

# ONTWA TOWNSHIP & VILLAGE OF EDWARDSBURG

## Joint Master Plan

Adopted by the Village of Edwardsburg: February 17, 2025  
Adopted by Ontwa Township: February 10, 2025



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The Village of Edwardsburg and Ontwa Township benefited from significant collaboration between Village and Township staff and leadership, the Planning Commissions, and citizens of the community. Without this support and input, completion of this plan would not have been possible.

Prepared with professional assistance from:

**williams&works**

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# INTRODUCTION

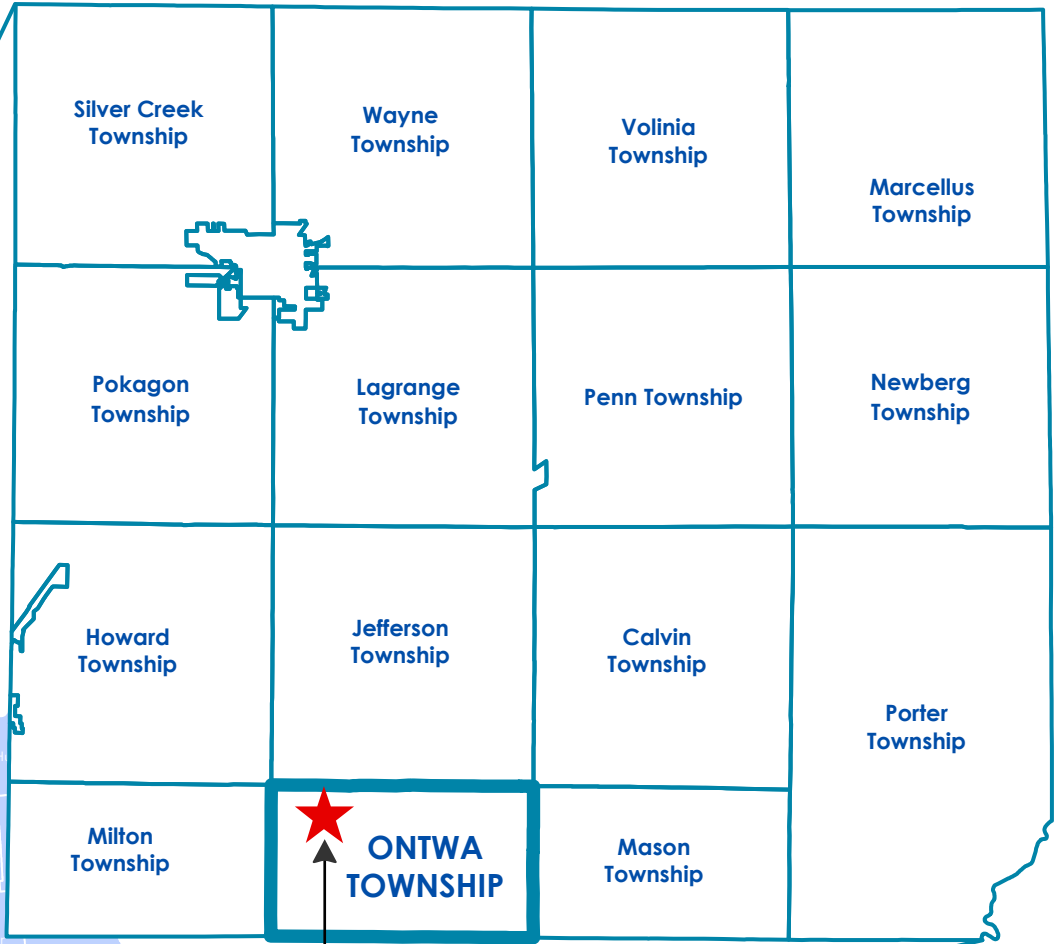
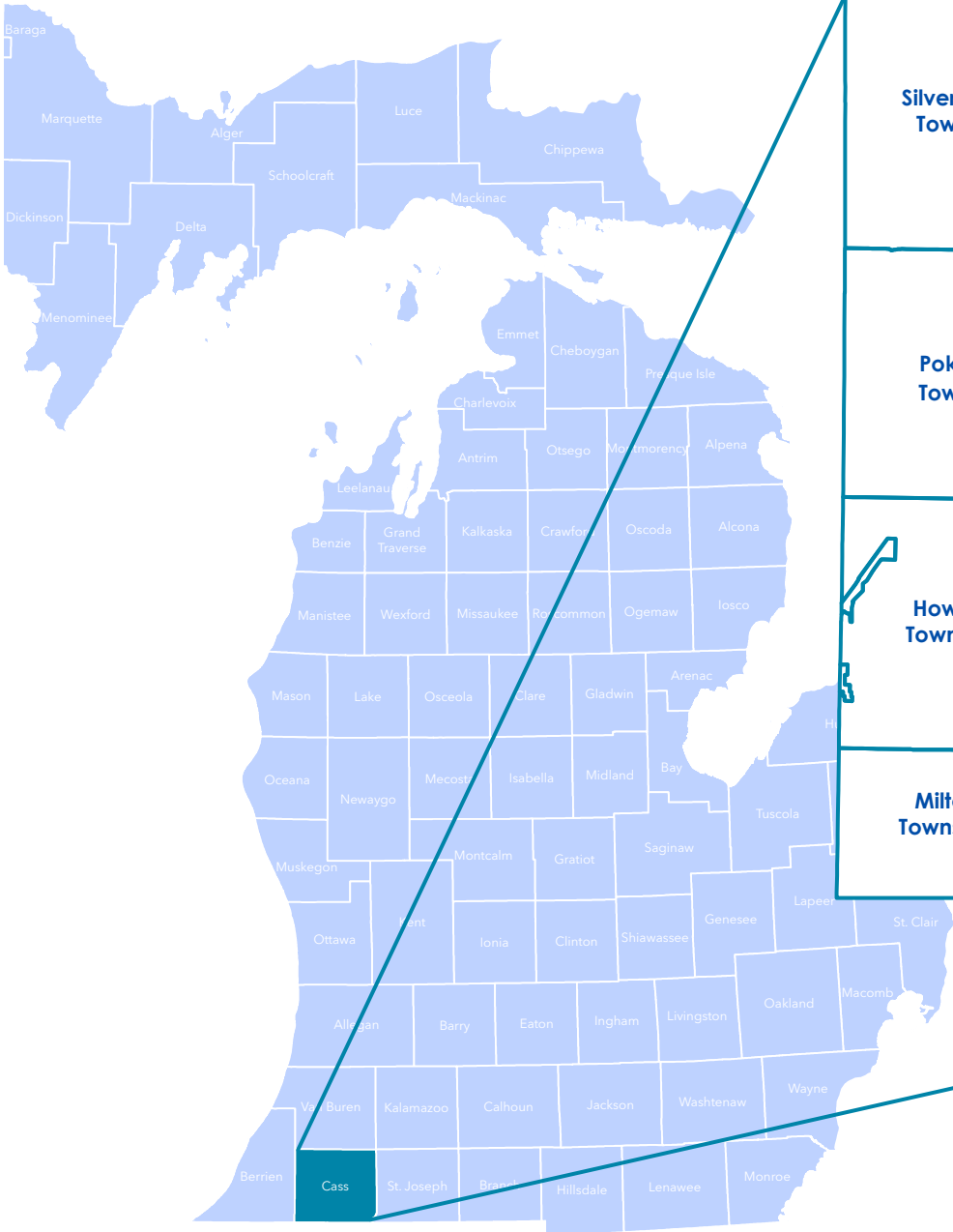
The background features a solid dark blue upper section. Below this, there are two overlapping, wavy, light blue shapes that create a sense of movement and depth. The bottom-most section of the image is a plain white background.



## Introduction

Ontwa Township occupies 21 square miles in southwest Cass County, Michigan. Its adjacent communities tend to be rural and include Jefferson Township, Mason Township, and Milton Township, which lie to the north, east, and west, respectively, of Ontwa Township. The Village of Edwardsburg consists of just under one square mile located within the northwest portion of Ontwa Township. Ontwa Township borders Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties in Indiana to the south, and portions of the township are located in the South Bend-Niles Urbanized Area.

The Ontwa Township/Edwardsburg community's location to major metropolitan hubs provides for easy access to Chicago, (a two-hour drive), Detroit (three hours), and Indianapolis (three hours). Additionally, the South Bend International Airport is within a half-hour of the community. Its proximity to jobs, shopping, retail, restaurants, malls, educational institutions, and medical facilities draws residents seeking a more rural atmosphere with many of the amenities of urban life. Edwardsburg Public Schools are among the finest, and the rural setting of Ontwa Township is attractive to developers and homebuyers. In addition, the community is home to numerous popular inland lakes including Eagle Lake, Christiana Lake, Garver Lake, Pleasant Lake, and a portion of Juno Lake, which attracts tourists and visitors to the community.



**VILLAGE OF  
EDWARDSBURG**



The purpose of this Master Plan is to enable the Township and Village to establish a future direction for the community's physical development. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended, specifically gives Township and Village Planning Commissions the authority to prepare and officially adopt a plan. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, Public Act 110 of 2006, as amended, authorizes communities to adopt and enforce zoning ordinances based upon a plan for the community. Once prepared, adopted, and maintained, this Plan will serve as an advisory guide for the physical conservation of certain areas and the development of other areas.

This Master Plan reflects the community's deep concern for the rural character, a desire to manage growth and development, and a strong commitment to retain and strengthen the local quality of life for future generations. It outlines the preferred future for the community and a comprehensive plan to realize it. The Master Plan is intentionally general, recognizing that planning for the

future is a delicate blend of art and science and that sufficient flexibility will be needed to respond to future challenges. There is constant change in our social, political, and economic structure, so the Plan must be maintained through periodic review and revision so that it reflects contemporary trends while maintaining long-range goals.

In previous years, the Township maintained its own Master Plan, while the Village participated in planning process led by Cass County. In 2023, the Township and Village deemed it appropriate to participate in a joint effort to develop this Master Plan. Both the Village and Township were instrumental in the preparation of this plan, and, while separately adopted by the Township and Village, this plan represents both communities.

The Master Plan will be effective to the degree that it:

- Reflects the needs and desires of the residents of Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg;
- Realistically interprets and reflects the conditions, trends, and economic and social pressures that are brought about by change; and
- Inspires consensus and cooperation among the various public agencies, developers, and the citizens of the Township and Village toward achieving common goals.

## The Purpose of the Master Plan

The effort to create a joint Master Plan in 2023-2024 was a significant one as it includes the newest Census and American Community Survey (ACS) data and is based on a robust public engagement process along with a thorough review of policies and recommendations for both the Village and the Township.

When updating a Master plan, it is important to understand the scale and scope of recent development and the likely future trends in the community. The Township and Village must also clearly define community priorities regarding growth, development, and land use, based on community consensus about the future. Finally, each community must establish realistic and effective mechanisms to achieve the plan's goals and objectives within their own governmental structures.

This Plan will serve the Township and Village in the following ways:

1. It provides a comprehensive means of integrating proposals that look years ahead to meet future needs regarding general aspects of physical conservation and development throughout the Township and Village;
2. It serves as the official advisory policy statement to encourage orderly and efficient use of the land for agriculture, residences, businesses, and industry, and to coordinate these uses of land with each other, with streets and highways, and other public facilities and services;
3. It creates a logical basis for zoning, subdivision design, public improvement plans, and facilitates and guides the work of the Township and Village Planning Commissions, legislative bodies, and other public and private endeavors dealing with the physical conservation and development of the Township and Village;
4. It provides a means for private organizations and individuals to determine how they may relate their building and development projects to official Township and Village planning policies; and
5. It offers a means of relating the plans of Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg to the plans of other communities in the region.





## The Relationship of Planning to Zoning

The relationship between land use planning and zoning is an important one. Planning is basically the act of planning the uses of land within a community for the future from a policy standpoint, while zoning is the act of regulating the use of these lands by law or ordinance. The laws of the State of Michigan require that a community engage in land use planning activities, including the preparation of a comprehensive plan or Master Plan, prior to the initiation of a zoning ordinance in a community.

Land use planning is the process of guiding the future growth and development of a community. Generally, a document known as the Master Plan is prepared, which addresses the various factors relating to the growth of a community. Through the processes of land use planning, it is intended that a community can preserve, promote, protect, and improve public health, safety, and general welfare. Additional considerations include: comfort, good

order, appearance, convenience, law enforcement and fire protection, preventing the overcrowding of land to avoid undue concentration of population, facilitating the adequate and efficient provision of transportation, water, sewage requirements and services, and conservation, development, utilization and protection of natural resources within the community.

Zoning is one of the instruments, along with capital improvements programming, the administration of local subdivision regulations, and other functions, that implements the goals and policies of a Master Plan. The enactment and administration of zoning ordinances are legislative and administrative processes conducted by local units of government relating to the implementation of the goals and policies of the Master Plan.



## Local History

From the day that Ezra Beardsley stopped to gaze at pretty Pleasant Lake and visualize his future along its shore, lakes have been a focal point for development of Ontwa Township and Edwardsburg. The area was originally called Beardsley's Prairie, after the first settler in this charming village close to the Indiana state line. The native prairie grasses and wildflowers were a beautiful sight to view.

Edwardsburg was the location of several important historical events. Where the village now stands was the camping grounds of Indian tribes and they held their councils of war and peace within a stone's throw of the place where a survey party took their observations to establish a baseline for the survey of Southwestern Michigan land. Cass County's first court session and the first Board of Supervisors' meeting were held in this village. The Village was platted in 1831 by Alexander A. Edwards and named for Thomas Edwards. Ontwa was named for an Indian girl employed by Thomas Edwards, who was the first clerk of the township.

The Village grew rapidly until the 1850s when the Michigan Southern Railway went to Elkhart, Indiana and the Michigan Central to Niles. In the 1870s the Peninsular Railroad (now the Canadian National Railroad) was constructed through the Village.

The Edwardsburg Museum proudly displays local history and is partially lodged in the boarding house connected to the Sherman Hotel. A replica of the hotel was reconstructed in 2006 to expand the Museum, which features special displays and programs on a monthly basis between May and November.

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Chapter 1

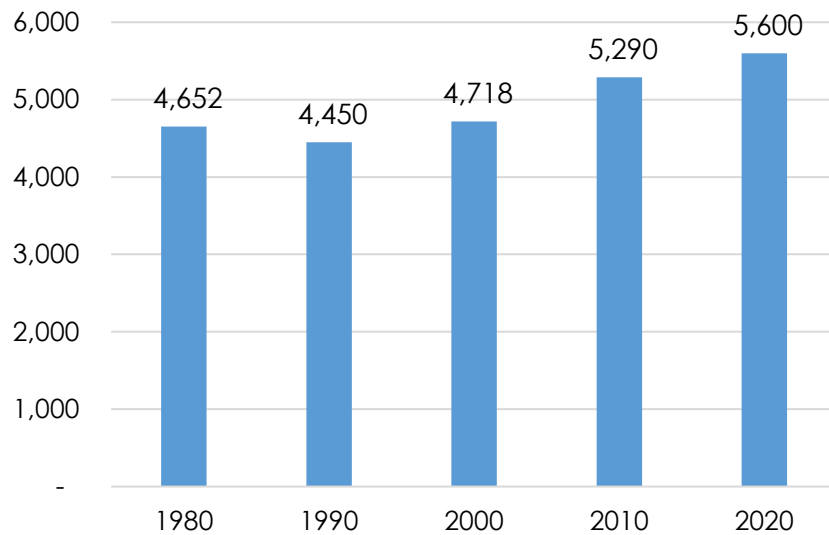
# POPULATION & ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

This Chapter presents a collection and analysis of basic factors relating to the Township's and Village's social and economic characteristics. By comparing the available data, it is possible to identify trends in population and housing, as well as the economic and labor force composition of the community. Viewed historically, and in relation to surrounding communities and the region, these trends give valuable insights into potential future conditions and serve as a basis for projections of future population, housing, and economic conditions. Unless specifically stated otherwise, data presented below for Ontwa Township also includes the Village of Edwardsburg.

## Population Characteristics

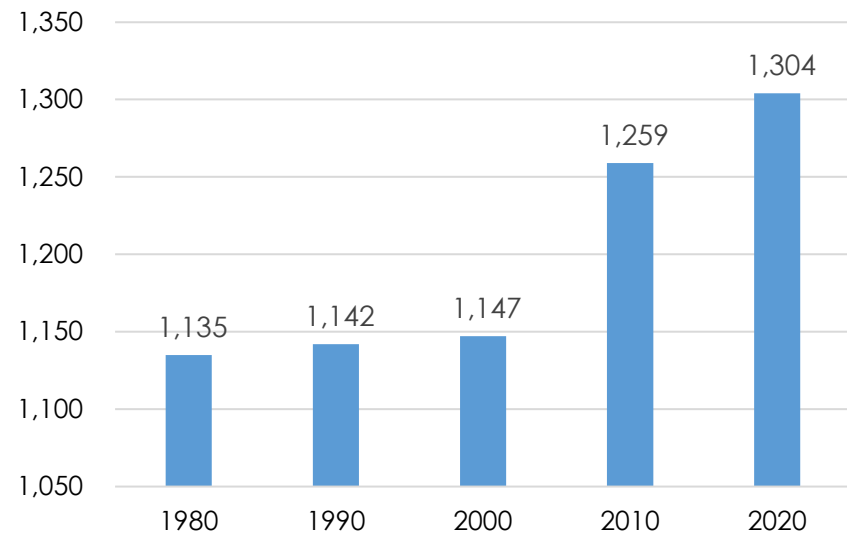
Figures 1-1 and 1-2 provide a visual for population growth from 1980-2020 in Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg, respectively. The 2020 Census revealed that the Township and Village populations have continued their upward trajectories with Ontwa Township gaining 310 residents since 2010 (a 6% increase) and the Village of Edwardsburg gaining 45 residents (a 4% increase).

**Figure 1-1. Ontwa Township Population, 1980-2020**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

**Figure 1-2. Village of Edwardsburg Population, 1980-2020**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

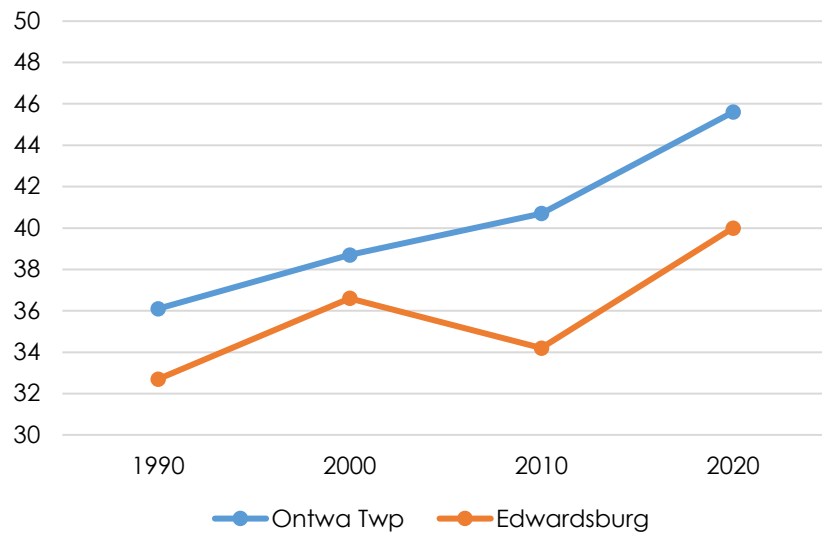
**Table 1-1. Historical Population Change**

Community	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	Change (2010-2020)	Percent Change (2010-2020)	Average Growth Per Year (2010-2020)
Ontwa Township (w/o Edwardsburg)	4,652	4,450	4,718	5,290	5,600	310	6%	31
Village of Edwardsburg	1,135	1,142	1,147	1,259	1,304	45	4%	36
Calvin Township	1,643	1,813	2,041	2,037	1,993	-44	-2%	5
Howard Township	6,524	6,378	6,309	6,207	6,275	68	1%	-4
Jefferson Township	1,963	2,057	2,401	2,541	2,590	49	2%	7
Mason Township	2,132	2,450	2,514	2,945	2,841	-104	-4%	-10
Milton Township	2,235	2,284	2,646	3,878	3,128	-750	-19%	-75
Cass County	49,499	49,453	51,035	51,952	51,589	-363	-1%	-36

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020

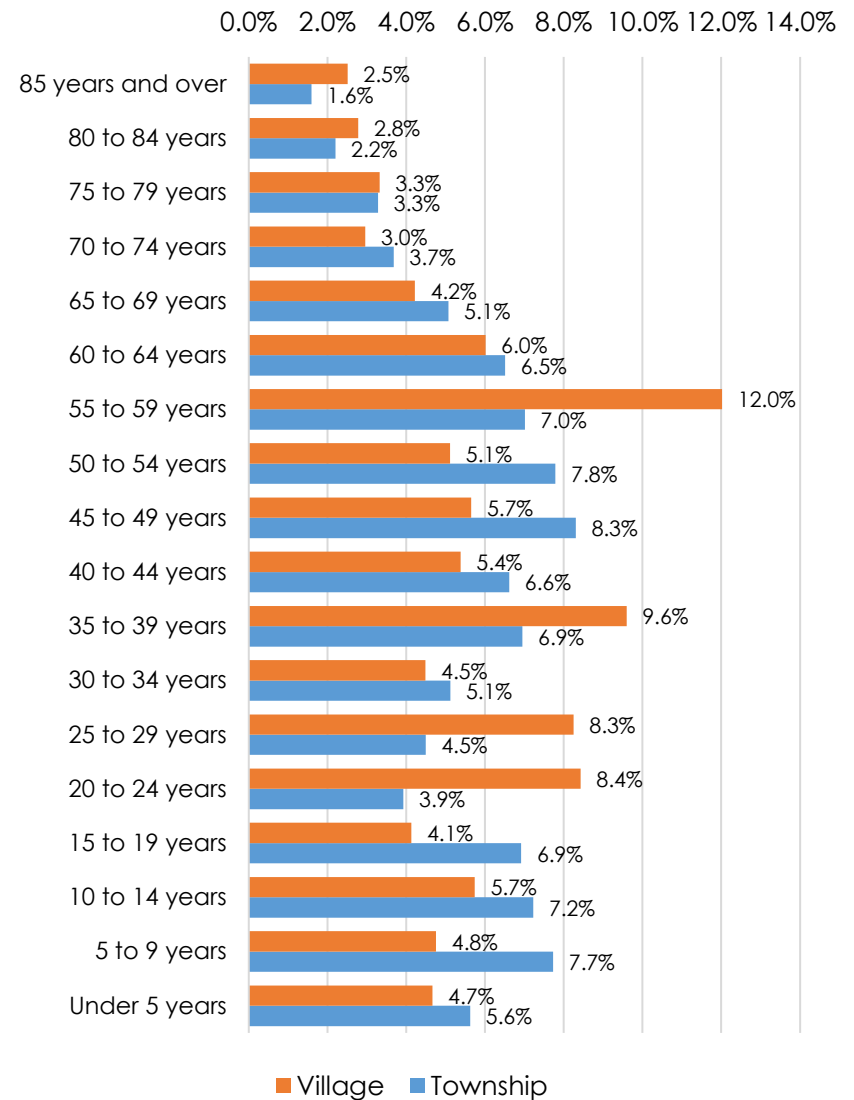
Figure 1-3 illustrates that the median ages in Ontwa Township and Edwardsburg residents is steadily rising. Between 2010 and 2020, the median age in Ontwa Township increased by about 9.6%, or 4 years, from 41.6 to 45.6 years respectively. In comparison, the median age for Cass County overall is 45.5 years, while the median age for Michigan is 39.7 years. The median age for the Village of Edwardsburg was estimated to be 40 years in 2020.

**Figure 1-3. Change in Median Age, 2000-2020**



Source: U.S. Census (1990, 2000), American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2010, 2020)

**Figure 1-4 Age Distribution 2020**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2020

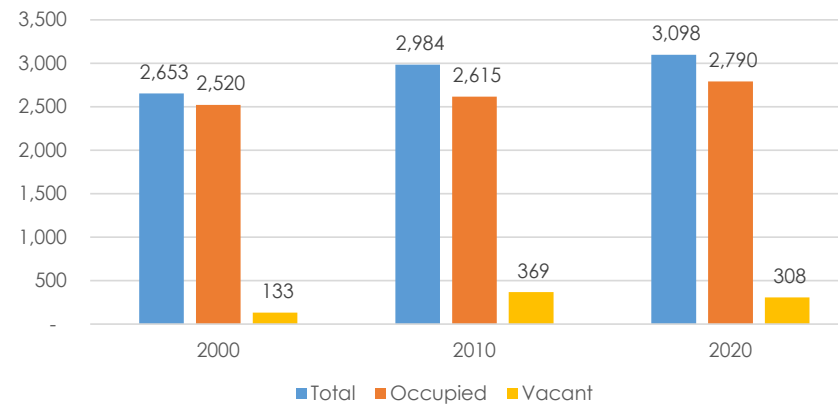
## Housing Characteristics

The number of housing units has increased in the Township, which can be expected given the population increase. As shown in Figure 1-5, the 2020 Census indicated that 3,098 housing units exist in the Township, an increase of 114 units (3.8%) from 2010. Note that the housing units data for the Township also includes housing units from the Village of Edwardsburg. The 2020 Census reported a total of 586 housing units in the Village of Edwardsburg, compared to 569 in 2010.

The average household size in 2020 decreased from 2.50 to 2.35 persons in the Township and from 2.62 to 2.02 persons in the Village, which is reflective of the national trend of shrinking households as there are more “empty nest” households and people are having fewer children than previous generations.

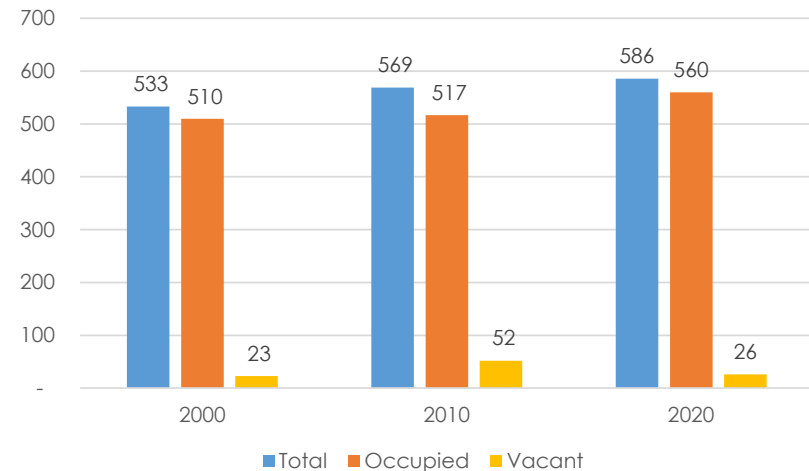
The 2020 Census reports that there are 3,098 total housing units in the Township, and 586 in the Village. 308 of those in the Township are vacant, and 26 are vacant in the Village. According to the 2020 American Community Survey most of the vacant units (~80%) are estimated to be seasonally vacant, which is unsurprising given that seasonal housing is common around the Township’s many popular inland lakes. Seasonal vacant housing units include those that are used for summer or winter sport/recreation, such as cottages and hunting cabins, and intended for occupancy in certain seasons of the year.

**Figure 1-5 Ontwa Township Housing Units by Occupancy, 2000-2020**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020

**Figure 1-6 Village of Edwardsburg Housing Units by Occupancy, 2000-2020**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020



# Building Permits

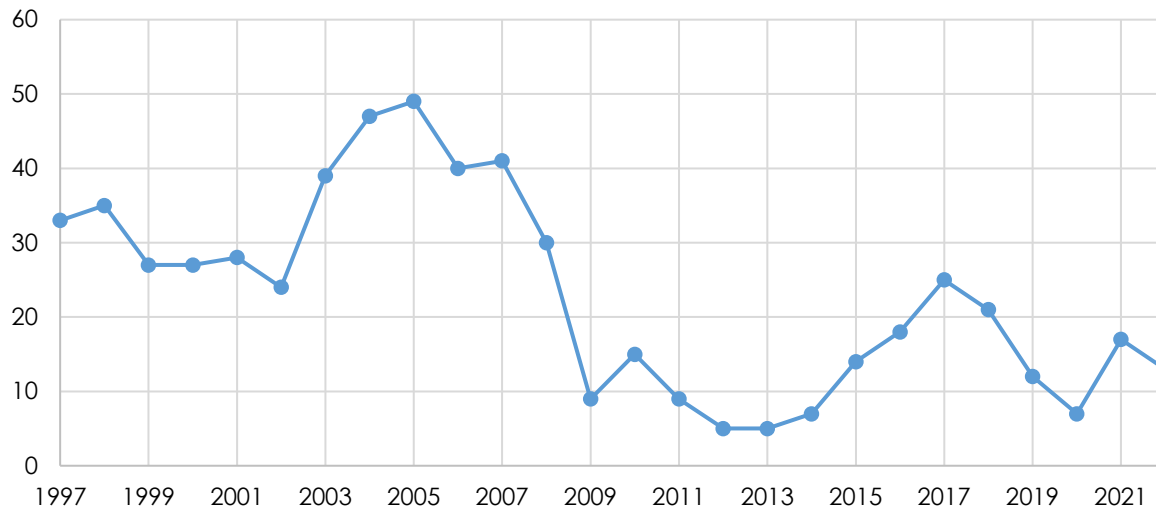
**Table 1-2 Ontwa Twp Building Permits, 1997-2023**

The data in Table 1-2 provides the number of residential building permits issued in Ontwa Township from 1997 to 2010. The Township experienced a high rate of development from 2003 to 2008; however new home construction declined between 2009 and 2014. In 2009, the Great Recession was just beginning, putting a damper on building growth nationwide. The reduction in building permits issued from 2009 through 2013 mirrors the “great recession” of the late 2000s and early 2010s. Data from 2014 through 2022 illustrate the recovery and strengthening of the economy, though building permits still remain far below pre-recession levels. The Village of Edwardsburg has issued 15 building permits for new homes in the Village since 1997.

The Ontwa/Edwardsburg community is a desirable place to locate due to its proximity to urban amenities such as shopping, retail, restaurants, and universities, yet rural atmosphere and open spaces. The Township has quality primary, secondary, and high schools. The many inland lakes provide scenic and recreational qualities that attract residential growth.

Year	Number of Permits
1997	33
1998	35
1999	27
2000	27
2001	28
2002	24
2003	39
2004	47
2005	49
2006	40
2007	41
2008	30
2009	9
2010	15
2011	9
2012	5
2013	5
2014	7
2015	14
2016	18
2017	25
2018	21
2019	12
2020	7
2021	17
2022	13
2023	11

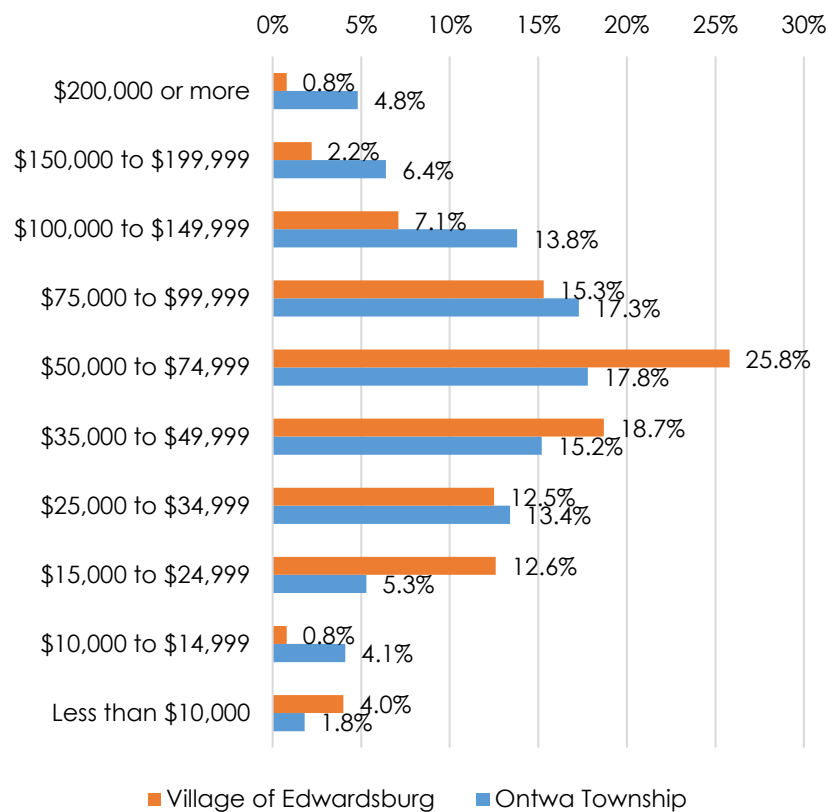
**Figure 1-7 Number of Building Permits, Ontwa Township**



## Economic Characteristics

In 2020, the median income for Ontwa Township was estimated to be \$61,628, compared to \$49,883 in 2010. In the Village, the median income was 47,313 in 2020 compared to 33,387 in 2010.

**Figure 1-8 Income Cohort, 2020**



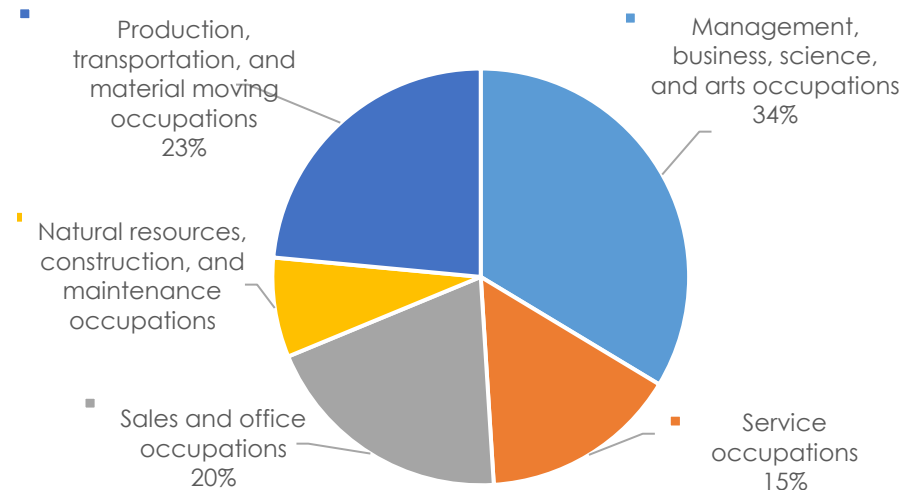
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

2020 American Community Survey estimates state that 633 people (~9.7% of the population) in the Township were estimated to be below the poverty level, and in the Village 151 people (~13.5% of the population) were below the poverty level, which is similar to that of Cass County (10%) and the state of Michigan (13.7%).

## Occupational Characteristics

Figure 1-9 illustrates the occupations of residents 16 years of age and over in the Village and Township who were employed in 2020 by industry (ACS 5-year estimates). The leading occupation group was management, professional, and related occupations at 33.6% followed closely by production, transportation, and material moving at 23.5% and sales and office occupations at 19.8%.

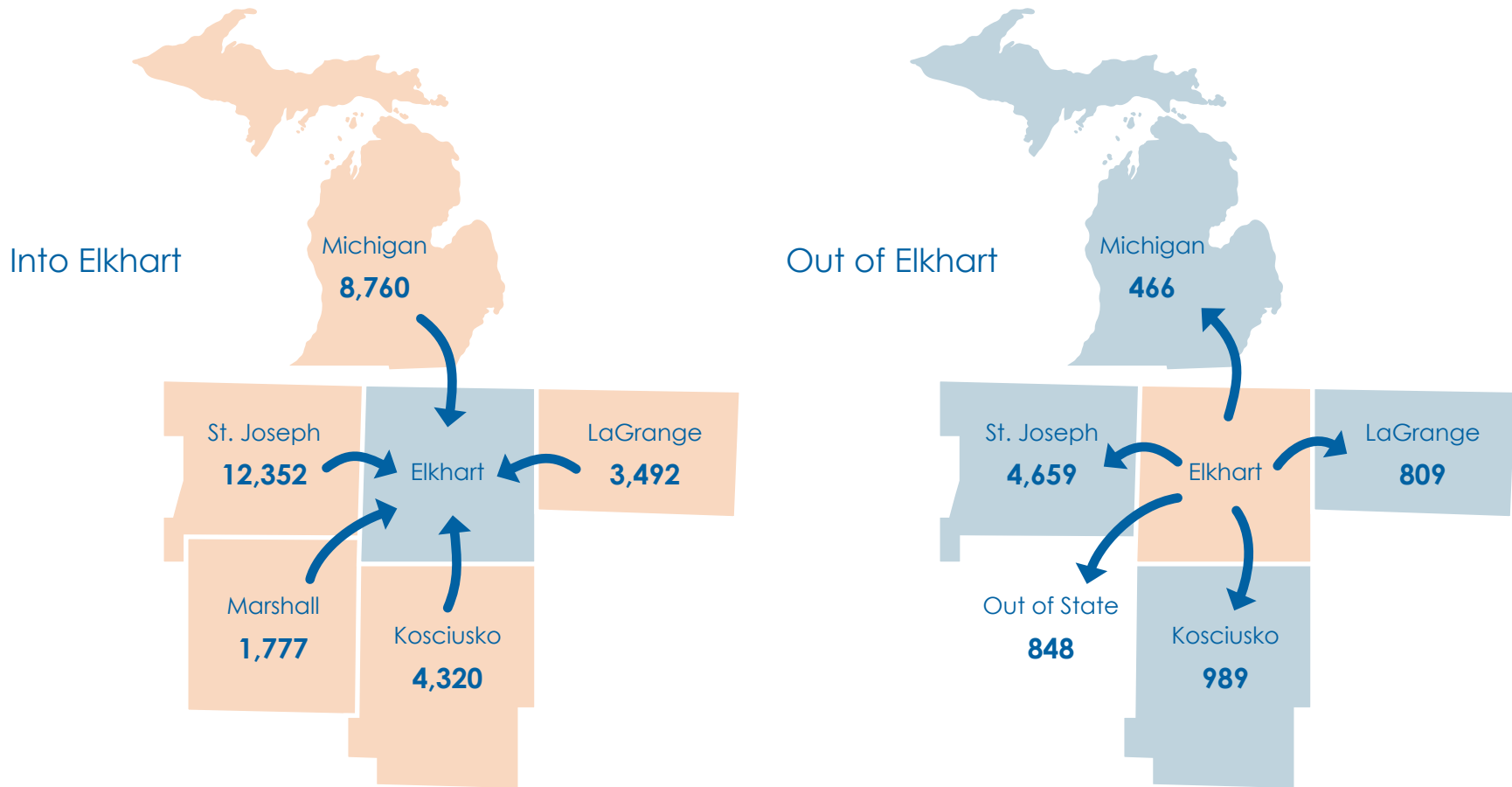
**Figure 1-9 Occupation by Type, 2020**



In 2020, 91.6% of employed residents in the Village and Township used private vehicles to travel, 3.3% walked to work and 3.7% worked from home. The average travel time to work was 25.6 minutes.

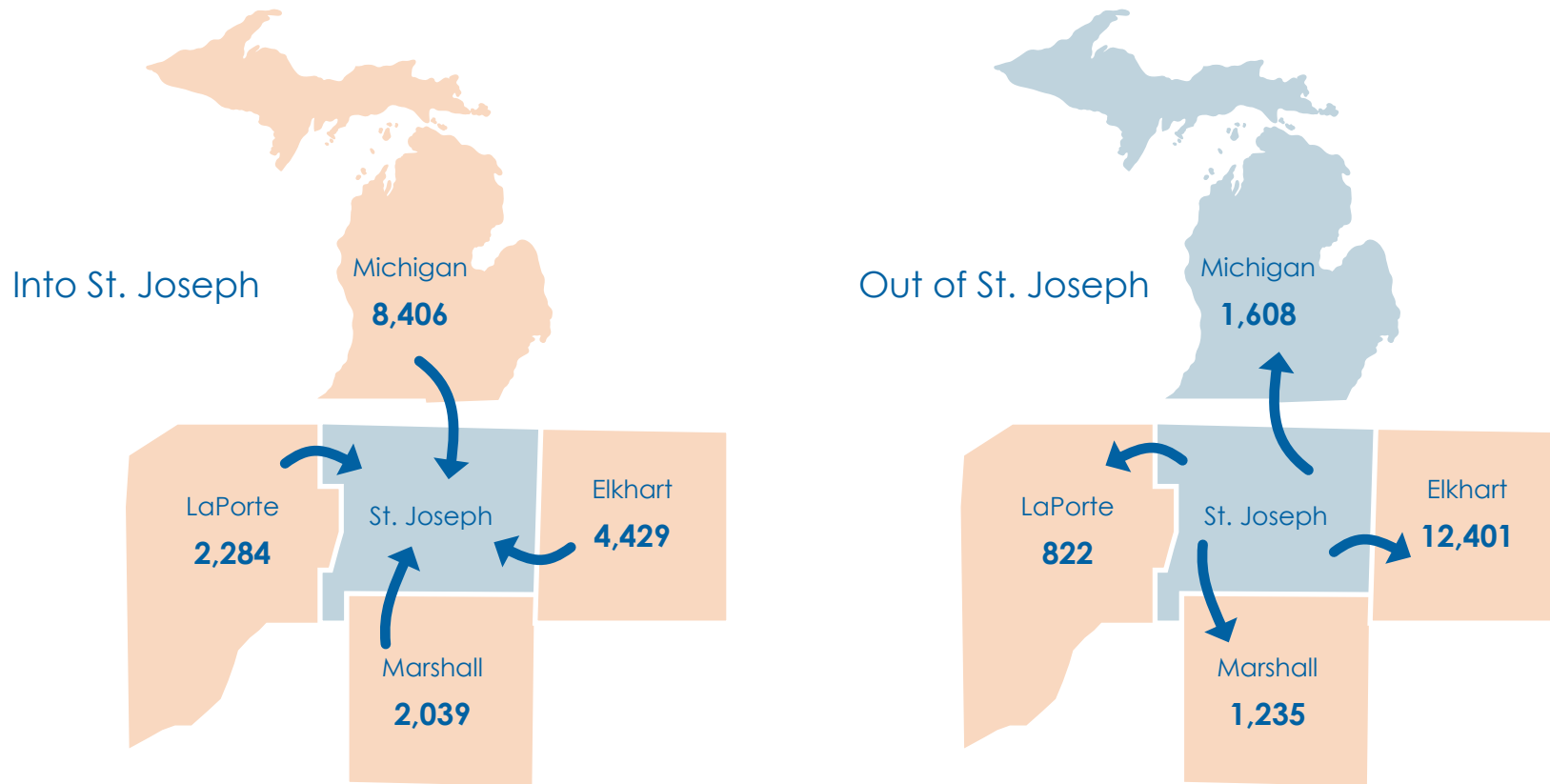
Figure 1-10 below represents the 2021 Tax Year Commuting Patterns for this region between Indiana and Michigan and Figure 1-11 represents the 2022 Tax Year Commuting Patterns for St. Joseph County.

**Figure 1-10 Commuting Profiles**



Source: STATS Indiana Commuting Profiles Tax Year: 2021

Figure 1-11 Commuting Profiles - St. Joseph County



Source: STATS Indiana Commuting Profiles Tax Year: 2022

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Chapter 2

# NATURAL FEATURES



## Natural Features

The natural environment has a significant influence on the development of land use patterns in Ontwa Township, helping to shape what the community is today. Natural features can both limit land use and attract it. While failure to acknowledge environmental constraints can lead to costly problems, integration of natural features into an overall Master Plan can enhance the quality of life for residents and help preserve the character of the community. Some constraints might include the capacity of wastewater services delivered through the Township's sewer agreements with the City of Elkhart, Indiana and the fact that both municipal and private groundwater is sourced from a sole source aquifer.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that there are land areas that serve a vital function in terms of cultivation, drainage, and wildlife habitat which may never be suitable for urban development.

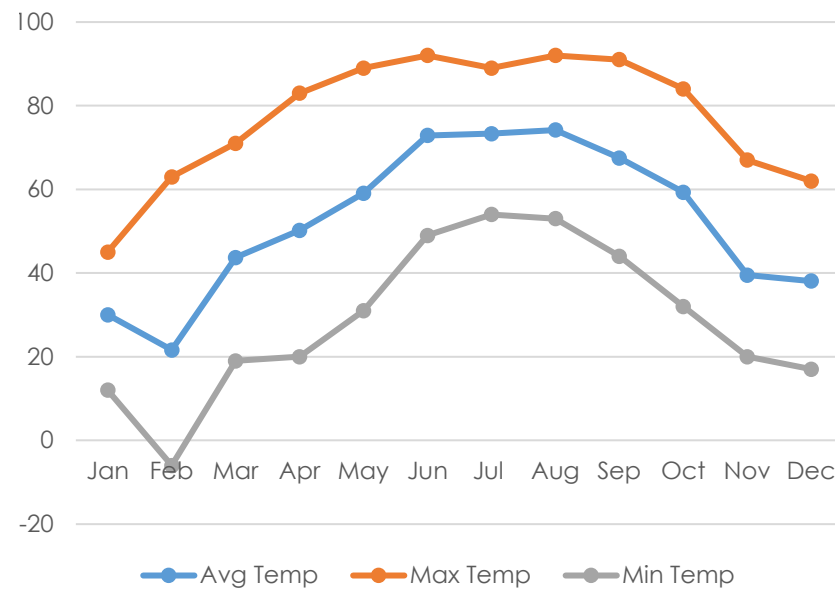
Given the Village of Edwardsburg's location within the Township, the profile of natural features applies to both the Village and the Township, though given the more urbanized nature of the Village there is greater focus on lands within the Township in this Chapter. Following is a discussion of the natural features in the community as they pertain to broad planning considerations.

# Climate

Ontwa Township and Edwardsburg are located approximately 30 miles east of Lake Michigan. The surrounding areas are affected by Lake Michigan often generating “lake effect” snow and rain. Weather data from weatherdb.com for the South Bend, IN station is listed below. The average rainfall (30-year average) is 42.2 inches, while snowfall is reported at 51.2 inches annually.

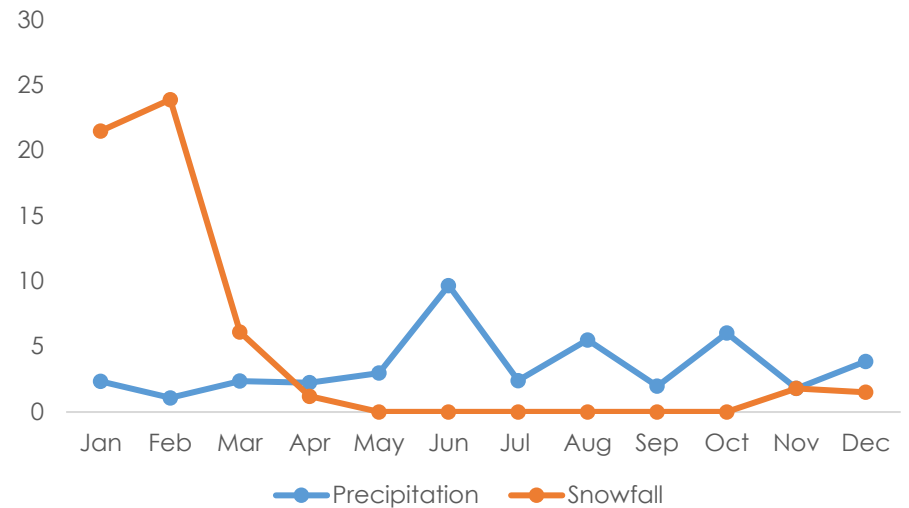
The following charts provide a snapshot of the average high and low temperatures for the region and the average rainfall and snowfall in inches.

**Figure 2-1 Regional Climate Data, 2021**



Source: National Weather Service

**Figure 2-2 Regional Precipitation/Snowfall Data, 2021**



Source: National Weather Service

# Topography

The topography in Ontwa Township and Edwardsburg varies from nearly level to somewhat hilly. Only a few slopes exceed 12 percent and therefore topography generally does not pose a major constraint to development.

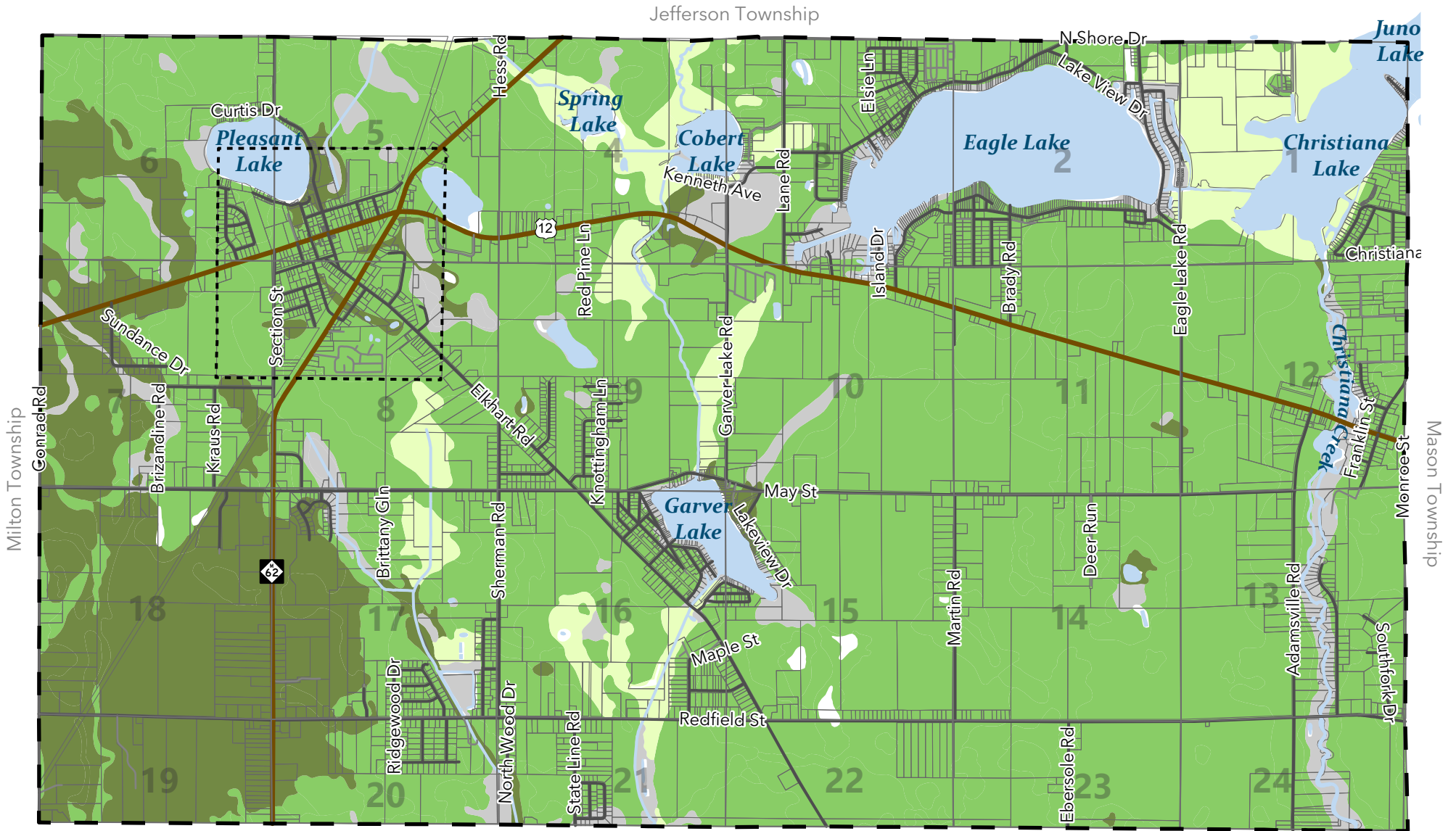


## Soils

Soils range from well-drained and moderately well-drained loams and clays to poorly-drained organic soils. While many properties in the Village and Township are connected to public sewer services, many residents and undeveloped areas of the Township must rely on septic fields for the disposal of wastewater. The location of these various soil types is an important consideration for future development and infrastructure for the Township.

The characteristics of soil composition are one of the most significant elements in land use planning. According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, four major soil orders dominate the land cover in Ontwa Township: Alfisols, Mollisols, Histosols, and Entisols, as shown in Map 2.

- Alfisols are moderately leached soils that have a relatively high native fertility. Alfisols with a dominant suborder Udalf, are most commonly found in Michigan. Udalfs form a belt extending through Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio. The combination of generally favorable climate and high native fertility allows alfisols to be productive soils for agricultural uses which relates to the large percentage of prime farmland in Ontwa Township.
- Mollisols are largely distributed in the southwestern corner of the township as shown in Map 2. They are characterized by a thick, fertile horizon. This soil type is among the most important and productive agricultural soils in the world.
- Histosols form in settings such as wetlands where restricted drainage inhibits the decomposition of plant and animal remains. They are often referred to as peats and mucks and have physical properties that restrict their use for engineering purposes. Histosols can be found around the lakes in the northern half of the township, largely around Christiana Lake.
- Entisols are characterized by great diversity, both in environmental settings and land use. All soils that do not fit into one of the other soil orders are consolidated as Entisols.
- Construction costs and risks to the environment can be minimized by developing in areas that have suitable soils. Soils that have more limitations are generally present near wetlands or water bodies. As shown in the map, areas with histosol as their soil type overlap with areas that have construction-related limitations. Very limited indicates that the soil has one or more features that are unfavorable and limitations generally cannot be overcome without soil reclamation, special design considerations, or expensive installation procedures. The map does generally define those areas in which intensive development without improved infrastructure can lead to environmental degradation and health hazards.



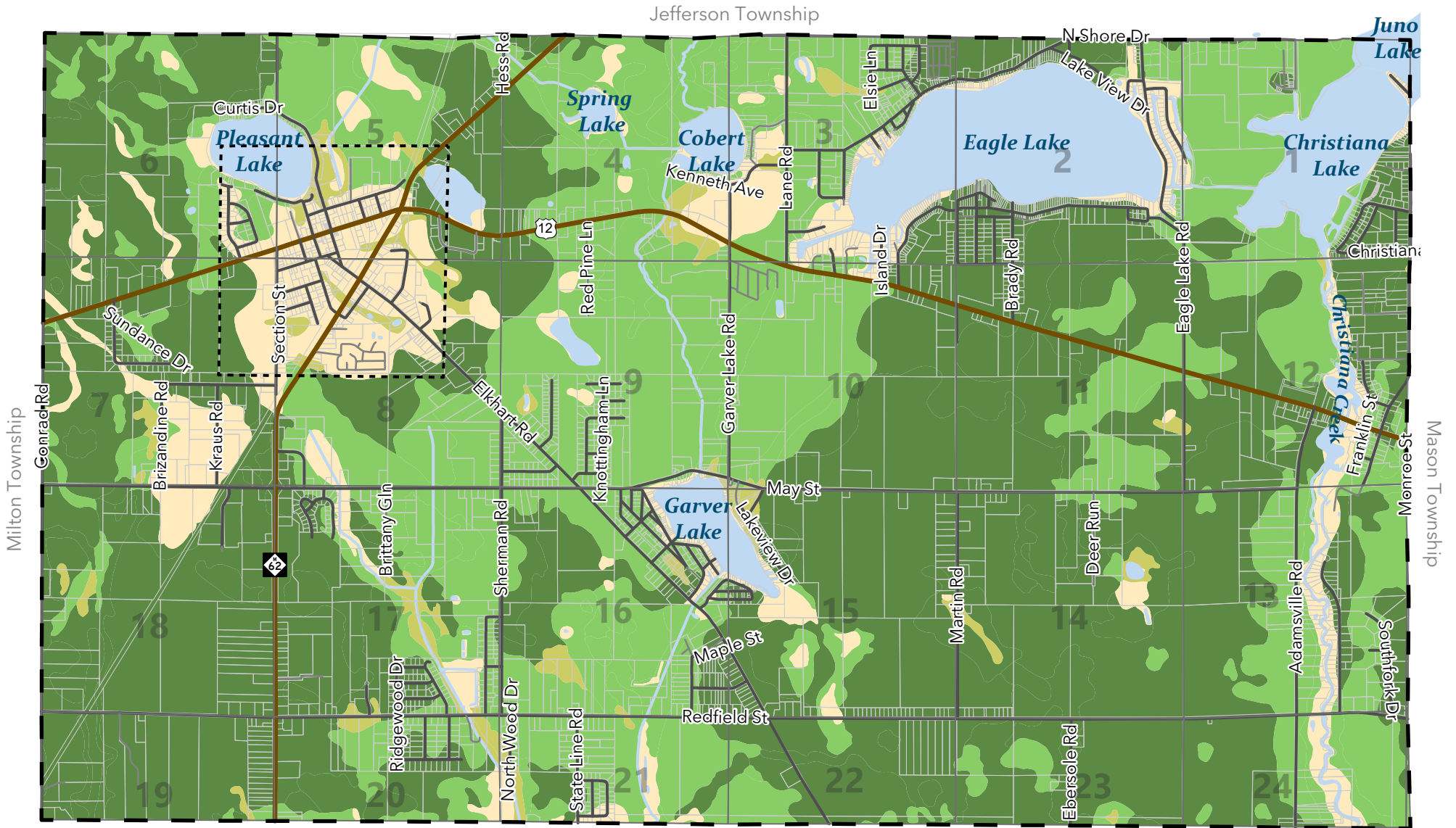
- Alfisols
- Mollisols
- Histosols
- Entisols

- Water
- Township Boundary
- Village of Edwardsburg
- Sections



## Map 2. Soils





- Prime Farmland
- Farmland of local importance
- Prime farmland if drained
- Not prime farmland
- Water
- Village of Edwardsburg
- Township Boundary
- Sections

**Map 3. Prime Farmland**

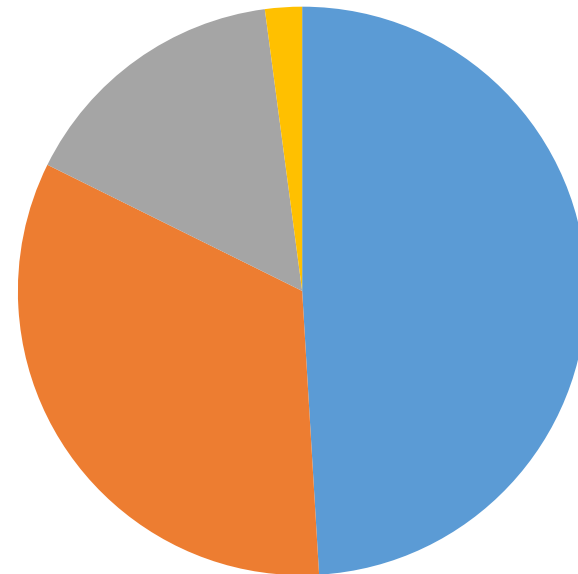


## Prime Farmland

The resource value of soils lies mainly in agriculture. Nearly half of the land in Ontwa Township is recognized as prime farmland while only 18% of the land is not prime farmland or prime farmland if drained. Map 3 illustrates general locations of locally important prime farmland as indicated in the Cass County Soil Survey. Prime farmland, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is the land that is best suited to food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. The soil qualities, growing season, and moisture supply are those needed for well-managed soil to produce a sustained high yield of crops. Prime farmland produces the highest yields with minimal expenditure of energy and economic resources, and farming on these lands generally results in the least damage to the environment.

As shown in Map 3, Ontwa Township also has a large mass of land that is classified as farmland of local importance. In some areas that are not identified as having national or statewide importance, land is considered to be “farmland of local importance.” This farmland type is identified by the appropriate local agencies. Farmland of local importance may include tracts of land that have been designated for agriculture by local ordinance. About 33% of the land in Ontwa Township is reported to be farmland of local importance.

Figure 2-3 Percentage of Prime Farmland



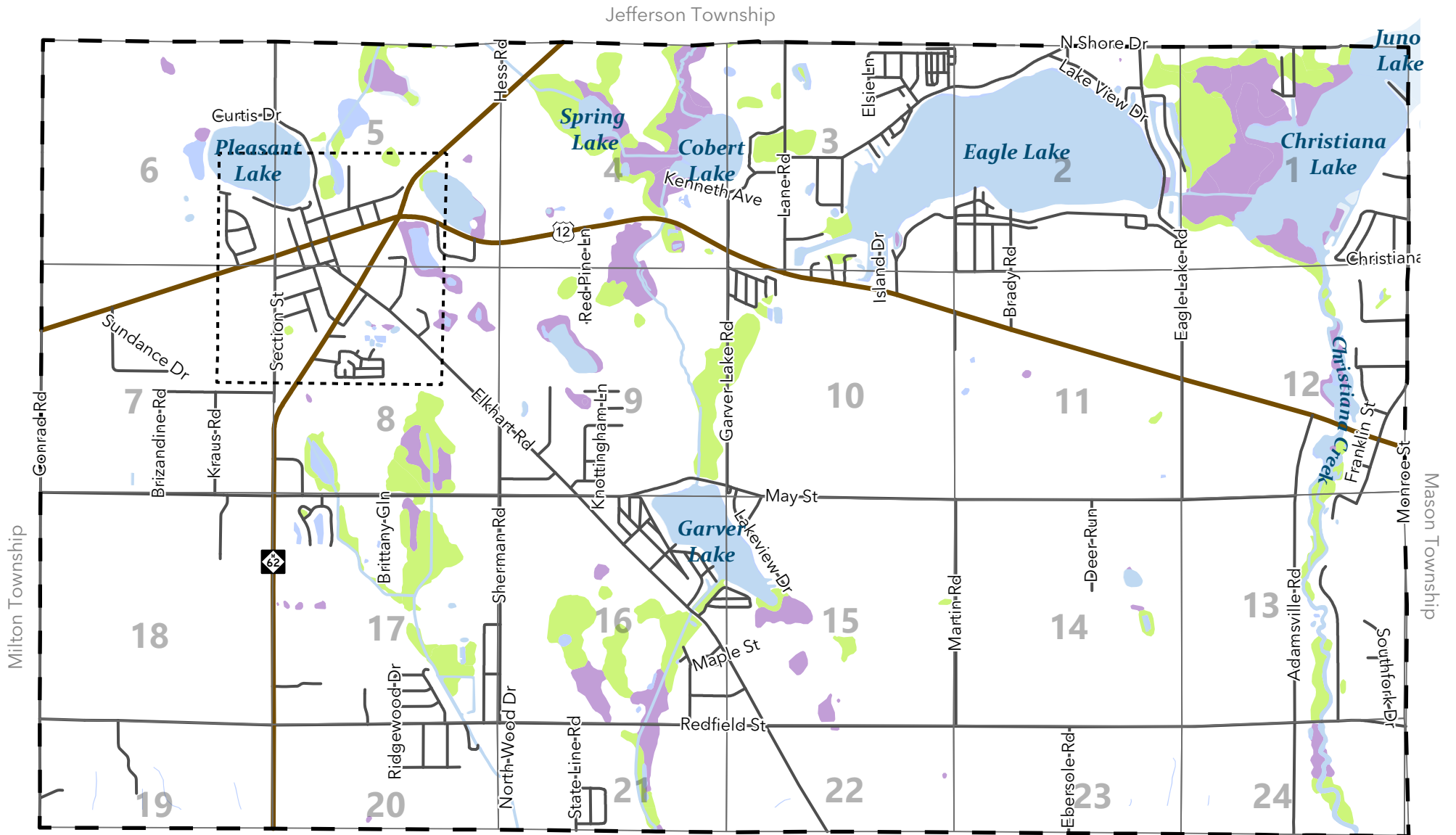
- All areas are prime farmland
- Farmland of local importance
- Not prime farmland
- Prime farmland if drained



## Wetlands

Map 4 indicates the areas that are considered wetlands within the Township and Village. Wetlands usually refer to swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas often found between open water and higher elevated areas. Wetlands are valuable natural resources that provide many important benefits to the natural environment such as helping to improve the water quality and reduce flood and storm drainage. They also provide important fish and wildlife habitat. In Ontwa Township, there are several pockets of wetlands throughout the Township with the largest pocket located along the west portion of Christiana Lake and around Christiana Creek. About 26% of the wetlands in the Township are classified as freshwater forested/shrub wetlands followed by freshwater emergent wetlands (21%). The rest of the wetlands are classified as lakes, ponds, and streams.

Although on site analyses are needed to verify the specific boundaries of wetlands, most are protected by Michigan's wetland statute, Part 303, Wetlands Protection, of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended. This Act places strict limits on the type of development which may take place. The areas encompassed as wetlands on Map 4 were derived from the National Wetlands Inventory (U.S. Department of the Interior). In Ontwa Township, wetlands greater than 5 acres in area are regulated by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE).



- Freshwater Emergent Wetland
- Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland
- Lakes & Ponds
- Streams
- Village of Edwardsburg
- Township Boundary
- Sections

**Map 4. Wetlands**



## Wildlife

The brush, woodlands, wetlands, native grasslands, agricultural crops and waterways in Ontwa Township provide good habitat for wildlife.

Wildlife in Ontwa Township includes white-tailed deer, cottontail rabbits, raccoons, squirrels, coyotes, red and gray fox, eagles, muskrat, mink, opossum, skunk, various songbirds and waterfowl, ruffed grouse, sandhill cranes, turkey and woodcocks. The Township's abundance of lakes, waterways, and associated wetlands provide excellent fishing with various panfish, pike, and bass being the most common species.



## Lakes and Streams

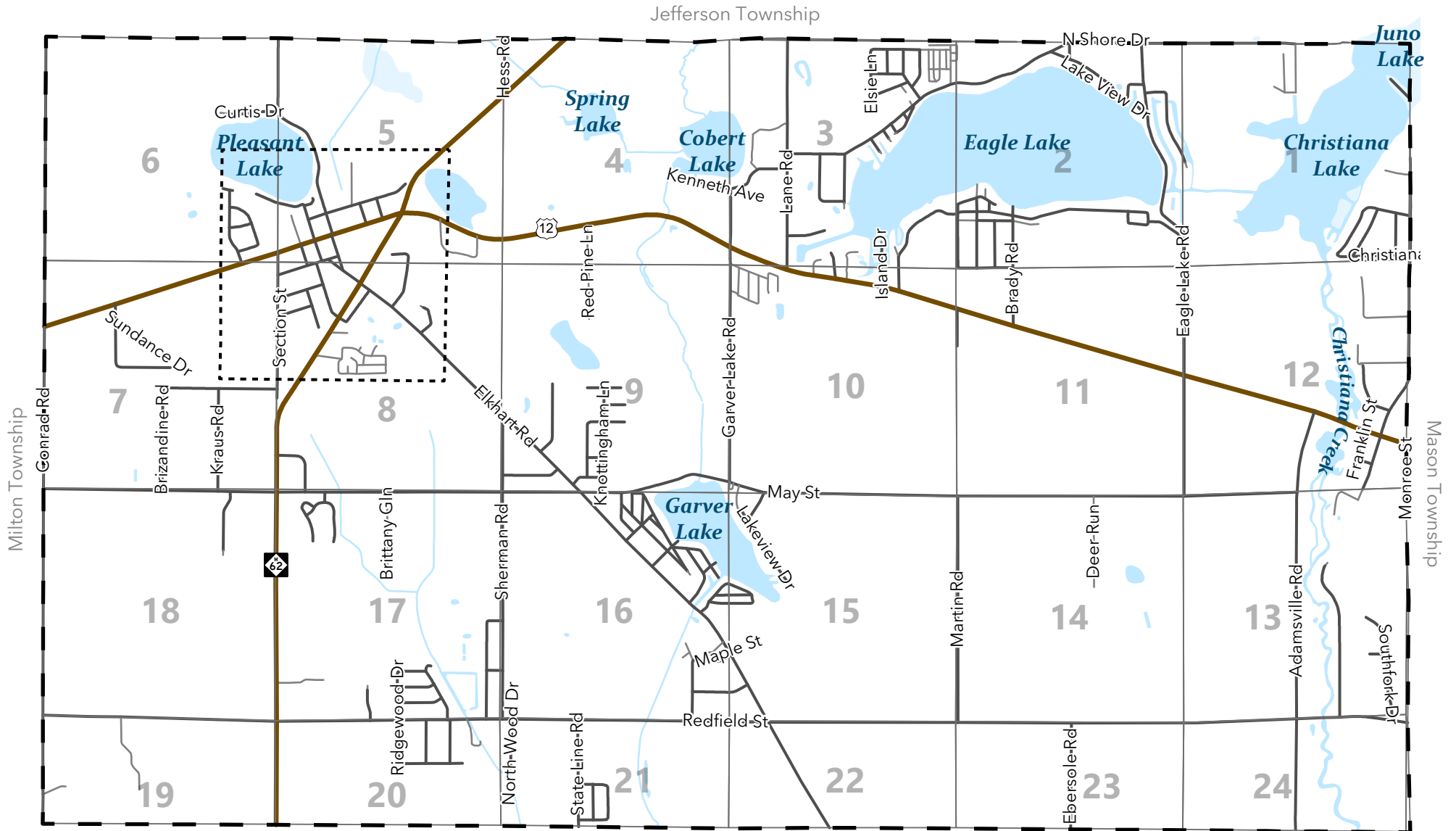
Located within Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg are five named lakes: Christiana, Cobert, Eagle, Painter, Spring, Garver, and Pleasant. A portion of Juno Lake also lies within the boundaries of Ontwa Township. Christiana Creek flows to Elkhart, Indiana and a small stream flows from Cobert Lake to Garver Lake and then south to Indiana. Brande Creek is in the southwest portion of the Township and also flows to Indiana. Eagle Lake is entirely spring-fed and flows to Christiana Lake.

Lakes and streams are important natural resources for the Village and Township. Besides offering recreation like fishing, swimming, and boating, the area lakes provide habitat for fish and wildlife. As places of beauty, the lakes offer aesthetic enjoyment. Some of the lakes have large

wetland areas which also provide wildlife habitat, prevent shoreline erosion, filter runoff, and protect against floods. The greatest population densities in the Township outside of Edwardsburg are the areas adjacent to the lakes and along the streams. Over the years, many of the former cottages have been converted to year-round homes which now represent the majority of lakeside housing. The developable areas adjacent to the lakes have acted as magnets for residential growth and have been substantially developed. Future development on the lakes may be the result of the demolition of existing homes and the construction of new homes.

The Eagle and PainterJunoChristiana Lake Associations work with the DNR and EGLE to support health lake ecosystems and fisheries and invasive species management.





- Lakes and Ponds
- Streams
- Village of Edwardsburg
- Township Boundary
- Sections

**Map 5. Hydrology**

Chapter 3

# COMMUNITY FACILITIES

## Community Facilities

The Township's and Village's community facilities provide tangible services to its residents and enhance the local quality of life. As the community's population grows, the demand for these services will also grow. This will translate into the need to expand existing community facilities; build more roads, sewers, and bridges; and hire additional public service personnel. As a basis for planning for these future needs, below is a description of existing community facilities within Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg.



## Village Parks

Gunn Park, located in the Edwardsburg Village limits, is a 3.2-acre park on the south side of Pleasant Lake, just north of US 12. An open play area is used for youth soccer, and picnic facilities are also available at this site, along with a basketball hoop and playground equipment. The Memorial Day Festival is celebrated annually at this park.

Library Park is an open space adjacent to the library in Edwardsburg Village located on 0.4 acres, just northwest of M-62. Bike racks are available for the children who utilize the space to play pick-up games of football and soccer.

Lindbergh Park is a 0.07-acre linear park within the Village of Edwardsburg located along Pleasant Lake on Cass Street (Dailey Road). It is primarily open space with a small beach and lake access for swimming.

## Township Parks

Kraus Memorial Park is the most recent addition to the Ontwa Township Parks System. Located on a 20-acre parcel on the northeast corner of M-62 and May Street, this land was donated by the Kraus family.

Ferndale Park is located along the south shore of Eagle Lake on approximately 0.5 acres. This park can be accessed from S. Shore Drive and is mostly open space with an opportunity for swimming.

Eagle Lake East End Lake Access offers open space along the eastern shore of Eagle Lake and includes lake access for boats and greenspace as part of the Eagle Lake Road right-of-way.

Brady Road Right-of-Way extends to the edge of Eagle Lake, offering lake access through a boat ramp at the end of the road.

## Other Recreation Facilities

Radabaugh Memorial Plant Preserve is approximately 3.1 acres along the western shore of Eagle Lake. This preserve is owned by the Michigan Nature Association and one of the last remaining natural areas around Eagle Lake. The preserve is mostly wetland, which has been present since the earliest recorded deed in 1836.

Edwardsburg Sports Complex is a not-for-profit sports and recreation facility developing just outside of the Edwardsburg village limits. Phase 1 of the development has been completed and Phase 2 is underway. The 102-acre complex is currently home to youth soccer, lacrosse, and high school cross country, but the finished facility will support all kinds of sports and outdoor activities for people of all ages.

Redfield-Bucklen Landing is a canoe and kayak launch operated by the Michigan DNR in Ontwa Township. This linear open space is approximately 300 feet along Redfield Street.

## Township / Village Hall

The Ontwa Township Hall is located at 26225 US-12, just east of M-62. The hall currently houses the offices of the Supervisor, Clerk, Treasurer, Assessor, Zoning Administrator, Building Official, and Sewer Commission. The Township Hall also houses the ambulance service. The Edwardsburg Village Hall is located at 26296 US-12. The Village has a Department of Public Works (DPW) whose duties include streets, water, sewer, parks, and cemeteries.

## Police Protection

The Township and Village provide police protection through the cooperative Ontwa/Edwardsburg Police Department, located at the Village Hall. According to the Police Chief, the Department employs several full-time officers, including the police chief. The Police Department has three patrol cars. Funding for this service is a combination of a special millage for the Township and Village plus general fund dollars.

Cass County participates in a “911” emergency notification system for County residents. In Ontwa Township, the police department is dispatched directly from 911 dispatchers for calls that originate from township residents. According to the Police Chief, the level of service as well as the response time to emergencies is currently adequate. Immediate assistance for the Department is provided by the Cass County Sheriff’s Department.

## Fire Protection

The Fire Protection District is managed by the Joint Fire Board, which is composed of two representatives each from Ontwa, Milton, and Jefferson Townships, as well as one at-large member who resides in one of the member townships and is appointed by the Fire Board. The Joint Fire Board has full responsibility for the Fire Department's management and operations and it convenes every other month at the Fire Station, located on the west side of M-62, just north of May Street.

The Fire Department's service area covers the entirety of Ontwa Township and the majority of Milton and Jefferson Townships. Dispatching is similar to the police department's response procedure, with the Fire Department being dispatched via the Cass County "911" Central Dispatch Center. The service is funded through a combination of a special fire and ambulance millage for the Township which also includes the Village of Edwardsburg. Milton and Jefferson Townships also have special assessment districts for the fire service.

The Fire Department maintains a fleet of three fire engines, two tankers, two grass trucks, and two utility vehicles, and is staffed by twenty-six volunteers. They recently upgraded their Self-Contained and Breathing Apparatus and finished a staffing study to prepare for future growth within their response area. Additional information can be found on their website at [www.edwardsburgfire.org](http://www.edwardsburgfire.org).

## Ambulance Service

Edwardsburg Ambulance Service has been in operation since 1968, making it one of the oldest EMS services in Cass County. It started out as a fully-volunteer service. In the late 1990's, the service started providing the community with a full-time staff. At that time, the service was still a Basic Life Support unit. In 2000, the service was upgraded to Limited Advanced Life Support.

Currently, there are 20 employees at Edwardsburg Ambulance Service, eleven of them being paramedics. The service provides 24/7 Advanced Life Support. The service operates two ambulances: one full-time 24/7 paramedic unit and the other at a 60-hour week back-up paramedic unit. Edwardsburg Ambulance Service currently serves all of Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg.

## Libraries

The Edwardsburg Public Library is one of three branch libraries of the Cass District Library (CDL) system. The main library of the system is located in Cassopolis. The library provides various community programs year-round. Funding for library services is derived from a tax millage.

In 2024, the Village of Edwardsburg will receive a new library. Cass District Library (CDL) designed a new building on the north side of US-12, directly east of Section Street. The new branch will be an increase size from 3,000 square feet to 9,000 square feet and will include a meeting

room, makerspace, a dedicated area for young adults, an expanded children's area, and spaces for private meetings and study. The Library's investment in the project will total approximately \$4.5 million. It will also be connected to the non-motorized transportation network.

The Library has prioritized the changing role of public libraries in creating safe and welcoming spaces for communities to find inspiration through learning and connecting. The physical space of the modern public library is an important asset and investment in Edwardsburg that will better position CDL to meet current community needs and better adjust to changes in the future.

## Schools

Ontwa Township residents are within the Edwardsburg School District. School facilities include a primary school, an elementary school, an intermediate school, a middle school, and a high school. In addition, the district has a separate administration building as well as a maintenance building. The Edwardsburg School system has maintained a steady enrollment, with 2,647 students in 2021-2022 school year, compared to 2,700 students in 2011 and 2,791 in 2016.

The school system has achieved many honors over the past several years. In addition to receiving a National Exemplary Blue Ribbon Award from both the Michigan Department of Education and the United States Department of Education, it has also been awarded the Governor's Cup and a Golden Apple Award. The Primary, Elementary, Intermediate, Middle, and High schools have

each received Blue Ribbon Awards. Some of the criteria considered for these awards are leadership, curriculum, teaching environment, organizational vitality, and community/parent support.

## Cemetery

Locally, there are two municipally-owned cemeteries. Located at the northwest corner of Adamsville Road and May Street, the Adamsville-Ontwa Township Cemetery is operated and maintained by Ontwa Township. Located on the north side of Hamilton Street, the Edwardsburg Cemetery is operated and maintained by the Village of Edwardsburg. Of historical note, both cemeteries are the final resting sites of many veterans dating as far back as the Revolutionary War, and some of the area's earliest recorded settlers.

## Solid Waste Disposal

Ontwa Township does not contract with any solid waste disposal contractors. Instead, township residents may contract with any private solid waste business desired. According to Township officials, there are no plans to change the existing system.

The Village currently uses Borden Waste-Away Service to provide trash and recycling pickup services to its residents. The Village collects leaves from the end of October to the end of November and collects brush and limbs all year as needed.

## Public Transportation

The Township and Village are served by the Cass County Public Transit Authority. According to the Authority's website (<https://www.mywaythere.org/cass.asp>), this is a shared ride transportation system for Cass County residents, with special reduced fares for seniors and individuals with disabilities. The authority covers the entire county with 24-hour advance reservation service and operates five medium-duty buses, four cutaway buses, and two minivans. All vehicles are equipped for people with disabilities, and fares range from \$3.50 to \$5.50 with reductions available for seniors, people with disabilities, and accompanied children 5-12 years of age. The system coordinates with Dowagiac Dial-A-Ride and systems in neighboring counties.

## Road System

All public roads within the Township are under the jurisdiction of the Cass County Road Commission. Roads designated as primary roads by the County include:

- Elkhart Road
- Redfield Road
- Dailey Road
- Adamsville Road
- May Street (west of M 62)
- Conrad Road (between May St. and U.S. 12)

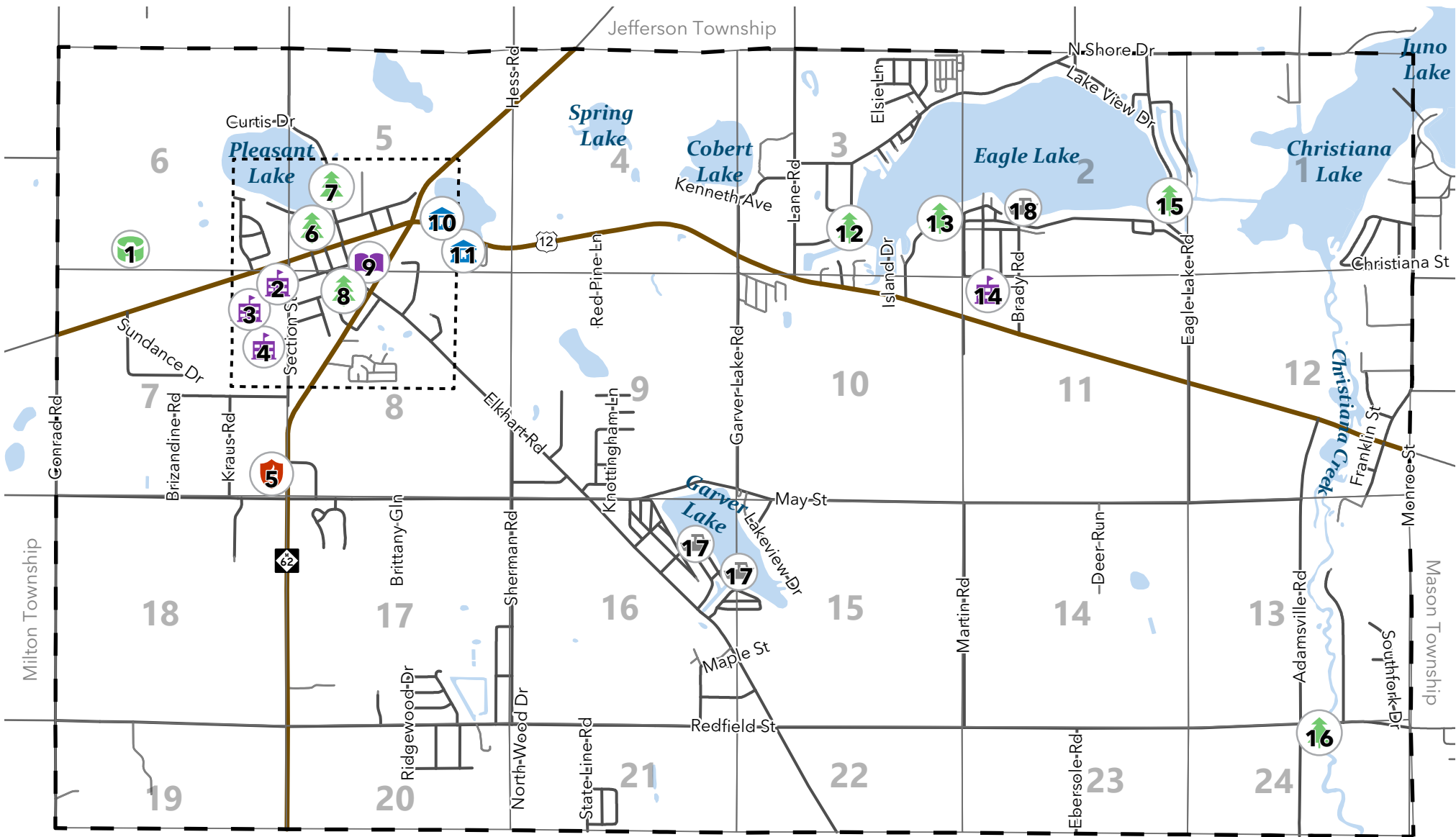
With the exception of US-12 and M 62, the remaining roads are designated as county local roads.

In Edwardsburg, streets are owned and maintained by the Village, except for US-12 and M-62. This includes the snow plowing of Village streets and sidewalks. The Village Street Department operates on a 2 mil, 20-year millage.

For planning purposes, it is useful to recognize that the various roads within a community can have different functions. An understanding of these functions can lead to decisions as to the desirable use of each road segment, road right-of-way widths, building setbacks, and adjoining land use. The following is a brief description of five road types that are important to consider in Ontwa Township.

**Major Access Routes (State and Federal).** These facilities are devoted entirely to the movement of large volumes of traffic at high speeds over relatively long distances. These roads are intended to provide little or no direct access to individual properties adjoining the roads. Federal Route US-12 is a two-lane road traveling east-west through the center (generally) of the Township and Village. This highway accounts for a sizable load of local traffic as well as for residents of southernmost Michigan traveling east-west through the State. Located approximately thirty miles to the west, U.S. 12 connects with Interstate 94 (I 94).

State trunkline M 62 also travels through Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg. Specifically, M 62 runs north south through the township as it passes through the center of the Village of Edwardsburg where it intersects



- |                                    |                                     |                                  |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1  Edwardsburg Sports Complex      | 7  Lindburgh Park                   | 13  Ferndale Park                |
| 2  Edwardsburg Primary School      | 8  Library Park                     | 14  Eagle Lake Elementary School |
| 3  Edwardsburg Intermediate School | 9  Cass District Library            | 15  Eagle Lake Public Access     |
| 4  Edwardsburg High School         | 10  Edwardsburg Village Hall        | 16  Redfield-Bucklen Landing     |
| 5  Edwardsburg Fire Department     | 11  Ontwa Township Hall             | 17  Garver Lake Public Access    |
| 6  Gunn Park                       | 12  Radabaugh Memorial Plant Presv. | 18  Brady Street Public Access   |



# Map 6. Community Facilities









Public roads in the Township are under the jurisdiction of the Cass County Road Commission

U.S. 12. M 62 is the main transportation facility for persons traveling to and from the State of Indiana. As M 62 enters Indiana, it becomes Indiana State Road 23 which runs southwest towards Granger, Mishawaka, and South Bend. US-12 through the Village is not speed-controlled, making crossing US-12 a potentially dangerous undertaking.

**Major Arterial Roads (County Primaries).** The major function of these roads is to move a fair volume of traffic within and through a community. A secondary function is to provide access to adjacent properties. In Ontwa Township, the major arterials are the county's primary roads which are listed above. Many residents use these roads when traveling to and from the Township.

**Table 3-1 Traffic Count Data**

Street	Description	AADT
Adamsville Road	South of Redfield Street	1,997
Adamsville Road	South of US 12	1,939
Adamsville Road	North of Redfield Street	2,375
Elkhart Road	Northwest of M-62	3,110
Elkhart Road	Southeast of M-62	3,902
May Street	West of M-62	1,883
Redfield Road	West of Adamsville Road	3,530
Redfield Street	East of M-62	5,739
Redfield Street	East of Adamsville Road	3,105
Redfield Street	West of M-62	4,505

Source: Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG)

**Minor Arterial Roads (County Locals).** These roads provide for internal traffic movement within a community and connect local land areas with the major arterial road system. Providing direct access to adjacent properties is an important function of these roads. The majority of the roads in Ontwa Township and Edwardsburg fall under this classification. Examples of such roads include May Street (east of M 62), Garver Lake Road, and North Shore Road. Over time, as development in the Township increases, traffic along minor arterials will also increase. Some minor arterial streets eventually become major arterial roads.

**Local Collector Roads.** The sole function of local roads is to provide access to adjoining properties. In many cases, through traffic is discouraged. Examples of such roads in Ontwa include Island Park Drive and Fillmore Drive.

**Local Feeder Roads.** These roads provide for internal traffic movement within a specific area, such as a residential subdivision, serving to funnel traffic from local collector roads to arterial roads. Feeder roads are typically wider than other local roads and may have amenities such as sidewalks and lighting, and could be public or private.

## Wastewater and Water Services

Wastewater facilities were originally installed in the Township in 1999. The new system included three districts, nine lift stations, and approximately eight hundred ninety-two customers. Those districts were Eagle Lake, Garver Lake, the Industrial Park, and Edwardsburg Public Schools. There are now five districts and seventeen lift stations with the addition of PJC Juno aka (Mason Township) and Christina Lake, and the Village of Edwardsburg including the north side of Pleasant Lake. The Township has nearly 1,800 customers.

Connection to the system is required as follows:

- For buildings, structures, and/or uses where sewage disposal is required, connection to a public sanitary sewer service is required if any point of the principal building is within 200 feet of a public sanitary sewer service
- For waterfront properties, connection to a public sanitary sewer service is required if it crosses, abuts, or adjoins a waterfront property.
- For a subdivisions, land division, or condominium projects, connection to a public sanitary sewer service may be required depending on the number of units in the development.
- For a park, connection to a public sanitary sewer system is required if it is within 300 feet of the park.

All wastewater from the districts is pumped to the City of Elkhart for treatment. The maximum the township can pump to Elkhart is 900 gallons a minute. The monthly averages for the last four years are listed below:

- 2020 - 9,950,000
- 2021 -10,256,000
- 2022 - 9,909,000
- 2023 - 10,045,000

Ontwa Township has an amended agreement with St. Joseph County Sewer District that increased the Granger District to encompass a larger area. This agreement allows Granger to pass their affluent through Ontwa Township then onto Elkhart Municipal Sewer Treatment Plant.

The Ontwa Township Board is reviewing the feasibility of extending service to Cobert Lake. This is contingent upon residents petitioning for an agreement of expansion. A new residential development called Eagle Ridge is nearing final approvals and will add another lift station to the existing infrastructure. Additionally, the administrator and board continue to work towards system improvements. The system is on a yearly gravity line cleaning program that cycles every seven years. The system consists of seventeen lift stations, eleven of which have been upgraded with generators. New control panels have been replaced as needed. The main lift station was completely renovated by December of 2023.

The central water utility for the Village was first constructed in 1976 and delivers safe, although unfiltered, water to

the Village and part of Ontwa Township. The well field has a high concentration of iron. Though not unsafe from a health perspective, it is a nuisance from the perspective of ordinary household usage and convenience. The Village of Edwardsburg has recently completed a new iron filtration plant, which will eliminate the need for point-of-use treatments such as iron filters in individual homes and businesses and will greatly reduce wear and tear on water softeners.

Most residents and businesses in the Township utilize private wells for potable water and are not connected to the Village's municipal system. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines a sole source aquifer as one which supplies at least 50 percent of the drinking water consumed in the area overlying the aquifer. By this standard the aquifer beneath the Township and Village is considered a sole source aquifer. Because there isn't another feasible alternative to a sole source aquifer for water supply, it is critical that this water supply be protected from contamination.



## Non-Motorized Transportation

The Township passed a complete streets resolution in 2016. It has also committed to providing matching funds for projects that meet its Complete Streets and Bike and Pedestrian Plans. The Planning Committee has been working toward the completion of the Township Bike and Pedestrian Plan.

The most notable non-motorized trail is the Connector Path Project, a partnership between Ontwa Township, the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF), and the Edwardsburg Sports Complex to provide a pathway system connecting the Sports Complex with the Edwardsburg Public School system and the Village of Edwardsburg's sidewalks. This path offers safe travel for a variety of non-motorized trail users to and from the Village to the Sports Complex.

The trail is a concrete, 10-foot wide path designed to accommodate a variety of non-motorized trail users. It was completed in 2019 and extends along the north side of US-12 from an existing pedestrian crosswalk at Claire Street in the Village of Edwardsburg heading west to the Edwardsburg Sports Complex. In 2017, the project received a \$40,000 grant from the Michigan DNR's Natural Resources Trust Fund to help build the pathway. The project has also received federal grant money through the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) program, which covered 80 percent of the cost. Further funding was committed from Ontwa Township and the Sports Complex. Phase II was

completed in 2023, extending it from Claire St to Section St including a pedestrian traffic signal and crosswalk at US12.

Citizens through their participation in this Master Plan update, have expressed an interest in additional bike and pedestrian facilities for the Township. The Elkhart Road Trail project has received much support from the residents along the corridor and in the Township in general. A Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund grant application was developed and submitted for the project.

Future bike trails would provide a network for biking to various destinations throughout the Township, including connections between the Village of Edwardsburg, Eagle Lake, Garver Lake, and Pleasant Lake. With the construction of the new library branch at US-12 and Section Street, the installation of a sidewalk/trail is being investigated to tie in the existing trail from the Sports Complex.

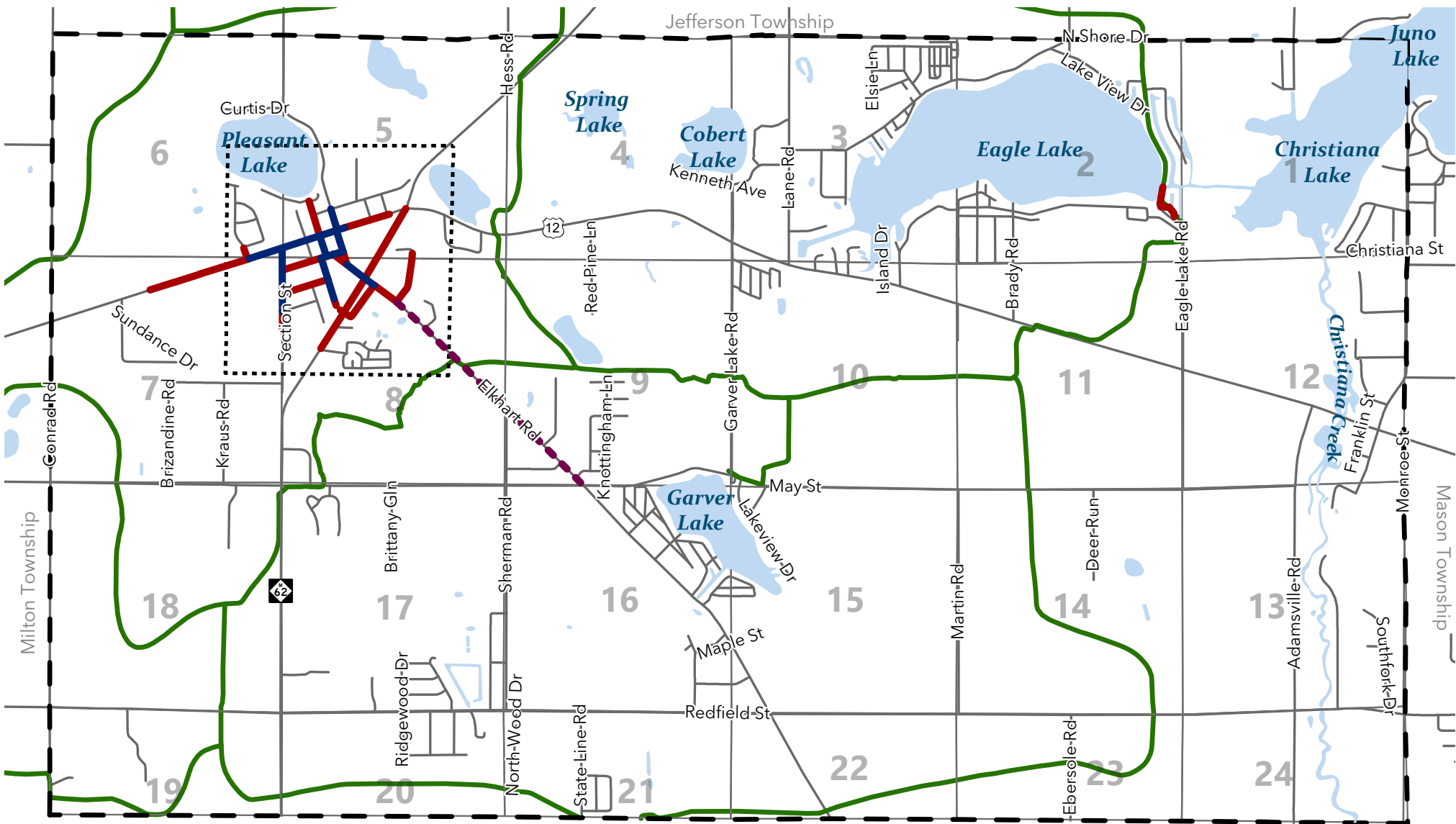
The 2020 Southwest Michigan Region Nonmotorized Transportation Plan was developed by the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) and MDOT. This plan includes nonmotorized recommendations for Cass County, including areas in Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg. The US-12 corridor through Edwardsburg is considered a priority east-west regional corridor for nonmotorized connections. This corridor was identified as having a four-foot shoulder along much of the road, although more gaps are present east of Edwardsburg. Local corridors were also identified along Elkhart Road and M-62.

The following roads were not prioritized for nonmotorized travel in Ontwa Township:

- Redfield Street
- M-62 from Cassopolis to Dowagiac to Edwardsburg
- Dailey Road from Edwardsburg to the north of M-60

The Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG) Active Transportation Plan also emphasizes non-motorized transportation connections between Michigan and Indiana, desiring improved connections from existing pathways in areas such as South Bend, Granger, and Elkhart, to areas in Michigan. Both locally and regionally significant bicycle and pedestrian projects are proposed near Ontwa Township in St. Joseph and Elkhart Counties, which would connect to the cities of Granger, South Bend, and Elkhart. Ontwa Township's proximity to these areas provides an opportunity to strengthen non-motorized connections across state boundaries.

Snowmobile trails are popular for winter recreation in the community. The Michigan DNR provides several off-road snowmobile routes throughout the Township, which are part of LP12. This trail has multiple loops throughout Ontwa Township and provides connections to other designated snowmobile trails in the broader Cass County region and the state. Local trails are maintained by the Edwardsburg Snowmobile Club.



- Sidewalks (one side)
- Sidewalks (both sides)
- - - Future Bike Path
- LP-12 Snowmobile Trail
- Village of Edwardsburg
- Township Boundary
- Sections



## Map 8. Nonmotorized Transportation & Sidewalks



Chapter 4

# EXISTING LAND USE



## Existing Land Use

Ontwa Township is rural in character, with the majority of its land acreage considered agricultural or vacant/unused. Residential is the second most prevalent use. Homes are scattered throughout the Township. The highest concentration of residential use exists along the shorelines of Eagle, Christiana, and Garver Lakes, including the few subdivisions relatively close to the lakeshore. Additionally, a few subdivisions exist in the southwest portion of the Township. Commercial and industrial land uses in the Township are moderate in number. The Township has commercial corridors located along U.S. 12; one is located just east of the Village and the other is near the eastern border of the Township. A third area is along M 62 south of the Village of Edwardsburg.

Edwardsburg has a more typical village character, with single-family homes and small businesses prevailing within its borders. Service Commercial areas exist along M-62 and U.S 12 in the Village, while the Retail Commercial is confined to the center of the Village. Edwardsburg Schools are located on a large area of land in the southwest corner of the Village, and a large portion of the northwest corner of the township consists of single-family homes with access on Pleasant Lake. Multi-family housing can be found east of M-62 in the center of the Village, while a Mobile Home Park exists along the southern border of the Village near M-62.

Other land uses, such as public and semi public uses, including a golf course, Township and Village Halls, fire

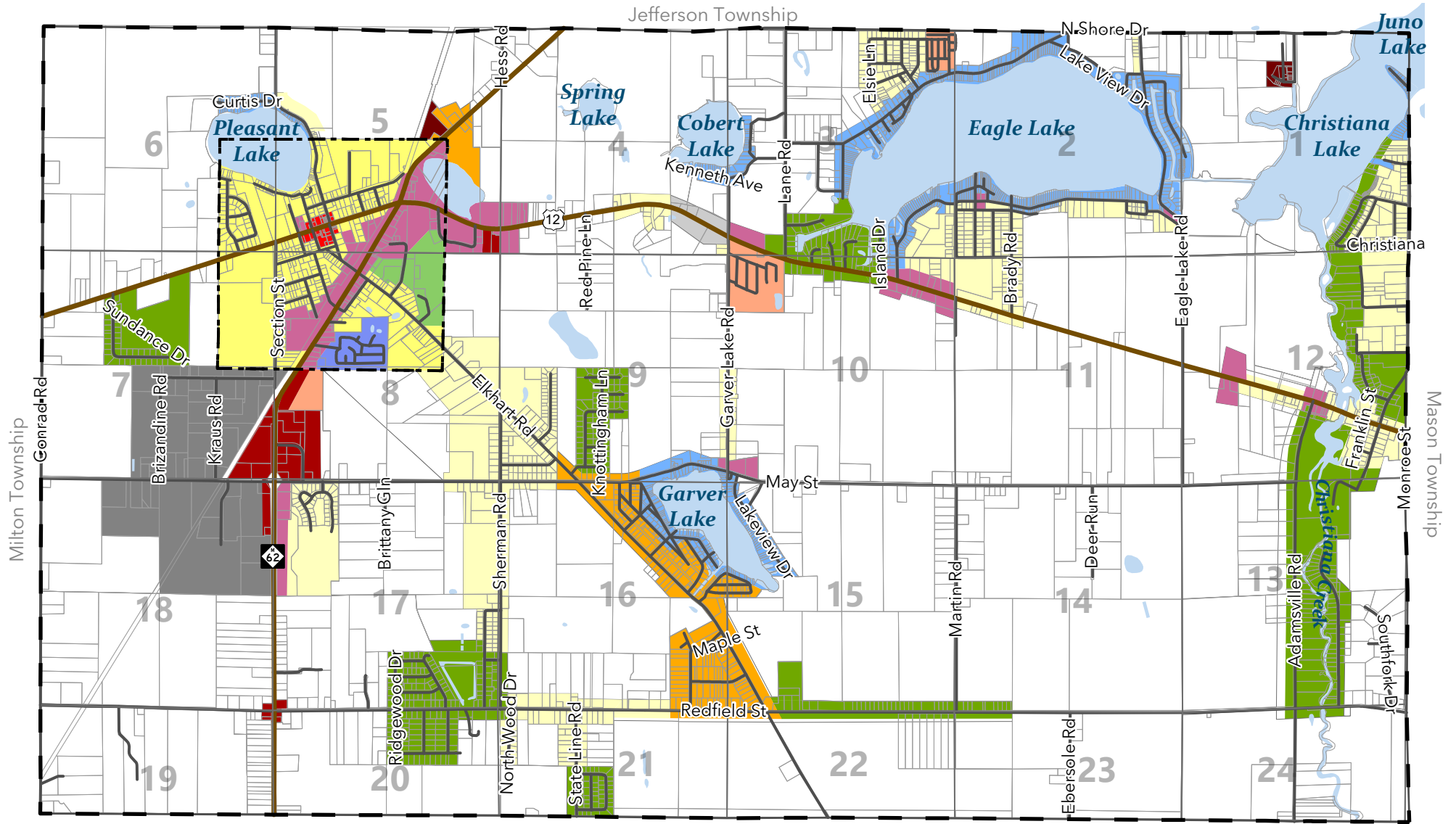
stations, parks, and churches are located at various locations throughout the Township and Village.

Following is a description of land use and zoning in Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg.

## Agricultural Land

There are several large tracts of land throughout the Township. While several of these large tracts include residential uses, many are also utilized for agricultural purposes. These may also include woodlands and low-lying wetlands which are not under cultivation. The major crops produced in Ontwa Township include corn, soybeans, wheat, and hay. Map 3 found in Chapter II, Natural Features, provides the location of prime farmland as indicated in the Cass County Soil Survey. Land zoned as Agricultural/Residential includes the land that is currently being used partially or wholly for agricultural operations, with or without buildings, along with residential homesites. Farming is permitted by right in this district.





**Village Zoning Classifications**

- Single Family Residential
- Mobile Home Park (R-2)
- Multiple Family Residential (R-3)
- Retail Commercial
- Service Commercial

**Township Zoning Classifications**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Agricultural Residential (AR)                           | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: lightblue; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Lake Residential (LR) |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: yellow; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Residential (R-1)             | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: grey; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Light Industrial (I-1)     |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: green; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Residential (R-1A)             | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: darkgrey; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Heavy Industrial (I-2) |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: orange; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Residential (R-2)             | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: pink; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Commercial (C-1)           |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: brown; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Multi-Family Residential (MFR) | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: darkred; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Commercial (C-2)        |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: peachpuff; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Mobile Home Park (MH)      |  |

- Village of Edwardsburg
- Township Boundary
- Sections
- Water



# Map 9. Current Zoning



## P.A. 116 Enrolled Lands

Some land in the Township is enrolled in the P.A. 116 Farmland Open Space Preservation Program. Under this program, property owners agree to relinquish development rights to their land for a minimum enrollment period of ten years in exchange for tax credits. Given the level of participation by area farmers, it appears that P.A. 116 has helped to keep large portions of the Township devoted to farming or open space; however, the level of participation has waned in the last decade and may need to be promoted again in the near future.

Many of the farming areas contain lands that are naturally endowed with the soil quality, growing season, and moisture content necessary to sustain high crop yields under average farming practices. Farming such land is feasible with minimal input of energy and economic resources, and results in the least damage to the environment. The following table indicates the properties involved in the PA 116 program.

**Table 4-1 P.A. 116 Enrolled Lands as of August 2023**

Section	Acres	Start Year	End Year	Term Years
15	78	1980	1999	20
14	86	1980	2052	73
13	39	1982	2052	71
13	39	1982	2052	71
8, 9	177	1995	2025	31

## Residential Land Uses

Residentially zoned properties include lands zoned R-1A, R-1, L-R, R-2, MH, and MFR. These districts accommodate single family homes on varying lot sizes, along with two-family, multi-family, and manufactured housing. Most of the residentially zoned property consists of detached single family homes. As stated earlier, most of the residentially developed land is concentrated along or near Eagle, Christiana, and Garver Lakes. In the single-family residential districts, single-family homes and institutional uses (churches, schools, and parks) are the general uses permitted.

In addition, the Township has a few residential corridors in the southwest quarter of the Township, near the state line. Specifically, residential corridors are located along Redfield Street, Sherman and State Line roads. Other existing residential land uses can be found throughout the Township, some of which are associated with agricultural uses or are non farm dwelling units within the Agricultural/ Residential district.

There are four mobile home parks within the Township. A mobile home park is located along North Shore Drive, east of Shirley Lane, in the northeast corner of the Township, another is located just southeast of the U.S.-12/Garver Road intersection. The third is located north of Redfield Road near Elkhart Road, and the fourth is located at the southern Village limits.

In the Village, single-family, manufactured home parks, and multiple-family residential districts guide residential land use. The Village is a hub for housing within the Township, and R-1 Single-Family Residential zoning is the most prominent district in Edwardsburg.

Rural areas such as Ontwa Township are less likely to have multi-family housing options given their inherent lower population densities and lack of public water and sewer infrastructure. However, the Village of Edwardsburg has options for multi-family housing in the way of several apartment complexes in the area of Elkhart Road and M-62. This includes apartments designed for senior living. Additional multi-family development could be feasible in areas in or near the Village that have the infrastructure necessary to support it.

## Commercial Land Use

The Township and Village each have two commercial zoning districts that permit include retail, service, and office facilities. Commercial land use within the Township is most predominantly located adjacent to US-12, just east of the Village limits and sporadically along the remaining portion of US-12. This area contains retail facilities that attract local businesses with some “passerby” business. Residents are also served by commercial uses located within the Village of Edwardsburg, mostly along M-62. In addition, there are some commercial uses in the small historic Village downtown located on Cass Street just south of US-12. The vast majority of businesses in the area are locally owned and operated.

Traffic on US-12 through the Village is not speed-controlled, which can lead to safety issues crossing the street, and the new stop light at Section Road and US-12 does not help the “uptown” district. Parking can also be an issue here, which can be a detriment for developers looking to use vacant land. There are available sidewalks in the uptown area but there is not a lot to visit in this area except for Pleasant Lake. The Uptown Improvement Association (UIA) through one of its members has taken care of flower pots decorated seasonally through this area, which is welcome and appreciated.

## Industrial Land Use

Industrial development within Ontwa Township is concentrated north and south of May Street, just west of M 62. The Township Zoning Ordinance provides two industrial districts; one district is intended for light industrial uses such as wholesale activities, warehouses, and industrial operations, and the other district is intended for industrial activities such as manufacturing, assembling, and fabrication activities including a large-scale and specialized industrial operations.

There is no zoning designation for Industrial uses within the Village of Edwardsburg, although there are a few industrial businesses that are permitted in the commercial zoning districts.

## Public and Semi-Public Uses

The public and semi-public land uses indicated on the existing land use map include land and facilities available for use by the general public or specific interest groups. Typically included in this land use category are public parks and Village and Township facilities. However, most of the public and semi-public facilities serving Township and Village residents, such as the Township and Village Halls and schools, are located within the Village of Edwardsburg or nearby. There is no zoning district for these uses as they are either exempt from zoning or permitted in the residential districts. These land uses are described at more length in the “Community Facilities” section.

In Edwardsburg, a large mural was recently painted on the grain elevator located at the southwest corner of M-62 and Elkhart Road. While this property is not owned by a public entity, the mural has quickly become an icon of the community and a source of civic pride. The mural was painted by local artist Bret Whitacre, and it reflects the Village’s history. The mural was commissioned by the Uptown Improvement Association (UIA) and paid for with donations from both residents and local businesses. The UIA was also responsible for the All Aboard Project, which helped clean up and beautify the area along the railroad tracks with plants, trees, and landscaping.

## Groundwater

Map 10 illustrates the general location of the water wells in the Village and the groundwater protection area in the Township. This joint effort by the Township and Village serves the residents of both communities to protect this valuable resource. All potable water in the Village and the Township comes from groundwater wells – either large municipal wells or individual private wells. These wells draw water from the St. Joseph River basin underground sole source aquifer, so protecting the quality of groundwater is a key priority.

The St. Joseph River basin is the area of land that drains to the St. Joseph River and eventually into Lake Michigan. It includes seven counties in northern Indiana and eight counties in southwest Michigan. The St. Joseph River Basin Commission “exists to conserve, enhance, and promote the natural resources and benefits of the Watershed for present and future generations by providing vision, leadership and means.” The Commission was created by and is funded by the State of Indiana but it may collaborate with state and local officials in Michigan to fulfill its purpose. The Commission is headquartered in the Michiana Area Council of Governments offices in South Bend, Indiana.

To help protect groundwater in the community, Ontwa Township has enacted an ordinance to:

- Preserve and maintain existing and potential ground water supplies, aquifers, and groundwater recharge areas of the Township, and protect them from adverse development or land use practices;
- Preserve and protect present and potential sources of drinking water supply for public health and safety;
- Conserve the natural resources of the Township;
- Protect the financial investment of the Township in its drinking water supply system and meet state requirements for wellhead protection; and
- Ensure that state regulations that help protect groundwater are implemented consistently when new or expanded development proposals are reviewed.

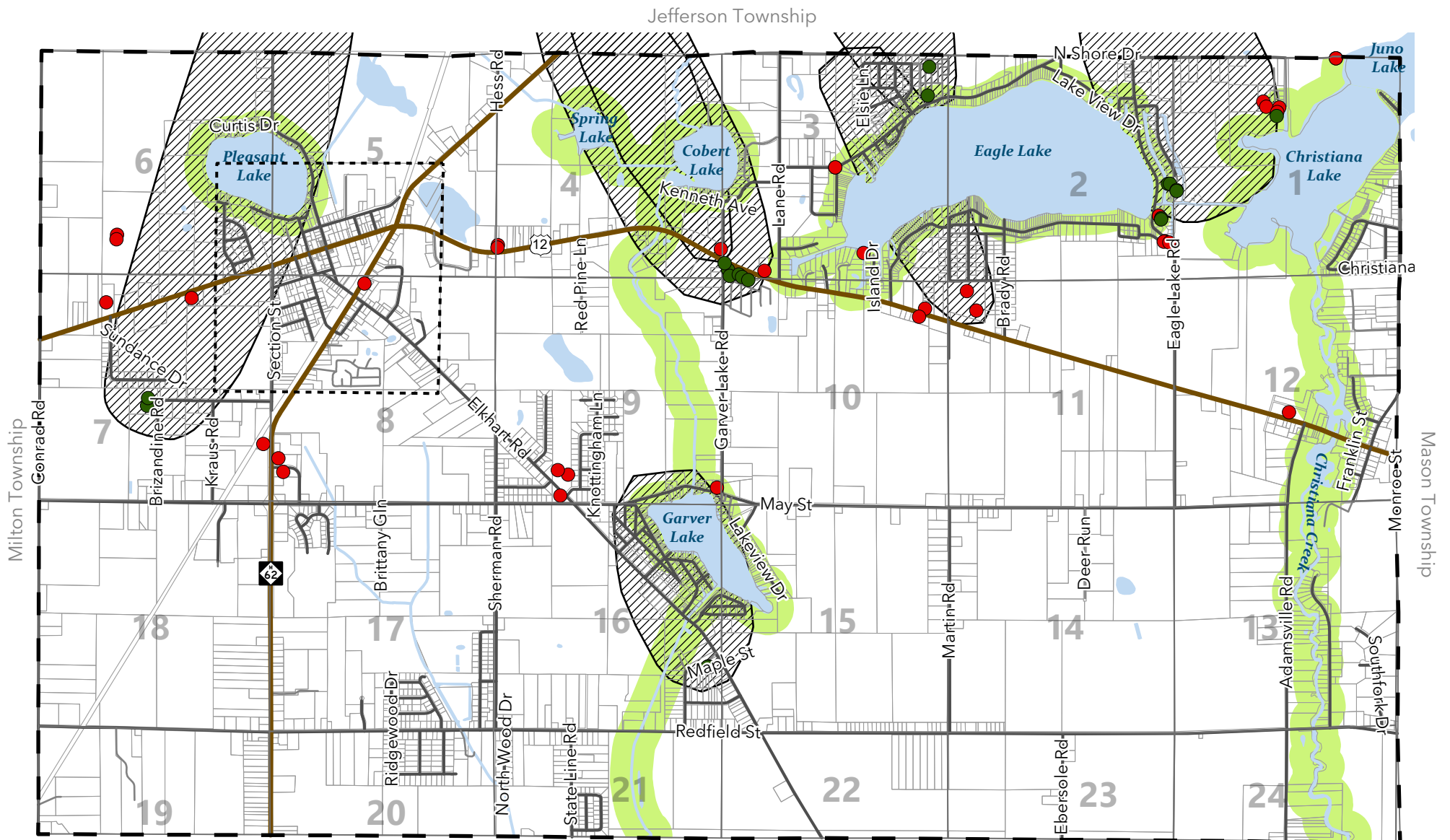
## **Water Overlay District and Wellhead Protection Areas (WHPA)**

Map 10 provides a visual aid in understanding the areas and lakes that the Water Overlay District impacts for non-residential land uses in all zoning districts except for Agricultural/Residential. Parcels within 500' of a lake, stream, or water body as listed in the ordinance may only have impervious surfaces covering 35% of the parcel and may not have hazardous materials or activities as named in the ordinance.

Map 10 also shows the location of Type I and II wells in the community, along with wellhead protection areas.

- Type I wells provide year-round service to 15 or more living units or 25 or more residents, such as municipalities, subdivisions, apartments, condominiums, manufactured housing communities, and nursing homes.
- Type II wells are noncommunity wells and serve 25 or more individuals or 15 or more service connections on an average daily basis for 60 or more days per year. Examples include, restaurants, schools, hotels, campgrounds, churches, and day care centers.

A Wellhead Protection Area (WHPA) is the surface area that overlies the aquifer that is directly contributing water to the well. It is critical for the Township and Village to carefully evaluate proposed land uses in these areas to ensure that the aquifer that provides potable water to residents is protected from possible pollutants.



- Type 1 Wells
- Type 2 Wells
- Wellhead Protection Areas
- Township Boundary
- Waterfront Overlay District
- Sections
- Water
- Village of Edwardsburg



**Map 10. Wells, WHPA, Waterfront Overlay District**



Chapter 5

**COMMUNITY  
PARTICIPATION**





## Overview

To ensure that the plan is responsive to community needs and desires, the Village and Township undertook a robust engagement campaign to inform the goals and objectives of the new Master Plan. This chapter presents the findings of this effort.

## Open House

A community open house was held in October 2023 to gather ideas that will inform the development of the Joint Master Plan for Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg. This event was held on Thursday, October 12, 2023, from 4:00 – 7:00 pm. Dozens of people visited the Township Hall from both the Village, Township, and neighboring communities.

## Community Values Activity Results

Participants were asked to write about what they love and what could be improved in both the Township and the Village. Responses were written on sticky notes and posted on the activity boards. There were two questions per board posed to participants. They could leave comments under, “What do you LOVE about Ontwa Township?” and “What would you IMPROVE about Ontwa Township?”, and “What do you LOVE about the Village of Edwardsburg?” and “What would you IMPROVE about the Village of Edwardsburg?”

### **“What do you LOVE about Ontwa Township?”**

The top responses to the question “What do you LOVE about Ontwa Township?” that emerged from the participants at the open house were:

1. Small Town/Rural Character
2. Lakes/Water
3. The Sports Complex
4. Community/People
5. Wildlife
6. Schools

### **“What would you IMPROVE about Ontwa Township?”**

The top responses to the question “What would you IMPROVE about Ontwa Township?” that emerged from the participants at the open house were:

1. Walking trails/non-motorized improvements
2. Housing
  - Renewable Energy
  - Park upgrades
  - Marihuana stores/operations
3. Grocery Store(s)
  - Shopping options
  - Downtown Improvements
  - Clean/update buildings

The most common reoccurring topics that participants loved about Ontwa Township were the “Small-town/rural character” and recreation-related comments such as water resources and the sports complex. Recreational and natural places and spaces in the Township continue to be valued assets in the community.

When considering what could be improved in Ontwa Township, the most common issue named by participants was a desire for more non-motorized infrastructure. People are looking for more trails and sidewalk construction and connections. There were several comments related to retail options, from limiting marihuana sales to increasing shopping and retail access and diversity. The improvements of old buildings and parks were also mentioned.

### **“What do you LOVE about the Village of Edwardsburg?”**

The top responses to the question “What do you LOVE about the Village of Edwardsburg?” that emerged from the participants at the open house were:

1. Community/People
2. The mural
  - Schools

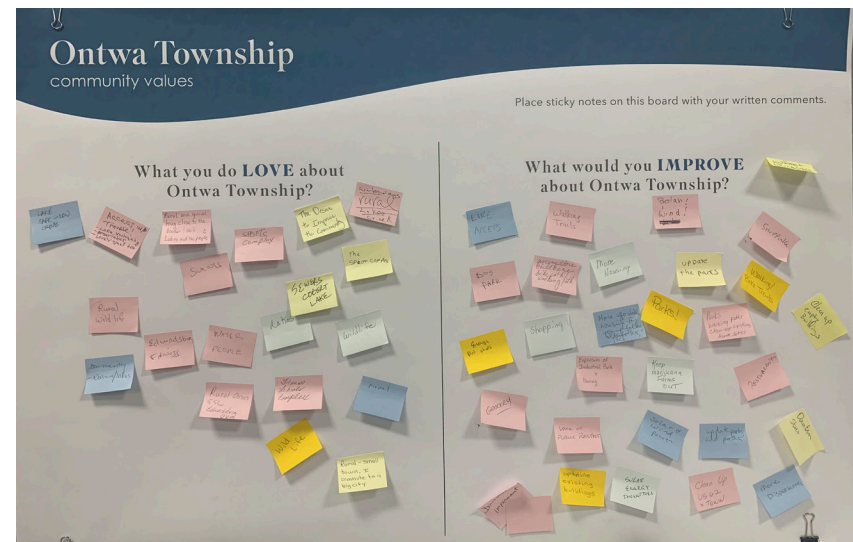
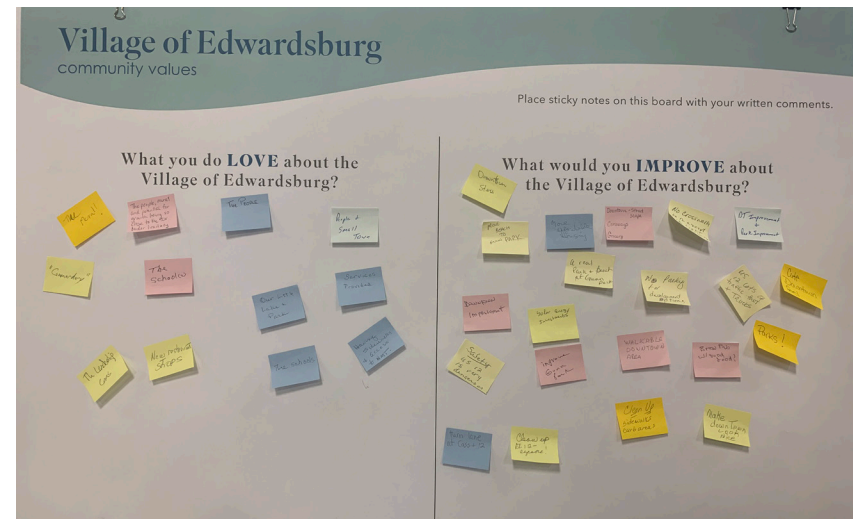
## “What would you IMPROVE about the Village of Edwardsburg?”

The top responses to the question “What would you IMPROVE about the Village of Edwardsburg?” that emerged from the participants at the open house were:

1. Improving Downtown
2. Improvements to U.S 12
3. Improvements/move beach to Gunn Park

The most common reoccurring topics that participants loved about the Village of Edwardsburg were the community and people, suggesting that the small, tight-knit character of the community is important to residents. Similar to the Township, the Edwardsburg Public School system was important to several participants.

When considering what could be improved in the Village of Edwardsburg, the most common issue was the desire for downtown improvements. Participants are looking for walkability and shopping options in the Village. There were also a large number of comments related to the improvement of U.S. 12, from walkability and traffic safety to the aesthetics of the corridor.

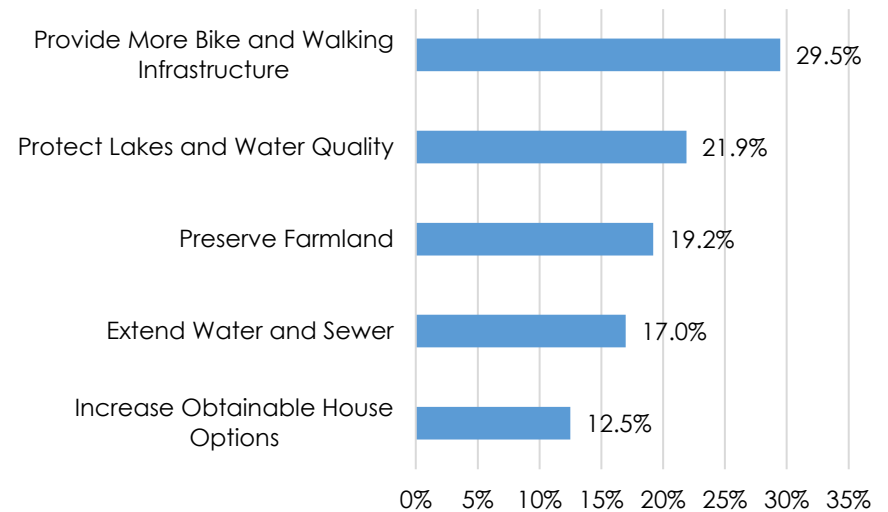


### Penny Jar Voting Activity Results

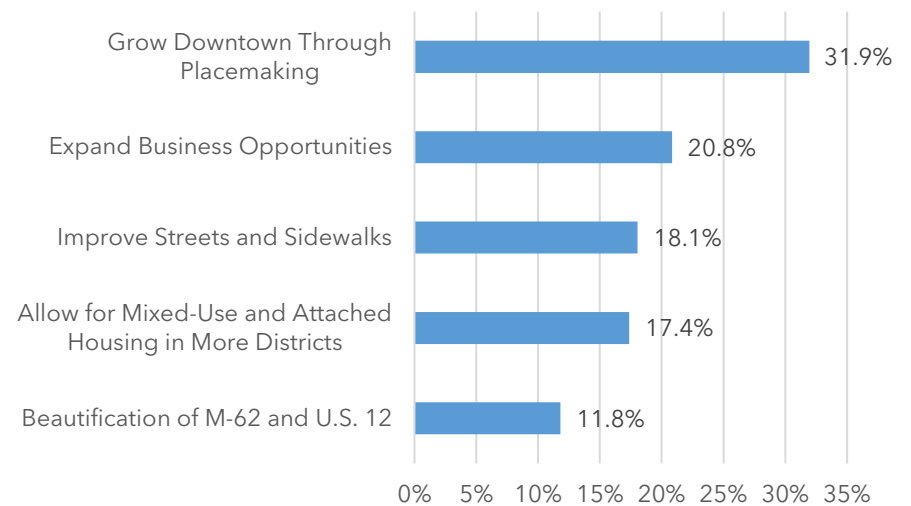
Participants were given 5 pennies to vote for Village improvements and 5 pennies to vote for Township improvements and were instructed to distribute all of their pennies into labeled jars. Each jar contained a few words that describe a land use and growth-related topic pertaining to either the Village or the Township's services, infrastructure, and/or amenities. The 10 pennies given to participants represented their tax dollars and the distribution of their pennies illustrated their desired allocation of those funds. The voting results for this open house activity are shown here.

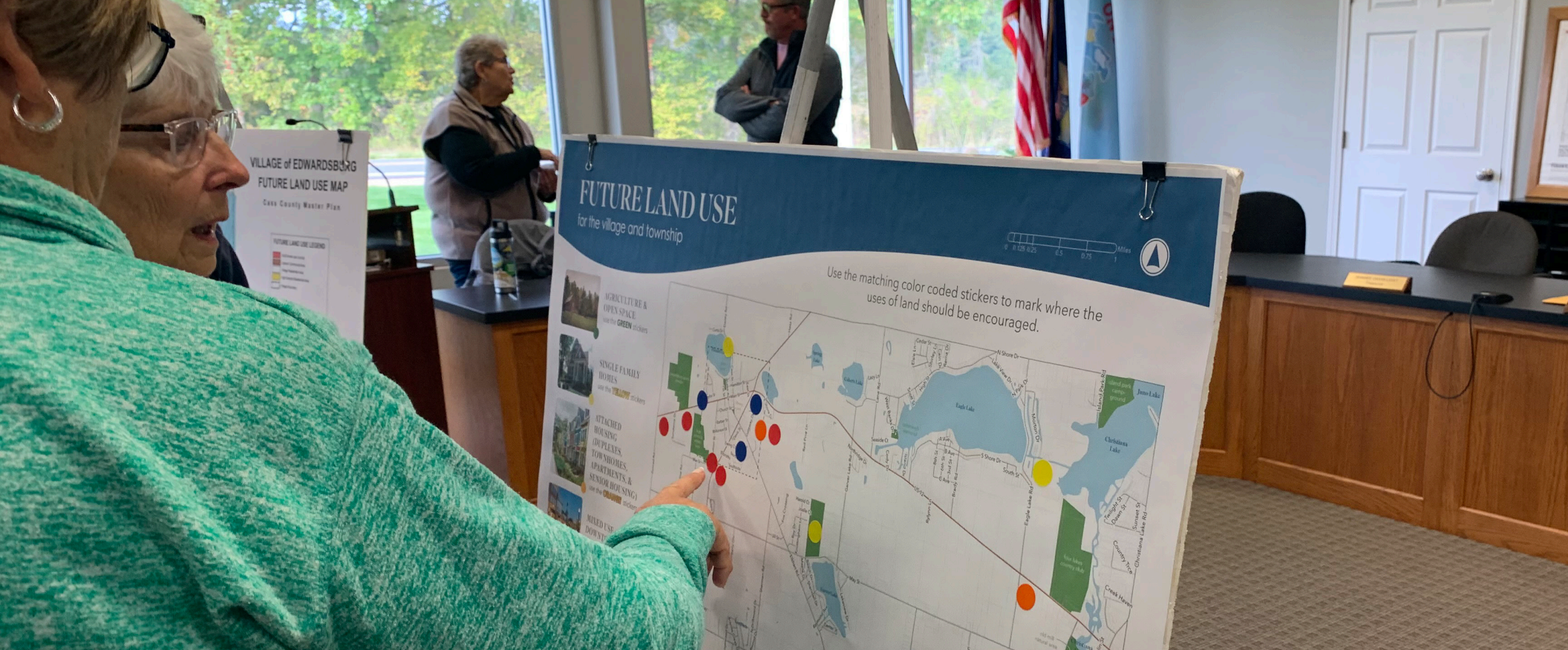
Participants in this activity were the most supportive of bikability and walkability in the community; this was selected as the highest priority in the Township. In the Village, participants wished to see growth in downtown through placemaking, new business opportunities, improved streets and sidewalks, and a mix of housing. These items speak to a desire for a higher quality of life. Also important to people in the Township was protecting the rural character of the Township and preserving the natural features such as lakes and groundwater. It should be noted that fewer people participated in the Penny Jar activity for the Village compared to the Township.

**Figure 5-1 Penny Jar Activity Results for Ontwa Township**



**Figure 5-2 Penny Jar Activity Results for Village of Edwardsburg**





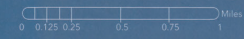
### Future Land Use Map Activity Results

To gain insight into desired land uses in the community, a future land use activity was conducted. The participants were asked to use stickers with coordinating colors to mark where the different uses of land should occur within the Village and Township. The respondents' feedback is shown on the scanned activity boards from the open house, on the following page.

The results suggest a planned distribution of different types of development, with a focus on concentrating industrial activities on the west side of the Township, or within the Village. Mixed-use and downtown development in the Village was preferred, which was also expressed in the Penny Jar Activity and the community survey. Retail and commercial corridors were identified to remain along major roads such as M-62 and U.S.12. Preservation of agriculture and open space was expressed by many individuals, as it is seen as a primary feature of the community, especially on the west side of the Township near the industrial park.

# FUTURE LAND USE

for the village and township



Use the matching color coded stickers to mark where the uses of land should be encouraged.



**AGRICULTURE & OPEN SPACE**  
use the **GREEN** stickers



**SINGLE FAMILY HOMES**  
use the **YELLOW** stickers



**ATTACHED HOUSING (DUPLEXES, TOWNHOMES, APARTMENTS, & SENIOR HOUSING)**  
use the **ORANGE** stickers



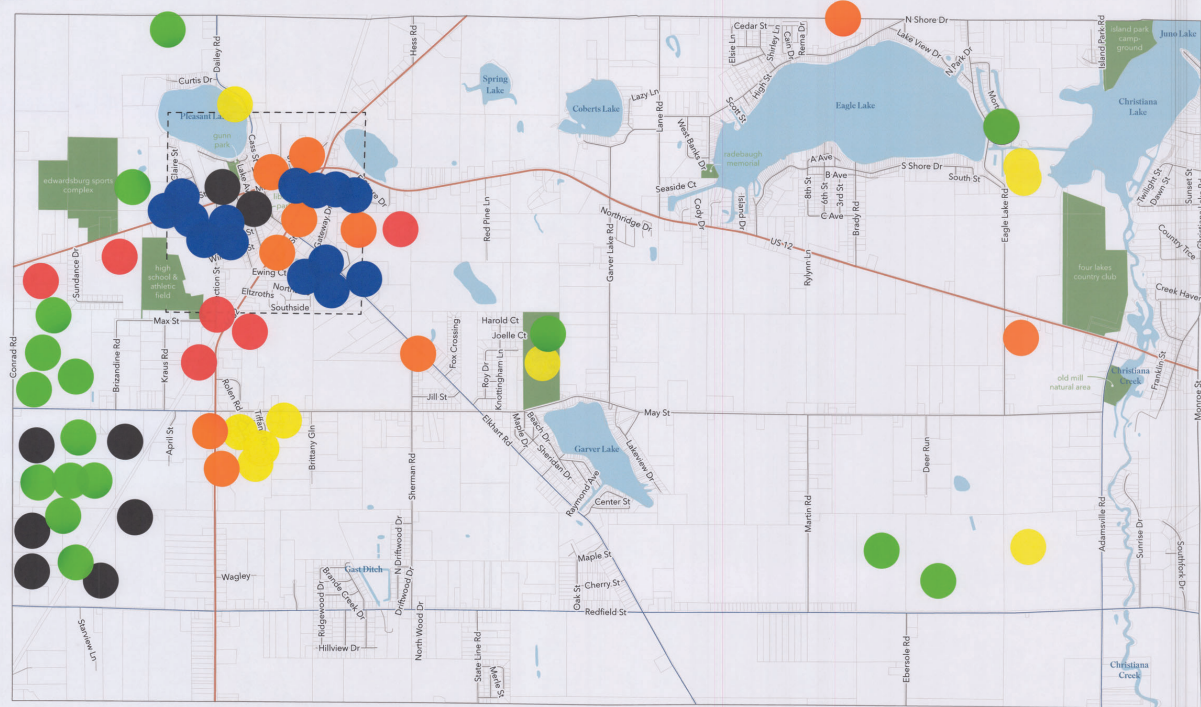
**MIXED USE AND DOWNTOWN**  
use the **BLUE** stickers



**OFFICE/INDUSTRY**  
use the **BLACK** stickers



**RETAIL/COMMERCIAL BUSINESS**  
use the **RED** stickers



I'M NOT SURE WHERE BUT I WANT TO SEE MORE OF \_\_\_\_\_ LAND USE.  
Place the corresponding colored dot below if you know what land uses you'd like to see more of but are unsure as to where it belongs on the map.

## Community Survey

From August 14 to October 30, 2023, Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg had a community survey open to gather public input on community development, housing, land use, and other related master plan topics.

The survey questions were developed with the assistance of Williams & Works. A total of 20 questions were asked via the online survey tool Survey Monkey. A total of 186 responses were received by the deadline with a 73% completion rate. Additionally, the survey was handed out in several Edwardsburg High School classes, of which 141 responses were returned. Student feedback was incorporated into questions 9, and 12-20. Between student respondents and general respondents, there were a total of 327 responses to the survey.

The survey was successful as it resulted in information from a large number of people compared to typical participation in other forms of public input like community open houses or visioning meetings. The survey enabled respondents to provide anonymous replies using a "check-the-box" format to expedite the completion of the online form and maximize the rate of response. Some questions allowed the respondents to leave other comments that may not have been covered with the multiple-choice options. Responses were kept as written by the respondent with a few exceptions for capitalization and some spelling corrections.

## Summary of Key Findings

1. While single-family homes were desired by a plurality of respondents (48.4%), there was support for additional housing types including retirement/assisted living facilities (27%), multi-family residential (19%), and attached single-family residential (16%). The Township and Village will need to ensure that the two jurisdictions provide a variety of housing options in well-planned areas suited to accommodate them. Grocery stores and sit-down restaurants were preferred by a wide margin in terms of new businesses that residents preferred to see in the area.
2. Protecting surface water and groundwater quality were repeatedly mentioned as important priorities to the community. This is reflected in the identification of community priorities (see question 17) and the agree/disagree statements contained in question 18.
3. Nearly all respondents wanted some sort of open space in new development. Most (73%) desired passive open space such as walking trails and picnic areas, but there was also support for active open space (42%), lake/river access (40%), and undeveloped areas (30%). However, only 5.2% indicated that they did not want open space in new developments.
4. Aside from the above-noted support for grocery stores and sit-down restaurants, several other types of businesses were desired, such as general retail, health care, personal services, and recreation. In general, there seemed to be stronger support for retail and

service uses compared to industrial businesses. Similarly, the open house results indicate mixed feelings with respect to industrial growth in the Township south of the Village limits.

5. In the Village, nearly 80% of respondents indicated that enhancements to downtown Edwardsburg were either “very important” or “important.” This is consistent with the results of the house penny jars, where “growing downtown through placemaking” received the highest number of votes from participants.

## Summary of Open-Ended Comments

### 1. Community Development and Planning.

Several comments express the need for improved communication, advocating for virtual meetings and emphasizing the importance of thoughtful planning. Some residents highlight specific areas for improvement, such as Gunn Park and Lindberg Park, suggesting activities for families and community gatherings. There also appear to be concerns about the pace of growth and a perceived lack of vision for the community.

### 2. Preservation of Farmland and Nature.

A recurring theme throughout is the preservation of farmlands and nature. Residents emphasized the importance of protecting agricultural areas, opposition to rezoning farmland, and advocating for the preservation of natural spaces. Some comments express a desire to balance development with the preservation of lakes, farmlands, and natural areas.

### 3. Growth Management.

Several comments addressed specific projects, such as the proposed “Eddies Market Park” project on U.S. 12, as there appears to be a concern that new developments may not align with the community’s identity. There are also pleas to avoid expansion and rezoning of farmlands for commercial or industrial purposes.



#### 4. Community Identity and Character.

Residents consistently express a strong sense of community and a desire to maintain the small-town character and charm of Edwardsburg. Concerns about growth, subdivisions, and comparisons with larger neighboring areas like Granger are prevalent. The need to enhance the cohesive appearance of the Village and preserve its unique identity is a common thread in many comments.

#### 5. Infrastructure and Services.

Practical concerns regarding infrastructure and services are raised in comments calling for a grocery store, improved waste management with more recycling options, and safer transportation, particularly addressing railroad crossings and sidewalks for school-going children. These comments reflect a desire for enhanced amenities and services within the Village and Township.

## Engagement Summary and Conclusion

The survey results reveal that residents of Ontwa Township are mostly united in a vision for the future of their community that consists of a desire to maintain the rural character that defines their surroundings. The results underscore the importance of preserving the farmland and the overall rural character of the community. In addition, the Township's many inland lakes are key features of the community that residents prioritize for protection and preservation.

Similarly, visions for the Village of Edwardsburg surrounded the school system and community, with a desire to concentrate new development in the Village and promote the existing downtown area as a place for housing, retail, recreation, and community events. The community expressed a desire for a vibrant downtown. Residents seek a thoughtful approach to development that encourages local businesses and fosters a sense of community. By focusing on the heart of the Village, residents aim to improve the downtown so it may serve both the practical needs of its residents and define the social fabric of the community.

This plan's goals and objectives, future land use maps, and strategies for implementation are rooted in the direction received from the public during these events.

Chapter 6

# PLANNING ANALYSIS



This section of the plan examines the various components which have previously been described and undertakes an analysis of planning indicators and growth trends. This analysis will provide an understanding on how the Township and Village developed and with this knowledge, the goals and objectives for future development can be established.

By looking at population projections, the existing land use mix, and basic planning assumptions, the guidelines for determining the various land use needs can be accomplished. Through this process the local Boards and the Planning Commissions will know if it is reasonable to plan for the development of several thousand acres or a few acres for a specific type of land use.

1. The use of public water and sewers continues to expand in the Township. Most of the developing areas around Edwardsburg can utilize both while many other areas can hook up to the present sewer system. This is especially true around Eagle, Christiana, and Garver

Lakes. Areas not served or likely to be served soon that are currently undeveloped should not be planned for intense land uses.

2. The engagement efforts outlined in Chapter 5 revealed a deep sense of community pride and limiting growth into undeveloped areas in an attempt to maintain and enhance the community's rural character was a common theme. "Rural character" can be an elusive concept to grasp or define, but residents agree that the character of Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg should be maintained. The Township is set apart by its wide open spaces, rolling topography, desirable lakefronts, quality homes, small-scale commercial areas, and scenic farm fields. The Village is a tight-knit community seeking to protect its small-town charm and identity through cooperative planning and beautification efforts in the Village's core neighborhoods and business districts. Above all, residents throughout the Ontwa/Edwardsburg

community want their leaders and policymakers to continue this character into the future through proper planning.

3. Redevelopment of existing commercial and industrial areas is recognized as a more economically and environmentally sustainable alternative to greenfield development of outlying areas of the Township. In addition, downtown Edwardsburg is embraced as the center of the community, so planning for large areas of commercial development away from the Village would undermine the redevelopment potential of downtown.
4. Commercial and industrial land uses need to be buffered from residential areas through open space, landscaping, and screening.
5. The Township has experienced the encroachment of nonfarm development into areas zoned for agricultural use. While growth and development have slowed, the encroachment of development into agricultural areas impinges on the desires of many citizens as expressed at the visioning workshop. Policies included in this Master Plan seek to support agricultural activity, yet are balanced with realities in the private marketplace and the rights of property owners. The future land use framework is developed to discourage intense development in agricultural areas.
6. Projections of future population growth provide the bridge between the present and the future in the comprehensive planning process. These projections help determine future land use requirements as well

as the demand for various public services and capital improvements.

Projections of future population growth need to consider the growth of the larger geographic region of which the community is a part. For Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg, this involves considering future population growth within the Township as it relates to the growth characteristics of Cass County, as well as the Michigan-Indiana border area. The growth of each of these geographic areas will influence the population growth of the Township and Village.

New housing developments have been approved in the Township which will add additional residents to the community. Much of this growth may be attributed to the community's rural and small-town atmosphere, high-quality neighborhoods, and desirable school district. It will be important to provide high-quality amenities and services and balance the need to accommodate additional residents in a responsible way that does not undermine the very features that drew them in the first place and the community's vision.

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Chapter 7

# GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Planning goals are statements that express the community's long-range desires and serve to provide direction for related planning activities. The following goals and objectives have been developed by the Village and Township Planning Commission as a foundation for establishing future direction. The goals are presented by major topic areas and are based on previous planning efforts in the two communities, along with the results of the public engagement effort held in support of this plan.

A goal is generally defined as a desired end state or condition the community is striving to achieve. It should be fairly long-term in nature and yet within the reach of the community to attain. The goal statement should be reflective of the values and attitudes of the community; and, therefore, it should enjoy broad-based support. Generally, a goal statement should be stated assertively and in positive terms. An objective statement is a milestone in the journey to achieve the goal. Objectives are more specific than goals and should have some measurable aspect so that progress toward the goal may be evaluated.

In this joint Plan, goals and objectives are divided into three categories: Joint goals that apply to both the Village and Township, along with Township-only goals and Village-only goals.

## Joint Township and Village Goals

### Residential Land Use and Housing

1. Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg will feature stable, high-quality, and welcoming neighborhoods that accommodate a variety of housing opportunities, including single-family, two-family, and multiple family residential development, to maintain affordability for a wide range of income levels.

### Objectives

- a. Make improvements to local residential streets, such as improving the sidewalk network, to ensure safe access to neighborhoods.
- b. Encourage the maintenance and preservation of the existing housing stock through proper zoning and housing code enforcement.
- c. Maintain efficient police, ambulance, and fire service to the neighborhoods.
- d. Implement zoning standards better equipped to influence the location and design of mobile home parks.
- e. Protect residential areas from commercial and industrial land uses by requiring open space, landscaping, buffered thoroughfares, and encouraging transitional land uses.

- f. New developments should include amenities such as active or passive open spaces, natural areas, sidewalks, bike and footpaths with multiple connections, street trees, and pedestrian linkages to commercial centers and parks.

### **Commercial Development**

- 2. Areas of Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg providing shopping and services will be quaint yet vibrant and will boast attractive streetscapes and will serve as a destination hub of social and retailing activity.

#### **Objectives**

- a. Implement regulations that encourage the shared use of commercial driveways and control the number and spacing of driveways, especially along U.S. 12 and M 62.
- b. Implement policies and regulations that promote family-oriented neighborhood convenience centers sited to promote walkability.
- c. Work with the local business community to encourage and maintain a desired mix of commercial and service opportunities available to Township residents.
- d. Develop more detailed landscaping, sign, and building appearance guidelines or ordinances to promote aesthetics and the vitality of the commercial districts.
- e. Explore methods to give preference to utilization of existing commercial properties over greenfield development in outlying areas.

- f. Complete a market study to determine which businesses the community can support and ensure that the Zoning Ordinance allows for or encourages development that aligns with the marketplace.

### **Industrial Development**

- 3. Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg will be balanced with a varied mix of businesses and industries, attractively developed and maintained and providing meaningful employment opportunities.

#### **Objectives**

- a. Preserve land for future industrial purposes in and around areas that provide easy access to major arteries such as M 62.
- b. Work on mutually-beneficial efforts dedicated to researching and recommending development incentives and other measures to attract private investment.
- c. Explore methods to give preference to utilization of existing industrial properties over greenfield development in outlying areas.
- d. Promote high-quality industrial development in planned areas to provide employment and economic development opportunities for both the Township and Village.
- e. Review zoning regulations to ensure that industrial areas provide appropriate buffer strips, open space, or other transitional land uses where necessary.



## Transportation

4. Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg will feature aesthetically attractive and well-maintained transportation routes that will complement balanced, orderly growth and ensure convenience and safety for residents and workers.

### Objectives

- a. Give priority to roads in areas intended to support the highest concentrations of development.
- b. Continue to work with the Cass County Road Commission to improve maintenance on existing roadways and to address traffic controls, sight restrictions, drainage, and ditching.
- c. Maintain solid communication with Cass County Road Commission personnel to promote road improvement policies consistent with the goals of the Township.

## Public Safety

5. Public safety and public services will continue to provide high-quality, reliable service for Village and Township residents.

### Objectives

- a. Expand the capabilities of the Edwardsburg/Ontwa Police and Ambulance Departments to match a standard ratio relating to the size of the Township's population as needed.

- b. Provide street lighting in identified residential areas and at key street intersections where necessary.

## Trails, Parks and Recreation, and Community Facilities

6. The residents and visitors of Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg will enjoy a network of trails and safe and inviting non-motorized connections to local and regional natural areas and recreational facilities.

### Objectives

- a. Acquire land areas for the development of future parks – including open spaces for developed play areas and preserves along the lakes for passive recreation.
- b. Develop neighborhood park facilities to provide economical and convenient recreational opportunities.
- c. Work with developers to set aside land for parks and obtain easements for pedestrian/bicycle paths. Amend the zoning ordinance to require the inclusion of pathways throughout new development and along streets to promote pedestrian connections and to begin to build a non-motorized network.
- d. Develop and/or maintain a five-year parks and recreation plan that identifies future desired park and trail locations and other relevant topics based on likely emerging growth areas, existing and proposed regional trails, natural feature destinations, sports complexes, cultural venues, etc.
- e. Explore possible trail funding opportunities or

general resource partners, including the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, the Cass County Parks Department, the Land & Water Conservation Fund, and the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance.

- f. Support the Edwardsburg Sports Complex.

### **Cooperative Planning with the Village and Adjacent Communities**

- 7. Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg will benefit from coordination of services and cooperative land use planning with each other, with neighboring communities, and within the larger region.

#### **Objectives**

- a. Continue and strengthen the consistent means of communicating with the Village of Edwardsburg and Ontwa Township Planning Commissions.
- b. Coordinate consistent and compatible land use decisions along the Township's borders with adjacent townships and the Village.
- c. Maintain cooperative programs, including emergency services.
- d. Support efforts of the joint Corridor Improvement Authority to improve and beautify the M-62 corridor.

## **Ontwa Township Goals**

### **Agriculture and Open Space**

- 1. Ontwa Township will feature productive and economically viable agricultural lands for years to come and the encroachment of non-agricultural uses into prime farming areas will be minimized.

#### **Objectives**

- a. Explore alternative planning and transitional zoning techniques, such as fixed area ratio zoning, sliding-scale zoning, and other approaches, that discourage or reduce spot zoning and the encroachment of nonfarm development into prime farm areas. Fixed area ratio zoning allows one dwelling at a density standard, with a maximum lot area to reduce the fragmentation of farmland; while sliding-scale zoning would allow comparatively more nonfarm dwellings to be subdivided from smaller farm parcels than larger farm parcels.
- b. Encourage the use of P.A. 116 of 1974 preservation agreements by area farmers that are consistent with the overall land development needs of the area.
- c. Investigate enacting a local transfer of development rights program, possibly with a multi-jurisdictional structure, which would preserve designated agricultural land and open space while facilitating development in certain pre-defined areas of the community, which may include the Village.

- d. Identify areas that are presently zoned for agricultural use which, due to their location and the encroachment of nonfarm development, should be planned and zoned for alternative long range use.

### **The Environment**

- 2. A defining characteristic of Ontwa Township will be its woodlands, open lands, drainage network, healthy wetlands and lakes, natural character, and wildlife habitat.

### **Objectives**

- a. Institute land use plans, policies, and regulations intended to minimize or avoid impacts on air and water quality.

- b. Amend the zoning ordinance to provide for open space development patterns, where development is planned, as the preferred use by right with conventional development patterns processed as special land uses.
- c. Develop zoning standards to promote non-contiguous planned unit developments as a means to promote open space protection.
- d. Implement more stringent zoning and related development review tools that encourage land developers to take natural features such as soils, topography, hydrology, and natural vegetation into account in the process of site design.



- e. Promote soil conservation and wise use of fertilizers and pesticides.
- f. Establish landscape guidelines for new commercial, industrial, and residential developments which will offset the loss of natural vegetation caused by development.
- g. Determine the feasibility of establishing a Township recycling program/center.
- h. Create a detailed inventory of key natural resources and features that can be used as a preservation guide, and possibly a regulatory tool, for the Township and developers.
- c. Implement a program of surface water quality monitoring to develop a trend line data for analysis and to serve as a basis for intelligent surface water regulation.
- d. Define the environmental carrying capacity of Ontwa Township lakes and employ the resulting analysis to guide land use decisions in the vicinity of water features.
- e. Explore mechanisms to ensure safe public access to the lakes at a reasonable level and minimize conflicts between motorized watercraft and swimmers.

### **Water Resources**

- 3. The surface waters of Ontwa Township, including its many lakes and streams, will be clean, attractive, and healthy, supporting a balance of native wildlife communities and a sustainable level of human use.

### **Objectives**

- a. Evaluate and revise, as necessary, zoning or other regulations pertaining to filter or buffer requirements along water bodies, including wetlands. Develop techniques to ensure development is adequately set back from significant features and that runoff is minimized.
- b. Expand and strengthen stormwater management standards to reduce the quantity and velocity of runoff and to reduce pollutants.

## Village of Edwardsburg Goals

### Sidewalks and Walkability

1. The Village will expand the sidewalk and non-motorized trail network within its boundaries, linking residential areas with commercial, educational, and recreational uses.

#### Objectives

- a. Develop a plan for expanding sidewalk connections within the Village with particular emphasis on connections to educational and recreational destinations such as the schools, parks, and the Edwardsburg Sports Complex.
- b. Create and promote educational materials that advocate the benefits of walking and biking, and the importance of a walkable community.
- c. Encourage mixed-use development in key areas to reduce the need for vehicular travel, thereby promoting walkability.
- d. Implement a comprehensive plan to retrofit existing sidewalks to meet accessibility guidelines where necessary.
- e. Regularly assess and update sidewalk infrastructure to identify and address potential hazards, such as uneven surfaces or obstacles.

- f. Work cooperatively with the Township in developing additional non-motorized pathways along US-12, M-62, or other key corridors in the community.
- g. Adopt official policies or ordinances that implement Complete Streets concepts.

### Downtown Development and Beautification

2. Cass Street will be defined as the heart of the Village of Edwardsburg, defined by a people-centered atmosphere and unique sense of place.

#### Objectives

- a. Review and amend the zoning ordinance as necessary to ensure that walkable development is the preferred development form along Cass Street, with particular emphasis on site design, building orientation, and walkability.
- b. Prioritize pedestrian infrastructure with wide sidewalks, well-marked crosswalks, bulb-outs, and similar improvements to enhance walkability and create a welcoming environment for residents and visitors.
- c. Facilitate community events and festivals in and around the downtown to activate public spaces and foster a sense of community pride and ownership.
- d. Permit and encourage the adaptive reuse of existing structures and the creation of flexible spaces that can easily adapt to changing community needs.

Chapter 8

# FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

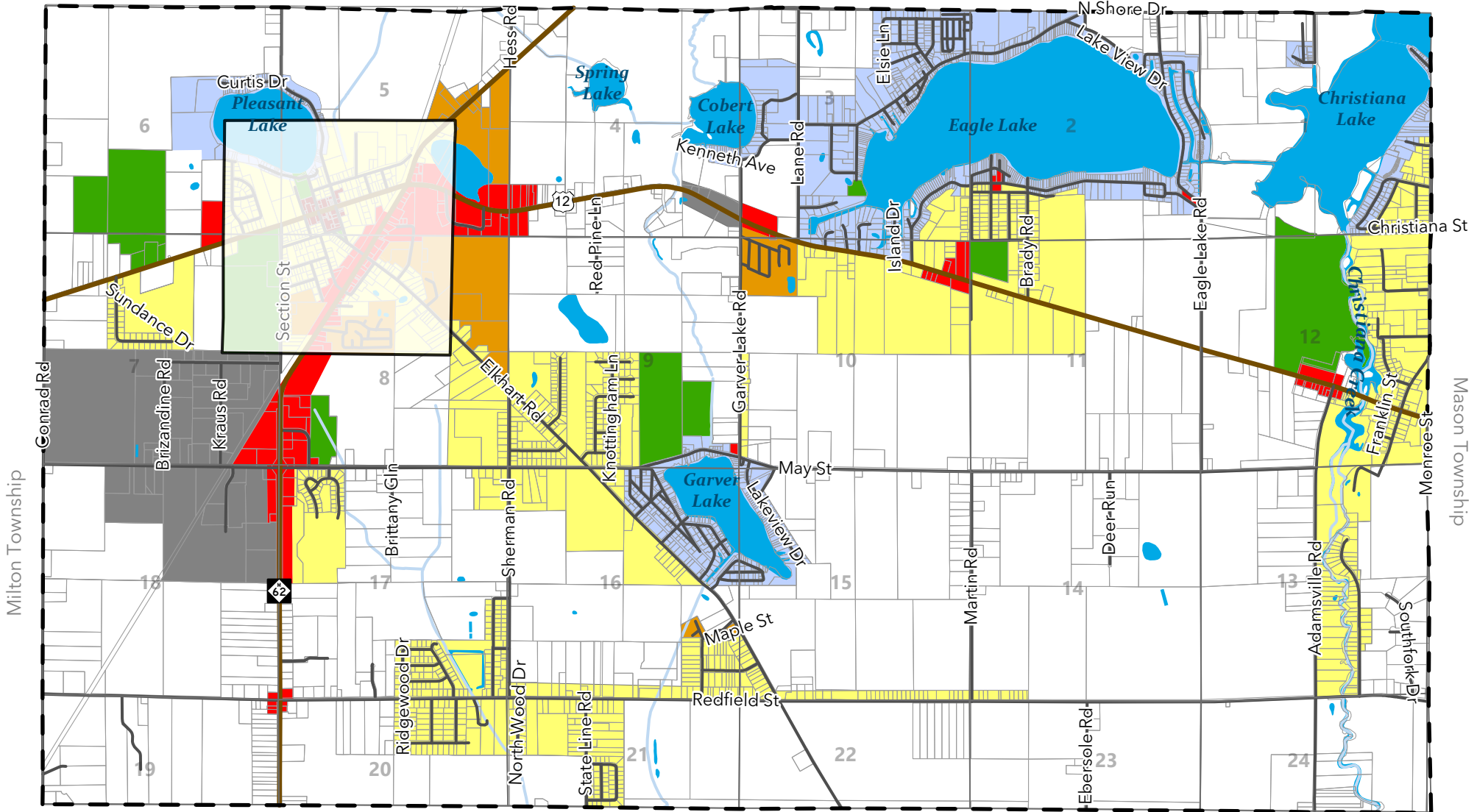


The Future Land Use Plan is a compilation of descriptions, recommendations, and justifications for future land use in Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg. It serves as an overall framework for the management and regulation of future development and also serves as the basis for evaluating rezoning requests.

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended, specifically gives both jurisdictions the authority to prepare and officially adopt a Plan. When prepared, officially adopted, and maintained, the Plan provides an advisory guide for the physical conservation of certain areas and for the development of other areas into the best possible living environment for present and future township residents.

The timing of a particular land use is dependent upon several factors such as the availability of public utilities, provisions for adequate roadways, the effect on public services, and the demand for a particular land use versus the available land zoned for this use.

While most of the future land use designations follow property lines, they are intended to be flexible with indistinct edges. Where a property adjoins more than one future land use designation, any of the adjoining designations may be found to be consistent with this Plan based upon the careful review of relevant policies and recommendations contained in this Plan.



- Agricultural Residential (AR)
- Low Density Residential (LDR)
- High Density Residential (HDR)
- Lake Residential (LR)
- Commercial (C)
- Industrial (I)
- Parks and Recreation (PR)
- Village of Edwardsburg
- Water

**Map 11. Future Land Use  
- Ontwa Twp**





# Ontwa Township Future Land Use Categories

## **Agricultural Residential**

Agricultural operations are a primary land use in Ontwa Township. The visioning workshop revealed that these operations are viewed positively, as farms establish a strong rural character and help to define the community. It is well documented that farms and non-farm uses can conflict with each other, for a variety of reasons. It is further recognized that non-farm development in transitional agricultural areas tends to have a domino effect, undermining the economies of scale in agricultural production that is afforded with relative size and contiguity of highly productive or unique soil classifications. Land use decisions in the Agricultural Residential areas should be mindful of these considerations.

The Agricultural Residential future land use designation is intended to accommodate farming activities and agricultural support services and to recognize the desire of residents to maintain the Township's farmland and rural character. Agriculture is an important piece of the heritage of Ontwa Township and the broader region. The Master Plan recognizes this and the Agricultural Residential designation is therefore designed to encourage farmers to continue operating in the Township. As such, non-farm development should be limited in these areas. Agricultural uses and limited low-density residential uses are the predominant land uses in these areas.

Future extension of public sanitary sewer infrastructure into these areas is not contemplated over the life of this Plan, and densities should therefore be low to accommodate private septic systems. Densities in the Agricultural Residential areas should be about one dwelling unit per two acres.

The Agricultural Residential classification recognizes the desire of homeowners for a rural environment relatively close to urban amenities. At the same time, this land category is intended to encourage the preservation of wetlands, woodlands, and open spaces which are useful as water retention and groundwater discharge areas, provide valuable habitat for wildlife, and have important aesthetic and scenic values. Lands in the Agricultural Residential designation host unique ecological areas and dramatic vistas. A central goal of this Plan is the maintenance of these features while also encouraging continued agricultural operations.

The boundaries and extent of the Agricultural Residential planning areas have been designed with the following considerations in mind:

- areas not serviced with public sewer should not be developed intensely;
- areas of PA 116 Lands should be protected from the encroachment of development;

- areas with soils that are generally unsuitable to support intensive development due to substantial rolling topography or septic system limitations should not be planned for intensive future growth;
- and areas considered suitable for long-term farming investment, including areas with modest land fragmentation, should be set aside for the continuation of agricultural use.

### **Low-Density Residential**

This Master Plan is intended to preserve the rural and agricultural character of the community but must be balanced with realities in the marketplace. The Low-Density Residential designation has been prepared in recognition of existing development patterns and the probable long-term future demand for family-oriented, single-family neighborhoods. It is anticipated that new development in these areas will result in attractive and inviting single-family communities of lasting value.

New development should be mindful of natural features, such as large expanses of woodlands, scenic vistas, water features, and ridgelines. This Plan encourages new developments to be designed as open space communities, with single-family lots gathered around large expanses of green space. Open space communities can protect valuable environmental and aesthetic features that support the rural character of the Township.

Additionally, new development should provide an internal walking trail or sidewalk system to promote pedestrian safety, walkability, and interconnection between neighboring developments. This Plan supports open space developments as a use permitted by right within Low-Density Residential areas and non-contiguous planned unit developments that permanently protect uninterrupted expanses of open space and help to establish a network of greenways.

Low-Density Residential areas have been planned adjacent to existing development, and are located in areas currently served with public sewer or in areas where public sewer may potentially be extended in the foreseeable future. Moreover, Low-Density Residential areas are primarily planned for lands not currently being farmed or areas not considered prime farmland, and located within a sewer district.

The predominant land use in the Low-Density Residential land use designation will be single-family dwellings at a density of approximately two to three dwelling units per acre, with a slight increase in density possible when public sewer is provided.

### **High-Density Residential**

A primary goal of this Master Plan is the preservation of the Township's natural features balanced with high-quality and aesthetic forms of development that offer a very attractive living environment for residents. The High-Density Residential designation is key to this goal. The primary purpose of this designation is to offer the potential for a

variety of residential options including single-family, two-family, and multi-family units, for a variety of age and income levels. In addition, these areas are intended to serve as receptors for senior living environments and care services. A long-term objective for this designation is the creation of high-density areas that are designed and located to create human-scale, walkable neighborhoods near commercial services and recreational amenities with high-quality design that works with the area's natural features.

Natural vegetative buffers around development in this land use category are encouraged to help protect less intense land uses and will be designed to retain significant natural features and the Township's urban/rural character. In addition, greater road frontage setbacks are encouraged to keep country roads scenic.

Single-family dwellings and two-family dwellings are the predominant land use in the High-Density Residential designation. Ontwa Township has recognized the need to provide limited areas of affordable, low-maintenance, and high-quality housing for young professionals, the elderly, and young families. As such, existing areas of more intense development can be found within the High-Density Residential designation, but new or expanded condominium, apartment, or manufactured housing developments are not encouraged unless served with public sewer and compatible with adjacent land uses. Moreover, these higher-density uses may be considered where the effects of that density on natural features, infrastructure, and surrounding properties can be

mitigated. For example, a senior housing development may be considered if it can be demonstrated that impacts such as traffic, stormwater runoff, community character, and service demands would be consistent with that generated by a less intense development.

Conservation design techniques will be encouraged, where appropriate, to establish small pockets of natural lands within this relatively intense development form. Overall residential densities of three to four dwelling units per acre will be achieved.

### **Lake Residential**

The inland lakes located in Ontwa Township are substantial recreational amenities and enhance the appeal of the community as a prime residential area within the region. Additionally, the water bodies and the surrounding land are valued for ecological significance and treasured for aesthetic value. As such, waterfront residential areas will warrant special planning attention when implementing this Master Plan.

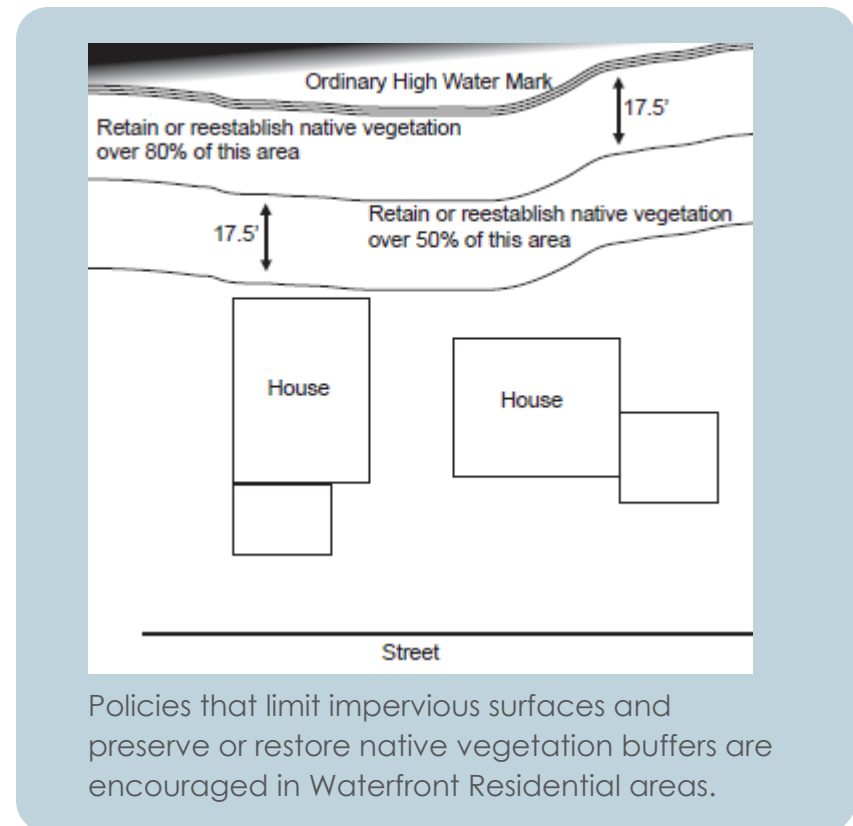
Some of the Township's lakes have acted as magnets for residential development and will remain attractive places for residential uses and recreation activities. Conversely, several smaller lakes and streams retain a pristine and relatively untouched character and have not attracted much development or have remained relatively low-density over time. In the former case, development regulations should recognize existing development patterns while applying realistic standards that support the long-term viability of the lake. In the latter case, wetlands

and other natural features have generally foreclosed the prospect of development, and pre-settlement characteristics of the water body and surrounding land should be preserved.

The established pattern in most Waterfront Residential areas includes single-family homes at a density of up to three to four dwelling units per acre in accessible waterfront areas. Lands classified as Waterfront Residential that are currently unplatted and therefore have no established, developed density pattern should utilize a lower density or open space development patterns that preserve natural vegetation along the shoreline.

In addition, while several existing non-residential land uses complement existing lakeside neighborhoods, they should not encroach further into residential areas and additional non-residential uses are not desired; to protect the integrity and cohesiveness of the neighborhoods and to protect lake quality by minimizing high-impact development. These uses include Eagle Lake Marine, Stacy's Food and Spirits, and a yacht club.

A significant portion of the existing lakefront areas in the Township are developed in relatively high-density patterns to take advantage of the lake amenity. In some cases, the scale of nearby development may impact lake water quality. Development within the Waterfront Residential designation should be scaled appropriately to the particular body of water to minimize any adverse effects on natural features. Additionally, impervious surface limitations and other policies that reduce the quantity and velocity of runoff and increase the quality of runoff will be encouraged.



Moreover, site design and landscaping techniques that result in the retention of native vegetation along the shore and discourage artificial fertilization will be promoted. Implementation of increased setback distances between dwellings and the ordinary high water mark or increased lot widths will be difficult because many areas are already developed. However, it is possible to foster the reestablishment of native vegetation along the shoreline to reduce fertilizer runoff that can lead to eutrophication.

Eutrophication is an aging process resulting from increasing levels of dissolved nutrients, such as phosphates, in surface water. While this process occurs naturally, it can be accelerated through pollution and other impacts of human settlement around water bodies. Increasing vegetation to promote the natural filtration of runoff and to reduce impervious surfaces can greatly benefit water quality.

### **Commercial**

The Commercial future land use label represents the desire to reuse and enhance existing commercial properties, in areas that may currently be served with public utilities and that are experiencing relatively high traffic counts. The limited expansion of areas planned for new commercial development is premised on the policy that downtown Edwardsburg, in the Village, is the commercial center and heart of the community. As such, the Township does not wish to provide excessive opportunities for competing suburban commercial developments; and rather, would like to support the redevelopment and improvement of downtown and existing Township commercial areas.

The purpose of the Commercial future land use designation is to perpetuate the accommodation of establishments offering goods and services to residents. Desired uses include retail, personal service establishments, restaurants, financial institutions, professional offices, and similar uses. The more automobile-oriented uses, such as drive-through businesses, are not encouraged throughout the Township and should be limited to the area around May Street and M-62. Uses in other Commercial areas should be of a smaller

scale with more design orientation focused on pedestrians, with amenities including substantial window coverage, sitting benches, and sidewalks.

In addition, architectural details are paramount in the Commercial areas. New development and redevelopment should be designed to deviate from conventional corporate architecture with carnival-like colors and “box” styling, to maintain the community’s unique rural character and to avoid a strip commercial, “Anyplace USA” appearance. Building facades should be constructed of high-quality materials to portray an aesthetic of permanence, and facades should be pleasantly broken up to evade monotonous storefronts. Meaningful pedestrian circulation patterns, ground-mounted signage, and efficient site illumination are encouraged; as well as enhanced landscaping.

Furthermore, large expanses of front yard parking area should be avoided, with some parking placed to the side or rear of buildings. Site access should be coordinated with neighboring properties to minimize traffic conflict points and to foster a safe environment for vehicular turning movements. This may be accomplished with shared access and connected parking lots and by requiring relatively large distances between street intersections and commercial driveways.



## Industrial

The Industrial future land use designation reflects the Township's desire to promote existing industrial areas as generators of employment for area residents. Industrial areas will be characterized by low-impact land uses, such as high-tech research and development, office, light manufacturing, warehousing, and shipping centers.

Vacant land zoned for industrial use in the Edwardsburg Industrial Park should be developed before additional lands in the Township are designated for such development. In addition, the Industrial area along US-12 should be kept relatively small-scale, with low-impact land uses and generous landscaping conducive to the location within proximity to residential neighborhoods.

Further, any Industrial areas adjacent to residential uses should include buffer areas to protect the residential uses from any potential adverse effects. Buffer areas should include substantial setbacks, landscaping, and possible fencing.

## Parks and Recreation

The Township seeks to provide continued recreational opportunities to its residents and visitors. As such, this Plan has contemplated a Parks and Recreation designation to ensure the preservation of Kraus Park, the Township-owned and maintained park. Additionally, the designation includes several private recreational facilities, such as the Four Lakes Country Club and the Edwardsburg Sports Complex. The Vernon and Velma Radebaugh Memorial, a 7.8-acre natural plant reserve area preserved by the Michigan Nature Association, is also designated Parks and Recreation. These facilities are designated Parks and Recreation in recognition of the significant contribution to quality of life they offer to Township residents.

# Village of Edwardsburg Future Land Use Categories

## Village Residential Area

The Village Residential designation is established in recognition of the existing and predominantly single-family residential neighborhoods in Edwardsburg, to support the stability and upkeep of such residential settings, and to provide additional opportunities for neighborhood growth and redevelopment of similar character. The Village Residential Area includes the majority of the village not otherwise part of the M-62 Mixed Use or Uptown Commercial designations.

Development densities throughout this designation vary but primarily range from four to six dwellings per acre (approximately 7,000 to 12,000 sq. ft. per dwelling) and the Plan supports the maintenance of this density range across the majority of this designation. New development should take into consideration the character of adjacent residential development patterns to ensure compatibility. The Plan supports the presence of the Edwardsburg Schools campus as part of the Village Residential Area and the educational, recreational, economic, and civic opportunities it provides.

## Waterfront Residential

Similar to the lakes of Ontwa Township surrounding the Village, Pleasant Lake, located in the northwest portion of the Village, is a substantial recreational amenity that enhances the appeal of the Village. Gunn Park contains

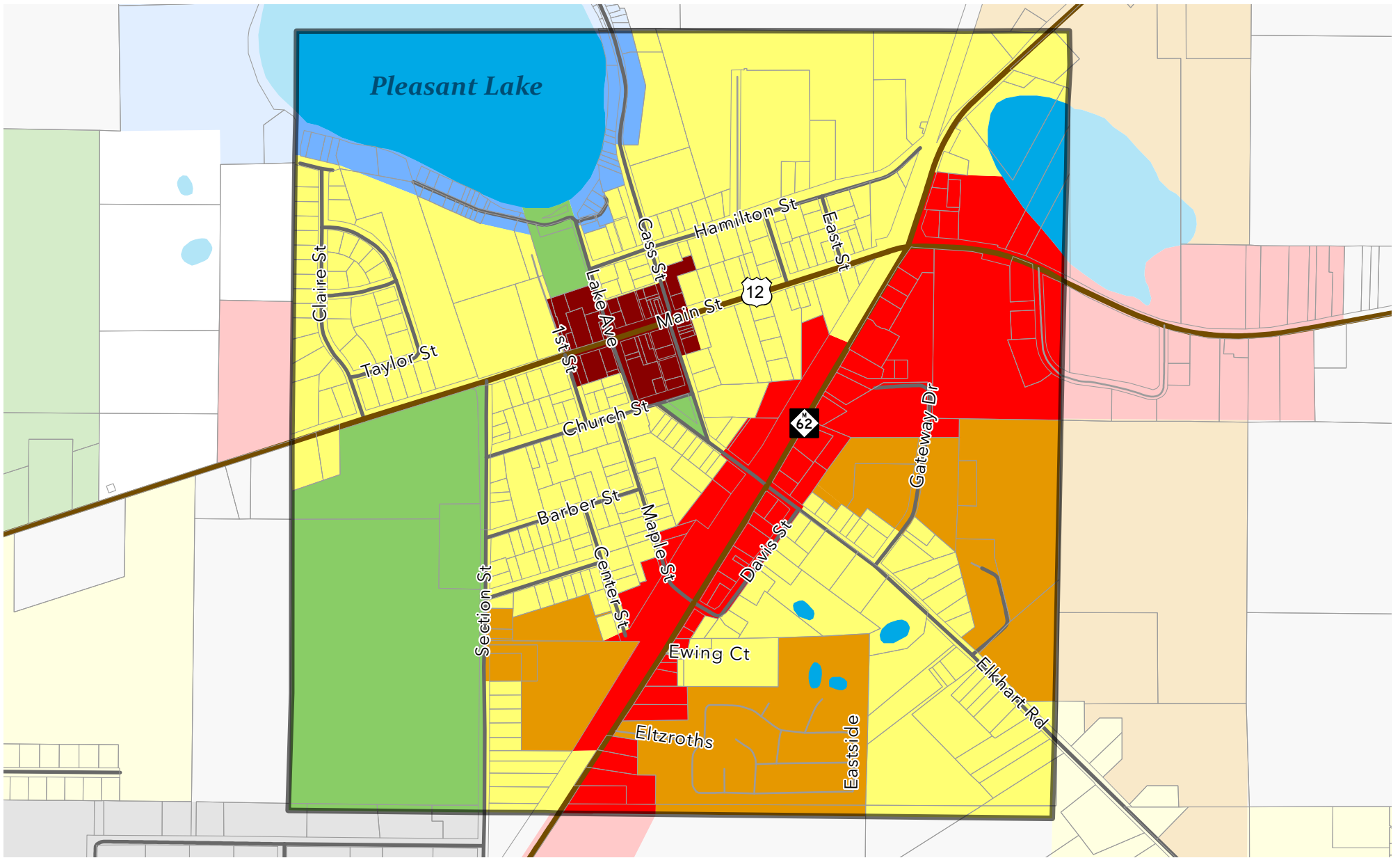
about 300 feet of frontage on Pleasant Lake, and there is a small swimming area on the east side of the lake at Lindbergh Park, making the lake a community-wide asset. The lake is valued for ecological, aesthetic, and recreational significance, so it also warrants special planning attention in this Master Plan.

In addition to the recreational uses afforded by Gunn Park, Pleasant Lake in the Village also contains residential and commercial uses, and the lake will likely remain attractive for development and redevelopment efforts in the future. Development regulations should recognize existing development patterns while applying realistic standards that support the long-term viability of the lake.

Like many waterfront lands, there is a long-established historical pattern of residential development and densities that should be respected. However, if opportunities for new development and/or redevelopment occur, the Village will need to take necessary steps to protect the quality of the lake. This may include limitations on residential densities, restrictions on keyholing/funneling, and standards to minimize stormwater runoff into the lake and preserve natural vegetation along the shoreline, among others.

## High-Density Residential Area

The High-Density Residential designation recognizes the presence of the Village's single manufactured housing community at the south end of the village and the apartment complexes off of Section Road and behind the M-62 and U.S.-12 corridors. This Plan supports the



- Village Residential Area (VRA)
- High Density Residential Area (HDR)
- Lake Residential (LR)
- M-62 Mixed Use Corridor (MUC)
- Uptown Commercial Area (UCA)
- Community Facilities (CF)
- Water
- Village of Edwardsburg

**Map 12. Future Land Use  
-Village of Edwardsburg**





provision of alternative living arrangements to meet the varied housing needs and desires of its current and future residents, and the maintenance and upkeep of these neighborhoods. These facilities provide considerable opportunities for apartment and manufactured housing community living.

However, this Plan does not support the expansion of these areas or the introduction of housing of similar character elsewhere in the village (except as described under M-62 Mixed Use Corridor). However, the Plan does support the redevelopment of any portions of these neighborhoods that are blighted, do not support a safe living environment, or otherwise negatively affect nearby properties or the community as a whole.

### **Uptown Commercial Area**

The Uptown Commercial Area reflects a traditional mixed-use village pattern including commercial, residential, and public uses. The existing businesses cater to the needs of the local community and highway travelers. The Plan supports the presence of this area as an important defining feature of the Village as a place of locally oriented commerce and social gathering. This pattern should be strengthened and enhanced whenever possible.

To preserve the area as a small commerce center, residences should be encouraged in spaces above commercial storefronts. Property in this designation should be designed around people, encourage safe and convenient pedestrian circulation and activity, and include streetscape and other amenities that enhance its vitality, energy, and sense of place.

While on-street parking may be allowed, there is little available land for off-street parking in this area which may limit development options. Nevertheless, the Village should prioritize creating and maintaining a vibrant streetscape available to and comfortable for pedestrians. Any off-street parking that is provided should be in the rear of buildings whenever possible. New development or redevelopment should respect this historic village character and be designed with this in mind. Challenges in this designation include the difficulty of making the lack of safe crossings of US-12, except for Section Street where there is a traffic signal. Changes and development in this designation will need to be carefully managed and considered to ensure pedestrian safety.

The Uptown Commercial area is not intended to evolve into an extended commercial center, although limited expansion to permit the incremental conversion of immediately adjacent lots to commercial or other alternative uses is reasonable where those uses support the purpose of the downtown, are developed with a design that contributes to a traditional downtown aesthetic, and do not undermine the character of nearby residential uses.

### **M-62 Mixed Use Corridor**

This highway segment is characterized by a mix of commercial uses along the east side of the highway. The west side includes the Canadian National Railroad and a mix of residences, commercial uses, abandoned buildings, and open space. The M-62 Mixed Use Corridor is established in support of the continuation of this pattern,

and to provide opportunities for increased residential opportunities along the corridor's east side. Primary commercial uses along the Corridor's east side should address the day-to-day needs of the local population, seasonal visitors, and highway travelers, including retail sales, offices, personal services, and eateries.

Secondary commercial uses include those that provide additional benefits and which may cater to a more regional population, and/or are of a size, scale, or intensity (including "big box" developments) that increases the potential for negative impacts. These uses should be carefully sited and subject to special land use review. The M-62 Mixed Use Corridor supports opportunities for residential uses above commercial storefronts wherever feasible.

The west side of the corridor includes those lots in immediate proximity to the railroad. The Plan supports the continued presence of residences along the railroad while, at the same time, recognizing that the residential use of lots adjacent to the railroad raises special challenges. Still, the use of these lots for commercial purposes can be particularly problematic for the residences and neighborhoods further west due to traffic, property ownership, and related issues.

The use of lots immediately adjacent to the west side of the railroad for non-residential purposes may be appropriate in the case where the proposed use can be accommodated without resulting in unreasonable impacts upon nearby residential uses, taking into consideration such factors as traffic generation and flow, screening,

hours of operation, noise, and similar factors. Thus, commercial uses should be service-oriented or otherwise be low traffic generators and be accessible from M-62 versus the neighborhoods to the west.

The proximity of residential neighborhoods presents special challenges for the accommodation of industrial activities along the railroad. Nevertheless, small-scale industry has been present in the past and there may be opportunities for low-intensity and small-scale industry.

### **Community Facilities**

The Village seeks to provide continued recreational opportunities and high-quality schools to its residents, and to neighboring communities and visitors. As such, this Plan includes a Community Facilities designation that includes Village parks, Edwardsburg Public Schools properties, and the Cass District Library. The location of the new library in proximity to the schools will enhance the benefits of the district and also provide a community center that will be an asset to the Village in future years.

These areas are designated Community Facilities in recognition of the significant contribution to the quality of life they offer to Village residents. While the school district is not subject to local zoning authority, the Village should seek to ensure that the school facilities are well-connected to the greater sidewalk and trail network in the community to ensure there are safe and usable non-motorized options for students, parents, and staff.



## Township and Village Zoning Plans

Section 33, (2), (d), of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Act 33 of 2008) requires that Master Plans include a Zoning Plan to explain how the future land use categories in this Plan relate to the zoning districts incorporated in the Township's Zoning Ordinance. The following tables relate the more general future land use categories with the zoning districts and discuss features and factors to be considered in reviewing requests to rezone lands in the Township or Village consistent with this plan.

In considering a request to rezone property in both the Township and the Village, each Planning Commission should consider their respective future land use maps and the future land use descriptive narrative of this plan. The foregoing tables shall be used to evaluate the degree to which the proposed rezoning is, or may be, consistent with this plan together with an evaluation of the specific request. The proposed rezoning decision shall also consider

whether the proposed site may be reasonably used as it is currently zoned, whether the proposed site is an appropriate location for any and all of the land uses that might be permitted within the requested zoning district, whether there may be other locations in the community that are better suited to accommodate such uses, and any potential detrimental impact on the surrounding property that could result from the proposed rezoning.

In all cases, this Zoning Plan shall be applied as a guideline for the Planning Commission subject to the appropriate application of the discretionary authority permitted to the Planning Commission and Township Board by statute, case law, and good planning practice. Nothing in this Zoning Plan will preclude the Planning Commission and Township Board from considering amendments to this Master Plan to better serve the public interests of the community.

# Ontwa Township Zoning Plan

Future Land Use Categories	Supporting and Compatible Zoning Districts	Additional Potentially Compatible Zoning Districts	Evaluation Factors and Features to Determine Eligibility for Additional Potentially Compatible Zoning Districts
Agricultural Residential	A-R, Agricultural Residential	None	
Low-Density Residential	R-1A, Residential R-1, Residential	None	
High-Density Residential	R-2, Residential	M-H, Mobile Home Park MFR, Multi-Family Residential	If public sewer is provided and new development includes open space and pedestrian amenities and is formed into a walkable community; and if compatible with adjacent land uses
Waterfront Residential	L-R, Lake Residential	None	
Commercial	C-1, Commercial/Service	C-2, General Commercial	If abutting M-62 generally within one-half mile of its intersection with May Street and if compatible with adjacent land uses
Industrial	I-1, Light Industrial	I-2, Heavy Industrial	If located within the Edwardsburg Industrial Park
Parks and Recreation	None, but a new district may be established in the future	The Township's intent is that recreation facilities stay in recreational use, but if development were to occur, it should meet the intent of the utility, land use, and rural preservation policies of the Plan and follow the predominant future land use designation surrounding the property	

# Village of Edwardsburg Zoning Plan

Future Land Use Categories	Supporting and Compatible Zoning Districts	Additional Potentially Compatible Zoning Districts	Evaluation Factors and Features to Determine Eligibility for Additional Potentially Compatible Zoning Districts
Village Residential	R-1 Single Family Residential	R-2 Mobile Home Park	Land with water and sewer utilities available that is near other R-2 zoned property may be appropriate for R-2 zoning
High-Density Residential	R-3 Multiple Family Residential	R-2 Mobile Home Park	Land with water and sewer utilities available that is near other R-2 zoned property may be appropriate for R-2 zoning
Waterfront Residential	R-1 Single Family Residential	None	A new zoning district that is designed specifically address challenges posed by lakefront development may also be compatible.
Uptown Commercial	RC Retail Commercial	None	N/A
M-62 Mixed Use	SC Service Commercial	None	N/A
Community Facilities	None	R-1 Single Family Residential	Properties in the Community Facilities designation are controlled by the Village or school district and are thus exempt from zoning. However, if any properties are removed from the control of the Village or school district they should be rezoned to R-1.

Chapter 9

# IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



For the Master Plan to serve as an effective guide for the continued development of Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg, it must be implemented. Primary responsibility for implementing the Plan rests with the Township Board and Village Council, each community's Planning Commission, and staff. This is done through several methods including ordinances, programs, and administrative procedures which are described in this chapter.

It is important to note that the Master Plan itself has no legal authority to regulate development to implement the recommendations of the Plan. This implementation must come from the decisions of the Township Board/Village Council and Planning Commission to provide needed public improvements and to administer and establish regulatory measures relative to the use of the land. Cooperation between the Township, Village, and adjacent municipalities and Cass County agencies is also essential.

The private sector, including individual home and land owners, is also involved in fulfilling the recommendations of the Master Plan through the actual physical development of land uses and through the rezoning of land. The authority for this, however, comes from the Township and Village. Cooperation between the public and private sectors is therefore important in the successful implementation of the Master Plan.

Previous elements of the Plan set forth Goals and Objectives and Land Use Plan recommendations which serve to guide the future development of Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg. Many of the specific implementation recommendations of this chapter are taken from these objectives.

The following sections summarize many of the major activities that the Ontwa Township and Village of Edwardsburg Planning Commissions should pursue in order to be proactive in the implementation of this Master Plan.

## Joint Implementation Strategies

### Complete Streets

This Plan supports complete streets policy. Complete streets are thoroughfares that are planned, designed, and constructed to allow access to all legal users safely and efficiently, without any one user taking priority over another. Users in the Township and the Village include pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, users of assistive devices, and truck drivers. Complete streets can result in increased safety for non-motorized users, improved public health, a cleaner environment, mobility equity, and enhanced quality of life through increased modal choices and more inviting streets. In 2016, the Ontwa Township Board of Trustees approved a Complete Streets Policy. In 2017, the Township Planning Commission appointed a Bike and Pedestrian Committee.

In addition, another key motivation to enact complete streets policies is that Michigan law encourages MDOT to give additional consideration to enhancement grant applicants with such policies. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act has also been amended to stipulate that transportation improvements be respectful of the surrounding context, further ensuring that more equitable and attractive streets become a reality.

The Village and Township should continue to work cooperatively and with surrounding communities to promote healthy lifestyles for people of all abilities through the continued development of a non-motorized network. Suggested design elements may include sidewalks on both sides of a roadway or street; adequate lighting; pedestrian signals and signage; bike lanes; multi-use trails; and other features. Even though Ontwa Township is a rural community, these elements are feasible in certain areas of the Township. Edwardsburg presents even more opportunities to design complete streets, given the slightly more developed nature of the Village. More urban features, like raised pedestrian bridges or transit services, are not likely to occur in the community at this time.

Some features may be accomplished through simple road restriping and the addition of signage. Other projects may be more involved and may only be practicable when coordinated with major roadway reconstruction. The Township and Village should work with neighboring communities, MDOT, the Cass County Road Commission, and other pertinent agencies in the implementation of complete streets policy.

### Trails and Nonmotorized Transportation

Trails encourage health and wellness, enhance quality of life, and promote a sense of community. Trails also can improve non-motorized system safety and support a complete streets program. Both Village and Township residents indicated a need for trails in the community. While the routes of future trails would need to be



determined, a priority preliminary connection has been identified by the public: the lakes area population cluster in the northeast portion of the Township to downtown Edwardsburg. A segment has already been completed continuing to the Edwardsburg Sports complex.

Several entities can assist with trail funding, planning, or information. These include the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, the Safe Routes to School Program, the Bikes Belong Coalition, the Southwestern Michigan Commission, the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission, county parks departments in Indiana and Michigan, and the two DNR programs described below. In addition, MDOT may provide funding for numerous types of projects that encourage safe, accessible, and efficient forms of multi-modal transport, including non-motorized facilities and other improvements related to transportation.

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund can assist with the community's outdoor recreation projects, including land acquisition, trails, and physical development of park facilities. Additionally, the Land and Water Conservation Fund is similar to the Trust Fund grant. Natural feature preservation has historically been the primary award criteria; and as such, this opportunity should especially be taken into account when planning for new passive recreation facilities. However, the LWCF places emphasis on trails, "green" technology in outdoor recreation, universal design, and coordination among recreation providers.

Most recreation grants will stipulate a minimum required local match. It is possible to be awarded grant dollars from multiple funding sources and use the funds leveraged from one source as a match for another. An example might be a local trail project, where the community uses MDOT funds as the match for a DNR grant. This can help save local government resources, is usually permitted by grant programs, and is encouraged.

Moreover, grant application guidelines often include a provision for regional coordination and cooperation. The Township or Village will generally receive more "points" for a grant application if it can demonstrate that the proposed project is the result of collaboration with an adjacent community, regional entity, or multiple units of government. The Township and Village should therefore keep this concept in mind, especially when planning for future trail connections that may traverse more than one community.

One requirement of State grant programs is that the local governing entity have an up-to-date recreation plan. The DNR requires that recreation plans be reviewed and updated every five years to keep them current. Following the DNR's guidelines in plan preparation establishes the Village's and Township's eligibility to apply for grant funds that would otherwise be unavailable.

### **Planning Commission Work Program**

The Plan recommends that both Planning Commissions prepare a work program in January of each year. This work program would set forth the tasks or goals that the Planning Commission determines to accomplish for the upcoming year. This will allow the Commission to stay focused on important tasks and help to implement the goals and objectives identified with this Plan.

The Village and Township Planning Commissions should also conduct at least one joint meeting per year to create a consistent means of communication, align priorities, discuss important land use decisions, encourage intergovernmental communication, participate in educational opportunities, and explore additional cost-saving benefits.

### **Planning Education**

Planning commissioners should attend planning seminars to keep themselves informed of planning issues and learn how to better carry out their duties and responsibilities as Planning commissioners. These seminars are regularly sponsored by the Michigan Association of Planning, the Michigan Township Association (MTA) and the Michigan Municipal League (MML), and are a valuable resource for Planning Commissions. Several planning publications are a useful information tool for Planning commissioners. The main publications are Planning and Zoning News and Michigan Planner Magazine.

### **Adhere to the Future Land Use Plan**

The Township and Village should both strive to make decisions that are in harmony with the future land use plan. Nevertheless, the policies of this Master Plan should be viewed as flexible, and they should be revised as the character of the community changes over time. The Plan should be reviewed and periodically updated at least once every five years to remain current and to meet statutory provisions. As stated in the description of the Zoning Plan on pages 65-66 proposed land uses should be consistent with the future land use designations. However, the Planning Commissions may determine that a proposed land use would not be consistent with the applicable future land use designation, but would not be incompatible with the underlying policies of the Plan, and would represent a logical extension of land use. It may therefore be a preferred alternative to the Plan, and the Plan may be amended accordingly.

## Strategies for Implementation: Ontwa Township

### Zoning Ordinance Amendments

The Zoning Ordinance will be the primary implementation mechanism to achieve the land use goals of the Plan. While the Township has been diligent in continually reviewing and amending its Zoning Ordinance, it has been many years since the document was subject to a comprehensive overhaul and rewrite. Thus, This implementation strategy contemplates a comprehensive evaluation of the entire Zoning Ordinance, and other ordinances that influence the physical environment, in connection with the goals, objectives, and future land use plan. The following summarizes many of the changes that may need to be contemplated, although other amendments to the Zoning Ordinance may also be necessary. The following recommendations, at a minimum, should be explored:

1. The residential zoning districts should be modified to permit open space developments by right, with general standards that define, guide, and encourage the use of such a development form. Conventional residential development can be permitted as a special land use, with standards in place that require a specific amount of open space be kept free from development along the roadway to maintain a natural vegetative buffer. Standards should encourage developers to take vegetation, topography, open space, and other features into consideration during site layout.
2. Design guidelines should be applied to commercial districts, and possibly other areas. Although the Plan does not contemplate strict form-based regulations that dictate minor architectural details, it is the intent of this Plan to promote development that is consistent with the small-town character and aesthetic of Ontwa Township and Edwardsburg. Enhanced aesthetics can act to promote a commercial area and reflect vitality. Zoning standards should therefore relate to better landscaping and preservation of natural features within a development site, less intrusive signage, landscape buffering between land uses, night-sky friendly outdoor lighting, and design principles that can preserve rural character. Such principles may include pitched roofs, parking located to the side or rear of buildings, mixed-uses at specific nodes, and high-quality building materials that lend an appearance of permanence.
3. Access management regulations can help avoid haphazard and unsafe driveways in commercial areas. For example, standards should be incorporated into the ordinance that regulate distance between access points and intersections, consolidation of driveways, and other features to help ensure proper traffic flow and safe traffic movements.
4. The Township should explore zoning tools that result in greater farmland preservation. There are a number of techniques by which this can be accomplished, and these should be discussed.

5. The Township should consider a comprehensive re-format to create a more user-friendly document with modern design principles, extensive graphics, and a new layout for use in the digital age.

### **Farmland and Open Space**

The Michigan Department of Agriculture's Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program includes several instruments that the Township can help to promote. The program also authorizes the Township to participate in several methods to encourage agricultural operations. The following are tools that should be endorsed and advertised by the Township, to the extent possible:

1. Purchase of Development Rights. This is a permanent, voluntary restriction on the land between the property owner and the State that preserves the land for farming in exchange for a cash payment.
2. Farmland Development Rights Agreements. This is a temporary, voluntary restriction on the land between the property owner and the State; which protects the agricultural use of the land in return for tax benefits and special assessment exemptions. This tool is commonly known as P.A. 116.
3. Local Open Space Easement. These are also voluntary and temporary, but represent an agreement between the landowner and the Township; where certain tax benefits and exemptions from various assessments are made possible.

4. Conservation Easement Donation. Conservation Easement Donations are permanent restrictions voluntarily entered into by the landowner between the same and the State; preserving the land for either farmland or open space.
5. Designated Open Space Easement. This is a temporary, voluntary restriction on the land between the property owner and the State; which maintains the land as open space in return for tax benefits and special assessment exemptions.
6. Transfer of Development Rights. Legal authority to establish a transfer of development rights program is unclear, as State enabling legislation has not been enacted. The Township may work with legislators to craft such legislation to promote the transfer of development rights as an effective and viable means to preserve open space and farmland. As the Township explores the possibility of creating a program, procedures, and regulations that govern the transfer of rights should be aligned to meet local objectives.

## **Water Quality**

Several significant lakes and wetland areas exist within Ontwa Township and Township residents have expressed an interest in maintaining the natural functions of the water features. The unique beauty and significant recreational value of these features are also critical to maintaining the quality of life for many Township residents. The Township should commission a process to evaluate the condition of water features and prioritize resource protection needs and can seek to establish an EPA Nine Elements approved watershed management plan.

Such a watershed management plan would involve working with neighboring communities, as appropriate, to follow the technical requirements of the EPA. Essentially, the planning process sets goals for water quality and identifies a process to meet them. Section 319, Nonpoint Source Management Program, of the Clean Water Act, can help provide funding through the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality for watershed planning and technical assistance.

On a more local scale, the Township could employ its own analysis of individual lakes to define carrying capacity, or the number of boats or other watercraft that can be on the lake without being destructive to water quality and boater safety. This threshold is related to many factors, including the size of the lake, its depth, its shape, bottom soils and bank characteristics, the number of homes on the lake and the extent of impervious surfaces, the degree of public access, and the number of visitors attracted to the lake.

The Township should define the carrying capacity of lakes to determine future policies. Township residents wish to preserve carrying capacity and prevent excessive boating from degrading lake quality. An analysis of carrying capacity is a likely first step in evaluating current lake access policies. The process may include several steps, including an analysis of physical characteristics, development intensity and land uses, mooring activity, definition of the net traversable acreage of the lake, and a build-out analysis.

In addition, the Township should evaluate the effectiveness of existing stormwater control mechanisms and contemplate additional or more innovative methods to manage stormwater. The way stormwater is handled can affect water quality. Stormwater standards may be strengthened with requirements or incentives that promote conservation and use of existing natural site features in stormwater system design to reduce the quantity and velocity of runoff and to reduce pollutants. Best practices may include bio-retention swales, rain gardens, vegetated rooftops, rain barrels, and permeable pavements; that process stormwater as a resource. New standards can require that natural features be preserved or recreated and impervious surfaces be minimized to the extent possible, to help ensure that runoff is reduced and processed naturally.

## Strategies for Implementation: Village of Edwardsburg

### Zoning Ordinance Revisions

The Village's Zoning Ordinance is the primary implementation mechanism for this Master Plan in the Village. Therefore, this strategy contemplates a comprehensive evaluation of the Ordinance in light of the policies of this Plan. This could include a revision of the zoning map, as appropriate, to support the future land use map, and a revision of some zoning standards to better conform to the future land use designations in this Plan.

In addition, the Ordinance should be evaluated to ensure it enables pedestrian-scaled development and offers sufficient site design flexibility to enable the type of buildings and development that this plan desires. For example, the zoning standards found in the RC district preclude the type of traditional development patterns that this Plan advocates. Therefore, it should be reviewed and revised.

Revisions to the Zoning Ordinance will likely involve outside assistance from consultants and the Village's legal counsel. Additionally, input from residents, stakeholders, and the business community may be useful in drafting effective and clear and effective zoning regulations.

This process should begin with a technical review of the Ordinance to highlight any problematic language, conflicts, confusing provisions, and other issues that would require clarification. Depending on the results of the technical review, the Village may elect to adopt amendments to the Ordinance or embark on a more ambitious rewrite of the entire document.

### Parks and Recreation Planning

Gunn Park's and Lindbergh Park's frontage on Pleasant Lake, coupled with the Village's proximity to public school facilities and the Edwardsburg Sports Complex, creates unique recreational opportunities for residents. Survey respondents generally supported additional recreational opportunities, more non-motorized trails, and access to the water, so the development and implementation of a Parks and Recreation Plan is an important step in meeting this need. By having a current 5-Year Recreation Plan, the Village is eligible for funding assistance from the Michigan DNR Trust Fund, Land and Water Conservation Fund, and Passport Grants program. These grants are awarded each year and can help offset the costs of developing park and recreational facilities in the Village.

The planning process must contain a public outreach effort to solicit input regarding topics such as the acquisition of new recreational properties (if any), improvements to existing facilities, programming, non-motorized trail connections, or other opportunities. In addition to a 5-Year Recreation Plan, the Village could also develop design plans for its park properties to ensure that each of its parks is accessible and used to its full potential.

## Downtown Placemaking Plan

In previous generations, the heart of Edwardsburg was a small central business district located along US-12 from 1st Street and along Cass Street south of US-12. The traditional development pattern remains visible today although several buildings have been removed over the years. Nevertheless, small retailers, services, offices, and various quasi-public uses still exist in this area, and this plan contemplates a plan to redevelop and revitalize this area as a traditional commercial node with buildings built to the street, mixed uses, and a walkable development pattern. While some of these changes are relatively simple to make, this plan suggests a more focused sub-area plan focused on placemaking to turn this small node into the community's primary hub of civic life.

The plan should address traffic patterns and street design, off-street and on-street parking, and streetscape improvements such as landscaping, lighting, sidewalks, public furniture, etc. This plan should be largely focused on improvements in the public realm, but should also include zoning and land use recommendations to facilitate development that is consistent with a downtown environment.



Appendix 1

**COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

A decorative graphic consisting of two overlapping, wavy, light gray shapes that curve across the bottom half of the page, creating a sense of movement and depth.



# Ontwa Township / Village of Edwardsburg

## Master Plan Community Engagement Report

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November 2023

## Introduction

A Master Plan is a broad policy document that provides a community vision and acts as a guide for land use and development, capital investment, and growth management. It is a vision that articulates what the community desires to become, and it establishes a framework for achieving that vision through a series of specific strategies and tasks. For the first time, Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg are developing a joint Master Plan. The planning process began in mid-2023 and will guide the Ontwa Township/Edwardsburg community over the next two to three decades. To ensure that the plan is responsive to community needs and desires, the Village and Township undertook a robust engagement campaign to inform the goals and objectives of the new Master Plan. This report presents the findings of this effort.

## Edwardsburg / Ontwa Township Joint Open House

A community open house was held in October 2023 to gather ideas that will inform the development of the Joint Master Plan for Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg. This event was held on Thursday, October 12, 2023, from 4:00 – 7:00 pm. Dozens of people visited the Township Hall from both the Village, Township, and neighboring communities.

### Welcome Board

The welcome board featured informational text that explained the process of the Master Plan and the importance of long-range community master planning. The board encouraged participants to take part in the available activities and provide their feedback regarding planning topics for the Village and Township.

### Where do you live?

This board asked participants to place a sticker to mark where they live, either in the Village or the Township, to help the Planning Commission gauge where participants were distributed throughout the local area.

### Community Values Activity Results

Participants were asked to write about what they love and what could be improved in both the Township and the Village. Responses were written on sticky notes and posted on the activity boards. There were two questions per board posed to participants. They could leave comments under, “What do you LOVE about Ontwa Township?” and “What would you IMPROVE about Ontwa Township?”, and “What do you LOVE about the Village of Edwardsburg?” and “What would you IMPROVE about the Village of Edwardsburg?”

### “What do you LOVE about Ontwa Township?”

The top responses to the question “What do you LOVE about Ontwa Township?” that emerged from the participants at the open house were:

1. Small Town/Rural Character (8 comments)
2. Lakes/Water (7 comments)
3. The Sports Complex (5 comments)
4. Community/People (4 comments)
5. Wildlife (3 comments)
6. Schools (2 comments)

### “What would you IMPROVE about Ontwa Township?”

The top responses to the question “What would you IMPROVE about Ontwa Township?” that emerged from the participants at the open house were:

1. Walking trails/non-motorized improvements (4 comments)
2. Housing  
Renewable Energy  
Park upgrades  
Marihuana stores/operations (tied with 3 comments)
3. Grocery Store(s)  
Shopping options  
Downtown Improvements  
Clean/update buildings (tied with 2 comments)

*Analysis:* The most common reoccurring topics that participants loved about Ontwa Township were the “Small-town/rural character” and recreation-related comments such as water resources and the sports complex. Clearly, recreational and natural places and spaces in the Township continue to be valued assets in the community.

When considering what could be improved in Ontwa Township, the most common issue named by participants was a desire for more non-motorized infrastructure. People are looking for more trails and sidewalk construction and connections. There were a number of comments related to retail options, from limiting marihuana sales to increasing shopping and retail access and diversity. The improvements of old buildings and parks were also mentioned.

### “What do you LOVE about the Village of Edwardsburg?”

The top responses to the question “What do you LOVE about the Village of Edwardsburg?” that emerged from the participants at the open house were:

1. Community/People (4 comments)
2. The mural  
Schools (tied with 2 comments)

**“What would you IMPROVE about the Village of Edwardsburg?”**

The top responses to the question “What would you IMPROVE about the Village of Edwardsburg?” that emerged from the participants at the open house were:

1. Improving Downtown (7 comments)
2. Improvements to U.S 12 (5 comments)
3. Improvements/move beach to Gunn Park (3 comments)

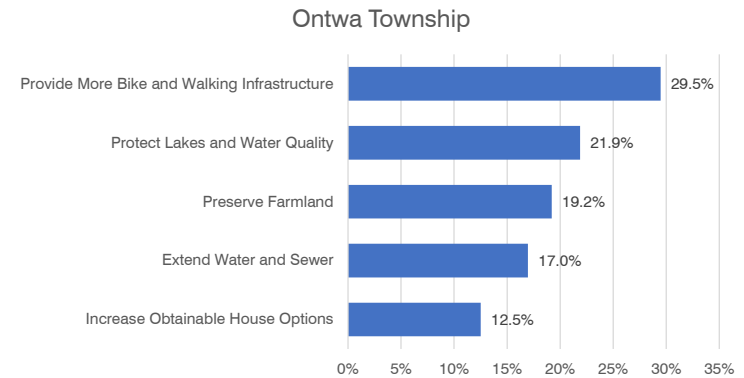
*Analysis:* The most common reoccurring topics that participants loved about the Village of Edwardsburg were the community and people, suggesting that the small, tight-knit character of the community is important to residents. Similar to the Township, the Edwardsburg Public School system was important to several participants.

When considering what could be improved in the Village of Edwardsburg, the most common issue was the desire for downtown improvements. Participants are looking for walkability and shopping options in the Village. There were also a large number of comments related to the improvement of U.S. 12, from walkability and traffic safety to aesthetics of the corridor.

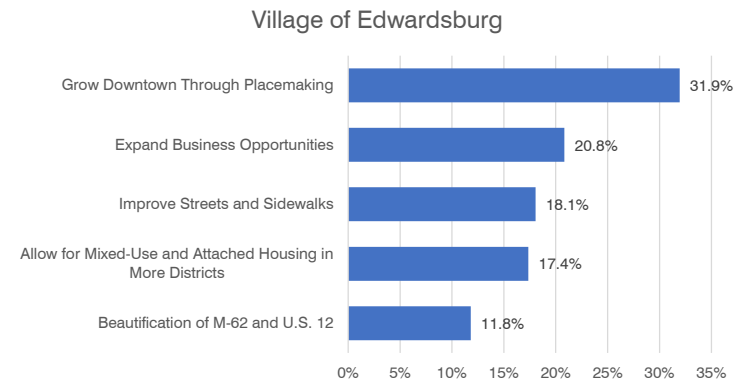
**Penny Jar Voting Activity Results**

Participants were given 5 pennies to vote for Village improvements and 5 pennies to vote for Township improvements, and were instructed to distribute all of their pennies into labeled jars. Each jar contained a few words that describe a land use and growth-related topic pertaining to either the Village or the Township’s services, infrastructure, and/or amenities. The 10 pennies given to participants represented their tax dollars and the distribution of their pennies illustrated their desired allocation of those funds. The voting results for this open house activity are shown below.

**Figure 1. | Open House Penny Jar Activity Results for Ontwa Township**



**Figure 2. | Open House Penny Jar Activity Results for the Village of Edwardsburg**



**Table 1. Total Number of Pennies for Ontwa Township**

Ontwa Township	Percentage	Count
Provide More Bike and Walking Infrastructure	29.5%	66
Protect Lakes and Water Quality	21.9%	49
Preserve Farmland	19.2%	43
Extend Water and Sewer	17.0%	38
Increase Obtainable House Options	12.5%	28
	Total	224

**Table 2. Total Number of Pennies for the Village of Edwardsburg**

Village of Edwardsburg	Percentage	Count
Grow Downtown Through Placemaking	31.9%	46
Expand Business Opportunities	20.8%	30
Improve Streets and Sidewalks	18.1%	26
Allow for Mixed-Use and Attached Housing in More Districts	17.4%	25
Beautification of M-62 and U.S. 12	11.8%	17
	Total	144

*Analysis:* Participants in this activity were the most supportive of bikability and walkability in the community; this was selected as the highest priority in the Township by 17 votes. In the Village, participants wished to see growth in downtown through placemaking, new business opportunities, improved streets and sidewalks, and a mix of housing. These items speak to a desire for a higher quality of life. Also important to people in the Township was protecting the rural character of the Township and preserving the natural features such as lakes and groundwater. It should be noted that fewer people participated in the Penny Jar activity for the Village compared to the Township.

**Future Land Use Map Activity Results**

In order to gain insight into desired land uses in the community, a future land use activity was conducted. The participants were asked to use stickers with coordinating colors to mark where the different uses of land should occur within the Village and Township. The respondents' feedback is shown below on the scanned activity boards from the open house.

**Placed Dot Stickers**

A few **black dots** representing office and industry were placed in the Village and west side of the Township near the existing industrial park.

A number of **blue dots** representing mixed-use and downtown style of development were placed in the heart of the Village.

A number of **red dots** representing retail and commercial corridors were placed along M-62 and U.S. 12 in the Township surrounding the Village. No red dots were placed within the Village limits.

Several **yellow dots** representing single-family homes were placed all around the Township, with one particular cluster on the southeast corner of May Street and M-62.

The **green dots** representing agriculture and open space were scattered around the Township, with a large cluster around the west side of the Township near the industrial park.

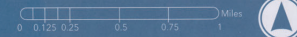
In summary, the results suggest a planned distribution of different types of development, with a focus on concentrating industrial activities on the west side of the Township, or within the Village. Mixed-use and downtown development in the Village was preferred, which was also expressed in the Penny Jar Activity and the community survey. Retail and commercial corridors were identified to remain along major roads such as M-62 and U.S. 12. Preservation of agriculture and open space was expressed by many individuals, as it is seen as a primary feature of the community, especially on the west side of the Township near the industrial park.

**Comment Cards**

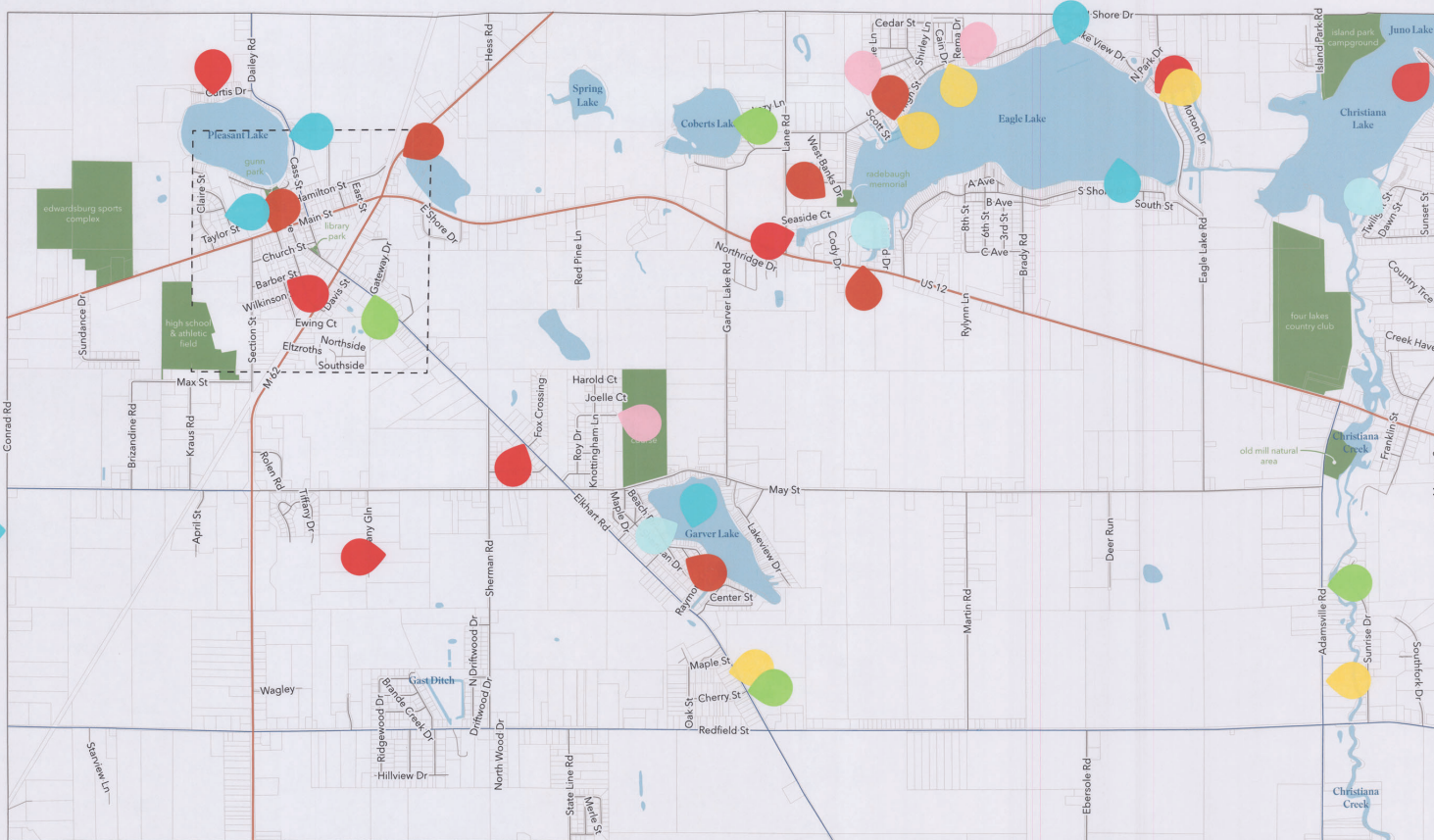
Participants were encouraged to provide additional thoughts anonymously via comment card (unless they choose to leave their name). A total of 7 cards were received, and responses varied from recreational opportunities for families and children, to multi-family housing concerns. Comments received are listed below:

- Make a safe place for kids to go after school and on the weekend and summer
- Would love to have recreational activities families can enjoy here. We leave town to go to parks, beaches and bike trails. We spend money when we do these things and I hate that all our money is leaving our community.
- Dense commercial / multi-family housing development on US 12 west of the village will create severe traffic problems.
- Future use of land (approx..) 125 acres at May St. and Conrad Road should NOT be industrial. It would destroy prime farm land and encroach on existing rural residential properties.
- Please do not expand the industrial park to Conrad Road. We do not need another 125 acres of trashy industry over taking the farm land. The fields need to remain agricultural not be rezoned as industrial!
- Edwardsburg needs a grocery store!
- Simple online Bill pay! IT IS 2023!

# WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

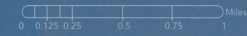


Use the stickers provided to mark where you live.



# FUTURE LAND USE

for the village and township



Use the matching color coded stickers to mark where the uses of land should be encouraged.



**AGRICULTURE & OPEN SPACE**  
use the **GREEN** stickers



**SINGLE FAMILY HOMES**  
use the **YELLOW** stickers



**ATTACHED HOUSING (DUPLICES, TOWNHOMES, APARTMENTS, & SENIOR HOUSING)**  
use the **ORANGE** stickers



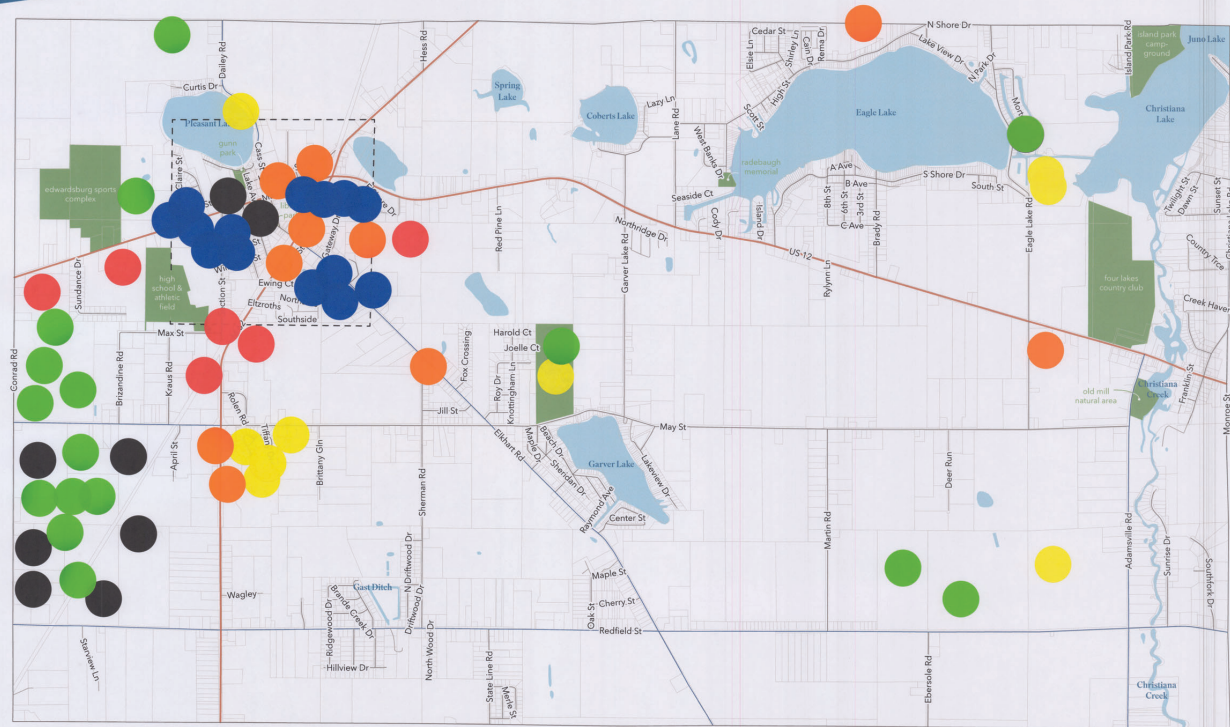
**MIXED USE AND DOWNTOWN**  
use the **BLUE** stickers



**OFFICE/INDUSTRY**  
use the **BLACK** stickers



**RETAIL/COMMERCIAL BUSINESS**  
use the **RED** stickers



I'M NOT SURE WHERE BUT I WANT TO SEE MORE OF \_\_\_\_\_ LAND USE.  
Place the corresponding colored dot below if you know what land uses you'd like to see more of but are unsure as to where it belongs on the map.

## Community Survey

### Introduction and Methodology

From August 14 to October 30, 2023, Ontwa Township and the Village of Edwardsburg had a community survey open to gather public input on community development, housing, land use, and other related master plan topics.

The survey questions were developed with the assistance of Williams & Works. A total of 20 questions were asked via the online survey tool Survey Monkey. A total of 186 responses were received by the deadline with a 73% completion rate. Additionally, the survey was handed out in several Edwardsburg High School classes, of which 141 responses were returned. Student feedback was incorporated into questions 9, and 12-20. Between student respondents and general respondents, there were a total of 327 responses to the survey.

The survey was successful as it resulted in information from a large number of people compared to typical participation in other forms of public input like community open houses or visioning meetings. The survey enabled respondents to provide anonymous replies using a “check-the-box” format to expedite the completion of the online form and maximize the rate of response. Some questions allowed the respondents to leave other comments that may not have been covered with the multiple-choice options. Responses were kept as written by the respondent with a few exceptions for capitalization and some spelling corrections.

### Data

The online survey tool Survey Monkey presented respondents with a standardized set of questions and responses. Some questions only permitted one answer while some permitted multiple-choice answers along with space for individual comments. This method restricted acceptable entries to those required by the survey form, providing a standardized method by which analysis could be conducted.

Three scoring scales were used to report the data received: Nominal, Ordinal, and Ratio scales. A nominal scale merely counts responses by a defined set of classifications (e.g., permanent residents or seasonal residents). This scale is useful to separate responses into working groups or to evaluate the overall sample to determine whether it represents the larger population.

Questions 1, 3, 5-13, and 15 were designed on a nominal scale.

An ordinal scale is more useful in gaining insight into respondent beliefs because it includes the characteristics of rank order. One item is greater or lesser than another item or it has more or less of a particular quality, based on a commonly understood standard. An ordinal scale enables some greater judgment about the relative strength or weakness of a particular response (e.g., “somewhat concerned”, “too quickly”, etc). However, it does not include a quantifiable or consistent interval between the various points in the scale. Questions 15, 17, and 18 were designed with an ordinal scale.

A ratio scale was used for questions 2 and 4 as respondents were asked to indicate a range of items that applied to them such as age. Finally, Items 16, 19, and 20 featured open-ended questions, allowing write-in responses.

### Summary of Key Findings

1. While single-family homes were desired by a plurality of respondents (48.4%), there was support for additional housing types including retirement/assisted living facilities (27%), multi-family residential (19%), and attached single-family residential (16%). The Township and Village will need to ensure that the two jurisdictions provide a variety of housing options in well-planned areas suited to accommodate them. Grocery stores and sit-down restaurants were preferred by a wide margin in terms of new businesses that residents preferred to see in the area.
2. Protecting surface water and groundwater quality were repeatedly mentioned as important priorities to the community. This is reflected in the identification of community priorities (see question 17) and the agree/disagree statements contained in question 18.
3. Nearly all respondents wanted some sort of open space in new development. Most (73%) desired passive open space such as walking trails and picnic areas, but there was also support for active open space (42%), lake/river access (40%), and undeveloped areas (30%). However, only 5.2% indicated that they did not want open space in new developments.
4. Aside from the above-noted support for grocery stores and sit-down restaurants, several other types of businesses were desired, such as general retail, health care, personal services, and recreation. In general, there seemed to be stronger support for retail and service uses compared to industrial businesses. Similarly, the open house results indicate mixed feelings with respect to industrial growth in the Township south of the Village limits.
5. In the Village, nearly 80% of respondents indicated that enhancements to downtown Edwardsburg were either “very important” or “important.” This is consistent with the results of the house penny jars, where “growing downtown through placemaking” received the highest number of votes from participants.

### Summary of Open-Ended Comments

#### 1. Community Development and Planning:

Several comments express the need for improved communication, advocating for virtual meetings and emphasizing the importance of thoughtful planning. Some residents highlight specific areas for improvement, such as Gunn Park and Lindberg Park, suggesting activities for families and community gatherings. There also appear to

be concerns about the pace of growth and a perceived lack of vision for the community.

## **2. Preservation of Farmland and Nature:**

A recurring theme throughout is the preservation of farmlands and nature. Residents emphasized the importance of protecting agricultural areas, opposition to rezoning farmland, and advocating for the preservation of natural spaces. Some comments express a desire to balance development with the preservation of lakes, farmlands, and natural areas.

## **3. Growth Management:**

Several comments addressed specific projects, such as the proposed “Eddies Market Park” project on U.S. 12, as there appears to be a concern that new developments may not align with the community’s identity. There are also pleas to avoid expansion and rezoning of farmlands for commercial or industrial purposes.

## **4. Community Identity and Character:**

Residents consistently express a strong sense of community and a desire to maintain the small-town character and charm of Edwardsburg. Concerns about growth, subdivisions, and comparisons with larger neighboring areas like Granger are prevalent. The need to enhance the cohesive appearance of the Village and preserve its unique identity is a common thread in many comments.

## **5. Infrastructure and Services:**

Practical concerns regarding infrastructure and services are raised in comments calling for a grocery store, improved waste management with more recycling options, and safer transportation, particularly addressing railroad crossings and sidewalks for school-going children. These comments reflect a desire for enhanced amenities and services within the Village and Township.

## **Conclusion and Next Steps**

The survey results reveal that residents of Ontwa Township are mostly united in a vision for the future of their community that consists of a desire to maintain the rural character that defines their surroundings. The results underscore the importance of preserving the farmland and the overall rural character of the community. In addition, the Township’s many inland lakes are key features of the community that residents prioritize for protection and preservation.

Similarly, visions for the Village of Edwardsburg surrounded the school system and community, with a desire to concentrate new development in the Village and promote the existing downtown area as a place for housing, retail, recreation, and community events. The community expressed a desire for a vibrant downtown. Residents seek a thoughtful approach

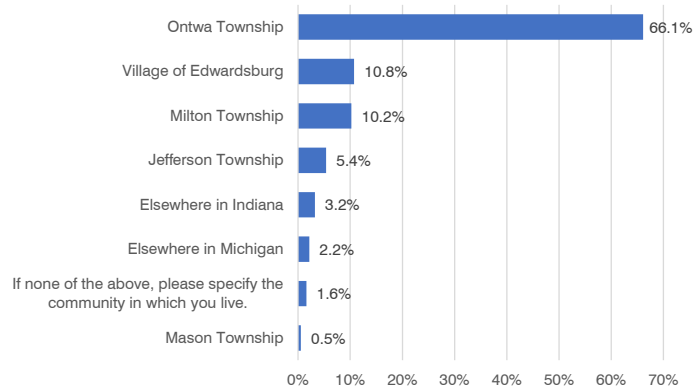
to development that encourages local businesses and fosters a sense of community. By focusing on the heart of the Village, residents aim to improve the downtown so it may serve both the practical needs of its residents and define the social fabric of the community.

As both the Township and Village review their goals and objectives, future land use maps, and strategies for implementation, it must be mindful of the direction received from the public.

Raw results of the community survey can be found on the following pages.



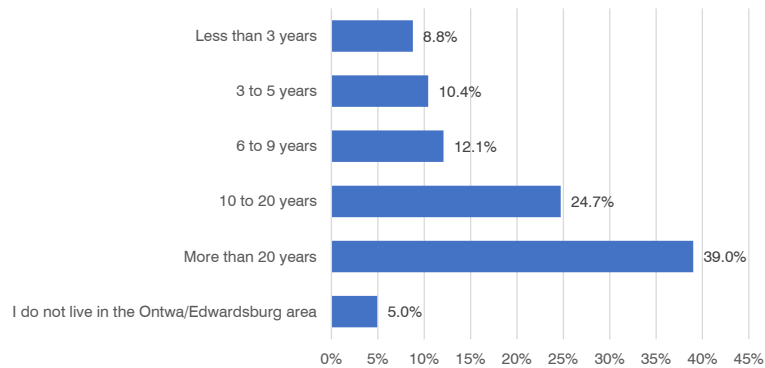
**Question 1: Where do you live?**



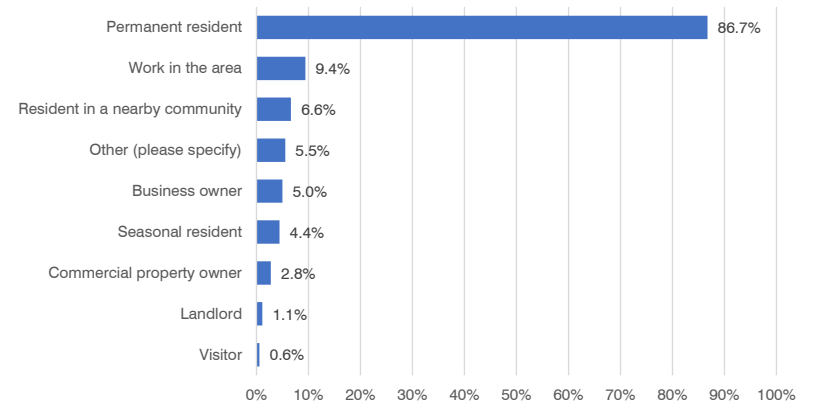
Other Responses:

- Porter Township
- Howard Township
- Edwardsburg, Michigan

**Question 2: How long have you lived in the Ontwa Township/Edwardsburg area?**



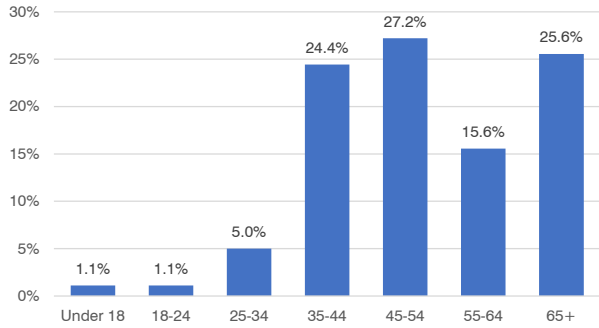
**Question 3: Which of the following best characterizes your connection to the Township/Village? (Select all that apply)**



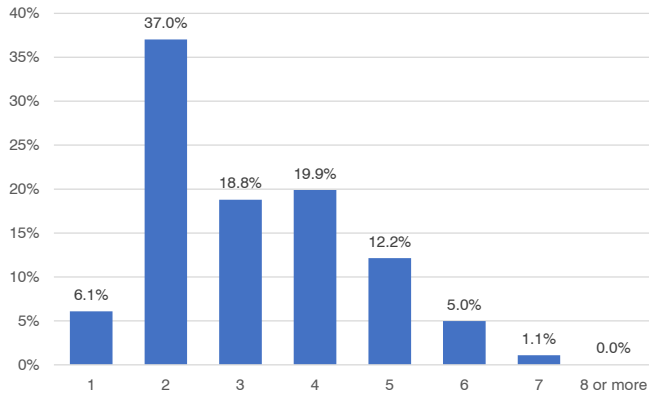
Other Responses:

- Run Not For Profit, LLC
- Husband is from here and his parents are Ontwa Township residents
- Own farmland in Ontwa Township
- Children attend EPS
- Miss/Mr Edwardsburg Youth Scholarship Program
- Teacher at Eagle Lake
- My children attend Edwardsburg Public Schools
- Edwardsburg Chamber
- Brother lives there
- Parent had a business

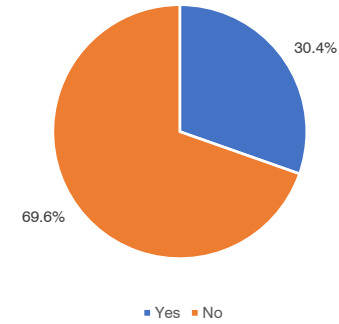
**Question 4: What is your age?**



**Question 5: Including yourself, how many people live in your household? (Please check one. Household members do not need to be related.)**



**Question 6: Is anyone in your household over 65?**

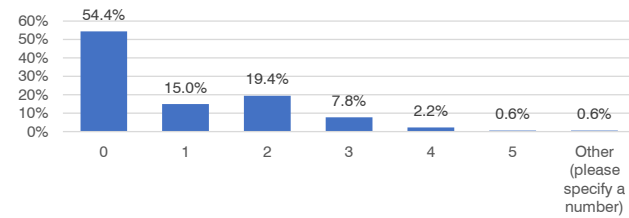


Answer Choices	Responses	Count
Yes	30.39%	55
No	69.61%	126
If yes, how many?	see below	39
	Answered	181
	Skipped	5

Responses:

- 1 (19 responses)
- 2 (20 responses)

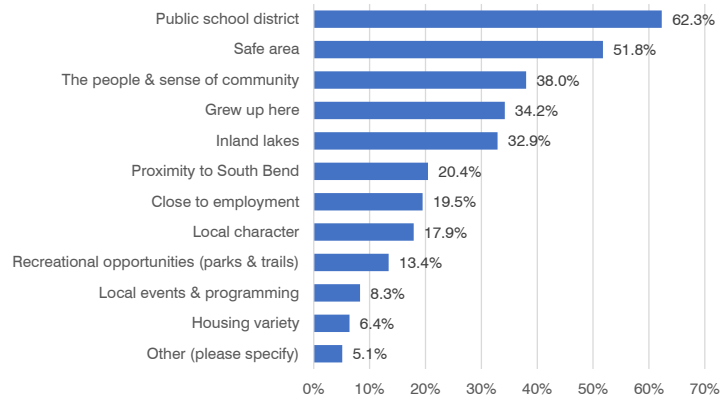
**Question 7: How many children (under 18 years of age) reside in your household?**



Other Responses:

- Grandchild

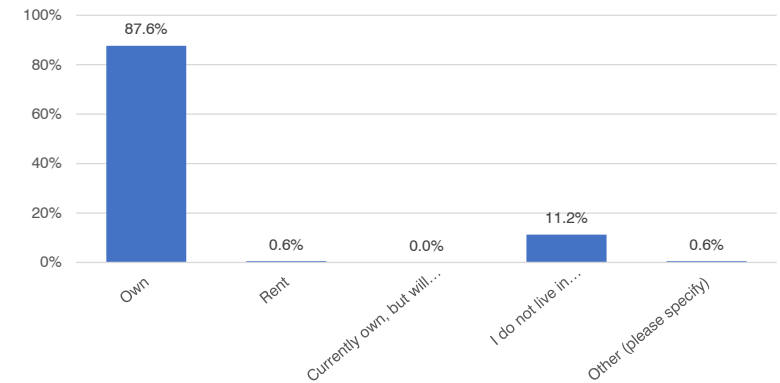
**Question 9: From the following list, please select the most important reason(s) you live or would consider living in the Township/Village (check all that apply):**



Other Responses:

- Small town
- But since we are dissatisfied with the district, we homeschool now.
- Rural atmosphere
- Country living with ability to get to Mishawaka/South Bend but not have to live in a urban setting
- Youth support has always been a priority here in EDWARDSBURG
- Small town
- Trying desperately to leave.
- Small rural community, not city life.
- Rural community
- Sports Complex
- I landed here years ago.
- Affordable acreage
- Property cost
- Small farm community

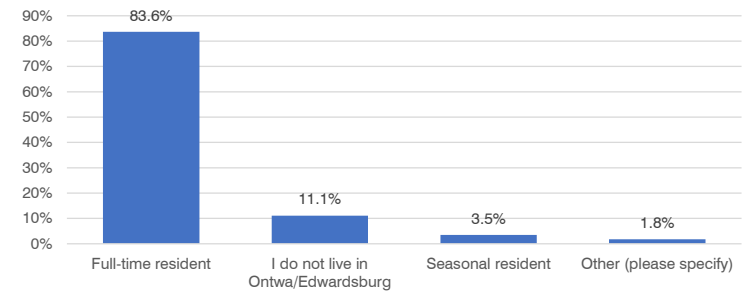
**Question 10: If you live in Ontwa/Edwardsburg, do you own or rent your residence?**



Other Responses:

- Live with relatives

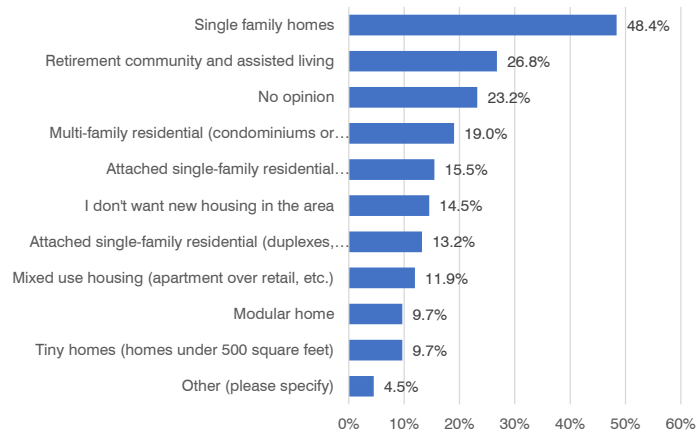
**Question 11: If you own or rent a residence in the Township or Village, are you a seasonal or full-time resident?**



Other Responses:

- Full-time for 39 years, seasonal for the last 4 years
- I have a full-time residence in Jefferson and a seasonal cottage in Ontwa

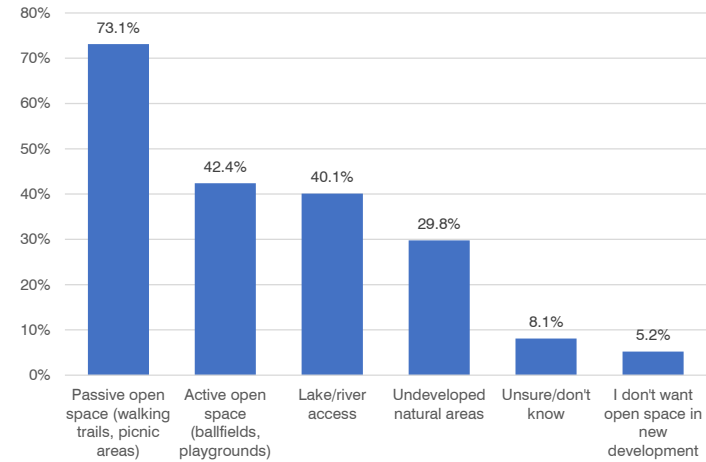
**Question 12: What types of housing are needed in the Township/Village? (check all that apply):**



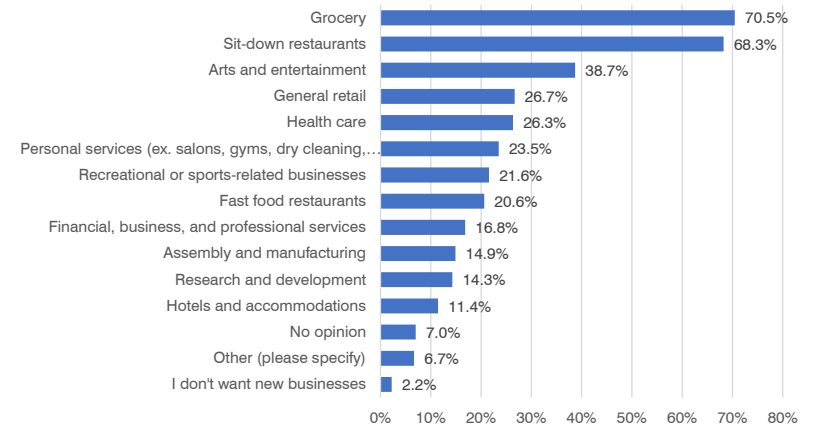
**Other Responses:**

- Hotel/Motel
- Cheaper rentals
- I like that this is a farm community. How about more parks/green spaces?
- Township needs growth to support the schools
- I DO NOT WANT APARTMENTS!!!!
- Affordable housing for young families
- Low-income housing
- 100-300k need to close the gap
- Affordable housing for low-income families.

**Question 13: What types of open space should be encouraged in new development? (select all that apply)**



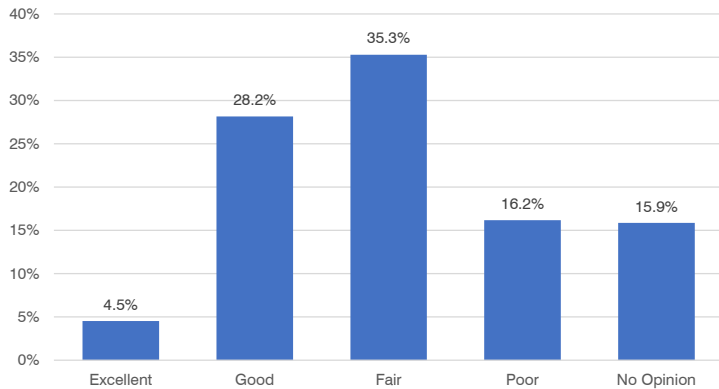
**Question 14: What types of new businesses would you like to see in the area? (check all that apply)**



Other Responses:

- Youth center
- D.N.R. Lake access on Eagle Lake. It is not a private lake.
- Downtown area
- NOT marijuana stores!
- Daycares
- Please no more pot shops. I don't want Edwardsburg to become a busy metropolis. I live here because it is a quiet safe farm community. We don't need condos or more apartments or busy retail destinations. Keep it mom and pop shop local. Unfortunately, the economy sucks and there isn't a lot of disposable income.
- I would be okay with business in the buildings that are already here but I do NOT WANT NEWLY BUILT
- Grocery stores, drug store
- Drug store
- Light industrial. Manufacturing. Good jobs promote prosperity and security.
- Desperately need a pharmacy, like Walgreens, CVS, or RiteAid (if that's what it is called).
- Bakery not just donuts, drug store
- Small and local owned
- Budget friendly dining

**Question 15: Please rate the Township/Village's efforts to guide and direct development and growth.**



Other Responses:

- Make sure Eagle Lake is open to everyone. It is a public lake.
- Village - poor
- Too many marijuana shops. We don't want to be known as a drug town. Rather a family friendly, quaint town.
- There have been two zoning changes that have resulted in no development that have become eye-sores. One on May St and one on Brady Rd.
- DO NOT allow business (with lots of junk) in residential areas, ex. Eagle Lake Road, first house to the south, next to DNR property, looks like a junk yard. Businesses in the Village are allowed to pile junk outside their businesses. Next to public parking and post office.
- I'm not familiar with the current efforts.
- Great planning but lacking follow through!
- I have no idea what the Township/Village is currently doing for this.
- Same people get re-elected and it is the same response. Not a lot gets done
- The Township seems hard pressed to hinder growth. We have such restrictive ordinances (maximum of 760 sq foot out building) some people on the Planning Commission make people jump through hoops to get projects passed. Our Township is controlled mostly by Eagle Lake residences, and that needs to change.

**Question 16: What do you feel is the best attribute of our community?**

- Our lakes
- Schools and people
- The lakes and the school system
- Agricultural areas, small town feel
- The residents + schools
- Our beautiful lake. + close location to shopping, doctors + churches
- Lakes / safety
- People
- School system
- The schools
- Your public lakes...you should capitalize on public lakes - maybe more ice cream shops.
- The leadership cares about the community
- Proximity to Granger yet rural feel
- Small town / schools
- Sport complex
- The public schools
- The schools
- Small town feel

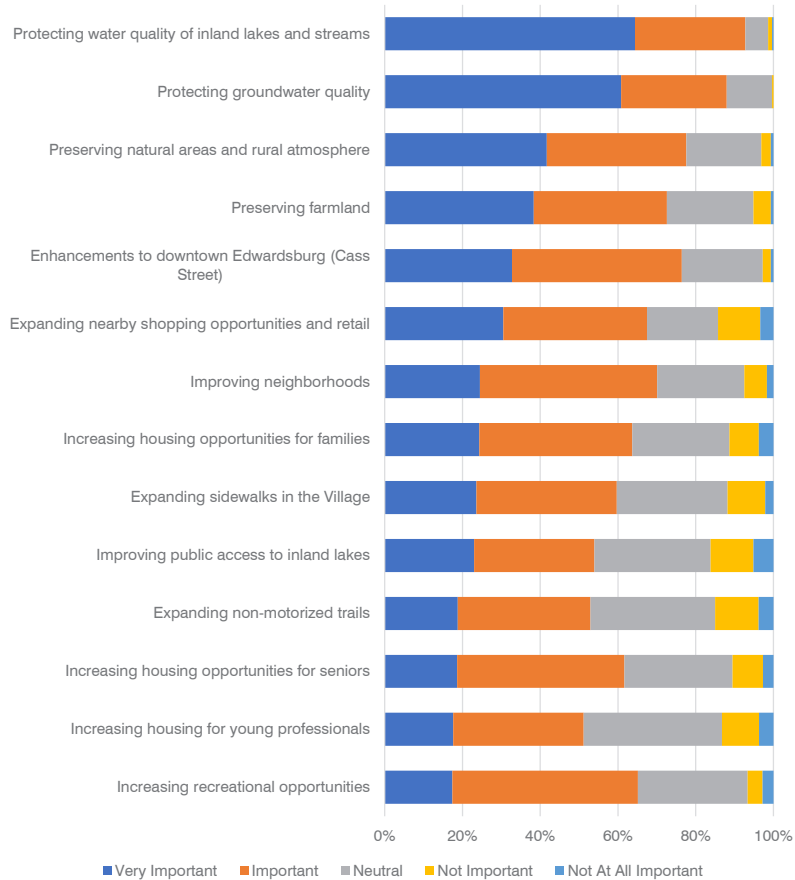
- Edwardsburg Schools, Edwardsburg Sports Complex, Lakes, small town close community involvement
- Location, community pride and support of school system.
- Our new superintendent of schools
- Eagle Lake
- Eagle Lake
- People helping people.
- Small town pride and family togetherness
- A "Small town community" where everyone knows everyone and a community of people that cares for one another. We don't want a granger type of community here. We don't want too much growth; our schools cannot handle any more growth. And we don't want our schools to be any more overcrowded. Edwardsburg has been a special place to live and we raised our children and now our grandchildren are attending Edwardsburg. We want all of our youth to be able to participate in sports or other activities if they want to... (and not just the wealthy families' kids that have had private lessons since they were 5 years old.) Too much growth will ruin our small town. Please don't let that happen! I have heard that there are 5 new developments that have been approved for building homes...that's way too many. Our quiet and safe small town needs to be protected.
- Small farm community.
- The people and the schools.
- Rural character
- The schools.
- Safety and pace of life
- Quiet-safe-little to no crime but there should be more activities for young people
- School/ small town feel
- Our schools and school pride.
- School district
- Not being a 2nd granger. We bought here to live in the country and have fields and farmers as neighbors not apartment buildings and strip malls.
- I love the small town feel and peacefulness
- Small community
- Eddie Pride - personable - small town feel
- The mural was a good addition
- People and small-town feel
- Small community
- Small town feel where people know each other, help each other and truly care about each other
- The sense of community is fantastic, and the public schools are great.
- The small-town feel
- Low population
- Our school system.

- Pride in the school district
- The schools and the small-town atmosphere.
- Small
- Probably the school district.
- Growing!
- There is no reason to expand Edwardsburg. Keep it a small city. I do not mind traveling the 10 miles to a grocery store.
- School district
- Local feel and small community
- Small-town feel
- I'm not sure there's nothing for kids to do parks rec areas or such. Nothing for adults to do so everyone has to drive to other towns for any kind of recreational fun. Maybe it's best attribute in some people's eyes like a lack of anything to do out of fear of the type of people it might bring would be the answer. So my answer is a lack of any kind of culture or anything that a vocal few fears congrats you've nailed it.
- The sense of community here. People of mostly conservative values who believe in kindness, patience, positive attributes and want to help and lift each other up but also expect everyone to pull their own weight (responsibility!)
- Small community with great schools.
- Edwardsburg Sports Complex. Nice gym. Public Schools.
- The school system. The families moving into the area, along with long-time residents with open ideas and a desire to grow the community to support new development. It's ok to develop and grow as a community.
- Ability to connect w nature
- It's a close-knit farming community. Needs to stay that way. We are close enough to Granger, Mishawaka and Elkhart we don't need more businesses or housing here.
- Size. I grew up down the road in Granger. I'm 45 and cannot stand what it has become.
- Good people. Great schools.
- Proximity to Mishawaka, lakes and public school
- Our school system. Frankly that and proximity to family are the only reasons we live here.
- The people
- Our police and our schools
- The small town and nice streets
- Schools and the Township and Village not helping support the school and its needs. But you can put two weed shops in on the main school routes.
- The lakes
- The school system. The library.
- Schools and Library
- Schools, library

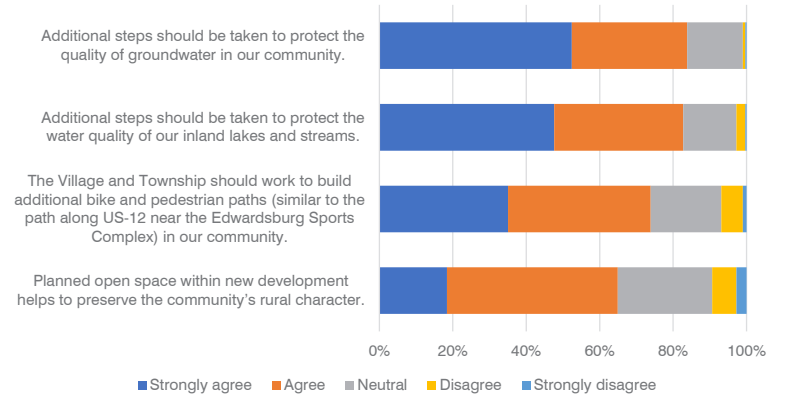
- The school district brings in families, the lakes bring in out of towners, but we don't have enough good business (retail, sit down dining, grocery). The number 1 problem is we don't have a city center.
- Sense of community.
- Friendly community
- Lakes draw people in, not much to keep them here
- Small town feel
- That we are a small community with good, wholesome family values. By adding too much housing and too many new retail spaces there is a large possibility that we will start to lose that. I love our small-town community with our amazing family values and togetherness.
- The new mural and the museum
- Hometown spirit and our schools but without industry and tax dollars, our schools are not properly funded.
- Peaceful & relaxed
- Small town feel
- Lakes
- Lakes, community pride and a conservative school system
- Lake
- Enhance the school system to better accommodate the students. The primary building is not adequate any longer. Need to help support the school system.
- The people, schools, Sports Complex and the lakes.
- Schools
- The rural setting and the access to lakes.
- Safe environment
- It must be the school, since every business that comes here has to have blue & orange as their 'colors' for their logo! (ok, not everyone, but geez, there ARE other colors!)
- The close, small-town feel.
- Small town with excellent school system
- Lakes
- "Country living" but close to urban conveniences such as shopping, medical services, education opportunities
- Libraries
- The schools, but they need updates including air conditioning for all buildings.
- The school system. Also, the natural beauty of the lakes and countryside
- Lakes and homes on the lakes, small town, quiet, downtown area could really be utilized if set up properly. Little brewery, coffee shop, bakery or ice cream. If walking distance
- The school system. Although the unwillingness of the community to support it via passing the bill allowing for renovations of existing building and addition of a new building make me think that we're not on a sustainable path in that regard. Many of the

- facilities— both athletic and academic— are well below standard and not on par with schools of similar scale in the region.
- It's a small town is why we moved into this area. Small schools and small town. I do think we need a grocery store and maybe a new tester at but no more housing/townhomes and or apartments. And no more recreational businesses.
  - Small town / schools
  - Our pride of community
  - School
  - I like where I live
  - The people of the community are nice, but there is a sense of, "You aren't from here."
  - Small farm rural
  - Good infrastructure and good schools
  - The people
  - Low crime and good schools
  - Love for the Eddies
  - Simply put, the "community". It's a small-town feel, where you really can get to know the people in your town if you put in a little effort.
  - Hometown
  - Great public relations, and service from our Police, Fire, and EMS to the community.
  - Peace and quiet in my neighborhood except for loud mufflers and squealing tires most recently.

**Question 17: In terms of potential priorities, how important are the following?**



**Question 18: Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:**



**Question 19: What three words best describe your future vision for the Ontwa/Edwardsburg community?**

Below is a word cloud that was generated from the survey responses. In a word cloud, the larger the word appears, the more often it was mentioned by respondents. It is clear from these results that a small, safe, clean, and friendly community is what respondents envision for the future of the Ontwa Township and Village of Edwardsburg area.





A collection of all of the responses to Question 19 are below:

Response	1	2	3
1.	Lake-life	Sports	Community
2.	More shops and restaurants; enhanced downtown presence	Walking/bike/hiking trails	Grocery store is a must
3.	Growth	Retail	Quality
4.	Enforce property upkeep	Less restrictive rules	Better communication
5.	Grow	Farmland	Cooperation
6.	Peaceful	Rural	Clean
7.	New motels	Restaurants	Elimination of blighted properties
8.	Embrace your neighbors	Don't be stuck-up	Neighbor be your best friend
9.	No pot shops	Quaint downtown	Small town community
10.	Safety	Protect natural resources	Development of businesses
11.	Retail	Resources for food - not dollar general	Farmer's market - indoor/outdoor
12.	Attracting	Young	Families
13.	Rural	Agricultural	Small town vibe
14.	Clean	Safe	Old school family
15.	Need to save the water	Need update park	Need more stuff here for kids
16.	Progressive	Inclusive	Safe
17.	Green	Diverse	Community
18.	Better school buildings	Improved downtown	More restaurants
19.	Safe	Quiet	Good roads
20.	Thriving downtown	Working with the vfw and american legion to promote activities	Traffic control
21.	Rural	Agricultural	Safe
22.	Develop	Enhance	Build
23.	Beautification	Growth	Foresight
24.	Healthy	Kind	Helpful
25.	Growing	Enhancing	Supportive
26.	Small	Friendly	Quaint
27.	Safe	Rural	Clean
28.	Walkability	Recreation	Restaurant variety
29.	Community	Gathering	Socializing

30.	Small community feel	Nature	Education
31.	More family friendly neighborhoods	More trails and bike paths	More retail and restaurants (not fast food)
32.	Vibrant	Progressive	Opportunistic
33.	Recreational facility	Local grocery store	Local hardware and pharmacy
34.	Family friendly		
35.	Small town		
36.	VILLAGE (small town)	FAMILIES (of all ages)	MAINTAIN (improve what we have)
37.	Friendly	Safe	Peaceful
38.	Country	Farms	Small town Community
39.	Keep rural/farm land	No more apartments/townhomes etc.	Save our small-town community
40.	An actual downtown		
41.	Welcoming	Kid friendly	Safe
42.	Stay small	Close knit	No expansion
43.	Safe	Friendly	Small-businesses
44.	Nature	Safe	
45.	Grocery	Restaurants	Entertainment
46.	Small	Quiet	Community
47.	Schools all of one campus	New homes near Eagle Lake	Increased outdoor recreation opportunities
48.	Safe park areas for middle-aged children	Sit down family eating	Community activities
49.	Protect	Preserve	Gradual
50.	School improvement	Commercial businesses	Sidewalks
51.	Connected	Strong family ties	Community
52.	Ecological neighborhood development	Increased tax base through manufacturing	Greater recreational opportunities.
53.	Welcoming	Progressive	Vibrant
54.	Keep the residential size	Expand native plant and tree planting	Reduce class size at EPS
55.	New	Vision	Please
56.	(Stay) rural	Grocery store!	Community
57.	Safe	Healthy	Involved
58.	Safe	Beautified	Responsible development
59.	Quiet	Walkable	Bikeable

60.	Housing growth	Business growth	Acceptance for new ideas
61.	Quiet neighborhood	Preserving farmland	Quality schools
62.	Preserve the integrity by protecting farmland	Continuing to provide a quality education and school system that attracts out of district families to attend via school of choice	Maintain quality and smooth roads free of potholes.
63.	Small	Not Granger	
64.	Friendly	Safe	Active
65.	Restaurants	Grocery stores	Public school improvements
66.	Growing	Walkable	Entertaining
67.	Opportunity	Downtown	
68.	Friendly	Safe	Clean
69.	Potential	Possibility	Nature
70.	Business	Growth	Safety
71.	Clean	Planned architecture	Pride
72.	Thriving	Charming	Safe
73.	Safety	Recreational opportunities	Good schools
74.	Protect ...citizen property rights	Protect ...citizen safety & welfare	Protect ...citizen property values
75.	Prosperity	Inclusion	Secure
76.	Access	Open space	Fair taxes
77.	Exciting	Diverse	Desirable
78.	Family	Safe	Relaxed
79.	Family first	Strong community	Safety
80.	Growing	Building	Succeeding
81.	Expansion (but classy)	More industry to support local business and our schools	Clean up
82.	Growing	Inviting	Inspiring
83.	Growth	Excellence	
84.	Enhancing schools/safe buildings	More safe neighborhoods	Would love a little downtown area or grocery store
85.	Green space	Welcoming	Rural
86.	Great schools	Lots of recreational opportunities	Plenty of non-motorized paths throughout the township!
87.	Building a sense of community	Housing	Business

88.	Diversify		
89.	Safe	Environmentally friendly	Quiet
90.	Education	Stable	Friendly
91.	Retail (grocery/pharmacy)	Protection (waterways & nature preserves)	Growth
92.	Safe	Community	Schools
93.	Safe	Welcoming	Clean
94.	Community	Inclusiveness	Responsibility
95.	Cohesive	Healthy	Community
96.	Inviting	Destination	Desirable
97.	No townhomes	Add a grocery store	Keep it small
98.	Safe	Clean	Local charm
99.	Safety	Education	Drug free
100.	Walking paths or sidewalks	Cellphone towers	Library upgrades
101.	Community enhancement: some parts of the community are ugly.	A variety of housing.	A few shops and a grocery store
102.	Preservation focused	Non commercial	Recreational
103.	Accepting	Green	Lively
104.	Growth		
105.	Enhancement	Infrastructure	
106.	Growth	Secure	Non-woke
107.	Safe	Healthy	Fun
108.	Unified	Inviting	Intentional
109.	Prosperous	Engaging	Organized
110.	Growing	Stable	Safe
111.	Grocery	Accessibility	Seniors
112.	Hopeful	Successful	Friendly
113.	Small	Safe	Friendly
114.	Safe	Entertainment	Successful
115.	Successful	Futuristic	Safe
116.	Fishing area	Water park	Community park
117.	Conservative	Clean	Friendly
118.	Cool	Beautiful	Fun
119.	Green	Clean	Peaceful
120.	Safe	Simple	Enjoyable
121.	Cool	Beautiful	Fun
122.	Kind	Exciting	Unique
123.	Unique	Friendly	Interesting

124.	Helpful	Easy access	Cleanly
125.	Beautiful	Welcoming	Safe
126.	Fun	Lots to do	Nice
127.	Good	Hardworking	Nice
128.	Kid friendly	Fun	Exiting
129.	Good	Futuristic	Outstanding
130.	Accessible	Safe	Friendly
131.	Livable	Likeable	Together
132.	Good	Nice	Great
133.	Safe	Social	Clean
134.	Growth	Inclusive	Improvement
135.	Growth	Money	Power
136.	Helpful	Happier	Logical
137.	Free	Strong	Hard working
138.	N/A	N/A	N/A
139.	Opportunity	Improvement	Involvement
140.	Lively	Peaceful	Fun
141.	Lively	Fun	Peaceful
142.	Better roads	Idk	Idk
143.	Awesome	Sweet	Excited
144.	Small	Rural	Adventures
145.	Friendly	Rural	Opportunistic
146.	Pride	Passion	Purpose
147.	Wonderful	Good	Natural
148.	Popular	Local	Convenient
149.	Lively	Busy	Loud
150.	Connected	Interesting	Clean
151.	Busy	Happy	Healthy
152.	Community	Safety	Clean
153.	Opportunity	Entertainment	Safety & quality
154.	I	Don't	Care
155.	Walkable	Affordable	Assisting
156.	Safe	Clean	Pedestrian
157.	Pride	Passion	Purpose
158.	Happy	Environmentally friendly	
159.	Preservation	Interesting	Clean
160.	Connected	Clean	Helping
161.	Improve	Design	Think
162.	Innovate	Expanding	Recreate
163.	Fun	Happy	Strong
164.	Improvements	Accessible	Safety

165.	Beautiful	Peaceful	Safe
166.	Growth	Communitive	Unity
167.	Growth	Maturity	Strength
168.	Futuristic	Accessible	Fun
169.	Easy access to sports + facilities	Better walkways	More paths or trails
170.	Safer	More sightseeing	Better
171.	Cool	Fun	Nice
172.	Clean	Calm	
173.	Visited	Loved	Cared for
174.	No more Dollar Generals	Cleaner	Pretty
175.	Safe	Clean	Happy
176.	Exciting	New	different
177.	Growth	Development	Neighborhoods
178.	Safe	Fun	Calm
179.	Safe	Food	Fun
180.	Clean	Organized	Safe
181.	Safe	Clean	Fishing spots
182.	Bigger	More opportunity	Connected
183.	Growth	Protection	Community
184.	Entertainment	Restaurants	Paths to walk
185.	Happy	Safe	Fun
186.	Evolved	Entertaining	
187.	Become bigger	Higher population	More building
188.		Growth	
189.	Development	Achievement	Growing
190.	Rural	Small	Sporty
191.	Protected	Safe	Peaceful
192.	Diverse	Accessible	Functional
193.	Nice	Accessible	
194.	Education	Rural	Community
195.	Improvements	Avocation	Ideas
196.	Clean	Walkable	Beautiful
197.	Improved	Sealed	Clean
198.	Safe	Good	Developed
199.	Grand	Expanding	Helping
200.	Fun	Entertaining	Safe
201.	Stay small	Rural	Bike paths
202.	Larger	Nature	Rural
203.	Rural	Peaceful	Clean

204.	Walkable	Safe	Natural
205.	Safe	Nature	Parks
206.	Nature	Water	Housing
207.	More parks	More entertainment	Stores
208.	Maybe soon overpopulated	Popular for gas station & food	Lot more houses to extend village
209.	Great	Teamwork	Good
210.	Not	The	Best
211.	Good	Developed	Safe
212.	Cool	Nice	Small
213.	Improved	Advanced	Welcoming
214.	Helpful	Fun	Cool
215.	Safe	Unity	Activities
216.	Rural	Smell	Community
217.	Great	Cool	Amazing
218.	Activity	Diverse	Welcoming
219.	Over population	Schooling	Academics
220.	Over population	Diversity	Academics
221.	Amazing	Popular	Special
222.	Nice	Explorable	Safe
223.	Explorable	Entertaining	Safe
224.	Spacious	Safe	Accessible
225.	Safe	Prosperous	Close-knit
226.	Accessible	Clean	Organized
227.	Fan	Good	Nice
228.	Entertaining	Alive	N/a
229.	Bigger	More space	Safe
230.	Improved	Advanced	Welcoming
231.	Clean	Active	Simple (in a good way)

**Question 20: If there are other comments related to land use, growth, and development in Ontwa Township or the Village of Edwardsburg that you would like to share, please write them below.**

- Grocery store
- Please do a better job of informing the public of future development. Zoom all meetings.
- Preserve our farmlands maintain our roads
- Stop being a greedie + share space with neighbor + friends. No matter what side of the street they live on.
- Developing Gunn Park to accommodate family activities Discussion @ Starboard Choice Marina to bring back size of Lindberg Park.
- No low-income housing
- Less private lakes.... more public lake access.
- We do not need new developments like the proposed Market Park project. Please use existing vacant lots within the village before re-zoning farmland for housing + business. It is very disturbing to see the industrial park has been potentially enlarged to go all the way to Conrad Road!
- Keep is simple + safe
- Edwardsburg residents have a strong sense of community and caring for each other. Yet, unfortunately, the school bond has not passed. I know the master plan has nothing to do with the school bond but upgrading our schools will be very important for the Township/Village upgrading. Continuing to try and upgrade our downtown will be attractive to people looking to move into Edwardsburg. A real grocery store would be a big plus. With that said, we still need to be aware of how important our farmlands/farmers are.
- Please do not proceed with Marketplace on U.S. 12. It doesn't represent our community appropriately.
- Need to use existing empty buildings and space before taking away more farmland.
- Please do not allow the Edwardsburg area between the Village and the State line to the south and to Conrad Rd. To the west turn into another Granger. I am very concerned about the possible rezoning of the farmland between U.S. 12 and May St. East of Conrad Road being rezoned Industrial or Commercial. I also am against the rezoning of the farm west of Edwardsburg to allow the Market Park project to build housing and retail space. Please encourage new growth within the village limits. Please protect the prairie before it is lost forever!
- There is very little vision for this community. Look at Cassopolis Dowagiac Three Oaks the improvements are enhancing those communities. They are destinations. Edwardsburg is a drive thru no reason to stop here. It's a shame and a waste of monies in lack on development in this community !!!!!

- Slow down growth, please keep our small-town community! We do not need more development. We need to improve what we already have. Edwardsburg is a wonderful Village/Township...it's special and rare to have our close knit community.
- Please do not expand Edwardsburg to become big. More tax dollars aren't always the answer. We are a small close knit farming community. That is the charm of our town. I love the flowers lining U.S. 12. I love the Christmas lights and the kiddos decorating the tree. I love highlighting our seniors with banners. Let's focus on keeping a small-town vibe and not wanting to develop the very land that makes this community great.
- Please do not develop existing farmland. Especially on 62 between Redfield and May Streets. Incentivize small business in the old town area. A boutique cafe would be nice, perhaps a gastro pub type restaurant. Don't just place everything on 62 in strip malls. Enhance and use the character of the old town area.
- I would love to see more restaurants and places to enjoy a coffee with friends. Shopping areas and single fam housing. Paths walks along Redfield such as the one on Adams in Granger
- Development needs to address the delicate balance of commercial/industrial, residential development and school systems in a very purposeful way. The Village and township must actively collaborate and incentivize these in a progressive manner to "prime-the-pump" of progress. Buy vacant properties (Lunkers) and land to drive the development of business, incentive new business with tax abatements, actively market for and engage developers to invest in the community, etc. Actively retain resources to work with the Planning Commission to benchmark the communities we'd like to be like to determine the what and how they were successful. Use ARPA funds available to do so!!!  
We are community of managers rather than leaders who drive the future with courage. Good enough has become the enemy Great!!!!  
Someone needs to LEAD this community towards establishing a vision of a better tomorrow with the willingness to take risks and ridicule by the vocal minority while drawing out and supporting the silent majority.  
This is going to be purposeful march that must start NOW, not 6 months or a year from NOW.
- The proposed Ice-Skating rink would be nice for the whole community. More festivals besides the Memorial Day one we already have
- Would love a grocery store and a quaint downtown feel like many neighboring small towns.
- We don't need to be another Granger. We need to improve our water and improve what we have while limiting overgrowth which causes more up keep over time and ultimately the community losses its purpose. Our strength is our small community and the pride we share with the community.

- I don't believe that farm should be destroyed there are plenty of other places to build and develop the downtown means something more. The village needs upgraded that role farm areas don't need to be developed. I moved to this area for the school in the small community would hate to see it changed.
- I wish we actually had a town. No clear downtown area
- Please limit the amount of growth.... we don't need more subdivisions. Granger is close enough
- Grocery store, drug store, hardware store, brewery. Continue park improvements/access at Gunn Park, possible walking bridge over U.S. 12 somewhere between Lake St & Dailey Rd for safe access to Gunn Park. Continue to increase utilization of our current outdoor areas such as Gunn Park, Sports Complex & our public access sites at local lakes.
- I prefer the quite simple life. I don't need big businesses I can go elsewhere for that. I like the small community
- I am good with the pot shops. But they shouldn't be the first thing you see when coming to town. They should be put in the industrial park and hidden.
- I believe we should try to preserve the small local feel of Edwardsburg against big strip malls or apartment buildings.
- Develop pickle ball, tennis courts similar to Vandalia.
- I think the community needs to get behind the school district to build a new K-3 building. If we want to attract and retain great teachers and families, we need this. The current buildings are out dated (especially with the new advances in technology). The lack of air conditioning is awful for learning. Plus, if the community were to grow, we are going to need space for additional kids.
- Would love to see Ontwa do something like what Cass has done with Stone Lake.
- Turn lunkers into a strip mall or multi business location
- Please only plant native plants
- Please don't forfeit farmland in order to create developments, especially by people who have not grown up here and do not care about maintaining our rural atmosphere and sense of community. Our wildlife is losing land for their homes. Farmers need land to grow crops. Traffic is already a big concern on U.S. 12 without adding to it. Bringing in large multitudes of people at once who do not treasure our sense of community will definitely change the personality and environment of our small town.
- We have zoned areas for development, particularly, Multi-Family Residential. Those designated areas could be built out, they have room for expansion. Why try to create more areas when existing areas are not full?
- The area really needs a zoning administrator who is effective, understands ordinances and adheres to them, cares about all citizens, no matter where they live and cares about the appearance of our community.
- Enhance the Industrial Park

- In order for the Township/Village to thrive, investment in development must be made. Just because it's always been done one way, doesn't mean it needs to continue to be that way. If you're not ever-evolving, there will be negative economic impacts to the community.
- Preserve the farm ground that feeds that nation. This community is not the place for tiny homes or mass housing. We already have enough apartment buildings available here and do not need more.
- We moved here 30 years ago specifically so our children could attend excellent schools. Now our grandchildren attend the same schools.
- We desperately need more housing, as well as restaurants, parks, recreational areas and just things in general for residents to do. Nearly all of our time outside the home is spent in Indiana.
- New Township board member to replace the ones that seem to stop or slow down new developments would be a good start. So many businesses don't even try in Ontwa because of the reputation the board has. Probably should replace all the people in appointed positions as well once the new board members take their seats.
- It would be great to remove the stuck-up dinosaurs from the boards and get in some fresh eyes with the ability to see potential in the area. Gunn Park and the downtown stretch of 12 has extreme potential and would be a huge benefit to the Village to improve. The area has felt like it has gone downhill from when I grew up here as a child and I would love to see it thrive again.
- Parks that have areas for gathering for music and festivals. Pickleball and basketball courts added to parks. But they have to be taken care of. We let our town look so run down. It's an embarrassment. We need something to be proud of. We also NEED A GROCERY STORE
- The schools are needing help and will need more help for growth in our community. I am all for growth, change and making a beautiful Main Street. Whatever you do it also has to be maintained on going. The schools are what is bring people to Edwardsburg not Edwardsburg.
- Please encourage more recycling within waste community.
- Community Pickle ball courts
- In terms of access, safety and welfare, the rights of our citizens should always be considered first before those of the general public.
- I am in favor of true affordable housing, but not in favor of building multiple apartment complexes, multi-family rental housing. Towns need affordable rental housing for younger residents or those looking for employment, but should also have truly affordable housing so these same people can buy a house and establish roots in the community. Someone that buys a house is likely to be more invested in the community by feeling a sense of belonging versus someone renting that may feel overlooked or temporary.

- You have to consider filling the empty spots in order to grow- corner of 12 and Dailey, the corner next to old barber shop, the old fireside lot.... Stop allowing those land owners to keep lots empty... we need business/buildings to fill with commerce!!
- I love our community and would love to see some updates on Cass Street, would love to have something more developed for our community at Gunn Park. I would love to see the businesses on 62 revitalized a little more as well. I do not want to see a giant condo/apartment development with shops and restaurants right next to the Edwardsburg Sports Complex. I love our small town and would hate to see it become like Granger and Mishawaka...so large with not much of a sense of community anymore.
- Rental properties do not generate property taxes
- If we could follow in Cass's footsteps and improve Gunn Park to be similar to Stone Lake, it would be wonderful. It might lead to some destination type businesses - good restaurants, shops etc.
- Green spaces should be required in future subdivisions. Sidewalks on the major roads required with any construction. May be subsidized via grants and Township funds.
- The area is low-income. Please make sure that the housing you provide is affordable.
- Enforce the current zoning ordinances and update them to be realistic based on actual lot sizes.
- The pot stores are embarrassing
- Parks, trails, green areas, new subdivisions with homes 1800 sq, foot plus with sewer, sidewalks and other amenities. Community center for Township-Village.
- The Village needs to look like one cohesive unit, a 'city' not a smattering of businesses here & there.
- Be more cohesive and able to travel via bike or walking to small shops or bakery or sandwich type place.
- The downtown area has so much potential if we cared to develop it appropriately. It could be such a quaint, inviting area. Currently, I own a \$1M-ish house (not on a lake) and am embarrassed to have people come visit me in Edwardsburg. It has the appearance of a "pass-through" country town that either has a low-income population or is poorly ran by people that have low expectations or no vision for improvement. (I don't know that this is actually the case, it's just what seems to be the case). I'm encouraged by this survey, however.
- I truly feel like our Village could be improved with sidewalks and shopping as drug store, hardware store and grocery store, but would not want any farm/rural areas destroyed.
- A huge problem is the railroad going through the Village. We have uptown, which needs beautification and then we have east over the railroad track. How do we fix that? We can't change the railroad track. There was a definite lack of planning and

vision. But we have new businesses like the Flat Rock and the vet hospital. The old Harding's mall looks much better. There is a small group of people who are trying to do something and they should be encouraged. They are the group that did the mural. Which is nice. There is a housing development south off M-62 with one house!

- Milton and Ontwa should cooperate more
- There are people on the Planning Commission, and the Board of Trustees that need to go. It's only a few people that seem to hamper growth in our Township.
- Please preserve the farm land, and, help to improve our schools.
- We need some more commercial business to help with the tax base. The residents are not able to accommodate the growth of the school or town.
- A daycare center would be helpful to working families with limited financial resources.
- Need an actual park
- Fix railroads so cars can go over softly without worrying about flat tires.
- No comment.
- Don't turn this town into a place of shopping centers.
- I think there should be more things for kids and teens to do.
- N/A
- None
- No
- Less manufacturing
- None
- None
- Easier access to crossing the train tracks.
- I do think we could add more parks and reserved spaced for more nature.
- They need to work on the neighborhood being built next to Eagle Lake.
- No comment
- Let people ride pit bikes and stuff if they follow the laws.
- No comments
- No opinion
- No more Dollar Generals
- N/A
- No other comments.
- N/A
- NO put Walmart
- We need an actual grocery store not another dollar general and a park with equipment for kids.
- Don't turn it into a city. Keep it small, just a village. Don't make it into something it's not.
- More parks

- None
- Ok
- Because so many people walk to and back from school, we would like nice sidewalks.
- We should be thinking about wildlife and clean community.
- Please protect the farmland and rural areas. We don't need more materialistic places! (Like we don't need 3 dollar generals for example).
- More nature and place to enjoy it. Less businesses like banks. Less parking lots. Walkable design.
- No comments
- No opinion
- Need better fast-food restaurants
- Do not disrupt farmland to add to the housing and business part of the community.
- N/A
- Grocery store
- N/A
- Preserve growth (trees). Do not clear them out + preserve water.
- N/A
- Land use but protect our animals.
- More entertainment for the youth

**Appendix A**

**VILLAGE OF EDWARDSBURG PLANNING COMMISSION  
CASS COUNTY, MICHIGAN  
Resolution No. 25-01**

At a regular meeting of the Village of Edwardsburg Planning Commission held on January 21, 2025 at the Edwardsburg Village Hall, the following Resolution was offered for adoption by Commission member Pat Bellaire and was seconded by Commission member Sam Garwood.

**A RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING APPROVAL OF THE ONTWA TOWNSHIP / VILLAGE OF EDWARDSBURG JOINT MASTER PLAN TO THE VILLAGE COUNCIL AND CONSTITUTING PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVAL OF SUCH MASTER PLAN**

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, MCL 125.3801 *et seq.* ("MPEA") authorizes the Planning Commission to prepare a Master Plan for the use, development and preservation of all lands in the Township; and

WHEREAS, the Village of Edwardsburg Planning Commission has undertaken a cooperative effort with the Ontwa Township Planning Commission to adopt a joint Master Plan, and;

WHEREAS, the Village and Township Planning Commissions have assembled a revised draft joint Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, on September 16, 2024 the Village Council received and reviewed the proposed Master Plan prepared by the Village and Township Planning Commissions and authorized distribution of the Master Plan to the Notice Group entities identified in the MPEA; and



WHEREAS, notice was provided to the Notice Group entities as provided in the MPEA;  
and

WHEREAS, the Village of Edwardsburg Planning Commission held a public hearing on today's date to consider public comment on the proposed Master Plan, and to further review and comment on the proposed Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds that the proposed Master Plan is desirable, proper, and reasonable and furthers the use, preservation, and development goals and strategies of the Village;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. ***Approval of 2025 Master Plan.*** The Planning Commission approves the proposed Master Plan, including all of the chapters, figures, descriptive matters, maps and tables contained therein.

2. ***Distribution to Village Council.*** Pursuant to MCL 125.3843, the Village Council has asserted by resolution its right to approve or reject the proposed Master Plan and therefore, the approval granted herein is not the final step for adoption of the plan as provided in MCL 125.3843. In addition, the Planning Commission hereby approves distribution of the proposed amended Master Plan to the Village Council. The Planning Commission respectfully recommends to the Village Council that the Village Council give final approval and adoption of the proposed Master Plan.

3. ***Findings of Fact.*** The Planning Commission has made the foregoing determination based on a review of existing land uses in the Village, a review of the existing Master Plan provisions and maps, and input received from the Village Council and at the public hearing, as well as the assistance of a professional planning group. The Planning Commission also finds

that the amended Master Plan will accurately reflect and implement the Village's goals and strategies for the use, preservation, and development of lands within the Village of Edwardsburg.

4. *Effective Date.* The Master Plan will be effective upon the date that it is approved by the Village Council.

YEAS: 5

NAYS: 0

ABSENT/ABSTAIN: Jackie Lazaro Jo Duke

**RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.**

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: 1/21, 2025

By   
Jordan Carr  
Planning Commission Chairperson

**VILLAGE OF EDWARDSBURG  
CASS COUNTY, MICHIGAN  
Resolution No. 25-01**

At a regular meeting of the Edwardsburg Village Council held on February 17, 2025, at the Edwardsburg Village Hall, the following Resolution was offered for adoption by Councilmember Sam Garwood and was seconded by Councilmember John Sharp:

**A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE PROPOSED  
ONTWA TOWNSHIP/VILLAGE OF EDWARDSBURG JOINT MASTER PLAN**

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, MCL 125.3801 *et seq.* (“MPEA”) authorizes the Planning Commission to prepare a Master Plan for the use, development and preservation of all lands in the Village; and

WHEREAS, the Village of Edwardsburg Planning Commission has undertaken a cooperative effort with the Ontwa Township Planning Commission to adopt a joint Master Plan, and;

WHEREAS, the Village and Township Planning Commissions have assembled a revised draft joint Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, on September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024, the Edwardsburg Village Council received and reviewed the proposed Master Plan prepared by the Planning Commission and authorized distribution of the Master Plan to the Notice Group entities identified in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, notice was provided to the Notice Group entities as provided in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025 to consider public comment on the proposed Master Plan, and to further review and comment on the proposed Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, after the public hearing was held, the Planning Commission voted to approve the Master Plan on January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025, and recommended adoption of the proposed Master Plan to the Village Council; and

WHEREAS, the Village Council finds that the proposed Master Plan is desirable, proper, and reasonable and furthers the use, preservation, and development goals and strategies of the Village;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. ***Adoption of 2025 Master Plan.*** The Edwardsburg Village Council hereby approves and adopts the proposed Master Plan, including all of the chapters, figures, descriptive matters, maps and tables contained therein.

2. ***Distribution to Notice Group.*** Pursuant to MCL 125.3843, the Village Council approves distribution of the Master Plan to the Notice Group.

3. ***Findings of Fact.*** The Village Council has made the foregoing determination based on a review of existing land uses in the Village, a review of the existing Master Plan provisions and maps, and input received from the Planning Commission and the public, as well as the assistance of a professional planning group. The Village Council also finds that the Master Plan will accurately reflect and implement the Village's goals and strategies for the use, preservation, and development of lands within the Village of Edwardsburg.

4. **Effective Date; Repeal.** The Master Plan shall become effective on the adoption date of this resolution. The prior Master Plan is hereby repealed upon the Master Plan becoming effective.

YEAS: Sam Garwood, Nancy Stoner, Terry Bidwell, John Sharp, Laura Hughes,  
Kellen Van Hulle

NAYS: None

ABSENT/ABSTAIN: None

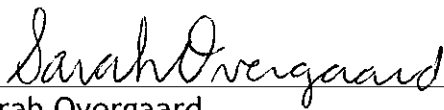
**RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.**

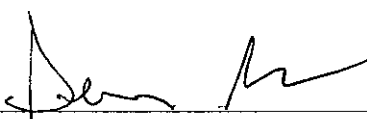
**CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of a resolution adopted by the Edwardsburg Village Council at the time, date, and place specified above pursuant to the required statutory procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: February 17, 2025

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Sarah Overgaard  
Village Clerk

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dennis Peak  
Village President

**ONTWA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION  
CASS COUNTY, MICHIGAN  
(Resolution No. 01-08-2025)**

At a regular meeting of the Ontwa Township Planning Commission held on January 8, 2025 at the Ontwa Township Hall, the following Resolution was offered for adoption by Planning Commission Member Bill Mahaney and was seconded by Planning Commission Member Don DeLong:

**A RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING APPROVAL OF THE ONTWA TOWNSHIP / VILLAGE OF EDWARDSBURG JOINT MASTER PLAN TO THE TOWNSHIP BOARD AND CONSTITUTING PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVAL OF SUCH MASTER PLAN**

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, MCL 125.3801 *et seq.* (“MPEA”) authorizes the Planning Commission to prepare a Master Plan for the use, development and preservation of all lands in the Township; and

WHEREAS, the Ontwa Township Planning Commission has undertaken a cooperative effort with the Village of Edwardsburg Planning Commission to adopt a joint Master Plan, and;

WHEREAS, the Village and Township Planning Commissions have assembled a revised draft joint Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, on September 9, 2024 the Ontwa Township Board received and reviewed the proposed Master Plan prepared by the Village and Township Planning Commissions and authorized distribution of the Master Plan to the Notice Group entities identified in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, notice was provided to the Notice Group entities as provided in the MPEA;  
and

WHEREAS, the Ontwa Township Planning Commission held a public hearing on today's date to consider public comment on the proposed Master Plan, and to further review and comment on the proposed Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds that the proposed Master Plan is desirable, proper, and reasonable and furthers the use, preservation, and development goals and strategies of the Township;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. ***Approval of 2025 Master Plan.*** The Planning Commission approves the proposed Master Plan, including all of the chapters, figures, descriptive matters, maps and tables contained therein.

2. ***Distribution to Township Board.*** Pursuant to MCL 125.3843, the Township Board has asserted by resolution its right to approve or reject the proposed Master Plan and therefore, the approval granted herein is not the final step for adoption of the plan as provided in MCL 125.3843. In addition, the Planning Commission hereby approves distribution of the proposed amended Master Plan to the Township Board. The Planning Commission respectfully recommends to the Township Board that the Township Board give final approval and adoption of the proposed Master Plan.

3. ***Findings of Fact.*** The Planning Commission has made the foregoing determination based on a review of existing land uses in the Township, a review of the existing Master Plan provisions and maps, and input received from the Township Board and at the public hearing, as well as the assistance of a professional planning group. The Planning Commission also

finds that the amended Master Plan will accurately reflect and implement the Township's goals and strategies for the use, preservation, and development of lands within the Township of Ontwa.

4. **Effective Date.** The Master Plan will be effective upon the date that it is approved by the Ontwa Township Board.

YEAS: Chris Marbach, Shane Szalai, Sandra Senor, Todd Haberland, Bill Mahaney, Don Delong, Mike Mroczek.


NAYS: 0

ABSENT/ABSTAIN: 0

**RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.**

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: January 8, 2025

By   
Chris Marbach  
Planning Commission Chairperson



**ONTWA TOWNSHIP  
CASS COUNTY, MICHIGAN  
(Resolution No. 2025-02-10.1)**

At a regular meeting of the Ontwa Township Board held on February 10, 2025, at the Ontwa Township Hall, the following Resolution was offered for adoption by Board Member Clerk VanBelle and was seconded by Board Member Trustee Stutsman:

**A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE PROPOSED  
ONTWA TOWNSHIP/VILLAGE OF EDWARDSBURG JOINT MASTER  
PLAN**

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, MCL 125.3801 *et seq.* (“MPEA”) authorizes the Planning Commission to prepare a Master Plan for the use, development and preservation of all lands in the Township; and

WHEREAS, the Ontwa Township Planning Commission has undertaken a cooperative effort with the Village of Edwardsburg Planning Commission to adopt a joint Master Plan, and;

WHEREAS, the Village and Township Planning Commissions have assembled a revised draft joint Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024, the Ontwa Township Board received and reviewed the proposed Master Plan prepared by the Planning Commission and authorized distribution of the Master Plan to the Notice Group entities identified in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, notice was provided to the Notice Group entities as provided in the MPEA;  
and

WHEREAS, the Township Planning Commission held a public hearing on January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025 to consider public comment on the proposed Master Plan, and to further review and comment on the proposed Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, after the public hearing was held, the Planning Commission voted to approve the Master Plan on January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025, and recommended adoption of the proposed Master Plan to the Township Board; and

WHEREAS, the Township Board finds that the proposed Master Plan is desirable, proper, and reasonable and furthers the use, preservation, and development goals and strategies of the Township;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. ***Adoption of 2025 Master Plan.*** The Ontwa Township Board hereby approves and adopts the proposed Master Plan, including all of the chapters, figures, descriptive matters, maps and tables contained therein.

2. ***Distribution to Notice Group.*** Pursuant to MCL 125.3843, the Township Board approves distribution of the Master Plan to the Notice Group.

3. ***Findings of Fact.*** The Township Board has made the foregoing determination based on a review of existing land uses in the Township, a review of the existing Master Plan provisions and maps, and input received from the Planning Commission and the public, as well as the assistance of a professional planning group. The Township Board also finds that the Master Plan will accurately reflect and implement the Township's goals and strategies for the use, preservation, and development of lands within the Township of Ontwa.

4. *Effective Date; Repeal.* The Master Plan shall become effective on the adoption date of this resolution. The prior Master Plan is hereby repealed upon the Master Plan becoming effective.

YEAS: 6

NAYS: 0

ABSENT/ABSTAIN: Jeff Kozinski absent


**RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.**


**CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of a resolution adopted by the Township of Ontwa Board of Trustees at the time, date, and place specified above pursuant to the required statutory procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: February 10, 2025

By   
Tina VanBelle  
Ontwa Township Clerk



**ONTWA TOWNSHIP &  
VILLAGE OF EDWARDSBURG**

Joint Master Plan