



GOLDEN TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

2019 Update



Prepared by the Golden Township Planning Commission
with assistance from the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission



The West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC) is a federal and state designated regional planning and development agency serving 120 local governments in Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana counties.

The mission of the Commission is to promote and foster regional development in West Michigan through cooperation amongst local governments and other regional partners.

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Introduction

Golden Township presents a variety of personas, depending on one's perspective. Year-round and seasonal residents, farmers, business owners, and elected and appointed officials have unique perceptions of the Township and, consequently, differing expectations of what the future might hold. Such perceptions include:

- An agricultural community;
- A resort community;
- A busy tourist destination with a bustling business district near Silver Lake;
- A quiet rural area with beautiful natural features;
- A convenient place to vacation;
- A rural township with large tracts of undeveloped land, some of which is ideally suited for development; and
- An area with a wealth of unique and fragile natural features and natural resources.

In some instances, these perceptions come into conflict. However in most cases, they coexist in harmony. A number of common values are held, regardless of one's perspective. For example:

- Golden Township is becoming more developed.
- Development in Golden Township is influenced by fluctuating trends and changing conditions in the region, state, and nation.
- Without regulatory rules, Township officials have limited ability to influence (a) how vacant land is developed; (b) how land uses are established over the short and long run; and (c) how natural features and resources are protected and preserved.
- The interests of year-round and seasonal residents, and members of the Township's agricultural, business, tourism, and developmental communities must be balanced in order to preserve those qualities that make the Township a desirable place to live, retire, do business, and visit.
- In order to benefit the entire community, and to preserve the unique character of the area and its natural features and resources, future development must occur in a planned and coordinated manner that is rooted in the desires of the citizenry.

Originally developed in November 1992, adopted in January 1993, and amended in July 1997 and 2011, the Golden Township Master Plan has aided Golden Township's Planning Commission and Board of Trustees in the ongoing process of striking a balance between competing interests by guiding land use and development. This update, which began in 2018, builds upon the foundation laid by the 1992 plan, and will serve the following purposes:

- Provide a basic plan that is consistent with the intent, purpose, and requirements of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended).
- Provide goals and policy guidance for future land use and development which recognize and reflect the interrelationship between economic, environmental, and social interests.

- Provide a means for residents to participate in determining the future development of the community, recognizing the validity of the Township's varied interests and interest groups.
- Support the continued strength and vitality of the Mears and Silver Lake business districts and businesses throughout the Township.
- Provide goals and policies to protect and leverage natural features for (a) the long-term health of residents and visitors; (b) resilience of the built environment; and (c) preservation of the Township's character, scenery, and tourism-oriented economic base. Such features include lakes, streams, shorelines, sand dunes, groundwater, woodlands, wetlands, farmland, and outdoor recreational opportunities.
- Promote a coordinated land use plan that is consistent with the goals established during the planning process, designating areas of land in keeping with the natural soil properties, vegetation, and terrain as development ensues.
- Provide policies describing how future land uses should be established, and how land and natural resources should be preserved and/or protected when altered or developed over time.
- Provide a tool for use by Township officials during the process of reviewing land development project proposals.
- Provide goals and policies to protect active agricultural land from encroachment by development and conflict with incompatible uses.
- Provide areas for renewable energy production as technology advances to meet those needs.
- Outline methods by which this plan may be implemented.

Community Profile

Population Characteristics

Table 1 shows changes in the Golden Township population since 1970, and the percentage change in population for Oceana County and the state of Michigan during that span. The Township experienced population booms in the 1970's and 1990's. However, since 2010 U.S Census, the total population is estimated to have declined slightly. It is critical to note that total population figures do not include seasonal population increases; which during peak weekends and holidays during the summer, can swell the number of people in the Township dramatically. For instance, if all hotel rooms, campsites, and seasonal homes are occupied, there could be well over 10,000 people in the Township at one time.

Table 1

POPULATION TRENDS		U.S. Census					American Community Survey 5-year Estimates					
		1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Total Population	Golden Township	871	1,358	1,302	1,810	1,742	1,582	1,572	1,681	1,707	1,637	1,635
	% Change		55.9%	-4.1%	39.0%	-3.8%	3.9%	-0.6%	6.9%	1.5%	-4.1%	-0.1%
	Oceana County		22.3%	2.1%	19.7%	-1.1%	-0.8%	-0.7%	-0.5%	-0.4%	-0.3%	0.6%
	Michigan		4.4%	0.4%	6.9%	-0.6%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 2 shows the median age of Golden Township to be higher than county, state and national levels, and trending upward at a faster rate. Median age at all levels increased between 2013 and 2017, according to American Community Survey 5-year Estimates.

Table 2

MEDIAN AGE	2013-2017 ACS 5-year Estimates					
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Golden Township	52	52.7	53	53.8	55	54.8
Oceana County	42	42.4	42.3	42.3	42.6	42.7
Michigan	38.8	39.1	39.3	39.5	39.5	39.6
United States	37.2	37.3	37.4	37.6	37.7	37.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 3

POPULATION AGE % percentage of total population	Golden Township		Oceana County		Michigan		United States	
	2010 Census	2017 ACS Estimate	2010 Census	2017 ACS Estimate	2010 Census	2017 ACS Estimate	2010 Census	2017 ACS Estimate
Under 5 years	4.8%	3.2%	6.7%	5.8%	6.0%	5.8%	6.5%	6.2%
5-19 years	13.5%	13.8%	20.8%	19.8%	20.8%	19.3%	20.4%	19.5%
20-24 years	3.7%	4.3%	4.9%	6.0%	6.8%	7.3%	7.0%	7.0%
25-44 years	18.3%	16.7%	21.5%	20.4%	24.7%	24.2%	26.6%	26.4%
45-64 years	34.7%	29.5%	29.0%	28.2%	27.9%	27.7%	26.4%	26.9%
65 years +	25.0%	32.5%	17.0%	19.8%	13.7%	15.9%	13.1%	14.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 3 further illustrates the advanced age of the Golden Township population. On the surface, the distribution of the population throughout the age groups in Golden Township was similar to distributions observed at the county, state, and national levels. The biggest differences were the lesser

proportion of the population 44 years old and younger, and the greater proportion of the population 45 and older. It is telling that, according to the American Community Survey 2013-2017 5-year Estimates, there was a greater proportion of the Golden Township population in the 65+ age group (32.5%) than any other age group. That included all age groups at the county, state and national level shown in the table for comparison.

Housing

Table 4 gives a general sense of the Golden Township housing stock, according to American Community Survey 2013-2017 5-year Estimates. Nearly one-third of the units were built between 1970 and 1989, and two-fifths were built between 1990 and 2009. The median value of owner-occupied housing units rested at \$159,300.

Table 5 shows the number of dwelling units in Golden Township since 1980. During this span, the total number of housing units in Golden Township was on the rise, with the proportion of occupied units trending down and the proportion of vacant units trending up. Most of the vacant housing units are used for seasonal, recreational or occasional use, as illustrated in Table 6. Compared to each neighboring township, Golden Township had more housing units; a lower proportion of occupied units; and a greater number and proportion of units for seasonal use.

Table 5

Number of Dwellings	Golden Township				
	1980	1990	2000	2010	2017 (est)
Total Housing Units	1,538	1,788	2,203	2,366	2,420
Occupied	555 (36.1%)	633 (35.4%)	712 (32.3%)	781 (33.0%)	693 (28.6%)
Vacant	983 (63.9%)	1,155 (64.6%)	1,491 (67.7%)	1,585 (67.0%)	1,727 (71.4%)

Source: U.S. Census (2000 and 2010); 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Table 4

Golden Township HOUSING STOCK		
Year Built	2013-17 ACS Estimate	
Total housing units	2,420	%
Built 2014 or later	10	0.4
Built 2010 to 2013	69	2.9
Built 2000 to 2009	332	13.7
Built 1990 to 1999	651	26.9
Built 1980 to 1989	322	13.3
Built 1970 to 1979	427	17.6
Built 1960 to 1969	183	7.6
Built 1950 to 1959	142	5.9
Built 1940 to 1949	109	4.5
Built 1939 or earlier	175	7.2
Value	2013-17 ACS Estimate	
Owner-occupied units	608	%
Less than \$50,000	77	12.7
\$50,000 to \$99,999	107	17.6
\$100,000 to \$149,999	107	17.6
\$150,000 to \$199,999	114	18.8
\$200,000 to \$299,999	115	18.9
\$300,000 to \$499,999	45	7.4
\$500,000 to \$999,999	26	4.3
\$1,000,000 or more	17	2.8
Median value of owner-occupied housing units	\$159,300	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 6

HOUSING OCCUPANCY	Golden Twp 2010	Benona Twp 2010	Hart Twp 2010	Pentwater Twp 2010
Total Housing Units	2,366	1,320	865	1,812
Occupied	781 (33.0%)	600 (45.5%)	699 (80.8%)	771 (42.5%)
Vacant	1,585 (67.0%)	720 (54.5%)	166 (19.2%)	1,041 (57.5%)
Vacant - for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	1,478 (62.5%)	653 (49.5%)	82 (9.5%)	947 (52.3%)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Decennial Census

Natural Resources

Natural resources are interrelated biological systems that provide tangible benefits to residents and visitors, and influence the suitability of land for various types of land uses. Many natural features make the Township unusually attractive for development. And although they are sometimes areas from which to steer development, they may also be responsibly utilized as focal points of community action.

- Wetlands provide important wildlife habitat and play an important role in the hydrologic cycle. Wetlands store and filter storm and flood waters.
- Woodlands provide renewable timber resources, important wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and help purify the air and water.
- Lakes and streams support aquatic and shoreline habitat and provide a wide variety of recreational opportunities.
- Sand dune formations provide unique views and recreational opportunities.
- Prime and unique farmlands provide food and fiber, and are an integral element of the Township's historic and visual character and economic base.
- Groundwater is the sole source of drinking water for Township residents.
- Soil influences the suitability of land for a variety of land uses and types of development, facilitating some and precluding others.
- Frequency and velocity of air flow in certain areas of the Township may provide an opportunity for wind-generated power sources.
- Mineral deposits such as sand and gravel can be utilized in the construction and maintenance of local and regional infrastructure.
- Mineral deposits such as petroleum, natural gas, and chloride.

In many communities, natural resources have been utilized and/or compromised for short-term economic gain or short-sighted development with little consideration for long-term impacts on local or regional quality of life. In such cases, utilization of non-renewable resources and over-utilization of renewable resources have degraded their tangible value and resulted in irreparable impacts on future quality of life. If managed over the long-term, natural resources benefit local and regional economies and quality of life. An overview of natural resources follows, with a suite of maps to illustrate contained within the Maps section in the appendix of this document.

Wetlands

Michigan's wetland statute, Part 303, Wetlands Protection, of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended, defines a wetland as "land characterized by the presence of water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances does support, wetland vegetation or aquatic life, and is commonly referred to as a bog, swamp, or marsh." The definition applies to public and private lands regardless of zoning or ownership.

Most people are familiar with the cattail or lily pad wetland found in areas with standing water, but wetlands can also be grassy meadows, shrubby fields, or mature forests. Many wetland areas have only a high groundwater table and standing water may not be visible. Types of wetlands include deciduous

swamps, wet meadows, emergent marshes, conifer swamps, wet prairies, shrub-scrub swamps, fens, and bogs. Wetlands are a significant factor in the health and existence of other natural resources in Michigan, such as inland lakes, groundwater, fisheries, wildlife and the Great Lakes. Michigan's wetland statute recognizes the following benefits provided by wetlands:

- Flood and storm water control by the hydrologic absorption and storage capacity of wetlands.
- Wildlife habitat for breeding, nesting, and feeding grounds and cover for many forms of wildlife, waterfowl, including migratory waterfowl, and rare, threatened, or endangered wildlife species.
- Protection of subsurface water resources and provision of valuable watersheds and recharging ground water supplies.
- Pollution treatment by serving as a biological and chemical oxidation basin.
- Erosion control by serving as a sedimentation area and filtering basin, absorbing silt and organic matter.
- Sources of nutrients in water food cycles and nursery grounds and sanctuaries for fish.

Open Space

Undeveloped land contributes to the Township's rural character and visual appeal. Open space includes farmlands, woodlands, and shrub and herbaceous fields.

Woodlands

Woodlands provide wildlife habitat for a wide variety of plant and animal life, contribute to hydrologic and groundwater recharge cycles, serve as holding and filtration areas for storm water runoff, prevent soil erosion, and afford a variety of recreational opportunities. If properly managed, woodlands may also provide profitable, renewable timber resources.

The Township's forested areas contribute to the community's historic, rural character. Many are found on slopes and hillsides, creek valleys, and adjoining wetland areas. Woodlands are scattered throughout the Township, most notably in northern and southern sections.

Surface Water

Lakes and streams support aquatic, shoreline, and stream bank wildlife habitats. A significant segment of the Township's tourism is dependent upon water-based recreation. Poor land development practices adversely impact the quality of surface waters and damage shoreline and stream bank ecosystems. Land use decisions, the activities allowed by those decisions, and the practices employed by those activities may affect the delivery of pollutants to waterways. Water quality degradation results from, among other causes, soil erosion, warming of the water due to tree removal and increased storm water runoff, lawn fertilizer runoff and the movement of effluent from septic systems into high water table areas around bodies of water.

Topography

The Township's topography is characterized by rolling hills, majestic sand dunes, and sandy beaches along the Lake Michigan shoreline. Higher elevations in central portions of the Township afford views of

Lake Michigan and the Silver Lake sand dunes. The steepest slopes are generally associated with the sand dunes of Lake Michigan and Silver Lake.

Slope

Degree of slope influences the capability of land to accommodate septic systems, roadways, building foundations, and other improvements. Slopes of 12 percent or less are typically viewed as presenting slight limitations to development. Slopes between 12 and 18 percent present limitations which must be overcome by careful site planning, building design, and construction methods. Michigan Department of Health standards for septic system absorption fields indicate that slopes in excess of 12 percent are to be avoided. Slopes in excess of 18 percent are generally considered unsuited to development. Such slopes can be suitable for timber management, passive recreation, wildlife habitat, and other low-intensity uses.

Soils

Soil characteristics present opportunities for the development of certain land uses, and limitations for others. Permeability, filtration capacity, load bearing capacity, shrink-swell potential, and slope influence the ability of land to accommodate septic systems, building foundations, and roadways. Other features influence productivity of agricultural and forestry operations, wildlife habitat, recreational uses, and the potential for surface and groundwater contamination.

Hydric/wetland soils are generally unsuited for septic system installations, road construction, and building site development. These soils tend to be of insufficient strength to support building foundations. Shrinking and swelling soils during freeze/thaw cycles can damage building foundations unless soils are modified with appropriate fill material.

Septic Limitations

High water table, wetness, slow permeability, slope, rapid permeability, and poor filtration capability influence the ability of septic systems to function properly. Hydric/wetland soils are characterized by slow permeability and wetness and are unsuited for septic system installations. Conversely, soils exhibiting rapid permeability and poor filtration capabilities are unable to adequately filter septic system effluent. The threat of groundwater contamination from septic system effluent exists when septic systems are constructed in areas with soils exhibiting these characteristics. Intensive development in areas with these types of soils may pose a threat to groundwater supplies.

Even under the best conditions, concentrations of septic systems on lots less than three-quarters of an acre in area (such as are found in most older platted subdivisions and shoreline communities) can result in the pollution of ground and surface water. Threats to ground and surface waters increase when soils are rapidly permeable, have poor filtration capacity, or when a high water table is present.

Densely populated waterfront areas are often occupied by cottages and summer homes that have been converted from seasonal to year-round dwelling units. In many cases, these homes rely upon older, poorly designed septic systems that worked well during times of occasional use, though fail when

subjected to constant and increased use. Such failures have been documented as a cause of ground and surface water pollution.

Groundwater

All Township residents rely on groundwater as their sole source of drinking water. Groundwater is susceptible to pollution under circumstances including, but not limited to: inadequate and overcrowded septic systems, unplugged wells, loss of wetlands and the cleansing process they provide, and leakage from discarded vehicles. Due to the sandiness of soils predominant in the Township, groundwater is very vulnerable to widespread contamination. Once polluted, it may not be feasible to remediate pollution in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure may be defined as “capital facilities necessary or available for the conduct of commerce and residency.” Examples include roads, waterways, water and sewer systems, and public and private utilities. These elements, to the extent they are or are not available, have a significant impact on patterns of development.

Transportation

Types of roadways in the Township include hard-surfaces, gravel, improved, and unimproved (see transportation map in the Maps section). The Township assesses a road millage of 2 mills, which makes it financially feasible to maintain a good condition of local roads. While there are no State routes in the Township, Silver Lake State Park would be well-served by a State trunk line as are all other State Parks in Michigan.

The nearest highway, US-31, is a critical north-south route, just to the east of the Township. The interchange on Polk Road is a stone’s throw from the Township’s eastern border. County-designated highway B-15 runs north-south through the Silver Lake area, terminating in Montague Township to the south in Muskegon County and Pentwater Township to the north.

The William Field Memorial Hart-Montague Trail State Park winds through the southeastern portion of the Township along a former railroad right-of-way. The trail spans 22 miles between the cities of Hart and Montague, where the trail connects to other regional trails. Biking, hiking, cross-country skiing opportunities are provided by the trail, which also serves as a snowmobile route during the winter.

Public transportation is provided by the Oceana County Council on Aging, and is available to all residents. There are no railways in the Township, and water transportation is primarily recreational.

Community Water and Sewer

The availability of community water and sewer plays an important role in the potential character and extent of future development. Although development can, and often does proceed in a rural area without benefit of these services, they can provide for or prevent development.

Density of development and consequential proliferation of septic systems in areas that are sensitive to contamination of surface water and/or ground water also create a need for community sewer systems and wastewater treatment processing. This situation exists in Golden Township and alternative solutions are being explored.

Other Infrastructure

Golden Township is well-served with electric power by Consumers Energy and Great Lakes Energy. Natural gas utilities are not available in the Township, but are available to nearby communities of Hart and Pentwater. Liquid petroleum gas is available by bulk and via a propane delivery system around Upper Silver Lake. Fuel oil is provided by various companies, and telephone service is provided by Frontier Communications.

New technology and changes in law have had a great effect on citizens of the township. Changes in the law allow private companies to sell electricity to utility companies. Telephone service is also continuing to be deregulated and the Michigan Public Service Commission estimates that within the next several years there will be very little regulation of either electric or telephone companies.

The increase in cellular telephone usage has led to construction of call transmission towers primarily near state highways and near Silver Lake. Additional call transmission towers or “repeaters” might be needed to furnish cellular service throughout the Township. Advances in computer communication are creating opportunities for new business and the in-home conduct of computer-based services. Conventional telephone service is considered good within the Township, and the cost and availability of specialized digital service and the quality of computerized communication continues to improve.

There are three dams in Golden Township listed in the US Army Corps of Engineers’ National Inventory of Dams: Holiday Lake Dam, Upper Silver Lake Dam, and Silver Lake Level Control Structure. The dams at Holiday Lake and Upper Silver Lake are rated “high hazard potential,” likely due to the density of development downstream of any potential dam failures.

Natural Hazards

Natural hazards are an important factor in the consideration of a community’s future development and well-being. A community can improve its resistance to natural hazards by ensuring that developments meet proper standards and are appropriately located. Public and private infrastructure must also be maintained and properly located in order to limit vulnerabilities and prevent costly repairs.

The Oceana County Hazard Mitigation Plan and the Oceana County Community Wildfire Protection Plan are excellent sources of information regarding the types of hazards that may potentially disrupt life in Golden Township. Natural hazards such as winter storms, severe winds, extreme temperatures, wildfires, and droughts are certain to occur, with varying frequency and impacts upon people, natural and built environments, and public and private infrastructure.

Flooding

Golden Township is a participant of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), which allows all Township land owners to purchase of flood insurance. As a NFIP participant, floodplains have been identified and mapped as well. These areas are found along Lambrick Creek; Au Sable Creek, Lake Holiday, Upper Silver Lake, and Hunter's Creek; Silver Lake and Silver Creek; and the Lake Michigan Shoreline.

Shoreline flooding and erosion are natural processes that occur constantly, regardless of water levels. However, during periods of high water, the effects of flooding and erosion are more evident, causing serious damage to homes and businesses, roads, water and wastewater treatment facilities, and other structures in coastal communities. Low water levels can also present shoreline hazards, such as shallow shipping and recreation channels or increased exposure of polluted lake-bottom debris. Other shoreline hazards include severe winds, seiches, and rip currents. These conditions can be life-threatening for boaters and swimmers, and are often exacerbated by the presence of structures, such as breakwalls, and river mouths.

Wildfire

Most Michigan wildfires occur close to where people live and recreate, which puts people, property, and the environment at risk. Development within and around forested areas often increases the potential for loss of life and property from wildfires, since most fires are caused by human activities, such as outdoor burning. The threat of wildfire may be elevated in times of drought, high heat, high wind, and/or low humidity. Unfortunately these conditions often coincide with attractive conditions for outdoor activity and recreation. This only compounds the fact that most wildfires are induced by human activity, rather than as a part of natural processes.

According to the Oceana County Community Wildfire Protection Plan, specific wildfire concerns in Golden Township include: Silver Lake State Park, Grace Youth Camp, the Lake Michigan shoreline (dune grass/woods, and poor access for first responders), and heavy growth load (state forest) along the northern border.

Existing Land Use

This portion of the Master Plan presents an overview of existing land use, which is illustrated by the Zoning Map in the Maps section. Table 7 demonstrates that, while there are some values related to agriculture, commercial and industrial uses, the vast majority of value in the Township is held in residential uses.

Table 7

PROPERTY VALUATIONS Golden Township	2017	2018	% Change
Agricultural	\$10,310,000	\$10,211,900	-0.95%
Commercial	\$17,079,500	\$17,085,000	0.03%
Industrial	\$73,700	\$63,700	-13.57%
Residential	\$227,470,050	\$227,759,100	0.13%
Total Real Property	\$254,933,250	\$255,119,700	0.07%
Total Personal Property	\$2,186,400	\$2,390,900	9.35%
Total Real and Personal	\$257,119,650	\$257,510,600	0.15%
% of Total County Valuations	16.28%	15.80%	-0.48%

Source: Oceana County Equalization Report (2017 and 2018)

Farmland and Open Space

Most of the land in the Township is used as farmland, or is undeveloped woodlands/open space.

Residential

Single family homes represent the Township's most common use of land. Homes are located on lots ranging in size from less than one-half acre to more than 100 acres. The majority of home sites are less than an acre in size, and are located in platted subdivisions surrounding Silver Lake, Upper Silver Lake, Village of Mears, and along Lake Michigan and the north side of Morris Lake.

According to 2010 US Census data, 33 percent of the Township's dwelling units were occupied and 62.5 percent of the units were "vacant, but for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use." This is a lower rate of occupancy and higher rate of seasonal/occasional occupancy than the neighboring townships of Benona, Hart, and Pentwater.

Business and Commercial

There are several businesses established in the Township, including restaurants, resorts, campgrounds, mini-warehouse storage, vehicle sales and repair, and a variety of other retail/service establishments which are operated either year-round or seasonally. While the majority of businesses are located in the areas described below, many are scattered throughout the Township and operated as approved home occupations, special uses, or as legal nonconforming uses.

- Village of Mears -

The unincorporated Village of Mears is a traditional rural village center with a business district along Fox Road. The Golden Township Hall, Mears Post Office, a general store, a restaurant, a historic museum, and a church are located along Fox Road to the east and west of 56th Avenue. Along 56th Avenue from Polk Road to Taylor Road several businesses are also located, including a farm market, bakery, electrical contractor, bike rental shop, and a wood working shop. Single family homes are located on platted lots adjoining the business district.

- Silver Lake Business District -

The Silver Lake business district is located along both sides of Hazel Road east of Silver Lake, and along the east side of Silver Lake Drive to the southern boundary of the Silver Lake State Park Campground. The business district provides private campgrounds, restaurants (both dine-in and carry out), motels, small-scale amusement parks, a strip mall with a variety of seasonal businesses, a bakery, rental cottages, and other business and retail establishments catering to a seasonal trade.

The district also extends along the north side of Hazel Road in strip or leap-frog fashion, and north on 34th Avenue to the intersection of 34th Avenue and Taylor Road. Uses in this portion of the district include a party store, a RV park, a motel, and a mini-warehouse storage facility. There are no businesses or commercial establishments along the east side of 34th Avenue, nor are there any along the south side of Hazel Road east of the Jellystone Park campground/resort.

- Silver Lake Dunes ORV Area -

This area is located at the western end of Fox Road at the entrance to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Silver Lake Sand Dunes off-road vehicle area. This sub-area includes jeep rental businesses and others specializing in off-road vehicle (ORV) parts and service.

- Silver Lake Road and 18th Avenue Area -

This area is located along the south side of Silver Lake, and includes the Mac Woods Dune Ride business and a seasonal carry-out restaurant.

- Polk Road Corridor -

Polk Road between 56th and 64th avenues has been designated as an area well-suited to commercial development in the midst of agricultural uses. This area already includes a body shop, salvage yard, farm market, and mini warehouse storage facility.

Planned Unit Developments (PUDs)

Planned unit development zoning districts have been established in Golden Township. The PUD zoning district was established to require a review and approval process for certain land uses that would have undesirable impacts on the public health, safety and welfare if such a process was not required. Refer to the Golden Township Zoning Ordinance for additional information regarding the Township's PUD regulations.

- Val Du Lakes Resort -

Val Du Lakes is a mixed-use development including a restaurant, softball field, campground, snocross, a rental cabin and a small concert venue.

- Cottonwood Creek RV Resort -

Cottonwood Creek Resort is a mixed-use development including 374 campsites, restroom, food service, and transient lodging facilities.

- Silver Hills Antique Mall -

Silver Hills is a farm building complex providing space for antique dealers to house and display goods on a seasonal basis.

- Hideaway Campground -

Hideaway is a campground and resort providing facilities for camping and lodging to the public on a seasonal basis.

- Wilson -

Wilson PUD is a multi-use development to the north and east of the 56th Avenue/Polk Road intersection. It consists of a convenience store/gas station facility located at the intersection and single family constructed homes farther to the north and east of the intersection.

- Wiedman -

Weidman PUD is a residential development of single family dwellings on 28th Avenue.

- Breakaway Bay -
Breakaway is a campground and resort providing facilities for camping and lodging to the public on a seasonal basis.
- Timberlake Terrace -
Timberlake Terrace PUD is a 39-unit single family site condominium project on 183 acres in section 4.
- Silver Lake Vista -
A 21-unit single family site condominium development on 25 acres with two private roads.
- Silver Lake Campground -
Silver Lake Resort Campground is a campground and resort providing facilities for camping and lodging to the public on a seasonal basis.

Public Uses

- Golden Township Parks and Open Space -
 - a) Golden Township Lake Michigan Park;
 - b) Round Lake Park;
 - c) Johnson Square and the Township offices in Mears;
 - d) Golden Township Natural Area in Section 26;
 - e) Golden Township Turtle Sanctuary on Wilson Road;
 - f) Lake Michigan Shores Natural Area;
 - g) Golden Township Park at Silver Lake.
- Cedar Point County Park -
This park is located on Lake Michigan off of Ridge Road near the Township's northern boundary. The park has a picnic area, waterfront access, and restrooms.
- State of Michigan Lands -
The State of Michigan and the Department of Natural Resources own several parcels of land in Golden Township, totaling in excess of 3,100 acres. This includes the Silver Lake State Park, the Hart-Montague Trail State Park, and large forest tracts in the northern sections of the Township known as the Pentwater Plains.

The Silver Lake State Park includes the majestic critical sand dune and ORV areas west and north of Silver Lake and a campground on the south shore of Silver Lake along Silver Lake Drive. The historic Little Point Sable lighthouse is located at the end of Lighthouse Drive on Lake Michigan.
- Cemeteries -
The Township has two cemeteries: Mears Cemetery is located on Fox Road, and Round Lake Cemetery is located on Deer Road.

Public Input

Perspectives of permanent and seasonal residents, as well as visitors and land owners, were carefully considered during the development of this master plan. Golden Township sought public input between June and September 2018. First, the Golden Township Planning Commission invited members of the public to attend its regular meeting on July 31 to discuss current issues and the future development and character of the Township. Then in September, Township officials occupied a booth in the Arts & Crafts section of the Silver Lake Apple & BBQ Festival to engage with members of the public and distribute master plan surveys. A mail-in survey was also made available on the Township's website from June through September. These methods are described in greater detail below, and a public input summary can be referenced in the appendix of this document.

Although there are opposing views across the spectrum of issues, it is clear that there is common concern and shared interest in the future development and general well-being of Golden Township. The Golden Township Planning Commission is grateful towards each individual that took time to share his/her opinions. Without public input and participation, the Planning Commission would not be able to properly manage growth in a manner that strives to meet the needs and desires of citizens and visitors.

- Golden Township Planning Commission Public Hearing – July 31, 2018

During the regular July meeting of the Golden Township Planning Commission, a portion of the meeting was dedicated to engaging members of the public. All in attendance were divided into small groups and guided through a two-part, open-ended activity. In the first part, participants were asked to describe Golden Township using one or two words. The second part tasked each group with brainstorming the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of Golden Township. After about 15 minutes of lively discourse, the groups were asked to share and discuss their findings.

- Silver Lake Apple & BBQ Festival – September 15, 2018

The Golden Township Planning Commission occupied a booth at the Silver Lake Apple & BBQ Festival for the entire duration of the Art Fair on September 15. Township representatives handed out half-page surveys and engaged in discussions with attendees, which included permanent residents, land owners, and visitors. By all accounts, this was a very effective method of reaching out to the public and gathering input.

- Master Plan Survey-

Throughout the public input-gathering phase, a two-page survey was available to the public on the Golden Township website. The survey instrument was intentionally modeled after a survey that was distributed in 2010. Therefore, township leaders were able to compare the results over time to gain additional insight into the opinions of the citizenry. Approximately 65 surveys were filled out and submitted. About 85% of the respondents were Golden Township property owners, and 15% were seasonal campers or visitors. The median age of respondents was 62 years old.

Goals and Implementation Steps

Public input gathered for this plan in 2010 indicated a variety of concerns and issues with respect to the future development and character of Golden Township. That insight served as the foundation for the Township's approach to the ongoing process of influencing use of land and natural resources over the short and long terms. Public opinions that were gathered in 2018 reflected a consistent set of concerns, offering support for the overall strategy that was established in 2010. For this updated edition (2019), goals and implementation steps were reviewed and updated to reflect any changes public opinion; adapt to changes that have occurred to the local landscape (physical, economic, social, etc.); and to anticipate/guide changes to the local landscape over the next five to twenty years.

The following strategy consists of goals and implementation steps, which are to be employed by elected and appointed Township officials to influence the Township's development and character in a positive, planned, transparent, and strategic manner. Goals are presented as the desired future conditions and practices. Implementation steps include more specific tasks and guidance for day-to-day operations towards achieving the long-term goals. The goals and implementation steps are listed in no particular order.

General Land Use

General Land Use Goals

1. The Township's scenic and rural character, including natural resources and small town attractiveness, are preserved and enhanced.
2. A mix of agricultural, residential, recreational, commercial, and industrial land uses is achieved which provides access to agricultural goods and services, quality living environments, recreational activities, commercial goods and services, employment opportunities, and a strong and varied tax base.
3. Future development is guided toward areas adequately and efficiently served by and planned for public roads, utilities, and other public services.
4. Township policies reflect a preference for activities and developments which have a low ecologic impact.
5. Private roads are well-designed.
6. Non-conforming uses are greatly reduced.
7. Variance issuance is controlled.
8. Incompatible land uses and land use conflicts are minimized through managed growth and employment of transition areas between various land uses.
9. Open space or wooded buffers are maintained along public roadways.
10. Recreational and cultural opportunities are provided for citizens and visitors.
11. Infrastructure improvements across jurisdictional boundaries are developed in cooperation with other local units of government.
12. Citizens are engaged in growth management processes.
13. Youth and young adults are involved in community affairs.

General Land Use Implementation Steps

1. Participation by Township officials in pertinent educational and information-sharing programs and workshops, such as Oceana County Chapter MTA meetings and planning and/or zoning workshops sponsored by Michigan Society of Planning Officials, Michigan Township Association, and MSU Planning and Zoning Center.
2. Perform a cover-to-cover zoning ordinance review and revision as necessary, addressing definitions of terms, land use zoning categories, and permitted and special uses in the various categories. Review and update the zoning ordinance periodically and amend as necessary to promote consistency with this Master Plan.
3. Create processes and procedures in conjunction with qualified agencies (or use existing processes and procedures, in present) to ensure areas shall be deemed unsuitable for development if they possess any of the following conditions:
 - a. Flooding
 - b. Inadequate drainage
 - c. Severe erosion potential
 - d. Unfavorable topography
 - e. Inadequate water supply
 - f. Inadequate sewage disposal capabilities
 - g. Inadequate ambulance, fire, and police protection
4. Provide for planning mechanisms and regulatory techniques which will preserve open space, wetlands, groundwater, historic sites, and recreational opportunities.
5. Support protection and regulation of wetland and wetland buffer areas in the Township.
6. Develop and refine greenbelt zoning techniques via maps and other tools to consistently protect and preserve sensitive areas.
7. Enforce the zoning ordinance in a consistent and fair manner.
8. Make zoning variances in exception rather than the rule.
9. Discourage poorly designed private roads by requiring designs to meet minimum Oceana County Road Commission standards.
10. Adopt site plan review guidelines for protecting groundwater and other essential resources.
11. Direct new development away from areas exhibiting environmental constraints such as steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, and unsuitable soils as determined by the appropriate agencies.
12. Cooperate with other local governments, citizens and businesses in the development and construction of sanitary sewer systems as appropriate for existing development and future growth.
13. Involve youth and young adults in local governing, planning and collateral activities whenever possible.
14. Retain the services of qualified consultants. Continue escrow policies which require developers and other applicants for zoning approvals to place fees in escrow at the time an application for site plan review, special use approval, or PUD zoning is filed. The Township can draw funds as necessary to pay for services rendered by its consultants (for example attorney, planner, and/or engineer) during the review process.

15. Maintain an updated parks and recreation plan. Funding assistance for acquisition of waterfront property for recreational or other public use is available from a number of sources. The Township will be well served by maintaining and updated recreation plan for submission to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The plan will establish eligibility for funding assistance for acquisition and improvement projects.

Agricultural

Agricultural Goals

1. Generalized and specialized farming and forestry activities are viable.
2. Fragmentation of farmland and woodlands is minimal.
3. Non-agricultural land uses are guided towards land poorly suited to farming and forestry.
4. Agri-tourism is recognized as an attraction for residents and visitors.

Agricultural Implementation Steps

1. Establish zoning regulations which discourage the fragmentation and conversion of farmland and forestland to non-agricultural land uses.
2. Explore programs to preserve productive farmland and forestland, including, but not limited to, purchase of development rights, transfer of development rights, and conservation easements.
3. Establish zoning regulations allowing renewable energy production and use.
4. Support agri-tourism as a strategy to support both the tourism and agricultural industries in the township.

Low Density Residential

Low Density Residential Goals

1. Residential development is carefully planned and low-density.
2. Generalized and specialized farming and forestry activities allowed in areas suited to such activities.
3. Fragmentation of woodlands and wildlife habitat is minimal.
4. New development occurs within open space preservation standards, including conservation or cluster zoning.
5. Landscaping emphasizes the rural and wooded qualities and natural habitats of the Township.

Low Density Residential Implementation Steps

1. Limit the number of driveways along public roadways.
2. Require that open space or wooded buffers be maintained along existing public roadways.
3. Limit new housing developments to areas where soils are suitable for on-site sewage treatment.
4. Limit new housing development to areas with adequate water and sewer infrastructure (existing or planned-for) and compatibility with neighboring land uses.
5. Encourage residential clustering and donations of conservation easements.
6. Allow farming and forestry operations where compatible with neighboring uses.
7. Establish zoning regulations for renewable energy production and use.

Single Family Residential

Single Family Residential Goals

1. The historic and visual appeal of the Village of Mears is maintained.
2. The Village of Mears is relatively free from encroachment by heavy commercial or industrial uses.
3. Groundwater is protected from pollution by septic systems.
4. Park and open space land is provided and maintained for community use.

Single Family Residential Implementation Steps

1. Require new development to be of a scale and design compatible with existing buildings and uses.
2. Encourage development of a municipal sewer system.
3. Use township recreation plan to enhance park development.

Resort Residential

Resort Residential Goals

1. Year-round and seasonal home neighborhoods are free from encroachment by non-residential uses.
2. In lieu of municipal sewer services, future residential developments occur only at densities sensitive to the capability of soils to safely accommodate on-site septic systems.
3. Permanent, natural greenbelt buffers are used along shorelines, where feasible, as a means of protecting water quality.
4. Surface water and groundwater quality is protected and improved.

Resort Residential Implementation Steps

1. Continue to provide that lots in these land use areas should be at least one acre in size or larger to mitigate the potential for ground and surface water pollution.
2. Require PUD review procedures for proposed waterfront subdivisions and condominium projects.
3. Enforce keyhole regulations to prevent overcrowding of remaining undeveloped shoreline open space, recognizing the interests of residents in areas developed for single family residential use.
4. Execute steps necessary to achieve improvement and enhancement of overall water quality of lakes in these areas.
5. Strictly enforce lakefront zoning.
6. Utilize lake boards and other forums to inform and educate lake residents regarding fertilizer practices and other actions which could affect water quality.
7. Utilize lake boards and property associations to implement superior management practices as recommended in lake studies.

Resort Commercial

Resort Commercial Goals

1. Formal and historically recognized centers for tourism and resort-oriented business uses are maintained.
2. Year-round and seasonal service and retail business establishments are developed and/or redeveloped.
3. A boundary between business districts and adjoining residential uses or undeveloped areas is maintained.
4. Business district developments occur with deference to adjoining residential neighborhoods.
5. Surface water and groundwater quality is protected and improved.
6. Park and open space land is provided for community use.

Resort Commercial Implementation Steps

1. Provide adequate screening along lot lines shared with residential neighborhoods.
2. Promote and support municipal sewer development to protect surface water and groundwater in an effort to encourage future business development in these areas.
3. Provide that parking and loading areas be of adequate size, and be designed to accommodate the needs of all businesses.
4. Limit the number of driveways serving individual parcels to prevent creation of traffic hazards, especially along Hazel and Silver Lake roads. Provide for shared driveways.
5. Require that exterior lighting fixtures be of a type and quality to limit illumination to individual properties without causing glare or off-site spillover.
6. Limit freestanding monument and pole-type signs to prevent the creation of visual clutter and resultant traffic hazards.
7. Discourage business development along the south side of Hazel Road, east of the Jellystone campground/resort.
8. Limit areas of development to places of minimum conflict with residential use.

C-1 Commercial

C-1 Commercial Goals

1. The viability and historic appeal of the Mears business center is maintained.
2. A center for shopping is provided.
3. Mears is a gathering place for community activities.

C-1 Commercial Implementation Steps

1. Establish zoning regulations based on current and historic uses.
2. Promote park and open space development and community activities.

Commercial Industrial

Commercial Industrial Goals

1. Commercial development does not encroach upon existing residential neighborhoods.

2. New industrial development is limited to avoid potential adverse impacts of, among other things, traffic, noise, and odors.
3. Land use conflicts are avoided or minimized.

Commercial Industrial Implementation Steps

1. Direct any new commercial and/or industrial development to selected areas which have good road access and utility services, or are planned to receive them, and where conflicts with other land uses do not exist or can be minimized.
2. Attract industrial operations that are compatible with agricultural and tourism businesses.

Future Land Use

This section of the Master plan represents a strategy for future land use and development consistent with the goals and implementation steps set forth in the preceding section. This strategy is intended to serve three broad purposes:

- Recognize that Golden Township's land and natural resources present both opportunities for, and constraints upon, development;
- Provide guidelines describing how land uses should be established, and how land uses and natural resources should and should not be altered within each future land use area;
- Set forth general categories for various types and densities of use.

This strategy is dependent, in part, on formally recognizing factors which are relevant to future land use and development:

- Golden Township possesses unique scenic characteristics and natural resources that are worthy of enhancement and preservation;
- No advantages can be gained, and unfavorable consequences may result, by permitting development which overburdens the Township's financial ability to provide adequate services and infrastructure;
- While privately-funded infrastructure projects may appear to be consistent with the intent and purpose of this plan, they should be subject to a comprehensive review process to assure that such projects do not result in unintended, Township-wide secondary social and/or environmental impacts;
- The Township's agricultural areas and its business districts are essential elements of its economic base;
- Business and commercial development outside of the current business districts should not be encouraged.

Future Land Use Categories

This section includes descriptions of future land use categories on the Future Land Use Map.

Agriculture

Agricultural areas include lands occupied by existing farm operations. These areas also include woodlands and other open space not ideally suited to farming. Farming and farmland are important to Golden Township's economic base, and its historic, rural, and aesthetic qualities. Agricultural land use areas have been established to encourage the continuation of all current farming activities, and to discourage the fragmentation of productive agricultural lands.

Agricultural areas also encompass land characterized by more rugged terrain and potentially productive woodlands. These areas may present opportunities for timber production if large tracts of land remain intact rather than becoming fragmented. Woodland areas should be preserved intact for continued

timber management purposes, and to provide wildlife habitat. Non-traditional agricultural land uses in agricultural areas might include game preserves.

Purchases and/or transfer of development rights for conservation easements might not be out of the question in the future, as means to prevent fragmentation of the land. Renewable energy production systems may be another way to protect agricultural lands from fragmentation and development.

Low Density Residential

This land use category provides for continued agricultural use, potentially productive woodlands and wildlife habitats, as well as residential activities of a semi-rural character.

Single Family Residential

This land use category consists of small lot residential neighborhoods which are similar in scale and character to farming community villages throughout Michigan and the Midwest. Because of limited lot size, established setback lines should be adhered to when new construction or renovation of existing buildings are considered. Municipal or privately-owned and operated sewer systems are preferred for these areas and should be encouraged when new development is proposed.

Resort Residential

The resort residential category includes the most densely developed portions of the Township in areas near Silver Lake, Upper Silver Lake, Lake Holiday, and along the Lake Michigan shoreline. This land use category recognizes a need to provide for seasonal and year-round residential development which will not be subject to encroachment by business and commercial land uses.

This land use area is similar to many waterfront and near-waterfront areas throughout Michigan in that many of the platted subdivisions are developed at a density in excess of three homes or cottages per acre of land. In many cases, development has occurred at a density which may exceed the capacity of the underlying soil to effectively filter septic system effluent before it reaches the underlying water table and/or adjoining surface waters.

Even under the best conditions, concentrations of septic systems on lots less than three-quarters of an acre (such as are found in many older platted subdivisions in shoreline communities) can result in ground and surface water pollution. Threats to ground and surface waters increase when soils are rapidly permeable, when a high water table is present, or when filtration capacity is poor.

Densely developed waterfront areas are often occupied by cottages or homes that have been converted from seasonal cottages to year-round dwellings. These homes may rely upon older, poorly designed septic systems which were adequate for occasional use, but are inadequate for frequent use. Failures of such septic systems have been documented elsewhere in Michigan as a cause of pollution of surface water, ground water, and drinking wells. Not all older septic systems fail and pollute; however the larger the concentration of such systems, the greater the likelihood of pollution. This is especially pertinent in areas of inappropriate soil conditions.

Resort Commercial

This land use category will continue to be a focal point of the area's seasonal economic base into the future. This area is recognized as the Township's primary area for seasonal and tourism-oriented business establishments. This land use area presents many opportunities for attractive renovation and development.

Demographic trends suggest that the number of area homes occupied on a year-round basis will increase over the short and long terms. This will likely result in an increased need for year-round retail and service establishments within this land use area.

The east side of 34th Avenue between Hazel Road, Taylor Road, and Fox Road may be an area to accommodate additional commercial development in the long term.

Commercial Industrial

These land use areas are logical locations for future commercial industrial developments because of their proximity to the US 31 interchange and to City of Hart municipal sewer and water service. Future development should be sensitive to traffic hazards which would be created by numerous driveway curb cuts and excessive or ill-advised signs.

Village Center-C1

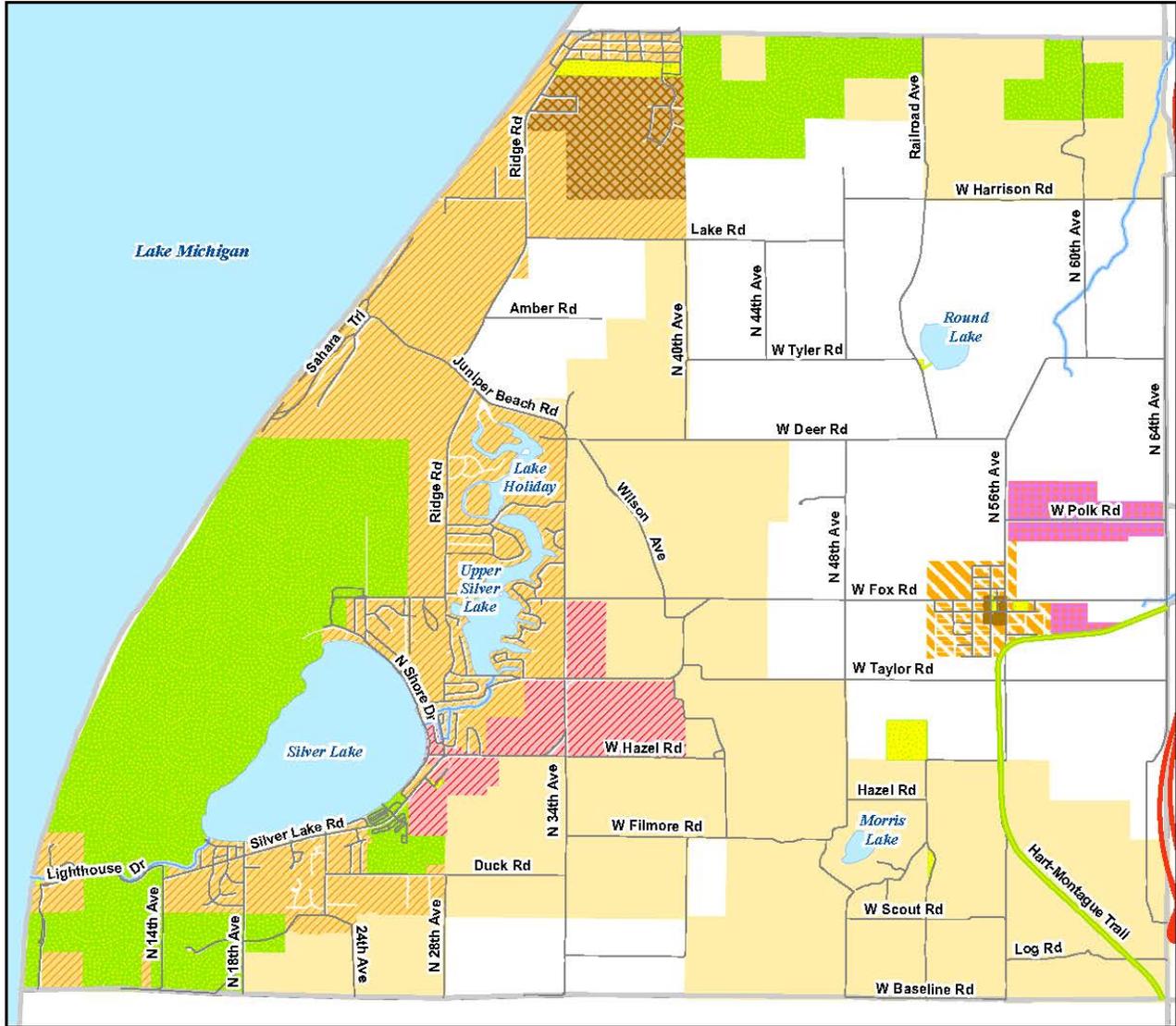
The land in the historic downtown Mears at the intersection of Fox Road and 56th Avenue should continue to be the gateway to the Township and provide a hub for commerce and community activities.

Planned Unit Development (PUD)

PUDs may be established in all land use areas except Resort Commercial, subject to recommendation by the Golden Township Planning Commission, and subsequent approval by the Zoning Board. PUDs must be consistent with the intent and purpose of this Master Plan and the Township Zoning Ordinance, and be in accordance with permitted and special uses allowed in the zoning district in which the PUD is proposed to be located.

The Golden Township Planning Commission has expressed a preference not to plan for future areas of PUD. Many areas that had formerly been designated as PUD have been removed from the Future Land Use Map. One large PUD area remains on the Future Land Use Map between Ridge Road and 40th Avenue.

Golden Township FUTURE LAND USE



	Agriculture		Golden Township
	Low Density Residential		State of Michigan
	Single Family Residential		Hart-Montague Trail
	Resort Residential		US 31
	Resort Commercial		Road
	Commercial/Industrial		River/Stream
	Village Center-C1		Lake
	PUD		

Master Plan Map adopted: December 09, 1997
 Updated February 29, 2012
 Updated February 26, 2019

Prepared By: **WMSRDC**
 WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE
 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Base map information obtained from the Michigan Center for Geographic Information, 2019.

Zoning Plan

The Golden Township Master Plan identifies goals and implementation steps for the development of the Township for the next five to twenty years. Its conclusions and recommendations are based upon a synthesis of factual research and input from the public. However as a policy planning document, this master plan is not legally enforceable. It must be implemented through measured and incremental changes to the Golden Township Zoning Ordinance. This chapter is intended to facilitate the relationship between master plan and zoning ordinance.

The zoning plan is required by Section 33 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA) and Section 305 of the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (MZEA) in all municipalities that have a zoning ordinance in place. The zoning plan can be a chapter in the master plan, a separate document of the master plan, or integrated throughout the master plan. The zoning plan components contained within a master plan will typically include:

- Standards or criteria to be used to consider rezoning consistent with the master plan.
- A description of each zoning district, general purpose of each district, the general locations for those types of districts, and a proposed zoning map.
- A proposed schedule of regulation by district that includes at least building height, lot area, bulk and setbacks.
- An explanation of how the land use categories on the future land use map relate to the districts on the zoning map.

Evaluation Standards of Rezoning and Land Use Changes

Changing the land use or zoning designation for any property can have far-reaching consequences: physically, environmentally, financially, and legally. The use of standards is essential to reaching fair and consistent land use decisions. The following evaluation measures are proposed to guide the contemplation of rezoning's or master plan and future land use map changes.

Standard 1 - Consistency with the Community Vision and Plan Strategies

If conditions (such as economic factors, demographic shifts, new utility lines, changing traffic conditions, etc.) upon which the master plan was developed have changed significantly since it was adopted, the township should incorporate these conditions into their deliberations to ensure that the plan is current. Particular attention should be paid to the master plan Goals and Objectives to ensure that they remain valid, and that the proposed re-zoning or land use change does not impair their intent.

Standard 2 - Compatibility with adjacent uses and districts

All of the uses allowed in a proposed district should be compatible with the conditions present on the site and in the immediate vicinity of the site, especially in terms of density, character, traffic, aesthetics, and property values. The master plan provides several goals and objectives, which should be considered when determining whether a proposed district is compatible with the locale and the township as a whole.

Standard 3 - Capability of being used as already zoned

It is the right of every property owner to receive a reasonable return on the investment placed on property. This does not mean that zoning is a slave to the "highest and best use," (which is not a zoning term, but rather a real estate term). It does mean that there should be a reasonable use available within the zone district. But if the property is capable of being used as zoned, there should be a compelling reason to change the zoning. Such reasons may be related to the first two standards of consistency and compatibility. Site plans will not be considered as part of a rezoning request. The township should not be influenced by what is proposed by the petitioner. Instead, the township will make a specific finding that all of the uses permitted in the proposed district are appropriate for the site and area, not just the one shown on a proposed site plan.

Standard 4 - It is critical that the Master Plan be read in its entirety

Rather than attempting to isolate individual statements that may appear to support one position or another regarding the township's future land use, the township must consider the intent of the master plan as a whole. This requires a careful reading of the plan to ensure that all of the plan's considerations are included in the evaluation of any change.

In addition to these general standards, the Golden Township Zoning Ordinance contains a detailed checklist and process for the review of proposed planned unit development (PUD) districts.

Zoning Districts

This master plan lists eight future land use categories, to the seven zoning districts defined in the Golden Township Zoning Ordinance. The following section describes how the master plan future land use categories relate to districts in the zoning ordinance.

Master Plan Category: Single Family Residential

Corresponding Zoning District: R-1 Single Family Residential (Chapter VI)

Intent of District:

Accommodate existing high density detached single family uses in the Plat of the Village of Mears to maintain the historic and visual appeal of the village atmosphere.

Permitted Uses:

Detached single-family dwellings, churches, private solar energy systems, and residential accessory buildings and structures.

Special Uses:

Schools, community clubs & fraternal organizations, public buildings, retirement community, home occupations and businesses, group day care home, parks, and adult foster care.

PUD Uses:

Detached single family site condominium and platted subdivisions, two-family dwellings, mobile home parks.

Master Plan Category: Resort Residential

Corresponding Zoning District: RR Resort Residential (Chapter VII)

Intent of District:

To provide for seasonal and year-round residential development protected from encroachment by incompatible commercial and business uses. This district encompasses existing subdivisions near Silver Lake, Upper Silver Lake, and the Lake Michigan shoreline.

Permitted Uses:

Detached single family dwellings, churches, family day care homes, recreational vehicles, state licensed residential facilities, private solar energy systems, and residential accessory buildings and structures.

Special Uses:

Two family dwellings, public buildings, community clubs and fraternal organizations, parks, home occupations, group day care home, and foster homes.

PUD Uses:

Detached single & two-family site condominium and platted subdivisions, multi-family dwellings, and resorts.

Master Plan Category: Resort Commercial

Corresponding Zoning District: RC Resort Commercial (Chapter VII)

Intent of District:

Provide for seasonal and rear-round business associated with area tourism.

Permitted Uses:

Restaurants, boat liveries and bait shops, resort and tourism-related retail businesses, churches, single family dwellings occupied by existing business owners, public parks, accessory building and structures, and roof mounted solar energy systems.

Special Uses:

Motels & hotels, amusement facilities, carryout and drive-through restaurants, drive-through business, commercial garages, gas stations, campgrounds and resorts, home-based, and commercial energy systems.

Master Plan Category: Agriculture; Low Density Residential

Corresponding Zoning District: AR Agriculture/Residential (Chapter IX)

Intent of District:

To promote and protect agricultural uses with limited encroachment by incompatible uses.

Permitted Uses:

Farms and forestry, roadside farm stands, agricultural labor camps, churches, schools, cemeteries, public buildings, single family dwellings, accessory buildings and structures, family day care home, state licensed residential facilities, and private solar energy systems.

Special Uses:

Grain elevators, commercial food processors, auto/farm machinery sales and repair, hunting and fishing preserves, golf courses/driving ranges, sanitary landfills, sewage disposal systems,

parks, home occupations, group day care, and adult foster homes, home based business, and commercial solar energy systems.

PUD Uses:

Detached single family and multi-family site condominium and platted subdivisions, campgrounds, mobile home parks, and mixed use developments.

Master Plan Category: Commercial /Industrial

Corresponding Zoning District: C-I Commercial/Industrial (Chapter X)

Intent of District:

Provide for commercial and industrial use in areas around the Village of Mears and along the Polk Road corridor.

Permitted Uses:

Retail & services businesses, new and used car sales (not including repair facilities), offices, hospital and clinics, feed or grist mills, animal hospitals, receiving and shipping of agricultural products, commercial cold storage and processing of agricultural products, mini/self-storage units, churches, private solar energy systems.

Special Uses:

Laundry/dry cleaning facilities, print/paint shops, hotels/motels, amusement facilities, junkyards, public garages, gas stations, drive-through restaurants and businesses, adult uses, and commercial solar energy systems.

Master Plan Category: Village Center C-1

Corresponding Zoning District: C-1 Commercial (Chapter XI)

Intent of District:

Promote and preserve the Mears village center economic base.

Permitted Uses:

Retail businesses, restaurants without drive-through, professional offices, bakery, accessory buildings, and private solar energy systems.

Special Uses:

Gas stations, indoor amusements, residential accessory to commercial, and commercial solar energy systems.

Master Plan Category: Planned Unit Development (PUD)

Corresponding Zoning District: PUD Planned Unit Development (Chapter XII)

Intent of District:

Require a review and approval process for certain land uses that would have undesirable impacts on the public health, safety, and welfare if such a process was not required.

Permitted Uses:

All uses listed as Planned Unit Development uses in the underlying zoning district.

Lot Area, Lot Width, Setback & Height Requirements (amended 1-17-2013)

Zoning District	Minimum Lot Area	Minimum Lot Width	Setbacks			Maximum Building Height
			Front	Side	Rear	
R-1	12,000 sqft	100'	25'	10'	10'	35'
RR	1 acre	225'	25'	10'	10'	35'
AR	2 acres	(Note 9)	40'	30'	40'	35'
RC	21,780 sqft	150'	25'	10'	25'	35'
C-1	0	0	0	0	0	35'
C-I	2 acres	200'	75'	(Note 5)	15'	35'

Supplemental Notes:

1. All buildings and structures must be set back at least 50 feet from the water's edge of a lake or stream.
2. Accessory buildings on water abutting lots may not be located between the water's edge and principal building.
3. Contiguous numbered lots under single ownership in platted subdivisions recorded before the effective date of this Ordinance may be sold as separate numbered lots, side and rear yard setbacks shall be no less than 6 feet. The front yard setback shall be determined by the average of the nonconforming front yard setbacks of existing buildings within 200 feet either way of the proposed building on the same side of the road. (amended June 8th 2004.)
4. Barns, silos and similar agricultural buildings and structures are exempt from height restrictions. Wireless communication towers and antennas. All towers and antennas regulated by Chapter XIII-A are not permitted or authorized pursuant to the provisions of this Section (see 4.26) but are, instead, permitted only as provided in chapter XIII-A.
5. In AR & CI 10% of front lot width, minimum 10 feet maximum 50 feet. (amended January 2000.)
6. Minimum lot area includes building site area. (amended June 8th 2004.)
7. Minimum dwelling size in all districts is 720 square feet. (amended June 8th 2004.)
8. Two family dwellings in R-1 & RR; Minimum lot size must be one acre and 720 Square feet for each unit. (amended 1-17-2013.)
9. See lot width definition

GOLDEN TOWNSHIP
MASTER PLAN APPENDIX

2019 Update

PUBLIC INPUT

Golden Township Planning Commission Public Meeting (July 31, 2018)

During the regular July, 2018 meeting of the Golden Township Planning Commission, a portion of the meeting was devoted to engaging members of the public. All in attendance (approximately 15 people) were divided into small groups and guided through a two-part brainstorming activity. In the first part, participants were asked to describe Golden Township using one or two words. The second part tasked each group with identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of Golden Township. After about 15 minutes of lively discourse, the groups were asked to share and discuss their findings. Listed below are the comments collected during the activity.

1. Describe Golden Township with one or two words:

Crowded	Underserved	Recreation	Sophisticated
Beautiful	Natural	Sand dunes	Progressive
Parks	Green	Farmers	
Overcampgrounded	Tourism	Residential	

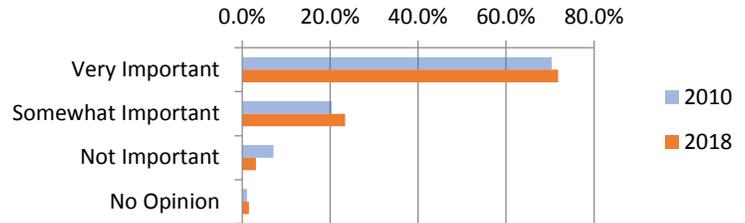
2. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
3 seasons of peace & quiet accessible farms/agriculture campgrounds community dunes great place to live infrastructure lakes nature/natural beauty resort setting roads state land tourism	community's approach to sewer project DNR property management dune buggies high taxes/not enough people paying taxes housing in Mears need more assistance (\$) from the State noise no fire support seasonal oversaturation Silver Lake management monopoly of utilities and cable/internet services overcrowding pollution too many campgrounds traffic visitor disrespect zoning enforcement
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
clean fun control growth eco-tourism economic diversity good selling property in demand increase population minimal opportunities sewer target families	additional campgrounds aging population agriculture commercial taking over Fox Road to duners increase crime, taxes, & utility rates out of control idiot tourists over-commercialism pollution (smoke & sewage) rentals sewer

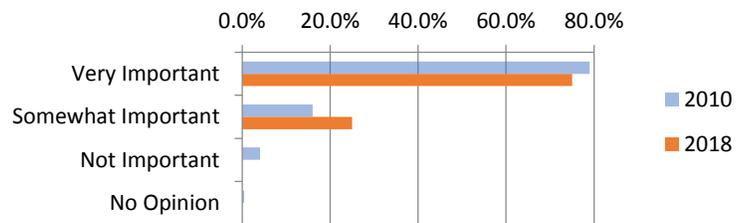
Master Plan 2-Page Survey Results (July through September 2018)

The Golden Township planning conducted a survey of public opinions from July 2018 through September 2018 for the purpose of informing the process of updating the Golden Township Master Plan. The same survey was distributed in 2010. The following section reveals the results of the 2010 and 2018 surveys.

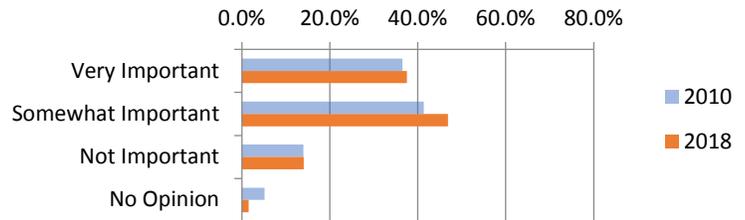
- 1. Golden Township has large areas of open space and woodlands. How important is keeping open space and woodlands from development?**



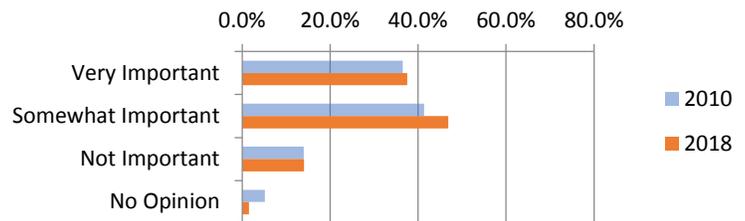
- 2. Agriculture has a very strong presence in Golden Township. How important is it to protect this presence?**



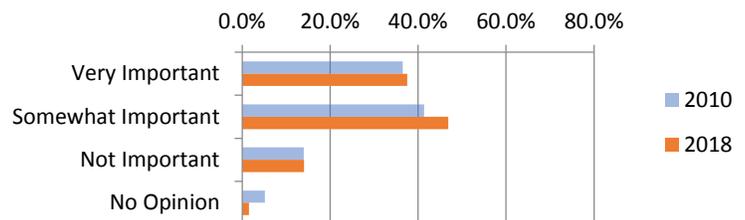
- 3. The Mears Commercial area is again becoming viable. How important is the viability of the Mears Commercial area?**



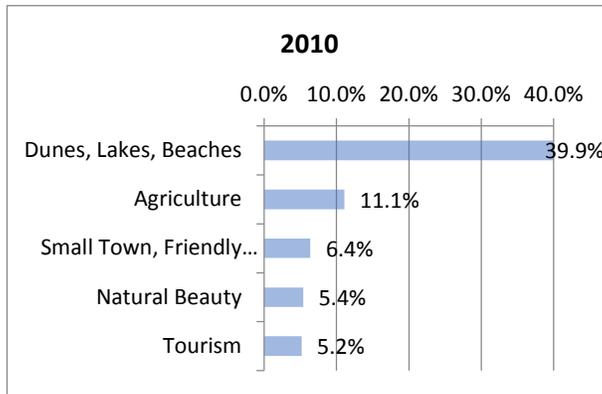
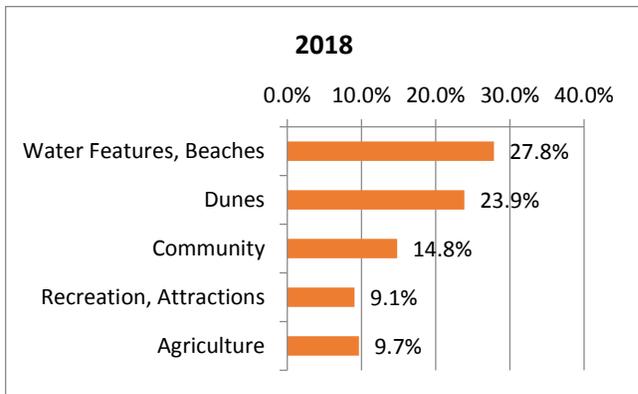
- 4. The Silver Lake area is a strong attraction for tourism. The Silver Lake Commercial area supports this attraction. How important is this commercial activity?**



- 5. How important is the establishment of a sewer system for the Silver Lake area?**

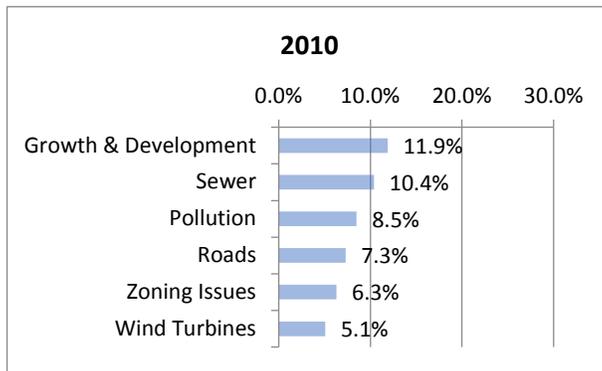
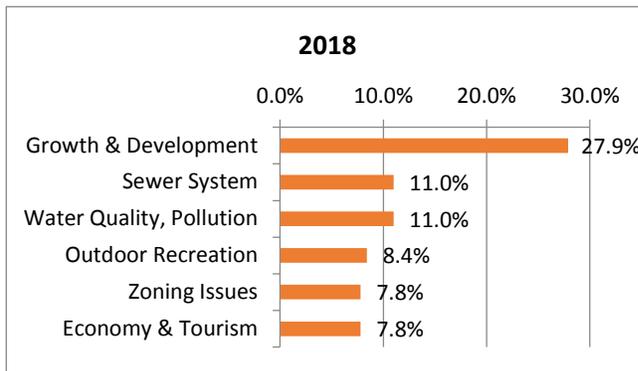


6. What are the three biggest assets of Golden Township?



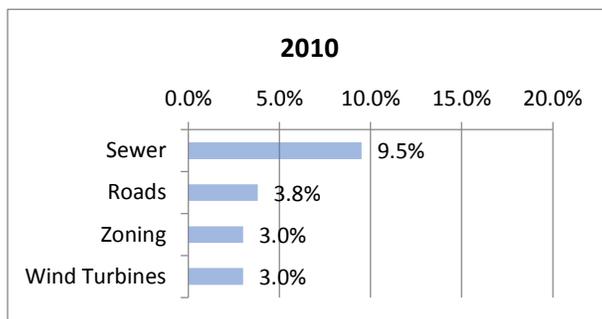
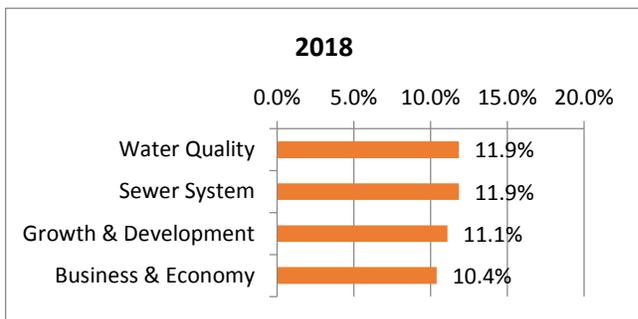
**Other assets identified in 2018 Survey: Tourism (6.8%); Natural Features/Beauty (4%); Business/Commerce (4%).*

7. What are the three most important issues facing Golden Township today?



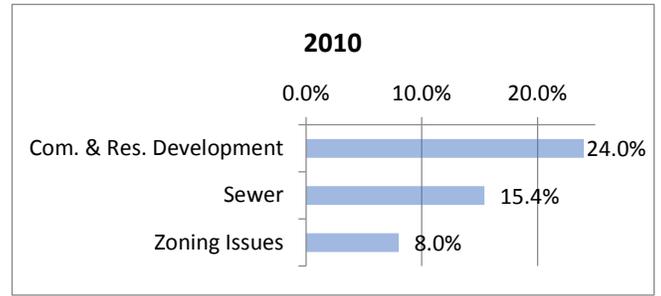
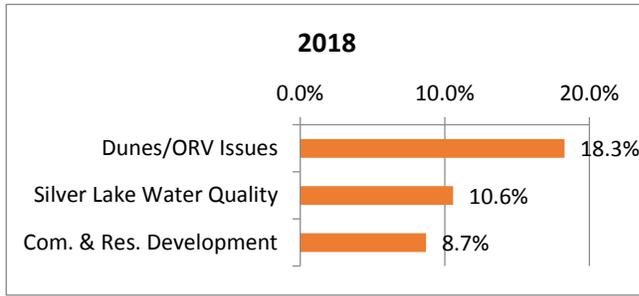
**Other issues identified in 2018 Survey: Township Leadership (5.8%); Public Safety (5.2%); Telecommunications (3.9%); Traffic (3.2%); Trash/Upkeep (2.6%).*

8. What are the three most important issues facing Golden Township in the next 10 years?



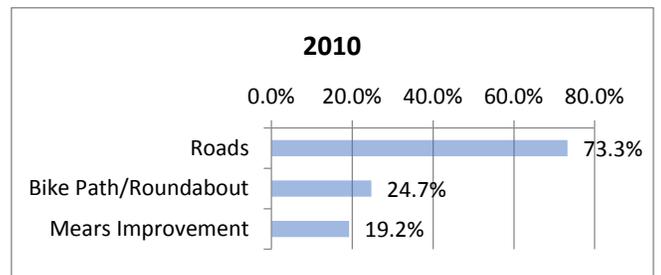
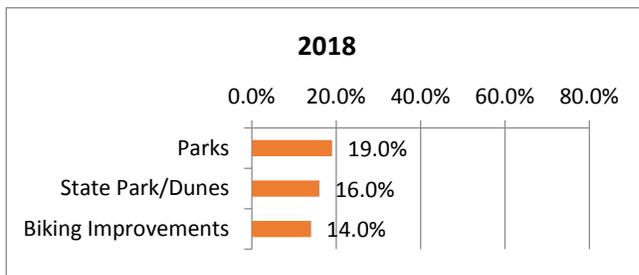
**Other issues identified in 2018 survey: Dunes/ORV (7.4%); Public Safety/Services (7.4%); Roads (6.7%); Community Character (5.2%); Zoning Issues (3.7%); Demographic Shifts (3.7%); Telecommunications (3.7%); Agriculture (2.2%); Campgrounds (2.2%); Tourism (2.2%); Traffic (2.2%); Environment (1.5%); Lake Levels (1.5%); Education (0.7%); Hunter's Creek (0.7%); Housing (0.7%); Public Input (0.7%); Township Leadership (0.7%); Wind Energy (0.7%); Drainage (0.7%).*

9. What changes of the last 10 years concern you the most?



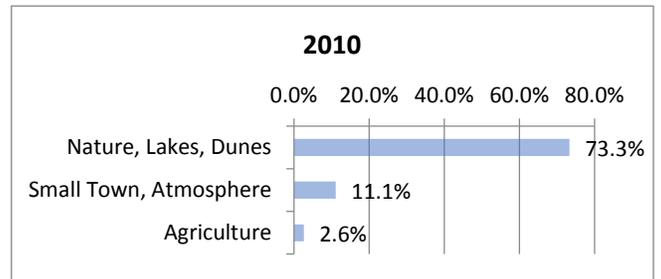
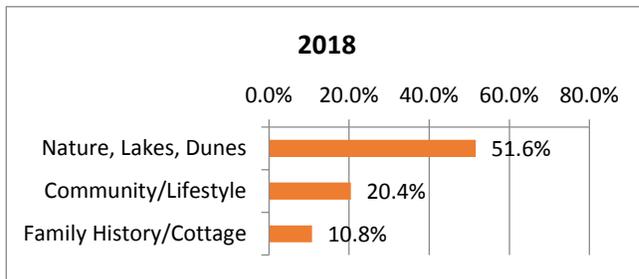
**Other changes identified in 2018 Survey: Roads (7.7%); Campgrounds (6.7%); Zoning Issues (6.7%); Rentals/Regulations (5.8%); Too Many People/Tourists (4.8%); Sewer System (4.8%).*

10. What are the most positive changes of the last 10 years?



**Other changes identified in 2018 Survey: Roads (8.0%); Nothing/Not Many (4.0%); Zoning/Land Use (4.0%); Advertising/Social Media (3.0%); Environmental Focus (3.0%); Sewer System (3.0%); Silver Lake/Mears Areas (3.0%); Cell Towers (2.0%); Development (2.0%); Township Leadership (2.0%); Community Activities (2.0%); Rental Ordinance (2.0%).*

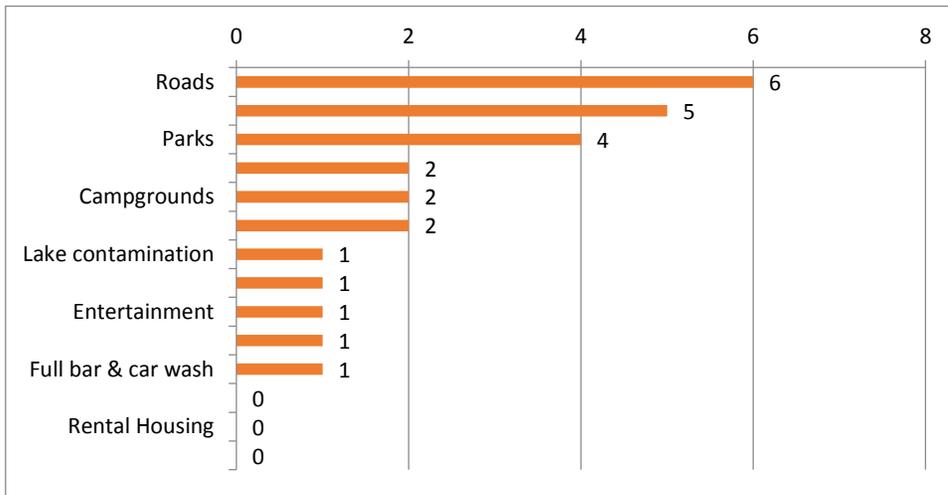
11. What attracted you to Golden Township as a place to live?



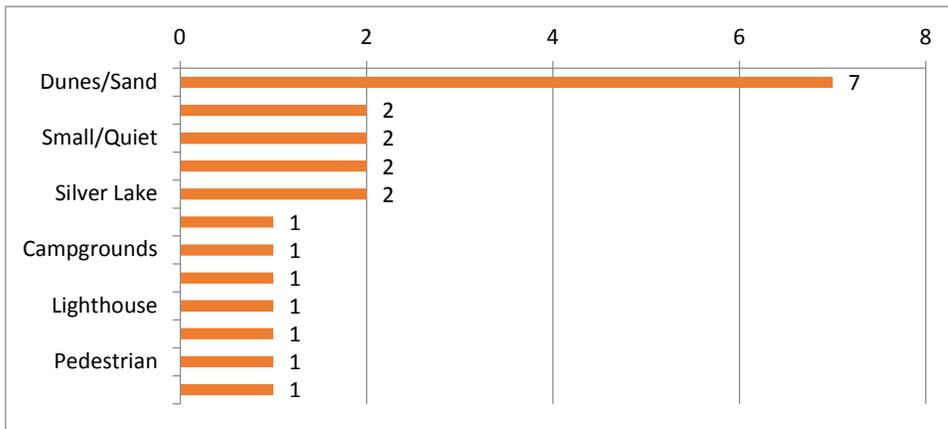
**Other reasons identified in 2018 Survey: People (5.4%); Activities (4.3%); Cost of Living (3.2%); Agriculture (1.1%); Highway (1.1%); Traffic (1.1%); Employment (1.1%).*

Silver Lake Apple & BBQ Festival – Short Survey (September 15, 2018)

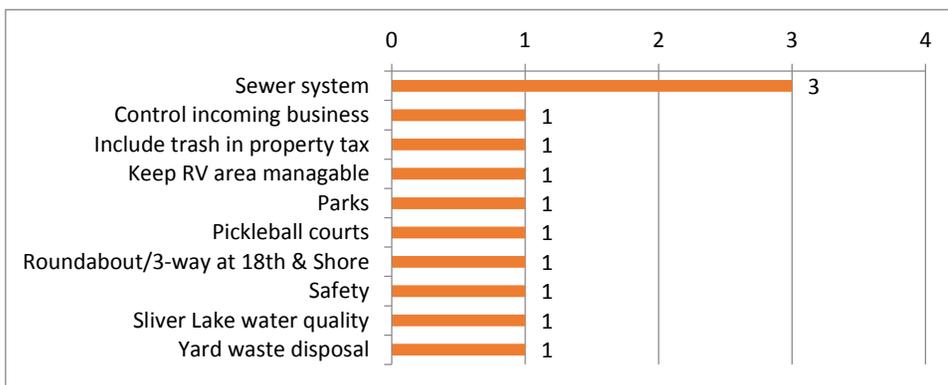
What 3 areas are important to you that Golden Township could improve on in the next 10 years?



What is it you like about Golden Township?



What issues are important to you?



Other Comments

-

- We are the Wisconsin Dells of Michigan
- No more campgrounds
- 18th & Shore is too confusing/dangerous for people not familiar

- Public parking at the dunes
- Open road needs to be here
- You do a nice job in Golden Township

PLAN DOCUMENTATION

Insert board resolution adopting plan

Insert planning commission resolution recommending board adoption of plan

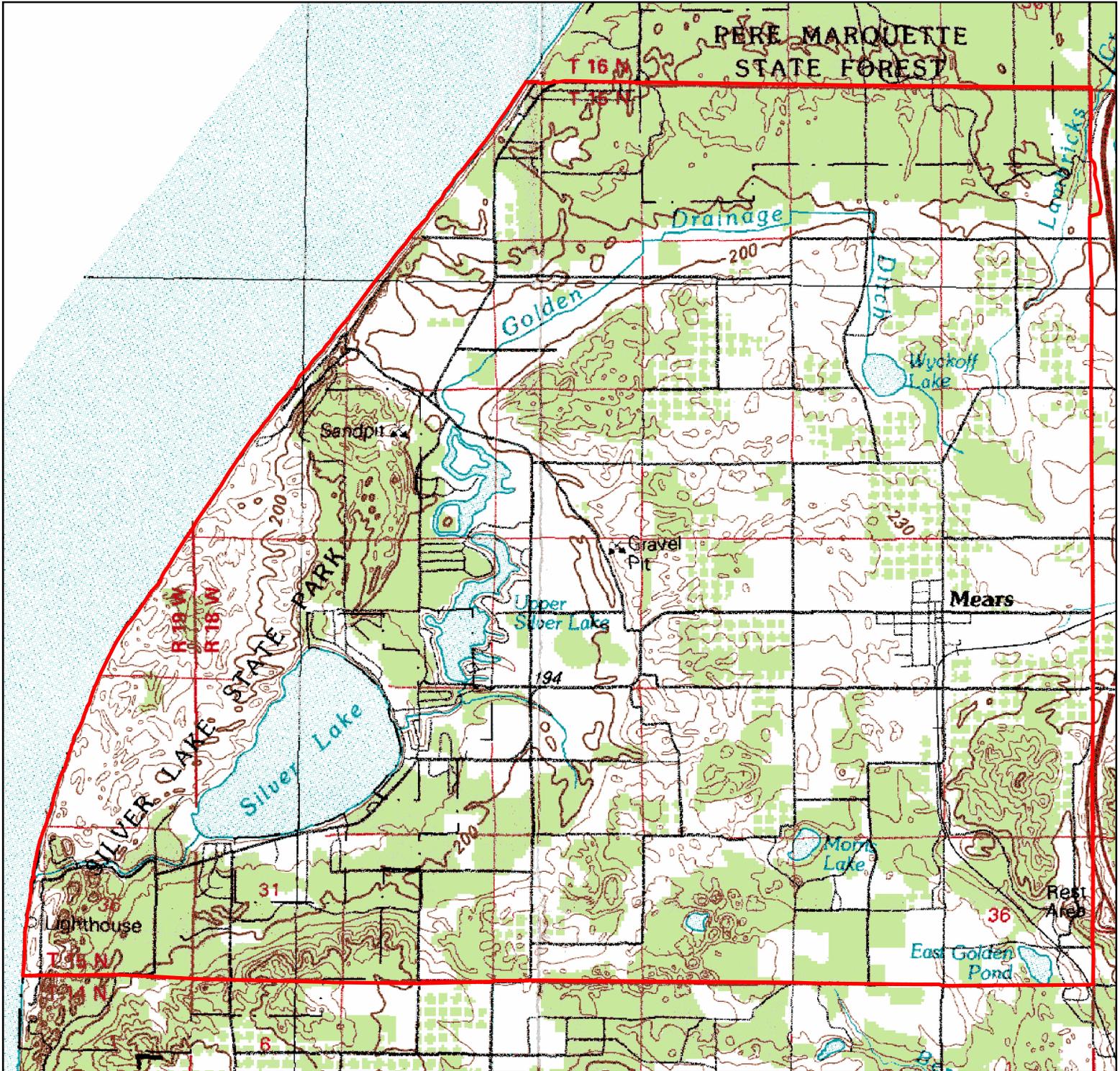
Insert planning commission minutes showing public hearing and plan approval following public review period

Insert board minutes approving plan for public review

MAPS

- USGS Topography
- Road Network
- Water Features
- Wetlands
- Soils
- Elevation
- State & Township Lands
- Zoning (02-17-12)
- Future Land Use

Golden Township TOPOGRAPHY



Map is based on 1:24,000-scale USGS georeferenced Digital Raster Graphics (DRG) quadrangles. Information used for this map was produced by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and obtained from the Michigan Center for Geographic Information.

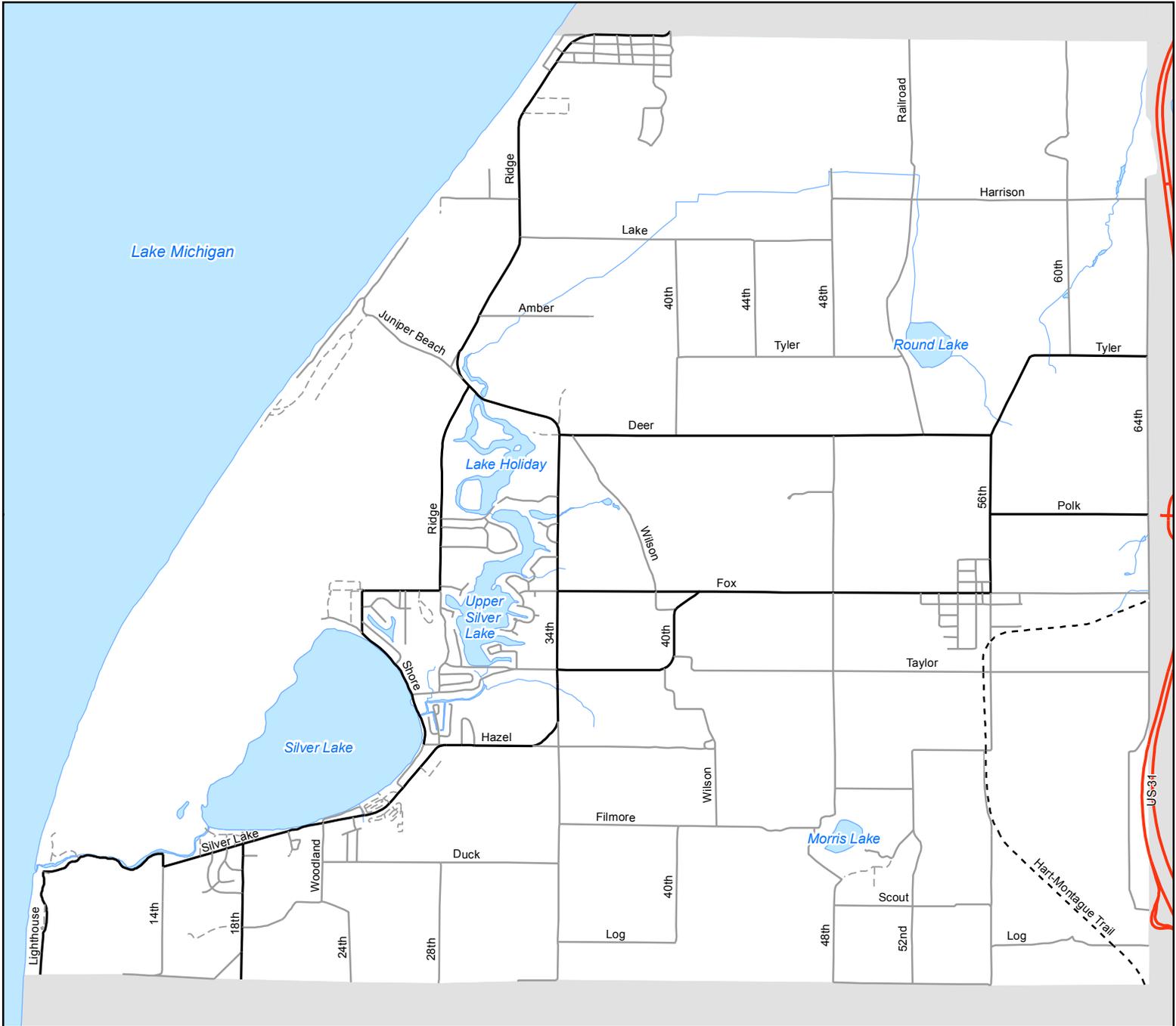
March 25, 2011



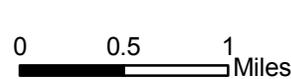
0 0.5 1 Miles

Map Prepared by:
WMSRDC
WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Golden Township ROAD NETWORK



-  US 31
-  Primary Road
-  Local Road
-  Minor Road
-  Hart-Montague Trail

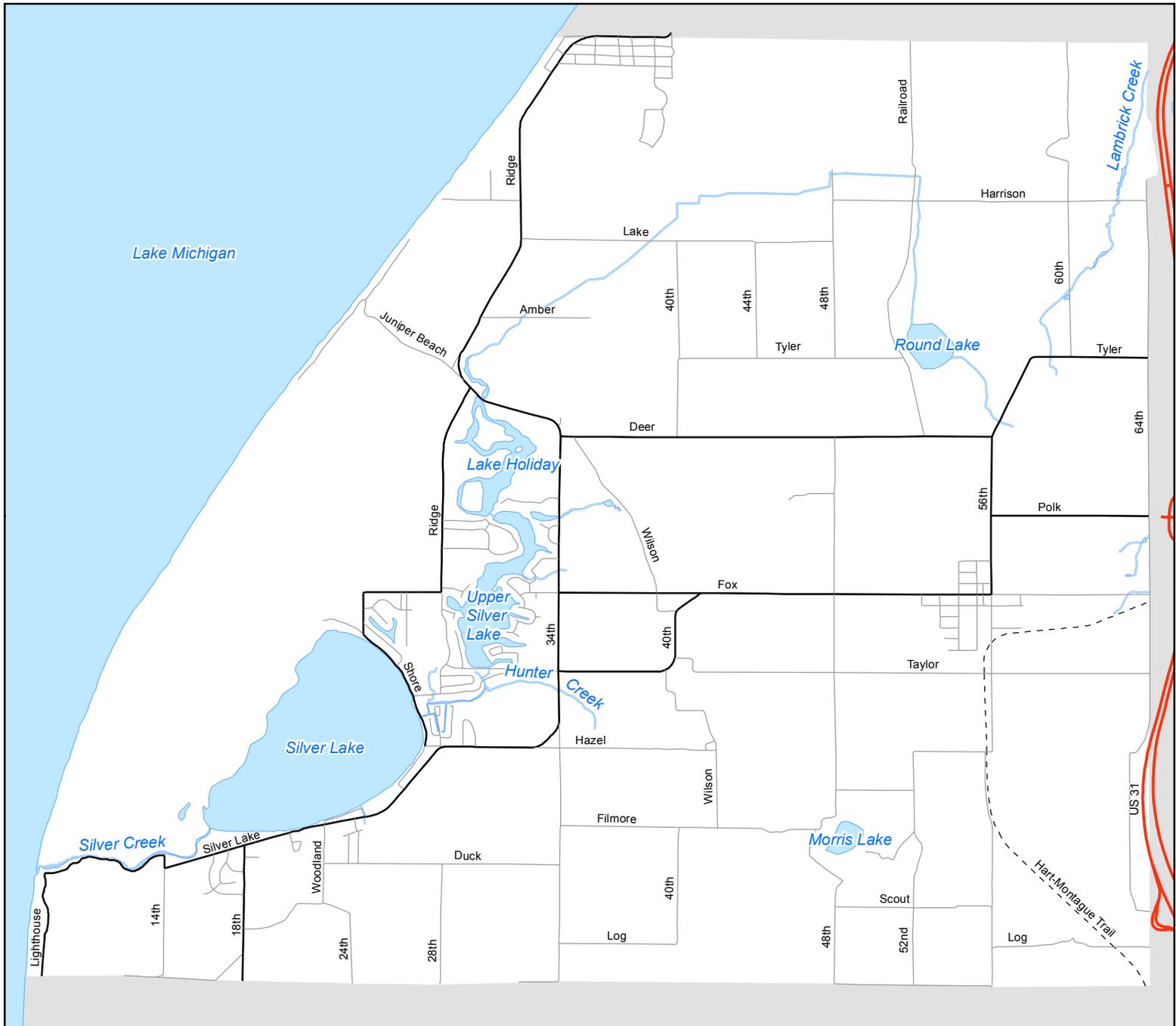


Map Prepared by:
WMSRDC
 WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE
 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

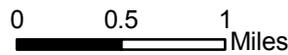
Base map and road information obtained from the Michigan Center for Geographic Information, 2010.

March 25, 2011

Golden Township WATER FEATURES



- Lake
- Stream
- US 31
- Primary Road
- Local Road
- Hart-Montague Trail

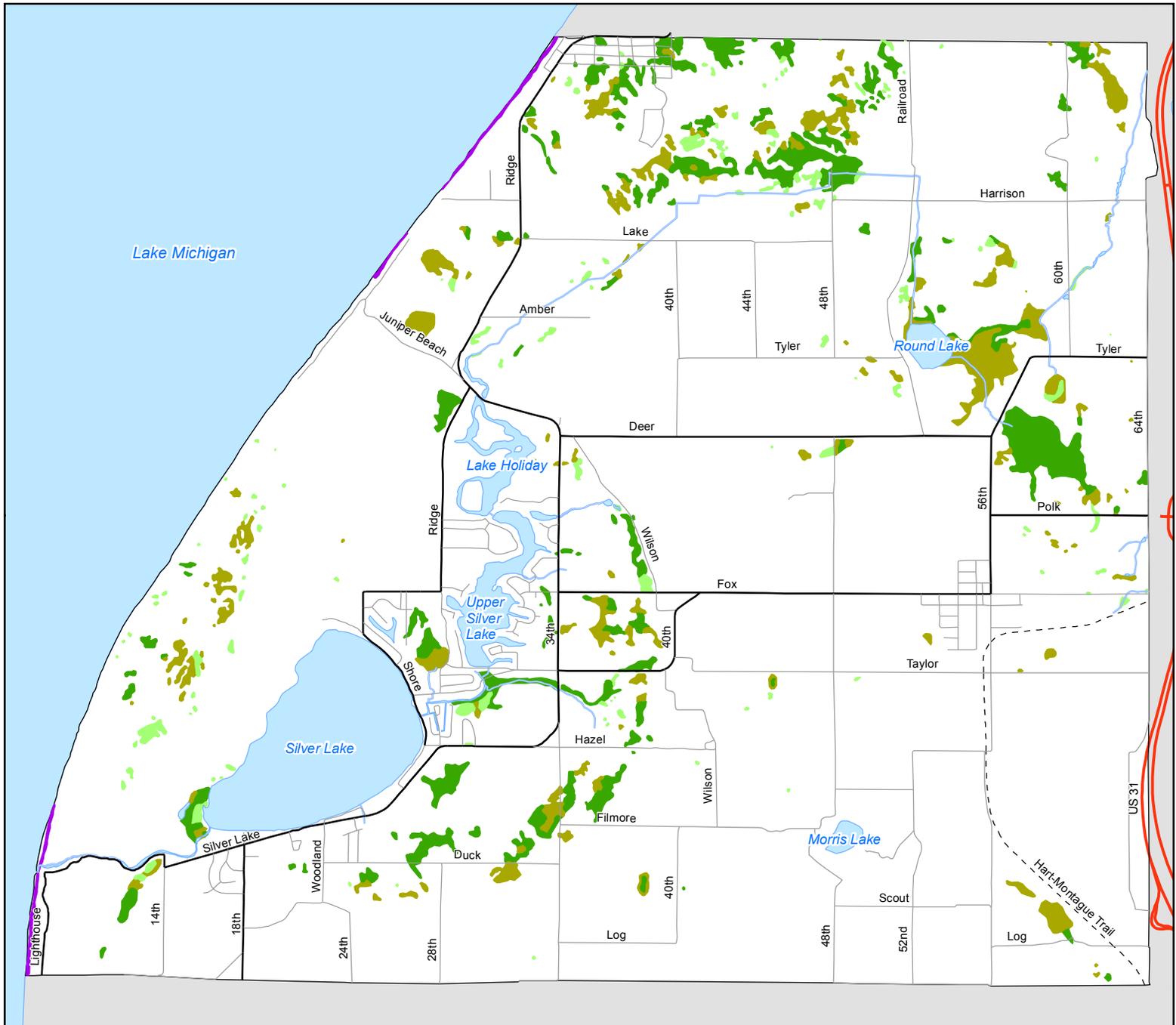


Map Prepared by:
WASRDC
 WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE
 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Base map and water feature information obtained from the Michigan Center for Geographic Information, 2010.

March 25, 2011

Golden Township WETLANDS



NWI Wetlands

- | | | | |
|--|----------------------|---|---------------------|
|  | Emergent |  | US 31 |
|  | Forested |  | Primary Road |
|  | Scrub-Shrub |  | Local Road |
|  | Unconsolidated Shore |  | Hart-Montague Trail |
| | |  | Water Feature |

0 0.5 1 Miles

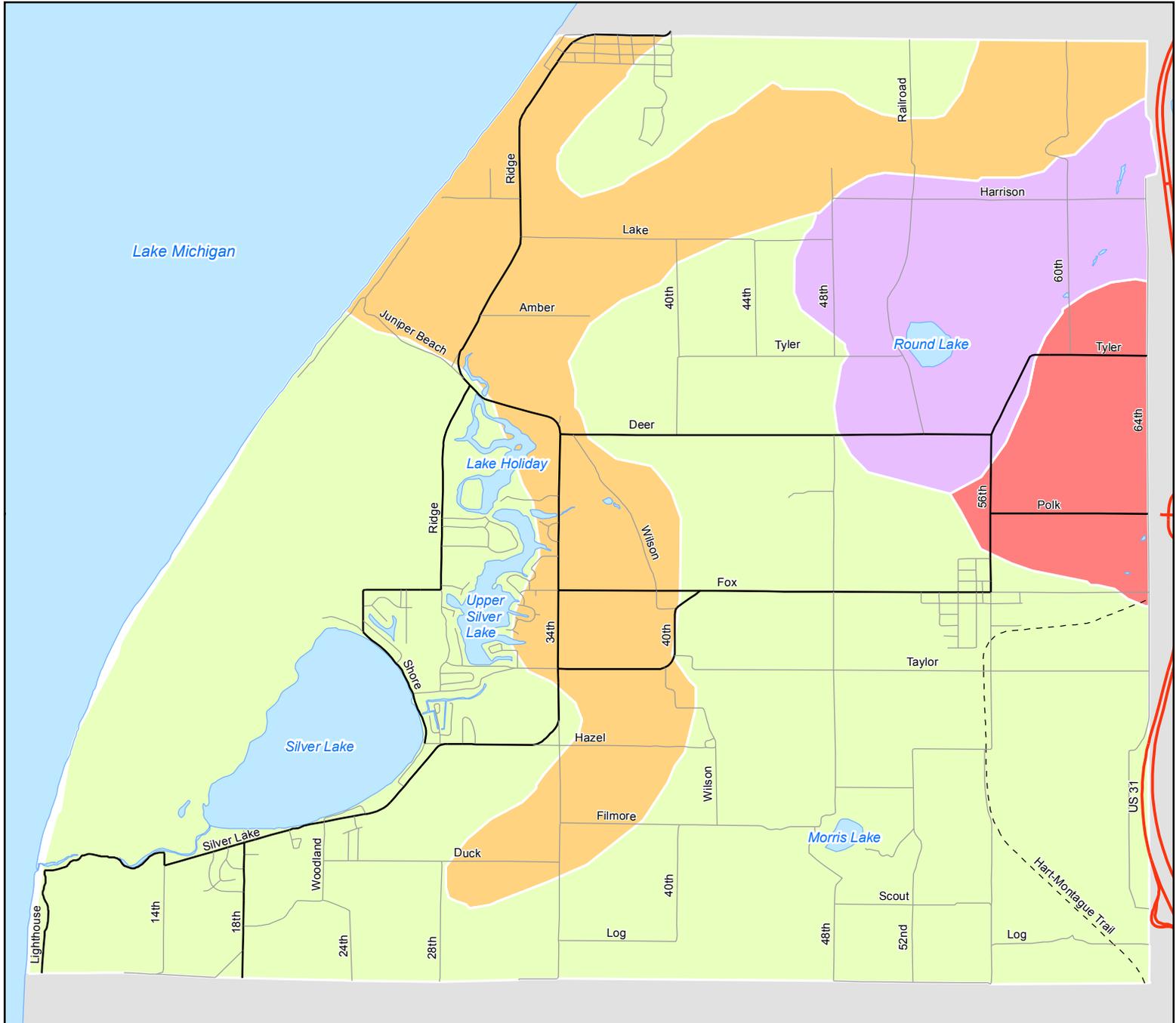


Map Prepared by:
WMSRDC
WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

This map contains potential and approximate locations of wetlands and wetland conditions according to the National Wetland Inventory (NWI) conducted by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. This data, as well as the base map information was obtained from the Michigan Center for Geographic Information in 2010.

March 25, 2011

Golden Township SOILS



STATSGO Soils

- GRATTAN-PIPESTONE-GRANBY (MI050)
- HOUGHTON-CARLISLE-ADRIAN (MI022)
- PERRINTON-ITHACA-COLOMA (MI058)
- REMUS-SPINKS-COLOMA (MI076)
- Water Feature
- US 31
- Primary Road
- Local Road
- Hart-Montague Trail

0 0.5 1 Miles



Map Prepared by:
WMSRDC
WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

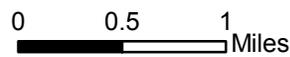
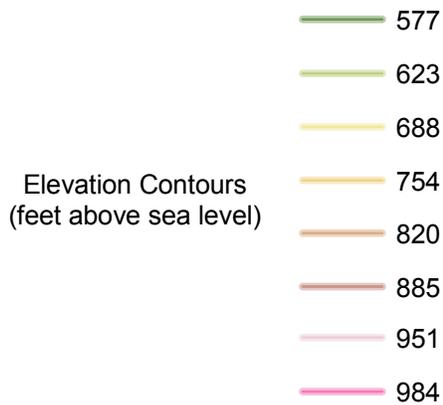
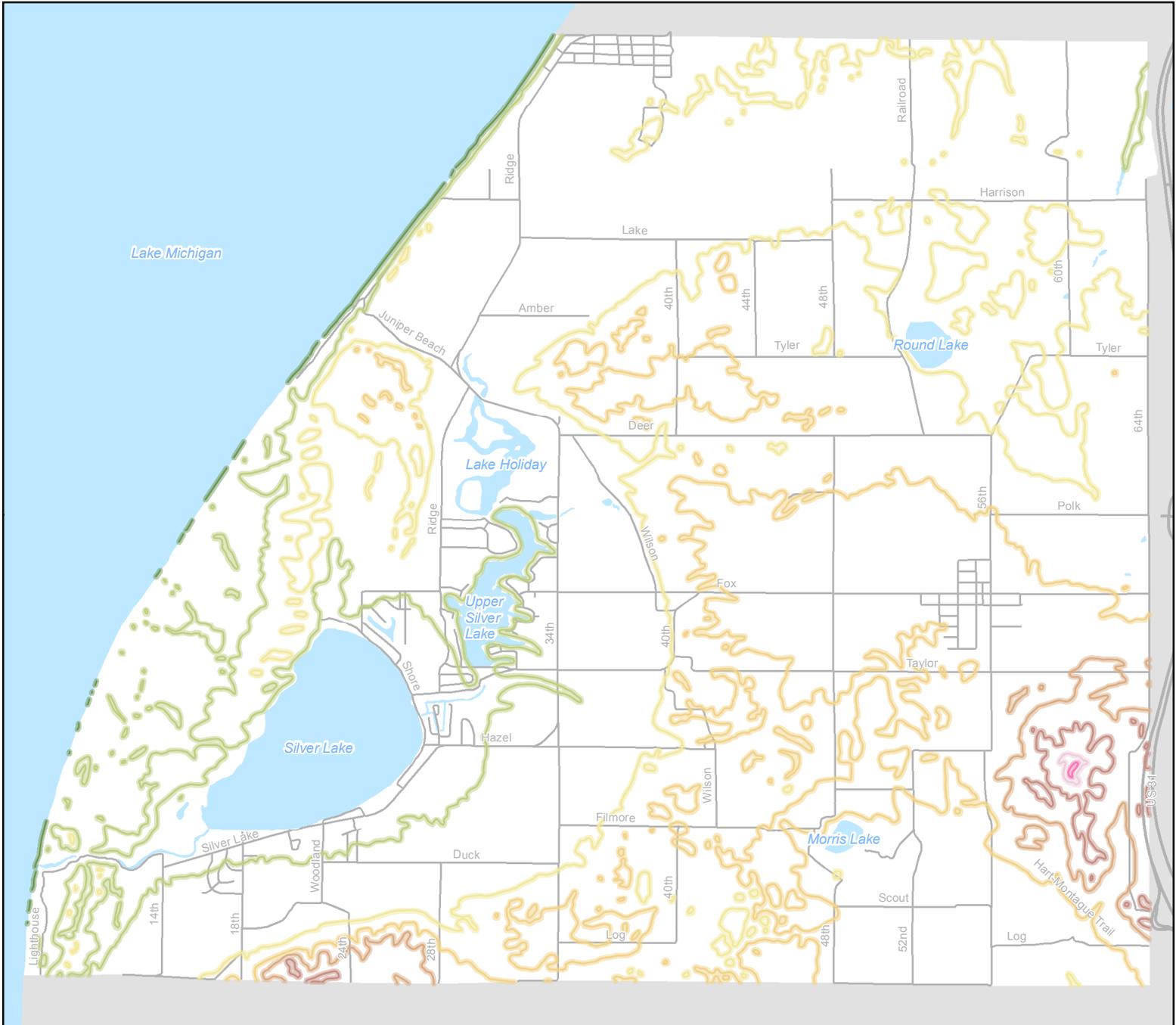
Soil information on this map comes from the State Soil Geographic (STATSGO) database for Michigan produced by the U.S Dept. of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service. All data was obtained from the Michigan Center for Geographic Information in 2010.

For more detailed soil information, refer to the Soil Survey of Oceana County, a publication of the National Cooperative Soil Survey.

April 1, 2011

15A

Golden Township ELEVATION



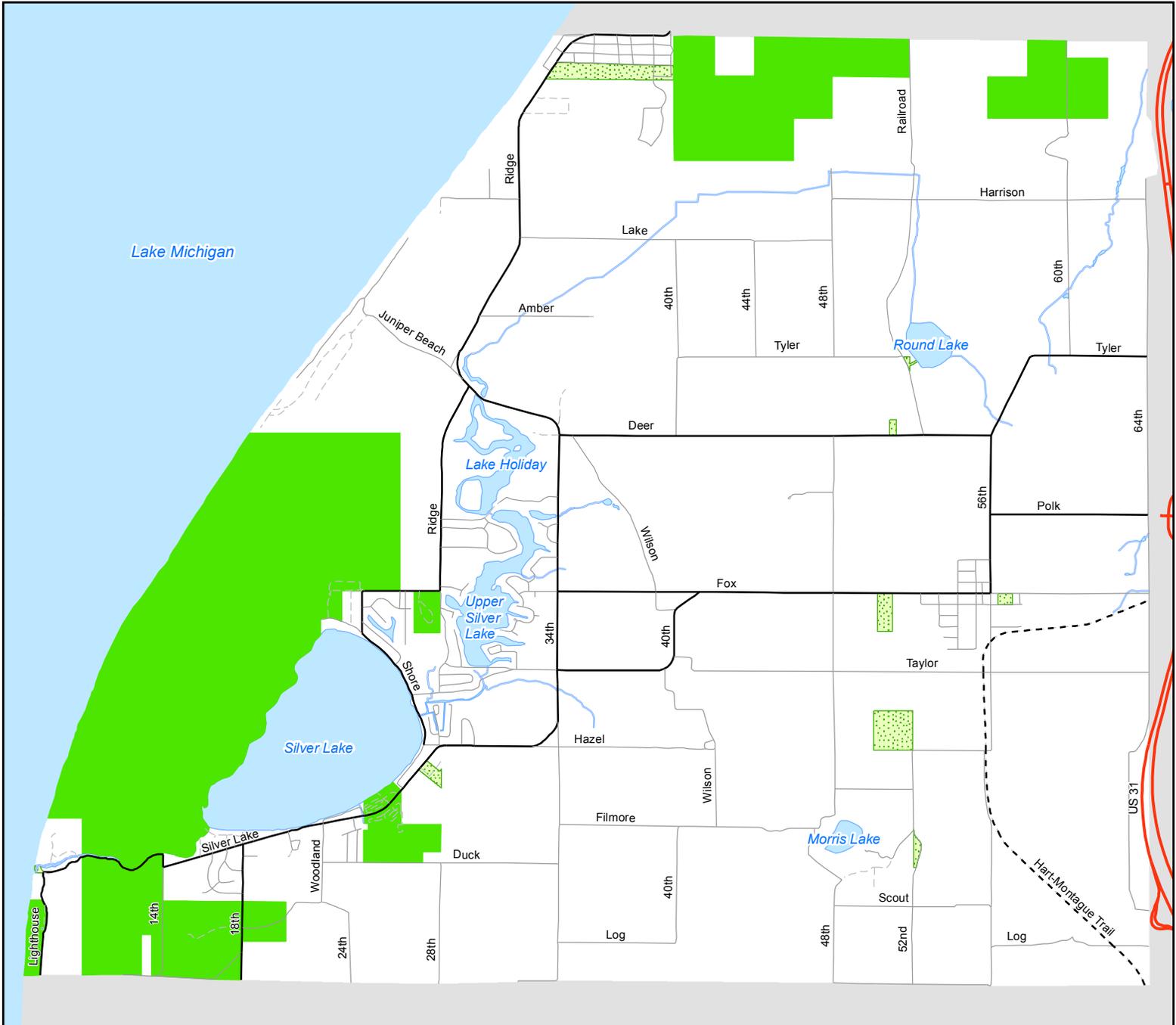
Map Prepared by:
WMSRDC
WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Base map and elevation information obtained from the Michigan Center for Geographic Information.

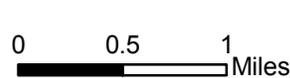
April 1, 2011

Golden Township

STATE & TOWNSHIP LANDS



- | | | | |
|--|---------------------|---|------------------|
|  | State of Michigan |  | Water Feature |
|  | Golden Township |  | US 31 |
|  | Hart-Montague Trail |  | Primary Road |
| | |  | Local Road |
| | |  | Minor Road/Trail |

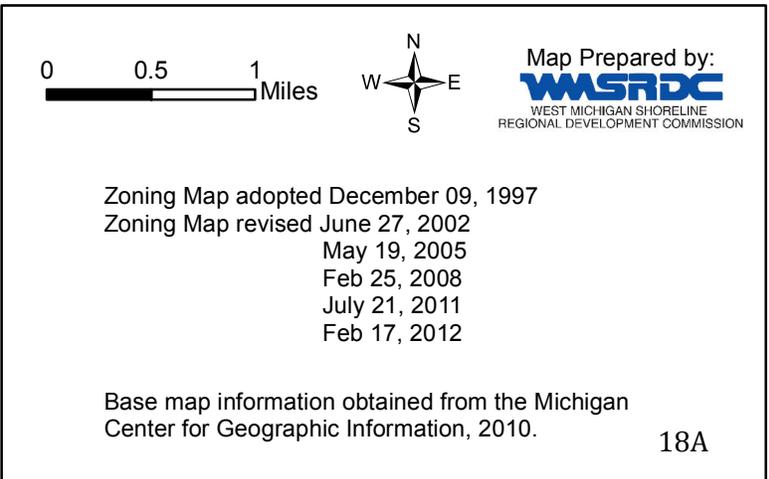
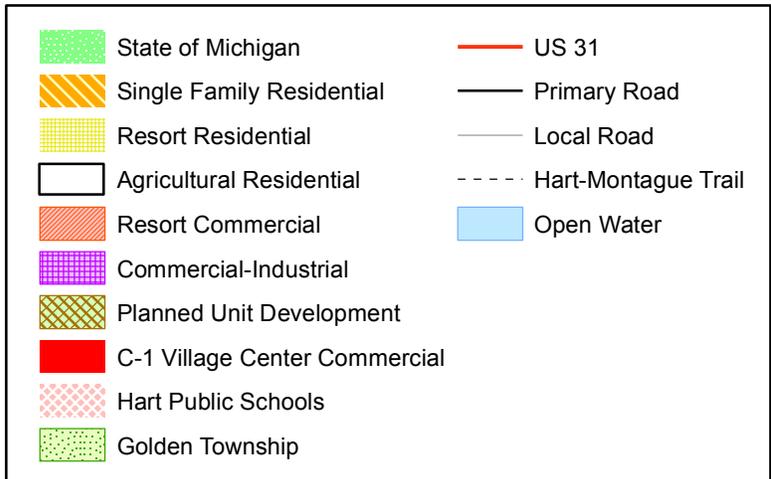
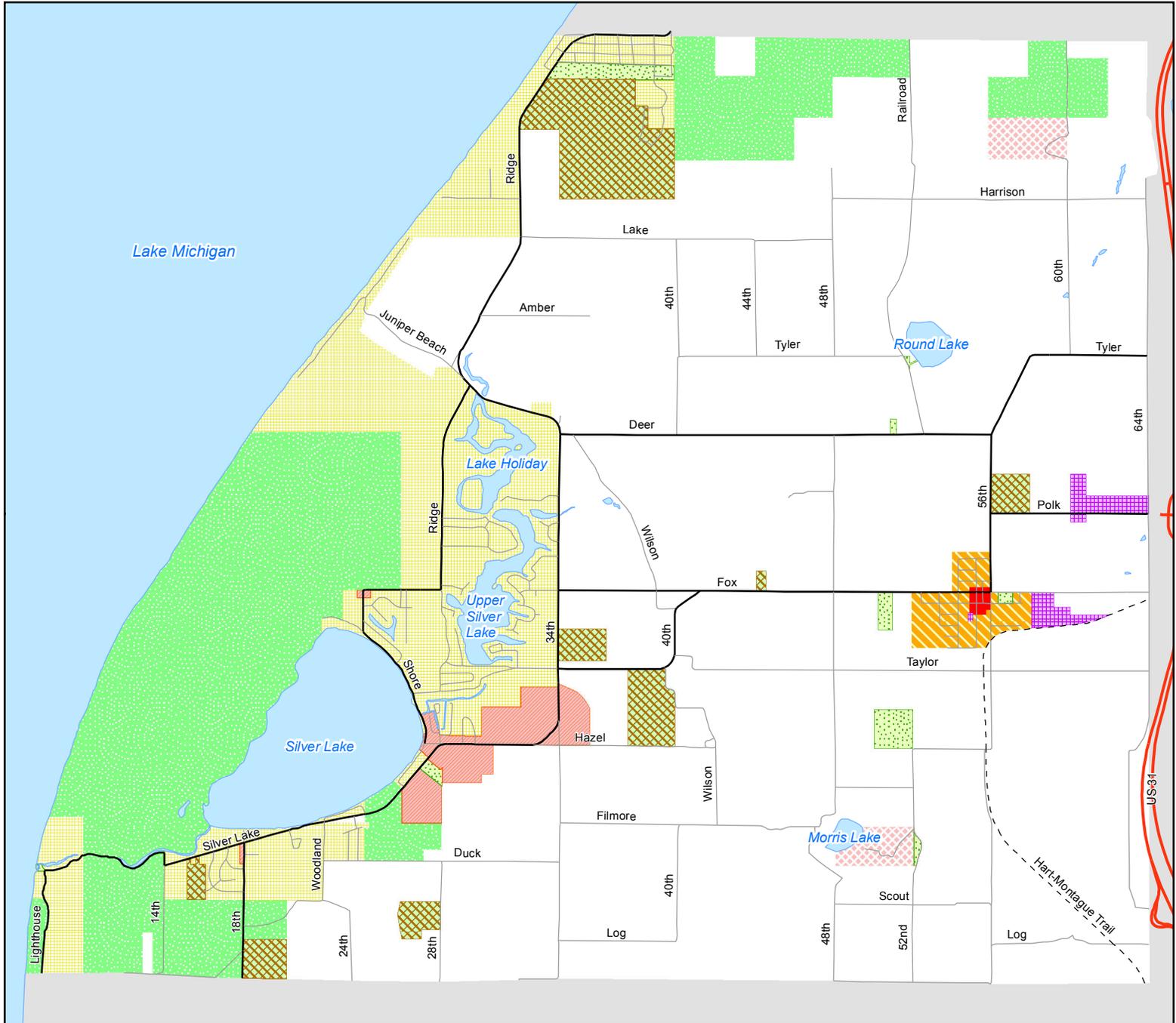


Map Prepared by:
WMSRDC
 WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE
 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

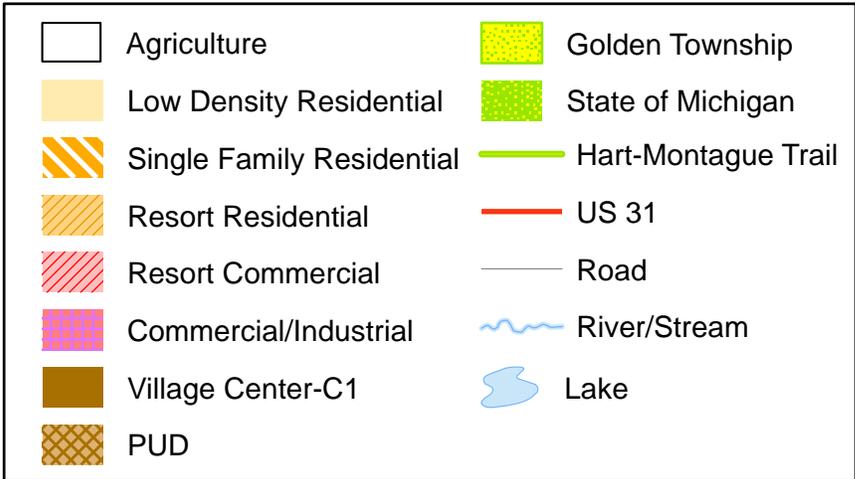
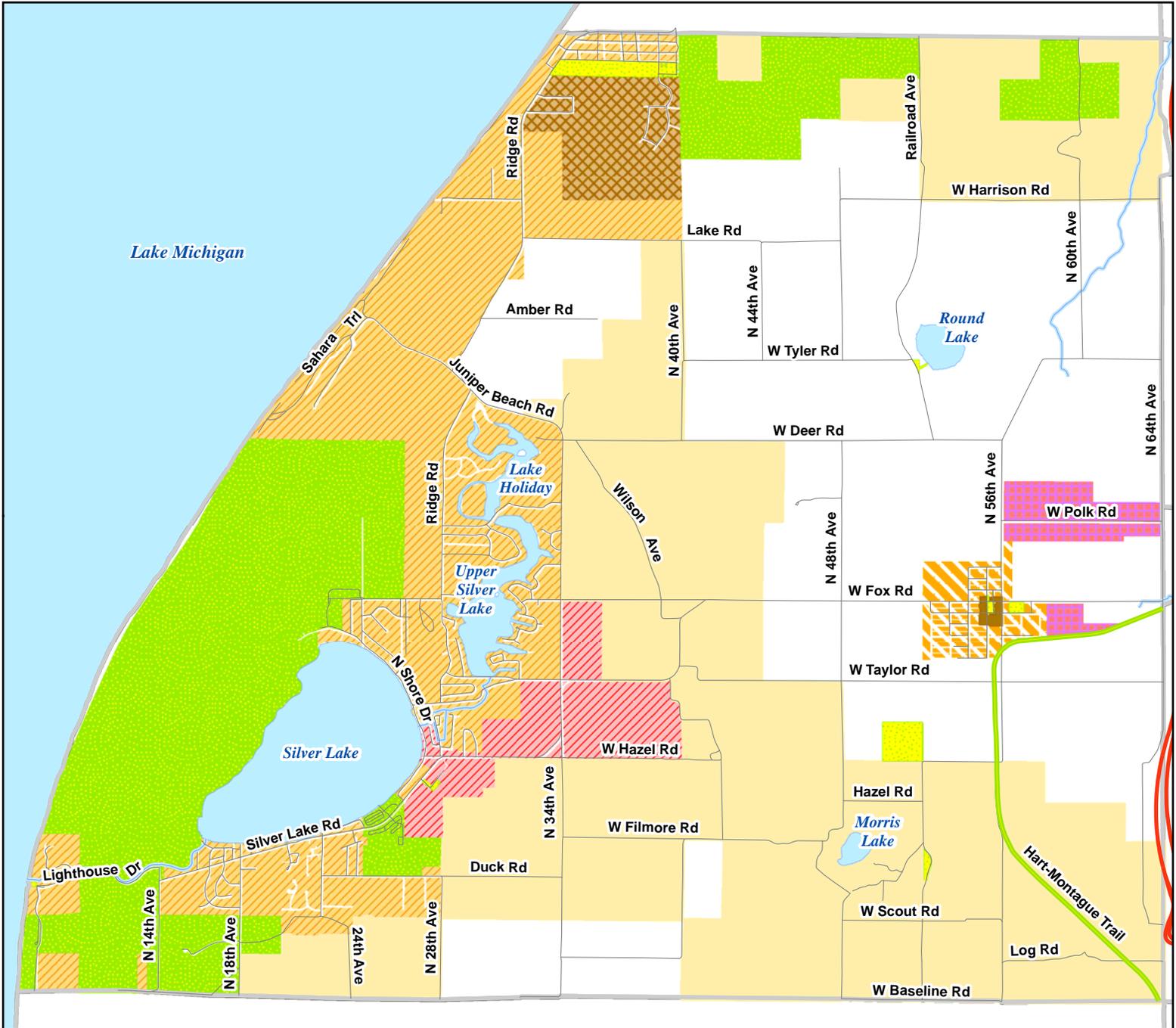
Township property information created by WMSRDC, 2009. State-owned property based upon information in the Oceana County, MI 2010 Plat Book. Base map information obtained from the Michigan Center for Geographic Information, 2010.

April 18, 2011

Golden Township ZONING



Golden Township FUTURE LAND USE



Master Plan Map adopted: December 09, 1997
 Updated February 29, 2012
 Updated February 26, 2019

Prepared By: **WSRDC**
 WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE
 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

0 0.5 1 Miles

Base map information obtained from the Michigan Center for Geographic Information, 2019.

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www.wmsrdc.org