

# VILLAGE OF UNION CITY MASTER PLAN



**March 2017**

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### **Village of Union City Council Members**

Mr. William Avery, President  
Mr. James Hurley, Trustee  
Ms. Lori Miller  
Mr. Steve Searls, Trustee  
Mr. Tony Smith, Trustee  
Mr. Gil Strathern, Trustee  
Ms. Wanda Yoder



### **Village of Union City Planning Commission**

Mr. Steve Meyer, Chair  
Mr. Greg Hull, Vice Chair  
Mr. William Avery, Village President  
Mr. James Hurley, Trustee  
Mr. Chris Mathis, Village Manager  
John Lodge

### **Village Staff**

Mr. Chris Mathis, Village Manager/ Police Chief/ Clerk  
Mr. Cynthia Shattuck, Park Board  
Jennifer Nagel, Assistant Manager/ Treasurer/ Deputy Clerk



## **INTRODUCTION**

The Village of Union City Master Plan is intended to guide the future growth and development of the community over the next 20 years. The Village's goal in the development of this new Master Plan is the desire to ensure that the Village continues to be an attractive community to live, work, and play while at the same time maintaining its "small town atmosphere." The Plan will further direct how future residential, commercial, small business, and industrial development will take place.

The Master Plan will initially define those issues most important to the community. An in-depth analysis of the existing features of the community illustrates some of the defining characteristics of the Village. The analysis includes a survey of the existing land uses in the Village, population,

economic and housing statistics, a description of issues and opportunities within the Village, and transportation circulation patterns within the community. Upon dissemination of the information and with input from citizens and the general public, a series of goals and objectives will be developed which outline the growth and development patterns for the community over the next 20 years. The identified goals and objectives will help to create the future land use plan for the Village. Finally, the implementation section will present some key strategies the Village can use to meet its stated goals and objectives.

Now entering the next decade, the Village is pursuing and anticipating increasing residential and small business. The citizens of the community will attempt to preserve, protect, and enhance the positive characteristics of their rural small town by providing an outline for the development of the Village.

## **HISTORY**

Situated on the banks of the Coldwater and St. Joseph Rivers, the Village of Union City is located in the Northwest corner of Branch County, Michigan. Originally inhabited by the Pottawatomi Indians, the area was first settled in 1833 by Justice Goodwin with the construction of a mill and the naming of the settlement "Goodwinville." A year later, Mr. Goodwin sold several hundred acres to E.W. Morgan, who officially platted the site renaming it from the "union" of the Coldwater and St. Joseph Rivers which join here. The Village of Union City was subsequently incorporated on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1866.

The Village of Union City was legally established on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1866 and was granted a Village charter by the State of Michigan on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1869. Prior to being established as "Union City", the Village was located on land that the United States acquired from Great Britain in 1783, and became the State of Michigan in 1837.

The Union City area was first settled in 1833 by Justin Goodwin, and the first plat of the Village was made on land owned by E.W. Morgan, which was recorded on August 27<sup>th</sup>, 1835 under the name "Goodwinville".

In 1837, Union Township was established, and the Township board governed Union City until the Village was incorporated in 1866. Union City got its name from the union of the St. Joseph and Coldwater Rivers.

Union City is located on the northern border of Branch County, about ten miles (16 km) northwest of Coldwater. This is a small picturesque and historic town that functions primarily as an adjunct community to the greater Coldwater and Battle Creek areas. It has a striking turn-of-the-century look architecturally, with well-preserved downtown buildings and several Victorian style homes. A Civil War monument can be seen on the north end of the main street area in the churchyard, while a veteran's memorial along the riverbank to the south end stands to commemorate those who fought in more recent wars.

Union City was designated as Station No. 2 of the famous Underground Railroad where a Mr. John D. Zimmerman (1811-1879) formerly of Connecticut was stationmaster. The slaves seeking refuge were taken into a home built around 1840 by Mr. Zimmerman, who arrived in Union City from Fairfield, Connecticut, in the spring of 1838. He brought with him a set of blacksmith tools to operate the blacksmith shop promised for him by Israel Ward Clark, one of the four proprietors of

the village of Union City in 1837. In September 1839, Zimmerman returned to Union City with his family; he soon built a wagon factory, blacksmith shop, and this Greek revival house.

In the early 1920s Union City built a hydro electrical plant to deliver cheaper electricity to the town. By 1923 Riley Dam was constructed on nearby St. Joseph River, and the backwater forms Union Lake.



## **REGIONAL CONTEXT**

### **Location**

The Village of Union City is located both in northwest Branch County and extending partially into southwest Calhoun County. The Village is located approximately twenty five (25) miles southeast of the City of Battle Creek, fifteen (15) miles north of the City of Coldwater and approximately ten (10) miles west of Interstate 69.

## Southcentral Michigan Regional Planning Commission (SMPC)

The Southcentral Michigan Regional Planning Commission is one of fourteen (14) regional planning and development agencies in the State of Michigan. These regional commissions were created by executive order in 1968 by the Governor of Michigan. SMPC is recognized as Region 3 and is responsible for communities located within St. Joseph, Kalamazoo, Calhoun, Branch, and Hillsdale Counties. SMPC's primary function is to assist public and private entities within its region by providing technical assistance for a variety of federal, state, and local programs and projects. SMPC also serves as an intergovernmental forum to address issues from a regional perspective.

## DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The previous Master Plan was the only comprehensive source of data about the Village of Union City, and used data from the 1990 U.S. Census. Census projections extrapolated to the current year based on 1990, 2000 census data and the most recent 2010 census population figures, as well as later figures. This information is very helpful when discussing population and employment trends and their effect on housing in the area.

The 2010 United States Census which took place in April of 2010 was used as a valuable tool to provide more recent figures and to suggest additional trends about the population, housing economic situation in Union City. The 2010 Census gave Branch County a population of 45,248 people. The Village of Union City had 3.53% of the county's total population, making its Branch County's 4<sup>th</sup> most populous community.

At the same time, Michigan had a population of 9,883,640 people, meaning that Union City had 0.02% of the total population of Michigan – making it the state's 290<sup>th</sup> most populous community.

The following information shows the recent changes in population. Other than the years 1990, 2000 and 2010 (which were Decennial Census years), the population counts are based upon estimates that were supplied by the U.S. Census:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Since 2000</i>	<i>Year-to-Year Change</i>
2014	1,611	-10.69%	+1.39% since 2013
2013	1,586	-12.08%	-0.44% since 2012
2012	1,594	-11.64%	-0.17% since 2011
2011	1,597	-11.47%	-0.13% since 2010
2010*	1,599	-11.35%	-1.54% since 2009
2009	1,624	-9.98%	-1.75% since 2008
2008	1,653	-8.37%	-2.13% since 2007
□ 2007	1,689	-6.37%	-1.17% since 2006
□ 2006	1,709	-5.27%	-1.56% since 2005
2005	1,736	-3.77%	-1.64% since 2004
2004	1,765	-2.16%	-0.79% since 2003
2003	1,779	-1.39%	-0.57% since 2002
2002	1,791	-0.72%	-0.67% since 2001
2001	1805		
2000*	1804		+2.09% since 1990

1900\* 1,757

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\* *Decennial Census years*

### **Population Trends**

The most current population estimate for Union City is 1,599 according to the 2010 U.S. Census. 1,804 according to the 2000 U.S. Census. This represents a decrease in population by over two hundred and five (205) people.

In 1990, there were 2.47 persons per household living in Union City. Nearly seventy percent (69.8%) of the households were defined as families, according to the 1990 U.S. Census. The 2000 census also indicated that there were slightly more females (52%) living in Union City than males (48%). By 2010, the population by sex has nearly equaled to approximately 49.71% male to 50.29% female. Furthermore, the population of Union City was quite stable per the 1990 census.

To explain, 54% of all of the persons in owner occupied housing living in Union City in 1990 had lived in the same house for at least five years. Of those individuals that moved into Union City between 1985 and 1990, 26% moved from locations within Branch County. However, due to the transient nature of renters, those residents living in rental units for over five years comprised only 12.5% of the total number of rental housing occupants.

### **Population of Area Jurisdictions**

	1990	1993	1996	1998	2000	2010	% Change from 2000-2010
Union City	1,765	1,770	1,780	1,798	1,804	1,599	-11.3%
Union Township	2,976	3,021	3,090	3,120	3,121	2,868	-8.1%
Branch County	41,502	41,884	42,935	43,634	45,787	45,175	-1.3%

In 1990 there were 2.47 persons per household living in Union City, Michigan. In 2000 there were 2.53 persons per household and the average family size is 3.04 persons living in Union City, Michigan persons per household living in Union City, Michigan. In 2010, Union City had 725

housing units, with a population of 1,599 people. This averages to 2.21 people per household.

1990 Census also indicated that there were slightly more females (52%) to Males (48%) living in Union City, Michigan. In 2000 the population by sex was nearly equal with (49.7% male to (50.29%) female. In 2010 the population by sex was 48.5 % male and 51.5% female.

Population estimate for Union City was 1804 according to the 2000 United States Census. Information from that time period represented an increase in population by (35) thirty five people from the prior Census of 1990.

In 2000 there were 685 households out of which 36.6% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 51.5% were married couples living together, 13.0% had a female householder with no husband present and 30.7% were non-families. 25.7% of all households were made up of individuals and 11.2% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.62 and the average family size was 3.15 according to the 2000 U.S. Census.

The most current information from the 2010 United States Census estimates the population for Union City, Michigan to be 1,599, accordingly. These figures represent a decrease in population of (205) two hundred and five people. This suggest that the population of the community has decline in the past ten years.

In 2010 there were 631 households of which 36.8% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 45.8% were married couples living together, 16.5% had a female house older with no husband present, 5.4% had a male with no wife present and 32.3% were non-families. 27.9% of all households were made up of individuals and 12.8% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average house hold size was 2.21 and the average family size was 3.04, according to the 2010 U. S. Census.

The 2010 Census showed that there were again as previous Census reported more females (823) to males (776) living in the Village of Union City.

## **POPULATION RINGS FOR UNION CITY**

(Population and community counts within each concentric ring centered on Union City)

<u>Radius</u>	<u>No of Communities</u>	<u>2015 Population</u>	<u>Change Since 2010</u>
5 mi [8 km]	3	2,848	-1.25%
10 mi [16 km]	5	3,862	-1.23%
15 mi [24 km]	10	20,621	-0.84%
20 mi [32 km]	20	94,566	-0.8%
25 mi [40 km]	30	171,619	+0.38%
30 mi [48 km]	44	281,166	+0.83%

### Age Characteristics

Approximately one third (30%) of the population of Union City was 18 years of age or younger in 1990. By the year 2000, this percentage has been reduced to an estimated 27.92%. In 2010 the population of Union City (442) four hundred forty two of the population were 18 years or younger, or 27.6%.

Another 24% of the population was over age 55 as determined by the 1990 Census. By the year 2000, the population had grown to a percentage of 21.3% of the population was between the age of 45 to 64. By 2010 24.1% of the population was between the age of 45 to 64.

The median age, in the Village of Union City for 2000 (half above and half below), for the village is 33 years old. The population is spread out with 29.9 % under the age of 18; 8.8% from 18 to 24; 28.3% from 25 to 44; 21.3% from 45 to 64; and 11.6% who were 65 years of age or older. For every 100 females there were 93.8 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 93.3 males.

The median age, in the Village of Union City for 2010, (half above and half below), for the village is (35.7 years. 27.6 % of residents were under the age of 18; 8.2% were between the ages of 18 and 24; 26.5% were from 25 to 44; 24.1% were from 45 to 64; and 13.8% were 65 years of age or older.

### Population by Sex and Age 2010

Male 776 and Female 823

Under 18 - 442

18 and over 1,157

20 - 24: 83

25 - 34: 214

35 - 49: 320

50 - 64: 273

65 and over : 221

#### 2010 Census

	<i>Under 18</i>	<i>18 &amp; over</i>	<i>20 – 24</i>	<i>25 – 34</i>	<i>35 – 49</i>	<i>50 – 64</i>	<i>65 &amp; over</i>
<i>Union City</i>	442	1157	83	214	320	273	221
<i>Union Township</i>	726	2,142	153	339	598	535	440
<i>Branch County</i>	10,392	33,272	<i>(Data Not Available for 20-64)</i>				6418

### Race & Ethnicity

The population of Union City was overwhelmingly classified as white in the 2010 U.S. Census. In fact, of the 1,599 residents counted in 2010, 95.1% individuals were white. Other races reported

included Hispanic 1%, American Indian .6%, Asian .6%, Black .4%, Two or more races 2.4%. In comparison, in Branch County, 92.9% were reported as White and in the U.S., 72% are reported as white.

## **Educational Attainment**

Obtaining a minimum level of education is important in Union City. As of 2016, Union City Schools has a 93% graduation rate. 37% of residents have an Associate Degree or some college, and 12% have a bachelor degree or higher. Compared to the State of Michigan, there is a 89% graduation rate and 33% have some college or an Associate Degree. 26% of State residents have a bachelor degree or higher.

## **Demographics**

### **2010 census**

As of the census of 2010, there were 1,599 people, 631 households, and 427 families residing in the village. The population density was 1,110.4 inhabitants per square mile (428.7 /km<sup>2</sup>). There were 725 housing units at an average density of 503.5 per square mile (194.4 /km<sup>2</sup>). The racial makeup of the village was 95.2% White, 0.4% African American, 0.6% Native American, 0.8% Asian, 0.2% from other races, and 2.8% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 1.0% of the population.

There were 631 households of which 36.8% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 45.8% were married couples living together, 16.5% had a female householder with no husband present, 5.4% had a male householder with no wife present, and 32.3% were non-families. 27.9% of all households were made up of individuals and 12.8% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.53 and the average family size was 3.04.

The median age in the village was 35.7 years. 27.6% of residents were under the age of 18; 8.2% were between the ages of 18 and 24; 26.5% were from 25 to 44; 24.1% were from 45 to 64; and 13.8% were 65 years of age or older. The gender makeup of the village was 48.5% male and 51.5% female.

### **2000 census**

As of the census of 2000, there were 1,804 people, 685 households, and 474 families residing in the village. The population density was 1,223.7 per square mile (473.8/km<sup>2</sup>). There were 734 housing units at an average density of 497.9 per square mile (192.8/km<sup>2</sup>). The racial makeup of the village was 95.90% White, 0.61% African American, 0.39% Native American, 0.44% Asian, 0.55% from other races, and 2.11% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 1.05% of the population.



There were 685 households out of which 36.6% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 51.5% were married couples living together, 13.0% had a female householder with no husband present, and 30.7% were non-families. 25.7% of all households were made up of individuals and 11.2% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.62 and the average family size was 3.15.

In the village the population was spread out with 29.9% under the age of 18, 8.8% from 18 to 24, 28.3% from 25 to 44, 21.3% from 45 to 64, and 11.6% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 33 years. For every 100 females there were 93.8 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 93.3 males.

The median income for a household in the village was \$37,065, and the median income for a family was \$43,984. Males had a median income of \$32,143 versus \$21,571 for females. The per capita income for the village was \$15,101. About 7.9% of families and 11.7% of the population were below the poverty line, including 18.9% of those under age 18 and 4.7% of those age 65 or over.



## HOUSING PROFILE

It is important to examine the housing stock in Union City because it serves as an indicator of the quality of life for residents living in the Village. Furthermore, housing information also acts as an economic gauge for the community..

### General Characteristics

In the 2010 Census the Village is shown to have 725 housing units and a land area of 1.44 square miles (3.7km), which is 486.3 housing units per square miles (187.7 housing units/km).

In 2000 Union City had 734 Housing Units, a population of 1,804 people and a land area of 1.47 square miles (3.8km). Giving a density of 2.46 people per housing Unit and 495 Housing Units per square mile (191.1 housing units/km)

### *Number of Dwelling Units Built Every Ten Years*

Year Structure Built	Number of Dwelling Units
2000 to 2010	4
1990 to 1999	8
1980 to 1989	95
1970 to 1979	81
1960 to 1969	56
1950 to 1959	81
1940 to 1949	77
1939 to earlier	323

The housing units available in Union City include mostly two and three bedrooms homes. Nearly all of the housing units were connected to public water and sewer. 44% of all homes in the Village were built before 1939, and another 30% of the housing units in the Village were built between 1940 and 1969. These figures represent a relatively old and continually aging housing stock. This information is relevant when making subsequent recommendations in the Village's final Master Plan.

The median value of a home in 2010 is \$67,777. In 2000 it was \$67,300 and in 1990 it was \$30,300. In comparison, Michigan had a median home value \$115,600 in 2000, and \$120,000 in 2010.

The median rent in 2010 was \$591. This represents 20.5% of the median income for Union City which is well below what is generally advised by financial institutions that housing expenses not exceed 28% of total household income on the low end and 35% on the high end.

2016 Owner Occupied Property Values	
Housing Value	% of Homes
Under \$50,000	42.38%

\$50,000 to \$99,999	44.44%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	8.79%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	1.68% %
\$200,000 to \$249,999	1.03%
Above \$250,000	1.68%

### **General Housing Information**

In the 2010 it was reported in the Census that there were 725 housing units in the Village at an average density of 503.5 per square mile. Of those 631 were occupied. Those that were owner-occupied were 447. Population in the owner-occupied dwellings was 1,164. Renter – occupied dwellings were 435. Household with individuals under 18 years of age was listed at 232. Vacant properties were listed at 94. Vacant for rent listed at 38 and vacant for sale 15. The population density was 1,110.4 inhabitants per square mile ( 428.7 /km).

### **2010 Housing information**

As of 2010, there were a total of 725 housing units, of those 631 were occupied and 447 owner occupied. Population in owner-occupied 1,164; Population in renter - occupied 435. Households with individuals under 18 was 232; Vacant 94; Vacant for rent 38 and Vacant for sale 15. It is interesting to note that the majority of the homes (70.4%) in the Village were owner occupied as of 1990. In addition, a similar number of homes (69.9%) and the highest percentage of dwellings in the Village as of 1990 were single family detached constructed units.



## **ECONOMIC PROFILE**

### **Labor Force**

As of 2015, the unemployment rate in Union City, Michigan was 5.2%. In comparison, Branch County Michigan has an unemployment rate of 4.5% in 2015. For Branch County, the unemployment rate was 14.5% in 2010, and 4% in 2000. In comparison, the unemployment rate was 5.4% in 2015 for the State of Michigan. For the State it was 13.7% in 2010 and 3.% in 2000.

### **Income and Poverty**

The median household income in Union City in 2013 is \$41,767. In comparison it was \$37,065 in 2000 and \$21,750 in 1990. By comparison the median income in Branch County is \$42,538 and in the State of Michigan it is \$64,487. Union City is 1.8% lower median income than the Branch County average and 35.3% less than the State of Michigan.

The per capita income for Union City in 2013 is \$15,602. In 2000 it was \$15,101 and in 1990 it was \$9,697. Compared with Branch County it is \$20,823 and in the State of Michigan it was \$30,689 in 2013.

As of 2013, 11.9% of Union City residents were living below the poverty level. About 7.9% of families, 18.9% of those under the age of 18, and 4.7% of those age 65 or over are living below the poverty line in Union City.

### **Travel Time to Work**

An indication of the Village's position relative to the surrounding region can be illustrated in its residents travel time to work. Approximately 37% of those residents working over the age of 16 work at least ten (10) to twenty-nine (29) minutes away from their homes. This indicates that Union City is primarily a bedroom or residential community where they have determined that the Village is a desirable place in which to live but they must travel a significant distance to their place of employment. Another, approximately twenty-six (26%) percent of those living in the Village travel at least thirty (30) and up to fifty-nine (59) minutes to their place of employment. In general, residents traveling these distances to work are employed in such commercial centers as Battle Creek, Kalamazoo, Marshall or Jackson. Finally, approximately 32% of Village residents either work at home or within close proximity to the Village since their travel time to their place of employment is less than ten (10) minutes.

### **Operating Millage Comparisons 2013**

A good percentage of money that funds the General Fund of a community comes directly from taxes. Better stated those funds are obtained from the millage that is levied on the citizens locally through a operating millage.

The chart below shows a comparison to the Towns and Villages that are near Union City

MUNICIPALITY	OPERATION MILLAGE
Bronson	16.9482
Coldwater	11.5978
Hillsdale	14.9205
Homer	11.3748
Litchfield	13.0000
Marshall	17.1629
Quincy	11.6267
Reading	12.5302
Springfield	14.0000
Union City	9.9972



## **E X I S T I N G   L A N D   U S E S**

In preparation of determining what the future of Union City will look like, we must first investigate the current land use patterns of the community. Without establishing a foundation on how the community has historically developed, future land use recommendations would become arbitrary and have no relationship to existing development patterns. In addition to describing the various existing land uses present in the Village, an existing land use map has been developed and included at the end of this section.

### **Transportation**

The Village of Union City is serviced by one state highway (M-60) and is located approximately ten miles west of Interstate 69. The Village is no longer serviced by either a passenger or a freight railroad service. Kellogg Regional Airport is a freight and military oriented airport located approximately 25 miles northwest of the Village in the City of Battle Creek. Located approximately 15 miles south of the Village, Branch County Memorial Airport is a public airport operated by Branch County that services private aircraft, charter and freight services. The Branch Area Transit Authority services the Village of Union City with on demand "Dial-A-Ride" bus service within the county. Furthermore, the Calhoun Transit Authority maintains a similar service for destinations within Calhoun County.

### **Residential Housing**

The primary land use in most municipalities, land devoted to residential purposes in the Village of Union City is no exception.



Single family residential development is the more predominate housing classification and can be found throughout the community. The central residential area of the Village is centered on the downtown commercial district and orientated on a modified grid patterned road system. Relatively newer housing has developed in the Northwest corner of the Village.



There are three multiple family developments in Union City offering approximately 83 rental units. Sycamore Bend Apartments are located on the west side of town south of Division Street and offers 19 one bedroom, 5 two bedroom, and 7 three bedroom units. Ridgeview Apartments is located on Dunks Rd. directly west of Union City High School and offers 12 one bedroom and 24 two bedroom apartment units. Butler Apartments near downtown provides eight (8) one bedroom, eight (8) two bedroom, and eight (8) three bedroom apartments. 14.43 acres of land within the community is devoted to multi-family uses. Multi-family residential land uses comprise 2.0% of the land within the Village.

There are currently no manufactured housing or mobile home parks located in the Village. However, the older sections of town have scattered individual mobile home units interspersed among more traditional housing types.

## **Commercial Activity Centers**

Union City has two primary commercial districts located within the Village. Commercial land uses account for 37.44 acres or 4.7% of the land area in the Village. The first is a traditional downtown central business district oriented north-south along Broadway Street and offering a full range of retail and professional offices servicing the residents of the community. Secondly, a commercial center is located north of downtown along state highway M-60 and North Broadway Street. Gas stations, convenience stores, service station, video store, car wash, a church and used car dealership are all located in the vicinity of the Broadway Street and M-60 intersection.

## **Industrial Development**

The Village has positioned itself for substantial industrial development. The Village has 79.77 acre industrial park located on the northwest side of the Village adjacent to M-60 and Arbogast Rd. Presently, only 30.86 acres (3.8% of the Village) is in active industrial use within the Village. Factories, storage units, and a agricultural business is all located within the industrial park.

Finally, there are additional industrial facilities which are located throughout the south side of the Village that are not associated with an otherwise identified or formal industrial park. These include a trailer manufacturing company, and two grain storage facilities on the south side of the community along Railroad Street, and an auto sales and service shop.

## **Agricultural Land Uses**

Though located in the center of an agricultural community, the Village is experiencing the loss of (loss or gain and add date?) its existing agricultural land uses as they are converted to residential and industrial uses. There are currently 165.12 acres designated as agricultural within the Village limits. This accounts for 20.5% of the total land area of the Village. However, these parcels are located primarily in the northwest and western sections of the Village and though they are zoned for or currently in crop production, are planned for further development including the eighty-eight (88) acre industrial park.





## **Recreational Land Uses**

The Village of Union City owns and operate Riverview Community Park, Heritage Cultural Park, Veteran Memorial Park, and kayak launch site park, and a park in development at the hydro electric facility (portage).

## **MDNR Boat Launch**

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources owns and maintains a public boat launch facility on the northeast shore of Union Lake, on Tuttle Road. The MDNR classifies the boat launch as a "hard surfaced ramp" with sufficient water depth to accommodate most trailer able boats. The facility includes a "courtesy pier" for loading and unloading passengers, two waterless toilet facilities, and a gravel parking area for vehicles and trailers. Swimming, wading, and bathing at the site are prohibited and there is no charge to use the access site.

The Village of Union City opened a Canoe/Kayak launch site in the village on Union City Road near the east village limits. This launch site has parking, place to launch water craft and area to sit to enjoy to nature. It was opened in 2013 with the help of many village residents, village council and local support. In 2015 a portage for canoes and kayaks around the Dam on the west end of Union Lake was installed. This site also provides access for first responders in case of an emergency on Union Lake.

## **Public Use**

Nearly seventy-five (75) acres of land are devoted to public use. The majority of this land is occupied by the four Union City School District facilities. These include the Elementary School on Walnut Lane, the Middle School and High School on St. Joseph Street, and the Community Education building on Ellen Street, which is operated independently of the school. Also included in this calculation are the Village's Police and Fire Department Building, Village Hall, and Utility Service Building on Coldwater Rd. Though occupying a small parcel, the U.S. Post Office located on High Street is also included in this category. Public uses represent 9.3% of the total land area of the Village.

## **Vacant Parcels**

Vacant land comprises the third largest land use category in the Village. These parcels maybe zoned for various purposes, but currently are undeveloped. Approximately 99.37 acres of land are vacant in the Village. This equals 12.4% of the total land area of the Village. This represents an opportunity for further development potential within the existing boundaries of the Village.



## **Churches/Religious Institutions**

Churches and religious institutions have been singled out as a land use due to their importance within a community. Slightly more than 10 acres of land is occupied by church facilities in the Village. This represents 2% of the total land area of the Village. This land, due to a church's tax exempt status, does not generate revenue for the operations of the Village government.

## Existing Land Use Area Calculations and Existing Land Use Map

The table below illustrates the distribution of land uses within the Village by total acres occupied as well as a percentage of the total land area of the Village.

**Village of Union City Existing Land Use Calculations**

<b>Existing Land Use</b>	<b>Area (Acres)</b>	<b>Percentage of Total</b>
Agricultural	165.12	18.9%
Churches	17.35	2%
Commercial	50	5.7%
Industrial	40	4.6%
Multi-Family Residential	15.78	1.8%
Park/Cemetery	35.10	4%
Public	74.94	8.9%
Single Family Residential	334.94	38%
Vacant	118	13.5%
Single Family Residential	21.83	2.5%

# ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

## **Issues Facing The Village**

The Village has expressed concern over the numerous older "single wide" mobile homes that were placed on individual lots prior to the passage of new HUD guidelines in 1976 regulating these structures relative to the lot size. While they provide an affordable housing alternative for those residents that may not be able to afford more substantial housing, the age, appearance and maintenance of these structures is often a detracting influence from the neighborhood and Village in general. It is the intent of the Village to see that these properties are properly maintained and when feasible, redeveloped with new housing meeting current building codes and residential design standards.

M-60 State Highway and N. Broadway Street should be considered for a variety of commercial activity orientated to highway travelers as well as local consumers.

## **Former Downtown Industrial Site**

The site located at E High St and Broadway St what was once an Industrial Site was converted to Heritage Cultural Park and a Library was recently built. As of 2016, an amphitheater is in process of being planned, using all community raised funds and a matching grant.



### **Central Business District**

In 2009 a fire in the downtown district resulted in the loss of two buildings, and a fire ordinance was adopted as a result. This ordinance mandated all the boards over the windows in the downtown block. Thus solving a previous issue in which of many of the building had boards covering the windows of the second and third floors. A fire code was also adopted, requiring all businesses to have an audible fire alarm to further promote safety for the Village's downtown district.

### **Opportunities Facing the Village**

#### **New Development**

In 2000, a new residential development area began construction on the west side of the Village. This represents the first new subdivision in the community in decades. As of 2015, eight newer homes were constructed in the area since that time, with approximately 13 lots still available. The addition of these homes will provide an additional housing alternatives. The Donald Dr area is zoned as R2 with the rest of the area being zoned RR.

In addition, the Village owns thirty-eight (38) acres of property. The park became the location of a medical clinic, a funeral home, and an agricultural store.

#### **Redevelopment of the Former Downtown Industrial Site**

In 2009-2010, a former downtown industrial site located at High St and N. Broadway was redeveloped into a Library, Township offices, an upcoming Amphitheater project, and Heritage Cultural Park.

### **Residential Conversion of Upper Story Commercial Buildings**

The reuse of second and third stories of downtown commercial buildings can provide additional income and incentive to property owners to further develop and improve their buildings. Furthermore, the relocation of residents to downtown housing opportunities can provide an increased customer base for local retailers and service providers. Downtown living is currently popular and the availability of additional rental units uniquely designed as "lofts" over commercial space would add additional diversity to the central business district.

### **Location Between Battle Creek and Coldwater**

The Village's proximity to the Cities of Battle Creek and Coldwater, each approximately 20 minutes from Union City, provides a great opportunity to draw upon a much larger population and employment base. The Village is in reasonable commuting distance from each city and therefore could position itself as a residential alternative to these larger more urban communities.

### **Entrance Treatments from the Southeast (Coldwater Road) and from the Southwest Along St. Joseph Street**

A community's physical appearance and identity is important to those who are not familiar with the area. When traveling M-60 past Union City, one may not be aware of the Village located just south of M-60. Furthermore, traveling north from Coldwater along Union City Road, there is no special identification that you are entering the Village of Union City other than a standard Village limit sign. Many communities are utilizing attractively designed and nicely landscaped entrance signs to welcome travelers and announce the presence of the community. The Village could benefit from a similar project.

### **Annexation**

The annexation of property adjacent to the Village would assist in the further development and growth of the Village. Only those parcels reasonably associated with the village and located adjacent to existing Village boundaries would be considered. These areas would include the properties between Calhoun Street and Broadway south of M-60 as well as those areas south of the Calhoun Co. line (Calhoun Street) and north of M-60 and south of County Line Rd and those parcels West of Dirks, East of Arborgast and south of Division Street that are not already within the Village. This would serve to "square off" the boundaries of the Village.





## **Union Lake**

Union Lake was created as a result of damming the St. Joseph River to provide a source of electrical power for the Village and today it serves as a cultural, economic and natural asset to the entire Union City community. This includes a new kayak/canoe launch was built in 2014 and portage that goes around the dam and was built in 2015. A new historic mark water trail is being developed for 2016 with markers identifying historic locations. The Village owns the lake bottom and that area occupied by Union Lake as well as the dam itself. The Village has expressed a willingness to provide utilities at the time that they become necessary to property owners adjacent to the lake to maintain the lake's currently good water quality. The extension of utilities to the current and future residents of Union Lake would provide two primary benefits. The first would be the environmental protection of the lake's surface waters and the residents' drinking water supplies by collecting household sewage with a public sanitary sewer system. The second would be an economical benefit to the Village with resulting additional revenue generated by the addition of the lake residents to the Village's utility system. The residents of the lake utilize the services and frequent the businesses of the Village. The Village should investigate opportunities to include lake residents in decisions affecting the community in general (and specifically the lake) as well as identify additional means of promoting the lake as a community asset, tourist destination and a desirable place to call home.

## COMMUNITY VISIONING PROCESS FOR 2012

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**Approach.** The Community Visioning Process is conducted to elicit ideas that can be translated into a set of Goals and Objectives that can further be incorporated into the development of the community's Master Plan. The meeting is an opportunity for the public to voice opinions, comments, and suggestions on the current status of the township and to provide insight toward the desired future of Union City and possible ways to attain it.

**Organization.** The Village sent out a survey to all Village residents and utility billing customers to solicit concerns and needs and the importance of each. The Village received back 1,385 surveys with 1200 being received back with the Utility Billing and 185 returned directly to the Village Office. The survey asked residents "on a scale of 1-10, rank the items below in terms of importance (1=low, 10=high):

Sidewalk Conditions	Increasing Tax Base
Water Quality	Property tax rates for elderly
Local Industry	Curb, Gutter, Street
Sewer bill rates	Business recruitment
River front recreational development	Business Representation on boards
Downtown Building Maintenance	Local Police Protection
Union Lake water levels	Free Summer lawn watering
Street Lighting	Youth activities center
Ordinance enforcement	Local Fire Protection
Business incentives	Littering
Industrial park promotion	Private property maintenance
Electric rates	Family dining establishments
Village board diversity	Fast food establishments
Public transportation	Communication with local officials
Downtown parking	Street sweeping
Handicap accessibility	Downtown retail space
Yard waste/compost site	Local banquet facilities
Support local businesses	Local marketing programs
Wastewater lagoon capacity	Local tourism support
Downtown store front occupancy level	Village government issues

**End Product.** The results of the surveys were compiled and the following was the rank of the importance of the items listed by average ranking:

- Water quality – 8.53
- Electric rates – 8.49
- Local fire department – 8.32
- Sewer bill rates – 8.12
- Local police protection – 7.85
- Local industry – 7.69
- Property tax for elderly – 7.33
- Communication with local officials – 7.28
- Increasing tax base – 7.17



- Sidewalk condition – 6.84
- Ordinance Enforcement – 6.83
- Village government issues – 6.79
- Downtown store front occupancy levels – 6.68
- Business Incentives – 6.62
- Industrial Park Promotion – 6.61
- Support for local businesses – 6.61
- Private Property Maintenance – 6.6
- Business Recruitment – 6.49
- Littering – 6.39
- Curb, Gutters, Street – 6.38
- Business representation on boards and commissions – 6.35
- Downtown building maintenance – 6.28
- Wastewater lagoon capacity – 6.23
- Union Lake Levels – 6.18
- Street Lighting – 6.18
- Youth activities center – 6.09
- Yard waste and compost site – 6.07
- Local tourism support – 5.91
- Free summer lawn watering – 5.86
- Family dining establishments – 5.79
- Village board diversity – 5.76
- Handicap Accessibility – 5.73
- Street sweeping – 5.71
- Downtown retail space – 5.37
- Fast food establishments – 5.02
- Local marketing programs – 5.02
- Local banquets facilities – 4.88
- Riverfront recreational development – 4.87
- Downtown Parking – 4.79
- Public Transportation – 3.08

## Evaluation

**Utility rates** – A clear concern from respondents was sewer rates, electric rates, and water quality, which were 3 of the top 4 ranked responses. While a 2016 study by the Village with other Michigan communities showed the rates are very low, the ready to serve fees in the water and sewer departments elevate the bills. These ready to serve fees are approx \$70, which the customer is charged before any usage. This is due to a large amount of debt the Village incurred with the sewer lagoon projects in 1995 and 2010 which required bonds for approx \$3.6 million and is still paying off. The Village would be well served in researching ways to restructure these bonds, or pay them off and reduce those RTS fees.

**Public services** – Citizens marked both the police and fire protection as high importance with fire being the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest importance and police 5<sup>th</sup>. Having strong fire and police protection should remain a priority to the Village. Ordinance enforcement was also noted as a high importance, ranking 11<sup>th</sup>. The Village recently hired an ordinance enforcement officer to address this concern.

**Industry and tax base** – Drawing local industry (6<sup>th</sup>), tax for the elderly (7<sup>th</sup>), increasing the tax base (9<sup>th</sup>), and industrial park promotion (15<sup>th</sup>) were also noted as high concerns.

**Infrastructure** – Most infrastructure items fell in the middle of the pack, with sidewalk conditions ranking higher (10<sup>th</sup>). Curb, gutter, and streets ranked 20<sup>th</sup>, street lighting 25<sup>th</sup>, and street sweeping 33<sup>rd</sup>.



### **Where Do We Go From Here?**

This Master Plan for the Village will strive to develop a plan for land use with the goal of utilizing non-developed land that will benefit and fit within the community. The Village Council and Planning Commission will utilize the plan when considering development projects, zoning requests, and other land use related issues.

## **GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

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In establishing a Land Use Plan, one of the primary components is the formulation of a community's goals and objectives. Establishing goals determines the destination toward which the community's planning efforts are directed. Objectives are more specific action oriented activities that are intended to lead to the fulfillment of the stated goals. Both are necessary components of the planning process as they provide the framework within which the plan is developed and the basis for determining future courses of action toward the physical development of the Village.

This chapter of the Village's Master Plan states general development goals and objectives for the future physical development of the community. The goals and objectives identified herein are intended to reflect the land use priorities of the community, give direction to land developers regarding the Village's physical environment, and establish a stated policy to assist the Village Planning Commission, Village staff and other boards and committees in assessing the impact of their planning decisions.

### **Economic Development**

Promote residential, commercial, and industrial development and employment creation for the residents of the community in an environmentally and socially responsible manner.

Plan future annexation areas to coincide with the availability and capacity of the Village's utility systems and to provide sufficient land for future housing, commercial and industrial development.

Pursue funding for infrastructure improvements to market and develop the Village's property located on M-60 for future development.

Market the Village as a desirable location to live and work using the proximity of M60, 1-94, 1-69 and the natural features of the St. Joseph River and Union Lake.

### **Recreational**

Provide additional recreational opportunities within the community.

- Continue to develop and improve the Village's Parks and further pursue the partnership with the Branch County Community Foundation as a funding source.
- Continue to develop the kayak and canoe launch sites. Currently a historical water trail with signs is being constructed between the launch sites at the Coldwater River in the Village out to the Riley Dam portage.



## **Downtown Development**

Reinforce and strengthen the Village's central business district as the commercial and cultural center of the community.

- Promote new commercial activity within existing downtown district boundaries.
- Continue to promote building maintenance and facade improvements.
- Promote upper-story residential use commercial buildings.
- Utilize the Chamber of Commerce to analyze the market area and retail impact of the downtown relative to Union City, Branch County, and southern Calhoun County.

## **Housing**

Provide a variety of suitable housing alternatives for the Village's residents that promote stability within existing neighborhoods and provides effective guidance to new residential development.

- The Village recently hired a code enforcement officer, and is working to expand active code enforcement efforts to remove blighting influences on the Village.
- Direct the future location of new housing projects through appropriate zoning, subdivision regulations, and utility extension policies. To include senior assisted living.
- Extend sidewalks in those residential areas currently without sidewalks and repair or replace where necessary in neighborhoods with existing sidewalks.

## Community Facilities

- Develop Village-wide sidewalk installation program for new construction and repair and replacement.
- Have the Village's Electric Department continue to evaluate the street lighting and make recommendations on what changes may be necessary.
- Consolidate the Village Hall along with other Village properties to a larger facility to increase efficiency.
- Continue to upgrade playground equipment and facilities at the Village Parks.
- Improve public infrastructure with new curb, gutter, and pavement when reconstructing or repairing Village roads.

## FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

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The Master Plan is a guide for the growth and maintenance of the community. The Plan, a product of the Village Planning Commission, is intended to guide development decisions through the next five to ten years. However, the Plan is not a prediction; it is not a rigid document and should be understood as the basis of the continuing planning process of regular evaluation and periodic adjustment, updating and amendment.

The Plan is comprised of both the map and supporting documentation which includes population and housing information based on the last ten to twenty years, circulation, environmental concerns and resources, and the community's goals and objectives. Rather than a precise document, (like a zoning map) the Master Plan map actually constitutes the development policy of the Village for circulation and land use and community facilities. The land use proposals identified on the Plan map are generalized areas for development which are not meant to follow specific property lines or define individual sites.

The Plan is based upon several planning principles and has the following characteristics:

- Long Range: Planning and responding to land development issues for the next 5-10 years.
- Comprehensive: All major types of land use are considered.
- Generalized: Land use allocations and relationships are general. The Master Plan map incorporates broad principals of land development and their inter-relationship(s).
- Flexible: The Plan is able to accept changes which do not affect the integrity of the total plan.
- Site Sensitive: All map land use designations must necessarily be subject to the environmental conditions of each particular site.

- **Regional:** The plan recognizes regional development and needs of adjacent communities as opposed to isolated development within arbitrary political boundaries.

Once again, the primary purpose of this Plan is to guide the Planning Commission as it considers rezoning, special land use, and variance requests. The first question commission members should ask themselves when faced with a rezoning request is "What does the Plan say?" The Future Land Use Map should be a ready reference at Planning Commission meetings and should be as frequently used as the official zoning map. Having the Future Land Use map, once updated, will be prominently displayed in the Village Hall to serve and inform both residents and developers of the policies guiding future land use for the community.

The Future Land Use Plan primarily proposes a continuation of the small town atmosphere of the existing land use pattern with provisions for further residential, commercial, and industrial development. Modest orderly growth is recognized. Furthermore, the map provides for transitions between land uses of varying intensity. A description of the Future Land Use Plan by land use category is described as follows:

### **Agricultural**

The majority of the land currently utilized for agricultural activities within the Village limits will eventually convert into nonagricultural uses over the course of the next ten to twenty years. Therefore, very little agriculturally designated land is planned and anticipated within the Village. Approximately 8% or 63.97 acres of land have been classified as agricultural in use. This area is limited to the northeast corner of the Village and includes the Riverside Cemetery and lands east of the St. Joseph River. Outside of the Village, lands north and west of Creamery Road and Union City Road will continue in agricultural use as will land north of M-60 and Wagner Road in Calhoun County. Finally, land to the southwest of the Village is also anticipated for continued agricultural production along Arborgast Road and south of St. Joseph Street.

### **Low Density Residential**

The low density residential land use classification is intended for single family dwellings of between two (2) and four (4) units per acre depending on the availability of public utilities. Larger lot sizes in excess of 18,000 square feet are required for parcels utilizing well and septic systems while smaller lot sizes of greater than 13,000 square feet maybe used where public utilities are available. Much of the land currently in agricultural use or rural residential use has been included in the low density category. Areas designated for low density residential development includes the land north of Division Street and south of M-60; and the entire area bordered by Arborgast Road, Division Street, and St. Joseph Street.

The elementary school, middle school, and high school have all been identified for low density purposes due to their proximity within existing residential areas and location to adjacent developing areas. For the purpose of future land use classification, these governmental or institutional uses are suitable uses within the low density residential land use category.

## **Medium Density Residential**

Much of the existing residential areas west of North Broadway Street and west of downtown have been designated for medium density residential. This category includes single family homes, condominiums, duplexes, and encompasses areas previously developed and currently zoned R-75 or R-60. The medium density classification is intended for small to medium lot sizes of between 7,000 square feet and 10,000 square feet with a dwelling unit density of between four (4) and six (6) dwelling units per acre. This area of the Village is characterized by many older historical homes as well as those built between 1970 and the present. It is the recommendation of the Planning Commission that new homes built in existing residential areas should be designed in such a manner so as to- "fit in" with the character and architecture of the adjoining homes and the neighborhood in general.

## **High Density Residential**

This land use classification is intended for multi-family (apartment) residential developments, very small single family residential lots, and parcels acceptable for the placement of manufactured homes outside of an approved manufactured home development (park). This area is characterized by very small lots of approximately 6,000 square feet in area and an overall density of between six (6) and eight (8) dwelling units per acre.

Multiple family housing can fill the needs of the Village's residents including the elderly who cannot afford or maintain a single family dwelling, single persons not wishing to maintain or unable to afford a single family dwelling, and those persons seeking temporary accommodations while they seek permanent housing or who may be working in the area temporarily.

Furthermore, multiple family housing near North Broadway and the downtown business district will contribute to pedestrian activity and will add potential customers and vitality to the downtown Village core. Planning Commission suggest that a development of an assisted living facility be explored within a high density residential area.

## **Manufactured Homes / Manufactured Home Development District**

Recognizing the need to provide for alternative and more affordable forms of housing, the Village has designated part of the southeast corner of the Village for the development or placement of manufactured homes either within park developments or on individual lots. The Village has identified this area for potential development and redevelopment due to its close proximity to the central business district (downtown), availability of public utilities and infrastructure, close proximity to the middle school and high school, and the desire to restrict these types of housing developments elsewhere within the Village.

This land use classification will continue to allow site built single family homes as well as provide single width manufactured home owners a location within a community to place their homes where public utilities are available, school facilities are located within walking distance, and where attractive existing neighborhoods have been established.

### **Highway Oriented Commercial**

The area along North Broadway Street north of Calhoun Street and adjacent to State Highway M-60 has been designated for highway oriented commercial land uses. This category includes those businesses and retailers dependent upon and specifically oriented toward servicing travelers and a more regional customer base outside of the population of the Village of Union City. These uses would include gasoline service stations, automobile sales dealerships, hotels and restaurants to name a few.

### **Central Business District**

This land use category is designed to satisfy the need for an active mixed use Village Center with retail and office uses located on the main floors of the commercial buildings and office and residential uses in the upper stories of the buildings. The Village recently improved the facades of the local businesses by mandating boarded up windows to be repaired and establishing a new downtown fire and safety code.

### **Neighborhood Oriented Commercial**

A new commercial designation has been added to address the specific needs of the south side of the Village along Coldwater Road. This area is currently zoned various commercial and residential classifications and is the home to an industrial facility, a grocery store, automotive repair, Village public works facility, restaurant, car wash, and single family residences most of which are single wide manufactured units. This area has been targeted for redevelopment as it serves as the gateway to the community from the south and east. The area has been designated neighborhood commercial for the purpose of promoting and encouraging additional commercial growth and expansion in this area. The uses allowed in this district would be freestanding commercial and office facilities light intensity in nature with small well landscaped parking lots intended to serve the commercial needs of the Village and immediate townships. Retail stores, offices, restaurants, and similarly sized commercial uses not suitable for locating in the central business district are encouraged. Car washes, gas stations, vehicle and boat dealerships, and various higher intensity commercial uses should not be located in this area.

### **Public/Institutional**

Churches, schools, government buildings, libraries, cemeteries, parks and other public and semi-public uses comprise this classification. These properties should be used for continued civic purposes. Upon such time as these properties are no longer used for public purposes, the parcels should be zoned in a manner pursuant to the recommendations of the Planning Commission.



## **Industrial**

Though industrial activity has historically located in the south side of the Village adjacent to a now removed rail line, new industrial activity is located on State Highway M-60. The first parcel is located west of Arbogast Road, and is home to one manufacturing facility, a farm supply store, a funeral home, and a medical clinic. The property is owned by the Village and zoned for industrial use. The Village is looking to pursue an assisted living home in this area.

The second site is located between M-60, Arbogast Road and Wagner Road. The majority of this property is currently outside of the Village limits but should be considered for industrial land use. Both sites are in close proximity to Village utilities which have been extended to the intersection of Arbogast Road and M-60.

## **CIRCULATION PLAN**

The principal objective of the Circulation Plan is to develop and maintain a system of all types of transportation that is integrated with all other elements of the Master Plan. Since the core of the Village is mostly developed and the majority of its circulation system is established, the emphasis of the circulation plan is placed on developing solutions for existing traffic problems.

The Village was built around a grid street system which will continue to serve as the backbone of the future road networks. The Circulation Plan highlights the dense network of interconnected streets in the Village which is in sharp contrast to the more widely spread street pattern of most suburban communities.

The Circulation Plan assigns three levels of functional classifications to the Village street system as described below. These designations are intended for planning purposes and should be used to guide the review of development proposals and evaluation of future transportation needs.

### **Arterial Roads**

Arterial roads are intended to accommodate longer distance travel to and through the community and serve to link neighborhoods and areas within the Village as well as provide access to neighboring communities. Arterial roads within the Village are Broadway, Coldwater Rd. and M-60. Arterial access should be carefully controlled and spaced to minimize traffic conflicts and facilitate efficient traffic flow.

### **Collector Streets**

Collector streets are intended to accommodate traffic within neighborhoods and non-residential areas and provide access from local streets to arterial roadways. Calhoun St., Division St., Park St, and St Joseph St. have been classified as collector streets in and adjacent to the Village. These streets should be monitored to ensure the continuance of safe and efficient traffic flows. This can be accomplished with proper maintenance of the driving surface and appropriate access management efforts to discourage numerous drive approaches and poorly located intersections with local streets.

## **Local Streets**

Local streets accommodate low volumes of traffic over relatively short distances, providing property access with neighborhoods and non-residential areas. Alleys are included in this classification, eliminating the need for driveway curb cuts and providing continuity of buildings along the local street. The elimination of driveways due to alleys also increases the availability of on-street parking.

The grid pattern roadway system, as found in the Village, has an inherent capability to distribute traffic efficiently. Instead of concentrating traffic on a few arterial which become congested and need to be widened, the system has the ability to spread traffic volumes among a number of roads. This provides for a more efficient traffic flow while delaying the need for road improvement projects. The grid system is also easier to navigate because streets do not dead end or follow a circuitous route, which can confuse and delay both residents and visitors. The grid pattern of roads also provides for convenient pedestrian and bicycle walkways and routes that add to the overall efficiency of the circulation system. Such walkways and routes should provide access within the Village neighborhoods as well as to the Village central business district and other non-industrial areas. The Village should strive to enhance the facilities for non-motorized transportation by providing linkages where needed and maintaining the facilities for safe and convenient access.

Finally, it should be emphasized that roadways are more than a means to reach a destination. Roads are also important public spaces which can greatly add to a community's image if properly and attractively maintained and designed to include street trees, street lights, barrier-free sidewalks, and crosswalks.

## **Planned Improvements**

The Village annually budgets between \$35,000 and \$40,000 per year on physical improvements to the street system above and beyond annual maintenance requirements such as snow plowing, lane striping and crack repair. Roadways are annually analyzed and prioritized for repair or reconstruction by the Village administration. Of particular note is the planned reconstruction with curb, gutter, storm sewer, pavement, and water lines of High St, John St, and Foote St. A \$1.5 million North Broadway St bridge project that involves a \$1.3 million grant from the State of Michigan is also planned in 2017. Plans to improve road and infrastructure, specifically St Joseph St, High St, and Park St are included with a new water tower project in the near future.

## **Conclusions**

New residential developments should be designed to continue the existing street pattern within the Village. This would include the use of a grid pattern to connect the new development to adjacent parcels and existing street intersections. In addition, new residential developments should also be encouraged to incorporate sidewalks on both sides of the street, narrow pavement widths, and curb and gutters to facilitate efficient pedestrian access and provide an attractive physical environment.

Existing neighborhoods that do not already have newer street systems should be phased in with pavement reconstruction, sidewalk repair, and the installation of curb and gutter as funding and priorities allow. New commercial development, particularly along the major arteries of Broadway and M-60 should be restricted to single driveway access points. Managing access to these major arteries of the Village will facilitate efficient traffic flow and reduce potential accident locations. Shared drive approaches between adjacent properties and interconnecting parking lots for internal vehicular access are also suggested for new and existing commercial and industrial development. These recommendations can be implemented with an appropriately drafted and enforced site plan review ordinance as a component of the Village's Zoning Ordinance.

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLAN

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### **Introduction**

The primary intent of the Community Facilities Plan is to provide for adequate public facilities to meet the needs of the existing and future residents of the Village of Union City. These public facilities include recreation and open space, Village administration, fire and police protection, street maintenance department, electric, water, and wastewater utility services. This community facilities plan provides an overview of the Village's commitments for the provision of these essential public facilities and services to meet the needs of the Village residents and visitors while ensuring the protection of the public health, safety, and welfare.

### **Existing Community Facilities**

The Union City School District operates a 1372 student district (K12) with the high school, middle school, elementary school, and a bus facility all located within the Village limits. The School District serves the populations of the Village of Union City as well as Sherwood, Union, and Burlington Townships.

The Union Township Public Library is a non-profit organization located at 191 North Broadway Street downtown within the Village limits. The existing library building was built in 2011. The Community Health Center of Branch County opened a medical facility on M-60 in the city's industrial park to serve the residents of northern Branch County and Southern Calhoun County including those in Athens, Union City, Sherwood, Burlington and Union Township.

### **Recreation / Open Space**

There are several recreational and open space areas in the Village. All have recently been renovated, improved, and expanded. The Village of Union City manages and maintains through an appointed Park Board several parks within the Village limits. Riverview Park is located at the intersection of the St. Joseph River and the Coldwater River just south of the central business district and includes a basketball court, playground equipment, and picnic facilities. Heritage Culture Park is located on High St near Broadway and is currently the focus of an amphitheater development which will be complete in 2016. Memorial Park is located on N Broadway St near High St and

includes Veteran's Memorial and Blue Star plaque. Other parks include a kayak launch on Coldwater Road near the Village limits and a kayak portage at the hydro electric facility on Riley Rd. The school district maintains recreational facilities within the Village including a baseball field, football field, and various playgrounds at its three sites.

Additional open space in the Village consists of a civil war monument park on the north side of the central business district adjacent to the Congregational church and the large Riverside Cemetery which is owned and operated by Union Township and is located on the north side of the Village along North Broadway Street.



### **Village Offices**

The Village administrative offices are located at 208 N. Broadway within the central business district and provides the offices for the Administrative Personnel and utility billing clerk. The Village employs two full time administrative staff members, one full and one part time utility billing clerk.

### **Department of Public Works/Utility Department**

The Village is a member of the South Central Michigan Power Agency which supplies its five member communities with public electrical service from a power plant in Litchfield, Michigan. In the past power was produced from coal and used tires, but due to environmental concerns mandated from the Federal Government, the role of South Central Michigan Power Agency has changed from power generator to energy distributor. The Village maintains a service crew for its transmission facilities of three employees and two service vehicles. The Village services approximately 1,450 electrical customers in the Village and residences adjacent to Union Lake

The Village's Public Works Department is staffed by four employees and is responsible for all street maintenance, water line maintenance, sewer and storm water line maintenance activities. In addition, the Public Works Department conducts an annual leaf pick-up program, plows snow from public roadways during the winter, and maintains all Village owned buildings and grounds. The wastewater treatment lagoons are located directly east of the Village just west off of Creamery Road. The Village well fields are situated at two locations. The older well field is located adjacent to the High

School football field directly south of the St. Joseph River. The second, newer, well is located north of Goodwin Road and west of Dirks Road. The Public Works Department garage and storage facilities are located on the south side Coldwater Street.

The sanitary system in the Village has expanded from 240 connected customer in 1965 to 665 in 2016. In 2009, the Village replaced all four sewer liners in the wastewater treatment lagoons at a cost of approximately \$1 million (look up exact). This unexpected cost due to the premature failure of the original liner extends both the life of the wastewater treatment lagoons and the bond payments. The Village goal is to pay these bonds off early and reduce utility costs.

### **Police / Fire Department**

The Police Department has recently added staff and consists of five full time officers and three part time officers and serves within the Union City Village limits. The staff and coverage hours were increased in 2014 due to reduction in staff with the Branch County Sheriff's Department in which they have no road patrol after 6pm. At the same time of staffing increases, the budget for the police department has decreased since 2007. The decision was also influenced by increase in crime and the increase in response to emergency calls from both the Michigan State Police and Branch County Sheriff's Department. The Village Police Officers were deputized in 2015 by the BCSD to aid in protection of the Hydro Electric Facility on Riley Rd due to the lack of police coverage for that area. The Police Department is located within the public safety building with the Fire Department at 123 Hammond Street. The department maintains two patrol vehicles for service within the Village. The Branch County Sheriff's Department, Calhoun County Sheriff's Department, and Michigan State Police also provide road patrol and assistance within the area.

The Fire Department is administered as a joint venture between the Village and Union Township and is directed by a paid fire chief and two assistant chiefs. The volunteer department maintains a roster of approximately twenty-five (25) persons who are actively involved in monthly training exercises. The department has mutual aid agreements with a number of adjoining departments including those in Athens, Sherwood, and Burlington. The department maintains six vehicles including two tankers truck, engine, grass rig, ladder truck, and command vehicle. The fire ISO rating for the Village has recently dropped to a "6" rating, which equates to lower home insurance rates for its citizens. The Village is in the process of evaluating the age of the equipment and replacing the same with funds set aside into a fire equipment replacement fund. Grants are also being sought to offset the cost in these replacements.

### **Conclusions**

For a community the size of Union City, the facilities that are owned and operated by the Village are in comparatively good condition. Upon review of the community's facilities and discussion with administrative staff, the following recommendations are provided for further improving and developing the Village's resources and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of services to its residents.

Investigate the relocation of the Village Administration offices to the Public Safety Building. This would reduce the number of buildings maintained by the Village, open up one additional building downtown for commercial use, increase efficiency use of minimal staffing by having fire, police, utility and administrative functions in one office complex.

Recently, the Village has increased its community facilities for the Village including public park facilities and recreational opportunities. The local school district provides additional outdoor active recreational space in the form of playgrounds for younger children and ball fields and open space for older children and adults. The Village has refurbished Riverview Park for recreational opportunities.

Because the facility is located in a very visible and prominent location along Coldwater Road, the Village's Utility and Public Works building and surrounding property should be well maintained to present a positive appearance for the Village and so as to not detract or cause nuisances for the adjoining property owners and neighborhood. Outdoor storage should be well organized and screened if possible.

The Village's street system condition is improving, and the Village administration should continue to annually allocate funds for the maintenance of the streets, curbs, gutters, and storm drains. Currently funds are allocated for a bridge project on N Broadway St to be completed in 2017. The Village also obtained a grant for this project. The Village's sidewalks have been identified as a concern however. A program should be developed to annually address broken, dangerous, and missing sections of sidewalk within the Village.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES ACTION PLAN**

Those projects which have received the highest relative priority rating and are classified as "priority projects" are ones that will potentially have a major impact on upgrading the Village in a manner consistent with the Plan and have a reasonable chance of implementation within a shorter time frame.

### **Priority Projects**

- Establish a committee to research sidewalk repair in residential neighborhoods.
- Develop a design and marketing plan for the Village owned property, or vacant industrial sites.
  - Construct a new water tower and well house at Dirks Drive location
  - Improve water line infrastructure per the Capital Improvement Plan established with the DEQ in 2016.

### **Housing Related Recommendations**

- Encourage renovating existing apartment facilities
- Encourage better home and property maintenance
- Promote and facilitate (when possible) new housing development

### **Commercial Related Recommendations**

- Encourage continued development of the Central Business District

## **Village Policies**

- Increase consistent property maintenance and code enforcement. The Village has hired a code enforcement officer in 2016 to begin this process.
- Study Village facilities for possible relocation, renovation and consolidation
- Expand utilities to Union Lake residents.

## **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

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### **Implementation Strategies**

Implementation strategies are a key component of any community master plan. They determine how the Plan's guidelines and recommendations become reality. To implement the goals and objectives provided in this Plan, it will be necessary for the planning commission to be flexible and pro-active. As events alter conditions within the community or the needs of the residents change, various adjustments or additions will need to be made to the Plan. Furthermore, all of the possible implementation tools available to the commission should be studied and discussed before approving any changes. Therefore, while generally helpful, suggestions for the implementation of goals and policies of the city are to be considered and used where possible, but are subject to further change. Every effort should be taken to keep the Plan current.

### **Annexation**

Though not a popular term among municipal and township officials, annexation provides an opportunity for the Village to continue to grow and the property owner an opportunity to receive municipal services. The extension of the Village's utilities should be tied directly with a property owner's and the Township's willingness to allow the property in question to be incorporated in the Village either through directs annexation or the establishment of a P.A. 425 agreement. The Village of Union City has identified areas in which it is interested in incorporating to effectively "square off" its municipal boundaries. This action would result in an increase in tax revenue for the Village, increase the efficiency of the delivery of public services, and would create areas where land use regulations are equal for all property owners within the district. Areas identified for incorporation include the south side of M-60 between Wagner Road east to North Broadway Street; property along M-60 between Wagner Road, Arbogast Road and Division Street; and southwest of the Village east of Arbogast Road, north of St. Joseph Street and south of the river.

### **Zoning Ordinance Integration with Master Plan**

The Village Zoning Ordinance is a principal tool for the implementation of the Plan. Substantial revisions are recommended to make the current zoning ordinance reflect the recommendations of this Plan and vision of the community. A zoning ordinance revision is under contract following the adoption of this Plan.

Zoning is the division of a community into districts for the purpose of regulating the use of land and buildings, their height and bulk, the proportion of lot that may be covered by them, and the density of development. Zoning is enacted under the police power of the state for the purpose of promoting the health, safety, and general welfare and has long been supported constitutionally by the U.S.

Supreme Court. The zoning ordinance needs to incorporate appropriate zoning tools such as planned unit development, site plan review, Village design standards, site condominium, cellular tower and landscaping requirements if the concepts of the Land Use Plan are to be implemented. The zoning map should necessarily reflect the rural small town character of the Village with the Land Use Plan map used as a guide in decisions involving zoning changes.

Depending on the rate of development and change and requests for change to the zoning map, an annual appraisal of the zoning map should be anticipated. It is generally accepted practice to provide zoning on the basis of a five-year land use projection, whereas the Plan is a twenty year projection.

### **Public Understanding and Support**

The necessity of citizen participation and understanding of the planning process and the Plan cannot be over-emphasized. A carefully organized public education program is needed to organize and identify public support in any community development plan. The lack of citizen understanding and support can seriously limit implementation of the Plan's recommendations and proposals. Public misunderstanding of a community's long range plan and desired objectives can result in the failure to support needed public improvements, proposed zoning amendments, necessary bond issues, and the election of responsible or progressive officials to lead the community.

In order to organize public support most effectively, the Village must emphasize the reasons for planning, the processes involved, and encourage citizen participation in the adoption of the Plan and the continuing planning process. Public awareness and education can be achieved through a number of different means including public presentations at commission and council meetings, articles written in the local newspaper or distributed in a newsletter or on the Village website. The willingness by residents to participate on Village boards and commissions, attend informational meetings, or volunteer with various civic organizations is evidence of a population's community involvement.

Finally, periodic community opinion surveys should be considered as another means by which the Village government can gauge changing attitudes and priorities. These surveys can be conducted in a variety of manners including a random sampling either by telephone or mail and a statistical sample of Village residents; a mail back survey directly sent to all residents in the Village with utility bills or property tax statements; or a survey inserted in the local paper or shoppers guide that may be either mailed back or dropped off at the Village offices. Either of these methods would provide beneficial and necessary feedback for Village leaders.

## **POTENTIAL FUNDING APPROACHES**

Successful implementation of these goals and projects identified in the Master Plan will depend on the ability of the Village to secure the necessary financing. Besides the general fund, there are several sources of revenues which the Village could utilize and should investigate in more detail. The primary sources of funding are summarized below:

### **Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG)**



The Community Development Block Grant program is an annual allocation of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to local governments for wide range of community development activities, including housing rehabilitation, public and neighborhood improvements and economic development activities which primarily benefit low and moderate income persons. Housing rehabilitation funds are currently available for Village residents through the Branch County Housing Commission.

### **Downtown Development Authority (DDA), P.A. 197 of 1975**

A Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is a non-profit development corporation within the business district of the Village which exists for the purpose of promoting a desirable environment for businesses and residents and implementing economic revitalization projects. Projects can be implemented by the DDA through a variety of financing techniques, including bond issues, tax increment financing, and public and private contributions.

### **Michigan Bureau of History**

Historic Preservation grants are available through the Michigan Bureau of History under the Department of State. These federal funds are received from the National Park Service and administered by the Department of State. Grant funds can be used to inventory historic and archaeological sites, nominate eligible sites to the National Register of Historic Places, plan for the preservation of historic sites, and produce educational programs to promote the historic preservation program a limited portion of the funds can be used for plans and specifications for properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but funds cannot be used to restore historic properties.

### **Intergovernmental Cooperation**

Public Act 425 of 1984 deals with inter-governmental land transfer for economic development projects, in a much looser context than annexation. In the past, if an economic development project expanded beyond one governmental unit's boundaries, it required annexation of land area from the neighboring unit. Implementation of Act 425 will permit this process to occur by a conditional transfer of property controlled by a written contract between affected units for renewable periods of up to 50 years.

This act allows two or more units of government to actually share a given land area, sort of a joint custody, for purposes of economic development projects. The sharing may involve public services, taxes, and other generated revenue, as provided by contract, rather than the all or nothing approach of annexation. In addition, there are many other Michigan laws which provide for intergovernmental cooperation on mutually beneficial projects.

The exchange of information and ideas between the Village and Union Township is a good foundation for further intergovernmental cooperation. The two units should regularly communicate and share plans to maximize the benefits for their citizens. A cooperative decision could be made to designate Union City as the commercial and population center in the Township, targeting specific

types of growth and investment within the Village while maintaining the Township's agricultural, recreational, and rural residential land use pattern.

### **Rehabilitation Act**

Act 344 of the Public Acts of 1945 is the basic Michigan rehabilitation statute. It provides powers and procedures for local governments to acquire, assemble, and finance the redevelopment of blighted areas for general rehabilitation purposes.

### **Special Assessment**

This technique allows for the financing of public improvements, such as roads or street lights, through the assessing of property taxes, on an equitable basis, to the benefited property owners in a specific district.

## **CONTINUOUS PLANNING**

One of the primary roles of the Planning Commission is to provide planning recommendations to the Village Council. This planning function is a continuous process which does not terminate the completion of the Plan. Communities are in a constant state of evolution and planning is an ongoing process of identification, adjustment and resolution of identified concerns, problems, and new challenges. To appropriately sustain the planning process, maintain interest and momentum, and generate the community's intended positive outcomes, the Plan should be reviewed and updated periodically. Furthermore, with the 2020 U.S. Census fast approaching, once this information becomes available, in approximately four years, a review should be conducted to evaluate the Plan relative to the new census information.