



Charter Township of

FILER

— MASTER PLAN —

ADOPTED AUGUST 6, 2020

RESOLUTION

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF FILER
MANISTEE COUNTY, MICHIGAN

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF FILER BOARD OF TRUSTEES
RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF FILER MASTER PLAN OF 2020

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA), 2008 PA 33, MCL 125.3801, et seq. requires municipal planning commissions to prepare a "master plan" pertinent to the future development of the municipality; and

WHEREAS, the Charter Township of Filer Planning Commission has prepared a draft Master Plan for the Township, to update and replace its previous Master Plan dated August 2009; and

WHEREAS, the Township Board of Trustees adopted a resolution on January 22, 2020 authorizing the distribution of the draft Master Plan to the general public and the various entities as required by the MPEA, for review and comment purposes; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Master Plan was made available to the various entities and the general public as required by the MPEA, and a public hearing thereon was held by the Planning Commission on July 13, 2020 pursuant to notice as required by MPEA; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has found the proposed Master Plan as submitted for the public hearing to be desirable and proper, and furthers the land use and development goals and strategies of the Township, and has adopted a resolution recommending that the Township Board of Trustees adopt the proposed Master Plan;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Charter Township of Filer Board of Trustees hereby adopts the new Master Plan as recommended by the Planning Commission including all text, charts, tables, maps, and descriptive and other matter therein intended by the Planning Commission to form the complete Master Plan, including the Future Land Use Map. The new Master Plan may henceforth be referred to as the Master Plan of 2020.

Motion by: Walker

Seconded by: Kruse

Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Ball, Chycinski, Krus, Kolanowski, Stege, Kruse, Walker

Nays: None

Absent: None

Abstain: None

RESOLUTION DECLARED PASSED

Shirley Ball, cmc.
Shirley Ball, Clerk

Charter Township of Filer Board of Trustees

Aug. 7, 2020
Date

CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify the foregoing resolution is a true and correct copy of the resolution approved by a majority of the Charter Township of Filer Board of Trustees by a roll call vote at a regular meeting of the Board held on August 6, 2020 in compliance with the Open Meetings Act.

Shirley Ball, cmc.
Shirley Ball, Clerk

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF FILER MASTER PLAN WAS PREPARED BY:

FILER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

MEMBERS:

JENNIFER WILLIAMS, CHAIR

SHIRLEY BALL

ROGER DITTMER

KATHY GUTOWSKI

CHRISTA JOHNSON

KAREN KOLK

LINDA ROGERS

WITH PARTICIPATION & ASSISTANCE FROM:

LARRY THOMPSON, ZONING ADMINISTRATOR

RICHARD WILSON, LEGAL COUNSEL

TAMARA BUSWINKA, AICP, DDA DIRECTOR

ADOPTED:

PLANNING COMMISSION: JULY 13, 2020

TOWNSHIP BOARD: AUGUST 6, 2020

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Executive Summary

The Charter Township of Filer is a community that was built on a fierce work ethic and a culture of civic engagement. It is an established and resilient community, with a long history of industry surrounded by historic walkable residential neighborhoods. The people of Filer embrace its history as a means of strengthening sense of community. The Township plans proactively to make informed, objective and thoughtful decisions; aiming to work cooperatively on regional initiatives and make sound land use decisions.

Today, Filer Township is at a crossroads, with a unique opportunity for transformation through public and private cooperation and investment. Recently, there has been significant public input and local leadership invested into developing a vision for the U.S. 31 corridor. Community leaders envision a walkable place of activity and commerce, with retail, shopping, dining and housing. By implementing planned corridor design standards, partnering with the DDA to actively attract new investment, and working to develop diverse housing options, the corridor can truly transform into the community's vision.

High-quality parks and recreational amenities are crucial for fostering a healthy, active multi-generational community. While recent improvements have focused on two Lake Michigan Township parks, the community intends to focus its efforts on renovations to two neighborhood parks and the community center. Also closely connected, the Township is prioritizing nonmotorized trail connections to foster a healthy, active walkable community.

More housing options is another theme that reoccurred throughout the master planning effort. Filer plans to update the zoning standards to encourage infill and mixed housing developments in areas near commercial and employment centers while also seeking grants and low interest loans to develop phases 2 of the Township's sanitary sewer system in the historic residential neighborhoods.

The following Community Master Plan sets out a strategy and set of goals and actions for accomplishing these priorities.



Introduction

WHAT IS A MASTER PLAN?

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008) enables municipalities to write a Master Plan that broadly guides development to meet current and future needs and promotes the health, safety, and general welfare of its residents. The process of creating a Master Plan asks a community to pause from its busy daily operations of running a municipality, and look to the future. As a policy document that comprehensively inventories and analyzes the elements that makes a township tick, it is essential to include as many stakeholders into the process as possible. Through community engagement, the Master Plan identifies key challenges the residents face, but focuses on finding a shared vision and goals that could help achieve that vision in perpetuity. More specifically, the Master Plan collates a vision statement, an action plan with specific strategies, tools for making coordinated land-use decisions, assessment of current programs, services, structures, and infrastructure, into one document to inform its citizenry on how the Township will plan for its future.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE ZONING ORDINANCE

The Master Plan is not a binding agreement but rather a planning framework. The Zoning Ordinance, on the other hand, is local land use law. The Zoning Ordinance is a set of regulations that provide the details for how and where development can locate to exacting specifications. The Zoning Ordinance is how the Master Plan gets implemented; as outlined in the Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008, a direct relationship between the two documents is required.

For example, if it emerges through community engagement and research that the housing types available do not adequately serve the population, then a vision statement in the Master Plan could read “to plan for housing types that meet all the preferences of all age groups, income levels, and disabilities.” To ensure that this vision is implemented, a municipality would revisit the Zoning Ordinance to determine if the land use code is preventing a particular type of development through height restrictions or lot size requirements. Only when the two documents are in sync can they be effective planning tools.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Charter Township of Filer encompasses 16.5 square miles of land in the southwest corner of Manistee County in Michigan’s lower peninsula. The Township is situated north of rural portions of Mason County, west of Manistee National Forest, and immediately south of the City of Manistee, and it is with this central city neighbor that the Township is intricately tied. Filer Township is also positioned on four miles of Lake Michigan coastline, which includes spectacular sand dunes, as well as two miles of Lake Manistee shoreline. These natural features play a defining role in the community by offering unique scenery and access to some of the finest recreation in the State, although these freshwater resources have historically contributed to the Township’s industrial economy.

HISTORY

Although several bands of Grand River Ottawa people originally lived in the Manistee area for millennia, the first settlers of European descent arrived to what would become Filer Township in the mid-1800s. The Township was formally established by Delos L. Filer, who platted the Filer City community on Lake Manistee and founded a sawmill in the Township with his family in 1867. The community’s first railroad line was constructed soon after in 1883 to accommodate the burgeoning lumber industry. Following the depletion of the area’s timber, the sawmill was converted to a pulp mill in 1917 and other types of industry, including paper products and salt processing, proliferated around Lake Manistee with its maritime transportation advantages. The construction of U.S. 31 as a federal highway in 1926 set the stage for the Township’s suburban commercial development.

As of 2019, several major industries remain centered on Lake Manistee, although many have since relocated to other settings following shifts in transportation and production patterns. Much of the Township’s year-round population however remains centered in the dense communities of Filer City and Oak Hill that surround these historical industrial concentrations. In recent decades, rural areas of the Township, and those along the Lake Michigan shoreline, have been built with seasonal residences drawn by the alluring natural resources. Portions of the area’s indigenous groups are organized as the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians and maintain jurisdiction in the community. The Township continues to provide a high quality of life for year-round and seasonal residents throughout its varied economy and diverse recreation opportunities, all driven by its rich natural resources and four seasons climate.

SUMMARY OF EXISTING PLANS & STUDIES

This Master Plan adds to Filer Township's strong array of planning studies in recent years. These efforts have analyzed the community's natural features, built characteristics, infrastructure, and economic potential, and made recommendations for improvement in these specific areas. This plan draws on recommendations from these strategic documents, codifies the information in them, and uses them as the basis for further action. The community's plans are in chronological order below.

Filer Township High Risk Erosion Areas and Critical Dune Areas - March 1993

This document was the result of monitoring undertaken by the State of Michigan of dune erosion rates in Filer Township. The Township's "high risk erosion areas" were defined under Public Act 245 of 1978 as areas with documented dune recession of one foot or more annually. These areas encompass large portions of the community's Lake Michigan shoreline, much of which is used for residential purposes in 2019. Dune erosion continues to pose a threat to private property owners in the area.

U.S. 31 Corridor Management Plan - January 2004

In 2004, Filer Township first undertook a planning effort for the U.S. 31 corridor in conjunction with surrounding jurisdictions, and county, regional, and state organizations. The project defined "access management", which includes improving automobile access to and from commercial properties along the roadway, as a major priority in Filer Township. Making the corridor inviting for pedestrians with streetscape, sidewalks, and building façade improvements was also another important action. The plan continues to provide valuable development guidelines that are implementable through zoning in 2019.

Charter Township of Filer Master Plan - August 2009

The Community's most recent Master Plan was completed in 2009. The effort thoroughly reviewed the Township's characteristics over time, including population change, age, income, and employment, and then determined a series of guiding principles for development over subsequent years. These goal statements were focused on fostering a "sense of place" through higher built densities, creating a greater range of housing and transportation options, and connecting neighborhoods, and activity centers with nonmotorized paths. These guiding principles formed the foundation for desired land use configurations, which were largely consistent with the Township's past development patterns.

Manistee County-Wide Park & Recreation Plan - February 2016

In 2016, Manistee County Planning Department and the Alliance for Economic Success (AES) published a countywide framework for parks planning. The effort involved extensive community engagement

through an online survey to determine how residents use existing amenities, and their priorities for new improvements. The plan specified projects for individual communities, including Filer Township. This approach allowed each community's park and recreation plan to reflect their individual visions, while sharing common county-wide goals and objectives.

Charter Township of Filer Parks & Recreation Plan - February 2016

The Charter Township of Filer Parks & Recreation Plan, included in the county-wide framework mentioned above, serves as a standalone plan satisfying the requirements of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Recommendations in the plan specific to Filer Township included the dispersion of new bike racks and benches throughout its facilities and the creation of separate bike paths along rural roads. Nonmotorized infrastructure was highlighted as one the County's key recreational opportunities, and the opportunity for the Township to coordinate on long-distance nonmotorized paths was another determined priority.

U.S. 31 Corridor Analysis and Opportunities Plan - 2016

In partnership with Wade Trim, the Township explored opportunities to redevelop the U.S. 31 commercial corridor. This effort led to the creation a subarea concept plan and map that incorporated a mix of residential and commercial uses, improved circulation and connections for motor vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles, green spaces and recreation opportunities, streetscape improvements, and identifiable branding and wayfinding. Collectively, these elements aimed to create a more traditional downtown environment in the community and served as the basis for the proposed Filer Town Center district. The concept map can be found at the end of this section.

Manistee County U.S. 31 Corridor Enhancement Plan - July 2017

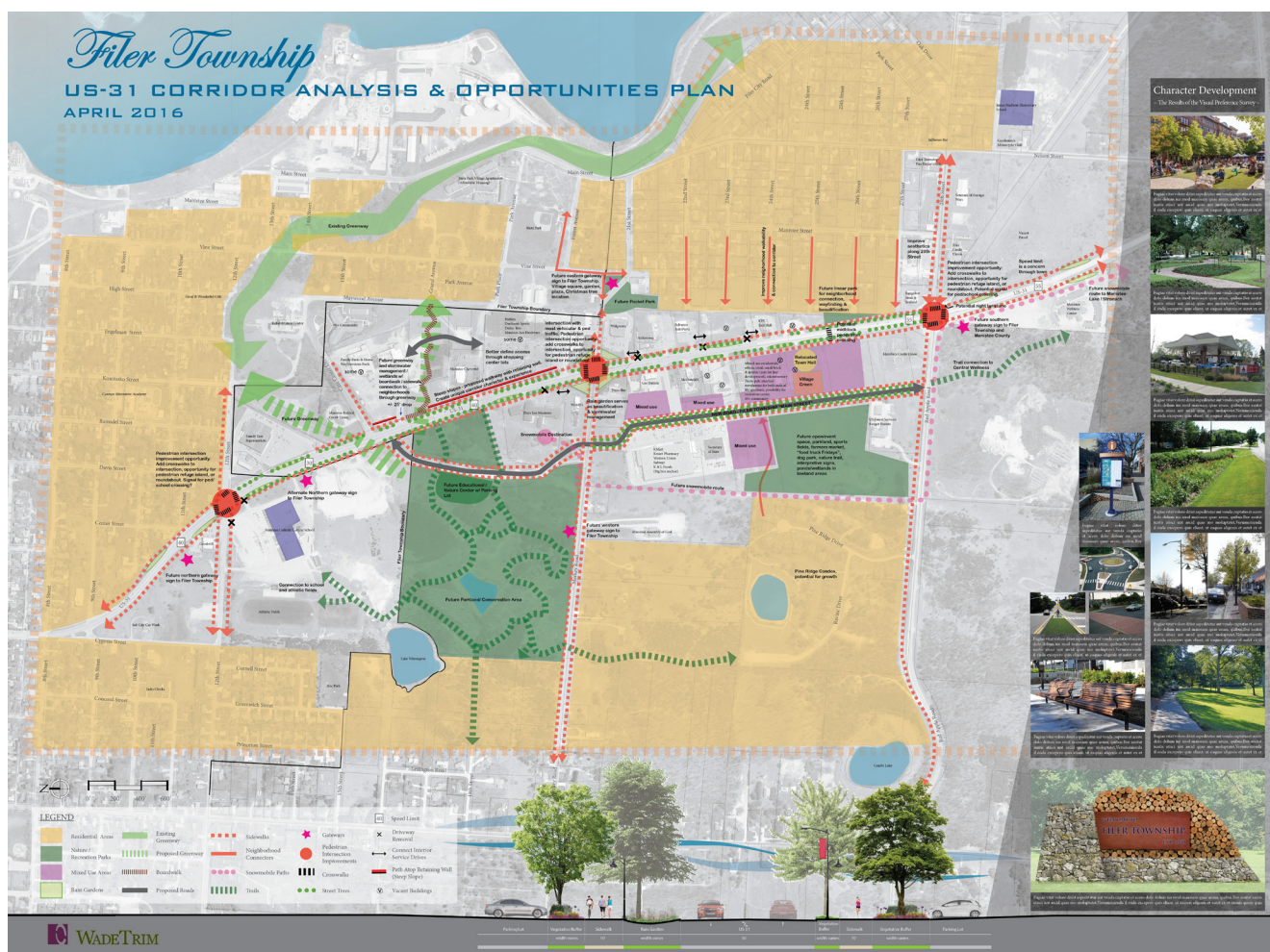
The Manistee County Planning Department and the Alliance for Economic Success (AES) undertook this plan in 2017, in cooperation with local jurisdictions along U.S. 31 and the Michigan Department of Transportation, and the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians. The study sought to create a shared vision for future uses and design along the County's main commercial roadway, and to define strategies for local actors to make the vision happen. After a thorough inventory of the existing demographics, land use, and zoning along U.S. 31, the County engaged residents to determine their priorities for the corridor. Residents hoped to see increased density and pedestrian-oriented streetscapes in existing built areas, including Filer Township. Resident input also resulted in a sub-area plan in Filer Township that showed priority locations for new mixed-use buildings, pedestrian amenities, and opportunities for connections between U.S. 31 and surrounding neighborhoods.

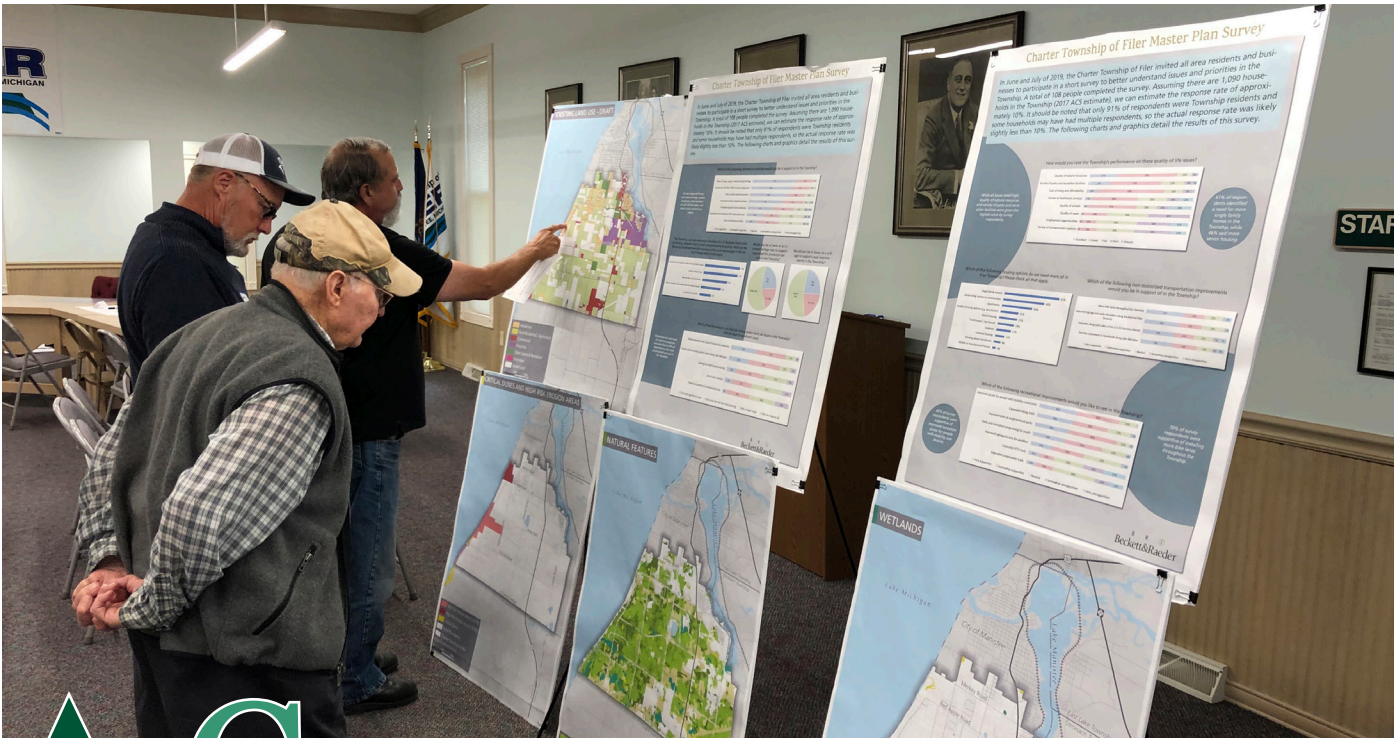
Filer Township Capital Improvement Plan 2019-2024 - September 2017

The Township released a new capital improvement plan in 2019 that detailed the organization's plans to finance capital projects in the community. The repaving of several roadways in need of repairs was one major element of the plan, and the Township seeks to coordinate with the Manistee County Road Commission for these improvements. It also defined maintenance of community parks and water infrastructure as priority projects through 2023.

Filer Township Retail Market Analysis - April 2019

This study was published by the Filer Township DDA in the spring of 2019, with consulting services provided by Gibbs Planning Group. The study analyzed and quantified the Township's potential for new retail and restaurant space in the U.S. 31 corridor. It accomplished this by analyzing the community's demographic composition, residents' retail and dining preferences, and their spending patterns in and outside of the community. Estimates of residents' annual spending leaving the community defined "retail gaps", or markets for goods and services where local demand could likely support more businesses. These findings are used to formulate recommendations for the U.S. 31 corridor to bring the area's uses and built characteristics in line with market potential.





Community Vision

Public input served as the foundation for the Filer Township master planning effort. The goal of the public engagement process was to gather input from diverse stakeholders in a variety of ways. Township leaders worked to make the input opportunities as accessible and inviting as possible and offer a variety of different forums for collecting this input.

FILER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

The Filer Township Planning Commission took a leadership role on facilitating an open and inclusive process for the Master Plan development. The Planning Commission met monthly over the course of the project to review existing planning documents and make recommendations for the Master Plan. Planning Commission meetings were open to the public and included informational presentations designed to build a better understanding of local land use and demographic trends as well as housing and economic opportunities. The Planning Commission also developed the future land use map, zoning plan, and action plan based on extensive public input and data gathering.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

The Filer Township Planning Commission and local leaders developed a community survey to gather feedback for the Master Plan update. The survey was hosted online and distributed to residents, businesses and community stakeholders. The survey was available online from

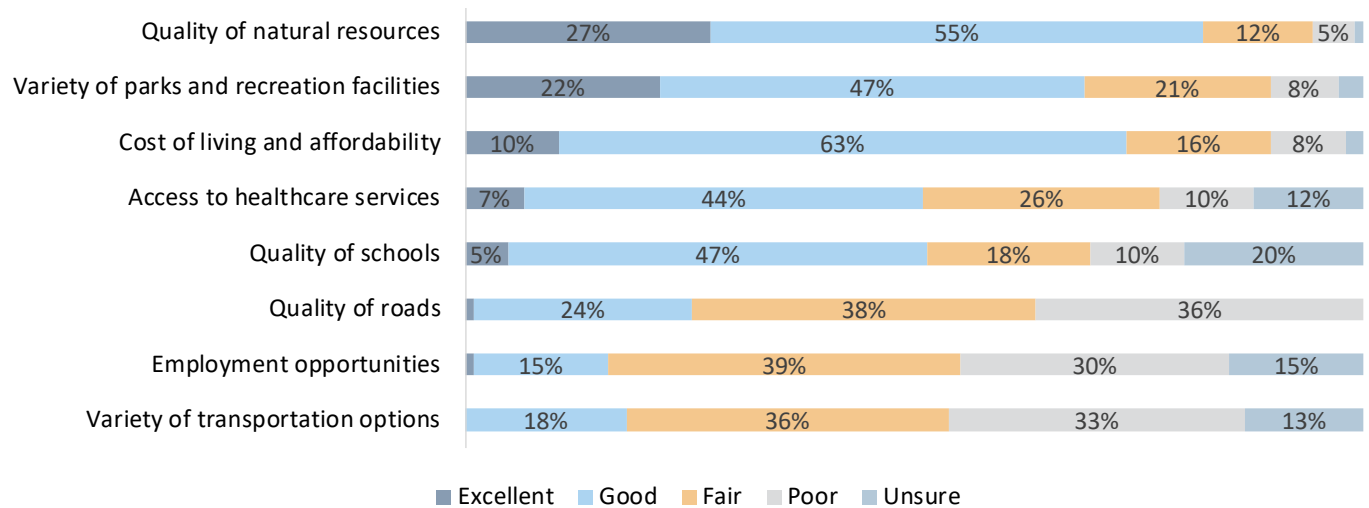
June 2019 through July 2019. Hard copies were also available at the Township hall and distributed by mail upon request. A postcard advertising the survey was sent to all Township property addresses. A total of 108 people completed the survey. Assuming there are 1,090 households in the Township (2017 ACS estimate), we can estimate the response rate of approximately 10%. It should be noted that only 91% of respondents were Township residents and some households may have had multiple respondents, so the actual response rate was likely slightly less than 10%.

Question 1: How would you rate the Township's performance on these quality of life issues?

Those choices receiving over 20% "excellent" rating included quality of natural resources and variety of parks and recreation facilities.

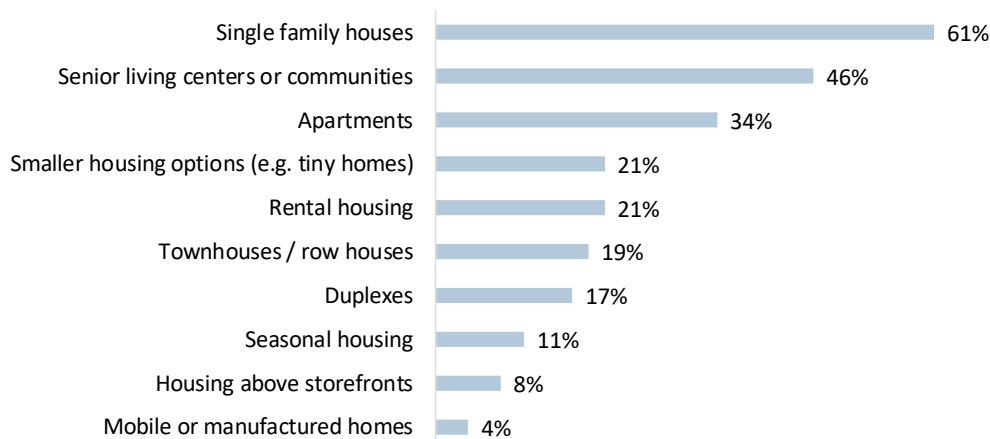
A total of 16 respondents provided additional detail on these quality of life issues. A full summary of open-ended responses can be found in Appendix A.

- 7 respondents noted the poor quality of road conditions in the Township
- 3 individuals noted the importance of attracting more businesses and commercial investment
- 2 individuals highlighted recreation opportunities



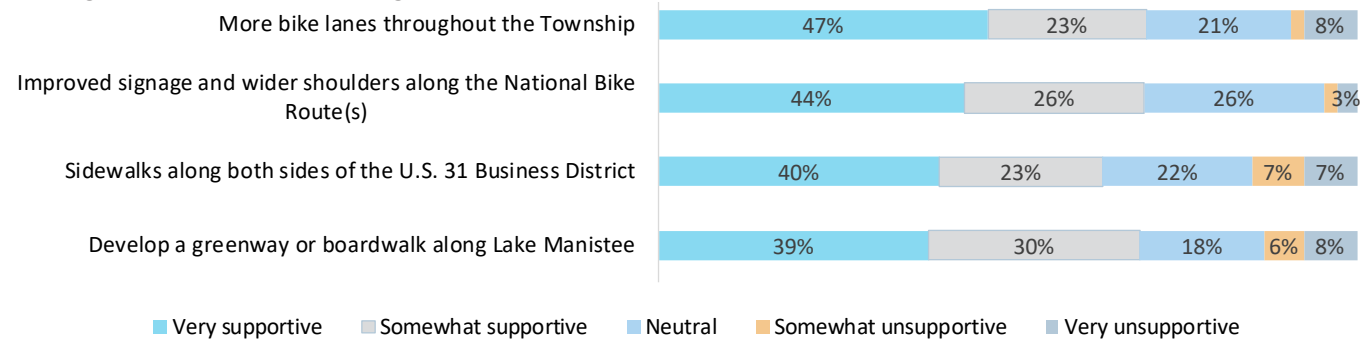
Question 2: Which of the following housing options do we need more of in Filer Township? Please check all that apply.

There was relative agreement amongst survey respondents of the need for more housing in Filer Township. Sixty one percent (61%) noted the need for more single family homes. Notably, there was also considerable support for senior living communities, apartments, and smaller homes.



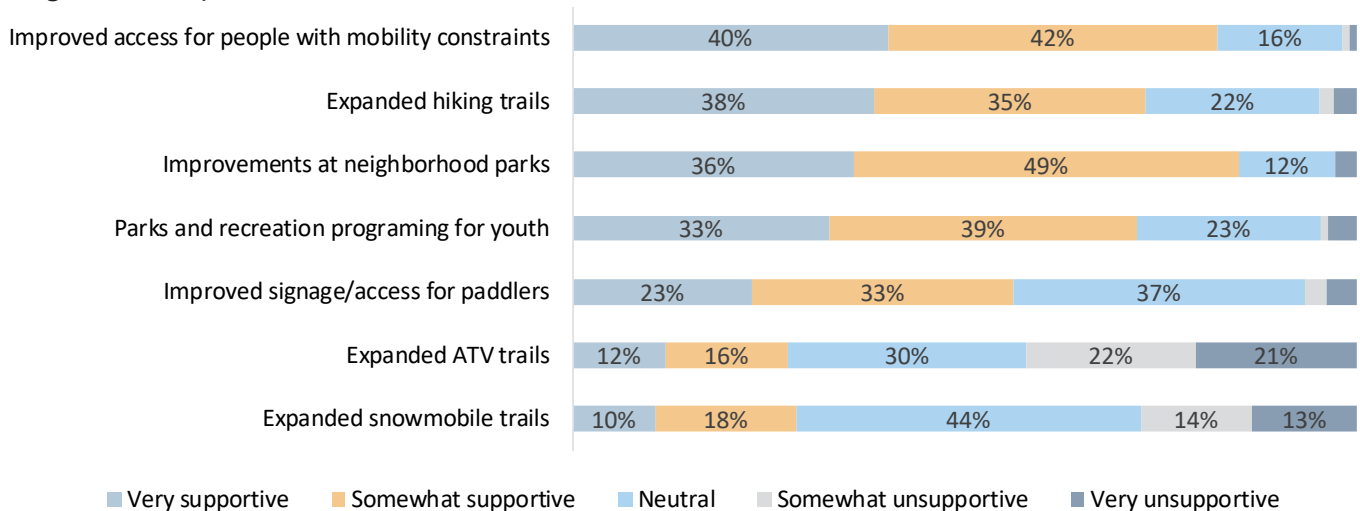
Question 3: Which of the following non-motorized transportation improvements would you be in support of in the Township?

There was considerable support for all non-motorized options, with the highest level of support for adding more bike lanes throughout the Township.

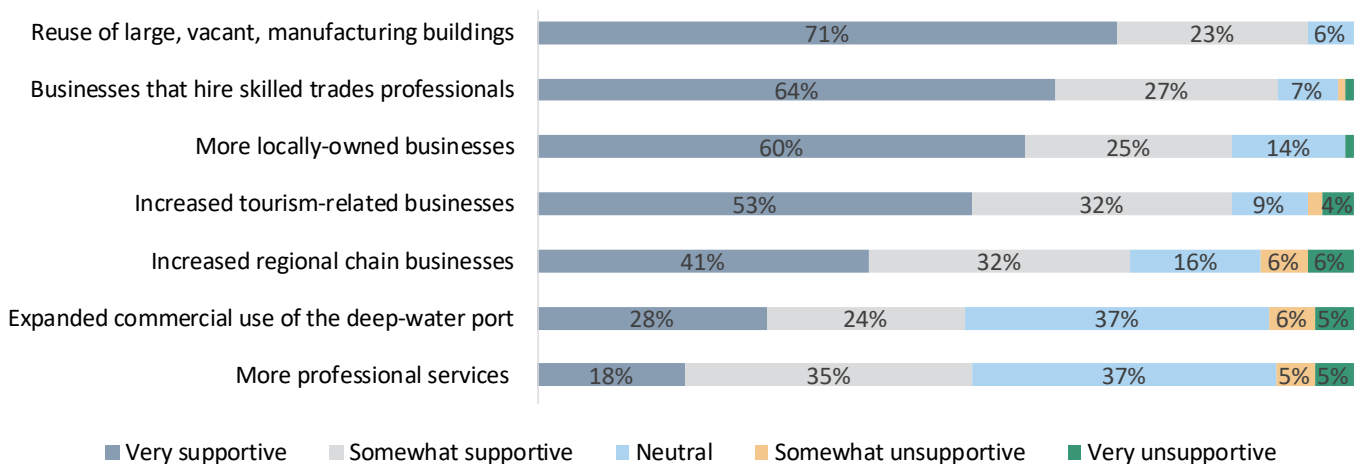


Question 4: Which of the following recreational improvements would you like to see in the Township?

Again, there was considerable support amongst survey respondents for recreational improvements. The highest level of support was in the category of improved access for people with mobility constraints. Respondents also showed considerable support for expanded hiking trails and improvements at neighborhood parks.

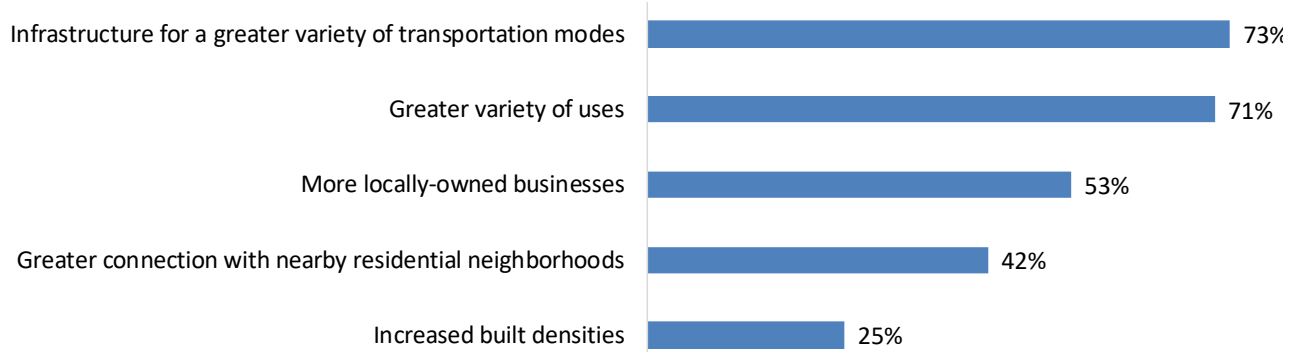


Question 5: Which of the following commercial activities would you be in support of in the Township?



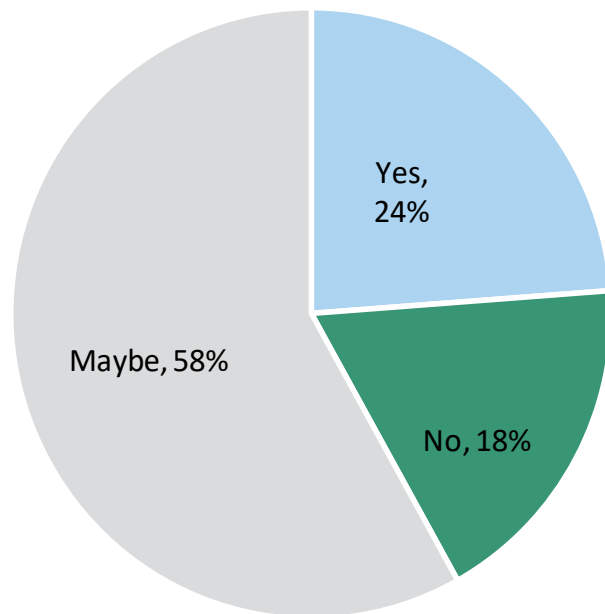
Question 6: The Township is actively working to develop a U.S. 31 Business District into an inviting, attractive hub of retail and entertainment activity. Which of the following businesses/amenities would you like to see encouraged in this district? Please check all that apply.

There is support for a variety of improvements along the U.S. 31 corridor. The highest level of support was for improvements to support a variety of transportation modes (73%), with a greater variety of uses desired by 71% of respondents.



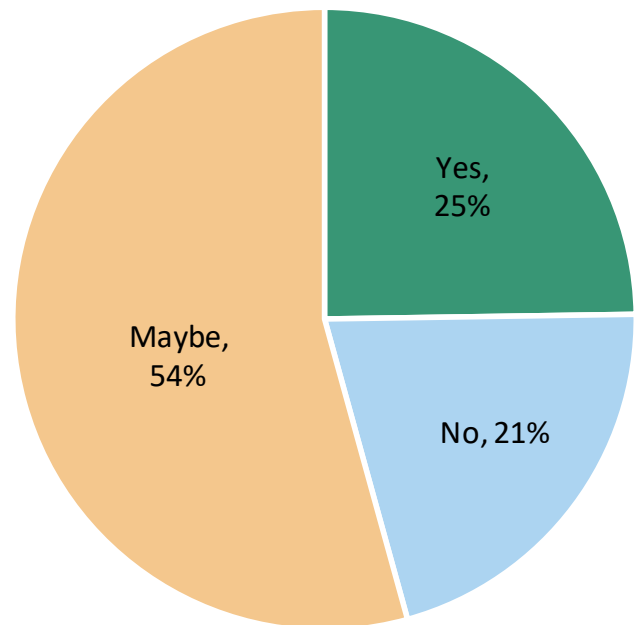
Question 7: Would you be in favor of an increased millage rate to support expanded fire protection services in the Township?

The majority of respondents selected maybe (58%), meaning they needed more information. Only 18% of respondents gave a hard no.



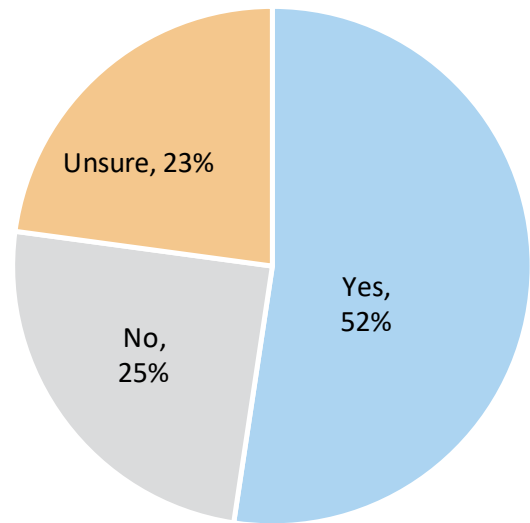
Question 8: Would you be in favor of a millage to support road improvements in the Township?

Again the majority of respondents selected maybe, indicating they needed more information. The number of respondents selecting no was slightly higher compared with an increased fire millage, at 21%.



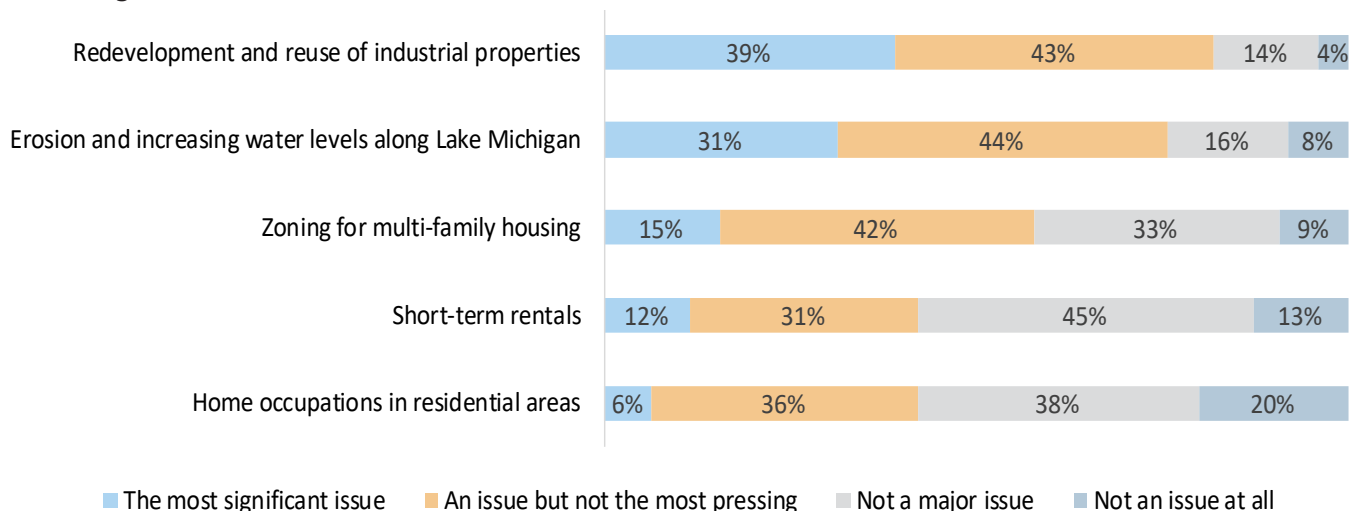
Question 9: Would you be in favor of a millage to support parks and recreation improvements (including trails) in the Township?

For this question, there was the highest support amongst respondents for a millage to support parks and recreation improvements - over 52% of respondents were in favor.

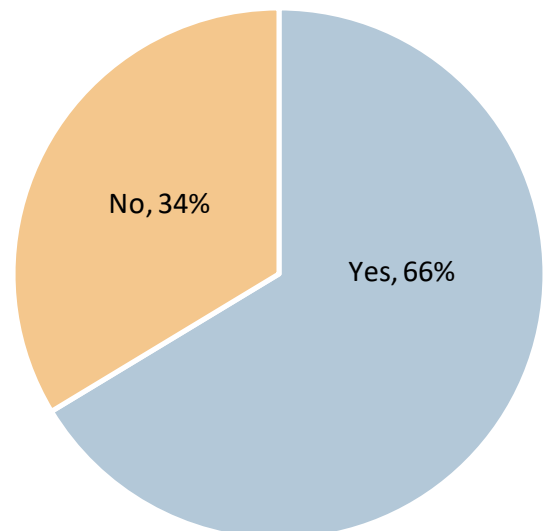


Question 10: Which of the following do you feel are zoning and/or land use issues in the Township? (not an issue to significant issue)

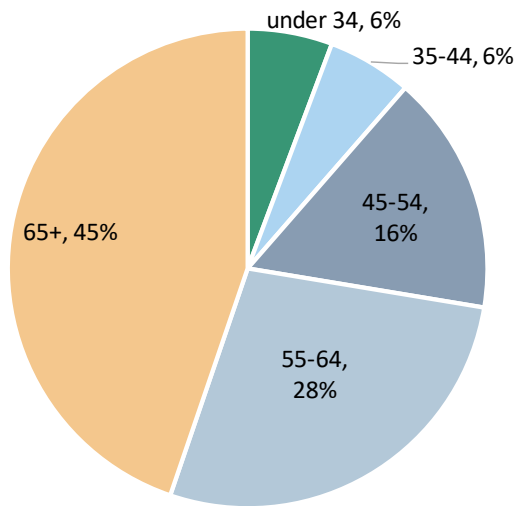
The goal of this question was to better understand which zoning issues the Township should focus its attention on. Given the large number of vacant industrial buildings, 39% said this was the most significant issues. A close second was addressing the erosion levels along Lake Michigan given the increasing water levels.



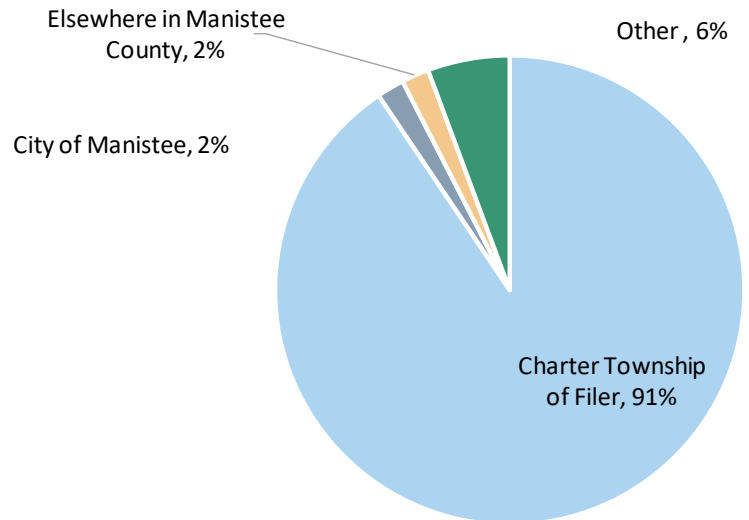
Question 11: Do you support commercial scale solar farms in the Township?



Question 12: Which of the following classifies your age?



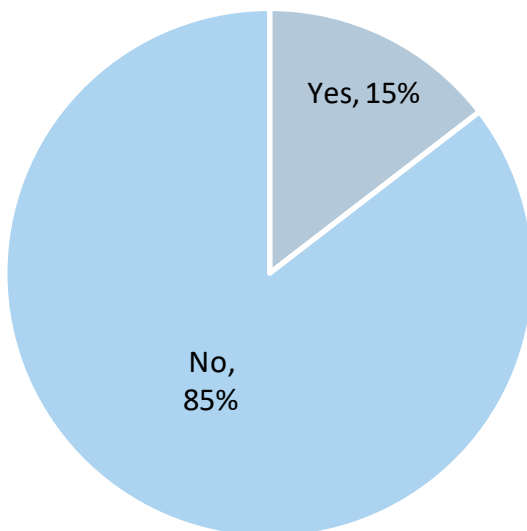
Question 13: Where do you Live?



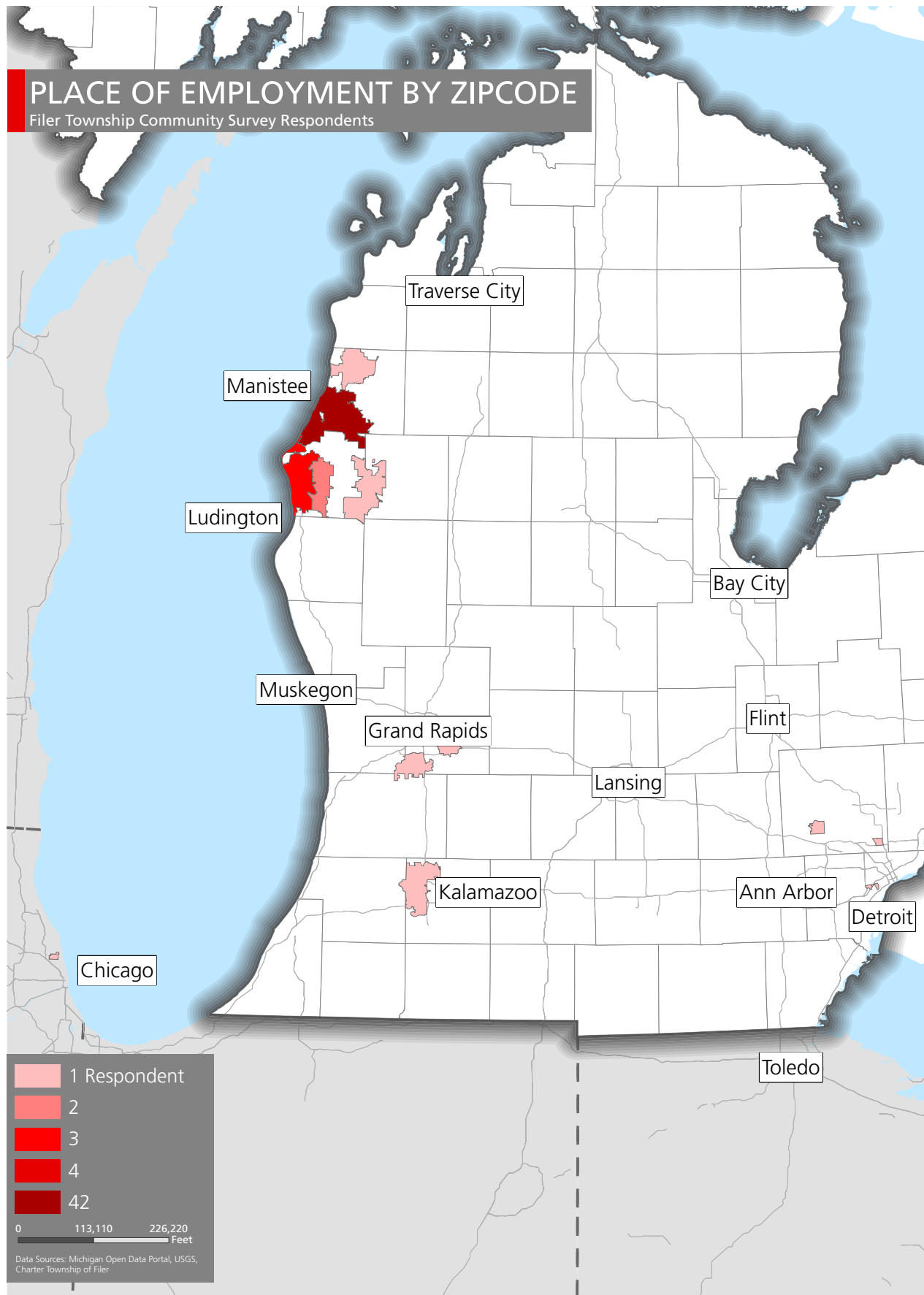
Question 14: If you are currently employed, what is the zip code of your principle location of work?

The majority of respondents work in the greater Manistee area, although some work elsewhere throughout the State of Michigan. Please refer to the map on the next page that summarizes place of employment by zip code amongst survey respondents.

Question 15: Do you have school-aged children? (18 years of age or younger)



MAP 1. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT BY ZIP CODE - SURVEY RESPONDENTS



COMMUNITY VISIONING SESSION

The Charter Township of Filer Planning Commission held a Community Visioning Session on Thursday, September 5, 2019 at the Township Hall for the purpose of gathering input from citizens for use in formulating the long-range priorities, goals, and strategies for the plan. Twenty five (25) people attended the session. Attendees arrived to find four tables set with exercise sheets and other materials.

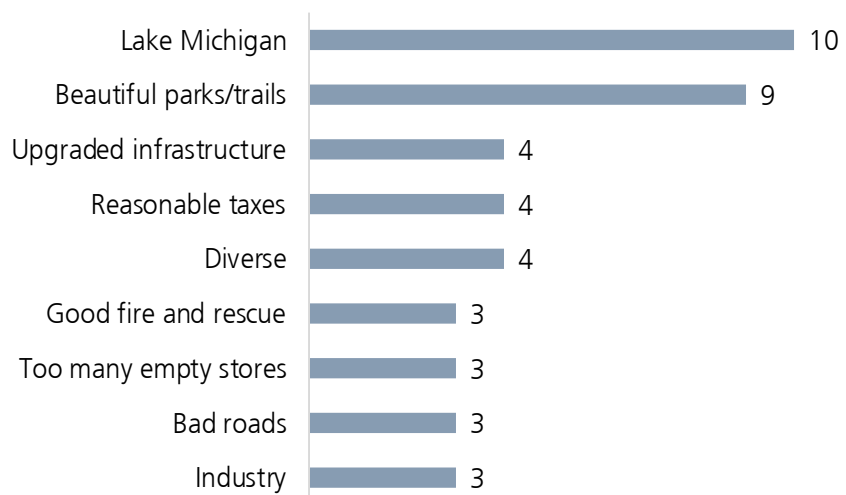
Process

The tables were numbered 1-4, and these numbers are referenced throughout this summary. The facilitator asked a series of five questions, giving the groups approximately ten minutes to develop as many answers as possible to them. Each individual then used dot stickers to indicate his or her preferred answers. Participants voted for their top items on questions 1-4 and their top three items on question 5.

When each table had generated and voted on its top three visions for the future, participants were asked to offer one strategy for achieving each vision. A representative from each group then presented these visions and strategies to the audience as a whole. During the presentations, a facilitator wrote the visions on poster-sized sheets. Repetitive elements were combined, and the facilitator reviewed each entry with the group to ensure clarity.

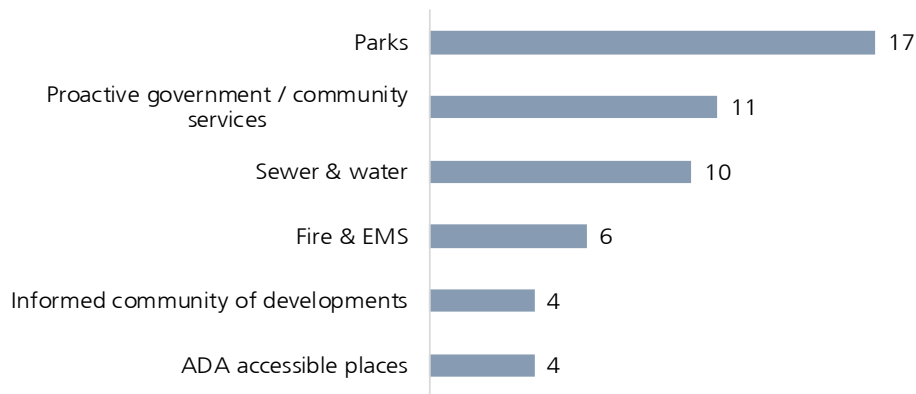
The "Collective Priority" sheets were hung near the exit, and attendees were asked to use their remaining three voting stickers to indicate their top priorities among all of the suggested visions.

Question 1: What one word or phrase best describes our community?

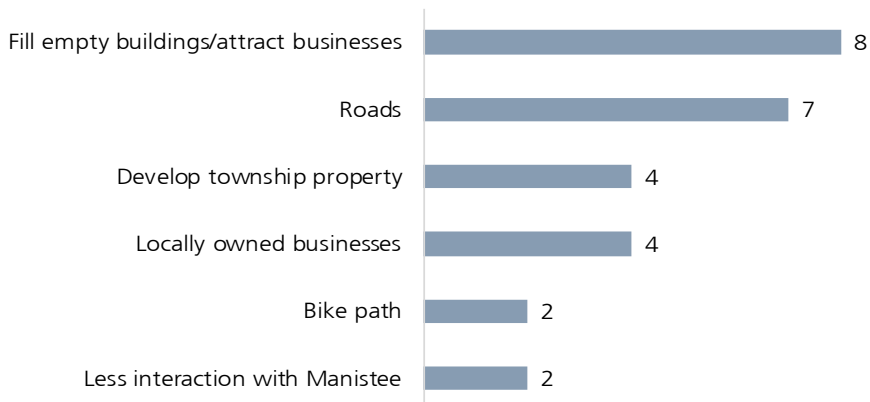




Question 2: What has our community done well?

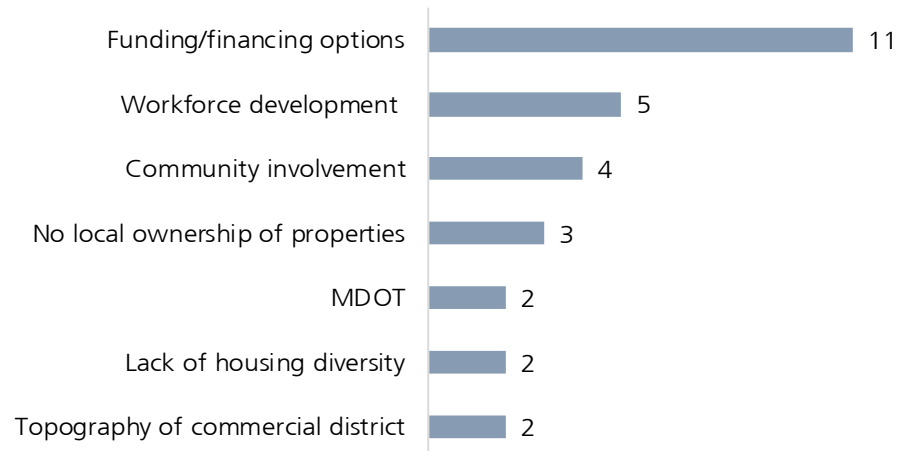


Question 3: What could our community have done better?

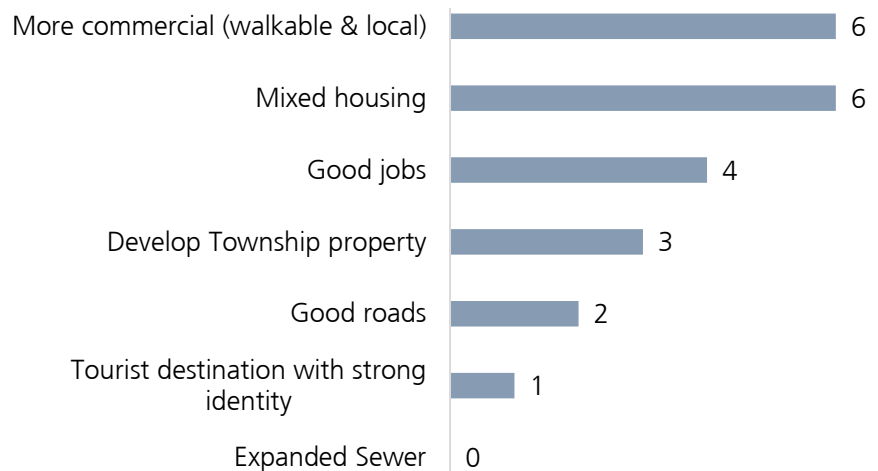




Question 4: What are our barriers to success?



Collective Priorities







The People of Filer

A nuanced understanding of a community's population and its social and economic attributes is essential in the planning process if improvements are to be made to that community. This chapter uses data from the 2010 U.S. Census as well as the 2017 American Community Survey to understand existing conditions in the Charter Township of Filer, and to compare them over time and with neighboring communities.

POPULATION AND GROWTH RATE

Data from the American Community Survey (ACS) suggests that Filer Township's population has increased in recent decades, an interesting reversal of trends throughout Michigan. The Township's population was 2,700 people in 2017, which is a notable increase of 16% from 2,325 residents in 2010, and from 2,208 residents in 2000. The margin of error in the ACS's measurements could explain some of the increase between 2010 and 2017, however. Taken as is, this trend of steady population increase differs from the larger geographies of Manistee County as a whole and the State of Michigan, both of which experienced population decline of -1.3% and -.27%, respectively, between these years. Data suggest that the Township's Oak Hill neighborhood's population grew from 569 residents to 786 residents between 2010 and 2017. The Filer City neighborhood didn't fare as well; its residential population shrank from 116 to 90 between the same years. The margin of error again lends some uncertainty to the figures for both neighborhoods, however. Filer Township's total residential population was dispersed across 1,090 households as of 2017.

HOUSEHOLDS AND HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Taken as a whole, Filer Township has a slightly larger household size compared with surrounding communities, and its household size may have even increased in recent years. The average household size in Filer Township was 2.47 people as of 2017, which is considerably larger than in the neighboring City of Manistee (2.17 people), but similar to the State of Michigan (2.49 people). This suggests a larger proportion of multiple-person households within the Township, compared with its central city neighbor. The Township's average household size likely increased from 2010, at which time it was 2.33 people, although measurement error could again account for some of the change. This is an interesting reversal of trends throughout the State, which have been toward declining household sizes.

Filer Township, with its suburban location and picturesque setting, is home to a large share of families and retirement-age couples. The community's share of households considered "families" by the U.S. Census Bureau was 71.1% as of 2017, notably larger than 54% in the City of Manistee, and 62.8% across Manistee County as a whole. Among the Township's families, almost two thirds (62.6%) were married couples, however, only a small share (18.4%) of these married couples also had a child under the age of 18 living with them. Considered with the Township's higher median age, this points to the community's large proportion of empty nesters and retirement age couples. The community's share of family households also rose from 67.6% in 2010, which is somewhat contradictory to the U.S. at large, where shares of traditional families are declining. Families also make up a large share of the total households in the Township's two prominent neighborhoods. At the 2010 Census, 65% of the 44 Filer City households were families, while 60% of the 247 households in Oak Hill were families.

With Michigan's growing share of retirees, older people living alone is also becoming commonplace. Despite Filer Township's large proportion of married couples, this pattern of elderly residents living on their own is also characteristic. The number of households with the householder as the sole resident was 296 in 2017, which was a significant but smaller share of total households (27.2%) compared with the City of Manistee (42.6%) and the County (32.7%) as a whole. Over half (54%) of the 296 residents living alone were 65 years of age or older. These are demographics that fly under the radar and may require more social support of the subsequent decades.

AGE PROFILE

The median age of Filer Township's population was 48.2 years in 2017, a slight dip from 50.3 years in 2010. This is relatively high compared with the City of Manistee (44.7 years), Manistee Township (45.6 years), and the State of Michigan as a whole (39.6 years). Following the high median age, approximately one third (31.4%) of Filer's population, an estimated 849 residents, were 60 years of age or over in 2017, which held constant from 2010. About another third (30.7%) of Filer Township's residents were between the ages of 40 and 59 years. This large segment of "late-career" individuals will be moving into retirement over the next couple of decades, and so amenities for these lifestyles and age ranges will continue to be important. For

instance, these demographics may seek downsized or more diverse housing, and require social support in the form of income assistance or transportation. It is therefore essential that the Township prepares by providing appropriate services and amenities.

Meanwhile, Filer Township has small and declining shares of young workers and school-age children. In 2017, only a total of 396 Township residents, 14.6% of the population, were between the ages of 20 and 39 years. This proportion was about the same in 2010. Large shares of these demographics are advantageous in communities because they often require fewer services and little social support but generate economic activity by working and spending discretionary income. The Township could consider policies to attract and retain residents between these age ranges, which could include diversifying its housing, creating live-work environments, and providing recreational amenities. Filer Township also had a relatively small number of young residents under the age of 18 years - an estimated 532 people in 2017. This made up about one fifth (19.7%) of residents. Even with a smaller share of youth, transportation to schools and youth programming will continue to be key, particularly in attracting young families.

SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS

Educational Attainment

A population's educational attainment serves as a link to economic stability and mobility, and largely determines the shape of the local economy. The completion of high school is a key baseline level, and fortunately, the vast majority of Filer Township's population has attained this level of education. In 2017, 93.8% of the Township's residents had at least completed high school, compared with 90.6% in Manistee County and 90.2% in the State of Michigan.

FIGURE 1. AGE PROFILE

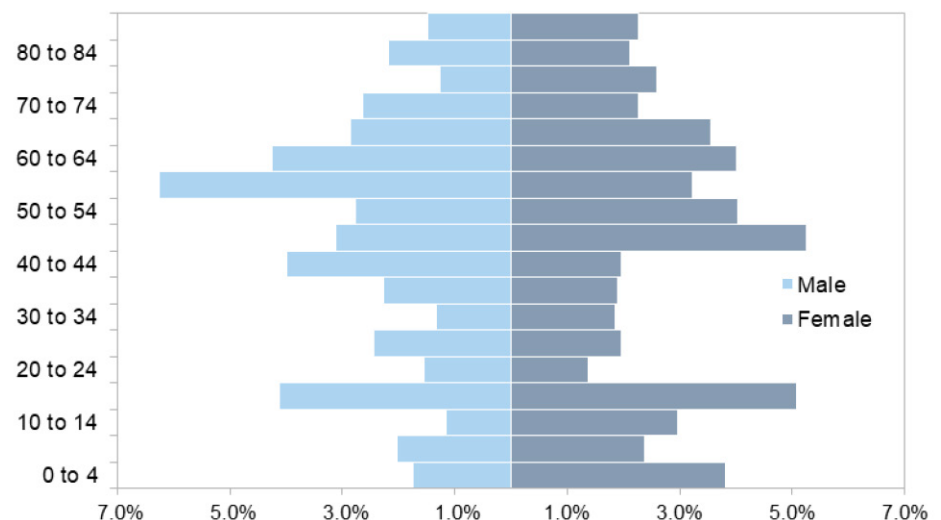
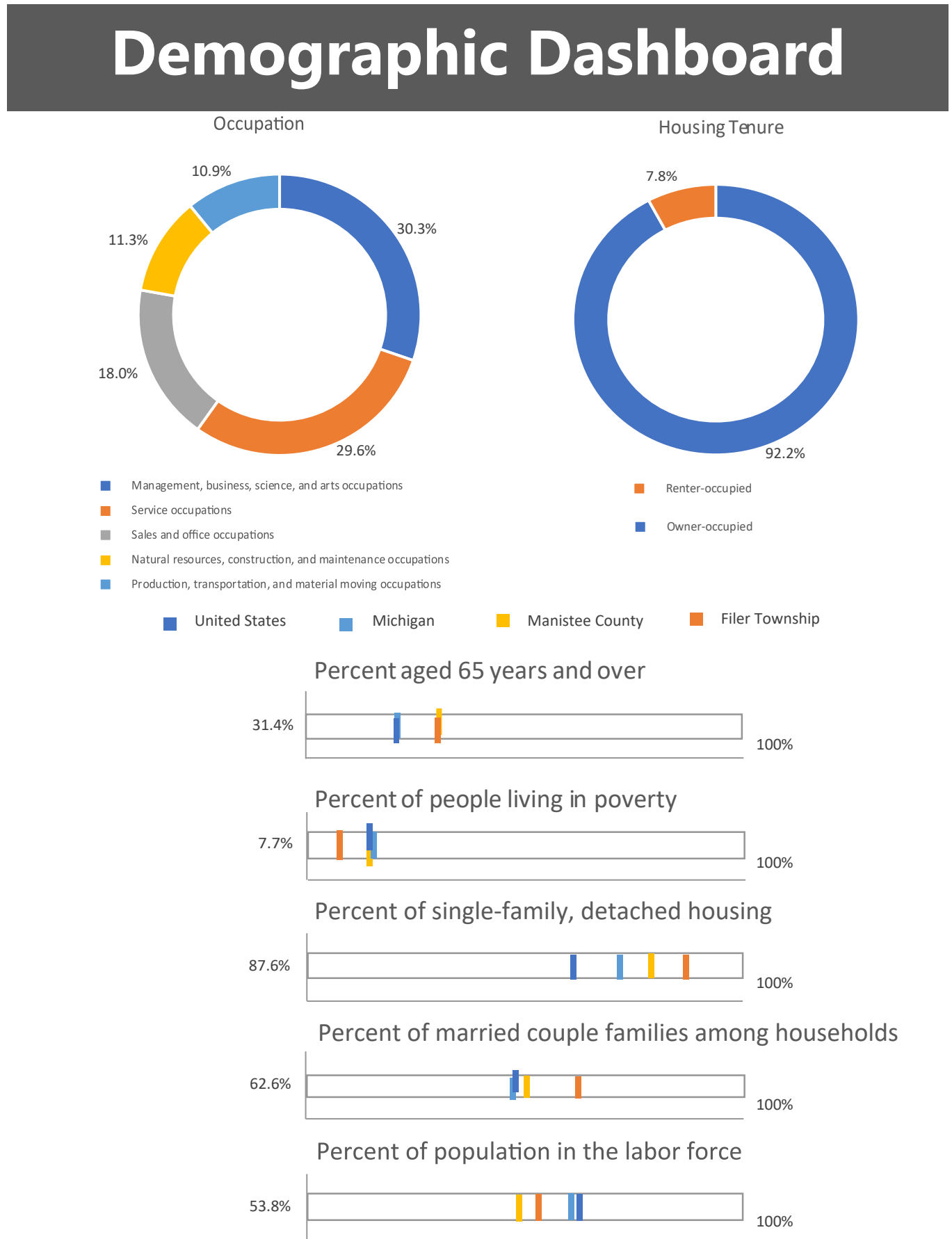


FIGURE 2. DEMOGRAPHIC DASHBOARD



Despite this, attainment of college degrees remains relatively low in the Township. In 2017, only about one fifth (21.6%) of the population had at least completed a four-year degree, comparable to 20.5% in Manistee County as a whole, but lower than 28.1% across the state. The Township's college degrees are also concentrated among older workers. Of the estimated 431 Township residents with at least a bachelor's degree, only 44 were between the ages of 25 and 34 years and 143 were 65 years of age or older. This is not particularly advantageous because younger workers will be employed over the coming decades "using" their education. Attracting educated households and younger residents will continue to be key to the Township's success.

FIGURE 3. INCOME RANGES OVER TIME

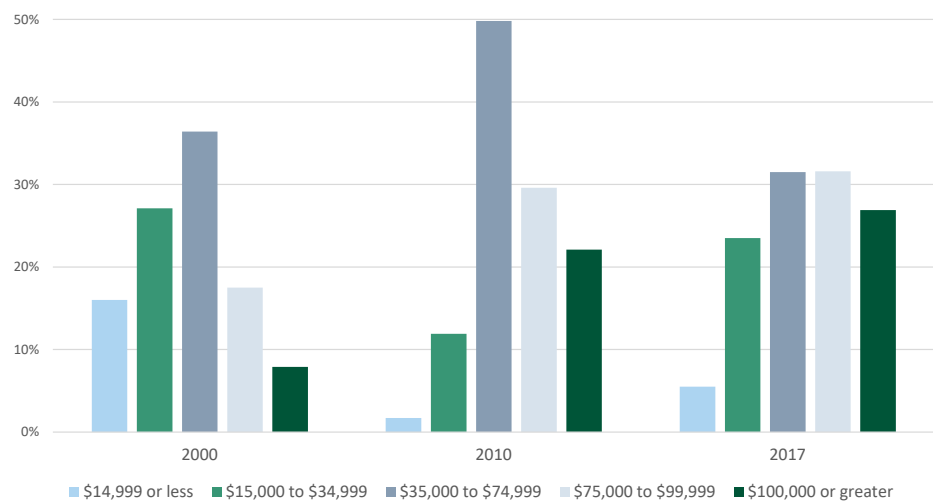
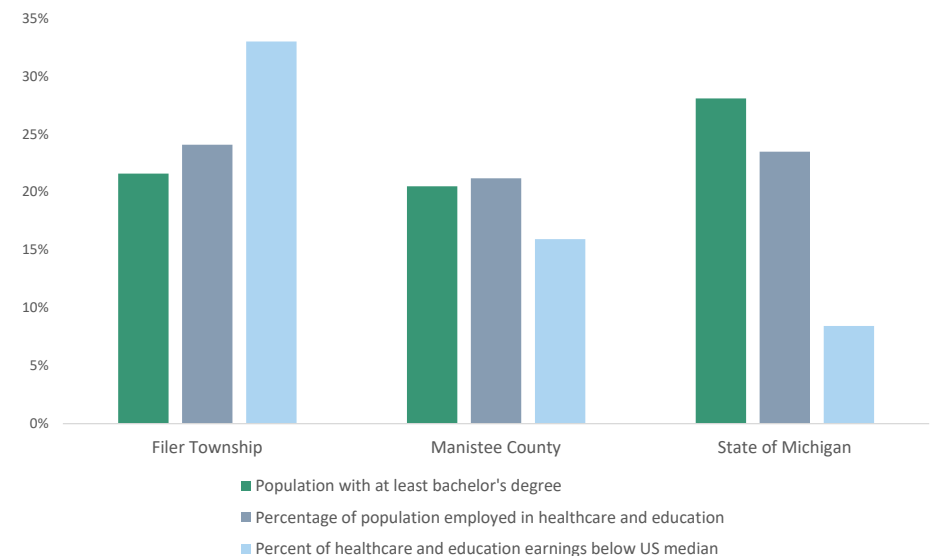


FIGURE 4. EDUCATION AND HEALTHCARE EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS



Income and Earnings

In most communities, a strong correlation exists between higher education and household income, which holds true in Filer Township. The median annual household income in the Township was \$52,105, which is on par with \$52,668 in the State of Michigan in that year but higher than both the City of Manistee (\$35,429) and Manistee County (\$44,882). Within this, there is an especially large divide between “family” and “nonfamily” households. The median annual income for Filer Township households with multiple residents, considered family households, was high at \$78,563, compared with \$66,653 across Michigan. Meanwhile, nonfamily households in Filer Township had an annual median income of only \$28,750 compared with \$31,333 statewide. Although higher incomes are to be expected in multi-person and dual-income households, there is a stark divergence between families and nonfamilies.

The breakdown of household income in Filer Township reveals a relatively even distribution. As of 2017, roughly 44.2% of the Township’s households had moderate annual incomes of between \$35,000 and \$75,999 per year, which resembles 44.8% of households across the state. This suggests that the Township maintains a strong “middle class”, while in other communities, middle-income households are few. The graph of incomes also shows, however, that the share of moderate-income households earning between \$35,000 and \$75,000 annually may have declined since 2000. In the same timeframe, the percentage of Filer households earning \$75,000 or greater nearly doubled - from 20.5% to 39.6%. Meanwhile, only about 29% of Township households had low annual incomes below \$34,999 per year in 2017; similar compared with the state.

Poverty status is another key economic indicator, which the U.S. Census Bureau determines by comparing household annual income with the number of people per household. Fortunately, only a small share (7.7%) of Filer Township households had incomes below poverty levels in 2017. Further, poverty among elderly and youth demographics is a concern in many Michigan communities, however, 2.6% of Township residents over the age of 60 years were in poverty status in 2017, which is lower than 8.8% across the state. Conversely, poverty rates among Filer’s youth closely mirror the state; 14.7% of its residents under the age of 18 years were in poverty compared with 21.7% in Michigan. These figures further show that the Township’s numerous older married couple households are relatively prosperous compared with families with children.

Employment and Economy

Michigan’s economy has moved toward services in recent decades, and particularly since the Great Recession, resulting in a variety of jobs offering both higher and lower incomes compared with traditional production-oriented industries. Interestingly, Filer Township doesn’t exactly mirror these broader trends, at least not in the past decade. Numbers show that about 18% of employed residents were employed in manufacturing, which picked up from 11.6% in 2010. Meanwhile, the share of residents employed in education, healthcare, and social

services declined by about 5% between these same years. Although both industries continue to comprise employment shares, this is a reversal of the broader patterns of declining manufacturing and burgeoning healthcare industries.

Both manufacturing and healthcare jobs typically offer higher pay than in other forms of employment found in Michigan, but data indicates a stark divergence between the two industries among Filer residents. Median annual earnings for Township residents in manufacturing were \$71,250, which is high compared with \$37,180 across all industries. Meanwhile, Filer residents employed in healthcare, education, and social assistance earned only \$24,360 annually, which is about one third lower than median across all industries. Healthcare jobs range in types from low-paying jobs that require little education to high-paying ones that require years of training, and incomes in the industry also vary correspondingly. Although about the same number of residents are employed in healthcare in the Township compared with larger geographies, incomes lag with lower education. Despite this, healthcare will likely play a key role in the Township's economy, considering the large share of employment in the industry and the area's aging demographics.

The next two largest employment sectors in Filer Township were retail trade and arts, entertainment, and recreation, which comprised 8.8% and 13.9% of residents' jobs, respectively in 2017. These sectors, both of which are associated with the area's tourism industry, were also low paying; annual median incomes for an employee in retail were \$35,357 while the median pay among employees in arts and entertainment was \$40,833. High-end services jobs including finance, insurance, and real estate comprised only 3.7% of the Township's employment in 2017.

TABLE 1. EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY SECTOR

FILER TOWNSHIP	2010	2017
Number		
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	1,072	1,180
Percentage		
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	0.0%	1.2%
Construction	4.4%	6.9%
Manufacturing	11.6%	18.3%
Wholesale trade	2.4%	1.7%
Retail trade	9.0%	8.8%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	5.2%	2.3%
Information	0.9%	0.8%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	5.4%	3.7%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	3.9%	2.0%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	29.3%	24.1%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	13.0%	13.9%
Other services, except public administration	1.0%	5.2%
Public administration	13.8%	11.1%



Pictured to the left is a residential street in Filer City. Pictured to the right is a residential home in a subdivision located just south of Merkley Road.

HOUSING

Housing Types

According to the American Community survey, Filer Township had a total of 1,350 housing units in 2017. Most of these (87.6%) were traditional single-family, detached homes, which is higher than the City of Manistee (61.6%), Manistee County as a whole (79.6%), and the State of Michigan (72.3%). The second most common type of housing in the township was large apartment buildings with 20 or more units per structure, which comprised less than 5% of the community's housing units. Formats in between these two extremes, including small apartment buildings with between two and 19 units, were almost nonexistent in Filer Township. By comparison, these medium-sized apartment buildings made up over one fifth (21.8%) of Manistee's housing stock. This illustrates a phenomenon called "missing middle" housing, where a community lacks housing formats between large apartment buildings and single-family homes. These duplexes, triplexes, and row houses are important because they provide lower-cost options and meet the needs and preferences of older and younger demographics. Importantly, these styles of housing can be constructed in a way that fits with neighborhood character in communities where single-family housing dominates.

Tenure and Cost

With the prevalence of single-family homes in the Township, most dwelling units are also owner-occupied. This form of tenure made up 92.2% of Filer Township's occupied housing units - similar to nearby Manistee Township (87.5%), but greater than Manistee County (82.3%), and the State of Michigan (71%). Meanwhile, renter-occupied housing only comprised 7.8% of the community's housing in 2017. The amount of owner-occupied housing units in the community may have risen as a proportion from 83.9% since 2010.

Housing formats and tenure forms are closely related to the relative cost of housing. Of the large number of Filer Township households with a mortgage, the median monthly ownership costs, which includes the mortgage payment, insurance, and taxes, was \$1,084 in 2017. This is comparable with Manistee County (\$1,038) but higher than the City of Manistee (\$934) and lower than the State of Michigan (\$1,251). This suggests that homeownership is relatively affordable in Filer Township compared locally and across the state. Median monthly rent in Filer Township was \$739 as of 2017, which was likewise higher than \$567 in the City of Manistee, but lower than the State of Michigan as a whole, where monthly median rents were \$824. Median rents in the Township may also have risen since 2010, at which time they were recorded at \$680.

Recent numbers show that housing costs are burdensome relative to incomes among the Township's renters. The U.S. Census Bureau considers households to be "cost-burdened" when they expend over 30% of their monthly earnings on housing expenses. In line with this definition, only about 12.9% of households that owned their home and had a monthly mortgage were cost-burdened as of 2017, which is down considerably from 24.8% in 2010. Declining cost-burdened households also match declining ownership cost figures in these years. Conversely, cost burden among renter households that rent their housing is relatively high (41.3%) as of 2017, although because renters are a small share of the population, margins of error are high in this measurement. Further, this proportion among households in the Township that rent may have risen from 37.2% in 2010.

Vacancy

The proportion of vacant housing units in a community is an important indicator of how well supply matches demand. According to the American Community Survey, almost one fifth (19.3%) of housing units in Filer Township were vacant in 2017, which is lower than the proportion in both the City and Township of Manistee, where about 25% of the communities' housing was vacant but lower than the State of Michigan as a whole, where the housing vacancy rate was 14.9%. Of Filer Township's estimated 260 housing units classified as vacant, 157 of these were "for seasonal recreational or occasional use". This signifies the large proportion of housing in the Township that serves the purposes of seasonal residents. The majority of the remaining Township's housing units (estimated 35 units) were either for rent or for sale.



Properties listed for sale near Meadow Wood Drive.



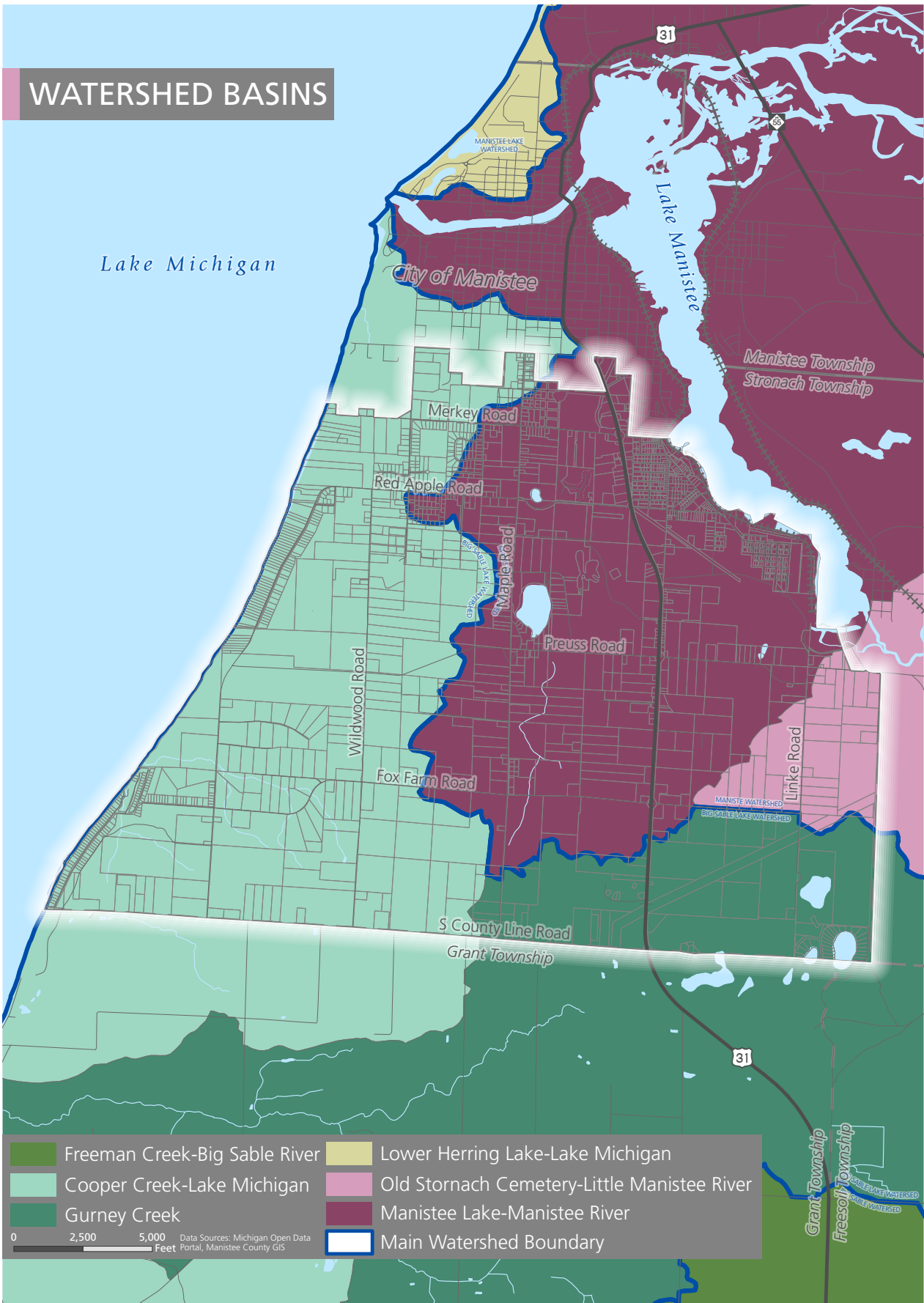
Natural Features

In Michigan communities, especially those surrounded by the Great Lakes, the management of natural resources is essential to the well-being and health of residents, attracting visitors with great parks and recreation, and to a prospering local economy. The Charter Township of Filer is located near unique natural resources, including Lake Michigan and its picturesque dunes, as well as Manistee Lake, and the Manistee River. The Township recognizes that all these assets ensure a high quality of life for year-round residents as well as seasonal residents and visitors. With this importance in mind, this chapter investigates the community's key natural resources and sets a broad course of action for their continued management.

WATERSHED

Filer Charter Township is unique in that the community is split between two watersheds in Michigan's lower peninsula. A watershed refers to a geographic area in which all precipitation eventually flows by way of gravity into a large body of water, in this case, a lake and a river. Filer Township's more densely developed northeastern half is located in the Big Manistee River Watershed. The Big Manistee River flows nearly 250 miles throughout Michigan's Lower Peninsula, and its drainage area encompasses 1,800 square miles of land within seven counties, which makes it one of Michigan's largest watersheds. In the instance of Filer Township, the community is located at the bottommost part of the River's watershed, and so instead of draining into the river, stormwater falls first into Manistee Lake and flows to Lake Michigan shortly thereafter. Meanwhile, the Township's southwestern portion drains directly into Lake Michigan. Taken together, this means that

MAP 2. WATERSHED BASINS



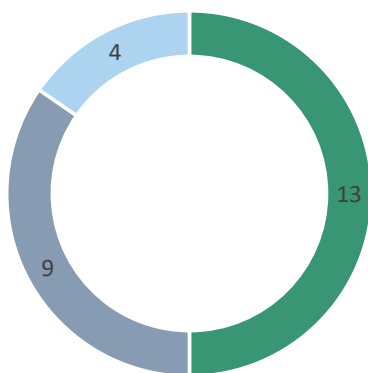
the Township's decisions affecting water quality directly impact Lake Michigan, regardless of where in the community they occur.

Land use decisions in communities from throughout a watershed have a major effect on the quality of water in nearby waterbodies. The Michigan Department of Energy, Great Lakes and Environment (EGLE) monitors the water quality of lakes and rivers in Michigan by sampling their species of insects and other small organisms throughout the year. Observed conditions on species health and habitat quality are then compared to those in hypothetical "undisturbed" places. The health metrics for natural communities are based on the variety of species identified, as well as the number and percentage of important species including mayflies, stoneflies, snails, and leeches. Similarly, the State-defined measures for species' habitat are based on the stability of stream banks, degree of protection provided by vegetation surrounding the river, and levels of sediment in the water.

Fortunately, high levels of species diversity and habitat integrity were reported throughout the Big Manistee River in sampling conducted in 2014. The sampling found, for instance, "excellent" aquatic species health, as defined by EGLE at 13 of the 26 sites sampled throughout the river in the year. Likewise, these species' habitat conditions at 13 of the 26 sites sampled met the department's "excellent" standards. These findings indicate continued high quality of water in the Manistee River, due in large part to the large proportion of federal forest land throughout the watershed, as well as the basin's low levels of land development.

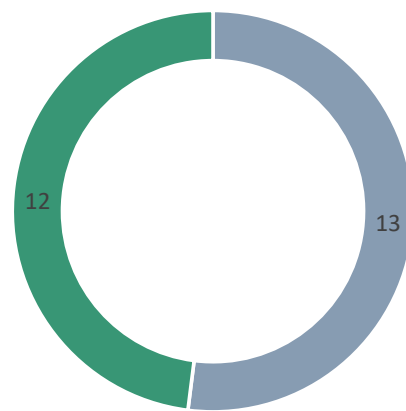
Although half of Filer Township is technically in the Manistee River watershed, the community does not have frontage on the Big Manistee River but rather is situated on the Lake Manistee shoreline, which is the River's inflow point. It is on the lake that the Township most directly impacts natural systems. The Big Manistee River, from which Lake Manistee gets its water, does supply fresh and clean water throughout the year. Considering the key importance of Manistee Lake to recreation and quality of life throughout Filer Township, and that large sections of the community's frontage on the lake is industrial

Manistee River Aquatic Bug
Community Ratings



■ Excellent ■ High Acceptable ■ Low Acceptable

Manistee River Habitat Ratings



■ Excellent ■ Good

and impervious, the Township should consider measures to further its contribution to water quality in Lake Manistee.

WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT

A variety of strategies termed low impact development (LID) are employed by communities to reduce the negative impacts of stormwater runoff, particularly in places with impervious surfaces and existing buildings. Conventional land development, including roads, buildings, and parking facilities, change hydrological patterns from their natural functioning. These built facilities slow the normal infiltration of stormwater into the soil and remove the natural vegetation that normally filters stormwater before it reaches waterbodies. This has the effect of increasing the amount of stormwater that runs off the landscape, the rate at which runoff occurs, as well as the level of pollution it contains. All of this disrupts the natural functioning of waterbodies.

Low impact development includes a variety of techniques to manage precipitation where it falls, rather than where it has its negative impacts. These techniques work by filtering nutrients in stormwater, slowing the rate of runoff, and increasing percolation into groundwater, thereby recreating a site's natural hydrologic characteristics. Low impact development encompasses a wide variety of human-made features including basins that catch and temporarily store stormwater, constructed wetlands designed to filter nutrients, and rain barrels that capture precipitation. Considering the benefits that maintaining high water quality in Lake Manistee has to Filer Township, the community could work to promote LID in a variety of ways. Installing these types of features on publicly held land, such as parks or public right-of-ways, is one possible technique. Often enough, features such as rain gardens, and vegetated basins can be deployed in public land in parks to enhance their scenic qualities as well.

FLOODPLAIN

FEMA develops Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) for each county in the United States. According to FEMA, the FIRM is "the primary tool for state and local governments to mitigate the effects of flooding in their communities." The National Flood Insurance Program was created

TABLE 2. LOW IMPACT TECHNIQUES

LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT TECHNIQUE	BENEFITS
Reduce impervious surfaces	Minimizes runoff volumes and peak rates.
Vegetated roofs and rainwater capture devices	Moderate stormwater runoff rates and provide heating and cooling benefits.
Bioretention areas and rain gardens	Control water volumes, filter pollution, and facilitate groundwater recharge.
Infiltration basins and trenches	Moderate runoff rates and volumes and promote stormwater infiltration into groundwater.
Restore native vegetation in riparian areas and build wetlands	Improves water quality, filters nutrients, and reduces runoff volumes.

in 1968 to reduce future damage and provide an insurance program that would help protect property owners from losses. The FIRM shows areas subject to flooding, based on historic, hydrological, hydraulic and meteorological data as well as flood controls. The maps identify a base flood elevation (BFE), sometimes referred to as the 100-year flood zone. These are areas that have a 1% chance of flooding in any given year. The maps also identify the areas with a 0.2% chance of flooding in any given year, also known as the 500-year flood zone. FEMA points out these ratios are only probabilities, not forecasts.

The current adopted FIRM in Filer Township was first adopted in 1976 and later amended in 1991. FEMA will be adopting new floodplain maps in late 2020. These maps will incorporate consideration of coastal flooding risk, including coastal erosion and inundation.

WETLANDS

Wetlands are characterized by natural areas that are inundated with water for at least part of the year and are a critically important natural resource in Michigan. Although there are different types of wetlands in the state, they are often thought of as nature's "sponge" for their role in absorbing water and pollution. For instance, wetlands help pollutants that collect in stormwater from the surrounding landscape, moderate the rate at which precipitation flows off the landscape, and help this precipitation infiltrate back into the water table instead of flooding waterbodies. Wetlands also provide valuable habitat for a variety of wildlife species including birds and insects. Further yet, they often provide recreational opportunities for people when they are incorporated within parks. Wetlands are therefore a central consideration when integrating land use decisions with the natural environment.

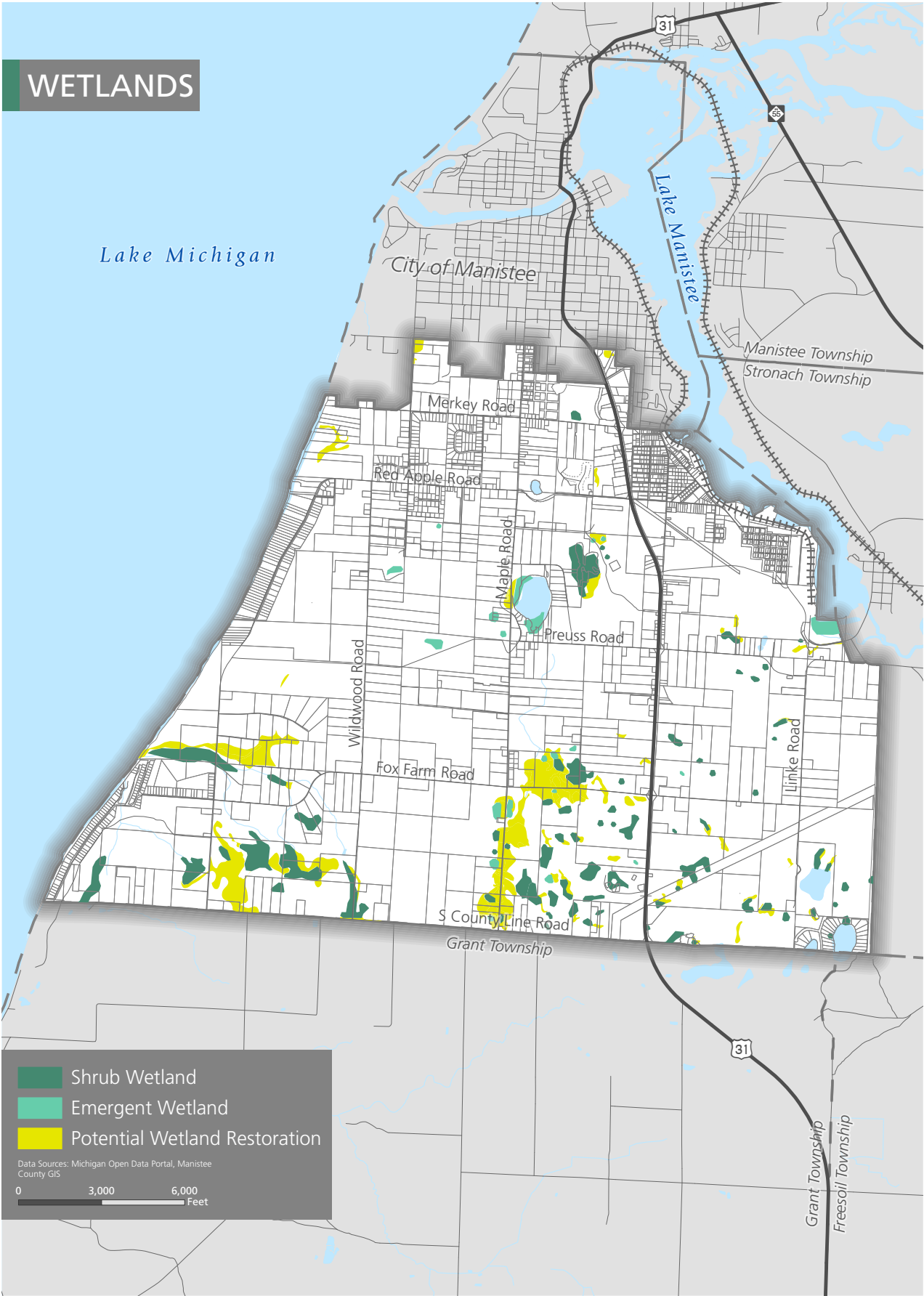
Although wetlands are not as extensive in Filer Township as in other parts of Michigan, the Wetlands map shows that a variety of these features are dispersed throughout the community. According to the State of Michigan's geographic information database, wetlands encompass over 695 acres within the Township, most of which are located in its less-developed central and southern portions. Within this total area, the Township has 368 acres of shrub wetlands, which are dry for at least part of the year, and about 53 acres of emergent wetlands, which are largely inundated with water throughout most of the year. Both types are dispersed throughout the central portion of the Township, however, emergent wetlands are located adjacent to Lake Manistee and Canfield Lake.

Of the Township's wetlands, almost half (48.6%) are classified as "potential restoration areas", which are wetlands whose natural

TABLE 3. FILER TOWNSHIP WETLANDS

WETLAND TYPE	SQUARE MILES	ACRES
Freshwater Emergent Wetland	0.08	53.7
Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland	0.47	303.2
Potential Wetland Restoration	0.52	338.9
Total Wetlands	1.08	695.9

MAP 3. WETLANDS



integrity has been degraded to some extent by development. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, these wetlands have the potential to be reverted from their degraded state to function nearly as they would have before development, at least in terms of stormwater retention and wildlife habitat. Many landowners may not be aware that their property has these degraded features, and so dispersing the information to the public and informing property owners about the restoration potential will be key. The Township could also explore other starting points, such as incentivizing restoration through tax rebates, or by providing the resources and information property owners need to get started.

Organizations such as the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy are actively involved with securing conservation easements on private land wherein property owners restrict development in exchange for an advantage of some type – typically a tax rebate or direct compensation. Filer Township could work with the land conservancy to promote these types of arrangements for wetland restoration and conservation.

LAKE MICHIGAN

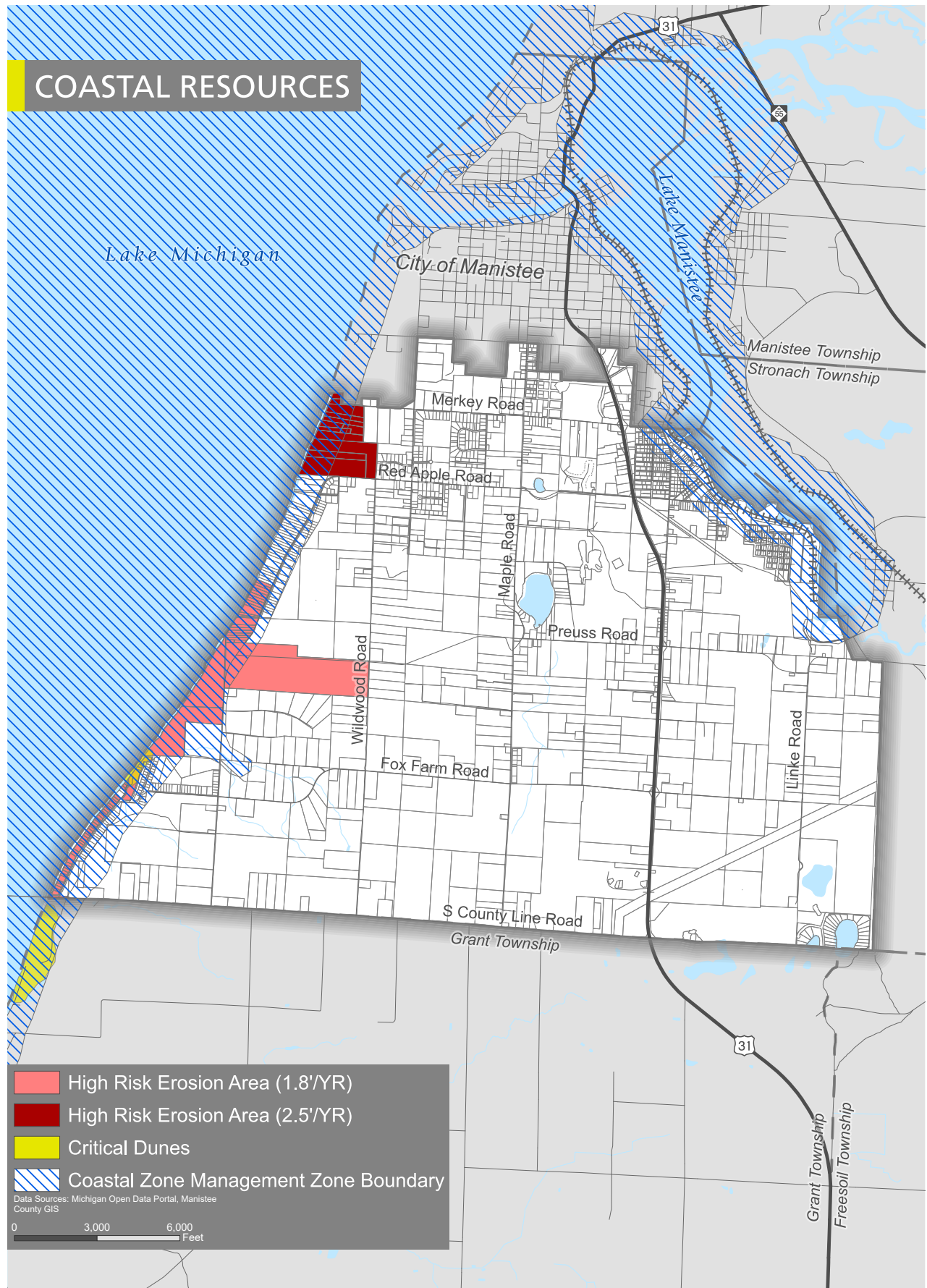
Filer Township is fortunate to have over four miles of direct frontage on Lake Michigan. Although much of this frontage is occupied with private residences, other segments are maintained by the Township and Manistee County as parks and nature preserves. The Lake Michigan shoreline provides a unique natural resource to residents and visitors and its management is a key issue.

High Risk Erosion Areas

As part of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act of 1994, the State of Michigan's Office of the Great Lakes undertakes periodic monitoring of all great lakes shoreline to determine properties where structures are at risk from erosion damage. The office undertakes the monitoring in the form of surveys and the interpretation of historical satellite imagery. From this monitoring, the department determines "High Risk Erosion Areas", which are designated when the active erosion facing the shoreline occurs at an average rate of one foot or more per year over 15 or more years. This information on erosion rates is then used to recommend appropriate building regulations, which local governments then incorporate into their Zoning Ordinances; typically, as a requirement that buildings be constructed further or "set back" from the bluff line. Usually, setbacks are determined using recorded erosion rates; the required setback for non-permanent structures is the bluff line after 30 years of erosion, while the required setback for permanent buildings is the bluff line after 60 years. Any construction designated as "High Risk" must also apply for a permit from the Office of the Great Lakes.

A total of 87 properties along the Lake Michigan bluff line in Filer Township are designated as "High Risk of Erosion" areas in 2017. These properties, most of which are private residences, encompass most of the Township's frontage on Lake Michigan. According to a 1993 study of the Township's high-risk areas, 74 residential properties west of Red Apple and Fox Farm roads have a recorded erosion rate

MAP 4. COASTAL RESOURCES



of 1.8 feet per year, while 13 properties in the far northwest corner of the Township along Red Apple Road have a more rapid annual erosion rate of 2.5 feet. To address the risk of damage to structures from erosion, Filer Township has a high-risk zoning designation that applies to all properties along the Lake Michigan bluff line, which stipulates that buildings be setback at least 100 feet from and parallel to the bluff line. This required setback also changes over time; if the bluff line recedes, then the setback requirement for new structures also moves landward at the same rate.

Despite this regulation, structures constructed following the Township's 100-foot setback requirement may still be in jeopardy from erosion. Assuming erosion rates hold constant, the Lake Michigan bluff line could recede by 100 feet by the year 2048 from its 1993 position in shoreline locations with an annual erosion rate of 1.8 feet. Meanwhile, the Lake Michigan bluff line could recede by 100 feet from its 1993 position much sooner - by the year 2033 - on properties where the annual erosion rate was recorded at 2.5 feet. That said, erosion rates fluctuate over time and are influenced by a variety of factors, including water levels. Although erosion rates are, therefore, too uncertain to forecast with certainty, past rates suggest that the Township's setback requirement may not protect residential structures indefinitely. Filer Township could, therefore, seek further policies and programs to reduce risk to structures from erosion.

Erosion Mitigation

Most of the properties along the Lake Michigan bluff line and many of those designated as "high risk" are already built with permanent structures in 2019. Considering that about one third (32.1%) of the Township's housing units were built after 1990, many of the lakeshore residential structures likely follow the coastal setback requirement. The Township could explore programs to promote bluff line



Signs at Magoon Creek park warn visitors of bluff erosion.

preservation among property owners. One major component could include educating homeowners on the rapid erosion rates and the associated risk to their structures. Filer Township could also incentivize property owners along the Lake Michigan shore to plant and maintain vegetation along the bluff line. This could be achieved through tax rebates, direct sponsorship of vegetation planting and maintenance, and ongoing education to property owners on how best to do it. The Township should also pay close attention to the State's monitoring efforts and adjust regulations and programs as erosion rates fluctuate.

Critical Dune Areas

The spectacular dunes along the Lake Michigan shoreline are a natural resource recognized throughout the United States and draw visitors throughout the globe. Lake Michigan dunes also provide natural habitat to a wide array of species. Also located in the southern portion of Filer Township is a small stretch of Lake Michigan frontage designated "Critical Dune Areas" by the Office of the Great Lakes. These stretches of dunes represent some of the tallest and most visually spectacular throughout Michigan, and the designation, which is determined by the state, seeks to protect these areas in recognition of their intrinsic public value. The Critical Dunes Program specifies that any physical alteration to these sand dunes, including construction, septic system installation, or paving or repaving must be approved by the Office of the Great Lakes through a permitting process, which gives the state additional discretion in determining the development that can occur. Filer Township's stretch of critical dunes are located in the Township's Magoon Creek Nature Area, thereby providing public access to and protection for the resources.

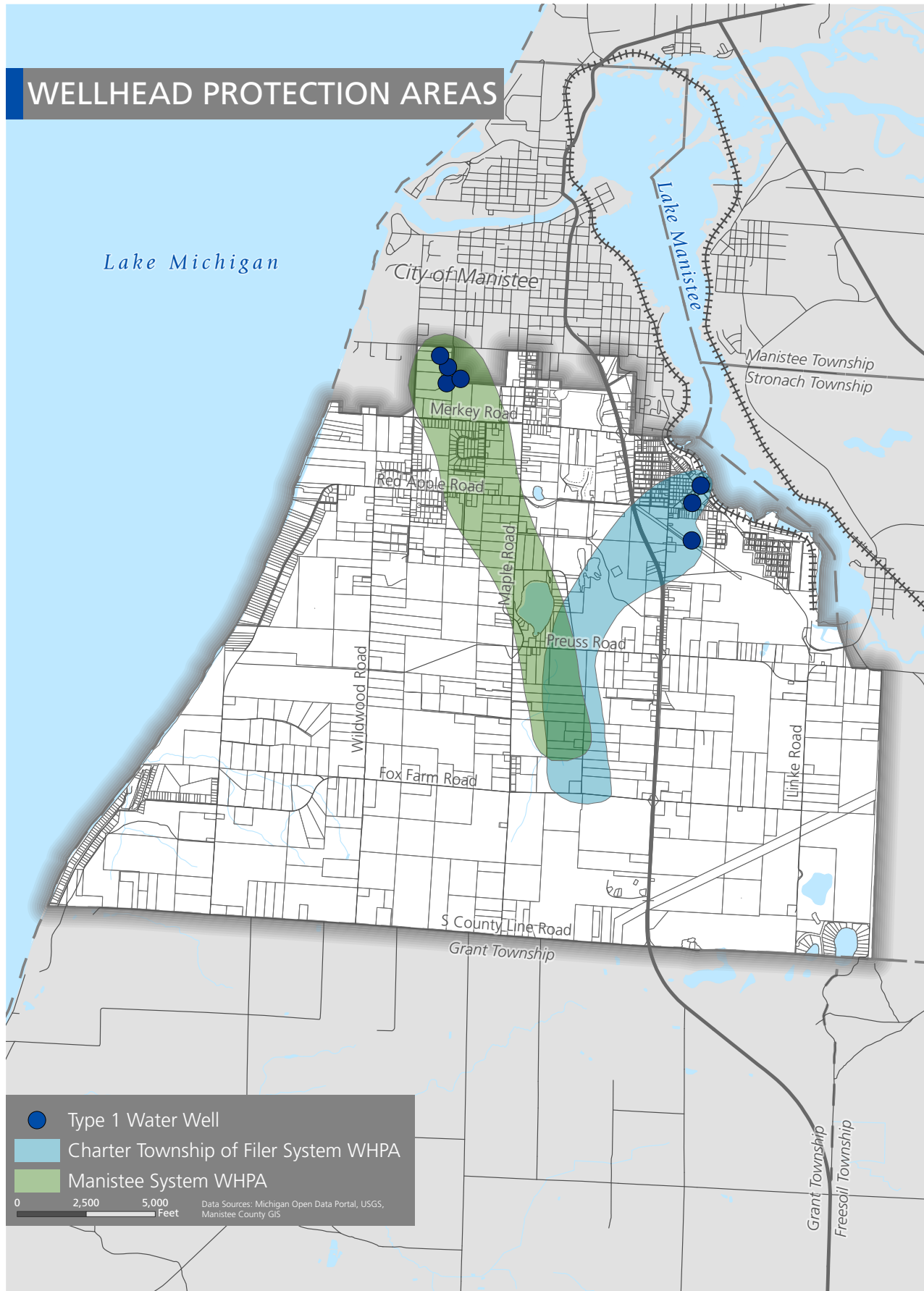
Coastal Zone Management

A large portion of Filer Township's frontage along Lake Michigan and on Lake Manistee is designated as Coastal Zone Management Areas by Office of the Great Lakes. This designation presents a tremendous opportunity to pursue initiatives related to natural systems preservation. The coastal zone management program promotes the stewardship of Lake Michigan's coastline by providing grants and technical assistance to Great Lakes coastline communities undertaking projects that further environmental protection. A wide array of projects can qualify for the assistance including those that protect and restore the lake's fish and wildlife habitat, promote public access to the lakeshore, revitalize waterfronts, or that reduce risk to structures from erosion. The state office has an application process for project funding, and the program's grants are provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Given the opportunity for increased tourism and recreation along the community's coastlines, Filer Township should consider ongoing projects that qualify for these grants. The Township could, for instance, leverage the program to support continued parks improvements, water trail designation, or to revitalize the community's industrial frontage on Lake Manistee.

GROUNDWATER PROTECTION

Groundwater supplies the source for public drinking water systems and private wells in most Michigan communities, and Filer Township is

MAP 5. WELLHEAD PROTECTION AREAS



no exception. To promote high-quality groundwater in communities, EGLE the Wellhead Protection Program, which assists municipalities that undertake projects with this goal. Michigan communities that participate in the State's program are first mandated to comply with a set of guidelines to reduce the risk of groundwater contamination. These include determining the geographic areas that feed public drinking water wells, identifying potential sources of contamination to them, and implementing measures including regulation and remediation that reduce the risk of negative impacts to aquifers. In return for taking these measures, the state provides a 50% matching grant to cover the costs of identifying protection areas and implementing proactive measures to prevent contamination. Filer Township participates in this program and has delineated a protection zone surrounding its three public groundwater wells, wherein properties are subject to additional restrictions. Limited uses within the zone include industry and manufacturing, automotive services, chemical production, and any use with more than one dwelling unit and a private septic system, among several others. The City of Manistee also has a wellhead protection zone surrounding its groundwater wells located in the northern portion of the Township.

In instances where commercial or industrial establishments rely on petroleum to operate their business, they often store the material in an underground storage tank (UST). This refers to any tank or underground piping connected to the tank that has at least 10% of its combined volume underground. Before the 1980s, USTs were made of steel, which in some instances corroded over time, causing the contents to leak into the soil. The consequences of this are most pressing where people grow food or drink water adjacent to these locations.

Records on USTs from the State of Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy show that one underground storage tank leak in Filer Township and remains "open," while another is "closed," as of 2019. The map of the Township's UST sites shows that the open leak is a commercial property on the east side of U.S. 31, which is a concerning location because of its proximity to the Township's public water wells. Filer Township should, therefore, seek to work with the state and the property owner to remediate the pollution. Meanwhile, the remediated leak classified as "closed" occurred on the Packaging Corporation of America property, which is situated on the Manistee Lake waterfront. State records also show that other

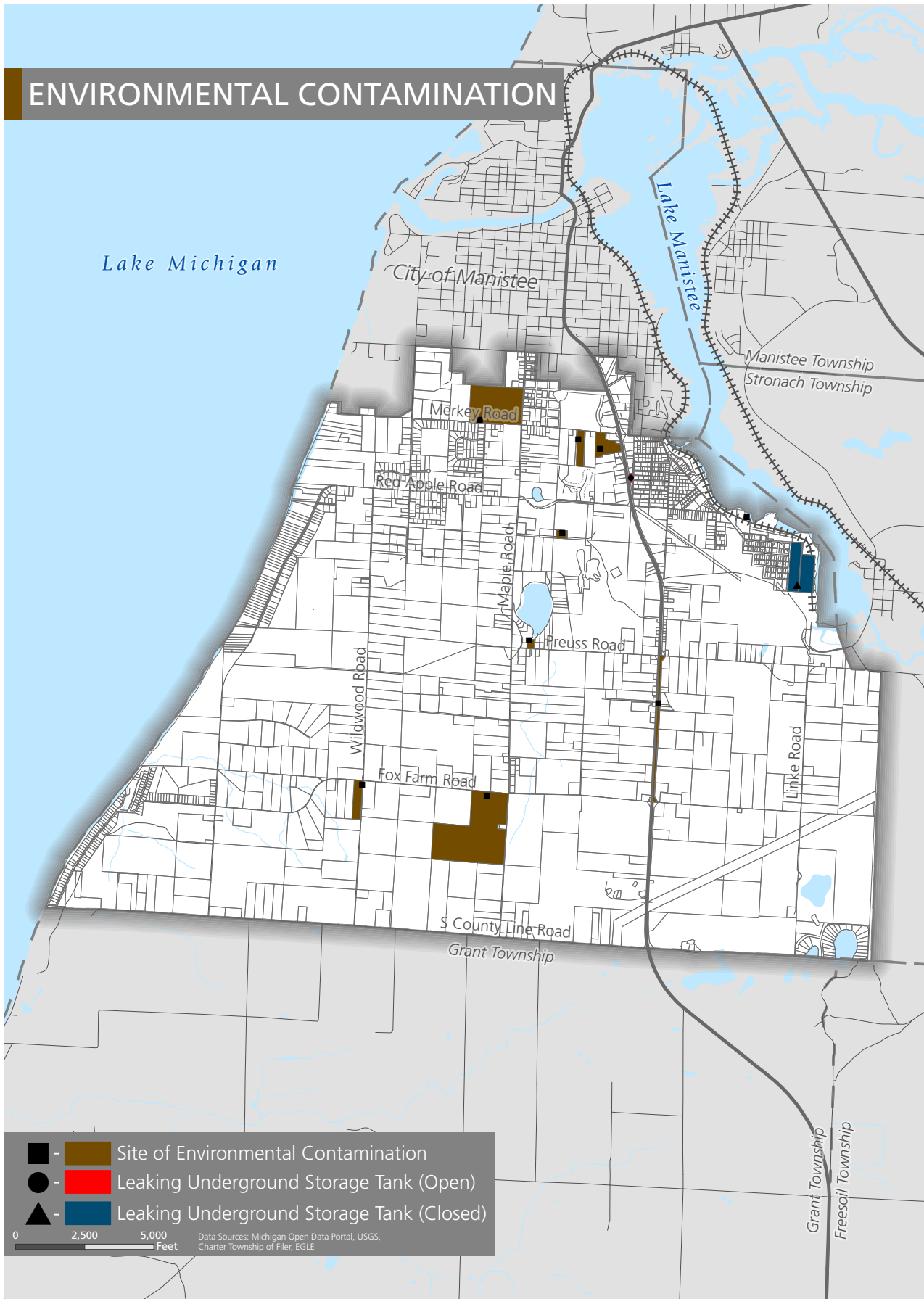
LEAKING UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANKS

Open leaking underground storage: a release has occurred, but no corrective action has been completed to meet the land use criteria.

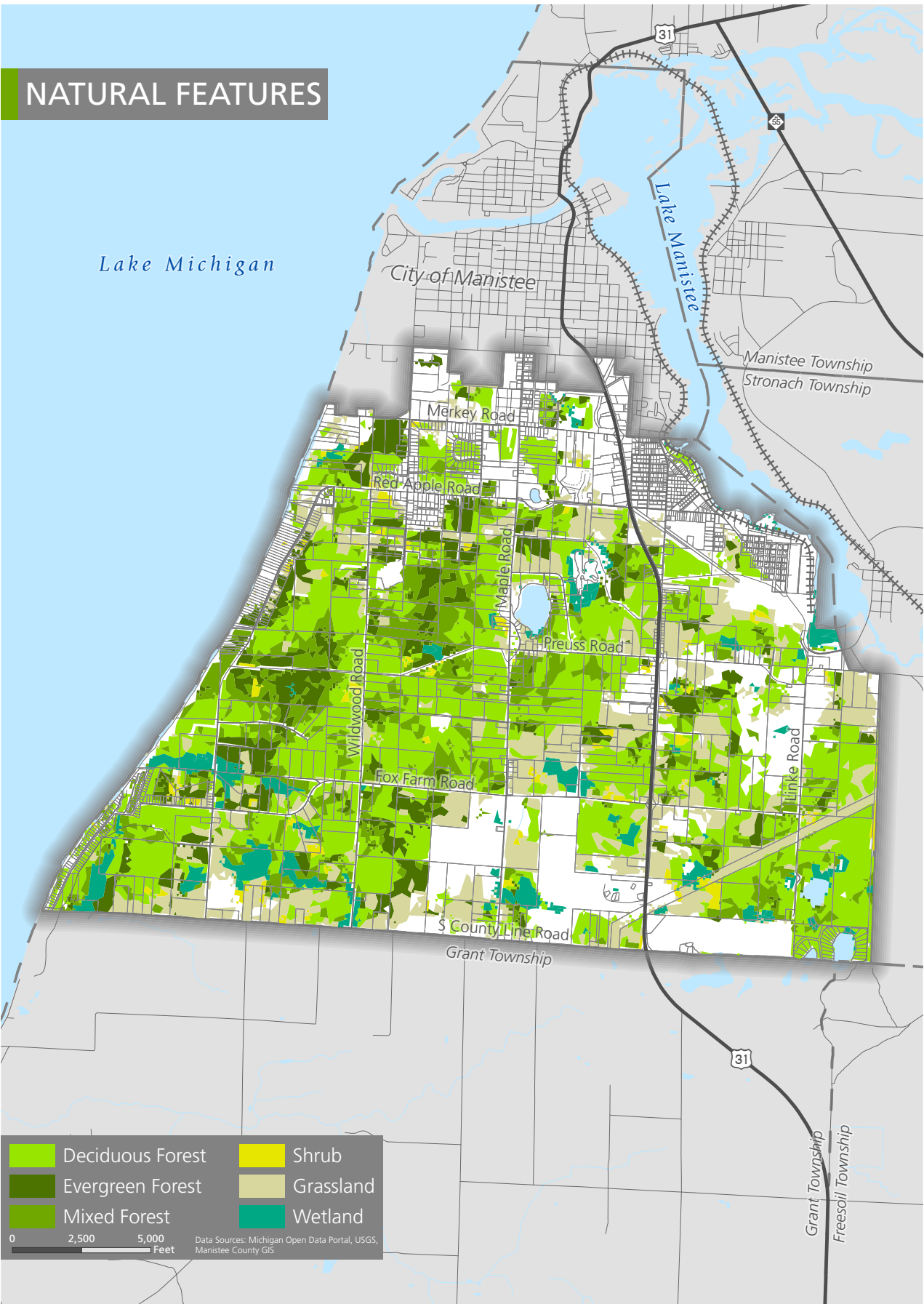
Closed leaking underground storage: a release has occurred, and corrective action has been completed to meet the land use criteria.

Environmental contamination: the release of a hazardous substance, or the potential release of a discarded substance, in a quantity which is or may become injurious to the environment, public health, safety, or welfare.

MAP 6. ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINATION



MAP 7. NATURAL FEATURES





A sign on Filer City Road signifying location within the wellhead protection area.

potentially hazardous leaks not classified as leaking storage tanks have occurred on a variety of other sites throughout the Township.

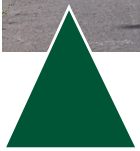
FORESTS

Michigan's deciduous and coniferous forests provide a variety of benefits to communities including increased property and residential home values. Tree canopy also helps households save money on heating and cooling expenses by providing shade in the summer months, when air conditioning might otherwise be required, and by shedding their vegetation when they are dormant in the winter, allowing passive heating. Greater tree canopy also moderates the heat characteristic of densely developed urban areas and also leads to improved air quality through the sequestration of particulate matter, which in turn promotes public health among residents. Further, tree coverage helps maintain the functioning of natural ecosystems by providing habitat for local species. Considering these benefits, many communities throughout the United States strive for 30-40% tree canopy coverage, which is considered by national conservancy American Forests to be a key point at which the benefits to local communities from tree canopy greatly increases.

The map of Filer Township's natural features shows that tree canopy is abundant throughout the community, comprising nearly half (49.9%) of the total land area. These expanses of forest are particularly dense and contiguous in the Township's central and western portions near Lake Michigan. The Township's abundant forests are a mix of deciduous and coniferous stands, although deciduous trees comprise a greater percentage overall. Although tree canopy is abundant overall, it is also important to note that the densely populated Filer City and Oak Hill neighborhoods have a relatively sparse tree canopy compared with the rest of the community. Guidelines on tree planting in Michigan, established by the regional planning body in southeast Michigan, recommend that communities focus tree planting efforts in areas where they have the greatest impact; places with more impervious surfaces, those located near waterbodies, neighborhoods with industrial properties, and those that have less than 20% existing tree canopy coverage. Most of these attributes apply to the communities of Oak Hill and Filer City. The public right of ways near roadways or public parks in these neighborhoods would be excellent locations to increase tree canopy coverage. Filer Township could also explore the possibility of tree planting or expand their vegetative buffering requirements in the Zoning Ordinance for these areas.

TABLE 4. FILER TOWNSHIP FOREST AND GRASSLANDS

LAND COVER TYPE	SQUARE MILES	ACRES	PERCENT OF LAND COVERAGE
Shrub/Grassland	2.39	1,528	14.6%
Forest	8.15	5,216	49.9%
Total Land Area	16.35	10,463	100%



C Community Services & Facilities

Public services that are oftentimes difficult to directly see contribute to a high quality of life among residents and facilitate a healthy local economy. Specific services, including healthcare and support for senior citizens, are critical to success in Filer Township, considering the community's large proportion of retirement-aged residents and empty nester households. Other services including wastewater management and access to high-speed Internet are key in promoting a growing local economy. Considering this, the Township has partnered with state and county governments to strive for the provision of these services in line with this objective. This chapter depicts the existing levels of service provision in Filer Township and investigates strategies the Township could pursue to strategically improve them.

TOWNSHIP SERVICES

Water and Sewer

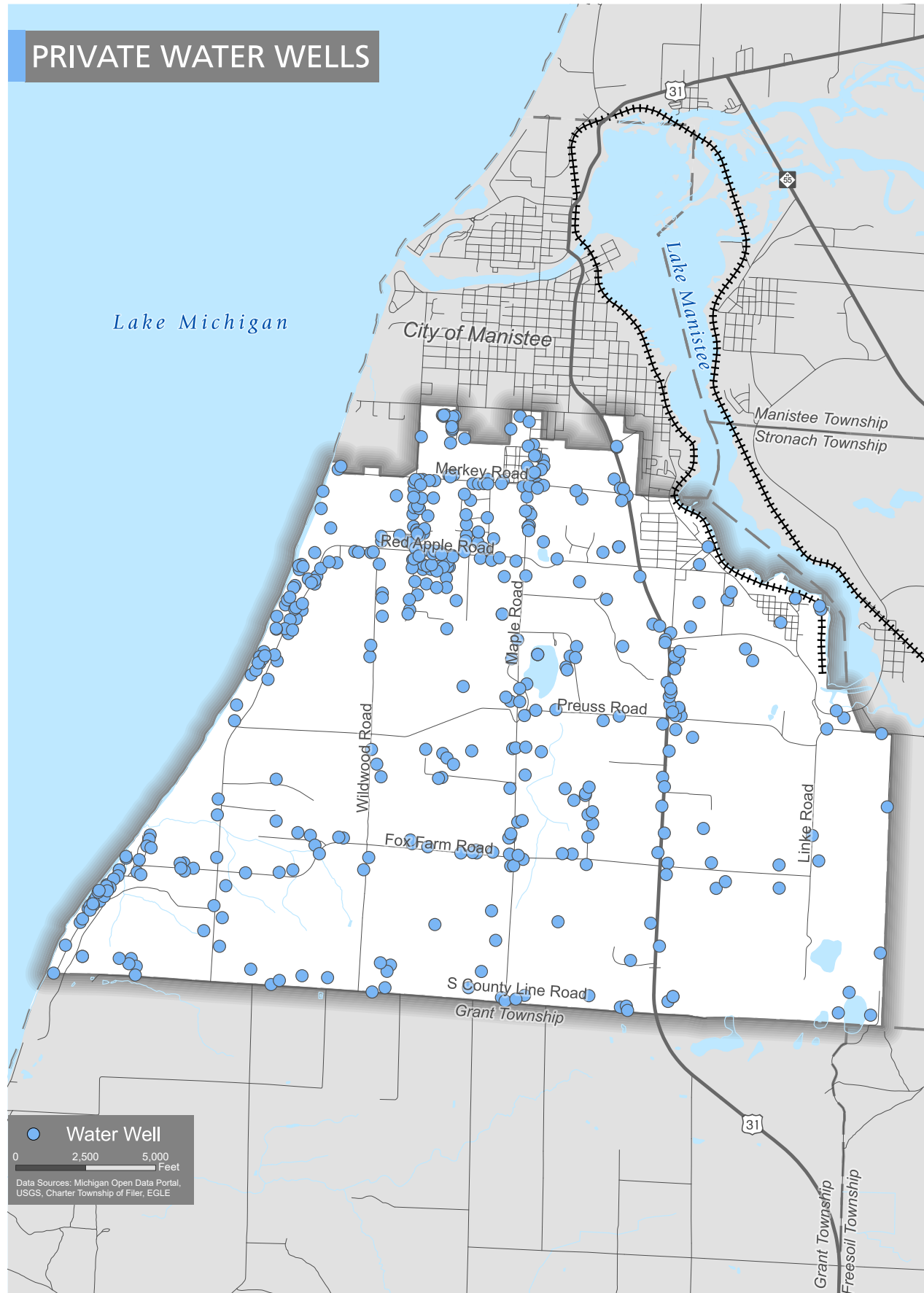
Oftentimes, it is the infrastructure and services such as water and sewer provision that allows for economic growth and that promotes a high quality of life for households. Filer Township provides drinking water to properties in the Township from groundwater, which is pumped from three water wells located throughout the Township. The Township's water system serves 432 properties, which are primarily residential and in the Oak Hill and Filer City neighborhoods, although the system also serves between 60 and 80 of the commercial properties located along U.S. 31 and 28th Street. The water system also serves large industrial customers such as Packaging Corporation of America in the Township as well as another industrial user located in Stronach

Township. All three of the community's water wells are near one another in the Oak Hill community of the Township and are positioned along Nelson Street, Filer City Road, and 28th Street, respectively. The Township participates in the State of Michigan's wellhead protection program and each of these groundwater wells is protected by additional land use regulations, which disallow commercial businesses such as automotive services and manufacturing, which use materials potentially hazardous to groundwater. EGLE also maintains a record of the number of private water wells in each community through its "Wellologic" database. The department's records stretch back to the 1960s. The State's database indicates that approximately 450 water wells exist in Filer Township in 2019. Most of these are spread across private residential property in the suburban and rural parts of the township.

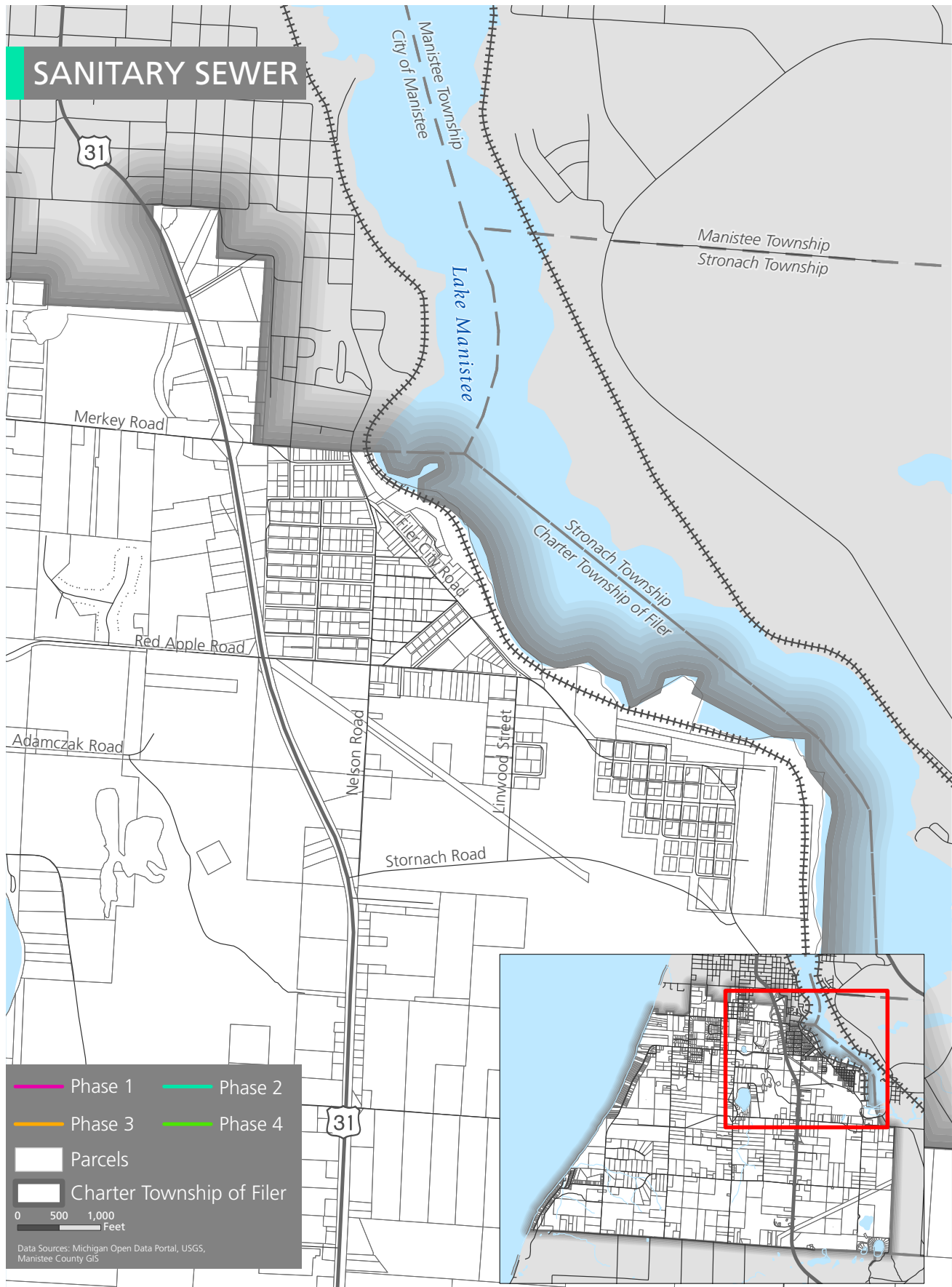
From these wells, groundwater is then pumped directly to properties in the Township, or to one of the community's two storage tanks and saved for future use. The older of these two tanks is in Oak Hill by the Township Hall and has a capacity of 200,000 gallons, while the newer facility is located along Red Apple Road. This new storage tank has a capacity of 300,000 gallons, which enabled the system to provide water to more properties throughout the Township and at a greater pressure. From the storage tanks, water is then fed via gravity to properties in the community through a series of water mains. As of 2018, the Township plans improvements to the community water system including water main and hydrant replacement, as well as maintenance to the Filer City Water Tower, which will better enable the Township to meet the community's day-to-day needs. As part of a contest in 2019, the Michigan Rural Water Association selected Filer Township as a municipality with one of the best tasting public water supplies in Michigan.

In many communities, a lack of wastewater infrastructure limits the level of development and permissible density that is possible within a community. To address these issues Filer Township constructed and completed its wastewater system in 2018, which serves the commercial corridor of the community stretching along U.S. 31 between Stronach Road to the south and 21st Street to the north. The system also has a branch that serves businesses east of U.S. 31 along 28th street, and it serves a total of 67 parcels of land in the downtown development authority's sewer district. Wastewater from the community's commercial district is then pumped to the City of Manistee's Wastewater Plant for treatment, as the agreement between the two communities specifies. The wastewater project was financed in part with a \$3.8 million loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Rural Development but also used funding from the Township's Downtown Development Authority's district, which issued bonds and charged a special assessment on properties receiving the wastewater service to finance the sewer system. The Township anticipates that the system will be instrumental in serving the community's objectives of expanding the economy, supporting concentrated rather than dispersed growth patterns, and increasing the variety of uses along the U.S. 31 corridor. The community also has plans to expand the sewer district to include the residential neighborhoods of Filer City and Oak Hill in the years following 2019. Also, several properties located along U.S. 31 to the north of 21st Street in the northern portion of the Township were connected to the City of Manistee's wastewater system

MAP 8. PRIVATE WATER WELLS



MAP 9. SANITARY SEWER



before the Township constructed its system, and therefore continue to remain on City sewer. The residential and rural areas of the Township are served by on-site septic systems.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

The management of water from precipitation is a critical service because it protects buildings, roadways, and the natural integrity of lakes and streams. Filer Township is served by the Green Lake Drain, an area of wetlands that stretches between Fox Farm Road and Preuss Road along U.S. 31 for 1.25 miles. Although the Township does not maintain infrastructure for stormwater purposes, it does have several ditches and drains located along streets in Oak Hill and Filer City, which hold precipitation and facilitate its infiltration back into the water table. Aside from these stormwater features, the Manistee County Drain Commissioner requires that all commercial and industrial development in the County conform to guidelines to manage stormwater where it falls, rather than waiting for it to runoff into bodies of water. The Drain Commissioner's guidelines encourage new development to use a variety of LID techniques to do this. These techniques include the construction of rain gardens, retention and detention basins, or constructed wetlands, all of which moderate the rate at which stormwater runs off properties and filters the contaminants in it. Filer Township itself also has special regulations that apply to properties on Manistee Lake wherein new commercial and industrial development is required to incorporate belts of vegetation to moderate impacts from stormwater runoff. Although the Township could work to implement a more comprehensive approach to managing stormwater runoff, these requirements are a strong start.

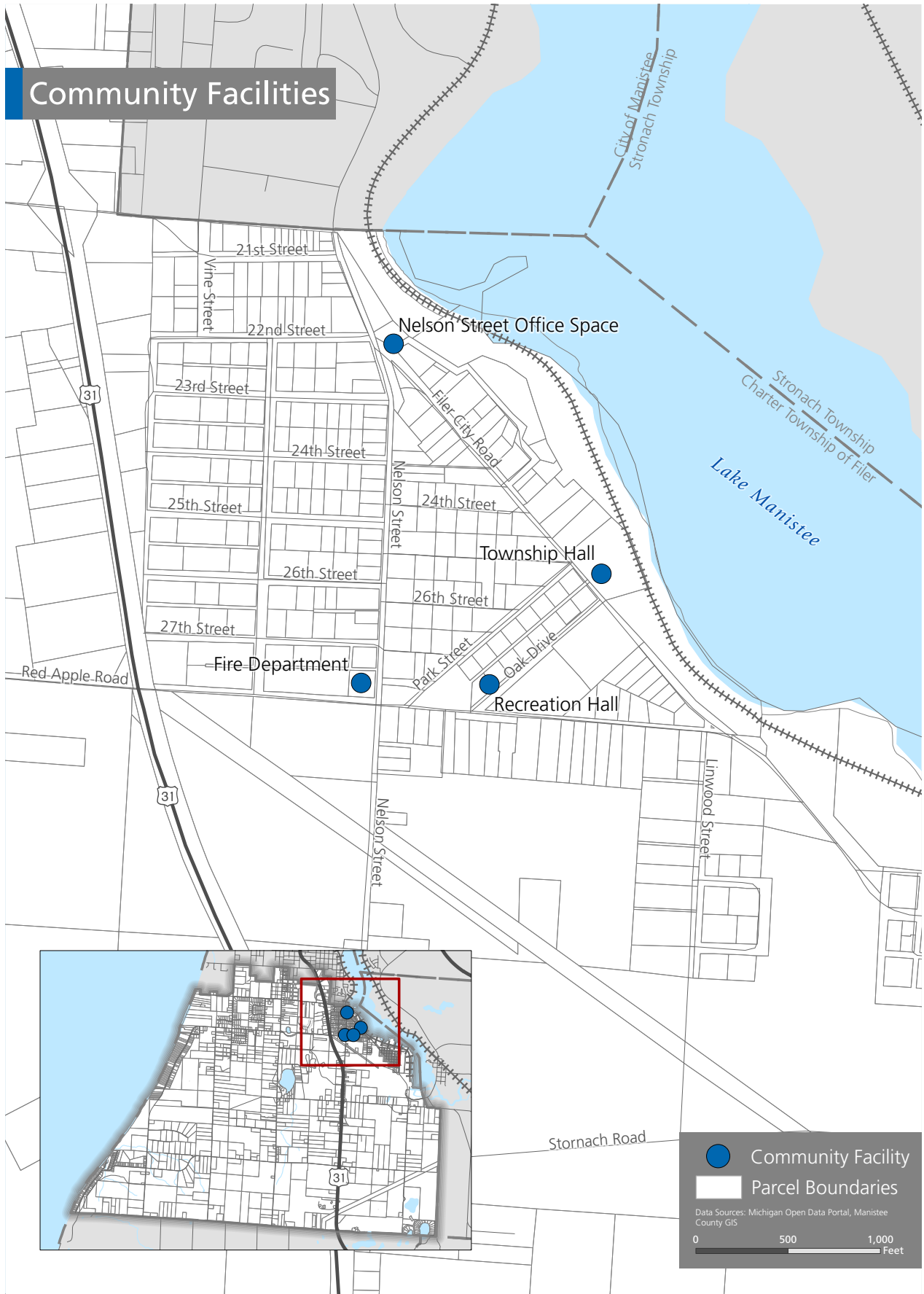
COMMUNITY CENTER AND GOVERNMENT FACILITIES

Recreation and event space is a key aspect of livability and to meet this community need, Filer Township owns and maintains a recreation center, which is located at the corner of Oak and 28th Streets in the Oak Hill community. This location presents an advantage because it is within walking distance of many surrounding residences, which potentially makes the facility more accessible, particularly for older



The Filer Township Recreation Center is centrally located in Filer City and is host to numerous community and private events.

MAP 10. COMMUNITY FACILITIES



and younger residents. The community center is used for private events such as graduations, birthdays, and reunions and hosts group fitness classes that are available for a monthly cost. This facility thus adds value to the community through these types of events. Located nearby is Filer Township Hall, which is likewise situated in Oak Hill. The Township hall provides a space for civic events and hosts meetings for local boards and commissions.

Education

A robust education system provides a key link to a flourishing economy for communities in the 21st century and strong public education continues to be readily available in Filer Township. The entire community is located within Manistee Area Schools, which encompasses a total area of 77 square miles within Manistee County. The district's two elementary schools serve grades kindergarten through 5th, while the combined middle and high school facilities serve grades 6 through 12. All the district's facilities are in the southern portion of the City of Manistee, with the middle and high school campuses situated immediately north of the City's border with Filer Township. The high school offers a variety of advanced placement courses including chemistry and calculus, which are key college-preparatory elements, and a greater percentage of students participate in advanced coursework compared with the statewide average. Student enrollment in two of the district's three facilities increased between 2014 and 2019, although this is because the City's high and middle schools were combined into one facility between these years. The school district has not experienced increased enrollment, although appropriate transportation planning between the Township's families and the school district facilities should still be a consideration.

TABLE 5. SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

SCHOOL	2019 STUDENT ENROLLMENT	CHANGE IN ENROLLMENT 2014-2019	GRADES SERVED
Manistee Middle and High School	744	+52%	6 - 12
John F. Kennedy Elementary School	324	-9%	3 - 5
Thomas Jefferson Elementary School	353	+12%	K - 2
James Madison Early Childhood Development Center	125	+0%	Pre - K-12
Casman Academy	63	-13%	7 - 12
Manistee Catholic Central Schools	193	Not Available	Pre-K - 12
Trinity Lutheran Schools	Not Available	Not Available	Pre-K - 8
Total	1,802		

Additionally, a variety of charter and private schools are located within the City of Manistee and provide other educational options for area families. These include Casman Academy, Manistee Catholic Central Schools, and Trinity Lutheran School. For continuing and adult education options, West Shore Community College is located to the south of Filer Township in Mason County and offers coursework in skilled trades as well as four-year degree preparation.

Solid Waste

Garbage removal services are provided to the community by the private contractor Republic Waste, which picks up solid waste weekly. Township residents can also drop off recycling to Republic Waste at their facility on Camp Road, just to the community's east in Stronach Township. In 2018, Filer Township residents passed a millage renewal to cover waste service expenses in the community.

Emergency Services

A variety of services provided by the Township and by neighboring and overlapping governments work to ensure the safety of the community. The Township is unique in that it has its own Fire Department, which is located on the corner of 28th and Nelson Streets in Oak Hill and is staffed by volunteers from the community. The fire department provides coverage to the Township. Law enforcement is provided to the community by the Manistee County Sheriff's Department, and the department's office is on Parkdale Avenue in the northern portion of the City of Manistee.

COUNTY, REGIONAL, AND PRIVATE SECTOR SERVICES

Healthcare and Senior Services

Access to general healthcare services and specialized forms of care are key elements in Michigan communities such as Filer Township with a large proportion of residents in retirement age ranges. Fortunately, a wide and recently expanding variety of these services are available to Township residents. Within the Township itself, a branch of Crystal Lake Health Center is located along U.S. 31 and provides general healthcare services to area residents as well as monitoring and care for more specialized conditions. Other general healthcare facilities including Manistee Family Health Care, which provides generalized services, and Munson Manistee Hospital, which has a 24-hour emergency room and specialized treatment centers, are in the City of Manistee. Munson Hospital also provides an emergency medical service to area residents.

Other facilities in Filer Township and its neighboring communities provide various forms of support for area seniors. The Manistee County Council on Aging is a local nonprofit funded by an ongoing millage at the county level. The organization seeks to keep County residents over the age of 60 active, socialized, and independent through the provision of services such as exercise classes, Medicare and Medicaid assistance, group activities and dining, and a dial-a-ride transportation service. In 2018, the organization announced the purchase of the building, which

is now the Wagoner Center. The Council on Aging plans to use the building and its expanded space as a new senior center and will host a variety of new activities, services, and events through it. Munson Healthcare also provides home health services including nursing, therapy, medical equipment provision, and medication management to seniors living independently in Manistee County. As a healthcare alternative, Green Acres Manistee is an assisted living facility located just to Filer Township's north that provides various forms of long-term care to area seniors.

Broadband Access

Access to technology and the ability to use it is a key determinant of economic success in the 21st Century, and largely drives a community's ability to connect with distant locations. In recognition of this importance, Manistee County partnered with organizations at the state level in 2017 to create a Community Technology Action Plan to assess broadband services in the County, understand the challenges facing digital literacy, and create recommendations for improvement. To do this, the County used a series of metrics to score its digital infrastructure, including basic availability of broadband to serve residences and businesses, access to high-speed connection, and the number of service providers. These metrics were scored on a numerical scale with a score of 1 indicating low access and a score of 10 indicating high levels of access in the community. The results indicate that Manistee County has room for improvement, as only 70.8% of households have Internet speeds of at least 25 megabits per second, which is needed for Internet-intensive activities and downloads.

The 2017 Community Technology Action Plan put forward several initiatives to be pursued by the County and communities to improve broadband access.

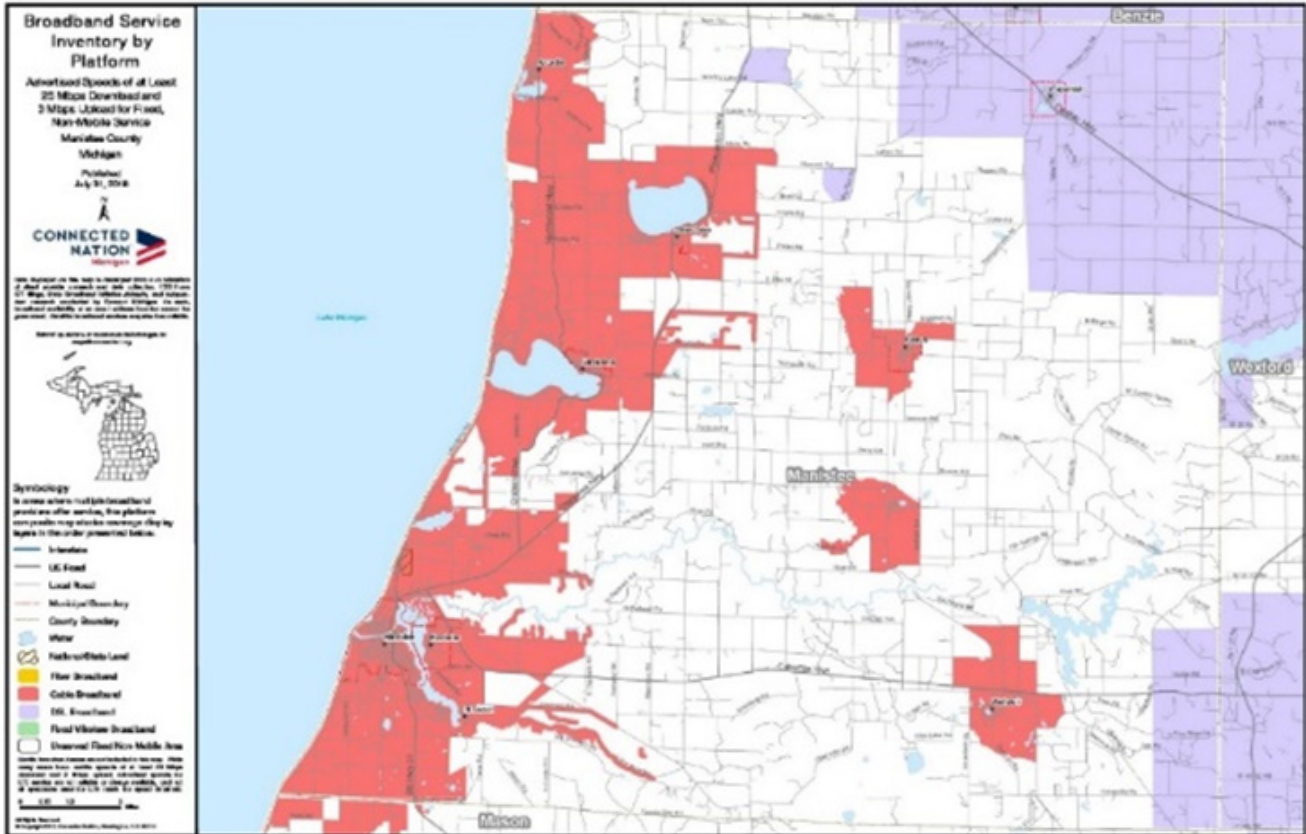
Information sources on broadband availability show that service is available in Filer Township, although slower speeds and fewer providers are issues. As the map of Internet service throughout the County indicates, cable broadband speeds that are enough to support most business activities (25 megabits per second) are available throughout most of Filer Township. The website "broadband now"

TABLE 6. COMMUNITY-WIDE INFRASTRUCTURE ASSESSMENT SCORE SUMMARY

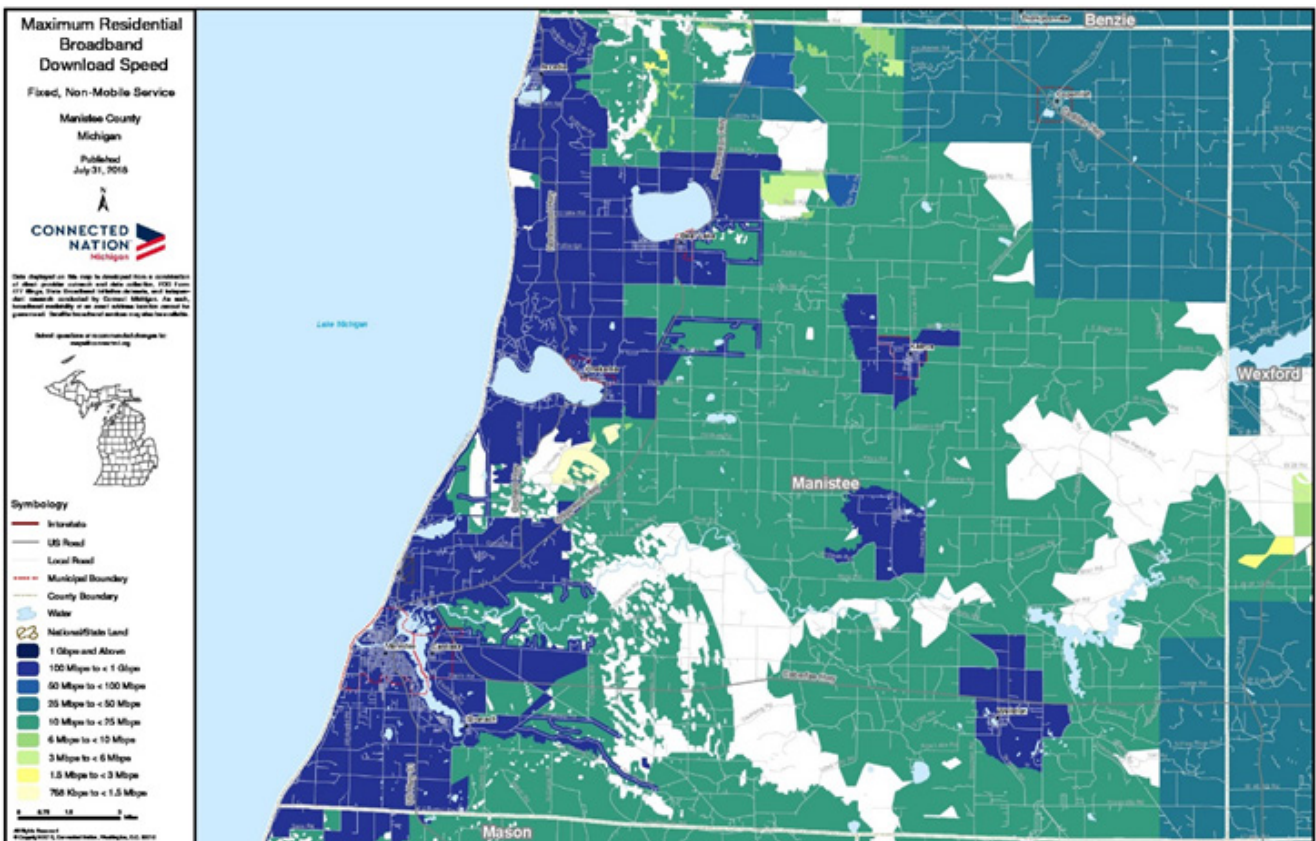
METRIC	COMMUNITY POINTS	POSSIBLE POINTS
Basic Availability	4	10
High Speed Availability	4	10
Competition	4	10
Platform Dependency	4	10
Mobile Broadband	8	10
Total	24	50

Source: Community Technology Action Plan Manistee County Michigan

MAP 11. INTERNET SERVICE OF AT LEAST 25 MBPS



MAP 12. MAXIMUM DOWNLOAD SPEED POTENTIAL



Source: <https://connectednation.org/michigan/county-maps/>

RECOMMENDED BROADBAND IMPROVEMENTS IN MANISTEE COUNTY

- Develop a community-based technology awareness group
- Validate demand for broadband service in underserved areas and perform a build-out analysis
- Launch a digital equity initiative
- Develop a technology mentorship program
- Establish a community technology academy
- Facilitate a Community Technology summit
- Implement cybersecurity Training
- Host a website and social media class for local businesses and residents
- Pursue next generation 911 upgrades

also provides more detailed information on the number of providers and download speeds within communities. The site shows that only two providers, AT&T and Spectrum Business, supply service to businesses throughout the Township. This lack of competition could result in higher prices. Simultaneously, however, GTT Communications, Everstream, and Telnet Worldwide supplement this service to commercial properties on the east side of U.S. 31 and south of 12th street, thereby providing other options to these businesses. Additionally, average download speeds ranged between 25 and 35 megabits per second in the Manistee Area zip code. Although this is perhaps sufficient to support most commercial activities, the website indicates that the average download speed of 32.44 megabits per second in the Manistee Zip code is still 11.5% slower than the average across Michigan and 37% slower than the national average. The map “Maximum Download Speed Potential” indicates that the maximum download speed is above 100 megabits per second, however, Spectrum Business was the sole private entity supplying service of over 25 megabits per second to businesses throughout the community, and monthly pricing ranged between \$50.99-109.00.

Overall these numbers show that Filer Township could take measures to improve competition and speeds throughout the community, which will be key in economic development. As of 2019, the Filer Township Downtown Development Authority plans to improve broadband access throughout the community and especially in its commercial corridor to create an environment suitable for high-tech, medical, and engineering businesses. In semi-rural areas, some private Internet service providers face challenges of higher deployment costs because of lower population densities, and lack of distribution potential between a centralized node and a new market. The Township could also seek to form strategic partnerships with private entities to finance and deploy broadband throughout the community. Public-private partnerships can help address economic challenges to broadband in rural areas by sharing capital costs of deployment and enhancing private providers’

revenue by finding anchor tenants and aggregating demand throughout the community. Although these programs transfer some of the risks and costs to the public sector, they can be instrumental in broadband deployment and economic development.



The Filer Township Water Tower is one of two storage tanks in the Township.



Parks & Recreation

Abundant recreation opportunities and the provision of facilities and amenities that support them is critical in promoting a vibrant economy and high quality of life throughout Michigan communities. In a 2014 report, Networks Northwest found that the recreation and entertainment industry directly supported 213 establishments, employed 2,348 residents, and added \$111,337,519 in annual earnings throughout the region. Aside from these direct economic ties, diverse parks and recreation amenities are essential in attracting and retaining businesses as well as the labor force with the skills and education associated with emerging economic sectors. Further, recreation facilities are key to promoting active lifestyles among residents, in preserving key natural assets, and also affect the fiscal health of a community. This chapter describes Filer Township's array of recreational amenities as well as the community's plan for their continued improvement.

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Filer Township uses its location among western Michigan's unique natural resources to provide a wide variety of recreational resources to residents and visitors throughout the year. The community's access to four miles of Lake Michigan frontage and two miles of Manistee Lake shoreline are paramount in this. Maintaining these outlets also takes coordination with overlapping entities including Manistee Area Public Schools, Manistee County, and the State of Michigan Department of Natural Resources. This section inventories the community's recreational facilities and classifies them based on the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' (MDNR) park categories shown in the table "MDNR Parks Classification."

TABLE 7. MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES PARKS CLASSIFICATION

PARK TYPE	PURPOSE	SIZE AND LOCATION
Mini Park	To provide limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs.	Less than one acre in size, located within ¼ mile of residential setting
Neighborhood Park	Serves as the recreational and social focus of the surrounding residential neighborhood.	5 to 10 acres, ¼ to ½ mile distance of surrounding residential
Community Park	Meets residential needs throughout the community. Serves a broader purpose than neighborhood parks.	30 to 50 acres and serves neighborhoods within ½ and 3 miles
Regional Park	Serves the recreation needs of the community and attracts visitors from beyond. Focus can be on preserving unique landscapes and open spaces	Varies with desired uses. 50 acres is typically a minimum with 75 acres or more being optimal
Natural Resource Areas	Lands set aside for the preservation of natural resources or unique natural landscapes.	Variable
Special Use	Serves a specific recreational activity or recreational purpose.	Variable
Greenways	Connects park system components to create a continuous environment	Variable

Neighborhood Parks and Mini-Parks

One facility in Filer City corresponds to the MDNR's recreation category termed mini parks, which typically encompass one acre of land or less and are situated within or near a residential community. This park is known as Filer City Park and is located on the corner of Avenue B and Avenue E amongst Filer City residences. The park is maintained by Filer Township and includes a playground and basketball court as well as tables and a pavilion for picnicking. These types of facilities are important because they serve the needs of adjacent neighborhoods, especially youth populations, and are often the only in a community located within an easy walk of surrounding residences.

Community Parks

Oak Hill Park is the major facility in Filer Township that matches the MDNR's classification of community parks, which are typically larger in geographic area than neighborhood parks and draw visitors from throughout the community. Oak Hill Park is situated on only a few acres of land at the corner of Park and 28th streets in the Oak Hill community. Although it is smaller than most community parks, the facility includes a wide variety of tennis courts, playground equipment, basketball courts, and a picnic area, which create a larger draw of visitors. The park is owned and maintained by Filer Township.

Regional Parks

Magoon Creek Natural Area, with its spectacular access to Lake Michigan, is one of the Filer Township's most popular recreational sites. The park corresponds to the MDNR's regional parks category,

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TRENDS IN MANISTEE COUNTY

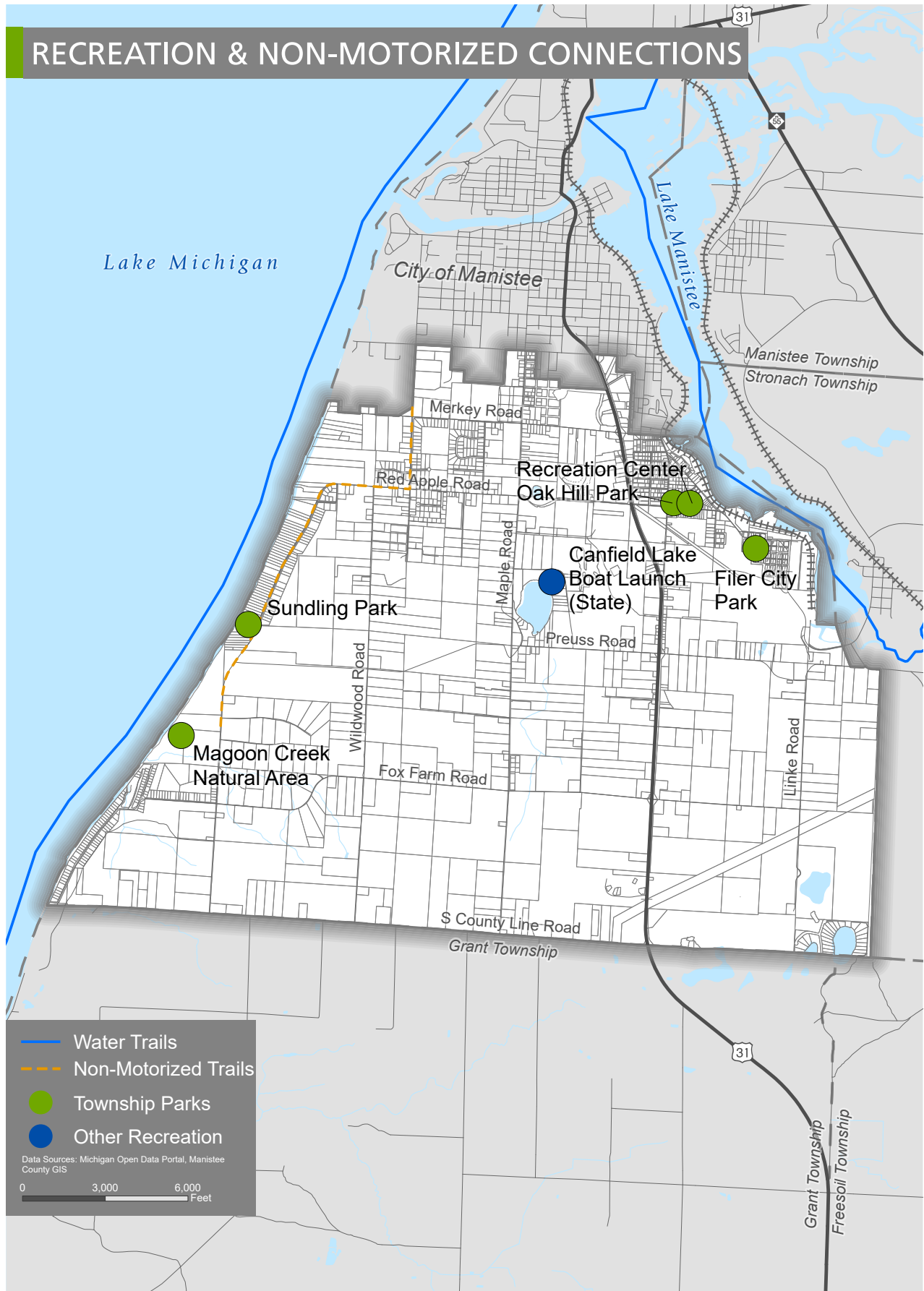
36% of Manistee County residents were obese in 2017

24% of County residents reported having no regular leisure time physical activity

Manistee County had only **63** recreational facilities compared with **117** in Leelanau County in 2014

Source: District Health Department 10 2016 Community Health Needs Assessment and A Framework for Recreation in Northern Michigan

MAP 13. RECREATION & NON-MOTORIZED CONNECTIONS





Above are two neighborhood parks. To the left is Oak Hill and to the right is Filer City.

which attract visitors from throughout the surrounding community and beyond, and often preserve valuable natural landscapes. The park is located within a 97-acre extent of forested land in the Township's southwestern portion and includes a fantastic 2,300-foot stretch of Lake Michigan beachfront, a sheltered picnic area, and hiking trails that offer striking views from the bluff line. The facility, which is owned and maintained by Filer Township, was identified as a candidate for a dark sky park in the Township's Parks and Recreation Plan of 2016 and was designated as an "Explore the Shores" site in 2018 by the Alliance for Economic Success and the Manistee County Community Foundation, certifying it as an universally accessible park by Manistee County.

Special Use Parks

The MDNR defines special use parks as facilities designed for a specific purpose or programmed event, as opposed to neighborhood and community parks that add general open space. One of these facilities in Filer Township is Sundling park, which is a natural site located on Lake Michigan which features a picturesque stretch of beach for swimming and picnicking and is maintained by the Township. Moving inland, Canfield Lake Boat Launch, which is maintained by the MDNR, offers other specific freshwater recreation opportunities including a kayak and canoe access.

In Michigan communities, indoor facilities are important aspects of recreation in inclement weather and to provide these amenities, Filer Township maintains its own community recreation center. This facility is located on Oak Drive in the Oak Hill neighborhood and aside from providing space for fitness classes and recreation, can be rented for private events including weddings, graduations, birthdays, and reunions. Also located nearby to the Oak Hill neighborhood is the U.S. Forest Service Office on Red Apple Road, and Filer Township Hall on Filer City Road. The Forest Service Office offers a picnic shelter while Township Hall provides a meeting place for civic events and local boards and commissions.

Greenways and Nonmotorized Trails



A marked biked route along Red Apple Road.

Pathways designed for nonmotorized transportation are an important and emerging form of recreation in northwest Michigan, and two different types of these trails extend through Filer Township. One of these is a long-distance pathway accommodating bicyclists, pedestrians, and other wheel-based transportation, thereby forming a unique recreational asset. This trail is an on-road bike lane that traverses the community from north to south along scenic Red Apple Road and connects the City of Manistee with Magoon Creek Natural Area and Sundling Park. The bike lane is currently located on the Red Apple Roadway and access is therefore more limited to experienced bikers and users who are comfortable pedaling in that setting. Filer Township could therefore seek to document existing shoulder widths and work to expand them or develop separated right of ways for the trail. Doing this could increase the trail's safety and make the facility appealing to more users. During Manistee County's 2017 parks planning process, Township residents also expressed interest in expanding nonmotorized infrastructure to include Fox Farm and Wildwood roads. Meanwhile the County is exploring potential nonmotorized loops extending around Manistee Lake, which would traverse the Township.

Filer Township also has two distinct "water trails" that serve as transportation corridors for nonmotorized watercraft users including kayakers, canoers, and paddleboard users. These water trails extend along bodies of water and connect access points to the waterbodies with historical sites, population centers, and other attractions that are located adjacent to them. This term originated with the National Park Service and grew in response to emerging need for dedicated space for nonmotorized watercraft and need to protect natural resources along shorelines. The Lake Michigan Water Trail is a prominent trail and extends north and south along the lake's shoreline and passes through Filer Township, while Lake Manistee is part of the Little Manistee River water trail. Water trail access points are designated at other park and recreation facilities in a community, and in Filer Township include Magoon Creek Natural Area. While the Lake Michigan trail has gained recognition throughout the state, it is not classified as National Water Trails under the National Recreation Trails System designated by the National Park Service.

This type of federal recognition is for trails of "local and regional significance" and requires designation from the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture. Although approval by these federal agencies is required for designation, management of the trails, which entails water quality monitoring and reporting, maintenance of public access points, and the dispersal of publicly available educational materials regarding local trails and their geographic extent, is still required by local agencies. To obtain national designation of water trails, the National Park Service specifies that communities follow a set of best management practices and undertake an application and review process. Once designated, the benefits include national promotion and visibility and technical assistance for planning and implementing further improvements. Considering these benefits, Filer Township should partner with organizations pursuing national designation for the Lake Michigan Water Trail. The Township could

TABLE 8. RECREATION RESOURCES IN FILER TOWNSHIP

FACILITY	MAINTAINING ORGANIZATION	PARK TYPE	UNIVERSAL ACCESS RATING (LOW, MEDIUM, HIGH)
Filer City Park	Filer Township	Mini-Park	Low
Oak Hill Park	Filer Township	Community Park	Low
Magoon Natural Area	Filer Township	Regional Park	Low
Sundling Park	Filer Township	Special Use	Low
Canfield Lake Boat Launch	State of Michigan	Special Use	Low
Filer Township Recreation Center	Filer Township	Special Use	Medium
USFS Manistee Administration Office	U.S. Forest Service	Special Use	Medium
Filer Township Hall	Filer Township	Special Use	High
Red Apple Road Paved Shoulder	Manistee County Road Commission	Nonmotorized Path	N/A
Lake Michigan / Manistee Lake Water Trail	N/A	Nonmotorized Path	N/A

Source: Manistee County-Wide Park & Recreation Plan

also support efforts to promote and designate several water trails on rivers throughout Manistee County that are designated by the county, considering the benefits from growing these recreation assets.

School District Facilities

Local school districts have always been key organizations in maintaining recreational facilities geared toward communities' youth, and Manistee Area Public Schools is a prime example of this. The school district's facilities are situated on the combined middle and high school campus on 12th street in the City of Manistee immediately north of Filer Township. In terms of indoor facilities, the district maintains a multi-purpose gymnasium, a ½ mile indoor walking track, a weight room, a 1,200 square foot recreation area, and an eight-lane Olympic pool and physical therapy room. Meanwhile, various outdoor facilities used for programmed events include Chippewa Softball and Baseball Complexes, Chippewa Varsity Football and Soccer Field, and two practice fields. The school also maintains a fantastic outdoor track that was renovated in 2017 and remains available to users of all ages from the community. The school district also provides a 475-person capacity auditorium used for a variety of events and purposes.

PARKS AND RECREATION ACTIONS

The 2016 Manistee County Recreation Plan set a trajectory for Filer Township to take in conjunction with neighboring communities in order to further improve its existing array of parks. These parks and recreation goals were defined through a robust community input process that engaged the community's youth and were categorized as follows.

Expand Facilities

One major theme was the desire for improvements to allow Filer Township parks to serve more uses and to enhance accessibility to the community's parks through nonmotorized transportation. For instance, the community supports the addition or replacement of benches at Canfield Boat Launch, Filer City Park, Filer Township Hall, Oak Hill Park, and Sundling Park in order to increase the facilities' passive recreation purposes. Residents also expressed enthusiasm for the installation of bicycle racks at these facilities, as well as at Magoon Park, in order to improve nonmotorized access. The community also expressed desire for a variety of improvements to Magoon Creek Natural Area including a scenic overlook and boardwalk, restrooms, and pathways developed to universal accessibility standards. The Township received two substantial grants in 2018, one from Consumers Energy, and another from the MDNR with Magoon Park's designation as an "Explore the Shores" site, to pursue these improvements.

Create Multi-Use Trails

Expansion of the community's nonmotorized infrastructure arose as another key goal in the County's planning process. The creation of separated routes for nonmotorized transportation to extend along the community's roads emerged as a key improvement. In a similar vein, expanded shoulder widths connecting Red Apple, Fox Farm, and Wildwood Roads was seen as a desirable way to facilitate bicycling in rural portions of the Township. Beyond additions to roadways, residents also expressed interest in converting the railroad lines along Lake Manistee to nonmotorized pathways. Likewise, the extension of nonmotorized trails between throughout the community and to Manistee Area School Facilities was defined as a desirable way to promote active and safe transportation option for the community's youth.



A map of the Magoon Creek park trail system.



Housing & Neighborhoods

In most communities throughout the United States, residential housing is the single largest use of land and comprises the greatest number of structures. Housing also represents the single largest expense as a share of household income for families throughout the country, while owning a home is often their greatest economic asset. The location, size, and construction of housing, therefore, have a major bearing on the land that communities encompass as well as on the dynamics of income and expenses for residents.

The U.S. Census Bureau defines the term “housing unit” as an apartment, individual room, or group of rooms intended for separate living quarters. According to American Community Survey data, there were an estimated 1,350 housing units in Filer Township in 2017. Housing is spread throughout the community, although concentrations are in the Filer City and Oak Hill neighborhoods in the Township’s north, as well as in the suburban areas immediately south of Manistee. The community’s total housing units increased slightly from the 2010 Decennial Census, at which time there were 1,188 housing units in the community. Meanwhile, the Census Bureau defines the broad term “households” as all the people occupying an individual housing unit. The number of households within the Township grew from 995 to 1,090 between 2010 and 2017, a trend that underlies part of the community’s housing construction in that timeframe.

HOUSING TYPES

In most Michigan communities, detached, single-family housing, which proliferated throughout the middle and late 20th Century as families

left central cities for suburbs, dominates residential landscapes. This pattern is pronounced in Filer Township, with its semi-rural position south of Manistee; 87.6% of the community's housing units were in single-family, detached formats as of 2017. By contrast, this format made up only 61.6% of the housing units in the City of Manistee, while it comprised 72.3% of units in the State of Michigan, overall. Only small shares of dwelling units in other formats exist in Filer Township. The American Community Survey recorded that approximately 31 housing units were in single-family, attached formats, while an estimated 60 dwelling units were in duplex form (two dwelling units per building), and 38 housing units were situated in large complexes with 20 or more housing units. These figures show the community's lack of housing diversity, a phenomenon often termed "missing middle" housing. In fact, single-family housing is the only housing type allowed throughout much of the Township's residential land. Multiple family dwelling units, including duplexes and townhomes, require a special permit, whereas single-family housing is allowed by right under residential zoning.

"Middle" housing refers to the range of multi-unit or clustered housing types compatible in scale with single-family homes. This concept was created as part of growing demand for denser and more walkable communities among millennials and baby boomers. The predominance of single-family housing formats created neighborhoods lacking compact housing options that these demographics often favor and can afford. One planning solution is to increase the permissible density of housing, where it is appropriate in communities. Permitted densities do not need to be increased on a scale that would change the character of existing neighborhoods. Rental and owned housing units with two to four dwelling units per structure have the potential to accommodate a greater range of incomes and to enhance walking and biking travel while fitting within the scale of existing single-family residential areas.

Housing in the Township's Oak Hill and Filer City neighborhoods, although in single-family, detached format, is already denser than in many Michigan communities. For instance, relatively modest lot widths, along with small square footage requirements per dwelling unit are permissible in these neighborhoods, all of which leads to a higher density character. These areas present an excellent opportunity to add multifamily options to the mix. Filer Township's "High Density Residential" zoning that encompasses the neighborhoods includes provisions that allow smaller lot areas when sewer service is provided to residential properties. Considering that accommodating senior demographics and attracting younger residents and seasonal visitors will present key issues, the Township could consider making changes to its high-density residential zoning to allow for multifamily options as uses allowed by right.

DEMAND FORECASTS

The housing types demanded by potential new residents is a major concern for decision-makers. In 2014, Networks Northwest partnered with Land Use USA, a consulting firm, and the State of Michigan to forecast demand for housing types in Manistee County over the subsequent 5-10 years. With "conservative" growth conditions, which assume modest in-migration and an otherwise "business as usual" economic climate, rental housing demand is expected to outpace demand for owner-occupied units. Manistee County could support



A neighborhood park in Filer City.

21-ACRE TOWNSHIP-OWNED PROPERTY

Building off a preliminary conceptual design done by Integrated Architecture, the Township intends to move forward with pursuing the redevelopment of a 21-acre Township-owned site. The site is conveniently located just off the U.S. 31 corridor. The Township desires to have diverse housing be the backbone of the development, but is also open to a walkable mixed-use development with commercial services to support the housing. An ad-hoc committee has been convened to explore this opportunity in greater detail. A number of key next steps have been identified for the Township to pursue:

1. Conduct a housing target market study
2. Conduct a topographic survey of site
3. Seek additional community input on site development
4. Work with the development team to attract high quality housing development.



Integrated
Architecture

PROPOSED MASTER PLAN | CONCEPT

scale 0 100 200 400' N

20181020 09 November 2018

FILER TOWNSHIP 25



Pictured above is a conceptual design by Integrated Architecture showing what a mixed-use development could look like on this Township-owned 21-acre site.

Pictured to the left is an example of a mixed housing development on Waverly Street in Holland. This type of mixed use development could be appropriate in Filer Township.

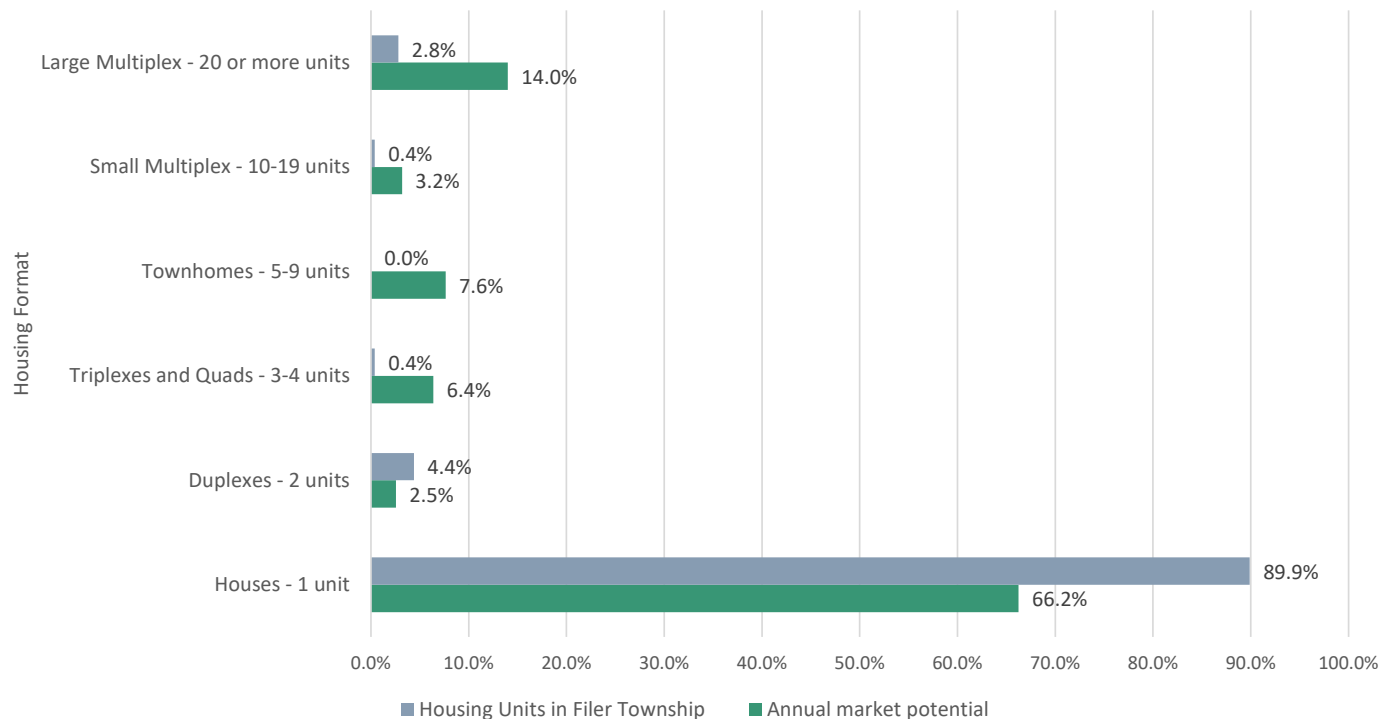
(Renderings used by the kind permission of Michael Corby and Integrated Architecture)

95 new rental dwelling units and 62 owner-occupied dwelling units annually, for a total of 157 new housing units every year. Within this, the County's market potential still tilts towards detached formats; about two thirds (65%) of the 157 new movers would prefer detached housing while only the remaining third would prefer attached units. The analysis also forecasts the demand for housing products based on new residents' lifestyles and incomes. Demand among new buyers for attached units would include low-rise products such as duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, condos, and row houses, while demand for detached units would tilt towards cottages with small footprints and lots and less square footage.

Filer Township's ability to leverage this forecasted demand depends on its ability to allow the appropriate physical form of development. Figure 5 depicts a mismatch between the projected demand for various housing formats throughout Manistee County and the number and type of units existing in Filer Township in 2017. The graph shows that annual demand for triplexes, townhomes, multiplexes far outpaces the share of those housing types in the Township. For instance, new Manistee County households would demand 10 triplexes or quadplexes annually, while only a small number of these housing options exist in Filer Township.

The community's limited supply of multifamily options further shows the need to allow for more of these types. The Township could make multiple family housing formats allowed as a use by right in its "High Density Residential" zoning designation, which encompasses both the Filer City and Oak Hill communities. This would streamline development and allow builders to construct townhomes and duplexes

FIGURE 5. ANNUAL MARKET POTENTIAL IN MANISTEE COUNTY AND HOUSING UNITS IN FILER TOWNSHIP



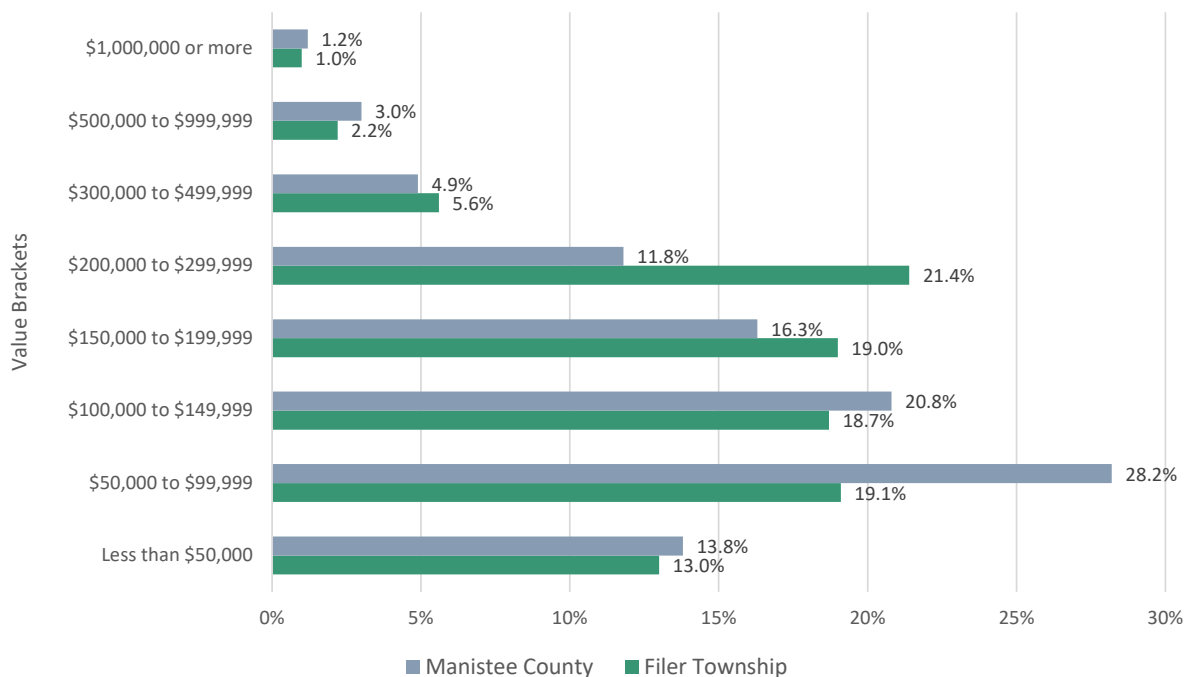
without an extended permitting process. Other measures such as further reducing the square footage requirements and front and rear setbacks could incentivize redevelopment by allowing builders to maximize space.

HOUSING VALUE

American Community Survey data reveals that housing values in Filer Township are high compared with surrounding communities and larger geographies. The median value of owner-occupied homes in the Township was \$147,700 as of 2017, which was about roughly one-third higher than in the City of Manistee, and about 13% higher than in Manistee Township. This is an encouraging trend in many respects and mirrors the Township's higher incomes relative to its neighbors. It is possible, however, that Filer Township's median home values have decreased from 2010, at which time they were reported at \$155,900, although the margin of error in the American Community Survey's estimates makes this difficult to say with certainty.

Higher housing values can also pose a problem by creating unaffordability relative to residents' incomes. The target market analysis also forecasts the price ranges in which new Manistee County households will seek housing. Across the lifestyle preferences and incomes of new buyers, most will seek homes valued at \$250,000 or less in 2012 dollars, while new renters will seek rents of \$900 or less. Simultaneously, the graph below shows that nearly one third (30.2%) of Filer Township's housing stock was valued at \$200,000 or more in 2017, while only about one-fifth (20.9%) of the County's housing stock fell within these same ranges. These figures show that Filer Township could consider measures to increase its supply of moderately priced ownership options within these desired ranges, to capture growth from new residents. Further, a lack of affordable options poses a problem for northwest Michigan's moderate-income households, and

FIGURE 6. SHARES OF OWNER-OCCUPIED HOMES BY VALUE BRACKET IN FILER TOWNSHIP AND MANISTEE COUNTY AS A WHOLE



accordingly, these measures could help the area's residents step into ownership, accumulate savings, and increase their spending power. Reducing minimum square footage and setback requirements in single family are a good starting points.

Tenure and Cost Burden

Housing data in Filer Township suggests the predominance of owner-occupied housing units at rates (92.2% of units) greater than the City of Manistee (63.6% of units), Manistee County as a whole (82.3% of units), and the State of Michigan (71.0%). The Township's homeownership rate may have risen since 2010, at which time it was estimated at 87.8% of units, although the margin of error could explain some of this recorded change. Taken as they are, these numbers suggest that Filer Township does not contain proportions of rental housing similar to other communities in Manistee County.

Housing costs are a pressing concern for communities everywhere, and particularly as Michigan's economy shifts from manufacturing, traditionally paying middle-income earnings, to service jobs that yield often yield lower pay. The median monthly cost of housing ownership in Filer Township was \$1,084 in 2017, which resembled that in Manistee County (\$1,038) in that year. At the same time, median gross rent among renter households in Filer Township (\$739), was similar to the County (\$691) but lower than in the State of Michigan (\$824). Because there are so few renter households in Filer Township, however, the margin of error makes it difficult to estimate median rents in the community with certainty. Taken as they are, however, these figures suggest that housing in Manistee County is relatively affordable compared with aggregate geographies.

Other figures show that housing expenses throughout the County are still pressing concerns relative to household incomes. The relative burden of housing expenses for households is determined by comparing monthly housing expenses (ownership costs or rent). Households spending more than 30% of their monthly income on housing are considered "cost-burdened" by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. Although figures comparing incomes to housing expenses are not reliable for Filer Township, in part due to the community's small size, they are available in Manistee County. Among County renters, over half of households (52.9%) were cost burdened in 2017, a share which may have grown since 2010. Meanwhile, about one third (32.1%) of Manistee County homeowner households that paid a mortgage were cost-burdened in that year. The trend among owners was in the opposite direction as renters; the share of cost-burdened owner households decreased by about 6% since 2010. This mirrors patterns in Northwest Michigan since the Great Recession; the costs of renting and owning are converging, although affordability remains an issue across both forms.

Filer Township has several projects planned to increase the community's housing options, which could also alleviate cost concerns. The Filer Township Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is exploring programs and incentives for developers, to build more workforce housing in its district. Although no "official" definition has been adopted, workforce housing is typically refers to housing that is affordable to parts of the workforce earning low-, moderate-, and

TABLE 9. COST CHARACTERISTICS IN MANISTEE COUNTY (U.S. DOLLARS)

		OWNERS	RENTERS
2006-2010	Monthly Housing Cost	1,054	627
	Median Households Income	46,550	22,267
2013-2017	Monthly Housing Cost	1,038	691
	Median Households Income	50,266	25,253
Change 2010-2017	Monthly Housing Cost	-16	64
	Median Households Income	3,716	2,986

TABLE 10. TENURE CHARACTERISTICS IN MANISTEE COUNTY

		OWNERS	RENTERS
2006-2010	Percentage of Total Households	80.4%	19.6%
	Percent of Households Burdened	38.3%	50.9%
2013-2017	Percentage of Households	82.3%	17.7%
	Percent of Households Burdened	32.1%	52.9%
Change 2010-2017	Percentage of Households	1.9%	-1.9%
	Percent of Households Burdened	-6.2%	2.0%

entry level incomes, generally up to 120% of the area median income. Often this includes occupations such as teachers, police officers, medical technicians, construction workers, office workers, and retail and restaurant staff. These programs are an excellent starting point for diversifying the community's housing stock, although the Township could also continue to consider a variety of other programs that exist to catalyze affordable options. The establishment of housing trust funds, for instance, which allow communities to allocate local public funds to support workforce housing development is an emerging strategy. These funds typically allow increased flexibility in the types of projects that can be supported and therefore let communities tailor incentives to their housing needs. Further, other built environment incentives, such as height, square footage, or density bonuses can be granted to incentivize builders to include affordable options. These types of provisions can be included in a community's zoning code.

VACANCY

Housing units have periods of vacancy when they are for sale or between leases. Communities should have at least some of this type of vacancy because it indicates that housing is available for new residents or for those who choose to move within the community. Of the estimated 1,350 housing units in Filer Township as of 2017, the American Community Survey estimates that about 260 units, about one-fifth (19.3%) of the total, were vacant. The American Community

TABLE 11. HOUSING VALUES AND VACANCY RATES

	MEDIAN VALUE	TOTAL HOUSING UNITS	VACANT HOUSING UNITS	VACANCY RATE	VACANT HOUSING FOR SEASONAL USE	PERCENT OF VACANT HOUSING FOR SEASONAL USE
Filer Township	147,700	1,350	260	19.3%	157	60.4%
Manistee City	96,300	3,736	952	25.5%	186	19.5%
Manistee Township	127,900	1,610	403	25.0%	283	70.2%
Manistee County	116,200	15,781	5,971	37.8%	4,279	71.7%

Survey counts housing for seasonal or occasional use among vacant dwelling units, and according to its data, about 157 (60.4%) of the Township's vacant units fell into this category. The 2017 figure contrasts with the City of Manistee and Manistee Township, where the overall vacancy rate was nearly one-quarter of all housing units in both geographies (25.5% and 25% of units, respectively). In the City, only a small share of the vacant units (19.5%) was for seasonal use, however, while that share was over three times larger (70.2%) in Manistee Township. Together, these numbers show a distinct trend; Manistee Township and Filer Township have high seasonal vacancy rates, while the City's vacancy rate is rooted in other issues facing the community.

NEIGHBORHOODS

A variety of residential settings exist throughout Filer Township and provide diverse housing options to residents.

Oak Hill

The Oak Hill neighborhood is a residential neighborhood located in Filer Township's northeast portion. The neighborhood encompasses approximately one half (.503) a square mile of land and is bound to the north by the Township's border with the City of Manistee at 21st Street, to the east by the Manistee Lake shoreline, to the south by 28th Street, and the west by U.S. 31. Although the neighborhood is located adjacent to Manistee Lake, the rail line extending along the shoreline impedes access to the waterbody. At the 2010 Census, a total of 569 residents were spread across 247 households in the neighborhood, all of whom lived within 289 housing units. The neighborhood, therefore, comprised nearly one quarter (24.5%) of Filer Township's total residents in that year and encompassed roughly the same share of the Township's total housing units (24.8%). Aside from this concentration of housing and population overall, Oak Hill included many of the Township's renter-occupied housing units; 59 of Filer Township's 160 renter-occupied housing units were in Oak Hill. The neighborhood's housing units were located on small-size lots and situated along traditional residential blocks with gridded streets and sidewalks.

These characteristics enhance the neighborhood's pedestrian scale and walkability. Oak Hill also falls under the Township's "High Density Residential" zoning category, which stipulates exclusively single-family housing, albeit at high densities, with modest lot widths, minimum square footage, and setback requirements.

Filer City

Similar to Oak Hill, the Filer City neighborhood is in the Township's northeast and forms a higher density residential concentration. The neighborhood encompasses roughly one-quarter (25.9%) of a square mile of land and is bound to the north by Filer City Road and Falleen Streets, to the east by Grant Street, to the South by Warren Street and Stronach Road, and to the west by natural features. Although Filer City is smaller than Oak Hill, both neighborhoods developed early in the Township's history to accommodate an industrial workforce. The neighborhood is located adjacent to industrial facilities, including Packaging Corporation of America and the TES Filer City Station, a coal and biomass-fired power station. This position supplies employment opportunities but also could pose health concerns to nearby households. At the 2010 Census, the average household size was larger than in Oak Hill, suggesting the presence of more families. The neighborhood's population of 116 residents was spread across 44 occupied housing units, 35 of which were owner-occupied, and 9 of which were renter-occupied. Like Oak Hill, the Filer City neighborhood has classic pedestrian-scale design falls under the Township's "High-Density Residential" zoning designation.

Filer Township North

Another distinctive residential district extends throughout the northern half of Filer Township's rural portions. This neighborhood extends between the City of Manistee boundary in the north, U.S. 31 in the east, Preuss Road in the south, and the properties along Red Apple Road in the west. Much of this neighborhood features suburban-style housing on large lots and extending along curvilinear residential streets. The streets in this neighborhood often lack sidewalks. Although these built characteristics contrast with those of Oak Hill and Filer City, the district's "Medium-Density Residential" zoning mandates the same characteristics in terms of minimum lot width, square footage, and setbacks compared with zoning in these other neighborhoods.

Filer Township South

Filer Township's southern extent comprises its remaining residential areas, although densities are far lower in this area than elsewhere in the community. Preuss Road bounds this geographic area in the north, while the community's borders with Stronach Township and Mason County form its eastern and southern borders, respectively, and the properties along Red Apple Road bound it to the west. Homes located on farmland are characteristic of the eastern part of this neighborhood, while single-family homes on rural roads comprise most of the housing in the west. Consistent with its rural character, properties in this area are regulated under "Agricultural Residential District" and "Forest Recreational District" categories, which establish larger lot and square footage requirements.

TABLE 12. 2010 NEIGHBORHOOD ATTRIBUTES

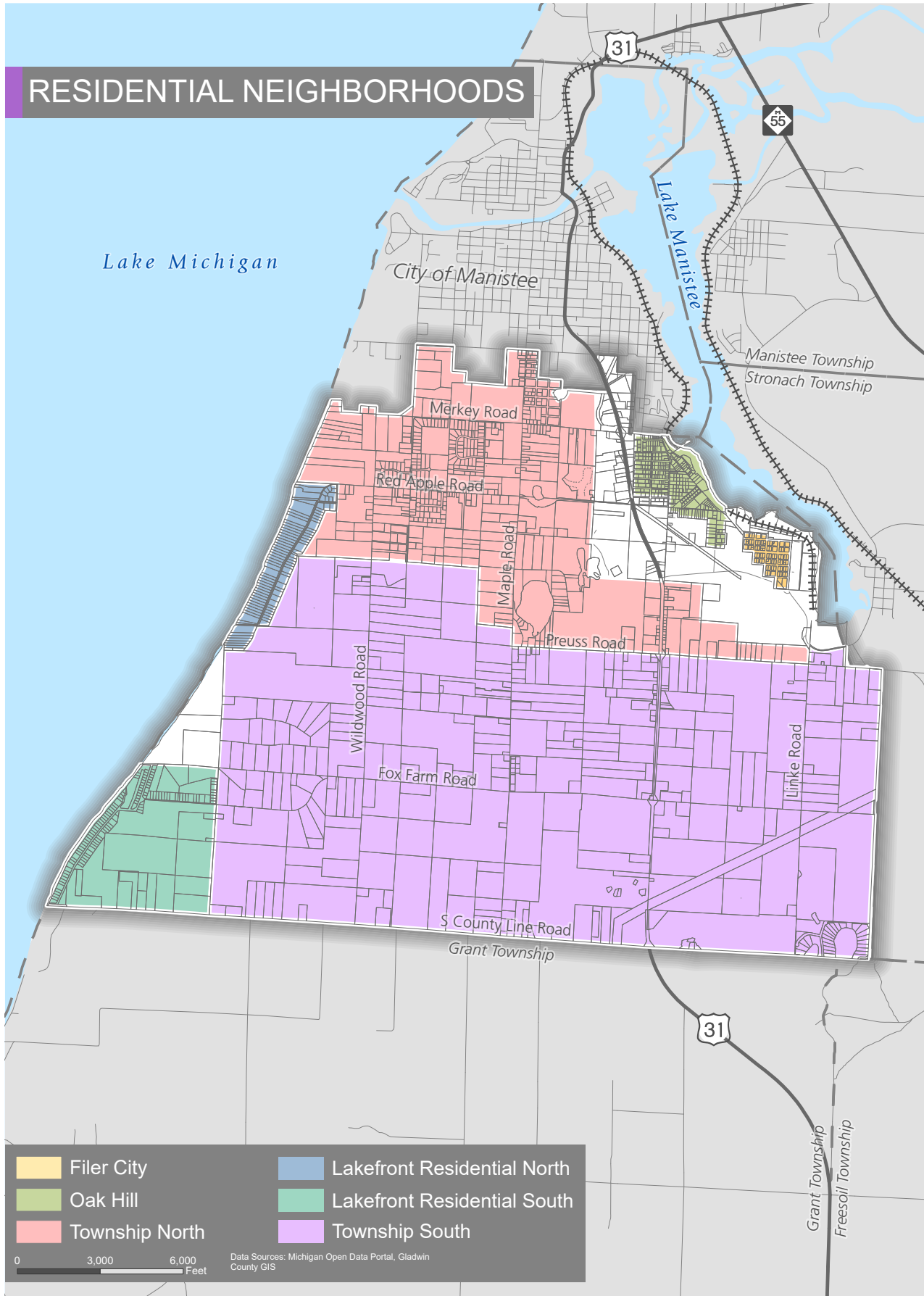
ATTRIBUTE	OAK HILL	FILER CITY
Residential population	569	116
Total households	247	44
Family households	150	29
Average household size	2.30	2.64
Total housing units	298	51
Vacant housing units	42	7
Occupied housing units	205	44
Owner-occupied units	188	35
Renter-occupied units	59	9

Lake Michigan Coastline Residential

Another distinctive residential pattern forms along Red Apple and Fox Farm Roads as they extend north and south along Lake Michigan. In this district, the properties' direct frontage on the Lake Michigan bluffline lends itself to larger housing units, which is particularly true on the west side of Red Apple and Fox Farm roads where residents are afforded spectacular views. With high demand for this unique type of access, housing units are built at relatively high densities along the road and lot widths are relatively narrow. Correspondingly, properties in the district are regulated under the "Medium Density Residential" zoning designation, which stipulates moderate lot sizes and setbacks. The natural areas Sundling Park and Magoon Creek Park divide the residential distinct between north and south; residential housing along Red Apple Road lies to the north of these natural areas, while residential housing along Fox Farm Road is located to their south.

These residential areas of Filer Township also face the challenge of erosion along the Lake Michigan bluff line, which could threaten the integrity of structures in the future. According to monitoring undertaken by the State of Michigan in 1993, 74 properties on the west side of Red Apple and Fox Farm Roads experienced annual bluff line erosion at an rate of 1.8 feet, while another 13 properties had more rapid annual erosion rates of 2.5 feet. Correspondingly, these properties are classified as High Risk Erosion Areas by the State of Michigan. Although Filer Township's zoning mandates that buildings be setback least 100 feet from the Lake Michigan bluff, this distance almost certainly will not be enough to protect structures indefinitely. The Township could therefore work with property owners to pursue other strategies to mitigate threats from erosion. Educating property owners on rapid erosion rates, the corresponding risk to private property, and the options to alleviate the risk is one important step. Filer Township could also pursue programs to encourage landowners to plant and maintain vegetation, install retaining walls, or use mulch matting to retain soil erosion.

MAP 14. RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS







Economic Development

The economic characteristics of a given community are driven to a large extent by those of the region in which it is situated, and more broadly by national and international trends. This chapter begins by exploring economic trends in northwest Michigan and Manistee County and then examines local attributes in Filer Township. It then summarizes the Township's many recent economic development studies and efforts and charts broad strategies for the community to leverage broader economic patterns.

ECONOMIC TRENDS IN NORTHWEST MICHIGAN

In 2015, Networks Northwest, the regional planning organization for Northwest Michigan's 10-county region, published a report titled "A Framework for Growth and Investment," which charted a road map for municipalities to enhance economic vitality. The report found that although the region's population remained stagnant between 2010 and 2015, new forms of economic activity still emerged since the Great Recession in the form of technology and information and tourism. The plan defined 31 "growth and investment areas" throughout the region, which are communities that already function as employment and population centers, operate municipal public utilities, and are therefore best positioned to accommodate future growth. The City of Manistee and its surrounding townships were included among these designated areas and Filer Township, with its sanitary system constructed in 2019, is uniquely situated to leverage these regional growth patterns. The plan recommends a series of best practices for these communities to realize growth in emerging industries, including maintaining robust and affordable services, promoting high-capacity

and low-cost broadband, and creating high-quality and memorable places through zoning and incentives. This chapter inventories Filer Township's economic profile and commercial corridors and compares them to these regional trends and defined best practices.

Two other planning efforts also analyzed the area's economy, but on a more localized level. The first report, "Manistee County Manufacturing Study – 2017" authored by the Alliance for Economic Success and the Fourth Economy, focused on the manufacturing industry sectors. Their report found skilled production workers to be the top occupations in terms of employment numbers, although the region was experiencing an increase in poverty rate, incomes that were decreasing at a rate greater than the state, and decreasing employment numbers that were reflective of the state as a whole. A gap analysis found the area's assets, which include natural resources, lake frontage, and ports, were overshadowed by gaps and threats in the economic landscape. Those barriers included housing availability and affordability, an aging workforce, funding, regulations and requirements, utility and energy costs, transportation costs, broadband availability, and contaminated sites. The report provided a strategic blueprint to explore and address these areas of improvement.

The second report was the "Lakes to Land and the Boardman Watershed Stronger Economies Together Regional Economic Development Plan – 2017" was created under the USDA Rural Development with assistance by the Alliance for Economic Success and Michigan State University Extension. This regional economic development plan created a road map for economic growth for the counties of Manistee, Benzie, Kalkaska, and Grand Traverse. Through intense research, analysis, and discussion, three industry sectors were identified as having the greatest economic impact potential based on their comparative and competitive advantage. These sectors included advanced material jobs, agribusiness, food processing and technology jobs, and energy (renewable and fossil) jobs. These sectors were found to be uniquely strong to the region and align with the educational attainment of the local workforce. The goals, strategies and action items produced in this plan are intended to capitalize on these opportunities.

MANISTEE COUNTY ECONOMY

While the economy of Manistee County, with its manufacturing and maritime history, is unique among those of the region, its recent employment trends reflect several of those referenced by Networks Northwest. The Figure titled "Industries in Manistee County" examines employment data across the County's larger industries over time. One major takeaway is the size of each industry in comparison to one another. Though employment levels fluctuated, the industries: (1) retail trade; (2) healthcare and social assistance; and (3) manufacturing remained the three largest segments of the economy between 2006 and 2016. Combined, these industries provided 4,512 of the County's 5,891 jobs in 2016, a share of over three quarters (76.5%). Importantly, arts, accommodation and food services offered the single largest share (1,371 jobs) of the County's overall jobs in 2016, but intermittent data availability makes the change over time in the industry difficult to discern with certainty. The two next largest segments of the economy in 2016, construction and finance, insurance, real estate, and

NETWORKS NORTHWEST 2015

Tourism-related employment accounts for nearly 30% of the region's total jobs and growth is expected to remain steady through 2030.

Knowledge-based industries such as finance, information, and professional management were expected to grow by 11% between 2015 and 2023.

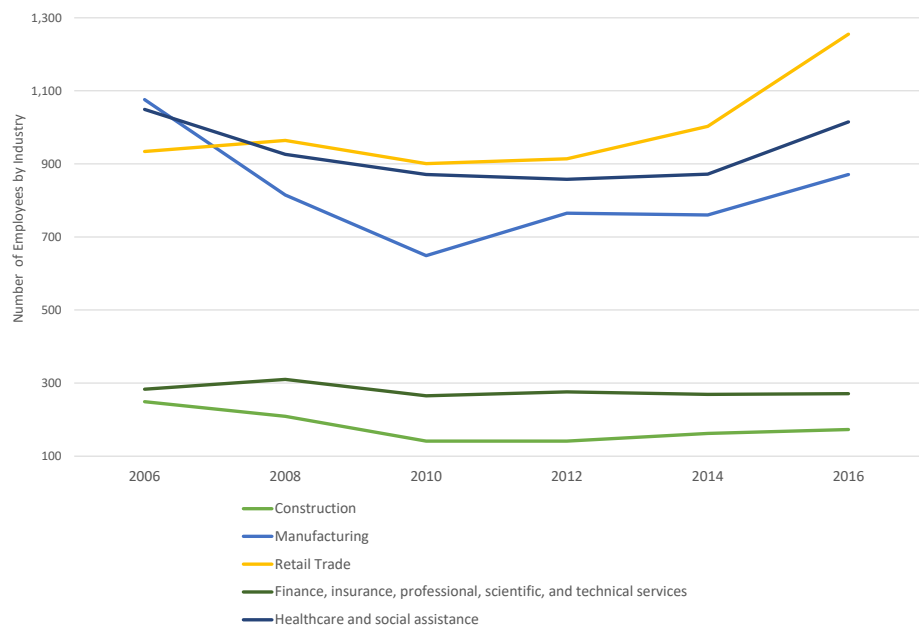
Employment in healthcare, which offers high average wages, was expected to grow 21% between 2015 and 2023.

Source: Networks Northwest - A Framework for Growth and Investment in Northwest Michigan

professional services comprised relatively small shares of the County's employment; 173 and 271 jobs, respectively.

Another major point is the rate at which employment in these industries has changed. Despite the struggles of the Great Recession, employment in retail, which is a notable tourism-related industry, grew steadily by about one third (34.3%) between 2006 and 2016 to become the second-largest sector in Manistee County in terms of the number of employees, following only arts, accommodation, and food services. Within the same timeframe, manufacturing employment in the County declined from 1,076 jobs to only 871. Although employment in this sector did recover by roughly one third (34.2%) between its low point during the recession in 2010 and 2016, the industry's overall decline from 2006 is perhaps more representative of the long-term trend throughout Michigan. Importantly, employment in healthcare, social assistance and finance, insurance, and professional, scientific, and technical services, both of which Networks Northwest cites as emerging industries, remained stagnant throughout these years. This suggests that communities throughout the County, despite aging populations and the corresponding need for healthcare, have not yet capitalized on regional patterns. This is true despite strong anchor institutions such as Munson Healthcare Manistee Hospital and Manistee County Medical Care Facility. Notably, information and technology-related industries are diverse and growing segments of the state's economy, however these jobs are nearly absent in the County (67 jobs in 2016).

FIGURE 7. INDUSTRIES IN MANISTEE COUNTY 2006-2016



Employment and Gender

Manistee County shows distinct patterns of employment and earning by gender across its industries, which in turn affects the dynamics of household income. Employment in industrial manufacturing has historically been held by males, and correspondingly, men held over

four-fifths (83.1%) of the County's 1,245 jobs in that sector in 2017. At the same time, the median annual earnings of women in that industry were only 70% of the annual median among males of \$52,188. Meanwhile, females held over three quarters (76.5%) of the County's jobs in educational services, healthcare, and social assistance, although the median annual income among females in that industry was only 51.5% of the median annual earnings among males employed in the sector (\$55,625). These findings are significant to bear in mind for Filer Township, where these two industries, manufacturing and education, healthcare, and social services, comprise the greatest number of jobs. Although the share of family households headed by single female adults was relatively small (5.3% of families) over half (54.8%) had annual incomes below poverty status.

Employer Size

The relative size of employers in terms of the number of employees is an important factor affecting economic trends. Data shows that the vast majority (91.8%) of establishments in the county were small establishments, with 19 employees or fewer. While some larger employers such as government and healthcare institutions are more fixed geographically and over time, others, including manufacturing employers are affected by international and national patterns and are more likely to relocate production, which has large consequences on local employment.

JOBS IN FILER TOWNSHIP

Two major measures describe the composition of a community's economy, the percentage of jobs located within the community within industries, and the portion of community residents employed in each industry. These industry categories correspond to the federal North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes, which categorize businesses based on their primary activity (highest revenue-generating activity).

Manufacturing

As of 2019, employment in manufacturing comprised over one quarter (27.4%) of the total 1,295 jobs within Filer Township and therefore made up the community's largest economic segment. Manufacturing jobs were offered through only five employers, which suggests that these businesses each maintain large numbers of workers. Prominent manufacturing businesses in the Township include Packaging Corporation of America, a cardboard materials manufacturer, which maintained a workforce of 333 employees as of 2017, as well as the TES Filer Station, a coal and natural gas-fired power plant that employed 23 workers in that year. The Township is uniquely positioned in terms of manufacturing by having one of the few deepwater ports along the Great Lakes. The ports are located in Mansitee Lake and support Packaging Corporation of America and TES Filer Station.

Although data on earnings and seasonal employment is not available for Filer Township because of the community's small size, trends at the County level give a general depiction of the nature of these variables

across industries. Large shares of employment in manufacturing offer advantages to workers through higher average earnings. The median annual earning for Manistee County workers employed in manufacturing was \$44,063, which was 54% higher than the annual median earnings for workers in the County across all industries in 2016. The median earnings in manufacturing in Manistee County were almost on par with median earnings in that industry across the State of Michigan in that year (\$47,872). Further, the majority of Manistee County jobs (84.4%) in manufacturing were full-time and year-round, and this type of stable work confers healthcare benefits and economic security to households. Employment in large single manufacturing firms can also present a weakness to communities, however, when changes in production economic trends cause industries to relocate or curtail production.

One major issue in Michigan's shoreline communities is the repurposing of waterfront districts historically occupied by heavy industry. As the national freight system shifted away from maritime shipping and railroad and towards trucking on highways, the advantage offered to industrial businesses by immediate waterfront access has declined. Simultaneously, aging and obsolete industrial facilities, coupled with the rise in use of waterfront real estate for recreation, retail, and residential purposes have driven the relocation of industry to inland locations with freeway access. In Filer Township, two major industrial facilities, the TES Filer City energy station, and Packaging Corporation of America are located immediately between the Manistee Lake Waterfront and surrounding residential neighborhoods. Considering this, Filer Township should determine a path to balance the priorities of maintaining industry as an economic driver with opportunities for redeveloping waterfront areas. In any case, the nature of industrial production has changed across many industries with these technological changes and new advanced techniques involving robotics and green production in recent decades; manufacturing requires a more skilled workforce. These trends will be important as the Township seeks to retain and attract industry.

Retail and Hospitality

With Filer Township's presence as a resort community, businesses in retail and arts, accommodation, and food services are at the core of its economy. Together, these industries provided nearly half (45.9%) of the Township's jobs. They also made up a similarly large share of the community's total establishments, which indicates that most employment is provided through smaller employers hiring 20 people or less. Jobs in both industries are concentrated in Filer Township's U.S. 31 corridor. At the same time, employment in both industries yields below-average annual median earnings; the annual median for Manistee County residents employed in retail in 2017 (\$20,250) was only 71% of the countywide median across all industries (\$28,498). Meanwhile, the median earnings for Manistee County residents employed in arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food service (\$15,081) was only about half (52.9%) that of County workers' median earnings across all industries.

Low wages can stymie local economies by leading to lower discretionary spending and making these jobs difficult to fill. Correspondingly, employers in tourism-related industries in northwest

Michigan reported a shortage of trained workers to fill positions such as waitstaff, housekeeping, and retail sales in 2016. Further, large shares of jobs in both industries were either part-time or seasonal in 2017; only 58% of Manistee County residents' retail jobs were full-time and year-round in 2017, while only about half (49.1%) of the County residents employed in arts, recreation, accommodation, and food services had full-time employment. Difficulty finding year-round work can lead to challenges including lack of employee benefits, and seasonal economic declines.

High Skill and Technology-Based Industries

One highly discussed topic is the emergence of the “new” economy rooted in knowledge, information, and communication, and dependent on a trained and skilled labor force, which contrasts with the “old” economy rooted in manufacturing dependent on natural resources. This transition toward knowledge-based economies has been pronounced in northwest Michigan; the number of establishments in the region working in Information increased by 4.5% between 2009-2012, while the number of establishments across all industries declined by 1.5% in the same timeframe. Following Manistee County's patterns of stagnation in technology-based industries, however, Filer Township has a shortage of employment and establishments in these industries. In 2017, the Township had only 63 jobs in finance, insurance, real estate, and rental leasing, and 48 jobs in professional, scientific, and management services. Meanwhile, data indicate that the community had virtually no establishments or employees in information-related industries.

Services, Infrastructure, and Placemaking

Several strategies exist for northwest Michigan communities to promote growth in these sectors. Maintaining the infrastructure that high-tech businesses need is key, which includes broadband at sufficient speeds and low cost to support these businesses' communication needs. As noted in the community facilities and services chapter, the density of private providers is relatively low; only two to three private entities provide broadband to households and businesses throughout the Township. Meanwhile, the average download speed of 32.63 Mbps is sufficient to support many businesses, although this is still 37% slower than the national average speed. Only one provider, Spectrum Business offers service of over 25 Mbps per second to businesses. This suggests that the community's main challenges to broadband access are in the number of providers, and service speeds and costs. To address this, Filer Township should plan to implement broadband improvements to meet the needs of high-tech, medical, and engineering companies. The Township could also seek partnerships with private providers to promote more competition and ensure affordable and high-speed service provision.

The ability to attract an educated workforce with the skills and training to support high-tech industry is also essential and dependent on providing a “high quality of life and place-defined by vibrant, desirable communities and environments.” Technology-based businesses are highly geographically mobile, as are their workers, who seek out locations with recreational opportunities, entertainment, diverse housing, all encompassed within a “sense of place.” To help develop

these desirable characteristics, Filer Township could consider changes to its "general commercial" zoning district, which provides locations for commercial services, retail, and offices along U.S. 31. For instance, the community could consider adding residential uses as allowable within its commercial zone, which would help facilitate the live-work environment that these demographics desire.

TABLE 13. INDUSTRY TRENDS IN FILER TWP

INDUSTRY	EST. IN FILER TOWNSHIP		EMPLOYEES IN FILER TOWNSHIP		MEDIAN ANNUAL INCOME FOR EMPLOYED MANISTEE COUNTY RESIDENT
	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	2	1.8%	5	0.01%	38,750
Construction	5	5.2%	20	1.5%	34,375
Manufacturing	5	4.3%	356	27.4%	44,063
Wholesale trade	1	0.9%	13	1%	28,750
Retail trade	24	20.7%	296	22.8%	20,250
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	7	6.0%	29	2.2%	39,063
Information	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	29,242
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	12	10.3%	63	4.8%	29,549
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	10	8.6%	48	3.7%	26,532
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	12	10.4%	62	4.7%	30,564
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	16	17.2%	300	23.1%	15,081
Other services, except public administration	12	10.3%	36	2.7%	15,929
Public administration and industries not classified	5	4.3%	67	5.1%	40,700
Total	111		1,295		28,498 (Median across all industries)

Source: ESRI - Business Summary and American Fact Finder - 2011-2016 American Community Survey

FILER TOWNSHIP RESIDENT EMPLOYMENT

Commuting

In many areas of Michigan, semi-rural townships such as Filer function as residential communities while the central cities they surround contain the jobs that rural-living residents commute to. The U.S. Census Bureau has an online application called "On the Map" that aggregates payroll data collected from businesses to estimate levels of commuting between different geographies. The application estimates, however, that this general pattern does not hold in Filer Township, as the community functions as a major job center in Manistee County.

The Census Bureau's tool shows that the vast majority (78.5%) of workers employed in Filer Township commute from outside the community daily to get to work. At the same time, most (85.1%) of the employed Filer Township residents commute outside of the community boundary to work, while only a small total of 135 people live and work in Filer Township. More detailed analysis from the Census Bureau shows that most employed Filer Township residents commute relatively short distances, with roughly half (50.7%) traveling less than 10 miles or less to work. Many of them commute north to the City or Township of Manistee. Taken as a whole, these patterns of workers commuting in and out of Filer Township indicate a net inflow of 248 people into the community daily for work.

It is important to bear in mind that the Census Bureau's commuting estimates may not correspond exactly with the American Community Survey's estimates of employed Filer Township residents or ESRI's approximations of jobs in the Township. This is because these analyses source different data. The American Community Survey asks a sample of residents which sector they work in, while the "On the Map" application aggregates payroll data. The tool is useful in portraying the general dynamics of commuting, however, and shows Filer Township as a job center.



Employment by Industry

This section inventories the jobs that Filer Township residents hold. In locations where commuting between communities is heavy, there can be a large discrepancy between the types of employment and establishments located within the community and the types of jobs that residents hold. Data from the American Community Survey suggests that this is the case in Filer Township; the jobs that residents hold does not exactly follow the profile of jobs and establishments in the community.

Following Filer Township's large share of retirees and empty-nester households, only about half (53.8%) of the Township's residents, an estimated 1,225 people participated in the labor force as of 2017. This was well below the labor force participation rate of 61.2% in Michigan as a whole in that year. Taken with the relatively low unemployment rate of 3.7% within Filer Township's labor force in that year, this meant that about 1,180 residents were actively employed. Of these employed residents, about one quarter (24.1%) worked in educational services, healthcare, and social assistance, making this industry the single largest. It is critical to bear in mind that simultaneously, very few jobs

in education, healthcare, and social assistance were in the Township, which means that many of Township residents employed in the sector were likely among those traveling outside the community for work. The second-largest share of employment among the Township's residents was in manufacturing, which composed just under one fifth (18.3%) of their jobs in 2017. This meant that only roughly 215 Township residents were employed in the sector in 2017, which also suggests that large shares of workers living outside the Township but commuting in held large shares of the community's manufacturing jobs.

Meanwhile, significant numbers of Filer Township residents also worked in retail trade and arts, entertainment, and recreation, accommodation, and food services. Together, these two industries comprised about one fifth (22.7%) of residents' employment. Another 11.1% of employed residents worked in public administration and industries not classified.

TABLE 14. FILER TWP LABOR FORCE

	FILER TOWNSHIP
Resident labor force	
Percent of residents in labor force	53.8%
Number of residents in labor force	1,225
Labor force unemployment rate	3.7%
Number of employed residents	1,180
Percent of residents employed by industry	
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	1.2%
Construction	6.9%
Manufacturing	18.3%
Wholesale trade	1.7%
Retail trade	8.8%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	2.3%
Information	0.8%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	3.7%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management	2.0%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	24.1%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	13.9%
Other services, except public administration	5.2%
Public administration and industries not classified	11.1%

Source: American Fact Finder –2011–2016 American Community Survey

RETAIL MARKET ANALYSIS

One major concern when it comes to the economic health and vitality of business districts is how well local demand for products and services match businesses' supply of those goods and services and, more generally, with the supply of commercial space. To fully understand this, Filer Township undertook a retail market analysis in 2019, which synthesized information on existing retail square footage and expenditures in the Township, the area's current and projected demographic and lifestyle characteristics, and the spending patterns of visitors and residents.

The study found that resident and visitor demand for goods and services could be leveraged to support several new businesses in the U.S. 31 corridor. Together, residents, visitors, and workers in Filer Township's "primary trade area" spent an estimated total of \$68.5 million on goods and services in 2018, approximately 75% of which occurred online and in shopping locations outside of the Township. Meanwhile, establishments in the Township captured only \$17.2 million in retail sales in that year. Following this, new commercial businesses in the DDA district could, given sound business practices, capture an additional \$8.1 million of this lost revenue by 2024. This growth could support 23,700 square feet of new retail space and 6,100 square feet of new restaurant space, which equates to between 10 and 15 new stores or businesses. Alternatively, some of the forecasted demand could be absorbed by existing businesses provided they make small adjustments in their practices to fully match products with consumers' preferences.

Given this recommendation, Filer Township's market analysis also estimates the types of goods, services, and businesses that could be supported in the DDA district, based on the retail area's demographics, lifestyle preferences, and spending patterns. Customer demand could

TABLE 15. RETAIL STATISTICS BY CATEGORY

RETAIL CATEGORY	EST. SUPPORTABLE SF	2019 SALES/SF (\$)	2019 ESTIMATED RETAIL SALES (\$)	2024 SALES/SF (\$)	2024 EST. RETAIL SALES (\$)
Retailers					
Apparel Stores	1,100	260	286,000	275	302,500
Beer, Wine, and Liquor Stores	1,200	315	378,000	330	396,000
Department Store Merchandise	4,900	220	1,078,000	230	1,127,000
Electronics & Appliance Stores	1,200	340	408,000	355	426,000
General Merchandise Stores	4,500	245	1,102,500	255	1,147,500
Gift Stores	900	270	243,000	285	256,500
Hardware	4,600	250	1,150,000	265	1,219,000
Home Furnishings Stores	1,200	275	330,000	290	348,000
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	2,000	245	490,000	255	510,000
Gift Stores	900	270	243,000	285	256,500
Retailer Totals	23,700	267	6,002,500	280	6,295,000
Furniture Stores	1,200	245	294,000	255	306,000
Restaurants					
Bars, Breweries, & Pubs	1,500	330	495,000	345	517,500
Full-Service Restaurants	1,900	280	532,000	295	560,500
Limited-Service Eating Places	1,500	260	390,000	275	412,500
Special Food Services	1,200	245	294,000	255	306,000
Restaurant Totals	6,100	279	1,711,000	293	1,796,500

Source: Gibbs Planning Group - Filer Township Retail Market Analysis

support new establishments including apparel stores, specialty food and beverage stores, electronics and appliance stores, hardware, and gift stores. The market could also support new food service establishments including full-service, limited service, and specialty food restaurants, as well as a brewpub. Despite these possibilities, several factors, including a lack of large anchor stores and a fragmented and discontinuous retail environment, inhibit the development of these businesses. These setbacks can, however, be best remedied by providing an “exceptional shopping setting” in U.S. 31 corridor and making the area more continuous, walkable, and inviting and therefore competitive with other well-managed retail districts in surrounding communities. The retail analysis, therefore, recommends that the Township follow recommendations from existing design studies for the corridor’s physical design. For these reasons, the Township could also consider long-term strategies for redevelopment along the Lake Manistee waterfront.

Filer Township should consider the findings from the report and should continue to implement recommendations from past studies of the U.S. 31 Corridor. The Township could also actively seek to publicize the findings from the report and to disperse the conclusions regarding “lost” demand across retail market segments among businesses. Organizations such as the Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce, which provides networking and information sharing among its members, would perhaps be a good starting point to reach business owners. Spreading this information could help them work together, adjust their practices, and match their supply of goods and services with forecasted demand.

BUSINESS DISTRICTS

Two prominent but contrasting districts provide the space wherein Filer Township’s establishments are located; The U.S. 31 Corridor and the Lake Front Industrial district located along Manistee Lake.

U.S. 31 Corridor



A view of the U.S. 31 corridor looking north.

Filer Township’s U.S. 31 corridor functions as the community’s commercial core by providing a contiguous business environment and supporting a variety of commercial retail, services, and office uses. The corridor extends along the highway for 1.35 miles between the City of Manistee boundary in the north and Stronach Road in the south. In its northern extent between the City of Manistee border and 21st street, the corridor primarily supports retail uses, which, as of 2019, include food and grocery stores, lumber and garden supply stores, sporting goods stores, discount retail, and a hotel. Continuing south between 21st and 28th streets, the corridor’s uses include fast food establishments, auto parts, and banking and credit unions. Commercial buildings in this district are located adjacent to but are not well-connected with the Oak Hill neighborhood located east of U.S. 31. In the corridor’s south, commercial uses are sparse between 28th street and Stronach Road but include one medical office. All of the district’s commercial uses are located primarily within suburban shopping plazas. All properties east and west of the highway are zoned for “General Commercial” use and are incorporated within the Township’s DDA district. Sidewalks and nonmotorized infrastructure are not included in the corridor.

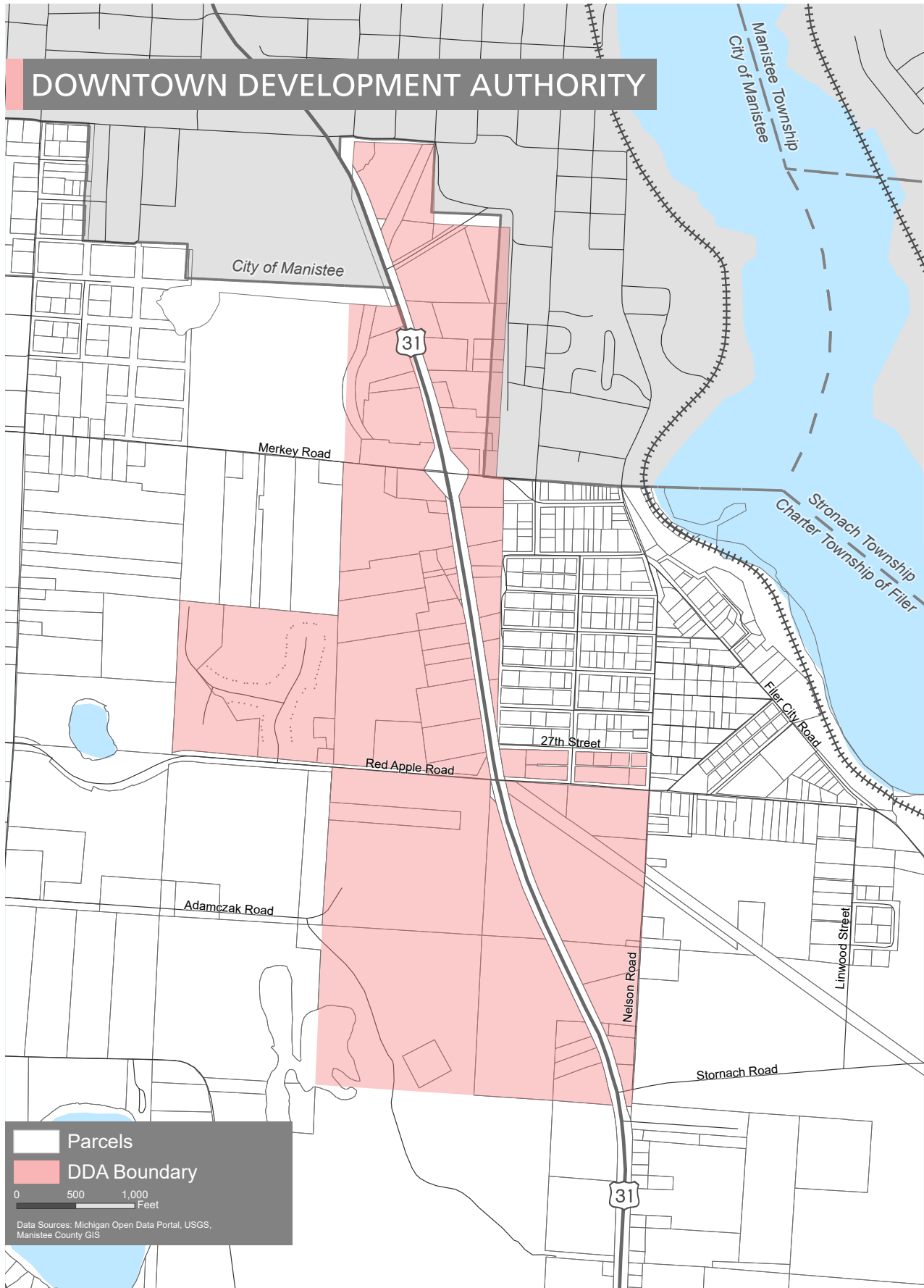
As part of Manistee County's broad-based effort to plan for the U.S. 31 corridor, Filer Township held a design charrette for the U.S. 31 corridor in 2017, which invited community members to share their preferences for aesthetics, access, and activities along the roadway. The design charrette garnered robust participation from Township residents, and a variety of desired outcomes emerged from the process and were codified under the "Filer Township U.S. 31 Corridor Analysis and Opportunities" design. Residents expressed that pedestrian access to properties was key, and the plan's corresponding recommendations include the installation of sidewalks and safe crosswalks along U.S. 31, nonmotorized connections between commercial properties and the Oak Hill neighborhood, and the installation of trees, raingardens, and lighting along the roadway.

Aside from these transportation and aesthetic improvements, residents wanted to see an increased variety of uses including mixed commercial and residential buildings, pocket parks, and civic facilities. In 2019, the Filer Township DDA plans to move forward with related projects including gateway signs for the U.S. 31 corridor, business incubation spaces, and the establishment of crosswalks across the highway and pedestrian pathways to surrounding neighborhoods. These improvements are an excellent start, and the Township should continue to refer to the designs when planning projects. The success of these projects and plans requires collaboration between the Township Planning Commission, Township Board, and DDA. Cataloging funding sources, proposing timelines in a capital improvements schedule, and adhering to design and zoning standards will be critical in ensuring implementation.

As the Township continues to plan improvements aimed to realize the community's design for the U.S. 31 corridor, it should also consider complementary changes to its zoning code that could help facilitate these desired outcomes. In 2019, all properties extending along U.S. 31 are regulated under the Township's "General Commercial District", which allows for a wide range of commercial retail, office, and service uses. Because residents expressed support for mixed-use structures along the corridor and that workers in technology-based sectors prefer compact environments, the Township could consider including residential uses such as apartments or condominiums as allowable by right or with a special permit. Further, the Township's zoning designation mandates building setbacks between 20 and 35 feet, which separate new structures from the streetscape and impede pedestrian access. Meanwhile, other zoning provisions, including inflexible minimum parking requirements, further degrade the district's contiguous commercial character. Decreasing minimum building setbacks and creating more flexible parking requirements could help to transition the district to a walkable commercial environment, while simultaneously incentivizing redevelopment by allowing the private builders to maximize space.

As with any changes to the physical standards in zoning, these alterations, once passed, would apply to future development, and would not affect the characteristics of existing properties.

MAP 15. DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY BOUNDARY



Lakefront Industrial

Filer Township's large industrial businesses remain concentrated on large parcels of land located along Lake Manistee in the Township's northeastern extent. The properties, which contain the TES Filer City Station and the Packaging Corporation of America Facilities are located along Mee and Grant Streets in the Township's Filer City neighborhood. These properties fall under the Township's "Lake Front Industrial" zoning category, which exists exclusively to provide a location for industrial, transportation, and warehousing businesses in need of lakefront access. In 2019, the zoning district mandates large minimum setbacks from parcel boundaries. The proximity of this district to adjoining residential areas presents potential environmental health risks, particularly related to truck and freight traffic, while the presence of the district on Manistee Lake also presents an opportunity for renewal.

ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES IN FILER TOWNSHIP'S ECONOMY

Filer Township DDA

The Charter Township of Filer Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is a local board with the stated purpose to strengthen the character and economy of the community's downtown. The Township's DDA district extends north and south along U.S. 31 and includes the contiguous commercial properties adjacent to the roadway. The DDA operations are also administered by a professional director, which makes the organization unique among small communities in Michigan, which often have a completely volunteer-based staff. The organization undertakes strategic improvements to public facilities and infrastructure in the community, including pedestrian and nonmotorized linkages and streetscaping projects. To support these economic development projects, the DDA is authorized to collect and use property tax revenue in the form of tax increment financing. In the timespan preceding 2019, the DDA has been active in financing the Township's sewer project through a special assessment on commercial properties within its district.

Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce

The Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce is a partnership working to promote networking, information sharing, and cooperation among local businesses. The chamber hosts events such as business after hours that promote relationship building and coordination among local members. It is also involved in local government advocacy on behalf of local businesses as well as in promoting a shared and positive image of the area through marketing efforts. Filer Township could consider partnering with the area chamber of commerce to pursue its planned marketing initiatives.

Michigan Small Business Development Center

Access to capital and technical knowledge is often an impediment to potential entrepreneurs and to address this issue, the Michigan Small Business Development Center offers consulting services to potential

business owners. The organization provides information on financing sources and assists entrepreneurs in accessing grants and loans for business ventures. It also provides training to new entrepreneurs including business plan creation, social media use and marketing, and human resources management. These services make the office a valuable resource for those seeking to expand or establish businesses.

REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Filer Township has a number of underutilized sites (both undeveloped and brownfields) which present opportunities for future commercial, industrial, and residential growth and development.

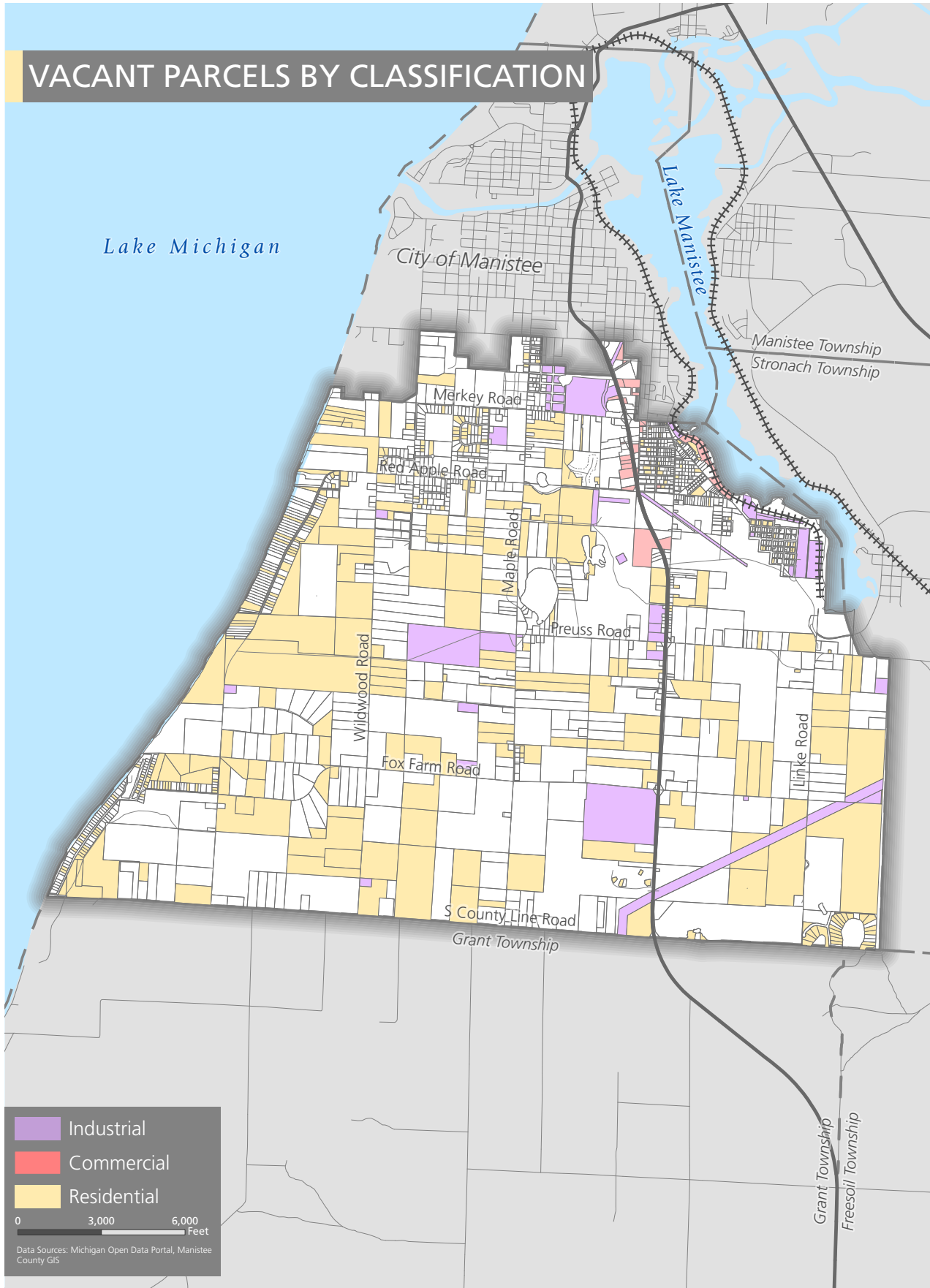
The initial step in the process is cataloging information and characteristics of underused properties that the community would like to see redeveloped. From this starting point, Filer Township can begin a community-driven conversation to determine the desirable types of development in each location, the uses, and businesses that the community would like, the types of development that would be feasible, and the resources available to encourage the development. The Township should continue to engage the community on preferred redevelopment locations and can use the information and economic trends depicted in this chapter to depict the market realities and regional economic trends and inform the debate.

There are many vacant parcels of land located throughout Filer Township under commercial, industrial, and residential designations. The Township could move forward with this information to designate and inventory potential redevelopment sites located in high impact areas such as the U.S. 31 corridor and the Oak Hill and Filer City neighborhoods.



Manistee National Golf and Resort club building.

MAP 16. VACANT PARCELS BY CLASSIFICATION





Transportation

Transportation infrastructure, including local roads, highways, and railroads is essential in the formation of connections within a given community as well as in facilitating interactions with other communities separated by distance. This infrastructure allows goods, services, and information to move between these locations, thereby facilitating a healthy economy. In most communities, the same infrastructure allows residents and households to access the day-to-day goods and services they need, while simultaneously, households' choice of transportation mode also affects the portion of their income they expend on transportation-related costs. A wide variety of transportation infrastructure serves the unique needs of Filer Township. This chapter inventories the Township's infrastructure as well as its geographic location within the community, and highlights planned improvements to the system.

ROAD OWNERSHIP AND CONDITION

The maintenance of roadways is a defining issue for communities throughout Michigan. A 2019 summit with Michigan transportation leaders estimated the State's funding gap on road maintenance between 2 and 2 ½ billion dollars annually, and further, that the costs from this under-funded infrastructure are transferred to business and residents through vehicle maintenance and lost productivity. This issue was highlighted by Networks Northwest, whose 2013 report on transportation in northwest Michigan defined the region's challenges. In the plan, the organization evaluated pavement conditions throughout northwest Michigan's roads and ranked them using the PASER analysis, which categorizes conditions into "good", "fair",

TABLE 16. ROAD OWNERSHIP & CONDITION

ROAD	OWNER	TOWNSHIP MILES IN "POOR" CONDITION	TOWNSHIP MILES IN "FAIR" CONDITION	TOTAL TWP ROAD MILES
U.S. 31	Michigan Department of Transportation	.83	3.07	3.9
Merkey Road	Manistee County Road Commission	2.06	.42	2.48
Maple Road	Manistee County Road Commission	.12	3.88	4
Red Apple Road	Manistee County Road Commission	5.5	.34	5.84
Preuss Road	Manistee County Road Commission	2.37	0	2.37
Fox Farm Road	Manistee County Road Commission	5.62	0	5.62

Source: Google maps, Transportation Asset Management Council "Interactive Maps" and Manistee County Road Commission "Dickson-Filer Roads"

and "poor" rankings. The results show that degraded pavement is a challenge in many communities, although the problem is particularly acute in Manistee County, which has one of the largest proportions of road mileage in "poor" condition throughout the region. Accordingly, the report identified "Asset Management", the process through which communities decide how to maintain existing roadway infrastructure, as a key to economic success. Because roads are owned and maintained by multiple levels of government this takes careful coordination.

Filer Township's roads are owned and operated by Manistee County and U.S. 31 by State of Michigan, which means that the Township's ability to finance its roads directly is somewhat limited. Although the roads are under the Manistee County Road Commission's purview, the commission has established a set of cost sharing procedures with local jurisdictions when it comes to resurfacing and reconstruction projects. Under the guidelines, townships such as Filer must share the cost of the improvement with the County, typically a proportion of 30% of the total cost, when the improvement is not eligible for state or federal funding. Importantly, U.S. 31, which is the community's commercial corridor and carries the largest traffic volumes, is maintained by the State of Michigan Department of Transportation.

The Transportation Asset Management Council, which is an organization associated with MDOT, also uses the PASER method to rate the quality of road pavement in the Township and according to the metrics, large portions of the community's roads are degraded to some extent. U.S. 31 was rated in "poor" condition to the north of 28th street, while the highway's condition were rated "fair" to 28th street's south. Most of the Township's commercial businesses are located to the north of 28th Street however, which means that road maintenance along the roadway will be important and further, that coordination with the State of Michigan will be necessary to make improvements in keeping with the Township's goal of fostering a mixed economy along the corridor. In a similar vein, major east-west thoroughfares such as Red Apple Road and Merkey Road are in "poor" condition throughout the Township, while Maple Road, which

MAP 17. PASER RATING

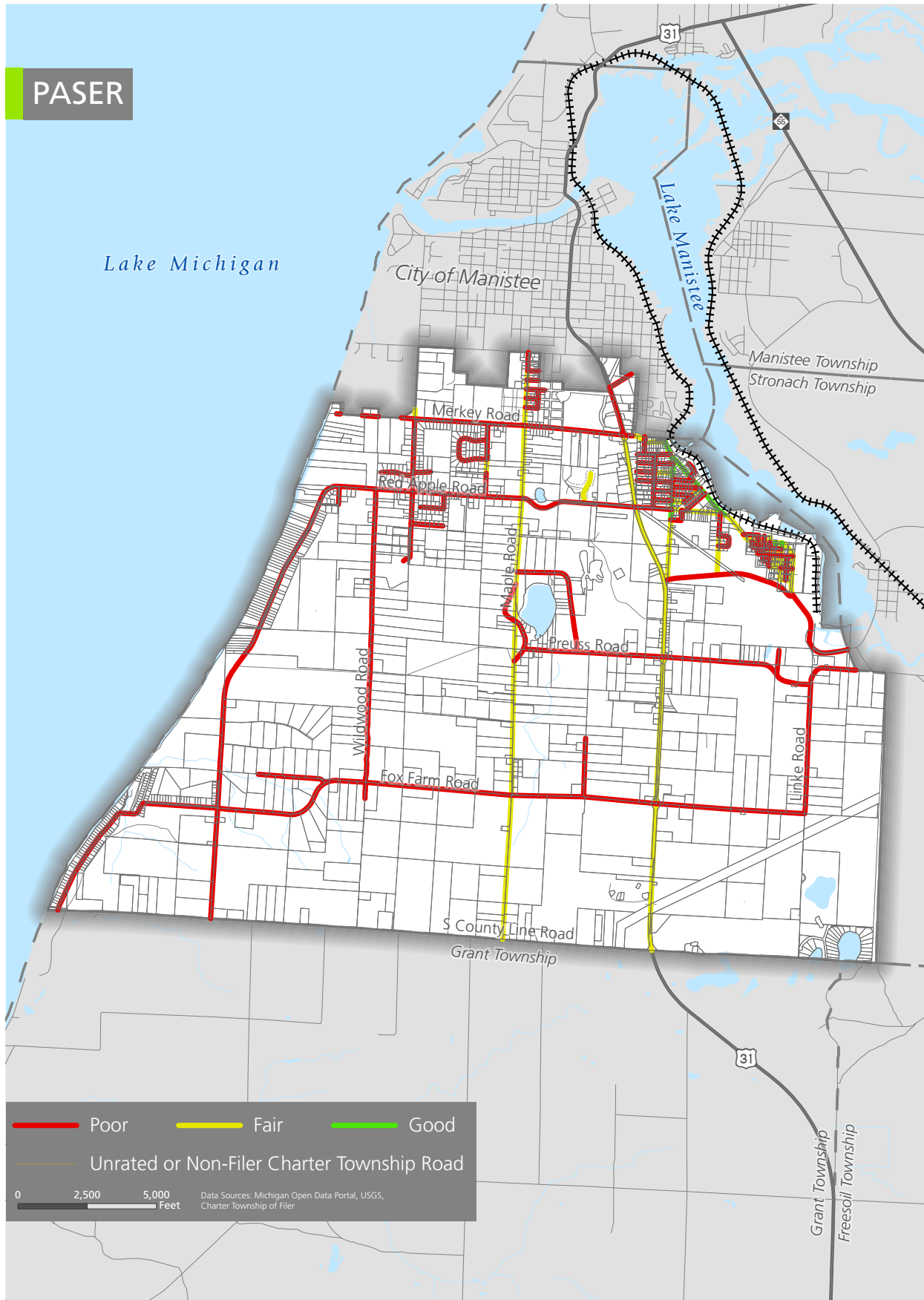
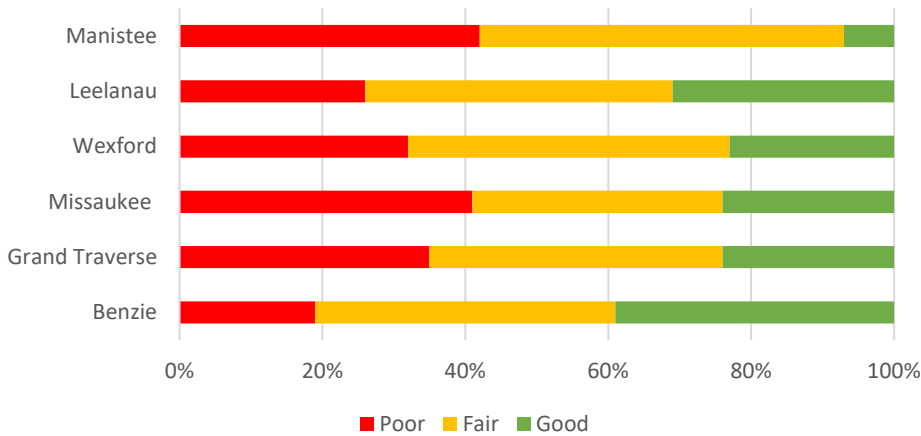


FIGURE 8. ROAD CONDITIONS BY COUNTY (2014)



carries relatively large volumes of traffic north-south, remains in “Fair” condition. This signifies that ongoing cooperation between residents, the Township, and the County will be needed to appropriately maintain these assets. In 2019, the only major improvement to the Township’s roads planned by the Manistee County Road Commission is resurfacing about 1 ½ miles of West Fox Farm Road.

TRAFFIC CONDITIONS

The Michigan Department of Transportation also provides estimates of the average number of vehicles that pass through roadways located within Filer Township on a daily basis throughout the year, a figure known as average annual daily traffic (AADT). The state’s estimates show that U.S. 31, which is the community’s major commercial corridor and its only roadway classified as a major arterial, carries by far the largest daily traffic volumes, with traffic counts ranging between 5,000 and 10,000 vehicles per day. The highway includes only two lanes in the southern extent of the Township but widens to include a turning lane north of 28th street, where commercial businesses are served on both sides of the roadway by the turning lane. That pavement conditions along this state highway are at least partially degraded which further highlights its priority for maintenance.

The next most heavily traveled streets in the community are Stronach Road east of U.S. 31, Merkey Road, which extends both east and west of U.S. 31, and Maple Road. All three of these roads accommodate between 2,001 and 5,000 vehicles per day and are classified as either minor arterials or major collector streets. Each of these roadways have only two automobile traffic lanes. The Township’s other roadways with relatively heavy traffic volumes include Filer City Road, Nelson Street, and 28th street. All three of these roadways accommodate under 2,000 vehicles per day and collect traffic traveling between the residential communities of Oak Hill and Filer City and other parts of the community. The three roads are the only major ways in and out of these residential communities and so traffic accumulates more heavily than it would on normal residential streets.

ACCESS MANAGEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

Filer Township has undertaken planning to improve transportation along its major commercial corridor, U.S. 31, and improving access

DESIGN DEFICIENCIES IN FILER TOWNSHIP ALONG U.S. 31:

Insufficient space between driveways and unnecessary second driveways to and from properties.

Too little distance from roadway to internal parking lot and circulation.

Poor offsets between driveways on opposite sides of U.S. 31.

Source: Source: Progressive AE. “U.S. 31 Corridor Management Plan.”

to and from commercial uses emerged as a major concern from these processes. According to the U.S. 31 Corridor Management Plan, several of the area's design attributes impede efficient access to and from adjacent commercial properties. These characteristics include too many driveways spaced at small distances, insufficient space from access drives to internal parking lots, and inadequate spacing between driveways on opposite sides of U.S. 31.

In recognizing these challenges to efficient access along U.S. 31, the corridor management plan recommends several actions for Manistee County communities to pursue:

"Shared access drives, service drives, or frontage roads all serve to minimize the number of conflict points along a corridor while still providing reasonable access to the adjacent land uses."

Source: Progressive AE. "U.S. 31 Corridor Management Plan."

- Reduce the number of access points and driveways to and from properties
- Increase the spacing between driveways and roadway intersections
- Provide adequate spacing of driveways from other driveways
- Increase spacing between driveways on opposite sides of the street
- Encourage shared driveways and parking lots between neighboring commercial uses
- Promote alternative forms of access including rear service drives and frontage roads

The management plan provides detailed specifications for each recommendation, all of which are based on context including the vehicle speed limit and the number and spacing of existing driveways. In keeping with these recommendations, Filer Township plans several improvements to the corridor including a shared access system to businesses on the west side of U.S. 31, and the elimination of curb cuts along the highway. This indicates significant progress, and Filer Township should continue to work with property owners and the State Department of Transportation to implement these recommendations, particularly on new development.

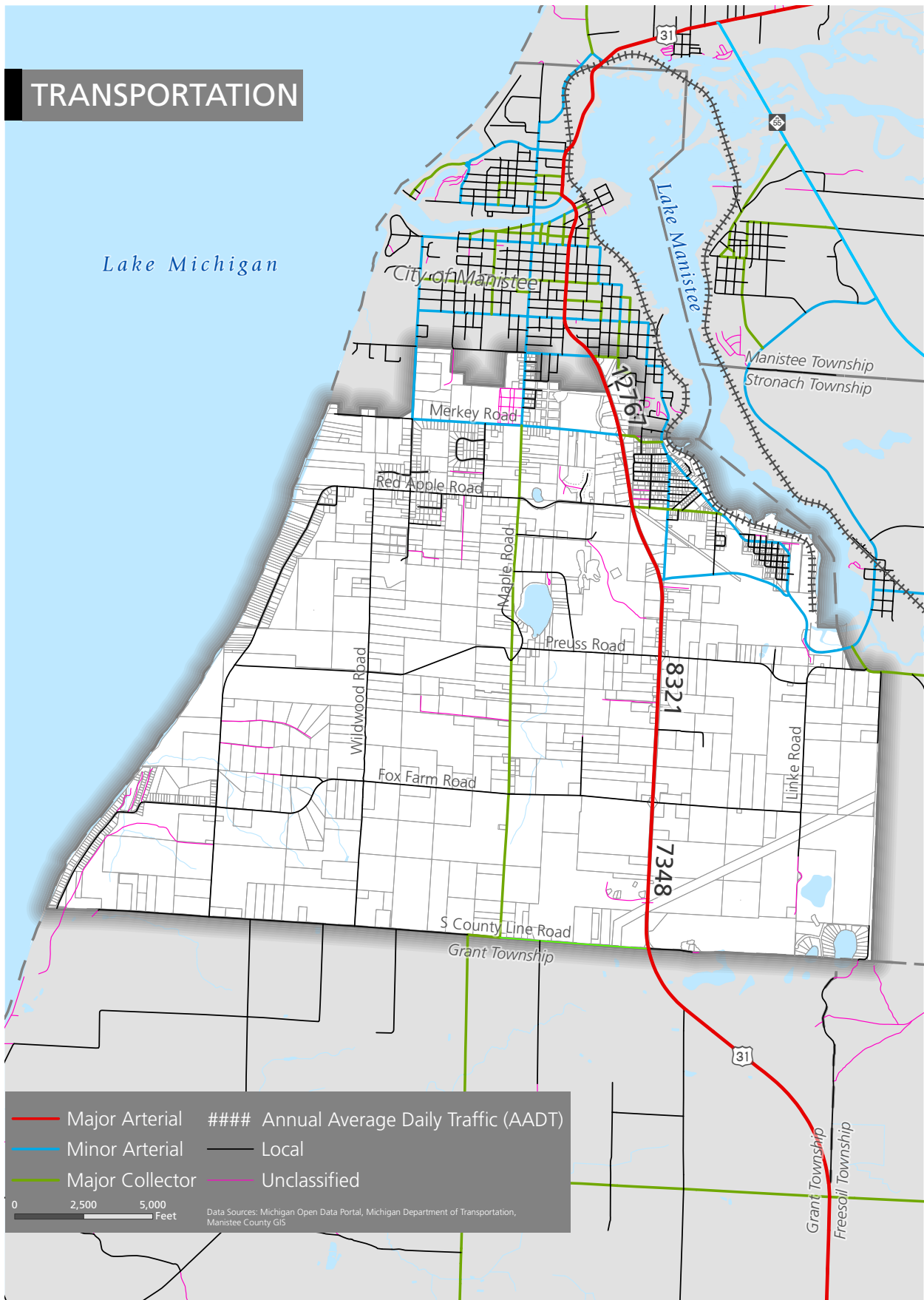
Another important aspect of access to and from U.S. 31 is the placement and size of parking lots, which often affect how easy walking is versus driving. Large, expansive parking lots in front of buildings create separation between sidewalks and businesses, thereby discouraging pedestrian travel, while parking lots located to the rear or side of structures lessen this effect. According to the 2017 U.S. 31 Corridor Plan, Filer Township has one of the lowest portions (7.94%) of rear and side parking lots of all Manistee County communities located along the highway. Considering this, and that most of the parking for commercial uses is on private property, the Township could incorporate zoning requirements to encourage rear and side automobile access to buildings.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

In low-density areas, the geographic coverage of public transit service and the frequency at which it can operate is a defining challenge. Despite this, Manistee County Transportation provides a bus service to residents of the County from Monday through Saturday throughout the week. The County's service is a dial-a-ride format where riders call ahead to reserve their pickup, as opposed to service that serves fixed stops on a determined schedule. The bus service includes discounted fares for



Manistee bus pulling in to pick up riders along the U.S. 31 corridor.



Public transit providers served 1.2 million passengers annually in northwest Michigan as of 2013

25% of transit passengers in northwest Michigan were disabled in that year

11% of transit passengers in the region were elderly

Source: Networks Northwest. "A Framework For Recreation in Northwest Michigan."

riders over the age of 65 and under the age of 16, as well as for people with disabilities. It is financed partially through these fares but also receives support from a local millage and from state and federal sources.

A transportation framework for northwest Michigan was developed by Networks Northwest and describes the challenges to public transportation use in northwest Michigan. Awareness of the service and how it works, as well as familiarity and comfort using it are one of the major barriers to garnering ridership, especially among elderly and disabled riders. Confusing and variable routes were also noted challenges to would-be users. More broadly, lengthy travel times, infrequent service, and hours without service, all associated with dial-a-ride formats, deter commuters or residents running errands from using the service. Networks Northwest's plan also states that fixed-route transit formats are critically important elements of service when attracting ridership from commuters and travelers that could choose to drive.

Despite these challenges, public transit provides enormous benefits to communities throughout the region. According to Networks Northwest's report, Manistee County Transportation provided service to 136,375 travelers in 2013, about 40% of whom were either elderly or disabled and would therefore have difficulties reaching destinations otherwise. Public transit also has the potential to reduce costs associated with transportation, which, after housing, is typically the largest expense for households in the United States. According to the Center For Neighborhood Technology, households in Filer Township spend \$11,342 annually on transportation-related expenses, which equates to 25% of the community's median annual household income. Considering this, Filer Township and Manistee County Transit should continually evaluate the goals of transit provision and strive to match the service with the goals.

COMPLETE STREETS AND NONMOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION

The complete streets movement is a relatively recent development and has been pushed by national organizations seeking to make community streets and roadways serve all users, regardless of their mode of travel. Complete Streets advocates for the design of streetscapes to facilitate travel by bicycle, walking, public transportation, among others. This contrasts with conventional street design in the United States, which facilitates the rapid movement of automobiles at the expense of these other modes. Elements of complete streets include the installation of specific features where they are appropriate, including wide sidewalks, bicycle lanes, bus shelters, crosswalks, vegetation. According to Networks Northwest, the potential benefits of complete streets are many; they can improve safety for non-motorists, lower transportation costs associated with the automobile, and can promote travel choices that millennial and baby boomer demographics need or prefer.

While some Filer Township streets already follow the complete streets conventions as of 2019, the Township plans improvements in order to make this more the case in key locations. The older residential



A sidewalk located in the Filer City neighborhood.

communities of Filer City and Oak Hill, with their small blocks, grid-based street patterns, and traditional sidewalks are perhaps the only major areas that have complete streets elements. Meanwhile, the same cannot be said for the U.S. 31 corridor, which lacks sidewalks, bike lanes, and connection with neighborhoods. Possible nonmotorized projects were identified in the Manistee County 2016 Parks and Recreation Plan include a loop trail along Red Apple and Fox Farm Roads, a nonmotorized path around Manistee Lake, and the conversion of railroad lines along Lake Manistee to bicycle infrastructure.

As of 2017, the automobile was the dominant form of transportation in Filer Township. In that year, the vast majority (95%) of Township residents reported commuting to work in an automobile, either alone or in a carpool, while only the remaining 5% biked or walked. Although most commuters also traveled via automobile in the City of Manistee (84%) and Manistee Township (90%), the proportion of commuters who drove to work in Filer Township was the highest of any community in the County in that year. These figures show that it is important that Filer Township continue to pursue its planned streets improvements to make diverse transportation choices viable in the community's more developed portions. The Township could also consider measures such as a complete streets resolution, which would require transportation engineers and planners to consider access for all travel modes when making decisions that affect streetscapes.

COMPLETE STREET DESIGN ELEMENTS

Elements

Curb Extensions

Roadway Medians

Safe Crosswalks

Wide Sidewalks

Bike lanes and racks

Bus shelters

RAILROAD

Rail transportation has historically enabled the proliferation of industry along the Manistee Lake waterfront. The Township's rail lines are thus located along the Lake's edge in the northeastern portion of the community following and connecting industrial businesses in the Township and in Manistee to freight and logistics centers such as Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo. Freight transportation along the community's lines is operated primarily by Marquette Rail, a company which is based in Ludington and operates throughout west Michigan. The Township intends to continue to work with the railroad operator, residents, and county government to explore opportunities where it may be beneficial to maintain and/or expand existing rail service, and where it may be appropriate to convert underutilized rail lines into non-motorized trails.

MARITIME TRANSPORTATION

Filer Township has two deep draft commercial harbors. The TES Filer Station facility, which is a coal and biomass power plant located in the Filer City neighborhood of the Township is serviced by one, and the Packaging Corporation is by the other. Located along the M-90 Marine Highway Corridor, these deep water docks provide a unique logistical opportunity for the expansion of the manufacturing sector in the community by facilitating the shipping and receiving of goods to larger markets located along the Great Lakes shipping network and globally through the Saint Lawrence Seaway.



Future Land Use & Zoning

FUTURE LAND USE

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008 requires the inclusion of a future land use map and zoning plan in the Master Plan. The future land use map and districts identify a generalized, preferred organization of future land uses in the Township. It is a general framework intended to guide land use and policy decisions within the Township over the next 15-20 years. It guides the development of a Zoning Plan and ultimately influences changes that may be made to the Zoning Ordinance.

The Future Land Use Map is not intended to be used to identify future land use on a parcel by parcel basis, but rather to identify land uses that may evolve within the Township. The Future Land Use Map shows the preferred locations for future preservation and development in the Charter Township of Filer.

The Future Land Use map is often informed by what currently exists in the Township (see Existing Land Use Map) and the current policy framework in the Township (see Zoning Map). Both the Existing Land Use map and the Zoning Map are important influences of the Future Land Use map. This map shows the relative desired locations for residential, commercial, industrial development in the Township.

Based on the social, economic and environmental characteristics of the Township, eight (8) general categories of land use have been identified to serve existing and future development needs. These categories are as follows:

- Traditional Residential
- Mixed Residential
- Shoreline Residential
- Suburban Residential
- Commercial
- Lakefront Industry
- Forest / Agriculture
- Lakeshore Environmental

Traditional Residential

Neighborhoods within this district correlate with the older residential areas of the Township and are intended to accommodate a variety of housing types ranging from attached and detached single-family to multiple-family housing. These richly historical areas are urban in nature with a distinct character that reinforces the feeling of neighborhood cohesion rather than a collection of unrelated houses. They are intended to infill with development of the same character as Oak Hill and Filer City with smaller lots; sidewalks; narrow, paved streets with tree lawns built on a fine grid street pattern; alleys; on-street parking; and garages located in the rear yards, making buildings the prominent features of neighborhood streets. Public water service is currently available in this area and public sanitary sewer service is anticipated in this area in the future.

Mixed Residential

The Mixed Neighborhood district is adjacent to the U.S. 31 commercial district and is intended to designate an area of future growth and investment to support economic development and respond to changing demands for a mix of housing options in the Township. Single family, townhouses, multi-family developments, and limited neighborhood services are supported in this district.

Shoreline Residential

The intent of the Shoreline Residential District is to provide a place for single family residential development that can occur in a sensitive manner in balance with coastal conditions and along sensitive inland lakes. In this district the properties with direct frontage on the Lake Michigan bluffline, as well as the Township's inland lakes, require larger setbacks from the shoreline. These residential areas along Lake Michigan face the challenge of erosion along bluff line, which could threaten the integrity of existing structures in the future.

Suburban Residential

Areas within this district are intended to be low-density detached single family housing that does not offer the full complement of urban services. These areas are intended to have on-site septic systems, private wells and rural roads with improved surfaces, shoulders and ditch sections. These areas are not intended to have publicly maintained parks but should have access to the Township's park system via an interconnecting trail network. Public and institutional uses that can be accommodated with on-site utilities and essential services are intended to support the needs of residential neighborhoods.

Mixed Use Commercial

The U.S. 31 corridor area is intended to accommodate a mix of commercial and residential uses that augment the shopping center character of the corridor while incorporating an attractive development design. This area is served by public water and the DDA district is served by sanitary sewer. The intent of this district is to provide a mix of uses and services that are pedestrian friendly, easily accessible, and provide a retail and entertainment experience in the Township. Apartments and other multiple-family housing styles can be located above commercial uses or as separate developments, providing the Township with additional housing options by assimilating uses together. Integrating these mixed uses will provide a sense of place and increase potential destinations for residents and visitors. The Township is exploring an amendment to the zoning ordinance to incorporate enhanced development standards, utilizing a form-based code approach, to implement the desired development pattern along the corridor.

Lakefront Industrial

The Lakefront Industrial area is intended to provide an exclusive place for industrial operations and land uses associated with industrial activities on the shores of Manistee Lake. This area accommodates larger employers that depend on the lake or rail to satisfy their transportation needs. This area is intended to be serviced by public utilities. In the event that industrial land becomes vacant, the Township should consider options and opportunities, including the establishment of a greenway that shares the existing railroad right-of-way along the lakeshore.

Forest / Agriculture

The intent of the Forest / Agriculture district is to protect existing farmland, open space, and forested areas of the Township and shift development away from these sensitive areas towards districts served by public infrastructure and services. Residential development in this district should be rural in nature and have a very low density of one residential unit per five acres. When feasible, cluster residential development tools should be used.

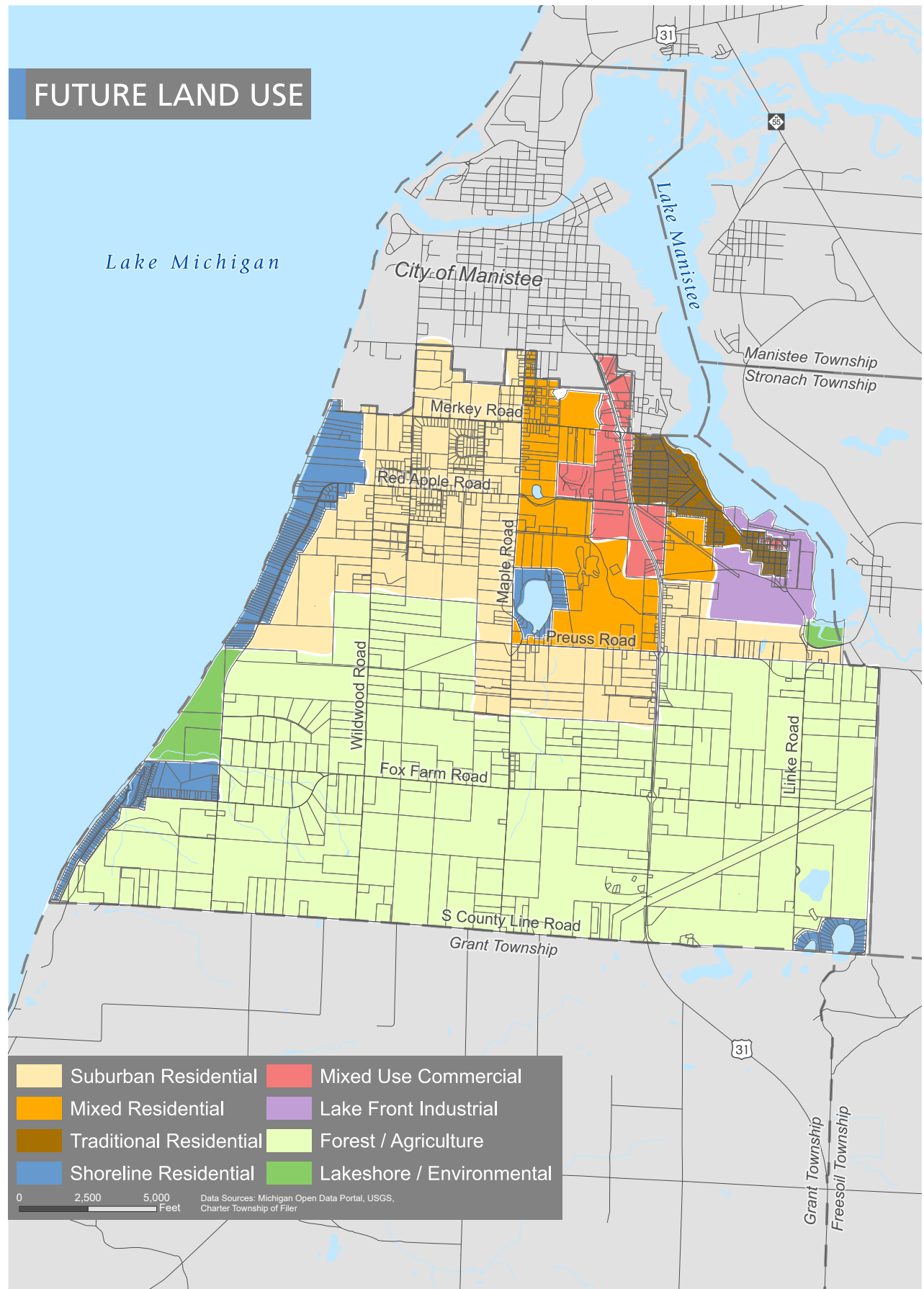
Lakeshore Environmental

These sensitive areas are either owned by the Township or are wetlands that need protection. These are high amenity areas that will remain as permanent open space and view sites. The only improvements that are intended to be allowed in these areas are to be recreational in nature.

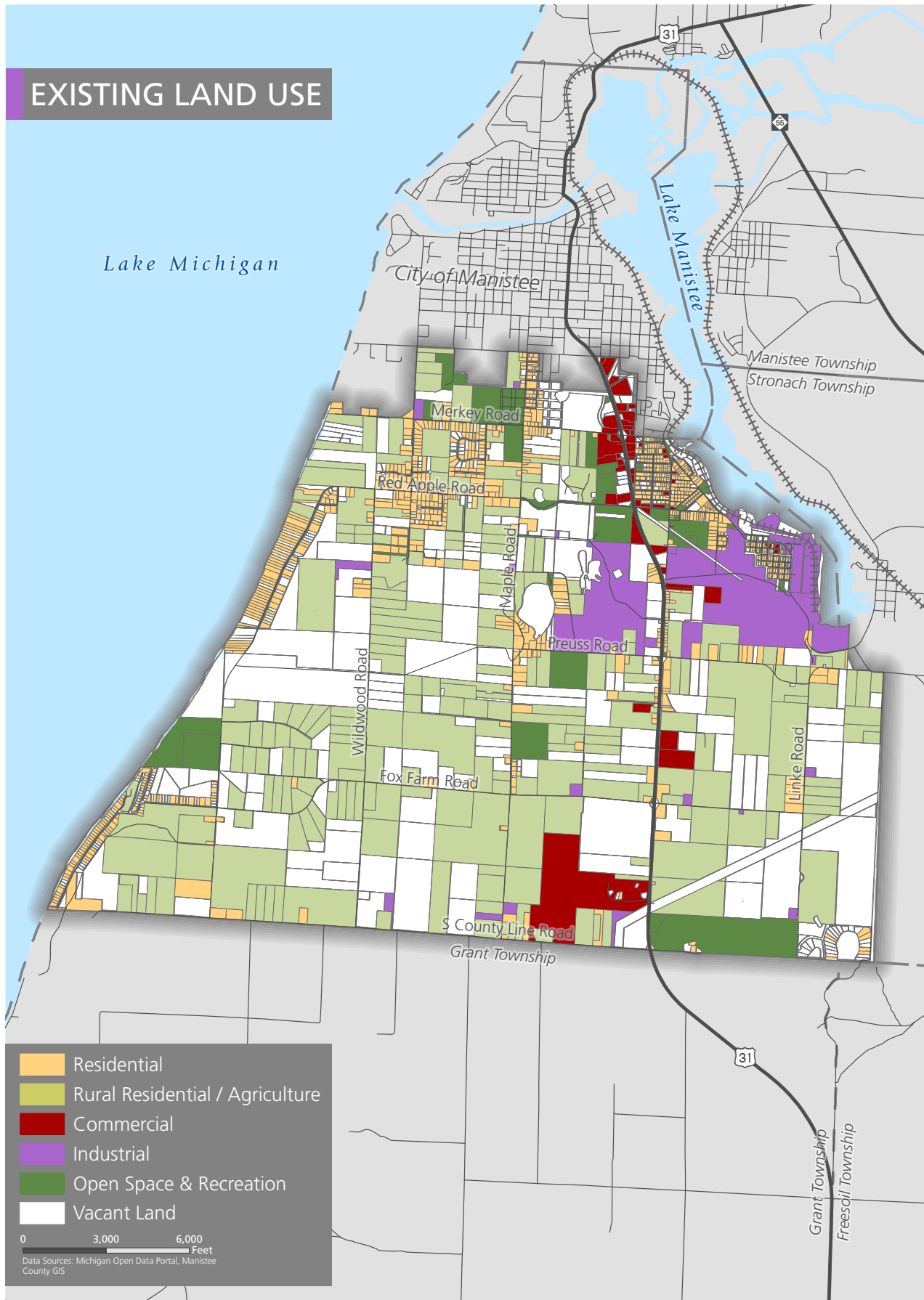
EXISTING LAND USE AND ZONING

To help inform the development of the future land use map, it is important to look at historic development patterns in the Township as well as the existing land use regulations to better understand what type of development is currently permitted in the Township. The maps that help paint this picture are the Existing Land Use map and

MAP 19. FUTURE LAND USE

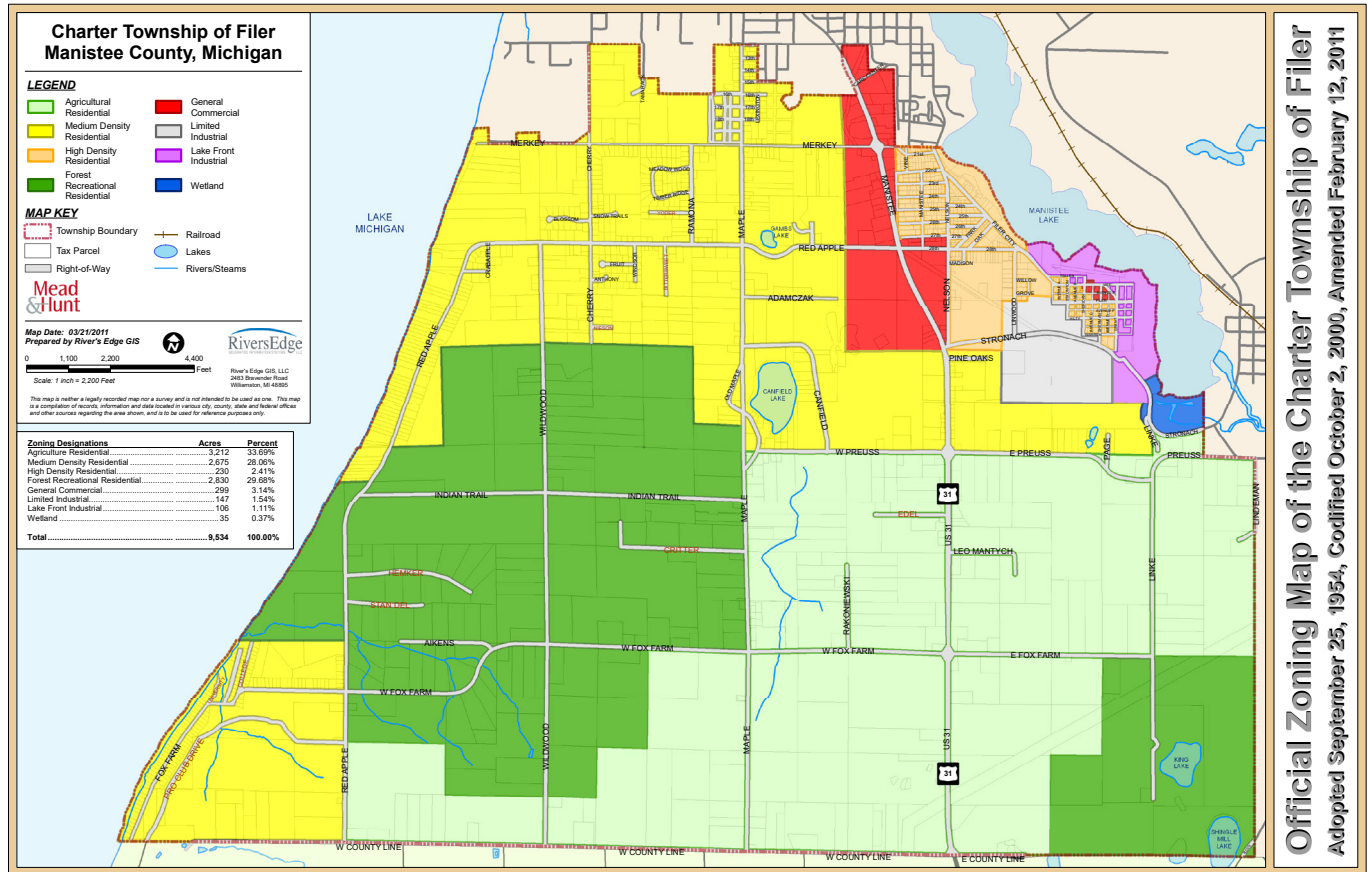


MAP 20. EXISTING LAND USE



the Zoning map. The Existing Land Use map illustrates how land is currently being used, what areas are vacant or underutilized, and what areas have higher intensity development. The Zoning Map shows what land uses are currently permitted in each district in the Township.

MAP 21. ZONING



ZONING PLAN

According to Section 2(d) of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008), the Master Plan shall include a Zoning Plan depicting the various zoning districts and their use, as well as proposed changes to these standards. The Zoning Plan serves as the basis for the Zoning Ordinance. As a key component of the Master Plan, the Zoning Plan is based on the recommendations of the Master Plan and is intended to identify areas where existing zoning is inconsistent with the objectives and strategies of the Master Plan, and to guide the development of the Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Ordinance is the primary implementation tool for the future development of Filer Township. The following zoning districts can be found within the Filer Township boundary. The table summarizes existing district regulations.

Proposed Zoning Changes

The following summarizes a list of proposed changes to the Zoning Ordinance. These changes will be prioritized and implemented by the Planning Commission as opportunities arise. The recommended

changes to zoning districts will be evaluated upon rezoning requests and on a case-by-case basis.

District Regulations

In some instances, the district regulations are in conflict with the historic development patterns of the Township. Where possible, these inconsistencies should be rectified in the Zoning Ordinance to reduce the number of non-conformities and support future development that is harmonious with historic patterns. Some examples of recommended changes to the district regulations include:

- **Traditional Residential:** In the R1 district, consider reducing the minimum lot width to 60 feet, reducing the minimum required square feet of living space, and reducing the rear setback requirements if/when these residential areas are served by a sanitary sewer system.
- **Agriculture and Open Space:** Consider setting the minimum parcel size for agricultural and forest-residential zoning districts at five acres. To disincentivize sprawl, promote cluster develop through planned unit developments and other tools. Also, in these districts, consider increasing setbacks to 30 feet to reduce the potential conflicts between agricultural and adjacent residential uses.
- **Commercial:** Currently the front setback is 35 feet. The design guidelines for the U.S. 31 corridor address the public realm by identifying landscaping and pedestrian requirements. However, a 35-foot setback in the Oak Hill neighborhood is likely further back than necessary to facilitate a connection with the street and public realm.
- Consider removing building height footage requirements in all districts and simply specify a maximum number of stories. This will allow for more variation in the skyline and creativity in design.

Filer Town Center District

This plan, in conjunction with the efforts by the DDA, proposes establishing a new mixed use district called the Filer Town Center. The location of the district would encompass the current Commercial zoning district and the Mixed Use Commercial future land use category. The intent would be to create a mixed use, walkable, "hamlet" in the heart of Filer Township that provides a mix of residential options and commercial uses serving the needs of the immediate community and broader region. To accomplish this, the Township could explore amending the zoning ordinance to incorporate form-based code provisions that focus on high quality site design that contributes to an improved public realm.

Sensitive Environmental Protections

Currently, the Township has a Lake Michigan shoreline residential setback of 100 feet to protect structures from coastal erosion. The Township could consider adopting natural feature protection setbacks for all inland waterways and wetlands. Filer Township is also interested in exploring the adoption of ordinance provisions to limit the establishment and spread of invasive species throughout the Township. The Zoning Ordinance could require native species to be planted as a part of the landscape requirements. The Township could

TABLE 17. DISTRICT REGULATIONS AND FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

ZONING DISTRICT	MINIMUM LOT SIZE	BUILDING AREA RATIO	HEIGHT	SETBACKS	FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORY
Environmental Districts					
WC - Wetland Conservation District	n/a	n/a		n/a	Lakeshore/Environmental
Residential Districts					
R1 - High Density Residential District	width of 100 ft.	720 square feet of living space in the first floor level, width of 24 ft.	Max: 2 stories or 35 ft.	Front: 35 ft, Side: 10 ft, Rear: 35 ft	Traditional Residential; Mixed Residential
R2 - Medium Density Residential District	width of 100 ft.	720 square feet of living space in the first floor level, width of 20 ft.	Max: 2 stories or 35 ft.	Front: 35 ft, Side: 10 ft, Rear: 35 ft	Shoreline Residential; Forest/Agriculture; Suburban Residential; Mixed Residential; Mixed Use Commercial
AR - Agricultural-Residential District	5 acres, lot width of 208 ft.	720 square feet of living space in the first floor level, width of 20 ft.	Max: 3 stories or 40 ft.	Front: 50 ft, Side: 20 ft, Rear: 50 ft	Forest/Agriculture; Suburban Residential
FR - Forest Recreational Residential District	10 acres, lot width of 297 ft.	720 square feet of living space in the first floor level, width of 20 ft.	Max: 3 stories or 40 ft.	Front: 50 ft, Side: 30 ft, Rear: 50 ft	Forest/Agriculture; Lakeshore/Environmental
Commercial Districts					
C-Commercial District	width of 30 ft.	800 square feet in 1st floor	35 ft	Front: 35 ft, Side: 5 ft, Rear: 20 ft	Mixed Use Commercial; Mixed Residential
Industrial Districts					
LI - Limited Industrial District	2 acres, lot width of 200 ft.	n/a	45 ft.	Front: 35 ft, Side: 20 ft, Rear: 35 ft.	Lakefront Industrial
LKI - Lakefront Industrial District	2.5 acres, lot width of 200 ft.	n/a	n/a	Front: 45 ft, Side: 20 ft, Rear: 45 ft.	Lakefront Industrial
Overlay Districts					
WPOD - Wellhead Protection Overlay District	underlying district regulations apply				

begin by adopting the list of recommended species by the Northwest Michigan Invasive Species Network (ISN).

Workforce Housing

Develop zoning standards in the residential areas surrounding the commercial district to provide for a mix of housing options. In established residential districts, work to update zoning standards to better facilitate infill and mixed housing developments in areas near commercial and employment centers with access to transportation options. Specifically, consider allowing accessory dwelling units and duplexes in traditional residential neighborhoods as uses by right.

Small Cell Wireless

Small cell wireless infrastructure is increasingly important for wireless broadband deployment and smart technology. Under Act 365 and 366 of 2018, small cell wireless facilities and associated support structure within a public right of way are not subject to zoning reviews or approvals. While the state preempts much local government control, there are some options for local units of government. The U.S. 31 commercial district could realistically be a location for future small cell infrastructure and the Zoning Ordinance should be reviewed and updated with this in mind.

Capital Improvement Program

Article IV of the new Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008) requires that township Planning Commissions annually prepare a capital improvements program of public structures and improvements when the municipality owns or operates a water supply or sewage disposal system. The Planning Commission may be exempted by charter from this duty if it is assigned to the legislative body and the legislative body may assign the duty to the chief elected official or a non-elected administrative official. The CIP must prioritize the projects which are deemed to be needed or desirable within the next six (6) years. The Filer Township CIP was adopted in 2017 and covers the period of 2018-2023. Upon adoption of the 2020 Township Master Plan, the Planning Commission should review the CIP to ensure that upcoming capital investments reflect projects and priorities set forth in the Master Plan.



Filer Township has a wide array of existing land uses. To the left is a historic home in Filer Township. Pictured to the right is Sundling Park.



Action Plan

The following draft vision, mission, goals, and policies have been developed using public input from the 2019 community survey, the September 2019 visioning workshop, Planning Commission input, and priorities from the 2009 Master Plan and 2014 Master Plan update.

VISION

Open space and natural areas have been protected and preserved. This healthy, active community boasts sidewalks and trail connections. The Township's neighborhoods provide a variety of housing options and are walkable and well-maintained. The U.S. 31 commercial corridor is bustling, with a wide variety of retail, service and entertainment opportunities. The lakefront industrial area activity is dynamic and offers well-paying jobs. There is a high level of community involvement on regional and local boards, commissions, and committees.

MISSION STATEMENT

The people of the Charter Township of Filer embrace our history to strengthen our sense of community. We plan proactively to make informed, objective and thoughtful decisions; aiming to work cooperatively on regional initiatives. We make land use planning decisions in order to protect limited natural resources and create a community where people can live, work and play. We make wise use of public tax dollars and seek to meet the variety of needs in our community with creativity and commitment.

GOALS AND POLICIES

Transportation Goal: Provide the highest quality of accessible, safe, and efficient transportation infrastructure throughout the Township.

Policies:

1. Support improvements in public transportation in cooperation with regional partners.
2. Require sidewalks and/or bikeways with new developments in urban service areas.
3. Encourage the use of alternative accesses in lieu of direct access to the highway in new developments.
4. Interconnect activity centers and natural and historical resources with pedestrian walkways and bike paths.
5. Add bike lanes and wider shoulders with future state and county highway improvements, focusing on routes that provide connectivity between neighborhoods and amenities.

Natural Resources Goal: Protect and enhance natural resources throughout the Township for future generations.

Policies:

- Consider adopting natural feature protection setbacks for all inland waterways and wetlands.
- Maintain the character of rural and agricultural areas through cluster development, while still preserving opportunities for farming and agricultural operations.
- Explore policy and design solutions to address erosion and increasing water levels along Lake Michigan.
- Working with Northwest Michigan Invasive Species Network, explore adoption of an invasive species ordinance.
- Develop a guide to preferred low impact design techniques to use as a reference during Planning Commission site plan reviews.

Recreation Goal: Invest in high-quality recreational amenities and community services that are accessible to the entire community.

Policies:

- Seek funding to improve and upgrade Filer City and Oak Hill neighborhood parks.
- Prioritize recreation projects and improvements that use universal accessibility standards.
- Work to develop directional and interpretive signage along water trails, directing paddlers to routes and amenities.
- Explore funding opportunities to upgrade the Township event center to accommodate larger events and audio-visual technology.

Housing Goal: Develop and maintain high-quality housing options that meet the needs of all residents and attracts and retains talented workers.

Policies:

- Work to develop an inviting, mixed-use town center that reflects a traditional downtown environment and incorporates diverse housing options at varying price points on the 21-acre Township-owned site as well as other appropriate locations as they become available.
- Update Township zoning standards to encourage infill and mixed housing developments in areas near commercial and employment centers with access to transportation options.
- Explore opportunities for senior housing to meet the needs of aging residents and allow for aging in place.

Economic Development Goal: Foster a strong and resilient economic climate through public infrastructure investment and public-private partnerships.

Policies:

- Concentrate future commercial and mixed-use development in the U.S. 31 Commercial District, with special emphasis on diverse, locally owned businesses. Implement recommendations from the 2019 Retail Market Analysis, including recruitment of a microbrewery and/or specialty restaurant.
- Adopt and implement corridor design standards within the U.S. 31 Commercial District.
- Recognize the Lakefront Industrial Area as an integral part of the history and economy of Filer Township, and balance the needs of industry with the needs of the adjacent community residents for health, safety and quality of life.
- Focus on the redevelopment and repurposing of large, vacant industrial buildings within the Township, seeking brownfield funding to offset costs.
- Seek grants and low interest loans to develop Phases 2 of the Township's sanitary sewer system.

Governance Goal: Maintain a climate of community trust and transparency that inspires strong civic engagement.

Policies:

- Foster a culture of civic ownership and encourage a diversity of residents to join boards and commissions.
- Design and institutionalize a public involvement process that is a regular component of all decision making.
- Seek to improve regional collaboration, working with City of Manistee and surrounding Townships on land use and service provision.
- Explore a millage increase to maintain a high level of fire service.

TABLE 18. FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN

CATEGORY	ACTION	PARTNERS	PRIORITY (1,2,3)	FUNDING
Transportation	Require sidewalks and/or bikeways with new developments in urban service areas.	DDA, PC	1	Developer
Natural Resources	Develop a checklist for preferred low impact design techniques to use as a reference during Planning Commission site plan reviews.	Planning Commission (PC)	2	Township
	Working with Northwest Michigan Invasive Species Network, explore adoption of an invasive species ordinance.	NWMISN,	2	Grants, Township
	Expand biking and hiking trail network	County Rec Commission	1	MDNR
Economic Development	Adopt and implement corridor design standards within the U.S. 31 Commercial District.	PC, DDA, Twp Board	1	Township
	Seek grants and low interest loans to develop Phases 2 of the Township's sanitary sewer system.	Twp Board	2	USDA,
Neighborhoods & Housing	Seek funding to improve and upgrade Filer City and Oak Hill neighborhood parks.	PC, Twp Board	1	MDNR,
	Update Township zoning standards to encourage infill and mixed housing developments in areas near commercial and employment centers with access to transportation options.	PC, Twp Board	1	Township
	Pursue partnerships to develop workforce housing in the Township.	Housing North, PC, Ad Hoc Subcommittee, DDA	1	MSHDA

Appendix A: Open Ended Survey Responses

Question 1: How would you rate the Township's performance on these quality of life issues? Please feel free to expand on any issues listed above.

1. More businesses - more jobs
2. Pave 4309 Wildwood Road Manistee, MI 49660 Past driveway
3. I'd like to see a park that accesses Manistee Lake
4. I feel that the township is responsible for very few of these issues listed. They are mostly county issues.
5. Roads are falling apart. Nothing done for 10 years on our roads
6. Don't know about any transportation options or variety of parks and rec. facilities
7. The quality of Merkey Road between Maple and Cherry Roads could be improved dramatically. With there being little to no shoulder at all, Merkey is often in bad shape. A bike path or wide shoulder expansion on both the north and south sides of Merkey would allow the asphalt to stay together in the traffic lanes, and would allow for pedestrians and bikers to safely travel the road. As it is now, I feel that the road is a little dangerous for vehicles, and quite dangerous for pedestrians and bikers. Definitely love Sundling and Magoon parks. Thank you. - Joel Smith, Filer Township resident
8. Roads have been totally neglected the past 8 years
9. We really don't have health care in Filer other than the walk in, plus the only school is an elementary
10. Merkey Road West of Maple is a disgrace with no paved shoulder for biking or walkers. Not good for a busy thoroughfare.
11. We need retail clothing stores and another grocery store.
12. No jobs, roads and ditches are terrible. Supervisor and assessor Decided farming was not an option for Filer
13. Maple Rd. between 15th street and 12th street is terrible, I dont think it will last until 2023 before its fixed.
14. Magoon Creek and Sundling Park are wonderful. Areas east of US31 need nicer facilities.
15. The unsure responses are because my wife and I are retired, so they are not relevant to our situation, except for the fact that we always vote yes on educational millages. That has always been important to us.
16. We need to attract more commercial investment in the Township - Dining, shopping, etc. We need to draw people to Filer Township and let the status quo finally go.

Question 16: Please feel free to provide additional comments related to the questions above.

1. regarding solar: would need more information
2. I don't believe we should pay school taxes if you don't have children in school
3. Pave our road instead of trying to improve Filer City Township. We pay \$5,000 a year in taxes what

wrong with the picture? Everyone has their roads paved in the who knows who? I'm disgusted who tuns Filer City Township & road commission. Thank you"

4. less regulations please.

5. Filer Township is not likely to become a tourist destination like Manistee, but it could be the preferred residential, commercial, industrial, and even recreational choice in this area. I believe Filer Township should get in front of Manistee and become the recreational Marijuana capital of West Michigan. Let all forms of commercial activity occur in the Township....including sales.

6. When I first started this survey I thought it was for Filer Township residents only because it is suppose to be about our township. It does not appear to be about that AND then you ask where I live???? I do not understand your purpose if this was suppose to be about the opinion of Filer Twp. residents. I didn't even answer one question because it didnt make sense and another because you did not give "none" as an option for an answer.

7. Need for restaurants different than Ludington to draw customers. Ie: Olive Garden, ponderosa, Chinese restaurant. Also Menards. Don't need Home Depot or lowes because Ludington already has. Something to draw more people to the area.

8. Want a nice walkable community with coffee shops, restaurants, park, community buildings not industrial looking but quaint. More shopping options even big box like tj maxx

9. I feel that the twp has wasted thousands of dollars on a twp building that was very unnecessary. That money could have gone into our falling apart roads and infrastructure. If people really paid attention to what the twp has spent money on the would be shocked. But ignorance is bliss. Also why is the twp residence paying pension on employees at the twp level. How many people in the twp know this. I would bet not many! Are tax dollars are wasted in this twp.

10. Would like to see the high density restrictions on backyard fowl lifted. The City is higher density, and they allow chickens. Work on getting businesses that have affordable priced items. We like to have nice neighborhoods, not unsightly homes in the area, so tired of unkempt properties. It's time to replace the water lines all over-put money into that instead of sidewalks on U.S. 31.

11. If you want to destroy a neighborhood ...all you need to do is allow short term rentals . The town ship needs to be very active to control this situation.

12. "I really appreciate the Township taking the time to reach out and listen to the residents through such means as this survey.

13. A lot of great things are happening in Filer Township - the biggest one being the sewer expansion that was completed last year along U.S. 31. The Board and Supervisor are to be thanked for their commitment, pride, and successes in Filer Township.

14. Hopefully, the addition of bike lanes along roads such as Merkey Road between Maple and Cherry will allow for increased safe, healthy, transportation alternatives such as walking and biking.

15. Thank you for your time and efforts."

16. Would like to see something happen with the K-Mart Plaza

17. Poor tax structure/inflated valuation. I bought property and sold it 7 years later and my taxes/SEV were always 25%+ more than either what I paid or sold it for. I'm outa here!

18. Cars speeding on township roads. Very dangerous as bike lanes are built. Residents try to use theses lanes for riding and walking. Dangerous speeding above posted speeds put adults, children and pets in jeopardy.

19. "Red Apple Rd is a speedway. More policing would help. Extension of 35 MPH. Maybe even speed bumps. If police have ticket quotas and I don't believe they do they could fill it in 24 hrs.

20. Besides the Wellhead Protection Area in Filer Twp. for public water supply, what other plans are there for effective groundwater management for the aquifers?
21. Encourage good paying jobs so our kids can work and raise families here. Right now they all leave and we are becoming a retirement town which means kids can't wait to leave after high school and don't come back after college.
22. "Would like to see the 31 Business corridor full and inviting. A bike/wlk trail from Red apple to join at Family Fare makes a ton of sense. Housing like at Grand Valley above shops makes sense. An Outlet Mall on the vacant property at Red Apple would increase shopping to our area(keeping local dollars and bringing in outside monies). Good re-use of current commercial space and filling empty buildings would be helpful as well. All for 3-5 new restaurants in this corridor.
23. "Thank you, thank you, thank you for this inquiry!!
24. We have been here since 1995 and I have always wanted to see new development in this beautiful town and have noticed a strong resistance over the many years. We need new growth and development. Manistee's population has declined over the years. There are no quality jobs for graduates so they move away looking for a better means. That is so sad. I am willing to help in any way if needed. You may reach out to me at cbrege@yahoo.com"
25. I would really like a shoulder added to Merkey Road because I walk there and it's already narrow and has none. We could also really use a Menards store in Filer. It's affordable, wouldn't put local hardware stores out, and I wouldn't have to leave town for my home improvement (which benefits Filer City). Lastly, a diner style chain restaurant i.e. Bob Evans, Big Boy, IHOP, somewhere that has all three meal services with a variety of foods where locals and tourists can gather again. Thank-you.
26. Provide better communication between Filer Board and citizens.
27. We love the area, but think the roads definitely need repair. It would be nice to see more small independent business come in instead of chains. Also local activities for kids, like summer camps, crafts, etc.. We think the home prices are very affordable and would not want any section 8 type housing to come in.
28. Recently bought property. We hope that Filer township keeps it's mileage low so that we can retire here in the next 5 years.
29. "My major issue is the traffic thru to Oak Hill. I live on 21st street and this is a thru way into Oak Hill. There are NO MPH signs, kid zone signs.
30. People who are up and down do not deem it necessary to follow any traffic laws.
31. More enforcement needs to be done!! "
32. I have some ideas I would like to share for property we own in the DDA district. You can email me @ conniegrenn@charter.net or call or text: 231-590-1091 or mail: Connie Grenn 4832 Melling Drive, Onkama, MI 49675. In fact, I would like to be on the mailing list. This information is being sent to my mom, Heide Siklich, who is now 90 and is simply passing on related information to me anyway! I will forever have a passion to the success of Filer!
33. More bike paths, more businesses, more affordable housing!
34. Specifically targeted Filer Township when purchasing a home. Really feel Filer offers good value and like living in the Township.
35. Take advantage of water access. City of Manistee does not maintain boardwalk or improve boating amenities. FILER DHOULD DO TBEIR OWN!
36. We need more larger retail. People are still going to Ludington, Traverse City and Muskegon for shopping. Why not bring in these well needed stores and keep our money in our community. Meijer has been an excellent asset!!!

37. Many of the items mentioned can be funded by grants. This should be looked into before asking for a millage.

38. I went to HS in Manistee, consider it my hometown as I have family roots here, and moved back here in semi-retirement. My main concerns are related to good health care, safety and security, and a way to age here....meaning I want to see more care options for the elderly. While these issues are not limited to Filer Township, I live here so issues like alternative transportation options are very important. I did not see all of these issues on your survey. I would like to see the business district offer more restaurant options along with delivery, important to an aging population.

39. The Township seems to have taken a "If we build it, they will come" gamble on a sewer system attracting new business to U.S. 31. The emphasis needs to be in this geographic area, i.e., new businesses, and major improvement of the appearance of the three large, existing shopping centers. How about a decent restaurant or two with liquor licenses? Please, no more fast food restaurants and low-end retail stores. The sewer is in, and so far the only change to the retail landscape thus far has been the departure of KMart and Peebles. We need to be realistic about who we are as a community, what we want to be in the future, and put in place achievable plans to get there.

40. thanks

41. There have been improvements over the past 20 years, but not enough. Enough with empty storefronts and fighting modernization. We need commercialization along US31 and growth. Retail, dining are sorely needed and are magnets for tourism and additional investment in the area. Cooperate, like it or not, with other major draws to the area, like the Casino, River St, etc. Don't prey on each other as business owners, complement each other and coexist. GROW.

42. Would be I interested and supportive of changes that would keep current and attezct new young families, as well as bring in more tourism dollars. Encouraging a variety of business growth and opportunities without completely selling out to big box retail--would want to see incentives for smaller, unique businesses, boutique businesses, local and regionally-based businesses and opportunities, which could.potentially create job for youth, trades, people with disabilities and those who want to work. Improving access to and offerings surrounding parks and rec and natural resources, without harming the environment. People are looking for unique experiences, opportunities and services not available online.

