



P.O. Box 523
251 W. Wright Avenue
Shepherd, MI 48883
989.828.5278
www.villageofshepherd.org

To: Interested Parties
From: Tim Wolff, Zoning Administrator
Date: August 1, 2025
Re: Village of Shepherd Master Plan Update

In accordance with Public Act 33 of 2008 (MCL 125.3839), the Village of Shepherd provided your entity with a notice of our intent to update our Master Plan in late 2024. I am pleased to present to your entity for review and comment a draft of an update to our Master Plan. This draft was approved for public distribution by the Village Council on July 21, 2025.

Under Michigan law, entities are provided 63 days to review and comment on the draft. We would request that all comments from other entities be returned to the Village by Friday, October 3, 2025. This will allow our Planning Commission the ability to review comments at its meeting on October 7, 2025.

Comments can be submitted in writing to the Village Hall, P.O. Box 523, Shepherd, MI 48883. Comments may also be emailed to Gina Gross, Village Clerk, at the following email address: clerk@villageofshepherd.org.

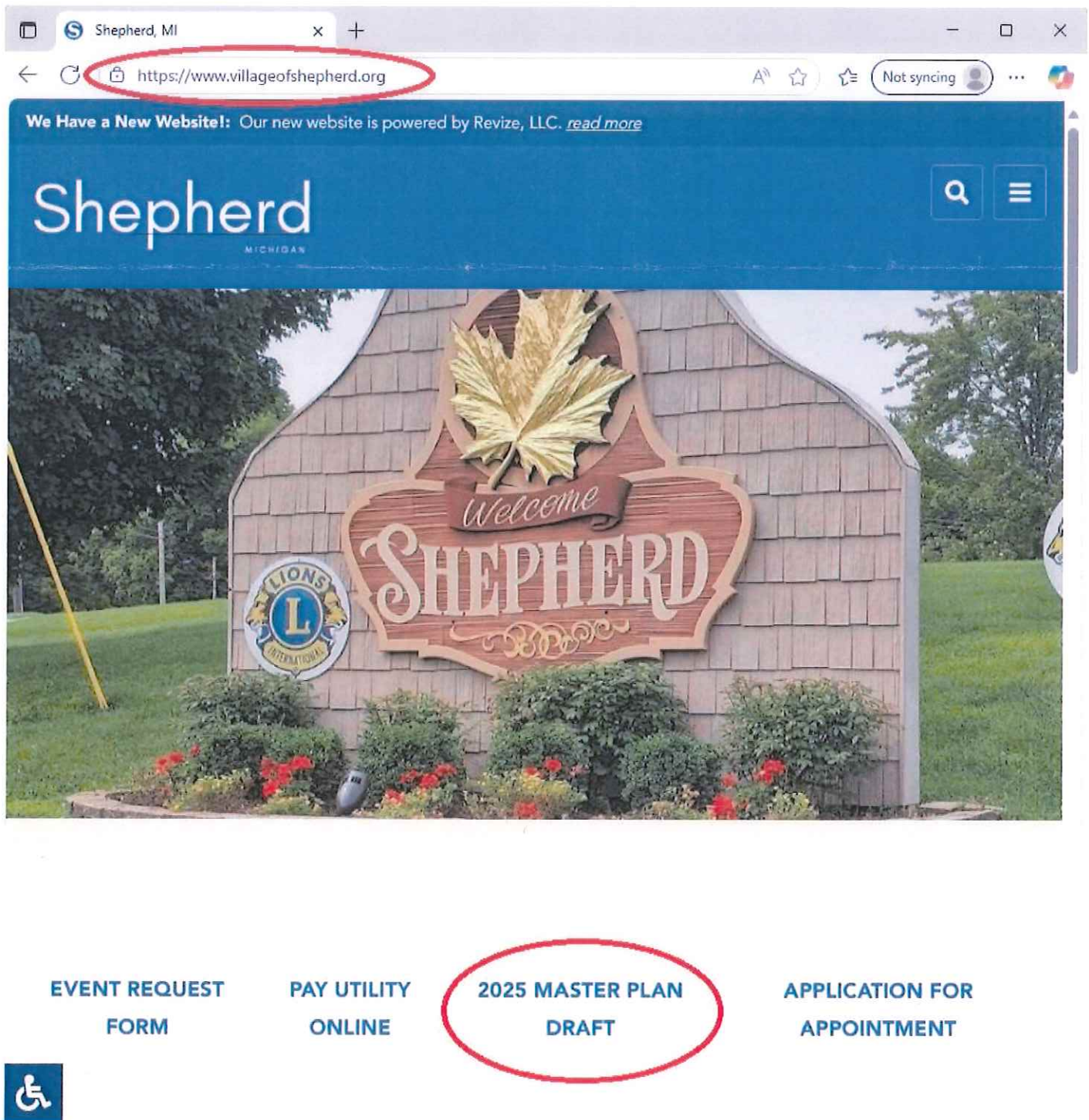
Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. We look forward to hearing from you. For your convenience, a digital copy of the draft is located on the home page of our website, www.villageofshepherd.org.

RECEIVED

AUG 4 2025

INSPECTION DEPT.

To find our Master Plan Update Draft on our website, see below!



**Village of Shepherd
Planning Commission
Master Plan
Public Hearing Notice**

Notice is hereby given that the Village of Shepherd Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, October 7, 2025, as part of a regular meeting beginning at 7 pm. The location of the public hearing will be the Village Hall, located at 251 W. Wright Avenue, Shepherd, MI 48883. The purpose of the public hearing will be to receive public comment on the proposed update to the Village of Shepherd Master Plan. A copy of the proposed Master Plan Update is available for public inspection during normal business hours at the Village Hall, or on the homepage of the Village's website: <https://villageofshepherd.org>

Written comments may be submitted in advance of the public hearing to the Village Clerk at the address below or via email at clerk@villageofshepherd.org.

Gina Gross
Village Clerk
PO Box 523
251 W. Wright Ave.
Shepherd, MI 48883
989.828.5278

RECEIVED
SEP 15 2025
INSPECTION DEPT.

Draft 1



Village of Shepherd 2025 Master Plan

Village of Shepherd 2025 Master Plan

Village Council Members

Vicki Travis, Village President

Valerie Maloney, President Pro Tempore

Lee Coughlin, Councilmember

Mike DeGraw, Councilmember

Melody Myers, Councilmember

Doug Mueller, Councilmember

Sarah Bryant, Councilmember

Planning Commission Members

Brian Hanson, Chair

Frank Hackett

Pat Burk

Sarah Bryant

Doug Mueller

Drafted by:

Tim Wolff, AICP

Village Zoning Administrator

Assistance provided by:

Gina Gross

Village Clerk

Steve Davidson

Superintendent of Public Works

Village of Shepherd 2025 Master Plan

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Introduction

This plan has been prepared under the authority granted by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended. This document replaces the Village's Master Plan, originally drafted in 2000 and last updated in 2014. Funding for this project was made possible by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, which awarded the Village a Housing Readiness Grant to update the Master Plan.



A Master Plan is a community's policy document used to guide decisions that affect its land, people, and structures. It is often regarded as a long-term "road map" to guide officials and decision-makers when faced with complex land use and infrastructure decisions that have lasting impacts on the community. The Master Plan identifies several systems, examining how they interact, how trends have impacted these systems over time, and what improvements a community can implement to strengthen these systems and positively influence residents' quality of life. Among the many things the Master Plan inventories are the following features:

- ⇒ Community History and Cultural Assets
- ⇒ Demographics
- ⇒ Natural Features
- ⇒ Existing Land Use
- ⇒ Community Facilities and Services
- ⇒ Housing

A Master Plan lays out "where we should go" based on a combination of residents' priorities and findings drawn from the inventory process. These priorities are the basis for actions that community leadership may pursue through policy, particularly through zoning ordinance updates and recommendations for the community's multi-year Capital Improvement Plan.

Located in southeastern Isabella County, the Village of Shepherd is a well-established community with roots going back over 150 years. Situated along US-127 and

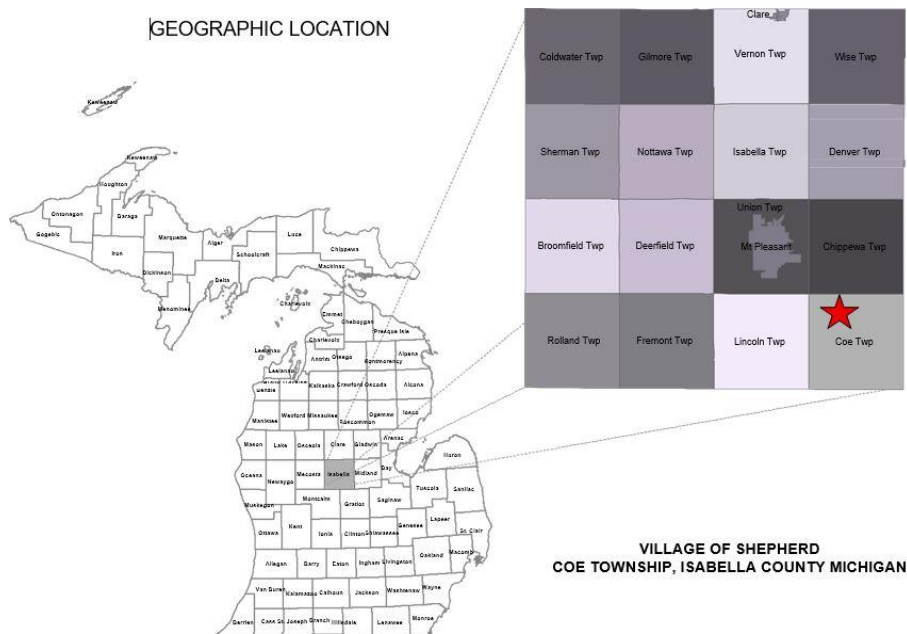


Photo 1: Wright Avenue looking west

the Great Lakes Central Railroad, the Village enjoys a prime location in the heart of mid-Michigan. It is ideally situated to offer a small-town quality of life and convenient access to either Mt. Pleasant or Alma. This is illustrated in the map below.



Map 1: Mid-Michigan Region, Showing Shepherd's location



Map 2: Location within Michigan

Community History

The Village of Shepherd, located in the southeast corner of Isabella County in Coe Township, is located in the traditional grounds of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe. The area known as "Ojibway Besse" roughly translates to "the place of the Chippewa," and served as winter hunting grounds for centuries.

James Campbell, born in 1830 in Chester County, Pennsylvania, arrived in Section 17 of Coe Township in October of 1854. Michigan had been a state for less than twenty years, and had a population of roughly one-tenth what it does today. Isabella County would not be officially organized until nearly five years later, in 1859. To arrive at what would become his future home, he needed to cut his own road from Alma, a distance of sixteen miles.

Campbell settled an area of 240 acres and began building a log cabin in the mid-Michigan wilderness. The Campbell home was located at what is now the northwest corner of Chippewa Street and North Drive in the south half of the Village of Shepherd.

The young Campbell family was soon joined by several other settlers. In 1857, the settlement of Salt River was established at what is now Wright Avenue and Chippewa Street, and the Campbells' home served as the first post office in Isabella County. Early settlers hand-built an earthen dam across the Salt River to provide sufficient water to operate a saw mill and flour mill at what had become known as "The Corners."

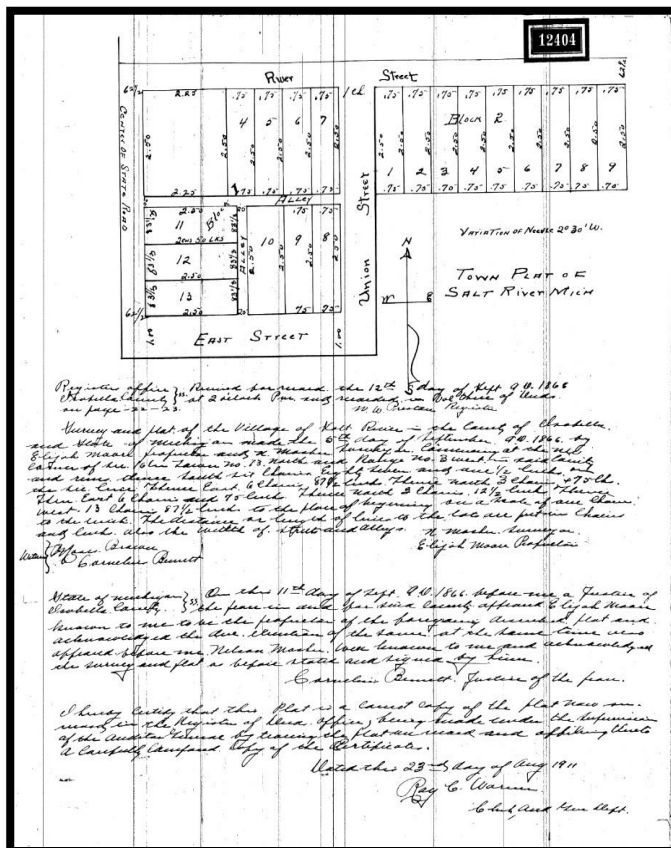


Photo 2: Original Plat of Salt River

In 1866, Elijah Moore platted the Salt River settlement of roughly 20 parcels. By 1884, the population was nearing 300, and additional areas to the north of the original settlement were platted as the Miller's Addition. The young community featured three stores, one hotel, two blacksmith shops, one boot and shoe shop, one news depot, one flouring and sawmill, one cheese factory, three physicians, and three attorneys.

The 1880s brought two major developments to the community. The first was economic, as the railroad came through the area, the final route of the new railroad ran $\frac{1}{2}$ mile west of the community. While the Salt River settlement was not directly located on the new rail line, the community was within a short walking distance to the line that connected Mt. Pleasant to Lansing. When taking into account the history of building the railroad, the final

location was more than acceptable, as various plans floated in years prior bypassed the community completely.

In 1886, planners of the Toledo & Ann Arbor Railroad were considering how best to connect their railroad from St. Louis to reach Mt. Pleasant. The original plan was to run the railway due north from St. Louis, bypassing Alma, and then enter Mt. Pleasant from the east. At the time, the railroad was owned by James Ashley, a former congressman from Ohio. Ashley had gone as far as to warn the residents of Salt River not to depend on his railroad coming to Salt River, and that if they could secure rail access from the competing Lansing, Alma, & Mt. Pleasant (LAMP) Railroad, it would be in their best interest to do so.

Ashley's plan for the railroad to bypass Alma did not coincide with the interests of Alma's leading citizen, Ammi Wright. Wright was a successful lumberman from Saginaw who had built the original St. Louis & Saginaw Railroad to connect St. Louis to Saginaw in 1872. In 1884, Wright incorporated the Lansing, Alma, Mt. Pleasant, and Northern Railroad with the intention of connecting Lansing to Mt. Pleasant and was considering two different routes, one that ran near Salt River, and the other two miles to the west at Estee's Corners.

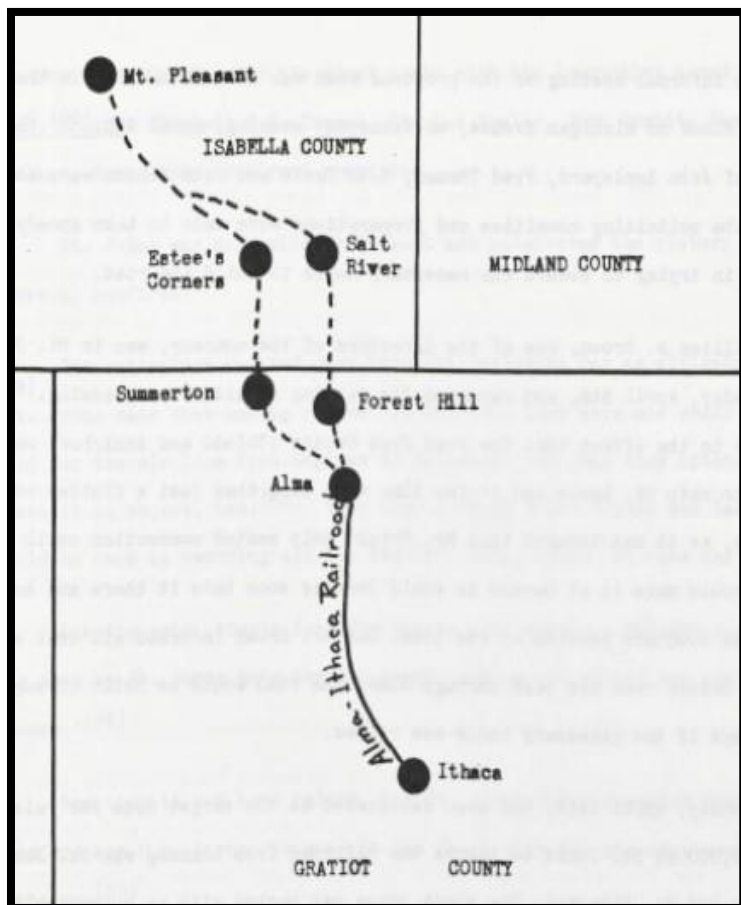


Photo 3: LAMP Route Options to Connect Alma & Mt. Pleasant

The need for a railroad running north and south through the mid-Michigan area had been a topic of discussion since 1869. As settlers moved further and further north into the region due to the rich farmland in Gratiot and Isabella Counties, a clear need for marketing milk, meat, lumber, and other products to Lansing only grew with each new resident.

In 1884, Mr. Wright and Mr. Ashley presented competing proposals to the residents as to which route would connect Mt. Pleasant. Ashley's Toledo & Ann Arbor Railroad promised to have Mt. Pleasant connected to St. Louis by October of 1885 if the people of Mt. Pleasant paid \$15,000 at the time of completion. Wright's proposal for his new rail company offered to connect Mt. Pleasant to Alma by July of 1885 for the same \$15,000 from Mt. Pleasant and an additional \$5,000 from Salt River (Shepherd).

By October 1885, Wright's railroad had made it to the community, and founding father Isaac Shepherd shipped out the first load of lumber from the mill on October 10, 1885. In 1886,

Ashley was able to purchase Wright's railroad and renamed it the Toledo, Ann Arbor & Mt. Pleasant Railway. Shortly thereafter, the two systems were connected when the towns of St. Louis and Alma were connected just south of the Pine River. The railway served as a vital commerce route to move goods and people further into central and northern Michigan.

The other major change that impacted the community occurred in 1867. A major fire that destroyed or damaged seven buildings in the Salt River community ravaged the small community. The cooperation of community members in moving goods out of the structures and in bucketing water in an attempt to extinguish the flames.

Despite the fire, the community continued to grow, and in 1889, the State of Michigan adopted Act 311 to incorporate the Village of Shepherd. The first few years of the new incorporated town saw the development of necessary public buildings and services. By December of 1890, the town jail had been completed, and a new Fire Department, known as Engine Company No. 1, was established. The current Fire Department was organized in 1964 when the Village joined forces with Coe, Lincoln, and Chippewa Townships to create a jurisdiction covering 108 square miles.

In February of 1907, the Village adopted the "Light Plan" ordinance and planned to hold a franchise for 30 years. The ordinance required streetlights to be kept burning from dusk until midnight, except when the moon was shining brightly, making artificial light unnecessary.

By the following year, a special election was held on August 6, 1908, for the purpose of bonding to build a water works and electric light plant for a combined amount of \$20,000. Both measures were passed with overwhelming community support.

The community saw its first paved streets in 1921, and in 1925, it sold its electric utility to Consumers Energy. The community thrived in its role tied to local agriculture and witnessed the development of the Shepherd Elevator, which has handled countless tons of grains, beans, and corn. The elevator, now owned by Star of the West Milling Co., continues to handle corn, beans, and grains. As the old-growth forests were depleted, agriculture took over as the driving force in the local economy.

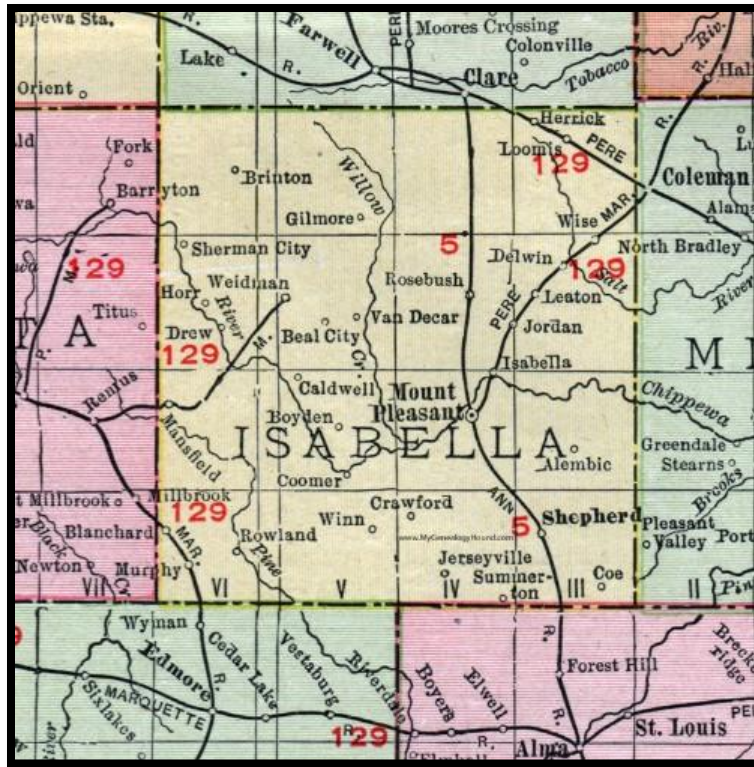


Photo 4: Completed Railroads circa 1911

Agriculture was supplemented by the discovery of the Dundee oil field near Mt. Pleasant in 1928. Pure Oil Company held most local leases and eventually constructed a pipeline to Mt. Pleasant. The success of these oil fields led to the construction of the Roosevelt Refinery in nearby Mt. Pleasant, which operated from the 1930s to the 1970s.

During the twentieth century, the community continued to grow and saw the establishment of several businesses. The community is still home to several long-time businesses, or new businesses that have taken up residence in the location of past community staples. Over the years, the Laurels Movie Theater at 221 W. Wright Avenue has changed from Angles Pizza to Eight 2 Eight Rental Hall. Another prominent location in the Village's downtown is 302 W. Wright Avenue, which has been home to a bank, The Glen Oren store, and Hanson Hardware. In 2003, shortly after the turn of the century, Highland Plastics moved into the community, relocating from their former home in Alma.

Another notable highlight of the twentieth century was the establishment of the Maple Syrup Festival in 1958. The Maple Syrup Festival has become a major annual event in Shepherd, attracting large crowds from throughout the region to enjoy the pancakes and other festivities of the three-day event, held during the last weekend in April.



Photo 5: Shepherd Maple Syrup

Community Profile & Demographics

The 2025 estimated population of the Village of Shepherd is 1,507. The Village's population has been largely stable over the past 40 years, as the table below shows.

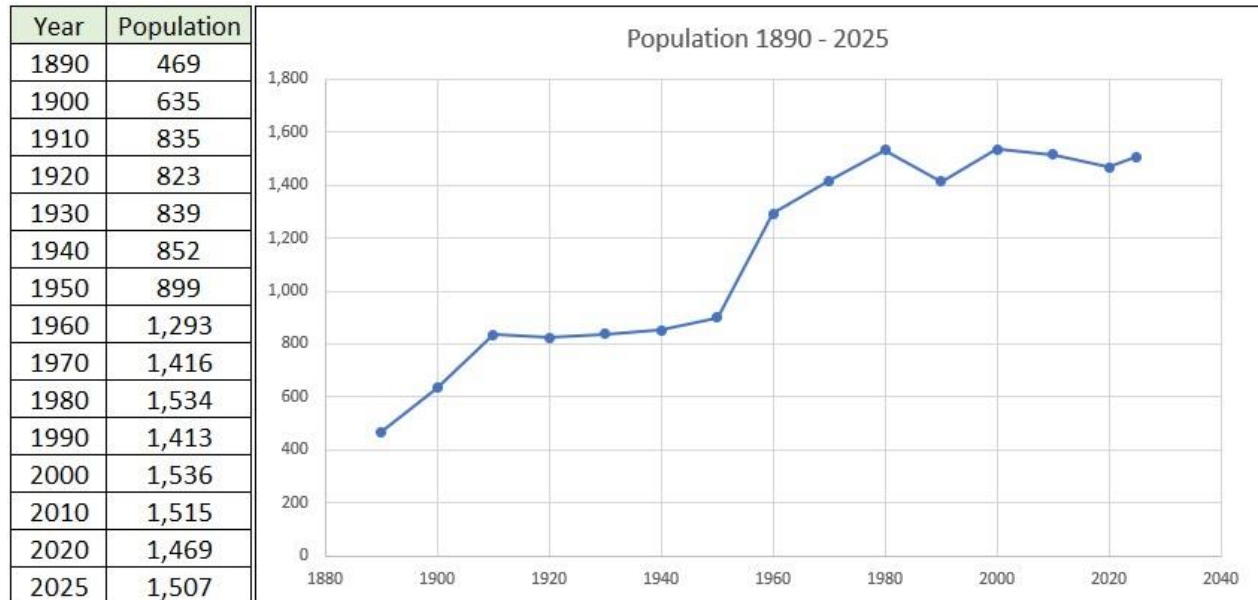


Table 1 Shepherd Population 1890 - 2025

Demographically, the Village has changed little over the past three official census counts. The population is predominantly white, females slightly outnumber males, and the median age has remained in the mid-thirties. A more detailed breakdown of the Census data is below.

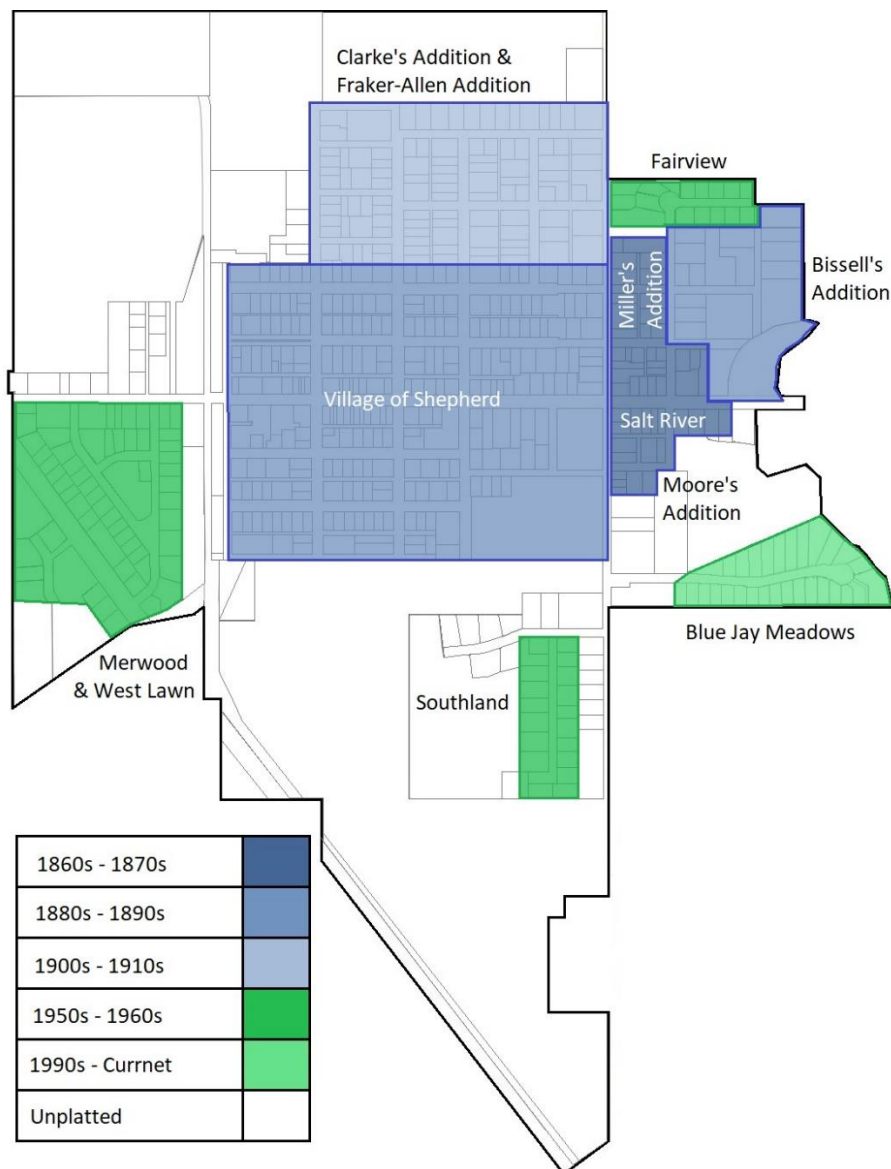
	2000	2010	2020
Population	1,536	1,515	1,469
White	96.35%	94.20%	87.13%
Male	46.70%	46.70%	48.05%
Female	53.30%	53.30%	51.95%
Under 18	27.50%	24.50%	24.43%
High School Enrollment	568	480	473
Bachelor Degree or Higher	22.4%	27.6%	27.6%
Over 65	11.70%	13.00%	14.15%
Median Age	34.00	37.50	32.00
Median Household Income	\$ 40,804	\$ 57,515	\$ 66,738
2000 MHI Adjusted		\$ 51,670	\$ 61,327
At or Below Poverty Level	10.5%	15.4%	15.4%
Household Size	2.47	2.36	2.46
Dwelling Units	641	699	678
Ave. Home Value	\$ 119,600	\$ 188,400	\$ 217,500
2000 Home Value Adjusted		\$ 151,449	\$ 179,755

Table 2 Census Data 2000 – 2020

Community Housing Data

In November of 2024, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed HB 5557 into law. HB 5557 amended the Michigan Planning Enabling Act to expressly include housing as a core provision of a community's Master Plan. Prior to the adoption of this bill, Michigan did not require that a community's Master Plan account for housing. The legislation requires that a community's Master Plan provide *"an assessment of the community's existing and forecasted housing demands, with strategies and policies for addressing those demands."* (MCL 125.3807)

In examining the housing in the community, it is important to look at when various parts of the community were platted and started to be developed. The Village of Shepherd features several plats that are well over one hundred years old, including the first plat in Isabella County, Salt River, recorded in 1868.



Map3: Platted Areas by Period of Development

To better understand the existing housing stock and market in the community, the data can best be understood by several snapshots of specific issues. Those are as follows:



Table 3: Percentage of Development by Decade

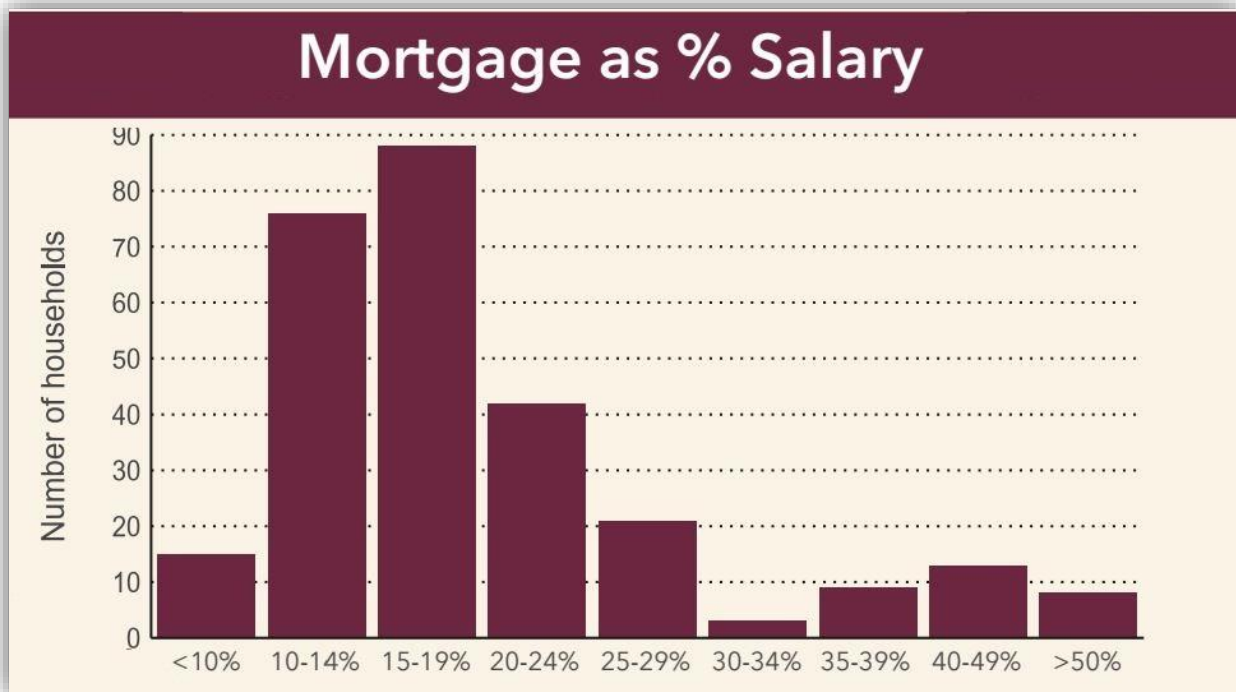


Table 4: Mortgage as a Percentage of Salary

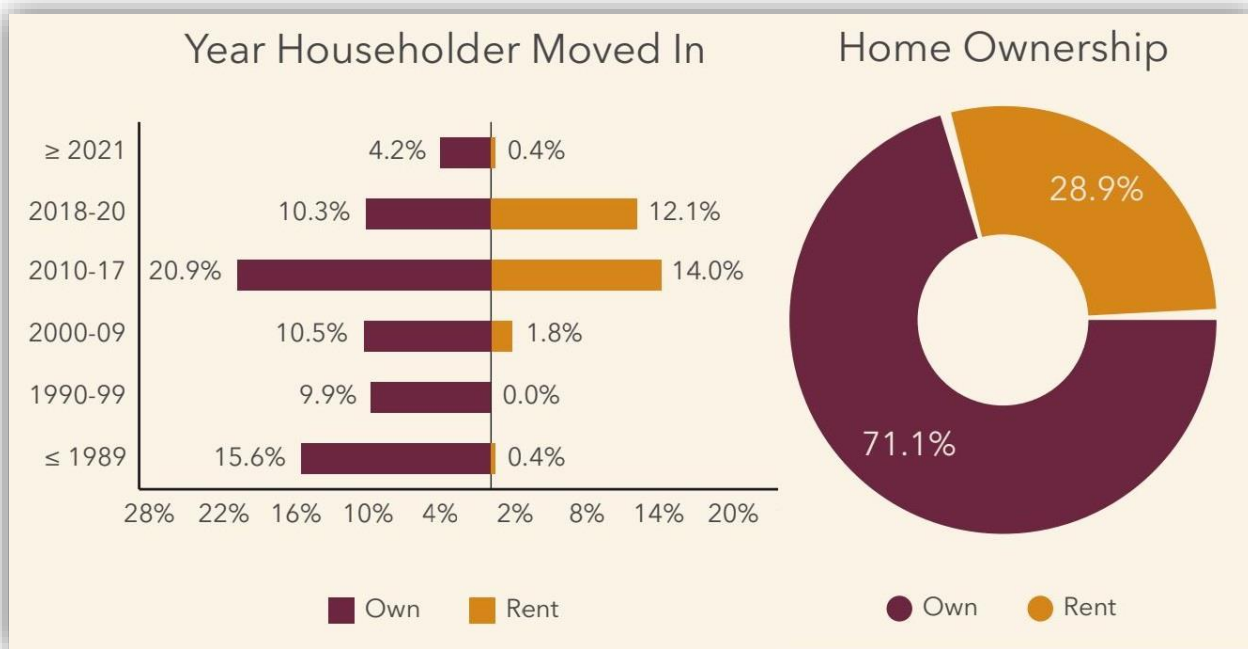


Table 5: Home Ownership & Tenure

- **Shepherd has a home-ownership rate slightly below the overall average in the State of Michigan of 74.1%**
- **Shepherd's home-ownership rate is above the national average of 65.9%**
- **In general, rents in Shepherd are lower than the State of Michigan average of \$1,367/month**



Table 6: Gross Rent

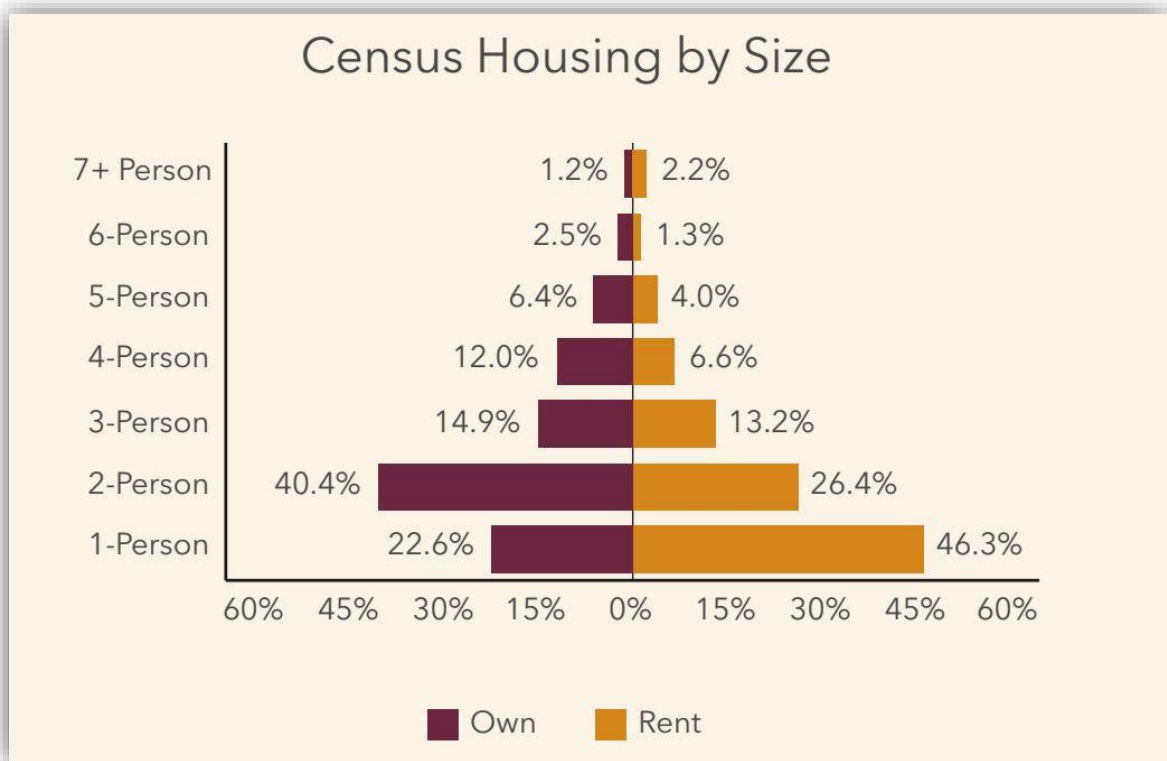


Table 7: Average Household Size

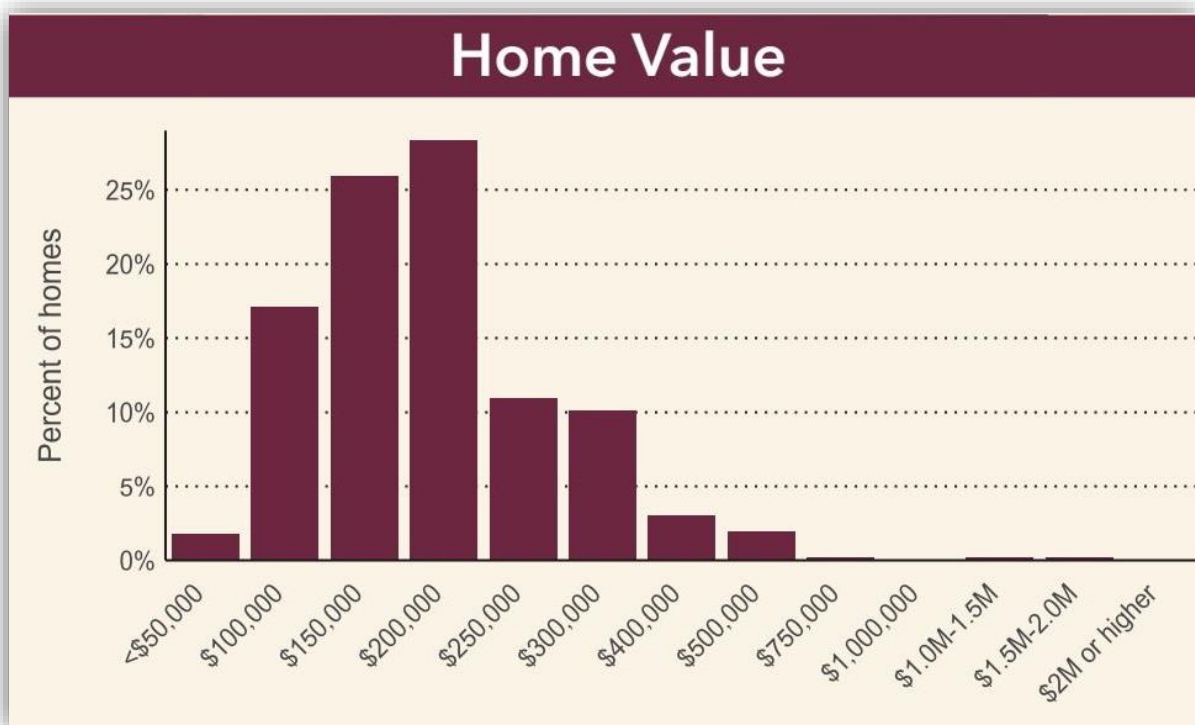


Table 8: Home Values



Map 4: New Single-family Homes in the Last 20 Years

Community Natural Resources

The purpose of this section is twofold. First, the goal is to identify areas in the Village that are most suited for development. The focus is on areas that will minimize development costs and provide amenities without adversely impacting the existing natural systems. The second goal is to identify land that should be conserved in its natural state and is most suitable for open space or recreation purposes.

Topography, woodlands, soil, water resources, and geology are among the most important natural features that impact land use.

The topography of Shepherd is relatively flat. Elevations range from a low of 750 feet above sea level at the southeastern border to a high of 770 feet above sea level at the western border. The flat terrain presents few constraints to development

Woodlands information for Shepherd is derived from the Michigan Resource Information System (MIRIS) land cover/use data provided by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Less than 10% of the Village is covered by woodlands. These woodlands are classified as upland forests. Upland forests include mostly central hardwood (oak) trees. Tree species in the oak forest include red oak, white oak, sugar maple, red maple, black cherry, beech, basswood, and ash.

Woodlands are complex ecological systems and, consequently, provide multiple benefits to the environment and its wildlife and human inhabitants. Woodlands play a role in flood protection by slowing the flow of surface runoff to allow for greater water infiltration. Woodlands also reduce air pollutants through absorption. In addition to providing wildlife habitat, forest vegetation moderates the effects of wind and temperature, while stabilizing and enriching the soil.

For human inhabitants, forested areas offer scenic contrasts within the landscape and with the changing of seasons. Forest lands also act as buffers from noise on heavily traveled roads.

Soil characteristics help define the land's capacity to support certain types of land uses. Soils most suitable for development purposes are well-drained and are not subject to a high water table. Adequate drainage is important for minimizing stormwater impacts. Adequate depth to the water table is necessary to prevent groundwater contamination from septic systems. A high water table also limits the construction of basements. Though civil engineering techniques can be employed to improve drainage and maintain adequate separation from the water table, such techniques are expensive to construct and maintain.

Soils in areas with good potential tend to have good to fair bearing capacity, low volume charge, and very low compressibility. Soils in areas with poor potential are hydric soils, with high water table and are generally located within the floodplain. Areas that have soils with fair to poor potential have a wide range of limiting conditions such as seasonal high-water table, fair to poor bearing capacity, medium compressibility, and shear strength. Maps 5 and 6 show where in the Village FEMA has listed as areas prone to flooding and placed in a floodplain hazard zone.



Map 5: Floodplain in the Northeast Corner of the Village



Map 6: Floodplain along Salt Creek

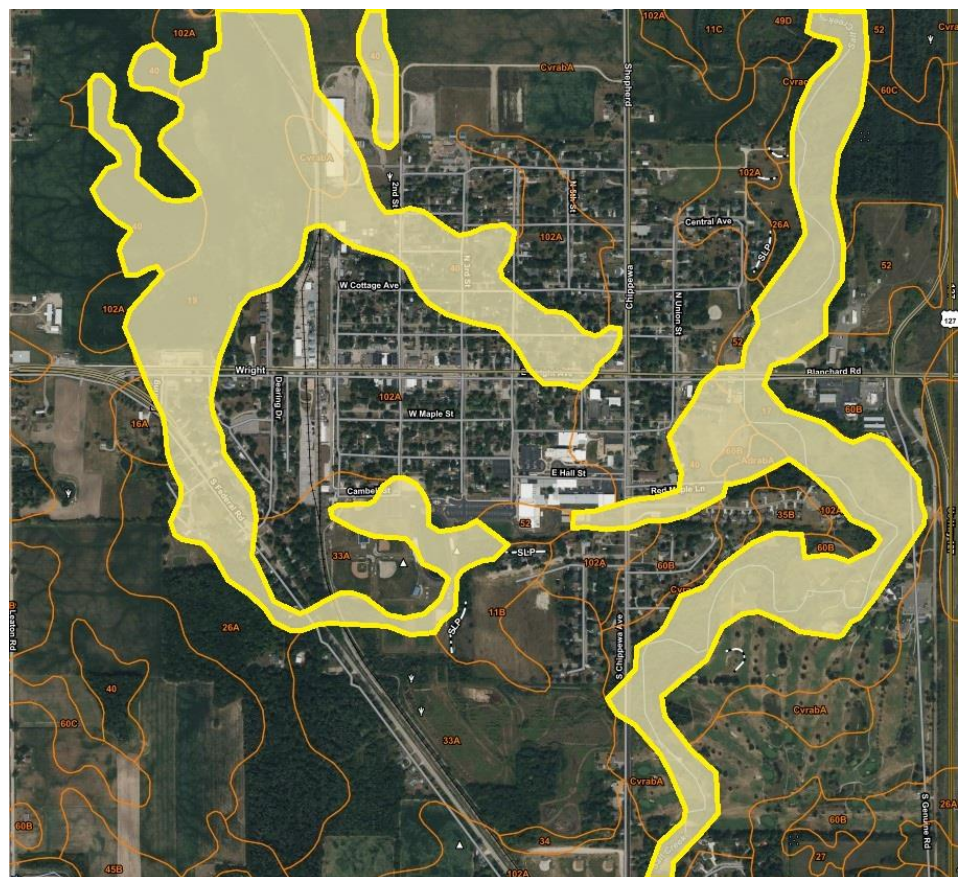
The geology of Shepherd, as well as the entire Lower Peninsula of Michigan, is described in terms of surface geology, also known as quaternary geology (materials deposited by continental glaciers), and bedrock geology (sedimentary rocks underlying the glacial deposits).

The quaternary geology of the Village developed 10,000 to 12,000 years ago through continental glacial activity. As the glaciers melted and retreated from the landscape, large amounts of sand, gravel, clay, and loam were deposited. Massive glacial lakes formed at the front of the retreating glaciers. Isabella County was among those submerged in glacial water.

The melting glacial water was laden with fine soil particles, which eventually settled to the bottom, creating clay and loam soils. The glacial meltwater streams also deposited fine sands into the shallow glacial lakes. The sand channels are several miles wide in places, but the sand in them is generally only five to ten feet deep.

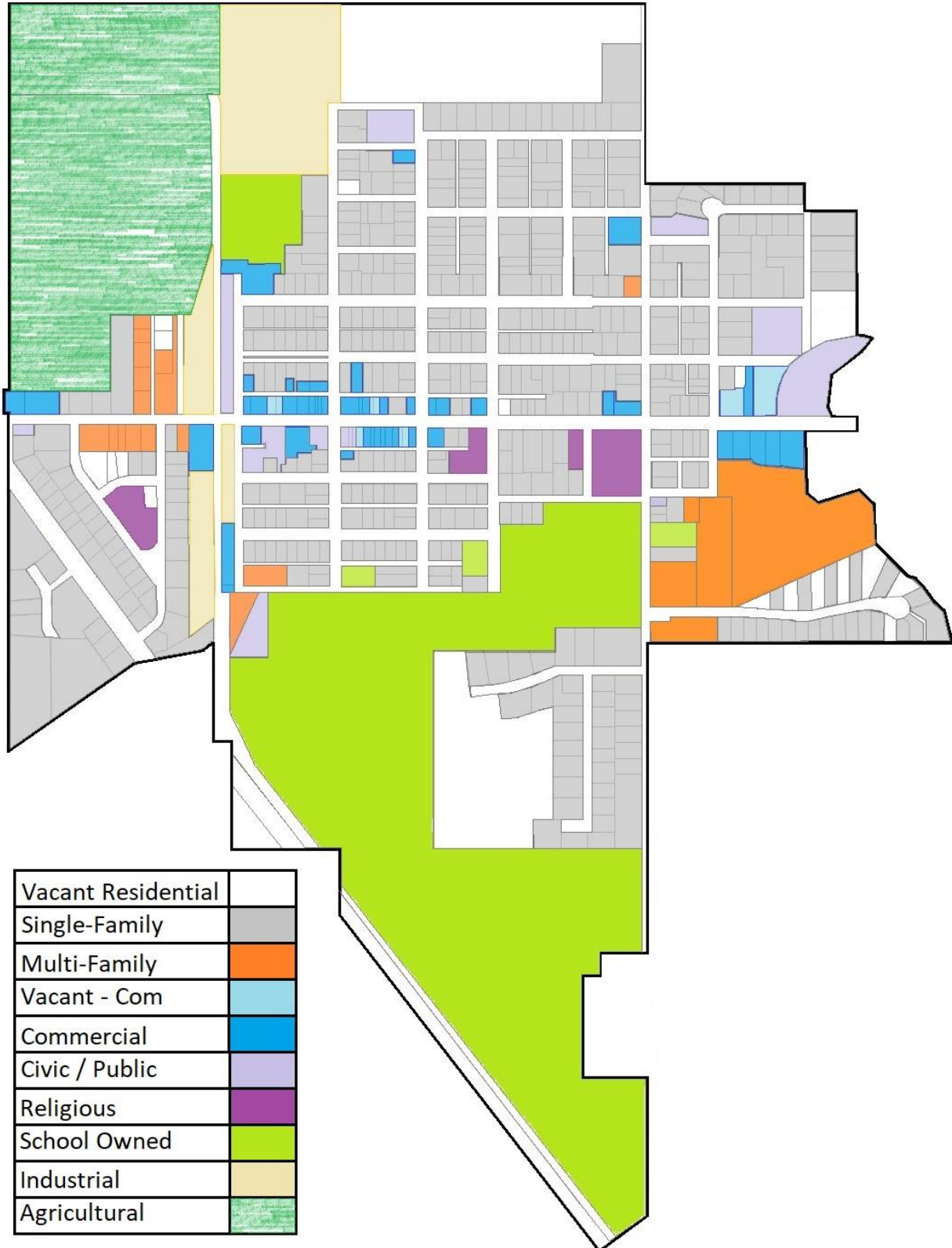
The sand deposits were further altered by wave action from these glacial “Great Lakes,” creating small sand dunes and low beaches across the landscape as the water levels declined and the lakes retreated to their current area of coverage. These low sandy ridges can be found in the countryside surrounding the Village of Shepherd.

The areas of glacial meltwater where heavier, clay soils were left present a drainage issue in parts of the community. These are known as hydric soils. Hydric soil is soil that is permanently or seasonally saturated by water, resulting in anaerobic conditions. Map 3 illustrates areas of the Village where hydric soils are most commonly found. Large portions of this area overlap with the floodplain areas, as shown in Maps 1 and 2. While not classified as wetlands, these areas have soils commonly found in wetlands, which will pose a development hurdle due to the need for infrastructure to manage both the seasonal high-water table and stormwater runoff and absorption.



Map 7: Hydric Soils

Existing Land Use



Map 8: Current Land Use Map

The current land use in the Village of Shepherd is mainly single-family homes located within a handful of blocks north and south of Wright Avenue. The second biggest land use in the community is property owned by Shepherd Public Schools. This encompasses not only the school properties but also the transportation complex situated at the northern end of First Street, as well as a large recreational area located at the southern end of town. This recreation complex includes multiple baseball/softball fields, a cross-country course which doubles as a walking path, a football field, track and field areas, and a small playground.

This large recreation provides the community with convenient amenities to enjoy. Since it is owned by the school, it is tax-exempt. The Village of Shepherd faces a challenge in having a significant amount of land within the community that is tax-exempt. In addition to the property owned by the school, three churches are located in the community, as well as land owned by the Shepherd Sugar Bush Corporation. The Sugar Bush is the maple syrup producing partner of the Maple Syrup Festival. The Corporation started in 1958 as a volunteer project to use proceeds from the sale of maple syrup to fund recreation activities in the community. Each spring, volunteers from the group tap the maple trees in the community, which is then processed into maple syrup at their building located on Third Street.

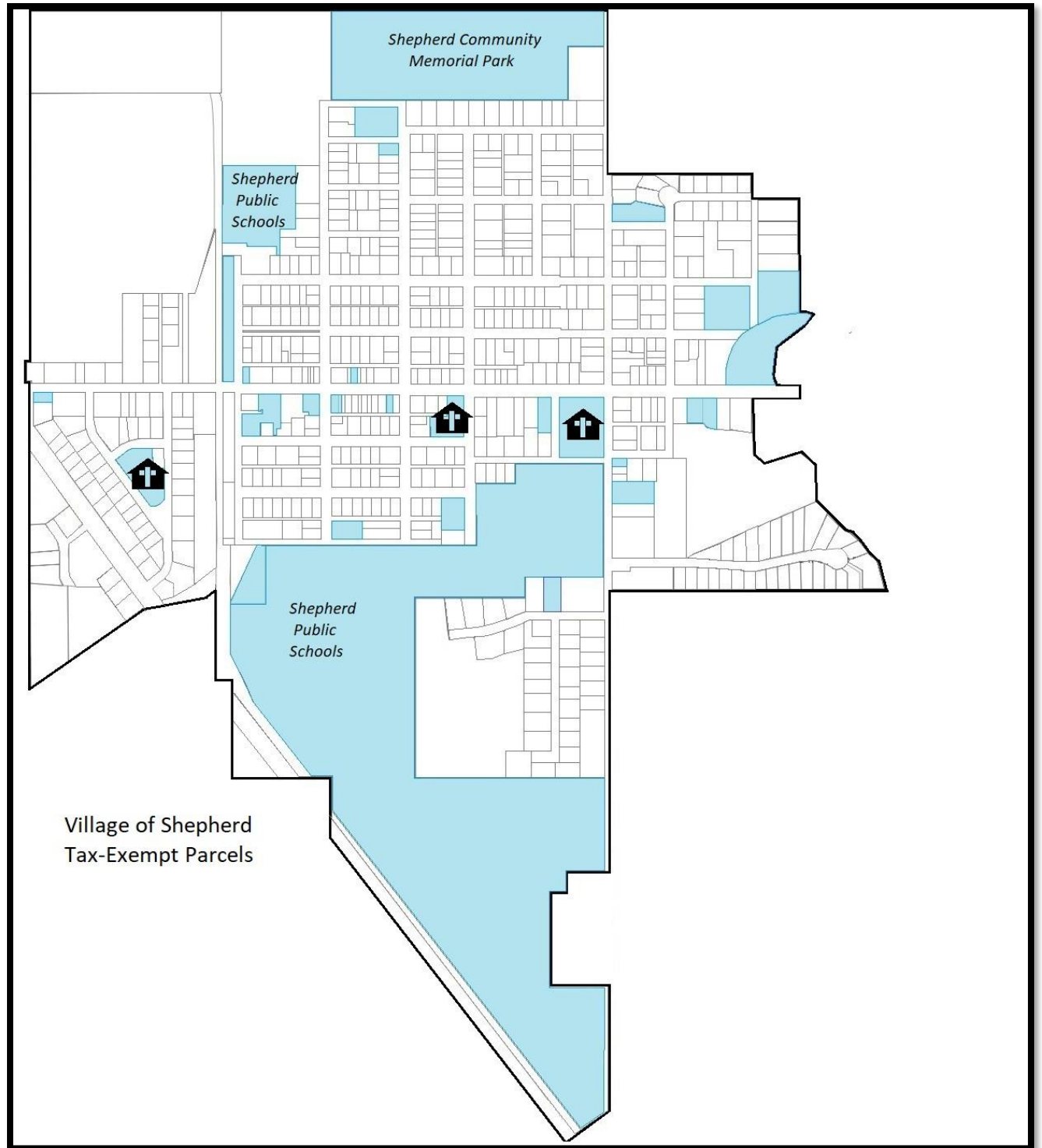


Photo 6: Shepherd Sugar Bush Corp. Building on Third Street

In addition to their property on Third Street, the Corporation also owns two large parcels in the community. At the east end of Cottage Avenue, they own a parcel that connects with two other large parcels just outside of the Village limits at the Little Salt River Park. Additionally, they own a large parcel on the Village's northern limits with development plans to become the Shepherd Community Memorial Park.



Photo 7: Community Memorial Park Sign



Map 9: Tax-exempt Parcels

Not only does the amount of tax-exempt parcels in the community pose a challenge for maintaining the Village's tax base, but it also limits the Village from growing within its current jurisdictional boundaries. Besides property currently zoned for Agricultural, there exists only one large tract of land, roughly 16 acres in size, left in the community.

This undeveloped tract of land is located along North Drive and is presently zoned R-1. It is located just to the west of the Southland Plat, which was recorded in 1960. Southland features 24 lots, all of which are roughly one-quarter acre in size. In the Southland plat, and adjacent to the plat on North Drive, are 27 homes. As of the end of 2023, these homes had an average equalized value of \$85,326 and an average taxable value of \$66,597. With newer homes in the area having an equalized value of just over \$100,000. Assuming this area could be developed with the same density as the adjacent subdivision, conservatively, the Village could see an additional 25 to 30 homes built on this tract of land.



Photo 8: Undeveloped Land to the West of Southland

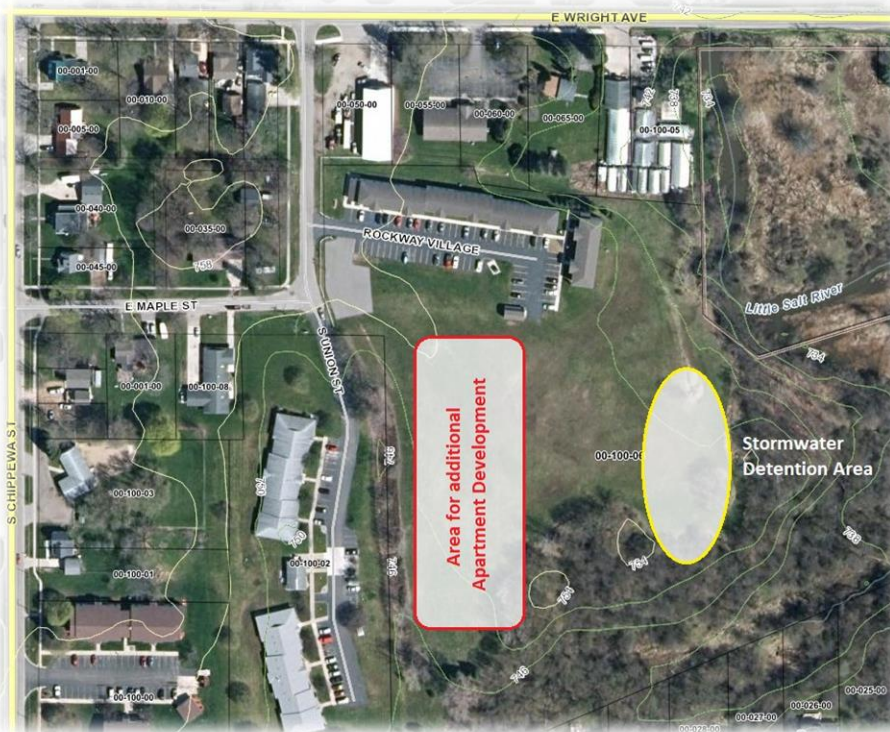
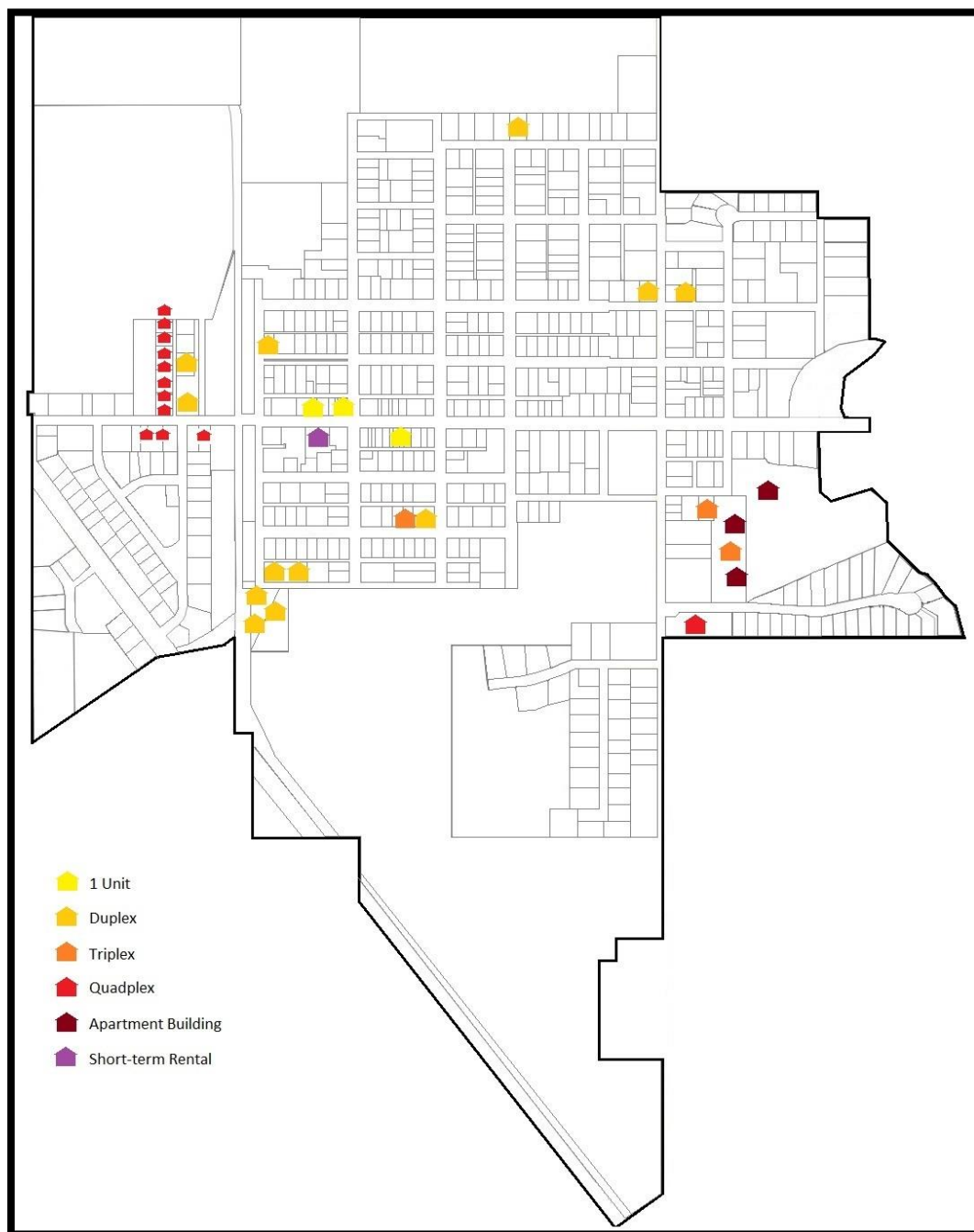


Photo 9: Rockway Village Future Growth

In addition to this undeveloped parcel, there is also one additional parcel that could be considered underdeveloped. Rockway Village is a large apartment complex located on the Village's eastern edge. This property has sufficient space to accommodate a second apartment complex of roughly the same size as the existing one on the property. The undeveloped portion of the property is flat

and features Parkhill Loam soil, which may require the development of a stormwater detention basin between any new development and the Little Salt River. This is illustrated on the previous page in Photo 9. Original plans for the property had several additional buildings which were never developed, however the site remains viable for additional development.

This area is also one of a handful of locations where multi-family uses have clustered in the Village, which would make future multi-family development consistent with the established land use pattern in this part of the community.



Map 10: Location of Multi-family Uses

The community also benefits from a small historical downtown. This area has frontage on Wright Avenue and runs from First Street to Third Street. These six blocks still feature many important community destinations. Both the Village Hall and Coe Township Hall are located in the Village's downtown, as well as the community library.



Photo 10: Downtown Shepherd, looking east, Circa 1900.

Unfortunately, over the years, several of the original structures have been lost, with the last two major losses occurring in 2006 when two businesses were lost or heavily damaged in fire on the north side of Wright Avenue between Second Street and Third Street. Several other structures were demolished in early 2015 at the southwest corner of Wright Avenue and Third Street. In addition to these two empty spaces in the downtown, the lot adjacent to the Village Hall has long been vacant, as well as a large lot across from the downtown park. These areas are highlighted below.



Photo 11: Downtown Empty Spaces

In the downtown, the types of uses have also changed over time. The Village no longer offers any significant retail businesses in the downtown, and besides the Shepherd Bar and the ice cream shop feature service orientated businesses. Lodging options are also limited, with the only space offering overnight accommodations being the large home behind the Township Hall located at 323 W. Wright Avenue. This multi-use structure that relocated in 2024 from across the street.



Photo 12: 323 W. Wright Avenue

Outside of the Village's downtown, additional commercial uses in the Village can be found at the corner of Wright Avenue and Chippewa Street, and just to the east of that intersection where Wright Avenue enters the Village. Commercial activity presently only exists on the south side of Wright Avenue at the Village's eastern entrance. Along the northside of the street at this location are two vacant commercial lots, as well as an empty structure that formerly housed a food establishment featuring pizza and ice cream. Adjacent to this structure to the west is a vacant parcel that formerly housed a Marathon gas station that was demolished in the early 2010s.

At the other end of Wright Avenue at the western entrance to the Village is the R and R Venue. This property features an event's facility that offers space for wedding receptions, graduation open houses, and other similar events.

The final major land use that should be highlighted are the industrial uses in the community. There are two main industrial activities in the Village of Shepherd. Situated along the railroad tracks to the west of the downtown is the Shepherd Elevator, currently in operation through Star of the West Milling Company. The elevator's three large silos



Photo 13: Shepherd Elevator

provide convenient shipping opportunities along the adjacent railroad. The elevator offers a host of agronomy services including chemicals, fertilizers, and feed.

The second industrial use in the community is Highland Plastics. Founded in 1991 in nearby Alma, the company relocated to Shepherd in 2003. In the early 2020s the facility underwent an expansion to accommodate the company's continued growth. The company offers solutions in multiple industries as the below illustration from the company's website shows.



Photo 14: Highland Plastics Sectors

Highland Plastic's location with the community is at the northern most end of Second Street, across from the Sugar Bush's Community Memorial Park. The parcel offers the company ample room for additional growth as shown on the adjacent map. This parcel is located in the northwest corner of the Village, adjacent to the railroad and farmland. Due to the Village's current jurisdictional boundaries, additional industrial development in this area is unlikely due to the lack of available parcels.



Photo 15: Highland Plastics Location

In terms of single-family residential development, the Village features a mixture of homes from different periods over the past 100+ years. The area along and adjacent to Wright Avenue going east from the railroad tracks features many two-story homes developed with features commonly found in Queen Anne and Stick homes built near the turn of the 20th century. These homes feature gable roof lines, and ornate features and trim which add character and style to the home.



Photo 16: Example of Home Styles Near Wright Avenue

As one moves further away from Wright Avenue, the tendency of two-story homes decreases considerably, and encounter home sizes and styles that are common on post-war development across the country. It is also in these areas where you see a noticeable shift from homes that sit very close to the street with a sidewalk running along the street, to homes more setback from the street with attached garages and lacking sidewalks



Photo 17: Home Development in the West Lawn Plat

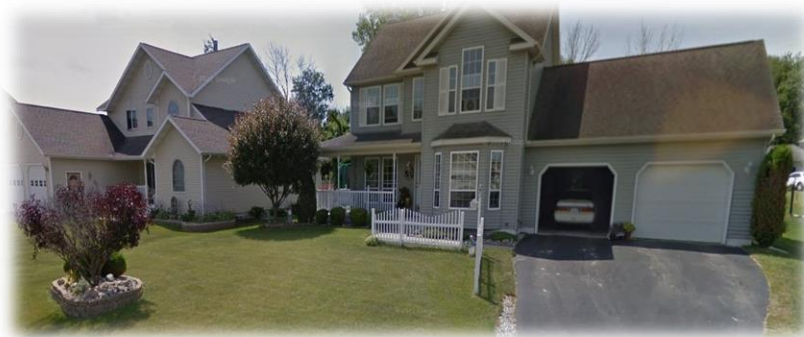


Photo 18: Development on Red Maple Lane

Lastly, there is the Blue Jay Meadows Site Condominium development. This area of the community located in the southeast corner of the Village, as well as Fairview Subdivision feature the most modern style homes, with many of them returning to two-story floorplans with attached garages.

Community Goals & Objectives

There is an old adage that reminds people that the to get what you want, you first must know what it is that you want. Whether one applies that to their personal life, their family, career, or their community it holds true regardless of the scale. The Planning Commission of the Village of Shepherd invested several months of discussion in crafting and tailoring specific goals and objectives that the Master Plan should advance.

A cohesive and forward-looking community is built upon a foundation of clearly defined and collectively supported goals. The articulation of these objectives serves not only to address present needs but also to guide the strategic development of the community in the years to come. These goals represent the shared values, priorities, and aspirations of residents, and are intended to promote the overall well-being, sustainability, and vitality of the community.

Community members were engaged in late 2024 via an online survey accessible through the Village's website. Community leaders were invited later in the planning process to rank goals in several different areas of focus to identify the most pressing items that should be focused on. When community members were asked about the best things about the community, the overwhelming response focused on things common to small towns. Those responses were put into a word cloud, which is illustrated below.



Photo 19: Word Cloud - Best Thing About Shepherd

When looking ahead at what goals and objections should be pursued, it is important to keep these core values in mind. The goal of this plan is to build upon and strengthen these fundamental elements of the community. Many people are drawn to small towns and villages for the peace, quiet, and slower pace of life they offer. These communities often provide a more relaxed and less stressful environment, with less noise, traffic, and overcrowding compared to

larger cities. The cost of living is typically lower, with more affordable housing and everyday expenses. Small towns also tend to foster a strong sense of community, where neighbors know each other, relationships are close-knit, and there's a shared sense of identity and belonging.

While small towns and villages offer many appealing qualities, they also come with drawbacks that can significantly affect daily life and long-term satisfaction. One of the most common challenges is limited access to amenities and services. This can include fewer healthcare facilities, limited shopping options, fewer restaurants, and a lack of cultural or entertainment venues. For specialized services, residents often need to travel to larger cities. When residents were asked about these challenges, the word cloud below reflects these hurdles.



Photo 20:: Least Favorite Thing About Shepherd

Employment opportunities can also be scarce, especially in specialized or high-paying fields. Young professionals may struggle to find jobs in their industry, leading to outmigration of younger populations and an aging demographic. Public transportation is often limited or nonexistent, making a car a necessity. Finally, while the slower pace can be relaxing, some people find it boring or stifling, especially those who crave new experiences, career growth, or vibrant social scenes.

As part of the Master Planning process, community leaders conducted a comprehensive SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis to evaluate the current landscape and guide future development. This collaborative effort brought together diverse perspectives from stakeholders across all levels of the organization to identify internal assets and challenges, as well as external factors that could influence long-term planning. The resulting analysis serves as a strategic foundation for informed decision-making, ensuring that the Master Plan reflects both the community's aspirations and its realities.

	Internal	Strengths Things to build up	Weaknesses Things to shore up
		Police Department Successful Infrastructure Projects Willingness to Work Together Community Support for Improvements X 2 Sense of Community X 2 Community Support Open Spaces Highway Access Social Events throughout the year Infrastructure Updates Great Schools Beautiful Parks Room for Growth X 2	Not always working as a team X 2 Building back the Downtown Communication with Residents Resistance to Change Lack of interest in new ideas Not enough businesses X 2 Vacant lots & buildings X 2 Lack of ordinance enforcement Lack of cooperation between Village & Twp. Lack of 24 Hour/Overnight Police Coverage Not bringing new businesses to town Lack of shopping No bigger parcels to bring in major businesses
	External	Opportunities Areas/Goals to Focus on	Threats Issues to monitor
		Working together Great Schools Remaining a bedroom community Requesting a Millage increase Becoming a City Annex Wright Ave. to US 127 Safe community Community Pride Connecting with higher ed institutions	Lack of communication with residents Resistance to change No Plan for Business Retention Future Funding / Loss of Funding Losing tax base to non-taxable entities Declining housing quality Need more homes Lack of supermarket Loss of businesses Housing affordability

Table 9: SWOT Analysis

The goals and objectives must reflect the type of community desired and the kind of lifestyle its citizens wish to follow, given realistic economic and social constraints. In examining the goals for the community of Shepherd, seven core areas were identified as main areas of focus. These seven areas should be viewed collectively in order to help see the end product that they produce. Like pieces of a puzzle, when placed together they take on meaning beyond the individual pieces.

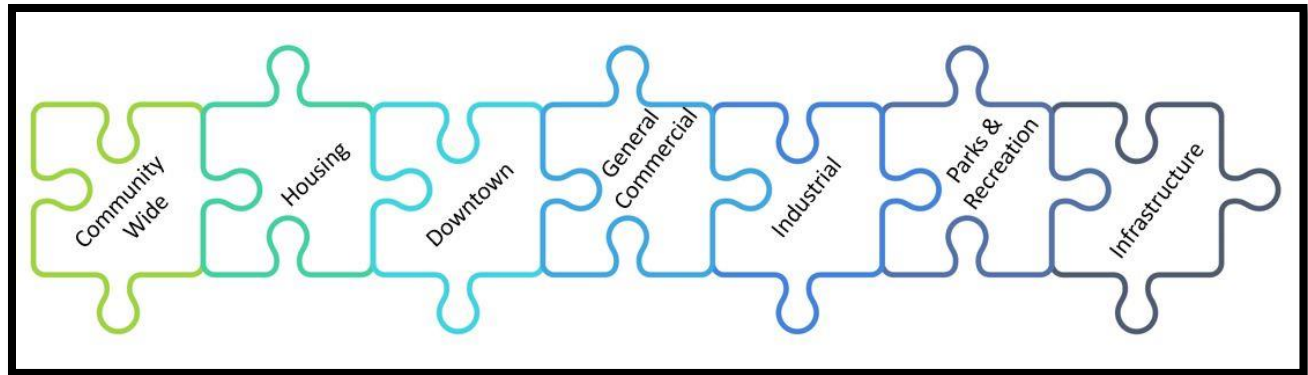


Photo 21: Seven Core Areas of Focus

I. Community-wide Goals

1. Maintain the small-town charm and quality of life currently enjoyed by residents.
2. To capitalize on the Village's proximity to US-27, the Soaring Eagle Casino, CMU, Mt. Pleasant, and Alma as a convenient location to live in mid-Michigan and be a short drive from most destinations.
3. Promote community well-being and a sense of community connection among residents.
4. Promote environmental sustainability.

II. Residential & Housing Goals

1. Remove blight and unsafe structures through code enforcement or other means.
2. Protect the identity and stability of residential areas.
3. Increase the supply of all ranges of housing that are affordable and attainable.
4. Preserve and maintain a quality and diverse housing stock that enhances a unique sense of place.
5. Encourage new housing developments in outlying areas of the Village.

III. Downtown Goals

1. Redevelop, expand, beautify, and promote the central business district around a unique theme to promote commerce and tourism in the community.
2. Identify historic buildings and promote their restoration and/or preservation.
3. Encourage mixed-use development in and near the downtown.
4. Increase formal outdoor public gathering space.
5. Increasing public art displays with such things as murals, art pieces, and crosswalk painting to create additional interest in the downtown.

IV. General Commercial Goals

1. Provide a wide range of commercial facilities to serve the needs of the local population and tourists.
2. Examine zoning issues that hamper development in the community.
3. Focus attention on the Wright Avenue corridor, and promote the area as both walkable and bike friendly.
4. Eliminate spot zoning where appropriate.

V. Industrial Goals

1. Encourage a variety of light industrial developments with attractive sites to strengthen the tax base and provide employment opportunities for area residents.
2. Locate industrial areas within reasonable boundaries that are easily accessible from existing transportation networks and that are not injurious to nearby residential uses.
3. Pursue agriculture-related industrial or value-added operations that can capitalize on the Village's location to US-127 and the rail line.
4. Encourage the development of new industries that are economically associated with the existing industrial base in the region.

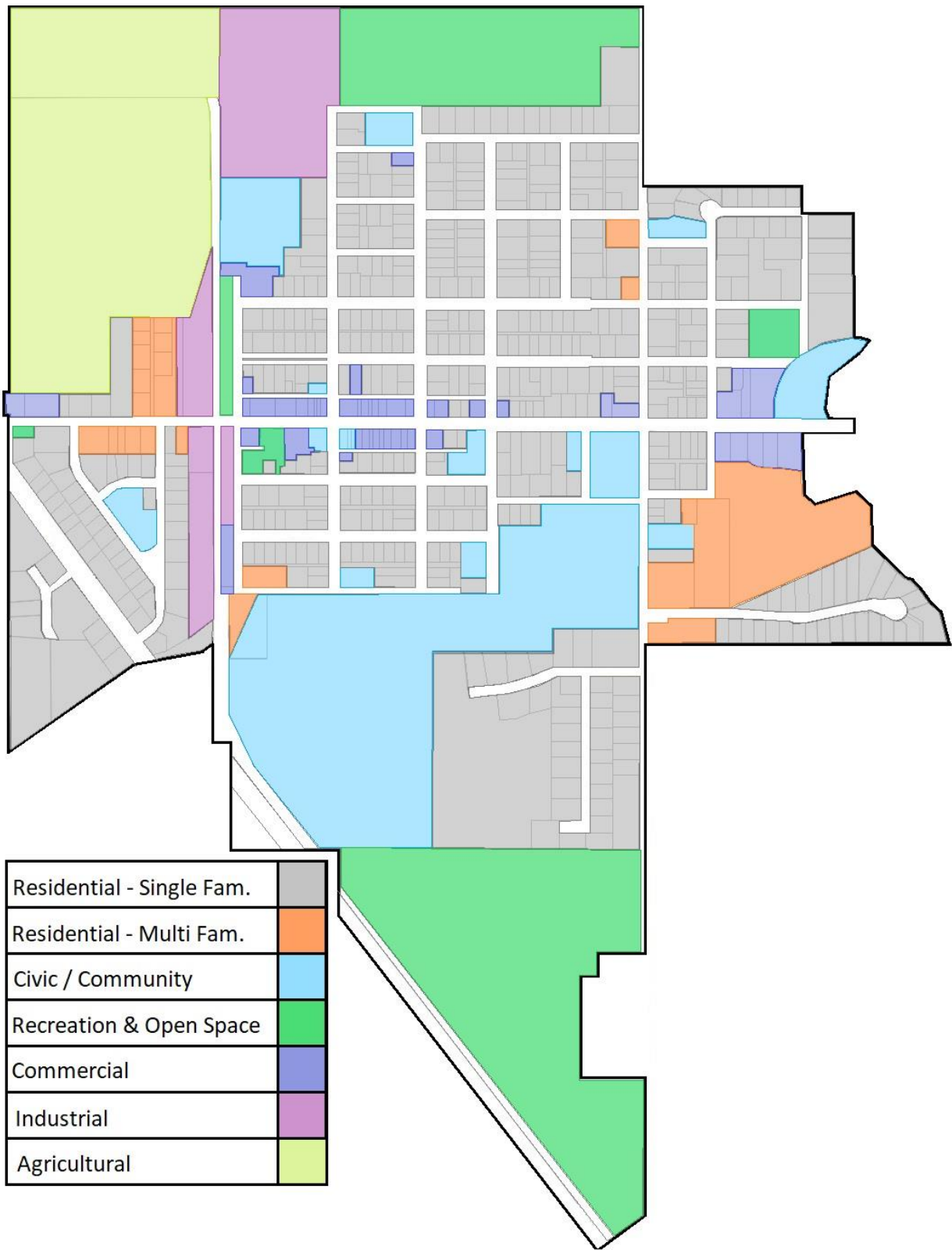
VI. Parks & Recreation Goals

1. To preserve the natural resources of the Village of Shepherd and provide for the recreational needs of all residents and tourists.
2. Establish a Village-wide tree planting and beautification program.
3. To preserve and enhance the natural and environmental resources of the Village for all present and future Village residents.
4. Ensure that the community has a DNR-approved five-year Recreation Master Plan.
5. Work with stakeholder groups to develop additional park areas beyond the downtown park. Pocket parks may be a suitable tool to increase recreational spaces in the community.

VII. Infrastructure Goals

1. Maintain the Village's water and sanitary sewer infrastructure to ensure community needs are met and the public's health and well-being are protected.
2. To improve and enhance the infrastructure of the Village for all present and future Village residents.
3. Maintain sidewalks Village-wide that promote walkability and target destinations such as the downtown and school.
4. To develop and maintain a network of streets that meets the needs of all Village residents, businesses, and tourists in a safe and convenient manner.

Future Land Use Plan



Map 11: Village Future Land Use Map

In the state of Michigan, the "Future Land Use" map and plan are essential elements of a community's comprehensive plan. This long-term planning document outlines how a municipality envisions its land being used and developed over the next 10 to 20 years. The Future Land Use map, in particular, illustrates this vision spatially, helping to ensure that future growth and development align with the community's goals and values.

One of the primary purposes of the Future Land Use plan is to provide guidance for zoning decisions. Although it is not a legally binding document like a zoning ordinance, it serves as a policy guide for local officials when considering rezonings or development proposals. By establishing a consistent and transparent framework, the plan helps ensure that zoning decisions support the community's broader vision for land use.

The Future Land Use plan also plays a critical role in managing growth. It helps communities plan for residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and recreational uses in a way that promotes efficiency and sustainability. By identifying appropriate locations for different types of development, the plan helps local governments anticipate and accommodate future needs while preserving key natural resources and community character.

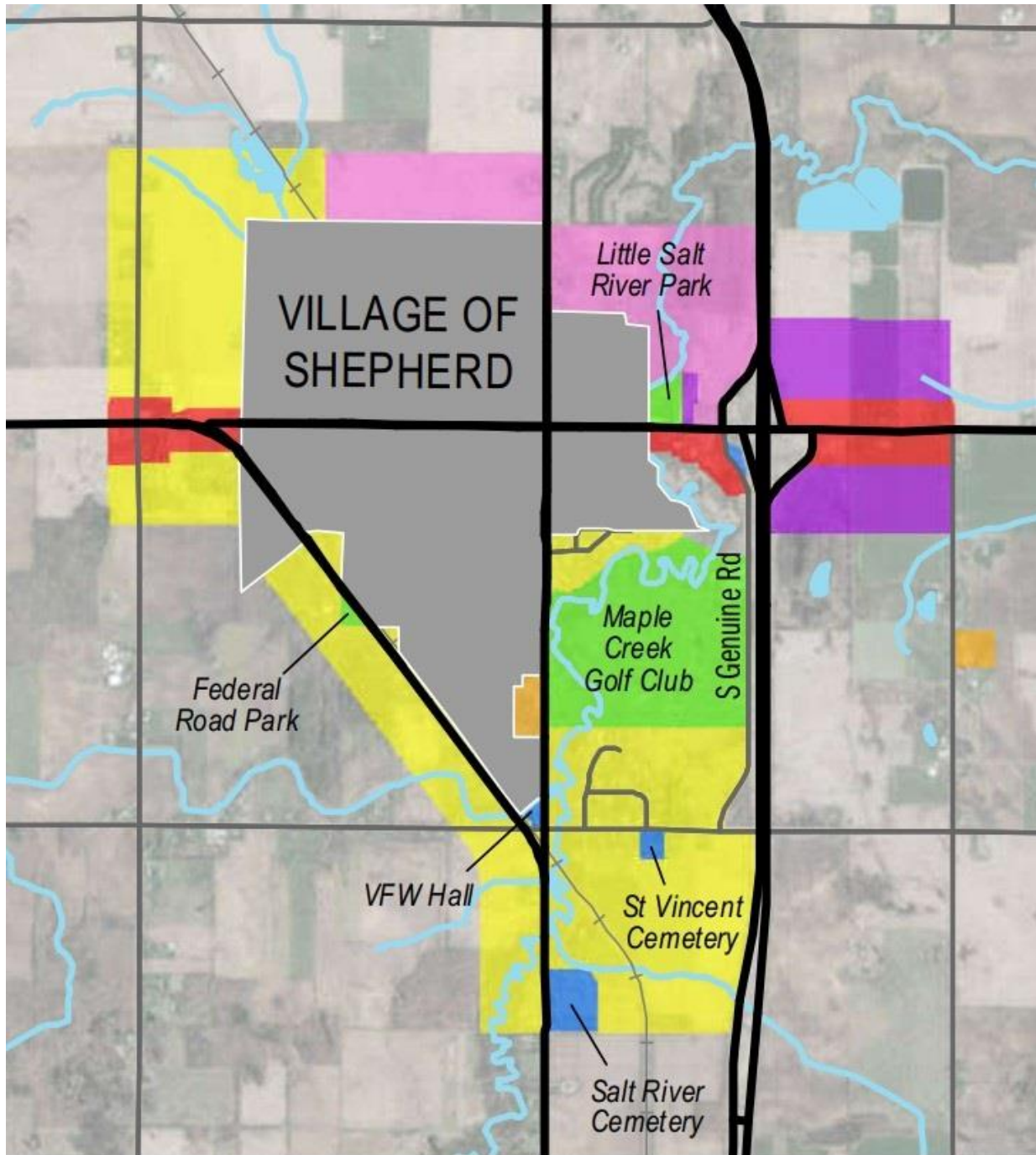
In addition, the plan supports infrastructure and capital improvement planning. By forecasting where growth is likely to occur, the plan allows local officials to prioritize investments in roads, utilities, public facilities, and services. This proactive approach helps reduce costs, avoid sprawl, and ensure that infrastructure keeps pace with development.

Finally, the Future Land Use plan strengthens a community's ability to pursue grants and partnerships. Many state and federal funding programs look for evidence of thoughtful, inclusive planning, and a well-developed land use plan can demonstrate a community's commitment to responsible growth. Under Michigan's Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008), the comprehensive plan—including the Future Land Use map—also provides legal support for land use decisions that serve the public interest.

In Michigan, it is required to review the contents of Master Plan plans, especially the Future Land Use Plan of adjacent jurisdictions, in an effort to minimize conflict. The Village of Shepherd is fully surrounded by Coe Township.

Coe Township last updated its Master plan in 2024, and identified several areas on the Village's boundaries where the highest density development in the township is desired. This poses an issue for the Village, specifically in providing the necessary water and sewer infrastructure to new developments outside its current jurisdictional boundaries. Presently, the Village does provide a host of township properties with either water or sewer.

When looking at this issue in greater detail, there are three types of scenarios that Village leaders should plan for. Those two are first annexing into the Village property, currently receiving utility service. The second scenario is an existing development that needs to access utilities or other core Village services. Lastly, new development that demands water and sewer due to the density or scope of the development. It must be noted that Village annexation poses little harm to the township, as Village property owners are township residents and pay township taxes. The Townships' only loss would be population for revenue sharing, which is an issue that could be addressed via a Conditional Annexation Agreement adopted via Public Act 425.



Future Land Uses:

 Agricultural (no color)	 Mixed Residential	 Institutional
 Single-Family Residential	 Commercial	 Recreation
 Multi-Family Residential	 Industrial	

Map 12: Coe Township Future Land Use Plan

In general terms, the Township's Future Land Use Plan identifies logical development along the Village's boundaries. There are two locations, however, where alternative development scenarios may be more advantageous to the Village. Those two areas are along Wright Avenue near the interchange with US-127. The other being along Chippewa Street and along the Village's northern jurisdictional boundary. Those are illustrated below.

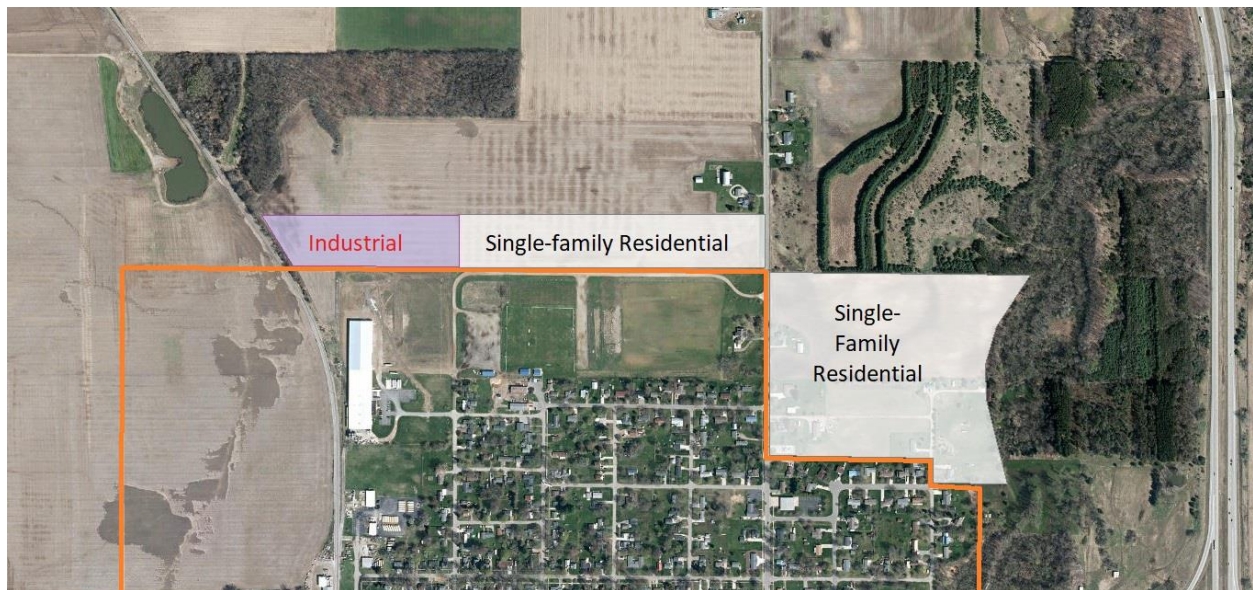


Photo 22: Alternative Future Land Use Option 1

In the above scenario, the area adjacent to the Community Memorial Park is developed as single-family homes, similar to the Southland Plat. The area immediately north of Highland Plastics is developed for industrial uses, capitalizing on access to the railroad. One additional aspect of this scenario may be the need to extend Second Street north, or develop a new road from Chippewa Street, heading west along the northern edge of the park.



Photo 13: Alternative Future Land Use Option 2

The other area where an alternative plan may be better suited is at the US-127 interchange. Due to the possible truck traffic associated with industrial uses, placing them along Blanchard Road to the east of the interchange with frontage on Blanchard Road, keeping all commercial development reserved for the west side of the interchange, may logistically work better in terms of truck traffic and the functionality of the bridge over the freeway.

In examining the future land use needs within the Village's current boundaries, the two most pressing issues that the Village must address focus on the long-term sustainability of the Village's downtown and residential areas, which allow greater flexibility for property owners in terms of accessory uses, two-family uses, and home occupations.

Generally speaking, future residential development should incorporate traditional neighborhood characteristics, with buildings no more than two stories in height, except near Wright Avenue, where it should be developed to be consistent with the large turn-of-the-century homes in this area. Sidewalks or walkable connections to other parts of the community should be encouraged. Street trees are a high priority to ensure that new development cohesively blends in with the existing community fabric.

Residential development of higher density should be considered in terms of two different scales. A level 1 multi-family zoning classification to cover duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes. A level 2 multi-family zoning classification to cover larger structures. Likewise, different levels of single-family uses should be crafted based on factors such as lot sizes, distance to the downtown and schools, and other established characteristics.

The Table below illustrates how the code could be modified to allow for various intensities of uses in a more tailored manner than what is currently provided for in the zoning code.

Village of Shepherd - Matrix of Uses					
Primary Use	R-1	R-2	R-3	M-1	M-2
Single-family Dwellings	P	P	P	P	-
Family Day Care Homes	P	P	P	P	-
Group Day Care Homes	-	S	S	S	-
Accessory Dwelling Units	S	S	-	-	-
Home Occupations	P	P	P	S	-
Bed & Breakfasts	S	S	-	-	-
Short-term Rental	-	S	-	-	S
Duplex	-	S	S	P	P
Triplex	-	-	-	P	P
Quadplex	-	-	-	P	P
Condominium Units	-	-	-	P	P
Apartment Complex	-	-	-	-	P
Assisted Living Facilities	-	-	-	P	P

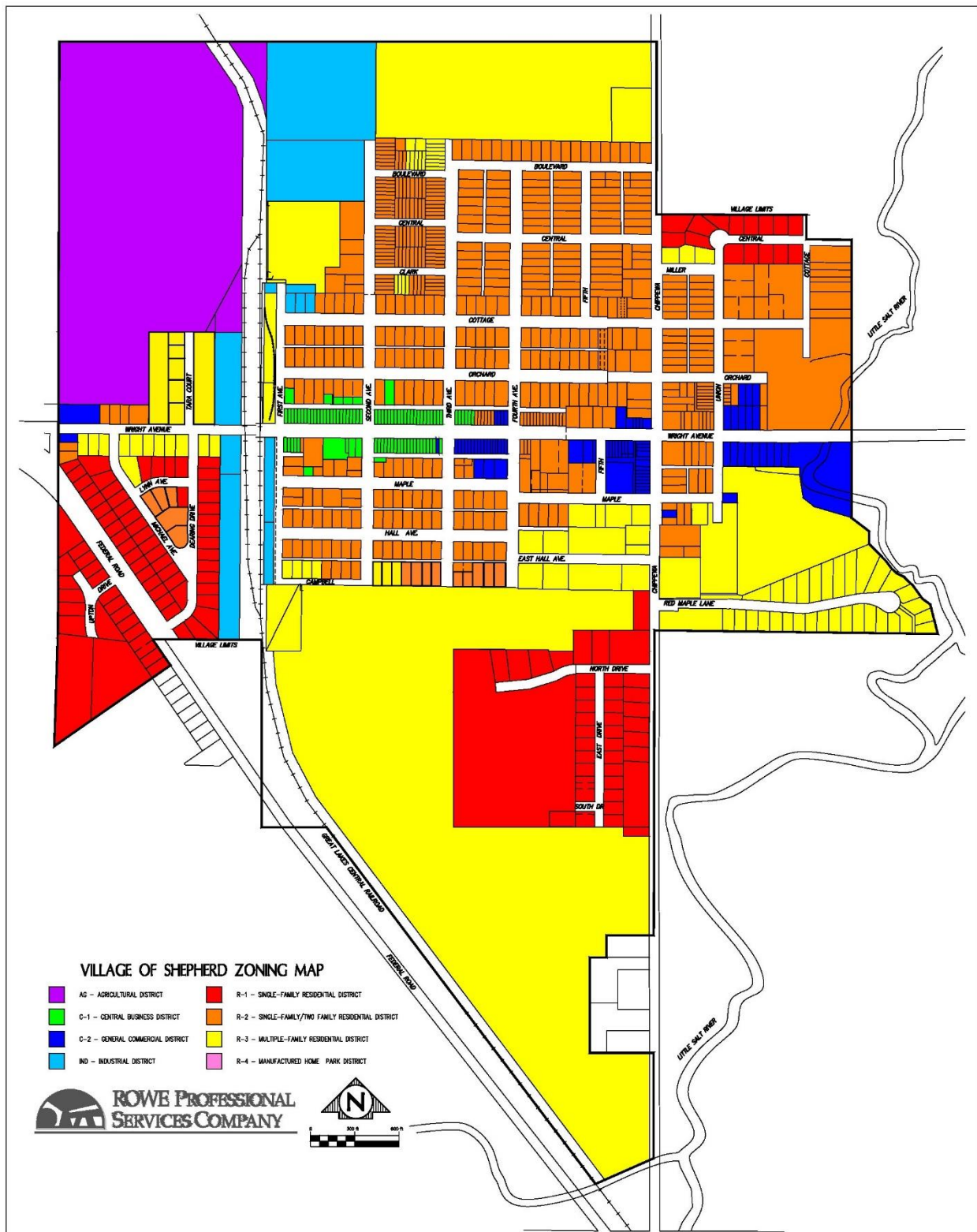
P = Permitted

S = By Special Exception

Table 10: Residential Use Matrix

Zoning Plan

Current Village of Shepherd Zoning Map:



The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA), as amended, requires that the Master Plan serve as the basis for the zoning plan. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (MZEa), as amended, requires a zoning plan be prepared as the basis for the zoning ordinance. It must be founded on an inventory of conditions pertinent to zoning in the community and the purposes for which zoning may be adopted, as described in the MZEa. The zoning plan identifies the zoning districts and their purposes, as well as the basic standards proposed to control the height, area, bulk, location, and use of buildings and premises in the community. A zoning plan can be a specific plan element or chapter in the plan, or it can be a separate document or appendix adopted as part of the master plan. It must be stressed that the zoning plan is not the zoning ordinance.

The zoning plan should explain how the land use categories on the future land use map relate to the districts on the zoning map. Differences between the two maps are highly likely to exist, and the differences between the land use categories on the future land use map and the zoning districts on the zoning map are to be explained in the text of the zoning plan. It might take a number of re-zonings over time to achieve the future depicted on the future land use map; new zoning districts may need to be created, or zoning districts might need to be combined or eliminated altogether. Whatever the reason for the differences, they need to be clearly explained, and that is accomplished through the zoning plan.

Description of Current Zoning Districts:

1. R-1 Single-Family Residential District.

The intent of this district is to provide for low-density, single-family residential development, and related public and semi-public buildings, facilities, and accessory structures. The provisions of this district are intended to protect and stabilize existing single-family developments and to encourage future single-family developments to occur on vacant land suitable for development, contiguous to existing residential land, with adequate public services and utilities. Encroachment by non-residential uses and activities considered capable of adversely affecting the residential character of this district is discouraged.

2. R-2 Single-Family/Two-Family Residential District.

The purpose of this district is to provide for stable, quality single-family and two-family residential developments at increased densities, along with related public and semi-public buildings, facilities and accessory structures. Districts of this nature are generally found in more established urbanized areas with existing public services and facilities, and serve as buffers or transitions between lower-density residential areas and higher-density or nonresidential areas.

3. R-3 Multiple-Family Residential District.

The intent of this district is to provide for an efficient and economic use of land through a mixture of single-family, two-family and multiple-family housing types together with such public and semi-public buildings and facilities and accessory structures as may be necessary and are compatible with such residential developments. The provisions of this district are intended to provide for the development of such projects with characteristics that are compatible with surrounding areas, while preserving open space and other natural features.

It is the intent of this district to locate residential developments near concentrations of nonresidential activities and facilities such as employment centers, with adequate access to major transportation arteries and existing public facilities and services.

4. R-4 Manufactured Home Park District.

The intent of this district is to preserve the interests of alternate types of residential developments by providing for manufactured housing developments and to protect the residents of any manufactured home development.

5. C-1 Central Business District.

The intent of this district is to provide and maintain a central business district with the character of a traditional walkable downtown by providing a diverse amount of office, business, and commercial facilities intended to serve the diverse needs of village citizens and tourists alike. The district regulations are designed to promote convenient pedestrian shopping and stability of retail development by encouraging a continuous retail frontage and by prohibiting automotive-related services and non-retail uses, which tend to break up such continuity. Large general commercial establishments and commercial strip mall style developments are discouraged.

6. C-2 General Commercial District.

The intent of this district is to provide for commercial areas that are designed for the needs of citizens of the village and surrounding communities. The general character of this district comprises a broad range of retail and service uses, entertainment uses, community facilities and general office uses. The provisions of this district are intended to encourage general commercial development to locate along major arteries particularly adjacent to major intersections where such development could most adequately serve the needs of the community's residents and those of the traveling public, without excessive quantities of strip development. The district discourages encroachment by industrial, residential or other uses considered capable of adversely affecting the general business characteristics of this district.

7. IND Industrial District.

The intent of this district is to provide areas that are appropriate for the industrial needs of the village. The district may include a variety of mixed wholesale and warehousing activities, light manufacturing, general offices and research and development facilities that have no detrimental effect on the surrounding districts. Development in this district is to be restricted to clean industry that does not produce substantial air or water pollution and excessive noise or odor. The district encourages industrial development to locate at a reasonable distance from heavily inhabited areas with access to major thoroughfares, highways and railroads. The provisions of this district further intend to discourage residential development or any other development that would hinder or adversely affect the industrial character of the district.

8. AG Agricultural District.

This district provides for the continuance of farming, ranching and commercial gardening activities on land being utilized for these purposes. The district is also intended for very

low density single-family housing as well as the preservation of natural open space lands and lands that are unsuitable for development due to constraints such as flooding, or lack of infrastructure. When land in the Agricultural District is needed for urban purposes, it is anticipated the zoning will be changed to the appropriate zoning district(s) to provide for orderly growth and development in accordance with the Master Plan.

Current Schedule of District Regulations:

Zoning District	Minimum Lot Size		Maximum Building Height		Minimum Yard Setbacks in ft.				Minimum floor area per dwelling unit in sq. ft. (2)	Maximum building coverage of lot	Maximum Dwelling Unit Ratio
	Area in sq. ft.	Width in ft.(1)	Stories	Feet	Front	Min. single side	Total two sides	Rear			
R-1 Single-Family	10,800	80	2-1/2	30	40	10	20	30	1,000	30%	1:2.5
R-2 Single-Family/ Two-Family	8,580	65	2-1/2	30	30	5	10	30	800/1,600	30%	1:3
R-3 Multiple-Family	8,580	65	3	35	30	5	10	30	(3)	(7)	1:4
R-4 Manufactured	(8)	100	2	25	10	5	10	30	600	None	None
C-1 Central Business	None	None	3	35	None	None (4)	None (4)	None (4)	None	(7)	1:4
C-2 General Commercial	None	None	3	35	25	None (4)	None (4)	None (4)	None	0	1:4
IND Industrial	None	None	3	35	30	20	40	(5) (6)	None	(7)	None
AG Agriculture	13,260	100	3	35	40	20	40	30	800	30	None
See Footnotes on the Follow Page											

Table 11: Current District Regulations

Footnotes to schedule of regulations.

(1) A maximum lot ratio of one to four (lot depth cannot exceed four times the lot width) shall be maintained for all new lots created. This ratio will not apply to existing lots. The depth of lot shall be measured within the boundaries of the lot from the abutting road right-of-way to the most remote boundary line point of the parcel from the point of commencement of the measurement. The width of a parcel shall be measured within its boundaries from parcel boundary lines which are perpendicular to the abutting road right-of-way, at the road right-of-way.

(2) The minimum floor area per dwelling unit shall not include area of basements, utility rooms, breezeways, porches or attached garages.

(3) The minimum floor space per dwelling unit shall be:

Efficiency	350 sq. ft.
One-bedroom apartment	500 sq. ft.
Two-bedroom apartment	700 sq. ft.
Three-bedroom apartment	800 sq. ft.
Plus an additional 80 sq. ft. for each additional bedroom	

(4) No side yards are required along the interior side lot lines, unless otherwise provided in the building code. On the exterior side yard which borders on a residential district, there shall be provided a setback of not less than ten feet (10') on the side of residential street. If walls or structures facing such interior side lot lines contain windows or other openings, side yards of not less than ten feet (10') shall be provided.

(5) No building shall be closer than fifty feet (50') to the outer perimeter (property line) of such district when such property line abuts any residential district. Upon application to the Village Board of Appeals, wherein such body determines the abutting residential district to be an area in transition which may become nonresidential in the future, this division (B) may be waived by the Board and substitute distances may be provided.

(6) All storage shall be in the rear yard and shall be completely screened with an obscuring wall or fence, not less than six feet (6') high, or with a chain link fence and a greenbelt strip to obscure all view from adjacent residential, office or business districts or a public street.

(7) The maximum percentage of coverage shall be determined by the use and the provisions for required off-street parking, loading and unloading, and required yards.

(8) The minimum lot size for manufactured home parks shall be ten acres.

(9) The Dwelling Unit Ratio shall be calculated using the following formula:

To calculate the average dwelling unit width, the total dwelling area square footage is divided by the width of the dwelling unit. To calculate the average dwelling unit length, the total dwelling area square footage is divided by the length of the dwelling unit.

Criteria to be Considered for Future Rezoning Requests:

1. Does the rezoning adhere to the goals, policies, and Future Land Use Map of the adopted Master Plan?
2. Will the rezoning be compatible with the physical, geological, hydrological, and other environmental features and the host of uses permitted in the proposed zoning district?
3. Will the potential uses allowed in the proposed zoning district be compatible with the surrounding uses and zoning in terms of land suitability, impacts on the environment, density, nature of use, traffic impacts, aesthetics, infrastructure, and potential influence on property values?
4. Does sufficient infrastructure and services exist to accommodate the uses permitted in the requested district without compromising the “health, safety, and welfare” of the residents of the Village of Shepherd?
5. Are the boundaries of the requested zoning district sufficient to meet the dimensional regulations for the zoning district listed in the Village’s zoning requirements?
6. If rezoning is appropriate, the requested zoning district shall be more appropriate from the Village’s perspective than another zoning district.
7. The ability of the applicant to satisfy any requirement (e.g., site plan, etc.) applicable to the specific use imposed pursuant to zoning and land use regulations.

Existing Districts Compatibility with Future Land Use Map:

In order to fully implement the goals of the Master Plan, changes to the zoning ordinance and zoning map will need to be made. In looking at the designations of the future land use categories and the current zoning districts, the following table should guide community leaders in pursuing changes to the governing documents.

Future Land Use Category	Existing Zoning District	New Zoning District
Residential – Single-family	R-1, R-2, R-4,	R-1, R-2, R-3
Residential – Multi-family	R-2, R-3,	M-1, M-2
Civic / Community	R-1, R-2	Civic
Commercial	C-1, C-2	C-1, C-2
Recreation & Open Space	None	Civic
Industrial	Ind	Ind
Agricultural	Ag.	Ag 1, Ag 2

In order to better plan for land uses, the existing zoning maps and districts should be amended to better realize the goals of the Master Plan and ensure that land uses are situated accordingly, while also providing a mix of attainable and marketable housing options that not only attract new residents to the community, but also allow for mobility within the community as housing needs fluctuate based on life stages.

Recommended Zoning Ordinance Amendments to Consider:

1. Identify areas where attached and multi-family developments should be located, and enact land use regulations that protect adjacent single-family uses from higher density development.
2. Better define what could be a two-family development in the R-2 District, consider allowing two-family only in two-story structures.
3. Consider allowing Accessory Dwelling Units in residential districts.
4. Review zoning regulations to ensure that non-residential uses in neighborhoods are low impact.
5. Update zoning regulations to require plantings are necessary for site development requirements by species native to Michigan.
6. Develop buffering regulations for lighting and parking where commercial uses abut residential uses.
7. Review zoning regulations to streamline the development process and eliminate barriers to development.
8. Update residential zoning regulations concerning setbacks and buildable lot coverage. Specifically, there are a considerable number of homes in the R-2 District which do not meet front setback standards. A reduction in the front setback should be considered to reduce the number and degree of non-conformities existing in the R-2 District.
9. Update the zoning for the downtown concerning setbacks and consider replacing setback requirements with a “build to” requirement to ensure that infill development maintains a similar façade with the existing downtown development.
10. Update development regulations to include stormwater management requirements.
11. Update the community’s sign ordinance regulations.
12. Review the development requirements for the Central Business District and add form-based requirements to ensure redevelopment is consistent with current buildings. This includes items like build-to lines, open store fronts, outdoor dining, minimum window transparency, and walk-up windows.
13. Update daycare regulations to make it easier for childcare providers to operate in the community.
14. Review and amend the Village’s zoning ordinance to be supportive of businesses likely to develop in the region, focusing on value-added agriculture and affiliates of Highland Plastics.
15. Update regulations allowing greater flexibility for work from home and start-up small business home occupations
16. Consider ways to incentivize certain residential development through tools such as density bonuses or smaller dwelling units (Tiny houses or micro units).

17. Create new zoning districts to better guide future development, as well as ensure infill development enhances the existing built environment.
18. Create a spin-off Industrial/Ag District for the Elevator.
19. Update subdivision/condo regulations to ensure new developments meet desired build out density and amenities.
20. Update the Village's regulations of temporary vendors and seasonal vendors to all be more permissible for start-up ventures.
21. Update design standards for new homes, to ensure that infill and greenfield development is compatible with the existing neighborhood.
22. Encourage mixed-use development along Wright Avenue, and within the downtown area.
23. Eliminate parking minimums.
24. Provide incentives for shared parking agreements, connections between parking lots, bicycle parking, pedestrian benches, and EV charging stations.
25. Create specific multi-family zoning districts.
26. Provide for Bed & Breakfasts in targeted areas near the downtown and schools.
27. Create a Civic/Community zoning district for parks, school, fire department, Village, Township, and Sugar Bush uses.
28. Encourage public art along Wright Avenue.

Implementation Strategies

To achieve the community's vision for sustainable growth and improved quality of life, this section outlines specific strategies aligned with the goals established in the Master Plan. These strategies provide a clear framework for action, guiding decision-making and resource allocation in key areas such as housing, economic development, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability. By implementing targeted initiatives, fostering public-private partnerships, and leveraging available funding opportunities, the town can enhance its resilience, maintain its character, and support the well-being of all residents. The following strategies have been carefully developed to reflect community priorities, maximize local assets, and ensure a balanced and thoughtful approach to future development.

Strategies
Review development requirements and street design standards, and amend if necessary to include rain gardens and landscaping in parking lots and along streets.
Consider developing a rental property inspection and licensing program.
Adopt and enforce the International Property Maintenance Code.
Enforce blight regulations and utilize the civil infraction process.
Sponsor a community clean-up day.
Work with property owners to recruit investors to develop new housing options.
Adding bike racks at key locations in the downtown will allow residents to access the downtown without taking up a parking space.
Market vacant land/buildings to developers through the Village's website with property information packages.
Identify capacity in various areas for additional water/sewer demand.
Work with MMDC on business attraction.
Establish a Village-wide tree planting and beautification program.
Redevelop, expand, and promote the recreational facilities of the Shepherd Park. Work with and in support of community groups that provide recreation to the community.
Cooperate with the surrounding communities, and not-for-profit and community groups in the development of regional trails and other recreational facilities
Annually PASER rate all streets in the Village.
Annually assess the condition of all sidewalks in the Village, and develop a multi-year plan that addresses sidewalk needs.
Identify areas where stormwater issues exist and ensure new development does not amplify drainage issues.
Create age-friendly housing options, including assisted living and downsized homes for retirees.
Support businesses that turn raw farm products into goods like cheese, jams, or canned produce.
Support agritourism and farm-to-table ventures in the community.
Cooperate with the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Isabella County Road Commission, and surrounding communities in the planning and design of street improvements.
Limit points of ingress/egress on major streets.

Segregate truck and automobile traffic as much as possible.
Incentivize more affordable 3 and 4 bedroom unit housing options to accommodate larger and multi-generational households.
Promote universal and barrier-free design accessibility, while considering additional space for special needs and equipment and contextual factors (e.g., access to transit and amenities) that influence accessibility and visitability.
Formally adopt and make available on the Village's website a policy that guides tax abatement requests and other development incentive tools.
Develop Wayfinding signage for the downtown and also the trail that markets a specific brand for the area.
Develop a corridor improvement plan for all of Wright Avenue, and focus on branding Wright Avenue as a historic or Isabella County Heritage destination
Consider using one of the vacant lots in the Downtown to create a pop-up village of tiny business spaces for start-up, seasonal, and craft businesses. Using this space to serve as an incubator for future commercial growth.
Work with property owners to fill vacant spaces in the downtown across from the community park. Consider some type of public art space, garden/plantings, or art display along the sidewalk to provide a buffer for the use of the remainder of the parcel.
Work to locate a Farmers Market near the Village's Downtown.
Consider developing a " <i>Shop Shepherd</i> " campaign to support local-first purchases from businesses in the community.
Continue to make development information available on the Village's website. Begin to highlight investment opportunities in the community.
Update zoning regulations to align with the Village's Master Plan.
Consider becoming a Redevelopment Ready Community or part of the Michigan Main Street Program.
Increase communication and engagement with the community.



Photo 24: Historical Shepherd Depot

Examples from Other Communities



Photos 25 - 27: Historical business and informational plaques from downtown Petoskey.

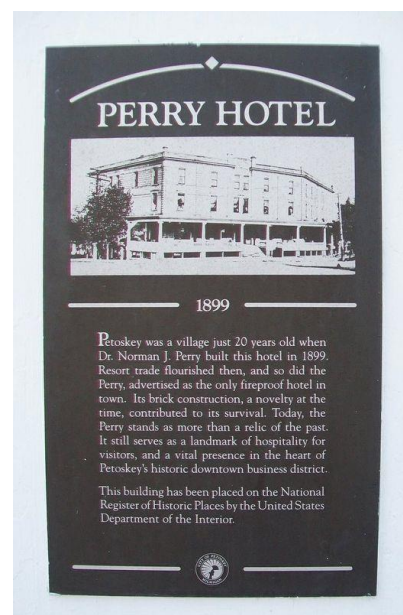




Photo 28: Downtown Mural - Rogers City



Photo 29: Alpena Downtown Pop-up Shops



Photo 30: Western Market Pop-up Shops – Muskegon

Community Survey Results

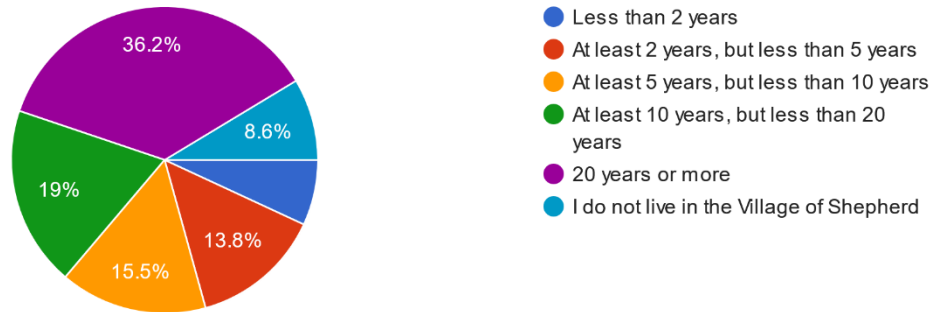


Village of Shepherd 2025 Master Plan

Question 1:

How many years have you lived in the Village of Shepherd?

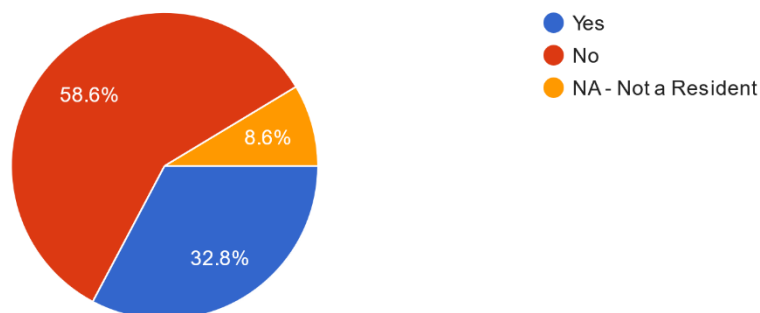
58 responses



Question 2:

Do you have any children under the age of 18 living at your home in the Village of Shepherd?

58 responses



Question 3:

What, if anything, do you think makes Shepherd a great place to live?

Criteria	Yes	No	Uncertain
Small town feel	55	2	0
Safety of the community	50	2	2
Close to work and/or school	42	7	1
It is affordable	36	4	11
Neighbors	35	6	8
Parks	30	12	7
It is "home," or where I grew up	24	22	1
Quality service & infrastructure	24	10	13
The downtown	24	16	9

Question 4:

What is your opinion of the following infrastructure items in the Village of Shepherd?

Item	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Average (2)	Fair (1)	Poor (0)	Average Score
Streets	6	32	16	3	1	2.67
Sewer Service	3	34	16	2	1	2.64
Streetlights	7	28	19	3	1	2.64
Stormwater Drainage	2	34	17	4	0	2.60
Internet Options	9	20	17	5	5	2.41
Drinking Water	2	20	15	12	9	1.90
Sidewalks	2	13	24	9	10	1.79

Question 5:

To what degree, if at all, are the following items a problem in the community?

Issue	Not a Problem (0)	Minor (1)	Moderate (2)	Major (3)	Average Score
Lack of Affordable Housing	20	18	12	6	1.07
Lack of Sidwalks	25	16	11	5	0.93
Junk Vehicles in Yards	27	16	7	7	0.89
Blighted Buildings	22	23	9	2	0.84
Cost of Living	25	17	13	1	0.82
Distance to Shopping	29	16	10	3	0.78
Loose Dogs	36	15	6	1	0.52
Noise Issues	33	21	3	0	0.47
Distance to Medical Care	39	10	7	1	0.47
Property Crime	41	15	1	0	0.30
Distance to School/Work	52	2	3	0	0.14

Question 6:

Do you feel there is a need to create any of the following recreation facilities?

Items	% Yes	% No	% Uncertain
Farmers Market	73.68%	19.30%	7.02%
Community Gardens	45.61%	36.84%	17.54%
Dog Park	36.21%	51.72%	12.07%
Skating Rink	35.71%	50.00%	14.29%
Sledding Hill	33.93%	53.57%	12.50%
Pickleball Courts	29.09%	52.73%	18.18%
Soccer Fields	27.27%	58.18%	14.55%
Disc Golf Course	26.79%	57.14%	16.07%
Basketball Courts	23.21%	62.50%	14.29%
Playgrounds	22.41%	65.52%	12.07%

Question 7:

How important to you is it for the Village government to represent the following values?

Least to Most Important →

Character Trait	1	2	3	4	5	Average
Committed to Safety	0	1	10	13	34	4.38
Fiscally Responsible	1	2	8	12	35	4.34
Welcoming	1	1	12	21	23	4.10
Promoting Health & Well Being	0	7	10	17	24	4.00
Family Centered	3	3	13	18	22	3.90
Inclusive	5	3	10	15	23	3.86
Economic Opportunity	0	7	14	18	18	3.82
Empathetic	2	4	19	11	20	3.77

Question 8:

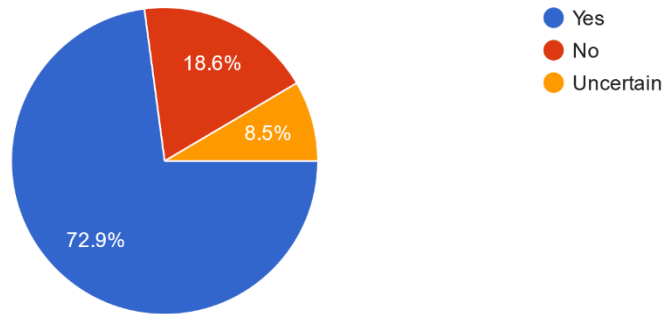
How much of a priority should the Village place on attracting the following types of new development?

Development	Not a Priority (0)	Low (1)	Medium (2)	High (3)	Average Score
Commercial	2	6	19	29	2.34
Single-family Homes	3	7	23	26	2.22
Mixed Use	8	15	21	11	1.64
Light Industrial	9	18	19	10	1.54
Assisted Living Facilities	10	15	24	8	1.53
Duplexes	9	19	22	7	1.47
Apartments/Condos	13	17	22	4	1.30

Question 9:

Currently, the Village prohibits all marijuana businesses from operating in the community. Should the Village continue to prohibit marijuana businesses from operating in the community?

59 responses



Question 10:

What one new business do you feel is most needed in the community?



Question 11:

What is your favorite thing about living in the Village of Shepherd?



Question 12:

What is your least favorite thing about living in the Village of Shepherd?



Question 13:

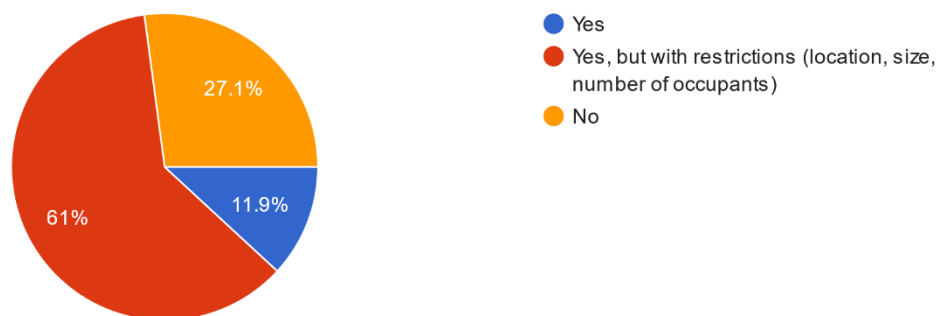
When you travel out of the Village for shopping, dining, and entertainment, where do you typically go?

Town	Most %	2nd %
Mt. Pleasant	72.73%	2.33%
Alma	15.58%	44.19%
Midland	3.90%	18.60%
Saginaw	2.60%	8.14%
Lansing	2.60%	11.63%
Clare	1.30%	8.14%
Grand Rapids	1.30%	3.49%
Big Rapids	0.00%	3.49%

Question 14:

Should the Village allow Accessory Dwelling Units in our residential areas? An accessory dwelling unit (ADU) is a smaller, independent residential dw...ry apartments, secondary suites, and granny flats.

59 responses



Question 15:

Please rate how you feel:

How do you Feel	Safe	Somewhat Safe	Somewhat Unsafe	Unsafe	Average Score
From violent crime	46	12	0	0	1.79
from property crime	38	17	3	0	1.55
During the day	52	6	0	0	1.90
At night	42	13	1	0	1.71

Question 16:

Please rate your opinion on the amount of public safety services currently covering the community?

Safety Services	Too Much	About Right	Too Little	Don't Know
Traffic Enforcement	5.26%	64.91%	24.56%	5.26%
Community Policing	3.45%	77.59%	12.07%	6.90%
Fire/Rescue Services	1.72%	77.59%	12.07%	8.62%
Ordinance Enforcement	8.62%	56.90%	25.86%	8.62%

Question 17:

Where do you get your information about the activities of the Village of Shepherd?

- Village Facebook Account 79.7%
- Friends & Neighbors 59.3%
- Village Website 45.8%
- Neighborhood App 6.8%
- Local Newspaper 5.1%

Question 18:

Any comments you'd like to share?

- Not everyone uses Facebook so maybe purchase an electronic sign so that messages can be seen by all.
- Need more police at night. The sheriffs dept also not here.
- Anxious to see village results
- I wish info was more accessible (not on FB)
- Being relatively new to the community, we are so happy to be a part of this wonderful community.
- More affordable housing options are needed (condos or new smaller homes and even apartment development), the sidewalks are awful. This should be a walkable community but for safety one needs to walk on the street which is not safe either. Street lighting could be better, I do not feel safe walking my dog in the evenings, neither safe from tripping hazards nor there being enough safe street lighting around the block. Also, commercial development downtown would be welcome including restaurants and shops. Keeping the character of a small town and requiring aesthetic considerations to new buildings (for example - too bad the Dollar General was not required to have a more unique building facade) which could be part of the zoning ordinance.
- The new school bus route uses Cottage Ave. There is no reason they should be driving down residential streets that they are not servicing. They drive too fast, I've almost been hit several times. They should be using Wright Ave.
- Appreciate forward thinking
- Would love to see more development of downtown area.
- do some maintenance on bike trails
- Get a dog park, put in more adult activities like disc golf or updated horseshoes
- We were happy to raise our family in Shepherd and the kids, now adults look forward to coming home, especially for the festival. Thank you for all you do to make Shepherd a great place to live.
- Splash park has been awesome and we are excited for the bridge project to be complete as well. I think a pickleball courts would be a welcome benefit to the community as many other sport or recreation options exist now.
- Do better respecting peoples property.
- Be more supportive of ALL local businesses and their owners. The good ole boy club needs to be done with. Stop picking and choosing who you favor, stop spreading rumors and saying malicious things about ppl you have no business talking about from a professional seat.
- Let's stay small! Keep up the great work!