

# MARLETTE

## MASTER PLAN

2020



City of  
**MARLETTE**  
*Heart of the Thumb*

Technical Assistance was provided by Beckett & Raeder, Inc. through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's Project Rising Tide.



**PAGE 2**

**MARCH 2, 2020**

**CITY OF MARLETTE**

**Community Development Report**

Lisa Kenny was not in attendance; she did however provide Council with a typed report which was included in their packets.

**DPW Report**

There was not a DPW report given to Council.

**Communication from the Mayor**

Nothing to report.

**Council/Committee Reports**

The Park Board met since the last Council meeting. Scott Keys of Keys Construction attended the Park Board meeting to discuss plans for a new pool house. It is estimated the new construction would cost between \$150-200,000. The City was required by the Sanilac County Health Department last season to perform some renovations on the pool house to make it compliant with the health codes. It is anticipated the improvements will ensure the City will be able to keep the pool open to the public until the new pool house is able to be constructed.

There is a Personnel Committee meeting March 5<sup>th</sup> at 4:15 to narrow down the applicants for the DPW Supervisor position. The goal is to schedule interviews the week of March 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Police Chief Report**

Chief McGinnis stated that officer Malburg will be teaching CPR at the High School March 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Unfinished Business**

None

**New Business**

**A. Master Plan Adoption**

Manager Rudzis stated that the Planning Commission passed the Master Plan unanimously at its last meeting, and now it is going before Council for a vote.

**Motion by Cargill, supported by Bush to approve the new Master Plan. Motion carried.**

**B. Budget Amendments**

The Budget Amendments were not finished and could not be presented to Council.

**C. Processes for Delinquent Utility Accounts**

Council was presented with a rough draft of an Ordinance change to the process whereby the City collects utility payments and how it handles delinquent accounts. Rudzis stated he will continue to work with the Infrastructure Committee.

**D. Resolution #04/2020: Permanent Seal #43164 for Ballot Tabulator**

Clerk Lentz requested a Resolution to place a permanent seal on the modem port of the Dominion ballot tabulator.

Motion by Cargill, supported by Moshier to vote on the Resolution.

**Ayes: Moshier, Bush, Cargill, Wilson, Quade**

**Nays: None**

**Absent: Hunter**

**Abstain: None**

**Resolution passed.**

**Council Comments**

Mayor Cargill spoke about the recent contracting position between the City and Lisa Kenny as the Community Development Specialist. She will work for the City on a part time basis as an independent contractor.

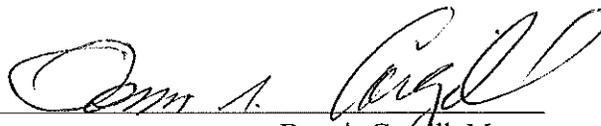
**Public Comments**

None

**Adjournment**

Motion by Bush, supported by Quade to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dennis Cargill, Mayor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Meranda Lentz, Clerk

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A special thanks to the following groups for their assistance in creating this Master Plan.

## Planning Commission

Lisa Volz, Chair  
Dan Edwards  
Shane Kady  
Marlene Wilson  
Tyler Hines  
Jerry Sauder  
Mike Kiley  
Sandra Cargill

## City Council

Dennis Cargill, Mayor\*  
Shane Hunter  
Dale Moshier  
Steve Quade  
Charlie Bush  
Pat Wilson  
Sandra Cargill

## City Staff

Ryan Rudzis, City Manager  
Lisa Kenny, Community Development Fellow  
Sarah Kady, Assessor

\*The Mayor also sits on the Planning Commission

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# BACKGROUND

# 1

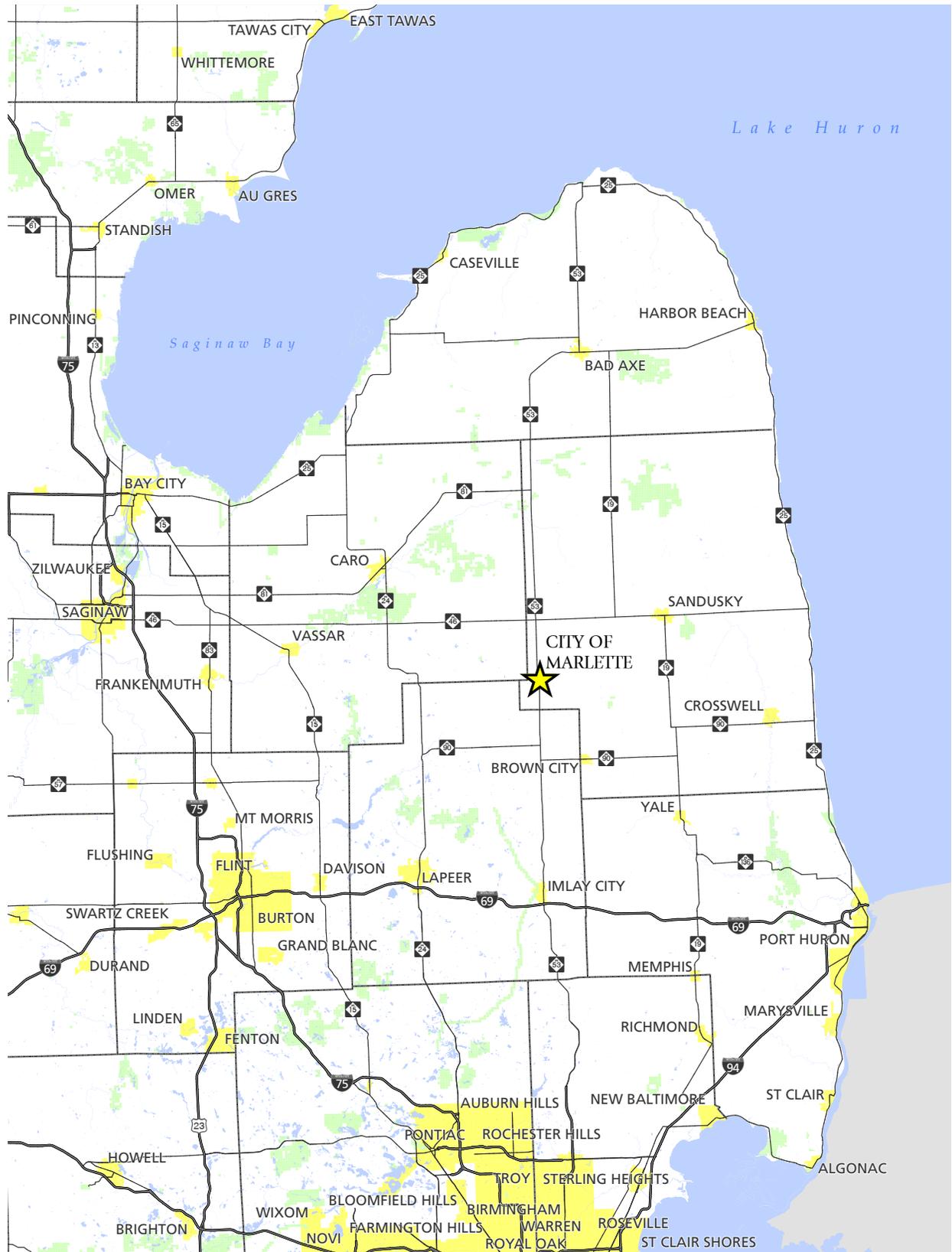
## WHAT IS A MASTER PLAN?

A Master Plan is a policy document for a city to use when faced with decision-making that affects the long-term well-being of its land, structures, and people. The Master Plan is an inventory of all the systems that comprise a city, such as its natural, transportation, infrastructure systems, to name just a few. The data collection process helps to determine if any trends have emerged that could be affecting the residents' quality of life and assesses the City's interrelated systems. Coupled with community engagement, a Master Plan compiles all of the findings to set goals and objectives, and to prioritize

improvements over time that fulfill the community's vision. The plan is only as valuable as it is relevant to city leaders, and for that reason, it is required by the State to be reviewed every five years. Broadly speaking, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act enables cities to adopt master plans because they serve to:

- » Guide the use of limited resources in an efficient manner,
- » Promote public health, safety, and general welfare,
- » Preserve the quality of the environment in the City, and
- » Guide future zoning decisions.

# MAP 1: REGIONAL LOCATION



## CITY OF MARLETTE MASTER PLAN Regional Location

Data Sources: State of Michigan Geographic Data Library, Michigan DNR Open Data Portal



Beckett & Raeder

The plan is designed to be comprehensive, future-oriented, and accessible to the public – after all, it reflects their aspirations for the place they call home. Its function is to help busy City officials not get swept up in short-term gains at the expense of long-term progress.

## REGIONAL CONTEXT

Marlette is located in the southwestern corner of Sanilac County in the geographic heart of Michigan's thumb region. Situated along M-53 (north-south) and close to M-46 (east-west), Marlette has easy access to its neighbors: Marlette Township and Koylton Township in Tuscola County to the northwest, and Burlington and Burnside Townships in Lapeer County to the west and south, respectively. Aside from its immediate neighbors, Marlette is not far from the county seat, Sandusky, and is also fortunately located within a short distance from Lake Huron for residents to take advantage of the recreational opportunities there. Just 20 miles south, I-69 provides access to travel across the

State; about 50 miles west, I-75 can take residents to the Upper Peninsula. In the region, the Marlette area is also known for its horse-drawn buggies, home-made baked goods, and furniture; there are 14 Amish businesses within a five-mile radius of the City.

## HISTORY

Most of Sanilac County was settled in the mid-1800s when the first settlers of European descent arrived in the eastern portion of the County, many from Ontario, Canada. By 1860, the nearby townships in the southern part of the County were being cleared for farming. The Port Huron - Northwest Railroad was established in Marlette in 1881, and shortly afterward, Marlette became a city in 1884, getting its start the way many settlements did, at the crossroads of industry and railroad lines. The City's name comes from Marlatt, carved on the end log of a shanty built across from the Rudd farm, located just north of the Marlette city limits. The legend is that the name was carved by two brothers, who along with their mother came from



*Depot Historical Museum*

Source: City of Marlette

Ontario to build a mill in the area but were unable to complete their plans and returned to Canada.

Due to its rich soil, the Marlette area produces corn, beans, and wheat, and is well known for its sugar beets. Sanilac County has experienced population pressure since the 1960s and has had to consider how protect its most productive farmland in the face of growing development demand.<sup>1</sup> Marlette, like many small cities in the Midwest and especially those in rural counties, has struggled to truly thrive as the economy transitioned from agriculture and industry to service-based jobs. In the middle of the 20th century, Marlette was home to several businesses that built and sold mobile homes. In 1956, it was known as the “Mobile Home Capital of the World” as three plants employed over 1,000 people. However, by the 1970s, the momentum for this industry lost steam when the founders of two major plants passed away and the companies folded.<sup>2</sup> With the loss of major employers, the stability of the local job market disappeared. However, Rising Tide, a state-wide initiative rooted in economic

development, is pulling together city stakeholders and state resources to reinvigorate the community’s dedication to Marlette.

The Rising Tide initiative, envisioned by Governor Snyder and implemented by the former Department of Talent and Economic Development (TED), provides at-risk communities with the necessary tools to design and build a successful economic framework. Marlette was selected based on the following criteria:

- » Poverty level
- » Unemployment level
- » Labor participation rate
- » Renter-occupied units
- » Vacancy rates
- » Households receiving SNAP benefits

As a part of the funding that was made available to Marlette through Rising Tide, the City has undertaken this Master Plan, a housing needs assessment, and property information packages for prioritized redevelopment sites.

TABLE 1: RISING TIDE PROJECTS

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION
Master Plan Update	An update to the 2014 Master Plan.
Housing Needs Assessment	A traditional supply and demand housing inventory to determine the numerical demand for owner and renter units and their respective price point.
Prioritized list of redevelopment sites	Identify redevelopment sites (vacant, abandoned, or underutilized) within the City. Prioritize three sites that have the potential to be redeveloped and then develop a vision for how the sites should be used.



source: Marlette History Society

## PLANNING EFFORTS

### 2014 Master Plan

The 2014 Master Plan found through community engagement that a strong majority of participants want to see more residential growth, and many are in favor of developing senior housing. Participants also wanted to see commercial development, particularly focused on decreasing the presence of abandoned or vacant buildings. Many of the goals align with the community's desires calling for the identification of sites suitable for senior housing and the provision of municipal amenities to support such development. The economic development goals focused on the downtown as well as on concentrating industrial uses on the south end of the City so that infrastructure is provided cost-effectively.

### 2012 DDA Development Plan

The Development Plan identifies two strategies: maintain existing infrastructure, and assist with private and public development to strengthen Marlette's economic base. The plan states that the DDA will help property owners within their boundaries through low-interest loans to improve building facades and when possible buy deteriorating buildings, renovate, and sell them. The DDA has focused on repairing parking lots but hopes to focus next on streetscaping efforts such as street signs and banners that create a nicer ambiance for visitors.

### 2018 Marlette Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Through the park and facility inventory conducted for this plan, Marlette determined where its facilities compared

to national standards and gauged the public's opinion on how their recreational needs were being met. In the short-term, the City will prioritize maintenance activities and replace play equipment that is out of compliance. Mid-term goals include more expensive improvements such as renovating the pool house, resurfacing projects, and developing a dog park. Connectivity appears in the longer-term goals with the hope of linking the school trail systems and city parks and, if possible, acquiring and developing more parkland.

### 2004-2024 Sanilac County Master Plan

At a larger scale, the County created general development recommendations that concentrate industry and residential uses to areas with adequate utilities and roadways, thereby preserving agricultural land. The County also wants to encourage farmers to use state programs that will help them keep their land. In step with the desire to preserve agriculture, the County intends to manage the natural resources by eliminating sources of pollution and reducing the need for landfills. In terms of economic development, promotion of tourism and tourist activities are at the center of the recommendations, but in thinking of the low wages attached to those jobs, the County wants to attract businesses that pay a "living standard" wage. The need to maintain its infrastructure and invest in future technologies like "smart grids" for wind energy are also recognized.

## SOURCES

- 1 Sanilac County Master Plan 2004-2024. Updated 2011.
- 2 Marlette History Society. Images: Millennium Edition. 1987.

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# DEMOGRAPHICS

## 2

### A PEOPLE-CENTERED APPROACH

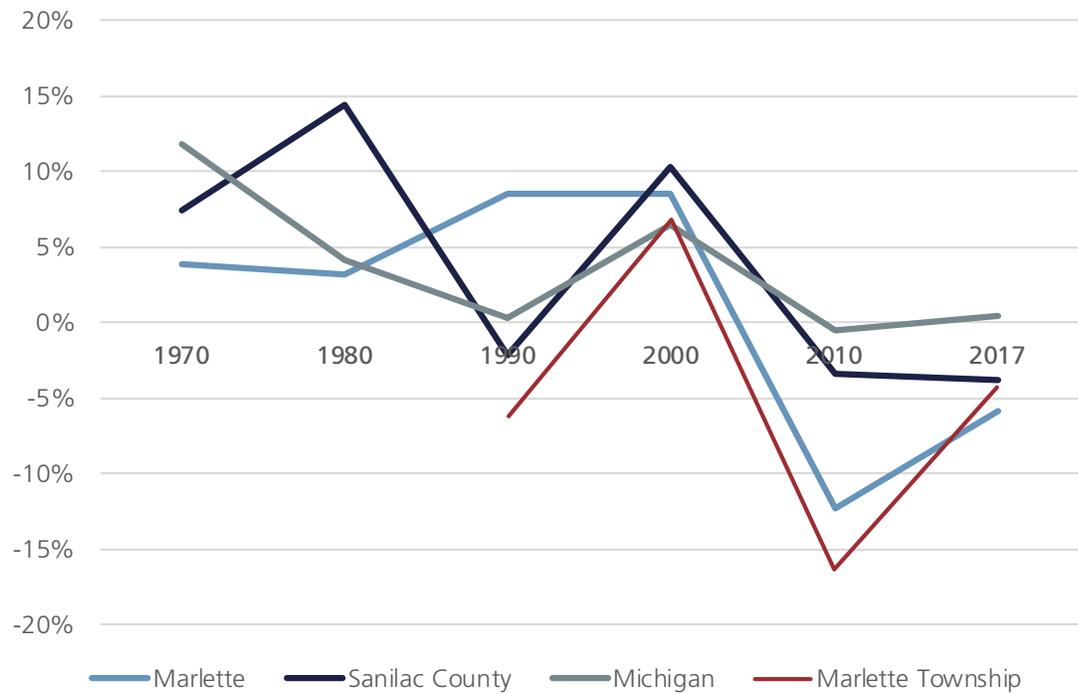
Community planning has traditionally been considered a discipline largely confined to land use. A cursory review of older plans confirms this. And, while land-use planning is important to improving residents' quality of life, an integrated approach that includes an understanding of demographic trends in addition to development trends will yield the best results for a municipality. It's the combination of the two that allows a city to tailor land use planning to the residents' needs and preferences. This section can be thought of as an inventory of residents' demographic characteristics—and how they may have changed, in terms of age, income, race,

educational attainment, since the last time a comprehensive look was taken.

The datasets used in this section have been taken from the following sources in this preferred order:

- » **2010 U.S. Census.** This is the gold standard for demographic data. It measures 100% of the population and offers comparable data points at regular intervals throughout most of the United States' developed history. However, available data is limited to population and housing information, and the ten-year interval between data points means it is rarely "fresh."
- » **American Community Survey.** The ACS program replaced the "long form" Census questions beginning in 2000, collecting the same types

FIGURE 1: POPULATION GROWTH OVER TIME



Source: Decennial census and 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates

of detailed information about social, economic, and housing conditions on a rolling basis instead of once per decade. Statistical validity of the ACS depends on sampling. In communities with populations of 65,000 or more, it is possible to gain a valid sample within twelve months, which the ACS calls a “one-year estimate.” For smaller communities, data is collected over the course of 60 months to achieve a valid sample size, called a “five-year estimate.” This system exposes the statistical tradeoff between the reliability gained by increasing sample size and the currency that is sacrificed in the time it takes to do so. The dataset used for this project was 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates

- » **ESRI Business Analyst.** This proprietary software presents privately generated market research data. In addition, it estimates Census and ACS data for geographic configurations other than Census-defined tracts, blocks, and places.

## Population

The last decennial census from 2010 reported that 1,875 people lived in the City, which was the first time Marlette had recorded a population loss since 1960. In one decade, 2000-2010, the City lost over 10% of its population. Known as the “Lost Decade” in Michigan, the recession began long before it hit the nation, and resulted in a net loss of people – the only state in the country to experience this during that period.<sup>1</sup> During that time, Sanilac County was one of the counties that took a hit, after decades of growth.

According to the 2017 ACS 5-Year estimates, a census survey that produces rolling averages in between the decennial census in smaller communities, shows that the City’s population has continued to shrink since 2010 but at a slower rate. Using the same estimates, Marlette Township is also shrinking. As of 2017, it had a population of 1,691, a drop from its population of 1,763 in 2010. Projecting five years in the future, by 2023 the City is expected to shrink, by

TABLE 2: LIFE STAGE COHORTS

LIFE STAGE	2010	2018	2023	% CHANGE, 2010-2023
Pre-school (Under 5)	6%	6%	5.6%	-8%
School-age (5-19)	22%	17%	19%	-14%
Young adult (20-34)	17%	19%	17%	-0.5%
Adult (35-64)	38%	38%	37%	-3.7%
Senior (65+)	17%	20%	22%	20%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst. Demographic and Income Profile.

about 50 people. In absolute terms, 50 is not a big number, but proportionally that is almost 3% of the total population. Understanding the probability of a further drop of city-dwellers can help Marlette plan for infrastructure and services more effectively for its future circumstance. Despite periods of growth and decline, Marlette and Sanilac County have remained racially homogeneous: 96% of the City and County identify as “white alone.”

### Age

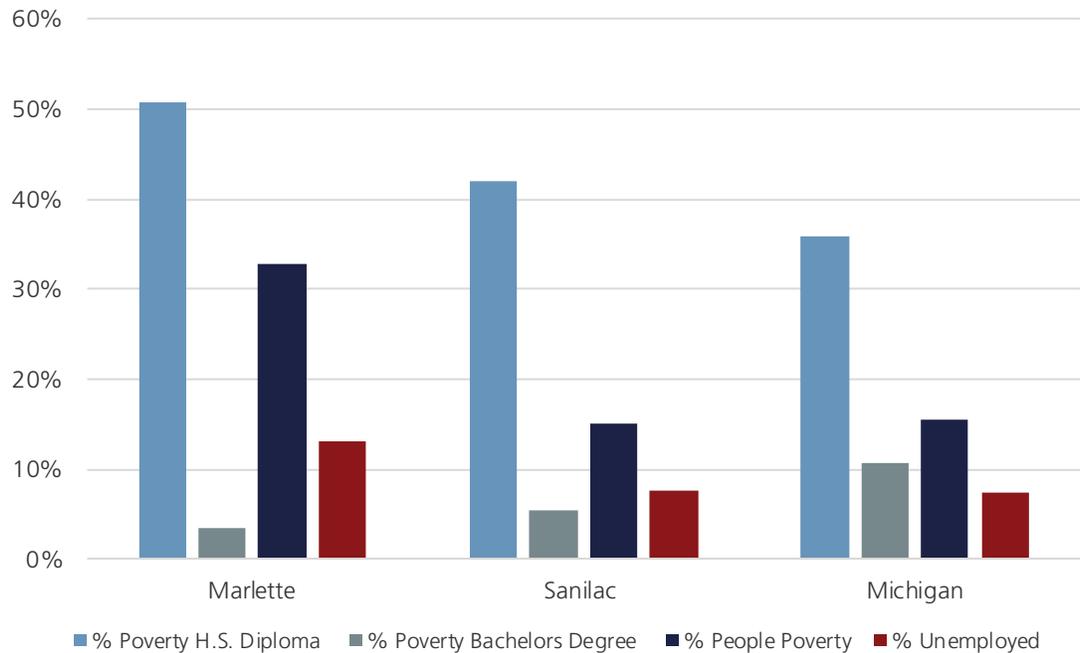
Age, or the life stage that a person falls into, influences how he/she experiences a city. Certainly, toddlers, teenagers, parents, and seniors don’t share all the same affinities, nor do they use all the same services at the same rate. The table “Life Stage Cohorts” points out that the only age group that is anticipated to grow in Marlette is seniors aged 65 or older. As of 2017, the median age was 44.8. The other life stages are expected to stay the same or decrease. The larger drop off in school-age children suggests that migration out of the City is tied to concerns over the local public education system. The data for the Marlette Community School district shows that in almost every grade level, between the school years 2013-2014 and 2018-2019, the enrollment numbers have decreased. Except for 12th grade where there was a boost, all the grades have seen substantial reductions, ranging from about 8 percentage points in 11th grade to 64 percentage points in 6th grade. There has been a recent uptick in

student enrollment by 50 students for the 2019-2020 school year. The Marlette Community School district serves a large geographic area including the City and Township of Marlette, and the following townships: Burlington, Burnside, Kingston, Koylton, Lamotte, Elmer, Moore, and Flynn.

Interestingly, the data for “young adults” indicates that they are not leaving in mass; in fact, a greater proportion is staying in the City after graduating high school than in 2010. However, it is projected that in five years this group will leave again at the same rate as in 2010, a year that symbolizes flight to places with greater perceived economic opportunity. It is still true that in comparison to the County, Marlette has a greater proportion of young adults, which could be boon for building a critical mass of youth.

The growth of senior citizens is also of note, particularly because they are likely to live on fixed incomes, need additional health care services, and may rely on transportation alternatives to personal vehicles. If all of these systems are not aligned to provide adequate accommodation and services, then their quality of life will dwindle and they could be precluded from being active members of the community. Another major difference is that while the disability rate for Marlette is high at 17%, 41% of them are aged 65 and over. Seniors disproportionately suffer from physical constraints that impede their ability to move freely to desired destinations.

FIGURE 2: POVERTY BY EDUCATION



Source: 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates

## Households

Types of households are also changing by generation. For example, while the majority of households are still considered “family” locally (60%), the presence of “nonfamily” households is growing. A family household is defined by the US Census as “any two or more people (not necessarily including a householder) residing together, and related by birth, marriage, or adoption.” “Nonfamily” households are made up of partners who live together but are not married, people living with non-related roommates, and those living alone. The 2017 ACS 5-year estimates calculate that 40% of households fall into this category, up from 37% in 2010. Many trends contribute to its growth: couples waiting to wed and cohabitating first, baby boomers living longer, and people of all ages living with unrelated people to share the cost of housing. The same shift is taking place at a larger scale in Sanilac County, Michigan, and the US. At the same time, the average household size has shrunk since 2010; then, it was 2.56 persons, but 2017 estimates reported an average household size of 2.37. The change in size is likely related to the growth of

nonfamily households, especially because it includes the number of people living alone.

## Socioeconomic Indicators

Educational attainment, employment, and income are highly correlated and highly determinant of a person’s economic stability. Unlike previous generations, the level of educational attainment has become an increasingly important factor in finding consistent, decent-paying work. To find a job, it is usually a prerequisite to have a high school diploma or equivalent. In 2017, 14% of Marlette residents aged 25 and older did not graduate from high school. This is only marginally higher than the County (12%), but considerably higher than the State (9.7%) and Marlette Township (9.6%). Marlette residents are on par with high school graduation rates when compared to the County but fall behind the State, which graduates 90% of the population over age 25, whereas the City graduates 86%. The disparity grows when the percentage of bachelor’s and professional degrees are compared. Only 13% of residents received four or more years of post-secondary education, which is less than

half of the 28% of students statewide with a bachelor or graduate degree.

The reason education matters for cities is because low levels of education typically correlate with lower wages, and low wages both complicate household financial positions and hinder the growth of the local economy. When residents make just enough to cover their immediate needs, little is left to invest or spend on local retail, entertainment, or services. Another way to gauge the effects of low educational attainment is the higher unemployment rates and poverty rates. In all the comparative geographies, someone with a high school diploma is between three to fifteen times more likely to live in poverty, than someone with a bachelor's degree, as can be seen in the chart "Poverty by Education." The main indicator of poverty is wage, but assistance is based on wage per household size. In 2017, the poverty guidelines were \$24,600 for a household of four and scales up or down about \$4,000 per person.

Perhaps with this in mind, the Sanilac Promise fund was recently created so that every student in the County will have a long-term savings account that can be used for college or trade school. It is

automatically created for kindergartners with a gifted sum of money through the Community Foundation that cannot be withdrawn until high school graduation. Various incentives, saving matches, and private deposits will help the fund grow throughout their childhood. It will take almost two decades to see the results of this endeavor, but other cities in the State with a head start have seen significant increases in college enrollment. There are several intermediate steps in between high school and a four-year university and already one-quarter of high school graduates are earning associate's degrees. This has a big impact on a student's employment prospects: the poverty rate of someone with an associate's degree is half that of a high school graduate, although still high (25% vs. 50%, respectively).

The data used in the figure "Poverty by Education" is from 2017; since then, the unemployment rates have continued to drop to 5.5% in Sanilac County and 4.0% for the State of Michigan. Unemployment rates at the city level are not readily available and are self-reported through the census, so the numbers in this figure may have changed to be even lower.



*Marlette Players*  
Source: City of Marlette

## Employment

The median household income is \$31,964 in Marlette. This is a sizeable drop compared to the 2010 census, when the median household income was \$36,750. Considering that the price of most goods and services has risen in that period, the loss of purchasing power is greater than the \$5,000 difference indicates. For those that live on their own, the situation is even worse: the per capita income is \$18,331, ranging from \$5,000 to \$10,000 less than the County and State, respectively. In Marlette, 43% of households earn less than \$24,999 per year, which is a significantly higher proportion than all of the other geographies.

The table “Employment Sector and Median Incomes” shows that of the 13 employment sectors that the Census keeps track of, Marlette workers earn a lower median income than the countywide median for eight of them. The lower median wages help explain why the rates of poverty are higher in the

City. Aside from construction and public administration, which offer much higher incomes on average than the median household income, only manufacturing and transportation/warehousing offer an income that is marginally close to \$31,964. Looking at the numbers, it makes sense that a young person who can make close to the median household income out of high school or with relatively little training would make the tradeoff for a seemingly high wage over investing time and money to potentially earn more later.

In terms of the percentage of people employed, manufacturing has grown substantially since 2010, from 16% working in this sector to 30% in 2017. Many of the other sectors have remained largely the same except for “education and healthcare” which took a large hit. The sector employed 37% of Marlette workers in 2010 and just 24% in 2017. This is an interesting turn of events where the trend nationally is a shrinking manufacturing sector and a growing “eds and meds” industry. The two sectors

TABLE 3: EMPLOYMENT SECTOR AND MEDIAN INCOMES

SECTOR	SANILAC COUNTY			MARLETTE		
	2017	2010 MEDIAN INCOME	2017 MEDIAN INCOME	2017	2010 MEDIAN INCOME	2017 MEDIAN INCOME
Agriculture, forestry, mining	8.9%	\$26,672	\$27,126	2.3%	\$--	\$24,074
Construction	6.4%	\$35,313	\$37,070	3.7%	\$7,321	\$54,583
Manufacturing	23.3%	\$32,277	\$36,593	29.5%	\$46,250	\$31,058
Wholesale trade	1.6%	\$24,940	\$33,194	0.8%	\$--	\$--
Retail	12.1%	\$17,462	\$17,943	12.4%	\$14,208	\$16,161
Transportation/warehousing	4.5%	\$40,690	\$46,161	4.0%	\$19,000	\$31,563
Information	1.2%	\$23,750	\$14,167	0.0%	\$--	\$--
Finance, insurance, real estate	3.5%	\$28,140	\$31,458	3.4%	\$32,500	\$24,821
Professional, scientific, management	4.7%	\$30,891	\$29,474	3.8%	\$32,083	\$22,500
Education and health care	19.2%	\$26,290	\$27,044	24.0%	\$30,147	\$27,500
Arts, entertainment recreation	6.0%	\$10,071	\$10,406	9.6%	\$5,972	\$6,897
Other services (not public)	4.5%	\$18,361	\$20,885	5.5%	\$15,750	\$11,071
Public administration	3.9%	\$40,625	\$43,500	1.0%	\$40,658	\$51,250

Source: 2010 ACS 5-Year Estimates & 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates

\*“\$--” indicates that there was no data available.

employ 54% of Marlette workers which represents a potentially consequential over-reliance on these two industries. A resilient economy is one that can rebound quickly, and if in a future recession, these two sectors were to contract, a large proportion of workers would be negatively affected. An economy can recover more quickly when it has a diverse base of employment options for its residents, which can be more difficult to achieve in a rural setting. The upshot is that as younger generations choose “place” first and “job” second, Marlette’s youth could plug into many employment sectors remotely if they wanted to stay in the City, even if the jobs there were looking for were not available locally.

Jobs that require skilled trades or professional training less than a four-year college degree comprise a large proportion of the jobs in Marlette, with its manufacturing and healthcare employers. In March 2019, the State of Michigan Bureau of Labor Market Information inventoried job postings throughout the thumb region. It found that 60% of formal advertisements required either an associate’s degree, vocational training, or at least a high school education.<sup>3</sup> Although the US Census does not track individuals with skilled trades credentials, these residents are recorded as having either “some college, no degree” or an “associate’s degree.” In 2017, about one third (32%) of Marlette’s adult population had attained one of these two levels of education.<sup>4</sup> This is advantageous because it suggests that many residents are at least minimally qualified for types of employment available in the region.

Further, several types of vocational professions are forecasted to grow in the Thumb, including nurses and nursing assistants, and food preparation workers.<sup>5</sup>

Marlette Regional Hospital has recently signed a purchase agreement on a large parcel of land adjacent to the hospital for the primary purpose of establishing an integrated senior living community. An integrated senior living community would include independent living, assisted living, and memory care units. Independent living is ideal for seniors who can live alone but would benefit from a community setting where residents have access to dining, activities, entertainment, outings and more. Residents enjoy the independent, maintenance-free lifestyle they want. Independent living is optimal for active seniors who take comfort in knowing they have access to assistance when needed. If the need arises, healthcare services are right next door. Assisted living communities (ALCs) and memory care units are designed for seniors who have had a slight decline in health but do not require nursing home level care. Residents retain their personal space in private, apartment-like suites while still enjoying the benefits of living in a safe, supportive, and social community. Care and support services generally include professionally trained staff available 24/7, nutritious meals and housekeeping, medication reminders/dispensing, assistance with one or more activities of daily living (bathing, grooming, dressing), social activities aimed at creating a sense of purpose, and improving physical and emotional well-being.

## SOURCES

- 1 MIPlace. Module 2. “The Economics of Place.” May 2013.
- 2 US Census Bureau. Current Population Survey. Subject Definitions. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/technical-documentation/subject-definitions.html#familyhousehold>
- 3 Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives. Real-Time Labor Demand: Prosperity Region 6
- 4 American Community Survey 2017 5-year estimates. DP02
- 5 Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives. Real-Time Labor Demand: Prosperity Region 6

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# HOUSING

## 3

A major concern for communities in Michigan’s “Thumb” is that the housing stock does not match residents’ preferences and price points. As a result, the housing market negatively affects the communities’ local workforce. In July 2019, a Housing Needs Assessment was published for the Marlette area by Community Research Services, LLC. The report evaluated how well Marlette’s housing stock matches current and forecasted housing demand. Because the housing market for Marlette area workers crosses the boundaries of the City itself, the analysis included the City of Marlette and the four surrounding Townships, known as the primary market:

- » City of Marlette
- » Marlette Township
- » Koylton Township (Tuscola County)
- » Burlington Township (Lapeer County)

In these four geographies, the needs and preferences of two important “target markets” of potential housing seekers were examined. The following two demographic groups are predicted to seek new housing in the area over subsequent decades, based on employment and migration patterns: workforce housing and mixed-income rentals.

TABLE 4: FORECASTED DESIRED OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING

Targeted demographics	Couples / small families of all ages
Targeted incomes	\$35,000-\$75,000
Occupation	Some degree of specialized training/education
Project Type	Single-family or duplex with attached garage
Unit Mix	3 bedrooms / 2 bathrooms structures
Preliminary pricing	\$150,000-\$225,000
Amenities	Commensurate with modern owner-occupied housing found across the community

Source: Community Research Services, LLC A Housing Market Analysis of Marlette, MI

## OWNER-OCCUPIED WORKFORCE HOUSING

### Target Market Characteristics

Retaining and attracting new families and workers is a concern in many Michigan communities. Maintaining a workforce that lives in the community facilitates the growth of new industries and encourages workers to spend time and money locally. The “target market” of workers likely to purchase a home in Marlette is forecasted as a mix of singles, couples, and young families earning moderate annual incomes, looking for a three-bedroom house priced between \$150,000 and \$225,000 with modern amenities. Information on homes for sale in the market area, however, shows that the community’s existing housing does not match new workers’ forecasted demand, potentially causing them to reside elsewhere.

### Lack of Homeownership Options for the Workforce

Recent data on homes for sale in the market area shows an insufficient number of homes available in new workers’ desired price range, with large shares falling below the preferred range. During the six-months before July 2019, a small supply of 20 homes in Marlette and the

adjacent Townships were listed for sale on Realtor.com.<sup>1</sup> Of these available homes, about one-third (35%) were priced at or below \$100,000, with most of the rest priced between \$100,000 and \$200,000. The median listing price among three-bedroom homes (\$115,400) was well below workers’ forecasted price points, while the average price (\$163,895) was at the low end of the range. In July 2019, only one housing unit was listed as “recently sold,” which further shows a supply and demand mismatch. The housing unit was a three-bedroom home with 1,300 square feet, which sold for \$110,000, and was listed for only 31 days.<sup>2</sup>

Although it is an asset to have lower-cost ownership options, low housing values can be a reflection of low-quality, outdated housing stock that lacks desired amenities. In the years preceding 2019, much of the City of Marlette’s single-story owner-occupied residences were converted into multi-family dwelling units. In 2017, almost half of Marlette households (46%) were renter-occupied.<sup>3</sup> This trend was compounded by a lack of new construction; Marlette and its adjacent townships experienced almost no new housing built between 2010 and 2019. The combination of these two forces removed homeownership options from the market.

Importantly, Marlette and the surrounding communities have a “regional” workforce, where workers commute between jurisdictions to meet their housing and work needs, even if it means living further from their jobs.<sup>4</sup> In 2016, Sanilac County lost an estimated 294 residents to other geographies annually, and limited housing options may be a contributing factor.<sup>5</sup> If Marlette does not “capture” new households by providing diverse housing, problems such as declining tax base, reduced incomes, and lower spending power among the community’s aging population could become prominent by the early 2030s.<sup>6</sup>

In order to capture these target markets, Marlette should consider the expansion of “alternative” housing formats that could bring the cost per unit down. “Missing Middle” housing refers to the spectrum of housing options between a single-family detached house with a yard and a high-rise apartment building. The options in between are varied and have the potential to better suit residents’ needs throughout their life, for example, an apartment downtown for a high school graduate, a townhome for a young professional, a single-family for a couple raising children, and a condominium for empty-nesters. This range of housing can accommodate different income levels, abilities, and ages so that residents can live in Marlette through all of these common life stages.

## Employer-Assisted Housing Programs

The success of local employers depends heavily on the availability of the local workforce, and a sufficient supply of appropriate housing could help ensure that workers live locally. Employers would also experience the benefits of a locally residing and committed workforce by directly sponsoring homeownership through a variety of programs.<sup>7</sup> For instance, employers can provide education to homebuyers, or direct financial assistance including matched savings, loans, and grants to finance down payments.<sup>8</sup> As another option, employers and local governments can partner with nonprofit housing developers and other groups to facilitate housing construction, finance, and acquisition by employees.<sup>9</sup> Local jurisdictions can initiate these employer-assisted housing programs by first educating employers about the benefits of a local workforce, and then creating partnerships with business groups and chambers of commerce to establish them. Communities can also encourage employers to implement housing assistance programs through tax incentives.

The 2019 Market Feasibility Study conducted for the Regional Hospital recommends that employers help sponsor housing acquisition through down payment assistance programs to move families into long-term homes.<sup>10</sup> This type of program is particularly relevant in Marlette considering that Marlette Regional Hospital is concerned with high employee turnover rates.<sup>11</sup>

TABLE 5: EXISTING HOUSING FORMATS FOR SALE IN MARLETTE

HOUSING FORMAT	NUMBER FOR SALE	MEDIAN PRICE (\$)	AVERAGE PRICE (\$)	AVERAGE SIZE	PRICE PER SQ. FT. (\$)
Two-bedroom	2	84,900	84,900	1,510	56.23
Three-bedroom	11	115,400	163,895	1,366	119.98
Four-bedroom	7	159,000	192,971	1,971	97.91
Total	20	133,950	160,328	1,582	101.35

Source: Community Research Services, LLC A Housing Market Analysis of Marlette, MI

## CASE STUDY: EMPLOYER HOUSING LOANS - AURORA HEALTH CARE IN MILWAUKEE, WI

### Background

Experts estimate that the United States will face a labor shortage of one million registered nurses in 2020 as Baby Boomers retire and the need for healthcare rises. This is compounded when affordable and decent housing ownership options are not located near these employers, causing workers to seek housing in far-flung locations or jobs in other communities. When workers commute long distances, absenteeism, stress levels, limited hours of availability, and high turnover become problematic.<sup>12</sup>

### The Program

Aurora Health Care is a not for profit healthcare provider located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin that confronted these challenges. In 1993, the healthcare institution launched a program to assist employees in purchasing housing near one of its major facilities. The program administers a no-interest, forgivable loan of up to \$3,000 and a term of five years to employees for the purchase of a home.<sup>13</sup> Aurora made the loan available only for housing located within a specified geographic range of the hospital – anywhere in the City of Milwaukee in this instance. The

healthcare provider also determined eligibility requirements among its employees: those seeking the loan must be full- or part-time professional staff members who have worked at least a year with the company.<sup>14</sup> The loan is forgiven after five years if the employee stays with the company, continuously occupies the home, and does not transfer ownership or interest.<sup>15</sup>

### Outcomes and Takeaways

After the program's inception, a total of 208 employees took advantage of it. Large shares (85%) of participants were female and over half (55%) were under the age of 35. In 2007, turnover rates among program participants (5%) were far lower than that among all Aurora Employees (12%) and employees in the Milwaukee metropolitan area (13%).<sup>16</sup> Further, 80% of the participants met the qualifications for the forgivable loan.<sup>17</sup> Although this resulted in total costs of \$500,000 for the employer, a cost-benefit analysis estimated that the costs of hiring and training replacements of the 208 participants could have been higher.<sup>18</sup> The case suggests mutual benefits for the groups involved: increased workplace and financial stability for both employer and employee, and reinvestment and new residents for the community. It also shows that the programs can be administered with flexibility, and that employers can determine eligibility standards.



## NEW HOUSING CONSTRUCTION

Communicating information about housing needs to developers can also promote the development of desired moderately priced starter homes in Marlette. Knowledge of the price ranges, amenities, and construction features that new residents seek to purchase a home desire are key points of coordination between the City and private builders. Marlette residents participating in the community's 2019 visioning session expressed interest in seeing vacant land used for new housing. As part of the RRC process, the City of Marlette has identified high-impact sites for redevelopment, several of which are vacant and zoned for single-family residential development, as is true of properties southeast of the Doyle and Angle Street intersection.<sup>19</sup> The City could seek to package these properties and market their advantages, including infrastructure and incentives, to developers in conjunction with the housing needs findings.

## EMPLOYER-ASSISTED HOUSING PROGRAMS

**Home buyer and homeownership education** - workshops conducted by experts on affordability, purchase, mortgage applications

**Financial assistance** - loans or grants to help with down payments

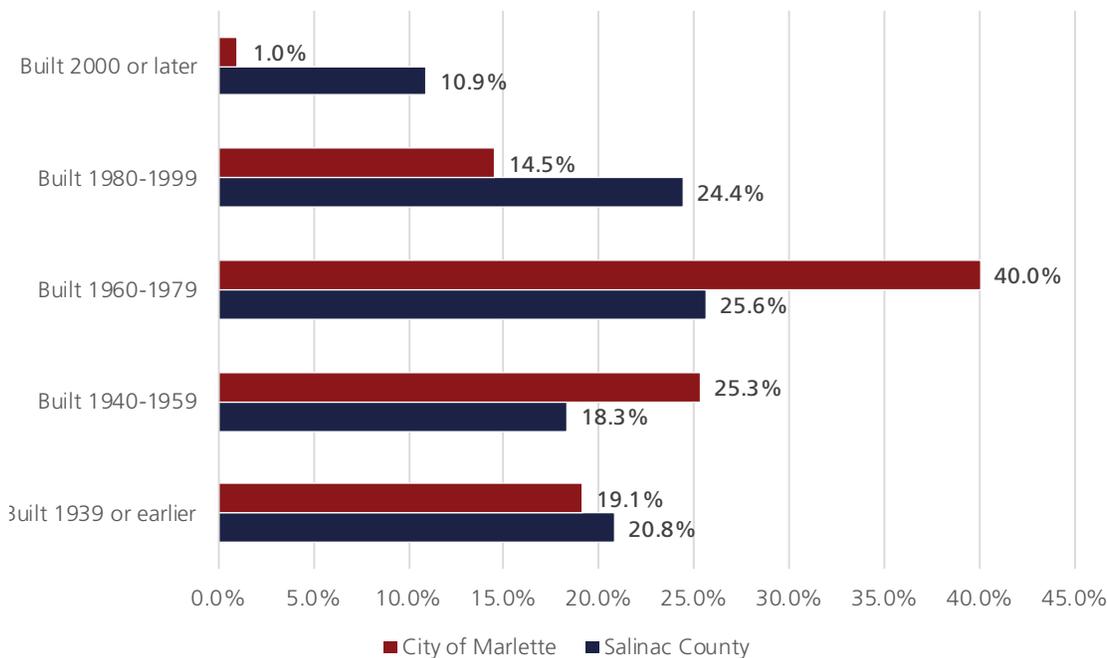
**Matched savings** - the employer matches savings with those from the employee to purchase a home

**Counseling** - provided by a certified counselor to help employees understand their options

**Housing Trust Fund** - the employer contributes to a fund for housing benefits including production

Source: National Association of Realtors. Employer Assisted Housing Fact Sheet

FIGURE 3: HOUSING CONSTRUCTION OVER TIME



Source: 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates

TABLE 6: FORECASTED DESIRED RENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

Targeted demographics	Low/moderate-income non-senior households in the labor force
Targeted incomes	\$15,000-\$32,000 for affordable units and \$32,000-\$50,000 for market-rate units.

**MSHDA Mod Program**

The City of Marlette applied for a new program managed by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority. Due its need for new housing for the workforce, the City was awarded a five-year repayable grant to develop modular units that fall within the desired price range of \$140,000- \$150,000. The City has already purchased the land at Carpenter Circle and is deciding on the type of housing that should be constructed. Depending on what is selected, the parcels may need to be rezoned for allow for denser residential options. With the funds provided, Marlette will be able to develop up to five modular units.

**Housing Rehabilitation**

Blight and degraded building quality are contributing to lower housing values throughout Marlette, although the net impact of blight and abandonment of a single property on a neighborhood are difficult to quantify. American Community Survey data shows low housing vacancy rates, suggesting that poor maintenance is not correlated to empty structures. Much of the housing stock is aging, which, when combined with poor upkeep, exacerbate blight.

According to the American Community Survey, the vast majority (84%) of the estimated 874 housing units in Marlette were constructed before 1979. Older construction can pose challenges to retrofitting homes with amenities and modern features.<sup>20</sup> Identifying properties in substandard conditions and those at risk of becoming substandard could be contenders for incentives, tax abatements, and grants available for rehabilitation.<sup>21</sup> In some instances, multiple employers can partner amongst themselves or with a developer to pay for the rehabilitation of older housing.<sup>22</sup>

**MIXED-INCOME RENTAL HOUSING**

**Rental Markets**

Most of the rental housing in Marlette takes the form of single-family housing or duplex formats, and large apartment buildings comprise only a small share of the community’s housing. The area’s apartments are a mix of market-rate and subsidized units through the HUD or the Rural Housing Service. Pricing for market-rate rental units in the Marlette is relatively low: rents for one-bedroom units ranged from \$495-585, while pricing for two-bedroom units was between \$600 and \$610. In comparison, the median monthly rent was \$643 in Sanilac County overall in 2017, while it was \$834 across the State of Michigan that year. Simultaneously, however, a large share (55%) of Marlette renter-occupied households spent over 30% of their monthly income on housing in 2017 and were considered “cost-burdened.” While lower rents are good from the standpoint of affordability, it also limits the potential for new rental construction by limiting builders’ revenue.

**FORECASTED ANNUAL DEMAND FOR RENTAL UNITS**

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Affordable Rentals - 28 units

Market-rate Rentals - 25 units

Source: Community Research Services, LLC A Housing Market Analysis of Marlette, MI

Correspondingly, the housing market study forecasts that demand will remain low for both subsidized affordable and market-rate rentals in the Marlette area through 2022. The market for both types of rental units is relatively stable; occupancy levels were 97% for rental units overall, and rates were somewhat lower (90%) among market-rate units. New demand for affordable rental housing units, priced for households earning between \$16,000 and \$32,000 annually, was estimated at 28 units, while demand for market-rate units, priced for moderate-income households earning between \$32,000 and \$50,000 annually, was forecasted at 25 units annually. Most of this demand is predicted to come from households moving within the area as opposed to growth in the number of households or in-migration. Rather than facilitating new rental housing construction, local leaders should, therefore, seek ways to improve the condition and value of existing rental housing.<sup>23</sup>

## Senior Housing

Similar forecasting methods were used to estimate annual rental demand among Marlette's growing portion of residents over the age of 65 years. The 2022 demand for affordable units was estimated at 14 units in the year 2022 while the estimated demand for market-rate units was nine.<sup>24</sup> In 2018, Marlette Regional Hospital explored the feasibility of a single-story senior living facility in the community. The study used the area's demographic profile in conjunction with the community's existing assisted and independent living facilities to estimate demand and found that the Marlette area would support a 57-bed facility, with five dedicated memory-care beds at monthly pricing of \$4,000 and \$5,000, respectively.<sup>25</sup>

Based on the findings, Marlette Regional Hospital has recently signed a purchase agreement on a large parcel of land adjacent to the hospital – the golf course – for the primary purpose of establishing an integrated senior living community. An integrated senior living community would include independent living, assisted living, and memory care units.

## ZONING

The City can use its Zoning Ordinance to provide more housing options, which could lead to lower price points for the target markets. To start in the downtown, one consideration for the DDA is to help businesses convert upper story units into housing. An inventory of vacant units and an assessment of the feasibility of converting them is a good step. Creating smaller units to densify the downtown is positive in two ways: it builds the customer base for local businesses, and it expands housing options.

With available vacant lots, the City should investigate the advantages of upzoning residential uses on some of those parcels to permit more single-family housing on smaller lots or integrate duplexes and triplexes where possible. Another way to densify is to permit accessory dwelling units to provide housing options without drastically altering the neighborhood's character. These smaller units, best situated in the rear of the principal home, have historically been used to house grandparents and young adults, two demographic groups that are underserved in Marlette.

In the Multiple Family zones, more options could be added to the list of permitted uses to include townhomes, courtyard apartments, and stacked flats. Because they each have the potential to have different building footprints, a more detailed schedule of regulations could be implemented that is tailored to those building types.

## CONCLUSION

As the 2019 Housing Needs Assessment notes, employment in Sanilac County's production-oriented industries and services in healthcare and education rebounded by 2018 from the Great Recession. The number of manufacturing jobs in the County increased from 1,826 in 2010 to 2,849 in 2018, a growth rate of 56%.<sup>26</sup> Housing construction has not kept up with employment growth. One key to leverage growth in these industries and to revitalize local business districts is to offer housing that workers need.

The potential benefits of a locally residing workforce are many. Some housing experts suggest that employer-assisted housing benefits employers by reducing worker turnover, helping boost local housing markets where the company has large real estate investments.<sup>27</sup> Bearing these benefits in mind, the

City of Marlette should continue to explore programs and zoning flexibility to promote new owner-occupied housing construction, rehabilitation, and homeowner education in the community.

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- 4 Community Research Services, LLC. A Housing Market Analysis of Marlette, MI. pg. 14
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- 9 National Association of Realtors. Employer Assisted Housing Fact Sheet. Pg.2
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# 4

## EXISTING LAND USE

Land use analysis is a pillar of community planning. While the built environment is not a permanent fixture, its sturdiness and extensiveness make sweeping land-use changes difficult. Often, change is made incrementally, on a parcel by parcel level. Luckily, Marlette has good bones: its traditional downtown and residential grid system promote good development—growth that is compact and encourages walkability, convenience, and social interaction.

This section is based largely on the “Existing Land Use” map that incorporates the City’s most updated boundaries and assessor land use classification codes. The codes are a part of a system that places land into broad use categories largely based on each parcel’s primary use for taxation. In Marlette, the land use categories are the following:

- » Residential
- » Commercial
- » Industrial
- » Exempt
- » Agriculture

### GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Much of the City’s land use has formed in expected patterns. Industrial and commercial uses established themselves along major transportation corridors: M-53 and the CSX rail line. Industry concentrated readily in the southern part of the City, closer to the rail line presumably because it is the most efficient way to send and receive goods. On M-53, the downtown emerged with its smaller commercial building

TABLE 7: EXISTING LAND USE CATEGORIES BY ACRE

LAND USE	# PARCELS	TOTAL ACRES	% ACRES
Residential	717	387	41.5%
Commercial	136	230	24.7%
Exempt	63	175	18.7%
Industrial	19	106	11.3%
Agriculture	1	35	3.8%
TOTAL	936	933	100.0%

source: Assessor

footprints and is surrounded by residential neighborhoods on both sides. The tighter residential blocks near the downtown give way to larger parcels towards the periphery of the City.

## RESIDENTIAL

Many small cities are primarily dedicated to residential uses. In Marlette, residential uses account for the highest number of overall parcels but still cover less than half of the City's total acreage. The category includes all housing types such as single-family homes, multi-family units, and mobile homes. In addition to housing type, residential character is also determined by lot characteristics. For example, some parcels are larger and situated on culs-de-sac, like the area near the City's northwestern border, and more compact lots are on a grid closer to downtown.

## COMMERCIAL

Commercial uses are concentrated along M-53 and the rail line and take up one-quarter of the City's land, ranging from compact lots downtown to large-scale parcels closer to the border. This is a big change from just five years ago when commercial uses only took up 4.5% of Marlette's total acreage. Most of this uptick in commercial properties can be attributed to the Marlette 100-acre golf course being reclassified from recreation to commercial, as well as a 30-acre property converting from agriculture to commercial adjacent to the rail line.

## INDUSTRIAL

Industry is another category that has grown tremendously in terms of acreage.

Concentrated in the southern portion of the City, but tucked away from M-53, there are several large industrial parcels. Industry consumes over 11% of the City's land for uses that include processing, manufacturing, fabricating, assembling, and storage.

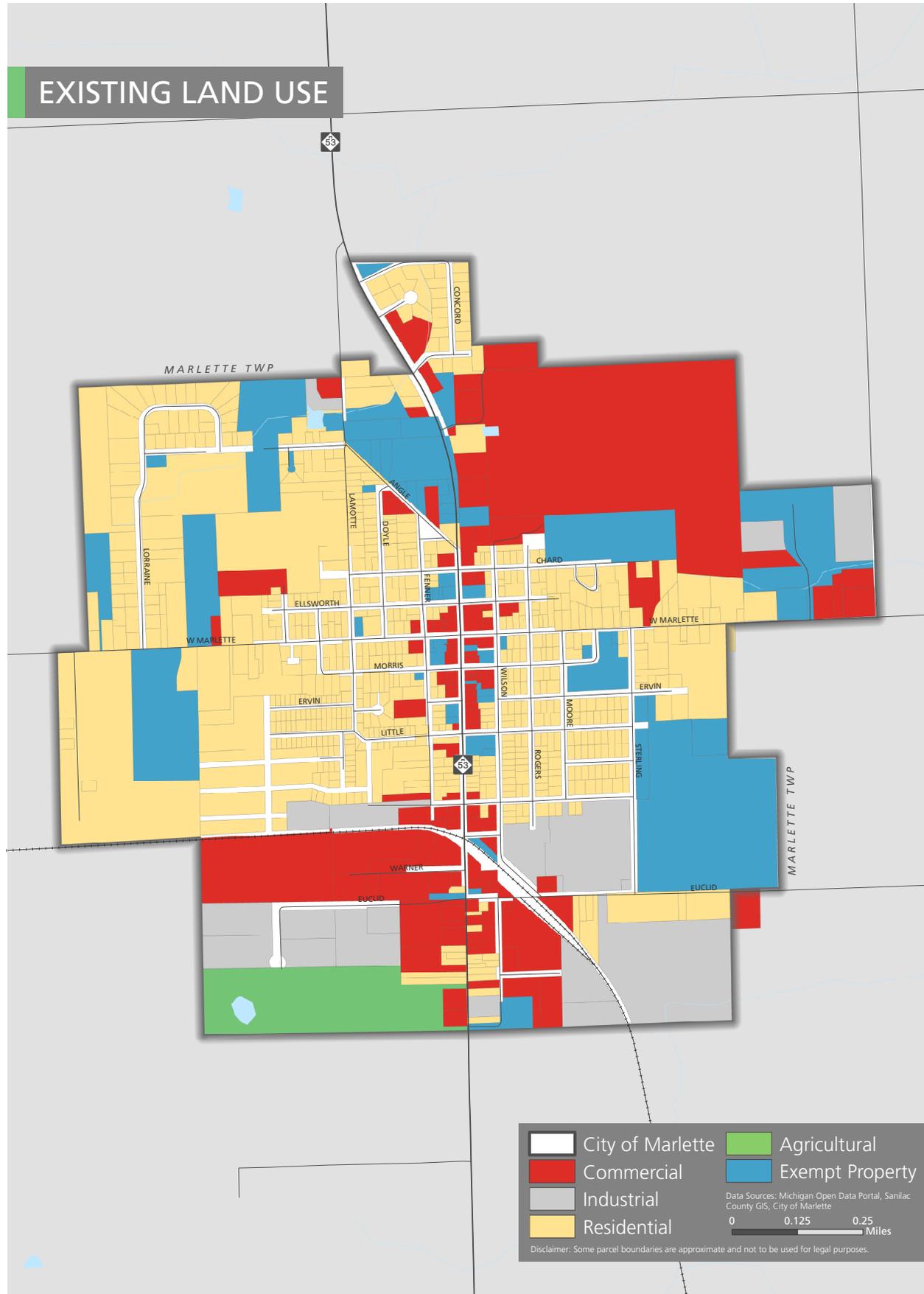
## AGRICULTURE

The region and the City's surroundings are agrarian, but little of that land exists within the City's boundaries. There is only one parcel remaining with this designation and it is 35-acres along the City's southern border. This represents a considerable reduction when just five years ago there was a total of 72 acres when the adjacent parcel was also classified as agriculture. This parcel is not listed as farmland preserved by Public Act 116. According to the Sanilac County Master Plan (2004-2024), Michigan is ninth in the nation for farmland loss, but it has remained the State's second-largest industry. The acreage of farmland is declining in the County albeit at a slower rate than the State. Having said that, a City is not the an advisable location for agricultural land. Cities are designated places for growth and development, and the preservation of vital farmland should take place beyond its borders.

## EXEMPT

Exempt uses are the third most common land use classification in the City. This is a particularly broad category because it includes any use that is "exempt" from property taxes. Many of these properties are owned by the City but could also be under the ownership of any level of government, a school district, non-profits, religious institutions, or charities. These uses are spread throughout the City because they are not as strongly dependent on access to transportation corridors as commercial or industrial properties, and they directly serve the residents. In Marlette, these uses are valuable to the community and come in various forms: eight churches, the public school system, a regional hospital, public parks and recreation, civic institutions like libraries, and public safety buildings, among others.

MAP 2: EXISTING LAND USE



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# 5

## NATURAL FEATURES

cover photo: hunting4land.com

Natural features are an asset the City must consider when planning for future development to provide environmental, recreational, and aesthetic value to the residents. The presence of wooded areas and wetlands are also increasingly important features to protect as they have proven to contribute ecosystem services of equal if not greater value than manmade infrastructure. This section summarizes some of the City's major natural features and their significant role in managing climate variability.

### **WATER**

Marlette is a part of the Cass River Watershed that covers 908 square miles across portions of Saginaw, Tuscola,

Sanilac, Huron, Genesee, and Lapeer counties.<sup>1</sup> Thirty-five percent of the watershed is in Sanilac County. The Cass River, the central thread of the watershed, has tributaries that branch off into a greater area of these counties, some of which cross into Marlette. Nonpoint source pollution, defined as anything carried off the land by water or wind and deposited onto surface water, is a primary threat to the health of this watershed. The most common nonpoint sources are sediment that comes from several places: roads, impervious surfaces, agricultural operations, construction sites, and eroding streambanks and shorelines.<sup>2</sup>

One of the goals of the watershed plan is to restore its wetlands and water quality.

TABLE 8: WETLAND ACREAGE

NATURAL FEATURES	ACRES
Freshwater emergent wetlands	1.6
Freshwater forested	22.0
Potential wetland restoration areas	115.9

**EMERGENT WETLAND:**

areas with perennial vegetation account for greater than 80% of vegetative cover and the soil is periodically saturated or covered with water.

**FRESHWATER FORESTED:**

areas where forest or shrubland account for greater than 20% of vegetative cover and the soil is periodically saturated or covered with water.

Wetlands are characterized by areas inundated with water, also referred to as a bog or a marsh, commonly located alongside bodies of water or areas with a high water table. Marlette has about 23 acres of wetlands between two different types of freshwater wetlands: emergent and forested. They are scattered on the western part of the City where development abruptly stops as it approaches a larger swath of wetlands. There are five times as many acres categorized as “potential wetland restoration areas” that are described as having the capacity to return from their degraded state to their “pre-existing naturally functioning condition, or... as close to that as possible.”<sup>3</sup> Due to the scale of their presence, it is worth working with the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) to take steps towards their restoration.

Wetlands’ value cannot be overstated. In a region where the climate predictions

call for more intense precipitation events, wetlands can help reduce flooding as they efficiently absorb excess stormwater and recharge groundwater. Besides, they are a centerpiece for a diverse ecosystem and can make for a point of attraction for recreational opportunities. These reasons explain why it remains best practice not to develop over them or severely impact their natural arrangement, and why wetlands of a certain size are regulated by the State. Because of the tremendous value they hold, filling, dredging, removing, constructing, or draining a wetland requires a permit from the EGLE.<sup>4</sup>

Building on sensitive natural features can have the unintended consequences of exposing people and structures to potential trouble. If the foundation is not built to withstand this type of landscape, it becomes more susceptible to water infiltration. One of the larger real estate challenges is a mindset change toward seeing wetlands as the “highest and best use” wherever they exist rather than an obstacle to development.

The FEMA records for floodplains in Sanilac County are not complete. The best assumption is that there are no major floodplains because of the lack of major water features in the area.

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINATION**

EGLE hosts an interactive map that keeps track of any parcels that are contaminated.<sup>5</sup> Clicking on a parcel reveals what type of activity has taken place: open and closed underground storage tanks and environmental contamination (nitrates, PCBs, etc.).

Where commercial and industrial establishments have relied on petroleum to operate their business, they store some of it below ground in what is known as an “underground storage tank” (UST) to mitigate the risk of explosion. A UST refers to any tank, or underground piping connected to that tank, that has at least 10% of its combined volume underground. Before the 1980s, USTs, were made of bare steel, which in several instances have corroded and the

MAP 3: NATURAL FEATURES

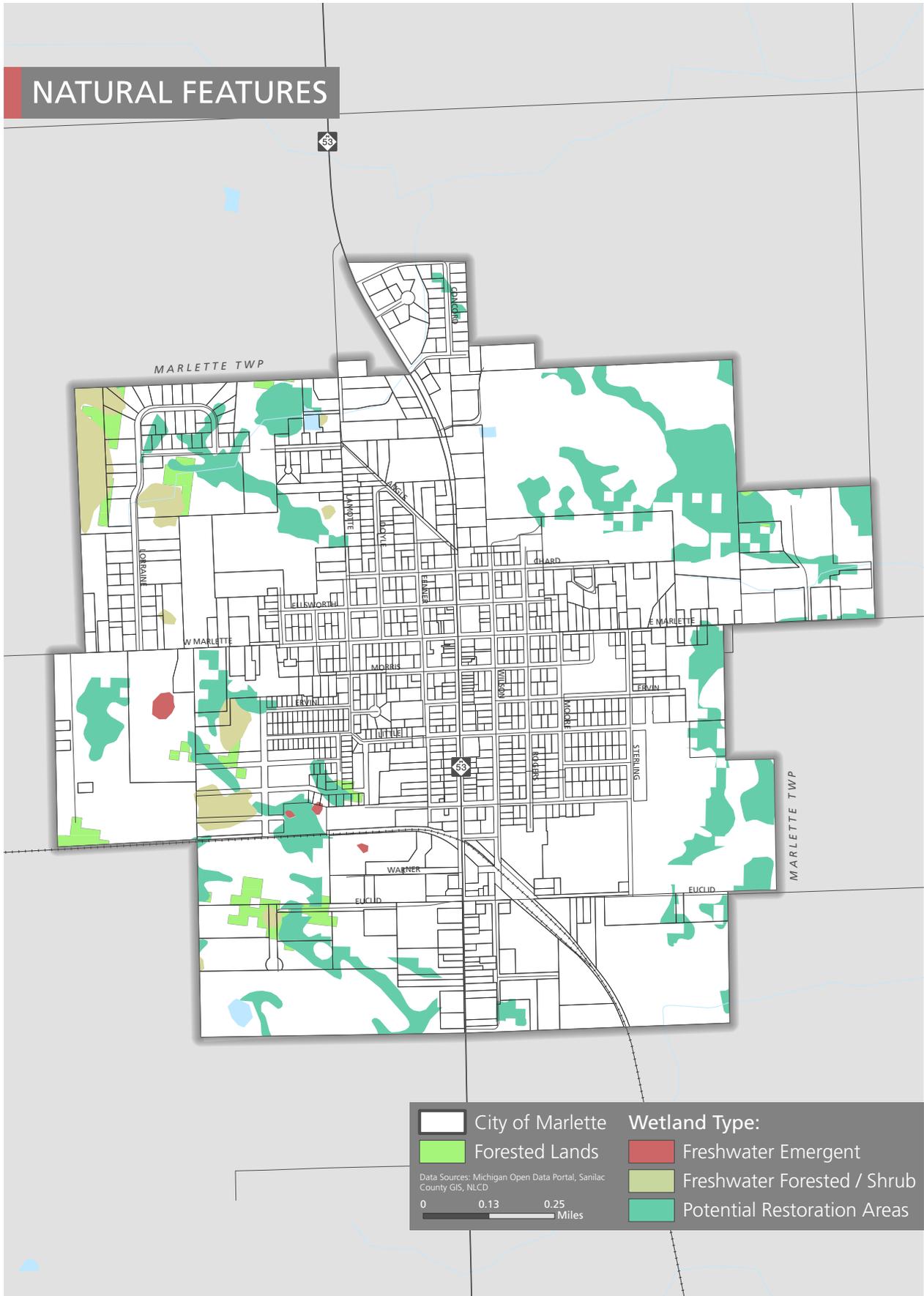


TABLE 9: CONTAMINATION SITES

STATUS	NUMBER
Closed leaking underground storage	6
Open leaking underground storage	7
Environmental contamination	4

Sources: Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and Act 451 of 1994 Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Action

**CLOSED LEAKING UNDERGROUND STORAGE:**

a release has occurred, and corrective action has been completed to meet the land use criteria.

**OPEN LEAKING UNDERGROUND STORAGE:**

a release has occurred, but no corrective action has been completed to meet the land use criteria.

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINATION:**

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

contents have leaked into the soil. The consequences of this vary; while it is never a good thing, it is most threatening if it contaminates soils where people grow food or groundwater that people drink. A wellhead protection program (WPP) is the first step to protecting groundwater from contamination and to having EGLE develop a wellhead protection program (WHPP) in Marlette. The WPP is a voluntary state-run program that provides guidelines to help cities protect their wells. Grants are offered to help communities develop and implement a WHPP, which is defined as the “surface area that overlies the aquifer that is directly contributing water to your well.”<sup>6</sup> If a WHPP is tested and developed, the WHPP is subject to higher levels of State monitoring for certain activities, for example, underground storage tanks. For brownfield sites, there are grants available through the Environmental Protection Agency to conduct environmental assessments and potential clean-up, which is likely a prerequisite before the site can be redeveloped.

**FOREST**

Within the city limits, there are an estimated 2.7 acres of mixed forest types. A “mixed forest” is described as trees greater than five meters in height, and no more than 75% are deciduous or evergreen species. The forested areas are primarily in the western half of the City and adjacent to or surrounding the wetlands. Forests and water are naturally paired because tree roots often help to stabilize wetlands, river beds, and lakeshores, using the constant stream of water to help the trees grow.<sup>7</sup>

Trees are also an invaluable resource for cities and are encompassed in the term “green infrastructure.” Green infrastructure consists of plants, green space, and other natural features that are efficient absorbers of excess stormwater. Because trees purify the air, reduce risks of flooding, and add to property values, it is highly recommended that tree canopy is strategically expanded, especially in areas where there is little greenery. Breaking up the impervious pavement to make space

for trees has an aesthetic and functional purpose for the property owners and the passers-by.

## SOIL

The Sanilac County Master Plan conducted a thorough mapping analysis of its soils to find that most of the County, including Marlette, has prime farmland soils. This is defined as not only the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing crops, but also the system that surrounds them, such as a dependable water source with adequate quality, a favorable temperature and growing season, few rocks, gentle slopes, among other factors.<sup>8</sup> This is important to remember as a city grows and may need to annex land. The surrounding land is a precious resource and should, therefore, be treated responsibly when considering a trade-off between consuming prime farmland soil and new development, as the soil is largely irretrievably lost once built upon. Instead, the City should first consider infill development as there is available vacant land within the city limits that are better candidates for development.

### DECIDUOUS FOREST:

areas dominated by trees where more than 75% of tree species shed foliage simultaneously in response to seasonal change.

### EVERGREEN FOREST:

areas dominated by tree species maintain their leaves all year—the canopy is never without green foliage.

## CONCLUSION

The City has some room to grow. Due to the presence of wetlands and prime farmland soil, the City has much to consider when determining where to develop. Instead of developing outward, the City should first consider “infill” development, sites that are vacant or underused that already carry significant value because of their high visibility and compactness, and preserve the City’s natural beauty.

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# 6

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES & RECREATION

Community facilities and services can influence where people decide to live. Public facilities often serve as a “third place” that is not work or home – places where people can relax, socialize, or stay informed on the City’s happenings without necessarily having to buy something. They are places and services not easily produced in the private market but form the “hard-to-put-your-finger-on-it-quality-of-life” category that residents and newcomers are looking for in their school district, city services, recreation, and community events. From a land-use perspective, it is important to review which structures are controlled by the City and which are quasi-public (serve the broader public but not publicly owned),

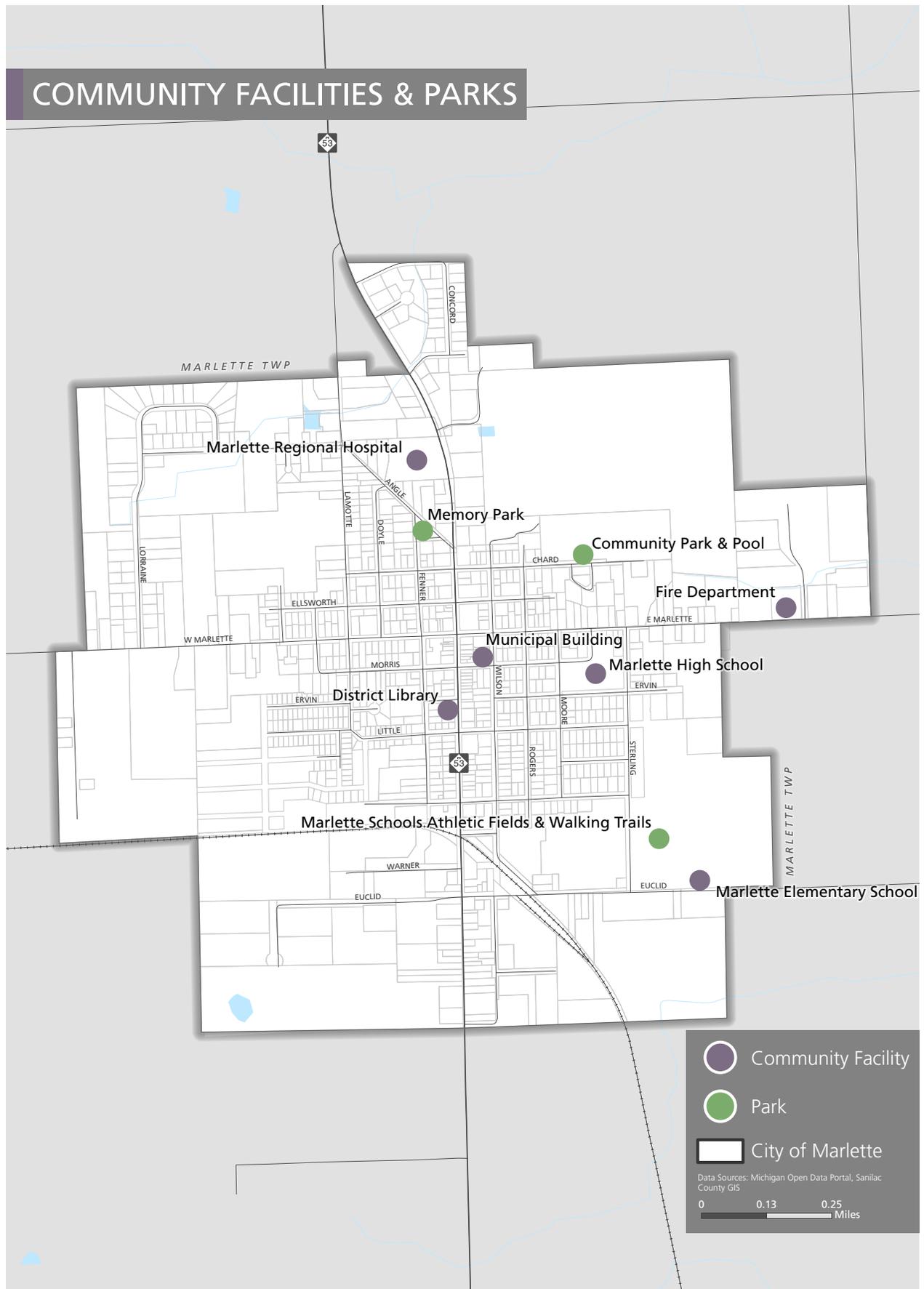
to determine if they need to expand, and if so, whether that land is available to meet future needs.

### **PUBLIC FACILITIES**

#### **Marlette Municipal Building**

The Marlette municipal building is the main home of government services. The municipal building holds several important departments: the Marlette Police Department, Department of Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Planning and Zoning, and the offices of City Clerk, City Treasurer, and City Manager. The municipal building also serves as the City Hall that hosts Planning Commission and

MAP 4: COMMUNITY FACILITIES & PARKS



City Council meetings.<sup>1</sup> The Planning Commission is a voluntary board that serves as an advisory commission to City Council, the elected officials, on planning and zoning issues such as zoning text amendments, special land use requests. The Planning Commission is the legal author of the Master Plan and must consider short- and long-term implications for land use planning and development. The Zoning Board of Appeals interprets the Zoning Ordinance, deliberates on an applicant's appeal to a zoning decision, and grant variances when appropriate.

The Police Department runs on four full-time officers. They are responsible for crime prevention and response, as well as enforcing a curfew for minors, blight violations, and street parking in restricted hours.

The City has also installed a backup generator and is working with the federal agency FEMA to make City Hall an emergency preparedness center in case of emergencies.

### Marlette Fire

The Marlette Fire Authority is located at 6436 Morris Rd and serves Marlette Township and parts of Burnside and Koylton Townships, in addition to the City. The Fire Department operates with 22 volunteer firefighters and reports responding to 100-120 emergencies annually.<sup>2</sup> The firehouse has four garages and six pieces of fire apparatus, and recently acquired a new fire truck. There are no plans at the moment for the fire department to expand.

### Marlette District Library

The Marlette District Library provides library services to the Marlette area. It offers internet access, book exchanges, and meeting rooms. The library building is a listed Michigan Historic Site because it was funded by the Carnegie Cooperation and the Marlette Research Club, a club founded by the women of Marlette.<sup>3</sup>

### Water and Sewer

The City has three active wells that draw from the Marshall Sandstone Aquifer

at a depth of 263 feet. The water quality report from 2015 showed that the drinking water was tested and met federal and state requirements on the level of contaminants. Another report is forthcoming; in certain circumstances when the water quality is high enough, water only has to be tested for contaminants every three years.

The Department of Public Works maintains the water system, sanitary, and storm sewer lines. The City provides water and sewer to nearly every block with some exceptions. The operation of the wastewater treatment plant is contracted to a private firm and the City is investigating how to upgrade the plant's filtration system. The storm sewer system is separate and collects runoff from streets and structures. Having separate stormwater and sanitary systems is beneficial because in some instances when the two are combined, a large storm event could overwhelm the system and release water that is not fully treated into water bodies. When the two systems do not share the same infrastructure, this is less likely to happen.

Marlette received a Stormwater, Asset Management, and Wastewater (SAW) grant in 2017 from EGLE. This fund has been used to clean sewer lines and film them to see where any repairs are needed. During this process, several manholes were found that had been paved over. The sewer lines and manholes were mapped so that in the future it is easier to pinpoint where a specific improvement must be made. The funds will also be used to investigate stormwater capacity and ways to improve management.

## SCHOOL DISTRICT

### Marlette Community Schools

Marlette Elementary School and Marlette Junior-Senior High School are in the Marlette Community School system. Marlette Elementary School is located at 6230 Euclid St.<sup>4</sup> As of the 2018-2019 school year, Marlette Elementary School has 383 students enrolled from Kindergarten to 6th grade.<sup>5</sup> In addition



*Marlette Community Pool*

Source: City of Marlette

to Kindergarten classes, the elementary school has a Head Start program, Great Start Readiness Program, and a tuition-based preschool program.<sup>6</sup> Adjacent to Marlette Elementary school is the Marlette Schools' Athletic Fields and Walking Trails, which is described in more detail below.

Marlette Junior-Senior High School is located on approximately 5.68 acres at 3051 Moore St.<sup>7</sup> During the 2018-2019 school year, Marlette Junior-Senior High School had 385 students enrolled. Of those 385 students, 67 live outside the City of Marlette. Also, 189 students who live in Marlette, attend school outside the City.<sup>8</sup> Marlette High School has a 91% Four-Year graduation rate, which is 9% above the State average.<sup>9</sup>

In terms of land use, Marlette Community Schools is unlikely to need more room to expand given shrinking enrollment rates. Even though it serves up to 10

surrounding communities, the enrollment numbers have decreased since the school year 2013-2014. The trend has already taken hold with the consolidation of Marlette Junior High and High School. Schools play a vital role in a community as an institution that educates the next generation, but also as a meeting place and a spot for specialized recreation facilities that municipalities usually do not provide (i.e track and field, football field). It is recommended that the school district and the City stay in close communication about the future of buildings, because often in the case of a shrinking school system, buildings can be repurposed as housing or community facilities.

## **QUASI-PUBLIC**

Quasi-public facilities are facilities that are not managed by a public entity but serve the public widely, often by government mandate, for example, an emergency room. The Marlette Regional Hospital

is a healthcare center that has provided many healthcare services not only to the City but the surrounding communities since 1951. The Marlette Regional Hospital is part of the Healthcare Facilities Accreditation Program meaning that the hospital has met certain health and safety benchmarks to earn this accreditation. Some of the services provided include cardiology, long term care, and emergency ambulance services for Sanilac County. Additionally, the Marlette Regional Hospital is the only hospital in the region that offers inpatient hospice resident care.<sup>10</sup> The hospital sits on 13.1 acres in the northern part of Marlette.<sup>11</sup> With homes to the north, west, and south of the hospital, the only available open land to expand is across M-53.

## RECREATION

The City Council works with a volunteer committee, the Park Board, to improve the park system and recreation programming. In 2018, a Parks and Recreation Master Plan was completed that did an on-site inventory of the facilities and catalogued the type of park, its major facilities, and its accessibility rating. The type of park and accessibility ratings are based on the Michigan Department of Natural Resources definitions, as this is the agency that reviews the document and provides grant funding for eligible projects.

The plan also compared Marlette’s inventory to national standards from the National Recreation and Park Association to see if the City meets the minimum provision of recreation facilities. When the public school facilities are included, the City meets all of the requirements for the number of facilities per population. When the school facilities are removed, the City is only deficient in the number of soccer fields provided. While this comparison is meant to be objective, it should be considered against a wider context of the community’s preferences and needs based on engagement sessions with the public. An online survey was conducted to ask a wide group of people for feedback on the parks system. In terms of capital improvements, the residents’ top three choices were “permanent restrooms at

the park,” “aging playground equipment [replaced],” and a “renovate[d] pool house.” For programming, residents wish to see summer concerts and movie nights in the park. The survey-takers also backed their desire for recreation improvements with support for potential millage increases: about 75% support a ½ mill levy and close to 50% support a 1 mill levy.

## RECREATION INVENTORY

### Community Park and Pool

#### *Type of Park:*

Community – Serves a broad purpose than smaller parks to meet community-based recreation needs

#### *Accessibility Rating:*

2, some site elements meet 2010 ADA standards for accessibility

The Marlette Community Park and Pool is the largest public recreational space, located on Chard Street. It is 17 acres that supports both active and passive recreation. The park offers softball fields, basketball courts, playground equipment, tennis courts, sand volleyball courts, picnic pavilions, and open green space.<sup>12</sup>



*Gayle's Trail walking path*

Source: City of Marlette

Most park facilities are open to the public, but the pavilions and softball fields require prior reservation.

Adjacent to the park area is the community pool and splash pad, which was a new addition to the community pool following a grant award in 2014. The pool area holds a pool house, three pavilions, benches, grills, bike racks, and has certified lifeguards on staff. The pool is open weekdays in the afternoon and evenings, and on weekends. The pool also offers swim lessons and group rates for the private use of the pool.<sup>13</sup>

The park and pool received a score of two on a scale of five for barrier-free access. The only facilities that have barrier-free access are the pool house, splash pad, pool, and adjacent parking lot.<sup>14</sup> To improve barrier-free access to the park facilities, the City could pave pathways to facilities in the park and parking lots. The Park Board is currently investigating how to update the City pool.

## Memory Park

### *Type of Park:*

Mini-park – used to address limited, isolated, or unique needs, less than ¼ mile from a residential setting, and less than one acre in size

### *Accessibility Rating:*

One: As of 2018, none of the site elements met 2010 ADA standards for accessibility. Recent improvements at the park would boost that score, but the exact rating is unknown until the next assessment is conducted.

Memory Park is a quarter acre mini-park in the northern section of the City designed for passive recreation. The park has a small play structure, open green space, a pavilion, and grills. Memory Park was rated one on a scale of five for barrier-free access. Due to lack of space, the park has no dedicated parking but relies upon on-street parking adjacent to the park.<sup>15</sup>

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## Marlette Schools' Athletic Fields and Walking Trail

The athletic complex next to Marlette Elementary school has an eight-lane track for track and field events, seven soccer fields, and four baseball/softball fields. There are paved pathways that allow barrier-free access to all facilities in the athletic complex. The athletic complex also has a dedicated parking lot with barrier-free access to the paved pathways that run throughout the site. This is a highly specialized type of facility that is tremendous for a small community to have access to, but like with most school facilities, they are only open to the public on weekends and during the summer.



*Marlette Community Pool*

Source: City of Marlette

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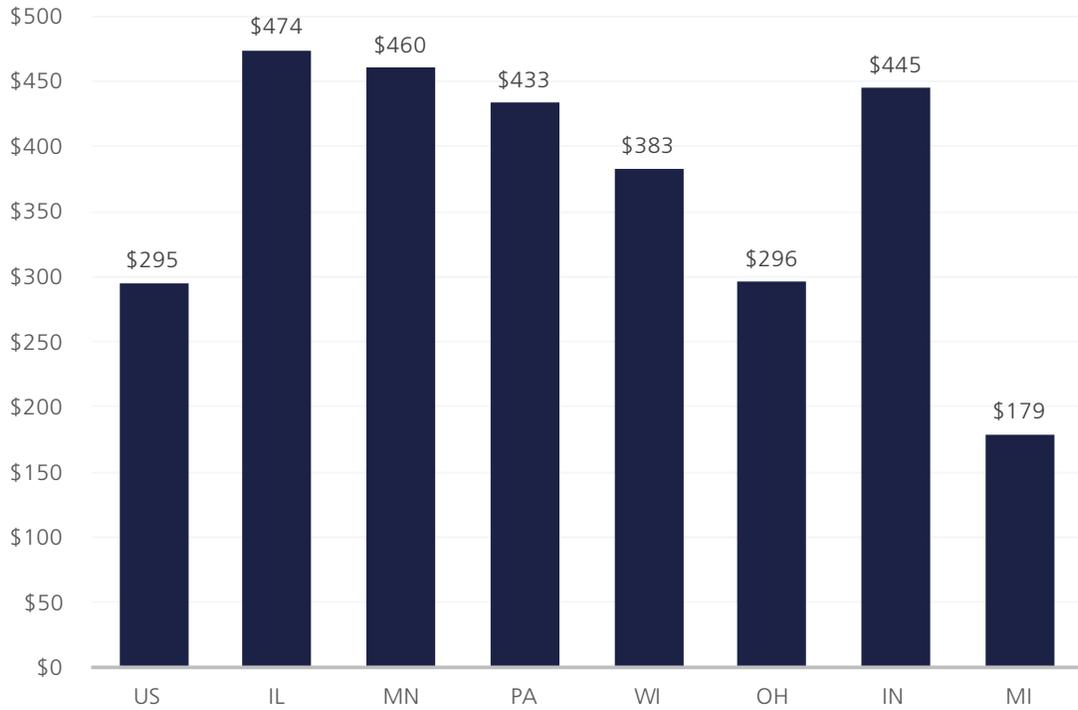


# TRANSPORTATION

It is often at road or train junctures where cities develop because a crossroads is an opportune place to build a connection to other markets. In a modern world where virtual connectivity is key to economic prosperity, the physical planning of transportation infrastructure that was once paramount for a city's success has been overlooked. Michigan spends the least per capita on road construction than the other Great Lakes States.<sup>1</sup> However, day-to-day life depends on the roads that take you where you need to be, and their poor maintenance is highly visible.

The importance of a smooth connected transportation network is equally important to high tech infrastructure and requires more than just maintenance, but expansion from 20th-century car-dominated planning. The youth and the elderly are increasingly expressing a desire for walkable and bikeable centers and alternative ways to get to destinations. This section inventories the roads as they are now and ways to make them more inclusive places and not just a means to arrive at a destination.

FIGURE 4: GREAT LAKES STATES ROAD CONSTRUCTION PER CAPITA



Source: SEMCOG

## ROADS

### Ownership and AADT

Marlette’s core has developed along the State trunkline M-53, a highway that is owned and controlled by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). Like many communities whose downtown is strategically located along a busy State highway, access to high levels of vehicular traffic is balanced by lack of control over speed limits, number of lanes, truck traffic, or any other aspects of the road that might detract from a downtown experience. To make any modifications to the roadway requires working with MDOT, which many communities have done to install traffic calming measures that make the downtown more pleasant for nonmotorized users.

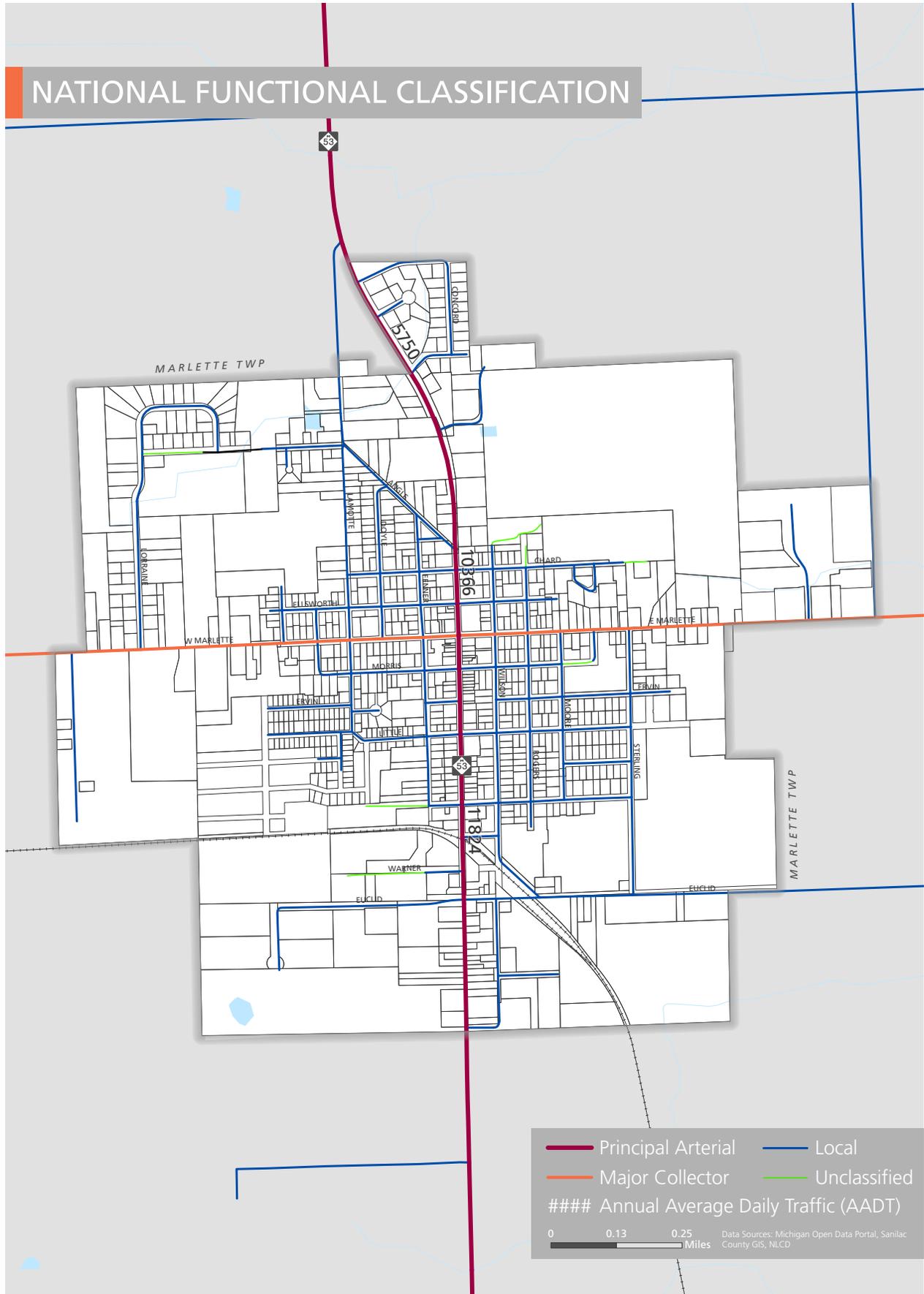
Along M-53, the average annual daily traffic (AADT) is calculated by MDOT. The number of vehicles that pass through changes drastically between the northern and southern parts of the City. South

of Marlette Road, the average annual daily traffic approaches 12,000 vehicles, whereas on the northern end of the City, the number dips below 6,000 vehicles.

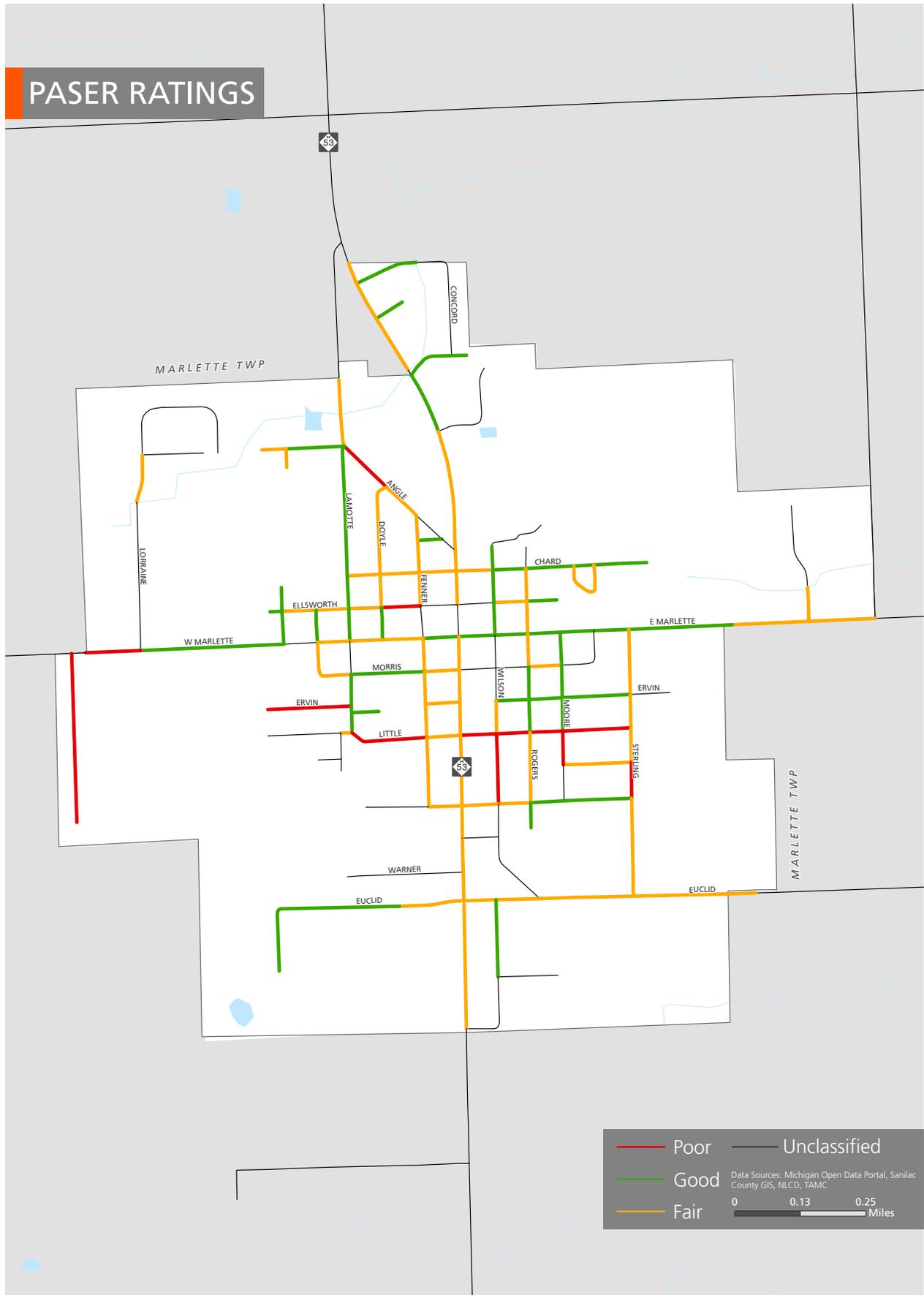
### Road Classification

The National Functional Classification, developed by the Federal Highway Administration and used by MDOT, is a classification system that designates which road types are eligible for federal funding. Road types that are eligible for federal funding are major and minor arterials and collector streets. Arterials are described as carrying vehicles for longer through traffic distances and collector streets typically provide more access to properties than arterials as the primary connections between residential and areas and arterials. The descriptions of each classification are largely based on vehicular movement and efficiency, not accessibility. Roads that would qualify for federal funding are Marlette Road (major collector) and M-53 (primary arterial).

MAP 5: NATIONAL FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION



MAP 6: PASER RATINGS



## Condition of Roads

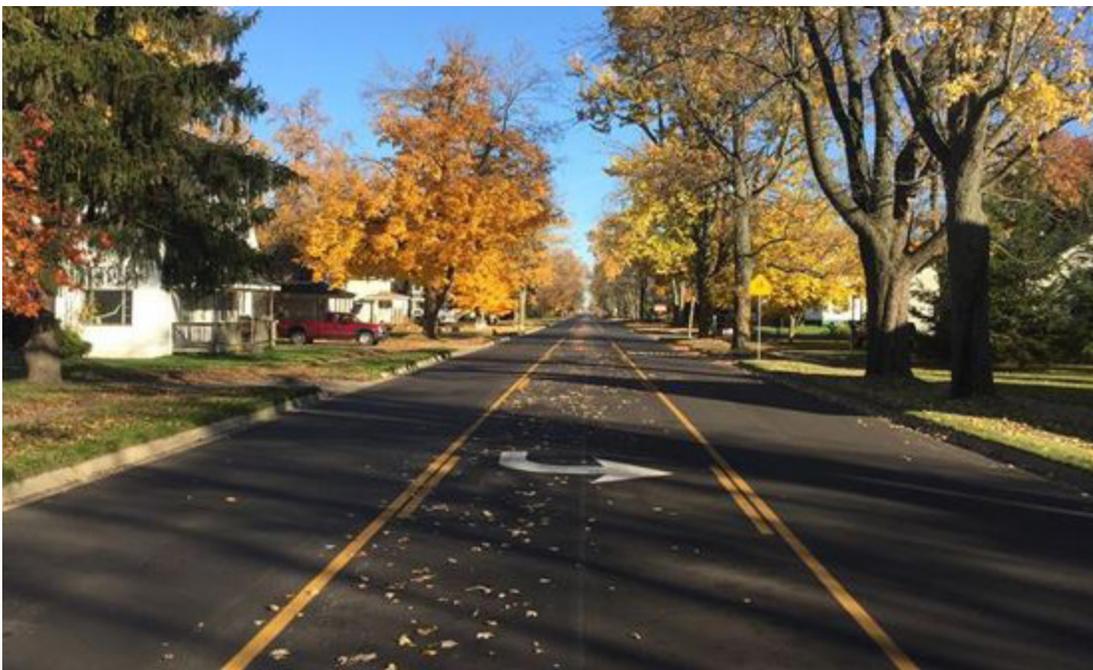
The poor condition of Michigan's roads is one of the most commonly heard complaints among communities statewide. With a shrinking proportion of revenue sharing from sales tax since 2002, cities are losing out on additional funds that can help with these large and expensive projects. Local and unclassified roads seen in the map "National Functional Classification" are controlled and funded at the local level, and many municipalities are struggling to keep up with the cost and professional capacity required to keep all roads in good condition. The pavement surface evaluation and rating (PASER) is a widely used system to rate roads based on their condition and the level of treatment they require. Many of Marlette's local roads are in "good" or "fair" condition with some exceptions on Kilgour Street, where four of the five blocks are in "poor" condition.<sup>2</sup> When funding roads, it is worth looking at a PASER map first to determine where to direct road preservation funds. Sidewalks would also benefit from a similar process of routine inventory, rating, and implementation schedules for repairs.

## FREIGHT TRAINS

The train that runs through the southwest corner of Marlette is the Huron and Eastern Railway owned by Genesee and Wyoming Railroad since 2012. The rail line starts in Brown City but connects to several other segments heading west to Saginaw and Bay City.<sup>3</sup> It primarily takes commodities from the City but does not serve passengers. A train stop is an asset for commercial and industrial businesses that rely on shipments to operate their businesses.

## ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION

The Sanilac Transportation Corporation (STC) receives funding from state and federal grants, ticket sales, and through contracts with Community Mental Health and the Intermediate School District. It is a shared-ride service that has been in operation for over thirty years. The service is a hybrid bus and taxi service: while it picks up passengers from their homes, it also runs on a fixed route and schedule. The bus is handicap accessible and provides discounted prices for frequent users. The countywide transportation



*Autumn on Marlette Street*  
Source: City of Marlette



*Complete Street example*

Source: City Lab

service is generally used for appointments and is not a common form of commuting to and from work due to its limited hours of operation.

A lack of transit alternatives has consequences outside of inconvenience. Its connection to economic stability is tightly bound. In the Master Plan community survey, one of the questions asked to what extent individuals rely on their vehicles. Just over 37% of respondents disagreed that it would be easy to find another way to work if their vehicle broke down. Another 17% neither agreed nor disagreed with that statement. In 2015, a the Greater Ann Arbor area issued a report on transportation, (a region that arguably has some of the best public transit options) still had 48% responses that transportation was a problem in finding and keeping a job. Other reliable options are necessary to keep entry-level employees connected to job opportunities.

## ELEMENTS OF COMPLETE STREETS

Wide sidewalks

Bike lanes and racks

Safe crossings

Medians

Curb extensions

Benches

Bus shelters

Owning a vehicle is cost-prohibitive for many low-income households, but with no other option, they must bear the cost. The housing and transportation index managed by the Center for Neighborhood Technology estimates transportation costs are 30% or more of a household's income, ranging between \$12,370-\$13,537 annually. For many households, this is more than they spend on housing.<sup>4</sup>

## COMPLETE STREETS

Nonmotorized features broadly refer to any piece of infrastructure that facilitates transit by foot, bicycle, train, bus, scooter, or wheelchair. A movement known as Complete Streets has emerged as a platform to advocate for streets to be designed for everyone, not just vehicles. Historically, the U.S. has funneled transportation spending to highway construction and expansion for a more "efficient throughput" of vehicles. More recently, organizations such as Smart Growth America have successfully argued that streets should be places that users of all ages and abilities can enjoy. Instead of only measuring the success of a road by vehicular mobility, Complete Streets include design elements, safety, and convenience for all users. In 2010,

Complete Streets legislation passed in Michigan to require that MDOT considers multi-modal features with new road construction. The City of Marlette has already adopted a Complete Street policy but implementation is hard without resources from the general fund to install these features. Some of the features will have to be installed piecemeal through the site plan process where new developments could be required to develop or improve sidewalks in a new subdivision or along the frontage of their business. A complete sidewalk network is a first step in progressing toward complete streets. Other pedestrian-friendly features can be implemented with the help of the local business community, such as benches and bike racks.

### Safe Routes to School (SRTS)

The School District and the City were awarded a Safe Routes to School grant from the Department of Transportation. The purpose of the grant is to promote walking and bicycling to school through various methods: physical improvements to infrastructure, enforcement, safety education, and incentives to encourage children to travel to school by foot or bicycle. The implementation of this project will likely start in 2020.

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# 8

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In August 2019, the City of Marlette held a work session that convened community leaders and stakeholders to share their views on the community's economic challenges, opportunities, and priorities. The discussion was focused on the local economy largely in terms of what Marlette needs to do to attract more people, help existing businesses, fill empty storefronts, expand housing options for the workforce, and improve the quality of life for all age groups. A local economy is hardly ever truly defined by a municipality's borders but is rather a reflection of regional if not statewide trends. An understanding of different economic scales and factors affecting the economy is required. This section depicts major economic conditions in Marlette and then summarizes initiatives the City

can take to reverse some negative trends to benefit its local economy.

### MARLETTE'S WORKFORCE

This section inventories employment patterns among Marlette residents since 2010. Because Marlette's employers hire from throughout the region, and many Marlette residents work outside the community, it also examines larger regional employment patterns.

#### Resident Employment

American Community Survey data shows that Marlette's labor force participation is lower than the State of Michigan overall but has risen since 2010, despite the community's growing retirement age demographics. In 2017, 58% of the adult

TABLE 10: PERCENT OF EMPLOYED RESIDENTS EMPLOYED BY SECTOR

	MARLETTE WORKERS 2010	MARLETTE WORKERS 2017
Number of employed residents	691	732
<b>PERCENT OF MARLETTE RESIDENTS EMPLOYED BY INDUSTRY</b>		
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	0.9%	2.3%
Construction	2.7%	3.7%
Manufacturing	16.1%	29.5%
Wholesale trade	0.7%	0.8%
Retail trade	10.0%	12.4%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	1.4%	4.0%
Information	3.5%	0.0%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	3.2%	3.4%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	7.4%	3.8%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	36.8%	24.0%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	9.4%	9.6%
Other services, except public administration	3.9%	5.5%
Public administration	4.1%	1.0%

Source: American Fact Finder - ACS 5-year estimates

population in Marlette participated in the labor force, compared to 61% across the State in that year. Notably, labor force participation in Marlette rose slightly from 55% in 2010. This suggests some workforce stability at least, although the margin of error in the American Community Survey estimates makes it difficult to say with certainty that the share increased by that exact amount. Labor participation rates are important to track because a low rate signifies that incomes are likely lower and that these individuals may rely on city or state assistance programs. Over the next year, employment numbers are expected to

stay about the same so little change is also expected for labor participation rates.

The two industries “manufacturing” and “education, healthcare, and social assistance” employ over half (54%) of Marlette residents. Employment in manufacturing rose as a share of residents’ employment by 13 percentage points between 2010 and 2017, while education, healthcare, and social assistance shrank as a share by 13 percentage points in the same time frame. This is a rare reversal of trends considering that industry employment projections from the Michigan

Department of Technology, Management, and Budget expect manufacturing to shrink by 1% by 2026 and for education and health services to increase by 14% in the State.<sup>1</sup> On a regional level, the “information” sector is expected to see the largest growth in the region by 2.9%, a figure that should cue cities to prepare for this growth (discussed more below).

### Employers and Jobs in Marlette

Strong anchor institutions in healthcare, social assistance, and manufacturing are at the core of Marlette’s economy and cement the community’s position as a job center in Sanilac County. Marlette Regional Hospital provides a variety of general and more specialized healthcare services to the region and maintained a staff of 453 employees in 2018. The healthcare facility is located on M-53 north of Marlette’s downtown. Marlette Community Schools is also a major employer in the City, and maintained a staff of 216 employees in the 2018-2019 school year across its elementary and high school facilities and transportation department.<sup>2</sup> The school district maintains a varied staff; in addition to traditional teachers, it hires speech therapists, counselors, and other specialists.<sup>3</sup> The community schools therefore contribute to Marlette’s position as a job center. Meanwhile, the manufacturing firms Grupo Antolin and Oetiker Inc. maintain facilities in the southern portion of the

City and together supplied over 500 jobs to the community in 2018.<sup>4,5</sup>

Large shares of employment in healthcare and manufacturing presents both benefits and potential weaknesses. Manufacturing and healthcare employment provided slightly higher median incomes among Marlette residents; \$31,058 and \$27,500, respectively, compared with \$24,074 across all industries. At the same time, large shares of jobs with single employers can present a potential weakness if these employers were to relocate or reduce production or services. Employers such as regional hospitals serve the needs of surrounding communities, are structured as nonprofits, and are perhaps less likely to relocate facilities on a large scale. Conversely, Michigan’s automotive-related manufacturers are less bound to geographic location and are notorious for layoffs, plant closures, and relocation in recent decades, particularly with innovations in production techniques and automation.

The graph of jobs by economic sector shows employment patterns in recent years throughout Sanilac County. The County’s manufacturing and healthcare sectors both added jobs starting in 2012, although 2016 employment figures were still 10% below pre-recession numbers in both sectors. The number of manufacturing jobs increased from 2,428 to 2,791 between 2012 and 2016, while

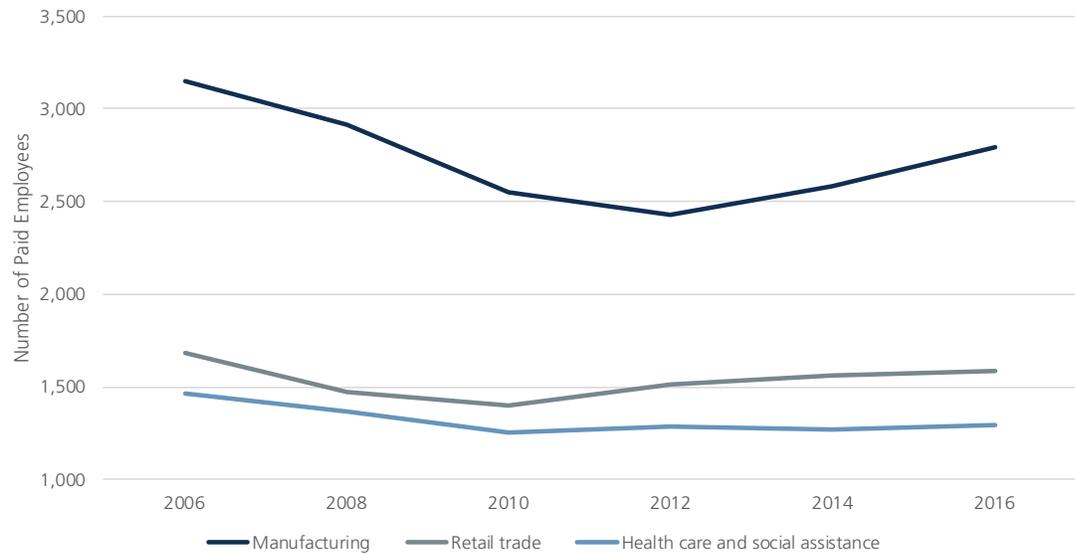
TABLE 11: INDUSTRIAL AND HEALTHCARE SERVICE EMPLOYERS IN MARLETTE\*

EMPLOYER NAME	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES	TYPE OF ESTABLISHMENT
Marlette Regional Hospital	453	Healthcare facility
Grupo Antolin	424	Auto parts manufacturer
Marlette Community Schools	216	Public school
Oetiker, Inc	100	Metal processing company
Marine Industries	25	Steel design and fabrication
Men of Steel	12	Steel fabrication
Blatsteel & Supply Inc	7	Steel sales, welding, fabrication
GMR Inc	5	Machine tool manufacturing

Source: Sanilac Regional Economic Consortium

\*This list is not exhaustive

FIGURE 5: ECONOMIC SECTORS IN SANILAC COUNTY



Source: American Fact Finder - County Business Patterns

healthcare and social assistance added very few jobs in that time frame – only an estimated eight jobs. This pattern roughly mirrors reduced shares of healthcare employment among Marlette residents before 2016. In 2019, Marlette Regional Hospital has procured land in the City for a new senior residential facility featuring independent and assisted living.<sup>6</sup> The facility could add new healthcare jobs in the Marlette community.

### Commuting

Marlette and its surrounding communities exhibit “regional” patterns of commuting and employment. The U.S. Census Bureau hosts an online interactive application called “On the Map” to estimate levels of commuting in and out of selected geographies and shows that Marlette, with its strong anchor institutions, functions as one of the employment hubs in Sanilac County.

According to the Census Bureau’s application, 1,489 workers were employed in Marlette in 2015, 1,341 of whom resided outside the community but commuted in for work. Simultaneously, about 693 Marlette residents were employed in that year, but only a small share (148 workers) of them lived and worked in the City. The remaining four-fifths of employed residents, a total of 545 workers, commute out of the City

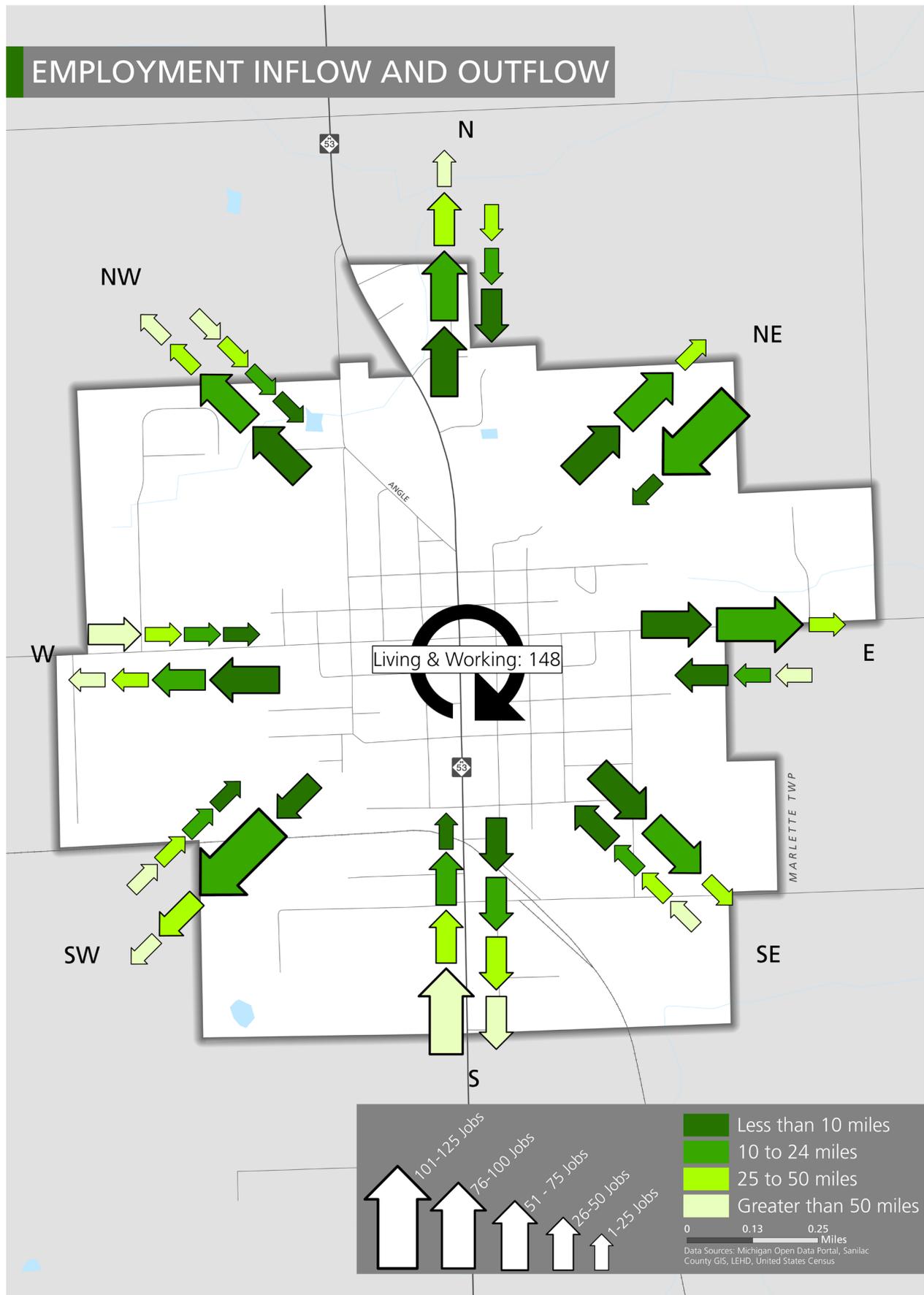
to work. The net influx of people into the City daily for work has important implications for the community from an economic standpoint as potential clientele to local businesses and residents. Many Marlette workers traveling outside the City worked in other Sanilac County communities including Sandusky and Brown City, while others commuted distances of over 50 miles to the Detroit, Flint, and Saginaw areas.<sup>7</sup>

Workers generally prefer living close to their job to reduce travel costs, although that is balanced by other personal priorities, including good housing and lifestyle. The large net influx of workers into the City suggests that employees in the region have a limited ability to live in Marlette. Numbers from the American Community Survey further illustrate this point: the average travel time to work for Sanilac County residents was a lengthy 27.5 minutes, compared to the Michigan average 24.3 minutes, meaning they likely live farther from the City than workers in other parts of the State. Workers traveling into Marlette might choose to live in the City if their housing preferences were met.

### WORKFORCE HOUSING

Attracting new residents and younger households is a key economic goal in Marlette; however, a mismatch between

MAP 7: EMPLOYMENT INFLOW AND OUTFLOW



## WORKFORCE HOUSING SUPPLY AND DEMAND

### FORECAST

Couples and small families with moderate incomes will seek three-bedroom housing priced between **\$150,000 and \$225,000**

### CURRENT MARKET

Most housing for sale was priced below or at the low end of the desired range.

Median listing price - **\$115,000**

Source: Community Research Services LLC - A Housing Market Analysis of Marlette, MI

housing supply and demand may hinder economic development. The concern is that a lack of desirable homeownership options for moderate-income workers in the City will continue to cause potential new residents and young families to reside elsewhere. This will, in turn, hinder the community's economic growth by limiting workers' ability to invest in the City. These concerns were identified in Marlette's July 2019 Housing Needs Assessment.

### Workers' Demand

The 2019 Housing Needs Assessment compiled data on income, demographics, and migration rates for Marlette to forecast the housing types that potential new workers moving to the community will likely seek. According to the forecasts, new households would likely be a mix of singles, couples, and small families, would have some type of specialized job training, and hold employment in healthcare, education, or manufacturing industries. Correspondingly, these households would earn moderate annual incomes between \$35,000 and \$75,000. With these characteristics, potential new households to Marlette will seek owner-occupied housing in specific formats, primarily three-bedroom homes priced between \$150,000 and \$225,000.

Data on housing available for purchase in Marlette shows that homeownership

options do not meet these preferences. Most housing was priced well below new residents' forecasted price points, indicating that the housing quality was poor or lacked modern features. Considering the average year of construction was 1950, it is probably a combination of these two factors that have dragged the price down. The median listing price in the Marlette area in 2019 was well below residents' forecasted desired price points, while the average listing price was only at the low end of residents' desired price ranges. Having said that, homes for sale stay on the market for a mere 38 days on average, indicating a high demand for what's on the market. However, a new construction single-family home may be hard to fit into the desired price range due to rising construction costs so the City must review its Zoning Ordinance to ensure that many "Missing Middle" options are available to try to lower housing prices and offer a wider range of options.

## DOWNTOWN MARLETTE / M-53 CORRIDOR

Marlette's commercial corridor extends north and south along M-53, a State trunkline. The community's traditional downtown encompasses five of those blocks between Kilgore Street and Angle Streets, while areas to the north and south of these streets contain suburban-style commercial businesses. Community members expressed the desire to revitalize Marlette's downtown, and City leaders determined several courses of action to achieve this.

### Retail Markets

The table "Establishments in Marlette" illustrates the composition of the City's 28 retail establishments in 2017. The largest single grouping of businesses was food service-related businesses; drinking places and restaurants together comprised over one quarter (29%) of the community's establishments. Automotive-related services, including automobile dealers, gas stations, and automotive parts stores also comprised a similarly large share of businesses (28%). Other traditional types of retail, including health and personal

care, sporting goods and hobby stores, and general merchandise, made up another quarter of the businesses.

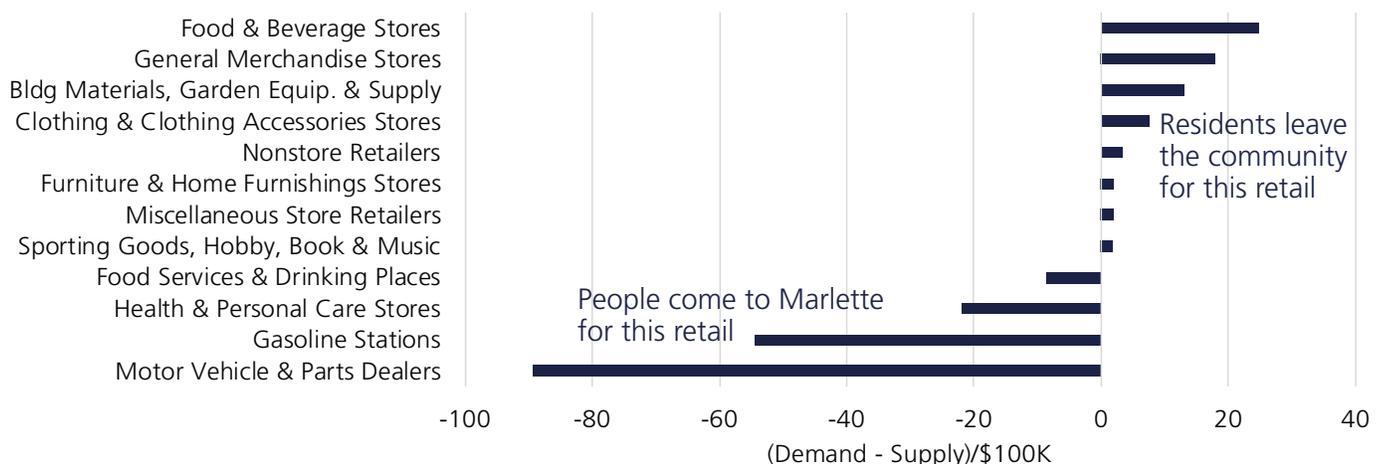
One concern for downtown is how well retailers' provision of goods and services matches local demand. ESRI's retail marketplace profile estimates the gap between supply and demand. "Surplus" markets describes when people living outside of Marlette come into the City for the product or service. In Marlette, "surplus" markets include gas stations, motor vehicle parts and accessories, food service, and personal health establishments. "Leakage" industries describes when residents travel outside the community to procure products. In Marlette, "leaky" retail markets found in the downtown include food and beverage stores, clothing and clothing accessories, and sporting goods, hobby and book stores, which combined forgo over \$3,000,000 annually in sales. In some instances, this happens because there are no local establishments, for example, clothing and accessories stores, electronics and appliances, and nonstore retailers. In other instances, industries that are leaking don't adequately supply the right product in their storefronts. These findings are key for tailoring business recruitment strategies towards leaking industries.

TABLE 12: ESTABLISHMENTS IN MARLETTE

RETAIL SECTOR	NUMBER OF BUSINESSES	PERCENT OF RETAIL SHARE
Food services and drinking places	8	28.5%
Motor vehicle parts	6	21.4%
Miscellaneous store retailers	4	14.2%
Health and personal care stores	3	10.7%
Sporting goods, hobby, books, and music	2	7.1%
Gasoline stations	3	7.1%
Food and beverage	1	3.5%
Furniture and home furnishings	1	3.5%
General merchandise (i.e. department stores)	1	3.5%
Electronics and appliances	0	0.0%
Clothing and accessories	0	0.0%
Nonstore retailers	0	0.0%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst - Retail Marketplace Profile and Community input

FIGURE 6: SURPLUS AND LEAKAGE RETAIL



Source: ESRI Business Analyst - Retail Marketplace Profile

A local survey asked specifically what types of businesses area residents wanted to see, and a summary of results are below based on 337 responses:

#### *Retail*

- » Women’s clothing boutique (69%)
- » Shoe store (50%)
- » Greenhouse (45%)
- » Craft supply store (41%; another 34% want crafting/pottery/sewing classes)
- » Dollar store (40%)

#### *Business Service*

- » Lodging options (49%; Airbnb, Bed and Breakfast, Executive Rentals)
- » Cellphone/technology store (39%)

#### *Entertainment*

- » Live entertainment in restaurants/bars (51%)
- » Outdoor lawn chair concerts in the park (50%)
- » Community rec center (38%)
- » Pottery/art/crafting/sewing classes (34%)
- » Outdoor family movies in the park (33%)
- » Microbrewery (32%)

#### *Dining*

- » Authentic Mexican sit down restaurant (55%)
- » Steakhouse/casual fine dining (55%)
- » Bakery with breakfast/lunch (52%)
- » Café/coffeehouse (39%)

Almost half of respondents spend \$21-\$30 for two adults for a sit down dinner and 34% spend \$31-\$50 on average. The daytime population is nearly triple the residency when factoring in schools, factories, and businesses. Over one-third of them dine out for lunch at least once a week, with another 18% dining out twice a week for lunch. One-third of respondents dine out at least once a

week for dinner as well, with another 29% dining out two to four times a week for dinner. Additionally, nearly everyone surveyed would dine out more often if there were more options available: 47% said yes and 50% said maybe, depending on the restaurants. More than one-third of people wish there were more fresh foods (not fried) available.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DOWNTOWN & BEYOND**

The main focus on economic development is to help existing businesses increase profitability by responding to what the community wants, and to attract more small businesses to diversify both the employment and the business mix. Marlette residents and leadership have a consensus on their desire to see the reuse of buildings in the City’s historic business corridor to support diverse business activities. Residents seek new establishments including dining, taverns, cafes, bakeries, retail, and personal services. Vacant storefronts, underused second stories, and misused first floors are characteristic of many buildings along Main Street in 2019. Commercial uses that are not complementary to a vibrant downtown, including auto parts stores, occupy storefronts in the community’s core between Kilgore and Angle Streets. This section inventories five major initiatives that the City can do to achieve desired changes:

- » Zoning
- » Attracting businesses through marketing
- » Facilitating business growth through education and training
- » Providing communications infrastructure and a co-working space
- » Expanding the Downtown Development Authority’s capacity

### **Commercial Zoning**

Inappropriate zoning requirements can limit the economic success of business districts. All commercial properties along M-53 fall under the “Commercial” or “Restricted Office” designations, which



*Luv More Ice Cream*  
Source: City of Marlette

permits disparate commercial uses such as space for retail businesses, service establishments, and small warehouses along the community's major roads, with no distinction between the traditional downtown and the suburban commercial areas on either side.<sup>8</sup> The original downtown, with its historic and compact buildings, wide sidewalks, and locally owned businesses, differs greatly from the outlying commercial areas, that have mid-century style architecture, are surrounded by parking lots to be convenient for automobiles and not pedestrians, and occupy larger building footprints for commercial uses such as warehousing. Because these two districts formed on different timelines and serve different purposes, two distinct commercial zones are warranted to separate experience-based from convenience-based commercial uses. Some of the commercial uses that occupy downtown storefronts are better suited to the suburban corridor to the north and south. These uses include auto parts stores, car washes, automobile sale lots which are permissible under the "Commercial" designation but detract from the retail, dining, and entertainment environment downtown. The City could adjust its "Commercial"

zoning to remove unsuitable uses downtown and permit them in a second more general business zone.<sup>9</sup>

Marlette's regulations on buildings' physical attributes are another area where downtown "Commercial" zoning could be differentiated from the outlying business areas. Marlette's "Commercial" designation mandates buildings cover a maximum of 40% of their lot and are separated from adjoining streets by yards. Many historic buildings along Main Street don't comply with these regulations; they occupy most of their lots and are set directly on the street, perhaps because they were "grandfathered in" before Marlette adopted the zoning. The City should review the physical standards to ensure that they reflect desired development starting with maximum lot coverages, minimum setbacks, and facades so that the downtown retains a pedestrian-friendly character.<sup>10</sup> These changes are important because "quality of building stock" was listed as an economic barrier by community leaders, and several downtown properties are redevelopment priorities.<sup>11</sup> If any of these buildings were to be demolished, new construction would have to abide by

## STRATEGIES FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ensure zoning meets desired uses and redevelopment goals

Develop apprenticeships and other workforce training initiatives

Create a marketing plan and market sites to businesses

Install high-speed internet

Create a coworking office space

Expand DDA staffing

“commercial” dimensional standards that could turn downtown into a suburban-style commercial corridor.

Marlette leaders also expressed support for more mobile businesses in the community as a way for new business owners to test their ideas with lower upfront costs. The City should, therefore, ensure that the district’s “Commercial” zoning downtown allows for temporary uses including food and retail trucks, especially considering their potential to activate public spaces.<sup>12</sup> To avoid conflict with brick and mortar businesses, work with established businesses and propose specific and limited times and dates, perhaps when businesses are closed.

### Attracting Businesses and Marketing

One potential step to fill storefronts in downtown is to actively market commercial spaces and their advantages to potential businesses, investors, and real estate professionals. Property information packages help promote a unified vision for the site to increase investor confidence and ensure that the community’s needs are fulfilled.<sup>13</sup> The City and the DDA should establish a working relationship with property owners to determine which spaces are in adequate condition to accommodate

desired businesses, and conversely, those that need physical rehabilitation to be occupied, based on the community survey results.<sup>14</sup> Considering the strength of the market now, if investors are not knocking on the door, then they need to be invited to see the City’s assets. More broadly, the City of Marlette can partner with adjacent jurisdictions, the Chamber of Commerce, small business development centers, and regional economic organizations to promote the region and its assets.

Using the survey data to target specific new businesses to the area will help to fill gaps in good and services and the empty buildings. Through press releases, social media marketing, and in-person visits to similar businesses within a 45 minute drive of Marlette, the City is collecting information on which businesses can expand into its market. Another approach is the Opportunity Match Symposium, which brings together entrepreneurs with investors, bankers, and state agencies offering services and/or grants to help small businesses grow. Marlette recently became the central location for all SBDC (Small Business Development Center) and SBA (Small Business Administration) trainings and counseling in the region.

### Business Growth Through Education and Training

Aside from attracting existing businesses to Marlette’s commercial spaces, there is homegrown potential to expand existing businesses and encourage locals to start new establishments, provided they have the appropriate training and resources. Educational institutions can play a vital role in addressing this. Marlette leadership understands that partnerships between the community’s schools and local businesses, including apprenticeships, internships, youth mentoring, volunteering, and business classes, could play a key role in growing the community’s economy. This type of programming could address two problems: local business owners seeking to retire, often lack younger employees to take over and a lack of a “stepping stone” to help youth make the jump into the business community.

Marlette schools have set a precedent for initiating partnerships with other organizations to facilitate experiential learning through career technical education classes.<sup>15</sup> The City could continue to work with the school district and local businesses to build these types of partnerships, especially considering that career training builds a viable path for youth outside of attending college, and could serve to keep the community's workers living locally.

Training adults is also important, as lack of access to capital and industry knowledge can prevent residents from starting business ventures. The Marlette Area Chamber of Commerce hosts educational sessions including "lunch and learns" and "meet and greets" that allow businesses to learn best practices from statewide experts and to network, coordinate, and share ideas.<sup>16</sup> Access to this programming is membership-based and requires the payment of dues. Also, Michigan's Small Business Development Center, which provides no-cost assistance to businesses throughout the State on raising capital, market research, business plan development, and human resources management, has agreed to work with existing and new businesses in Marlette.<sup>17</sup> Other initiatives at the State level, including the "Pure Michigan Business Connect" developed by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, provide resources including networking and consulting to companies seeking to expand.<sup>18</sup>

## Communications Infrastructure & Co-working Space

Providing communication infrastructure that businesses need is a reoccurring concern. Emerging technology-based businesses are often less reliant on transportation infrastructure than Michigan's historical manufacturing industries, but more dependent on communications such as high-speed internet connection. Broadband Now estimates that the average download speed in Marlette was 5.09 mbps – 86% slower than the statewide average, and that half of the residents have severely limited broadband choices.<sup>19</sup> The website also shows that the number of internet providers in Marlette is severely limited:

only one private entity provided service at speeds of over 25 megabits per second. This lack of competition could drive up the cost of services. Considering that these connections are key for modern business and quality of life, the City should consider approaches to fund and support broadband infrastructure through public-private partnerships.<sup>20</sup> Other improvements like public Wi-Fi can be financed by the DDA and could encourage visitors to spend time downtown.

In 2018, the State of Michigan passed legislation known as the "Small Cell Wireless Law," which is designed to streamline the process of small-scale wireless infrastructure deployment in public rights of way in Michigan communities.<sup>21</sup> Creating a dense network of these small cell towers will, some experts argue, allow providers to supply more flexible coverage and capacity and may ultimately eliminate the need for large cell towers.<sup>22</sup> The City of Marlette should enact ordinances that comply with the act's guidelines and create a streamlined process for small cell tower installation.

Marlette leaders and residents also highlighted the need for a co-working space. These are office spaces that are shared by a variety of users including entrepreneurs, freelance workers, or independent contractors that can't afford to rent a workspace. Co-working spaces are becoming increasingly important models as companies contract more tasks out to part-time and temporary specialists to reduce costs, leaving more workers to do their jobs remotely.<sup>23</sup> In Sanilac County, about 9% of workers are self-employed and may lack space to hold a meeting with clients or access office equipment. Many co-working spaces charge small fees for use and host complementary uses like a café and/or gym. The availability of this type of space could help facilitate the growth of new businesses and form a locus of entrepreneurs and workers engaged in remote and short-term contracting activities.

Similarly, residents expressed support for new "makerspaces" which provide

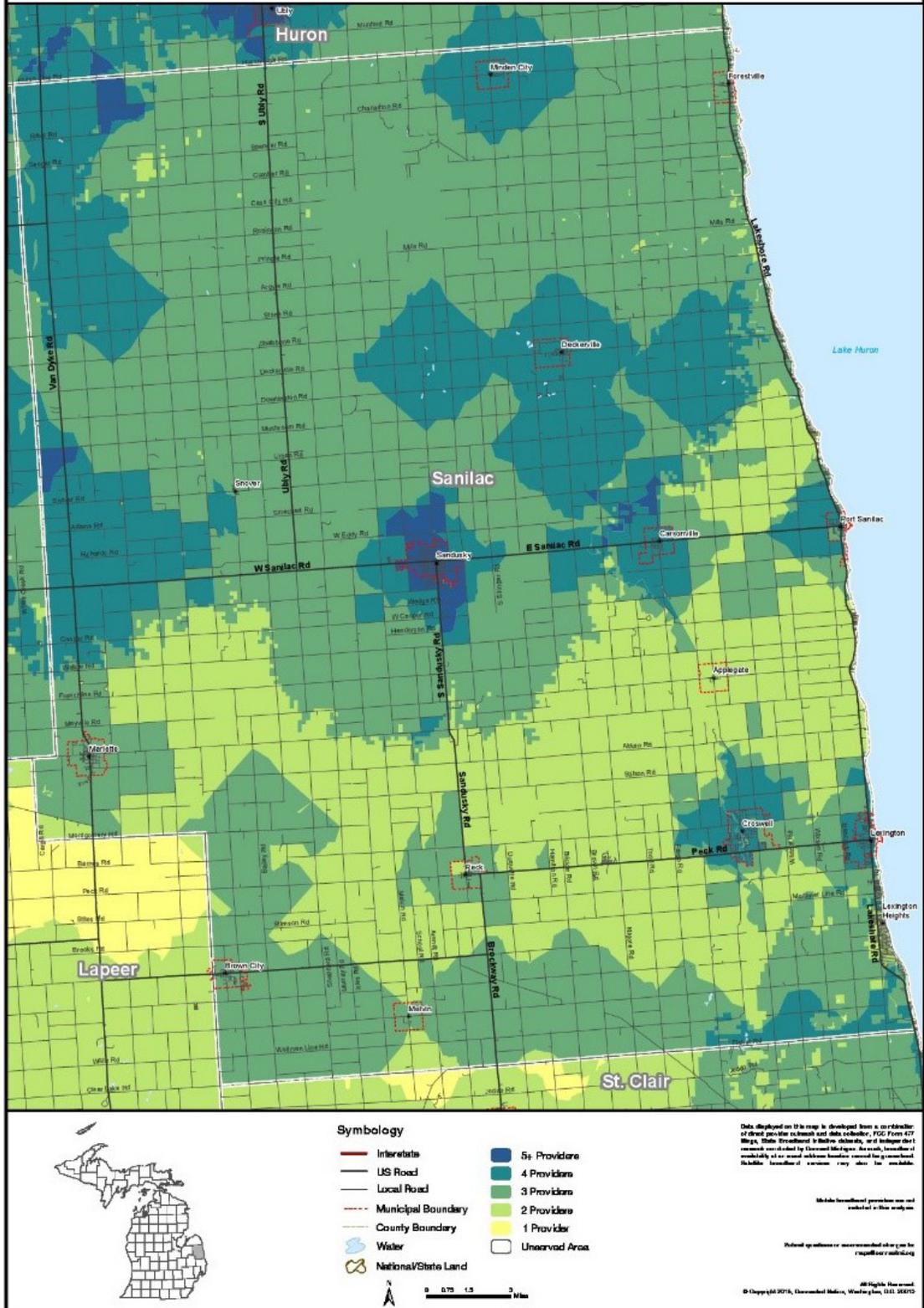
# Density of Broadband Providers

Advertised Speeds of at Least  
3 Mbps Download  
and 768 Kbps Upload

## Sanilac County Michigan



Published  
July 31, 2018



Connected Nation - Broadband Mapping and Analysis

workspace for people with interests in machining, technology, and digital art. These types of spaces provide the equipment, software, and facilities needed for these activities at a small membership or use cost.<sup>24</sup> These types of spaces can be especially geared towards youth, and the DDA and City should, therefore, promote this type of facility through partnerships with the library and other organizations involved in youth programming.

### **Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Capacity**

Marlette's DDA is the primary organization dedicated to the health and vitality of the community's downtown. The DDA supports economic development projects by tax increment financing, which allows the organization to capture tax revenue from properties in its district to finance improvements in the community's core. The DDA also administers façade improvement grants. The success of this program should be monitored and adjusted when necessary to accelerate the beautification of downtown and rehabilitation of storefronts with a focus on restoring facades to their historic architecture.<sup>25,26</sup> Through the downtown revitalization focus led by Project Rising Tide, the DDA is becoming more proactive in attracting new businesses and assisting entrepreneurs in developing their business plans with the Small Business Development Center. The DDA also contributes financially to the marketing of the business community along with the City and Chamber.

The Marlette community described a lack of staffing for youth engagement as an issue in the community.<sup>27</sup> The DDA could also seek to expand programming and staffing to address that area of concern, especially considering the potential role of youth programming in attracting families. During Project Rising Tide, it was recommended by MEDC, the Community Economic Development Association of Michigan (CEDAM), and the Rising Tide Steering Committee that Marlette create a permanent position for a Community Development Specialist to be the driving force in executing the Economic Development Strategy. With a dedicated

person in charge of this, Marlette can increase its capacity to apply for more grant funding through Community Development Block Grant and other programs, as well as implement more of the Master Plan goals.

### *The Chamber of Commerce*

The Marlette Chamber of Commerce is run by a self-elected board of business professionals and entrepreneurs. Their mission is to promote collaboration between businesses and the community to foster business prosperity, civic engagement, and quality of life. They provide free trainings for small businesses, coordinate four major community events annually, organize business cross-promotions, and promote member businesses via Facebook, Constant Contact email newsletters, a shopping and entertainment map, and member business directory.

## **THE CITY'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ROLE**

The City of Marlette's focus on economic development is both broader and narrower than the Chamber and DDA. It is broader in that it gathers input from a wide variety of community members in developing the vision for the future and the immediate wants/needs of the town, and working them into the Master Plan. It is narrower in the one-on-one work with potential property owners and developers to streamline the zoning and permitting process so they can start and grow businesses in Marlette.

### *The Community Development Fellow*

In 2019, the Rising Tide Community Development Fellow gleaned input from a large portion of the public and business community about what they want and need for growth. This was done in a variety of ways:

- » Community Visioning Session as part of the Master Plan process
- » Rising Tide Steering Committee meetings with local community leaders
- » Attendance at public meetings including Chamber, DDA, City Council

- » One-on-one conversations with business owners, managers, residents, and entrepreneurs
- » Several community and business surveys
- » Discussions with the Superintendent, students, and teachers
- » Presentations at local service groups
- » Chamber of Commerce trainings

## Michigan Main Street

Main Street is a national program that assists communities to preserve and reinvigorate their downtowns. The Main Street approach is a coordinated grassroots effort that focuses on economic vitality, design, organization, and promotion. Its approach aligns with Marlette’s recent endeavors because it respects historic preservation, simultaneously looks for small wins and long-term change, and relies on inexpensive, place-based events to bring people back downtown. The success of this program hinges on a strong group of volunteers, which the City has cultivated during the Master Plan process. The progress of the downtown ultimately depends on consistent dedication from the residents and staff, but the Main Street program provides a framework and support, and has a track record for turning downtowns into destinations. To gain access to this program, a City must apply first to be eligible for assistance.

## EXPANDED FACILITIES, RECREATION, AND PLACEMAKING

Developing and maintaining a robust array of recreational amenities and facilities will be a major component in a thriving economy in Marlette. Emerging employment sectors including healthcare, education, and technology all rely on a labor force with specific job training and education to thrive. The young families and workers who have these critical skills value certain lifestyle amenities when deciding where to live: they desire a rich array of recreation facilities,

programmed events, activities for youth, and a distinctive “sense of place.”<sup>28</sup> The ability of a community to provide these amenities is related to economic success.

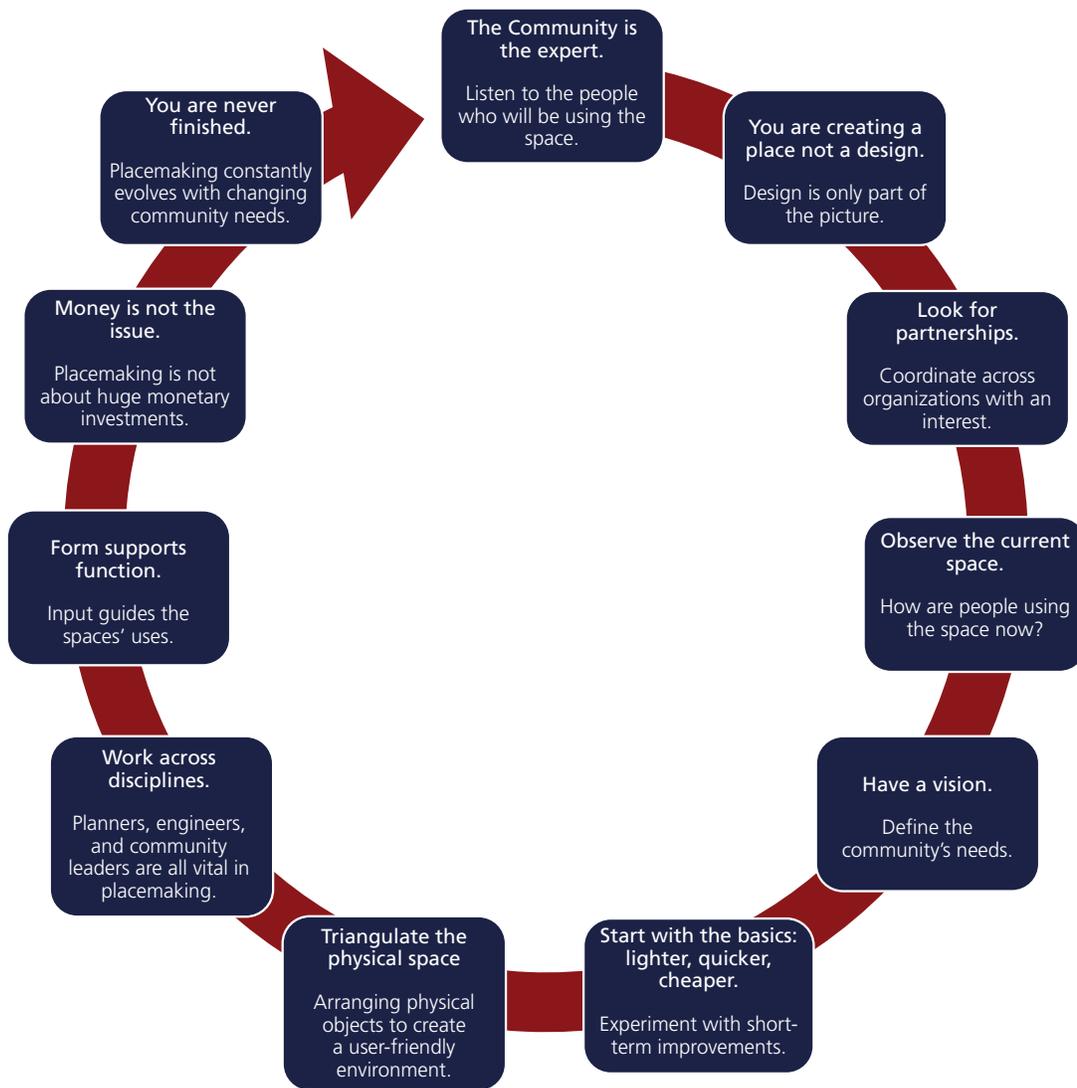
## Recreation

The need for indoor and outdoor recreation space geared toward youth was noted among Marlette leadership as a way to draw in workforce-aged residents. The City doesn’t maintain an indoor public facility such as a pool, gym, or track that is available for public use. These amenities are, however, important in attracting residents considering that the area’s climate is not conducive to many outdoor activities in the winter months. Residents envisioned that an indoor facility could take the form of a community center with athletic facilities and a pool.<sup>29</sup> Community visioning also showed the desire for a new RV park, newer playground equipment, and updated and renovated parks.<sup>30</sup> The City of Marlette should, accordingly, work with organizations such as the school district to identify possible locations for these facilities and to determine actions to finance them. These items are prioritized in the City’s 2018 parks and recreation plan, and Marlette should continue to follow those recommendations.<sup>31</sup>

## Placemaking

Great public spaces, including parks and plazas, serve as focal points of social activity in a community and invite people to spend their time in a place. Although it is notably difficult to define shared characteristics between great public spaces, these facilities are key in attracting professional demographics and will be important considerations in Marlette. National nonprofits, including the Project for Public Spaces, have defined general principles to guide communities. One takeaway is public spaces don’t have to be large and costly; many effective places can be achieved with small-scale improvements to a community’s existing configuration. Although Marlette has a traditional downtown with wide sidewalks and public benches, the district lacks defined gathering space. The City and DDA could work to engage

FIGURE 7: PLACEMAKING PROCESS



Source: Project for Public Spaces

the community to develop a vision and experiment with projects that enhance the public realm.

Designing user-friendly spaces also necessitates that they are safe and accessible for all users. In the August 2019 work session, seniors mentioned they were scared to park on Main Street.<sup>32</sup> The City and DDA could work to improve the safety and accessibility of parking facilities downtown, and especially the public parking lot east of Main Street.

## Making the Vision Happen

Making physical improvements requires stable financing. To this end, the City will likely need to first grow its tax base by initiating its economic strategies such as increasing homeownership and expanding business in downtown. Once adequate revenue streams are established through these efforts, the City will have greater capacity to commence improvements to parks and public spaces. In the meantime, a millage could be placed on the ballot

to solve any immediate recreation needs; the results from the 2018 Parks and Recreation Master Plan showed resident support for a one mil increase.

## **GROWING TOURISM**

Boosting tourism is a common economic strategy to bring money into the area and support local businesses. The City has worked with the Chamber of Commerce to create a tourism map that highlights Marlette's retail, dining, and things to do. It also features the cluster of Amish businesses that are located a few miles east of the City. Their custom high-quality products are a draw to the region, and due to their proximity to Marlette, can be leveraged to bring tourists into the City for a meal and/or recreational opportunity. The map will be displayed digitally and at strategic sites in the region. The City can work to define what makes it unique through an inclusive branding process that shares the City's story. To make itself a desirable place to visit, Marlette should track its progress by reaching out to visitors and asking for feedback about how to improve its tourist amenities.

## **REDEVELOPMENT SITES**

At the time of this writing, the City of Marlette is seeking certification under the State of Michigan's Redevelopment Ready Communities ® program. The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) administers the certification to communities to promote business, investment, and physical redevelopment. To achieve the certification, communities must first adhere to a set of best practices designed to facilitate economic development. These guidelines include training municipal officials and staff members on best practices, streamlining the development review process, making the Zoning Ordinance user-friendly, and accommodating a wide variety of appropriate uses. One critical step in the certification process is to identify priority sites that the community seeks to see

redeveloped, catalog information on each site, including available infrastructure, ownership, and zoning, and then actively marketing the sites and their advantages to developers. MEDC recommends that these sites be in high impact areas such as downtowns, high-visibility commercial corridors, and historic neighborhoods. These priority sites can include:

- » Vacant parcels
- » Underused buildings
- » Surface parking
- » Brownfields and former industrial sites

The City of Marlette has designated several properties in high impact areas in its downtown as priority redevelopment sites. The sites were selected based on several factors that would affect the feasibility and the time line of the redevelopment process. The factors agreed upon by the Rising Tide Steering Committee were:

- » Local property owner
- » Site's potential use
- » Need to rezone
- » Available utilities
- » Historic or obsolete designation
- » Visibility
- » Paved parking
- » Exterior conditions
- » Environmental contamination
- » Community input

Each criterion was weighted and each property received a final score. The properties with the highest overall score and with the consent of the property owner will be the focus of the City and DDA's redevelopment efforts. Individual property information packages were created and marketed widely to fill these buildings with retail and services that align with the community's vision for Marlette.

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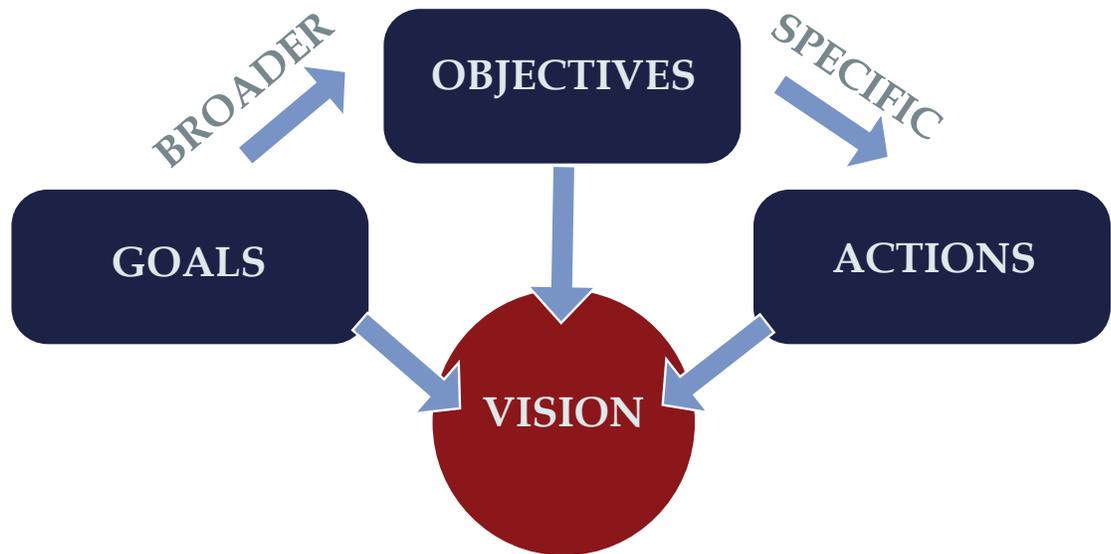
## IMPLEMENTATION

With the data and community engagement collected and compiled, Marlette can turn its attention to a more detailed Action Plan that outlines the City’s goals over the next ten years. The “Vision Diagram” explains that the goals, objectives, and actions are designed to reinforce the vision statement, a statement that was created based on the community’s input that serves as a road map with a broadly defined direction for reaching its vision. The graphic also illustrates that the actions are folded under objectives and that the objectives are folded under goals. As your move right from goals to actions, the intent becomes more specific: goals have the widest scope, objectives clarify the purpose of the goals, and actions are strategies the City can *do* to advance towards its goals.

### VISION STATEMENT

Over the next ten years, Marlette will be a City with a steadily growing population, where there are housing options with safe, attractive neighborhoods to support its residents through all stages of life. It is a City that tourists visit and recommend to their friends and family. It is a place where young people stay and young families move to due to ample economic opportunity; a high-quality school system; downtown entertainment, dining, and retail; and access to recreation.

FIGURE 8: VISION DIAGRAM



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

A summary of community engagement efforts and results explains how Marlette arrived at its vision statement. Community engagement is a cornerstone of responsible planning. As such, two methods of engagement were used to collect feedback from the community. A visioning session at Marlette High School was held to educate the public on Project Rising Tide and to provide an opportunity to sit with neighbors and participate in a face-to-face exchange of ideas with local officials. On April 22, 2019, about 40 residents attended and brainstormed how to achieve the City's vision over the next 10 years. Concurrently, a community survey successfully garnered a total of 489 responses between March and May 2019. The survey was widely publicized on the City's and Chamber of Commerce Facebook page, two press releases and feature stories in the County papers, a live 20-minute interview on local radio, flyers sent through the water bill, and through key institutions like school, banks, and committee meetings. Because surveys are taken in the privacy of one's own home, the results are more personal and candid, a valuable element to this process so that the City can reach a breadth and depth of input between the two methods.

In both the survey and the visioning session, respondents were asked what word or phrase they want to describe Marlette in the future. Their combined responses appear in the word cloud: the larger the word, the more often it was repeated. One main theme relates to the local economy with words like "growing," "booming," and "thriving." Many of the other words describe the communal side they want to retain: "small," "quaint," "quiet," "friendly," and "family." Participants hope for a growing Marlette that has the character of a small town, a strong familial community, and also offers entertainment as a regional destination.

More specific survey results will be shared in this section as they relate to the major themes discussed below.

## VISIONING SESSION & COLLECTIVE PRIORITIES

At the visioning session when participants were asked what they want Marlette to look like in the future, they recorded their ideas as group, voted on their top three, and then shared them with the group at large. Each group's top three priorities were recorded in real time and once they were all collected, each participant could vote on their top three again from the comprehensive list. The purpose of

this exercise is to demonstrate the type of process that local government must undergo when dealing with a limited budget and a long wish list.

Items that received the highest votes are known as Marlette’s “collective priorities.” In the table “Collective Priorities by Age Cohort,” the top ten priorities are listed, and the votes are broken down by age group to see if there is any difference in priorities by age cohort. There were few participants representing the younger demographics from high school or ages 19-34. Even still, the top three responses describe a desire for a City with more entertainment options, primarily in the downtown where there are building vacancies and sufficient parking for them. Interestingly, they also wish to see a more diversified income among residents. Residents would like to see a more balanced range of incomes represented in the city limits to offset the relatively high poverty rate.

FIGURE 9: ONE WORD OR PHRASE THAT DESCRIBES MARLETTE IN THE FUTURE



TABLE 13: COLLECTIVE PRIORITIES BY AGE COHORT

PRIORITY	TOTAL VOTES	HS STUDENTS	AGE 19-34	AGE 35-55	AGE 55+
Bustling downtown	18	1	0	7	10
More dining options	13	2	0	7	4
Diversified incomes	11	0	1	5	5
High employment industries	7	0	2	3	2
Housing for all age groups	5	0	1	0	4
Increase population	5	0	0	0	5
RV park	5	0	0	0	5
Pedestrian friendly	4	0	0	1	3
Senior living complex	2	0	0	0	2
Hallmark movie	2	0	0	1	1

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTION PLANS

The following section connects the community engagement results more directly to the goals to provide a rationale for why the goals were selected. The goals are divided into major themes:

- » Housing
- » Downtown
- » Local Economy
- » Infrastructure
- » Recreation

The objectives clarify the intent of the goals, and the action is the specific strategy the City can take to achieve the associated goal. Tied to each action is the lead party to hold entities accountable, and a time frame for when an action should be started or completed. The desired time frame helps ensure that actions can be coordinated with the budgeting cycle and describes the level of urgency.

“Affordability of housing” was the second most popular answer when asked what factors were important in choosing to live in Marlette and “quality of housing” was fourth (out of 12 options).

## Housing

### *Variety*

The vast majority of survey-takers live in single-family detached homes (85%), and a similar proportion want to live in the same type of home. When adding up all of the alternatives to a single-family home, about 12% of the population (not including senior housing) wish to live in a different type of housing format:

- » Attached home
- » Duplex, triplex, fourplex
- » Small apartment building/condo
- » Large apartment building/condo
- » Loft
- » Mobile

The price range for homeowners that suits over two-thirds of respondents is between \$50,000-\$150,000. This is problematic as new construction of a single-family home with modern features tends to exceed this range. However, the price can be brought down through the provision of smaller single-family homes, attached units, and modular housing. Another 9% do not feel comfortable buying a home yet and either rent or live with a loved one.

### *Quality*

Another finding from the Housing Needs Assessment is that many single-family homes have been converted into rentals, and the condition of many of these homes are in poor or fair condition. The conversion to rentals removes homeownership options from the market and when kept in poor condition reduces the value of adjacent homes. One way the City can discourage the conversion into low-quality rentals is to develop and enforce a rental inspection program to ensure the structures are well maintained and take away some of the financial incentive for landlords to forgo repairs.

TABLE 14: HOUSING ACTION PLAN

GOALS & OBJECTIVES	ACTION	LEAD PARTY	TIME FRAME
<p>Expand housing options for the target markets identified in the Housing Needs Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» To induce population growth through housing production</li> <li>» To provide suitable housing options for residents through all life stages</li> </ul>	Apply for the MSHDA Mod program to invest in lower-cost homes	CED	2020
	Identify and map vacant residential parcels of land and extend necessary infrastructure to these parcels	CED/Assessor	2020
	Expand the types of multi-family housing units permitted to comply with the RRC requirements	City Manager	2020
	Assist businesses downtown to convert the second-story to residential units	CED	2024
	Update and promote the use of accessory dwelling units on single-family lots	Planning Commission	Ongoing
	Reduce the minimum lot size for multiple-family and single-family units where appropriate	Planning Commission	2021
	Expand the maximum lot coverage for multiple-family units	Planning Commission	2021
	Condense R-2 and R1-C zones and expand to permit duplexes in neighborhoods	Planning Commission/City Manager	2021
	Market changes to residential zoning standards to the development community	CED	Ongoing
	Conduct a cost benefit analysis on housing development on the periphery of the City before extending infrastructure	City Manager	When needed
<p>Improve housing quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» To enhance the appearance of the neighborhoods</li> <li>» To boost property values</li> <li>» To ensure that residents are living in structures that protect their health and safety</li> </ul>	Create a one-page handout of state and local resources that assist homeowners with maintenance and repairs	CED	2020
	Develop a rental inspection program	Planning Commission	2022
	Target blighted areas and apply for housing rehabilitation grants through MSHDA or USDA	CED/City Manager	Ongoing

CED = Community & Economic Development; DDA = Downtown Development Authority;  
 DPW = Department of Public Works; SBA = Small Business Association; SBDC = Small Business Development Center

## Downtown

From the survey, participants were asked more specifically what types of retail, businesses, and entertainment options they'd like to see come to Marlette. The top responses provide direction for where the DDA can focus its attention of business recruitment. The results are worth sharing with local business owners who may be willing to expand or start a new business, or bring in entrepreneurs from the region. It is recommended that the DDA begin the recruitment process based on the results, as they express strong community support. While a co-working space was not suggested by the community, it is recommended to support the changing employee-employer dynamic in cases where people work remotely and need space for meetings and presentations.

In addition to business recruitment, the City and DDA should work on creating a separate zoning district for the downtown that focus on high-quality

design and architecture, pedestrian-friendly amenities, and an updated list of permitted uses. The downtown should have a recognizable feel that is not confused with the rest of the commercial corridor. By using the facade improvement program, the DDA is working to upgrade the aesthetic ambiance of the downtown core, but changing the ordinance to enforce stricter design guidelines would reduce new development from using outdated building materials.

Other ways to boost business is to host coordinated events and work with business owners to draw in tourists to the area. Working with the business community, more data can be collected on the success of these events for business sales and exposure. Events could also be a good opportunity to allow emerging entrepreneurs to test new ideas in mobile set-ups. To support business is to allow them space throughout the start up phase until they can own brick-and-mortar spaces downtown.

TABLE 15: DOWNTOWN ACTION PLAN

GOALS & OBJECTIVES	ACTION	LEAD PARTY	TIME FRAME
<p>Restore the downtown to the entertainment and retail epicenter of Marlette</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» To fill buildings downtown with uses that align with residents’ desired retail and services</li> <li>» To encourage beautiful building facades</li> <li>» To invest in placemaking to beautify the downtown and attract visitors</li> </ul>	Identify projects that high school students can help the DDA organize, and seek out volunteers	CED/High School	2020
	Hire a full-time Community Economic Development Specialist	DDA	2021
	Continue to administer the grant facade program, prioritizing properties that will restore the building to its historic appearance	DDA	Ongoing
	Create a separate “Downtown Zone” that updates permitted uses, parking, design, and landscaping standards	DDA/City Manager/ Planning Commission	2021
	Use the survey results to recruit businesses to downtown that align with the residents’ retail and service preferences; market findings to regional businesses/investors	CED	Ongoing
	Encourage business owners to host events associated with their business (i.e. trivia night or live music at a local restaurant)	CED	Ongoing
	Plan one event in the downtown per season	Chamber of Commerce	Ongoing
	Identify spaces and funding sources for public art	DDA	Ongoing
	Create a “mobile truck” ordinance that permits new businesses to test ideas	City Manager	2021
	Work with the Michigan Municipal League to pilot projects that test how to repurpose underutilized space	City Manager	2021
	Consider converting a building downtown into a co-working space	DDA	2022
	Deploy public wifi downtown	DDA	2023
	Apply to become a Michigan Main Street member	DDA	2022

CED = Community & Economic Development; DDA = Downtown Development Authority; DPW = Department of Public Works; SBA = Small Business Association; SBDC = Small Business Development Center

## Local Economy

### *Business Services*

The local economy is larger than a downtown and the City. Local economies are embedded in a regional economy that is often subject to state and national trends. As such, it is best for a community to build strong relationships with county and regional governments, large nonprofits and foundations, and educational and training institutions that have a larger scope of work or an integral role in Marlette's success. For example, in addition to investing in place, a City is well served by investing in its people. Business owners may not have a succession plan for when they retire, which could result in a closed store instead of a revamp of the business. Another instance could be a young person with a great idea who does not know how to start a brick and mortar business. Partnerships with organizations with expertise in small business development, like the Small Business Association (SBA) or the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) provides support to the business community that want to start or grow a company. Marlette has recently brought these services back to the City to assist entrepreneurs. In the same vein, reaching out to students, teaching them business skills in school, and creating a pipeline for them to succeed in the City could provide huge payouts in retained youth and economic growth.

### *Redevelopment*

In terms of land use planning, economic development has a large component of filling vacant buildings. However, the purpose of planning is to fill them with

employment sectors that provide good jobs and are projected to grow. Looking to the future, "new economy" jobs that are knowledge and service based are expected to grow, and it is important to be ready for them with an updated Zoning Ordinance, infrastructure, and a streamlined development process. The talent attracted these types of jobs are also looking for social infrastructure for the hours they are not working. As younger generations tend to pick places they want to live first and jobs second, having entertainment and recreation options are also an economic development strategy. Below are some examples of new economy industries:

- » Alternative energy
- » Breweries/distilleries
- » Indoor recreation
- » Research
- » Film/heavy arts
- » Makerspace
- » Information technology
- » Small scale manufacturing

### *Tourism*

Another way to improve the local economy is to increase your presence as a tourist destination. Marlette has recently created a map of sites worth visiting; as the community changes, the map will have to be updated and consistently marketed to a broad network. The City can work to define what makes it unique through an inclusive branding process that shares the City's story. To make itself a desirable place to visit, Marlette should track its progress by reaching out to visitors and asking for feedback about how to improve its tourist amenities.

TABLE 16: LOCAL ECONOMY ACTION PLAN

GOALS & OBJECTIVES	ACTION	LEAD PARTY	TIME FRAME
Assist business owners to expand and attract new business to Marlette » To provide opportunities for youth and residents to become local entrepreneurs » To provide training on how to start, operate, and expand a business	Hold regular and consistent trainings with business owners and/or interested community members.	SBDC, SBA	Ongoing
	Work with businesses to create a summer internship program with students	Career Center	2021
	Market local jobs to regional education and training institutions	CED	Ongoing
	Work with the school district to align training with jobs available locally	MiWorks/School District/CED	2022
	Promote the Chamber of Commerce events and services	Chamber of Commerce/CED	Ongoing
	Regularly check in with businesses to see what challenges they are facing	CED	Ongoing
	Connect new or interested business owners with housing opportunities in Marlette	CED	Ongoing
Facilitate redevelopment opportunities using the RRC best practices » To keep commercial and industrial buildings occupied » To ensure that properties are filled with businesses that align with the community’s vision	Keep an updated list of vacant, abandoned, or underutilized properties	CED/Assessor	Ongoing
	Work with property owners to create property information packages and market properties widely	CED	Ongoing
	Actively seek “new economy” businesses and build the associated social infrastructure that young workers want to see	CED/City Manager	2024
Boost tourism to the Thumb » To increase the local economy with outside dollars » To attract new businesses to Marlette	Keep tourist map up-to-date and market online	CED	Ongoing
	Quantify tourist trips to the City and survey them on their experience in Marlette	CED	Ongoing
	Identify a site that could be used for lodging to accommodate increased tourism	CED	2020

CED = Community & Economic Development; DDA = Downtown Development Authority; DPW = Department of Public Works; SBA = Small Business Association; SBDC = Small Business Development Center

## Infrastructure

### *Roads and Sidewalks*

While infrastructure is not commonly an exciting topic to the public, it is the backbone of their success. Roads in Michigan are in poor condition, and their deterioration is a result of many factors that are out of a City's control. However, they are a highly visible and daily used features of all municipalities and therefore warrant some additional steps to improve them, such as developing a system to regularly monitor their condition and budget for their repairs.

Just as important as road quality is the expansion of road use to pedestrians, bicyclists, public transit, and disabled persons. In the community wide survey, almost 18% of participants reported not feeling safe from traffic when walking or biking. Moreover, about 35% of survey-takers want to live within walking distance to small local businesses, and 24% want to be within biking distance. However, most of these respondents are fearful of traveling throughout the City by means other than a vehicle, which adds to the deterioration of roads. Providing safe spaces for alternative modes of transit is an investment that reduces our carbon footprint, promotes physical activity, and add patronage to commercial corridors.

### *Broadband*

Broadband is slow in Marlette and the competition is weak. Slow download and upload speeds have negative consequences for economic growth and quality of life. As a staple of the modern economy and most households, this is an investment the City cannot forgo. While data was not specifically collected on Marlette youth regarding this topic, but it is a known reason that young people leave rural areas for cities with reliable internet and cell service.

### *Stormwater*

Sanilac County is interesting in that there are no designated FEMA floodplains. However, predictions declare more frequent and intense precipitation, and when mixed with impervious surfaces, it is a likely combination for increased flooding. Marlette's remaining funds for the SAW grant can be used to investigate ways to use grey infrastructure – people-engineered stormwater management infrastructure that typically includes pipes, pumps, ditches, and detention ponds – to expand stormwater management capacity. One strategy is to map where flooding most commonly occurs in the City after a storm and tailor approaches to particular sites.

Households also contribute to flooding if they do not actively capture and store water during a storm. There are several ways that residential structures can reduce the amount of water that goes into the storm drains, but many residents may lack knowledge on how to do so. It is recommended that the City share with property owners ways to retain water onsite and incentivize them to do so.

TABLE 17: INFRASTRUCTURE ACTION PLAN

GOALS & OBJECTIVES	ACTION	LEAD PARTY	TIME FRAME
Maintain high-quality roads and sidewalks that are safe for all users » To provide public rights-of-way that welcome nonmotorized users » To beautify the public rights-of-way so that the journey between destinations can also be enjoyed	Train DPW to use the PASER system on roads and sidewalks on an annual basis	DPW	2021
	Prioritize and budget for repair of roads and sidewalks starting with those in the poorest condition	DPW/City Manager	2021
	Hold a community audit that inventories sidewalk gaps, lighting, benches, and landscaping for the neighborhoods and commercial corridors	CED	2021
	Complete Safe Routes to School project	City Manager	2021
Install a broadband network » To provide reliable internet service » To become a more competitive business hub » To retain youth	Review the Zoning Ordinance for wireless communication facilities	City Manager	2020
	Update the Zoning Ordinance to include small cell wireless facilities and comply with legislation	Planning Commission	2020
	Work with local or regional providers to install a broadband network	City Manager	2023
Reduce the impact of flooding on people, property, and infrastructure » To invest in strategies that expand stormwater capacity » Educate property owners on how to capture stormwater onsite	Develop a Stormwater Management Plan	City Manager/DPW	2022
	Map areas in the City that are prone to flooding	City Engineer	2022
	Require that new construction can demonstrate water retention onsite	City Manager/Planning Commission	2023
	Use green infrastructure, rain barrels, or porous pavement in floodprone areas to reduce the damaging effects of excess stormwater	DPW	2024
	Separate combined stormwater and sanitary systems	DPW	2025

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## Recreation

### *Community Pool*

Recreation is more than a luxury for small cities, it's an important space that has the power to improve property values and attract families to a neighborhood. Recreational space is so important that it requires a completely separate plan. Marlette updated its Parks and Recreation Master Plan in 2018. During that process, residents were asked what improvements they wish to see. The third highest response was to "renovate the pool house," selected by 35% of respondents. Marlette's main park features a community pool that is a cherished community asset in need of an update. The Parks Committee is currently working on how to fund upgrades to the facility. While the pool has been supported by local organizations, a steady stream of revenue is needed to calculate how to

complete these repairs. A majority of parks and recreation survey respondents were willing to pay a 1/2 millage for this project. With the City's focus on the pool, it is recommended that Marlette does not acquire additional parkland until the budget can accommodate increased maintenance costs.

### *Programming*

The same survey respondents desired more programmed events, especially in the summer. More specifically they wished for a summer series. The Action Plan expands on those wishes and calls for planning recreational events year-round and marketing spaces that are available for indoor recreation in the colder months. Recreation is another good topic to engage the youth. As users of these spaces, it is worth asking them to help fundraise and plan for improvements that cater to them.

TABLE 18: RECREATION ACTION PLAN

GOALS & OBJECTIVES	ACTION	LEAD PARTY	TIME FRAME
Upgrade the community pool » To enhance a community asset for increased public use » To provide a safe place for families to re-create and exercise	Institute a temporary millage increase to improve the pool house	Park Board	2020
	Create an inclusive community process for re-designing the community pool	CED/Park Board	2021
	Develop a maintenance plan for keeping the facility safe and usable	DPW	2022
	Expand programming to align with suggestions in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan	Park Board	Ongoing
	Modernize the facilities to be ADA compliant and eco-friendly	City Manager/DPW	2023
Expand recreational programming and partnerships » To provide residents with opportunities to socialize with neighbors and build civic pride » To promote public health and wellness » To provide positive things for the youth to do	Plan a family-friendly recreational event for each season	Park Board	2021
	Increase programming in the summer and invest in the necessary infrastructure to holding regular events (i.e. outdoor movies, live music)	CED/Park Board	2021
	Engage the youth to fundraise and plan for recreation spaces they want to use	CED/School District	Ongoing

CED = Community & Economic Development; DDA = Downtown Development Authority;  
 DPW = Department of Public Works; SBA = Small Business Association; SBDC = Small Business Development Center

## FUTURE LAND USE MAP

Another tool to help Marlette realize its goals is to create a Future Land Use Map (FLUM). It's a tool that the City can use to visualize how land should be developed over time. Unlike a Zoning Map that is designed parcel-by-parcel to enforce the legally binding Zoning Ordinance, the FLUM provides a direction on how future development can align with best planning practices. The FLUM identifies districts that may evolve within the City and describes the purpose of that change.

While most of the FLUM designations correspond to existing zones, there are some departures shown in the table "Future Land Use Categories" concerning housing density, the creation of a

downtown zone and transitional commercial uses, and the conservation of natural features.

## FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

### Housing

#### *Low Density*

The low-density single-family housing remains on the periphery of the City on larger lot sizes in the quieter northwest corner of the City and neighborhoods surrounding East Marlette Road. This category combines zones R1-A and R1-B and recommends that the minimum lot size, widths, and setbacks follow the regulations in R1-B. This would increase

TABLE 19: FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

FLUM DESIGNATION	CORRESPONDING ZONE	FLUM DESCRIPTION
Low-Density	R1-A, R1-B	A single-family area on the largest lots permitted in the City with limited associated uses
Medium-Density	R1-C, R-2	A neighborhood that offers single-family and two-person housing on smaller lots than the low-density designation with limited associated uses
High-Density	R-M	A range of attached, higher-density housing units to help fill in the gap in the "Missing Middle"
Manufactured Housing	RMH	No changes recommended
Transition	RO	Surrounding the downtown, the intent of this designation is to permit quieter commercial uses that are compatible with higher density housing units as a buffer to single-family neighborhoods
Downtown	New	A mixed-use hub of retail, dining, and entertainment with design standards that accentuate its historic buildings and footprint and accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists
Commercial Corridor	C	Commercial uses that are geared towards highway passers-by and convenience-based retail
Industry & Technology	M	An area exclusively dedicated to research, development, and manufacturing that, due to its scale of operation, is buffered from residential units and serviced by adequate utilities and thoroughfares
Conservation	New	Where land is densely covered by forests or wetlands, development should follow tighter development standards to protect the surrounding natural features through the use of low impact design standards (LID).



residential density without disrupting the single-family character and could make single-family homeownership on smaller lots more attainable for target markets.

### *Medium Density*

The majority of the neighborhoods would fall into this category. It is a combination of R1-C and R-2 which would allow single-family homes and duplexes to co-exist in this zone. Otherwise, the R-2 zone is not adequately represented on the Zoning Map even though it has the potential to provide a low impact way of broadening the housing types permitted in this zone. As a medium density option, the minimum lot size could be further reduced to 5,000.

### *Multi-family*

Multi-family housing is primarily permitted in two areas but mainly on the western side of the City. The R-M zone permits single-family and higher-density units, but is vague on the types of multi-family units. In order to comply with RRC requirements, the revision of this zone could include the following housing types by right:

- » Stacked flats
- » Townhouses/rowhouses
- » Cluster housing
- » Micro units

Furthermore, if these units are appropriately zoned, then some of the dimensional standards can be tailored to each format. As the list of market rate multi-family units suggest, they may be better served if each option had different dimensional requirements as a townhome has a different shape than clustered units. A change in the regulations could help induce this type of development that can serve a wider demographic.

### *Manufactured Housing*

This category recognizes the Manufactured Housing development in Marlette but does not recommend any changes to the zone.

## **Commercial**

The biggest change recommended is that the commercial zone is divided into

two zones, to differentiate between the downtown and the commercial corridor.

### *Downtown*

Marlette currently lacks a separate zone for its downtown core. This means that all businesses along the highway share uniform standards despite the downtown's historic charm. An entirely new zone should be developed that accounts for design and architectural standards to bring out the beauty of the buildings' facades, permit appropriate uses that are compatible with patrons moving on foot, consolidates parking, and maximizes the pedestrian's experience through streetscaping elements. This area is designated as Main Street between Ellsworth Road (north) and Kilgour Street.

### *Transition*

Immediately adjacent to the downtown would be the transitional zone that permits higher density housing and office spaces. Offices make compatible neighbors as they tend to keep quiet day-time hours. This area currently permits multi-family units and administrative offices as a buffer to single-family neighborhoods; the only major change recommended is that this zone permit higher density housing such as triplexes, fourplexes, and small apartment and condominium buildings. The proximity to downtown makes this an appropriate envelope for higher density housing with similar height restrictions as the central business district so it would not be too imposing on the adjacent single-family homes.

### *Commercial Corridor*

This proposed FLUM designation would stretch along M-53 outside of the transitional zone. The purpose of this zone is to host different types of commercial uses than the downtown. While the downtown focuses on experience, the rest of the corridor focuses on convenience. This is where it is appropriate to allow commercial uses with a larger building footprint and that cater to vehicular passers-by. For example, a downtown would have a boutique coffee shop and clothes stores and this zone would feature drive throughs and a big box store.

## Industry

### *Industry and Technology*

The purpose of this zone is largely the same as its current intent, which is to host more intense industrial uses. These areas generally allow for large complexes and are adequately buffered to reduce noxious sounds or odors from reaching neighborhoods. The major update is to review the permitted uses and ensure that they include newer industries and “new economy” sectors that have since formed with technological advances.

## Conservation

Based on the Natural Features map, areas of the City that have wetlands are further protected by the Conservation designation. It does not prohibit development altogether but it would require that extra steps are taken in the site review process to ensure that minimal damage is done to the surroundings and that water can be retained onsite. Low impact development (LID) is one method of responsibly building in sensitive areas. LID is supported by the federal EPA as an integrated development practice that reduces stormwater runoff and pollutants into local waterbodies. It is recommended that this is written into the ordinance and applied when appropriate.

## Other Zoning Issues

A review of the Zoning Ordinance demonstrates that other updates are needed. Aside from permitted land uses by zone, the City could modernize the following ordinances to improve the beauty and functionality of Marlette:

- » Parking standards - add flexibility in parking minimums and maximums
- » Landscaping - preserve vegetation and require native species over invasive species
- » Small cell wireless - comply with state legislation about the installation of small cell wireless facilities
- » Tax exempt enterprises downtown - balance the mix of private, public, and nonprofit uses
- » Historic preservation - develop an ordinance that protects buildings' architectural integrity
- » Provisions that permit renewable energy options on new and existing structures

