



GAINES TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

Approved April 10, 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Gaines Township Master Plan was made possible through the substantial effort among Township Board members, Planning Commissioners, Township staff, stakeholders, and the residents of Gaines Township.

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GAINES CHARTER
— TOWNSHIP —

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This document is the community's master plan, a guide for growth, conservation, investment, and future decision-making. It is the vision of the citizens and officials of Gaines Charter Township.



WELCOME

Gaines Charter Township is a growing community that features urban and suburban residential areas, shopping centers and commercial developments, industrial and transportation logistics business areas, and farmlands and woods.

From the early-1800s onward, the area was extensively farmed. Division Avenue was a major north-south corridor connecting Grand Rapids to Kalamazoo. The Paul B. Henry Freeway (M-6) traverses the northern third of the township and has brought growth and change to the region over the last 20 years.

The township is part of the growing southern tier of metropolitan area communities, including the City of Kentwood to the north, Byron Township to the west, and Caledonia Township to the east. To the south is Leighton Township located in Allegan County.

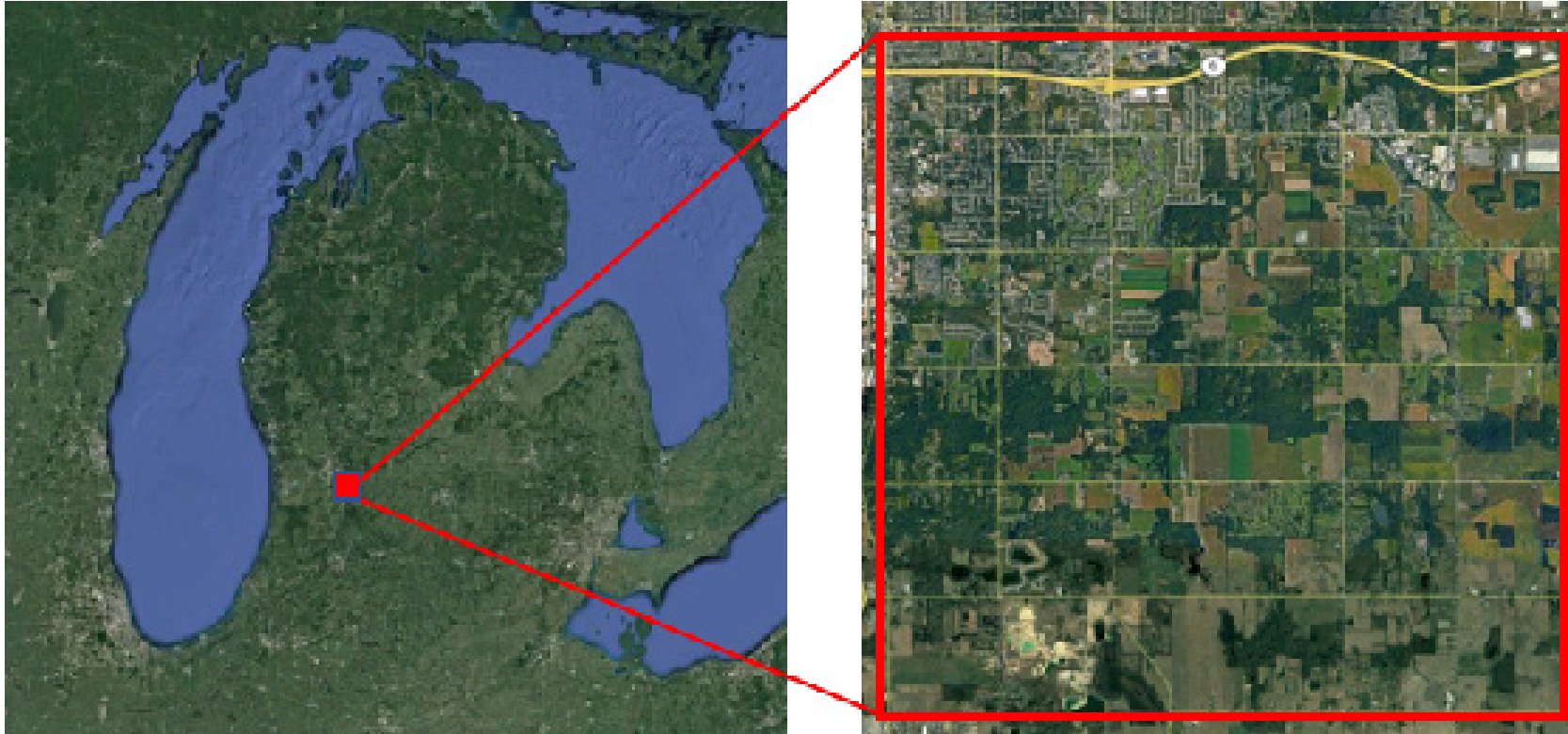
The township can generally be described as a growing suburb. Residential neighborhoods and attendant commercial and industrial areas have been developed in its northern half and rural homes and agricultural areas in its southern half. Commercial uses are

clustered along major roads including 68th Street, Division Avenue, and around the M-6/Kalamazoo Avenue interchange. These businesses are supported by new subdivisions, mostly containing single-family homes, with enclaves of higher-density housing including apartment buildings and mobile home parks in the northwest corner of the township and along 60th and 68th Streets. Further east, there are industrial parks, large-scale manufacturing and research facilities around 68th Street and East Paris Avenue.

The township has experienced steady growth in both population and development for many decades. The full opening of the Paul B. Henry Freeway (M-6) in 2004 accelerated growth, particularly commercial development along Kalamazoo Avenue between 60th Street and 68th Street. This area has become a regional destination, with two large “big-box” retailers, several grocery stores, chain restaurants, and a multiplex movie theater.

Overall, Gaines Charter Township is a desirable location in the metropolitan area, with great access to employment centers, good shopping, and quality parks and schools. The township exemplifies a growing area that encourages quality growth and development yet still treasures the rural atmosphere of its undeveloped agricultural areas.





Map 1. Gaines Charter Township

MASTER PLANNING

The Gaines Charter Township Master Plan is intended to be a guide for the township's development over the next 20 years. The Master Plan is a product of the planning process that included robust and varied opportunities for citizen input. Through text and maps, it explains the philosophy and desires of citizens concerning the future. The Master Plan seeks to express an ideal and achievable community in terms of growth potential and preservation. However, the plan is flexible enough so that changing conditions will allow the township to adapt as necessary to accomplish the general goals of the plan.

The Master Plan was developed under the authority of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, PA 33 of 2008. The Master Plan is the basis for the Zoning Ordinance, which regulates the use of land, and serves as the framework for decision-making concerning future growth, development, preservation, and community services.

PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS

This Master Plan is based upon the foundation built by several previous planning efforts. This plan recognizes the significant public efforts to establish the overall community vision, goals, principles, and implementation actions.

2002 Master Plan. The original 2002 Master Plan represented the culmination of nearly two years of work by numerous residents and local officials. It reflected the community's strong commitment to retaining and strengthening the local quality of life.

The document outlined the preferred future for the township and a comprehensive plan to realize it. It set the framework for the fast pace of growth and infrastructure development during the early and mid-2000s. Additionally, the first Future Land Use Map and plan was developed during this effort.



2008 Dutton & 100th Street Sub-Area Plan. In 2007, the township performed its 5-year review of the 2002 Master Plan and recognized the need to revisit specific “sub-areas” within the township. The 2002 Future Land Use Map identified the Dutton area and 100th Street as two areas dedicated to industry. As a part of this effort, the township determined how these two areas affect one another and how new employment uses could be encouraged within the township. Strategies concerning future land use, economic development, and infrastructure were developed during this planning effort.

2009 Parks and Recreation Plan. The township’s Parks and Recreation Plan identified the recreational needs of the citizens of the township. The plan helped guide project development and budgeting and qualified the township for Michigan Department of Natural Resources grant opportunities. This plan is currently being updated and will be finalized in 2023.

2010 Nonmotorized Transportation Plan. The Nonmotorized Transportation Plan (NMTP) was one of the first steps taken by the township to achieve the goal of providing increased transportation options that result in improved public health and an overall greater quality of life.

The NMTP planning effort intended to create a connected internal network of sidewalks, shared-use paths and bikeways, provide links to important destination points, and improve the functionality and safety of the overall nonmotorized transportation system.

2015 84th Street and Kalamazoo Avenue Sub-Area Plan. In early 2014, township officials determined it was time to create a Sub-Area plan for the Kalamazoo Avenue and 84th Street intersection, and the 84th Street Corridor between Kalamazoo Avenue and Division Avenue. The goal of this document is to establish the future character of the area to ensure development will be compatible with township objectives, as identified by the Public and by township officials during the planning process.

2019 Four Corners Transportation Plan. There are four communities that comprise the “Four Corners” in the southeast Grand Rapids metro area: the City of Kentwood, Cascade Township, Gaines Township, and Caledonia Township. The successful collaboration led to several joint planning projects in the area. This update is focused on improving multi-modal transportation to provide safe and convenient travel options for pedestrians and bicyclists in the area.

2023 Parks and Recreation Plan. The township recently approved a new Parks and Trails Plan to prioritize the recreational needs of the citizens of the township. The plan helps to determine opportunities, guide project development and budgeting, and will qualify the township for Michigan Department of Natural Resources grant opportunities.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

To gain a good understanding of residents' thoughts about how the township should develop over the next 10-20 years, township staff developed a multi-pronged input process that involved two surveys and two open houses. Overall, 332 survey responses were obtained. These responses will help inform both Planning Commissioners and the Board of Trustees about how people view development going forward and will help define goals and objectives for the Master Plan.

Outreach Effort. The overall outreach effort was undertaken over a period from May 11th, 2022, to July 31st, 2022. Multiple formats for public engagement were utilized including paper and web-based surveys, a web-based mapping tool, and two open houses. Flyers were posted at popular businesses and several articles were run in the local Sun & News newspaper. Finally, notices of the input opportunity with QR codes were sent out with summer tax bills to all taxpayers in the township.

Surveys. A survey ("Master Plan Public Input Survey") with 33 questions was developed that covered a range of topics. The survey was distributed at the Township Hall, Kent District Library - Gaines Township Branch, Streams of Hope, and Townline Elementary School. Kentwood Schools also assisted the outreach effort by translating the survey into Burmese, Nepali, Bosnian, Spanish, and Vietnamese. They also distributed hard copies to students to take home to parents.

A GIS-based app was developed in cooperation with REGIS that allowed people to place dots on a map of the township that was coded to specific land uses. This was developed to mimic the "sticky dot" method typically used in open houses. The remotely gathered information related to how people feel about future land use, and what uses should go where.

Both the survey and GIS map were distributed digitally via posting on the township website, on two Facebook groups; "Gaines Township / Cutlerville Community Chatter" and "Dutton Fire Department, Gaines Township Michigan". A QR code link for both surveys was also sent out with the summer tax bill which was received by every taxpayer in the township. The Sun & News newspaper also ran three separate stories on the engagement effort.

Flyers. To notify residents of the opportunity to comment, staff posted flyers bearing QR codes for mobile phone connections at twenty-six apartments, mobile home parks, businesses, and non-profit locations.



Two open houses were held to garner public opinion on the Master Plan. Public input maps (pictured above) were on display for residents to provide feedback on future land use in the township.

Respondents. Three hundred and thirty-two people filled out written surveys, 96% of whom were residents, or non-residents that own land in the township.

Eighty-six percent (86%) of respondents fell into the 21–70-year-old age categories (n=286). Compared to census data, we know that only about 45% of the overall population falls within this age group, so the under 20 and 70+-year-old age brackets are underrepresented.

In terms of their current housing situation, most respondents (74%) live in single-family houses, with a majority of respondents in this category living on lots less than half an acre (38.4%). Approximately 12% of respondents live in apartments, 7% are in multi-unit condominiums, and the rest (8%) are in mobile homes, duplexes, or some other living arrangement. Respondents in the “Other” category consist of stand-alone condos, single villa condos, and residents who live in their businesses. The number of single-family homes responding is almost identical to estimates of overall home ownership in the township (around 72%).

n=332

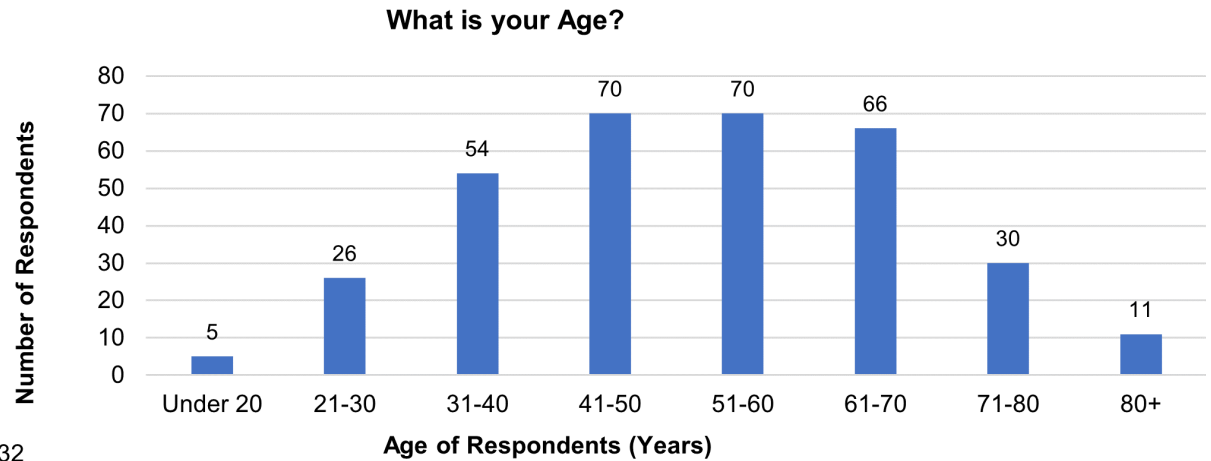
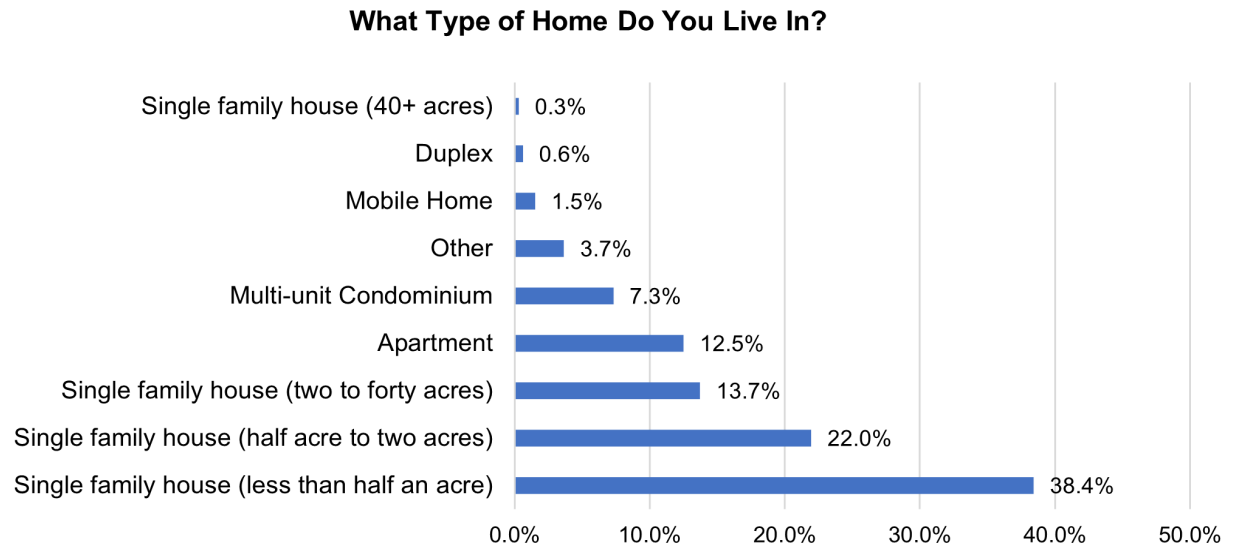


Figure 1. 2022 Master Plan Public Input Survey Question 2

Respondent Home Type



n=328

Percentage of Respondents

Figure 2. 2022 Master Plan Public Input Survey Question 3

GOAL 1.1 INTRODUCTION TO ACHIEVE A BALANCE BETWEEN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOWNSHIP AND PRESERVING THE NATURAL FEATURES AND RURAL ATMOSPHERE WITHIN THE TOWNSHIP.

GOAL 1.2 INTRODUCTION RESIDENTS WILL HAVE AMPLE OPPORTUNITY TO VOICE THEIR OPINIONS TO TOWNSHIP LEADERS WHEN CONSIDERING PROJECTS THAT WILL IMPACT THEIR COMMUNITY.

Actions

1. Creation of quality housing, employment centers, and shopping areas which will continue to elevate Gaines Township as a premier community within the Grand Rapids metro area.
2. Conservation and preservation of natural features, as well as agricultural lands and traditions.
3. Review and possibly revise the zoning ordinance to ensure that public engagement is robust, and resident input is heard during deliberations on projects.





CHAPTER 2. ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL FEATURES



SOILS

The land area of Kent County is the result of continental glaciation, which left the foundation rock buried by many feet of glacial debris. This occurred when ice sheets nearly one mile thick covered the Upper Midwest portion of the United States and Canada. Roughly the west half of Gaines Township is the result of end moraines, which run in a north-to-south direction and are rocky and well-drained. The moraines were formed along halted ice fronts, which deposited unsorted debris consisting of rocks, soil, and vegetation. The longer the glacier was stopped in one spot, the greater the deposit. Moraines consist of whatever kind of material the ice was carrying at that place. Sometimes this material was sand and at other points clay-like materials. The proportions of boulders varied greatly also.

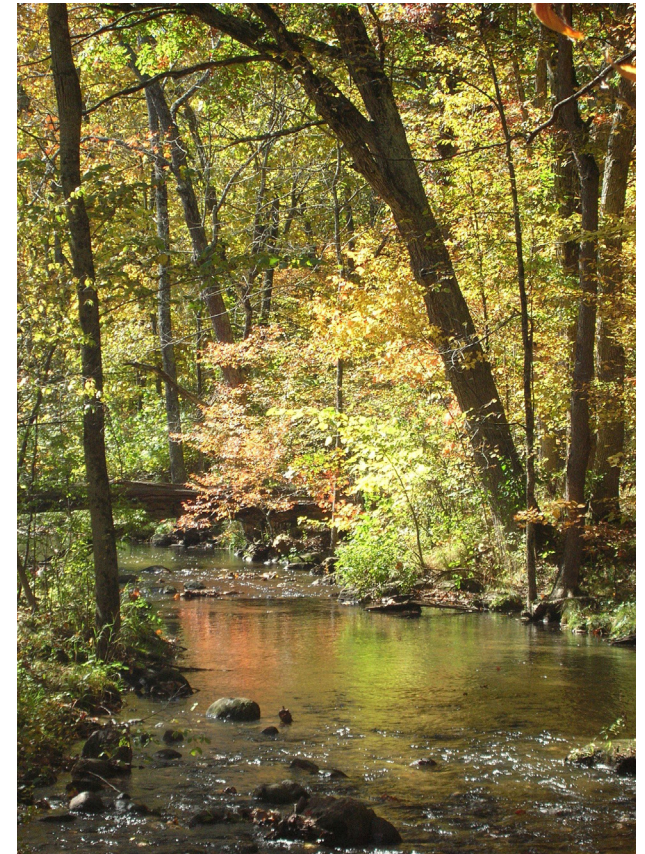
The northern and eastern portions of Gaines Township consist of gentle slopes ranging from level to eight percent. The southeast and southern sections of the township are the areas that consist of rolling hills. Clay soils are predominant, which sometimes limit use for sanitary systems, and limit drainage leading to pockets of wetland soils scattered across the area. The most significant topographical feature is around 92nd Street and Eastern Avenue, where the steepest slopes are found and reaches a high point on Dias Hill (A.K.A. “92nd Street Hill”) of over 1,030 feet.

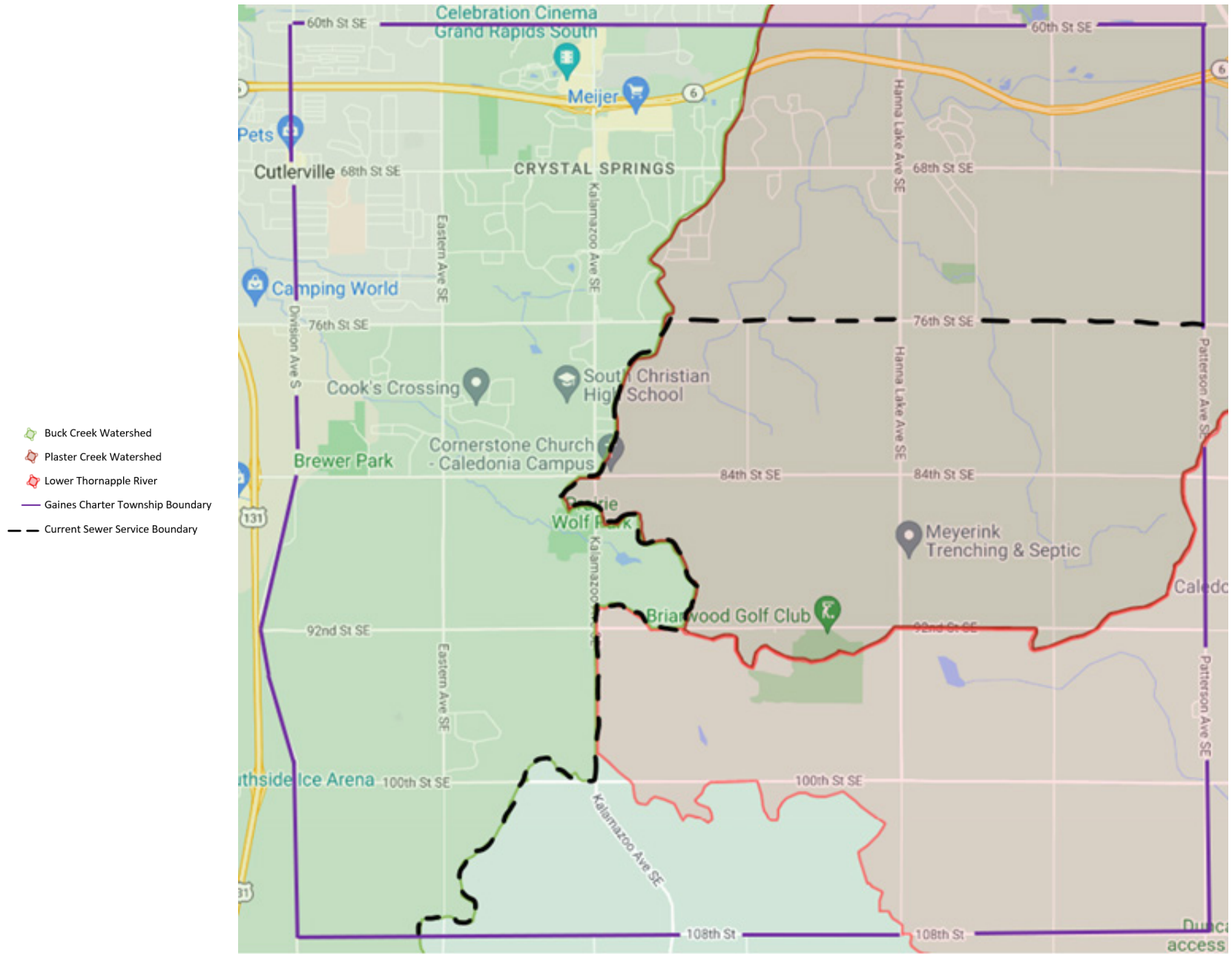
WATERSHEDS

Hanna Lake, Orissa Lake, and Martin Lake are three natural lakes within Gaines Township of substantial size. Hanna Lake, approximately 20 acres, is located in Section 26 and has a number of “flag lots” surrounding the northern shore and other larger lots on the southern shore. The soils surrounding the lake, being typically mucky, are not suitable for onsite disposal systems, structural development, cropland, or pasture. Summer Shores Lake, a manmade lake of approximately 13 acres was created in Section 6 of the township after the area was mined for gravel to build M-6. Many other small, unnamed, water bodies are present in the township. They are typically associated with mucky soils.

The township is divided into three primary drainage basins of the Grand River Watershed and one primary drainage basin of the Kalamazoo River Watershed. Surface drainage from the east half of Sections 30 and 31; the southwest part of Section 29; Sections 32 and 33; and the southwest portion of Section 34 flows to the Rabbit River and eventually into the Kalamazoo River. All other township drainage flows to the Grand River by way of Plaster Creek, Buck Creek, or the Thornapple River.

In several places, the low ridges that separate these watersheds form a barrier to providing gravity-flow sewage systems. Generally, the Plaster and Buck Creek watersheds allow sanitary systems to flow to the north and west towards water treatment facilities. The Rabbit River and Duncan Lake watersheds flow south and eastward respectively. Service within the Plaster Creek watershed flows northward to the Grand Rapids system.





Map 2. Watersheds with Current Sewer Service Boundary Demarcated

WOODLANDS, VEGETATION AND WILDLIFE

Public comments from the Master Plan Public Input Survey indicate that respondents are generally very/somewhat concerned with preserving surface wetlands and ground water quality, and to a lesser degree failing septic systems. The township may seek to protect its headwater, wetland, and groundwater resources better than it has in the past, where it has deferred to regulation and management by state agencies.



How Concerned Are You About Preserving Surface Water and Wetlands?

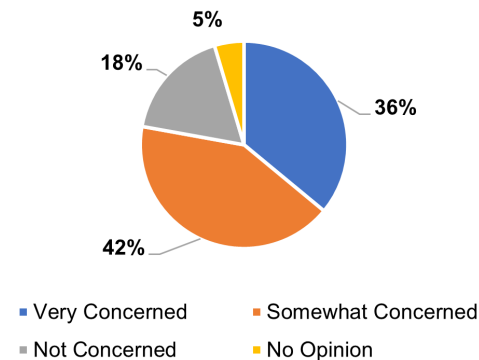


Figure 3. 2022 Master Plan Public Input Survey Question 11

How Concerned Are You About Failing Septic Systems?

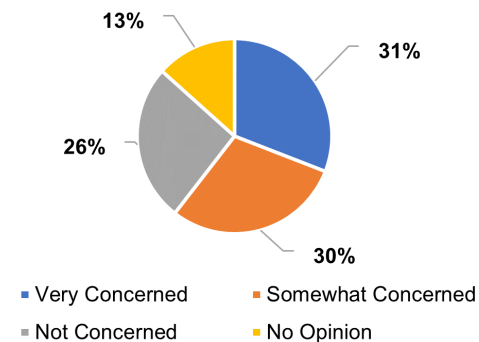


Figure 4. 2022 Master Plan Public Input Survey Question 13

Prior to Anglo-American settlement Gaines Charter Township was extensively forested and probably used seasonally by Native Americans for hunting and gathering. The predominant forest type was Beech-Sugar Maple, with stands of White Pine and Mixed Hardwoods in the northwest corner of the township. Pockets of mixed hardwood and conifer swamp were scattered across the southern half of the township in wetland areas.

Following the intense logging of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the rural portions of the township are characterized by farm fields and other cultivated lands. Remnant second-growth woodlots represent an important resource for their recreational opportunities and their aesthetic qualities in a rural landscape, as well as habitat for various animal species.

GOAL 2. ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL FEATURES DEVELOP TOWNSHIP ORDINANCES AND POLICIES THAT WILL PRESERVE AND ENHANCE THE NATURAL FEATURES OF GAINES TOWNSHIP WHILE PERMITTING SMART DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOWNSHIP.

Principles

1. Replacement trees and vegetation in developed areas should utilize historically native species to the extent possible.
2. Limit development on steep slopes, near wetlands, and within woodlands, and promote the preservation of open space, sensitive environmental areas, and habitat.



Actions

1. Reevaluate landscaping requirements in the zoning ordinance to include preferred tree and plant species to promote native varieties when possible.
2. Evaluate the cost of performing a Natural Features Inventory that may be used for evaluating areas that may be designated for conservation or preservation.
3. Consider amending the zoning ordinance to restrict the development of non-regulated wetlands or create development setbacks for wetlands.
4. Evaluate pathways to connect parks, significant green spaces, and natural features.

CHAPTER 3. PEOPLE



The heart of Gaines Charter Township is its residents, workers, and students. As such, it is important to understand characteristics of the people of the township and the unique needs that result. As changes occur over time, township needs, goals, and priorities will likely evolve.



ESRI Inc has developed a very useful data analysis tool that categorizes various groups of people and describes their “cultures”. Summaries of the various groups of people they identify in the township are below. Each of these segment descriptions is broadly written; clearly there is a lot of variability within each segment, and there are people that don’t neatly fit these categories. The interpretations of the people in the township do help broaden our understanding of who lives here and what their interests and needs are.

The largest group of people at 46% of residents are “Middleburgs”; traditional, family-oriented consumers. More country than rock and roll, they are thrifty but willing to carry some debt and are already investing in their futures. They rely on their smartphones and mobile devices to stay in touch and pride themselves on their expertise. They prefer to buy American and travel in the US. This market is younger but growing in size and assets.

“Metro Fusion” (11.4%); is a young segment. Many residents do not speak English fluently and have moved into their homes recently. They are highly mobile and over three-quarters of households are occupied by renters. Many households have young children; a quarter are single-parent families. Most residents live in midsize apartment buildings. Metro Fusion is a hardworking market with residents that are dedicated to climbing the ladders of their professional and social lives.

“Green Acres” (11.4%); this lifestyle features country living and self-reliance. Avid do-it-yourselfers, they maintain and remodel their homes with all the necessary power tools to accomplish the jobs. Gardening, especially growing vegetables, is a priority, again with the right tools, tillers, tractors, and riding mowers. Outdoor living features a variety of sports: hunting and fishing, motorcycling, hiking, camping, and golf.

“Young and Restless” (10.3%); Well-educated young workers, some of whom are still completing their education, are employed in professional and technical occupations, as well as sales and office and administrative support roles. These residents are not established yet but are striving to get ahead and improve themselves. This market ranks in the top five for renters, movers, college enrollment, and labor force participation rate. Almost one in five residents move each year. More than half of all householders are under the age of 35, the majority living alone or in shared nonfamily dwellings. Median household income is still below the US average. Smartphones are a way of life, and they use the internet extensively.

“Workday Drive” (8.8%); is an affluent, family-oriented market with a country flavor. Residents are partial to new housing away from the bustle of the city but close enough to commute to professional job centers. Life in this suburban wilderness offsets the hectic pace of two working parents with growing children. They favor time-saving devices, like banking online or housekeeping services, and family-oriented pursuits.

“Savvy Suburbanites” (8.4%); residents are well educated, well read, and well capitalized. Families include empty nesters and empty nester wannabes, who still have adult children at home. Located in older neighborhoods outside the urban core, their suburban lifestyle includes home remodeling and gardening plus the active pursuit of sports and exercise. They enjoy good food and wine, plus the amenities of the nearby city’s cultural events.

“Traditional Living” (3.7%); Residents in this segment live primarily in low-density, settled neighborhoods in the Midwest. The households are a mix of married-couple families and singles. Many families encompass two generations who have lived and worked in the community; their children are likely to follow suit. The manufacturing, retail trade, and health-care sectors are the primary sources of employment for these residents. This is a younger market—beginning householders who are juggling the responsibilities of living on their own or in a new marriage, while retaining their youthful interests in style and fun.

A community is more than just groups of people living and working together. The Master Plan Public Input Survey showed that residents want more public places to interact with their neighbors, including community gathering spaces and event spaces. It is important to recognize the benefits of social gathering places for people to interact and create community bonds. These are the “third places”; places of worship, cafes, clubs, public libraries, bookstores, recreation centers or parks where people can interact and enjoy each other’s company, meet new people, and share experiences. These spaces contribute to a sense of place, whether temporary festival events or permanent parks.

The Master Plan Public Input Survey asked respondents how they felt about certain issues surrounding township development, in which 36.1% stated there are “Not enough” community gathering spaces and community events. Additionally, Question 14 asked what types of development respondents would like to see more of, with 59.7% of respondents stating they’d like to see more social gathering places. Respondents indicated that they tend to travel out of the township to Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo and Holland for entertainment. The township should prioritize developing public places that encourage social interaction and community bonding.



“... if we introduce community building opportunities for folks to come together and meet each other via events, it could help many people re-affirm themselves and have a better overall perspective of their local area all together. Over time, if people come to appreciate their local area, they will be naturally inclined to appreciate its growth through involvement.”

*- Gaines Charter Township Resident;
2022 Master Plan Public Input Survey*

POPULATION

In the 2020 US Decennial Census, the township’s population was 28,812 residents, an increase of +14.5% from the 2010 population of 25,146. While the most significant 10-year increases in population were the 1990’s (+38%) and 2000’s (+25%), population is steadily increasing, although at a slower rate than previous decades. In comparison to its neighboring townships, the 10-year growth rate was less than Caledonia Township (+34%) Byron Township (+36%), and Leighton Township (+48%), although Gaines remains the most populous. Southern Kent County townships are growing significantly as a whole, with population growth far greater than the +10% 10-year average for the county as a whole.

If rates of population growth continue, projections for the township show the population increasing to around 36,000 in 10 years (2032) and close to 43,000 residents in 20 years (2042). Over the next 20 years, the township should plan for a population increase of approximately 15,000 residents. Approximately 4,000-5,000 new dwellings will be needed to accommodate this increase.

There are approximately 9,682 total households and they average 2.77 persons overall. 39.5% of households have one or more children under 18, and 35.1% have at least one person over 60. Of these households, 5,389 are married couples, 594 are cohabiting couples, and 3,699 are single-parent homes.

In broad terms Gaines Township has slightly more persons under 5 and under 18 than Kent County and the United States, and slightly less people 65 and older, which is reflective of the steady influx of population over the last 20 years.

Census Data	Gaines Twp.	Kent Co.	U.S.
Persons under 5 years, percent	7.10%	6.20%	5.70%
Persons under 18 years, percent	26.50%	23.70%	22.20%
Persons 65 years and over, percent	12.30%	14.60%	16.80%

Source: US Census Bureau

Census Data	Gaines Twp.	Byron Twp.	Caledonia Twp.	Leighton Twp.
2020	28,812	26,927	15,811	7,001
2010	25,146	20,317	12,332	4,934
2000	20,360			
1990	14,564			

Source: US Census Bureau

EMPLOYMENT & INCOME

Gaines Township is currently in a favorable situation for new economic development. The proximity of the adjacent north-south corridor of U.S. 131, the east-west corridors of M-6 and I-96, and Gerald Ford Airport place Gaines squarely in the middle of excellent surface and air transportation facilities. This combined with a relative abundance of developable land has led to two decades of steady job growth in the township. These attributes have led to several large investors and employers locating here in recent years including Steelcase, Amazon, Alliance Beverage, Coca Cola, Old Dominion, ALRO Steel, and Switch. These employers, in addition to Spectrum Health and Pine Rest, retail developments along Kalamazoo, the ongoing construction industry, and East Kentwood and South Christian High Schools make a relatively diverse job market.

Major sectors of employment within the township with over 1,000 people employed are: Manufacturing (3,037); Educational services, and health care and social assistance (2,638); Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services (1,532); Retail Trade (1,432); and Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing (1,096).

Overall, the township is wealthier than Kent County and the United States as a whole. In general Gaines Township residents make more money per household, but less money per capita. The community exhibits a lower poverty rate than Kent County and the US as well. Its commute times are also lower.

Census Data	Gaines Twp.	Byron Twp.	Caledonia Twp.	Leighton Twp.
White	78.3%	84.6%	94.60%	93.50%
African American	7.9%	3.9%	1.00%	0.60%
Asian	7.6%	3.9%	1.00%	3.10%
Hispanic or Latino, percent	7.3%	7.8%	1.10%	4.40%
American Indian	0.3%	0.4%	0.50%	0.00%
Two or More Ethnicities	4.2%	4.2%	2.60%	2.80%

Source: US Census Bureau

Job Descriptions	2020	2015	2011	Change (2011 - 2020)	
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	14,121	13,375	11,427	2,694	+19%
Manufacturing	3,037	2,398	2,236	801	+26%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	2,638	2,862	2,418	220	+8%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	1,532	1,499	1,073	459	+30%
Retail trade	1,432	1,580	1,330	102	+7%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	1,096	859	912	184	+17%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	957	1,147	730	227	+24%
Construction	750	712	528	222	+30%
Wholesale trade	735	606	672	63	+9%
Other services, except public administration	733	399	619	114	+16%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	713	771	427	286	+40%
Public administration	333	309	333	0	0%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	94	31	10	84	+89%
Information	71	202	139	-68	-96%

Source: US Census Bureau

Census Data	Gaines Twp.	Kent Co.	U.S.
Median household income (in 2020 dollars), 2016-2020	\$70,071	\$65,722	\$64,994
Per capita income in past 12 months (in 2020 dollars), 2016-2020	\$31,372	\$33,629	\$35,384
Persons in poverty, percent	6.70%	11.10%	11.40%
Mean travel time to work (minutes), workers aged 16 years+, 2016-2020	20.4	21.3	26.9

Source: US Census Bureau

GOAL 3. PEOPLE OUR TOWNSHIP WILL BE HOME TO A DIVERSITY OF AGES, ETHNICITIES, INCOME LEVELS AND EDUCATION LEVELS.

Principles

1. Work towards a township that enables its residents to achieve their desired quality of life and upward economic mobility.
2. Develop public places that encourage social interaction and community bonding.
3. Promote community events that celebrate the diversity of ethnicities, cultures, and age groups that reside in the township.
4. Search for opportunity sites to create “third places” or social places not associated with home or work.

Actions

1. Evaluate costs to perform a market study specific to the township and carry out study if funded.
2. Evaluate opportunities for the township to promote and support community festivals and events to bring residents together for social interaction.
3. Work with civic groups to bring back “Cutlerville Days”, “Dutton Days” and continue “Harvest Festival”.
4. Evaluate options to require creation of public parks and facilities as part of the land development process.



CHAPTER 4. COMMUNITY FACILITIES & UTILITIES



WATER AND SANITARY SEWER

Services are provided through the Byron-Gaines Utility Authority (BGUA), which purchases water capacity from the City of Wyoming and sewer capacity from the Cities of Wyoming and Grand Rapids. Byron and Gaines Townships jointly own and operate the authority.

The presence of water and sewer utilities make certain kinds of development feasible. Any kind of residential development is dependent on sanitary sewer availability, whether via a septic system or utility connection. Areas that are not served by utilities are limited to rural, or suburban residential use if the residential home can find a location with suitable soils for an independent septic system. Community wastewater systems are generally not desirable septic systems to use in the township.

Areas served by utilities are conducive to a full range of development use, and only limited by capacity of the available system. Sewer service is currently available in the Buck Creek watershed via Wyoming and is restricted to the north side of 76th Street in the Plaster Creek watershed, as 76th is the dividing line where the City of Grand Rapids service area ends. The City of Grand Rapids service area line will likely need to be moved southward to 92nd Street in the next 10-20 years to incorporate the headwaters of Plaster Creek.

LIGHTING

The changing technology of lighting has led to the wide use of LEDs as a primary use both at the utility scale and for general commercial and residential use. LEDs have certain qualities that are significantly different from older lighting technologies including benefits such as much lower energy demands and a wide range of control over brightness, directional control, and color. LEDs also have several negative effects depending on how they are deployed including high glare, intensity, and luminescence; these negative effects can affect driving safety due to distraction, loss of night sky visibility, effects on human circadian rhythms, and effects on wildlife. If deployed incorrectly, light trespass may be considered a nuisance, and the increased use of LEDs must be regulated carefully to limit negative effects.

The Master Plan Public Input Survey also shows that residents are concerned about obtrusive lighting in the township. Question 12 asked residents how they feel about obtrusive lighting, to which 28.9% stated they are “Very Concerned,” while 41.9% are “Somewhat Concerned” about the issue. High levels of background lighting can affect the view to the night sky and present a more urban look. Commercial areas in particular can have an impact on lighting levels since parking lots tend to be larger and require more illumination. There is a need to balance the requirements of safety and the effect of lighting on the night sky.

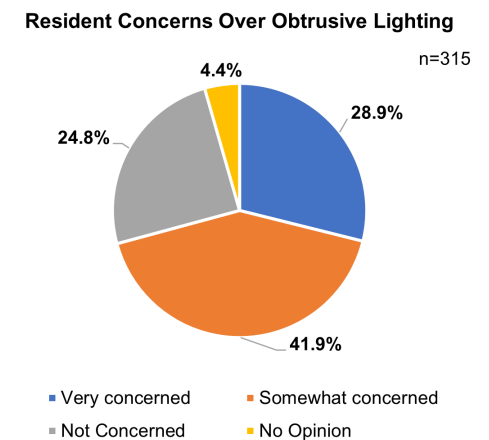


Figure 5. 2022 Master Plan Public Input Survey Question 12

TOWNSHIP HALL

Gaines Township Hall accommodates all the administrative functions of the township services and is located at the southwest corner of 84th Street and Kalamazoo Avenue, adjacent to Prairie Wolf Park. The \$4.4 million project was completed in 2003. A portion of the lower level of the Township Hall also serves as the South Substation for the Kent County Sheriff's Department.

PARKS

Prairie Wolf Park is the only developed park managed by the township, but several sites are currently being evaluated for improvements under the Parks and Trails Master Plan including 1269 84th Street (Cody's Mill). Brewer, Creekside and Shadyside Parks are all managed by Kent County.

LIBRARY

Kent District Library operates the Gaines Branch on 68th Street, east of Division Avenue. The building is owned and maintained by the township. Residents have access to all of the Kent District Library branches, including the Grand Rapids Public Library and its branches.

FIRE PROTECTION

There are two fire districts serving the township. The Cutlerville Fire Department serves the developed area in the western edge of the township; the fire station is in Byron Township. The Dutton Fire Department serves the remainder of the township and has facilities on 68th Street in Dutton.

SCHOOLS

There are three public school districts in Gaines Charter Township: Byron Center Public Schools, located in the southwestern portion of the township; Kentwood Public Schools, in the northern portion of the township, and Caledonia Public Schools, covering the approximately eastern two-thirds of the township. East Kentwood High School is the only high school located within the township boundaries. The township also hosts a publicly supported charter school and several parochial schools.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Kent County Sheriff Department provides law enforcement services in Gaines Township, and the department leases a portion of the Township Hall for its South Substation

CEMETERIES

The township maintains three cemeteries: South Gaines (Kalamazoo and 92nd); Blain (68th Street, between Eastern and Kalamazoo); and Dutton (Hanna Lake Avenue, just south of 68th Street).

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires townships that operate a water and/or sewer utility to adopt an annual capital improvements plan (CIP). Since Gaines Charter Township operates (with Byron Township) both water and sewer utilities, the Planning Commission will begin conducting an annual review of the CIP each year. The township has prepared a CIP for the current year and will review and update it annually.

PUBLIC ART

Gaines Township lacks public art other than the "welcome to" signs at Kalamazoo and 60th, the Cutlerville sign on 68th, and the wolf statue in Prairie Wolf Park. Public art can be an important part of community identity and beautification and should be integrated into the community fabric as a placemaking feature.

GOAL 4. COMMUNITY FACILITIES & UTILITIES TO PROVIDE RESIDENTS WITH QUALITY AND NECESSARY INFRASTRUCTURE, RECREATIONAL, EDUCATIONAL, AND PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES IN THE APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS TO INSURE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE SERVICE FOR ALL RESIDENTS OF GAINES TOWNSHIP.

Principles

1. Provide public and private sites for recreation together with a variety of facilities to accommodate township residents.
2. Maintain and improve the public infrastructure within the village centers and neighborhoods such as sidewalks, lighting, parking, and other amenities.
3. Provide a system of community facilities designed for education, recreation, healthcare, and police-fire protection. Locate the facilities to balance convenience to users, cost efficiency, and compatibility with surrounding areas.
4. Seek opportunities to beautify the community and create neighborhood identities through branding and public art.
5. Ensure that residents have a “right to darkness” in residential and rural areas.

Actions

1. Develop a Capital Improvement Plan for the entire township, which will attempt to ensure all future residents will be provided with service in all appropriate locations.
2. Evaluate need for a Community Facilities Plan as the township grows and new facilities are needed.
3. Evaluate best locations for sidewalk connections to be made throughout the township and focus any available discretionary funds to complete unconnected areas.
4. Revise zoning ordinance to limit negative effects of manmade light in residential and rural areas.
5. Seek opportunities to install public art to reinforce the identity of the township and its neighborhoods as unique places.



CHAPTER 5. MOBILITY

Residents in the township continue to utilize cars as their primary mode of transportation, and this will continue to be the case for the foreseeable future. Approximately 23% of respondents from the Master Plan Public Input Survey respondents indicated they were not interested in any other forms of transportation. Comments from the other 76% of respondents do indicate a strong desire for improvements to bicycle pathways and sidewalks as the main alternative to automobiles. About 14% of respondents desire some improvements to bus service or carpooling.



AUTOMOBILES

The transportation network within the township is primarily automobile based. The traditional grid pattern of county roads provides excellent access to all portions of the township. Passing through the west and north edges of the township, US-131 and M-6 provide excellent access to the greater Grand Rapids region, Lansing and Detroit to the east, and Kalamazoo, Holland, and Chicago to the south. The construction of these major highways and the on/off ramps associated with them has promoted commercial and residential development along those corridors. New high density residential development and retail business within the township has generally been within a mile of these corridors. Gaines is generally well served with gas stations along the north and west edges of the township, but it currently lacks charging stations for electric vehicles.

“All Season Primary” are roadways that are not subject to springtime seasonal weight restrictions, have priority for winter maintenance, and are built to a higher standard than typical county roads. It is appropriate for industrial/commercial developments dependent upon a higher standard of road to be located near or on an “All Season Primary”. The streets that have this status are 60th, 68th, 84th (west of Hanna Lake), and 100th. The avenues that have this designation are Division, Kalamazoo and Patterson (see kentcountyrads.net website). During 2023, improvements will be made to 84th and 100th that will convert them to All Season from Hanna Lake to Patterson Avenues.

Residents have expressed a general concern regarding the amount of traffic and vehicle speeds on major roads. Question 10 of the 2022 Master Plan Public Input Survey asked respondents how concerned they are about traffic using a Likert scale approach. Out of 328 total respondents to this question, 40.2% stated they were “Somewhat Concerned” about traffic, while 37.2% of respondents said they were “Very Concerned.”

The volumes of traffic in the township are directly related to both the residential and commercial growth within the township, and the commuters that use township roads from other jurisdictions to the south and east that seek access to M-6 and US-131. Based on data from the Grand Valley Metro Council Traffic Count Data System the busiest intersections in the township are Kalamazoo/60th, Kalamazoo/68th, and Division/68th with the highest Annual Average Daily Traffic counts. The next busiest intersections are Kalamazoo/76th, Division/76th, and Kalamazoo/84th, Division/84th.

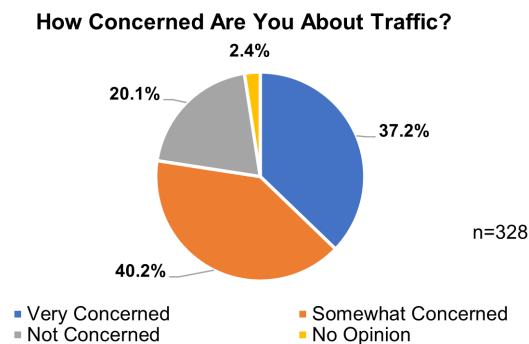


Figure 6. 2022 Master Plan Public Input Survey Question 10

Census Data	Est. Total	Est. Drive Alone	Est. Carpooled	Est. Public Transit
Workers Aged 16+	13,816	11,998	1,139	161

Source: US Census Bureau

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLES

Sidewalks have been gradually added to main streets as developments have occurred, and township policy requires installation of sidewalks at the time of construction or development of a parcel.

Bicycle lane and dedicated pathway development remains limited within the township but does include the Paul Henry Trail that connects the Dutton area with the Village of Caledonia, and the Fred Meijer Trail which connects the Cutlerville area to 60th and Wing Avenue where it meets the Paul Henry Trail.

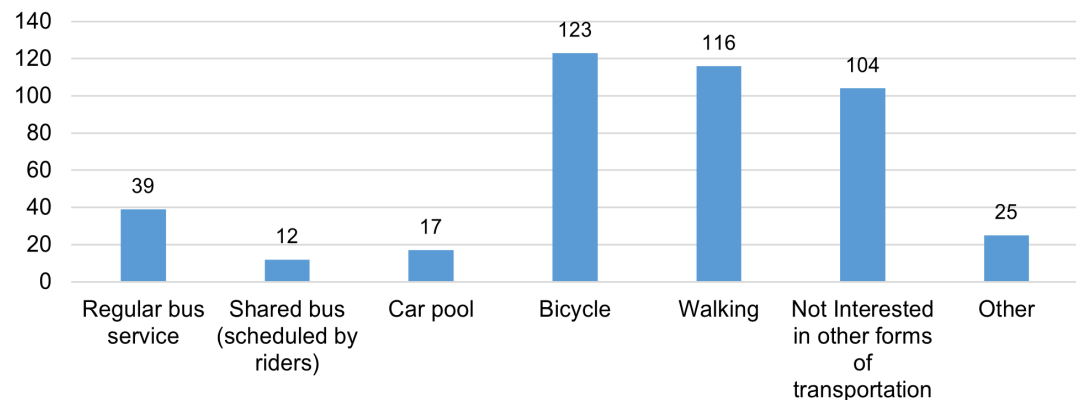
It is the intent of the township that dedicated primary trails that provide full multi-modal access and barrier free passage will be compliant with current Kent County Road Commission Non-Motorized Facilities policy for Non-Motorized Paths and Americans with Disabilities Act design standards. Secondary or “spur” trails may be built to lesser standards.

The Master Plan Public Input Survey responses show that residents are interested in improving and expanding bicycle and pedestrian amenities. Question 11 asked respondents what alternatives to driving a car they currently use or would like to be able to use. Out of 332 responses to this question, several respondents stated that they currently utilize or would like to utilize bicycles (n=123).

The second most common response was walking (n=116), while 104 respondents stated they were not interested in other forms of transportation. Other responses included regular bus service (n=39), carpool (n=17), and shared bus scheduled by riders (n=12). There were 25 responses in the “Other” category, which was structured as a fill-in-the-blank question and included responses such as golf carts, motorcycles, and additional feedback on improving bicycle pathways and sidewalks within the township.

Additionally, Question 13 of the Master Plan Public Input Survey asked respondents for their opinion on issues surrounding development in the township. Out of 325 responses to this question, 55.5% of respondents stated that there are currently “Not enough” bike and walking paths, while 38.6% of respondents stated that the amount of bike and walking paths is “About right.” Further, Question 15 asked what township priorities were important for residents, in which 48.4% of respondents stated that improving pedestrian and bike trails is “Very important,” while 31.6% of respondents stated that improving pedestrian and bike trails is “Somewhat important.”

What Alternatives To Driving A Car Do You Use, Or Would You Like To Be Able To Use?



n=332

Figure 7. 2022 Master Plan Public Input Survey Question 11

PUBLIC TRANSIT

The Interurban Transit Partnership, otherwise known as The Rapid, is a public transit agency serving the metro Grand Rapids region. The Rapid provides expansive fixed route service and a door-to-door paratransit service called GO!Bus for ADA-eligible and senior residents.

While Gaines Township is not a member of the transit partnership, the township contracts for service with The Rapid to provide 15-minute service on Route 4 Eastern through the Woodfield Apartment complex at the southwest corner of 60th Street and Eastern Avenue. Route 4, along with Route 2 Kalamazoo, further serves the Celebration Village area and terminates at the Gaines Township Meijer. Route 2 also operates on a 15-minute schedule during weekdays as well.

Route 10 also provides service into the township with stops on the campus of Pine Rest and Spectrum Health South Pavilion through a partnership between The Rapid and Disability Advocates of Kent County. The Rapid's Silver Line bus rapid transit service is within proximity to the township as well, with a park-and-ride and station located at the northeast corner of 60th Street and Division.

In early 2022, The Rapid began piloting an on-demand microtransit service called Rapid Connect. Rapid Connect offers transit service from major bus stops, such as Woodland Mall, to any destination in a geographic zone.

Trips may be booked through a smart phone app or through a subscription. Currently, the service reaches as far south as the municipal boundary with the City of Kentwood along 60th Street.

Ancillary transportation services are available to supplement the fixed routes, including Hope Network's Wheels to Work program, West Michigan Ridership (a vanpool program), and Kent Community Transit (provides seniors and ADA-eligible individuals with paratransit service up to a monthly cap on the number of trips).

Looking forward, the township is in preliminary discussions with the Rapid to restore fixed route service along Division between 60th and 68th to service the employment center at Pine Rest and finding ways to serve the KDL branch at 68th and Madison. Additionally, the township has had initial discussions with Amazon about a potential fixed route service that could serve that as well as other major employers in the northeast quadrant of the township.



Map 5. The Rapid's System Map (as of August 2022), Routes in Gaines Twp.

COMPLETE STREETS

In August of 2010, PA 33 of 2008 (the Michigan Planning Enabling Act) was amended to require local master plans to include consideration of additional elements related to transportation. These elements include safe and efficient movement of people and goods by motorized and nonmotorized means. Pedestrians, bicycles, and those who need assistance must also be taken into consideration.

The Planning Enabling Act provides the following definition for street: “A street, avenue, boulevard, highway, road, lane, alley, viaduct, or other public way intended for use by motor vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, and other legal users.” A Complete Streets philosophy addresses all the listed items.

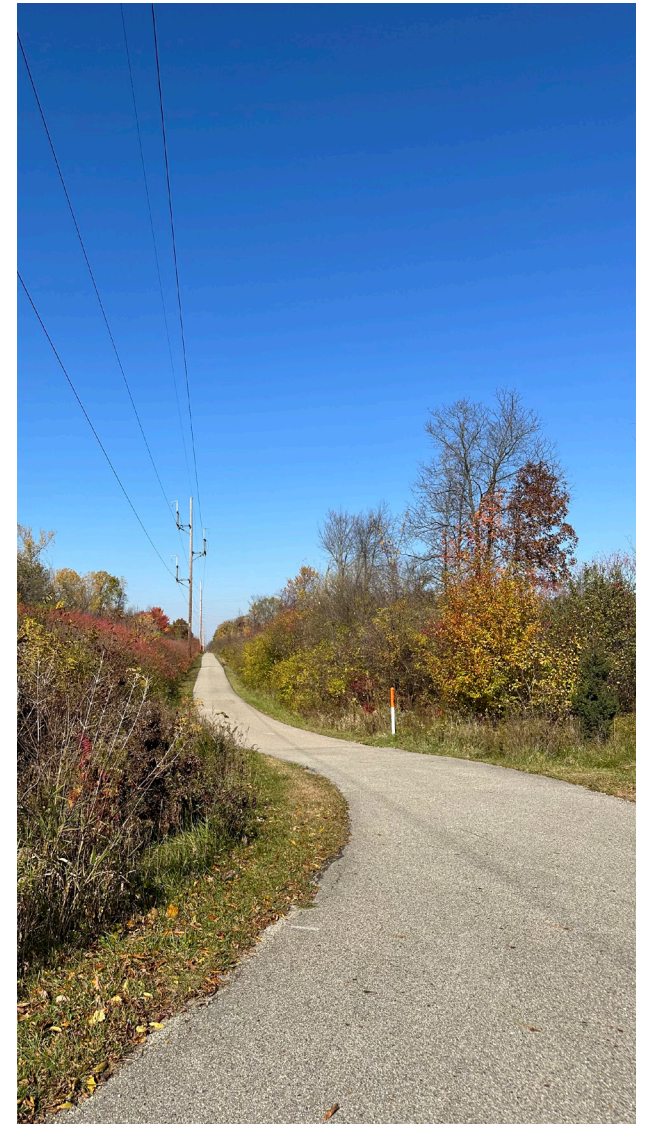
In December of 2010, PA 33 was further amended to require that local master plans also take into consideration the location, character, and extent of public transit routes and public transportation facilities in the preparation of the master plan, and to coordinate with public transportation agencies in the planning process.

TRAILS

The Paul Henry Thornapple Trail is a non-motorized trail following the former Penn Central railroad line, owned and maintained by the Kent County Parks Department. The trail begins in Kentwood and travels southeast to Caledonia, then east all the way to Vermontville. It travels diagonally through the northeastern portion of the township, past Dutton.

The Fred Meijer M-6 Trail begins at 60th Street and Wing Avenue and bears westward to a connection with Kent Trails in Byron Township. Riders can use the connection to go north into Wyoming, Grandville and Grand Rapids.

The Park and Trails Master Plan provides a more focused examination of future and existing trail networks.



GOAL 5. MOBILITY PROVIDE A COMPREHENSIVE MULTI-MODAL CIRCULATION SYSTEM FOR THE TOWNSHIP THAT PROVIDES APPROPRIATE ACCESS TO ALL LOCATIONS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY IN AN EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE MANNER.

Principles

1. Provide infrastructure so that residents can safely and efficiently access businesses and services without barriers.
2. Increase sidewalk and safe bicycle/skate/ski path connections from residential areas to the two established trails, to commercial and retail areas, and employment centers.
3. Where the township trail system crosses county roads, provide safe, accessible crossings for all users.
4. Participate in the exploration of alternative types of transportation systems for the benefit of the local and regional population base.
5. Work with Kent County Road Commission to find physical ways to promote safe travel on township roads, and the Kent County Sheriff's Department to enforce speed limits.

Actions

1. Work with Kent County Road Commission to provide pathways that are adequate for bicycle travel on both sides of major roads.
2. Review road construction standards to determine how to improve safety standards.
3. Within residential and mixed-use areas of the township, evaluate requiring creation of dedicated bike lanes and "sharrows" where appropriate to facilitate sharing of vehicle travel lanes with bicycles.
4. Revise zoning ordinance to require development fronting on major arterials to create a secondary road network, which collects residential traffic and allows access to the arterial network at safe, coordinated locations.
5. Promote installation of electric vehicle charging stations in commercial areas for patrons to utilize local businesses while waiting.
6. Update ordinance standards to require easements or construction of planned pedestrian walkways and trail crossings, and accessible walkway access from the public sidewalk to private or public facilities and include as part of site plan review.
7. Seek partnership with The Rapid to increase the reach of public transit services and increase connections between residential areas and major employment centers.
8. Assess potential traffic calming measures along 68th Street, in Dutton, and in Cutlerville areas.

CHAPTER 6. NEIGHBORHOODS



Gaines Township features a range of housing available to residents. Single family, two-family, multi-unit condos, townhomes, apartments, and manufactured homes are housing options that can be found within the township. This variety is directly related to the availability of public water and sewer services. Without them, dense development such as an apartment building or manufactured housing community would not generally be feasible.

HOUSING

People choose to live in the township for a variety of reasons. Public comments from the Master Plan Public Input Survey indicated the top five reasons people live here are for the safe area, good neighborhoods, proximity to nature, rural lifestyle, good schools, and relative affordability. Most survey respondents want to move into a single-family home for their next home purchase, and about a quarter of respondents want to move into a connected townhome, apartment, or duplex. The results of this preference are not surprising considering the demographic that tended to respond to the survey.

When asked about the look of the home, there was a preference (58%) for the modern front garage accessed suburban home style, but 42% liked a prominent front porch rather than garage. Considering the existing housing stock in the township, front garage style houses are the dominant building style both historically and currently, and the front porch orientation is clearly a style that is desired but not typically available.

Demand for new housing has been strong in Gaines Township over the last forty years. Outside of the major apartment complexes, single family suburban homes have been the predominant type of housing. Large subdivisions like Crystal Springs, and older platted areas between Kalamazoo and Division north of 76th Steet were almost universally single-family home oriented. Larger apartment complexes have generally been restricted to the northern third of the township, and apartment projects like Woodfield, Fieldstone, and River Birch have also relied on PUD zoning to gain approval for the project. US Census data indicates that approximately 76% of households are owner occupied in 2020.

Since the mid-2010s housing developments have been incorporating newer house forms like “terrace” homes and attached townhouses in Cooks Crossing and multi-unit condominiums in Preservation Lakes, while relying on a Planned Unit Development rezoning to do so. Single-family housing has remained in demand, but prices for construction and land have pushed the costs for single-family homes on large lots into the \$400,000+ range, making it unaffordable for what was traditionally a “starter” home. It is likely that single-family on small lots, two-family, townhouse, and multi-family housing whether rental or owned will be in high demand as a more affordable option.

Affordability has become an issue over the last several years as prices of single-family homes have essentially doubled since 2012, while wages have not. Essentially, houses are much more expensive now compared to 2012, and the market for what were once considered “starter” homes has dissipated.

“Housing is a large problem in America. We need more mid-size housing. Some people like suburbs but that doesn’t mean we should force that lifestyle on others.”

*- Gaines Charter Township Resident;
2022 Master Plan Public Input Survey*

In an effort to seek ways to address the issue of increasing house prices and ensure that the township has housing that is available at a variety of price points for people at different levels of income, all aspects of the zoning ordinance will be evaluated to determine if it can be modified to address the issue. One way to do this is to enable housing to be built at higher densities, thus lowering the price per unit due to more efficient use of land, infrastructure, and utilities. Multi-family housing is not appropriate in all areas of the township, but single family on smaller lots or connected townhomes can certainly be an option in many areas, if it is designed well. As has been outlined in previous Master Plans, Traditional Neighborhood Development is an excellent way to design new development.

“Would love to see more options for housing. I’d like a townhouse or small home on a small lot that is relatively affordable (\$150k to \$250k) to purchase. It seems like everything is big homes on big lots. As a single adult, I just don’t need/want that much space to manage but there are no other options for homeownership.”

*- Gaines Charter Township Resident;
2022 Master Plan Public Input Survey*

Year	Average Sale Price (Gaines Twp)	Percent Change	Median Household Wages (Kent Co)
2009	\$144,064		
2010	\$144,064	0%	\$47,897
2011	\$152,523	6%	
2012	\$156,621	3%	\$50,647
2013	\$159,200	2%	
2014	\$177,433	10%	\$53,342
2015	\$192,988	8%	
2016	\$209,166	8%	\$59,649
2017	\$223,227	6%	
2018	\$235,956	5%	\$61,675
2019	\$256,121	8%	
2020	\$273,263	6%	\$65,722
2021	\$322,507	15%	

Source: US Census Bureau

US Census Data 2020	Gaines Twp	Byron Twp	Caledonia Twp	Leighton Twp
Owner-occupied housing unit rate, 2016-2020	75.90%	83.20%	88.20%	87.70%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2016-2020	\$212,600	\$232,300	\$271,700	\$235,300
Median gross rent, 2016-2020	\$936	\$1,003	\$936	\$1,325
Households, 2016-2020	9,682	8,605	4,969	1,986
Persons per household, 2016-2020	2.77	2.83	2.85	2.95
Living in same house 1 year ago, percent of persons aged 1 year+, 2016-2020	87.10%	87.70%	89.40%	89.10%

Source: US Census Bureau

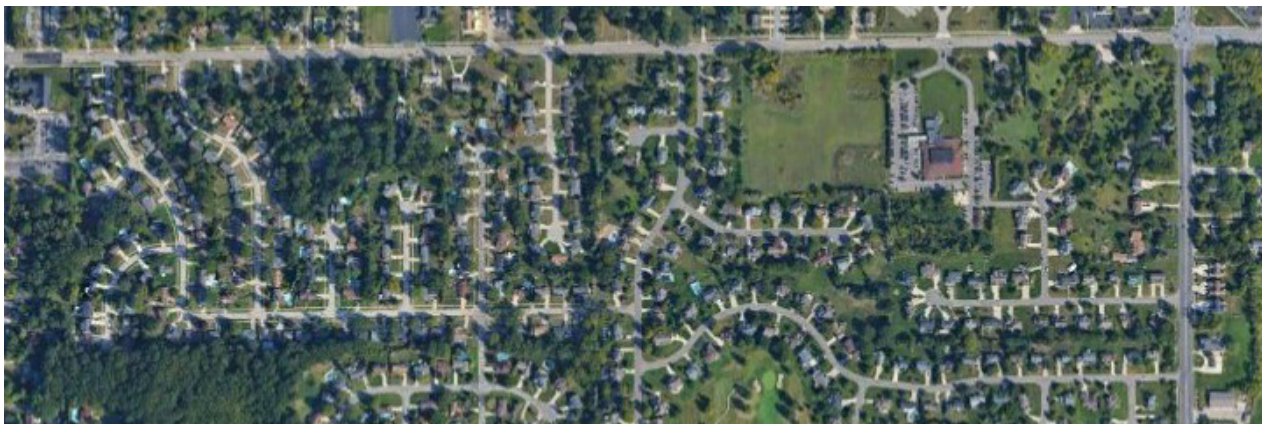
GOAL 6. NEIGHBORHOODS GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP WILL HAVE A DIVERSIFIED AND HIGH-QUALITY HOUSING STOCK, AND DEVELOPMENTS WILL ACCOMMODATE DIFFERING HOUSING PREFERENCES, LIFESTYLES, AND NEEDS WHILE PRIORITIZING NATURAL RESOURCE PRESERVATION.

Principles

1. Promote the preservation of natural features and innovative land use concepts such as cluster residential developments.
2. Encourage quality housing types and sizes for all age groups and income levels.
3. Ensure that residential developments are visually attractive.
4. Promote variety in mixed-use developments, mixed-use buildings, attached housing, and traditional neighborhood development patterns to provide a range of housing choices to attract workers to the area.
5. Support mixed-income housing, including both market rate and affordable housing, at all levels of affordability.
6. Support development and public improvements near existing and planned Rapid bus stations that result in walkable districts for living, working, shopping, and recreating.
7. Create more affordable housing near transit and job centers.
8. Ensure the preservation and maintenance of existing housing.

Actions

1. Develop township ordinances and design standards that will establish requirements that create high-quality residential and non-residential development that is visually attractive and attempts to minimize negative impact to existing residents and natural features.
2. Develop standards that emphasize and maintain a unique character within each of the village centers.
3. Develop township ordinances that will accommodate a variety of housing preferences, lifestyles, and needs.
4. Assess potential traffic calming measures along 68th Street, in Dutton, and in Cutlerville areas.



CHAPTER 7. LAND USE DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS



Land use patterns in Gaines Township are characteristic of a community transitioning from rural to suburban.



NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Sixty years ago, urban areas were restricted to the Division Avenue corridor and the village of Dutton, the rest of the township was only scattered farms. The 1979 zoning map of the township shows urban development in four northwest sections of the township (Sections 6,7,8, and 18). Steady urban growth has extended southward from Kentwood and Wyoming since the 1980s.

The total land area of Gaines Township is approximately 36 square miles, or 23,040 acres divided into 36 sections. The township is located south of the City of Kentwood and Grand Rapids along the southern border of Kent County. The township land uses are divided primarily between the north and south; the north being developed and served by utilities, while the south is typically low-density single-family homes, agricultural land, a mining operation, and isolated stands of forest. The west side of the township is becoming more developed along the US 131 corridor.

In many parts of the township, agricultural land uses are interspersed with centers of population where residential, commercial, institutional, and some industrial activities have located. Public comments from the Master Plan Public Input Survey indicate about 2/3's of respondents think that the overall rate of residential and commercial growth in the township is about right, with less preference for more industrial.

Respondents are very/somewhat concerned with development of farms into housing, which has been an ongoing process since the 1980s. This concern is certainly justified, but very difficult to restrict due to the desire of landowners to develop their property when they are retiring from farming.

Generally, before the post-WWII housing boom of the 1950's, neighborhoods were developed without strict separation of residential and commercial or industrial uses, streets systems were usually developed as a grid, homes were closer to the street, and had front porches that served as a cool place to be in summer and encouraged interaction with people passing by. Usually, residents would walk to neighborhood schools, parks and services, as automobiles were just becoming available to the general public.

Since the suburban housing boom that began after World War II, development has been much more auto dependent. Housing developments on the urban periphery have generally been designed with curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs, and the only way to get to business and employment centers is to drive onto arterial streets. Houses were typically built with deeper setbacks, and living was focused more on the private area in the rear yard, as opposed to the semi-public front yard where neighbors interact. Most homes do not have front porches, and garages often dominate the front façade. Housing, commercial, and industrial areas have been strictly separated and commercial areas are generally not friendly to the pedestrian.

VILLAGE CENTERS

Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) is an attempt to reverse this trend and go back to previous development patterns. Traditional neighborhood development attempts to mix uses, provide for more human interaction, and shorten the distance between homes, business centers and employment areas. Residents can walk or bike to nearby shops, schools and parks. Successful examples of TND include Cherry Hill Village in Canton, the Fontaine Street & Baptiste Avenue neighborhood in Monroe in Michigan, West Glen Town Center in Iowa, and Middleton Hills in Wisconsin to name a few.

Homes on lots would be designed in a traditional style, with front porches to emphasize the connection between the public realm (the street and sidewalks) and the private realm. Garages, predominantly accessed from alleys or side streets, would be located at the rear, while on-street parking, in bays separated from the travel lanes, would be allowed. Where street access to garages is allowed, houses should be designed to deemphasize the garage by placing it to the side or recessing the entrance under a cantilever and behind façade features such as columns.

Over the course of the last fourteen years specific area plans have been developed for several areas within the township that deserve some detailed consideration. In general, these area plans focused on a mixed-use approach to development that was sensitive to the context of their surroundings in Dutton, and the two corridors along 100th and 84th between Division and Kalamazoo.

Dutton Village Center. One area of the township that is likely to be redeveloped in the next few years is Dutton. It was first laid out as a rail siding in the 1870s, and a few of the buildings along Hammond Street are original to that era. Several large parcels of former farmland are in process of being sold and a site plan will be developed soon thereafter. The Dutton area was the focus of the 2008 Master Plan Update.

The area still retains a feeling of a walkable village despite a hundred years of redevelopment based on automobile access. Currently the area along 68th between Dutton Trail and East Paris is a mix of industrial, retail, and general commercial uses intermixed with houses. In the vicinity are several churches, schools, and a cemetery. A mile to the east, major employers Amazon, Steelcase and Great Lakes Coca Cola provide thousands of jobs. This area has good access to 68th Street, Hanna Lake Avenue and other public roads and are near existing utilities.

“We need more residential development at all levels of housing.”

*- Gaines Charter Township Resident;
2022 Master Plan Public Input Survey*

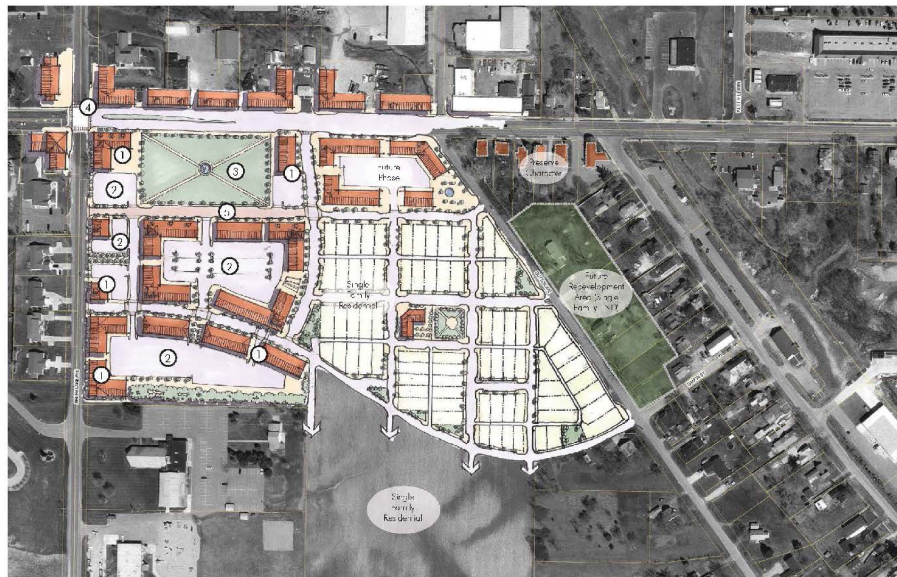
The 68th Street corridor provides an opportunity for redevelopment, as most of the commercial structures are approaching the end of their usefulness. Redevelopment presents an opportunity to reclaim the original village character of Dutton and make this a unique area within the township.

New residential development with higher density in this area could potentially support this concept, with traditional street patterns and pedestrian oriented retail and commercial development. The residential neighborhoods surrounding the village center should be developed with Traditional Neighborhood Design concepts; front porches, reduced front setbacks, slow auto speeds, and rear or side garages will make a pedestrian-first community.

The nature of this area also supports mixed-use development as well as a mix of densities, allowing single family homes on small lots to co-exist with small-scale multiple family and townhouse developments. To provide amenities to residents and encourage pedestrian and bicycle activity, new developments should require elements such as bike racks in addition to meeting automobile parking requirements. Residential developments and employment centers should be interconnected via non-motorized trails, with connections to the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail and sidewalk connections to the employment center to the east.

100th Street Area. The 100th Street Subarea is centered on 100th Street with Division Avenue defining its western boundary and Kalamazoo Avenue generally forming its eastern boundary. The northern edge of the subarea is defined by the southern halves of Sections 29 and 30 while the southern boundary is the township line. The 100th Street Subarea is characterized by rolling hills, farms, woodlands, and the large-scale mineral extraction operations at Kalamazoo Avenue.

Although the Gaines Charter Township side of Division Avenue is currently largely undeveloped, there is small-scale commercial development on the west side in Byron Township. The Byron Township Land Use Plan shows both sides of 100th Street, as well as the west side of Division north of 100th as commercial, with the remaining land planned for industrial use. The type and character of development in this area affects both townships; therefore, the plan proposes a joint planning process between Gaines and Byron Townships to ensure that future development is mutually beneficial. This could take the form of a joint planning commission or a joint planning effort between the staffs and planning commissions of both townships.



DUTTON, MI **GAINES TOWNSHIP**
CONCEPT: 04.24.08



Map 6. Dutton Village Center Concept from 2008

It is important that the entry to the township on 100th Street from US 131 provide a “sense of arrival.” Travelers entering the 100th Street/Division Avenue intersection should have a feeling of entering a special community, distinct from neighboring Byron and Leighton Townships. This can be accomplished in several ways, such as providing a dramatic entry feature, streetscape improvements, signs and wayfinding, and design standards that support high quality development. Neighborhood commercial design layouts could create a feeling that the visitor has entered a different place than the general commercial areas to the west in Byron Township.

To provide employment opportunities with easy access to US 131, the area east of Division Avenue and south of 100th Street is dedicated to mixed office, industrial, and commercial development. This land use designation encourages both traditional light industrial/assembly uses and office/technology and research use. Because of the configuration of business – technology buildings, uses such as indoor sports facilities are also possible.

Development should be in a park-like setting that respects the natural topography. Open spaces and woodlands should be preserved to provide places for employees to walk and enjoy nature. Buildings would be designed using high quality materials (to avoid plain, prefabricated steel structures) and so that service areas (loading docks, etc.) are not visible from the street.

84th Street Corridor. Under the prior 84th and Kalamazoo Area Plan the intersection of 84th Street and Division Avenue was designated for general commercial purposes. Considering the growth of general commercial to the west in Byron Township, this plan recommends that those two corners be designated for a Neighborhood Retail and Services use. Creating a more neighborhood-oriented environment will serve as a better transition from the general commercial to the west into the suburban neighborhoods to the east. It would also fit better with the mixed use along Division Avenue to the north.



GOAL 7.1 LAND USE DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS PROMOTE GOOD DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE TOWNSHIP TO ENSURE THAT LAND USES ARE LOCATED IN A COMPATIBLE MANNER THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF THE FULL RANGE OF TOWNSHIP RESIDENTS, PRESERVES THE NATURAL FEATURES OF THE COMMUNITY, AND PROMOTES EFFICIENT LAND USE.

Principles

1. Promote preservation of natural features and innovative land use concepts such as cluster developments by limiting the density of dwelling units in rural areas of the township.
2. Promote denser development in areas served by utilities and closer to services.
3. Ensure that development density and intensity are appropriate to the traffic level of service for 100th Street, Division, Eastern, and Kalamazoo Avenues.
4. Support businesses, entertainment, dining, cultural, and recreation opportunities within the area to serve workers and residents within closer proximity to residential areas and are not auto dependent.
5. Encourage development of appropriate standards for transitions between incompatible non-residential uses and residential neighborhoods.

Actions

1. Plan and support mixed-use “village centers” that build on the historic character of Dutton.
2. Evaluate zoning ordinance setback and buffering requirements for non-residential uses.
3. Evaluate future land use map to include areas within the township for new commercial development for types of commercial uses that serve the regional market that are close to M-6 and US-131.



GOAL 7.2 DUTTON SUBAREA PROVIDE AMENITIES IN THE DUTTON SUBAREA TO ATTRACT “KNOWLEDGE-BASED” WORKERS AND “NEW ECONOMY” EMPLOYERS BY PROMOTING A VILLAGE CENTER WITH IMPROVED PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES, AND SAFE VEHICLE CIRCULATION AND ACCESS IN THE DUTTON SUBAREA.

Principles

1. Create a “village center” along 68th Street that builds on the historic character of Dutton.
2. Promote mixed-use development in traditional development patterns, and a combination of multi-family and low-density development to provide a range of housing choices to attract workers to the area.
3. Promote mixed use development near and/or within the same buildings including commercial, office and residential uses.
4. Promote compact, “traditional neighborhood” development and row houses near the historical center of Dutton. Encourage these neighborhoods to integrate with existing Dutton.
5. Encourage housing at varying densities near employment areas to provide a range of housing choices.
6. Provide businesses, entertainment, dining, cultural and recreation opportunities within the Dutton area to serve the workers and residents.
7. Provide parks, open space and pedestrian paths and sidewalks throughout the area to connect residential, commercial, and industrial employment areas.
8. Create a road network parallel to 68th Street and to Hanna Lake Avenue, to better distribute traffic through the area.
9. Consider traffic calming measures along 68th Street east and west of Hanna Lake.
10. Consider access management to ensure safe and efficient traffic movements along 68th Street, Hanna Lake Avenue and East Paris Avenue.
11. Provide inter-connected pedestrian and non-motorized paths between shopping, neighborhoods and employment areas, schools and parks/open spaces that connect to the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail and other trail systems.
12. Consider ordinances, guidelines and incentives for redevelopment that result in preserving and enhancing Dutton’s village character.
13. Determine the streetscape design elements that identify Dutton as a unique place and an exciting destination.
14. When necessary, acquire key properties to ensure that redevelopment meets the goals of this plan.
15. Integrate new residential and commercial areas into existing Dutton to capitalize on its unique village character.
16. Promote Dutton as an attractive place to live and work, as well as a premier location for industry, research and technology.

COMMERCE AND BUSINESS

Gaines Township has several advantages for attracting new economic development. The proximity of U.S. 131 to the west, M-6 & I-96 to the north and east, the Gerald Ford Airport, and State Route 37 to the east create a very attractive transportation network for companies involved in warehousing, transportation of goods, and manufacturing. There are still large tracts that are open for development that feature stable soils and have few environmental constraints. This combined with the availability of sewer and water service make for a strong local economy.

Major employers include Steelcase (Wood Manufacturing Plant), Spectrum Health’s Pine Rest Campus, Amazon (one warehouse and a new sortation facility), Great Lakes Coca Cola, South Christian and East Kentwood High Schools, and multiple retailers in the Marketplace Planned Unit Development including Meijer, Target, and ALDI.

Public comments from the Master Plan Public Input Survey indicated that respondents want smaller scale neighborhood shopping rather than more large scale regional (“big box”) commercial. Sit down restaurants, music venues, pub/brewery/distillery businesses were all highly desired, stemming from a desire to have more social gathering places to interact with neighbors outside of home and work.

Commercial. The main shopping and retail areas in the north half of the township are in Cutlerville and southward along Division Ave., along Kalamazoo Ave. between 60th and 68th Streets and in Dutton. Commercial areas provide residents with the services that are essential to making a community work efficiently but are generally accessible only by car and are auto dependent. This may change in the Dutton area as mixed-use development to the south may promote a more walkable environment along 68th and Hanna Lake.

Some of the areas have been connected via sidewalk extensions, making pedestrian and bicycle access possible. Compared to the two townships to the east and west, Gaines lags in retail sales.

Public comments from the Master Plan Public Input Survey indicated that respondents tend to shop for groceries in the township but tend to go to 28th Street and the surrounding communities of Caledonia, Grand Rapids, and Byron Township for retail goods.

General Commercial (GC) vs Neighborhood Commercial (NC). Since the 1950s the township has developed commercial and retail areas to be primarily accessible by automobile. Portions of the township that were built in the 1800s (Dutton) through 1940s (Cutlerville, Division Avenue) integrated commercial businesses and retail with residential subdivisions that were accessible to the immediate neighborhoods surrounding them. At this point the two commercial zoning categories—General and Neighborhood—have nearly identical development standards as both have evolved to service auto-dependent development.

General Commercial is a designation that caters to the automobile-based transit systems that have been developed in the township over the last century. Generally associated with chain retail anchors, general commercial should focus on regional markets and be located on major roads that have the capacity to carry large volumes of traffic safely and efficiently to and from the area. Concurrently, they should integrate pedestrian facilities at the nearby road intersections

Census Data	Gaines Twp.	Byron Twp.	Caledonia Twp.	Leighton Twp.
Total accommodation and food services sales, 2017 (\$1,000)	35,495	34,069	34,675	NA
Total retail sales, 2017 (\$1,000)	98,607	411,244	280,389	15,376
Total retail sales per capita, 2017	\$3,666	\$17,249	\$19,365	\$2,694

Source: US Census Bureau



so that pedestrians can cross safely. Large parking lots are typically considered unattractive, so adequate landscaping is necessary to improve aesthetics, as well as limit “heat island” effects.

Large vehicle lots are standard but should also integrate site improvements for people to safely walk from their parked vehicles to the adjacent businesses. Signage for individual businesses should focus on clarity and legibility from adjacent roadways for easy wayfinding.

The township recognizes that residents often prefer to not have to drive to get services, and that smaller scale retail and commercial business can be integrated into primarily residential areas with careful design and create desirable services within an easy walk or ride.

To this end Neighborhood Commercial should be redefined for a walkable pedestrian scale. In terms of physical layout Neighborhood Commercial should integrate businesses in an aesthetically pleasing manner, with building scale in keeping with the surrounding neighborhood, and materials creating a harmonious transition between uses.

“The fact that I need to use the car for all my activities bothers me. It’s very uncomfortable, and makes everything inconvenient. I would like to have at least a small scale grocery store I could walk to 15 minutes away from home. But feels like it’s asking too much.”

*- Gaines Charter Township Resident;
2022 Master Plan Public Input Survey*

Industrial. The existing industrial zones in the township are located primarily east and north of Dutton (Sections 1, 2, and 11) in and around the Steelcase Planned Unit Development. There is also an industrial area located along Division Avenue just south of 76th Street. All these areas are close to existing and future roadways suitable for heavy truck traffic.

Expansion of industrial use is expected to occur south of the Steelcase PUD and down to 76th Street over the next decade. Recently, Steelcase has begun the process of extending Rapids Drive to the south as they split parcels off from former farmed lands for development. This process will likely continue into the foreseeable future and will only be limited by availability of sewer and water utilities that currently end at 76th Street.

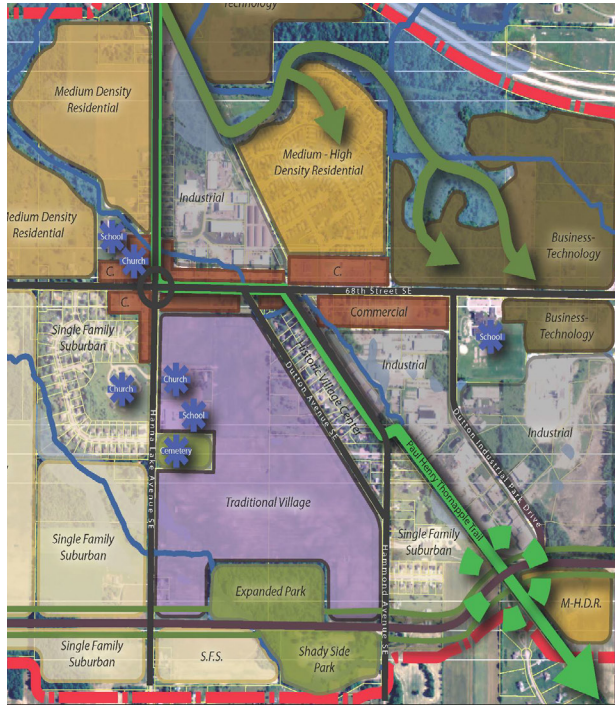
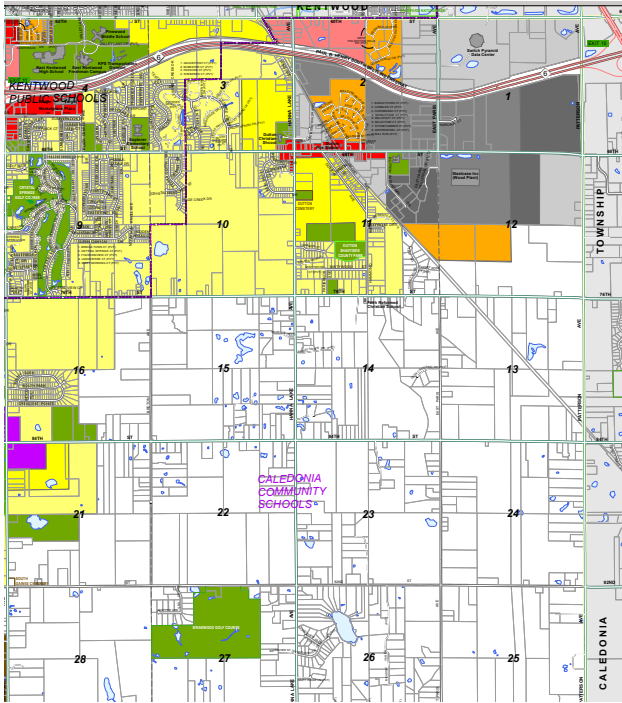
Recent development in the Steelcase PUD has been related to logistics and transportation along with warehousing. This trend is expected to continue for the foreseeable future as market demand for this use is strong and the area is close to surface and air transportation hubs.



GOAL 7.3 COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT GAINES TOWNSHIP WILL EXPAND AS A WELCOMING PLACE FOR BUSINESS GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT TO ENSURE A HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE, AND DIVERSE ECONOMY WITHIN THE REGION.

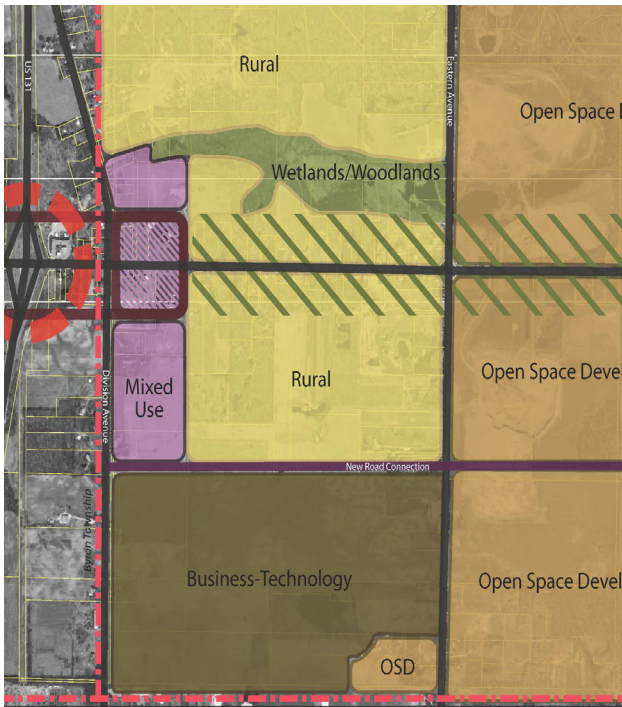
Principles

1. Provide an opportunity for high-tech industrial, research and development, medical facilities, and other similar types of uses to promote diversity of the local and regional economic base and land use mix.
2. Ensure that industrial parcels are available for locally owned businesses and smaller operators.
3. Encourage businesses to improve and maintain their properties in a manner that promotes the aesthetic appearance of the district.
4. Promote the township as an attractive place to live and work, as well as a premier location for industry, research, and technology.
5. Provide opportunities for diversified business expansion and growth.
6. Provide planned areas within the township for new commercial development for those types of commercial uses that cannot be in the village centers and serve the regional market.
7. Encourage businesses to improve and maintain their properties in a manner that promotes the aesthetic appearance of the district.
8. Provide adequate buffering between industrial uses and residential uses and improve development standards for industrial developments.
9. Increase retail opportunities for township residents and reduce vehicle trips and travel times to access them.
10. Support integrated and coordinated development of retail, office, and business/technology uses and avoid piecemeal, disjointed development.



CHAPTER 8. FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The intent of the Future Land Use Plan is to foster orderly patterns of development that preserve the community's important natural features, promote high quality and appropriately scaled residential, commercial, and industrial development, provide efficient transportation connections, and enhance quality of life for local residents.



The Gaines Charter Township Future Land Use Plan establishes general patterns of land use to guide growth and development for the next twenty to twenty-five years. Its importance is continually reinforced as it is frequently the first resource consulted when considering newly proposed land use changes. The Land Use Plan also provides the most fundamental resource for developing township zoning, design criteria, and other regulations.

The intent of the Future Land Use Plan is to foster orderly patterns of development that preserve the community's important natural features, promote high quality and appropriately scaled residential, commercial, and industrial development, provide efficient transportation connections, and enhance quality of life for local residents. By encouraging relatively intense development near existing development and utility systems, the township will be able to accommodate anticipated growth while maintaining high quality residential and commercial development.

Controlling future growth is generally done via traditional zoning and development of ordinances that specify certain development parameters related to lot size, placement of a building on a parcel, height, and other dimensional aspects of development. Besides the traditional ordinance, several other methods are available that may be helpful to guide development.

The Future Land Use Plan is general in scope. It is not, in most cases, intended to establish precise boundaries of land use or exact locations of future uses in the same way as the township's Zoning Map. Change is constant and usually unpredictable, and there may be circumstances that warrant changes to the zoning boundaries that are not consistent with the Master Plan. However, the intent and spirit of the Future Land Use Plan and categories should be followed.

Additionally, a future land use designation shown on a map does not mean that a rezoning of land to a compatible district is appropriate at the time of an application. The Master Plan is a long-term vision, and certain land use decisions will depend on site-specific conditions at the time an application is received. Additionally, new zoning districts may be required to be drafted and adopted prior to rezoning land. The timing and appropriateness of zoning map amendments are dependent upon many factors, such as availability of public utilities, provisions for adequate roadways, environmental sensitivity, natural and physical site constraints, traffic conditions and congestion, impacts on public services, and the demand for a particular land use as determined by market forces. Many additional case and site-specific factors must be considered when reviewing a request for rezoning a parcel of land, aside from Future Land Use Plan consistency.

The following list includes factors that may be used to determine if deviations from the Future Land Use Plan should be considered during zoning decisions.

1. Have any conditions changed in the area since the plan was adopted which may justify this change?
2. Is the development proposal generally consistent with the intent and spirit of the Future Land Use Plan and its recommendations?
3. Will there be any community impacts that should be considered, such as increased traffic or others that might create a need for additional services or improvements?
4. Are there any environmental considerations or constraints?
5. Will there be any adverse effects on adjacent properties as a result of the proposed land use change?
6. What will the impacts be on the public health, safety, and welfare of the township residents?

The following descriptions of future land uses will help guide orderly development of the township and conserve rural areas.

RURAL

Natural woodlots, open fields, and agricultural land uses such as field crops, family farm livestock operations and hobby farms growing a variety of vegetables may be anticipated in these areas. This area is intended to function as an area where only limited residential development can or should occur. This area is not intended to be served with public utility systems that would promote greater housing densities.

Concentrated animal feeding operations and intensive greenhouse operations are considered incompatible with nearby residential uses. Energy related development (e.g., solar collectors, energy storage or transmission facilities) should be screened from surrounding residential homes and major roads.

Residential development in this land use district should be sparse. Conservation designs are encouraged where natural features like wood lots are present and will preserve the rural character of the area considered for development. Passive recreation parks or natural resource areas at the scale of 5+ acres, community parks at the scale of 10-30 acres, and neighborhood parks at the scale of 1-2 acres are ideal.



A minimum lot size of approximately one-acre or greater per lot is appropriate, as ample space for future on-site sewage disposal must be required in these non-sewered areas.

Projects that preserve natural amenities will be considered on the urban fringe area in the Rural Residential area. Types of projects could include cluster developments conserving open space with dwellings concentrated on smaller lots to gain maximum benefit of natural features and open space area.

SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL

A significant portion of the developed areas of the township have been built as suburban style single-family neighborhoods. These communities are relatively homogenous in form and developed in density patterns ranging from minimum lot areas ranging from 8,000 square-feet to one acre per dwelling, but the average is 10-12,000 square-feet for a net density range of one to four units per acre.

The Suburban Residential area is intended primarily for single family home development, both platted and unplatted, and minimum lot size should continue in the traditional scale of about 1-5 homes per acre. Accessory dwelling units may be allowed with a special use permit.

Conservation designs are encouraged where natural features like wood lots are present and will preserve the rural character of the area considered for development. Passive recreation parks or natural resource areas at the scale of 5+ acres, community parks at the scale of 10-30 acres, and neighborhood parks at the scale of 1-2 acres are ideal.



VILLAGE RESIDENTIAL

The Village Residential is intended for residential uses just as the Suburban Residential area, but at moderately higher densities and incorporating two-family and multi-unit connected townhomes along with single family houses so that a neighborhood with mixed housing options is created. The Village Residential area is intended primarily for single family home development, both platted and unplatted, and may serve as a buffer between Suburban Residential and a variety of commercial or high density residential. This type of development will be in areas served by utilities.

Townhouses are defined as homes attached to the neighboring house via a shared wall, and each dwelling unit should be served with an individual entrance. These house types can be built on smaller lots with a smaller building footprint while still allowing for single-family homeownership with a traditional mortgage. This is one of the best ways to provide housing that can be family-oriented, owner-occupied, and remain relatively affordable. Generally, townhouses will be two-story, or may have daylight or walkout basements. The preference is for them to have front porches, and rear or side garages to create an environment for neighbor interaction, and setbacks may be shallow. A development may utilize pure two-family or townhouse home types if the density and scale of the development is appropriate for the surrounding residential context of the area, and parking is to the rear so that a TND



neighborhood is created. Infill projects may also be a single home type if the proposed homes diversify housing in the surrounding neighborhood, if the lot size is limited, or if a single home type is determined to be acceptable in terms of density, scale and context.

Some house lots as small as 6,200 square feet are found in the 1930s era Cutlerville area, and portions of some recent PUDs exhibit two-family homes, “terrace homes” 20-24 foot wide two-story homes separated by 10 feet (8.7 DU per acre), and three to six family connected townhomes (up to 14

DU per acre). Some cohousing models might create up to 20 DU per acre but maintain a neighborhood feel with a creative design and layout.

Some public amenities should be made available to serve the neighborhood such as parks, trails, natural areas with paths, pavilions, etc. Community parks at the scale of 10-30 acres, and neighborhood parks at the scale of 5-10 acres per 1,000 residents are ideal.

MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

The area is intended for the highest residential densities in the township. The primary purpose of this designation is to house people in buildings with multiple dwelling units sharing a single entrance. They should be near commercial and recreational services, with good amenities and designs that are compatible with neighboring uses. In all cases, public or properly licensed private utilities will be required in developments in the multi-family residential use designation. No matter how many buildings are placed on a lot, amenities such as parklets, social gathering spaces, and connection to trails are required for the enjoyment of the residents. Community parks at the scale of 10-30 acres, and neighborhood parks at the scale of 5-10 acres per 1,000 residents are ideal.

Multi-family residential uses can serve as a buffer between lower density residential and commercial, retail, industrial areas and may be integrated into mixed-use projects. They should not be located adjacent to Suburban Residential or Rural uses at three stories without adequate setbacks, but two-story buildings may be built around the periphery of a property to “step up” intensity.



Multi-building apartment complexes may incorporate three story buildings, but only outside of a setback from property lines that would prevent a perception of looming buildings on the neighboring properties and rights-of-way. Two story apartment buildings may be located closer but must meet setbacks. This planning area will accommodate the township’s highest density housing type: apartment buildings integrating up to 24 DUs and three stories tall. Densities are expected to range from 10-20+ units per acre.

HEALTH AND WORKPLACE

This land use designation seeks to provide medical, professional service, technical and related office uses both to serve the area’s residents and in support of the growing industrial development in the township. It may include senior housing and assisted living facilities as well.

NEIGHBORHOOD RETAIL AND SERVICES

Small scale and designed to provide goods, restaurants, and services primarily to meet the needs of the immediate neighborhood and township residents. Facilities will be developed in harmony with the area's natural features and in a scale and form to encourage pedestrian and multi-modal access and to minimize auto-pedestrian conflicts. Modifications to existing roadways may require traffic calming and safety measures to fulfill this. Associated parking for Neighborhood Commercial will not have minimum standards, but will rely on market determination of need, and shared or public parking.

There are two locations in the north part of the township where examples of this can be found: Cutlerville on Division between M-6 and 68th, and in Dutton on 68th between Hanna Lake and Dutton Industrial Drive. This planning area is located to serve the neighborhood commercial needs of residential centers in Cutlerville and Dutton. Development and redevelopment of these areas must be sensitive to the existing residential neighborhoods in terms of noise, landscaping, lighting, and signage.



Uses in these areas need to serve the adjoining neighborhood, not conflict with the residents. One of the most important features of this type of land use is the need for adequate neighborhood access. Zoning regulations should acknowledge this by providing ample standards for parking, driveways, and pedestrian safety. Neighborhood commercial designation is intended to retain and build upon the unique character within village centers such as Dutton and use pedestrian scale design when creating new buildings.

Local retail land uses can be thought of as a source of identity and often considered landmarks in a community. Unique design features such as outdoor seating, awnings and heightened landscape standards should be encouraged in local retail areas. This is the only commercial designation considered to be compatible with adjacent LDR or MDR use.

GENERAL RETAIL AND SERVICES

Neighborhood Commercial development should have several key elements:

- Building facades should be set close to the front lot line for easy access from the sidewalk, while leaving some room for outdoor amenities or landscaping.
- Entries should be placed to the primary street for easy pedestrian access and parking lots should be placed to the side or rear of the front building façade.
- Parking lots should be small scale and incorporate pedestrian infrastructure access to the business.
- Exterior finishes should be materials found in the surrounding neighborhoods such as wood, brick, or stone, and windows should be featured prominently on façades facing sidewalks and streets.
- Site improvements that encourage the use of alternative forms of transportation (e.g., bike racks, transit shelters).

If parking lots already exist in the front of the business, then fencing, vegetation, or walls should be installed to screen the parking lot during building improvements or site redevelopment. If located adjacent to LDR or RR uses, NC buildings must be designed with a picturesque architectural style that fits with rural character with a pitched roof (e.g., craftsman, prairie, farmhouse architectural styles are all relevant guides).

The general retail areas are intended for generalized commercial activities including all highway commercial, regional based retail, and general business activities that service other businesses as well as the public. Associated parking for General Retail and Services will not have minimum standards, but will rely on market determination of need, and shared or public parking.

INDUSTRIAL, BUSINESS, WAREHOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

The Industrial and heavy industrial land use designation are intended to further the township's role in providing employment for area residents and manufactured goods and services to meet the needs of the larger West Michigan region. Facilities will be developed with appropriate utility and transportation connections and in harmony with the area's natural features. Industrial uses to be promoted will include manufacturing and transport operations with minimal impact on the environment or on the surrounding community. The scale of industrial parcels should be adequate for both large and smaller users, so that smaller locally owned businesses are able to operate and grow.

The most important characteristic of the light industrial area is its low use intensity. These areas are intended to provide a safer, cleaner industrial environment. Uses recommended for this area, therefore, include only industrial, warehousing and transportation activities that create a minimum of off-site effects. Industries that traditionally cause excessive noise, vibration, odors, visual blight, environmental pollution, or area involved in potentially hazardous processes, should be avoided or allowed only on a discretionary basis.



The most appropriate location for additional industrial land is in the area south of the existing Steelcase Wood Plant and Amazon facilities. The south half of Section 22 is primarily owned by Steelcase, which is in the process of extending Rapids Drive, and will subsequently divide that area into multiple parcels for development.

HEAVY MANUFACTURING

Intended for most all industrial uses, particularly those which could cause greater impacts on the surrounding area due to the processing and handling of raw materials and large and heavy products. This zone should be located with adequate buffers to other uses so visual, audial, olfactory, and environmental impacts can be avoided.

PUBLIC AND INSTITUTIONAL

This future land use category recognizes municipal government, public institutions and education facilities. Public open space, public library, public service, community center, and similar uses also fall within this category. It includes the Township Hall and Prairie Wolf Park on the southwest corner of 84th Street and Kalamazoo Avenue, and other parcels that are township owned.

County managed parks and trails are also considered public use. Byron Center, Kentwood and Caledonia Public School District owned parcels which have been developed as educational institutions and may be located in any zoning district are also indicated. Byron-Gaines Utility Authority also owns some land within the township, and it is considered institutional, as well as Kent District Library.

These uses are typically allowed within multiple zoning districts with a Special Use Permit. Municipal uses are permitted within Office-Service, Commercial-1 & 2, Industrial 1 & 2. Schools (public and private) are allowed in any zoning district.

In the long term, the open field immediately west of the Township Hall is considered a good location for expansion of a new fire station, library, or other public facilities due to its central location. Prairie Wolf Park will continue to be protected, and there is public support expressed for expansion of passive and active recreational facilities throughout the township.

Pedestrian and trail connections continue to be a goal to enable multiple modes of travel. One open space opportunity site is 1263 84th Street, which is owned by the township and is a logical location for a new public park due to the new residential developments around the area.



MIXED USES

Since the 1950s, Gaines Township has followed the traditional model of zoning uses into separate areas. This “Euclidean” framework evolved to separate uses that were considered incompatible and to protect landowners from development that would threaten their homes and investments. That model has worked well, but there has been an increasing reliance on Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) to build projects. There are now 42 PUDs in Gaines Township, all with separate development and design regulations. This indicates that the traditional zoning categories do not necessarily reflect market conditions, nor does it offer the flexibility that developers desire when designing residential or commercial developments.

This Master Plan recognizes that some uses are compatible, and that with careful site plan review, uses can be integrated into highly livable and well-designed developments. Creative and variable designs are more sustainable in the long run, provide greater access in housing and commercial development, and create more pleasant environments for residents and workers.

Individual parcels within a mixed-use designated area may be developed with a single use, if that use is compatible with the uses designated for that district. Site infrastructure such as travel circulation, parking, and other site improvements must be integrated with surrounding properties.



RESIDENTIAL AND NEIGHBORHOOD RETAIL AND SERVICES

This includes a mix of Suburban and Village Residential, but in addition Neighborhood Commercial development would be allowed on main roads, in existing commercial buildings, or designated commercial areas within the overall development. The intent is to integrate the commercial with the surrounding neighborhood, not to mix the uses in a checkerboard, but to allow low intensity commercial activity adjacent to Village Residential (medium density) use. Buffer areas between the two may include narrow parking lots, fencing, or landscaped areas. Pedestrian access between the two should be well integrated with sidewalks and pleasantly landscaped to promote a walkable connection. Site improvements should be included that encourage the use of alternative forms of transportation (e.g., bike racks, transit shelters).

The designation may also be applied to small scale “live-work” mixed use buildings that have access to main roads and combine residential use with offices or services with limited clientele visitation in the same living unit (but not commercial retail). Review of the site plan under a special use permit is required. “Live-Work” units are very dependent on the context of the project surroundings and may not be appropriate in established residential areas. Considerations of traffic frequency and parking allowances are important.

This form of development has been present in the township since its formation in the village of Dutton, and historically along Division Avenue beginning in Cutlerville and southward to 79th Street and would be appropriate in those areas. Other locations might be considered if well planned. Stand-alone commercial strip malls designed for drive-thru business and to attract drive-by traffic do not align with the above description.

VILLAGE CENTER

This mixed-use category is intended to be used for new urbanist “village center” areas and integrates multiple uses at a pedestrian scale.

The category is envisioned as a walkable main street with pedestrian scale commercial/retail/office use either vertically stacked with, or surrounded by, high or medium density residential. Narrow streets discourage speeding and are therefore safer for pedestrians – particularly children and the elderly – to cross. Modifications to existing roadways may require traffic calming and safety measures to fulfill this.

A sense of design and proportion are critical to a sense of neighborhood. Architecture should display harmony through use of similar materials and an emphasis on midwestern architectural traditions but permit individual expressions and interpretations. High architectural standards are expected, as well as a cohesive urban design that integrates private and public spaces. They should be in areas with existing utilities or within one mile of existing utilities.

The intent of the Village Center is to create by design a blend of structures and uses which are compatible in both form and function, thus allowing residential and more intense uses to coexist in the same area. The elements of a Village Center district include:

- Strong architectural design standards
- A sense of place and community integrating public spaces
- Multi-story Buildings with shared uses, such as residential and office or commercial in one building
- Wide Sidewalks
- Pedestrian Scale Street Lighting
- Accessibility to existing or new parks
- Plazas and/or public gathering places
- Limited front yard parking with most of the parking in the rear or side yard
- Site improvements that encourage the use of alternative forms of transportation (e.g., bike racks, transit shelters).
- Varying setback requirements dependent upon the building type, height; and location
- Restaurants with outdoor dining areas
- Attached town homes



A key element of this strategy is the effort to concentrate residential and commercial development in the immediate vicinity of existing or potential future local retail and commercial nodes. Dutton could benefit from additional mechanism to protect its unique community character and build upon the mixed-use area on 68th from Hanna Lake Road to Hammond Avenue. The commercial center that is established and evolving in Cutlerville would be another example of a prime area for adding village center elements.

INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS

Plans should encourage higher residential density and neighborhood commercial land uses in the village center areas, and taper to lower intensity uses towards the margins, or match the adjacent land use. All the different building forms should be designed with careful attention paid to pedestrian connections. The township is committed to a human-scale atmosphere that minimizes conflicts with the regional traffic corridors. As such, access to roadways should be managed off connector streets. Design techniques and identity-enhancing landscaping will be encouraged to improve safety while building community character.

A certain amount of noise may be generated by commercial and retail use that may not be compatible with residential uses. The township may consider designating “quiet times” from 10pm-6am in areas where these uses are in proximity, may restrict hours of operation, or may require sound mitigation for specific noisy operations.

Intended to be an area for light industrial, business, health and workplace activity, with a limited amount of general commercial/retail component. Industrial uses will require a special use permit so that noise, dust, odors, and similar nuisances that may affect neighboring properties are limited. In general, visual buffers for industrial uses, whether fencing or vegetation, are important considerations during site plan review. Any other business, office, or service use may be located within the area with careful placement to avoid nuisance conflicts. In general, non-industrial uses should be located along major road corridors for easy access and to avoid conflicts with heavy truck traffic.

General commercial could be located along major streets and would require a special use permit. Neighborhood commercial may be an appropriate use as a buffer to adjacent residential or office areas.

The south half of Section 12 is an appropriate location for this designation, as further industrial development is likely, office buildings may desire to locate in the area, and limited commercial development related to servicing the needs of workers may be needed. Similarly, the southwest quarter of Section 31 would be an appropriate location for any of these uses, if adequate buffers are maintained with residential uses.





CHAPTER 9. OPEN SPACE, RECREATION, AND TRAILS

It is clear from the public input gathered during development of this plan that open space is highly valued by township residents, both for recreation, and simply an aesthetic standpoint.

PARKS

Question 12 of the Master Plan Public Input Survey asked residents how concerned they are about certain issues in the township, in which 48% of respondents stated they were “Very Concerned” about development of farms and natural areas into house lots, with 29.8% of respondents stating they were “Somewhat Concerned.” Additionally, Question 15 asked respondents to rank priorities for the township, in which 46.2% of respondents stated that obtaining land for open space and recreation was “Very Important,” while 34.7% responded that it is “Somewhat Important.” The rural qualities of the township— fields, farms and woodlots— is what has attracted many residents to the area. It is a common comment that development should be limited from this point forward.

This is the crux of a problem echoed throughout the United States; people move in because they like the rural environment, but by moving create demand for housing that converts open space to urbanized land. In the township, like elsewhere in the US, landowners retain the right to develop land as they see fit, and as farmers retire, they sell their land, often to developers.

There are three Kent County parks within the township. The largest, Brewer Park, contains several soccer fields and a disc golf course. Creekside Park contains an exercise trail system, playgrounds and baseball diamonds. Dutton Shadyside Park, straddling Plaster Creek, is a shady site for picnics and contains a large playground area. Other recreational uses in the township include the Crystal Springs Country Club and the Briarwood Golf Club.

At Kalamazoo Avenue and 84th Street, the township owns 45 acres known as Prairie Wolf Park. In 2007, the township installed approximately 2/3rds of a mile of paved trail within Prairie Wolf Park, as well as associated picnic facilities and is reviewing further attempts at securing state funding to develop this park for passive recreational use.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

The future development of the property to the west of the Byron Gaines Utility Authority along 84th Street, designated as Cody’s Mill Park, is another area that has been identified for preservation. A nonmotorized trail will help link this area to Prairie Wolf Park, the Gaines Township Offices, and eventually to the existing neighborhoods near Eastern Avenue and Brewer Park to the west. Two wetland mitigation banks located at 2702-2902 76th Street and 4554 76th Street that are owned by MDOT were set up to be taken over by the township for recreation use during the construction of M-6 in the 1990s, but the land transfer has not taken place.

The township seeks to conserve open space, establish trails, and reinforce the existing trail network whenever possible. New developments will provide dedicated pathways to serve and improve the public trail network. The township will work with active farmers to determine if any available farmland preservation programs are attractive and will evaluate the possibility for creating a dedicated millage for improvement of open space, trails and land purchase.

FORM BASED CODE

As required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, a Master Plan shall include a zoning plan. The zoning plan is intended to connect future land use designations with zoning districts, and to anticipate where future zoning changes may be needed to ensure consistency between the two documents. It should be noted that a Master Plan is a framework for the future, identifying preferred land use patterns for up to 25 years into the future. Zoning is the regulatory tool governing land development. Land use and zoning do not necessarily conform, since land use patterns take years to evolve.

Several methods for rethinking how zoning is implemented in the zoning ordinance have been contemplated since the 2002 Master Plan. Neither has been utilized up to this point, but the Planning Commission and Township Board will continue to evaluate these methods for their applicability in the future.

This zoning technique emphasizes the built form and character of individual buildings to create a neighborhood instead of the separation of specific uses that typifies traditional zoning. A form-based code (FBC) can be useful in a Traditional Neighborhood Development to ensure that all new development is consistent with the “village” character that is often the goal of traditional neighborhood design.

A FBC lays out in detail the required building elements, such as building location (using a “build to” line instead of a setback line) and building elements such as driveway and garage location, roof pitch, transparency (windows, doors, etc.), floor height, signs, etc. Generally, a visual guide is provided to the developer that helps explain the desired outcome.

If all the “form” requirements are followed, a development can receive an administrative approval usually in a matter of days or a few weeks. This provides an incentive to build according to the FBC. If a developer wishes to deviate from the forms, generally site plan approval is required, which can make the approval process take much longer.

OVERLAY DISTRICTS

Another tool is using overlay districts in conjunction with traditional zoning. The requirements of an overlay district “float” over the underlying zoning district, adding or subtracting from the zoning requirements. For instance, lots located in a TND could be zoned single family, in the same manner as non-TND lots, but the TND Overlay could add design requirements for homes like front porches and require certain building materials.

Overlay districts are effective when dealing with properties that have similar characteristics, even if they are in different zoning districts. Using the above example, the lots could be in several zoning districts because of lot sizes, density, etc. (like LDR and MDR); however, all of the lots have similar needs that could be more easily addressed with an overlay district as opposed to amending each individual district or creating even more zoning districts. One opposing view is that they are unnecessary when simple amendments to the zoning code for the specific use could be done instead. Overlay districts are created in the same manner as any other zoning district. The text of the Zoning Ordinance is amended to create the requirements for the new district, and then the Zoning Map is amended to show the boundaries of the overlay area.

Future Land Use Designation	Current Zoning
Rural	Agricultural/Agri-Business (A-B), and Agricultural/Rural-Residential (A-R)
Suburban Residential	Single Family Residential (RL-14 and RL-10)
Village Residential	Single Family Residential (RL-14 and RL-10), and Townhouses (R-3, single family only)
Multi-Family Residential	Multiple Family Residential (R-3)
Health and Workplace	Office Service (O-S)
Neighborhood Retail and Services	Neighborhood Commercial (C-1)
General Retail and Services	General Commercial (C-2)
Industrial, Warehouse and Transportation	Light Industrial Zoning District (I-1)
Heavy Manufacturing	Heavy Industrial Zoning District (I-2)
Public and Institutional	Government, Public Lands, and Public Schools
MU Residential with Neighborhood Retail and Services	Single Family Residential (RL-14 and R-10), Neighborhood Commercial (C-1), and small-scale Office Service (O-S)
MU Village Center	Single Family Residential (RL-14 and RL-10), Multiple Family Residential (R-3), Office Service (O-S) on ground and upper floors, and Neighborhood Commercial (C-1) on ground floors
MU Industry and Business	Office Service (O-S), General Commercial (C-2), Light Industrial Zoning District (I-1)



APPENDICES

The appendices to this Master Plan document include the future land use map, a map of public input, and the adoption resolutions for the Planning Commission and Township Board.

Gaines Charter Township

Kent County, MI

FUTURE LAND USE

APRIL 10, 2023



FUTURE LAND USE LEGEND

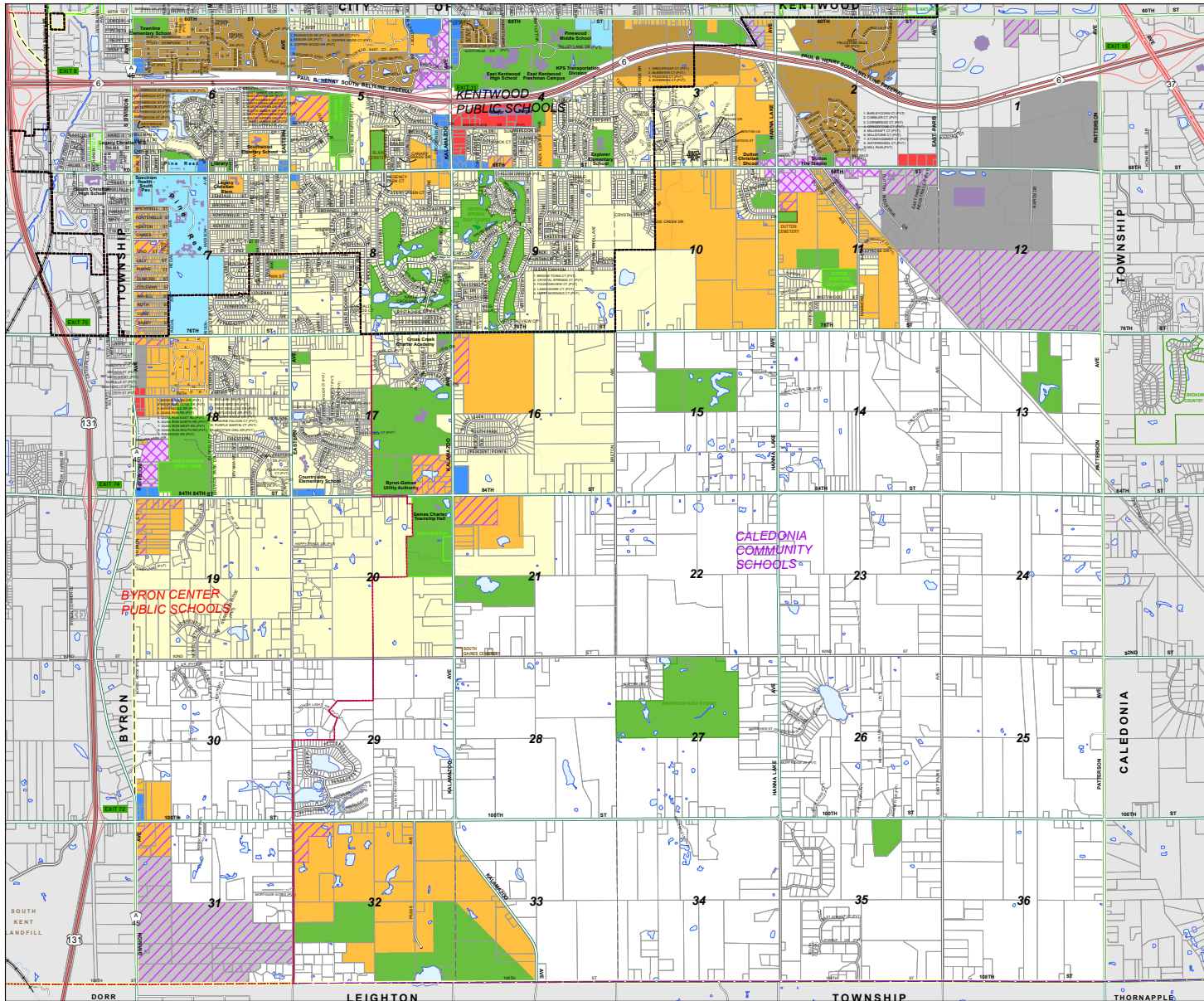
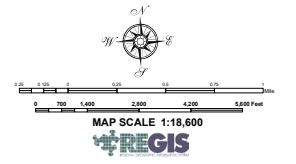
Land Use Code, Description

SR - Suburban Residential
VR - Village Residential
MFR - Multi-Family Residential
R/R - Residential/Retail
VC - Village Center
NR - Neighborhood Retail
GRS - General Retail & Services
P/I - Public / Institutional
HW - Health and Workplace
IB - Industry / Business
LIN - Light Industrial
HIN - Heavy Industrial
RUR - Rural

Base Map Legend

Byron Center Public Schools	Railroads
Caledonia Community Schools	Cemetery
Kentwood Public Schools	Golf Course
Freeway	Park
Freeway Ramp	Major Buildings
Highway	Municipal Boundaries
Primary	Section Lines
Secondary	Parcels
Private	Lakes & Ponds
	Rivers & Streams

This map does not represent a legal document. It is intended to serve as an aid in graphic representation only. Information shown on this map is not warranted for accuracy and should be verified through other means. Any duplication is restricted under copyright laws and the Enhanced Access to Public Records Act, PA 462 of 1996, as amended.



Map 7. Future Land Use Map

PLANNING COMMISSION ADOPTION RESOLUTION

GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

KENT COUNTY, MICHIGAN

RESOLUTION 23-03-23-PC

At a meeting of the Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission held on March 23rd, 2023, at 7:00 PM.

PRESENT: Waayenberg, Rober, Haagsma, Wiersema

ABSENT: Giarmo, Thomas, Billips

The following preamble and resolution were offered by Member Waayenberg and supported by Member Haagsma.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE 2023 GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN UPDATE AND TO RECOMMEND FINAL APPROVAL BY THE GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

WHEREAS, the Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission has prepared the 2023 Gaines Charter Township Master Plan Update, being an update to the version last revised on March 16th, 2016; and

WHEREAS, on December 15th, 2022, the Planning Commission approved the tentative text of the Master Plan and requested that the Gaines Charter Township Board of Trustees authorize the distribution of the draft Master Plan to the contiguous municipalities and the governmental and other agencies entitled to receive the draft for review and comment; and

WHEREAS, on January 9th, 2023, the Gaines Charter Township Board of Trustees approved the distribution of the draft Master Plan and asserted its right to give final approval or rejection of the Plan; and

WHEREAS, the required period of public comment on the draft Master Plan has expired; and

WHEREAS, the Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission held a public hearing on February 23rd, 2023, with the required notice, on the proposed Master Plan update.

IT IS, THEREFORE, RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. The Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission approves the 2023 Gaines Charter Township Master Plan Update, dated March 23rd, 2023,
2. The Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission recommends that the Gaines Charter Township Board of Trustees give final approval of the Master Plan; and
3. The Secretary of the Planning Commission is requested to forward this resolution and the approval of the 2023 Gaines Charter Township Master Plan Update to the Township Clerk for submission to the Gaines Charter Township Board of Trustees.

AYES: Waayenberg, Rober, Haagsma, Wiersema

NAYS: None

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.



Planning Commission Chair

TOWNSHIP BOARD ADOPTION RESOLUTION

GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

KENT COUNTY, MICHIGAN

At a meeting of the Gaines Charter Township Board of Trustees held on April 10, 2023, at 7:00 PM.

PRESENT: DeWard, Brew, Lemke, Fryling, Haagsma, Terpstra, VanderStel

ABSENT: None

The following preamble and resolution were offered by VanderStel and supported by Haagsma.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE 2023 GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN UPDATE

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act provides for the preparation and adoption of master plans and amendments therein for the use, development, and preservation of lands in the Township;

WHEREAS, the Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission has prepared the 2023 Gaines Charter Township Master Plan Update, being an update to the version last revised on March 16th, 2016; and

WHEREAS, on February 23rd, 2023, the Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission held a public hearing on the proposed Master Plan update following the distribution of the tentative draft of the Master Plan to the contiguous municipalities and other relevant planning and governmental entities and following public notice as required by law; and

WHEREAS, on March 23rd, 2023, the Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission adopted a resolution approving the 2023 Gaines Charter Township Master Plan Update and recommending that the Gaines Charter Township Board of Trustees grant final approval.

IT IS, THEREFORE, RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. The Gaines Charter Township Board of Trustees hereby approves the 2023 Gaines Charter Township Master Plan Update prepared by the Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission, dated March 23, 2023.

2. The Township Clerk is requested to distribute copies of the 2023 Gaines Charter Township Master Plan Update to the contiguous municipalities and the other governmental bodies and planning agencies entitled by law to receive copies of the approved Master Plan.

AYES: VanderStel, Haagsma, DeWard, Fryling, Lemke, Terpstra, Brew

NAYS: None

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.


Township Clerk