

WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP

MASTER PLAN—2026-2031

WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

2026-2031

Emmet County, Michigan

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Adopted by Planning Commission: January 14, 2026

Adopted by Township Board: March 24, 2026

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

WHAT IS A MASTER PLAN?

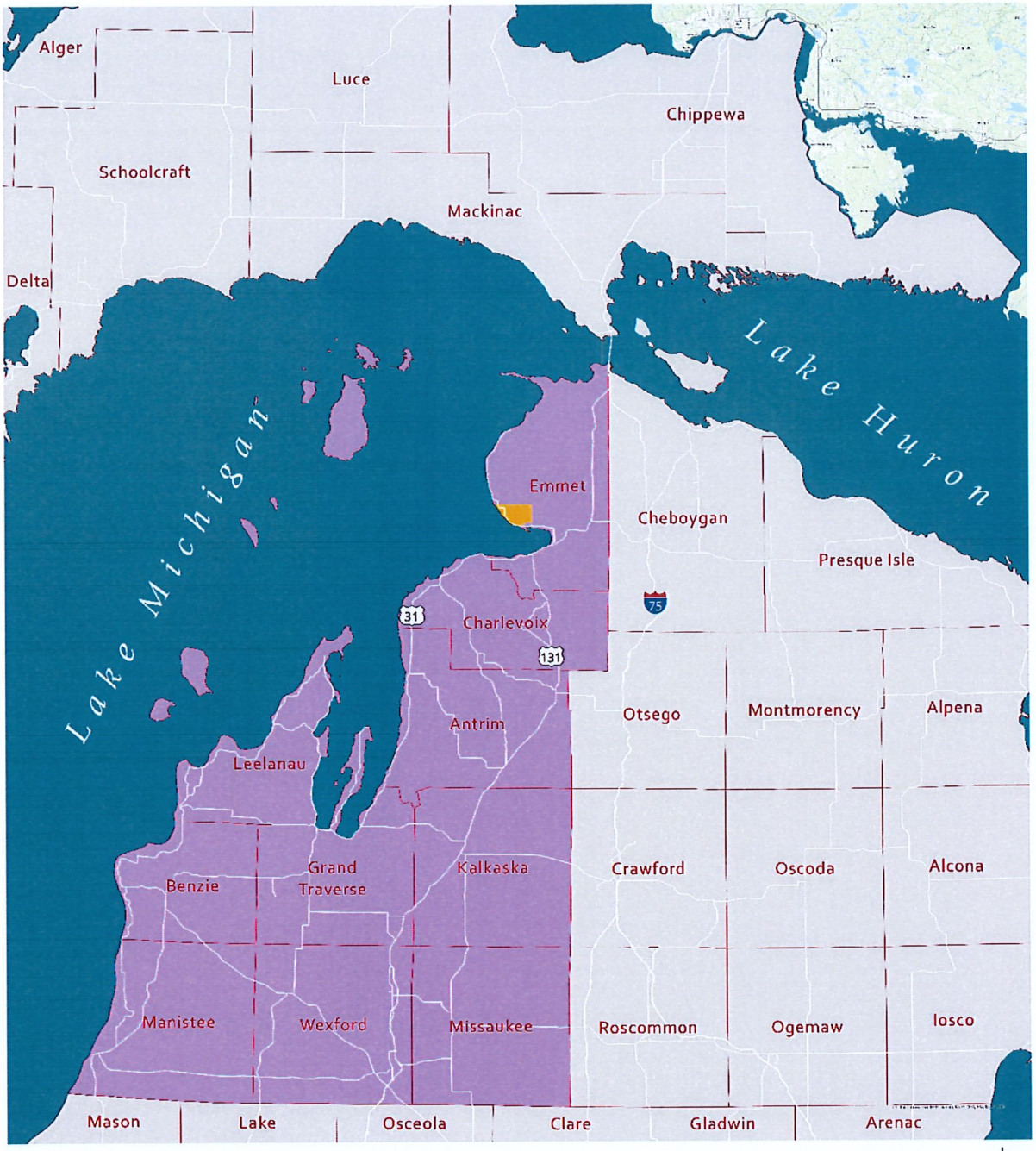
A Master Plan is a community's land use policy document that guides decision-making that affects its land, people, and built environment. It guides the community when faced with complex land use and infrastructure decisions that have long-term impacts on the community. This Master Plan inventories West Traverse Township's assets and challenges to empower the Township to strengthen its systems and influence positive change.

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008, as amended) (MPEA) enables municipalities to create master plans to do the following:

- Guide the use of limited resources efficiently;
- Promote public health, safety, and general welfare;
- Preserve the quality of the environment; and
- Guide zoning decisions.

This plan is designed to be comprehensive, future-oriented, and accessible to the public with the community's desires incorporated into the goals and strategies. This plan also provides suggestions for the implementation of identified goals and policies.

Figure **01**: Regional Map of West Traverse Township



Regional Map

Sources: Michigan Open Data Portal, Networks Northwest

10 Miles

Beckett & Raeder, Inc.

West Traverse Township

Michigan Counties

Networks Northwest

HISTORY AND REGIONAL CONTEXT OF WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP

In 1855, Emmet County was divided into four townships by the State Legislature of Michigan. Little Traverse Township included the present townships of Pleasantview, Friendship, Little Traverse, and West Traverse. When the 1874 Homestead Act opened Emmet County for settlement, Friendship and Pleasantview Townships were created from the original Little Traverse Township. At that time, the northern boundary of Little Traverse Township was drawn to extend west to Lake Michigan.

In 1897, all land which lay west of Hoyt Road, excluding the Village of Harbor Springs, was organized as West Traverse Township. Harbor Point became part of West Traverse Township by virtue of lying west of Hoyt Road. The southern tier sections of Friendship Township were also added to West Traverse Township in 1897.

West Traverse Township is located on the north side of Little Traverse Bay, in the western part of Emmet County, in the northwest region of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. West Traverse Township is the smallest Township in the State, comprising approximately 13 square miles of the County's 468 square miles of land area. The Township's irregular size and shape is due to its adjacency to Lake Michigan's shoreline. This shoreline also provides 48,300 feet (9.15 miles) of Lake Michigan frontage within West Traverse Township. The Township contains some of the most beautiful and diverse geographical and ecological lands in the state.

The maximum distance from the north boundary to the south boundary is approximately four miles, with the east to west distance at nearly six miles. West Traverse Township is bordered on the south by the City of Harbor Springs and Lake Michigan, on the north at Lacount Road by Friendship Township, on the east by Pleasantview Township, Little Traverse Township, and the City of Harbor Springs, and by Lake Michigan on the west. A small portion of the Township, known as Harbor Point, is separated from the rest of the Township by the City of Harbor Springs, and is only accessible by going through Harbor Springs or via Lake Michigan/Little Traverse Bay. The City of Petoskey, Charlevoix, and Traverse City are approximately 7, 25 and 72 miles southwest of the Township, respectively. In addition to residential areas, farming lands, and open spaces, West Traverse Township also includes an industrial park, several golf courses, and Thorne Swift Nature Preserve.

In 2005, the Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians purchased and placed in tribal trust approximately 80 acres of property in the northeast part of the Township. The property is developed as housing for tribal members. This property has been placed in tribal trust and has sovereign nation status, thus is not under the jurisdiction of West Traverse Township.

PAST PLANNING AND ZONING IN WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP

West Traverse Township adopted a permanent Township Zoning Ordinance in 1972 and adopted an initial Comprehensive Plan (now, according to the MPEA, a "Master Plan") in 1981 and amended the Plan in 1993. Due to changes and growth pressures in the Township, the Comprehensive Plan was thoroughly reviewed and updated in 2008 and 2014. The 2020 Master Plan Update utilizes information from the earlier planning efforts as a starting point and updated the information as appropriate to best serve current community needs.

West Traverse Township established a Planning Commission in the early 1990s; however, a planning committee existed prior to the formal establishment of the Planning Commission. Since adopting the Zoning Ordinance in 1972, the Township has been responsible for the administration of zoning regulations in the Township. West Traverse, Little Traverse, Pleasantview, and Resort Townships are the only four townships, out of 16 townships in Emmet County, that have their own Zoning Ordinance. The other 12 townships in Emmet County fall under County zoning regulations and enforcement.

Zoning Ordinance updates supported by up-to-date Master Plans are considered the main tool Michigan communities have to control land use patterns and development pressures. To guide future development, West Traverse Township decided to develop a Township Zoning Ordinance coordinated with the Master Plan.

Chapter 2: Demographics & Housing

Demographics and Housing

Reviewing demographic and household information is crucial for the master planning process as it provides essential insights into the community's socioeconomic characteristics. This understanding helps shape strategic goals and actions that promote inclusive growth and development within West Traverse Township. This section will highlight significant trends within the Township, as well as include regional comparisons to offer a comprehensive view of broader influences affecting growth and development in the area.

DATA SOURCES

The demographic information in this chapter was sourced from the following locations.

- The U.S. Decennial Census is the most reliable sources of demographic information in the country. Mandated by the U.S. Constitution, the primary goal of the decennial census is to achieve a complete count of the U.S. population. Since its inception in 1790, the census has provided a critical reference point for tracking population changes over time. Although the census has been conducted for over 200 years, the questions have evolved to better reflect modern society. For instance, questions regarding past rebellion against the U.S. are no longer included. The most recent censuses have gathered data on age, sex, race, relationships within households, and household tenure.
- The American Community Survey (ACS) replaced the "long-form" questions of the decennial census starting in 2000, gathering similar information on social, economic, and housing conditions on an ongoing basis. Including these detailed questions in the decennial census would be more resource-intensive and could lower the response rate for the primary population count. Unlike the decennial census, the ACS is not a full survey of the U.S. population but rather a sample. Each year, a random selection of households receives the ACS, and the Census Bureau uses these responses to generate estimates for the broader population. Because the ACS is a sample survey, smaller communities require several years of data collection to produce accurate estimates. For communities with fewer than 20,000 residents, data must be collected over a 60-month period, resulting in what are known as 5-year estimates. Since West Traverse Township has a population under 20,000, this plan will rely on ACS 5-year estimates.

The small size of the Township poses challenges for data collection, leading to a larger margin of error in estimates from sources like the U.S. Census and the American Community Survey. With a smaller population, sample sizes are limited, making it difficult to capture accurate and reliable data across various demographic and economic indicators. These sampling issues can result in estimates that are less precise, making it harder to draw accurate conclusions about trends such as income, poverty, or housing in the community. As a result, data for small communities should be interpreted cautiously, recognizing the potential for variability in reported figures.

POPULATION

As of 2022, the population of West Traverse Township reached 1,796 residents (984 male and 812 female). This marked an increase of 6.9% from the 2012 figure of 1,680 residents.[1] This growth outpaced the overall population growth of Emmet County, an increase of 3.9% during the same ten-year period.[2]

Table **01**: Population Growth for West Traverse and Emmet County

	2012	2022	Growth Rate
West Traverse Township	1,680	1,796	6.9%
Emmet County	32,799	34,072	3.9%

Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, DP05

Age Distribution

In West Traverse Township, there is a notable lean towards older age groups. In 2022, the community's median age was 55.5 years, significantly higher than the median age of 40.3 years for Michigan as a whole.[3] Comparatively, in 2012, the median age in West Traverse was 43.1 years, aligning more closely with Michigan's present median age.[4] The substantial rise of 12.4 years in the median age within a decade suggests West Traverse has grown increasingly popular among the elderly demographic. American Community Survey data shows that one-third (31.3%) of the population is aged 65 and above, and more than half (53.5%) are 55 and older.[5] This trend may be partly due to the economic barriers that preclude younger families from residing in West Traverse Township.

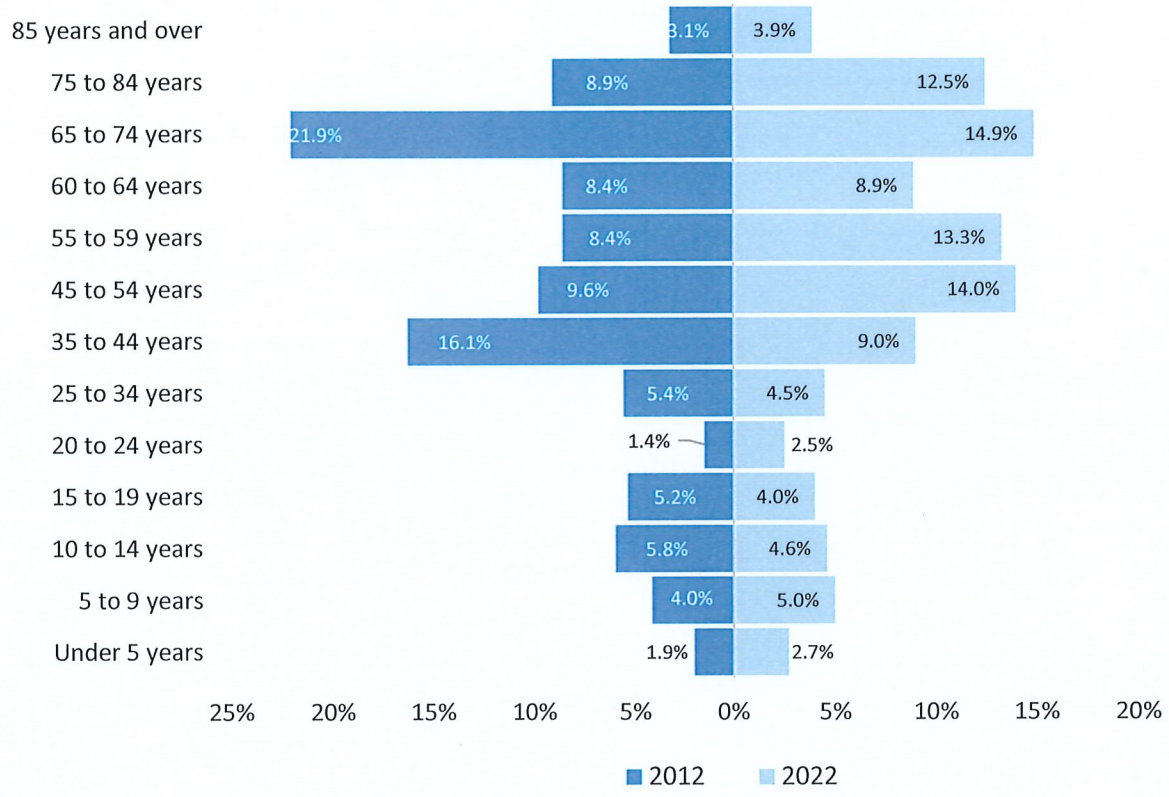
Having such a large portion of older residents, West Traverse Township should ensure that planning efforts consider a supportive environment for aging needs to meet health and social needs, including access to healthcare, nutritious meals, transportation, and mental health and emotional enrichment activities.[6] Collaborations with nearby communities and Emmet County to meet these needs can help to ensure senior residents are served efficiently.

Conversely, the Township has a smaller proportion of college-aged adults (aged 18 to 24) and working-age adults (aged 25 to 64) compared to the state of Michigan. The Township faces a need to attract younger residents to ensure that the population remains balanced in the future. To attract younger residents, West Traverse Township should focus on providing affordable housing, diverse job opportunities, outdoor recreation, and entertainment options. Continued improvement to these assets will keep the Township a desirable place to live.

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[1] American Community Survey, 2022 5-Year Estimates, DP05.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] E. Sigler, et al., Community-Based Supports and Services for Older Adults: A Primer for Clinicians, 1-23-2024, pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4339950/

Figure **01**: Age Distribution in West Traverse Township, 2012 & 2022



Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, DP05

Racial Distribution

ACS data shows that most residents (96.9%) in West Traverse Township are white, with a small portion being of native descent, or of some other race.[7]

Table **02**: Racial Distribution in West Traverse Township, 2022

Race	Portion of Total Population
One race	96.9%
White	95.2%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.3%
Some Other Race	0.5%
Two or More Races	3.1%
White and American Indian or Alaska Native	2.4%
White and Some Other Race	0.4%
African American and American Indian or Alaska Native	0.1%

Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, DP05

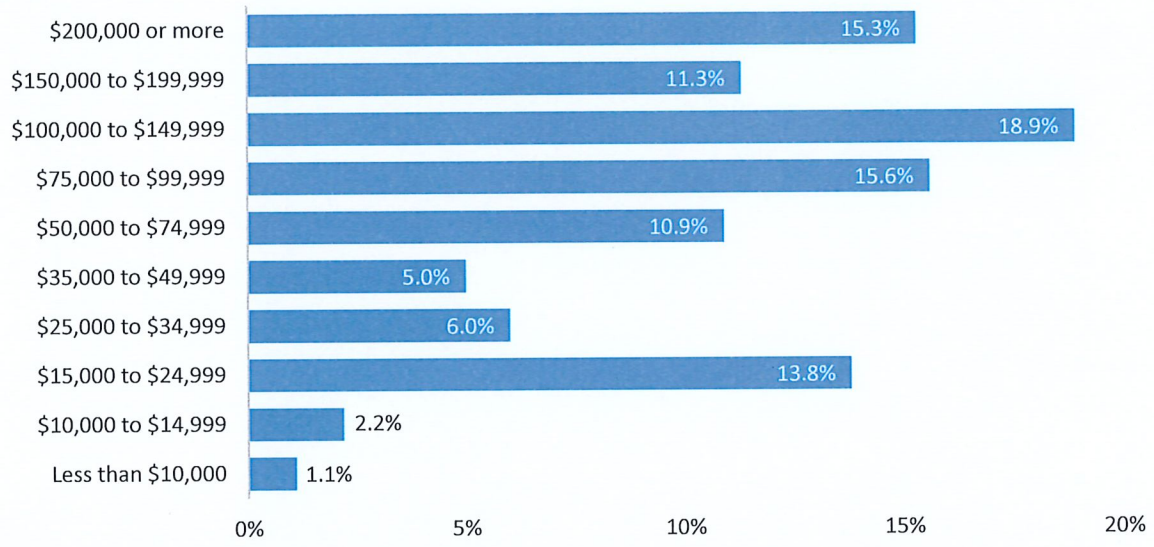
[7] American Community Survey, 2022 5 Year Estimates, DP05.

SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS

Income and Poverty

In 2022, West Traverse Township reported 806 households with a median household income of $90,132, exceeding the state median of $66,986 and Emmet County at $69,690.[8] West Traverse's median income demonstrated a growth of 22.6% since 2015 when the median household income was $76,250.[9] Considering the high median household income in West Traverse, the income distribution shows a trend of higher household incomes being the larger distribution groups, with 45.5% of households earning $100,000 or more in 2022.[10]

Figure **02**: Household Income Distribution, 2022



Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, DP03

[8] American Community Survey, 2022 5-Year Estimates, DP03.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.

Federal Poverty Level (FPL) is a measure of income issued every year by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Federal poverty levels are used to determine eligibility for certain federal programs and benefits.[11] West Traverse Township observes low poverty rates for all groups with just 3.2% of residents falling below the federal poverty level. This is lower than the rest of Emmet County (5.2%) as well as the State (8.8%).[12]

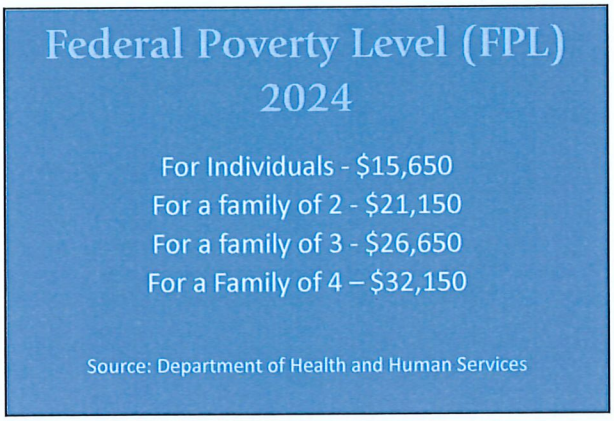


Table **03**: Residents Below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), 2022

	Portion below the FPL
All people	3.2%
All families	1.5%
Residents under 18 years	1.2%
Residents 18 years and over	3.5%
Residents 65 years and over	2.1%

Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, DP05

One critique of the FPL is that it fails to account for households with incomes above the poverty line that still face difficulties in meeting essential expenses. To address this gap, the United Way Foundation developed the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) defines those earning above the federal poverty level yet below the threshold needed to cover basic living costs.[13] ALICE data is tracked at the County level. In 2022, 3,636 households (25%) in Emmet County were below the ALICE threshold compared to 8.4% of households living below the federally designated poverty threshold.[14] The ALICE metric also produces a basic survival budget, the minimum expenses that a household has for basic needs. The table titled "Alice Household Survival Budget," shows the minimum survival budget for a single adult is approximately $27,500 annually, with costs rising when there are more adults and children in the household.[15]

[11] Department of Health and Human Services, Federal Poverty Level (FPL), 1-23-2025, www.healthcare.gov/glossary/federal-poverty-level-fpl/
[12] American Community Survey, 2022 5-Year Estimates, DP03.
[13] Michigan Association of United Ways, The ALICE Project, 10-21-2024, www.uwmich.org/alice-report
[14] United for ALICE, Michigan, Emmet County Report 2022, 10-21-2024, www.unitedforalice.org/county-reports/Michigan
[15] Ibid.

Table **04**: ALICE Household Survival Budget, Emmet County, 2022

Monthly Costs and Credits	Single Adult	One Adult, One Child	One Adult, One In Child Care	Two Adults	Two Adults Two Children	Two Adults, Two In Child Care	Single Adult 65+	Two Adults 65+
Housing - Rent	$432	$428	$428	$428	$586	$586	$432	$428
Housing - Utilities	$163	$258	$258	$258	$310	$310	$163	$258
Child Care	$0	$194	$519	$0	$389	$1,052	$0	$0
Food	$470	$798	$716	$862	$1,450	$1,281	$434	$796
Transportation	$462	$596	$596	$703	$1,113	$1,113	$398	$575
Health Care	$174	$383	$383	$383	$601	$601	$514	$1,028
Technology	$86	$86	$86	$116	$116	$116	$86	$116
Miscellaneous	$179	$274	$299	$275	$457	$506	$203	$320
Tax Payments	$328	$678	$742	$453	$916	$1,046	$391	$699
Tax Credits	$0	($206)	($217)	$0	($411)	($433)	$0	$0
Monthly Total	$2,294	$3,489	$3,810	$3,478	$5,527	$6,178	$2,621	$4,220
ANNUAL TOTAL	$27,528	$41,868	$45,720	$41,736	$66,324	$74,136	$31,452	$50,640
Hourly Wage	$13.76	$20.93	$22.86	$20.87	$33.16	$37.07	$15.73	$25.32

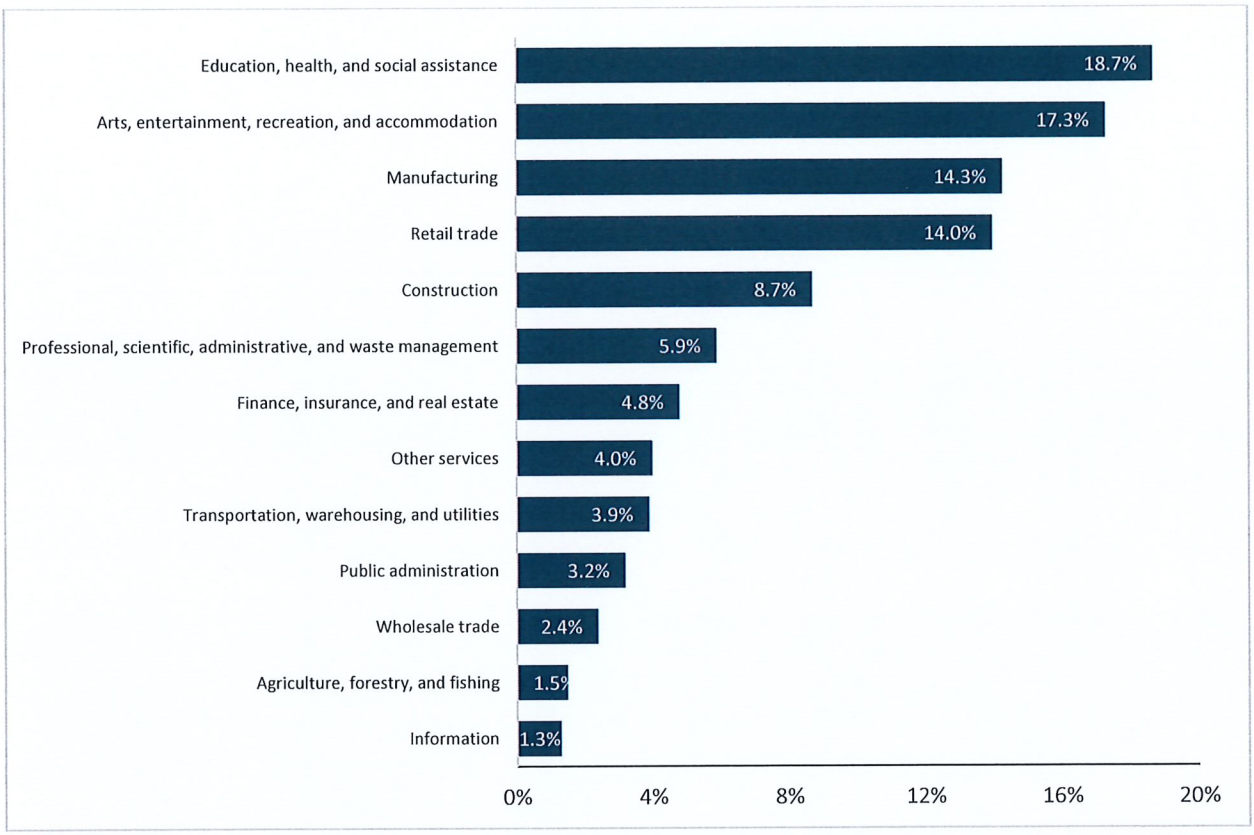
Source: ALICE

Employment and Labor Force Participation

The largest employment sectors in West Traverse Township are *Education, health, and social assistance* and *Arts, entertainment, and accommodation* at 18.7% and 17.3% of the labor force, respectively.[16] Additionally, *Manufacturing* and *Retail trade* account for a similar percentage of the labor force as retail. Most of the top employed sectors have remained the same in the past decade, though both *Manufacturing* and *Retail* have increased from 2012 when it comprised of just 7.1% and 8.2% respectively, of the workforce in West Traverse Township. This may reveal a change in the local economy, where often part-time, low-paying retail jobs with little benefits have a similar presence to manufacturing jobs that have typically provided decent wages, room for growth, and benefits.

[16] Ibid.

Figure **03**: Employment by Sector, 2022



Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, DP03

The American Community Survey (ACS) tracks employment data for all noninstitutionalized persons (those who are not in institutional group quarters facilities such as correctional institutions, juvenile facilities, skilled nursing facilities, and other long-term care living arrangements).[17] The labor force includes all people age 16 and older who are classified as either employed and unemployed (but available and looking for employment), as defined below. In West Traverse Township, the labor force is comprised of 1,571 residents. Of all residents qualifying for the labor force, 57% are either employed or unemployed, and 43% are not actively searching for a job. Considering the high median age in the community this is not surprising.[18]

Table **05**: Labor Force Participation, 2022

	Total
Population 16 years and over (Labor Force)	1,571
Participation	57.0%
Employed	54.0%
Overall Unemployment Rate	5.2%

Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, DP03

[17] U.S. Census Bureau, Glossary, 9-18-2024, www.census.gov/glossary/
[18] American Community Survey, 2022 5-Year Estimates, DP03.

Education

As of 2022, of the 1,467 residents of West Traverse Township who are 25 years or older, 98.4% have attained at least the level of high school graduate (an increase from 96.6% in 2010); while 57% have earned their bachelor's degree or higher.[19] This higher level of educational attainment may be correlated to the higher median household incomes.

Table **06**: Education Attainment, 2022

	Total
Population 25 years and over	1,467
High school graduate or higher	98.4%
Associate's degree	8.5%
Graduate or professional degree	24.3%
Bachelor's degree or higher	57.0%

Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, S1501

HOUSING

An evaluation of housing stock can be very beneficial in determining housing needs. For example, a large percentage of seasonal housing units indicate an increased seasonal population, as is the case of West Traverse Township. In 2022, there were 1,334 housing units in West Traverse Township. Of these units, 765 (57.3%) were occupied and 569 (42.7%) were vacant.[20] A housing unit recorded as vacant means that it was not occupied at the time of data gathering. The table "Status of Vacant Housing" shows a breakdown of the 569 vacant housing units. Of all vacant housing units, 89.8% were occupied seasonally, typical for northern Michigan as many people live in the area part time and use the unit for a vacation home.[21]

Table **07**: Status of Vacant Housing, 2022

	Total
For rent	0.0%
Rented, not occupied	2.6%
For sale only	3.0%
For seasonal use	89.8%
Other vacant	4.6%

Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, B25004

Housing Diversity

The majority (83.6%) of housing in West Traverse Township is single-family detached homes.[22] This aligns with the high homes values and high ownership rates. The lack of diverse housing types may be another factor that prevents younger households from entering the housing market.

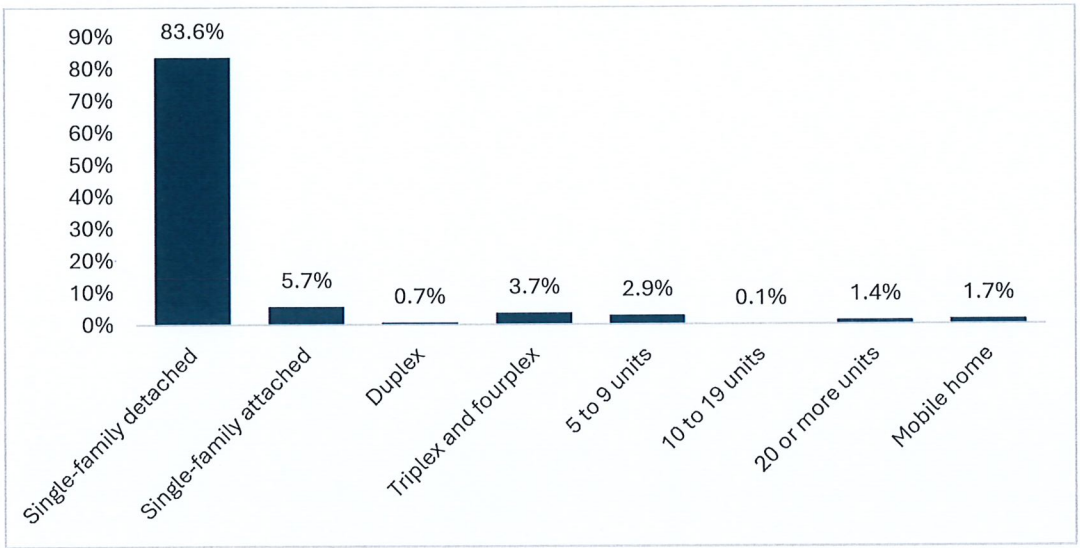
[19] American Community Survey, 2022 5 Year Estimates, S1501

[20] American Community Survey, 2022 5-Year Estimates, DP04.

[21] American Community Survey, 2022 5 Year Estimates, B25004.

[22] American Community Survey, 2022 5-Year Estimates, DP04.

Figure **04**: Types of Housing in West Traverse Township



Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, DP04

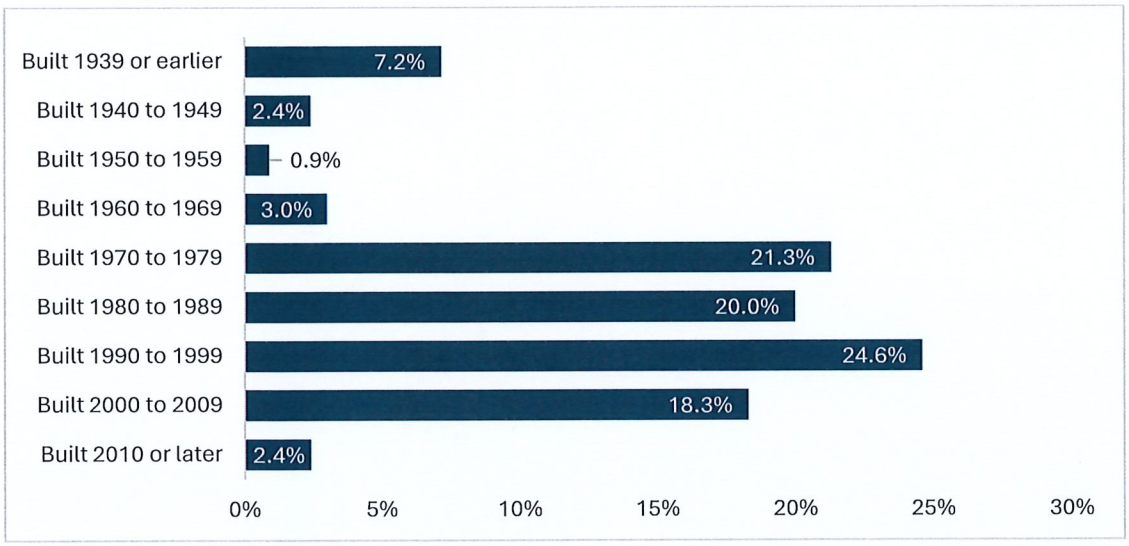
Housing Age

The age of housing in a community matters because it significantly impacts the availability of housing options that meet the needs of residents. For example, factors like accessibility, energy efficiency, and maintenance costs may affect the affordability and quality of life for the household. Older homes might require more renovations to accommodate accessibility needs while newer homes may offer features like energy-efficient appliances and modern layouts.[23] Most homes in West Traverse Township are newer, with 86.6% of housing units being constructed after 1970.[24] As long as units are maintained, they should continue to serve the community and remain in good quality.

[23] Erika Zelaya, Urban Institute, How to Meet the Housing Needs of Older Adults Aging in Place, 1-24-2025, housingmatters.urban.org/articles/how-meet-housing-needs-older-adults-aging-place#:~:text=More%20than%2010%20million%20households,building%20this%20type%20of%20unit.

[24] American Community Survey, 2022 5-Year Estimates, DP04.

Figure **05**: Portion of Housing Built by Decade



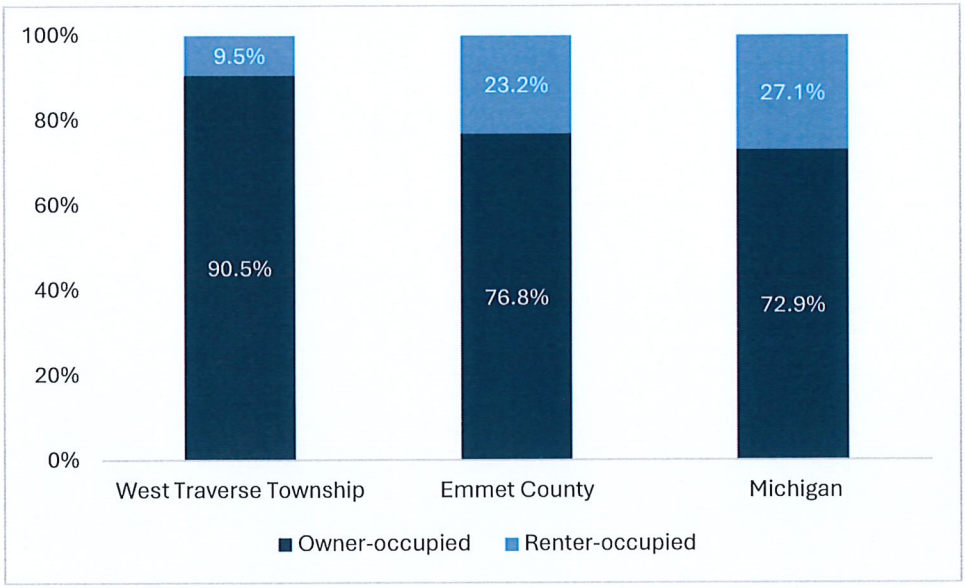
Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, DP04

Home Ownership

Homeowners are a large majority in West Traverse Township, (90.5% of households are owner-occupied.).[25] The homeowner rate in West Traverse exceeds both the rest of Emmet County (76.8%) and the State of Michigan (72.9%).[26] The low portion of renter households in West Traverse is likely affected by high home values, resulting in high rents that are less attainable.

[25] American Community Survey, 2022 5 Year Estimates, DP04.
[26] Ibid.

Figure **06**: Owner Vs. Renter Households, 2022

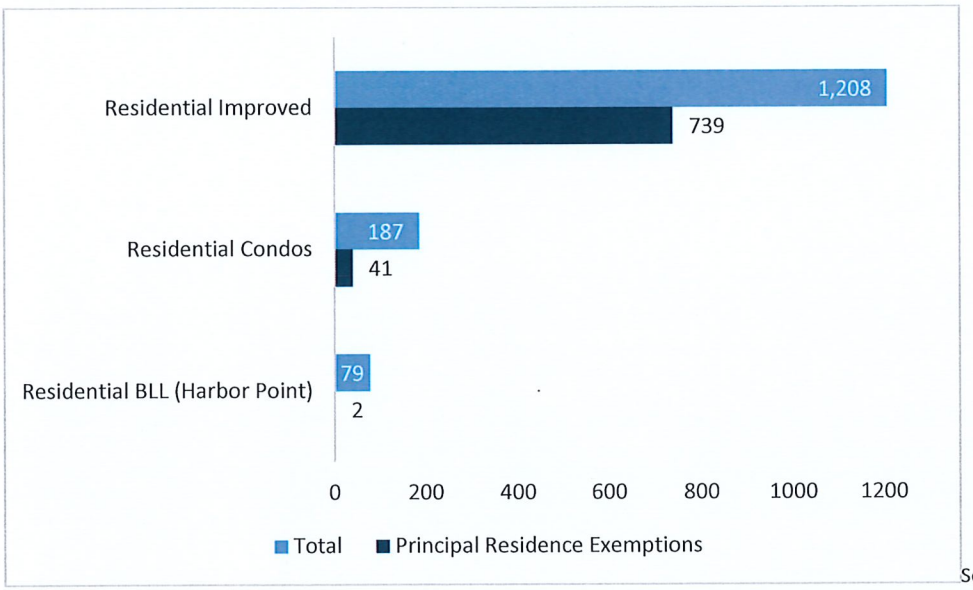


Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, DP04

Principal Residence Exemptions

In Michigan, a Principal Residence Exemption (PRE) reduces a homeowner's property taxes by exempting their primary residence from the local school operating tax. This exemption is only available for residential properties. To be eligible for a PRE the home must be owner-occupied, with the owner's drivers license and voter registration reflecting this address. Only one PRE can be claimed at a time, whether in Michigan or outside of it. The figure "Properties with a PRE, Compared to Total Units" shows that there are 784 total exemptions in West Traverse Township, about 53.1% of the total units, as of the Summer of 2025. The chart includes a breakdown of the portion of properties with PREs for various residential types. Residential BLL represents "Buildings on Leased Land". Properties within the Harbor Point Resort community have this designation because of their ownership arrangement with the Harbor Point Association. Within Harbor Point, the houses are the personal property of the owner, but the underlying land is owned by the Harbor Point Association, who leases it to the homeowner.

Figure **07**: Properties with a PRE, Compared to Total Units

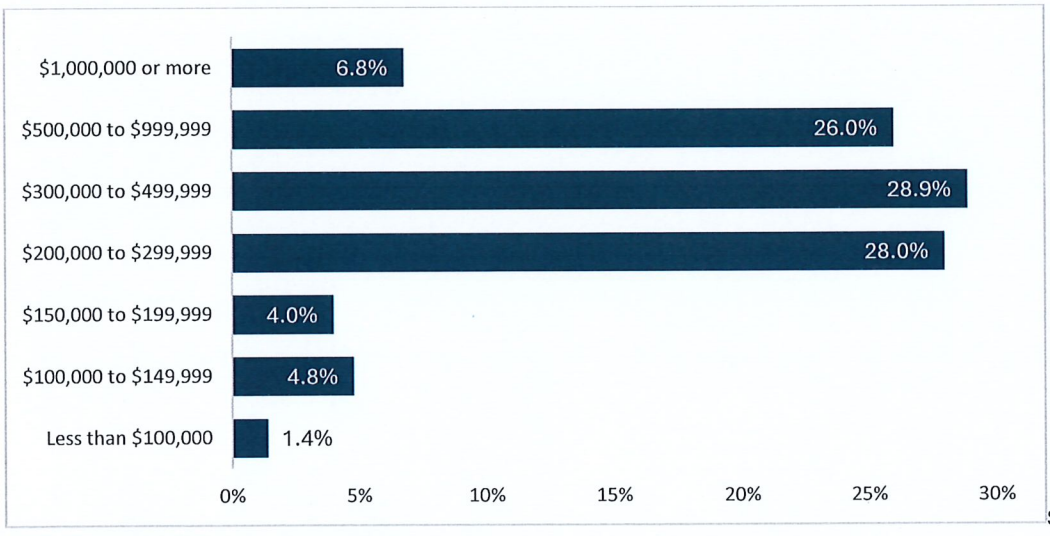


Source: West Traverse Township

Home Values

The median value of an owner-occupied home in West Traverse Township was $343,600 in 2022, a 50.2% increase from $228,800 in 2010.[27] Over 90% of households were valued higher than $200,000, with the largest portion of households (28.9%) being valued between $300,000 and $499,999.[28]

Figure **08**: Owner-Occupied Home Values, 2022



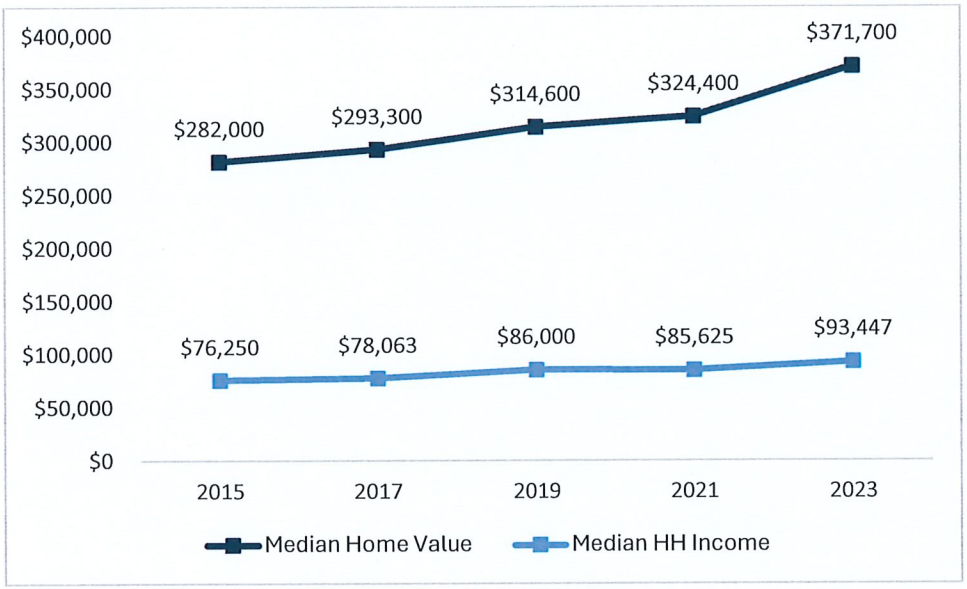
Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, DP04

The figure "Median Home Value Vs. Median Household Income, 2015-2023" compares how median home values in West Traverse have increased compared to median household incomes. Home values increased

[27] American Community Survey, 2023 5 Year Estimates, DP04.
[28] Ibid.

by 31.8% between 2015 and 2023, while incomes grew by 22.6%.[29] In 2015 the median value of a home was $282,000, about 3.7 times higher than median household income. By 2023, this same figure was 4 times higher than the median household income.[30] Historically, the rule of thumb from financial experts is that a buyer should not pay more than 2.6 times their household income for a home, something far exceeded in West Traverse Township.[31] With the ever increasing price of housing however, this is something that is observed in many places nationally, making affording to buy a home beyond the reach of many.

Figure **09**: Median Home Value Vs. Median Household Income, 2015-2023



Housing Cost and Affordability in West Traverse Township

Across the State, housing affordability remains a significant challenge for many homeowners and prospective homebuyers. According to Michigan's 2022 Statewide Housing Plan, home prices surged by 84% between January 2013 and October 2021, in contrast to a national average increase of 48% during the same timeframe.[32]

Defining Housing Affordability

Affordable: Households spend <30% of income on housing costs.

Unaffordable: Households spend 30%-50% of income on housing costs.

Severely Unaffordable: Households spend >50% of income on housing costs.

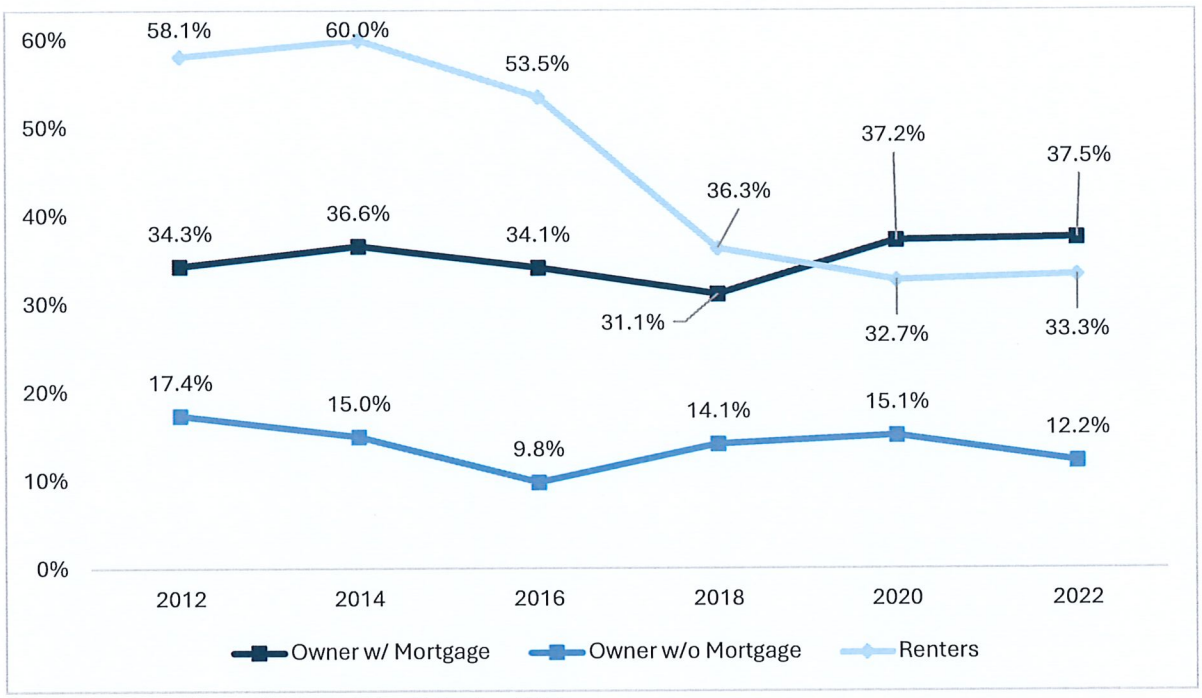
Source: Department of Health and Human Services

The figure "Cost Burdened Households, 2022" shows cost burdened households in West Traverse Township broken down

[29] American Community Survey, 2015-2023 5 Year Estimates, DP03&DP04.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Richard Florida, Bloomberg, Where the House-Price-to-Income Ratio Is Most Out of Whack, 2-4-2025, www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-05-29/how-many-years-of-income-does-a-home-in-your-city-cost
[32] Michigan Housing Development Authority, 2022 Statewide Housing Plan, 11-18-2024, www.michigan.gov/mshda/-/media/Project/Websites/mshda/developers/Statewide-Housing-Plan/MI-Statewide-Housing-Plan_Final-112723.pdf?rev=4f844882abac481faa8f3361138ec189&hash=F2BEA0EF26CB69CD1E7ED3C5A204D690

by owner-occupied households with and without mortgages, and renter households from 2012 to 2022; cost-burdened households for homeowners without a mortgage and for renters both observed a decline during this period, while the cost burden for households with a mortgage showed a slight increase.[33]

Figure **10**: Cost Burdened Households, 2022



Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, DP04

Seasonal Population in Emmet County

Northwest lower Michigan's popularity as a tourist destination is not surprising when looking at its natural beauty, provided by expansive lands including forests, lakes, rivers, and massive stretches of Lake Michigan shoreline. The region features charming communities and makes it an attractive spot for people looking for recreation as well as tranquility. Outdoor activities are abundant, with options for boating, golfing, camping, hiking, birding, and off-roading. Networks Northwest conducted a Seasonal Population study in 2022 to estimate how many people visited the 10 counties that make up northwest lower Michigan annually.[34] The population in Emmet County fluctuates as part-time residents come and leave throughout the year, peaking in June, July, and August at 13,504 residents for the summer tourist season. In contrast, the part-time population is about 2,532 in May (the beginning of tourist season and 3,798 in September (the end of tourist season), reflecting the transition around peak months.[35]

The overnight population also shows a marked increase during the summer, rising from 38,367 in May to a peak of 42,011 in July, before tapering off to 34,779 in September. This trend gives Emmet County a total estimated population of 89,628 in July and 89,514 in August. The average for the rest of the year is approximately 48,480, showing a drop off from the peak summer numbers.[36] While West Traverse sees

[33] American Community Survey, 2015-2022 5 Year Estimates, DP04.
[34] Networks Northwest, 2022 Seasonal Population Study, 10-22-2024, www.networksnorthwest.org/userfiles/filemanager/49nwypzbp28vz3voy6gk/
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.

just a percentage of the total seasonal visitors to Emmet County, any small increase in overnight population will likely place a burden on the community, as some of these visitors rely on housing stock as accommodations. Temporary visitors staying in short term rental housing (like Airbnb or VRBO) remove full-time housing for residents, effectively reducing the available housing units.

Table **08**: Seasonal Population, 2022

	May	June	July	August	September	Rest of Year Average
Full-Time Population	34,112	34,112	34,112	34,112	34,112	34,112
Part-time Population	2,532	13,504	13,504	13,504	3,798	2,833
Overnight Population	38,367	40,136	42,011	41,898	34,779	11,535
Total	**75,011**	**87,752**	**89,628**	**89,514**	**72,690**	**48,480**

Source: Networks Northwest

Assessment of Needs in Housing in West Traverse Township

While most housing units within the Township are owner-occupied, there is a need for units available to rent. A community needs rental housing to provide affordable housing options for a wider population, including those transitioning into homeownership, students, young professionals, low-income individuals, and people with fluctuating income. Housing people in various life stages ultimately supports economic stability and overall community well-being by ensuring access to adequate shelter for all residents. There needs to be spaces to support low-income residents as they comprise much of the local workforce that operates in the goods and services sectors.

For a housing assessment, housing needs are broken down by housing costs as a percentage of the median income for Emmet County. The classes are represented as a percentage of the median income for the County, known as area median income (AMI). The demand for housing is supported by the Housing Needs Assessment, a study conducted by Bowen National Research. The housing needs assessment was conducted for 10 northern Michigan counties, including Emmet County.[37] The study shows that while an almost 10% increase in housing units was attained in the County between 2010 and 2020, the rate has stagnated this decade, and only an additional 1% increase in housing stock was anticipated between 2022 and 2027.[38] The data shows that rental units are needed at all price points in West Traverse Township, with the need at each price point in the table "Rental Housing Gap Estimates (2022 - 2027)".

Table **09**: Rental Housing Gap Estimates (2022 - 2027)

Percent of Median Income	≤ 50%	51%-80%	81%-120%	121%+
Household Income Range	≤$41,600	$41,601-$66,560	$66,561-$99,840	$99,841+
Monthly rent range	≤$1,040	$1,041-$1,664	$1,665-$2,496	$2,497+
Overall Units Needed	21	12	6	8

Source: Bowen National Research

[37] Housing Needs Assessment, Bowen National Research, Housing North, 11-6-2024.

[38] Ibid.

The table "For-Sale Housing Gap Estimates (2022 - 2027)" shows the housing need in West Traverse Township for owner-occupied units. The data shows a total need of 135 housing units across all income levels, with the largest need being in the 81%-120% AMI range.

Table **10**: For-Sale Housing Gap Estimates (2022 - 2027)

Percent of Median Income	≤ 50%	51%-80%	81%-120%	121%+
Household Income Range	≤$41,600	$41,601-$66,560	$66,561-$99,840	$99,841+
For Sale Price Point	≤$138,666	$138,667-$221,867	$221,868-$332,800	$332,801+
Overall Units Needed	30	25	46	34

Source: Bowen National Research

The data forecasts that to meet the need for potential housing between 2022 and 2027, the Township should explore options to add long term rental and owner-occupied units.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- To attract younger residents, West Traverse Township should explore methods to provide attainable (affordable is listed above) housing, diverse job opportunities, and entertainment options. Outdoor recreation opportunities, which are plentiful in the region, also attract residents. Continued improvement to these assets will protect them and ensure that they remain a desirable attraction.
- Data shows that median home values are increasing faster than the increases in income. While incomes are higher in West Traverse than in Emmet County, housing prices still appear to be getting out of reach of what is attainable for many residents, including those who earn lower incomes.
- Exploring the development of new housing types, at differing price ranges, can provide a method to meet projected demands.
- With such a large portion of older residents, West Traverse Township should ensure that planning efforts consider these people to meet the needs of aging residents including access to healthcare, nutritious meals, transportation, and mental health and emotional enrichment activities. Collaborations with nearby communities and Emmet County to meet these needs can help to ensure senior residents are served efficiently.

Chapter 3: Natural Resources

Natural Resources

The abundance of beauty and natural resources has driven the settlement and development in the areas surrounding Little Traverse Bay for thousands of years. Residents and visitors cherish the beautiful natural scenery, clear blue waters, sandy beaches, scenic trails, expansive forests, rolling landscape, wildlife, and its mild summers and snowy winters.

Be it for boating, swimming, skiing, golfing, hunting, biking, wildlife viewing, or snowmobiling, resort goers and tourists have been coming to the area for over 100 years. When describing the area, people usually mention the glistening blue bay, the inland lakes and rivers, the wooded hillsides, the variety of wildlife, or the depth of the snow. The natural resources and resulting quality of life amenities have undoubtedly contributed to the growth of the Township.

Growth that is not well-managed can threaten or diminish natural resources and quality of life. Development can have negative impacts on rural and lake viewsheds, water quality, forest lands, and wetlands. Therefore, it is critical to understand existing natural features in the Township when planning for its future. By understanding the climate, geology, topography, soils, forest cover, and water resources, growth can be directed into the least environmentally sensitive areas.



Thorne Swift Nature Preserve Overlooking Little Traverse Bay, Source: West Traverse Township

CLIMATE

Moderate summers offer a cool escape from urban heat, while snowy winters provide abundant opportunities for winter recreation. Beyond recreation and daily weather shifts, climate conditions also affect building code requirements, influence infrastructure considerations like road maintenance and utility depths, and guide planning for erosion control and energy efficiency. Like many coastal areas in northern Michigan, West Traverse Township experiences unique climate patterns influenced by the "Lake Effect." This phenomenon can lead to extended winters that linger into spring due to the lakes' cold temperatures rising slower than weather temperatures and prolonged fall weather as the warm lake temperatures linger late into the year.

The Midwestern Regional Climate Center at Purdue University has been collecting weather data since 1953 for cities and villages across the Midwest. For this analysis, data from the nearest weather station, located just north of West Traverse Township in Cross Village, has been utilized. The data shown in the table "Average Monthly Temperatures 2022-2024" shows average temperatures for each month from 2022 to 2024, with the coldest month being January at an average of 23.1°F and the warmest month being July with a mild average temperature of 65.5°F. [1]

Table **11**: Average Monthly Temperatures 2022-2024

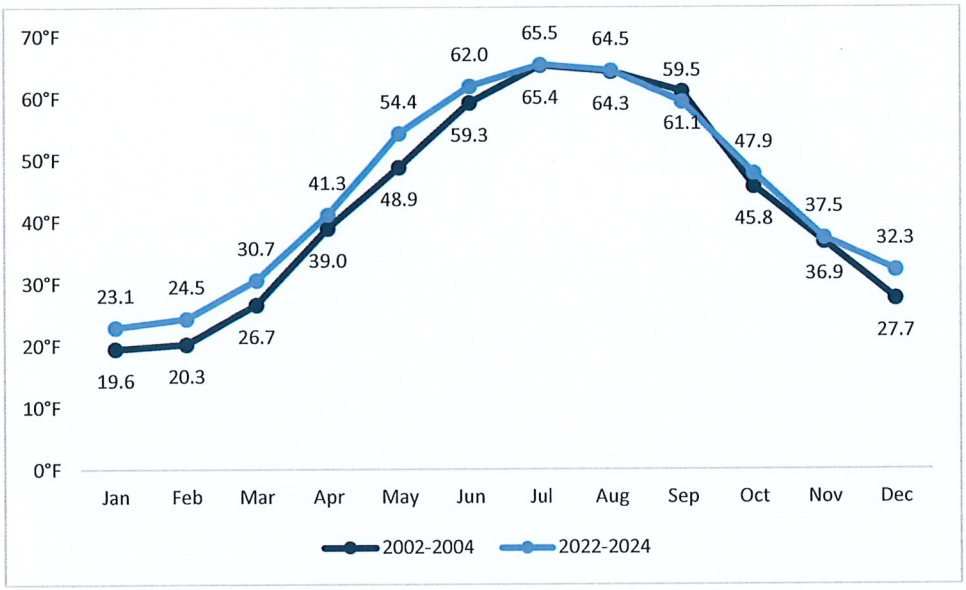
Month	Average (°F)	Average Daily Minimum Temperature Recorded (°F)	Average Daily Maximum Temperature Recorded (°F)
January	23.1	18.0	28.2
February	24.5	15.8	33.2
March	30.7	20.5	40.9
April	41.3	31.5	51.0
May	54.4	43.7	65.1
June	62.0	53.3	70.7
July	65.5	57.4	73.5
August	64.5	56.4	72.6
September	59.5	52.3	66.8
October	47.9	41.2	54.5
November	37.5	30.8	44.3
December	32.3	26.9	37.7

Source: Midwestern Regional Climate Center

The figure "Monthly Average Temperature 2002-2004 vs. 2022-2024" shows a comparison of monthly average temperatures for two separate three year periods, spanning a total of 20 years. The data shows a slight increase in the average annual temperature from 42.9°F in the 2002-2004 period to 45.3°F during the 2022-2024 period. This temperature increase may be of concern, especially if the trend continues as rising temperatures in coastal areas can lead to more flooding and extreme weather events. The Township should continue to monitor weather and the shoreline and note any changes that may require policy and zoning changes to mitigate any effects on residents and structures.

[1] Midwest Regional Climate Center, cli-MATE database, Cross Village, 2-18-2025, https://mrcc.purdue.edu/CLIMATE/

Figure **11**: Monthly Average Temperature 2002-2004 vs. 2022-2024



Source: Midwestern Regional Climate Center

PRIME FARMLANDS

Prime soil, or prime farmland, is defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as land possessing the ideal combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops.[2] To qualify as prime farmland, the land must be available for agricultural use, including cultivated land, pastureland, or forestland, but not urban or developed areas. Key attributes of prime farmland include a reliable moisture supply, a favorable growing season, appropriate soil acidity or alkalinity, low rock content, and good permeability to water and air. Prime soils should not be excessively erodible, frequently flooded, or waterlogged for extended periods. Typically, these soils feature gentle slopes ranging from 0 to 6 percent.[3]

The identification and preservation of prime soils are vital to sustaining the nation's food supply, as high-quality farmland is a limited resource.[4] From a planning perspective, strategies to protect farmland often involve zoning regulations coupled with protective measures like buffer requirements. Buffers—strips of vegetated land surrounding farmland—help reduce erosion and prevent pollution from soil runoff.[5] Another effective strategy is the implementation of Right-to-Farm ordinances, which, in Michigan, are governed by the Right to Farm Act (Act 93 of 1981) under the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD). This program safeguards farms from nuisance complaints related to standard agricultural and maintenance practices, supporting long-term agricultural viability.[6]

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[2] U.S Department of Agriculture, Prime Farmland Soils, 2-20-2025, efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/CO/5a_Prime_Farmland_Definition.pdf

[3] U.S Department of Agriculture, Prime and Other Important Farmland, 2-19-2025, usda.gov

[4] Ibid.

[5] State of Michigan, Michigan Right to Farm Act 93 of 1981, 2-20-2025, www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-Act-93-of-1981.pdf

[6] Ibid.

The transfer or purchase of development rights is another effective strategy permitted under the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act and administered by MDARD.[7] This approach involves an agreement between landowners and developers, allowing landowners to sell the development rights to their property to another party. This type of agreement offers two key benefits: first, it ensures that the landowner's property remains protected from development that could harm natural resources, and second, it enables the developer to apply the purchased development rights to a new project, allowing for a larger or denser development.[8] To implement this strategy, the Township must establish specific "sending zones" (areas from which development rights can be transferred) and "receiving zones" (areas where these rights can be applied). Once in place, this tool can effectively guide development in West Traverse, balancing growth with conservation goals.[9]

The map "Prime Soils in West Traverse Township" shows the location of different soil qualities, there different categories are explained here:

- *Not Prime Farmland* soil lacks nutrients needed to grow crops and may be too rocky.
- *Farmland of Local Importance* are tracts of land used agriculturally, for foraging, or some other related use that are not necessarily designated as agriculture land.[10]
- *Prime Farmland* Land that is best characteristics for producing food or vegetation.[11]

Prime Soils are limited throughout the Township. Farmland of Local importance is the most prevalent, indicating that farming is not widespread in the area. This is not surprising as West Traverse Township is within hardiness zone 5b according to the USDA.[12] Hardiness zone 5b is characterized by short growing seasons, and a small window of frost-free periods typically from mid-June to early-September.[13]

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[7] Michigan Legislature, Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (Excerpt) Act 110 of 2006, 2-19-2025, www.legislature.mi.gov/Laws/MCL?objectName=mcl-125-3508#:~:text=(1)%20A%20development%20rights%20ordinance,and%20the%20method%20of%20payment.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] United States Department of Agriculture, Prime and Unique Farmlands, 11-5-2024, efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/va/PrimeandUniqueFarmlands.pdf

[11] Ibid.

[12] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Plant Hardiness Zone Map, 2-23-2025, planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/

[13] Wilson Bros Gardens, USDA Plant Hardiness Zones, 2-23-2025, www.wilsonbrosgardens.com/usda-plant-hardiness-zone-map.html#:~:text=Zone%205b%20has%20a%20low,regions%20of%20western%20Canada%2C%20central

Map **01**: Prime Soils in West Traverse Township



Prime Soils

Sources: Michigan Open Data Portal, West Traverse Township, Emmet County, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

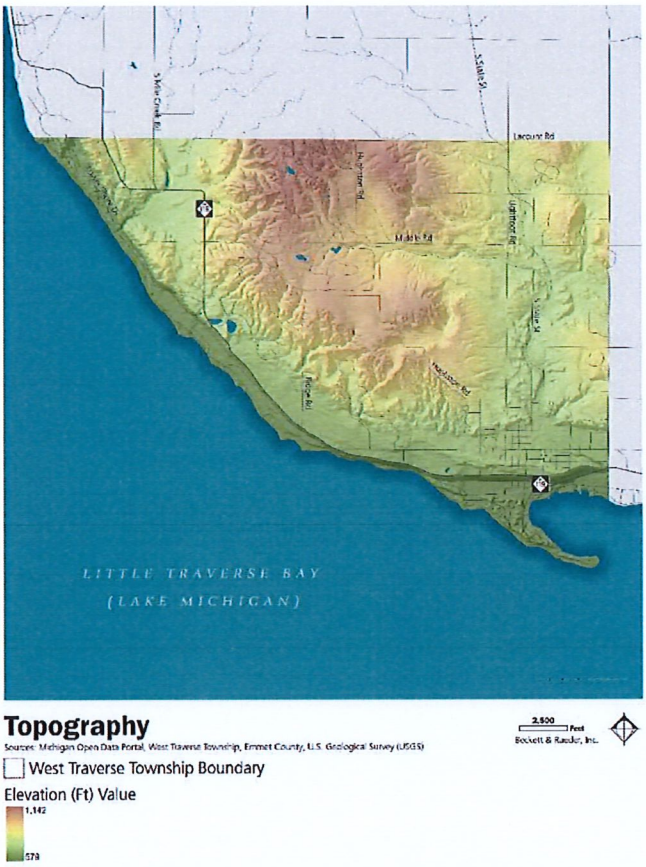
2,500 Feet

Beckett & Raeder, Inc.

- West Traverse Township Boundary
- Not Prime Farmland
- Farmland of Local Importance
- Prime Farmland

GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Map **02**: Topography in West Traverse Township



The geology of West Traverse Township is typical of the Northern Michigan region with bedrock formed over 300 million years ago during the Middle Devonian period of the Paleozoic Era. In contrast, the surface geology developed much more recently—though still ancient—approximately 10,000 to 12,000 years ago through continental glacial activity. Repeated glacier advances and retreats created patterns of erosion and deposition throughout the area.[14]

The formation of Little Traverse Bay resulted from a glacial lobe that gradually widened and deepened a pre-glacial river basin. Many of the lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands characteristic of the region were also formed by melting ice blocks embedded in the soil as glaciers retreated.[15] The large hills in the central portion of the Township, surrounded by large depressions, are clear indicators of glacial activity. These hills, now home to a golf course and surrounding uses, consist of sand and gravel deposited by the glacier. Such geological formations are known as glacial moraines, which are highly valued for their gravel and mineral resources.[16] The remainder of the Township, particularly around Little Traverse Bay and the inland lakes, primarily consists of lacustrine (lake-related) sand and gravel, deposited along the ancient glacial Great Lakes shoreline.

The topography in West Traverse Township, according to the U.S. geological survey, ranges from approximately 579 feet above sea level (which is the shoreline level of Lake Michigan) to 1,142 feet in the hillier inland areas. This leads to a quick gain of almost 600 feet in elevation within just a mile or less of the shoreline. The resulting slopes within the Township are a concern for development. Flat areas require less effort to build on and are easier for residents to move about. Steep slopes can pose challenges such as difficult access, erosion control issues, limitations for septic systems, and increased excavation costs.[17]

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[14] State of Michigan, Middle Devoinian Transverse Group in Charlevoix and Emmet Counties, Michigan, 2-24-2025, www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/egle/Documents/Programs/GRMD/Catalog/05/GIMDL-GSA87J.PDF?rev=15c99901f0f743e48830691b98f83527#:~:text=The%20Middle%20Devonian%20Traverse%20Group,portion%20of%20Michigan's%20Southern%20Peninsula.

[15] Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, Little Traverse Bay Watershed, 2-24-2025, watershedcouncil.org/watersheds/little-traverse-bay-watershed/#:~:text=Lake%20Michigan%20and%20Little%20Traverse,on%20the%20bottom%20of%20each.

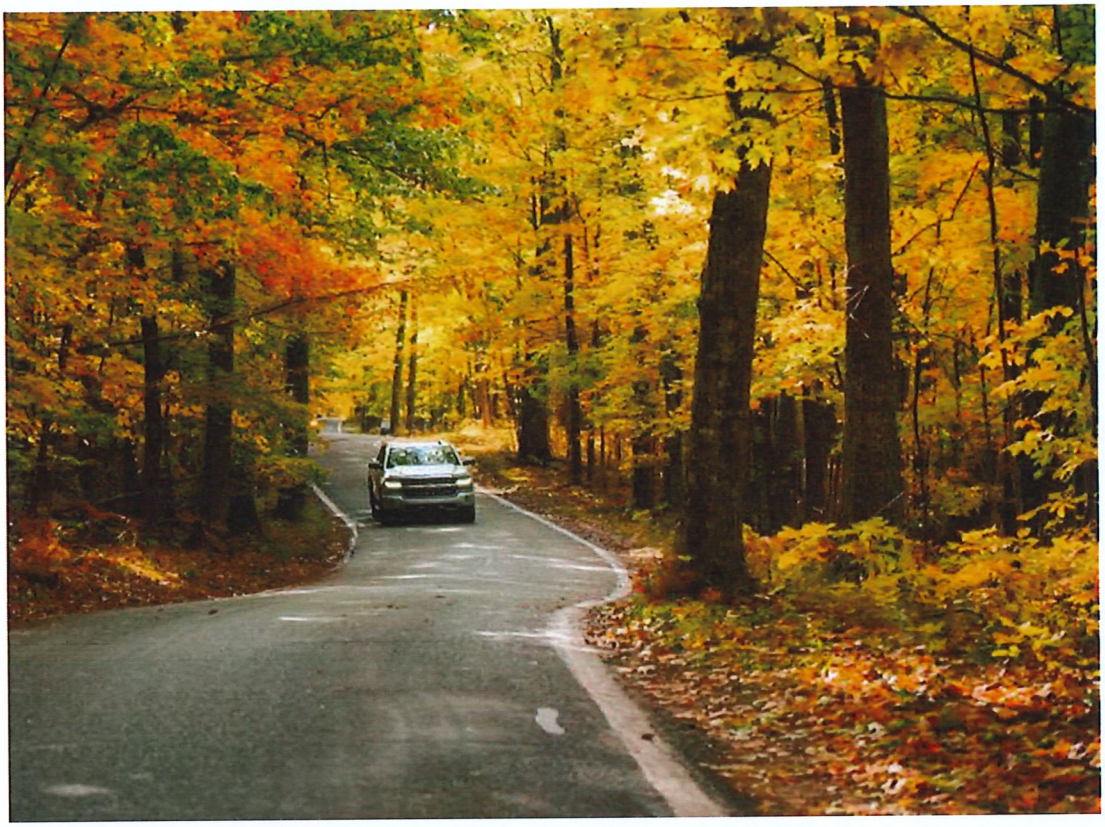
[16] National Park Service, Terminal and Recessional Moraines, 2-24-2025, www.nps.gov/articles/terminalandrecessionalmoraines.htm

[17] Nashua Regional Planning Commission, Steep Slopes, 2-23-2025, http://cms5.revize.com/revize/nrpc/Document_Center/Publications/iTRaC/2007/FS12_Slopes.pdf

TUNNEL OF TREES/M-119

Figure **12**: Map of Tunnel of Trees





Tunnel of Trees Source: PureMichigan

The M-119 Tunnel of Trees Corridor is designated as a Scenic Heritage Route that runs about 20 miles along the Lake Michigan coastline in Emmet County through West Traverse Township between Harbor Springs and Cross Village.[18] The Tunnel of Trees offers breathtaking views of the picturesque northern Michigan landscape, enveloped by dense woods that captivate travelers. The value of this route to the region is immense and should be protected for future generations.

WOODLANDS

Woodlands are found throughout the Township and play an important role in the quality of life. Woodlands provide many environmental benefits like mitigating the effects of flooding, blocking excessive noise, controlling erosion caused by stormwater runoff, improving air quality by absorbing certain air pollutants, and creating recreational opportunities.[19] According to the U.S. Geological Survey Woodland Cover database, over half of all Township land is presently forested. Many of the forested areas in the Township are managed by various land management entities and preserve them, ensuring that the many ecosystems in the area remain healthy.

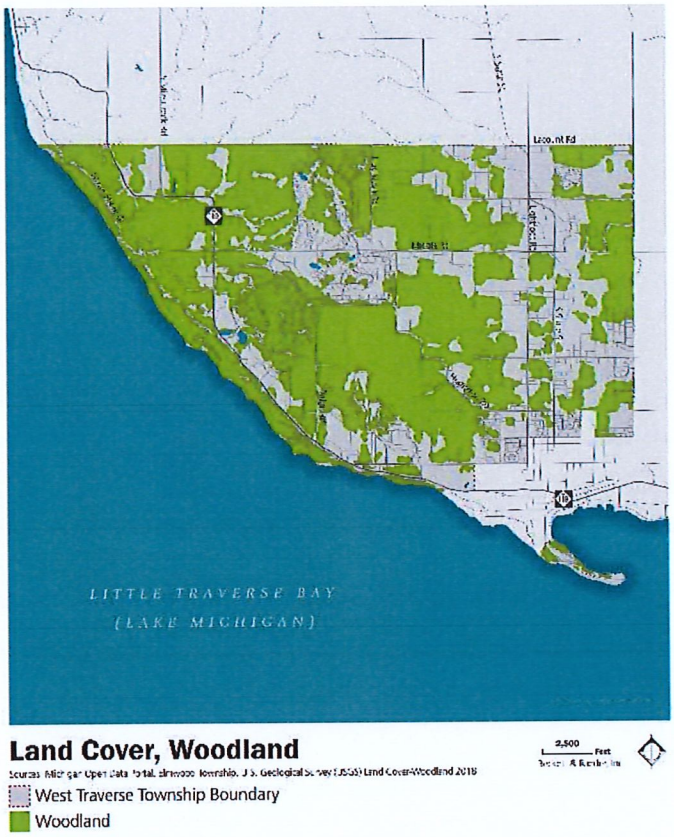
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[18] M-119 Tunnel of Trees Scenic Heritage Route, 2-14-2025, www.m119tunneloftrees.org/learn.asp

[19] World Resources Institute, How Forests Near and Far Benefit People in Cities, 2-24-2025, www.wri.org/insights/forests-benefit-cities#:~:text=Trees%20and%20forests%20can%20provide%20tranquil%20spaces,tend%20to%20have%20better%20spatial%20awareness%20and

In late March and early April of 2025, the Township, along with a nine county area across Northern Michigan, experienced a disastrous ice storm that impacted its woodland areas. The full effect of the storm has not yet been determined, but numerous trees within the forested portions of the Township were destroyed or significantly damaged.

Map **03**: Tree Coverage in West Traverse Township



WETLANDS

Wetlands are areas where water covers the soil or is present either at or near the surface of the soil all year or for varying periods of time during the year, including during the growing season. Wetlands are also referred to as a marsh, swamp, or bog. Water saturation (hydrology) largely determines how the soil develops and the types of plant and animal communities living in and on the soil. Wetlands may support both aquatic and terrestrial species. The prolonged presence of water creates conditions that favor the growth of specially adapted plants (hydrophytes) and promote the development of characteristic wetland (hydric) soils.[20]

[20] U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, What is a Wetland? 2-23-2025, www.epa.gov/wetlands/what-wetland



Thorne Swift Nature Preserve Source: Onlyinyourstate.com

In the past, wetlands were considered wastelands, and many were filled for development as their natural state often was not seen as having significant value. More recently, awareness of the important benefits of wetlands to our entire ecological system has become more known. Some of these benefits include:

- Wetlands help to improve the water quality of our lakes, rivers, and streams by acting as a filtering mechanism. Wetlands can also absorb runoff stormwater which helps to reduce flooding.
- Wetlands are typically connected to underground water systems and not only filter water going back underground but also gives it a path for water to move in and out of the groundwater systems.
- Wetlands provide habitats for plants, fish, and other wildlife.
- Wetland vegetation helps to hold soil in place and vice versa, helping to control erosion along shorelines.

While the practice of developing on wetlands was widespread in other parts of the state it appears that the practice was not as prevalent in West Traverse Township. The most substantial wetland areas in the Township are in the western wooded areas, forming marshy areas throughout. Wetland areas in the rest of the Township are largely surrounding ponds and streams.

Map **04**: Wetlands in West Traverse Township



Wetlands

Sources: Michigan Open Data Portal, Emmet County, Michigan Department of Environment Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) Open Data, United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)

2,500 Feet

Beckett & Raeder, Inc.

- West Traverse Township Boundary
- Freshwater Emergent Wetland
- Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland
- Freshwater Pond Wetland
- Lake Wetland
- Riverine Wetland

WILDLIFE IN WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP

West Traverse Township is home to a rich variety of plants and wildlife characteristic of northern Michigan. Common wildlife species include deer, coyote, bobcat, fox, porcupine, opossum, skunk, rabbit, squirrel, mink, muskrat, turtles, and a wide array of bird species. The vegetation in the area is equally diverse, featuring many varieties of ferns, wild sarsaparilla, northern starflower, and hundreds of other plant species. Little Traverse Bay is well-known for its exceptional fishing opportunities, offering a healthy and diverse fishery with species such as trout, salmon, bass, pike, and panfish.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

There are a few sites throughout the Township that could create an environmental concern and should be monitored to ensure potential environmental impacts are mitigated. In Michigan, the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) provides regulatory oversight of underground storage tanks that store regulated substances like hazardous materials, petroleum, and other chemicals.[21] Two tanks regulated by LARA are located at the Birchwood Farms Golf and Country Club. While these tanks are not shown to be a contamination issue at the current time, continuous monitoring is needed so that the status of these tanks are known. Additionally, one other regulated tank is located within the Township, just east of Birchwood Farms at the southeast corner of where Hughston Road dead ends into Middle Road in a field that is used for agriculture.[22]

Located on Hughston Road, is an old dump site that was used for many years by residents of West Traverse Township, Harbor Springs, and surrounding communities. While this site is no longer used, contaminants may be on site. The site should be inspected before any development occurs.

SEPTIC LIMITATIONS

The Township has septic limitations related to steep slopes of greater than 18%, hydric (wetland) soils, or both. These limitations do not automatically preclude the development of specific sites. Developers should realize, however, that construction on some soils may be more costly, in time and money. Due to technological changes, the options for waste disposal systems are evolving, and thus the significance of these identified limitations may be reduced in the future. A more detailed analysis of soils by the District Health Department will determine the suitability for siting a septic system. Health Department approval is required by State law for private systems.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- West Traverse Township possesses a wide array of natural resources, that are inseparable from its identity and the quality of life of its residents.
- These resources have been protected by the Township, its residents, and various entities through continuous stewardship and education. As development continues these efforts must be continued to ensure that the ecosystem remains healthy and stable.
- Planning efforts as well as determinations for future land use should be made in a way that natural assets are protected. When development is undertaken near sensitive areas, the Township should ensure that it is done with the asset in mind.

[21] State of Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, Underground Storage Tanks, 3-1-2025, www.michigan.gov/lara/bureau-list/bfs/storage-tanks/underground
[22] Ibid.

Chapter 4: Existing Land Use

Existing Land Use

TOWNSHIP DESCRIPTION

West Traverse Township is located along the Lake Michigan Shoreline, on the northern side of Little Traverse Bay. The shoreline area of the Township has some sand dunes and very steep topography, but much of the Township is gently rolling land with few developmental limitations. The Township is a resort-based community of 8,559.9 acres that is very scenic. The Heritage Highway traverses the Township and provides views of Lake Michigan.

2025 Township Assessing Records indicate 2,417 residential properties (comprised of 1,531 properties with a structure and 652 vacant properties), 173 Commercial/Industrial use properties (143 that are improved and 30 vacant), and 12 properties that are agricultural use. Other land uses present in the Township include Park/ Nature Preserve, and various types of Exempt Land Use, which are generally public use and not a part of the tax base.[1]

PATTERNS OF LAND DIVISIONS

As development occurs, larger tracts of land are generally broken down into smaller parcels. Therefore, studying the existing pattern of land divisions is one way to analyze the status of land use and development. Land division patterns for West Traverse Township are discussed below. In 2025, parcel sizes in the Township range considerably, with the largest parcel in the Township being 231 acres, owned by the Little Traverse Conservancy. In total the Little Traverse Conservancy owns more than 605 acres in West Traverse Township across 13 total properties.[2]

Small lot developments, site condominium projects, or larger planned unit developments (PUDs) are interspersed throughout the inland portions of the Township, such as Birchwood and Windward. Other small tract land divisions continue to occur as small parcels along the roads are split from larger parcels. In terms of land division patterns, it is worth noting that some of the newer residential developments in West Traverse Township are being created as site condominiums or PUDs rather than traditional subdivisions. These developments are created under different state statutes and often include commonly owned open space.

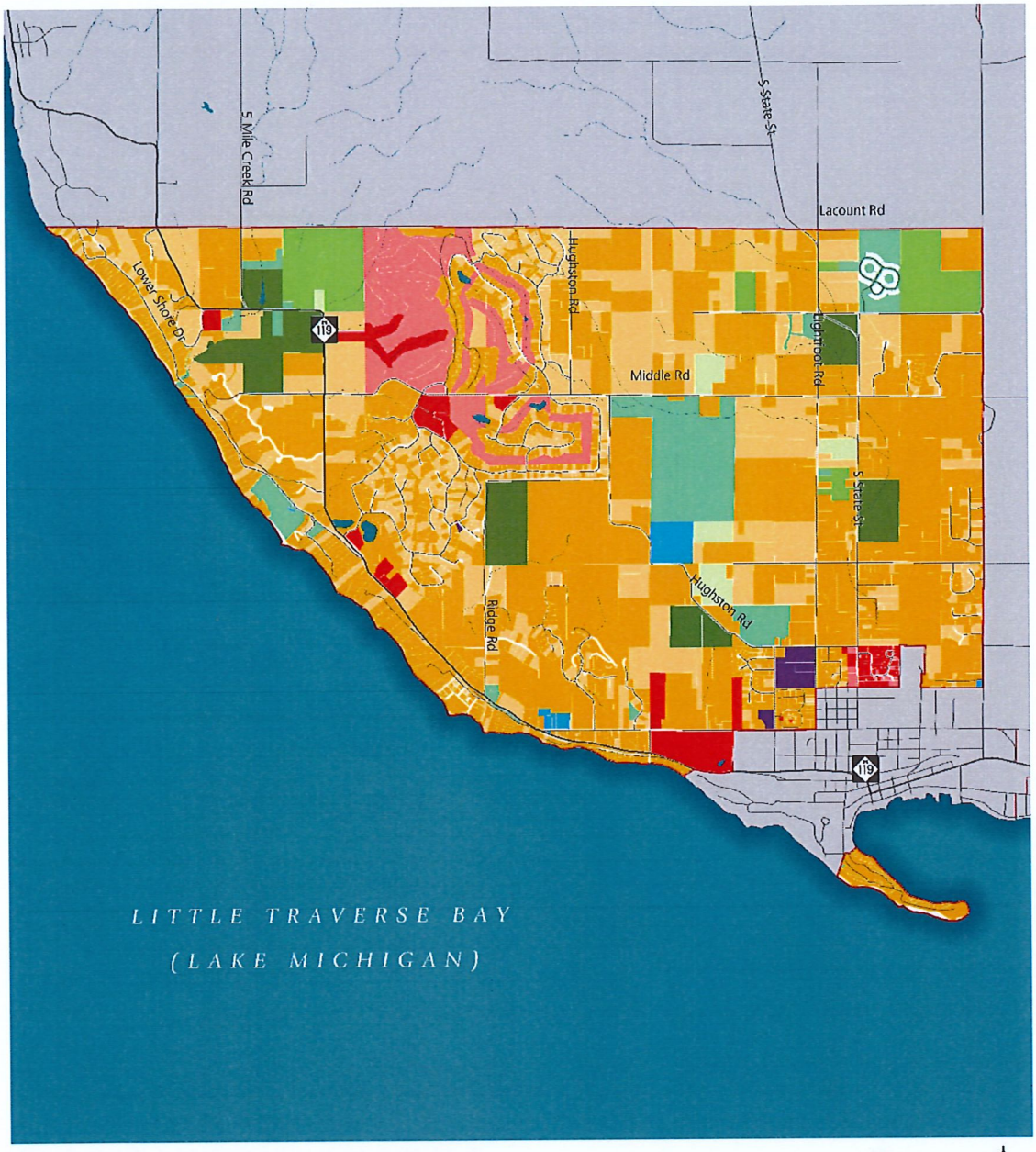
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[1] Emmet County, Equalization Department, 6-26-2025, https://emmetcounty.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=7426312e77a04530920120153c5a1fef

[2] Emmet County, Equalization Department, 6-27-2025, https://emmetcounty.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=7426312e77a04530920120153c5a1fef

EXISTING LAND USE STATISTICS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Map **05**: Existing Land Use in West Traverse Township



Existing Land Use Map

Sources: Michigan Open Data Portal, West Traverse Township, Emmet County

0.5 Miles

Beckett & Raeder, Inc.

Map Date: June 26, 2025

- West Traverse Township
- Park / Nature Preserve
- Agricultural, Improved
- Agricultural, Vacant
- Residential, Improved
- Residential, Vacant
- Commercial, Improved
- Commercial, Vacant
- Exempt, Local
- Exempt, Religious
- Exempt, Other

West Traverse Township's land area is approximately 13.3 square miles (8,559.9 acres), with the land uses present throughout the Township in the map "Existing Land Use in West Traverse Township". The table "Existing Land Use, 2025" shows the percent of the Township in each land use category. The existing land use map is a compilation of data from the State of Michigan, Emmet County, aerial photo interpretation, Township Planning Commission input and additional field checking.

The Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians (LTBBOI) currently has approximately 61.8 acres in West Traverse which is held in trust with the United States of America and used for residential purposes. Because federally recognized tribes have sovereign nation status, exclusive jurisdiction for Native American affairs rest with the Tribe and the federal government. Local units of government have no control over where the LTBBOI purchases land and what land is taken into trust for its benefit. Over the years, West Traverse Township has developed a positive relationship with LTBBOI leaders and continues to maintain open communications regarding development plans as they may occur.

Improved Vs. Vacant Land Uses

Some Township land uses are broken down by its status as "vacant" or "improved". The primary distinction between improved and vacant land is that improved land has infrastructure already in place such as roadways, utilities, and possible buildings already on site, whereas vacant land has none of these. Establishing infrastructure on site is a high cost of developing a location, so improved areas are much more optimal when attracting developers.[3]

Table **12**: Existing Land Use, 2025

Land Use Category	Acreage	Percent of Township Land Area	Number of Parcels
Residential, Improved	4183.4	48.9%	1531
Residential, Vacant	1790.5	20.9%	652
Undefined (ROW and Other)	507.5	5.9%	--
Commercial, Vacant	487.5	5.7%	30
Exempt, Other	454.0	5.3%	25
Park / Nature Preserve	392.9	4.6%	7
Agricultural, Improved	309.7	3.6%	6
Commercial, Improved	238.3	2.8%	143
Agricultural, Vacant	101.1	1.2%	6
Exempt, Local	52.7	0.6%	12
Exempt, Religious	42.3	0.5%	5
TOTAL	8,559.9	100%	2,417

Source: West Traverse Township, Emmet County Equalization

RESIDENTIAL

As can be seen from the Existing Land Use table and the Land Use map, the amount of land being used for residential purposes was just under 70 percent of the Township in 2025 (48.9% improved and 20.9% vacant). The pattern of residential development in the land use map shows that residential uses are located all throughout the Township with concentrations primarily located along the lakeshore, within the Birchwood Farms and Windward developments, and along the main roads.

[3] ATG Title, What is Unimproved Land & Is it Worth Buying?, 6-27-2025, atgtitle.com/what-is-unimproved-land-is-it-worth-buying/

COMMERCIAL

Commercial land uses encompass a wide range of businesses focused on the buying, selling, and trading of goods and services. The table "Existing Land Use, 2025" shows that the amount of land developed as commercial is 8.7% of the Township (2.8% improved and 5.9% vacant). The commercially used land is primarily located at the edge of Harbor Springs, and in the North of the Township at Birchwood Farms Golf and Country Club, where the vacant commercial land is primarily golf course property.

AGRICULTURAL

Agricultural Lands occupy over 5.8 percent or 410.8 acres of West Traverse Township land area in 2025; 309.7 acres of agricultural land is improved, while 101.1 acres are vacant. The land use map shows active agricultural lands are dispersed throughout the Township.

PARKS/NATURAL PRESERVES

Parks and natural preserves in West Traverse Township are areas of land set aside for conservation and recreation. This classification does not include all natural areas in the Township, because some are privately owned and classified differently. Properties under this classification account for 5.3% of Township land area, spanning approximately 454 acres across 25 properties.

EXEMPT LAND USES

Exempt land uses refer to properties or activities that are not subject to certain regulations, like zoning laws or property taxes, due to their specific purpose. These exemptions can vary by location and the type of land use. In West Traverse Township, these exempt land uses are divided into three categories: Local, Religious, and Other. The table "Exempt Land Use" shows how much land coverage belongs to each exempt land use category. In total, Exempt Land Uses cover 6.4% of total land area, with "Exempt, Other" covering the most land area at 454 acres.

Table **13**: Exempt Land Use

Land Use Category	Acreage	Percent of Township Land Area	Number of Parcels
Exempt, Other	454.0	5.3%	25
Exempt, Local	52.7	0.6%	12
Exempt, Religious	42.3	0.5%	5
TOTAL	549.1	6.4%	42

Source: West Traverse Township, Emmet County Equalization

UNDEFINED (RIGHT-OF-WAY AND OTHER)

Some land within the Township is not recorded as a part of any of the above land uses. Undefined is comprised land which does not have recorded data showing it under a classification. Right-of-Ways account for most of this classification. Right-of-way easement grants the right to pass over another's property, often for access to a road or waterway, or for utility purposes.[4] Right-of-ways include streets and roadways within the Township.

[4] Dingeman&Dancer, Michigan Land Use Law, 6-27-2025, https://www.ddc-law.com/michigan-land-use-law-faqs/

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- West Traverse Township is a resort-based community that is traversed by a scenic Heritage Highway.
- The majority of developed properties in the Township are used for residential purposes.
- Newer residential developments in the Township were created as site condominiums or PUDs rather than traditional subdivisions.

Chapter 5: Community Services, Facilities & Transportation

COMMUNITY SERVICES, FACILITIES, AND TRANSPORTATION

It is important to take into account all of the existing services, facilities and transportation options that exist in and around a township for planning purposes. By knowing what services, facilities and transportation options exist, we are able to better plan for the future.

WATER AND SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS

Two public water systems are available in West Traverse Township, one owned and operated by the City of Harbor Springs and the other by West Traverse Township. The City of Harbor Springs system serves approximately 105 residential customers primarily located on Harbor Point, Pine Trail, Forest Beach Drive, and along M-119 up to the intersection with Lake Road. In an area west of State Road and adjacent to the City of Harbor Springs, the Township's Pine Trail Forest Beach Sewer System system serves approximately 150 residential customers. Due to the number of public water customers, the Township has installed a water storage facility on property zoned "Public District". Additionally, a few areas are served by private community water systems, including Birchwood Farms Golf and Country Club, Windward and the Franklin Park Commercial/Industrial area.

Portions of West Traverse Township are served by two separate sewer systems; one system is owned by the City of Harbor Springs, and the other is owned by the Township. The Township system is operated and maintained under contract with Meade & Hunt. The City system is operated and maintained under contract with the Harbor Springs Area Sewage Disposal Authority. The Harbor Point area is served by the City of Harbor Springs system. Pine Trail and Forest Beach Drive are served by the West Traverse Township sewer system. A limited number of developments provide private community septic systems in the Township, including some at Birchwood Farms Golf and Country Club. However, most Township residents rely on on-site private wells for domestic drinking water and individual septic systems for disposals. All private drinking water wells and septic systems are regulated by the Health Department of Northwest Michigan.

There are a few residential developments which have community wells but have individual septic systems. This is the approach taken with the Birchwood Farms Golf and Country Club and Windward developments. It allows for development on small lots where achieving the required isolation distance between individual wells and individual septic fields would have been difficult. Two important determinants for siting a septic system are soil suitability and depth to bedrock. Chapter Three – Natural Resources discusses the geology and soils of the Township, and potential septic limitations.

TRANSPORTATION AND ROAD MAINTENANCE

Public roads within the Township are categorized as follows (lengths are approximate):

State Route	5.6 miles in length

County Primary Paved	8.1 miles in length
Local Paved	20.98 miles in length
Local Gravel (including seasonal)	1.9 miles in length

The only State route through the Township is M-119, the north/south route which approximately parallels the shoreline of the Township. M-119 is a State highway under the jurisdiction of the Michigan Department of Transportation and is designated as a Scenic Heritage Highway due to the natural beauty along the route. The total distance of M-119 passing through West Traverse Township is approximately 5.6 miles.

Lake Road, State Road, Quick Road, and Middle Road are classified as County primary roads by the Emmet County Road Commission.

The remaining public roads in the Township are classified as local roads, including approximately 20.98 paved miles and approximately 1.9 miles of gravel roads. The following are the public gravel roads in the Township:

Middle Road	0.53 miles (west of M-119)
Griffin Road	0.76 miles - seasonal
Ridge Road	0.62 miles (north of La Canada) – seasonal

Additionally, there are a significant number of miles of private roads within several residential developments. Lower Shore Drive (approximately 2.8 miles) is designated as a Natural Beauty Road. This is a designation for county roads which have outstanding natural features along their borders. Qualifying criteria include native vegetation and/or open space with scenic or natural vistas. Singly or in combination, these features set a Natural Beauty Road apart from other roads as being something unique and distinct.

Within the Township, certain public roads and segments of roads have been built as all season roads to handle heavy truck traffic year round. These roads are designated as a "Class A" or "All Season" Roads. The following roads and road segments are designated as such:

- Lake Road (1.19 miles from Harbor Springs City Limits west to M-119)
- Quick Road (from State Road east 0.76 miles)
- State Road (Harbor Springs City Limits north to Township line, 2.88 miles)
- Middle Road (State Road west 1.74 miles to Hughston Road)
- Franklin Street (0.55 miles)
- Hoyt Road (Harbor Springs City Limits north to Heynig Rd, 2.35 miles)

The Emmet County Road Commission provides road maintenance and snow removal services on all public non-seasonal roads within the Township. Additionally, there are a number of private roads as well as seasonal roads serving residential developments. The maintenance and repair of private roads is typically handled through a private association.

RECREATION & PUBLIC LANDS

The West Traverse Township Recreation Committee serves in an advisory capacity to the Township Board concerning Township recreation matters. This Committee is responsible for updating the Township's 5-year Parks & Recreation Plan.

A brief summary of some of the recreational lands and opportunities is provided in this section. Details pertaining to recreational facilities, goals, and future recreation projects are provided in the 2025 West Traverse Township Parks & Recreation Plan.

During the 2022-2023 fiscal year, West Traverse Township appropriated $106,439 towards its Recreation and Culture budget, which is 12.9% of total primary government expenses ($822,656 during the 2022-23 financial year). For 2023, the Township allocated $25,000 for trail maintenance at Township owned properties, including the Ridge Road "80" property. This figure was increased to $30,000 for 2024.

Funding for the maintenance and operation of Thorne Swift Nature Preserve is provided by special voted millage of up to 0.25 mills that has been continually renewed every four years by the Township voters.

West Traverse Township has a long standing relationship with the City of Harbor Springs that provides Township residents the opportunity to use the City's recreational facilities, specifically the City Beach, the skating rink and Kiwanis Park. The Township's share of the cost of operating these facilities is paid out the Township's General Fund and typically runs approximately $13,000 annually.

Thorne Swift Nature Preserve: The Thorne Swift Nature Preserve includes Michigan beach frontage and is accessed from Lower Shore Drive. As a cooperative effort with the Little Traverse Conservancy, Thorne Swift Nature Preserve is maintained for the enjoyment of nature trails, interpretive walks, swimming and special courses in interpretive studies. The preserve covers approximately 36 acres of land and includes 950 feet of Lake Michigan frontage and 500' of beach access. The Preserve was initiated in 1981 when Elizabeth Kennedy donated the property to the Conservancy.

West Traverse Township currently owns approximately 132 acres of land which is set aside for recreational and other Township purposes. These parcels are described below:

Township owned properties on Lake Road: West Traverse Township owns four separate parcels on Lake Road within the southern sector of the Township. The parcels provide expansive green space and are home to mature hardwood trees and open fields. Notable on the properties are two substantial septic systems, servicing approximately 22 lots in the Forest Beach Association and an additional 11 in the Pine Trail Association. The properties also include a residential garage, two barns, and a parking lot for additional parking at Township Hall.

Ridge Road "80" Township Public Park: The Ridge Road "Township 80," is a natural area and a favored destination for hunting, hiking and cross-country skiing by locals. The landscape features a range of topographies from moderate to steep slopes and is enveloped by a forest of mature trees, which provides an inviting environment for these recreational activities. These hiking and skiing trails weave through the adjacent Birchwood Farms Golf and Country Club with snowmobile routes adjacent to Ridge and Griffin Roads. Access to Ridge Road "80" is commonly achieved by walking or limited parking on Griffen and Ridge Roads.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

West Traverse Township Hall

The Township Hall is of frame construction with a concrete basement and was built in conjunction with the Grange in 1897. The parking lot next to the building is paved. The main level of the hall consists of a large meeting room for Township and community use. The downstairs houses the Township offices and a storage room.

Fire Protection

Fire protection is provided by the Harbor Springs Area Fire Authority. The Department is a volunteer association of the City of Harbor Springs, Little Traverse Township, Pleasantview Township, and West Traverse Township. The West Traverse Township Supervisor represents the Township on the Harbor Springs Area Fire Authority.

Police Protection

Police protection is provided by the Emmet County Sheriff's Office, headquartered in Petoskey with a Road Patrol sub-station on M-119 between Harbor Springs and Petoskey, one at the Pellston Airport and one at the EMS Eppler Rd. station. The Michigan State Police are dispatched from the Gaylord Post as needed.

Ambulance Service

Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulance service is provided by Emmet County EMS working out of three stations; Mackinaw, Harbor Springs and Petoskey. Current staffing includes one ambulance and two crew members at Mackinaw, three ambulances and four crew working various hours at the Harbor Springs Station and three ambulances at the Eppler Station with four crew members along with office personnel. All locations provide 24/7 coverage. The Birchwood Farms Golf and Country Club Security are "First Responders" who voluntarily provide service to the Township. Both services are dispatched by the Cheboygan Charlevoix Emmet (CCE) 911 facility and therefore all requests for emergency services simply need to dial 911. Because it is an enhanced 911 facility, the caller's location, even if on a cell phone, is automatically identified on the dispatcher's screen.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- It is important to take into account all of the existing services, facilities and transportation options that exist in and around a township for planning purposes. By knowing what services, facilities and transportation options exist, we are able to better plan for the future.
- In 2025, the Township adopted a Parks & Recreation Plan that provides details pertaining to recreational facilities, recreation goals and objectives, and possible future recreation projects in the Township.
- Police, fire, and ambulance services are provided to residents and visitors of West Traverse Township.

Chapter 6: Community Goals & Objectives

Community Goals and Objectives

This chapter lists the goals and objectives for each of the functional areas studied by the Planning Commission. A series of public investment, land use and organization policies constitute the balance of this chapter. "Goals" are general statements of shared values that assist local decision makers in implementing objectives and taking action. "Objectives" are the stated means by which West Traverse Township may reach its goals.

General Goals

Township Planning is based upon and undertaken for the protection of the public health, safety and welfare of residents and visitors of West Traverse Township, guided by the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (PA 110 of 2006, as amended) and the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008, as amended).

West Traverse Township will seek to manage and guide growth to maintain and enhance the high quality of rural life for residents and visitors through implementation of this Master Plan.

Township decision-makers should balance the public interest in sound land planning as expressed by and embodied within this Master Plan, with the rights and interests of private property owners when considering land use decisions.

NATURAL FEATURES

Goal: Preserve and enhance West Traverse Township's natural features and environment for the betterment of its residents.

Objectives:

- Protect the rural character of West Traverse Township by encouraging landowners to use conservation easements to protect and preserve open spaces, such as scenic views, farmlands and forest areas.
- Encourage the use of open space/conservation designs for site development.
- Discourage development in areas designated as unsuitable such as steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands and poor soils.
- Encourage the use of the Emmet County Soils Survey when reviewing large developments within the Township.
- Continuing review of Township Zoning Ordinance to reflect the goals and objectives of the Township Master Plan.
- Provide for the preservation of scenic sites, such as M-119 and Lower Shore Drive, and open space.
- Provide for the preservation of the Lake Michigan Shoreline and support the water setback section of the Zoning Ordinance.
- Continue to support The Thorne Swift Nature Preserve.
- The long term quality and conservation of natural resources, water quality protection and environmental protection must be considered of significant importance when making land use decisions.

TRANSPORTATION

Goal: Coordinate the development of the transportation network with the overall development of the township's human and physical resources.

Objectives:

- Promote the maintenance and enhancement of transportation infrastructure within West Traverse Township.
- Encourage the scenic nature of M-119 be preserved.
- Consistent with the West Traverse Township Parks & Recreation Plan, encourage the development and maintenance of bike paths and walkway connections throughout the Township.

WATER AND WASTEWATER

Goal: Protect and improve our water heritage to ensure the health and well being of the township's residents.

Objectives:

- Require the protection of the waters of Lake Michigan through zoning setbacks and other regulations.
- Encourage the proper maintenance of public wastewater systems within the Township.

RECREATION

Goal: In conjunction with the Recreation Committee, develop the local park and recreation system which:

- Provides a wide variety of recreational opportunities for the Township residents with a major focus on passive recreation.
- Is related to the use capacity of the environment.
- Wherever possible, is designed for multiple and year round use of the facilities.

Objectives:

- Encourage additional Lake Michigan access site for public use, encourage intergovernmental agreements between cities, townships and villages to provide recreational services, and possibly develop cooperation with adjacent governments.
- Improve the awareness of the township owned 80-acre parcel as an area of low impact recreation for hiking, biking, snowshoeing, etc.
- Encourage bike/pedestrian trails throughout the Township.
- Encourage the preservation of natural resources and protection of the environment, including Township owned lands.
- Encourage cooperation with neighboring Townships and area associations to increase regional recreational opportunities.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Goal: Encourage the economic development of community facilities and related services that will provide each citizen with the best possible public services within the Township.

Objectives:

- Recognize the importance of Township services and public land to the community.
- Where appropriate, encourage the development of shared septic, water, access road and/or pedestrian trail infrastructure in future housing developments. Such infrastructure should conform with and be designed to readily connect to future projects.

• Promote the use of Township property for a future Township Hall and Recreation Area.

HOUSING

Goal: Promote the maintenance and enhancement of the rural character and environmental quality in West Traverse Township while balancing the need for new residential development.

Objectives:

• Encourage areas of increased housing density contingent upon the creation of greenbelts and buffers and the use of open space/conservation design methods of development.

• Protect steep slopes and wetlands.

• Continue to research the proper development of a wide variety of housing types including; single family homes, cluster development, site condos and multifamily homes, to serve the current and future residents of the Township.

• Encourage on-site management of storm water.

COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Goal: Provide for the orderly development of commercial properties within the Township.

Objectives:

• Allow, with controls, home occupations as viable economic activities without altering the character of neighborhoods and residential areas.

• Incorporate best management practices and low impact development techniques to reduce amounts of impervious surfaces and storm water runoff.

• Encourage the maintenance of existing industrial facilities and industrial park areas within the Township.

LAND USE POLICIES

• In making land use decisions, utilize the Township Master Plan.

• Preserve all natural resources to the extent possible.

• All developments should be guided by land use controls.

• Encourage new developments to be placed in areas outlined in the Future Land Use Map which is incorporated as part of the Township Master Plan.

• If necessary, update and review all Township Ordinances.

• Encourage the use of conservation design with a mix of lot sizes and housing types, along with open space for recreation.

• Secure open spaces by utilizing planning tools and techniques, including but not limited to:

1. Working with local and state government, land trusts, conservancies and others to protect identified conservation and recreation areas.
2. Support the purchase of development rights, transfer of development rights, conservation easements and other available methods that voluntarily preserve natural and/or cultural resources.
3. Encourage support for the goals and objectives of the Township Parks & Recreation plan.
4. Consider the purchase of unique parcels to protect sensitive resources and valuable vistas.

Chapter 7: Future Land Use Recommendations

Future Land Use Recommendations

Overview

Through land use planning and land use controls, West Traverse Township intends to ensure that existing forest, open space, and recreational land uses can continue; that irreplaceable natural resources such as water, wetlands, and forestlands will be protected; and that reasonable growth can be accommodated with minimal land use conflicts or negative environmental impacts.

Future land use recommendations for West Traverse Township were developed by the Planning Commission with assistance from the Zoning Administrator and Planner. Recommendations are based on an analysis of several factors including: public input from previous citizen surveys, the pattern of existing land use, social and economic characteristics, environmental conditions, available community services and facilities, the existing patterns of land divisions, and community goals and policies.

Land Use Planning Areas

Land Use Planning Areas Listed below are detailed explanations of the eight different land use planning areas in the future land use recommendations. **Map 06** is the Future Land Use Map of West Traverse Township which depicts the locations of land use planning areas.

- Conservation and Parkland
- Farm / Forest
- Single Family Residential (including a waterfront overlay)
- Mixed Residential
- Residential Buffer
- Institutional
- Planned Unit Development (PUD)
- Commercial - Light Industrial

The **Conservation and Parkland** category includes existing public lands, park lands, as well as land owned and protected by a land conservancy as preserves. Uses proposed in the Conservation and Parkland area include public forestry, wildlife habitat, recreation and similar open space uses. Approximately 487 acres in this category are owned by the Little Traverse Conservancy, and 132 acres are owned by the Township. While approximately 424 acres of additional land is protected under conservation easements held by local land conservancies, those properties are not open to the public and therefore are not included in this category.

The **Farm/Forest** land use category is consistent with the Township's goal to encourage farmland preservation and open space, and to further efforts to "retain the existing quiet, scenic, rural and historic

character...", as well as the housing goal to "promote the maintenance and enhancement of the rural character and environmental quality in West Traverse Township while balancing the need for new residential development." The Township will encourage methods of preserving farmlands, open space, natural resources, and rural character of the Township, while assisting landowners who want to reduce or discontinue farming. The methods could include innovative zoning provisions that allow for the preservation or conservation of essential natural resources, farmland, open space, and forest management. Methods to help protect and preserve agricultural land while protecting a landowner's economic investment include the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR), Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), clustering requirements for non-agricultural uses, and tax breaks or incentives for continuing agricultural use. These alternatives will continue to be investigated for possible application in West Traverse Township as a way to balance economic rights with agricultural and open space preservation goals. This future land use category is supportive of the Agriculture and Forest related zoning districts. The maximum allowable density is one unit per two acres.

The **Single Family Residential** category is designed to primarily accommodate single family dwellings and approved accessory dwelling units at a maximum density of one unit per acre. The large residential lots provide privacy from neighbors and/or other development. The areas designated for this type of development are located on roads with light vehicular traffic. Buffers or physical separation from potentially incompatible uses (industrial and agriculture) may be necessary when located adjacent to this type of development. Additional provisions are incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance to allow for a cluster development pattern to avoid or minimize development impacts on environmentally sensitive areas, forests or farmland. This Single Family Residential land use category strives to maintain an ecologically sound balance between human development activities and the environment to retain the Township's scenic and rural character.

To preserve the scenic beauty, property value and environmental integrity of lakefront areas, a "Waterfront Residential Overlay" land use designation is also used. This specialized designation contains residential standards specific to the unique environment found in waterfront areas. The **Waterfront Residential** designation is utilized in shoreline areas of lakefront residential development. Development regulations within the waterfront residential area are designed to address Township residents' concerns regarding water quality and shoreline protection.

The **Mixed Residential** category is primarily designed to accommodate single-family, two-family, and multiple-family dwellings including on lots varying in size. Residential uses, such as apartments, townhouses, condominiums, mobile home parks, convalescent or nursing homes, and manufactured home developments would be allowed provided the water and wastewater issues can be adequately addressed. Community uses such as parks, churches, schools or cemeteries, in addition to bed and breakfast facilities and accessory dwelling units, may be allowed in this area if designed to be compatible with the residential setting.

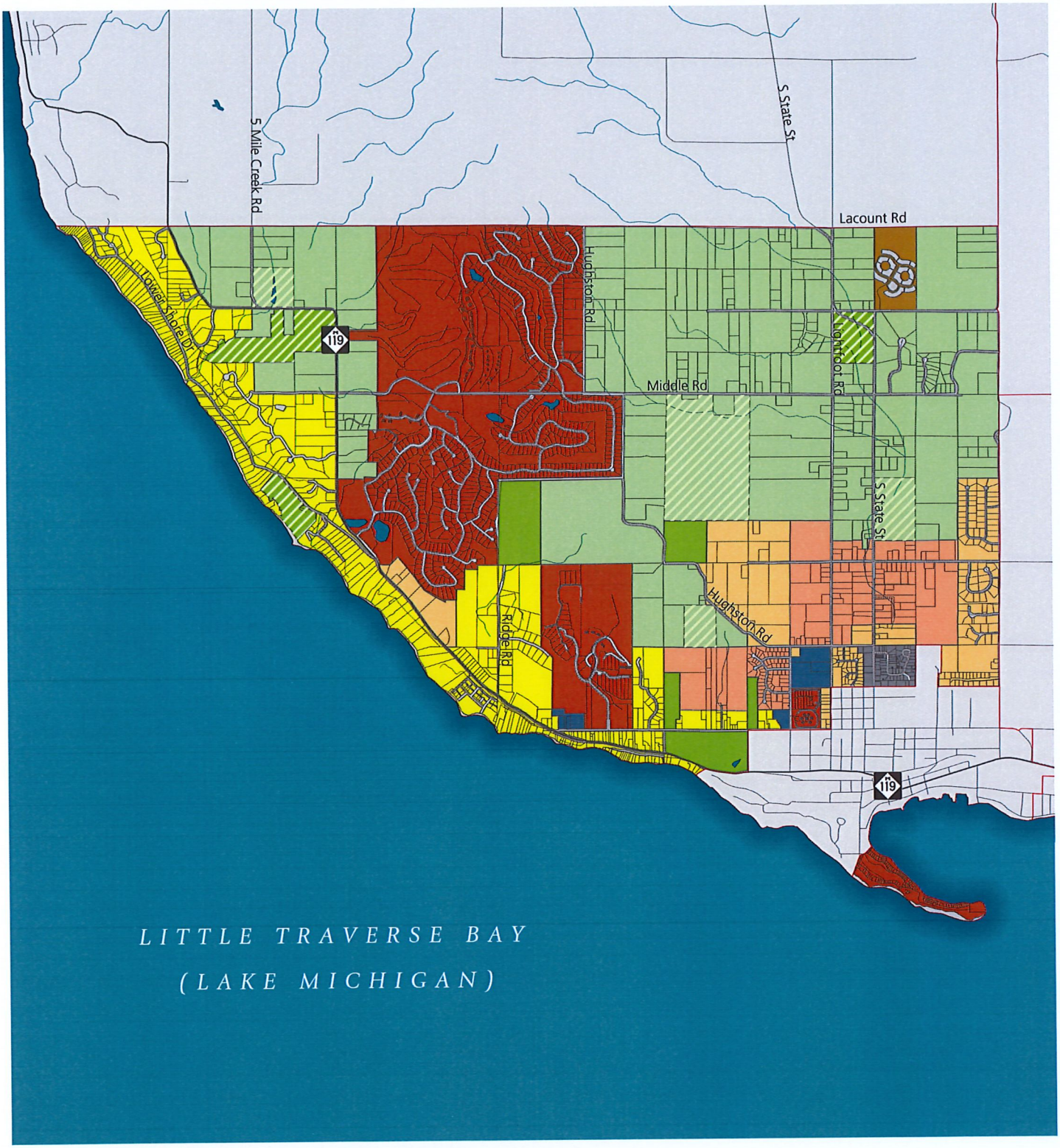
The **Residential Buffer** land use category is designed to provide residential uses on smaller parcels and will serve as a transition between the higher intensity and greater density provided for in the adjacent zoning

districts in the City of Harbor Springs and the lower density zoning of the Township. The maximum residential density in this area is slightly less than two units per acre.

The **Planned Unit Development (PUD)** future land use category is intended to accommodate the existing Planned Unit Developments (PUD), such as the Harbor Point Community, Birchwood Farms and Windward developments, which incorporate small lot residential, open space, and some recreational facilities. Due to the unique nature of this type of development, PUDs are designed to provide a more desirable living environment by retaining the rural and natural character of the township through the preservation of open spaces, woodlands, streams, ponds, water frontage, hills, and similar natural assets. The PUD type of development encourages a unified and potentially more desirable development of large areas of land based on an overall plan which provides a balance between physical improvements, community needs and site amenities such as scenic views, open space, recreation areas, and environmentally sensitive areas. The density of the PUD future land use areas varies and is based on the underlying zoning, since such developments are accommodated in a number of zoning districts. The location, size and specific details of any new PUDs will be determined on a project by project basis with the initial project proposed by the property owner. Therefore, the only areas designated as PUD on the Future Land Use Map are those which have been developed as such and are expected to continue.

The **Institutional category** is designated to accommodate existing institutional uses including Township owned properties, a church, and a cemetery.

The **Commercial-industrial category** is designated to provide areas of general commercial development and to allow for the establishment of neighborhood shopping centers, personal services, professional offices, and tourist services. Additionally, this category is designated to accommodate small to moderate scale light industrial development needs of the Township. This area is located immediately adjacent to the City of Harbor Springs, in order to have better access to the necessary support services and facilities. Due to the availability of additional commercial or industrial areas in the adjacent City of Harbor Springs, at present there is no plan to expand this area beyond what is currently designated.



2026 Future Land Use Map

3,000 Feet

Beckett & Raeder, Inc.

Sources: Michigan Open Data Portal, West Traverse Township, Emmet County

- West Traverse Township Boundary
- Conservation & Parkland
- Farm-Forest
- Single Family Residential
- Residential Buffer
- Mixed Residential
- Planned Unit Development
- LTBBOI Trust
- Institutional
- Commercial-Industrial

Other Layers

- Preserves - LTC

Chapter 8: Adoption and Implementation

PLAN ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

OPEN HOUSES

On July 9, 2025, and on August 13, 2025, the Planning Commission held open houses at Township Hall to receive public input on the updated draft West Township Master Plan. Notice of both open houses was published in the Harbor Light Newspaper on June 25, 2025, as well as on the Township website. Members of the Planning Commission and the Township Planning & Zoning Administrator attended both open houses. A copy of the notice is in the Appendix.

Township residents and members of the public were encouraged to attend both open houses and/or submit written comments in person, by mail, by email, or via text message through the West Traverse Township TextMyGov service.

DRAFT PLAN CIRCULATED FOR COMMENTS

The updated draft West Township Master Plan was transmitted to the Township Board for review and comment on October 8, 2025. The Township Board approved the draft plan for distribution on November 11, 2025. Following the Township Board's approval for distribution the proposed plan was distributed to the adjacent Townships, as well as to Emmet County Planning Commission on November 12, 2025, for review and comment.

PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing on the proposed Master Plan for West Traverse Township, as required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended, was held on January 14, 2026, at the Township Hall. The legally required public hearing notice was published in the Harbor Light Newspaper on December 24, 2025, as well as on the Township website. A copy of the public hearing notice is in the Appendix.

During the review period, the draft Master Plan 2026-2031 update was available for review on the Township's website, and at the Township office. The purpose of the public hearing was to present the proposed Master Plan 2026-2031 update and to accept comments from the public. In addition to the Planning Commission members, the Planning & Zoning Administrator attended the meeting. Members of the general public attended the meeting as well. The public hearing minutes are in the Appendix.

PLAN ADOPTION

After conducting the public hearing on January 14, 2026, the Planning Commission formally reviewed comments received and adopted by resolution the Master Plan 2026-2031 update on January 14, 2026. The Planning Commission Resolution of adoption is in the Appendix.

The Township Board formally adopted the 2026-2031 Master Plan on March 24, 2026. The minutes and resolution are in the Appendix.

LEGAL TRANSMITTALS

Michigan planning law requires that the adopted Master Plan be transmitted to the Township Board, the adjacent townships, and the County. A copy of this transmittal letter is in the Appendix.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Chapter 6 – Community Goals and Objectives set forth West Traverse Township's goals and policies for guiding future development. These goals and implementation steps are as follows:

GOAL 1: NATURAL FEATURES: Preserve and enhance West Traverse Township's natural features and environment for the betterment of its residents.

Objective	Implementation Strategy
Protect the rural character of West Traverse Township by encouraging landowners to use conservation easements to protect and preserve open spaces, such as scenic views, farmlands and forest areas.	Provide support to the Little Traverse Conservancy's efforts to obtain conservation easements.
Encourage the use of open space/conservation designs for site development.	Where appropriate, suggest the use of the PUD provisions of the Township Zoning Ordinance.
Discourage development in areas designated as unsuitable such as steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands and poor soils.	Enforce applicable site plan review standards of the Township Zoning Ordinance.
Encourage the use of the Emmet County Soils Survey when reviewing large developments within the Township.	Enforce applicable site plan graphic requirements of the Township Zoning Ordinance.
Continuing review of Township Zoning Ordinance to reflect the goals and objectives of the Township Master Plan.	The Planning Commission will continue to conduct periodic reviews of the Township Zoning Ordinance.
Provide for the preservation of scenic sites, such as M-119 and Lower Shore Drive, and open space.	Enforce applicable site plan review standards of the Township Zoning Ordinance. Provide support to the M-119 Heritage Highway Committee.
Provide for the preservation of the Lake Michigan Shoreline and support the water setback section of the Zoning Ordinance.	Provide support to continued enforcement of the waterfront setback provisions of the Zoning Ordinance.
Continue to support The Thorne Swift Nature Preserve.	Provide support as needed to the Township Recreation Committee.
The long term quality and conservation of natural resources, water quality protection and environmental protection must be considered of significant importance when making land use decisions.	Provide support to continued enforcement of the waterfront setback provisions of the Zoning Ordinance.

GOAL 2: TRANSPORTATION: Coordinate the development of the transportation network with the overall development of the township's human and physical resources.

Objective	Implementation Strategy
Promote the maintenance and enhancement of transportation infrastructure within West Traverse Township.	Provide support as needed to the Township Board when it considers roadway maintenance and improvements.
Encourage the scenic nature of M-119 be preserved.	Provide support to the M-119 Heritage Highway Committee.
Consistent with the West Traverse Township Parks & Recreation Plan, encourage the development and maintenance of bike paths and walkway connections throughout the Township.	Provide support as needed to the Township Recreation Committee.

GOAL 3: WATER AND WASTEWATER: Protect and improve our water heritage to ensure the health and well being of the township's residents.

Objective	Implementation Strategy
Require the protection of the waters of Lake Michigan through zoning setbacks and other regulations.	Provide support to continued enforcement of the waterfront setback provisions of the Zoning Ordinance.
Encourage the proper maintenance of public wastewater systems within the Township.	Provide support as needed to the Township Board.

GOAL 4: RECREATION: In conjunction with the Recreation Committee, develop the local park and recreation system which: provides a wide variety of recreational opportunities for the township residents with a major focus on passive recreation; is related to the use capacity of the environment; wherever possible, is designed for multiple and year round use of the facilities.

Objective	Implementation Strategy
Encourage additional Lake Michigan access site for public use, encourage intergovernmental agreements between townships and villages to provide recreational services, and possibly develop cooperation with adjacent governments.	Provide support as needed to the Township Recreation Committee.
Improve the awareness of the Township owned 80-acre parcel as an area of low impact recreation for hiking, biking, snowshoeing, etc.	Provide support as needed to the Township Recreation Committee. Participate in updates to the Township Parks & Recreation Plan.
Encourage bike/pedestrian trails throughout the Township.	Provide support as needed to the Township Recreation Committee.

Encourage the preservation of natural resources and protection of the environment, including Township owned lands.	Provide support to continued enforcement of the waterfront setback provisions of the Zoning Ordinance.
Encourage cooperation with neighboring Townships and area associations to increase regional recreational opportunities.	Participate in updates to the Township Parks & Recreation Plan.

GOAL 5: COMMUNITY FACILITIES: Encourage the economic development of community facilities and related services that will provide each citizen with the best possible public services within the Township.

Objective	Implementation Strategy
Recognize the importance of Township services and public land to the community.	Provide support as needed to the Township Board in decisions pertaining to the acquisition and maintenance of Township property.
Where appropriate, encourage the development of shared septic, water, access road and/or pedestrian trail infrastructure in future housing developments. Such infrastructure should conform with and be designed to readily connect to future projects.	Provide support to the sidewalk and trail plan included in the Township Parks & Recreation Plan.
Promote the use of Township property for a future Township Hall and Recreation Area.	Provide support as needed to the Township Board.

GOAL 6: HOUSING: Promote the maintenance and enhancement of the rural character and environmental quality in West Traverse Township while balancing the need for new residential development.

Objective	Implementation Strategy
Encourage areas of increased housing density contingent upon the creation of greenbelts and buffers and the use of open space/conservation design methods of development.	Where appropriate, suggest the use of the PUD provisions of the Township Zoning Ordinance. The Planning Commission will continue to conduct periodic reviews of the Township Zoning Ordinance.
Protect steep slopes and wetlands.	
Continue to research the proper development of a wide variety of housing types including; single family homes, cluster development, site condos and multifamily homes, to serve the current and future residents of the Township.	The Planning Commission will conduct periodic reviews of the Township Zoning Ordinance pertaining to housing types.
Encourage on-site management of storm water.	Enforce applicable site plan review standards of the Township Zoning Ordinance.

GOAL 7: COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: Provide for the orderly development of commercial properties within the Township.

Objective	Implementation Strategy
Allow, with controls, home occupations as viable economic activities without altering the character of neighborhoods and residential areas.	Provide support to continued enforcement of the home occupation provisions of the Zoning Ordinance. The Planning Commission will conduct a review of the home occupation and home based business sections of the Township Zoning Ordinance.
Incorporate best management practices and low impact development techniques to reduce amounts of impervious surfaces and storm water runoff.	Enforce applicable site plan review standards of the Township Zoning Ordinance.
Encourage the maintenance of existing industrial facilities and industrial park areas within the Township.	Provide support to zoning enforcement efforts.

GOAL 8: LAND USE POLICIES.

Objective	Implementation Strategy
In making land use decisions, utilize the Township Master Plan.	The Planning Commission will conduct a review of the Township Zoning Ordinance to ensure consistency with the Master Plan.
Preserve all natural resources to the extent possible.	Enforce applicable site plan review standards of the Township Zoning Ordinance.
All developments should be guided by land use controls.	Enforce applicable site plan review standards of the Township Zoning Ordinance.
Encourage new developments to be placed in areas outlined in the Future Land Use Map which is incorporated as part of the Township Master Plan.	Work to ensure the Master Plan is available to developers and the public.
If necessary, update and review all Township Ordinances.	Provide support as needed to the Township Board.
Encourage the use of conservation design with a mix of lot sizes and housing types, along with open space for recreation.	Where appropriate, suggest the use of the PUD provisions of the Township Zoning Ordinance.
Secure open spaces by utilizing planning tools and techniques, including but not limited to: 1. Working with local and state government, land trusts, conservancies and others to protect identified conservation and recreation areas. 2. Support the purchase of development rights, transfer of development rights,	Provide support as needed to the Township Board, the Township Recreation Committee, and Township planning & zoning staff.

	conservation easements and other available methods that voluntarily preserve natural and/or cultural resources. 3. Encourage support for the goals and objectives of the Township Parks & Recreation plan. 4. Consider the purchase of unique parcels to protect sensitive resources and valuable vistas.	Provide support as needed to the Township Board, the Township Recreation Committee, and Township planning & zoning staff.

Appendix

A. Open House Public Hearing Notice

B. Public Hearing Notice

C. Public Hearing Minutes

D. Planning Commission Resolution Recommending Adoption

E. Township Board Minutes

F. Township Board Resolution of Adoption

G. Legal Transmission Letters of Notice of Adoption

A: Open House Public Hearing Notice

PUBLIC NOTICE
WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP

West Traverse Township is in the process of reviewing and updating its Five-Year Master Plan and is seeking input from residents, business owners, and other community stakeholders. The Township invites all members of the public to participate in shaping the future of our community by providing feedback and suggestions during this important planning process.

The Master Plan serves as a long-term guide for land use, community development, natural resource protection, and public services within the Township. Updated every five years, the plan reflects the community's values and vision while helping local leaders make informed decisions about zoning, infrastructure, and future growth.

Residents are encouraged to attend upcoming Open Houses or submit written comments. Input gathered will directly influence planning strategies and goals for the next five years and beyond.

How to Participate:

- **Public Comment Period**: Open through September 30, 2025.
- **Open House:** Scheduled for July 9, 2025, from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at West Traverse Township Hall and August 13, 2025, from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at West Traverse Township Hall.
- **Written Comments:** May be submitted by mail to West Traverse Township Hall, P.O. Box 528, Harbor Springs, MI 49740, or by email to zoning@westtraversetownship.gov. If you have already subscribed to the West Traverse Township TextMyGov service, comments may be submitted via text message by texting "master plan" to (231) 529-5515.

To view or learn more about the draft Master Plan visit:

https://westtraversetownship.gov

Your voice matters. Help shape the future of West Traverse Township by participating in this important process.

Questions? Please contact:
Ken Lane
Planning & Zoning Administrator
West Traverse Township
Phone: (231) 526-7361
Email: klane@bria2.com
Website: www.westtraversetownship.gov

B: Public Hearing Notice

WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Public notice is given to all persons that the West Traverse Township Planning Commission will hold a public hearing to solicit comments on a proposed West Traverse Township Master Plan at 5:30 pm on Wednesday January 14, 2026, at West Traverse Township Hall located at 8001 M-119, Harbor Springs, MI, 49740. All persons are invited to attend and be heard. The proposed Master Plan is meant to guide land use and development decisions in the Township over the next 5-20 years, based on a comprehensive inventory of existing conditions and documented community preferences. The proposed Master Plan is available for review online at: www.westtraversetownship.gov Questions or comments can be presented at the meeting and written comments can be submitted, by 5 pm on the day prior to the hearing, to Township Planner Ken Lane by email at klane@bria2.com or by letter to West Traverse Township PC, P.O. Box 528, Harbor Springs, MI, 49740. This notice is in compliance with PA 267 of 1976 as amended (Open Meetings Act), MCL 125.3843(1), and the American Disabilities Act (ADA). Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact West Traverse Township at 231-526-7361, seven days in advance of the public hearing.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

EMAIL LISTINGS TO: CRYSTAL@NCPUBLISH.COM

Paid listings (payment required in advance):

Up to 20 words: $20 per week; 3 weeks for $40

Over 20 words: $30 per week; 3 weeks for $60

UPDATED POLICY:

Current Harbor Light Newspaper subscribers receive the first **3 weeks** of a classified listing for FREE (excludes business and help-wanted ads). After 3 weeks, active listings may be extended at the above rates.

Wanted

WANTED: IF YOU have a foosball or ping pong table gathering dust let's get together. Give me a call or drop a line...Juan@ 513.225.8105 text/voice or jmuzquiz@cinci.rr.com

For Sale

JOHN BOOS CUCINA Elegante kitchen cart. Maple block top w/ one drop leaf. Like new condition. Sells for $1644 on Amzn Wfair and John Boos website. Sell for $800. 526-3930.

For Rent

HOUSE FOR RENT. 3 bdrm 2.5 baths. Min. year lease. Across from beach. Huge view. Available immediately. Please call (513) 236-3416

PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE
LITTLE TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP
EMMET COUNTY MICHIGAN
Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting and Public Hearing

Notice is hereby given that the Little Traverse Township Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a Public Hearing on January 15, 2026, at 4:00 P.M. at the Township Hall, 8288 S. Pleasantview Road, Harbor Springs, MI 49740, to consider the following:

Case #A-01-2026
An application by TeleCAD Wireless Site Design Inc, on behalf of Vertical Bridge, for a height variance to erect a 130' telecommunications tower at 2763 Powers Road, Harbor Springs, MI 49740. The property is zoned FF-1. The property is more particularly described in tax parcel #24-08-16-12-400-004.

This public hearing was previously cancelled, and is now being rescheduled for January 15, 2026, at 4:00 P.M.

Further information regarding this hearing is available at the Township Hall by contacting William Dohm, Supervisor, or Ken Lane, Planning Consultant, (231-526-0351).

William P. Dohm
Supervisor

PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE TO TAXPAYERS AND ELECTORS
OF THE TOWNSHIP OF WEST TRAVERSE
OF INTENT TO ISSUE BONDS
AND THE RIGHT OF REFERENDUM RELATING THERETO

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Township of West Traverse, County of Emmet, State of Michigan (the "Township"), intends to issue and sell its general obligation limited tax bonds pursuant to Act 34, Public Acts of Michigan, 2001, as amended, in an aggregate principal amount of not to exceed Two Million Dollars ($2,000,000), in one or more series, for the purpose of paying all or part of the cost to acquire, construct, furnish and equip capital improvements in the Township, consisting generally of acquiring, constructing, furnishing, and equipping a new Township hall, together with all related site improvements, appurtenances, and attachments.

SOURCE OF PAYMENT OF BONDS

THE PRINCIPAL OF AND INTEREST ON SAID BONDS SHALL BE PAYABLE from the funds of the Township lawfully available for such purposes, including property taxes levied within applicable constitutional and statutory tax rate limitations.

BOND DETAILS

SAID BONDS will be payable in not-to-exceed 30 annual installments and will bear interest at the rate or rates to be determined at a public or private sale but in no event to exceed the maximum rate permitted by law on the balance of the bonds from time to time remaining unpaid.

RIGHT OF REFERENDUM

THE BONDS WILL BE ISSUED WITHOUT A VOTE OF THE ELECTORS UNLESS A PETITION REQUESTING SUCH A VOTE SIGNED BY NOT LESS THAN 10% OF THE REGISTERED ELECTORS RESIDING WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF THE TOWNSHIP IS FILED WITH THE TOWNSHIP CLERI(WITHIN FORTY-FIVE (45) DAYS AFTER PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE. IF SUCH PETITION IS FILED, THE BONDS MAY NOT BE ISSUED WITHOUT AN APPROVING VOTE OF A MAJORITY OF THE QUALIFIED ELECTORS RESIDING WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF THE TOWNSHIP VOTING THEREON.

THIS NOTICE is given pursuant to the requirements of Section 517, Act 34, Public Acts of Michigan, 2001, as amended.

Joseph H. Olson
Township Clerk
Township of West Traverse

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between the covers
On the Bookshelf

Holiday Titles to Share with Your Little Readers

***Dasher and the Polar Bear*, by Matt Tavares** (Candlewick, $18.99, ages 4-8)

Another *Dasher* adventure by the bestselling author-illustrator Matt Tavares!

On a cold and clear December night, Dasher is out exploring, when the northern lights swirl through the skies. Dasher lands to watch the brilliant light show and hears a low roar. Dasher comes face to face with a polar bear name George.

"How did you get here?" questions George. "Why I flew!" exclaims Dasher.

Oh how George would love to fly and though it is easy for Dasher, George just can't seem to fly through the skies as Dasher does. Dasher's mother assures her that Christmas magic works in many ways and it does for George on Christmas Eve.

Matt Tavares was a presenter at the Harbor Springs Festival of the Book in 2018. I happily await his breathtakingly illustrated adventures every year!
-Susan

***The Christmas Sweater*, by Jan Brett** (G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, $19.99, ages 4-8)

Jan Brett's richly detailed trademark illustrations will delight readers in this (loosely) modern retelling of the Greek Myth of Theseus and the Minotaur. When Theo's dog, Ari, is gifted a Christmas sweater he is totally underwhelmed. Thinking he might change Ari's mind upon seeing how cozy it is, Theo suits him up for a winter hike, only to find the sweater is nowhere to be found when they head back home. What's more, fresh snow has covered their footprints. Can a snow-buried discovery help lead them safely back home?

Elaborate sidebar artwork adds depth and enhances the return journey storyline. A heartwarming story that underscores the importance of gratitude, resourcefulness and empathy.
-Laurie

***Firefox Moon*, by Eoin Colfer** (Roaring Brook Press, $19.99, ages 8-12)

Juniper Lane is here with another magical and heartwarming adventure with her flying reindeer Skara. It is summertime and they are the new guardians of Cedar Wood and in search of a legendary fox with the powers to grant a wish under the midsummer Blood Moon!
-Susan

***The Little Ghost Quilt's Winter Surprise*, by Riel Nason, illustrated by Byron Eggenschwiler** (Tundra Books, $18.99, ages 3-7)

Our favorite Little Ghost Quilt is back again and for the first time experiencing winter! It begs the question what all the little ghosts do outside of their Halloween season, which is something I certainly never thought about before. The Ghost Quilt creates a unique Christmas experience for their friends to enjoy, all while telling the reader that the true joy of the winter season is being with the people (ghosts) you care about.
-Avarie

***Mr. Willowby's Head Over Heels Christmas*, by Robert Barry** (Doubleday Books for Young Readers, $18.99, ages 3-7)

Mr. Willowby's Christmas Tree has been a long-time family favorite, so when this book crossed my receiving desk, I was excited. Based on a long-lost manuscript and sketches by Robert Barry, this "sequel" employs the same endearing characters, signature artwork, and rhyming format as the original. In this version, Mr. Willowby resorts to the help of his woodland friends to solve his latest dilemma. The funny, wild ride that ensues will elicit giggles of delight and soon become a staple on your holiday bookshelf.
-Laurie

***The Old Sleigh*, by Jarrett & Jerome Pumphrey** (Norton Young Readers, $18.99, ages 4-8)

In the tradition of their award winning title *Old Truck*, brothers Jarrett and Jerome Pumphrey grace readers with their iconic illustrations and a quiet nod to tradition. Father and son deliver chopped wood to their small town's neighbors. Through sleet, snowdrifts, wind and darkest of days they bring warmth, light and happiness. As the small town grows and the old sleigh has given its all, the son creates a new sled to carry on the tradition of giving light and warmth. This is the perfect curl-up with a favorite little person book to be read time and time again.
-Susan

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PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICE
Pleasantview Township Hall
2982 S. Pleasantview Road, Harbor Springs, MI 49740

Notice is hereby given that the Pleasantview Township Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a Public Meeting on January 15, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Pleasantview Township Hall, 2982 S. Pleasantview Road, Harbor Springs, MI 49740.

The following Public Hearing will be held to consider a setback variance request for the property located at 346 Sun Valley Drive, Harbor Springs, MI 49740. The variance is requested to allow for construction of a garage that would not meet the required setback standards as outlined in the Pleasantview Township Zoning Ordinance.

All interested persons are invited to attend and provide comments. Written comments may also be submitted to the Zoning Administrator at 2982 S. Pleasantview Road, Harbor Springs, MI 49740 or zoning@pleasantviewmi.gov.

If you require special accommodations to participate in the public hearing, please contact the Clerk at (231) 526-8140 or office@pleasantviewmi.gov.

For further information please contact the Zoning Administrator at (231) 526-8140 or zoning@pleasantviewmi.gov.

LEGAL NOTICE
EMMET COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Notice is hereby given that the Emmet County Planning Commission will hold a Public Meeting on January 8, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Emmet County Building, 200 Division Street, Petoskey, MI 49770. The following Public Hearings will be held and reviewed:

PSUP25-009
A request by Betsy and Michael Tiedeck for a Special Use Permit for a cemetery on property located on the south side of Island View Road and west side of Gully Road in Section 17 of Readmond Township. The property is tax parcel 12-08-17-200-003 and it is zoned FF-2 Farm and Forest. The proposal will be reviewed per Zoning Ordinance Articles 8, 20, 21, 22 & Section 26.25.

The Planning Commission will hold public hearings and cases will be held on the agenda each month until a decision is made. Meeting schedules are available on the county web-site www.emmetcounty.org . For additional information, contact the Office of Planning and Zoning. Call (231) 348-1735 or email: pzcr@emmetcounty.org . Written comments may be emailed or mailed to Planning & Zoning, 3434 Harbor-Petoskey Rd, Suite E, Harbor Springs, MI 49740. For questions about accessibility or to request special accommodation please contact the Planning and Zoning office through the methods listed above.

WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Public notice is given to all persons that the West Traverse Township Planning Commission will hold a public hearing to solicit comments on a proposed West Traverse Township Master Plan at 5:30 pm on Wednesday January 14, 2026, at West Traverse Township Hall located at 8001 M-119, Harbor Springs, MI, 49740. All persons are invited to attend and be heard. The proposed Master Plan is meant to guide land use and development decisions in the Township over the next 5-20 years, based on a comprehensive inventory of existing conditions and documented community preferences. The proposed Master Plan is available for review online at: www.westtraversetownship.gov Questions or comments can be presented at the meeting and written comments can be submitted, by 5 pm on the day prior to the hearing, to Township Planner Ken Lane by email at klane@bria2.com or by letter to West Traverse Township PC, P.O. Box 528, Harbor Springs, MI, 49740. This notice is in compliance with PA 267 of 1976 as amended (Open Meetings Act), MCL 125.3843(1), and the American Disabilities Act (ADA). Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact West Traverse Township at 231-526-7361, seven days in advance of the public hearing.

C: Public Hearing Minutes

WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP
REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION
January 14, 2026

Chair Hollerith called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

Roll Call: Hollerith, Remus, Dohan, Osetek, Thompson, Green, Forster

Absent: none

Visitors: Garon Gopigian, Ed Taylor, Lisa Morris

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all.

Approve Agenda as presented or with additions: Forster approved the agenda as presented. Thompson seconded. All aye.

Public Comment – none

Minutes: Green asked to replace the sentence "*he addressed the concerns of the neighbors*" to "*he responded to the concerns of the neighbors*." **Remus made the motion to approve the minutes of December 10, 2025, as amended. Green seconded. All ayes.**

Unfinished Business

a. Master Plan

i. Public Hearing - 2026-2031 West Traverse Township Master Plan – Hollerith asked for a motion to open the Public Hearing. **Thompson made the motion to open the Public Hearing at 5:40 p.m. Osetek seconded. Roll Call vote: Green – yes, Thompson – yes, Forster – yes, Hollerith – yes, Osetek – yes, Remus – yes, Dohan – yes.** Lane noted that the Master Plan passed the 63-day review, where and how it was advertised and a message through Textmygov was sent. Lane stated that he had received a letter from Tammy Doereneburg with comments on font, verbiage, text size, formatting, and language. After discussion, the Planning Commission decided to leave the language as is. Hollerith opened to Public Comments at 5:43 p.m. Public Comments: Garon Gopigian questioned if Lane was going to read the comments on the plan or would they be able to read them. Hollerith received a letter from Paul Mooradian and read his concerns/comments to the Planning Commission. Items of his concern were things such as adding Water & Wastewater, denoting water systems, adjusting residential designations on the Future Land Use Map, etc. The Planning Commission discussed the items and decided to leave the plan as is. Hollerith closed the Public Comment at 5:48 p.m.

ii. Consider motion to recommend approval to Township Board – The Planning Commission briefly discussed the Master Plan, the work that went into it, etc. Hollerith asked for a motion to recommend the Master Plan to the Township Board. Thompson made the following motion. "**I, Molly Thompson, move to approve and**

recommend the adoption by the Township Board of Trustees the 2026-2031 West Traverse Township Master Plan as submitted and amended at the January 14, 2026, Public Hearing, including all the text, charts, tables, maps and descriptive and other matter therein intended by the Planning Commission to form the complete 026-2031 Master Plan." Dohan seconded. All aye.

b. **Pond Hill Farm – Revaluate Special Use Permit attachment** – Lane gave an overview of the SUP and informed the Planning Commissioners of the two choices regarding the SUP; extend or extend indefinitely. Lane noted there have been no complaints. Hollerith asked for opinions from the Planning Commission on the SUP. Green said they are doing all the right things, noting the written request to hold HSHS Senior Prom Dance and proposed extend indefinitely. Thompson commented that they are great stewards of the community, have shown commitment and extend indefinitely. Forster said they are doing a great job and extend indefinitely. Osetek noted they are doing a good job and extend indefinitely. Remus: no comment, extend indefinitely. Dohan extend indefinitely, wondered if they could be flagged for a violation and does the SUP stay with the property. Hollerith, extend indefinitely noting they have been managing their hours and there have been no complaints. Hollerith asked for a motion at 5:56 p.m. Dohan offered the following motion; "**Based upon a reevaluation by the Planning Commission conducted on January 14, 2026, I John Dohan, move to indefinitely extend the Second Amendment to the Special Lane Use Permit for Pond Hill Farm, as approved by the Township Board of Trustees on July 8, 2025, as provided in Zoning Permit #20-2025, and as provided in the corresponding agreement fully executed between West Traverse Township and Pond Hill Farm on August 11, 2025." Remus seconded. Roll Call vote: Green – yes, Thompson – yes, Forster – yes, Hollerith – yes, Osetek – yes, Remus – yes, Dohan – yes.** Lane explained the request from Pond Hill Farm regarding the Harbor Springs High School request to hold their Senior Prom Dance there and the need to extend beyond the 10:00 p.m. cut off for an additional hour, 11:00 p.m. Hollerith inquired if any further requests such as this could be handled by the Zoning Administrator on a case-by-case basis with the Planning Commission agreeing it can be handled through ZA Lane.

New Business:

a. 2026 Election of Officers – The Planning Commissioners held elections for appointment of new Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and ZBA Rep.
   - Dohan nominated Forster for Chair. Green seconded. All aye.
   - Hollerith nominated Remus for Vice Chair. Remus seconded. All aye.
   - Green nominated Osetek to Secretary. Forster seconded. All aye.
   - Green nominated Dohan as ZBA Rep. Hollerith seconded. All aye.

b. 2026 Meeting Schedule – The Planning Commission set their meeting schedule for the 2026 year. **Hollerith offered the following resolution at 6:06 p.m. "Resolved by the Planning Commission of West Traverse Township, of Emmet County, State of Michigan, establishes the following Regular Meetings of the West Traverse Township Planning Commission, to be held at West Traverse Township Hall, 8001 M-119, Harbor Springs, MI 49740 as follows: January 14, February 11, March 11, April 8, May 13, June 10, July**

8, August 12, September 9, October 14, November 11, December 9, 2026 and January 13, 2027. Meetings will commence at 5:30 p.m. This will be at the discretion of the Planning Commission with due and proper notice as required by law. Thompson seconded. Roll Call vote: Green – yes, Thompson – yes, Forster – yes, Hollerith – yes, Osetek – yes, Remus – yes, Dohan – yes. All aye.

c. 2025 Planning Commission Annual Report – Per the Planning and Zoning Enabling Act it is required to submit an Annual Report to the Township Board summarizing a list of items reviewed by the Planning Commission over the year. The Planning Commission commented on the work completed. Green asked about having the Planning Commission and the Zoning Board of Appeal attend the February Township Board meeting along with a Power Point Presentation of what has been completed. **Green made the motion to approve the 2025 Planning Commission Annual Report and submit it for approval at the West Traverse Township Board meeting. Thompson seconded. All aye.**

Other:

a. Zoning Administrator Report – Lane noted the Year End report is in the packets. Remus asked about the on-going enforcement of 4850 Lake St. and if anything was being done. Lane stated the circumstances of the property and that it is a work in progress.

b. Township Board Representative – Green gave the Planning Commission updates on the progress of the new Township Hall; fine tuning floor plans, cost, obtaining new technology for the new Hall, Zoom, etc., concerns about what to do with the old Township Hall, and obtaining a Phase One Environmental assessment on Township properties. Green noted that the Township Board of Trustees approved the WTTS Chicken Ordinance at the recent Township Board meeting.

c. Correspondence – Lane noted the received letters regarding the Otis project, copies of the letters are in the packet. Hollerith inquired if The Otis had responded to the letters received and if the plans were to still move forward in February. Hollerith also stated that the walk through of The Otis property is strictly fact finding and that the Commissioners are not to deliberate or discuss any issues while at the site.

d. Emmet County Master Plan survey – Hollerith encouraged the Commissioners to look at the ECMP survey on the Emmet County website noting it has interesting topics.

Planning Commissioner Comments (open discussion) – Thompson thanked Hollerith for the exceptional work he did while the Planning Commission Chair.

Public Comments – Lisa Morris is happy regarding the outcome of the Pond Hill Farm decision, and she hopes that others in the Township will be held to the same standards. She mentioned that Zoom meetings are needed along with better transcription of the minutes. She also discussed the Phase One Environmental Assessment asking that soil samples be included in the assessment due to old wells, out-houses, pesticides, etc.

Next Meeting: Planning Commission next regular meeting will be held February 11, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

Adjournment: Hollerith asked for a motion to adjourn. **Thompson made the motion to adjourn at 6:29 p.m. Forster seconded. All aye.**

Respectfully Submitted by:
Jim Osetek, Secretary

Transcribed by:
Amy Peters

Proposed: 01-14-26
Approved: 02-11-26

Outlook

West Traverse Township Master Plan

From Tammy Doernenburg <tdoernenburg@emmetcounty.org>
Date Fri 12/26/2025 11:13 AM
To P-ZA <zoning@westtraversetownship.gov>

Hello Ken,

I reviewed the West Traverse Township Master Plan and have a couple of suggestions – these are mostly formatting and a couple of typos.

Page 5 - an observation about Data Source. The first bullet indicates that the US Decennial Census is the most reliable source of demographic information, then in the last paragraph of page 5 the conclusion seems to contradict that first bullet point.

On pages 15, 22, 24, 25, 30 and 33 the Figure title is on a page prior the actual figure – suggest formatting so that the figure title is on the same page as the actual figure.

Page 19 – last full sentence "need" should be "needed". So that the sentence would read "The data shows that rental units are needed at all price points in West Traverse Township…"

Page 20 – sentence just before Key Takeaways – "tern" should be "term".

Page 24 – Transfer of development rights is not specifically identified in the MZEA. (Just Purchase of Development Rights).

Page 40 – last sentence in the Ridge Road "80" paragraph seems to be a larger/different font than the rest of the page.

Page 41 – Under Ambulance Service – the 2nd line starts with "new" stations….those stations are now 10 years old!!

Page 43 – Under Recreation Objectives – suggest adding cities to the first bullet point so that it reads "Encourage additional Lake Michigan access site for public use, encourage intergovernmental agreements between cities, townships and villages to provide recreational services,…"

Page 45 – Under Land Use Planning Areas – 2nd sentence Figure (TBD) – TBD should be changed to reflect the Figure Number on the FLUM.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the West Traverse Township Master Plan. We will review the FLUM to incorporate into the Emmet County Master Plan.

Happy holidays!

Tammy

****

Tammy Doernenburg
Emmet County Planning & Zoning Director
3434 Harbor-Petoskey Rd, Suite E
Harbor Springs, MI 49740
231.439.8998
www.emmetcounty.org

D: Planning Commission Resolution Recommending Adoption

WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
EMMET COUNTY, MICHIGAN

RESOLUTION APPROVING AND RECOMMENDING THE ADOPTION OF THE
2026-2031 WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

RESOLUTION # 01-2026

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA) authorizes municipal planning commissions to prepare a "master plan" pertinent to the future development of the municipality; and

WHEREAS, the West Traverse Township Planning Commission has prepared a draft Master Plan for the Township, to update and replace its previous community master plan; and

WHEREAS, the West Traverse Township Board of Trustees authorized the distribution of the draft Master Plan to the general public and the various entities as required by the MPEA, for review and comment purposes; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Master Plan was made available to the various entities and the general public as required by the MPEA, and a public hearing was held by the Planning Commission on January 14, 2026, pursuant to notice as required by the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds the proposed Master Plan as submitted for the public hearing is desirable and proper, and furthers the land use and development goals and strategies of the Township.

NOW, THEREFORE, the West Traverse Planning Commission hereby approves and recommends the adoption by the Township Board of Trustees the 2026-2031 West Traverse Township Master Plan as submitted and amended at the January 14, 2026, public hearing, including all the text, charts, tables, maps, and descriptive and other matter therein intended by the Planning Commission to form the complete 2026-2031 Master Plan.

Motion by Commissioner Thompson, second by Commissioner Dohan,

YEAS: Thompson, Dohan, Forster, Remus, Osetek, Hollerith, Green

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: None

RESOLUTION ADOPTED

CERTIFICATION

As the Planning & Zoning Administrator of West Traverse Township, I hereby certify the foregoing resolution was approved by a majority of the members of the West Traverse Township Planning Commission by a roll call vote at a meeting of the Planning Commission on January 14, 2026, held in compliance with the Open Meetings Act.

Ken Lane
Planning & Zoning Administrator

1/15/26

Date

E: Township Board Minutes

WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP
BOARD MEETING
Tuesday March 24, 2026
6:00 p.m.

Supervisor Murphy called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Roll Call: Olson, Hollingsworth, Baker, Green, Murphy

Absent: none

Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all.

Approve Agenda & additional items: Hollingsworth made the motion to approve the agenda as presented. Green seconded. All ayes.

Approve minutes of regular meeting February 10, 2026: Baker requested changing "*503c* to *501c3"* on page 2 of the mins along with clarification of Bakers' meeting with LTC regarding Township 80 meeting to "*meeting with Ed Murhpy regarding LTC Township 80 proposal*". **Green made the motion to approve the minutes with changes. Baker seconded. All ayes.**

Visitors: Katie McGauley, Sally Olson, Joanne Murphy, Patrick O'Brien, Bill Brown, Lisa Morris, Israel Hernandez, Pat Lennon, John Gibbs, Alesandra Callavino, Kamron Bijeh-Apple, Tom Mough, Keith Hammond, Costis Skiadas, Robin Skiadas, Lee Ford, Constance Hicks, Shane Abe, Shannon Welsh, Garon Gopigian, Glenn Remus, John Fergus-Jean, Elizabeth Fergus-Jean, Karin Offield, Tim Kepford, Abigail Hackman, David Berryman, Kathy Cavanegh, Dick & Joanne Stewart, Cal Benjamin, Jeanne Benjamin, Fred Hackyl, Laurie Seltenright, Douglas Brown, Mackenzie Brown, Patrica Spaulding, Jill Jahn, Robin Couzens, Kris Neal, Renee McDuffee

Public Comments Supervisor Murphy reminded any speakers during public comment to keep their comments respectful and within the time limit. Renee McDuffee stated her objections to the hotel and that the "zoning specified amplified sound" is too vague and suggests it be changed to "no amplified sound." Glenn Remus discussed the proposal, the intensity of use, referred to ZO 604 and the five (5) conditions that were deemed satisfied were not discussed, he's not in favor of the project and asked that it be remanded back to Planning Commission. Fred Hackyl spoke in favor of the Otis noting the worthy charm, aesthetic value and how it will benefit the community. Mackenzie Brown said it has creative energy and will be a positive contribution to the community. Abigail Hackman understands the noise concern but wanted pointed out that it's no different than the noise coming from Birchwood Club House. Douglas Brown spoke in support of the Otis. Jill Jahn is in favor of the Otis noting that it will be a positive contribution to the area as well. Patrica Spaulding commented on the noise concern, noting it won't be every day, it isn't any different than the noise coming from Birchwood's Club House and appreciates the thoughtful nature of the Otis.

Review Correspondence not listed below: none.

Action Items:

a. Approve WTTS Board 2026-2027 Meeting Dates – Meeting dates for 2026-2027 will be: April 14, 2026, May 12, 2026, June 9, 2026, July 14, 2026, August 11, 2026, September 8, 2026, October 13, 2026, November 10, 2026, December 8, 2026 & January 12, 2027, February 9, 2027, and March 23, 2027. **Green made the motion to approve the WTTS Board 2026-2027 meeting dates. Hollingsworth seconded. All ayes.**

b. Approve 2026-2027 Burnham & Flowers FY WTTS Insurance Renewal – the Board discussed the annual renewal policy, the list of rates for the FY of 2026-2027 and Olson explained the slight increase. Baker asked if there were any things that could be removed to help reduce the cost. Green suggested the Township obtain quotes from other insurance companies. Olson will look into it for the next year. **Hollingsworth made the following motion:** "*THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the West Traverse Township Board that the Supervisor be authorized to approve the Proposed FY 2026-2027 Township Insurance Proposal From Burnham & Flowers effective April 1, 2026, as presented.*" **Green seconded. Roll Call vote: Olson – yes, Baker – yes, Murphy – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes. Five (5) ayes. The Supervisor declared this resolution adopted.**

c. Approve West Traverse Township Master Plan – Zoning Administrator Lane presented the updated Master Plan detailing the Planning Commission's efforts and the public input received. Hollingsworth noted corrections to the sewage disposal system and the property count which Lane will correct. **Baker made the following motion**. *"NOW THEREFORE the West Traverse Township Board of Trustees hereby approves with corrections and adopts the 2026-2030 West Traverse Township Master Plan as submitted and amended at the public hearing, including all the text, charts, tables, maps and descriptive and other matter therein intended by the Planning Commission to form the complete Master Plan."* **Hollingsworth seconded. Roll Call vote: Olson – yes, Baker – yes, Murphy – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes. Five (5) ayes. The Supervisor declared this resolution adopted.**

d. Consider Special Use Request from the Otis – Lane presented the Planning Commissions' recommendation to approve the Otis' Special Use Permit with conditions and addressed points from letters submitted noting that all issues had been addressed. Israel Hernandez and Pat Lennon, Attorney for the Otis, discussed the Otis' history, current operations, and proposed expansion. The Board discussed the conditions imposed by the Planning Commission including noise restrictions and parking requirements. Hollingsworth noted her concerns about the amplified sound and stated she is inclined to represent the concerns of the Township residents that are opposed. Baker asked if there had been any complaints about the noise, Hernandez said there hadn't been any. Murphy complimented the PC on the excellent job with the project. Green pointed out that all the items are amendable in the future. Olson said there was a lot of thought put into the design and believes it meets the needs of the community.

Baker made the following motion. *"I, Stephanie Baker, based upon the recommendation of the Township Planning Commission, move to approve Case #3-2025, a site plan review and the expansion and enlargement of a legal non-conforming use by Special Use Permit, as submitted by Israel Hernandez, on behalf of JV North Shore Lodge LLC and the Otis Harbor Springs, for the property at 7291 S. Lakeshore Dr and 7707 S. Lakeshore Dr, tax parcel #24-16-15-09-100-031 and #24-16-09-100-032, as described and depicted in the submitted application materials, including the revised materials submitted on January 9, 2026, and the site plan dated November 18, 2025, the floor plan and elevation drawings by Michael Hsu, Architect, dated June 21, 2022, and the concept site plan dated January 9, 2026, because the applicable standards of the West Traverse Township Zoning Ordinance have been satisfied, subject to the following conditions: A) The number of parked vehicles at 7291 and 7707 S. Lakeshore shall not exceed 132. B) There shall a guest and event attendee limit of 300 people at any one time at 7291 and 7707 S. Lakeshore Dr. C) All required permits and approvals from all applicable regulatory agencies, including District Health Department #3,MDOT, and the Emmet County Building Department, shall be obtained and kept current by the applicants and a copy shall be provided to the Township and kept on file with the West Traverse Township Clerk. D) All outdoor activities and events shall commence no later than 7:00 a.m. and shall terminate no later than 9:00 p.m. All outdoor amplified sound shall commence no earlier than 12:00 p.m. and shall terminate no later than 9:00 p.m. E) All driveways and accessways on site shall be comprised of concrete. All parking spaces shall be comprised of the materials depicted and described in the concept site plan dated January 9, 2026, prepared by Michale Hsu, Architect. F) Landscaping and screening shall be provided as depicted in the concept site plan dated January 9, 2026, prepared by Michael Hsu, Architect, with additional landscaping for screening added along the rear property line of 7291 S. Lakeshore and continuing to the east property line of 7291 S. Lakeshore Dr. G) The detached cabins shall be used exclusively as hotel rooms, and shall be occupied and reserved in the same manner as rooms in the two other hotel buildings on the property. H) Day passes shall be limited to hotel guests for the first six (6) months after the issuance of certificates of occupancy by the Emmet County Building Department. I) Exterior lighting shall comply with the revised lighting details submitted by the applicants. J) the Planning Commission shall reevaluate this approval and these conditions within one (1) year of the issuance of certificates of occupancy by the Emmet County Building Department and determine if any negative effects have occurred. If no negative effects have occurred, the Planning Commission may extend this approval to a future date or indefinitely. No public hearing or further amendment of the Special Land Use permit is required for this review. K) The terms and conditions of this Special Use Permit shall be documented within a Special Use Permit agreement executed between the applicants and the Township before issuance of a zoning permit. The Township Board authorizes the Township Supervisor to sign such agreement on the Township's behalf."* **Green seconded. Roll Call vote: Baker – yes, Green – yes, Murphy – yes, Hollingsworth – no, Olson – yes. Four (4) ayes, one (1) no.**

e. Approve WTTS Financial Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Budget – The Township Board approved the WTTS Financial Fiscal Year Budget. The following resolutions were approved by the Board:

Resolution to Amend the FY 2026-2026 Budget – March 24, 2026. Motion by Olson – *"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Township's FY 2025-2026 operating budget is hereby amending account, New Hall Consulting and Contract Services, GL 101-265-965.007 with an increase of $95,000.00: FROM $25,000.00 to $120,000.00."* **Green seconded. Roll Call vote: Olson – yes, Baker – yes, Murphy – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes. Five (5) ayes. The Supervisor declared this resolution adopted.**

Resolution to adopt the West Traverse Township General Fund Budget for the Fiscal Year beginning April 1, 2026, and ending March 31, 2027. Motion by Hollingsworth – *"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the West Traverse Township Board, that the General Fund draft budget dated March 24, 2026, be adopted for the Fiscal Year beginning April 1, 2026, and ending March 31, 2027, with no changes."* **Green seconded. Roll Call vote: Olson – yes, Baker – yes, Murphy – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes. Five (5) ayes. The Supervisor declared this resolution adopted.**

Resolution to approve Township Millage for Fiscal Year 2026-2027. Motion by Baker – *"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the West Traverse Township Board, that the Township millage for the Fiscal Year beginning April 1, 2026, and ending March 31, 2027, be set at 1.40 mils, with .9751 not .90 mils designated for the Township General Fund and .4249 not .050 mils designated for the Road Fund with changes."* **Hollingsworth seconded. Roll Call vote: Olson – yes, Baker – yes, Murphy – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes. Five (5) ayes. The Supervisor declared this resolution adopted.**

Resolution to adopt the West Traverse Township Road Fund Budget for the Fiscal Year beginning April 1, 2026, and ending March 31, 2027. Motion by Hollingsworth – *"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the West Traverse Township Board, that the Road Fund draft budget dated March 24, 2026, be adopted for the Fiscal Year beginning April 1, 2026, and ending March 31, 2027, with no changes."* **Seconded by Baker. Roll Call vote: Olson – yes, Baker – yes, Murphy – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes. Five (5) ayes. The Supervisor declared this resolution adopted.**

Resolution to adopt the West Traverse Township Sewer Fund Budget for the Fiscal Year beginning April 1, 2026, and ending March 31, 2027. Motion by Hollingsworth – *"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the West Traverse Township Board, that the Sewer Fund draft budget dated March 24, 2026, be adopted for the Fiscal Year beginning April 1, 2026, and ending March 31, 2027, with no changes."* **Olson seconded. Roll Call vote: Olson – yes, Baker – yes, Murphy – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes. Five (5) ayes. The Supervisor declared this resolution adopted.**

Resolution to adopt the West Traverse Township Water Fund Budget for the Fiscal Year beginning April 1, 2026, and ending March 31, 2027. Motion by Hollingsworth – *"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the West Traverse Township Bord, that the Water Fund draft budget dated March 24, 2026, be adopted for the Fiscal Year beginning April 1, 2026, and ending March 31, 2027, with no changes."* **Baker seconded. Roll Call vote: Olson – yes, Baker – yes, Murphy – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes. Five (5) ayes. The Supervisor declared this resolution adopted.**

Resolution to adopt the West Traverse Township Thorne Swift Preserve Fund Budget for the Fiscal Year beginning April 1, 2026, and ending March 31, 2027. Motion by Baker - *"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the West Traverse Township Board, that the Thorne Swift Nature Preserve Fund draft budget dated March 24, 2026, be adopted for the Fiscal Year beginning April 1, 2026, and ending March 31, 2027, with no changes."* **Hollingsworth seconded. Roll Call vote: Olson – yes, Baker – yes, Murphy – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes. Five (5) ayes. The Supervisor declared this resolution adopted.**

Resolution to approve the Thorne Swift Nature Preserve Millage for Fiscal Year 2026-2027. Motion by Hollingsworth – *"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the West Traverse Township Board, that the Thorne Swift Nature Preserve millage for the Fiscal Year beginning April 1, 2026, and ending March 31, 2027, be set at 0.2437 mils."* **Green seconded. Roll Call vote: Olson – yes, Baker – yes, Murphy – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes. Five (5) ayes. The Supervisor declared this resolution adopted.**

Resolution to Establish West Traverse Township Supervisor's salary. Motion by Hollingsworth - *"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the salary of the West Traverse Township Supervisor shall be increased approximately 2.7% from $23,159.00 to $23,784.29 effective April 1, 2026."* **Green seconded. Roll Call vote: Olson – yes, Baker – yes, Murphy – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes. Five (5) ayes. The Supervisor declared this resolution adopted.**

Resolution to Establish West Traverse Township Clerk's salary. Motion by Hollingsworth – *"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the salary of the West Traverse Township Clerk shall be increased approximately 2.7% from $23,159.00 to $23,784.29 effective April 1, 2026."* **Green seconded. Roll Call vote: Olson – yes, Baker – yes, Murphy – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes. Five (5) ayes. The Supervisor declared this resolution adopted.**

Resolution to Establish West Traverse Township Treasurer's salary. Motion by Baker – *"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the salary of the West Traverse Township Treasurer shall be increased approximately 2.7% from $23,159.00 to $23,784.29 effective April 1, 2026."* **Olson seconded. Roll Call vote: Olson – yes, Baker – yes, Murphy – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes. Five (5) ayes. The Supervisor declared this resolution adopted.**

Resolution to Establish West Traverse Township Trustee's salary. Motion by Hollingsworth – *"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that he salary of the West Traverse Township Trustee's shall be increased approximately 2.7% from $6588.00 to $6765.87 effective April 1, 2026."* **Baker seconded. Roll Call vote: Olson – yes, Baker – yes, Murphy – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes. Five (5) ayes. The Supervisor declared this resolution adopted.**

Resolution to Establish Thorne Swift Manager Keith Hammond's salary for Fiscal Year 2026-2027. Motion by Hollingsworth- *"BE IT RESOLVED that Keith Hammonds salary shall be $44,000.00 for the Fiscal Year of April 1, 2026, to March 31, 2027."* **Green seconded. Roll Call vote: Olson – yes, Baker – yes, Murphy – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes. Five (5) ayes. The Supervisor declared this resolution adopted.**

Resolution to Establish Secretary Amy Peters' Compensation for Fiscal Year 2026-2027. Motion by Baker – *"BE IT RESOLVED that as of April 1, 2026, Amy Peters' hourly rate shall be increased by 4% from $21.00 to $21.84 per hour."* **Green seconded. Roll Call vote: Olson – yes, Baker – yes, Murphy – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes. Five (5) ayes. The Supervisor declared this resolution adopted.**

Resolution to Establish Compensation for Appointed Positions for Fiscal Year 2026-2027. Motion by Hollingsworth – *"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the compensation for these positions, Board of Review, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals & Water Committee, be increased 20% for the Fiscal Year of April 1, 2026, to March 31, 2027."* **Baker seconded. Roll Call vote: Olson – yes, Baker – yes, Murphy – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes. Five (5) ayes. The Supervisor declared this resolution adopted.**

Resolution to Establish Election Inspector Compensation for Fiscal Year 2026-2027. Motion by Hollingsworth – *"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that as of April 1, 2026, compensation for the Election Inspector Chair shall be $185.00 per session and Election Inspectors shall be $180.00 per session with sessions being 7.5 to 8 hours."* **Baker seconded. Roll Call vote: Olson – yes, Baker – yes, Murphy – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes. Five (5) ayes. The Supervisor declared this resolution adopted.**

f. Resolution Authorizing Issuance of 2026 Capital Improvement Bonds – Green discussed the 2026 Capital Bonds Improvement Bonds paperwork, the competitive nature of the sale, how it is negotiated, summarized the disclosure, length of the term of the loan, what account requirements are needed from Hollingsworth for establishing the account, that the loan cannot exceed $2 million, the interest rate, that the successful bidder will get a "funding provided by" signage paid for by the financial institute, not the Township, and that the Board needs to approve signers for the paperwork. Olson inquired about the timeline for bids. **Hollingsworth made a motion to adopt the Resolution authorizing issuance of 2026 Capital Improvement Bonds limited tax general obligation as presented. Green seconded. Roll Call vote: Olson – yes, Baker – yes, Murphy – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes. Five (5) ayes. The Supervisor declared this resolution adopted.**

g. METRO Act Right-of-Way Permit Application – Lane gave an overview of the METRO Act Right-of-Way (Metropolitan Extension Tele-Communications Right of Way), the permit process for Surf Internet to erect a cell tower on Hughston Rd, detailed the application, the fee, the need for Board approval and for the Supervisor to sign the agreement. **Hollingsworth made the motion to approve a Metro Act permit for Surf Internet and authorize the Township Supervisor to sign. Green seconded. Roll Call vote: Olson – yes, Baker – yes, Murphy – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes. Five (5) ayes.**

h. Project Centennial Updates – Olson provided an update on Project Centennial, noting the completion of the site plans, the upcoming interior design meeting and outlined the timeline. Olson requested a motion to approve the plans for the new Township Hall noting that if approved, it will be on the April Planning Commission agenda. **Hollingsworth made the motion to approve the Project Centennial new Township Hall site plan dated 3-13-26. Green seconded. Roll Call vote: Olson – yes, Baker – yes, Murphy – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes. Five (5) ayes.**

i. Existing Township Hall Discussion – Olson reported that there is no new information regarding anyone acquiring the current Township Hall. Baker asked if it could be repurposed as a business. Leasing the building to non-profit organizations was discussed as well. Baker asked about the process required for leasing to an interested party. The Board agreed to explore proposals.

j. Big Barn Discussion – Murphy referenced Lisa Morris' letter to the Board regarding her offer to have the roof of the barn repaired at her cost. The Board expressed concerns about private citizens investing in Township assets and the need for a formal process for the two (2) barn's future. Olson stated that both barns were discovered to have creosote and so they cannot be burned. The Board agreed to seek estimates from barn restoration companies.

k. Township 80 Proposal for Little Traverse Conservancy – Baker informed the Board of the recent Conservancy meeting and the discussion regarding the sale of the Township 80. The Board considered the impact of a Park restriction on the Township 80's value and the need to follow a public bidding process after an appraisal is completed, should the Board decide to sell the property. Hollingsworth stated her concern about the presumption and timing of the selling the property at this time.

Reports & Updates

a. Clerk – Olson updated the Board on the May 5 election; there will be no early voting and ballots have been mailed. Olson also stated that he was able to get the Phase One Environmental Company to price match the other company and they will be out to assess the property after the snow is gone.

b. Treasurer – Hollingsworth presented her End of the Year report, explained how and where the money, brought in from taxes, are distributed and asked to have the following comment read into the minutes. "*Out of the $13 million collected from the Summer and Winter 2025 taxes, the Township receives $402K of which is distributed amongst various funds, operating costs, etc., and has $1.5 million dollars in savings*". Green complimented Hollingsworth on her diligence and hard work.

c. Planning Commission – Green reported on the March PC meeting where a Special Use Permit for Ann's Nest, an Assisted Living Community for Developmentally Delayed persons, was proposed and noted that the Polo Field had been re-scheduled to May's agenda.
d. Zoning Administrator – Provided in packet
e. Recreation/Thorne Swift Committee – The Recreation Committee met in February, discussed expanding the committee members to include members from other municipalities, they reviewed plans for potential new projects and will continue to work on the Recreation plan.
f. Supervisor – Murphy informed the Board members of a proposal from a cell tower company to lease property on Hughston Rd for a new tower. The Board agreed to review the proposed lease agreement.

Approve February payables & payroll – Green made the motion to approve the February payables & payroll. Hollingsworth seconded. All ayes.

Public Comments – Lisa Morris commented on the Capital Improvement Bonds. She also proposed that the money the Township receives from the METRO Act be used to bury power/cable lines as the overhead lines are a deterrent to individuals who would like to preserve historical homes by moving them to another property. Morris also touched on moving the new Township Hall to a different location so as to save the large Township parking lot for events where parking is needed. Garon Gopigian suggested ZA Lane speak with Chief Knight about how he negotiated the contract with Surf Internet and the right to use lines for the City of Harbor Springs.

Board comments – Members of the Township Board commented on what a great meeting it was.

Next Regular Meeting – The Board agreed to not hold an April Board meeting. **May 12, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. will be the next regular meeting.**

Adjourn – Murphy asked for a motion to adjourn the March 24, 2026, Township Board meeting. **Hollingsworth made the motion to adjourn at 8:54 p.m. Green seconded. Five (5) ayes**

Respectfully Submitted by:
Jay Olson, Clerk
Transcribed by: Amy Peters

Proposed: March 24, 2026
Accepted:

F: Township Board Resolution of Adoption

WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP
EMMET COUNTY, MICHIGAN

RESOLUTION APPROVING AND ADOPTING THE
2026-2031 WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

RESOLUTION # 3-2026

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA) authorizes municipal planning commissions to prepare a "master plan" pertinent to the future development of the municipality; and

WHEREAS, the West Traverse Township Planning Commission has prepared a draft Master Plan for the Township, to update and replace its previous community master plan; and

WHEREAS, the West Traverse Township Board of Trustees authorized the distribution of the draft Master Plan to the general public and the various entities as required by the MPEA, for review and comment purposes; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Master Plan was made available to the various entities and the general public as required by the MPEA, and a public hearing was held by the Planning Commission on January 14, 2026, pursuant to notice as required by the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission found the proposed Master Plan as submitted for the public hearing was desirable and proper, and furthers the land use and development goals and strategies of the Township.

NOW, THEREFORE, the West Traverse Township Board of Trustees hereby approves with corrections and adopts the 2026-2031 West Traverse Township Master Plan as submitted and amended at the public hearing, including all the text, charts, tables, maps, and descriptive and other matter therein intended by the Planning Commission to form the complete Master Plan.

Motion by Trustee Baker, second by Trustee Hollingsworth,

YEAS: Baker, Hollingsworth, Murphy, Olson, Green

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: None

RESOLUTION ADOPTED

CERTIFICATION

As the Clerk of West Traverse Township, I hereby certify the foregoing resolution was approved by a majority of the members of the West Traverse Township Board of Trustees by a roll call vote at a meeting of the Township Board on March 24, 2026, held in compliance with the Open Meetings Act.

Joseph Olson, Township Clerk

4/2/2026

Date

G: Legal Transmission Letters of Notice of Adoption

West Traverse Township

8001 M-119 P.O. Box 528
Harbor Springs, MI 49740
231-526-7361
Website: westtraversetownship.gov

Ed Murphy - Supervisor
Joseph (Jay) Olson - Clerk
Kristi Hollingsworth - Treasurer
David Green - Trustee
Stephanie Baker – Trustee

April 16, 2026

RE: West Traverse Township Master Plan-2026-2031

To whom it may concern:

This letter is to provide notification to your office that the West Traverse Township Board of Trustees adopted the proposed West Traverse Township Master Plan 2026-2031 on March 24, 2026, pursuant to Public Act 33 of 2008, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act.

The final plan is available for download at www.westtraversetownship.gov . Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Ken Lane
Planning & Zoning Administrator
West Traverse Township
zoning@westtraversetownship.gov
(231) 526-7361

Enclosure: List of organizations and entities receiving this notification

Notification of Adoption of Master Plan

Organizations and Entities Receiving this Notice:

Emmet County Planning Commission
Emmet County Road Commission
City of Harbor Springs Planning Commission
Friendship Township Planning Commission
Little Traverse Township Planning Commission
Pleasantview Township Planning Commission
Readmond Township Planning Commission
MDOT—North Region
Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Networks Northwest
Consumers Energy
DTE Energy
Great Lakes Energy
AT&T
Verizon
Charter Communications
Harbor Springs Area Sewer Authority
Harbor-Petoskey Airport Authority
Charlevoix Emmet ISD
Harbor Springs Public Schools
Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians
Little Traverse Conservancy
Great Lakes Central Railroad