

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION



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## INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the location of Marine City in the St. Clair County region. It also explains the purposes of this combined master plan/five-year recreation plan and its relationship to zoning, capital improvements planning and related implementation tools. The Marine City Master Plan is intended to guide the growth and development of the city over the next twenty years.

Many factors influence the growth and development of a given community. Some relate to local decisions and can be controlled by the local community; others result from actions and/or developments outside the community and are, therefore, subject to somewhat less local control. In turn, the influence of actions and/or developments outside the community depends on the position of the community within the larger surrounding region. This position is a factor that cannot be changed but must be recognized and accommodated. Furthermore, local actions and developments that have occurred in the past influence current local and regional actions and developments and, as such, community growth and development. Local policies and decisions impacting land use should take these historical and regional influences into account to be relevant and effective.

## HISTORY OF MARINE CITY

The first settlers of what is now known as Marine City came by water to begin a relationship between a human settlement and the waterfront that continues to this very day. From settlements known as Yankee Point, Newport and La Belle Riviere, a thriving community grew to be incorporated as Marine City on March 21, 1865. Activities such as shipbuilding, shipping, saw mills and salt mining formed the economic backbone of the newly-formed community.

The early community prospered through waterborne commerce with the construction and repair of vessels to transport people and products. The first shipyard in Marine City was located at the foot of



Pearl Street and Broadway on the St. Clair River. Four other shipyards followed and it has been estimated that over 250 vessels were constructed in the late 1800's and early 1900's. In addition to shipbuilding, other shipping related activities provided income to the majority of Marine City residents as evidenced by a report in an 1890 edition of the local newspaper, the Marine City Magnet:

"Sailors constitute a large percentage of our citizens and it is probably that no city on the chain of lakes turns out as large a percentage of sailors as may be found in Marine City. Of the three hundred and fifty men in this area and earning their living on the lakes, over two-thirds are officers and many of them own an interest in the boats they sail, fifty-two boats laying up in winter quarters here."

Vestiges of the past can still be found in the form of the many historical structures that still stand throughout the city. Prominent among these historical structures are the City Hall, built in 1889, and the Newport Academy, now the Pride & Heritage Museum. McLouth Yards has been in continuous operation since 1910, first as a ship repair yard until the 1930's and later as a port for sand, gravel, stone and coal. A number of historic homes remain today in restored condition.

Just as the dominant form of commerce was waterborne in the early years, the primary mode of transportation was by water. Steamers provided passenger service between ports along the St. Clair River. Transportation over land was by horse and coach over unpaved roads and pathways. By 1900, Marine City was a connecting link between Detroit and Port Huron on the interurban electric railway. Regular ferry service to Sombra, Ontario, provided a strong relationship between Marine City and its Canadian neighbors.

Increased reliance on rail and automobile transport and changing economic needs caused a shift away from water transportation by the 1920's and 1930's. With this shift, came a decline in the relationship between Marine City and its waterfront. However, with today's demand for water-based recreation and tourism opportunities, Marine City can once again capitalize on its historical heritage as a center of waterborne commerce.

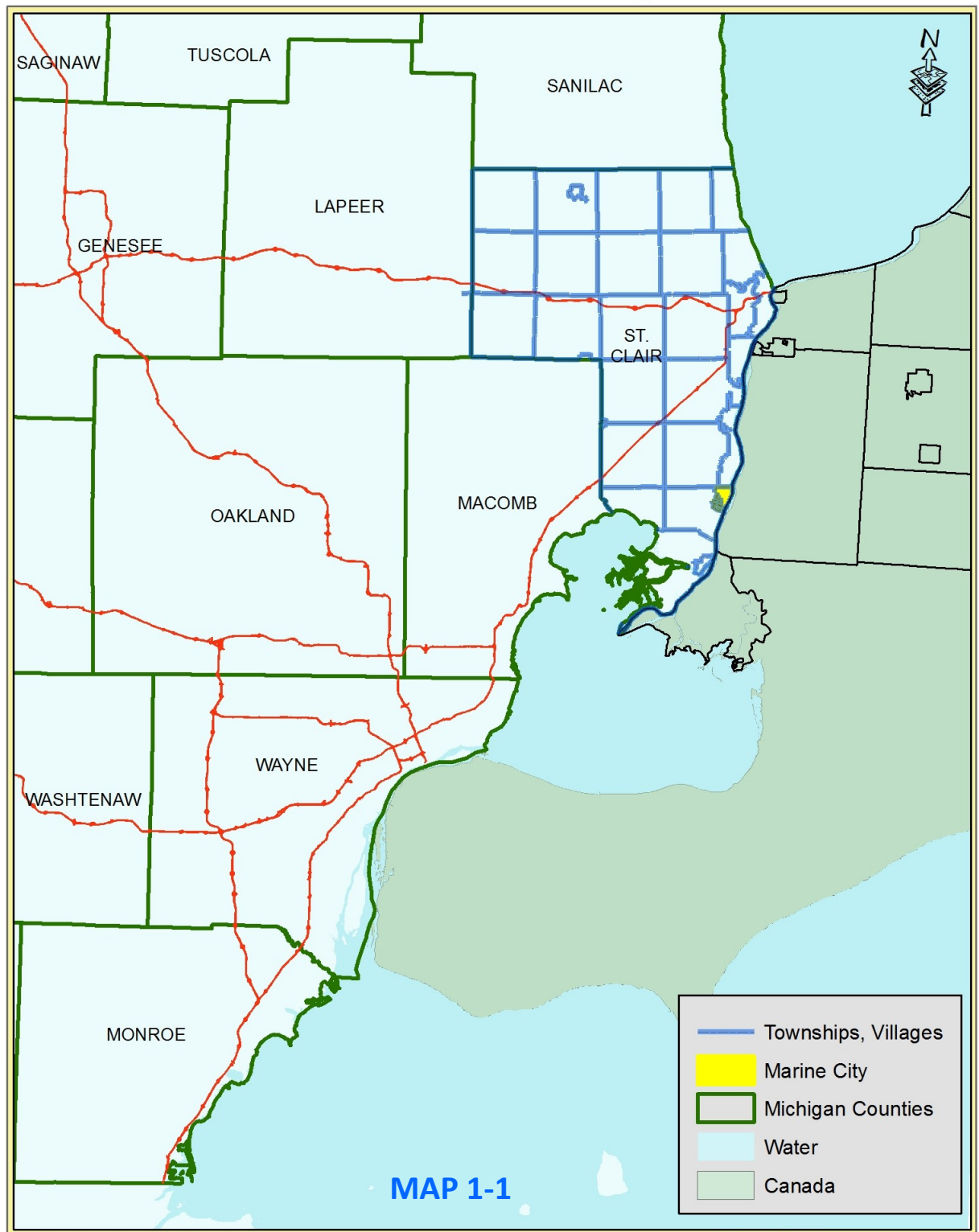
## REGIONAL LOCATION

Marine City is located within southeastern Michigan, the most heavily populated region in the state, approximately 20 miles south of Port Huron and 50 miles north of Detroit. Situated at the confluence of the St. Clair and Belle Rivers in southeastern St. Clair County, Marine City is one of many Michigan communities that are readily accessible by both land and water. The city is bordered by Cottrellville Township to the south and west, China and East China Townships to the north, and the St. Clair River to the east.

Other nearby communities are the City of Algonac (approximately 5 miles to the south), the City of St. Clair (approximately 6 miles to the north), and Sombra, Ontario, which is directly across the St. Clair River from Marine City. The Belle River runs south from the northern city limits to a point just south of Chartier Avenue, where it joins with the St. Clair River, which runs diagonally from northeast to southwest.

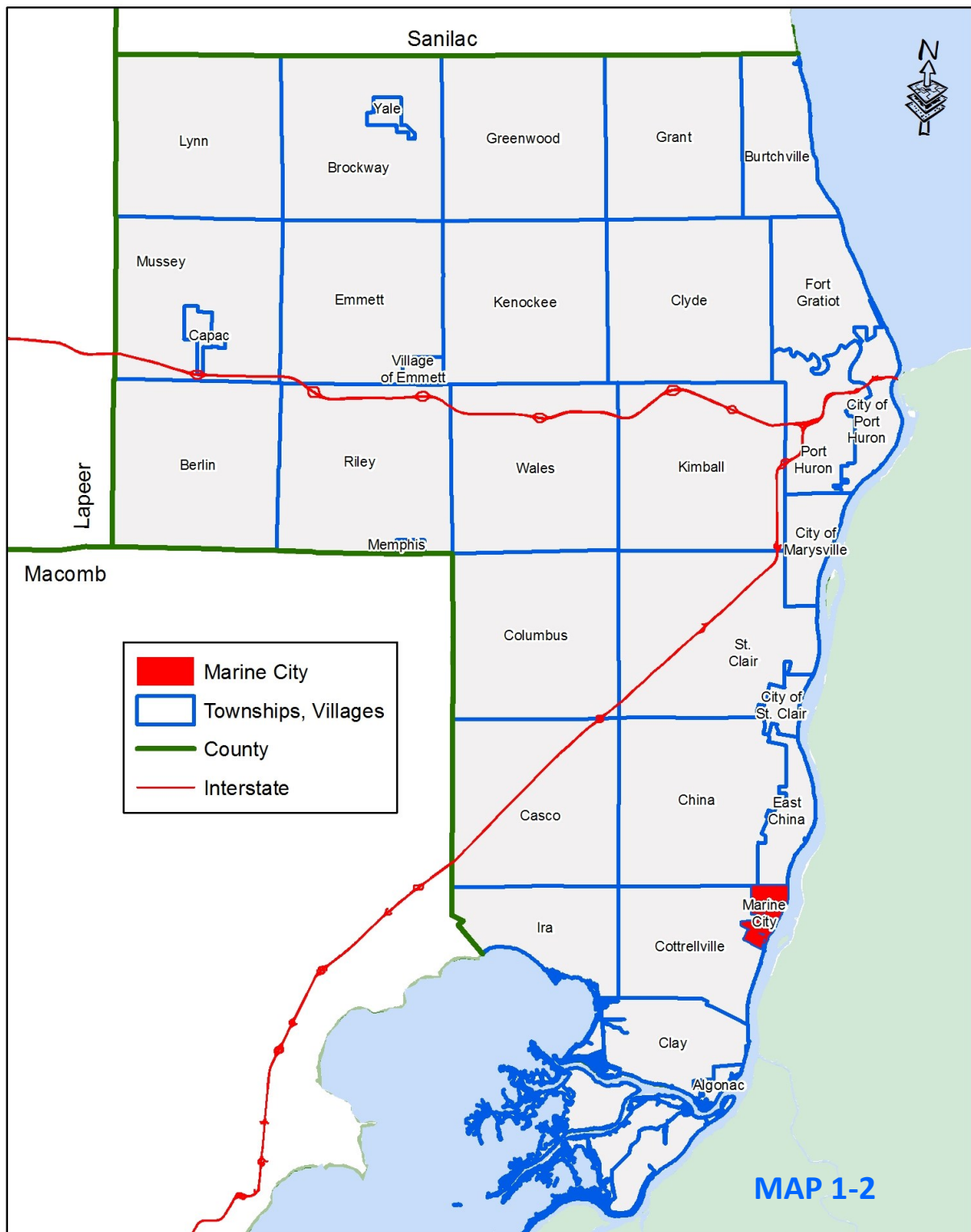
# Regional Area

Marine City Master Plan



# Marine City in St. Clair County

Marine City Master Plan



## REGIONAL ACCESS

Marine City can be reached from the north and south via state trunkline M-29 (which runs through the city) and is linked to Interstate 94 (the expressway link between Detroit and the Port Huron/Sarnia area) by Marine City Highway. M-29 connects Marine City with Algonac to the south, with the City of New Baltimore (in Macomb County) to the west, with the Cities of St. Clair, Marysville, and Port Huron to the north and, via Business Loop I-94, with state trunkline M-25, which runs along the Lake Huron shoreline from Port Huron to Bay City.

Marine City Highway is a paved County Primary road running east from Interstate 94 to the northwest part of the city. Marine City can also be reached from the north via King Road, a paved County Primary road. Auto ferry service across the St. Clair River is available from Marine City to Sombra, Ontario. Given its river location, the city is a popular permanent and transient mooring spot for Great Lakes pleasure crafts.

## REGIONAL INFLUENCES

There are several major regional free market and governmental influences on the growth and development of Marine City. These regional influences are:

- ▶ Labor markets in Metropolitan Detroit
- ▶ The St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission (SCCMPC)
- ▶ The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG)

### Labor Markets in Metropolitan Detroit

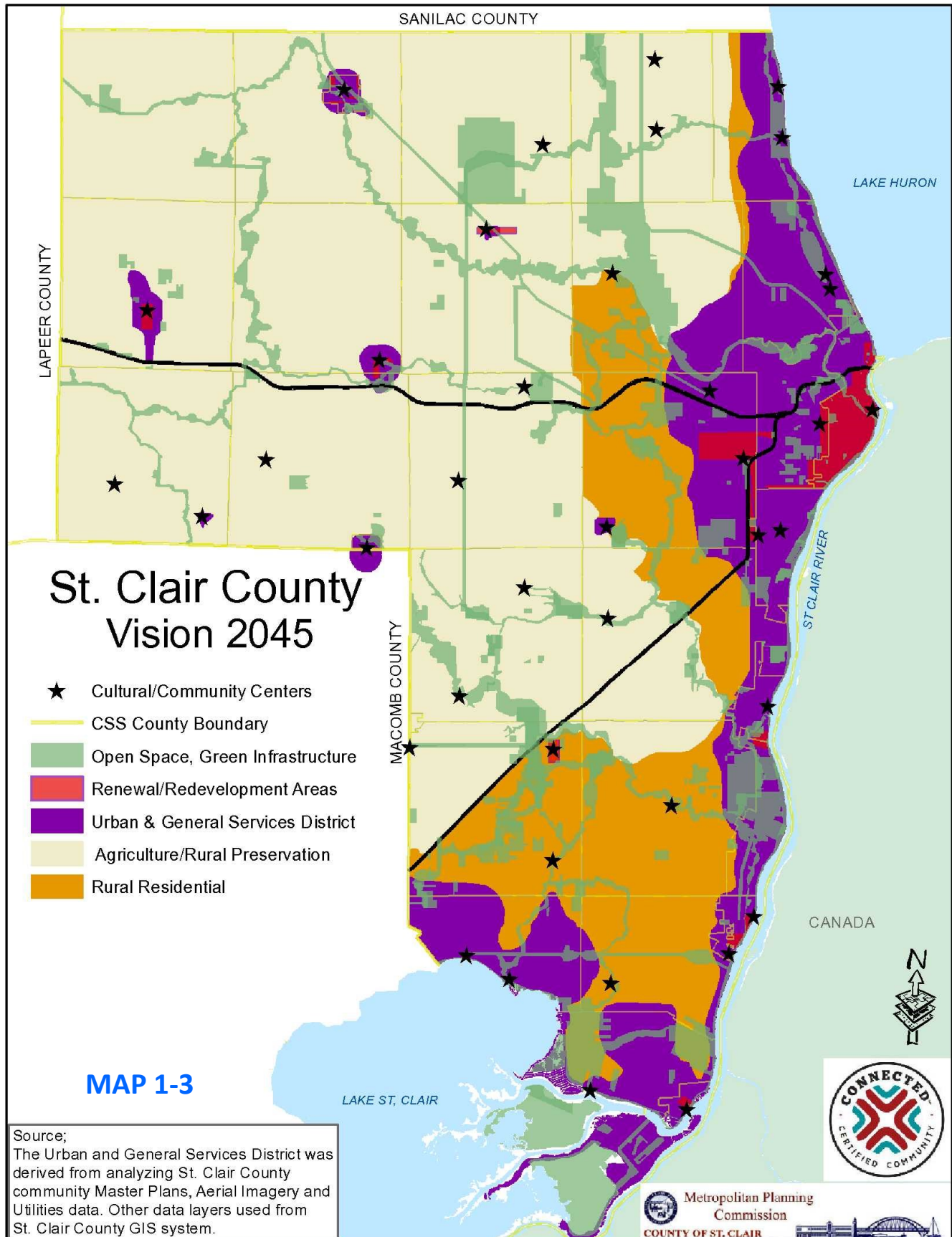
St. Clair County is part of the Detroit Metropolitan Area, which is a region that is experiencing an economic downturn due to major changes in the global automotive industry, which had provided the region with jobs for decades. Marine City lies near the northeastern fringe of this region. Manufacturing employment tied to the production of automobiles has decreased, affecting the incomes and lifestyle of residents in the region, as well as having direct impacts on the regional housing market.

The location of Marine City with respect to the labor markets of the region, particularly those in the Port Huron Urbanized Area and in nearby Macomb County, is such that persons can maintain a residence in the small-town atmosphere of Marine City and easily commute to employment in those labor markets. However, jobs in those labor markets that were so closely tied to automotive have decreased as small and large suppliers are having to produce more with less resources, diversify to other industries or shut down altogether.

### St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission

The St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission (SCCMPC) carries out regional planning functions, which include:

- ▶ Coordinating local planning and zoning efforts;
- ▶ Providing planning assistance to local units of government;





- ▶ Directing transportation planning and programming for the county;
- ▶ Implementing the St. Clair County Master Plan; and
- ▶ Working collaboratively with other entities in the region to facilitate sustainable economic development.

To fulfill its coordination function, the SCCMPC adopted the St. Clair County Master Plan in November 2016. The plan addresses certain planning concerns in St. Clair County as a whole for the years 2016 through 2035. These concerns include land use and change management, the environment, the economy, transportation, and public facilities and services.

The St. Clair County Master Plan includes the “Vision-Based Policy” map (see map 1-3), which indicates that Marine City is located within the Urban and General Services District (UGS). Key characteristics of the UGS district are:

- ▶ The highest density development within the next 20 or so years occurs within a proposed Urban and General Services Districts (UGSDs). This district is located primarily along the shoreline in a band of about one to three miles wide. Sewer, water and other services are not extended beyond the district boundary, except in or adjacent to small cities and villages.
- ▶ The UGSD represents target areas for directing new growth needing a full range of public services in a managed, phased, incremental manner.
- ▶ The UGSD is comprised of higher density areas, with existing water/sewer service or planned water/sewer service within the next 20 years.

The Vision-Based Policy (Map 1-3) depicts Marine City as a cultural/community center and shows planned open space corridors along the St. Clair River and Belle River shorelines. A planned transit corridor, to link all of the shoreline communities in the county, is shown running along the west side of the city.

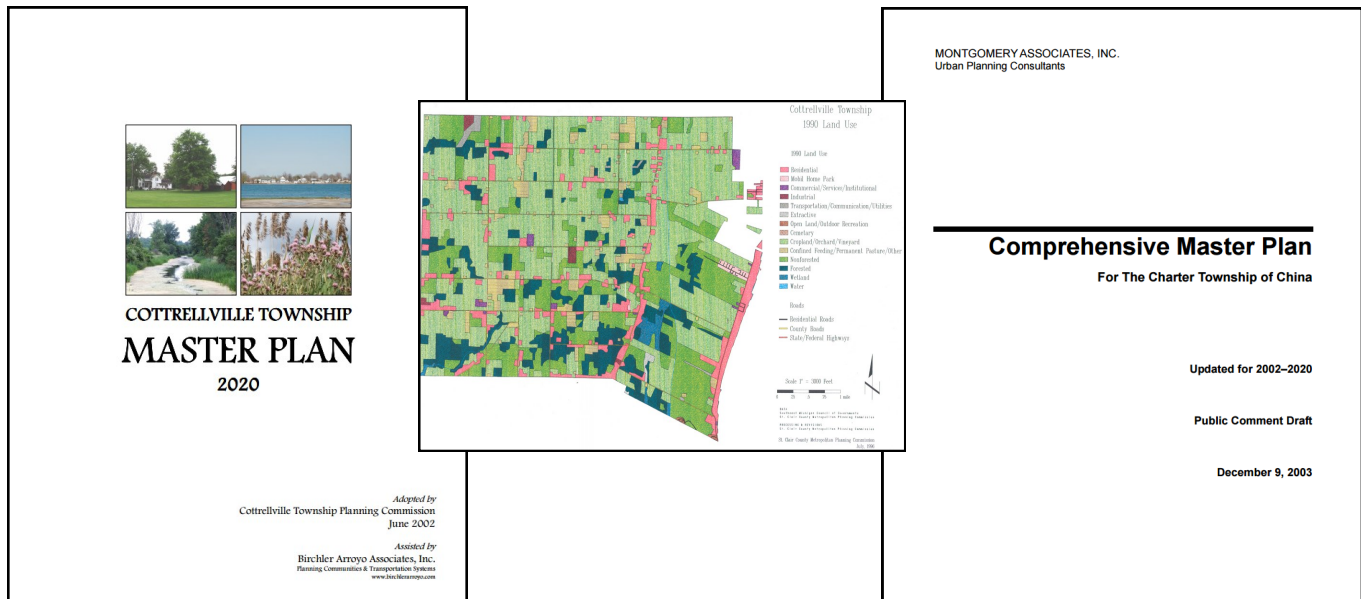
## **Southeast Michigan Council of Governments**

St. Clair County is in the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) region. SEMCOG plays an active role in providing planning-related data, transportation modeling and regional planning to its member municipalities. SEMCOG also reviews local applications for federal and state funding to ensure that the local projects for which funds are sought are consistent with regional planning efforts.

## ***PLANNING IN NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES***

In addition to the wider regional influences given above, planning and zoning efforts in neighboring communities can influence Marine City’s growth and development. For example, if land in a neighboring community were zoned/used for light-industrial purposes, it would be advisable for the City to designate its land that abuts such an area as a compatible use, such as industrial or commercial, as opposed to an incompatible use, such as single-family residential. As noted above, there are three communities that share a common boundary with Marine City: China Township and East China Township to the north and Cottrellville Township to the south and west.





## China Township

China Township completed a review of its Comprehensive Master Plan for the years 2004-2020 in 2013 and determined that while the plan remained substantially valid, some updating and amendments to the plan were required. Most of this work was precipitated by the release of the 2010 U.S. Census impacting population projections and profiles within the Plan.

The land use plan has not changed significantly since the last master plan update. The future land use plan update anticipates land uses which are consistent with the existing and future land use plan of Marine City.

General planning objectives include providing for a balance of urban and rural land uses within the township; preserving the rural character of the township through proper and thoughtful arrangement of land uses; preventing haphazard intrusion of urban areas into those rural areas of the township not planned to receive public utilities; and encouraging a well-planned arrangement of urban uses in that portion of the township to be provided with public water and sewer services.

The existing land use pattern along the Marine City border is predominantly agricultural, along with small pockets of single-family residential and vacant uses. There are farms in almost every section of the township. Much of this farmland is fragmented and is interspersed with vacant land and large lot residential development. Relatively large farms can be found in the southern half of the township. The predominant land use found along the border in Marine City is vacant, along with some commercial and office land uses found at the intersection of King Road and Marine City Highway.

The future land use map for China Township designates land along the Marine City border for commercial, business and professional office uses. China Township designated this area as commercial due to its close proximity to King Road. Placing these land use types near an intersection of two paved public roads allows for appropriate access intended for more intensive uses. These areas are also expected to receive public sewer and water and could support relatively higher-density general commercial uses. At present, there are 17 homes in China Township along King Road with failing septic

systems, which may necessitate connecting to Marine City’s sanitary sewer system to alleviate the problem.

## **Cottrellville Township**

Cottrellville Township’s master plan was last revised in 2016. The predominant land use in Cottrellville Township along the Marine City border is agriculture, with an area in the northeast corner zoned as light industrial. There are also small pockets of single-family residential and open space land uses running along the border with the city. In Marine City, the existing land use pattern along the border is predominantly vacant, with some industrial uses in the north, multiple family residential along King Road, between Chartier Road and Plank Road, and commercial and office land uses at the intersection south of Short Cut Road and east of River Road.

The Cottrellville Township Master Plan intends to guide much of its development near Marine City. This is achieved through several basic objectives found in their future land use plan, some of which include concentrating the most intensive land uses near Marine City where sanitary sewer service is most likely to be available; promoting Marine City as the long-range center of all shopping and services at the community-wide level; encouraging higher density residential development within the St. Clair River Corridor and at other locations where sanitary sewer and/or municipal water service is anticipated; and promoting industrial development around the Marine City Airport in a well planned, industrial park setting to improve the community’s tax base and to provide additional employment opportunities.

The three “islands” of township land located within the city limits of Marine City are all planned for suburban residential densities.

## **East China Township**

East China Township’s master plan was last updated in 2006. Residential land use is the most extensive use in the township. The existing land use pattern for both East China Township and Marine City are similar, both being characterized by single-family residential and vacant land. The predominant land use found along the border in Marine City is single-family residential and vacant land use areas. However, while not as abundant, there are also a few intermittent areas in Marine City with two-family residential, recreation, commercial and office, as well as public/quasi-public/institutional lands uses found along the East China border.

According to the East China Township Future Land Use Plan, the entire southern border of the township is planned for single-family residential, except for a large piece of property designated for commercial development.

## ***PURPOSE OF THE MASTER PLAN***

The Marine City Master Plan defines the existing and proposed future character of Marine City. Its primary function is to allow the City to comprehensively describe the goals and policies for its physical development. This master plan is intended to guide City officials and citizens in making decisions about public facilities and the use of public and privately owned land.



The Marine City Master Plan was prepared under the provisions of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Public Act 33 of 2008), which gives city planning commissions the authority and obligation to prepare and officially adopt a master plan. The Plan is comprised of text and supporting maps; however, the most significant map is the Future Land Use Map, which shows the location and relationship of land in the city for the next twenty years.

### ***RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MASTER PLAN AND ZONING***

The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, Public Act 110 of 2006, provides that "the zoning ordinance shall be based upon a plan designed to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare, to encourage the use of lands in accordance with their character and adaptability" and "to limit the improper use of land." This master plan is adopted to help provide a strong legal basis for the City's zoning ordinance and thus contains a zoning plan element which details the zoning district and use regulations of the ordinance.

However, adoption of the master plan does not directly control land use. Such control is left to the zoning ordinance (including the zoning map), to land division regulations, and to other local ordinances. Implementation of the master plan is carried out through final decisions on rezonings, special land use permits, site plan and plat approvals, as well as by the expenditure of City funds on various capital improvements.

### ***REVIEWING AND UPDATING THE MASTER PLAN***

In accordance with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Public Act 33 of 2008), the Marine City Master Plan will be reviewed every five years and, if necessary, will be updated to remain a viable document. There is constant change in the city's economic, demographic, and social character, which warrants revising the Plan to reflect the latest trends relative to long-range goals. If circumstances necessitate a change to the Plan prior the five-year review, then the Plan will be amended as necessary.





## ***PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT***

The success of any planning process is reliant upon public involvement. Marine City has committed itself to pursue a proactive public outreach effort throughout the development of this Plan. Efforts focused on soliciting community input to maximize awareness of the planning process.

The combined master plan/five-year recreation plan was prepared in concert with the residents of Marine City through a public process that examined current trends in the city and the surrounding region, public input on a vision of what the city should be like in twenty years, analysis of key issues identified by the public, and consensus among the Planning Commission and City Commission on specific elements in the Plan.

The public involvement process for developing this combined Master Plan/Five-Year Recreation Plan included:

- ▶ Two online leadership surveys distributed to members of the Marine City Commission, Planning Commission, and other key stakeholders in City administration.
- ▶ A public visioning workshop held on July 19, 2016 held at the Washington Life Center to focus on the comprehensive Master Plan update.
- ▶ A brainstorming session on future land use in the city at the April 10, 2017 Planning Commission meeting.
- ▶ A public visioning workshop held on April 24, 2017 at the Marine City Fire Hall focused on parks and recreation in Marine City.
- ▶ A 63-day public review and comment period that began on October 27, 2017 and ended on December 29, 2017. The 63-day public review and comment period is statutorily required by Public Act 33 of 2008 (Michigan Planning Enabling Act) and included the 30-day review period required by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for the review and comment on parks and recreation plans.
- ▶ A public hearing held on January 8, 2018 to receive additional citizen comments.
- ▶ A presentation of the combined Master Plan/Parks and Recreation Plan to all members of the Planning Commission and the City Commission.