



ORONOKO
CHARTER TOWNSHIP

MASTER PLAN

Updated April 11, 2023

ORONOKO CHARTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

CH 1. INTRODUCTION

The fundamental purpose of a Master Plan is to enable a community to establish a direction for physical development, capital investment, and growth. Therefore, a Master Plan represents a foundation 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 the Oronoko Charter Township Planning Commission and the Township Board the authority to prepare and adopt a plan. Once prepared, adopted, and maintained, this Plan will serve as an advisory guide for the physical conservation of certain areas and the development of other areas.

This Plan represents the culmination of several years of work by numerous residents and local officials. It reflects the community's deep concern for the natural beauty of its surroundings and a strong commitment to retaining and strengthening the local quality of life. The plan outlines the preferred future for the community and a comprehensive plan to realize it. The Plan is appropriately general, recognizing that planning for the future is a delicate blend of art and science and that sufficient flexibility will be needed to respond to the challenges of the future.

Oronoko Charter Township's last Master Plan was completed in 2000. General planning practice, as well as State statute, suggests that Master Plans should be reviewed at about five-year intervals and the Township has been fairly vigilant in doing so. The former plan, adopted in January 2000, reflected many current conditions and trends, so the effort to update it in 2010 enabled the community to focus on particular challenges rather than restrict the effort to a more general overview. The Township updated the plan again in 2022 to update community data and address contemporary challenges and issues facing the community.

Nevertheless, planning for the long term should be carried out at a general level that recognizes the potential for change and provides flexibility. This results in a Master Plan that can be useful well into the future instead of becoming obsolete if or when demographic and economic trends stray from those identified in the Community Profile.

PLAN METHODOLOGY

The planning process involved four inter-related phases:

- Data Analysis - A Community Profile;
- Goals and Objectives - Creating a Policy Foundation;
- Plan Preparation - Analyzing the Issues and Defining the Preferred Future; and
- Implementation Strategies - Getting There from Here

DATA ANALYSIS

The Community Profile is the first part of this Master Plan, and contains the following key areas of focus:

- Natural and Cultural Features (Chapter 2)
- Population (Chapter 3)
- Housing and Economic Development (Chapter 4)
- Land Use and Development Patterns (Chapter 5)
- Community Facilities and Services (Chapter 6)
- Utilities and Transportation (Chapters 7 and 8)

During the first phase, demographic, economic, and land use data was gathered from a variety of sources and analyzed. The purpose of this effort was to develop a comprehensive impression of the patterns of growth and the challenges that will impact the Township. This phase culminated in the preparation of the Community Profile Report, which was published in December 2008. This report served as a technical resource for the Planning Commission and the consultant. It also represents the Community Profile, which constitutes Chapters 2 through 7 of this Plan.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The objective of the second phase was to establish a policy basis for the Township’s planning and land use regulations. To do this it was important to “take the pulse” of the community and determine what direction residents were looking for the future of their community. To this end, the Township held an Open House and Visioning Workshop in March 2009. This was a public meeting intended to allow community residents to voice their opinion regarding important issues such as farmland preservation, land use, utilities, and others.

Approximately 60 participants attended the meeting and provided valuable input regarding agriculture, transportation, utilities, and many other topics. A report that details the results of this meeting is included in Appendix 1.

Since the adoption of the 2010 Master Plan, the Township has been proactive in implementing the plan and gaining additional public feedback to support its ongoing planning endeavors, such as the creation and adoption of the M-139 Corridor Improvement Plan in 2013 and subsequent Place-Based Code in 2015. This ongoing and regular feedback loop with the citizens of the Berrien Springs – Oronoko Township (BSOT) community informed the effort to update the Master Plan update in 2020-2022.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Information gathered from the Open House and Visioning Workshop, as well as input gathered regularly over the subsequent years, 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 goals and objectives comprise Chapter 8 of the Plan. These were reviewed and revised in 2020-2022.

PLAN PREPARATION

The third phase involved drawing together the input from the previous two phases and preparing a Future Land Use Plan, which is reflected in Chapter 9. The future land use designations and map were developed in a series of interactive meetings of the Planning Commission. To support the desired development patterns envisioned in the Future Land Use Map, the Map is supported by a collection of texts describing how specific areas of the Township should develop within the next twenty to thirty years. These were reviewed and revised in 2020-2022.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The final phase of the process involved the development of specific implementation strategies to carry out the Plan. These are reflected in general terms in Chapter 10 and were updated in 2020-2022. After the fourth phase, the Planning Commission held an open house and a public hearing on the entire draft Plan.

PLAN ADOPTION

The updated Master Plan was approved by the Planning Commission on March 7, 2023 and on April 11, 2023, the Oronoko Charter Township Board officially adopted the updated 2023 Oronoko Charter Township Master Plan.

A blue-tinted photograph of a wetland landscape. In the foreground, there are tall, thin grasses. In the middle ground, there is a body of water with some reeds and a small island. In the background, there is a dense line of trees. The overall scene is serene and natural.

CHAPTER 2

Natural Features & The Environment

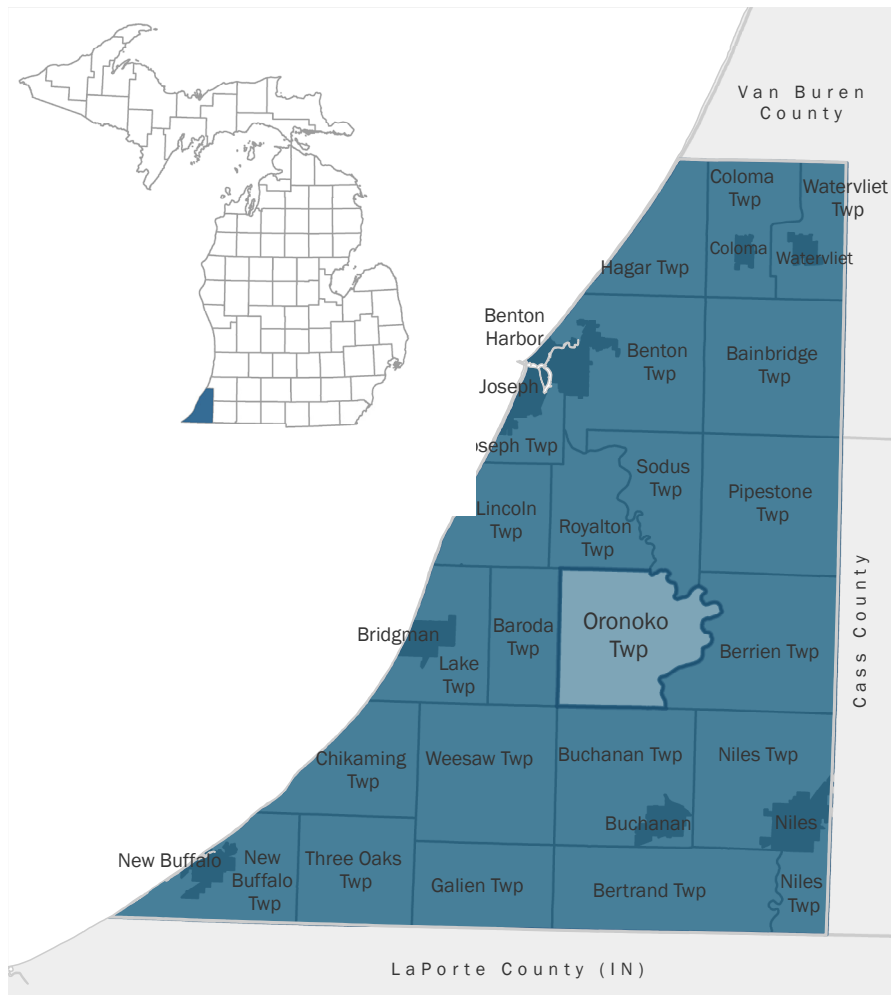
CH 2. NATURAL FEATURES & THE ENVIRONMENT

Oronoko Charter Township is situated in the southwestern lower peninsula of Michigan in the center of Berrien County, just a few miles north of the state’s border with Indiana. The Township has an area of slightly more than 33 square miles and is characterized by abundant agricultural land, wooded habitats, rivers, and creeks mixed with new and old human development. This chapter of the Community Profile Report presents the natural and environmental conditions that characterize the community.

The Township is bounded by Royalton Township to the north, Buchanan Township to the south, Baroda Township to the west, and by the Saint Joseph River and Berrien Township to the east (Map 1). The border between Oronoko Charter Township and Berrien Township is defined by Lake Chapin and the St. Joseph River. The Township was organized on March 11, 1837, and became a Charter Township in 1988.

There is some uncertainty surrounding the origins of the Township’s name. Some believe the Township was named after Oronoko, an Indian Chief known by the Governor, George Mason, while others believe that the Township was named after the heroine in the novel Oroonoko, OR, The Royal Slave: A True History, written by Mrs. Aphra Behn in 1688.

Map 1. Location of Oronoko Charter Township.

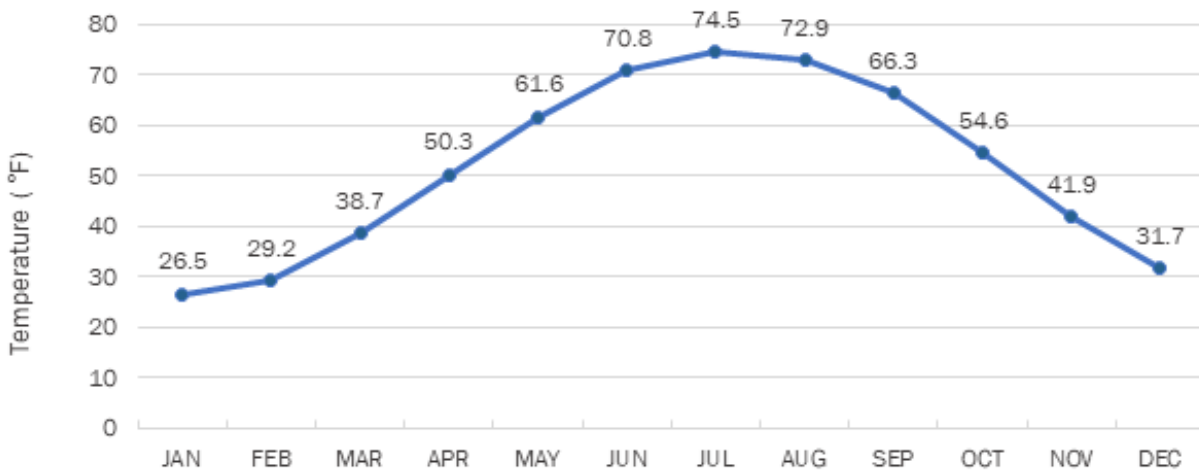


CLIMATE

The Midwestern Regional Climate Center (MRCC) provides a climate summary for Berrien County based on a station in the village of Eau Claire.¹ Based on average annual climatic conditions between 2017 and 2022, January temperatures ranged from an average low of 21°F to an average high of 35°F. These temperatures, along with an average of 54 inches of snowfall annually, are conducive to many wintertime activities such as cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and ice fishing. A significant amount of this snow is a result of the Township’s proximity to Lake Michigan.

In July, the average low temperature between 2017 and 2022 was 63°F, and the average high was 83°F, making for a pleasant and comfortable environment for bicycling, fishing, golfing, hiking, and many other outdoor summer activities. The average annual precipitation for the Township was 46 inches. The Township’s location near Lake Michigan moderates the overall temperature, creating a unique micro-climate that is conducive to agricultural activities, such as vineyards.

Figure 2.1 Average Monthly Temperature, 1991-2020



LAKES & RIVERS



Lake Chapin

The most significant lake in the Township is Lake Chapin, which comprises a part of the Township’s eastern border. Lake Chapin has an area of approximately 480 acres and is a popular destination for fishing and boating. Lake Chapin is a man-made reservoir, created with the construction of the Berrien Springs Dam in 1908. A fish ladder was added in 1975 and at the time it was the second major fish ladder to be constructed in the State of Michigan.

Lake Chapin plays an important role in defining the community’s character, enhancing both the natural environment and the lifestyle of residents. Much of the western shoreline of the lake is developed with seasonal and year-round residences.

¹ “Climate Summaries.” Midwestern Regional Climate Center. mrcc.illinois.edu/mw_climate/climateSummaries/climSumm.jsp

St. Joseph River

The St. Joseph River is approximately 210 miles long and begins in Hillsdale County, dips southwest into northern Indiana before turning northwest and emptying into Lake Michigan between St. Joseph and Benton Harbor. The St. Joseph River watershed is over 4,600 square miles in area, contains over 400 lakes, and falls approximately 600 feet from its source in Hillsdale County to Lake Michigan.

The St. Joseph River formed about 8,000 years ago when the last glaciers retreated and small settlements first appeared near the river between 2,000 and 4,000 BC. Early European explorers found Miami and Potawatomi peoples living near present-day St. Joseph. The river was a significant early transportation route for both Native Americans and French fur traders.

The river provides residents with recreational opportunities such as fishing, canoeing, and kayaking. Much of the St. Joseph River north of the Village of Berrien Springs is bordered by wetland areas. These wetlands and the 100-year floodplain areas have helped to limit intense development near portions of the riverbank within the Township.

WATERSHEDS

A watershed is a region of land that is drained by a particular river or river system. Typically, these systems include many smaller tributaries such as creeks and streams that feed into a larger river and are influenced by elevation or the lay of the land. All of Oronoko Charter Township lies within the St. Joseph River regional watershed. In addition to lands that drain directly to the St. Joseph River, Oronoko Charter Township also includes the following sub-watersheds:

- Big Meadow Drain - Drains the northern portion of Oronoko Charter Township, as well as portions of Lincoln and Royalton Township and enters the St. Joseph River in northwest Royalton Township.
- East Branch of the Galien River - Drains a very small portion of Oronoko Charter Township, as well as portions of Baroda Township, Lake Township, Weesaw Township, and Buchanan Township.
- Hickory Creek - Drains the western portion of Oronoko Charter Township as well as portions of Buchanan Township, Weesaw Township, Baroda Township, Lake Township, Lincoln Township, Royalton Township and meets the St. Joseph River in St. Joseph Township.
- Lemon Creek - Drains the central portion of Oronoko Charter Township and enters the St. Joseph River just north of Berrien Springs.

Water quality within a watershed is directly related to the land management practices within that watershed. For example, if a new development creates a large increase in impervious surfaces (i.e. asphalt) and stormwater is not properly managed, the volume and velocity of the runoff into the creek, stream, or river could intensify to a point where stream bank erosion occurs. Stream bank erosion increases the amount of silt material on the streambed and the stream's turbidity by carrying additional suspended particles. This greatly reduces the stream's ability to provide quality habitat for animals and reduces its clarity for recreational and aesthetic enjoyment.

Further, increased runoff from impervious surfaces often causes chemicals and pollutants to be transported to rivers, changing the chemistry of the water with phosphates, nitrogen, and other chemicals. All of these changes may affect the wildlife that is dependent on the stream or river for survival. Map 2 illustrates the watersheds, rivers, streams, and lakes in the Township.

According to the Great Lakes Commission, land uses within the St. Joseph River watershed are roughly 60 percent agricultural, 20 percent forested, and less than 10 percent of the area is urbanized. However, management practices within the agricultural industry have contributed to bank erosion and

sedimentation issues within the watershed. Water quality in the St. Joseph River watershed has been negatively affected by:

- Nonpoint source pollution from agricultural uses
- Highly erodible soils
- The location of twelve Superfund (hazardous waste) sites
- The presence of Atrazine, PCBs, nutrients, suspended solids, trans-nonachlor, and mercury

The St. Joseph River Watershed Management Plan

In 2007, the Lower St. Joseph/Galien River Watershed Management Plan was completed by the Southwest Michigan Regional Planning Commission. The purpose of the plan is to “identify and implement actions needed to improve water quality and reduce water quantity impacts by encouraging cooperation between the diverse public and private entities in the watershed.”² The plan identifies several overall goals for the St. Joseph River Watershed. Below is a list of goals from the plan that are related to land use practices, planning, and development:

- Reduce soil erosion and sedimentation by site remediation, controlling pathways, and preventing or minimizing sources so that surface water functions and uses are not impaired and aesthetics are improved.
- Increase preservation, restoration, protection, and appreciation of open space and coastal zones, and implement actions that restore, enhance, and sustain the health, biodiversity, and productivity of the ecosystem (a system of natural areas, wildlife habitats, corridors, farmland, open land, and parklands).
- Reduce the levels of chemicals, pesticides, heavy metals, petroleum, and other toxins that are harmful to public health and that degrade aquatic habitat.
- Minimize hydrologic impacts of development, maintain water levels high enough for navigation, protect streambanks from erosion, and reduce flooding impacts.

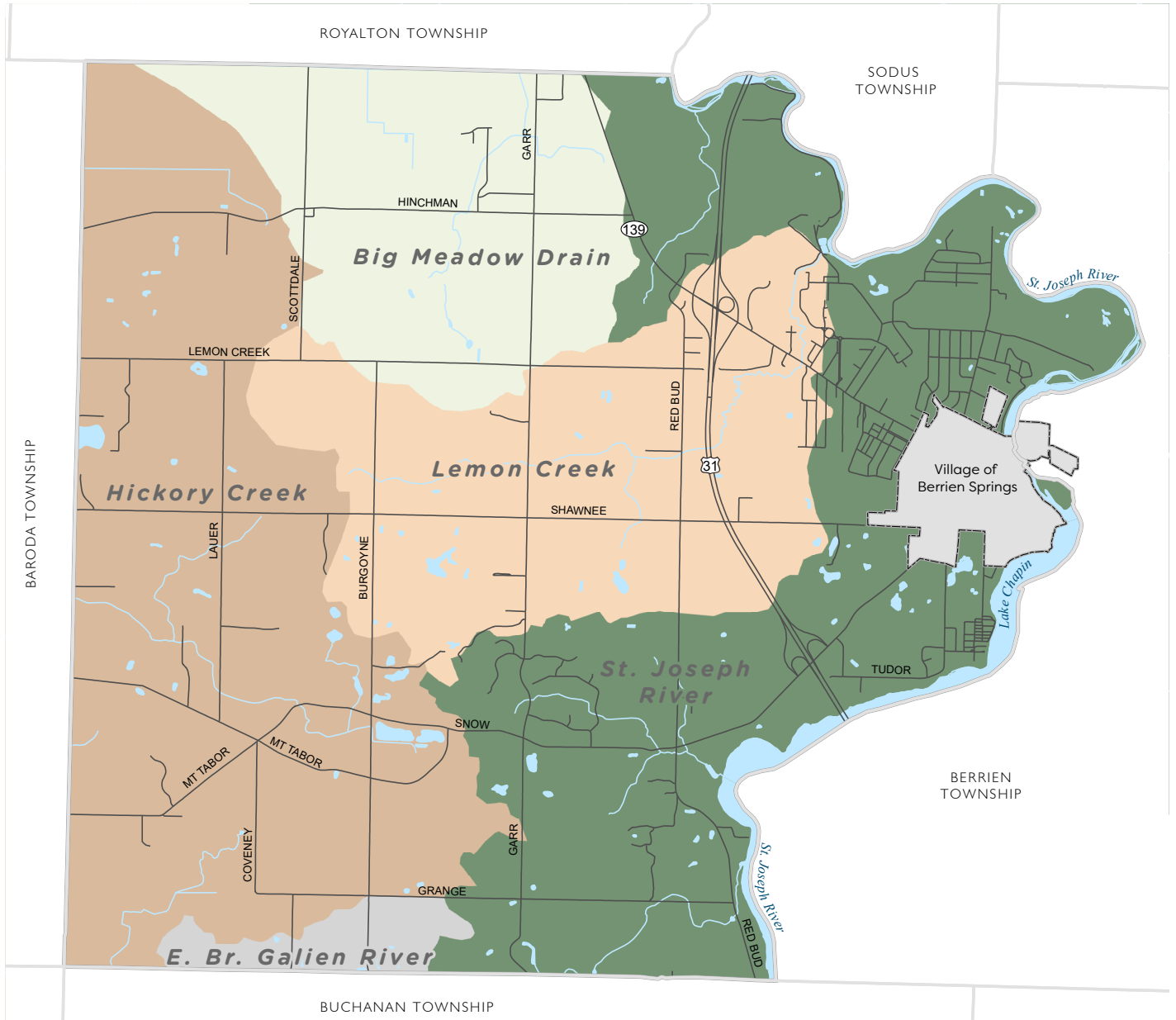
A Public Education Plan was adopted for the Lower St. Joseph/Galien River Watershed area in 2011. It will guide the educational efforts in the watershed and describe efforts to educate and empower the public about ways they can reduce storm water pollution. Outreach activities will reach diverse audiences with a variety of viewpoints and concerns. Successful implementation of the PEP will form partnerships with local agencies and organizations and use educational materials and strategies that are familiar and relevant to the area residents.

Several southwest Michigan communities participate in the Southwest Michigan Water Partnership and are working together to educate Southwest Michigan residents about protecting water quality and reducing water pollution. All counties, cities, villages, townships, businesses, and organizations are invited to join this partnership.

As the Township continues to develop, care must be taken to ensure that new developments are carefully planned to protect the quality of the water in the St. Joseph River and its tributaries. The health of the watershed should be carefully considered when assessing the impacts of new development within the Township.

² “Lower St. Joseph/Galien River Watershed Management Plan” (Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, 2007), 1, 33-36

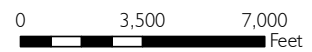
MAP 2. WATERSHEDS



Legend

- Lemon Creek
- Hickory Creek
- Big Meadow Drain
- St. Joseph River
- E. Br. Galien River
- Lakes
- Streams

1 inch = 3,500 feet



Data Sources: Berrien County GIS and Michigan GIS Open Data

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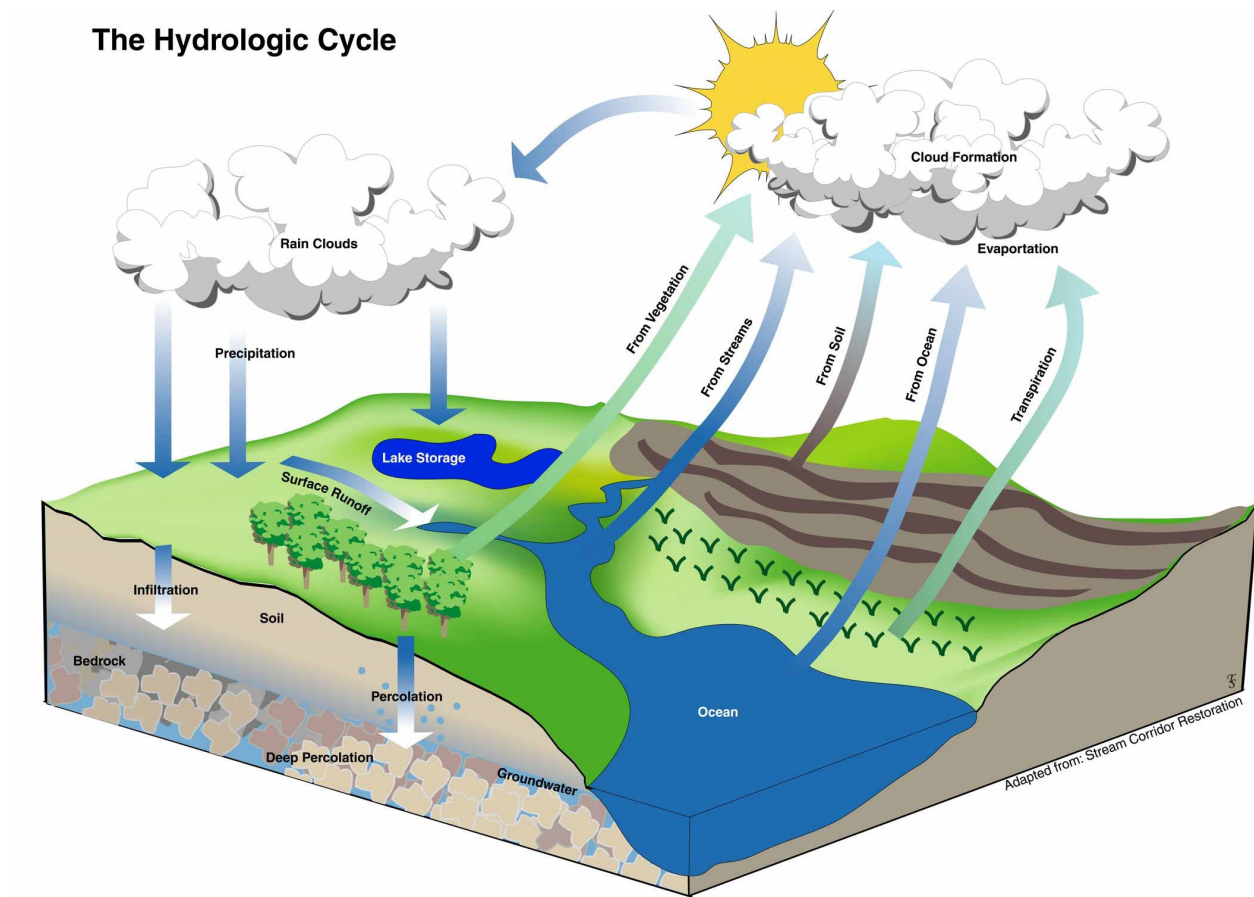


GROUND WATER

As the population in and around Oronoko Charter Township continues to grow, natural resources will inevitably be impacted. The groundwater supplies in the Township, even though abundant, can be affected as impervious surfaces increase and greater demand is placed on groundwater supplies.

In Berrien County, glacial aquifers are the primary source of groundwater. These aquifers were developed as glaciers dropped large amounts of sediment as they receded across the landscape.³ The sediment is mostly unconfined, meaning that it allows water to seep into the ground directly above the aquifer. Therefore, most areas across the landscape contribute to the overall groundwater supply.

According to Dr. Roberta Dow of the Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program at the Michigan State University Extension in Traverse City, Michigan, there are many different ways groundwater can be polluted. Two primary contributors are the application of fertilizer on crops and residential lawns and septic tank drainfield effluent. Proper fertilizer application management and septic tank maintenance may help to significantly reduce nitrate levels. Abandoned wells may also be a threat to ground water quality if they have not been properly closed or “capped.” Open wells may expose groundwater supplies to surface contaminants. Since all drinking water in Oronoko Charter Township is derived from groundwater sources - either from private wells or the municipal water supply - protecting this key resource is of vital interest to the Township.



³ “Summary of Hydrogeologic Conditions by County for the State of Michigan” (USGS, 2007), 11.

SOILS

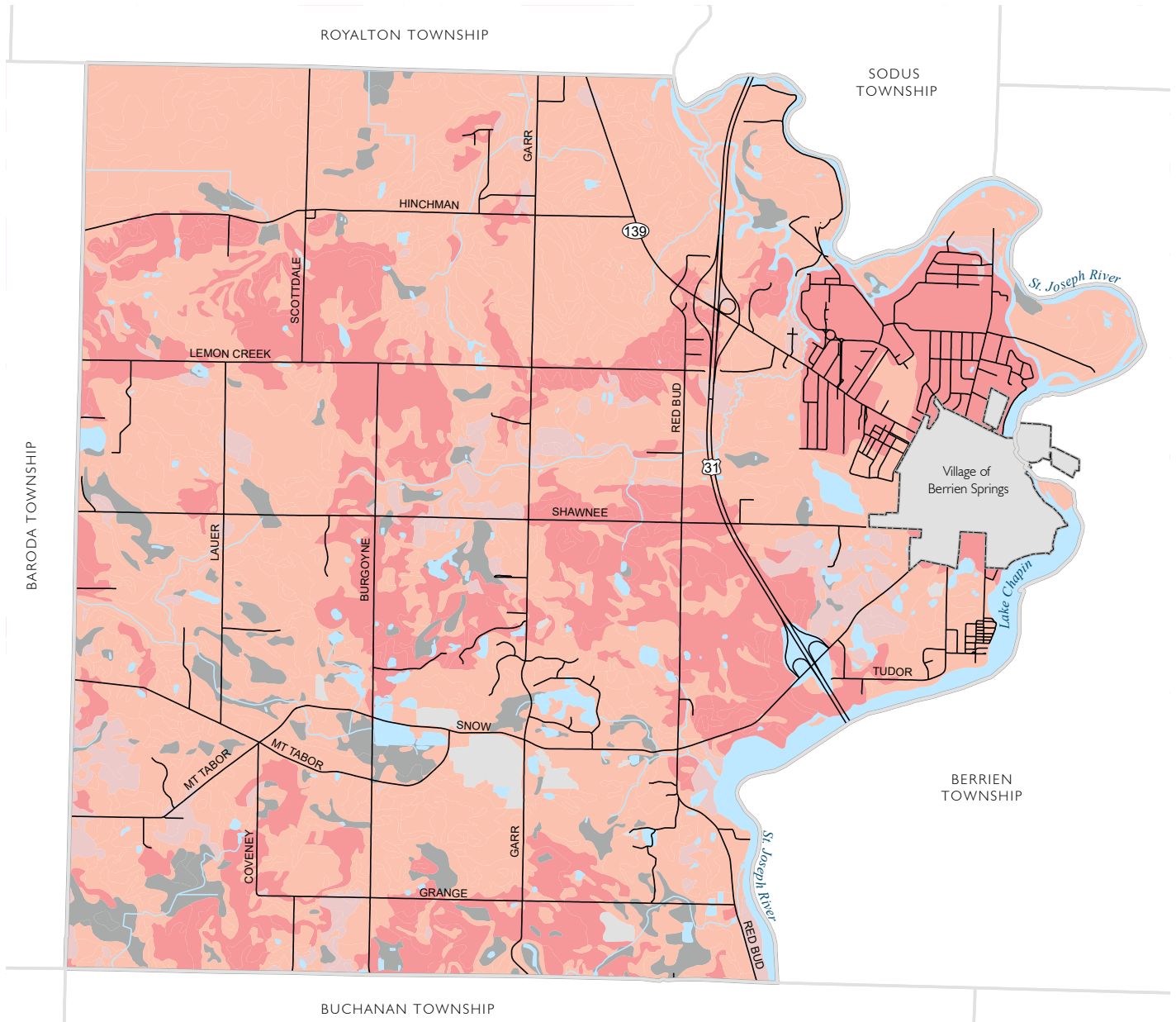
Soil composition is an important aspect of planning for many reasons. Some soils are not well suited for individual septic systems and therefore may threaten ground water or surface water quality due to lack of proper filtration. The composition of soils also determines stability and suitability for structural development, while agricultural productivity is dependent on the fertility of the soils. Using soil classifications of the Township, areas can be appropriately designated for suitable use.

The United States Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service has classified the soils of the Township into many different general soil associations, and Map 3 illustrates the different soil textures found in Oronoko Charter Township:

- Sandy - Sands are loose and single-grained. Soil materials classified as sands contain 85-100% sand-sized particles, 0-15% silt-sized particles, and 0-10% clay-sized particles.
- Loamy - Loam is a soil material that is medium-textured and is composed of a mixture of clay, silt, and sand. Soil materials classified as loams contain 7-27% clay, 28-50% silt, and less than 52% sand.
- Muck - Muck is extremely dark in color and contains well-decomposed organic soil mixed with mineral soil material. Mucky soils contain at least 20% organic matter.
- Complex - Complex soils are characterized by the presence of two or more kinds of soil occurring in such a pattern that they cannot be shown separately on a soil map.
- Pits - Pits are open excavations from which the soil and underlying material have been removed, exposing material that supports little or no plant cover. Pits may have standing water at varying depths.

Map 4 illustrates the engineering limitations of the soil types found in the Township for dwellings with basements. Soils that are "not limited" have characteristics that are generally favorable to development. Soils that are "somewhat limited" have characteristics that are not favorable to development without special planning or design. Soils that are "very limited" have characteristics that are highly unfavorable to development, and development on these soils may result in increased construction maintenance and costs.

MAP 3. SOILS - TEXTURE



Legend

- Sandy
- Loamy
- Complex
- Pondered/Water
- Muck
- Pits

1 inch = 3,500 feet

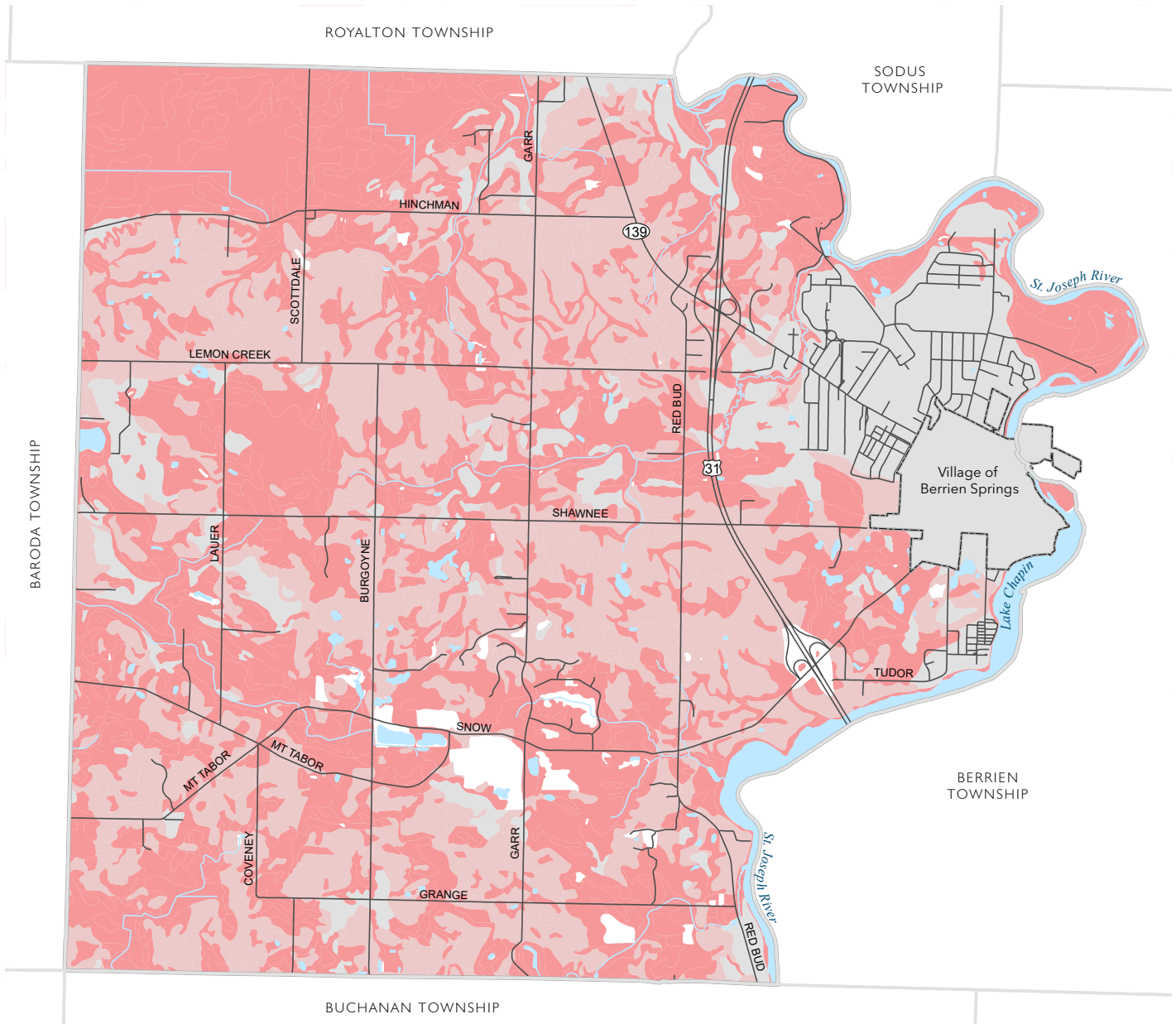


Data Sources: Berrien County GIS, NRCS, and Michigan GIS Open Data




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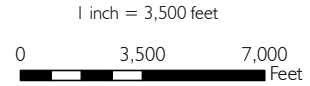


MAP 4. SOIL DEVELOPMENT



Legend

-  Not limited
-  Somewhat limited
-  Very limited



Data Sources: Berrien County GIS, NRCS, and Michigan GIS Open Data

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WETLANDS

Wetlands play a critical role in regulating the movement of water within watersheds. Wetlands are characterized by water saturation in the root zone, or above the soil surface, for a certain amount of time during the year. The fluctuation of the water table above and below the soil surface is unique to each wetland type.

Wetlands store precipitation and surface water and then slowly release the water into associated water resources, ground water, and the atmosphere. They help maintain the level of the water table and may serve as filters for sediments and organic matter. They may also serve as a sink to catch water, or transform nutrients, organic compounds, metals, and components of organic matter. Wetlands can impact levels of nitrogen, phosphorous, carbon, sulfur, and various metals. Without them, water quality decreases, areas are prone to flash flooding, and habitat for specialized plants and animals is reduced.

The wetlands in Oronoko Charter Township occupy approximately 5,100 acres and are scattered throughout the Township, but are found primarily along stream and drain corridors. Wetland areas and hydric soils are identified on Map 5, which is based on the state-wide Wetland Inventory conducted by the Department of Energy, Great Lakes, and Environment (EGLE), and hydric soils are identified by the Soil Survey Geographic.

According to EGLE, a hydric soil "is saturated, flooded, or ponded long enough during the growing season to develop anaerobic conditions. This lack of oxygen in the soil can lead to the formation of certain observable characteristics in wetland soils, such as a thick layer of organic matter (non-decomposed plant materials) in the upper part of the soil column."⁴ While the presence of hydric soil does not necessarily indicate the presence of a wetland, hydric soils are considered to be wetland soils, according to the United States Natural Resources Conservation Service.

This map is intended to illustrate only the general location of potential wetland areas in the Township. The exact location of any wetland or hydric soil should be determined through a field site inspection by a qualified scientist.

PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Development. Oronoko Charter Township's natural features and rural character will likely continue to draw and attract new residents, resulting in continued residential development. While the pace and scale of growth are expected to be manageable, there is a risk that without effective planning, this growth will begin to degrade the very resources that draw it.

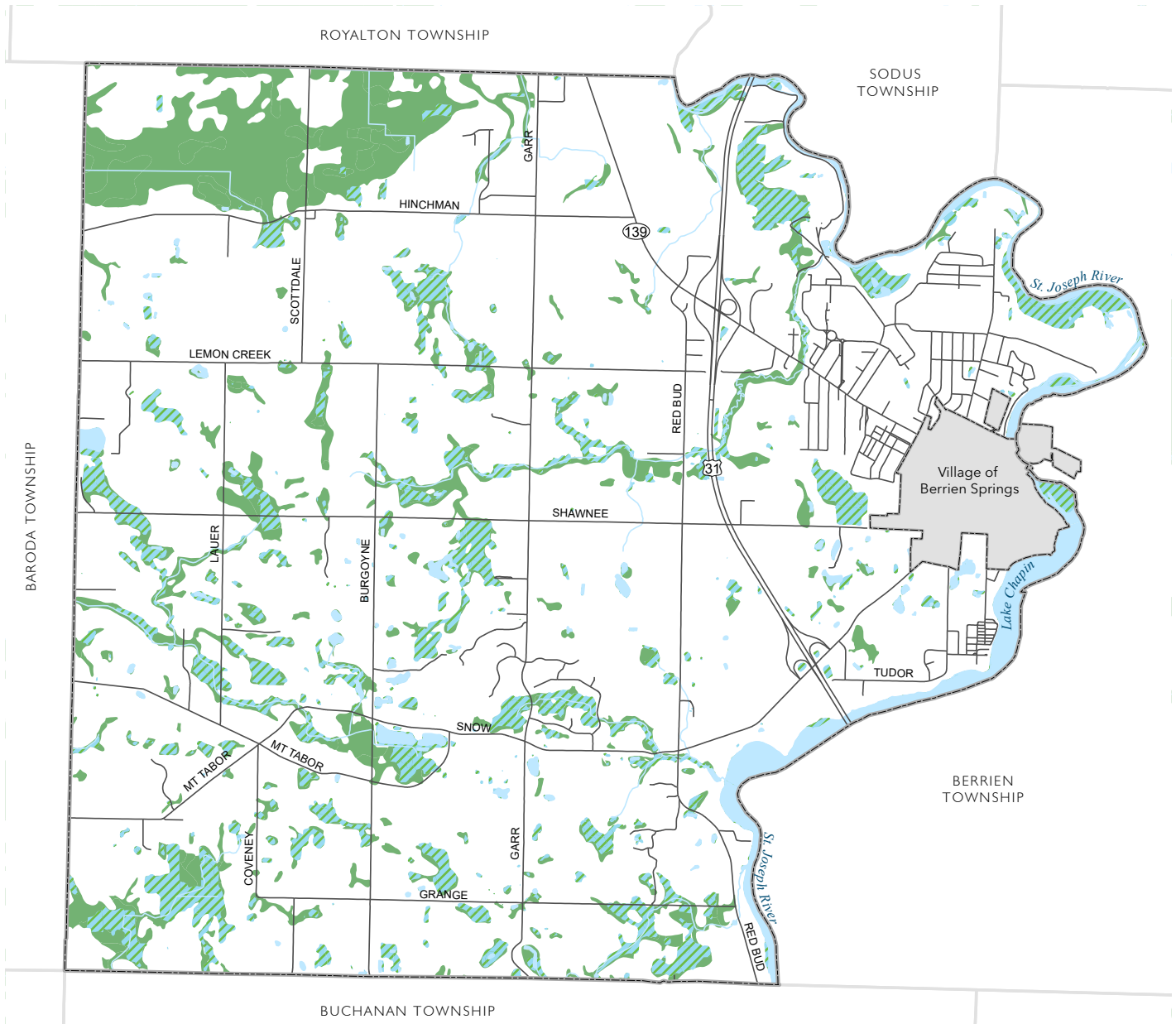
Surface Water. The Township contains approximately 5,100 acres of potential wetland areas and many of the soils found in the Township are not conducive to residential development. Additionally, most land within the Township drains toward the St. Joseph River, so protecting this watershed is important to the environmental health of the entire region. Careful site planning will be needed for the Township to aid in maintaining these critical natural features.

Groundwater. As a rural community, Oronoko Charter Township relies heavily upon local drinking water sources. These include private wells and connections to the Berrien Springs water system, which also obtains water from four groundwater wells. Therefore, preserving groundwater resources will be imperative for the Township in retaining healthy and safe drinking water. Major sources of pollution are crop fertilizers and septic tank effluent, both of which are associated with rural settings. Therefore, generating community awareness of ways to mitigate groundwater contamination and engaging in a local wellhead protection program can help promote safe drinking water quality for future residents.





Climate. The climate of southwestern Michigan provides excellent conditions for growing fruit. This has resulted in numerous productive farms and wineries that contribute to the economic viability and cultural character of the area. Planning decisions that support the continuance of these agricultural operations should be encouraged.

⁴ "How are wetlands identified?" Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy. www.michigan.gov/egle/0,9429,7-135-3313_3687-24314--,00.html.

MAP 5. WETLANDS



Legend

-  Streams
-  Open Water
-  Wetlands
-  Hydric soil

1 inch = 3,500 feet



Data Sources: Berrien County GIS, NRCS, and Michigan GIS Open Data

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CHAPTER 3

Population

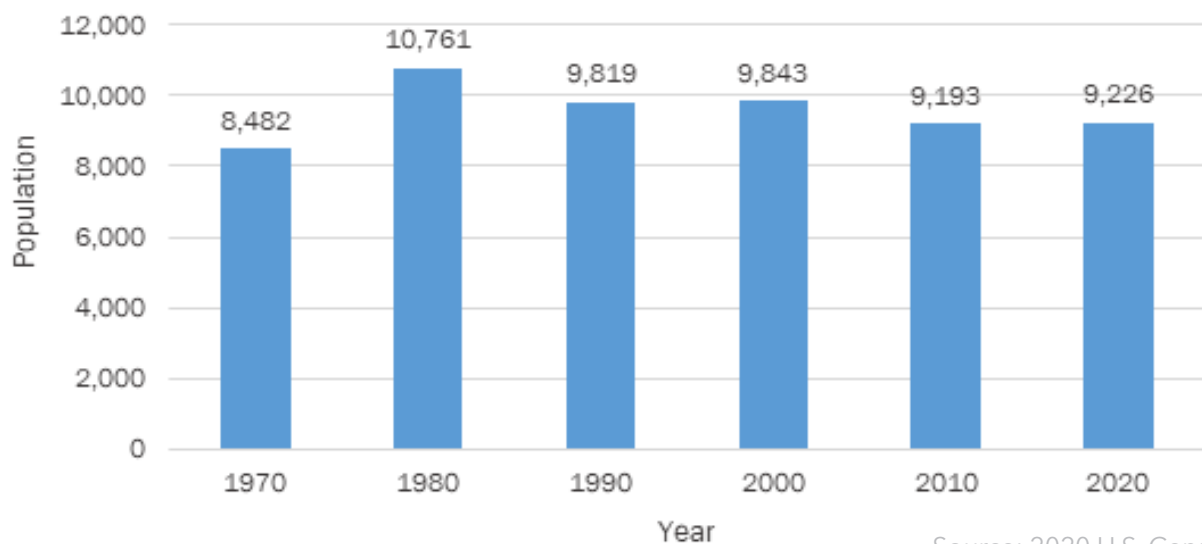
CH 3. POPULATION

Population and demographic change are among the most important measures to express growth and its likely impact on land uses in a community. An accurate analysis of the Township's current and future population is critical to ensure that the Township will meet future needs for housing, recreation, and other community services and preserve the high quality of life that characterizes Oronoko Charter Township. Therefore, it is helpful to recognize the Township's population and growth trends in preparing a realistic and meaningful Master Plan. This chapter describes the Township's population and demographic characteristics and serves as part of the foundation for drawing conclusions about the Township's likely future.

HISTORIC POPULATION GROWTH

Observing historic population trends provides insight into growth trends that the Township has experienced in the recent past (i.e., the last thirty years). Oronoko Charter Township experienced considerable growth between 1970 and 1980 (26.9%). Since then, the population has slightly declined and growth has reached a plateau, remaining relatively steady in recent years. In 1980, the Township's population peaked at 10,761, compared to 9,193 in 2010 and 9,226 in 2020. Figure 3.1 illustrates the change in population in Oronoko Charter Township from 1970 to 2020.

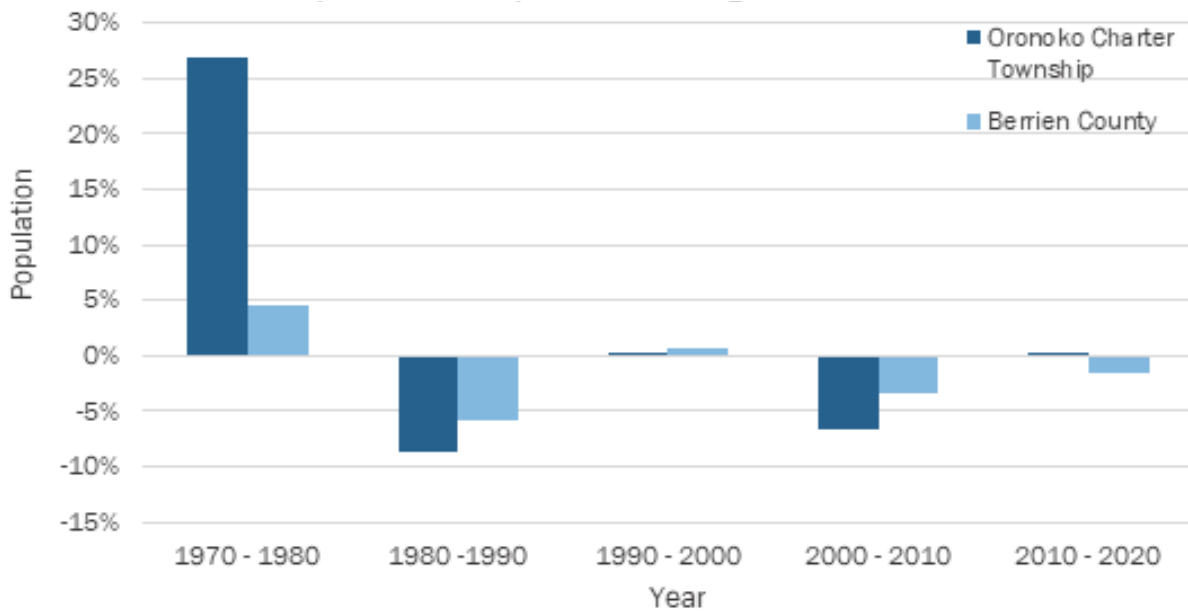
Figure 3.1. Population Change, 1970 - 2020



Source: 2020 U.S. Census

From 1990 to 2000, the Township experienced very little population change, adding 24 residents during that time (0.2%). Minimal change was also experienced between 2010 and 2020, with the U.S. Census reporting a growth of 33 residents over those ten years. Population changes in Berrien County have somewhat mirrored those experienced in the Township, although the County experienced an overall loss in population from 2010 to 2020. Figure 3.2 compares the percent change in population in Berrien County and Oronoko Charter Township from 1980 to 2020.

Figure 3.2. Population Change Comparison, 1970 - 2020



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Statistical averaging techniques were employed to project the Township's likely population growth to the year 2050. These approaches are intended to provide a general sense of growth in the future. In communities such as Oronoko Charter Township that have experienced varying rates of growth development, future growth trends may not parallel historical trends, especially since developable acreage has been consumed over time. The following generalizations are limited in scope and are based on past trends documented by the United States Census Bureau and township data.

These projections have implications regarding future land use necessities, the demand for various public services, and capital improvements, and they help to understand the future position of the Township in terms of growth and total population. The following describes the projection techniques.

The Constant Proportion (or ratio) Method of projecting population assumes that Oronoko Charter Township will continue to represent the same percentage of Berrien County's projected population in the years 2030, 2040, and 2045 that it represents today. In 2020, Oronoko Charter Township comprised about 5.97% of Berrien County's total population. Using the population projections for Berrien County as estimated by the Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives, and extending those trends through 2045, Table 3.1 illustrates the results of the constant proportion method for Oronoko Charter Township.⁵

Table 3.1. Constant Proportion Method

	2020 Population	2030	2040	2045
Berrien County	154,316	156,590	159,500	157,470
Oronoko Charter Township	9,226	9,348	9,522	9,401

⁵ "Michigan Population Projections by County Through 2045" (State of Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget, Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives, 2019), 69.

The Growth Rate (or geometric) Method projects future population growth or decline based on the Township's past rate of change. Using the growth rate method, the following assumes that growth in the future will occur at the same average rate as has occurred annually since 1990. As indicated previously, the Township's population has declined since the 1980s, except for slight growth between 1990 and 2000. This results in an overall compounded annual decrease by -2.0%.

Table 3.2. Growth Rate Method

Compounded Annual Growth Rate	1990 – 2020	2020 Population	2030	2040	2050
Oronoko Charter Township	-2.05%	9,226	9,039	8,855	8,674

The Arithmetic Method is similar to the growth rate method in that population projections are based on growth that occurred in preceding decades. This method, however, bases population growth on the overall average increase in the number of persons per year, rather than on growth rates. The following projections are based on the average net decrease of 20 persons per year between 1990 and 2020 in Oronoko Charter Township, based on U.S. Census figures.

Table 3.3. Arithmetic Method

	Average Increase Each Decade (# of Persons)	2020 Population	2030	2040	2050
Oronoko Charter Township	-20	9,226	9,026	8,826	8,626

The Building Permit Method predicts growth trends based on the actual number of new residential building permits issued by the Township. Oronoko Charter Township has issued 15 new residential building permits on average per year from 2015 to 2018.⁶ In 2019, the Township's average household size was 2.49 persons.⁷ Extrapolating these figures into the future may project likely population growth, if current trends remain the same. This population projection technique holds that Oronoko Charter Township will grow by 37.3 persons per year.

Table 3.4. Building Permit Method

	Average No. Permits/Year	2019 Persons per H/H	2020 Population	2030	2040	2050
Oronoko Charter Township	4.25	2.49	9,226	9,599	9,972	10,345

Table 3.5. Growth Projection Summary

	2020 Population	2030	2040	2050
Constant Proportion Method	9,226	9,348	9,522	--
Growth Rate Method	9,226	9,039	8,855	8,674
Arithmetic Method	9,226	9,026	8,826	8,626
Building Permit Method	9,226	9,599	9,972	10,345
Average	9,226	9,253	9,294	9,215

⁶ Oronoko Charter Township

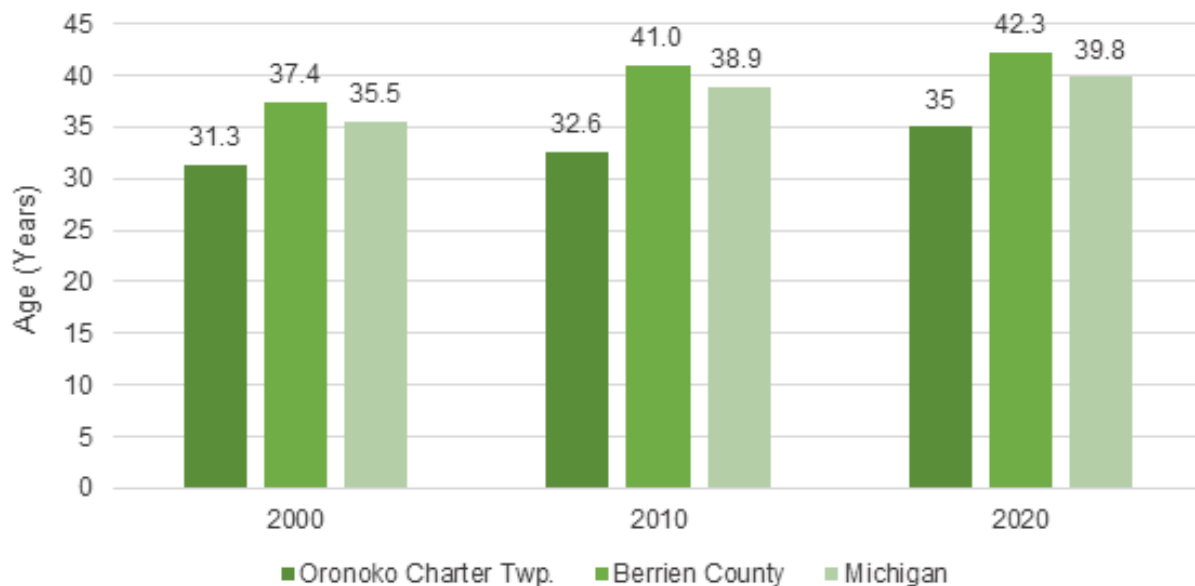
⁷ 2013-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

AGE, GENDER, AND ETHNICITY

A comparison of a community's age distribution provides another opportunity to measure demographic change. This provides insight into the type of housing demands and recreational facilities that may be needed. For example, if a large portion of the population were younger, the Township may benefit from additional park and playground facilities. Similarly, the national trend of an increasing senior population may have implications for more senior living opportunities, such as condominiums and public services.

In 2020, the median age of Oronoko Charter Township residents was 35 years, significantly younger than the county (42.3 years), and also younger than the state and the U.S. (39.8 and 38.2 years, respectively). The median age represents the mid-point in the range of all ages within the Township; one-half of the population is younger and one-half of the population older. Although the state and nation are trending toward a higher median age, the Township has retained a relatively low median age and has had minimal increases in median age since 2000 (Figure 3.3). This suggests that there is a substantial younger population in the Township, which can likely be attributed to the large student population at Andrews University.

Figure 3.3. Median Age Comparison

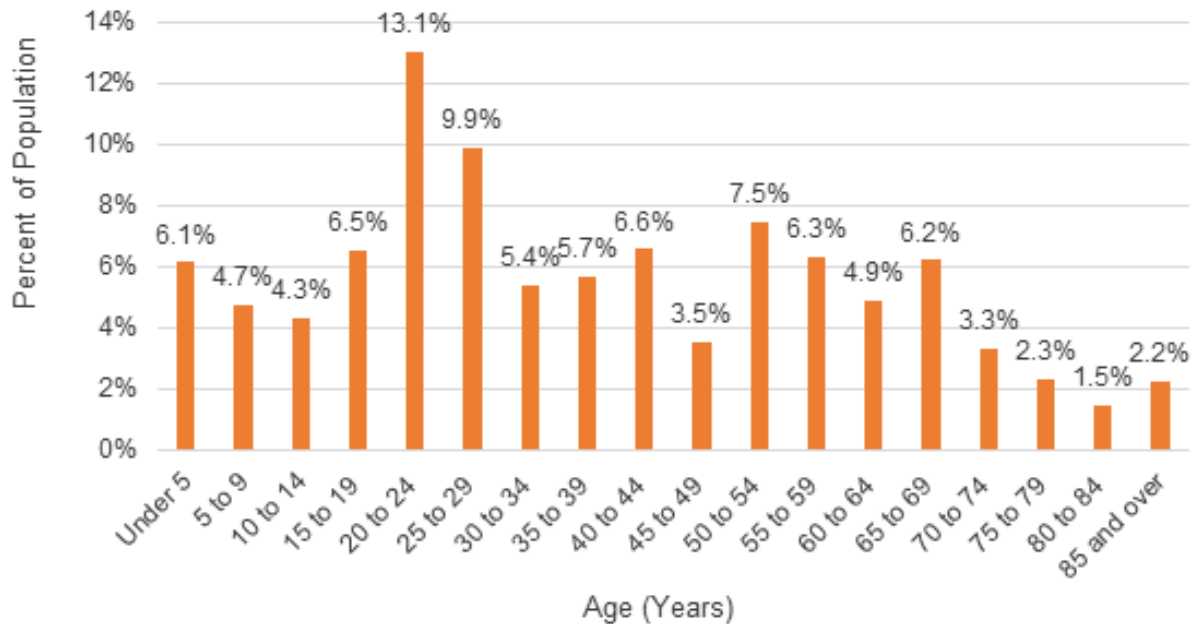


*Estimate from the 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Similarly, an analysis of five-year age groups indicates that the Township's population is relatively young (Figure 3.4). By grouping the population into five-year age groups, it is possible to identify significant age groups in the population that may be influencing the median age. Despite the aging "baby boomer" population, approximately 17.1% of the Township's population was under the age of 18 according to 2020 ACS estimates, and 10.9% of the population was between the ages of 5 and 17. This suggests a potential need for schools, parks, and other youth-related facilities, however, private institutions also help to meet this demand. Additionally, 17.7% of the Township's population was between 18 and 24 years. This was the largest five-year age group and indicates a large population comprised of college-aged students. Therefore, the relatively young median age in the Township is reflected in the large percentages of the population between 5 and 24 years.

The 25 to 44 year age group is significant since it represents the main age division for family formations. About 27.5% of the Township's population falls in the 25 to 44 age group. The bulk of the wage-earning population is between the ages of 25 and 54, and approximately 38.5% of the Township's population falls within this age range. These age groups symbolize a demand for single-family housing developments, and school and recreational facilities for children. These age groups are typically indicative of future increases in the 5 to 19 years age groups, increased school enrollment, and demand for family-oriented commercial services.

Figure 3.4. Age Distribution, 2020



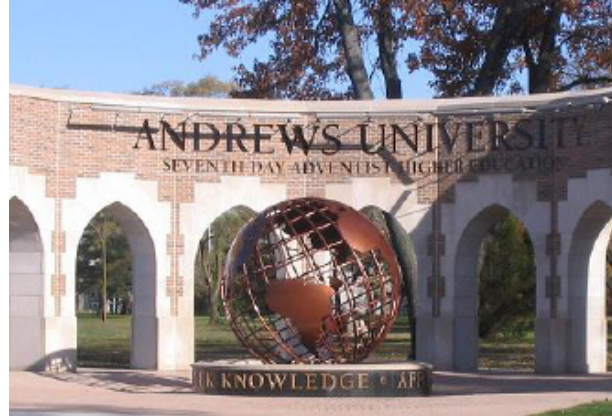
About one-quarter of township residents are over the age of 55. This age division is generally comprised of "empty nesters" and aging baby boomers and implies disposable incomes. About 11% of the Township is aged 55 to 64 years, and will likely enter retirement within the next ten years. Indicative of retirees and senior citizens, approximately 16% of the Township is over 65 years of age (compared with 19.8% of Berrien County). These figures, in addition to statistics on general aging, point toward a possible need for increased senior living opportunities, public transportation, and passive recreational facilities, such as parks and pedestrian facilities that connect land uses.

Although Oronoko Charter Township has a relatively low median age and many residents in younger age groups, the Township is experiencing a shift toward an older population overall. Between 2000 and 2020, the young age group (less than 15 years) has declined by 14.6% and the elderly age group (65 years and older) has increased by 30.3%. Therefore, the Township is experiencing a demographic shift toward an older population.

As far as ethnic characteristics, the community is relatively diverse. The portion of the population of the Township classified as "white" at the 2020 ACS 5-year estimates represented 53.7% of the community. Black or African Americans represented 19.5% of the Township; American Indian and Alaska Natives represented 0.6%; Asians represented 9.4%; Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders represented 0.7%, and other races comprised 6.0% of the Township. Note that 73.6% of Michigan's population and 73.9% of Berrien County's population is "white", compared with Oronoko Charter Township at 53.7%. This can also be attributed largely to the diverse student body at Andrews University, which attracts students from all over the world.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

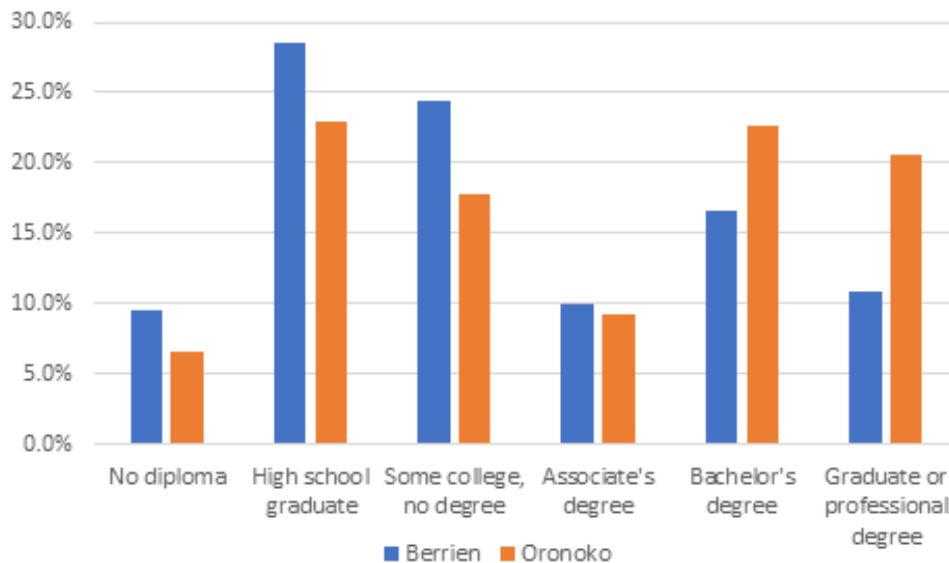
In addition to age, gender, and ethnicity characteristics, it is appropriate to catalog educational attainment trends in the community. This information may be an indicator of local school district quality, which is typically a major concern for families moving into the area. Figures related to educational attainment in Oronoko Charter Township are also influenced by the presence of Andrews University, which will be discussed in Chapter 6, Community Facilities and Services.



Education attainment statistics in the Township are likely influenced by Andrews University.

The 2020 American Community Survey estimates that within Oronoko Charter Township, approximately 28.1% of the population over 25 years of age have the equivalent of a high school education and 43.3% of the population have a bachelor's degree or higher. Overall, 93.4% of township residents have a high school diploma or higher. In Berrien County, roughly 28.5% of the population have the equivalent of a high school education with 27.6% reporting a bachelor's degree or higher. Overall, 90.5% of Berrien County residents reported a high school diploma or higher. Thus, generally, residents in the Township are more educated than the county overall, much of which can be attributed to Andrews University. This is depicted in Figure 3.4, as the graph is generally skewed toward a bachelor's or graduate degree in the Township and generally skewed towards a high school diploma for the county.

Figure 3.5. Educational Attainment 25 Years or Older, 2020*



*Estimate from the 2020 American Community Survey

The Township also has a high level of educational attainment compared the State of Michigan. The 2020 American Community Survey reports that 30.0% of Michigan residents have at least a bachelor's degree, compared with 43.3% reporting a bachelor's degree or higher in the Township. Overall, the Township had a higher percentage of residents (93.0%) with educational equivalent to a high school diploma or higher compared to Michigan (91.3%).

PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Population Trends. The population has generally reached a plateau in its growth, experiencing a slight overall decline in population numbers overall since 1980. Based on population projections and historic population trends, it is reasonable to assume that the Township's population will remain relatively steady, possibly experiencing a slight decline overall. Because the population has remained relatively steady in recent years, the Township may focus on providing for the needs of its current residents while considering opportunities to enhance growth in coordination with the capacities of facilities and services to serve a larger population. This should include the implementation of the BSOT Place-Based Code for the M-139 corridor to define the Township as a desirable place to live, work, and visit.

Age. The Township has a relatively low median age compared to Berrien County, Michigan, and the U.S. This is likely influenced by students attending Andrews University. However, between 2000 and 2019, there has been an increase in elderly residents and a decrease in younger residents. Because the Township has this combination of younger students and an increasing senior population, consideration may be given to facilities and services that accommodate different age groups. A low median age and a high number of college-aged students may desire active recreational opportunities, parks, and family activities. Additionally, as residents continue to age, the Township may also consider additional facilities that accommodate an aging population, such as senior housing, accessible facilities, and community services applicable to all ages.

Education. The Township has a higher level of educational attainment than Berrien County and the state of Michigan. This is likely due to the presence of Andrews University, which offers both undergraduate and graduate degrees. This higher education of residents will likely correspond to jobs that require advanced knowledge in areas such as science, technology, education, and public health. Considering the high percentage of college-aged residents, the Township may consider opportunities to retain this young workforce through a variety of opportunities that appeal to different skillsets.



CHAPTER 4

Housing & Economic Development

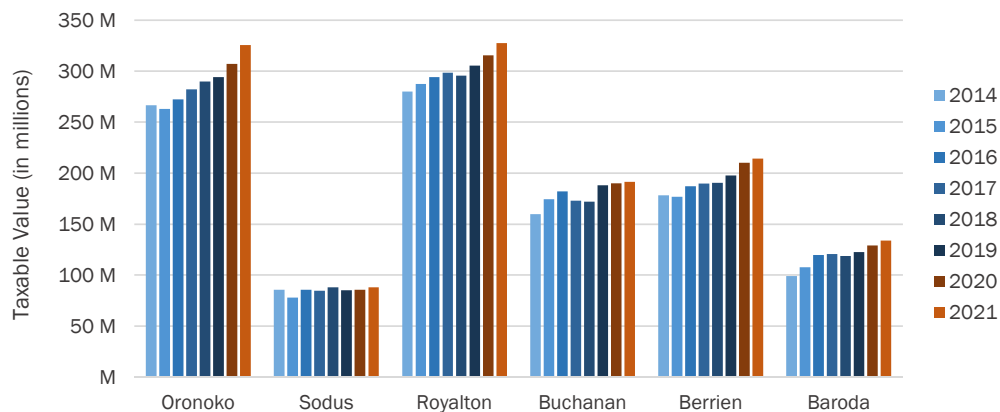
CH 4. HOUSING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This chapter analyzes the housing and economic development trends within the community. It is useful to compare housing trends with population projections so that housing shortages or surpluses can be estimated. In addition, comparisons of housing and land values against the incomes of current residents can help reveal the relative affordability of the local housing stock for the residents of the community.

TAXABLE VALUE GROWTH

Property values are a key measure of economic growth and the financial strength of a community. Property values reflect both investment in new development and the degree of growth in the value of those investments. Annually, the assessors of each jurisdiction report total valuation within their respective jurisdictions, and these reports can provide an illuminating impression of the character of a community. Figure 4.1 compares the annual assessed values of real property in Oronoko Charter Township to those of surrounding municipalities.

Figure 4.1. Change in Assesed Value of Real Property, 2014 - 2021

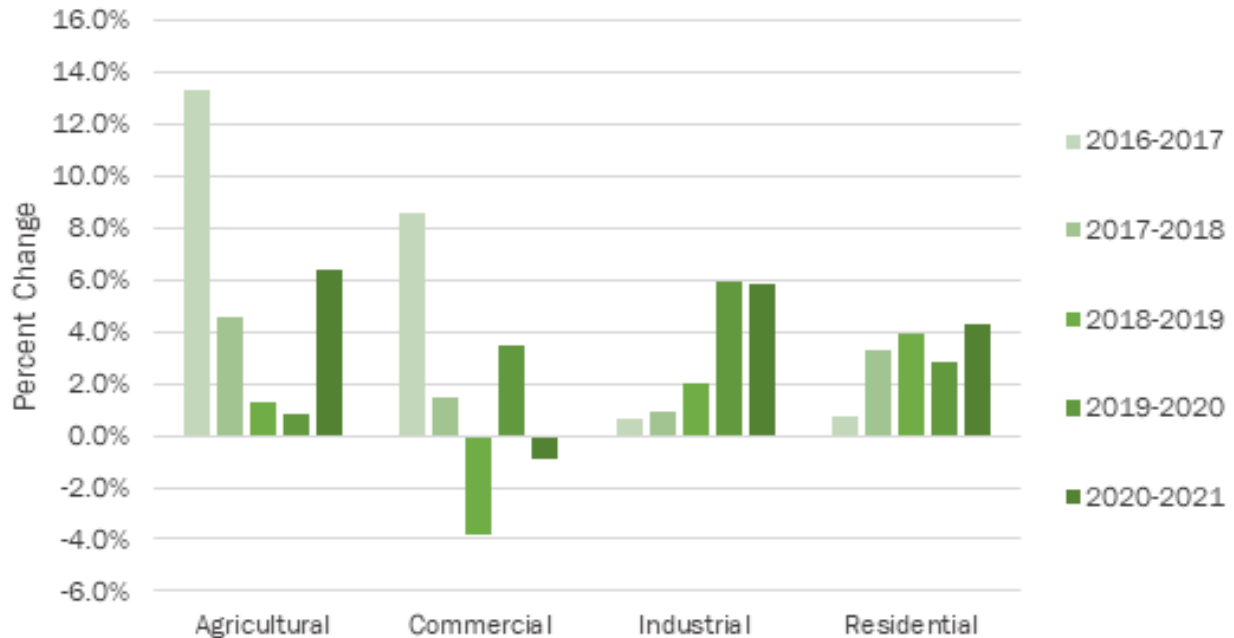


Source: Berrien County Equalization Department

The total real property assessed value for Oronoko Charter Township in 2014 was \$266.7 million, and by 2021 it had increased by approximately 22% to \$325.6 million. Oronoko Charter Township accounts for about 6% of the county’s population (based on the 2020 Census) and about 3.2% of its total real property value. It is important to note that while many estimates indicate that the Township’s population has leveled off in recent years, the value of real property has continued to increase at a relatively steady rate.

Comparing the real property classification breakdown for Oronoko Charter Township provides insight into which categories of taxable values are growing, declining, or remaining steady (Figure 4.2). Between 2016 and 2017, agricultural taxable values increased substantially (13.3%). The Township also experienced considerable commercial growth (8.6%). Since 2016, industrial and residential categories have continued to steadily increase. Commercial taxable values were the only category to decrease by -3.8% from 2018-2019 and they decreased again by -0.9% from 2020-2021. Overall, the classification breakdown indicates that agricultural and commercial growth has slowed, while industrial and residential growth has increased.

Figure 4.2. Real Property Value Percent Change in Oronoko Charter Township, 2016 - 2021



Source: Berrien County Equalization Department

BUILDING PERMITS

Building permits are one indication of investment in the community. As Figure 4.3 indicates, the number of total building permits issued in Oronoko Charter Township over the past four years has varied significantly but represent a significant investment in the community.⁸ Figure 4.3 includes all permits, such as the construction of new homes, remodels, additions, accessory buildings, and modifications to or new commercial or institutional buildings.

If the value of residential permits issued over the same period is examined, other trends can be observed. The total value of new home construction permits in 2018 was more than \$18 million (Figure 4.4), while from 2019-2021 the values ranged from \$3-5 million. The total number of new residential permits has been relatively steady, but the value of those permits has fluctuated. Nevertheless, the data indicates that many of the new residential investments in Oronoko Township have been sizable ones.

⁸ Oronoko Charter Township

Figure 4.3. Building Permit Activity, 2018-2021

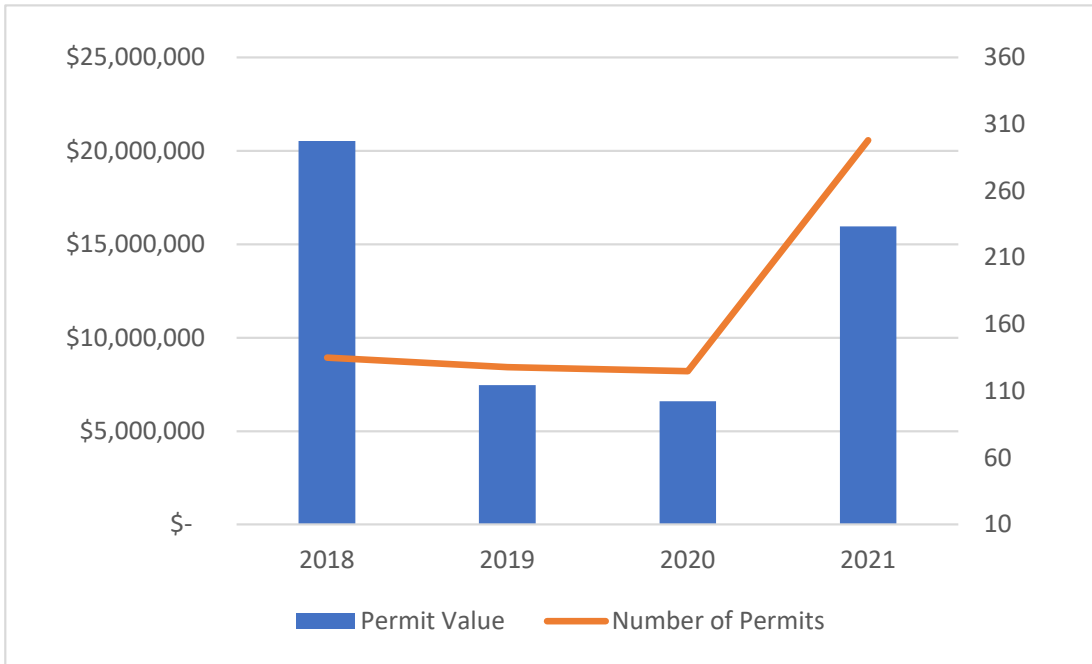
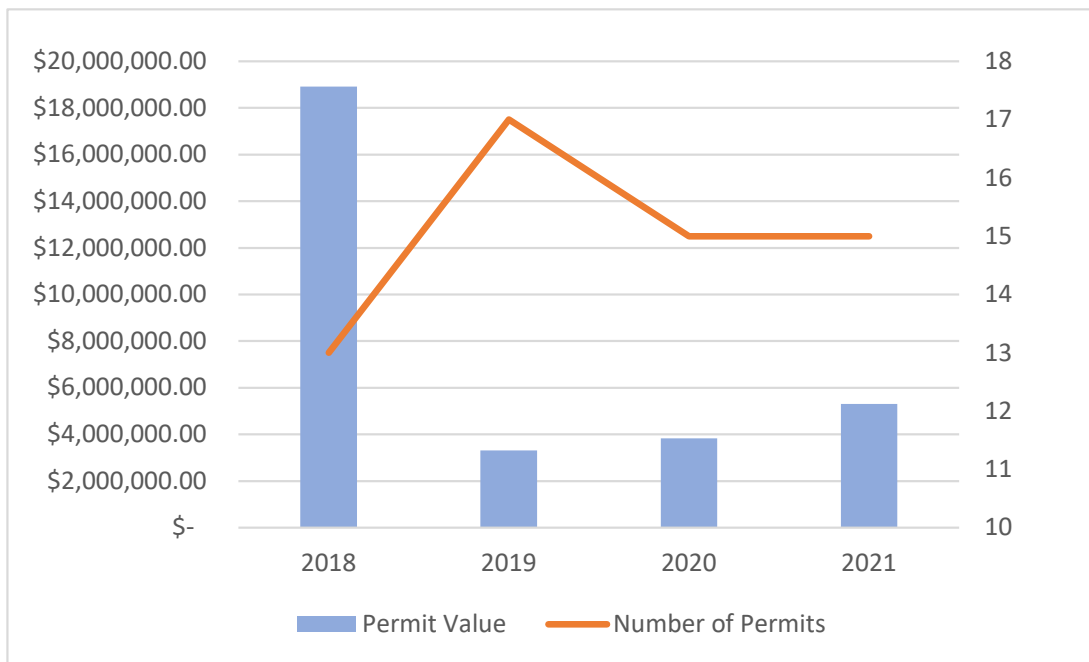


Figure 4.4. Value of Residential Permits, 2018-2021



EMPLOYMENT

With the relatively small extent of commercial and industrial development in the Township, many of the Township's residents find their employment outside of the community. According to the 2020 American Community Survey, the mean (average) travel time to work for township residents was 19.6 minutes. Of the Township's labor force, about 66.4% reported traveling to work alone, 8.8% carpool, and 16.0% indicated that they walked to work. Since 2000, there was a 16.8% decrease in people reporting that they travel to work alone, a 0.9% decrease in those who carpool, and a 13.8% increase in those who walk to work. Overall, the Township has a relatively high number of residents who either walk or carpool to work. About 6% of the people reported working from home in 2019. These figures may be influenced by the presence of Andrews University, where it is likely that many students live in close proximity to the University and are able to walk or carpool. The COVID pandemic also likely altered commuting patterns,

At the beginning of 2000, the Township's workforce reflected a relatively low jobless rate of 3.8%. Unemployment fluctuated since then as employment rates increased during the "great recession" in the late 2000s. From 2010 to 2019, the unemployment rate decreased steadily in Berrien County to a low of 3.9% in 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 resulted in sharply increasing unemployment rates for early 2020, which have since decreased. In December 2021, the state unemployment rates had returned to 4.4% in Michigan and 4.6% in Berrien County. Figure 4.5 illustrates the unemployment rate in Berrien County, Michigan from 2000 through 2020.

Figure 4.5. Monthly Unemployment Rate in Berrien County, MI (not seasonally adjusted)



Source: Michigan Department of Technology, Management & Budget, LAUS

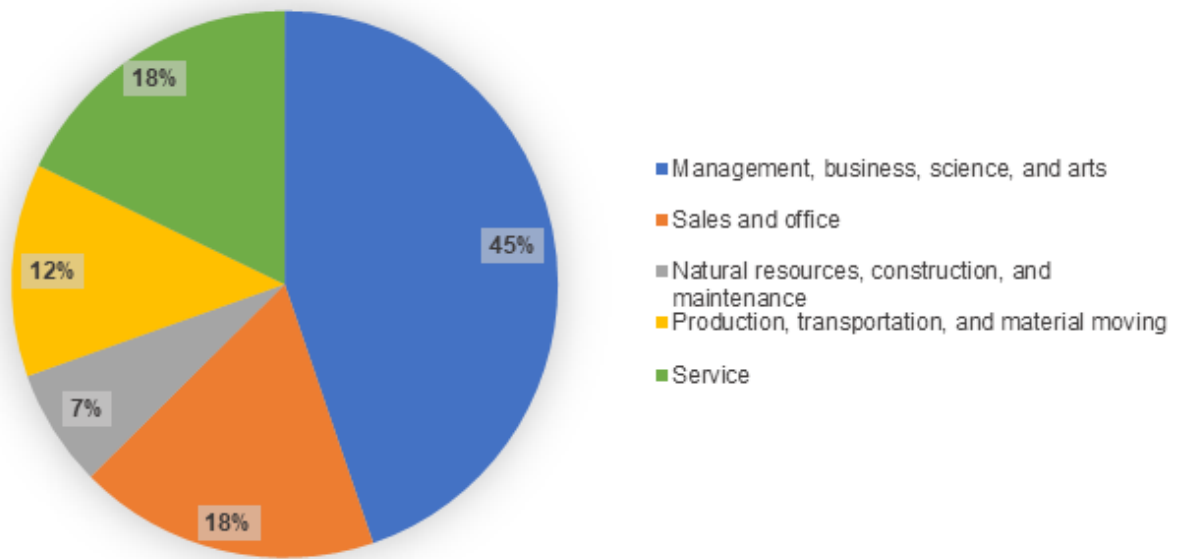
Over the last 20 years, the jobless rate in Berrien County has closely mirrored that of the state in general. Over this time, the jobless rate in Berrien County was at its lowest point in 2000 at 3.9%. By 2009, however, the jobless rate had more than tripled to 12.7% in the county and 13.7% in the state of Michigan. Since that time, the jobless rate has significantly declined to similar rates before the economic crash associated with the national housing bubble.

Of those who are employed in Oronoko Charter Township, the 2020 American Community Survey reports nearly half (44.8%) are employed in management, business, sciences, and arts occupations. This category includes educational jobs, which is the largest subgroup in this category of occupations. The presence of Andrews University is largely responsible for the high number of educational jobs in the Township. Additionally, 17.8% are employed in sales and office occupations, 17.8% are employed

in service occupations, 7.0% are employed in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations, and 12.6% are employed in production, transportation, and material moving occupations. Despite the predominant agricultural land use in the Township, farming, fishing, and forestry only account for 1.3% of total employment within the natural resources occupation category.

Compared to occupations reported in the 2000 Census, there was a decrease in all occupation categories except Production, transportation, and material moving occupations. Sales and office and natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations experienced the largest decline (-33.5% and 12.6% respectively), while production, transportation, and material moving occupations grew by 4.3%. Management, business, science, and arts occupation decreased by -3.3%, and jobs in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations decreased by -9.4%.

Figure 4.6. Occupations of Oronoko Charter Township Residents, 2020*



*5-Year Estimates from the 2020 American Community Survey Estimates

Although Oronoko Charter Township is largely a rural and agricultural community, some employment is centered in the Township. It is home to several larger employers and institutions such as Andrews University, which provides significant employment for area residents. The following is a list of several of the largest employers with locations in the Township:

Table 4.1. Major Employers & Institutions in Oronoko Charter Township, 2021

Employer	Number of Employees (approx.)
Andrews University	800
Berrien Springs Public Schools	119
Berrien RESA	125
Honor Credit Union	229
Tabor Hill Winery*	225
Twixwood Nursery	80
Tafcor	16

*Includes employees from both Tabor Hill Winery and Round Barn Estate

PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Property Values. As the economy has recovered from the high unemployment rates in the late 2000s, the Township has retained strong development activity and property values. Investment in Oronoko Charter Township continues to increase in value and property values have increased since 2012. Agricultural, industrial, and residential property values have all experienced positive increases in value since 2016. Trends indicate that the values of industrial and residential properties will continue to increase in the future. As a result, the Township can expect developments of this nature to continue.

Workforce. The Township enjoys a diversified workforce consisting of jobs in management, business, science, arts, sales and office, and service occupations. Since 2000, there has been a substantial increase in service occupations and a decrease in production, transportation, and material moving occupations. As the Township considers opportunities for future businesses, these trends should be observed to help inform potential skillsets that are already held by township residents.

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CHAPTER 5

Land Use and Development Patterns

CH 5. LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Oronoko Charter Township has an area of approximately 33 square miles. It is bounded on the north by Royalton Township, on the south by Buchanan Township, on the west by Baroda Township, and on the east by the St. Joseph River and Lake Chapin. Additionally, US-31 runs through the eastern portion of the Township from north to south, connecting the Township with larger urban centers to the north and south. These features have affected growth and development patterns in the Township over time and will continue to make the Township an attractive location for new development.

LAND COVER

Land cover describes the vegetation or land use that occupies the land in a given community. The land cover data analyzed for this plan is part of the larger National Land Cover Dataset (NLCD) as prepared by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) in 2019. This information was derived from LandsatTM (Thematic Mapper) satellite imagery and was interpreted using an automated computer-based process. This was followed by an accuracy assessment of the satellite data that involved the use of aerial photographs to judge the quality of the computer-based interpretation. The 2019 NLCD data was released in May 2021 to provide “innovative, consistent, and robust methodologies for production of a multi-temporal land cover and land cover change database from 2001 to 2019 at 2-3-year intervals.”⁹ This information is useful in determining the distribution of vegetation and development patterns and their change over time throughout the Township. The 2019 NLCD includes 16 classes of land cover type based on a modified Anderson Level II classification system. The smallest “on the ground” unit of measure for the 2019 NLCD is 30 square meters.

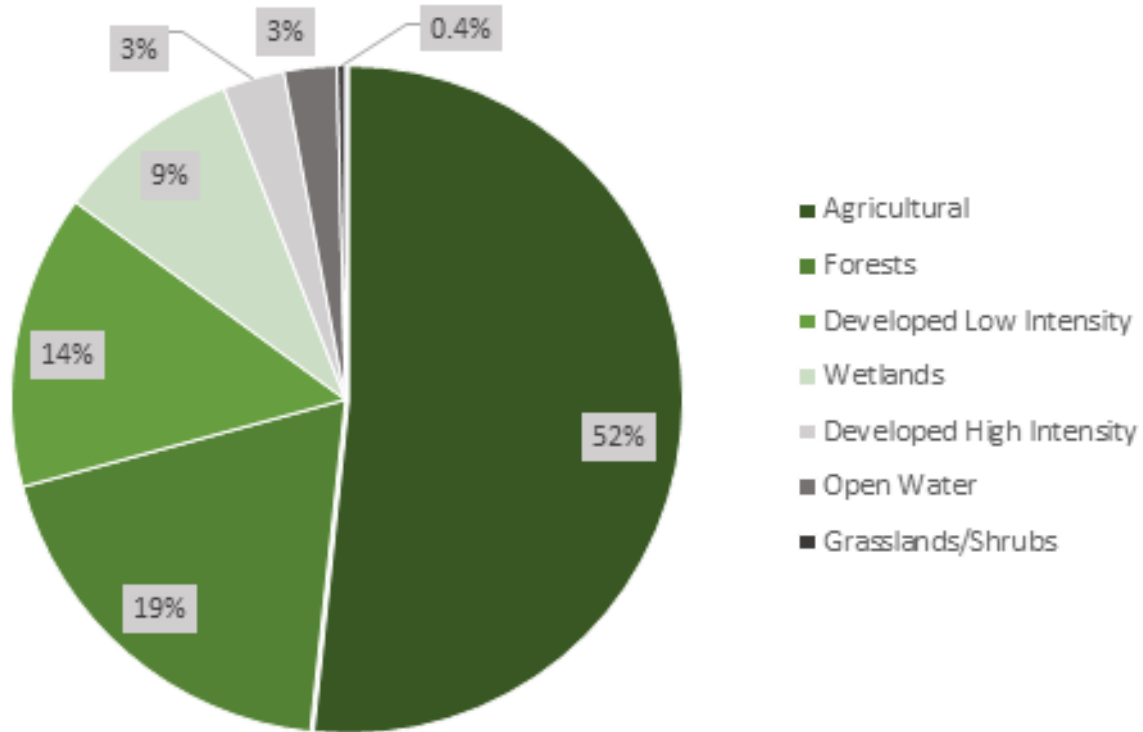
Map 6 illustrates the land cover composition of Oronoko Charter Township based on the 2019 NLCD. The predominant land cover type found in the Township is agricultural (52%), which is a composite of two NLCD classes found in the Township: pasture/hay and crops. The forested class is also an aggregate grouping of three forest cover types: deciduous forest, evergreen forest, and mixed forest. This group is the second-largest land use type representing approximately 19% of the Township’s land cover. Low-intensity developed land is comprised of barren, open space, and low-intensity NLCD classes, which comprise 14% of the Township. High-intensity developed land includes medium- and high-intensity NLCD classes and makes up a small percentage (3%) of the Township’s land, primarily near Berrien Springs. The smallest percentage of land cover is grasslands/shrub (0.4%), which is comprised of herbaceous and shrub/shrubland NLCD classes. This is likely due to the large presence of agricultural land in the Township, which often converts flat grassland properties into agricultural fields.



Agricultural uses, such as vineyards, are found throughout the township

⁹ “NLCD 2016 Land Cover (CONUS),” Multi-Resolution Land Characteristics Consortium, last modified 2016, www.mrlc.gov/data/nlcd-2016-land-cover-conus

Figure 5.1. Land Cover in Oronoko Charter Township



Source: Multi-Resolution Land Characteristics Consortium, 2019 NLCD.

LAND COVER CHANGE

The 2019 NLCD also includes a NLCD Land Cover Change Index, which provides comprehensive data regarding land use change from 2011 to 2019 in a single layer. Each pixel in this layer represents a land cover change that has occurred at least once over this time. This data has been utilized to examine land cover change in Oronoko Charter Township between 2001 and 2019. Map 6 provides a visual representation of these changes.



Large lot residential development has occurred in some of the Township's agricultural areas.

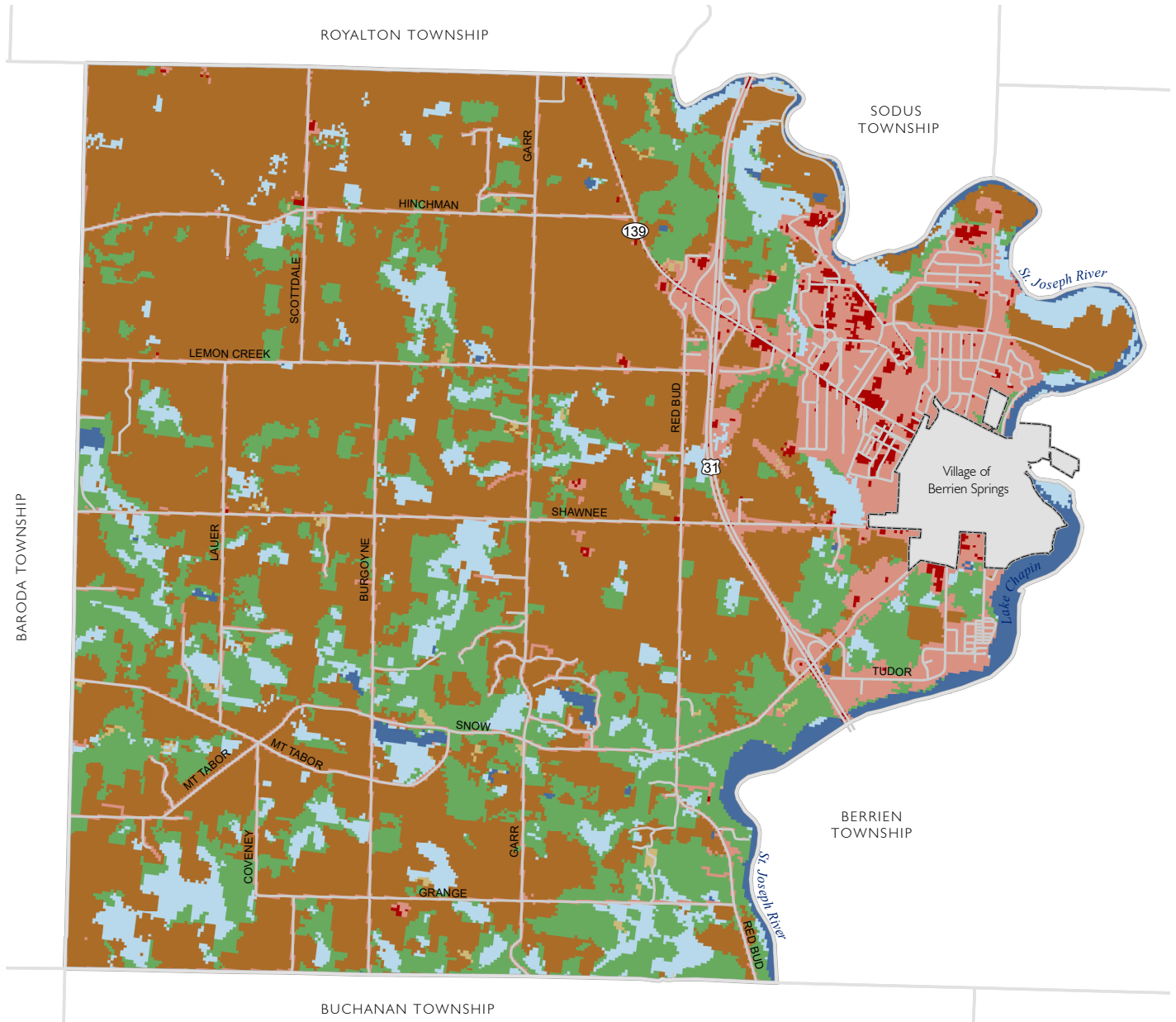
Between 2011 and 2019, the greatest land cover change within the Township was wetland and water features (Map 7). This category had an overall change of approximately 207 acres. This value represents an overall change, including the addition of some water features and the removal of others over this time. Following this class, changes to or from urban areas (mostly to urban areas) encompassed approximately 177 acres. The smallest changes occurred in forests (37 acres). As indicated by Map 7, there has been relatively minimal overall change across the Township since 2001. This indicates that the Township has remained relatively steady in retaining existing infrastructure and its rural character.

Comparing total acreage of land cover classes between 1992 and 2019 also provides insight into which classes are increasing or decreasing in acreage (Table 5.1). Between 1992 and 2019, agricultural land decreased by 18%, from 13,478 acres to 11,006 acres. This was likely influenced by the major increase in urban and built-up lands. It is also likely that increased development contributed to a loss in forests and grasslands. However, there has been an increase in wetlands between 1992 and 2019, which may be a result of increased awareness of the valuable ecosystem services they provide and concerted efforts to protect them.








Although the comparison of this data between 1992 and 2019 indicates significant increases and decreases in land cover, it must be noted that mapping procedures, data collection techniques, and procedures for analyzing spatial data have greatly advanced since 1992. Therefore, these values should not be interpreted with a purely scientific mindset. Rather, these values are useful for interpreting trends related to land use changes over a longer period. Based on a comparison of land cover changes between 1992 and 2019, along with spatial data from 2001 to 2019, it is apparent that significant urban development occurred in the late 1990s and has since slowed.

MAP 6. 2016 LAND COVER

LAND USE & DEV. PATTERNS



Legend

- | | |
|---|--|
|  Developed, Low Intensity |  Wetlands |
|  Crops and pasture |  Herbaceous & Shrub |
|  Forest |  Open Water |
|  Developed, High Intensity | |

1 inch = 3,500 feet

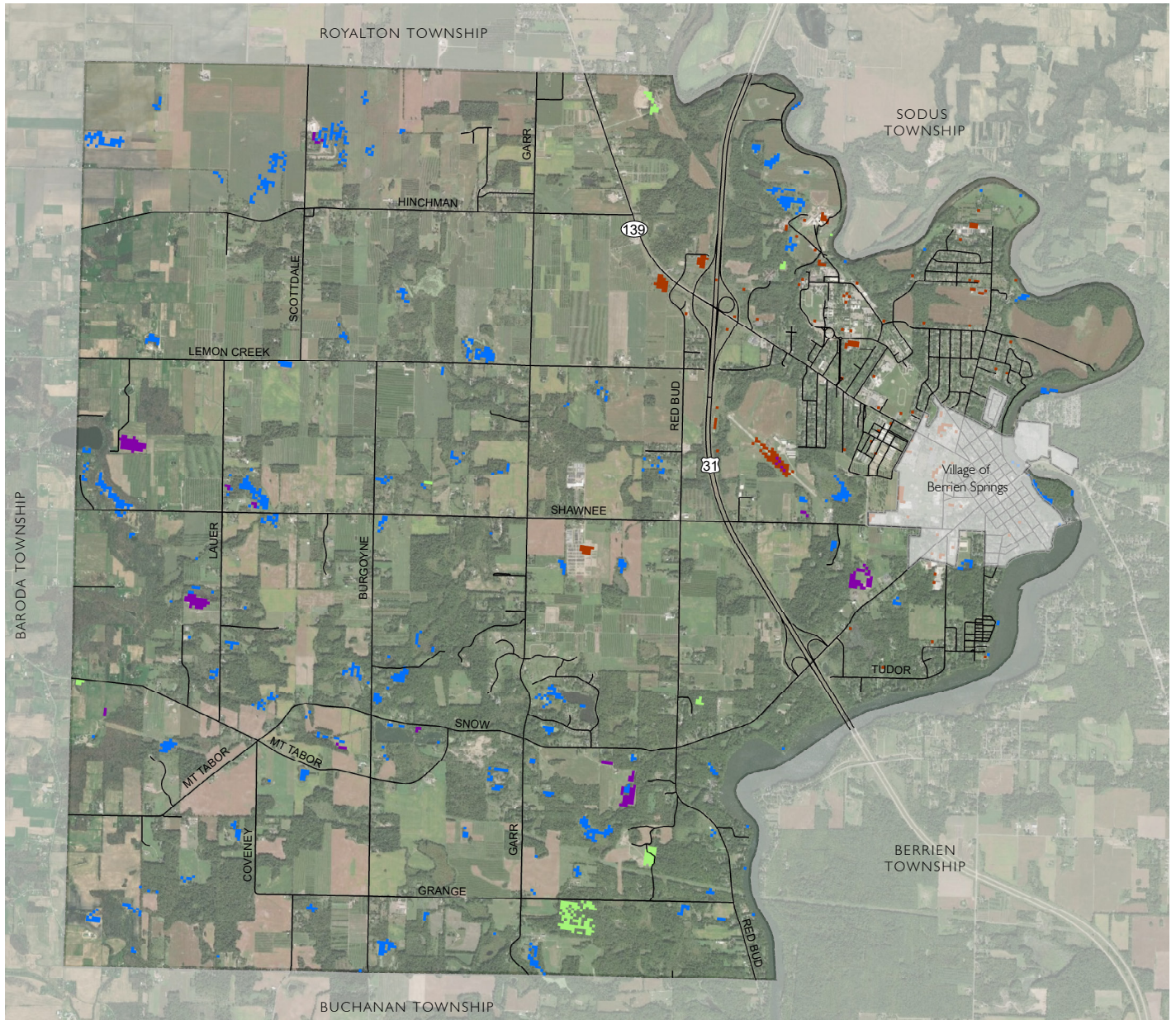


Data Sources: Berrien County GIS, MRLC NLCD, and Michigan GIS Open Data

williams&works
engineers | surveyors | planners







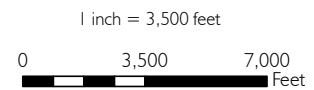
MAP 7. LAND COVER CHANGE 2001-2016



LAND USE & DEV.
PATTERNS

Legend

-  Change to or from water/wetland
-  Change to or from urban
-  Change to or from cultivated crops
-  Change to or from forest



Data Sources: Berrien County GIS, MRLC NLCD, and Michigan GIS Open Data

williams&works
engineers | surveyors | planners



A QUICK BUILD-OUT ANALYSIS

A build-out analysis is a powerful tool for illustrating the potential impact of master plans and zoning policy if all buildable lands are developed at the maximum permitted density. This section evaluates the current zoning conditions in Oronoko Charter Township and considers the impacts future growth will have on the community by performing a build-out analysis.

A build-out analysis is essentially an evaluation of the current zoning situation in a community. It acts as a worst-case scenario tool for planning. The analysis can assist local governments by showing what growth the locality will allow in the future under current zoning designations. The resulting information can then be used to estimate the impacts of future growth on the community in question. The primary output from the analysis is the maximum number of dwelling units that can be built in each zoning district. Future population estimates for the community can then be derived from the number of potential dwelling units and then compared with population projections for the area. This comparison will then allow one to judge the effectiveness of the area's current zoning.

Many build-out analyses have shown a disparity between the existing population, projected 20-year growth, and potential build-out figures, resulting in a serious rethinking of public policy. In ten Michigan communities examined by Kilpatrick and Wyckoff, build-out analyses showed that the current zoning in these communities on average would support a population increase of 453%.¹⁰ This extreme "overzoning" as it has come to be known, can be seen as an invitation to inefficient land use and a perpetuation of suburban sprawl.

Step 1: Analyze Current Zoning

The first step in analyzing Oronoko Charter Township requires the calculation of the total amount of developable land within each residential zoning district. For purposes of this analysis, it was assumed developable parcels were those with an area greater than five acres. Additionally, to account for the necessary infrastructure needed (roads, utilities, etc.) to support development, 15% was subtracted from the total developable land in each residential zoning district. Table 5.2 shows the amount of land occupied by each residential district in the Township.

Table 5.2 Developable Land Based on Residential Zoning District

Mapped Residential Districts	Developable Acres	Net developable Acres (Minus 15 % for Infrastructure)
A-R Agricultural Residential	14,877	12,645
E-1 Estate Residential	1,437	1,221
R-1 Single Family Residential	859	730
R-2 Single & Two-Family Residential	1,091	927
R-3 General Residential	135	115
Total	18,399	15,638

¹⁰ Mark Wyckoff and Erin Kilpatrick, "Planning Zoning News," (April 2002).

Step 2: Determine Potential Dwellings

The second step in the process is to determine the number of potential dwelling units allowed by zoning standards at build-out. To derive this number, the total developable net area in each district is divided by the minimum lot area allowed in the given district (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3 Residential Lots at Build-Out Based on Zoning District

Mapped Residential Districts	Net Developable Acres	Minimum Lot Size	Potential Number of Lots
A-R - Agricultural Residential	12,645	1 Acre	12,645
E-1 Estate Residential	1,221	1 Acre	1,221
R-1 Single Family Residential	730	15,000 sq. ft.	2,120
R-2 - Single & Two-Family Residential	927	12,000 sq. ft.	3,365
R-3 General Residential	115	12,000 sq. ft.	417
Total	15,638	-	19,768

Step 3: Determine Potential Population

The third and final step in the analysis is to determine the total population resulting from the number of potential lots, or the potential population at build-out. This is accomplished by multiplying the number of lots by 2.49, the average number of people per household in the Township according to the 2019 ACS 5-year estimates. Since most of the Township consists of single-family homes, we have assumed that each of the residential zoning districts will contain one home per lot.

Table 5.4 Population at Build-Out Based on Zoning District

Mapped Residential Districts	Potential Number of Lots	Number of additional residents at build-out
A-R Agricultural Residential	12,645	31,486
E-1 Estate Residential	1,221	3,040
R-1 Single Family Residential	2,120	5,279
R-2 Single & Two-Family Residential	3,365	8,379
R-3 General Residential	417	1,038
Total	19,768	49,222

The resulting calculations show that under current zoning, Oronoko Charter Township would have a population of 49,222 persons at build-out, which is an increase of 440% from the 2020 Census population. Based on the rates of growth described in Chapter 3, and given current zoning, the Township is not likely to reach full build-out in the projected future, if ever. This means that the Township is “overzoned” to accommodate far more growth than it is likely to experience over the life of this plan. This also means that the Township’s current zoning standards need to provide more guidance in terms of where in the Township new development should be located.

As the Township begins to look at alternative future land use patterns, it may be helpful to revisit the build-out analysis and consider existing patterns as well as planned new growth. However, care should be taken when interpreting these results. This analysis should be seen only as a theoretical model of Oronoko Charter Township’s current zoning map. As with most models, there are many variables and assumptions built into the analysis that are not necessarily reflective of the real-world situation.

PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Land Cover. As illustrated in the Land Cover map, Oronoko Charter Township is still predominately a rural and agricultural community and is likely to remain as such for the foreseeable future. The rural character of the Township is evident through the abundance of agricultural and forest lands, which together comprise 52% of land cover in the Township. Additionally, as depicted in Map 7, there have been minimal changes to land cover since 2001. This indicates that changes in land cover and associated uses are occurring gradually within the Township. This provides the Township with the opportunity to consider and plan for desired changes in the future. However, the overall increase in developed areas and loss in agricultural land indicates that development is trending towards the loss of agricultural land to more residential and commercial uses. The Township should consider this trend in future planning endeavors and consider how future development can continue to protect the rural character of the Township.

Zoning. As the build-out analysis demonstrated, the current zoning in the Township provides little guidance for the location of new development. This apparent lack of direction may result in new development becoming fragmented and undermine the rural character and natural beauty that attracts much of this development in the first place. Therefore, as the Township considers amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and map in the future, it is recommended that the Township consider revisions that would provide more guidance for the location of new development.

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CHAPTER 6

Community Facilities & Services

CH 6. COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

Community facilities and services play a fundamental role in augmenting civic engagement, sponsoring cultural events, and promoting community pride. Such facilities and services include educational institutions, recreational opportunities, and public safety facilities, all of which contribute to the quality of life experienced by residents in the Township. Therefore, this chapter of the Community Profile begins with a discussion of educational opportunities within the region and portrays local school enrollment and trends. In addition, parks and recreation areas are cataloged. Finally, the chapter discusses public safety facilities that service the Township.

HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS

Residents of Oronoko Charter Township are within proximity to many educational institutions, and one university, Andrews University, is located within the Township’s boundaries. Several additional colleges and universities are within driving distance. These include Lake Michigan College in Benton Harbor, Western Michigan University – Southwest Campus in Benton Harbor, Southwestern Michigan College in Niles, Siena Heights College in Benton Harbor, and Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana.



Andrews University is an educational institution of the Seventh Day Adventist Church

Andrews University

Located in the northeast portion of the Township just east of US-31, Andrews University is an educational institution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It was founded in 1874 in Battle Creek, and moved to its present location in the Township in 1901. Originally called Battle Creek College, the name was changed to Emmanuel Missionary College upon its relocation. The name was changed again in 1960 to Andrews University, after the church’s first overseas missionary, John Nevins Andrews.

During the 2019-2020 school year, Andrews University’s overall enrollment was 4,767 students, with 1,708 students enrolled as undergraduates, 1,035 graduate students, and 716 in US off-campus programs. In fall 2020, 3,171 students were enrolled on or through the Berrien Springs campus, which was a decrease from approximately 3,400 students in 2019.

As of 2018, approximately 713 of the University’s students were international, representing 39 different countries. The University was ranked in the top 5 percent for overall ethnic diversity and the top 10 percent of universities for financial value according to College Factual, which publishes its annual rankings with USA Today. The University was also ranked in the top third of institutions by the Wall Street Journal/Times Higher Education and was included in the best Midwest colleges and research universities by Forbes America’s Top Colleges. The University employs approximately 800 full-time staff, including faculty members teaching more than 100 undergraduate academic programs and degrees and 38 graduate degrees.

The University has a significant impact on land use and development in the Township, as it owns approximately 2,400 acres of property in the Township. The presence of the University also diversifies the Township in terms of ethnicity, housing, educational attainment, and many other areas.

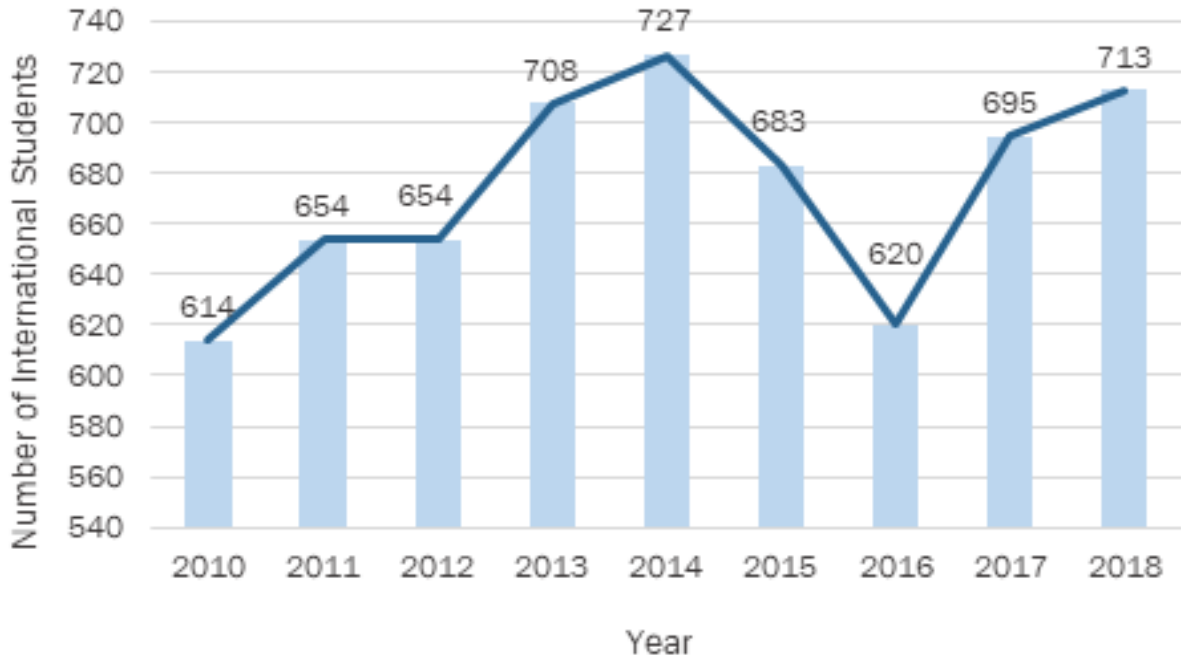
Andrews University also provides many cultural facilities in the Township, including the Siegfried Horn Archaeological Museum, the Howard Performing Arts Center, the Crayon Box (Children’s Day Care), and the James White Library.

Table 6.1 Total Enrollment at Andrews University

Year	2015 - 2016	2016 - 2017	2017 - 2018	2018 - 2019	2019 - 2020	2020 - 2021
Total Enrollment*	4,582	4,567	4,735	4,753	4,767	4,117

* Non-US programs not included
Source: Andrews University Enrollment Summary

Figure 6.1 International Student Enrollment at Andrews University



Source: Multi-Resolution Land Characteristics Consortium, 2019 NLCD.

PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Oronoko Charter Township is served by four school districts: Berrien Springs Public Schools, Buchanan Community Schools, River Valley School District, and Lakeshore School District. However, the vast majority of the Township is served by Berrien Springs Public Schools.



Approximately 3,717 K-12 students are enrolled at Berrien Springs Public Schools.

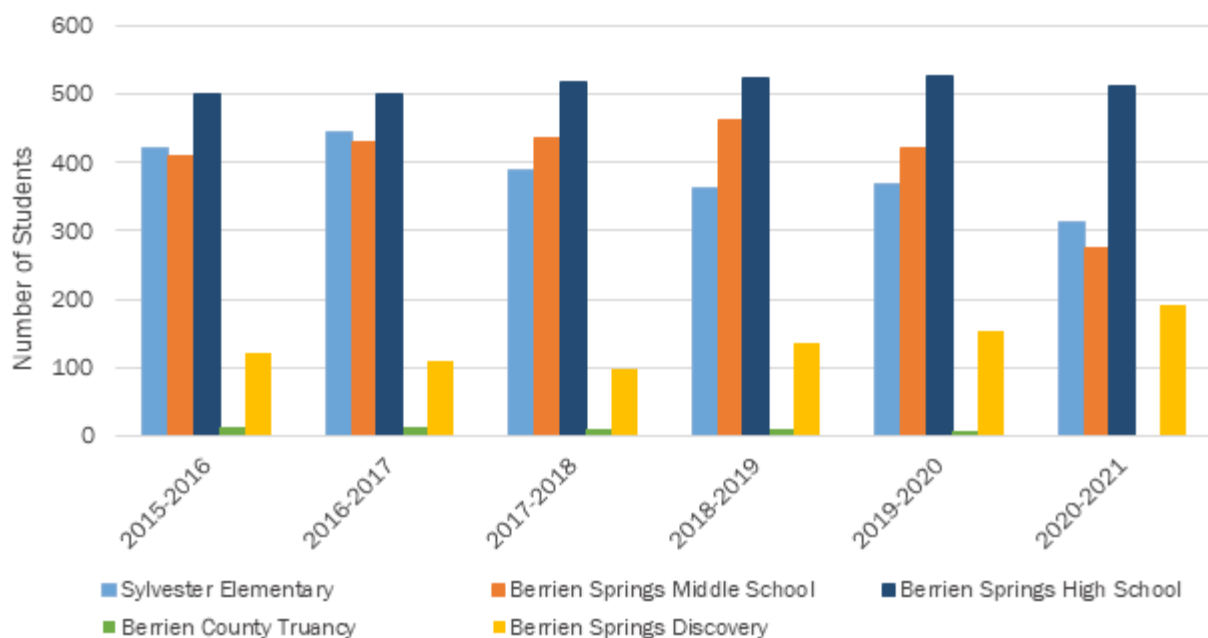
Berrien Springs Public Schools

Berrien Springs Public Schools enrolled 3,717 K-12 students in the 2020-21 school year and almost all of Oronoko Charter Township is within this district. This school district extends beyond the Township’s boundaries and contains Berrien Springs High School, Berrien Springs Middle School, Sylvester Elementary, Mars Elementary, Berrien County Truancy Academy, Berrien Springs Discovery Academy, and Berrien Springs Virtual Academy. All of these facilities are located within the Village of Berrien Springs.

Enrollment trends illustrate that the school district is growing steadily, which is somewhat surprising given that the population of the

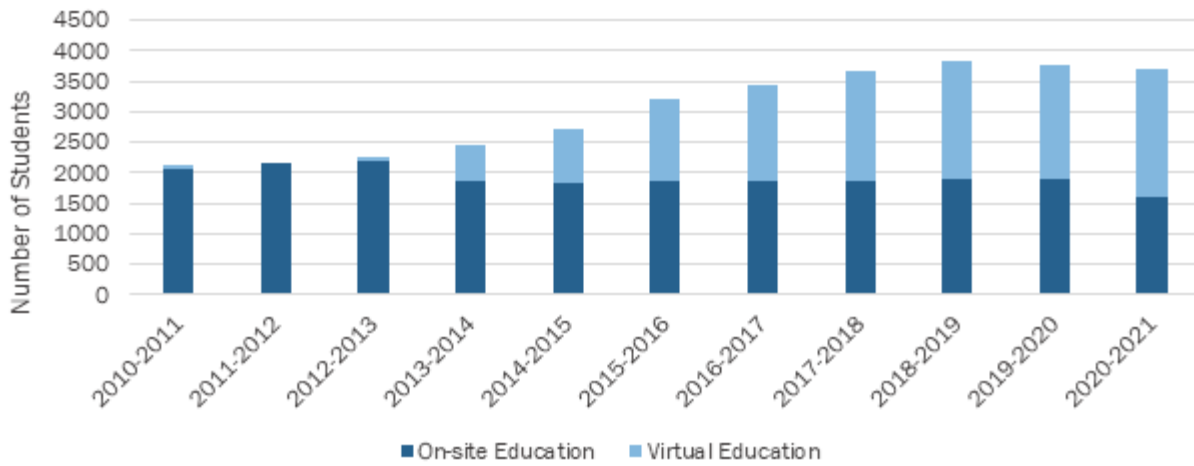
Township has declined in recent years. Since 2015, enrollment in the district has grown by 15% or 505 students. However, a closer look at enrollment numbers in the public schools indicates that the schools located in Berrien Springs have experienced relatively level numbers of student enrollment. However, the enrollment numbers in virtual programs, such as SUCCESS, West Michigan Virtual, and Berrien Springs Virtual Academy have greatly impacted the total enrollment numbers for the school district. Enrollment in virtual programs is largely responsible for the increase in student numbers. As shown in Figure 6.4, virtual programs have been becoming an increasingly popular choice for students over the past few years. Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, more students opted for virtual schools in the past two years.

Figure 6.2. Enrollment Trends in Berrien Springs Public Schools



Source: MI School Count Data.

Figure 6.3. Overall Enrollment Trends in Berrien Springs Public Schools



Source: MI School Count Data.

In 2020, construction began on a \$19.7 million Arts and Athletic Center facility in Berrien Springs. The Performing Arts Center (PAC) would provide classroom & instructional space for the choir program, band program, drama & musical productions, and possibly technology-related programming such as robotics, computer science, and future technology-related programming. In addition, the facility would provide auditorium style seating, storage areas and performing areas for the school district’s Fine Arts programs.

The Indoor Athletic Complex (IAC) would provide auxiliary gym and practice space for up to three (3) indoor athletic teams at one time, a new fitness and weight room, and wrestling and competitive cheer practice space. The IAC would be strategically located between the Tennis Complex, Sylvester Outdoor Athletic Center and Baseball/Softball complexes to allow all athletes to benefit from the Fitness and Weight Room. The facility opened in 2022.¹¹

Buchanan Community Schools

Buchanan Community Schools are located in Buchanan, south of the Township; however, a small (approximately 200-acre) area of this district reaches north into Oronoko Charter Township along Red Bud Trail south of Grange Road.

There are six schools within Buchanan Community Schools: Buchanan High School, Buchanan Middle School, Moccasin Elementary School, Ottawa Elementary School, Buchanan Step Up, and Buchanan Virtual Academy. During the 2020-2021 school year, approximately 1,523 students were enrolled in Buchanan Community Schools and were distributed as follows:

- Moccasin and Ottawa Elementary Schools: 547 students
- Buchanan Middle School: 265 students
- Buchanan High School: 488 students
- Buchanan Step Up and Buchanan Virtual Academy: 210 students

¹¹ <https://www.homeoftheshamrocks.org/district/arts-and-athletic-center-aac-project/>

River Valley School District

The River Valley School District is located in Three Oaks, which is southwest of the Township; however, approximately 450 acres in the southwest corner of the Township are within this school district's boundaries.

There are three schools within this district: Chikaming Elementary School, Three Oaks Elementary School, and River Valley Middle / High School. During the 2020-2021 school year, approximately 553 students were enrolled in the River Valley School District and were distributed as follows:

- Chikaming Elementary: 117 students
- Three Oaks Elementary: 126 students
- River Valley Middle / High School: 310 students

Lakeshore School District

The Lakeshore School District is located in Baroda and Stevensville to the west of the Township. Only about 80 acres of this school district is located in Oronoko Charter Township along Hartline Road, which is the Township's western border.

There are five schools within this district, none of which are in Oronoko Charter Township: Lakeshore High School, Lakeshore Middle School, Stewart Elementary, Hollywood Elementary, and Roosevelt Elementary. During the 2020-2021 school year, approximately 2,778 students were enrolled in the Lakeshore School District and were distributed as follows:

- Stewart, Hollywood, and Roosevelt Elementary Schools: 1,237 students
- Lakeshore Middle School: 651 students
- Lakeshore High School: 890 students

PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Oronoko Charter Township is home to four private schools that serve the community: Andrews Academy, Ruth Murdoch Elementary, the Village Adventist Elementary School, and Trinity Lutheran School. These private institutions are active in the community and provide unique educational opportunities for students and families in the area.

Andrews Academy and Ruth Murdoch Elementary School

Andrews Academy is a Seventh-day Adventist secondary school located on the campus of Andrews University that offers grades 9-12. The Academy has a staff of about 24 professionals, and enrollment at the Academy has been steadily increasing over the past few years, with 268 students attending the Academy in the 2018-2019 school year. The academic program has been recognized by the United States Department of Education as a recipient of the School of Excellence Award for secondary schools.

Ruth Murdoch Elementary School is a Seventh-day Adventist elementary school for children grades K through 8, also located on the campus of Andrews University. Both Andrews Academy and Ruth Murdoch Elementary are part of the Seventh-day Adventist school network, which includes more than 7,000 elementary and high schools around the world.

Village Adventist School

Located in Berrien Springs, the Village Adventist Elementary School has been in operation for just over 100 years. It is a co-ed school offering grades K through 8. The school is owned by the Michigan Association of Seventh-day Adventists and enrolls approximately 159 students.

Trinity Lutheran School

Located in the Village of Berrien Springs, Trinity Lutheran School is part of the Trinity Lutheran Church and offers preschool through 8th grade. The school is accredited by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, MANS (Michigan Association of Non-public Schools), and the Michigan District of the Missouri Synod. Enrollment at the school is about 68 students.

RECREATION & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The presence of high-quality recreational opportunities is a helpful indicator of an area's quality of life and such facilities characterize Oronoko Charter Township. The developed portions of the Township contain numerous recreational opportunities, including trails and bikeways, and parks. The health and leisure benefits of a trail facility and other recreation lands, such as several popular golf courses, extend beyond the Township. In addition to recreational facilities, public schools provide neighborhood spaces for interaction, learning, and community building, and safety services provide a compulsory service to the community.



Oronoko Charter Township maintains one park and five cemeteries.

Township Facilities

Oronoko Charter Township maintains one park and five cemeteries. Robert G. Feather Park is located adjacent to the Township Hall and contains one baseball field, playground equipment, picnic facilities, and two pavilions: one enclosed pavilion with restroom facilities and one open pavilion. The enclosed pavilion can be reserved by township residents with payment of a deposit.

The Township adopted a Parks and Recreation Plan in 2013 and an update to that plan was completed in 2018. The 2013 Plan was the basis for a successful \$278,100 development grant from the Michigan DNR Trust Fund in 2017, which included

the addition of two football/soccer fields, a concession/restroom building, a parking lot, regional trailhead, accessible pathways, and a section of regional trail located on property adjacent between the Township Hall/Feather Park and the public safety building.

A ten-foot wide paved path will be constructed next spring along Snow Road from Shawnee Road to the entrance of the park to provide safe, non-vehicular travel to the park from downtown. In addition to the DNR Trust Fund grant, fundraising efforts have resulted in the Township receiving grants from the Heart of Cook Foundation (Cook Nuclear Plant) and from the Berrien Community Foundation "For Good" grant program. The Township has also received donations from businesses, groups and families in the community to assist with this project that will improve the quality of life and health in the Township.

Greater Berrien Springs Recreation Department

The Greater Berrien Springs Recreation Department (GBSRD) is a non-profit organization that provides year-round athletic programs for boys and girls ages 4-15. Programs offered by GBSRD include basketball, volleyball, soccer, football, cheerleading, tennis, baseball, softball, track & field, wrestling, and others. Most of the activities are held at locations provided by Berrien Springs Public Schools. This organization provides diversity within the Township as children from Berrien Springs Public Schools, Ruth Murdoch Elementary, Village Seventh-day Adventist School, Andrews Academy, Trinity Lutheran School, and children who are home-schooled all participate in the GBSRD programs.

Programs are funded through contributions from Oronoko Charter Township, Berrien Township, the Village of Berrien Springs, and numerous local businesses. Additionally, there is a current effort to create a Recreation Authority among Oronoko Charter Township, Berrien Township, the Village of Berrien Springs, and Berrien Springs Public schools. This Authority would help raise additional financial resources for the GBSRD and further enhance the program. By expanding its ability to meet the recreational needs of a variety of residents, the Recreation Authority is expected to take the GBSRD program from "good" to "great."

Farm Markets and Wineries

Oronoko Charter Township is home to several high-quality farms and wineries that serve an important role in the Township, as well as the region as a whole. These farms have been located in the Township for decades and their continued operation plays an important role in defining the Township's agricultural heritage. These important agricultural operations also serve as a recreational opportunity for residents and visitors.

Local farms in Oronoko Charter Township include Stovers, Hildebrand, and Lemon Creek. These farms operate farm markets as well as "u-pick", where visitors pick their own fruit, which is generally available from June through October.

Stovers Farm also offers opportunities for education through school field trips and entertainment on the weekends, and Lemon Creek Winery and Fruit Farm hosts numerous events, including a radio show and an art fair. Wineries in the Township include Tabor Hill, Lemon Creek, Round Barn, Domaine, Free Run Cellars, Gravity, and Red Top. Many of the wines produced at these wineries have won numerous local and national awards, and some wineries also host events, banquets, and offer winemaking classes.

The Township's farms and wineries are an important component of the local economy and a key aspect of the Township's identity. The viability of these important community members should be considered as one of the Master Plan's recommendations.



The township's fruit farms and wineries serve a unique role in the township and the region.

EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL FACILITIES

Berrien Springs Community Library. Located at 215 Union Street in Berrien Springs, the Berrien Springs Community Library serves residents of the Township as well as the Village of Berrien Springs. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the library contains over 45,000 books and serial volumes, as well as numerous subscriptions, videos, and audio materials. The library's total circulation in 2019-2020 was 71,121.

Andrews University James White Library

James White Library is a large, multi-level research library that primarily serves students and faculty at Andrews University. Originally located on the second floor of the University's Administration Building, it quickly grew and when the library opened in its current location in 1962, it housed over 120,000 volumes. As of this writing, the James White Library houses more than 750,000 volumes, nearly 3,000 periodical subscriptions, and an annual circulation of approximately 62,000 materials. The library also has a collection of non-print material, and its catalog is available on the internet. Members of the community are permitted to use the library materials and databases free of charge on-site. Community patron cards, which costs \$36 annually, may be purchased to check out materials. Discounts are also offered to family members of Andrews University students and personnel, senior citizens, ministers, and educators.

Andrews University Howard Performing Arts Center

Andrews University Howard Performing Arts Center is located on the university's campus and is a cultural resource for the entire region. It serves as a performance venue for university orchestras and choirs, community-based musical groups, as well as visiting musicians. The center's broadcast and recording studios is also the home to WAUS-FM, the campus public radio station. In addition, the facility is available to schools, civic groups, and other organizations for special events and educational programs.



Howard Performing Arts Center benefits both the University and the community.

1839 Courthouse Square

Located in Berrien Springs, this is the oldest Courthouse in the state of Michigan. It was used as a Courthouse until 1894 when the county seat was moved from Berrien Springs to St. Joseph. Since that time, new owners re-used the buildings on the courthouse square for various uses, including a dance hall, church, and low-income apartments. Today the square houses a county museum, archives, and serves as headquarters for the Berrien County Historical Association. Its original buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Also included in this historical site are the Sheriff's residence, the old County Office building, a two-story log house, and a blacksmith shop.



The 1839 Courthouse in Berrien Springs is the oldest Courthouse in Michigan.

PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES AND FACILITIES



Police

Oronoko Charter Township is served by the Berrien Springs Oronoko Township Police Department, which is funded entirely by Oronoko Charter Township. This police department is comprised of ten full- and part-time policed officers, which are complimented by a reserve division of citizens that provide support to officers and community events. The department's personnel consists of the Chief of Police, Patrol Lieutenant, Detective, and Patrol Officers.

Officers also participate in several county task force operations including the Sheriff's Tactical Response Unit, the Homicide Task Force, the Fire Investigation Task Force, and various county wide traffic enforcement initiatives.



Fire and Rescue

The Township is served by the Berrien Springs/ Oronoko Township Fire Department, which is a volunteer fire department consisting of 28 firefighters. The department's personnel are also trained in search & rescue, vehicle extrication, hazardous material awareness, swift water rescue, ice rescue, carbon monoxide alarm responses, and some members are also trained as First Responders.

PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Diversity. The presence of Andrews University increases the diversity within the Township, as many international students attend the university. The total enrollment of Andrews University has been increasing and the number of international students increased between 2016 and 2017. Additionally, the university contributes to a large student population in the Township. This provides a unique situation for the Township to engage with a younger demographic. As such, the Township may plan for increased services and facilities that may accommodate this population as student enrollment continues to rise.

Recreation. Recreational and cultural opportunities are plentiful for Oronoko Charter Township residents. As the Township's median age is relatively young and there is a growing student population, there may be an increased need for facilities, services, and active forms of recreation in the future, such as hiking, biking, or water-based activities. This may also place additional demand on the revenue available to support those services.

Agribusiness. The Township's agricultural businesses and wineries provide an important and unique service within the community, and care should be taken to support their active role in the community and to resist low-density residential development patterns that might encroach on their viability.

A background image of a construction site. Two workers in yellow hard hats and safety vests are standing near a silver car. A white van is parked nearby. There are orange and yellow traffic cones on the ground. The scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent brown filter.

CHAPTER 7

Utilities & Transportation

CH 7. UTILITIES & TRANSPORTATION

A safe and well-balanced transportation network is essential to the health of any jurisdiction, as it links activities and land uses within a community to those in the broader region. Transportation plays a critical role in determining the nature and intensity of land uses that occur throughout a community. Oronoko Charter Township has a wide variety of land uses and, in turn, a rather diverse transportation network that provides its residents with a mixture of transportation experiences, from winding rural roads to busy limited-access highways.

The Township’s land uses do not generate congestion on the level that many Berrien County communities experience. Further, most roads in Oronoko Charter Township navigate straight through the Township, providing sufficient connections with neighboring communities.

This chapter of the Community Profile will chronicle the characteristics of the Township’s transportation system as it pertains to the quality of life and land use planning.

ROAD CLASSIFICATIONS

One approach to gaining a better understanding of transportation networks has been to classify the roads that make up these networks into groups based on the role or function that they play. One such classification scheme was devised by the Berrien County Road Commission. This classification system is shown on Map 8 and contains the following categories:

- Interstate Highway
- State Highway
- County Road, Primary System (paved)
- County Road, Local System (paved)
- County Road, Local System (unpaved)
- Private Road

The following table contains a breakdown of the highways and county primary roads in the Township based on their classification system by the Berrien County Road Commission.

Table 7.1. Highway and Primary Road Classifications Oronoko Charter Township

Interstate Highways		State Highways	
US-31		M-139 (Old US-31)	
County Road, Primary System			
Hollywood Road	Linco Road (part)	Lauer Road	Garr Road (part)
Hinchman Road	Lemon Creek Road (part)	Shawnee Road	Red Bud Trail
Scottsdale Road		Snow Road	Hills Road

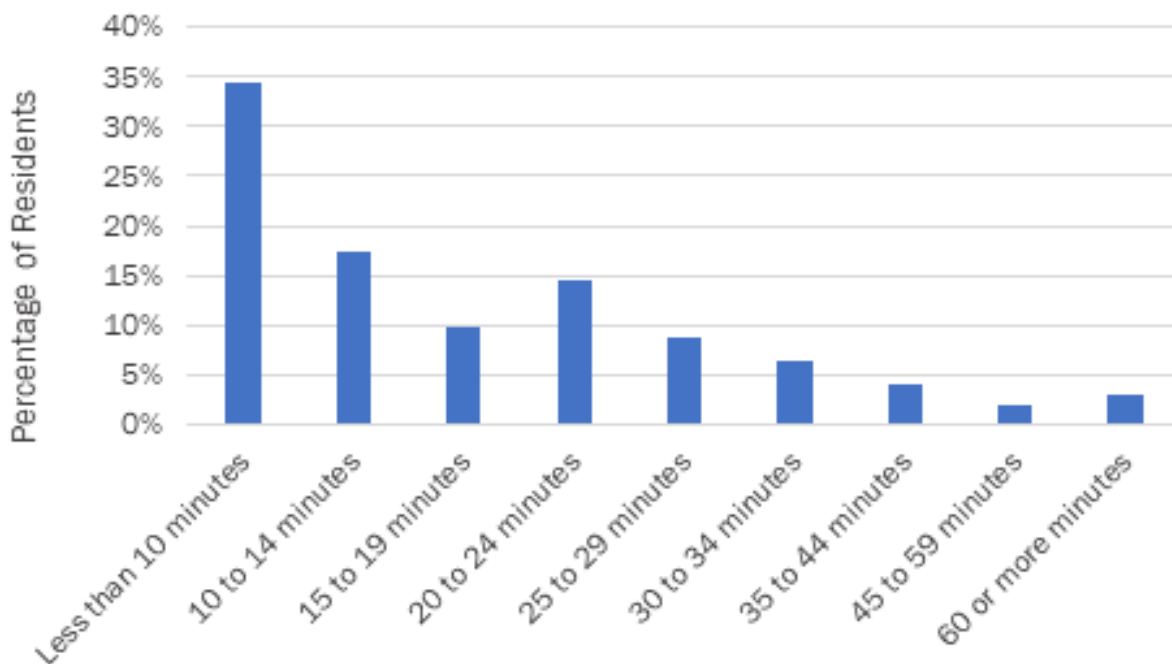
Most of the roads in the rural parts of the Township run north-south or east-west, generally along section lines. In some instances, however, roads are routed around natural features such as rolling hills or open water. The Township contains three crossings over the St. Joseph River: twice along US-31 and once along M-139 in the Village of Berrien Springs.

COMMUTING PATTERNS

According to the 2019 American Community Survey, approximately 48.7% of the Township’s working population travels outside the Township for work. Of those who travel outside the Township for work, about 4% of the Township’s residents work in a different county and 5.1% work outside of Michigan. Overall, the overwhelming majority (91%) of the Township’s working population works within Berrien County. It is likely that those who work outside the Township travel to larger urban areas such as St. Joseph, Benton Harbor, and South Bend, Indiana. This has significant implications concerning the transportation network, as a large portion of the Township’s residents and workers utilize the regional transportation network to access employment.

In 2019, most of the Township’s residents (65.0%) drove to work alone, but a significant portion (6.6%) shared a ride, and an ever-larger portion (18.3%) walked to their jobs. Additionally, 1.7% reported riding a bike to work, and 7.6% work from home. Compared to the 2000 Census, more residents drove alone or carpooled and a number walked to work in 2019. This likely corresponds to the plurality of residents (34.3%) commuting less than 10 minutes to work (Figure 7.2). The relatively high percentage of residents working from home likely corresponds to active farm operations. Additionally, the high percentage of residents who walk to work is indicative of a connected and walkable community. Due to the rural nature of the Township, walkability is likely most prevalent in Berrien Springs.

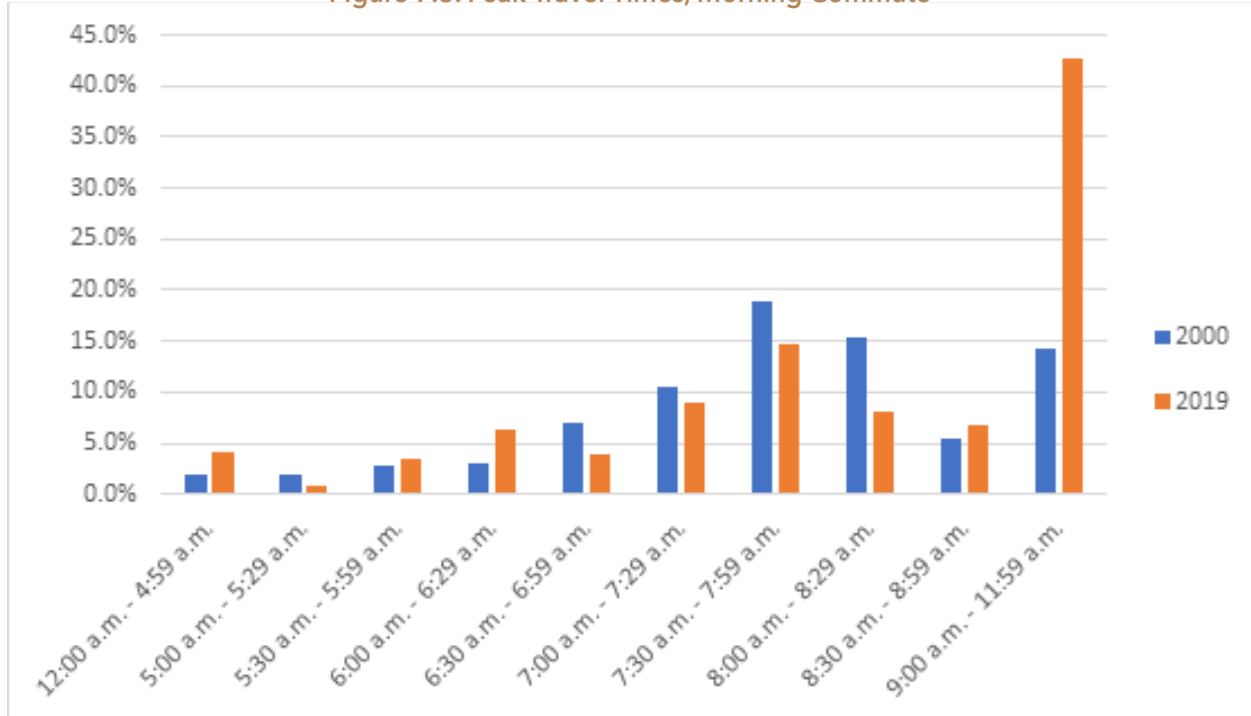
Figure 7.2. Travel Time to Work, 2019*



* Estimates from the 2019 American Community Survey Estimates
Source: 2013-2019 American Community Survey Estimates

In 2000, the peak travel times during the morning commute expectedly coincided with the standard workday, with the greatest percentage of residents leaving their homes for work between 7:30 and 8 am. However, in 2019, this pattern was slightly different with the greatest percentage of residents leaving for work between 9 am and noon (Figure 7.2). The percentage of residents leaving for work between 7:30 and 8 am was similar to the pattern observed in 2000; however, there appeared to be fewer residents leaving during this time overall and many more leaving later in the day. This later morning commute may have been impacted by students with more flexible job hours during the school year and/or professors who leave at variable times in the morning to teach classes at Andrews University.

Figure 7.3. Peak Travel Times, Morning Commute



* Estimates from the 2019 American Community Survey Estimates
Source: 2013-2019 American Community Survey Estimates

TRAVEL CONDITIONS AND TRAFFIC VOLUMES

US-31 is an important route both locally and regionally. US-31 in Michigan begins at the Indiana state line, 3 miles south of US-12 near White Pigeon, and terminates at I-75 near the Mackinac Bridge, just south of Mackinac City, Michigan. US-31 has become an important route in Michigan, connecting the Township to many population centers in western Michigan, including St. Joseph, Holland, Grand Haven, and Muskegon.

Locally, US-31 serves as the major north/south connection between the Township and employment and commerce centers such as Niles, the Benton Harbor/St. Joseph area, and South Bend, Indiana. Approximately 4 ½ miles of US-31 are contained within Oronoko Charter Township. This limited-access highway has two interchanges in the Township: one at M-139 and one at Snow Road. According to data compiled by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), South US-31 near the Snow ramp received an Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) of 16,895 vehicles, which was a 17% increase from 2017. Additionally, North US 31 at the M-139 ramp had an AADT of 12,644 vehicles in 2018, which was a 20% increase from 2017.



M-139 is the key commercial corridor in the Township, connecting the Township with employment centers in St. Joseph and Niles.

M-139 (Old US-31) is another major road in the Township connecting employment centers in St. Joseph and Niles. In addition, the segment of Old US-31 in the Township between US-31 and Berrien Springs has seen commercial development, providing services to local and regional traffic. According to MDOT, M-139 had an AADT of 1,559 in 2018, with only a 3% increase in traffic from 2017.

Map 8 depicts road classifications and the associated average annual daily traffic (AADT) levels on selected roads. The traffic counts were collected by the Berrien County Road Commission and the Michigan Department of Transportation and incorporate traffic levels collected from 2016-2019.

Generally, traffic on the Township's roads flows smoothly and there are few congestion concerns. Vehicular traffic flow is heaviest towards the eastern portion of the Township since these areas have absorbed most development in the Township. However, traffic in the Township is currently manageable.

PUBLIC AND AIR TRANSPORTATION

Andrews University Airpark. While there are no commercial airports in the Township, Andrews University Airpark is located south of Old US-31 and east of US-31. The airpark primarily serves students participating in the University's Program of Aviation Flight, although it is available for use by members of the community as well. The University owns seven aircraft and 30 hangars.

The nearest commercial airports include the Michiana Regional Transportation Center in South Bend, Indiana, and the Kalamazoo International Airport in Kalamazoo.

Berrien Bus. Berrien Bus is a non-urban system that provides public transportation to township residents. This service is headquartered in Berrien Springs and offers regularly-scheduled daily trips to destinations across the county, including Benton Harbor, St. Joseph, Niles, Coloma, Watervliet, and others. Additionally, Berrien Bus offers a demand-response service where riders can schedule a ride at least a day in advance.

Fares for Berrien Bus are \$2.50 for flex route service and \$5.00 for demand response riders. Senior citizens over the age of 60, individuals with disabilities, and children aged 3-12 receive a 50% discount from the regular fares. Children under the age of 3 ride for free.

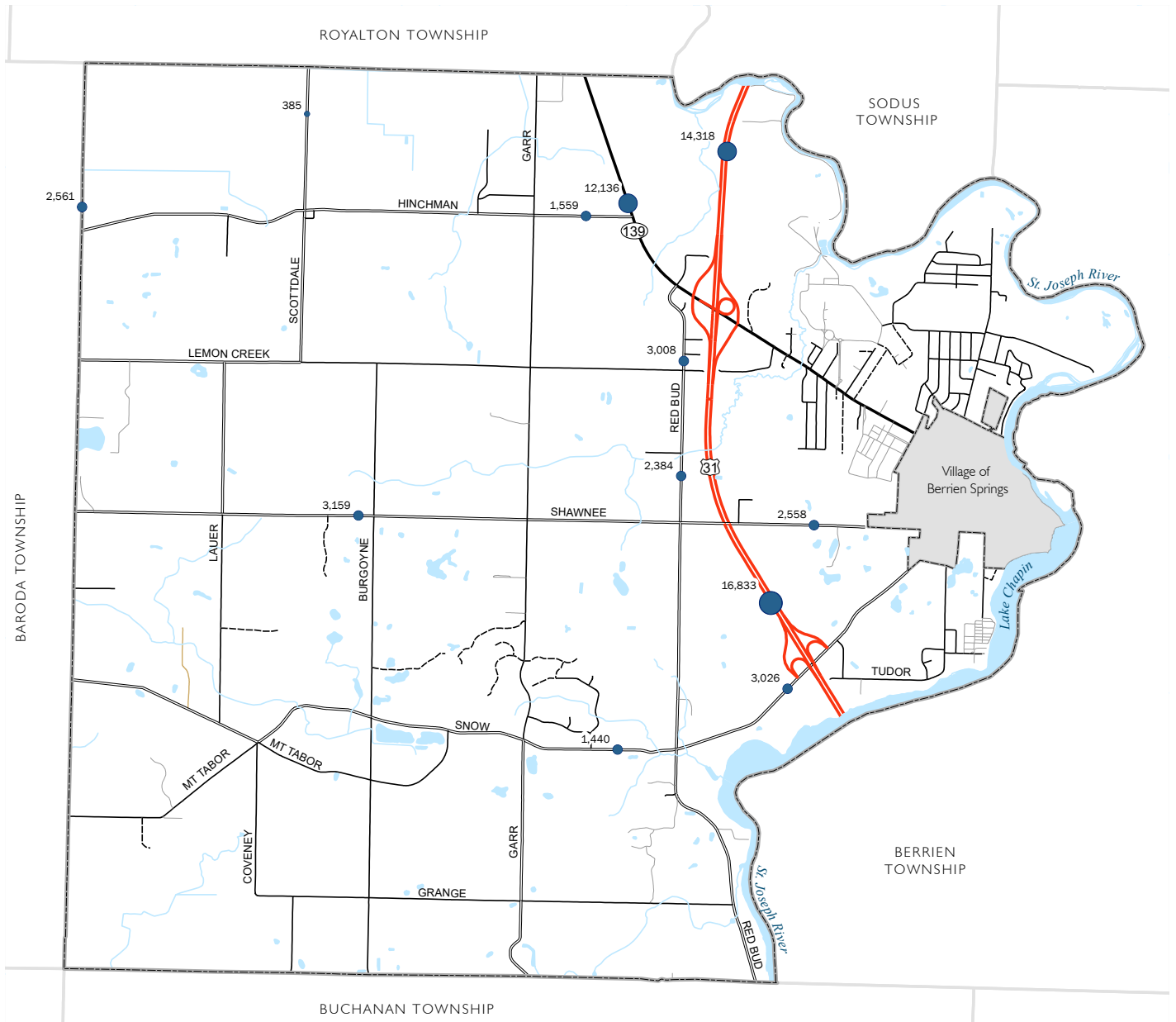


Andrews University Airpark is located just east of US-31



Berrien Bus provides mass transit services to numerous destinations in Berrien County.

MAP 8. ROADS & TRAFFIC



Legend

Traffic Counts (AADT)

- Less than 1,000 vehicles
- 1,000 - 4,999 vehicles
- 5,000 - 9,999 vehicles
- 10,000 - 14,999 vehicles
- More than 15,000 vehicles

Road Classification

- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- County Road, Primary System (Pa)
- County Road, Local System (Pave)
- County Road, Local System (Unpa)
- Private Road
- No Data

1 inch = 3,500 feet



Data Sources: Berrien County GIS and Michigan GIS Open Data

williams&works
engineers | surveyors | planners



BSOT M-139 CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Village of Berrien Springs and Oronoko Township (BSOT) collaborated on the development of a sub-area plan to improve the M-139 corridor. Through several public participation events, challenges and opportunities for development were discussed. To plan for future development, the preparation of a place-based plan for the M-139 corridor was approved. Place-based codes emphasize a development's form rather than its use, assuming that some mixture of uses can be complimentary. The BSOT Joint Place-Based Code for the M-139 Corridor was created as an overlay to existing zoning to increase flexibility in development.

Following the BSOT Place-Based Code, the design and infrastructure along M-139 were considered. It was determined that the safety, comfort, and aesthetics of this corridor should be improved to accommodate future development. Oronoko Township and Berrien Springs have partnered on this task, as utilities have been extended along the M-139 corridor and infrastructure updates are being pursued. The BSOT Place-Based Code provides architectural guidelines to guide future development and promote a unified aesthetic across Berrien Springs and Oronoko Township, increasing the overall aesthetic of this area. Both municipalities have pursued the implementation of this code to unify development between municipal boundaries and promote continued development.

UTILITIES

Public utilities are an important element in a growth management plan. Through the delivery of reliable and plentiful water and the safe and efficient disposal of wastewater, communities can achieve an improved quality of life for residents. Utility systems also have the potential to aid in growth management by enabling greater densities in selected locations. Finally, and most importantly, public utility systems give the community the ability to provide effective stewardship over such important natural features as groundwater and surface water features.

Water

Residents of Oronoko Charter Township generally rely on private wells to meet their needs for clean drinking water. The Village of Berrien Springs operates its own water and sanitary sewer system. The Berrien Springs system serves a portion of the township, including Andrews University. The source of Berrien Springs' water supply is groundwater that comes from four groundwater wells located in two well fields. Currently, this water source has sufficient capacity to provide water services to additional homes if it is needed.

Areas in Oronoko Charter Township served by public water services consist of the Kephart Woods neighborhood to the north of the village, as well as some properties along Shawnee Road and Snow Road. Along Shawnee, a water line extends a short distance to the west of the Village limits. Along Snow Road, a water line extends from the village to the Township's public safety building located about ¼ mile southwest of the village. Additionally, an apartment complex on Rose Hill Road, south of the village limits, is also served.

Sewer

A wastewater treatment plant is located on the east side of the St. Joseph River and serves the Village of Berrien Springs and portions of the Township. In 2012, Oronoko Charter Township entered into a Wastewater Service Agreement with the Village of Berrien Springs, which permitted the village to transact a municipal sewer service utility business in the Township and provided regulations and enforcement for residents using the village's sanitary sewer collection and treatment system. Additionally, in 2017 the village received a state grant from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) to pay for mapping and managing of the village's sewer and stormwater systems. This grant helped identify the needs of residents so the Village could prepare for the re-licensing of its sewer treatment plant.

The Village of Berrien Springs provides sewer services to a limited number of areas in the Township; however, an extension was constructed along M-139 to Hinchman Road in 2020. Current sewer services exist along Shawnee Road, where a sewer line extends a short distance to the west of the Village limits. Through the M-139 Corridor Improvement Plan, sewer has also been extended to US-31 along M-139. A public sewer extension is planned along the northwest side of the M-139 and US-31 interchange that will enhance the Township's ability to accommodate added density near the interchange and encourage further development in the community consistent with the BSOT Place Based Code.

High-Speed Internet. The Township is currently expanding broadband internet access to properties that do not have "high-speed" (as defined by the FCC as 25 megabytes per second (mbps) download and 3 mbps upload) internet. With assistance from Berrien County using American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, \$1.4 million has been allocated toward the expansion of high speed internet facilities in the Township.

PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Traffic Volume. While the current transportation system in the Township functions smoothly, the Township may experience increased traffic levels on existing roadways. Although the Township's population has remained relatively steady in recent years, traffic generation has been increasing on major roadways such as US-31 and M-139. A smooth and efficient transportation network is critical for a community experiencing population growth, so as traffic generation continues to increase, the transportation network will have to be analyzed. Possible topics for study should include not only at traffic volume and conditions, but roadway surfaces, access management, and vehicular and pedestrian safety.

Non-motorized Transportation. A relatively high percentage of residents walk to work. This indicates that the Township and village have encouraged walkable environments and that this mode of transportation is desired by residents. This is likely associated with the high student population at Andrews University. Future developments should consider walkability and bikeability to continue encouraging alternate modes of transportation.

Utilities. The Township's agreement with Berrien Springs to extend wastewater service into the Township is expected to increase the Township's capacity to accommodate higher density developments. The extension northwest of the M-139 and US-31 interchange will allow the Township to encourage appropriate development near a high-traffic area, meeting the needs of local residents and highway travelers. This extension is also expected to support the continued implementation of the BSOT Place Based Code. As future extensions are contemplated, the Township should consider preservation of rural character, development, and redevelopment in accordance with the BSOT Place Based Code, and sustainable growth which serves the needs of township residents.

Broadband Internet. The expansion of broadband internet service in the Township has transformative potential, as a lack of internet can be a limiting factor for families in choosing where to live. With more jobs and educational opportunities being conducted online in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Berrien County's attention to this issue, the Township could experience additional growth pressures as one of the limiting factors to rural living - reliable, high-speed internet access - is reduced.



CHAPTER 8

Goals & Objectives

CH 8. GOALS & OBJECTIVES

As a result of the Township's efforts to form a community consensus opinion about growth and development, twelve broad goal statements have been developed. These goals and objectives are founded on the input received during the Open House and Visioning Workshop that was held in support of the 2010 plan and subsequent planning efforts, along with the knowledge of the Planning Commission and local officials. The Planning Commission reviewed and revised these policies during its effort to update the plan in 2022.

Each goal is supported by more specific objectives, and the policies of this plan are based on these statements. The goals are intended to describe a desirable end state or the condition of the Township twenty to thirty years into the future. They are intentionally general but attainable through concerted effort. The objective statements tend to be more specific and may be regarded as milestones in the journey to achieve the larger goal.

An effective goal serves as a useful guide for policy decisions by the Planning Commission, Township staff, and the Township Board. Goals should also be informational for the public, outlining a vision for the desired future of the Township. For a goal to be useful, it should meet the following criteria:

Define a desired end. A goal statement should describe a desired end state, outcome, or result. The statement may be worded in either the present or future tense, but if the future tense is used, it should be stated as a prediction, rather than a hope.

State in positive terms. For a goal to be effective, it should state a positive outcome, as opposed to avoidance of an undesirable result. It is tempting to state goals as the reversal of an undesirable trend, such as "Oronoko Township will limit significant additional development in agricultural areas." This statement, however, does not address the underlying issue: Protection of the Township's productive farmlands for the benefit of future generations.

Bold, but realistic. For a statement to be meaningful, it needs to require effort to achieve. If goals were achieved without effort, they would simply be re-statements of current trends. On the other hand, a goal also needs to be realistic. Goals that are impossible to achieve will languish, resulting in community frustration and acrimony.

Reflect a consensus. Most importantly for goal setting, the goal must reflect a community consensus on a particular issue. Since the implementation of these goals will require broad community support, the goals need to reflect community ideas and values. A statement that does not reflect the ideas and values of a broad section of the community is doomed to failure.

AGRICULTURE AND FARMLAND PRESERVATION

Goal 1

Oronoko Charter Township will be characterized by abundant and productive agricultural lands in active use. Oronoko Township farms will be characterized by sustainable, environmentally healthy operations based on both traditional and progressive agricultural techniques. A thorough understanding of agriculture's role in the community will underlie policy decisions related to land use.

Objectives:

- a. Review and adjust the zoning ordinance, as necessary, to enhance flexibility and adaptation to traditional and modern agriculture and related activities. This may consist of efforts to ensure that Township officials are up to date on Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices

(GAAMPS), encouraging farm markets, promoting opportunities to educate the public about the importance of farms, working proactively with agricultural property owners to consider additional agri-tourism and farm-related recreational activities on appropriate parcels, and others.

- b. Avoid fragmentation of farmland by limiting incompatible uses and non-farm residential development in the Agricultural-Residential district, except for the limited circumstances outlined by this plan.
- c. To the extent that residential development occurs in agricultural areas, encourage development that can co-exist with farming and be placed on less productive farmland in clustered settings served by singular shared driveways or private roads that are scaled and designed for a rural setting
- d. Proactively help small farmers continue agricultural operations by permitted uses such as the sale of agricultural products, nurseries, U-pick operations, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and other complementary uses.
- e. Participate in the Berrien County Farmland Purchase of Development Rights program and actively assist landowners who wish to enroll in the programs.
- f. Educate agricultural landowners regarding farmland conservation assistance available through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to help protect the Township’s valuable waterways, wetlands, and other vital natural resources.
- g. Educate agricultural landowners regarding the farmland preservation opportunities currently available through the State Department of Agriculture, and actively assist landowners who decide to participate in these programs, such as the MAEAP, a voluntary program that helps farmers adopt cost-effective practices that reduce erosion and runoff into ponds, streams, and rivers.
- h. Sponsor public outreach programs that would inform the public of the benefits of local farming and the methods available to preserve farmland.



Preserving and maintaining the Township’s productive agricultural lands is a key goal of this Plan.

NATURAL FEATURES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Goal 2

The Township will contain environmentally healthy, attractive, and permanently protected natural features that will include mature and emerging woodlands, wetlands, open fields, and stream corridors.

Objectives:

- a. Develop and implement feasible approaches to acquire and/or protect important natural areas such as woodlands, wetlands, and water features. Such approaches may include concerted efforts to raise funds from public and private sources, universities, conservancies, and may include locally-voted taxes.

- b. Implement a program of community information to educate the public on strategies to protect rural character (i.e. contaminant identification, green infrastructure) and appropriate solid waste disposal (i.e. preferred methods, recycling and composting, water resource protection).
- c. Collaborate and coordinate conservation efforts with the Berrien Conservation District.
- d. Review and adjust zoning ordinance standards, as necessary, to ensure natural features such as wetlands, woodlands, and scenic areas are being protected and/or responsibly integrated into new development.

Goal 3

Lake Chapin and the St. Joseph River will provide high-quality surface water, opportunities for sustainable human recreation and use, and vital habitats for wildlife in and around the water features.



Protecting the health of Lake Chapin and the St. Joseph River is a key component to this Master Plan

Objectives:

- a. Revise the zoning map to create buffers or overlays that protect significant streams and wetlands in the Township.
- b. Expand and strengthen storm water best management standards for low impact development (LID) in zoning and other development regulations to reduce the quantity and velocity of runoff, and improve water quality.
- c. Provide incentives for new developments to utilize ecologically-friendly building and development standards.
- d. Encourage new developments and street reconstruction that reduces impervious surfaces, implements green stormwater infrastructure, protects wetlands, and increases land availability for natural groundwater recharge.
- e. Limit development in environmentally sensitive areas, such as wetlands and riparian areas, and encourage more intense development in areas with services and infrastructure to accommodate such development.

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Goal 4

Commercial and industrial development will be compatible with existing land use patterns, provide a variety of meaningful employment opportunities, and contribute to the character of the Township through attractive, sustainable, and economically viable developments.

Objectives:

- a. Work with regional economic development efforts to promote the health of Township businesses and to attract desirable commercial and industrial land uses.
- b. Identify economic development tools to attract, retain, and enhance local businesses.

- c. Explore techniques to permit limited “country commercial” developments at county road intersections that are complementary to rural life, such as small restaurants, beds and breakfasts, inns, country stores, farm markets, and agricultural support service establishments.
- d. Coordinate the intensity of commercial and industrial development with the capacity and availability of public facilities and services (public water and sewer, roads, emergency services, etc.)
- e. Encourage a variety of development and redevelopment opportunities along the M-139 corridor that comply with the provisions of the BSOT Place Based Code.
- f. Evaluate and revise, as necessary, the BSOT Place Based Code to ensure its effectiveness and applicability along the M-139 corridor.
- g. Work cooperatively with MDOT, the Village of Berrien Springs, and other partners to improve the M-139 Corridor and transform the public realm into a safe, human-scaled, walkable corridor.

UTILITIES

Goal 5

Public water and sewer utilities will serve development along the M-139 corridor and expansions will occur through careful coordination with the future land use plan of the Township, the Village of Berrien Springs, and in accordance with the character and capacity of the land.

Objectives:

- a. Develop and maintain a utility plan in coordination with the Village of Berrien Springs.
- b. Establish and revise land use and zoning policies that take into account existing and planned extensions of utility systems.
- c. Develop and adopt utility policies to ensure that expansion of the systems will be driven by land use objectives and not by revenue considerations.
- d. Develop a plan in coordination with service providers to expand high-speed internet access to all areas of Oronoko Charter Township, particularly those in the southwest portion of the Township where service is most limited.

COOPERATION AND COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Goal 6

To provide the highest levels of service to its residents, Oronoko Charter Township will be a leader in fostering positive and productive relationships with the Village of Berrien Springs, neighboring communities, and Andrews University.

Objectives:

- a. Work with the Village of Berrien Springs, Andrews University, MDOT, and impacted property owners in the development of an actionable strategy to transform M-139 into a human scaled, walkable corridor.
- b. Regularly schedule meetings with the Joint Planning Commission to review the M-139 Place Based Code and propose new amendments as needed.
- c. Work with Andrews University in adopting land use guidelines and policies that account for the University’s campus and the Airpark.

- d. Develop a utility plan in cooperation with the Village of Berrien Springs. (duplicates 5, a)
- e. Implement periodic meetings and exchanges with the school district and Andrews University to share information and plans and to jointly plan for capital improvements and recreation facilities.
- f. Coordinate planning efforts with neighboring townships and Berrien Springs, recognizing the role of Berrien Springs within the region as a center for urban development and public services.
- g. Where practical, identify a planned future land use pattern that is compatible with land uses in neighboring townships and Berrien Springs.
- h. Establish and maintain a communication program with regional municipalities to discuss public facility and service needs, land use conditions and trends, preservation goals and objectives, contemporary planning issues, and other mutually beneficial strategies to address short and long-term needs.

Goal 7

Zoning standards and regulations in Oronoko Township will be clear, fair, and broadly understood in the Township. The Zoning Ordinance will be structured to support the goals of this Master Plan, ensure the health, safety, and welfare of residents, and provide maximum flexibility to protect the property rights of landowners.

Objectives:

- a. Prepare and adopt Zoning Ordinance revisions, as necessary, to implement the policies of the new Master Plan and to address changing conditions and emerging land use issues.
- b. Develop programs to disseminate information on planning and zoning standards and procedures, including extensive use of the Township’s website to expand and improve communication with citizens concerning land use and zoning issues.
- c. Regularly review the zoning ordinance to ensure that it meets the land use and development goals of the Township.

PEOPLE, HOUSING AND COMMUNITY

Goal 8

Oronoko Charter Township will foster community character by leveraging distinct community characteristics such as natural features, recreational opportunities, agriculture, and the Township’s cultural history.

Objectives:

- a. Invest in wayfinding signage or markers that highlight the Township’s cultural and natural resources and ensures equitable use of roadways by different types of users.



The development of gathering spaces aids in fostering social interaction among neighbors

- b. Enact site plan review standards that enable the Planning Commission to require certain site amenities of developers, such as benches, sidewalks, and bike racks.
- c. Collaborate with Berrien Springs to encourage programs and policies which maintain an attractive streetscape with planters, street trees, and landscaping, and which promote walkability and a sense of place along M-139 and the downtown area.
- d. Amend the Zoning Ordinance to permit accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in areas that are capable of supporting them.

Goal 9

A variety of housing types will accommodate a range of ages, income levels, abilities, and lifestyles of residents.

Objectives:

- a. Establish land use policies to coordinate the pace and distribution of new residential growth in accord with the Township’s future land use plan and population projections.
- b. Develop and implement standards to incorporate and maintain, where appropriate, pedestrian facilities and neighborhood gathering places, such as sidewalks, community greens, or small-scale parks, to foster social interaction among neighbors.
- c. Encourage alternative housing developments that preserve open space and agricultural areas, such as cluster developments, conservation easements, or similar tools.
- d. Encourage alternative and attainable housing that is complementary to surrounding built and natural environments, confining higher-density residential development to areas with existing services and infrastructure to support more intense uses.
- e. Amend the zoning ordinance to permit accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in certain districts and subject to appropriate regulation.

Goal 10

Neighborhoods in Oronoko Township will value connectivity and walkability to open spaces, natural areas, shopping centers, and employment opportunities through the creation of non-motorized pathways and trails.

Objectives:

- a. Develop and implement a non-motorized transportation plan to address both recreational uses and local non-motorized commuting needs.
- b. Develop and implement standards to incorporate and maintain, where appropriate, pedestrian facilities and neighborhood gathering places, such as sidewalks, community greens, or small-scale parks, to foster social interaction among neighbors. (Duplicates 9, b)

TOURISM AND MARKETING

Goal 11

Oronoko Township will become a regional destination for unique agricultural products produced as a result of the Township's advantageous location near Lake Michigan. The Township will work to enhance its agricultural and agritourism activities with the community's desire to preserve its unique natural features and natural beauty.

Objectives:

- a. Construct attractive gateway features at the US-31 interchanges and at major entrance points into the Township.
- b. In cooperation with the Village of Berrien Springs, undertake promotional efforts to attract visitors to area festivals, events at the fairgrounds, and cultural resources such as the Village Courthouse.
- c. In cooperation with Andrews University, promote the University's educational and cultural facilities as a resource available to all residents.
- d. Encourage farm-related products as viable businesses in the Township and promote local farms, wineries, and breweries as unique destinations for residents and visitors.

RECREATION

Goal 12

Recreational opportunities in Oronoko Charter Township will meet the physical and social needs of the community through accessibility for all users, convenient access, safe facilities, and sustainable designs.

Objectives:

- a. Township policies will recognize and support both publicly sponsored facilities and activities and recreation uses on private lands.
- b. Assist in leading the reorganization of the Greater Berrien Springs Recreation Department to oversee recreation facilities, activities, and programming in the Township and Village.
- c. Acquire property for the protection of natural features and promotion of recreational opportunities, such as neighborhood parks, when available.
- d. Develop Park Master Plans for all newly acquired and/or undeveloped recreation lands.
- e. The parks and recreation planning function of the Township will be coordinated with its land use planning and the planning of the public schools and Andrews University.
- f. Maintain a current Parks and Recreation Plan to remain eligible for grants from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) for park development, redevelopment, and land acquisition.
- g. Maintain close relationships with regional entities and actively participate in the planning, design, and construction of regional trails, parks, natural areas, and similar facilities.



CHAPTER 9

Future Land Use

CH 9. FUTURE LAND USE

The Oronoko Charter Township Master Plan establishes general patterns of land use to guide growth and development for the next twenty to thirty years. This Plan constitutes a practical and integrated approach to accommodate the impacts of growth 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 estimated 400 additional households anticipated in the Township by 2030.

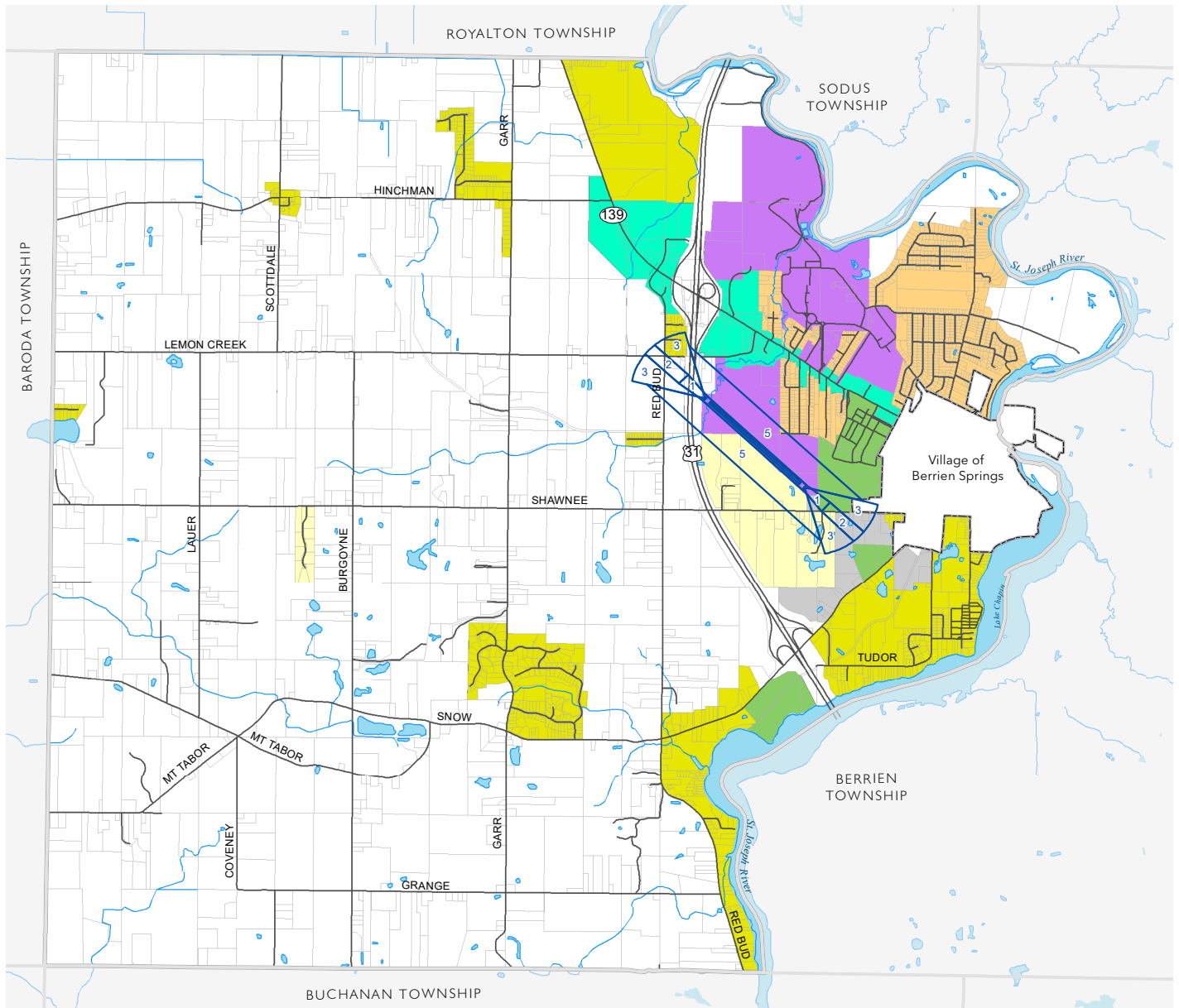
The residents of Oronoko Township have indicated that they wish to preserve their agricultural operations in Township and protect the Township's woodlands, wetlands, and other natural areas. They also recognize the economic development potential along the M-139 corridor near Berrien Springs, and this Plan will guide new development while protecting farmland and critical natural resources. To honor these values, a land use framework has been developed that seeks to preserve farmland and natural areas, encourage new development or redevelopment in appropriate areas, provide for economic opportunity and growth, and preserve the community's rural aesthetic.

The overall purpose of the future land use designations is to guide new development in logical and viable patterns while offering fair, and in some cases, value-enhancing opportunities for development, where appropriate. Public utilities are anticipated along the M-139 corridor, and most commercial development is to be directed in these areas.

The following pages describe the future land use designations as illustrated on the Future Land Use Map (Map 9). Each Future Land Use designation is intended to foster a character distinctive to that district and unique to Oronoko Township. Furthermore, it is intended that as the community develops over the next twenty to thirty years, a significant share of the natural features existing today will have been preserved.

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 9. FUTURE LAND USE



Legend

Future Land Use

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| | AG, Agricultural | | C, Commercial |
| | CR, Country Residential | | U, University |
| | LDR, Low Density Residential | | LI, Light Industrial |
| | MDR, Medium Density Residential | | REC, Recreation |
| | MU, Mixed Use | | Accident Safety Zones |

0 3,250 6,500 Feet

Data Sources: Berrien County GIS, NRCS, and Michigan GIS Open Data

williams&works
engineers | surveyors | planners



FUTURE LAND USE DESCRIPTIONS

Agriculture

Oronoko Charter Township contains large areas of unique agricultural lands that are crucial to the region's local economy and character. Maintaining these productive agricultural lands is a high priority among Township residents, and preserving large and contiguous tracts of productive farmland is essential to that goal. Oronoko Township contains several agricultural operations that not only produce high-quality agricultural products but also attract visitors from throughout the region to special events, farm markets, and "u pick" during the summer months. To this end, this plan strongly encourages the continuation of these farming activities. The agricultural future land use designation is intended to preserve agricultural productivity and viability within the Township by allowing for enough land to support agriculture and related services.



This Plan also recognizes that some lands within the Agricultural designation are not conducive to agricultural activities. These areas presently contain woodlands, pasture lands, wetlands, and low-intensity residential development, and they may be appropriate for other uses that complement the character of the country atmosphere. Such uses may include, but are not limited to, outdoor recreation facilities of limited intensity, campgrounds, and residential homesites on non-farm properties.

Site condominium and subdivision developments are discouraged in this designation; however, clustered land divisions designed to maximize the protection of farmland, open spaces, woodlands, and sensitive natural features may also be appropriate. These small clusters (generally fewer than 10 homesites) of single-family residential development should be designed to minimize the number of new driveways on county roads and should instead be served by a shared driveway that is scaled, designed, and developed for the country setting. Land division, private road, and driveway regulations should be evaluated to ensure that they are consistent with the Township's rural character preservation objectives and principles.

In recent years, the Township has experienced an increased demand for "special event" activities on agricultural properties or large parcels in agricultural areas. These uses include resorts and retreats, wedding facilities, venues for festivals and gatherings, and restaurants. The Township has found many of these types of land uses to be acceptable and approved zoning amendments to permit them, subject to appropriate local controls regulating potentially objectionable impacts such as noise, traffic, and lighting through carefully set hours of operation, isolation radii, mature tree preservation, among other conditions. Moving forward, the Township may continue to permit these uses on a case-by-case basis but should be careful to ensure that the primary use of these properties - farming - is maintained as the predominant land use in this designation. The land designated as Agriculture amounts to about 15,500 acres, or approximately 78% of the total land area within the Township (excluding the Village of Berrien Springs and US-31 right of way). The most important factors informing the decision to designate particular parcels of land as Agriculture are (1) an examination of local and County data identifying productive agricultural land uses; (2) the relative size and contiguity of those agricultural properties; (3) farmland in the Berrien County 2015 Master Plan identified as prime, unique, or having local importance.



An important step toward the preservation of this land use designation as agricultural is for the Township to participate in the County Purchase of Development Rights program to receive State and Federal funding. This will allow the Oronoko Township's unique agricultural lands are crucial to the region's local economy and character purchase of the development rights of private property owners via funds collected through grants, donations, bonds, special assessments, or general appropriations. Likewise, landowners will have the option to sell their development rights (calculated as the difference between the agricultural value of the land and the fair market value) to a public entity. Under part 362 of PA 451 (1994), this ensures the land will be preserved for agricultural use and open space in perpetuity, while, in exchange, landowners may continue to farm their own land, rent the land to another farmer, or sell the land for the remaining agricultural value.

In addition to the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program, zoning standards must reflect the Township's desire to protect local farmland from excessive development. There are several techniques available to the Township that will help to preserve the character and productivity of the Agricultural future land use designation while still providing property owners with options for some development; particularly where agricultural uses are not feasible. These techniques include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Adjustments to the Township Zoning Ordinance. Adjustments to the zoning ordinance may include changes to the agricultural district of the zoning map or adjustments in the text that regulate development in agricultural areas.
- PA 116 Agreements. A temporary restriction on the land, voluntarily entered into by a landowner, between the State and the property owner that preserves the land for agriculture in exchange for certain tax benefits and exemptions for various special assessments.
- Conservation/ Open Space Easements. A restriction on the land, voluntarily entered into by a landowner, between the local government and a landowner that preserves the land as open space or otherwise prohibits development. In some cases, the landowner receives certain tax benefits and exemptions for various special assessments in exchange.
- Purchase of Development Rights (PDR): A permanent restriction on the land, voluntarily entered into by a landowner, between the State and/or Berrien County where a landowner permanently preserves the land for agriculture in exchange for a cash payment for those development rights.

This plan also contemplates limited "country commercial" uses at limited (not more than 6) public county road intersections for small nodes of commercial activity that are complementary to rural life, such as restaurants, beds and breakfasts, inns, country stores, farm markets, agricultural support service establishments. These uses should be carefully regulated with architectural, site design, landscaping, signage, and similar standards to encourage compatibility with adjacent farmland and the overall country setting.

Country Residential

This future land use designation is intended primarily to address the demand for large-lot, single-family development in rural areas of the Township. These uses are positioned on lands where there is little or no potential for productive agricultural activities, and a conventional lot split or subdivision would not have significant negative impacts on the environment. About 400 acres of land are within this designation.

Much of this area is currently wooded or former agricultural properties that have been fragmented into parcels ranging between five and twenty acres in area. Primarily, land uses in this district will include single-family residential development situated on larger lots. However, conservation cluster development patterns, as well as agricultural and related uses, may also be expected. Areas are expected to develop without public water and sanitary sewer service.



Low Density Residential

The Low Density Residential future land use designation has been established in recognition of the emerging suburban nature of the eastern portions of the Township. This district recognizes this characteristic and anticipates and facilitates an orderly and sequential transition from a rural area to attractive and functional neighborhoods. Approximately 1,500 acres are within this designation will normally be found where utilities are or may be available in the near term to enable densities of one to three units per acre.

While the primary land use within the Low Density Residential area will be single-family detached housing, some mix of uses may be appropriate to serve nearby population areas. Compatible uses may include institutional (e.g., schools and churches) or recreational land uses.

New developments are encouraged to utilize extensive landscaping and vegetation to create a visually appealing sense of entry and to further the character of the community. However, the bulk, scale, and positioning of buildings must be carefully managed to preserve the aesthetics of a neighborhood and any important views within the area.



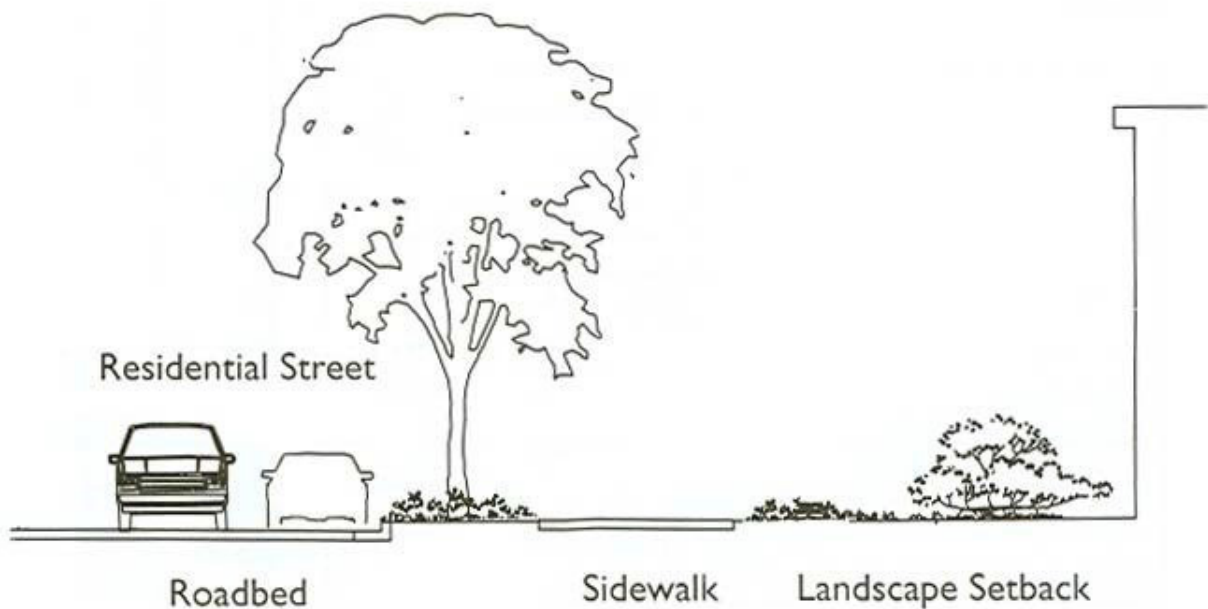


Image Source: Planning and Urban Design Standards

Medium Density Residential

The Medium Density Residential designation is intended to accommodate residential options for people of varying ages and income levels formed in inviting communities. Development types will primarily consist of single-family detached homes, however, duplexes, senior living facilities, or student housing may be expected as well, depending on the availability of utilities. Where public utilities are not available, the overall permitted density in this area should not exceed two units per acre, but density may be increased up to six units per acre if water and sanitary sewer utilities are available. These developments should be limited to locations within walking distance of commercial services and similar amenities, where the development would not significantly alter the character of the neighborhood. Within this future land use designation, flexible conservation design mechanisms will be encouraged, as appropriate, to establish open space preserves and neighborhood recreational facilities.

Parks, playgrounds, trails, and gathering areas to provide opportunities for recreation and social interaction should be incorporated into new development. Developments should include pedestrian walkways throughout, and street layouts should follow a grid pattern whenever feasible, and be designed to connect with future developments as they occur.

Mixed Use

With Oronoko Charter Township poised to increase in population over the life of this plan, a need may develop for commercial and professional services near housing. The Township, in coordination with the Village, has begun to address this need through the development and adoption of the M-139 Corridor Plan and subsequent Place-Based Code, which allows residential, commercial, office, and related uses along the entire M-139 corridor between US-31 and into Berrien Springs. The code also includes detailed architectural standards, site design, standards, and streetscape requirements to ensure that over the long term the corridor becomes an inviting corridor designed for people rather than automobiles.

The intent of the Mixed Use designation is to further implement and support the Corridor Plan and Place-Based Code, which incentivizes walkable, human-scale developments with narrower streets, mixed land uses, walkable neighborhoods, and will result in the development of a greater sense of place in the community... Development should be carefully arranged in planned patterns that minimize curb cuts and driveways to M-139 and laid out in walkable patterns that enhance safety and promote interconnections among uses and between neighborhoods.

Some redevelopment in this designation is also likely that may not fully conform to the Place-Based Code in instances where code compliance is optional. In these cases, existing patterns may be continued, provided that redevelopment begins to embrace the Place-Based Code's overarching principles of walkability, architectural expression, and human-centric development patterns and forms.

Whenever possible, all buildings within this designation should face the street with parking located to the side or behind the buildings. Residential uses should be arranged in an efficient design that maximizes the preservation of trees and other key natural features. Mixed-use buildings with generous amounts of transparent windows facing the street, street trees, sidewalks, and buildings containing architectural ornamentation and articulation are strongly encouraged in the Mixed Use designation, especially for properties fronting M-139 between Us-31 and the Village.

This plan also strongly encourages the Township, in coordination with the Village of Berrien Springs, Andrews University, and other partners, to work cooperatively with MDOT to re-think the design of M-139, particularly between US-31 and downtown Berrien Springs. M-139 still primarily functions as an auto-centric corridor in 2022. If the vision for M-139 articulated by this Plan, the M-139 Corridor Improvement Plan, and the M-139 Place-Based Code are to become reality, the public realm must be designed to implement the same principles and goals that the community requires for the private realm through zoning: human-scaled, safe, walkable places.

Light Industrial

Industrial development provides employment opportunities for residents and investment in the community. While some industrial uses may generate objectionable off-site impacts, existing manufacturing operations in the Township have not presented significant problems for neighboring uses. This Master Plan envisions an industrial area of about 150 acres forming along the north side of Snow Road between US-31 and the Village of Berrien Springs. Currently, some industrial uses exist in this area and these will be supported and strengthened.

Development in this designation should include small-scale industrial activities, such as research and development, office, warehouse, retail, shipping/logistics, storage facilities, contractor's yards, and showrooms. Sites should be carefully designed to minimize off-site impacts, and extensive screening and landscaping is strongly encouraged to foster attractive developments. Uses that are adjacent to residential land uses should include transition areas and buffers to minimize potential adverse effects.

Certain non-industrial uses, such as convenience stores or small-scale restaurants, may also be contemplated in this designation to serve the workers in the area.

University and Airport Safety Zone

Enrollment at Andrews University has been steady over the past several years, and this plan recognizes the University's role in shaping the character of the community. The University future land use designation is about 845 acres in area and consists of properties owned by Andrews University. Land uses in these areas vary significantly, and include the educational and cultural facilities on the main campus, student housing, agricultural practices, and the Andrews University Airpark, located east of US-31 between M-139 and Shawnee.

Andrews University Airpark also has an impact on land uses in the area, and therefore warrants special consideration in this plan. The Andrews University Airpark Planning and Zoning Study contains land use guidelines in Airport Safety Zones, which are illustrated on the Future Land Use Map. Generally, residential land uses and land uses that concentrate people outside are discouraged in Airport Safety Zones, however, there are numerous residential neighborhoods in these areas that existed long before the airpark was established. The Township Zoning Ordinance should be reviewed to ensure that uses in the Airport Safety Zones are adequately protected from potential airport hazards.

The Zoning Ordinance contains height restrictions based upon the proximity to the airpark, which should also be regularly reviewed and consulted by the Township. The Township should refer to and carefully consider the land use guidelines contained in the Andrews University Airpark Planning and Zoning Study, along with this Master Plan, whenever a development is proposed within an Airport Safety Zone.

Recreation

This designation consists of properties owned by the Berrien County Youth Fair and the Boy Scout Camp near the US-31/Snow Road interchange, and this plan supports both of these organizations. Events at the fairgrounds attract thousands of visitors to the Township, and as the fair grows, additional development may be needed at this site. This plan anticipates a continuation of current activities at Youth Fair, but recognizes the potential for expansion of its existing facilities to meet growing demand.

Additional development at the fairgrounds should be walkable, well-landscaped, and arranged to minimize any impacts on adjacent properties. Additional provisions for parking and access management may also be necessary to manage traffic coming to and from events at the fairgrounds. If necessary, utilities should be extended to serve the fairgrounds to meet the demands of busier and more intense uses on the site.

ZONING PLAN

The following table includes the zoning plan for Oronoko Charter Township.

Land Use Category	Corresponding Zoning District	Notes
Agricultural	A-R Agricultural Residential	The Township should refine the A-R district to further promote Farmland Preservation.
	E-1 Estate Residential	Open space preservation and clustering development techniques are encouraged
Country Residential	A-R Agricultural Residential	R-1 Single Family Residential may be compatible for properties east of US-31
	E-1 Estate Residential	Open space preservation and clustering development techniques are encouraged
Low Density Residential	R-1 Single Family Residential	Portions of the Low Density Residential future land use designation are within the E- 1, R-1, and R-2 zoning districts.
Medium Density Residential	R-2 Single and Two Family Residential R-3 General Residential	
Mixed Use	B Business O3, O4, or O-5B (Refer to Place Based Code)	New development will be subject to the by the Place Based Code, existing development redevelopment may utilize the Place Based Code or underlying conventional zoning standards
Light Industrial	M-1 Limited Manufacturing	
University	U-C University - College	
Recreation	To be determined	This Recreation future land use designation is limited to properties controlled by the Berrien County Youth Fair and the Boy Scout Camp. A corresponding zoning district may not be necessary.



CHAPTER 10

Implementation

CH 10. IMPLEMENTATION

For a Master Plan to truly impact growth and development, its goals, objectives, and future land use plan must be implemented. The following strategies are established to provide a framework for implementing the recommendations and policies described in this Plan. It is recognized that many strategies will be long-term in nature and that many entities in addition to Oronoko Charter Township will need to cooperate in order to fully implement this Master Plan. The strategies described in this chapter are intentionally general to allow the Township the flexibility to prepare specific work assignments and prioritize each strategy as a part of its overall municipal operations.

Primary responsibility for implementing the Master Plan rests with the Township Board, the Planning Commission, and staff. This is done through several methods that may include ordinances, programs, and administrative procedures that are further described in this Chapter. Some of the implementation strategies also require significant public and private investment. The following strategies are in no particular order; each strategy is important, as it contributes to achieving the overall vision expressed by the Plan. Therefore, it will be important for the Township Board, Planning Commission, and staff to develop a detailed set of work assignments to set this plan in motion.

ZONING ORDINANCE REVISIONS

The Zoning Ordinance is the primary implementation mechanism for this Plan, as it regulates land use in Oronoko Charter Township. To support this Master Plan's updated goals, objectives, and Future Land Use Plan, this strategy recommends the regular evaluation of the existing Zoning Ordinance for its continued effectiveness to guide growth and development envisioned by the community. Because the Township adopted a new Zoning Ordinance in 2011 under the recommendation of the 2010 Master Plan, is likely that most zoning standards will continue to support this updated Plan. However, some updates may be beneficial to provide continued flexibility for development, preservation of natural features and farmland, and the implementation of the M-139 Corridor Improvement Plan, and to address current trends, challenges, and case law.

The Zoning Map should be evaluated for its consistency with the future land use map and the land uses envisioned in this Master Plan. Revisions should occur, as appropriate, to support the vision outlined in the updated future land use map. In addition, the Ordinance should be evaluated for flexibility to address innovative development techniques and for its ability to control inefficient development patterns.

Specifically, the following updates may be considered:

- The creation of buffers or overlays to protect significant streams and wetlands.
- Landscaping provisions could be expanded to address landscaping materials, planting size, plant spacing, and prohibition of invasive species.
- Parking lot landscape islands within parking lots and landscape designs that contribute to natural stormwater management (e.g. rain gardens, sunken landscape islands).
- The requirement of sidewalks in certain developments to encourage connected non-motorized pathways within and between developments.
- Standards to encourage non-motorized transportation in appropriate areas, such as bicycle and pedestrian pathways and supporting infrastructure.
- Revision of the signage chapter to ensure standards are content-neutral, as required by the US Supreme Court's decision in *Reed v. Town of Gilbert*.
- Revision of the Township's private road ordinance to encourage clustered land divisions serviced by a shared driveways or unpaved private roads, designed appropriately to preserve rural character.
- Revisions to allow accessory dwellings units (ADUs) in appropriate areas.

In addition, some of the larger future land use designations (e.g., Agriculture, Country Residential) may necessitate some adjustment in the zoning district standards. For example, the Agricultural future land use designation most closely corresponds to the A-R Agricultural Residential zoning district. Because the importance of farmland preservation has been emphasized throughout this Master Plan, the Township may consider modifying this district or creating a new district to focus primarily on the preservation of farmland rather than residential with agricultural uses. Overall, the evaluation of zoning districts and future land use designations may include adjustments of the dimensional standards, refining uses permitted, or even the establishment of new and more refined zoning districts.

Responsibilities. The Township staff and the Planning Commission may implement this strategy. This is likely to be an extensive task with multiple elements, each with unique challenges that may require each activity to be addressed independently, so it is likely that outside support will be needed. Any resulting amendments to the Ordinance should be reviewed by the Township’s legal counsel and ultimately adopted by the Township Board.

AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION STRATEGY

Agriculture is an important land use in the Township that shapes the rural landscape, provides jobs, increases local tourism, and comprises a significant portion of the Township’s heritage and identity. The importance of agricultural preservation has been emphasized throughout this Plan in response to the community’s desire to maintain this rural landscape for the enjoyment of future generations. Therefore, this strategy outlines some opportunities for the preservation of agricultural land that may be utilized in the Township.

The Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD) provides several methods by which the Township can use to promote farmland and open space preservation:

- Farmland Development Rights Agreement (PA 116). A landowner may voluntarily enter into an agreement with the state of Michigan to place a temporary restriction on their land (10-90 years) to preserve it for agriculture. In return, the landowner receives certain tax benefits and exemptions and various special assessments.
- Conservation Easement Donations. A landowner may voluntarily enter an agreement with the state of Michigan to place a permanent restriction on their land to preserve it for open space or agriculture. This will preserve the natural conditions on the site and the donation is considered a charitable donation, potentially providing a federal income tax deducted. Property taxes may also be reduced, as the land value receives a lower assessment value.
- Agricultural Preservation Fund. This fund was created to assist local units of government in implementing a local purchase of development rights program, since funding is not currently available for the purchase of development rights program at the state level.
- Local Open Space Easement. A landowner may voluntarily enter an agreement with the local government to place a temporary restriction to preserve open space in exchange for certain tax benefits and various special assessments.
- Designated Open Space Easement. A landowner may voluntarily enter an agreement with the state of Michigan to place a temporary restriction on land to preserve open space in exchange for certain tax benefits and various special assessments.

There are multiple options for farmland preservation and these opportunities presented by MDARD are intended to be a starting point for exploring farmland preservation techniques. Informational material regarding these options and their qualifications, along with other information regarding farmland preservation, may be made available on the Township website or printed material kept at the Township Hall to help educate citizens on the available options to preserve their farmland.

This Plan also recognizes that some residential development is likely to occur via land divisions in the Township’s rural areas. While these development rights may be exercised by landowners, it is

recommended that land divisions be clustered around shared driveways or private roads instead of simply being dividing along an adjacent county road. Clustered land division development will help to preserve the country atmosphere and agricultural land by leaving intact larger parent parcels. Further, fewer driveways directly accessing county roads will help improve safety and preserve important viewsheds.

Responsibilities. The Township staff and Planning Commission may implement this strategy through efforts to educate the public through informational meetings and material, participation in the Berrien County Farmland Purchase of Development Rights program, and other methods as necessary. The public will be responsible for volunteering their properties for preservation, as applicable.

This task may also require amendments to the Zoning Ordinance, Land Division Ordinance, Private Road Ordinance, and others to encourage land owners to take advantage of clustering options. These changes should be initiated by Township staff or the Planning Commission before adoption by the Township Board.

M-139 CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

As the Township's most important thoroughfare and also a state highway, M-139 facilitates significant traffic and contains many of the Township's commercial and institutional land uses. Over five years (2013 - 2018), traffic increased on M-139 by approximately 10 percent south of the US-31 interchange and by approximately 30 percent north of the interchange. Due to its connection to the US-31 interchange, the Village of Berrien Springs, and a variety of land uses, careful planning is necessary to avoid M-139 becoming an unattractive and unsafe "strip" commercial corridor. Such a corridor is an unsafe environment for pedestrians and bicyclists and results in unnecessary traffic congestion and a generally unpleasant environment for people. To create a corridor that is safe, attractive, and facilitates orderly traffic flow, the Township should work with the Village and MDOT to rethink M-139's function in the community, particularly in light of the Township's Corridor Improvement Plan and Place Based Code. Improvements may include a boulevard or raised landscape area, additional crosswalks, signalization, reduced speeds, reduced curb cuts, streetscape improvements, and a bike lane to aid in safe pedestrian and bicycle use along the roadway.

It will also be necessary to coordinate this study with MDOT and the Berrien County Road Commission. The M-139 Corridor Improvement Plan created by the Urban Design Studio at Andrews University in 2014 also recommended that an access management plan be prepared in close collaboration with MDOT, the Berrien County Road Commission, and private stakeholders. It is anticipated that this plan will provide a plan for safe and effective traffic circulation along M-139 for multiple modes of transportation and meet the needs of a variety of residents in Oronoko Charter Township and the Village of Berrien Springs.

A longer-term step to ensure the longevity of the corridor is for the Township and Village to establish a Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA). A CIA functions similar to a DDA in that it creates an authority tasked with facilitating public improvements in a specific area and can use tax increment financing (TIF) to funnel tax increment back into the improvement area to fund public improvements that will further implement the Township's and Village's long-range goals, encourage development and redevelopment, and establish a long-term funding source to maintain a high-quality public realm.

Responsibilities. The Planning Commission may implement this strategy. This element will require significant cooperation between local units of government, Berrien County, and MDOT. It should also include an element of community involvement and it is likely that outside engineering, planning, and legal support will be needed.

BSOT PLACE BASED CODE REVISIONS

The BSOT Place Based Code was created to permit a wider variety of mixed uses along M-139 in walkable and pedestrian-oriented spaces in response to the 2010 Master Plan's recommendation for a M-139 Sub Area Plan. The BSOT Place Based Code provides a vision for land uses along M-139 that coordinate developments between Berrien Springs and Oronoko Charter Township. As utility extensions are expected to extend west of the US-31 interchange during 2020, further development and implementation of this Code is expected.

To ensure the continued effectiveness of the BSOT Place Based Code since its adoption in 2015, this strategy recommends an evaluation of its continued applicability in light of recent developments along this corridor. An evaluation may consider the following:

- Whether compliance with the BSOT Place Based Code should remain optional in certain circumstances.
- The boundaries of Place Based Code Zone locations in accordance with built developments currently in those zones.
- The effectiveness of standards in Place Based Code Zones to promote mixed uses in a pedestrian-oriented environment.
- The effectiveness of architectural and dimensional standards.
- Ways in which the code can be leveraged to facilitate streetscape improvements.

Responsibilities. The M-139 Joint Planning Commission will primarily be responsible for reviewing the BSOT Place Based Code and recommending amendments, if necessary. The Township Board and Berrien Springs Village Council will be responsible for approving any proposed amendments.

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 their community.

An element of this strategy includes, first and foremost, the continued education of Township officials on relevant planning and zoning topics. In addition, the Township should endeavor to educate the public on current planning trends and the benefits of implementing the goals and objectives in this Plan. Every public meeting, including those hosted by the Planning Commission and Township Board, should be instructive for the public.

Further, Township officials should encourage the establishment of 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 a Farmland Preservation Committee, Water Quality Protection, or M-139 Improvement Committee.

The Township should also look for ways to provide residents with news and information regarding their Township government and relevant planning and zoning topics. Possibilities include updates and informational material on the Township's website, a Township newsletter, and developing a series of informational material that could be kept at the Township Hall. Topics could address zoning procedures, water quality protection strategies, farmland preservation techniques, the importance of walkability and the BSOT Place Based Code, and green stormwater infrastructure.

Responsibilities. The Township Board, Township Planning Commission, and staff will need to be responsible for seeking and attending seminars and conferences on current planning topics, as well as establishing new community organizations that may develop and implement educational activities or publish literature that may also be posted on the Township’s website.

COORDINATE WITH NEIGHBORING AND REGIONAL MUNICIPALITIES

Some of the goals in this plan will not be achievable without the cooperation of the Township’s neighboring municipalities. The Village of Berrien Springs, MDOT, and Andrews University should be engaged in discussions pertaining to improvements along the M-139 Corridor. This corridor, along with local infrastructure, will likely serve as the 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, Village, and the University. Continued coordination of the BSOT Place Based Code will promote a unified aesthetic, establishing a greater sense of place within the community.

Additionally, utility extensions along M-139 must continue to be coordinated with the Village of Berrien Springs.

The Township should also work to form alliances with Berrien County and other regional organizations to market the Township as an agricultural and recreational destination, such as the Berrien Conservation District. The County can also be a valuable asset in developing policies to preserve farmland in the Township and can be an important resource in educating the public about important issues in the Township.

Responsibilities. The Township Board, Township Planning Commission, and staff will need to be responsible for advocating seasonal or bi-annual meetings with governing bodies in neighboring communities.

MARKETING AND PROMOTIONAL EFFORTS

The Township’s variety of land uses, rural setting, agricultural productivity, and proximity to Lake Michigan provide ample opportunities for visitors to enjoy the area. To make visitors aware of the Township’s ample opportunities, the Township should look to increase promotions and marketing efforts in the community. The Township should consider the following options:

- **Farmer’s Market:** The Township could work with the local businesses and neighboring communities to study the potential for a weekly farmer’s market located in or near the Village to support local farmers and growers. The creation of a local farmer’s market would provide opportunities for the community to support local agriculture and be conducive to drawing patrons into other stores in the area.
- **Develop Township Newsletter:** As part of this strategy, the Township could develop a semi-annual or quarterly newsletter to educate residents about their local government, key issues affecting the community, and alert them to upcoming events in the Township. It could be mailed to Township residents, posted on the Township website, or delivered via email to those who sign up for email distribution.
- **Promote Local Businesses:** Informational materials and newsletters provided by the Township could be sponsored by a local business each month to educate residents about the economic benefits of shopping at locally-owned businesses. The Township could also support a “shop local” campaign to promote local businesses. Studies have shown that 48 percent of local purchases from independent businesses were re-circulated in the local economy, compared to approximately 14 percent from national chain stores.¹² A shop local campaign could help build community, strengthen the local economy, contribute to a healthier environment, and create additional jobs.

¹² Jeff Milchen, “The Multiplier Effect of Local Independent Businesses,” amiba, American Independent Business Alliance, accessed April 1, 2020, <https://www.amiba.net/resources/multiplier-effect/>

- **Regional Marketing Effort:** Many of the agricultural operations in Oronoko Township are unique, although there is a perception that they are still largely “undiscovered” by many residents of southwest Michigan. Therefore, the Township should work to raise its profile in regional marketing materials and brand itself as an agricultural destination. This may be accompanied by erecting gateway features at key entry points to the Township to provide a sense of place within the community.
- **Promote the Township’s Historical and Educational Resources.** Oronoko Township contains invaluable historical and educational resources in the Courthouse Square and Andrews University, respectively. Andrews University not only serves its students, but is also a valuable asset in the community that enriches the quality of life of local residents. The Courthouse Square is one of the most unique historical sites in the region, offering educational programs, events, tours, and other activities.

The Township should be proactive in creating and/or strengthening partnerships with these vital community resources, which may provide a positive impact on the local economy. For example, the Township could assist in advertising and promotional efforts or provide additional insight into the community’s history. In addition to the cultural background, the unique architecture at the Courthouse Square is should promoted. A partnership with Andrews University should be beneficial to both the University and Township residents. For example, educational outreach programs for residents could be held at University facilities, and the Township could assist the University by providing information and/or resources for research projects.

Responsibilities. The Planning Commission, Township Board, and staff may implement this strategy. This strategy involves numerous elements that will likely require the cooperation of multiple entities to be completed. Outside support will likely be necessary to accomplish the various tasks. These should also include an element of community involvement and engagement.



MASTER PLAN