

Village of Empire Master Plan

2019

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2019 Village of Empire Master Plan

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Front Cover Caption: View of Empire Bluff

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Empire was incorporated as a Village in 1895. The original village and two additions were platted in 1892. At that time it was a bustling lumber town with a sawmill and loading wharf on Lake Michigan just south of South Bar Lake. At the turn of the century, Empire had a population of 609. After the lumber mill burned down in 1917, the population fell sharply, decreasing to less than 300 people by 1920. In the two decades following World War II, four other subdivisions were platted. These included South Bar Shores and Bacon's subdivisions located along LaCore Street, as well as Lakeview and Sunset subdivisions located at LaCore and M-22.

Most of the early settlers were associated with the local lumber industry. After the timberlands were nearly all gone and the sawmill closed, the village lost much of its population as many people moved to cities, or to new farms (homesteads) in the surrounding area.

The early village residents included people of a variety of nationalities, including Irish, Scots, French, Scandinavian, and Belgian. These people started businesses, orchards, and farms, which generally made a successful transition from a lumbering supported livelihood to other occupations.

In the 1950's, Empire became the site of an Air Force base that provided some employment opportunities and boosted the Village population by 300. The base was scaled down, and then phased out in 1988, but many of the retired personnel have remained in the area. The former Air Force base now serves as a national park maintenance facility, with nine seasonal and year-round housing units on the site. Additionally, one Federal Aviation Administration radar dome remains in operation on this former Air Force base.

The National Park Service (NPS) is a visible, influential part of the Village of Empire. The Sleeping Bear Dunes



Entrance sign to Empire

National Lakeshore was formally established in 1970. Since January of 1987, the NPS administrative offices and Visitor Center have operated in a leased building on the eastern edge of the Village.

Empire is a village of 375 year-round residents, according to the 2016 American Community Survey. The Village consists of several small seasonal specialty shops, artisans, restaurants, bars, banks, professional offices, and a variety of retail businesses to meet the everyday needs of the year-round residents.

The present economic base of Empire is the ever-growing tourism industry. The Village is nestled in the midst of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, which attracts nearly 1.7 million visitors yearly. Tourist visitation estimates have risen annually since 1984.

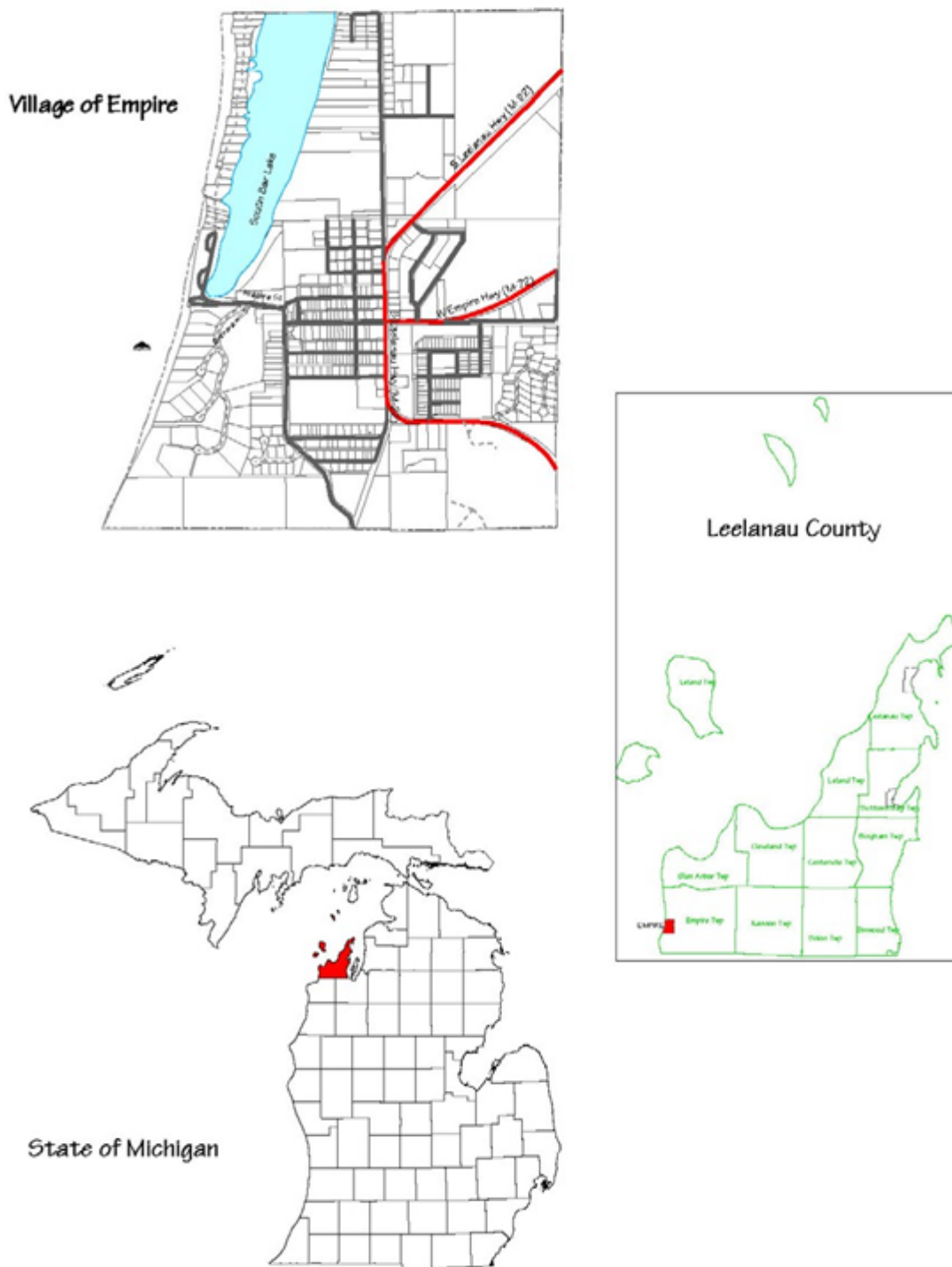
Agriculture, specifically apple and cherry orchards, have traditionally been and continue to be an important source of local employment. Many Empire residents commute daily to the Traverse City area. It is also important to note that Empire has a growing number of retirees. All these factors must be kept in mind while planning Empire's future.

Change will continue to occur. To ensure that those changes preserve and enhance Empire's most cherished qualities, the community must plan and prepare for change.

Village of Empire

Location Map, Village of Empire

Figure 1-1



The purpose of the Empire Village Master Plan is to guide future development and change according to the community's priorities.

The Plan is intended to provide for:

- **Informed decisions:** The Master Plan provides a stable, long-term basis for informed decision-making. Analysis of existing conditions, combined with the goals and policies that are outlined in the Plan, help guide the Planning Commission and Village Council as they consider zoning, new development, capital improvements, and other matters relating to land use and development.
- **Optimizing Investments:** The Plan provides for coordination of public improvements and private development, and also helps the Village prioritize improvements to community facilities.
- **Predictability:** The Master Plan informs citizens, property owners, and neighboring communities of the Village's priorities and goals, as well as where and how the community is expected to grow—allowing them to plan for the use of property in a way that is consistent with the community's vision.
- **Zoning:** The Master Plan provides the legal foundation for zoning. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act requires the zoning ordinance be based on a plan designed to meet residents' needs for natural resources, housing, recreation, industry, business, service, and other uses.

Planning Process

The Empire Village Master Plan was developed by the Empire Village Planning Commission in 2012, and updated in 2019. Public input was central to the 2012 Plan and the 2019 update with opportunities for participation through surveys, committee meetings, and forums. Public input for the 2019 update was obtained through a written survey and public forums held in August 2017 and March 2018. Plan goals, objectives, strategies, and future land use recommendations were developed based on public input obtained throughout the process, analysis of existing conditions, and previous or related plans and studies. The Plan was prepared in accordance with provisions of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Public Act 33 of 2008) to enhance and protect the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens.

Organization of the Plan

The Empire Village Master Plan provides overviews of existing conditions; discussion of public input; identification of issues and opportunities surrounding different elements of the community; goals, objectives, action statements and implementation strategies. Descriptions of best practices, relevant programs, and resources are highlighted throughout the Plan. The Plan is divided into sections and chapters as follows:

1. **Introduction** provides an overview of the plan and process.
2. **Existing Conditions and Context** discusses Empire's history, its place in Leelanau County and the

What is a Master Plan?

State law allows townships, cities, villages, counties, and regions to create "master plans" that make recommendations about community issues like public services, housing, natural resources, and transportation needs. A master plan does not have the rule of law; instead, it acts as a guide for governments and other community partners to use when making decisions. To be effective, the Empire Village Master Plan must be put into practice through partnerships with communities, organizations, and local government units.

region, and issues that are relevant across the spectrum of the community, including demographics and economic issues.

3. **Natural Resources** provides an overview of the natural features found within the Village.
4. **Quality of Life and Sense of Place** discusses the community's place-based and quality of life assets.
5. **Land Use** summarizes the character, types, and location of the various land uses found in the Village, including residential, commercial, and community facilities and services. This section also includes the future land use map and district descriptions, which will provide the basis for the Zoning Plan. The future land use map and zoning plan formalize plan goals and objectives into future land use policy. These policies will be used in making decisions on zoning changes and new development. As the Village Council and Planning Commission experience turnover and changes in leadership over time, the Future Land Use Map and Zoning Plan will provide a stable, continuous basis for land use decision making through changes in the makeup of elected and appointed boards, thereby encouraging the implementation of the long-term goals and objectives of the Master Plan.
6. **Goals and Objectives** provide recommendations for actions and policies that will address the issues and opportunities identified in previous plan chapters.
7. **Plan Implementation** provides an overview of the Village's decision making structure, leadership, and other considerations that will ultimately drive the implementation of the plan. Public participation, civic engagement, leadership, and partnership opportunities will be discussed in this chapter.

Related Plans and Studies

Plans and economic development strategies that are consistent across local boundaries are critical for success: in today's economy, traditional political boundaries are virtually ignored. Today's communication technologies enable businesses to operate in many communities; workers commute across multiple community boundaries; and businesses draw their customer bases from large market areas that do not follow political boundaries. On their own, communities can rarely provide all of the features necessary to support new economic needs, especially if it has an undiversified economic base such as tourism. Creating strategies for growth and economic development that are consistent across government boundaries can thus help communities attract and support new investment, facilitate business operation, and create a more competitive regional economy with advantages. This regional approach to planning and economic development also allows communities to seek funding, partnerships, and other resources for implementation of local goals from regional, state, or economic development partners. Some plans and studies in Leelanau County and the region that are important in planning and economic development activities for the Village of Empire include:

Leelanau General Plan

The Leelanau County General Plan was developed with participation from stakeholders and units of government throughout Leelanau County, and was adopted in 2012 with an updated Plan expected in 2019. It provides guidance to the County and other stakeholders that are working to address issues around land use, housing, agriculture, economic development, recreation, and natural resources. It clarifies the roles of different players and recommends some strategies for moving forward in a way that respects local authority and private property rights, while leveraging relationships and opportunities for collaboration between communities and existing organizations. Rather than providing prescriptive recommendations for new development and growth, it is intended to be a high-level, broad-brush guide for addressing the issues, challenges, and opportunities faced by the many citizens, jurisdictions, businesses, nonprofits, and other stakeholders throughout Leelanau County.

Framework for Our Future

This regional planning resource for local governments and community organizations was developed as part of Michigan's Regional Prosperity Initiative, which encourages local private, public, and non-profit partners to identify regionally-aligned growth and investment strategies. It includes information and tools that can help stakeholders address issues and supplement their local deliberation, planning, and decision-making processes. The *Framework* was developed by Networks Northwest with input and partnerships from a variety of community stakeholders and members of the public through an intensive, inclusive, region-wide community outreach process. The goals, strategies, and actions included in the *Framework* were built upon public input heard throughout the process, as well as on existing and adopted goals from local plans and planning initiatives.

Grand Vision

The Grand Vision is a vision of regional growth built on input from over 15,000 residents in Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, and Wexford counties. The process, completed in 2009, included random-sample, scientifically-valid surveys, public workshops, questionnaires, traffic modeling, and data analysis. It resulted in the selection of a "preferred scenario" - that is, a growth scenario that would promote the values that were identified by the public. The "preferred scenario," as identified by the questionnaire and tested by a random-sample survey,

included a vision of *future growth that would occur primarily in the region's cities and villages, with additional growth in the main cities of Traverse City and Cadillac. Large amounts of rural open space would be preserved. This development pattern would require investments in regional bus service, sidewalks, and bike trails in villages and cities, with some investments in new or widened roadways.*

Leelanau County results showed strong support for the preferred scenario, both in the questionnaire and in the follow-up random-sample survey. Some highlights from the study process for Leelanau County are as follows:

- Leelanau County residents rated their quality of life higher than residents of the region as a whole, and were more positive about the quality of life in the future when compared with the region.
- Leelanau County residents were more likely to feel that the most important qualities were “having friends and family nearby,” “a family friendly environment,” and “scenic beauty of the region and having access to nature.”
- The most popular growth strategies in Leelanau County were: “The development of more affordable housing should be encouraged ” (90%); and “more mixed use development should be encouraged” (87%). The least popular growth strategies were that most new housing should be separated from jobs & existing centers (62% disagree) and more regional freeways should be built (54% disagree).

Leelanau Peninsula Economic Foundation

The Leelanau Peninsula Economic Foundation is a non-partisan, self-funded non-government organization and advisory board whose purpose is to support the Leelanau business community by providing resources, programming, and collaborative opportunities that will strengthen the economic vitality of Leelanau businesses and communities. In 2016, the Leelanau Peninsula Economic Foundation (LPEF) conducted a survey with business owners in the County on several issues including their perceptions of the advantages of doing business in Leelanau County and the most critical barriers to their business success and growth.

Leelanau Housing Action Committee

The Housing Action Committee (HAC) was appointed by the Leelanau County Planning Commission in 2017, following support by the County Board of Commissioners. The County Board of Commissioners approved a set of actions/goals for the HAC, which held its first meeting in May 2017. The HAC is engaged in providing information and outreach to local units of government about becoming “housing ready” communities.

Leelanau County Target Market Analysis

A residential target market analysis was conducted by real estate consultants LandUseUSA in 2014 for Northwest Michigan. The study analyzes demand from various demographic groups for multi-family housing types from potential “movers” both inside and outside the study area.

Leelanau County Housing Inventory

Housing reports were prepared by Networks Northwest for Antrim, Benzie, Kalkaska, Leelanau, and Wexford counties, to provide the information foundation for a regional housing strategy, an element of the *Framework for Our Future*. The inventories provide an overview of housing affordability, type, and condition and information on related factors such as energy and transportation costs, vacancies and foreclosures, and homelessness.

Chapter 2: Existing Conditions and Context

The natural beauty, historic character, small town lifestyle, and tremendous recreation opportunities available in Empire are, even taken singly, uncommon in many communities of a much larger size. For a village the size of Empire, the presence of these many assets represents a wealth of opportunity in terms of creating and maintaining a high quality of life for its residents and visitors.

Empire is not without challenges. The community's population is experiencing shifts in terms of aging and seasonality. A decline in the number of young people and families, combined with an influx of retirees, has created a skewed population that presents challenges for the local workforce. At the same time, high real estate values make it difficult to attract young people back to the community, as many are priced out of the housing market in Empire and Leelanau County as a whole. But despite these challenges—and in some cases, because of them—there are many opportunities to enhance Empire's quality of life and move towards new opportunities.

Increasingly, the health of a community and its potential for new investment is the product of many factors. First among them is a high quality of life: recreation opportunities, cultural activities, quality natural resources, and a

welcoming social environment. These elements work to attract new residents that bring with them skills, knowledge, buying power, and other assets that provide the necessary foundations for new economic investment.

As the Village works to maintain and improve the community's quality of life through planning and preparing for change, it must consider the Village's existing context. This chapter will discuss Empire's history, geographic context, community character, population characteristics, and economic assets.

Empire in the Region

Empire's regional context forms the foundations of the community's population trends, employment opportunities, and lifestyle.

The northwestern region of Michigan's lower peninsula is a place of incredible natural beauty, tremendous natural resource assets, thriving agricultural economies, seasonal recreation and resorts, and year-round communities. The landscape of forests, lakes, rivers, orchards and farmland is dotted with villages and small cities that are considerable distances from larger metropolitan communities. These distances have helped these small communities shape their character and create individual identities that have



Empire Beach (Courtesy of The Empire Chamber of Commerce)

become well-recognized as retirement and resort communities as well as desirable places to reside.

This unique rural character and access to water, forest, and other natural resources has been the region's greatest economic driver. Many communities had their beginnings with the lumber industry or served as major hubs for water-based or rail-based transportation. Once the land was cleared, agriculture became an economic foundation for some parts of the region.

Natural resources and rural character have played yet another role since the 1970's. Many new residents, including significant amounts of retirees and seasonal residents, have moved to the area to take advantage of the region's small town and rural lifestyles, outdoor recreation opportunities, and natural beauty. Since 1970, the



Empire at Sunset (Courtesy of the Empire Chamber of Commerce)

region's population has nearly doubled—from 158,333 to 297,912 in 2010, with Leelanau County one of the fastest growing counties in the region and the state.

However, much of that growth has occurred outside of the region's cities and villages. The desire for rural lifestyles or homes on larger lots, combined with limited land supply and higher costs in city and village boundaries, has led to greater growth and development in rural areas, while the population of some communities remain stagnant or decline, due to factors including geographic area, aging populations, and loss of industry or employment.

Population & Economic Indicators

Changes in the economy over the years, combined with changes in development patterns throughout the region, have had a dramatic impact on the population in both Empire and Leelanau County.

Beginning in 2008, the United States experienced a recession that had far-reaching and long-lasting effects on employment and housing demand—particularly in Michigan, which

experienced statewide population loss, some of the highest rates of foreclosure in the nation, persistently high unemployment rates, and home abandonment and blight throughout the state. While the most severe problems were concentrated in urban areas, no parts of Michigan were immune from the effects of the recession, and Northwest Michigan, including Leelanau County, experienced significant changes in its population, employment dynamics, and housing market. Between 2000-2010, Leelanau County's population grew by 3%, compared to 28% growth between 1990-2000. And between 2010-2015, the County's population grew only 1%, the lowest growth rate since before 1950.

Not only did growth rates slow, the characteristics of that growth changed. While many residents of Michigan – and Leelanau County – left the state for better employment opportunities, older adults continued to retire and move to Leelanau County, leading to a skewed population change: While the number of people aged 50 years and up increased, there was a substantial decline in individuals aged 35-44, children, and families in Leelanau County.

Many of these County-wide population trends have long been a reality for the Village of Empire, which has experienced significant fluctuations in its population since its population high of around 609 people during World War I. With the loss of the Village's sawmill and the lumber industry, the population

declined to a low of 251 people in 1951, a number that gradually increased until 1980, when Empire experienced a large loss of population between 1970 and 1980, with the scaling down of the Air Force Base, the community's largest employer. Another drop occurred between 2000 and 2010 (see Table 1). The 2010 population was estimated at 373, a slight decline of nearly 1% since 2000. The 2015 population estimate for the Village is 379.

1970—2010

The growth rate in Leelanau County nearly doubled.

1.3%

Growth rate in Leelanau County between 2010-2015

Overall, the Village's population size has been fairly stable, reflecting general population trends in Northwest Michigan villages, which typically experience slower growth than many of the region's rural townships. Yet, the characteristics of the Village's population have changed over the years, with related impacts on market demand and service needs.

Household Size & Age

The age of a community's residents has significant impacts on housing demand, service needs, and employment base; while household size can reflect changes in community demographics and signal a need for additional housing options.

Population Change, 1970-2016

(Table 1)

	1970	% change 1960-1970	1980	% change 1970-1980	1990	% change 1980-1990	2000	% change 1990-2000	2010	% change 2000-2010	2016	% change 2010-2016
Empire	409	-8.7%	345	-15.6%	355	2.9%	378	6%	373	-0.8%	375	0%
Leelanau County	10,872	16.6%	14,007	28.8%	16,527	18%	21,119	27.8%	21,708	2.8%	21,981	1.3%
NW Michigan	158,333	13.9%	208,286	31.5%	230,962	10.9%	281,468	21.9%	297,912	5.8%	303,254	1.8%

Source: US Census and 2016 American Community Survey

Data Sources

A number of resources and data sources were used to inform the content of the Empire Village Master Plan, including:

- US Census
- American Community Survey
- US Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Topical studies specific to County or local geographies

When reviewing data, it's important to note that different geographies, data collection methodologies, and update timelines mean that comparable information isn't always available at the Village level. And, changes in the Census mean that comparisons between current and historic Census is not available.

The decennial **US Census** is conducted every 10 years to measure population, age, and other basic demographic information for all geographies in the country. Historically, the Census "long form" also recorded more detailed information on individual household characteristics, including income, employment, poverty, housing value, commute time, etc. Since 2005, that information has instead been collected every 5 years by the **American Community Survey (ACS)**, a large, continuous demographic survey conducted by the Census Bureau that will eventually provide accurate and up-to-date profiles of America's communities every year. Questionnaires are mailed to a sample of addresses to obtain information about households and housing units. The survey produces estimates of population and housing characteristics data for small areas, including tracts and population subgroups. Questions asked are similar to those on the decennial census long form. Estimates for small geographic areas are based on data collected over a 5-year time period, and represent the average characteristics over that time period. For small geographies, the margin of error is high. Leelanau County data is used in place of Empire data for some detailed information.

Between 2010-2015, the Village lost population in nearly all age groups under the age of 44, while percentages of those age 45-65+ grew substantially. In 2000, Empire's population was younger than the County's; that trend has since reversed, with the Village's population now older than the County as a whole. In 2015, the proportion of the Village of Empire population over age 54 was 57.8%, compared to the County percentage of 28%. And, in 2000, the median age in the Village of Empire was 49.1 years, while the median age County-wide was 56.8 years. In 2015, Empire's median age (57.5 years) is above that of the County (52.4). Residents of both the Village and the County as a whole are significantly older than residents statewide: the median age for Michigan is 39.3 years. The median age and proportion of the population over age 54 is projected to continue to increase at a higher rate than the State.

As the population ages, the number of one and two-person households increase, a trend reflected in a declining average household size. Fewer school-aged children and family households represent growing numbers of "empty nesters" and contribute to the Village's shrinking household size. At 1.75 people per household (PPH), Empire's average household size is well below that of both the Average household size of the state (2.51 PPH) and County (both 2.38 PPH).

Some of these changes reflect natural age increases, as the Baby Boomers begin to reach retirement age; while some growth can be accounted for by new residents that moved to the area following retirement. These trends have tremendous impacts on the County's workforce, schools, and service and market demands.

Seasonal Population

As a community centered around its outdoor recreation opportunities, Empire's economy and population are highly seasonal, with an influx of visitors and seasonal residents, and accompanying economic activity, occurring in the summer months.

Seasonal population fluctuations aren't measured by the Census or American Community Survey (ACS), but the ACS does count vacant housing units that are for "seasonal" use. In Leelanau County, 34% (5,103 housing units) of Leelanau County's total housing stock, and 36% (131 units) of Empire's, is classified as seasonal—compared to 6% of the State's total housing stock. The number of housing units classified as "seasonal" increased by 16% between 2010-2016, compared to only 5% total housing unit growth—likely reflecting a trend of conversion from year-round homes to seasonal housing.

Additional data is available from the *Northwest Michigan Seasonal Population Study* (2014), which shows changes in population by

month in each county in Northwest Michigan. Leelanau County's population is estimated to increase by 40% in the summer months to over 35,000 residents. This includes seasonal residents, overnight visitors, and other transient residents that are staying in second homes, campgrounds, RV parks, hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, cottages, and marinas (Northwest Michigan Seasonal Population Analysis, 2014, MSU Land Policy Institute). It is important to note that day-trip visitors, account for a significant amount of Empire's traffic and visitation. The National Park Service estimates that over 1.7 million people visit Sleeping Bear Dunes annually, with 72% of visits occurring between June and August. Many of those trips originate or end in the Village of Empire, accounting for an enormous population and traffic spike in the summer months.

Housing

Like other Northwest Michigan communities, Empire is experiencing changes in housing demand and shortages of a range of housing choices that are impacting businesses, schools, and community vitality. Housing shortages are impacting households from across the income spectrum. (See Target Market Analysis, Leelanau County, Michigan, The Market Strategy [November 3, 2014] <https://www.networksnorthwest.org/userfiles/filemanager/3580/>)

A number of recent housing studies

document this shortage. The *2014 Leelanau County Housing Inventory* showed significant affordability gaps for households throughout Leelanau County, as well as issues related to housing quality or condition. Only about 9% of rentals and 3% of owner-occupied homes were considered “affordable” to households earning under \$50,000 per year. The 2016 American Community Survey reports the median home value of owner-occupied homes in the Village is \$195,100. Federal mortgage guidelines assume 30% of the household income will be spent on housing.

A 2014 “target market analysis” assessed the potential annual demand for new housing units in Leelanau County. It showed that there may be a market for 46 new owner-occupied housing units, and 88 rental units, in Leelanau County each year through 2019, for households earning between \$19,000 and \$92,000 per year. In Empire, there’s a potential demand for 6 new owner-occupied units and 10 new rental units each year for those households.

According to 2017 State Equalized Value (SEV) data, undeveloped residential lots, mostly located in the recently built subdivisions, range anywhere from \$10,000 to \$35,000 SEV, with higher values—above \$100,000—for existing houses located in these subdivisions. The median value for all taxable property within the Village is approximately \$68,150.



Typical New Neighborhood Housing

Housing affordability issues are compounded by transportation costs, as many residents commute outside the Village or County to work, shop, receive services or for school. National data indicates that households shouldn’t spend more than 45% of their income on the combined costs of housing and transportation. But a typical household in Leelanau County spends 58% of its total income on the combined costs of housing and transportation, while moderate income households spend 73% of their income on those two costs alone .

Transportation & Commutes

Fifty percent (50%) of Leelanau County’s workforce (5,190 workers) work outside of the County, while 4,216 workers - 60% of the people employed in the County – commute into the County for work. The primary destinations for those commuting outside of Leelanau County are Grand Traverse, Benzie, Kalkaska, Antrim, and Wexford counties. The median commute time of the Village’s workforce is 19 minutes; 26% of workers in the Village commuting 30 minutes or

more to work (2016 American Community Survey). *Note: Data reflecting commuting destinations are not available at the village level.*

With large percentages of workers commuting to work, transportation costs—including vehicle ownership costs, fuel, insurance, and maintenance—make up a large proportion of an average household budget, the typical household in Leelanau County spends about 34% of its income on transportation costs alone.

Income, Poverty, & ALICE Households

A 2017 United Way report identifies the cost of basic needs for each county in Michigan, and the number of households that are what United Way calls ALICE – an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. ALICE households have incomes above the federal poverty level, but still struggle to afford basic household necessities. In Leelanau County, about 8% of households are estimated to live in poverty, and another 20% of households are considered to be ALICE. With a median household income of \$56,189, and household “survival” budgets ranging from about \$19,000 per year to \$58,000 per year, many households in Leelanau County are clearly struggling to make ends meet.

(continued on pg. 20)

Age Distribution, 2000-2016

(Table 2)

Age Group (years)	VILLAGE OF EMPIRE						LEELANAU COUNTY				MICHIGAN		
	Total, 2000	% of Population, 2000	Total, 2010	% of Population, 2010	Total, 2016	% of Population, 2016	% Change, 2010-2016	2000	2010	2016	2000	2010	2016
0-4	8	2%	18	5%	0	0	-	5%	4%	4%	7%	6%	6%
5-17	51	14%	32	9%	32	9%	0	19%	15%	13%	19%	18%	17%
18-24	24	6%	8	2%	29	8%	260%	6%	6%	7%	9	10%	10%
25-44	73	19%	63	17%	39	11%	-38%	24%	17%	17%	30%	25%	24%
45-64	133	35%	143	38%	150	41%	5%	28%	34%	32%	22%	28%	28%
65+	89	24%	111	30%	113	31%	1%	17%	23%	28%	12%	14%	15%
Total	378		375			36%							

Source: 2016 American Community Survey estimates

Housing Units & Seasonal Housing, 2010-2016

(Table 3)

	TOTAL HOUSING UNITS, 2010	TOTAL HOUSING UNITS, 2016	# SEASONAL HOUSING UNITS, 2010	# SEASONAL HOUSING UNITS, 2016	% SEASONAL HOUSING UNITS, 2016	% INCREASE IN TOTAL HOUSING UNITS, 2010-2016	% INCREASE IN SEASONAL HOUSING UNITS, 2010-2016
Village of Empire	347	360	113	131	36.3%	4.6%	15.9%
Empire Township	1,088	1,122	442	423	38.8%	3.1%	-4.3%
Leelanau County	14,935	15,214	4,681	5,103	33.5%	1.9%	9%
State of Michigan	4,532,233	4,544,920	263,071	286,249	6.3%	.3%	8.8%

Source: 2016 American Community Survey estimates

Income Distribution

(Table 4)

HOUSEHOLD INCOME LEVELS	VILLAGE OF EMPIRE	EMPIRE TOWNSHIP	LEELANAU COUNTY	MICHIGAN
Less than \$10,000 annually	10.6	6.8	4.1	7.8
\$10,000-\$14,999	5.8	4.4	3.3	5.3
\$15,000-\$24,999	16.4	8.9	9	11.1
\$25,000-\$34,999	8.7	8.2	9.4	10.7
\$35,000-\$49,999	12.1	13.2	15.5	14.3
\$50,000-\$74,999	9.7	14.1	21.7	18.5
\$75,000-\$99,999	6.8	11.3	11.9	12
\$100,000-\$149,999	27.1	20.8	13.4	12.2
\$150,000-\$199,999	1.9	7.4	5.4	4.3
\$200,000 or more	1.0	4.8	6.3	3.8
Median Household Income	\$48,125	\$64,688	\$59,018	\$50,803

Source: 2016 American Community Survey

Leelanau County Labor Force & Unemployment

(Table 5)

LABOR FORCE ANNUAL AVERAGES, 2017	LEELANAU COUNTY	MICHIGAN
Total Labor Force	10,655	4,883,815
5-Year % Change	4.8%	0%
10-Year % Change	-6.2%	-2.5%
Employed	10,133	4,657,272
5-Year % Change	8.4%	9.7%
10-Year % Change	-5.6%	0%
Unemployed	522	226,543
5-Year % Change	-36%	-46.8%
10-Year % Change	-16.30%	-35.7%
Unemployment Rate	4.9%	4.6%
5-Year % Change	-38.8%	-49.5%
10-Year % Change	-10.9%	-34.3%

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Economy

Workforce & Unemployment

In 2017, the average unemployment rate over the course of the year in Leelanau County was 5% (Bureau of Labor Statistics). This low unemployment rate represents a significant change since the years of the recession, when many people left the County and the State to look for work elsewhere. In 2017, with low unemployment rates and increasing costs of living, business and other stakeholder input from throughout the County and the region emphasize that the County is now experiencing the opposite problem: it's become increasingly difficult for business to find and retain workers. Data from the Michigan Department of Labor and Growth shows that, between 2010-2016, the number of jobs in the County increased by over 11%, while the population increased by less than 1%. Contributing factors include the loss of young families and the aging of the population; high costs of living, including housing and transportation costs; limited daycare options; and a mismatch in the skills needed by employers and those possessed by the existing workforce. The workforce shortage is particularly pronounced in tourism-related industries, agriculture, and health care, which make up a significant share of the County's economic activity.

Education

Educational attainment rates are an important consideration for business, particularly knowledge-based businesses, which often seek to locate in communities that are home to an educated workforce. Leelanau County is home to one of the most highly-educated populations in the State of Michigan: while 27% of residents statewide have a bachelor's degree or higher, 41% of Leelanau County residents over the age of 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher. The rate is even higher in Empire, where 55% of residents over the age of 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher. 97% have a high school diploma or higher (2016 American Community Survey).

These high educational attainment rates likely reflect, in part, the large numbers of college-educated professionals that have migrated to the region post-retirement.

Tourism

Tourism is a foundation of the County's economy, and acts as its most visible economic driver. Tourism-related jobs (including those in Retail; Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation; and Accommodation and Food Services) account for 20% of the County's total jobs, employing over 2,400 employees. These jobs are typically lower-paying and seasonal in nature, with average annual earnings of \$23,784, compared to annual average earnings of \$44,808 for all jobs in the County.

One of the most important tourism-related drivers in the Village of Empire is the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Over 1.7 million people visit the park annually and nearly a quarter of a million people go to the Sleeping Bear Dunes Visitor Center within the Village limits on an annual basis. With promotion and awareness of the National Park on the rise, visitation has increased dramatically over the last ten years, from 1,008,315 visitors in 2008 to 1,678,126 in 2017—an increase of 66%. Increased visitation has had, and will continue to have, significant impacts on job opportunities and business revenues within the Village.

Agriculture

While agriculture itself accounts for a relatively small proportion of Leelanau County's economy (7% of jobs), agriculture is a significant part of the County's "brand," creating a sense of place that drives tourism and contributes to the community's quality of life. It sustains businesses like fruit processors and retail outlets. What's more, entrepreneurial food and farming related activity has become an economic hallmark of Leelanau County, creating new interest regionally and state-wide in local foods, through farmers markets, wineries, food processing, and other food-related economic activity.

ALICE Households: Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed

Many households are living below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), but an even greater number of households are what United Way calls ALICE – an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. ALICE households have incomes above the FPL, but still struggle to afford basic household necessities. A 2017 United Way report identifies the cost of basic needs for each county in Michigan, and the number of households earning below this amount – the ALICE Threshold.

Annual Household Survival Budget—Table 6

	Median Household Income	Unemployment Rate	% of households that are ALICE Households	% of Households in Poverty	Single Adult	2 Adults, 1 infant, 1 preschooler
Antrim	\$46,485	9.7%	28%	13%	\$16,632	\$59,508
Benzie	\$47,388	8.4%	27%	10%	\$19,188	\$55,244
Charlevoix	\$46,544	7.8%	27%	12%	\$18,924	\$55,908
Emmet	\$51,018	8.4%	26%	11%	\$19,260	\$53,760
Grand Traverse	\$55,013	4.4%	25%	10%	\$19,872	\$58,740
Kalkaska	\$40,534	10.4%	27%	16%	\$18,048	\$53,508
Leelanau	\$56,189	7.1%	20%	8%	\$18,852	\$57,708
Manistee	\$41,395	11.5%	25%	14%	\$17,556	\$52,452
Missaukee	\$41,098	11%	29%	15%	\$17,556	\$55,608
Wexford	\$41,354	9.5%	28%	16%	\$17,016	\$51,936
Michigan	\$51,804	7.2%	25%	15%	\$18,192	\$56,064

Source: United Way, 2017

Leelanau County Housing Studies

A residential “target market analysis” was conducted by real estate consultants LandUse USA in 2014 for all counties in Northwest Michigan. The analysis analyzes demand from various demographic groups for multi-family housing types from potential “movers” both inside and outside the study area. The complete study and methodology is available online at www.networksnorthwest.org. (Table 7)

POTENTIAL OWNERS/RENTERS	ANNUAL MARKET DEMAND - OWNERS	ANNUAL MARKET DEMAND - RENTERS	MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	% THAT ARE SINGLE-PERSON HOUSEHOLDS	MEDIAN RENT	MEDIAN HOME VALUE
Young singles	18	34	\$37,000	64%	\$550	\$89,000
Lower-income families/ households	0	15	\$29,000	17%	\$525	\$92,000
Lower-income Boomers	0	12	\$34,500	80%	\$525	\$92,000
Moderate-income Boomers	15	14	\$48,500	51%	\$700	\$147,000
Lower-income seniors	0	7	\$20,000	69%	\$500	\$95,000
Moderate-income seniors	6	2	\$38,500	48%	\$875	\$187,500
Higher-income seniors	7	4	\$92,000	30%	\$1,100	\$275,000
Total	46	88				

Source: 2015 Northwest Michigan Target Market Analysis, prepared by LandUseUSA. Underlying data provided by the Internal Revenue Service; US Decennial Census; American Community Survey; and Experian Decision Analytics

Housing Affordability in Empire and Leelanau County

- A household earning the Village’s median homeowner income of about \$55,833 might be able to afford a home valued at about \$140,000; however, the median home value in the Village is over \$195,000.
- 44% of renters pay more than 30% of their income on housing costs.
- In order to afford the median monthly rent in Leelanau County, workers need to earn at least \$16.63 per hour, or \$34,600 per year.

Housing Terms

Because there's no "one size fits all" definition for affordable housing, and because it can include market-rate and subsidized housing, it's important to define the different types and prices of affordable housing, as well as the various income levels and populations served.

Low-income, permanent, or long-term affordable housing is defined as:

Rental housing or for-sale housing that is made affordable, through public or other subsidies, to low- and moderate-income households. Deed restrictions or other controls limit the resale price or rent for a specified number of years. Affordability may be guaranteed for periods ranging from 10 years to perpetuity. Housing is typically available to households earning 80% or less of the area median income (AMI).

Workforce housing is defined as:

Rental housing or for-sale housing, located near employment centers, that is affordable to households with earned income. Workforce housing may be either subsidized or unsubsidized, and is often marketed to those with moderate- and entry-level incomes like teachers, police officers, medical technicians, office workers, construction workers, and retail and restaurant staff. Generally these occupations earn up to 100% of the area median income (AMI).

Supportive housing is defined as:

Housing that is made affordable to residents with subsidy that is linked to support services such as mental health care, employment or job training assistance, addiction treatment, or other services that support independent living.

The Missing Middle is defined as

The Missing Middle is a range of medium density, multi-unit, or clustered housing types compatible in scale with single-family homes that help meet the growing demand for walkable living and smaller homes. It includes housing types like duplexes, four-plexes, accessory dwelling units, and clustered cottage housing developments.

Even within each of these categories, the types and prices of affordable housing vary considerably. Various income levels are used by funders and housing providers to determine the level of affordability and the type or level of subsidy. For current income levels by county in Michigan, visit www.michigan.gov/mshda.

Historic Empire Home

Empire Home



Leelanau County Economic Overview

Leelanau County’s economy has historically been rooted in tourism and agriculture, and these remain among the County’s most important economic drivers today.

Employment in Leelanau County is concentrated in government (which includes employment at the Leelanau Sands Casino and other employment at the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians), tourism-related industries, and health care. Employment in tourism-related industries, including the Accommodation and Food Services sector, Retail, and Arts/Entertainment, represents about 20% of all employment in the County. However, because employment at the Leelanau Sands Casino and related businesses is counted as “Government” employment due to ownership by the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, the actual number of individuals employed in tourism-related industry is likely to be notably higher than reported. Other important industries include Construction and Real Estate, each of which account for about 9% of all employment. Agriculture employs about 7% of the total workforce; but its connection to other industries should be noted, as agriculture drives a significant amount of tourism and entrepreneurial activity in the County.

Industry	Jobs	Earnings	Sales	Average Earnings
Casinos	1,730	\$91,415,833	\$333,819,627	\$52,842
Accommodation and Food Services	1,123	\$28,294,295	\$75,329,767	\$25,195
Construction	1,076	\$40,119,999	\$99,105,945	\$37,286
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1,074	\$31,701,505	\$139,514,939	\$29,517
Retail Trade	848	\$21,966,009	\$57,522,791	\$25,903
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	790	\$19,939,256	\$76,146,929	\$25,240
Health Care and Social Assistance	742	\$38,847,364	\$66,179,248	\$52,355
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	707	\$27,817,991	\$52,508,420	\$39,347
Finance and Insurance	679	\$36,974,364	\$78,469,061	\$54,454
Other Services (except Public Administration)	591	\$14,522,626	\$29,028,375	\$24,573
Manufacturing	587	\$22,727,598	\$128,905,901	\$38,718
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	481	\$13,369,164	\$29,534,089	\$27,795
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	435	\$8,810,030	\$19,108,375	\$20,253
Wholesale Trade	353	\$11,930,171	\$32,375,786	\$33,797
Educational Services	231	\$5,256,803	\$7,935,099	\$22,757
Information	106	\$4,217,240	\$18,194,813	\$39,785
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	98	\$8,526,259	\$21,878,756	\$87,003
Transportation and Warehousing	96	\$3,665,569	\$10,308,756	\$38,183
Management of Companies and Enterprises	14	\$354,350	\$683,345	\$25,311
Utilities	<10	\$266,162	\$990,598	\$38,023
	11,769	\$430,722,591	\$1,277,540,621	\$36,598

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Health Care

Jobs in health care are an important economic engine, making up 6% of jobs County-wide. As the population ages and demand for health care increases, this sector will become increasingly important. Currently, the Village contains several medical professional services, including Munson family care, physical therapy, pharmacy and lab services; as well as independent health care providers including dental services. Because these services act as a medical “hub” for the rural areas surrounding Empire, the Village is well-positioned to capitalize economically on the growth in health care services and demand.

High-Tech Infrastructure

Wireless and broadband is becoming increasingly important in creating a competitive environment for new economic investment. Greater coverage of telecommunications and high-speed internet are critical in today’s business operations: high-tech, high-speed Internet infrastructure is a “must-have” in accommodating the interconnected, innovative nature of new economic growth. Residents have expressed the need for updated and faster broadband infrastructure available to the Village.

Issues & Opportunities

Population Changes

The Village’s population trends have had and will continue to have significant impacts on the economy, housing demand and value, and tax revenues, with subsequent impacts to service delivery and quality.

As the population ages and household size declines, demand for housing is likely to shift to smaller homes. What’s more, smaller household sizes mean that additional housing units will be needed even to maintain the current population. And, as more residents reach retirement age, the labor force will shrink, exacerbating the current workforce shortage. The ability to attract a new workforce will be impacted by costs of living, especially housing costs, that may prevent some potential new residents from relocating to the area.

To adjust to and prepare for these changes, the Village of Empire can consider options that help seniors “age in place,” that is, remain in their homes as their needs and abilities change. One way communities support aging in place is through in-home services like those that are offered by the Share Care. Other proactive approaches include allowing different types of housing to accommodate smaller households and individuals that no longer want to maintain a large home. These diverse housing types can also support younger

households or new residents that may be moving to the area to work and are looking for affordable residential options. Options like townhomes, condominiums, apartments, granny flats or accessory dwelling units, and small or even “tiny” homes can meet the needs of older households, young singles, empty nesters, and others, often at a more affordable price point.

Workforce

The presence of talent—a skilled, knowledgeable workforce—is needed to support existing business, and also helps to create and attract high-paying, sustainable jobs. Yet, Leelanau County is experiencing challenges in sustaining a workforce even for existing businesses, particularly those with larger seasonal staffing. A survey conducted in 2016 by the Leelanau Peninsula Economic Foundation identified workforce shortages as a key area of concern. The workforce shortage is affecting the length of the season for some businesses, along with opening hours, menus, and expansion potential. Local and regional partners are focusing on workforce development through schools, job trainings, apprenticeships, and other educational approaches; but, as the region adjusts to the reality of an aging population that is increasingly reaching retirement, the ability to recruit new workers to the County and region is vitally important. Local efforts to improve the quality of life and affordability

of living costs will be key factors in attracting new residents, families, and workers that can support new and growing economic activity. Placemaking activities that enhance the sense of place and community—including community improvement projects, events and festivals (especially during the ‘shoulder season’) that bring the community together, and recreation improvements that provide recreation and entertainment options for all ages and income levels—can make Empire a more desirable place to live and do business. Housing is a particularly important component in attracting workers: in the LPEF survey of Leelanau County businesses, 74% of respondents cited the “availability of affordable housing for employees” as a

primary business challenge. Zoning changes that incrementally increase density or allow additional housing types, meanwhile, can create important residential options that meet the needs and preferences of individuals and families that may be looking to relocate in Empire.

Housing Affordability

Housing affordability has serious impacts on quality of life, local businesses, school enrollment, and traffic patterns. When families or households experience housing cost overburden, they are at increased risk of foreclosure or homelessness. To avoid cost overburden, households may choose to live in substandard or overcrowded housing, or they may move to less expensive areas—often rural areas without significant services or

employment opportunities. These moves mean that businesses lose year round customers; school enrollment is destabilized, impacting school budgets; and traffic increases as residents commute into town for jobs, school, and shopping.

Affordable housing, small homes, rentals, or multi-family housing units consistent with single-family development—otherwise known as the “missing middle”—are all becoming more important in meeting the needs of the workforce, an aging population, small households, young professionals, and families. Without them, employers struggle to hire qualified new workers, including seasonal and professional staff; and schools lose out on new students. The ability to meet these needs is

High-Speed Internet in Leelanau County

In 2016, the Leelanau Peninsula Economic Foundation (LPEF) conducted a survey of business owners in Leelanau County on issues including barriers impacting their business success and growth. Because the lack of available high-speed Internet service ranked high on the list, the LPEF established the Leelanau Internet Futures Team (LIFT), made up of local elected/appointed officials, public sector employees and local business owners tasked with examining the status of broadband services in Leelanau County with a goal of developing an action plan to provide high-speed Internet access throughout Leelanau County.

In partnership with Connect Michigan, LIFT surveyed Leelanau County residents, businesses and stakeholders to identify broadband needs and priorities, exploring focusing on Libraries, Agriculture, Economic Prosperity, Government, Healthcare, K-12 Education, Public Safety, Talent/Workforce Development, Tourism and Community Organizations. LIFT’s key findings and action items include:

- Among those households without a home Internet connection, 54.8% cite a lack of availability as the reason.
- 44.7% of people earning less than \$35,000/year are without Broadband services. Lack of availability is the major reason cited, however, 24.4% of those individuals said the service was too expensive.
- Convened a meeting with Internet Service Providers (ISPs) who either currently offers services in Leelanau County or might be

limited by land values, the high costs of development, regulatory obstacles, limited infrastructure, and a lack of developers with the experience or financing options needed to build these new housing types.

Housing was an important issue for the public during the Master Plan update, with a focus on housing that's affordable to the workforce and families year-round. To create more opportunities for housing, the Village of Empire can consider regulatory approaches that allow diverse housing options that cost less to build and provide year-round options—including rentals—for families and the workforce.

Tourism, Seasonal Population & Housing

Empire's many natural assets, proximity to the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore and recreational opportunities have enormous impacts on economic activity from tourism.

Tourism comes with some concerns as dependence on tourism-related industries naturally causes seasonality issues. While other local municipalities have concerns about the impact of seasonal housing on year-round residents, the Village of Empire is looking to take a proactive, evidence-based approach by focusing on issues and challenges specifically impacting the Village of Empire. As vacation rental options via the internet become more popular, there is a concern that new housing – particularly “affordable” or



Sleeping Bear Gallery

“workforce” housing – will be purchased, rented, or used for seasonal residents or visitors, which could impact businesses, schools, and the Village’s year-round character and sense of community. Although, anecdotally, many Village residents who participate in some type of seasonal rental activity, acknowledge that their return visitors become part of the fabric of the community—and often choose to purchase homes in the area. Housing data from the American Community Survey shows that seasonal housing units are increasing at a faster rate than total housing units, as year-round homes are being converted to seasonal homes. And as land and development costs increase, seasonal housing increasingly looks like the best investment for some builders or developers: with a strong market for seasonal homes, and the ability to turn a profit, there is more incentive to build seasonal homes than those that are affordable to the workforce or families.

At the same time, seasonal rentals and tourism have an important economic impact. Visitors who lodge in seasonal rentals spend

money at local businesses, and property owners are investing in the community and improving and rehabilitating property. Tourism provides jobs, supports local businesses, and influences the types of commercial, business, recreational, and other kinds of development that occurs here. What’s more, visitors who experience the community’s unique sense of place and its physical, natural, and cultural assets may choose to permanently relocate here.

There must be a balance between encouraging tourism’s economic benefits, while minimizing negative impacts to the population and housing market. Communities can research how other communities – locally and across the United States—are identifying methods to ensure proper balance in meeting the needs of year-round residents, seasonal residents and seasonal rentals. Careful study of the issues is an important step for the Village of Empire to begin the process.

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Chapter 3: Natural Resources

The natural resources in and surrounding the Village of Empire are almost unmatched for a community of its size: towering dunes, over a mile of public water frontage, and a natural area inside the Village limits set it apart from other communities, and act as the foundation to Empire’s quality of life. Both residents and visitors take advantage of the wide range of recreation opportunities available in the forests, lakes, and streams within and surrounding the Village. Public input from the 2018 Master Plan update process showed a substantial consensus on preserving and enhancing Empire’s natural resources: survey respondents and public forum participants overwhelmingly agreed that the Village’s natural resources, primarily its beach and waterfront, are an important community asset that should be protected, maintained, and enhanced.

To ensure the continued and enhanced quality of these resources, it will be important to balance community development needs with environmental considerations. The benefits of such a balance are increasingly being quantified in economic, public safety, health, and social measures. Environmental quality and protection can enhance economic development efforts. Energy



View of Sleeping Bear Dunes from the Empire Bluff

efficiency reduces the costs of products and services, while the preservation of quality natural features increases the value of developed properties and acts as a draw for new residents and visitors. And, even more fundamentally, planning efforts must by their nature consider the environment upon which they are based. This chapter provides an overview of Empire’s natural features, to provide context for planning and future development.

Natural Features

Empire sits in a small valley that outlets into South Bar Lake and

Lake Michigan. Two large sand dune systems bracket the valley on the north and south. The sandy soils in and around the developed portion of the Village were formed as the ancient lake shore terrace and on a glacial outwash plain. The hilly terrain to the south and southeast are glacial end moraines.

Once South Bar Lake was a part of the ancient Lake Michigan. However, as the sand dunes began shifting, the cove was cut off from Lake Michigan by the sand deposit. Only a small outlet connects the two lakes.

A portion of the dune areas are



Empire Beach—Lake Michigan

state classified as Critical Sand Dune Areas, and as such any development in this area must be in compliance with the provisions of the state statute and receive state approval in addition to local land use and zoning approvals.

Sand Dunes & High Risk Erosion Areas

Steep slopes and bluffs, dunes, and sandy beaches are dynamic, ever-changing environments that must retain their dynamic features in order to function properly within the ecosystem. From the perspective of the built environment, the dynamic nature of dunes and coastal areas make them vulnerable to hazards like erosion that can cause damage to human life and property. As such, fragile sand dunes and high-risk erosion areas are regulated by state law controlling development in these areas. The State of Michigan regulates land within “critical sand dune areas” of the state. Empire is home to important and fragile dune systems that are regulated by the State.

According to the DNR, critical dune

areas protected by Part 353 represent the highest and most spectacular dunes extending along much of Lake Michigan's shoreline and the shores of Lake Superior, totaling about 80,000 acres in size. The State of Michigan has found that critical dune areas of the state are a unique, irreplaceable, and fragile resource that provide significant recreational, economic, scientific, geological, scenic, botanical, educational, agricultural, and ecological benefits to the people of Michigan. As such, alteration or use of critical dune areas shall occur only when the protection of the environment and the ecology is assured.

The DNR defines high risk erosion areas as the shorelands of the Great Lakes and connecting waters where erosion has been occurring at a long-term average rate of one foot or more per year. The erosion can be caused from one or several factors. High water levels, storms, wind, ground water seepage, surface water runoff, and frost are important factors causing erosion. The high risk erosion area regulations establish required setback distances to protect new

structures from erosion for a period of 30 to 60 years, depending on the size, number of living units and type of construction. Other setback requirements are applicable for home restorations and additions to existing structures. Any person or local government agency proposing to erect, install, move, or enlarge a permanent structure on a parcel must obtain a permit prior to the commencement of construction.

Wetlands

According to the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI), there are approximately over 4,500 acres of wetlands and wetland conditions within the Village limits, located mostly on the east-side, through Chippewa Run and South Bar Lake (see existing and future land use maps in Chapter 5). Wetlands are important features in the landscape that provide numerous beneficial services for people and for fish and wildlife. Some of these services, or functions, include protecting and improving water quality, providing fish and wildlife habitats, storing floodwaters and maintaining surface water flow during dry periods. Locations of these wetlands should be considered when planning for development or open space designations as a way to protect wetland resources.

Shoreline

The Village of Empire is a shoreline community, with Lake Michigan as its western boundary. The Village has 1.36 miles of shoreline frontage along Lake Michigan, and 1.5 miles

of South Bar Lake frontage with public access available in both locations.

Green Infrastructure

The Village of Empire is home to substantial, interconnected green infrastructure assets—including the National Park, Leelanau Conservancy properties, and Village-owned parks and nature preserves—that provide important economic and environmental benefits.

Green infrastructure provides a variety of community benefits. Because greenway spaces like trails and natural areas are often seen as more valued amenities by residents than even golf courses or swimming pools, green infrastructure can increase the value of nearby property, with corresponding increases in tax revenues.

Further, continuous systems of forests, wetlands, and other open areas reduce the risk of flooding by controlling storm water runoff and provide protection from storm damage and erosion in coastal areas. Green infrastructure systems also provide invaluable wildlife habitat and foster ecological

diversity.

Natural features provide significantly more benefits if they are maintained in larger units, such as a complex system of woodlands, wetlands, rivers, and streams. Larger, connected systems—often referred to as green infrastructure systems—are more successful at maintaining ecological diversity and integrity.

Issues & Opportunities

Environmental quality was identified as an important community priority. Local roles in preserving and enhancing environmental quality include efforts to address storm water runoff and to institute measures that lead to greater coastal resiliency and protection of existing wetlands.

Storm water Runoff and Impervious Surface Coverage

Sediment – including sand – is a major surface water pollutant that washes from roads, parking lots, and driveways. Sediment and sand

smother the habitat that aquatic organisms need to survive and reproduce. Sediment and sand enter our surface waters through stormwater carrying with it nutrients and many other forms of pollution such as salt, oil, and anti-freeze.

When rain and snowfall hit the ground, they naturally filtrate through the earth and recharge the groundwater. However, paved, or impervious, surfaces, prevent the filtration of rain or snow into the ground. This precipitation instead flows over the ground, picking up debris, chemicals, dirt, and other pollutants. Runoff then flows into a storm sewer system or directly into a lake, stream, river, or wetland, where it is discharged, untreated, into the water we use for swimming, fishing, and drinking.

Reducing impervious surfaces in a community provides significant benefits to water quality. Roads or parking lots make up the majority of a community's impervious surface coverage. In most communities, road design is significantly influenced by the county road commissions and local

The Grand Vision: Guiding Principles for Natural Resources

- Protect and preserve the water resources, forests, natural areas, and scenic beauty of the region
- Protect our water quality
- Preserve the scenic beauty of the region
- Create ways to allow and encourage access to nature
- Be a good steward of our forest resources

Coastal Resiliency & Empire's Dunes

Dunes occur in different shapes and sizes, formed by interaction with the flow of air, water, wind, sand, waves, vegetation and ice. They are subject to unique hazards related to the potential for the movement of sand and subsequent erosion, which can result in the loss of property or necessitate the relocation of homes as sand or soil is lost over time. Roadways along the shoreline may experience bank erosion which contributes to cracking and overall structural instability. The foundation of a structure, or underground utility pipes, in a dune area may become fully exposed and vulnerable to weather, extreme temperatures, water damage, or other sources of risk. At the other end of the spectrum, active dunes may result in deposition, with roads, parking lots, driveways, and structures becoming covered or buried in sand. These processes, and the likelihood of their occurrence, vary depending on how the dune was formed, and the different characteristics of each type of dune. Understanding the types of dunes, and the hazards associated with each, is central to appropriate planning and development.

Acres of vegetated, perched, parabolic dunes are located in Empire. These dunes were formed by strong winds and storms that created a repeated series of blowouts, or saddle-shaped or U-shaped depressions in a stabilized sand dune. The ridges of parabolic dunes are typically vegetated with grasses, shrubs, and trees, while the blowouts in between the ridges are usually very open with a few sparsely scattered clumps of grasses, herbaceous plants, and sometimes shrubs. Parabolic dunes are among the most common type of dune system in the Northwest Michigan, and Manistee, Benzie, and Leelanau Counties, feature some important parabolic dunes also known as "high perched parabolic dunes." Perched dunes are found "perched" atop bluffs that vary in height from 90 to 450 feet about lake level. Low perched parabolic dunes are located on either low-lying flat glacial lake plains or sand bars. Their higher elevations leave them more exposed to the wind, meaning they can be more active and hazardous than low perched parabolic dunes.

It's important to note that even parabolic dunes that appear stable can become unstable, as sand continues to move within them on a regular basis. The unpredictable nature of parabolic dunes means that development within these systems should occur with caution, sound site planning, and good building design that takes active sand movement into consideration. Improperly sited development is especially hazardous in high perched parabolic dunes due to active sand movement, coupled with erosion, particularly during storms and high water periods.

A number of resources have been developed with support from Michigan's Coastal Zone Management Program to help communities and property owners plan proactively for the dune systems in their communities. These resources and information, including online mapping tools, are available at:

Planning for Coastal Resiliency in Northwest Michigan: A Guidebook for Local Governments

www.networksnorthwest.org/coastalresiliency

Coastal Dunes of Michigan's Northwest Lower Peninsula (Story Map)

<http://mnfi.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=a2232d34a57644baac2687f5481033c2>

Northwest Lower Peninsula Coastal Resiliency Maps (ArcGIS Online Map Viewer)

<http://arcg.is/2hjEJmz>

Leelanau Native Plant Initiative Program (LNPI)

Leelanau County Planning Department

fire departments.

Allowing for flexibility in the number of parking spaces, or for shared parking between different uses, can also work to reduce the amount of impervious surface in the community.

Coastal Resilience

Empire’s coastal resources are some of its most valued and cherished resources, beloved for their beauty and the recreation opportunities they provide. However, these areas—including the dunes, steep slopes, and shoreline in Empire—are vulnerable to natural disasters because of factors like extreme weather events and geological processes. Dunes are prone to natural movement and erosion more than other areas, and sand is easily impacted by development or construction that can disrupt the natural process of beach creation and replenishment, and may exacerbate erosion and

other hazards.

The potential hazards in these high-value areas make coastal resilience an important priority. The term coastal resilience refers to the ability of these environments to “bounce back” after hazardous events like coastal storms and flooding. Improving resilience—through anticipating, preparing for, responding to, and adapting to changing conditions, and recovering rapidly from hazardous events with minimal damage—is a key objective for communities that want to reduce the vulnerability and risks associated with coastal areas.

Empire’s dunes are protected as part of the National Park Service and by State critical dune legislation. Yet, it remains important to recognize that the most effective approaches to coastal resilience distribute responsibilities between federal, state, and local agencies and the

public.

The responsibilities and roles of local and county government are central to this collaborative framework. While state and federal agencies have some regulatory and permitting control, local governments must take the lead in planning and implementing resiliency policies that are outside the purview of state and federal agencies. Zoning is an important part of this framework, offering a number of techniques that can minimize the impacts of development and weather events on sensitive natural features. Key among those techniques is an approach known as shoreline protection setbacks, which require buffers of naturally growing grasses, shrubs, and trees in coastal areas. These setbacks have been shown to protect the health of streams, wetlands, rivers, or lakes. In order to be most effective, they must be large enough (50-100 feet)

Best-Practice: Low Impact Development

Low-impact development or design (LID) is a series of techniques that manage rainfall to infiltrate, filter, store, evaporate, and detain runoff closer to its source. With LID techniques in place, stormwater runoff becomes a resource rather than a waste product. Cisterns and rain barrels can use collected rain water for irrigation or as gray water for toilet flushing.

LID also promotes the idea that almost all elements of a site plan can be used for stormwater control. Parking lots can be made of pervious surfacing materials that allows stormwater to drain through the pavement and recharge groundwater sources; while rooftops can be used as planting areas, soaking up rainwater and reducing runoff.

These techniques often cost less to build than traditional closed designs, primarily by keeping stormwater on the ground rather than building infrastructure underground to handle it.

to capture surface runoff, and must be permanently conserved.

Other important zoning techniques include regulations that limit shoreline structures; require environmental impact statements, establish “bluff protection zones” or overlay districts in sensitive areas; and coordinate permits with related regulations.

Invasive Species

Invasive species are plant or animal species that are not native to an area and cause negative effects on that area’s environment, health, or economy. A number of invasive species present a significant threat to the integrity of native plant and animal communities and the ecosystem in and around Empire. They present varying threat levels, but certain high profile invasive species are especially prolific and present the greatest disruptions to the ecosystem. These include Purple Loosestrife, Phragmites, Eurasian Water Milfoil, the Round Goby, and Quagga Mussels. These species are outcompeting many native species and are significantly disrupting the food chain and ecology of Lake Michigan and many inland lakes. On land, species like Baby’s Breath, Common Buckthorn, Garlic Mustard, the Emerald Ash Borer, and Spotted Knapweed are having tremendous impacts on the ecology of forested areas and open space.

The Village of Empire is host to a number of protected species; a full listing of those species found in

Leelanau County is provided in Appendix A. The listed species are protected under federal and/or state law due to their scarcity. Some of these species include the Indiana Bat (*Myotis sodalis*), Pitcher’s Thistle (*Cirsium pitcheri*), and Michigan monkey-flower (*Mimulus michiganensis*).

Conservation and planning efforts can include actions that can help prevent or mitigate the spread of invasive species in order to preserve both vital ecosystem services and biological diversity. Addressing nutrient pollution through stormwater management is one action that communities can take, while community-led initiatives and partnerships can, and have been, successful in addressing invasive species issues. Networks of volunteers and environmental organizations like the Northwest Michigan Invasive Species Network work to identify and remove invasives from public property. See common invasive plant species identified in the Village pictured on the next page.

Common Invasive Plant Species



Autumn Olive



Baby's breath



Black Jet Bead



Black locust



Bush Honeysuckle



Dame's Rocket



Garden Yellowrocket



Garlic Mustard



Leafy spurge



Lyme grass



Phragmites



Spotted knapweed

Chapter 4: Quality of Life & Sense of Place

The Village of Empire is endowed with an incredible quantity and quality of place-based assets. Beautiful views and vistas, the Village's rich historical heritage, and its small size are characteristics that are cherished by both residents and visitors. These assets create Empire's unique sense of place and may form the foundation for thoughtful, well-considered economic investment.

Enhancing sense of place, creating and promoting a positive identity, branding, and global visibility are key elements of placemaking, which uses local assets to create attractive and sustainable communities, improve the quality of life, and help communities succeed in the new economy. Placemaking involves working with the assets within the Village to focus on attainable, community supported opportunities for new economic investment. In addition to making Empire an even better place to live, work, and visit, enhancing Empire's sense of place and quality of life can create opportunities for economic development through tourism and attraction of knowledge workers and companies.

Empire's Quality of Life Assets

The Village's location in the Northwest Lower Michigan region



South Bar Lake

has contributed to the creation of its distinct character with quality of life assets that are beloved by residents and visitors. Some of those assets that make up Empire's unique identity, as identified by public input, include:

Small town atmosphere and lifestyle

The Village of Empire, despite its small size, acts as a year-round economic hub for residents in both Leelanau and Benzie counties. The Glen Lake Library, medical and health care services, banks, post office, restaurants, and other services are available for both year-round and seasonal residents that live within the Village itself, as well as in surrounding rural areas.

At the same time, the Village's small size makes for a close-knit community, and Empire residents appreciate the friendly atmosphere and other characteristics of small town life.

Heritage and historic character

Empire has a rich historical heritage that is still evident in its housing stock and commercial buildings. A large percentage of Empire's housing stock was built before the mid 20th century and still retains its historic character. The Heritage Museum preserves the community's past, provides for community events and programming, and allows current residents to connect with the Village's history, helping to build a strong sense of place.

Access to recreation

The Village has a wealth of high quality recreation opportunities and events. Empire Beach, outdoor activities, boating, Empire Bluff Trail, and other natural areas attract many visitors from beyond the region and the state. Nationally-significant recreation opportunities are in every direction within and outside Empire—the presence of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, Leelanau Conservancy preserves, the Pere Marquette State Forest, Crystal River and a variety of attractions in nearby Traverse City attract hundreds of thousands of visitors to the area annually.

Village-owned or managed recreation assets are identified in the Village Recreation Plan, updated every five years to be compliant with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources requirements for recreation plans. The Village will continue to have an approved, updated and active Recreation Plan in place to remain eligible for state recreation grants.

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

Surrounding the Village, the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore was established in 1970 by an act of Congress that set aside the Lakeshore for preservation of the natural resources and for public use. The most prominent features, and those for which the park is named, are the perched dunes above Lake Michigan. The dune overlooks at the Sleeping Bear, Empire, and Pyramid Point bluffs are



Asparagus Festival on Front Street in Empire

about 400 feet above Lake Michigan. These unique features attract over 1.7 million visitors annually to the region, a number that has grown significantly since 2011, when Sleeping Bear Dunes was voted as the “Most Beautiful Place in America” on Good Morning, America.

For many visitors, their first stop in their visit to the National Lakeshore is the Village of Empire, which provides services like gas, food, and lodging. Its prominent location and importance to park visitors means that any management activities undertaken by either the National Park Service or the Village have direct impacts on the other, with shared social, economic and ecological impacts.

Issues and Opportunities

Community Image

Empire has tremendous place-based and quality of life assets that create

unique environment desirable to many as a place to live and visit. This includes a well maintained beach on Lake Michigan that attracts people from around the region; a downtown, small-town atmosphere, historic neighborhoods, surrounding natural resources and adjacent proximity to the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

Location

The rural, scenic setting that surrounds Empire is inseparable from its image and lifestyle. According to the Land Policy Institute, rural areas located long distances from large metropolitan areas have important economic benefits that arise from these long distances, including the opportunity to market uniquely rural assets, such as recreation, local foods and festivals, scenic views and other rural placemaking possibilities. At the same time, it can create economic challenges, including difficulties in accessing educational or employment opportunities.



Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore Headquarters in Empire

Empire—a small village with year-round services in a rural region, located only a half-hour drive from the largest city in the region, Traverse City—has a distinct “best of both worlds” advantage in terms of accessing benefits from both rural settings and larger communities. What’s more, distance learning and telecommuting make it easier for residents to access education and employment opportunities from the Village.

Transportation Connections

The presence and availability of state highways, sidewalks, and trail systems create tremendous visibility and access to the Village’s park, recreation, and other place-based assets. The Village is also served by the Bay Area Transportation Authority (BATA), which provides fixed-route public transportation within Traverse City and Grand Traverse County. The re-instatement of the BATA “Village connector” line, can bring visitors and residents to and from Traverse City and Leelanau County villages. Additionally, enhancing Empire’s image as a “walkable community”

could enhance pedestrian or bicycle safety for waterfront or beach visitors that are traveling into the downtown and other parts of the community.

Creating enhanced walkability or biking opportunities, combined with the use of distinctive, attractive wayfinding signage to help pedestrians and motorists navigate through downtown, could also represent an opportunity to build awareness of Empire’s attractions and serve as a valuable business tool.

Downtown/Village Activity

Downtown events have great potential to stimulate economic activity—especially during the “shoulder seasons”. Festivals and events have historically been important in the Village. Capitalizing on these or similar traditions could act as draws to the downtown and help in generating revenue for local businesses. Signature annual events include:

- Snowmobile Drag Race (January)
- Asparagus Festival (May)
- Anchor Day (July)

- Hill Climb Revival (September)
- Hops & Harvest Festival (October)
- Artisan Market Place (November)

Many community activities are hosted and coordinated by non-profit groups in Empire such as the Empire Chamber of Commerce, the Empire Lions Club and the Empire Area Community Center (EACC). The Snowmobile Drag Race, The Asparagus Festival and the Hops and Harvest Festival are coordinated by the Chamber of Commerce. The Empire Lions host pancake breakfasts and chicken dinners as well as a very well attended auction in August. EACC coordinates Anchor Day and the Artisan Marketplace and, also, maintains an emergency fund to provide financial assistance to those that have fallen on hard times.

Arts and Culture

Arts and cultural opportunities are critical economic assets. The Empire Artisan Marketplace hosts skilled and talented workers. These creative workers are drawn to communities with a strong sense of place with a thriving arts-oriented culture. Leelanau County and the Northwest Michigan region are home to a large number of artists and others with creative talent that can be leveraged to enhance civic engagement, create a unique identity or brand, and support community image and beautification efforts.

Gateway Communities

The Village of Empire is what is known as a “gateway community:” a community that lies just outside a major tourist attraction like a national park. Tourism is an economic boon for these communities in general, and the Empire area is no exception: in 2017, nearly 1.7 million park visitors spent an estimated \$177 million in local gateway regions while visiting Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. This spending supported a total of 2,520 jobs, \$64.8 million in labor income, \$121 million in value added, and \$212 million in economic output in local gateway economies surrounding Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

Tourism can impact communities in many ways. Communities that attract large numbers of visitors are often more desirable places to live and do business. This desirability often increases land values—a desirable effect for land owners, and a deterrent to workers or families that are looking to move to the community but are no longer able to afford to do so.

High volumes of tourist activity can have environmental and infrastructure implications, as well—from noise, to water quality, to traffic concerns, and more, all of which can ultimately affect the integrity of the natural, cultural, scenic, and recreational resources that drew people to these places to begin with.

Other communities around the



Secret Garden on Front Street

country have looked at strategies to ensure a balance is achieved between accommodating and capitalizing on tourism activity, but also keeping their small town’s character and way of life intact for those that live there year-round. Examples of the way Empire balances tourism with keeping the small town character includes the Chamber of Commerce activities that expand the traditional tourist season by increasing marketing for activities for spring, fall and winter and offering services and program through local non-profits such as the Lions Club and Empire Area Community Center.

To address tourism needs and impacts, it’s important for the Village, neighboring communities, the National Parks Service and related agencies to collaborate and communicate regularly about shared priorities.

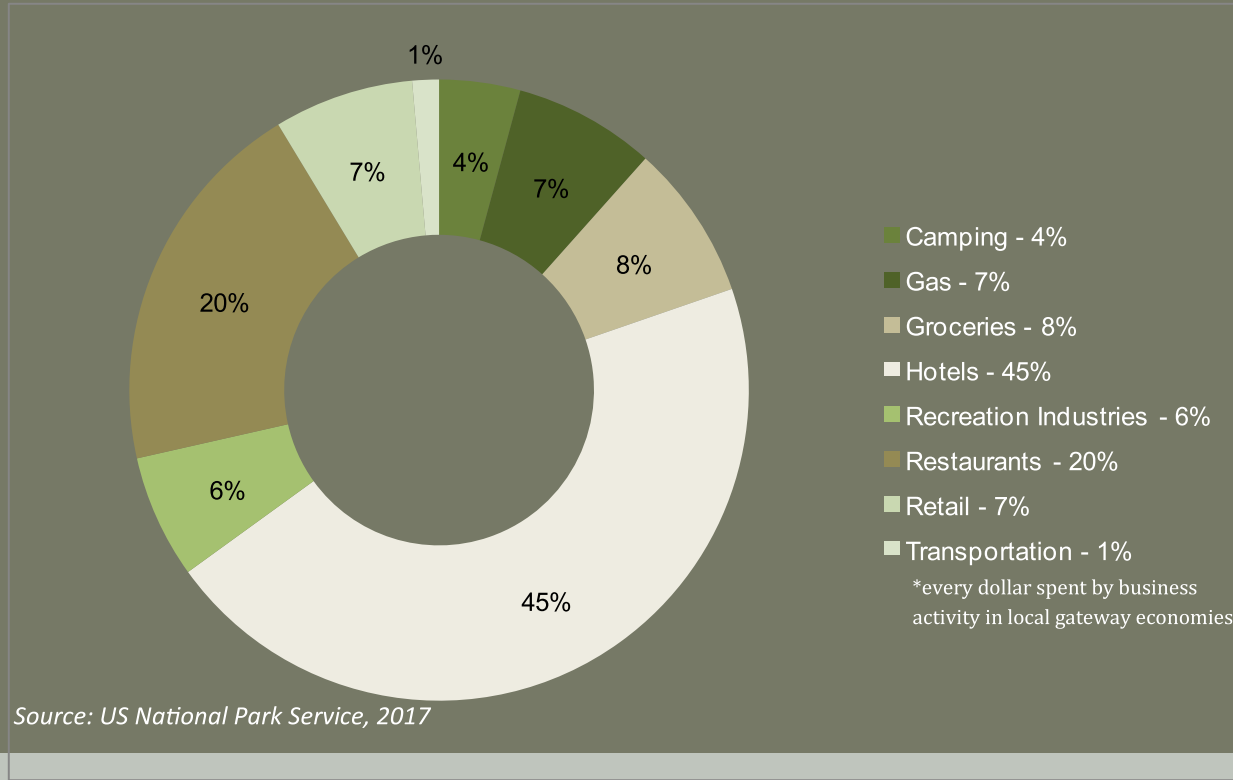
One approach to improved coordination between the Village, neighboring communities, the National Park Service, and related agencies is to convene discussions between communities and agencies through public forums to explore

common concerns and priorities. Forums can include a variety of opportunities for interaction and participation, emphasizing common elements of open communication, inclusion and collaboration.

The Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore has stated a commitment to working cooperatively with surrounding areas/communities to ensure there’s a harmonious and productive relationship.

Economic Impact of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

(Chart 1)



Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore Visitation

(Table 7)

	Total Visits	Coast Guard Station	Dune Climb	Stocking S. Drive	Esch Road	Platte River	Visitor Center
2017	1,678,126	33,287	130,735	153,448	34,580	88,895	236,555
2016	1,683,553	34,639	131,393	150,429	34,538	94,790	239,136
2015	1,535,633	28,185	122,888	134,900	30,646	89,327	218,952
2014	1,395,401	30,472	112,713	115,577	27,246	75,404	226,586
2013	1,340,007	29,896	93,696	117,008	30,448	84,512	207,180
2012	1,531,560	35,597	113,151	132,489	33,650	93,236	228,868
2011	1,348,304	30,999	96,738	113,400	28,726	83,482	196,945
2010	1,280,934	30,561	84,738	101,094	34,921	81,598	170,251

Source: US National Park Service, 2017

Chapter 5:

Current & Future Land Use

The Village contains approximately 600 acres of land area, not including South Bar Lake. Development patterns within the Village have been dictated in large part by its geography, bounded by water features, steep slopes, wetlands, and dunes. Forests cover steeply-sloped hillsides while wetland vegetation and lowland woods are found in lower elevations. With 3 cumulative miles of shoreline on Lake Michigan and South Bar Lake, lakefront homes are available along the shores of both Lake Michigan and South Bar Lake.

While many parts of the Village are currently developed, there nevertheless remains significant acreage that offers opportunities for new development that may be needed in the future to meet housing, economic, or service

needs. The future land use element of the Master Plan allocates land to take into account community socio-economic trends, real estate market factors, transportation, land use relationships, and community values. Consistent with the existing village character, this plan promotes the continuation of the mixed-use downtown area, provides for varied housing types, and highway commercial development. Recommendations are built through analysis of several types of maps and descriptions :

- The **existing land use map and descriptions** identify the current, “on the ground,” uses of properties within the Village. An understanding of existing land uses is needed to ensure that future development is compatible with the Village’s existing character,

environmental features, community needs, and vision and goals.

- **Zoning** identifies the permitted land uses for each geographic area in the Village. The zoning map shows what is allowed to occur legally on a parcel-by-parcel basis, *regardless* of the current existing use for that parcel.
- The **future land use map and descriptions** identify the preferred patterns of development and redevelopment and are based on the goals and objectives identified in the planning process. The future land use map is not intended to be parcel specific; future land use recommendations are intended to be used as a long-range (20+ years), general guide for

Empire Zoning Ordinance & Relation to the Master Plan

The Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance are closely connected, and both have important impacts on land use and development. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (PA 110 of 2006) requires zoning to be based on an adopted plan that is designed to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of all citizens. The master plan provides guidance for zoning decisions, including amendments to the text or the zoning map. As such, zoning is the method most commonly used to achieve master plan goals. However, it’s important to recognize that the Master Plan is only a guide, and cannot enforce where or how something is built. The Zoning Ordinance, on the other hand, is a **legally enforceable law** that regulates land and buildings, and establishes standards for development.

development patterns. Desired results are not expected to occur in the near future.

Through the Master Plan, zoning, and other policies, the Village of Empire intends to allow for reasonable growth to be accommodated with minimal land use conflicts or negative environmental impacts, while allowing for the continuation of existing commercial, residential, or recreational uses. To provide a context for these future land use decisions, this chapter includes descriptions of existing land use and neighborhood types found in the Village, issues and opportunities that have been identified for each use, and future land use descriptions and recommendations for the following districts:

- Residential
- Multiple-Family Residential
- Village Core—Mixed Use
- General Commercial
- Light Industrial
- Recreation/Conservation



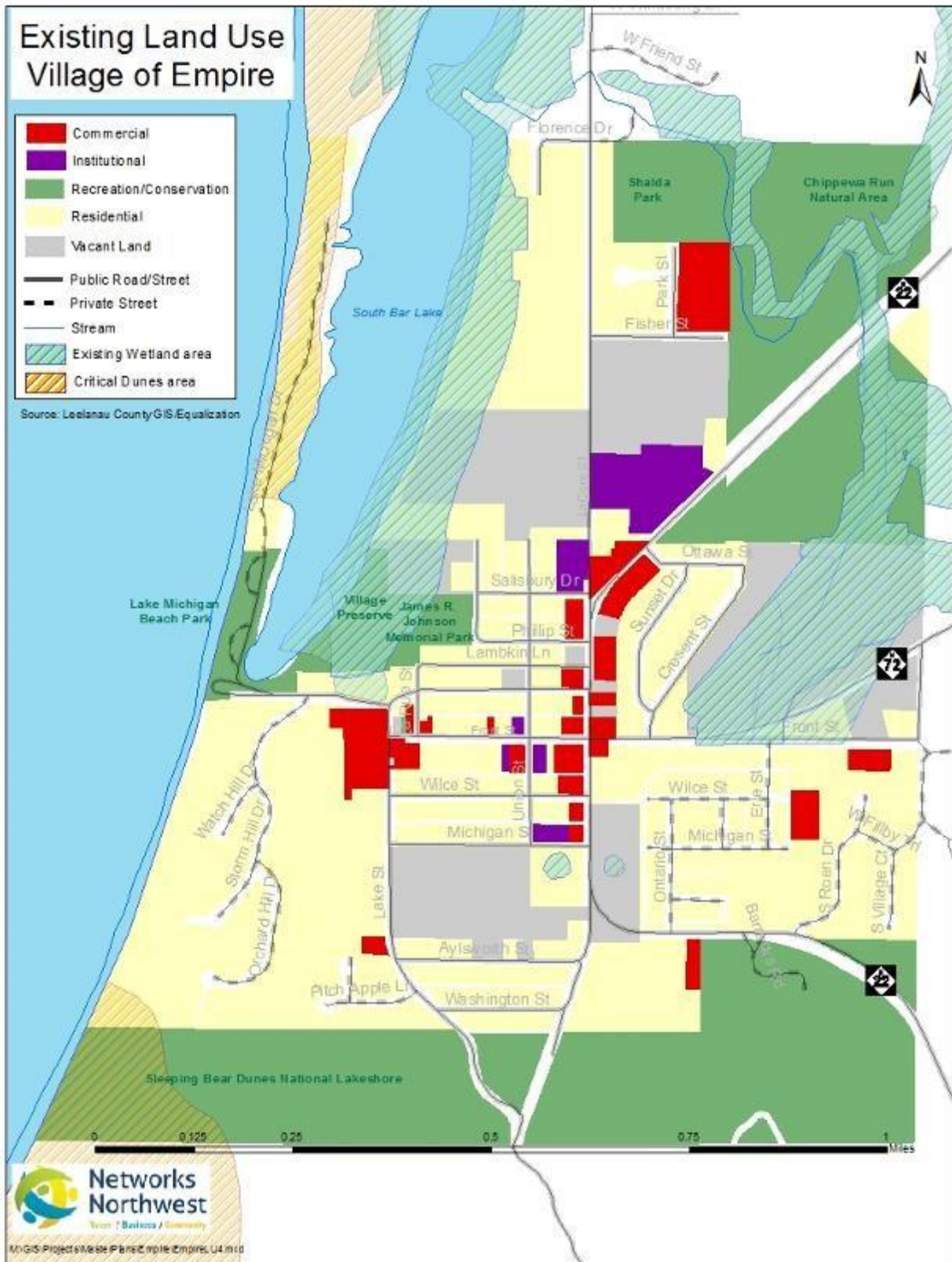
West Front Street

Map Notes:

Existing Land Use Map (p. 43 figure 2) and Future Land Use Map (p. 45 and figure 4): These maps are not intended to be used to determine the specific locations and jurisdictional boundaries of wetlands subject to regulations under Part 303, Wetlands Protection Act of Michigan Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 P.A. 451, as amended or Section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. Section 1344 *et seq.* Only an on-site wetland delineation as verified by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers shall be used for jurisdictional determinations.

Existing Land Use Map (Figure 2)

The existing land use map identifies the current, “on the ground,” uses of properties within the Village. An understanding of existing land uses is needed to ensure that future development is compatible with the Village’s existing character, environmental features, community needs, and vision and goals.



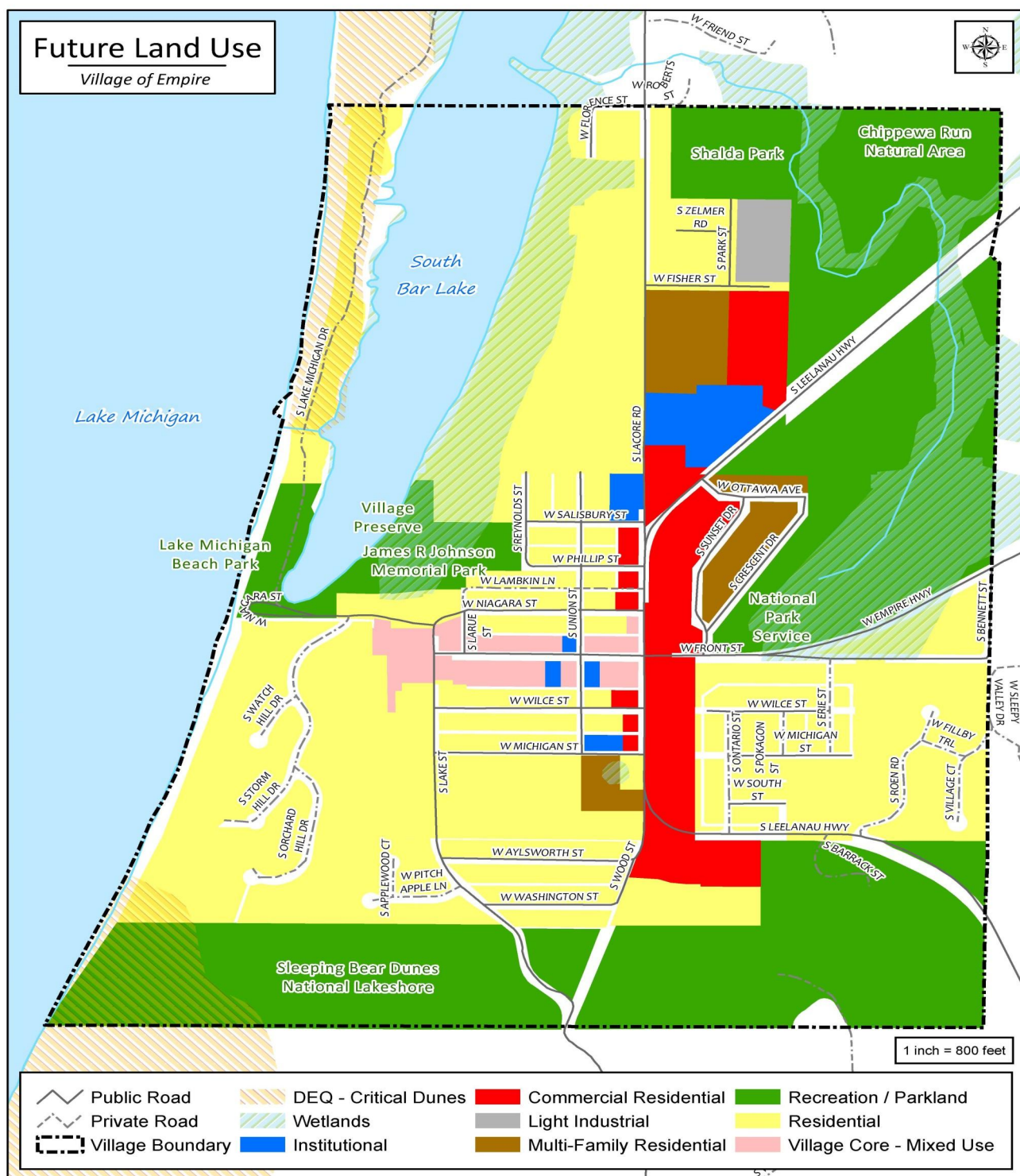
Zoning Map (figure 3)

Zoning identifies the permitted land uses for each geographic area in the Village. The zoning map shows what is allowed to occur legally on a parcel-by-parcel basis, *regardless* of the current existing use for that parcel.



Future Land Use Map (figure 4)

The **future land use map and descriptions** identify the preferred patterns of development and redevelopment, and are based on the goals and objectives identified in the planning process. The future land use map is not intended to be parcel specific; future land use recommendations are intended to be used as a long-range (20+ years), general guide for development patterns. Desired results are not expected to occur in the near future. (Map rendering by Leelanau County, Equalization Department).



This map is prepared by Leelanau County for reference purposes only. Leelanau County is not liable for any errors that may be found in this map.

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Residential

With 254 acres containing an estimated 347 dwelling units, about 42% of the Village’s land area is categorized as residential land use. Empire’s neighborhoods are primarily composed of single family detached homes mostly built around the mid-20th century, with more recently-constructed, large-lot homes located in the southwest sector of the Village (Storm Hill, Heritage Hills), near the dunes area, with New Neighborhood and Empire Hills subdivisions located in the southeast sector of the Village. The Beaver Creek residential development is located adjacent to the Sleeping Bear Visitors Center.

The average residential density of the Village is 1.37 units per acre. Existing residential lots vary in size from 50x125 feet lots in the Village core, to large lots on the east side of South Bar Lake ranging up to nearly 20 acres in size.

The Village’s size allows for residential areas to exist in close proximity to Village amenities such as parks, playgrounds, shopping, churches, and other services. Most of the housing stock is located in the Village residential neighborhoods on walkable streets with lower traffic volumes.

Zoning

There are five (5) zoning districts located within the Village that allow for residential use. These are General Residential (GR), Mixed

Residential (MR), Village Residential (VR), Planned Unit Development (PUD) and Commercial Residential (CR).

Housing Stock

The 2016 American Community Survey estimates that there are 347 housing units. 44% were owner-occupied, 13% were renter-occupied, and 36% were considered vacant for seasonal use.

Issues & Opportunities

Village character

Village neighborhoods feature a mix of historic homes and summer cottages that foster a distinct small-town feel. Throughout the 2018 Master Plan process, public input clearly emphasized the desire to retain the Village’s small-town character.

Housing Options

National trends toward shrinking household sizes mean that more housing units will be needed simply to maintain existing population levels—let alone to attract new residents, a workforce, or families, additional housing units. Given the Village population trends, there is likely to be a continued demand for housing. Demand may shift, however, from larger single family homes to smaller homes or multi-family homes as the population ages and household size continues



New residential construction in the Village Core

to shrink. Diverse senior housing types, including assisted living or skilled nursing facilities, might be needed for some parts of the population. Other approaches to senior housing allow seniors to “age in place” by ensuring that health care and social services are available and accessible to seniors locally and in their homes.

One way to accommodate this demand is through inclusion of “missing middle” housing types, such as duplexes, four-plexes, accessory dwelling units, or other medium-density housing types that are consistent with single family neighborhoods.

Other housing options that are important to the Village’s current and future population include “incremental” development types, that allow small-scale solutions in existing homes or neighborhoods. Converting single-family homes into two-family homes; allowing homeowners to rent out an extra bedroom; or accommodating boarding houses under certain

situations are all important approaches that can house diverse populations—in particular, the seasonal workforce that is critical to Empire’s tourist economy.

Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is defined as housing that costs 30% or less of a household’s income. Families or individuals that pay more than 30% of their income for housing are considered cost overburdened. When households are cost overburdened, they are at a higher risk of foreclosure or homelessness; or are more likely to move into substandard or overcrowded housing, which can have serious impacts on quality of life, school performance, and well-being. Multiple housing studies, including the 2014 Leelanau County Housing Target Market Analysis and the *Framework for Our Future*, have found significant shortages of housing that’s affordable to many parts of the County’s population. Potential Village actions that could address those shortages include measures that would streamline the zoning process; provide regulatory support for diverse housing options; and make land available for diverse housing types.

Seasonal Rentals

In a seasonal community with significant tourist activity like Empire, seasonal rentals are an important lodging option for visitors that come with both positive and negative community impacts. It’s important for the Village to continue its informed



Storm Hill Development—Original home of lumber company owner

monitoring of the impact of seasonal rentals on the Village and its resources. This may include a study of best practices as seasonal rental activity increases.

Future Land Use

Development Considerations

- Future development should consist of single – and two-family uses and accessory uses including accessory dwelling units, gardens, accessory structures, and home occupations.
- Multi-family dwellings and “missing middle” residential types, including conversions of single-family homes to multi-family homes, should be permitted when consistent with existing residential character.
- Diverse housing types and services for seniors should be allowed when impacts are mitigated. Adult foster care, assisted living, skilled nursing, and related health care services are all necessary to the aging population, and should be permitted when impacts are mitigated and design is

consistent/compatible with the Village’s character.

- Incremental housing options for the workforce, such as single-room rentals in single-family homes, or boarding houses, should be considered and allowed when uses are mitigated.
- Non-residential uses such as churches, parks, and daycare are also appropriate when traffic, noise, signage, and other impacts to adjacent use are limited.
- Sensitive environmental features should be protected, preserved, and enhanced.

Residential

The Residential district covers a significant portion of the Village’s land area, and is located throughout the Village. Current land use within this district includes both historic and recently-built single-family homes developed in a grid pattern, along with more recently developed residential areas and subdivisions such as Storm Hill, Empire Hills, and Beaver Creek. Additionally, institutional

uses such as Churches are included in this category as well.

Future Land Use Recommendations

The intent of the Residential District is to maintain the current residential character of the Village while providing new housing opportunities. Any infill and redevelopment should incorporate the specific dimensional and building characteristics of these neighborhoods.

While current infrastructure limitations impact development densities and types, the designated Residential District should be retained for low- and medium-density residential development, along with residential “in-fill” development near the downtown area on smaller pre-existing platted lots. District regulations should be flexible enough to encourage development that is varied in density, land coverage and lot sizes, yet compatible with community character and image. Residential types including various senior housing options, the missing middle, and incremental development types should also be considered when compatible with community character.

Properties located adjacent to South Bar Lake and Lake Michigan face some unique waterfront and environmental considerations, such as issues concerning critical dunes areas, protected species, wetlands, water quality and shoreline protection.

Multiple-Family Residential

The Multiple Family Residential District includes two primary areas: the northern half of the Village along LaCore/Fisher Streets, and between Michigan and Aylsworth Streets in the southern half of the Village. Both districts include vacant or developable property.

Future Land Use Recommendations

The multi-family residential development category is intended to accommodate a mix of housing types and densities, including single-family, two-family, and multiple-family dwellings, on lots varying in size. Higher density residential uses and missing middle housing types, such as apartments, townhouses, condominiums, and senior housing facilities, may be allowed.

Community uses such as parks, churches, schools, libraries, cemeteries, in-home occupations, health care and social services, and bed and breakfast facilities may also be allowed in this area if designed to be compatible with the residential setting.

Commercial/Light Industrial

Commercial uses consume 21.6 acres of land, primarily along Front Street, Lake Street, and the M-22 corridor. A large majority of the Village's commercial uses are located on M-22; however, West Front Street is the focal point of the Village, boasting a traditional downtown with businesses and residential uses. Some light industrial uses are found outside the Village's commercial and residential areas.



West Front Street - retail core

Zoning

There are three commercial zoning districts within the Village, including Village Core, General Commercial, and Light Industrial districts. Retail, service establishments, office space and other traditional commercial uses are permitted within these three districts. Special uses including, but not limited to, lodging, schools/clinics and open air businesses are permitted as special uses.

West Front Street

The commercial uses located along West Front Street comprise the “downtown” of the Village, and include a blend of residential and commercial uses. This district fosters a strong sense of community and encourages pedestrian access to residential neighborhoods and parks. Features include compact development, a density and arrangement of land uses which encourages pedestrian

activity, and a mix of residential and limited commercial land uses in successful co-existence.

M-22 Corridor

Basic services such as gas stations, financial institutions and medical facilities are located along the M-22 corridor. These uses serve both residents and visitors alike. Commercial development along M-22 is primarily pedestrian-oriented with accommodations in providing for safe auto-oriented access.

Light Industrial

The Village is home to a small light industrial area located at the northeast corner of Fisher and Park Street that includes a long-term storage and a food production facility, as well as large dumpsters available for public recycling. To date, no additional property is zoned Light Industrial.

Issues & Opportunities

Transportation Connections

Traffic along M-22 creates concerns for pedestrian safety, particularly in the summer months, when traffic levels and congestion are high. The intersection of M-22 and M-72 was upgraded, in recent years, to a four way stop and provides safer, marked pedestrian crosswalks.

Infrastructure

Any new commercial businesses are required to use a reserve field and a primary field in order to meet regulations of the Benzie-Leelanau Health Department for septic fields. This can limit options for commercial development. Commercial uses may, also, require further investigation to determine future utility infrastructure needs. This includes utilities such as



M-22 retail shops (south side of Empire)

electrical, water, natural gas, communications systems (including wi-fi), as well as roads and sidewalks. A lack of availability of these systems may limit options for commercial development or for design that meets Village priorities for walkability.

Future Land Use

Development Considerations

- Development should accommodate commercial uses designed to serve the shopping and service needs of pass through traffic as well as local residents and visitors.
- All uses permitted in the residential district, including single and two-family dwellings, multiple-family housing, senior housing, the missing middle, and incremental development types should be considered when uses are compatible with the Village’s character and uses are appropriately mitigated. Development should be consistent with

Empire’s historic character and existing building styles.

- Streetscapes and landscaping are encouraged.
- Parking should be located to the side or behind buildings, with on-street parking in front.
- Well-maintained sidewalks or other non-motorized transportation options should connect commercial uses to residential areas, parks, and other neighborhoods.
- Public uses or activities such as community events are encouraged.
- Sensitive environmental features should be protected, preserved, and enhanced.
- Light industrial use under Special Land Use Permit only.

Commercial Residential District

The Commercial Residential district includes properties along M-22. Land uses within this area include retail, office, and service uses, as well as institutional. Residential

uses should be incorporated or allowed. Buildings are one– to two-stories high, with parking located in front of or to the side of buildings.

Future Land Use Recommendations

The intent of the Commercial Residential District is to provide a variety of services and retail opportunities for residents and visitors within an environment that is safe for vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic. Consideration should be given to opportunities to incorporate residential development on the second floor of commercial buildings or in other areas within the district. Development in the district should be pedestrian-oriented and walkable with consistent streetscape/landscaping, and parking located to the side or rear of buildings. Design of buildings, signage, and other features should reflect the Village’s unique character.

Village Core-Mixed Use District

The Village Core-Mixed Use district includes properties along west Front Street. Land uses within this area include retail, office, service, and institutional uses. Buildings are one– to two-stories high, with minimal setbacks. Parking is located along the street.



Chippewa Run Natural Area

***Future Land Use
Recommendations***

The intent of the Village Core is to support and encourage the continuation of the mixed-use character of the district. A balanced blend of residential and commercial uses should be maintained along Front Street to preserve the small-town scale and character of the community. The Front Street area is appropriate for increased retail on the first floor, with residential above. As the balance of residential and commercial uses continues to evolve, issues such as parking, signs, and the overall character of the neighborhood should be continually monitored and addressed through zoning. Development in the district should be pedestrian-oriented with safe auto-oriented access.

Light Industrial

The Light Industrial district includes properties that are currently vacant or are home to agricultural processing/distribution activities.

***Future Land Use
Recommendations***

The intent of the Light Industrial district is to accommodate existing light industrial uses, and to encourage and provide opportunities for additional light industry, including wholesale and warehousing uses as well as activities like research laboratories, high-tech industries, light assembly operations, office space, and commercial uses that support light industrial activities. Activities should not create smoke, gas, odor, dust, noise, or other environmental impacts beyond the property. Impacts of any light industrial activities should be mitigated and shielded from surrounding properties. Development in the district should be designed with measures to ensure appropriate vehicular access, attractive building facades, and significant landscaping to shield impacts of any light industrial activities from surrounding properties.

Community Facilities, Services, and Public Land

A high quality of life and place depend in part on the availability of adequate and efficient community services. Well-maintained roads, parks, and public buildings support existing residents and pave the way for future investment and development.

Wetlands

The Village of Empire possesses three important wetland areas. These resources provide wildlife habitat, protect groundwater/drinking water, filter pollutants from surface runoff, possess recreational value and help in the prevention and mitigation of flooding. Wetlands are biologically rich and diverse places to observe plants and animals in their natural habitat.

Water/Wastewater

Empire is served with a public water system. A 100,000-gallon underground cement reservoir storage tank is located south of the Village on U.S. government property. Four wells presently service the community; an 80 gallon per minute well at the public beach, a 90 gallon per minute and a 105 gallon per minute well at Shalda Park, and 250 gallon per minute well along M-22 north. At present, each residence and business has its own private septic drain field to dispose of sewage, with the exception of the New Neighborhood which is served by

several small community septic systems.

Solid Waste

Solid waste is collected by private haulers and placed in Glen's Landfill in the Maple City area, a privately owned landfill. Community recycling dumpsters are located at the east end of Fisher Street to receive recyclable materials. This facility was funded by the Leelanau County recycling program.

Village Public/Quasi-Public Facilities

Over 250 acres of land are devoted to public/quasi-public facilities and open space properties. These include the Post Office, Glen Lake Community Library, Township Hall, Fire Department facilities, Public Works maintenance garage, Village Office, the Empire Area Historic Museum, the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (including a Visitor Center located on private property leased to the Federal Government), Village parklands and open space, as well as the natural area owned by the Leelanau Conservancy. The museum was established by the Empire Historic Society and is on land leased by Empire Township on LaCore.

Public Safety

The Leelanau County Sheriff's Department provides police protection for the Village. The Glen Lake Fire and Rescue Department

(GLFD), is a 24 hour a day, seven days a week service, staffed by a full-time chief and staff supplemented by a small contingent of part-time personnel. All Department members are certified Michigan firefighters and/officers and licensed as either paramedics (EMT-P) or basic emergency medical technicians (EMT-B). The Department operates from two stations: the Public Safety Building, located at 6401 W. State Street in Glen Arbor, is staffed full-time with one paramedic and three firefighter/ EMT-Bs; The Fire Station in Empire, located at 11350 LaCore, is staffed full-time with two firefighter/EMTs. Shift staffing is augmented during the peak, summer months and personnel and equipment from either or both stations will respond to calls separately or together, depending on the nature and location of each incident. The Fire and Rescue Department provides Advanced Life Support (ALS) medical services, including transport, fire fighting services, vehicle extrication, high angle rescue at the Dunes, search and rescue, plus newly added marine rescue and fire fighting for Glen Lake and Lake Michigan in coordination with the U.S. Coast Guard.

The National Park also responds to public safety situations including traffic enforcement.

Transportation

The historic center of Empire contains a grid-street pattern. While some anomalies exist, such as some narrower rights-of-ways and skewed road intersection angles, general traffic operates well in and around the Village as identified by the Village's recently adopted Transportation Plan.

State Highways M-22 and M-72 intersect at the corner of Front Street and LaCore Street. Highway M-22 provides the primary north and south access into the community and M-72 is the primary link to eastern Leelanau County and the Traverse City area to the east.

The official Act 51 street inventory shows 1.42 miles of major streets and with the recent addition of Lambkin Lane to the Village street network there are approximately 5.50 miles of local streets, along with 1.88 miles of State Highways within the Village. State Highway traffic counts have estimated average daily traffic (ADT) on the two State Highways. M-22 south of M-72 carries 1,400 ADT. M-22 north of town has an ADT of 2,200 trips. M-72 east of town has an ADT of 2,100.

The road right-of-way amounts to an estimated 21 acres of State Primary Highways, 35 acres in local streets, nine acres in major streets, and two acres in public alleys. In all, 67 acres or 13.7 percent of the Village area is space devoted to street right-of-way.



Village Office and Department of Public Works

Non-Motorized Transportation

A number of non-motorized transportation systems exist within and near the Village. In addition to a network of sidewalks within the Village, the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail, a multi-modal trail that extends through the National Park to Cleveland Township, includes a route through the Village. The Michigan Shore-to-Shore riding and hiking trail follows an abandoned railroad right-of-way to the east of the Village, with connections to and through the Village. The route uses the Niagara and Front Street right-of-way and the south side of M-72.

Public Transportation

The Village is served by a dial-a-ride bus system that makes five round trips daily between Empire and Traverse City. Bus service is provided by the Bay Area Transportation Authority (BATA), which serves Grand Traverse and Leelanau Counties.

Air Transportation

The William B. Bolton Airport is owned jointly by the Village of Empire and Empire Township. It is managed by the Empire Airport Authority, with representatives from both the Village and Township. The airport serves the general Empire area with hangars, runway lights, tie-downs, and an administrative building. The airport is located three miles east of the Village and two miles south on Benzonia Trail.

Commercial air service for the region is provided primarily by the Cherry Capital Airport, located in Traverse City.

Public Buildings

About nine (9) acres in the Village (1.5%) are categorized as institutional or public uses. The Village office and Department of Public Works is located on LaCore Street. The Empire Township Hall is located on Front Street, which provides important community



Johnson Park Pavilion (owned by the Empire Lions Club)

meeting and event space. Also located on Front Street is the Glen Lake Community Library, which is set to undergo a major expansion in 2019-2020. Other institutional uses include the Fire Hall, along with a number of churches.

Natural Areas and Parks

Despite its small size, the Village is home to a wealth of natural areas and parks, including:

- Chippewa Run Natural Area (Leelanau Conservancy)
- Johnson Park (Empire Lions Club)
- Lake Michigan Beach Park
- Shalda Park
- Village Nature Preserve
- Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (US National Park Service)

These parks and their amenities, along with goals and objectives for each park, are detailed in the Village of Empire Recreation Plan.

Sensitive environmental features such as the state-designated Critical Sand Dune Areas, the protected flora and fauna, the woodlands on the east side of South Bar Lake and in the northeast quarter of the Village, the dune west of Lake St., the Lake

Michigan shoreline beach and the steep, wooded hillsides to the south must be preserved to maintain the beauty of Empire’s natural setting.

Issues and Opportunities

Traffic and Pedestrian Safety

During the summer months, congestion occurs along the primary state highways and their major intersections. Traffic congestion and parking overflows or shortages result from the growing number of cars and recreational vehicles using the downtown and beach areas. As the National Park and Village experience increased visitation, pedestrian or non-motorized routes become more important.

Waste Water Infrastructure

The Village currently does not have a municipal (community) sanitary sewer system, which may be a limiting factor to commercial and some residential growth and development in the Village. The Village commissioned a formal waste water feasibility study in April of 2016 and a Village feasibility study committee was formed. Upon completion of this exploratory study, the Village Council held three review

sessions of the study in the fall of 2018. On October 23, 2018, the Village Council formally accepted the Waste Water Study from the committee and “unanimously agreed to be open to any person or organization who comes before the Council with a viable, well-considered plan to solving specific economic (commercial) or residential waster water issue”. Public input and Master Plan Committee discussions throughout the development of the 2019 Master Plan identified questions and issues related to a waste water system, including costs, impact on development and community support.

Future Land Use

Development Considerations

- Development should be consistent with Empire’s historic character and existing building styles.
- Sidewalks or other non-motorized transportation options should connect commercial uses to residential areas, parks, and other neighborhoods.
- Public uses or activities such as community events are encouraged—especially during the “shoulder seasons”.
- Sensitive environmental features should be protected, preserved, and enhanced.

Recreation/Parkland

The Recreation/Parkland district includes property in the northeast corner of the Village; along the southern Village boundary; and along the south end of South Bar Lake.

Future Land Use Recommendations

The Recreation/Parkland category is designed to accommodate existing recreation property, areas for future recreation use, or other sensitive resource areas. This land use category will allow for low-intensity recreation development, as well as low-density residential uses consistent with recreational and conservation uses.

The Recreation/Parkland category incorporates Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore property. This public property is a highly-valued asset for the residents, businesses, and visitors, and it is the Village's intention to work cooperatively with the Park Service. Also included in this category is the Village-owned beach/park on Lake Michigan, as well as Johnson Park and Shalda Park, and the Chippewa Run preserve, owned and protected by the Leelanau Conservancy.

Development in or use of the Recreation/Parkland land use category should be consistent with the Village's Recreation Plan goals, including the goal to "provide and maintain community and recreation lands and facilities for safe access and enjoyment by residents and visitors." Primary uses proposed in the Recreation/Parkland area include public and private forestry, wildlife habitat, parks and recreation, as well as similar open space uses. Secondary uses include low-density residential development.

Chapter 6:

Vision, Goals, & Objectives

One of the fundamental roles of a Master Plan is to provide a blueprint for the future, through the establishment of a vision, goals, and objectives. A vision is a long-term view of the community, while goals provide general direction and serve as a description of the desired future. They address issues and specific needs, but are broad in scope. Objectives are a tangible means of achieving goals.

The vision, goals and objectives in this chapter are intended to guide future development, policy initiatives, and other activities in a manner that reflects the community's values and priorities.



West Front Street retail shops

These goals were developed using the Master Plan Committee's and public input, previously adopted plans and studies, and analysis of

current conditions, as discussed in previous plan chapters.

Vision, Goals, Objectives, & Actions

In order to appropriately administer goals, objectives and strategies—and to ensure that progress is being made towards the community's vision—it's important to understand the roles of each and their relationship to each other.

- **A Vision** is a picture of where or what the community wants to be in the future.
- **Goals** provide general direction and serve as a description of the desired future. They address issues and specific needs, but are broad in scope.
- **Objectives** are a means of achieving goals, and are attainable.
- **Action Strategies** set forth the specifics necessary to accomplish objectives. One strategy might be used to accomplish multiple objectives; or an objective might require multiple strategies. Action strategies identify implementation tools (such as zoning changes) and the players involved in meeting goals and objectives.

Future Empire: Vision

The Village of Empire provides and preserves a quality of life for a diverse group of residents and businesses that reflects the Village's unique natural environment and small village atmosphere, while reflecting past history and our small village values, and to create a Village that is economically, environmentally and culturally sustainable.

View from Empire Bluff Trail



Goals & Objectives: Land Use & Development

Objective: Preserve and enhance unique community character and sense of place

Actions:

- Preserve the friendly, quiet and safe atmosphere found within the community
- Promote Empire as a walkable community.
- Explore modifications and amendment of the Village of Empire Commercial Residential (CR) Zoning District to separate, refine and enhance development standards within the Village commercial core, i.e., along Front Street and within the commercial corridor along M-22 Highway. A safe, pedestrian-oriented approach within the Village core and the safe pedestrian and vehicle-based transportation within the M-22 commercial corridor, and their connectivity, should guide this effort.
- Preserve the beauty of the natural environment and the vitality of the dune areas
- Protect water quality –both groundwater and surface water.
- Continue and expand community planting program.
- Promote the preservation and protection of historic sites, buildings and features in the Village.
- Encourage local community historic preservation and interpretations programs.
- Consider zoning changes to include design standards in line with the Village’s historic character and development patterns.
- Sensitive environmental resources including wetlands and water quality should be protected, preserved and enhanced.
- Consider options and MEDC Redevelopment Ready Communities best practices to make zoning more user-friendly and efficient.
- Continue to review and update the zoning ordinance as necessary.
- Continue to support testing and possible remediation of South Bar Lake and participate with the Leelanau County Clean Water Group.

Goals & Objectives: Housing

Objective: Provide for a range of housing types, sizes, and densities to ensure housing options for all incomes, ages, household sizes, and abilities conducive to the Village's small town character

Actions:

- Preserve the scale and character of existing established neighborhoods.
- Explore possible partnerships with employers in the area for housing affordable to the local workforce.
- Encourage Empire Township to explore multifamily housing implementation options.
- Maintain and enhance the mix of housing to meet the varied economic needs of the community.
- Explore zoning changes to allow additional or diverse housing types throughout the Village.
- Explore zoning options for assisted living facilities.
- Explore federal, state and local financial incentives for encouraging quality long-term rental opportunities for all income levels.
- Explore and evaluate seasonal rentals in the Village.

Goals & Objectives: Public Infrastructure

Objective: Maintain, improve, and expand the Village facilities including infrastructure consistent with the community needs.

Actions:

- Continue to review and update the Village adopted Capital Improvement Plan.
- Continue to examine the feasibility of implementing Village-wide infrastructure to address growth and encourage economic development including, but not limited to, waste water options, electrical, water, natural gas, communications systems (including wi-fi), roads, sidewalks, public washrooms and greenspaces.
- Promote continued cooperation between the Village and the Township on possible cost-savings initiatives.
- Explore the feasibility of burying utility lines village-wide.
- Explore the feasibility of implementing Village wide “green” technology (solar, wind, LED, etc).
- Explore and pursue opportunities to implement recommendations of the Village Transportation Plan.
- Consider the development of a Village Tree Maintenance Plan.
- Establish physical space to support community center activities and groups like the Empire Area Community Center.

Goals & Objectives: Intergovernmental Cooperation

Objective:

Work with surrounding communities; other local, state and federal agencies; and the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians to engage in sound cooperation where appropriate.

Actions:

- Explore forming a formal partnership with the National Park on issues such as workforce housing, transportation of visitors, enhancing accessibility, encouraging economic development, etc.
- Coordinate with other units of government as appropriate to address specific multi- jurisdictional issues as they arise, such as issues related to land use planning, recreation, public services, or transportation, including non-motorized pathways and connections.

Goals & Objectives: Economic Development

Objective: Promote Empire as an economically viable community which supports recreation, tourism, and small businesses.

Actions:

- Encourage the addition of grocery/convenience stores, entertainment/restaurant options and/or other basic commercial services.
- Continue to promote the Village as a tourist/recreation destination essential to the existing and future economy.
- Explore the possibility of establishing formal partnerships with the National Park Service and surrounding communities to address seasonal influx by identifying potential availability of services, such as housing and transportation, for the seasonal workforce.
- Consider zoning changes to promote consistent design for M-22 development that is consistent with Village character, and to preserve and enhance existing character along Front Street.
- Encourage compatible commercial design standards.
- Coordinate and communicate with various State agencies for grant opportunities specific to the Village's needs, including the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's (MEDC) Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) program.
- Pursue participation in the MEDC Redevelopment Ready Communities program to gain access to its experience and knowledge base, best practices, and financial assistance through grants and other funding opportunities in support of Village projects, goals, and vital assets.

Goals & Objectives: Community Character & Attractions

Objective: Maintain our unique community character for enjoyment by residents and visitors alike.

Actions:

- Continue to strive for high-quality maintenance of the beaches and parks as they are one of the most visited destinations in the Village.
- Market the Village as a “destination” by highlighting proximity and accessibility to the natural environment, including the National Park.
- Ensure the availability of ample green space measured against possible new development.
- Consider design guidelines, zoning regulations, and other policies that ensure growth or development is consistent with Village values and character.
- Continue to host and encourage events promoting the Village’s values and character.

Sleeping Bear Marathon—start and end at Empire Lake Michigan Park Beach



Goals & Objectives: Recreation Goal

See Village of Empire Recreation Plan - Appendix E

Chapter 7: Implementation

Zoning Plan

Zoning has traditionally been the primary means of implementation for most master plans. Further, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008) requires the Master Plan to include a zoning plan, showing how land use categories on the future land use map relate to the zoning map. The Future Land Use Map and district descriptions act as the Village of Empire Village Zoning Plan. The proposed land uses illustrated on the future land use plan map are a guide and not intended to indicate the precise boundary between uses. These uses could vary depending on how a specific proposal relates to existing uses and to the plan.

Many goals and objectives in the Master Plan can be addressed through continued administration and implementation of, or changes to, the Village Zoning Ordinance. The Village should review and evaluate existing regulations to determine where and if changes are needed to encourage or accommodate the desired intent of the future land use map. As part of this review, the Village should also explore the possibility of implementing or reviewing regulatory techniques, including form-based zoning, the refinement of commercial zoning regulations within the Village core and along



Empire Lake Michigan Beach Park

the M-22 corridor and planned unit developments (PUD), that allow for safe pedestrian pathways and for the community to protect public safety and preserve its most valued characteristics while allowing for new development and redevelopment in areas that represent opportunities for infill and redevelopment.

Rezoning and Conditional Rezoning

In many cases, current zoning allows for the use of properties in a way that is consistent with the intent of the Future Land Use Map. However, in some cases, rezoning may be needed to allow for the intended uses or development types of the Future Land Use Map.

Conditional zoning is a technique permitted in Michigan which allows a property owner to voluntarily attach conditions to a rezoning request. These conditions restrict the development of the property to that scenario proposed by the applicant, and must be offered by the applicant—not imposed by the local government. This technique may be useful in circumstances where possible impacts to adjacent uses are a concern.

Capital Improvements, Grants, and Spending

While many Village planning goals will be implemented through zoning or other policies, some projects or



Empire Industrial Zone

objectives will require local expenditures. Because some expenses or improvements may be eligible for grant funding, the Village should pursue grant opportunities as appropriate. Other, non-grant funded spending needs will be addressed in the Village budget, which is adopted annually and addresses expenditures for facilities, maintenance, staffing, and other administrative functions.

To aid in the budgeting process, the Village should maintain and update its capital improvements plan (CIP), which provides a blueprint for capital expenditures such as roads, utility improvements, parks, and heavy equipment. A CIP offers important budgeting guidance for Village assets, helps the Village use tax revenues efficiently, aids in administration, and supports grant applications.

Leadership and Public Input

The Village Council is elected every four years to represent the

community. Responsibilities include adopting plans and ordinances, setting tax rates, authorizing expenditures and borrowing, hiring administrative staff, providing oversight of public facilities, and other duties as necessary. The Council also appoints the Village Planning Commission, which is charged with development of plans and zoning ordinances, along with review of development proposals. Both elected and appointed leadership should attend regular training sessions on planning and zoning fundamentals, best practices, and emerging and innovative approaches to community development.

To ensure that the community is responsive to community and development needs while protecting the public health, safety, and welfare, the Village Council, Planning Commission, and staff should engage in regular, open communication with the community. Regular focus groups, public discussions, or other forum type opportunities should be

considered as a means to continuously obtain input and feedback. Pre-development meetings with property owners or developers should be available and encouraged to clarify ordinance requirements and approval procedures.

Partnerships and Citizen Engagement

While many of the plan’s objectives may be addressed through Village policies, ordinances, or other regulations, many of the goals and objectives will require strong partnerships with community stakeholders.

The plan recommends pursuing partnerships with local service clubs, schools, nonprofits, regional agencies, and other levels of government. Partnerships broaden the scope of available grant dollars and other revenue, encourage citizen engagement in community activities, and enhance staff capacities and efficiencies. Possible partners may include:

- Leelanau County
- Neighboring units of government
- Glen Lake Public Schools
- Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District
- Chamber of Commerce
- Networks Northwest
- SEEDS
- Leelanau Conservancy

- Friends of Sleeping Bear
- National Park Service
- Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency
- Northwestern Michigan College
- Michigan State Housing Development Authority
- Michigan Department of Transportation
- Michigan Economic Development Corporation
- Watershed Center

Partnerships with some of these organizations may provide volunteer capital to implement some small-scale community projects. Volunteer activities will be critical to building citizen engagement and community pride.

To ensure that partnerships are efficient and effective, the Village may wish to consider partnership agreements that clearly identify responsibilities, accountability, and length of commitment.

Plan Updates

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires that all plans be reviewed, and updated if necessary, every 5 years. While comprehensive updates may not occur as often as every 5 years, regular review of the plan and its objectives will be important to ensure that the plan and related ordinances are effective, whether the goals and objectives are being addressed, whether the plan’s policies are still relevant and appropriate, and which

objectives remain to be addressed.

During the plan review, several objectives should be identified and prioritized as an implementation schedule, in order to help focus the Planning Commission’s activity throughout the year.

The Recreation Plan should be reviewed and updated every five years, to ensure that goals are relevant and objectives are being addressed.

Provision of Municipal Services

The provision of municipal services, including water and sewer infrastructure, is one way that many communities address or achieve local plan objectives. While the Village of Empire provides municipal water, sanitary sewer services are not available. Because the lack of sewer services may limit options for new development and redevelopment, it’s important for the Village to consider the impacts, cost, and potential benefits of building a sewer system or

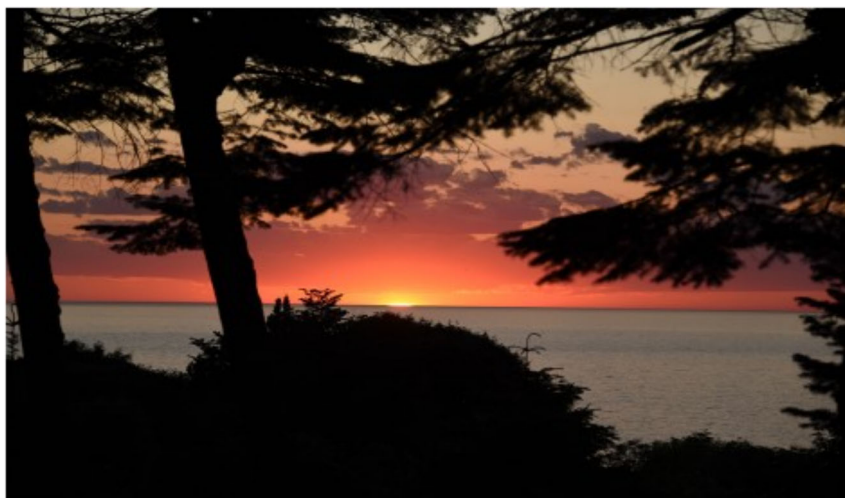
alternative sewer system options in the Village. Engineering studies and ongoing community discussions can help the Village explore these issues and determine whether, where, and how to expand infrastructure to accommodate new development or address Master Plan goals and objectives.

In addition, the Village will also consider providing assistance in street and other utility improvements within designated rights-of-way or in alternative rights-of-way, per the Village Transportation Plan. Typically, the Village will act as the vehicle to obtain grants and loans or will establish special assessment districts for financing such improvements.

Preservation of Village Character

The beauty, visual appearance, and historic characteristics shall be, to the extent possible, preserved in any implementation efforts.

The Empire Sunset

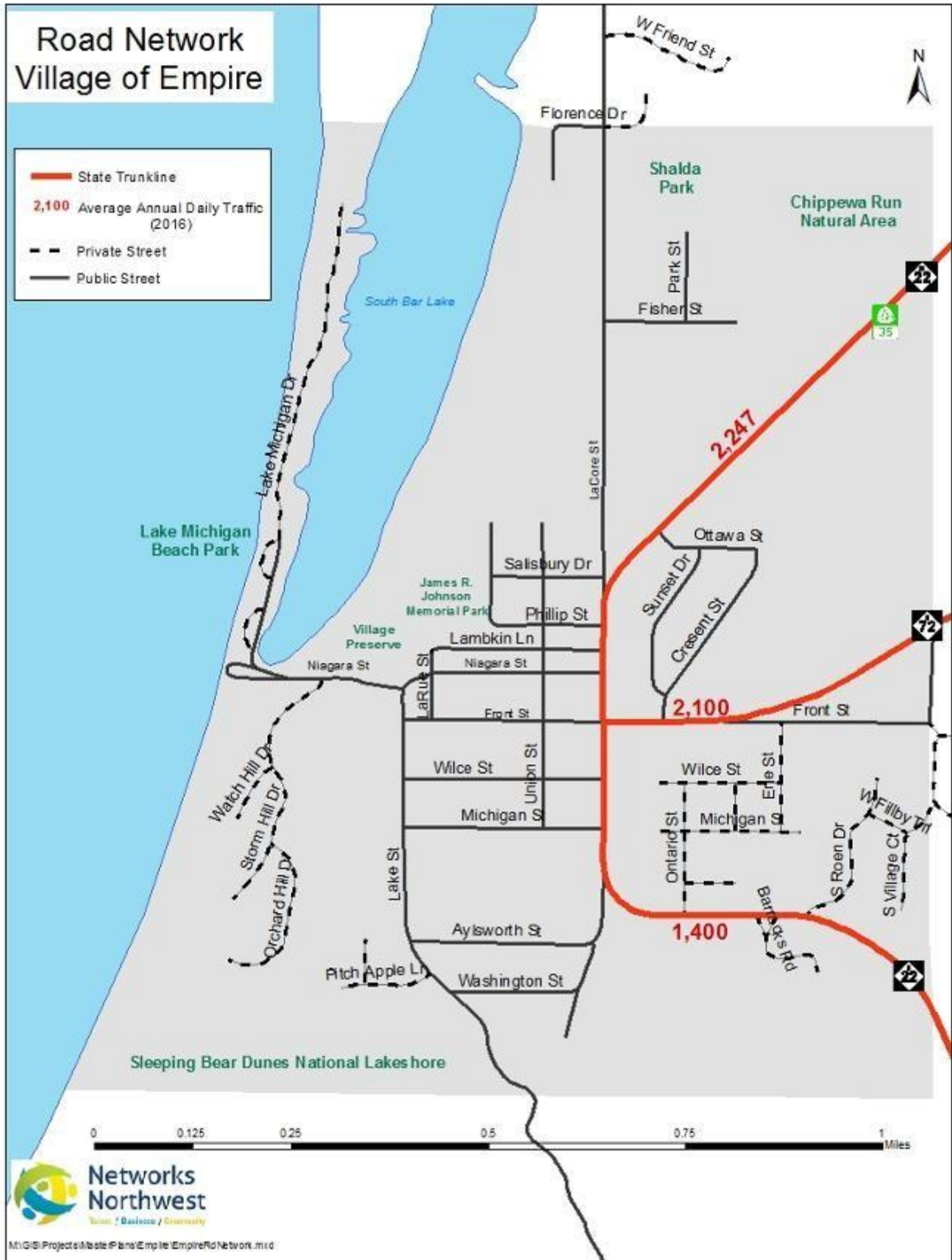


Appendix A

Leelanau County Endangered Species

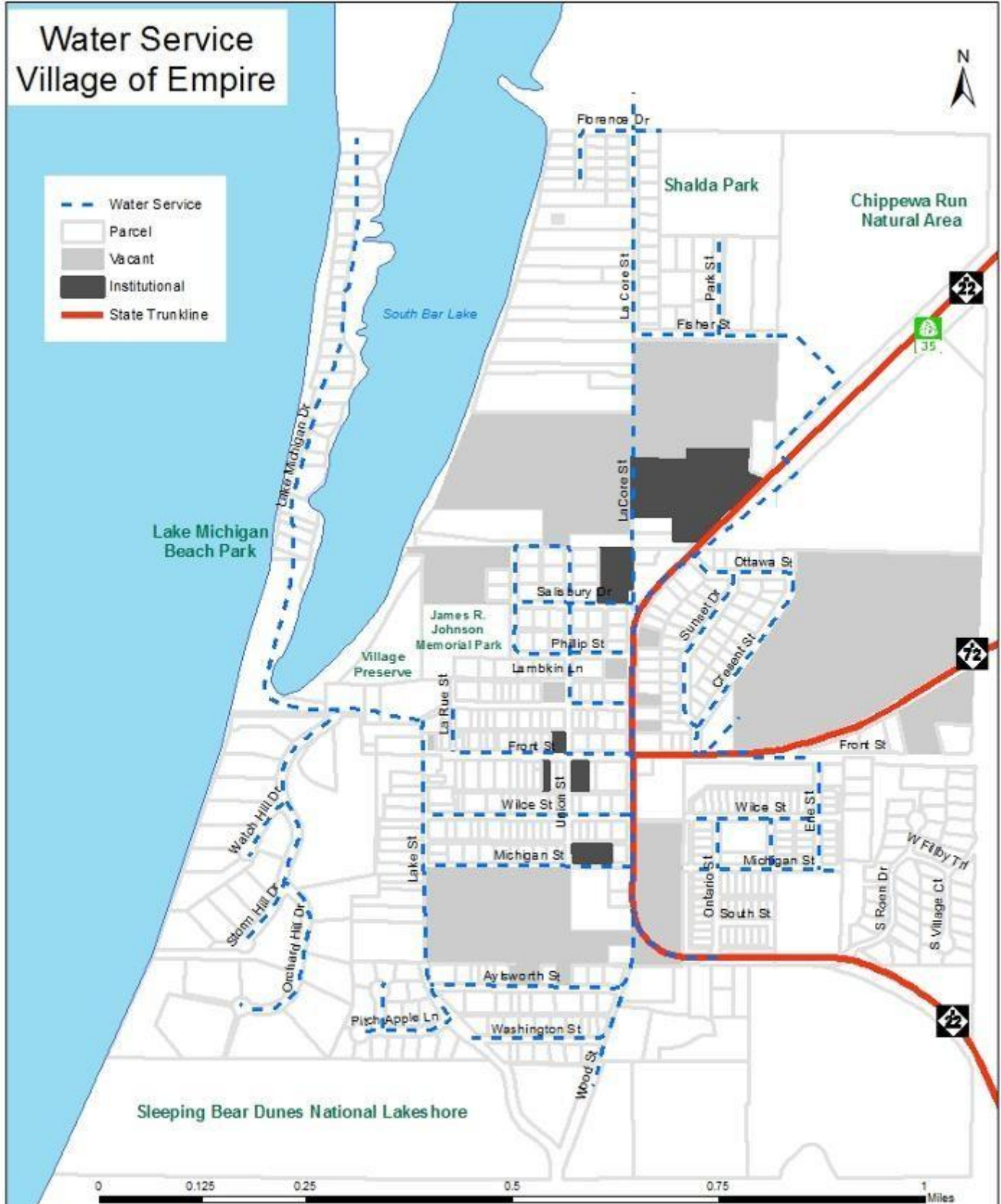
<u>Indiana bat</u> <i>(Myotis sodalis)</i>	Endangered	Summer habitat includes small to medium river and stream corridors with well developed riparian woods; woodlots within 1 to 3 miles of small to medium rivers and streams; and upland forests. Caves and mines as hibernacula.
<u>Northern long-eared bat</u> <i>(Myotis septentrionalis)</i>	Threatened	Hibernates in caves and mines - swarming in surrounding wooded areas in autumn. Roosts and forages in upland forests during spring and summer.
<u>Piping plover</u> <i>(Charadrius melodus)</i>	Endangered <u>Critical Habitat</u>	Beaches along shorelines of the Great Lakes
<u>Rufa Red Knot</u>	Threatened	Only actions that occur along coastal areas during the Red Knot migratory window of MAY 1 - SEPTEMBER 30
<u>Michigan monkey-flower</u> <i>(Mimulus michiganensis)</i>	Endangered	Soils saturated with cold flowing spring water; found along seepages, streams and lakeshores
<u>Pitcher's thistle</u> <i>(Cirsium pitcheri)</i>	Threatened	Stabilized dunes and blowout areas

Appendix B Infrastructure Maps



Water Service Village of Empire

-  Water Service
-  Parcel
-  Vacant
-  Institutional
-  State Trunkline



This map is intended for reference only and represents a geographical interpretation, NOT a formal survey.

Appendix C

2012 Master Plan Data

Table 1
Population Change (1940-2010)
 Village of Empire, Empire Township and Leelanau County

	1940	Percent Change 1940-50	1950	Percent Change 1950-60	1960	Percent Change 1960-70	1970	Percent Change 1970-80	1980	Percent Change 1980-90	1990	Percent Change 1990-00	2000	Percent Change 2000-10	2010
Village of Empire	266	-5.6	251	78.5	448	- 8.7	409	-15.6	345	2.9	355	6.5	378	-0.8	373
Empire Township (excluding Village)	325	-15.7	274	37.2	376	45.5	547	-16.6	456	10.3	503	40.6	707	14.4	809
Leelanau County	8,436	2.5	8,647	7.8	9,321	16.6	10,872	28.8	14,007	18.0	16,527	27.8	21,119	2.8	21,708

Note: Township populations, excluding the Village, are provided in parentheses; percent change is calculated for the entire Township, including Village portion.
 Source: Northwest Michigan Council of Governments

Table 2
Age Distribution
 Village of Empire, Leelanau County, State – 2000 and 2010

Age Group	Village of Empire				% Change 2000-2010	Leelanau County		State	
	2000		2010			2000	2010	2000	2010
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent		Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
0-4 years	8	2.1	18	4.8	125.0	5.1	4.3	6.8	6.0
5-17 years	51	13.5	32	8.5	-37.3	19.3	15.2	19.3	17.7
18-24 years	24	6.3	8	2.1	-66.7	5.7	5.7	9.4	9.9
25-44 years	73	19.3	63	16.8	-13.7	24.2	16.9	29.8	24.7
45-64 years	133	35.2	143	38.1	7.5	28.3	34.4	22.4	27.9
65 +	89	23.5	111	29.6	24.7	17.4	23.4	12.3	13.8
Total	378		375		-0.8				
Median Age	49.1		56.8			42.6	50.3	35.5	38.9

Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100 percent.
 Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Table 3
Seasonal Housing Characteristics
 Village of Empire, Empire Township, Leelanau County and State of Michigan - 2010

	Total Units	Seasonal Units	% Seasonal
Village of Empire	347	113	32.6
Empire Township	1,088	442	40.6
Leelanau County	14,935	4,681	31.3
State of Michigan	4,532,233	263,071	5.8

Source: US Census Bureau Census 2010

Appendix C

2012 Master Plan Data (continued)

Table 4 Value of Specified Owner-Occupied Housing Units Village of Empire – 2005-2009	
Housing Values	Percent of Units
Less than \$50,000	0.0
\$50,000 - 99,000	1.7
\$100,000 - 149,000	11.3
\$150,000 - 199,000	19.1
\$200,000 - 299,000	42.6
\$300,000 or more	25.2
Median Value	\$238,000
Source: US Census Bureau Community Survey (2005-2009)	

Table 5 Income Statistics Village of Empire, Empire Township, Leelanau County and State of Michigan (in 2009 inflation-adjusted dollars)				
	Number of Households			State of Michigan
	Village of Empire	Empire Township	Leelanau County	
Total Households	172	563	9,354	
Households Income Levels				
Less than \$10,000	30	44	449	
\$10,000 to \$14,999	13	18	299	
\$15,000 to \$24,999	22	34	1,098	
\$25,000 to \$34,999	23	105	1,064	
\$35,000 to \$49,999	40	124	1,436	
\$50,000 to \$74,999	6	95	1,789	
\$75,000 to \$99,999	18	57	1,258	
\$100,000 to \$149,999	14	36	1,169	
\$150,000 to \$199,999	6	33	366	
\$200,000 or more	0	17	426	
Median household income	32,045	43,973	54,451	\$ 48,700
Per capita income	28,000	35,109	31,874	\$ 25,172
Source: US Census Bureau Community Survey (2005-2009)				

Appendix C

2012 Master Plan Data (continued)

Table 6 Civilian Labor Force Comparisons and Unemployment Leelanau County and State of Michigan 2006-2010						
	Leelanau County			State of Michigan (in 1,000's)		
	2010	2008	2006	2010	2008	2006
Labor Force	10,769	11,234	11,628	4,790	4,936	5,068
Employed	9,684	10,544	11,048	4,193	4,519	4,719
Unemployed	1,085	690	580	597	416	350
Unemployment Rate %	10.1	6.1	5.0	12.5	8.4	6.9

Source: Office of Labor Market Information, Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget

Table 7 Employment by Industry 2009 Village and County				
Industry	Village of Empire		Leelanau County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining	0	0.0	430	4.4
Construction	20	15.3	1,065	10.9
Manufacturing	3	2.3	774	7.9
Wholesale trade	12	9.2	204	2.1
Retail trade	46	35.1	1,108	11.3
Transportation warehousing, and utilities	0	0.0	315	3.2
Information	3	2.3	163	1.7
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing	6	4.6	537	5.5
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	2	1.5	837	8.5
Educational, health, and social services	20	15.3	2,463	25.2
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services	11	8.4	1,279	13.1
Other services (except public administration)	6	4.6	406	4.1
Public administration	2	1.5	211	2.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Community Survey (2005-2009)

Appendix C

2012 Master Plan Data (continued)

Table 8

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore
Comparative Annual Public Use Data

Year	Total Visits	Coast Guard Station	Dune Climb	Stocking S. Drive	Esch Road	Platte River	Visitor Center
2011	1,348,304	30,999	96,738	113,400	28,726	83,482	196,945
2010	1,280,934	30,561	84,738	101,094	34,921	81,598	170,251
2009	1,165,836	27,297	81,320	94,853	28,321	73,686	158,982
2008	1,104,597	22,720	78,928	82,527	28,008	74,414	135,978
2007	1,134,312	21,986	83,315	78,837	31,798	79,363	133,421
2006	1,147,314	22,120	89,080	78,753	25,547	84,008	118,836
2005	1,218,410	22,466	92,593	89,278	25,547	86,708	117,032
2004	1,114,615	31,402	83,474	82,327	22,974	79,713	123,119
2003	1,153,962	26,307	83,645	84,297	25,022	80,037	137,780
2002	1,170,873	28,580	81,795	85,741	28,012	85,822	126,887
2001	1,127,107	32,549	73,796	82,265	25,007	81,035	125,577
2000	1,195,084	38,182	66,791	50,990	31,205	84,060	132,427
1999	1,364,834	30,274	93,149	90,316	35,683	114,088	134,808
1998	1,298,205	29,049	98,332	100,660	31,888	90,477	89,828
1997	1,157,616	25,745	92,287	89,846	23,764	77,566	71,028
1996	1,091,005	18,434	82,779	81,517	23,120	84,301	70,466
1995	1,151,957	24,958	83,345	97,282	23,477	79,213	73,278
1994	1,159,676	26,217	84,472	125,621	36,047	79,289	80,987

Source: U.S. National Park Service

Appendix D

Zoning Table—Schedule of Regulations

Section 4.09 Schedule of Regulations

Zoning District	District Name	Min. Lot Area		Max.Ht of Structure	Yard Setbacks					Min. space btwn Bldgs	Min. & Max. SF per D.U or Main bldg	Maximum Lot Coverage %
		Area (sq. ft)	Width (ft)		Feet (a)	Front (ft)	Min. Side (ft)	Min. Rear (ft)	Min. Alley			
GR	General Residential	12,500	100	35	20 min	10	10	10	20	20	900	25% (b)
MR	Mixed Residential	2 ac (c)	150	35	40 min	20	20	20 (d)	20	40	1 BR- 540/ DU 2 BR 700/DU	40% (b)
VR	Village Residential	6,250	50	35	10 min 20 max	5	10	10	---	10	750	50%
CR	Commercial Residential	5,000	50	35	5 min 20 max	0 (e) (f)	10 (f)	10	---	10 (g)	750	70%
LI	Light Industrial	1 acre	100	35	20 min	15 (f)	20	10	---	10	NA	60%
R/C	Recreation/Conservation	3 acres	300	35	10 min	10	20	20	20	20	900	10%
PUD	Planned Unit Development	See Article 7		See Article 7								

- a) Maximum height for an accessory building shall be 25 feet or the height of the primary structure, whichever is less.
- b) Existing 50' wide (or less) platted lots shall be permitted a maximum of 50 percent building coverage.
- c) A minimum of 8,700 square feet of lot area is required per dwelling unit.
- d) Minimum setback from an internal drive serving multiple family dwellings, shall be 10 feet.
- e) Minimum 0' side yard setback applies when a commercial use is adjacent to a commercial use, the setback is increased to 5' for a commercial use adjacent to a residential use, or for a residential use adjacent to another residential use.
- f) Except when adjacent to a different zoning district, the greater of the two district side setback standards applies.
- g) The minimum building spacing does not apply for the portion of a building utilizing the zero setback provision, provided a firewall is provided between buildings located on the property line.

Key: D.U. --Dwelling Unit sq. ft. --square feet ft. --feet