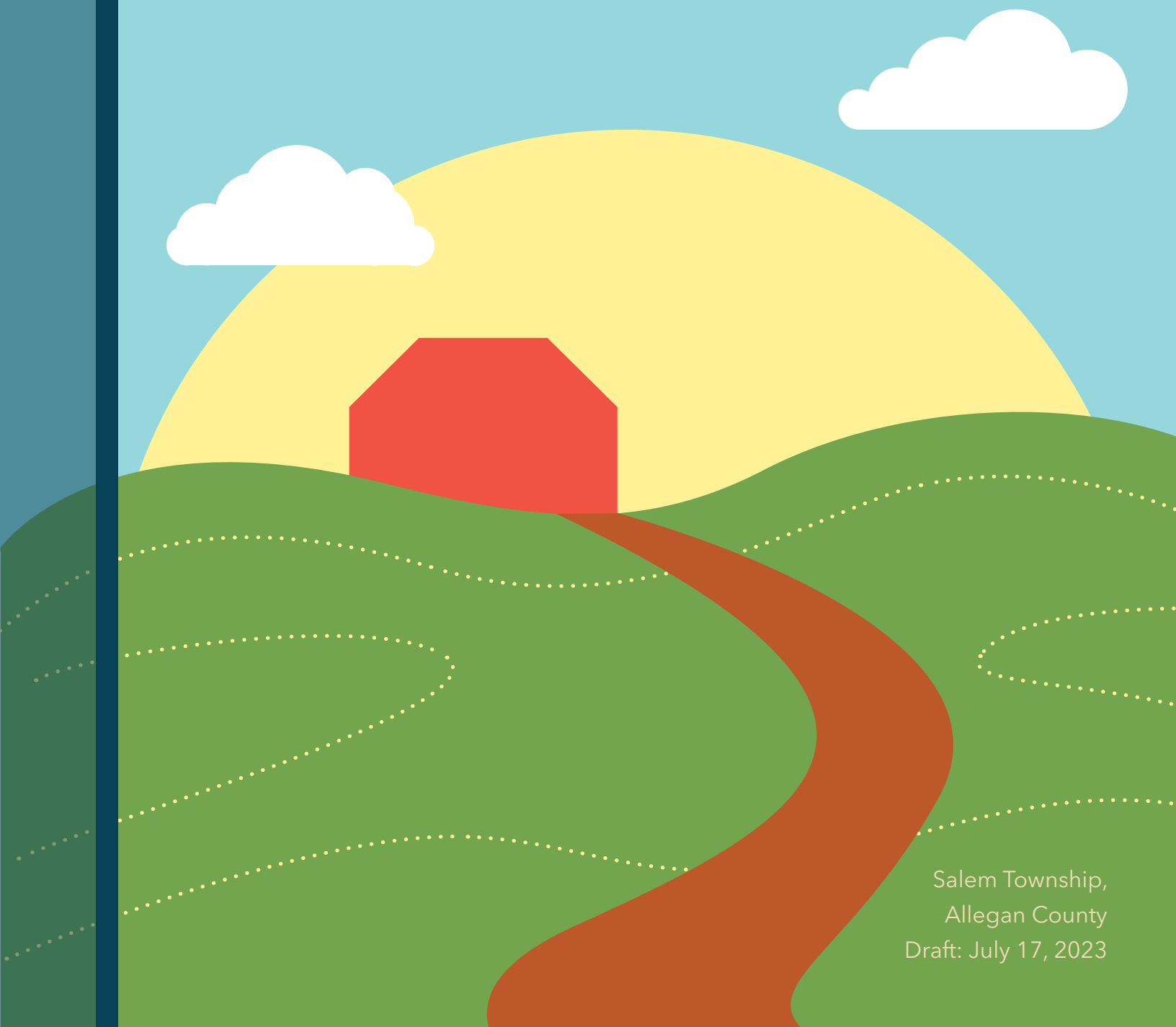


SALEM TOWNSHIP

COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN



Salem Township,
Allegan County
Draft: July 17, 2023



Acknowledgments

The Salem Township Master Plan benefited from significant collaboration with Township staff, the Planning Commission, the Township Board, and active members of the community who participated in this planning process.

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Appendix A
Community Survey Report

Chapter 1 Introduction



Salem Township

Salem Township is located in north Allegan County and consists of 36 square miles of land area. It is bounded on the west by Overisel Township, on the southwest by Heath Township, on the south by Monterey Township, on the southeast by Hopkins Township, and to the west by Dorr Township, all of which lie within Allegan County. Jamestown Township and Zeeland Township, which bounds Salem Township on the north, lie in Ottawa County. Byron Township borders Salem to the northeast and is in Kent County. The Township almost entirely lies within the Kalamazoo River watershed, and the shoreline of Lake Michigan is located approximately 19 miles west of the Township. US Highway 131 runs east of the Township.

Major Issues that are influencing Salem Township include:



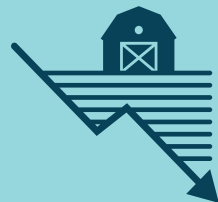
Population Pressure



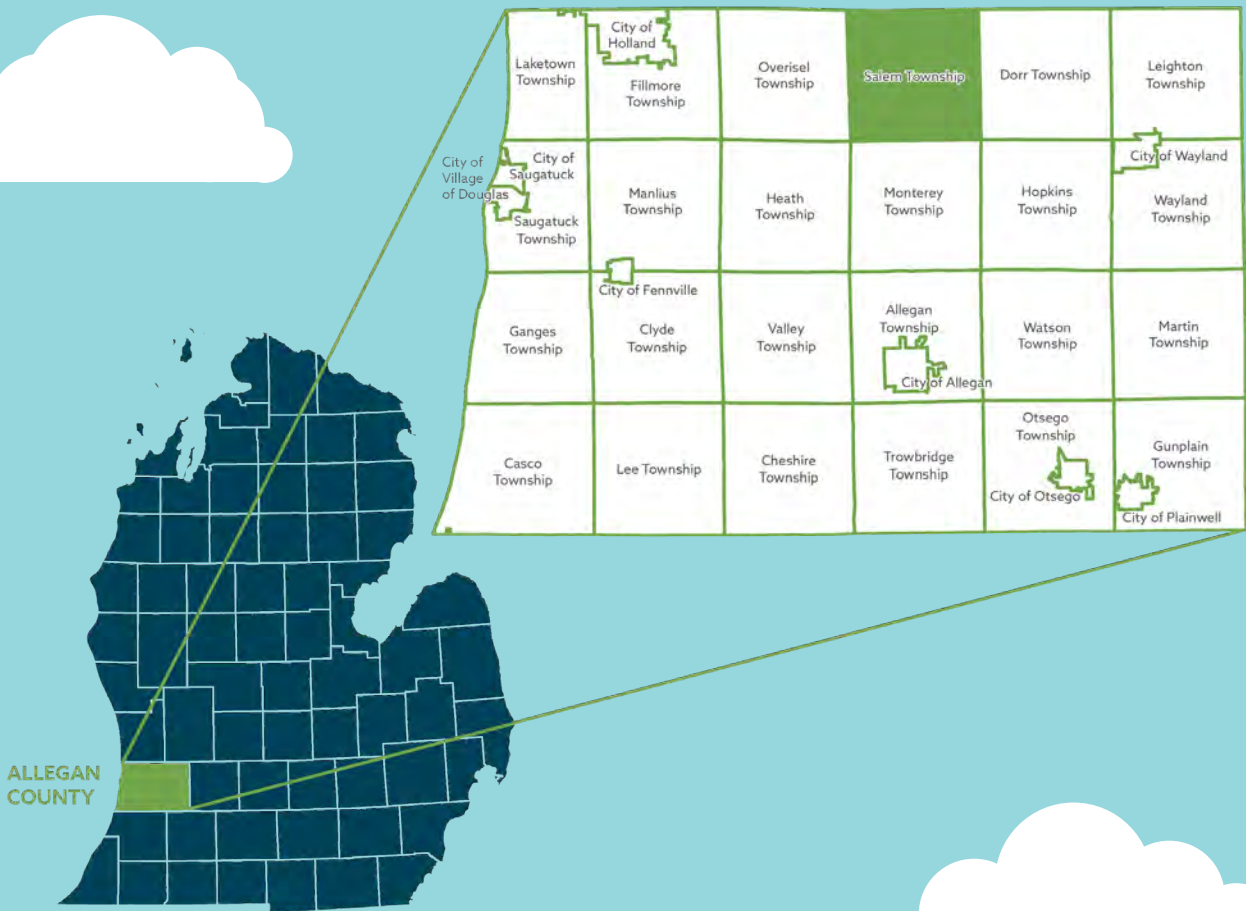
Demand for Housing



Forecasted Groundwater Issues



Loss of Farmland



The Salem Township Master Plan is a policy document developed to guide and inform land use decisions. The Plan provides the legal framework for local zoning decisions and enforcement along with the roadmap for development, farmland use, public improvement plans, and informing the work of the Township Planning Commission and Township Board.

The Master Plan provides a road map for members of the community, Township officials, and other existing and potential stakeholders of Salem Township.



With a history steeped in agriculture and identity in the rural, bucolic landscape of west Michigan, Salem Township seeks to retain the community's character. This plan should be used to inform the future land use, growth, and development decisions in the community.

The Master Plan of Salem Township was originally adopted in 1992. An updated plan was adopted in 2017, and the most recent version was adopted in 2023. A typical planning horizon for a master plan can be as long as 20 years, and reviews of the plan are required every 5 years by the Michigan Public Act 33 of 2008 (Michigan Planning Enabling Act).

Legal Basis for the Plan

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires the Planning Commission to make and approve a master plan as a guide for development within the planning jurisdiction. In the preparation of a master plan, a planning commission shall do all of the following:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Make careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of present conditions and future growth within the planning jurisdiction with due regard to its relationship to neighboring jurisdictions.2. Consult with representatives of adjacent local units of government with respect to their planning so that conflicts in master plans and zoning may be avoided.3. Cooperate with all departments of the state and federal governments, public transportation agencies, and other public agencies concerned with programs for | <p>economic, social, and physical development within the planning jurisdiction and seek the maximum coordination of the local unit of government's programs with these agencies.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">4. In the preparation of the master plan, the planning commission may meet with other governmental planning commissions or agency staff to deliberate.5. In general, a planning commission has such lawful powers as may be necessary to enable it to promote local planning and otherwise carry out the purposes of this act. |
|--|--|

Who Should Use the Master Plan?

Residents

Each parcel has a certain right of use set forth in the Master Plan and zoning ordinance. Proactive participation in assuring any changes that may occur is consistent with the Master Plan is the single most effective activity **residents** can undertake in regards to master planning.

Property Owners

Owners of undeveloped land should look at the Master Plan to obtain the parameters that identify the potential land use. Proper planning and growth management can often coexist with the appropriate development objectives.

Real Estate Purchasers

In the real estate industry, the term “due diligence” means that when a prospective buyer contemplates a purchase of land, the prospective buyer should research relevant information regarding the property prior to purchase. Typically, the **purchaser** will investigate whether there is a good and marketable title, environmental questions, land survey, and other relevant information. The Master Plan defines acceptable categories of future land use. The purchaser could be encouraged to review the Master Plan before buying property to see if their objectives align with those outlined on the Future Land Use Plan.

Developers

Potential **developers** in the community should always do a thorough analysis of the Master Plan before buying property. Planned location and type of land use, density of land use, utility service areas, and growth management policies of the Plan must be clearly understood. Court cases that involve a property purchaser or developer who disagrees with antecedent plans and zoning usually result in a judgment in favor of the municipality.

Planning Commission

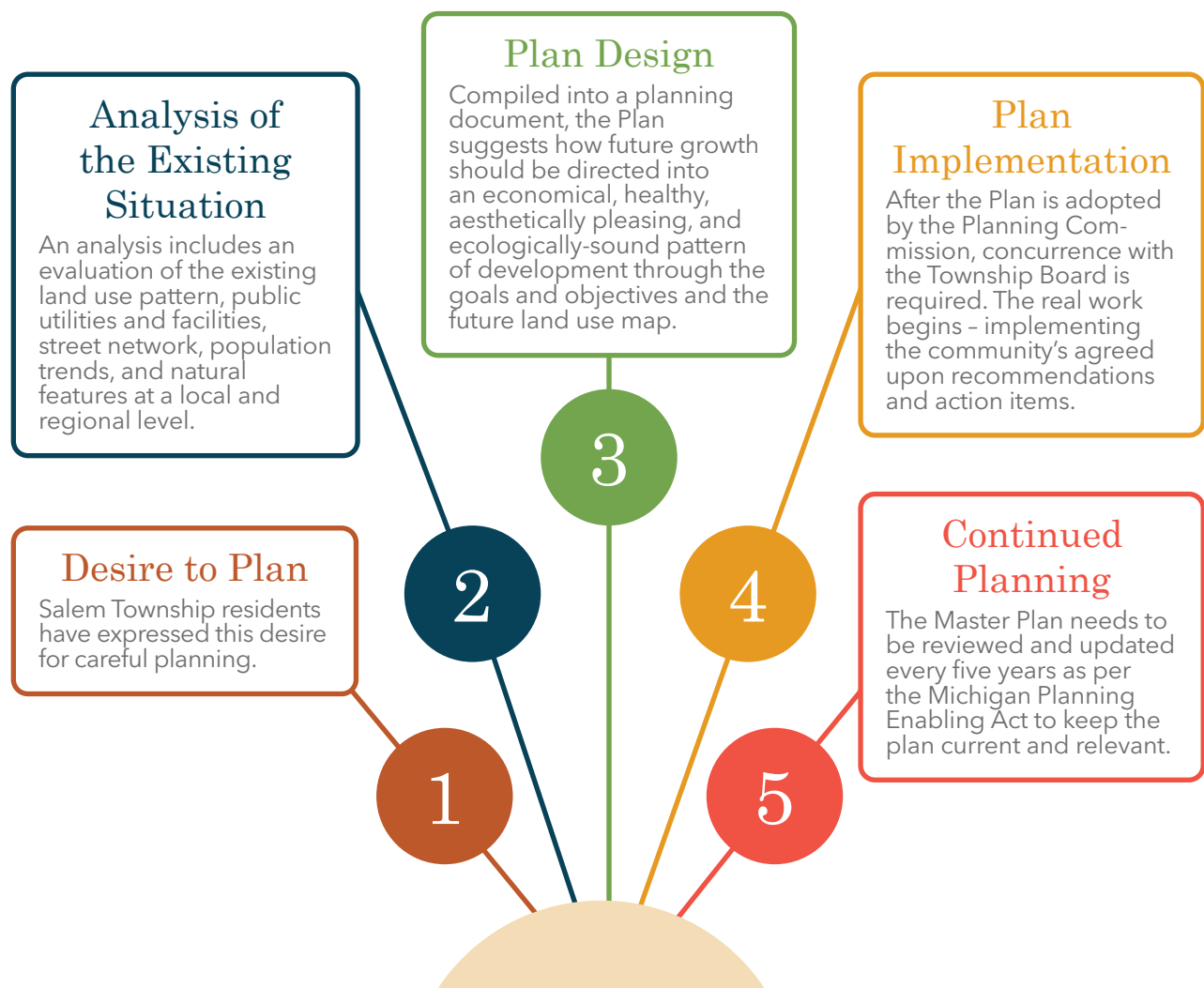
The **Planning Commission** should use the Master Plan as its basis for making planning and zoning decisions.

Township Board

Changes to zoning districts and planned unit development decisions are made final by the **Township Board** on the advice of the Planning Commission. The Township Board should be familiar with the Master Plan so that it will understand the framework from which the Planning Commission is making its recommendations.

The Planning Process

Planning is an ongoing, goal-oriented process that seeks to create a better Salem Township community. Periodically the process moves to focus on the updating of the Master Plan, but typically the planning process is used to guide on-going growth and development-related questions and situations. The planning process informs land use decisions. The Master Plan is a tool that should be used by all interested parties making land use decisions and undertaking projects that affect the Township's future.



The Planning Process in 5 Steps



Citizen Participation and Involvement

The Master Plan is a product of participation by Township residents. The Master Plan Steering Committee was comprised of Township officials and vested community members that gave direction to and vetted the Master Plan document. The Committee also approved the community survey that provided residents the opportunity to provide feedback and opinions about land use and growth-related matters like farmland preservation, ground water and water quality, future development, renewable energy systems, and other related topics. The results of the survey were compiled and informed the development of the Plan's goals and objectives. This entire Community Survey Report can be found in the Appendix.

Community Survey Highlights



A majority of survey respondents...

- live in single-family homes (93%)
- lived in Salem Township more than 10 years (67.4%)
- own the dwelling they live in (97.9%)



Top three reasons why residents chose to live in Salem Township:

1. Rural lifestyle
2. Natural setting
3. Safe area



Top three highest concerns for residents:

1. Conversion of farms to commercial uses
2. Conversion of farms to residential living
3. Unplanned and sporadic commercial development



Top three priorities the Township should focus on:

1. Protecting private property rights
2. Protecting groundwater
3. Preserving rural character

Chapter 2

Population and Economic Characteristics



Population

The population of Salem Township has been on an upward path since 1970, as shown in Figure 1. The 2020 U.S. Census provides the most recent population of Salem Township. The U.S. Census reported 5,156 people residing in Salem Township in 2020.

The Township experienced an increase in total population with a growth rate of 13.8% since 2010.

Overall, population growth in the Township has been substantial since the 1970s and progressed at a steady pace between 1970 and 2010.

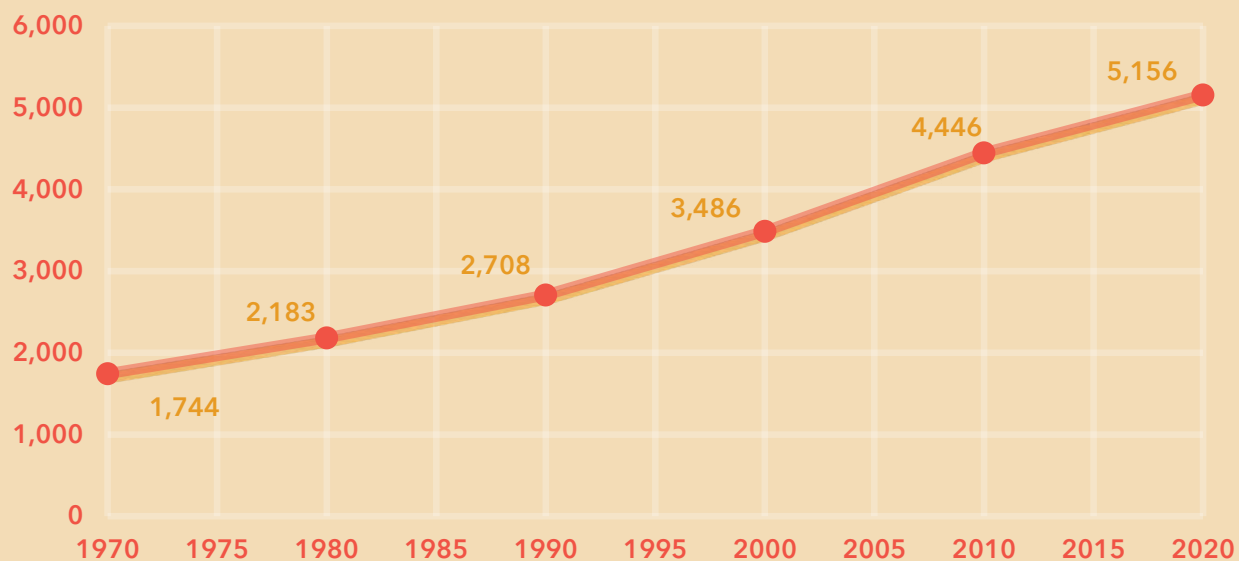


Figure 1. Salem Township Population 1970-2020

Source: U.S. Census 2020

Racial Composition

Rural Townships tend to reflect a racially homogenous population, and this is also the case with Salem Township. Nearly 92% of the population is white as shown in Figure 2. Other races represent 8% of the population and people of two or more races make up the majority of the Township's population that is not white. The remaining balance of persons is represented by a variety of other races including.

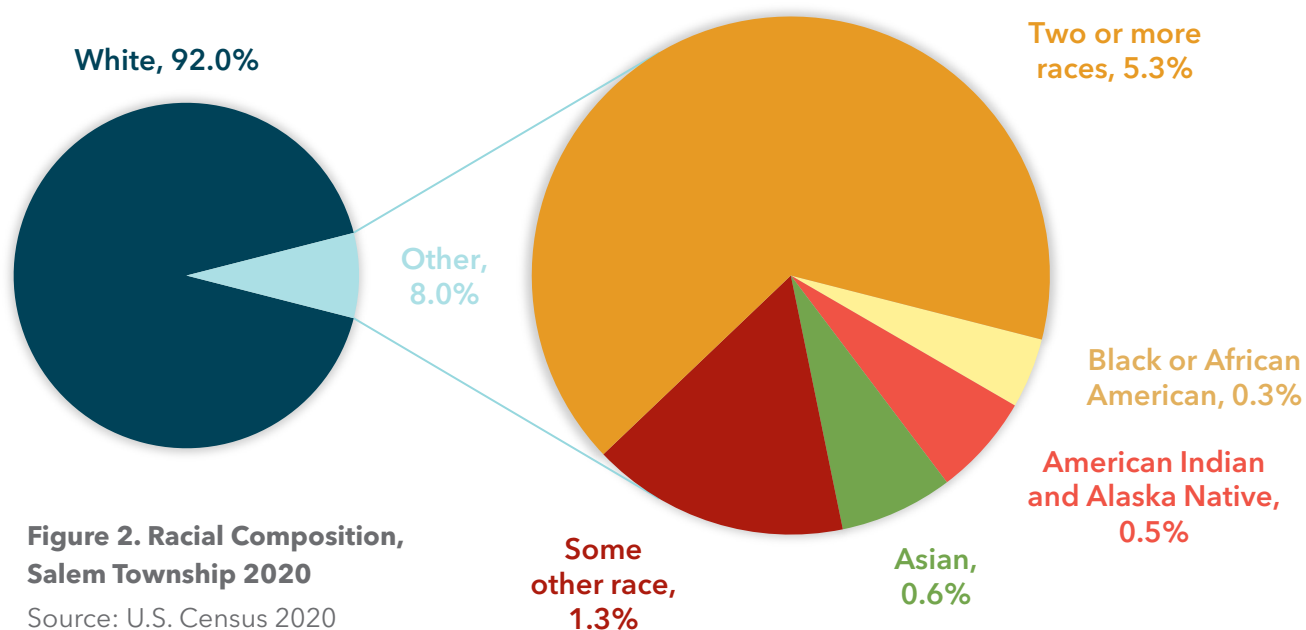


Figure 2. Racial Composition, Salem Township 2020

Source: U.S. Census 2020

Age

A good measure of change within a community can be obtained by comparing age distribution over time. Comparing values from the previous master plan gives insight into how the Township age distribution has changed over the past decade.

A large percentage of Salem Township's population is represented in the Family Forming and Mature Families age group which indicate ages 18 to 44 and 45 to 64 respectively. People in the Family Forming years are also the prime wage-earning population. A high number of people in this category is indicative of an area with a strong demand for single-family housing, schools, and recreational

facilities. School-aged children (5 to 17 years old) account for 17% of the population followed by Retirement age (65 years and older) and Preschool age children (0 to 4 years). As shown in Table 1, there has been a significant increase in the Retirement age group. It is not unexpected to see an increase in the Retirement population as individuals in the Mature Families group age out over time. The population grew in every category except for School-Aged children where the population experienced a decline of 13.5%. The numbers also continue to foretell demands for recreational facilities and housing types that serve both young and older residents, but particularly with regards to toward the older population.

Table 1. Percent Change in Age Distribution 2010-2020, Salem Township

Age Group	# of People in 2010	# of People in 2020	% Change (2010-2020)
Preschool (0-4)	354	360	1.7%
School Age (5-17)	965	835	-13.5%
Family Forming (18-44)	1,600	1,674	4.6%
(Mature Families (45-64)	1,147	1,410	22.9%
Retirement (65+)	380	645	69.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates

Education

There are 3,495 people in Salem Township of age 25 years and older. Of these persons, nearly 95.2% completed at least 4 years of high school education or education equivalent to a high school diploma. The high school education attainment rate in the Township is 4% higher than the Allegan County average. Approximately 16.1% of people age 25 or older received a Bachelor's degree or higher which is slightly lower than the County average (23.6%).



Table 2. Education Attainment 2020, Salem Township

Education Level	Number of People	Percent of People
Less than 9th grade	39	1.1%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	129	3.7%
High school graduate	1,882	53.8%
Some college, no degree	672	19.2%
Associate's degree	212	6.1%
Bachelor's degree	415	11.9%
Graduate or professional degree	146	4.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates



The per capita income in the Township increased by 45.8% since 2010 and increased by 30.1% in the County.

Income

Income is a helpful indicator to identify disparities between communities and measure the economic strength of an area. Income can have land-use implications since people with high incomes have more spending power, therefore, the local government has a higher tax base. Table 3 compares the historical and 2020 ACS 5-year estimated per capita income in Salem Township with Allegan County. In 2020, the estimated per capita income for Salem Township was reported to be \$30,547, which is slightly higher than the per capita income for Allegan County (\$30,057).

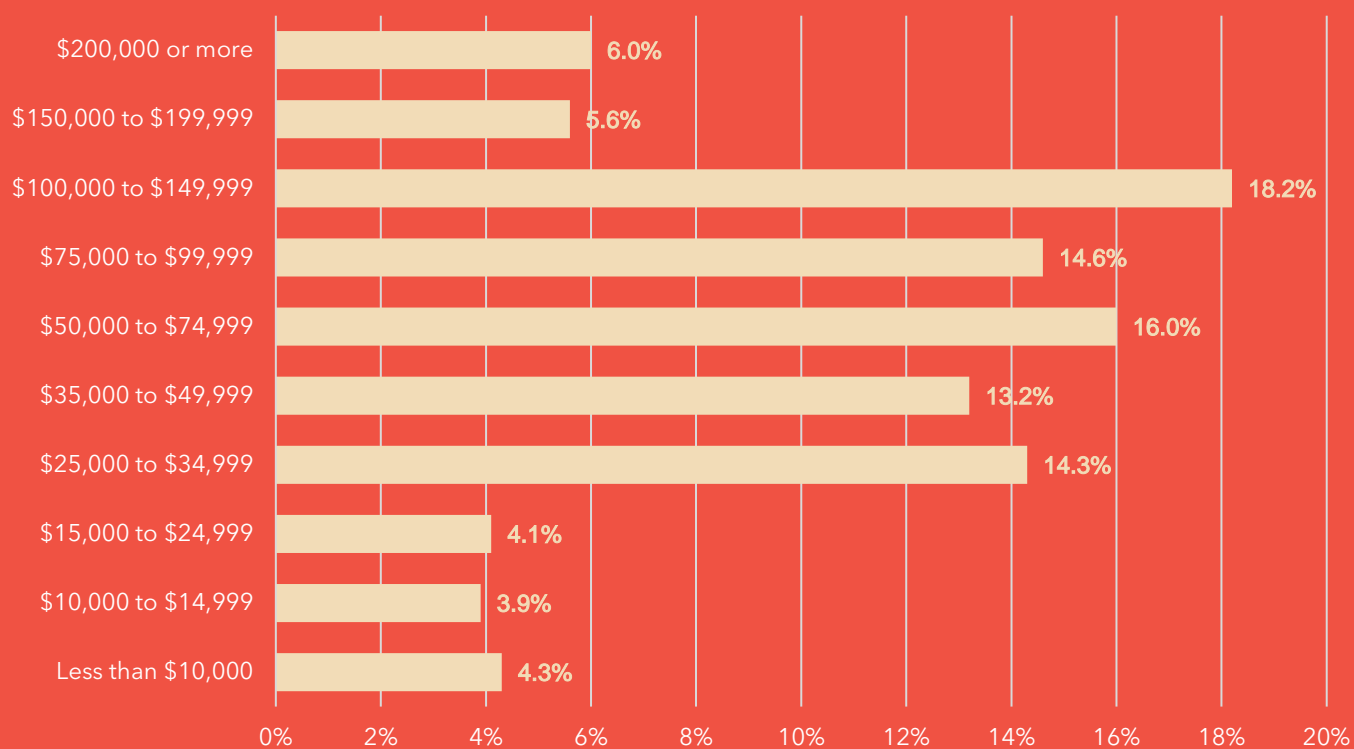
The median income for Salem Township was reported to be \$78,718 up from \$58,527 in 2010. The median income for the Township also exceeds the Allegan County median income (\$65,071). In 2020, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that 3.6% of people in the Township were living below the poverty level. This is lower than the 2010 estimate (11.9%) and the percent of people below poverty level in Allegan County (8.8%) in 2020. About 60.4% of households have an income of \$50,000 or higher and about 29.8% of households were reported to have an income of \$100,000 or higher as shown in Figure 3.

Table 3. Per Capita Income, Salem Township, and Allegan County 1989-2020

Per Capita Income				
	1989	1999	2010	2020
Salem Township	\$10,236	\$19,620	\$20,958	\$30,547
Allegan County	\$12,980	\$19,918	\$23,108	\$30,057

Percent Change			
	1999 -2010	2010-2020	2010
Salem Township	91.7%	6.8%	45.8%
Allegan County	53.5%	16.0%	30.1%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates

**Figure 3. Percent of Households by Income, Salem Township 2020**

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates



Housing

The figures listed in this section are estimates made by the U.S. Census Bureau based on representative sample data. According to the U.S. Census 2020 5-Year estimates, there were 2,056 housing units in Salem Township, up from 1,758 units in 2010. Of the total units, 1,912 units were occupied and about 144 units were vacant in 2020. Nearly 86% (1,769) of the units are identified as owner-occupied and about 7% (143) are identified as renter-occupied as shown in Figure 4. As listed in Figure 5, 213 building permits (for residential housing units) were issued from 2012 to 2019. An average of 27 building permits were issued annually and the highest number of permits were issued in 2015 and 2017.

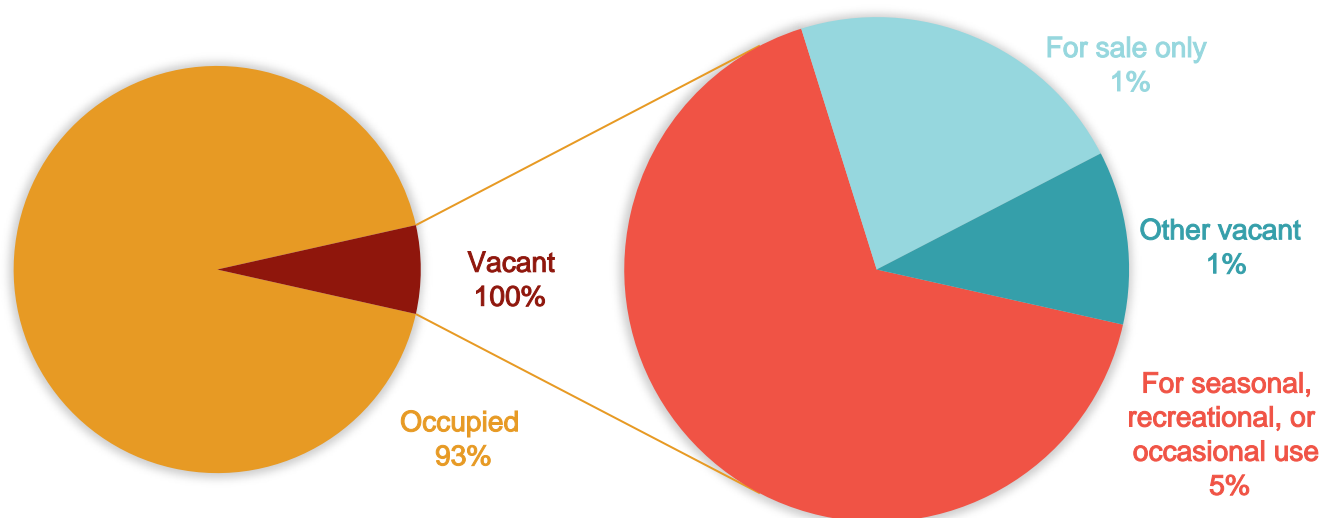


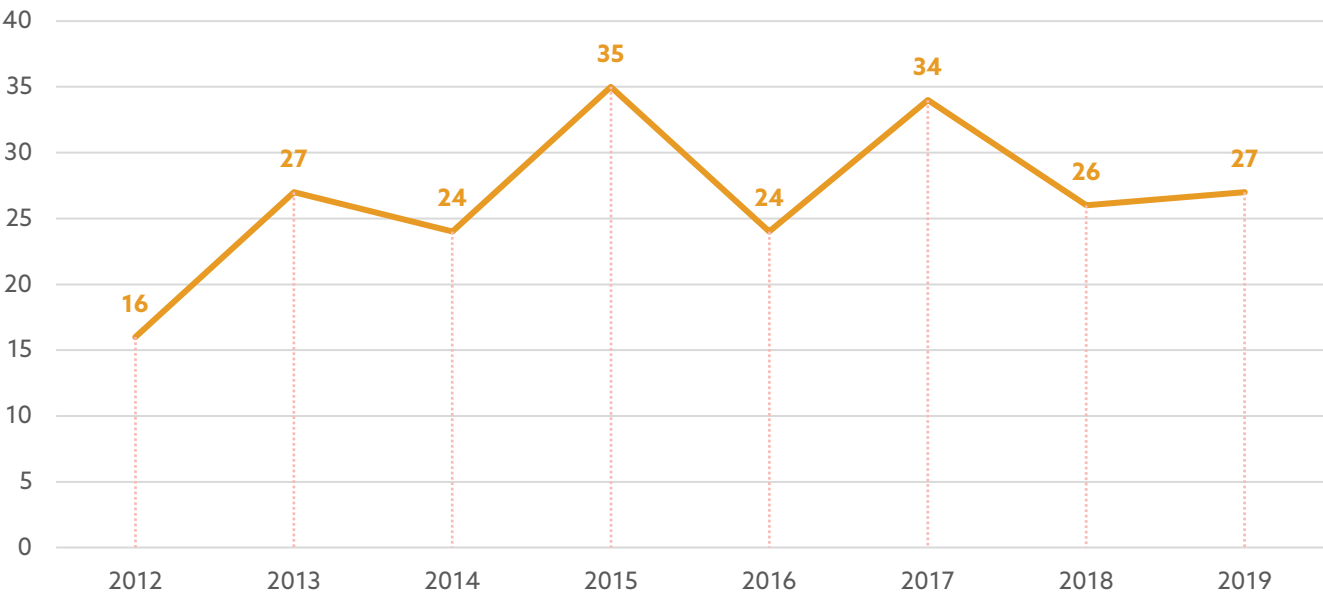
Figure 4. Percent of Housing Units by Occupancy, Salem Township 2020

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates

A majority of the housing units in Salem Township (83.5%) are identified as conventional single-unit detached homes. Mobile homes comprise 13.4% of the total housing units. Single-unit attached structures make up 1.3% and two-unit structures make up 1.8% of the total housing units in the Township. As shown in Figure 4, 5% or 96 units were estimated to be vacant for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use in 2020.

Figure 5. Number of Building Permits Issued Annually, Salem Township 2012-2019

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates



Seasonal vacant housing units include those that are used for summer or winter sport/recreation, such as cottages and hunting cabins, intended for occupancy in certain seasons of the year. Over the past few decades, Salem Township saw a decline in the average number of persons per household. In 2000 the average number of persons per household was 3.03, in 2010 it dropped to 2.92 and as of 2020, the average number of people per household was 2.57. The recent drop is in line with a noticeable trend nationwide towards smaller family units.

Employment

In 2020, there were 3,795 persons 16 years and over and of these, 2,350 were considered in the labor force. Of the eligible labor force, 2,308 people, or 60.8% were employed. The 2020 Census estimates revealed that the average worker in the local labor force took approximately 25.4 minutes to travel to work. A majority of the people drove to work (88.6%), while only 2.0% walked to work. Another 9.4% reported working from home in Salem Township. More than half (59.4%) of the working population listed working outside the county of residence.



These statistics support the conclusion that Salem Township continues to be a bedroom community with the majority of the residents working in other communities.

As shown in Figure 6, the Township comprises a diversity of occupations. The largest occupations were listed as production, transportation, and material moving with 31.1% of the working population.

Figure 6. Employment by Occupation, Salem Township 2020

Source: U.S. Census Bureau,
ACS 5-Year Estimates

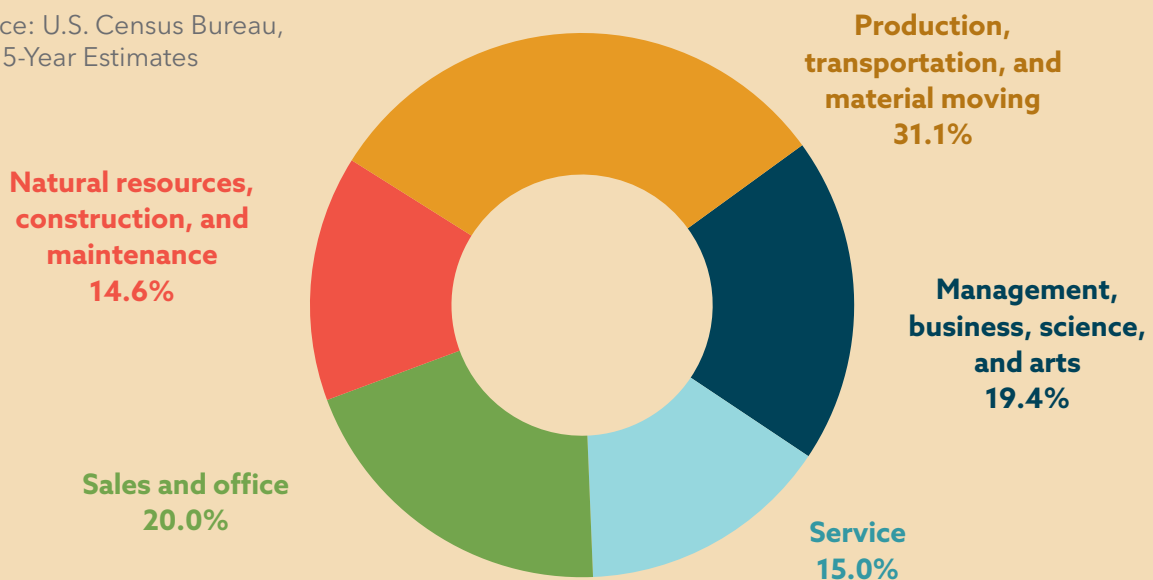


Table 5 illustrates the employment industries and percent change from 2010 to 2020 in Salem Township. *Manufacturing* employed the largest number of workers from Salem Township followed by *Other services, except public administration* (14.2%) and *Educational services, and healthcare and social assistance* (11.1%). *Other services, except public administration* and *Manufacturing* industries, saw the largest increase in the number of workers while *Wholesale trade* and *Information* industries saw the largest decline in the number of workers. Contrary to the trends from the 2010 census, the Township fell more heavily in the production, transportation, and material moving and management business, science, and arts categories than the sales and office and natural resources, construction, and maintenance categories.

Table 5. Change in Employment Industry, Salem Township 2010-2020

Industry	2020 # of Worker	% of Workers	2010 # of Workers	% Change (2010-2020)
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	76	3.3%	47	61.7%
Construction	246	10.7%	230	7.0%
Manufacturing	742	32.1%	425	74.6%
Wholesale trade	22	1.0%	86	-74.4%
Retail trade	249	10.8%	243	2.5%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	85	3.7%	101	-15.8%
Information	12	0.5%	46	-73.9%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	48	2.1%	59	-18.6%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	121	5.2%	115	5.2%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	256	11.1%	395	-35.2%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, and accommodation and food services	74	3.2%	141	-47.5%
Other services, except public administration	328	14.2%	129	154.3%
Public administration	49	2.1%	76	-35.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates

Population Projections

Population projections refer to the direction a community is anticipated to follow in the future. In the planning process, projections of the future population provide an insight into the future land use requirements as well as the demand for various public services and capital improvements. Population projections are, however, only refined estimates of what the future might hold and should not be taken from a truly scientific viewpoint. There are several methods used to project population growth, three of which are described below and summarized in Table 9.

Growth Rate Method

The growth rate method projects future population growth (or decline) based on the rate of growth in the past. Between 1990 and 2010, the population of Salem Township grew at an average rate of 0.49% every year. Extending this rate into the future, the growth rate method projects 5,963 people by the year 2050.

Arithmetic Method

The arithmetic method is similar to the growth rate method in that population projections are based on growth that occurred in past decades. This method, however, bases population growth on the average increase in the number of persons per year, rather than the percentage rate. Between 1980 and 2020, Salem Township gained an average of 17.1 persons each year. The arithmetic method projects 5,668 people in Salem Township by 2050.

Buildings Permit Method

The building permit method may be the most accurate projection technique because it accounts for recent, construction activity while tempering the recent short-term trends with the trends that occurred within a longer 20-year period. The census data show that a total of 213 new dwelling units were constructed between 2012 and 2019 with an average of 27 new units per year. According to the 2020 ACS 5-year estimates, the average household size for Salem Township was 2.57 per household. Based on these average values, the table shows the population estimates out to the year 2050. The projection using this method results in a higher increase in population by the year 2050.



Table 6. Growth Rate Method Population Projections

Population Change (1980-2020)	Current Population 2020	Population Projections		
		2030	2040	2050
0.49%	5,156	5,412	5,681	5,963

Table 7. Arithmetic Method Population Projections

Population Change (1980-2020)	Current Population 2020	Population Projections		
		2030	2040	2050
17.1	5,156	5,327	5,497	5,668

Table 8. Building Permit Method Population Projections

Avg. Building Permits (2012-2019)	Avg. Household Size	Current Population	Population Projections		
			2030	2040	2050
27	2.57	5,156	5,850	6,544	7,238

Combined Average

Averaging the three-population projection methods illustrated on the preceding page provides a more comprehensive view of the future population. Table 9 provides the summary of the preceding information and the average of all three projection methods. Based on the projections above and the combined average, it can be estimated that the township’s population may reach 6,290 by 2050.

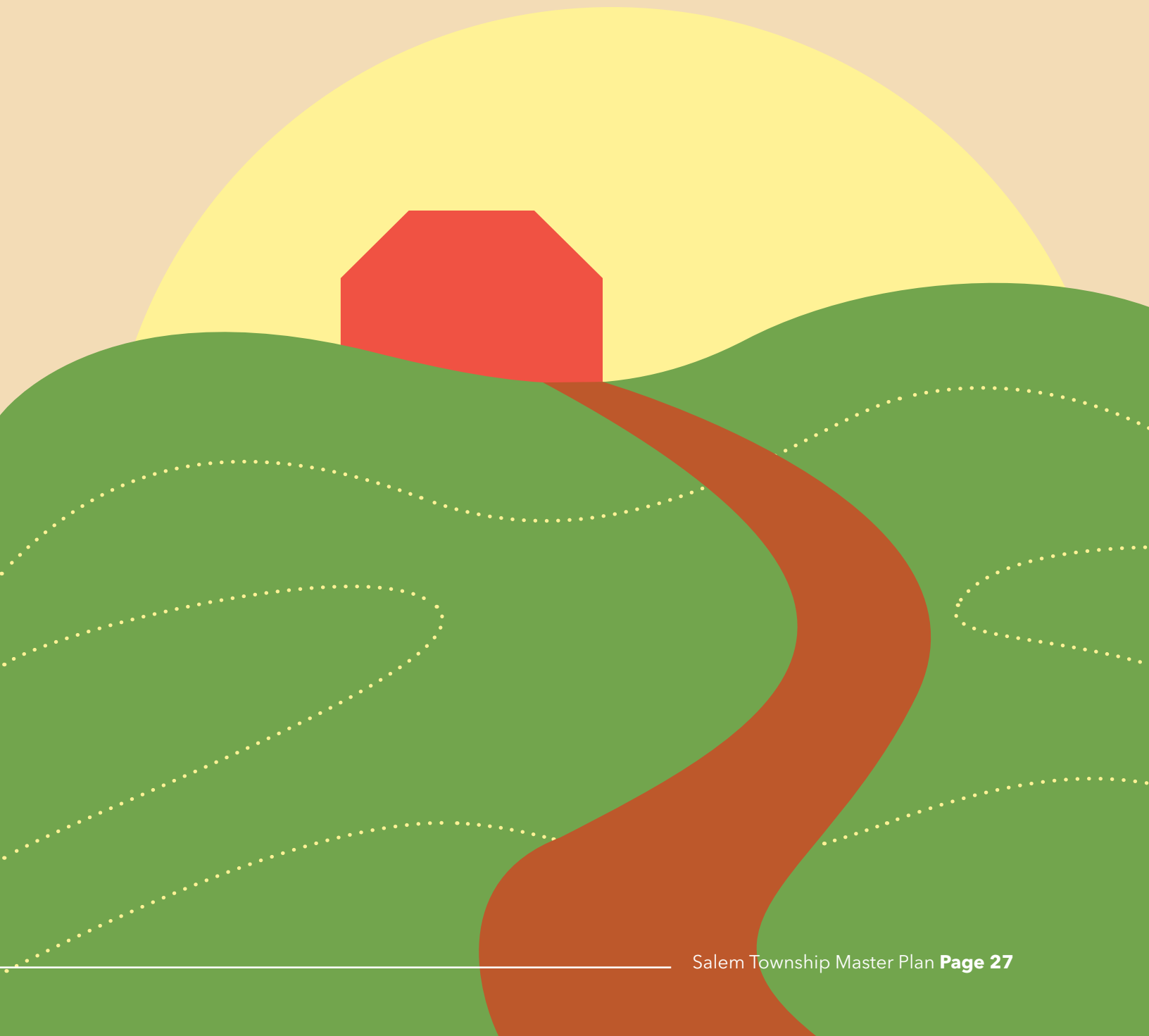


Table 9. Population Projection Combined Average

Method	2020	2030	2040	2050
Arithmetic Method	5,156	5,327	5,497	5,668
Growth Rate Method	5,156	5,412	5,681	5,963
Building Permit Method	5,156	5,850	6,544	7,238
<i>Average</i>	<i>5,156</i>	<i>5,530</i>	<i>5,907</i>	<i>6,290</i>

Growth Trend Implications

If growth pressures continue along the rate of any of these projections, the landscape and characteristic of the Township will likely change. Township officials should take proactive steps to consider where they would like new developments to go or what areas should be intentionally preserved. Continuing to get support from planning and zoning professionals will be helpful in making land use and development decisions.



Chapter 3 Natural Features



The natural environment contains resources that need to be conserved and protected if they are to be enjoyed by future generations. The physical environment provides both opportunities and constraints for development. While a wetland or heavy soil can hinder construction, the presence of a stand of trees can help enhance a development project. The following discussion highlights significant aspects of the local environment as they pertain to future planning considerations for Salem Township.

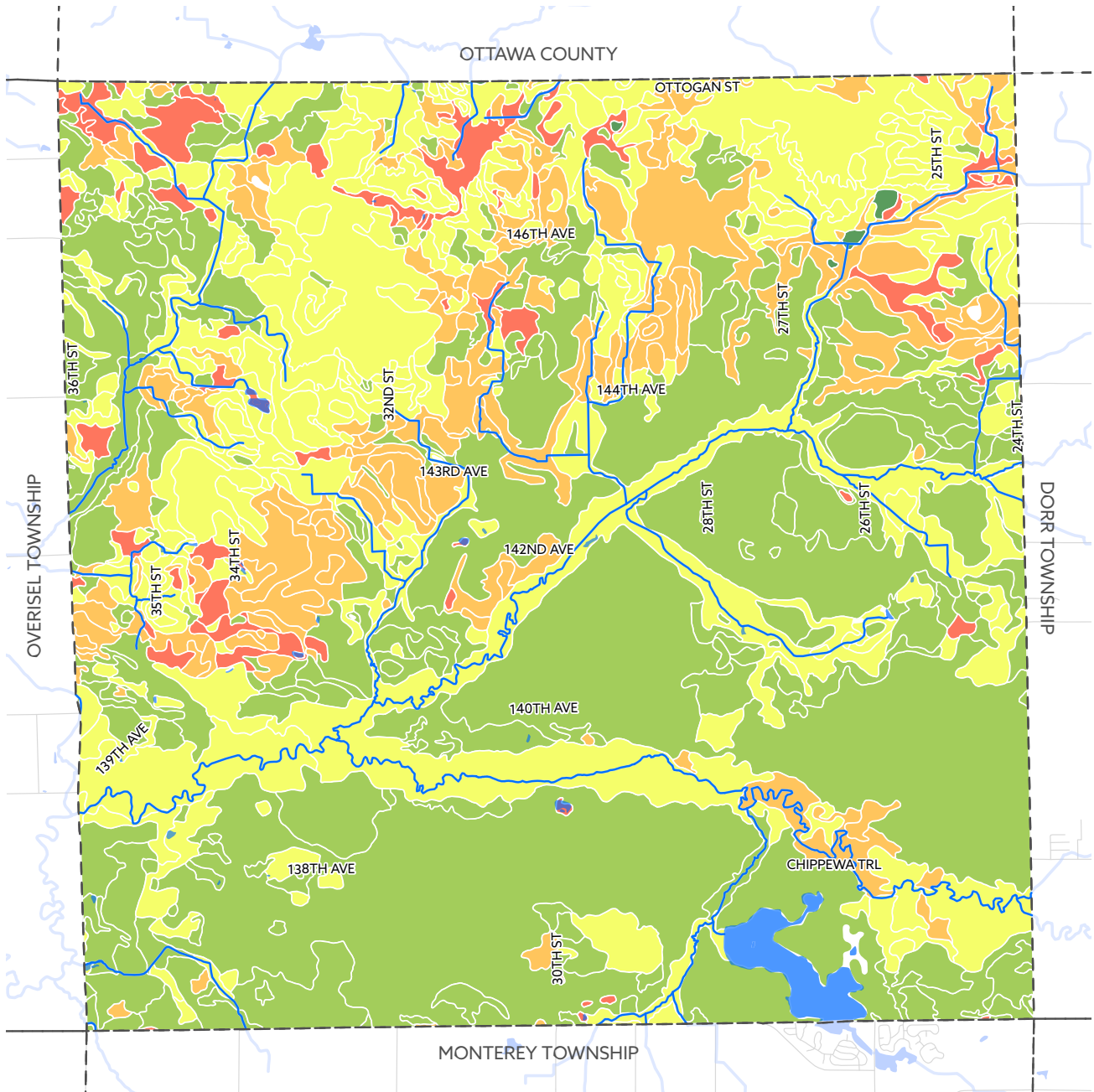
The land surface within the Township varies from nearly level to hilly as shown in Map 1. Elevations vary from 500 to 1,000 feet above sea level, with the highest elevations located in the northeast and the lowest elevation located in the southwest. Nearly level areas are associated with out-wash plains, floodplains, and till plains. Hilly areas are primarily associated with moraines. Areas with high elevation can be seen more prevalently in the northern half of the Township.

Mineral Resources

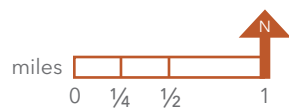
Gas companies have found that geological formations beneath Salem Township are optimal for the underground storage of natural gas.

For many years, during the summer months, gas has been piped from outside the state and held in the ground beneath the Township until winter, when it is distributed to many areas throughout west Michigan. These gas storage areas lie beneath large areas of the north and central portions of the Township. Gas companies have made leasing arrangements to allow for the underground storage of gas with many local property owners. Local storage operations also provide an important contribution to the local tax base. There are also approximately 80 oil wells in Salem Township. Most are stripper wells, capable of producing only small volumes of oil per day. The operation of these wells is sporadic and is tied to the price of oil.





Map 1. Elevation



Elevation Range (In Feet)

525 - 640	870 - 984
641 - 755	985 - 1099
756 - 869	

A number of sand and gravel mining operations have located within the Township, but mining activity has fluctuated in the last decade. Most of the mining operations are located in the northern half of the Township where there are relatively large deposits of sand and gravel and where the proximity to major development activity in communities to the north and northeast was closer.



Soils

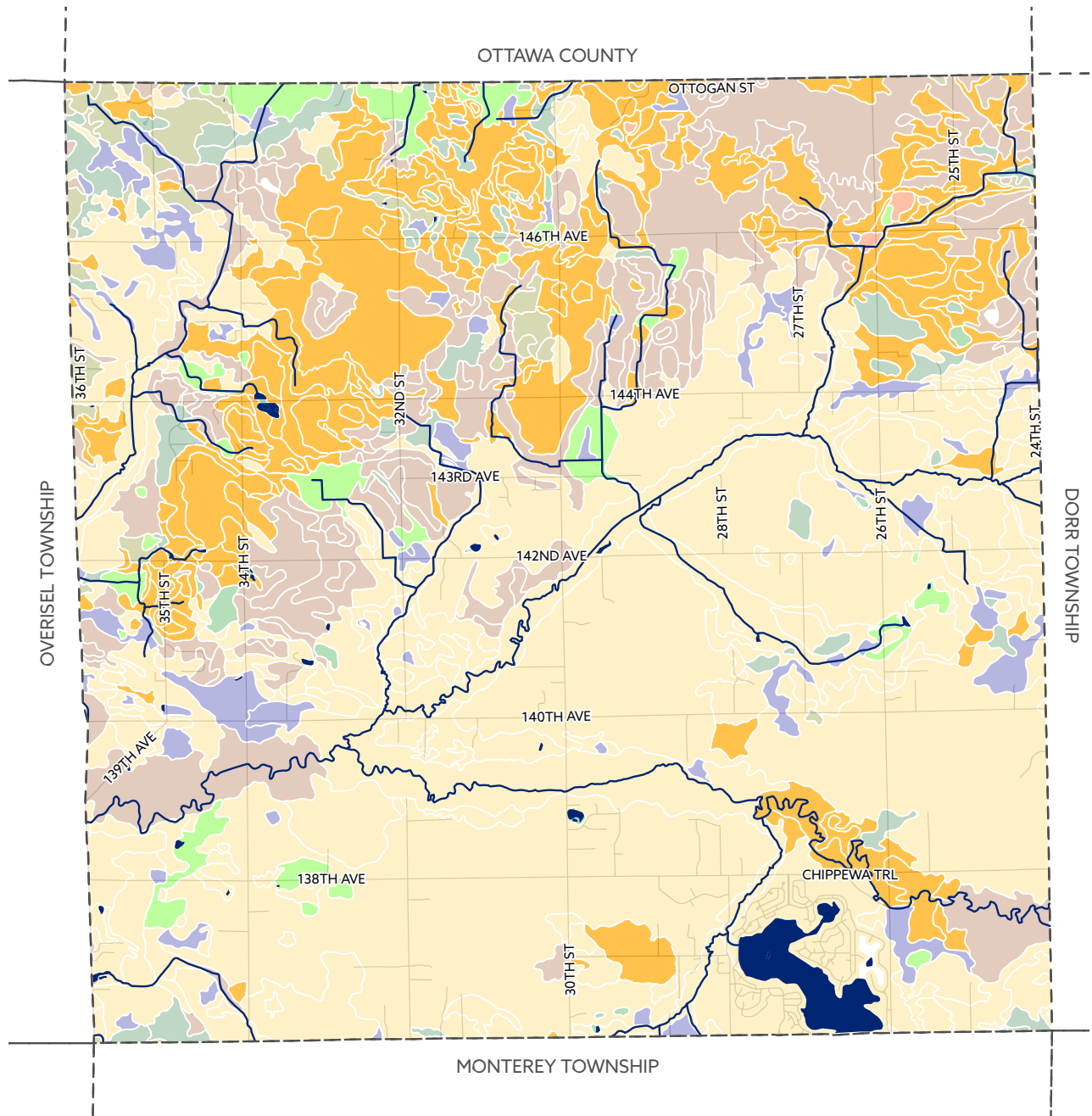
The soils in Salem Township range from well-drained, sandy, or loamy materials to poorly drained soils formed in sandy, loamy, and organic materials. Because residents rely on septic fields for the disposal of wastewater, the location of various soil types is an important consideration in future development plans for the Township.

Map 2 contains information on soil type. The Township is mostly comprised of mixed soils. The northwestern portion of the township is predominantly comprised of fine loamy soils along with clusters of coarse loamy, sandy mixed, and loamy mixed soils.

Map 3 shows the locations of soils according to their drainage capacity. The map identifies the natural drainage conditions of the soil and refers to the frequency & duration of the wetness period. The natural drainage of the soil may limit human use of the resource. Excessively drained soils are defined as soils in which water is removed very

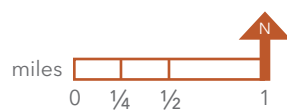
rapidly. These soils are commonly coarse-textured and have a very high hydraulic conductivity or are very shallow with reduced soil structure. Well-drained soils remove water from the soil readily but not rapidly. Water is available to plants throughout most of the growing season in humid regions. Wetness also does not inhibit the growth of roots for significant periods during most growing seasons. Poorly drained soils remove water very slowly so that the soil is wet at shallow depth periodically during the growing seasons or remains wet for long periods. These soils are commonly level or depressed and frequently ponded.

Most of the soils in the Township are considered to be excessively drained. Well-drained soils are located in the northern half of the Township and poorly drained soils are located around the various streams of water that branch throughout the Township.



Source: Soil Survey Geographic Databa

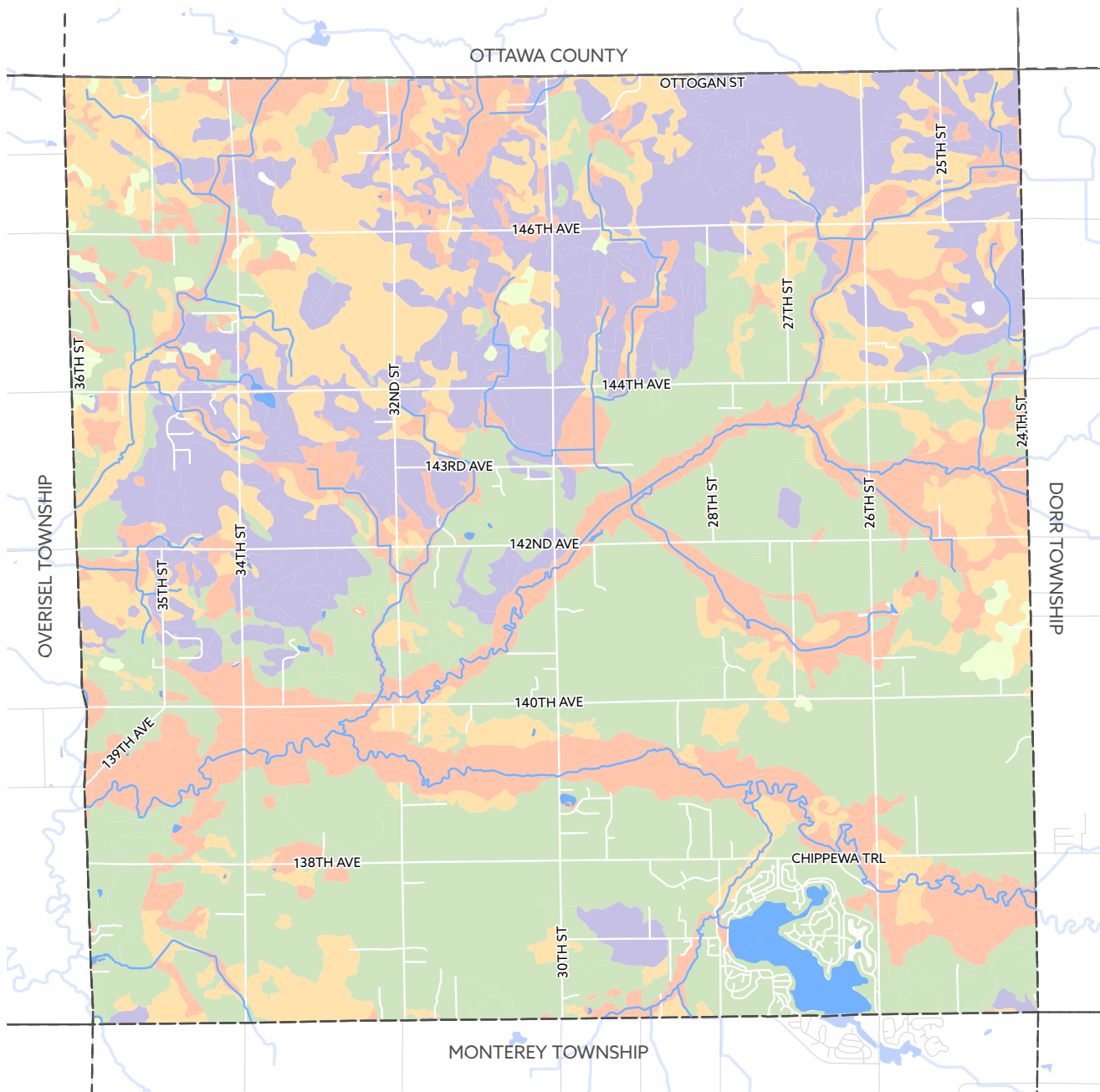
Map 2. Soils



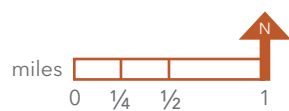
Soil Classification

■ Aquepts	■ Fine Silty
■ Coarse Loamy	■ Loamy Mixed
■ Euic	■ Mixed
■ Fine Mixed	■ Sandy Mixed
■ Fine Loamy	■ Lakes

— Streams & Rivers
— Roads
 Jurisdiction Boundaries



Map 3. Soil Drainage



Soil Category

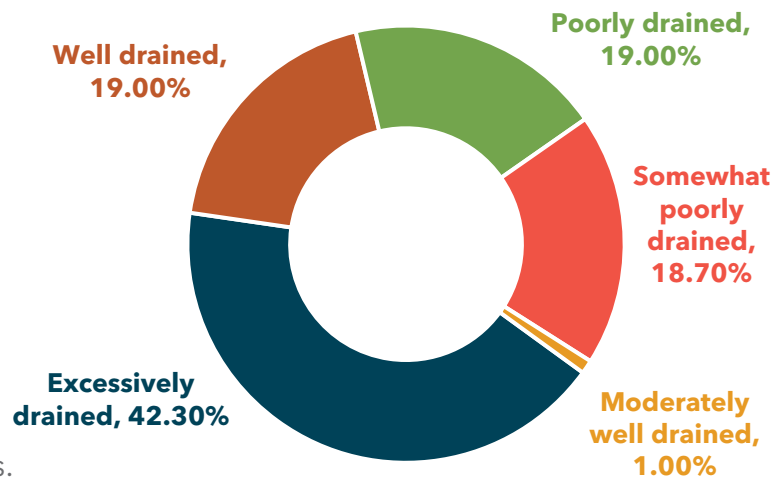
- Excessively drained
- Moderately well drained
- Well drained
- Somewhat poorly drained
- Poorly drained

- Lakes
- Streams & Rivers
- Jurisdiction Boundaries

Generally, soils which have unsuitable characteristics for buildings or septic fields may still be useful with on-site modifications. The soil drainage map is, therefore, not a substitute for on-site investigation or detailed engineering studies. The map does generally define those areas where intensive development can lead to environmental and health hazards.

Figure 7. Percent of Soils by Drainage Class

Source: Soil Survey Geographic Database



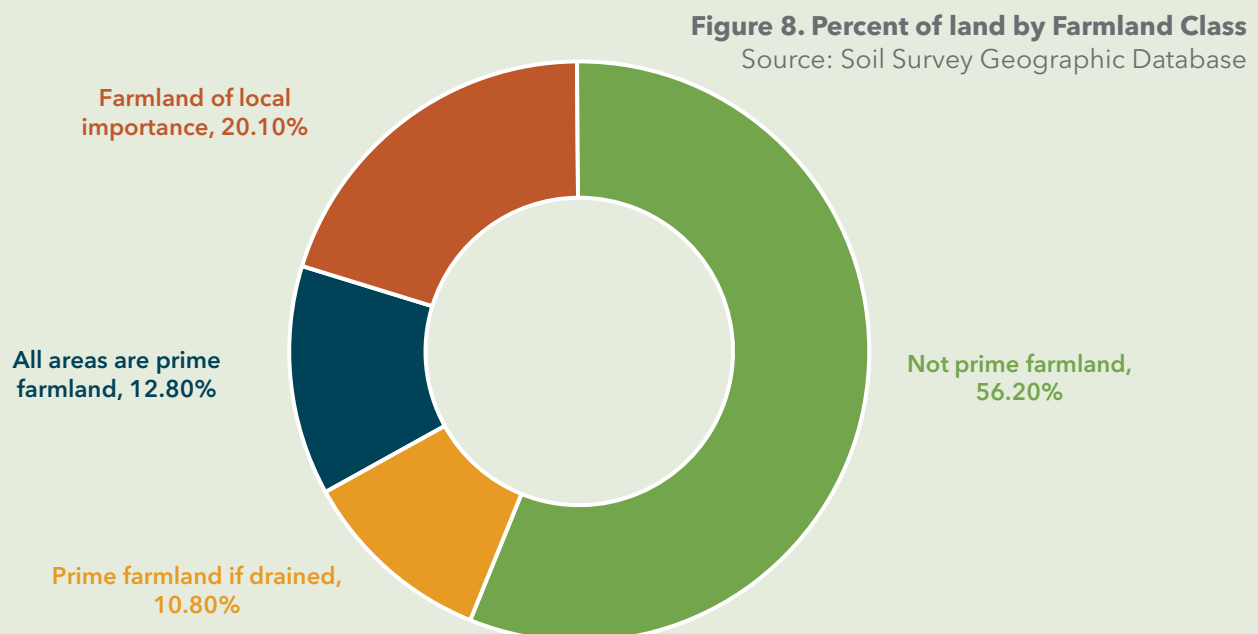
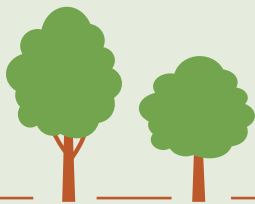
The implications are that very little intensive development can occur without significant site modification in the building development phase and that significant development activity cannot be supported without improved public or private wastewater treatment systems.

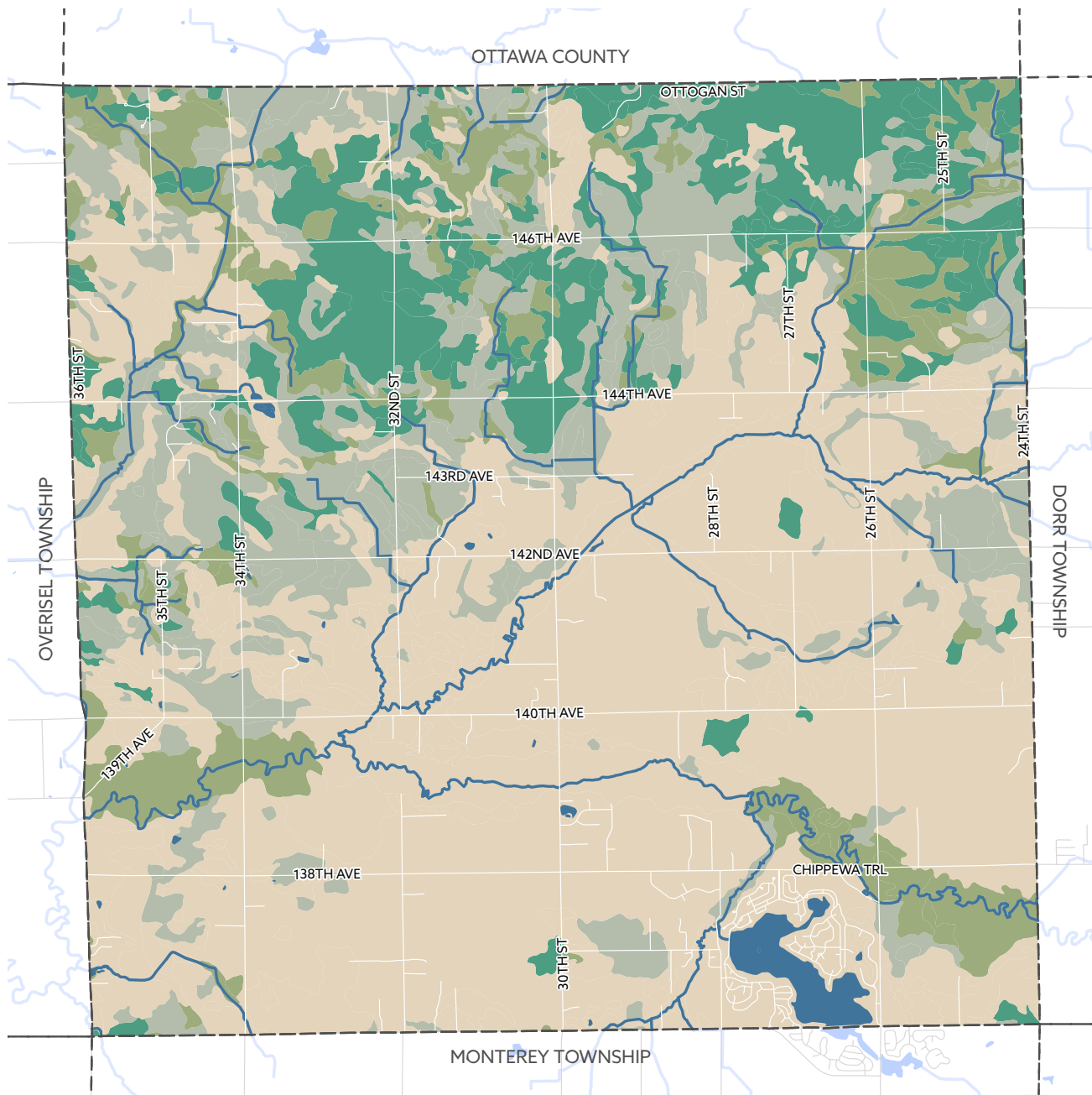
Farmland

The Farmland Classification map shows the location of prime agricultural lands within the Township as determined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service. Such lands are naturally endowed with the soil quality, growing season, and moisture content necessary to sustain high crop yields under average farming practices. The map also shows prime farmlands that have local importance and lands that could be prime farmlands if drained. A majority of the Township is not classified as prime farmland as shown on Map 4.

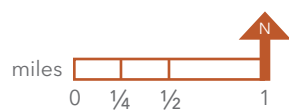
Areas with prime farmland are focused on the northern half of the Township with areas of farmland of local importance. Areas that are not identified as having national or statewide importance are considered to be farmland of local importance for the production of food, feed, fiber, and oilseed crops. Farmland of local importance may include tracts of land that have been designated for agriculture by local ordinances.

In Salem, the existence of extensive areas of important farmland and the environmental limitations that soils present for development are two very important factors in the development of the Future Land Use Plan for the Township.





Map 4. Farmland



Farmland Class

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

- Jurisdiction Boundaries
- Streams & Rivers
- Lakes

Hydrology

Lakes & Rivers

The Kalamazoo River watershed is the primary watershed in which Salem Township is located. As shown on Map 5, the Township is fed by four watershed subbasins: Little Rabbit River, Black Creek, Rabbit River, and Macatawa River. A majority of the Township is in the Little Rabbit River watershed. The Rabbit River eventually flows into the Kalamazoo River about 10 miles west of the Township. The Kalamazoo River, in turn, eventually flows into Lake Michigan near Saugatuck. On the Hydrology Map, the Rabbit River itself flows through the southern third of Salem Township. Within the Township, the major streams are Pigeon Creek in the southeast, the Little Rabbit River Drain in the northeast and central, and the Black Creek Drain in the northwest.



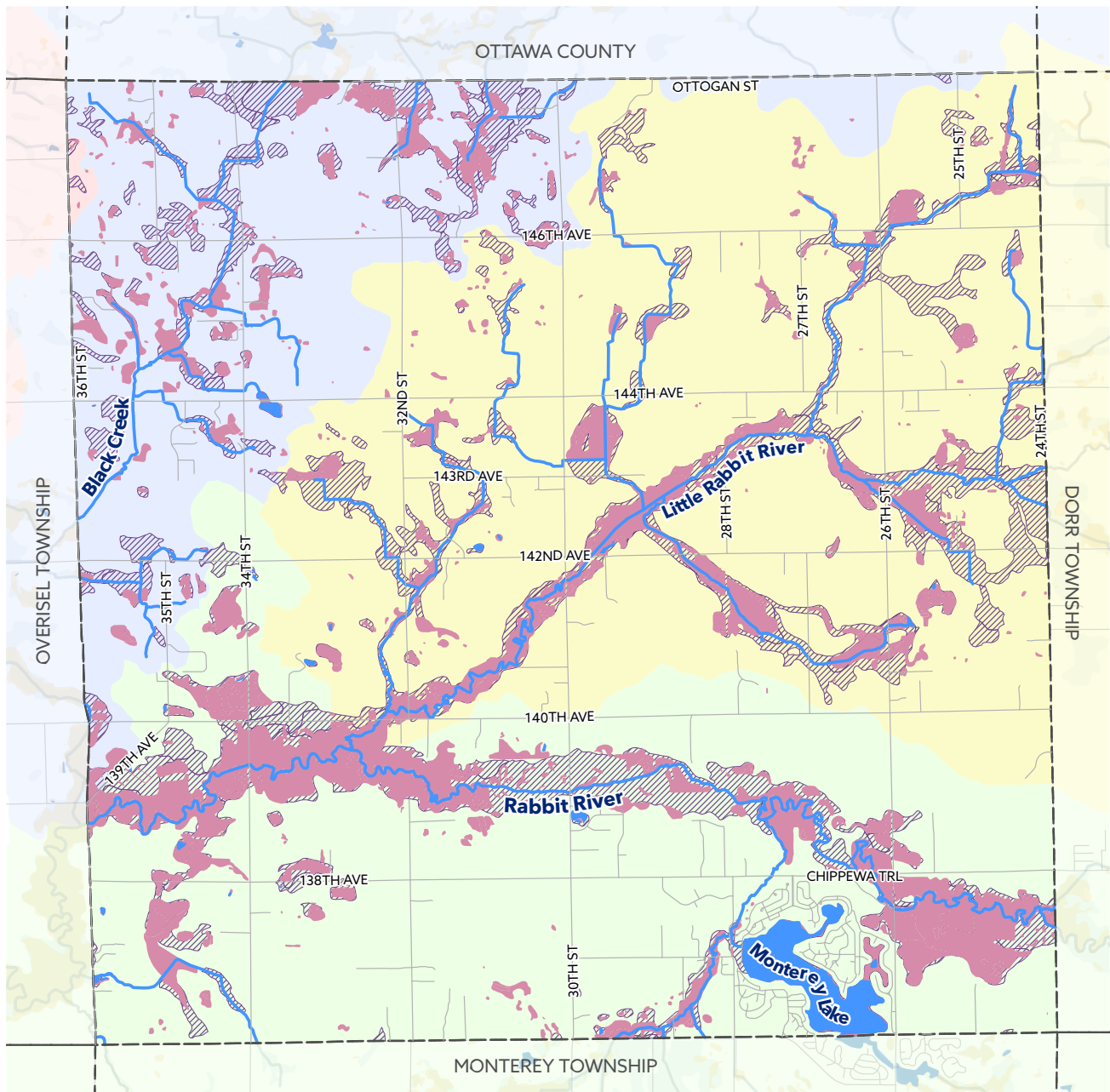
Throughout the Township, the land uses along stream banks are almost entirely rural or characterized as corridors of wooded wetland or rolling woodlands. Many locations immediately adjacent to the streams are subject to periodic flooding but there are no federally defined 100-year flood plain areas. Lake Monterey is a significant water body within Salem Township. The lake is approximately 193.8 acres in size and was created by the construction of a dam across Pigeon Creek.

Wetlands

Wetlands are another important hydrological feature in Salem Township. Wetlands are complex ecological systems that provide valuable drainage, flood control, and water purification functions. Wetlands that overlay groundwater recharge areas improve groundwater quality by filtering the water as it percolates through the soil. Wetlands located along a watercourse protect surface water quality by filtering surface run-off. Finally, wetlands are highly productive ecosystems, which provide essential habitat to much of Michigan's fish and wildlife.

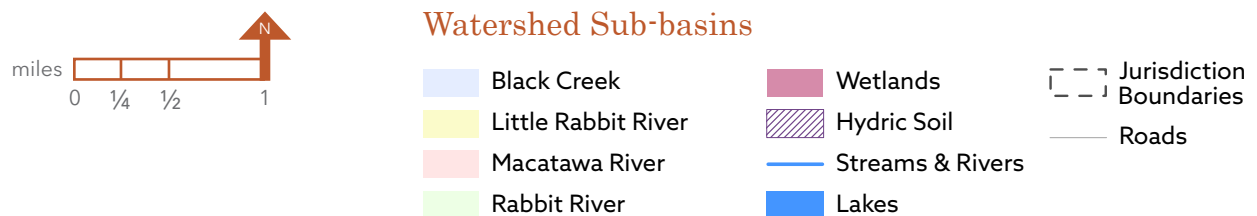
The Rabbit River watershed is home to numerous types of wetlands which also features hydric soils, as shown in Map 5. Wetlands are most prevalent along the rivers and streams that flow throughout the Township. A large wetland area can also be seen east of Lake Monterey along the Rabbit River. A majority of the wetlands present in Salem Township can be classified as freshwater forested/shrub wetlands. Other types of wetlands like freshwater emergent, freshwater ponds, lakes and riverine can also be found on a smaller scale in the Township.





Source: Michigan Open Data Portal

Map 5. Hydrology

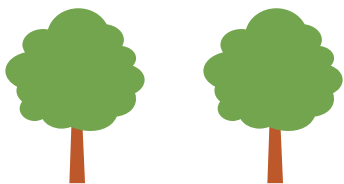


Groundwater

Salem Township residents must rely on groundwater as their only supply of drinking water. Private wells supply all of the water for residential, commercial, and industrial land uses within Salem Township. All water wells are governed by Allegan County Water and Sanitary Regulations and State Law that governs construction materials, construction standards, and water quality. Groundwater is an important but unseen resource and because it is not easily observed, it is particularly vulnerable to mismanagement and contamination.

The Rabbit River has recharge and discharge areas. Groundwater recharge areas are usually upland areas with sandy or gravelly soils. The groundwater recharge rate for the majority of Salem Township is 5 to 11 inches per year. Some areas along the southern boundary of the Township have a recharge rate of up to 15 inches per year. The recharge areas are critical to protecting drinking water sources, and also maintaining the quality of streams. Recharge areas in the Rabbit River Watershed are found in the headwater area, and areas with higher elevation, mostly around the edges of the watershed.

The County leaves the landowners responsible for the treatment of their water. However, efforts to educate and make people aware of checking their water quality and measures that can be taken to prevent contamination have been led by the Allegan County Health Department. The Health Department offers a groundwater investigations program for new and existing groundwater contamination sites which provides consultation on potential health effects, issues health advisories against the consumption of contaminated water, and long-term monitoring in areas of known contamination. Evaluation of existing water wells is conducted at the request of lending institutions or home buyers to determine the construction of the well and water quality before issuing a mortgage for the property.



Allegan County Water Study

Allegan County has been undergoing an extended period of growth that started decades ago and has continued. This includes the growth in population that has occurred in Salem Township. Increased agricultural activities and above-average population growth has resulted in water use increases across the County. To effectively protect and manage the long-term sustainability of the county's water resources, a holistic understanding of the county's water system is needed.

The Allegan County Ground Water Study was commissioned by the County in 2021, and completed in 2022, to understand the current state of the local water system and potential impacts that could occur in the future.

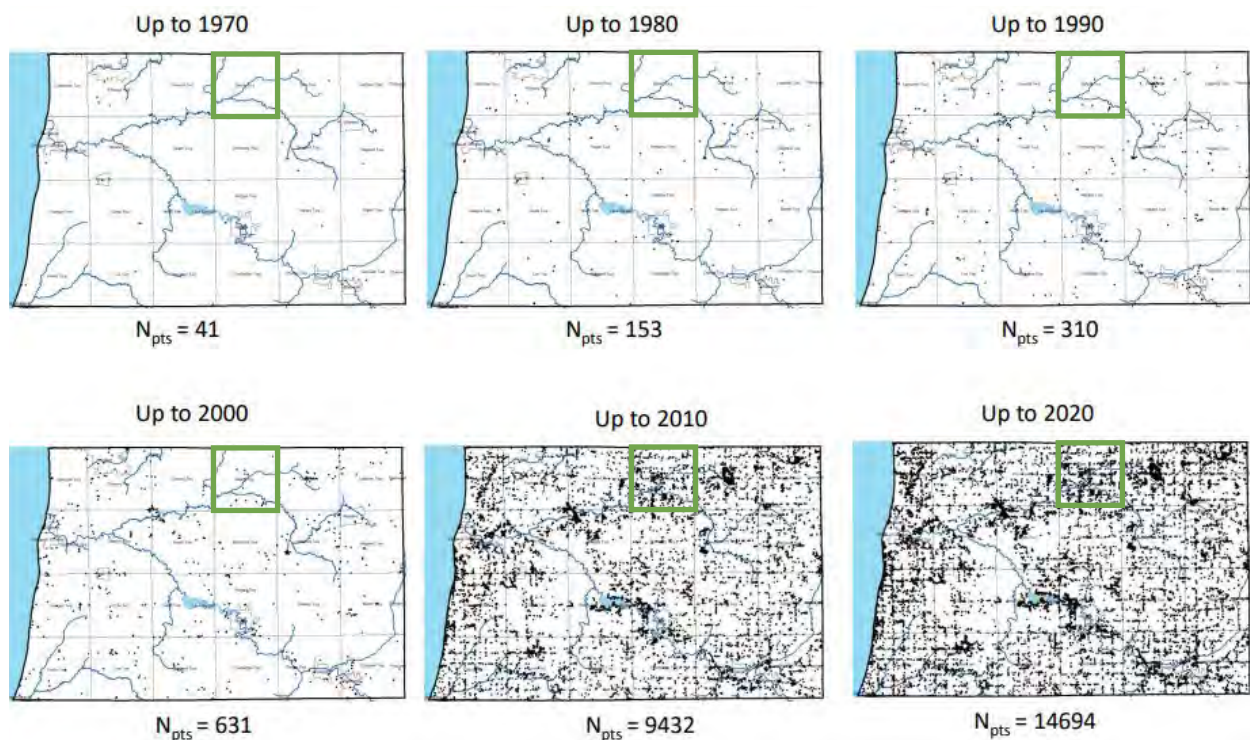
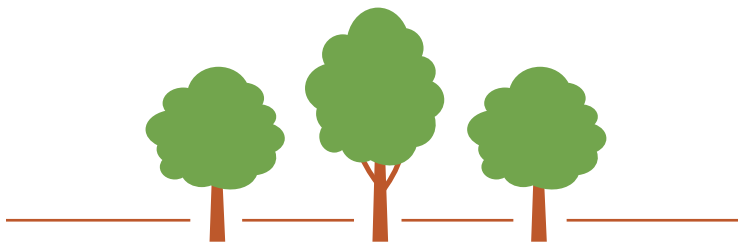


Figure 9. Water well network growth over the past two decades, from 1999 - 2020.

Source: Allegan County Water Study 2022

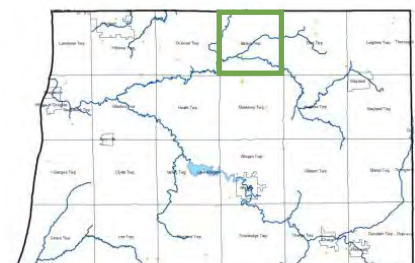
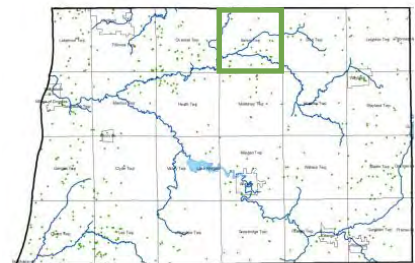
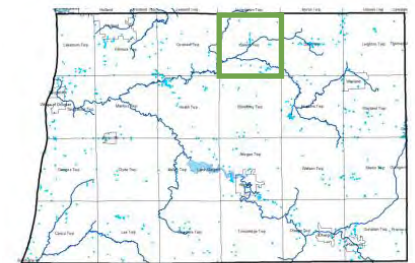
As of 2022, almost all of the water supply in Allegan County is from groundwater. There were 952 known wells in Salem Township, the third highest number of recorded wells in Allegan County.



The groundwater is pumped from two aquifers types: a shallow “glacial” aquifer, and a deep “bedrock” aquifer. A vast majority of the water wells in Allegan County are completed in the glacial aquifer; as of August 2020, 88% of the wells in the Wellogic water well database were confirmed as “glacial wells” (13,354 out of 15,114 total wells). Only 1,095 (or 7%) of the wells were confirmed as “bedrock wells.” (The remaining wells lack sufficient information to make a distinction.) Most wells are used for domestic water supply. As of August 2020, 86% of the wells in Wellogic were classified as “household wells” (13,050 out of 15,144 total wells). Roughly 6% (896 wells) were classified as public supply wells, 3.4% (521) as irrigation wells, and 0.3% (42) as industrial wells.

Figure 10. Present-Day Distribution of Wells by Water Sector

Source: Allegan County Water Study 2022



Key Findings

The key findings of the report stated that there did not appear to be a groundwater resource crisis in Allegan County, unlike what has been occurring in Ottawa County. However, in some areas of the County there were some concerns of similar issues that led to the current groundwater crisis in Ottawa County, including:

Elevated Nitrate



Significantly elevated nitrate concentrations impacting shallow groundwater

Elevated Chloride



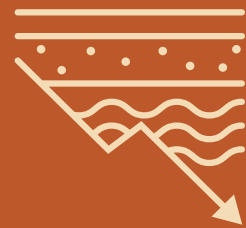
Significantly elevated chloride concentrations impacting groundwater discharge areas

Contamination Sites



A large number of potential or known sites of contamination

Groundwater Levels



Hints of systematic declines in groundwater levels because of cumulative water use trends in well growth



Township-based countywide nonpoint source pollution maps were generated to give a sense of the average (median) and above-average concentrations. Nonpoint source pollution is water pollution which occurs from many diverse areas of human activity within a watershed. These pollutants do not come from a single source.

Nitrates

Nitrate contamination is a significant issue in the shallow aquifer predominantly due to agricultural activities (runoff from fertilizer), but also possibly from leaking septic tanks/sewage. Examples with concentrations above the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) of 10 mg/L are found throughout the County, including Salem Township. MCL are a legally enforceable standards set by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Nitrate concentrations in drinking water above the MCL are known to cause adverse impacts on human health, specifically the risk of methemoglobinemia – a condition in which blood lacks the ability to carry sufficient oxygen to body cells. Infants below the age of one have the highest risk of developing methemoglobinemia. And although the MCL was set at 10 mg/L based on acute (short-term) health effects, research into possible chronic health effects of consuming water with nitrates at elevated concentrations is on-going.

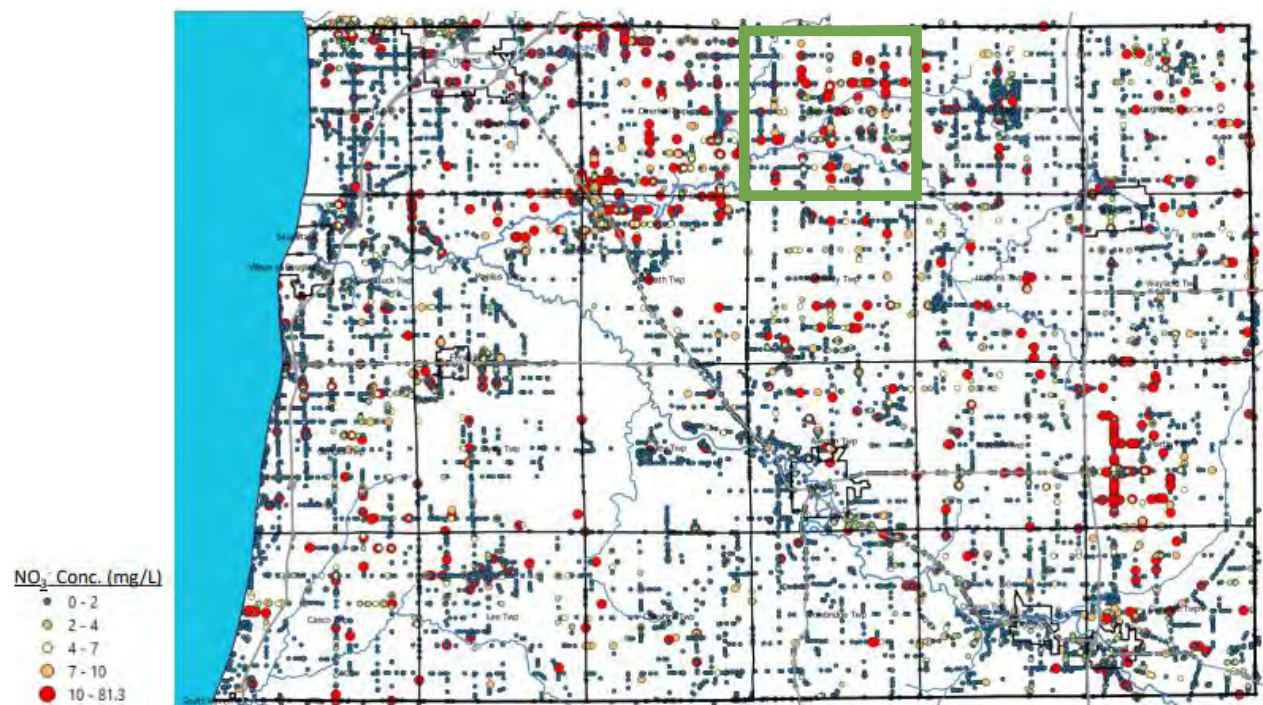


Figure 11. Allegheny County Nonpoint Source Pollution Nitrate Map

Source: Allegheny County Water Study 2022

Chloride

Typically, most shallow aquifers in the County have natural chloride concentrations of less than 15 mg/L. Samples with concentrations above the Secondary Maximum Contaminant Level (SMCL) are found throughout the County, although most townships have significantly fewer elevated samples relative to samples with low/natural concentrations. Salem Township has notable visual “clusters” of samples above the SMCL, as can be seen in Figure 3.3. SMCLs are non-mandatory guidelines to assist public water systems in managing their drinking water for aesthetic considerations (e.g., taste, color, odor). Contaminants are not considered to present a risk to human health at the SMCL, but there are risks to applying groundwater with elevated chloride concentrations (>100 mg/L) as irrigation water to agricultural crops. It is well documented that crops can be damaged or destroyed by the application of chloride-laden water.

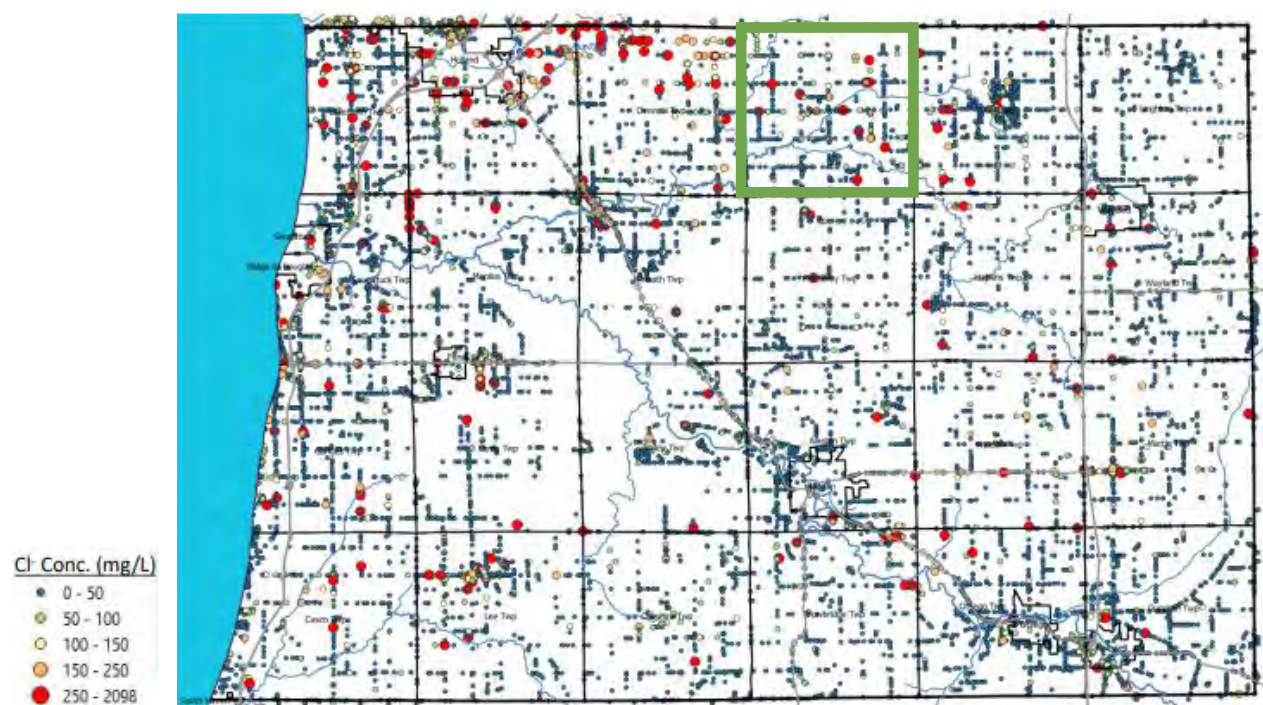
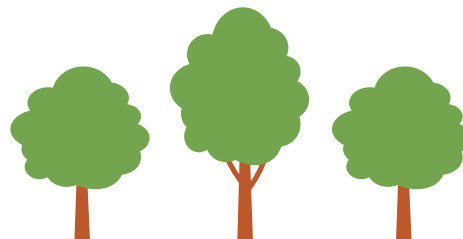


Figure 12. Allegheny County Nonpoint Source Pollution Chloride Map

Source: Allegheny County Water Study 2022



Lead

Lead point concentration was collected. There were several sample points taken in Salem Township. The large red circles on Figures 13 and 14 indicate samples with concentrations above the lead Action Level of 0.015 mg/L. The Maximum Contaminate Level is zero. If concentrations exceed the action level of 10% of samples (i.e. from customer taps sampled), the water supply system must undergo a number of additional actions to reduce concentrations.

Manganese

The distribution of manganese point concentration data was also collected. Salem Township has two locations that exceed 0.05 mg/L. High level of manganese are found throughout the County.

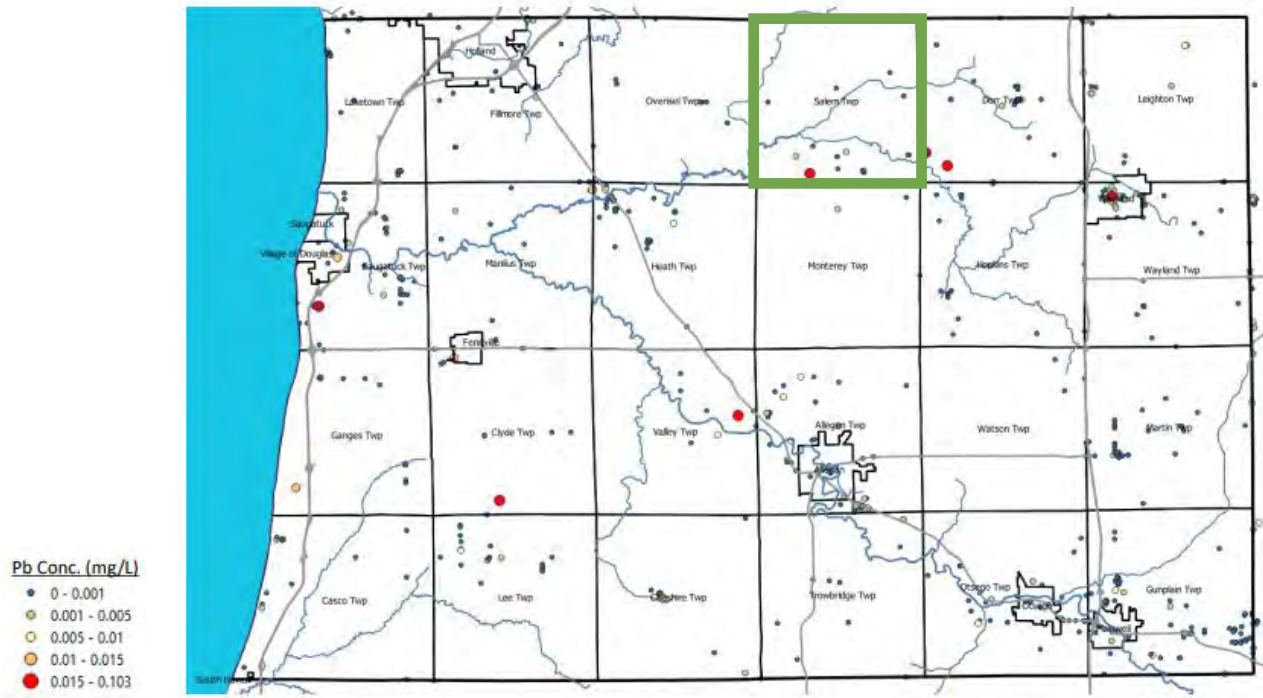


Figure 13. Alleghen County Nonpoint Source Pollution Lead Map

Source: Alleghen County Water Study 2022

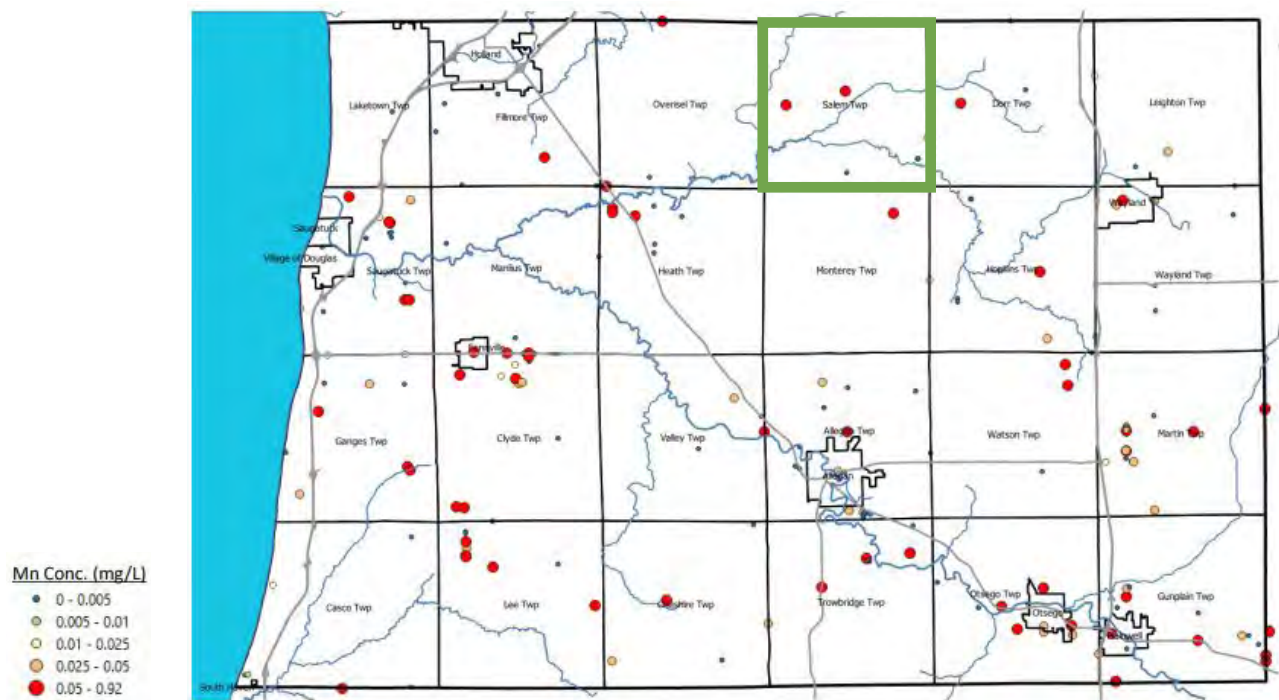


Figure 14. Alleghen County Nonpoint Source Pollution Manganese Map

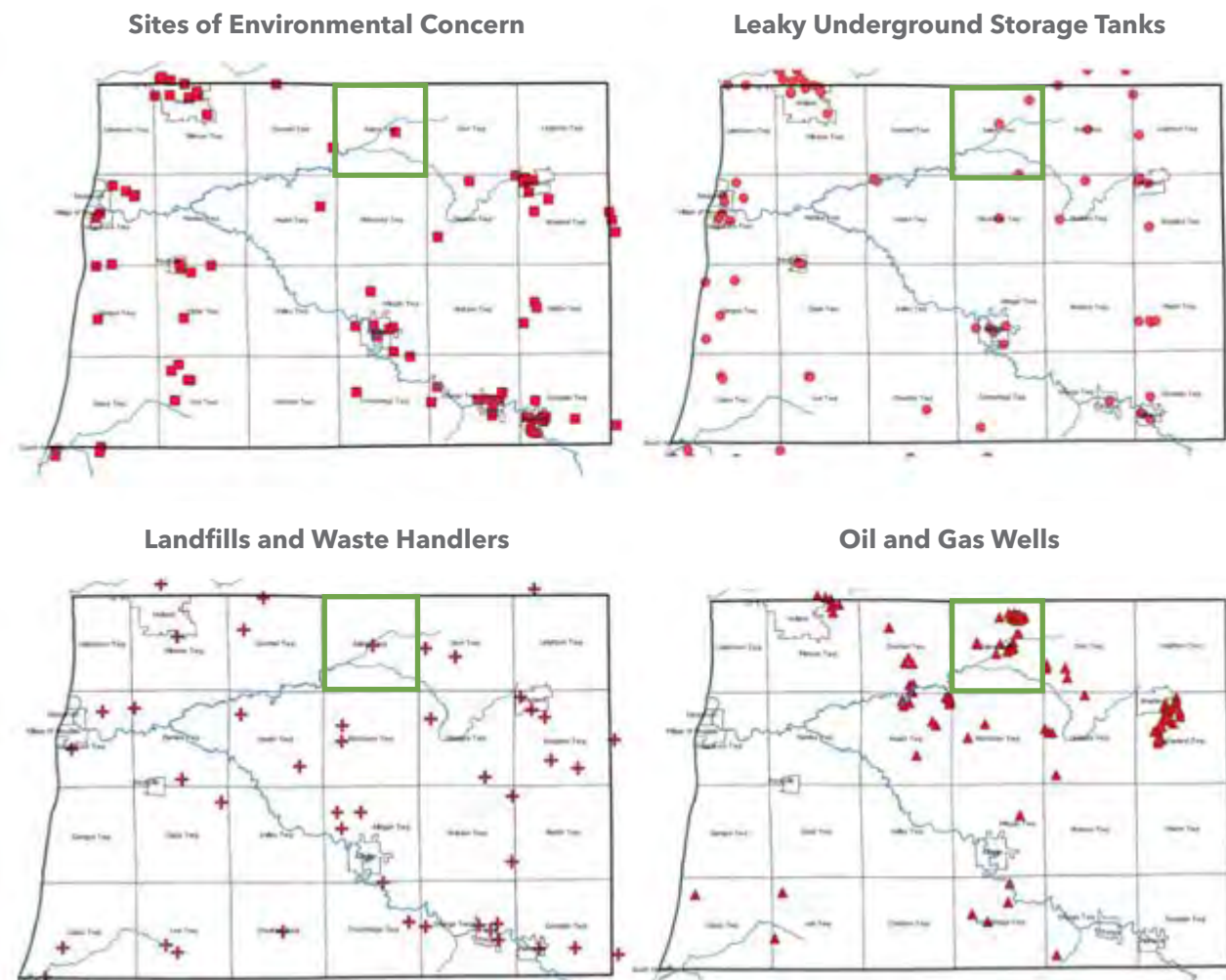
Source: Alleghen County Water Study 2022

Known & Potential Sites of Contamination

Other data on environmental hazards was collected during the study. There were several points of concern that were observed in Salem Township. The maps below identify the locations, however, the sites are at different stages of management. Allegan County or the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy should be contacted for more information.

Figure 15. Known & Potential Sites of Contamination Maps

Source: Allegan County Water Study 2022



Sites of Environmental Concern

are where environmental damage is suspected or possible based on available data. There is one site identified in Salem Township.

Leaky Underground Storage Tanks (LUSTs)

are locations where either “closed” or “open” underground storage tanks are known to exist. Closed LUSTs are a location where a release has occurred from an underground storage tank system, and where corrective actions have been completed to meet the appropriate land use criteria. The MDEQ (or EGLE) may or may not have reviewed and concurred with the conclusion that the corrective actions described in a closure report meet criteria. Open LUSTs are locations where a release has occurred from an underground storage tank system regulated under Part 213, and where corrective actions have not been completed to meet the appropriate land use criteria. An open LUST site may have more than one confirmed release. Salem Township has at one closed LUST and three open LUSTs.

Underground Storage Tanks (USTs) are sites where there is at least one take at the facility that is not closed or has not been removed. There may be closed tanks or active non-regulated tanks (such as heating oil tanks) present at these sites. There are two sites in Salem Township, with one additional site on the border of Monterrey Township.

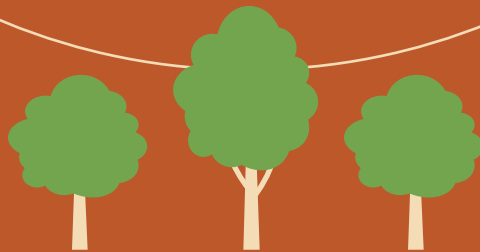
Historical Landfills and Waste Handlers.

These are the locations of historic landfills and waste handlers that are included in the statewide dataset. These facilities may pose a risk to groundwater contamination from leachate of waste products stored on site depending on the pollution prevention and control protocols being used. There is one landfill in Salem Township.

Oil and Gas Wells. These facilities are common in Salem Township. Leaky / fractured wells or poor well closure practices associated with early oil and gas wells may provide a vertical conduit for flow of deeper, highly mineralized groundwater to the near-surface environment. There were more than 20 sites identified in Salem Township.



Though the Township did not rank especially high for water quality concerns, a number of sites with notable environmental concerns were identified. This information is valuable as development and growth continues to occur in the community. Information from this study should be used to help Salem Township officials better know the state of local groundwater quality, and can be used to influence potential growth and development related-decisions in the community. Community leaders and stakeholders should contact Allegan County and the State of Michigan EGLE if there are further questions or before taking any actions based on this information.



Land Cover

Land Cover describes the vegetation or land use that occupies the land in a given community. The land cover data that was analyzed includes data from National Land Cover Database (NLCD) as prepared by the United States Geological Services (USGS) in 2019. The information is useful in determining the distribution of vegetation and development patterns and their change over time throughout the Township.

Salem Township's total land area consists of 36 square miles or 23,056.5 acres. More than half of the Township land is devoted to cultivated crops in Salem Township, as shown in Table 10. Cultivated crop areas are described as land used for the production of annual crops and perennial woody crops such as orchards and vineyards. This class also includes land being actively tilled.

Table 10. Land Cover Class 2019, Salem Township

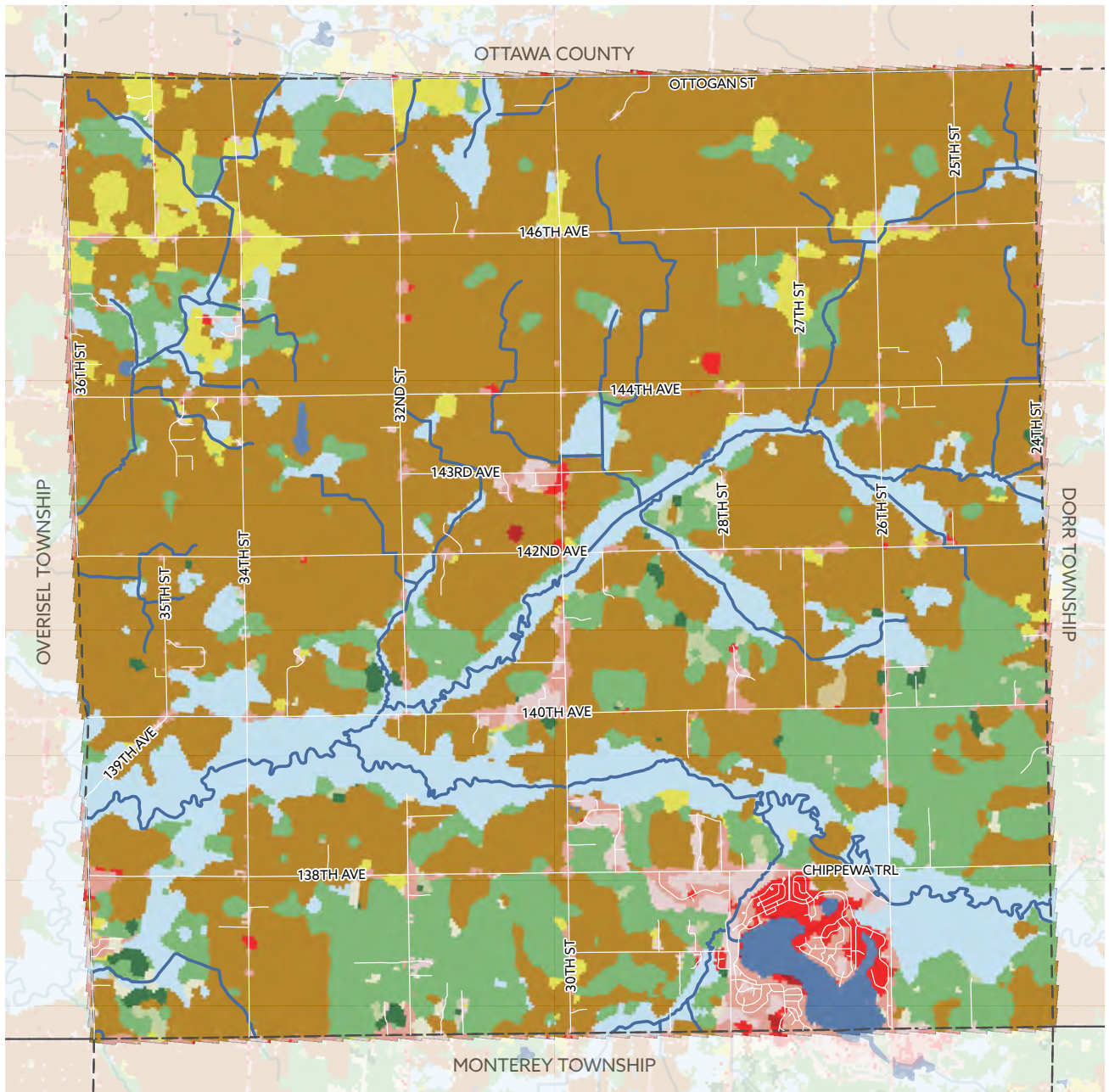
Land Cover Class	Acres	% of Total
Cultivated Crops	12,369.8	53.6%
Deciduous Forest	3,332.6	14.5%
Woody Wetlands	3,136.4	13.6%
Developed, Low Intensity	1,143.6	5.0%
Developed, Open Space	982.1	4.3%
Hay/Pasture	722.1	3.1%
Developed, Medium Intensity	407.0	1.8%
Mixed Forest	228.0	1.0%
Open Water	199.3	0.9%
Emergent Wetlands	166.1	0.7%
Evergreen Forest	139.2	0.6%
Herbaceous	139.0	0.6%
Developed, High Intensity	58.5	0.3%
Shrub/Scrub	24.0	0.1%
Barren Land	8.9	0.04%



Deciduous forest and woody wetlands are the next largest classes of land in Salem Township. Deciduous forest areas are dominated by trees generally greater than 16 feet tall, and greater than 20% of total vegetation cover. Woody wetland areas include a forest of shrubland vegetation where the soil substrate is periodically saturated or covered with water. The majority of local forested lands are concentrated in the central and southern portions of the Township and most are associated with the Rabbit River, Little Rabbit River, and drainage ways. Local forested lands include aspen, birch, pine stands, etc. The wooded areas provide habitat for a variety of wildlife and are an important part of the local landscape.

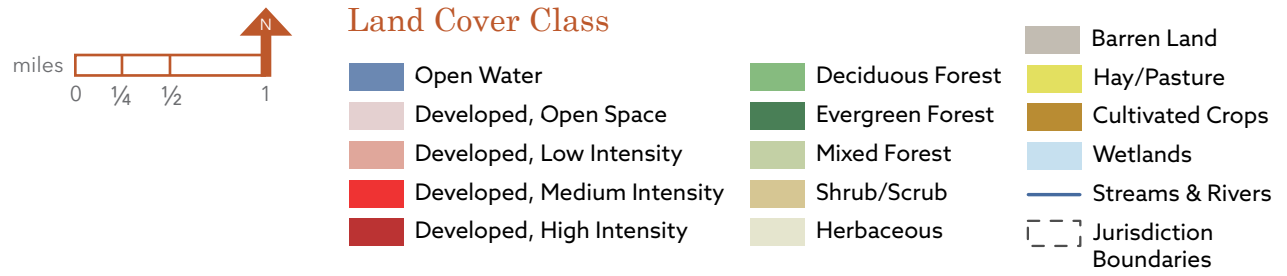
As development occurs within the township, careful site designs that recognize tree stands as an important amenity can lead to enhanced projects and contribute to maintaining the overall rural character of the Township.

Only a small percentage of land is developed in the Township, 5% of the developed land is low intensity, and about 0.3% of the land is developed at high intensity. Map 6 illustrates the land cover as of 2019 in Salem Township. Developed land can be attributed to single-family housing units, parks, golf courses, apartment complexes, row houses, commercial or industrial developments, etc.



Source: National Land Cover Database

Map 6. Land Cover



Wildlife

The woodlands, wetlands, native grasslands, and waterways of Salem Township provide good habitat for wildlife. With much of the area being underdeveloped and dedicated to agriculture, it is prime habitat for whitetail deer. These characteristics also provide good habitat for squirrels and raccoons. Other wildlife includes cottontail rabbits, red and gray fox, muskrat, mink, opossum, skunk, various song birds, ruffed grouse, woodcocks, Great Blue Herons, and waterfowl. Sandhill Cranes and Trumpeter Swans may also exist in the Township.





The miles of streams and drains, along with Lake Monterey (privately stocked), also provide a variety of game fish. This variety of wildlife is an impressive resource and provides those who hunt, fish, and enjoy viewing wildlife with invaluable recreational opportunities.



Chapter 4

Community Facilities & Infrastructure



Providing an overview of local services and infrastructure that serves the Township is helpful information in knowing what resources are available to Township residents. The following chapter provides a summary of this information.

Township Hall

The Salem Township Hall is a focal point within the community. Built in 1985, the Township Hall occupies an eight-acre site located on the northwest corner of 142nd and 30th Streets. Contained within the hall are an office area, a meeting space with a capacity for 200 persons, a smaller meeting space where formal Township official meetings like the Planning Commission and Board take place, and kitchen facilities. The Salem Township Fire Department is also housed on this site.

Schools

Salem Township is served by four separate school districts: Hopkins Public Schools (southeast), Hamilton Public Schools (southwest), Hudsonville Public Schools (north), and Zeeland Public Schools (north). There are no schools in operation within the Township and all children in grades K-12 that attend public schools are either driven or transported by school bus to the various schools outside of the Township. St. Mary's Visitation School is a parochial school that offers a pre-school program as well as elementary education for grades K-6. All districts provide programming for youth and adults and include organized soccer, baseball, softball, tennis, football, swimming (in pools at Hamilton and Zeeland), and music.



Hopkins Public
Schools



Hamilton Public
Schools



Hudsonville
Public Schools



Zeeland Public
Schools

Public Safety

Fire and Rescue

The Township has a paid-on-call fire department that operates out of a fire station that is attached to the Township Hall. Salem Township Fire Department has a group of 23-25 dedicated personnel that provide fire protection and first responder services for Salem Township and the northern portions of Monterey Township. The department has a mutual aid agreement to provide services outside its immediate service area.

Ten of the firefighters are first responders or emergency medical technicians who are employed by Wayland Area Emergency Medical Services as paid-on-call responders. Wayland Area Emergency Medical Services is owned by Salem Township and 10 other government entities. Salem Township responds to all medical calls other than level 3 medical calls.

Ambulance

Residents of Salem Township are served by Wayland Area Emergency Medical Services which provides medical transport. They provide medical first response and ambulance transport through a 911 system for emergency requests in their service area. They also provide education to the general public through the Wayland Community Education Department and the American Heart Association for First Aid and CPR as well as EMT and EMT Specialist classes on a regular basis.

Police

General police protection for Salem Township is provided by the Allegan County Sheriff's Department which operates out of the City of Allegan 13 miles to the south. There is also a Michigan State Police post located in the City of Wayland approximately seven miles to the east. The State Police do not patrol the Township but will respond to emergencies.



Library

Salem Township Library offers Salem Township and Overisel Township residents 32,198 physical items such as books and DVDs. More than 3 million items are checked out of the system annually from the Lake Land Library Cooperative which consists of 42 member libraries including Salem Township Library and has a total of 46 million items. In addition to these items, thousands of people enter the library to use various services including printing, electronic reference resources, access the internet through library computers, or to participate in numerous activities.

Residents are also able to utilize the online book ordering system where they can order books from the comfort of their own home and have them delivered to their house by the library.

Cemetery

The Township owns and maintains a cemetery located at the southwest and southeast corners of 144th Avenue and 30th Street. The Township recently purchased an additional 4.4 acres in response to limited capacity. The new acreage is expected to serve Township needs into the foreseeable future.

Utilities



There are no public water or sanitary sewer systems within Salem Township. Township residents and businesses must rely on individual wells for their water supply and individual septic systems for sanitary disposal. Reliance on groundwater for drinking water is a concern as water obtained from shallow wells can contain nitrate concentrations and deeper wells produce salty water.

The use of “engineered” septic systems is becoming more common as a means of overcoming the natural soil limitations found in some of the heavier and wetter soil areas of the Township.

A natural gas pipeline runs through Salem Township. There are several natural gas wells in the area. Natural gas is provided by Consumers Energy, Michigan Gas Utilities, and SEMCo Energy Gas Company. Consumers Energy gas storage fields are located in the center part of the Township, extending into Overisel Township. Electrical power is provided by Great Lakes Energy, Wolverine Electric, and Consumers Energy.



Internet is provided through Spectrum, Surf Air, and Great Lakes Energy. Spectrum is the most common provider for the community.

Electric Power Plant

On 143rd Avenue, about half a mile west of 30th Street, there is a small power plant and service center operated by Wolverine Power Cooperative. The plant, portions of which date back to 1938, was built in response to the Rural Electrification Act. The Act was passed to provide electric service through cooperative ventures to rural areas not served by major electric companies at the time. In 2000, a gas turbine was added to the plant to add to the facility's "peaking capacity."

The plant provides electric power to the overall power grid serving west Michigan. The Burnips power plant has two turbines on site, one combined-cycle unit and one simple-cycle unit. Both are powered by natural gas, and the combined output is approximately 48 megawatts. Wolverine employs a chief power plant operator and three operators at this location. The service center has four linemen and a field supervisor that respond to routine maintenance work, system outages, and restoration efforts on power lines and substations.



Waste Disposal

Township residents utilize private waste haulers to collect local trash and transport it to landfills located in nearby Zeeland and Byron Townships.

A solid waste transfer facility owned and operated by Salem Township is located on 29th Street, east of 30th Street and south of 142nd Avenue.

Curbside collection of recyclable material is available to all residents once a month. Recycling in Salem Township is provided by Republic Service Curbside Recycling. The recycling stream accepts newspapers, grocery bags, clear glass, empty aerosol cans, plastic bottles, and jugs. They also take magazines, phone books, flattened cardboard, newspapers, office paper, and junk mail.

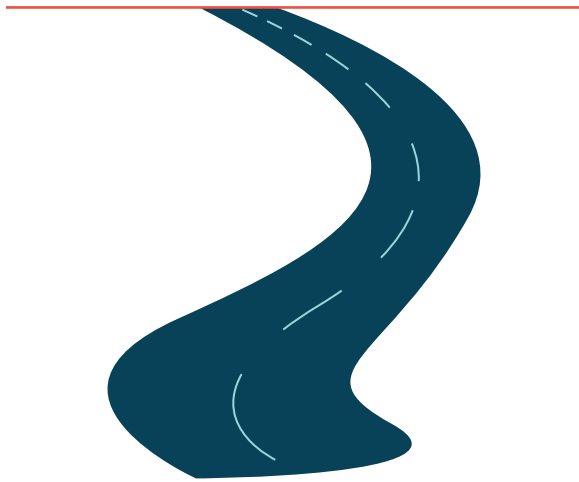
Parks & Recreation

Map 7 shows the recreation facilities available within Salem Township. The Township owns and maintains a local park located on the same site as the Township Hall.



Salem Township Park is a 17.6-acre park that was established by a grant through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Township funds, area businesses, and individual donations. Facilities at this park include a playground area, softball field, restrooms, concession stand, soccer field, pavilion, walking trail, a disc golf course, and multi-sport court that can accommodate a single game or match for tennis, basketball, or pickleball.

Park improvements are planned and noted in the Salem Township Park Design Plan that was adopted by the Township Board in 2022.



The final concept design serves as a community vision for the future build-out of the Township Park recreational and community amenities. Community members, park champions, and local officials can all contribute to the implementation of this vision and propel the future of this dynamic, beloved space forward. The final park design concept is a true community achievement of what Salem Township envisions for the future of recreation in this rolling landscape. Building on the foundational work that was completed during the development of the Salem Township Park and Recreation Plan 2022 - 2026, Township leaders sought the opportunity to start intentionally planning for the Park. A steering committee comprised of local leaders and community champions provided clear direction in developing a bold, pragmatic vision for future park investments. Community members were invited to provide their ideas and opinions.

The final concept design has been completed with recommendations for funding, phased implementation, and assessments of probable costs.

This design responds to the community's desire for parks to focus on health and wellness and to provide athletic spaces and opportunities. Active recreation and court sports are built-up, expanding the existing playground area and adding a second multi-sport court for tennis and basketball. Expanded trails lead to a centrally located pavilion and picnic area that is conveniently positioned within a short walk of the existing volleyball court and disc golf course, and the proposed pickleball facilities and U12 soccer field. With

the library located adjacent to the park and this recreational space's regular use for local field trips and homeschool gatherings, the inclusion of elements that support and build on these functions only seems natural. The relocation of the U8 soccer field closer to the existing volleyball court creates a better connection between park amenities. This opens up space west of the library for the creation of outdoor educational spaces, such as a reading garden, a learning stage, and additional parking to support the new recreational facilities.



In addition to the Township Park, there is an 18-hole golf course located on 138th Avenue, one mile east of 30th Street. Although privately owned, the golf course is open to the public. Sandy Pines on Lake Monterey is a private recreational vehicle campground in the southeast portion of the Township. The majority of campsites are membership owned. Limited public camping is available, however, there is no public access to the lake. The development also contains over 59 campsites, 10 cabins, and 5 trailers for rent, along with the facilities listed below:

- Library
- Heated pools
- Restrooms (with shower facilities)
- Access to the lake (for swimming/paddleboarding/kayaking)
- Splash pad and water park
- Disc golf and minigolf
- Arcade and fitness center
- Retail stores and restaurants
- Playgrounds for pickleball, tennis, soccer, volleyball, and basketball

South Kent Sportsmen's Club is a private, member-owned, volunteer-operated, and non-profit club that provides facilities for firearm enthusiasts. They have trap and skeet fields, general purpose and match-only bunkers, and a variety of ranges.

There are several lakes in Allegan County with public access. The closest of these is Dumont Lake, six miles south of Salem in Monterey Township. The County owns and maintains a park on Dumont Lake. The park includes a boat launch, a swimming beach, playground equipment, and picnic areas. The county also maintains 320-acre Silver Creek Park along Silver Creek, located 2 miles southwest of Salem Township. It contains numerous campsites, fishing access, picnic areas, and trails.

Salem Township residents also live within a short drive of several excellent regional recreation areas, including the Holland and Saugatuck State Parks on Lake Michigan. In addition, the residents can also enjoy the Allegan State Game Area that lies to the southwest of the Township and Yankee Springs State Park which is within a half-hour drive to the southeast in Barry County.



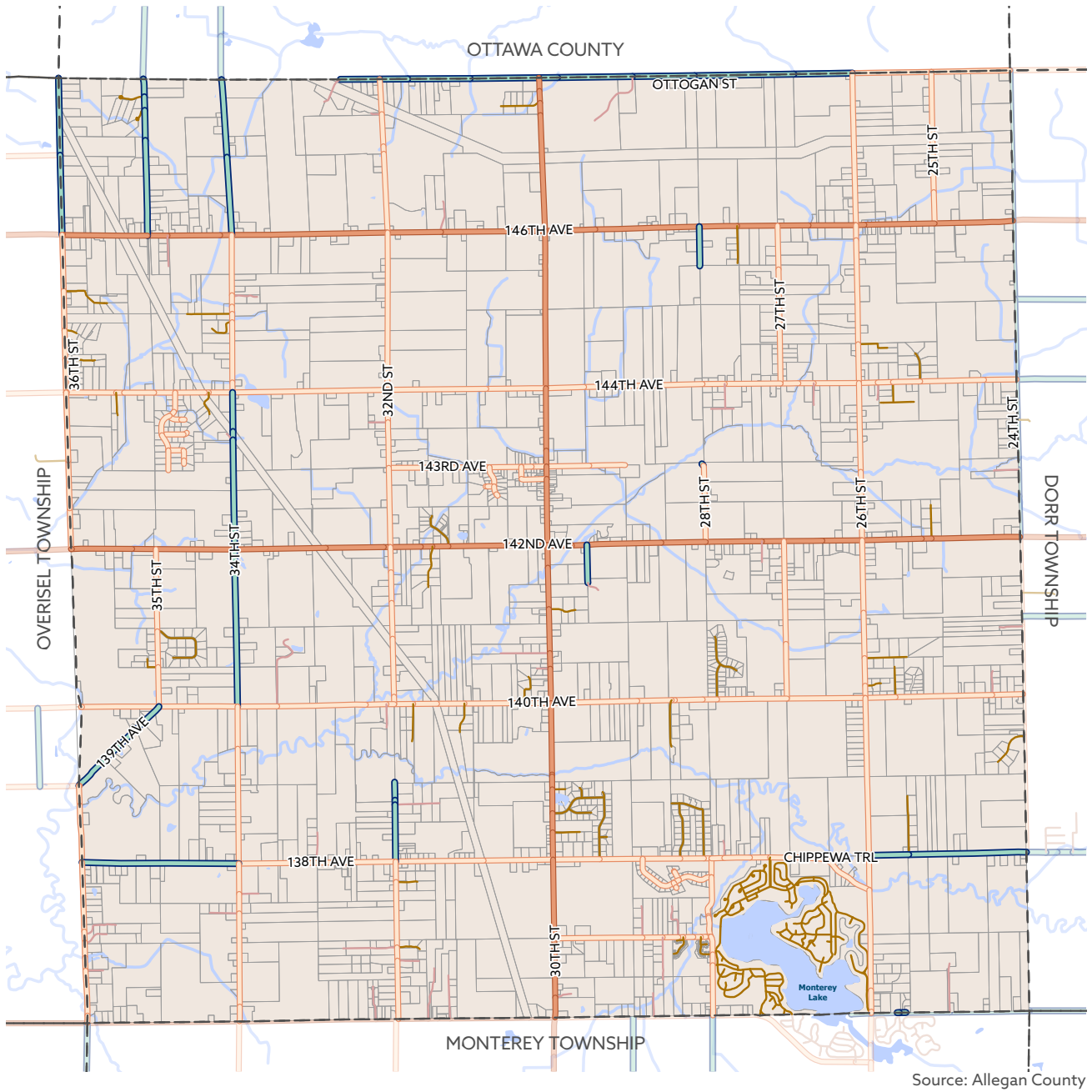
Transportation Network

Roads

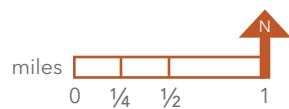
As shown on Map 8, the roads in Salem Township have been primarily developed in a grid pattern. Four of these roads - 30th Street, 146th Avenue, 142nd Avenue, and 136th Avenue from 30th to 36th - are designated as county primary roads. The remaining roads are designated as county local roads. There are a total of roughly 80 miles of public roads within the Township. There are 61.04 miles of local roads and about 21.03 miles of primary roads and a total of \$67,558 in funds were received in 2020 (Allegan County Road Commission Annual Report 2020). One of the goals of the Township has been to have all roads paved.

Limited Access Highway

These facilities are devoted entirely to the movement of large volumes of traffic at high speeds over relatively long distances. These roads provide little or no direct access to individual properties adjoining these roads. Examples of such roads are U.S. 131, M-6, and I-196. While no such roads exist within the Township, they have had a significant impact on local development because of their relative proximity. Salem Township has become an attractive place to live while still within a reasonable commute to jobs within west Michigan.



Map 8. Roads



Road Classification

- | | |
|---|---|
| — County Primary (Paved) | — Private (Paved) |
| — County Local (Paved) | — Private (Unpaved) |
| — County Local (Unpaved) | Jurisdiction Boundaries |

Major Arterial Roads (County Primaries)



The major function of these roads is to move traffic through an area. A secondary function of these roads is to provide access to adjacent land areas. In Salem Township, these roads include the county primary roads 146th Avenue, 142nd Avenue, 30th Street, and 136th Avenue from 30th to 36th. Many residents use these roads when traveling to and from the Township.

Minor Arterial Roads (County Locals)

These roads provide for internal traffic movement within a community and connect local land areas with the major arterial road system. Providing direct access to adjacent properties is also an important function of these roads. The majority of the roads in Salem Township fall under this classification. However, over time, as development in the Township increases, traffic volumes along minor arterial roads will also increase. Some minor arterial roads may eventually become major roads.



Local Roads

The sole function of local roads is to provide access to adjoining properties. In many cases, thru-traffic is discouraged. Examples of such roads in Salem Township include West and Newell Streets in the Burnips area and the roads within the Oakland Hills neighborhood. While there are not many such roads in the Township at this time, the number of these kinds of road may gradually increase over time as subdivision development occurs. Private roads are also classified as local roads.



Road Conditions

Over time paved and gravel roads deteriorate due to use, traffic volume, weight of vehicles, weather, and road material composition. The Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) is a visual survey method used to evaluate road conditions. The rating scale ranges from 10 (excellent) to 1 (failed). Staff members at the Allegan County Road Commission are trained and certified annually to use the PASER system by the Transportation Asset Management Council (TAMC). Ratings of 1-4 are grouped as poor condition, 5-7 are classified as fair condition, and ratings of 8-10 are considered to be in good condition. At the local level, ratings help officials develop cost-effective pavement maintenance strategies.

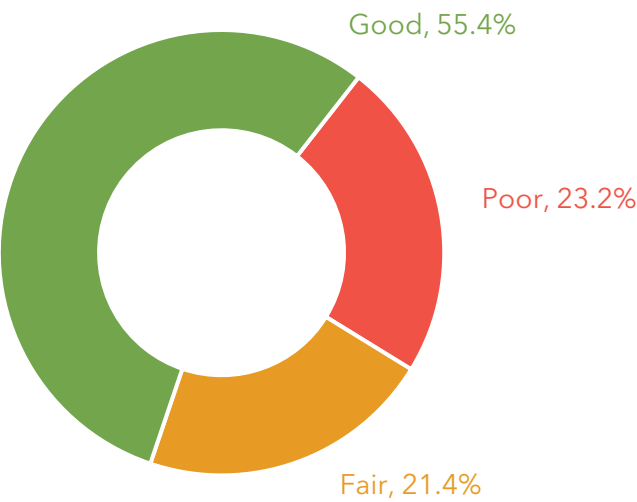


Figure 16. Salem Township, Local Road Conditions 2022

Source: Salem Township Condition Summary by Allegan County Road Commission

Table 11. Salem Township Local Road Conditions, 2022

Condition	Local Road Miles	%
Good	22.4	55.4%
Fair	8.7	21.4%
Poor	9.4	23.2%

As shown in Figure 16, more than half of the Salem Township local roads fall into the good category and about 21.4% are in the fair condition category. About 23.3% of the roads fall into the category with poor ratings. It is important to note that about 40 miles of county local road ratings are reflected in the figures below. These roads are not in the federal aid network and the funding for maintenance is provided by the Township.

Table 12. Salem Township Traffic Counts, 2021

Road Name	Location	Counts
30th Street	North of 142nd Avenue	6,668
30th Street	South of 142nd Avenue	5,643
142nd Avenue	West of 30th Street	4,766
142nd Avenue	East of 30th Street	4,483
30th Street	South of Ottogan Street	4,359
136th Avenue	East of 30th Street	1,290
146th Street	500' east of 30th Street	954
136th Avenue	West of 30th Street	723

Source: Allegan County Road Commission

Traffic Counts

The above table lists the traffic counts for the major roadways going through Salem Township. 30th Street had the largest number of traffic counts recorded in the Township. 142nd Avenue also had a higher number of counts compared to other major roadways in the Township.

Nonmotorized Transportation

Nonmotorized transportation facilities enhance the quality of life for seasonal and full-time residents. There are a limited types of facilities in Salem Township. There is a paved trail that loops around the Salem Township Park property. There are also some roads in the Township that have wide shoulders that could accommodate people biking and walking. There are no plans at this time for additional nonmotorized facilities in Salem Township.

Rail

There are no railroad lines in Salem Township.



Transit

Allegan County Transportation (ACT) is an on-call transit service. Out-of-county medical transportation is available for senior citizens or persons with a disability by special request to Calhoun, Kalamazoo, Kent, Ottawa, and Van Buren counties.

Children under 5 years of age ride free. Children under 12 years of age must be accompanied by a responsible adult or older child. ACT will drop off children at daycare within 10 miles of pick-up or destination at no additional charge on the way to a place of employment.



Chapter 5

Goals and Objectives




Considering the results of the Community Survey, the goals and objectives outlined in this chapter are used to help guide the implementation of the future vision for Salem Township. The goals are intended to help the community aspire to accomplish big ideas, and are considered attainable through long-term, focused efforts. The objectives are more specific and may be regarded as milestones to achieving the goal.

The goals are guiding statements written to address how the Township would like to grow and develop.

Salem Township envisions a future where agriculture remains a dominant part of the landscape, culture, and economic development strategy. A concentration of commercial and residential development will propel and enliven the Burnips area, extending to the Township Muniplex Complex and Township Park.

The survey revealed that a majority of respondents agreed with the statement that “Farmland in the Township should be preserved and protected” and “I would support increased controls on development to protect water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams.” Agriculture and agriculture-related businesses are the number one business that survey respondents would like to have in Salem Township. Nearly half of the survey respondents noted that the Township is growing “about right,” yet 37% of respondents believed that the Township is growing “too quickly”.

The Township is feeling growth pressure as it sits on the fringe of the thriving Grand Rapids metropolitan area, causing concern about retaining the bucolic way of life that has attracted generations of residents. (Thirty percent of survey respondents have lived in the community for more than twenty-five years.) Maintaining the agrarian landscape, viewshed, and economy is important to community members. Yet officials are aware that flexibility is needed to accommodate the changing growth and economic demands in the Township and west Michigan region.



Survey respondents identified that Salem Township is a great place to live, a great place to raise a family, and has a high quality of life. Township officials should continue to encourage modest growth in specific areas of the Township, especially in the Burnips area, following the goals in this chapter and the development patterns outlined on the future land use map.

Goals & Objectives

AGRICULTURE GOAL: *Encourage and facilitate the preservation of prime farmland and other lands suitable for agricultural uses in the Township, while limiting the intrusion of land uses that are incompatible with farming activities.*

Objectives

- a. The Master Plan will recognize areas where poor soils, low productivity, incompatible surrounding uses, land fragmentation, and similar factors make the lands less appropriate for farming and potentially more appropriate for future residential development. Land use policies will give development priority to these areas instead of prime farmland areas.
- b. The Township will use appropriate ordinances to protect its valuable farmland areas and will encourage farmers to participate in county and state-level programs for the purchase and transfer of development rights as such programs are implemented.





THE ENVIRONMENT AND OPEN SPACE GOAL: *The Township will strive to preserve the overall rural character of the Township and integrate the ideal of environmental protection into all phases of local planning and land use policy implementation.*

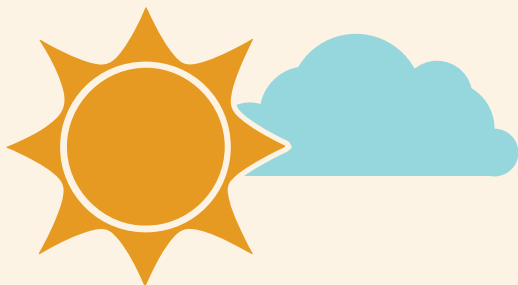
Objectives

- a. Conduct a complete inventory of the Township's environmental assets such as groundwater recharge areas, critical wildlife habitats, and significant wood lots.
- b. Improve zoning and related development review tools to better encourage approaches to land development that take natural elements such as trees, the natural lay of the land, wetlands, and open views into account in the development process. Such amenities contribute to the overall aesthetic qualities of the Township.
- c. Emphasis will be placed on preserving stream corridors and woodlots by designating conservation corridors along the Rabbit River and other fragile environmental areas.
- d. Day-to-day zoning and development decisions will consider the impacts of proposed developments on the natural environment.
- e. A watershed protection approach to water quality and storm water management. Emphasis will be placed on preserving stream corridors and woodlots, which are essential for sustaining wildlife habitat.
- f. Development standards and policies will be holistic and coordinated with county, state and federal efforts to ensure the sustainability of high-quality surface and groundwater resources.
- g. Direct development away from areas with sensitive soils, and encourage development which follows the natural lay of the land and which does not alter natural drainage patterns.
- h. Participate in regional and statewide programs to monitor the quality of surface and groundwater.

ROADS AND TRAFFIC GOAL: *The roadway system in Salem Township will be planned in consideration of all users, including pedestrians and bicyclists, and will provide safe and efficient access to all parts of the community. The roadway system will consist of a well-developed and maintained system of public arterial and local streets augmented by well-constructed and maintained private residential streets designed to minimize environmental impacts and calm neighborhood traffic.*

Objectives

- a. Continue the Township's road paving program, and work toward improved maintenance of existing paved and gravel roadways -- specifically addressing drainage, grading of gravel roads, dust, shoulders, and clear vision areas at corners.
- b. Systematically enhance the road system giving priority to roads in areas intended to support the highest concentrations of development and/or vehicle trips.
- c. Work with Allegan County Road Commission to enforce access management regulations along the arterials to curtail the number of individual driveways and to manage traffic conflict points along the roadways.
- d. Encourage the development of a balanced local public road system including minor roads that provide access to properties, collector roads, and arterial roads to handle larger volumes of traffic at higher speeds.
- e. Consider the context of each street improvement project and the needs of all users in that context. Where practical, devise a plan and integrate features into street design and construction that create safe and inviting environments for all users including walkers and bicyclists.
- f. Salem Township is willing to work within its own boundaries and with nearby communities to develop a network of nonmotorized infrastructure to destinations.
- g. Regulate the location, layout, interconnectivity, and construction of private streets serving residential developments.
- h. Establish road improvement policies consistent with goals of the Township's Master Plan.



PUBLIC SAFETY AND ENFORCEMENT

GOAL: *Achieve an optimal level of public safety and quality of life by cooperating with existing enforcement agencies and Township personnel. Give high priority to enforcement of the local zoning ordinance and building codes.*

Objectives

- a. Maintain a close, cooperative relationship with the Allegan County Sheriff's Department to ensure adequate police protection.
- b. Maintain the Township's paid-on-call fire department and mutual aid relationship with neighboring communities.
- c. Periodically review enforcement and compliance with local zoning ordinances and building codes to ensure an appropriate degree of enforcement and compliance.
- d. Supply adequate training and staffing for enforcement officials.
- e. Maintain communication between Planning Commission, Township Board, and Building/Zoning Officials to ensure ordinance and policy implementation and the monitoring of development activities.





RESIDENTIAL LAND USE GOAL: *Strengthen the stability of existing residential areas within the Township and ensure that new residential developments are compatible with the Township’s environmental sensitivities and overall rural lifestyle.*

Objectives

- a. Utilize density standards and infrastructure policies that are consistent with the natural capacity of soils to handle on-site septic systems and which promote the preservation of the Township’s rural and agrarian qualities.
- b. Provide for a variety of housing types in appropriate locations and at acceptable densities to accommodate varying needs in household size, location, style and income levels, while taking into consideration existing neighborhood character.
- c. Require major residential developments to be served with public or private community wastewater treatment systems and require them to be designed as neighborhoods, considering such amenities as pedestrian paths, and open space.
- d. Encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the existing housing stock through proper code enforcement.



COMMERCIAL, SERVICE, AND INDUSTRIAL LAND USES GOAL: *Provide well-planned locations for commercial and industrial developments centered in Burnips and other key arterial locations and institute appropriate policies, standards and limitations to accommodate a controlled number of both small home based and stand-alone rural businesses.*

Objectives

- a. Maintain an identifiable business district in the Burnips area promoting the village area as a key element to the community's local character.
- b. Assure comprehensive control of the location of commercial and industrial land uses by utilizing site plan review zoning provisions.
- c. Promote un-congested commercial thoroughfares by encouraging the sharing of commercial drives.
- d. Recognize the benefits of mixed-use developments and implement guidelines and standards that will allow mixed-use development to occur. Where necessary separate commercial land uses from incompatible uses by landscaping, buffered thoroughfares, and transitional land uses.

Commercial, Service, and Industrial Land Uses Goal continued:



- e. Discourage strip development of commercial and industrial uses along the major roads.
- f. Minimize industrial nuisances such as air pollution, water pollution, vibration, noise, and outdoor storage of materials by implementing and enforcing adequate zoning and performance standards. Insist upon compliance with State and Federal environmental laws.
- g. Limit high-density development that will lead to the need for public utilities or services that cannot be economically or efficiently provided in the near future.
- h. Adopt reasonable standards for isolated small businesses and home occupations that offer start-up business opportunities for residents and which allow redevelopment potential for existing farm buildings, but which protect existing and planned residential areas from traffic and other nuisances.
- i. Encourage opportunities for utility providers to provide plans showing proposed placements of structures, open space, landscaping, and other development features.
- j. Seek clear communication from all public utilities.



ORDERLY AND EFFICIENT DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS GOAL:

Plan for orderly and balanced land use patterns for future development within the Township while preserving desirable features such as open spaces, agricultural heritage and the neighborly small town atmosphere.

Objectives

- a. Continue to promote Burnips as the community focal point.
- b. Establish a pattern of land use that will promote the general health, safety and welfare of all segments of the community, and will minimize conflicts between adjacent land uses.
- c. Encourage concise concentration of urban types of development, thereby minimizing the costs of public service delivery, and intrusion into rural areas. Strip development patterns, which limit access to interior parcels, should be discouraged.
- d. The preservation of local natural land forms and agricultural landmarks which symbolize the area's agricultural heritage will be encouraged by innovative zoning regulations such as provisions allowing for the adaptive reuse of existing farm structures.
- e. Quiet, family-oriented neighborhoods will be encouraged and maintained by protecting them from through-traffic and by locating new development in close proximity to community services.
- f. Update the Master Plan every five years.
- g. Adopt zoning provisions consistent with the plan and which bring about its implementation.
- h. Encourage community participation in the planning process, and inform the public of master plan policies.

PARKS AND RECREATION GOAL 1:

Provide adequate park and recreation facilities for all residents of the Township.

Objectives

- a. Continue to pursue recreation funding from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources by keeping the Township's Parks and Recreation Plan up to date.
- b. Maintain and improve the Township's existing park next to Township Hall.
- c. Identify and set aside land areas for the development of future parks -- including open spaces for active play, and greenways for passive recreation.
- d. Work with Allegan County and adjacent communities to plan for the development of an integrated non-motorized trail system.

PARKS AND RECREATION GOAL 2:

The Township Park will be well maintained and enhance the Salem community character through the stewardship of natural resources and community needs.

Objectives

- a. Strategically acquire and develop new park space to meet community needs and provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.
- b. Maintain and improve the existing recreational facilities at the Township Park for users of all ages and abilities.
- c. Promote the safety and cleanliness of park facilities.
- d. Maintain a current Recreation Plan that supports the improvement of the Township's quality of life.

PARKS AND RECREATION GOAL 3:

Salem Township Park will allow residents and visitors the opportunity to pursue activities and programs that will contribute to a high standard of living.

Objectives

- a. Pursue opportunities to improve and maintain park facilities such as sport courts and fields, playground equipment, and other features.
- b. Continue to support residents' use and interest in trails within the Township.
- c. Engage residents to solicit feedback on various funding opportunities for future sport court and field improvements.
- d. Support the development of recreational programs that would promote the health and wellness of Township residents and visitors.

PARKS AND RECREATION GOAL 4:

Salem Township Park and recreational facilities will be accessible to all residents and visitors.

Objectives

- a. Ensure that park improvements improve ADA compliance, and pursue universal design, when possible, for the safety and enjoyment of facilities by all ages and abilities.
- b. Develop and incorporate wayfinding and site signage that directs residents and visitors to important landmarks and recreational features in the park.
- c. Provide accessible sport courts.
- d. Pursue funding opportunities for park development, including the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund, Passport Recreation Grant Program, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund.



TOWNSHIP FACILITIES GOAL: *Undertake improvements, upgrades, and maintenance of the Township's facilities as needed.*

TOWNSHIP FACILITIES GOAL

Objectives.

- a. Improve the Township Hall offerings to meet the future needs of the community and Township staff.
-



Township Hall

- b. Update the Township Fire Station to be able to maintain a high standard of public safety and emergency services for the growing needs and demands of the Salem Township community.
-



Fire Station

- c. Encourage open communications with the Salem Township Library Board to understand their needs and how the Township can work with them to meet residents' needs.
-



Library

- d. Continue to support and maintain the Salem Township Transfer Station site as it meets the needs of Township residents.
-



Transfer Station

Chapter 6

Land Use



Existing Land Use

Salem Township's total land area consists of 36 square miles or 23,065 acres. Most of its land acreage is either actively farmed or remains as open fields and woodlands. There has been a significant change in land use with the conversion of agricultural/open space lands to low-density single-family residential use over the last several decades. As the Grand Rapids metropolitan area and the Holland/Zeeland areas have continued to grow, Salem Township has become increasingly attractive to individuals who work in urban areas but prefer to live in a rural setting.

Agricultural Land Use/Open Land

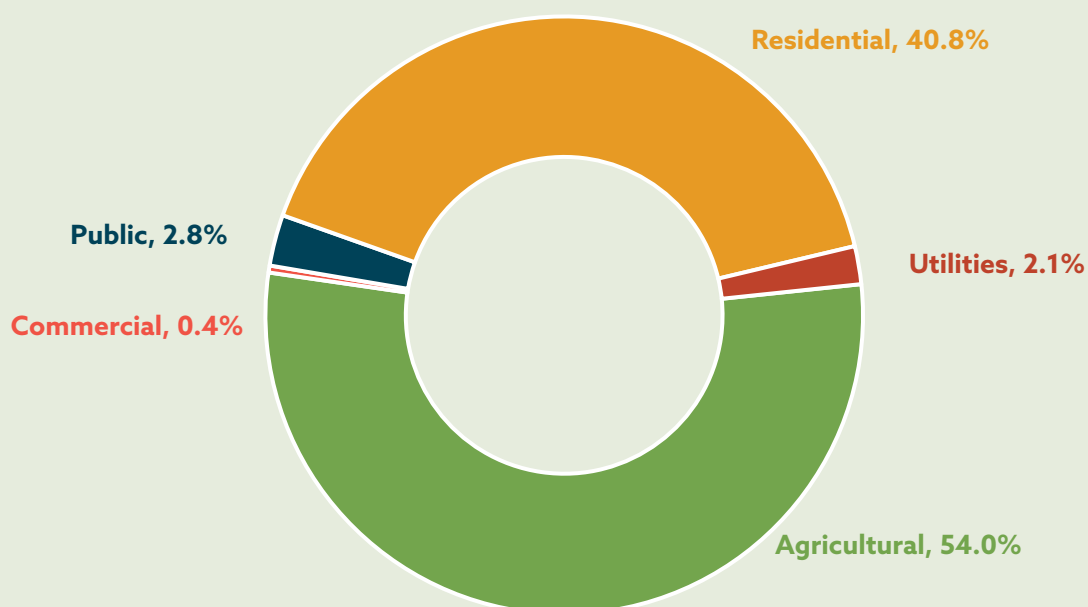
This category of land use includes farmland such as cropland and orchards as well as land that is not actively used for agricultural purposes such as pastures, shrubland, woodlands, and wetlands. Large areas in the northern half of the Township are classified as prime agricultural land by the United States Department of Agriculture as shown in the farmland map in the natural features chapter. Crops that grow in local sites include corn, hay, grains, Christmas trees, cucumbers, and nursery stock.



About 12,344.4 acres or approximately 54.0% of land in Salem Township is identified as agricultural land use according to the Salem Township property tax classification parcel data sourced from Allegan County GIS data in 2022.

Figure 17. Existing Land Use, Salem Township 2023

Source: Allegan County GIS Open Data



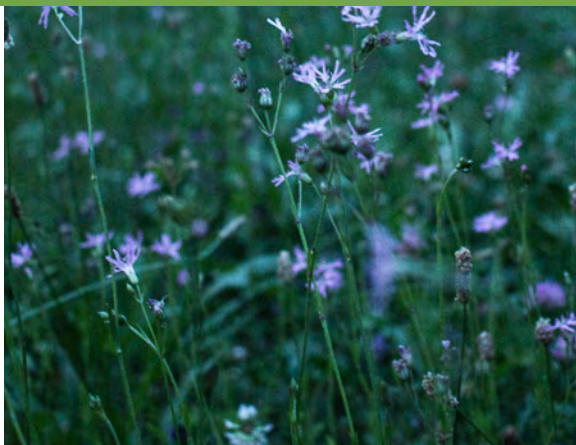
There are 1,258.3 acres or 27 parcels of land in Salem Township that are enrolled in a PDR program for agricultural preservation. Formerly known as the P.A. 116 program, the Michigan Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program have helped to keep large portions of the Township devoted to farming or open space. This act enables a farm owner to enter into a development rights agreement with the State. The agreement is designed to ensure that the land remains in agricultural use for a minimum of 10 years and ensures that the land is not developed for non-agricultural uses. In return for maintaining the land for agricultural uses, the land owner may be entitled to a certain income tax benefit, and the land is not subject to special assessments for sanitary sewer, water, lights, or non-farm drain projects.



Residential Land Use

Residential land use comprises approximately 40.8% or 9,342.9 acres of land in Salem Township.

The presence of active farms, oil fields, farm preservation land, and restrictive agricultural zoning have served to moderate residential activity in the northern portion of the Township.



As a land use category, residential land uses generally include detached single-family houses, attached multiple-family units, mobile homes, and seasonal homes. This category also includes condominiums that are constructed as either multifamily units, single-family detached homes (site condominiums), or attached units.

The dominant housing type in the Township is the detached single-family house. Mobile homes make up the second largest year-round housing type. Mobile homes are scattered throughout the Township with the highest concentration occurring in the southwest and east-central areas of the community. Historically, most homes in the Township were constructed by individuals on relatively large lots (1 to 20 acres) fronting on county section line roads. The Township is now witnessing a significant increase in the number of homes being

constructed in “metes and bounds” private developments as well as the development of subdivisions.

The highest concentration of residential activity in the Township occurs in the southeast corner of the Township in Sandy Pines. A private “members-owned” recreational vehicle campground, Sandy Pines, encompasses over 800 acres and includes well over 2,000 campsites. During the summer months, the population in Sandy Pines swells to over 16,000 persons.



Commercial Land Use

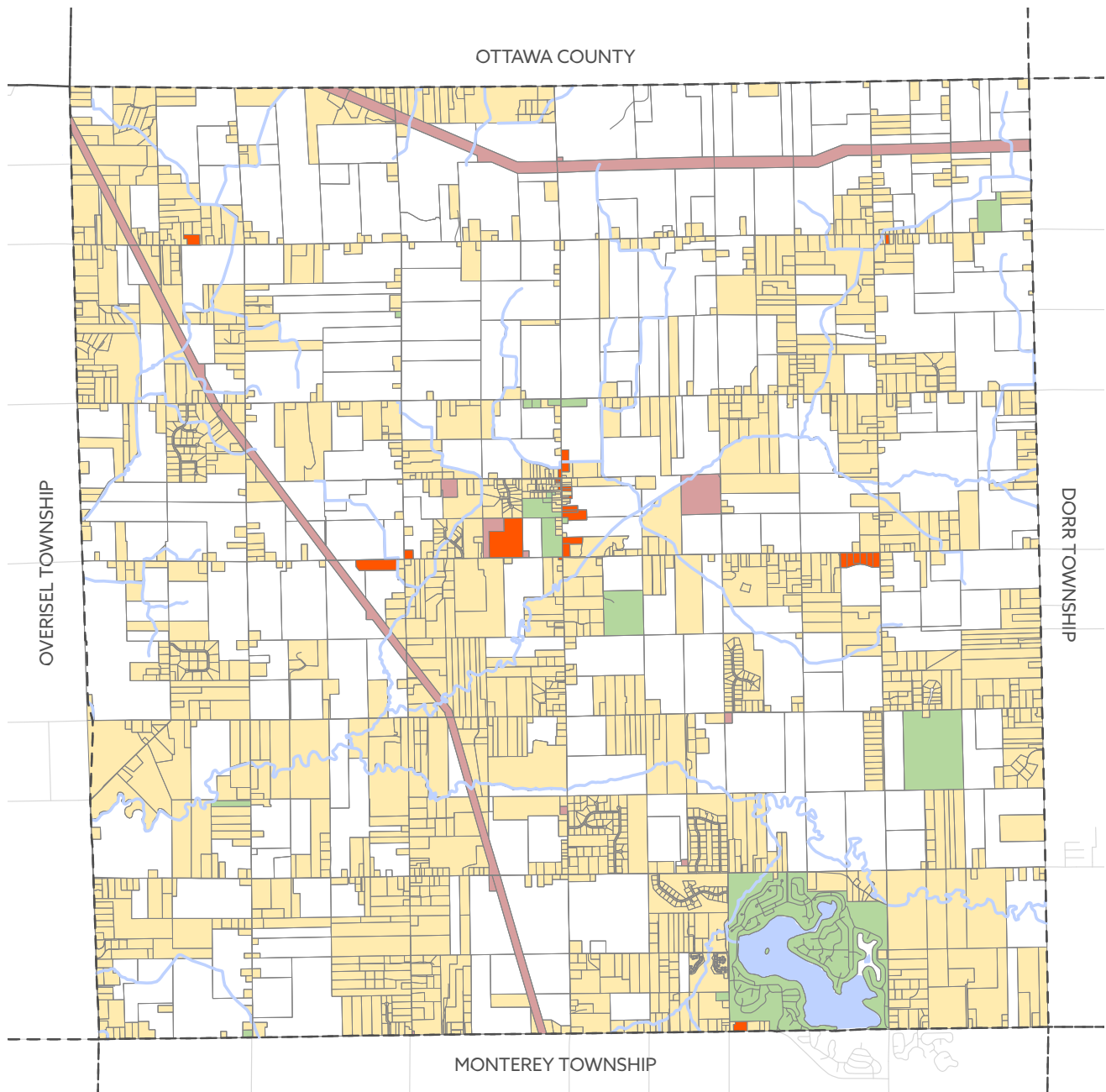
This category of land use includes retail, service, and office uses. Commercial land use comprises approximately 0.4% or 85.9 acres of land in Salem Township. There are relatively few parcels that comprise commercial uses in the Township, and they are mostly located in the Burnips area. They include a diner/sports bar, a gas station/convenience store, and other similar uses. Other commercial land uses include an ice cream shop at the corner of 142nd and 32nd streets, a restaurant at the corner of 26th Street and 142nd Avenue, and a farm implement dealer west of 32nd St and 142nd Avenue. Several mini-storage facilities and scattered service uses such as repair shops and hair stylists are also found throughout the Township.

Utilities

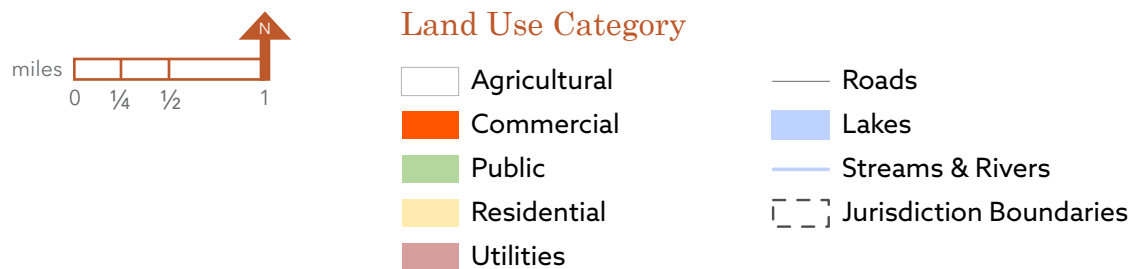
Utility land use includes land mainly used for utility production like natural gas and utility services like electricity. A total of 470.4 acres or 2.1% of the Township land is in utility use. Consumers Energy has underground natural gas storage fields tapping into depleted hydrocarbon reservoirs deep underground through approximately 942 wells that tie into the state's gas system. Some of the gas storage field locations can be found in Salem Township as shown in the existing land use map. Other parcels with the utilities land use include the Burnips Power Plant and Service Center which is powered by natural gas.

Public Land

Public land uses indicated on the existing land use map include land and facilities available for use by the general public or specific interest groups. Included are schools, churches, Township facilities, public parks, cemeteries, and the Sandy Pines Recreational Community. In Salem, most of these land uses are located in the Burnips area, although there are churches and cemeteries located elsewhere in the Township. There is only one Township park, and is located on the same parcel as the Township Hall, Library, and Fire Station. St. Mary Visitation Catholic Church also has a playground. The South Kent Gun Club, Lake Monterey Golf Course, and Sandy Pines are other recreation land uses located. About 633.2 acres or 2.8% of the land are classified as public property in Salem Township.



Map 9. Existing Land Use



Future Land Use Categories



Agriculture



Rural Estate



Suburban Residential



Attached Residential



Manufactured Home Community



Village Residential



Village Commercial



Village Enrichment



General Commercial



Light Industrial



Resort Community



Institutional

Agriculture



The Agriculture future land use category's primary intent is to support farming operations. Residential development is permitted on a limited basis on parcels that average approximately one acre in size but restrictions on the scale of developments are intended to result in gross residential densities of less than one unit for every ten acres. Several major farms produce specialty crops like pickles, evergreen trees, cattle, and floral nursery stock.

Farming activities and rural residences can co-exist, yet development is discouraged by regulations that strictly limit the number of lots and building permits that can be created from a parent parcel of land. Residential parcels should be between 1-2 acres with the primary structure located in the front part of a parcel. Many of the parcels in the Agriculture future land use category also overlap with some areas in the Township that contain large areas of "prime agricultural" soils as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture.

The primary intent of this future land use category is outlined by the following ideas:

- Promote farming activities as the primary land use in the areas of the Township best suited for such use and to conserve as long as practical the Township's most productive agricultural land.
- Preserve woodlands and wetlands often associated with farm-size parcels. Such features are useful as water retention, surface water and ground water recharge areas, and as habitat for plant and animal life. These have an important aesthetic value that contributes to the unique character of the farm areas.
- Discourage the conversion of agricultural land to scattered, non-farm development, which when unchecked, not only hinders farm operations but results in disinvestments in farming and higher costs and inefficiencies in the provision of public services and infrastructure.
- Encourage long-term investment in improvements needed to maintain and expand agricultural production by creating a stable environment for these businesses.



The intent of this future land use category is to establish areas where residential development is preferred and the character remains predominantly rural.



Farming operations are expected to continue, and development will occur in the form of individual lot splits as well as multi-unit subdivision developments. Care will be taken in the planning and design of the major development to ensure that the site layout will have minimized impacts on adjacent farming operations, natural features, and surrounding properties. The classification encourages the preservation of wetlands, woodlands, and other open spaces, which are useful for water retention, groundwater recharge, and habitat for wildlife. As a basic development option, large lot parcel splits will provide adequate area for septic system placement. This will be accomplished through zoning standards that protect natural features, create appropriate setbacks and buffers along roadways, and impose minimum open space set-asides. Individual lots should be a minimum of 1 acre.



The Suburban Residential future land use category facilitates the residential expansion of areas specifically around Burnips.



Suburban residential



The category recognizes residential development on parcels less than one acre. The predominant housing style within this classification will be single-family homes, and two-family homes will be allowed under specific conditions. Because it is desirable for the majority of residential development to be located close to community services, facilities such as schools, libraries, churches, and parks are also permitted. Suburban Residential future land use areas are intended to be located in areas that will enhance the sense of the small-town character.



The boundaries of the Suburban Residential future land use areas are intended to be the boundaries of these areas. Any rezoning that may need to reoccur to accommodate this type of development should be done incrementally based on market needs. Further, it is not recommended that the rezoning occur unless a careful evaluation of specific soil conditions shows that the capability of supporting the development or that appropriate infrastructure and protective services can be provided. There are no public water or public sewer services offered by or within the Salem Township boundaries. Without the support of these kinds of services, denser development may be harder to accomplish for public health reasons.

Attached residential

The Attached Residential future land use classification is designed to accommodate attached dwelling units. Housing types include assisted living facilities, nursing homes, other group housing, townhouses, and others. Attached Residential areas can be located on public paved roads to facilitate access by fire and police service. Having these kinds of residences exist in Salem Township can be beneficial to the community and provides a variety of housing that can serve the growing population of Salem. Having these kinds of developments also make sense in areas that are located near services that can be accessed by pedestrians. There may be some limitations as to where and how much of this kind of development may occur in the Township since there are no public water or public sewer infrastructure.

Manufactured Home Community

In the attempt to address the need for affordable housing within the area as demands for a wide variety of housing styles, the Future Land Use Plan identifies the northwest ¼ of Section 34 as the preferred future location for a manufactured home community. This site was selected after extensive analysis by the Planning Commission of several potentially suitable sites during the development of the 2017 Master Plan.



The Village Residential future land use category recognizes the pre-existing nature of homes and lots within the Burnips and New Salem town center areas.

Many of the homes, buildings, and lots are nonconforming due to their small parcel size. In recognition of these situations, the Village Residential land use category was created to reflect the predominant parcel size, lot width, and building setbacks in the area. The intent of this classification would be to rehabilitate building structures in the Burnips and Salem areas while achieving a sense of place that remains consistent with the traditional character of these neighborhoods. The growth of this kind of development will allow for residential developments that are conveniently located close to commercial developments in the Burnips and New Salem areas.



Village Commercial



The Village Commercial future land use category is intended to foster a walkable, mixed-use commercial area that includes storefront retail, service, office and government uses as well as upper story in mixed-use buildings.

Development in this area should highlight the existing character of the area, and create a vibrant commercial hub in the heart of Salem Township.

Sites in this area should include provisions for access by a variety of transportation modes (cars, bikes, etc.), minimal setbacks from the roads, and minimal parking needs.



Village Enrichment



The Village Enrichment future land use classification identifies locations where a single best use may not be definable. These locations may be ideal for specific kinds of commercial or residential development based on the nearby existing land use, community services, and the built environment. The Township is reasonably flexible in terms of use for these areas. The intent is to create an area for a mix of uses, and buildings should emulate the existing neighborhood character.



The General Commercial future land use classification includes retail, service, and office uses. The majority of commercial uses in the Township should be in the Burnips area, and around the intersection of 142nd Avenue and 32nd Street to serve the convenience shopping needs of the Township. Focusing commercial development in Burnips will guide revitalization efforts. A small area of commercial development is also shown on 136th Ave. east and west of 28th Street to serve the needs of the Sandy Pines resort. The intent is to limit strip commercial development and its generally undesirable characteristics of too many driveways, land use and traffic conflicts. Promoting the physical clustering of commercial establishments should be promoted instead of extensive strip development, joint use of parking facilities, and minimized extension of utilities are other matters to consider.

Specific site criteria are needed to assure that sufficient setbacks, landscaping, parking, drainage, driveway spacing, shielded lighting, buffers, and sign controls are provided for new commercial establishments. Unless careful site planning and access controls are instituted, even a limited number of commercial establishments can cause traffic conflicts. Commercial businesses that provide goods and services to meet the daily needs of a growing township population while not duplicating services provided by establishments already located nearby should be encouraged.





Salem Township historically has not been a prime location for industrial developments, as it does not have a public water supply or a sanitary sewer system. However, planning for the potential location for this kind of development is helpful when considering the future of the Township.



The few parcels designed as Light Industrial are located south of 142nd Avenue and east of 30th Street.

This designated area includes a privately owned parcel with frontage along 142nd Avenue as well a parcel under the ownership of Salem Township. The Township property presently supports the Township's solid waste transfer station and is the former Township dump location. The Township may decide to move forward with preparations to make the site available for private industrial use. Improvement of 29th Street and the extension of gas and electrical utilities are among the improvements necessary for a viable light industrial location. The other parcel on 143rd Avenue is the site of an existing power sub station.

Many types of “light, small industrial” shops are low volume water users. They have relatively few employees and do not have heavy freight needs. These businesses could include small tool and die shops, wood and metal fabricators, light parts assembly, plastic parts extrusion and equipment repair. The basic infrastructure demands for these types of small industries are a ready work force, electricity, natural gas and relatively close proximity to suppliers and customers. Low start-up costs in the form of land and buildings are also extremely important considerations. Many of the above characteristics are exhibited within Salem Township.



The Township should recognize the potential conflicts that may arise by having industrial areas near residential development. To minimize such conflicts, it is recommended that the use and site development standards applicable to industrial and commercial development be evaluated and appropriately upgraded. “Heavy” uses such as basic manufacturing should not be permitted and some of the more intensive fabrication or assembly operations that would potentially involve disrupting noise, atmospheric or vibration emissions should be approved only as special uses. The site design provisions include landscape provisions to enhance the appearance of the facilities, significant buffers, setbacks, and physical screening requirements and limitations on outdoor storage and other outdoor activities that can be used to help create and maintain a harmonious environment.

Resort Community



The Resort Community future land use category is used to identify the recreational and resort of Sandy Pines Campground community. This future land use is unique to this development, and should only be applied to this area of the Township. Any expansions or major changes proposed for the resort should be brought forward for the Township Planning Commission and Township Board to review. The existence of this unique feature in the Township is important, but future changes will need to follow the existing Township rules for development and site plan review.

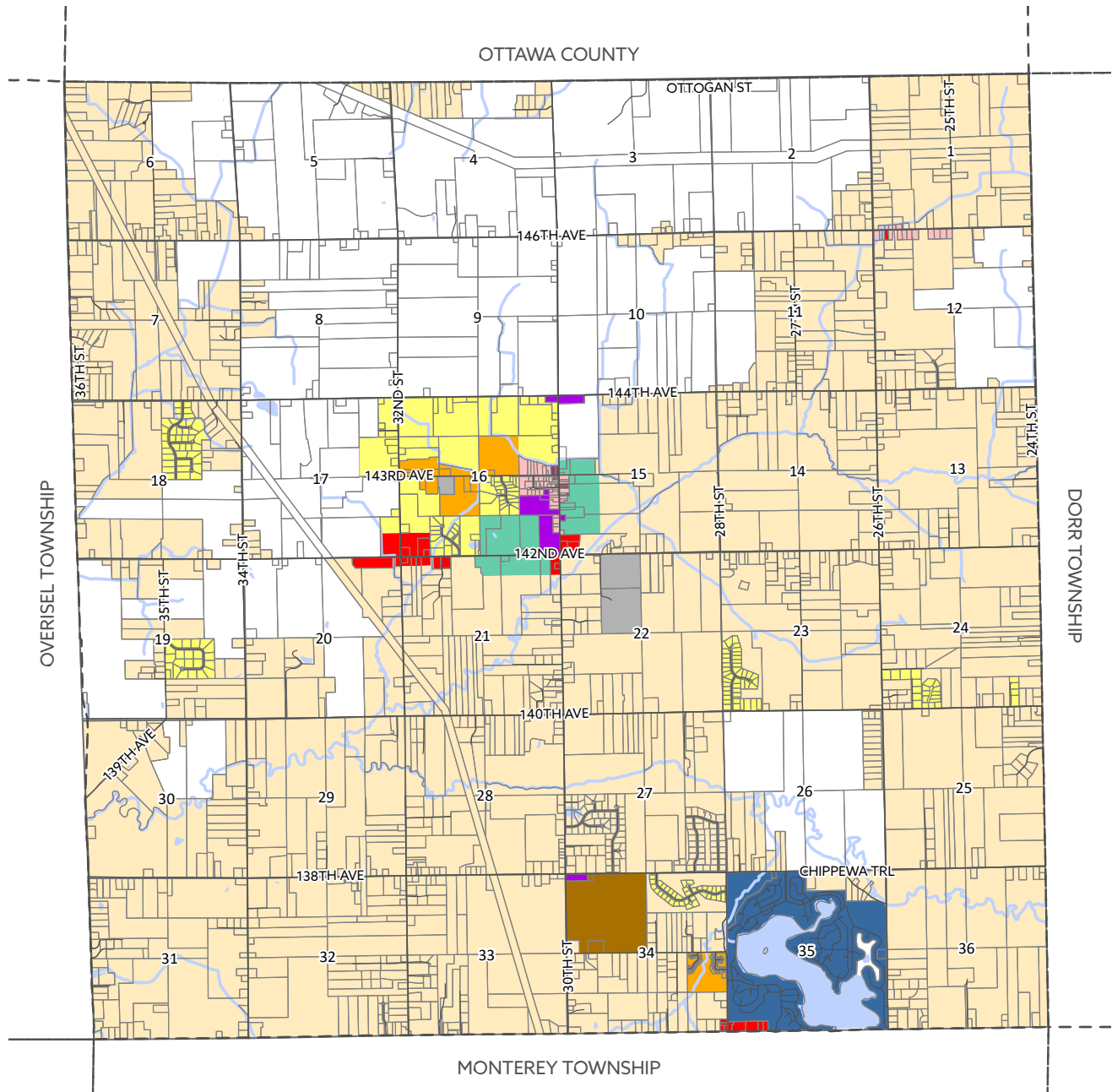
Institutional



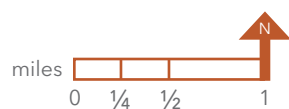
This category includes land uses such as schools, government buildings, churches, cemeteries, and medical facilities that are available for use by the general public. The Plan recognizes that it is necessary to provide for the establishment of certain nonresidential land uses within residential as long as they are compatible. Such non-residential uses commonly include religious and educational institutions, recreational uses such as parks, and play fields, and public utility facilities.

The future land use map illustrates the major public/semi-public uses in the Township. Expansion or location of these uses should depend upon compatibility with adjacent land uses and the extent to which neighborhood character will be maintained.





Map 10. Future Land Use



Future Land Use Category

Agriculture	Village Residential	Resort Community
Rural Estate	Village Commercial	Institutional
Suburban Residential	Village Enrichment	Sections
Attached Residential	General Commercial	
Manufactured Home Community	Light Industrial	

Chapter 7

Implementation



A focused effort towards the implementation of this plan will strongly contribute to the preservation of the Township's rural setting while allowing growth in appropriate areas. Local officials must follow and implement the Master Plan to effectively guide growth in Salem Township. By following the strategies that have been outlined, the community is equipped to make informed land use and development decisions based on good data and community input.

The implementation strategies that are outlined in this chapter are intentionally general to provide the community with the flexibility to prepare specific work assignments and prioritize each strategy as it makes sense based on a compelling need or identified timeline.

To actualize the vision that is outlined in this plan, a set of work assignments by the Township Board, Planning Commission, and staff should be developed. This is accomplished through various tasks that may include updating ordinances, special studies or assignments, and administrative procedures which are described in this chapter.



The Township must be proactive in pursuing the Plan's goals and objectives if they are to be realized. Some of the implementation strategies require significant public and private investment.

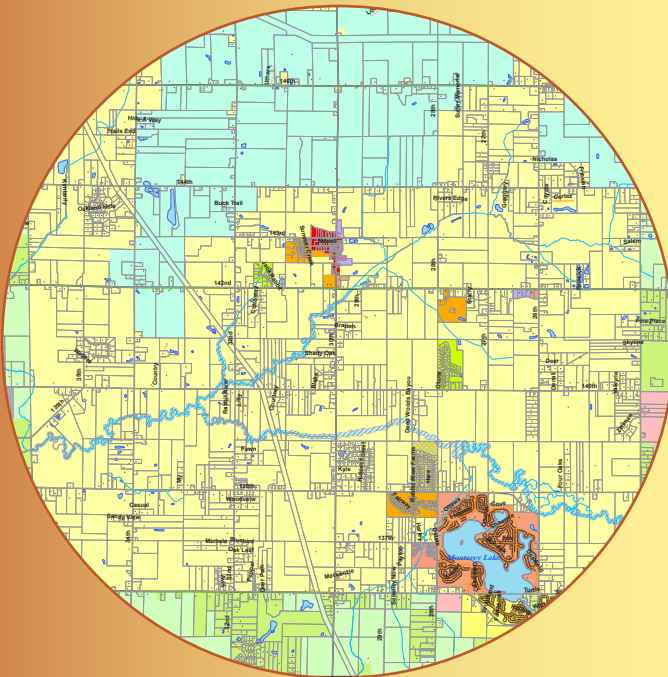
Some strategies are long-term in scope and the cooperation of many different entities may be necessary. The Township will have to balance financial, political, and other factors in determining how and when to implement the strategies listed on the following pages.

Zoning Ordinance Update

Developing a current Township Zoning Ordinance is the primary implementation mechanism for this Plan, as it regulates land use in the Township. The Salem Township Zoning Ordinance is the primary implementation mechanism for this Plan, as it regulates land use in the Township. Local control of land use, as provided for by zoning, is an accepted legal practice.

The principles on which zoning is based include the need to:

- Balance the interests of all landowners and residents with individual landowners.
- Help provide a long term vision for the Township.
- Ensure development is adequately served by roads and utilities.
- Achieve the quality of life desired by residents.
- Protect the environment.
- Provide fair and consistent review of development needs.
- Protect the public health, safety, and welfare.

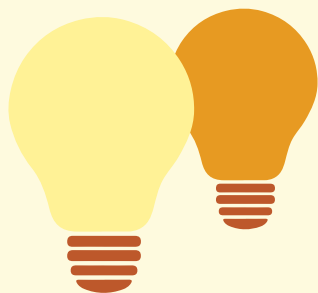


A zoning ordinance audit in light of the updated Master Plan is expected to commence immediately after the adoption of the Master Plan. The audit will include a review and recommendations for, if appropriate, of the Zoning Map and current regulations to better conform to the future land use designations and map. The Ordinance may also be evaluated for its flexibility to address innovative development techniques and control of inefficient development patterns.

Additionally, the Ordinance should be updated and reformatted for modern use which will allow for consistency in provisions and the ability to enforce the imposed standards. Overall, a revised Zoning Ordinance would provide a more user-friendly document with updated graphics for ease of interpretation, understanding, and implementation.

Specific examples of Zoning Ordinance updates include:

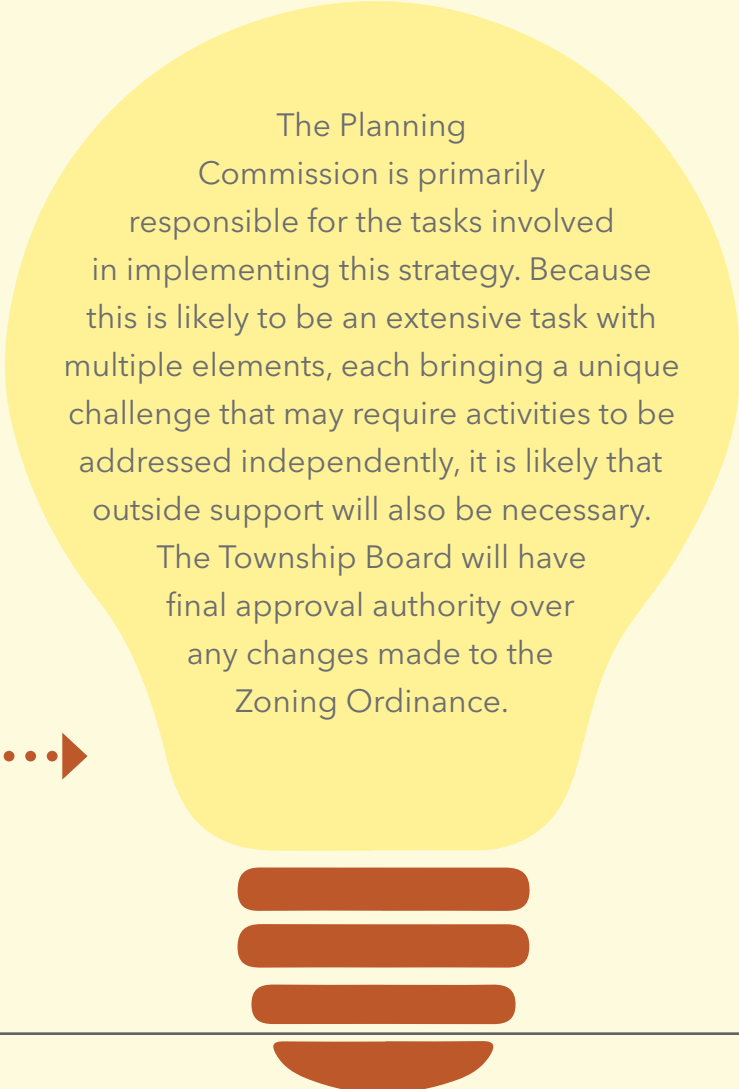
- Language to encourage walkability and landscaping in developed areas, especially in the Burnips and New Salem areas.
- Review of permitted uses and special land uses for adherence to the vision of this Plan.
- *Rezoning of Sandy Pines.* The Sandy Pines area is zoned C-1, however, this is no longer appropriate for the area. The Township should adopt a special land use zoning designed specifically to facilitate resorts and campgrounds and to address zoning issues that relate directly to that type of land use.



- *Solar Energy Ordinance.* The Planning Commission and Township Board members should take some time to review best practices and zoning ordinances to create a solar ordinance for the Township. Landowners in the community have already been approached by potential solar power providers. The best time to create a new policy or ordinance is before an urgent situation arises. Using available resources and attending educational workshops or seminars from agencies that have the Township's best interest in mind from across the state will be important for local officials to become knowledgeable on the topic. Township staff and leaders can then work with planning and zoning professionals to develop an ordinance that meets the needs and aligns with the Township's policy on solar energy systems.

Specific examples of Zoning Ordinance updates continued:

- *Manufactured Homes.* Following the recommendations from the 2017 Master Plan, the Township should prepare and incorporate a Manufactured Home Community zoning text provisions and MHC Zoning map designation for this potential land use. It is also recommended that while the selected site is to remain on the Future Land Use Plan as the preferred location for that use, the rezoning of the site to the MHC zoning designation should not be made until such time as the actual need for such housing is demonstrated.
- *Conservation Subdivision Planned Unit Development.* Review the relevancy of the Conservation Subdivision Planned Unit Development and the contents of Chapter 23.
- *Zoning Map.* Make sure the zoning map is current and reflects the existing zoning ordinance.
- *Riparian Area Protection Overlay.* Review the zoning district to ensure that the standards, guidance, and setbacks adhere to best practices. Discussion by the Steering Committee during the development of the Master Plan specifically asked for deeper dive into this material.



The Planning Commission is primarily responsible for the tasks involved in implementing this strategy. Because this is likely to be an extensive task with multiple elements, each bringing a unique challenge that may require activities to be addressed independently, it is likely that outside support will also be necessary. The Township Board will have final approval authority over any changes made to the Zoning Ordinance.



Water Protection Strategy

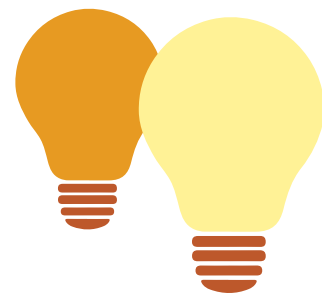
Water quality within a watershed is directly affected by land management practices. For example, if a new housing development creates a large number of impervious surfaces such as rooftops and streets, and stormwater is not properly managed, it is possible that the rate and volume of flow into and within the creek, stream, or river will increase to a point that stream bank erosion occurs and there will be less surface area for groundwater recharge. Since Salem Township does not have public water or sewer systems, all new development needs to have their own well. New wells are creating increased pressure on the groundwater resources in Allegan County and nearby Ottawa County.

The Township should consider how they can balance the demand for new growth with the impact and limitations of groundwater resources. Township officials should continue to follow updates from the Allegan County Water Study Workgroup, and review any policies, documents, or action plans that they produce.

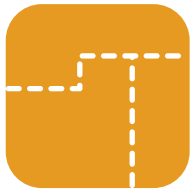
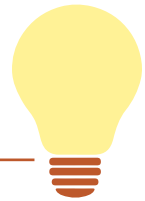
Water Protection Strategy Continued:

Township officials should also periodically review information from the Ottawa County Groundwater Sustainability Initiative. Even though the Township is not in Ottawa County, the Township sits on the County's southern border. Results of any studies or land use and/or utility-related decisions or policies that are developed may affect growth and development in Salem Township.

Land use planning and zoning should recognize the need for the long-term protection of surface and groundwaters by encouraging the maintenance of green belt corridors along major streams and lake shorelines. Making sure that the Riparian Area Protection Zone (RAP) Zoning District is correctly implemented is an important step to supporting clean waterbodies. Land splits and growth and development-related policies can also be used to control where, how many, and what types of developments can be permitted, reducing the impact of wells on the groundwater supply.



Where implemented, development regulation can ensure that land development activities provide protection. Among the regulatory measures that can be effective are: _____



Using density and land splits as a means for reducing the impact of groundwater.



Requiring 50 feet setbacks from waterbodies.



Encouraging and/or requiring open space along stream banks and shorelines in all new residential developments.



Requiring prompt re-vegetation of disturbed areas and prohibiting development on excess slopes.



Limiting peak run-off volumes after development to pre-development levels through the use of on-site stormwater detention and retention facilities and limiting the extent of impermeable surfaces on development sites.



Requiring all new developments to provide measures that protect against spills and the release of hazardous materials.

Complete Streets

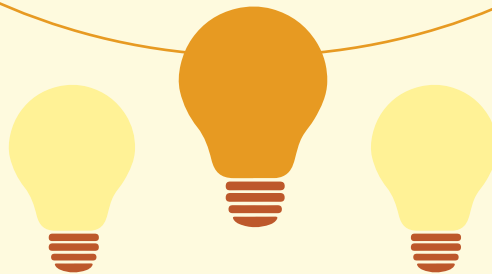
This Master Plan supports a complete streets policy for Salem Township. A complete streets policy encourages a design approach that enables safe travel for multiple modes of transportation including vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, and public transportation. Through this approach, thoroughfares are planned, designed, and constructed to allow access to all legal users safely and efficiently, without any one user taking priority over another. The goal is to provide safe access for all types of users and modes of transportation within a right-of-way.

In Salem Township, primary modes of transportation include vehicles, bicycles, and people who move around by foot. The Township's primary objective will be to work with surrounding communities to promote healthy lifestyles for people of all ages, abilities, and life circumstances. Sidewalks on both sides of a road or street, bike infrastructure, and other features will be promoted when appropriate. Complete streets can result in increased safety for all road users, improved public health, a cleaner environment, mobility equity, and enhanced quality of life through more inviting streets.

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



Although much of Salem Township is a rural community, having this policy will strengthen the community's position when opportunities arise to improve the transportation system to consider improvements for all users. There may be areas of the community where this kind of development may make sense to start to develop, like in the Burnips area and southeast corner of the Township near Sandy Pines. Some features may be accomplished through simple road re-striping and the addition of signage. Other projects may be more involved and may only be practicable when coordinated with major roadway reconstruction. Because most of the Township's roadways are under the jurisdiction of Allegan County, much of the Township's work in implementing a complete streets policy will involve working with neighboring communities, the Road Commission, and other pertinent agencies.





Salem Township Park and Recreation Plan

Though not a part of this planning process, the Township should continue to keep the Salem Township Park and Recreation Plan current. The plan was adopted in 2022 and is set to expire according to the MDNR requirements in 2026. A new plan would need to be adopted and submitted by early 2027. Without a current Park and Recreation Plan on file with the MDNR, the Township would not be eligible for many MDNR grants like the Trust Fund. Township Officials and the Parks and Recreation Committee should work to ensure that the plan remains in good standing.



Cooperation with Neighboring and Regional Governments

Coordinating and cooperating with neighboring municipalities can provide a number of opportunities for the Township. Since the Township is on a shared border with Kent County, Ottawa County, Overisel Township, Heath Township, Monterey Township, Hopkins Township, Dorr Township, Jamestown Township, Zeeland Township, and Byron Township, intergovernmental cooperation should be strongly encouraged in a reasonable way.

The Township should also work to form alliances with the counties and other regional organizations to actively plan for the future of the community and to achieve the goals of this Plan. The Allegan County Road Commission should continue to be in discussions pertaining to road improvements. The County can be a valuable asset in developing policies to preserve farmland, groundwater, and natural resources, and educating the public about important resources in the community.



On-Going Education

The Planning Commission and other Township officials and staff should continue to seek educational opportunities to grow their knowledge and familiarity with planning-related topics and legal decisions that affect local land use. The Township can seek opportunities from agencies like Michigan State University Extension (MSU-Extension), the Michigan Township Association (MTA), the Michigan Planning Association (MAP), and the Michigan Municipal League.

Plan Updates

The Plan should be reviewed periodically by the Planning Commission. At a minimum, the land use portion should be reviewed annually and, following the state law, updated at least every five years. An annual review allows the Township to stay on track to implement the Plan's recommendations as well as note any changes that may need to be made when the time comes for a significant update. A periodic review of the Plan also ensures that it stays current and relevant.

Implementation Matrix

The following is an Implementation Matrix to help the Township discern an action plan to implement the recommendations of the Master Plan. The graphic should be used as a suggestion by the Township Planning Commission, Township Board, Township Staff, and other local champions to build a practice in empowering local land use decisions to be achieved by the Township. By working diligently and consistently the Township will build strong relationships that will help them develop and support growth in the way that is befitting of the Salem Township community.

Year
1

Education
on solar
energy system
ordinances

*Planning Commission
Township Board*

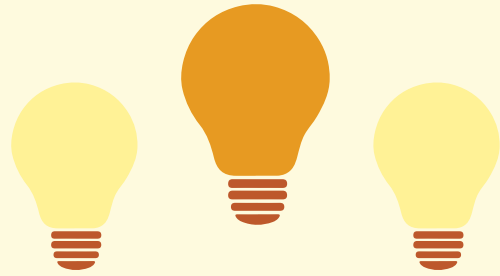
Year
2

Review of
Land Use and
Implementation
chapters of
Master Plan

Planning Commission

Address any
zoning ordinance
updates that are
needed

Planning Commission



Year
3

Update Salem
Township Park &
Recreation Plan

*Parks & Recreation
Committee
Township Board*

Address any
zoning ordinance
updates that are
needed

Planning Commission

Year
4

Review of
Land Use and
Implementation
chapters of
Master Plan

Planning Commission

Review
information
from the Allegan
County Water
Study Group.
Consider how
results impact
or affect the
community.

*Planning Commission
Township Board*

Year
5

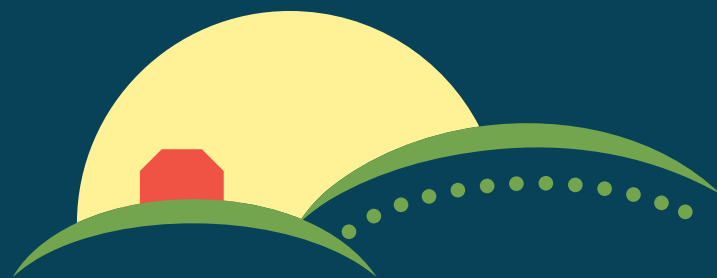
Review of Master
Plan

Planning Commission

Appendix A

Community Survey Report





SALEM TOWNSHIP

COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN