GRATIOT COUNTY MASTER PLAN

2025

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GRATIOT COUNTY MASTER PLAN 2025

Acknowledgements

City of Alma, Michigan

City of Ithaca 1855

City of St. Louis – Middle of the Mitten

Fulton Township

Gratiot County 1855 – Industry, Business, Agriculture

Newark Township est. 1857

Village of Ashley

Village of Breckenridge

Village of Perrinton – Gratiot County, Michigan

Arcada Township

Bethany Township

Elba Township

Emerson Township

Hamilton Township – Gratiot County Michigan

Lafayette Township

New Haven Township
Gratiot County, Michigan

North Shade Township
Gratiot County, Michigan

Est. 1851 – North Star Township

Pine River Township

Seville Township – Gratiot County - Michigan

Sumner Township
Gratiot County, Michigan

Washington Township – M 57, 127

Wheeler Township – Gratiot County, Wheeler, MI

Greater Gratiot Development, Inc.

CIB Community Image Builders – Planning | Marketing | Economic Development

01. Introduction

INTENT OF MASTER PLANS

A master plan is the official document used to guide the future growth and development of a community. The master plan should serve as a road map and foundation for future decision making, as well as the official policy guide for physical development. This master plan is intended to be a usable reference document, easily readable and accessible to all residents.

OVERVIEW OF THIS PLAN

This plan builds on the foundation created by the Gratiot Regional Excellence and Transformation (GREAT) Plan, first published in 2011 and then updated in 2017, which created a vision for the next two decades. This new plan incorporates data gathered from a thorough public engagement process as well as economic, demographic, and land use trends from communities throughout Gratiot County to develop county-wide, long-term goals, objectives, and strategies.

The Gratiot Regional Excellence and Transformation (GREAT) Plan was a unique collaborative effort between all local units of government in Gratiot County. As stated in the plan, "seldom, if ever, in Michigan's history have this many jurisdictions joined together to develop a shared master plan that has been individually adopted by each local unit of government. However, for years, Gratiot County leaders have realized that the future of the community is in their hands and that multi-jurisdictional cooperation is essential to sustain the county as a whole."

REDEVELOPMENT READY COMMUNITIES

Redevelopment Ready Communities® (RRC) is a toolkit of best practices supporting community revitalization and the attraction and retention of businesses, entrepreneurs, and talent throughout Michigan. RRC encourages communities to be development ready and competitive in today's economy by actively engaging stakeholders and proactively planning for the future—making communities more attractive for projects that create places where people want to live, work and invest.

This master plan update implements the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) Redevelopment Ready Communities best practices to create a strong vision for redevelopment in Gratiot County.

A MASTER PLAN IS THE OFFICIAL DOCUMENT USED TO GUIDE THE FUTURE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMUNITY. THE MASTER PLAN SHOULD SERVE AS A ROAD MAP AND FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE DECISION MAKING, AS WELL AS THE OFFICIAL POLICY GUIDE FOR PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT. THIS MASTER PLAN IS INTENDED TO BE A USABLE REFERENCE DOCUMENT, EASILY READABLE AND ACCESSIBLE TO ALL RESIDENTS.

HOW TO USE THE PLAN

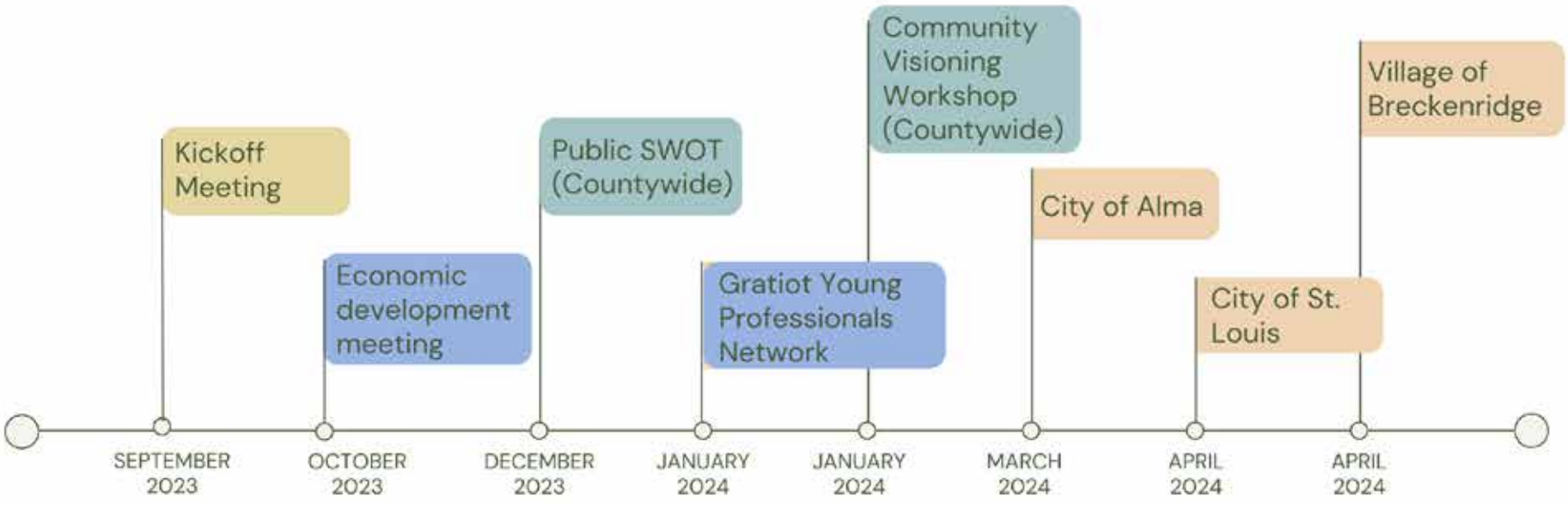
Overall, this plan is designed to serve as:

- A general statement of the community's policies and land use. The plan provides a single, comprehensive view of the community's desire for the future.
- An aid in daily decision-making. The goals, objectives, and strategies outlined in the plan will help direct local jurisdictions in their deliberations on zoning, subdivision, capital improvements and other matters. This document is intended to provide a stable, long-term guide for decision-making.
- A statutory basis for zoning decisions. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (Act 110 of 2006), as amended, requires that the zoning ordinance be in accordance with a master plan.
- A growth management strategy. This plan will help coordinate public improvements and private development through a well-managed and thoughtful growth strategy.
- An educational tool. The plan offers citizens, property owners, developers, and adjacent communities a clear indication of the community's direction for the future.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The master plan preparation requires review and input from the Planning Commission, municipal officials, staff, residents, and community organizations. Development of the plan involves collection and analysis of data on land use, environmental, transportation, infrastructure and socio-economic conditions.

Public engagement is an integral phase of the planning process that identifies and establishes community vision and values. To encourage public participation during the planning process, the planning team conducted the following engagement timeline:



LEGEND:

- Steering Committee
- Countywide Focus Groups
- Public Engagement Sessions
- Individual Municipalities Focus Groups

GRATIOT COUNTY CONTEXT

Gratiot County is located in central Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The County is comprised of twenty-three local government units, including sixteen townships, three villages, and three cities. Gratiot County is primarily rural with a very active agricultural community. The cities and villages serve as commercial, industrial, and residential hubs. For example, the City of Ithaca serves as the County seat and is recognized for its historic courthouse, and the City of Alma is home to Alma College, one of the state's premier private colleges, and the Highland Festival, an internationally known annual celebration of Scottish arts, games, and food.

More recently, Gratiot County is known for being a leader in renewable energy, which was made possible by creating Michigan's first Countywide Wind Energy Ordinance. There are currently 417 wind turbines in the County, and the first solar farm will be operational in 2025.

The wind energy operations have contributed to Gratiot's already diverse economy, which has a mix of business, industry, healthcare, and education. Gratiot County has a particularly strong and diverse manufacturing base that produces a variety of products including jet engine parts, automotive parts, and pontoon boats. The County offers five industrial parks and other planned areas for future industrial development

Gratiot County is also becoming increasingly known for its recreational opportunities. There are three state game areas, a canoe trail, and multiple county and private parks offering camping, swimming, and hiking opportunities.

Above all, Gratiot County is recognized for its sense of community. Still ringing true today, both the 2002 and 2017 County Strategic Plan state:

Each year there are a number of heartwarming stories about people helping people. Many times a group of farmers will band together to plant or harvest the crops of a neighbor who is ill or injured and can't do the job himself. Then there are those who initiate fund-raising campaigns to help pay the medical bills for a child or adult stricken with a life-threatening disease. Many of these good deeds occur without much publicity but they don't go unnoticed or unappreciated. After all, that's what a "community" is all about.

Stemming from this strong sense of community and willingness to help one another, the local jurisdictions collaborate at a level that is unprecedented in the state of Michigan. For decades, the townships, villages, and cities of Gratiot County have worked together to ensure a stronger community for all.

Examples of collaborative entities in Gratiot County include:

- Brownfield Redevelopment Authority of the County of Gratiot
- Countywide Library Operating millage (supports six public libraries)
- Economic Development Corporation of the County of Gratiot
- Gratiot Area Chamber of Commerce
- Gratiot Area Water Authority
- Gratiot County Airport Authority
- Gratiot County Community Foundation
- Gratiot County GIS Authority
- Gratiot County Land Bank
- Gratiot County Parks & Recreation
- Gratiot County Township Assoc.
- Greater Gratiot Development, Inc.
- Hospital Finance Authority of the County of Gratiot
- Vocational education services through a bi-County collaborative effort administered through the Gratiot-Isabella RESD.

Another recent collaborative effort is the Gratiot County Quilt Trail, which consists of unique quilt squares displayed throughout Gratiot County. The Quilt Trail encourages tourists to explore the countywide trail and urban communities and support local businesses along the way.

GRATIOT COUNTY MASTER PLAN PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

MEETINGS

Throughout the course of the 2023-24 plan update, public meetings were held and were located at the Gratiot-Isabella Regional Education Service District (GIRESD) and the Alma Public Library. In total, about 130 community members participated in the meetings.

A small-scale, leadership led SWOT analysis was performed during the Greater Gratiot Development Economic Development Board meeting in October of 2023. A larger public SWOT in early December, 2023, and participants were asked to give feedback on the County's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats/challenges, and consider them within general categories of infrastructure, industry activities, housing, education/workforce development, community character/civic engagement, and recreation. The summary of the SWOT analysis is contained within this chapter.

A public visioning session was held in mid-January at the GIRESD where the planning team presented results of the online public survey (summarized below). The bulk of the time during the session was spent in small group breakout sessions discussing the priority pillars, which are key areas of growth that had been identified through previous public engagement sessions and the online public survey. The pillars include housing, child care and early development; community business and workforce development; industry activities and infrastructure; and tourism/agrotourism, environmental protection, recreation and messaging. The five priority pillars provided a framework for the implementation matrix, which outline future goals and step-by-step action items to achieve them. The participants self-selected the pillars where they identified a mission, vision or goal in each category, the answer to the question "why this goal?" and the groups or organizations that should be involved in the implementation steps.

Public Engagement

Community engagement is a key component to Master Planning. Public involvement fosters a sense of ownership and connection, and ensures the public has a say in decisions that impact the community.

MEETINGS SUMMARY:

- Kickoff meeting with steering committee on September 13, 2023
- Economic development meeting with GGD board (mini-SWOT), October 20, 2023
- Greater Gratiot Master Plan Kick-off with MEDC representative, October 26, 2023
- Public SWOT, December 7, 2023
- Gratiot Young Professionals Network, January 17, 2024
- Community Visioning Workshop, January 17, 2024
- The City of Alma, the Village of Breckenridge and the City of St. Louis also held individual community meetings in March and April 2024 with the Master Planning team to discuss priority projects. Future land use change feedback was also communicated by these three communities to the planning team.

Assets

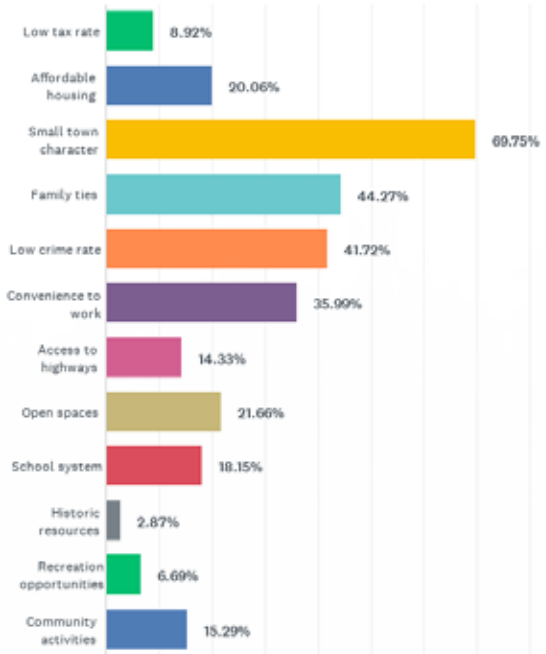
70 percent of survey respondents agree that the best thing about living in Gratiot County is the small town character of their community.

Topics

The topics rated most important to residents are road quality, employment opportunities, overall appearance, recreational resources, and public services.

COMMUNITY SURVEY ANALYSIS

Q5 What do you like about living in Gratiot County? Please select your top 3 responses.



The main goal of the Master Plan update survey was to gain community input from County residents on land use, zoning, housing, economic development, open space and recreation, natural resources, municipal services, and transportation. The results help to shape recommendations and to determine the direction of the Countywide Master Plan. The survey was live and promoted from November 21 to December 8, 2023, and received 314 completions.

The majority of the survey participants have a long tenure of residency with 48% living in the County over 25 years, and 20% living here 11-25 years. 68% of respondents work within the County and 13% are retired. The industries in which participants work varies, but the largest figures are healthcare, education and other (not listed).

When asked “What do you like about living in Gratiot County?” The highest scoring response at 70% was

small town character, family ties at 44%, 41% low crime rate, 36% convenience to work, 22% say open spaces, and 20% say affordable housing. When asked, “what do you find undesirable about living in Gratiot County? Please select your top 3 responses,” the top results were lack of retail shopping opportunities, lack of recreation opportunities, lack of affordable housing, lack of employment opportunities, and lack of a community-gathering place.

When asked “The Master Plan Team is examining the following topics. Please indicate their importance to you,” the following rated the highest in order of importance: road quality, employment opportunities, overall appearance, recreational resources, public services.

When asked, “What types of recreational opportunities would you like to see more of in Gratiot County?” the following were selected in order of importance: hiking, swimming, bike trails, performing arts, ice skating, playgrounds.

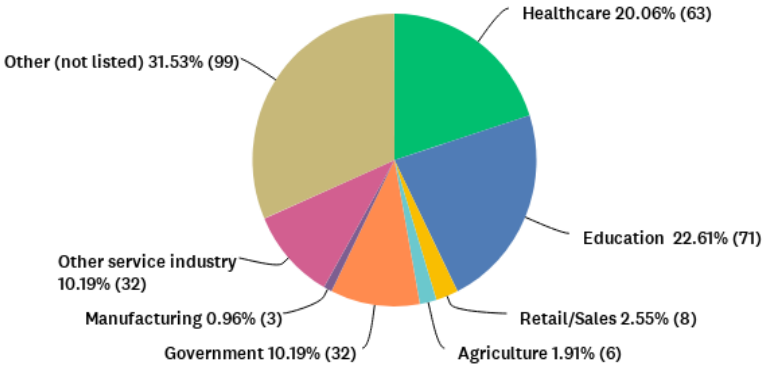
When asked “What types of housing do you think Gratiot County needs more of?” the following answers rated highest: Single-family detached homes - small (approx. 1,500 square feet or less), Single-family attached homes (townhouses, attached condos), Single-family detached homes - large (approx. 1,500 square feet or more), Senior housing – independent living.

How satisfied are you with the County’s access to internet services? 49% say they are somewhat satisfied, 33% say very satisfied, and 18% not satisfied.

When asked “Should the County continue to support alternative energy development to diversify power generation?” 69% say yes, and 31% say no. When asked what types of energy, 54% said both wind and solar.

When asked “Of the options below, what are the challenges facing Gratiot County as it works to improve jobs and

Q4 If you do work in Gratiot County, what industry do you work in?



economic growth? (Please rank from least challenging to most challenging),” top answers include keeping young, skilled workers, availability of diverse housing options, availability of jobs, access to capital and resources for small businesses, quality of life amenities, inadequate transportation infrastructure, and inadequate public services and infrastructure.

When asked “Please indicate how important you feel about each of these topics from not important to extremely important,” the following were rated highest: making vocational programs available to students, preserving natural areas (e.g. woodlands & wetlands), protecting the pine river, redeveloping empty lots and contaminated sites, improved and well-maintained infrastructure, maintaining and improving downtowns, expanded internet service, preserving open spaces (e.g. farmlands & fields), more local government, school and agency cooperation, and more county-wide recreational opportunities.

When asked “In the previous version of the Master Plan, the following goals were identified as important. Please rank the goals that you think are the most important to Gratiot County today,” the following are in order of importance: generate and

sustain economic opportunities – retain, attract and grow quality employers and workforce; strengthen the existing cities, villages, and hamlets - "placemake" Gratiot's downtowns to ensure that they serve as quality community centers; provide quality public services and infrastructure – carefully coordinate and plan services to ensure quality and cost effectiveness; preserve the County's quality rural character – keep productive farms and healthy natural features; provide premier cultural and recreation resources - develop Gratiot as a cultural and recreational destination that serves people of all generations; continue and increase good governance and inter-jurisdictional collaboration - cultivate strong leadership and Countywide cooperation.

In summary, the results demonstrate that residents of Gratiot County understand the challenges and importance of continuing to focus on jobs and workforce development. Specifically, providing resources to support the expansion of job opportunities, keeping skilled workers, providing vocational programs, and placemaking the downtowns. Housing and redevelopment also remain a top priority, along with sustaining and preserving the natural features and open spaces, continuing to remediate the rivers, and maintaining recreational opportunities.

GRATIOT COUNTY SWOT

Summaries and notes within this section were drawn from the multiple SWOT sessions held throughout the county during the master planning process. Specific dates and locations of the SWOT sessions can be referenced on page 12.

STRENGTHS SUMMARY

Gratiot County offers many assets. Traditional, walkable downtowns are located throughout the County, and they offer a mixture of events and activities for citizens of all ages. Housing stock in the County is aging but considered generally affordable. There are planned sites for housing development in Rainbow Lake, and mixed-use facilities that contain ground floor rear apartments are in Alma, Ithaca, and St. Louis.

STRENGTHS

The County's strengths include it's access to highways and railways, traditional, walkable downtowns; affordable housing stock, recreation opportunities, and more.

The County is also investing in improving its water and sewer systems, as well as supporting its diverse industries, such as agriculture, tool and die, marine, automotive, and renewable energy. With access to highways and railways, Gratiot County is well-connected to other major cities and markets in the state and beyond. Gratiot County is home to a satellite location of Mid-Michigan College, as well as MyMichigan Medical Center in Alma.

Gratiot County is not only a place that provides a high-quality of life, but also a destination that may be overlooked by visitors looking for recreational opportunities throughout the state. The County boasts a non-motorized trail system that connects its communities and parks, including the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail between Edmore and Alma, and then southeast to the City of Greenville, and the Mid-Michigan Pathways Trail going between Alma and Ithaca. Mountain biking and gravel trails are a draw for bicyclists state-wide who are "in the know." The County's rich culture and history is experienced at the Statewide Masonic Home, the Highland Festival, the Polar Express in Ashley, and the charming and historic downtowns. Gratiot County is a place where people collaborate and support each other, as evidenced by its large non-profit network, its community spirit, and its strong investment community.

STRENGTHS LIST

Housing

- Apartments in downtown Alma, Ithaca, St. Louis (mixed-use, ground floor rear apts.), some additional apartments developing in Alma
- Housing is generally affordable but aging stock
- Planned sites for housing dev. (Rainbow Lake and other communities)

Infrastructure

- Improvements being made in water and sewer
- Access to highways and state roads – M-46, M-57, US Highway 127

Industry

- Alma is home to a diversity of industries
- Agriculture (Zeeland Farm Services, etc)
- Support for diverse areas with Millages Libraries, transit, Commission on Aging, Ec Dev., 4-H, Sheriff, Education, Parks, Senior, Buildings, 911, Fire, career and technical millage
- Diverse Industries (Alma): agriculture/boat/ auto / tool+ die
- Access to highways, railways
- Renewable energy + manufacturing- Jobs, works together with highway system
- Central location
- Large non-profit network - dedicated state- recognized groups that provide resources
- Countywide Chamber of Commerce
- Good retailers given competition with big box retailers

Recreation

- Non-motorized trail system along 127–there is a plan to connect riverwalk in St. Louis to Alma
- Kayaking—Seville utilizes Pine River
- Trails—Mt. Pleasant-Shephard to Claire, Fred Meijer, gravel trails, mountain biking trails
- Several County parks with a variety of activities, funding through millage Breckenridge has a Splash park, Lumberjack Park, Forest Hill Nature Area as Destination / Attraction
- County parks millage attracts people from out of County

Placemaking/Character/Destination

- Statewide Masonic Home
- Highland Festival and a good mixture of activities – (Christmas, Fall, Homecomings)
- Polar Express in Ashley
- Good, healthy collaboration (we're all in this together)
- Downtowns - charming/ traditional (Hollywood), walkable, old/historic, activities, community engagement, restaurants, some retail
- Community Support btw. municipalities - Spirit of cooperation
- Strong investment community (Gemini Capital Group)
- High/Good spirit of collaboration and cooperation throughout the County
- Rural and safe (public facilities- police, fire, etc.)
- One or more great restaurants in every community
- River walk connection from St. Louis to Alma

- Forest Hill Nature Area (90-acre educational area near Alma)
- Recognizing the limitations of resources and best sharing them throughout the community
- People trust the local leaders

Workforce/Education

- Hospital within County
- Alma College in Alma

WEAKNESSES SUMMARY

Like many counties throughout the state and wider nation, Gratiot County faces weaknesses across various sectors, impacting its residents and prospects. Housing options across the spectrum are limited, despite existing and planned development projects underway. Regulatory costs, labor shortage, lack of housing supply, and high mortgage rates all contribute to the housing issue and further complicate the need for diverse housing solutions.

The education landscape suffers from declining school enrollment due to homeschooling, online options, and an aging population. Limited career opportunities beyond healthcare, energy, and specific trades contribute to a "brain drain," especially near Isabella County. Recent child care center closures exacerbate the situation for working parents, particularly those on non-traditional schedules. In fact, as of June 2023, Gratiot County's licensed child care providers had a 72% closure rate and Gratiot County is a child care desert for 80% of infants and toddlers, 60% of preschoolers, and 80% of school-aged children.

Lack of amenities and services also hinder Gratiot County's wider appeal. The absence of a flagship hotel and thriving service industry create an obstacle for tourism and economic development. Drug issues remain a concern, requiring continued attention and resources.

Some local parks lack funding and proper maintenance, making them less attractive compared to County parks. The Pine and Maple Rivers suffer from industry-related contamination, highlighting the interconnectedness of local challenges.

Aging infrastructure presents another hurdle. Roads, wastewater systems, and watermains require significant investment. Expanding high-speed internet access, especially in rural areas, is crucial for attracting tech companies and bridging the digital divide. Public transportation has seen some improvements, specific to essential services for seniors, which is supported by the Commission on Aging, a voter-approved millage, and Alma Transit Center.

Moving forward, Gratiot County will benefit from a multi-pronged approach. Working with investors and developers to close funding gaps in the residential space and accessing state-supported funding for residential development will help the County increase housing diversity. Revitalizing and supporting the service industry and addressing infrastructure issues are essential. Continuing to prioritize environmental protection and enhancing recreational facilities will improve quality of life and draw visitors from outside of the County. Fostering career opportunities through targeted workforce development programs can counter the brain drain.

WEAKNESSES LIST

Housing

- Housing choices - throughout all levels of aging = senior housing important; cities have some projects
- Availability of housing
- Senior housing (e.g. Hamilton township – 400 residents – 80% are 60 and up)
- Not enough builders – subcontractors
- Need every sector of housing

Workforce/Education/Child care

- Declining school enrollment due to homeschooling, online enrollment, aging population
- Lack career opportunities outside of healthcare, energy, agriculture and tool and die
- Brain Drain - school enrollment down, esp. close to Isabella County
- 2 closures of child care centers - especially challenging for 2nd /3rd shift workers
- Child care deserts throughout the County are a problematic impediment to a stronger workforce

Placemaking/Character/Civic/Destination

- Issues with drugs
- Lack of Flagship Hotel / overnight accommodations
- Service industry is lacking

Environment/Recreation

- Local parks need more funding – aging structures
- Rivers: Pine and Maple Rivers- contamination from industry, pollution, local-based challenges affects the whole County

WEAKNESSES

Housing options across the spectrum are limited, declining school enrollment, “brain drain,” and a lack of childcare options.

- Local parks are suffering and not as attractive as the County parks – lack of funding, maintenance

Infrastructure

- Aging Infrastructure- roads, wastewater, anything in a pipe (roads, wastewater, watermains)
- Lack of high-speed / broadband in twp. / rural areas
- Finding ways to incentivize tech companies (Verizon, etc.) highspeed fiber in some communities - no municipal system, both providers are private

Transportation

- Public transport has improved but needs to be updated and expanded to the rest of the County
- Public transport - commission on aging - some options/ services outside of the city.

OPPORTUNITIES SUMMARY

Opportunities for housing, economic development, workforce/ education, recreation, transportation, land use and other areas exist in Gratiot County. There are various opportunities to increase housing stock. One approach is to garden local residential developers, and another is the potential redevelopment of elementary schools and churches in Ithaca, St. Louis and other areas. The County is also considering the development of a Land Bank to facilitate additional housing options.

Communities within the County struggle with high vacancy rates in commercial spaces, and the development of a strategy to attract and retain long-term tenants would aid in overcoming the vacancy issue. Commercial spaces could also be repurposed in some instances. The County lacks diversity within industrial sectors and taking steps to overcome that like identifying and updating potential policy hinderances, unifying and streamlining local zoning ordinances to provide predictability, and identifying unfavorable business practices would properly position the County to diversify. Within that realm, there is an opportunity to improve and increase health care access for veterans, as many leave the County to access health services.

As child care continues to be an issue in the County, there are opportunities for increasing the number of facilities through state and federally funded programs via grants. Improving child care would lead to an increase in the workforce, as some parents have little choice but to drop out of the workforce to care for young children due to the lack of facilities and cost/benefit ratio. Additionally, and related to workforce training and education, an opportunity exists for the County to support a community college.

OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities for housing, economic development, workforce/education, recreation, transportation, land use and other areas exist in Gratiot County.

As mentioned in the strengths section, recreational opportunities within the County not only service recreational needs of residents but can also attract visitors seeking a variety of outdoor activities. Some of the local parks could be improved, and additional programming around recreation could be added. Marketing and promoting recreational facilities to potential visitors is a key component of attraction and produces a ripple effect for local commerce. Another recreational opportunity component has to do with transportation to and from these locations. Opportunities exist to increase and improve access by way of mass transit and senior transportation options around the County, especially outside of the cities. Part of the transportation strategy should also consider plans underway for an Amtrak rail stop in Alma enroute from Ann Arbor to Traverse City. This passenger train stop will produce a positive ripple effect for the Alma economy as well.

OPPORTUNITIES LIST

Housing

- Housing - garden new local developers that can help with housing locations (almost had an opportunity in Ithaca)
- Redevelop 2 elementary schools in Ithaca and St. Louis and potentially other churches and schools
- The County is creating a Land Bank for housing

Industry

- Strategy for long-term tenants in commercial districts (all communities have high commercial vacancy rates)--create a strategy for addressing and repurposing/leasing of vacant commercial spaces around the County
- Diversification of Industry
- Increase Veterans' health services—opportunities for new director and the HERO Center in St. Louis (many vets go out of County for services)
- Update zoning ordinances--strive to unify local zoning ordinances across the County to provide a level of predictability

Workforce/Education

- Child care opportunities (public and private)
- Expand local CTE services

Recreation

- More organization and strategic programming for recreational programs
- Better communication and promotion of recreational opportunities
- Improve local parks

Transportation

- Expand mass transit and senior transportation options around the County, especially outside of the cities
- Passenger rail stop from Ann Arbor to Traverse City planned for Alma

Land Use

- Strive to unify local zoning ordinances across the County to provide a level of predictability
- Create a strategy for addressing and repurposing/leasing of vacant commercial spaces around the County
- Zoning ordinance and special land use opportunities (especially for churches)

THREATS SUMMARY

Like all places, Gratiot County faces its share of challenges and threats. The threat of population loss is tied to federal and state funding loss, and the overall effects of losing the workforce and tax base. The loss of population places an increased emphasis on talent development, retention, and attraction critical if the region is to move forward. Additionally, housing availability is a growing challenge for new and existing residents in the County. An important part of building up the local workforce is ensuring that those workers' needs can be met. The market for affordable and accessible child care has supply and demand problems, including a lack of licensed providers, which can lead directly to women disproportionately leaving the labor force. Improving access to economic opportunities is an essential element of a resilient economy.

THREATS

Population loss in the County leads to a lower workforce and tax base. Blight and blight control are a challenge, and the environmental contamination of the Pine and Maple Rivers continues to pose a threat to the County.

When thinking about industry and local economies, it's worth noting that the taxbase in Alma is stable, but a large segment of the business population are non-profit organizations, which tend to have a downward effect on the taxbase. Along those lines, development projects throughout the region have been lost due to community development funds being applied for but not being awarded through the Revitalization and Placemaking (RAP) grant program.

Blight and blight control are challenges within areas of the County, specifically areas where there are broken down vehicles, rubbish, and housing disrepair. Additionally, the Central Michigan Correctional Facility faces a potential consolidation which could negatively impact the tax base and economic state of the County.

Environmentally, the contamination of the Pine and Maple rivers from the former Velsicol Chemical Corporation continues to threaten the surrounding communities, and the EPA continues to remediate the superfund sites along the watershed.

The County continues to face the same challenges as the state regarding a lack of people in younger generations moving into jobs made available from retirees, and a general "brain drain" issue where millennials and younger move out of state or into larger urban areas where there are more diverse career opportunities.

When it comes to civic engagement, challenges exist due to the lack of civic-mindedness and low involvement of younger generations. Recalls within local governmental positions and lack of transparency in these areas result in apathy. Police and fire recruitment is challenging across all municipalities within the County. Unfunded regulatory requirements from the state prove frustrating for communities already struggling with infrastructure challenges.

THREATS LIST

Industry

- Unemployment
- Loss of population, Federal and State Funding tied to population
- Loss of a few developments due to community development funds not being awarded (RAP Grants)
- Non-profit taxbase in Alma=stability but a lower tax base
- Limited access freeway along U.S.-127 for 16 miles

- Blight control and blight enforcement (rubbish, disrepair of houses and buildings, non-running vehicles
- Potential closure of the State Prison facility by the state

Environmental

- Pine River remediation

Housing

- Need more local builders

Workforce/Education

- Lack of younger generation moving into jobs

Character/Civic/Culture

- Transparency
- Recalls
- Unfunded regulatory mandates from the State
- Social media – extreme views, disrespect, misinformation
- Police and Fire – recruitment of younger volunteers across the County is challenging
- Lack of civic-minded and volunteer spirit in the younger generation

02. Gratiot County Context, Existing Conditions, Trends

SETTING

Gratiot County is a vibrant, rural county located in the center of lower Michigan. Within the county, there are 22 units of government: cities of Alma, Ithaca, and St. Louis, villages of Ashley, Breckenridge, and Perrinton, and townships of Arcada, Bethany, Elba, Emerson, Fulton, Hamilton, Lafayette, Newark, New Haven, North Shade, North Star, Pine River, Seville, Sumner, Washington, and Wheeler. These units have a unique set of assets that make Gratiot County what it is today.

Gratiot County has an extremely diverse economy. The county is primarily rural, with over 80% of land being used for agriculture production. Cohesive with agriculture, renewable energy has emerged as a leading industry in the county, and wind and solar are now harvested by interested local farmers.. Over $2.5 billion has been invested since renewable energy generation began operations in 2012 with six wind farms. Two solar developments are expected to be completed in 2025, which will diversify renewable energy generation in the county, while using the existing electrical infrastructure.

The county also has a stable base of diverse manufacturing companies, significant non-profit organizations, and a robust healthcare system that serve as major employers. There are over 50 manufacturing companies in Gratiot County, manufacturing products such as carbide cutting tools, aircraft jet engine parts, and luxury pontoon boats. Gratiot County has four industrial parks and one industrial, technology, and agribusiness park in Breckenridge.

The wind energy operations have contributed to Gratiot's already diverse economy, which has a mix of business, industry, healthcare, and education. Gratiot County is also becoming increasingly known for its recreational opportunities.

The cities and villages serve as commercial, industrial, and residential hubs due to the existing infrastructure. Alma maintains Gratiot's largest population of close to 10,000, and as a result is home to many major

Gratiot County created Michigan's first countywide model wind energy ordinance. The wind farms represent the largest investment in the county to date, estimated to be $2.5 billion since 2012. The county is now home to six wind farms and two planned solar developments.

employers in the County: MyMichigan Health—Alma, Alma College, Avalon & Tahoe Manufacturing, and Masonic Pathways, to name a few. Ithaca is the county seat, and many state offices and the GIRESD are located here. Additionally, ZFS Ithaca began operations in 2019, and processes close to 50% of the state's soybeans, creating positive spin-off effects for local farmers. St. Louis is the exact geographic center of the lower peninsula; major employers include two state prisons, Powell Fabrication, Plasti-Paint, and Apex Marine. Breckenridge is currently expanding infrastructure within its industrial park to provide for new businesses in the area; current major employers include Integrity Fab & Machine and Michigan Agricultural Commodities.

Gratiot County also offers a high quality of life for its citizens. Perhaps two of Gratiot's greatest offerings are Paul Hubscher County Park in Sumner Township (west of Ithaca) and Reed County Park in North Star Township (south of Ithaca). Open to the public, both parks offer a swimming beach, a playground, nature trails, various sports fields, pavilions, and picnic tables & grills. Cities and villages within Gratiot County also have a selection of local parks that offer a variety of amenities. The county is rich in trails, including the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail (42 miles long from Alma to Greenville), US Highway 127 Trail (6.6 miles from Ithaca to Alma), and a mountain bike trail in Alma. Additionally, the Pine and Maple rivers run through the county, and three state game areas.

Gratiot County is known statewide as a collaborative, forward-thinking entity. From the model countywide wind ordinance to many successions of this collaborative Master Plan, the goal of Gratiot County is for all units to thrive. While this collaboration can be attributed most obviously to efficiencies of time and money, both of which are valuable to a small county, it also speaks to the unique perspective of the multiple municipal units and organizations within Gratiot County. There is an understanding that what impacts one community will have spin-off effects to another, so planning together is a necessity for success.

Stemming from this strong sense of community and willingness to help one another, the local and county-level jurisdictions collaborate at a level that is unprecedented in the state of Michigan.

Above all, Gratiot County is known for its sense of community and truly embodies the saying of "a rising tide lifts all boats." For decades, the townships, villages, and cities of Gratiot County have worked together to ensure everyone succeeds. Examples of collaborative entities in Gratiot County include:

- Brownfield Redevelopment Authority of the County of Gratiot
- Countywide library operating millage (supports six public libraries: Alma, Ashley, Breckenridge, Ithaca, Riverdale, and St. Louis)
- Economic Development Corporation of the County of Gratiot
- Gratiot Area Chamber of Commerce
- Gratiot Area Water Authority
- Gratiot County Airport Advisory Committee
- Gratiot County Blight Enforcement Program

- Gratiot County Community Foundation
- Gratiot County GIS Authority
- Gratiot County Parks and Recreation (with grant opportunity for municipal parks)
- Gratiot County Township Assoc.
- Greater Gratiot Development, Inc.
- Vocational education services through a bi-county collaborative effort administered through the Gratiot-Isabella RESD
- Gratiot County Quilt Trail
- St. Louis, Ithaca, Pine River Transportation Authority (S.L.I.P.R.) in partnership with the Alma Transit Center
- Gratiot County Local Emergency Planning Committee
- Numerous emergency service authorities, including Gratiot Emergency Services Authority (City of Ithaca and Arcada, Emerson, Lafayette, Newark, New Haven, and North Star townships, and in partnership with Perrinton Fire/Rescue); Breckenridge-Wheeler Township Fire & Rescue; Mid-Michigan Community Fire Control Board (City of St. Louis and Bethany, Pine River, and Jasper (in Midland Co.) townships); Ashley Area Fire Authority (Village of Ashley and Elba, Hamilton, and Washington townships); and Alma District Fire Department (City of Alma and Arcada, Pine River, Seville, and Sumner townships).

This list of collaborative efforts reinforces the fact that municipalities, organizations and non-profits across the county share a collective vision, dedicated to building the economy, increasing cooperation and improving quality of life across Gratiot County.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

A thorough understanding of Gratiot County's current condition is essential to understanding the present, and anticipating what future trends and developments may occur. In this chapter, demographic and economic trends will be analyzed, along with an overview of existing conditions, to better understand how these factors have shaped Gratiot County today and provide some context about where the County stands regionally and nationally.

DATA SOURCES

Demographic data for 2022 is taken from the American Community Survey (ACS) which replaced the "longform" Census questions beginning in 2000. ACS collects the same types of information about social, economic, and housing conditions on a continual basis. The ACS is a sample, not a complete survey of the United States. A random selection of households is sent to the ACS every year. The Census Bureau draws inferences to generate estimates for the rest of the population. Data for 2020 and 2010 comes from the decennial censuses which are the most accurate source of demographic information in the United States. Mandated by the United States Constitution the aim of the decennial census is to count 100% of the US population.

DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION

Gratiot County lost 2.25% of its population betwee n 2010 and 2022, according to the 2022 ACS estimates as detailed in Table 1. By contrast, neighboring Isabella County experienced a more severe population loss, over 7% during the same period, while Clinton County experienced a significant increase. During that same period, Michigan and the United States both experienced population growth. Population is a key metric to use in planning for the future. Population decline can have significant repercussions on an area, sometimes resulting in increased vacancies, disinvestment and decreased funding for services. To put population decline in Gratiot County into a larger context, it is important to note that Michigan ranked 43rd among states in terms of its rate of population change from 2020 to 2022. Between 2010 and 2020, most of the population growth that occurred in Michigan was concentrated in Metro Detroit, Grand Rapids and Traverse City.

Table 1: Population 2010 - 2022

	2010	2020	2022	Percent Change 2010-2022
Gratiot County	42,476	41,761	41,534	-2.25%
Isabella County	70,311	64,394	64,938	-7.64%
Clinton County	75,382	79,128	79,748	5.79%
Michigan	9,883,640	10,077,331	10,034,118	1.52%
US	308,745,538	331,449,281	333,287,562	7.96%
Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2010 & 2020 Census				

In the coming decades, Gratiot County is expected to gain a small increase in population. According to Gratiot County Population Forecast Through 2045, calculated by the MDOT Bureau of Transportation Planning, the County's population is expected to plateau at around 42,484 residents in 2045. These projections are detailed in Table 2.

According Gratiot County Population Forecast Through 2025, calculated by the MDOT Bureau of Transportation Planning, the county's population is expected to plateau at around 42,484 residents in 2045.

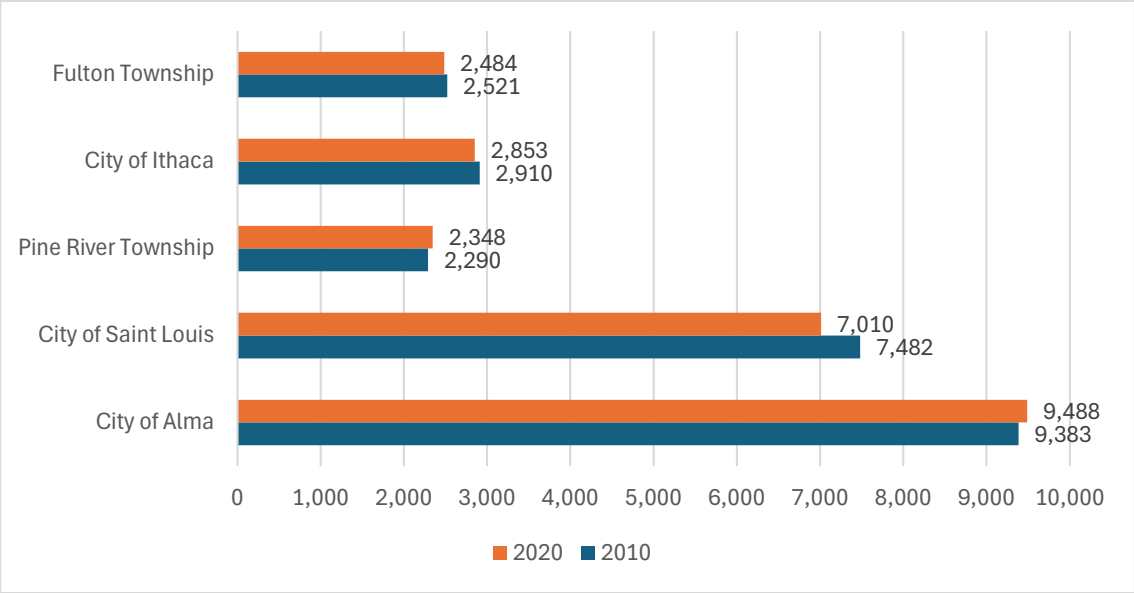
Table 2: Population Projections (2025-2045)

	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	Percent Change 2025-2045
Gratiot County	41,645	42067	42,432	42,612	42,484	2.01%

Source: MDOT Bureau of Transportation Planning (2017)

The two largest population centers in Gratiot County are the Cities of Alma and St. Louis as detailed in Table 3. Comparison of census data between 2010 and 2020 indicates that the City of Alma's population grew, as did the City of Ithaca's. Outside of these cities, several townships, most notably Pine River and Fulton Townships, are home to a growing number of County residents. In contrast, Arcada Township has the lowest population in Gratiot County, followed by Hamilton Township and the Village of Ashley.

Table 3: Population Centers in Gratiot County (2010-2020)
Source: 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census



HOUSEHOLDS

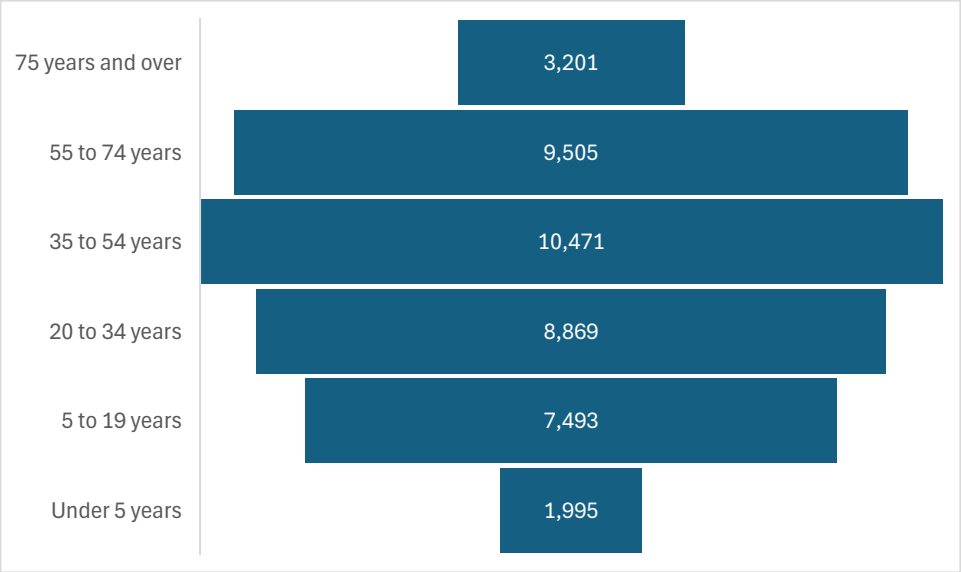
The Census Bureau defines a household as a group of people who share a housing unit as their primary residence. This includes family members, unrelated people, such as lodgers, foster children, or employees, a single person living alone and groups of unrelated people living together, such as roommates. In 2020, there were 14,764 households in Gratiot County. The average household size in Gratiot County was 2.57 people. For comparison, the average household size in Michigan was 2.53 people for the same period. The average number of people per household has been steadily declining nationally for several decades due to decreasing family size, as people are having fewer children, and increasing life expectancy among several other factors.

AGE

Age is another important factor that must be considered during the planning process, as different age cohorts will have distinct needs as they pertain to housing, education, transportation and community resources among other considerations. The median age in Gratiot County in 2020 was 39.6 years old, up from 38.0 years old in 2010. For reference, the median age in Michigan in 2020 was 40.5 years old, up from 36.7 years old in 2010. It is important to note that residents in the County's two correctional facilities are included in the census counts, which increases the numbers of individuals (generally between 25 and 55 years of age) by about 3,600 people. This factor should be considered when looking at demographic data for the County. As shown in Table 4, the largest sector of the population is residents between the ages of 35 and 54 years old, accounting for a quarter of Gratiot County. The next largest sector is residents between the ages of 55 and 74 years of age, comprising nearly 23% of the population. Residents between the ages of 20 and 34 years of age are 21% of the population. While Gratiot County's population skews decidedly middle-aged and older, there is still a sizable population of young people. Residents aged 5 to 19 years old account for 18% of the population. Finally, children 5 years of age and younger are almost 5% of the population. The data points to a strong segment of prime working-age residents currently in Gratiot County. Demographic indicators also point to a population that will gradually trend older, as residents age and fewer children are born. Overall, the trends on aging at the County level are also happening statewide as Census data indicates that Michigan's population is aging at a faster rate than the nation.

Table 4: Gratiot County Age Distribution (2022)
Source: 2022 ACS

Planning indications for Gratiot County's aging population



involves several key considerations to ensure that communities are inclusive, accessible, and supportive for older adults. These include accessible and attainable housing solutions that promote age-friendly accommodation, transportation services, access to healthcare options, community engagement and

volunteer opportunities to promote mental well-being, and emergency preparedness with consideration for the needs of older adults.

Gratiot County, like most Michigan communities, needs to focus on attracting younger people to the area. One of the trends is for recent college graduates to migrate to larger urban areas, like Chicago, Charlotte, Denver, etc. looking for the job opportunities and amenities that are offered. Another related trend, however, is for these same people to move closer to family once they get married and have children. The family support system combined with remote employment opportunities and lower housing costs have proven attractive to younger people. Gratiot County communities could also add to their desirability by supporting the growth of downtowns and village centers, along with amenities like quality health care, schools, parks, etc. Key employers in the County should help support these efforts since they will enhance the ability to attract quality employees in a very competitive environment.

SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational attainment in the County has a direct connection to employment opportunities and to the economic stability of the County, as higher education levels correspond with higher income levels. As shown in Table 5, Gratiot County's number of residents with a high school diploma or equivalent degree, is substantially higher than the percentage of state residents with the same educational attainment. Per 2022 ACS estimates, Gratiot County also has a slightly higher number of residents with some college but no degree, than the statewide rate. Educational attainment starts to decline from statewide trends, when it comes to associate and bachelor's degrees, as well as further graduate or professional degrees. Attracting recent college graduates back to the County will help increase the overall educational attainment in the area, as will encouraging residents to attend area colleges. Gratiot County is in close proximity to several community colleges including Mid Michigan, Montcalm, Delta and Lansing. Alma College also has a partnership with Mid Michigan College for transfer opportunities.

Table 5: Educational Attainment, 25 Years and Older (2022)
Source: 2022 ACS

	Gratiot County	Michigan
High school or equivalent degree	40.6%	28.1%
Some college, no degree	24.4%	21.9%
Associate degree	8.8%	9.7%
Bachelor's degree	12.3%	19.5%
Graduate or professional degree	5.8%	12.6%

EMPLOYMENT

As detailed in Table 6, the largest employers in Gratiot County include public or private entities in healthcare, manufacturing, corrections, education and utilities. Combined, these organizations employed 3,469 people in 2023, and most are in the City of Alma.

Table 6: Largest Employers (Private, Public/Non-Profit Sectors Combined), Gratiot County (2023)

Source: Gratiot County Development, Inc. County Employment Overview

Business Name	Location	Number of Full Time Employees
MyMichigan Medical Center	Alma	666
Avalon and Tahoe Manufacturing	Alma	503
Central Michigan Correctional Facility	St Louis	432
Alma College	Alma	400
St Louis Correctional Facility	Bethany Twp	332
Gratiot-Isabella RESD	Ithaca	280
Masonic Pathways	Alma	261
International Auto Components (IAC)	Alma	220.5
Alma Public Schools	Alma	194
Consumers Energy	Alma	181

Looking more closely at employment in Gratiot County, Table 7 details the industries that employ workers in the County. While we can assume that many of these jobs are in the County, it is important to note that the data is not wholly indicative of the industries found within the County because some workers may travel outside of Gratiot County for employment. The largest industry of employed workers is educational services, health care and social assistance (4,902 workers). Large employers like MyMichigan Medical Center, Masonic Pathways, Alma College and Alma Public Schools would be included in this category. Other significant industries in the County include manufacturing (2,470 workers), retail trade (1,881 workers) and arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food service (typically what are referred to as “service industry jobs”) which employ 1,361 people.

Table 7: Industry of Employed Workers, Gratiot County (2022)
Source: 2022 ACS

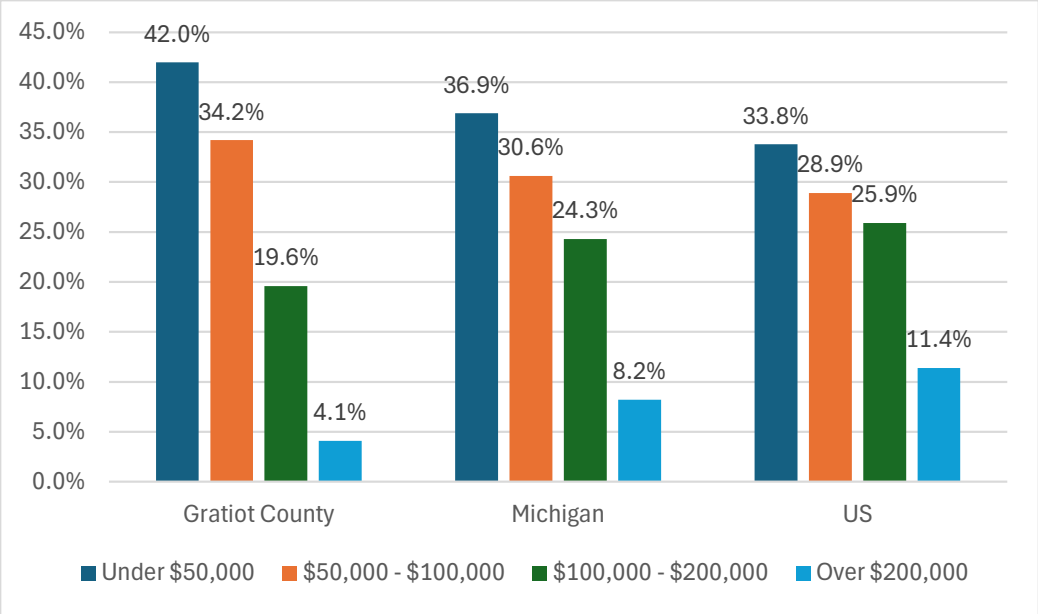
Industry	Number of Workers	Percent of Total
Educational services, health care and social assistance	4,902	28.6%
Manufacturing	2,470	14.4
Retail trade	1,881	11.0%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food service	1,361	7.9%
Construction	1,261	7.4%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative and waste management services	1,065	6.2%
Public administration	923	5.4%
Other services, except public administration	793	4.6%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	734	4.3%
Transportation and warehousing and utilities	660	3.9%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	621	3.6%
Wholesale trade	318	1.9%
Information	142	0.8%
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	**17,131**	**100.0%**

According to the Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget, the unemployment rate in Gratiot County as of October 2024, was 4.4%. This is lower than some neighboring counties such as Isabella County (4.6%) and Saginaw County (5.5%) and higher than Midland County (4.2%) and Clinton County (3.6%). During the same time, the unemployment rate was 4.7% statewide and 4.1% nationwide.

INCOME AND ECONOMIC STABILITY

Per 2022 ACS estimates, the median household income in Gratiot County was $57,934 which is substantially lower than the statewide median of $66,986. As detailed in Table 6, the largest household income cohort in Gratiot County are those earning $50,000 or less annually, which accounts for 42% of households. The second largest cohort is those households earning between $50,000 and $100,000 which accounts for 34.2% of households.

Table 8: Median Household Income Comparison (2022)
Source: 2022 ACS



Economic stability is another key data point to examine. The US Department of Health and Human Services publishes poverty guidelines annually. These poverty guidelines are used to determine financial eligibility for certain programs. For reference, in 2024, the poverty guideline for a household with one person was $15,060, two people was $20,440 and three people was $25,820 annually. Per 2022 ACS estimates, 1,810 households (roughly 12%) in Gratiot County reported being below the poverty guidelines in the previous 12 months.

The United Way developed another measure used to assess economic stability. The 2022 Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE) data, is used to measure the number of households that earn more than the federal poverty guidelines, but less than the basic cost of living for the County. Counties are the core geography for ALICE data because they reveal variations often obscured by statewide averages and highlight the households that struggle with the rising cost of household essentials (housing, child care, food, transportation and healthcare). According to the 2022 ALICE data, 48% of Gratiot County households are struggling to afford necessities, with 12% of the total households being below the poverty guidelines and 36% of the total households being above the poverty line but below the ALICE threshold. For comparison, around 28% of households in Michigan are below the ALICE threshold.

When nearly half of a county's population are struggling to afford necessities, it indicates significant financial instability. The County can help create a more stable and supportive environment for ALICE households by focusing on attainable housing initiatives and related policies, economic development and job creation programs, access to child care and affordable healthcare services, community support services to address food insecurity, public transportation, and policy advocacy to support higher wages and social safety nets.

48% of the households in Gratiot County are struggling to afford necessities. Key initiatives should include attainable housing, economic development, access to child care, community support services, transportation and policy advocacy.

HOUSING

HOUSING STOCK

According to the 2020 Census, Gratiot County had 16,032 housing units. This number represents a slight decline from the 16,060 housing units counted in the 2010 Census. Of the housing units recorded in 2020, 14,764 (92%) were occupied and 1,268 (8%) were vacant. Of those occupied units, 78% of units were owner occupied and 21% were renter occupied. The vast majority (78%) of all housing units were single family detached homes (see Table 9). At 9%, the next most common type of housing structure was mobile homes. Multiple family dwellings (defined as 2-20 units) comprised 8% of all housing structures in Gratiot County.

Census data revealed that as of 2020, 29% of the housing stock in the County was constructed between 1960 and 1979, another 21% was built between 1940 and 1959 and 23% was built in 1939 or earlier. In other words, almost 75% of housing units in Gratiot County are 45 years or older. There was a notable increase in housing units built between 1980 and 1999, with data indicating that over 18% of the County's units were built during that period and another 7% constructed between 2000 and 2019.

Table 9: Gratiot County Units in Structure (2012 & 2022)
Source: 2012 & 2022 ACS

	2012		2022		Change 2012-2022	
Unit Type	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
1, detached	11,188	76.0%	11,506	78.2%	318	2.2%
1, attached	118	0.8%	178	1.2%	60	0.4%
2 apartments	368	2.5%	369	2.5%	1	0.0%
3 or 4 apartments	353	2.4%	272	1.8%	-81	-0.6%
5 to 9 apartments	265	1.8%	304	2.1%	39	0.3%
10 or more apartments	721	4.9%	733	5.0%	12	0.1%
Mobile home or other	1,708	11.6%	1,343	9.1%	-365	-2.5%

It is worth noting that Gratiot County has a higher percentage of residents living in group quarters than the national and state averages. Alma College and Masonic Pathways (a non-profit offering senior care and living services), are both located in the City of Alma, and the Mid-Michigan Correctional Facilities account for this high percentage of group quarter residents. Alma College enrolls over 1,250 students, Masonic Pathways has over 400 residents and the St. Louis Correctional Facility and Central Michigan Correctional Facility can house around 3,600 people.

COST OF HOUSING

The median value for owner occupied units according to the 2022 ACS estimates is $126,500, up from 2012, which was $88,200. Twenty-two percent of houses fell in the range of $50,000 to $99,000, followed by houses between $100,000 to $149, 000 at 19.8% and houses from $150,000 to $199,999 at 14.1%. Home prices in Gratiot County have been on the rise, just as they have been in the rest of Michigan and the nation. Although housing in the County is relatively affordable, availability and interest rates are preventing many would be buyers from purchasing a home. Of all the homeowners in Gratiot County, 55.7% mortgaged their homes and the median monthly cost of a mortgage across the County was $1,164. The median rent across the County was $757. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development considers housing costs exceeding 30% of income as unaffordable. In 2022, about 31% of homeowner costs and about 51% of gross rent exceeded this level, suggesting that there is a need for more affordable housing options in Gratiot County.

There is a need now for a variety of housing sizes and types to accommodate the new trends in household structure.

HOUSING SUPPLY

One of the best ways to overcome the rising cost of housing is to increase the overall supply. As people move up through life cycle changes with larger, more expensive housing, more affordable entry-level units become available. One of the efforts to increase housing supply in Gratiot County includes some cities and villages making zoning changes to allow for first floor housing behind commercial space. There have also been several downtown mixed-use projects restoring previously obsolete buildings. Additionally, new homes have been built in Alma's Gemstone development as well as around Rainbow Lake in Fulton Township.

Median housing costs:
2022 median home value is $126,500
2022 median monthly rent is $757/month

ECONOMY

OVERVIEW

While Gratiot County's economy was traditionally centered around agriculture, there have been decades of coordinated, multi-community economic development efforts, both public and private, that have successfully diversified the economy. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the largest employers in the County include the healthcare industry, manufacturing and education.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Educational services, healthcare and social services are a key component of the economy in Gratiot County. One of the most well-known examples is Alma College, which has over 1,200 students enrolled and is one of the largest employers in the County. The Gratiot-Isabella Regional Education Service is also a major employer in Gratiot County, as are Alma Public Schools.

MyMichigan Medical Center, is a 107-bed teaching hospital located in Alma and is the largest employer in Gratiot County. A surgical center renovation was recently completed there, further enhancing the ability to provide medical services to the region. There are also many doctors, dentists, optical providers and other medical specialists across the County, which are a substantial part of the County's economy. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services 2020 Primary Needs Assessment for the County notes that there is currently a shortage in primary care, dental health and mental health providers in Gratiot County. Finally, Masonic Pathways is a non-profit retirement community offering independent and assisted living, short-stay rehabilitation and skilled nursing and memory care services to over 400 residents and a major employer in the region.

MANUFACTURING

Manufacturing companies in the County work with a variety of materials from plastics to all types of metal, making products of a diverse range and size. Products manufactured in the County are used in the manufacturing of other parts or products including molds, dies, specialty carbide cutting tools and die sets. Most manufactured parts become components of other finished assemblies including automobiles, motorcycles, trucks, jet engines, agricultural, and construction equipment. Still other companies manufacture components used in the defense industry. The County also has companies specializing in manufacturing complex machinery for planting and cleaning crops and manufacturing base chemicals. The County is home to two high-quality pontoon boat manufacturing companies. Additionally, the international import and export of products is the focus of many firms in Gratiot County.

Gratiot County industries have also begun moving away from sole dependency on automotive orders into more specialized lines and other companies have ventured into recreational and agricultural markets. Aircraft Precision Products recently began onshoring products that were produced in China for GE while Powell Fabrication has seen a significant increase in orders for bleach-making equipment. Likewise, Alma Tire has expanded its retreading line operation, and since the pandemic there has been additional demand for pontoon boats from Avalon & Tahoe and Apex Marine.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is an integral part of Gratiot County's past, and it continues to play a central role in Gratiot County's identity, land use, character and way of life. Active farms can be found in most parts of the County, offering a broad array of products, with an emphasis on corn, beans, and sugar beets. Gratiot County is a leading producer of dry beans, sugar beets, corn, wheat, poultry, pigs, cattle, and dairy products.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Census of Agriculture noted that there were 818 farms in the County, accounting for 305,863 acres of land as of 2022. As detailed in Table 10, the average size farm in 2022 was 374 acres. Most farms in Gratiot County are between 10 and 179 acres, though there are 75 farms that are 1,000 acres or more. According to Eastern Michigan Council of Governments (EMCOG), Gratiot County covers 365,081 total acres in all. Using these figures, agriculture accounts for 84% of all land use in the County.

Overall, the area is a leading producer of dry beans, sugar beets, corn, wheat, poultry, pigs, cattle, and dairy products. Agriculture accounts for more than 84% of all land use.

Table 10: Total and Per Farm Overview (2017-2022)
Source: US Census of Agriculture, Gratiot County 2022

Total and Per Farm Overview, 2022 and change since 2017

	2022	% change since 2017
Number of farms	818	+1
Land in farms (acres)	305,863	+3
Average size of farm (acres)	374	+2
Total	($)	
Market value of products sold	486,085,000	+73
Government payments	3,193,000	-40
Farm-related income	9,207,000	+13
Total farm production expenses	371,554,000	+52
Net cash farm income	126,932,000	+153
Per farm average	($)	
Market value of products sold	594,236	+71
Government payments [a]	12,049	+11
Farm-related income [a]	24,952	+25
Total farm production expenses	454,223	+51
Net cash farm income	155,173	+152

The Census of Agriculture reported that the market value of products sold by Gratiot County farms in 2022 was $486,085,000, up from $281,445,000 in 2017. The average market value of products sold per farm in 2022 was $454,223, an increase from the average of $301,612 in 2017.

Gratiot County is also home to several large farm implement dealers. Hutson, selling the John Deere brand, is located near St. Louis, Ellens Equipment has a location in Ithaca and Janson Equipment is in Wheeler Township. Additionally, Michigan Agricultural Commodities have facilities in Breckenridge, Fulton Township, and Wheeler Township. Their Breckenridge facility is one of the largest elevators in the state. Zeeland Farm Services operates the state's largest soybean processing plant in Ithaca. The company can process over 40 million bushels of soybeans annually at this facility.

Given Gratiot's significant agricultural production-based economy, the County is home to a variety of associated businesses including several seed and fertilizer dealers, animal feed stores, farm clothing and supply stores. Agricultural-adjacent businesses like companies engaged in genetics and hybrid research, manufacturing of agricultural equipment, financial services for agricultural businesses, insurance, professional consulting as well as companies making products from and offering services for production crops are also a growing segment of Gratiot County's economy.

CLEAN ENERGY

Wind energy operations have contributed to Gratiot County's already diverse economy. Gratiot County became known as a leader in wind energy in the mid-2000s. The County accomplished this by the creation of Michigan's first Countywide model wind energy ordinance and by leveraging the large amount of flat, open space in the region to attract and facilitate wind energy projects. Gratiot County is home to five wind farms, with space for an additional facility that would be permitted in the southwest corner of the County. These projects represent the largest investment in the County to date, estimated to be around $2 billion dollars since 2012. Alongside wind energy, Gratiot County is expanding its solar energy capacity. The County's proactive planning for renewable energy development has made it a model for other regions.

There has also been increased interest at the State and local level in solar power and "solar farm" development. The State of Michigan recently passed a law that pre-empted some local control of solar development, and there are legal challenges in the process. Four (4) townships are currently in the process of

solar development, with the first to be completed in Pine River Township. The County is working on a collaborative battery storage ordinance to prepare for potential solar development.

RETAIL, SERVICE AND FINANCIAL BUSINESSES

As markets and customer preferences changed over the last several decades, so did the commercial (retail, service, and financial) business mix in Gratiot County. While traditional downtowns used to serve as the main centers of commerce in this largely rural County, much of the newer commercial development has been concentrated along more suburban "shopping corridors". Most notable is the shopping corridor which has grown from the north side of the City of Alma and extends into Pine River Township. This corridor has a blend of both locally owned and managed businesses, as well as national and international businesses. Several Townships have also increased commercial zoning to encourage further development.

The retail and service sectors in the County include, but are not limited to restaurants, hotels and motels, retail stores and businesses offering therapeutic or cosmetic services such as massage, physical therapy, chiropractic, hair care, tanning, etc. Gratiot County has an abundance of fast-food establishments that line the more heavily traveled commercial corridors, but "sit down" restaurants are somewhat limited. There are several independent hotels and motels across the County, including a boutique hotel in Downtown Alma.

Retail in the County includes a variety of types and sizes, from independent retailers in traditional downtown areas to larger national chains. Gratiot County has several independent pharmacies, national chains, and in-store pharmacies. Clothing can be purchased at larger chain stores and home furnishings are limited to a few independent furniture stores. There are a handful of home improvement stores and lumberyards in Gratiot County. For everyday needs, discount or dollar stores offer many necessities that may otherwise be found only at big box retailers. There are multiple automobile dealerships representing the "Big Three" automakers: General Motors, Ford and Stellantis (historically Chrysler), across the County. They offer full service and collision departments in addition to sales. There are also independent used car dealers and independent auto service and repair facilities. There is an abundance of gas stations located in the more densely populated areas of Gratiot County, but stations are somewhat scarce at the southern end of the County.

Real estate offices, both independent and with national affiliation, serve the residential and commercial markets across the County. Gratiot County is home to the headquarters of Commercial Bank, which has locations in Alma, Ithaca and St. Louis. Mercantile Bank serves the northern area of the County with locations in Alma and Ithaca. Isabella Bank has locations in Ithaca and Breckenridge. Huntington Bank, a national bank, has a location in St. Louis. Three credit unions serve Gratiot County: Gratiot Community Credit Union, Michigan One Credit Union and GreenStone Farm Credit Services. GreenStone provides financial services to the agricultural industry including short, intermediate and long-term loans, equipment and building leases and crop insurance.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

INDUSTRIAL PARKS

A significant part of Gratiot County's multi-decade effort to diversify their economy included planning and providing places for industrial businesses to locate. As a result, Gratiot County is home to five business parks and one commerce park. There are business parks in Alma, Breckenridge, Ithaca (two separate parks) and St. Louis and the commerce park is in Ithaca. The business parks have been successful and welcomed several new businesses since the parks were developed. For example, Avalon and Tahoe, a major employer in the County, has invested nearly $8,000,000 in building and equipment expansions at their facility located in the Alma business park. Greater Gratiot Development, Inc. keeps an inventory of sites available across the County, including those in business parks, and can assist businesses in the site selection process.

A prime development location for industrial use is the West Hoffman Road site located adjacent to US Highway 127 in Alma. The site is municipally owned and consists of 163 acres with surrounding land that could allow for a potential expansion to the south and west. The site has been certified as an Energy Ready Site by Consumers Energy and Greater Gratiot Development, Inc has marketed the site as an "ideal location for automotive parts manufacturing, plastic products manufacturing, agricultural processing or warehousing/ logistics". They also note that the site has railroad access, and a developer could receive assistance through economic development incentives. Greater Gratiot Development, Inc. is also working with the Village of Ashley to promote a smaller site (approximately fifty acres with lots that range from one to six acres) that could be developed for retail, commercial,

residential, or light industrial uses with tax abatements available to eligible industrial clients.

TRADITIONAL DOWNTOWNS

Significant changes have occurred in traditional downtown areas across the country, and Gratiot County is no exception. Gratiot County's downtowns are in the cities of Alma, Ithaca, and St. Louis, as well as the Villages of Ashley and Breckenridge. What were once the exclusive centers of local and regional commercial activity, traditional downtowns are now increasingly challenged to compete with changing shopping habits, in particular online shopping, and corridor/ suburban commercial development. Customers' ability and routine willingness to drive longer distances and utilize online shopping options has pushed the transformation of the downtowns to be places now centered more on businesses offering personal and professional services of all types, unique products, small cafes and restaurants, specialty items requiring

Gratiot County is home to five business parks and one commerce park.

personal service, and entertainment options including theaters, pubs, and bars. Young people looking at moving back to the area from larger cities can still find some of the urban amenities they left behind.

Throughout Gratiot County, independently owned, full-service hardware stores remain in most of the downtown areas. Grocery stores, once a staple of a traditional downtown, have moved away from the downtown area into more suburban areas. Some of the unique "niche" businesses in the County's downtowns includes a microbrewery, confectioner, specialty bakeries, tattoo/body art, quilting, and antiques/collectibles.

Traditional downtowns offer the perfect opportunity for mixed-use development, particularly second story living above commercial, which is becoming more popular. There is still a large amount of undeveloped space to be utilized in the cities and villages of the County; effectively redeveloping these upper-story spaces presents both a challenge and an opportunity. Economic developers believe that developing flexible living spaces will increase the number of people downtown and can be expected to bring more foot traffic and greater revenues for businesses.

Economic development in traditional downtowns has been encouraged by Public Act 57 of 2018, commonly referred to as the Downtown Development Authority Act, which was designed to encourage development in commercial cores. Specifically, the DDA Act was created to halt property value deterioration, increase property tax valuation, eliminate the causes of deterioration and encourage historic preservation according to the DDA's own locally adopted development plans. DDAs enable a variety of funding options, including tax increment financing, which can be used to fund public improvements in downtown districts as well as the ability to levy a limited millage for administrative expenses. In Gratiot County, the Cities of Alma, Ithaca and St. Louis have DDAs, as does the Village of Breckenridge, all of which are working to maintain and expand traditional downtown business districts.

BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT

Brownfields are defined as vacant or underused properties that are contaminated, blighted or functionally obsolete. While assumed to be only industrial sites, brownfields can occur on smaller sites, such as former gas stations, junk yards or property along railroads for example. Regardless of their classification, all brownfield properties face obstacles to redevelopment and reuse. With the help of the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority of the County of Gratiot (BRACG), administered by Greater Gratiot Development, twenty-one sites have been redeveloped, $154,778,450 of private capital has been invested, $399,938 in grant funding has been received and 431 jobs were created. This is an important component of economic development because redevelopment of brownfield sites guarantees that the existing infrastructure

As in all municipal areas, and very noticeably in smaller communities, the most significant change has occurred in the traditional downtowns. Gratiot's downtowns are in the cities of Alma, Ithaca, and St. Louis and the Villages of Ashley, Breckenridge, Middleton, and Riverdale.

is used, and it conserves greenfield sites. Greater Gratiot Development, with help from local municipalities, have completed successful brownfield redevelopment projects in Alma, Ithaca, Ashley and St. Louis (Bethany Township).

The brownfield redevelopment process starts with an application to BRACG, which is a partnership of local municipalities and the County, administered by Greater Gratiot Development, Inc. After the initial application, the first step is a Phase I Assessment, which determines if the site has potential contamination issues. Phase II Assessment will include soil, surface water, and ground water testing to reveal the extent of contamination. Next, a Baseline Environmental Assessment is conducted to prevent the current owner from being liable for previous contamination. A Due Care Plan will include the clean-up of existing contamination to the required standards. Finally, a brownfield plan is developed to identify the activities and costs for which a developer may be reimbursed (potentially via tax increment financing). All Michigan brownfield projects require the cooperation of the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) to ensure that properties are cleaned to a standard that is safe for future use. Greater Gratiot Development, Inc. promotes several incentives for brownfield developers, including liability protection from existing contamination, tax increment financing reimbursement for eligible demolition/cleanup costs and potential environmental assessments through federal grants. Gratiot County has shown itself to be a model for cooperation between federal, state, and local government agencies when it comes to the cleanup and redevelopment of brownfield sites.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Greater Gratiot Development, Inc. operates as a public/private partnership and is recognized for fostering and participating in collaborative relationships with municipalities and other partners across the County. Their mission is to retain, expand, and attract business and industry, and to participate in activities which enhance the economic climate within Gratiot County. Incorporated in 1978, Greater Gratiot Development, Inc. coordinates economic development and related services on behalf of local municipalities and acts as a Countywide clearinghouse for information and assistance in the retention, expansion, and location of businesses in Gratiot County. The 32-member board includes representatives from political and geographic areas across Gratiot County and represents the major segments of the local economy. Greater Gratiot Development, Inc. administers the following corporations, each having a separate board membership structure: Brownfield Redevelopment Authority of the County of Gratiot, Economic Development Corporation of the County of Gratiot and the Hospital Finance Authority of the County of Gratiot. Greater Gratiot Development Inc.'s

program and administrative activities are partially funded by a Countywide millage.

Another organization involved in economic development in the County is the Gratiot Area Chamber of Commerce. Incorporated in 1994, the Chamber combined the efforts of the Cities of Alma, Ithaca and St. Louis and Village of Breckenridge/Wheeler Township Chambers. Each of the former chambers created Promotional Committees to maintain community-specific efforts, all under the umbrella of the Gratiot Area Chamber, which represents members across the County. The Gratiot Area Chamber of Commerce advocates for its members, while also promoting the County as a great place to live, work and visit. The Chamber organizes several annual events to highlight the region.

EMPLOYMENT

LABOR FORCE

Per the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) data, the civilian labor force (those 16 and over) of Gratiot County is estimated to be 18,016 people. Of this sector of the population, 63.3% live and work in Gratiot County, while 36.6% of workers travel outside of the County for employment. Around 50% of workers indicated that their commute to work in the County is less than 20 minutes. Comparing Gratiot County to Isabella County, which is a larger employment center, almost 37% of Gratiot County residents are leaving the County for employment while only 21% of Isabella County residents are leaving the County for employment. This data suggests an opportunity for Gratiot County to capture more resident workers through attraction of new businesses, as well as retention and expansion of existing companies.

Gratiot County is part of the Great Lakes Bay Michigan Works! service area. Gratiot's local Michigan Works! office is in the City of Alma and provides a full range of technical professional skills training for employers and jobseekers. The organization is an important part of workforce development in the County, offering employers many resources including staffing assistance, talent attraction, funding and resources for specific types of employee training.

TRANSPORTATION

AIRPORT

The Gratiot County Airport is located between the Cities of Alma and Ithaca and offers flight services to business, individual, and freight patrons. The airport features a 5,000-foot east-west primary runway and a 3,200-foot north-south cross wind runway. The runways handle commercial aircraft and small jets. The facility also provides private charters. In total, the airport oversees 9,500 operations per year. The Airport is governed by the Gratiot County Airport Advisory Board, consisting of the cities of Alma, Ithaca and St. Louis, the townships of Arcada and Pine River, and Gratiot County. All entities contribute financially to the Airport Advisory Board. The Board also receives funding through hangar and land lease rentals. Three Point Aviation LLC is the Fixed Base Operator at the airport and handles day-to-day operations.

ROADS

The primary road running through Gratiot County is US Highway 127, which moves vehicles north/south directly through the center of the County. Major roads running east/west include M-46 in the northern portion of the County, and M-57 in the southern portion of the County.

The County's more urban hubs are situated along these corridors, like the Cities of Alma and St. Louis which are both located near the intersection of US Highway 127 and M-46. The Gratiot County Road Commission (GCRC) states that they are responsible for 1,183 miles of County roads and 119 County bridges. The GCRC also maintains an additional 234 lane miles of US and State Trunklines through a partnership with the Michigan Department of Transportation.

State and federal funds for these roads are allocated through two different classification systems. State funding is provided through Michigan Public Act 51 of 1951, and federal funding is designated through the National Functional Classification System. Federal Aid eligible roads are rated for surface conditions under Michigan's Asset Management Program. The process of rating roads involves a windshield survey performed by a team of representatives from MDOT, road commissions, municipalities, and regional council. The rating a road receives sheds light on possible improvement measures that might be required in the future. Maps showing the most current road ratings for Gratiot County can be found at the Transportation Asset Management Council's website: https://www.mcgi.state.mi.us/tamcMap/.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

As a rural County, public transportation is limited and concentrated in the more urban areas of Gratiot County. One example is the Alma Transit Center's low cost, curb to curb dial-a-ride transit service throughout the city. A millage was also passed extending Alma Transit service to the Cities of Ithaca and St. Louis, as well as Pine River Township.

EDUCATION

SCHOOLS

Under the umbrella of the Gratiot-Isabella Regional Education Service District (GIRESD), there are six school districts serving Gratiot County: Alma Public Schools, Ashley Community Schools, Breckenridge Community Schools, Fulton Schools, Ithaca Public Schools and St. Louis Public Schools. In addition to traditional PreK through 12th grade education, GIRESD also provides the Gratiot-Isabella Technical Education Centers with a campus in Alma. GI-TEC offers students the opportunity for work-based learning in several trades including agriscience, auto technology, criminal justice, pre-engineering (mechatronics) and welding.

LIBRARIES

There are six public libraries located in Gratiot County: Alma Public Library, Seville Township Library, Thompson Home Public Library (Ithaca), T.A. Cutler Memorial Library (St. Louis), Breckenridge Village Library and Howe Memorial Library (Breckenridge). Each of these locations offers book lending services along with a variety of other services. County voters approved a Countywide millage to provide support to libraries in Gratiot County.

COLLEGES

Alma College is a four-year liberal arts private college located in the City of Alma. Alma College was founded in 1886 by Presbyterians and maintains a Scottish heritage. Among other Scottish traditions, the college has a kilted marching band, a Scottish dance troupe and hosts the annual Alma Highland Festival. The school enrolls over 1,200 students each year. Gratiot County does not have a two-year college, sometimes called a community college. In 2024, Michigan launched a program called "Community College Guarantee" that could cover most or all the cost of an associate degree or certification. The closest two-year college in the region is Mid-Michigan College in Mt. Pleasant.

There have been major developments at Alma College including a brand-new Library, completion of the Opera House, and new state-of-the-art athletics building with indoor track and field. These improvements will serve as a regional and state-wide draw to help increase enrollment efforts. Alma College is one of the largest employers and main cultural resources in Gratiot County and these improvements will further enhance its ability to draw students and investment into the area.

NATURAL RESOURCES

SOILS

In Gratiot County, nearly 84% of land is used in agriculture or designated as cropland, woodland and pasture. Most of the soils of the County have a good or fair potential for woodland, except in some areas where trees would not grow naturally or produce poor wood crops. Commercially valuable trees are less common and generally do not grow so rapidly on the wetter soils. Many of the soils in the County have a wetness limitation for urban development and some have a poor potential for urban development because of the shrink-swell potential.

The hilly portions of the County are excellent for parks and extensive recreation areas, nature study areas, and wilderness uses. All these areas provide habitat for many important species of wildlife.

LAKES AND RIVERS

Gratiot County has two natural lakes, Half Moon, and Madison. They are small and privately owned and are in Seville Township. Big Rainbow Lake located south of Perrinton is a private, all-sport lake, and is a man-made reservoir covering 304 surface acres. It also has a smaller branch-off lake called Little Rainbow Lake. Both lakes are part of the Upper Maple Watershed. There are two major rivers in the County, the Pine River, in the northern part of the County, which flows northeasterly, and the Maple River, in the southern part, which flows westerly.

CONTAMINATION

According to the County's 2010 Hazard Mitigation Plan, updated in 2020, "the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority of the County of Gratiot has documented over 100 brownfield sites, the vast majority related to underground storage tanks (i.e. fueling/service stations). Some of the more serious sites are in the federal Superfund program and/or encompass relatively large tracts of land." Among the contaminated sites, the Velsicol Plant in St. Louis has presented the community with the most

notable contamination issues. Contaminants have been released on that site since the 1930s when the plant was owned by Michigan Chemical Corporation. In the 1970s, under Velsicol's ownership, the plant was closed by the DNR after the company accidentally shipped PBB pellets, a fire retardant, as cattle feed. Since the closing of the plant, contaminants from the Velsicol site continue to be released into the community due to poor closing procedures, despite extensive clean-up efforts by the EPA. The EPA has been working for the last few years on clean-up of the Velsicol site. When complete, the property could be used for solar energy or a park, to name a few options.

RECREATION

FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

Gratiot County celebrates its community through fairs, festivals and other events. The most well-known of these celebrations is the Highland Festival, where thousands of people from the United States and Canada gather over Memorial Weekend to enjoy Scottish traditions.

Table 11: Fairs, Festivals and Events in Gratiot County

Month	Event	Location
Year Round	Gratiot County Players	Alma
Year Round	Gratiot County Quilt Trail	Countywide
March	Dueling Pianos	St. Louis
April	Easter Egg Hunts	Alma, Ithaca, St. Louis
May	Dust Off Car Show	Ithaca
May	Highland Festival and Games	Alma
May	Memorial Day Services	Ithaca, St. Louis
May – Oct.	Farmers Markets	Alma, Ithaca, St. Louis
June	Joe Scholtz Memorial Fishing Derby	St. Louis
June	Ashley Trading Days	Ashley
June	Gratiot Agricultural Expo	Ithaca
July	4th of July Celebrations	Breckenridge, St. Louis
July	Rural Urban Day	Alma
July	Gratiot County Fair for Youth	Alma
August	Perrington Summerfest	Perrington
August	St. Louis Blues Festival	St. Louis
August	Bannister Czechoslovak Harvest Festival	Bannister

August	Sumner Daze	Sumner
August	Old US Highway 127 Car Cruise	Alma, Ithaca, St. Louis
September	Gratiot Brews and Bites	Alma
September	Labor Day Bridge Walk	St. Louis
September	Lucky Macduck Day	Alma
September	Fall Festival	Alma, Breckenridge
December	Alma Jingle Bell 5k/10k	Alma
December	Holiday Celebrations	Alma, Ithaca, St. Louis, Breckenridge

SPORTS

The W.T. Morris swimming pool in St. Louis and the Alma College and Alma High School swimming pools offer opportunities for swimming, competitive and otherwise. Additionally, Alma High School and Ithaca High School have installed artificial turf fields, adding a regional draw for sporting events. Gratiot County has many opportunities for youth in the more densely populated areas of the County. There are four County owned parks, each supported by a county millage. There are organized sports groups such as soccer, football, and softball leagues, as well as specialized groups such as 4-H, sponsored by Michigan State University, and Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. Playgrounds, winter sled hills and ice-skating rinks are natural playgrounds for youth activities. There are adult organized sports clubs as well, with golf courses catering to all levels of golfing skills. Numerous parks are available for groups to meet for biking and hiking.

PARKS

The Gratiot County Parks and Recreation Department operates four facilities: Reed County Park, Paul Hubscher County Park, Luneack County Park, and Pompeii Park. In addition, the Parks Department maintains the six-and-a-half-mile paved path alongside US Highway 127 that runs from Ithaca to Alma. County parks provide opportunities for picnicking, hiking, kayaking, canoeing, and swimming. Ball fields encourage Little League play, and school sporting events bring out many spectators. These parks are supported by a countywide park millage. The Cities of Alma, Ithaca and St. Louis, as well as the Village of Breckenridge each have their own park and recreation systems, which operate parklands that are generally classified as neighborhood and community parks. In addition, public school districts across the County offer playgrounds and sports facilities like basketball courts that can be used by community members.

TRAILS

There is an abundance of trails throughout the County that provide opportunities for recreation. For example, the Mid-Michigan Pathways Trail, a non-motorized trail which runs parallel to US Highway 127 from Ithaca to Alma, connecting to the Fred Meijer Rail Trail in Alma and the Pere Marquette Rail Trail in Clare. The Fred Meijer Hartland Trail is a paved hiking and biking path that extends approximately forty-two miles along an abandoned CSX railroad right-of-way going east of Elwell in Gratiot County, west through Riverdale, Vestaburg, Cedar Lake, and Edmore. At Edmore, the trail turns south and runs through McBride, Stanton, Sidney and ends at Lake Road in Montcalm Township just north of Greenville. It is open to non-motorized use year-round. The Pine River Canoe Trail is a thirty-mile water trail that winds through the open fields and flood plain forests of Gratiot County. The Pine River Canoe Trail takes travelers to Lumberjack Park, the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail, Sumner Centennial Park, and the Pine River Park.

PUBLIC SERVICES

POLICE

The Gratiot County Sheriff's Office is the lead law enforcement agency for Gratiot County and is headquartered in Ithaca, the County seat. The Sheriff's Office provides road patrols across the County and operates the Gratiot County Jail, which has a capacity of seventy inmates. The City of Ithaca contracts police services with the Gratiot County Sheriff's Office. An "Ithaca Unit" of the Sheriff's Department has been formed, with 24/7, dedicated patrol and community policing services to the City of Ithaca. The Cities of Alma and St. Louis and the Village of Breckenridge have their own police departments. The Gratiot County Central Dispatch Authority (GCCDA) answers all 911 calls that originate within Gratiot County. The GCCDA averages over 18,000 911 calls per year, 46,000 non-emergency administrative telephone line calls, and annually dispatches over 43,000 individual calls for service.

FIRE

As would be expected in a rural County, fire services are shared across several communities through the formation of authorities or by mutual aid agreements. The Gratiot Emergency Services Authority (GESA) was formed and became an incorporated government agency in October 2020. Members of the Authority are the City of Ithaca and the Townships of Arcada, Emerson, Lafayette, New Haven, Newark, and North Star. The City of Alma's fire department is responsible for 140 square miles, including the City of Alma, and parts of Pine River, Arcada, Sumner, and Seville Townships.

The Ashley Area Fire Authority, located in the Village of Ashley, provides fire services to the Village of Ashley and the Townships of Elba, Hamilton, and Washington. The Breckenridge-Wheeler Township Fire Department is headquartered in the Village of Breckenridge and covers an area of roughly 140 square miles within Gratiot and Midland Counties that includes the Village of Breckenridge and parts of the Townships of Bethany, Emerson, Lafayette, and Wheeler. The Saint Louis Area Fire Department is owned and operated by the Mid-Michigan Community Fire Control Board. The Fire Control Board was established in 1981 through collaborative efforts of the City of St. Louis and the Townships of Bethany and Pine River, as well as a portion of neighboring Midland County. The fire district encompasses approximately 83 square miles. The Perrinton Fire Department provides fire service for the Village of Perrinton and the Townships of Fulton, New Haven, Newark, and North Shade Township.

WATER AND SEWER

Providing water and sewer services is another area where communities in Gratiot have collaborated for the public good. For example, the Cities of St. Louis and Alma formed the Gratiot Area Water Authority (GAWA) to oversee the replacement of the St. Louis municipal groundwater supply after discovering the wells had been contaminated by a Superfund site located within the city limits. The project was a massive undertaking that included expanding the former Alma Water Treatment plant, constructing two new booster pumping stations to direct water to St. Louis, new dual finished water transmission mains, a regional hydrogeological study, new water supply wells and associated raw water transmission main, and a new elevated water storage tank in the City of St Louis. In addition to the Cities of Alma and St. Louis, GAWA provides water to sections of the Townships of Pine River and Bethany as well. Other cities and villages within the County operate their own water treatment plants.

LARGER TRENDS

The insight in this section is based on national and state trends that were considered when shaping this plan, specifically the challenges and focal points that were identified through the public engagement process.

RESIDENTIAL

On a national level, housing inventory remains below pre-pandemic levels, but supply of newly built homes is increasing. On a state level, Michigan faces a tight housing inventory, with demand outpacing supply in many areas, including Gratiot County. When considering the goal to increase and expand the supply and variety of housing that was brought about during the public engagement process, it's important to consider the broad factors that influence the residential market in the County:

- Housing Supply and Demand: The balance between the number of homes available for sale and the number of buyers affects home prices and market activity. Recently, Gratiot County has seen a rise in home prices.
- Economic Conditions: Local employment rates and economic stability play a significant role. A strong job market can boost demand for housing, while economic downturns can have the opposite effect.

- Interest Rates: Mortgage interest rates impact buyers' purchasing power. Lower rates generally make buying a home more affordable, increasing demand.
- Population Trends: Changes in population, such as growth or decline, can influence housing demand. With a significant portion of the population being 65 years and older, there is an increased demand for accessible and age-friendly housing. This includes single-level homes, properties with wheelchair accessibility, and retirement communities. The average number of people per household has been steadily declining for several decades. Smaller family sizes and a rise in single-person households can lead to a higher demand for smaller homes, apartments, and condos. Additionally, different generations have varying housing preferences. Baby Boomers may prefer downsizing to smaller, more manageable homes, while Millennials might seek urban living with access to amenities and public transportation.
- Local Amenities and Infrastructure: The quality of schools, healthcare facilities, transportation, and other amenities can make an area more attractive to potential buyers.

Specific strategies to address housing are identified under the "Housing Gratiot" pillar in chapter four of this plan.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation continues to evolve, which translates to increases in ride sharing, driverless cars, electric or eco-efficient cars, public transportation and non-motorized mobility. Communities have benefitted from this shift due to the variety of transportation modes that offer more affordable and often more safe options.

Complete Streets is a comprehensive transportation planning approach that aims to create inclusive and sustainable transportation networks. Specifically, the Complete Streets approach aims to create roadways that are safe, accessible, and convenient for all users, regardless of their mode of transportation. This includes pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transportation users. The key principles to the Complete Streets approach are as follows.

- Safety: Prioritizing the safety of all road users by incorporating features like crosswalks, bike lanes, and traffic calming measures.
- Accessibility: Ensuring that streets are accessible to people of all ages and abilities, including those with disabilities.
- Connectivity: Creating a network of streets that connect people to key destinations such as schools, workplaces, and parks.
- Equity: Designing streets that serve all community members, including underserved and vulnerable populations.

Transportation planning with a complete streets policy uses the entire right of way to increase functionality, convenience, and safety for users while maintaining traffic capacity and flow. The

focus of complete streets does not stop at providing alternate forms of transportation but also places importance on the creation and enhancement of the public realm.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRITOURISM

Agricultural trends reflect broader changes in the agricultural sector and local economic development. The following agricultural conditions and practices exist in Gratiot County.

- Crop Production: Gratiot County remains a significant producer of crops like soybeans, corn, and wheat. The County has seen an increase in the acreage dedicated to these crops, driven by market demand and favorable growing conditions. The establishment of the ZFS Ithaca Soybean Processing Facility, the largest in the state, has influenced land use. This facility supports local soybean farmers and has led to increased soybean cultivation. ZFS has expanded since it began operations and can process approximately 150,000 bushels a day. This is a direct economic benefit to local and regional farmers who pay less to transport soybeans and receive a higher yield. Area farmers are also investing in storage facilities on their farms so they can sell beans outside of harvest for even better yields.
- Renewable Energy: Gratiot County is a leader in wind energy in Michigan, with numerous wind turbines installed. This shift has led to some agricultural land being repurposed for wind farms.
- Sustainable Practices: There is a growing emphasis on sustainable farming practices, including no-till and reduced-till farming, which help preserve soil health and reduce erosion. Dairy farmers in the area have added biodigesters to produce natural gas and manage manure. Cover cropping is also becoming more common.

Agritourism, defined as a form of tourism that involves visiting agricultural areas to experience farm life and agricultural activities, is growing in popularity across the nation. It offers visitors a chance to engage with farming practices, enjoy rural landscapes, and learn about food production.

Across the State of Michigan, local economies are benefitting from agritourism, and as an increasing number of visitors seek out agritourism opportunities, the farms gain support through the additional income streams for farmers. Agritourism also helps preserve agricultural land by making farming more economically viable. Another benefit is the educational aspect where visitors can learn about farming practices, sustainability, and the importance of local agriculture.

POPULAR AGRITOURISM ACTIVITIES:

- U-Pick Farms: Visitors can pick their own fruits and vegetables
- Cider Mills: Historic cider mills provide a taste of traditional cider-making processes and offer fresh cider and donuts.
- Farm Stays: Some farms offer overnight stays, allowing visitors to experience farm life firsthand. This includes activities like feeding animals and learning about sustainable farming practices.
- Corn Mazes and Pumpkin Patches: Seasonal attractions offer fun activities such as corn mazes, wagon rides, and pumpkin picking.
- Farmers Markets: Local farmers markets provide fresh, locally grown produce and handmade goods.

INDUSTRY

During the Recession of 2008-2012 all manufactured housing companies in Michigan ceased operation. Since manufactured housing represents a key potential form of affordable housing in Gratiot County moving forward, consideration should be given to attracting a manufactured housing company. Delivery costs for out-of-state modular housing are high and attracting a new manufacturing housing company to the area would help meet the housing demand while creating new employment opportunities.

SUSTAINABILITY

State and local governments need to be proactive in understanding the consequences of climate shifts and carry out plans that meet the anticipated challenges. In Michigan, recent strides have been made to face the climate and sustainability challenges.

- Clean Energy Initiatives: Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed a package aiming for 100% clean energy by 2040. This includes transitioning state utilities to renewable energy sources like wind, solar, and hydropower.
- MI Healthy Climate Plan: Launched in 2022, this plan aims for a carbon-neutral Michigan by 2050. It focuses on mitigating climate change impacts, creating green jobs, and promoting sustainable practices.
- Growth in Clean Energy Jobs: Michigan leads the Midwest in clean energy jobs, with a 5% growth in clean energy and transportation jobs from 2023 to 2024. The state is investing in renewable energy projects and energy efficiency improvements.

The following are recent sustainability trends in Gratiot County:

- Wind Energy Development: Gratiot County is a leader in wind energy, with several wind farms contributing significantly to the local energy grid. The recent addition of the Heartland Farms Wind project, which includes 72 wind turbines, will power approximately 80,000 households.

- Solar Energy Projects: Alongside wind energy, Gratiot County is expanding its solar energy and battery storage capacity.
The County's proactive planning for renewable energy development has made it a model for other regions. It is important to note that some communities have expressed interest in allowing the development of solar farms while others want to maintain the agricultural integrity and character of the land. If possible, future consideration should be given to creating a form of solar development transfer rights. This would allow communities wanting solar development to absorb the demand from those that do not.
- Collaborative Planning: The Gratiot Regional Excellence and Transformation (GREAT) plan is a collaborative framework that includes goals for renewable energy development across municipal boundaries. This approach ensures coordinated and sustainable growth in the County.

03. Economic Development Strategy

REGIONAL CONTEXT

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The landscape of Gratiot County varies greatly including thousands of acres of productive farmland, international transportation routes such as US Highway 127 along with several vital smaller cities, townships and villages. It should be noted that Gratiot County also has one of the highest concentrations of wind-powered, utility scale electric generation capacity in the State of Michigan with over 400 Megawatts of electrical generation. Despite the County's diversity, its residents and businesses share many of the same opportunities, assets, and challenges that can be more effectively acted upon with a coordinated effort. Given that, there are several recent regional economic development planning efforts including a newly adopted 14-County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) detailed below.

EASTERN MICHIGAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (EMCOG), REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

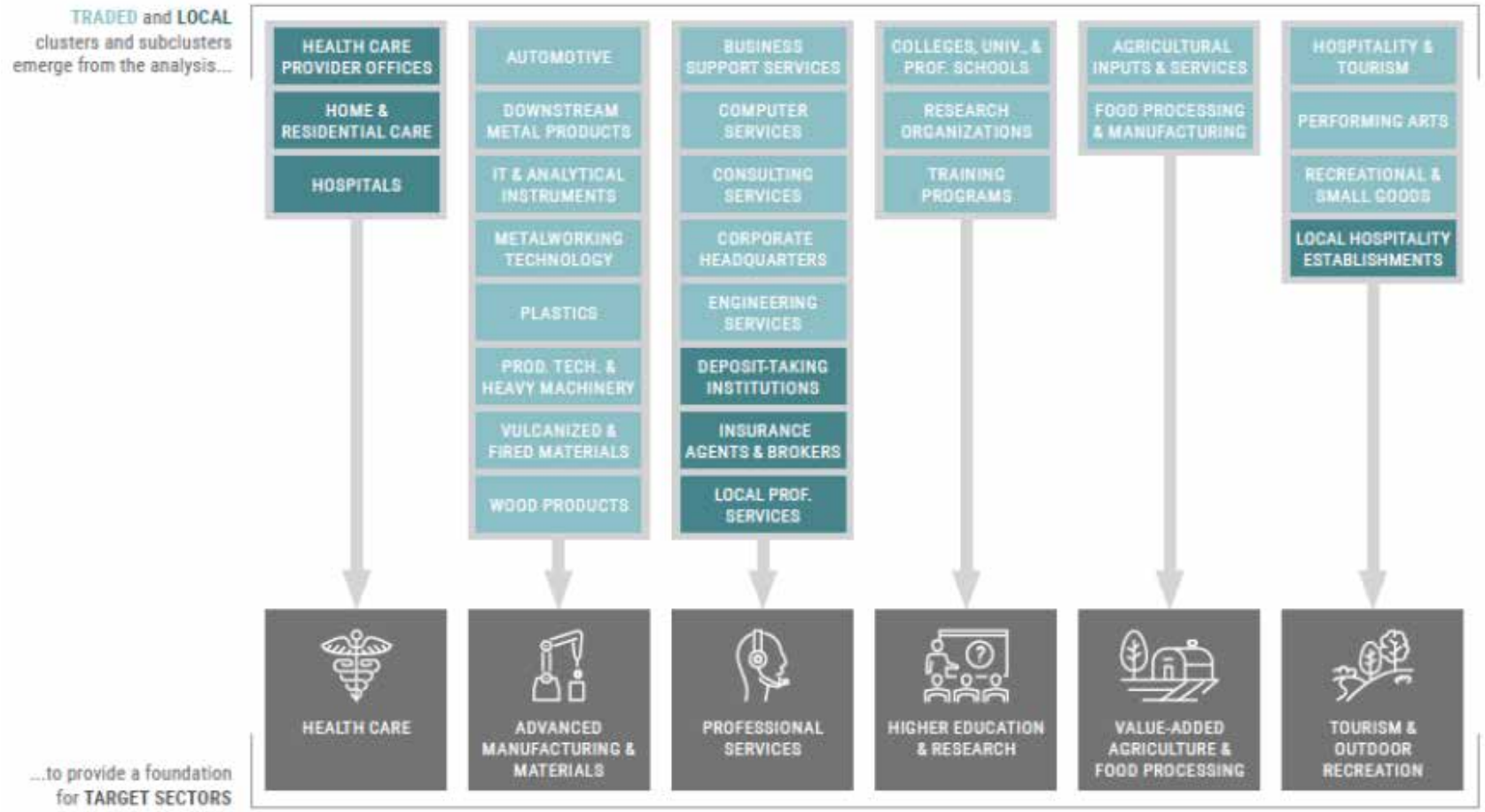
In January of 2020, EMCOG initiated the process of developing a 14-County CEDS plan to guide economic development efforts throughout their planning region, which includes Gratiot County. The plan was developed to focus on implementation strategies for the next five years; however, it covers a broad range of strategies that will have long-term economic impacts for the next several years.

The vision of the plan is to develop a resilient economy by investing in economic and workforce development, supporting vital infrastructure, preserving the outstanding quality of life, and encouraging economic opportunities for all.

The plan also identifies five goal categories that serve as the guide for the implementation strategies to be accomplished throughout the life of the plan. Those goal categories are:

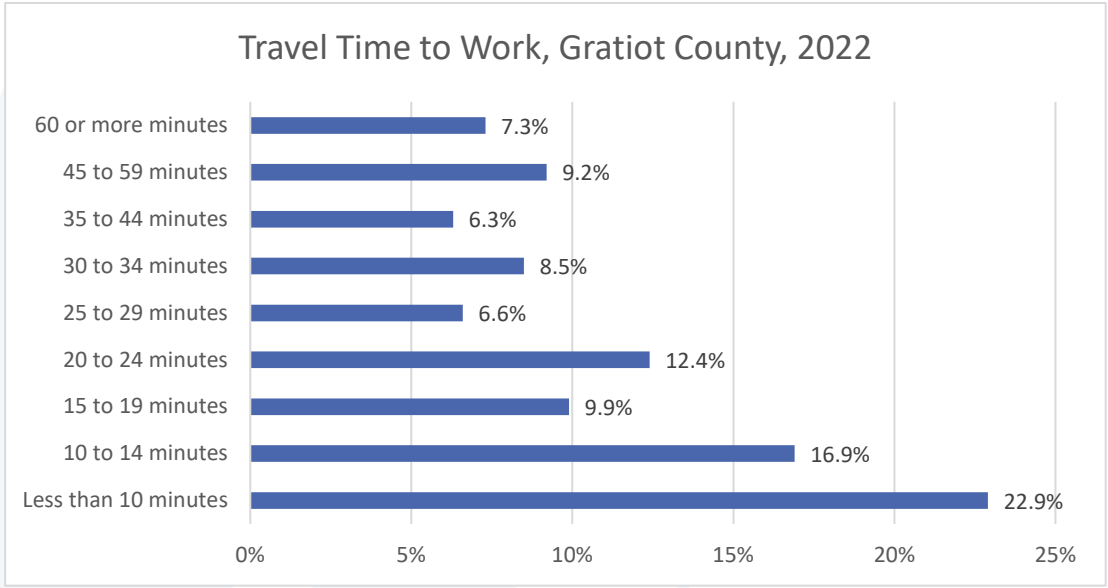
1. Infrastructure – Capitalize on East Michigan's transportation assets (roads, rail, port facilities, airports...) and make strategic investments in regional infrastructure, including broadband, that improve the region's economic competitiveness.
2. Workforce – To build on the collaboration among East Michigan's higher education, adult education, primary and secondary education, and workforce development organizations to create a strong talent pool to support the region's current and future employers.
3. Innovation – To leverage East Michigan's higher education institutions, major industries, medical complexes, and innovation assets to establish the region as a center for technology-based entrepreneurship and small business growth.
4. Placemaking – To embark on local and regional initiatives to strengthen the quality of place in each of East Michigan's communities to create an attractive environment for residents and tourists.
5. Economic Development – To grow East Michigan's economy through economic development activities (business retention, expansion and recruitment) and marketing efforts that enhance the region's image as a place to do business.

There are several target sectors identified within the CEDS as seen in Figure 8 below.



Sources: US Economic Development Administration; Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness, Harvard Business School; TIP Strategies.

Gratiot County currently has an advantage based on the number of residents that are currently employed in the manufacturing, agri-business and health care industries. It is also important to note that over 60% of employed residents within the County are employed within the County with many having less than a 10-minute commute time. This is an opportunity to attract new companies to these target sectors by showing that much of the County's workforce is generated and retained locally as seen in the chart below.



Tourism and outdoor recreation have also been identified as a target sector for growth, and the County is positioned to capture a share of that growth as well through agri-tourism, hiking, biking and paddling.

GREATER GRATIOT DEVELOPMENT, INC.

GGDI was incorporated in 1978 to coordinate economic development and related services on behalf of the area municipalities and the County of Gratiot. Acting as a Countywide clearinghouse for information and assistance in the retention, expansion, and location of businesses in Gratiot County. Greater Gratiot Development, Inc.'s program and administrative activities are partially funded by a Countywide millage.

Currently, GGDI serves as the primary agency for conducting business retention and attraction service for the townships in partnership with Gratiot County and the Michigan

Economic Development Corporation. GGDI participates in site selection and business attraction, serving as a gateway for companies looking to locate in the County.

Notable developments since the last Master Plan include the following:

- Numerous manufacturing expansion projects:
  - ◊ Aircraft Precision Products
  - ◊ Alma Tire
  - ◊ Aludyne
  - ◊ Apex Marine
  - ◊ Avalon & Tahoe
  - ◊ Jer-Den Plastics
  - ◊ MERRILL
  - ◊ Mid-Michigan Awning & Upholstery
- Misenhelder Welding
- Plasti-Paint
- Powell Fabrication
- Trident Manufacturing
- Trinity Truck
- ZFS Ithaca, LLC began operations in 2019 and has expanded since. It now processes almost 50% of the state's soybeans, which results in positive spin-off effects on the local economy. Local farmers also are seeing higher prices with lower transportation costs.
- Capital Steel & Wire purchased the former Cartridges Are Us building in South Ithaca Industrial Park; it will be operational in Q3 of 2025.
- Small businesses were impacted severely by COVID-19 and most weathered the downturn, many due to grant relief programs totaling $844,000 to over 200 small businesses in Gratiot County and PPP funding.

- Brownfield Redevelopment projects:
  - ◊ 3one3 Boutique Hotel, Alma (mixed-use)
  - ◊ 120 E. Superior, LLC, Alma (mixed-use)
  - ◊ 313 N. State St., Alma (mixed-use)
  - ◊ 228 E. Saginaw St., Breckenridge (mixed-use)
  - ◊ 220 E. Superior St., Alma (mixed-use)
- Alternative energy projects:
  - ◊ Polaris Wind (68 turbines in North Star, Hamilton, and Lafayette townships)
  - ◊ Gratiot Farms (60 turbines in New Haven and North Shade townships)
  - ◊ Heartland Farms Wind (72 turbines in Newark, Washington, New Haven, North Shade, and North Star townships)
  - ◊ Pine River Solar (Pine River townships)
  - ◊ Polaris Solar (Washington and North Star townships)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

There are several opportunities to invest and support new growth and development within Gratiot County. Some of those opportunities are detailed here, recognizing that they can change over time. As GGDI and other public and private partners venture into these tasks, new projects may be discovered. It will also be important to prioritize efforts to ensure the most benefit is realized not only in new taxable value, but also in job growth, wage growth, business retention and expansion, and finally, business attraction.

ECONOMIC GENERATORS

Gratiot County, like most communities, has what can be referred to as "Economic Generators" or those uses or places that hold potential to attract additional activity and investment. They can be large employers, institutions, or locations that if properly planned, marketed, and incentivized, can lead to spin-off or stand-alone development. Some of the economic generators might fall under one of the categories below, like Public-Private Partnerships, but the specific projects will be identified in the following section.

US 127 HIGHWAY CORRIDOR

The US 127 corridor holds potential for additional new development, especially given the traffic volumes during peak travel periods. There is continuous access to the highway from M-57 to E. Pierce Road and then interchanges with full access at E. Washington Road in Ithaca, E. Polk Road, E. Lincoln Road, N. State Road, Michigan Ave. and M-46 interchanges in Alma. A market analysis should be conducted for the entire corridor within Gratiot County to identify gaps in the market for retail, industrial, and other potential uses. A marketing plan can then be built around the study results and serve as the basis for developer and business outreach.

FRANCHISE HOTEL SITE

Even though Alma is home to Alma College and other major area employers, there is not a franchise hotel located in or near the city. The market is currently served by smaller motels, a historic bed and breakfast in Alma, residences on Alma College Campus, and

a recently finished boutique hotel in the heart of downtown Alma. When overflow is needed due to major events at Alma College, the Alma Hospital, Michigan Masonic Home, and other major employers, visitors must travel to outside locations like Mt. Pleasant for rooms at franchise hotels. Studies have been conducted questioning the viability of a typical franchise hotel, and have shown the need for a smaller footprint, 40 rooms or less, at major interchanges, particularly the M-46/US HIGHWAY 127 intersection in Pine River Township.

ALMA COLLEGE

As a prestigious four-year college, Alma should be looked at for potential development and business spin-offs. This could include everything from expanded housing opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to a small business incubator/ shared workspace with access to college resources. History has shown that institutions like colleges, libraries, hospitals, etc. provide greater long-term growth and stability to communities than the attraction of large industrial employers. While it is important to continue attracting new industries, they have life cycles that are exceeded by local institutions.

TRADITIONAL DOWNTOWNS

Traditional downtowns have made a strong comeback over the past 20 years and have become an economic generator for communities. People of all ages are attracted to thriving downtowns, regardless of the size. From single block downtowns in predominantly rural areas to multi-block downtowns in small to medium sized cities, people are attracted to the uniqueness and vibrancy they can provide. Businesses like to locate in traditional downtowns and people like to live and work there too.

It is not just the planning and community development organizations that recognize this trend. Economic developers have found traditional downtowns to be an attraction tool and a way to provide additional housing that is sorely lacking nation-wide. It can be difficult to attract new industries if housing is not available for employees at all levels within the company. Likewise, traditional downtowns can help companies and businesses attract young people to the County as they look for some of the vibrancy found in larger cities.

MICHIGAN MASONIC HOME

The Michigan Masonic Home, including Masonic Pathways (Life Plan Community), Jack F. Sanders Heath Care Center (Rehabilitation and Skilled Nursing) and PACE Central Michigan (Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly), together provide comprehensive and quality senior care from all aspects of the senior care continuum. With approximately 400 residents and 350 employees, it serves as an economic generator for new business and housing activity. It is important to take full advantage of the spin-off potential created by this long-term community institution.

MYMICHIGAN MEDICAL CENTER

Also located in Alma, the MyMichigan Medical Center has 107 beds and over 1,000 employees serving Alma and the greater Gratiot County area. This is a teaching facility with a family medicine residency training program, medical student clinical rotations, nursing student rotations and state-of-the-art Simulation Center. As with the Michigan Masonic Home, it is important to maximize the financial impact of the Center and continue to support the ongoing needs of the staff. For example, joint housing development efforts can be undertaken with MyMichigan Medical Center to ensure that doctors and hospital staff have adequate housing availability in the Alma area.

AGRI-TOURISM/BUSINESS

There is a long and rich history of agricultural tradition and heritage embedded within Gratiot County. This includes acres of crop production, processing facilities, distribution facilities and ag-based tourism stops such as Phillips Orchards and Apple Barrel Cider Mill Due to the centralized location of the County in the Lower Peninsula and with nearby access to major transportation routes, it makes good sense for ag-based business and services providers such as ZFS in Ithaca to be located in Gratiot County and should be a high priority focus of attracting additional facilities to the area that could provide value-added services and jobs that support the ag industry in the County and surrounding region. Other industries could include food processing however some processing uses require high volumes of water.

LAND BANKED PROPERTY

Land banked properties can both be a liability and an asset to the County. When properties are held by a Land Bank, they are not income generating for the County or its municipalities as they are not required by statute to pay property tax. Also, many of these properties tend to be vacant and blighted and in need of demolition or rehabilitation. The County should work with its Land Bank partners to identify a priority demolition plan and access available state and federal funds to implement demolition efforts, if needed, across the County as soon as possible to stabilize blighted areas which can also help reduce crimes committed on these vacant properties.

This is only successful when there is a plan for redevelopment of these vacant properties. Through the Land Bank Act, Land Banks have access to certain economic development tools that can be lucrative to potential investors and developers. If the County acquires multiple properties in the Land Bank, it should work with the State Land Bank Authority and the local authority to consolidate the vacant parcels and issue a Developer Request for Qualifications to solicit a pool of qualified developers that have the capacity to start building on these vacant parcels immediately using Tax Increment Financing to assist with closing the financial gaps between construction and sale or lease of the final units.

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

With alternative energy becoming a state priority for new clean energy generation and distribution, Gratiot County has been leading the way with wind energy. The City of St. Louis also has a long-established power authority and hydro-electric generation facility. There will undoubtedly be pressures and opportunities in the region for new solar installations in the County given the acres and acres of mostly flat and open existing farmland. An opportunity also exists for solar on brownfield land that may have limited other redevelopment potential.

Under Michigan Public Act 233 of 2023, the Michigan Public Service Commission has been given authority over large utility-scale alternative energy project siting as a result of substantial pushback from local communities over the siting of these large projects. In areas of the County interested in alternative energy projects, it is recommended that zoning regulations match those of the state to retain local authority over the projects. It is anticipated that there will still be opportunities for alternative energy growth throughout the County and for that reason the need for skilled labor, technology, grid support and expansion as well as innovation and research and development related to clean energy generation which all can lead to valuable economic expansion and growth in the County and region.

CHILD CARE

The East-Central Michigan region faces a growing demand for child care, driven by economic shifts and changing

demographics. Key industries, such as manufacturing and healthcare, require child care during non-traditional hours, yet this need is not met due to regulatory and operational barriers. An aging population and reduced birth rates further complicate the child care ecosystem, which is defined by limited supply and high costs. Many families are left relying on informal care arrangements due to the lack of licensed child care providers, particularly in rural areas.

The East-Central Michigan Child Care Coalition (ECMI) developed a Regional Child Care Action Plan that provides an analysis of the current child care landscape across nine counties in East-Central Michigan and proposes actionable strategies to improve access and sustainability within the system.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Insufficient Child Care Supply: The region lacks adequate child care options, especially for non-traditional work hours. High operational costs, municipal regulations, and state policies restrict providers from expanding services
2. Barriers to Child Care Access: Families face difficulties accessing affordable, quality child care due to regulatory burdens, limited public funding, and inflexible scheduling. These issues are compounded by outdated information and complex systems that hinder access to care.
3. Inconsistent Funding and Support: Child care providers face low reimbursement rates, high administrative burdens, and unpredictable funding. This limits their ability to sustain operations or compete with government-run programs.
4. Workforce Challenges: Staffing shortages, low wages, and high turnover plague the child care industry, reducing the quality and availability of services. Providers struggle to attract and retain qualified staff due to low wages and challenging working conditions.
5. Regulatory and Policy Barriers: Complex and overlapping municipal and state regulations make it difficult for child care businesses to operate sustainably. Zoning laws, licensing requirements, and inspection protocols are often duplicative and costly.
6. Lack of Recognition of Child Care as Infrastructure: Child care is not widely recognized as essential infrastructure, leading to inadequate investment and support from both public and private sectors.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a Child Care Referral Tool: Create a tool to help families identify available child care options in the region, supported by community partners to improve access to information.
- Create a Municipal Guidebook: Develop a guidebook to support municipalities in aligning local policies with state regulations and understanding the needs of child care providers.
- Leverage Child Care Management Software: Assist child care businesses in adopting management software to streamline operations and reduce administrative burdens.
- Advocate for Policy Change: Work with policymakers to recognize child care as essential infrastructure, ensuring long-term funding and support for providers.
- Expand Funding and Reimbursement Programs: Increase funding for the CDC Scholarship and other programs to provide fair compensation for providers and expand access to affordable child care.

TOOLS TO SUPPORT INDUSTRIAL GROWTH

There are several areas that could present an opportunity for new industrial growth within the County and its municipalities. This includes a mixture of both existing structures and vacant properties identified by the County and its municipalities. The following programs are intended to assist the city with the redevelopment of these sites as well as assist with support for redevelopment, new and existing businesses and attraction to these spaces.

PROJECT SPECIFIC TAX CAPTURE (DDA'S, CIA'S, LDFA'S)

Recognizing that the cost of industrial redevelopment is higher than it is for undeveloped sites, the Tax Increment Finance Authorities throughout the County may, at their own discretion, commit project-specific future tax increment capture back to private projects for a specified period. The goal is to provide funding to close the "gap" that prevents the project from becoming a reality due to financial feasibility. For example, if the pro-forma for a project indicates that it cannot generate enough income to cover the cost of construction and a reasonable rate of return for a developer/investor, future tax increment can be committed to that development to make is feasible. It can also be used as a tool to attract companies and businesses to the County to create new employment opportunities within the TIF Districts.

For TIF Authorities to use this option, they will need to amend their existing Development Plans to include "Gap Funding" as an eligible expense and utilization of captured funds from the Authority.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Public-Private Partnerships (P3) can exist in several different formats but may present one of the best opportunities for redevelopment of industrial spaces within the County and its municipalities.

This opportunity would allow a municipality or non-profit agency the ability to partner with a for-profit builder to develop new industrial, flex or campus options within the city. By partnering, it is possible for the developers/builders to get land at a lower cost, thereby reducing total construction costs.

In theory, the municipality/non-profit could hold the land, reducing holding costs and taxes while the project is under construction. The P3 could also be instrumental with infrastructure development on the property and eventually recuperate initial costs upon final sale or redevelopment of property.

BUSINESS RETENTION/ATTRACTION

Upon completion of this strategy, it will be important to engage fully with GGDI as well as the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to implement a business attraction strategy that works for the community based on the outcome of the Master Plan, land available for growth and target sectors the County and region are looking to attract.

GGDI as well as MEDC can provide support and are a useful partner for assisting with attracting new industrial and office users to the community. Utilization of their broker networks as well as hosting local familiarization tours within the community can work to attract new investors and tenants that strengthen and diversify the economic fabric of the community.

SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT – MEDC/GGDI/SBA/APEX/SBDC

There are several support agencies positioned to support local entrepreneurs and should all be included in discussions and strategies to identify entrepreneurs and home-based businesses throughout the city and “garden” them to foster new economic growth in the city.

The following programs are ideal for this strategy.

- APEX Accelerator – The mission of APEX is to enhance national defense and economic development in the State of Michigan by assisting Michigan businesses in obtaining and performing on federal, state and local government contracts. APEX is a great resource for small businesses looking to provide services to all levels of government.
- Michigan Small Business Development Center – The MISBDC is a premier business development and entrepreneurial support agency. They offer a wide range of services from business planning to counseling to market research. MISBDC is a branch of the U.S. Small Business Administration. https://michigansbdc.org/.

- SBA – The U.S. Small Business Administration can provide funding assistance through micro loans for growing and expanding small businesses looking to locate within Gratiot County. https://www.sba.gov/
- Greater Gratiot Development, Inc - GGDI focus is to leverage public and private investment to accelerate business growth and the creation of high-quality employment opportunities in Gratiot County.

GGDI is uniquely positioned to help local businesses meet their economic objectives:

- Advise as to business expansion assistance
- Assist with site location and planning
- Coordinate economic development incentives and grant opportunities
- Assist with infrastructure development
- Provide project financing assistance
- Offer brownfield redevelopment support
- Serve as a liaison between business and state and local government
- Assist with access to a number of workforce training programs.

INCENTIVES TO ASSIST DEVELOPMENT

One of the common themes identified by the public input sessions was the need for housing of all varieties, and a lack of financing opportunities for new housing construction, especially for speculative building. While banks and mortgage lenders are financing new construction for home buyers to build individual home sites, there is still hesitancy to finance large construction projects. Some of the reasoning behind this includes tighter lending regulations since the Great Recession.

Other issues include low credit ratings and lack of capital and collateral. It is also recognized that funding support is needed to improve and revitalize existing housing stock within established residential neighborhoods throughout the County. The following strategies could help to assist with closing the financing gap.

FINANCIAL PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT RESIDENTIAL

MSHDA MULTIFAMILY DIRECT LENDING

MSHDA offers direct lending to eligible borrowers in the form of loans from both tax-exempt and taxable bonds, as well as MSHDA gap funding loans and equity bridge loans in certain situations, for the development of affordable rental housing.

MSHDA direct lending programs are available for both new construction and acquisition and rehabilitation of affordable or conventionally financed rental housing, mixed use buildings, or the adaptive re-use of other structures.

MSHDA NEIGHBORHOOD ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

The NEP program's primary goals are to identify and fund innovative activities to address specific needs; assist and showcase where people are engaged and facilitating change; and provide funding to facilitate and implement additional activities.

The NEP program can financially assist high-impact, innovative, neighborhood housing-oriented activities that benefit low and moderate-income areas and residents. All components are designed to fund tangible housing-oriented activities that are: implementation ready; highly visible; impactful to the community and resident's qualify of life; holistically focused; and where there is buy-in and demonstrated local support.

The NEP program is made available statewide through a yearly competitive funding round to applicants consisting of local non-profit agencies (501c3) and local units of government.

MEDC COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

The Michigan Community Revitalization Program (MCRP) is an incentive program available from the Michigan Strategic Fund (MSF), in cooperation with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). The program is designed to provide grants, loans, or other economic assistance for eligible investment projects in Michigan and promote community revitalization that will accelerate private investment in the following categories:

Areas of historical disinvestment:

- Contribute to Michigan's reinvention as a vital, job generating state
- Foster redevelopment of functionally obsolete or historic properties

- Reduce blight
- Protect the natural resources of this state

LOW INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDIT

The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) is the most important resource for creating affordable housing in the United States today. The LIHTC database, created by HUD and available to the public since 1997, contains information on 45,905 projects and 2.97 million housing units placed in service between 1987 and 2015.

NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY

Through the provisions of Public Act 57 of 2018, a Neighborhood Improvement Authority (NIA) may be established. A NIA may use its funds, including tax increment financing, to fund residential and economic growth in residential neighborhoods.

An authority may also issue bonds to finance these improvements. Once established, the NIA prepares a development plan and a tax increment financing plan to submit for approval to the local municipality. A development plan describes the costs, location, and resources for the implementation of the public improvements that are projected to take place in the NIA district.

A tax increment financing plan includes the development plan and details the tax increment procedure, the amount of bonded indebtedness to be incurred, and the duration of the program. After adoption of the two plans, the development plan is implemented and the tax increments, which occur because of improvements in the eligible property, accrue to the NIA to be used as required by the development plan.

The activities of the NIA may be financed by a) donations to the authority; b) revenue bonds; c) revenues from buildings or property owned or leased by the NIA; d) tax increments; e) special assessments; and f) grants.

FEDERAL HOME LOAN BANK

Serving Michigan, the FHLB of Indianapolis is one of 11 Regional FHLBank offices that support mortgage lending and community investment through their member organizations. FHLB primary objectives are to support housing finance and community development

and provide direct support of affordable housing. Products and services include forgivable grants and loans in support of home repairs, down payment assistance to increase affordability, new housing development and much more.

RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES EXEMPTION

The Residential Housing Facilities Act (known as the Residential Housing Exemption), 2022 PA 237, provides a tax incentive to owners of rental housing property of more than four units to enable renovation and expansion of aging facilities and assist in the building of new facilities. A Residential Housing Exemption Certificate (RHEC) entitles the facility to exemption from ad valorem real property taxes for a term of one to twelve (1-12) years as determined by the local governmental unit.

Applications are filed, reviewed, and approved by the local governmental unit. The State Tax Commission (STC) must also approve the application and issue the exemption certificate.

NEIGHBORHOOD ENTERPRISE ZONE (NEZ)

The Neighborhood Enterprise Zone Act, PA 147 of 1992, as amended, provides for the development and rehabilitation of residential housing located within eligible distressed communities. New and rehabilitated facilities applications are filed, reviewed and approved by the local unit of government,

but are also subject to review at the State level by the Property Services Division.

The State Tax Commission (STC) is responsible for final approval and issuance of new and rehabilitated facility certificates. Exemptions for new and rehabilitated facilities are not effective until approved by the STC. NEZ Homestead applications are filed, reviewed and approved by the local unit of government.

COMMUNITY CAPITAL

Community capital is defined as capital sourced from a broad cross-section of the community and invested in the community. It is more than a legal and financial strategy as at its core, it's about equity, inclusivity, empowerment, and shared prosperity. Community capital has been empowered by recent legislation, policy, and management tools that now enable virtually any/every member of any community to invest in community-based projects, including housing. There are now also community investment fund structures that can raise local investment into a fund that can help build or renovate housing.

PHILANTHROPIC CAPITAL

The philanthropic world is more and more frequently engaged in "impact investing"; notably looking to solve local problems by partnering with traditional sources of capital. There are a growing number of housing projects in Michigan and nationwide, where capital is provided as seed or match money from community and family foundations, most often from program income funds but now also from corpus funds.

Philanthropic capital is most often seen as part of the capital required for low-income or affordable housing, as well as workforce housing; generally where there is a social good tied to a housing project.

FAITH BASED PROPERTY

While communities across the country are struggling to provide affordable housing options for their most vulnerable citizens, a new set of sometimes-overlooked development partners is rising to the challenge: religious institutions. Many of these institutions own vacant buildings and underutilized land in established neighborhoods.

Projects to repurpose unneeded land surrounding a religious worship structure often involve a still-active (though possibly struggling) congregation interested in both addressing the affordability challenge and preserving or improving the future of that worshiping community. Since the "excess" land that may be made available for housing is often currently used as a parking lot, they also frequently involve questions of zoning regulations requiring minimum amounts of parking.

Beyond housing, financial tools exist at the local, state, and federal levels to assist in re/development. The following programs are a sampling of incentives and tools that could potentially be utilized or have been used by municipalities and developers that are undertaking redevelopment projects in the community.

PROJECT SPECIFIC TAX CAPTURE (DDA)

For municipalities that have a Downtown Development Authority (DDA), they can establish a Project-Specific Tax Capture program for projects in the downtown districts. The program commits project-specific future tax increment capture back to private projects for a specified period of time. The goal is to provide funding to close the "gap" that prevents the project from becoming a reality due to financial feasibility. For example, if the pro-forma for a project indicates that it cannot generate enough income to cover the cost of construction and a reasonable rate of return for a developer/investor, future

tax increment can be committed to that development to make is feasible. It can also be used as a tool to attract companies and businesses to create new employment opportunities within the DDA Districts.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Public-Private Partnerships can exist in a number of different formats but may present one of the best opportunities for redevelopment of both residential and retail spaces within the more urban municipalities in the County. This opportunity would allow a municipality or non-profit agency the ability to partner with a for-profit builder to develop new housing, mixed-use or campus options within areas in the County. By partnering, it is possible for the developers/builders to get land at a lower cost, thereby reducing total construction costs.

In theory, the municipality/non-profit could hold the land, reducing holding costs and taxes while the project is under construction. The P3 could also be instrumental with infrastructure development on the property and eventually recuperate initial costs upon final sale or redevelopment of property.

STATE AND FEDERAL INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

BROWNFIELD ACT 381

The Brownfield Program uses tax increment financing (TIF) to reimburse brownfield related costs incurred while redeveloping contaminated, functionally obsolete, blighted or historic properties. It is also responsible for managing the Single Business Tax and Michigan Business Tax Brownfield Credit legacy programs (SBT/MBT Brownfield Credits).

The Michigan Strategic Fund (MSF) with assistance from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), administers the reimbursement of costs using state school taxes (School Operating and State Education Tax) for nonenvironmental eligible activities that support redevelopment, revitalization and reuse of eligible property.

The MEDC also manages amendments to SBT/MBT Brownfield Credit projects approved by MSF. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) administers the reimbursement of environmental response costs using state school taxes for environmental activities, and local units of government sometimes use only local taxes to reimburse for eligible activities (i.e., "local-only" plans).

Additionally, The Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act of 1996, MCL 125.2651 et. seq., as amended (the "Brownfield Act"), authorizes municipalities to create local brownfield redevelopment authorities (each a "BRA") to facilitate the implementation of brownfield plans to promote the revitalization, redevelopment, and reuse of brownfield properties, which include, but are not limited to, previously developed, tax reverted, blighted, or functionally obsolete properties. The Brownfield Act permits the use of tax increment financing ("TIF") as a funding tool to help cover the additional costs associated with redeveloping a brownfield property. The taxable value of brownfield property is often very low, and the property taxes generated therefrom may be correspondingly very low. When an improved brownfield redevelopment has increased property value and generates new tax revenue, the increased revenue can be captured by a local BRA and be used to either repay TIF bonds or reimburse the developer for the eligible costs associated with redeveloping the property.

On July 19, 2023, Public Act 90 of 2023 ("PA 90") became effective and amended the Brownfield Act to include certain housing development activities as eligible activities. Prior to PA 90, TIF was only available to property owners who coordinated with local BRAs and (a) the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy ("EGLE") for certain environmental cleanup activities, and (b) the Michigan Strategic Fund ("MSF") for certain business development and community development activities. Pursuant to PA 90, brownfield work plans and combined brownfield plans that involve the use of taxes levied for school operating purposes and that request reimbursement for housing development activities for affordable and/or subsidized housing must be reviewed by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA).

EMPLOYER-ASSISTED HOUSING FUND

Michigan's workforce is growing, but housing options aren't keeping pace. The Employer-Assisted Housing Fund is a state-funded initiative designed to help employers invest in housing solutions for income-eligible households. By bringing together employers, local governments, housing professionals, and MSHDA, the Employer-Assisted Housing Fund tackles one of Michigan's most pressing economic challenges, ensuring workers have access to affordable homes near their jobs.

Backed by $10 million in state funding, MSHDA will administer the Fund, which offers direct support to employers willing to invest in housing for local workers. Employers that contribute matching funds—whether through cash investments, land donation, a below-market interest loan, or some combination thereof—may qualify for resources through the Fund to help develop new housing options. In return, rental housing must remain affordable for at least 10 years and for-sale housing must remain affordable for five years—ensuring long-term impact.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The MiBDP is an incentive program available from the Michigan Strategic Fund, in cooperation with the MEDC. The program is designed to provide grants, loans, or other economic assistance to businesses for highly competitive projects in Michigan that create jobs and/or provide investment.

Gratiot County would utilize this program in partnership with the Greater Gratiot Development Inc. and the MEDC through their business retention/attraction strategy. This tool can work great for companies looking to expand or relocate within the County and are adding new and retaining existing jobs.

COMMERCIAL REHABILITATION ABATEMENT

Encourages the rehabilitation of commercial property by abating the property taxes generated from new investment for a period up to 10 years. Commercial property is a qualified facility that includes a building or group of contiguous buildings of commercial property that is 15 years or older, of which the primary purpose is the operation of a commercial business enterprise or multi-family residential. The CRA freezes the taxable value of the building and exempts the new investment from local taxes.

The CRA requires multiple levels of approval including the creation of the CRA District which is established by the municipal boards or councils and approved by the County. Upon creation and approval of the district, the abatement itself is approved or denied on a project specific application basis.

CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITIES

A Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA) allows the use of tax increment financing to make capital improvements within an established commercial district. It allows communities that already have Downtown Development Authorities (DDAs) to extend similar benefits to aging commercial corridors outside the DDA district or that extend through more than one municipality.

MICHIGAN TRANSPORTATION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND

The mission of the Transportation Economic Development Fund (TEDF) is to enhance the ability of the state to compete in an international economy, to serve as a catalyst for economic growth of the state, and to improve the quality of life in the state.

The funds are available to state, County, and city road agencies for immediate highway needs relating to a variety of economic development issues. Similar to the Business Development Program identified above, this a great tool to help communities improve transportation routes supported by large economic development projects. In the case of Gratiot County, the applicant for these funds would be the Gratiot County Road Commission.

COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

The Michigan Community Revitalization Program (MCRP) is an incentive program available from the Michigan Strategic

Fund (MSF), in cooperation with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), designed to promote community revitalization that will accelerate private investment in areas of historical disinvestment; contribute to Michigan's reinvention as a vital, job generating state; foster redevelopment of functionally obsolete or historic properties; reduce blight; and protect the natural resources of this state.

The program is designed to provide grants, loans, or other economic assistance for eligible investment projects in Michigan.

PA 198 INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES EXEMPTION

Industrial property tax abatements provide incentives for eligible businesses to make new investments in Michigan. These abatements encourage Michigan manufacturers to build new plants, expand existing plants, renovate aging plants, or add new machinery and equipment. High technology operations are also available for abatement. Depending on the scope and type of project, real property taxes can be abated up to 50% for a period not to exceed 12 years for new construction.

Further, the 6-mil SET may be abated up to 100% with approval from the MEDC. In the case of rehabilitation, the current assessed value of the property prior to improvement is frozen. This results in a 100% exemption from property tax on the value of the improvements.

A PA 198 Exemption can be initiated by eligible applicants and require approval from municipal authorities and the State of Michigan.

MATCH ON MAIN GRANTS (MEDC)

The Match on Main Grant Program is a reimbursement grant program, provided by the MEDC, that serves as a tool to support new or expanding place-based businesses by providing up to $25,000 in funding to support an eligible small business through an application submitted, administered, and managed by the local unit of government, downtown development authority, or other downtown management or community development organization where the business is located.

PUBLIC PLACES, COMMUNITY SPACES (MEDC)

The grant program is available to municipalities with projects that focus on “activation of public spaces and community places,” such as an outdoor plaza or park enhancements and that have established public awareness and local momentum.

Once a project has been chosen and the funding gap has been identified, the community can apply to MEDC to conduct a crowdfunding campaign of up to $50,000 generated in part by donations from community residents and stakeholders. Funding generated by the campaign will be matched with a grant by MEDC.

REVITALIZATION AND PLACEMAKING PROGRAM (MEDC)

The Revitalization and Placemaking (“RAP”) Program is an incentive program that will proactively deploy state funding to address community revitalization needs in Michigan communities by investing in projects that enable population and tax revenue growth through rehabilitation of underutilized buildings and historic structures, and development of permanent place-based infrastructure associated with social zones and traditional downtowns, outdoor dining, and place-based public spaces. Administered by the MEDC, this tool provides access to development gap financing for 1) real estate rehabilitation and development projects; 2) public place-based infrastructure projects; or 3) façade improvement program implementation projects. Grants will be awarded for individual projects; however, grants for place-based infrastructure and/or façade program implementation may be awarded to subgrant programs. Awards may be made based on individual application or based on funding rounds as determined by the MEDC.

04. Gratiot County Priority Pillars

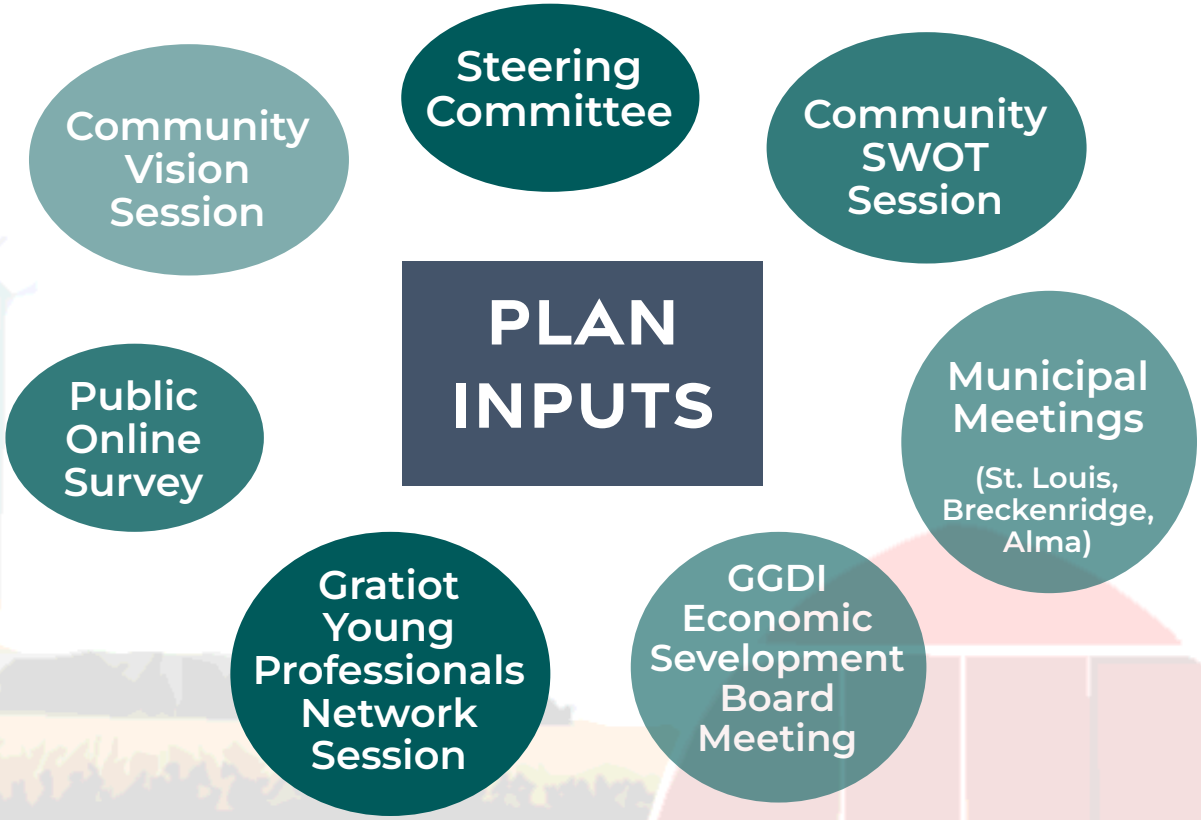
INTRODUCTION

Throughout the master planning process, each of the steps taken and the information gathered informed future stages of the planning process. These steps ultimately led to the identification of the five priority pillars, or areas of priority development and improvement throughout the County.

The pillar inputs included both technical and intuitive information, to create a balanced set of plan inputs that considered market and community perspectives, as well as best practices and innovation in economic development.

The five priority pillars are derived from community feedback, market and industry analysis, and serve as the plan's foundation. The long-term intention of the pillars involves implementation of the objectives within this plan and will rely on the continuation of community participation.

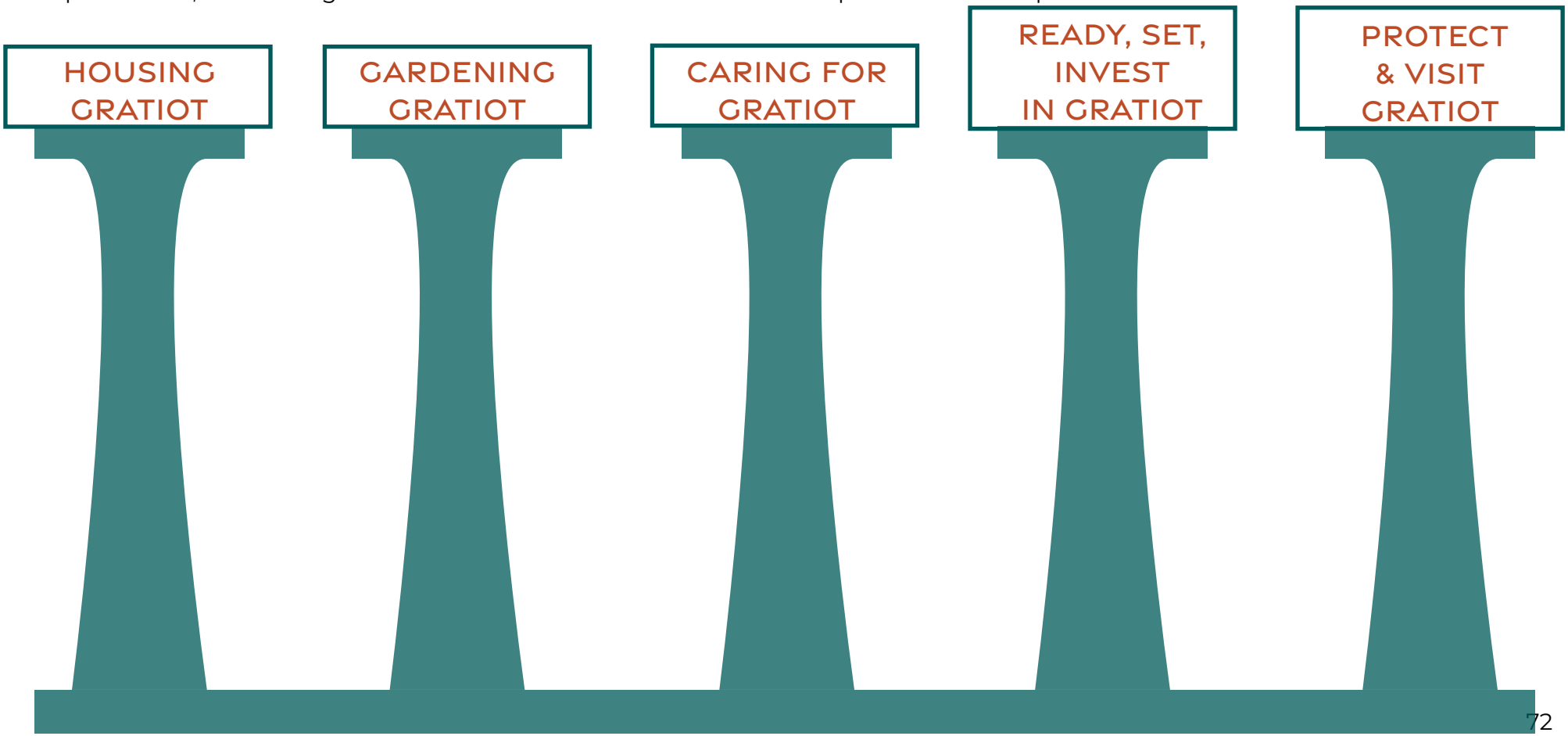
Gratiot County does not have an abundance of economic development resources to devote to the action items identified within these categories, but it does have many vested residents who are dedicated to continual improvement, which could be a key volunteer source. The groups formed at the community visioning session identified pillar missions, primary vision/goal, the answer to "why this goal?" and involved parties. Under their leadership, committees dedicated to those missions could meet at a set frequency throughout the year and develop work plans to achieve the action items within each pillar.



THE FIVE PRIORITY PILLARS

1. **Housing, referred to as "Housing Gratiot."**
2. **Community business and workforce development, referred to as "Gardening Gratiot."**
3. **Child care and early development, referred to as "Caring for Gratiot."**
4. **Industry activities and infrastructure, or "Ready, Set, Invest in Gratiot."**
5. **Tourism/agrotourism, environmental protection, recreation and messaging, or "Protect and Visit Gratiot."**

The five priority pillars framed in a mission, future goals and "next step" action items to be implemented, and the organizations that should be involved in the implementation steps.



HOUSING GRATIOT

MISSION: TO DEVELOP ALL TYPES OF HOUSING IN GRATIOT COUNTY.

VISION/PRIMARY GOALS

- Develop housing within all formats to serve the needs of seniors who are downsizing, new family formations, families with younger children, professionals coming to the market, and work force housing. Formats include condominiums/small houses, apartments, mixed use in downtowns, and subdivision developments
- Preserve the County's rural character by ensuring planning principal best practices are utilized when considering rural areas for new housing developments.
- Stabilize and enhance existing neighborhoods in and around downtowns.
- Continue to provide and expand quality public services such as policing, fire protection, healthcare and transportation opportunities.

WHY THESE GOALS?

- Desire to increase new housing construction throughout the County
- Desire to increase supply of affordable housing through zoning and funding
- Desire to increase supply of senior housing between independent and dependent living
- Desire to keep the County's rural character
- Desire to continue to improve County's downtowns

OBJECTIVES

- Recruit a developer to focus on the County
- Create funding partnerships of both private individuals and governmental groups (cities, County, townships) to secure land for future housing development
- Review ordinances to see if they still are applicable with today's smaller lot and housing size trends
- Create a Countywide housing authority that can focus on all areas of the County to build partnerships for new housing development

- Do a best practice search around the state to see how other areas are working to solve these issues
- Partner with the hospital, college, and private businesses to gain support housing development
- Engage with a market analyst to perform a residential Target Market Analysis to uncover housing gaps and opportunities that exist within the County
- Develop a countywide housing strategic plan that identifies the action items necessary to align local zoning ordinances and related policies with the findings of the residential market analysis to realize new housing
- Create a housing market specific "pitch" for Gratiot County that can be shared with builders in other regions of the state that may consider building in Gratiot County
- Align zoning plan in the master plan with RRC Best practices
- Work with Gratiot County high school vocational trade programs to develop a home-building program for starter homes (like GI Tech, Building Tech) to help lower labor costs
- Apply to Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) funding programs for renovation and rehabilitation assistance
- Identify potential redevelopment areas for both multi- and single-family developments
- Provide municipalities with a framework to identify gaps in desired neighborhood amenities, such as sidewalks, parks, and parking, and develop plans to address these gaps
- Emphasize enforcing current ordinances and building codes within the residential and business districts on a city-by-city basis
- Address the need for housing for the County's aging population
- Expand programs to assist cities and non-participating municipalities to continue to develop blight ordinances appropriate to each community and/or more strongly enforce existing ordinances.

ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS AND POTENTIAL FUNDING RESOURCES

- Townships, Villages, Cities, County
- MEDC
- Developers
- Market Analyst
- Michigan State Housing Development Authority
- School Systems
- GGDI

GARDENING GRATIOT

MISSION: SOLVING THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COUNTY.

VISION/PRIMARY GOALS

- Gain a better understanding of the County's talent and skills makeup, strengths, and existing challenges to develop solutions that ensure that education and resources are most appropriately invested throughout Gratiot County.
- Enhance career and technical education (CTE) opportunities.
- Understand business needs specifically related to job training and talent attraction.

WHY THIS GOAL?

- There is a growing challenge to retain and find talent in the County
- Provide entrepreneurial training for new businesses and startups
- Need exposure to local opportunities
- Grow a business mentorship program
- Aging workforce throughout the County
- Bridge the technology gap in the agricultural industry
- Business startup information
- CTE program expansion
- Leverage local campus
- Internships to develop new talent
- Wage analysis

OBJECTIVES

- Complete a labor, wage and benefits analysis for Gratiot County as well as a worker flow analysis to get a clear understanding of the existing employment market and to identify specific worker migration trends (i.e. outmigration of workers to the Lansing area for higher wages for the same jobs)
- Conduct research and site visits to other institutions to gain insight into successful CTE operations
- Improve coordination of resource delivery to veterans, including mental and physical health services, training, and job placement
- Work with local companies to understand their talent needs and workforce planning projections to uncover existing future talent and training gaps
- Work with Michigan Works to gain insight and data on the workforce and assess the talent and skills makeup in the County
- Identify additional sources of funding or strive to create philanthropic funding opportunities to support workforce training, development and attraction efforts.
- Expand opportunities for formerly incarcerated residents to obtain job skills training and other services to support reentry and fill workforce gaps until they are Clean Slate eligible
- Work with MyMichigan Medical Center and other large employers to provide first-time homebuyers, relocation, and alternative underwriting incentives to encourage new graduates or members of the workforce to stay in the County and new workers to migrate to the County
- Partner with an existing community college/Alma College to provide programming for continuing education
- Continue to expand mentoring/ leadership programs
- Continue to promote S.T.E.A.M. education and identify funding opportunities to strengthen these subjects.

ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS AND POTENTIAL FUNDING RESOURCES

- Montcalm Ag Tech program
- Michigan Works!
- MEDC
- MSU extension
- FFA (Future Farmers of America)
- 4-H
- Private sector
- MSU product center

CARING FOR GRATIOT

MISSION: PROMOTE QUALITY AND AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE AND EARLY EDUCATION IN GRATIOT COUNTY.

VISION/PRIMARY GOALS

- Ensure zoning is not unnecessarily restrictive for in-home daycares, while balancing the need for public input.
- Allow more in-home daycares through local zoning reform.
- Work with employers and the State of Michigan to implement the Tri-share program to help employees pay for child care.
- Provide local high school students with job training programs that prepare them to be early educators (CTE).

WHY THIS GOAL

- Parents need child care to get quality jobs
- Increase options for affordable child care in Gratiot County
- 72% of child care options in Gratiot County have closed
- Provide more options across the County i.e. locations, hours, availability.

OBJECTIVES

- Continue working to implement a tri-share program where funding is split into thirds by the state, employer, and employee
- Develop educational efforts targeted at employers to enable a full understanding of the child care issue and provide resources to learn more about employer-sponsored facilities where employees and families are members
- Improve wages, benefits, and continued education opportunities for child care workers
- Explore state funding programs and grants to support child care throughout the County
- Accelerate the start-up and expansion of licensed child care businesses, particularly in areas with high demand

- Support early childhood initiatives to build literacy and math skills
- Continue to develop before and after school care programs, enrichment programs, 4-H, and related child care enrichment programs
- Support East-Central Michigan Child Care Coalition (ECMI) in implementing strategic recommendations identified in the Regional Child Care Action Plan.

ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS AND POTENTIAL FUNDING RESOURCES

- Parents
- Schools
- United Way
- Community Foundation
- Employers
- State of Michigan
- East-Central Michigan Child Care Coalition (ECMI)
- MEDC
- GGDI

CASE STUDIES: CHILD CARE

CHILD CARE INNOVATION FUND: REIMAGINING CHILD CARE IN MICHIGAN

BACKGROUND

Michigan's child care sector faces significant challenges, impacting both families and the economy. The Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) recognized the need for innovative solutions to address these issues. In response, they established the Child Care Innovation Fund to reimagine child care services and support early childhood providers.

THE CRISIS

Here are some critical aspects of the child care landscape in Michigan:

Lack of Providers: Approximately 44% of Michiganders live in areas classified as child care deserts, where access to quality child care is limited.

Underpaid Workforce: A staggering 38% of child care workers earn wages low enough to qualify for at least one public benefit.

Growing Demand: Less than 50% of Michigan's population under age five can be served by the current capacity of licensed child care providers.

PRIORITIES OF THE CHILD CARE INNOVATION FUND

The Child Care Innovation Fund focuses on five key priority areas:

1. Create Synergy Between Economic and Child Care Sectors: Position child care as essential community infrastructure for economic growth, business productivity, and school readiness.
2. Improve Compensation and On-the-Job Supports: Enhance wages, benefits, on-the-job support, and professional learning for early educators.
3. Build Supply: Accelerate the start-up and expansion of licensed child care businesses, particularly in areas with high demand.
4. Collaborate With Employers: Partner with employers to improve productivity, recruitment, and retention of working families through child care solutions.
5. Strengthen Child Care Businesses: Enhance the economic viability and sustainability of child care providers.

CURRENT PROJECTS

Several innovative projects are underway to support the Child Care Innovation Fund's priorities. Notable initiatives include:

Caring for MI Future: A $100 million investment aims to open 1,000 new or expanded child care programs by the end of 2024, making quality child care more accessible to Michigan families.

IMPACT AND RESOURCES

Since its inception in 2021, ECIC's Child Care Innovation Fund has collaborated with national, state, regional, and community partners to design, pilot, and scale common-sense business, workforce, and financing solutions that expand equitable access to high quality, affordable child care for working families. The Innovation Fund's second annual Impact Report features the Fund's investment in state-wide child care innovations, and how the Fund is partnering with other sectors to address

Michigan's child care crisis. In FY23, the Innovation Fund secured over $15 million in grants. These funds, so far, have supported:

- 16 Regional Child Care Planning Coalitions
- 9 Family Child Care Network Hubs
- 14 Regional early care and education registered apprenticeship programs.

References:

Child Care Innovation Fund - ECIC

Regional organizations help determine the child care landscape within Michigan

Michigan is reimagining child care through innovation

CASE STUDY: RURAL CHILD CARE SUPPLY BUILDING

The Infant and Toddler Child Care Start Up in Leelanau County, Michigan, is an innovative approach to building child care supply in a rural community.

When and how did this innovation begin?

Center-Based child care facilities were closing in Leelanau County, leaving the community with limited to no access to infant and toddler child care.

The Leelanau Early Childhood Development Commission (LECDC) took on the challenge of increasing access to infant and toddler child care by focusing on the start-up of five new home-based child care businesses.

LECDC partnered with the Leelanau Children's Center and the Leelanau Peninsula Economic Foundation to ensure the new child care businesses had a strong focus on program quality and business sustainability from their inception.

ECIC's funding was crucial in allowing us to address our licensed child care deserts in a unique way introducing a model that was both financially viable while maintaining high quality care...these home-centered programs have generated a sense of community ownership and incredible provider support for success and sustainability."

- Patricia Soutas Little, Leelanau Early Childhood Development Commission

The Infant and Toddler Child Care Start-Up, one of the Innovation Fund's first grantees, piloted a new approach to increasing access to high quality infant and toddler child care: scaling up a County-based child care business development model to recruit and coach culturally and economically diverse qualified adult entrepreneurs to launch a licensed child care business.

This unique model offered qualified entrepreneurs funds for child care business start-up costs, facilities repairs and capital improvements, child care and business coaching, support to meet regulatory standards, and opportunities for no/low-cost shared services such as accounting and invoicing.

After learning that existing home-based child care regulations did not work for many prospective entrepreneurs due to home size, property restrictions, or other factors - project leaders worked with the Michigan Department of Licensing Administration and Regulatory Affairs to create a cost-effective alternative, now known as a "micro-center." A micro-center operates with approved variances to existing child care

center regulations, allowing the business owner to obtain a “home-scaled” license for up to 12 children while operating outside of the business owner’s home. The micro-center option created flexibility for prospective business owners and allowed for the creation of public/private partnerships with school districts, churches, and other community- based organizations.

INNOVATION IMPACTS

- Start-up of 2 child care homes and 4 micro-centers.
- Creation of 72 additional child care openings.
- Access to high-quality child care for 60 working families.
- Based on the impact of this innovation, ECIC has promoted it as an adaptable child care business development approach to all 16 Regional Child Care Planning Coalitions.

READY, SET, INVEST IN GRATIOT

MISSION: FOR GRATIOT COUNTY TO BECOME THE IDEAL CHOICE FOR INVESTMENT OF ALL INDUSTRY TYPES (INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL, AND AGRICULTURAL) WHILE PRESERVING AND MAINTAINING GRATIOT COUNTY'S AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE AND FOCUS SOLAR DEVELOPMENT TOWARD COMMUNITIES THAT WANT IT.

VISION/PRIMARY GOALS

- Harmoniously match industrial needs with community desires and requirements, for betterment of all in the form of an increased tax base and employment opportunities.
- Support the ability of farmers to continue to actively engage in farming and sustainable agricultural practices.
- Create opportunities for more community engagement in rural communities before new alternative energy developments are approved.
- Improve and maintain existing infrastructure.
- Provide a variety of transportation and mobility options.
- Promote development and redevelopment of vacant commercial/industrial properties.
- Continue and increase good governance and inter-jurisdictional collaboration to eliminate barriers to future growth and development.

OBJECTIVES:

- Ensure communication infrastructure in place for safety, quality of life and business development
- Replace aging water/sewer infrastructure, lead pipes and seek state assistance for funding
- Continue to support, promote and expand educational programs for a skilled workforce
- Maintain and improve road quality and safety
- Better navigate rail/community relations for agriculture, large development, and passenger potential
- Increase training for target industries including agricultural processing, alternative energy, and general manufacturing

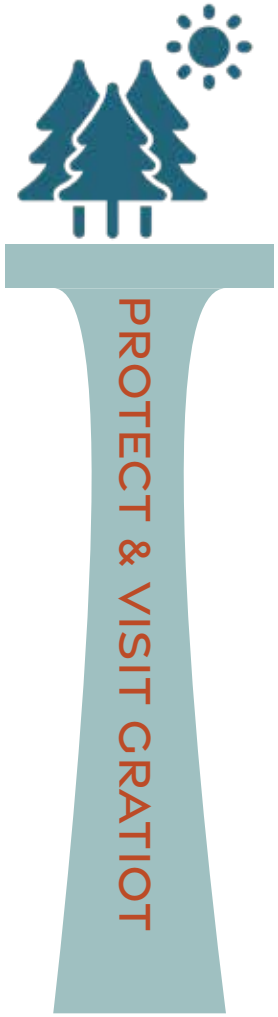
- Expand Countywide mass transportation network/options
- Maintain and support emergency services
- Work with municipal leadership to identify priority redevelopment sites throughout the County to provide direction to where and what should be developed and how to help fund investment
- Commission an infrastructure analysis to identify internet, water, sewer, paved roads, potentially rail access to target redevelopment areas
- Explore opportunities to increase funding for more staff, tools, and facilities for emergency, firefighting, and police services
- Continue to work with eligible businesses to take advantage of available tax incentive/abatement programs
- Identify and expand infrastructure at industrial sites in Breckenridge, Ithaca, and Alma, and support industrial development in St. Louis and Pine River Township
- Utilize existing electrical infrastructure and grid capacity in place for future alternative energy developments. Municipal units will decide if there is an interest in such projects in their area, while recognizing the need to maintain workable local ordinances considering PA 233 of 2023
- Commission a study to review the impact of expanding interstate US Highway 127 into a limited access roadway from M-57 north to E. Pierce Road. This would include creating an overpass above the railroad crossing just north of M-57
- Create co-op opportunities through the schools to teach young people how to farm. Farming is on the decline due to a shortage of farmers (last generation to farm)
- Increase participation from Future Farmers of America and 4-H

ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS AND POTENTIAL FUNDING RESOURCES

- Broadband providers
- State of Michigan/MEDC/MDOT/EGLE
- Municipal units in Ithaca, Alma, St. Louis, Breckenridge, Pine River Township
- Gratiot County
- Greater Gratiot Development Inc.
- Chamber of Commerce
- Great Lakes Central/Mid-Michigan (short-rail)
- GIRESD/schools/CMMA
- Gratiot Emergency Response Planning Group
- Police and Fire
- MEDC
- Michigan Agency for Energy

PROTECT AND VISIT GRATIOT

MISSION: TO PROVIDE EXPOSURE AND ACCESS TO AGRITOURISM AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS AND VISITORS WHILE PROTECTING ENVIRONMENTAL ASSETS THAT STRENGTHEN GRATIOT COUNTY.



PRIMARY VISION/GOALS

- Increase the number of visitors to the County.
- Build awareness of agritourism and recreational opportunities with County residents.
- Preserve the County's rural character by protecting natural features and fostering a healthy environment.
- Make Gratiot County's downtowns destinations.

WHY THIS GOAL?

- Increase recreational tourism and agritourism to Gratiot County
- Increase tourism-based economic opportunities in the County
- Increase funding to improve and maintain the County's assets
- Protect Gratiot County's environmental assets

OBJECTIVES

- Work with GoGratiot.com to market and advertise opportunities that draw visitors to the County
- Explore opportunities for tourism, agritourism, and recreational activities that currently do not exist
- Develop a unified message about the recreational and agritourism opportunities in Gratiot County, and focus messaging internally to residents, which will, in turn, spread the messages externally
- Work with Alma College's communications department to develop a video montage of outdoor recreation, activities, and events in Gratiot County for use on the gogratiot.com website and other areas
- Advertise activities and the gogratiot.com website at County parks
- Explore the development of an influencer program on social media for younger audiences

- Explore ways to improve transportation in non-participating jurisdictions within the County to the main attractions and events
- Engage in coordinated branding efforts for the County's downtowns, which can be applied to gateways, signage, and marketing
- Develop or revise local downtown plans to identify key redevelopment areas and advertise/market to desired project types
- Actively engage with various downtown enhancement groups and programs, such as Michigan Main Street Program and the Michigan Downtown Association
- Actively recruit agribusiness to do business in the County
- Continue to improve the streetscapes throughout key downtown corridors
- Share Alma's food truck ordinance with interested municipalities to support the expansion of food truck businesses throughout other downtowns in the County Adopt and implement Complete Streets policies
- Support efforts to expand rail transportation service to reach areas of the County that are currently not serviced
- Continue special efforts and utilize best practices to clean the Pine River, reservoirs, and other key natural assets, and continue to support the Healthy Pine River Group in efforts to comprehensively address river contamination
- Continue to clean contaminated sites through brownfield redevelopment and recently initiated Land Bank formation
- Create a Countywide Integrated Parks and Recreation and Non-Motorized Master Plan and a project steering committee with representation from across the County and regional planning agencies
- Explore funding opportunities for non-motorized pathways to increase connectivity between communities in the County, with a focus on services for seniors
- Work with the recreation authority to increase millage to fund recreational and enrichment programs
- Create a Countywide recreation authority and community education program administrator, possibly through Gratiot-Isabella RESD.

LIST OF ASSETS/ATTRACTIONS

- Highland Festival
- Alma College
- Hubscher Park
- Woodland Park
- Conservation Rail Trail (45 miles)
- Organic farming
- Polar Express in Ashley
- Splash Pad in Breckenridge
- Heritage Center
- Community Arts Center
- Pine River Art Center
- Riverdale Tavern
- Ithaca Park
- Alma Brewery

- Glenn Gravel

ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS AND POTENTIAL FUNDING RESOURCES

- GoGratiot.com
- Michigan Downtown Association
- MDOT
- County
- Community Foundation
- Alma College
- Parks & Recreation programming entities
- Chambers of Commerce
- Greater Gratiot Development, Inc.
- Chamber of Commerce
- Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Farmer's Markets
- Farms
- Pure Michigan Business Connect
- MEDC
- Friends of the Pine River
- Healthy Pine River Group
- Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
- Michigan Complete Streets
- Michigan Department of Transportation
- Alma Transit
- Gratiot-Isabella RESD
- Michigan Trail Towns
- Michigan Biking and Walking Coalition
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund
- Michigan Department of Transportation TAP Grants
- Mid-Michigan Community Pathways
- Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Michigan State University Extension
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- United States Department of Agriculture
- Pure Michigan
- ORV Safety Education Grants
- ORV Trail Improvement Program
- Recreation Improvement Fund Grants (for restoration of lands damaged by ORVs)

05. Existing and Future Land Use

OVERVIEW

Existing land use gives an overview of how the County is developed now, helps define what additions may be needed, and in which locations new development should go. The current patterns result from former planning visions for the future and existing trends, and this serves as a starting point for all future development or changes resulting from the Master Plan.

The future land use map is a representation of how the County will appear when fully developed. It does not imply that all the changes should occur at once. The future land use plan is the general framework upon which land use and policy decisions for the County will be guided for the next 25 years.

EXISTING LAND USE

Historically, the predominant land use in Gratiot County has been for agricultural purposes, and this is still true today. As noted in Chapter Two, agriculture currently accounts for more than 84% of all land use in the county. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Census of Agriculture noted that there were 818 farms in the county, accounting for 305,863 acres of land as of 2022.

When it comes to other types of land use, the development of major transportation corridors and railroads, as well as the increasing availability of public sewer and water utilities in some sectors of the county, has distinctly influenced development patterns. Urban and suburban development are clustered around the US Highway 127 and M-57 corridors that contain higher density residential, commercial and industrial land. Gratiot County is home to several bedroom communities, with a range of residential types from lower density rural residential to denser neighborhood residential, two-family and multiple family options.

Commercial land uses are also mainly clustered around major corridors, and in the traditional downtowns of Gratiot County. Commercial uses include retail, restaurants, mixed-use, professional offices and other businesses that serve the needs of Gratiot County residents as well as visitors. The county has also made a concerted effort to diversify their economy including planning and providing places for industrial businesses to locate.

Finally, land dedicated to parks, recreation and open space is another important land use in Gratiot County. Land across the county is dedicated to county, city, village and township parks, as well as a network of trails and natural/open spaces. This land use is a crucial part of quality of life in the county both for the recreational opportunities it offers, as well as the land it provides for the habitats of many important species of wildlife. The natural beauty of parks and recreation land area as well as undeveloped open space lands, draw people to Gratiot County.

FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

The future land use categories for this Plan were originally developed by compiling language from individual master plans and the land use categories implemented by the Gratiot County GIS Authority. The Future Land Use Maps show where these land uses are preferred.

AGRICULTURAL LAND USE

Agriculture

The category of agriculture includes farming, livestock, farming-related business, wind farms, agri-tourism and other related industries. Gratiot County is a leader in wind energy, and as it considers implementing other forms of alternative energy generation, they may be appropriate locations in some agricultural areas. Low-density residential is also an important component of this land use category and may be developed in a limited manner to preserve the overall rural character of Gratiot County and prevent fragmentation of farmland.

RESIDENTIAL LAND USES

Rural Residential

Rural residential land use is a category that intends to designate land for low-density, single-family homes on large lots. These developments are typically located outside of urban and suburban areas, with the goal of conserving open space and the rural character of the area. The rural residential category is an intermediate land use between agricultural and urban areas. Cluster design is encouraged as a design option in this category for the creation of common open space that helps preserve natural areas and agricultural lands. For example, a clustered residential development with committed open space for recreation, trails, or a unique environmental feature would be compatible with this category. In addition, cluster design is encouraged to allow for the most cost-effective expansion of urban services if these services are deemed necessary within a rural residential area.

Neighborhood Residential

The neighborhood residential category includes primarily single-family residential developments that generally have the characteristics of traditional urban neighborhoods, such as a grid street system, sidewalks, small lots, and shallow setbacks. In-fill housing and integrated expansion at the edges are encouraged in existing neighborhood residential areas. In addition, a modest mix of non-residential uses is allowed in these areas to address the needs of neighborhood residents.

Multi-Family Residential

The multi-family residential category provides for existing and future duplexes, attached single-family town homes, and multi-family apartments. In addition, a modest mix of non-residential uses may be allowed in these areas to address the needs of neighborhood residents.

Manufactured Housing Community

The manufactured housing community land use category provides for existing and future manufactured housing communities.

COMMERCIAL LAND USES

General Commercial

The general commercial land use designation includes large-scale businesses that provide shopping and services at a regional level.

MIXED-USE LAND USES

Downtown Mixed-Use

The downtown/mixed use category provides for areas where combinations of employment, housing, shopping and services are integrated in a compact, pedestrian oriented, urban form, which encourages community interaction. Small shops, offices, restaurants, entertainment establishments, second story apartments and condominiums, and public areas are characteristic uses of this land use category.

GENERAL MIXED-USE

The general mixed-use category provides for areas outside of the downtown where combinations of employment, housing, shopping, and services are integrated. In some cases, these areas may serve as the basis of a hamlet-style hub. In these instances, compact, pedestrian-oriented development is desired.

INDUSTRIAL LAND USES

Light Industrial

This district is intended to provide areas for less intensive industrial activities like wholesale, warehouses and industrial operations. Typically, these operations have minimal environmental impact. Light industrial should generally be located only in areas where public utilities and adequate paved primary roads are available.

Heavy Industrial

This district is intended for more intensive industrial activities. Heavy industrial should generally be located only in areas where public utilities and adequate paved primary roads are available.

OFFICE AND RESEARCH

Office/Research/Technical

The office and research district is intended to provide areas for compatible mixture of office, research and in some cases, light assembly that is completely confined within a building.

Professional Office Park

The professional office park district is intended to designate areas for office buildings, often including research and development facilities.

PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

Gratiot County has a number of future land use designations that provide area for parks, recreation and open space. These land use designations include:

- Neighborhood park
- Recreational
- Community-wide park
- Natural and open space
- Open space/conservation area

OTHER LAND USES

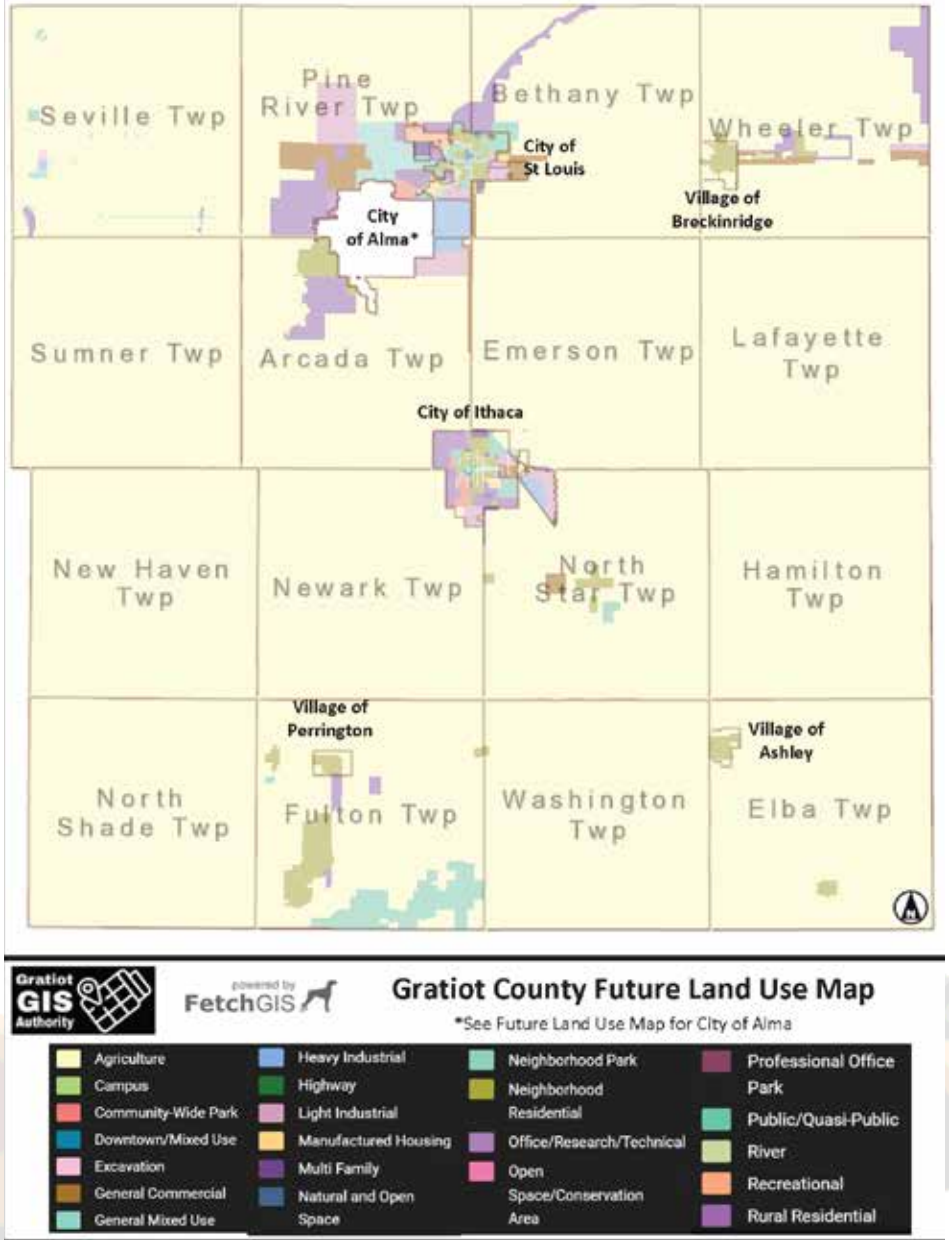
Public/Quasi-Public

Public and quasi-public land uses include facilities that are designed to serve the public interest, such as education (except for Alma College, which is under the campus category), cultural, government, religious, health, correction, military, cemeteries, airports, senior care centers, utilities and public safety.

Campus

The campus land use category includes campus style facilities, such as Alma College, the Masonic Home, and the Sisters of Mercy. Residential and commercial uses associated with the facility are permitted in the campus land use area.

FUTURE LAND USE MAP



06. Zoning

ZONING OVERVIEW

The requirement for a zoning plan has a long legal history in Michigan as the requirement has existed in every zoning-enabling act since the City-Village Zoning Act, PA 201 of 1921. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (MZEA), PA 110 of 2006, requires in Sec. 203 (1) that zoning be based on a plan and includes a long list of goals and objectives that such a plan is designed to promote. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act, as amended in 2008 (MPEA) includes specific zoning plan requirements in Sec. 33 (2)(d). Originally, zoning was intended to promote harmonious uses within surrounding areas. Today it also serves the following purposes:

1. To promote orderly growth in a manner consistent with land use policies and the Master Plan.
2. To promote attractiveness in the jurisdiction's physical environment by providing for appropriate land uses and lot regulations.
3. To accommodate special, complex or unique uses through such mechanisms as planned unit developments, overlay districts, or special use permits.
4. To guide development in a way that helps prevent future conflicting land uses (e.g. industrial uses adjacent to residential areas).
5. To preserve and protect existing land uses until such time as they may change in accordance with the Master Plan.
6. Gratiot County administers planning and zoning for the Townships of Elba, Hamilton, Lafayette, Newark, North Star and Sumner. All other townships, cities and villages in the County are self-zoned. These jurisdictions and the County will need to work together to make any zoning changes necessary to reflect the future land use goals as presented in the future land use map.

ZONING PLAN

While there are many programs and activities important to the overall implementation of the Master Plan, zoning is the single most significant mechanism for achieving the desired land use pattern and quality of development outlined in earlier chapters. The Zoning Plan provides a useful guide relative to the inconsistencies between current zoning patterns and proposed future land use designations.

Because the future land use map is a long-range vision of how land uses should evolve over time, it should not be confused with the zoning map, which is a current (short term) mechanism for regulating development. Therefore, not all properties should be immediately rezoned to correspond with the plan. The Future Land Use Plan is intended to serve as a guide for land use decisions over a longer period (up to 20 years).

The plan categories correspond to zoning districts, but there is some generalization. The following table provides a Zoning Plan indicating how the future land use categories in this Master Plan relate to the zoning districts in the Zoning Ordinance. In certain instances, more than one zoning district may be applicable to a future land use category.

Zoning changes in accordance with the plan should be made gradually so that change can be managed. The Future Land Use map as well as the plan's goals, objectives, and development recommendations should be consulted to judge the merits of a rezoning request. In review of rezoning and

development proposals, Gratiot County should consider the following sequencing standards:

- Any rezoning or development proposal must be compatible with the Master Plan as a whole and be able to stand and function on its own without harm to the quality of surrounding land uses.
- There must be sufficient public infrastructure to accommodate any proposed development or the types of uses that would be allowed under the requested zoning change. This must include sufficient sewer and water capacity, transportation improvements as determined by a traffic impact study, and all other necessary infrastructure improvements provided concurrently with the development.
- The environmental conditions of the site should be capable of accommodating the types of development or potential uses allowed with a zoning change. The impact on natural features should be minimized to the maximum extent practical with the most important resources preserved.
- Rezoning needs to be linked as closely as possible to the timing of development and land use change. Premature rezoning without a specific development proposal and site plan should be avoided to minimize land use conflicts, property value decline, and maintenance and safety problems.
- Sites proposed for rezoning to accommodate change in land use need to have sufficient width and area to facilitate development that satisfies the design guidelines of this plan, requirements of the zoning ordinance, and not create odd parcel configurations.

CURRENT COUNTYWIDE ZONING DISTRICTS

(AG) AGRICULTURAL

The AG district is intended to preserve, enhance and stabilize areas within the County that are mainly being used for the production of food. It is the purpose of the regulations for this District to promote the preservation of these prime and important farmlands for future agricultural and related uses. All uses permitted within this District shall be conducted with due consideration for the potential effects that may result from the authorized agricultural uses, in accordance with Public Act 94 of 1995, the Michigan Right to Farm Act.

(RP) RURAL PRESERVATION

This RP district is intended to preserve areas in the County that would generally be characterized as primarily rural, and exhibit unique, fragile, or significant nature features. The district is to be applied to lands that are subject to periodic flooding, are adjacent to sources of water supply, contain unstable soils, or contain significant animal habitats or environmental features unique to the County. The regulations are designed to provide a degree of protection for sensitive natural features and open spaces. A variety of uses are permitted in this district; however, the intensity of development is limited in order to protect the natural character and abundant resources that are found within it.

(RR) RURAL RESIDENTIAL

The regulations of the RR district are intended to provide for a stable and sound residential environment with large home sites, at a higher density than would be permitted in the Agricultural and Rural Preservation Districts, while still compatible with the County's rural character. The district

provides for the orderly transition of land from agricultural to low density residential uses, without straining the land, or requiring public services or utilities, even if they exist, or are planned. Through this District, low density residential development will be permitted through the construction and occupancy of single-family dwellings on large rural parcels.

(R-1) LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

The R-1 district is intended to provide for a residential neighborhood environment near the County's urban centers. The district provides a transition area between the high-density urban centers with its commercial and sometimes industrial influences, to the low density residential and agricultural land uses.

(R-2) MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

The R-2 district is intended to provide for residential uses in a neighborhood environment in the County's urban centers and Villages. The district provides for higher density residential uses on smaller lots. The district may or may not be served by public water or sewer service, but these public services shall be planned for these areas.

(MHP) MANUFACTURED HOME PARK

This MHP district is intended to provide suitable areas for manufactured housing developments within Gratiot County. Public sewer and water facilities should be provided for each such development. However, if public sewer facilities are not available, a community treatment system and well, meeting all State and County regulations may be permitted. This type of development is to be located near essential community services and abutting paved public roads. All manufactured home parks shall comply with the applicable requirements of Public Act 419 of 1976, as amended, and Public Act 96 of 1987, as amended, and all other applicable local, County, or state regulations.

(B-I) LOCAL BUSINESS

The B-1 district is intended to permit local retail business and service uses which are desirable to serve the outlying residential areas of the County. The regulations of this district are designed to promote limited business development at an appropriate scale to surrounding residential areas. Uses that would create hazards, offensive or loud noises, vibration, smoke, glare, or heavy truck traffic, are prohibited. The intent of this district is to encourage the concentration of conveniently located business uses to the mutual advantage of both the consumers and merchants. More intensive community wide businesses should be concentrated in the County's urban centers and will not be permitted in this district.

(B-2) HIGHWAY BUSINESS

The B-2 district is intended to provide for the general community and area-wide commercial and service needs of the County, to provide areas for commercial establishments which cater primarily to the needs of the motoring public, and to provide for the orderly development and concentration of such uses. The district should be established along major County roads and highways which can satisfactorily accommodate the large volumes of vehicular traffic typically associated with such commercial concentrations. Typical uses will offer specialized retail outlets and commercial amusement enterprises. The requirements of this District are developed to minimize traffic hazards and interference with other related uses in the vicinity.

(I-I) INDUSTRIAL

The I-1 district is intended to provide a location for general industrial uses. The facilities will be kept from encroaching in areas or districts where they would create a nuisance and be incompatible with existing uses. The I-1 District should be located only in areas where public utilities and adequate paved County primary roads are available.

COUNTYWIDE ZONING PLAN

Zoning Plan	Current Countywide Zoning Districts								
Future Land Use Categories	(AG) Agricultural	(RP) Rural Preservation	(RR) Rural Residential	(R-1) Low Density Residential	(R-2) Medium Density	(MHP) Manufactured Home Park	(B-1) Local Business	(B-2) Highway Business	(I-1) Industrial
Agriculture	■								
Campus									
Community-Wide Park			■						
Downtown/Mixed Use							■		
Excavation									
General Commercial							■	■	
General Mixed Use							■	■	
Heavy Industrial									■
Highway								■	
Light Industrial								■	■
Manufactured Housing						■			
Multi Family					■				
Natural and Open Space			■						
Neighborhood Park					■	■			
Neighborhood Residential						■			
Office/Research/Technical								■	
Open Space/Conservation Area		■							
Professional Office Park								■	
Public/Quasi-Public		■	■						
River									
Recreational	■	■							
Rural Residential			■	■					

COMMUNITY-SPECIFIC ZONING PLANS

CITY OF ALMA

Zoning Plan			Current City of Alma Zoning Districts													
Future Land Use Categories	R-1 Single Family Residential	R-1a Single Family Residential	R-2 Two Family Residential	R-3 Multiple Family Residential	MPH Mobile Home Park	B-1 Central Business	B-2 General Business	BMR Business/Multi-Residential	SR Storage Restricted	PUD Planned Unit Development	ORT Office Research Industrial	OS Office Services	LI Limited Industrial	GI General Industrial	CI Campus-Institutional	WF Waterfront
Agriculture																
Campus															■	
Community Wide Park	■	■														■
Downtown/Mixed Use						■				■						
General Commercial							■									
General Mixed Use								■								
Heavy Industrial														■		
Light Industrial									■				■			
Manufactured Housing Community					■											
Multi-Family Residential			■	■												
Natural and Open Space		■														■
Neighborhood Residential	■	■														
Office/Research/Technical											■	■	■			
Open Space/ Conservation Area	■	■														■
Professional Office Park											■	■				
Public/Quasi-Public	■	■														
Recreational	■	■														
Waterfront Development																■

R-I SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL/R-IA SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (LOW AND MEDIUM DENSITY)

These districts are intended to provide places where the main use is single-family residential, plus its normal accessory and compatible supportive uses. A reasonable range of lot sizes is envisioned, which will provide a choice of desirable and economically feasible development opportunities for all members of the general public. Certain other private and public uses are permitted but subject to conditions which will ensure their compatibility with the main use and character of these districts.

R-2 TWO FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (SINGLE FAMILY AND TWO FAMILY)

The intent of this district is to provide places which the main uses include both single-family and two-family residential development, plus normal accessory and compatible supportive uses.

R-3 MULTIPLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

The R-3 multiple-family residential district is designed to provide sites for multiple-family dwelling structures and related uses which will generally serve as zones of transition between nonresidential districts and lower density single-family districts. Due to its buffering characteristic between residential and nonresidential uses, the R-3 district is intended to provide a residential area which is low rise in character yet providing greater density by allowing increased building coverage in the most intense single-family residential district.

MPH MOBILE HOME PARK

The purpose of the district is providing places of such size and location as will encourage good mobile home residential development, adjacent to essential community services, and otherwise protecting the health, safety and welfare of mobile home residents. In addition to the requirement of this chapter, all mobile home parks shall comply with the Mobile Home Commission Act, Public Act No. 96 of 1987 (MCL 125.2301 et seq.) and the current mobile home code adopted by the state mobile home commission.

PUD PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT

The intent of this district is to allow the development of a planned unit development, in accordance with ordinance, by way of a rezoning.

B-I CENTRAL BUSINESS

This district has the intent of providing areas wherein retail trade and service outlets can be located in order to satisfy the goods and services needs of the city residents and the surrounding trading area. It is the further purpose of this district to retain the present general scale of the variety of buildings, structures and general landscape or site development features in order to continue to retain the overall historical and present city character.

B-2 GENERAL BUSINESS

This district has the intent of providing an area in which the community's overall commercial and business facilities can be centralized to most efficiently and effectively serve the general community and adjacent areas. Other uses are permitted which are generally compatible with the character

and requirements of these commercial and business uses. These regulations are designed to reduce possible conflicts with adjacent land uses and to provide conditions which encourage proper development within the district.

BMR BUSINESS/MULTI-RESIDENTIAL

The purpose of the BMR district is to preserve business districts while at the same time allowing a mixture of land uses which will improve property values and the local economy. The BMR district is designed to permit certain business and multifamily uses as a matter of right while allowing certain public services uses that are compatible with surrounding neighborhoods to be considered as special approval uses.

SR STORAGE RESTRICTED

The intent is to provide a district which would act as an acceptable buffer between industrial manufacturing and business or residential uses. The district would provide for enclosed manufacturing or commercial storage facilities, which would be of a low noise and low traffic use.

OS OFFICE SERVICES

This district is intended to provide the necessary professional, administrative, personal, technical and scientific offices and related services as the principal uses. Office uses in part are intended to function as transition areas between retail commercial uses and residential uses.

ORT OFFICE RESEARCH INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

The ORT is designed to provide for uses which are office or research type or industrial uses which have limited impact outside of the industrial building. The district is designed to be used in areas which are properly buffered from single family residential areas.

LI LIMITED INDUSTRIAL

The intent of this district is to provide resources and services available and essential to good industrial development, while also guarding against the encroachment of these uses into districts where they would be considered incompatible.

GI GENERAL INDUSTRIAL

The intent is to provide a district whose location will permit heavy manufacturing types of use to best utilize essential public and private facilities and utilities.

CI CAMPUS-INSTITUTIONAL

The purpose of this district is to provide area for colleges, universities, educational facilities, convalescent/retirement housing, and related uses. Athletic and cultural institutions shall be included as well as campus housing, student apartments, dormitories, sororities, fraternities and single-family housing.

WF WATERFRONT

This district has the intent of providing areas having waterfront access wherein the proper use of such areas will principally serve the economic, social and recreational needs and interests of the residents and users of the city. It is the further purpose of this district to promote a mix through a vertical integration of residential, commercial and recreational land uses, emphasizing pedestrian circulation, environmental protection and waterfront access.

CITY OF ST. LOUIS

Zoning Plan	Current City of St Louis Zoning Districts								
Future Land Use Categories	**R-1 Suburban Residential**	**R-2 One and Two Family Residential**	**R-3 Multiple Family Residential**	**PUD Planned Unit Development**	**R-4 Mobile Home Park**	**C-1 Central Business**	**C-2 General Business**	**I-1 General Industrial**	**I-2 Industrial Park**
Community Wide Park									
Downtown/Mixed Use				■		■			
General Commercial							■		
General Mixed Use				■			■		
Heavy Industrial								■	
Light Industrial									■
Manufactured Housing					■				
Multi-Family Residential		■							
Natural and Open Space									
Neighborhood Residential	■								
Office/Research/Technical									■
Professional Office Park									
Public/Quasi-Public									
Recreational									
Waterfront Development									

R-1 SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT

This district is intended to preserve semi-rural character, open space and rural qualities of the community. It is further the purpose of this section to accommodate limited single-family housing without the benefit of city water or sewage facilities and to facilitate the limited development of those areas of the City, which may remain without such services for an extended period of time. This district includes existing low-density single-family properties, as well as areas within which that type of development appears both likely and desirable and the availability of water and sewer, by itself, may not constitute cause for instituting a higher density zoning.

R-2 ONE AND TWO FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

This district is intended to accommodate a variety of housing types within medium density residential areas in the City of St. Louis. The One- and Two-Family Residential District encompasses the City's existing mature neighborhoods where new large scale residential development is highly unlikely, as well as newer less dense population, and where the character of the various neighborhoods will be retained. It also accommodates certain compatible non-residential uses which do not overcrowd residential areas or congest local streets.

R-3 MULTIPLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

This district is intended to accommodate housing types within high density residential areas. It is designed to permit a more intensive residential use of land with various types of multiple dwellings, including high rise apartment structures and related institutional uses. These districts would be distributed within various planned locations throughout the City, be located adjacent to streets permitting good accessibility and be compatible with adjoining single-family neighborhoods.

R-4 MOBILE HOME PARK

The district is intended to preserve the interests of alternate types of residential developments which should be permitted in every community and to protect the residents of any manufactured home type development. The regulations applicable to this district are considered as minimum standards to be applied to all manufactured home park developments in the district.

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUD)

The PUD District is established to facilitate mixed uses on a large (40 acre or more) site within the context of a planned development, including site condominium development. This district is intended to allow for the compatible placement of residential and limited commercial uses associated with a privately owned and operated golf course open to public use. All development in this district is intended to occur after submittal and approval of a site plan according to the standards, procedure, and requirements set forth in this Article or in Article 19, Site Condominium Development.

C-1 CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

The C-1 Central Business District is intended to permit a harmonious mix of commercial, administrative, financial, civic, cultural and entertainment activities to enhance the district as a high density commercial, service and cultural center. Public sidewalks and off-street parking serve both pedestrian and automobile traffic.

C-2 GENERAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

This district is intended for service businesses not customarily associated with compact retail trade establishments and retail uses requiring outdoor space or multiple accessory buildings for the conducting of business. The General Business District

encourages commercial uses that can accommodate larger off-street parking facilities and complement pedestrian-oriented business in the C-1 District.

I-1 GENERAL INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

This district is intended to accommodate a broad range of industrial uses such as manufacturing, warehousing, wholesaling, and transport terminal activities. The industrial uses may be conducted as open-air activities or within an enclosed structure. These regulations are established to permit industrial activities, provided performance standards related to smoke, noise, vibration, odor, glare and other environmental factors are met.

I-2 INDUSTRIAL PARK DISTRICT

This district is intended to accommodate industrial uses such as manufacturing, warehousing, and wholesaling activities which are compatible with an industrial park setting. The purpose of this district is to provide suitable sites for industry, free from encroachment by incompatible residential and commercial uses, while ensuring that permitted industrial uses will have minimal detrimental effect on surrounding areas of the community. These regulations are established to permit the industrial activities, provided that performance standards related to smoke, noise, vibration, odor, glare and other environmental factors are met.

VILLAGE OF BRECKENRIDGE

Zoning Plan	Current Village of Breckenridge Zoning Districts						
Future Land Use Categories	**A-1 Agriculture**	**R-1 Single/Two Family Residential**	**R-2 Multiple Family Residential**	**R-3 Manufactured Home Development**	**C-1 Business**	**C-2 Business**	**I Industrial**
Agriculture	■				■		
General Commercial					■		
Heavy Industrial							■
Light Industrial							■
Manufactured Housing				■			
Multi Family			■				
Neighborhood Residential		■					
Public-Quasi Public							
Recreational							

A-1 AGRICULTURE

The A-1 district is for agricultural and single-family residential uses associated with farming operations together in a compatible environment. The purpose of this zone is to encourage the preservation and enhancement of agricultural land and farming practices together with specified non-agricultural activity allowed by ordinance.

R-1 SINGLE AND TWO FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

The R-1 district is intended for single-family and two-family residential uses. The purpose of this zone is to encourage a residential environment of low-density dwellings.

R-2 MULTIPLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

The R-2 district is to provide a variety of housing styles, designs and costs to meet the needs of existing and potential residents while promoting development and preservation of neighborhoods of higher density than in the R-1 district.

R-3 MANUFACTURED HOME DEVELOPMENT

This district is intended to preserve the interests of alternate types of residential developments that should be permitted in every community and to protect the residents of any manufactured home type development. The regulations applicable to this district are considered as minimum standards to be applied to all Manufactured Home Developments in the district.

C-1 BUSINESS DISTRICT

This district is intended to provide areas of concentrated commercial development in the business district of the community. Preferred uses are those of a retail or personal services nature which do not necessarily require large spaces for the display or sale of goods or services, and which do not require immediate access to the site for motor vehicles as well as to provide essential service needs to the highway traveler and to accommodate businesses serving a regional market.

C-2 BUSINESS DISTRICT

This district is intended to provide areas of general commercial development for the location of uses which are of a retail or personal services nature and for uses which require large spaces in which to conduct a commercial operation.

I INDUSTRIAL

This district is intended for light industrial uses and also permits nonretail business and service establishments. It is designed to permit manufacturing, production, processing, assembling, packaging and treatment of products from previously prepared or finished products. The purpose of this district is to promote industrial areas that are protected from incompatible uses.

07. Countywide Implementation

TENANTS OF SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

COMMITMENT

The input received through the master plan process provided a foundation to help achieve the County's vision. Community support, commitment, and involvement must continue.

Successful plan implementation will be directly related to a committed County and municipal leadership. While elected and appointed officials will have a strong leadership role, many others will also be instrumental in supporting the plan (department directors, staff, and leaders from the County's many institutions and organizations).

However, commitment reaches beyond just these individuals and includes the array of stakeholders. Citizens, landowners, developers, and business owners interested in how Gratiot County develops must unite toward the plan's common vision.

INTEGRATE WITH PROJECT DESIGN

County officials and departments must embrace the plan, applying its recommendations to help shape annual budgets, work programs, and the design of capital improvements. For example, the County's engineering practices can support implementation through infrastructure improvements, streets, and storm systems designed consistent with plan policies and recommendations. Each department, staff person, and elected official should find it a benefit, if not an obligation, to reference the plan when making decisions and setting priorities.

GUIDANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS

This plan is designed for routine use and should be consistently implemented during any process affecting the County's future. Private investment decisions by developers, corporations, and landowners should consider the plan's direction as it is the guide for economic growth and stability of the community and supports the goals and objectives of the overall master plan.

EVALUATION AND MONITORING

This plan has been developed with a degree of flexibility, allowing nimble responses to emerging conditions, challenges, and opportunities. To help ensure the plan stays fresh and useful, periodic reviews and amendments may be required. This will ensure plan goals, objectives, and recommendations reflect changing County needs, expectations, and financial realities.

HOUSING GRATIOT

TIMEFRAME
Short Term: 0-3 years
Medium Term: 4-6 years
Long Term: 7+ years

Gratiot County Implementation Plan					
	Primary Goals	**Action**	**Timeframe**	**Responsible Parties & Partners**	**Desired Outcomes**
Housing Gratiot **Mission: To develop all types of housing in Gratiot County**	1. Develop housing within all formats to serve the needs of seniors who are downsizing, new family formations, families with younger children, professionals coming to the market, and work force housing. Formats include condominiums/small houses, apartments, mixed use in downtowns, and subdivision developments. 2. Preserve the County's rural character by ensuring planning principal best practices are utilized when considering rural areas for new housing developments. 3. Stabilize and enhance existing neighborhoods in and around downtowns. 4. Continue to provide and expand quality public services such as policing, fire protection, healthcare and transportation opportunities.	Recruit a developer to focus on the County.	Short Term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County, Developers	• Desire to increase new housing construction throughout the County • Desire to increase supply of affordable housing (by way of zoning and funding) • Desire to increase supply of senior housing between independent and dependent living • Desire to keep the County's rural character • Desire to continue to improve County's downtowns
		Create funding partnerships of private individuals, developers, and governmental groups (cities, County, townships) to secure land for future housing development.	Mid Term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County, Developers	
		Review ordinances to see if they still are applicable with today's smaller lot and housing size trends.	Short Term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County	
		Create a Countywide housing authority that can focus on all areas of the County to build partnerships for new housing development.	Mid Term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County	
		Research the best practices around the state to see how other areas are working to solve these issues.	Short Term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County	
		Partner with the hospital, college, and private businesses to gain support housing development.	Mid Term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County	
		Engage with a market analyst to perform a residential Target Market Analysis to uncover housing gaps and opportunities that exist within the County.	Short Term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County, Greater Gratiot Development, Inc. (GGDI), Analyst	

			Develop a Countywide housing strategic plan that identifies the action items necessary to align local zoning ordinances and related policies with the findings of the residential market analysis to realize new housing.	Short Term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County, GGDI, Developers	
			Create a housing market specific "pitch" for Gratiot County that can be shared with builders in other regions of the state that may consider building in Gratiot County.	Short Term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County	
			Align zoning plan in the master plan with MEDC's RRC Best practices.	Short Term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County, MEDC	
			Work with Gratiot County high school vocational trade programs to develop a home-building program for starter homes (like GI Tech, building tech) to help lower labor costs.	Mid Term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County, School Systems	
			Apply to MISHDA funding programs for renovation and rehabilitation assistance.	Short Term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County, Developers	
			Identify potential redevelopment areas for both multi- and single-family developments.	Mid Term	Townships, Villages, Cities, Developers, *Partner:* Michigan State Housing Development Authority	
			Provide municipalities with a framework to identify gaps in desired neighborhood amenities, such as sidewalks, parks, and parking, and develop plans to address these gaps.	Long Term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County	

		Emphasize enforcing current ordinances and building codes within the residential and business districts on a city-by-city basis.	Short Term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County, *Partners:* Michigan Municipal League, Michigan Townships Association	
		Address the need for housing for the County's aging population.	Mid Term	Townships, Villages, Cities, Developers *Partners:* National Age in Place Council, AARP, Gratiot County Commission on Aging	
		Expand programs to assist cities and non-participating municipalities to continue to develop blight ordinances appropriate to each community and/or more strongly enforce existing ordinances.	Short Term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County *Partners:* Michigan Municipal League, Michigan Townships Association	

Gratiot County Implementation Plan

	Primary Goals	Action	Timeframe	Responsible Parties & Partners	Desired Outcomes
Gardening Gratiot **Mission: Solving the disconnect between education and training and job opportunities in the County**	1. Gain a better understanding of our talent/skills makeup, strengths, and challenges to ensure limited education and resources are most appropriately invested throughout Gratiot County. 2. Enhance career and technical education (CTE) opportunities. 3. Understand business needs specifically related to job training and talent attraction.	Complete a labor, wage and benefits analysis for Gratiot County as well as a worker flow analysis to get a clear understanding of the existing employment market and to identify specific worker migration trends (i.e. outmigration of workers to the Lansing area for higher wages for the same jobs).	Short Term	Chamber of Commerce, Local Government Leadership, Employers, GGDI	• Retain/find talent in the County • Start entrepreneurial training for new businesses and startups • Discover local opportunities • Explore a business mentorship program • Support aging workforce throughout the County • Bridge the technology gap in the agricultural industry • Seek business startup information • CTE program expansion • Leverage local campus • Initiate internships to develop new talent • Perform wage analysis
		Conduct research and site visits to other institutions to gain insight into successful CTE operations.	Short Term	School districts, Chambers of Commerce, Local Government Leadership, GGDI, CMMA, Employers	
		Improve coordination of resource delivery to veterans, including mental and physical health services, training, and job placement.	Mid Term	Veterans Affairs	
		Work with local companies to understand their talent needs and workforce planning projections to uncover existing future talent and training gaps.	Short Term	Chambers of Commerce, Local Government Leadership, Employers, GGDI *Partners:* Colleges, Montcalm Ag Tech program, 4-H, Future Farmers of America (FFA)	
		Work with Michigan Works! to gain insight and data on the workforce and assess the talent and skills makeup in the County.	Mid Term	Michigan Works!, Local Government Leadership, Employers, GGDI	
		Identify additional sources of funding or strive to create philanthropic funding opportunities to support workforce training, development and attraction efforts.	Mid Term	Community Foundations, Chambers of Commerce, Michigan Works!, GGDI	

		Expand opportunities for formerly incarcerated residents to obtain job skills training and other services to support reentry and fill workforce gaps until they are Clean Slate eligible.	Mid Term	Central Michigan Correctional Facility, Colleges, Michigan Works!, Employers	
		Work with the MyMichigan Medical Center and other large employers to provide first-time homebuyers, relocation, and alternative underwriting incentives to encourage new graduates or members of the workforce to stay in the County and new workers to migrate to the County.	Short Term	MyMichigan Medical Center, Employers, Chambers of Commerce, GGDI	
		Partner with an existing community college/Alma College to provide programming for continuing education.	Mid Term	School Districts, Colleges *Partner:* School District	
		Continue to expand mentoring/leadership programs.	Short Term	School Districts, Chambers of Commerce *Partners:* School District, Chamber of Commerce, Local Government Leadership, Employers	
		Continue to promote STEAM education and identify funding opportunities to strengthen these subjects.	Long Term	Employers, School Districts, GGDI, Chambers of Commerce, CMMA *Partners:* U.S. Department of Education, Investing in Innovation, Teachers for a Competitive Tomorrow	

Gratiot County Implementation Plan					
	Primary Goals	**Action**	**Timeframe**	**Responsible Parties & Partners**	**Desired Outcomes**
Caring for Gratiot **Mission: Promote quality and affordable child care and early education in Gratiot County**	1. Ensure zoning is not unnecessarily restrictive for in-home daycares, while balancing the need for public input. 2. Allow more in-home daycares through local zoning reform. 3. Work with employers and the State of Michigan to implement the Tri-share program to help employees pay for child care. 4. Provide local high school students with job training programs that prepare them to be early educators (CTE).	Continue working to implement a tri-share program where funding is split into thirds by the state, employer, and employee.	Short Term	MiLEAP (MEDC), Municipalities, ECMI, Employers	• Increase options for affordable child care in Gratiot County. • Open more child care locations with options for shift hours (72% of child care options in Gratiot County have closed). • Removing the barrier to child care will improve long-term career outcomes for parents
		Develop educational efforts targeted at employers to enable a full understanding of the child care issue and provide resources to learn more about employer-sponsored facilities where employees and families are members.	Short Term	Employers, State, ECMI	
		Explore state funding programs and grants to support child care throughout the County	Short Term	State, MEDC, Child Care Facilities	
		Accelerate the start-up and expansion of licensed child care businesses, particularly in areas with high demand.	Short Term	State, GGDI, SBDC	
		Improve wages, benefits, and continued education opportunities for child care workers.	Mid Term	School Districts, Alma College, State *Partner:* Foundations	
		Support early childhood initiatives to build literacy and math skills.	Ongoing	School Districts, Alma College, Parks and Recreation, Community Foundation *Partners:* Montcalm Ag Tech program, 4-H, Future Farmers of America (FFA)	
		Continue to develop before and after school care programs, enrichment programs, 4-H, and related child care enrichment programs.	Ongoing	School Districts, Alma College, Parks and Recreation *Partners:* Montcalm Ag Tech program, 4-H, Future Farmers of America (FFA)	
		Support East-Central Michigan Child Care Coalition (ECMI) in implementing strategic recommendations identified in the Regional Child Care Action Plan	Ongoing	ECMI, MEDC, Municipalities, Employers, Child Care Facilities, Community Foundation, GGDI	

Gratiot County Implementation Plan

Ready, Set, Invest in Gratiot

Mission: For Gratiot County to become the ideal choice for investment of all industry types (industrial, commercial, and agricultural) and to preserve and maintain Gratiot County's agricultural heritage and focus solar development toward communities that want it.

Primary Goals	Action	Timeframe	Responsible Parties & Partners	Desired Outcomes
1. Harmoniously match industrial needs with community desires and requirements, for betterment of all in the form of increased tax base and employment opportunities. 2. Support the ability of farmers to continue to actively engage in farming and sustainable agricultural practices. 3. Improve and maintain existing infrastructure. 4. Provide a variety of transportation and mobility options. 5. Promote development and redevelopment of vacant commercial/industrial properties. 6. Continue and increase good governance and inter-jurisdictional collaboration to eliminate barriers to future growth and development.	Work with municipal leadership to identify priority redevelopment sites throughout the County to provide direction to where and what should be developed and how to help fund investment.	Mid Term	State of Michigan/MEDC/MDOT/EGLE, Municipal units in Ithaca, Alma, St. Louis, Breckenridge, Pine River Township; Gratiot County, Greater Gratiot Development Inc.	• Communication infrastructure in place for safety, quality of life and business development. • Aging water/sewer infrastructure and lead pipes replaced, and state to assist with funding • Continue to support, promote and expand educational programs for a skilled workforce • Maintain and improve road quality • Create opportunities for more community engagement in rural communities before new alternative energy developments are approved. • Better navigate rail and community relations for agriculture, large development, and passenger potential • Increase training for target industries including agricultural processing, alternative energy, and general manufacturing • Expand Countywide
	Perform an infrastructure analysis to identify internet, water, sewer, paved roads, potentially rail access to target redevelopment areas.	Mid Term	Municipal units in Ithaca, Alma, St. Louis, Breckenridge, Pine River Township; Gratiot County, GGDI, Analyst	
	Seek out opportunities to increase funding for more staff, tools, and facilities for emergency, firefighting, and police services.	Mid Term	Municipal units in Ithaca, Alma, St. Louis, Breckenridge, Pine River Township; Gratiot County, GGDI, Gratiot Emergency Response Planning Group, Police and Fire	
	Continue to work with eligible businesses to take advantage of available tax incentive/abatement programs.	Ongoing	State of Michigan/MEDC/MDOT/EGLE, Municipal units in Ithaca, Alma, St. Louis, Breckenridge, Pine River Township; Gratiot County, GGDI, Chambers of Commerce	

				Identify and expand infrastructure at industrial sites in Breckenridge, Ithaca, Village of Ashley, and Alma, and support industrial development in St. Louis and Pine River Township.	Mid Term	Municipal units in Ithaca, Alma, St. Louis, Village of Ashley, Breckenridge, Pine River Township; Gratiot County, GGDI *Partner:* Contractors	mass transportation network/options • Maintain and support emergency services
				Utilize existing electrical infrastructure and grid capacity in place for future alternative energy developments. Cities, Villages, and Townships will decide if there is an interest in such projects in their area, while recognizing the need to maintain workable local ordinances in light of PA 233 of 2023.	Mid Term	Cities, Villages, and Townships; Gratiot County, GGDI *Partner:* Utilities	
				Commission a study to review the impact of expanding interstate US Highway 127 into a limited access roadway from M-57 north to E. Pierce Road. This would include creating an overpass above the railroad crossing just north of M-57.	Mid Term	MDOT, Transportation/Infrastructure Specialist, Gratiot County, GGDI	
				Create co-op opportunities through schools to teach future farmers how to farm.	Mid Term	School Districts, Alma College, Parks and Recreation Partners: Montcalm Ag Tech program, 4-H, Future Farmers of America (FFA)	
				Increase participation from Future Farmers of America and 4-H.	Mid Term	School Districts, Parks and Recreation Partners: Montcalm Ag Tech program, 4-H, Future Farmers of America (FFA)	

PROTECT AND VISIT GRATIOT

Gratiot County Implementation Plan					
	Primary Goals	**Action**	**Timeframe**	**Responsible Parties & Partners**	**Desired Outcomes**
Protect and Visit Gratiot **Mission: To provide exposure and access to agritourism and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors while protecting environmental assets that strengthen Gratiot County.**	1. Increase the number of visitors to the County. 2. Build awareness of agritourism and recreational opportunities with County residents. 3. Preserve the County's rural character by protecting natural features and fostering a healthy environment. 4. Make Gratiot County's downtowns destinations.	Explore opportunities for tourism, agri-tourism, and recreational activities that currently do not exist.	Mid term	Townships, Villages, Cities and County Parks & Recreation programming entities; Chambers of Commerce	• Increase recreational tourism and agritourism to Gratiot County • Increase tourism-based economic opportunities in the County • Increase funding to improve and maintain the County's assets • Protect Gratiot County's environmental assets
		Develop a unified message about the recreational and agritourism opportunities in Gratiot County, and focus messaging internally to residents, which will, in turn, spread the messages externally.	Short term	County, GGDI	
		Work with Alma College's communications department to develop a video montage of outdoor recreation, activities, and events in Gratiot County for use on the gogratiot.com website and other areas.	Short term	Alma College, County, GGDI	
	Gratiot County Assets (Partial List)	Advertise activities and the gogratiot.com website at County parks.	Short term	GoGratiot.com, County	
	Highland Festival Alma College Hubscher Park Woodland Park Conservation Rail Trail (45 miles) Organic farming Polar Express in Ashley Splash Pad in Breckenridge Heritage Center	Explore the development of an influencer program on social media for younger audiences.	Mid term	GoGratiot.com, County	
		Explore ways to improve transportation in non-participating jurisdictions within the County to main attractions and events.	Mid term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County, MDOT, Alma Transit and St. Louis, Ithaca, and Pine River Transportation Authority (SLIPR)	

Community Arts Center Pine River Art Center Riverdale Tavern Ithaca Park Alma Brewery Glenn Gravel	Engage in coordinated branding efforts for the County's downtowns, which can be applied to gateways, signage, and marketing.	Mid term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County, GGDI, Chamber of Commerce	
	Develop or revise local downtown plans to identify key redevelopment areas and advertise/market to desired project types.	Mid term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County	
	Actively engage with various downtown enhancement groups and programs, such as Michigan Main Street Program and the Michigan Downtown Association.	Mid term	Townships, Villages, Cities, MEDC, MDA	
	Actively recruit agribusiness to do business in the County.	Short term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County, GGDI *Partners:* Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Pure Michigan Business Connect, MEDC	
	Continue to streetscape key downtown corridors.	Short term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County, GGDI, MEDC, DDA's	
	Share Alma's food truck ordinance with interested municipalities to support the expansion of food truck businesses throughout other downtowns in the County.	Short term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County, GGDI	
	Adopt and implement Complete Streets policies.	Mid term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County, MDOT, Michigan Complete Streets	

Continue special efforts and utilize best practices to clean the Pine River, reservoirs, and other key natural assets, and continue to support the Healthy Pine River Group in efforts to comprehensively address river contamination.	Mid term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County *Partners:* Friends of the Pine River, Healthy Pine River Group, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality	
Continue to clean contaminated sites through brownfield redevelopment and recently initiated Land Bank formation.	Mid term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County Land Bank, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, GGDI	
Create a Countywide Integrated Parks and Recreation and Non-Motorized Master Plan and a project steering committee with representation from across the County and regional planning agencies.	Short term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County, GGDI	
Explore funding opportunities for non-motorized pathways to increase connectivity between communities in the County, with a focus on services for seniors.	Mid term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County, GGDI, MDOT	
Work with the recreation authority to increase millage to fund recreational and enrichment programs.	Mid term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County, Parks & Recreation programming entities	
Create a Countywide recreation authority and community education program administrator, possibly through Gratiot-Isabella RESD.	Mid term	County, Parks & Recreation programming entities, Gratiot-Isabella RESD, Municipalities	
Develop an off-road vehicle (ORV) trail system to help direct ORV use to appropriate areas.	Long term	Townships, Villages, Cities, County, Parks & Recreation programming entities	

COUNTYWIDE PRIORITY REDEVELOPMENT SITES

PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT AREAS

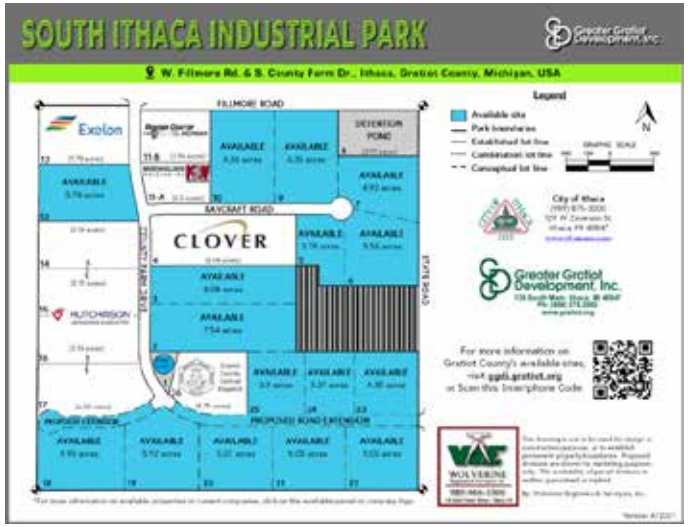
When considering potential sites for new or redevelopment, three metrics should be considered: existing conditions and infrastructure, stakeholder input, and market conditions and opportunities. Once identified, these areas are important to revitalize, grow, or attract new investment.

Key features of these areas should include the following:

- Areas that include existing development incentives such as Corridor Improvement Areas (CIAs) or planned infrastructure
- Areas that can significantly contribute to elevating the character, image, and brand of the community
- Areas that represent a high concentration of employment
- Areas with considerable potential for commercial and industrial development/redevelopment
- Areas that align with the accommodation of new, identified development.

SOUTH ITHACA INDUSTRIAL PARK

The South Ithaca Industrial Park has space available for additional development. The total park size is 137 acres, with available parcels ranging in size from 3 to 39 acres. It contains all underground infrastructure. It is located with access to Class A roads, within two miles of US Highway 127, and near Great Lakes Central Railroad. Tax Incentives include Countywide tax abatement policy in effect for up to 12 years in the Industrial Development District, and for foreign trade zone 275 members.



South Ithaca Industrial Park

ASHLEY DEVELOPMENT SITE

The Village of Ashley is a forward-thinking community whose vision is “to stimulate economic growth and create opportunities for the residents of the Village and surrounding area.” To achieve this, the Village acquired approximately 80 acres in 2020 to be marketed for development. The site is ideal for retail, commercial, residential, or light industrial development. It is located on Michigan Highway 57, four miles east of the US Highway 127 Interchange. Available lots range in size from one to six acres and can be combined based on project needs. Approximately 50 acres total are available. Tax abatements are available to eligible industrial clients.

Ashley Development Site

ALMA HOFFMAN ROAD

Alma Hoffman Road in Alma, Michigan, is home to a significant industrial site. This municipally owned 163-acre site is located in Pine River Township and is zoned for industrial use.

- Location: The site is strategically positioned near the Alma Industrial Park, US Highway-127, and Michigan Highway 46.
- Infrastructure: It has access to municipal water and sewer services and is certified as “Energy Ready” by Consumers Energy, meaning it can support substantial electric and natural gas demands.
- Transportation: The site is bordered by the Mid-Michigan Railroad, providing excellent rail access.
- Potential Uses: It’s ideal for industries such as automotive parts manufacturing, agricultural processing, plastic product manufacturing, and logistics/warehousing.

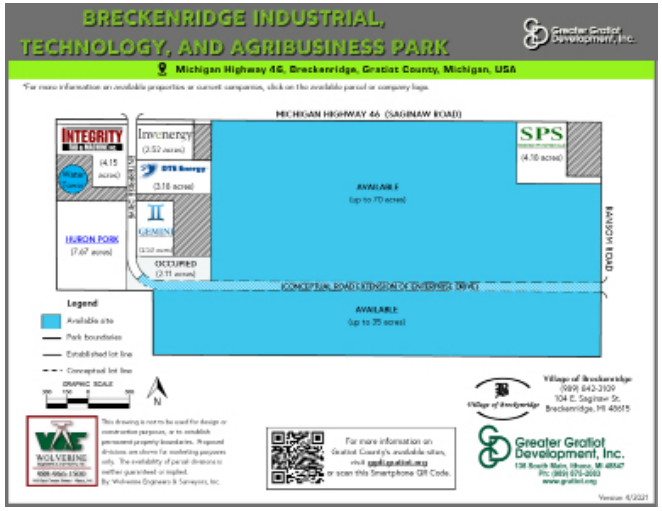
Alma Hoffman Road

BRECKENRIDGE INDUSTRIAL PARK

Breckenridge Industrial Park, located just east of Breckenridge and west of Wheeler Township on M-46, is part of the Mid-Michigan Certified Business Park.

- Purpose: It is the first business park in the U.S. established specifically for conducting agricultural business.

- Current Businesses: The park hosts several businesses, including DTE Energy, Gemini Capital Management, Huron Pork, Integrity Fab & Machine Inc., Invenergy – Gratiot Wind, and Memorial Fields Crematorium.
- Infrastructure: The park offers municipal water and sewer services, high-speed internet access, and underground infrastructure.
- Transportation: It features Class A roads and is located near the Mid-Michigan Railroad, Gratiot Community Airport, and MBS International Airport.
- Lot Sizes: The park offers flexible lot sizes, ranging from 1 acre to over 100 acres.
- Utilities: It is serviced by Consumers Energy for both electric and natural gas needs.



Breckenridge Industrial Park

08. Community-Level Implementation Matrices

The following implementation matrices address specific actions, priorities, and responsibilities that were identified during interactive work sessions. The Village of Breckenridge, the City of St. Louis, and the City of Alma identified community-specific goals and action steps in accordance with the County's Five Priority Pillars. They determined the priority and responsible parties who will work together to accomplish the actions. In some instances, communities may defer to the county-level action if pillars are not indicated in the community-level implementation matrix within this chapter.

PRIORITY & TIMEFRAME:
High or Short Term: 0-3 years
Medium or Mid Term: 4-6 years
Low or Long Term: 7+ years

VILLAGE OF BRECKENRIDGE

HOUSING BRECKENRIDGE		
Goal: To develop all types of housing in Breckenridge		
Action	**Priority**	**Responsibility**
Address housing needs and shortages within the community including multiple formats of housing including but not limited to single-family detached, duplex, tri-plex, multi-family, accessory dwelling units, town-housing or row-housing or other formats of housing that make sense for the community based on the community needs.	High	Village Council, Planning Commission
Focus efforts to secure residential development opportunities for a 40-acre property near Spruce Street and M-46 that has existing available infrastructure to support new housing.	High	Village Council, Planning Commission, GGDI, MSHDA
Utilize PUD to maximize development flexibility for mixed-use and housing development for specific projects that are creative and meet the needs of the community, which could include tiny home development (example near the golf course) or other types of development where density or other regulations could impede or prevent a project from moving forward.	High	Village Council, Planning Commission
Continue to update and review zoning ordinances on a regular basis to ensure growth friendliness for new housing within the community.	High	Village Council, Planning Commission

HOUSING BRECKENRIDGE		
Goal: To develop all types of housing in Breckenridge		
Action	**Priority**	**Responsibility**
Work to utilize new financing tools such as Brownfield TIF for Housing or the Workforce Housing Grant, Community Revitalization Program, Revitalization and Placemaking, LIHTC or other innovative solutions to support new housing development opportunities.	High	Village Council, MSHDA, MEDC, Philanthropy, Private Sector, Community Foundations, Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, State Land Bank

CARING FOR BRECKENRIDGE		
Goal: Promote quality and affordable childcare and early education in Breckenridge		
Action	**Priority**	**Responsibility**
Continue to support the Husky Pups program for youth ages 2-5 and identify opportunities to increase access to the program.	High	Encouragement from village with support from County, GGDI, local schools and private sector
Look at childcare business concepts to support local and county-wide child care options to support local employment expansion and attraction.	Med	Encouragement from village with support from County, State, GGDI, local schools and private sector
READY, SET, INVEST IN BRECKENRIDGE		
Goal: For Breckenridge to become the ideal choice for investment of all industry types (industrial, commercial, and agricultural).		
Action	**Priority**	**Responsibility**
Complete a Retail Market Analysis to assess community retail needs, demands, and ideal potential targets for new retail attraction.	High	Village Council, Administration
Continue to proactively solve problems/growth challenges with the local business community.	Ongoing	Village Council, Administration, GGDI

READY, SET, INVEST IN BRECKENRIDGE		
Goal: For Breckenridge to become the ideal choice for investment of all industry types (industrial, commercial, and agricultural).		
Action	**Priority**	**Responsibility**
Ensure local companies are educated and have access to small businesses' development and growth resources, tools and incentives.	Ongoing	Village Council, Administration, GGDI, MEDC, DDA
Continue to make infrastructure improvements and prepare for Phase II and III of the industrial park expansion and continue to focus on diversification of industries attracted to the park to maximize economic enhancement of the community to the extent possible.	Ongoing	Village Council, Administration, GGDI, MEDC
Work to stem the decline in brick and mortar retail to the extent possible by finding creative zoning, parking, financial and employment solutions through the utilization of local, county and State partnerships that may have access to specialized programs to support local retail sustainability.	Ongoing	Village Council, Administration, GGDI, MEDC

PRIORITY & TIMEFRAME:
High or Short Term: 0-3 years / Medium or Mid Term: 4-6 years / Low or Long Term: 7+ years

HOUSING ST. LOUIS		
Goal: To develop all types of housing in St. Louis		
Action	**Priority**	**Responsibility**
Consider and explore all options around township areas for partnerships for further land expansion for residential housing development.	Ongoing	City Council, Neighboring Townships, City administration
Seek to develop vacant land near Olive and Faro for new residential housing.	High	City Council, City administration
Seek to attract a residential development for the vacant land along Monroe between Hidden Oaks Golf Course and the Cambridge Woods Apartment complex.	Ongoing	City Council, City administration, GGDI, MSHDA
Prioritize the capacity of water service to the west of the city to enhance the ability to support new residential development of all housing format types.	High	City Council, City administration
Review second story housing requirements and determine if there is a need for first story for lease rental options, specifically in the downtown or other commercial areas.	Mid-term	City Council, City administration, Planning Commission
Seek funding options for renovation/rehabilitation of existing multi-family homes within the community as well as existing mixed-use structures within the community.	Ongoing	City Council, City administration, MEDC, MSHDA, Private sector, Philanthropy
Explore existing housing incentives (Brownfield TIF for Housing, DDA Project Specific TIF, Residential Facilities Exemption, RAP, CRP and others) to determine the best tools available for supporting new housing development or rehabilitation within the city.	Ongoing	City Council, City administration, MEDC, MSHDA, Private sector, Philanthropy, GGDI
Review and update the Zoning Ordinance to ensure the ability to maximize local housing development potential while specifically considering the reduction of minimum lot sizes, parking minimums and the allowance of up to quadplex housing in all residential districts.	High	City Council, City administration, Planning Commission

GARDENING ST. LOUIS		
Goal: Solving the disconnect between education and training and job opportunities.		
Action	**Priority**	**Responsibility**
Further educational opportunities, especially regarding skilled trades through partnerships with community, CTE providers, and industrial businesses.	High	City Council, City administration, GGDI, Local Employers, GIRESD, MEDC, Mid-Michigan Community College, LINK Learning
Seek to expand LINK Learning to include individuals aged 25 and older.	High	City Council, City administration, GGDI, Local Employers, GIRESD, MEDC, Mid-Michigan Community College, LINK Learning
CARING FOR ST. LOUIS		
Goal: Promote quality and affordable childcare and early education in St. Louis.		
Action	**Priority**	**Responsibility**
Ensuring local zoning is amenable toward child care and early education facilities.	Ongoing	City Council, City administration, Planning Commission, Local Schools
Solicit and develop a child-care needs analysis and incorporate implementation actions into the City Master Plan.	Mid-term	City Council, City administration, GGDI, GIRESD
READY, SET, INVEST IN ST. LOUIS		
Goal: For St. Louis to become the ideal choice for investment of all industry types (industrial and commercial).		
Action	**Priority**	**Responsibility**
Plan and work to upgrade Jackson and Croswell Roads to become all-season roads to support future industrial expansion.	Mid-term	City Council, City administration
Identify opportunities to expand fiber optic lines throughout the city and to support future industrial development.	Ongoing	City Council, City administration, DPW, GGDI
Plan for future potential industrial development on private owned vacant land that is currently agricultural to the east of town including infrastructure requirements for expansion and costs associated with expansion.	Mid-term	City Council, City administration, DPW, GGDI

Promote water and electric capacity as an incentive to attract new industrial to the community.	Ongoing	City Council, City administration and GGDI
Create a long-term resiliency strategy for redevelopment of the existing prison site as either industrial or future housing to have a plan in place should the State ever close the prison.	Mid-term	City Council, City administration, Planning Commission, GGDI, MEDC RRC
Plan options for the future potential development of the Horse Creek Property.	Mid-term	City Council, City administration, Planning Commission, GGDI, MEDC, RRC
PROTECT AND VISIT ST. LOUIS		
Goal: To Provide access the current opportunities to residents and visitors while protecting the environmental assets to strengthen St. Louis.		
Action	**Priority**	**Responsibility**
Plan and identify a permanent location and capital support for the community farmer's market.	Short-term	City Council, City administration, Planning Commission
Create a specific use strategy for the better utilization of Clapp Park for events, including the potential development of a bandshell and pavilion.	Short-term	City Council, City administration, Planning Commission, Parks and Rec
Research and plan the potential development of a splash park to serve younger children and families that may not use the community pool with Clapp and Lions Park being potential locations.	Short-term	City Council, City administration, Planning Commission, Parks and Rec
Identify areas for potential food truck events.	Short-term	City Council, Planning Commission
Identify areas for potential Pickleball courts.	Short-term	City Council, City administration, Planning Commission, Parks and Rec
Promote and facilitate the eventual re-use of the former Velsicol Plant as an energy park.	Mid-term	City Council, City administration, Planning Commission, Parks and Rec, Michigan State Land Bank Authority

PRIORITY & TIMEFRAME:
High or Short Term: 0-3 years / Medium or Mid Term: 4-6 years / Low or Long Term: 7+ years

HOUSING ALMA		
Goal: To develop all types of housing in multiple formats to support affordability and attainability		
Action/Project	**Priority**	**Responsibility**
Utilize multiple funding options including state and federal grants for infrastructure improvements as well as potentially the Brownfield TIF for Housing which can support infrastructure development for new housing.	High	City Commission, Administration, MSHDA, MEDC, GGDI and other potential granting agencies such as EPA and the EDA
Identify all vacant lots in the city including public and privately owned lots to plan and prioritize infill housing development opportunities.	High	City Commission, Administration, Planning Commission, GIS, State Land Bank Authority
Identify opportunities to establish local funding programs to assist with housing support for physical improvements, downpayment assistance, GAP financing, or other local housing needs and costs that are not wholly reliant on state and federal grant funds.	Ongoing/ High	City Commission, Administration, GGDI, Philanthropy and Foundations, Institutions, Private Sector
Complete a local housing Target Market Analysis to identify specific housing market needs and demand for new and rehab housing as well as housing format types in demand withing the community.	High	City Commission, Administration, Planning Commission, GGDI, MSHDA, MEDC, Gratiot County
Complete a Housing Strategic Plan for development, implementation and prioritization of tools and policies to assist with maximizing the realization of housing development meeting the local market potential.	High	City Commission, Administration, Planning Commission, GGDI, MEDC, MSHDA, Rural Development
Upon completion of a Market Analysis and housing Strategic Plan, create developer attraction tools, and host developer forums and community tours to attract new housing developers to the community.	Mid-range/ Ongoing	City Commission, Administration, GGDI, MEDC, Gratiot County
Identify tools and programs to assist/offset with local lease rates such as rental support programs or other unique tools such as the creation of Community Land Trust for housing.	Mid-Range	City Commission, Administration, MSHDA, State Land Bank Authority, Community Foundation, Private Sector

Complete a Zoning Audit to ensure zoning policies are supportive of new housing development for multiple formats of housing types such as ADU's, mixed-use, townhouses, up to 4 attached units by right in all residential districts and other creative zoning that supports housing development.	High	City Commission, Administration, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals
GARDENING ALMA		
Goal: Solving the disconnect between education and training and job opportunities		
Action	**Priority**	**Responsibility**
Expand the utilization of the GoingPro talent development program with local companies.	High	RESD, GGDI, MEDC, Michigan Works!, Private Sector
Identify and better utilize or expand access small business funding support programs and dollars as well is identify gaps in small business development support tools and programs.	Ongoing	Administration, GGDI, Gratiot County, Private Sector, SBDC, Mid-Michigan Community College, Montcalm Community College, Alma College, PTAC
Research and identify small business needs for development support such as the potential creation of a makerspace or co-working facilities or incubation centers.	Ongoing	Administration, GGDI, Gratiot County, Private Sector, SBDC, Mid-Michigan Community College, Montcalm Community College, Alma College, EDA
READY, SET, INVEST IN ALMA		
Goal: For Alma to become the ideal choice for investment of all industry types (industrial, commercial, and agricultural).		
Action	**Priority**	**Responsibility**
Continue Capital Improvement Planning to identify major and minor improvements to infrastructure and roads as well as identify potential out of the box funding sources for capital improvements that support new commercial and industrial development and expansion within the community.	Ongoing	City Commission, Administration, Planning Commission
Prioritize development potential and business attraction for the Hoffman Road site owned by the City of Alma including steps potentially needed to execute an eventual Act 425 agreement between Alma and Pine River Township to accommodate site infrastructure needs.	High	City Commission, Administration, City Legal, Pine River Township, GGDI, MEDC
Prioritize areas of the city in most immediate need of infrastructure capacity upgrades and development throughout the city.	Ongoing	City Commission, Administration, Engineering

Initiate a planning process for the Northtown Area of the city as a subarea plan to create a unified vision for new development or redevelopment of the area including vacant land within the subarea.	High	City Commission, Administration, Planning Commission, GGDI, MEDC
Improve investment storytelling through the creation of a new Marketing and Branding Strategic Plan that will assist with the unification of community messaging as well as messaging for specific investment sectors and opportunities in the community.	High to Mid-range	City Commission, Administration, GGDI, MEDC RRC Program
Identify support services in the community to support the energy and rail economies including the potential of being a part of the A2 to Traverse Rail Strategy for Michigan.	Ongoing and Mid-range	City Commission, Administration, GGDI, MDOT
Identify blight support programs to assist with site improvements, specifically to the Alma Products building on Court, but not limited to that single facility.	Ongoing/ High	CCity Commission, Administration, State Land Bank Authority
Identify opportunities for river front development within the community.	Ongoing	City Commission, Administration, Planning Commission
Utilize the MSHDA Workforce Housing Grant to assist with workforce housing development in the community.	High	City Commission, Administration, Planning Commission
PROTECT AND VISIT ALMA		
Goal: To Provide access the current opportunities to residents and visitors while protecting the environmental assets to strengthen Alma.		
Action	**Priority**	**Responsibility**
Seek to establish a community art program to support local artist, tourism, placemaking development and community beautification.	High	City Commission, Administration, DDA, Institutions, Philanthropy, Private Sector, Arts Council
Support activities when possible that focus on improving the environment in the community as well as the environmental quality of the Pine River.	High	City Commission, Administration, EPA, EGLE, Volunteers, Gratiot County and Environmental Advocates
Initiate a feasibility study for dam risk reduction throughout Gratiot County.	High	City Commission, Administration, EGLE
Expand the Keep Alma Beautiful initiative.	Ongoing	City Commission, Administration
Expand the recreational partnership between the city and County.	Ongoing	City Commission, Administration, Gratiot County

PRIORITY & TIMEFRAME:
High or Short Term: 0-3 years / Medium or Mid Term: 4-6 years / Low or Long Term: 7+ years

HOUSING ASHLEY		
GOAL: Develop all types of housing in St. Louis.		
Action	Priority	Responsibility
Conduct and explore all options surrounding Ashley for potential residential developments, including an infrastructure analysis.	Ongoing	Village Council and Planning Commission, Elba Township, MEDC, MSHDA
Seek to develop vacant land near water tower (500 W. Oak St.) and along M-57/McClelland Rd. for potential mult-family residential housing and for individal residential lots throughout the Village.	Ongoing	Village administration, Council and Planning Commission, developers, MSHDA
Review and update the Zoning Ordinance to ensure the ability to maximize local housing development potential while specifically focusing on minimum lot sizes and minimum dwelling sizes.	Short	Village administration, Council and Planning Commission
Pursue senior housing development to help free-up current single family homes.	Medium	Village administration, Council and Planning Commission, developers, MSHDA

GARDENING ASHLEY		
GOAL: Solving the disconnect between education and training and job opportunities.		
Action	Priority	Responsibility
Increase communication to school students about job opportunities in the area and help them access training needed for those jobs.	Ongoing	GIRESD, CMMA, local employers, Ashley Public Schools
Recruit an alternative energy training facility for students due to proximity to wind and solar farms.	Long	GIRESD, alternative energy companies, Ashley Public Schools

CARING FOR ASHLEY		
GOAL: Promote quality and affordable childcare and early education in Ashley.		
Action	Priority	Responsibility
Grow current school system and continue to promote its award-winning status.	Ongoing	GIRESD, Ashley Public Schools, Village staff
Pursue utilizing existing vacant school rooms for daycare and/or GSRP programs.	Short	GIRESD, EightCap, Ashley Public Schools, Early Childhood Investment Corporation

READY, SET, INVEST IN ASHLEY		
GOAL: For Ashley to become the ideal choice for investment of all industry types (industrial and commercial).		
Action	Priority	Responsibility
Recruit businesses to help serve basic needs of community such as bank, restaurants, healthcare, gas station, and grocery stores.	Ongoing	Village administration, Council and Planning Commission, developers, GGDI
Promote Ashley Development Side (M-57 between McClelland and Arnold Rds.) for future commercial and industrial development.	Ongoing	Village administration, Council and Planning Commission, developers, GGDI
Expand wastewater lagoon system to service Ashley Development Site.	Short	Village administration, Council and Planning Commission, EGLE

READY, SET, INVEST IN ASHLEY		
GOAL: For Ashley to become the ideal choice for investment of all industry types (industrial and commercial).		
Action	Priority	Responsibility
Discuss potential of joining with a transit system (potentially Alma Transit/SLIPR)	Short	Alma Transit, SLIPR, Village Council
Plan road cuts and deceleration lanes for Ashley Development Site.	Short	Village administration, Council and Planning Commission, Gratiot County Road Commission, MDOT
Maintain relationship with railroad, as it is necessary for tourism and industrial development. Work with railroad to avoid blocking off areas of town, especially during school traffic	Short	Village administration, Gratiot County 911 Authority, Great Lakes Central Railroad
Upgrade road capacity to better serve business needs.	Medium	Village administration, Council and Planning Commission, Gratiot County Road Commission, MDOT
Increase areas with three-phase service for future business needs.	Medium	Village administration, Council and Planning Commission, Consumers Energy, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric
Expand telecommunications capacity including recruiting a cell tower to eliminate no-service areas, extending fiber east of the railroad tracks, and solving emergency tower interference issues between Clinton and Gratiot counties.	Medium	Village administration, Council and Planning Commission, cellular service providers, fiber providers, MDOT, Gratiot County 911 Authority, Great Lakes Central Railroad
Construct sidewalks from new Ashley Development Site to Ashley schools.	Medium	Village administration, Council, Ashley Schools, Gratiot County Road Commission, MDOT
Consider a special assessment to pay for increased Sheriff presence in Village for better traffic enforcement.	Medium	Village Council, Gratiot County, Gratiot County Sheriff

PROTECT AND VISIT ASHLEY		
GOAL: Provide access to current opportunities for residents and visitors while protecting the environmental assets that strengthen Ashley.		
Action	Priority	Responsibility
Capitalize on community involvement and tourism increase due to Christmas event, with a potential Christmas in July event.	Ongoing	Ashley Country Christmas Committee, Village Staff and Council, Gratiot Area Chamber
Seek assistance for small Village staff in updating website, social media, and marketing materials.	Ongoing	Village staff, Ashley Schools, GIRESD, Alma College, area community colleges
Join Gratiot countywide recycling initiative.	Short	Village Council, Gratiot County
Evaluate need for electric charging stations.	Short	Village Council and Planning Commission, Consumers Energy, EGLE
Increase greenspace Downtown, perhaps with a park, art installations, murals, etc. to make area more attractive to families.	Short	MEDC, Village staff and Council
Consider joining Gratiot Area Chamber of Commerce and establishing an Ashley Promotional Committee.	Short	Local businesses, village staff, Gratiot Area Chamber of Commerce
Build a pavilion for a future farmers market.	Medium	MEDC, Village staff and Council, MMDHD

Appendix 1: Jurisdiction Profiles & Maps

Please Note: Maps for the individual communities within this section of the plan represent the latest land use and zoning information available for the communities at the time of this plan's development. Some Gratiot County communities are in the process of updating their maps, and the existing maps may not show the land use categories in real time. It is anticipated that over time, some maps may be revised, and the latest maps will be located on the individual community's website. Map revisions and updates would be considered a non-substantive administrative change to the appendix of this plan.

APPENDIX I: JURISDICTION PROFILES

CITY OF ALMA 2
ARCADA TOWNSHIP 6
VILLAGE OF ASHLEY 8
BETHANY TOWNSHIP 11
VILLAGE OF BRECKINRIDGE 13
ELBA TOWNSHIP 16
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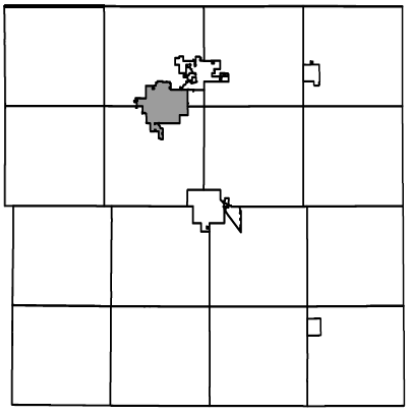
APPENDIX I: JURISDICTION PROFILES

1. CITY OF ALMA

[https://myalma.org/]



ABOUT

Founded in 1854, Alma encompasses 6.05 square miles. Home to Alma College and Masonic Pathways, Alma is the largest city in Gratiot County.

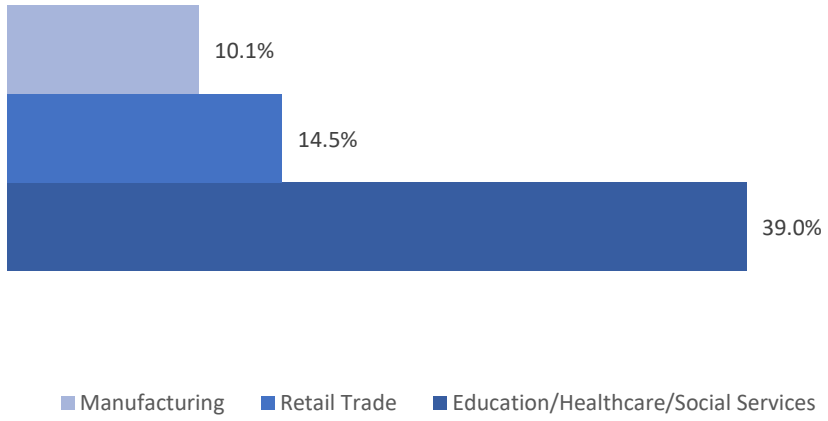
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	9,488
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2022)	3,541
MEDIAN AGE (2022)	32.7 years
POPULATION 65+ YEARS (2022)	18.0%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022)	$44,375
MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2020)	$97,300
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2022)	3,577
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	60.8%
RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	39.2%
EMPLOYMENT RATE (CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE) (2022)	53.2%
POVERTY RATE	21.8%

Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 ACS

2022 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

Below are the top three industries in which the City of Alma's residents are employed in. The percentages below come from the context of 4,195 total employed civilians.



CITY OF ALMA HIGHLIGHTS

The City of Alma has a goal to develop all types of housing in multiple formats to support affordability and attainability. Some of the actions that will be taken to fulfill this goal are listed here:

- Utilize multiple funding options including state and federal grants for infrastructure improvements as well as potentially the Brownfield TIF for Housing which can support infrastructure development for new housing.
- Identify all vacant lots in the city including public and privately owned lots to plan and prioritize infill housing development opportunities.
- Identify opportunities to establish local funding programs to assist with housing support for physical improvements, downpayment assistance, GAP financing, or other local housing needs and costs that are not wholly reliant on state and federal grant funds.
- Complete a local housing Target Market Analysis to identify specific housing market needs and demand for new and rehab housing as well as housing format types in demand within the community.
- Complete a Housing Strategic Plan for development, implementation and prioritization of tools and policies to assist with maximizing the realization of housing development meeting the local market potential.
- Upon completion of a Market Analysis and housing Strategic Plan, create developer attraction tools, and host developer forums and community tours to attract new housing developers to the community.

Alma has a goal to solve the disconnect between education and training and job opportunities. Some of the actions that will be taken to fulfill this goal are listed here:

- Expand the utilization of the GoingPro talent development program with local companies.
- Identify and better utilize or expand access to small business funding support programs and dollars as well as identify gaps in small business development support tools and programs.
- Research and identify small business needs for development support such as the potential creation of a makerspace or co-working facilities or incubation centers.

Alma's goal to become the ideal choice for investment of all industry types (industrial, commercial, and agricultural) will be supported by the following actions:

- Continue Capital Improvement Planning to identify major and minor improvements to infrastructure and roads as well as identify potential out of the box funding sources for capital improvements that support new commercial and industrial development and expansion within the community.
- Prioritize development potential and business attraction for the Hoffman Road site owned by the City of Alma including steps potentially needed to execute an eventual Act 425 agreement between Alma and Pine River Township to accommodate site infrastructure needs.
- Prioritize areas of the city in most immediate need of infrastructure capacity upgrades and development throughout the city.
- Initiate a planning process for the Northtown Area of the city as a subarea plan to create a unified vision for new development or redevelopment of the area including vacant land within the subarea.
- Improve investment storytelling through the creation of a new Marketing and Branding Strategic Plan that will assist with the unification of community messaging as well as messaging for specific investment sectors and opportunities in the community.

- Identify support services in the community to support the energy and rail economies including the potential of being a part of the A2 to Traverse Rail Strategy for Michigan.

Additional action items are identified in their community-specific matrix in Chapter Eight.

Alma's goal to provide access the current opportunities to residents and visitors while protecting the environmental assets to strengthen the community is supported by the following action items.

- Seek to establish a community art program to support local artists, tourism, placemaking development and community beautification.
- Support activities when possible that focus on improving the environment in the community as well as the environmental quality of the Pine River.
- Initiate a feasibility study for dam risk reduction throughout Gratiot County.
- Expand the Keep Alma Beautiful initiative.
- Expand the recreational partnership between the city and County.

EXTENDED ACTION PROJECTS

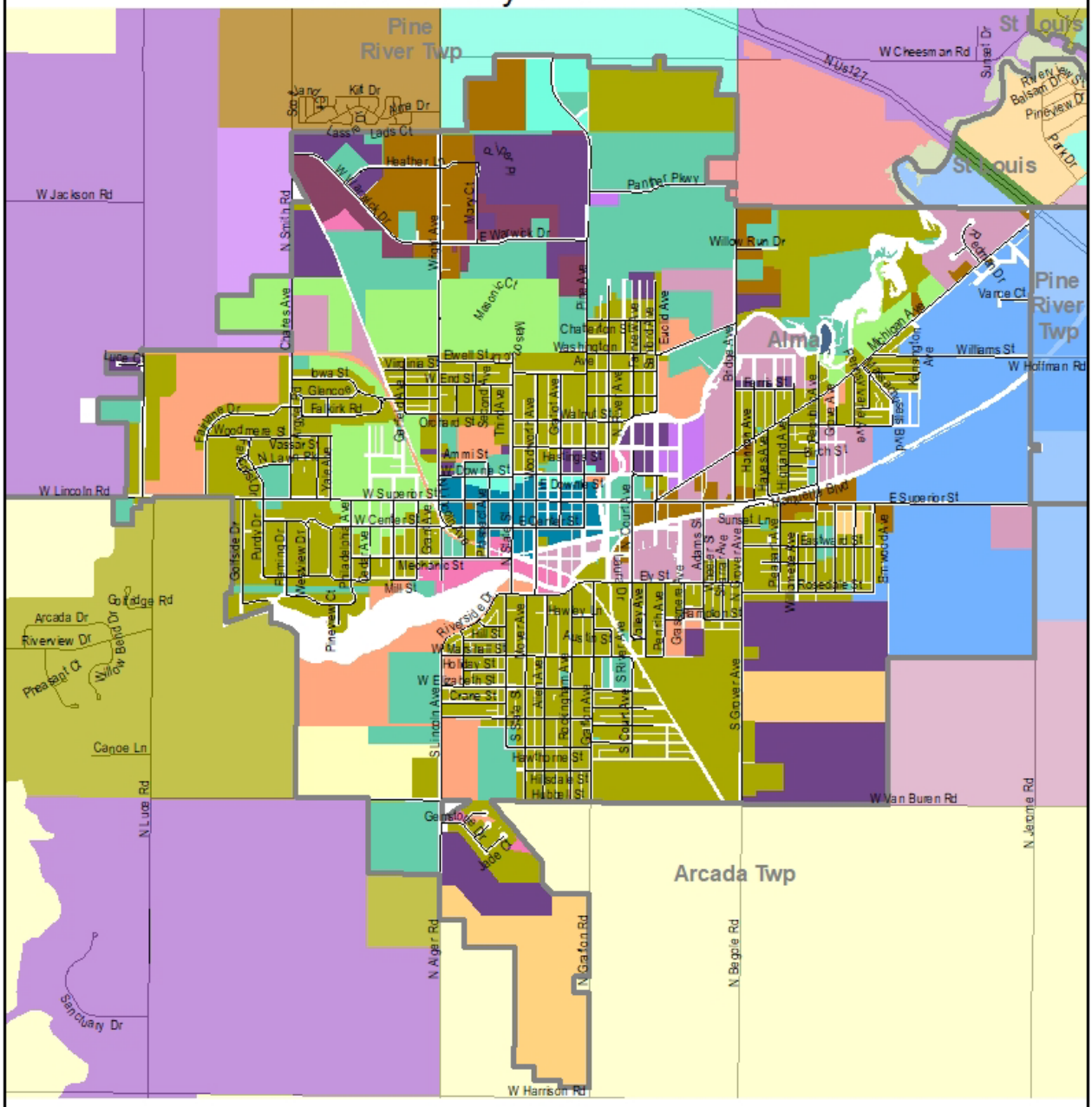
- Developing a messaging and marketing campaign for the city with a limited budget and staff.
- The continuing the non-motorized trail expansion and final connections to existing linear non-motorized paths.
    - Connect Alma and St. Louis Riverwalks
    - Connect Gratiot Fair for Youth Sidewalk with the Gemstone Fields subdivision
    - Connect Luce Road School with the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail
    - Connect the City of Alma to the US127 Non-Motorized Pathway
- Rebuilding the park assets that are still important with the current population's wants and needs, specifically the Park Plan.
- Event/Support spaces within the commercial district to assist/support the development and facilitation of community events/activities, i.e. public restroom
- Public arts initiatives for the public space throughout the community, specifically the public spaces in the downtown area.
- Explore opportunities for the installation of solar on the former refinery site with property owner, utility companies and the State of Michigan.
- Continued support and investment in residential living in the downtown area.
- Riverfront Redevelopment planning the appropriate housing, commercial, recreational opportunities, including a passenger depot/platform, while focusing on the health of the State Street Dam impoundment (Healthy Pine River Committee).
- Redevelopment of the former Middle School site, adjacent to the downtown.
- Development of a site to assist entrepreneurs/small business.

COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Zoning Map
Zoning Ordinance
Capital Improvement Plan

1. 4

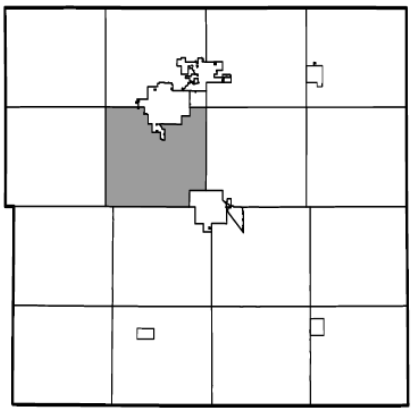
Gratiot County Future Land Use



Source: Data provided by Gratiot County GIS Authority and City of Alma. All information is deemed accurate and is made available without warranty of any kind. This document is intended to depict the approximate spatial location of mapped features within the community and any other use is at the risk of the user.

2. ARCADA TOWNSHIP

[https://arcadami.gov/]



ABOUT

Located in the northwest quadrant of Gratiot County, Arcada Township spans 32.7 square miles in area, with 0.2 miles consisting of water.

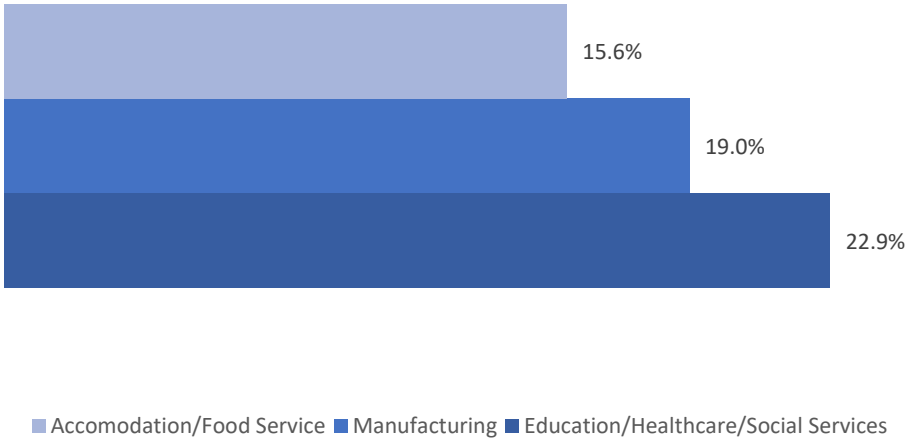
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	1,671
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2022)	691
MEDIAN AGE (2022)	42.4 years
POPULATION 65+ YEARS (2022)	19.0%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022)	$77,083
MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2020)	$198,000
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2022)	726
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	88.9%
RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	11.1%
EMPLOYMENT RATE (CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE) (2022)	53.6%
POVERTY RATE	10.3%

Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 ACS

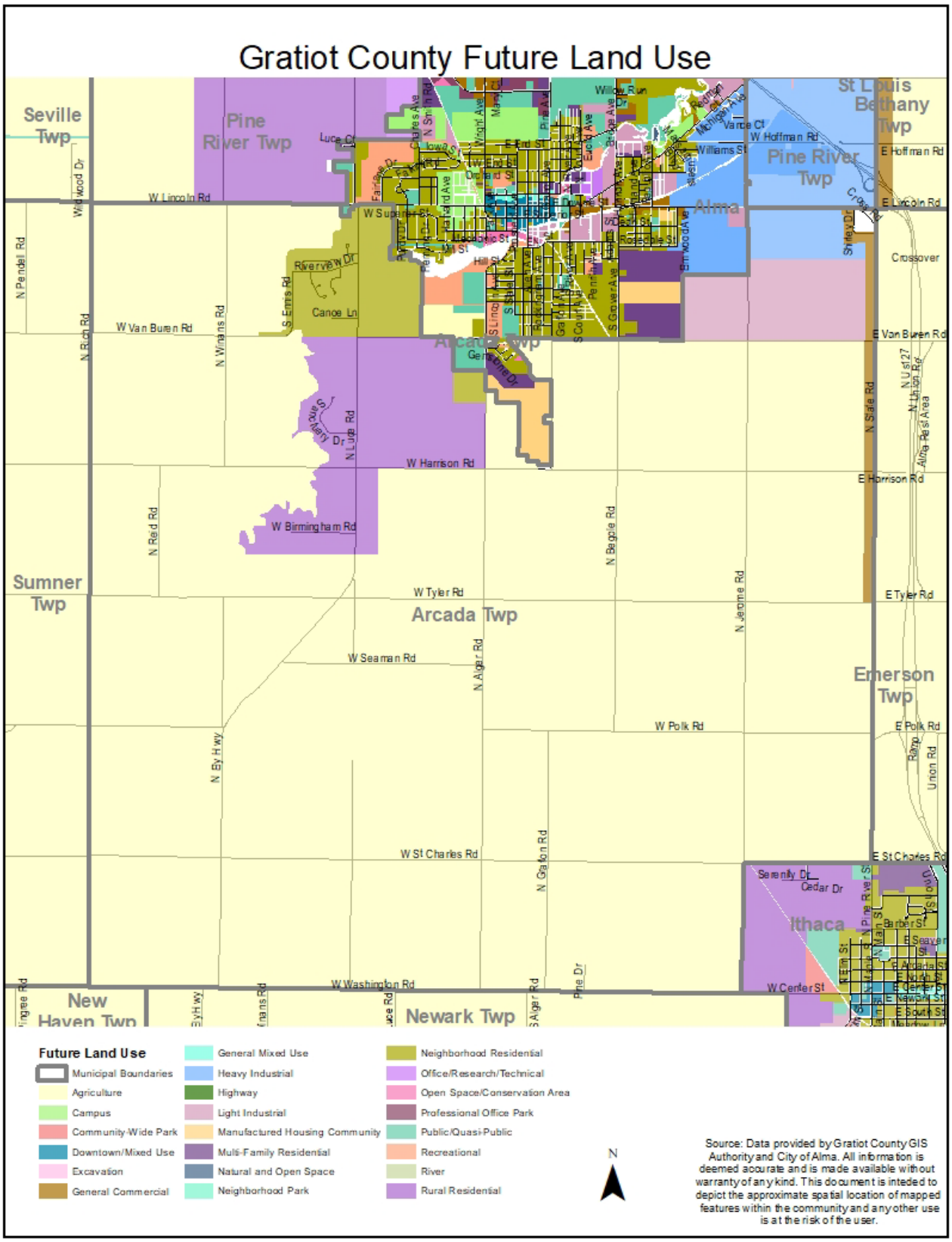
2022 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

Below are the top three industries in which Arcada Township's residents are employed in. The percentages below come from the context of 796 total employed civilians.



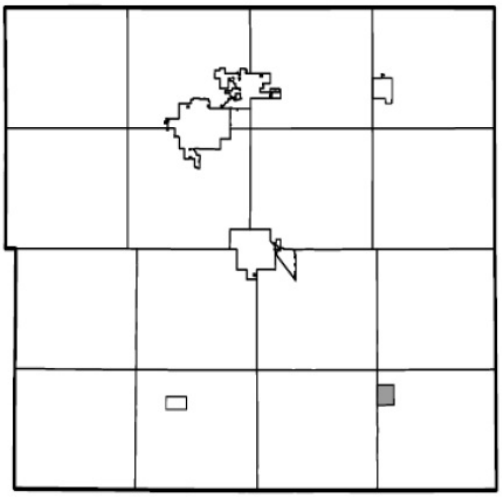
COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Zoning Map
Zoning Ordinance


Gratiot County Future Land Use
Seville Twp
Pine River Twp
St Louis
Bethany Twp
Alma
Arcada Twp
Sumner Twp
Emerson Twp
Ithaca
New Haven Twp
Newark Twp
W Lincoln Rd
E Lincoln Rd
W Van Buren Rd
E Van Buren Rd
W Harrison Rd
E Harrison Rd
W Tyler Rd
E Tyler Rd
W Seaman Rd
W Polk Rd
E Polk Rd
W St Charles Rd
E St Charles Rd
W Washington Rd
W Center St
W Birmingham Rd
W Hoffman Rd
E Hoffman Rd
Future Land Use
Municipal Boundaries
Agriculture
Campus
Community-Wide Park
Downtown/Mixed Use
Excavation
General Commercial
General Mixed Use
Heavy Industrial
Highway
Light Industrial
Manufactured Housing Community
Multi-Family Residential
Natural and Open Space
Neighborhood Park
Neighborhood Residential
Office/Research/Technical
Open Space/Conservation Area
Professional Office Park
Public/Quasi-Public
Recreational
River
Rural Residential
N
Source: Data provided by Gratiot County GIS Authority and City of Alma. All information is deemed accurate and is made available without warranty of any kind. This document is intended to depict the approximate spatial location of mapped features within the community and any other use is at the risk of the user.

3. VILLAGE OF ASHLEY

[https://www.ashleyvillage.net/]



ABOUT

Located in the northwest corner of Elba Township, the

Village of Ashley spans a total of 0.64 square miles in area.

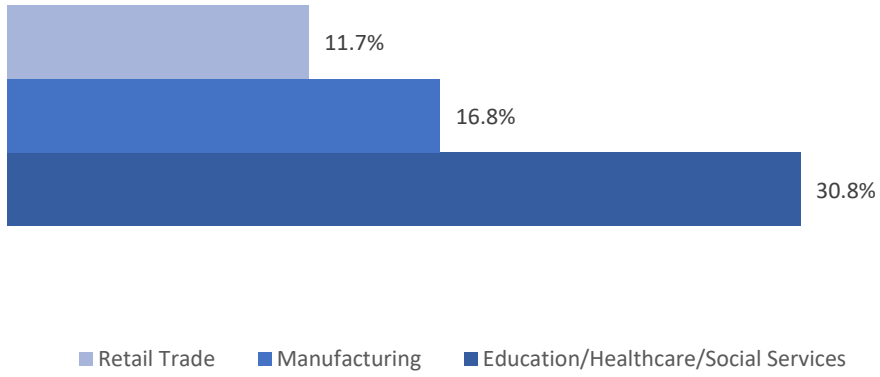
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	508
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2022)	201
MEDIAN AGE (2022)	45.6 years
POPULATION 65+ YEARS (2022)	24.8%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022)	$52,083
MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2020)	$88,600
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2022)	212
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	71.6%
RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	28.4%
EMPLOYMENT RATE (CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE) (2022)	53.8%
POVERTY RATE	18.9%

Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 ACS

2022 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

Below are the top three industries in which the Village of Ashley's residents are employed in. The percentages below come from the context of 214 total employed civilians.



COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Zoning Ordinance

The Village of Ashley Planning Commission made the following notes to support the Countywide Master Plan:

1. **Housing and Infrastructure:** Ashley has a need for housing and related infrastructure that can be addressed in the following ways:

    a. **Senior & Veteran Housing**: Explore the development of specialized facilities to serve aging residents and veterans, ensuring access to affordable, accessible living spaces.
    b. **Housing Variety**: Expand options with multi-family units, single-family homes, and apartments to attract young families, professionals, and retirees.
    c. **Transit System**: Explore the creation of a local transit option or shuttle service to connect residents to jobs, schools, healthcare, and recreation.
    d. **Utilities & Infrastructure Upgrades**:
        i. Upgrade electrical service to 3-phase power to support industrial and commercial growth.
        ii. Upgrade Natural Gas service to areas of the village presently not served.
        iii. Ensure reliable cell phone and broadband coverage throughout the village.
        iv. Continue planning for lagoon expansion to support population growth and future development.
    e. **Community Enhancements**: Improve sidewalks, railroad access, and streetscapes to make the village more walkable and inviting.
    f. **Partnerships**: Working with Planning Commission, MEDC, Greater Gratiot Development, MSHDA, and other organizations to be a Development Ready Community will be a key focus for Ashley.

2. **Education and Training:** Ashley Community Schools and the community can work together to support the following initiatives that will aid growth

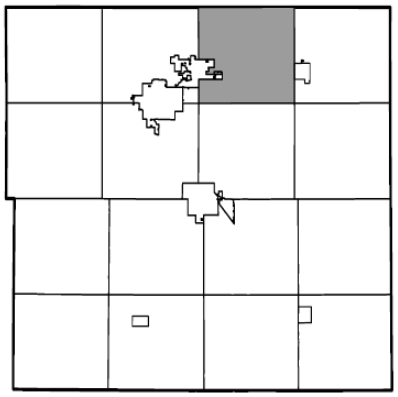
    a. **Daycare & Early Childhood**: Establish a quality daycare facility to support working families and attract new residents.
    b. **School Growth**: Increase population to grow school enrollment, allowing for expanded programming while maintaining a small-school, individualized instruction atmosphere.
    c. **Post-Secondary & Career Training**:
        i. Create opportunities for local college-level courses and trade certifications.
        ii. Explore partnerships to establish an alternative energy training facility, preparing students and adults for future-focused careers.

3. **Investment and Job Opportunities:** Ashley has a need for business and related infrastructure that can be addressed in the following ways:
    a. **Business Development**: Encourage the addition of essential services such as a gas station, bank, and eateries to support both residents and visitors.
    b. **Workforce Growth**: Attract investment that creates sustainable jobs, with a focus on industries aligned with regional strengths (e.g., renewable energy, skilled trades, outdoor recreation).
    c. **Infrastructure for Commerce**: Strengthen power supply, transportation access, and digital connectivity to make the village business friendly.

4. **Tourism, Recreation, and Marketing:** Ashley has a good tourism infrastructure with the Christmas Events and this can grow in the following ways:
   a. **Outdoor Recreation**: Leverage the state game area and natural surroundings to attract hunters, anglers, hikers, and eco-tourists.
   b. **Community Amenities**: Expand recreational offerings such as trails, parks, and public spaces to improve resident quality of life and attract visitors.
   c. **Marketing & Visibility**:
      i. Build a strong social media presence to showcase village life, amenities, and opportunities.
      ii. Develop branding and promotional campaigns that highlight the village as a welcoming place to live, work, and visit.

4. BETHANY TOWNSHIP

[https://www.bethanytownshipmi.gov/]



ABOUT

Organized in 1858, Bethany Township spans a total of 35.2 square miles in area.

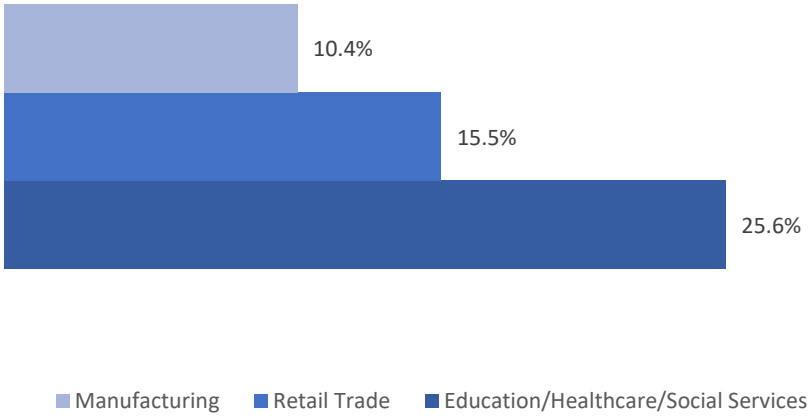
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	1,773
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2022)	428
MEDIAN AGE (2022)	45.6 years
POPULATION 65+ YEARS (2022)	24.9%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022)	$78,125
MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2020)	$145,700
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2022)	559
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	91.6%
RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	8.4%
EMPLOYMENT RATE (CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE) (2022)	53.2%
POVERTY RATE	4.4%

Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 ACS

2022 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

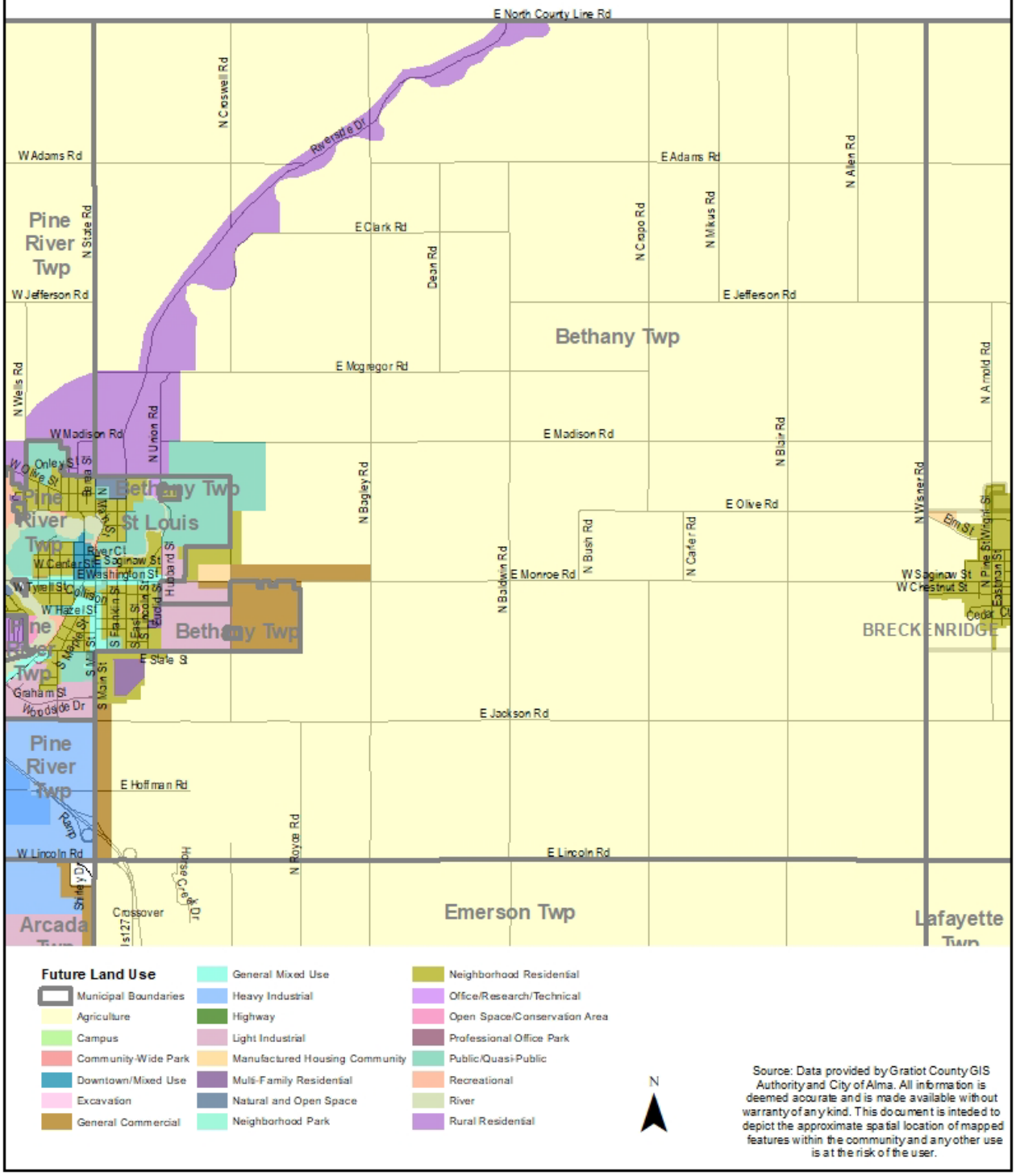
Below are the top three industries in which Bethany Township's residents are employed in. The percentages below come from the context of 580 total employed civilians.



COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

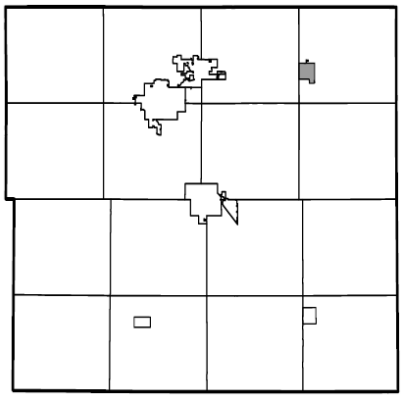
Zoning Ordinance

Gratiot County Future Land Use



5. VILLAGE OF BRECKINRIDGE

6. [https://www.breckenridgemi.com/]



ABOUT

The Village of Breckenridge was incorporated in 1908 and spans 1.07 square miles in area. Located in the northeast region of Gratiot County, it lies near the border of Wheeler Township and Bethany Townships.

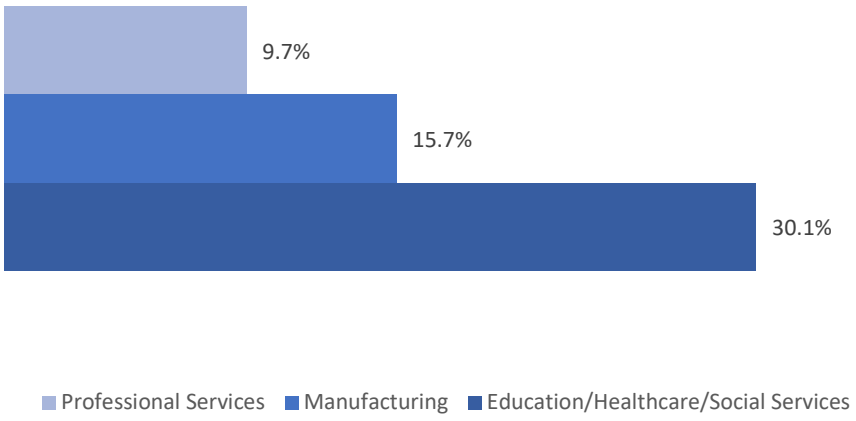
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	1,238
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2022)	541
MEDIAN AGE (2022)	38.7 years
POPULATION 65+ YEARS (2022)	14.3%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022)	$54,413
MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2020)	$97,700
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2022)	589
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	70.1%
RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	29.9%
EMPLOYMENT RATE (CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE) (2022)	55.7%
POVERTY RATE	14.7%

Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 ACS

2022 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

Below are the top three industries in which the Village of Breckinridge's residents are employed in. The percentages below come from the context of 607 total employed civilians.



VILLAGE OF BRECKENRIDGE HIGHLIGHTS

The Village of Breckenridge has a goal to develop all types of housing in multiple formats to support affordability and attainability. Some of the actions that will be taken to fulfill this goal are listed here:

- Address housing needs and shortages within the community including multiple formats of housing including but not limited to single-family detached, duplex, tri-plex, multi-family, accessory dwelling units, town-housing or row-housing or other formats of housing that make sense for the community based on the community needs.
- Focus efforts to secure residential development opportunities for a 40-acre property near Spruce Street and M-46 that has existing available infrastructure to support new housing.
- Utilize PUD to maximize development flexibility for mixed-use and housing development for specific projects that are creative and meet the needs of the community, which could include tiny home development (example near the golf course) or other types of development where density or other regulations could impede or prevent a project from moving forward.
- Work to utilize new financing tools such as Brownfield TIF for Housing or the Workforce Housing Grant, Community Revitalization Program, Revitalization and Placemaking, LIHTC or other innovative solutions to support new housing development opportunities.

The Village of Breckenridge's goal to promote quality and affordable child care and early education in Breckenridge will be supported by the following actions:

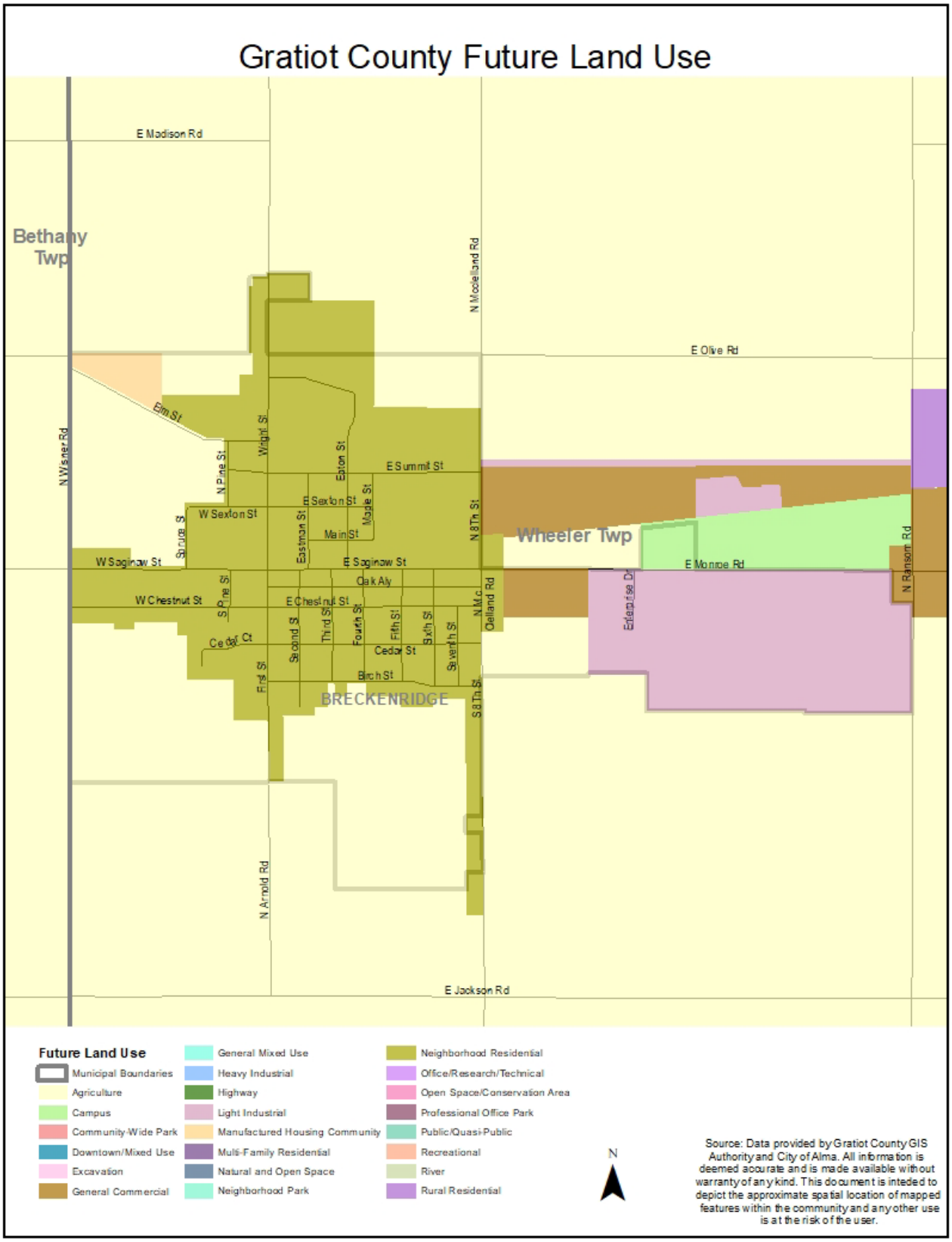
- Continue to support the Husky Pups program for youth ages 2-5 and identify opportunities to increase access to the program.
- Look at child care business concepts to support local and county-wide child care options to support local employment expansion and attraction

The Village of Breckenridge's goal to become the ideal choice for investment of all industry types (industrial, commercial, and agricultural) will be supported by the following actions:

- Complete a Retail Market Analysis to assess community retail needs, demands, and ideal potential targets for new retail attraction.
- Continue to proactively solve problems/growth challenges with the local business community.
- Ensure local companies are educated and have access to small businesses' development and growth resources, tools and incentives.
- Continue to make infrastructure improvements and prepare for Phase II and III of the industrial park expansion and continue to focus on diversification of industries attracted to the park to maximize economic enhancement of the community to the extent possible.
- Work to stem the decline in brick-and-mortar retail to the extent possible by finding creative zoning, parking, financial and employment solutions through the utilization of local, county and State partnerships that may have access to specialized programs to support local retail sustainability.

COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Zoning Ordinance
Capital Improvement Plan


Gratiot County Future Land Use
E Madison Rd
Bethany Twp
N Wisner Rd
N Middleland Rd
E Olive Rd
Elm St
Wright St
N Pine St
Elton St
E Summit St
E Sexton St
W Sexton St
Spruce St
Eastman St
Maple St
Main St
N 8Th St
Wheeler Twp
W Saginaw St
E Saginaw St
E Monroe Rd
N Ransom Rd
Oak Aly
W Chestnut St
S Pine St
E Chestnut St
N Middleland Rd
Enterprise Dr
Cedar Ct
Second St
Third St
Fourth St
Fifth St
Sixth St
Seventh St
Cedar St
First St
Birch St
BRECKENRIDGE
S 8Th St
N Arnold Rd
E Jackson Rd
Future Land Use
Municipal Boundaries
Agriculture
Campus
Community-Wide Park
Downtown/Mixed Use
Excavation
General Commercial
General Mixed Use
Heavy Industrial
Highway
Light Industrial
Manufactured Housing Community
Multi-Family Residential
Natural and Open Space
Neighborhood Park
Neighborhood Residential
Office/Research/Technical
Open Space/Conservation Area
Professional Office Park
Public/Quasi-Public
Recreational
River
Rural Residential
N
Source: Data provided by Gratiot County GIS Authority and City of Alma. All information is deemed accurate and is made available without warranty of any kind. This document is inteded to depict the approximate spatial location of mapped features within the community and any other use is at the risk of the user.

7. ELBA TOWNSHIP

[https://www.elbagratiot.com/]

ABOUT

Elba Township was established in 1856 and spans 35.1 square miles in area. The township forms the southeast corner of Gratiot County.

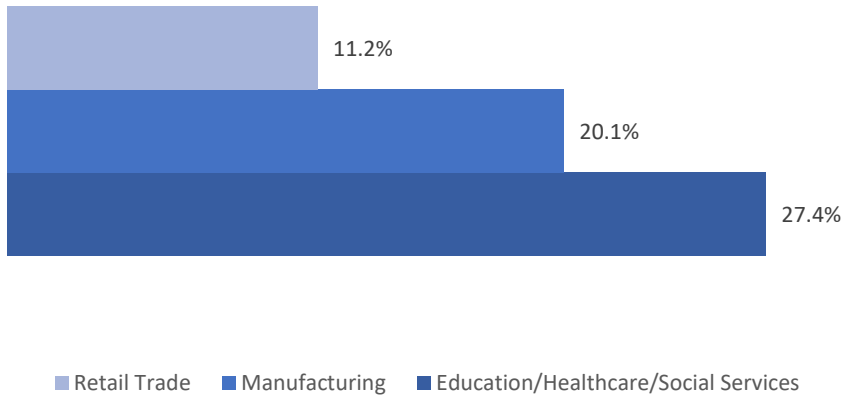
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	1,293
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2022)	491
MEDIAN AGE (2022)	41.9 years
POPULATION 65+ YEARS (2022)	21.8%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022)	$59,028
MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2020)	$111,500
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2022)	547
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	75.2%
RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	24.8%
EMPLOYMENT RATE (CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE) (2022)	55.6%
POVERTY RATE	14.6%

Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 ACS

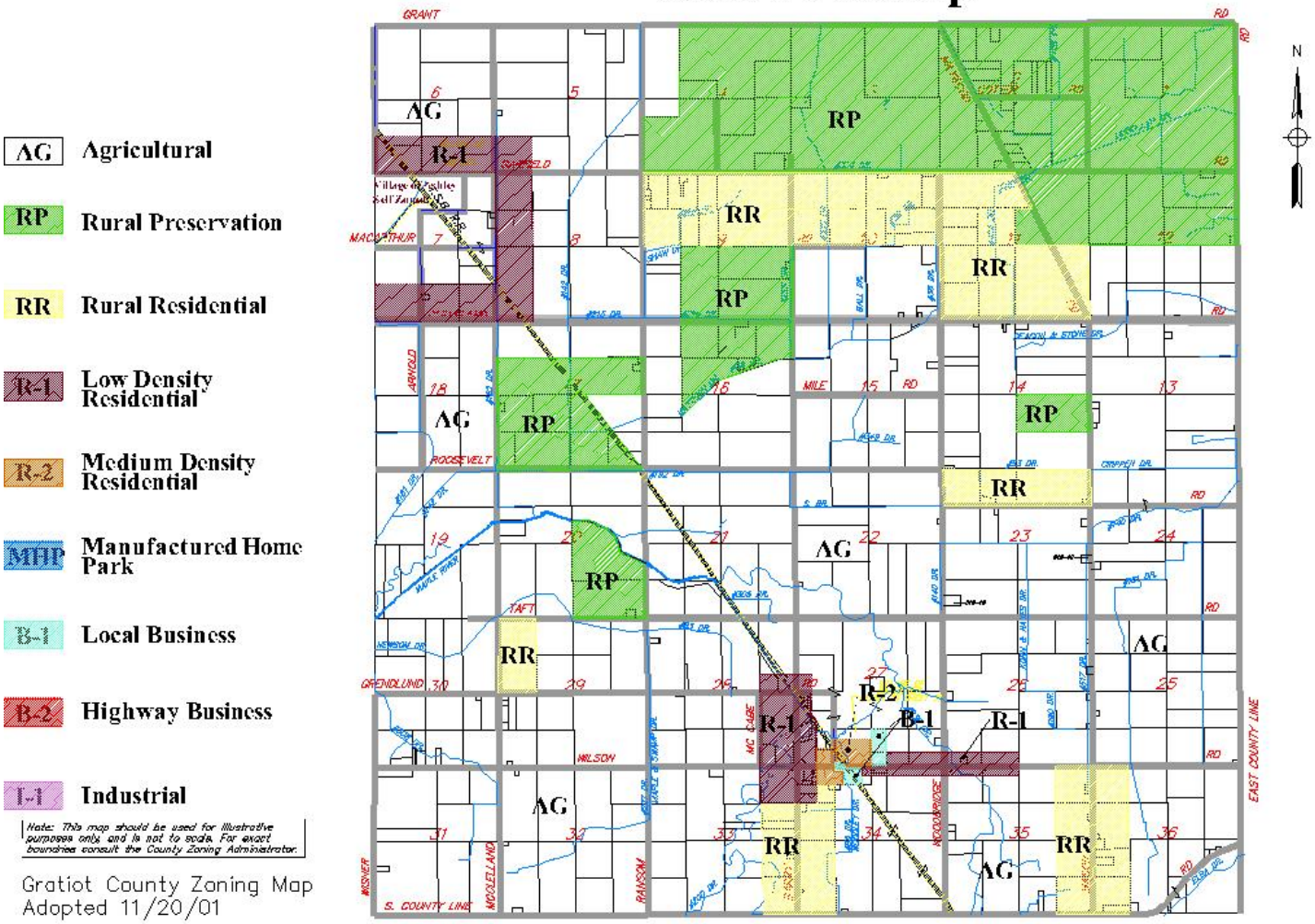
2022 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

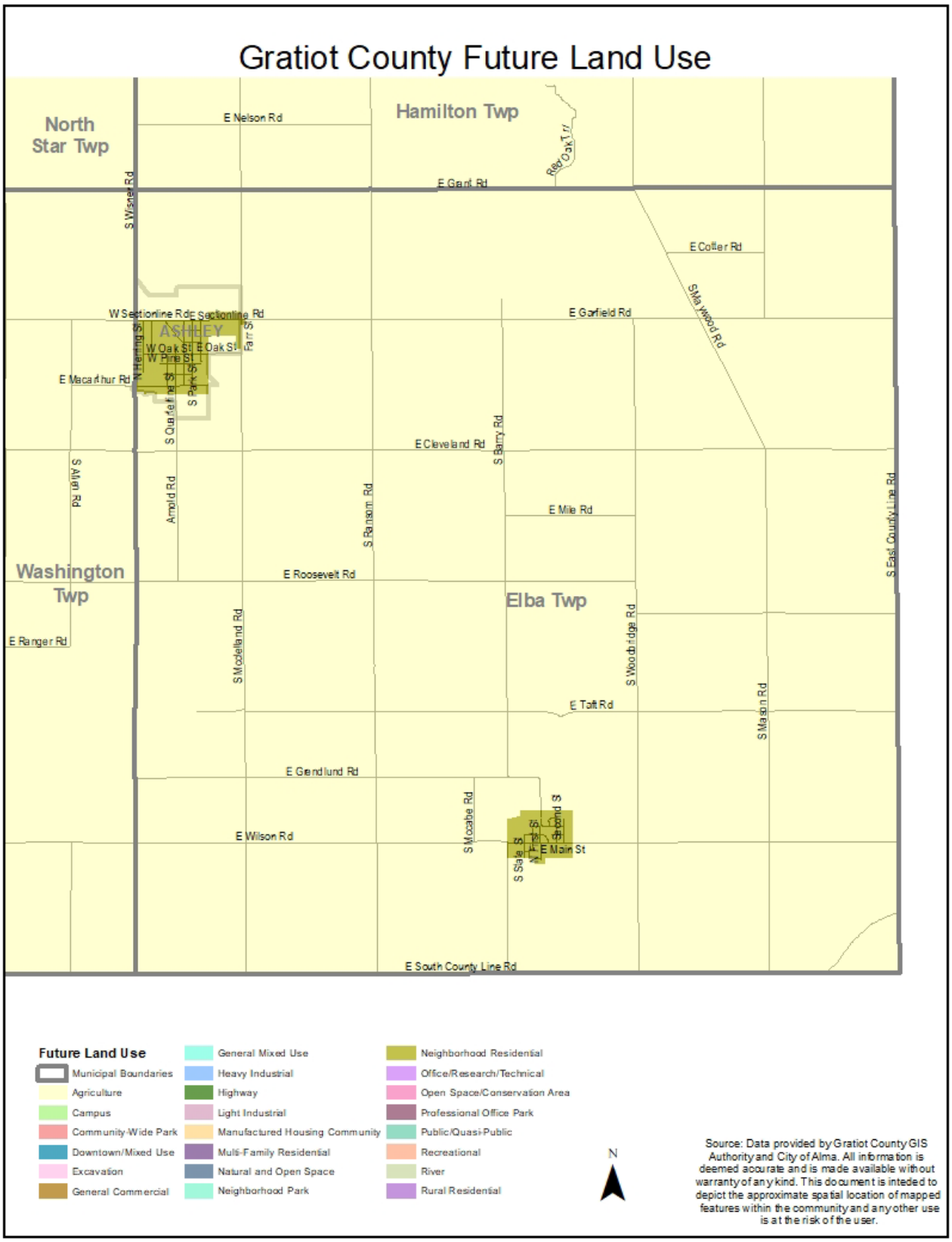
Below are the top three industries in which Elba Township's residents are employed in. The percentages below come from the context of 543 total employed civilians.



Elba Township Zoning Map

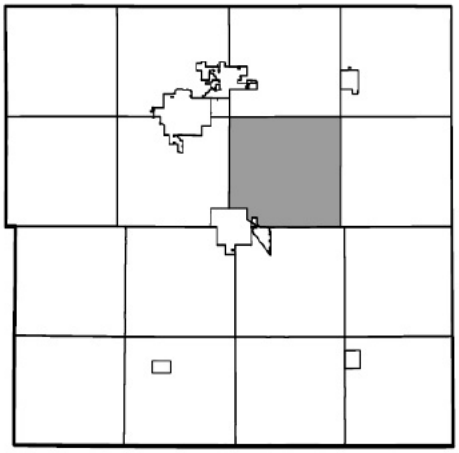
Elba Township




Gratiot County Future Land Use
North Star Twp
Hamilton Twp
Washington Twp
Elba Twp
ASHLEY
E Nelson Rd
E Grant Rd
Red Oak Trl
S Wisner Rd
E Cotter Rd
S Maywood Rd
W Sectionline Rd
E Sectionline Rd
E Garfield Rd
W Oak St
E Oak St
W Pine St
N Herring St
Farr St
E Macarthur Rd
S Quarterline St
S Park St
E Cleveland Rd
S Barry Rd
S Allen Rd
Arnold Rd
S Ransom Rd
E Mile Rd
S East County Line Rd
E Roosevelt Rd
E Ranger Rd
S Mcclelland Rd
S Woodbridge Rd
E Taft Rd
S Mason Rd
E Grendlund Rd
S Mccabe Rd
E Wilson Rd
S State St
N First St
Second St
E Main St
E South County Line Rd
Future Land Use
Municipal Boundaries
Agriculture
Campus
Community-Wide Park
Downtown/Mixed Use
Excavation
General Commercial
General Mixed Use
Heavy Industrial
Highway
Light Industrial
Manufactured Housing Community
Multi-Family Residential
Natural and Open Space
Neighborhood Park
Neighborhood Residential
Office/Research/Technical
Open Space/Conservation Area
Professional Office Park
Public/Quasi-Public
Recreational
River
Rural Residential
N
Source: Data provided by Gratiot County GIS Authority and City of Alma. All information is deemed accurate and is made available without warranty of any kind. This document is inteded to depict the approximate spatial location of mapped features within the community and any other use is at the risk of the user.

8. EMERSON TOWNSHIP

[https://www.emersontwp.com/]



ABOUT

Organized in 1855, Emerson Township spans 35.2 square miles in area. Located in the central region of Gratiot County, it is a major agricultural area.

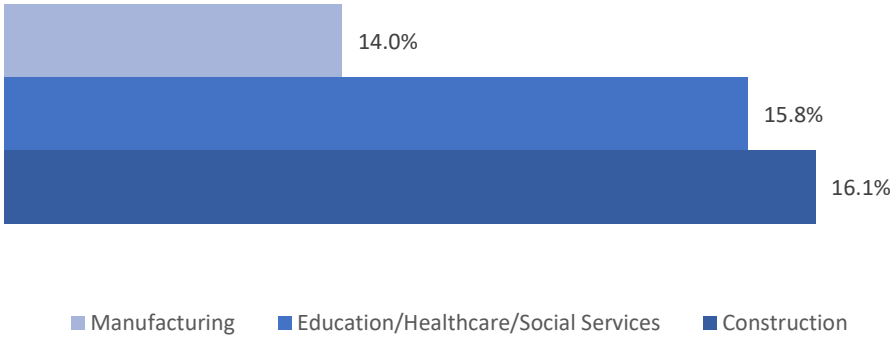
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	849
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2022)	347
MEDIAN AGE (2022)	47.8 years
POPULATION 65+ YEARS (2022)	21.9%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022)	$69,750
MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2020)	$158,000
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2022)	379
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	93.9%
RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	6.1%
EMPLOYMENT RATE (CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE) (2022)	56.0%
POVERTY RATE	7.8%

Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 ACS

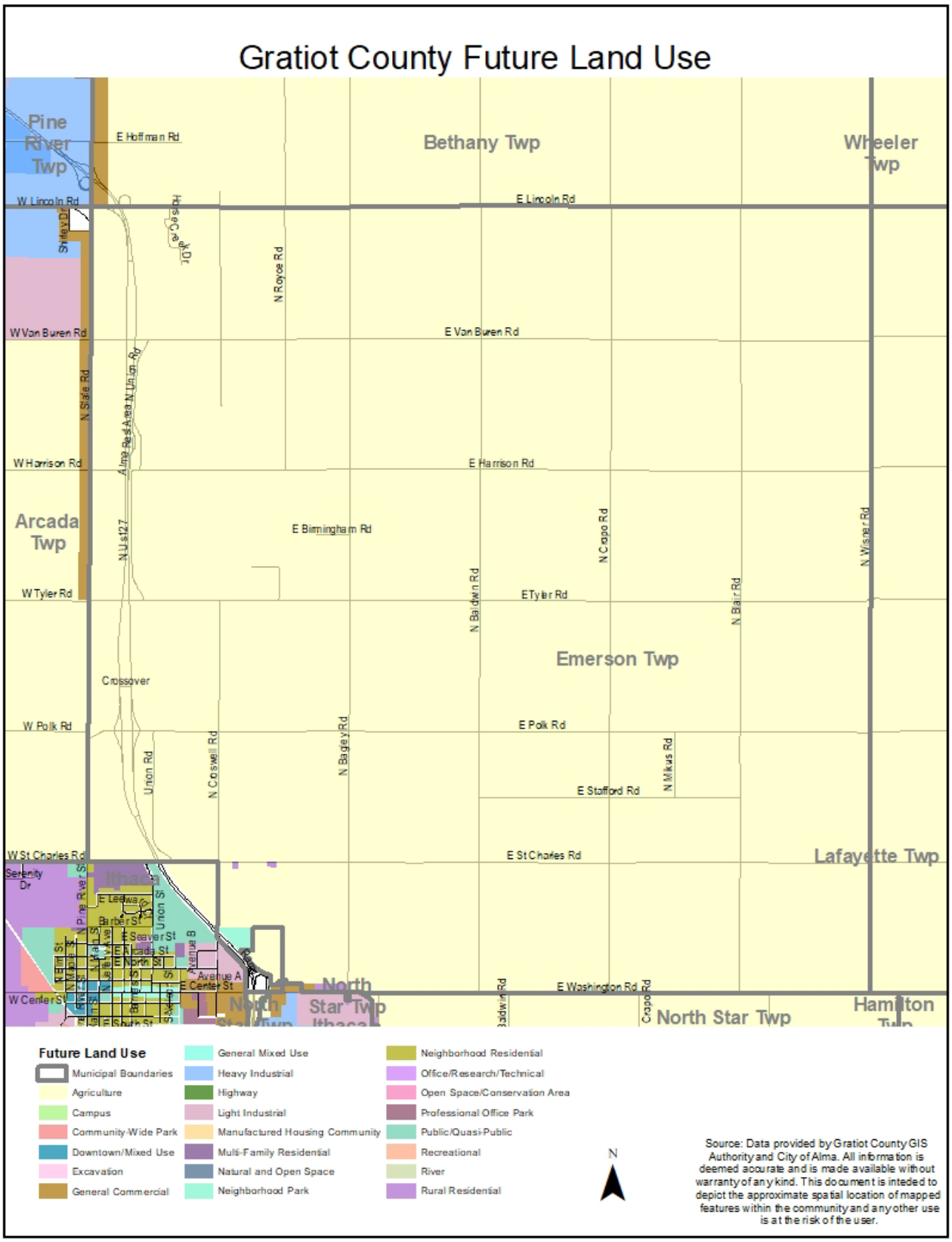
2022 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

Below are the top three industries in which Emerson Township's residents are employed in. The percentages below come from the context of 379 total employed civilians.



COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Zoning Map
Zoning Ordinance


Gratiot County Future Land Use
Pine River Twp
Bethany Twp
Wheeler Twp
Arcada Twp
Emerson Twp
Lafayette Twp
North Star Twp
Hamilton Twp
E Hoffman Rd
W Lincoln Rd
E Lincoln Rd
W Van Buren Rd
E Van Buren Rd
W Harrison Rd
E Harrison Rd
E Birmingham Rd
W Tyler Rd
E Tyler Rd
Crossover
W Polk Rd
E Polk Rd
E Stafford Rd
W St Charles Rd
E St Charles Rd
E Washington Rd
W Center St
N Royce Rd
N Slate Rd
N Union Rd
N Us127
N Baldwin Rd
N Cropo Rd
N Blair Rd
N Wisner Rd
N Croswell Rd
N Bagley Rd
N Mikus Rd
Union Rd
Serenity Dr
Ithaca
E Leeway
Barber St
E Seaver St
E Arcada St
E North St
E Center St
Avenue A
Avenue B
Future Land Use
Municipal Boundaries
Agriculture
Campus
Community-Wide Park
Downtown/Mixed Use
Excavation
General Commercial
General Mixed Use
Heavy Industrial
Highway
Light Industrial
Manufactured Housing Community
Multi-Family Residential
Natural and Open Space
Neighborhood Park
Neighborhood Residential
Office/Research/Technical
Open Space/Conservation Area
Professional Office Park
Public/Quasi-Public
Recreational
River
Rural Residential
N
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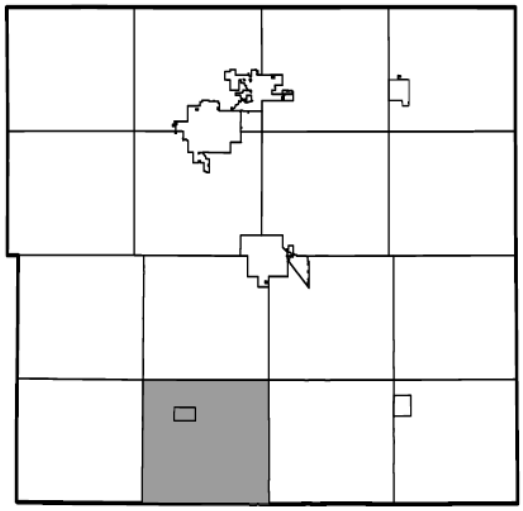
9. FULTON TOWNSHIP

[https://fultontwp.com/]

ABOUT

Fulton Township spans a total of 35.8 square miles, with .06 square miles of water. The township is in the southwest region of Gratiot County.



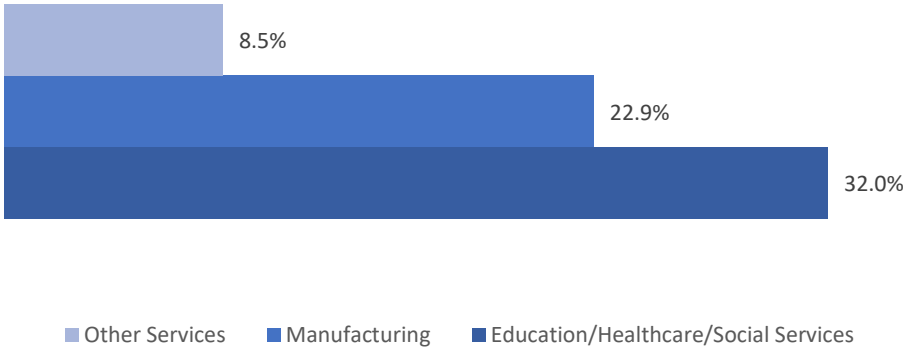
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	2,484
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2022)	1,016
MEDIAN AGE (2022)	41.2 years
POPULATION 65+ YEARS (2022)	19.9%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022)	$71,774
MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2020)	$164,800
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2022)	1,063
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	81.8%
RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	18.2%
EMPLOYMENT RATE (CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE) (2022)	56.3%
POVERTY RATE	8.0%

Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 ACS

2022 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

Below are the top three industries in which Fulton Township's residents are employed in. The percentages below come from the context of 1,146 total employed civilians.



Fulton Township Specific Master Plan Goals

Housing in Fulton Township, Gratiot County

- Enrich properties for housing of farmers, farmhands and families to support sustainable living, and safety in the community.
- Support the development of ecofriendly and affordable housing to lower carbon footprint.

Caring for Fulton Township, Gratiot County

- Provide necessary expansion of early childcare facilities as well as support to current facilities to promote family wellness and opportunities in the community.
- Consideration of adult care facilities to support the elderly population in close proximity to the residents of Fulton Township.

Gardening Fulton Township, Gratiot County

- Community facility to help educate and train younger generations of farmers to create a sustainable future of agriculture and skilled trades in the community.
- Support the schools in retaining existing youth leadership and development.

Ready, Set, Invest in Fulton Township, Gratiot County

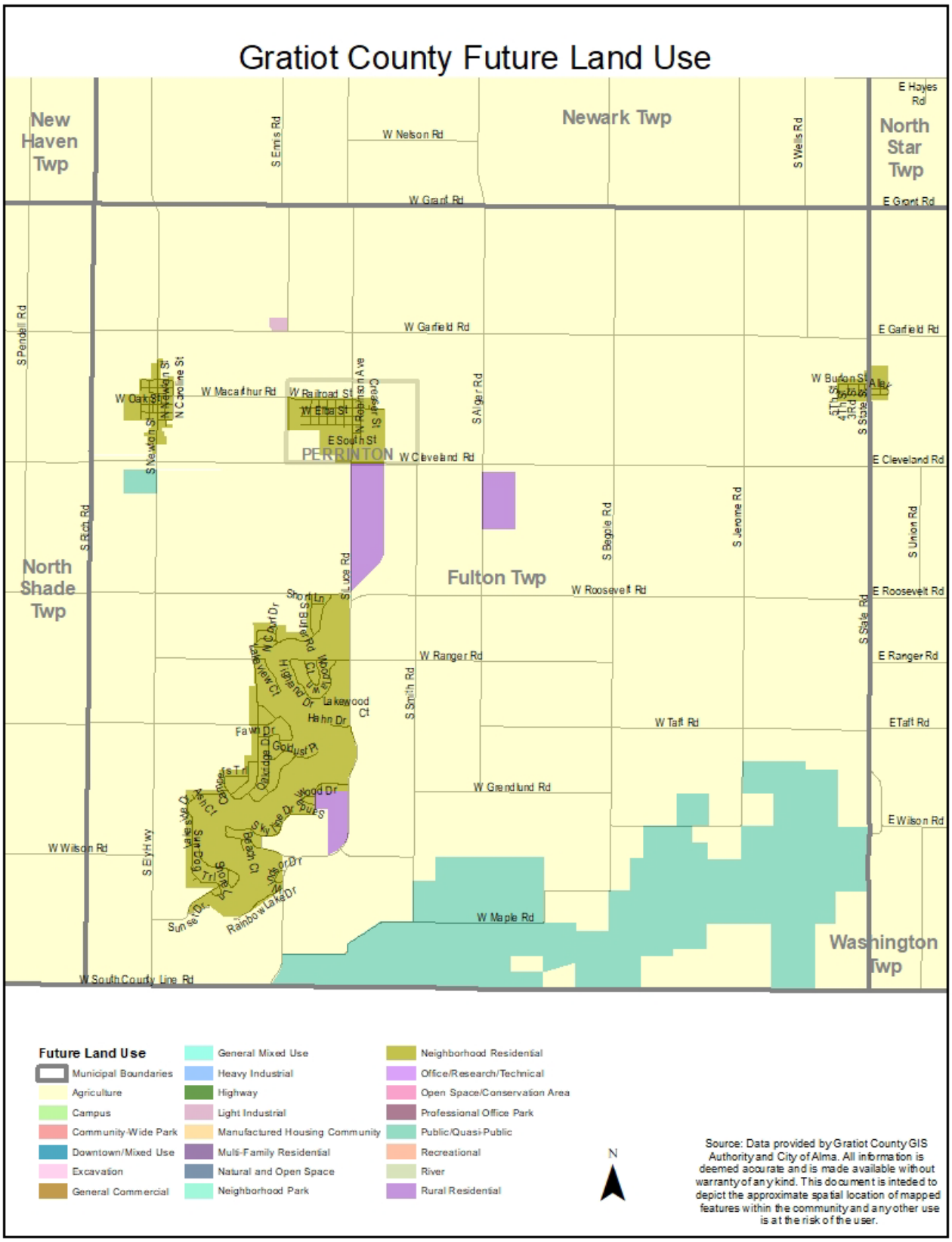
- Transforming the community to a self-sustaining agri-business region to enhance food and job security, growth and income.
- Support and protect businesses who assist in agricultural supply chain.
- Revitalization of abandoned buildings in the area to bring in grocery centers or restaurants that would create jobs and help less mobile citizens in the township.
- Investing in the community with a farmers' market to support local farmers and gathering as well as sale of goods.

Protect and Visit Fulton Township, Gratiot County

- Utilization of public land to grow recreational opportunities.
- Restoration of community parks and public spaces to encourage gathering and community.
- Expansion of Fulton Townships annual clean up day to further provide recycling for community residents.

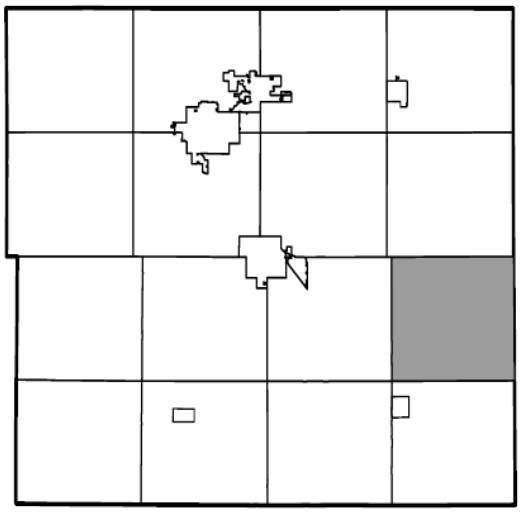
COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

[Zoning Map]
[Zoning Ordinance]



10. HAMILTON TOWNSHIP

[https://hamiltontownshipmi.wixsite.com/home]



ABOUT

Organized in 1855, Hamilton Township spans 34.8 square miles in area. It is located along the eastern border of Gratiot County.

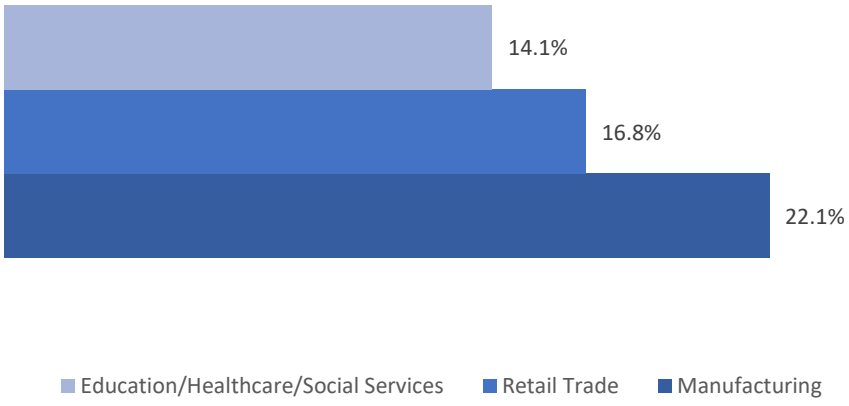
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	427
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2022)	168
MEDIAN AGE (2022)	51.3 years
POPULATION 65+ YEARS (2022)	26.0%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022)	$54,688
MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2020)	$145,800
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2022)	201
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	85.7%
RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	14.3%
EMPLOYMENT RATE (CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE) (2022)	47.3%
POVERTY RATE	22.1%

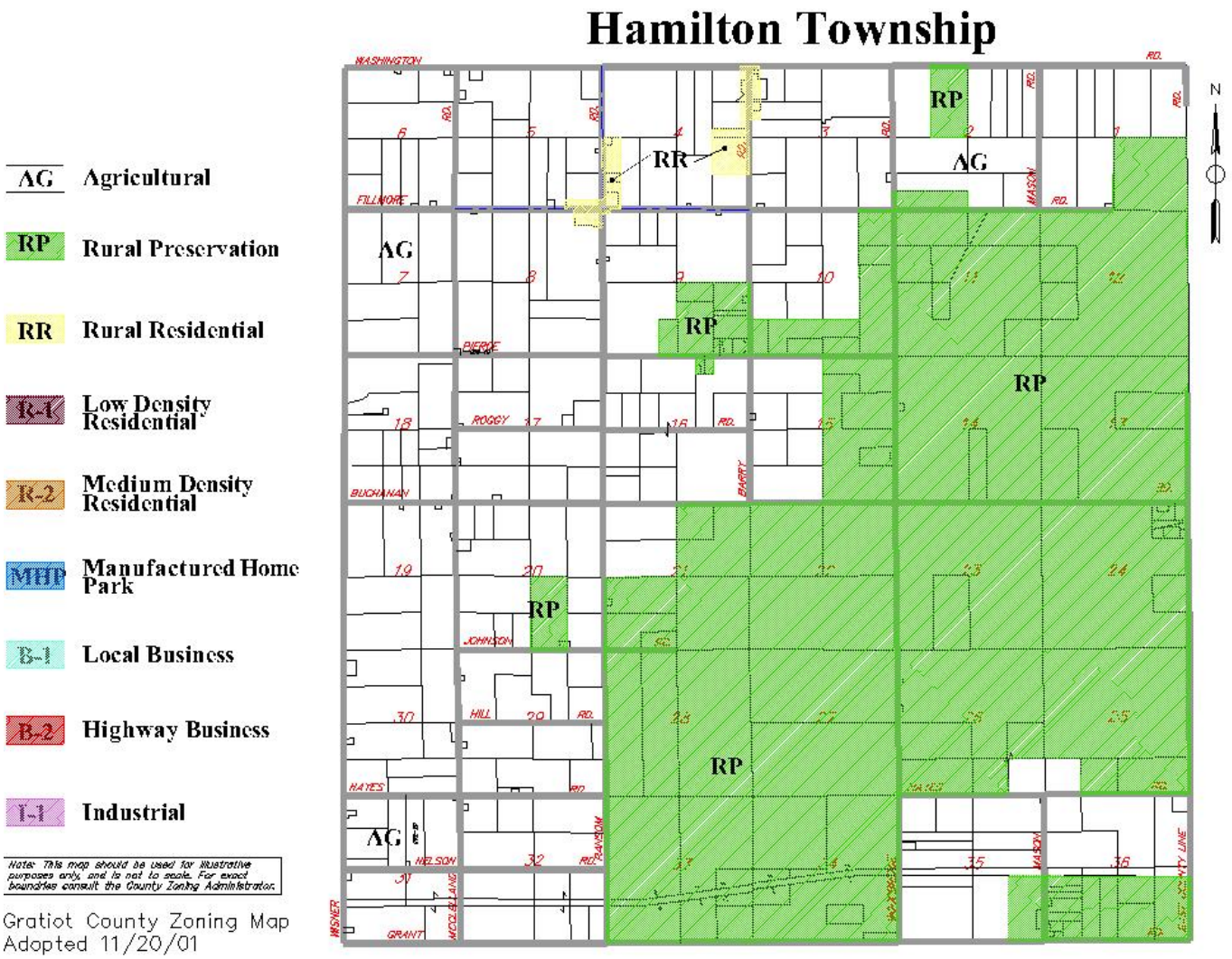
Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 ACS

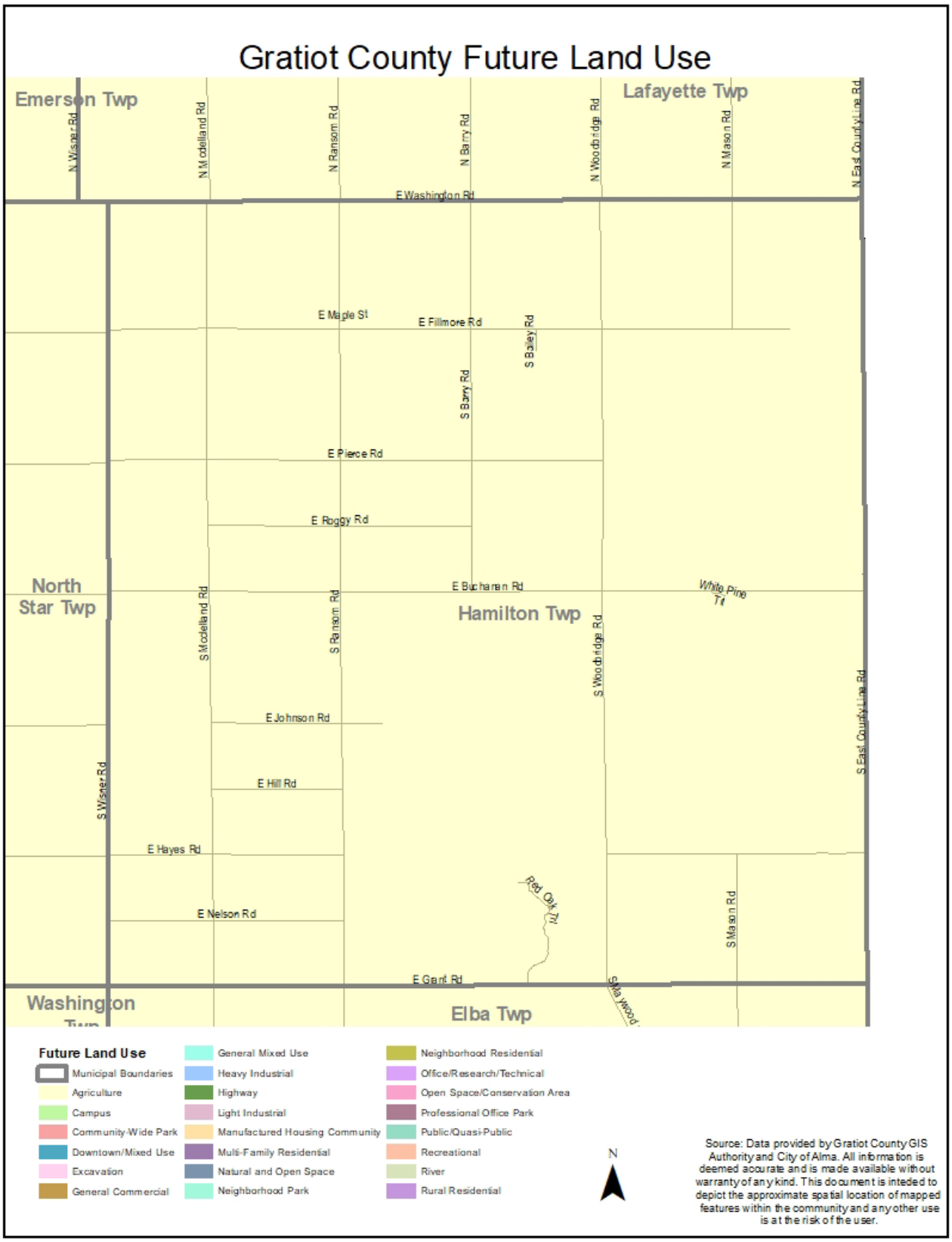
2022 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

Below are the top three industries in which Hamilton Township's residents are employed in. The percentages below come from the context of 158 total employed civilians.



Hamilton Township Zoning Map




Gratiot County Future Land Use
Emerson Twp
Lafayette Twp
North Star Twp
Hamilton Twp
Washington Twp
Elba Twp
N Wisner Rd
N Modelland Rd
N Ransom Rd
N Barry Rd
N Woodbridge Rd
N Mason Rd
N East County Line Rd
E Washington Rd
E Maple St
E Fillmore Rd
S Bailey Rd
S Barry Rd
E Pierce Rd
E Roggy Rd
E Buchanan Rd
White Pine Trl
S Modelland Rd
S Ransom Rd
S Woodbridge Rd
S East County Line Rd
E Johnson Rd
S Wisner Rd
E Hill Rd
E Hayes Rd
Red Oak Trl
E Nelson Rd
S Mason Rd
E Grant Rd
Silva Wood
Future Land Use
Municipal Boundaries
Agriculture
Campus
Community-Wide Park
Downtown/Mixed Use
Excavation
General Commercial
General Mixed Use
Heavy Industrial
Highway
Light Industrial
Manufactured Housing Community
Multi-Family Residential
Natural and Open Space
Neighborhood Park
Neighborhood Residential
Office/Research/Technical
Open Space/Conservation Area
Professional Office Park
Public/Quasi-Public
Recreational
River
Rural Residential
N
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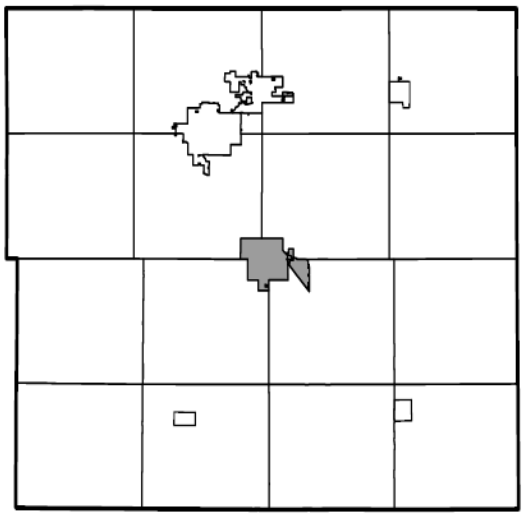
11. CITY OF ITHACA

[https://www.ithacami.com/]



ABOUT

The City of Ithaca was incorporated as a village in 1869 and became a city in 1961. It spans 5.28 square miles in area and serves as the county seat of Gratiot.

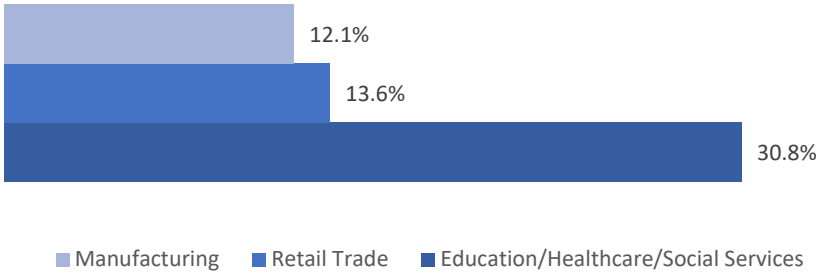
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	2,853
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2022)	1,183
MEDIAN AGE (2022)	42.2 years
POPULATION 65+ YEARS (2022)	14.1%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022)	$60,389
MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2020)	$129,300
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2022)	1,311
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	71.5%
RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	28.5%
EMPLOYMENT RATE (CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE) (2022)	65.8%
POVERTY RATE	20.2%

Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 ACS

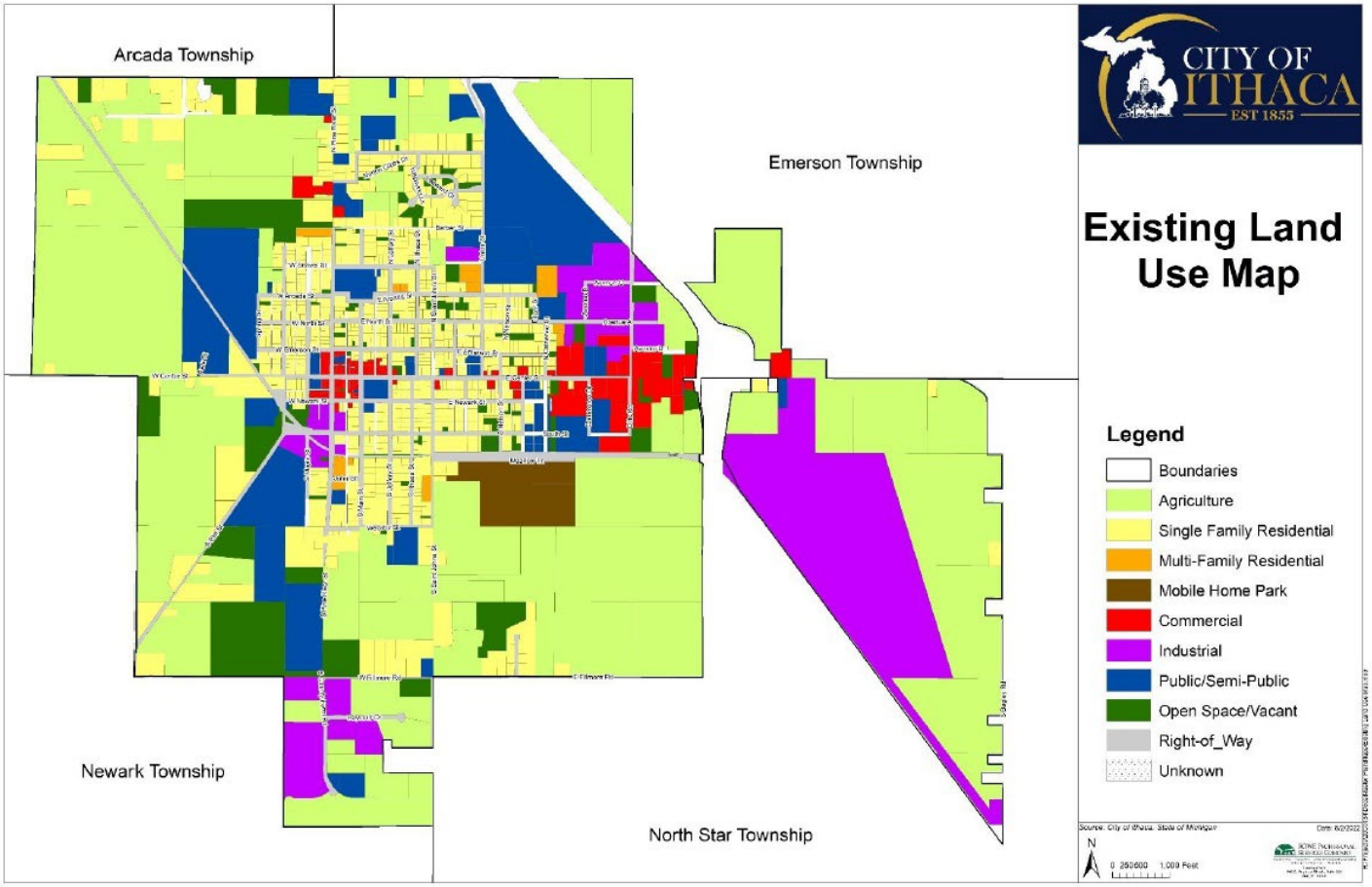
2022 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

Below are the top three industries in which the City of Ithaca's residents are employed in. The percentages below come from the context of 1,583 total employed civilians.

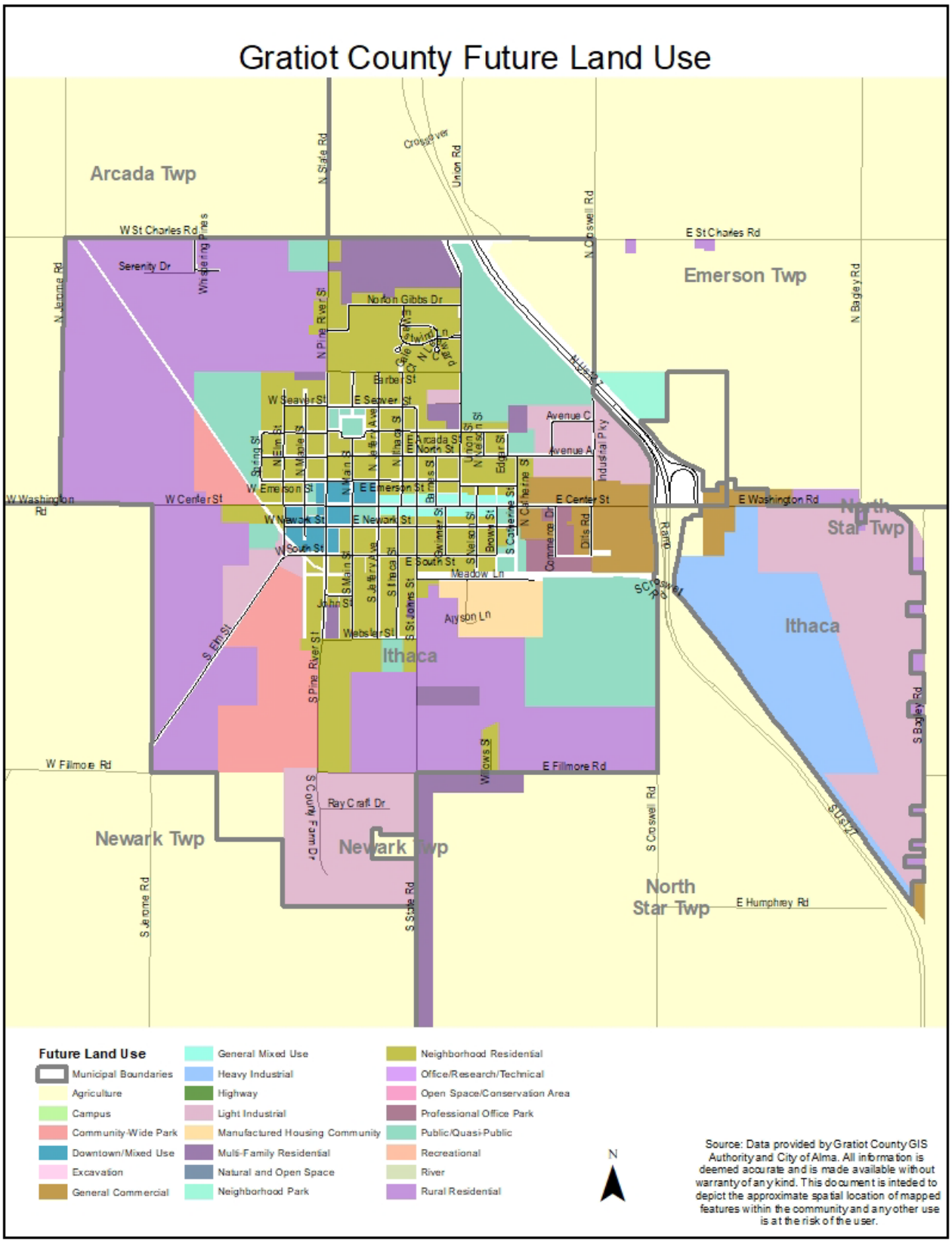


COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Capital Improvement Plan
Master Plan
Zoning Map
Zoning Ordinance

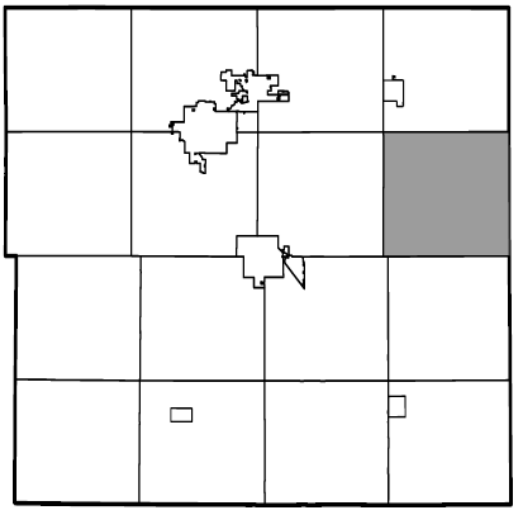


Source: City of Ithaca Master Plan 2022-2042


Gratiot County Future Land Use
Arcada Twp
Emerson Twp
North Star Twp
Ithaca
Newark Twp
W St Charles Rd
E St Charles Rd
Serenity Dr
Norton Gibbs Dr
W Seaver St
E Seaver St
Barber St
Avenue C
Avenue A
W Emerson St
E Emerson St
W Washington Rd
W Center St
E Center St
E Washington Rd
W Newark St
E Newark St
W South St
E South St
Meadow Ln
Alyson Ln
Webster St
W Fillmore Rd
E Fillmore Rd
Ray Craft Dr
E Humphrey Rd
Future Land Use
Municipal Boundaries
Agriculture
Campus
Community-Wide Park
Downtown/Mixed Use
Excavation
General Commercial
General Mixed Use
Heavy Industrial
Highway
Light Industrial
Manufactured Housing Community
Multi-Family Residential
Natural and Open Space
Neighborhood Park
Neighborhood Residential
Office/Research/Technical
Open Space/Conservation Area
Professional Office Park
Public/Quasi-Public
Recreational
River
Rural Residential
N
Source: Data provided by Gratiot County GIS Authority and City of Alma. All information is deemed accurate and is made available without warranty of any kind. This document is intended to depict the approximate spatial location of mapped features within the community and any other use is at the risk of the user.

12. LAFAYETTE TOWNSHIP

[https://www.lafayettetwp.com/]



ABOUT

Lafayette Township spans a total of 36 square miles in area. It is located on the eastern border of Gratiot County.

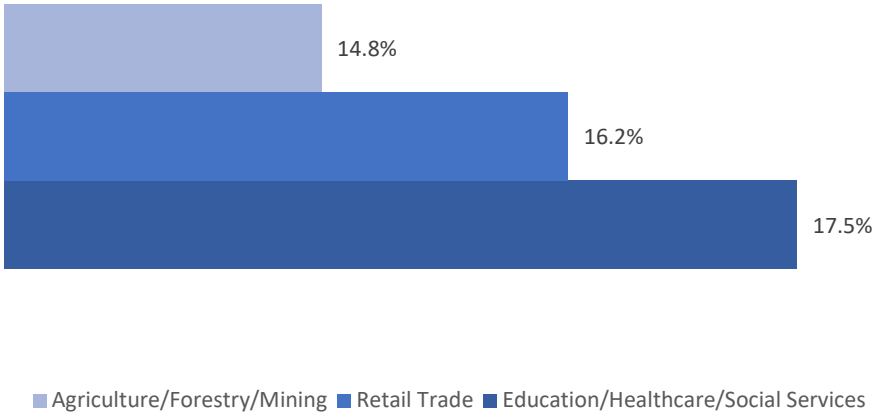
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	516
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2022)	223
MEDIAN AGE (2022)	years
POPULATION 65+ YEARS (2022)	20.9%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022)	$67,269
MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2020)	$140,000
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2022)	225
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	89.7%
RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	10.3%
EMPLOYMENT RATE (CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE) (2022)	51.3%
POVERTY RATE	12%

Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 ACS

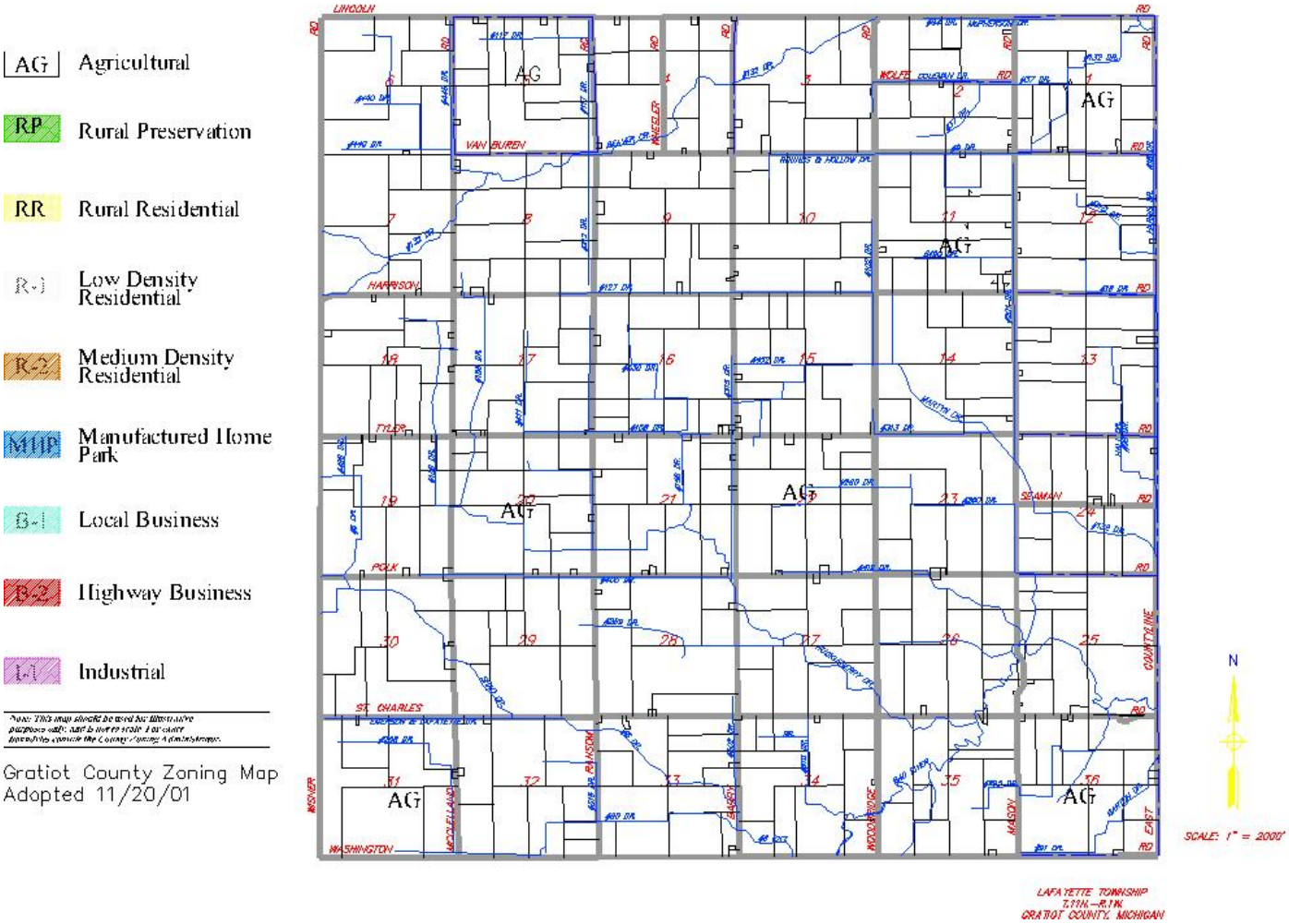
2022 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

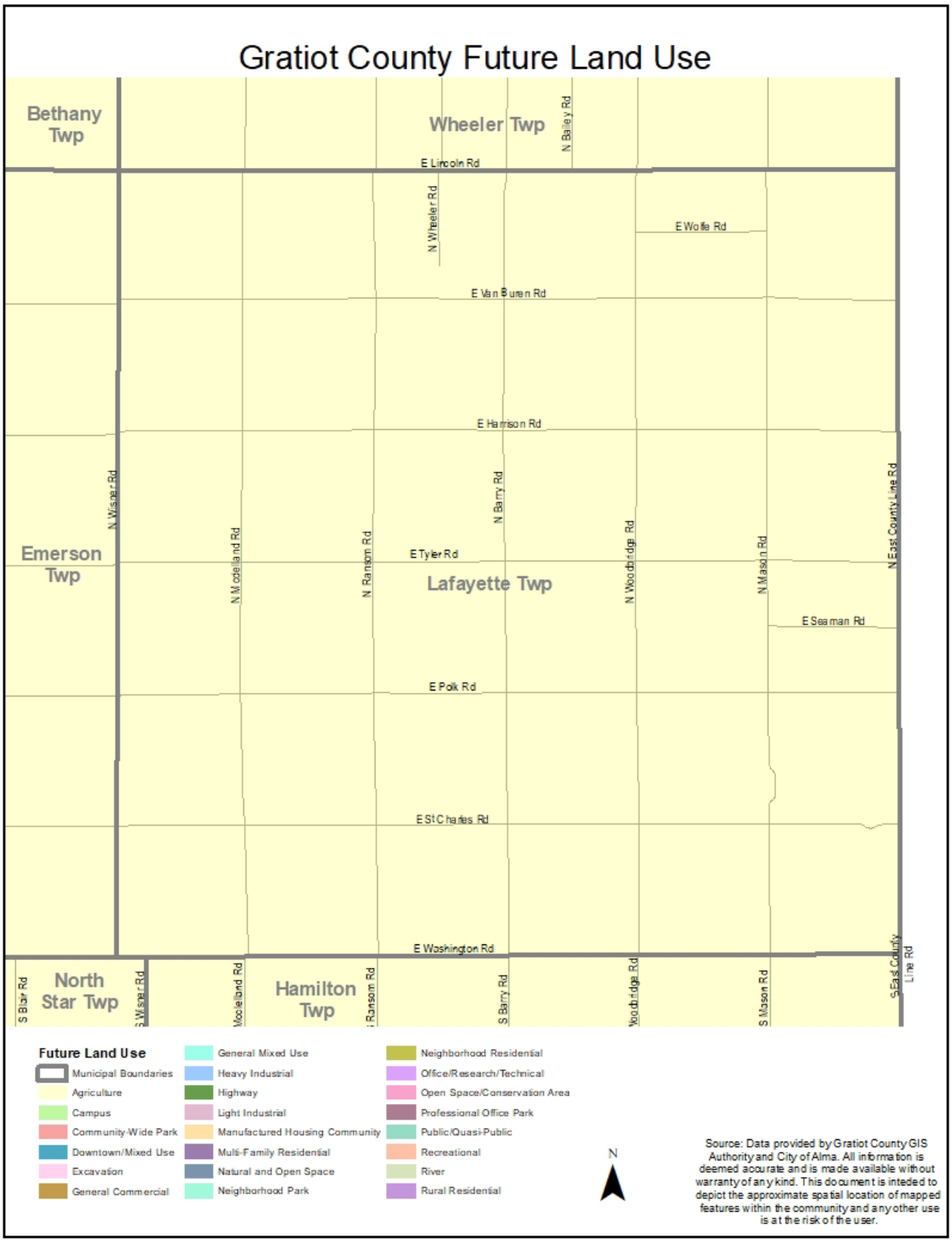
Below are the top three industries in which Lafayette Township's residents are employed in. The percentages below come from the context of 229 total employed civilians.



Lafayette Township Zoning Map

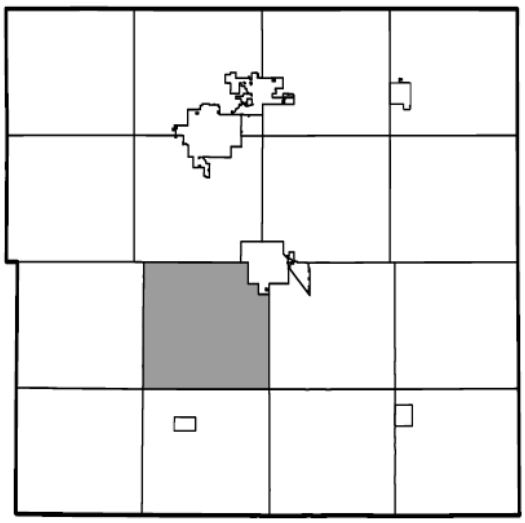
LafayetteTownship




Gratiot County Future Land Use
Bethany Twp
Wheeler Twp
Emerson Twp
Lafayette Twp
North Star Twp
Hamilton Twp
E Lincoln Rd
N Bailey Rd
N Wheeler Rd
E Wolfe Rd
E Van Buren Rd
E Harrison Rd
N Wisner Rd
N Barry Rd
N East County Line Rd
N Mosieland Rd
N Ransom Rd
E Tyler Rd
N Woodbridge Rd
N Mason Rd
E Seaman Rd
E Polk Rd
E St Charles Rd
E Washington Rd
S Blair Rd
S Wisner Rd
Mosieland Rd
S Ransom Rd
S Barry Rd
Woodbridge Rd
S Mason Rd
S East County Line Rd
Future Land Use
Municipal Boundaries
Agriculture
Campus
Community-Wide Park
Downtown/Mixed Use
Excavation
General Commercial
General Mixed Use
Heavy Industrial
Highway
Light Industrial
Manufactured Housing Community
Multi-Family Residential
Natural and Open Space
Neighborhood Park
Neighborhood Residential
Office/Research/Technical
Open Space/Conservation Area
Professional Office Park
Public/Quasi-Public
Recreational
River
Rural Residential
N
Source: Data provided by Gratiot County GIS Authority and City of Alma. All information is deemed accurate and is made available without warranty of any kind. This document is intended to depict the approximate spatial location of mapped features within the community and any other use is at the risk of the user.

13. NEWARK TOWNSHIP

[https://www.newarktownship.com/]



ABOUT

Spanning a total of 34.4 square miles in area, Newark Township is host to many Historical Family Farms. It was organized in 1857.

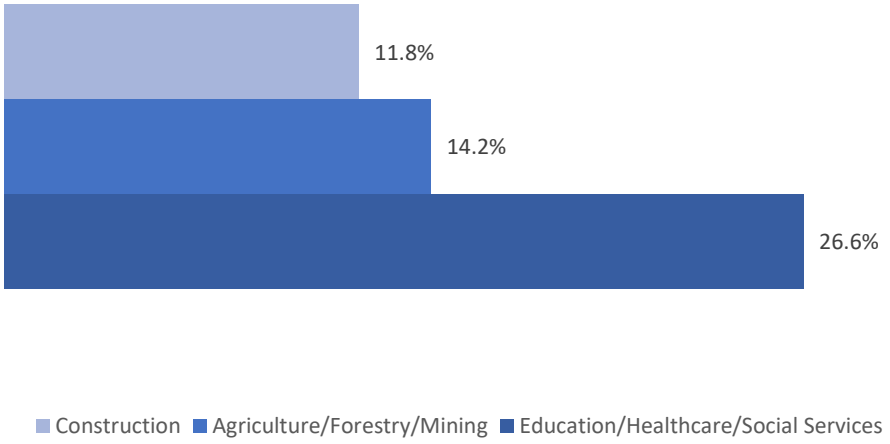
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	1,112
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2022)	396
MEDIAN AGE (2022)	35.9 years
POPULATION 65+ YEARS (2022)	17.2%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022)	$77,000
MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2020)	$187,900
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2022)	445
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	86.9%
RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	13.1%
EMPLOYMENT RATE (CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE) (2022)	61.9%
POVERTY RATE	4.5%

Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 ACS

2022 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

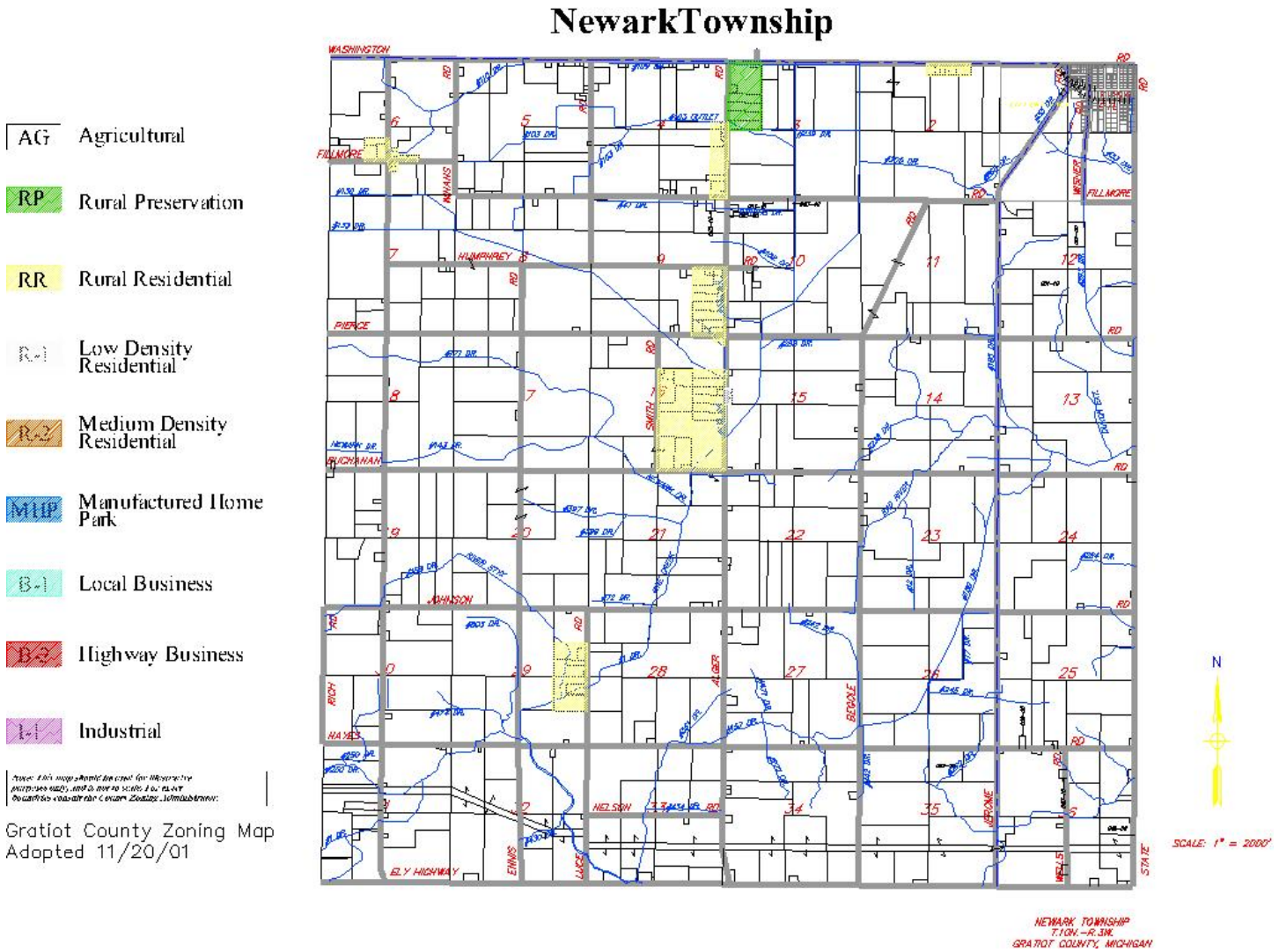
Below are the top three industries in which Newark Township's residents are employed in. The percentages below come from the context of 493 total employed civilians.

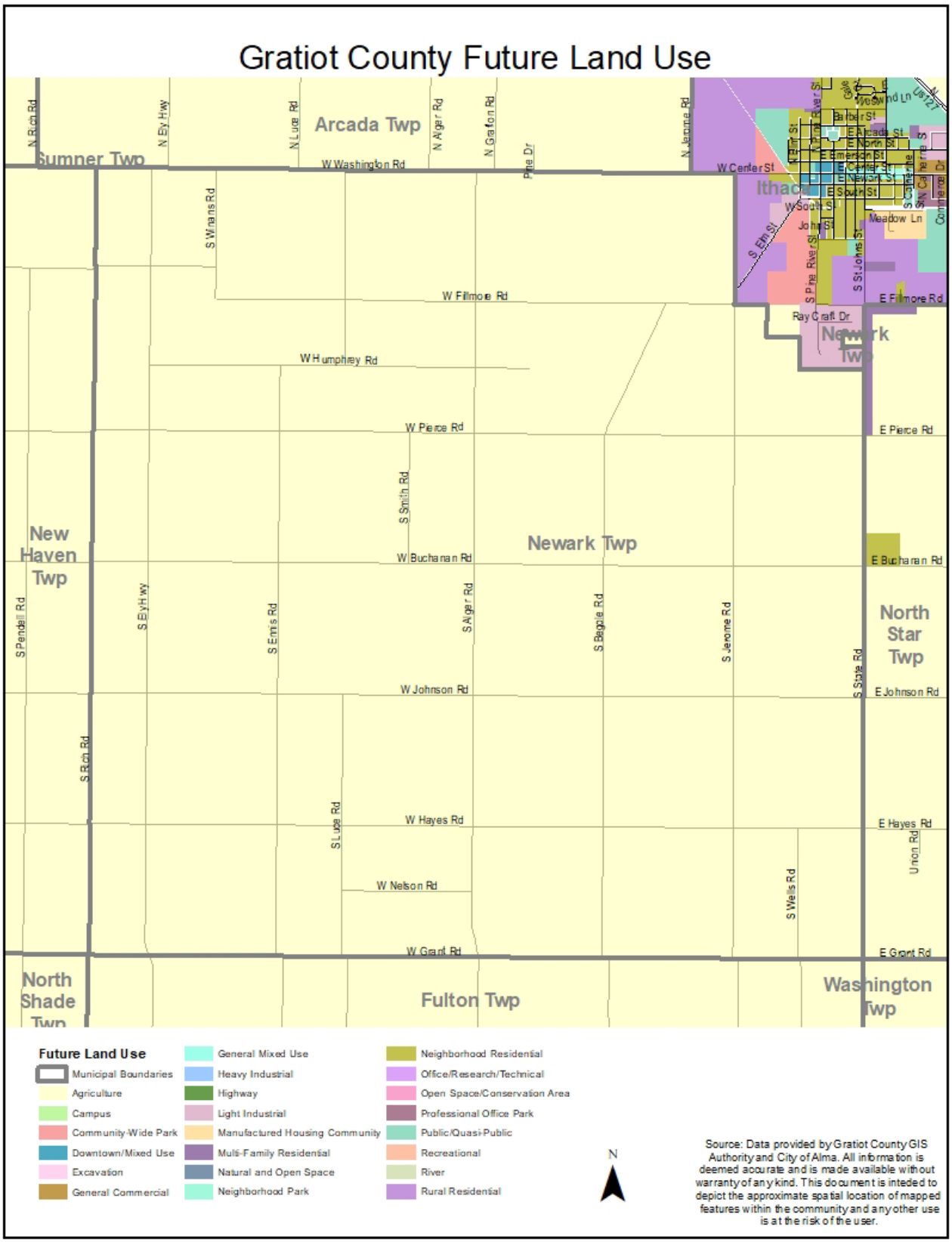


COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

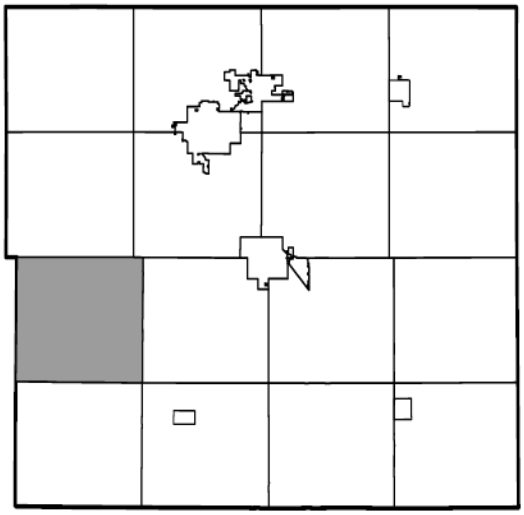
Zoning Ordinance

Newark Township Zoning Map




Gratiot County Future Land Use
Arcada Twp
Sumner Twp
Ithaca
Newark Twp
New Haven Twp
North Star Twp
North Shade Twp
Fulton Twp
Washington Twp
N Rich Rd
N Ely Hwy
N Luce Rd
N Alger Rd
N Grafton Rd
N Jerome Rd
W Washington Rd
Pine Dr
W Center St
S Winans Rd
W Fillmore Rd
E Fillmore Rd
Ray Graff Dr
W Humphrey Rd
W Pierce Rd
E Pierce Rd
S Smith Rd
W Buchanan Rd
E Buchanan Rd
S Pendell Rd
S Ely Hwy
S Ems Rd
S Alger Rd
S Bagola Rd
S Jerome Rd
S State Rd
W Johnson Rd
E Johnson Rd
S Rich Rd
S Luce Rd
W Hayes Rd
E Hayes Rd
Union Rd
W Nelson Rd
S Weis Rd
W Grant Rd
E Grant Rd
Meadow Ln
Future Land Use
Municipal Boundaries
Agriculture
Campus
Community-Wide Park
Downtown/Mixed Use
Excavation
General Commercial
General Mixed Use
Heavy Industrial
Highway
Light Industrial
Manufactured Housing Community
Multi-Family Residential
Natural and Open Space
Neighborhood Park
Neighborhood Residential
Office/Research/Technical
Open Space/Conservation Area
Professional Office Park
Public/Quasi-Public
Recreational
River
Rural Residential
N
Source: Data provided by Gratiot County GIS Authority and City of Alma. All information is deemed accurate and is made available without warranty of any kind. This document is intended to depict the approximate spatial location of mapped features within the community and any other use is at the risk of the user.

14. NEW HAVEN TOWNSHIP



ABOUT

New Haven Township spans a total of 35.6 square miles in area, with 0.1 square miles of water. It is located along the western border of Gratiot County.

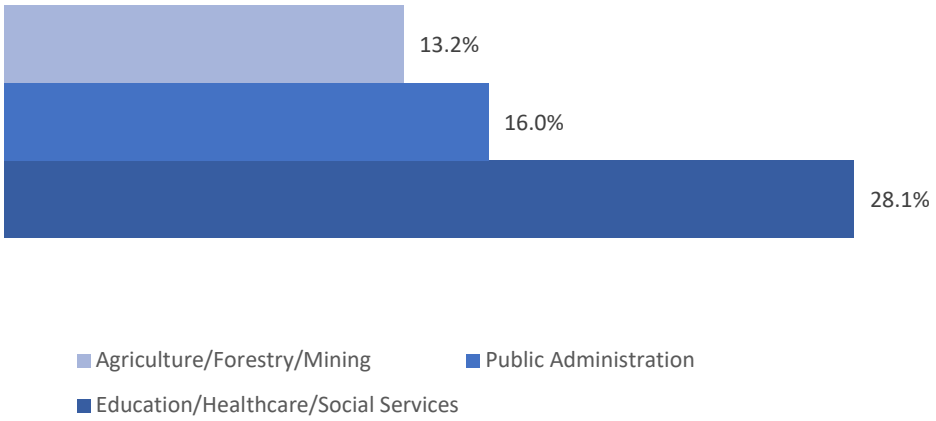
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

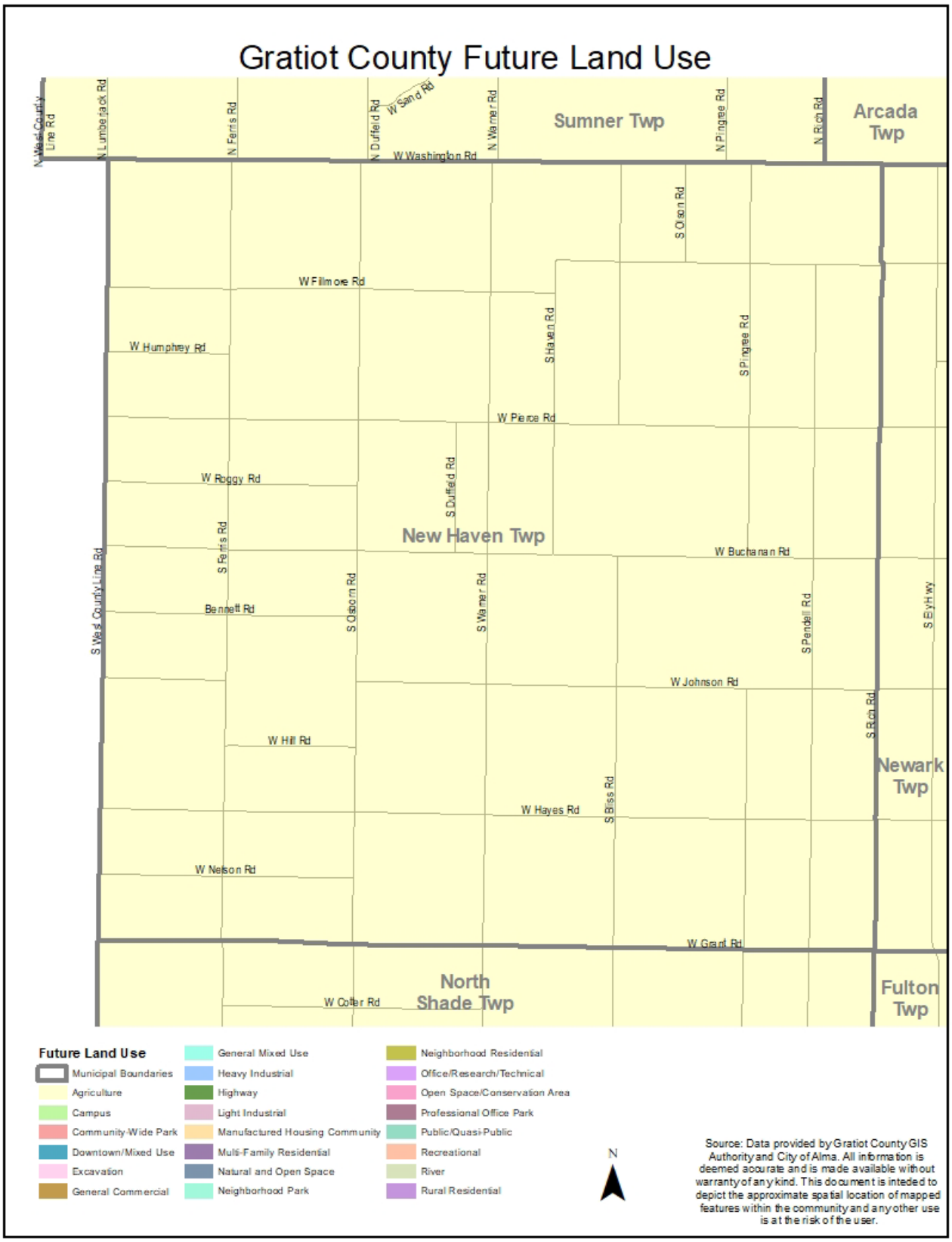
TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	1,064
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2022)	353
MEDIAN AGE (2022)	39.1 years
POPULATION 65+ YEARS (2022)	16.2%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022)	$64,250
MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2020)	$163,900
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2022)	416
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	85.6%
RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	14.4%
EMPLOYMENT RATE (CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE) (2022)	51.6%
POVERTY RATE	11.3%

Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 ACS

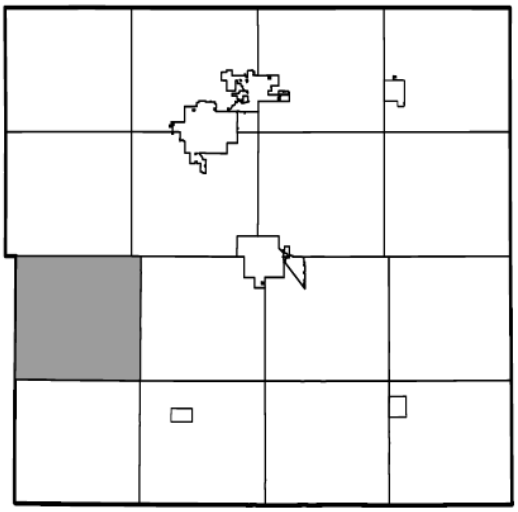
2022 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

Below are the top three industries in which New Haven Township's residents are employed in. The percentages below come from the context of 363 total employed civilians.




Gratiot County Future Land Use
Sumner Twp
Arcada Twp
New Haven Twp
Newark Twp
North Shade Twp
Fulton Twp
N West County Line Rd
N Lumberjack Rd
N Ferris Rd
N Duffield Rd
W Sand Rd
N Warner Rd
N Pingree Rd
N Rich Rd
W Washington Rd
S Olson Rd
W Fillmore Rd
S Haven Rd
S Pingree Rd
W Humphrey Rd
W Pierce Rd
S Duffield Rd
W Roggy Rd
S Ferris Rd
W Buchanan Rd
S West County Line Rd
S Olson Rd
S Warner Rd
S Pendell Rd
S Ely Hwy
Bennett Rd
W Johnson Rd
S Rich Rd
W Hill Rd
S Bliss Rd
W Hayes Rd
W Nelson Rd
W Grant Rd
W Colter Rd
Future Land Use
Municipal Boundaries
Agriculture
Campus
Community-Wide Park
Downtown/Mixed Use
Excavation
General Commercial
General Mixed Use
Heavy Industrial
Highway
Light Industrial
Manufactured Housing Community
Multi-Family Residential
Natural and Open Space
Neighborhood Park
Neighborhood Residential
Office/Research/Technical
Open Space/Conservation Area
Professional Office Park
Public/Quasi-Public
Recreational
River
Rural Residential
N
Source: Data provided by Gratiot County GIS Authority and City of Alma. All information is deemed accurate and is made available without warranty of any kind. This document is intended to depict the approximate spatial location of mapped features within the community and any other use is at the risk of the user.

15. NORTH SHADE TOWNSHIP



ABOUT

North Shade Township spans a total of 35.6 square miles, of which .03 square miles is water. It is in the southwest corner of Gratiot County.

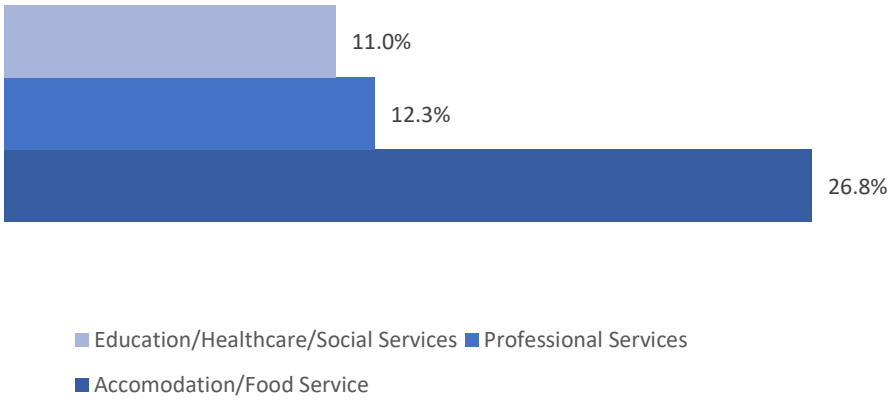
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

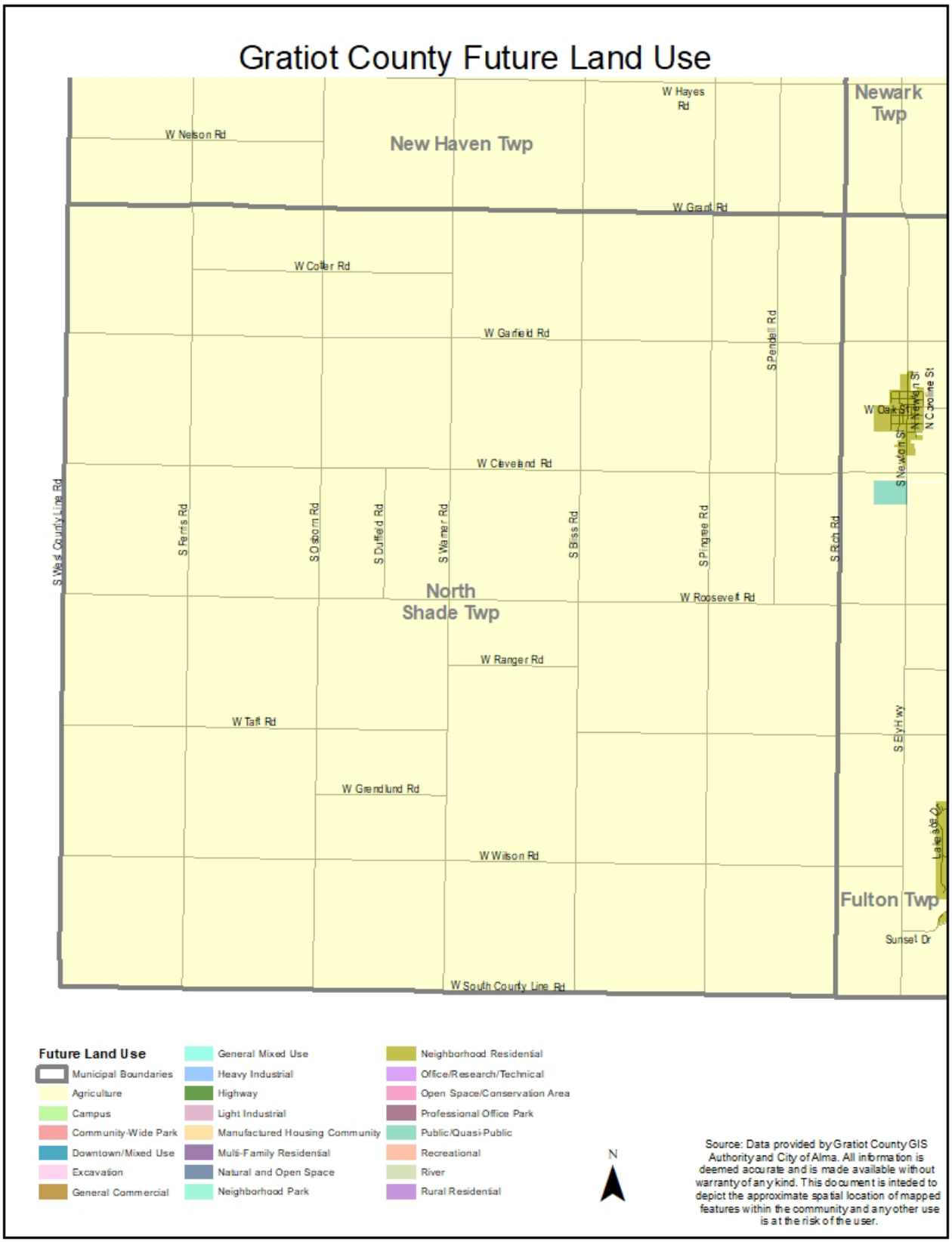
TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	558
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2022)	229
MEDIAN AGE (2022)	32.0 years
POPULATION 65+ YEARS (2022)	12.2%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022)	$69,375
MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2020)	$143,400
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2022)	236
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	86.5%
RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	13.5%
EMPLOYMENT RATE (CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE) (2022)	73.0%
POVERTY RATE	8.0%

Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 ACS

2022 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

Below are the top three industries in which North Shade Township's residents are employed in. The percentages below come from the context of 373 total employed civilians.




Gratiot County Future Land Use
New Haven Twp
Newark Twp
North Shade Twp
Fulton Twp
W Hayes Rd
W Nelson Rd
W Grant Rd
W Collier Rd
W Garfield Rd
S Pendell Rd
W Oak St
N Newark St
N Caroline St
S Newark St
W Cleveland Rd
S West County Line Rd
S Ferris Rd
S Osborn Rd
S Duffield Rd
S Warner Rd
S Bliss Rd
S Pringree Rd
S Rich Rd
W Roosevelt Rd
W Ranger Rd
W Taft Rd
S Ely Hwy
W Grendlund Rd
W Wilson Rd
Lake Ave Dr
Sunset Dr
W South County Line Rd
Future Land Use
Municipal Boundaries
Agriculture
Campus
Community-Wide Park
Downtown/Mixed Use
Excavation
General Commercial
General Mixed Use
Heavy Industrial
Highway
Light Industrial
Manufactured Housing Community
Multi-Family Residential
Natural and Open Space
Neighborhood Park
Neighborhood Residential
Office/Research/Technical
Open Space/Conservation Area
Professional Office Park
Public/Quasi-Public
Recreational
River
Rural Residential
N
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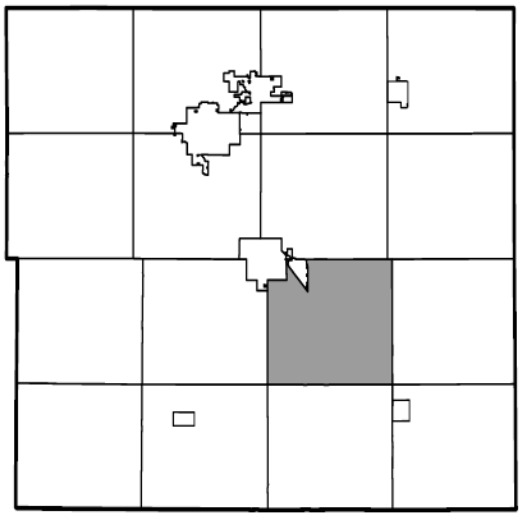
16. NORTH STAR TOWNSHIP

[https://www.northstartwp.com/]



ABOUT

North Star Township spans a total of 34.6 square miles, of which 0.12 square miles is water. It is in the central region of Gratiot County.

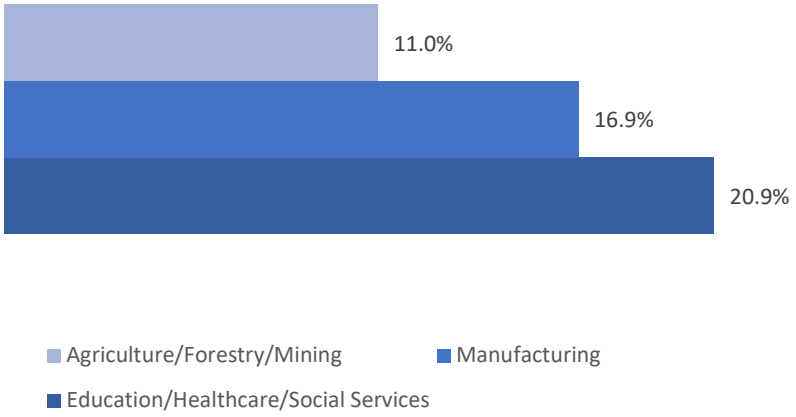
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	895
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2022)	343
MEDIAN AGE (2022)	38.2 years
POPULATION 65+ YEARS (2022)	15.6%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022)	$62,019
MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2020)	$152,300
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2022)	382
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	84.5%
RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	15.5%
EMPLOYMENT RATE (CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE) (2022)	68.0%
POVERTY RATE	2.7%

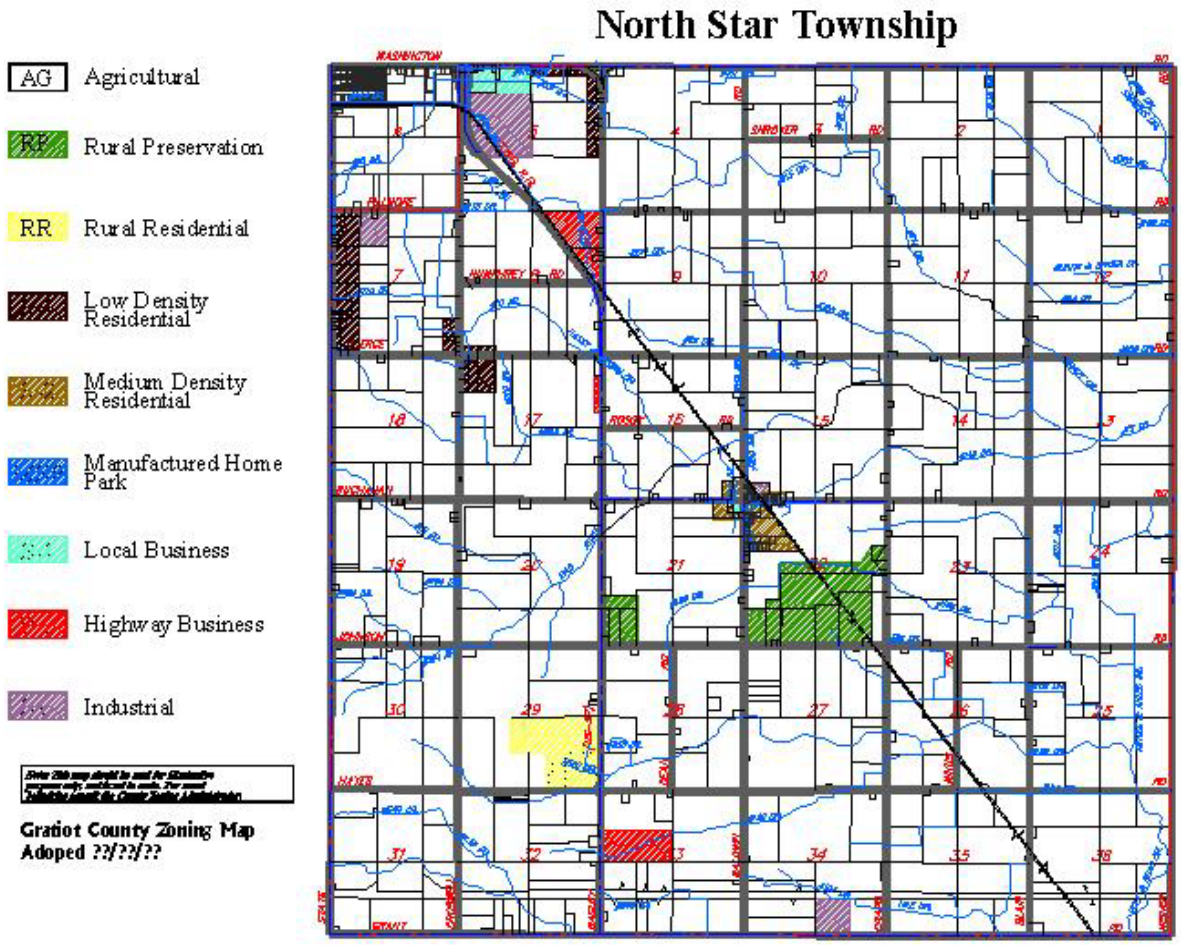
Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 ACS

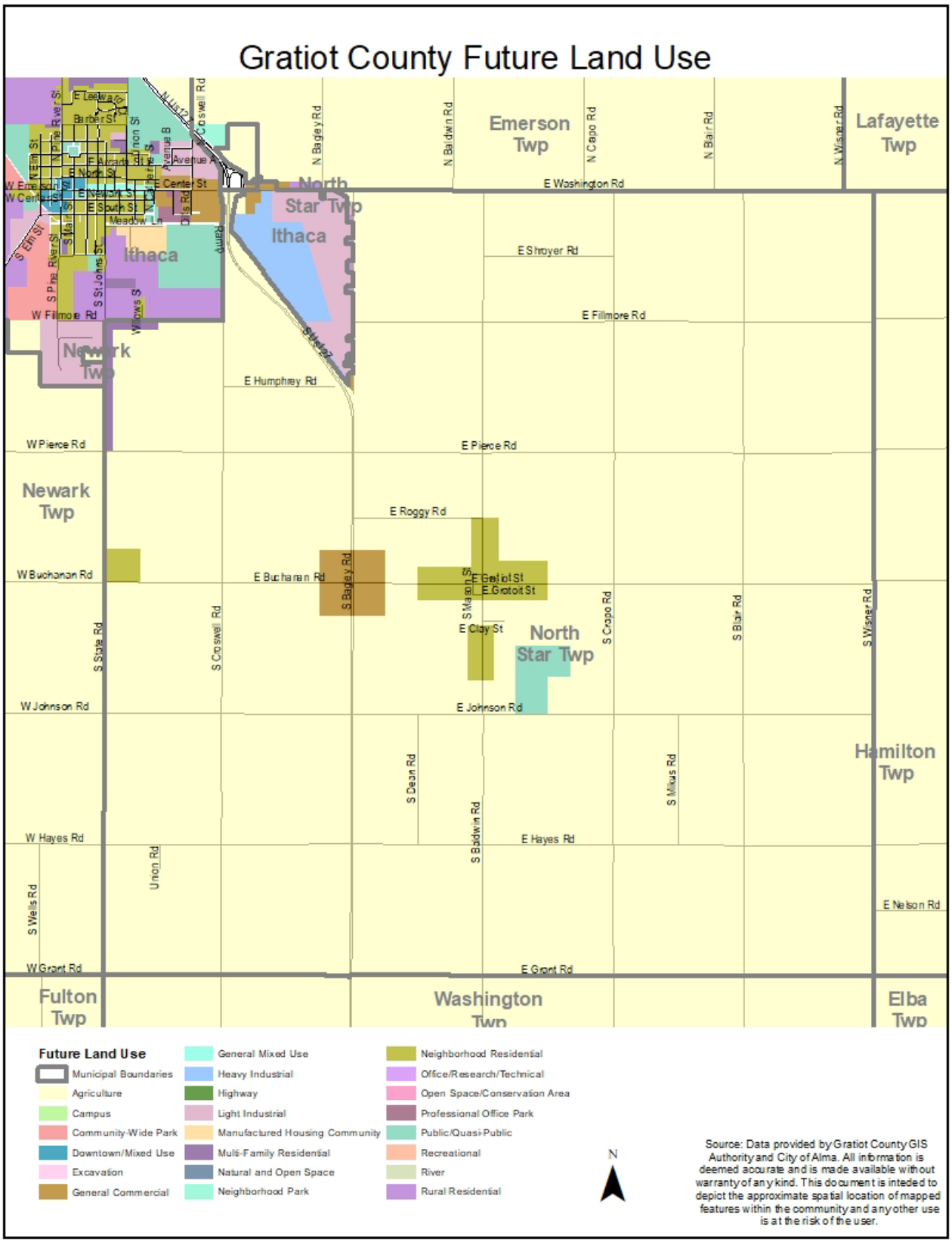
2022 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

Below are the top three industries in which North Star Township's residents are employed in. The percentages below come from the context of 484 total employed civilians.



North Star Township Zoning Map




Gratiot County Future Land Use
Emerson Twp
Lafayette Twp
North Star Twp
Ithaca
Newark Twp
Hamilton Twp
Fulton Twp
Washington Twp
Elba Twp
E Washington Rd
E Shroyer Rd
E Fillmore Rd
W Fillmore Rd
E Humphrey Rd
W Pierce Rd
E Pierce Rd
E Roggy Rd
W Buchanan Rd
E Buchanan Rd
E Gelfot St
E Grotot St
E Clay St
W Johnson Rd
E Johnson Rd
W Hayes Rd
E Hayes Rd
E Nelson Rd
W Grant Rd
E Grant Rd
N Bagley Rd
N Baldwin Rd
N Capo Rd
N Blair Rd
N Wisner Rd
S State Rd
S Crosswell Rd
S Bagley Rd
S Capo Rd
S Blair Rd
S Wisner Rd
S Dean Rd
S Baldwin Rd
S Mikus Rd
S Wells Rd
Union Rd
Future Land Use
Municipal Boundaries
Agriculture
Campus
Community-Wide Park
Downtown/Mixed Use
Excavation
General Commercial
General Mixed Use
Heavy Industrial
Highway
Light Industrial
Manufactured Housing Community
Multi-Family Residential
Natural and Open Space
Neighborhood Park
Neighborhood Residential
Office/Research/Technical
Open Space/Conservation Area
Professional Office Park
Public/Quasi-Public
Recreational
River
Rural Residential
N
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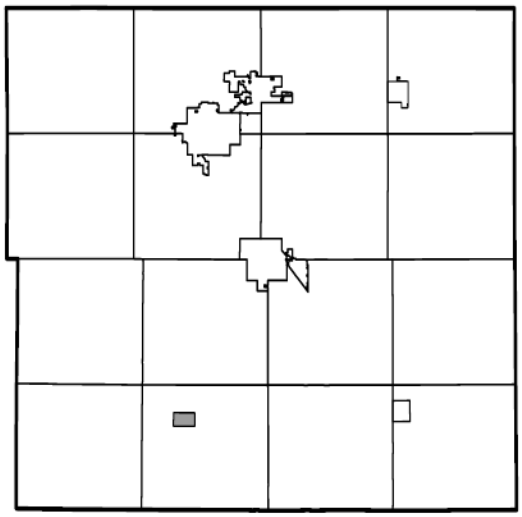
17. VILLAGE OF PERRINTON

[https://villageofperrinton.com/]



ABOUT

The Village of Perrinton spans a total of 0.64 square miles in area, with 0.03 square miles of water. The Village is located in Fulton Township.

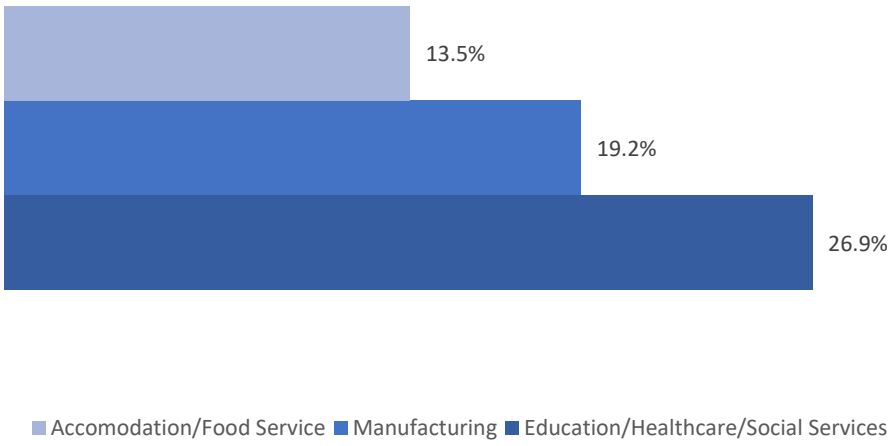
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

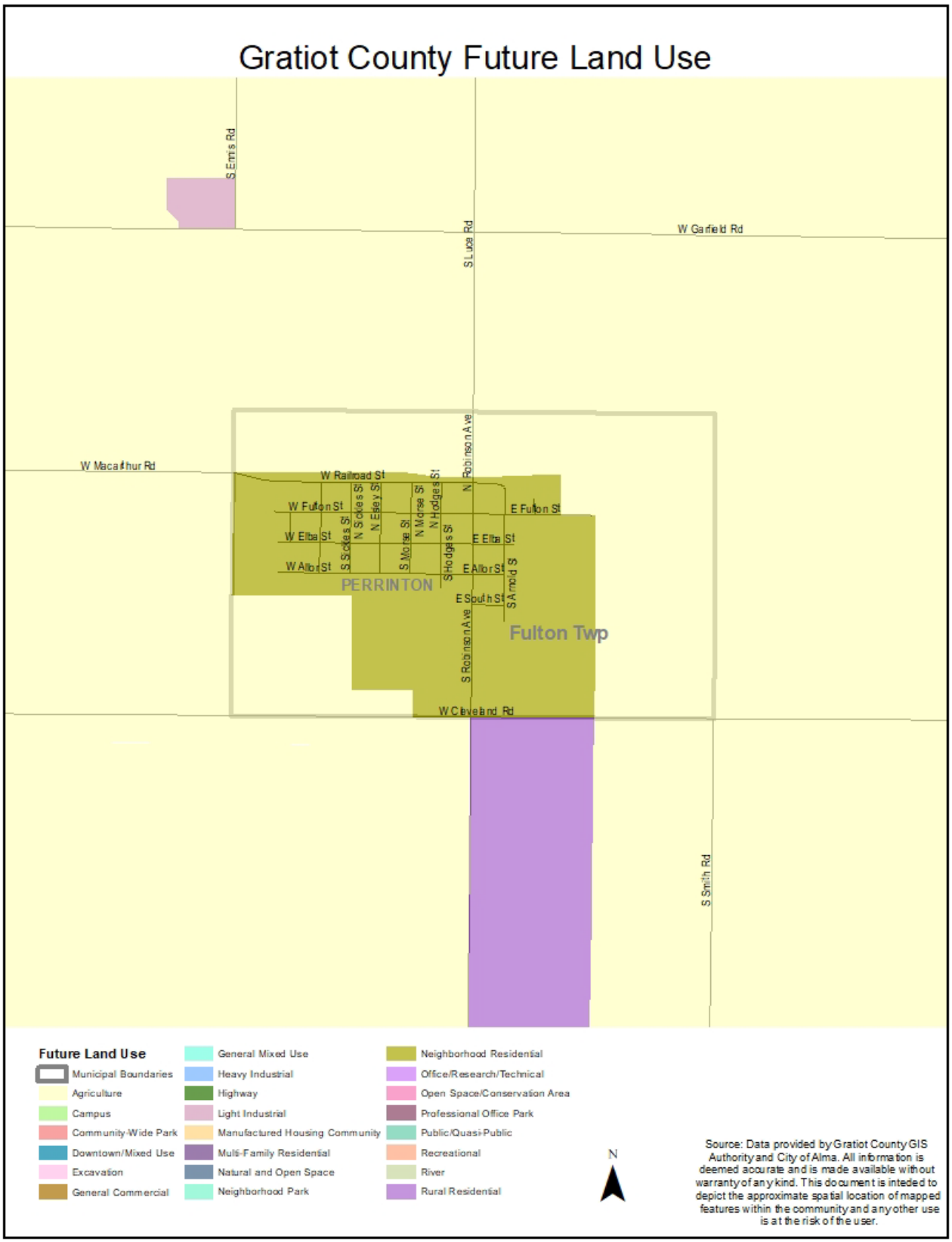
TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	393
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2022)	195
MEDIAN AGE (2022)	32.6 years
POPULATION 65+ YEARS (2022)	20.1%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022)	$51,339
MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2020)	$84,100
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2022)	169
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	70.3%
RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	29.7%
EMPLOYMENT RATE (CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE) (2022)	51.6%
POVERTY RATE	11.4%

Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 ACS

2022 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

Below are the top three industries in which the Village of Perrinton's residents are employed in. The percentages below come from the context of 193 total employed civilians.




Gratiot County Future Land Use
S Ennis Rd
W Garfield Rd
S Luce Rd
W Macarthur Rd
W Railroad St
W Fulton St
E Fulton St
W Elba St
E Elba St
W Allor St
E Allor St
E South St
N Robinson Ave
N Sickles St
N Essey St
N Morse St
N Hodges St
S Sickles St
S Morse St
S Hodges St
S Arnold St
S Robinson Ave
PERRINTON
Fulton Twp
W Cleveland Rd
S Smith Rd
Future Land Use
Municipal Boundaries
Agriculture
Campus
Community-Wide Park
Downtown/Mixed Use
Excavation
General Commercial
General Mixed Use
Heavy Industrial
Highway
Light Industrial
Manufactured Housing Community
Multi-Family Residential
Natural and Open Space
Neighborhood Park
Neighborhood Residential
Office/Research/Technical
Open Space/Conservation Area
Professional Office Park
Public/Quasi-Public
Recreational
River
Rural Residential
N
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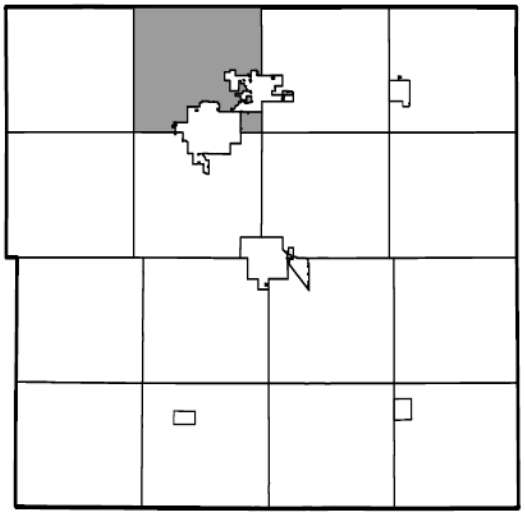
18. PINE RIVER TOWNSHIP

[https://pinerivermi.gov/]



ABOUT

Pine River Township spans a total of 30.8 square miles in area, of which 0.29 square miles is water. It is located along the northern border of Gratiot County.

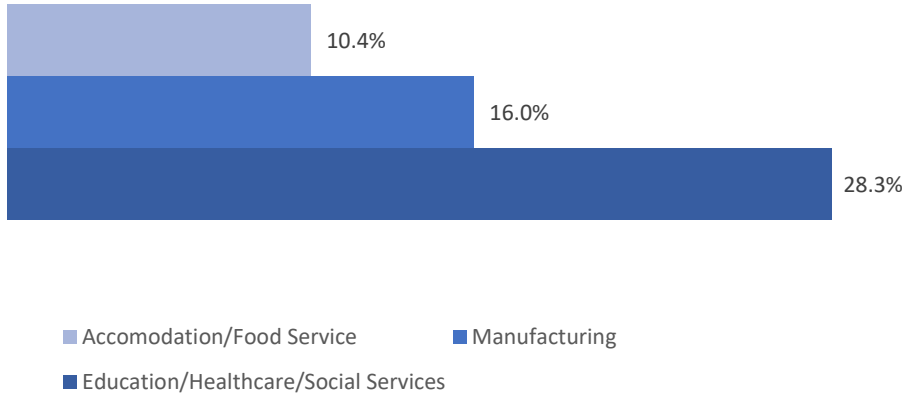
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	2,348
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2022)	1,039
MEDIAN AGE (2022)	36.6 Years
POPULATION 65+ YEARS (2022)	19.2%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022)	$66,881
MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2020)	$140,400
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2022)	1,016
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	98.7%
RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	1.3%
EMPLOYMENT RATE (CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE) (2022)	63.4%
POVERTY RATE	8.2%

Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 ACS

2022 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

Below are the top three industries in which Pine River Township's residents are employed in. The percentages below come from the context of 1,329 total employed civilians.

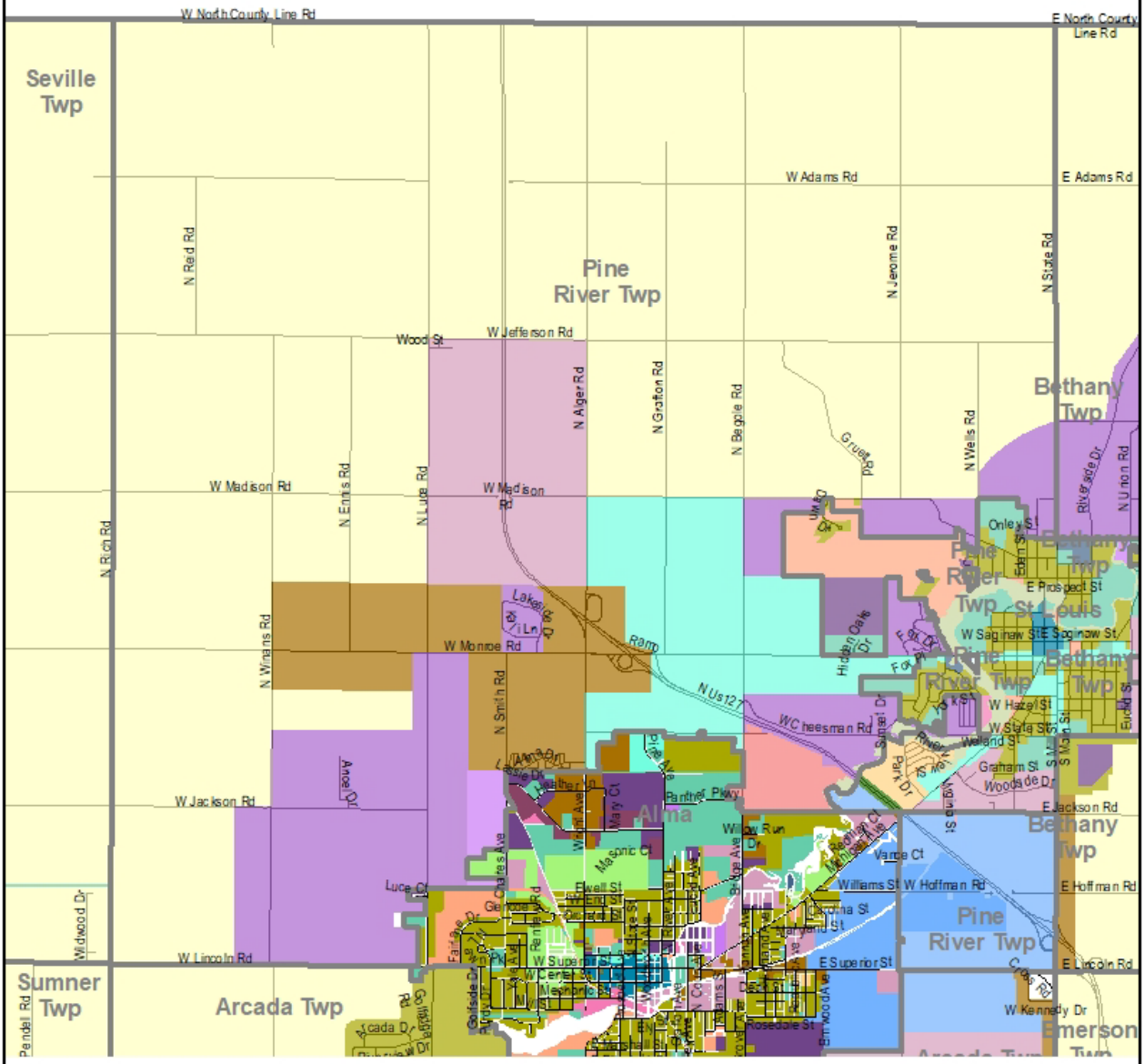


COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Zoning Map
Zoning Ordinance

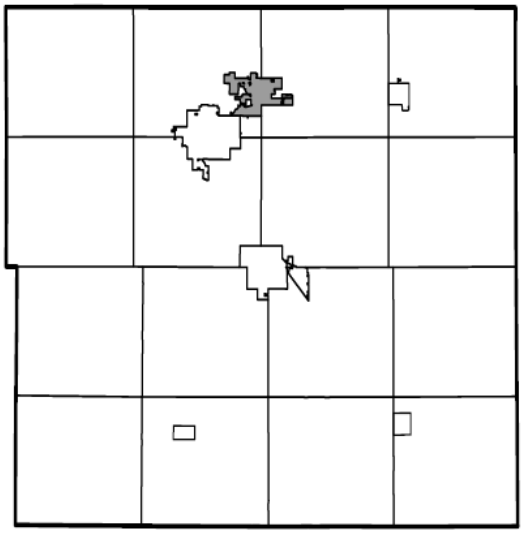
Action/Project	Priority	Responsibility
Housing Pine River Township Goal: To develop all types of housing in **Pine River Township.**		
Nothing to add**.**		
Gardening Pine River Township Goal: Solving the disconnect between education and training and job opportunities		
We are here to help, but unlikely to locate in Pine River Township.		
Caring for Pine River Township Goal: Promote quality and affordable childcare and early education		
Nothing to add.		
Ready, Set, Invest in Pine River Township Goal: For **Pine River Township** to become the ideal choice for investment of all industry types (industrial, commercial, and agricultural).		
Expand access to municipal water along Alger, Monroe, and Smith Road(s).		
Help promote micro-wine businesses, farmers markets.		
Protect and Visit Pine River Township Goal: To Provide access the current opportunities to residents and visitors while protecting the environmental assets to strengthen **Pine River Township.**		
Pavilions, splash pads, pickleball courts.		
Permanent structure for farm market		
Pine River Township Future Land Use		
Pine River Township will change future land use for the area NE of US-127 in Section 36 from Industrial to Agricultural. Residents of the area desire to use the old gravel pit area as rural residential in the future. They say no industry would use the water resource for any industrial purpose.		

Gratiot County Future Land Use



19. CITY OF ST. LOUIS

[https://www.stlouismi.com/]



ABOUT

The City of St. Louis spans a total of 3.34 square miles of land and 0.49 square miles of water. Identified as the "Geographic Center of the Lower Peninsula," the city has a history of being home to the Magnetic Mineral Springs and bath house.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	7,010
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2022)	1,267
MEDIAN AGE (2022)	38.4 years
POPULATION 65+ YEARS (2022)	10.8%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022)	$47,662
MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2020)	$106,700
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2022)	1,677
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	71.4%
RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	28.6%
EMPLOYMENT RATE (CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE) (2022)	19.8%
POVERTY RATE	13.5%

Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 ACS

2022 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

Below are the top three industries in which the City of St. Louis' residents are employed in. The percentages below come from the context of 1,257 total employed civilians.

Manufacturing Professional Services Education/Healthcare/Social Services

CITY OF ST. LOUIS HIGHLIGHTS

The City of St. Louis has a goal to develop all types of housing in multiple formats to support affordability and attainability. Some of the actions that will be taken to fulfill this goal are listed here:

- Consider and explore all options around township areas for partnerships for further land expansion for residential housing development.
- Seek to develop vacant land near Olive and Faro for new residential housing.
- Seek to attract a residential development for the vacant land along Monroe between Hidden Oaks Golf Course and the Cambridge Woods Apartment complex.
- Prioritize the capacity of water service to the west of the city to enhance the ability to support new residential development of all housing format types.
- Review second story housing requirements and determine if there is a need for first story for lease rental options, specifically in the downtown or other commercial areas.
- Explore existing housing incentives (Brownfield TIF for Housing, DDA Project Specific TIF, Residential Facilities Exemption, RAP, CRP and others) to determine the best tools available for supporting new housing development or rehabilitation within the city.

The City of St. Louis's goal to solve the disconnect between education and training and job opportunities will be supported by the following actions:

- Further educational opportunities, especially regarding skilled trades through partnerships with community, CTE providers, and industrial businesses.
- Seek to expand LINK Learning to include individuals aged 25 and older.

The City of St. Louis's goal to promote quality and affordable child care and early education in St. Louis will be supported by the following actions:

- Ensuring local zoning is amenable toward child care and early education facilities.
- Solicit and develop a child-care needs analysis and incorporate implementation actions into the City Master Plan.

The City of St. Louis's goal to become the ideal choice for investment of all industry types (industrial, commercial, and agricultural) will be supported by the following actions. Additional action items are identified in their community-specific matrix in chapter eight.

- Plan and work to upgrade Jackson and Croswell Roads to become all-season roads to support future industrial expansion.
- Identify opportunities to expand fiber optic lines throughout the city and to support future industrial development.
- Plan for future potential industrial development on private owned vacant land that is currently agricultural to the east of town including infrastructure requirements for expansion and costs associated with expansion.
- Create a long-term resiliency strategy for redevelopment of the existing prison site as either industrial or future housing to have a plan in place should the State ever close the prison.
- Plan options for the future potential development of Horse Creek Property.

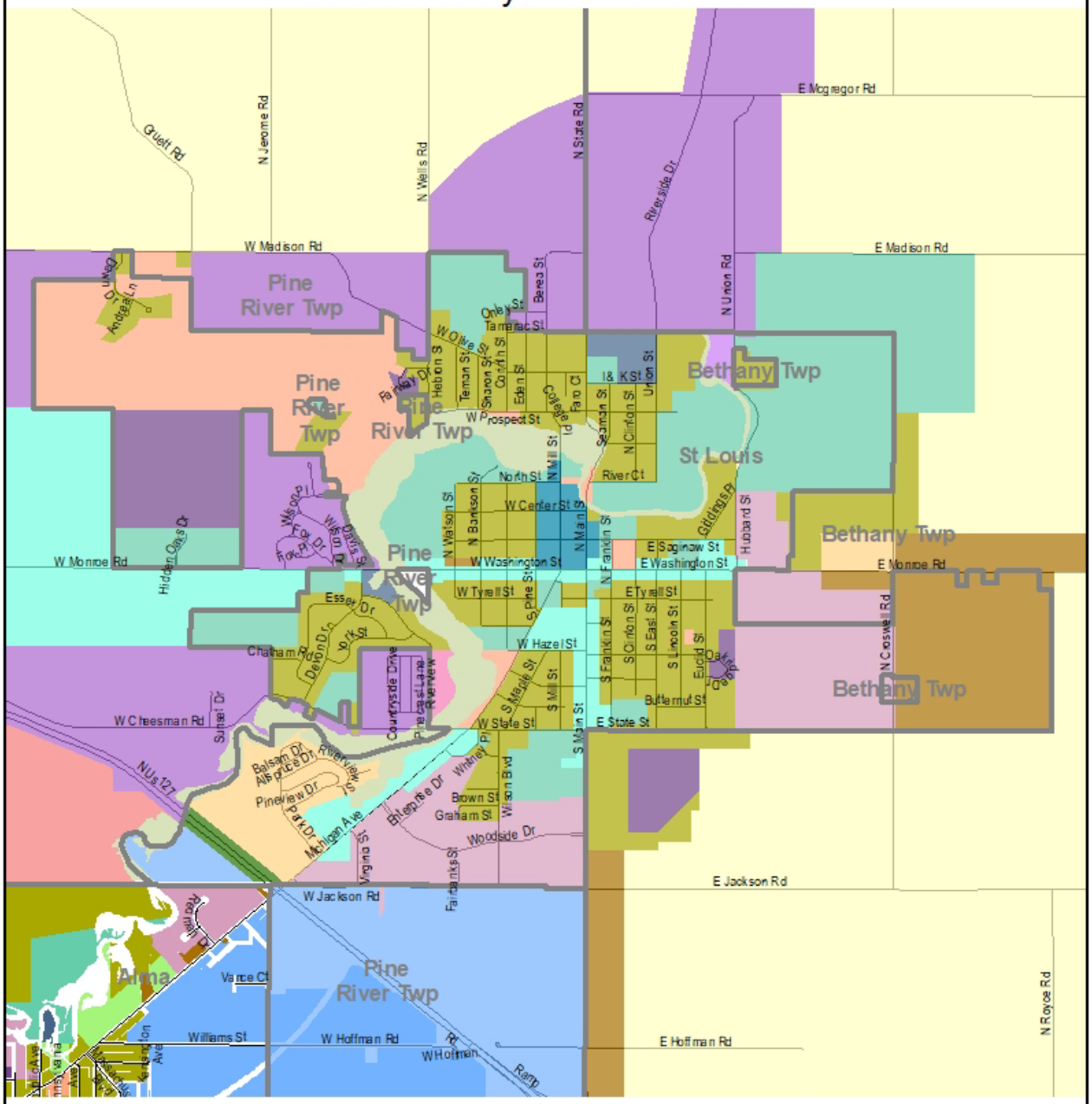
The City of St. Louis's goal to provide access the current opportunities to residents and visitors while protecting the environmental assets to strengthen the community is supported by the following action items.

- Plan and identify a permanent location and capital support for the community farmer's market.
- Create a specific use strategy for the better utilization of Clapp Park for events, including the potential development of a bandshell and pavilion.
- Research and plan the potential development of a splash park to serve younger children and families that may not use the community pool with Clapp and Lions Park being potential locations.
- Identify areas for potential food truck events.
- Identify areas for potential Pickleball courts.
- Promote and facilitate the eventual re-use of the former Velsicol Plant as an energy park to accommodate recreational uses along with electrical generation and/or energy storage. (Further information can be found in the Velsicol Reuse Plan Update.

COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

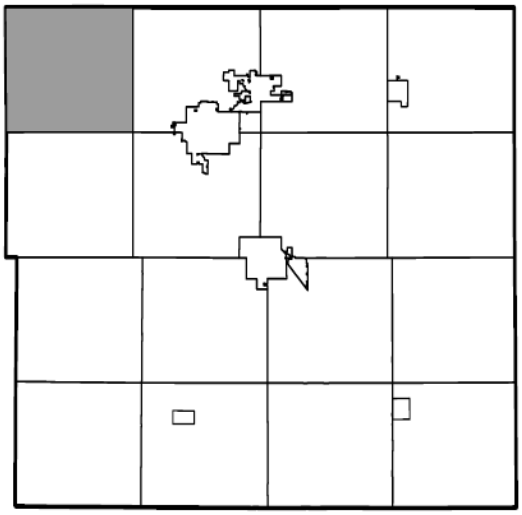
Zoning Map
Zoning Ordinance

Gratiot County Future Land Use



20. SEVILLE TOWNSHIP

[https://sevilletownship.com/]



ABOUT

Spanning 35.9 square miles in area, Seville Township is in the northwest corner of Gratiot County.

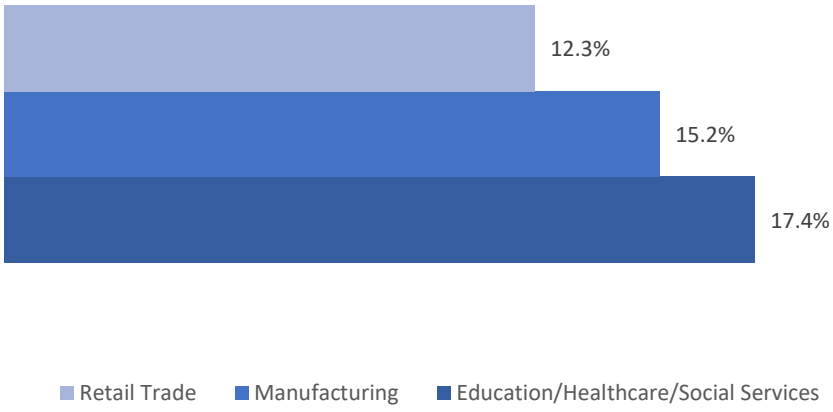
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	2,132
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2022)	790
MEDIAN AGE (2022)	49.4 years
POPULATION 65+ YEARS (2022)	28.7%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022)	$60,658
MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2020)	$120,300
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2022)	790
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	94.7%
RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	5.3%
EMPLOYMENT RATE (CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE) (2022)	52.4%
POVERTY RATE	11.9%

Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 ACS

2022 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

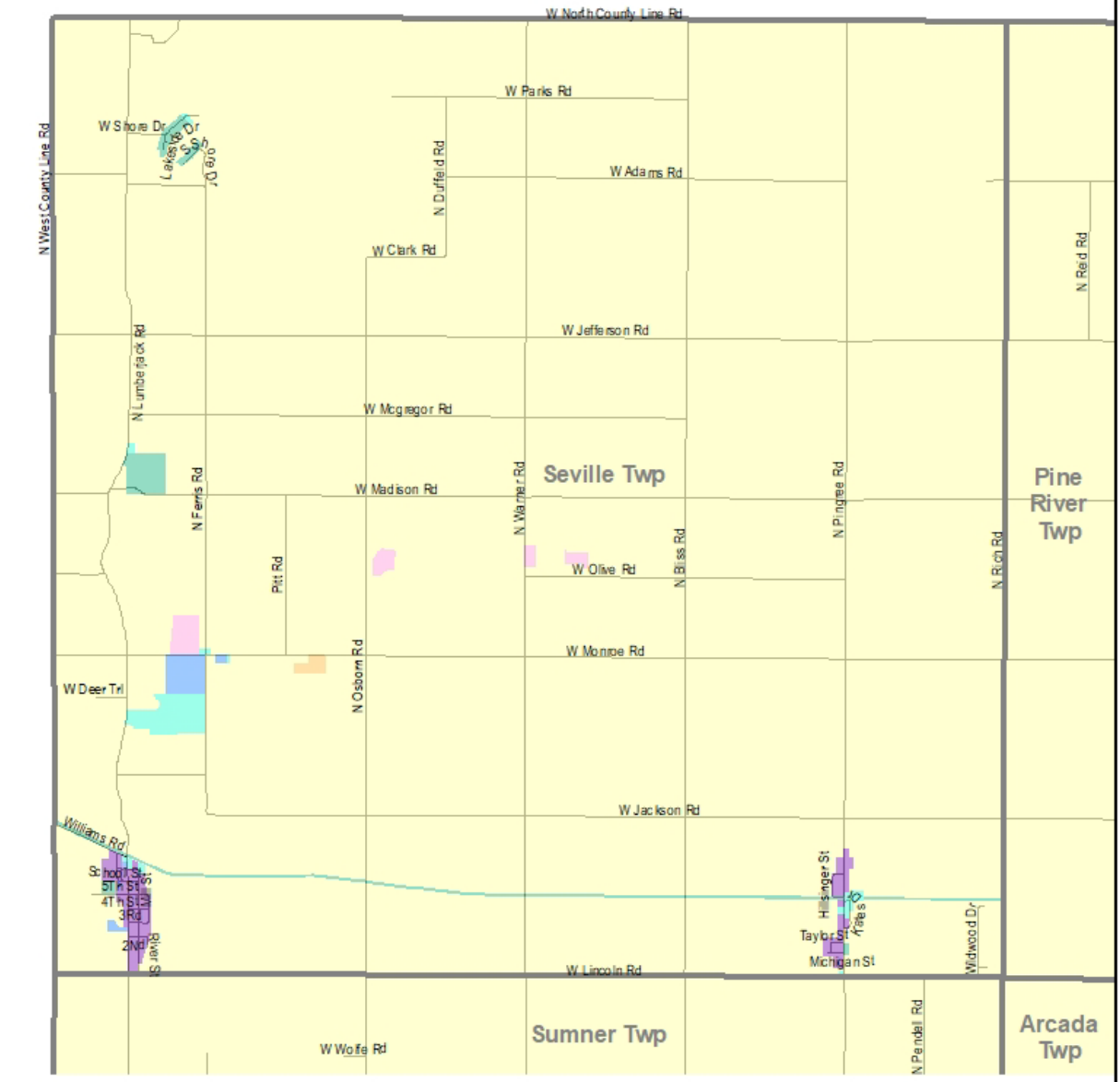
Below are the top three industries in which Seville Township's residents are employed in. The percentages below come from the context of 804 total employed civilians.



Action/Project	Priority	Responsibility
Housing SEVILLE TOWNSHIP Goal: To develop all types of housing in **SEVILLE TOWNSHIP**		
Continue monitoring and enforcing blight clean-up throughout the Township		Zoning Admin and Township Board
Gardening SEVILLE TOWNSHIP Goal: Solving the disconnect between education and training and job opportunities		
No Changes		
Caring for SEVILLE TOWNSHIP Goal: Promote quality and affordable childcare and early education		
Expand and promote Seville Library Programs		Library Board and staff
Continue to foster the relationship with Forest Hill Nature Center		Township Board

Ready, Set, Invest Goal: For **SEVILLE TOWNSHIP** to become the ideal choice for investment of all industry types (industrial, commercial, and agricultural).		
Promote Seville Township as a viable option for business and agricultural projects as supported by the township residents		Township Board
Protect and Visit Goal: To Provide access the current opportunities to residents and visitors while protecting the environmental assets to strengthen **SEVILLE TOWNSHIP**.		
Support and promote the efforts of the Clean Pine River project		Township Board
Support and promote the Make Pine River Navigable project		Township Board

Gratiot County Future Land Use



Seville Township Zoning Map

AG Agricultural

RP Rural Preservation

RR Rural Residential

R-1 Low Density Residential

R-2 Medium Density Residential

MHP Manufactured Home Park

B-1 Local Business

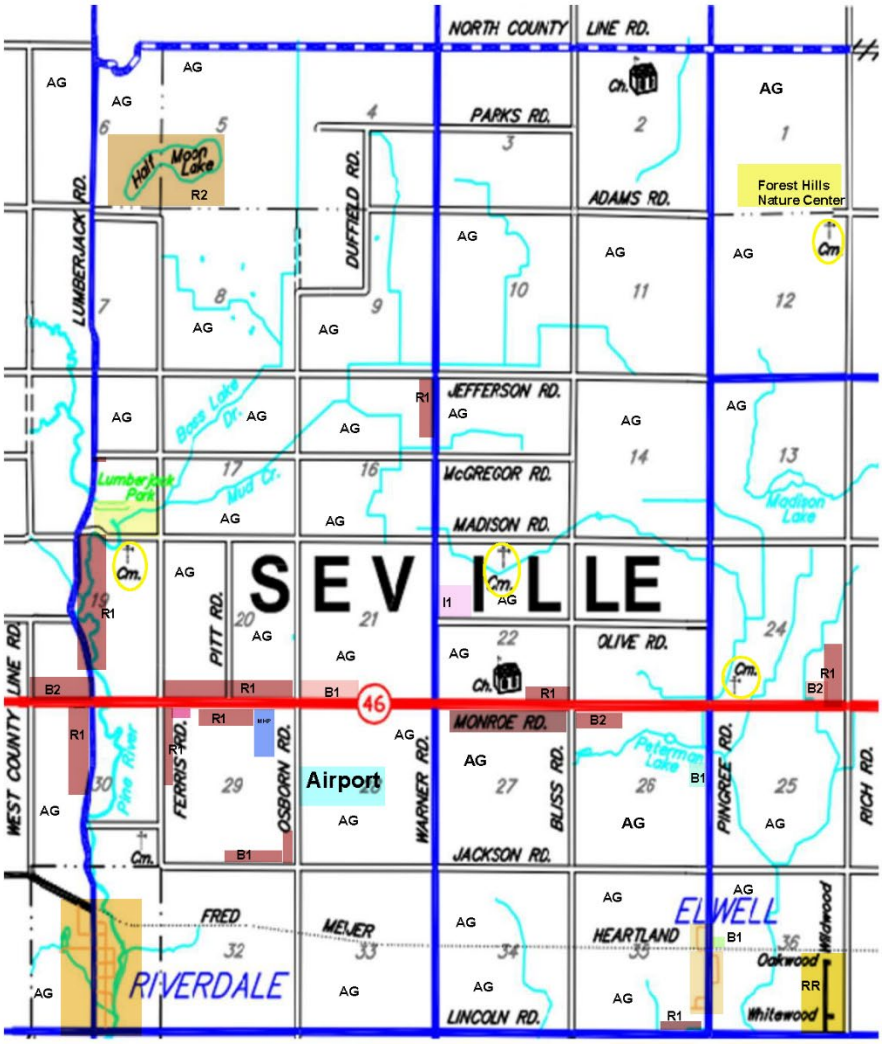
B-2 Highway Business

I-1 Industrial

Note: This map should be used for illustrative purposes only, and is not to scale. For exact boundries consult the County Zoning Administrator.

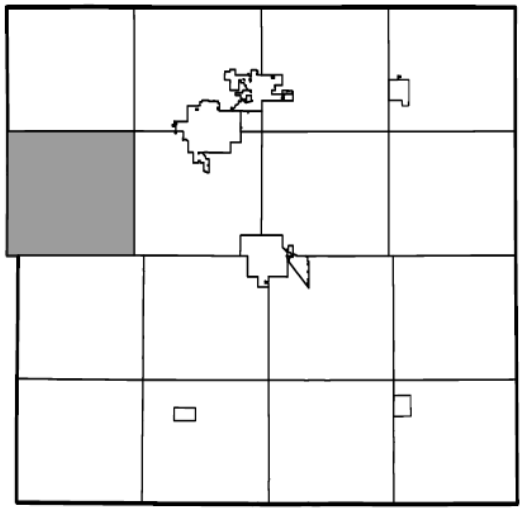
Gratiot County Zoning Map
Adopted 11/20/01

Cemetery



SUMNER TOWNSHIP

[http://www.sumnertownship.com/]



ABOUT

Organized in 1868, Sumner Township spans a total of 35.9 square miles in area, with water covering .04 square miles of land.

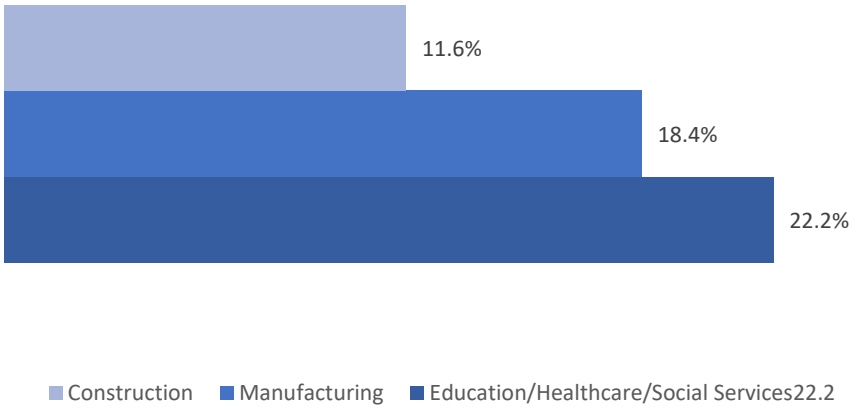
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	1,863
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2022)	826
MEDIAN AGE (2022)	43.3 Years
POPULATION 65+ YEARS (2022)	17.3%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022)	$56,477
MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2020)	$102,500
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2022)	789
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	83.5%
RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	16.5%
EMPLOYMENT RATE (CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE) (2022)	51.2%
POVERTY RATE	15.4%

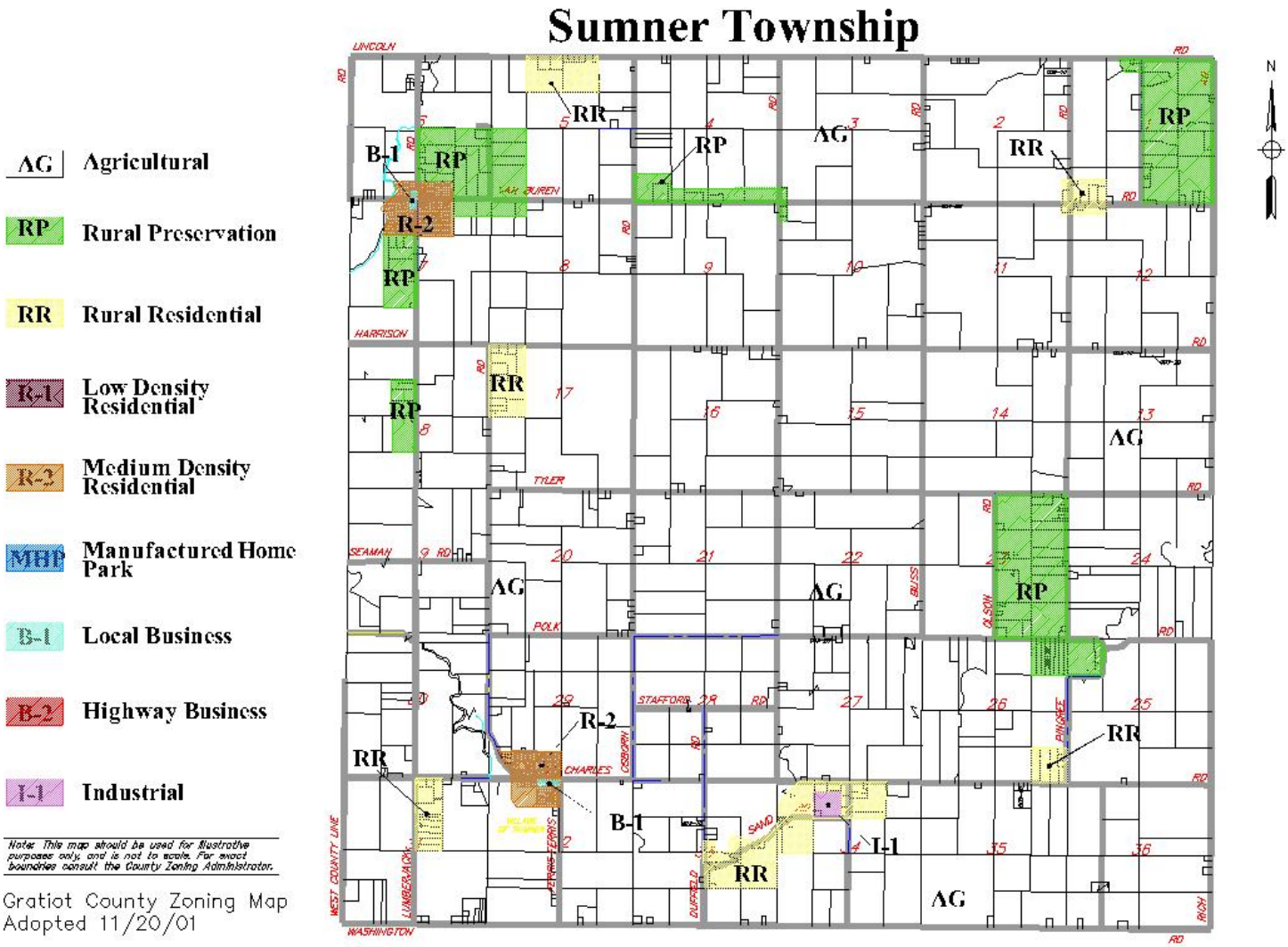
Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 ACS

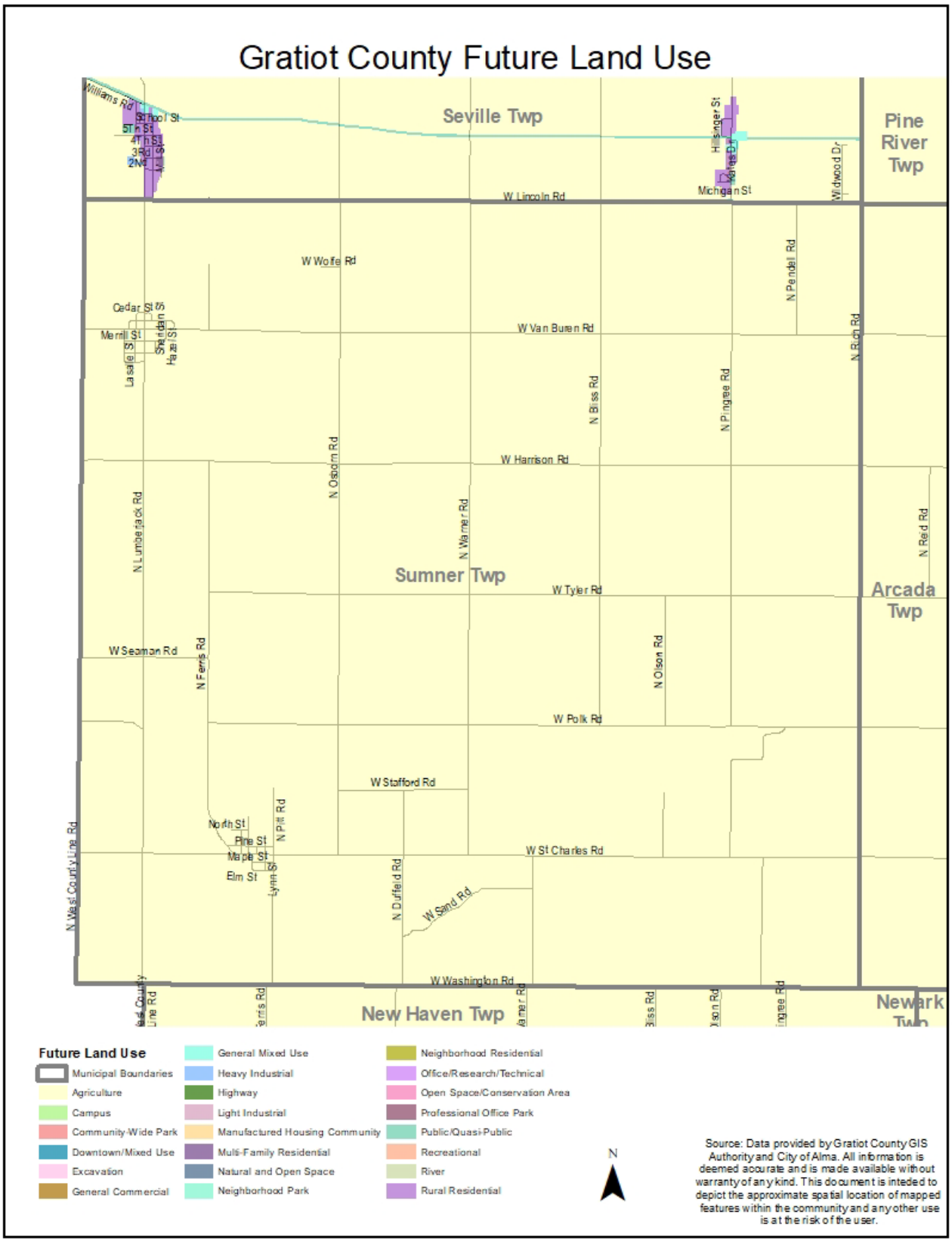
2022 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

Below are the top three industries in which the Sumner Township's residents are employed in. The percentages below come from the context of 847 total employed civilians.

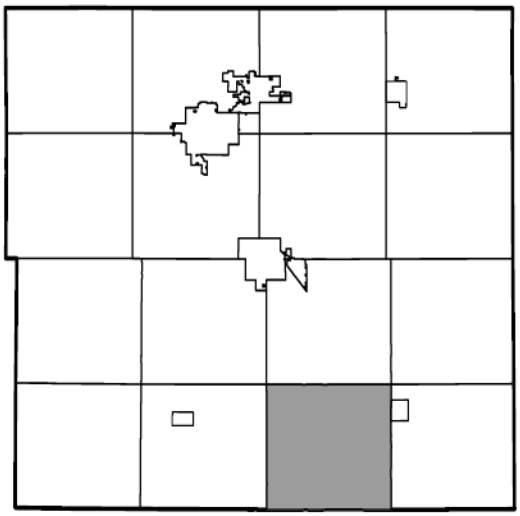


Sumner Township Zoning Map




Gratiot County Future Land Use
Seville Twp
Pine River Twp
Sumner Twp
Arcada Twp
New Haven Twp
Newark Twp
W Lincoln Rd
W Wolfe Rd
W Van Buren Rd
W Harrison Rd
W Tyler Rd
W Seaman Rd
W Polk Rd
W Stafford Rd
W St Charles Rd
W Washington Rd
N Osborn Rd
N Warner Rd
N Bliss Rd
N Pingree Rd
N Pendell Rd
N Rich Rd
N Reid Rd
N Olson Rd
N Ferris Rd
N Lumberjack Rd
N West County Line Rd
N Duffield Rd
N Pitt Rd
Lynn St
Cedar St
Merrill St
Lasalle St
Sheridan St
Hazel St
Williams Rd
School St
5Th St
4Th St
3Rd
2Nd
Hillsinger St
Michigan St
Widwood Dr
Future Land Use
Municipal Boundaries
Agriculture
Campus
Community-Wide Park
Downtown/Mixed Use
Excavation
General Commercial
General Mixed Use
Heavy Industrial
Highway
Light Industrial
Manufactured Housing Community
Multi-Family Residential
Natural and Open Space
Neighborhood Park
Neighborhood Residential
Office/Research/Technical
Open Space/Conservation Area
Professional Office Park
Public/Quasi-Public
Recreational
River
Rural Residential
N
Source: Data provided by Gratiot County GIS Authority and City of Alma. All information is deemed accurate and is made available without warranty of any kind. This document is inteded to depict the approximate spatial location of mapped features within the community and any other use is at the risk of the user.

21. WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP



ABOUT

Washington Township spans a total of 35.4 square miles in area and is in the southeast region of Gratiot County.

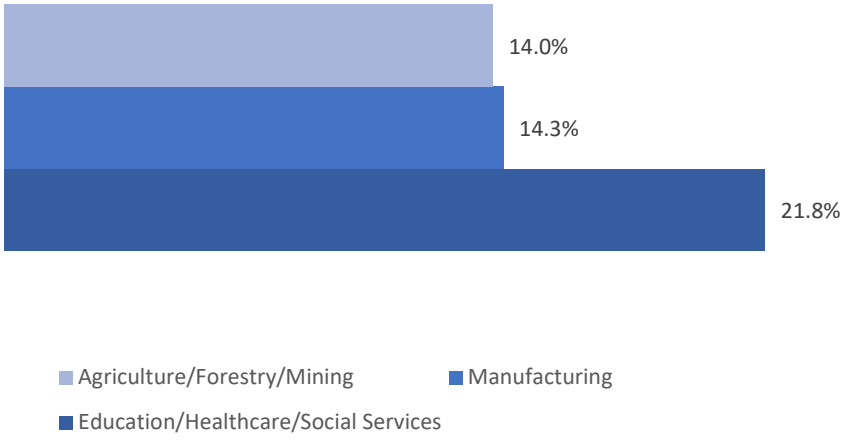
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

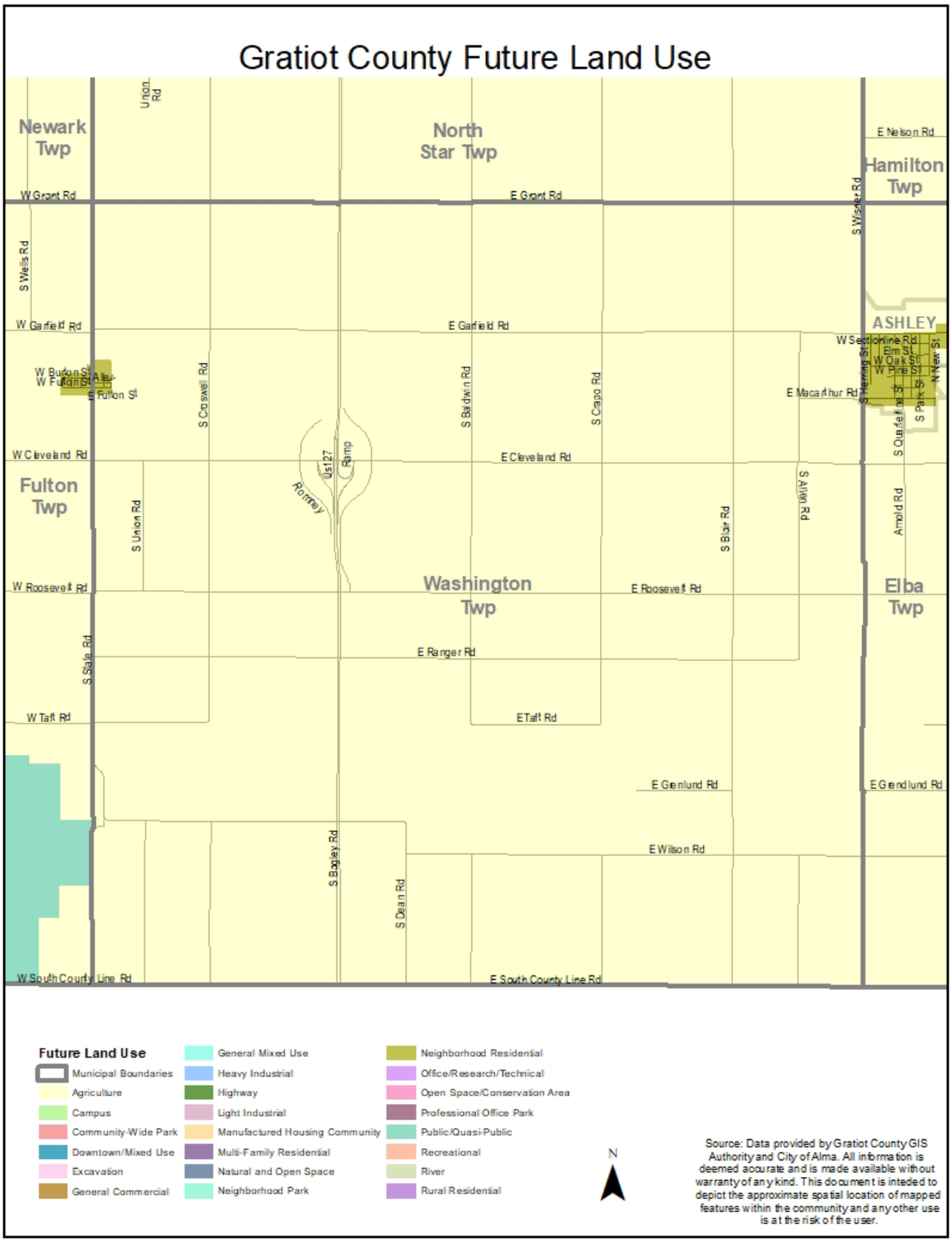
TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	813
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2022)	359
MEDIAN AGE (2022)	42.1 Years
POPULATION 65+ YEARS (2022)	18.1%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022)	$68,583
MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2020)	$340,200
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2022)	354
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	65.2%
RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	34.8%
EMPLOYMENT RATE (CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE) (2022)	46.4%
POVERTY RATE	22.9%

Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 ACS

2022 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

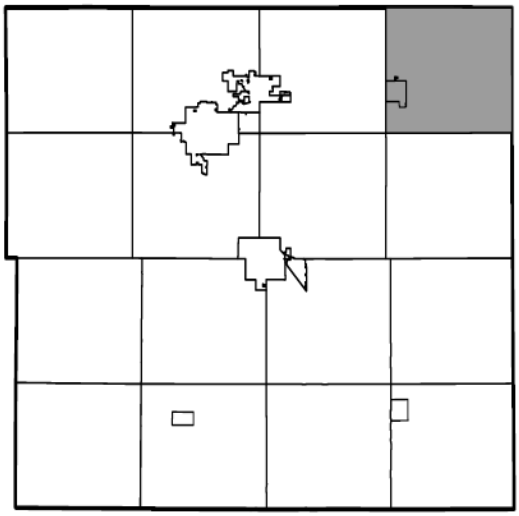
Below are the top three industries in which Washington Township's residents are employed in. The percentages below come from the context of 385 total employed civilians.




Gratiot County Future Land Use
Newark Twp
North Star Twp
Hamilton Twp
Fulton Twp
Washington Twp
Elba Twp
ASHLEY
W Grant Rd
E Grant Rd
E Nelson Rd
S Wisner Rd
S Wells Rd
W Garfield Rd
E Garfield Rd
W Sectionline Rd
Elm St
W Oak St
W Pine St
N New St
S Herring St
S Quarterline St
S Park St
W Burton St
W Fulton St
Alley
E Fulton St
S Croswell Rd
S Baldwin Rd
S Crapo Rd
E Macarthur Rd
W Cleveland Rd
E Cleveland Rd
Us127
Ramp
Romney
S Union Rd
S Blair Rd
S Allen Rd
Arnold Rd
W Roosevelt Rd
E Roosevelt Rd
S State Rd
E Ranger Rd
W Taft Rd
E Taft Rd
E Grenlund Rd
E Grendlund Rd
E Wilson Rd
S Bogley Rd
S Dean Rd
W South County Line Rd
E South County Line Rd
Future Land Use
Municipal Boundaries
Agriculture
Campus
Community-Wide Park
Downtown/Mixed Use
Excavation
General Commercial
General Mixed Use
Heavy Industrial
Highway
Light Industrial
Manufactured Housing Community
Multi-Family Residential
Natural and Open Space
Neighborhood Park
Neighborhood Residential
Office/Research/Technical
Open Space/Conservation Area
Professional Office Park
Public/Quasi-Public
Recreational
River
Rural Residential
N
Source: Data provided by Gratiot County GIS Authority and City of Alma. All information is deemed accurate and is made available without warranty of any kind. This document is inteded to depict the approximate spatial location of mapped features within the community and any other use is at the risk of the user.

22. WHEELER TOWNSHIP

[https://wheelertwp.com/]



ABOUT

Spanning a total of 35.8 square miles in area, Wheeler Township is located in the northeast corner of Gratiot County.

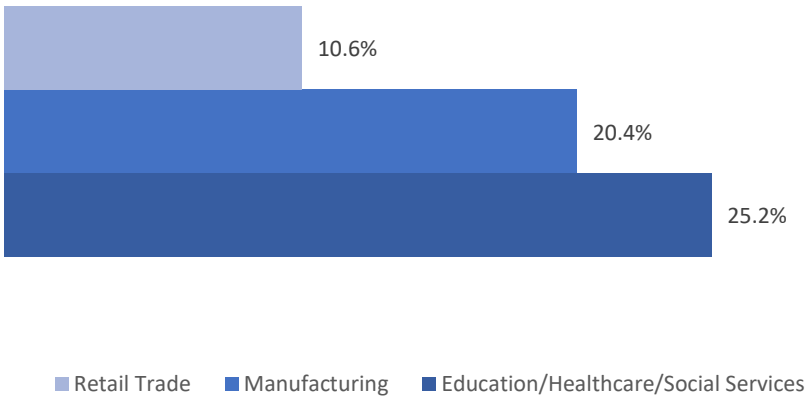
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

TOTAL POPULATION (2020)	2,612
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2022)	1,015
MEDIAN AGE (2022)	42.8 Years
POPULATION 65+ YEARS (2022)	17.5%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022)	$57,332
MEDIAN HOME VALUE (2020)	$114,400
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2022)	1,168
OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	78.2%
RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS (2022)	21.8%
EMPLOYMENT RATE (CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE) (2022)	56.3%
POVERTY RATE	12.9%

Sources: 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 ACS

2022 EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY

Below are the top three industries in which Wheeler Township's residents are employed in. The percentages below come from the context of 1,201 total employed civilians.



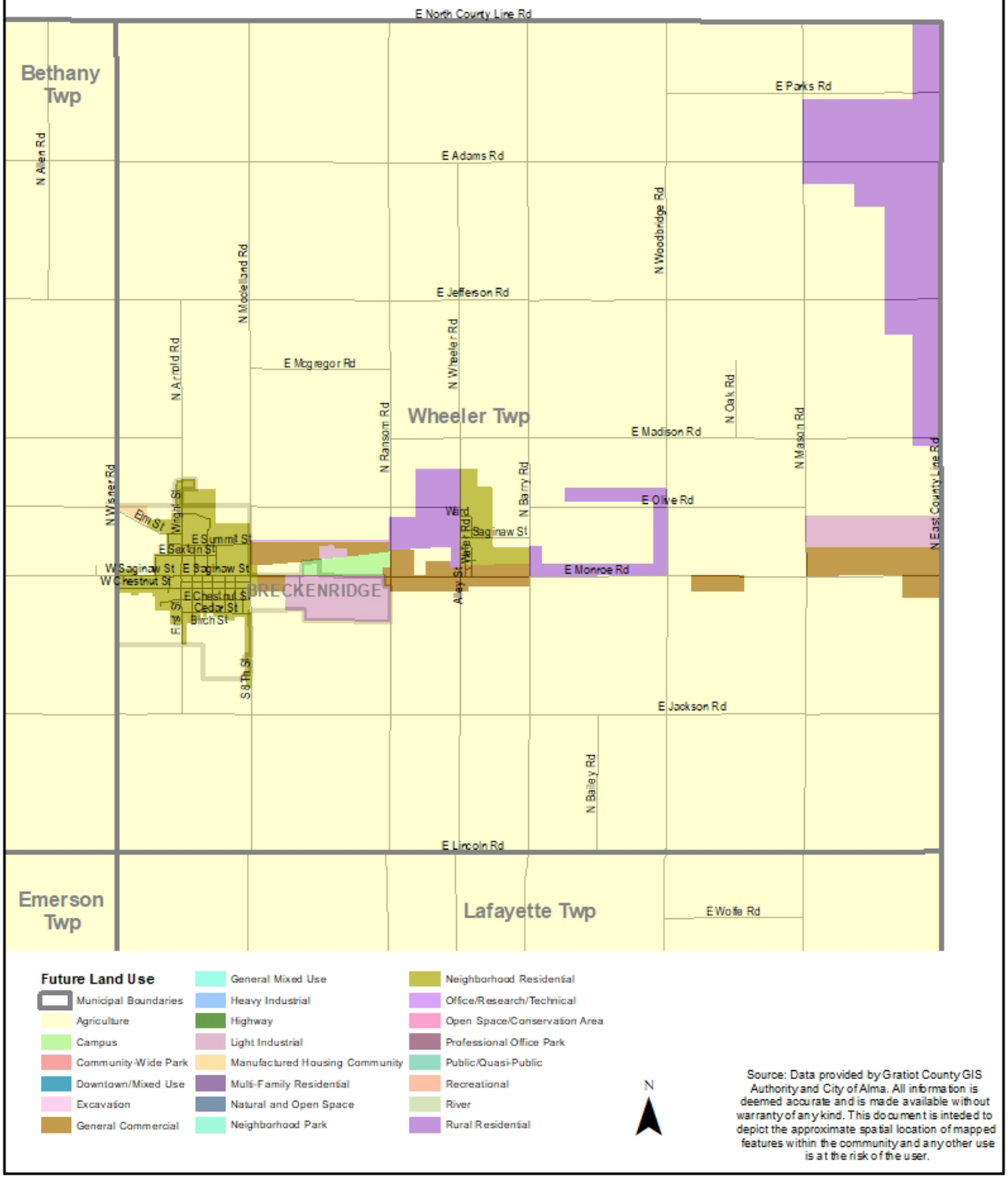
COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Zoning Map
Zoning Ordinance

At their August 2024 meeting, the Wheeler Township's Planning Commission made the following notes to support the draft of the Countywide Master Plan:

1. Housing - continue to focus on ordinance compliance to promote attractive and healthy neighborhoods
2. Childcare & Early Development (no update)
3. Business and Workforce Development (no update)
4. Industry Activity & Infrastructure - continue to proactively problem solve with the business community including review ordinances and amend as necessary to ensure Wheeler Township is promoting a friendly, growth-oriented business environment. - continue township support of projects that promote clean energy production (Anaerobic Digester Project, Wind and Solar projects). - in partnership with the Village of Breckenridge, promote expansion of industrial park. - continue to promote infrastructure improvements (road upgrades, electric systems, water systems, and fuel distribution systems).
5. Tourism/Agrotourism, Environmental Protection, Recreation, Messaging - continue improvement programs at township parks (facilities, playground equipment, etc.) - promote the benefits of doing business and living in Wheeler Township - promote the expansion of senior services and activities

Gratiot County Future Land Use



Appendix 2: Public Comment

Per the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MCL 125.3839–125.3843), the public comment period is open for 63 days from the date the notice and draft plan are sent to the municipalities within Gratiot County.

Public Comments:

1. Individual expresses frustration over limited public involvement in Gratiot County's Master Plan and fear that the proposed "Redevelopment Ready Community" designation will prioritize large-scale renewable energy projects over preserving agricultural heritage. Per the individual, many respondents oppose additional solar, wind, and battery storage developments, citing their concerns for negative impacts on property values, lack of transparency, and environmental concerns. The feedback was taken into account on page 110, where "create opportunities for more community engagement in rural communities before new alternative energy developments are approved" is listed as a desired outcome of the Master Plan, and throughout the plan where renewable energy projects are addressed as an individual municipal decision, as permitted by current state law.