



BLUE LAKE TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2025 Update

Adopted June 9, 2025



**WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
(WMSRDC)**

The West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission is a federal and state designated regional planning and development agency serving 120 local governments in Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana counties.

The mission of the Commission is to promote and foster regional development in West Michigan through cooperation amongst local governments and other regional partners.



Kathy Winczewski, Chairperson
James Rynberg, Vice-Chairperson
Michelle Hazekamp, Secretary

Erin Kuhn, Executive Director

Project Staff:

Stephen Carlson, Program Manager

Blue Lake Township Planning Commission:

Greg Rice, Chair

Chris Bade, Vice Chair

Mike Sikkenga, Secretary

Robert Gaston

Lyle Monette

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I. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Plan

This plan is intended to be a policy plan to guide future township actions and decisions. It is not intended to establish precise boundaries of land use areas or exact locations of future types of developments. Its function is to guide growth toward long-range, broad-based goals.

The goal of any comprehensive development plan is to combine the needs and desires of the citizenry with the land's suitability and capability for sustaining those uses, according to the ability and desire of the municipality to provide public services throughout its jurisdiction. Such planning will minimize the potential for land use conflicts and inappropriate use of land, for the betterment of all residents.

Every effort has been made to present information that is both current and accurate. The Blue Lake Township Board, the Blue Lake Township Planning Commission, and the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission shall not be held liable for any errors and/or omissions that are related to this plan. This plan is a general document; therefore, a thorough investigation with original research materials should be undertaken before proceeding with any specific implementation decisions. These materials might include site plans, legal reviews, etc. and would vary by situation.

Legal Basis of Planning

The State of Michigan authorizes municipalities to develop community planning through the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008 (MPEA). Under this act, townships have the responsibility to develop and adopt a plan for the future development of their community. The Blue Lake Township Planning Commission followed the directives of this act in the preparation of this master plan.

Although enabled by Michigan law, this plan does not have the force of statutory law or ordinance. The MPEA provides the legal basis for local planning and outlines requirements for the preparation, content, public review, adoption, and regular review of any plan that is intended to satisfy the requirement of section 203(1) of the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, 2006 PA 110, MCL 125.3203, regardless of its title (i.e. master plan, comprehensive plan, land use plan, etc.). Key objectives of a plan as outlined in the act include:

- a) Create a plan that guides development that is coordinated, adjusted, harmonious, efficient, and economical and that best promotes public health, safety and general welfare;
- b) Make careful and comprehensive studies of present conditions and future growth with due regard for its relation to neighboring jurisdictions;
- c) Consult and cooperate with representatives of adjacent local units of government, departments of state and federal governments;

- d) Address land use and infrastructure issues and make recommendations for physical development;
- e) At least every five years, review the plan to determine whether to amend or readopt the current plan or adopt a new master plan.

The Planning Process

In 2024, Blue Lake Township contracted with the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC) to concurrently assist in the update of the 2019 Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan and the 2017 Blue Lake Township Recreation Plan. This concurrent process was intended to help ensure the two plans are aligned.

This edition of the Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan closely resembles previous editions that were adopted by the township in 2006 (re-adopted in 2011) and 2019. Notable adjustments to this edition of the plan include updated demographics, tables, and maps, and revisions to the goals & objectives. The Future Land Use map was reviewed by the Blue Lake Township Planning Commission, and no revisions were deemed necessary at the time.

Citizen input is paramount in identifying and discerning the issues facing township residents. All citizens were invited and encouraged to take part in the planning process, as were bordering municipalities. The opportunity for input and comments was provided through Planning Commission meetings open to the public, a special public input meeting held by the Planning Commission, and a publicly noticed review period that was immediately followed by a public hearing. Notices of these meetings were published in the White Lake Beacon and made available on the Blue Lake Township website.

The goals and objectives set forth in this plan for the township should be reviewed on a regular basis. When appropriate, this plan should be modified to reflect changes of physical nature or of public sentiment. A comprehensive development plan should be consistent in maintaining the community's goals. The planning process strives to combine the needs and desires of the citizenry with the land's suitability and capability for sustaining those uses. It also balances the township's ability and desire to provide public services throughout its jurisdiction.

How to Use This Plan

The Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan is intended to function as a guide for directing and managing development within the township boundaries. This plan is not a zoning ordinance, which is a legally enforceable document. This plan is a policy-planning document that provides a legal rationale for zoning. It presents a written analysis of the township's physical and social characteristics, as well as visions and goals for future development. In addition, implementation strategies are identified and are intended to guide policy makers towards accomplishing the established visions

and goals of the Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan. Development decisions for the township should be informed by data and information presented in this plan and be consistent with the outlined visions and goals.

The Comprehensive Development Plan's Relationship with Zoning

While most understand that there is a relationship between a land use (i.e. comprehensive development) plan with a future land use map and a zoning ordinance with a zoning map, it is often misinterpreted and used inappropriately. The relationship is a very important one, *because you cannot utilize one without having the other*. A formal definition of a land use plan is simply that it is a policy document in which the zoning ordinance is a regulatory tool that is used to implement the goals and objectives of the land use plan. *In other words, the land use plan and map are designed to provide the community with a glimpse of where they desire their community to head, and a zoning ordinance and map provides the means to arrive there.*

The primary difference between a future land use plan and a zoning ordinance is a familiar one. Changes to a zoning ordinance or zoning map are the primary tools available to change the regulations affecting land or the types of use land may be used for. The land use plan and map are used to guide the process of changing land uses. In other words, the future land use plan and map will be utilized to evaluate what zoning changes will occur and where they will occur. For example, rezoning requests are often required to be consistent with the future land use plan's designations which identify the community's desires for their future.

In 2002, the state encouraged all local governments to have a Land Use Plan in effect. Effective December 15th, 2002, it became mandatory that any amendments to a community's plan be submitted, for review and comment, to all bordering jurisdictions and the acting regional planning commission, if applicable. The comments derived from those then must be submitted to the county where they are reviewed. A final comment is made on the changes to the plan and is then submitted back to the originating municipality. While presently these comments have no regulatory implications, it is the first step in working towards a collaborative effort amongst bordering municipalities encouraging similar land uses on adjacent parcels.

Requirements of the 2008 Michigan Zoning Enabling Act state that a zoning ordinance "shall be based on a plan..." (MCL 125.3203(1)). Often, the plan that zoning is based upon is referred to as a "zoning plan." The zoning plan can be a chapter in the master plan, a separate document of the master plan, or integrated throughout the master plan. Chapter VIII of this plan is intended to fulfill this requirement and strengthen the ties between Blue Lake Township's comprehensive development plan (master plan) and zoning ordinance.

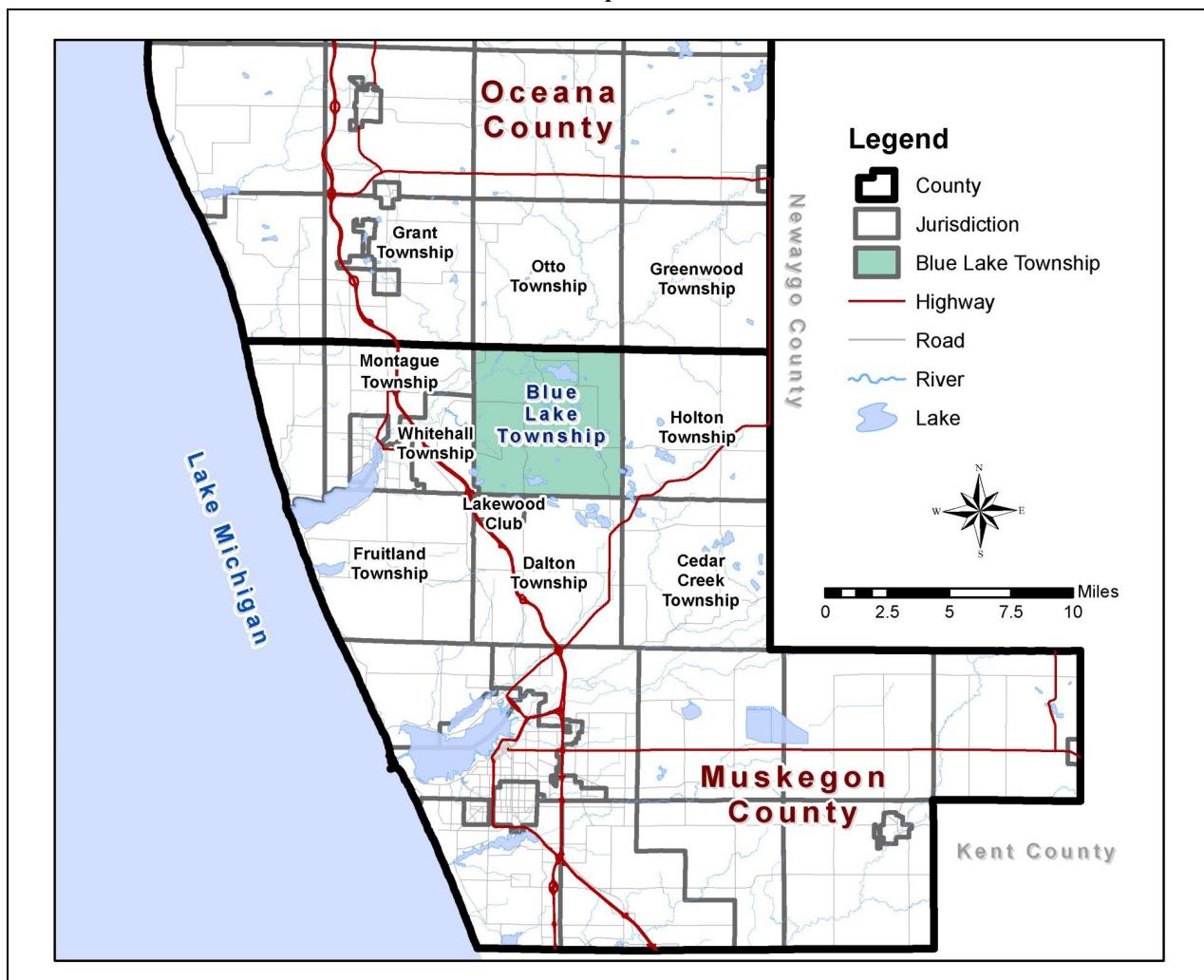
II. LOCATION AND HISTORY

Regional Location

Blue Lake Township is located along the northern border of Muskegon County. The county is situated along the eastern shore of Lake Michigan approximately halfway between Traverse City, Michigan and the Michigan/Indiana border. The township has a total area of 35.7 square miles, with 34.4 square miles of land and 1.3 square miles of water.

Blue Lake Township is bordered by Otto Township in Oceana County to the north, Dalton Township and the Village of Lakewood Club to the south, Whitehall and Montague townships to the west, and Holton Township to the east. The county seat, the City of Muskegon, is located approximately 15 miles to the south.

Map #1



Community History

Blue Lake Township has a unique history of development dating back to its first European settler, Charles Hart, in 1853. According to historical records, Hart acquired 160 acres of land under the Homestead Act. Many other settlers soon followed to participate in the lumber boom that occurred during the mid- to late- 1800's. Blue Lake Township's first sawmill was built in the southwest corner of Section 6 in the year 1856. A nearby watermill was erected near the mouth of Brown's Pond.

When Muskegon County was founded in 1859, the Blue Lake area was often referred to as "Thousand Lakes" due to the vast number of local lakes. Before organization as a township, the Blue Lake area was located within Dalton and Oceana Townships in Muskegon County. In March of 1865, the two townships were combined, and three townships were apportioned from the merged land. The first town meeting was held on April 3, 1865. Austin P. Ware, who settled in the area in 1864, became the township's first supervisor.

Blue Lake Township experienced its most prosperous years during West Michigan's lumber age. There were expansive stands of pine forests and adequate water transportation for shipping the timber to the mills. Most of the early residents were involved in the timber industry working either as lumberjacks or in the mills. However, in the 1890's the timber had been extracted and the lumbering age came to a halt. Many of the residents left Blue Lake Township in search of other more promising forests to the west. In fact, the exodus became so severe that the township nearly lost its status as an organized community. Land became very inexpensive due to the swift emigration of original settlers and abandonment of claims. For instance, in the late 1880's, a parcel of 160 acres, 30 of which were cleared, brought a price of \$600. Property taxes were also extremely low (taxes on a 320-acre improved farm valued at \$400 paid between \$16 and \$18 a year).

After several years of stagnation the township witnessed a new development trend at the turn of the century. Blue Lake Township became the location for a grand vacation resort, which was developed by Harrison Parker, a former Chicago Tribune business manager, to provide Chicagoans with a relaxing atmosphere far from the heat and stress of the city. According to the Muskegon Chronicle (December 17, 1989; pg 6B), Parker's original plan was to "entice Chicagoans to the area by offering free 25 x 100 foot lots to anyone attending land expositions at the Chicago Coliseum. All one needed to do was pay a \$3 recording fee and he or she would own a lot in Michigan." The Fruitvale Land Development Company, which Parker owned, offered 5- and 10-acre parcels for sale. The Rochdale Inn, located on the White River, was the centerpiece of the resort area. It contained 50 rooms, was considered very elegant, and held dances. It is estimated that during the peak of success the resort consisted of 125-150 cottages. Parker planned to supply the resort with food stuffs produced at his Fruit and Poultry Gardens. His idea was modeled after the British Rochdale system of cooperative government in which the surrounding farms support the landowners and the inn.

Many questions arose about the legality of how Parker was conducting business. By 1912 the Muskegon County Board of Commissioners was investigating the Fruitvale Land Development Company. Eventually greater mobility and other recreational opportunities lured guests to other destinations and the area fell into disrepair in the 1930's. Many of the cottages burned and others simply collapsed due to abandonment. The only remaining remnants of Parker's dream resort are building foundations and portions of tennis courts.

An extraordinarily similar land development scheme was being contemplated in the southern area of the township shortly after Parker opened his resort. B.C. Mayo of the Chicago Evening Post bought the extremely inexpensive land surrounding Fox Lake in an effort to increase circulation of the newspaper. He offered the right to purchase a lot on monthly installments of \$2.90 for four months as long as the Post was subscribed to for four months at 30 cents a month. On October 14, 1912, the Lakewood Lot Owners Association was formed to promote infrastructure improvements such as electric lines and parks. The Lakewood Clubhouse was a large (70' x 95') and rustic structure filled with Indian artifacts and a large fireplace built of boulders. Later additions included a barber shop, Western Union and Postal telegraph stations, and billiards and bowling facility.

By the early 1930's the resort began witnessing a decrease in members and the water level of the lake had fallen such that recreational activities were no longer feasible. The streetcar line had been abandoned, and the Chicago Evening Post went out of business. During the Great Depression many of the lot owners became delinquent on their taxes and were forced to release their titles to the state in lieu of payment. The clubhouse and surrounding cottages fell into disrepair and eventually collapsed and nearly 1600 acres were transferred to the Chicago Boy Scout Council. Lakewood became an incorporated village in 1967 and had a population of 1,291 according to the 2010 Census.

One final historical trend, which has survived the longest, also became apparent at the turn of the century. In 1910, Blue Lake Township became the home of Camp Hardy, a summer outpost for the Chicago-based Lawrence Hall Home for Boys. Soon after, the Owasippe Boy Scout Reservation was established in 1911. Since then, seasonal camps have dominated the township's landscape. Current examples of the exceptional camps that have graced the township include: Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp, a national leader in fine arts education; Camp Pendalouan, a YMCA sponsored summer camp; Camp Owasippe, operated by the Pathway to Adventure Council of Boy Scouts of America; Pioneer Trails, hosted by Pioneer Resources; and Gerber Scout Camp, owned and operated by the Michigan Crossroads Council of the Boy Scouts of America. A detailed profile of each existing camp is included in Chapter III of this document.

III. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Township Government

Blue Lake Township is a general law township and is governed by a five-member board consisting of a supervisor, treasurer, clerk, and two trustees, all of whom are representatives of the citizenry. Board members are elected to four-year terms, in the same year as United States presidential elections. The Blue Lake Township Board of Trustees meets on the second Monday of every month at 7:30 P.M. at the township hall located at 1491 Owasippe Road, Twin Lake, Michigan, 49457. The schedule of meetings is published at the beginning of each year.

Blue Lake Township also has a five-member Planning Commission, a three-member Zoning Board of Appeals, and a Recreation Committee. The Zoning Board of Appeals is composed of citizens appointed by the township board and meets on the call of the Chair when there is business to attend. Members of the Planning Commission are appointed by the Township Supervisor, with Township Board approval, for three-year staggered terms on an at-large and non-partisan basis. Officers consist of a chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary and meetings are scheduled for the Wednesdays following the board meetings. The Planning Commission is primarily an advisory body, reporting directly to the Township Board, but it does have some authorities granted for decision making in land use matters.

The Blue Lake Township Board of Trustees administers the annual township budget. The primary source of revenue for Michigan townships, such as Blue Lake, is the local government's share of the state sales tax. Other revenue is garnered from the millage rate applied to local property tax fees, fees for building permits, and Planning Commission/Zoning Board of Appeals review fees. Table 1 provides context regarding the township's trending tax base, according to selected Muskegon County Equalization Reports. The total state equalized value (SEV) of real and personal property in the township saw an increase of 73.4% between 2018 and 2024.

Table 1

Blue Lake Township STATE EQUALIZED VALUES (2018, 2021, 2024)						
Property Class	2024		2021		2018	
	Number of Parcels	SEV	Number of Parcels	SEV	Number of Parcels	SEV
Commercial	10	\$ 1,485,800	10	\$ 1,328,000	9	\$ 1,149,200
Residential	1,581	\$ 147,723,500	1,577	\$ 99,629,000	1,592	\$ 84,627,600
Agricultural	0	\$ 0	0	\$ 0	0	\$ 0
Industrial	0	\$ 0	0	\$ 0	0	\$ 0
Personal (com. + util.)	49	\$ 3,208,800	54	\$ 2,491,100	50	\$ 2,127,000
Total (real & personal)	1,640	\$ 152,418,100	1,641	\$ 103,448,100	1,651	\$ 87,903,800
Exempt	114		121		128	

Source: Muskegon County Equalization Reports from 2024, 2021, & 2018

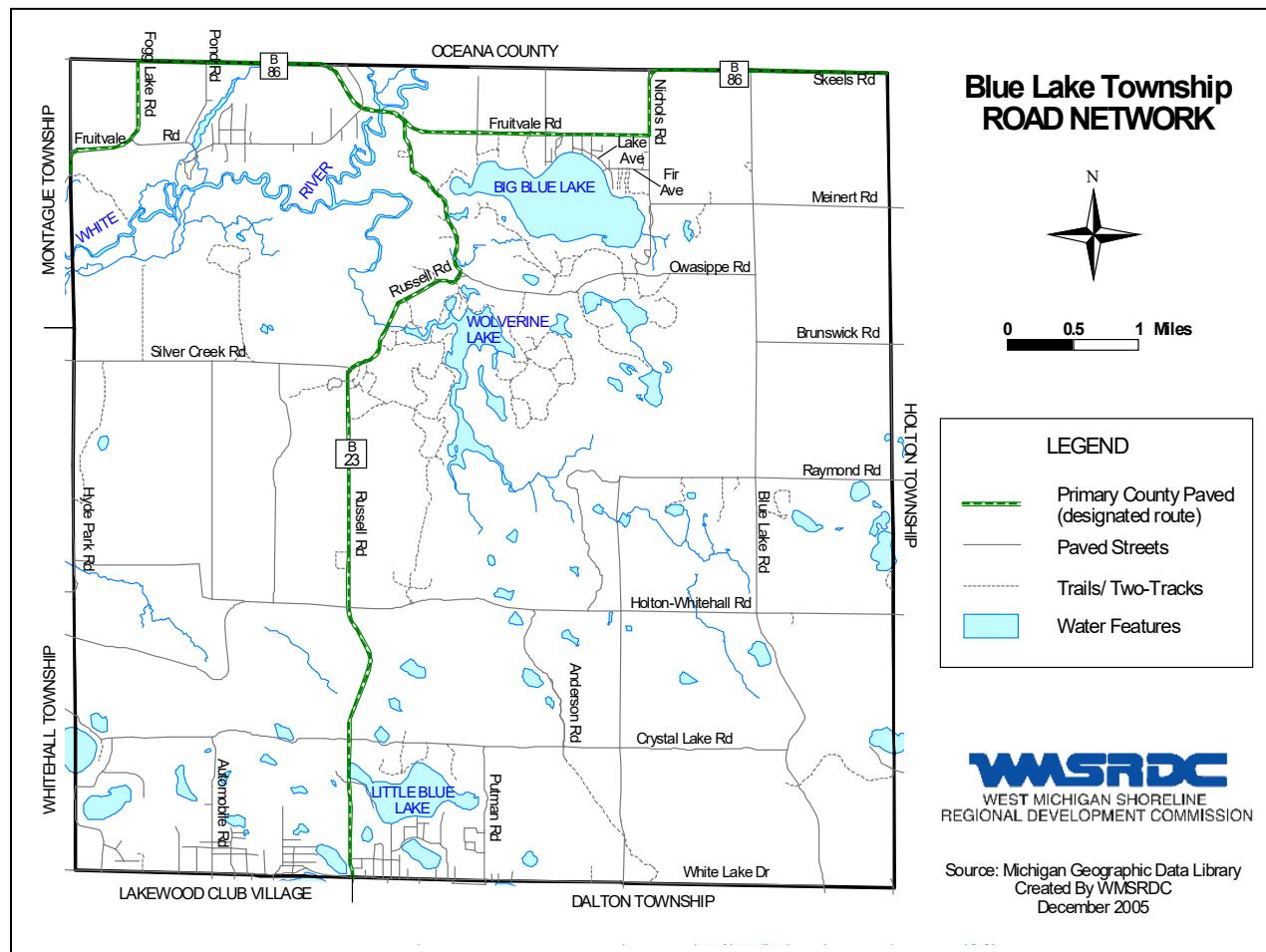
Blue Lake Township currently maintains a community recreation plan, but does not maintain a capital improvements plan, such as a written plan for improving roads. Despite this, the township does practice a limited amount of capital improvements, primarily to maintain local roads. It does not provide, either by itself or through the county, public water or sewer services, and does not employ a professional township manager. It does, however, employ part-time building, electrical, and plumbing/mechanical inspectors, a part-time zoning administrator, and a part-time property assessor.

Transportation

Although the township does not contain any state or federal roads, it is serviced by one major artery, US-31, which passes by the southwest corner of the township. The highway runs north and south, connecting Muskegon and Whitehall. The township also has two primary county roads: B-86, which runs east and west; and B-23, which runs north and south. According to GIS data published by the State of Michigan, the township road network consists of about 68 miles of roads and about 15 miles of uncoded or not certified public roads. There are almost 30 miles of roads that are eligible for federal aid road funding and offer the highest mobility function, according to the Michigan Department of Transportation.

The Muskegon County Airport, located approximately 23 miles south of the township, provides both commercial and passenger service. There are currently no public bus routes serving the township. The Muskegon Area Transit System is the nearest fixed route public transportation system and primarily serves the Muskegon metro area. Lastly, railroad service in Muskegon County is available, but primarily for industrial purposes. There is no passenger rail service in the county. Railroads are active within the urban confines of Muskegon and connect the area to Fremont and to the greater railroad network via Ottawa County.

Map #2



Parks and Recreation

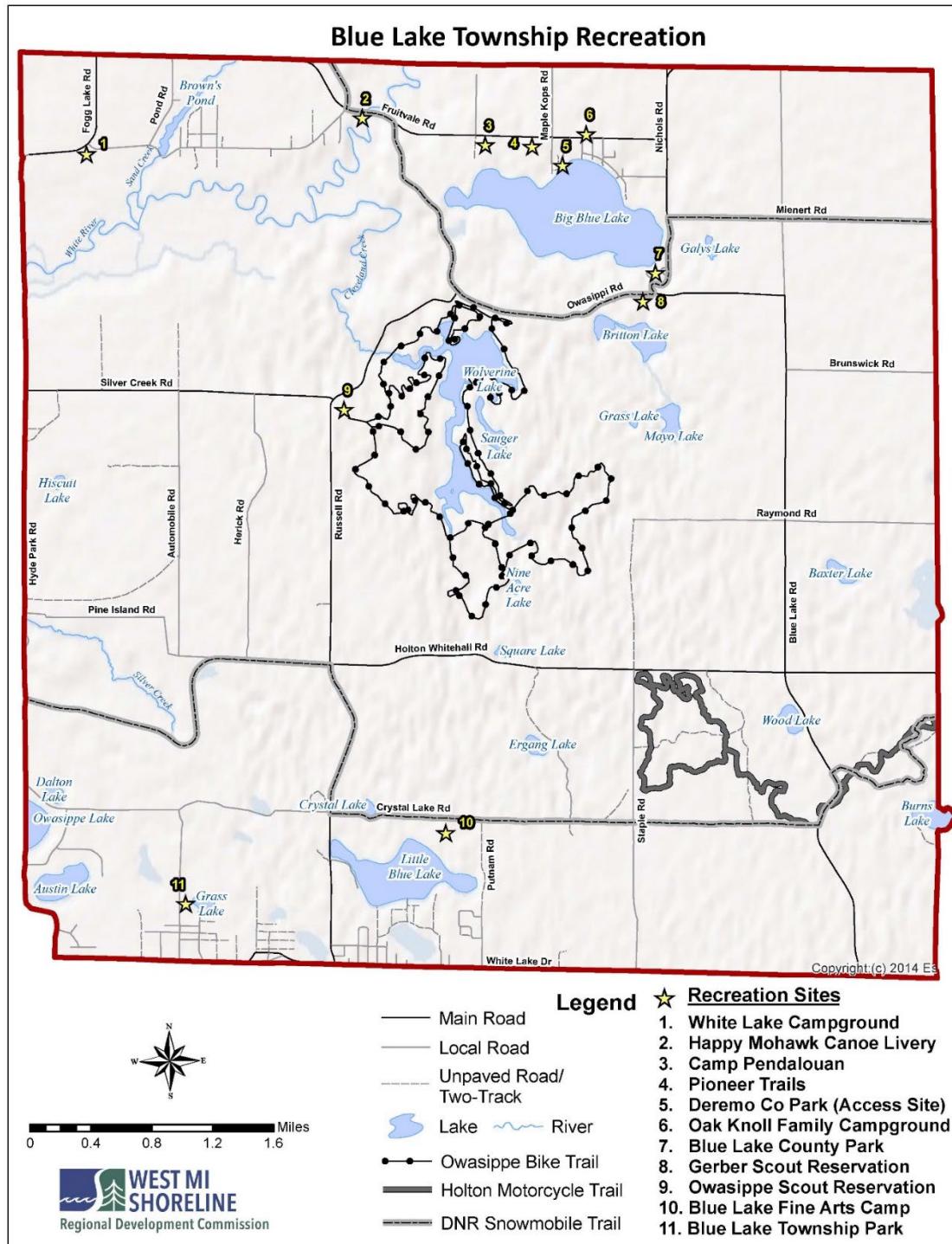
There are numerous outdoor recreation opportunities within Blue Lake Township. The township owns over 200 acres on White Lake Drive in the southwest intended for recreational development. In recent years, the township has taken steps to improve the property, which opened to the public in 2024. At the time this plan was written, Blue Lake Township had established a parking lot at the trailhead along Automobile Road, as well as 2.5 miles of the Red trail that are open to the public. A 6.3-mile Green trail is planned, with 1.7 miles having been flagged already. A Blue trail system is also planned, which is expected to be about 2.5 miles. When all three trail systems are completed, there are expected to be about 10 to 11 miles of trails at the park. The township is also host to five youth camps, as well as two Muskegon County parks on Big Blue Lake. Deremo Boat Launch is on the north side of the lake and Blue Lake County Park, with 600' of lake frontage, is on the southeast side.

Website: <http://www.muskegoncountyparks.org/>

The northern tier of the township is host to two private campgrounds (White River Campground and Oak Knoll Family Campground) and the Happy Mohawk Canoe

Livery. The rural and undeveloped nature of the township, much of which is publicly owned property, offers residents and visitors endless outdoor recreation possibilities. Options include the White River; the Manistee National Forest, which covers most of the township and includes several parcels of federally owned lands; and dozens of lakes and ponds, which vary greatly in size.

Map #3



Youth Camps

Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp: <http://www.bluelake.org/>

Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp is a national leader in the instruction of fine arts to youth from around the world. Many of the students who attend the summer sessions come from as far as Europe, Asia, and South America, thanks to the International Exchange Program. The 1,600-acre camp opened in 1966 on the shores of Little Blue Lake, at the same site as a previous camp, Camp Hardy. Hardy, the first camp located in the township, began operation in 1910. Its operator and owner was the Chicago-based Lawrence Home for Boys.

In its first year, Blue Lake Fine Art Camp hosted 280 students. Each summer, the principal camp program serves more than 5,400 gifted elementary, junior high, and high school students with diverse programs in music, art, dance, and drama while offering more than 175 performances during its Summer Arts Festival. Financial aid is available for many of the students that meet certain criteria, such as audition or portfolio, arts instructor recommendations, and in some cases, financial need. The camp is an inclusive facility, providing housing, dining, and entertainment for its campers. Many popular entertainers have visited the camp, including the U.S. Army Field Band, U.S. Navy Band, Bill Cosby, Bob Hope, Count Basie, Dizzy Gillespie, and Victor Borge. Blue Lake hosted over 300,000 campers in its first 50 years.

Owasippe Scout Reservation: <http://www.pathwaytoadventure.org/>

The largest operating camp in Blue Lake Township belongs to the Pathway to Adventure Council (formerly Chicago Area Council) of Scouting America (formerly Boy Scouts of America). Established in 1911, it boasts the title of the oldest continuous Scout Camp in the nation and is one of the five largest scouting-owned parcels in their “Central Region,” which encompasses 16 states in the Midwest. According to Muskegon County parcel data, Pathway to Adventure Council owns over 4,000 acres of land in Blue Lake Township and is therefore very important to the township from several standpoints. Regarding land use, social activities, and economic and environmental concerns, scouting groups have significant influence on the township.

Scout camping is not the only recreational use of the Owasippe Scout Reservation property. Throughout the year, it is frequently used by the public for activities such as hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, fishing, and hunting. In addition, according to a 2002 BioBlitz assessment conducted by the Nature Conservancy, the property was home to 19 animal species listed by the State of Michigan as being threatened, endangered, or having “special concern”, and three of which were also listed at the federal level by the 1998 Federal Endangered Species Act. These three animals are the Karner Blue Butterfly (endangered), Bald Eagle (threatened), and the Eastern Massassauga Rattlesnake (candidate for federal status). The bald eagle was delisted from the federal list in 2007, and the eastern massasauga rattle snake was upgraded to threatened status in 2016. The Karner Blue Butterfly remains endangered.

Boy Scouts annually populate the Owasippe Scout Reservation during the summer months of June, July, and August. At its peak in the 1960's, Owasippe annually hosted about 13,000 Boy Scouts, and had a capacity of 16,000. In the early 2000's, the number of campers had reduced to approximately 1,300 Chicago-area Boy Scouts and approximately 1,300 Boy Scouts from other areas. Since then, annual attendance has gradually increased.

After years of consideration, the Chicago Area Council resolved in 2002 to sell the property because of the steady decline in campership and due to its financial situation. By 2004, the Boy Scouts had a prospective buyer and had asked the township for a rezoning request as a prerequisite to the sale of Owasippe. The request called for approximately 3,500 acres at Owasippe to be rezoned from forest/recreation to residential, allowing for the development of homes, condominiums, and camping lodges. The zoning variance was denied by the Blue Lake Township Planning Commission at its March 15, 2006, meeting, and the prospective deal fell apart in 2008 following a court decision upholding the township's rezoning denial.

Camp Pendalouan: <https://muskegonymca.org/pendalouan/>

Camp Pendalouan is a year-round outdoor education center, summer camp, and conference facility serving schools, families and organizations. Pendalouan serves over 10,000 kids annually. It is located on over 105 acres in Blue Lake Township near Big Blue Lake, the Manistee National Forest, and the White River. Pendalouan offers numerous programs throughout the year such as: overnight camps, day camps, family camps, seasonal events, and school programs. Pendalouan hosts several specialty camps and events, such as Women's Adventure Weekend and Halloween Camp, and is also available for retreats and rentals.

The first Muskegon YMCA Camp was conducted at Duck Lake in 1923. The next year in 1924, the camp was moved to a site on Big Blue Lake, now known as Hiawatha Beach. The camp had adopted the name "Camp Williams" in honor of Sir George Williams, the founder of the YMCA in London, England. It was then renamed "Camp Pendalouan" in the 1930s. Since then, Camp Pendalouan continued to show steady growth in enrollment, equipment, leadership, and programming.

With 100 years of camping experience, Pendalouan provides quality programming dedicated to safety, fun, healthy living, and character development. Programming focuses on instilling values of honesty, caring, respect, and responsibility that help provide benefits of community and belonging for all. The Pendalouan community has a wide range of campers from all over West Michigan, the Chicago area, and from across the country. Camping at Pendalouan has been impacted by thousands of volunteers, staff, alumni, campers, families, and friends in the past century.

Gerber Scout Reservation: <https://michiganscouting.org/camping/properties/gerber-scout-reservation/>

First opened in 1951, Gerber Scout Reservation is located in the Manistee National Forest and operates Boy Scout Summer Camp and Webelos & Cub Scout Summer

Camp. It is a nationally accredited Scouting America camp of the Michigan Crossroads Council. The property is located directly to the east of Camp Owasippe, is almost 800 acres, and contains Big Britton Lake, Little Britton Lake, and Mayo Lake.

In recent years, Gerber Scout Reservation attendance has swelled from 900 in 1997 to over 2,500 in 2012. Much of this increase can be attributed to the 1998 initiation of the Cub Scout and Webelos Adventureland, a section of the camp dedicated to Cub Scouts. Gerber currently has the capacity to accommodate 425 Boy Scouts, 200 Cub Scouts each week or session.

Activities offered at the camp include the Waterfront, Honor Ground, Climbing Tower/COPE, Scoutcraft, Handicraft, Environmental Resource Center, Archery, and Shooting Sports. Recently, an air-conditioned leaders' lounge was added to allow adults to view their Scouts' MB progress and check emails. The new dining hall, named the Ralph K. Merrill Centennial Dining Hall, was completed in time for the 2010 summer camp season. Centennial Dining Lodge boasts state-of-the-art facilities, a capacity of over 700, and a safe place to take shelter

Pioneer Trails: <http://www.pioneerresources.org/pioneer-trails/>

Pioneer Trails, formerly known as Camp Emery, rests on 48.8 acres, including ¼ mile of Big Blue Lake frontage, on the edge of the Manistee National Forest. With the help of Rotary International Muskegon sponsorship, Camp Emery began when Rotary members' interest in the Children's Home stimulated a movement to establish a summer camp for underprivileged children, with the dual role of improving physical condition and of aiding in character building. Rotary raised \$33,000 for the purchase of property from the Blue Lake Club on Big Blue Lake, and for the preparation of existing buildings for use as a camp. The Children's Home organization sought out underprivileged children to be given the benefits of the camp and conducted the activities of the camp during the summer season, while the Rotary financed its operations and supervised the maintenance of the property. Later, Rotary financed camp additions and improvements, such as a dining hall and kitchen. In 1976, Rotary spent over \$30,000 to refurbish buildings, build new cabins, and update sanitary facilities. In 1988, Camp Emery was renamed to Pioneer Trails and is now primarily used by Pioneer Resources. Pioneer Trails is the host site for camp programs serving many specialized populations, including: Discovery Day Camp, Ignite Your PATH to Employment, Camp Connected, Camp Bold Eagle, and Camp Courage.

Schools

Blue Lake Township is straddled by two school districts: Whitehall District Schools to the west and Holton Public Schools to the east. There are no school buildings located within the township.

Fire and Police

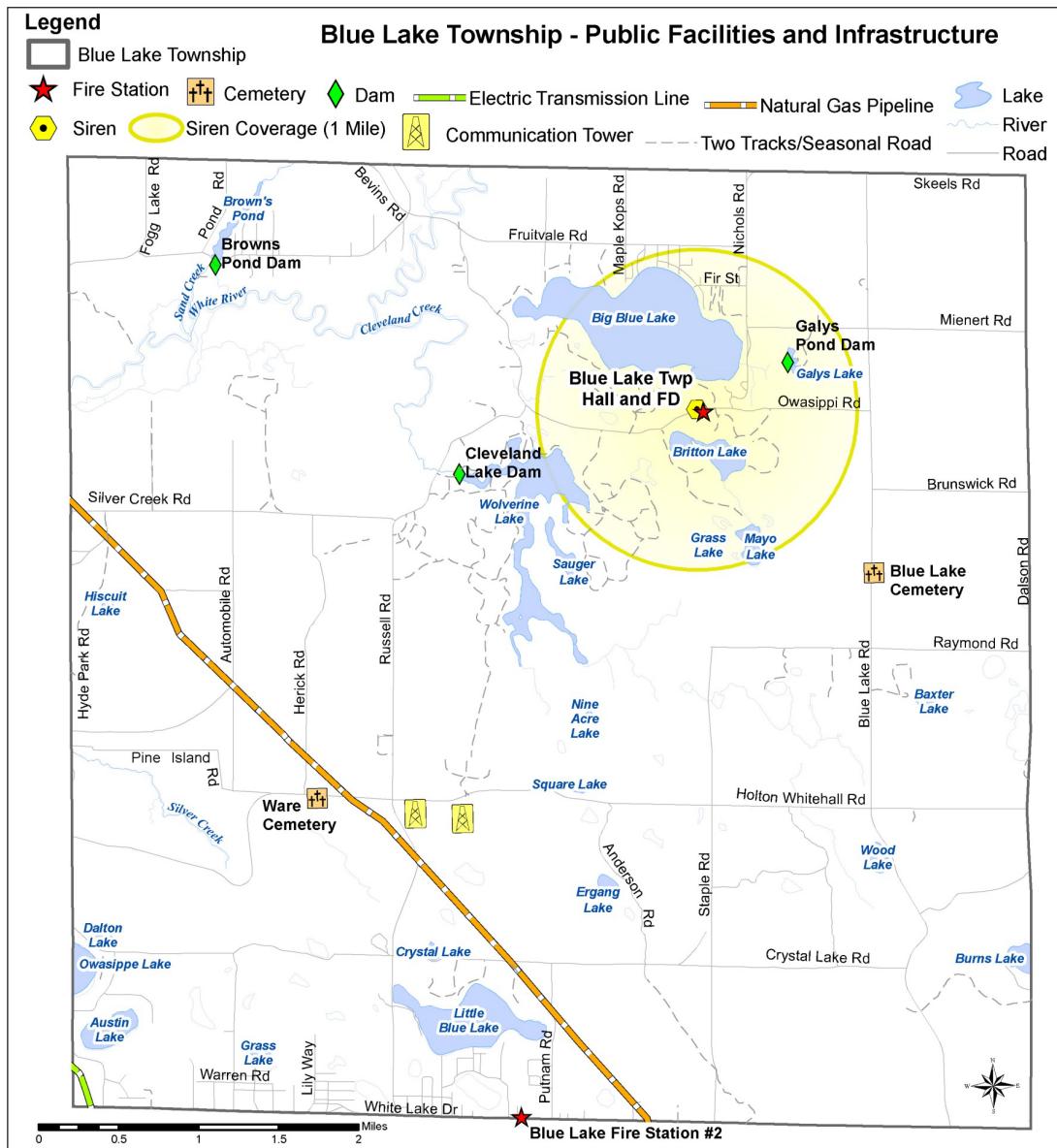
Blue Lake Township has an equipped and staffed fire department, an important attribute for a heavily forested area. The Blue Lake Fire Department has 15 available part-time employees. Station #1 is located next to the township hall at 1491 Owasippe Road and Station #2 is located on White Lake Drive. As previously mentioned, the fire department is assisted by the Fire Advisory Committee, an eight-member committee including four firemen and four members of the public. It is run by the Fire Chief, who is appointed by the Township Board.

The township has one operational siren located at the fire department. This siren reaches much of the Owasippe and Gerber scout reservations and Big Blue Lake. However, its actual coverage varies according to meteorological conditions such as humidity, wind speed, and direction. Law enforcement is provided to Blue Lake Township through the Muskegon County Sheriff's Department and the Michigan State Police Post in Grand Rapids.

Public Facilities and Infrastructure

According to the Michigan Dam Inventory, the township contains two dams: Cleveland Lake Dam on Cleveland Creek and Brown's Pond Dam on Sand Creek. Both dams are also listed on the National Inventory of Dams. The Cleveland Lake Dam, a concrete dam, is owned by the Pathways to Adventure Council of Scouting America and is located on Owasippe Scout Reservation property. The Brown's Pond Dam was built in 1855 and is an earthen dam. A privately owned dam on Galys Pond was identified in the past, however its status is currently unknown. Additionally, a power transmission line and a natural gas pipeline traverse the south and west portions of the township.

Map #4



COMMUNITY PROFILE

Population characteristics, such as growth, age distribution, income, and educational level, and housing characteristics help planners make predictions based on historic patterns. A picture of the future can be painted by analyzing these factors. The following sections provide a community profile of Blue Lake Township, using data from the U.S. Census Bureau. The two most referenced datasets in this chapter are the 2020 U.S. Census of Population and Housing Characteristics and the 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates released in December 2024.

Population Trends

According to the 2020 Census, Blue Lake Township claimed 1.37% of the Muskegon County population, with 2,416 of the county's 175,824 persons. The township's population density was 72 persons per square mile, compared to the county's density of 345 persons per square mile.

Between 2010 and 2020, the township's population density increased only slightly.

The township has experienced continual growth in the last several decades, as shown in Table 2. The 2023 ACS gives the township an estimated population of 2,406.

Table 2

BLUE LAKE TOWNSHIP DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS			
	Population	Change	% Change
1970	715	-	-
1980	1,101	386	54.0%
1990	1,235	134	12.2%
2000	1,990	755	61.1%
2010	2,399	409	20.6%
2020	2,416	17	0.7%

Source: Decennial Census, U.S Bureau of the Census

Table 3

NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS				
	2010 Population	2020 Population	2010-2020 % Change	2023 Estimate*
Lakewood Club	1,291	1,340	3.8%	1,315
Dalton Twp	9,300	9,427	1.4%	9,427
Holton Twp	2,515	2,586	2.8%	2,568
Montague Twp	1,600	1,555	-2.8%	1,478
Whitehall Twp	1,739	1,768	1.7%	1,775
Otto Twp	826	858	3.9%	804

Source: U.S Bureau of the Census

* 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Age and Gender

Table 4 shows the age distribution in Blue Lake Township, compared with Muskegon County. The figures reveal relatively healthy population distributions for both entities. The ages 25-54 make up 38.2 percent of the township's population, while children and teenagers make up 22 percent. The township's estimated median age of 42.7 years in

2023 marks an increase from the 2017 estimate of 40.9 years. The county's estimated median age increased from 39.1 years in 2017, to 39.9 years in 2023.

Table 4

	AGE DISTRIBUTION		Muskegon County	
	Blue Lake		number of persons	percent of persons
0-4	90	3.7%	10,134	5.8%
5-9	123	5.2%	11,497	6.6%
10-14	144	6.0%	11,063	6.3%
15-19	170	7.1%	11,050	6.3%
20-24	161	6.7%	10,225	5.8%
25-34	201	8.4%	22,976	13.1%
35-44	392	16.3%	21,928	12.5%
45-54	324	13.5%	20,646	11.8%
55-59	290	12.1%	12,051	6.9%
60-64	171	7.1%	12,212	7.0%
65-74	200	8.3%	19,387	11.1%
75-84	129	5.4%	8,609	4.9%
85+	9	0.4%	3,600	2.1%
Total	2,406	100.0%	175,378	100%

Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Table 5

	GENDER DISTRIBUTION	
	Blue Lake Township	Muskegon County
Male	1,188 (49.4%)	87,488 (49.9%)
Female	1,218 (50.8%)	87,587 (49.8%)

Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimate

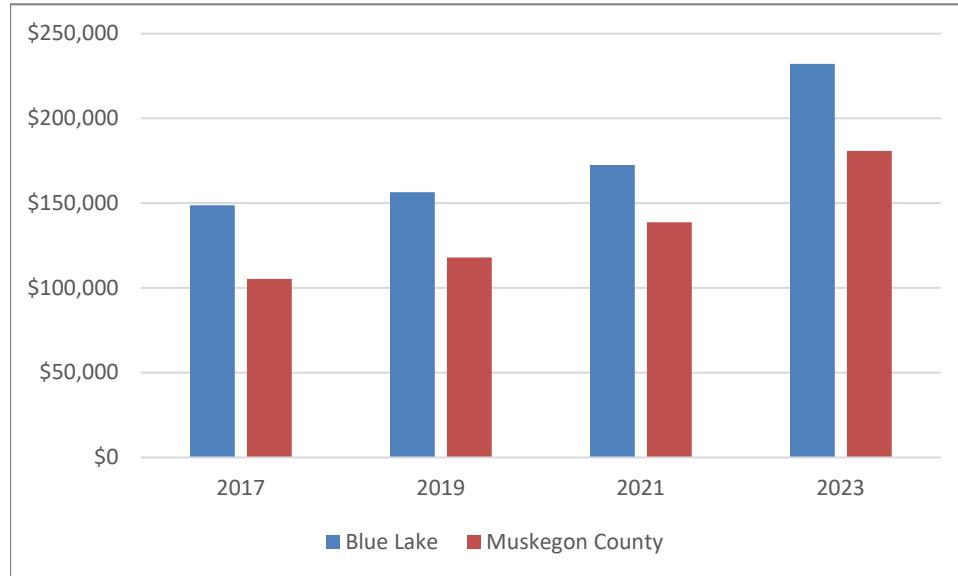
Housing

Housing and any significant changes in an area's housing stock have a direct impact on planning decisions. It is important to note that changing trends related to housing stock are often the first indications that important changes are taking place with the population base and land use. It is also important to note that a vital aspect of housing stock is the presence of a variety of house choices (i.e. traditional single-family homes, duplexes, and manufactured homes). Various housing types allow for affordable housing opportunities for all segments of the population.

The housing characteristics presented herein for Blue Lake Township are based upon American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. According to the estimates, there were approximately 956 housing units in the township in 2023. Of the total housing stock, 103 units (or 10.8%) were estimated to be vacant. The median value of owner-occupied

units was \$232,100. Graph #1 shows a marked increase in the median value of housing units in the township since 2017. It also shows that housing values are greater in Blue Lake than the countywide average.

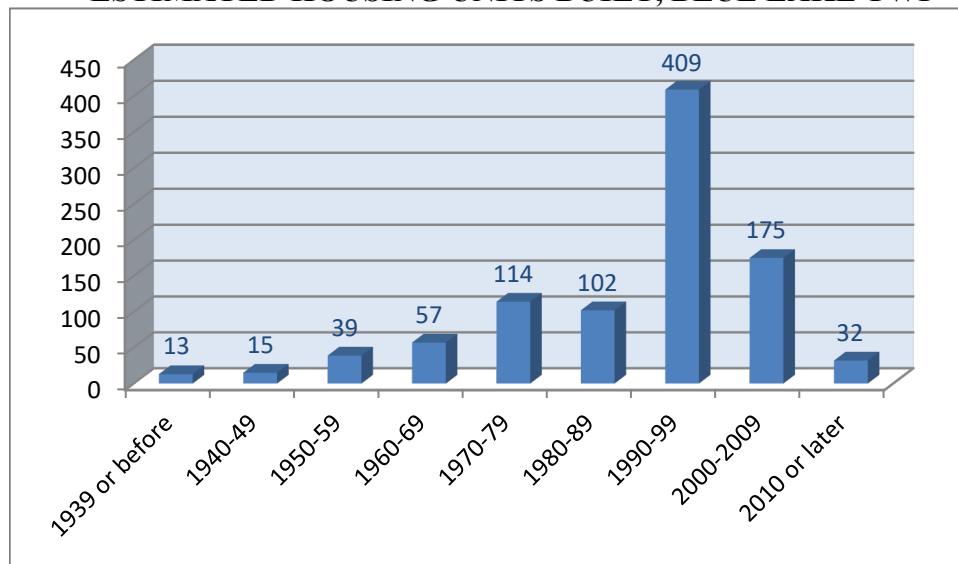
Graph #1
MEDIAN HOUSING UNIT VALUE



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

Graph #2 illustrates the timeline for when Blue Lake housing units were built. The decade from 1990-1999 saw the greatest increase in the number of units of any decade. Of the 956 housing units estimated in 2023, more than half were built since 1990 and about 87% (832 units) were built since 1970.

Graph #2
ESTIMATED HOUSING UNITS BUILT, BLUE LAKE TWP



Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Table 6 shows the housing units in Blue Lake Township had a similar rate of occupancy (89.2%) as the entire county (89.5%).

Table 6

HOUSING OCCUPANCY			
	Total Units	Occupied	Vacant
Blue Lake Township	956	853 (89.2%)	103 (10.8%)
Muskegon County	74,969	67,112 (89.5%)	7,857 (10.5%)

Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Racial Composition

Table 7 illustrates the racial composition of Blue Lake Township and Muskegon County. As noted in the table, the majority (98.4%) of Blue Lake Township residents have a white ethnic background. This concentration is greater than the county (84.5%).

Table 7

ETHNICITY		
	Blue Lake Township	Muskegon County
Total Population	2,406	175,378
White	2,367 (98.4%)	148,166 (84.5%)
Black or African American	84 (3.5%)	27,490 (15.7%)
American Indian or Alaska Native	40 (1.7%)	3,584 (2.0%)
Asian	1 (0.0%)	1,982 (1.1%)
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0 (0.0%)	609 (0.3%)
Some Other Race	57 (2.4%)	7,733 (4.4%)
Two or More Races	134 (5.6%)	13,486 (4.1%)
Hispanic or Latino (of any race) *	85 (3.5%)	10,671 (6.1%)

*Hispanic origin is included in all races; therefore, totals will not equal the Total Population line

Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Income and Poverty

Tables 8 and 9 outline the income levels and income distribution in Blue Lake Township and Muskegon County. While the per capita income is very similar between the two, the median household income in the township is significantly higher than it is countywide. This can partially be accounted for by the difference in household size.

Table 8

INCOME		
	Blue Lake Township	Muskegon County
Mean Income Per Capita	\$31,211	\$32,307
Median Household Income	\$75,446	\$63,495

Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates

The county averages 2.53 persons per household while the township averages 2.98 (2023 5-year estimates).

Table 10 identifies poverty status in the last 12 months, according to the 2023 ACS 5-year estimates. Of the 2,406 residents in Blue Lake Township, 278 persons were listed as being below the poverty level. This equals 11.6% of the population and is very close to the county's poverty percentage of 12.2%.

Table 9

HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION		
	Blue Lake Township	Muskegon County
Total households	853	67,112
Less than \$10,000	4.0%	4.7%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	3.5%	4.0%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	5.9%	8.5%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	14.2%	8.7%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	4.5%	12.4%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	17.7%	29.6%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	16.4%	14.9%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	19.1%	16.9%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	11.8%	5.9%
\$200,000 or more	2.9%	4.4%

Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Educational Attainment

Table 11 details the educational attainment for township and county residents aged 18 to 24, as well as 25 years of age and over. Over half (53.1%) of the township's population aged 18 and over has had some college or obtained higher education degrees.

Table 10

POVERTY STATUS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS		
	Blue Lake Township	Muskegon County
Population Below Poverty Level	278	21,347
Under 5 years	23 (8.3%)	1,772 (8.3%)
5 to 17 years	66 (23.7%)	4,622 (21.7%)
18 to 34 years	22 (7.9%)	4,922 (23.1%)
35 to 64 years	128 (46.0%)	7,237 (34.0%)
65 years and over	39 (14.0%)	2,794 (13.1%)

Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Table 11

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		
	Blue Lake Township	Muskegon County
Population 18 to 24 years	229	14,157
Less than high school graduate	37 (16.2 %)	2,238 (15.8 %)
High school graduate	130 (56.8 %)	5,993 (42.3 %)
Some college or associate's degree	48 (21.0 %)	5,197 (36.7 %)
Bachelor's degree or higher	14 (6.1 %)	729 (5.1%)
Population 25 years and over	1,716	121,409
Less than 9 th grade	25 (1.5 %)	2,595 (2.1 %)
9 th – 12 th Grade	31 (1.8 %)	6,518 (5.4 %)
High School Diploma	719 (41.9 %)	42,123 (34.7 %)
Some College	402 (23.4 %)	29,391 (24.2 %)
Associate Degree	173 (10.1 %)	14,745 (12.1 %)
Bachelor's Degree	255 (13.1 %)	18,266 (15.0 %)
Graduate or Professional Degree	141 (8.2 %)	7,771 (6.4 %)

Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Labor Force Composition

The employed population in Blue Lake Township, consisting of residents 16 years of age and over, totaled 1,150 persons in 2023. Of all workers 16 and over, 77.1% worked in Muskegon County with the remaining 22.9% traveling outside the county. The mean commute time to work was 26.2 minutes for all workers, including those leaving the county and those working within the county. Most laborers travel to manufacturing, education or service, and retail jobs outside of the township. Table 12 shows industries of employment for Blue Lake Township citizens aged 16 and over.

Table 12

INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT: Employed Civilian Population 16 Years and Over	
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	1,150
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining	32 (2.8%)
Construction	52 (4.5%)
Manufacturing	352 (30.6%)
Wholesale trade	10 (0.9%)
Retail trade	98 (8.5%)
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	52 (4.5%)
Information	12 (1.0%)
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing	29 (2.5%)
Professional, scientific, management, admin., and waste mgmt. services	72 (6.3%)
Education services, and healthcare and social assistance	243 (21.1%)
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	133 (11.6%)
Other services (except public administration)	11 (1.0%)
Public administration	54 (4.7%)

Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Economic Outlook

Since over three-quarters of the Blue Lake Township labor force works within Muskegon County, it may be useful to analyze the changes occurring in the makeup of county employment by sector. This will allow a view into the economic course the county is following. Table 13 shows a recent history of jobs and wages in Muskegon County. Since 2018, Muskegon County has experienced steady increases in the number of establishments, number of jobs, and average wages. One notable exception is the lesser number of jobs in 2020 and 2021, likely due to the economic effects of the COVID pandemic.

Table 13

MUSKEGON COUNTY JOBS & WAGES			
	Establishments	Jobs	Avg Wage Per Job*
2023	3,376	62,246	\$51,247
2022	3,177	62,897	\$49,465
2021	3,028	59,243	\$47,785
2020	2,999	56,191	\$46,176
2018	2,825	62,927	\$42,963
2016	2,855	62,086	\$40,856
2014	2,974	61,476	\$39,511
10-Year Change	+336	+2,139	+\$12,378
10-Year Percent Change	+11.1%	+3.6%	31.8%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) via www.statsamerica.org

* Adjusted for Inflation

Table 14, which shows the distribution of Muskegon County jobs among industry sectors in 2023, reveals that manufacturing was the top job providing industry in the county, followed by Health Care/Social Services and Retail Trade. Among the sectors listed, “Utilities” offered the highest annual average wage (\$139,218), while “Accommodation and Food Services” offered the lowest (\$21,143).

Table 14

MUSKEGON COUNTY 2023 INDUSTRY DISTRIBUTION OF JOBS AND WAGES				
Annual Industry Distribution of Jobs and Avg. Wage in 2017 (NAICS)	Establishments	Jobs	%	Annual Average Wage Per Job
Total	3,376	62,246	100%	\$51,247
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	48	599	1.0%	\$39,999
Mining	3	46	0.1%	\$76,424
Utilities	7	234	0.4%	\$139,218
Construction	309	2,337	3.8%	\$71,411
Manufacturing	296	13,144	21.1%	\$69,309
Wholesale Trade	125	1,464	2.4%	\$72,654
Retail Trade	486	10,929	17.6%	\$33,704
Transportation & Warehousing	91	1,081	1.7%	\$71,226
Information	46	370	0.6%	\$62,810
Finance and Insurance	168	925	1.5%	\$71,940
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	92	629	1.0%	\$37,014
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	220	1,318	2.1%	\$73,138
Management of Companies and Enterprises	12	113	0.2%	\$96,289
Admin. & Support & Waste Mgt. & Rem. Services	160	1,560	2.5%	\$38,345
Educational Services	76	4,279	6.9%	\$52,320
Health Care and Social Services	365	10,133	16.3%	\$56,581
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	68	928	1.5%	\$25,661
Accommodation and Food Services	354	7,376	11.8%	\$21,143
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	315	1,746	2.8%	\$33,742
Public Administration	73	2,304	3.7%	\$61,594
Unallocated	63	251	0.4%	\$46,307

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) via www.statsamerica.org

Unemployment

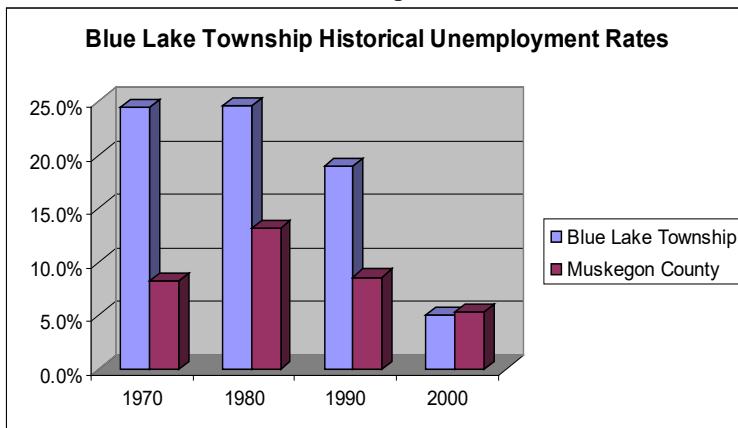
Table 15 identifies the total labor force and gives estimated information on employment and unemployment for Blue Lake Township, Muskegon County, and Michigan in 2023. Blue Lake Township's unemployment rate (3.6% of the civilian labor force) is less than the county (6.8%) and the state (5.8%). Graphs #3 and #4 illustrate historical unemployment rates for Blue Lake Township.

Table 15

CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE			
	Blue Lake Twp	Muskegon County	State of Michigan
Labor force	1,193	83,281	5,008,264
Employed	1,150	77,505	4,712,135
Unemployed	43	5,691	290,715
Not in labor force	836	57,120	3,147,074
Unemployment rate	3.6%	6.8%	5.8%

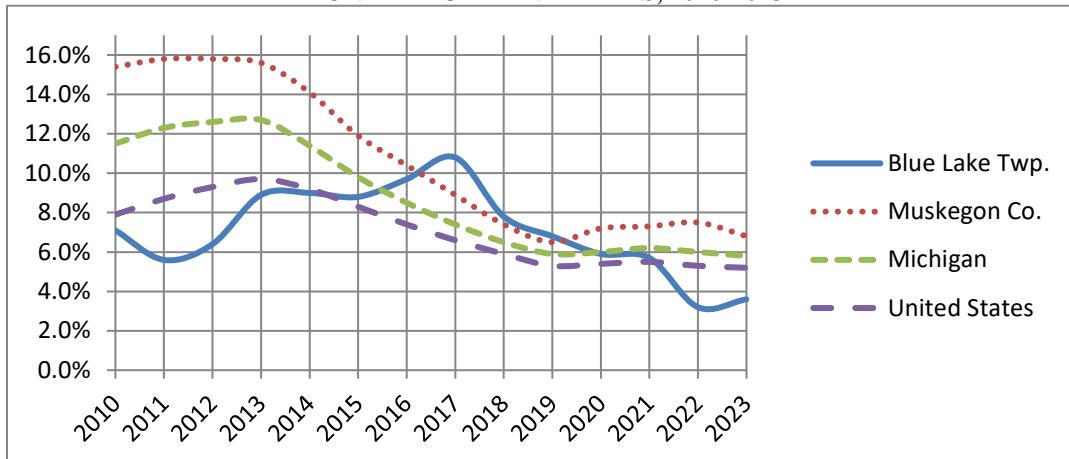
Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Graph #3



Source: Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth (1970, 1980);
2000 U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990, 2000)

Graph #4
UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, 2010-2023



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

V. NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

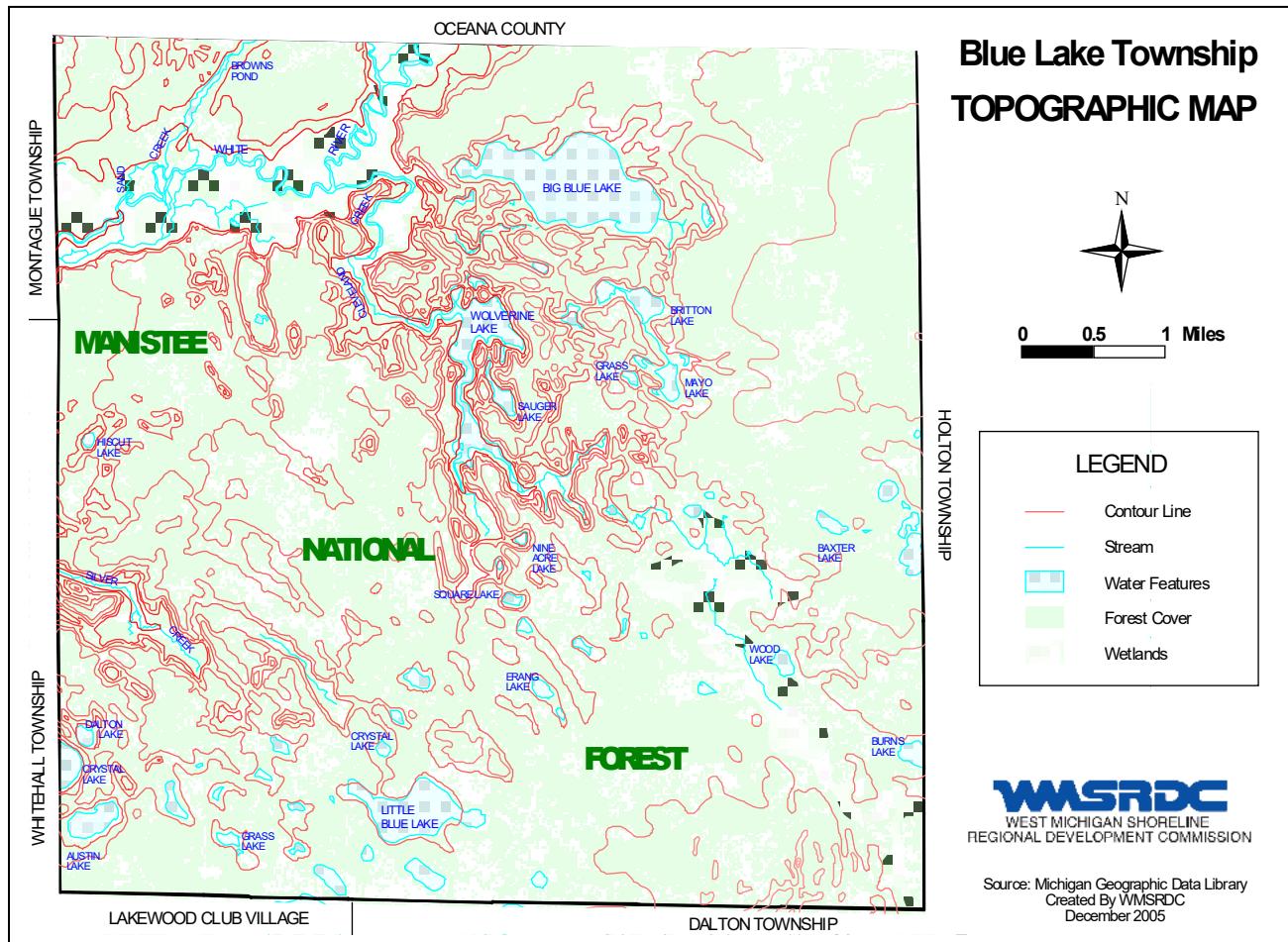
Blue Lake Township contains an abundance of natural resources that define its rural character. The following sections describe those resources.

Topography

The topographic features found in Blue Lake Township are quite varied, because they were formed thousands of years ago by the action of glaciers. This action, combined with the presence of lakes, streams and rivers, makes for a scenic landscape today.

Township elevations vary from approximately 600 feet above sea level near the White River to over 700 feet above sea level in the east and southeastern portions of the township. Broad-forested areas with numerous scattered lakes occupy undulating plains in the township, while the extreme northwest corner is relatively low and wet. The topographic map below illustrates the overall relief of Blue Lake Township. Tight contour lines signal steeper slopes.

Map #5

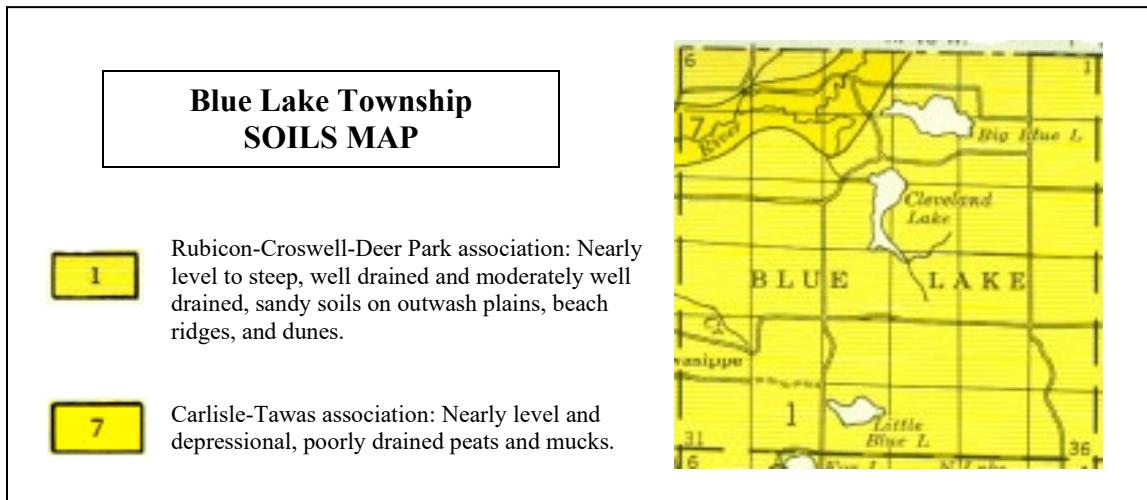


Soils

Soil, and the type of development it allows or restricts, is a primary factor in determining where future development will occur. It is especially important in areas where there is no public water and sewer services available. The suitability of soils for roads, foundations, wells, and septic systems is critical in determining the location and intensity of development.

Soil surveys assist in determining the extent of flood-prone areas, access to aquifers, erosion and sedimentation potential, ability to site septic tanks and absorption fields, and the limitations for construction. Soil maps are important to the planning process because they can geographically depict areas that have development limitations, based on the soil suitability. According to the 1968 Soil Survey of Muskegon County, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, there are several different soil series located in Blue Lake Township. The two most prominent are the Rubicon Series (found throughout the south and east sections of the township) and the Tawas Series (located along the White River in the northwest sections).

Map #6



The largest soil series found in the township is the Rubicon Series which consists of well-drained, deep, sandy soils on the nearly level, dry outwash plain and the rolling sandhills of the county. The original vegetation of this series was white pine, red pine, black oak, and white oak. These soils are permeable, have a low supply of plant nutrients, and are low in available moisture capacity. Rubicon soils are well suited to plantations of Christmas trees and to other forest products and are well-suited to woodland wildlife (ruffed grouse, woodcock, thrushes, vireos, scarlet tanagers, gray, red, and fox squirrels, white-tailed deer, and raccoons).

The second most prominent soil series in Blue Lake Township, Tawas, consists of very poorly drained, shallow, organic soils. The native vegetation consisted of mixed lowland hardwoods and conifers and included red maple, elm, ash, and white cedar. Tawas soils are rapidly permeable and have high available moisture capacity. They are

naturally wet and require artificial drainage before they can be used as cropland. They are well-suited to wetland wildlife (ducks, geese, herons, shorebirds, rails, mink, and muskrat).

According to the soil survey, “the selection of areas for community development depends on the suitability of soils as sites for the structures and other facilities that are to be built.” In Table 16, the limitations of soil groups that are used for specific purposes in community development are rated, and soil features that affect these uses are given.

The limitations of each group of soils are rated slight, moderate, severe, or very severe. A rating of *slight* means that the soil has few or no limitations for the use specified or that the limitations can be easily overcome. A rating of *moderate* indicates that some planning and engineering practices are needed to overcome the limitations. A rating of *severe* indicates that the soil is poorly suited to the use specified and that intensive engineering practices are needed to overcome the limitations. A rating of *very severe* indicates that the soil is very poorly suited to the use specified and that practices to overcome the limitations may not be economically feasible. These ratings apply to a depth of 5 feet or less.

The ratings in Table 16 are for residential developments with public sewers, filter fields for septic tanks, buildings for commerce and light industry, and traffic ways. Some explanation is required.

Residential developments with public sewers. - The ratings in this column apply to residences of three stories or less that have basements and are served by a public sewage system. The major properties important in evaluating the soils for this use are wetness, hazard of flooding, slope, volume change on wetting and drying, hazard of erosion, suitability for growing lawns and shrubs, and bearing capacity. Engineers and others should not apply specific values to the estimates for bearing capacity of soils.

Filter fields for septic tanks. - Important properties that affect the use of soils for filter fields for septic tanks are depth of the water table, hazard of flooding, slope, and permeability, or rate of percolation.

Buildings for commercial and light industry. - The ratings in this column apply to stores, offices, and small factories that are not more than three stories high and that have public or community facilities for sewage disposal. Important soil features are wetness, slope, hazard of erosion, volume change on wetting and drying, and bearing capacity. Specific values should not be applied to the estimates given for bearing capacity.

Trafficways. - The ratings in this column apply to streets and highways within or adjacent to residential and industrial developments. Features considered in rating the soils are frost heaving, ease of excavating and grading, seepage, and slope.”

TABLE 16

Community Development Groups	Degree of Limitation and Soil Features Affecting Use For:			
	Residential Developments with Public Sewers	Filter Fields for Septic Tanks	Buildings for Commerce and Light Industry	Traffieways
Group #3 (includes Rubicon soils)	Limitations: Slight on slopes of 0 to 6 percent; moderate on slopes of 6 to 12 percent; and severe on slopes of 12 to 45 percent. Features: Susceptibility to wind erosion; droughty; difficult to establish and maintain lawns; frequent watering required; stable material for roadbeds and foundations; steep slopes hinder layout and construction of utilities	Limitations: Slight on slopes of 0 to 6 percent; moderate on slopes of 6 to 12 percent; and severe on slopes of 12 to 45 percent. Features: Favorable percolation rate; possible contamination of nearby water supplies	Limitations: Slight on slopes of 0 to 6 percent; moderate on slopes of 6 to 12 percent; and severe on slopes of 12 to 45 percent. Features: Susceptibility to wind erosion; good foundation material; low volume change; grading and land shaping required in sloping and steep areas.	Limitations: Slight on slopes of 0 to 6 percent; moderate on slopes of 6 to 12 percent; and severe on slopes of 12 to 45 percent. Features: Good bearing capacity, good material for subbase and subgrade; cuts and fills needed in sloping to steep areas; severe erosion in steeper areas.
Group #10 (includes Tawas soils)	Limitations: Very severe Features: High water table; unstable organic material with low bearing capacity and high compressibility; severely limited for foundations; organic material must be removed before construction; subject to ponding and flooding.	Limitations: Very severe Features: High water table; unstable organic material.	Limitations: Very severe Features: High water table; subject to ponding and flooding; very severely limited for foundations; low bearing capacity and high compressibility; unstable organic material that must be excavated before fill is placed; fill required to raise grade above water table.	Limitations: Very severe Features: High water table; unstable organic material that must be removed before fill is placed; low bearing capacity and high compressibility; fill required to raise grade above water table.

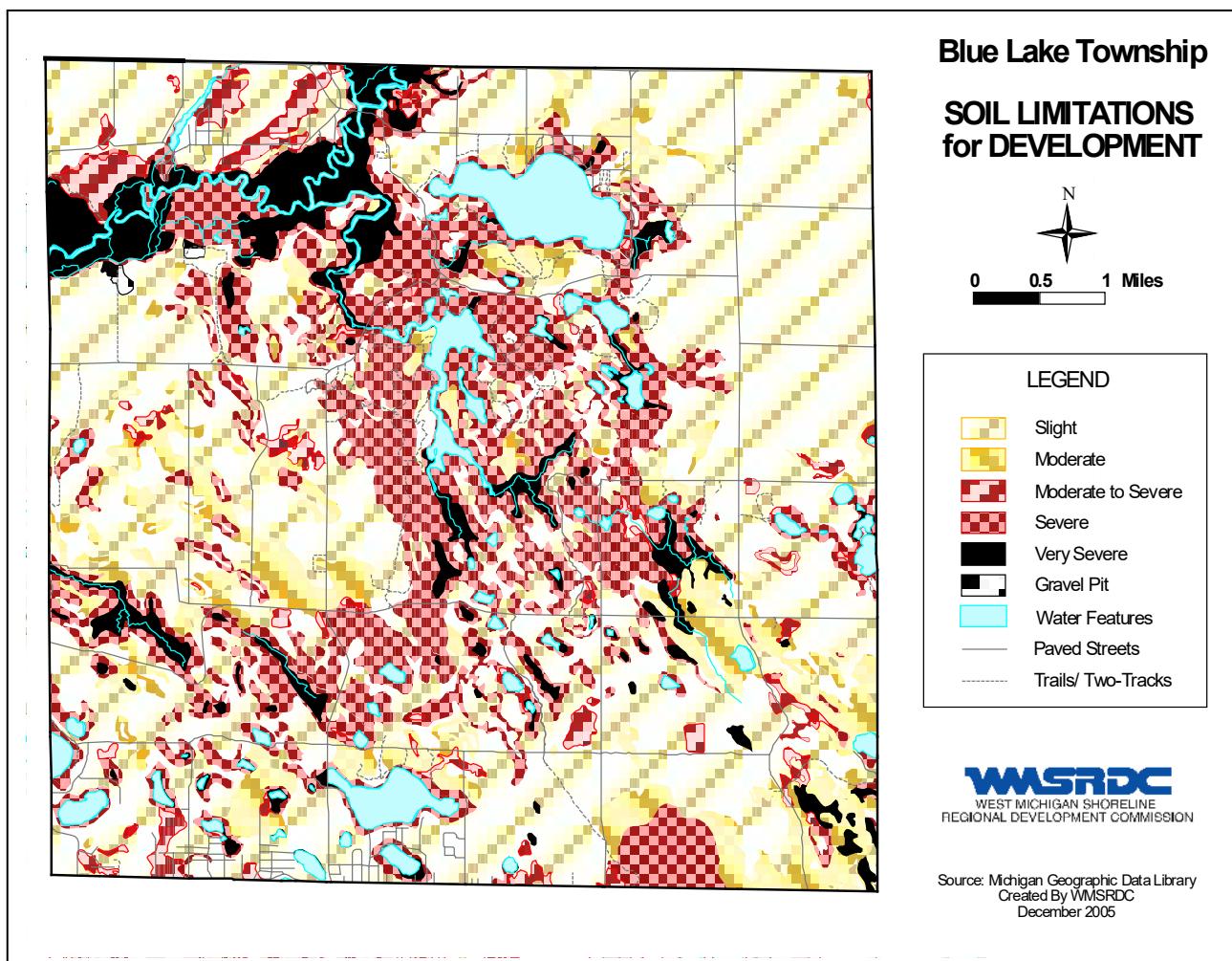
Source: United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Forest Service. [Soil Survey of Muskegon County, MI 1968](#)

Map #7, Soil Limitations for Development, is based on soil data gathered by the National Cooperative Soil Survey Program (NCSS). The NCSS is a partnership, led by the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), of federal land management agencies, state agricultural experiment stations and state and local units of government.

The map was created by comparing NRCS-identified soil types to their corresponding development limitations identified by the Soil Survey of Muskegon County.

The development limitation levels *slight, moderate, severe and very severe* are described in detail earlier in this section. The level *moderate to severe* was added to the map to display areas with varying degrees of limitations, such as sloping terrain and soils with septic suitability issues. According to NCSS and NRCS information, it appears that about half of the township's soils carry a development limitation rating of moderate to severe, severe, or very severe. The remaining soils have slight or moderate limitations for development.

Map #7



Septic Suitability

Although information on septic suitability is included in the previous section, additional information is presented in this section for two reasons. It should be noted that none of Blue Lake Township is currently serviced by a public sewer system and that all

township residences and businesses rely on septic tanks and drain fields. Given this situation, the suitability of the soil for septic tanks to properly function is critically important in determining where and how much development can occur without the need for public utilities.

Soil is not considered to be suitable for septic systems if it has excessively high or low permeability, if the slope is excessive, or if the water table is too close to the surface. The permeability and coarseness of soil has a direct impact on its ability to properly filter toxins (i.e. septic material) as they pass through the soil. In Blue Lake Township, excessive percolation capability of the soil is the main cause for concern, rather than not enough percolation, and the resulting concern is the potential for polluting groundwater resources. In addition, certain areas have variable septic limitations. For instance, septic tanks may operate safely and effectively during a dry summer, but the very same tanks may malfunction or flood during an extraordinarily rainy spring.

Areas which have a high flood frequency are also not generally considered to be adequate locations for septic systems. As the ground becomes saturated and floods, the toxins may be removed from septic tanks and flow into groundwater or surface water supplies. Quite often the waste deposited in septic systems is much more hazardous than only human waste. Such materials include household cleaners, bacteria, and other toxic nuisances.

In order to reduce the amount of pollution released from septic tanks, citizens should refrain from the disposal of medicines and household chemicals, such as ammonia, bleach or other hazardous substances, into the septic system. Septic tank maintenance should also be addressed on a regular schedule by adding necessary chemicals, cleaning, and using only to capacity. Additionally, a septic system should be emptied at a minimum of once every seven years but preferably every other year.

Access to municipal sewage systems is the principal alternative to septic usage. These systems have more efficient capabilities to treat wastewater before it is discharged into the environment. The treatment process often includes aeration, sedimentation, exposure to sunlight, which releases many types of contaminants, and chemical treatment.

Erosion

Information presented previously in the Soils section shows that much of Blue Lake Township has the potential for wind erosion. This is because soils such as sand (i.e. Rubicon, Blown-out, etc.) and silt (uncovered) have a greater capacity to erode than do soils such as clay or gravel.

In spite of this, the terrain in Blue Lake Township is currently dominated by low erosion potential and, consequently, the streams and lakes are not threatened with excessive sedimentation. The main explanation for this is that much of the natural cover, such as trees, grasses, and forest litter; remains intact. The absence of

agricultural activities also reduces the potential for erosion. Natural cover acts as a barrier to erosion in that root systems of trees, grasses, forest litter and stones hold the soil in place even during torrential rainfall.

However, removal of this cover could expose the soil to its erosion potential. In addition, changes in development patterns often create substantial changes in the ratio of permeable surfaces in an area. Even in a heavily forested area, the addition of asphalt, pavement, and roofs can make a substantial difference. Table 17 highlights important considerations for development in light of corresponding erosion.

Table 17

SOIL EROSION CHARACTERISTICS	
1	The amount of runoff generated is dependent upon the type of soil and the kind of land use prevalent in any given area.
2	Natural areas, where vegetation remains intact, are almost always better-equipped to absorb and retain water than are areas in either agricultural or urban use.
3	Those areas best able to absorb and retain rainfall include forests and other areas of dense vegetation.
4	Those areas which have the greatest impact on the amount of runoff created typically include urban lands with high percentages of impervious surfaces, and agricultural lands typically in row crops.

Climate

Blue Lake Township is in an area of the United States which experiences unique and diverse climatic conditions due to its proximity to the Lake Michigan shoreline. Muskegon County is classified as having “quasi-marine” (when westerly winds pass over Lake Michigan) and “continental” climates (when the winds become easterly or southeasterly and pass over a large expanse of land).

As a result of the predominately west winds and “quasi-marine” climate, Muskegon County often experiences moderated temperature extremes compared to communities farther away from the lake. This translates into slightly cooler maximum summer temperatures and slightly warmer winter minimum temperatures. Winds sometimes approach from easterly directions creating a “continental” climate and conditions that are more characteristic of the United States’ Midwest. Table 18 shows notable climatic data from the period 1991-2020, including temperature and precipitation averages and for the City of Muskegon about 15 miles to the south of Blue Lake Township.

The presence of Lake Michigan also causes a climatic phenomenon called lake effect snow. During the winter months, the relatively warm waters of the lake provide moisture for weather fronts as they cross over from Wisconsin. When these fronts reach the cooler land of Michigan, the moisture condenses and falls as snow. Lake effect snows can be serious and hazardous weather events; however, their actual duration and severity can vary greatly. Although the area has been dealing with winter for a very long time and has many resources at its disposal, winter weather will annually affect

communities through treacherous driving conditions, cost of snow removal, and possible infrastructure failures. Rural areas, such as Blue Lake Township, often experience the worst road conditions during the winter because their roads are often the last to be cleared and salted.

Table 18

Month	Average Daily Temperatures (Fahrenheit)			Average Monthly Precipitation (Inches)				Snowfall	
	maximum	minimum	mean	mean	Liquid Equivalent				
					.1"	.5"	1"		
January	32.5	20.7	26.6	2.42	7.1	0.9	0.1	29.1	
February	34.5	20.8	26.6	2.11	5.3	0.9	0.4	20.0	
March	44.3	27.1	34.4	2.40	5.5	1.4	0.4	7.5	
April	56.6	36.9	46.0	3.47	7.4	2.1	0.7	1.8	
May	68.4	47.5	56.3	3.38	6.8	2.2	0.8	.	
June	77.7	57.2	65.8	3.05	5.6	2.1	0.7	.	
July	81.6	62.2	70.6	2.75	5.3	1.9	0.6	.	
August	80.2	61.3	69.3	3.10	5.7	2.1	0.7	.	
September	73.4	53.5	61.5	3.26	5.8	2.3	0.7	.	
October	60.6	43.2	50.1	3.80	7.8	2.4	0.7	.	
November	47.8	34.1	39.7	2.92	7.1	1.7	0.5	6.5	
December	37.4	26.3	39.6	2.42	6.7	1.0	0.3	22.3	
Annual Averages	57.9	40.9	49.4	35.08	76.1	21.0	6.6	87.2	

Source: NOAA, National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service

Changing Climate

The 30-year averages shown in Table 19 differ from the previous period (1981-2010), with higher average temperatures, greater annual precipitation and less annual snowfall. The following passage, borrowed from the Oceana County Hazard Mitigation Plan (updated in 2023), provides some additional perspective on changing climate conditions in the Great Lakes region.

The changing climate presents complicated, intertwined, and evolving implications for numerous (natural hazards). According to the Michigan Sea Grant website, Great Lakes residents must understand how climate change will affect their region. Specific projections vary, but scientists predict that the regional climate of the Great Lakes basin will be warmer, wetter, and less icy by the end of the century. According to the Great Lakes Integrated Sciences and Assessments (GLISA), some projections for the coming century include:

- Increases in average air temperatures by 3.6 to 11.2°F (2 to 6.2°C)
- More intense storms, leading to more damage from winds and flooding
- Less lake ice, leaving more water exposed to evaporate and become lake-effect rain or snow
- Larger and more severe algal blooms
- Fluctuating lake levels
- Greater displacement of native aquatic and terrestrial species by more adaptable species
- More frequent and severe droughts
- Longer growing season for crops, tempered by crop damage from heat, drought, and pests
- Increased risk of illness and death from heat waves and pest-borne diseases
- Interruptions to local economies dependent on winter tourism

Prime Forest Lands

According to the Michigan Resource Information System (MIRIS), in 1978 Blue Lake Township contained 18,134.21 acres of forest, which is 79.3% of all land cover in the township. While it is certain that this amount of forest cover has been reduced somewhat in the years since, a recent partial update of Muskegon County land cover by the Water Resources Institute of Grand Valley State University indicated little change. Of the forest cover noted previously, 16,884.61 acres were hardwood, with the rest being conifer, including “Christmas tree farms.” This is in contrast to traditional orchards for apples and cherries, etc., which would be included in the agricultural land use category. Additionally, federally owned plots of the Manistee National Forest are scattered throughout the township. They are most commonly found along the White River and in the township’s southeast quarter.

Given the vast amount of forested land, the township faces an increased threat of wildfire. Most Michigan wildfires occur close to where people live and recreate, which puts people, property, and the environment at risk. Development in and around rural forested areas often increases the potential for loss of life and property from wildfires, since most are caused by human activities such as outdoor burning and can also create fire-fighting challenges.

Residents should be encouraged to take actions to properly protect their property. For example, residents can create “defensible space” around their homes. This entails clearing a radius of about 30 feet of brush and any other fire fuel to prevent fire damage to structures and private property. Common development practices include setting structures back from slopes, which allow fires to spread faster than flat terrain, and assuring accessibility and adequate water supply for fire-fighters. Firewise USA, a program of the National Fire Protection Association, offers tips and resources for mitigating wildfires and wildfire impacts. For more information, go to: <https://www.nfpa.org/education-and-research/wildfire/firewise-usa>.

Water Resources

There are many lakes, varying in size, depth and usage, located within Blue Lake Township. Big Blue Lake is the largest and is, thus, the centerpiece of many of the residential and recreational activities within the township. The lake is home to Blue Lake County Park, Deremo County Park, YMCA Camp Pendalouan, Pioneer Trails, and various private residential properties. It should be noted that, due to its heavy usage, the lake must be properly monitored in order to ensure continued high water quality. Overdevelopment and indiscriminate usage may cause irreparable damages.

More than a dozen other small lakes (including Burns, Wood, Little Blue, Ergang, Square, Hiscuit, Nine Acre, Grass, Mayo, Britton, Wolverine, Austin, Crystal, and Dalton) and numerous small ponds dot the landscape in Blue Lake Township, all of which add to the natural character of the township. There are a few lakes within the township where gas-powered motorized water vehicles are not allowed in the water. For example, Wolverine and Sauger lakes at the Owasippe Scout Reservation and Brown's Pond only allow small battery-powered trolling motors. Pristine lakes such as these are points of pride within the community.

These assets must be used with care and monitored frequently to prevent detrimental environmental repercussions. Eutrophication, erosion, and the discharge of pollutants from mechanisms, such as motorized water vehicles, are just some of the methods by which lakes can be degraded. Precautionary measures to prevent erosion, fertilizer/pesticide contamination, stream degradation, and other threats to the natural environment must constantly be taken to protect surface water resources in Blue Lake Township.

Another important surface water resource is wetland. Commonly known as marshes or swamps, wetlands are lands that are wet for most of the year. Wetlands are important in the ecology of relatively undisturbed and heavily forested areas. These water bodies provide needed habitat for many organisms and serve as a filter for water as it seeps into the ground and eventually into the groundwater supply. This filtering process includes removing many toxic elements from precipitation or surface water. Due to Blue Lake Township's growing dependence on groundwater, the existence and protection of these wetlands should be a top priority. The largest area of wetlands can be found along the White River in the northwest corner of the township, as well as scattered throughout central and eastern parts of the township along Cleveland Creek.

There are many important rivers and streams that traverse Blue Lake Township. The White River is the primary drainage system for Blue Lake Township and nearby areas and, therefore, receives much runoff. There is a high potential for water pollution to occur if the runoff is composed of hazardous materials. Some of the sources for polluted runoff include roads, homes (including lawn care measures, sewage, etc.) and erosion. Increased siltation and eutrophication are examples of potential effects that could result from contaminated runoff or erosion.

The White River and its tributaries provide excellent habitat for many species of plants, animals, and fish. Cleveland Creek, a tributary of the White River, is a perfect example of such an environment. The creek serves as an important salmon and steelhead run. Other White River tributaries include Silver and Sand creeks. The White River is one of sixteen designated Natural Rivers in the state of Michigan. In addition, Blue Lake Township has received authorization from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to administer the Natural Rivers zoning rules.

A 1977 water quality study prepared by the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission described the characteristics of the groundwater quantity and quality in Blue Lake Township. The following three paragraphs are reprinted from a volume of that publication.

Groundwater Location:

Blue Lake Township has very few areas with a shallow groundwater aquifer. Except for areas along the White River, most of the township has a groundwater table that exceeds 25 feet in depth. Wells tap an aquifer between 25 and 70 feet from the surface. This aquifer is apparently unprotected and is superimposed with fine sands. The area between this aquifer and the underlying Marshall Sandstone Formation is somewhat of a mystery as there are no records of any deep wells in this area. The Marshall Sandstone Formation and the glacial drift found immediately above are both likely to contain available aquifers.

Groundwater Quality:

The quality of groundwater in Blue Lake Township is good except for isolated instances of naturally occurring high iron concentrations.

Potential Groundwater Degradation:

The now-closed Blue Lake Township landfill was estimated to exceed the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) recommended 20 feet isolation distance from groundwater. The landfill is not known to have received any industrial or particularly toxic wastes. There are no known industrial-municipal groundwater discharges in Blue Lake Township.

In conclusion, surface and groundwater water features located within Blue Lake Township are very important to maintaining the high standard of living in the township. Moreover, the existing character of the township reflects the influence of these water bodies. These resources must be protected to help ensure the township's future prosperity.

Flood Frequency

Flood frequency is determined by how often an area is inundated with water. For example, a floodplain which is regularly inundated would have a frequent classification. Floods are caused when the ground becomes saturated beyond its capacity to absorb any more water or when precipitation is so intense that the ground

cannot absorb it quickly enough. The less permeable the soil and the higher the water table, the more susceptible an area is to flooding. With the exception of low-lying locations along waterways and wetlands, flood frequency is relatively low throughout most of Blue Lake Township because of the excessive percolation capability of the soils.

Flooding often transmits contaminants from streets, parking lots, soils, etc., into surface water sources. Due to the fact that much of the township is undeveloped (i.e. absence of large parking facilities, high traffic roads, and other impervious structures) there is less risk of surface water contamination. The potential for property damage (homes, crops, etc.) caused by flooding is also relatively slight, with the exception of underground structures such as basements, which are highly exposed in certain locations along the streams and lakes of the township. In conclusion, the potential for any toxic substance to enter into the water supply through the process of surface flood is rather minimal. On the other hand, the potential for groundwater contamination from septic system failures or flooding is a real threat because there are no public sewer systems.

Special Concern, Endangered, and Threatened Species

A 2002 biological study at the Owasippe Scout Reservation in Blue Lake Township, undertaken by The Nature Conservancy, identified 1,078 species, 19 of which have been listed by the State of Michigan as being threatened, endangered, or having “special concern.” Of these identified organisms, three were also listed by the 1998 Federal Endangered Species Act: Bald Eagle (threatened), Karner Blue butterfly (endangered), and Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake (candidate for federal status). Table 19 lists the 19 state and federally listed species found at Owasippe in 2002. The table has been updated to include the species’ statuses according to the Michigan Natural Features Inventory website as of January 2025. Perhaps the most notable status changes are that the Bald Eagle was delisted from the federal list in 2007, the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake was upgraded to threatened status in 2016, and the Eastern Box Turtle was upgraded to threatened in 2022.

It is important to note that the afore-mentioned biological study was conducted over a very short period. Therefore, it is likely that there are numerous unidentified species at Owasippe and throughout Blue Lake Township, some of which may be state or federally listed species.



Bald Eagle



Karner Blue



Massasauga Rattlesnake

Table 19

SPECIAL CONCERN, ENDANGERED, AND THREATENED SPECIES OBSERVED AT OWASIPPE SCOUT RESERVATION			
common name	species	MI status	US status
Cut-leaved water parsnip	<i>Berula erecta</i> (<i>Berula pusilla</i>)	SC	
Red-shouldered hawk	<i>Buteo lineatus</i>	T	
Hill's thistle	<i>Cirsium hillii</i> (<i>Cirsium pumilum</i>)	SC	
Cerulean warbler	<i>Dendroica cerulea</i>	T	
Blanding's turtle	<i>Emydoidea blandingii</i>	SC	
Creek chubsucker	<i>Erimyzon oblongus</i>	E	
Common loon	<i>Gavia immer</i>	T	
Prairie-smoke	<i>Geum triflorum</i>	T	
Bald eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	SC	
Whiskered sunflower	<i>Helianthus hirsutus</i>	SC	
Great Plains spittlebug	<i>Lepyronia gibbosa</i>	SC	
Karner blue	<i>Lycaeides melissa samuelis</i>	T	LE
Pinetree cricket	<i>Oecanthus pini</i>	-	-
Bald-rush	<i>Psilocarya scripoides</i> (<i>Rhynchospora scripoides</i>)	SC	
Tall beak-rush	<i>Rynchospora macrostachya</i>	SC	
Louisiana waterthrush	<i>Seiurus motacilla</i>	T	
Eastern Massasauga	<i>Sistrurus catenatus catenatus</i>	T	LT
Eastern box turtle	<i>Terrapene carolina carolina</i>	T	
Sand Grass	<i>Triplasis purpurea</i>	SC	
Species status under the Michigan Endangered Species Act: SC = special concern, T = threatened, E = endangered.			
Species status under the Federal Endangered Species Act: LT = listed threatened, LE = listed endangered, C = candidate for federal status			

Sources: The Nature Conservancy. [Globally Rare, Locally Found: Searching for Species & Reporting Results](#). October 2002.
 Michigan Natural Features Inventory (1/03/25). <https://mnfi.anr.msu.edu/species>.

VI. EXSISTING LAND USES AND COVER

The land use and land cover in Blue Lake Township truly reflects its rural nature. The following land cover descriptions have been taken from the 1996 Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan:

“...Blue Lake Township is largely forested (nearly 80% of its land cover forested), and...has numerous lakes, ponds, rivers, and steams. There are roughly 2,000 acres of open range land in the township, over 1,000 acres of water, and nearly 1,000 acres of wetlands. There is very little agriculture (if not presently, then in the recent past), and only about 50 acres of extractive processes. All urban uses combined add up to just over 500 acres. This consists of all single family housing, duplexes, mobile homes, commercial, etc., and would normally include all multi-family housing, industrial facilities, and transportation facilities if there were any in the township.”

Although the land use statistics given above may have changed slightly since the 1996 plan was written, the overall character of the township remains the same. The statistics

provide an adequate overview of land use and land cover in Blue Lake Township. Given the approximate 21% population increase and 20% increase in housing units between 2000 and 2010, it is likely that any land use and land cover changes have involved an increase of residential uses and a slight decrease of undeveloped land.

Much of the residential development in the township is either around the northeast corner of Big Blue Lake in the north or on several lakes and primary county roads in the south, mainly concentrated near the intersection of Russell Road and White Lake Drive. Blue Lake Cooperative, consisting of 71 family units, is at the latter location. There is newer residential development cropping up in the township, most notably in sections 30 and 31 in the vicinity of Crystal Lake in the southwest corner of the township.

Additionally, two county parks, the various youth camp facilities, and other recreational facilities consume the land, primarily around the White River and Big Blue, Little Blue and Wolverine Lakes. The township owns acreage that is available for recreational development on its south side. The White River and its associated wetlands slice through the northwest corner of the township, while another swath of wetlands and their related lakes cuts a long line from the southeast corner to the north and west to Big Blue Lake.

The neighboring townships of Dalton, Holton, Montague, and Whitehall are largely forested in the areas where they border Blue Lake Township. This helps the township fit in with the regional land use pattern quite well. There is one area of potential land use conflict in Whitehall Township near the Blue Lake Township border at a former Muskegon County Wastewater facility. This is an environment conducive development on the Whitehall Township side but identified for residential development on the Blue Lake Township side. Potential development should be compatible with that of the Blue Lake Township side of the border, which has developed in a predominately low-density residential manner.

The Blue Lake Township Land Cover Map given below was derived from the National Land Cover Dataset (NLCD) published by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) in 1999. The data represents conditions in the early 1990's and is displayed on the map by 30-meter pixel detail. The USGS states that this data is most accurate when viewed at the state or multi-state level (rather than the township level shown below). Therefore, it is important to note that this map is very general and should not be consulted for site-specific land cover analysis. This map does, however, usefully reveal that the vast majority of the township is dominated by natural land cover, and that the most developed locations in the township are located around Big Blue Lake and along the township's southern border. Definitions of the NLCD Land Cover Classifications are shown in Table 20.

Map #8

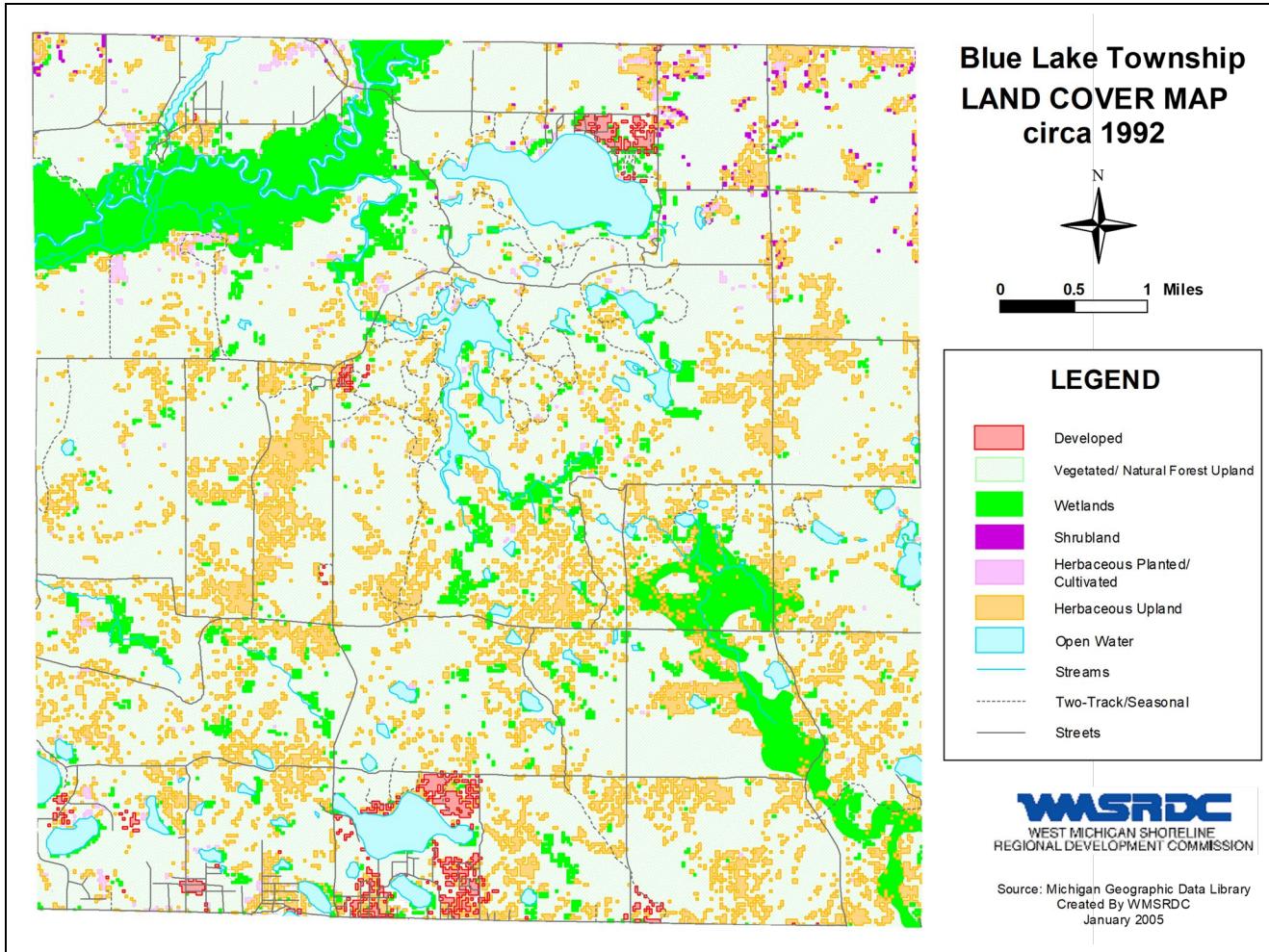


Table 20

NLCD Land Cover Classification Definitions

Developed	Areas characterized by high percentage (approximately 30% or greater) of constructed material (e.g. asphalt, concrete, buildings, etc.).
Vegetated/ Natural Forest Upland	Areas characterized by tree cover (natural or semi-natural woody vegetation, generally greater than 6 meters tall); Tree canopy accounts for 25 to 100 percent of the cover.
Wetlands	Areas where the soil or substrate is periodically saturated with or covered with water.
Shrubland	Areas characterized by natural or semi-natural woody vegetations with aerial stems, generally less than 6 meters tall with individuals or clumps not touching to interlocking. Both evergreen and deciduous species of true shrubs, young trees, and trees or shrubs that are small or stunted because of environmental conditions.
Herbaceous Planted/Cultivated	Areas characterized by herbaceous vegetation that has been planted or is intensively managed for the production of food, feed, or fiber; or is maintained in developed settings for specific purposes. Herbaceous vegetation accounts for 75-100 percent of the cover.
Herbaceous Upland	Upland areas characterized by natural or semi-natural herbaceous vegetation; herbaceous vegetation accounts for 75-100 percent of the cover.

VII. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

One must obtain a thorough understanding of a community to establish an appropriate development strategy for its future. The previous chapters of this document describe the township's history, demographics, infrastructure and physical geography. However, one critical component to the analysis of Blue Lake Township has yet to be addressed: public opinion. This is described in the "Township Visions" section below. The information presented therein is then synthesized with the information from previous chapters of this document to form the final section of this chapter, "Goals and Objectives."

Township Visions

To help develop the visions and goals included in this chapter, the following efforts were made to seek public input from township residents and property owners. A "town meeting" was held at the township hall on August 14, 2024. Participants were divided into two groups and asked to work collaboratively on completing a SWOT Analysis. A SWOT Analysis is a highly effective way of identifying Strength and Weaknesses (existing conditions), and Opportunities and Threats (future conditions). Engaging in this kind of exercise helps a community identify areas where it is strong and where the greatest opportunities lie. An online SWOT Analysis form was also made available to the public on the Blue Lake Township website from August through September 2024.

The SWOT analysis results are presented in Appendix B. To summarize, strengths of the township included low density of development, and the abundance of natural resources and recreational opportunities. Weaknesses included illicit dumping, development pressure, power outages, and poor condition of secondary roads. Public engagement, protection of natural resources, and cooperation with outside organizations/entities were noted as opportunities. Development pressure, potential closure of camps, and misuse/abuse of natural areas were all noted as threats.

In addition to input received from the public, township officials and planning commissioners also contributed to the formulation of this document and the creation of the Community Visions (Table 21), and the following Goals and Objectives. The four primary visions derived from the public input are listed below in no particular order.

Table 21

COMMUNITY VISIONS	
<i>Environment</i>	Protect and preserve the unique environment and natural resources in Blue Lake Township.
<i>Quality of Life</i>	Maintain the rural and recreational character of Blue Lake Township and foster community participation in township activities and issues.
<i>Public Services & Infrastructure</i>	Assure adequacy of services and infrastructure in Blue Lake Township.
<i>Planning & Land Use</i>	Make practical land use decisions, with consideration given to the unique environment of Blue Lake Township as well as the rights of property owners.

Muskegon Area-wide Plan

In the early 2000's, Blue Lake Township participated in the development of the Muskegon Area-wide Plan (MAP). The MAP was developed by the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission under the policy guidance and active participation of local governments and other stakeholders in Muskegon County and engaged citizens in developing a shared vision for the future of the county. It was recognized that each jurisdiction is part of the greater Muskegon County community and that all communities share common interests for the growth and development of the area. The MAP was heavily rooted in "Smart Growth" principles, which are included in Appendix C of this plan.

Blue Lake Township was represented on the MAP Steering Committee and the Blue Lake Township Board passed a "MAP Resolution" at its December 12, 2005, board meeting. The resolution states that "Blue Lake Township approves/endorses the Muskegon Area-wide Plan as a vision for the future of the county, and agrees to incorporate the general principles, policies, and visions identified in the Muskegon Area-wide Plan in its Comprehensive Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance as these documents are updated and implemented."

The MAP was last updated in 2013. Since then, coordinated countywide planning under the MAP has fallen idle. As such, references to MAP have been removed from the following Goals and Objectives for Blue Lake Township. Regardless, the underlying principles of "Smart Growth" remain relevant to Blue Lake, especially the priority to guide development towards existing infrastructure, rather than consume natural and undeveloped areas. Should another countywide planning effort reemerge in the future, Blue Lake Township will eagerly consider participation once again.

Goals and Objectives

The following goals are intended to describe desirable conditions of the township 20 to 25 years into the future. The objectives tend to be more specific and may be viewed as milestones used in the process to achieve the larger goal. The following goals and objectives, listed in no particular order, are intentionally general but are all attainable through incremental, yet sustained, community collaboration.

Planning and Land Use Goal:

Foster land use decisions that preserve the township's natural character through protection of open spaces and that cluster commercial and residential development. Make land use decisions in accordance with a current and continually reviewed Comprehensive Development Plan, through broad community involvement and support.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Evaluate and amend as necessary the Blue Lake Township Zoning Ordinance to further the goals of the Comprehensive Development Plan.

2. Continually educate the Blue Lake Township Board of Trustees, the Blue Lake Township Planning Commission, and the Blue Lake Township Zoning Board of Appeals on the uses and advantages of managed and/or controlled growth and encourage the concepts to be incorporated in township documents and procedures.
3. Continually inform and educate the community concerning the advantages of managed/controlled growth.
4. Create, update, maintain, and continually strengthen a community consensus to sustain rational and responsible growth management strategies to be utilized by Blue Lake Township elected and appointed officials.
5. Assure that areas shall be deemed unsuitable for development if they possess any of the following conditions: flooding, inadequate drainage, wetlands, soil formations with contra-indications for development, severe erosion potential, unfavorable topography, inadequate water supply and sewage disposal capabilities, or any other feature likely to be harmful to the health, safety, or welfare of the community at large.
6. Establish residential density standards that are consistent with the natural capability of soils and topography and the availability of public utilities to handle such development. Limit commercial development to maintain the rural character of the township.
7. Utilize and update clearly defined procedures, including site plan reviews and groundwater protection assurances, for granting or denying zoning variances and re-zoning efforts.
8. Enforce the Blue Lake Township Land Division Ordinance (Ordinance No. 37) to control large lot disintegration.
9. Cooperate in regional planning efforts and communicate with neighboring communities to assure compatibility of land uses.

Natural Resources and Environment Goal:

Promote and preserve the abundant natural resources in Blue Lake Township while taking adequate measures to protect the environment including its lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, groundwater, woodlands, and unique wildlife habitats.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Maintain and support both public and private natural features of the community, including man-made waterways. Identify their uniqueness and probable threats and continually monitor their viability.
2. Maintain and support relationships with federal, state, and county agencies to further the community's goals for the protection of natural features.

3. Communicate with neighboring communities to protect and preserve natural features from possible contamination, inappropriate development, and degradation.
4. Educate the community on the importance of protecting and preserving the natural resources in the community.
5. Ensure that development takes place in an environmentally sound manner by minimizing the potential for flood hazard, soil erosion and disturbances to the natural drainage network; by protecting the quality of woodlands, wetlands, and groundwater; and by protecting natural vegetation and endangered species.
6. Utilize lake boards and property associations (such as the Big Blue Lake Association) to implement best management practices as recommended in lake studies, including grant acquisition, to protect natural resources and waterways.
7. Protect significant amounts of land by seeking the involvement of non-profit trusts and conservancies and other private parties.

Public Services and Infrastructure Goal:

Work with the Muskegon County Road Commission and other transportation agencies to develop and maintain roadway priorities. In addition, control the location, density, pattern, and type of future development in order to minimize unnecessary public expenditures for infrastructure. Maintain the Blue Lake Township Fire Department in order to provide continued protection to area residents.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Develop and maintain a working relationship with the Muskegon County Road Commission and other transportation agencies.
2. Develop and implement a plan that balances maintenance of existing roads with the development of new roads, particularly as they accommodate township growth, and pave or improve only those roads where soils and other natural features will support increased development.
3. Constantly monitor community services, such as fire protection, to ensure they keep up with development within Blue Lake Township.
4. Seek consolidation/coordination of services with neighboring governments that will enhance the services and lead to more availability.
5. Restrict the extension of utilities in sensitive and natural areas as a means to protect them and to lead development to where it is best suited. Have new development shoulder the burden for utility needs that it creates.

6. Consider the impact of individual septic systems on groundwater and evaluate alternate sanitary sewage disposal methods.
7. Support and facilitate greater availability of affordable high speed internet services and improved cell phone reception.

Neighborhood, Housing, and Community Goal

Define Blue Lake Township's identity through a strong sense of community, promote the valuable quality of life available to its residents, and increase community awareness of township issues.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Encourage residents to become involved in the administration of the township and to participate in decision-making.
2. Foster a sense of community among township residents and preserve the current high quality of life for which the area is known.
3. Develop and implement programs aimed at increasing public knowledge and participation regarding township issues.
4. Advocate for a variety of housing choices for township residents that provide for the general health, safety, and welfare of township residents and promotes an esthetic environment.
5. Encourage residential development to be low density or to use PUDs, clustering and preservation of open space.
6. Consider zoning ordinance options regarding rental housing.
7. Enforce building, plumbing, mechanical and electrical codes to assure safe and sanitary housing.

Regional and Intergovernmental Cooperation Goal:

Become a regional leader in promoting cooperation and mutual support between and among the jurisdictions surrounding Blue Lake Township.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Inventory existing relationships with local, county, regional, and state units of government and evaluate the township's role and the effectiveness of the relationship. Identify areas where future relationships could exist.
2. Participate in regional activities, capital improvements, economic development, watershed planning, land use planning, and transportation planning.
3. Continually seek common regional goals and cooperative approaches to meet them.

Outdoors and Recreation Goal:

There are four broad goals identified in the 2025 Blue Lake Township Recreation Plan Update, which are incorporated in this master plan as guiding principles of township decisions pertaining to outdoors and recreation. Specific objectives for each of these goals are listed in the Goals and Objectives chapter of the Blue Lake Township Recreation Plan.

Recreation Plan Goal #1: Increase public recreational opportunities within Blue Lake Township for residents of all ages.

Recreation Plan Goal #2: Increase communication between Blue Lake Township and other recreational providers, including surrounding communities and private businesses.

Recreation Plan Goal #3: Maintain the natural resources and rural character of Blue Lake Township through recreational uses.

Recreation Plan Goal #4: Utilize and/or promote the vast amount of public land, open space, water bodies, and forested areas in Blue Lake Township for recreational purposes.

VIII. ZONING PLAN

The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act requires that a zoning ordinance “shall be based on a plan...” (MCL 125.3203(1)). Often, the plan zoning is based upon is referred to as a “zoning plan.” The zoning plan can be a chapter in the master plan, a separate document of the master plan, or integrated throughout the master plan. The zoning plan components contained within a master plan will typically include:

- Standards or criteria to be used to consider rezoning consistent with the master plan.
- A description of each zoning district, general purpose of each district, the general locations for those types of districts, and a proposed zoning map.
- A proposed schedule of regulation by district that includes at least building height, lot area, bulk and setbacks.
- An explanation of how the land use categories on the future land use map relate to the districts on the zoning map.

Evaluation Standards of Rezoning and Land Use Changes

Changing the land use or zoning designation for any property can have far-reaching consequences: physically, environmentally, financially, and legally. The use of standards is essential to reaching fair and consistent land use decisions. The following evaluation measures are proposed to guide the contemplation of rezoning's or master plan and future land use map changes.

Standard 1 - Consistency with the Community Vision and Plan Strategies

If conditions (such as economic factors, demographic shifts, new utility lines, changing traffic conditions, etc.) upon which the master plan was developed have changed significantly since it was adopted, the township should incorporate these conditions into their deliberations to ensure that the plan is current. Particular attention should be paid to the master plan Goals and Objectives to ensure that they remain valid, and that the proposed re-zoning or land use change does not impair their intent.

Standard 2 - Compatibility with adjacent uses and districts

All of the uses allowed in a proposed district should be compatible with the conditions present on the site and in the immediate vicinity of the site, especially in terms of density, character, traffic, aesthetics, and property values. The master plan provides several goals and objectives, which should be considered when determining whether a proposed district is compatible with the locale and the township as a whole.

Standard 3 - Capability of being used as already zoned

It is the right of every property owner to receive a reasonable return on the investment placed on property. This does not mean that zoning is a slave to the "highest and best use," (which is not a zoning term, but rather a real estate term). It does mean that there should be a reasonable use available within the zone district. But if the property is capable of being used as zoned, there should be a compelling reason to change the zoning. Such reasons may be related to the first two standards of consistency and

compatibility. Site plans will not be considered as part of a rezoning request. The township should not be influenced by what is proposed by the petitioner. Instead, the township will make a specific finding that all uses permitted in the proposed district are appropriate for the site and area, not just the one shown on a proposed site plan.

Standard 4 - It is critical that the Master Plan be read in its entirety

Rather than attempting to isolate individual statements that may appear to support one position or another regarding the township's future land use, the township must consider the intent of the master plan as a whole. This requires a careful reading of the plan to ensure that all of the plan's considerations are included in the evaluation of any change.

In addition to these general standards, Blue Lake Township's zoning ordinance contains a detailed process for the review of proposed planned unit development (PUD) districts.

Proposed general future land uses are described in the following chapter, Implementation. Included within the descriptions are explanations of how the land use categories on the future land use map relate to the districts outlined in the Township's zoning ordinance and zoning map which is to be on file in the Township Clerk's office.

Zoning District Descriptions

Conservancy (CO) District

It is the purpose of this district to protect and enhance the exceptional water and adjacent land resources of the Township with particular emphasis placed upon the White River floodplain, the Township's lakes, and other surface water bodies and drainage ways. The regulations of this district are designed to prohibit or limit those uses that may be incompatible with or degrade the Township's water resources and to encourage those uses that are compatible with or otherwise enhance critical water resource areas.

Those water and attendant land areas of the White River floodplain are indicated on the Zoning District Map as a CO (Conservancy) District. All other areas adjacent to streams, lakes and ponds are not indicated on the map but are included in these regulations and shall not be assumed as not less than that area between the water level and a line not less than 100 feet horizontally set back from the high-water level of any subject water body, stream or drainage way.

Forest/Recreational/Residential (FR-R4, FR-R5, FR-R6) Districts

These zoning districts are provided in order that the extensive land areas of the Township that consist of forested, rolling topographic outwash plains are appropriately protected as exceptional natural, forest, and recreational resource areas and are provided for those uses which are compatible with such land and vegetative resources. In addition, these zoning districts are provided to encourage seasonal recreational uses and to allow limited low density residential uses in these areas in order to minimize insufficient public services and facilities, to reduce hazards to the land and forest resources and to residents of the

Township, and to maintain the integrity of the Township's exceptional land and water resources.

Residential (R-1) District

This zoning district provides for those areas where single family residences of limited lot areas exist and where similar residential development may be ultimately provided with community or public sewage treatment and disposal facilities or other utilities and public services on a reasonably efficient basis. It is intended to provide areas for residential living free of incompatible uses with adequate light and air and yard areas.

Residential (R-2, R-3) Districts

These zoning districts are established to provide for single family residential uses in those areas that are not anticipated to require public sewage collection treatment facilities but rather will be dependent upon on-site treatment and disposal or upon small area systems. This localized treatment approach requires larger lot sizes in order to protect on-site water supply and to reduce treated wastewater loadings of the groundwater resources. These districts also provide residential choice in the form of neighborhoods of dwellings sited upon larger lots.

Forest/Recreational/Institutional (FR-I) District

This zoning district provides for the protection of property developed and used for the operation of institutional camps at the time this zoning district was initially established in 2004. Any use of the property in the zoning district for anything other than the development and operation of institutional camps shall require rezoning of the property or a use variance if allowed by the Zoning Act.

Commercial (C) District

This zoning district provides for retail convenience goods and services for residents and recreational uses in the area. The population of this general area will not support major shopping services that are provided by the Muskegon metropolitan area, and to a lesser degree by the White Lake area, but convenience goods and services may be supported in limited numbers. With increased organized recreational development and uses, supporting recreational foods and services can be supported. This zoning district is designed to meet these limited needs.

Residential Mobile Home Area (RMHA)

This zoning district allows the development of medium to high density residential environments that are consistent with and promote the general health, safety, convenience, and welfare of citizens residing in mobile homes.

Planned Unit Development (PUD) District

It is the purpose of this zoning district to coordinate development on larger sites in order to achieve the following:

- Permit flexibility in the regulation of land development allowing for higher quality of project through innovation in land use, design, and layout;

- Provide the opportunity for compatible uses with single family dwellings;
- Allow clustering of single-family dwellings to preserve common open space or natural features;
- Ensure compatibility of design and function between neighboring properties;
- Promote efficient provision of public services, utilities, and transportation facilities;
- Provide convenient vehicular access throughout a development and minimize adverse traffic impacts;
- Provide adequately for pedestrians to create walkability;
- Provide adequate housing opportunities;
- Develop convenient recreational facilities as an integral part of developments;
- Ensure the type, scale, and mass of uses and structures will relate harmoniously to each other and to adjoining existing and planned uses;
- Encourage development that is consistent with the goals stated within the community master plan; and
- Not allow agricultural or commercial or industrial uses, townhouses, mobile home parks, or wind energy conversion systems.

These PUD regulations are not intended to be used for circumventing the more specific standards and requirements of the zoning ordinance, or the planning upon which they are based. Rather, these provisions are intended to result in a development that is substantially consistent with the zoning requirements as generally applied to the proposed uses, but with specific modifications that, in the judgment of the Township, assure a superior quality of development. If this improved quality is not apparent upon review, a site shall not qualify for modifications allowable under this designation.

Table 22

SCHEDULE OF REGULATIONS BY ZONING DISTRICT				
Zoning District	Building Height	Lot Area	Coverage	Setbacks
Conservancy (CO)	No permitted building or structure shall exceed 35 ft. in height	Minimum lot area shall be 20 acres	Lot coverage by any principal or accessory buildings shall not exceed 5% of total lot area	No buildings or parking areas located less than 100 ft. from any adjoining right of way or property line
Forestry/ Recreation/ Residential (FR-R4)	No building or structure shall exceed 35 ft. in height	Total lot area shall be more than 2.5 acres, not more than 5 acres	Total building area or coverage, including accessory buildings, may not exceed 10% of the total lot area	Lot frontage and width not less than 165 ft. at the front lot line. Front yard not less than 30 ft., side yards not less than 40 ft., and rear yard of not less than 50 ft.. No structures, sewer systems, or water wells within required yards.
Forestry/ Recreation/ Residential (FR-R5)	No building or structure shall exceed 35 ft. in height	Total lot area shall be more than 5 acres, not more than 10 acres	Total building area or coverage, including accessory buildings, may not exceed 10% of the total lot area	Lot frontage and width not less than 260 ft. at the front lot line. Front yard not less than 30 ft., side yards not less than 40 ft., and rear yard of not less than 50 ft.. No structures, sewer systems, or water wells within required yards.
Forestry/ Recreation/ Residential (FR-R6)	No building or structure shall exceed 35 ft. in height	Total lot area shall be more than 10 acres	Total building area or coverage, including accessory buildings, may not exceed 10% of the total lot area	Lot frontage and width not less than 260 ft. at the front lot line. Front yard not less than 30 ft., side yards not less than 40 ft., and rear yard of not less than 50 ft.. No structures, sewer systems, or water wells within required yards.
Residential (R-1)	No building or structure shall exceed a height of 40 ft.	Total lot area shall be not less than 11,000 sq. ft..	Total building area, including accessory buildings, shall not exceed 30% of the total lot area.	Frontage and width not less than 80 ft. at any point. Front yard of not less than 30 ft., side yards of not less than 15 ft., and rear yard of not less than 50 ft.. Accessory buildings and structure may be placed in the rear yard not less than 7 ft. from rear and side property lines.
Residential (R-2)	No building or structure shall exceed a height of 40 ft.	Minimum lot area of 40,000 sq. ft.	Lot coverage by buildings shall not exceed 15% of the total lot area.	Frontage and width not less than 100 ft. at any point. Front yard of not less than 30 ft., side yards of not less than 20 ft., and rear yard of not less than 50 ft.. Accessory buildings and structure may be placed in the rear yard not less than 7 ft. from rear and side property lines.
Residential (R-3)	No building or structure shall exceed 35 ft. in height	Total lot area shall be more than 40,000 square feet, no more than 2.5 acres	Total building area or coverage, including accessory buildings, may not exceed 10% of the total lot area	Lot frontage and width not less than 165 ft. at the front lot line. Front yard not less than 30 ft., side yards not less than 40 ft., and rear yard of not less than 50 ft.. No structures, sewer systems, or water wells within required yards. Accessory buildings and accessory structures may be placed in the rear yard if at least 20 feet from the rear lot line.
Commercial (C)	No building or structure shall exceed a height of 40 ft.	Not less than 1 acre		Front yard of not less than 30 ft.. Initial 20 ft. of front yard shall not include buildings, parking, or other structures except access drives, traffic signs, and sidewalks. A rear yard of 15 ft. and side yards of 15 ft. permitted.
Mobile Home Park (MH)	No building or structure shall exceed a height of 40 ft.	Not less than 10 acres	Not less than 300 ft. frontage on a major street	Front yard of not less than 50 ft.; parking may not occupy initial 25 ft. of front yard, but may occupy the second 25 ft. not adjoining the street right of way. Side and rear yards not less than 25 ft.
Forestry/ Recreation/ Institutional (FR-I)	The Township's zoning ordinance outlines general uses for this zone which are tailored to and accommodate the operation of institutional camps. Specific building height, lot area, coverage and setback requirements are not included.			
Planned Unit Development (PUD)	<p>PUD Requirements:</p> <p>Total contiguous minimum acreage required is 20 acres.</p> <p>Affected property shall be located as permitted by the official zoning map of the township.</p> <p>Uses in the pre-PUD zoning district shall be allowed in the PUD, with additional uses as provided in the township's zoning ordinance.</p> <p>Required open space shall be 20% of the total land area in the PUD.</p> <p>(The township's zoning ordinance outlines additional standards, requirements, and procedures.)</p>			

IX. IMPLEMENTATION

Future Land Use

A plan for future land use requires a synthesis of all the information included in a comprehensive development plan, and results in a map that generally depicts the various types of recommended land uses and their locations in the community. The map is accompanied by text explaining the “districts” or “categories” used on the map. These “districts” describe the character of the land use.

A future land use plan and a zoning ordinance are related. The future land use plan and map are designed to provide the community with a glimpse of where they desire the community to head, and a zoning ordinance and map provide the means to arrive at that point. ***The future land use map should not be confused with the zoning map***, which is a current mechanism for shaping development. The future land use map is intended to serve as a guide for land use decisions over a longer period of time.

A zoning ordinance is the legal arm of a future land use plan. It is the most frequently used and effective regulatory tool to implement a future land use plan, as it regulates land use. Changing a zoning ordinance (or zoning map) is the primary tool available to modify regulations affecting land or the types of land uses. The future land use plan and map can be utilized to guide what zoning changes will occur and where they will occur. For example, rezoning requests may be required to be consistent with the future land use plan’s goals and objectives, which identify the community’s desires for the future.

The word “district” is often used in both kinds of documents; however, the term must be used carefully. On the one hand, using similar terms for the various land use designations is one way to demonstrate the relationship between the two documents, and it helps to avoid confusion and translation difficulties. On the other hand, it is important to realize that a future land use map and a zoning map are NOT necessarily the same thing.

The use of a term such as “high density residential” does not necessarily translate into specific numbers in terms of lot sizes and other elements of zoning. In some cases, a designated district on a future land use map might not “convert” into a particular zoning district at all but rather should be utilized as a philosophical guide for the flexible interpretation of other zones. However, future land use plan categories may generally correspond to zoning districts with some overlap to allow for site conditions.

Future Land Use Categories

The Blue Lake Township Planning Commission developed the following general future land use districts to convey the desired character of Blue Lake Township over the next 20 to 25 years. These districts were developed as a result of the analysis of current land uses, physical and environmental suitability, the existence of or ability to provide services, and compatibility with goals and objectives identified in the plan.

It is important to re-emphasize the purpose of the future land use map and categories: to paint a general vision for the future development and character of Blue Lake Township. The future land use map is not intended to establish precise boundaries; that is the purpose of the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map, both of which are available at the Township Clerk's office.

High Density Residential

This district generally corresponds with the R-1 Residential Zoning District and “provides for those areas where single family residences of limited lot areas exist and where similar residential development may be ultimately provided with community or public sewage treatment and disposal facilities or other utilities and public services on a reasonably efficient basis.” Since these areas are currently served by wells and septic systems, density should be consistent with an area’s existing and planned infrastructure and land capabilities. Principal uses typically include single family dwellings and public parks, playgrounds, recreation areas, schools, and churches, family day care homes, adult foster care homes, and family foster care homes. Special uses might include home occupations, bed and breakfast establishments, and site condominium projects.

Desired “high” density areas are located near the northeast shoreline of Big Blue Lake; along the central southern township boundary with proximity to similar development in the neighboring jurisdictions of the Village of Lakewood Club and Dalton Township; and along Holton-Whitehall Road near the southwest quarter of the township.

Medium Density Residential

This district generally corresponds with the R-2 Residential Zoning District. This district is primarily intended to provide for a medium density of single-family residential uses in areas that are not anticipated to require public sewage collection treatment facilities. Uses would be dependent upon on-site treatment and disposal or small area systems. This type of district carries the potential to conserve open space, which is the dominant characteristic of a rural area such as Blue Lake Township. Principal and special uses are similar to High Density Residential areas, with the addition of two-family dwellings and multiple-family dwellings.

Desired “medium” density areas are located at Brown’s Pond; adjacent to higher residential density areas near Big Blue Lake and the central southern township boundary; and near the central western border of the township along Hyde Park Road.

Forest/Recreation

The Forest/Recreation districts generally correspond to the Forest-Recreation (FR) districts and the R3 district dictated by the Blue Lake Township's zoning ordinance. They were created in order that the extensive land areas of Blue Lake Township that consist of forested, rolling topographic outwash plains are appropriately protected as exceptional natural, forest and recreational resource areas, and to provide for uses which are compatible with such land and vegetative resources. In addition, this area is noted in order to encourage seasonal recreational uses; allow limited low density residential uses; minimize insufficient public services and facilities; reduce hazards to the land, forest resources, and residents; and maintain the integrity of the Township's exceptional land and water resources. In order to maintain the flexibility for varying uses such as residential, forestry, recreation, hunting, outdoor camps and others, lot sizes must be larger to ensure a lower density. Many areas are capable of supporting septic systems, but some are not, so caution is needed when considering placement of individual dwelling units.

The **Forest/Recreation-Residential** future land use districts are intended to support low density development. These generally encompass lands around the periphery of the Forest/Recreation-Institutional district.

The **Forest/Recreation-Institutional** future land use district can be mostly described as lands presently used for operation of camps. On the Future Land Use Map, this district encompasses land owned by institutions which operate camps, as well as lands owned and maintained by state and federal public entities. A majority of this land would typically remain undeveloped. Normal use and development for camp use and operation includes institutional camping which serves public and private youth organizations and family groups from schools, scouts, religious and other organizations or business groups. Any use of the land for other purposes, or construction on the land that is not considered normal use and development for camp use and operation, should require a variance for zoning change or variance of present zone from the Blue Lake Township Planning Commission.

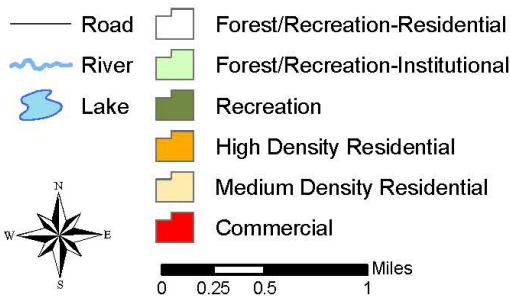
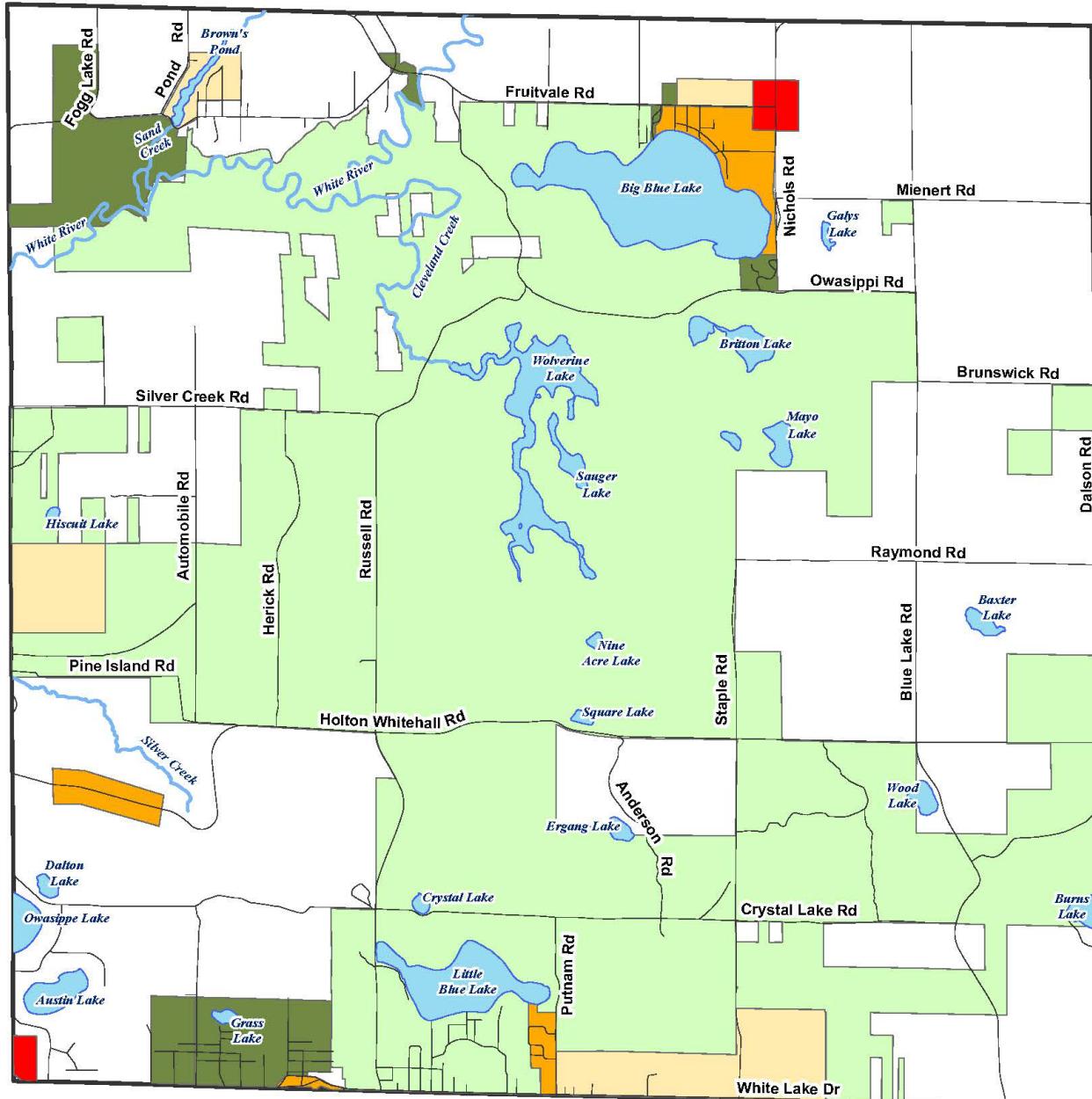
Commercial and Recreational

These districts are primarily envisioned to reflect existing or accommodate slightly expanded sites of commercial activity, tourism-based recreational businesses, and public parks. Greatly expanded commercial areas are not desired by the population, nor are they needed. Retail services are currently available in the Muskegon metropolitan and White Lake areas.

The Commercial and Recreation future land use districts generally correspond with the Commercial (C) zoning district. According to the Zoning Ordinance, principal uses in those areas provide for retail convenience goods and services for residents and recreational uses in the area. On the Future Land Use map, recreation areas are shown as a separate designation to call attention to existing and desired areas for recreation facilities, both publicly and privately-owned.

Map #9

Blue Lake Township General Future Land Use



This map was created by the Blue Lake Township Planning Commission for the Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Plan with assistance from the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission.

Land uses shown are intended to illustrate the generally desired future development of Blue Lake Township, and do not necessarily reflect current zoning and land use.

Some areas within the township may not be suitable or appropriate for development. Please refer to the Sensitive Areas map, found within the Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Plan, which generally depicts some of these areas.

Sensitive Areas

Since Blue Lake Township is a natural resource-based area, and because it is desired to remain as such, the protection of those resources is paramount. The Sensitive Areas map is an important part of that protection strategy and is intended to be a companion to the General Future Land Use map. In previous editions of this Comprehensive Plan, the “sensitive areas” were represented on the Future Land Use map as the “Hazard/Protected” district. This change helps highlight the importance of sensitive areas, and also visually simplifies the General Future Land Use map.

Many areas identified on this map coincide with the Conservancy (CO) District in the Blue Lake Township Zoning Ordinance, which includes land within 100 feet from most water bodies, wetlands, areas with very severe development limitations, adjacent areas with severe development limitations, and some areas with valuable natural resources.

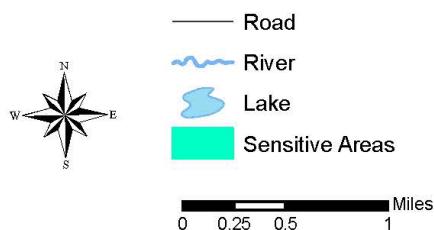
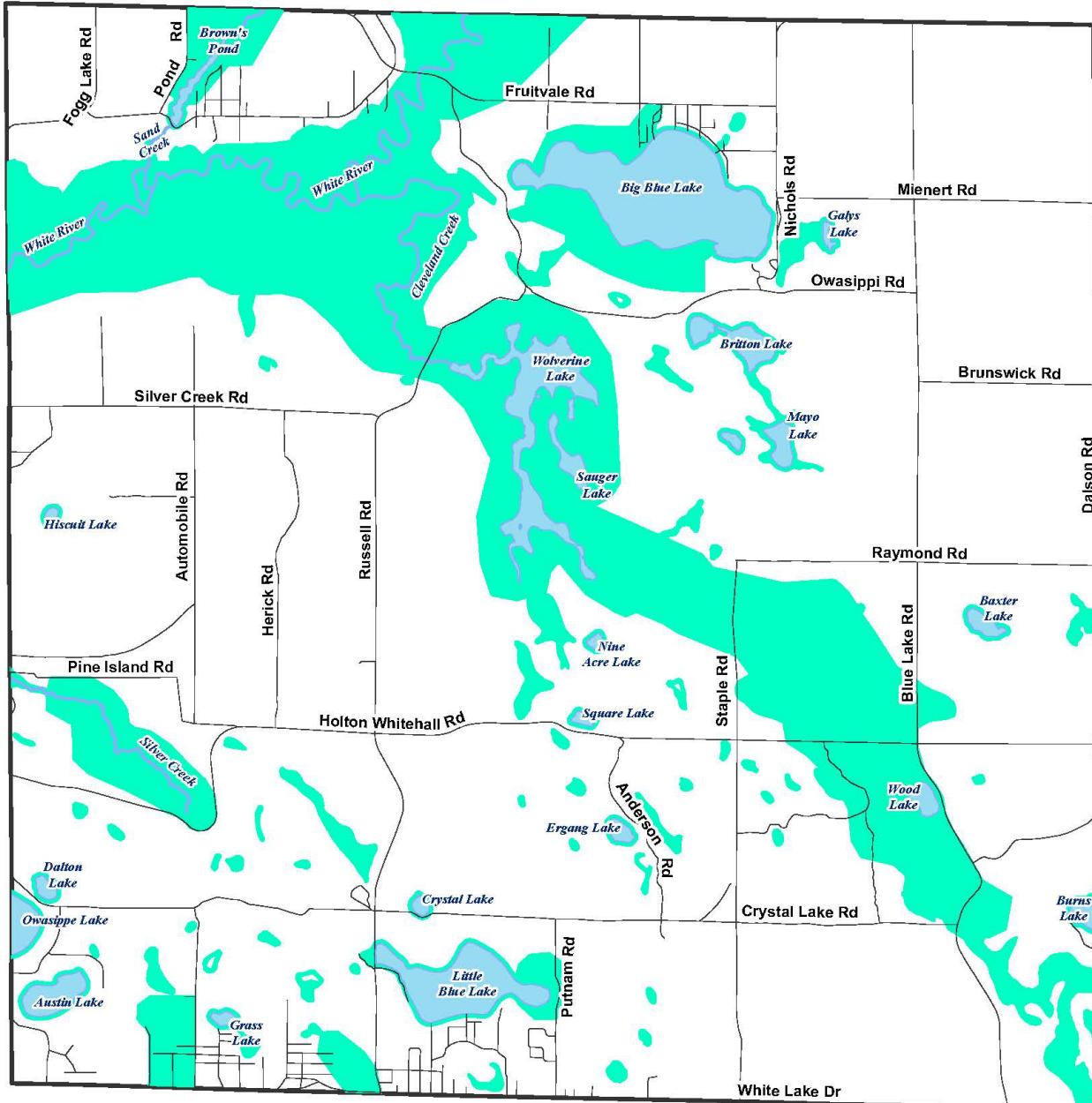
According to the Zoning Ordinance, the purpose of the Conservancy District is to protect and enhance the exceptional water and adjacent land resources of the township with particular emphasis placed upon the White River flood plains, lakes, and other surface water bodies and drainage ways. Those uses that are incompatible with or degrade water resources are prohibited or limited while those uses that are compatible with or otherwise enhance critical water resource areas are encouraged. Areas adjacent to these subject water bodies are also included in the regulations.

Permanent buildings for human habitation and structures that significantly interfere with the free flow of flood waters or cause stream bank or lakefront erosion are not allowed in the Conservancy zoning district. Special uses that are allowed include campgrounds; trails; hunting, camping, dog, and gun clubs or organizations; canoe or boat liveries; and ski or toboggan slopes and facilities; provided there are no adverse land or water impacts.

As a companion to the General Future Land Use map, this map is intended to be a tool that provides clues about which areas of the township may warrant special consideration, should a zoning change or potential development come under consideration. Its purpose is not to definitively identify all sensitive environments. The Sensitive Areas map reflects a composite of wetlands (National Wetland Inventory), floodplains (National Flood Insurance Program), soils with “very severe” development limitations (Soil Survey of Muskegon County), areas abutting surface water features, and other areas that were identified during the planning process.

Map #10

Blue Lake Township Sensitive Areas



As a companion to the General Future Land Use map, this map is intended to be a tool that provides clues about which areas of the township may warrant special consideration, should a zoning change or potential development come under consideration. Its purpose is not to definitively identify all sensitive environments.

The Sensitive Areas map reflects a composite of wetlands (National Wetland Inventory), floodplains (National Floodplain Insurance Program), soils with 'very severe' development limitations (Soil Survey of Muskegon County), areas abutting surface water features, and other areas that were identified during the planning process.

Planning Implementation Tools and Techniques

The ultimate goal of planning is implementation. Implementing the ideas generated through the planning process is the culmination of the analysis, goal setting, and interaction activities which took place during the creation of the Comprehensive Development Plan. This portion of the Plan is designed to guide the community in taking the actions necessary to achieve its goals and objectives.

The Plan is intended to be a working document that provides the township's decision makers with information on the goals desired by the community. The Plan should, therefore, be consulted whenever policy issues arise, especially those related to land use.

Successful implementation requires a continuous effort on the part of the Planning Commission, the Township Board, and the community at large. It is essential that each member of the Planning Commission and the Township Board understand the Plan, know their own role as it relates to the Plan, and promote implementation of the Plan by the Township Planning Commission, the Township Board, and appropriate agencies, community groups, and citizens.

The goals and objectives of the Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan can be implemented through the use of the following described tools and techniques, among others. The following list of tools and techniques is certainly not exhaustive, and some are more applicable to the township than others. Many of the tools and techniques can be used for multiple purposes by Blue Lake Township to achieve its goals and objectives, even though they are listed under specific headings.

Zoning Ordinance

A zoning ordinance is the primary regulatory tool used to implement future land use plans. Following the adoption of the plan, Blue Lake Township should complete an internal inventory and review its priorities. Following these actions, it should then amend the Blue Lake Township Zoning Ordinance as appropriate. This will ensure that the zoning ordinance will be consistent with the completed Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan.

The Blue Lake Township Zoning Ordinance is one of the most important tools available to implement the visions of the Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Plan related to land use and the general character of the township. The purpose of zoning is to assist in orderly development and growth, while protecting property values, investments, and the environment. Because of the impact zoning can have on the use of land and related services, local zoning regulations must be built upon the foundation of a master plan and "zoning plan."

Land Division Act

Townships are authorized to regulate and control the subdivision of land within their jurisdictions pursuant to Public Act 591 of 1996, the Land Division Act (formerly known as P.A. 288 of 1967, the Subdivision Control Act). Amended in 1997, this act

gave a township with a land division ordinance more control over how land could be divided and lessened state controls. The act governed the division of existing parcels, called “parent parcels”, as identified by the state. Blue Lake Township adopted its Land Division Ordinance shortly thereafter.

A township can have an important voice in the design and layout of subdivisions and can set uniform standards for streets and roads, utilities, and other improvements with the utilization of a local land division control ordinance. The land division ordinance can reference all other township ordinances and require conformance with them. Conformance with the zoning ordinance and the insertion of land division design standards while updating the ordinance offers control over density.

Planned Unit Development (PUD)

The planned unit development concept is utilized by many communities to encourage innovative and imaginative project design. As a development type, it permits flexibility in site design and usage. It allows buildings to be clustered by mixing types, or by combining housing with ancillary uses such as neighborhood shopping. It allows for better design and arrangement of open space and the retention of such natural features as forests, slope, and floodplains. As a regulatory tool, it allows variation in many of the traditional controls related to density, setback, use and open space. Blue Lake Township’s zoning ordinance contains a detailed process for the review of proposed planned unit development (PUD) districts.

Open Space Preservation

A variation on the PUD theme is an Open Space Preservation district. In this type of district, or in a residential district with this feature, developers are encouraged to set aside open space in perpetuity in exchange for flexibility on the part of the township with respect to zoning requirements. Open space conservation is important because open space needs to be planned and provided prior to complete development occurring.

Key characteristics of an Open Space Preservation District/Overlay, when combined with elements of the PUD concept or Site Condominium concept, include;

- Flexibility in the design of a development.
- Lot size restrictions in traditional zoning are converted to density limitations where the unit of measurement is the entire project, not the individual lot.
- Allowance for slightly greater density than normal zoning, in most cases, *as an incentive*.
- Buffering/open space in the development is *in exchange* for flexibility on the part of the township, so the alternative (i.e. traditional zoning) must be fairly rigid, more restrictive, and strictly enforced.
- The developer saves money through lower up-front costs for infrastructure and tends to make more profit through higher initial sales price and greater sales volume.

Open Space Zoning allows the developer to have some additional units to market, in exchange for the promise to set aside a portion of the development as open space in perpetuity.

Growth Management

“Growth management refers to the systematic attempt, by a community, to guide the type, rate, location, timing, public cost of, and often the quality and character of land re-development” (Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Coastal Management Program). Growth management must be well integrated into the planning and zoning process. As an overview, there are several possible avenues to explore when considering a growth management strategy. Among them are:

- Purchase of Development Rights. In this scenario, the township directly remunerates the landowner in return for exclusive rights to develop the property as the township sees fit or to preserve it. The rights may also be sold to yet another property owner who can (or will) develop the land as the township wishes. The landowner participates voluntarily, still owns the land, and can use or sell the land for specified purposes, such as farming or hunting.

Once a Purchase of Development Rights agreement is made, a usually permanent deed restriction is placed on the property which limits the type of development that may take place on the land. A legally binding guarantee is thus achieved to ensure that the parcel will remain as it is or be developed only as wished. The deed restriction can also be referred to as a conservation easement.

- Transfer of Development Rights. Although not authorized by statute for use between jurisdictions in Michigan, this technique has been used successfully elsewhere. It is a variation on the above, except a trade is made between two or more parcels. It essentially is a method for protecting land by transferring the “right to develop” from one area (sending) and giving it to another area (receiving). A consensus must be reached on where the public wishes to preserve low density or open space and where it will allow for increases in development densities.

“Receiving” areas generally have streets, public water and sewer, and other improvements or the improvements are such that they can be extended a short distance without extensive cost. The costs of purchasing the easements are recovered from the developers who receive building “bonuses” according to the values agreed upon. As with Purchase of Development Rights, the owner of the preserved site participates voluntarily and retains existing use rights while receiving compensation for the development value of the land.

- Concurrency. This is a situation in which the township ties development (i.e. density and type) to established benchmarks regarding public service (i.e. water, sewer, roadway capacity, police, fire, educational and others) to control development. No development can occur in a given area until the benchmarks are

met, either by the township or the developer. This method also requires a carefully laid out capital improvements plan to be fully effective.

- Development Agreements. This would operate much like a contract/site plan review process combined. It would cover a fixed period in time and would identify specific elements of development covered. It would offer assurances for both sides that planning could take place and there would be no change of the rules in the middle of the game.
- Regional Impact Coordination. In a larger sense, this concept amounts to a specific agreement to involve other jurisdictions in any development which has a “regional impact”. The West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission and the constituents of Muskegon County have taken steps to foster such coordination by creating the Muskegon Area-wide Plan (MAP).

The State of Michigan has taken another step by making it mandatory that amendments to a community’s land use plan be submitted, for review and comment, to all bordering jurisdictions, the acting regional planning commission, and ultimately the County. While presently these comments have no regulatory implications, this legislation is the first step in working towards a collaborative effort amongst bordering municipalities encouraging similar land uses on adjacent parcels.

Capital Improvements Program

A Capital Improvements Program (CIP) is a fiscal plan outlining the means for the township to finance selected projects requiring capital, either on a short-term or long-range basis. The CIP thus sets priorities for future development. Projects typically included are public facilities such as township halls and parks, land improvements, roads, bridges, acquisitions, utilities, planning projects, etc.

Dedicated Millage

A dedicated millage can be used to generate revenues for a specific purpose and, in so doing, can implement recommendations of the Comprehensive Development Plan. For example, a dedicated millage could be used to establish a land acquisition fund, a bike path fund, or a conservation easement program. All of these would be useful tools for promoting open space preservation.

Although acquisition of land by a governmental unit provides the greatest level of land use control, it is also the most expensive. In addition to acquisition costs, purchase removes property from the tax rolls and decreases property tax revenues.

Conservation Easements

The Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act of 1974 provides for dedication of a conservation easement to a public entity while the Conservation and Historic Preservation Easement Act of 1980 gives a third party, such as a land trust, the right to

receive and the resulting responsibility to enforce an easement. Conservation easements are voluntary legal agreements between landowners and a land conservancy or government agency and are distinct property rights that may be sold or donated separately from other rights.

Conservation easements are effective for preserving sensitive lands, providing public access along rivers or greenways, and allowing property owners to consider land stewardship while they continue to live on their land. They permanently limit development of the property in order to protect the conservation values of the land. The landowner continues to bear all costs and liabilities related to ownership and maintenance of the property.

The relationship between Purchase of Development Rights and conservation easements is close and the terms are often used interchangeably. However, conservation easements can be both sold or donated. When a landowner sells the development rights for less than their full value, it is called a “bargain sale”. Bargain sales and donations can reduce income, inheritance, and property taxes while providing cash for needed purposes when meeting the necessary requirements.

Land Conservancy

While property owners can voluntarily donate or sell land or easements in the interest of conserving natural resources or natural features, and perhaps qualify for income, estate and property tax benefits, private land trusts can facilitate a resource protection program by use of a variety of land acquisition and conservation techniques.

For instance, The Land Conservancy of West Michigan (LCWM) “protects lands that contribute to the distinctive character and quality of life in West Michigan; lands that are important for their values as habitat for native plants and animals, as centers for study and quiet recreation, and as elements of scenic beauty and rural character. LCWM offers positive, non-regulatory solutions to disappearing open space that benefit landowners and local communities.”

LCWM acquires natural land through donation or “bargain sale” purchase of high priority land for the purpose of creating nature preserves that are open to the public. It also assists with conservation easements and works with developers to construct easements for open space design. Finally, LCWM assists local governments with identifying important natural areas, preserving lands, creating community parks, and writing grant applications for project funding.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS

This plan summarizes the physical nature of Blue Lake Township, where there is abundant natural beauty; including open spaces, pristine lakes, rivers, and forests; as well as habitats for endangered species. In addition, the township is very unique, with over 7,000 acres of land used or owned by institutional camps (approximately 1/3 of all land) and no acreage devoted to industry. Lastly, there is a strong preference by residents to preserve the natural environment of the township.

Despite this long-held community preference, Blue Lake Township experienced a significant population increase of 61% between 1990 and 2000, the highest growth rate of any municipality in Muskegon County during that period. Between 2000 and 2010, the population grew 20%. Although population estimates from 2023 suggest the township's population has leveled, recent history indicates the potential exists for significant periodic population increases. Regardless of the population trends, the fact remains that Blue Lake Township is not densely developed at the present time, and many of its undeveloped places are very attractive for potential development.

Development limitations have been noted however, such as a lack of public sewer and water, limitations of the soil for both development and septic systems, and limitations of infrastructure and services. There are just two county-designated roads in the township and no state or federal roads or highways. Fire-fighting is done on a part-time basis, and equipment would need to be increased to service any additional development. There are many areas with moderate to very severe soil limitations for development, due to soil composition and/or slope, and several with moderate limitations for development but severe limitations for septic systems.

The township, by adopting this Comprehensive Development Plan and adopting and revising ensuing ordinances, is preparing itself to manage growth. As previously stated, the goal of any plan is to combine the needs and desires of the citizenry with the land's suitability and capability for sustaining those uses, according to the ability and desire of the municipality to provide public services throughout its jurisdiction. In addition, careful consideration must be given to the preservation of the township's unique resources.

The township should continually visit the visions, goals, and objectives identified in this plan and prioritize those of greatest and most timely importance. For instance, the township's history of participation in the Muskegon Area-wide Plan highlights the need to support multi-jurisdictional visioning and act cooperatively with neighboring communities. Planning in this way allows greater opportunities to preserve open space and guide development towards existing communities already served by infrastructure.

Development pressures experienced by Blue Lake Township in the recent past highlighted the importance of remaining proactive towards preserving natural resources and maintaining the rural and recreational character of the township through carefully managed growth. Objectives for growth management include on-going education on growth management techniques, utilization of those techniques, and inclusion of

environmental and infrastructure considerations in development decisions. Objectives for preserving natural resources include those that focus on building partnerships while objectives for promoting existing resources for recreational purposes include the expansion of recreational uses and the maintenance of a Community Recreation Plan.

XI. CONCLUSION

The future conditions envisioned in a land use plan will occur because of cumulative private and public decisions about such things as opening a business, locating a residential development, and installing a public park. The inner workings of investments by private actors and individual entrepreneurs, as well as development decisions by public and quasi-public agencies, bring about physical changes to a municipality.

If properly used, the Comprehensive Development Plan can inform government about where public development should go. It can give potential investors a general sense of where the community would prefer residential and commercial development to be located. In short, the purpose of a Comprehensive Development Plan is to offer guidance to any and all actors whose decisions affect land. This plan offers several suggestions for achieving commonly held aspirations for the township's future development.

This Comprehensive Development Plan provides a clear vision for Blue Lake Township's future growth and development. It describes, through the General Future Land Use map, where various types of future land uses and, therefore development, should be located. It also provides guidance as to the form, characteristics, and appearance that are desired for future development. However, the vision embodied by the Comprehensive Development plan is but a step in making those visions a reality.

Beyond this plan awaits the need for a commitment by the township to dedicate the necessary resources for review of the Comprehensive Development Plan at a minimum of every five years. This will enable the Planning Commission to track progress of implementation, while regularly taking the pulse of the community to determine whether the goals remain relevant and if additional goals should be added.

The Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan should be consulted regularly as a guide for land use decisions and should be updated accordingly as the local situation warrants. It is important to acknowledge that change is inevitable. Managing that change will be the key to Blue Lake Township's success in managing and guiding development in the township.

APPENDIX A - PUBLIC NOTICES AND PLAN APPROVAL PROCESS

Board resolution adopting plan **(Passed June 9, 2025)**

RES 20250609-01

**TOWNSHIP OF BLUE LAKE
COUNTY OF MUSKEGON, MICHIGAN
Resolution No. 20250609-01**

TOWNSHIP BOARD RESOLUTION TO ADOPT MASTER PLAN

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA) authorizes the Planning Commission to prepare a Master Plan for the use, development and preservation of all lands in the Township; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission prepared a proposed Master Plan and submitted the plan to the Township Board for review and comment; and

WHEREAS, on June 9, 2025, the Blue Lake Township Board received and reviewed the proposed Master Plan prepared by the Planning Commission and authorized distribution of the proposed Master Plan to the Notice Group entities identified in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, notice was provided to the Notice Group entities as provided in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on May 14, 2025 to consider public comment on the proposed Master Plan, and to further review and comment on the proposed Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, on May 14, 2025, the Planning Commission approved and adopted by resolution the proposed Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Township Board finds that the proposed Master Plan is desirable and proper and furthers the use, preservation, and development goals and strategies of the Township;

THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. ***Adoption of the Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan, 2025 Update.*** The Township Board hereby approves and adopts the proposed Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan, 2025 Update, including all of the chapters, figures, maps and tables contained therein.

2. ***Distribution to Notice Group.*** The Township Board approves distribution of the adopted plan to the Notice Group.

3. ***Findings of Fact.*** The Township Board has made the foregoing determination based on a review of existing land uses in the Township, a review of the existing Master Plan provisions and maps, input received from the Planning Commission and public hearing, and with the assistance of a professional planning group, and finds that the Master Plan will accurately reflect and implement the Township's goals and strategies for the use, preservation, and development of lands in Blue Lake Township.

4. ***Effective Date.*** The Master Plan shall be effective as of the date of adoption of this resolution.

WHEREAS the Board of Trustees voted to adopt said Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan at its regular meeting on June 9, 2025 through a motion by Debbie Therrian and support by Lyle Monette.

Roll Call Vote:	Debbie Therrian	Yes
	Jeff Abram	Yes
	Jackson Wall	Yes
	Lyle Monette	Yes
	Melonie Arbogast	Yes

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Blue Lake Township Supervisor, Melonie L Arbogast, hereby declares the Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan adopted.

Melonie L. Arbogast
Supervisor

I, Jeffery T Abram, Clerk, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and original copy of a resolution adopted by the Blue Lake Township Board of Trustees at a Regular Meeting thereof held on the 9th day of June, 2025.

Clerk

Jeffery T Abram

Planning Commission resolution recommending board adoption of plan
(Passed May 14, 2025)

**TOWNSHIP OF BLUE LAKE
COUNTY OF MUSKEGON, MICHIGAN
RESOLUTION NO. 2025.05**

PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION TO ADOPT MASTER PLAN

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA) authorizes the Planning Commission to prepare a master plan for the use, development and preservation of all lands in the Township; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission prepared a proposed master plan and submitted the plan to the Township Board for review and comment; and

WHEREAS, on February 11, 2025, the Blue Lake Township Board received and reviewed the proposed master plan prepared by the Planning Commission and authorized distribution of the master plan to the Notice Group entities identified in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, notice was provided to the Notice Group entities as provided in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on May 14, 2025 to consider public comment on the proposed master plan, and to further review and comment on the proposed Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds that the proposed master plan, the Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan, is desirable and proper and furthers the use, preservation, and development goals and strategies of the Township;

THEREFORE BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. Adoption of the Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan, 2025 Update.

The Planning Commission hereby approves and adopts the proposed Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan, 2025 Update, including all of the chapters, figures, maps and tables contained therein.

2. Distribution to Township Board and Notice Group. The final step for adoption of the plan is approval by resolution by the Township Board. In addition, the Planning Commission approves distribution of the adopted master plan to the Notice Group, pending Township Board adoption of the Master Plan.

3. Findings of Fact. The Planning Commission has made the foregoing determination based on a review of existing land uses in the Township, a review of the master plan provisions and maps, input received from the Township Board and public hearings, and with the assistance of a professional planning group, and finds that the proposed master plan will accurately reflect and implement the Township's goals and strategies for the use, preservation, and development of lands in Blue Lake Township.

4. Effective Date. The master plan shall be effective as of the date of adoption by the Township Board.

The foregoing resolution offered by Planning Commissioner: **Lyle Monette**

Second offered by Planning Commissioner: **Mike Sikkenga**

Upon roll call vote the following voted:

"Aye": **Mike Sikkenga, Lyle Monette, Rob Gaston**
(list names of members voting "aye")

"Nay":

(list names of members voting "nay")

The Chair declared the resolution adopted.



Rob Gaston, Secretary

May 14, 2025

Date

***Planning Commission minutes showing public hearing and plan approval following public review period* (Meeting held May 14, 2025)**

Blue Lake Township Planning Commission Meeting
Blue Lake Township Hall
1491 Owasippe Rd
Twin Lake MI 49457
May 14, 2025

Call to Order for the Planning Commission meeting at 6:33 PM

Present: Mike Sikkenga, Lyle Monette, Rob Gaston

Absent: Greg Rice, Chris Bade

Guest: Stephen Carlson (WMSRDC)

Public Hearing commenced at 6:34 PM

- The purpose of the Public Hearing was to discuss adoption of the Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan (Master Plan), 2025 Update.
- One member of the Public was present, and commented their approval of the General Future Land Use Map, as presented in the Plan (Map #9).
- The Planning Commission recognizes the minor discrepancies in Map #2 and Map #3 communicated via email by Paul Bouman (Muskegon County Road Commission), and will reconcile in the future, if indicated. The discrepancies will be added as an appendix to the Plan.

Public Hearing adjourned at 6:50 PM

- Lyle made a motion to approve the Planning Commission Resolution to Adopt Master Plan. Mike seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.
- The Resolution will be submitted to the Township Board for approval of the Plan.

Perfection of Agenda: None

Minutes: Mike made a motion to approve the minutes dated March 12, 2025. Rob seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

New Business: None

Planning Commission Member Reports:

- Rob noted that the Blue Lake Township Park grand opening (Spring Fling) event on May 10, 2025 went well, and was well attended. It was also noted that the regional Recreation Grant Coordinator from MI DNR will visit the Park on June 2, 2025 in support of the recently submitted DNR Trust Fund Grant application for Grass Lake observation decks. Members of the Recreation Committee will be present for the visit.

Task of the Meeting: Conduct a Public Hearing and discuss the Comprehensive Development Plan (Master Plan), and if approved by the Planning Commission, send a Resolution to the Township Board recommending that the Plan be approved.

Next Meeting: September 10, 2025

Adjourn: Mike made a motion to adjourn, Rob seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 7:15 PM

Rob Gaston, Secretary

Notice of public viewing and comment period/date of public meeting
(Published in the White Lake Beacon on March 9, 2025 and April 27, 2025)

NOTICE REGARDING BLUE LAKE TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The proposed Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan update will be available for public review from March 10 through May 13, 2025. The plan may be seen on the township's website, bluelaketownship.org, or in person at Blue Lake Township Hall, 1491 Owasippe Rd, during regular business hours. In addition, the Blue Lake Township Planning Commission will hold a public hearing during its regular meeting at 6:30 PM on May 14, 2025, to receive comments regarding the content of the proposed plan. The meeting will take place at the Township Hall. Written comments may also be sent to scarlson@wmsrdc.org no later than May 13, 2025.

Notice of public input opportunity at the beginning of the planning process
(Published in the White Lake Beacon on July 28, 2024)

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING REGARDING BLUE LAKE TOWNSHIP PLANNING

The Blue Lake Township Planning Commission has begun the process of updating the township's Comprehensive Development Plan and Recreation Plan. Residents and stakeholders are invited to join a community discussion about future land use and recreation in the township. The meeting will take place at 6:30 PM on August 14, 2024 at the Township Hall, 1491 Owasippe Rd, Twin Lake, MI. Individuals that are unavailable to attend the meeting are invited to provide input through an online form available at <https://srvy.pro/2ZJW7HR>.

Questions and concerns may be directed to scarlson@wmsrdc.org.

APPENDIX B – PUBLIC COMMENTS

Blue Lake Township Planning Public Input SWOT Analysis

Conducted online (August-September 2024) and in person (August 14, 2024)

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
ENVIRONMENT			
low density development/population	illicit dumping	seek outside assistance to address invasive species	attitudes/expectations of new residents
rural nature	pressure for development	increase awareness of surroundings	invasive species (autumn olive, purple loosestrife)
lakes & streams	gypsy moth infestations	protect environment & natural feel	camps closing, leading to development pressure
forests & wildlife			outside actors/land brokers
camps			development
QUALITY OF LIFE			
peace, quiet & natural feel	vigilant protection of quality of life	community events	alcohol/bars
new recreation area - twp owned		develop twp land for recreation	misuse of public land
county parks		acquire open space	public space becoming a pumping ground
camps		land use code (zoning) enforcement	overuse and over-development
low density			
PUBLIC SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE			
strategic location of fire stations	frequent power outages/powerline management	natural gas service	speed control (as roads are improved)
fire department	county support for road condition and snow/ice in winter	bury electrical lines	
broadband	communication regarding budget/limitations	coordinate/partner with road commission	
main roads	road conditions (mainly side roads)	public recreation	
access to environment	poor cell phone service due to trees/terrain		
	forgotten Fruitvale Rd		
	broadband		
PLANNING & LAND USE			
5-acre minimum requirement	enforcement	community-building events (bbq, picnic, etc)	camps closing
animals allowed in certain areas	public engagement to reaffirm zoning	explore public utilization of twp property near White Lake Drive	land splitting of large parcels
quad runners allowed in certain areas		limit development	encroachment on natural resources by development
low density & natural feel		communication (2 way - government and residents)	
large parcels		natural resources protection	
solid guiding principles			

Blue Lake Twp Comprehensive Development Plan
Public Review Period and Public Hearing

Public review period: March 10-May 13, 2025
Public hearing: May 14, 2025

Public Comments Received	Planning Commission Response/Action
<p>Email correspondence March 12, 2025 Paul Bouman, Director of Engineering, Muskegon County Road Commission</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. (regarding Map #2 on page 9) “designated routes implies all-season truck routes, which these roads are not” 2. (regarding Map #3 on page 10) “Putnam Rd south of Crystal Lake Road; Pine Island Rd; and (portions of) Automobile Rd have all been previously abandoned. 3. (regarding Map #3 on page 10) Southwest boundaries of the township shown on the map are not accurate. 4. (regarding Future Land Use Map on page 53) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Adjacent land use is medium density residential b. Whitehall Township has the adjacent property zoned medium-high density residential. 	<p><i>*Note: The Planning Commission recognizes the discrepancies noted in items 1-3 below, and will resolve in a future review/update of the Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remove “(designated route)” in legend of Map #2 2. Amend Map #3 to remove abandoned roads 3. Amend Map #3 to reflect accurate township boundaries 4. The future land use in question is the “commercial” designation in the southwest corner of the township. This area is near the US 31 ramps in Whitehall Township. According to “Future Land Use Categories” (page 51), “principal uses in those areas provide for retail convenience goods and services for residents and recreational uses in the area.” The Planning Commission did not consider this to be a conflict with adjacent uses within Blue Lake Township and there is no present recommendation to amend the Future Land Use Map.
<p>Email correspondence March 17, 2025 Jonathan Wilson, Regional Manager, DTE Energy</p> <p>“I noticed in the SWOT analysis there may be an opportunity for natural gas service at the fire stations. Can you confirm if this is an interest of the township and if I can assist with pursuing this?”</p>	<p>Correspondence noted</p>
<p>Public Hearing Comments: A member of the public attended the public hearing to express support for the Future Land Use Map, specifically the general commercial designation in the southwest corner of the township.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

APPENDIX C – SMART GROWTH

Principles of Smart Growth

- **Create Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices**
Providing quality housing for people of all income levels is an integral component in any smart growth strategy.
- **Create Walkable Neighborhoods**
Walkable communities are desirable places to live, work, learn, worship and play, and therefore a key component of smart growth.
- **Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration**
Growth can create great places to live, work and play -- if it responds to a community's own sense of how and where it wants to grow.
- **Foster Distinctive, Attractive Places with a Strong Sense of Place**
Smart growth encourages communities to craft a vision and set standards for development and construction which respond to community values of architectural beauty and distinctiveness, as well as expanded choices in housing and transportation.
- **Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair and Cost Effective**
For a community to be successful in implementing smart growth, it must be embraced by the private sector.
- **Mix Land Uses**
Smart growth supports the integration of mixed land uses into communities as a critical component of achieving better places to live.
- **Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty and Critical Environmental Areas**
Open space preservation supports smart growth goals by bolstering local economies, preserving critical environmental areas, improving our communities quality of life, and guiding new growth into existing communities.
- **Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices**
Providing people with more choices in housing, shopping, communities, and transportation is a key aim of smart growth.
- **Strengthen and Direct Development Towards Existing Communities**
Smart growth directs development towards existing communities already served by infrastructure, seeking to utilize the resources that existing neighborhoods offer, and conserve open space and irreplaceable natural resources on the urban fringe.
- **Take Advantage of Compact Building Design**
Smart growth provides a means for communities to incorporate more compact building design as an alternative to conventional, land consumptive development.





316 Morris Avenue, Suite 340
Muskegon, MI 49440

231-722-7878
WMSRDC.org

Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan; 74 pages., June 202025

A master plan update for Blue Lake Township in Muskegon County, MI. It provides comprehensive discussion, updated charts, and maps of the community's history, economy and demographics, community facilities and services, and natural resources. Trends are analyzed; issues, goals, and objectives are identified; and a vision for future land use is outlined. The plan also includes implementation strategies with which to attain the goals and objectives.

WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

REPORT/PUBLICATION FORM

Name of Report/Publication: Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan

PROJECT REVIEW	NAME	DATE
Project Staff Mark changes - send to Staff 2	Stephen Carlson	01/29/2025
Staff 1 Mark changes - send to Staff 2	Lauryn Blake	01/29/2025
Staff 2 Mark changes - send to Office Manager	Jack Grice	06/17/2025
Office Manager Mark changes - send to project staff	Syndi Copeland	
Project Staff Incorporate edits – send to Office Manager	Stephen Carlson	06/18/2025
Office Manager Final review – send back to Project staff	Syndi Copeland	
Project Staff Approve and begin filing instructions below	Stephen Carlson	09/17/2025

Filing Instructions:

<input type="checkbox"/> Project Staff Emails Final to Office Manager	Initial	sdc
<input type="checkbox"/> Project Staff Emails Synopsis to Office Manager	Initial	sdc
<input type="checkbox"/> Office Manager Emails to Website Staff for Posting	Initial	sdc
<input type="checkbox"/> Office Manager files to Shared Drive	Initial	sgc
<input type="checkbox"/> Posted to social media?	Yes/No	no

Approval:

Erin Kuhn
Executive Director

09/25/2025

Date