



# Memorandum

**TO:** Shelby Township Planning Commission  
**FROM:** Danielle Bouchard, AICP, Principal Planner  
Paige Brodeur, Assistant Planner  
**SUBJECT:** **2024 Master Plan Community Survey**  
**DATE:** July 23, 2024

**The Township of Shelby is working on updating their Master Plan.** This includes a period of public engagement and input. The following are the results of their Community Survey posted in May of 2024.

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

A general summary of key findings of the community survey are listed below:

- Most respondents and Township residents are supportive of the Township's efforts to expand and enhance parks and recreation amenities. This can include both active and passive recreation as well as nonmotorized facilities.
- In general, respondents are supportive of new housing development/growth in targeted areas, specifically surrounding the Village of Shelby. This may necessitate creating an "urban services boundary" that permits public utility extensions, or rezonings, within the Township. This is related to the potential of varied housing density requirements.
- Many respondents noted support for the Township to engage in efforts to expand housing types in the Township, such as medium density housing or "missing middle" housing.
- Respondents indicated general support for business/commercial growth concentrated along Shelby Road, Oceana Drive, and M-20.
- Depending on the program type, it is likely the community would support programming for farmland preservation. This can translate to zoning requirements, allowing targeted housing density, purchase of develop rights programs/policies, expanded uses in the AG District to allow supplemental income for farmers, and other related mechanisms.
- Preservation of natural/rural character – while balancing with targeted development/economic development – should be a component of the Master Plan.
- Some respondents feel that the current housing stock in the Township are in need of repairs and/or upgrades. To address this, the Township could consider enhancing or clarifying zoning ordinance enforcement procedures, or partnerships with local housing agencies to connect residents to resources that can assist with aging in place efforts, home repairs, or other similar activities.
- Many residents are concerned with any potential tax increases as a result of new development or programs in the Township.



## DEMOGRAPHICS

The start of the survey asked about demographic details to get an understanding of who the respondents are. Below are some general statements about the majority of the respondents:

- A total of **328 responses**.
- The majority are residents of or own property in Shelby Township.

## LIKE OR DISLIKE

The next section discussed, in general, what the respondents like about the Township and what they would like to change. Below is a summary of their responses:

- What do you *like most* about Shelby Township?
  - Small town, rural atmosphere
  - Proximity to Lake Michigan and natural scenery
  - Quiet and peaceful, minimal noise and traffic
  - Small and close-knit community of kind and friendly people
  - Trails and parks, outdoor activities like farming, hunting, and fishing
  - Good schools, a nice library, the hospital
  - Safety
  - Affordability, growth and improvements, small businesses and shops, and downtown area
  - Activities
- What would you *change* about Shelby Township?
  - Improved internet access
  - Increased affordable housing
  - More commerce, especially downtown. Incentives and support for small businesses, shops, and dining on Main Street (this is located in the Village)
  - Community services like daycares, structured activities for children, community programming, educational classes
  - Activities for families like movie theaters, roller skating rinks, public pools
  - The roads, parking
  - Degrading buildings and homes
  - Lower taxes
  - Control over growth
  - Water department
  - Restraints and gas stations
  - More connection between the Village and the Township, communication and advertisement of local activities and offerings



## BUSINESS/COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The next section of the survey was about business and commercial development. The following are general statements regarding respondents' opinions on the options of business and commercial uses, both present and what they would like to or not to see.

- **47.92% of respondents want the township to find a middle ground between strictly regulation land divisions and development** to preserve rural character and allow landowners the freedom to develop.
- **57% would like to see more businesses along Oceana Drive and Shelby Road.**
- Some of the other responses were:
  - Focus on building/improving areas currently zoned for commercial only
  - Preserve **by restricting large national corporations**
  - **New businesses along M-20**
  - Utilize empty buildings or new businesses, invest in current businesses
  - Don't place restrictions on development within the Village, create a vision for the Village and support endeavors that will lead to it
  - Do not restrict or target anything, allow for natural growth, free market
  - **Mix of restoration and maintaining agricultural and historical grounds** as well as inviting new businesses
- In response to the types of businesses people would like to see, **70.86% would like to see lodging and entertainment businesses like restaurants and hotels**
- **56.95% would like to see small-scale retail businesses** like clothing and home furnishings.
  - Some of the other responses included professional offices (47.35%), industrial businesses (44.37%), and personal services (42.72%).

## HOUSING

The next section of the survey was about housing. The following are general statements regarding respondents' opinions on the options of housing, both present and what they would like to or not to see.

- The majority of respondents want to **target new housing developments surrounding the Village of Shelby** limits or to allow most landowners to subdivide their land and build additional new houses and neighborhoods.
- When asked if the housing options meet the needs of the residents, **34.74% responded with yes, 23.16% were unsure**. Some of the comments included:
  - Housing is rundown
  - Cost of living is too high, no affordable housing for kids to leave home
  - New homes of all sizes should be on big lots, not stacked on top of each other
  - Not enough housing
  - Need more options of sizes and types for different stages of life
  - Retirement options are missing
- **44.29% of respondents are supportive of the Township exploring opportunities to implement "missing middle" housing**, 30.10% said it depends on where.



- The **majority believes that accessory dwelling units (ADUs) should be allowed** with either minimum regulation, or some regulations and rules.
- When it comes to public water and sewer utilities, **over 50% think the Township should encourage expansion wherever feasible.**

## **PARKS**

The following responses are regarding the adequacy of parks and trail infrastructure in the Township.

- **72.46% of respondents think that Shelby Township should continue to pursue opportunities for new parks and recreation amenities.**
- Most would like to see **passive recreation or conservation areas, senior and youth programs, neighborhood parks and playgrounds, followed by bike trails or expanded road shoulders.** Other responses include:
  - Public pool or splash pad
  - Track, gym, or exercise equipment
  - Focus on maintaining what we already have
  - Spaces to grill and enjoy the outdoors
  - Dog parks
  - Trails for off road vehicles
  - Skate park/rink
  - Natural playground
- Respondents voted relatively evenly on the things they would like to see in Shelby Community Park with the exception of **public art and concessions being the lowest voted categories.**
- **66.05% of respondents said they never visit Shelby Township Bark Park** and most have no opinion.
- **30.73% would be interested in a new sports or recreation facility** with the majority voting for a walking track, exercise classes, and basketball court followed by a volleyball court, tennis/pickleball court, or batting cage.
- In regard to where future facilities should go, residents responded with:
  - New Era Village
  - Any of the unused grade school locations, like New Era or Thomas Read
  - Shelby Road or Oceana Drive
  - Hart
  - Next to the new park or the bike trail
  - Old apple juice plant
  - Within walking distance to schools and neighborhoods

## **NATURAL FEATURES**

The following general statements are regarding the natural features of Shelby Township including farmland and rural areas:



- **43.96% think the Township should actively pursue farmland preservation policies and programs,** 42.12% said it depends on the program type.
- **42.80% said they would support the expansion of permitted uses in the Agricultural zoning district** to allow for farmers to pursue options to collect supplemental income.

## ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

Listed below are quotes from respondents who had additional thoughts and comments to share:

- “I appreciate the recent developments in the Township and am glad leaders have a vision for the future. However, we have a lot of community members who are just struggling to get by, find housing, childcare, community connection, etc. More investment in community services and better maintenance of what we already have (cemetery) should be priority.”
- “Consider a township center so residents feel a connection to Shelby Township as an entity.”
- “How is the cost of maintenance for the new rec park going to take place? Please - no more taxes.”
- “Love the new parks. Really would be excited to see indoor swimming available to the public year-round.”
- “I didn’t see anything dealing with traffic control in a confined area with the influx of more people and business. Also, the development of utilities to support the increase in population and business.”
- “The Shelby Township Community Park will add great value to our area, nice job on providing a great place for kids and adults.”
- “Add parks and business in the southern portion of the Twp. In New Era. Shelby has three new parks already. Make the rec. facility in New Era elementary if there are grants and donations to make it possible. Do not ask for an increase in taxes.”
- “A regional recreation collaborative would help strengthen the quality of life for all area residents and offer new opportunities for visitors. Pay for services could help sustain that infrastructure.”
- “I know the Ladder is an option but make things safer for kids and make sure to support kids who don't follow religion as well.”
- “Shelby needs to be more cohesive. The township, village and schools should be working hand in hand. We have limited resources in this area, and we need to find a way to jointly manage them instead of turning things into paint contests and disputes. As a taxpayer, it's frustrating to see all the fuss about every little thing, only to have nothing come of it for years. We also desperately need more community engagement and involvement.”
- “Try to preserve nature but also look into people next to farms. My water is filled with nitrites from the apple orchard next to me. I had to pay thousands to make my well water safe to drink. I feel the town should've paid for it.”
- “Arts, music, theater are of particular interest to my family, and I often hear from others in Oceana County the desire for more opportunities here. Ideas presented in this survey such as the bandshell / amphitheater would be a wonderful starting place for those of us with the skill and passion to (re-)grow our local programming and consider arts development more heavily in the 20–30-year plan.
- In regards to jobs opportunities, I would like to see growth in the area of office jobs or jobs which might traditionally require a college degree. Warehouses and manufacturing centers bring a lot of entry level and skilled labor positions; however, the administrative staff tends to be minimal. The structure of administrative positions are jobs that people will traditionally relocate for because they are not as easy to come by in a rural area. More of these types of opportunities would draw more working age people to our community and persuade young adults to return after pursuing postsecondary education. When considering corporations



which will provide much needed jobs to the existing population, I encourage the township to pay special consideration to those which offer a large proportion of office positions, or remote opportunities to work for the corporation.”

- “I think we need to clean up the area, run down houses. Get businesses in the vacant buildings. Use New Era Elementary for a community center, with adequate parking. We need to preserve farmland and encourage farming growth. Make Shelby a desirable and growing community like it once was. We have a great school, hospital, library and some industry.”
- “New to the area - excited to raise our family in a dedicated and growing community!”
- “Bring more into the community to keep kids busy during all seasons- keep them from traveling outside the community. Something like the VAC (in Whitehall) would be a HUGE asset to the community.”
- “I like the idea of the new and expanding of our town, but I also want to see our downtown restored, like what has been done to Muskegon. A town I would enjoy going for a walk down. Restaurant with outdoor dining. Stores of various kinds. Ambient lighting. Gardens. Let's make it beautiful!”
- “We need to offer what other towns near us don't, provide opportunities for our youth that is closer to home and not a 45-minute drive away. Bring opportunities closer to home! Let's make Shelby great again!”
- “Enforce blight ordinance. Hold landlords with rentals in the village responsible to maintain the outside of their rentals if those renting are not doing so themselves. Find a solution for brush and leaf pick up as current rules make it too complicated for residents of the village to keep their yards clean. Focus on improving what we have and enforcing proper care of existing properties and services before taking on more.”
- “Too many to list. But out with the old and in with new mindsets more attune to progress. But grateful for everything Shelby has to offer.”
- “I appreciate all the work that has been put into making our township, village and schools better. Thank you to all the people that serve our community in governmental roles.”
- “Shelby township can really be in use of a bigger store like Walmart and maybe more housing and a play area for all to be able to play in any weather conditions.”
- “I think the homes and businesses in town look rundown. Very unappealing to the eye. We should fix this before we venture other ideas.”
- “If teachers could be found for another daycare, similar to the one between Baseline and Fillmore roads on Oceana Drive, that might help to keep young people in our community.”
- “I'd love to see growth! More opportunities for employment, increased access to nature via parks, paths, and venues - coupled with more community areas to gather people. I'd really love to see much more public art installations that reflect the beauty and culture of Oceana/Shelby.”
- “Better maintenance of roads and bridges.”
- “Jobs. Build a space for younger (and older) people who work from home to want to move to. More people living here would make it possible for new businesses & restaurants to come and be successful. Not huge, just condo space within walking distance to good food, entertainment, & shopping.”
- “Anything you can do to preserve the natural character of the county/township would be much appreciated. Stop installing lawns and move to wildflower meadows!”
- “I would just like to say that I am raising boys in this community with vastly different personalities. I would like to see opportunities here for both. One who loves sports and one who loves technology.”
- “I would like to see the Township be involved more in maintaining all gravel roads in township.”
- “Looking forward to seeing more development in our area. Can't wait for the new sports complex.”



- “Keep the landowners/ farmers in mind always. Respect them. Shelby Fruit/Vegetables Crops are the Backbone for Shelby; without them Shelby Will Dwindle and people will move away.”
- “This is a great way to include people's opinions! Thanks for offering the opportunity.”
- “I think one of the main issues in Shelby/Oceana County is housing. so many people looking for housing in our county.”
- “I think it is important to remember that not everyone will be happy with change, but it is important to not be stuck in the old and allow room for new because old could potentially slowly turn into a ghost town.”
- “Kids need more things to do when not in school, more access to mental health is very much needed, and (having enough) affordable housing is an issue.”
- “Thank you for all that you do!”.
- “Everything needs a face lift, so the stores look inviting.”
- “Glad residents’ opinions are being considered.”
- “Affordable housing is my biggest concern. I have a family of 5 and support them off a single income. Not everyone is blessed with perfect credit or financial stability. Unfortunately, from past financial struggles, I myself am unable to get help from financial institutions. Undoubtedly in today's market, house payments are often cheaper than rent and yet, I am stuck with renting a home since a bank will not support me for purchasing a home. I love our Township, but feel I am slowly being forced out due to lack of affordable rental housing for my family and I.”
- “it sounds like it is already set in stone no matter what the survey. (Master Plan)”
- “Thanks for seeking input. The best idea here is the indoor facility. Seems like a partnership with the school would be advantageous. Similar to the Vac in Whitehall.”
- “I general, business and housing developments should be restricted to areas in and around the village of Shelby. The Master Plan for the township should be prepared with collaboration from the village so both are successful in meeting objectives and serving the community well.”
- “Excited for change and growth to come.”
- “Thank you for conducting the survey, great strides have been made. Further efforts shaped with intentional discipline an updated master plan will take the community in the proper direction.”
- “Quit letting Peterson Farms dictate what, where and how things happen in the Township and start listening to the people who live here.”
- “Please help clean up the blight along our major roadway entrances into town. Require sign maintenance or removal and grass mowing and removal of unusable vehicles and junk that is unsightly and draws rodents and pests. South Shelby along Oceana Drive is very unsightly; boarded up buildings, junk cars, overgrown brush and trees.”
- “I look forward to more growth for Shelby! :) Much love!”
- “Good luck with your survey and with any modifications you make in the future. Please note that nothing is worth doing if the buildings etc. are left to run down and embarrass the community. That said, go for it!”
- “I feel the Shelby Township Board and its Supervisor have done a remarkable job thus far in establishing a vision for the future growth and development of the township in ways that have and will continue to benefit the residents of and visitors to Shelby Township. I grew up on the property adjacent to the Community Park property and it was never fully developed as prime agricultural property as it should have been then. It is now going to serve a more beneficial purpose.”
- “Great progress has been made in Shelby Township over the past few years! Keep it rolling!”





- “I’m looking forward to the opening of the new park and hope it has many daily visitors.”
- “Try not to become a bigger metropolis area. People come here because they like the quiet, less traffic, small Town feel. So don’t try to change that so much. Improve on what we have.”
- “Township doing a great job moving forward for the people, by the people, not just PF.”
- “I appreciate the improvements made with the new supervisor in place.”
- “The town needs to grow and create more opportunity and can while still maintaining the small-town atmosphere. The community needs to be supportive for some change or it will fade out.”
- “Thank you for making a difference in the community! All of the improvements have been great!”
- “In my opinion, the Shelby Township Board is doing an excellent job making this a township to be proud of. I may not live here, but I was raised in Shelby Township and I have been impressed with the positive changes. The township park is something you’d see in a larger city...we are very fortunate to have a park like this in Shelby! I also love that my children will directly benefit from it--through their school's Rec program.”
- “Shelby Township is a pleasant place to live and raise a family and I fear unfettered or hasty development may destroy the very place by chasing a suburban development plan.”
- “Add options for public transportation.”
- “More transparency about budget and how funds are being utilized. Seems like home assessments are going up and taxes but yet roads are left in poor condition and focus on housing specifically to help Peterson Farms. Sounds like some catering to that business is taking place from the Township.
- This plan for the township sounds like a plan to help Peterson Farms and their needs and not fully designing around the needs of those current citizens.
- Before thinking of expanding these elements work on the current state of the Township and celebrating those achievements to your community.
- With the economy the way it is why would we want to even consider expanding the Township in this way.
- Thanks for allowing our feedback on this plan.”
- “Hart township is taken care of much better than Shelby township. I’m a resident of Shelby Township and the yards in Shelby are not maintained well. The residents need to have some sort of care in life.”
- “Well done on the improvements made over the last couple years. Love that Mount Hope wall was addressed. Now the village needs to step up and fix the rest of that hazard!”
- “Our kids and adults need activities to keep them out of trouble. Employment opportunities for teens in our community would also be a great idea.”
- “The housing development, new school and community park are exciting enhancements to the township. The Village of Shelby still looks a little shabby. It would be nice to spruce up existing structures rather than building new apartments. I do not want big box stores or more hordes of tourists in the area.”
- “What about development of new era? Did you forget about m-20 corridor or downtown areas?”
- “There seems to be a lot of questions on the survey regarding development of possible businesses and new neighborhoods in Shelby Township. I enjoy the agricultural aspect of Shelby Township and the general slower pace of life out here. I am not interested in neighborhood development programs or large solar panel developments in agricultural areas like you see taking shape in other parts of the state. Keep the area as it is. An agricultural landscape and a place people can come to enjoy the natural beauty this area brings. There are plenty of other places willing to give that up. Let’s not be one of them.”
- “Nice to ask opinion about the sports park NOW instead of before you did it.”





- “Many business buildings and residences along the main section of Michigan Avenue are abandoned, neglected, and unsightly. Surely, we can do better!”
- “I love the park but let's keep going.”
- “Fix the Shelby rec program. There’s no organization for parents or coaches and it’s a joke. I paid for my kid to play tee ball this spring. She has had two successful practices and supposed to start games this week. We should have a month of practice before games begin. But coaches didn’t know where to practice or when. Where is my money going to??”
- “It’s hard because I love the small-town feel, but we are growing and need to change with the times and provide services for everyone, young and old.”
- “I’m just greatly encouraged by the recent activity in Shelby. I’ve grown up in the area (New Era) and only recently moved into the township, November 2022. I’m excited by the growth and the investment in the community. I’m proud to be living in Shelby and am happy my kids will have expanded opportunities as they grow.
- The one thing I think needs to be looked at in the future is to take advantage of the tourism in the area. So many people go by or through Shelby to get to the dunes, or to Ludington, but at the moment, there isn’t a lot to stop here for. We need a reason for these people to stop by our delightful township. Obviously, we have Lewis’ and Country Dairy, but I think more needs to be done to draw people in.
- Keep up the great work!”
- “We are a rural area, we do not need outside interests trying to make this an urban area. People who have lived in urban areas are not returning to their rural roots because they dislike urban life for numerous reasons.”
- “People travel to access natural playgrounds. They’re what our kids living in town need to be able to access.”
- “I would like to see agrivoltaic projects promoted by the township.”
- “Increasing minimum lot area has the effect of reducing the amount of farmland. Benona Township went from 2.5 to 5 acres minimum lot area. It doesn’t stop the land from being developed, just takes more land out of production.”
- “The township should allow a certain amount of business expansion and affordable housing (with restrictions) while still preserving the agriculture and small town feel of the Twp.”
- “I feel that growth is important, but with growth there should be systems in place to keep things running smoothly. I also worry that if expansions are not done correctly, it could bring in crime, corruption and a decline in the beauty of our area.”
- “Again, I feel as if the main focus should really be the rail trail and making it more comfortable and exciting to go walk down it.”
- “Again, the tax increases are becoming overly burdensome.”
- “There has to be grants out there to help save rural towns from blight and decay. Apply for those grants! Have a plan to unify the buildings downtown Shelby rather than is mishmash, hodgepodge of storefronts. The town looks all cobbled together. Add some trees, keep the existing flowers watered.”
- “Let growth come naturally. Don’t force a lot of changes that existing residents may not necessarily want. We have a beautiful, diverse area. Don’t ruin it with lots of big city changes, especially at taxpayer expense.”
- “I don’t like huge apartments built. I have had trouble with theft from one of them and trespassing on my home property.”