

# Erie Township Master Plan



...designing our community's future



2025

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# Acknowledgements

The 2025 Erie Township Master Plan was officially approved and adopted by the Erie Township Board on October 14, 2025

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I-75

Luna Pier Rd.

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# Introduction

Townships are constantly changing. The numbers of residents change and the characteristics of those residents also change. New construction occurs; buildings are torn down and replaced with new ones. Sometimes physical changes are subtle and nearly imperceptible.

Other times, physical change is dramatic, as large development projects are completed. Apart from the issue of the pace of community change, is the larger question regarding whether change is making the community more livable, economically stable, attractive and desirable.

Physical change in a township is driven by all types of public and private decision-making. The Erie Township that we see today is the product of these large and small decisions made over time by private property owners and by public entities. Private property owners make all kinds of decisions that impact community change. They decide to buy or sell property, expand existing buildings, use property for other purposes, remove buildings, or simply decide to do nothing for a while. Public entities such as Boards of Township Trustees and Planning Commissions decide what public infrastructure to build and maintain and how to regulate land use.

Given this environment of change and decision-making, it is not unusual for

community leaders to consider the overall direction of community development and seek to define a sense of overall vision. The purpose of a Master Plan is to provide this vision, capturing and articulating desired community goals, based on community attitudes and preferences. Effective Master Plans serve as a guide for day-to-day decision-making within the context of long-term community goals and objectives.

that can be foundation for economic development.

Master Plans are adopted after a substantial period of information gathering, public engagement and consensus-building. Once adopted, a Master Plan becomes the document that public officials, residents, the business community, and others can look to when they consider decisions that affect the future of the community. A Master Plan also

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Master plans are communicated with words, graphics, and maps and they describe a desired future state or condition for a community. They provide a long-term perspective of development in a way that recognizes the interrelated elements of community fabric.

This includes how land is used, how people move from place to place, and what public infrastructure should be built to support human needs. Master Plans also seek to develop and articulate a sense of place in a community

becomes an indispensable foundation for rational zoning and related regulatory instruments.

## **Time Frames**

A community's Master Plan provides a long-term perspective of community change. Typically, the planning horizon considered by a Master Plan is 20 years. Support for this time frame is found in the Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008 which states that "A Master Plan

shall address land use and infrastructure issues and may project 20 years or more into the future” (Sec.33(1)). It is important to note that depending on the subject matter, time horizons for planning issues can differ. For example, planning decisions regarding new public facilities (township halls, libraries, recreation facilities, etc.) have very long-term consequences; often well beyond 20 years. Similarly, transportation planning decisions (new roads, widening, etc.) have long-term or nearly permanent consequences in a community.

### Legal Significance of Master Plans

The legal authority for Erie Township’s Master Plan is derived from the Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008. This legislation replaced earlier legislation and was intended to create a more uniform process for preparing and adopting master plans among local governments in Michigan and to define minimum plan content.

Passage of the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, PA 110 of 2006 and the New Michigan Planning Enabling Act, PA 33 of 2008 has helped to clarify the relationship between local planning and zoning in Michigan. Of particular importance is the need for the Master Plan to address how land use categories shown on a future land use map relate to the districts shown on the zoning map. This requirement represents an important link between local planning and zoning that can help address the legal risks associated with zoning decisions that are made without regard for long-range community planning. Generally, zoning decisions that are consistent with a well-reasoned Master Plan are more likely to withstand legal challenge than those made in a more arbitrary and subjective manner.

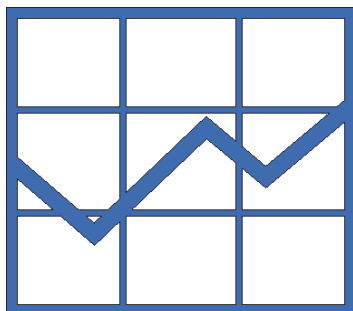
### Master Plan Characteristics

This Master Plan has three important characteristics:

**Big Picture:** Most day-to-day local government decisions that relate to community development focus on very specific issues in specific areas. A Master Plan offers the opportunity to look broadly at issues such as land use, economic development, public infrastructure, commercial corridors and mobility in terms of how they relate to each other. This larger view of the community gives an important perspective toward individual development proposals and issues.

#### Identification of Existing Conditions and Relevant Trends:

Master Plans generally include information regarding how an area is changing and how it might be impacted by local, regional and even national trends. Populations grow or decline in terms of numbers of people, and the characteristics of the average resident also change. This change is important for many reasons. For example, as residents age, what they want from their community changes. Other characteristics



of a community such as housing choices, public amenities, and job opportunities, also change over time, impacting the livability and quality of life of a community. Master Plans also identify trends that are taking a community and a region in a certain direction.

**Public Engagement:** The development of a Master Plan typically includes opportunities for the general public to weigh in on key community issues. The consideration of “big picture” community development issues is frequently accomplished with the benefit of public consensus-building efforts. Often the development or update of a Master Plan affords the rare opportunity for residents to speak out about general community development priorities and concerns.

### Uses of This Master Plan

This Master Plan has several important uses:

**Guiding Zoning Decisions:** Zoning regulates how property owners may use and develop property. In some states, zoning ordinances must be based on a Master Plan to make sure that zoning decisions are well-reasoned and legitimately related to a public purpose. In Michigan, zoning decisions that are supported by a Master Plan are less likely to be challenged on the basis of being arbitrary and unrelated to a public purpose.



**Guiding Public Investment Decisions:** The identification of redevelopment areas or possible growth areas implies something with regard to where new public investment should be directed. Often, the need to simulate new development or to support the needs of community growth means that there should be more investment in infrastructure. This ranges from the need for new or upgraded transportation improvements, water/sewer lines or plant upgrades to expanded open spaces or park facilities.



**Guiding Private Investment Decisions:** As the private sector considers decisions about buying or developing land, a Master Plan can be a source of information with regard to relevant public policy. This may help gauge the likelihood of a specific rezoning approval and expectations for future public infrastructure investment.

**Supporting Grant Proposals:** Communities with a strong and relevant Master Plan often are more successful with obtaining grant funding for key projects. Funding agencies are particularly drawn to supporting projects that are clearly part of a long-term community development strategy identified well before a specific grant application is written. Funding agencies often prefer to work with communities who articulate shared goals in an accepted plan. They look for the partnership that is established when they can provide funding for projects that meet both the agency’s programmatic goals and the community’s needs.

**Defining Needed Public Initiatives and Follow-up Planning:** Because of its more general nature, a Master Plan often points toward the need for more focused public initiatives and/or follow-up planning. Some initiatives include regulatory initiatives (i.e. create new zoning districts to apply to a redevelopment area), while some initiatives might be organizational (create a new organization to help address a particular redevelopment concern). Another initiative might be the need for a more focused planning effort (i.e. downtown plan, bikeway plan, shore line plan or corridor plan).

**Past Planning Efforts**

This Master Plan fully replaces the previous past similar documents. Specifically, the “Erie Township Land Use Plan” was adopted in March of 2001 and the Erie Township Master Plan was adopted on May 8, 2012. This 2025 Master Plan described planning issues facing Erie Township, and it articulated updated goals and objectives. While this most recent Master Plan has served Erie Township well for several years, Section 125.3845 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act indicates that a Master Plan should be reviewed every 5 years.

In 2018, Erie Township conducted a survey of all residents to gauge public opinion on the issue of medical marijuana. According to recent legislation, Michigan communities were given the option of allowing or disallowing various types of medical marijuana facilities and operations. This survey was sent to every registered voter in Erie Township and more than 570 responses were provided. The responses pointed toward a majority (60%) against allowing facilities and only about 40% indicating support for such facilities.



The Erie Township 5-Year Park & Recreation Plan 2023 - 2027 is included as part of this document and is to be used as a reference. (Copies may be obtained at the Erie Township Office.) This planning document is necessary in order for Erie Township to remain eligible for various grants offered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

The grants offered by MDNR can potentially fund a wide range of park and recreation improvements and land acquisitions. Past similar efforts in 2014 yielded a grant to improve South Erie Park. Key recommendations provided in this most recent Park and Recreation Plan are included in this Master Plan Update.



**Planning Process**

At the onset of steps taken to update the Master Plan, it was decided that past significant efforts to gauge public opinion on planning issues were still largely valid and remain so in 2025. In 2011, a township survey and planning workshop was conducted. In many ways, the results of past public engagement efforts did not surprise those who know Erie Township well. The information and data generated helped to validate many long-held beliefs about what residents want Erie Township to be like. Some key observations from the survey included the following:



- By far, people consider the “rural atmosphere” to be the most important reason to continue living in Erie Township.
- Overwhelmingly, survey respondents think that Erie Township needs to place more attention on the conservation of open spaces and the preservation of agricultural land.
- More than half of survey respondents indicated that remaining primarily a rural community is the ONE thing that Erie Township should strive for in the next 5-10 years.
- Respondents clearly indicated a desire to keep the cost of government and taxes low.
- Respondents rate the “peace and quiet” and “overall quality of life” as being what they like best about Erie Township.

- In contrast to the views concerning the best of Erie Township, respondents least liked the fact that shopping and career opportunities are limited in Erie Township.
- Defining rural character can be difficult; however, most survey respondents reported that rural character includes large tracts of land and few homes.

Along with past efforts to learn about the attitudes and perceptions of residents toward land use and development issues, Erie Township used its newsletter and web site to keep residents informed. Early in 2018, Erie Township included an article about steps being taken to update the Master Plan in the newsletter and announced plans to hold a public hearing in June, 2018. Erie Township also created space within its web site to share draft materials.



# Existing & Future Land Use

## Existing Land Use

In 2011, an early and significant step to develop the Master Plan began with field work necessary to produce an up-to-date existing land use map. This work was aided by new aerial photography provided by the Monroe County Planning Department. That high resolution aerial photography captured land use imagery from 2010. Since then, Monroe County continues to build its Geographic Information System (GIS) database. Newer air photos exist and there are continued efforts to build on this system with various layers of additional geographic information. This data includes parcel information that can include property data such as building types, land use and related information.

Ultimately, it will likely be possible to produce an existing land use map from data provided electronically from the Monroe County GIS System. Because of this potential, and the fact that Existing Land Use Map from 2012 is still generally accurate, efforts to update Map 1 were not made. Instead, Map 1 continues to be used as a graphic depiction of existing land use in Erie Township. General land use categories were defined to encompass all types of land uses. What is very evident from this map is the fact that much of Erie Township is categorized as being natural areas/woodlands/agricultural lands or

rural residential. Rural Residential was defined as being very low density (one dwelling unit per acre or fewer). More developed and urbanized portions of Erie Township are concentrated along the southern border within and around the Village of Erie and to the north around the Mason School Campus.

## Future Land Use

A Future Land Use Map is shown on Page 13. This Previous map was generated from the extensive efforts of the Erie Township Planning Commission and is based on blending information from the existing land use map, recent zoning updates existing zoning, the 2011 Erie Township Land Use Plan, along with new insights gained from recent land use analysis, the community survey and public meetings. This Future Land Use Plan consists of a classification for various land uses and provides a broad view of desired land use patterns in the future. A primary value of this map is to help support decisions related to changes to the zoning ordinance in the future.

The new and updated Land Use Map is included in this plan and may be found attached to this Master Plan (at the end).

A total of eight land use categories were created to depict future land use patterns. The number of categories is less than what existed in the 2011 Future Land Use Plan, because of past implementation efforts and zoning updates.

## Natural/Conservation Area

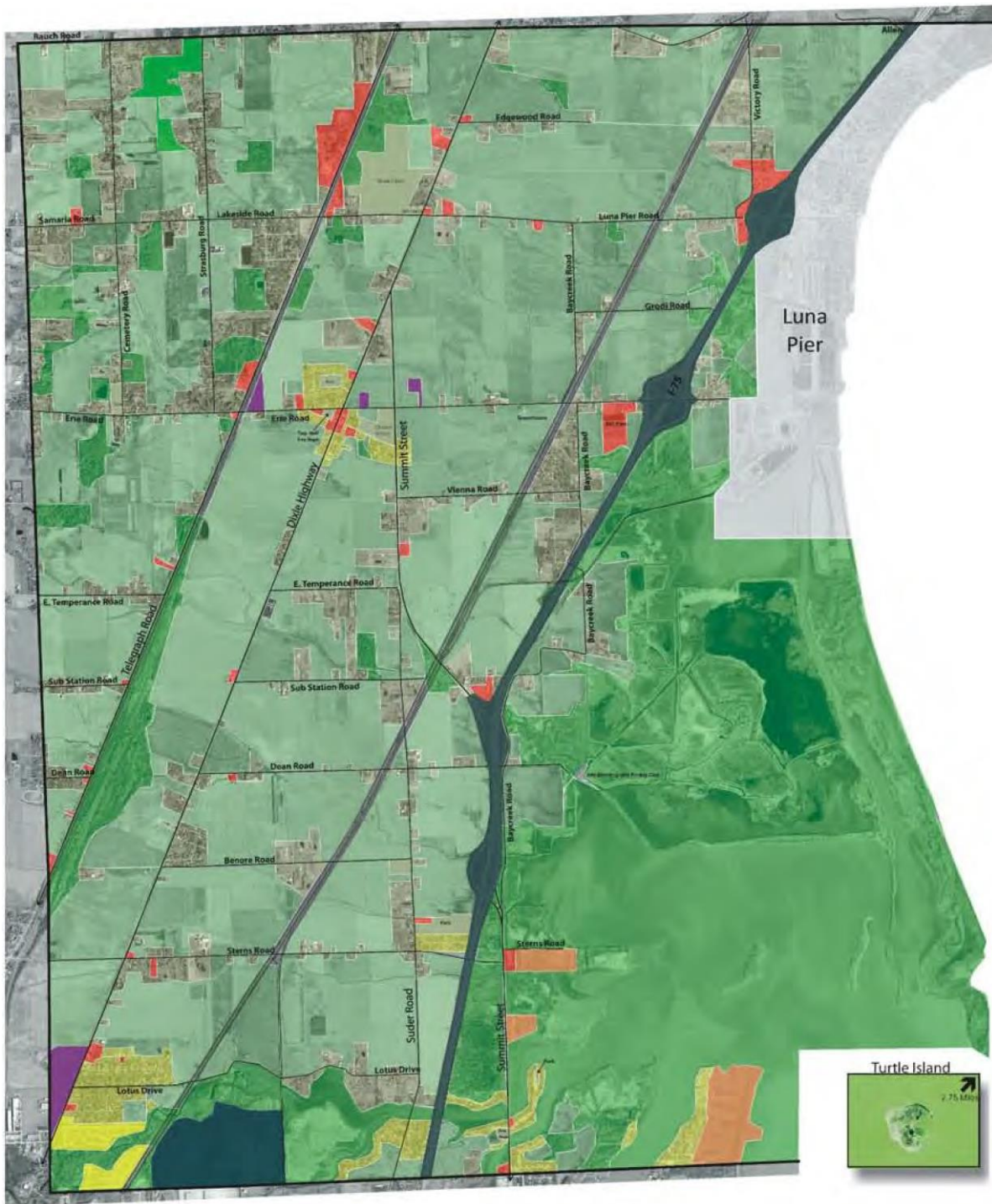
The Land Use Plan establishes a Natural and Conservation Area which includes most of the North Maumee Bay shoreline and its expansive wetlands. This Natural/Conservation Area also includes the substantial publicly owned acreage dedicated to resource protection and outdoor recreation that include the Erie State Game Area and substantial holdings managed by the Nature Conservancy. The Conservation area is a very unique and special region in Erie Township. Its wetlands and shoreline environments are environmentally sensitive, and present substantial limitations for urban development. Chief among these physical limitations are issues related to coastal flooding. Conversely, natural attributes of these areas provide important environmental benefits,

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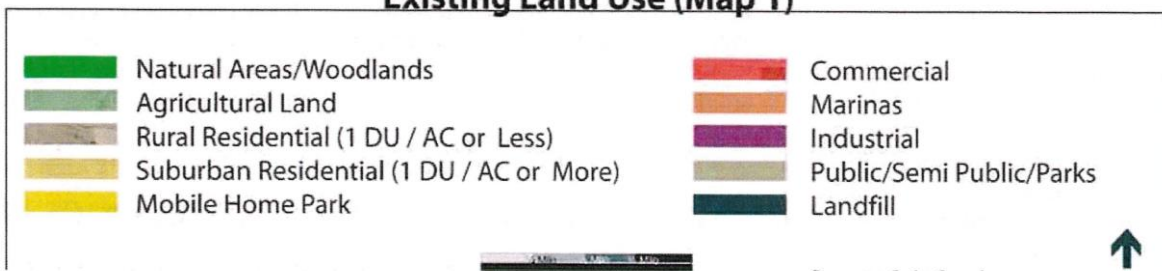
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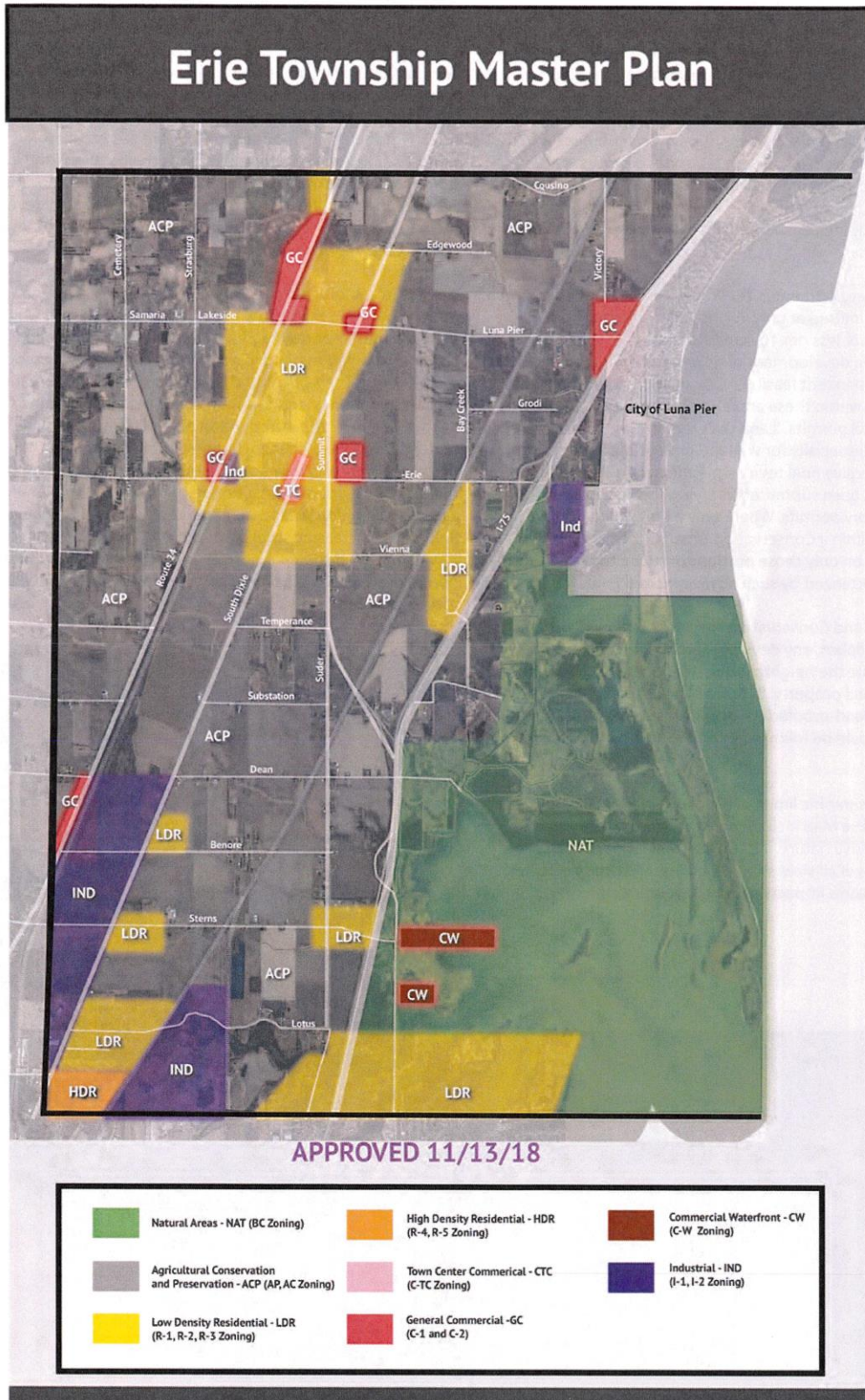
ERIE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN



**Existing Land Use (Map 1)**



ERIE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN



including habitats for wildlife, flood control, groundwater recharge and discharge, and surface water purification. In addition, they provide special opportunities for passive recreation and contribute to the Township's overall rural character.

In light of these characteristics, the Natural and Conservation Area is defined as a place where human development is to be limited. These areas are largely set aside to protect natural resources and environmental quality. Future use and development of land in the Natural and Conservation Area should be predominantly limited to open-space and natural resource-based land uses.

Residential development in the Natural and Conservation Area should be permitted at only very low densities (such as 1 dwelling unit or less per 10 acres). Alteration of the natural landscape and development of new roads should be avoided to the greatest extent feasible. Obviously, no development should occur within these areas without receipt of appropriate state or federal permits. Land uses requiring state and/or federal permits (especially for wetland or floodplain alterations) should not receive final township approval until satisfactory evidence has been submitted verifying the acquisition of all other necessary permits. Where only a portion of a single parcel falls within a Conservation Area, future development should occur on only those portions of such properties which are not characterized by such environmental limitations.

As all Natural and Conservation Area are contained within the 100-year floodplain, any development within these areas must recognize the heightened risk of flood and the potential harm to life and property. Buildings should be appropriately elevated or flood-proofed per applicable regulations. These measures should be followed in all floodplain areas in Erie Township.

While the geographic limits of the Conservation Areas on the Future Land Use Map include only those wetland areas of a large expansive nature, it should also be understood that wetland areas of all sizes should be preserved and protected from the negative impacts of land development.



## Agricultural Conservation & Preservation

The Agricultural Conservation and Preservation Area includes the vast majority of land in Erie Township where active farms and agricultural activities prevail. This land use category connects to the strongly held belief that Erie Township is and should remain largely rural in nature with a strong agricultural heritage. The designation of this area as Agricultural Conservation and Preservation intends to encourage the long-term protection of farmland resources of Erie Township and provide opportunities for very low-density residential development in support of existing rural character, agriculture, natural resources, and open spaces.

This Future Land Use Plan recognizes that farming plays an important role in the history and character of Erie Township. It contributes important agricultural products to local and regional populations, and it is an important source of income for residents. The Agricultural Conservation and Preservation Area designation encourages the continuation of existing farming activities and the introduction of new farming activities. All typical farming activities, including the raising of crops, the use of stables, silos, and barns are encouraged provided that they meet Department of Agriculture requirements as "generally accepted agricultural land management practices." However, in light of the increasing level of residential development in the Township, the introduction of new large, concentrated livestock operations should be permitted only after special review to assure compatibility with adjacent land uses.



Lands within the Agricultural Conservation and Preservation Area are largely characterized by conditions such as:

Classification by the U.S. Department of Agricultural as “prime farmland”;

Larger parcel sizes.

Limited amounts of non-agricultural land uses.

Enrollment in Farmland and Open Space Protection Programs.

Adjacency to other farmland parcels with similar opportunities for long-term economically viable farming operations.

The Agricultural Conservation and Preservation Area is not intended to serve as significant areas for residential growth, or as “holding areas” for later residential development. Rather, these areas are intended to be primarily agricultural areas for years to come and any substantial encroachment of higher-density residential land uses is viewed as being counter to the goal of preserving important agricultural resources and maintaining the long-term economic viability of farming.

Since the 2011 Master Plan, Erie Township has taken steps to distinguish between areas of highest agricultural characteristics and areas where agricultural characteristics are diminished slightly by development patterns that introduce potential conflicts to strong agricultural operations. The zoning code now defines Agricultural Preservation Areas with the strongest agricultural characteristics and Agricultural Conservation Areas which offer more of a balance between agricultural operations and very low-density rural development. The Agricultural Conservation Areas also reflect the fact that farming, as an industry, continues to face challenges, and the ability of a farmer to split off residential lots from the farm acreage from time to time, is important both for economic gain and assuring the continued operation of the farm. The designation of areas as Agricultural Conservation includes the expectation that some limited new, low-density residential development will occur. Overall however, the expectation is that the Agricultural Conservation area will support the preservation of rural character and farmland resources.

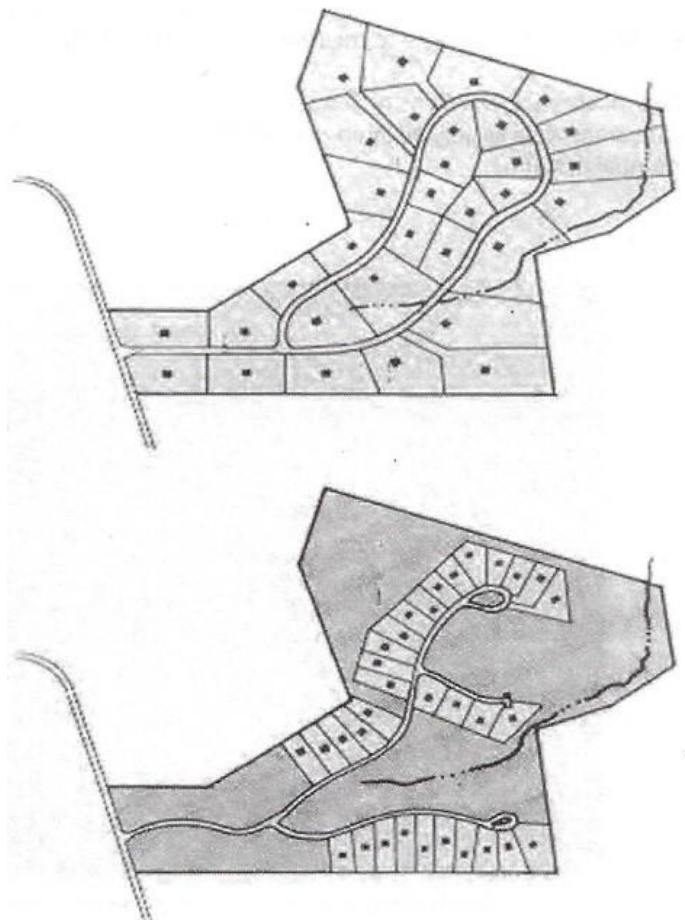


The Future Land Use Map does not distinguish between these two agricultural areas. Localized conditions can place areas in one category or another and such a distinction is not really needed from this larger township-wide Master Plan perspective. The maximum residential development density is one housing unit for each acre, and lower densities should be associated with areas designated as Agricultural Preservation.

Slightly higher development densities should be made available to landowners who pursue special development measures, such as conservation design. Conservation Design (or Open Space Design) is a land development method that helps protect rural character, farmland and/or other natural resources.

Conservation Design involves “clustering” residential development so that the development of an interior road system and the creation of new building lots are allocated to only part of the site, while designating the balance of the remaining portion of the parcel as open space with conservation easements, deed restrictions, or similar tools. Interior roads allow for the creation of new building lots that gain access by way of a new road into the interior of the development project, rather than such lots having direct access to the existing county road network in a strip development manner. Overall density in terms of units in each development could be slightly higher, but clustering of housing units helps allow for a more usable open space system and protection of natural assets of the site.

*Conservation design involves clustering the numbers of housing units allowed within a smaller part of the development area so that land can be set aside as common open space.*



For the most part, the provision of sanitary sewers is not anticipated in the majority of the Agricultural Conservation and Preservation Area. On-site septic systems approved by the Monroe County Health Department are expected to continue to provide the means by which sewage disposal will be addressed. The reliance upon on-site septic systems generally also means that larger lot sizes can be necessary to provide adequate room for systems to function properly.

Potential new residents in the Agricultural Conservation and Preservation Area should recognize that the traditional smells, noises, pesticide applications, and generally recognized agricultural activities associated with responsible farming may well continue on a long-term basis in this area. The Township does not consider such activities and operations as nuisances. Rather, the Township supports the long-term continuation of farming in the Township. Local developers and real estate agents should disclose this information to prospective buyers of land in these areas.

### Low Density Residential

Low Density Residential Areas are predominantly single-family areas that range from very low density rural residential areas to residential areas with more suburban character and higher numbers of housing units per acre. In quantitative terms, housing density generally ranges from about 1.3 housing units per acre to about 4 housing units per acre. Higher densities are typically only associated with areas that are served by central water or sewer systems.

The largest Low Density Residential Area encompasses the Village of Erie and the areas to the north toward Mason School. There are pockets of commercial development areas in this area, but for the most part this area includes considerable space for more residential development. This area is essentially the only low density residential area identified for growth in Erie Township as it contains agricultural lands that could be developed more intensively when the landowners decide to do so. Higher levels of development activity in general also hinges on the availability of sewer and/ or water services to this rural area.

Apart from the Village of Erie and Mason School Area, other Low Density Residential Areas include two developed areas near the Michigan/Ohio State line. One area exists near the Lake Erie Shoreline, and additional development in these areas may be possible, but it is also close to the Lake Erie shoreline and may be subject to flooding.

Other pockets of Low-Density Residential Areas are shown throughout the township. These areas were largely developed many years ago and do not represent areas of potential growth.



*Suburban Residential Area in Southwest Corner of Erie*

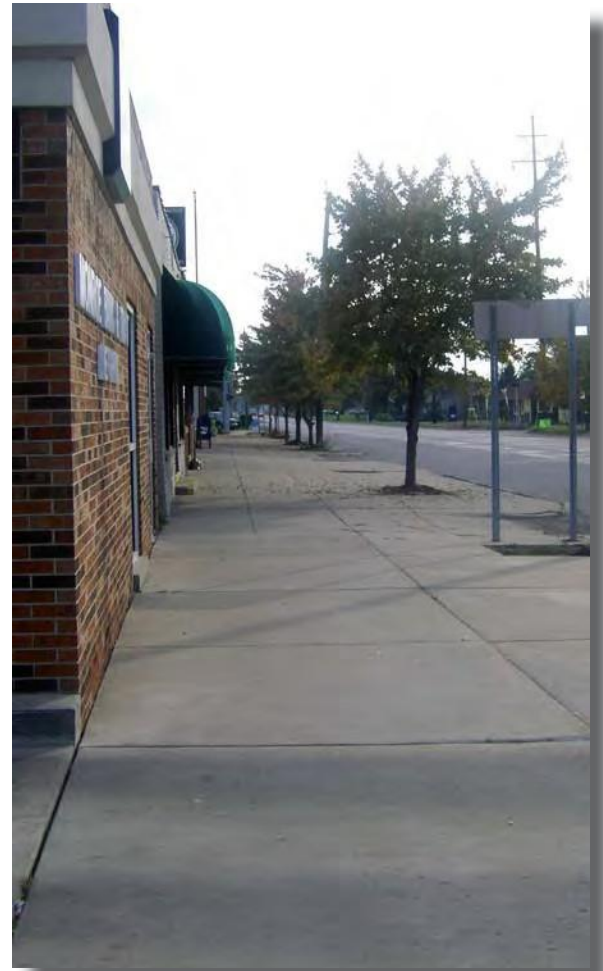


### High Density Residential Areas

A few pockets of High-Density Residential Areas are found in Erie Township. High density residential refers to areas developed as multiple family residential units and manufactured home parks. These areas have about eight housing units per acre or more. One area included on the Future Land Use Map as High Density Residential is the manufactured home park at the far southwest corner of Erie Township. This development has existed for many years and provides lower-cost housing options for the area.

### Town Center Commercial

The Village of Erie has a small commercial core that provides limited goods and services to area residents. Most of the built environment in this commercial core includes older buildings pulled forward toward the road right-of-way in a manner similar to downtowns in cities. This area is distinguishable from other commercial areas in terms of building placement, parking, and building mass. There is a strong local desire to maintain and support this pattern of development, as it helps maintain a sense of rural atmosphere and Township identity. Any new construction that would replace or involve renovation of an existing building should maintain a similar scale and mass as existing buildings and should be placed on the lots so as to not break up the rhythm of street frontages. Suburban-style parking lots should not be permitted in front of buildings. Permitted land uses should include a mixture of commercial retail, commercial service and office uses along with residential uses limited to upper floors. A new zoning district was created after the 2012 Master Plan with unique zoning requirements developed to maintain and support this development pattern.



*Village of Erie Street Frontage*



*village of Erie Commercial Area*

## Commercial Waterfront

Waterfront commercial areas are found toward the southeast side of Erie Township near Lake Erie. Specifically, there are commercial development areas catering primarily to tourism and water-related services. One such area is the eastern extension of Stems Road which is largely characterized by a number of small marinas. The continued maintenance and upgrades to these facilities are supported by this plan, along with other water and tourism-related uses associated with Marina / Waterfront Commercial Areas. At the same time, because of the proximity to Lake Erie, development must be sensitive to the special natural features present, including wetland and shoreline environments. More intensive uses such as lodging, restaurants, or other water/tourist-based uses should be comparatively small, with limited paved areas to minimize disturbances to the visual and environmental character of the area. This location can accommodate unique and innovative opportunities for addressing some commercial needs of those wanting to take advantage of its water recreation opportunities. It is also recognized that low water levels present new challenges to water-related land uses, and there is a need to consider a wider range of land uses in Marina / Waterfront Commercial areas to help keep them viable. There are significant costs and environmental impacts associated with dredging, and boat use is already limited in certain areas.



## General Commercial

Erie Township has several general commercial areas. For the most part, these areas are found toward the north part of the Erie Township. They include both limited commercial areas and general commercial areas. These areas are typically groups of parcels that have emerged as commercial nodes along major road corridors such as Telegraph Road, Dixie Highway or I-75. As opposed to commercial strip development, this Master Plan envisions nodes of limited commercial activity following existing development patterns. To a large degree, extensive commercialization of the Telegraph Road or Dixie Highway corridors are viewed as being counterproductive to preserving the rural character of Erie Township and contrary to the goal of maintaining safe and efficient traffic flow as commercial development. Strip commercial development generally introduces more access points (driveways) with increased turning movements which slow traffic and create more potential accident locations.

One significant commercial area is identified at the intersection of Luna Pier Road and I-75. Some commercial development exists in this area now; however, this area lacks sewer service necessary to support more intensive commercial development. Because this area is next to an I-75 interchange with considerable visibility and access, development opportunities would be significant if this site was fully serviced by utilities. This interchange is among the first few I-75 exits northbound traffic encounters when entering Michigan.

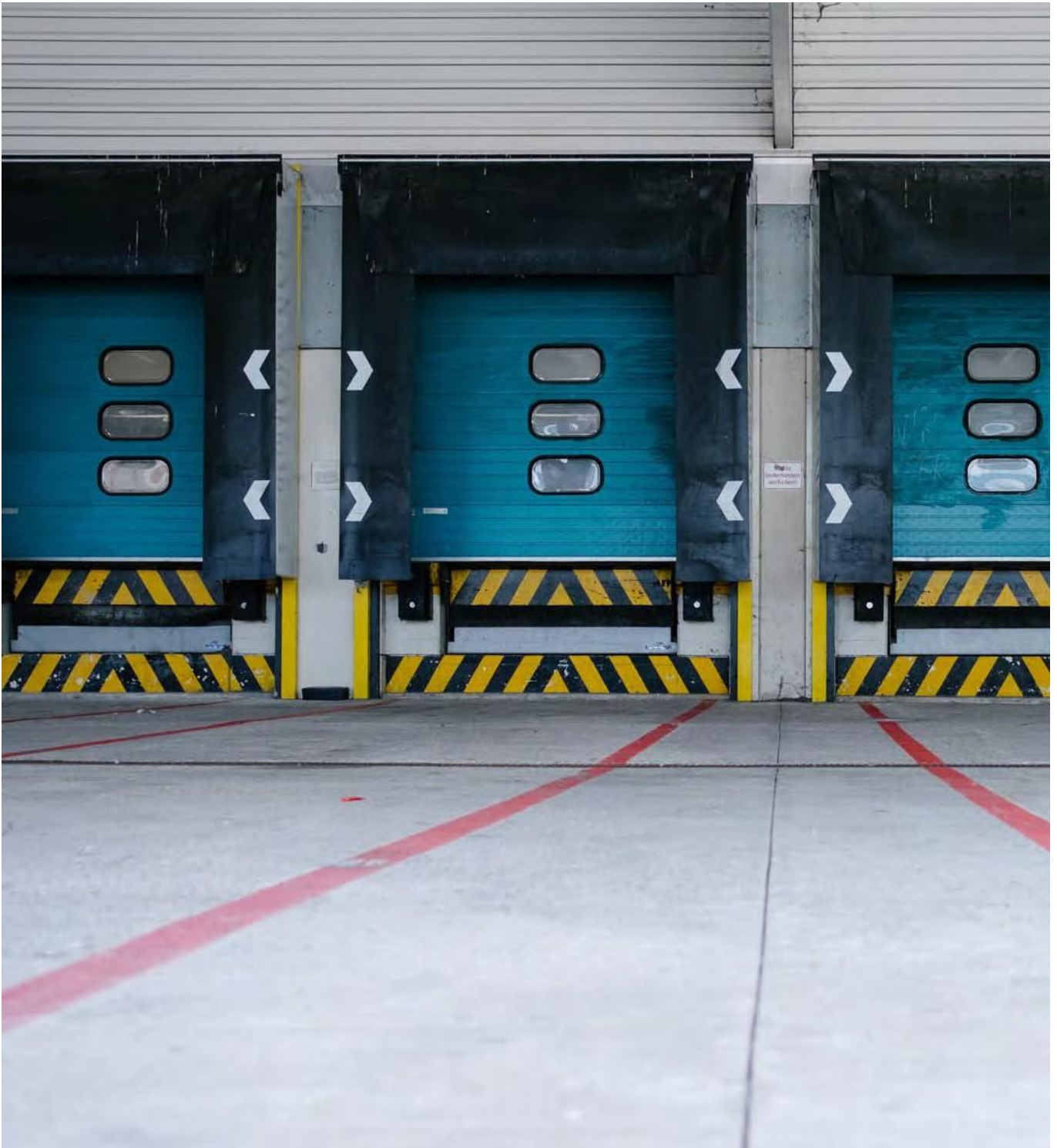
Apart from the issues of where commercial development should occur in Erie Township are two related matters. First, Erie Township continues to update its zoning to more completely reevaluate the lists of permitted and special uses. In particular, special uses now include very limited forms of material assembly and small product manufacturing. Limited forms of manufacturing and material assembly (perhaps involving small computer or electrical components or similar small products) may be an appropriate land use in some General Commercial Areas in Erie Township and are therefore special uses. Similarly, some provisions related to home occupations, agricultural-related business were updated to help avoid the need for commercial rezoning, when the development plans are limited. Second, as will be discussed later, a growing concern among local planning officials is the need to make sure that newer commercial development exhibits higher quality site design and architectural elements.



## Industrial Areas

Three Industrial Areas are present in Erie Township. In the southwest corner of Erie Township, a large triangular area is bounded by Dixie Highway and the Erie Township line provides industrial development opportunities. This area is zoned industrial and could be served by sewers. Rail access is nearby in Bedford Township. This is a significant industrial area mentioned in the Monroe County Comprehensive Plan. Part of this area is currently used for industrial land use.

To the east and along the state line, a large industrial area is located just east of the railroad tracks. This area is currently used as a landfill and some room for expansion is included. To the north, the area between I-75 and the Luna Pier corporation limits and south of the Erie Road interchange is a large industrial area. This area is largely undeveloped. Its industrial development potential is driven by its proximity to I-75 and rail access. This area lacks sanitary sewers, but an extension of sewer service from the City of Luna Pier would be possible.



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# Rural Character/Design

Since Erie Township has a strong rural identity and a strong desire to maintain rural character, the subject of rural design warrants specific attention in this Master Plan. To some, rural areas are places that are waiting to be “developed.” They see farms and agricultural land as places in a holding pattern waiting for more intensive uses to come along. To others, rural places represent history, tradition, family, culture and nature. To those people, the built environment consisting of farmhouses, barns, and other rural buildings are as intentional as any urban place or suburban development.

If there was one clear message from the resident survey that was conducted several years ago, it was that rural character and atmosphere are highly valued. When asked what the one thing you would like to see Erie Township accomplish in the next 5 to 10 years, more than half of the respondents indicated a desire to remain primarily a rural community. Digging deeper into this issue, residents were also asked to identify what considerations contribute to an area having rural character. The two most popular responses included the presence of large tracts of farmland and few homes, along with the presence of small quaint rural communities such as Erie is to simply accept whatever happens and assume that urbanization is the inevitable outcome once development pressures reach a high enough level.

This perspective accepts the premise that rural landscapes have less value than urban places - but clearly, local residents feel otherwise. That is not to say that change is not inevitable in rural places. Just as anywhere else, change occurs - but it can be in the form of a steady and more deliberate adaptation of traditional development patterns.

This Master Plan supports rural character in several specific ways:

## 1. Direct New Development Toward Specific Areas

The Master Plan Map intentionally targets more intensive development activity to existing urbanized centers. These areas exist in the Village of Erie and areas to the north. Denser development is also oriented toward the southern edge of Erie Township, adjacent to the Michigan/Ohio State line.

The bulk of Erie Township is identified as being “Agricultural Conservation and Preservation” which is consistent with existing development patterns.

Following the completion of the Master Plan in 2012, efforts to reevaluate existing zoning included an extensive review and update of lot size and frontage requirements to discourage development in solid agricultural areas. As part of this, large portions of Erie Township were identified as “Agricultural Conservation” and “Agricultural Preservation” areas. At the same time it identifies areas for residential, commercial and industrial growth.

To a large degree, this growth hinges on the possibility of sanitary sewers being provided in the future. New sanitary sewers are not necessarily advocated by this Master Plan, but it is recognized that expansion of sewers into new areas is possible, and will involve decision-making by officials at many layers of government. Recent pollution issues in Lake Erie and concerns over public health related to on-site sewage disposal are generally addressed by not only local officials alone, but also potentially by federal, state, regional and county authorities.

To support a focus on rural design, this Master Plan deliberately seeks to protect and maintain land uses that are rural, preserve traditional buildings and landscape patterns, and design new development to be compatible with rural landscapes.

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**This Master Plan supports rural character in three specific ways.**

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This Master Plan also recognizes the potential for residential, commercial and industrial growth (especially if sewers are provided in the future). This growth should be directed toward areas that are currently best suited for development by virtue of existing concentrations of development. Directing new construction toward areas already somewhat developed helps provide for the economical provision of public utilities and helps protect more rural areas from development pressure.

## 2. Encourage Appropriate Building Designs

In addition to the policy of encouraging development toward areas already somewhat urbanized (as shown on the Master Plan Map), planning policies should also encourage building designs with architectural features that look and feel like they belong in a more rural and small-town environment. Examples of buildings with rural design features are shown below. Erie Township can develop a set of design guidelines that provide more specific guidance for including appropriate architectural features to reflect rural character and image. Alternatively (and at a minimum), some specific language can be added to the zoning code to make sure that rural design elements are considered -especially when commercial buildings are proposed along prominent, or highly traveled roadways.

*Desirable Architectural Styles For Commercial Buildings That Reinforce Rural Character*



### 3. Encourage Appropriate Infill, New Development, and Roadway Re-configuration in the Village of Erie

Perhaps the most significant element of rural character in Erie Township is the Village of Erie itself. Buildings in this area are among the oldest in the Township and they exhibit a “down town style and appearance” that is common in Midwestern rural communities. Many “downtown” buildings were destroyed in a fire many years ago and were replaced by newer ones.

Following the direction provided in the previous Master Plan update, new zoning was created to better reflect the existing form of buildings so that new construction in or near Erie would better blend with existing building character. At that time it was recognized that typical commercial zoning districts (C-1, C-2) were geared toward more suburban-style development patterns along major roadways. Downtown Erie by contrast is more of an urban center that is less autooriented.

The new zoning was called C-TC, or Commercial - Town Center. Some requirements included the need to pull buildings forward toward the right-of-way to match existing building placement. Similarly, parking is directed behind buildings and permitted land uses were reexamined to include a range of retail sales and service establishments. Ideally, future infill or new construction in this area would be multiple story structures with first floors occupied by retail or consumer service type uses. Upper floors would be residential or office uses.

“Downtown Erie”



Future efforts to develop design guidelines as mentioned above should also apply to the C-TC district to help maintain more consistent architectural characteristics.

In addition to the buildings, the future configuration of the road right-of-way is a matter that deserves ongoing discussion and planning. Dixie Highway can be viewed as the “Main Street” of Erie Michigan. Presently, it is about 90 feet wide and it has 4 vehicle travel lanes and two parallel parking areas on both sides of the street. Past conversations with MDOT indicate that Dixie Highway will be resurfaced in the future. This may present an opportunity to “rethink” how Dixie Highway is configured in terms of vehicular travel lanes and parking. After a road is resurfaced, new pavement markings can be provided at little cost to help the area serve a wider range of needs (travel lanes, parking, vehicular circulation, etc.).

It is believed that South Dixie Highway has low traffic volumes and that four travel lanes may not be needed to support existing traffic flow. A future traffic engineering study would be necessary to document this condition. Often a road diet can reduce travel lanes and provide a similar level of service. This potentially leaves room for a boulevard, bike lane or widened sidewalks. If Dixie can be reconfigured, it opens the possibility of providing an attractive landscaped median in the center of the road, bike lane or widened sidewalks. The graphics on the following page provide a general sketch of existing conditions. Much more study is warranted to fully identify a range of viable options and alternatives.

“Downtown Erie”



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# Environment

Two environmental issues dominate discussions about future land use in Erie Township. These issues include both floodplains and wetlands.

## Floodplains

Erie Township is drained by an extensive network of creeks and drains that cut across the Township in a east and south-east direction and empty into North Maumee Bay. The largest of these drains is Halfway Creek along the Township's southern border. Halfway Creek exceeds 500 feet in width at times and drains into North Maumee Bay just east of Morin Point. The Ottawa River, which travels through the City of Toledo, merges with Halfway Creek at North Maumee Bay. Only a half-mile segment of the Ottawa River flows through Erie Township and is approximately 1,000 feet wide. The balance of the drainage courses frequently flow intermittently.

Lands abutting or in close proximity to drainage courses, including streams, ponds, and lakes, are subject to flood conditions if the drainage courses do not have the capacity to accommodate the rate of runoff from a single or numerous rainfalls over a relatively short period of time. Adjacent to Lake Erie, and being the point where numerous streams empty into the lake, Erie Township has

witnessed its share of flood conditions over the years. The most recent larger scale floods occurred in the summer of 1998.

The 100-year flood plain is an area that has a one percent chance of flooding in any given year. This level of flooding is used by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for regulatory

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## Two environmental issues dominate land use discussions in Erie Township - flood plains and wetlands.

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purposes. This 100-year flood plain covers large areas east of I-75. Flood conditions can be brought on by unusually heavy rainfalls and by strong winds from the east and northeast pushing Lake Erie's waters westward. Improperly managed land development practices can exacerbate flood conditions. A permit is necessary for construction in the regulatory flood plain and measures to protect the structure from flood damage are required.

The specific boundaries of the flood plain are available for review on-line at FEMA. Gov. These maps are continually being updated and reviewed.

## Wetlands

There are hundreds of acres of wetlands in Erie Township and they dominate the landscape along the North Maumee Bay

and Lake Erie shoreline areas. The majority of wetlands are located east of I-75 and is classified as emergent wetlands.

Wetlands present severe building and on-site sewage disposal limitations due to soil instability, soil saturation, and standing water. Wetlands have significant environmental benefits including flood control, runoff purification, groundwater recharge, and wildlife habitats. A majority of the Township's wetland areas are protected

from development in terms of both public ownership and regulations. First, the Michigan Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act regulates the dredging and filling of most wetland areas in the Township. Further, many of the local wetland areas are part of the Erie State Game Area, including Woodtick Peninsula. Conservation and wildlife management are the principle goals of these publicly-owned areas. Finally, hundreds of acres in eastern Erie Township are managed by The Nature Conservancy, a nonprofit land trust dedicated to the protection of important environmental resources.



# Economics

Along with many other local governments, Erie Township was impacted by the Covid stimulus in 2021 and 2022. Since then, economic conditions have generally improved.

Property values are one measure of financial stability for local governments. Since property taxes are levied against

real estate values, declining real estate values ultimately translate into declining tax revenues. According to the Michigan Department of Treasury, Erie Township has had an increasing tax base over the couple of years, mainly as a result from a lack of inventory in housing, both sales and rentals. In 2010, the total taxable value was \$132.5 million. By 2016, the total taxable value in Erie Township declined to \$124.2 million.

Source: Michigan Department of Treasury Annual Local Unit Fiscal Report

| Revenues             | 2022      | 2023      |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Taxes                | \$853,414 | \$927,527 |
| Licenses & Permits   | \$835,892 | \$861,215 |
| From Federal Govt.   | \$80,243  | \$907     |
| From State Govt.     | \$500,864 | \$488,329 |
| Charges For Services | \$93,925  | \$29,964  |
| Fines & Forfeits     | \$0       | \$0       |
| Interest & Rents     | \$6,627   | \$90,954  |
| Other Revenues       | \$191,276 | \$142,000 |



# Infrastructure and Public Facilities

Infrastructure and public facilities might be thought of as the bones of the community which support the body of land uses. Key elements of this support system are roadways, water and sewer service infrastructure, and public buildings.

## Road Network

Erie Township's road network is dominated by three parallel major regional thoroughfares cutting across the Township in a southwest to northeast direction. The highest volume roadway is Interstate 75. I-75 travels through the eastern portion of the Township generally parallel to the Lake Erie shoreline, and connects Detroit with Toledo. There are three interchanges in the Township, one of which abuts Luna Pier.

The western half of the Township is traversed by Telegraph Road (U.S. 24) and South Dixie Highway (M-125). Telegraph Road also connects Detroit to the north with Toledo to the south. South Dixie Highway originates just north of the City of Monroe at a Telegraph Road interchange and travels southwest to Toledo. The M-125 Connector, also referred to as M-24A, is a nearly three-mile segment of highway in the central area of the Township that connects these two thoroughfares and is an extension of Summit Road to the south. These three

highways provide comparatively good accessibility to and from the Township. In addition, U.S. 23 is within nine miles of the Township's western border, linking Ann Arbor with Toledo.

Part of Erie Township has been identified as an "Urbanized Area" by the Federal government. Specifically, the Toledo Urbanized Area includes the southern portions of Bedford, Erie and Whiteford Townships. Transportation projects in these Urbanized Areas may qualify for federal funding with local matching dollars.

Erie Township's local roadway network generally reflects the traditional section-line grid pattern which characterizes the vast majority of rural townships in Michigan's Lower Peninsula and stands in contrast to the diagonal alignment of I-75, Telegraph Road, South Dixie Highway and the railroads. Except for the federal and state highways and a number of roads under private ownership (recorded as private easements), the balance of the Township's roadway network is comprised of roads under the jurisdiction of the Monroe County Road Commission.

In compliance with the requirements of Michigan Act 51 of 1951, the Monroe County Road Commission (MCRC) classifies all roads under its jurisdiction

as either primary roads or local roads. Primary roads are considered the most critical in providing regional circulation throughout the County. Approximately two thirds of the primary road miles are located in the northern third of the Township. All roads in the Township classified as primary roads by the MCRC are paved and include:

- Cousino Road
- Erie Road, from Telegraph Road to Manhattan Street
- Lakeside Road
- Luna Pier Road
- Manhattan Street
- Rauch Road, from Telegraph Road to Dixie Highway
- Summit Street
- Sterns Road west of Summit Road
- Strasburg Road
- Temperance East Road, west of Telegraph Road
- Victory Road

All other public roads are classified as local and, except for Minx Road along the Township's western border and several other small road segments, all are paved. Most of the Township's road miles are classified as local roads due to the low volume of traffic and proximity to major arterials such as I-75, Telegraph Road, and South Dixie Highway.

The classification of roads in the Township by the MCRC has important financial implications regarding maintenance and improvements. Under Michigan law, townships have no responsibility for funding road improvements and maintenance. On the other hand, while County Road Commissions must maintain and improve primary roads at their own expense, state law limits the participation of County Road Commissions to no more than 50% for improvements to local roads. In reality, there are very few counties in Michigan where local townships are not actively involved in funding road improvements. Many improvements to local roads are funded in full by Erie Township.

### Rail Road Network

The Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad operates a rail line adjacent to Telegraph Road. The Grand Trunk Western Railroad and Norfolk Southern Railroad operate lines adjacent to one another and are generally parallel to and within ½ to 1 ½ miles west of I-75. The lines separate and diverge in the southern 1 ½ miles of the Township.

### Complete Streets

In 2010, the State of Michigan passed Complete Streets Legislation that amends both the Michigan Transportation Fund Law (Act 51) and the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Act 33). According to PA 135 of 2010, Complete Streets means "roadways planned, designed and constructed to provide appropriate access to all legal users in a manner that promotes safe and efficient movement of people and goods whether by car, truck, transit, assistive device, foot or bicycle." Complete Streets is a national movement to "ensure that roadways are designed and operated to enable safe access along and across a street for all users of all ages and abilities, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and those with disabilities, in addition to automobiles."

Changes to Act 33 requires community master plans address all transportation needs, including public transit, bicycle facilities, pedestrian ways and other legal users in addition to motor vehicles. Specifically, Act 33 amendments:



*Typical Erie Township Road*

Modifies the definition of "streets" to specifically include all legal users.

Expands the elements that may be included in a master plan to encompass all transportation systems that move people and goods.

Specifies that transportation improvements identified in a plan are appropriate to the context of the community and considers all legal users of the public right-of-way.

As a rural township with very low-density development patterns, opportunities to implement complete streets policies are more limited compared with more densely populated areas.

However, Erie Township can support complete streets policies by considering all users in decision-making related to transportation-related projects; and by examining opportunities to provide accessible and efficient connections between home, school, work, recreation, and retail destinations with both pedestrian, bike and vehicular environments. This is especially true in the context of enhancing safe walking and bicycling options for school-age children in support of the national Safe Routes to School program.

Erie Township has addressed complete streets issues in the past and continues to explore possibilities. In 2015, Erie Township investigated Michigan's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program and hosted a meeting between local school officials, Michigan SRTS representatives and residents to consider a potential project.

. A graphic from this plan is shown below and provides a planning concept that would link together community features, population centers and the water trails defined at the county-level for the western Lake Erie shoreline. This plan will require more due diligence and refinement, but it is a starting point for more careful planning. Also shown are preliminary plans to develop a wildlife observation deck over- looking wetlands and open spaces to the east.

**Concept Plan for Non-Motorized Transportation in Erie Township**



## Sewer Service

The City of Toledo provides sewer service to the Lost Peninsula area of Erie Township. Erie Township also has an agreement with Toledo to serve an area south of Lotus Drive in the southwest corner of Erie Township. Future plans to expand sewer services in Erie Township are governed in part by the Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments (TMACOG) Areawide Water Quality Management Plan. This comprehensive document is required by the Clean Water Act of 1972 and is sometimes called the 208 Plan. The latest version of this document was adopted in 2017 and it contains the following key pieces of information:

- Erie Township is projected to have a population of 4,635 in the year 2040 (pg. 170).
- It is noted that areas in Erie Township have been designated as a Critical Sewage Area by the Monroe County Health Department. The individual septic systems are susceptible to failure due to poor soil conditions.
- Erie is an unincorporated town in Erie Township. There is no public sewerage system: all businesses and residences are served by individual onsite systems. There is one package plant, which serves Mason Consolidated Schools.
- Small lot sizes in Erie do not allow room for onsite sewage systems that meet today's standards. If a significant number of individual septic systems fail, a public sanitary sewerage system may be required. The sewage treatment options that should be considered are 1) connecting to the Luna Pier system via force main, or 2) constructing a new wastewater treatment plant.
- Should a sewerage project in Erie Township be initiated, the Township would be responsible for planning, construction, and operation of a collection system, and a wastewater treatment facility if required.
- The City of Luna Pier has an activated sludge wastewater treatment plant with grit removal, primary and final sedimentation, aeration, anoxic zone, effluent chlorination, gravity sludge thickening and storage. Average daily flow capacity is 0.348 mgd, and 0.696 mgd peak. The discharge enters Lake Erie via LaPointe Drain. The WWTP was constructed in 1969 and expanded in 1990 and 2013.

Apart from the TMACOG 208 Plan, the Monroe County Comprehensive Plan (2010 Update prepared by the Monroe County Planning Commission) addresses sewer issues in Erie Township. This document notes that expansion of the existing sewer service in southern Monroe County is dependent, to a large extent, on the capabilities of the existing wastewater treatment facilities located in Bedford Township and the City of Luna Pier. Specifically, an extension of the Bedford Township sewer system

into Erie Township is planned for a proposed industrial area that would be partly in Bedford Township and partly in Erie Township. This expansion would include areas on Sterns Road from Telegraph Road east to Summit Street. A future extension may also include portions of Erie Township.

Outside of areas served by sewage systems, on-site treatment is common in Erie Township. Most often, septic systems treat wastewater generated from individual homes and other properties. These on-site sewage disposal systems are subject to regulations enforced by the Monroe County Environmental Health Division. Pursuant to Monroe County's Sanitary Code, the Monroe County Environmental Health Division has the authority to issue or deny applications to construct on-site sewage disposal systems.

## Water Service

A public water system is provided to many Erie Township residents with the South County Water Distribution system. Along with Erie Township, the South County Water Distribution System serves Bedford Township, LaSalle Township and the City of Luna Pier. The water is actually provided from the City of Toledo's water system. In Erie Township, the public water service areas are concentrated toward the southwest corner of the Township and along certain corridors. A map showing water service areas generated by the Monroe County Planning Department is provided on the following page.

Private wells also provide Erie Township residents with water. In some cases, a private well also serves facilities such as apartments, mobile home parks, churches, schools, restaurants, campgrounds, places of employment, and similar uses. The Monroe County Health Department regulates private wells.



Public Water Service Areas

Source: Monroe County Comprehensive Plan 2010 Update, Monroe County Planning Department & Commission

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## Traditional Energy

In recent years, issues related to energy supplies and costs have become more significant. Electricity and natural gas provide the bulk of traditional energy sources to residents and businesses. Consumers Energy provides electrical service to Erie Township residents. Natural gas is provided by Michigan Gas Utilities which provides service to most of Monroe County.

## Alternative Energy

Alternative energy is becoming an increasingly important consideration in the U.S. Recent spikes in gasoline and natural gas prices and concern over energy supplies have elevated attention toward alternative energy. Many believe that global trends such as the modernization of places such as China and India may make energy an issue for many years to come.

Two areas of concern are particularly relevant for Erie Township. First, the issue of appropriately regulating individual alternative energy installations is important. This refers to the installation of improvements such as roof-top solar panels and small-scale windmills to generate power for use on the subject property. Installation of small-scale windmills and solar panels can have a range of impacts on surrounding property.



Large scale wind and solar energy systems are also an issue. Michigan is a state where proximity to the Great Lakes helps to create sustained and stronger winds that provide opportunities for large scale wind energy facilities. In nearby Riga Township to the west in Lenawee County, many large wind turbines have been proposed that stand nearly 500 feet tall. New zoning was approved, and was subsequently placed on the ballot when concerned residents were able to obtain necessary signatures. Concerns included issues related to impacts on property values and noise.

In recent years, Erie Township updated zoning requirements for many types of alternative energy facilities. These ranged from accessory equipment to larger scale commercial facilities designed to connect directly to the electric grid. These new regulations were a major step forward, but continued efforts to make sure ordinance language is up to date is warranted.

## Public Facilities

Erie Township has several publicly owned facilities which include the following:

**Township Hall:** The Erie Township Hall is centrally located in Erie Township in the Village of Erie. This building contains offices for Township elected officials and staff and has meeting rooms.

**Public Safety Facilities:** The Erie Township Police Department is located at 2065 Erie Road. Erie Township employs full-time and part time officers. Erie Township has two Fire Departments located in Erie just west of the Township Hall and in Morin Point. These departments are staffed by volunteers.

**Library:** The Erie Branch Library is located at 2065 Erie Road in Erie. It is owned and maintained by Erie Township and operated by the Monroe County Library System.

**Parks:** Erie Township has a Park Commission which is responsible for local parks. Maplewood Park is a 4.1 acre park in the Village of Erie. South Erie Park Erie is an 18.1 acre site that includes playground, ball diamonds, and picnic sites. Morin Point Park is a small 1.6 acre park in the far southeast corner of Erie Township. (See the Erie Township 5-Year Parks & Recreation Plan for additional information.) Mason Schools also has a large park area associated with the School Campus north of Erie.

**EV Charging:** Electric Vehicle charging stations are located in the Erie Township Hall parking lot.

# Implementation

## Goals

The preparation of this Master Plan update provided the opportunity to reconsider the list of goals that provide the foundation for local planning. Planning goals are divided into the major categories listed below. These goals remain essentially unchanged from the previous plan, as they were found to have continued relevance and meaning. The goals listed below serve to help drive decisions that led to the creation of this new Master Plan and help direct implementation steps described.

- 1 Growth Management:** Manage future growth and development to assure that it is consistent with the natural limitations of the land and availability of public services, the protection of the Township's natural resources and rural character, the provision of public facilities and services in a cost-effective fashion.
- 2 Community Character and Environment:** Preserve the dominant rural character of Erie Township, the unique character of its historical development nodes, and its environmental integrity.
- 3 Farmland:** Actively encourage the continuation of local farming operations and the long-term protection of farmland resources.

- 4 Residential Development:** Accommodate new residential development in a manner which recognizes the natural and cultural opportunities and constraints in the Township; preserves its overall rural character and farmland resources; and accommodates a range of densities and lifestyles that fosters a satisfying living environment.
- 5 Commercial/Industrial Development:** Provide opportunities for limited expansion of commercial

and industrial uses that minimize negative impacts upon adjacent land uses, respond to the predominant rural character of the community and its activity centers, and is compatible with available public services and infrastructure.

- 6 Roads:** Maintain a transportation network throughout the Township which moves vehicular traffic in an efficient and safe fashion and is coordinated with the planned future land use pattern.



## Implementation

To support the previously described goals, and to support the overall vision for Erie Township in the future, a number of necessary implementation steps are defined.

- 1. Future zoning decisions should be generally consistent with The Land Use Plan:** The Land Use Plan provides a view of future land use in Erie Township that is consistent with the desire to maintain a pleasant and attractive rural community. Although it is possible that unforeseen and compelling reasons to deviate from this Plan may present themselves in the future, substantial deviation from the Land Use Plan should be generally avoided.
- 2. Urban Design Standards:** As noted in the previous Master Plan, and in this document, Erie Township should investigate the need for architectural review of new construction to help encourage rural design elements in new construction. Such standards would be primarily aimed at new commercial development. This step aligns with the need to preserve and enhance rural character as discussed previously in the Chapter on Rural Character/Design.
- 3. Regulatory Zoning with Respect to Industrial Development:** One of Erie Township's significant areas for future industrial development is found toward the south-west side of Erie Township. This property is adjacent to industrial property in Bedford Township. It is possible that land in Erie Township and Bedford Township should be developed concurrently, and therefore, zoning requirements should be complimentary. For this reason, a more complete evaluation is warranted.
- 4. Focused Planning for Downtown Erie:** Downtown Erie is a focal point for Erie Township and it is believed that long-term redevelopment opportunities exist here. One limitation however is the lack of sanitary sewers which limits development options. Should that issue be addressed at some point in the future, significant development and redevelopment opportunities will likely present themselves. In the meantime, more planning and consensus-building is needed to help better frame the image of a more vibrant downtown.
- 5. Complete Streets and Non-Motorized Travel:** Erie Township will continue to investigate how to develop non-motorized mobility options such as sidewalks, bicycle parking and other pedestrian connections. Erie Township will continue working with the Monroe County Road Commission and SEMCOG to explore funding opportunities that expand non-motorized travel options as they relate to both connections to community facilities such as Mason School and recreational destinations. Erie Township also has an updated Park and Recreation Master Plan makes Erie Township eligible for funding that could include projects with local recreational trails.
- 6. General Zoning Updates:** Erie Township has a strong tradition of regularly reviewing its zoning code and updating provisions as need. A recent case in point related to medical marihuana and the need to keep pace with new land uses, state law and regulatory approaches to sensitive land uses. Continued due diligence is necessary to make sure that local zoning is performing in a way that advances the goals of this Master Plan.

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# Appendix

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# History

Erie Township anchors the south-east corner of the state, and has slowly grown to a community of nearly 4,500 people. It has remained a largely rural community with farms and orchards.

Erie Township was one of the first five organized townships in Monroe County under the act of Congress in 1827, which by act of the legislative council, comprised that part of the County of Monroe south of the south line of Monroe Township and east of the east line of the Township of Raisinville, bounded on the south by Township No.8, south of the base line and including ranges 6, 7, and 8 east of the meridian. It was provided that the first election should be held at the house of Francis Cousineau. Thus the Township included within its specified boundaries all of the present Townships of Erie, Bedford and LaSalle except a strip of about a half mile in width lying between the present Ohio line and the south line of Township No.8; this by the same act was to constitute the township of Port Lawrence; as before stated was in the 'disputed territory;' - in this position the geographical line remained until after the 'Toledo War,' after which this strip was attached to the Townships lying north of it in Michigan..."

In the spring of 1827, Levi Collier was elected the first township supervisor of Bay Settlement. He died that same year and his term was filled by Antoine LaFountain. In 1835, a document from the United States Post Office was received stating that the Post Office had officially changed the name from Bay Settlement to Erie, County of Monroe, Territory of Michigan.



# Demographics

*(See US 2000 Census Data. This can be found online at Data.Census.Gov)*

## Population

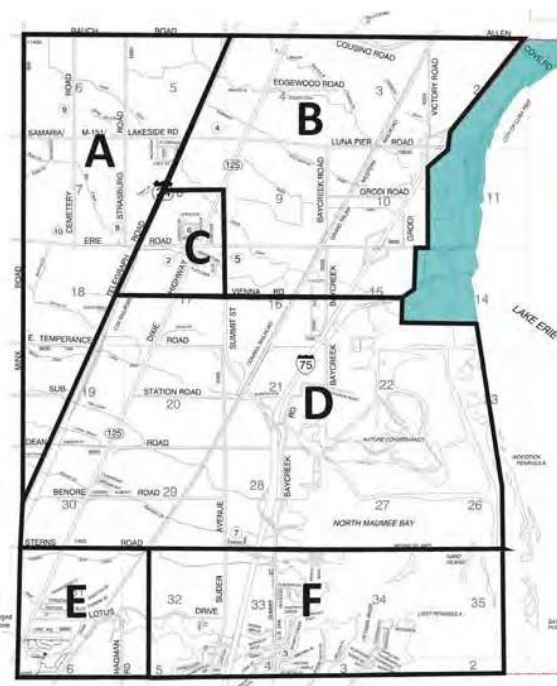
|                  |       |
|------------------|-------|
|                  | Total |
| Population. .... | 4,299 |

# Survey Results

A Survey of Erie Township Residents was taken during spring/ summer of 2011 to provide residents with the opportunity to express their views about Erie Township and key planning issues. This survey was included in the Township newsletter and could be completed on line. Survey results are provided below from both sources of responses and combined.

**1. Referring to the graphic below, please indicate which area of Erie Township you live in (mark N/A if you work in Erie Township and live elsewhere).**

|       | Written | On Line | Total | %    |
|-------|---------|---------|-------|------|
| A     | 13      | 6       | 19    | 20%  |
| B     | 12      | 11      | 23    | 24%  |
| C     | 4       | 6       | 10    | 10%  |
| D     | 11      | 9       | 20    | 21%  |
| E     | 4       | 5       | 9     | 9%   |
| F     | 9       | 7       | 16    | 16%  |
| Total | 53      | 44      | 97    | 100% |



**2. If you live in Erie Township – how many years?**

|       | Written | On Line | Total | %    |
|-------|---------|---------|-------|------|
| 0-5   | 4       | 0       | 4     | 4%   |
| 6-10  | 8       | 2       | 10    | 10%  |
| 11-15 | 5       | 8       | 13    | 14%  |
| 16-20 | 6       | 3       | 9     | 9%   |
| 20+   | 21      | 39      | 60    | 63%  |
| Total | 44      | 52      | 96    | 100% |

**3. If you work in Erie Township - how many years?**

|       | Written | On Line | Total | %    |
|-------|---------|---------|-------|------|
| NA    | 32      | 33      | 65    | 78%  |
| 0-5   | 0       | 3       | 3     | 4%   |
| 6-10  | 3       | 0       | 3     | 4%   |
| 11-15 | 2       | 0       | 2     | 2%   |
| 16-20 | 2       | 1       | 3     | 4%   |
| 20+   | 5       | 2       | 7     | 8%   |
| Total | 44      | 39      | 83    | 100% |

**4. How old are you?**

|          | Written | On Line | Total | %    |
|----------|---------|---------|-------|------|
| Under 18 | 0       | 0       | 0     | 0%   |
| 18-24    | 0       | 1       | 1     | 1%   |
| 25-34    | 1       | 2       | 3     | 3%   |
| 35-44    | 2       | 6       | 8     | 8%   |
| 45-54    | 10      | 17      | 27    | 28%  |
| 55-64    | 19      | 15      | 34    | 36%  |
| 65-74    | 9       | 3       | 12    | 13%  |
| 75+      | 10      | 0       | 10    | 11%  |
| Total    | 51      | 44      | 95    | 100% |

| <b>5. What are reasons that you CONTINUE to live in Erie Township? PLEASE SELECT NO MORE THAN TWO</b> |         |         |       |      |
|---|---------|---------|-------|------|
|   | Written | On Line | Total | %    |
| Affordable housing  | 9       | 4       | 13    | 7%   |
| Quality of community services   | 1       | 0       | 1     | 1%   |
| Rural atmosphere  | 36      | 27      | 63    | 35%  |
| Close to work   | 2       | 9       | 11    | 6%   |
| Proximity to Lake Erie & natural areas  | 9       | 8       | 17    | 9%   |
| Close to retail and service areas   | 4       | 1       | 5     | 3%   |
| Schools   | 6       | 0       | 6     | 3%   |
| Family roots / friends nearby   | 21      | 13      | 34    | 19%  |
| Low crime rate  | 12      | 11      | 23    | 13%  |
| Other (please specify)  | 5       | 4       | 9     | 5%   |
|   | 105     | 77      | 182   | 100% |

| <b>6. Please select up to THREE of the following topics that you feel need more attention in the Township.</b> |         |         |       |      |
|--|---------|---------|-------|------|
|  | Written | On Line | Total | %    |
| Protection of historic resources   | 10      | 7       | 17    | 7%   |
| More job opportunities   | 5       | 10      | 15    | 6%   |
| Control of strip development along major transportation corridors  | 14      | 11      | 25    | 10%  |
| Stormwater runoff and flooding   | 11      | 7       | 18    | 7%   |
| Housing availability and affordability   | 3       | 3       | 6     | 2%   |
| Conservation of natural features and open space  | 27      | 16      | 43    | 17%  |
| Agricultural preservation  | 23      | 20      | 43    | 17%  |
| Zoning / building code enforcement   | 12      | 5       | 17    | 7%   |
| Community involvement / awareness and education  | 7       | 13      | 20    | 8%   |
| Environmental quality and pollution control  | 9       | 8       | 17    | 7%   |
| Development of more recreational opportunities   | 8       | 7       | 15    | 6%   |
| Other  | 5       | 9       | 14    | 6%   |
|  | 134     | 116     | 250   | 100% |



| 7. In your opinion, what ONE thing would you like to see Erie Township accomplish in the next 5-10 years? |         |         |       |     |
|---|---------|---------|-------|-----|
|   | Written | On Line | Total | %   |
| Remain primarily a rural community  | 24      | 24      | 48    | 51% |
| Remove dilapidated structures   | 4       | 2       | 6     | 6%  |
| Expand commercial centers   | 0       | 0       | 0     | 0%  |
| Create more job opportunities and tax base  | 5       | 9       | 14    | 15% |
| Develop more recreational opportunities   | 3       | 2       | 5     | 5%  |
| Other   | 15      | 7       | 22    | 23% |

| 8. Rank the importance of each of the following: |               |         |      |      |                    |         |      |      |           |         |      |      |                |         |      |      |
|--|---------------|---------|------|------|--------------------|---------|------|------|-----------|---------|------|------|----------------|---------|------|------|
|  | Not Important |         |      |      | Slightly Important |         |      |      | Important |         |      |      | Very Important |         |      |      |
|  | Writ.         | On Line | Tot. | %    | Writ.              | On Line | Tot. | %    | Writ.     | On Line | Tot. | %    | Writ.          | On Line | Tot. | %    |
| Developing additional township park land         | 22            | 17      | 39   | 15%  | 14                 | 14      | 28   | 9%   | 9         | 11      | 20   | 7%   | 2              | 2       | 4    | 2%   |
| Keeping the cost of government and taxes low     | 3             | 0       | 3    | 1%   | 4                  | 5       | 9    | 3%   | 13        | 12      | 25   | 9%   | 28             | 27      | 55   | 22%  |
| Develop additional commercial opportunities      | 22            | 16      | 38   | 14%  | 6                  | 17      | 23   | 7%   | 14        | 5       | 19   | 7%   | 7              | 6       | 13   | 5%   |
| Develop additional industrial opportunities      | 23            | 17      | 40   | 15%  | 14                 | 17      | 31   | 10%  | 6         | 7       | 13   | 5%   | 6              | 3       | 9    | 4%   |
| Control Commercial Sprawl                        | 6             | 5       | 11   | 4%   | 7                  | 12      | 19   | 6%   | 14        | 10      | 24   | 9%   | 20             | 17      | 37   | 15%  |
| Control Residential Sprawl                       | 6             | 6       | 12   | 5%   | 12                 | 13      | 25   | 8%   | 13        | 12      | 25   | 9%   | 16             | 12      | 28   | 11%  |
| Preserve/protect agricultural land               | 6             | 1       | 7    | 3%   | 3                  | 10      | 13   | 4%   | 14        | 10      | 24   | 9%   | 26             | 23      | 49   | 20%  |
| Allow more flexibility with homebased business   | 8             | 3       | 11   | 4%   | 15                 | 16      | 31   | 10%  | 17        | 19      | 36   | 13%  | 7              | 6       | 13   | 5%   |
| Provide more local police protection             | 8             | 7       | 15   | 6%   | 18                 | 18      | 36   | 12%  | 15        | 10      | 25   | 9%   | 6              | 9       | 15   | 6%   |
| Develop more local job opportunities             | 13            | 12      | 25   | 9%   | 14                 | 17      | 31   | 10%  | 14        | 12      | 26   | 9%   | 6              | 3       | 9    | 4%   |
| Expand local housing options and choices         | 18            | 16      | 34   | 13%  | 17                 | 21      | 38   | 12%  | 14        | 6       | 20   | 7%   | 0              | 1       | 1    | 0%   |
| Develop bike trails and bike lanes               | 14            | 16      | 30   | 11%  | 13                 | 14      | 27   | 9%   | 15        | 6       | 21   | 8%   | 7              | 8       | 15   | 6%   |
|  | 149           | 116     | 265  | 100% | 137                | 174     | 311  | 100% | 158       | 120     | 278  | 100% | 131            | 117     | 248  | 100% |

| 9. What do you like BEST about the Township? PLEASE SELECT THREE |         |         |       |     |
|--|---------|---------|-------|-----|
|  | Written | On Line | Total |     |
| Density of population  | 7       | 20      | 37    | 3%  |
| Quality of local public services                                 |         |         | 8     | 3%  |
| Scenic beauty  | 3       | 4       | 27    | 0%  |
| Overall quality of life  | 34      | 23      | 57    | 21% |
| Historic rural buildings   | 2       | 4       |       | 2%  |
| Shopping opportunities   | 0       | 2       | 2     | %   |
| Career opportunities   | 0       | 0       | 0     | 0%  |
| Housing costs  | 8       |         |       | 4%  |
| Transportation network   | 2       | 4       |       | 2%  |
| Cost of services/taxes   |         |         | 5     | 5%  |
| Quality of schools and locations                                 | 2       |         | 8     | 6%  |
| Recreational opportunities                                       |         |         | 4     | %   |
| Peace and quiet  | 40      | 37      | 7     | 28% |
| Other  | 0       |         |       | 3%  |
|  | 45      | 32      | 277   | 00% |



| <b>10. What do you like LEAST about the Township? PLEASE SELECT THREE</b> |         |         |       |     |
|---|---------|---------|-------|-----|
|   | Written | On Line | Total |     |
| Density of population   | 0       | 4       | 4     | 2%  |
| Quality of local public services  |         |         | 8     | 8%  |
| Scenic beauty   | 4       |         | 0     | 4%  |
| Overall quality of life   | 2       |         | 5     | 2%  |
| Historic rural buildings  | 4       | 2       |       | 3%  |
| Shopping opportunities  | 4       | 5       | 29    | 3%  |
| Career opportunities  | 4       | 3       | 27    | 2%  |
| Housing costs   | 2       |         | 8     | 3%  |
| Transportation network  | 6       |         | 23    | 0%  |
| Cost of services/taxes  | 8       | 9       | 27    | 2%  |
| Quality of schools and locations  |         | 9       | 28    | 2%  |
| Recreational opportunities  | 5       |         |       | 5%  |
| Peace and quiet   | 2       |         |       | %   |
| Other   | 2       | 20      | 32    | 4%  |
|   | 9       | 32      | 23    | 00% |



| <b>11. It is sometimes said that people want to maintain the rural character. In your mind, what considerations contribute to an area having rural character? PLEASE SELECT TWO</b> |         |         |       |     |
|---|---------|---------|-------|-----|
|   | Written | On Line | Total |     |
| Large tracts of farm land and few homes   | 2       | 30      | 5     | 27% |
| Rural roadways with low traffic volumes   | 8       | 3       | 3     | 6%  |
| Small/quaint rural communities such as Erie's downtown area   | 2       | 6       | 37    | 20% |
| Historic rural structures (older homes, barns, silos, horse fences)   | 0       |         | 6     | %   |
| Orchards & other specialty agricultural operations  | 6       |         | 27    | 4%  |
| Woodlots and open fields.   | 0       | 2       | 22    | 2%  |
| Other   | 4       | 0       | 4     | 2%  |
|   | 00      | 88      | 88    | 00% |

# Geology and Topography

During the Paleozoic era of geological history, Monroe County and the state were inundated by successive warm, shallow seas during which large amounts of sediment were deposited. These deposits subsequently formed bedrock. Erie Township sits upon bedrock formed during the Silurian period of Michigan geological history. The bedrock, composed of both the Bass Islands and Salina Groups, consists of dolomite, shale, and dolomitic shale. The Ice Age brought four successive continental glaciers across the Great Lakes area. As these ice sheets moved southward from Canada, they scoured and abraded the surface of the land leaving behind deeper valleys and more rounded hilltops. The advancing glaciers carried large quantities of rock materials scraped and gouged from the land's surface. As the glacier melted, these materials were deposited to form drift materials covering the bedrock below. In Erie Township, this deeper drift is comprised mostly of clay mixed with silt, sand, pebbles and cobbles. The upper drift area is comprised of loamy and sandy materials in the Township's northwest region and silt and clay materials in the southeast.

The bedrock geology of Michigan can be generally described as bow shaped in that the depth to the bedrock generally increases as one moves toward the center of the state. Depth to bedrock in portions of the state exceed 700 feet. The depth in Erie Township generally ranges between 10 and 90 feet. The shallower depths are found primarily in the northwest region. While these comparatively shallow bedrock depths do not typically present limitations to building construction, the bedrock can pose challenges for the construction of public sewer systems and the effective operation of septic systems. Protection of the groundwater for drinking purposes requires that the septic drain field's leachate be fully broken down in the underlying soils prior to reaching potable water sources (the bedrock in this case). This issue takes on even greater significance in light of the fact that the soils in the northwest corner are sandier and allow leachate to reach the bedrock more quickly.

The topography of the Township can be described as generally level. Grades rarely exceed 1%. In the instances where steeper grades are evident, they do not exceed 3% and are generally associated with the principal drainage corridors of the Township. This topography is very supportive of farming activities and offers no limitations for construction of dwellings and buildings provided adequate drainage exists.

Elevations across the Township range from approximately 570 to 640 feet above sea level and generally fall as one travels southeast. The lowest elevations are generally associated with the Lake Erie and North Maumee Bay areas. The highest elevations are generally found in the northwest corner.

## Groundwater

As runoff flows across land surfaces and travels through drainage courses, a portion of the runoff seeps into the ground and collects in great quantities within the underlying soils and deeper bedrock. These reservoirs of water are referred to as aquifers and serve as the source of drinking water for two thirds of the Township. Most residences employ filtration systems to improve the quality of the water drawn from local wells. Without this filtration, the water is frequently hard and discolored, and characterized by a sulfur odor. These conditions are most noticeable in the central areas of the Township and extending east to North Maumee Bay. There is a marked improvement in the water quality in the northwest corner.

# Hydrology

Erie Township is drained by an extensive network of creeks and drains that cut across the township in a east and southeast direction and empty into North Maumee Bay. The largest of these drains is

Halfway Creek along the Township's southern border. Halfway Creek exceeds 500 feet in width at times and drains into North Maumee Bay just east of Morin Point. The Ottawa River, which travels through the City of Toledo, merges with Halfway Creek at North Maumee Bay. Only a half-mile segment of the Ottawa River flows through Erie Township and is approximately 1,000 feet wide. The balance of the drainage courses frequently flow intermittently.

Lands abutting or in close proximity to drainage courses, including streams, ponds, and lakes, are subject to flood conditions if the drainage courses do not have the capacity to accommodate the rate of runoff from a single or numerous rainfalls over a relatively short period of time. Adjacent to Lake Erie, and being the point where numerous streams empty into the lake, Erie Township has witnessed its share of flood conditions over the years.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency conducted a 100-year flood study as part of the township's involvement in the National Flood Insurance Program. The 100-year floodplain identified by the study covers most of Erie Township east of I-75, and extends further west along drainage corridors and adjacent lower lying areas (see Map 3). Flood conditions can be brought on by unusually heavy rainfalls and by strong winds from the east and northeast pushing Lake Erie's waters west ward. Improperly managed land development practices can exacerbate flood conditions.

### Wetlands

There are approximately 1,000 acres of wetlands in Erie Township, comprising 7% of its landscape (see Map 4). Wetlands continue to dominate the landscape along the North Maumee Bay and Lake Erie shoreline areas. More than 90% of the wetlands are located east of I-75. Approximately two thirds of the wetlands are of a shrub, emergent, and/or aquatic bed character, and the balance are primarily lowland hardwoods such as ash, elm, and red maple.



## Soil Conditions

According to the Soil Survey of Monroe County published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Monroe County exhibits six general soil associations. Three of these associations are found in Erie Township. The majority of the Township is characterized by the Lenawee-Del Ray association which includes nearly level, poorly drained and somewhat poorly drained silty soils. The northwest corner of the Township is characterized by the Pewamo-Selfridge-Blount association which includes nearly level, poorly drained and somewhat poorly drained loamy and sandy soils. The shoreline areas around North Maumee Bay, including Woodtick Peninsula, are part of the Lenawee ponded association and includes nearly level, very poorly drained silty soils.

"Soil associations" refer to the classification of broad patterns of soils, topography, and drainage. A soil association generally consists of one or more major soils and other minor soils. It is the pattern of these major and minor soils (including topography and drainage) which differentiates one association from another. An association often includes individual soils of varying character.

The soil associations identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture are very general. It is important to identify with more specificity those soils which appear to present particular opportunities and constraints to future land use and development. The character of soils can have a profound impact upon the suitability of future uses of land in regard to groundwater contamination, onsite sewage disposal, and agricultural productivity. The Department of Agriculture has identified more

specific individual soil units throughout the county based upon the characteristics of the upper soil layers (approximately five feet in depth) and this provides a more reliable basis for planning purposes.

According to the Department of Agriculture, nearly all the soils in Erie Township, and Monroe County, present “severe” limitations for septic systems. These limitations vary based on the particular soil type but include such factors as soil wetness, slow percolability, ponding, limited depth to bedrock, and poor soil filter characteristics. A primary concern is the soil’s ability to absorb and breakdown the leachate from the septic drain fields before it reaches underground water supplies.

Much of Michigan is characterized by soils that present “severe” limitations to septic systems. Soils which present septic system limitations can often be accommodated with specially engineered or raised systems at additional costs. The Monroe County Health Department is responsible for issuing permits for on-site sewage disposal. It will not issue a permit unless all county requirements for the septic system have been met. The Health Department currently requires building sites to be a minimum of five acres in area to satisfy health code standards. A landowner may appeal this requirement upon a satisfactory showing that on-site soils or the specifically proposed drain field design permits a smaller lot area.

The Monroe County Soil Survey also identifies the vast majority of Erie Township as presenting “severe” limitations to residential development due to such factors as soil wetness, ponding, and shrink-swell potential. While the township’s northwest corner is characterized by a higher proportion of soils more supportive of residential development, these soil areas are dispersed and marbled and do not exist as large expansive nodes.

It should be noted that while a site may be classified by the Department of Agriculture as presenting a certain level of limitation to septic systems, on-site investigation may show the classification to be less than fully accurate and/or show that the deeper soils (more than five feet deep) present different characteristics than the upper layer soils and thus varying limitations. On-site investigations should be carried out before specific land development projects are initiated.

While Erie Township soils present limitations to on-site sewage disposal, the Department of Agriculture has classified more than three quarters of the township as being “prime farmland” in that, under proper management, the land is particularly well suited to food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is capable of producing sustained high yields. Those areas not classified as prime farmland are situated primarily in the township’s northwest corner and along the North Maumee Bay shoreline.