



# **OAKFIELD TOWNSHIP**

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## **MASTER PLAN**

### **ADDENDUM**

**DRAFT 11.7.24**

10300 14 Mile Road  
Rockford, MI 49341  
616.754.5679  
[www.oakfieldtwp.org](http://www.oakfieldtwp.org)



## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

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1. COMMUNITY OVERVIEW	7
2. DEMOGRAPHICS	12
3. LAND USE	18
4. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	27
5. IMPLEMENTATION	33

# COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

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## INTRODUCTION

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- **Introduction - The Purpose of This Plan and Planning**

This Master Plan Addendum is a supplement to the existing Township Master Plan, and provides an update to the community background and profile, community survey data, goals and objectives, land use and implementation. This addendum is not meant to replace the existing Master Plan, instead it serves as a refresh and should be utilized by the Planning Commission as it considers any future rezoning requests, site plan review, and other community planning activities.

A Master Plan is a tool used by municipalities to analyze the current state of their community and plan for their future growth, development, and needs. This document addresses this issue by detailing Oakfield Township's current conditions and looks to the future to take specific actions to plan for the needs of the community.

A Master Plan can generally be described by the following key characteristics:

- **Future Oriented:** The Plan is a long-range guide for growth and land use needs. The plan is not only a picture of the community today, but a guide to how the community should evolve over the next five to ten years.
- **General:** The plan establishes broad principles and policies to address future land use needs.
- **Comprehensive:** The plan addresses all types of land uses and the practical geographic boundaries of each. The Plan also refines the general aspects into specific goals and tasks so that the Plan is meaningful and usable.
- **A Plan:** The land use plan is a tangible document which consists of both text and maps, with maps typically illustrating the policies set forth within the text.

The purposes of the Master Plan are to preserve and create a community that is best for its residents and its neighbors. In order to achieve this, the Plan is written as an analysis of what the community has, and a guide regarding how to use it when making land use decisions.

**Master Plans** serve to:

- Seek citizen input on needs and services
- Illustrate an overall perspective of the land, how it is being used, and how it should be used in the future

- Create a general statement of the goals and objectives of the community
- Preserve the quality of life in the community
- Promote public health, safety, and welfare for the region’s citizens
- Guide the use of limited resources and preservation in the most effective manner possible through clear and logical zoning decisions

The Michigan Planning Enabling Legislation, [P.A. 33 of 2008](#), as amended, says this another way:

“The general purpose of a master plan is to guide and accomplish, in the planning jurisdiction and its environs, development that satisfies all of the following criteria:

- I. Is coordinated, adjusted, harmonious, efficient, and economical.
- II. Considers the character of the planning jurisdiction and its suitability for particular uses, judged in terms of such factors as trends in land and population development.
- III. Will, in accordance with present and future needs, best promote public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare.
- IV. Includes, among other things, promotion of or adequate provision for 1 or more of the following:
  - (1) A system of transportation to lessen congestion on streets.
  - (2) Safety from fire and other dangers.
  - (3) Light and air.
  - (4) Healthful and convenient distribution of population.
  - (5) Good civic design and arrangement and wise and efficient expenditure of public funds.
  - (6) Public utilities such as sewage disposal and water supply and other public improvements.
  - (7) Recreation.
  - (8) The use of resources in accordance with their character and adaptability.

Master Plans do not have the force of law. ***As guides, they are intended to be referenced and kept current.*** The Future Land Use plan is the key feature of the plan when making zoning decisions, capital improvement decisions, utility expansions, land divisions and all decisions with neighboring communities. It is important to remember however, that *as a guide, as opposed to an engineering tool*, the maps contained in this document are not intended to be used to scale property lines, be a definitive source for tax purpose, or determine the exact boundaries of floodplains or wetlands, for example.

The Plan only has value if it is used and it has more ongoing value if it is used in conjunction with all the other planning efforts that are going on in Oakfield Township and the surrounding communities. Coordinated planning helps each group leverage their individual funds, knowledge and momentum toward an outcome. Some of these efforts are:

- Wabasis Lake and Campground
- Utilities and Roads
- Shared law enforcement – Kent County Sheriff and State Police, DNR
- Same schools – Kent ISD
- Other overlapping interests and needs with Kent and Montcalm County

### 2024 COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

Below summarizes the results of a survey conducted in Oakfield Township in May 2024. The survey was conducted digitally and in paper copy, and each household in the Township received a postcard notifying them of the survey with a QR code. Over 352 people responded.

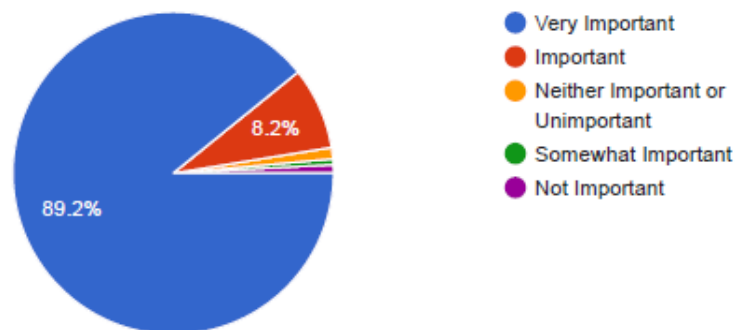
The survey focused on understanding the community’s priorities and concerns regarding development, growth, and the preservation of its rural character. The report details resident responses to questions about the importance of various issues, including preserving agricultural lands, managing development, and attracting commercial or industrial growth. The survey also explored residents' views on the township's current growth trajectory, their reasons for moving to Oakfield Township, and their concerns about issues such as traffic safety, water quality, and the condition of roads. This data provides valuable insight into the community's aspirations for the future of Oakfield Township.

- A significant majority of survey respondents are single-family homeowners (79.3%)
- The top three concerns for the township in the next 10 years are preserving the rural character of the township, preserving agricultural lands, and protecting the quality of well water sources.
- These concerns are likely shared by a large portion of residents, regardless of their residential status, as they relate to the overall quality of life and environmental sustainability in the township.
- However, certain concerns might be more pronounced among specific resident groups:

**Lakefront homeowners:**  
The results show that lakefront homeowners are concerned about the quality of their lake water and the impact of development on water

#### 3. Protecting the quality of well water sources (groundwater)

352 responses



quality. Willingness to pay for sewer service was moderately supported by 25% of respondents of the question (106 people). Support for sewer service was at 30% during the previous survey in 2006.

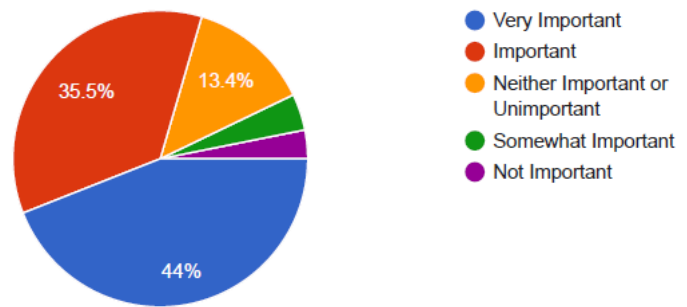
**Residents concerned about road conditions:** The condition of roads is a recurring theme in the "Other" responses. A significant number of residents are concerned about the condition of their streets and would support an additional tax millage for road paving. These concerns could be more prevalent among residents on unpaved roads or those living farther from the township's center.

**Residents along M-57:**

Several respondents living along the M-57 corridor express concerns about traffic safety and accidents. The survey also reveals concerns about commercial development along M-57. It can be inferred that residents in this area might be more sensitive to development's impact on traffic, safety, and the aesthetic appeal of the corridor.

4. Managing development along M-57

352 responses

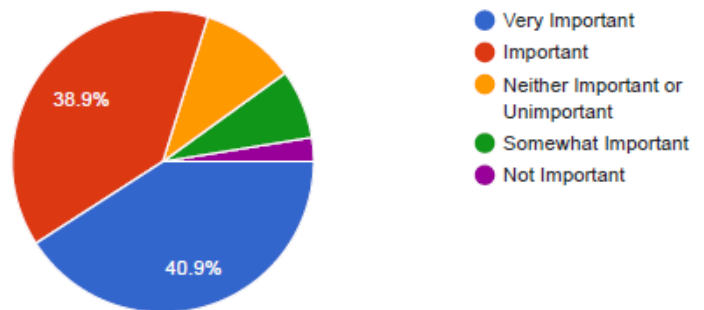


**Sentiment on Growth and Development in Oakfield Township**

The survey results suggest that Oakfield Township residents have mixed feelings about growth and development. There is a clear desire to maintain the rural character of the township, with 79.8% of respondents indicating that preserving the rural character is either "Very Important" or "Important". This sentiment is further reinforced by the strong disagreement with the idea that development is acceptable as long as the township

1. Preserving the rural character of the township

352 responses



stays primarily rural. Only 20.2% agree or strongly agree with this statement, while 55.7% either disagree or strongly disagree.

This desire to preserve the rural character likely stems from residents' reasons for choosing to live in Oakfield Township. When asked about the importance of various factors in their decision to move to the township, 48% of respondents indicated "Rural surroundings/wanted fewer neighbors" was either "Very Important" or "Important". This suggests that many residents were specifically seeking a rural lifestyle when they moved to Oakfield Township.

However, residents are not entirely opposed to all forms of development. For example, 86.4% of respondents view protecting well water sources as either "Very Important" or "Important", and the sources indicate that lakefront homeowners are particularly concerned about the quality of their lake water and its potential impact on their property values. This highlights a potential willingness to accept development if it is accompanied by measures to mitigate its negative impacts on the environment.

The "Other" responses in the survey provide further insights into residents' specific concerns and desires. These responses reveal a range of issues, including concerns about:

- The condition of roads
- Traffic safety on M-57
- The need for more recreational amenities like parks and walking trails
- Enforcement of township ordinances to address issues like blight

These concerns suggest that residents are not necessarily against growth and development but are looking for responsible and managed growth that considers the existing character of the township and the needs of its residents. The strong support (63.3%) for implementing a master plan to guide future development underscores this desire for a strategic and controlled approach to growth.

### **Sentiment about Parks and Recreation in Oakfield Township:**

**Importance of Parks and Recreational Activities:** The survey asked residents to rate the importance of "Developing more parks and recreational activities" in the next 10 years. While not a majority, a considerable portion of respondents, 40.4%, indicated that this was either "Very Important" or "Important," an increase of 14% from the previous community survey. This suggests that a significant segment of the population values the development of recreational amenities.



**Demand for Trails:** Several respondents in the "Other" section specifically mentioned the desire for more walking trails, bike trails, and parks. This suggests a latent demand for trail systems within the township.

**Concern about Lack of Sidewalks and Bike Paths:** The survey highlights that 54.3% of respondents consider the lack of sidewalks and bike paths to be at least "A Problem," which is an increase by 8% from the previous survey. This reinforces the idea that residents see value in expanding the township's non-motorized transportation and recreational infrastructure.

**Sentiment about Commercial and Industrial Development in Oakfield Township:**

**Low Priority for Attracting Development:** The survey asked respondents to rate the importance of various issues for the township's future. Attracting commercial development ranked 10th out of 14 listed issues. Attracting industrial development ranked even lower at 12th on the list of 14 possible properties. This suggests that these types of development are not high priorities for most residents.

**Support for Keeping Commercial Development Out:** A notable portion of respondents (37.8%) expressed support for keeping commercial development out of the township entirely. This sentiment aligns with the strong emphasis on preserving the rural character and natural features of the township, as expressed in previous responses and throughout the survey data.

**Acceptance of Light Industrial Development:** While there's resistance to commercial development, there is more openness to light industrial development, as long as it doesn't negatively impact residential areas. 59.9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this sentiment. This suggests a degree of pragmatism and a recognition that certain types of development might be necessary or beneficial.

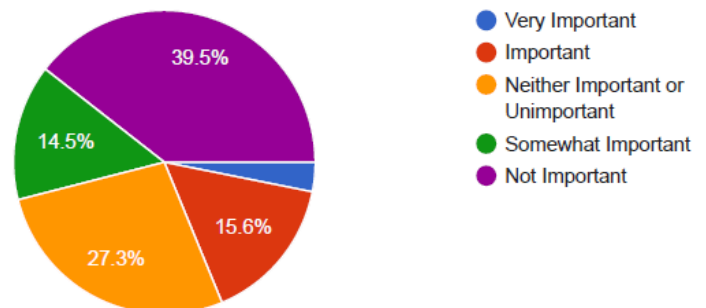
**Concerns about**

**Development along M-57:**

Residents living along the M-57 corridor express specific concerns about commercial development in that area, particularly its impact on traffic safety and the aesthetic appeal of the corridor. This highlights the importance of location and careful planning in any development considerations.

5. Attracting industrial development

352 responses



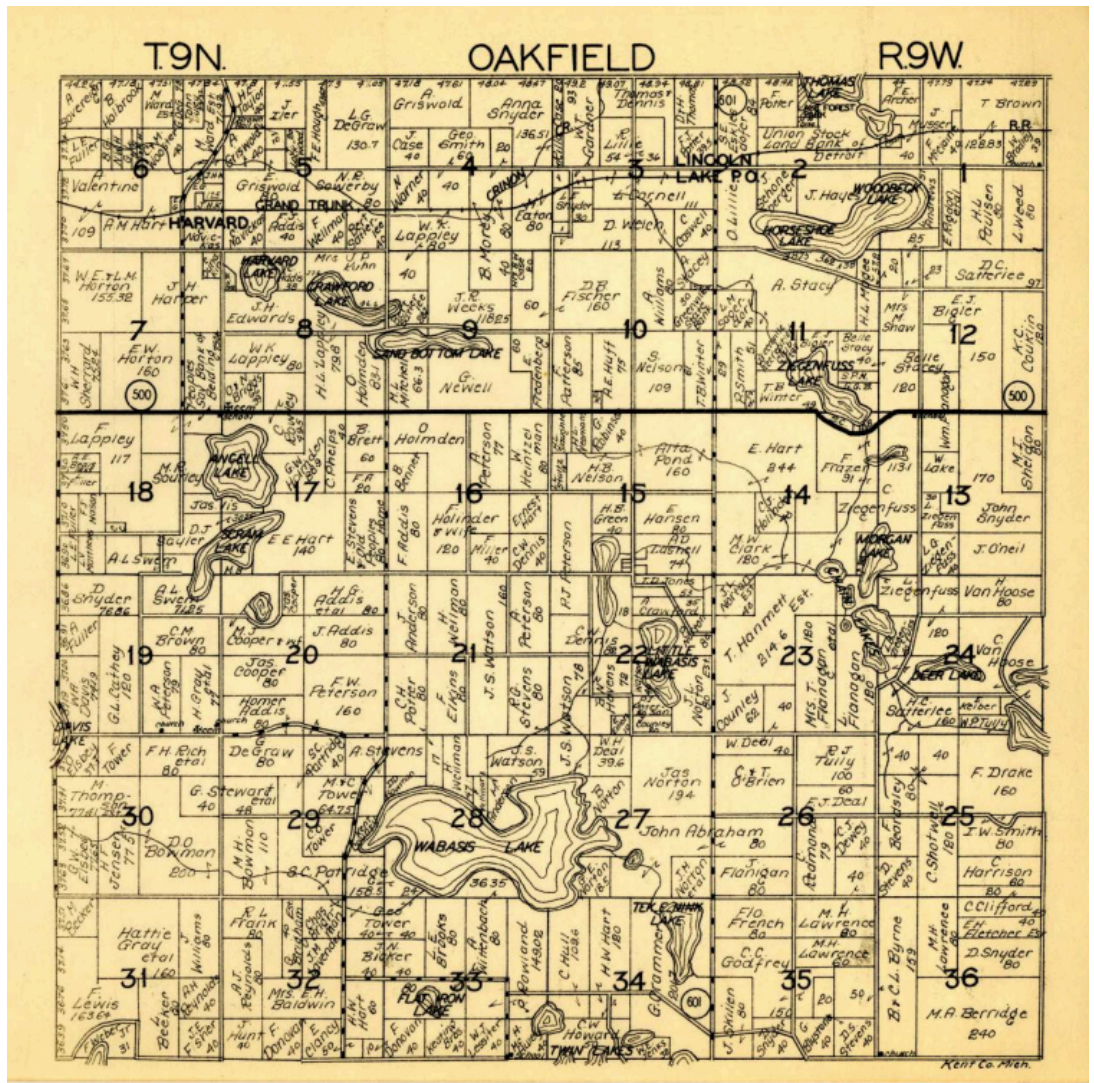
**Desire for Balanced Growth:** Some residents acknowledge the inevitability of growth but advocate for a measured approach that balances development with the preservation of the township's rural character and farming heritage. This perspective suggests a willingness to accept some development if it is done responsibly and in a way that considers the long-term well-being of the township.

### 1. COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

Oakfield Township, located in Kent County, Michigan, was first settled in the 1840s by pioneers seeking new opportunities in the Michigan Territory. The township was officially organized in 1849, deriving its name from the abundance of oak trees in the area. One of the notable early settlers was Enos Parish, who arrived in 1844 and played a significant role in the township's development.

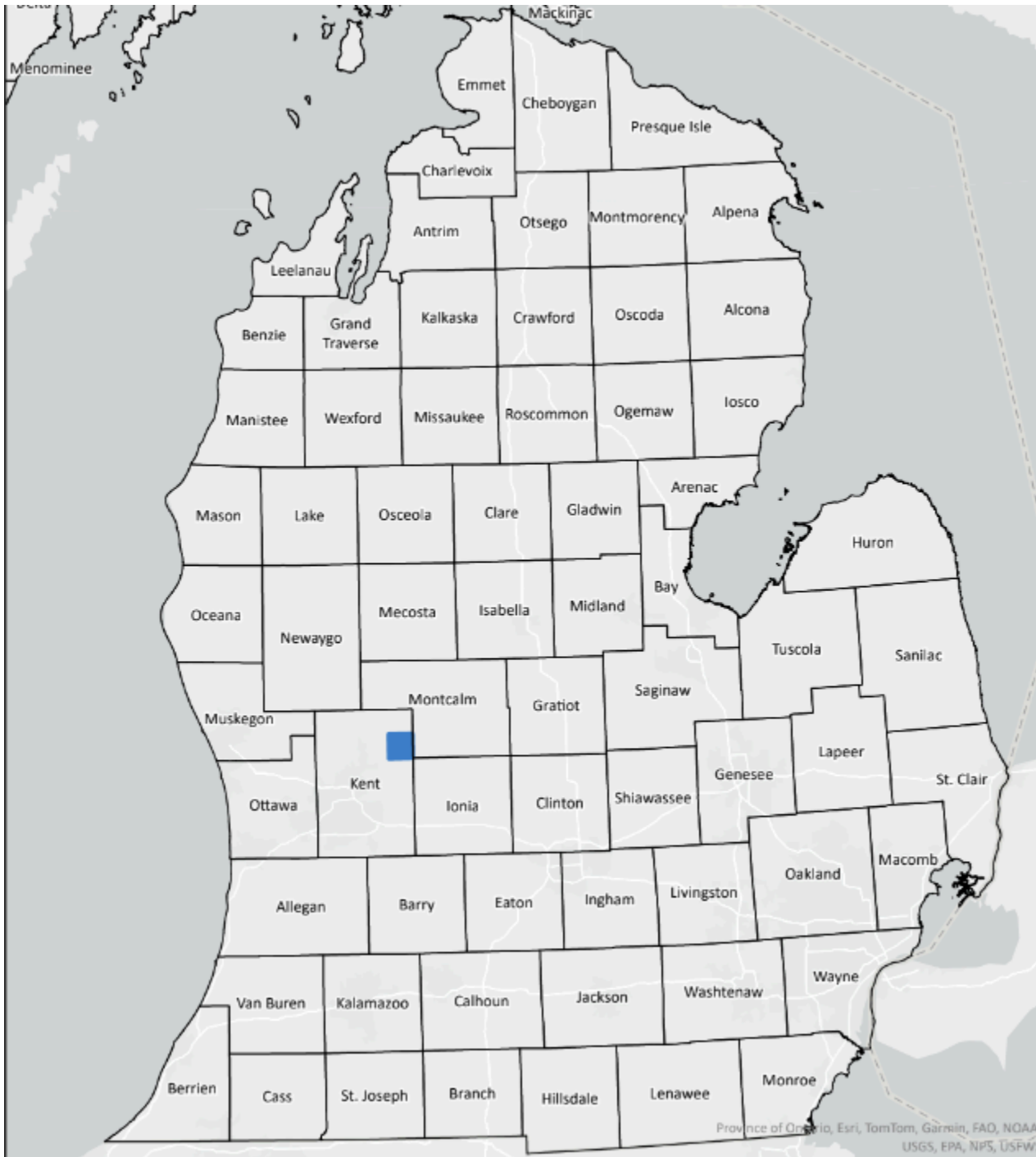
The land area of Oakfield Township covers approximately 36 square miles, characterized by a mix of gently rolling hills, flat plains, and fertile soil. This diverse topography has influenced the

township's land use over time. Initially, the area was primarily used for agriculture, with early settlers clearing the land for farming. The township's natural features include several small lakes and streams, with the Flat River forming part of its eastern boundary. Above is a 1920 plat map of Oakfield Township by the W.W. Hixson & Co.



**Regional Location**

Oakfield Township is situated in the upper right quadrant of Kent County, which is in the western part of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The township is approximately 20 miles northeast of Grand Rapids, the largest city in Kent County and the second-largest city in Michigan.



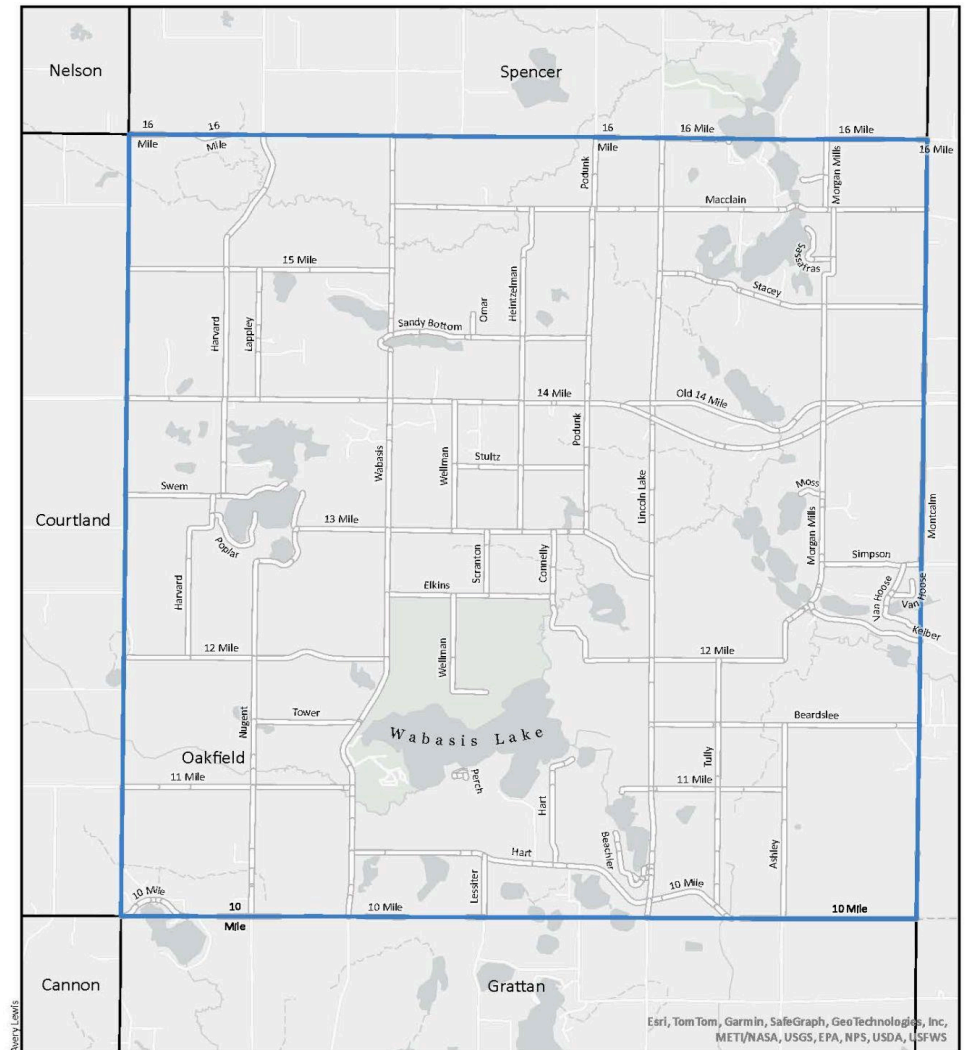
# OAKFIELD TOWNSHIP

## Master Plan

To the north, Oakfield Township borders Montcalm County. Specifically, it shares its northern boundary with Spencer Township in Kent County and Eureka Township in Montcalm County. To the east, it is adjacent to Grattan Township, also in Kent County. The southern border of Oakfield Township is shared with Cannon Township, while its western boundary is formed by Courtland Township.

### Oakfield Township Municipal Map

-  Oakfield Township Boundary
-  Townships of Kent County
-  Roads, Streets, and Avenues



Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc., METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS

The township's position within Kent County places it in a transitional zone between the more urbanized areas surrounding Grand Rapids to the southwest and the more rural, agricultural regions to the north and east. This location has allowed Oakfield Township to maintain its rural character while still being within commuting distance of larger urban centers.

The Flat River, a tributary of the Grand River, forms part of Oakfield Township's eastern border, adding to its natural features and contributing to the local geography. This river system connects the township to the broader watershed of West Michigan.

### Transportation Routes

M-57 (14 Mile Road) is a state highway that runs east-west through the central part of Oakfield Township. It's a primary route connecting the township to neighboring areas and provides access to larger cities like Greenville to the east and Cedar Springs to the west. Lincoln Lake Avenue is a north-south road that runs through the eastern part of the township. It connects M-57 to Grattan Township to the south. Podunk Avenue is another north-south road, located in the western part of the township. It runs from M-57 northward, connecting to Spencer Township.



Oakfield Township, being primarily rural, does not have extensive public transportation services. However, residents may have access to some limited services:

1. The Interurban Transit Partnership (The Rapid): While not directly serving Oakfield Township, this system operates in the greater Grand Rapids area. Residents might access park-and-ride facilities in nearby communities for commuting to Grand Rapids.
2. Kent County Ride Link: This dial-a-ride service may be available for seniors and persons with disabilities, providing transportation within the county.

There may be some local trails or bike paths, particularly around recreational areas like Wabasis Lake. Many of the township's rural roads are used by cyclists.

While there are no airports within Oakfield Township itself, residents have access to:

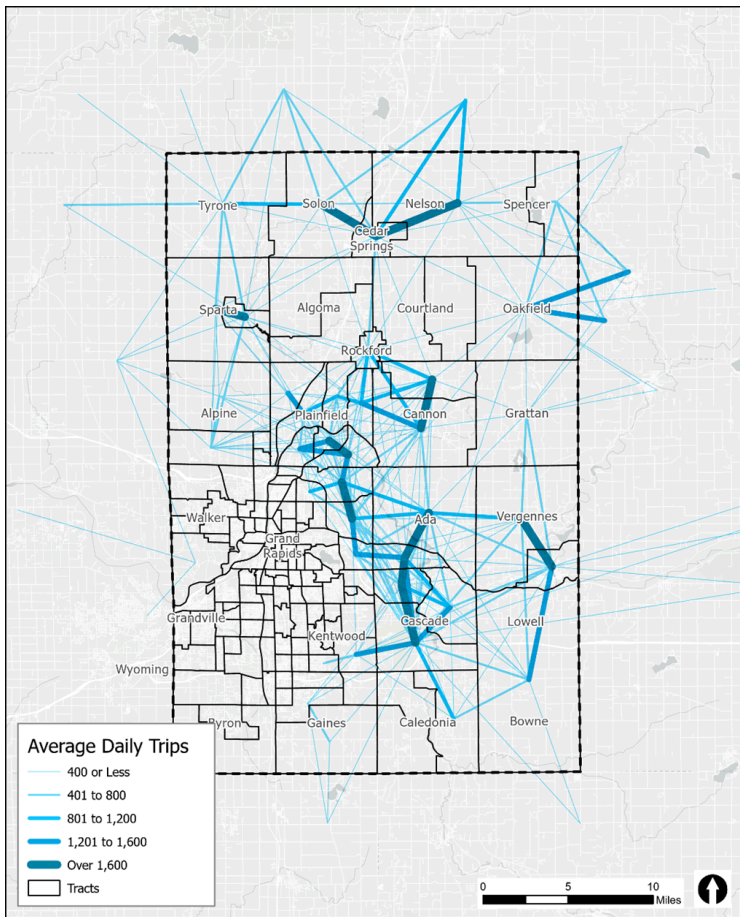
1. Gerald R. Ford International Airport: Located about 25 miles southwest in Grand Rapids, providing domestic and international flights.
2. Greenville Municipal Airport: A smaller, general aviation airport about 15 miles southeast of the township.

The Michigan Department of Transportation has monitored traffic levels at various locations along M-57. Average Annual Daily Counts are the estimated mean daily traffic volume using seasonal and

day-of-week adjustment factors. Traffic counts on M-57 increased by 6.17% from 2021 to 2022 and by 3.39 percent from 2022 and 2023.

Below is trip flow data showing the most common origin and destination routes for travelers in Kent County. The trip patterns that are mapped have more than 25 trips per day along a given route.

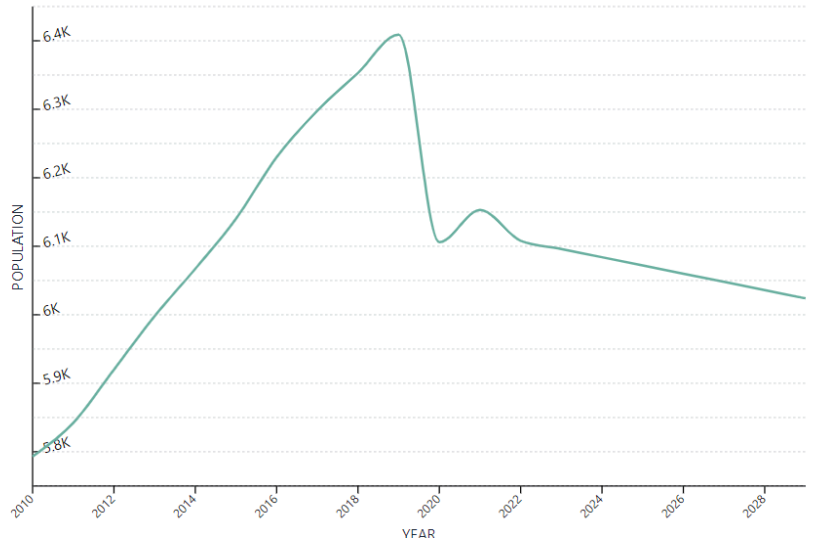
Oakfield Township sees many of the residents leaving the Township to destinations east of Kent County. The data is from a system called Replica, which is based on cell phone data. The lines represent at least 25 trips in a given direction per hour.



## 2. DEMOGRAPHICS

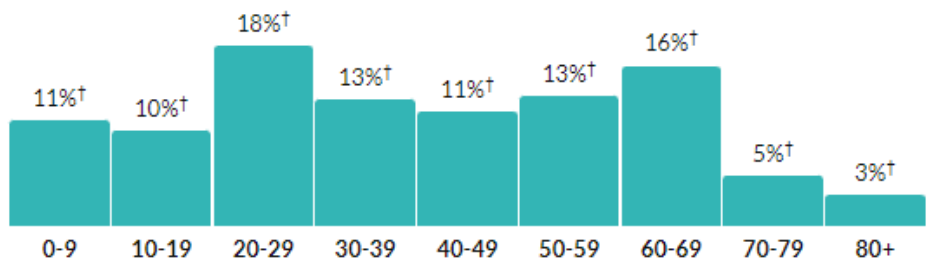
### Population

Oakfield Township is home to at least 6,082 people, according to the 2020 census. The American Community Survey 5 year estimate for 2024 is a little over 6,122. Based on the census data, there has been a general downward trend in population since 2020. Despite this trend, the Township may see a slight increase or restoration to pre-2020 numbers due to the overall projected increase in population within Kent County as a whole.



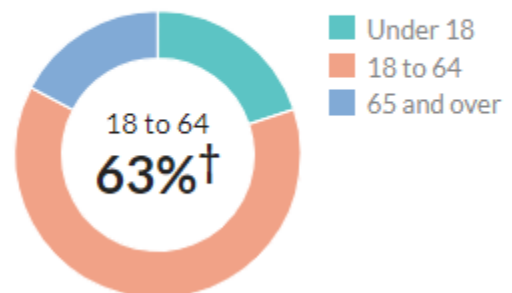
The median age in Oakfield Township is 39.5 years old, which is approximately 10% higher than Kent County, which has a median age of 35 years old, and is about the same median age as the state of Michigan. In 2000, the median age in the Township was 37.

### Population by age range



Generally, the Township is getting older, which is a factor contributing to the downward trend in population data. This decline in population is consistent with broader trends of population growth in more rural areas and reflects the challenges faced in these communities to maintain their population levels.

### Population by age category



While the population may be declining, the number of households is increasing, which is due to local and national trends on changes to household



dynamics and the number of people per household. Additionally, due to the quantity of inland lakes and proximity to urban centers, Oakfield may have more second homes than other Townships in the County.

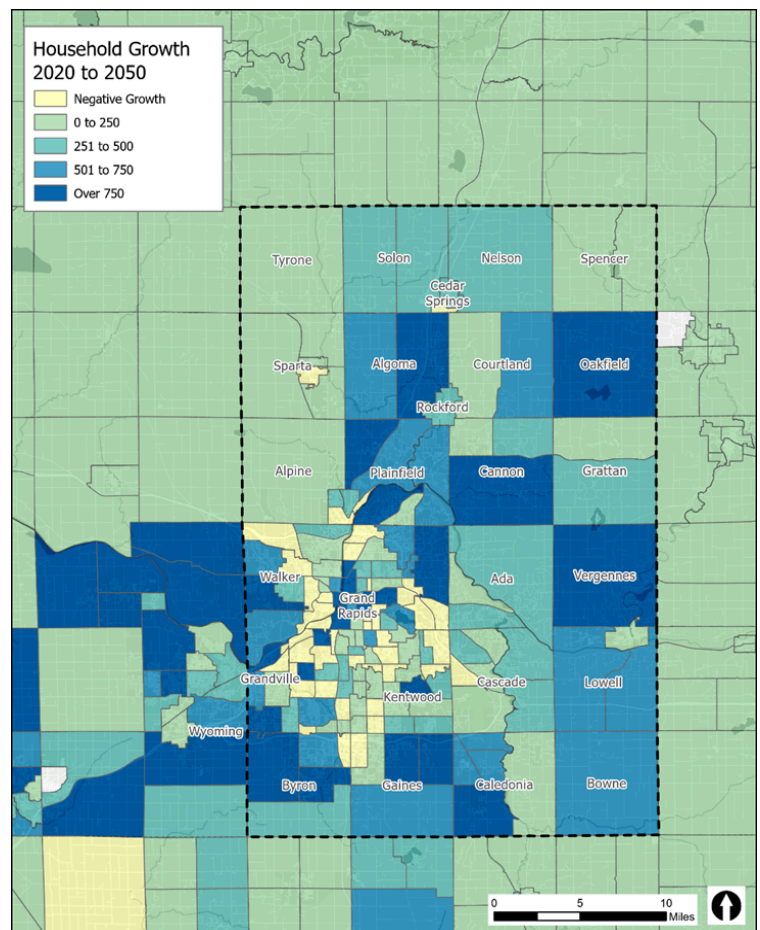
### Racial Profile

The racial composition of Oakfield Township has remained predominantly white, though there has been a gradual increase in diversity in terms of people identifying as two or more races. According to the 2020 Census, the racial composition of Oakfield Township, Kent County, Michigan was:

- White: 97.07%
- Black or African American: 0.12%
- American Indian or Alaska Native: 0.04%
- Asian: 0.16%
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: 0.00%
- Two or more races: 2.61%

### Housing

According to 2020 Census data, Oakfield Township in Kent County, Michigan experienced steady residential growth from 2000 to 2020. In 2000, the township had approximately 1,789 housing units. This number grew to about 2,013 units by 2010, representing a 12.5% increase over that decade. By 2020, the housing stock had expanded further to 2,169 units, showing continued but somewhat slower growth of about 7.7% from 2010 to 2020. This overall pattern reflects the township's gradual transition from a more rural area to a developing suburban community within the greater Grand Rapids metropolitan region, while still maintaining much of its rural character. The majority of this growth came in the form of single-family homes, consistent with the township's zoning and development patterns.



Based on U.S. Census data, Oakfield Township maintained relatively low vacancy rates over this twenty-year period. In 2000, the township had a vacancy rate of approximately 4.1% (about 73 vacant units out of 1,789 total units). The vacancy rate increased slightly to 4.8% by 2010 during the aftermath of the Great Recession (roughly 97 vacant units out of 2,013). By 2020, the vacancy rate had decreased to about 3.9% (approximately 85 vacant units out of 2,169), suggesting a tightening housing market. These consistently low vacancy rates, particularly compared to many other Michigan communities during this period, indicate that Oakfield Township maintained stable housing demand even through periods of economic uncertainty. The median value of homes in the Township is \$273,000 and the average rent rate is \$1200.

Overall, the housing market in Oakfield Township exhibits the characteristics of a stable rural community with slow but steady changes over the past two decades. With negative to modest population growth projected for the Township, the existing and forecasted housing demands are also minimal. The pattern will continue to be single family detached dwellings, with the potential for attached residential around the commercial node of Lincoln Lake and M-57. It is important to note that without transit, pathways, nor utilities, house types other than single family detached on individual well and septic systems, is unlikely.

Given the aging population of the Township, there may be needs for retirement housing, including aging-in place options, long-term care facilities, and other smaller-scale, zero-step living arrangements. A recommendation included in the implementation section of this Master Plan update is to add nursing home, retirement housing, small-scale multi-family, townhouses, and single-family dwellings to the list of uses in Commercial and Neighborhood Commercial zoning districts.

## **Employment**

Most of the workers in Oakfield Township are employees of private companies, around 64%. Employees of local, state, and federal governments make up 16.5% of the population. Nonprofits account for 10.5% of the workforce. Self-employed individuals, both incorporated and unincorporated represent 8.9% of the workforce. The national trend is to see an increase in entrepreneurs, which might result in the need for the Township to consider methods to allow and regulate home based businesses, which can be more intensive uses than a home occupation. There is an overall 59.8% employment rate in Oakfield Township, which is higher than Kent County's.

Education, health care, and social services are the leading industry, employing 20.9%. Other leading categories are manufacturing and retail, at 16.5% and 15.3%. Construction, entertainment services, management services, and other services each account for more than 5%, but less than 10%. Despite the Township's largely rural nature, agriculture only accounts for around 4% of the workforce.

On average, workers in Oakfield Township work 38.6 hours per week, which is comparable to the average for Kent County. On average, men work 40.1 hours per week and women work 36.7 hours per week.

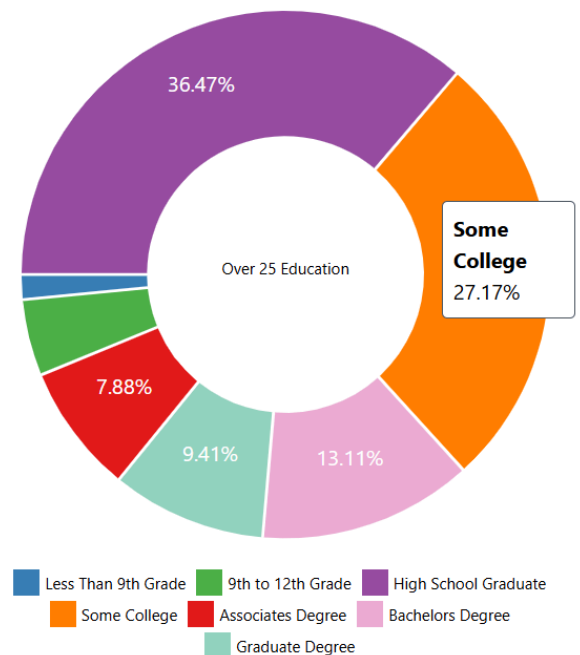
According to U.S. Census data, Oakfield Township's unemployment rates reflected broader economic trends over these two decades. In 2000, during a period of economic stability, the township's unemployment rate was approximately 3.8%. The rate increased significantly to about 8.9% by 2010, reflecting the impact of the Great Recession. By 2020, the unemployment rate had declined to approximately 5.2%, showing considerable recovery though not quite returning to pre-2000 levels. The current unemployment rate in the Township is 2.6%.

### Education

According to the 2020 Census data the educational attainment breakdown for residents 25 years and older shows that approximately 95% have at least a high school diploma or equivalent. Of the adult population, about 25% have a bachelor's degree or higher. Specifically, approximately 5% of the population age 25 and older are without a high school diploma, 35% with a high school diploma or equivalent, 32% with some college or an associate's degree, 20% with a bachelor's degree, and roughly 5% holding graduate or professional degrees. These education levels reflect a relatively well-educated workforce and are generally comparable to broader Kent County averages, though with slightly lower rates of advanced degrees than seen in some of the county's more urbanized areas.

From 2000 to 2020, Oakfield Township has seen a general upward trend in educational attainment levels. In 2000, approximately 88% of residents had at least a high school diploma, with about 15% holding a bachelor's degree or higher. By 2010, the high school completion rate had increased to roughly 92%, and those with bachelor's degrees or higher grew to about 20% of the adult population.

The 2020 data shows continued improvement, with approximately 95% of residents holding at least a high school diploma and 25% having earned a bachelor's degree or higher. This twenty-year trend shows a significant decrease in residents without high school diplomas (from 12% in 2000 to 5% in 2020), and a notable increase in higher education attainment, with the percentage of college graduates increasing by about 10 percentage points over the two decades.



### Income

As of the most recent data, the per capita income in Oakfield Township is approximately \$30,000. Since 2000, this figure has seen a noticeable increase, reflecting economic growth and changes in the local job market. In 2000, the per capita income was around \$20,000, indicating a significant upward trend over the two decades. This growth can be attributed to factors such as rising employment opportunities, increased property values, and an influx of new residents drawn to the area's suburban appeal.

From 2010 to 2020, Oakfield Township in Kent County, Michigan, experienced notable changes in household and family income trends. The median household income in Oakfield Township increased during this period, reflecting the community's gradual economic growth and the appeal of suburban living. Factors such as the expansion of local businesses, improved infrastructure, and a strong sense of community likely contributed to this rise. In comparison to the broader trends in Kent County, Oakfield Township's income growth was somewhat parallel, but it often outpaced the county's overall average, showcasing a local resilience amid fluctuating economic conditions.

The race most likely to be in poverty in Oakfield township is Hispanic, with 28.31% below the poverty level. This rate is higher than Kent County as a whole, which is 25%. Additionally, the poverty rate for all races is 12-14%, therefore, this demographic is disproportionately experiencing poverty in the community. The race least likely to be in poverty in Oakfield township is White, with 7.7% below the poverty level. The poverty rate among those that worked full-time for the past 12 months was 0%. Among those working part-time, it was 16.01%, and for those that did not work, the poverty rate was 5.79%.

### Recreation

Oakfield Township offers a variety of recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. The township park and other nearby natural areas provide ample space for hiking, picnicking, and enjoying the outdoors. The nearby Flat River and its tributaries offer fishing and kayaking options, while the scenic landscapes are perfect for cycling and walking. Just a short drive away, adjacent Townships and Grand Rapids offer even more recreational facilities including the White Pine Trail, sports complexes, golf courses, and cultural attractions, enhancing the area's appeal for outdoor enthusiasts and families.

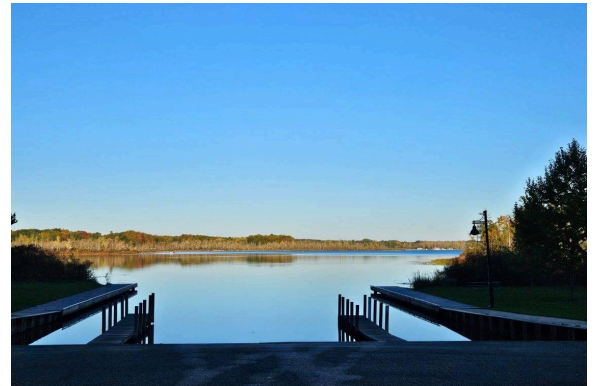


Wabasis Lake is a popular destination near Oakfield Township, offering a variety of recreational opportunities. The lake features a public park with picnic areas, swimming spots, and a

sandy beach, making it a great place for families to relax and enjoy the outdoors. Fishing is also a popular activity, as the lake is home to various fish species. Additionally, Wabasis Lake Park includes trails for hiking and nature walks, providing scenic views and opportunities for wildlife observation. The combination of water activities and surrounding natural beauty makes Wabasis Lake a key attraction for those looking to enjoy the outdoors in the Oakfield Township area.

The Township has dozens of inland lakes that are enjoyed by residents and visitors attracting anglers and boaters in all seasons. Deer and waterfowl hunting is also popular in the Township.

A separate recreation plan has been written by Kent County and includes Oakfield Township's recreational resources and plans.



### 3. LAND USE

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- **Future Land Use**

The rural nature of Oakfield Township is the most prominent as well as the most important feature of the Township throughout the Master Plan. The community, through public input, has stressed that they would like the Township to remain rural, with lake living and commercial uses concentrated along M-57.

The community is also concerned about heavy industrial uses and contamination of water resources, as well as industrial impacts near residential areas. There is a desire for a balance with light industry and job growth. These descriptions provide a comprehensive framework for planning and zoning decisions, ensuring that development aligns with the township's goals and preserves its rural character. Below are summaries of the future land uses in the Township.



#### **Commercial**

This category includes all parcels containing commercial facilities and uses, all public and quasi public uses and other institutional uses. This category is recognized as a priority along M-57.



#### **Industrial**

Included in this category is land used for processing, extractive, manufacturing, fabrication, assembling materials, utilities, or for the outside storage of equipment and materials.



#### **Neighborhood Commercial**

This classification includes small-scale, locally-based commercial uses that serve the immediate neighborhood.



### Planned Unit Development

This category includes planned residential development consisting of single family detached housing and open space.

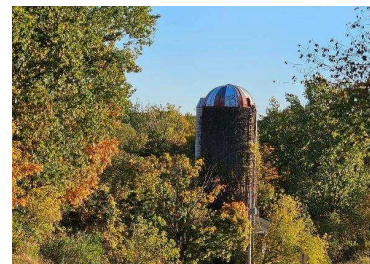


### Manufactured Housing Development

Wooded land includes stands of trees generally larger than five acres.

## 1. Agricultural/Rural Residential

**Purpose:** The Agricultural/Rural Residential land use category is designated to preserve and protect farming activities, support agricultural businesses, and maintain the rural character of the township and allow for residential growth.

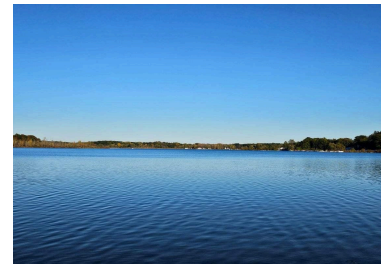


### Description:

- **Primary Uses:** Residential, crop production, livestock farming, dairy operations, orchards, vineyards, nurseries, solar and other agricultural activities.
- **Secondary Uses:** Farmhouses, barns, silos, greenhouses, agricultural processing facilities, and ancillary structures related to farming.
- **Development Standards:** Low-density development to minimize conflicts with agricultural operations. Large lot sizes are encouraged to sustain viable farming activities.
- **Conservation Practices:** Implementation of best practices in soil conservation, water management, and sustainable agriculture to enhance environmental quality.

## 2. Lakes

**Purpose:** The Lakes land use category is intended to provide a variety of housing options that accommodate the township's population while maintaining water quality through setbacks and preserving the views along inland lakes.



### Description:

- **Primary Uses:** Single-family homes
- **Secondary Uses:** Home-based businesses, small-scale agriculture (e.g., personal gardens, agricultural entertainment), and community facilities (e.g., schools, parks).
- **Development Standards:** Varied lot sizes to offer a range of housing densities, with an emphasis on setbacks from waterfront.
- **Design Guidelines:** Encourage designs that allow for views of the water from the road of back lots, and that promote a cohesive community atmosphere.

## 3. Planned Unit Development

**Purpose:** The Planned Unit Development land use category is intended to provide flexibility in development layout and arrangement in exchange for the preservation of open space.



### Description:

- **Primary Uses:** Single-family homes, accessory dwelling units
- **Secondary Uses:** Home-based businesses, and community facilities (e.g., schools, parks).
- **Development Standards:** Varied lot sizes to offer a range of housing densities, with an emphasis on clustered development and the preservation of open space.
- **Design Guidelines:** Encourage designs that allow for the preservation of woodlands, water ways, slopes, wetlands or other important natural features in a clustered, smaller lot development.

## 4. Commercial

**Purpose:** The Commercial land use category aims to support business activities that serve the needs of township residents and visitors, fostering economic development while preserving the township's rural character. Commercial is also an opportunity for





mixed uses, and having housing near employment and community recreational assets.

**Description:**

- **Primary Uses:** Retail stores, restaurants, offices, service businesses (e.g., banks, salons), multi-family, two-family, and small-scale markets.
- **Secondary Uses:** Mixed-use buildings with residential units above commercial spaces, community centers, and public spaces.
- **Development Standards:** Concentrated in designated areas such as along the M-57 corridor, building sizes and designs should be consistent with the rural character of the Township, with appropriate setbacks and landscaping. Parking can be minimized in favor of low impact development practices so long as deferred parking areas are available on site. Signage should be low profile, small-scale, with low, static lighting. Sidewalks would be required along the M-57 frontage.
- **Accessibility:** Adequate parking and sidewalks

**5. Light Industrial**

**Purpose:** The Light Industrial land use category is designated to accommodate businesses engaged in light manufacturing, assembly, warehousing, and distribution, providing employment opportunities while minimizing environmental impacts. The Township does not have municipal utilities, therefore, there is a limitation to the scale and type of industrial development that can be accommodated.

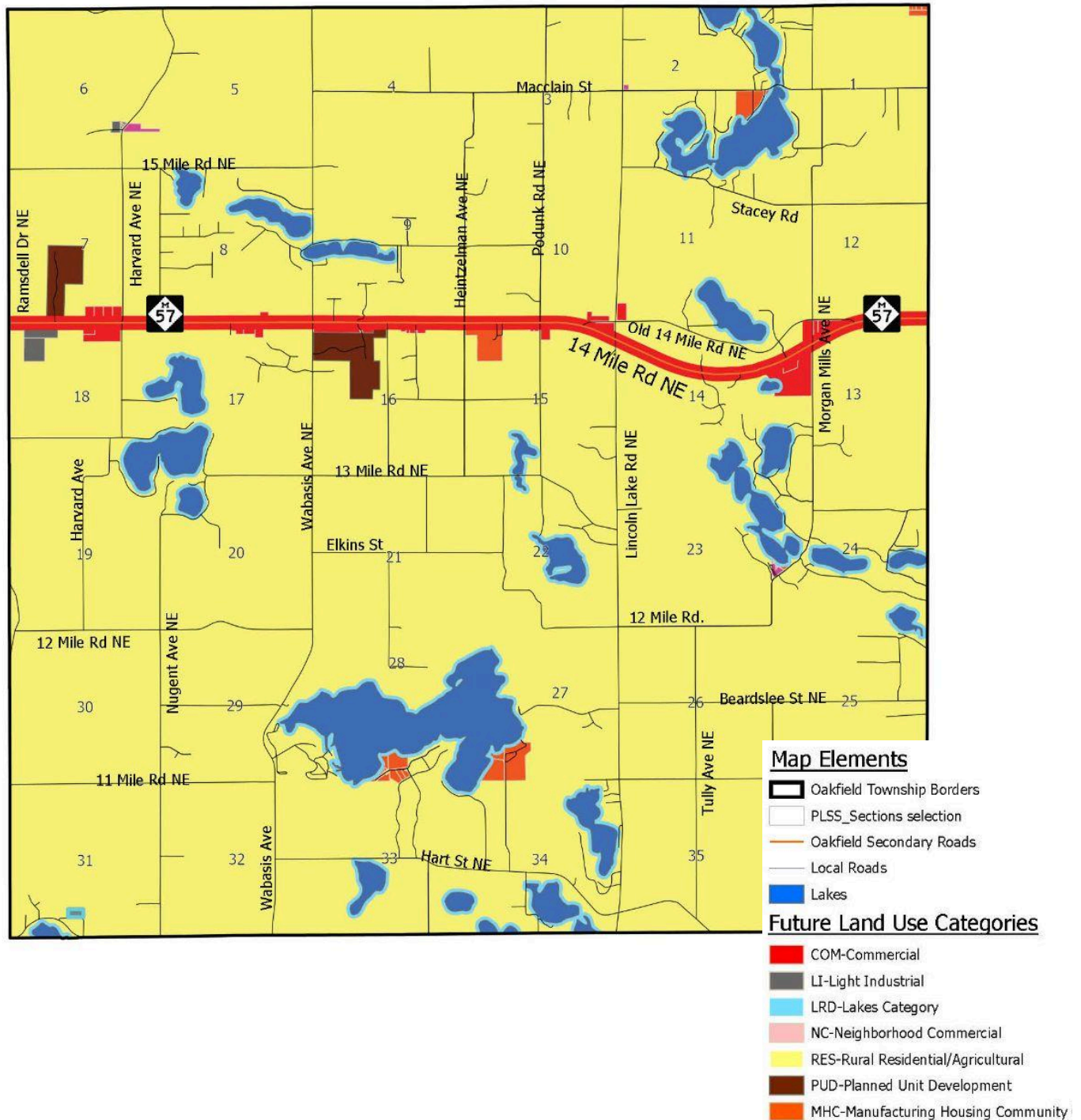


**Description:**

- **Primary Uses:** Light manufacturing, assembly plants, research and development facilities, warehouses, distribution centers, and technology-based industries.
- **Secondary Uses:** Ancillary offices, storage buildings, and limited retail sales related to the primary industrial use.
- **Development Standards:** Located away from residential areas to reduce potential conflicts. Emphasis on buffering and screening (e.g., landscaping, fencing) to minimize visual and noise impacts. Sites should have adequate infrastructure, including roads, water, and sewer services.
- **Environmental Considerations:** Implementation of measures to manage waste, control emissions, and protect natural resources.

The future land use map, together with the zoning plan, should guide requests from landowners for new zoning districts. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act states that zoning should be based on a plan for the community. That plan is the Future Land Use map.

**FUTURE LAND USE MAP**



**Zoning Plan**

Oakfield Township should use the future land use map and the zoning plan when considering a rezoning request. The zoning plan is a regulatory tool to manage land use and development. It is a key component of the overall land use planning process and is typically implemented through local zoning ordinances.

Future Land Use Category	Compatible Zoning District	Considerations
Agriculture	Agricultural	
Residential	Residential	Consider updating the zoning ordinance for accessory dwelling units as part of a PUD
Lakes	Residential	The Lakes designation includes residential land use and zoning, with a buffer area around the lake to ensure water quality and reduce impervious surfaces near waterways.
Commercial	Commercial	Commercial is desired along M-57, with the use of shared driveways to minimize curb cuts and manage access. Additionally, tree preservation along M-57 should be prioritized for the first 40' from the right-of-way to maintain the wooded character of the area. The densities and building types would include attached single family (townhouse) and small-scale multi-family (6-8 units in a building) for commercial development near the intersection of Lincoln Lake and M-57 if soils and topography can accommodate well and septic.
Neighborhood Commercial	Commercial or Residential	Small-scale businesses catering recreation, also consider updates to the zoning ordinance to allow for single-family, live-work, and two-family residential.
Industrial	Industrial or Commercial or Residential	Blending housing, commercial and light industrial is suggested to ensure that people can live close to employment. Sidewalks and non-motorized pathways could connect jobs to housing, as well as to recreation opportunities. Heavy industry is not recommended near important natural areas nor where woodlands would be compromised.

## Rezoning Considerations

The rezoning process involves changing the zoning designation of a piece of land, which dictates how that land can be used. This process typically involves several steps and considerations, especially concerning future land use categories. Here's an overview of the process and the key considerations for a planning commission and township board:

1. **Assessment of Current Zoning, Utilities and Land Use:** The first step is to assess the current zoning designation and land use of the property. This involves understanding the existing zoning regulations, land use patterns in the surrounding area, existing or planned utilities and the capacity of soils for uses in the requested zoning district, significant natural features such as woodlands, wetlands, streams or waterways, and any applicable plans or ordinances.
2. **Identifying the Need for Rezoning:** Rezoning may be initiated for various reasons, such as accommodating growth, promoting economic development, or addressing changes in community needs. The planning commission and township board should identify the specific reasons for considering rezoning and how it aligns with long-term community goals and objectives.
3. **Future Land Use Categories:** Future land use categories are typically defined in comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances. These categories specify the desired future development patterns and land uses for different areas within the jurisdiction. When considering rezoning, it's essential to evaluate how the proposed change aligns with the future land use categories outlined in this plan and the zoning plan.
4. **Public Input and Stakeholder Engagement:** Public input and stakeholder engagement are critical components of the rezoning process. The planning commission and township board should solicit input from residents, property owners, business owners, and other stakeholders who may be affected by the proposed rezoning. Public hearings and community meetings provide opportunities for feedback and discussion.
5. **Compatibility and Consistency:** When evaluating a rezoning request, the planning commission and township board should consider whether the proposed change is compatible with surrounding land uses and consistent with the community's long-term vision for development. They should assess factors such as land use intensity, density, building design, infrastructure needs, recreation, public infrastructure, and environmental impacts.
6. **Zoning Criteria and Standards:** Zoning criteria and standards outline specific requirements and considerations for rezoning applications. These may include factors such as lot size, setback requirements, height restrictions, parking provisions, and landscaping standards. The planning commission and township board should evaluate whether the proposed rezoning meets these criteria and standards.

7. **Review Process and Decision-Making:** The rezoning process typically involves a formal review process, including application submission, staff review, public hearings, and deliberation by the planning commission and township board. The decision to approve or deny a rezoning request should be based on thorough analysis, consideration of relevant factors, and adherence to established procedures and criteria.
8. **Legal Considerations and Due Process:** Throughout the rezoning process, it's essential to adhere to legal requirements and due process principles. This includes ensuring transparency, fairness, and compliance with state and local laws, regulations, and constitutional principles. Proper documentation and record-keeping are also important to support the decision-making process and provide a basis for any potential legal challenges.

## 4. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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The following provides the overarching vision for Oakfield Township to guide land use decision-making for the next 20 year planning horizon. This vision responds to the desire of the community to continue its rural pace and lifestyle, while also recognizing the need for job growth. Jobs and industry that preserves natural features, and is located along M-57 are desired and reflected in the future land use plan.

**Overall Vision: Create a vibrant and sustainable rural community that balances economic development, environmental protection, and a high quality of life for residents.**

Goals and policies serve as instruments which guide the evolution of the township by bringing the social, physical, economic, and political considerations into more meaningful focus. Goals and policies are statements of the intent of the community with respect to future development and the remainder of the plan is based on the desire to implement those intentions.

To be effective, goals and policies should:

1. be **achievable**;
2. be **realistic**;
3. be broad enough to **inspire** but narrow enough to meet #1 and #2;
4. be **limited** to no more than 2-3 major points;
5. paint a **picture** of the future (10-20 years) as the township and its residents would like to see it.

The goals and policies were developed for the Master Plan by the Planning Commission from the Community Survey and their own knowledge of the township.

### TOWNSHIP CHARACTER

**GOAL: Development in the township will preserve its rural character and natural features.**

Township residents closely equate rural character to natural features. Their responses to the Community Survey indicate that natural features were an important consideration in their desire to live in the township. In addition, a substantial percentage of residents 88% (4% more than the 2006 survey) identified the preservation of rural character as one of the most important issues that the township will face in the next 10 years. Generally, the survey indicated a tendency to support development as long as natural features and rural character are maintained and adequate services are available.

### POLICIES

- The township will adopt and implement ordinance provisions which promote the design of residential developments which maintain rural character.***

- Review of land use and zoning changes will include specific consideration of how the proposed change preserves the rural character of the vicinity and the township.***
- Adhere to the future land use plan for zoning actions by limiting non-residential outside of the M-57 commercial corridor.***

The ability to live in a rural setting, with few neighbors and increased privacy, is attractive to many urban residents tired of traffic, noise, and other urban impacts.

Accordingly, it will be necessary to plan a land use pattern that balances the desire to maintain the township's rural character yet provide opportunities for people who wish to live in the township. Future land use is intended to address the need to establish a long range direction for the township, which will achieve this balance. Each new development must be measured against its ability to maintain it.

**GOAL: The township will plan for an appropriate mixture of land uses, but will emphasize agricultural uses and homes in rural settings.**

When given a choice, the greatest number of respondents wanted to see a mixture of all types of development, but it was clear that homes and farms should be the predominant uses. A sizable percentage, nearly a quarter of all respondents, indicated that the township should attempt to either slow down or stop development. On the other hand, about the same percentage felt that the Township should either actively encourage development or let it take place with as little government interference as possible.

Overall, the survey indicated only modest support for industrial and commercial development, but residents do want to see control over commercial development along M-57 (80%, up from 76% in 2006). But while there was little interest in attempting to attract new commercial and industrial development, neither was there a strong desire to keep such development from the township. This was especially true of commercial uses. At the same time, there was little belief in the need to attract commercial and industrial growth to lower the tax burden on homeowners.

A central issue with respect to both commercial and industrial development is the presence of M-57. Managing development along this thoroughfare is of concern to the survey respondents and the Planning Commission. Most of the respondents agreed that development along M-57 was acceptable as long as it was attractive.

Similarly, industrial development, which generally depends on availability of public utilities, will necessarily be limited within the township, both in amount and intensity. About an equal number of survey respondents agreed and disagreed on the location for industrial development as being that which would not affect residential development. This is probably as much an indication of a weaker lack of support for industrial uses as it is a comment about location.

## **POLICIES**

- New commercial development should be located and designed to reflect the rural character of Oakfield Township, with uses necessary for daily needs of the area, proper access, and limited sizes of buildings and parking areas.***
- Parking areas should be landscaped, and a tree buffer placed along M-57 (or a tree preservation ordinance developed) to ensure the wooded character of the Township remains.***
- Industrial development will be directed to those areas where proper access is available, environmental problems are minimized, and where residential areas will be unaffected.***

## **THE ENVIRONMENT**

**GOAL:** Protection of surface water and groundwater resources, natural features, and other environmental characteristics will be a primary consideration of the township when reviewing development proposals.

As indicated in the survey, township residents are acutely aware of the quality of the environment, and appear to support strong policies protecting environmental assets and open spaces. Township residents, increasingly sensitive to the value of their environment, are generally supportive of reasonable laws to help ensure that these resources will be present for future generations to enjoy. Three aspects of the environment concern township residents: protection of natural features, groundwater quality, and preservation of agricultural lands.

The 2024 Community Survey produced the following responses:

- 76% thought that “preserving the rural character of the township” was either “Important” or “Very Important”
- 98% indicated that “protecting the quality of well water sources (groundwater)” was either “Important” or “Very Important”
- 63% were concerned about the “loss of farmland to residential uses.”

## **POLICIES**

- Before approval the township will seek information from applicants regarding impacts on surface waters, groundwater, natural features, and farmland (as applicable) created by land development projects.***
- The township will adopt and implement ordinance provisions which promote the protection of natural features, minimize impact on groundwater, and preserve farmland.***

As should be expected, those who live on a lake want to keep the quality of their water high. But there does not seem to be a particular sense of urgency about the need to take actions necessary to do so. It is likely that the few existing problems on the lakes have not prompted action of sufficient strength to take steps to maintain water quality. New development around lakes has prompted some concern,



yet few believe that such development should be restricted in lieu of a sanitary sewer system. Fewer still were willing to pay a share of the cost to install such systems.

## **TOWNSHIP SERVICES**

**GOAL: The township will provide a level of public services that are necessary and appropriate for a rural and agricultural community, including recreational opportunities.**

It is ironic that many of the people who move to a rural area like Oakfield Township bring with them an expectation of receiving services like those in the urban area. However, the township's low density residential development, which they sought, cannot support those levels of services.

The low density development and spread out nature of homes and businesses in Oakfield Township make it difficult to provide public utilities in a cost effective manner. As a result, it is unlikely that widespread utility services will be available throughout the township. However, the residents of the township do have concerns about groundwater protection and the impact of growth on water quality and other quality of life issues.

Generally, people were satisfied with snow removal and road conditions within the township. There is an increase of 8% of those desiring more pathways and sidewalks in the Township. A goal has been added to create a Parks and Recreation plan with a concept for pathways. The rationale is that the Township is seeing an increase in the senior population as well as youth, both demographic groups tend to desire recreational opportunities. There is an increase of 6% of respondents who claim that accessibility to recreational areas is important or very important.

For the most part, traffic concerns are limited to major roadways, such as M-57 and Lincoln Lake Avenue. From the 2006 to 2024 survey, there is an increase of 26.8% of respondents stating that traffic safety on M-57 is a significant problem. Additionally, there is an increase of 11% of respondents who say traffic safety on Lincoln Lake is also a problem.

The principal concerns along M-57 will be the number and location of driveways and the location of nonresidential land uses. It will be important to manage the character, design, and type of development to ensure that traffic safety is maintained to the greatest possible extent.

## **POLICIES**

- The township will provide the range and level of services sought by its residents in accordance with its ability to finance those services, or as its residents are willing to pay for such services.***
- The township will encourage land development and site design along M-57 that reduce the number of access points for individual uses, improves the appearance of individual establishments, and promotes a sound land use pattern.***

- The township will create a parks and recreation plan to determine the recreational needs and opportunities in the community, as well as pathway planning to encourage more outdoor activities.***

### **1. Preserve Farmland and Promote Agriculture:**

- **Objective 1.1:** Implement agricultural land preservation programs (e.g., purchase of development rights) to protect a specific percentage of farmland acreage over a set timeframe.
- **Objective 1.2:** Develop a farmers market and/or support existing ones to promote local produce and agricultural products.
- **Objective 1.3:** Encourage and support agri-tourism initiatives (e.g., farm tours, u-pick operations, agricultural entertainment) to connect residents and visitors with local agriculture.

### **2. Develop Sustainable Recreation:**

- **Objective 2.1:** Collaborate with the County to improve Wabasis Lake for recreational uses (e.g., fishing, canoeing) while maintaining its ecological health.
- **Objective 2.2:** Work with the County or neighboring Townships to create a Parks and Recreation Plan that includes a network of walking and biking trails that connect with regional trails, highlighting natural features and scenic views.
- **Objective 2.3:** Create an information board at the Township Hall to promote local attractions, businesses, and events.
- **Objective 2.4:** Encourage development of eco-friendly tourism accommodations (e.g., bed and breakfasts, campgrounds, outfitters and cafes) that minimize impact on the environment in agricultural and residential areas.

### **3. Foster Economic Growth and Job Creation:**

- **Objective 3.1:** Identify and attract businesses that complement the rural character and capitalize on tourism and agriculture.
- **Objective 3.2:** Explore opportunities for broadband internet expansion to facilitate remote work and business development.

### **4. Increase Housing Diversity and Affordability:**

- **Objective 4.1:** Update the zoning ordinance to reclassify residential, commercial, neighborhood commercial, and light industrial land uses to ensure they locate in areas best suited for growth and compatibility with natural resources and agricultural land.
- **Objective 4.2:** Ensure that attached residential housing types, including duplexes, townhomes, and small-scale apartments (up to 8 per building) are located along M-57 at Lincoln Lake and can be connected to sidewalks, pathways, and commercial businesses.
- **Objective 4.3:** Encourage rehabilitation and renovation of existing housing stock.

**5. Protect and Enhance Natural Features:**

- **Objective 5.1:** Implement environmental zoning practices, such as dark-sky lighting, deferred parking, increased landscaping, tree preservation, and river and wetland setbacks to promote sustainable land use practices.
- **Objective 5.2:** Develop educational programs to raise awareness and encourage resident participation in environmental stewardship.
- **Objective 5.3:** Consider the financial implications of road paving and the density of housing along the roadway prior to paving.

## 5. IMPLEMENTATION

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This plan outlines steps for implementing the master plan in Oakfield Township which places a focus on adhering to the future land use plan, and supporting a continued priority for agriculture and farmland preservation, supporting recreation opportunities with the regional trails and County parks in the community, and preserving the unique features of the community including the woodlands, rolling topography, and inland lakes.

### Phase 1: Planning and Assessment

- **1.1 Public Engagement:**
  - Conduct community surveys and hold public forums to gather resident input on priorities and concerns.
  - Establish a social media presence to share updates on the planning process and community involvement opportunities through posted agendas for Board and Planning Commission meetings.
  - Prior to road paving, conduct a public meeting and provide a financial assessment of the associated costs and long term return through general fund dollars prior to committing to the project.
  
- **1.2 Inventory and Analysis:**
  - Inventory existing recreational facilities, agricultural land, potential natural area sites, and current zoning regulations to ensure zoning practices align with the Master Plan while protecting private property rights.
  - Analyze regional trail connections and tourism opportunities in collaboration with Kent County.
  
- **1.3 Parks and Recreation:**
  - Consider partnering with adjacent Townships or the County to create a parks and recreation plan and pathway vision for the Township.
  - Continue to invest in the Township Park near the Township Hall and consider upgrades that meet community needs, such as walking paths, pickleball and an updated playground.

## Phase 2: Implementation Strategies

- **2.1 Recreation:**

- Collaborate with Kent County to implement long term vision for improved access and additional lands near Wabasis Lake.
- Organize community events and programs promoting outdoor recreation.

- **2.2 Agricultural and Woodland Preservation:**

- Research and implement agricultural land preservation programs (e.g., purchase of development rights, conservation easements).
- Update the zoning ordinance to prevent large-scale cutting of woodlands, as well as the maintenance of tree buffers along M-57 and other prominent corridors.
- Explore opportunities for agri-tourism development, and add agricultural entertainment uses into the zoning ordinance.

- **2.3 Regional Trails:**

- Collaborate with regional trail organizations to connect the township's trails with existing networks.
- Utilize the Township website and any newsletters to highlight Wabasis Lake, and other nearby County trails, as well as education around the cost and return for road paving projects.

- **2.4 Updated Zoning:**

- Establish zoning regulations that encourage development patterns compatible with agriculture, tourism, and natural area preservation.
- Explore mixed-use zoning options to increase residential living options near commercial corridors and the intersection of M-57 and Lincoln Lake Road.
- Ensure zoning regulations adhere to best practices for environmental protection.
- Consider updated zoning standards for tree preservation along M-57 and other natural beauty roadways.

- **2.5 Enforcement:**

- Continue to follow-up on complaints related to property maintenance.
- Update general law ordinances related to property maintenance and upkeep.
- Provide an on-line reporting form for residents to report any concerns.
- Consider bi-annual “Dumpster Days” at the Township for residents to dispose of items in an effort to improve blight.

### **Phase 3: Monitoring and Evaluation (Ongoing)**

- Monitor progress on achieving the master plan's goals and objectives at each Planning Commission meeting.
- Annually, conduct a joint implementation meeting with the Township Board, ZBA and Planning Commission.
- Regularly engage with Kent County and the community to maintain public support and encourage participation in implementation efforts.

### **Additional Considerations:**

- **Funding:** Identify potential funding sources for each implementation strategy (grants, public-private partnerships, general fund, fundraising).
- **Staffing:** Assess staffing needs to implement the plan and identify potential partners for expertise.
- **Capacity Building:** Provide training for township officials and staff on relevant topics like planning and zoning, grant writing, environmental protection, and recreation.

### **Success Factors:**

- Strong community engagement throughout the planning and implementation process.
- Effective collaboration with regional partners (Kent County, trail organizations, agricultural agencies).
- Secure and diversified funding sources.
- Commitment and leadership from township officials and residents.

By following these steps and considering the additional factors, this implementation plan can guide the rural township towards achieving the goals of its master plan and building a vibrant, sustainable future.