



New Baltimore, MI

Master Plan 2026

Draft as of May 14, 2026

“Without a plan, development happens by accident rather than by design.”

— Lewis Mumford, Historian and Urbanist



Welcome to the New Baltimore, Michigan Master Plan—a shared vision for the future of our community that reflects the voices, values, and aspirations of our residents. This plan serves as a roadmap to guide thoughtful growth, preserve our unique character, and enhance the quality of life for all who live, work, and play here. Grounded in collaboration and driven by data, the master plan outlines strategic goals for land use, housing, transportation, sustainability, economic development, and community well-being. Together, we are shaping a resilient and vibrant future that honors our past while embracing the opportunities ahead.

Elected Officials

Tom Semaan, Mayor
Marcia Shinska, Clerk
Jeanne Bade, Treasurer
Jason Harvey, Councilperson, Mayor Pro Tem
Jacob Dittrich, Councilperson
David Duffy, Councilperson
Mel Eason Jr., Councilperson
Florence Hayman, Councilperson
Stan Russell, Councilperson

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New Baltimore
Macomb County, Michigan
Resolution Adopting Master Plan

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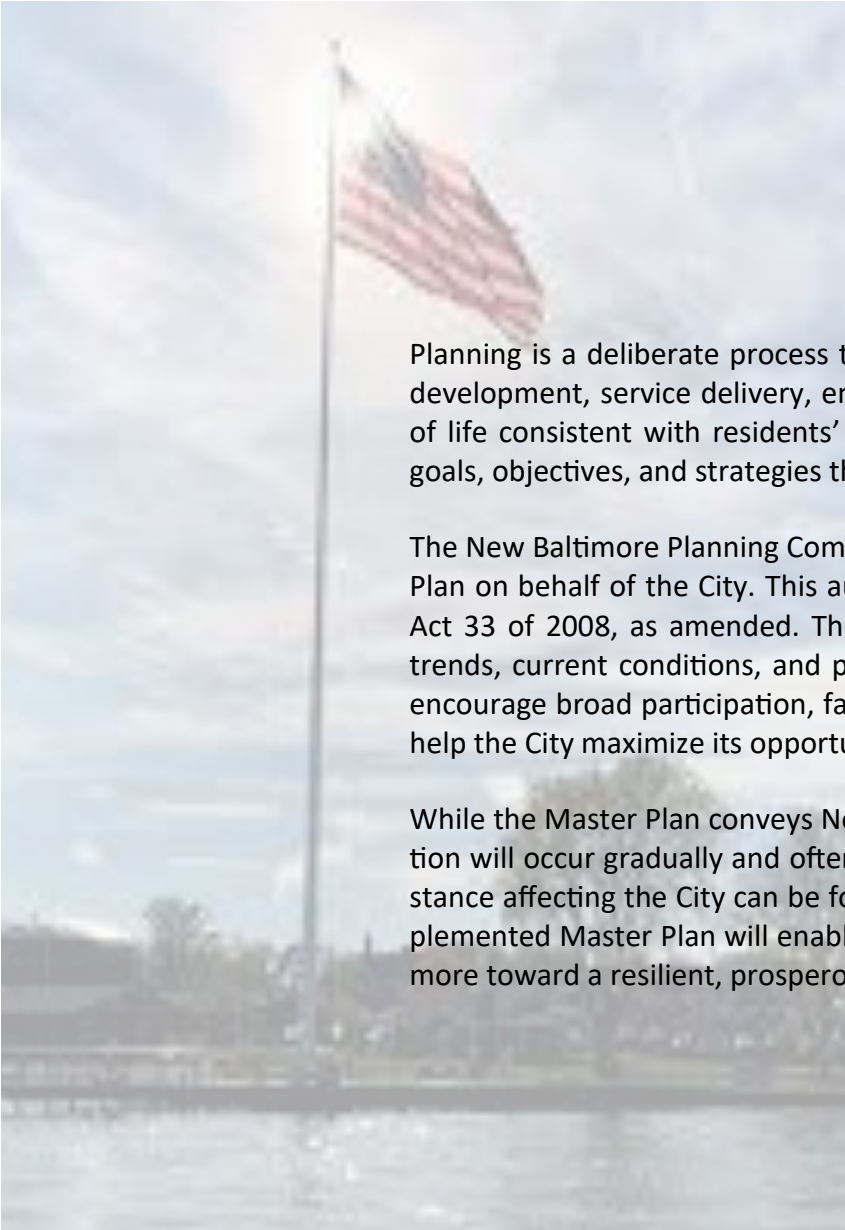
Future Land Use

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Chapter 1

Introduction



Planning is a deliberate process that entails the thoughtful selection of policies governing land use, development, service delivery, enhancement of community character, and preservation of a quality of life consistent with residents' expectations. The purpose of this Master Plan is to articulate the goals, objectives, and strategies that the City and its residents seek to pursue.

The New Baltimore Planning Commission is charged with the preparation and adoption of the Master Plan on behalf of the City. This authority is derived from the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended. The planning process has included a comprehensive analysis of past trends, current conditions, and potential future scenarios. The process has also been structured to encourage broad participation, facilitate the exchange of ideas, and generate innovative concepts to help the City maximize its opportunities.

While the Master Plan conveys New Baltimore's long-term vision for the community, its implementation will occur gradually and often in ways that may differ from initial projections. Not every circumstance affecting the City can be foreseen. Nevertheless, a thoughtfully prepared and consistently implemented Master Plan will enable the community to make informed decisions that guide New Baltimore toward a resilient, prosperous, and sustainable future.

HOW IS IT USED?

The Master Plan serves several important functions and is intended to guide decision-making across a variety of contexts, including the following:

Foundation for Regulatory Actions – The Master Plan provides the statutory basis for zoning and land use decisions. Pursuant to the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (Public Act 2006 of 2008, as amended), zoning ordinances must be based on a plan designed to address residents’ needs for natural resources, housing, recreation, industry, commerce, public services, and other land uses, while ensuring their appropriate location within the community.

Framework for Community Programs and Decision-Making – The goals and policies contained in the Master Plan guide the Planning Commission and City Council in their review of zoning actions, subdivision approvals, capital improvement projects, and other land use–related matters. In doing so, the Plan establishes a consistent, long-term framework for decision-making.

Basis for Planning Studies – While no Master Plan can anticipate every future issue in detail, it identifies key needs and opportunities and recommends additional study where appropriate. These follow-up studies may result in targeted strategies, programs, or implementation actions to address evolving conditions.

Reference for Stakeholders – The Master Plan serves as an important reference for residents, property owners, developers, business owners, prospective residents, the Planning Commission, the City Council, and other boards and agencies. It communicates the City’s long-term vision, goals, and development priorities in a clear and accessible manner.

Long-Term Development Guide – The Master Plan provides a framework for evaluating public and private development proposals that influence the City’s physical, social, economic, and environmental conditions. As a comprehensive statement of long-range goals and policies, it promotes coordinated, orderly, and sustainable growth over time.

COMMUNITY INPUT

Community participation is a fundamental component of an effective planning process. For the goals and policies of the Master Plan to be meaningful and achievable, it is essential to establish a shared vision that reflects the community's values, priorities, and long-term aspirations.

To support this effort, the New Baltimore Planning Commission conducted an online community survey to gather public input on a range of land use and development-related topics. A total of 190 people participated, providing valuable feedback on future land use, housing options, and overall quality of life. This input informed the development of the Master Plan's goals, strategies, and recommendations, helping to ensure that the Plan reflects community perspectives while providing a clear framework to guide long-term growth and development.



City of New Baltimore – Master Plan Update

The City of New Baltimore is updating its Master Plan — a key document that will guide future growth, redevelopment, and community enhancement efforts.

Your input is essential to ensure the Plan reflects the needs and priorities of our residents, businesses, and visitors. Please take a few minutes to complete the short survey linked below. Your feedback will help shape the future of our community.

Thank you for your time and participation.

New Baltimore Planning Commission

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Chapter 2

Community Snapshot

The review and analysis of existing conditions—including population, housing, employment, and economic trends—provide valuable insight into the City’s character and its historical development. This information establishes a foundation for identifying and pursuing the community’s long-term goals. By evaluating these data, the City can better understand shifting demographic and economic patterns, which in turn inform the recommendations and strategic decisions set forth in the Master Plan.



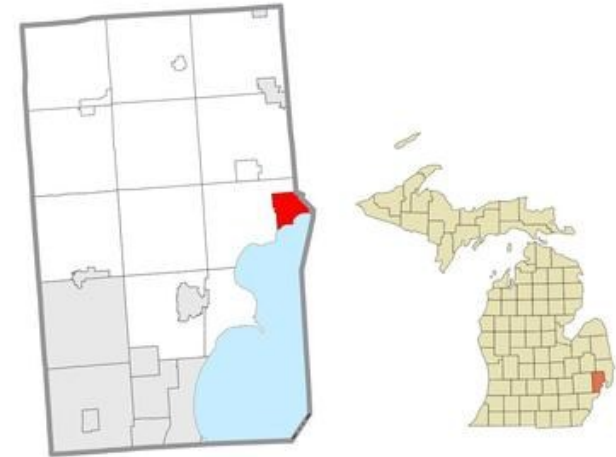
LOCATION

New Baltimore is a lakefront city located along the eastern edge of Macomb County, Michigan. It is bordered by Chesterfield Township to the west and north, Ira Township to the east, and Lake St. Clair to the south, with approximately four miles of shoreline.

The area was first settled in 1796 by French hunters and fur trappers and developed as a ribbon-farm community that relied on its riverfront as a port, exporting goods such as lumber and household materials. New Baltimore was incorporated as a village in 1867 and later achieved city status in 1931.

The city encompasses approximately 6.7 square miles, consisting of about 69 percent land and 31 percent water. Predominant land uses include single-family residential neighborhoods, parks and recreation areas, open space, and commercial development.

New Baltimore is within commuting distance of both Detroit and Port Huron and is served by two major transportation corridors: M-29 (23 Mile Road) and I-94. Despite continued growth, the city has maintained its small-town, lakefront character.



PLANNING INFLUENCES

In planning for long-term growth, New Baltimore must consider not only its own goals but also the policies of surrounding jurisdictions. Because the City shares boundaries with two townships, coordinated planning is essential to promote compatible land uses, minimize potential conflicts, and support regional cooperation.

The following section summarizes the adopted plans of adjacent communities and identifies potential implications for New Baltimore.

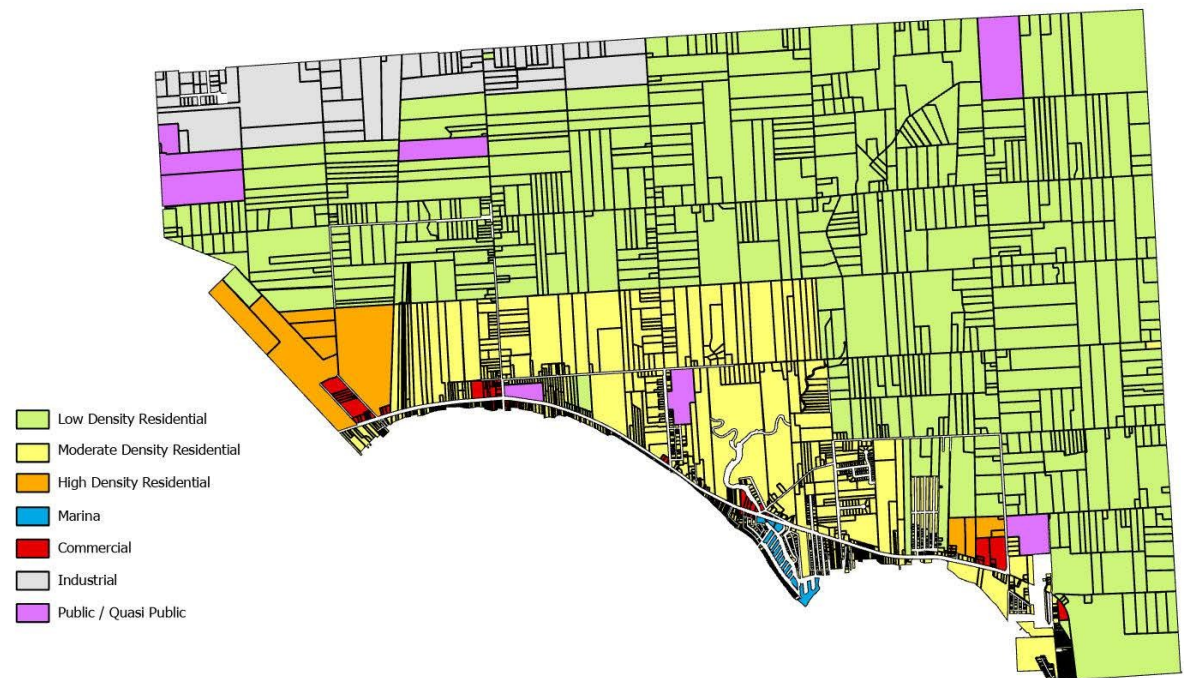
ADJACENT COMMUNITIES

Two communities share a common boundary with New Baltimore. These include Ira Township and Chesterfield Township.

Ira Township

Ira Township’s western boundary is adjacent to the eastern boundary of the City of New Baltimore. Ira Township adopted a new Master Plan in 2025, which provides guidance for future growth and land use patterns in areas bordering the City.

The Future Land Use Map for Ira Township primarily designates high-density residential land uses along the shared boundary with New Baltimore. This designation has implications for land use compatibility, infrastructure planning, and service coordination, underscoring the importance of ongoing communication and coordinated planning efforts between the two jurisdictions.

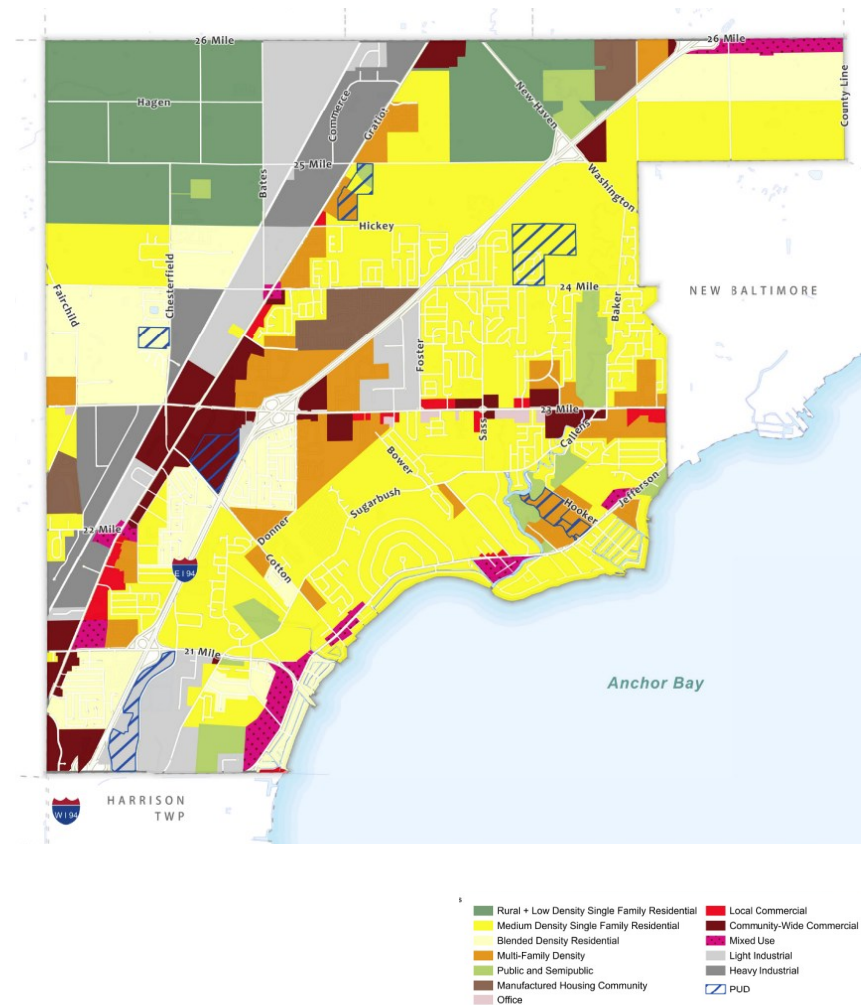


Ira Township Future Land Use Map

Chesterfield Township

New Baltimore shares its western and northern boundaries with Chesterfield Township, which adopted its Master Plan in 2021. Because of this shared boundary, coordination between the two communities is important to promote compatible land use patterns and minimize potential conflicts.

Chesterfield Township’s Future Land Use Map designates predominantly residential land uses along the shared boundaries with New Baltimore. An exception occurs along the 23 Mile Road corridor, which is designated for commercial use. This commercial designation is consistent with New Baltimore’s future land use planning for the corridor and supports continuity in land use policy between the two jurisdictions.



Chesterfield Township Future Land Use Map

Population Trends for New Baltimore & Surrounding Communities

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

New Baltimore has maintained a relatively stable population over time, with only modest fluctuations. Between 2010 and 2020, the City’s population remained essentially unchanged, followed by a slight decline by 2024. The 2050 forecast anticipates a rebound to approximately 13,130 residents, indicating long-term stability with modest growth rather than significant expansion.

In comparison, Macomb County experienced stronger growth between 2010 and 2020 and is projected to grow substantially by 2050.

	2010	2020	2024	2050 Forecast
New Baltimore	12,084	12,117	11,866	13,130
Chesterfield Twp.	43,381	45,376	46,023	51,677
Lenox Twp.	5,628	6,022	6,259	6,902
Ira Township	5,178	4,967	5,190	5,114
Casco Twp.	4,748	4,107	4,210	3,782
New Haven	4,642	6,097	6,709	6,817
Macomb County	840,078	881,217	877,336	962,485

HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Average household sizes have declined nationwide, decreasing from 2.62 persons per household in 2000 to 2.53 in 2020. Michigan has experienced an even more significant reduction, from 2.75 to 2.48 over the same period, with local communities reflecting this trend. In New Baltimore, the 2020 Census reported a decline in average household size from 2.73 in 2010 to 2.61 in 2020. Projections from SEMCOG indicated that this figure continued to decrease, with an estimated average household size of 2.49 in 2024.

New Baltimore Population & Household Data

	2010 Census	2020 Census	2024 Estimate	2050 Forecast
Population	12,084	12,117	11,866	13,130
Households	4,434	4,638	4,762	5,044
Persons per Household	2.73	2.61	2.49	2.60

Source: SEMCOG

AGE CHARACTERISTICS

Information on age within a community can assist in matching public services to community characteristics and in determining the special needs of specific age groups. For example, younger populations tend to require more rental housing units and smaller homes, while the elderly populations may require assisted living facilities.

Between 2010 and the 2023 estimates, New Baltimore’s age profile shows a noticeable shift toward an older population. The City’s median age increased from 37.1 years in 2010 to 42.9 years in 2023, reflecting both the aging of existing residents and changes in household composition over time.

Younger age cohorts experienced the most significant declines. The population under age 10 decreased substantially, and the number of residents in the 10–14 and 15–19 age groups also declined overall. These trends suggest fewer young families with children and a reduced presence of school-age populations compared to 2010.

In contrast, older age groups expanded markedly. Residents aged 50 to 64 increased significantly, with particularly strong growth in the 50–54 and 55–59 cohorts. Growth is also evident among residents aged 70 and older, including notable increases in the 70–74 and 75–79 age groups. These changes indicate that many long-time residents are aging in place, while the City is also attracting or retaining older adults.

Population by Age Group

	2010	2023 Est.
Under 5	856	576
5–9	1,049	566
10–14	1,040	857
15–19	798	748
20–24	530	726
25–29	512	586
30–34	850	692
35–39	1,056	612
40–44	1,177	1,033
45–49	1,003	673
50–54	810	1,212
55–59	640	1,095
60–64	582	754
65–69	425	446
70–74	259	688
75–79	191	372
80–84	168	268
85+	138	156
Median Age	37.1	42.9

RACIAL COMPOSITION

An important social characteristic of any community is its racial composition. Understanding this composition is essential for identifying and addressing the diverse needs of the population.

Between 2010 and the 2023, New Baltimore’s racial and ethnic composition remained predominantly White, though modest shifts occurred across several groups. The White population declined slightly, decreasing by 351 residents, while the Black population also experienced a decline of 133 residents.

In contrast, the City experienced notable growth in diversity. The Hispanic population more than doubled, increasing by 254 residents, and the multiracial population grew significantly, increasing by 280 residents. These gains offset some of the overall declines in other groups and indicate a gradual diversification of New Baltimore’s population.

Population by Race

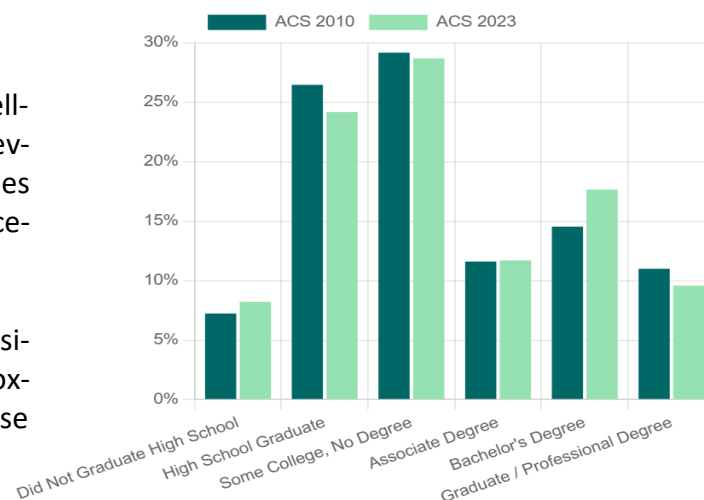
	2010 Census	2023 ACS	Change
White	11,224	10,883	-351
Black	329	196	-133
Hispanic	221	475	+254
Multi Racial	152	432	+280
Asian	104	40	-64
Other	54	0	-54

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational attainment is a critical indicator of a community’s socioeconomic well-being. Research consistently demonstrates a strong correlation between higher levels of education and increased economic prosperity. As residents pursue degrees and professional credentials, opportunities for job growth and economic advancement expand.

The adjacent chart illustrates the educational attainment of New Baltimore residents based on the most recent American Community Survey data. In 2023, approximately 27 percent of residents held a bachelor’s degree or higher, a slight increase from the 25 percent reported in 2010.

Educational Attainment



HOUSING TYPE

Between 2010 and the most recent estimates, New Baltimore’s housing stock experienced modest growth, with total housing units increasing from 4,740 to 4,931. This growth was driven primarily by an increase in owner-occupied housing, which rose from 3,501 to 3,812 units, reinforcing the City’s character as a predominantly owner-occupied community.

During the same period, renter-occupied units declined from 933 to 821, while vacant units decreased slightly from 306 to 298. The reduction in both rental and vacant units suggests relatively stable housing demand and limited excess supply.

Overall, these trends indicate continued emphasis on homeownership, modest residential growth, and a generally stable housing market within the City of New Baltimore.

Occupancy

	2010	2023
Owner Occupied Units	3,501	3,812
Renter Occupied Units	933	821
Vacant Units	306	298
Total	4,740	4,931



HOUSING VALUES & RENT

Between 2010 and 2023, housing costs in New Baltimore increased steadily, reflecting a generally stable and mature housing market. The median housing value rose from \$300,250 to \$309,800, an increase of \$9,550 over the period. This modest appreciation suggests that owner-occupied housing values have grown at a measured pace, indicating market stability rather than rapid escalation. Such trends are consistent with a community characterized by established neighborhoods and limited large-scale new residential development.

Rental housing costs increased more noticeably over the same timeframe. Gross median rent rose from \$971 to \$1,081, an increase of \$110. While this level of growth does not suggest extreme rental pressure, it does indicate rising costs for renters and reflects broader inflationary trends affecting housing expenses, utilities, and maintenance.

Taken together, these trends suggest that New Baltimore has experienced gradual upward pressure on housing costs without significant volatility. The relatively modest increase in home values, paired with more pronounced rent growth, underscores the importance of monitoring housing affordability—particularly for renters and fixed-income households. As the community continues to age and diversify, maintaining a balanced mix of housing types and price points will be an important consideration in supporting long-term residential stability and accessibility.

Housing Values & Gross Rent

	2010	2023	Change
Median Housing Value	\$300,250	\$309,800	+\$9,550
Gross Median Rent	\$971	\$1,081	+\$110

Source: SEMCOG



EMPLOYMENT IN NEW BALTIMORE

Between 2020 and 2025, employment increased across New Baltimore and surrounding communities, reflecting steady regional economic growth. Employment within the City of New Baltimore rose from 3,619 to 3,956, representing moderate local job growth over the five-year period.

Nearby communities experienced similar upward trends. Chesterfield Township recorded the largest employment gains, increasing from 18,300 to 20,397 jobs, reinforcing its role as a major employment center in the area. Lenox Township, Ira Township, Casco Township, and the City of New Haven also posted consistent growth, each adding several hundred jobs.

At the county level, Macomb County employment increased substantially, rising from approximately 415,735 jobs in 2020 to 458,200 in 2025. Overall, these trends indicate a strengthening regional economy, with New Baltimore benefiting from both local employment growth and its proximity to expanding employment centers throughout eastern Macomb County.

Employment in Community		
	2020	2025
New Baltimore	3,619	3,956
Chesterfield Twp.	18,300	20,397
Lenox Twp.	1,979	2,276
Ira Township	1,714	1,963
Casco Twp.	1,000	1,101
New Haven	1,494	1,678
Macomb County	415,735	458,200



Resident Employment By Sector

Between 2020 and 2025, total employment among New Baltimore residents increased from 3,619 to 3,956, with growth occurring across most industry sectors. Healthcare services remained the largest employment sector and continued to expand, while information and financial activities and professional and technical services also experienced notable gains, reflecting a growing share of professional and service-based employment.

Manufacturing and transportation-related industries showed moderate growth, reinforcing the importance of industrial and logistics employment within the local labor force. Leisure and hospitality recorded one of the more significant increases, while retail trade remained relatively stable. Public administration changed little over the period.

Overall, the data reflect a diverse and balanced employment base for New Baltimore residents, with steady growth in healthcare, professional services, manufacturing, and service-oriented industries.

New Baltimore Resident's Employment by Industry Sector

	2020	2025
Natural Resources, Mining, & Construction	255	286
Manufacturing	291	323
Wholesale Trade	66	72
Retail Trade	326	323
Transportation, Warehousing, & Utilities	235	262
Information & Financial Activities	376	405
Professional and Technical Services	233	290
Administrative, Support, & Waste Services	224	272
Education Services	224	238
Healthcare Services	529	554
Leisure & Hospitality	338	420
Other Services	290	314
Public Administration	194	197
Total Employment Numbers	3,619	3,956



HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The household income trends shown in the chart highlight a notable shift in New Baltimore over the past decade. In 2010, New Baltimore’s median household income was substantially higher than the county average, reflecting the community’s strong economic base and concentration of higher-earning households. By 2023, however, the City’s median household income declined to \$97,027, representing a decrease of approximately \$19,300 over the period.

Despite this decline, New Baltimore’s median household income remains well above that of Macomb County, which saw only minimal growth between 2010 and 2023. Macomb County’s median household income increased by less than \$1,000 during this period, indicating relatively stagnant income growth at the countywide level.

Taken together, these trends suggest that while New Baltimore continues to outperform the county in terms of overall household income, the gap has narrowed over time. The decline in median household income may reflect broader economic shifts, changes in household composition, or demographic transitions within the community. From a planning perspective, this pattern reinforces the importance of policies that support housing diversity, workforce retention, and reinvestment, ensuring that New Baltimore remains an economically resilient and inclusive community over the long term.

Median Household Income 2010—2023

	2010 Median Household Income	2023 Median Household Income	2010 – 2023 Change
New Baltimore	\$116,369	\$97,027	-\$19,342
Macomb County	\$75,452	\$76,399	+\$942



COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Municipal Offices

New Baltimore’s municipal offices are currently located at 36535 Green Street and are co-located with the Fire Department. City Council meetings, as well as meetings of other boards and commissions, are held in the chambers within this facility during evening hours.

The City has recently acquired the former Rite Aid building located at the intersection of 23 Mile Road and Jefferson Avenue. Plans are underway to renovate the structure for use as a new City Hall, which will provide a more functional and efficient space for municipal operations and public meetings.

Police

The New Baltimore Police Department is located at 37885 Green Street and serves as the primary provider of law enforcement and public safety services for the City. In addition to standard patrol, investigative, and enforcement responsibilities, the department provides school-based programming, and supports a variety of community safety and crime-prevention initiatives. These services contribute to a coordinated approach to public safety and reinforce the department’s role in maintaining a safe and secure community environment.

Fire

The New Baltimore Fire Department provides fire suppression, emergency medical response, and public safety services to the community. Administrative offices for the department are located within the municipal building at 36535 Green Street, allowing for close coordination with other municipal functions.



Utilities

The City of New Baltimore provides municipal water treatment and distribution services to residents and businesses throughout the community. The City's water treatment plant is located near the downtown area and serves as a critical component of the municipal infrastructure system, supporting both existing development and future growth.

Wastewater collection and treatment services are also provided by the City. The wastewater treatment facility is located on Cricklewood Street within the Industrial District, where its location is compatible with surrounding land uses and infrastructure needs. Together, the City's water and wastewater facilities play an essential role in protecting public health, supporting economic development, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of municipal services.



New Baltimore Area Schools

New Baltimore is served by the Anchor Bay School District, which also provides educational services to portions of Chesterfield, Lenox, Casco, and Ira Townships. The School District plays an important role in the community and is a key contributor to the City's quality of life and long-term attractiveness to residents.

Three school facilities are located within the City of New Baltimore, including Lighthouse Elementary School, Ashley Elementary School, and Anchor Bay Middle School North. These schools serve a range of educational needs and contribute to the City's land use, transportation, and community service considerations. The presence of multiple school facilities within the City underscores the importance of continued coordination between the City and the School District in planning for infrastructure, transportation, and community services.

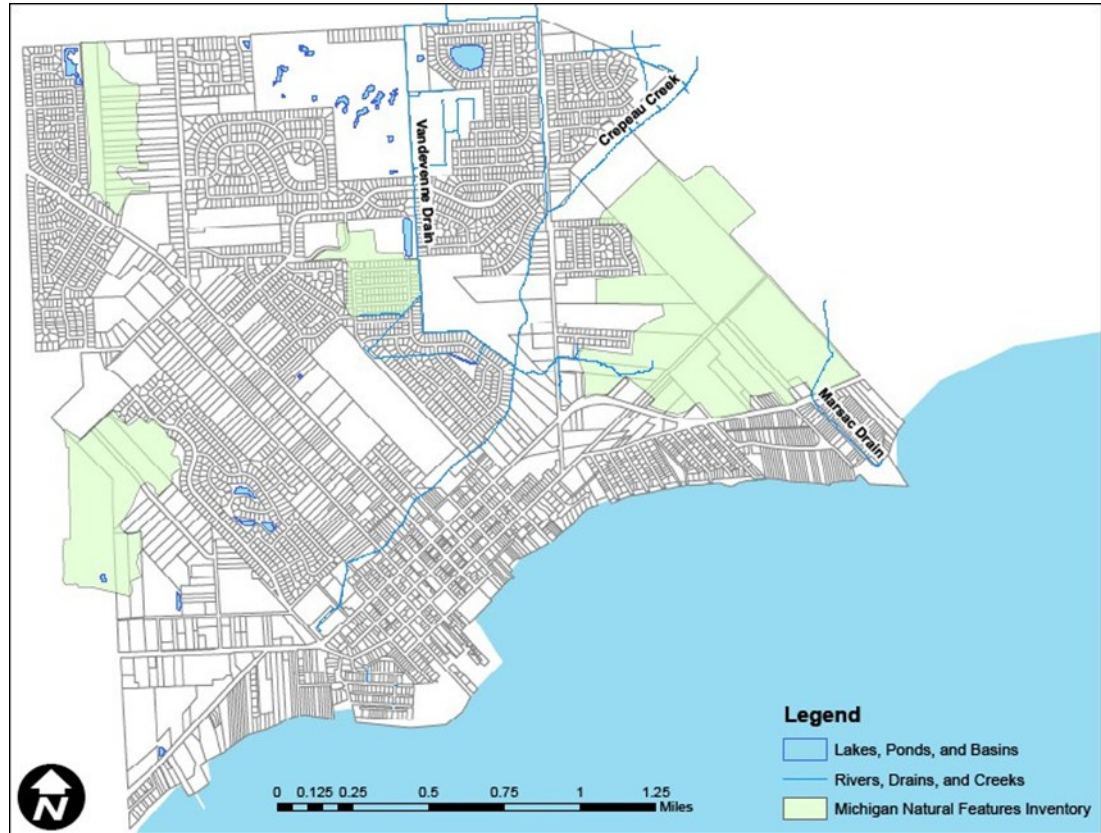


NATURAL FEATURES

Water is the City’s most prominent and influential natural feature. New Baltimore’s physical geography is shaped by the shoreline of Lake St. Clair and several watercourses that traverse the community, contributing to both its scenic character and environmental quality.

With more than four miles of shoreline, New Baltimore has a distinctive landscape that supports a wide range of residential, commercial, and recreational uses. Historically, these water features supported commerce and industry; today, they serve as the foundation for many of the City’s most valued quality-of-life amenities.

In addition to its waterfront resources, New Baltimore contains several important inland conservation areas. The Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) has identified four “Potential Conservation Areas” within the City that are characterized by native vegetation, water features, and unique natural characteristics. Two of these areas have been incorporated into existing development, while two remain largely in open space. These MNFI sites represent significant natural assets and opportunities for long-term environmental stewardship.

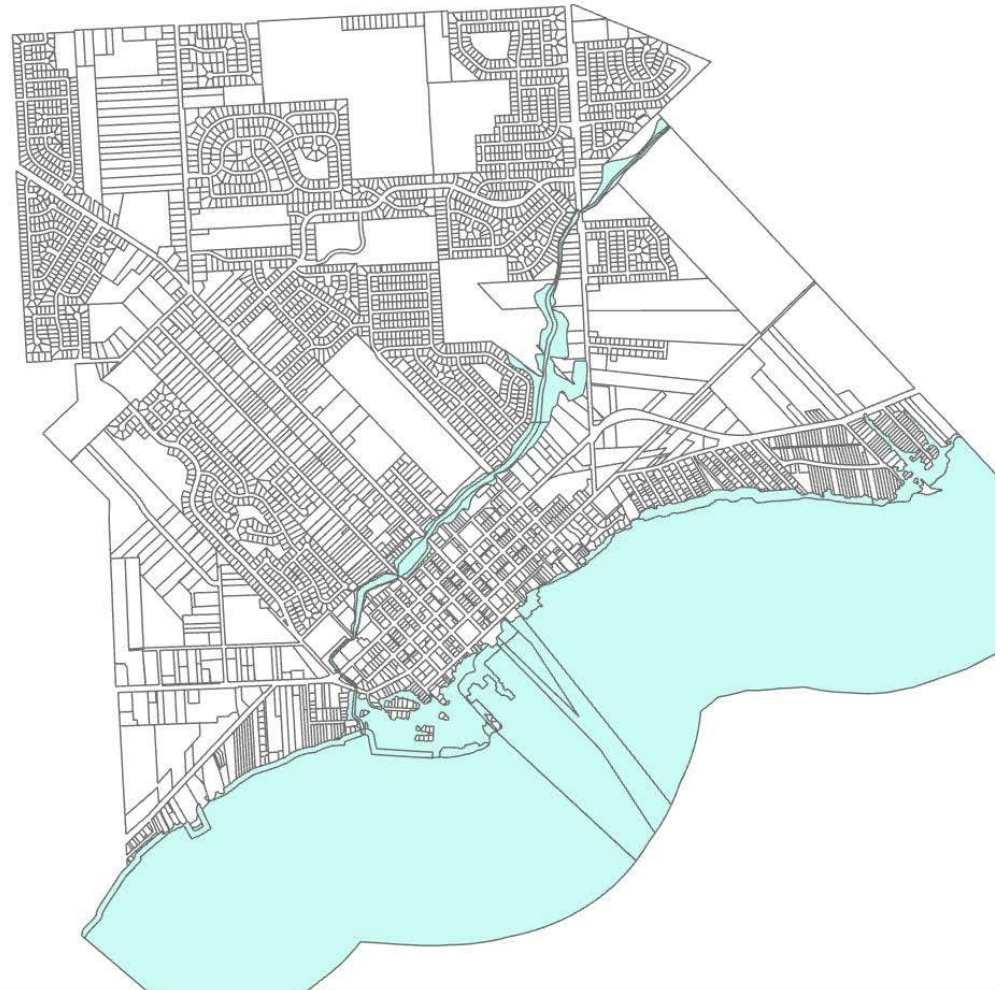


Natural Features Inventory

Floodplains

Floodplains are areas of land that are subject to periodic inundation as a result of heavy precipitation, snowmelt, storm surge, or fluctuating water levels. An understanding of floodplain conditions is essential to guiding future development, protecting public safety, minimizing property damage, and preserving the City's natural features. Effective floodplain management also supports long-term resilience and helps reduce public and private costs associated with flood events.

New Baltimore's relatively low-lying topography makes portions of the City susceptible to periodic flooding, particularly during periods of heavy rainfall, rapid snowmelt, and elevated water levels in Lake St. Clair. According to the National Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), areas along the City's shoreline—from Ruedisale Point to Marsac Point—are located within designated flood hazard areas and are subject to potential flooding. Development within or adjacent to these areas must be carefully managed to ensure compliance with floodplain regulations, protect existing development, and maintain the ecological function of shoreline and floodplain environments.



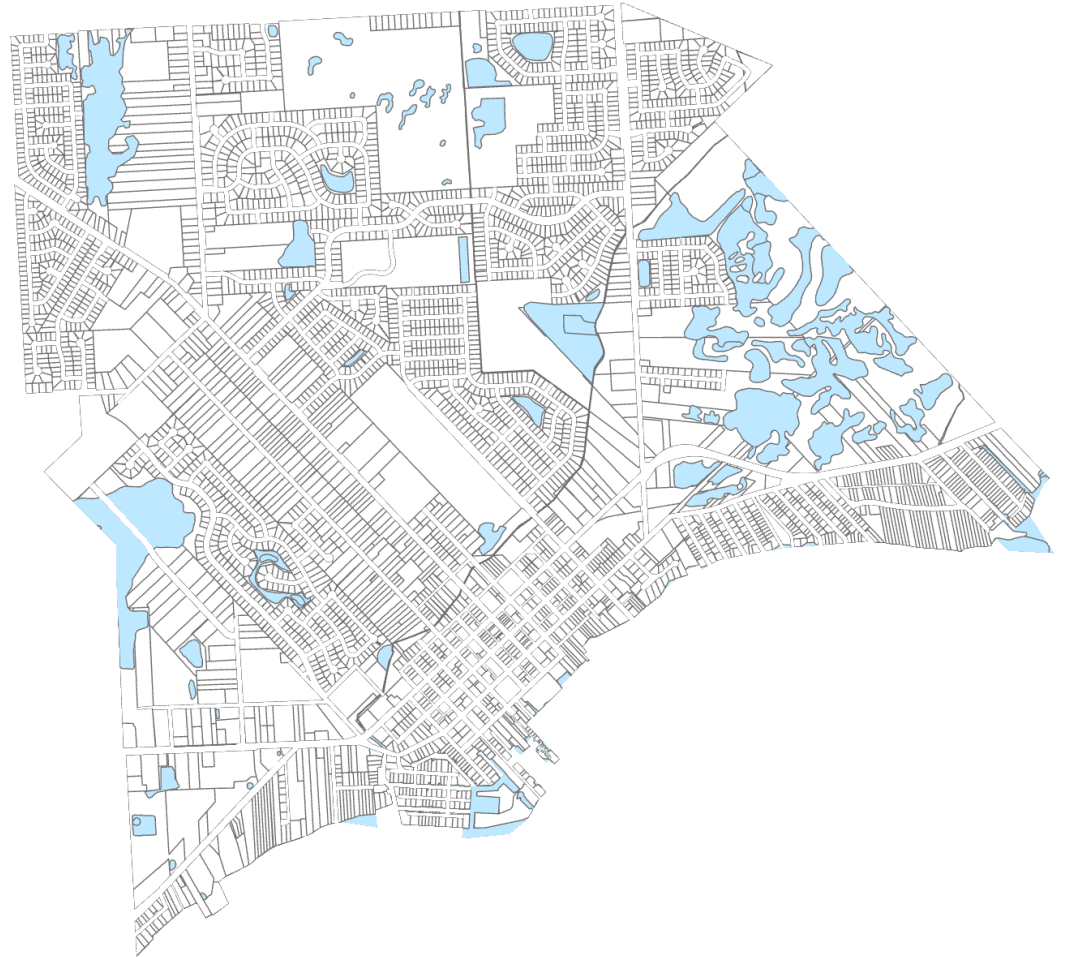
Floodplains

Wetlands

Wetlands are located throughout the City of New Baltimore and are an important part of the community's natural environment. They provide significant ecological, economic, and recreational benefits that enhance environmental quality and community resilience. Wetlands protect downstream water resources by filtering nutrients, trapping sediments, improving water quality, and contributing to groundwater recharge. They also help manage flooding by absorbing excess stormwater during heavy rainfall or snowmelt and releasing it gradually to reduce downstream impacts.

Wetlands within the City are regulated at both the state and federal levels. In Michigan, protection is governed by Part 303 (Wetlands Protection) of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (Public Act 451 of 1994, as amended) and administered by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). Certain wetlands are also regulated under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Compliance with these regulations is an important consideration in future land use and development decisions, helping preserve wetlands while accommodating responsible growth.

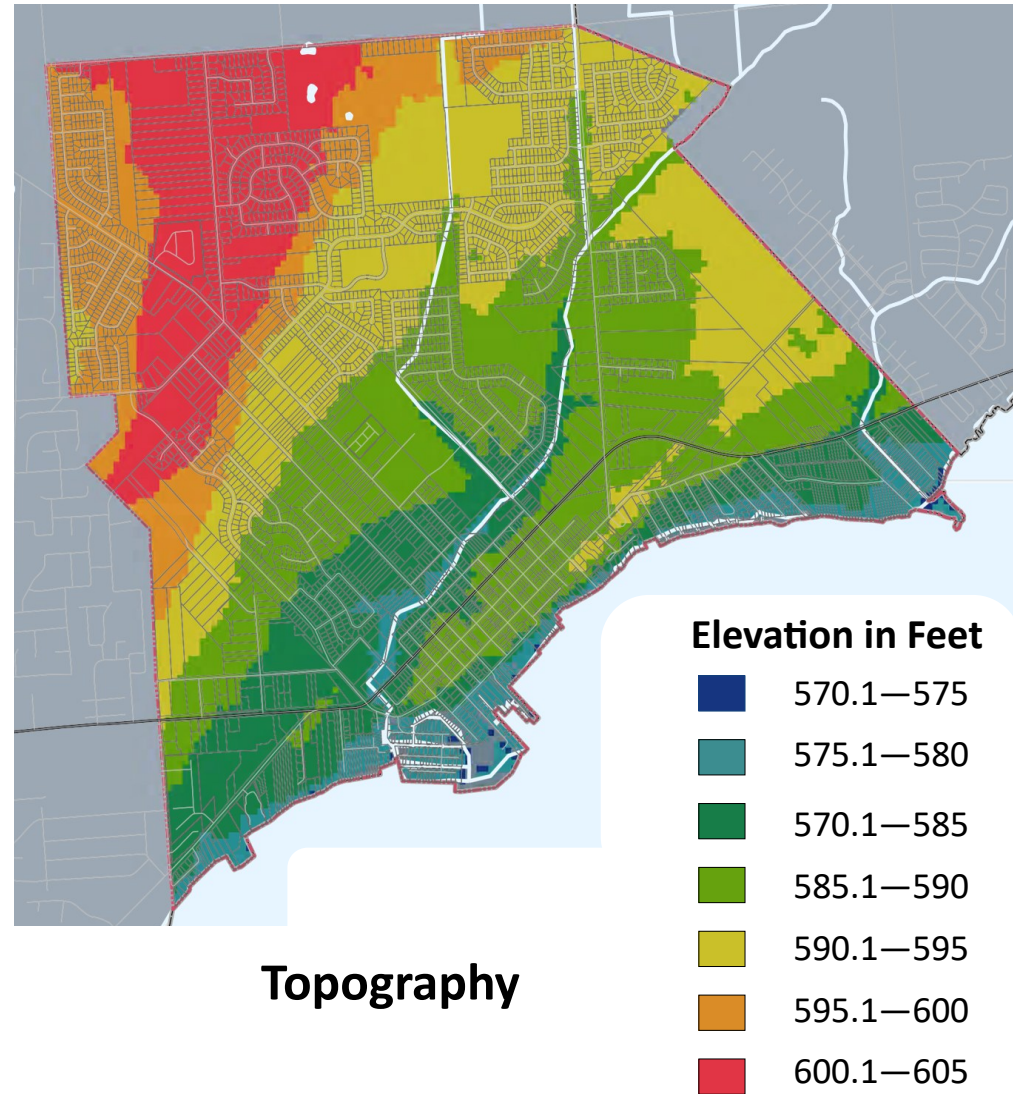


Wetlands

City Topography

New Baltimore is characterized by generally flat topography, with minimal changes in elevation across much of the City. This relatively level terrain has influenced historic development patterns, infrastructure placement, and drainage systems. Subtle elevation changes, rather than pronounced slopes, define the City's landscape and contribute to the community's vulnerability to surface water accumulation during periods of heavy precipitation or rapid snowmelt.

The highest elevation point within the City is located near the intersection of 25 Mile Road and Baker Road. From this area, land elevations gradually decrease toward Lake St. Clair and the City's shoreline. This overall elevation pattern affects stormwater flow, floodplain boundaries, and infrastructure planning, underscoring the importance of coordinated land use, drainage, and stormwater management strategies in future development and re-development efforts



Topography

Woodlands

Several wooded areas are scattered throughout the City of New Baltimore, with the largest concentration located along the eastern boundary, north of M-29 and east of County Line Road. These wooded areas vary in size and configuration and are generally characterized by lowland hardwood vegetation. Collectively, they contribute to the City's natural landscape and help define the character of areas that remain less intensively developed.

Many of New Baltimore's woodlands are located in close proximity to wetlands and waterways, where they perform important environmental functions. These wooded areas help stabilize soils, reduce erosion, and filter stormwater runoff before it enters adjacent water bodies. In addition, they provide critical habitat for a variety of native plant and animal species, supporting local biodiversity and ecological health. The preservation and thoughtful integration of these wooded areas into future development and land use planning efforts will be important to maintaining the City's natural features and environmental quality.

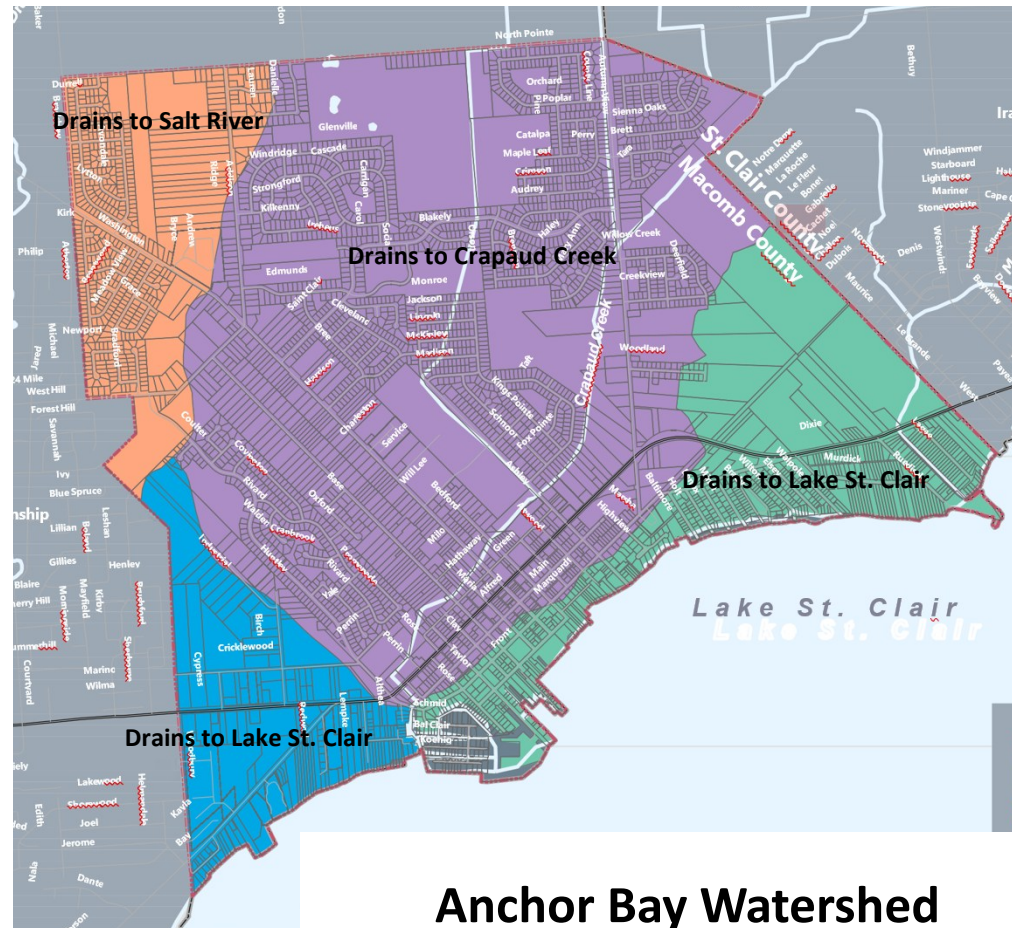


Woodlands

Watersheds

A watershed is the land area that collects precipitation—such as rain and snowmelt—and channels it through a network of ditches, drains, streams, rivers, wetlands, and groundwater systems to a common outlet, such as a lake or river. All properties within a watershed are hydrologically connected; activities occurring on individual parcels, roadways, and developed areas can directly influence water quality, water quantity, and ecological health throughout the entire system.

The City of New Baltimore is located within the Anchor Bay Watershed that forms part of the broader Lake St. Clair Drainage System. This regional system ultimately conveys surface water runoff and treated stormwater into Lake St. Clair, one of the most significant freshwater resources in the Great Lakes Basin. As a result, land use decisions, infrastructure design, and stormwater management practices within the City have implications not only at the local level, but also for downstream communities and the health of Lake St. Clair.



PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

New Baltimore is situated within a region that is widely recognized for its extensive and well-developed system of parks and recreational destinations. Southeast Michigan has demonstrated a longstanding and deliberate commitment to parks, open space, and outdoor recreation, resulting in a diverse landscape of facilities that range from large, regional park systems to protected wildlife habitats and natural conservation areas. These resources play an important role in supporting quality of life, environmental stewardship, and regional tourism.

At the state and regional levels, State of Michigan and the Huron-Clinton Metroparks Authority have collectively established a comprehensive and interconnected network of recreational assets. This system is designed to accommodate a broad spectrum of users, offering accessible facilities for residents of all ages and abilities, as well as specialized amenities that support both active and passive recreation.

Within the five-county area surrounding New Baltimore, there are sixteen (16) state parks and state recreation areas encompassing more than 50,000 acres of publicly accessible land. These destinations provide a wide range of recreational opportunities, including hiking and biking trails, swimming beaches, fishing and boating access, picnic areas, campgrounds, nature preserves, and winter activities such as cross-country skiing. Together, these regional resources complement New Baltimore’s local parks and waterfront amenities, reinforcing the City’s position within a broader recreational landscape that supports outdoor activity, environmental conservation, and regional connectivity.

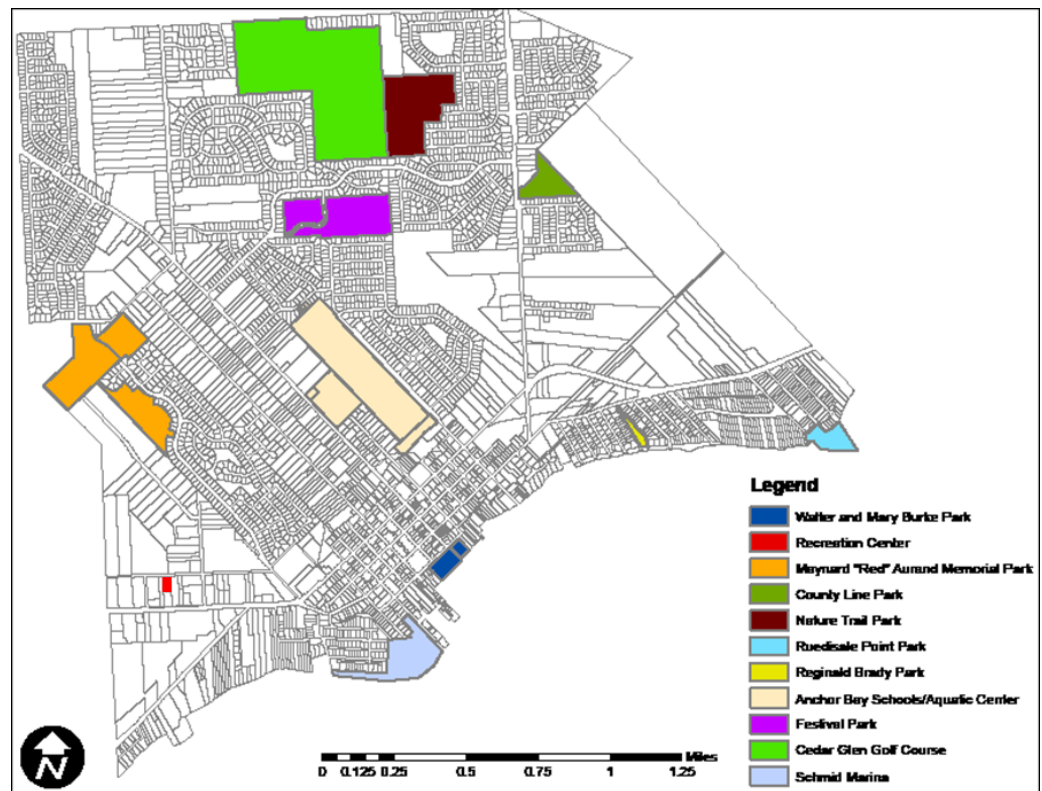


City of New Baltimore Recreation Facilities

The City of New Baltimore maintains a comprehensive and well-established system of parks and recreation facilities that serve residents throughout the community. In total, the City contains 13 parks and recreation facilities that collectively provide a broad range of recreational, social, and environmental benefits. Of these facilities, eight are owned and operated by the City of New Baltimore, one is leased by the City, one is managed by Anchor Bay Public Schools, and three are operated by private entities. This mix of ownership and management reflects a collaborative approach to providing recreational opportunities and maximizing the use of available land and resources.

Together, these parks and recreation facilities encompass approximately 320 acres distributed across the City. The system includes a diverse range of landscapes and settings, from large tracts of open space and active recreation areas to smaller neighborhood parks and facilities located within or near the downtown area. This geographic distribution helps ensure that recreational opportunities are accessible to residents in all parts of the community.

The New Baltimore Parks and Recreation Plan, as amended and re-adopted in 2025, identifies and inventories the City's existing recreation facilities and areas, evaluates current and future recreational needs, and establishes priorities for maintenance, improvements, and potential expansion. The following section outlines the recreation facilities and areas identified in the Plan.



New Baltimore Parks and Recreation Facilities

County Line Park

County Line Park is currently an undeveloped 10-acre site. The park is located on the east side of County Line Road, south of Crapeau Creek. As a large track of undeveloped greenspace the City of New Baltimore is considering a number of parks and recreation improvements to this site.



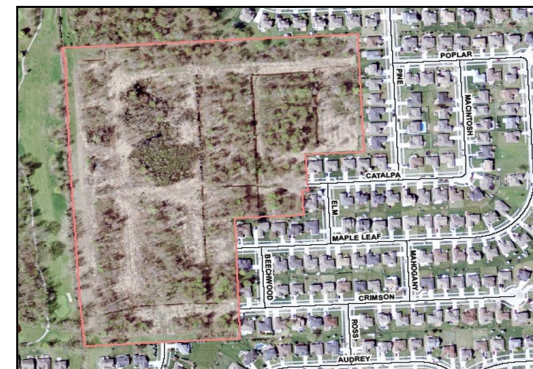
County Line Pathway

The County Line Pathway was a collaboration between the City of New Baltimore, the Anchor Bay School District, Ira Township, St. Clair County, and Macomb County. The initial 1.25 Mile trail was constructed in 2011 and connected Anchor Bay High School to residential neighborhoods as far south as St. Clair Drive in New Baltimore. The additional 0.95 miles of pathway was added with a grant from the DNR Trust Fund in 2015 and extended the trail further south past M-29.



The Lillian Lucas Trail System

The Lillian Lucas Trail System was added to the New Baltimore Parks system in 2016 as a result of the property being acquired by the City in a settlement. The City has taken steps to return the site to its natural habitat. The Lillian Lucas Trail System is located next to Cedar Glen Golf Club and is north of St. Clair Drive next to Maple Creek Subdivision. There is currently a soft pathway system meandering through the park conducive to bird watching, running, and cross-country skiing in the winter. In 2019, a gravel parking lot was added at the trail head located at the end of Crimson Lane. Future development will include restrooms, trail enhancements, and seating on the trails.



Festival Park

In 2016, the local non-profit organization Bay-Rama donated a 31-acre site to the City for use as a sports and family park. The park is located off St. Clair Drive near the center of the City. The site has been developed with two full-size soccer fields, four baseball diamonds, and a 100-space parking lot. A one-mile walking path has been constructed around the perimeter of the park, with multiple access points, along with a designated picnic area. In 2018, Bay-Rama donated a playscape, which was added to the park's amenities. Planned future improvements include field lighting, permanent restroom facilities, pickleball courts, a concession stand, and paved parking areas. Additional tree and shrub plantings are also planned to enhance the park's aesthetics and green space.



Maynard “Red” Aurand Memorial Park

Maynard “Red” Aurand Memorial Park is the City of New Baltimore’s largest and most active parks and recreation facility. Located at the corner of Huntley Street and 24 Mile Road, the park serves as a major destination for community recreation and athletic programming.

The park includes two baseball diamonds, soccer fields, a basketball/pickleball court, a covered pavilion, a skate park, a sledding hill, a children’s playscape, restroom facilities, and a year-round exercise pathway. The site is also connected to protected greenspace immediately to the south and Oakwood Cemetery to the east.

As a heavily used community asset that attracts thousands of visitors annually, Maynard “Red” Aurand Memorial Park plays a central role in the City’s parks and recreation system. Planned future improvements include grading additional green space to accommodate new soccer fields, installation of athletic field lighting, and development of a universally accessible playscape.



Reginald Brady Park

Reginald Brady Park is a neighborhood park located between Reginald Street and Brady Street along the shores of Lake St. Clair. The 1.8-acre boulevard park is situated within a residential neighborhood and provides opportunities for passive recreation. Park amenities include picnic areas, scenic views of Lake St. Clair, and a small garden area.

Surrounded by mature trees, Reginald Brady Park offers a quiet, natural setting that allows residents to enjoy Lake St. Clair. Future improvements may include additional seating, a small playscape, and shoreline restoration.



Ruedisale Point Park

Ruedisale Point Park is a 6.9-acre community park located in the southeastern portion of the City at the terminus of Ruedisale Street along Anchor Bay. The park functions primarily as a passive shoreline recreation area and includes picnic tables and benches distributed throughout the site.

Due to its shoreline orientation and exposure to lake conditions, stabilization of the park's shoreline has been an ongoing concern. In 2021, the City received a grant from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to support shoreline restoration, installation of wave attenuation features, and enhancement of fish habitat.

Potential future improvements include a fishing pier, walking paths, a dog park, a pavilion, permanent restroom facilities, rain gardens, interpretive signage, a kayak launch, expanded parking, and a universally accessible playscape.



Walter and Mary Burke Park

Walter and Mary Burke Park is a destination community park located off Front Street on Lake St. Clair and represents one of the City's few public access points to the lake. With over 400 feet of frontage, the park offers a unique recreational setting featuring a public beach, pier, canoe/kayak launch, and a transient boat dock with 20 slips. The launch provides important access to the Anchor Bay Water Trail, supported by on-site paddleboard and kayak rentals, and presents opportunities for enhanced trail connectivity.

Additional amenities include playscapes, swings, picnic areas, pavilions, and restrooms. The park also includes rain gardens and pervious pavers designed to reduce erosion and prevent E. coli runoff into the lake. The restrooms have been upgraded to meet ADA standards. The northwest corner of the site contains the City's water filtration plant and groundwater storage tank, and the City's flagpole adjacent to the pier serves as a regional landmark for boaters.



Anchor Bay Schools

The Anchor Bay School District owns approximately 67 acres on the east side of Washington Street in the center of New Baltimore. The campus includes two elementary schools, a middle school, a child care center, transportation and maintenance facilities, and the Anchor Bay Aquatic Center.

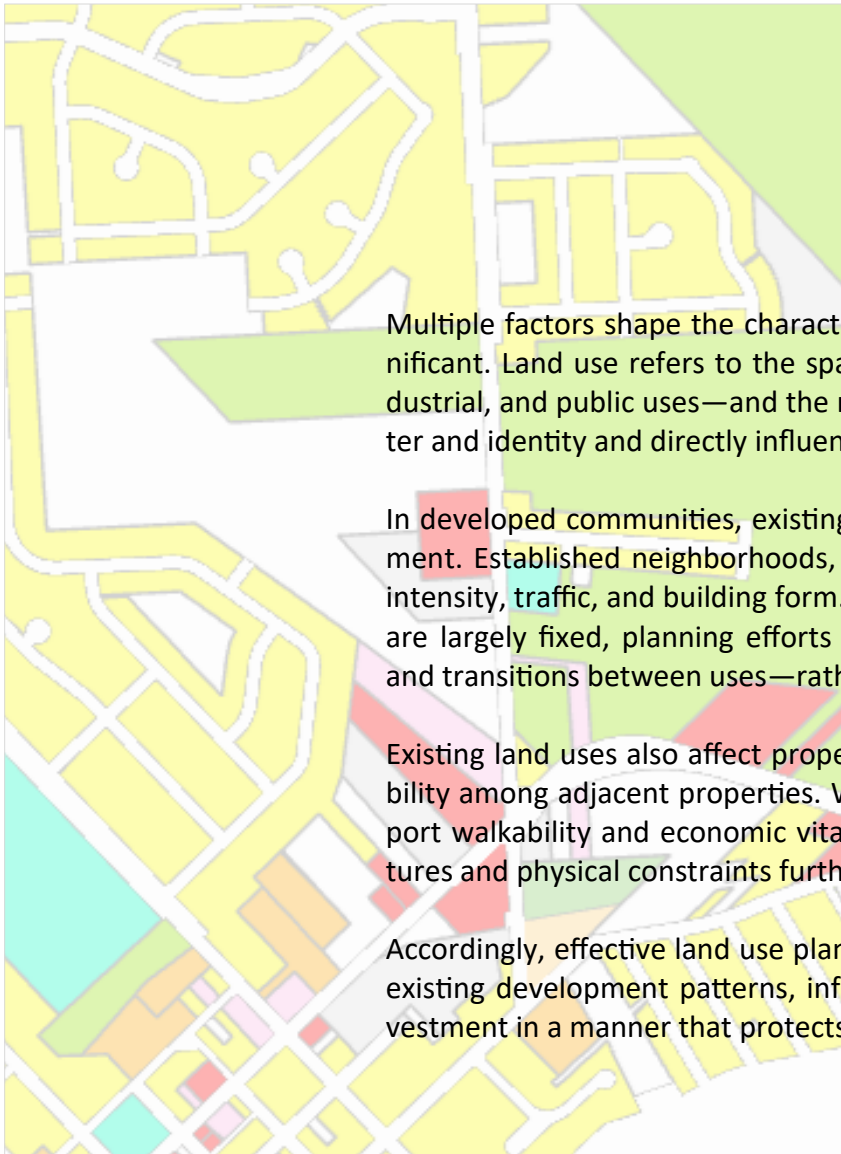
The site also provides extensive recreational amenities, including playgrounds, multi-purpose fields, baseball and soccer fields, a quarter-mile track, an athletic field, and a combined concession and restroom building.

The 24,000-square-foot Anchor Bay Aquatic Center features an L-shaped competition pool, accessible ramp entry, and a computerized maintenance system, and serves both school and community needs.



Chapter 3

Existing Land Use

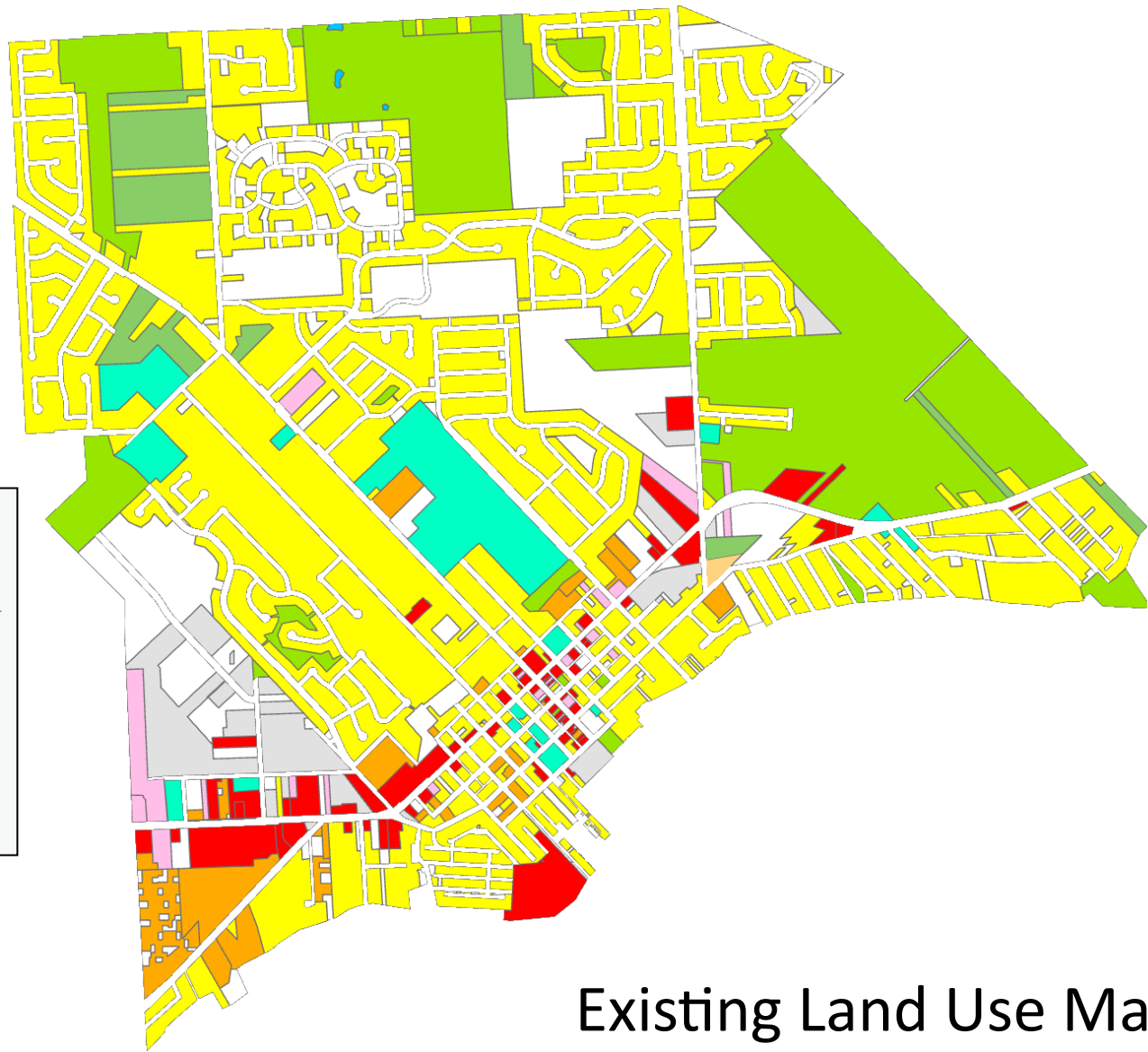
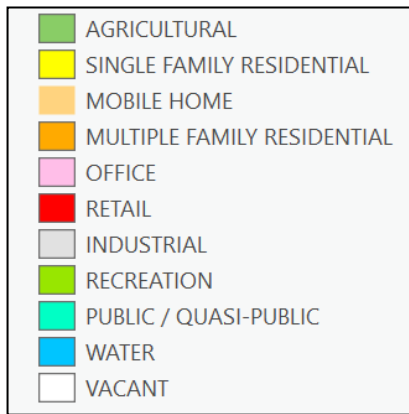


Multiple factors shape the character of the physical environment, with land use being the most significant. Land use refers to the spatial distribution of activities—such as residential, commercial, industrial, and public uses—and the relationships among them. These patterns define the City’s character and identity and directly influence residents’ quality of life.

In developed communities, existing land use patterns strongly influence future growth and reinvestment. Established neighborhoods, business districts, and industrial areas set expectations for scale, intensity, traffic, and building form. Because infrastructure, parcel layouts, and development patterns are largely fixed, planning efforts often focus on managing change—such as infill, redevelopment, and transitions between uses—rather than accommodating entirely new growth.

Existing land uses also affect property values, market demand, infrastructure capacity, and compatibility among adjacent properties. Well-planned arrangements can create positive synergies and support walkability and economic vitality, while incompatible uses may generate conflicts. Natural features and physical constraints further shape development potential and long-term sustainability.

Accordingly, effective land use planning in established communities requires careful consideration of existing development patterns, infrastructure systems, and environmental conditions to guide reinvestment in a manner that protects community character and advances long-term goals.



Existing Land Use Map

Source: SEMCOG

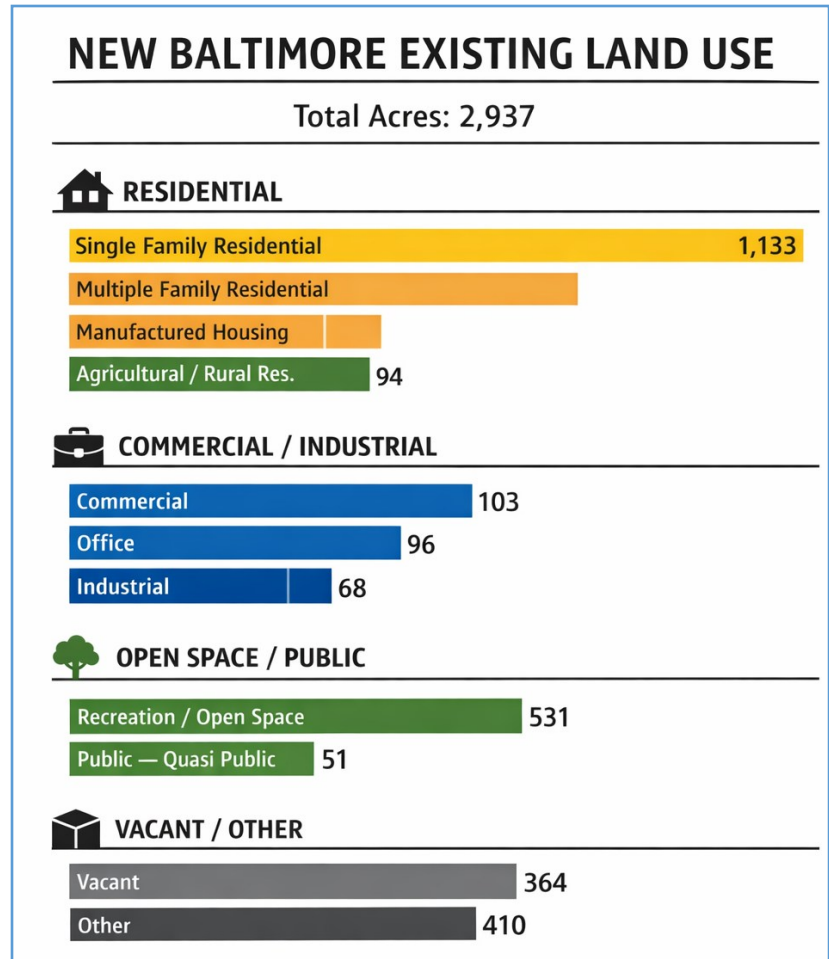
EXISTING LAND USE

As one of Macomb County’s earliest settlements, New Baltimore developed with a distinctive and layered street network that reflects its historic origins and subsequent growth patterns. The City features a radial street pattern formed by major corridors such as 23 Mile Road, Jefferson Avenue, Washington Street, and County Line Road, which extend outward and connect the community to surrounding townships and regional destinations.

Near the downtown and waterfront, the street system transitions into a more traditional grid pattern, characteristic of early settlement design. This grid provides smaller blocks, walkability, and direct access to commercial areas, parks, and Lake St. Clair. As a result, the highest residential densities are concentrated in and around the downtown and waterfront areas, where lot sizes are generally smaller and development is more compact.

Moving west and into the interior portions of the City—particularly near the boundary with Chesterfield Township—the development pattern becomes less dense. In these areas, lots are larger and more suburban or semi-rural in character, reflecting later phases of growth and lower-intensity residential development.

This combination of radial arterials, a historic downtown grid, and larger-lot residential neighborhoods creates a varied and distinctive land use pattern that contributes to the City’s character and functional organization.



Source: SEMCOG

Major Land Use Categories

Single Family Residential—This category includes single-family dwelling units designed for occupancy by one household, whether situated on individual platted lots or larger unplatted parcels. Development typically consists of detached homes with customary accessory structures such as garages, sheds, barns, decks, patios, and similar residential improvements. These areas are generally characterized by lower residential densities, private yards, and a neighborhood-oriented development pattern. Supporting infrastructure may include local streets, sidewalks, utilities, and stormwater management facilities.

Multiple Family Residential—This category includes duplexes, townhouses, apartments, and attached condominium units in which two or more separate dwelling units occupy a single building or are located on a single lot. Housing types may range from two-family dwellings to larger apartment complexes and multi-building condominium developments. These areas are typically developed at higher densities than single-family neighborhoods and may include shared open space, common parking areas, and coordinated site design features. Multiple-family housing provides a range of housing options to meet varying income levels, household sizes, and lifestyle preferences.

Manufactured Housing Communities—This category includes planned manufactured home communities developed and operated in accordance with state and local regulations. Such communities are typically designed with internal road networks, utility infrastructure, and designated manufactured home sites arranged in a coordinated layout. Accessory buildings, community buildings, recreational facilities, playgrounds, and open space areas may also be included as part of the overall development. These communities provide an alternative form of affordable housing while maintaining unified management and maintenance standards.

Commercial—This category includes retail sales establishments, personal service businesses, restaurants, financial institutions, and medical, professional, and general business offices. Uses may range from small neighborhood-serving establishments to larger commercial centers. Commercial areas are intended to provide goods and services to residents, businesses, and visitors. Development may include standalone buildings, multi-tenant shopping centers, and office complexes, typically supported by parking facilities, signage, and access management improvements. These areas often serve as activity centers and contribute to the local tax base and employment opportunities.

Industrial—This category includes uses, with or without buildings, where materials are processed, fabricated, assembled, or manufactured. It also includes warehousing, distribution centers, contractor yards, and facilities where equipment, vehicles, or materials may be stored outdoors. Industrial areas may accommodate light manufacturing as well as more intensive operations, depending on zoning regulations and performance standards. These uses typically require access to major roadways or transportation corridors and are important for employment generation and economic development. Appropriate buffering and site design are generally necessary to minimize impacts on adjacent land uses.

Public / Quasi-Public—Public uses include publicly owned and operated facilities such as public schools, municipal buildings, fire and police stations, libraries, and other governmental buildings or service facilities. Quasi-public uses include institutions that serve a community function but may be privately owned or operated, such as places of worship, private schools, cemeteries, and similar facilities. These uses provide essential educational, civic, cultural, and social services and are often centrally located or integrated within residential neighborhoods for convenient community access.

Recreation—This category includes public parks, golf courses, trails, athletic fields, waterfront access areas, and other public recreation facilities. These areas may provide both active recreational opportunities—such as playgrounds, sports courts, and ball fields—and passive recreational amenities such as walking paths, picnic areas, natural open space, and scenic viewpoints. Parks and recreation facilities enhance community quality of life, support public health and wellness, preserve natural features, and contribute to the overall attractiveness and livability of the community.



Chapter 4

Livability & Great Neighborhoods

New Baltimore acknowledges and respects the heritage of its community while at the same time planning for the needs of tomorrow. The City is home to people of different ages, interests, lifestyles, abilities, and incomes. Their needs should be equally considered when making land-use decisions relative to housing types and density. Input from the public meetings tells us that more and more people choose where they live based on the character of a neighborhood and the amenities it offers. Furthermore, no one-size house or neighborhood fits all.

New Baltimore is a residential community with unique neighborhoods that contribute to the City's small-town atmosphere and character. The community is characterized by a mix of traditional street patterns and housing located near the downtown and waterfront areas, as well as newer residential subdivisions in the City's outlying areas. Together, these neighborhoods create a diverse residential environment that reflects different periods of the City's growth and development.

Consequently, the existing housing stock and established residential neighborhoods represent a significant strength of the community. The Master Plan builds upon and supports the current neighborhood framework while also identifying opportunities to enhance the diversity of the housing stock. This includes encouraging a broader range of housing options within existing neighborhoods to accommodate residents of all ages, incomes, and lifestyles.

CORE OBJECTIVES

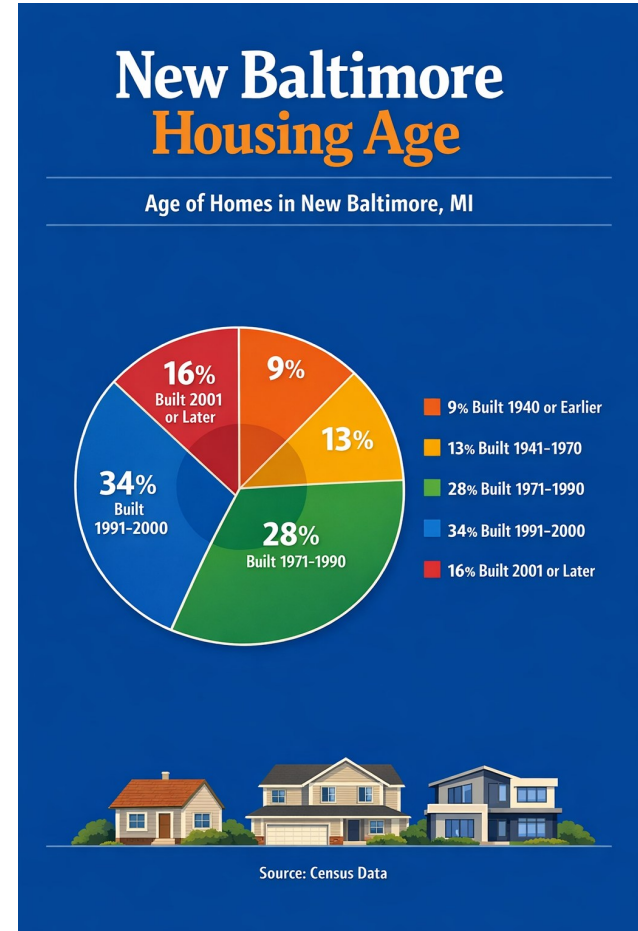
- 🎯 New Baltimore will be a safe and welcoming community of strong and complete neighborhoods that will meet the needs of all residents.
- 🎯 New Baltimore will have a diverse range of quality and affordable housing opportunities throughout the community.

TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Many of New Baltimore’s established neighborhoods were developed using a traditional grid street pattern, resulting in a consistent and interconnected arrangement of streets and lots. This compact, walkable form of development—commonly referred to as Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND)—originated prior to the widespread use of the automobile.

This development pattern promotes walkability and helps counter the effects of urban sprawl by emphasizing human-scaled design. Residents are able to conveniently access parks, public spaces, neighborhood services, and community destinations on foot. Traditional Neighborhood Design also supports a mix of land uses, where residential areas are located in proximity to neighborhood businesses rather than being strictly separated.

The City’s housing stock reflects both its historic origins and more recent suburban growth. Approximately one-sixth of the housing units were constructed prior to 1940, primarily within traditional neighborhoods near the downtown and waterfront. In contrast, a significant share of homes were constructed after 1990, with the largest concentration built between 2000 and 2009 during a period of residential subdivision development.



NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

New Baltimore’s homes and neighborhoods are a source of community pride and represent one of the most significant contributors to the City’s overall image, identity, character, and charm. These neighborhoods are characterized by tree-lined streets, a connected sidewalk network, and an architecturally diverse housing stock.

The City recognizes the importance of maintaining strong, attractive neighborhoods while also accommodating new residential investment and infill development. A balanced combination of well-maintained existing homes and high-quality new housing helps ensure that neighborhoods remain desirable, vibrant, and attractive places to live.

Looking ahead, the City should continue to prioritize the character and quality of its neighborhoods. By supporting the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing homes, encouraging well-designed single-family infill development, accommodating appropriate multi-family housing in select locations, and balancing residential stability with economic development along the primary corridors, the City can preserve and enhance the long-term desirability of its neighborhoods.



ACTION STRATEGY

Preserve and enhance the unique character of New Baltimore’s single family neighborhoods.

RESIDENTIAL INFILL

Residential infill refers to the development of new housing on vacant or underutilized parcels within areas that are already largely developed. In communities such as New Baltimore, where much of the land within the City limits has already been developed, residential infill represents one of the primary opportunities to accommodate future housing demand while making efficient use of existing infrastructure and public services. Infill development may include construction of a single home on a vacant lot within an established neighborhood, redevelopment of previously developed sites, or small-scale multi-family or attached housing in appropriate locations.

A key objective of infill development is to ensure that new construction is compatible with surrounding neighborhoods. This is particularly important in New Baltimore, where residential areas range from traditional neighborhoods near the downtown and waterfront to newer subdivisions with curvilinear streets located toward the outer portions of the City. Each area has its own established development pattern and character, and new construction should complement the scale, appearance, and design of surrounding homes.

Many residents are attracted to New Baltimore because of its traditional neighborhood qualities, including walkable streets, a variety of housing styles, and established residential areas that contribute to the community's small-town character. At the same time, many older homes require modernization to meet the expectations of today's homeowners, including updated amenities, expanded living space, and features that allow residents to age in place. Both reinvestment in existing homes and well-designed infill development should reinforce the City's established neighborhood framework while maintaining appropriate density, building scale, and architectural compatibility.



ACTION STRATEGY

New homes and residential structures should be constructed in a manner that complements the existing character of the neighborhood, while providing housing opportunities that meet the needs and desires of existing and future populations.

RESTRICTING COMMERCIAL INTRUSIONS INTO RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

In several areas of New Baltimore, residential neighborhoods are located directly adjacent to commercial properties, particularly near the downtown area and along the City’s primary corridors. While this proximity can contribute to walkability and convenience, it can also create challenges when it comes to providing adequate buffering and screening between residential and commercial uses. These challenges are often compounded by the relatively shallow depth of some commercial parcels, which limits the available space for traditional landscaping and screening improvements.

The City should identify locations where the adjacency between residential and commercial properties creates compatibility concerns and explore ways to improve buffering and screening in those areas. This may include developing programs or initiatives that encourage property owners to install additional landscaping, fencing, or other screening improvements that help reduce visual and operational impacts on nearby homes.

Another option would be to review and potentially revise the City’s landscaping and screening requirements to ensure that adequate buffering is provided where commercial properties abut residential neighborhoods. Given the limited size and depth of many commercial lots in New Baltimore, effective buffering will likely require a combination of landscaping and fencing. In some cases, new commercial development or redevelopment may also need to incorporate additional landscaping improvements along the edges of adjacent residential properties to help maintain neighborhood character and livability.



ACTION STRATEGY

Review where residential and commercial adjacency is problematic, and examine ways to facilitate the use of buffering and screening techniques to minimize harmful impacts.

STREET TREES

Many of the residential streets in New Baltimore are lined with mature trees that form an attractive canopy over the roadway. These trees are an important element of the City's neighborhoods and contribute significantly to the community's overall character, charm, and visual appeal. In addition to enhancing neighborhood aesthetics, a healthy tree canopy helps create comfortable, shaded streets that support walkability and contribute to the quality of life for residents.

Urban tree canopies play a vital role in shaping a community's identity and sense of place. They help define neighborhood character, soften the visual impact of buildings and pavement, and create a more inviting and attractive public environment. Trees also provide environmental benefits, including improved air quality, stormwater management, and reduced urban heat.

Because of these benefits, New Baltimore should continue to take proactive steps to maintain, protect, and expand its urban tree canopy. This may include regular maintenance of existing street trees, replacing trees that are lost due to age or disease, and incorporating new tree plantings as part of neighborhood improvements, redevelopment projects, and streetscape enhancements. Through ongoing stewardship of its street trees, the City can help ensure that its neighborhoods remain attractive, walkable, and distinctive for future generations.

Benefits of Street Trees

Natural Beauty

Traffic Calming

Increased Property Values

Saves Energy

Protection from Elements

Temperature Reduction

Air Quality Improvement



ACTION STRATEGY

Develop and implement a tree planting program to replace diseased trees, and plant new trees where needed. The installation of new trees will ensure a healthy and complete urban tree canopy and help to increase the attractiveness, desirability, and value of the neighborhoods.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

Neighborhoods form the foundation of community life in New Baltimore. The condition and upkeep of individual properties directly influence the appearance, safety, and overall quality of the surrounding neighborhood. When properties are not properly maintained or when nuisance conditions exist, they can detract from neighborhood character, negatively affect property values, and diminish residents' enjoyment of their homes.

While property owners may view the maintenance of their property as a private matter, the reality is that neighboring properties are closely interconnected. The condition of one property can have a measurable effect on nearby homes and the broader neighborhood. For this reason, property maintenance, building safety, and nuisance prevention are important community concerns that require clear standards and consistent enforcement.

To help preserve neighborhood quality, New Baltimore should maintain and enforce property maintenance and nuisance regulations that govern the use, appearance, and upkeep of all properties. Effective code enforcement programs establish clear expectations while ensuring that properties are maintained in a manner that protects public health, safety, and welfare.

A proactive yet reasonable approach to code enforcement—focused on communication, education, and compliance—can play an important role in maintaining neighborhood appearance and protecting property values. By encouraging timely maintenance and addressing nuisance conditions before they worsen, the City can help ensure that New Baltimore's neighborhoods remain attractive, safe, and desirable places to live.



ACTION STRATEGY

Strengthen code enforcement and inspection programs that promote the health, safety, and welfare of our residential living units and neighborhoods.

MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING

As demand grows for walkable, mixed-use communities, many cities are reexamining how to create vibrant places that attract young professionals, support aging residents, and accommodate emerging employment sectors. An important component of these communities is diversity—not only in the people who live there, but also in the types of housing available. Expanding housing choice allows communities to meet the needs of households at different stages of life while supporting long-term economic vitality.

One approach gaining increasing attention is Missing Middle Housing (MMH). Missing Middle Housing refers to a range of small-scale, multi-unit or clustered housing types that are compatible with traditional single-family neighborhoods. These housing forms address a common market gap by providing additional housing choices at a scale that fits within established neighborhoods. Examples include duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, and cottage courts that offer a variety of housing options while maintaining a neighborhood-scale appearance.

Traditional zoning ordinances, including those used in many communities, generally regulate development based on land use. This approach separates residential, commercial, and other uses into distinct districts and often limits residential areas to single-family homes. While historically intended to reduce land use conflicts, this framework can make it difficult to introduce small-scale housing options that support walkable neighborhood patterns. Because Missing Middle Housing contains multiple dwelling units, these housing types are often not permitted in areas zoned exclusively for single-family development.

For communities such as New Baltimore, where walkable neighborhoods and proximity to downtown and the waterfront are important community assets, expanding housing choice can help address changing housing preferences. Many younger households, single adults, and older residents seeking to downsize are interested in living in walkable areas but may not want—or be able to afford—the cost and maintenance of a detached single-family home. Well-designed Missing Middle Housing can provide additional housing opportunities while preserving the scale and character of New Baltimore’s established neighborhoods.



ACTION STRATEGY

Evaluate and amend the zoning ordinance to allow for Missing Middle Housing in areas where appropriate.



Missing Middle Housing Concept Rendering



Rendering showing how Missing Middle Housing can be used as a transition between a traditional neighborhood and downtown.

AGING IN PLACE

Aging in place refers to the ability of individuals to live safely, independently, and comfortably in their homes or communities as they grow older. Most people prefer to remain in the communities where they have established social connections and routines. Today's seniors are also living longer, remaining active, and continuing to participate in community life.

In communities such as New Baltimore, the ability to age in place is closely tied to housing and neighborhood environments that support an active lifestyle. Walkable neighborhoods, access to community spaces, and proximity to services—particularly those near the City's downtown and waterfront—can help older residents maintain independence and stay connected to the community.

As New Baltimore's population ages, it will be important to provide a range of housing options, including smaller homes and other housing types that can be integrated into walkable neighborhoods or mixed-use areas. Many older homeowners have paid off their mortgages and often contribute to the local economy through spending, volunteerism, and civic involvement.

However, traditional zoning practices can sometimes create barriers by separating housing from services and limiting neighborhoods to single-family homes. When homes become difficult to maintain, older adults may have limited opportunities to downsize while remaining in their community. Policies that support more flexible housing options can help New Baltimore accommodate residents at different stages of life while maintaining strong neighborhoods.



ACTION STRATEGY

Evaluate and revise the Zoning Ordinance, as necessary, to eliminate barriers to allowing seniors to age in place.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Housing affordability has become an increasingly important issue in many communities, including those in Southeast Michigan. In part due to zoning ordinances that have historically emphasized detached single-family housing over a broader range of housing types, many communities now face a limited supply of housing that meets the needs of households of varying sizes, ages, and income levels. As housing costs continue to rise, the availability of attainable housing options has become a growing concern for young households, working families, and older residents seeking to downsize.

The State of Michigan now requires communities to consider housing affordability as part of the Master Plan process. State planning guidance emphasizes evaluating local housing conditions and identifying policies that expand housing opportunities for residents across a range of income levels. Addressing housing affordability in local planning helps communities support workforce housing needs and maintain diverse and inclusive neighborhoods.

Local zoning and land-use regulations can play an important role in addressing housing affordability. In many cases, older zoning provisions may unintentionally limit the range of housing types that can be developed, restricting housing supply and contributing to rising costs. Updating zoning ordinances to allow a broader mix of housing types and reducing unnecessary regulatory barriers can help expand housing opportunities while maintaining neighborhood character.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO INCREASE HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND SUPPLY

The Michigan Association of Planning's Zoning Reform Toolkit identifies a variety of strategies that have been used by some local governments to address housing affordability. These strategies are provided for informational purposes and may serve as a general reference as New Baltimore considers housing issues within the community.

Expand Allowable Uses in Residential Zoning Districts

Modern zoning ordinances contain a wide range of regulations, including setbacks, minimum lot sizes, lighting requirements, and other development standards. Each ordinance also establishes mapped zoning districts accompanied by a list of permitted uses within each district. Expanding the range of housing types allowed within these districts—particularly as permitted uses by right, but also as special land uses—would increase the availability of land for diverse forms of housing.

Allowing additional housing types within residential neighborhoods directly contributes to increased housing supply and improved housing affordability. Research demonstrates that restricting land available for medium- and higher-density development artificially limits supply, thereby increasing housing costs. Furthermore, when the majority of residentially zoned land is reserved exclusively for detached single-family homes, personal choice is constrained, and the housing needs of diverse household types are not adequately met.

Reduce Minimum Lot Width and Area Requirements

Lot width requirements establish the minimum standard for the frontage of a parcel, defining the amount of roadway access necessary to accommodate a given land use. Lot area requirements, by contrast, set the minimum standard for the overall size of a parcel. Together, these two standards frequently determine whether a parcel is considered buildable and represent a significant factor influencing the ultimate cost of housing.

Historically, neighborhoods were characterized by a diverse mix of lot sizes and housing types. Smaller cottages were commonly constructed on compact lots, while larger estate homes occupied more expansive parcels. In many older neighborhoods, these varying lot sizes and housing forms were seamlessly integrated within the same block or between adjacent blocks. The post-World War II suburban zoning model, however, shifted toward uniformity by establishing districts with standardized minimum lot widths and areas. This regulatory approach significantly reduced opportunities for the construction of smaller, more affordable homes. A commonly cited rule of thumb is that the value of a home is approximately three times the value of the land on which it sits. In high-demand areas, large minimum lot requirements can inflate land costs to the point where the development of modest homes becomes financially infeasible. Consequently, larger lot standards often contribute to higher overall housing costs and may function, whether intentionally or inadvertently, as an exclusionary mechanism by limiting the availability of smaller, more affordable housing options.

Reduce Minimum Dwelling Unit Size

Most communities establish minimum dwelling unit sizes for various housing types. For instance, single-family homes are often required to be at least 1,200 square feet, while multi-family units typically range from 400 to 800 square feet, depending on local regulations.

Although multiple factors influence the cost of housing, unit size is a significant determinant. Accordingly, when a community mandates that all detached single-family homes meet a minimum size of 1,200 square feet, it is, in effect, limiting the range of housing choices available to residents. Such requirements, while intended to maintain certain standards, can produce unintended consequences. For example, they may restrict opportunities for individuals such as older adults seeking to downsize into a smaller residence or young professionals entering the housing market for the first time. Minimum dwelling unit size standards, therefore, play an important role in shaping both the affordability and diversity of housing options within a community.

Allow Accessory Dwelling Units

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) provide an important housing option that supports aging in place and accommodates the evolving needs of households. An ADU is a self-contained housekeeping unit located on the same lot as a single-family dwelling. ADUs may be attached to or detached from the principal residence but are generally required to be compatible in scale, design, and character with the surrounding single-family neighborhood. Increasingly, communities are recognizing the value of ADUs, as they can provide supportive yet independent living arrangements for family members, including young adults and seniors.

Because ADUs may not always be occupied by family members, appropriate regulatory standards are necessary to ensure neighborhood compatibility. Such standards may include design requirements that match building materials and architectural character with the principal structure. Many ordinances also require that the primary residence be owner-occupied, ensuring the property is maintained at a standard consistent with other single family homes in the district. In all cases, the ADU must remain clearly secondary and subordinate to the principal use of the property as a single-family residence.



Allowing Residential Development in Commercial Zoning Districts

Existing commercial districts and corridors represent strategic opportunities to expand housing choice, support reinvestment, and advance broader placemaking objectives. The designation of mixed-use zoning along these corridors is among the most effective strategies for accommodating higher-density residential development in locations that provide a logical transition from established lower-density neighborhoods, while also leveraging existing infrastructure, utilities, and transportation access.

Across Michigan, many commercial corridors remain zoned exclusively for commercial uses, often extending for thousands of feet or several miles along major roadways. This pattern can result in underutilized land, auto-oriented strip development, and limited activity outside of business hours. By contrast, national best practices in planning and urban design demonstrate that the most vibrant and sustainable commercial areas are typically organized as compact, walkable nodes—generally one or two square blocks in size—with active ground-floor commercial uses complemented by residential, office, or civic uses located above, behind, or on adjacent side streets.

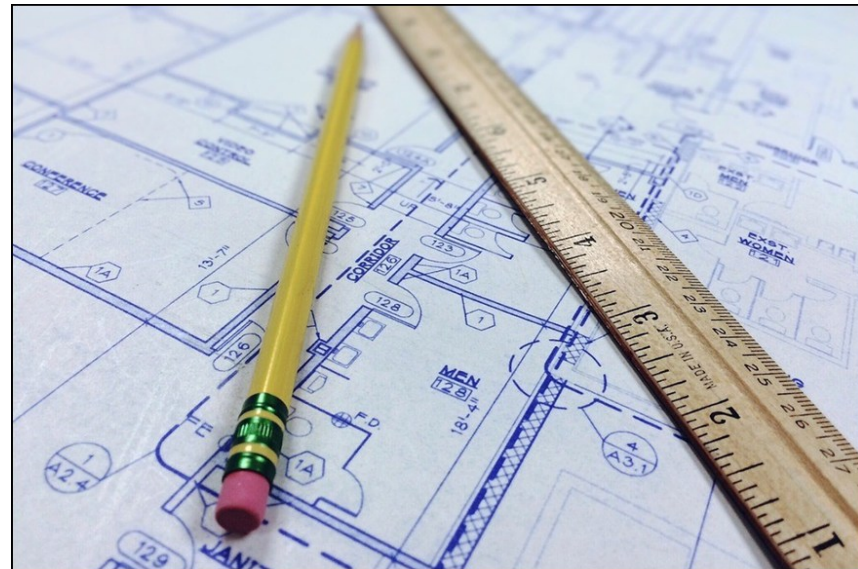
Such mixed-use patterns promote walkability, support local businesses through a built-in customer base, and create a stronger sense of place. In addition, integrating residential uses within or adjacent to commercial areas can enhance safety through increased “eyes on the street,” encourage more efficient use of land, and contribute to long-term economic resilience by diversifying both land use and market demand within these corridors.



Streamline Development Review Procedures

Time is a critical factor in development, and lengthy local approval processes often contribute to higher housing costs. A portion of development expenses arises from project design and the approvals process itself. When local decision-making becomes highly subjective, it introduces greater political influence, which can result in delays, increased holding costs, uncertainty regarding project viability, and frustration for developers. If excessive modifications are required that reduce the number of units from the original project pro forma, financial feasibility may be compromised. These increased costs are typically passed on to future homeowners or renters rather than absorbed by the developer, thereby reducing housing affordability and limiting access for households that might otherwise qualify.

To mitigate these challenges, zoning ordinances should be drafted in clear, straightforward language. Routine site development requests and uses permitted by right should be administered primarily by the zoning administrator. More complex site plans or special land use applications may require review by the planning commission. However, legislative bodies need not be directly involved in the review of site plans or special land use requests, as these are administrative functions appropriately handled by staff or the planning commission. The elected body should only engage when legislative action is required—such as amendments to zoning ordinance text or maps, or the approval of development agreements.

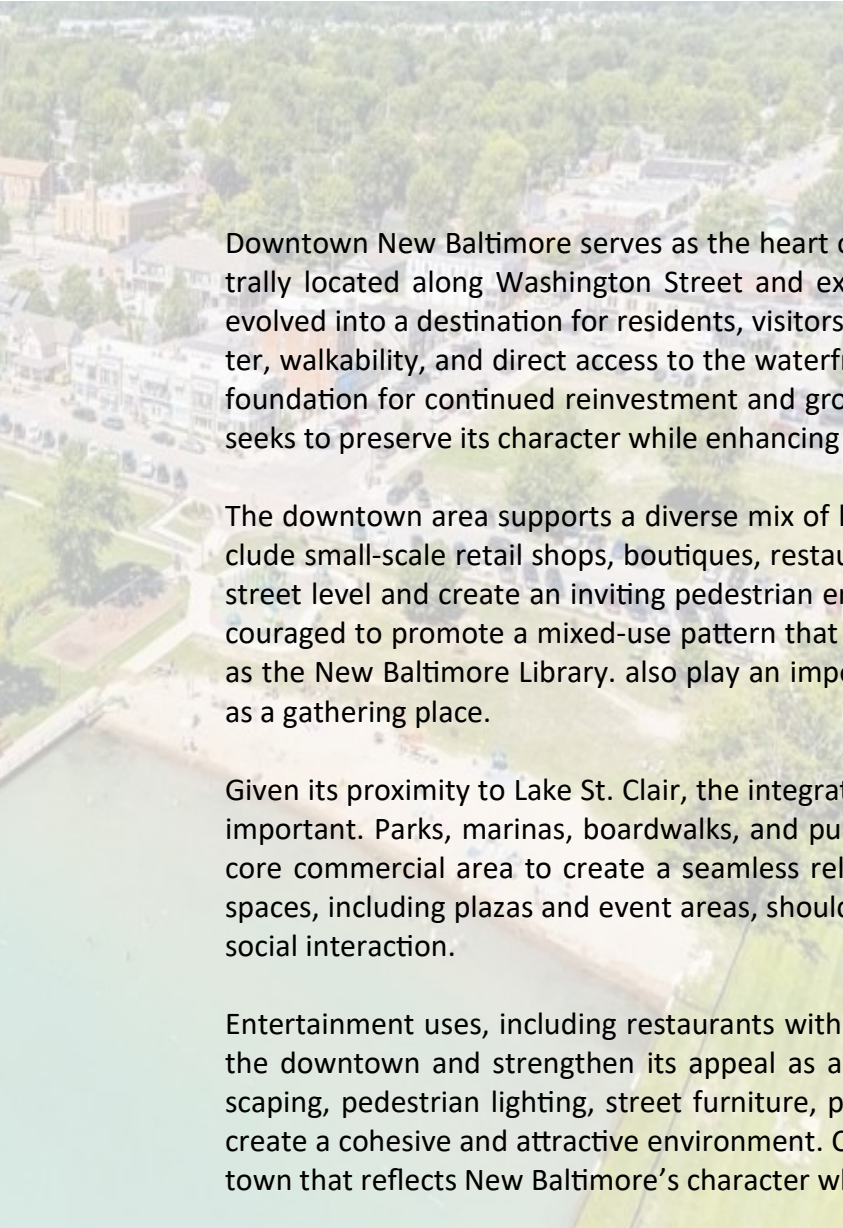


ACTION STRATEGY

Evaluate and revise the Zoning Ordinance, as appropriate, to expand opportunities for increasing housing affordability.

Chapter 5

Downtown Vitality

An aerial photograph of downtown New Baltimore, showing a mix of residential buildings, green spaces, and a waterfront area. The image is partially obscured by a vertical light blue bar on the right side, which serves as a background for the text.

Downtown New Baltimore serves as the heart of the City and a defining feature of the community's identity. Centrally located along Washington Street and extending toward the Lake St. Clair waterfront, the downtown has evolved into a destination for residents, visitors, and the broader region. Its unique combination of historic character, walkability, and direct access to the waterfront distinguishes it from other communities and provides a strong foundation for continued reinvestment and growth. This Master Plan recognizes downtown as a critical asset and seeks to preserve its character while enhancing its role as a year-round destination.

The downtown area supports a diverse mix of land uses that contribute to its vitality and appeal. Desired uses include small-scale retail shops, boutiques, restaurants, cafés, and personal service establishments that activate the street level and create an inviting pedestrian environment. Upper-story residential units and office spaces are encouraged to promote a mixed-use pattern that increases activity throughout the day and evening. Civic uses, such as the New Baltimore Library, also play an important role in anchoring the downtown and reinforcing its function as a gathering place.

Given its proximity to Lake St. Clair, the integration of the waterfront into the downtown experience is particularly important. Parks, marinas, boardwalks, and public open spaces should be enhanced and better connected to the core commercial area to create a seamless relationship between downtown and the shoreline. Public gathering spaces, including plazas and event areas, should be designed to support community events, festivals, and informal social interaction.

Entertainment uses, including restaurants with outdoor dining and live music, are encouraged to further activate the downtown and strengthen its appeal as a destination. Streetscape improvements—such as enhanced landscaping, pedestrian lighting, street furniture, public art, and wayfinding—should continue to be implemented to create a cohesive and attractive environment. Collectively, these elements will support a dynamic, walkable downtown that reflects New Baltimore's character while positioning it for long-term economic and social vitality.

CORE OBJECTIVES

- 🎯 New Baltimore's Downtown will be a vibrant, mixed use, pedestrian oriented environment, that values and builds upon its cultural and historical assets.
- 🎯 New Baltimore's Downtown will serve as a hub of community activity, providing a unique and hospitable location for area events, social interaction, and commerce.

HISTORIC DOWNTOWN

New Baltimore is fortunate to have an active historic downtown that is pedestrian in scale and rich in architectural character. The walkable streets, cohesive streetscape elements, and predominantly one- and two-story historic brick buildings create a distinctive identity that many communities seek to replicate.

As the downtown continues to evolve, changes to buildings and sites are expected. However, it is essential that these changes respect and preserve the historic fabric and character that define the area. Thoughtful restoration of underutilized or altered storefronts, along with the preservation of intact historic features, will enhance the downtown's overall appearance, reinforce its role as a regional destination, and increase its value to residents and visitors alike.



The historic buildings within downtown New Baltimore reflect a shared architectural tradition. While individual structures exhibit unique stylistic details, they also share common design elements rooted in long-standing patterns of town development. These enduring principles evolved over time in response to human scale, function, and community life, and they continue to provide a



ACTION STRATEGY

Future building renovation or alteration, no matter the planned use, must retain the overall design integrity of the historic building by protecting or restoring the original features, and design elements.

ADAPTIVE REUSE

Adaptive reuse should be a key strategy for strengthening downtown New Baltimore, especially as the community enhances its walkable, waterfront character. Many older storefronts and mixed-use buildings were designed for past uses that no longer match today's market, even though they remain structurally sound and contribute to downtown's historic charm.

Repurposing these buildings into uses like upper-story housing, offices, restaurants, or flexible retail can increase activity and foot traffic while preserving local character. Converting underused second floors into residential units, in particular, can support downtown businesses and extend activity beyond daytime hours. Similarly, adapting single-use buildings into multi-tenant or mixed-use spaces better reflects current small business needs.

Challenges remain, as older buildings often require costly upgrades to meet modern codes for accessibility, fire safety, and energy efficiency. Retrofitting features like elevators or sprinkler systems can be especially difficult on smaller downtown parcels, and outdated infrastructure can further increase costs.

To support these efforts, the Master Plan should promote flexible zoning that allows mixed-use development, reduces parking requirements, and enables creative solutions where strict code compliance is difficult. It can also connect property owners to historic tax credit programs through the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office.

Clear design guidelines should encourage preserving key architectural features while allowing modern improvements. Streetscape, signage, and pedestrian enhancements can further unify downtown's identity.

By prioritizing adaptive reuse, New Baltimore can preserve its historic assets, support small businesses, and foster a more active, year-round downtown.



ACTION STRATEGY

Update the Zoning Ordinance to lessen restrictions on adaptive reuse projects.

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

The New Baltimore Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is a public authority established to strengthen and revitalize the downtown district of New Baltimore. Like many downtown development authorities in Michigan, the DDA was created under state law to encourage economic growth, improve public spaces, and support local businesses within a designated downtown area. The organization works closely with city officials, property owners, business operators, and community groups to promote a vibrant and attractive downtown environment that benefits both residents and visitors. Its efforts often focus on preserving the character of the historic waterfront downtown while encouraging new investment and commercial activity.

The responsibilities of the DDA generally include planning and funding downtown improvement projects, coordinating beautification initiatives, and supporting economic development programs. This can involve streetscape enhancements, public parking improvements, signage, landscaping, seasonal events, marketing campaigns, and business recruitment efforts. The authority may also use tax increment financing (TIF) to reinvest a portion of increased property tax revenue back into the downtown district for infrastructure and redevelopment projects. In addition to physical improvements, the DDA serves as an advocate for the downtown business community by helping create a welcoming atmosphere that encourages shopping, dining, tourism, and community engagement in New Baltimore's central business district.



Downtown Development Authority
District Boundaries



ACTION STRATEGY

Support the New Baltimore Downtown Development Authority in implementing downtown revitalization initiatives that enhance economic development, waterfront connectivity, pedestrian accessibility, business growth, and public gathering spaces while preserving the historic character and identity of the downtown.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The New Baltimore has a strong historic identity that contributes to the character and appeal of the community. The City has retained many historic homes, commercial buildings, and civic structures that reflect its connection to the Lake St. Clair waterfront and traditional downtown development patterns. These features reinforce a unique sense of place and remain important community assets.

The local historic district includes Downtown and portions of surrounding residential neighborhoods and waterfront areas. While not every structure is historically significant, future development and exterior improvements should remain compatible with the surrounding architectural character. Preserving the scale, appearance, and historic qualities of these areas is important to maintaining the City's identity and visual appeal.

Several structures in New Baltimore are recognized for their historic significance at the local, state, or national level, while other historically valuable properties remain undesignated. Historic designation may provide access to preservation incentives and tax credits that support restoration and rehabilitation efforts. Improvements to designated properties are generally expected to follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

The New Baltimore Historic District Commission oversees the review and regulation of historic properties within the City. Continued support from the New Baltimore Planning Commission, New Baltimore Downtown Development Authority, and City Council will remain important in promoting preservation efforts and encouraging investment in historic areas.



Historic District Boundaries



ACTION STRATEGY

Support the preservation and rehabilitation of historic properties within New Baltimore through coordinated review, compatible development standards, preservation incentives, and continued collaboration between the New Baltimore Historic District Commission, New Baltimore Planning Commission, New Baltimore Downtown Development Authority, and City Council.

MIXED USE BUILDINGS

A strong, vibrant downtown in New Baltimore depends on continuing to support and expand mixed-use development. Historically, downtowns functioned as the center of daily life because they combined residential, retail, and service uses within a walkable area. Over time, traditional zoning practices—often influenced by Euclidean zoning—separated these uses, contributing to reduced activity and, in many communities, the decline of downtown districts.

Today, there is renewed recognition that mixed-use environments are essential to creating active and resilient downtowns. In New Baltimore, encouraging a blend of uses—such as restaurants, cafés, small shops, offices, and upper-story housing—can help sustain foot traffic throughout the day and evening while reinforcing the city’s waterfront character.

As New Baltimore looks to the future, it must balance active storefronts with market realities. While retail along corridors like Main Street helps create an engaging pedestrian environment, demand for retail space is limited in a community of this size. Allowing a wider range of ground-floor uses—such as offices, personal services, and small-scale commercial uses—can help reduce vacancies and keep buildings occupied and productive in New Baltimore.

Characteristics of Successful Downtowns

- ◆ *Pedestrian-friendly environment*
- ◆ *Clean, well-maintained streets and sidewalks*
- ◆ *Greenery: trees, shrubs, flowers, planters, etc.*
- ◆ *Traffic slowing features.*
- ◆ *Availability of public restroom facilities*
- ◆ *Street furniture, such as benches and seating*
- ◆ *Substantial street lights and well lit areas*
- ◆ *Directional signage (parking, destinations, etc.)*
- ◆ *Easy access to adequate parking facilities*
- ◆ *Bike lanes, paths, and racks*
- ◆ *Open public space such as a park*
- ◆ *Preservation of historic character, including historic sites and reuse of existing historic buildings*



ACTION STRATEGY


Encourage a flexible mixed-use downtown in New Baltimore by updating zoning to allow residential, office, and service uses alongside retail on all floors to reduce vacancies and sustain continuous downtown activity.

RETAIL GAP ANALYSIS

A retail gap analysis evaluates the relationship between the availability of goods and services (supply) and the spending patterns of residents, workers, and visitors (demand). When consumer spending exceeds the capacity of existing businesses, demand is greater than supply, resulting in residents purchasing goods and services outside of the community. This condition, commonly referred to as “retail leakage,” may indicate opportunities to attract new businesses and capture additional local spending. Conversely, when the supply of goods and services exceeds local demand, the market may be considered saturated, limiting opportunities for additional similar businesses.

Based on the analysis, New Baltimore demonstrates several areas of long-term market potential. The community’s relatively high household incomes, strong homeownership rates, and family-oriented demographic profile support continued demand for a variety of retail, service, and commercial uses. Key opportunities appear to exist in sectors related to home improvement, automotive services, dining and entertainment, hospitality, pet services, and financial services. Several of these categories show Market Potential Index (MPI) values above the national average, indicating residents are more likely than the average U.S. consumer to spend within these sectors.

The analysis suggests particularly strong potential for businesses tied to housing and property maintenance, including remodeling, landscaping, furnishings, and appliance-related services. Automotive-related businesses also demonstrate favorable market conditions due to high vehicle ownership rates and above-average spending on gasoline, maintenance, and repair services.

Retail Market Potential			
New Baltimore city, MI (2657100) New Baltimore city, MI (2657100) Geography: Place			
			
Demographic Summary		2025	2030
Population		11,912	11,809
Population 18+		9,754	9,879
Households		4,655	4,680
Median Household Income		\$97,203	\$108,183
Product/Consumer Behavior	Expected Number of Adults or HHs	Percent	MPI
Apparel (Adults)			
Bought Men's Clothing Last 12 Mo	6,399	65.6%	103
Bought Women's Clothing Last 12 Mo	5,129	52.6%	101
Bought Shoes Last 12 Mo	7,584	77.8%	103
Bought Fine Jewelry Last 12 Mo	2,114	21.7%	99
Bought Watch Last 12 Mo	1,188	12.2%	95
Automobiles (Households)			
HH Owns or Leases 1+ Vehicles	4,396	94.4%	106
HH Bought or Leased New Vehicle Last 12 Mo	439	9.4%	111
Automotive Aftermarket (Adults)			
Bought Gasoline Last 6 Mo	9,149	93.8%	105
Bought or Changed Motor Oil Last 12 Mo	5,556	57.0%	105
Had Vehicle Tune-Up Last 12 Mo	2,333	23.9%	104
Beverages (Adults)			
Drank Non-Diet (Regular) Cola Last 6 Mo	3,459	35.5%	93
Drank Beer or Ale Last 6 Mo	3,801	39.0%	105

Restaurant, entertainment, and hospitality uses also appear well positioned for future demand. Residents demonstrate above-average spending on dining, travel, hotel stays, and entertainment activities, supporting opportunities for quality restaurants, waterfront dining, and tourism-oriented businesses that capitalize on New Baltimore's downtown and Lake St. Clair location. Additional opportunities may exist for pet-related businesses and financial or professional services that support the City's stable and relatively affluent population.

The City, in coordination with the Downtown Development Authority, should consider utilizing this information as part of its broader economic development and downtown revitalization strategy. Targeted marketing efforts, business recruitment initiatives, and support for small business development can help position New Baltimore to capture a greater share of local spending while enhancing the overall vitality of the downtown and waterfront areas.

It is important to recognize, however, that retail gap data represents only one factor influencing business location decisions. Regional competition, demographic trends, site availability, accessibility, infrastructure capacity, and the overall business climate will ultimately affect whether new investment occurs within New Baltimore or in surrounding communities. Given the competitive retail environment in southeast Michigan, these factors will continue to play a significant role in shaping the City's ability to realize identified market opportunities.

(The entire Retail Market Profile for New Baltimore is provided in the Appendix of this document.)



ACTION STRATEGY

The Downtown Development Authority and the Planning Commission should take an active role in marketing available commercial spaces in the downtown to potential and existing businesses in the region that might seek to expand or open a new facility. Assembling data on the available commercial properties, including information on their internal layout and square footage, potential uses, and provision of utilities, is one key step that could be undertaken.

RETAINING AND ATTRACTING BUSINESS

To support a thriving and growing local economy that attracts and retains businesses in Downtown New Baltimore, the City should continue to focus on creating an environment that is supportive of entrepreneurship and small business development. In addition to promoting New Baltimore as a “live, learn, and earn” community and exploring opportunities for business incubator space, the following strategies may be considered:

Strengthen the Downtown Business Environment - Enhance the physical and regulatory environment to make it easier for entrepreneurs to establish and operate businesses. This may include streamlined permitting processes, clear zoning standards that allow for flexible mixed-use development, and continued investment in streetscape improvements that create an appealing, walkable, and attractive downtown setting.

Establish a Small Business Assistance Program - Consider developing a local program, in partnership with the Macomb County Department of Planning & Economic Development, to provide technical assistance, business planning support, and guidance on financing. This could include “one-stop” support services to help entrepreneurs navigate startup requirements.

Offer Targeted Incentives and Façade Improvement Programs - Provide financial tools, such as small grants or low-interest loans, to assist with building improvements, tenant build-outs, and code compliance. Façade improvement programs can be particularly effective in enhancing the visual appeal of downtown while lowering startup costs for new businesses.

Activate Underutilized Spaces - Encourage temporary or flexible uses in vacant storefronts, such as pop-up shops, seasonal markets, or shared retail spaces. These lower-risk opportunities allow entrepreneurs to test business concepts while contributing to downtown vitality.

Leverage the Waterfront and Tourism Base - Capitalize on New Baltimore’s location along Lake St. Clair by attracting businesses that serve both residents and visitors, including dining, recreation-oriented retail, and experiential businesses. Coordinated events and programming can help increase foot traffic and create opportunities for new entrepreneurs.

Expand Marketing and Branding Efforts - Develop a cohesive branding strategy that highlights Downtown New Baltimore as a destination for unique, locally owned businesses. This may include coordinated marketing campaigns, social media promotion, and partnerships with regional tourism organizations.

Improve Access to Capital and Partnerships - Facilitate connections between entrepreneurs and financing sources, including local banks, community development financial institutions, and state or federal grant programs. Partnerships with organizations such as the Michigan Small Business Development Center can provide valuable training, counseling, and resources to startup businesses.

Encourage Upper-Floor Residential Development - Support mixed-use development with residential units above ground-floor commercial spaces. Increasing the downtown residential population can provide a built-in customer base and support sustained demand for local businesses.



ACTION STRATEGY

Work with downtown building owners to identify space that could provide reasonable priced lease options, shared services, and technical assistance to start-up businesses.

Business Incubators

A major challenge for small businesses is having sufficient operating capital to make it through the first year or so. One way to mitigate this challenge is by starting business incubators. A business incubator is a facility that provides flexible space near or below market cost; shared services; access to computers, general office equipment; and technical assistance to entrepreneurs and early-stage businesses. The primary goal of a business incubator is to develop successful business operations that will outgrow their start-up space in the incubator and leave to establish viable, freestanding business operations within the City.



The Launch Factory Incubator, Charlotte, North Carolina

DOWNTOWN PARKING

Parking and land use regulations are closely related. To achieve the goals of a land use plan, adequate parking must be available to meet the needs of a dense downtown setting, while facilities should be located so as to minimize the impact on the vibrancy of the downtown and the pedestrian environment.

In order to maximize the use of the core and promote a pedestrian-friendly environment, parking demand for businesses in the downtown is considered collectively rather than on a business-by-business basis. Downtown property owners may be required to provide on-site parking or are responsible for meeting parking demands by participating in a public-private funding structure that provides for the construction of shared customer and employee parking.

Parking is a costly asset; accordingly it is important to ensure that the use of parking spaces and facilities are maximized. It is important to note that it is not practical to provide enough parking spaces to meet the absolute peak demand. Therefore parking management strategies focus on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing parking supply and should be utilized to address short-term parking needs in the downtown.

Parking in downtown New Baltimore is served by several private and public parking areas and on-street parking. It is critical that a balance of parking types be maintained throughout the downtown to meet the needs of various users. While public parking lots offer the most flexibility for visitors and employees, private parking lots offer unique opportunities for businesses to promote parking options directly to their customers.

PAYMENT IN LIEU OF PARKING

A Payment in Lieu of Parking (PILOP) program is a regulatory and financing tool that allows property owners or developers to satisfy required off-street parking obligations through a financial contribution rather than constructing all required parking spaces on-site. In the context of Downtown New Baltimore—where parcels are often small, development patterns are compact, and walkability is a defining characteristic—this approach can provide a practical and flexible alternative to traditional parking requirements.

Under a PILOP program, funds collected from participating developments are directed to a dedicated account and used by the City to plan, construct, or improve shared public parking facilities. These may include municipal parking lots, on-street parking enhancements, wayfinding signage, or other access and mobility improvements that benefit the downtown as a whole. This approach shifts the responsibility for parking from individual sites to a coordinated, community-wide system.

The benefits of a Payment in Lieu of Parking program are significant. First, it helps remove a common barrier to redevelopment and business attraction in the downtown. Strict on-site parking requirements can limit the ability to reuse existing buildings, particularly historic structures or sites with limited lot depth. By offering an alternative compliance option, the City can encourage reinvestment, adaptive reuse, and infill development that might otherwise be infeasible.

A PILOP program supports the preservation of New Baltimore’s traditional downtown character. Requiring each site to independently meet parking standards often results in the over-construction of surface parking lots, which can disrupt the pedestrian environment, reduce building density, and detract from the overall aesthetic quality of the area. A shared parking approach allows for more efficient land use, promotes a continuous streetscape, and reinforces a walkable, human-scaled environment.

Thee program enables the City to strategically plan and locate parking resources where they are most effective. Rather than dispersing small, underutilized parking areas across multiple sites, the City can develop well-designed, centrally located public parking facilities that serve multiple users throughout the day and evening. This shared-use model recognizes that parking demand varies by time of day and by land use, allowing the same spaces to accommodate different users at different times.



ACTION STRATEGIES

Review and consider adopting a Payment in Lieu of Providing Downtown Parking Ordinance.

DOWNTOWN GATEWAYS

Gateways into the City of New Baltimore do not consistently or effectively announce arrival into the downtown or convey the sense of identity, pride, and waterfront character that defines the community. Gateways serve as important visual and spatial markers that signal entry into a distinct place. They establish a sense of arrival, reinforce community boundaries, and provide an opportunity to communicate the City's unique identity to residents and visitors alike.

Recognizing the importance of clearly defined and well-designed entry points, the enhancement and reintroduction of gateway features should be considered a priority. Gateway treatments should be strategically located along key corridors leading into the downtown and waterfront areas, including major approaches such as Jefferson Avenue and 23 Mile Road. These features should reflect New Baltimore's historic roots, nautical heritage, and connection to Lake St. Clair.

Gateway improvements may include coordinated signage, decorative elements, and high-quality landscaping that create a cohesive and memorable entrance experience. Materials such as stone, brick, and metal accents, combined with native plantings and seasonal landscaping, can reinforce a sense of permanence and quality. In addition, the incorporation of lighting, public art, and banners can further enhance visibility and create a welcoming atmosphere during both daytime and evening hours.

Well-designed gateways not only improve aesthetics, but also support economic development and tourism by strengthening the City's brand and encouraging visitors to explore the downtown. Collectively, these enhancements can help establish a strong and recognizable identity for New Baltimore while reinforcing community pride and creating a lasting first impression.



ACTION STRATEGIES

Develop and implement a coordinated Downtown Gateway Improvement Program that identifies key entry corridors, establishes design standards, and phases the installation of unified signage, landscaping, and placemaking features that reflect New Baltimore's historic and waterfront identity.



Downtown entryway from Green Street and Washington, taken on May 18, 2026



ChatGPT A.I. generated rendering depicting possible entryway improvements.

BICYCLE PARKING

As society shifts towards sustainable living, a cleaner alternative to automobile commuting is gaining traction. Cycling offers benefits that surpass driving on many levels—an economically and environmentally sound option that helps people fulfill health and fitness goals.

Bicycle parking is needed at key destinations throughout the downtown to encourage bicycling as a mode of transportation. The safety, location, and type of bicycle parking facility is important to encouraging cyclists to use it. Parking should be located where it is close to entrances, have metal framing that is secured to the ground, and allow for bicycle frames to be locked to the rack in addition to front wheels.

Bicycle parking could be permitted as an incentive to reduce vehicle parking for new development and in redevelopment projects or could be required as a part of the site development provisions in the zoning ordinance.



Without a convenient place to park, bicyclists will either pass through or avoid downtown entirely. Therefore, a complete network of conveniently located bicycle parking facilities needs to be provided.



ACTION STRATEGY

Identify appropriate locations, and construct attractive and durable, bicycle parking areas within the downtown.

DOWNTOWN DESIGN FRAMEWORK, STREETScape, LANDSCAPING, AND FAÇADE ENHANCEMENT

The visual quality and functionality of the downtown environment play a critical role in shaping how residents, visitors, and investors perceive and experience the City of New Baltimore. Streetscape enhancements, coordinated landscaping, and thoughtful façade improvements collectively contribute to creating a vibrant, walkable, and economically resilient downtown. These elements not only improve aesthetics, but also reinforce a strong sense of place that reflects the City's waterfront character along Lake St. Clair and its historic village identity.

Streetscaping refers to the coordinated design and enhancement of the public right-of-way to create an attractive, functional, and pedestrian-oriented environment. It typically includes elements such as street trees, sidewalks, lighting, benches, signage, decorative paving, planters, and other features that contribute to the overall appearance and usability of a street. Streetscaping is intended to improve both the visual character and the day-to-day experience of those who live in, work in, and visit the downtown.

A well-designed streetscape enhances the comfort and safety of the public realm. Features such as pedestrian-scaled lighting, clearly defined walkways, and street trees help calm traffic, improve visibility, and create a more inviting setting. These improvements encourage walking, increase the amount of time people spend downtown, and support local businesses by fostering a welcoming environment for shopping, dining, and community interaction.

Landscaping further strengthens the downtown's visual appeal and environmental performance. The strategic use of plantings, planters, and green infrastructure softens the built environment, provides shade, and assists with stormwater management. Seasonal landscaping introduces color and variety throughout the year, reinforcing civic pride and demonstrating continued investment in the community. Landscaping can also be used to define spaces, enhance gateways, and screen less desirable views.

Façade improvements are equally important in reinforcing downtown character and supporting economic vitality. High-quality building design, the preservation of historic architectural elements, and the use of coordinated materials and colors contribute to a cohesive and attractive streetscape. Enhancements such as updated storefronts, increased window transparency, improved lighting, and architectural detailing create visual interest and strengthen the pedestrian experience. These improvements can also increase property values, attract new businesses, and encourage reinvestment in existing structures.

Collectively, streetscape, landscaping, and façade improvements serve as foundational tools for downtown revitalization. By creating a cohesive, attractive, and pedestrian-oriented environment, the City can enhance its identity as a waterfront destination, support local economic development, and improve overall quality of life. These investments position downtown New Baltimore as a welcoming and competitive place for residents, businesses, and visitors alike.



Downtown street façade taken on May 18, 2026.



ChatGPT A.I. generated rendering showing street façade with streetscaping improvements.



ACTION STRATEGY

Enhance the appearance of the downtown through streetscaping, landscaping, and façade improvements. Programs that encourage private investment should be developed.

PUBLIC SPACES AND GATHERING AREAS

One of the most important factors influencing the perception and success of a downtown is the quality of its public spaces—areas where residents, employees, and visitors can gather and interact. In the City of New Baltimore, these include sidewalks, plazas, alleys, parks, and waterfront areas, all of which contribute to both the physical character and social life of the downtown. Well-designed public spaces not only support pedestrian movement and congregation, but also enhance architectural variety and reinforce a distinctive identity, particularly within the waterfront setting along Lake St. Clair.

Downtown New Baltimore benefits from several established public spaces that serve as key community assets. Pedestrian alleys located throughout the downtown provide unique connections between streets and businesses, extending the walkable environment beyond primary corridors. These spaces often incorporate decorative paving, landscaping, and lighting, creating visual interest while encouraging exploration and small-scale gathering.

In addition, the City’s waterfront parks and civic spaces offer important opportunities for recreation and community activity. With amenities such as seating, open green space, and shaded areas, these locations support both organized events and informal use while reinforcing the City’s identity as a lakefront destination.

Collectively, these public spaces play a vital role in supporting economic activity, fostering social interaction, and enhancing overall quality of life. Continued investment in their improvement and activation will further strengthen downtown New Baltimore as a vibrant and welcoming destination.



ACTION STRATEGY

Additional public gathering spaces should be identified and constructed, and existing public gathering spaces should be enhanced and promoted for use.

Chapter 6

Placemaking & Economic Development

The quality of place has become an increasingly important factor in shaping economic decisions and community success. As people and capital have become more mobile, communities must compete not only on cost and location, but also on the overall experience they offer. In the City of New Baltimore, the character and quality of the downtown and waterfront environment play a central role in attracting and retaining residents, businesses, and visitors. High-quality places support a strong sense of community, provide access to amenities and services, and foster the social and professional connections that are essential to long-term economic vitality.

Placemaking is a planning and economic development approach that recognizes the direct relationship between the quality of a place and its ability to attract investment. As the economy continues to evolve toward knowledge-based and service-oriented industries, communities that offer appealing, walkable, and engaging environments are better positioned to succeed. In this context, placemaking focuses on enhancing public spaces, strengthening downtown identity, and creating destinations that reflect the City's unique assets, including its location along Lake St. Clair.

While placemaking is not a new concept, it has gained renewed emphasis as both public and private sectors increasingly invest in community design, streetscapes, and public amenities. It is important to recognize that placemaking is not a short-term solution, but rather a long-term strategy that supports sustainable growth and reinvestment. When implemented thoughtfully, placemaking can create an environment that encourages private investment, supports local businesses, and enhances overall quality of life, positioning New Baltimore as a competitive and desirable place to live, work, and visit.

CORE OBJECTIVES

New Baltimore will have a growing, diversified economy that offers opportunity for all businesses and residents to prosper.

New Baltimore will have a unique character and strong sense of place in its neighborhoods, downtown, and City as a whole.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A comprehensive and coordinated economic development strategy is essential to guiding investment, supporting business growth, and strengthening the long-term economic health of the City of New Baltimore. Such a strategy establishes a clear vision for the local economy, defines how the City will engage with the business community, and identifies priorities for business attraction, retention, and expansion. It also provides a framework for evaluating when public incentives may be appropriate and outlines implementation actions that will enhance the overall economic environment, particularly within the downtown and waterfront areas along Lake St. Clair.

Business Attraction - Business attraction efforts are focused on identifying and encouraging new businesses to locate or expand within the City. The primary objective is to generate new jobs, increase the tax base, and diversify the local economy. In New Baltimore, successful business attraction should emphasize targeting uses that complement the City's existing character and assets, particularly those that enhance the downtown experience, serve the needs of residents and visitors, and build upon the City's identity as a waterfront destination. Strategic attraction efforts should also prioritize businesses that fill market gaps, support existing industries, and contribute to a vibrant, walkable environment.

Business Retention and Expansion - Business retention and expansion (BRE) represents the foundation of a sustainable economic development program. Existing businesses are a critical asset, providing employment opportunities, local services, and a stable tax base. Accordingly, it is essential that the City prioritize the needs of its current business community. A proactive BRE strategy involves regular communication with local businesses, identification of operational challenges, and responsiveness to changing economic conditions. By fostering a supportive business climate, New Baltimore can encourage existing businesses to remain, reinvest, and expand, thereby strengthening the local economy while reducing the need for costly recruitment efforts.



ACTION STRATEGY

Market available office, retail, and industrial spaces in the City to potential and existing businesses in the region that might seek to expand or open a new facility. Assembling data on the available commercial properties and lease spaces, including information on their internal layout and square footage, potential uses, and provision of utilities, would help support and facilitate the process.

QUALITY OF PLACE

The quality of place plays an increasingly important role in shaping economic decisions and long-term community success. As people and capital have become more mobile, communities must compete based on the overall experience they offer. In the City of New Baltimore, high-quality places—particularly within the downtown and waterfront areas along Lake St. Clair—help attract and retain skilled workers, entrepreneurs, and investment. Communities that provide attractive amenities, strong social and professional networks, and access to services and opportunities are better positioned to support job creation and economic stability.

Placemaking, as a place-based approach to community investment, recognizes the connection between quality environments and economic vitality. It serves as a transformative tool focused on enhancing public spaces, improving amenities and services, and elevating overall quality of life. While not a new concept, placemaking has gained increased attention as an effective economic development strategy, supported by both public and private sector investment.

A key component of this approach is the maintenance and enhancement of existing parks, green spaces, and recreational assets, as well as the continued expansion of these resources where appropriate. These amenities contribute directly to quality of life and strengthen the City’s appeal as a place to live and work. At the same time, long-term economic success depends on retaining and expanding existing businesses, supporting small business development, and attracting new talent and entrepreneurs.

Achieving these outcomes requires recognizing and promoting the City’s unique assets, providing reliable infrastructure and services, and guiding growth in a manner that reinforces the community’s character. Equally important is fostering a strong, collaborative relationship between local government and the business community. Open and consistent communication is essential to understanding business needs, responding to emerging challenges, and ensuring that public investments effectively support private sector growth. Together, these efforts position New Baltimore for sustainable, long-term economic development.



IMAGE & BRANDING

Every community has a unique set of assets that shape its identity and contribute to its overall quality of life. In the City of New Baltimore, these assets include its waterfront location along Lake St. Clair, a vibrant and walkable downtown, established neighborhoods, and popular community events such as the Bay-Rama Fishfly Festival. Collectively, these elements create a strong sense of place that distinguishes New Baltimore from surrounding communities and enhances its appeal as a place to live, work, and visit.

Branding is the intentional process of defining how a community presents itself to residents, visitors, and the broader region. Rather than allowing its identity to be shaped externally, New Baltimore should take a proactive approach to clearly articulate and promote its unique character. An effective community brand is rooted in authentic local assets and values, and it communicates a consistent and compelling message that resonates with both existing residents and potential visitors, businesses, and investors.

A successful branding strategy should begin with identifying the City's distinguishing features through engagement with residents, business owners, and community stakeholders. These features—such as the waterfront setting, downtown atmosphere, recreational amenities, and community events—should serve as the foundation for a clear and memorable identity. This identity can then be expressed through coordinated visual elements, messaging, and marketing efforts that reinforce the City's image across multiple platforms.



ACTION STRATEGY

Partner with the Macomb County Department of Planning & Economic Development to promote the City as a place to live, visit, and start a business.

Characteristics of Placemaking

- ◆ *Compact development that doesn't sprawl, enabling urban and rural areas to be clearly differentiated from one another.*
- ◆ *Urban places with a strong center, where multiple uses and activities are clustered in fairly close proximity.*
- ◆ *Vital, distinctive, and varied neighborhoods, in close proximity to the urban center.*
- ◆ *Pedestrian and bicycle friendly environment.*
- ◆ *Environmental resources, natural amenities, scenic qualities, parks, recreation, and open space that are preserved and integrated into the fabric of the community.*
- ◆ *Historic and cultural resources.*
- ◆ *Strong local character, community identity, and a sense of place.*
- ◆ *Well-designed buildings and public spaces that strengthen community sense of place, often reinforced and enlivened by works of art and sculpture.*
- ◆ *Landmarks and building facades, providing evidence that it is a real place, not just superficial.*



SPECIAL EVENTS

Special events and festivals play a vital role in drawing residents and visitors into the downtown, creating energy and activity that often leads to repeat visits to local shops, restaurants, and businesses. In the City of New Baltimore, the Bay-Rama Fishfly Festival serves as a signature community event that attracts large numbers of attendees each year. This longstanding tradition not only celebrates the City's unique waterfront identity along Lake St. Clair, but also reinforces a strong sense of community pride and local character.

Events such as Bay-Rama, along with other seasonal and community-oriented activities, provide important opportunities for social interaction among residents and visitors of all ages. They help foster a welcoming, small-town atmosphere and contribute to the sense of place that defines New Baltimore. These gatherings also serve as an introduction to the downtown for first-time visitors, encouraging future trips and continued patronage of local businesses.



In addition to large-scale festivals, coordinated efforts among downtown businesses to host sidewalk sales, holiday events, and themed promotions can further enhance activity and visibility. These smaller, recurring events help maintain momentum throughout the year, supporting local commerce and broadening the City's economic reach by attracting visitors from the surrounding region.

With thoughtful planning and collaboration, special events can have a lasting positive impact on downtown vitality. By building upon established traditions such as the Bay-Rama Fishfly Festival and expanding complementary programming, New Baltimore can continue to strengthen its identity as a vibrant waterfront destination while supporting local economic growth and community engagement.



ACTION STRATEGY

Expand the hosting of festivals and special events that bring people and dollars into the City.

ARTS AND CULTURE

The City of New Baltimore recognizes the important role that arts and culture play in defining community character, supporting economic vitality, and enhancing overall quality of life. Cultural activities and artistic expression contribute to a vibrant and engaging environment, providing educational opportunities, encouraging creativity and innovation, and fostering connections among residents of all ages and backgrounds.

Public art and cultural amenities are key elements in shaping the community experience and reinforcing a strong sense of place. Features such as murals, sculptures, performance spaces, and cultural programming help activate public spaces, encourage social interaction, and distinguish downtown destinations.

New Baltimore should continue to strengthen its cultural presence through the development of dedicated spaces, support for local artists and organizations, and the introduction of new initiatives that celebrate the community's unique identity. At the same time, the City can leverage its proximity to regional cultural assets to expand opportunities for residents and visitors. By integrating arts and culture into the public realm, New Baltimore can further enhance its attractiveness as a place to live, visit, and invest.



POP-UP & TEMPORARY BUSINESSES

While large-scale events provide significant visibility and draw, they often require substantial planning, staffing, and financial resources that may be challenging to sustain on a frequent basis. As a complementary strategy, the City of New Baltimore should also support smaller-scale, flexible programming that can be implemented more regularly and with fewer resources. These efforts can be coordinated through partnerships among the Downtown Development Authority, local business organizations, City staff, and community volunteers.

One effective approach is to encourage “pop-up” businesses and temporary activations within the downtown. These may include start-up ventures, seasonal vendors, or temporary extensions of existing businesses, and can be accommodated in vacant storefronts, underutilized properties, or open spaces during peak periods such as evenings, weekends, and holidays. When paired with small-scale events—such as live music, food truck gatherings, beverage tastings, and artisan or farmers markets—these activities can create a dynamic and engaging downtown atmosphere.



Vacant or underutilized spaces may also be enhanced through passive attractions, including temporary art installations, murals, or student-led projects, further contributing to the visual interest and identity of the downtown. While some existing businesses may initially perceive these activities as added competition, the increased foot traffic and overall vibrancy typically benefit the entire business community. Over time, these efforts can help build market demand, attract new investment, and support the transition of temporary uses into permanent businesses, strengthening the long-term economic vitality of downtown New Baltimore.



ACTION STRATEGY

Revise the city ordinances to allow new or potential businesses to hold temporary pop-up events, use vacant spaces, or utilize movable infrastructure to test and market their product or service, prior to making a significant investment.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is commonly defined as meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. At its core, sustainability recognizes that a community's long-term health, safety, and prosperity depend on the responsible stewardship of natural resources. Clean air and water, energy, land, and natural ecosystems all contribute to the quality of life and economic vitality of a community.

In the City of New Baltimore, sustainability is both an environmental and community planning priority. The City's location along Lake St. Clair highlights the importance of protecting natural resources, as the waterfront is a defining community feature and valuable environmental asset. Protecting these resources is essential to preserving community character, supporting recreation and tourism, and maintaining environmental quality for future generations.



A commitment to sustainability requires integrating environmentally responsible practices into community development and decision-making. This includes promoting efficient land use patterns, encouraging walkability and alternative transportation options, supporting energy-efficient development, and protecting open space, wetlands, and natural habitats. It also involves the use of green infrastructure practices, such as stormwater management systems, tree planting, and permeable surfaces, to improve environmental performance and reduce long-term maintenance costs.

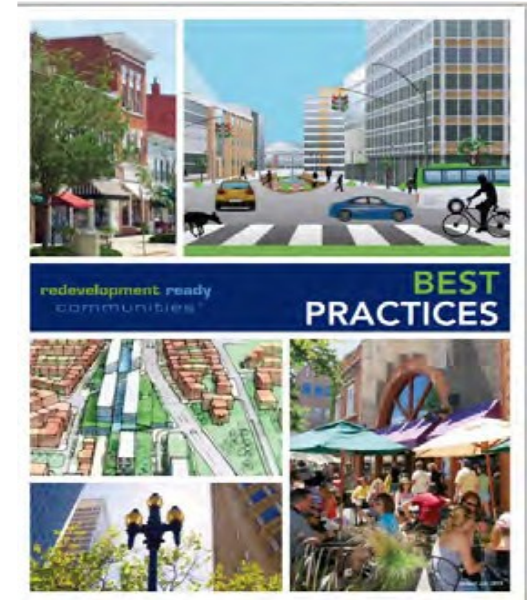
Sustainability also supports economic resilience. Communities that emphasize sustainable practices are increasingly attractive to residents, businesses, and investment. By improving infrastructure efficiency, reducing energy consumption, and enhancing environmental quality, the City can strengthen property values, lower operational costs, and maintain a high quality living environment. In addition, sustainability contributes to the preservation and enhancement of neighborhoods, parks, and public spaces. Green initiatives can improve aesthetics, provide shade and comfort, support public health, and strengthen the community's overall sense of place.

Ultimately, sustainability should serve as a guiding principle for future planning and investment decisions in New Baltimore. By incorporating sustainable practices into land use, infrastructure, environmental stewardship, and economic development, the City can support balanced and resilient growth that benefits both current and future residents.

REDEVELOPMENT READY

From a land-use planning perspective as well as an economic development perspective, it is important to take stock of the areas in the community that are ripe for redevelopment. The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) encourages communities to take a proactive approach in identifying and preparing properties to be redeveloped. A key element of the MEDC's Redevelopment Ready Communities Program is to identify redevelopment ready sites and strategies associated with each site.

The MEDC Redevelopment Ready Communities Program is a statewide certification program that helps communities become development-ready and competitive in today's economy. There is a formal certification program to ensure well-defined development procedures, a community supported vision, an open and predictable review process, and compelling sites for developers to locate their latest projects.



ACTION STRATEGY

Develop and maintain a listing of redevelopment ready sites for distribution to realtors, builders, and developers.

Identify and implement best practices to become a certified Redevelopment Ready Community.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The preparation and maintenance of a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is a critical component of effective community planning and long-term fiscal management. In the City of New Baltimore, the CIP serves as a coordinated, multi-year plan for the scheduling and financing of major public investments, including infrastructure, public facilities, parks, and municipal equipment. By identifying capital needs in advance, the City is better able to prioritize projects, allocate resources efficiently, and ensure that public improvements are aligned with the goals and policies of the Master Plan.

The importance of a Capital Improvement Plan is further underscored by its role under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, which authorizes and encourages Planning Commissions to prepare and adopt a program of public improvements. The CIP provides a structured framework for evaluating proposed capital expenditures, promoting sound decision-making, and coordinating investments across departments and agencies. It also enhances transparency and accountability by clearly communicating the City's priorities and anticipated expenditures to elected officials, residents, and stakeholders.

In practice, the CIP is an essential tool for linking land use planning with infrastructure investment. It ensures that public facilities and services are provided in a timely and cost-effective manner to support development patterns envisioned in the Master Plan. This includes improvements to transportation systems, water and sewer infrastructure, parks and recreation facilities, and other essential public services that contribute to the City's overall quality of life and economic competitiveness.

The New Baltimore Planning Commission has prepared a Capital Improvement Plan that is reviewed and updated on an annual basis. This ongoing process allows the City to respond to changing conditions, emerging needs, and new opportunities while maintaining a clear and consistent investment strategy. Annual updates ensure that the CIP remains current, realistic, and aligned with available funding sources and community priorities.



ACTION STRATEGY

Maintain and implement a coordinated, annually updated Capital Improvement Plan, prepared by the Planning Commission in accordance with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, to prioritize and fund public infrastructure and facility improvements that align with the Master Plan and support the long-term needs of the City of New Baltimore.