



LINCOLN CHARTER TOWNSHIP  
BERRIEN COUNTY, MICHIGAN

# 2025 MASTER PLAN

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION





## **CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION**

### **WHAT IS A MASTER PLAN?**

The purpose of a Master Plan is to enable a community to establish a direction for physical development and redevelopment, capital investment, and growth. A Master Plan represents a broad policy statement about what a community is, what its residents value, and what those residents and businesses hope the community will become. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Act 33 of 2008) specifically gives municipalities the authority to adopt a Master Plan. Once adopted, the Master Plan will serve as an advisory guide for the physical conservation of certain areas and the development of other areas. It will also serve as the policy basis for land uses and zoning decisions made under the Zoning Ordinance.

For Lincoln Charter Township, this Master Plan reflects the Township's recognition of the natural beauty of its surroundings and a strong commitment to retaining and strengthening the local quality of life. This Master Plan outlines the preferred future for the community and strategies to realize it. The Plan is written in general terms, recognizing that planning for future the requires flexibility to effectively respond to challenges that the Township will face.

Lincoln Charter Township's last Master Plan was updated in 2013. General planning practice, as well as State statute, suggests that Master Plans should be reviewed at five-year intervals and the Township has been fairly vigilant in doing so. This update in 2024-2025 was performed with the knowledge that some significant changes have occurred in the community since 2013, although many of the 2013 policies remain relevant.

This Master Plan was prepared and adopted pursuant to the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Act 33 of 2008, as amended.



## THE PLANNING PROCESS

The process to create this Master Plan took approximately 18 months and involved five steps that are listed below. Most of the Plan was drafted by a steering committee who in turn sought broader input and feedback from the Township Planning Commission as the process moved along. The Plan consists of the following sections:

- Data Analysis (Chapters 2-5)
- Public Participation (Chapter 6)
- Goals and Objectives (Chapter 7)
- Future Land Use (Chapter 8)
- Implementation Strategies (Chapter 9)

The first step in the process involved collecting data related to Township demographics, land use, community facilities, and other topics from a variety of sources and analyzing it to establish a baseline of data and demographic trends in the community. This fact-finding effort presented in Chapters 2-5 and, along with public input and local knowledge, can be used to inform policy decisions.

Following this data-gathering phase, the Township issued an online community survey. The purpose of the survey was to solicit input from the community on the future of the Township and determine what direction residents were looking for the Township relative to planning, zoning, land use, and municipal services. The survey was open for approximately one month in the spring of 2024. A total of 320 residents responded to the survey. The Plan's policies and recommendations in Chapters 7-9 are based on the results of this effort.





Information gathered from the survey were formed into several broad goal statements which form the foundation of the Master Plan. Each goal is supported by several objectives that are to be seen as steps needed to accomplish each goal. The 2013 Plan was utilized as a starting point and each goal was modified in light of current challenges and the desires of the community.

The Future Land Use Plan, which is reflected in Chapter 8, consists of a Future Land Use Map and accompanying narrative. The Future Land Use Map illustrates the desired development patterns for the future of the Township. Each of the future land use designations on the map are supported by the narrative which describes how each area should develop over the life of this Plan.

Finally, the specific implementation strategies to carry out the Plan were developed. These are reflected in Chapter 9 and are intended to function as a specific set of tasks for the Township to accomplish in both the short and long term. The completion of each task will move the Township toward the fulfillment of the Master Plan and the vision that it sets forth.



## CHAPTER 2

# DEMOGRAPHICS



## CHAPTER 2. DEMOGRAPHICS

A Master Plan is ultimately for people, so it is fitting to begin the plan with an analysis of past population growth, the current population, housing characteristics, and future population projections.

### PRESENT POPULATION

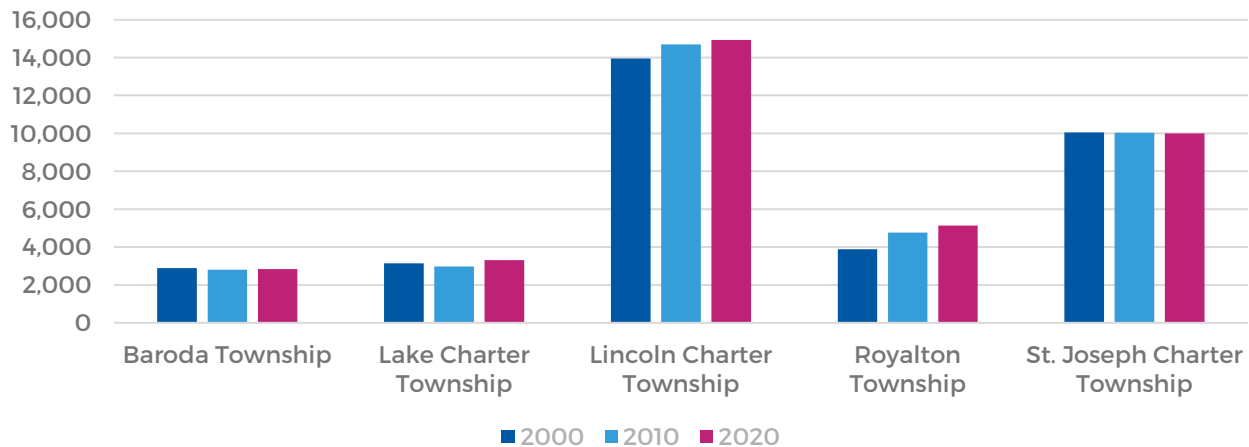
According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Lincoln Charter Township experienced an increase in population between 2000 and 2010. During this period the Township's population grew from 13,952 in 2000 to 14,691 in 2010, an increase of 5.3%, (see Table 1). From 2010 to 2020, the Township continued to grow, adding another 1.6% to reach a 2020 population of 14,929 people.

Table 1. Total Population 2000-2020

Community	2000	2010	2020	% Change (2000-2010)	% Change (2010-2020)
<b>Lincoln Charter Township</b>	<b>13,952</b>	<b>14,691</b>	<b>14,929</b>	<b>5.3%</b>	<b>1.6%</b>
Baroda Township	2,880	2,801	2,835	-2.7%	1.2%
Lake Charter Township	3,148	2,972	3,316	-5.6%	11.6%
Royalton Township	3,888	4,766	5,141	22.6%	7.9%
St. Joseph Charter Township	10,042	10,028	9,993	-0.1%	-0.3%

Source: 2000-2020 U.S. Census

Figure 1. Population Growth 2000-2020



Source: 2000-2020 U.S. Census

Over the last two decades, townships surrounding Lincoln Charter Township displayed differing trends and demographic patterns. Royalton Township witnessed significant growth, while Baroda Township and St. Joseph Township showed only modest changes. Lake Charter Township experienced a resurgence in 2020 after a decline from 2000 to 2010. Lincoln Township has experienced consistent moderate growth over the past two decades.

## POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Table 2 presents the age distribution of Lincoln Charter Township. The data highlights a trend toward an aging demographic, as the average resident age rose from 39.2 years in 2000 to 41.2 years in 2020. This figure is similar to the Berrien County average of 42.2 years but exceeds the statewide average for Michigan, which is 40.3 years. The largest age cohort in Lincoln Charter Township is the 55 to 59 range, which contains nearly 10% of the Township's population. Nearly a quarter of the township is over the age of 60, and another quarter is comprised of children 19 years of age or under.

This demographic aging poses significant implications for the Township, underscoring the need for a careful examination of housing options and a need to provide housing for all age ranges and particularly those in the older age cohorts. In addition, health care, transportation, and recreation are issues that also warrant study. An aging population may also impact local school enrollment. The primary school district in Lincoln Charter Township (Lakeshore Public Schools) has an excellent reputation, which acts as a magnet for families with children. Thus, the Township will need to provide ample housing choices, including attainable and workforce housing available to younger families.

**Table 2. Age**

	Lincoln Charter Twp.		Berrien County		Michigan	
Under 5 years	979	6.6%	8,074	5.3%	536,805	5.3%
5 to 9 years	1,070	7.2%	9,166	6.0%	571,751	5.7%
10 to 14 years	883	5.9%	9,117	6.0%	615,180	6.1%
15 to 19 years	901	6.1%	10,369	6.8%	643,459	6.4%
20 to 24 years	866	5.8%	8,318	5.4%	687,971	6.9%
25 to 29 years	835	5.6%	7,982	5.2%	648,661	6.5%
30 to 34 years	825	5.5%	9,456	6.2%	666,712	6.6%
35 to 39 years	861	5.8%	9,411	6.2%	611,173	6.1%
40 to 44 years	796	5.4%	9,330	6.1%	608,035	6.1%
45 to 49 years	728	4.9%	7,974	5.2%	562,636	5.6%
50 to 54 years	882	5.9%	9,106	6.0%	639,007	6.4%
55 to 59 years	1,423	9.6%	9,872	6.5%	649,226	6.5%
60 to 64 years	975	6.6%	11,792	7.7%	715,940	7.1%
65 to 69 years	901	6.1%	11,272	7.4%	619,018	6.2%
70 to 74 years	837	5.6%	8,116	5.3%	504,542	5.0%
75 to 79 years	420	2.8%	5,114	3.3%	336,257	3.4%
80 to 84 years	366	2.5%	3,912	2.6%	216,443	2.2%
85 years and over	320	2.2%	4,519	3.0%	201,302	2.0%
<b>Median Age:</b>	<b>41.2</b>		<b>42.2</b>		<b>40.3</b>	

*Source: 2021 American Community Survey (5-Year Estimates)*



## Number of Housing Units and Vacancy Rate

Table 3 characterizes the housing stock of Lincoln Charter Township. The number of housing units in the Township increased from 6,603 in 2010 to 6,723 in 2020, according to the 2020 U.S. Census. Of those 6,723 units, 6,140 (91.3 %) were occupied in 2020 while 8.7% were vacant. Of the occupied housing units 80% were owner-occupied, while 20% were renter-occupied, according to the 2021 ACS 5-year estimate. Of the vacant units, nearly 40% were vacant for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

**Table 3. Housing Characteristics**

	Number of Units	Percent of Total
Total Housing Units	6,723	100%
Occupied	6,140	91.3%
Vacant	583	8.7%
Owner-occupied*	4,708	80.3%
Renter-occupied*	1,153	19.7%

*Source: 2020 U.S. Census (\* 2021 American Community Survey)*





## Occupied Dwelling Units

Table 4 illustrates the growth in total occupied dwelling units from 2010 to 2020 in Lincoln Charter Township and neighboring communities. During this period, Lincoln Charter Township experienced an increase of 176 occupied dwelling units. Concurrently, as highlighted in Table 1, the Township's population increased by 238 persons.

Table 4. Occupied Housing Units

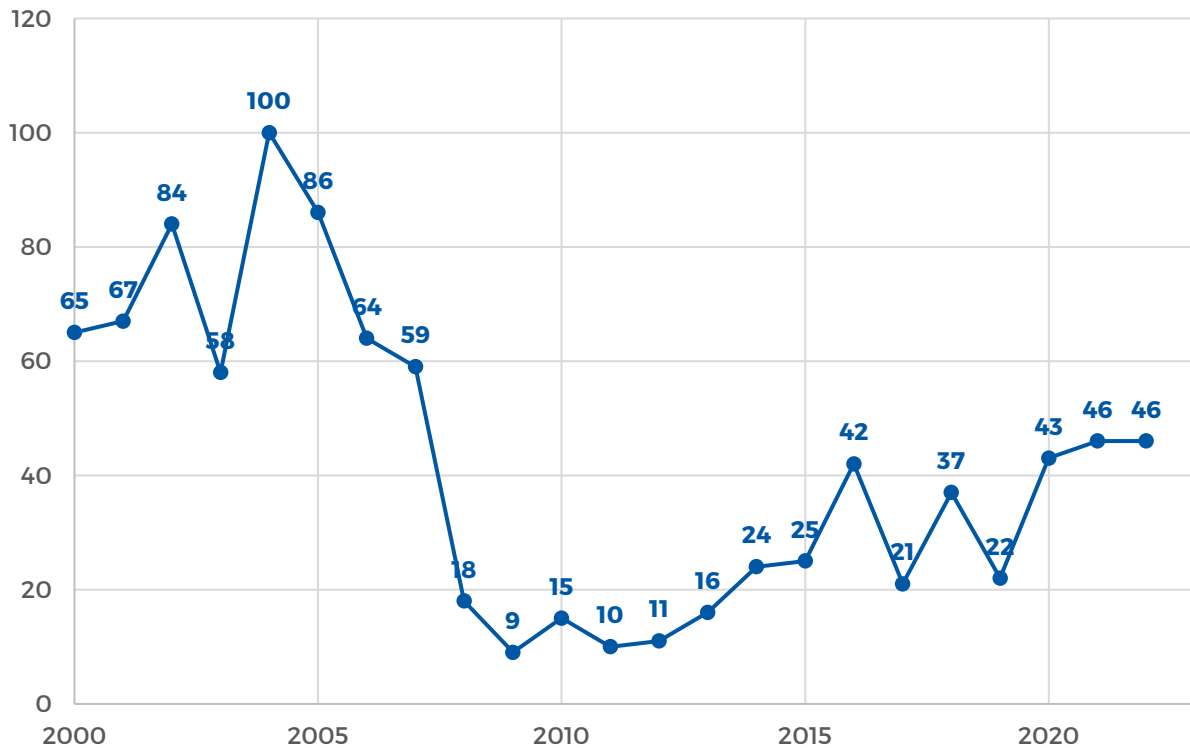
Community	2000	2010	2020	% Change, 2010-2020
Lincoln Charter Twp	5,486	5,964	6,140	3.0%
Baroda Twp	1,117	1,122	1,172	4.5%
Lake Charter Twp	1,171	1,211	1,399	15.5%
Royalton Twp	1,299	1,699	1,944	14.4%
St. Joseph Charter Twp	4,094	4,140	4,196	1.4%

Source: 2020 U.S. Census

## Residential Building Permits

Analyzing the data on new residential permits over the years provides insights into the trends and fluctuations in housing construction. The data in Figure 2 shows a general upward trend from 2000 to 2004, with the number of permits peaking at 100 in 2004. Subsequently, there is a noticeable decline in the following years, reaching a low of 9 permits in 2009, likely reflecting the impact of the economic recession during that period. Since that time the Township has experienced a gradual recovery with some fluctuations, and an increase in recent years, reaching 46 permits in both 2021 and 2022, still well short of the number of permits issued before the recession. The data also shows that the number of permits can fluctuate quite a bit depending on a variety of local, regional, and statewide or nationwide factors.

Figure 2. Building Permits Issued for New Home Construction



Source: Lincoln Charter Township

## Population Projections

Statistical averaging techniques were used to project the Township’s likely population growth through the year 2050. These approaches are intended to provide a general sense of growth in the future. The following generalizations are limited in scope and are based on past trends documented by the United States Census Bureau. These projections can be used to understand the future position of the Township in terms of growth and total population. There are three different projection techniques explored in this section.

Table 5 shows the results using the Arithmetic Method. This method projects future population counts based on the increase or decrease in the average number of persons per year. The following projections are based on an average increase of approximately 12 persons per year in Lincoln Charter Township since 1980.

Table 5. Arithmetic Population Projection, 2020-2050

Arithmetic Method	2020	2030	2040	2050
Population Projection	14,929	15,046	15,164	15,281

Table 6 shows the results of the Growth Rate Method to project the population. This method assumes growth or decline will occur at a similar rate as it did in the past, similar to the Arithmetic Method. According to the U.S. Census, the rate of growth in the Township was approximately 0.1% per year between 1980 and 2020.

Table 6. Growth Rate Population Projection, 2020-2050

Growth Rate Method	2020	2030	2040	2050
Population Projection	14,929	15,055	15,182	15,310

The Building Permit Method is based on the number of residential building permits issued by the Township. A total of 333 permits were issued in Lincoln Charter Township from 2012 – 2022 with an average of 30 permits per year. The Township’s average household size as estimated by the Census Bureau was 2.54 persons in 2021. Extrapolating these figures into the future may project likely population growth if current trends remain the same, as shown in Table 7.



**Table 7. Building Permit Population Projection, 2020-2050**

Building Permit Method	2020	2030	2040	2050
Population Projection	14,929	15,691	16,453	17,215

Table 8 summarizes the population projection information based on an average of the three above methods. The projections assume that the past trends will continue, which limits the reliability of the information, but is still useful for anticipating future conditions. Projections are based on population counts documented by the United States Census Bureau (see note at the beginning of this section for information on 2020 population). Building permit data was provided by Lincoln Charter Township.

The weighted projections place more emphasis on the Arithmetic and Growth Rate methods (40% each) because they reflect broader, historical population trends, while the Building Permit method, which was given a lower weight of 20%, captures a more localized trend based on recent construction activity. However, this method assumes there will be sufficient space for new housing in the future and that the Township will be able to accommodate all planned developments, which may not be realistic, given potential constraints on land availability and infrastructure.

**Table 8. Population Projections**

Method	Current Population 2020	Project Population		
		2030	2040	2050
Arithmetic	14,929	15,046	15,164	15,281
Growth Rate	14,929	15,055	15,182	15,310
Building Permit	14,929	15,929	16,453	17,215
Average	14,929	15,264	15,600	15,936
Weighted Average	14,929	15,179	15,429	15,680

It is worth noting that the population projections from the 2013 Master Plan overestimated the 2020 population of the Township by approximately 1,000 people. In other words, the plan assumed that the Township's population would grow faster than it did in reality. It is also notable that the number of new building permits issued by the Township has generally increased over the last ten to fifteen years. Thus, it seems likely that the Township's population will continue to increase, and how the Township manages that growth will be central to its future.

The future of Lincoln Charter Township will be determined by the goals and objectives of this Master Plan, the resources and constraints of the Township, and the areas of Lincoln Charter Township that are suitable for development. As it has in previous years, the Township must continue to be proactive in managing change, providing high-quality services, and acting as a responsible steward of its numerous natural resources and assets.

# CHAPTER 3

## NATURAL FEATURES

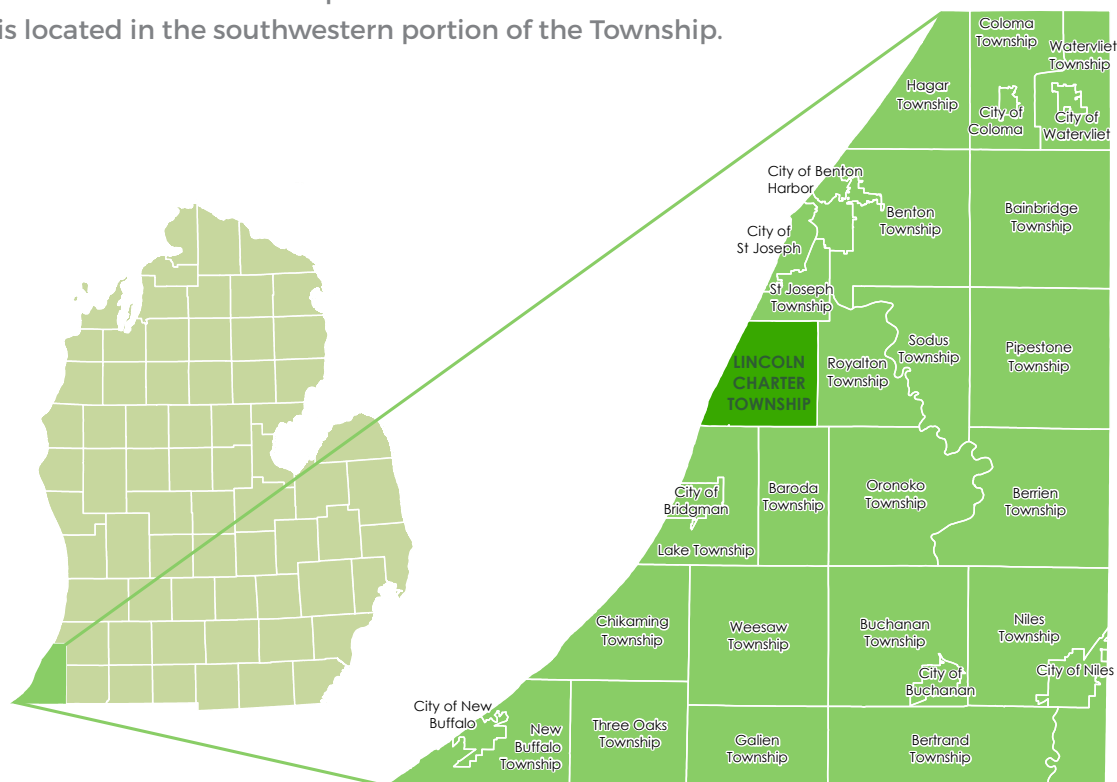
## CHAPTER 3. NATURAL FEATURES

In developing a Master Plan it's essential to consider the Township's natural features—creeks, lakes, forests, and open spaces—which bring various benefits. These elements support biodiversity, improve air quality, and enhance climate resilience, providing environmental advantages. They also contribute to the Township's aesthetic appeal, cultural identity, and quality of life, serving as gathering places for recreation and community events. Additionally, these natural assets offer economic advantages through tourism, property value appreciation, and attracting businesses and skilled workers. By incorporating and preserving these features in this Master Plan, Lincoln Charter Township can promote sustainable development, environmental stewardship, and the long-term well-being of the Township and its residents.

### GEOGRAPHY

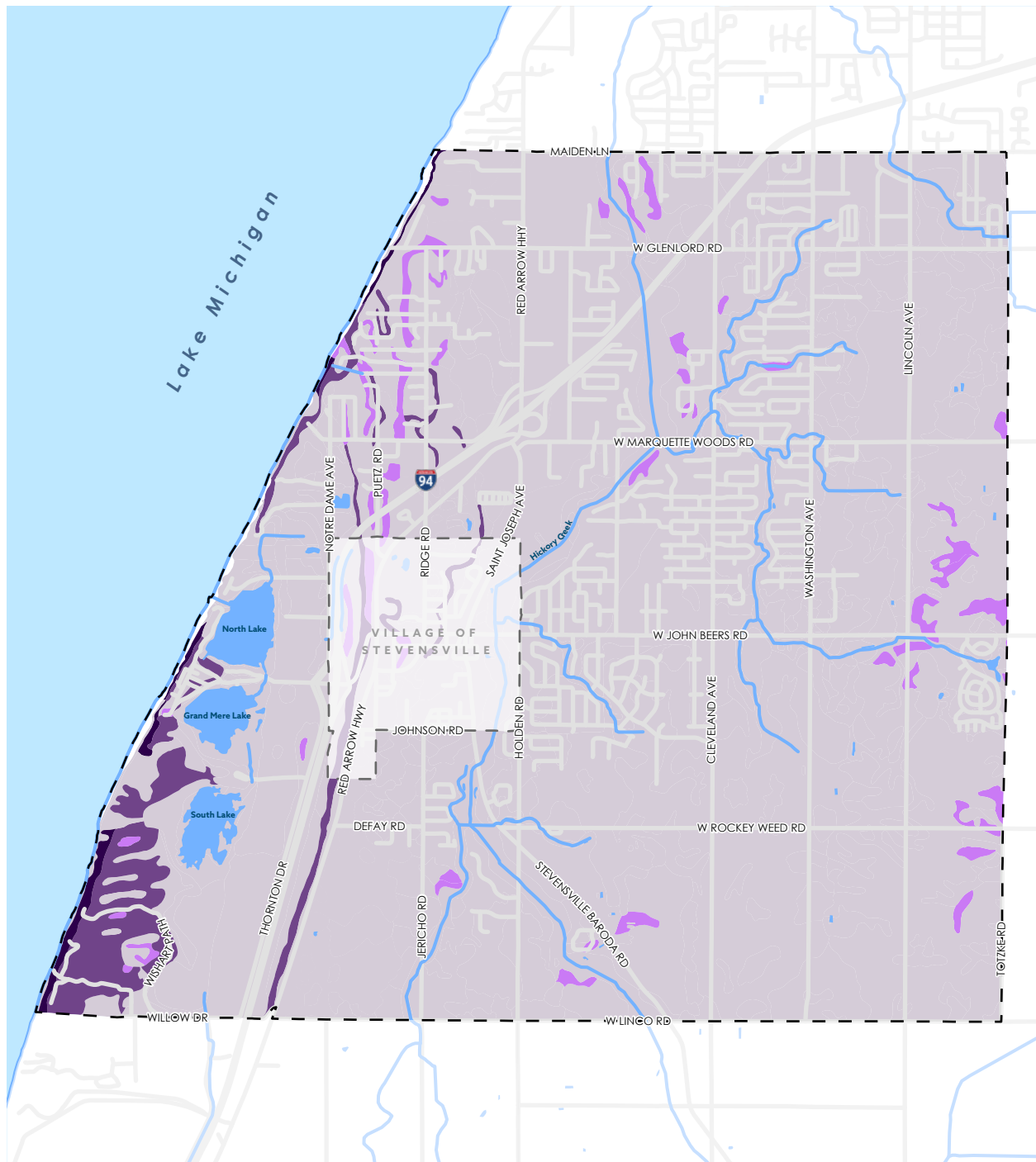
Lincoln Charter Township is situated within Berrien County, which is known for its proximity to Lake Michigan and its picturesque landscapes. The accessibility to Lake Michigan contributes to the Township's charm, making it an appealing destination for both residents and visitors exploring the natural beauty of the region. Nearby are an assortment of state parks and recreational areas, including the Grand Mere State Park, North Lake Park, and many more.

Like many townships in Michigan, Lincoln Charter Township consists of a mix of rural and residential areas. Agriculture is the predominant feature of the eastern and southeast portions of the Township. Residential or developed land covers the central and northwestern portions while the Grand Mere State Park is located in the southwestern portion of the Township.









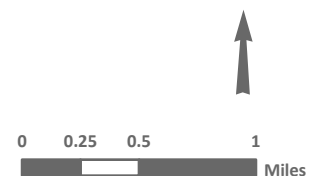
## MAP 1. SLOPE GRADIENT



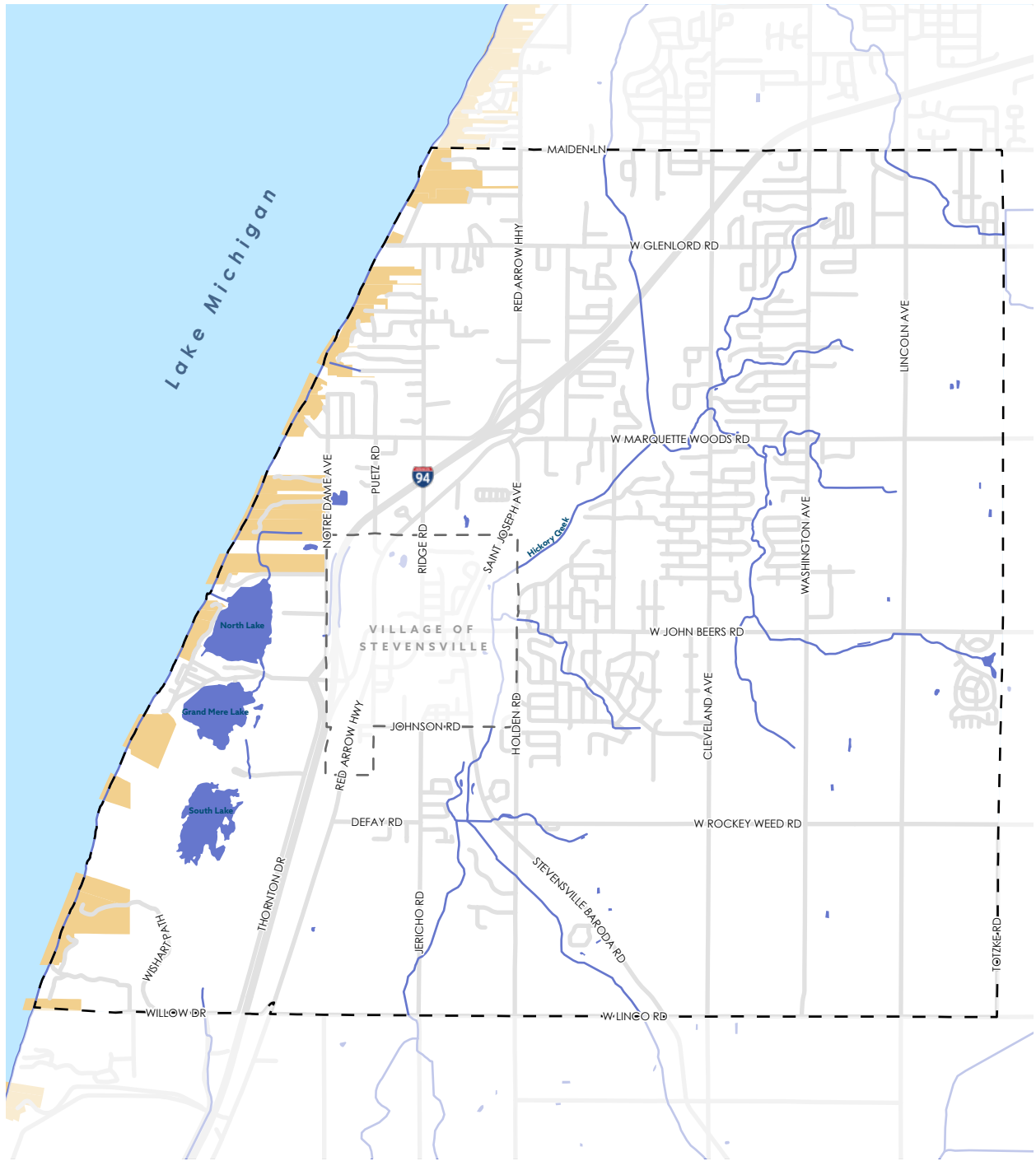
Source: Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil Survey Geographic Database (SSURGO)

Slope Gradient - Representative Value


-  Less than 5%  
 5% to 14%  
 15% to 34%  
 More than 35%



## MAP 2. HIGH RISK EROSION AREAS



Source: Michigan GIS Open Data

 High Risk Erosion Zones



0 0.25 0.5 1  
Miles

## Topography

Topography is a major factor in shaping the physical characteristics of a community. Map 1 shows the elevation and slope gradient for Lincoln Charter Township.

Slope gradient refers to the steepness or incline of the land surface and is typically measured as the ratio of vertical change (rise) to horizontal distance (run). It provides a quantitative measure of how quickly or gradually the elevation changes over a given distance and is an essential factor in understanding the topography, drainage patterns, and potential erosion risks of an area. Steep slopes next to a lake or a stream are common in certain geographic settings similar to that of Lincoln Charter Township.

Slopes as steep as 48% can be seen near the Lake Michigan shoreline and along the Red Arrow Highway. Lincoln Charter Township is divided into east and west halves by the Hickory Creek Corridor. The valley along the creek is narrow with steep slopes in several locations.

Lying between the Grand Mere Lakes and the Lake Michigan shore is a two-mile stretch of sand dunes comprising over 500 acres. This southern sandy shore is in marked contrast to the northern half of the shoreline, which is characterized by steep lake bluffs, which are threatened by erosion, particularly during times of high water levels in Lake Michigan.

The entire Lake Michigan shoreline is threatened by erosion. Even though the current lake level is roughly in line with historical averages, the shoreline of Lake Michigan is subjected to high rates of erosion. Serious erosion occurred in the 1970s and into the 1980s, and again from 2018-2022 when the Lake Michigan water level was at record-high levels after years of below average water levels from 2000-2014. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources designates these areas as High Risk Erosion Areas. Most of Lincoln Charter Township's Lake Michigan shoreline is within a high-risk erosion area.

In recent years, efforts have intensified to develop “creative and adaptive solutions when addressing the challenges associated with the unpredictability of the Great Lakes water levels, increased storm intensities and frequency as result of climate change. [...] Resilient Communities are those that are prepared to withstand and recover from Great Lakes coastal erosion and flooding events. Through resilient planning, a coastal community can prepare itself to absorb and adapt to changes in Great Lakes water levels, coastal storms and floods; manage social and environmental changes; and build a better and more reliable local economy.”

“The Michigan Coastal Management Program (MCMP) is building the Pathway to Resilience to enhance community preparedness and promote resiliency to mitigate the impacts of coastal hazards through increased knowledge of the risks, wise planning and zoning, and capacity building. The goal is for communities to be equipped with planning and data tools to effectively plan for growth and change; install practices and policies that protect, preserve, restore, enhance, and wisely develop coastal areas; and create networks for the collective impact of effective coastal management. In addition, the Coastal Leadership Academy is a free technical training opportunity delivered by EGLE staff to allow officials from coastal communities to come together to share their coastal challenges and learn about widely available resiliency tools to help plan for future conditions.”

<https://www.michigan.gov/egle/about/organization/water-resources/coastal-management/michigans-resilient-coast>





Due to its aesthetic beauty, the shoreline has always been a popular location for residential development and continues to be popular, based upon the high cost of lakefront property. Residents of the Township recognize the aesthetic beauty, taxable value, and sensitive habitat along the lakeshore. However, during periods of high erosion rates, shoreline developments suffer a considerable amount of property damage. Similarly, over-development of these areas may cause these areas permanent damage.

Because of the sensitive and unstable nature of the shoreline, the common development pattern along the lakeshore is single-family detached residential homes. Any creative development tool within High Risk Erosion and Critical Dune Areas, such as Planned Unit Developments, should be utilized to control the impact of dense, residential development. However, it is also recognized that in some sensitive waterfront areas, development of any kind may be detrimental. In these cases, any disturbance of natural features must be minimized and discouraged.

According to the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), the western portion of Lincoln Charter Township is designated as a Coastal Zone Management Area.

Lincoln Charter Township was not immune to the forces of erosion and the impact of high lake levels. The high water levels of Lake Michigan experienced in 2017 – 2020 damaged an existing boardwalk, picnic area, and gravel parking lot at Lincoln Township Beach, resulting in the need to close the beach to all but walk-in use. Lincoln Charter Township desires to restore access to the beach and this work is ongoing as of 2024.

In addition, a stone revetment was placed at the base of the slope at Glenlord Beach in 2018 to assist in protecting the bluff against erosion. In 2020, work was done to restore eroded areas adjacent to the overlook and to further protect the slope. In addition to erosion to public property, numerous private properties experienced significant erosion in the late 2010s and early 2020s.

For now, high water levels have subsided somewhat and erosion has slowed along the shoreline. Nevertheless, the last twenty years have underscored the notion that natural forces can change the landscape quickly and the Township must be prepared to address additional challenges when they arise.



## Hydrology

Lincoln Charter Township has direct access to Lake Michigan via its western boundary. In addition, the Township also includes the Grand Mere Lakes, located in the Grand Mere State Park. Proximity to Lake Michigan offers a range of recreational opportunities including, swimming, boating, fishing, and other water-related activities. Grand Mere State Park, located along the Lake Michigan shoreline, further amplifies the Township's aesthetic appeal. The park, with its sand dunes, woodlands, and beaches, provides residents and visitors with additional recreational opportunities, including hiking, bird-watching, and enjoying the natural beauty of the area.

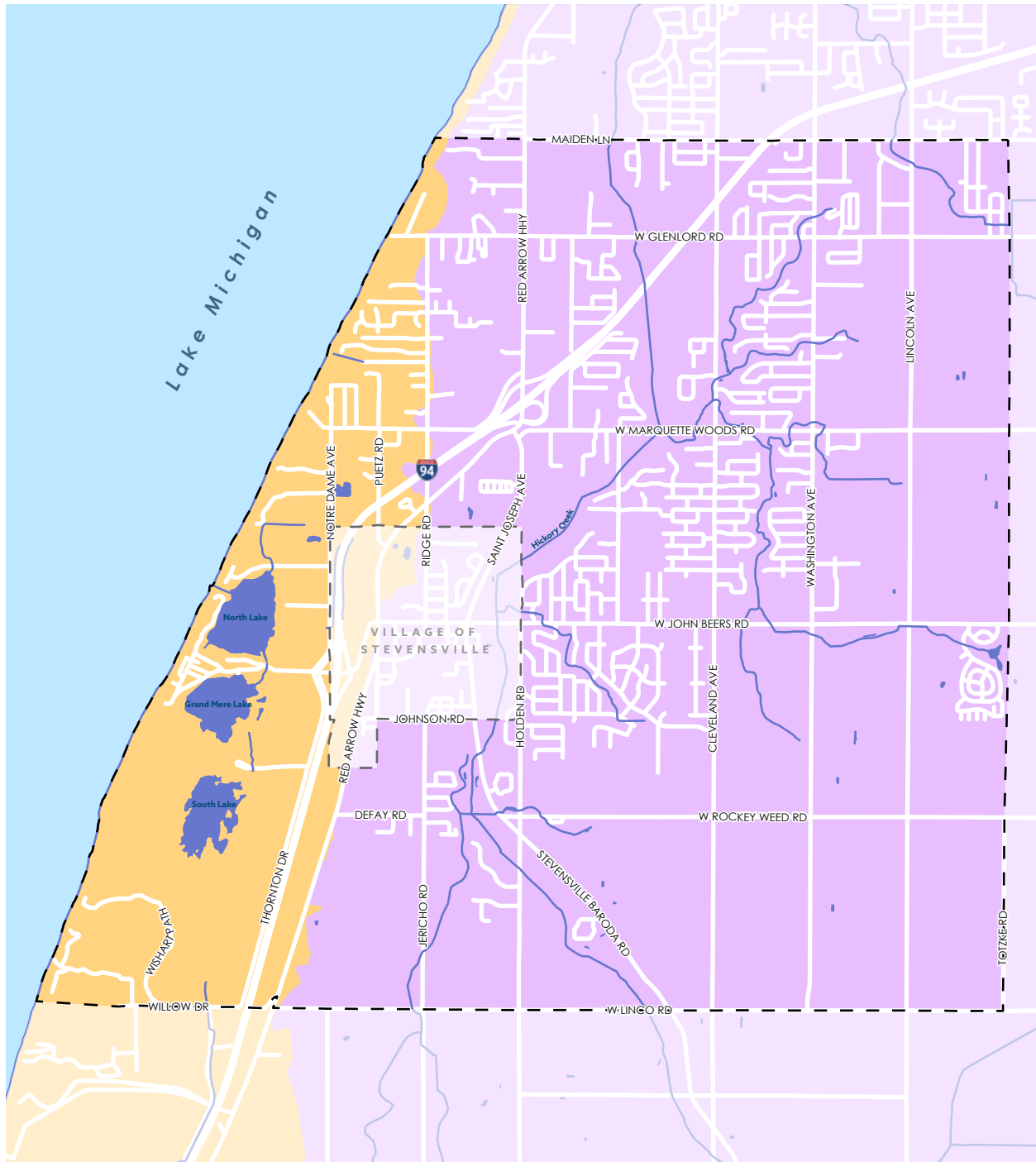
Lincoln Charter Township is largely located in the St. Joseph River watershed, as shown in Map 3. The St. Joseph River Watershed, located in the southwest portion of the lower peninsula of Michigan and the northwestern portion of Indiana, is the third largest river basin in Michigan and contains nearly 217 sub-watersheds. A majority of the Township is located in the Hickory Creek sub-watershed. Hickory Creek flows northerly through Lincoln Charter Township into the St. Joseph River.

## Wetlands

Areas of wetlands can be found near the Grand Mere Lakes and along the course of Hickory Creek. A majority of the wetlands as shown in Map 4, are freshwater forested/shrub wetlands. Forested wetlands are characterized by dominance of trees and shrubbery.

Including wetlands in a community's master plan is crucial for several reasons. Wetlands act as natural filters, purifying water and preventing runoff. They provide essential habitats for diverse plants and animals, promoting biodiversity. Wetlands contribute to flood control by absorbing excess water and serving as carbon sinks, aiding in climate change mitigation. Beyond their environmental benefits, wetlands enhance the community's quality of life, offering recreational opportunities and scenic landscapes. Integrating the preservation and sustainable management of wetlands into the master plan ensures the community's well-being and demonstrates a commitment to environmental stewardship.

## MAP 3. WATERSHEDS



Source: Michigan GIS Open Data

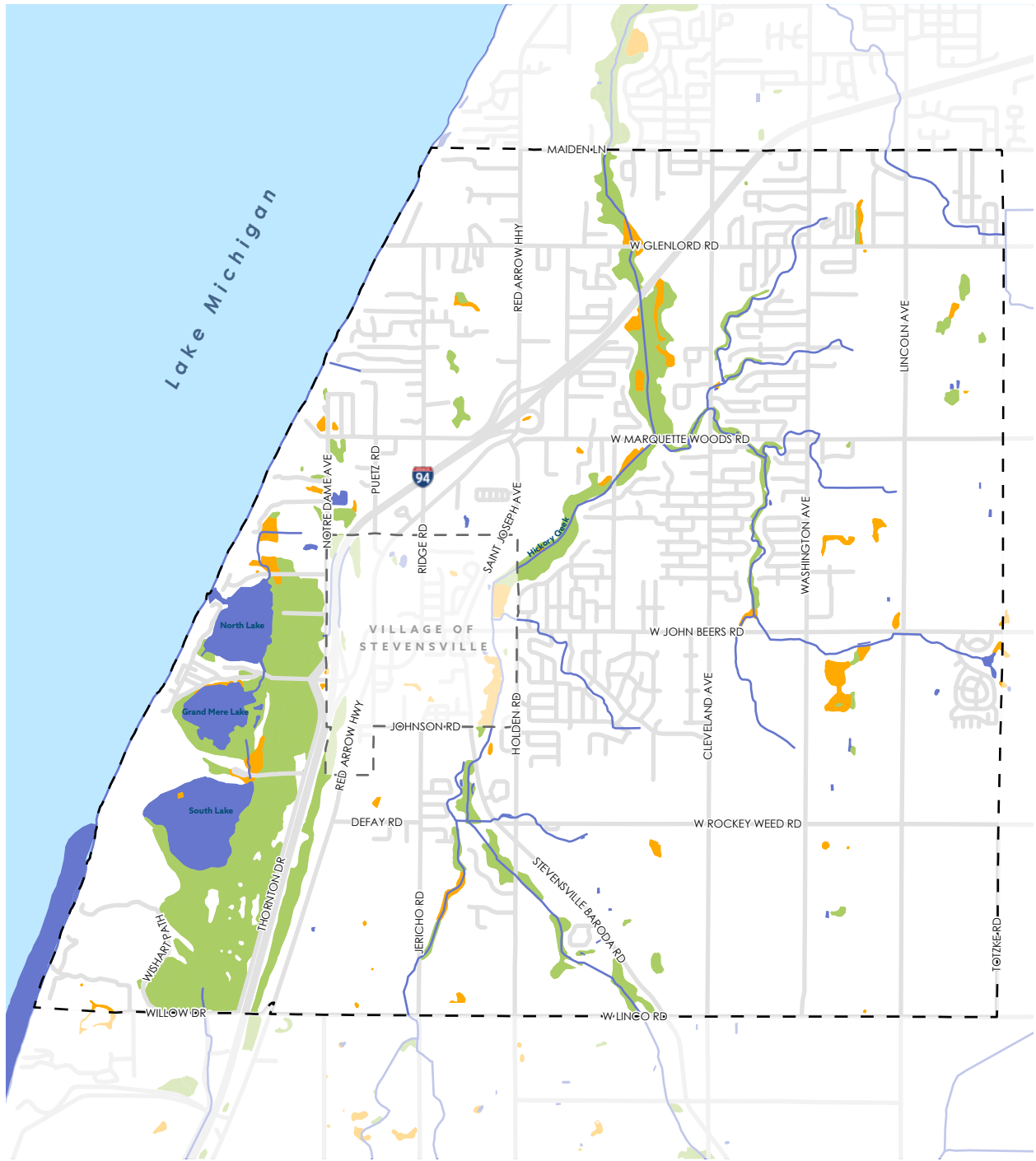
- Water Bodies
- Watershed Basin
- St. Joesph River
- Lake Drainage



0 0.25 0.5 1  
Miles

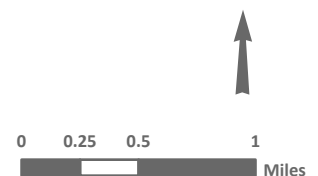


## MAP 4. WETLANDS

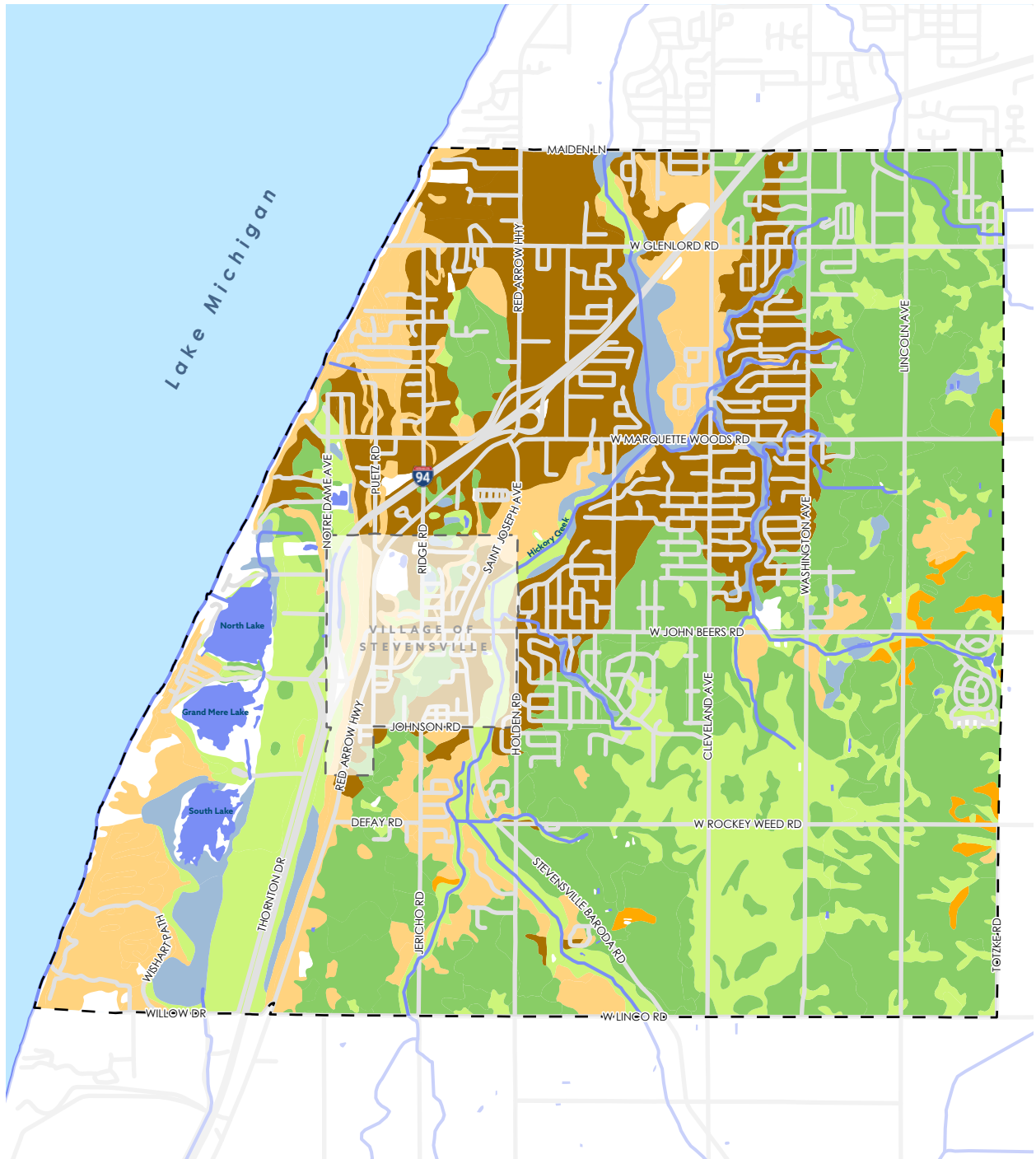


Source: Michigan GIS Open Data

- Freshwater Emergent Wetland
- Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland
- Water Bodies



## MAP 5. SOILS



Source: Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil Survey Geographic Database (SSURGO)

- Excessively drained
- Moderately well drained
- Well drained

- Somewhat poorly drained
- Poorly drained
- Very poorly drained





## Soils

Understanding the soil composition is an important part of land use planning. Soils provide valuable information about the composition, fertility, and drainage characteristics of the land. Understanding the soil types in an area helps determine the suitability for agriculture, construction, and infrastructure projects. It influences decisions related to land zoning, conservation, and environmental protection. Incorporating thoughtful soil drainage strategies in the master plan promotes sustainable urban development, safeguards the community against potential hazards, and contributes to the long-term well-being of both the environment and its residents.

**Excessively drained soils** are characterized by a rapid rate of water drainage. They typically have a sandy or gravelly texture that allows water to quickly percolate through the soil profile. While this can be beneficial in preventing waterlogging and providing aeration to plant roots, excessively drained soils may also pose challenges as they can lead to quicker nutrient leaching. Drought stress is another potential concern in these soils as water drains rapidly, making it challenging for plants to retain adequate moisture.

Conversely, **poorly drained soils** retain water for extended periods due to slower drainage. These soils often have a high clay content or are situated in areas with a high water table. Poor drainage can lead to waterlogging, reducing the availability of oxygen to plant roots and potentially causing root rot. While some plant species may be adapted to such conditions, poorly drained soils can limit agricultural productivity and may require specific management practices to improve drainage.

Soils in Lincoln Charter Township run the spectrum from well-drained to poorly drained. Lands generally north of John Beers and west of Washington have sandier, well-drained soils, while areas to the east of Washington and south of John Beers Road tend to be poorly-drained.

Well-drained soils help reduce the risk of flooding, protecting properties, and enhancing overall resilience to extreme weather events. Excessively drained soils and poorly drained soils represent two ends of the spectrum in terms of soil drainage characteristics. Both excessively drained and poorly drained soils pose unique challenges for various land uses, whether it be agriculture, urban development, or natural ecosystems. In all cases, soil characteristics are one of several factors to be considered when planning for additional residential, commercial, and/or industrial growth.

## EXISTING LAND USE

Lincoln Charter Township contains blend of rural and urban land uses. Agricultural land and open spaces, a cornerstone of the Township's character, span from agricultural, forest, and fields. Additionally, the Township contains a number of public lands, including parks and community facilities, churches, schools, and more. Residential areas, ranging from single-family homes on farms and in subdivisions, to multi-family developments, provide homes for the Township's nearly 15,000 residents. Commercial zones that are largely centered around main thoroughfares including Red Arrow Highway and the intersection of John Beers Road and Cleveland Avenue, cater to the daily needs of residents and visitors alike. Additionally, the Township accommodates industrial uses, with a majority of industry being located along the railroad right-of-way that passes through the center of the Township.

Table 9 below provides a breakdown of the Township's overall land uses. It is clear to see that a large percentage, nearly half, of the Township consists of residential land uses. This is reflective of the largely suburban nature of the Township. Residential uses are followed behind by agricultural/open space uses, occupying around one-third of the Township's land.

Public and quasi-public lands account for around 15% of the land in the Township. A large portion of this is located along the lakeshore as a part of Grand Mere State Park, and other State and Township-owned lands.

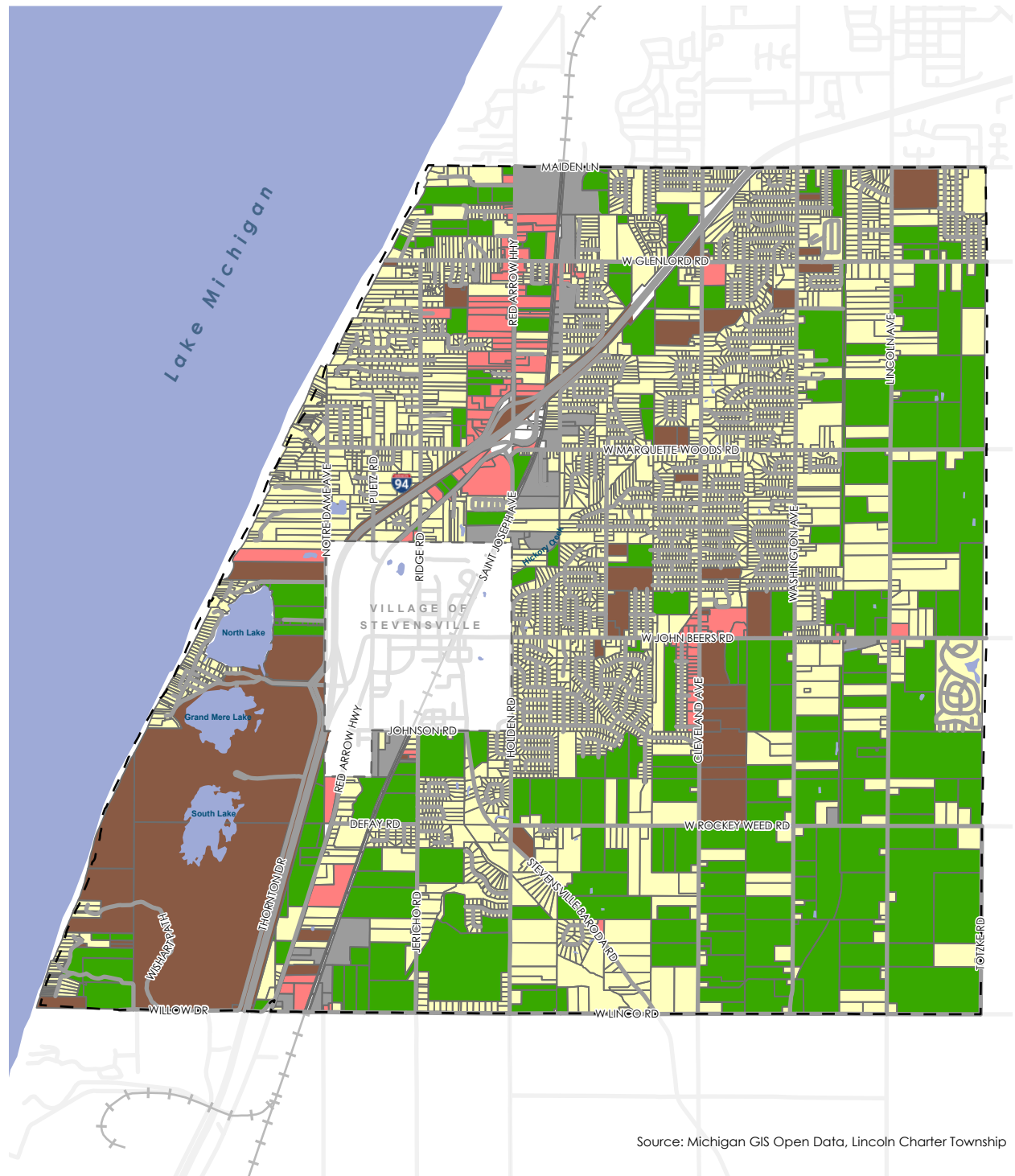
Lastly, commercial and industrial uses in the Township make up less than 5% each of the total land area in Lincoln Township.

**Table 9. Land Use**

Land Use	Acres	Percentage of Total
Agriculture/Open Space	3,454.1	32.1%
Commercial	367.6	3.4%
Residential	5,091.8	47.3%
Industrial	249.5	2.3%
Public/Quasi-Public	1,609.9	14.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,772.9</b>	



## MAP 6. EXISTING LAND USE



- |                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: green; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Agriculture/Open Space | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: grey; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Industrial           |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: red; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Commercial               | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: brown; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Public/Quasi-Public |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: yellow; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Residential           | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: blue; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Water Bodies         |





# CHAPTER 4

## UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES



## CHAPTER 4. UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Community facilities play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life, fostering civic engagement, supporting cultural activities, and instilling a sense of community pride. They also offer local spaces for interaction, education, and community development. When considering planned growth, concentrating development in desirable locations ensures that these facilities remain accessible and meet the needs of the residents.

This chapter provides an overview of the community facilities, services, and local infrastructure found in Lincoln Charter Township.

### WATER AND SEWER UTILITIES

The wastewater collection system in Lincoln Charter Township is owned by the Township and operated by the department of public works. The Township jointly owns portions of the system along Maiden Lane and some infrastructure in St. Joseph Township. The system in Lincoln Charter Township includes approximately 75 miles of gravity sewer, 6 miles of force main, 1,500 manholes, and 19 lift stations. An interceptor sewer along Hickory Creek is owned by the Southwest Michigan Regional Sanitary Sewer and Water Authority and conveys wastewater north to the regional treatment facility. All wastewater collected by the township sewer system is conveyed either to this interceptor or discharged to the conveyance system owned by St. Joseph Township to the north.

In 2018, an asset management plan and capital improvement plan was completed for the township sewer system with funds from the stormwater, asset management, and wastewater (SAW) grant. This report analyzes the wastewater system in detail and provides further information on the asset value, current conditions, level of service, and future needs of the system. The Township will consider extending sewers to facilitate future development in the Township, so it is important that future development policies of this Master Plan be consistent with utility extension considerations.

One wastewater treatment plant, jointly owned by the cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph, services Lincoln Charter Township, the cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph, Benton Charter Township, Hagar Township, Royalton Township, Sodus Township, St. Joseph Charter Township, Shoreham Village, and the Village of Stevensville. The capacity of the plant can be expanded to accommodate future growth. The plant currently treats 14 - 16 million gallons per day.

The City of St. Joseph owns a water treatment plant and provides, through contract, water to the Southwest Michigan Regional Sanitary Sewer and Water Authority. Membership of this Authority is currently composed of the Lincoln Charter Township, Royalton Township, St. Joseph Charter Township, the Village of Shoreham, and the Village of Stevensville. The capacity of the water treatment plant is 16 million gallons per day and the current demand is up to 14 million gallons per day.

The Southwest Michigan Regional Sanitary Sewer and Water Authority also owns and operates the water distribution network throughout its service area. Lincoln Charter Township is not



responsible for any operation or maintenance of the drinking water supply, and there are not any known plans to expand the distribution network at this time. While the unavailability of water does not have as severe an impact as sanitary sewer in some cases, it can affect economic development, particularly for industrial organizations that are large water users.



## SCHOOLS

Lincoln Charter Township is served by three public school systems: Bridgman\*, Lakeshore and Saint Joseph Public Schools. There are two parochial schools located in Lincoln Charter Township as well. These are outlined below:

Bridgman Public Schools, while having a portion of the Township in its school system, do not operate any facilities within Lincoln Charter Township. There are also two parochial schools in the Township: Christ Lutheran School and St. Paul's Lutheran School, both of which also contain preschools.

### LAKESHORE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- **LAKESHORE HIGH SCHOOL**  
5771 Cleveland Avenue  
Stevensville, Michigan 49127  
Enrollment: 872
- **LAKESHORE MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
1459 West John Beers Road  
Stevensville, Michigan 49127  
Enrollment: 611
- **ROOSEVELT ELEMENTARY**  
2000 El Dorado Drive  
Stevensville, Michigan 49127  
Enrollment: 404
- **STEWART ELEMENTARY**  
2750 Orchard Drive  
Stevensville, Michigan 49127  
Enrollment: 414
- **HOLLYWOOD ELEMENTARY**  
143 East John Beers Road  
Stevensville, Michigan 49127  
Enrollment: 403

### SAINT JOSEPH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- **UPTON MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
800 Maiden Lane  
St. Joseph, Michigan 49085  
Enrollment: 665

### PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS

- **CHRIST LUTHERAN SCHOOL**  
4333 Cleveland Avenue  
Stevensville, Michigan 49127  
Enrollment: 95
- **ST. PAULS LUTHERAN SCHOOL**  
2673 West John Beers Road  
Stevensville, Michigan 49127  
Enrollment: 50

The Saint Joseph Public Schools, including Upton Middle School, have recently expanded. Lakeshore Public Schools recently completed major expansion and renovation projects at all its facilities.

The necessary relationship between schools and community development highlights ways in which both governmental entities can be partners. The Township can do its part by allowing for affordable housing, the provision of quality services, and code enforcement.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

### **Fire**

Fire protection for Lincoln Charter Township is provided by the Lincoln Township Fire Department, which employs a full-time fire chief with 18 volunteer members. The Township was previously served by the Tri-Unit Fire Department, which was composed of Lincoln Charter Township, Royalton Township, and the Village of Stevensville. However, in 2003 the communities decided to split the two stations and start their own departments. The Lincoln Charter Township Station was constructed in 1998, and the department consists of about eighteen members. Over the past five years, the station has responded to a range of about 180-230 calls per year.

### **Police**

Lincoln Charter Township operates its own full-time police department with 11 full-time officers, including the chief of Police, and two clerical employees. The Police Department also has a police reserve program.

### **Ambulance**

Ambulance service is provided through Medic 1 Community Emergency Service. This municipality-owned service operates four fully staffed locations and provides advanced life support to 22 municipalities in parts of Berrien and Van Buren Counties. Lincoln Charter Township is a charter member of this ambulance service.

## **LIBRARY**

The Lincoln Charter Township Library is located at 2099 West John Beers Road and serves Lincoln, Royalton, and Baroda Township. The library acts as a gateway for the community to stimulating programs and events for children, teens, and adults. Annually, patrons make nearly 125,000 visits to the library to access about 75,000 books and print materials, nearly 12,000 digital materials, over 150 magazine and newspaper subscription and almost unlimited resources made available online and through interlibrary loan. The library is a cultural center that serves the needs of the community ranging from children to adults.

## CEMETERY

Lincoln Charter Township has two cemeteries, The Lincoln Charter Township Cemetery and Hickory Bluff Cemetery. The Lincoln Charter Township Cemetery is located at the corner of Marquette Woods Road and St. Joseph Avenue. This is the oldest of the two cemeteries, the veterans circle is located at this cemetery. There is a Memorial Day Service held here each year. The newer Hickory Bluff Cemetery is located on the west side of Cleveland Avenue, between Marquette Woods and Glenlord Road.

## PARKS

Lincoln Charter Township has eleven areas designated as parks within the Township. There is also a 12th park in the Village of Stevensville, which is located within the Township's boundaries. The parks include:

- **GLENLORD BEACH PARK:** This is a two-acre park located in the northwest region of the Township on Lake Michigan. It is located at the western terminus of Glenlord Road.
- **RUDNICK PARK:** This is a five-acre park located in the central northern region of the Township. The park is located on both sides of Hickory Creek with access off Glenlord Road.
- **LINCOLN TOWNSHIP BEACH & NATURE TRAIL:** This park provides the primary public beach access within Lincoln Charter Township. The park is 34.4 acres in area with direct frontage on Lake Michigan.
- **COMMUNITY CENTER PARK:** This park is located in the central region of the Township, adjacent to the Township Hall on Roosevelt Road. The park is nearly fifteen acres in size and provides active recreational facilities for residents.
- **NORTH LAKE PARK:** This park is located within the Grand Mere area and near the Pine Street, Lake Street, and Pier Street road ends. It is immediately adjacent to Grand Mere State Park and located on North Lake, which discharges into Lake Michigan.
- **LAKESHORE YOUTH BASEBALL & SOFTBALL PARK, ROCKET FOOTBALL PARK & YOUTH SOCCER COMPLEX:** This 80-acre multi-sports facility is located in the southeast region of the Township at the corner of Cleveland Ave and Rockey Weed Road.
- **CHICAGO STREET BEACH:** This beach is a public road end of Chicago Street. The park provides a small access to Lake Michigan. As a public road end, however, it is unmaintained and is bordered by private property. No parking or other improvements are available, so its function as a public amenity is limited.
- **PINE STREET BEACH, LAKE STREET BEACH, AND PIER STREET BEACH:** These small public road ends are located near each other in the Grand Mere neighborhood that was, for many generations, comprised largely of small family cottages. The beaches are located at platted street ends that terminate at Lake Michigan. Similar to the Chicago Street



Beach, these are also public road ends, and are unmaintained and bordered by private property. No parking or other improvements are available at any of these beaches, so their function as a public amenity is limited.

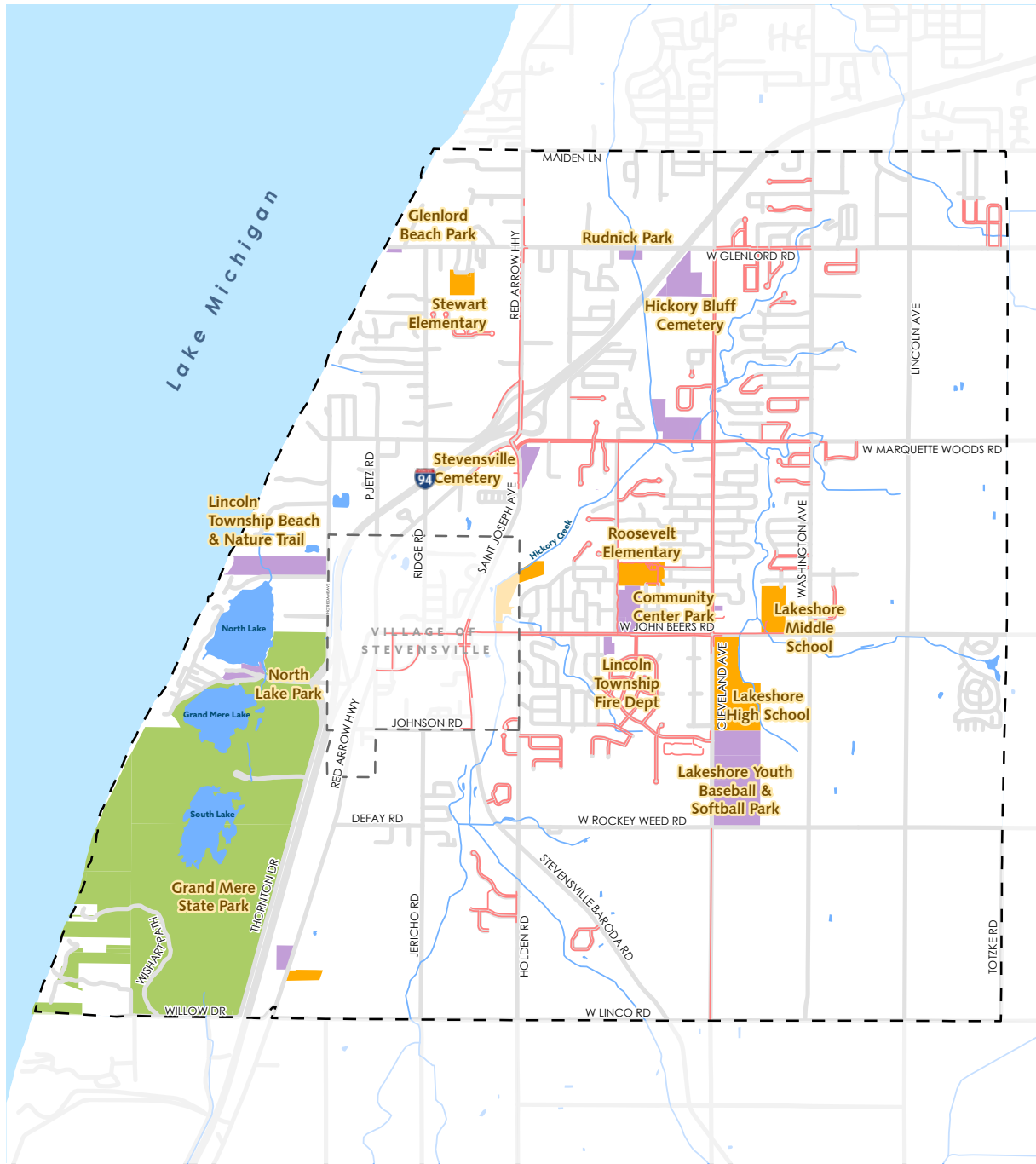
The Township also recently acquired two properties and is working to turn them into a trail and park along Hickory Creek.

Lincoln Charter Township is fortunate to have a state park within its boundaries. Grand Mere State Park is an approximately 1,100-acre park on the shores of Lake Michigan. The park is characterized by its sand dunes and lakes, providing a unique habitat to many different species of flora and fauna. Nearly a mile of shoreline is available for beachgoers, accessed by trails through the Park from a parking area off of Thornton Road. Access to Middle Lake is provided off of Grand Mere Road.

Other recreational facilities available to the public include the playground and sports fields at Lakeshore Public Schools, St. Joseph Public Schools, and other nearby county parks such as the Galien River County Park Preserve, Love Creek County Park, and more.

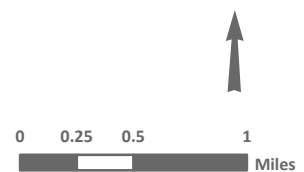


## MAP 7. PARKS



Source: Michigan GIS Open Data, Lincoln Charter Township

- School Property
- State Land
- Township Property
- Non-Motorized Facilities





# CHAPTER 5

# TRANSPORTATION



# CHAPTER 5. TRANSPORTATION

## OVERVIEW

The road network of Lincoln Township is characterized by a variety of roadway types, including an interstate highway, arterials, collectors, and local paved and gravel roads. MDOT maintains Interstate 94, which bisects the Township north to south, following the shore of Lake Michigan, and providing a connection between many of Michigan's largest cities to Chicago and beyond.

The Township contains a stretch of Red Arrow Highway, which begins at the northern border of the Township, and passes through a number of lakeshore communities before terminating in New Buffalo. Much of the commercial activity in the Township is located along Red Arrow Highway.

The remaining Township roads act as collectors and local roads, providing access to homes, businesses, schools, and recreational opportunities.

## EXISTING ROAD NETWORK

The following list of roadways are the main arterials in the Township:

- Cleveland Avenue (4.5 miles)
- Glenlord Road (2.5 miles)
- Grand Mere Road (.5 miles)
- Jericho Road (1.5)
- John Beers Road (3.2 miles)
- Johnson Road (.6 miles)
- Linco Road (.7 miles)
- Lincoln Avenue (4.5 miles)
- Marquette Woods Avenue (2 miles)
- Red Arrow Highway (3.4 miles)
- Ridge Road (.6 miles)
- St. Joseph Avenue (1.5 miles)
- Stevensville Baroda Road (1.9 miles)
- Washington Avenue (.5 miles)

These roads are maintained by the Berrien County Road Department, and are mainly funded through gas and weight taxes and registration fees collected by the State of Michigan and distributed to the various road departments and commissions across the state.



## MAP 8. ROAD NETWORK



Source: Michigan GIS Open Data

- Interstate Highway
- State Highway
- Principal Arterials
- Minor Arterials
- Residential Roads / Non-Certified Roads



## ROAD CLASSIFICATIONS

The table below shows the number of miles of roadway in the Township as classified by the Michigan Department of Transportation.

Table 10. Amount of Roadway by Classification

Roadway Classification	Amount of Roadway
Limited Access Freeway (I-94)	14.1 miles (including north and southbound lanes, ramps)
State Highway (ex. Red Arrow Highway)	15.0 miles
Arterials (ex. Cleveland, John Beers)	28.1 miles
Minor Arterials (subdivision roads)	77.8 miles
All other roads (ex. private roads, turnarounds)	15.1 miles

## TRAFFIC VOLUMES

Understanding the traffic patterns on major roads is crucial for planning and infrastructure development. Red Arrow Highway, just south of the I-94 Interchange, has an average daily traffic count of 9,420 vehicles, indicating its significant role as a major thoroughfare. Additionally, Red Arrow Highway north of Linco Road experiences a slightly lower traffic volume, with an average of 8,084 vehicles per day.

Marquette Woods Road east of St. Joseph Avenue also plays an integral role, with a daily average traffic count of 5,448 vehicles, indicative of moderate but steady usage. In contrast, Lincoln Avenue north of John Beers has a much lower traffic volume, with only 1,583 vehicles per day, reflecting its more localized and residential nature. Meanwhile, Cleveland Avenue north of John Beers, sees a daily average of 7,286 vehicles, highlighting its status as a vital connector road for both local and through traffic.

Interstate 94 dominates the traffic counts in Lincoln Township, with averages between 44,000 and 51,000 vehicles using the route per day along the stretch south of Red Arrow Highway and North of Red Arrow Highway, respectively. Additional selected traffic count data from the Berrien County Road Department is provided in Table 11 below,

Table 11. Selected Traffic Counts, 2022-2023

Road Name	24-hr Traffic Count (Year)
Cleveland [N of Rockey Weed]	6,215 (2023)
Cleveland [N of John Beers]	9,574 (2023)
John Beers [W of Cleveland]	7,817 (2022)
Linco [W of Date]	1,519 (2022)
Stevensville-Baroda [S of Johnson]	4,013 (2022)
Washington [S of Glenlord]	3,694 (2022)

## NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION

Over the past 15 to 20 years, the Township has actively expanded its network of sidewalks and nonmotorized trails. Presently, sidewalks and non-motorized trails line several key arteries within the Township, including segments of Red Arrow Highway (stretching from I-94 to Glenlord), Cleveland Avenue (spanning from Lakeshore High School to Glenlord), and various segments of Roosevelt, Marquette Woods, Glenlord, and John Beers Roads.

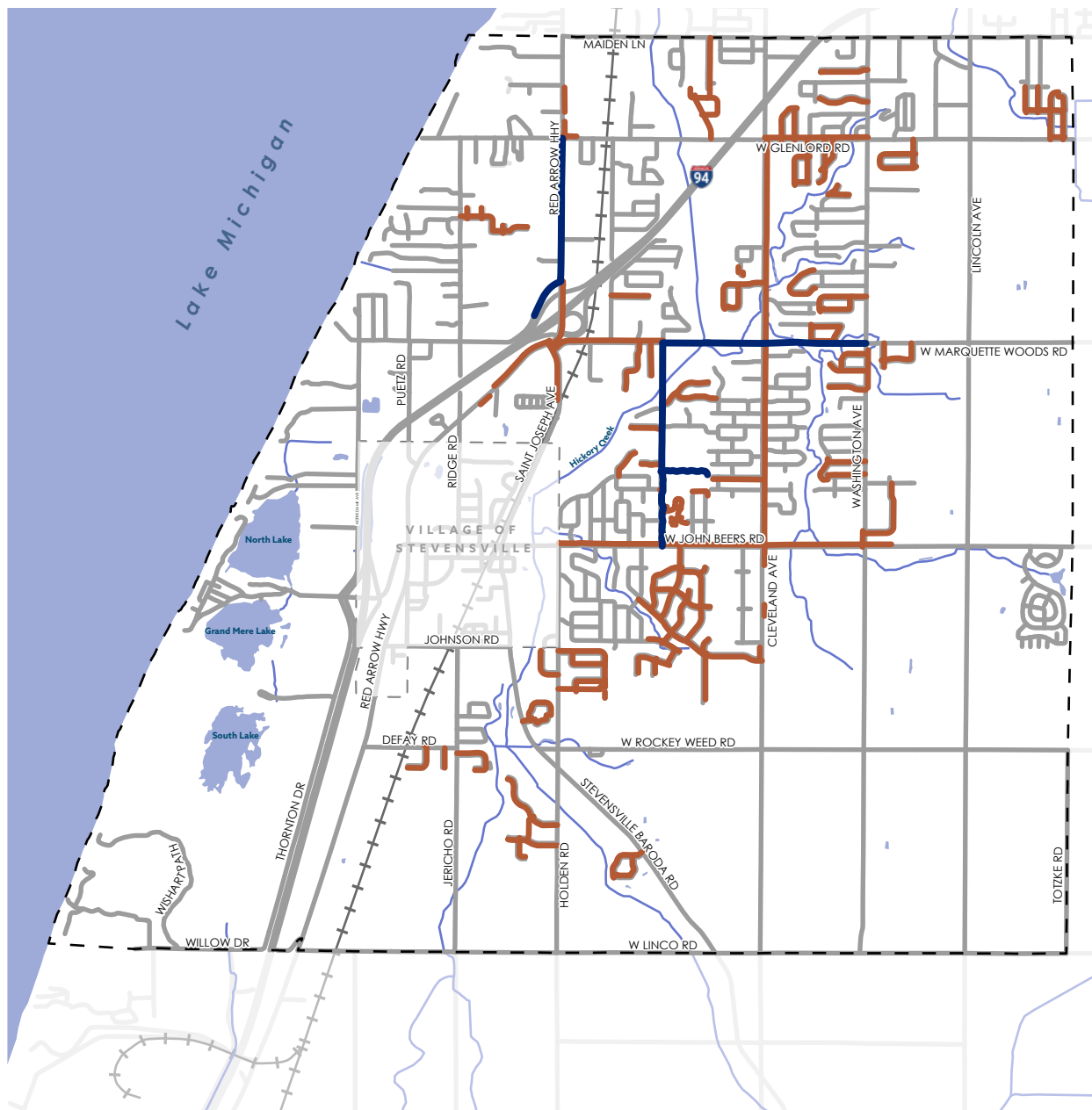
Moreover, sidewalks are incorporated into numerous recent residential developments, and the Township has diligently worked to establish connections between its nonmotorized infrastructure and essential locations such as schools, parks, and other points of interest. Ongoing efforts involve the Township's strategic planning for new sidewalks and the extension of its non-motorized network. Map 9 shows existing sidewalks and nonmotorized trails in the Township.

Since 2013, the following sidewalks or nonmotorized trail segments have been completed or are under construction as of 2024, with more planned for future years, as discussed in Chapter 8:

- Roosevelt Rd Non-motorized Trail Extension Phase 2 – Connect to Safe Routes Trail and continue to Hidden Pines
- Roosevelt Non-motorized Trail Extension Phase 3 – Hidden Pines to Marquette Woods
- Marquette Woods - Widen Shoulders & Sidewalks – Marquette Woods from St. Joseph to Roosevelt
- John Beers Sidewalk Extension – Roosevelt west to Village of Stevensville (completed in 2025)

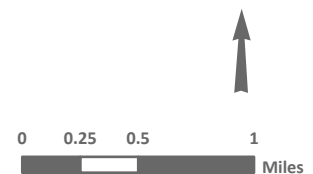
Also noteworthy is the CSX Railroad, which passes through the Township from north to south. This line carries both freight for nearby and distant industry, as well as passenger rail, accessible to Township residents via the Amtrak Station in St. Joseph. One passenger train per day is available in each direction to either Chicago or Grand Rapids.

## MAP 9. EXISTING NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION NETWORK



Source: Michigan GIS Open Data, Lincoln Charter Township

- Existing Sidewalks
- Existing Non-Motorized Trails
- Township Roads





The background of the entire page is a blue-tinted photograph of a winter landscape. In the foreground, there are several large, dark, cylindrical objects, possibly tree stumps or logs, partially covered in snow. A wooden fence runs across the middle ground. In the background, there are bare trees and a body of water, possibly a lake or a wide river, under a pale sky.

## CHAPTER 6

# **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

## CHAPTER 6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

### ONLINE COMMUNITY SURVEY

From February 7, 2024 to March 26, 2024, Lincoln Township conducted an online community opinion survey open to gather public input on community development, housing, land use, and other related topics.

#### Methodology

A total of 28 questions were asked via the online survey tool Survey Monkey. A total of 320 responses were received by the deadline with 89% of respondents completing the entire survey.

The survey was successful as it generated 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, 2, 4-6, 8, and 9 were designed on a nominal scale.

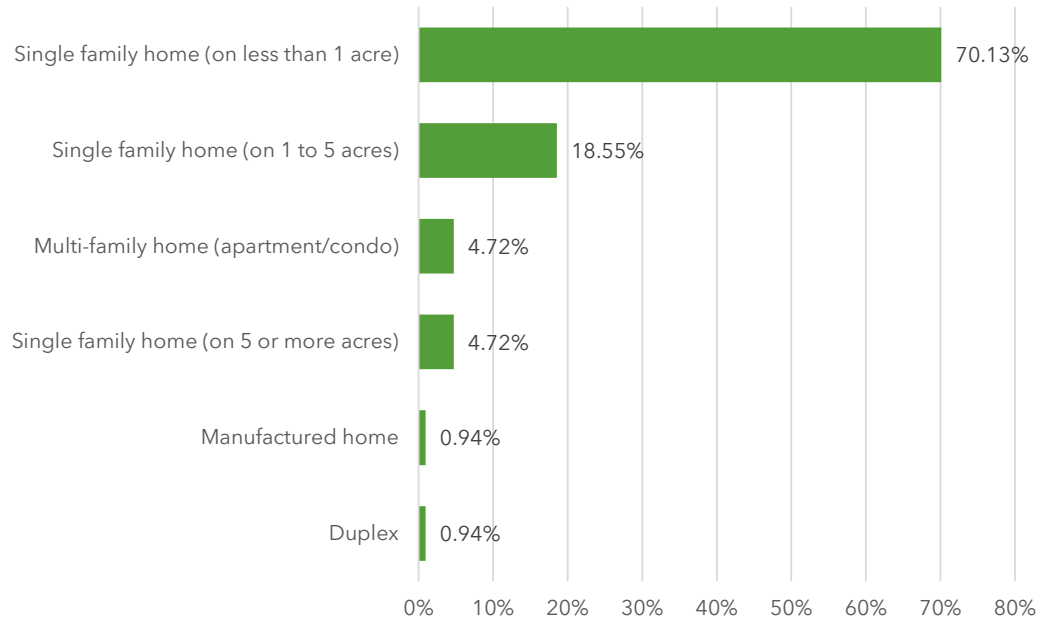
An ordinal scale is more useful in gaining insight into respondent beliefs because it includes the characteristics of rank order. One item is greater or lesser than another item or it has more or less of a particular quality, based on a commonly understood standard. An ordinal scale enables some greater 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 11, 13, 14, 16, and 18-26 were designed with an ordinal scale.

A ratio scale was used for questions 7 and 10 as respondents were asked to indicate a range of items that applied to them such as age. Questions 3, 27 and 28 featured an open-ended, write-in response for participants to list their answers.

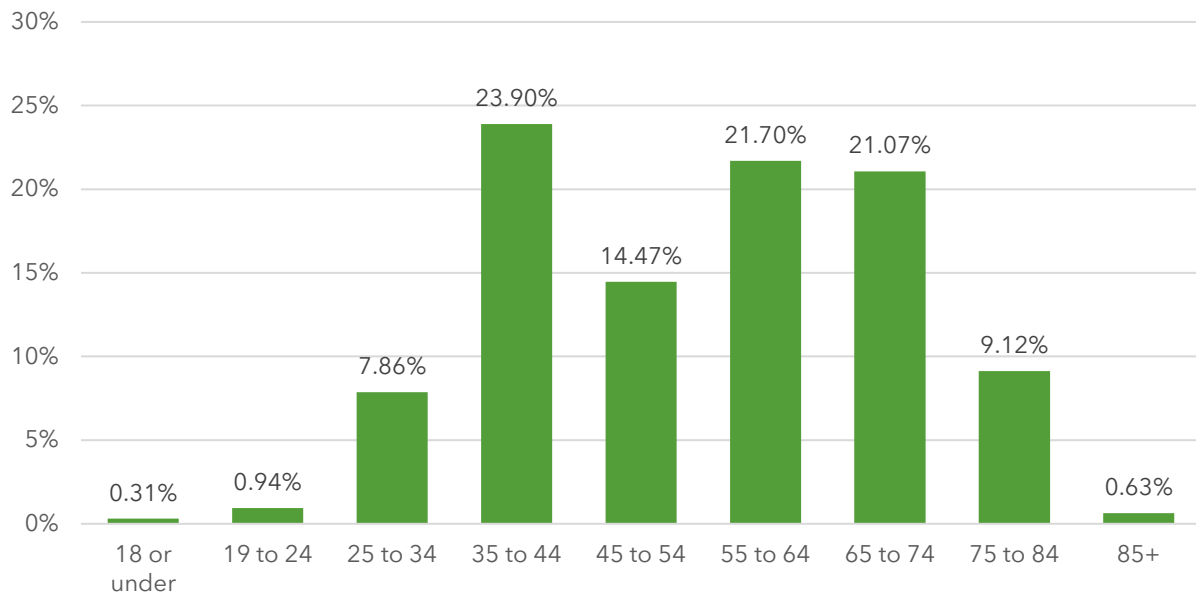
## RESULTS

Selected results are below, and the full results of the survey are included in Appendix 1.

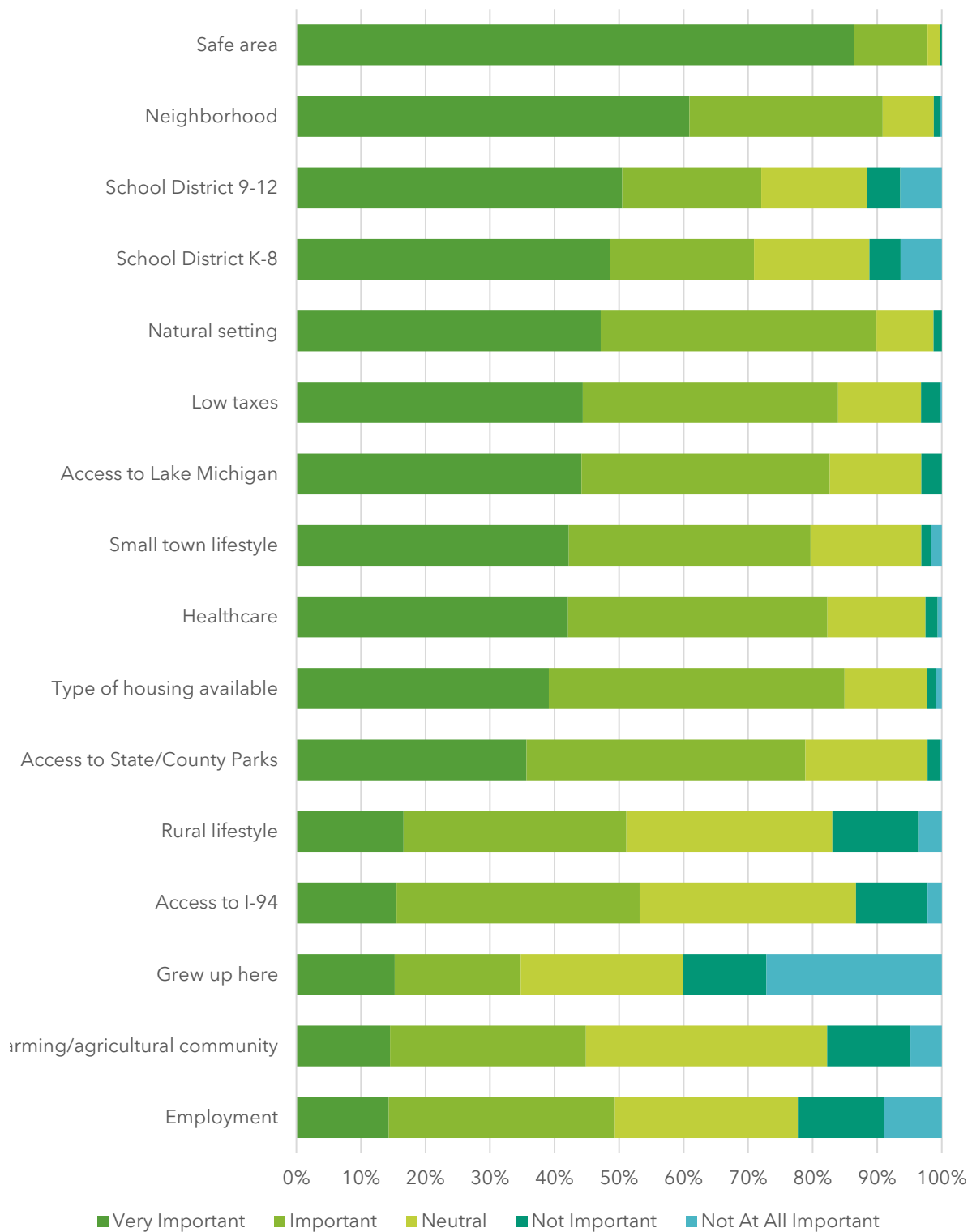
### In what type of residence do you live?



### What is your age?

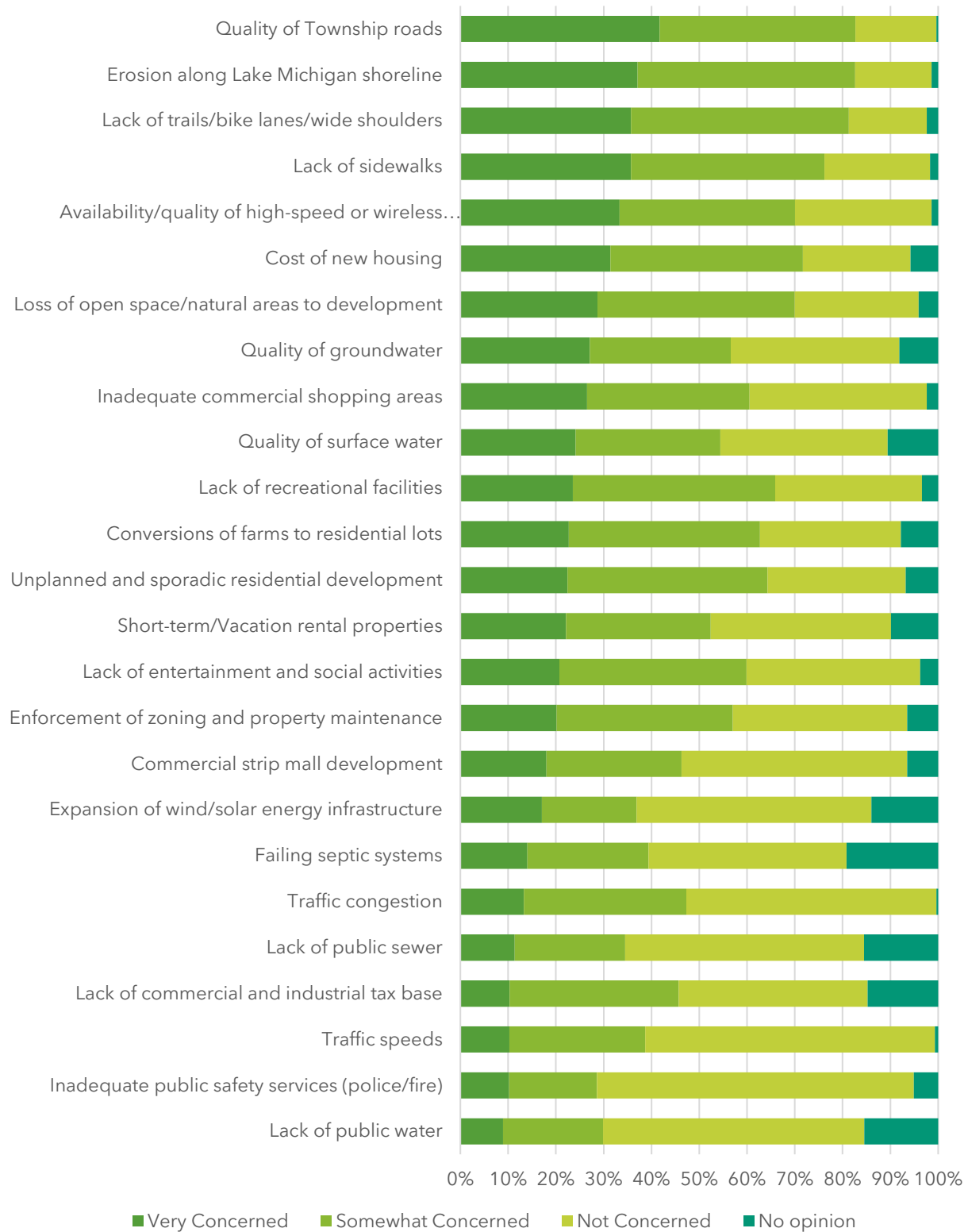


**In terms of reasons you would choose to live in Lincoln Charter Township, how important are the following?**

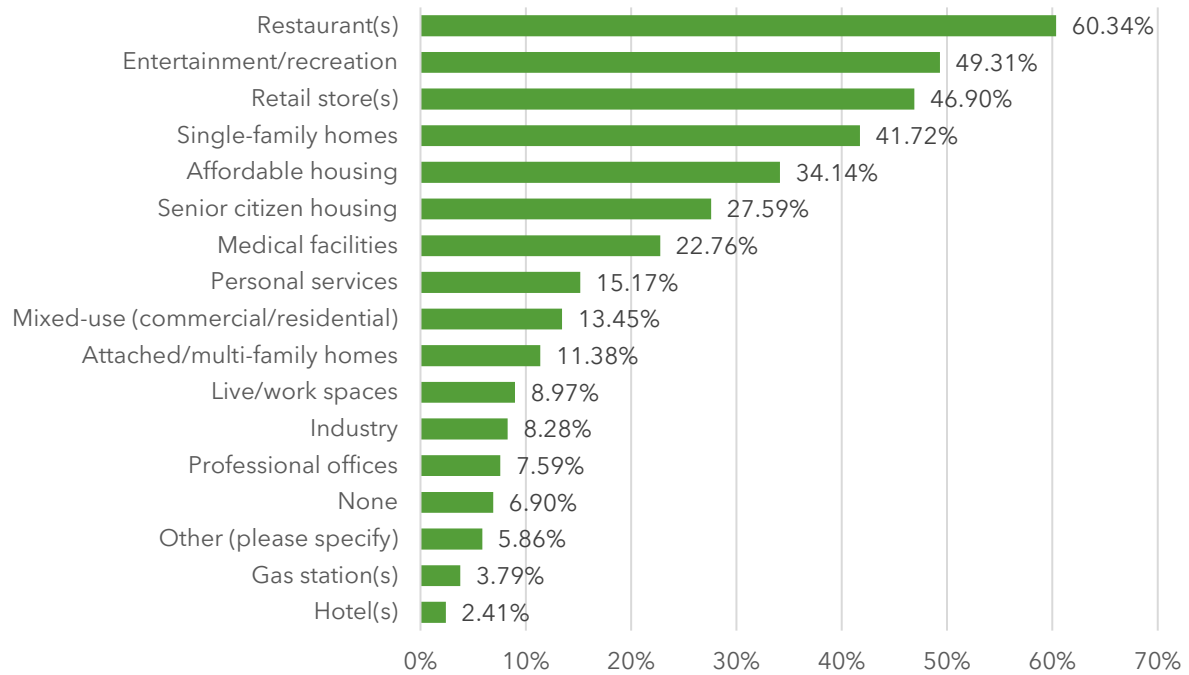




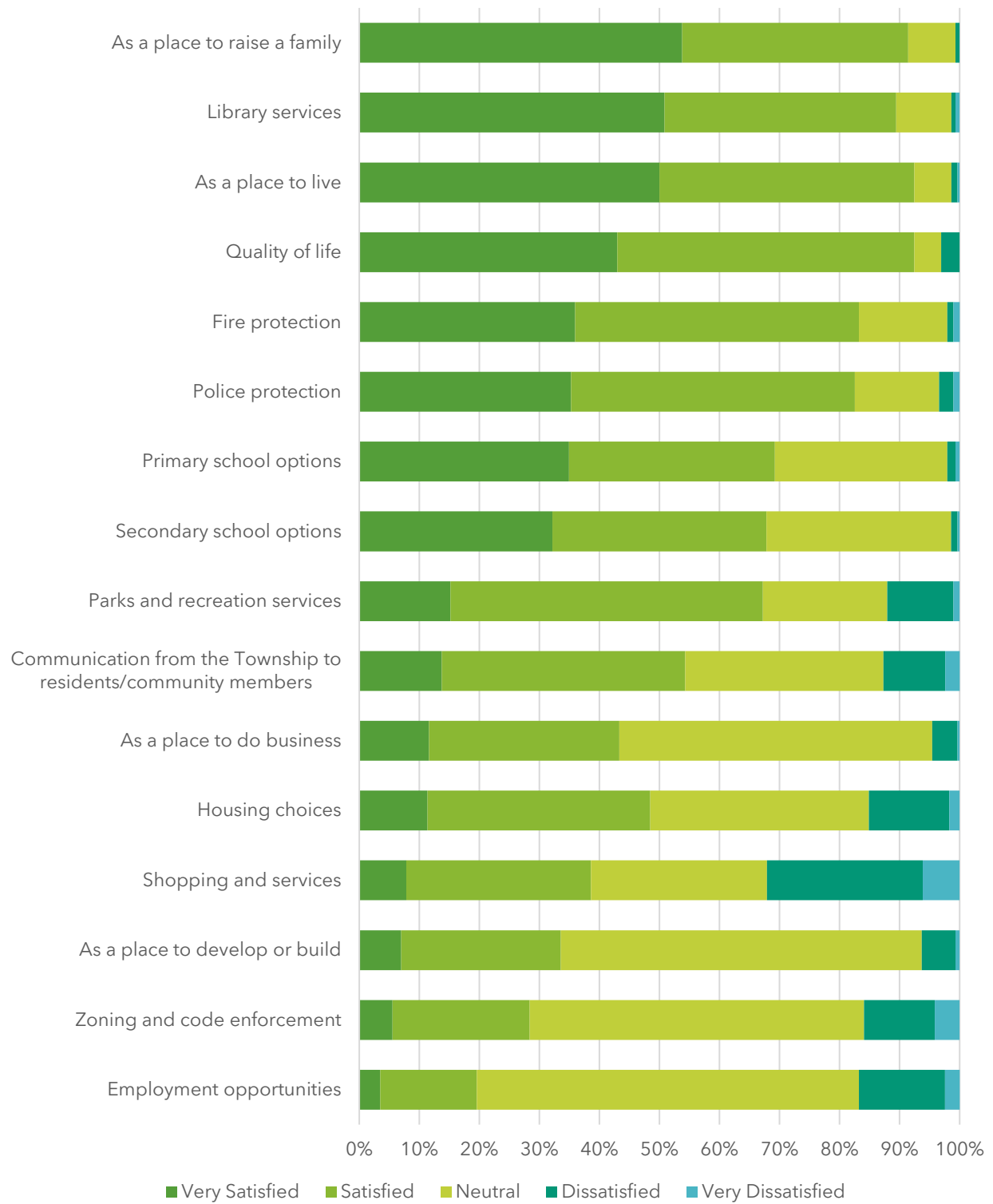
**Please rate your level of concern regarding the following issues**



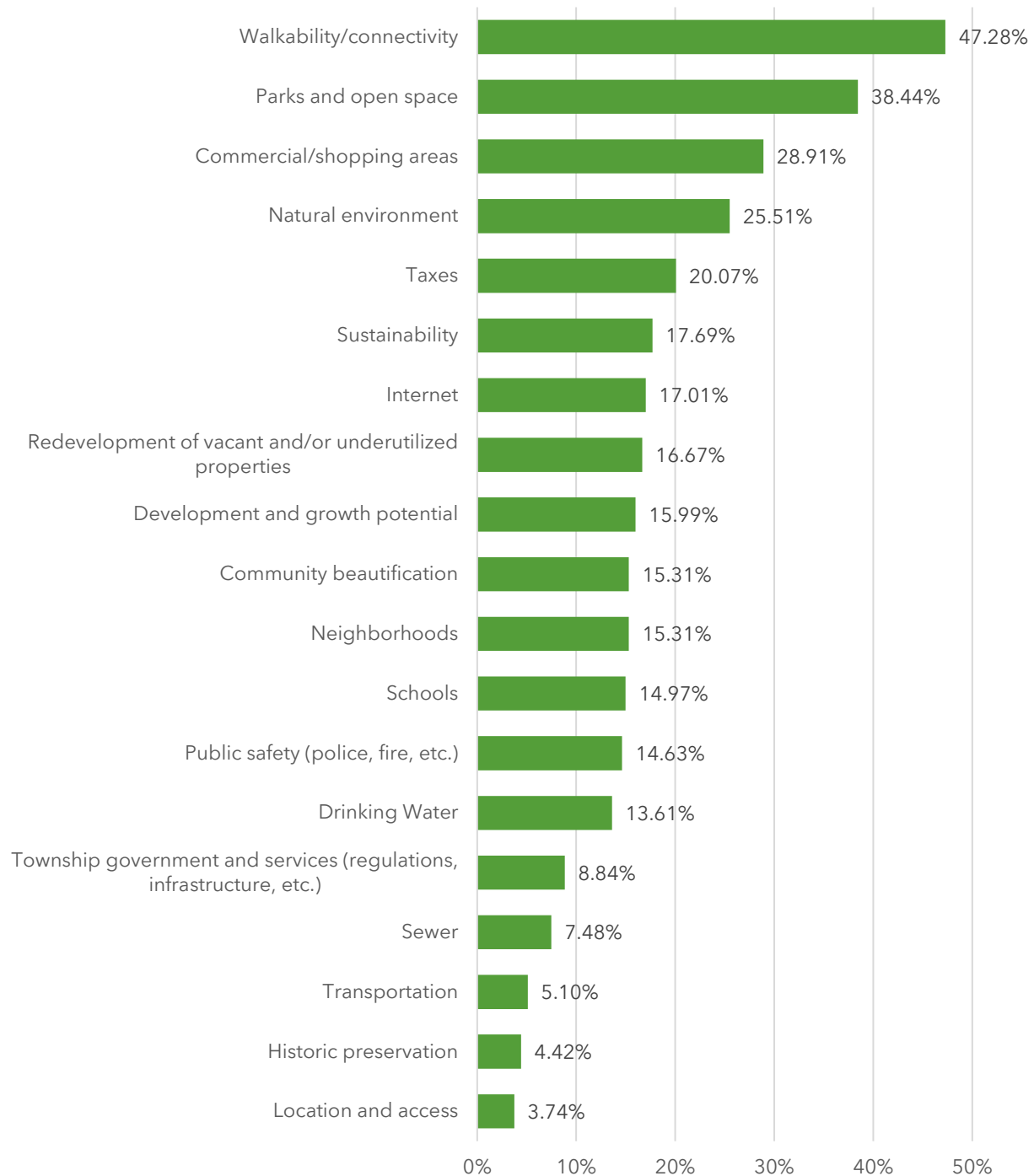
**What kind of new development would you like to see in Lincoln Charter Township/Village of Stevensville in the future? (check all that apply)**



## How satisfied are you with the following aspects of Lincoln Charter Township?



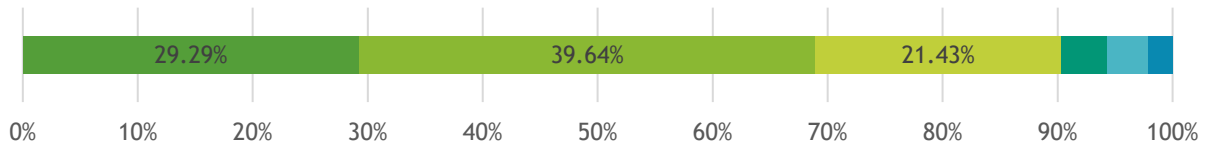
**What are the top three priorities the Township Master Plan should focus on improving?  
(Choose three)**



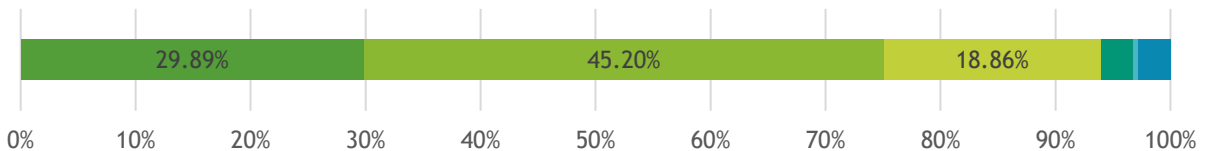
The following survey questions asked respondents to indicate their feelings related to several statements on a range from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly Disagree.”

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ No opinion

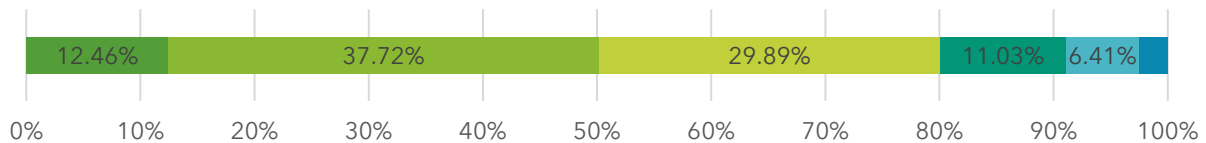
**Lincoln Charter Township should acquire more land for parks, natural areas, and non-motorized trails.**



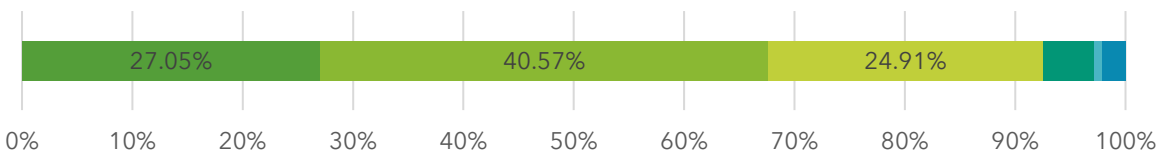
**I support increased controls on development to protect surface water resources and groundwater in Lincoln Charter Township.**



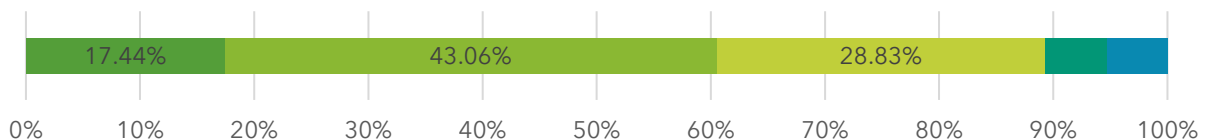
**Lincoln Charter Township needs to attract more commercial businesses**



**Farmland in Lincoln Charter Township needs to be preserved and protected.**

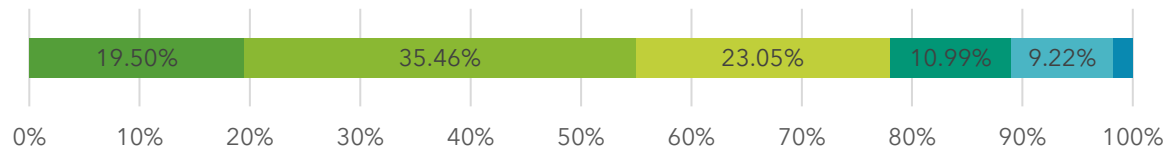


**New housing in Lincoln Charter Township should be directed primarily to areas with existing water and sewer services.**

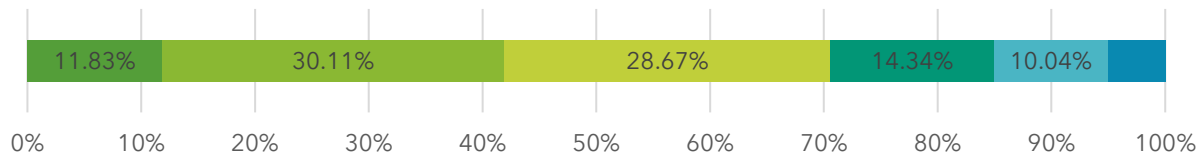




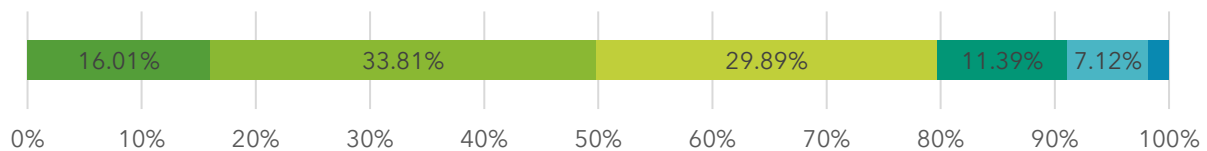
**I would support a dedicated millage in Lincoln Charter Township in order to acquire or improve parks, natural areas, and non-motorized trail facilities.**



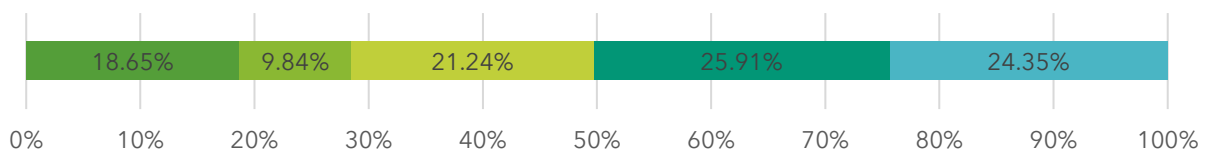
**Accessory dwelling units (ex. converting garages and out buildings to living spaces) should be allowed in the community.**



**Accessory buildings (ex. garages and out buildings) should be allowed to be used for home occupations (at-home commercial activities).**



**Lincoln Charter Township should revise its current ordinance to allow livestock (goats, chickens, pigs, sheep, dairy, horses, etc.) in the backyard of residential areas.**



## Open Ended Responses

The written survey responses at the end of the instrument also provided additional perspective and are summarized below.

- There is a desire to improve roads in the Township and address traffic issues, including speed limits (especially on John Beers Road) and congestion around schools.
- Many respondents feel that commercial development should be well-planned and more walkable. There was also concern related to pole-style buildings along key corridors.
- The affordability and availability of housing are significant concerns, as some comments indicated a desire for more options for young people, seniors, and affordable rentals.
- Comments also indicated that there is waning support for certain types of commercial development, such as hotels, car washes, and chain restaurants.
- Many respondents desire additional parks, greenspace, and recreational trails. Improvements to existing parks could include pickleball courts, beach access, and playground improvements.
- As discussed previously, there appears to be support for the continuation of the Township's efforts to build additional bike and pedestrian infrastructure, including sidewalks and pathways for families and children.
- Several respondents desired to protect wetlands, natural areas, and beaches.
- There is frustration with **code enforcement** (e.g., short-term rentals, livestock in residential areas, and property upkeep), with some suggesting that more proactive inspections and stronger enforcement would benefit the community.
- Many respondents want to avoid the Township becoming overly commercialized or losing its community character, seeking to preserve the area's natural beauty and small-town feel.

Some respondents expressed concern over short-term rentals affecting the residential atmosphere of the Township, particularly near schools or in predominantly residential areas.

## Conclusions and Planning Implications

The overwhelming majority of survey respondents reported that they live in a single-family home on less than 1 acre (70%) or 1-5 acres (18.6%). Further, residents desire to maintain the Township as a community of largely single-family homes, as there appeared to be little support for mixed use, attached/multi-family housing, or live-work units in the Township. The only type of development desired by more than 50% of Township residents were restaurants (60.3%).

The quality of the schools, safety, and natural settings were identified as reasons why respondents have elected to live in Lincoln Charter Township. Similarly, aspects of the community with which respondents were most satisfied included the Township “as a place to raise a family,” schools, library services, police, fire, and similar topics. This suggests that the Township does an admirable job of ensuring that the basic day-to-day needs for families, such as schools, recreation, safety, and security, are being met.

While respondents indicated that they are able to find groceries locally, many other local needs, such as health care and entertainment, are found outside of the Township’s boundaries.

Transportation infrastructure is an area of concern for respondents, with the quality of Township roads being a high level of concern, along with a lack of trails, bike lanes, or wide shoulders. A plurality (47%) of respondents indicated that walkability/connectivity should be addressed. Other planning priorities included parks and open space, commercial/shopping areas, and the natural environment.

Survey respondents were most inclined to agree that more controls are needed to protect surface and groundwater resources. Respondents also desired to protect farmland and felt that new housing in the Township should be directed to areas with existing water and sewer services. The Township has maintained some areas that are planned and zoned for agricultural uses, and the Township should continue to encourage development in areas already equipped to handle the additional growth and capacity.

There appears to be limited support for accessory dwelling units in the Township, with less than half (42%) of respondents indicating that ADUs should be allowed in the Township. There was also little support for revisions to current regulations to allow livestock in residential areas, with about ½ of respondents either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the idea, compared to only 28% supporting it.

# CHAPTER 7

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES







## CHAPTER 7. GOALS & OBJECTIVES

### GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Goals and Objectives serve as the policy foundation of this Master Plan. Goals are often general statements that describe a desired future that the Township should try to achieve. Objectives are specific steps that can be thought of as milestones on the way to achieving the larger goal. Together, these statements provide guidance for decision-makers and should be considered when making land use decisions in the Township.

The following goals and objectives are based in part on the development goals from the previous Master Plan, the Red Arrow Highway Sub Area Plan, and have been further informed by the public engagement efforts that were conducted as part of the process to develop this updated Master Plan in 2024.

### Agriculture and Open Space Preservation

**GOAL 1. Lincoln Charter Township will preserve portions of the Township that are clearly of a rural character and encourage active farming in those areas.**

#### Objectives

1. Establish a utility extension policy that limits or discourages the installation of sanitary sewer facilities in the agricultural areas of the Township
2. Review site plan review standards in the zoning ordinance to recognize the value of farming and limit development to areas that are least suited to agricultural activities



## Residential Development

**GOAL 2. Lincoln Charter Township will encourage a general pattern of low density residential development found in most areas of the Township and direct higher densities in areas with a mixed land use pattern and access to community services such as schools, parks, and transportation networks.**

### Objectives

1. Develop a residential zoning district that permits single-family detached at greater densities than currently permitted.
2. Evaluate the zoning ordinance to consider allowing smaller building footprints, accessory dwelling units, and detached offices in some residential zoning districts.
3. Allow bonus incentives in a PUD if a developer demonstrates exceptional design quality in the projects, including ecologically sensitive dwellings or land uses, environmentally friendly design, outstanding architecture, or similar characteristics.
4. Consider allowing limited commercial uses where appropriate in new residential developments as a part of a special use or similar discretionary entitlement process.
5. Pursue appropriate economic development opportunities for new housing opportunities and develop the knowledge and tools necessary to attract and support new housing and mixed-use development consistent with this Plan.

**GOAL 3. Residential development in Lincoln Charter Township will be walkable and connected to sidewalks and/or non-motorized trails and pathways whenever possible.**

1. Extend the network of non-motorized trails and sidewalks to increase connectivity between neighborhoods and to connect residential neighborhoods to shopping, schools, and recreation.
2. Encourage developers to include non-motorized trail or sidewalk connections in new and existing developments.

**GOAL 4. Neighborhoods in Lincoln Charter Township will be characterized by well-maintained homes in a variety of forms and building types.**

1. Enable the development of a more diverse housing stock and consider allowing smaller building footprints and accessory dwelling units as well as 'mother-in-law quarters.
2. Maintain existing housing stock through a code and ordinance enforcement program.

## Commercial Development

**GOAL 5. Commercial development in Lincoln Charter Township will be located in clearly defined and planned areas to accommodate the daily needs of residents and visitors.**

- 1.** Encourage mixed uses in commercial development to allow for market flexibility. Residential uses may also be incorporated if carefully planned and reviewed through a PUD or similar discretionary entitlement process.
- 2.** Encourage developers to include non-motorized trail or sidewalk connections in new and existing commercial developments.
- 3.** Review existing landscaping standards to ensure they are feasible and foster creativity and innovation in landscape design techniques and practices.

## Red Arrow Highway Sub Area

**GOAL 6. The Red Arrow Highway Corridor will be characterized by productive developments arranged in patterns that facilitate efficient and sustainable land use.**

- 1.** Provide a density bonus to Planned Unit Development projects within the Red Arrow Highway sub area where public roads are built in accordance with this Plan provided the following are considered:
  - a.** Density bonuses may be appropriate where certain natural features are protected; and,
  - b.** When possible, include landscaping within the right-of-way to slow traffic and create a street system appropriate for residential uses.
- 2.** Resolve dual-zoned parcels by utilizing internal access roads that enable new land divisions.
- 3.** Look to drive development through infrastructure improvements using public funds; consider public-private partnerships and use of infrastructure overlay districts
- 4.** Accommodate new residential growth of all types including single-family detached and attached, as well as high-density apartment-style housing in areas zoned for high-density development.

## **GOAL 7. The Red Arrow Highway will be a safe, efficient, multi-modal transportation corridor.**

- 1.** Develop an access management plan in collaboration with the Michigan Department of Transportation. The access management plan will include:
  - a. Standards for driveway spacing;
  - b. Regulations for frontage roads, and rear access roads to minimize curb cuts; and
  - c. The dedication of public access easements abutting planned access roads within the Sub Area. Public access easements should also be in place to connect to vacant, developable lands, and should be at least one-half the required right-of-way width.
  - d. Encourage the use of boulevards and curvilinear internal access roads to reduce speeds and enhance walkability. All internal access road should be planned to have sidewalks and landscaping, which will help slow traffic and provide paths for pedestrians.
  - e. Reduce the number of curb-cuts on Red Arrow Highway by enforcing driveway spacing standards, and requiring shared access easements.
- 2.** Explore the potential of a boulevard along Red Arrow Highway for beautification and better manage traffic.

## **GOAL 8. The aesthetics of the Red Arrow Corridor will improve in terms of the intensity of signage, quantity of landscaping, and building form.**

- 1.** Require a greenbelt along Red Arrow Highway that includes a landscaped front yard setback, street trees at certain intervals, and the protection of significantly large deciduous or evergreen trees, when possible. Review landscaping provisions in the zoning ordinance to ensure that greenbelts and mature tree preservation efforts can offset certain landscaping requirements so as to not increase development costs.
- 2.** Work proactively with local businesses to create a corridor improvement plan to recommend policy changes and beautification recommendations within the corridor. Improvements must be clearly defined and broadly understood among businesses in the corridor that will be most affected.
- 3.** Develop an equitable mechanism, such as a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) or a Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA) that would utilize tax increment financing to fund improvements in the corridor.

## Utilities and Infrastructure

**GOAL 9. Lincoln Charter Township will be served by high quality infrastructure through careful coordination with the future land use plan of the Township, in accordance with the character and capacity of the land.**

1. Revise, as necessary, zoning regulations to account for existing and planned extensions of utility systems to ensure that long-range land use goals are consistent with planned extensions of utility systems
2. Develop a plan in coordination with service providers to expand high-speed internet access to all areas of Lincoln Charter Township, particularly areas in the south and southeast portions of the Township where service is most limited.

# CHAPTER 8

## **FUTURE LAND USE**





## **CHAPTER 8. FUTURE LAND USE**

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

The Master Plan establishes general patterns of land use to guide growth and development for the next twenty to thirty years. It constitutes a practical and integrated approach to accommodate the impacts of changes suggested by growth trends and existing patterns of development. The chief intent is to foster efficient and sustainable forms of development that preserve the community's natural features and unique character while accommodating the additional development and redevelopment in the Township.

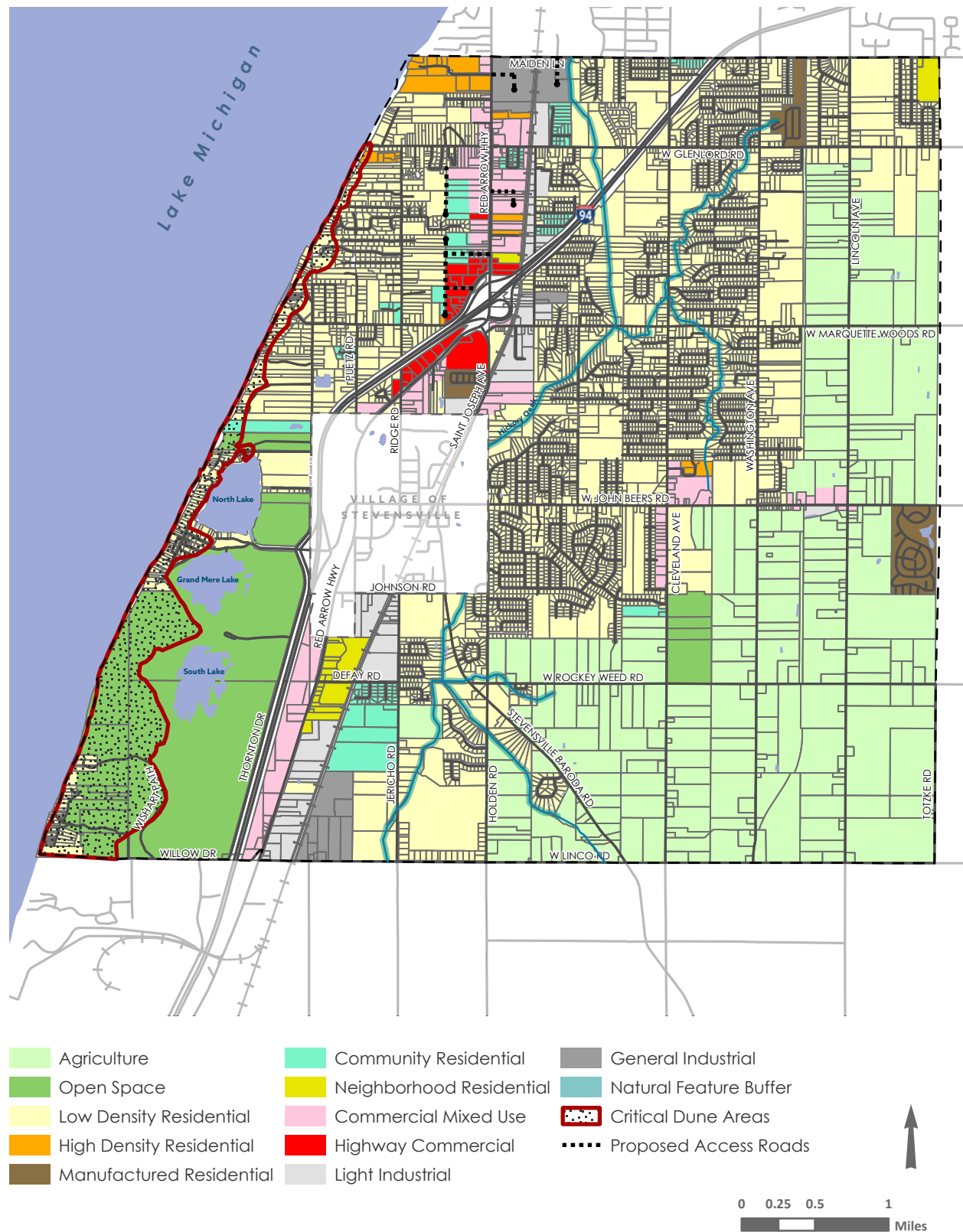
The future land use designations contained in this chapter have been developed to preserve the Township's scenic landscape, encourage new development or redevelopment in appropriate areas, provide for economic opportunity, growth, and the continuation of high quality municipal services. They are also intended to guide new development in logical and sustainable patterns while offering fair, and in some cases, value-enhancing opportunities for development.

Each Future Land Use designation outlined in this chapter is intended to foster a character and development pattern unique to that designation. Furthermore, the Township seeks to ensure that a significant share of the natural features existing today will have been preserved for the benefit of future generations.

Each designation described below corresponds to a designation on the Future Land Use Map (Map 11). Further, the Zoning Plan describes how each of the future land use designations correspond to a zoning district found in the Township's zoning ordinance. This will be useful as the Township contemplates rezoning decisions as the zoning plan will aid the Planning Commission and Township Board in determining whether a proposed zoning amendment or development proposal is consistent with this Master Plan.

The future land use designations on the map are meant to be seen as general with indistinct edges. Along the margins, where two or more designations adjoin, either land use may be appropriate.

## MAP 11. FUTURE LAND USE



## **FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATIONS**

### **Agriculture**

This Master Plan calls for the eastern edge of the Township to continue its agriculture base. Approximately one mile south of the northeast corner of the Township, agriculture is planned for the entire east side, going west about 1/4 mile beyond Lincoln Avenue. The western edge proceeds south to John Beers Road and follows quarter section lines until it reaches Holden Road. This area covers about 2,200 acres and is of sufficient size to maintain agriculture as part of the local economy for the life of this Plan, shown on Map 5.

Michigan's Right to Farm Act preempts the Township's ability to regulate farms and their related uses (such as roadside stands, farm markets, etc.), so the Township has little ability to meaningfully address conflicts between residential and agricultural uses. Therefore, this Plan strongly recommends that residential and non-farm land uses be discouraged in areas within in this future land use designation. The existing manufactured housing park on John Beers Road at the east Township limits, remains in the Plan, but expansion is not desired.

### **Low Density Residential**

Low Density Residential land uses are the primary land use in the Township and it continues to be recognized as such in this Plan. Low density or detached single unit residential, the overwhelming housing choice of residents, is planned for the northern two thirds of the Township. Low density residential is recommended for significant portions of Sections 11, 14, 15, 17, 20, 22, 23, 27, 28, and 33 and the western half of section 16. Of course, detached single-unit houses in very stable neighborhoods already occupy most of these areas, so this Plan does not recommend fundamental changes to these land use patterns and recommends preserving the integrity of these neighborhoods. For this Master Plan, "low density" is generally defined as up to 3.6 dwelling units per acre.

Low density residential development is also recommended for infill and redevelopment. As noted above, development that encroaches into agricultural areas is not recommended since there is ample space to accommodate future population growth for the life of this Plan outside of those areas planned for agriculture.

This Master Plan continues to recognize that clustered housing may be an option in agriculture areas because of the Open Space Preservation Act (PA 177 of 2001). However, it makes no policy statement on recommending the pattern or form of that growth. If such development occurs, this Plan recommends that the residential development offer the least amount of "intrusion" into agriculture as possible. Additionally, new developments should contain sidewalks and connect to the Township's larger network of non-motorized transportation whenever feasible.

## Community Residential

The Community Residential land use designation helps to solidify the residential character of the interior of the corridor (approximately 600' from Red Arrow Highway right-of-way west to Ridge Road) as these areas relate to Lake Michigan. The uses permitted in Community Residential are proposed to include primarily single-family development, as well as places of public assembly, educational facilities, and family day care homes. The Township may also consider two-family homes, townhouses, or other residential housing types as infrastructure allows. State law requires that some of these uses, such as day care homes, be permitted in any residential district. Residential development includes both detached and attached single-unit development, and could be expanded to include two-family dwellings in the future.

Design standards for attached single family or two-family homes could provide that each building elevation would look like a single-family home, and/or stipulate the types of building material such as brick, stone, or wood siding. Density would be up to 5 dwelling units per acre for single-unit detached, and up to 6 dwelling units per acre for single-unit attached. Townhomes would also be permitted in the Community Residential district so long as each elevation was limited to one garage and one ground-level entry, similar to a single family dwelling. Multi-family dwellings, such as apartments, where lots or units are not individually owned, would not be permitted in this land use category.

Finally, any use other than detached single family residential would be required to place a buffer in the form of a transition strip adjacent to any property in the Low Density Residential district. This buffer would include berms and landscaping capable of a semi-opaque screening, such as coniferous and deciduous trees. Sidewalks should be required in all new development. Building height in the Community Residential area would be 40 feet, measured to the peak of the roofline.

Much of the land in this designation is in relatively close proximity to areas planned and/or zoned for commercial or mixed use development, so this designation is one area for the Township to focus efforts to provide additional attainable housing options at higher densities than those found in the Low Density designation. Developments in this designation should be well-connected by nonmotorized facilities to adjacent development and nearby commercial corridors whenever possible.

## Neighborhood Residential Development

The suburban style single-family detached house has been the workhorse of the housing industry for decades and historically has been the only style of dwelling available for those looking for new homes. This type of house typically offers a large back yard for play equipment and relaxation, as well as opportunities to live near families of similar "means." This affords some families more of a sense of security and is their preferred living environment. However, this development pattern is inefficient in that it consumes large quantities of land and results in an automobile-dominated environment.

A growing segment of the population is looking for living environments that integrate

residential and commercial development in a walkable community and serves people's needs for public gathering and socializing. Land use plans often preclude neighborhood residential development, and, by extension, there are seldom any zoning regulations to permit this type of development. Another feature of neighborhood residential development is a balanced transportation system, which provides equal access to pedestrian and cyclist mobility. Streets are also laid out as an interconnected network, forming coherent blocks where building entrances front the street rather than the parking lot.

Neighborhood residential development also celebrates public space. Civic buildings such as community buildings or neighborhood centers, government buildings, and libraries are sited in prominent locations, which are accessible to the pedestrian. Open spaces, such as parks, playgrounds, squares, and greenbelts are located at accessible locations throughout the neighborhood. Low impact office and retail uses are also encouraged, as well as attached single unit housing types to a density of 5 dwelling units to the acre.

Neighborhood residential development is designated in areas of the Township where community facilities exist, and where established transportation networks provide accessibility for motorists and pedestrians. This offers opportunity for substantial civic space to be part of residential lifestyles, and the ability to develop thoughtful development that incorporates a variety of residential densities including townhouses, apartments, and duplexes, along with appropriate non-residential uses that fit a small scale neighborhood context. Areas planned for Neighborhood Residential Development have a number of advantages which warrant consideration:

- Larger land areas that can allow development to be completely walkable using the standard of the 5-minute walk is the typical tolerance limit for Americans.
- Since the development would permit a higher density than permitted in the Low Density areas, more potential disposable income could be available for capture by the businesses adjacent to or within the development.
- Developing land for residential uses at a greater density will accommodate a significant amount of the growth that the Township is expected to experience by 2050 (an additional ~1,000 residents). In addition, the development of land in this designation would help to relieve development pressure off farmland, enabling agriculture to remain a part of the Township's economy for future generations.
- Perhaps more than anything else, it would provide residents with a choice of living styles within a neighborhood setting. Single-unit dwellings, both attached and detached, accessory dwellings, townhomes, rowhouses, live-work units would be components of neighborhood in this designation.

Neighborhood residential development is encouraged along Red Arrow Highway south of Defay Road and along Glenlord Road near Royalton Township and the regional hospital facilities.



## High Density Residential

The High Density Residential future land use designation accommodates multi-family residential development at densities up to 10 dwelling units per acre. Single-family and two-family residential development is also permitted in this designation. High Density Residential is located east of Red Arrow Highway where the majority of this use exists today. South of Interstate 94, High Density Residential is proposed to transition from Highway Commercial development to Light Industrial at Mobile Village. Apartments, historically and correctly viewed as high-density housing, are recommended to locate in areas of higher intensity, such as along major thoroughfares. The Master Plan recognizes the need to provide for multi-family development.

## Commercial Mixed Use

The Commercial Mixed Use designation acknowledges the existing land use mix, thereby minimizing the likelihood of creating non-conforming uses once rezoning occurs. Commercial Mixed Use is an appropriate land use mix for parcels taking access from Red Arrow Highway and other major thoroughfares in the Township. Both residential and service commercial uses can use Red Arrow Highway and other primary arterials as the primary access, with a rear access road providing a secondary access to minimize the number of driveways and create a safer pedestrian-oriented environment. Building height in the Commercial Mixed Use area would be the lesser of 35 feet or two and one-half stories, measured to the peak of the roofline. Additionally, new developments should contain sidewalks and connect to the Township's larger network of non-motorized transportation whenever feasible.

This designation seeks to facilitate compatible development, including both local and national establishments. The Township should continue to prioritize the beautification of this important commercial corridor as it experiences large volumes of both local and regional traffic and patronage.

## Highway Commercial

The Highway Commercial land use category calls for more intense land uses in terms of traffic generation and building size. This use provides the transient lodging services, restaurants, and convenience shopping capturing consumers from the region. Maximum building footprint is restricted in hopes of fostering multi-story development, up to 4-stories. Building height in the Highway Commercial area would be 50 feet measured to the peak of the roofline. Careful planning and design should occur with any new mixed use or large-scale commercial projects to ensure that traffic safety is considered, and appropriate access management techniques have been incorporated into site planning.

## Light Industrial

Light industrial development is characterized by small-scale industrial activities, such as fabrication, assembly and research and development provided that such uses conform to any performance standards established by the Township. Other uses appropriate for light industrial areas include office buildings, warehouse and showroom facilities, and master

planned business parks, or medical offices and facilities. Any light industrial uses next to residential uses should include transition areas to buffer the use and any potential adverse effects.

## General Industrial

The preferred land use plan includes the heavy industrial area in the northern portion of the Township near Maiden Lane and Glenlord Road. This property is owned/operated by the Robert Bosch Corporation (formerly the Bendix factory area), and this plan envisions the site as a future high-tech manufacturing facility and/or a business incubator to facilitate start-up business development. This site is underutilized and largely comprised of vacant land and is saddled with legacy contamination issues. Preparing the site for redevelopment would likely be a significant effort and include or require acquisition or another form of assistance by the Township, or another outside entity such as entity such as Cornerstone Alliance, a brownfield redevelopment authority (whether the Township's or the County's) or a future Community Growth Alliance formed in partnership with the Southwest Michigan Chamber of Commerce.

This designation also includes the largely undeveloped and under-developed areas along the railroad corridor south of Johnson Road, particularly if the railway were to be utilized for high-speed passenger trains.

## Open Space

The Grand Mere State Park and the shoreline of Lake Michigan represent outstanding natural features and recreation assets for the Township. However, this Plan also recognizes the Hickory Creek corridor as a very valuable recreational feature. The Creek has the potential for affecting the quality of more lives than the two previously mentioned giants. Its potential stems from its proximity to so much existing residential development in the Township.

The community survey conducted for this Master Plan showed a high degree of support for a trail system in the Township. Trails could accommodate walkers, hikers, and cyclists, and trail systems along the Creek would meet that need.

Hickory Creek and its tributaries meander throughout the central portion of the Township. A trail head exists on John Beers Road in the Village. The Plan recommends preservation of the Creek corridor, a trail system along the corridor, as well as connection points to some of the nearby residential development and existing parks, such as Rudnick Park.

## **GATEWAYS**

Community gateways have been identified to help promote Lincoln Charter Township as a destination, as well as to develop the identity of the Red Arrow Highway corridor as a mixed-use corridor where residents and businesses interact and relate. These gateways could include signage, monuments, landscaping or a combination of all, and may be used to announce community events, to promote local businesses, and to beautify and to unify the corridor. Local business may sponsor a gateway. Passersby will know they have arrived at a community different and unique from St. Joseph and Stevensville. Gateways are envisioned on Red Arrow Highway near the I-94 interchange, on Red Arrow near Maiden Lane, and on Red Arrow Highway near Linco Road.

## **VEHICULAR ACCESS ROADS**

Access is necessary to provide viable mixed-use corridors, where property owners can utilize the full extent of their property. Access roads are also necessary to help relieve congestion along Red Arrow Highway and begin access management techniques such as minimizing curb cuts and sharing drives. Access roads are proposed to connect to existing public roads, such as Locust Lane and Orchard Lane. There is also a connection planned on the east side of Red Arrow Highway between Glenlord Road and Arrow Path. By connecting to existing right-of-way, new curb cuts are minimized. Also, these existing rights-of-way serve residential neighborhoods, and would provide new and secondary access to Community Residential areas. The precise location and configuration of internal access roads will be determined by analyzing existing topography, land use and connections to the existing road network. This plan assumes that any roadway would need to be reviewed by the Township Engineer and Road Commission, when applicable. Public roads are preferred, however, private roads may be considered on a case-by-case basis especially when available to the public for circulation. In all cases, roads should be designed with the minimum right-of-way necessary for public safety and accessibility. Landscaping greenbelts, including landscaping within the right-of-way, utilizing boulevards, and other traffic-calming measures are priorities for any internal access route serving both commercial and residential uses.

## PEDESTRIAN ACCESS AND NONMOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION

Along the east and west sides of Red Arrow Highway, pedestrian access is shown. Proposed access roads servicing the interior portions of the corridor also include pedestrian access. There is a pedestrian connection from Ridge Road to Red Arrow Highway that creates a network of pathways linking residential areas with the commercial and mixed-use development along Red Arrow Highway. Pedestrian pathways along internal access roads will be especially useful because these roadways will be designed for slower speeds to carry residential traffic.

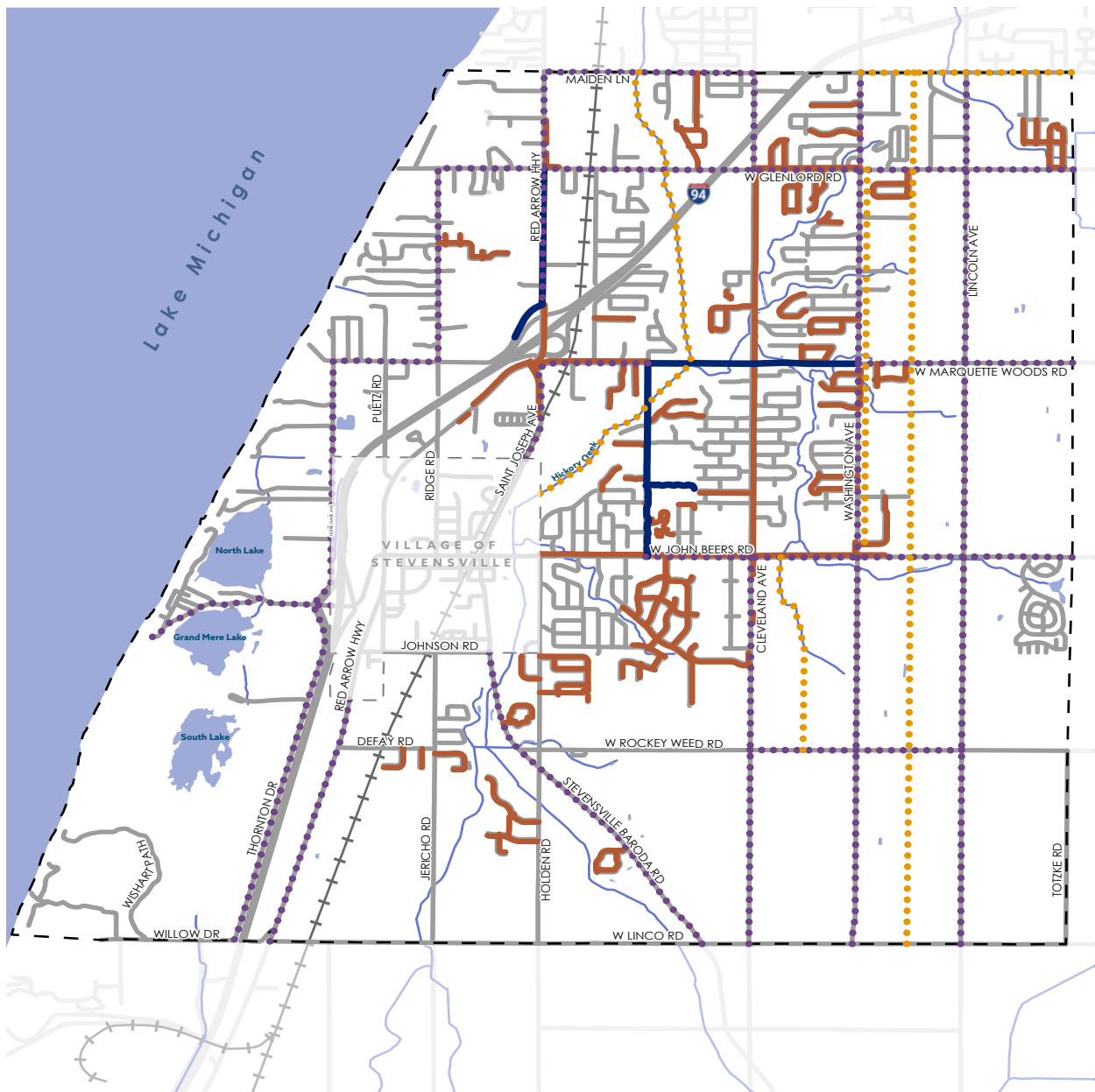
The public input activities held in support of the effort to update this plan in 2013, and this revision in 2024, revealed a strong desire for additional sidewalks and trails for pedestrian access. Funding for these projects may come from state grants, local funds, special assessments or some combination of these sources.

Several sidewalk and nonmotorized paths have been completed since 2013, as outlined in Chapter 5. Additional projects are envisioned for future years, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Cleveland Ave Non-motorized connection – connect sidewalks on Cleveland and John Beers to Sports Park and Wyndstone
- Washington Ave Sidewalks – John Beers to Marquette Woods
- Washington Ave Sidewalks – Marquette Woods to Glenlord
- Marquette Woods Widened Shoulders – Cleveland to Washington
- Ridge Road Non-motorized pathway - Marquette Woods to Glenlord
- Glenlord Road Non-motorized pathway – Ridge Road to Red Arrow Highway
- Red Arrow Highway under I-94 and connect park ‘n’ ride to nearby existing trails or sidewalks.

In addition to the above projects, additional non-motorized trails are envisioned and included as part of larger regional planning efforts undertaken by County and regional entities such as the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, and the Township is supportive of these efforts. The Planning Commission and Township Board should continue to develop and refine work plan to prioritize to implement the non-motorized recommendations of this Plan.

## MAP 12. PROPOSED NONMOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES



Source: Michigan GIS Open Data, Lincoln Charter Township

- Existing Sidewalks
- Existing Non-Motorized Trails
- - - Proposed Off-Road Non-Motorized Facilities
- - - Proposed On-Road Non-Motorized Projects





## ZONING PLAN

In considering a request to rezone property in Lincoln Charter Township, the Planning Commission should consider the future land use map and the future land use descriptions provided in this plan. The Zoning Plan should be used to evaluate the degree to which the proposed rezoning is consistent with this plan, together with an evaluation of the specific request. The Planning Commission may also consider other factors, such as whether the proposed site is an appropriate location for any and all of the land uses that may be permitted within the requested zoning district, and any potential detrimental impacts on the surrounding properties that could result from the proposed rezoning.

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

**Table 12. Zoning Plan**

Future Land Use Designation	Primary Compatible Zoning District	Potentially Compatible Zoning Districts
Agriculture	Agriculture	Low Density Residential
Low Density Residential	Low Density Residential	Community Residential, Neighborhood Residential Development
Community Residential	Community Residential	Low Density Residential, Neighborhood Residential Development
High Density Residential	High Density Residential	
Neighborhood Residential	Neighborhood Residential Development	Community Residential, Commercial Mixed Use, Low Density Residential
Commercial Mixed Use	Commercial Mixed Use	N/A
Highway Commercial	Highway Commercial	N/A
Light Industrial	Light Industrial	Heavy Industrial
General Industrial	Heavy Industrial	Light Industrial
Manufactured Residential	Mobile Home	N/A
Open Space	N/A	N/A

## **Factors for Evaluating Potentially Compatible Zoning Districts**

### **Agriculture**

The Township has made it a priority to preserve and protect the large productive agricultural parcels on the east and southern portions of the community. As a general principle, development is discouraged in these areas. However, there already exist some areas of scattered land divisions and in these areas, a future rezoning to low-density development may be appropriate in areas where future agricultural uses are not viable or unlikely to continue.

### **Low Density Residential**

Areas within the Low Density Residential designation that are in close proximity to employment opportunities, commercial services, or recreational amenities may be appropriate for rezoning to Neighborhood Residential Development or Community Residential, provided that sites are well-planned and integrated appropriately into their surroundings.

### **Community Residential**

Areas planned for Community Residential Development may be appropriate for low density residential or neighborhood residential development zoning. The neighborhood residential development zoning district permits a wider variety of non-residential uses, so contemplation of this district should be carefully evaluated to ensure compatibility with adjoining uses, available infrastructure, access, and similar factors.

### **Neighborhood Residential Development**

The Neighborhood Residential Development zoning district permits a variety of both residential and nonresidential uses. Therefore, in certain areas rezoning to either Commercial Mixed Use, Low Density Residential, or Community Residential could be appropriate, depending on the location. NRD-planned areas along Red Arrow Highway south of Stevensville could be appropriate locations for small-scale commercial development if development in a manner consistent with the other principles of this Plan. In the northeast corner of the Township, however, residential uses are appropriate and commercial land uses are not desired.

### **Open Space**

There are areas planned as “open space” in the Township that consist of Township parkland and the Grand Mere State Park. These areas do not have a corresponding zoning district but are to be preserved as recreation areas for future generations.



# CHAPTER 9

## **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**



## **CHAPTER 9. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

### **BACKGROUND**

In order for this Master Plan to effectively guide growth and development in Lincoln Charter Township, it must be followed and implemented. The Township will need to be proactive in order to accomplish the goals and objectives set forth by this Plan. This chapter sets forth strategies that are established as a framework for implementation.

These implementation strategies are intentionally general in order to provide the Township with flexibility to prepare specific work assignments and prioritize each strategy within its municipal operations. Therefore, in order to actualize the vision that is outlined in this Plan, it will be important for the Township Board, Planning Commission, and staff to develop a set of work assignments that set this Plan in motion. A planned and focused effort towards the implementation of this Plan will greatly contribute to the preservation of the Township's rural setting while allowing growth in appropriate areas. Historically, the Township has established ad-hoc committees to study specific areas and make policy and/or ordinance recommendations to Township Board and Planning Commission, and this work should continue.

The Township Board, Planning Commission, and Township staff are given primary responsibility for implementing the following strategies. This is accomplished through several methods that may include ordinances, special studies or assignments, programs, and administrative procedures that are described in this chapter.

It is recognized that many of these strategies are long-term in scope and may involve the cooperation of many different entities in order to fully implement the Plan. Each will require concerted effort but will move the Township closer towards its overarching goal of achieving the collective community vision outlined in this Plan. The following strategies are in no particular order; each strategy is important and contributes to achieving the overall vision expressed by this Plan.

As of this writing, Lincoln Charter Township is moving toward a governmental structure with a full-time Township Manager. The accomplishment of the strategies outlined in this Chapter should be facilitated by a Township Manager in cooperation with the Township Board, Planning Commission, and support staff, as needed.

### **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

#### **Zoning Ordinance Amendments**

The Lincoln Charter Township Zoning Ordinance is the primary implementation mechanism for this Plan, as it regulates land use in the Township. A comprehensive evaluation of the ordinance in light of the community's goals, objectives, and Future Land Use Plan is recommended. Overall, the Township's Zoning Ordinance is well-organized so a complete overhaul is likely not needed. However, some revisions and adjustments may be warranted, including, but not limited to:



- Review and revision, if appropriate, of the Zoning Map and current district regulations to better conform to the future land use designations and map as described in this Plan.
- Evaluation of the Zoning Ordinance for its ability to provide attainable and/or affordable housing. The Township should evaluate minimum dwelling unit sizes, minimum lot sizes, parking requirements, setbacks, nonconforming provisions, and others to help reduce development costs and allow for the provision of more affordable housing units.
- Review of wind energy requirements, and the provision of utility-scale solar and energy storage facilities, particularly in light of Act 233 of 2024.
- Evaluation of development review procedures such as PUDs and condominiums to ensure they offer the needed clarity and, where appropriate, flexibility to address innovative development techniques, control of inefficient development patterns, and meet the evolving market needs of the community.
- The Ordinance could be updated and reformatted for modern use which will allow for consistency in provisions and the ability to enforce the imposed standards. Overall, a more user-friendly document with updated graphics, click-able links for electronic use, and similar features could be added for improved accessibility.

## **Non-motorized Transportation**

Sidewalks and non-motorized trail connections provide residents with a healthy alternative to driving to destinations. They serve both as a mode of transportation and a type of recreation that many residents have embraced; during public input meetings held in support of this plan, many residents articulated the importance of these connections and a strong desire to see the non-motorized transportation network grow in the Township. The Township has been proactive in developing these connections over the last decade, and this trend should continue for the foreseeable future. Trails and sidewalks should connect neighborhoods and residents to shopping, schools, and parks. Regional nonmotorized trail connections should also be prioritized whenever possible.

## **Red Arrow Highway Sub Area Improvements**

Red Arrow Highway improvements were included in the 2013 Master Plan and remain included in this updated Plan to continually strive to improve this key community corridor. Generally, this Plan continues to contemplate the provision of residential development at a moderate density (greater than Low Density, but less dense than High Density) and ensuring traffic and pedestrian safety along the Corridor. The Plan calls for greater pedestrian access routes, limiting the number of curb cuts, and connecting existing roads to an internal network of roads enabling greater utilization of land. Over the long term, the Township could establish a Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA) to fund improvements to the corridor and participate in efforts directly related toward improvements in the corridor.

In addition, the Township should work cooperatively with MDOT to develop an access management plan that will address issues such as driveway spacing; provide regulations for frontage roads, and rear access roads to minimize curb cuts; and explore the potential of a boulevard along Red Arrow Highway for beautification and better manage traffic.

## **Parks, Open Space, and Natural Feature Preservation**

In 2022, the Township adopted a Five-year Parks and Recreation Plan. This plan is a commitment to improve the existing Township parks, expand the nonmotorized trail network, and inform its residents of the recreational opportunities available. In addition, adoption of the Parks and Recreation Plan established the Township's eligibility for DNR grant opportunities. The Townships must update Parks and Recreation Plan every five years to maintain grant eligibility, and the Township should be proactive in updating and implementing this Plan.

The Hickory Creek Corridor is a major environmental feature in the Township. Its preservation will enhance the quality of this natural resource and benefit generations of Township residents. Since much of the property along the Creek is held in private ownership, this is a long-term goal that will require the Township to look for opportunities as they arise. Focusing on the acquisition of specific sections of the corridor would generate momentum towards the preservation of the entire corridor.

## **Local Government Cooperation**

Some of the goals in this plan will not be achievable without the cooperation of the Township's neighboring municipalities. The Village of Stevensville, adjoining cities and Townships, MDOT, Berrien County, and others should be engaged in discussions pertaining to multijurisdictional projects that will impact the region beyond the Township's boundaries. The Red Arrow Highway corridor will likely serve as a primary catalyst for local economic development over the coming years, and the extent to which efforts to attract new business and industry can be coordinated will be helpful to the Township and better position it for success.

Further, there is no doubt that the health of the Village very much impacts that of the Township. While honoring its development goals, the Township should consider how proposed development in the Township affects the Village. For example, planning for more dense development near the Village would increase the potential capture of more disposable income by Village merchants, thereby increasing the viability of Stevensville's downtown.

In addition, the Township should be a leader in the region in fostering intergovernmental cooperation, such as working proactively with Cornerstone Alliance and other economic development organizations to bring employers to the region, partnering with the County or other entities in building out the regional nonmotorized trail network, and looking for additional cost-effective ways to jointly provide services to residents.

Representatives from the Lincoln Charter Township / Stevensville community are exploring creating a Stevensville Area Community Growth Alliance, which would be formed in partnership with the Southwest Michigan Chamber of Commerce. These efforts will require the cooperation from several organizations outside of the Village and should be continued.

## **Community Education and Outreach**

The planning process is consistently changing with shifting social and economic concerns and unique land use challenges. Attitudes of residents toward growth, economic development, traffic, protection of natural resources, and other pertinent land use issues will likely differ from person to person depending on their individual circumstances. However, the planning process also provides a vision for the future based on input from the community and steadily moves toward that vision through collective actions. Therefore, it is vitally important for Township officials to continue to seek educational opportunities to inform residents of current opportunities and issues in Lincoln Charter Township.

The continued education of Township officials on relevant planning and zoning topics is a key component of effective government and administration. In addition, the Township should look to educate the public on current planning trends and the benefits of implementing the goals and objectives in this Plan. Public meetings, including those hosted by the Planning Commission and Township Board, should be structured and conducted in a way that provides information and education to the public.

Further, Township officials should continue to use ad-hoc committees, to which some of the responsibilities for achieving the goals of this plan may be delegated. These committees could focus on topics that are of great importance to the community, such as housing, economic development, sustainability, recreation, and others as needed.



