

Keeler Township MASTER PLAN 2023



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The Keeler Township Planning Commission dedicates this Plan in honor of Don George Blackmond for his many contributions to the Planning Commission and the development of Master Plans for Keeler Township.



Contents

1. Introduction	7
2. Community Profile	12
3. Natural Features	22
4. Community Infrastructure, Services, & Facilities	38
5. Goals	48
6. Land Use	56
7. Implementation	66
APPENDIX. Signed Resolution, Community Survey Report	70

chapter 1.
INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

The Keeler Township Master Plan presents a vision for land use and development for the next 20 years. The Master Plan is a visionary and strategic document, outlining goals and objectives for the future that guides land use policy. The planning process to development plan brings together Township officials, local champions, and community members to create an idea of what Keeler Township could be in a future time.

Legal Basis for the Plan

Master Plans are authorized by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008. This Act describes the basic purposes and requirements of Master Plans including the need to:

- Promote public health, safety, and general welfare;
- Encourage the use of resources in accordance with their character and adaptability;
- Avoid the overcrowding of land by buildings or people;
- Lessen congestion on public roads and streets;
- Facilitate provisions for a system of transportation, sewage disposal, safe and adequate water supply, recreation, and other public improvements; and
- Consider the character of each township and its suitability for particular uses and population development.

Lawful Zoning Ordinances Need a Master Plan

For a community to have a legally defensible zoning ordinance, a Master Plan is needed that “(a) Is coordinated, adjusted, harmonious, efficient, and economical. (b) Considers the character of the planning jurisdiction and its suitability for particular uses, judged in terms of such factors as trends in land and population development. (c) Will, in accordance with present and future needs, best promote public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare,” according to the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. The Master Plan is intended to prepare Keeler Township to properly manage growth and provide a basis for public and private investment. The Master Plan is also intended to serve as a means to protect and enhance the quality of life in the Township by fostering orderly, manageable, and cost-effective growth and establishing a framework for future decisions. This will enable the residents to enjoy the qualities that make Keeler Township a great place to live.

The Plan will be a decision-making tool for public and private decision-makers, including Township staff, boards, and commissions, as well as businesses, community groups, the development community, non-profit organizations, and individuals. Planning Commissioners and Township Elected Officials will use the Plan in their deliberations on development opportunities and zoning actions.

The Plan’s goals and supporting statements will be used to direct development activities and implement programs. They are also designed to help Township officials make decisions that will achieve the best use of land resources. According to the community survey, 50% of respondents feel that the Township is growing “about right.” By using the goals outlined in the plan that was developed based on the input of the community survey, leaders in the community can be confident that residents will continue to support the pace and types of development that occur in Keeler Township.



The Planning Process

The dedication and desire of the Planning Commissioners, Township Board members, and the public to preserve the qualities that make Keeler unique became apparent during this planning process. The decision to update the 2002 Master Plan was made by Township leaders. The update is meant to formulate a prioritization of areas where land use type is best suited for maintaining the rural character and qualities of the community while guiding growth. The Master Plan represents the efforts of Keeler Township to achieve the following:

- a common “blue print” of land uses and land use development and preservation goals for the future growth and development within Keeler Township.
- a foundation for establishing compatible land uses that will benefit the Township.

Public involvement provides residents with the opportunity to voice their opinions about what they see happening in the community, a chance to offer suggestions, provide insight, and strengthen the position of the Master Plan through their involvement. Using public input to identify issues of importance in Keeler Township is essential to the formation of a sound vision for the future. Unless problems are accurately identified, and proper solutions sought, the Plan will not achieve its full potential as a guide that can the community a better place to live, work, and play.

A community survey was mailed to all of the Keeler Township property owners to determine their views about the future of the Township. The survey was organized to obtain responses from permanent and seasonal residents with eight questions specifically directed toward seasonal residents. A total of 29 questions were included in the survey. The survey was primarily conducted via a printed mailed survey that was sent to 1,613 tax parcels in Keeler Township. The availability of the survey was advertised through word of mouth, email, social media, and on a marquee at a local restaurant. A total of 302 responses were received by the deadline. The community survey results are found in the Appendix.

What is the Difference Between the Master Plan and the Zoning Ordinance?

The relationship between the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance is often misunderstood, as the Master Plan is a land use guide for the future. The Zoning Ordinance regulates current land use. The implementation of the Master Plan will depend upon the existence of supporting community services and activities. The following services will be of primary importance in realizing the development of the goals and objectives:

- updated zoning ordinances
- roads
- parks and recreation facilities
- fire and police protection
- economic development efforts
- capital improvement plans and budgets

Using the Plan

The Master Plan can be used in a number of ways. Consistent use of the Plan is of primary importance. The ability to use the Plan to support various development related decisions is directly related to the ability of the Township to demonstrate that the Plan is used consistently, or that departures from the Plan are identified and explained.

Refer to the Master Plan in all Zoning Decisions. Use of the Master Plan ensures that the Township's desires regarding future development are translated into action. These decisions occur one at a time through actions like rezonings, site plan reviews, special land use approvals, or variances. Those decisions create the land use pattern for Keeler Township.

Encourage Other Decision Making Bodies to Use the Master Plan. The Master Plan should assist in guiding the decision making efforts. The planning and development programs of other agencies such as the Van Buren County Road Commission, MOOT, Van Buren County Public Works Department, and adjacent communities can refer to and support the implementation of the Keeler Township Master Plan.

Keeping the Plan Current. The Michigan Planning Enable Act of 2008 mandates that the Plan be reviewed and updated every five years. To ensure that the Plan stays current the Planning Commission should conduct a bi-annual review. The review will help make the five year updates much easier by ensuring that changing conditions have been taken into account. During a review, plan amendments may be considered to ensure that the vision, goals, policies, and land uses are still consistent with community philosophies and needs.

How the Master Plan Affects a Resident or a Landowner. How the Master Plan affects you depends on your particular situation. If you are a property owner you may have several interests, including not only your property but properties near you. As a homeowner, you will be interested in the properties in your immediate neighborhood. You may wish to know what uses are proposed for vacant land in your area. As an owner of vacant property, you will want to know what land uses are proposed for your property. As a resident, you will be interested in the overall concepts of the Plan, as expressed in the goals and policy statements. These statements will give you an indication of the Planning Commission's view of the Township.



How Should You Use This Plan? The use of the Plan depends on your interest in the future of Keeler Township. The general procedure is outlined below.

- *Step 1: What land use is proposed for your property, or the area surrounding your property?*

You will find this information on the Future Land Use map. The map is divided into separate land use categories. Find the category of land use in which your property is located.

- *Step 2: Determine how the Planning Commission views development in your area.*

The Future Land Use map will indicate the general direction of development within your area. It may be fairly specific, or it may be somewhat general. The Future Land Use map is meant to be a development guide for the Planning Commission.

- *Step 3: Determine the meaning of the land use designation for your property.*

After determining the land use designation for your property, read the discussion on the meaning of each land use designation. Depending on the nature of your interest in the Master Plan, this may be as far as you carry your initial investigation. If you have a specific proposal that does not fit the Future Land Use Map, you may want to investigate the Plan in more detail, beginning with the goals and policy statements.

- *Step 4 Determine how the Plan affects your property.*

The Future Land Use designation will indicate to you how your property is planned for use in the future. This does not mean that you cannot continue the use that you currently have. Land use within Keeler Township is also affected by the zoning for your property.

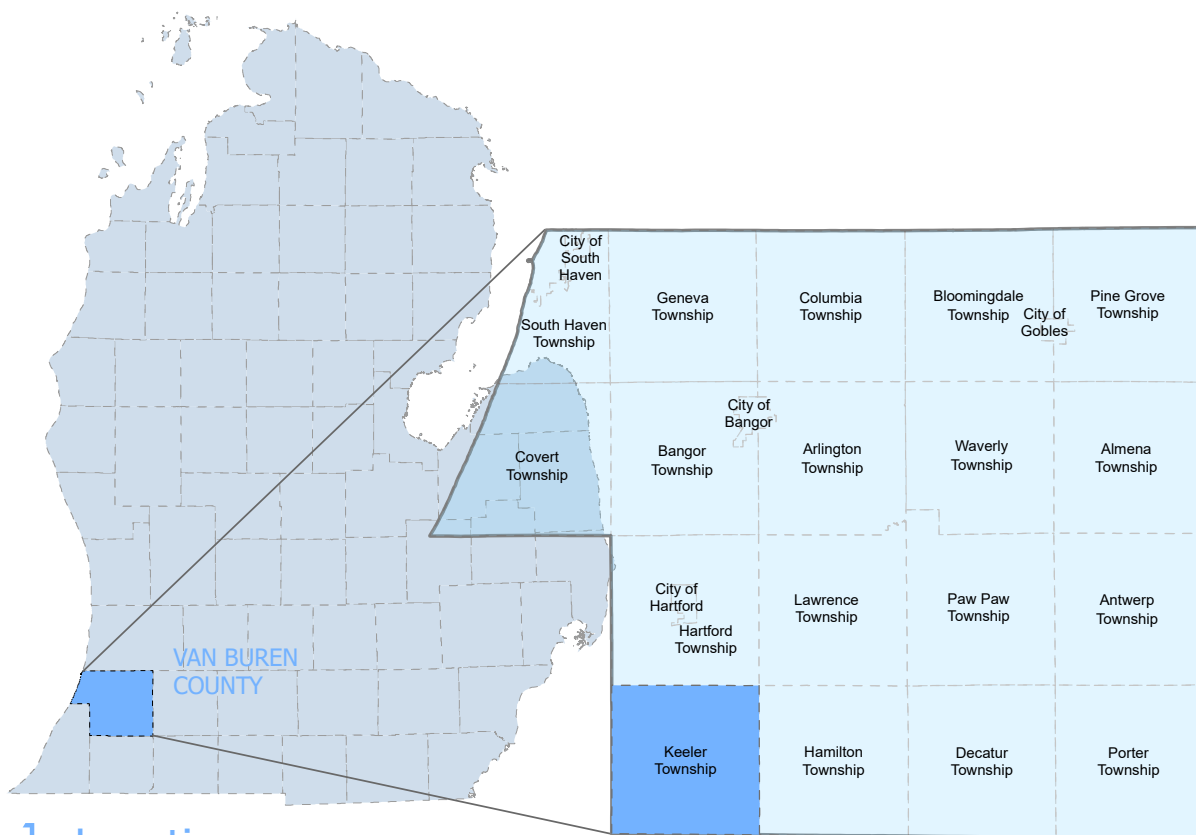
Conclusion

The Master Plan is designed to be a part of a process that forms the character of the Township that will provide a safe and attractive environment and a high quality of life for its citizens. It will promote a concentration of development within areas currently provided or planned to receive water or waste water services. This Plan will help minimize encroachment on the prime agricultural lands in Keeler Township. Rural lifestyles are also accommodated through rural development proposed on lands with marginal agricultural potential than other parts of Keeler Township.

Natural features are very important to the residents of Keeler Township. Survey respondents indicated that protecting groundwater, preserving open spaces, and preserving the rural character were three of the top five priorities that Township officials should seriously consider. A majority of respondents agreed with the following statement "I would support increased controls on development to protect water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams."

A challenging issue facing the Township is its ability to balance preserving the community character with development pressure. The leaders of Keeler Township have a responsibility to look beyond the day-to-day zoning issues and provide guidance for land use and development through the Master Plan. A properly developed, well thought-out Master Plan can be of great value by providing tangible benefits in improved quality of life, more efficient use of financial and other resources, a cleaner environment, and an economically healthy community.

The value of the Master Plan is directly related to the community's willingness to follow its recommendations and diligence in keeping the plan current with fluctuating conditions. It is hard work, but the rewards make the effort worthwhile.



1 Location

Keeler Township, Van Buren County, MI

chapter 2.
COMMUNITY PROFILE



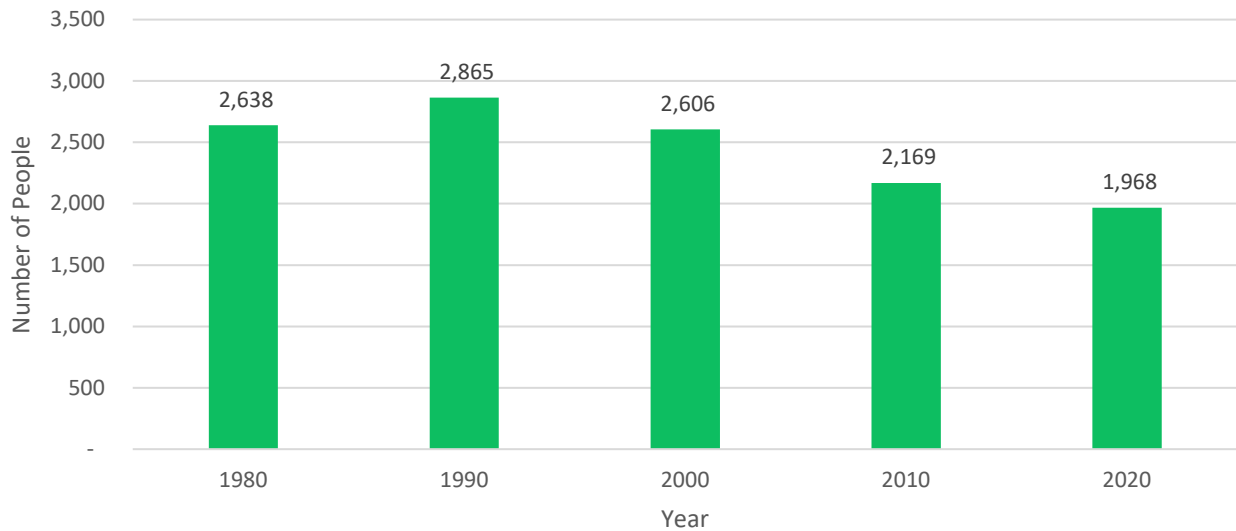
COMMUNITY PROFILE

The population is among one of the most important factors in determining the growth in a community. Land use and services provided by a jurisdiction are impacted when the population changes. This chapter provides an overview of the demographic information in Keeler Township.

Population Growth

Identifying the growth that Keeler Township has experienced in recent years is an important factor when creating a master plan. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the population of Keeler Township was 1,968. The Township experienced a slow decline in the population over the past three decades. The population decreased by 10% since 2010, however, Keeler Township along with Silver Creek Township (Cass County), had the lowest rate of decline as compared to the other Townships in Van Buren County.

Figure 2.1 | Keeler Township Population Change 1980-2020



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980-2020

In addition to the U.S. Census data, there is a significant number of seasonal residents that need to be considered in the planning process. Keeler Township estimates, based on anecdotal information, that one seasonal residential unit averages 6 people. Based on this estimate, it can be calculated that there can be approximately 3,216 seasonal residents in Keeler Township. As reported by the 2020 U.S. Census, there are 2.28 people per household in the Township. Based on this statistic, it can be calculated that there are approximately 1,188 seasonal residents in Keeler Township. Both estimates imply that Keeler Township is home to a large seasonal population and this unique setting influences the demographic composition and apparent vacancy rate. The Township may consider strategies to meet the needs and provide a sense of community to seasonal and year-round residents.

Racial Mix

Another demographic characteristic, racial mix, changed little from 2010 to 2020. As shown in Table 2.1, 77.8% of the population in Keeler Township was classified as “White alone,” followed by “Some Other Race alone” at 11.8%, and 7.7% as “Two or More Races.”

Table 2.1 | Ethnic Populations, 2020

Populations in Keeler Township	Number of Residents	Percent of Total Population
White alone	1,532	77.8%
Black or African American alone	13	0.7%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	37	1.9%
Asian alone	1	0.1%
Some Other Race alone	233	11.8%
Two or More Races	152	7.7%

Source: 2020 U.S. Census Bureau

Population Projections

Population projections estimate the Township’s future population, providing context for future land use decisions and public service needs. Because there are many unpredictable factors affecting population change, the population projections are limited by the assumption that past trends will continue, however, projections do give some guidance on the potential for development. The projections have implications regarding future land use, the demand for various public services, and capital improvements. The following approaches are intended to provide a general sense of future population change to serve as a guideline. Current population estimates are from the 2020 U.S. Census. It should be noted that some methods show an increase in population while others show a decrease.

The Arithmetic Method for Population Projections. The Arithmetic Method projects the Township’s population from annual population changes, assuming the Township will continue to change by the same number of people as it did between 1980 and 2020. During these 40 years, the Township’s population decreased by an average of 1.3 people per year. Based on this average decrease, Table 2.2 estimates the future population by 2050.

Table 2.2 | Arithmetic Method Projections

Average Annual Change (190-2010)	Current Population	Population Projection		
	2020	2030	2040	2050
-1.3	1,968	1,955	1,941	1,928

The Growth Rate Method for Population Projections. The Growth Rate Method projects the Township’s population from an annual rate of change, assuming the Township will continue to change as it did between 1980 and 2020. During these 40 years, the Township’s population decreased by an average of 0.09%. Based on the average decrease, Table 2.3 estimates the future population by 2050. Compared to Arithmetic Method, Growth Rate Method projects a slightly larger population decline by 2050.

Table 2.3 | Growth Rate Method Projections

Average Annual Change (190-2010)	Current Population	Population Projection		
	2020	2030	2040	2050
-0.09%	1,968	1,951	1,935	1,918

The Building Permit Method for Population Projections. The Building Permit Method projects the Township’s population from the average number of residential building permits issued annually, assuming the Township’s population will continue to correspond to the number of building permits issued between 2010-2020 and that the average household size will be similar as it was during the 2020 U.S. Census. Because this method is based on the actual number of building permits issued in the Township, it may provide a more realistic projection compared to the Arithmetic and Growth Rate methods. The average number of persons per household in Keeler Township was reported to be 2.28 people according to the U.S. Census. Between 2010 and 2020 the Township received an average of 4.8 building permits for new residential dwellings annually. Based on this average value, Table 2.4 estimates the future population by 2050. In contrast to the methods above, the Building Permit Method projects an increase in population by 2050.

Table 2.4 | Building Permit Method Projections

Average Annual Change (190-2010)	Average Persons Per Household	Current Population	Population Projection		
		2020	2030	2040	2050
4.8	2.28	1,968	2,077	2,187	2,296

Population Projection Summary. Averaging the three-population projection methods above provide a more comprehensive view of the future population. Table 2.5 provides a summary of the preceding information, including the average of all three methods. Based on the projections above and the combined average, it can be assumed that Keeler Township’s population may be 2,048 by 2050.

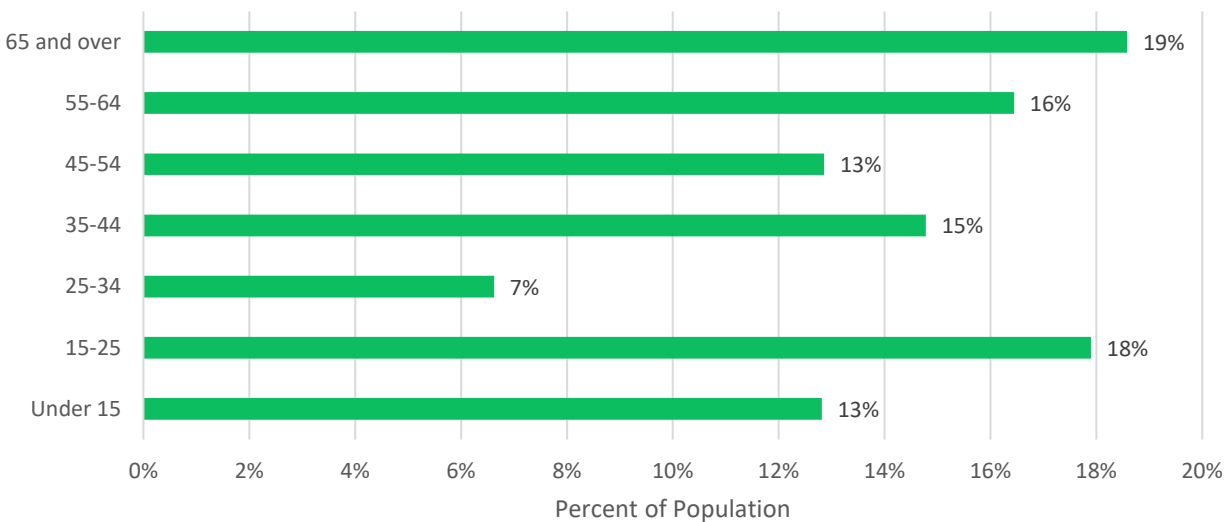
Table 2.5 | Population Projection Averages

Average Annual Change (190-2010)	Current Population	Population Projection		
	2020	2030	2040	2050
Arithmetic	1,968	1,955	1,941	1,928
Growth Rate	1,968	1,951	1,935	1,918
Building Permit	1,968	2,077	2,187	2,296
Average	1,968	1,994	2,021	2,048

Age Profile

The most recent estimates for population age are provided by the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) in Figure 2.2. The largest age group was of people aged 65 and over, which is about 19% of the total Township population followed by the 15 to 25 age group, which comprises 18% of the population. Children 15 years and younger made up 13% of the population. The smallest population group was of people between 23-34 years old, which comprised 7% of the population. The median age of a Keeler Township resident was reported to be 43.2 years old which is slightly higher than Van Buren County's average of 41.6 years of age and the State of Michigan's average of 39.7 years of age.

Figure 2.2 | Age Profile, Percent of Residents 2019

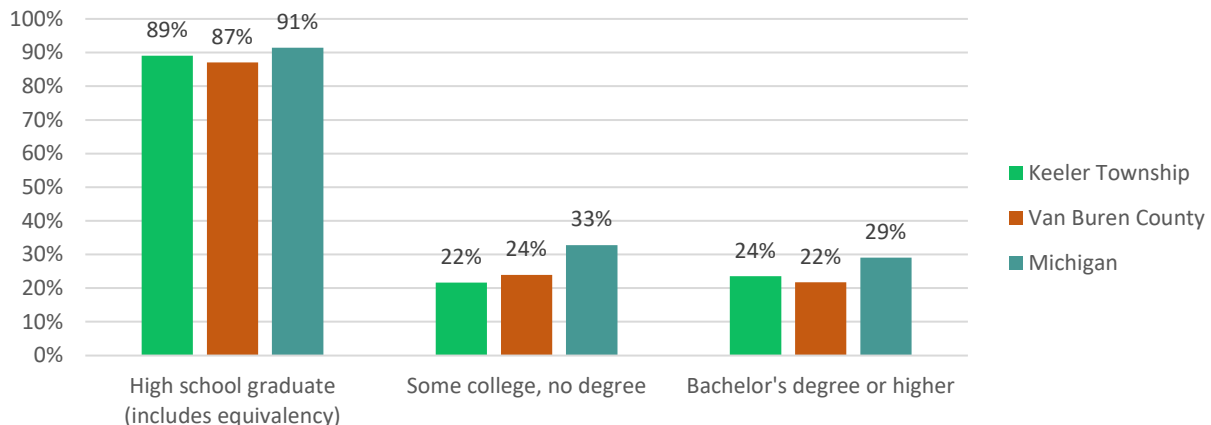


Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
 Note: 2020 U.S. Census Bureau data was not available

Educational Attainment

According to the 2019 ACS 5-year estimates, approximately 89.1% of people 25 years or older earned a high school diploma or higher, and 23.6% of the population reported having a bachelor's degree or higher in Keeler Township. Graduate or professional degree holders comprised 8.4% of the Township population. About 10.9% of the people reported not obtaining a high school diploma or equivalent.

Figure 2.3 | Educational Attainment for Population Aged 25 Years or Older



Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
 Note: 2020 U.S. Census Bureau data was not available

Household Size

Using the 2019 ACS information for Keeler Township, there were 2.28 people per household in Keeler Township. Compared to the average household size in Van Buren County (2.51) and the average household size in the State of Michigan (2.47), the average household size in Keeler Township is smaller. Approximately 32.3% of the households were estimated to be people living alone.

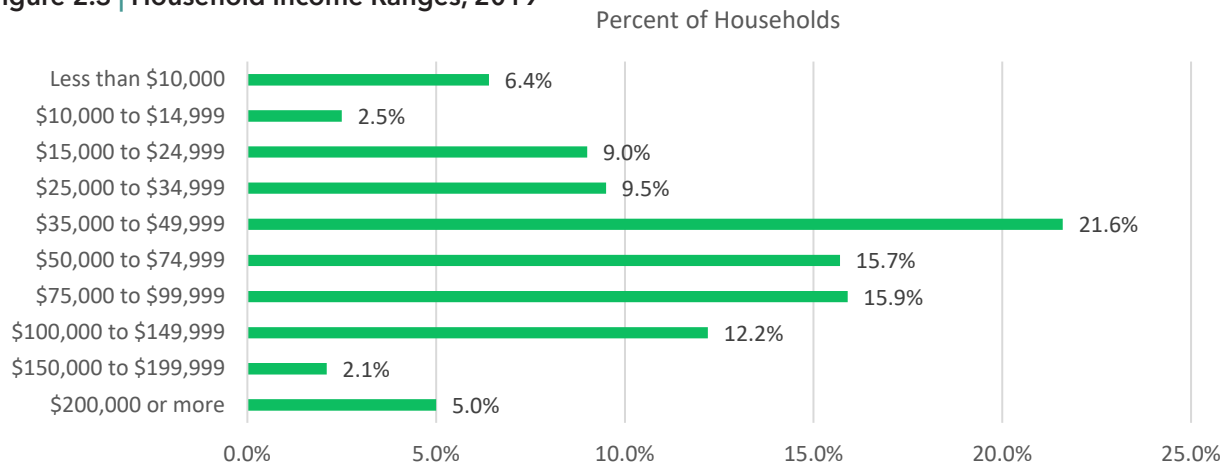
Income

The median household income reported in the 2019 ACS 5-year estimates for Keeler Township was \$50,592. There was an 18% increase in median income since 2000. In addition, 16.7% of the households in the Township were reported to be below the poverty level in the Township, which is 4% more than the state average of 14.4%. As defined by the Michigan Office of Management and Budget, the poverty threshold for two people under the age of 65 years was \$18,145 and the threshold for two people of age 65 and older was \$16,379. The Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. The official poverty definition uses money income before taxes and does not include capital gains, tax credits, or noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps). Income that is used to compute poverty status includes:

- Earnings
- Unemployment compensation
- Workers' compensation
- Social Security
- Supplemental Security Income
- Public assistance
- Veterans' payments
- Survivor benefits
- Pension or retirement income
- Interest
- Dividends
- Rents
- Royalties
- Income from estates
- Trusts
- Educational assistance
- Alimony
- Child support
- Assistance from outside the household
- Other miscellaneous source

As shown in Figure 2.4, the largest income group for households in Keeler Township was \$35,000 to \$49,999 (21.6%) followed by \$75,000 to \$99,999 income group (15.9%), and \$50,000 to \$74,999 (15.7%)

Figure 2.3 | Household Income Ranges, 2019

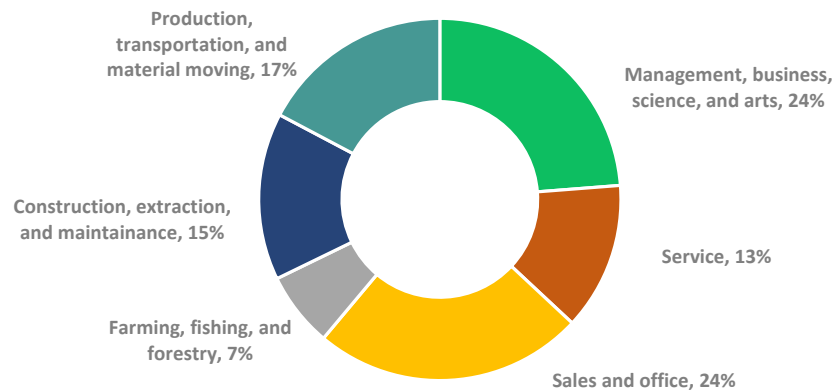


Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
Income was considered in 2019 inflation-adjusted dollars. 2020 U.S. Census Bureau data was not available

Employment

This section explains the employment characteristics (occupation and industry) that are reported for Keeler Township. Employment occupation is defined as the kind of work a person does to earn a living (Figure 2.5), while employment industry is the type of activity at a person’s place of work (Table 2.6). According to the American Community Survey, the most common occupations in Keeler Township were Management, business, science, and arts (24%) and Sales and office occupations (24%).

Figure 2.5 | Employment Occupations for the Population 16 Years and Over, 2019



Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
 Note: 2020 U.S. Census Bureau data was not available

Table 2.6 | Employment Industries for the Populations 16 Years and Over, 2019

Industry	Percent	Industry	Percent
Manufacturing	14.5%	Other services, except public administration	9.1%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	13.9%	Construction	6.2%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	12.1%	Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	5.4%
Retail trade	10.1%	Wholesale trade	3.8%
Professional, scientific, and management and administrative and waste management services	9.7%	Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	3.5%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	9.5%	Public administration	2.2%

Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
 Note: 2020 U.S. Census Bureau data was not available

As shown in Table 2.7, the unemployment rate for the Township is 5.0% which is higher than the State of Michigan and Van Buren County averages of 3.7% and 3.5%, respectively. Commuting characteristics also provide insights into job locations held by residents. The mean travel time to work in Keeler Township is 24.9 minutes, demonstrating that many people travel outside the Township to reach their place of employment. Although a majority of people work outside the home, 6.3% of the Township’s population report working from home according to 2019 ACS data.

Table 2.7 | Unemployment Rate, 2000-2019

Unemployment Rate	2000	2010	2019
Keeler Township	4.6%	8.4%	5.0%
Van Buren County	3.8%	6.9%	3.5%
Michigan	3.7%	7.3%	3.7%

Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
 Note: 2020 U.S. Census Bureau data was not available

Taxable Value Growth

This section analyzes the property value trends within Keeler Township. Property values are a key measure of economic growth and the financial strength of a community. Property values reflect investment in new development and the degree of growth in the value of the new developments. Annually, the assessors of each community report the total valuation. Figures 2.6 & 2.7 compare the real property values in Keeler Township to those of surrounding townships.

Figure 2.6 | Commercial, Agricultural, and Industrial Property Values, 2021

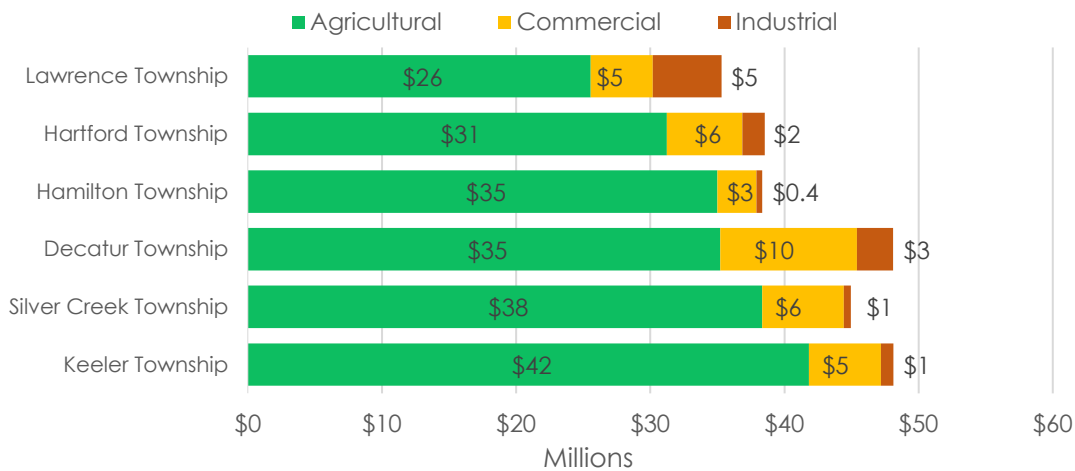
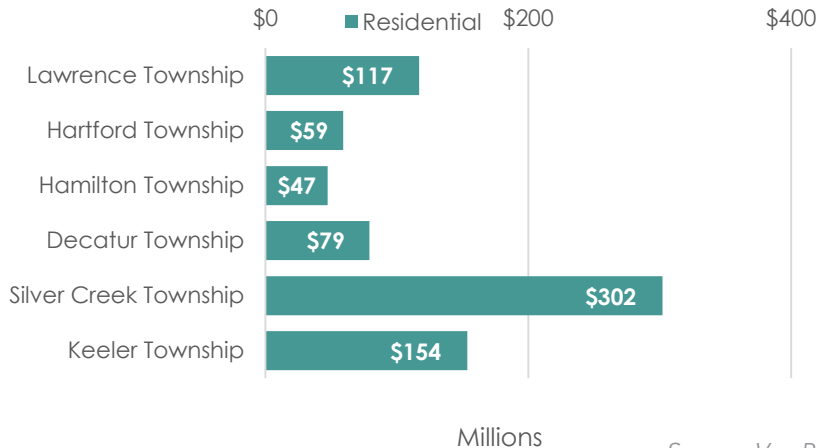


Figure 2.7 | Residential Property Value, 2021



Source: Van Buren County Equalization Report, 2021

The total real property taxable value for Keeler Township in 2016 was \$186.5 million and it increased by approximately 8.2% to \$201.7 million in 2021. Keeler Township accounts for 2.6% of Van Buren County’s population and about 3.8% of its total real property value. Despite the slow decline in the population of Keeler Township, the real property value has continued to increase at a relatively steady rate. According to the Van Buren County Equalization Report, between 2016 and 2021, agricultural property values in Keeler Township increased substantially by 11.9% (\$4.4 million), and residential property values increased by 7.7% (\$11 million) as shown in Table 2.8. However, commercial and industrial categories slightly decreased by 4.3% and 0.3% respectively. A similar pattern can also be seen in the neighboring townships.

Table 2.8 | Percent Change in Real Equalized Valuations 2016-2021

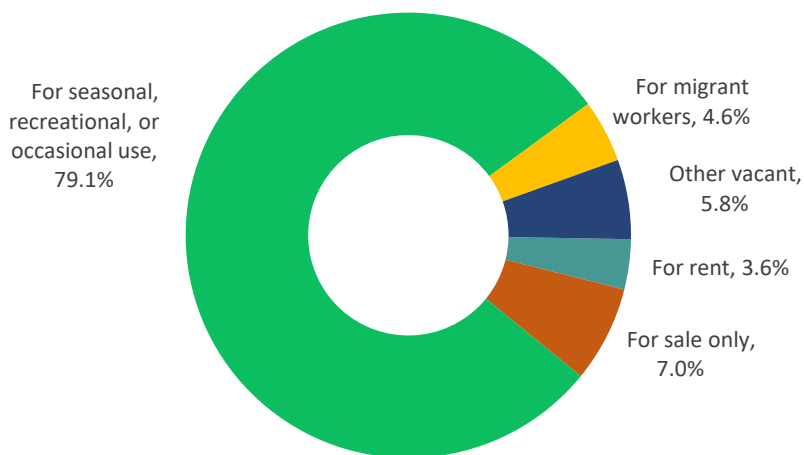
	Agricultural	Commercial	Industrial	Residential	Total
Keeler Township	11.9%	-4.3%	-0.3%	7.7%	8.2%
Silver Creek Township	9.0%	7.0%	9.1%	17.6%	16.3%
Decatur Township	-18.1%	-7.8%	33.5%	37.1%	11.8%
Hamilton Township	-8.6%	-1.1%	-17.8%	19.7%	5.4%
Hartford Township	-13.1%	-3.8%	-6.3%	43.4%	15.1%
Lawrence Township	-4.7%	-25.5%	230.4%	16.3%	12.7%

Source: Van Buren County Equalization Report, 2021

Housing

According to the 2019 ACS, there were a total of 1,591 housing units in Keeler Township. Of the total housing units, 58.6% (932) of the units were occupied and 41.4% (659) units were listed as vacant, which includes seasonal vacancies. See Figure 2.8 for more information regarding vacant housing information in the Township.

Figure 2.8 | Vacant Housing Unit Breakdown, 2019



Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

The population of the Township fluctuates due to the presence of many seasonal residents, which is not reflected in the U.S. Census population totals. Although the U.S. Census does not report the seasonal population, information on season home vacancies is provided. Seasonal vacant housing units include those that are used for summer or winter sport/recreation, such as cottages and hunting cabins, and intended for occupancy in certain seasons of the year. Seasonal vacancies can give some insight as to the population found in a given community throughout the year, which is important in a community like Keeler Township which has a significant influx of residents in warmer weather months. The Township’s natural features and lakes attract seasonal residents.

The Township offers a variety of housing options, however, the large majority of them are 1-unit detached buildings (87.9%). As shown in Table 2.9, about 5.3% of the housing stock is identified as mobile homes. The median rent for Keeler Township increased from \$438 in 2000 to \$588 and the median mortgage increased from \$688 in 2000 to \$1,218 in 2019. The median house value in Keeler Township was \$172,600, but in 2021 the value rose to \$250,000. Moreover, a majority of the housing stock (77.6%) in Keeler Township was built in 1980 or earlier. In the year 2000, the average sale price of non-waterfront property in Keeler Township was \$70,000, and in 2021 the average sale price of non-waterfront property rose to \$212,000.

Table 2.9 | Housing Units by Type, 2019

Type of Unit	Percent of Total Units
1-unit, detached	87.9%
1-unit, attached	1.8%
2 units	1.1%
5 to 9 units	1.1%
10 to 19 units	1.5%
20 or more units	1.3%
Mobile home	5.3%

*Source: 2019 American Community Survey
5-Year Estimates*



chapter 3.
NATURAL FEATURES



NATURAL FEATURES

Keeler Township features rolling farmlands, lush orchards, exceptional water resources, and unique natural areas. These features give the Township a ‘sense of place’ that appeals to all residents and visitors. Most of Keeler Township is in a rural setting and there is an abundance of lakes, woodlands, and rolling hills which make an important contribution to the quality of life. Preserving these natural features and the rural character of the Township is an essential objective for its residents.

Natural features provide essential elements that both enhance and protect the quality of life in Keeler Township. In addition to the aesthetic and recreational value of the natural features, these resources also provide other benefits like clean water supply, support for wildlife habitats, and groundwater recharge and purification. This chapter is an overview of some of the major natural features that are prevalent throughout the Township. As development occurs, the following natural features should be considered in addition to the other site-specific conditions that may be pertinent to each location.



Hydrology

Keeler Township has three larger lakes in the southwest corner of the Township and other smaller lakes and ponds throughout the Township as shown in Map 2. The area that encompasses the lakes in the southwest corner of the Township is called Sister Lakes. Two of these lakes, Round Lake (highwater mark at 768 feet), and Big Crooked Lake (highwater mark at 768 feet) are in Keeler Township. Magician Lake (highwater mark at 764 feet), and Little Crooked Lake (highwater mark at 768 feet) are shared by Keeler and Silver Creek Township. Magician Lake is the headwater for Silver Creek. About 2.3% of the land, or 605 acres, is occupied by a water body of some type, whether it be lakes, ponds, or streams. In addition, there are several miles of streams that branch through the northwest section of the Township. These water resources provide a wide variety of functions including:

- recreational opportunities for fishing, swimming, boating, etc.
- aesthetic and educational value
- recharge area for groundwater during dry times of the year

The lakes along with other creeks and other water bodies, enhance the value of surrounding properties for residential opportunities. Upland areas drain to the low-lying wetlands, lakes, and streams that pass through the Township. Wetlands, lakes, streams, groundwater, and other surface water bodies are also part of the watershed.

There are two major watersheds in Keeler Township: the St. Joseph River Watershed and the Paw Paw River Watershed. The St. Joseph River Watershed is the third largest river basin in Michigan and empties into Lake Michigan. According to the St. Joseph River Watershed Management Plan 2005, the Paw Paw River subbasin in Van Buren County has been identified as one of the richest areas of biodiversity in Southwest Michigan. The Paw Paw River Watershed is a priority for protection and preservation among southwestern Michigan watersheds because a relatively high percentage of its natural land cover remains despite increasing development pressure through the region. The Paw Paw River empties into the St. Joseph River in Benton Harbor.

As the areas become more developed, the amount of water infiltrating the surface will decrease and the surface runoff will increase. This can be caused by the clearing of natural vegetation, the addition of impervious material to the land, and the installation of storm drains. These effects can be addressed by protecting native vegetation, requiring on-site stormwater retention, and permitting clustered development that reduces the amount of paving and cleared land. Although Keeler Township has had little increase in development over the past decades, it is important to understand the impacts of increased development on natural features. Important factors in the evaluation of groundwater are the quantity and quality of the water. Quantity or yield standards for a typical residential or commercial use range from 7 gallons per minute to 20 gallons per minute. Water is generally available in sufficient quantity and will not likely be a factor in limiting growth.

Threats to groundwater quality can come from “nonpoint” pollution sources, such as agricultural and stormwater runoff, and “point” sources like failed septic tanks, industrial operations, and others. Careful consideration of the location of uses that have the potential to affect groundwater is critical to the future protection of the source of the township’s domestic water supplies.

While the Sisters Lakes Sewer District has alleviated some of the groundwater issues, the remainder of Keeler Township relies on septic systems. Over time as these systems age and become more susceptible to failure, the Township and County will have to be in a position to monitor the long-term effects of these systems on groundwater.

Wetlands

Wetlands provide a vital role in recreation, tourism, and the economy apart from their environmental value. According to the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), wetlands are classified as “land characterized by the presence of water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances does support, wetland vegetation or aquatic life, and is commonly referred to as a bog, swamp, or marsh.”

As illustrated in Map 2, wetlands are extremely prevalent in Keeler Township. Several small wetlands can be seen throughout the Township. Large clusters can be found in the northwestern, southwestern, and southeastern corners of the Township. Larger wetland areas are around Round Lake and Big Crooked Lake. Wetlands serve a variety of functions for a community. Wetlands can:

- Mitigate flooding by detaining surface runoff.
- Control soil erosion and sedimentation loading in rivers and lakes.
- Provide links with groundwater.
- Improve water quality which is degraded by nutrients and chemicals resulting from urban activities.
- Control erosion and sedimentation resulting from agricultural and construction activities.

- Function as highly productive ecosystems in terms of wildlife habitat and vegetation.
- Serve a variety of aesthetic and recreational functions.

Wetland areas are valuable as natural buffers between residential and other land uses. As such, they can make a significant contribution to the aesthetic character of the community. By incorporating wetlands as part of new development, they can help maintain open and green space as well as contribute to retaining a rural setting. There are a variety of wetland classes found within the estuarine intertidal wetland habitats of Keeler Township. Using the data from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, which cites data from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the following is a list of wetland classes that are found in the Township:

- Emergent - wetlands that contain emergent plants that are erect, rooted, herbaceous, and/or hydrophytes that are the tallest life form, that cover at least 30% of the area.
- Scrub/Shrub - wetlands that contain woody plants less than 20 feet tall that are the dominant life form, that cover at least 30% of the area.
- Forested - wetlands where trees are the dominant life form, that cover at least 30% of the area.
- Aquatic Bed - includes wetlands and deep-water habitats where plants grow principally on or below the surface of the water, and that cover at least 30% of the area.

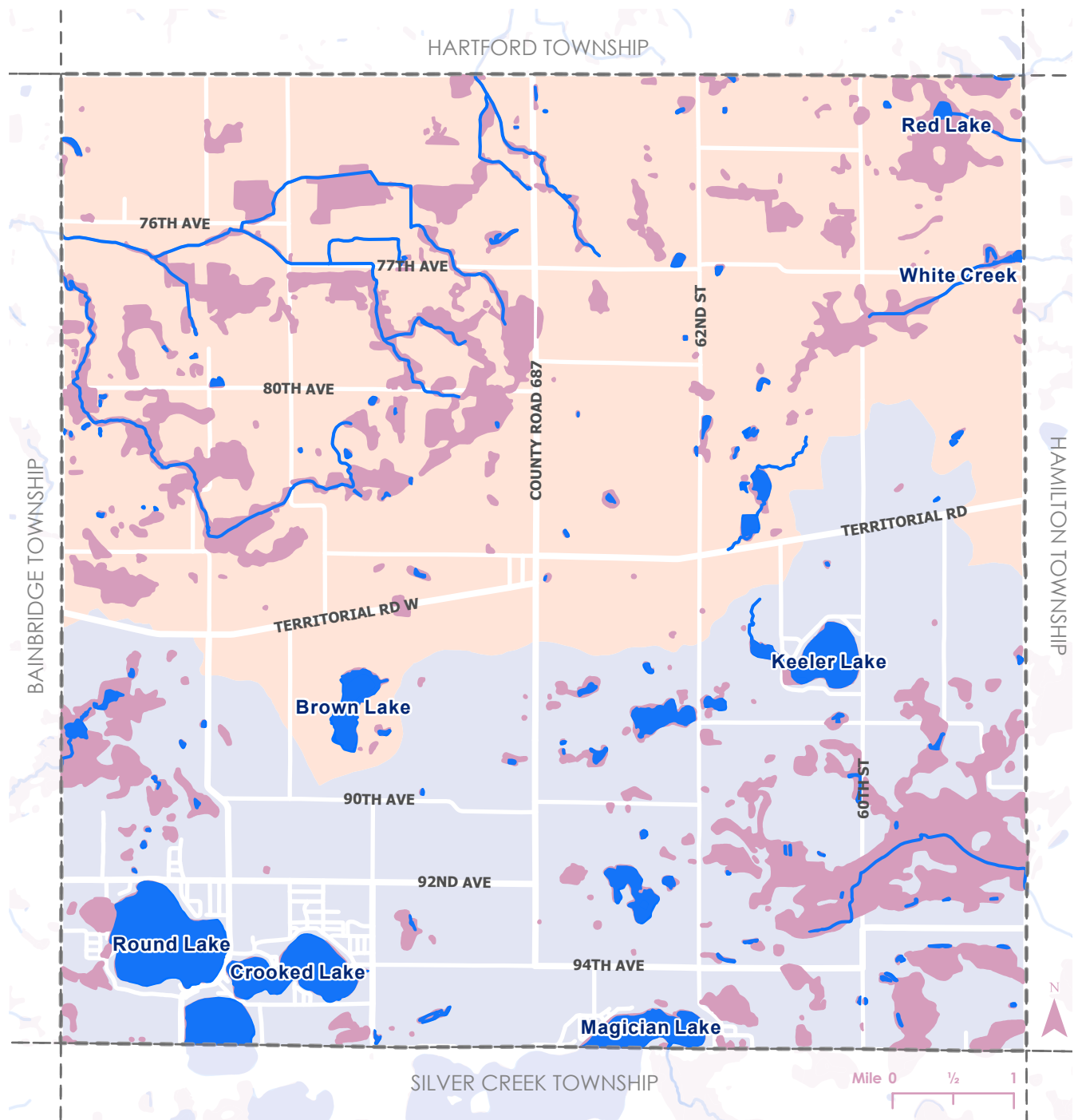
These are the specific classes that are found in the commonly used wetlands classification system that was developed by Cowardin and is described in the 2013 paper titled "Classification of Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats of the United States." The Cowardin system is used by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the National Wetlands Inventory. In this system, wetlands are classified by landscape position, vegetation cover, and hydrologic regime. It should be noted that there are a variety of ways to categorize and classify wetlands, depending on the system that is used.

Prior to zoning approval, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources should be consulted to review the results of a wetland determination. The impacts of development within wetland areas should be carefully considered, and a permit from the DNR should always be obtained if regulated wetlands are to be impacted.

Topography

The topographic features result from past glacial activity. Irregular landforms such as rolling hills, low broad valleys, marshlands, and small lakes, are characteristic of glacial terrains and are pronounced in the eastern portion of the Township. The topography or slope of the land plays an important role in land use development.

The topographic profiles reveal that the Township has generally low rolling hills throughout, except in the northern part of the community where the land is relatively flat. The western half of the Township also features some slopes higher than 10 percent as shown in Map 3. A slope gradient is a difference in elevation between two points, expressed as a percentage of the distance between those points. It is calculated by the change in height divided by the change in horizontal distance. For example, a gradient of 1% may also be expressed as 1 in 100. This means that the road rises or falls by 1 foot for every 100 feet of travel in a forward direction. The elevation map shows the elevation in feet for Keeler Township in Map 4.

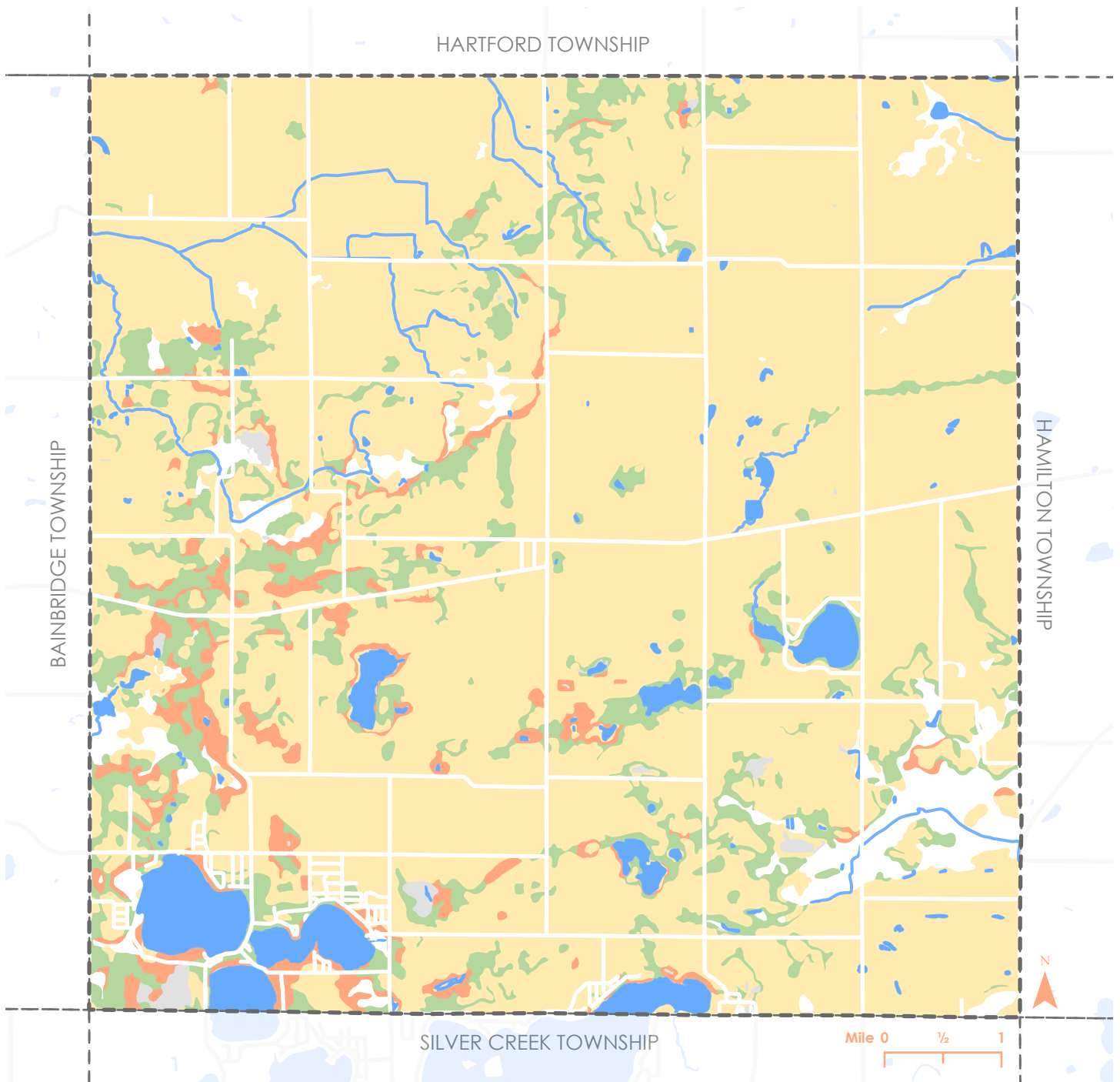


2 Water Features

Keeler Township, Van Buren County, MI

Legend

- Paw Paw River Watershed
- St. Joseph River Watershed
- Wetlands
- Streams
- Lakes

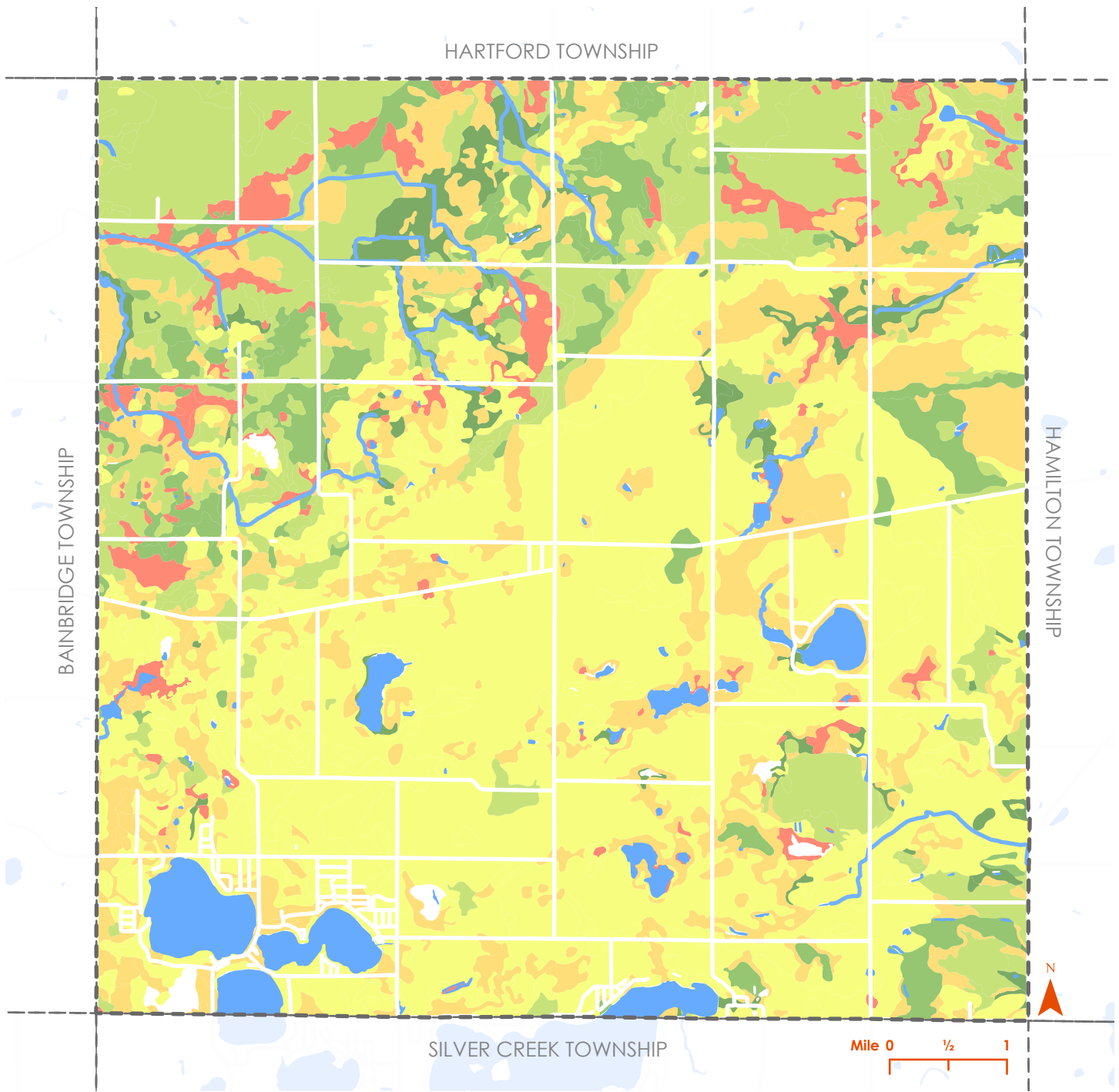


3 Slope

Keeler Township, Van Buren County, MI

Legend

- 10 to 22 percent
- 5 percent or less
- 5 to 10 percent
- No data












4 Elevation

Keeler Township, Van Buren County, MI

Legend

Elevation (in Feet)

 660 - 710	 840 - 880	 1100 - 1200
 720 - 770	 890 - 940	 Streams
 780 - 830	 950 - 1000	 Lakes

Endangered Species

The alteration and loss of habitat or an overall increase in human activity can threaten the plant and animal diversity of local ecosystems. Environmental changes may occur naturally within an area, however, changes are often due to human activity or development. There are ten species of plants and animals that are considered to be endangered, threatened, or of special concern in Keeler Township according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Information for Planning and Conservation website. These species are listed in Table 3.2.

Table 3.1 | Keeler Township Endangered Species

Species		Status
Mammals	Indian Bat	Endangered
	Northern Long-Eared Bat	Endangered
Birds	Piping Plover	Endangered
	Red Knot	Threatened
Reptiles	Copperbelly Water Snake	Threatened
	Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake	Threatened
Insects	Mitchell's Satyr Butterfly	Endangered
	Monarch Butterfly	Candidate
Flowering Plants	Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid	Threatened
	Pitcher's Thistle	Threatened

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, Information for Planning and Consultation

Soils

The characteristics of soil composition are one of the most significant elements in land use planning. According to the Natural Resources Conservation Services, four major soil orders dominate the land cover in Keeler Township: Alfisols, Entisols, Histosols, and Mollisols, as shown in Map 5. A large majority of land in Keeler Township is comprised of alfisols. The definitions of these soil orders are provided by the Department of Soil and Water Systems on the University of Idaho website.

- **Alfisols** are moderately leached soils that have a relatively high native fertility. Alfisols with a dominant suborder Udalf, are most commonly found in Michigan. Udalfs form a belt extending through Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio. The combination of a generally favorable climate and high native fertility allows alfisols to be productive soils for agricultural uses.
- **Entisols** are characterized by great diversity, in environmental settings and land use.
- **Histosols** form in settings such as wetlands where restricted drainage inhibits the decomposition of plant and animal remains. They are often referred to as peats and mucks and have physical properties that restrict their use for engineering purposes. Histosols are soils that are composed mainly of organic materials.

- **Mollisols** are largely distributed in the northwestern part of the Township as shown in Map 5. They are characterized by a thick, fertile horizon. Aquolls are a type of Mollisol with a water table at or near the surface for much of the year. This soil type is among the most important and productive agricultural soils in the world.

Construction costs and risks to the environment can be minimized by developing in areas that have suitable soils. The central part of the Township generally has well-drained soils; however, some parts of the Township have somewhat poorly, poorly, and very poorly drained soils. The three major soil characteristics considered in the analysis of soil suitability conditions are drainage, foundation stability, and septic suitability.

Drainage: Development on poorly drained soils increases development and maintenance costs, and may lead to sanitary problems. Development costs are increased due to additional foundation, road, and septic preparation. Maintenance costs and problems will be associated with septic field failures, flooded basements, and impact to roads from frost action.

Foundation Stability: Soil types that do not provide stable foundations may experience shifting building foundations, cracked walls, and cracked pavement and roadways. These problems often result in increased development and maintenance costs or in extreme cases, structural failure.

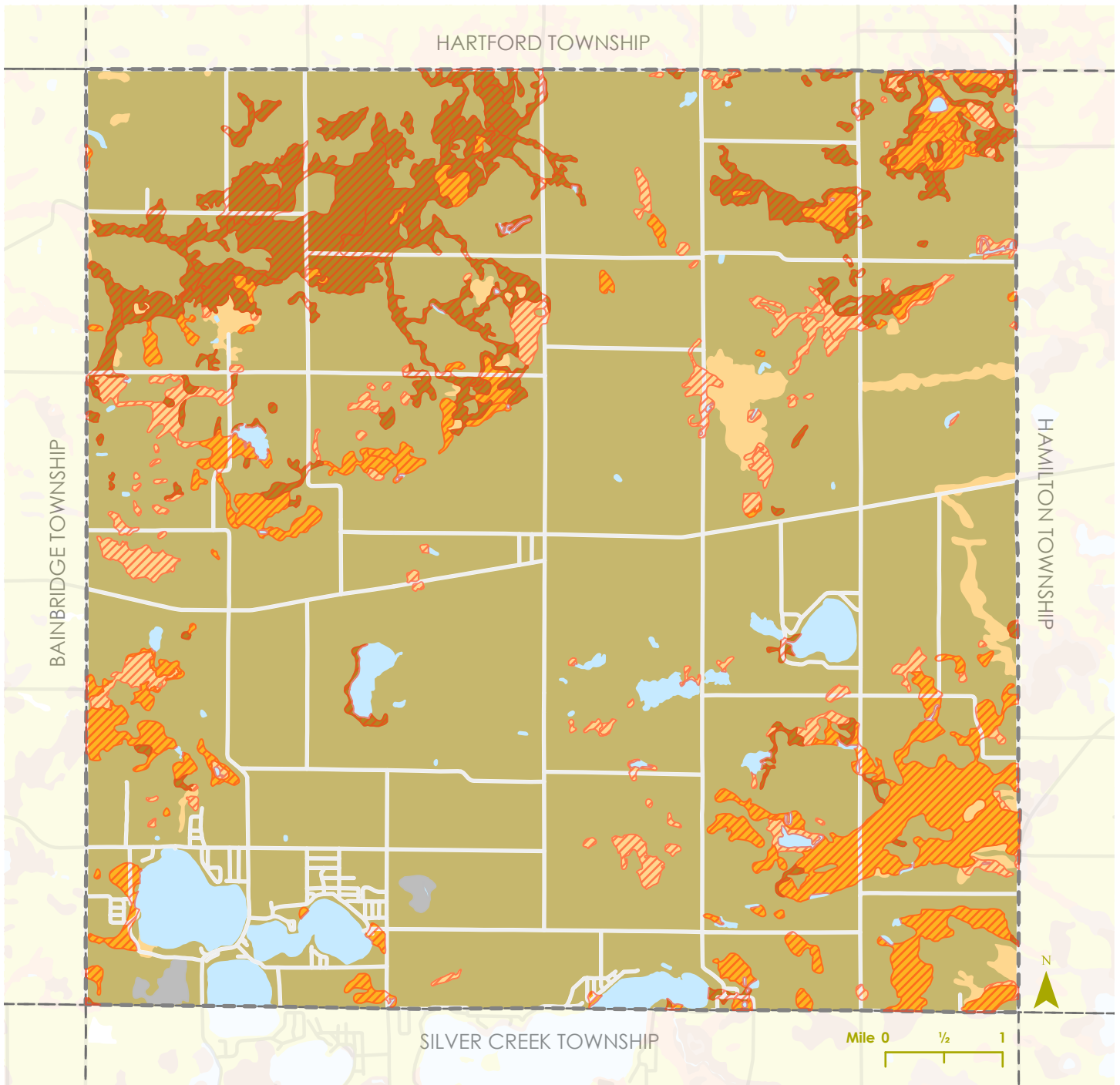
Septic Suitability: Because there are many areas of Keeler Township that rely on individual septic systems, the location of septic systems on proper soils is extremely important. Septic field failures are often the result of poor soil permeability, high water table, or excessive slope. Soils such as compacted clays and silts will not allow wastewater to percolate, a high-water table prohibits adequate filtering and excessive slope does not provide an opportunity for adequate percolation.

Soils poorly suitable for development:

- Areas with little topographic relief, which does not allow proper drainage
- Areas with excessive slopes which are susceptible to erosion
- Mucks or soils with high organic materials
- Silts and clays
- Areas with higher water tables
- Soils generally found along lakes, creeks and wetlands.

Soils well suited for development:








- Areas sufficiently above ground water
- Loamy and sandy soils.



5 Soils

Keeler Township, Van Buren County, MI

Legend

- | | |
|--|---|
|  Poorly Drained Soils |  Mollisols |
|  Alfisols |  Lakes & Ponds |
|  Entisols |  No Data |
|  Histosols | |

Woodlands

While the Township has been experiencing moderate development, there are many significant areas of natural woodlands as shown in Map 6 (Land Cover 2019). Forests cover 2,995 acres of land in Keeler Township and a majority of the forests are classified as deciduous. Deciduous forests are common in areas where they are exposed to warm and cold air masses. Most of the forest types are a northern hardwood mix with much of the lowland wetlands having Tamarack and White Cedar trees as the dominant species. During the fall, trees change color and lose their leaves in preparation for the winter season.

There are two properties in the Township that are owned and classified as huntable lands by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Combined the properties are called Keeler State Game Area (SGA) and are comprised of 396 acres. The northeast unit (180 acres) is located at 72nd Ave & 64th St and the southwest unit (216 acres) is located on 84th Ave & 68th St. The Keeler SGAs provides a diverse suite of habitat suitable for many desirable species with features thick cover intermingled with standing corn and green cover crops. Mature forests, agricultural fields, and herbaceous open lands provide habitats for wild turkeys and white-tailed deer. These areas are available to the public for hunting, nature observation, and hiking. Marsh areas are also present on both properties.

Keeler has a very good fall colors season which can be best viewed in Mid-October. Most of the trees are broadleaf trees such as oak, maple, beech, hickory, and chestnut (Earth Observatory, NASA). Woodlands provide the following community benefits:

Quality of life: The abundant woodlands and trees help create a peaceful, rural atmosphere. Trees provide a visual barrier between individual properties and offer a sense of privacy.

Influence on microclimate: Woodlands play an important role in moderating ground-level temperatures. Trees canopies buffer the ground surface from the sun's heat and wind. Temperature extremes during the winter months can also be moderated with the help of trees.

Reduction in air pollution: Woodlands absorb carbon dioxide and return oxygen to the air. Tree leaves filter pollutants from the air, removing ozone, chlorine, hydrogen fluoride, sulfur dioxide, and other pollutants. Large and dense stands of trees serve as a noise buffer as well.

Reduction in soil erosion: Woodlands and other vegetation stabilize soils and help prevent soil erosion. The vegetation absorbs the energy of the falling rain and the web of roots of all types helps hold the soil particles in place. Fallen leaves minimize the loss of soil moisture, help prevent erosion, and enrich the soil to support future plant growth. Wooded wetlands provide the additional benefit of trapping and holding stormwater runoff. Dense vegetation can help slow flood surges and flows.

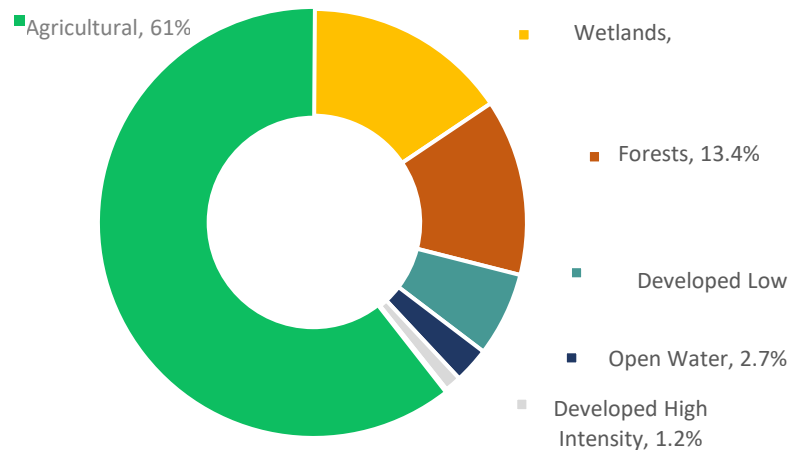
Wildlife habitat: Woodlands provide essential shelter and food for deer, raccoons, rabbits, pheasants, and other animals. The opportunity to observe wildlife in a natural setting has educational benefits for Keeler residents.

Preservation of natural character: There is a significant amount of mature vegetation along many of the rural road corridors that pass through the Township. Woodlands located near the roadway contribute to a natural/rural atmosphere in many ways. There is also a significant amount of vegetation along most lakes and streams throughout the area.

Land Cover

Land Cover describes the vegetation or land use that occupies the land in a given community. The land cover data that was analyzed includes data from National Land Cover Dataset (NLCD) as prepared by the United States Geological Services (USGS) in 2019. The information was derived from Landsat TM (Thematic Mapper) satellite imagery and was interpreted using an automated computer-based process. This was followed by an accuracy assessment of the satellite data that involved the usage of aerial photographs to judge the quality of the computer-based interpretation.

Figure 3.1 | Keeler Township Land Cover by Percentage

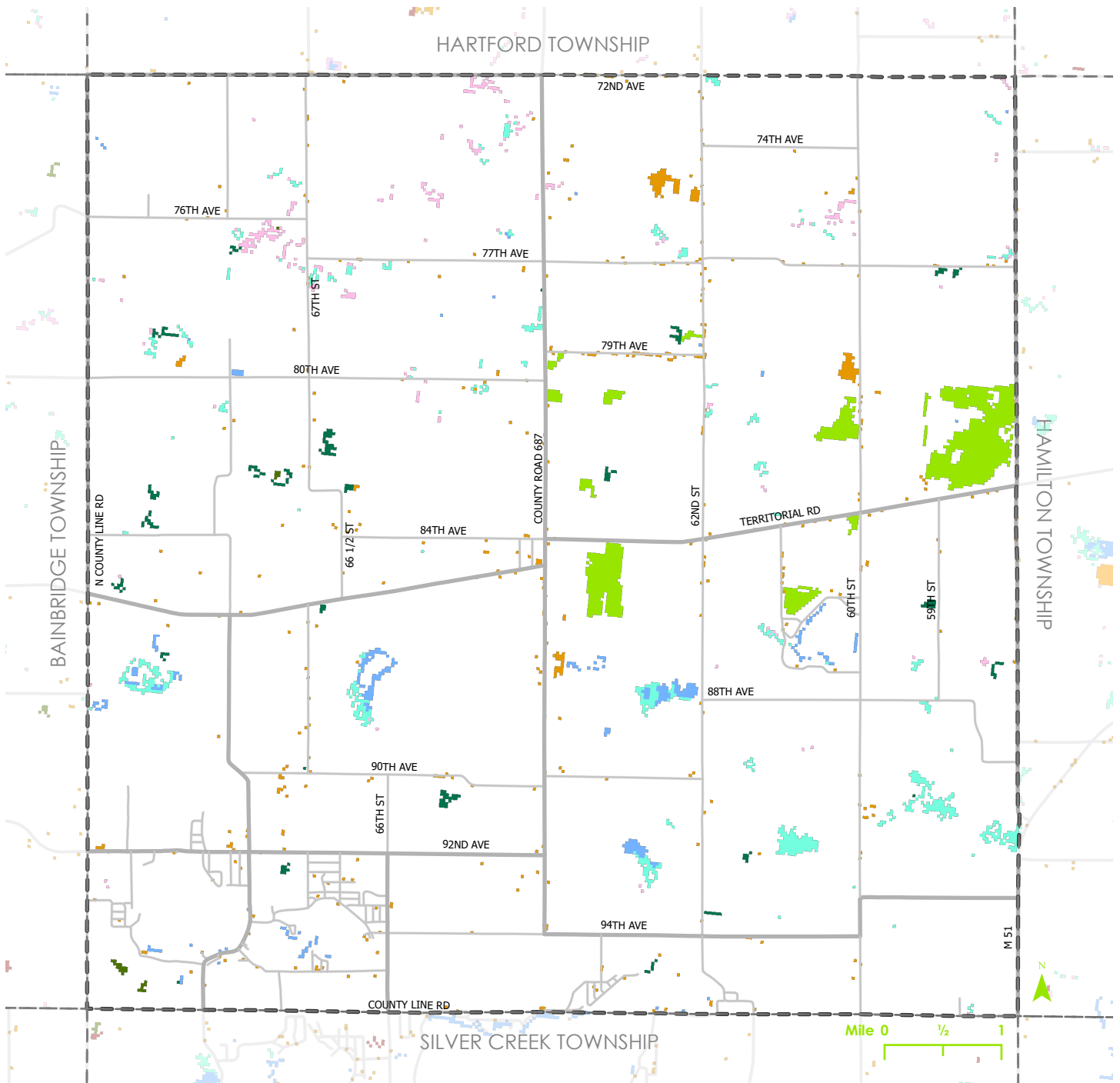


Source: USGS National Land Cover Dataset 2019

The 2019 data was released in May 2021 to provide “explicit and reliable information on the Nation’s land cover and land cover change.” The information is useful in determining the distribution of vegetation and development patterns and their change over time throughout the Township. The 2019 NLCD includes 16 classes of land cover type based on a modified Anderson level II classification system.

The predominant land cover type found in Keeler is agricultural (60.7%), which is a composite of two NLCD classes found in the Township: pasture/hay and crops (shown in Figure 3.1 above). Agriculture is also the predominant land cover type in Van Buren County. According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service, the top crops in Keeler Township were alfalfa, cherries, blueberries, apples, soybeans, and corn. There is one regulated Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) in Keeler Township which houses over 1,600 mature dairy cattle. CAFOs are large-scale industrial facilities for raising animals and are subject to regulation by EGLE based on the number of animals it stables or confines.









Wetlands are the second largest class that is an aggregate grouping of woody wetlands and emergent herbaceous wetlands and accounts for 15.5% of the land. The forested class is also an aggregate grouping of three forest cover types: deciduous, evergreen, and mixed forest. The forest group is the third-largest land-use type representing 13.4% of the Township’s land. Low-intensity developed land is comprised of barren, open space, and low-intensity NLCD classes, which comprised about 6.4% of the Township. The smallest percentage of land cover is grasslands (0.4%), which are comprised of herbaceous and shrub/shrubland NLCD classes. This is likely due to the large presence of agricultural land in the Township, which often converts flat grassland properties into agricultural fields.



7 Land Cover Change

Keeler Township, Van Buren County, MI

Legend

- | | |
|---|---|
|  Agricultural Change |  Urban Change |
|  Agriculture within class Change |  Forest Change |
|  Wetland Change |  Open Water Change |
|  Wetland within class Change |  No change |

Land Cover Change

The 2019 NLCD also includes an NLCD Land Cover Change Index, which provides comprehensive data regarding the land-use change from 2001 to 2019 in a single layer. Each pixel in this layer represents a land cover change that has occurred at least once over this period. This data has been utilized to examine land cover change in Keeler Township. Map 7 provides a visual representation of these changes. It is important to note that the Agricultural land class experienced a significant change within a class as shown in the map as compared to the slight change in acreage shown in the table below.

Comparing the total acreage of land cover classes between 2001 and 2019 also provides insight into which classes are increasing or decreasing in acreage (Table 3.2). The land cover in Keeler Township has not experienced any change since 2001. However, the largest change can be seen in the developed high-intensity category which grew by 44.6% (86 acres) in 2019. The grasslands land cover category experienced a slight decrease of 10.3% (4 acres). Developed low intensity, open water, agricultural, wetlands, and forest land uses also experienced a minor decline. Developed Low Intensity land cover areas are identified by containing a combination of places with a small number of buildings and some vegetation. Impervious surfaces like roads and parking lots account for 20%-49% of total cover in areas with developed low intensity land cover. These areas most commonly include single-family housing units. Developed High Intensity land cover areas are identified as highly developed areas where there is a concentration of people living and/or working. Land cover includes development like apartment complexes and commercial and industrial buildings. Impervious surfaces account for 80% to 100% of the total cover in areas with developed high intensity land cover.

Table 3.2 | Land Cover Change in Keeler Township, 2001-2019

Land Cover Category	Land Cover 2001 (Acres)	Land Cover 2019 (Acres)	Change (Acres)	% Change 2001-2019
Developed High Intensity	193	279	86	44.6%
Grasslands	39	35	-4	-10.3%
Developed Low Intensity	1,475	1,429	-46	-3.1%
Open Water	610	605	-5	-0.8%
Forests	2,985	2,995	10	0.3%
Agricultural	13,630	13,588	-42	-0.3%
Wetlands	3,472	3,467	-5	-0.1%

Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

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chapter 4.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, AND FACILITIES



COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, AND FACILITIES

Community facilities and services play a fundamental role in augmenting civic engagement, sponsoring cultural events, and promoting community pride. Such facilities and services include educational institutions, recreational opportunities, and public safety facilities, all of which contribute to the quality of life experienced by residents in the Township.

Transportation

Keeler Township has approximately 78.4 miles of roads, 17.54 miles of which are in the federal aid network. Of the roads in the federal aid network, 2.91 miles are State trunkline roads and 14.63 miles are County primary roads. County Road 687 and Territorial Road divide the Township into four quadrants. The majority of County primary roads are in poor condition, and most are owned and maintained by the Van Buren County Road Commission. The state trunkline roads are owned by MDOT and receive federal and state funding for maintenance.

Table 4.1 | Keeler Township Road Classification

Road Classification	Number of Miles	Percent of Total
County Local	53.6	68.4%
County Primary	18.5	23.6%
Private Roads	3.4	4.3%
State Trunkline	2.91	3.7%
Total	78.4	
Non-Federal Aid	60.86	77.6%
Federal Aid	17.54	22.4%

Source: Van Buren County Road Commission 2021

The Van Buren County Road Commission provides Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating System (PASER) data for roads in Keeler Township. Staff members from the Road Commission are trained and certified annually to use the PASER system by the Transportation Asset Management Council (TAMC). PASER is a system designed to assess road pavement conditions while driving (known as a windshield survey), and assign the road surface a value from 1 through 10 based on the observed facts, with 1 being a severely distressed road with extensive loss of surface integrity and 10 being a newly constructed road. Ratings of 1-4 are grouped as poor condition, 5-7 are classified as fair, and ratings of 8-10 are considered to be in good condition. Of the non-federal aid roads, 20% were rated to be in good condition, 34% were in fair condition, and 45% of the roads were in poor condition in 2021.

The existing non-motorized network in Keeler Township includes a four-foot wide shoulder/bike lane on County Road 687. The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission proposed on/off-road trails in the southern portion of Keeler Township as highlighted in Map 7. Van Buren Public Transit is a non-profit transportation agency that began providing demand response and advanced reservation service in the County in 1979. The service is housed in its facility located in Bangor, Michigan, and serves the County, including Keeler Township.

Nonmotorized transportation facilities enhance the quality of life for seasonal and full-time residents. According to the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, nonmotorized trails are proposed in the Township. The Sister Lakes Corridor Improvement Authority has been interested in expanding the nonmotorized trail facilities in the Sister Lakes area. The creation of a local nonmotorized network is outlined in The Sister Lakes CIA Feasibility Study from 2017. Nonmotorized infrastructure provides additional opportunities for residents to move and recreate around the community. The addition of nonmotorized infrastructure can also help calm traffic. The key components of the trail network are as follows.

1. A safe route for visitors and residents to access the business area of Sister Lakes located between Round Lake & Little Crooked Lake.
2. A small multi-modal trail circuit.
3. A large multi-modal circuit that connects to the existing regional trail system via the Van Buren State Park Trail and onto the Kal-Haven and the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail.

Police, Fire, & Public Safety

The Keeler Township Fire and Rescue Department and the Sister Lakes Fire Department serve Keeler Township and the Sister Lakes area. The Keeler Township Fire and Rescue Department receives about 60 fire-related calls annually, and the Sister Lakes Fire Department receives 51 calls annually. The Keeler Township Fire and Rescue Department is housed in the Township Hall, along with Pride Care Ambulance. The Keeler Fire Department also provides first responder care within the Township and responds to fire, medical, and public service requests as needed, with about 156 requests a year. Keeler Township also has a service contract with the Van Buren County's Sheriff's Department for 40 hours a week for one full-time deputy and an additional part-time deputy for 20 hours a week. The Township has three millages for police, fire service, and roads that have either been renewed or are in the process of renewal. Information about local public safety and road millages is provided below:

- The police millage was approved in 2018 by the voters for 0.75 mils (\$0.75 per \$1,000 of taxable value for real and personal property) for police protection from 2019 - 2022. A renewal will be requested in 2023
- The road millage was approved in 2018 by the voters for 1.00 mil (\$1.00 per \$1,000 of taxable value for real and personal property) for road maintenance, repair, and construction for 2019 -2022. The millage will be up for renewal in 2023
- A county-wide millage for ambulance service was approved in August 2022. Keeler Township has received around \$30,898 each quarter which is used to pay for services provided by Pride Care in the Township. Pride Care is the full-time contracted ambulance service for Van Buren County and Keeler Township and receives about 154 calls per year
- A Fire Service Millage was renewed in August 2018 for 1.00 mil (\$1.00 per \$1,000 of the taxable value of real and personal property) for fire protection for five years from 2019 through 2023. The millage revenue is split evenly to support the Sister Lakes Fire Department and the Keeler Township Fire and Rescue Department. The Sister Lakes Fire Department has approximately 20 members and Keeler Township Fire and Rescue Department has about 16 members.

Internet Access

The internet has become a crucial part of working people's and students' lives. Access to internet services helps eliminate the homework gap and improve education, socioeconomic equality, telemedicine, public safety, agriculture, and economic development. The homework gap, as identified by the National School Boards Association, is the digital divide that impacts millions of households nationwide. As education has shifted from traditional classrooms to include aspects of virtual classrooms, the necessity for each student to have access to high-quality internet is imperative. In April 2021, the Township adopted a resolution asking the Michigan Townships Association to support legislation giving tax breaks for high-speed internet providers. Many residents miss out on educational resources, access to healthcare, and remote work opportunities due to the lack of high-speed internet.

Internet access is currently provided by Midwest Energy and Communications, Sister Lakes Cable TV, and Frontier. The Van Buren County Board of Commissioners recently decided to earmark \$7 million of the county's \$14.6 million in ARPA funds toward broadband expansion. Keeler Township also passed a resolution to earmark a substantial portion of its ARPA funds to the broadband expansion project. DCS Technology Design of Chelsea has surveyed properties throughout Van Buren County to determine the level of broadband internet access to homes and businesses.

Educational Institutions

Keeler Township is served by three school districts: Dowagiac Union School District, Hartford Public School District, and Watervliet Public School District. Grace Christian School and Eau Claire SDA School are private schools in the area. Table 4.1 illustrates that school enrollment in the Dowagiac Union and Hartford Public School Districts decreased while enrollment in Watervliet Public School District slightly increased in the 19 years from the 2002-2003 school year to the 2020-2021 school year.

Table 4.2 | Enrollment by School District

School District	Enrollment 2002-2003	Enrollment 2020-2021
Dowagiac Union School District	2,806	2,105
Hartford Public School District	1,474	1,232
Watervliet Public School District	1,383	1,474

Source: Michigan School Data

Water, Sewer, & Electricity

The Sister Lakes Area Utilities Authority operates the sanitary sewer system in Keeler Township and has the authority to require connections and to levy and collect fees. A connection to the system is required by a lakefront property when it is within 600 feet of the sewer line and by a non-lakefront property within 250 feet of the sewer line. In 2022, the connection fee is \$7,920 and the monthly user fee is \$35 per Residential Equivalent Unit.

Most of the Township is serviced by private wells and septic systems. However, due to the fragile nature of the lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, and other bodies of water and their surrounding environments, intense development should be discouraged without connection to public sewers.

Electricity services in the Sister Lakes area and Keeler Township are provided by Indiana Michigan Power and MEC.

Renewable Energy Systems

Solar Energy Systems

By 2040, DTE Energy expects to have over 10 million solar panels generating power for its customers, and Consumers Energy plans to build roughly 8,000MW (megawatts) of solar energy-producing infrastructure. Regional electric cooperatives and municipally-owned utilities are following suit, with plans to expand solar energy production. There are several factors that local officials should consider when determining the impact that solar energy systems may have on their community. Having a community master plan and zoning ordinance adopted is a critical step in legitimizing a local

government's ability to regulate solar energy infrastructure. The master planning process can also allow the public to participate in the decision-making process via a visual preference survey with photos of small, medium, and large-scale developments as well as roof-mounted and ground-mounted systems.

Zoning regulations can impact the siting and design of solar energy developments in several ways. When it comes to the siting of projects, large-scale projects tend to be allowed as principal land uses of the property and authorized by special land-use permits in specified zoning districts. Accessory structures, typically defined where the electricity generated is used by the principal land use on the property, are generally allowed in many different types of zoning districts as accessory uses by right.



To encourage the adoption of solar energy, some communities waive or reduce zoning fees for some types of residential systems. For large utility-scale projects, a community might consider using escrow funds deposited by the applicant to recover the expense of hiring outside reviewers, such as an attorney, engineer, or planning consultant. An escrow policy provides a mechanism for the community to anticipate the costs associated with reviewing a complex application.

Local officials should also consider the range of sizes, scales, configurations, and related components of solar energy infrastructure projects because the scale of installations and energy generation capacity can vary dramatically based on the location, project size, available technology, and other factors. Solar energy generation for distribution to the grid is unique land use. The scale of a project can cover as little as an acre to thousands of acres. Large and small-scale projects should be clearly defined as a distinct land use within a zoning ordinance.

Communities must also consider the impact on the surrounding land uses and the landscape. A recommended practice is to use regulation to encourage the siting of a solar energy system on land that is difficult to develop or of marginal value for other uses. Examples of lands of marginal value include brownfield sites, capped landfills, grayfield sites (previously developed property), and the required safety buffer areas around industrial sites. Solar arrays can be designed to avoid penetrating the ground and don't require as much remediation as other kinds of development. The development of solar energy projects on grayfield sites can provide an economic development opportunity for land that is otherwise disadvantaged from a redevelopment perspective.

"Dual-use" is the integration of solar panels in an agricultural system in a way that enhances a productive, multifunctional landscape. Perhaps the most overt combination of solar and agriculture working together is through an "agrivoltaic" system that combines raising crops for food, fiber, or fuel,

and generating electricity within the project area to maximize land use. Grazing animals under and around solar panels or planting ground cover that is compatible with solar panels and supports the local ecosystem are other examples of dual-use.

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development administers the Michigan Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program, which includes the Farmland Development Rights Program, commonly referred to as PA 116 (Public Act 116 of 1974). The PA 116 program allows a landowner to voluntarily enter into an agreement with the State to retain their land in agriculture in exchange for certain tax benefits and exemptions from various special assessments. Before 2019, principal-use solar was not permitted on land enrolled in the PA 116 Farmland Preservation Program. The policy has changed to allow landowners to put their PA 116 agreements on hold to pursue solar development if specified conditions are met.

A community should consider what happens to the solar energy system infrastructure at the end of the solar project's useful life. Most solar panels are designed to operate for 25-40 years, so it is not uncommon for solar developers to have a lease or easement of roughly this length with a landowner. It's important to note the distinction between the two primary options at the end of a solar project's life: decommissioning and repowering. The decommissioning plan details how the project equipment will be removed and the land restored when the contract expires, and the financial commitment guarantees there will be funding to implement the plan. Repowering involves refurbishing or replacing system components to allow the solar energy infrastructure to continue operation.

Wind Energy Systems

Like solar energy systems, a community master plan and zoning ordinance strengthen a community's ability to regulate projects in the community. Wind energy projects can bring controversy, and local officials should be prepared by studying and developing a regulatory framework. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act requires a zoning ordinance to accommodate all legitimate land uses in the presence of a demonstrated need. There is a need for reliable, clean energy according to Michigan's Clean and Renewable Energy and Energy Waste Reduction Act of 2008, and as amended in 2016 with the new target of producing 35% of the state's electric needs through energy waste reduction and renewable energy sources by 2025. Local governments must decide whether intentionally restrictive zoning ordinances for utility-scale wind energy systems amount to an unlawful exclusion of a land use where there is a demonstrated need for it. Some land uses may not be reasonably accommodated in every local unit of government, but this should be reviewed with legal guidance. Furthermore, developers may not own the property where wind turbines are located and must have signed private leases or easements with landowners that allow the developer certain types of land use rights on the land.

Since wind energy infrastructure can cover a large geographic area, and because it can involve individual land owners, there can be an increased chance for a conflict of interest to arise for the Township Board and/or Planning Commission members. If no rules or bylaws are in place for these entities regarding conflicts of interest, they should be established. Public opinion can also play a role in the acceptance of wind energy projects and should be seriously considered. The six factors below are used to explain the various factors in the public's understanding:

1. *Socioeconomic aspects:* Distributional justice is one factor in how wind development projects are received. This concept refers to the distribution of the costs and benefits of wind energy developments to a given group of people. Though there can be benefits of an increase in local jobs, reduced electrical bills, and local landowner compensation, there are also negative impacts. Rural communities can be perceived as bearing the burden of a region or society reaching renewable energy goals. With negative impacts on local tourism and property values, and producing much more power than the rural community itself needs, often by large, multinational corporations, and having that power exported to an urban area, rural communities may feel that they are being exploited. There is also often concern about distributional justice between those

residents who would receive direct compensation from the wind developers and those who would not. Some developers have broadened the geographic extent of royalty payments to include residents within the entire area of a project and not just immediate land owners. While this may influence attitudes positively, it also has the effect of increasing the likelihood that one or more Township Board or Planning Commission members will have a conflict of interest.

2. *Sound annoyance and health risk perceptions:* Recent research has concluded that wind sound and infrasound are not directly related to adverse health effects or sleep quality, however, public perception of health risks may be different. Care must be taken to address this concern.
3. *Visual/landscape aspects, annoyance, and place attachment:* The perception of wind energy development fitness on a landscape may vary. Many agricultural communities have shown moderate to high support for wind energy, as residents see wind turbines as protecting the rural farming character of the landscape by preventing suburban expansion or seeing them as another productive use of the land. Other communities, however, oppose wind energy development due to their visual impact, risk of shadow flicker and/or noise, and other reasons. Local officials should balance the rights of individuals who see the land for productive, agricultural uses and those who value it for other reasons, including but not limited to aesthetics. Master Plans must balance these competing interests appropriately and thoughtfully, and the zoning ordinance should be amended to implement the plan's recommendations in a legally defensible way.
4. *Environmental concerns and attitudes:* There will be impacts on wildlife, especially during construction, however, research is ongoing and many organizations support properly-sited infrastructure, as it helps mitigate climate change, which poses a greater threat to the natural environment.
5. *Distance from turbine:* The most intense impacts are often felt by people who live nearest to wind turbines. While individuals closest to the turbines may be the most likely to hear the turbines, they are also the most likely to be financially compensated. The financial compensation to impacted residents can influence their opinion on a wind energy systems project having a negative or positive impact on the community.
6. *Perceptions of the planning process, fairness, and trust:* Many studies have pointed to community trust in the wind energy development siting process as being important to public acceptance or acceptability. Trust and a sense of fairness are tied to meaningful public engagement in the siting and decision-making process. This includes actions taken by wind developers as well as those taken by local officials.

Keeler Township may consider the role of and proactively consider siting wind energy and solar energy system developments, as there may be a considerate push for these types of developments in southern Michigan townships.

Parks & Recreation

There are three major areas in Keeler Township that serves the purpose of recreation in the Township. As shown on Map 8, Keeler State Game Area, Hamilton Coastal Plain Marsh, and Lion's Club Recreational Area are some of the major recreation spots in the Township along with on/off-road trails and snowmobile trails. The Sister Lakes area also provides recreational elements to the Township. Since the lakes area is in the heart of Michigan's fruit belt, there is an abundance of local farms to visit. Some farms offer activities like hayrides, pick-your-own fruit (raspberries, blueberries, peaches, apples), and other activities for children and adults alike. Residents also enjoy wineries, breweries, golf courses, and other recreational activities. Major public recreational areas in Keeler Township include:

- Round Lake Public Beach: Located on the east side of Round Lake on County Road 690 between Rays Court and Victory Shore Drive, the area includes a grassy open area with access to the lake along with a beach. The area is approximately 4,000 square feet in area.
- Keeler State Game Area: Split between two areas, the 396-acre area is owned by the DNR and open to the public 24 hours a day for hunting, fishing, hiking, and seasonal camping and picnicking.

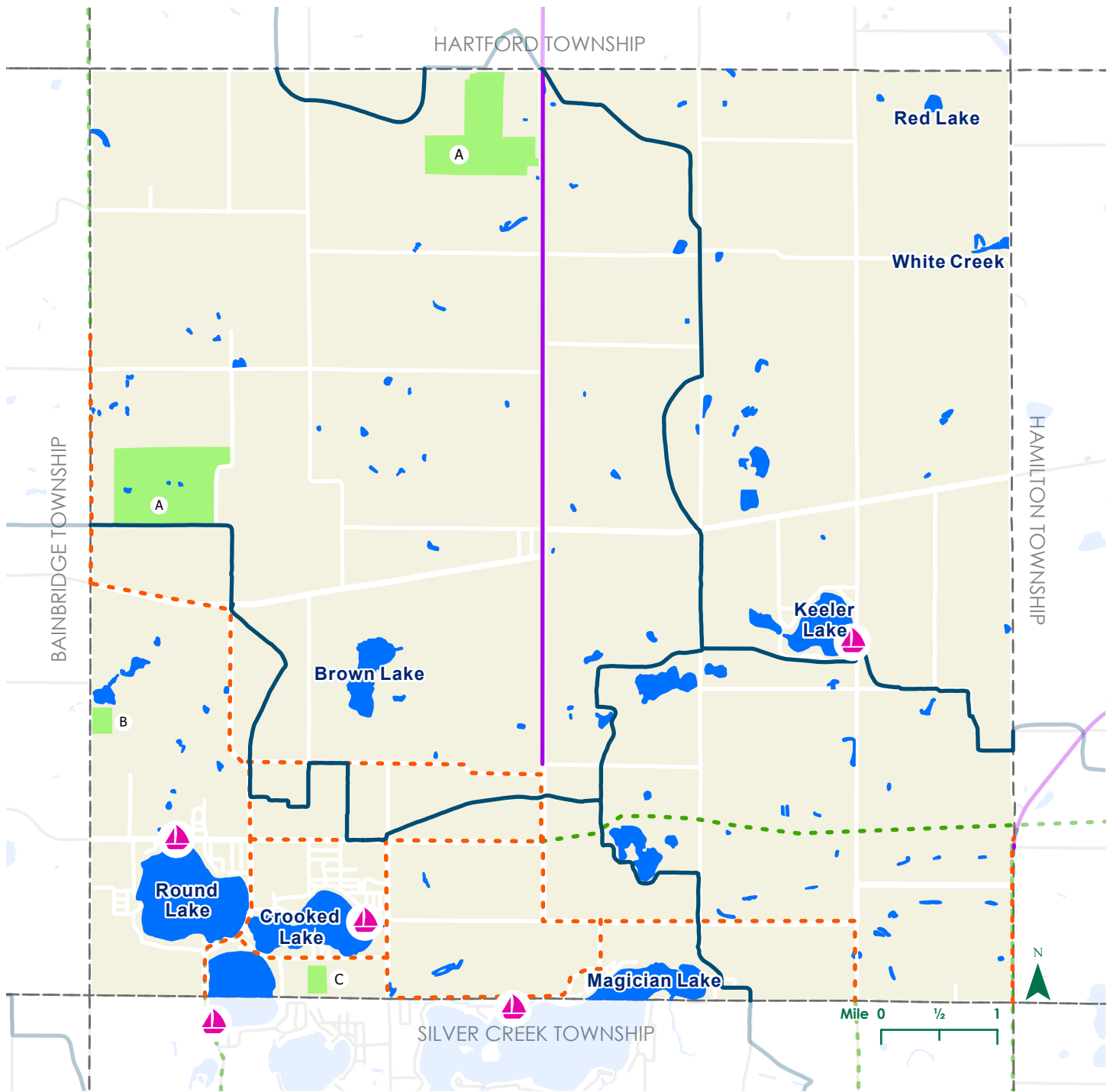
Major recreational areas near Keeler Township include:

- Van Buren Trail: A 14-mile non-motorized trail that links the City of Hartford to the City of South Haven. The trail is suitable for hiking, biking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling.
- Van Buren County Fairgrounds: The Van Buren County Fair Board leases approximately 85 acres from the County. The fair board and volunteers have contributed to the development of a campground and buildings to supplement a “natural amphitheater” with hillside seating. In 2005, the fair board paved surfaces throughout the grounds to increase accessibility.
- Van Buren State Park: A 400-acre park that features one mile of sandy beach and high dune formations along the Lake Michigan shoreline, located near South Haven. Facilities include swimming, hunting, a picnic shelter, and a playground.

There are several boat launch access sites in the Township. Big Crooked Lake, Little Crooked Lake, and Keeler Lake have locally-owned and maintained boat ramps. The Round Lake and Magician Lake Boating Access Sites are administered by the DNR. The sites include a hard-surfaced ramp, parking spaces, and public restrooms. The sites are also stocked with various game fish by the DNR such as bluegill, largemouth bass, pumpkinseed, and yellow perch.

Other recreational assets nearby Keeler Township include:

- County (Courtyard) Park
- Ramona Roller Rink
- Paw Paw River Water Trail
- Bangor to South Haven Heritage Water Trail
- Lake Michigan Water Trail
- Silver Beach County Park
- Doe-Wah-Jack’s Canoe Rentals
- 5 Mile Drive-In Theater
- Indian Lakes Hills Golf Course
- Pipestone Creek Golf Course
- Southwest Michigan Maker’s Trail



8 Parks & Recreation

Keeler Township, Van Buren County, MI

- (A) Keeler State Game Area
- (B) Hamilton Coastal Plain Marsh
- (C) Lions Club Recreational Area

Legend

- Parks and Recreational Areas
- Lakes
- Existing Wide Shoulder on Road
- Existing Snowmobile Trail
- Planned Off Road Trail
- Planned On Road Trail
- Boat Launch Site

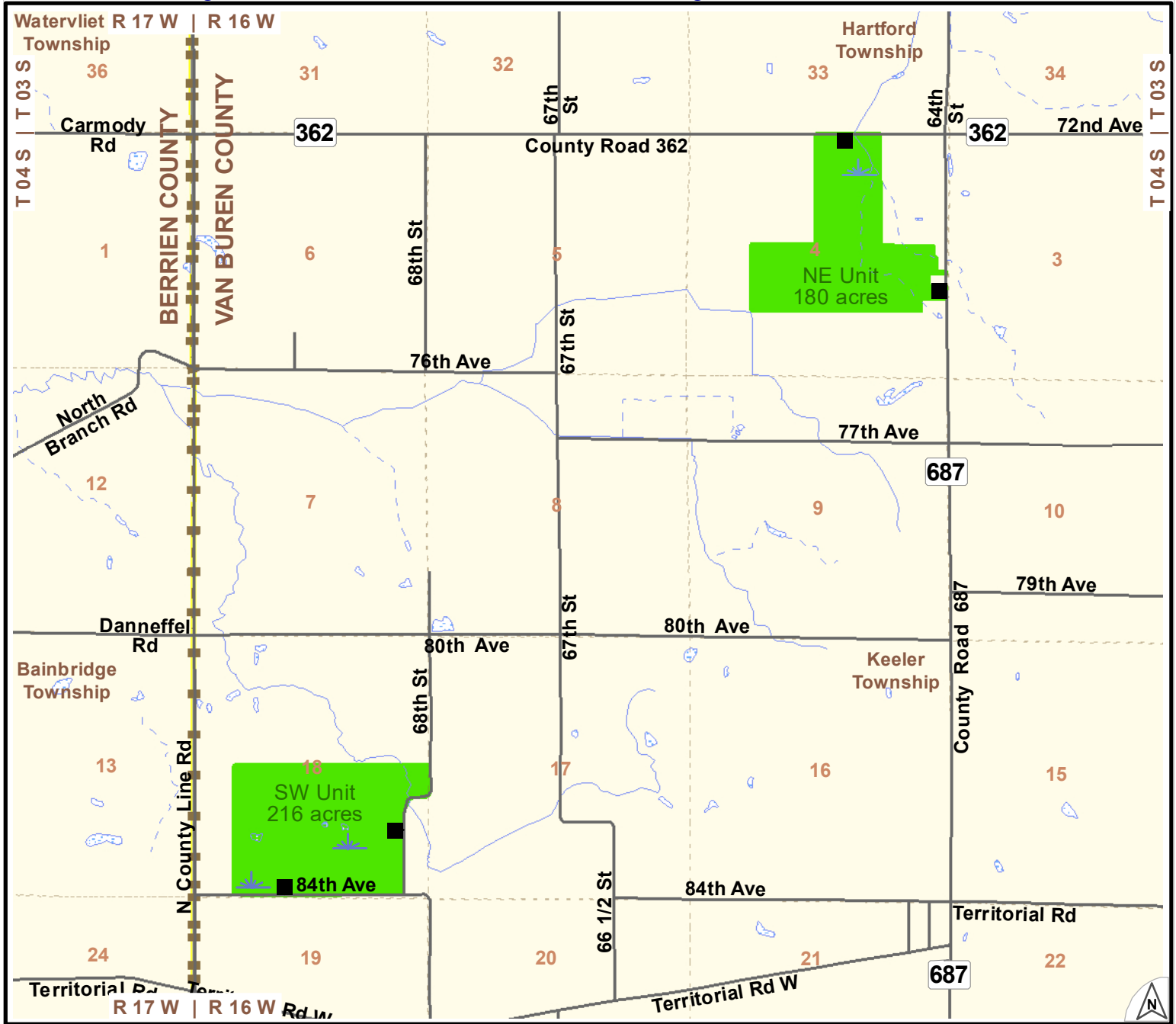


KEELER STATE GAME AREA

in Van Buren County



Contact: [Allegan DNR Wildlife Office](http://Allegan.DNR.Wildlife.Office), 4590 118th Ave, Allegan, MI 49010; 269-673-2430



State Wildlife/Game Area:

- Huntably Land - General Area
- Parking Lots
- Marsh

0 1/2 1 2 Miles

Hunter Safety Zones of 150 yards (450 feet) are enforced around all buildings/structures at all times.



For more information or help on areas: contact DNR offices, visit the DNR online (www.mi.gov/dnr), click-on or scan the QR-block. Complete rules and regulations are online (www.mi.gov/dnr/laws). This geospatial PDF has embedded GPS coordinates and links.



Hunter Monies Help Make This Area Possible

Map rev. 04/10/2019 (-DNR-Wildlife/M.Strong)



chapter 5.
GOALS



GOALS

Goals should be thought of as the overarching policy, written as a desirable state of the Township that may be reached during the Plan's 20 year planning horizon. Policy statements can be thought of as milestones that will help the Township reach the stated goals.

The goal and policy statements were developed based on the results of the community survey and in discussion with the Steering Committee members. Survey results indicate that there is a level of satisfaction that respondents generally have regarding the character and growth of the community. The top three reasons that community survey respondents identified as reasons that they have chosen to live in Keeler Township were the lake community, natural setting, and rural lifestyle. Exactly 50% of respondents feel that the pace of growth within the community is "about right." Respondents see Keeler Township as a "satisfactory" place to live and raise a family, and believe it provides a "satisfactory" quality of life.

The survey had many questions about the level of concern for a variety of transportation, environmental, housing, recreation, infrastructure, and economic development topics. The quality of roads, the availability or quality of high-speed or wireless internet, and the quality of groundwater were identified as the top three issues out of a list of nearly 30 different statements. The top five Township priorities that were identified by survey respondents include:

- Preserving groundwater
- Protecting private property rights
- Preserving open spaces
- Preserving rural character
- Improving public roads

Survey respondents also "agreed" with the following statements:

- "I would support increased controls on development to protect water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams."
- "Farmland in Keeler Township should be preserved and protected."

This shows that there is strong support for protecting the water resources within Keeler Township, and local leaders should continue to strive to take reasonable actions that align with community support. The preservation of farmland should also be continued. Keeler Township has a long standing agriculturally-focused heritage, and there is ample public support for this important economic activity. Township officials should continue to protect areas of prime farmland soils and large tracts for agricultural production. This landscape can contribute to a rural aesthetic, which is another important asset of the community as indicated by survey respondents.

Keeping these results in mind, the Keeler Township Master Plan will help Township leaders to support the development of the community using the following guiding statements.

1. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Goal 1. Encourage the protection of environmentally sensitive natural areas.

Policy Statement:

- a. The Township will consider the impacts on environmentally sensitive natural features during its review of plans, programs, and regulations in regard to protecting the region's natural environment.

Goal 2. Maintain development standards to promote water, air, and soil quality.

Policy Statement:

- a. Water quality protection measures will be considered to promote standards, addressing water resources, such as drinking water, streams, and lakes, stormwater, groundwater, and wastewater.
- b. Ensure that any development projects meet federal, state, and local air quality and soil standards.

Goal 3. Strive to improve coordination and cooperation between units of government, other governmental agencies, and community organizations that contribute to the management of environmentally sensitive areas.

Policy Statement:

- a. The Township will work together with surrounding units of government on projects involving environmentally sensitive natural areas.

2. AGRICULTURE/OPEN SPACE

Goal 1. Encourage the continued use of farmland as a valuable resource for the community.

Policy Statement:

- a. Land use decisions will support the desires of individual property owners who wish to keep their land in agricultural production.
- b. In considering farmland for residential use, the Township will prioritize farmland with poor soils, incompatible surrounding character, low productivity, and smaller acreages before prime farmland.

Goal 2. Protect farm operations from conflicts with incompatible uses and support a strong agricultural economy.

Policy Statement:

- a. Some limitations on non-agricultural development should be considered in areas planned for long-term agricultural uses.
- b. Land uses and activities that adversely affect the long-term investment in farming areas should be discouraged.
- c. Use Open Space Preservation development techniques to concentrate non-farm residential development in order to preserve prime agricultural lands.
- d. Lower density residential development will be considered in areas planned for long-term agricultural uses. Lot design and house placement should minimize conflict with ongoing agricultural operations.
- e. Permit a limited range of farm-based businesses in agricultural areas to allow residents to supplement their farm income. The uses allowed should have some relationship to agricultural and not adversely affect neighboring uses.

Goal 3. Promote the conservation of open space areas within Keeler Township to enhance the area's environmental, aesthetic, and recreational qualities.

Policy Statement:

- a. Open Space Preservation will be encouraged as a development style in the Township to help preserve valuable natural features and maintain rural character.

3. RESIDENTIAL GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

Goal 1. Consider limits on densities and determine appropriate locations for residential development in order to preserve the Township's rural character.

Policy Statements:

- a. The Township will consider optimal locations for single-family residential development giving special consideration to agricultural preservations, environmental protection, infrastructure availability, and the surrounding character.
- b. The Township will encourage development patterns that ensure adequate spacing between homes in more rural areas to maintain rural character.
- c. The Township will encourage development patterns that utilize Open Space Preservation techniques in conjunction with the establishment of conservation easements dedicated to the preservation of unique natural features.

- d. The Township will consider the development of higher density residential areas in locations where: a) public utilities exist; or b) public utilities do not exist but, as a component of a proposed development, will be extended to serve that development, or c) it does not adversely affect the rural/agricultural character of the area.

Goal 2. Consider the need for a range of housing options at appropriate densities and locations.

Policy Statements:

- a. The Township will review housing in the area to evaluate whether the needs of families in the community are being met.

Goal 3. The Township will support programs that promote the maintenance and livability of homes that are compatible with community character.

Policy Statements:

- a. Maintain a Township program to proactively address abandoned, dilapidated, and/or blighted houses.
- b. The Code Enforcement Officer, Building Inspector, and Zoning Administrator will work in a coordinated fashion, and use the Township’s “Dangerous Building Ordinance” and “Blight Ordinance” to manage the condition and safety of buildings.
- c. Continue to fund a position at the Township level to promote and manage the condition of buildings in the community.

4. COMMERCIAL GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

Goal 1. Allow commercial development to occur in the Township in a limited, controlled and responsible manner.

Policy Statements:

- a. The Township will limit new commercial development to those businesses which serve the needs of the local residents. The Township will support commercial development to occur on parcels of appropriate size and scale to maintain consistency with the surrounding character.
- b. The locations for new commercial development should be carefully considered and development should be of a nature and size consistent with the rural surroundings of the Township.

5. COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

Goal 1. Provide the necessary facilities and services that are consistent with the Township's rural character and that will serve the needs of the residents.

Policy Statements:

- a. Promote a coordinated approach among local communities for the planning, provision, and expansion of public water and sanitary systems.
- b. Consider the potential for adding a municipal water service to residents and businesses.
- c. Strengthen site plan review provisions and promote enforcement of existing regulations to enhance aesthetics in the Township, such as requiring the removal of junk in yards in the Township.

Goal 2. Support efforts to develop a reliable, high-speed, accessible internet service network.

Policy Statements:

- a. Seek partnering opportunities for the study, development, and installation of an accessible internet network.
- b. Pursue grants to help fund the development of an internet network.
- c. Continue supporting legislative initiatives that promote rural broadband opportunities.

Goal 3. Support reasonable, efficient investments in renewable energy infrastructure that match and align with the character envisioned for the future of the Township.

Policy Statements:

- a. Encourage Township officials, staff, and residents to learn more about renewable energy systems through information resources and technical guidance.
- b. Develop a model ordinance that defines and guides the parameters of solar and wind energy systems development for a range of sizes, scales, and configurations.

Goal 4. Develop and deploy new methods of communication with the residents of Keeler Township.

Policy Statements:

- a. Update the Township website monthly to reflect community activities and Township meetings.
- b. Consider using social media to push information and notifications to Township residents and others who are interested in the community.
- c. Explore additional means of communication to ensure that all residents have at least one way of communicating with the Township.

Goal 5. Improve access to and facilities within parks and recreation features.

Policy Statements:

- a. Update the Keeler Township Community Recreation Plan 2018 – 2022 every five years to accurately reflect any changes in the community and to ensure that the Township has a current Parks and Recreation Plan on file with the DNR to remain eligible for DNR grants.
- b. Develop a prioritized list that provides guidance in maintaining Township park and recreation facilities.
- c. Seek grant funding from the DNR and other sources to help implement recommendations from the Keeler Township Community Recreation Plan 2018 – 2022 and future plan iterations.

6. TRANSPORTATION

Goal 1. Develop an integrated, well-maintained transportation system.

Policy Statements:

- a. Continue to work with the Van Buren County Road Commission to improve the conditions of the roads in Keeler Township.
- b. Continue to seek an adequate Road Millage for the Township.
- c. Continue to support Van Buren County Public Transit as a realistic, accessible mode of transportation for Township residents.

Goal 2. Develop a nonmotorized network that accommodates a range of ages and abilities.

- a. Work with the Van Buren County Road Commission to identify routes and/or facilities and use Act 51 funds to support the development of nonmotorized transportation facilities.
- b. Develop a reasonable, safe nonmotorized network within the Sister Lakes Corridor Improvement Authority area.
- c. Participate in the development of a Township and regional trail system and support facilities.

Goal 3. Promote opportunities to improve safety and reduce crashes within the transportation network.

- a. Work with local and state officials to reduce or affect speed limits by changing the streetscape and/or other aspects of the built environment.
- b. Study the need for more traffic control devices to promote safety at intersections and in areas that are important to the Township.
- c. Develop safer places for nonmotorized users, especially in the higher density areas of the Township.

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chapter 6.
LAND USE



LAND USE

The Keeler Township Master Plan establishes general patterns of land use to guide growth and development for the next twenty to thirty years. The Plan constitutes a viable and integrated approach to accommodate the impacts of growth suggested by the existing growth patterns and developmental trends. The over-arching intent is to foster efficient patterns of development that preserve the community's important natural features and rural character while accommodating particular types of growth in certain desirable areas.

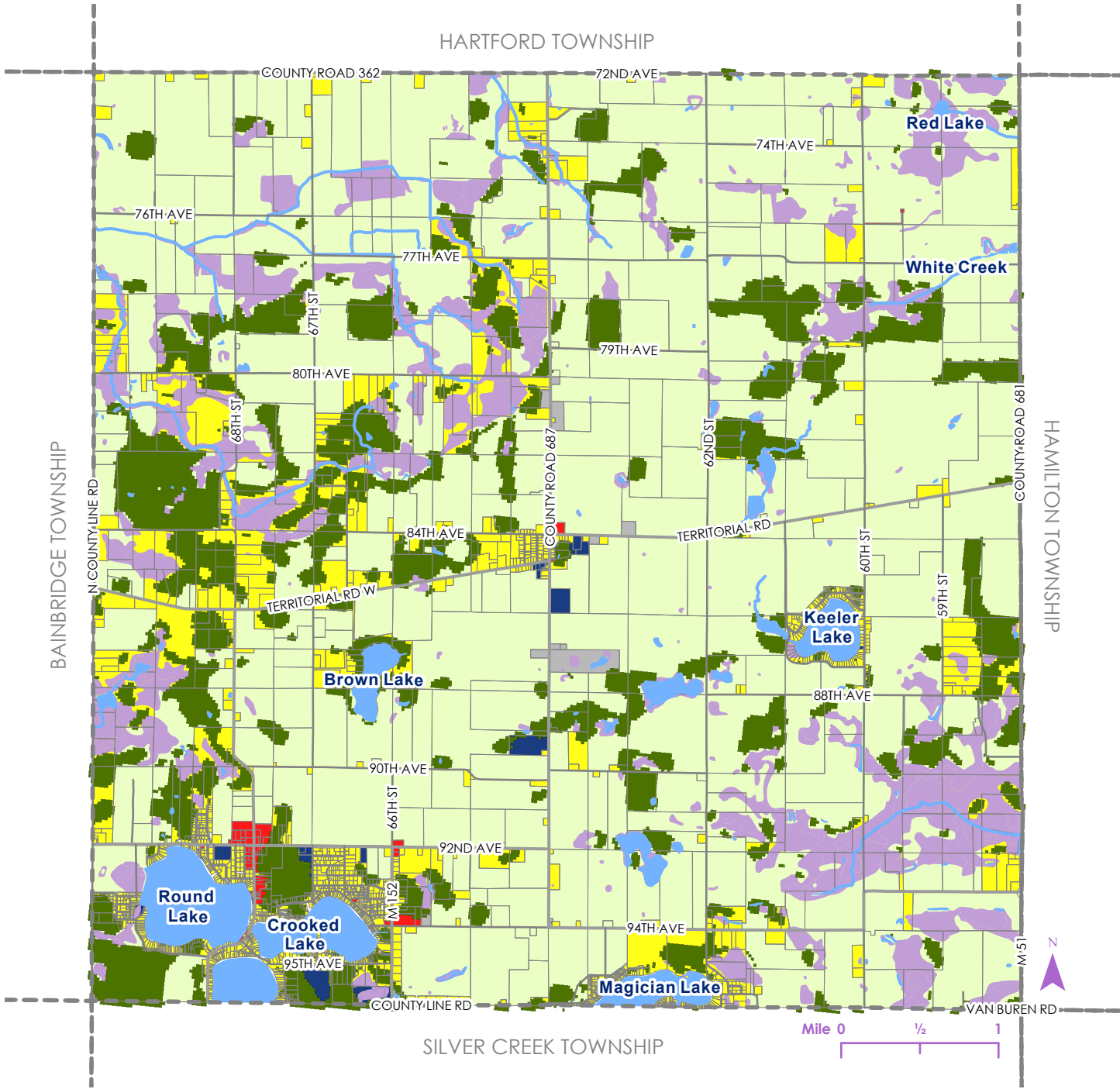
According to feedback gathered via the community survey, Keeler Township residents overwhelmingly indicated a desire to preserve the rural character and farmland in the community. Natural features such as lakes, rivers, streams, and farmland were all considered valuable. Survey respondents also indicated that their most important priorities are the protection of groundwater, the protection of private property rights, and the preservation of open spaces. Expansion of industrial development and increasing the options available for housing were considered the least important; however, limited development may be appropriate in specific areas. To honor these values, a land use framework has been developed that seeks to preserve open space, protect lake, and water quality, provide economic opportunity and services in appropriate locations, and preserve the rural aesthetic.

This chapter describes several land use designations that are intended to guide new development in logical patterns and preserve much of the Township for agricultural production. The existing land use patterns are identified and briefly discussed in the first part of the chapter. The future land use vision is outlined in the second half of the chapter. The zoning plan for each future land use category is also included at the end of each future land use category section. A zoning plan is required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Public Act 33 of 2008), which explains how each category on the future land use map relates to districts in the Township's zoning ordinance. A rezoning request should consider this zoning plan, along with the supporting narrative in this chapter, the future land use map, desired use, and other applicable features of the application.

EXISTING LAND USE

The existing land use information is helpful in understanding the current character of Keeler Township and can be informative in shaping future development. The existing land use map provides a bird's eye view of the pattern of human activity on the land surface to create a "snapshot" of the existing physical conditions on the landscape. The existing land use categories are listed below, and the amount of land that they cover within Keeler Township is shared in Table 6.1. The existing land use map is found on Map 9.

1. Agricultural
2. Residential
3. Commercial
4. Industrial
5. Public/Quasi-Public
6. Forests
7. Wetlands



Legend

9 Existing Land Use

Keeler Township, Van Buren County, MI

- | | |
|--|---|
| Agricultural | Public/Quasi-Public |
| Commercial | Forests |
| Industrial | Wetlands |
| Residential | Lakes |

The existing land use map was developed by reviewing the tax classification information from Van Buren County GIS data, reviewing satellite imagery, and through discussions with the Keeler Township Master Plan Steering Committee members. Forest and Wetlands information was sourced by the National Land Cover Dataset and National Wetland Inventory as updated by the Michigan Department of Environment, Energy and Great Lakes. The map constitutes a valuable public record and is an important part of planning and zoning discussions. Existing land use patterns can provide a useful narrative about where present land uses are and where new growth most likely will occur. The Township should regularly review and update the map to ensure that it reflects the latest developments within the Township.

Table 6.1 | Existing Land Use Information

Land Use Class	Acres	Percent
Agriculture	17,846	80.0%
Residential	3,535	15.8%
Lakes	605	2.8%
Public/Quasi-Public	153	0.7%
Commercial	90	0.4%
Industrial	78	0.3%
Total*	22,307	100%
Forests	2,995	13.4%
Wetlands	2,774	12.4%

Source: Van Buren County, Keeler Township parcel data.

*Note that the forests and wetlands land uses were not included in the total land area as they overlap with the agriculture and other major land use classes.

Agriculture

Agriculture is the largest use of land and drives the Township’s identity community. 80% (17,846 acres) of the land area is categorized as agriculture. The majority of the eastern side of the Township contains areas of open farmlands except for a few clustered residential developed areas immediately surrounding Keeler Lake and near the intersection of 59th Street and 88th Avenue. Agricultural also covers the landscape along the northwestern portion of the Township and part of the southwestern part of the Township excluding the Sister Lakes area.

Many agricultural areas are interspersed with small lot development created as farmers divide their land. This practice provides income for farmers, but can result in a disjointed development pattern and can increase the cost of supplying public services. Soil conditions largely influence whether or not an area is capable of supporting agricultural activities. Parcel size and shape also have an important influence on the viability of a given area for long-term agricultural production. Large parcels with a regular configuration lend themselves more readily to farming than smaller parcels that have been split up for non-agricultural purposes. Oddly shaped parcels, such as flag lots, can impede agricultural uses. Agricultural support operations tend to be more viable when there are many large contiguous tracts of farmland in an area.

Survey results indicated that residents want to preserve and protect farmland. The Township should continue to explore effective and feasible methods to preserve large contiguous tracts of viable farmland.

Residential

A little more than 15% (3,535 acres) of the land in Keeler Township is in the form of residential use. Residential development is located throughout the Township, and there are residential clusters in places like the Sister Lakes area, the west central part of the community, and around the larger lakes like Keeler Lake and Magician Lake. Many of the homes are located on or near farms and are single-family dwellings. Development has historically occurred along County roads but has continued to increase along secondary roads. Many seasonal lake cottages that were only occupied during the

summer months have been redeveloped into single-family homes that are occupied for 6 months or more, also influencing the residential landscape of the Township. Nearly half of survey respondents responded that they would prefer new houses to be single-family homes with 1- 5-acre lot sizes. This may mean that there is a higher chance that new residential developments may negatively impact agricultural lands, and this is a strong reason why new development should be located near existing residential areas.

Public/Quasi-Public

Public/Quasi-Public land use comprises about 0.6% (153 acres) of the total land area of the Township. Parcels in this land use category include churches, parks, cemeteries, private recreation areas, and others. Familiar locations are the Sister Lakes Lions Club Park, the Township Hall and Fire Department, and the Keeler Cemetery. This land use area will likely have minimal growth over the next 20 to 25 years.

Commercial

Commercial land uses comprise 0.4% (90 acres) of the total land area. Most of that is oriented to local, immediate needs for basic goods like gasoline service stations, restaurants, and numerous other small enterprises. Survey respondents indicated that shopping for major goods is performed outside the Township, predominantly in Benton Harbor/St. Joseph or in other places in Van Buren County. A lack of commercial businesses in the Township is generally not a concern to Township residents according to the community survey results. However, there is an interest in more sit-down restaurants, retail stores, and personal services like hair salons and health businesses.

Industrial

Industrial land use within Keeler Township constitutes about 0.3% (78 acres) of the total land area of the Township. Parcels that are in industrial use include Burnette Foods, Incorporated, Keeler-Glasgow Company, and Cherry Ke, Incorporated. Attracting new industrial businesses for jobs is not a high priority for the citizens of Keeler Township according to the community survey, however, any growth in this land use would also likely equate to new jobs and could have a positive impact on growing and diversifying the Township's local economy.

Forests and Wetlands

Forests and wetlands are important land use and cover a notable amount of land. These natural areas contribute to the community's rural landscape and also provide an important land cover. Wetlands support storm water drainage, which is important to recognize in a developing community. These features comprise an important environmental resource that occupies approximately 25.4% (5,769 acres) within the Township. According to the results of the survey, the second highest reason people have chosen to live in Keeler is because of the natural settings. Survey respondents also indicated that the Township should protect groundwater and preserve the rural character. Continuing to preserve forests and wetland areas will be an important way that Township officials can demonstrate that they are continuing to respond to the priorities of its residents.

FUTURE LAND USE

This chapter contains the recommendations that will guide the Township in the coming years. These recommendations were influenced by the results of the Keeler Township Master Plan community survey, analysis of existing circumstances, Township officials, and the Keeler Township Zoning Ordinance. Each of these factors guide the creation of the future land use map. The future land use map is on Map 10. The future land use categories include:

1. Rural Residential
2. Low Density Residential
3. Commercial
4. Industrial
5. Agriculture

The following section provides a brief description that should be used to drive the intentional growth and preservation of agriculture in Keeler Township. The future land use map is found on the following page.

Agriculture

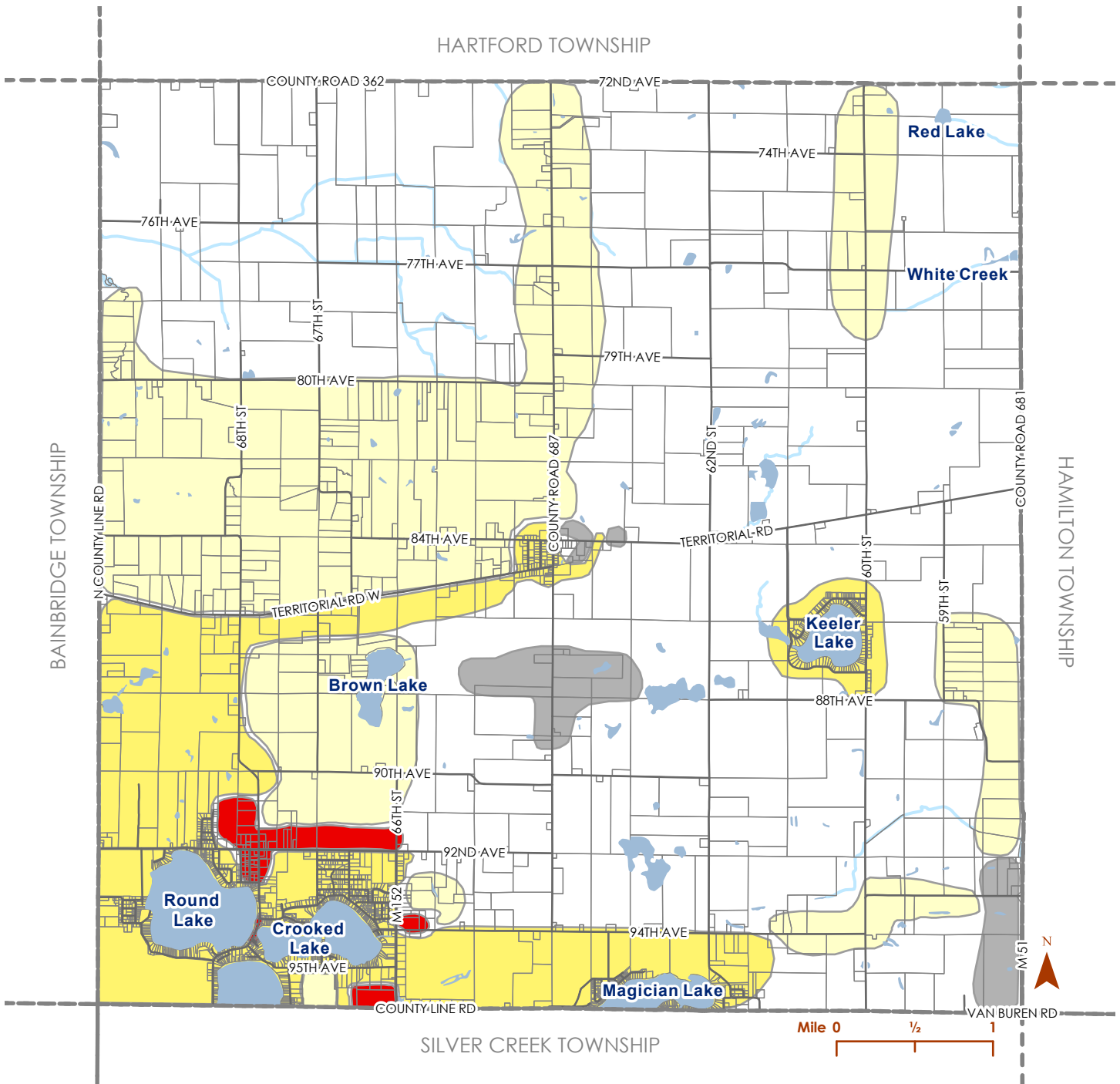
This land use designation is intended to primarily accommodate agricultural uses and very low density residential development located in conjunction with these agricultural land uses consistent with Township’s existing character. An important element of the Plan is supporting the continuation of farming as an essential land use in the Township.

Agricultural land uses would be characterized by traditional cash crops, fruit, and vegetable cultivation, raising livestock and poultry, equestrian activities, nurseries and greenhouses, and similar uses. This also includes the vast amounts of woodland and wetlands that are abundant across the Township.

Rural residential development in agricultural areas should be limited to locations where the soils and terrain are least suitable for agricultural production. Any new residential development should be limited and designed to minimize conflicts between agricultural and residential uses and to help preserve important agricultural lands in the Township. Public sewer is not available, anticipated, or encouraged. Higher densities and development that require support of public sewer and water or private collection systems are also discouraged. Emblematic of the agricultural areas are single-family detached homes and farmstead clusters (single-family homes with a series of accessory structures, such as barns, silos, stables, and utility buildings). Rural viewsheds are encouraged to be preserved along road rights-of-way, including trees lining roadways and any unique natural features. Provisions for utility solar use could be located in these land use areas.

Zoning Plan - Agriculture

Future land use designation	Primary compatible zoning district	Potentially compatible zoning district	Remarks
Agriculture	AG	R-R	High intensity development should not be permitted. Low density residential uses may be appropriate where farming activities are limited or lands are unsuitable for agriculture.



Legend

- Rural Residential
- Low Density Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Agriculture

10 Future Land Use

Keeler Township, Van Buren County, MI

Rural Residential

This classification provides a transition between some of the agriculture areas of the Township and the lands where residential development is permitted. This is cited to be used in the west central, southwest, and north central areas of the Township along County Road 687. Rural residential minimums lot size will be no smaller than 2 ½ acres.

With the generally sparse current pattern of development and the lack of public utility services available across the Township, several parts of the planning area (especially in the north and east areas), are not yet viewed as being as ripe for conversion to residential use as other areas located further to the south and west. Residential uses in this area should also contain soils that accommodate private septic systems. For that reason, a policy of managed, incremental expansions of the residential zoning districts is intended to prevail rather than a policy that would allow significant leapfrog changes or the wholesale re-zoning of the planning area. The current zoning within this future land use designation will remain largely in place until market conditions, emerging development patterns, and infrastructure improvements warrant changes on an incremental basis.

Zoning Plan - Rural Residential

Future land use designation	Primary compatible zoning district	Potentially compatible zoning district	Remarks
Rural Residential	R-R	R-I	High intensity development should not be permitted. Residential development should be considered in coordination with available infrastructure.

Low Density Residential

The areas designated for low density residential development are generally concentrated in the south central and southwestern portions of the Township, particularly around the Sister Lakes area, and around Keeler Lake. The designated lands also comprise those areas where higher densities of single family development already exist. Much of the Sister Lakes area, for example, has been platted into small lots. Due to the fragile nature of the lakes and wetland areas, intense development should be discouraged without connection to public sewers for any location within Keeler Township.

When a change within the low density or rural residential future land uses is contemplated, whether at the request of a land owner or at the Township's initiative, several factors should be weighed in determining the appropriateness of a residential designation over the existing agricultural designation, or among the residential zoning district. The following factors are among those that should be considered. The factors are not prioritized nor should they be considered exclusive to all other considerations

- The demand for housing and the existing supply of available, undeveloped residential areas nearby and elsewhere in the Township.
- The presence of utilities and/or the likelihood and timing of utility extensions capable of serving the particular area when it does develop.
- The soils of the area and their ability to accommodate residential development densities without public sewer.
- The availability and quality of groundwater to support residential water demands.

- The consistency of allowable densities and lot sizes with neighboring developed residential areas and neighborhoods.
- The presence and proximity of farming operations and the direct impacts that a conversion to residences would have on such operations.
- The adequacy of the road and nonmotorized system to support additional traffic demands, plans for road improvements, and the timing of such improvements.

While the aim of the Master Plan is to direct the majority of new single-family residential growth within this general planning area, it is not anticipated that the planning area will see full development within the 20 year planning horizon. This classification is also suitable to contain residential Planned Unit Developments as well as denser residential development types like townhomes, condominiums, mobile home parks, and multi-family developments.

Zoning Plan - Rural Residential

Future land use designation	Primary compatible zoning district	Potentially compatible zoning district	Remarks
Low Density Residential	R-1	LR, R-2, MHP	Patterns of existing development should be maintained. Limited commercial uses may be appropriate when sensitive to residential properties.

Commercial

There is a modest amount of commercial development in Keeler Township. According to the community opinion survey, there is not a strong desire for widespread commercial land uses in the future, but a few key businesses would be ideal for permanent and seasonal residents. The characteristics of future commercial sites should be compatible with the identity of the community, complement existing businesses, and further enhance Keeler Township.

This category is primarily intended to provide a location for employment, goods, and professional services. This land use classification includes various types of commercial uses, including retail and wholesale operations, contractor’s establishments, food services, and convenience businesses.

Commercial development should be focused near the Sister Lakes area. Developments should remain attractive through the use of quality building materials, landscaping, and unique architecture. The mixture of uses and development should be carefully considered and scrutinized by the Township. Strip development should be limited where possible and should enhance the character of the Sister Lakes area.

Limiting strip development will help promote smooth traffic flow and safe travel by minimizing curb cuts and conflict points. While commercial uses are primarily envisioned for this area, a mix of uses will likely be present for some time. Screening and landscaping should be used to mitigate the impacts of more intense uses.

Zoning Plan - Commercial

Future land use designation	Primary compatible zoning district	Potentially compatible zoning district	Remarks
Commercial	C	C	Uses should be sensitive to surrounding properties and consider available public infrastructure, services, and utilities.

Industrial

Keeler Township does not envision any intensive industrial development in the 20 year planning horizon. The intent of the Plan is to provide a location where these uses can be accommodated in an environment that is conducive to the use and compatible with the surroundings. Land use classification can include various types of industrial uses like manufacturing, processing plants, storage facilities, and others. The industrial future land use category can also provide employment opportunities for residents. The Plan supports the continuation and strengthening of existing industrial uses. Future industrial operations should be coordinated with the availability of public infrastructure, such as water and sanitary sewer. Should industrial operations be expanded or redeveloped, special attention should be given to landscaping, vehicle and pedestrian circulation, safety for workers and the public, and building design to promote attractive developments.

Industrial buildings are expected to be attractive, with sides and front facades of the buildings designed with high quality building materials such as stone, brick, and other natural materials. Well-maintained and landscaped yards are expected in yards adjacent to the street and where a rear or side yard abuts a residential zoning district. Loading areas should be located in the rear of buildings. Outdoor storage should be minimized and where it is permitted, buffering techniques should be implemented. Landscaping should be used to augment the natural impression found in Keeler Township.

Provisions for utility solar use could be located in this land use areas, as well as medical and/or adult use marijuana uses.

Zoning Plan - Industrial

Future land use designation	Primary compatible zoning district	Potentially compatible zoning district	Remarks
Industrial	LI	LI	Uses should be sensitive to surrounding residential properties and consider available public infrastructure, services, and utilities.

chapter 7.
IMPLEMENTATION



IMPLEMENTATION

For the Master Plan to effectively guide growth and development in Keeler Township, it must be followed and implemented. Township officials must be proactive to accomplish the goals and objectives set forth by the Plan, and following the strategies that have been established as a framework for implementation. Many of these strategies are long-term in scope and may involve the cooperation of many different entities to implement the Plan.

These implementation strategies are intentionally general to provide the community with the flexibility to prepare specific work assignments and prioritize each strategy within its municipal operations. To actualize the vision that is outlined in this Plan, it will be important for the Township Board, Planning Commission, and staff to develop a set of work assignments that set this Plan in motion. This is accomplished through several methods that may include ordinances, special studies or assignments, programs, and administrative procedures, which are described in this chapter. Some of the implementation strategies require significant public and private investment.

A planned and focused effort towards the implementation of this Plan will greatly contribute to the preservation of the Township's rural setting while allowing growth in appropriate areas. The following strategies are in no particular order. Each strategy is important and contributes to achieving the overall vision expressed by this Plan.

Zoning Ordinance Revisions

The Keeler Township Zoning Ordinance is the primary implementation mechanism for this Plan, as it regulates land use in the Township. Local control of land use, as provided for by zoning, is an accepted legal practice. The principles on which zoning is based include the need to:

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

A comprehensive evaluation of the Ordinance in light of the updated Master Plan is expected to commence immediately after the adoption of the Master Plan. The Township's Ordinance has not undergone a significant update since 2004 and is therefore missing many components necessary to implement the vision of this Plan. An update should include a review and revision, if appropriate, of the Zoning Map and current regulations to better conform to the future land use designations and map as described in this Plan. The Ordinance may also be evaluated for its flexibility to address innovative development techniques and control of inefficient development patterns.

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

Specific examples of Zoning Ordinance updates include:

- Site development standards to protect rural farmland and water quality
- Specific land use regulations such as solar energy systems, agri-tourism, short-term rentals, recreational and medical marijuana, and others if desired
- Updated signage regulations that are content neutral
- Language to encourage walkability, landscaping, and open space
- Review and revision of permitted uses and special land uses for adherence to the vision of this Plan
- Language to encourage flexibility in agricultural operations and related activities

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

Capital Improvements Programs

Developing a Capital Improvements Program (CIP) and keeping it current will provide immediate resources and funds to support plan implementation. The CIP is a schedule of short and long range capital projects that have been earmarked for funding. Elements of the CIP include project identification, project description, implementation timetable, project cost, funding sources, and the party responsible for undertaking the project. This can be useful when outlining the schedule for road and utility improvements, for example.

Communication and Education

Communication and education are important components of a vibrant community. Clear and consistent communication allows Township officials to stay informed on local opinions, while also allowing the public to express ideas and interests. The Township should consider ways to enhance communication with the public, such as through website updates, social media, newsletters, emails, public presentations, or other methods of communication. Such methods can allow the Township to update the public on policies, land use trends, local events, and other community interests. These may also be used to highlight local businesses and provide education on relevant topics in the Township, like updates within the Sister Lakes Corridor Improvement Authority.

The Township should continue to seek opportunities to enhance the education of local leaders and the public. Citizen involvement and support will be necessary as the Plan is implemented. Township officials and leaders should seek continued education on planning and zoning trends, issues, and opportunities. This may include attendance at conferences or seminars on relevant planning and zoning topics. Findings should be conveyed to the public and all public meetings should be instructive for the public. Other opportunities to enhance public education, such as through the support of a local trade school or small college, are also recommended. Resources available through the Michigan Municipal League and the Michigan Association of Planning provide a continuous program of discussion and education on planning and zoning topics relevant to the Master Plan.

Complete Streets Policy

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

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

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

Although much of Keeler Township is a rural community, these elements are feasible in many places. Some features may be accomplished through simple road restriping and the addition of signage. Other projects may be more involved and may only be practicable when coordinated with major roadway reconstruction. Because most of the Township's roadways are under the jurisdiction of Van Buren County, much of the Township's work in implementing a complete streets policy will involve working with neighboring communities, the Road Commission, MDOT, and other pertinent agencies.

Cooperation with Neighboring and Regional Governments

Coordinating and cooperating with neighboring municipalities can provide a number of opportunities for the Township. Since the Township is on a shared border with Berrien County and Cass County, and is part of the multi-jurisdictional area commonly known as the Sister Lakes, intergovernmental cooperation should be strongly encouraged in a reasonable way.

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

Plan Updates

The Plan should not become a static document. The Planning Commission should attempt to re-evaluate and update portions of it periodically. The land use portion should be reviewed annually and, following the state law, updated at least every five years. Although significant changes may not be needed, a periodic review of the Plan ensures that it stays current to today's conditions.

Appendix

SIGNED RESOLUTION

**KEELER TOWNSHIP
VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN
(Resolution No. 8-1-2023-01)**

At a regular meeting of the Keeler Township Board held on July 11, 2023, at the Keeler Township Hall, the following Resolution was offered for adoption by Board Member Don Blackmond and was seconded by Board Member Jerry Morin.

**A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE PROPOSED
KEELER TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN**

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, MCL 125.3801 et seq. ("MPEA") authorizes the Planning Commission to prepare a Master Plan for the use, development, and preservation of all lands in the Township; and

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

WHEREAS, on February 7, 2023, the Keeler Township Board received and reviewed the proposed Master Plan prepared by the Planning Commission and authorized the distribution of the Master Plan to the Notice Group entities identified in the MPEA; and

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

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on June 27, 2023, to consider public comment on the proposed Master Plan, and to further review and comment on the proposed Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, after the public hearing was held, the Planning Commission voted to approve the proposed Master Plan on June 27, 2023, and recommended adoption of the proposed Master Plan to the Township Board; and

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

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. **Adoption of Master Plan.** The Keeler Township Board hereby approves and adopts the proposed Master Plan, including all of the chapters, figures, descriptive matters, maps, and tables contained therein.
2. **Distribution to Notice Group.** Pursuant to MCL 125.3843, the Township Board approves distribution of the amended Master Plan to the Notice Group.
3. **Findings of Fact.** The Township Board has made the foregoing determination based on a review of existing land uses in the Township, a review of the existing Master Plan provisions and maps, and input received from the Planning Commission and the public, as well as the assistance of a professional planning group. The Township Board also finds that the proposed Master Plan will accurately reflect and implement the Township's goals and strategies for the use, preservation, and development of lands within Keeler Township.
4. **Effective Date; Repeal.** The proposed Master Plan shall become effective on the adoption date of this resolution. The prior Master Plan is hereby repealed upon the Master Plan becoming effective.

YEAS: Jerry Morin, Sharon Clupper, Don Blackmond, Matt Sexton, Angie Sexton

NAYS: None

ABSENT/ABSTAIN: None

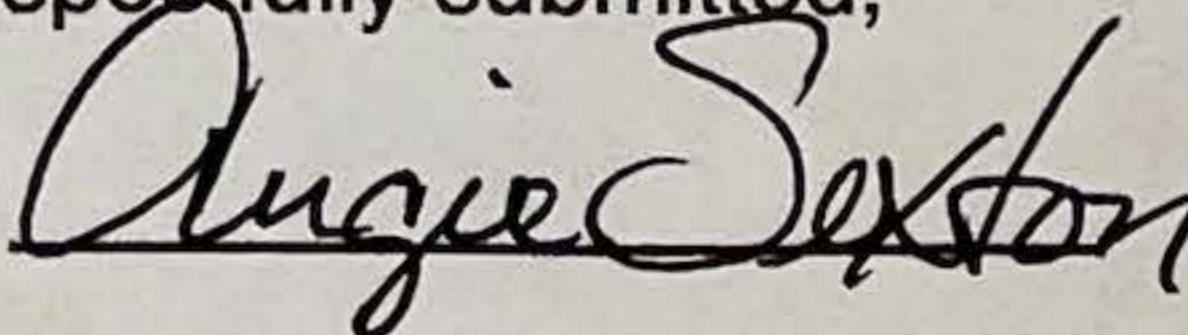
RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of a resolution adopted by the Township of Keeler Township Board of Trustees at the time, date, and place specified above pursuant to the required statutory procedures.

Dated: August 1, 2023

Respectfully submitted,

By 

Angie Sexton
Keeler Township Clerk

COMMUNITY SURVEY REPORT

Master Plan

Community Survey Report

Keeler Township
JUNE 2022

Introduction

From Mid-April to June 1st, 2022, the Keeler Township Planning Commission had an opinion survey open to gather public input on land use planning in the Township. The survey responses provided a considerable amount of quantifiable data to help set policy related to growth and development in the Master Plan. The results are displayed below, followed by a summary of trends and planning implications.

Community Survey

METHODOLOGY AND GENERAL INFORMATION

The survey questions were developed by the Keeler Township Master Plan Committee with the assistance of the consultant team from Williams & Works. The survey was organized to obtain responses from permanent and seasonal residents with 8 questions specifically directed toward seasonal residents. A total of 29 questions were included in the online and mail-in survey. With the presence of a large seasonal population, questions 8-15 (questions a-h in the mail-in survey) were directed only to seasonal residents to obtain detailed demographic information. The survey was primarily conducted via a printed mailed survey that were sent to 1,613 tax parcels in Keeler Township. The availability of the survey was advertised through word of mouth, email, social media, and on a marquee at a local restaurant. A total of 302 responses were received by the deadline. 266 survey responses were received via mail and about 36 responses were received online via the online survey tool Survey Monkey. The mail-in survey responses were recorded in survey monkey to aid in results analysis.

It should be noted that due to sample size, sample population, and other limitations present in online surveys generally, results should not be interpreted with a purely scientific mindset; however, results of the survey provide valuable perspectives of the community's opinions regarding relevant land use and planning issues in the Township. The survey was successful as it resulted in objective quantifiable information from a large number of people compared to typical participation in other forms of public input like community open houses or visioning meetings. The survey enabled survey respondents to provide confidential replies using a "check-the-box" format to expedite the completion of the online form and to maximize the rate of response. This format also facilitated consistent scoring on which the analysis can be performed. Some questions allowed the respondents to leave other comments that may not have been covered by the multiple-choice options. Spelling and grammar mistakes were corrected in the open-ended responses otherwise, all responses were kept as written by the respondent.

DATA ENTRY AND MEASUREMENT

The online survey tool SurveyMonkey presented respondents with a standardized set of questions from which they could choose responses. Some questions only permitted one answer while some permitted multiple answers along with space for individual comments. This method restricted acceptable entries to those required by the survey form, providing a standardized method by which analysis could be conducted.

Three scoring scales were used to report the data received: Nominal, ordinal, and ratio scales. A nominal scale merely counts responses by particular classification (e.g. permanent resident or seasonal resident). This scale is useful to separate responses into working groups or to evaluate the overall sample to determine whether it represents the larger population. Questions 1-3, 5, 7, 10, 13-15, 17-20, and 24-25 were designed on a nominal scale.

An Ordinal scale is more useful in gaining insight into respondent beliefs because it includes the characteristic of rank order. One item is greater or lesser than another item or it has more or less of a particular quality, based on a commonly understood standard. An ordinal scale enables some greater judgment about the relative strength or weakness of particular responses (e.g., "somewhat concerned," "too quickly," etc.). It does not, however, include a quantifiable or consistent interval between the various points in the scale. Items 21-23 and 26-28 were designed with an ordinal scale.

A ratio scale was used for questions 4, 6, 9, 11, and 16 as respondents were asked to indicate a range of items that applied to them such as age, income cohort, etc. Items 8 and 29 featured an open-ended write-in response for participants to list their answers and add any additional thoughts about planning and zoning not covered in the survey.

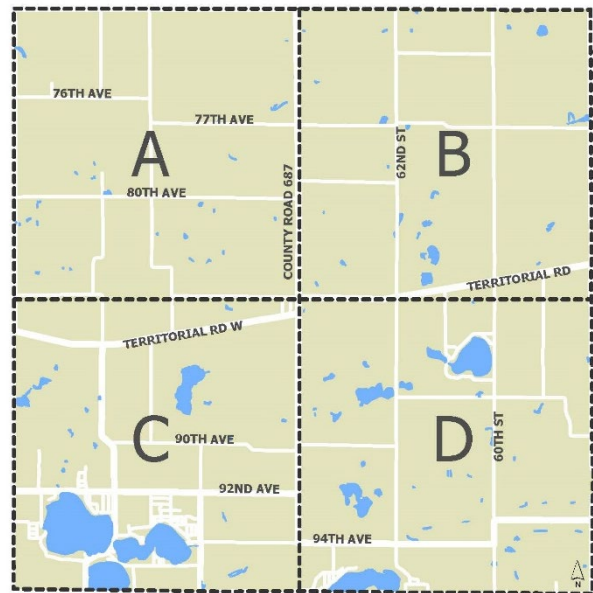
To report the results of the survey, the ordinal scales used were converted to interval scales. A numeric value was assigned to each response with an interval of “1” between each point on the scale. For example, in Question 23, “Very Concerned” responses were assigned the number 4, “Somewhat Concerned” responses were assigned the number 3, and so forth. This was done to enable the measurement of the central tendency of all responses, which is accomplished by determining the arithmetic mean (or average) response for the item. However, it must be recognized that the assignment of value to the intervals of the scale does not automatically result in a true interval scale because each respondent will have his/her interpretation of the interval. Nevertheless, in aggregate, this procedure does enable a comparison of the items from one to the next via a weighted average.

Results

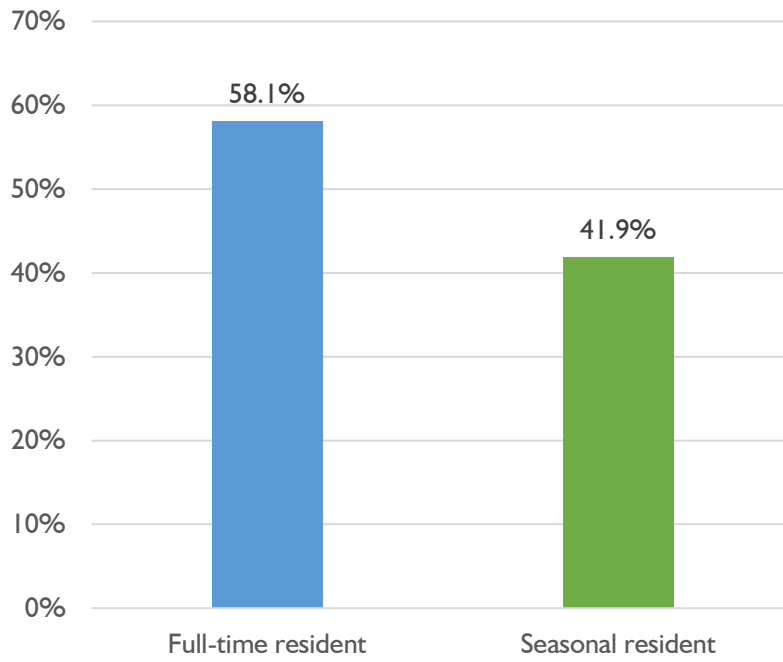
I. In which part of the Township do you own property?

The respondents were provided a map that divided the Township into four quadrants, A, B, C, and D as seen on the map below. The respondents selected the quadrants in which they owned property. The respondents were also able to select more than one option. A majority of the respondents answered owning property in quadrant C which is home to the Sister Lakes Area. Quadrant D has the second-largest respondent population owning property in that area.

Answer Choices	Responses	
A	8.89%	24
B	6.30%	17
C	60.37%	163
D	24.81%	67
	Answered	270
	Skipped	31



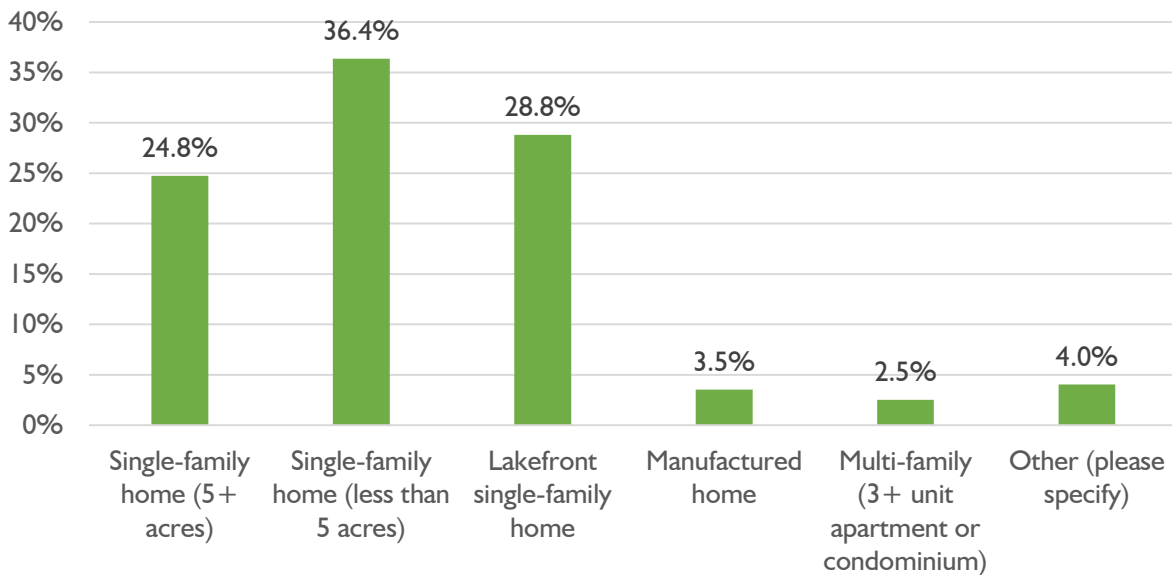
2. What is the status of your residency in Keeler Township?



Answer Choices	Responses	
Full-time resident	58.11%	172
Seasonal resident	41.89%	124
	Answered	296
	Skipped	5

3. If you are a permanent resident, which of the following best describes your permanent residence in Keeler Township?

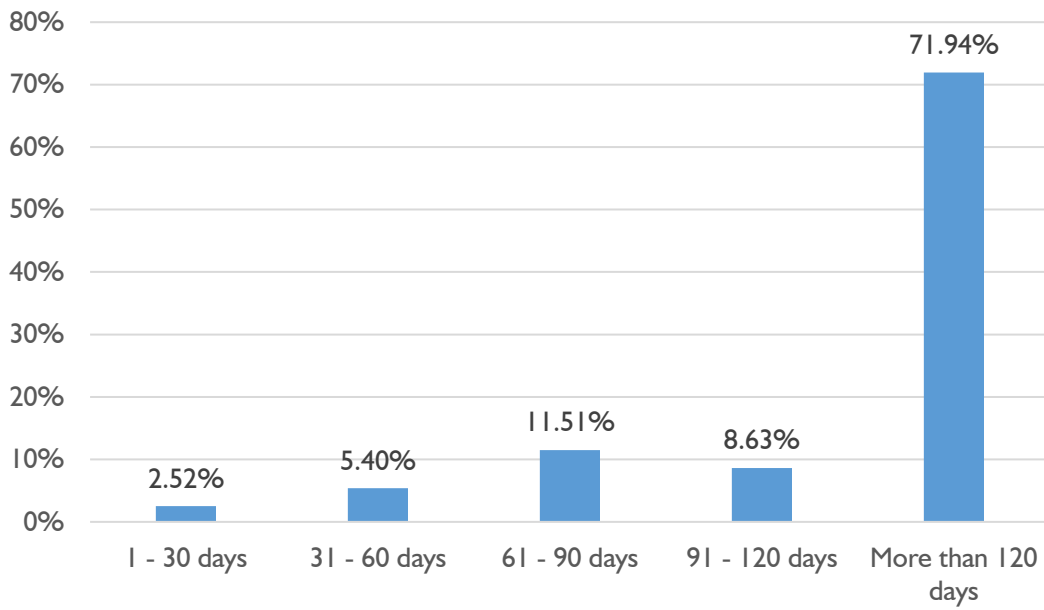
Answer Choices	Responses	
Single-family home (5+ acres)	24.75%	49
Single-family home (less than 5 acres)	36.36%	72
Lakefront single-family home	28.79%	57
Duplex	0.00%	0
Manufactured home	3.54%	7
Multi-family (3+ unit apartment or condominium)	2.53%	5
Other (please specify)	4.04%	8
	Answered	198
	Skipped	103



Others (please specify)

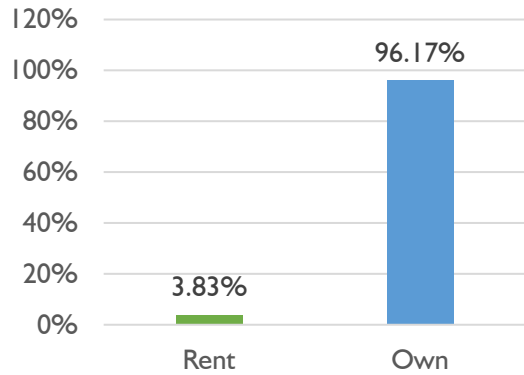
- Home is vacant
- Farm
- Back lot
- 2 single-family homes on 1 lot
- 2 single-family homes on 1 lot
- Commercial
- Lakefront single-family home and multiunit resort
- Agricultural land owner. No residence.

4. How many days per year are you a resident of Keeler Township?



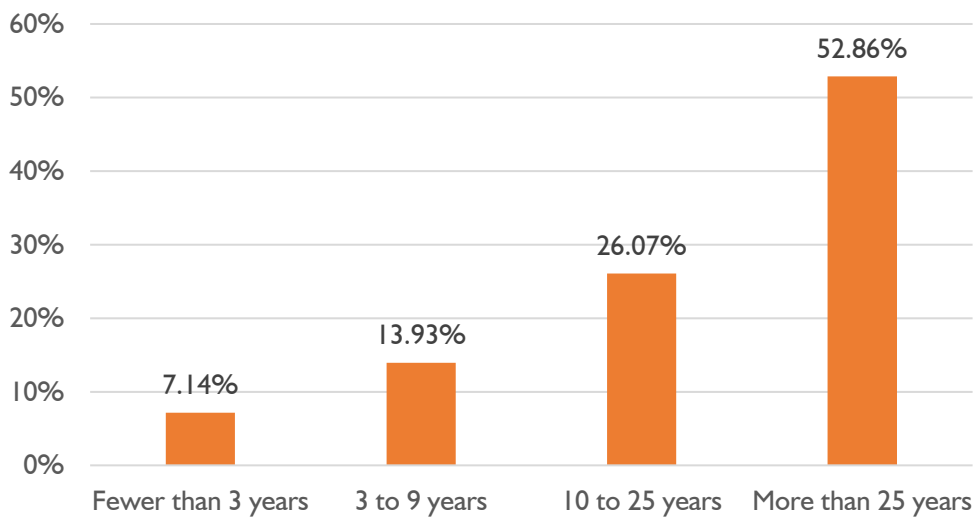
Answer Choices	Responses	
1 – 30 days	2.52%	7
31 – 60 days	5.40%	15
61 – 90 days	11.51%	32
91 – 120 days	8.63%	24
More than 120 days	71.94%	200
	Answered	278
	Skipped	23

5. Do you rent or own your Keeler Township home?



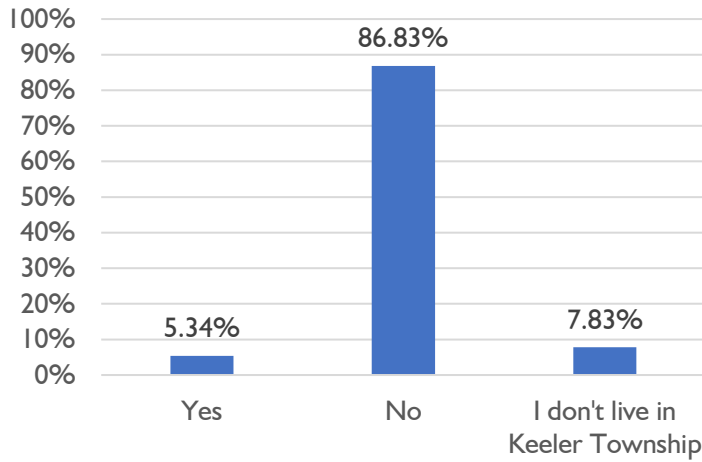
Answer Choices	Responses	
Rent	3.83%	11
Own	96.17%	276
	Answered	287
	Skipped	14

6. How long have you owned or rented property in Keeler Township?



Answer Choices	Responses	
Fewer than 3 years	7.14%	20
3 to 9 years	13.93%	39
10 to 25 years	26.07%	73
More than 25 years	52.86%	148
	Answered	280
	Skipped	21

7. In the next five years, do you expect to move out of Keeler Township?

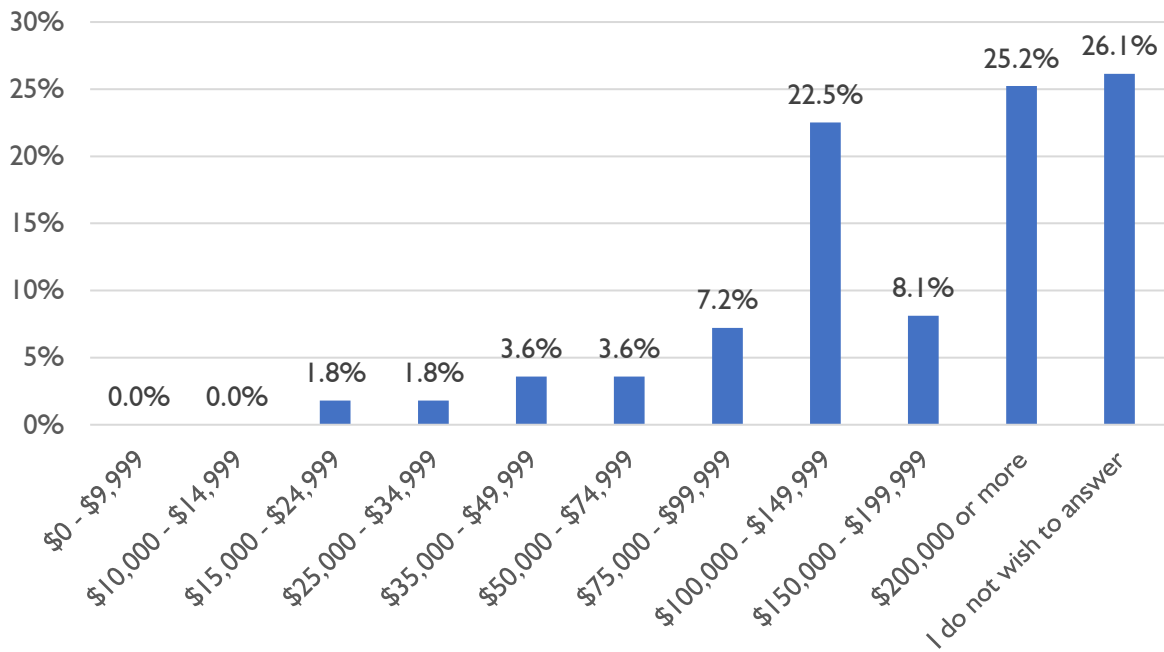


Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	5.34%	15
No	86.83%	244
I don't live in Keeler Township	7.83%	22
Answered		281
Skipped		20

8. What is the zip code of your permanent residence? (Seasonal residents only)

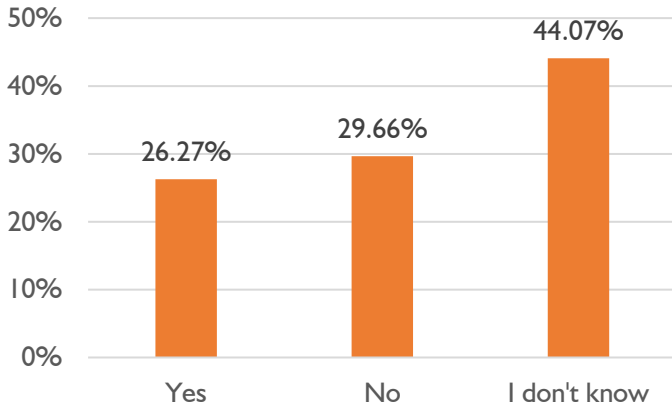
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- 60515
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- 46321
- 60452
- 60439
- 60422
- 60504
- 60564
- 60060
- 60302
- 60452
- 30041
- 60189
- 91214
- 49047
- 60558
- 49047
- 60565
- 60643
- 60515
- 49022
- 60540
- 95123
- 60172
- 60104
- 60477
- 63122
- 49047
- 49423
- 60565
- 49047
- 60643
- 60805
- 46301
- 60443
- 60453
- 46307
- 48428
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- 49106
- 49022
- 49047
- 60459
- 60448
- 60634
- 60448
- 49047
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- 60491
- 60430
- 49047
- 46311
- 60661
- 60174
- 48146
- 34110
- 60521
- 27713
- 49045
- 60457
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- 60106
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- 60540
- 60614
- 47803
- 46321
- 49047
- 60137
- 60126
- 60714
- 46321
- 49047
- 47049
- 49022
- 60540
- 60516
- 60527
- 60563
- 49047
- 60607
- 60451
- 46635
- 46311
- 49047
- 60004
- 60025
- 60137

9. What is your total household income level? (Seasonal residents only)



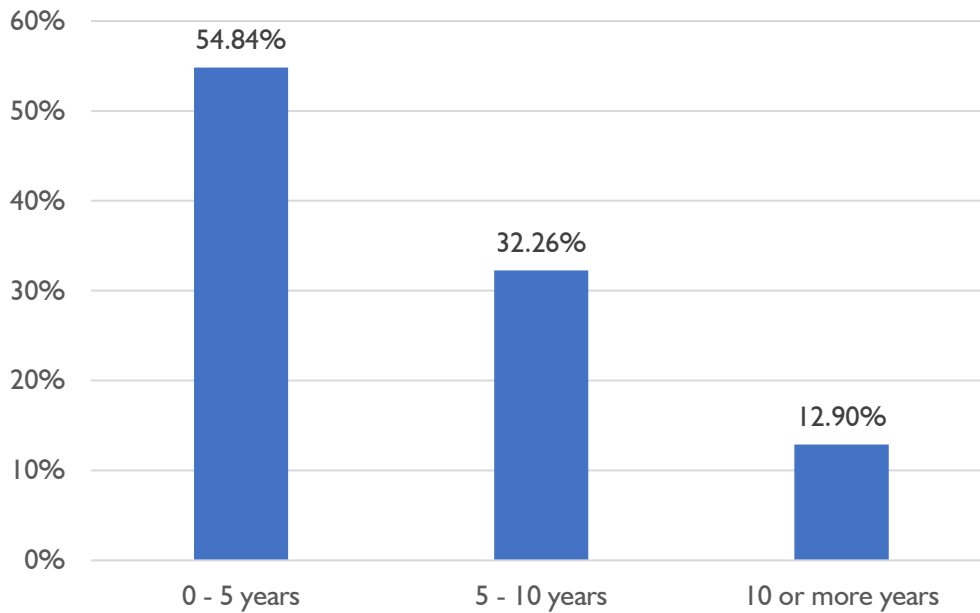
Answer Choices	Responses	
\$0 - \$9,999	0.00%	0
\$10,000 - \$14,999	0.00%	0
\$15,000 - \$24,999	1.80%	2
\$25,000 - \$34,999	1.80%	2
\$35,000 - \$49,999	3.60%	4
\$50,000 - \$74,999	3.60%	4
\$75,000 - \$99,999	7.21%	8
\$100,000 - \$149,999	22.52%	25
\$150,000 - \$199,999	8.11%	9
\$200,000 or more	25.23%	28
I do not wish to answer	26.13%	29
	Answered	111
	Skipped	190

10. Do you plan to eventually move to Keeler Township? (Seasonal residents only)



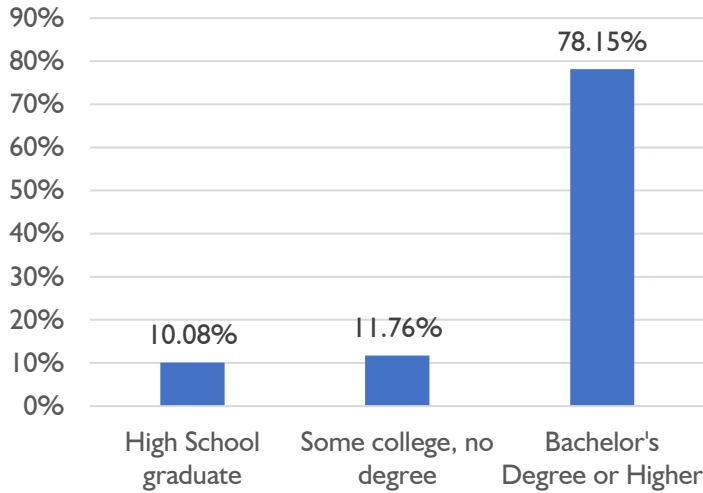
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	26.27%	31
No	29.66%	35
I don't know	44.07%	52
Answered		118
Skipped		183

11. If you answered yes for the previous questions, how soon do you plan to move? (Seasonal residents only)



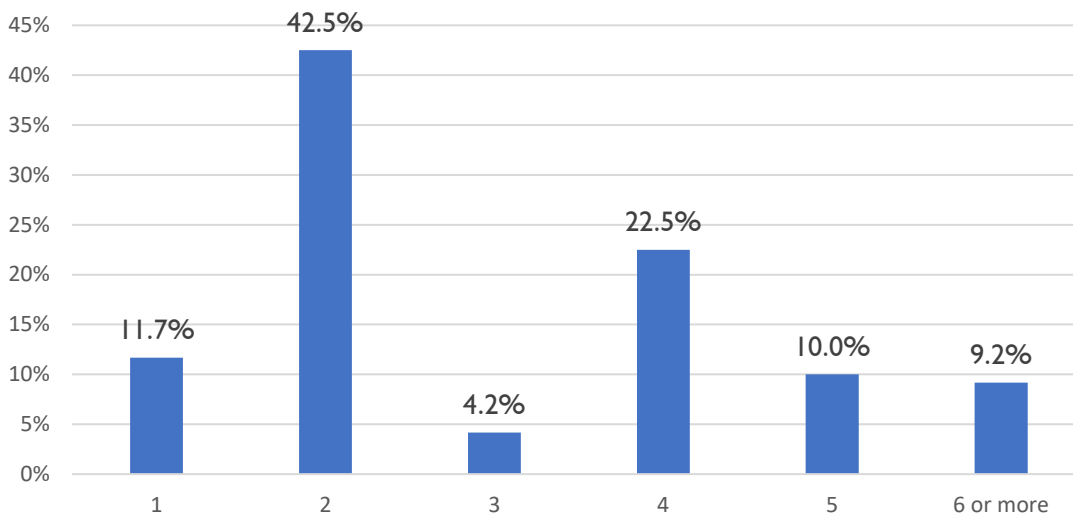
Answer Choices	Responses	
0 - 5 years	54.84%	17
5 - 10 years	32.26%	10
10 or more years	12.90%	4
Answered		31
Skipped		270

12. What is the highest grade of school you have completed or degree received? (Seasonal residents only)



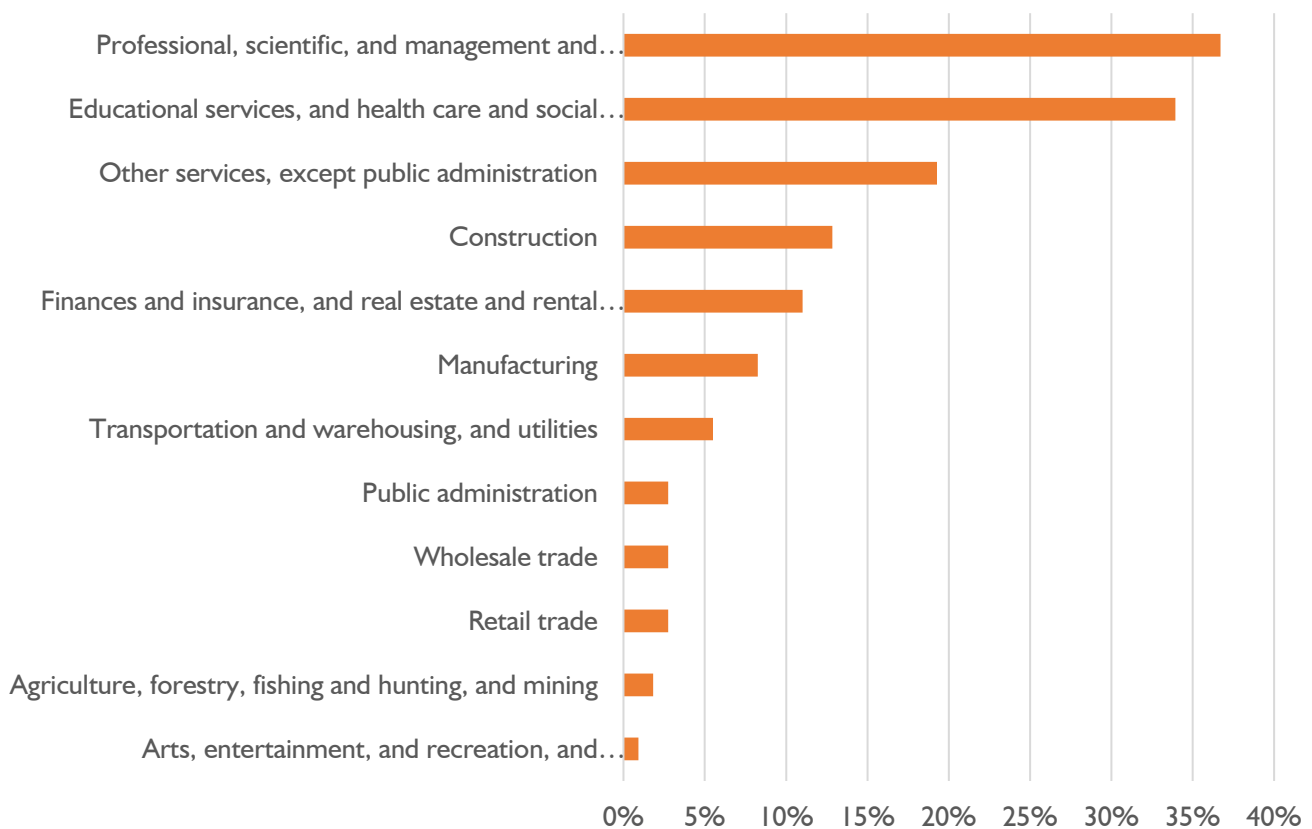
Answer Choices	Responses	
High School graduate	10.08%	12
Some college, no degree	11.76%	14
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	78.15%	93
	Answered	119
	Skipped	182

13. What is your household size? (Seasonal residents only)



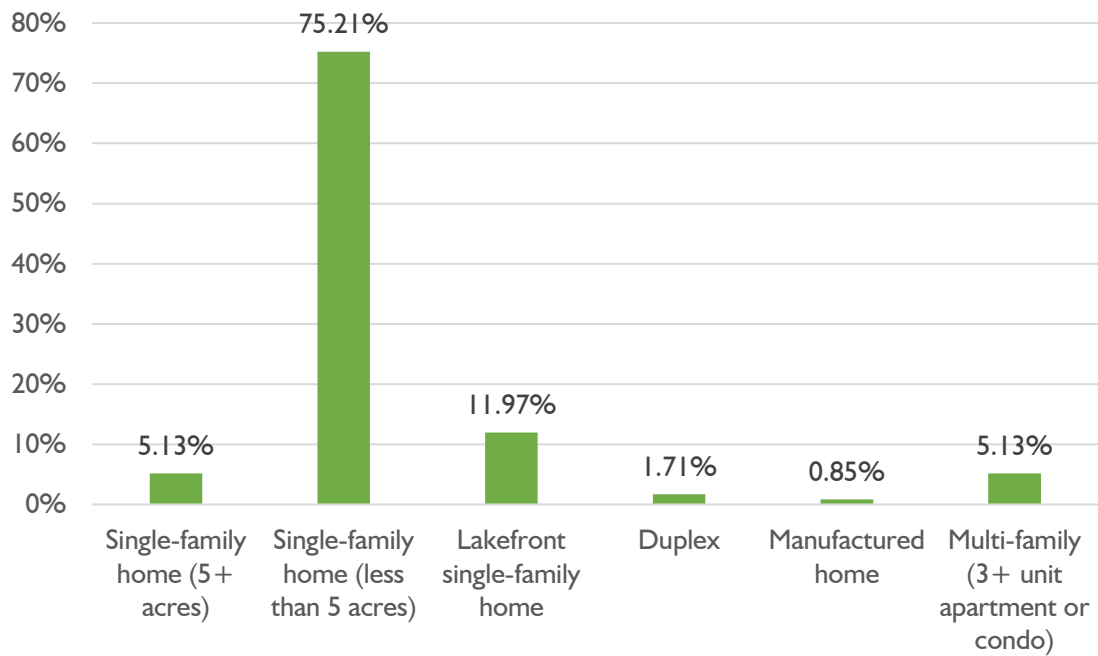
Answer Choices	Responses	
1	11.67%	14
2	42.50%	51
3	4.17%	5
4	22.50%	27
5	10.00%	12
6 or more	9.17%	11
	Answered	120
	Skipped	181

14. Which of the following employment categories best describes the occupations of household members? (Seasonal residents only)



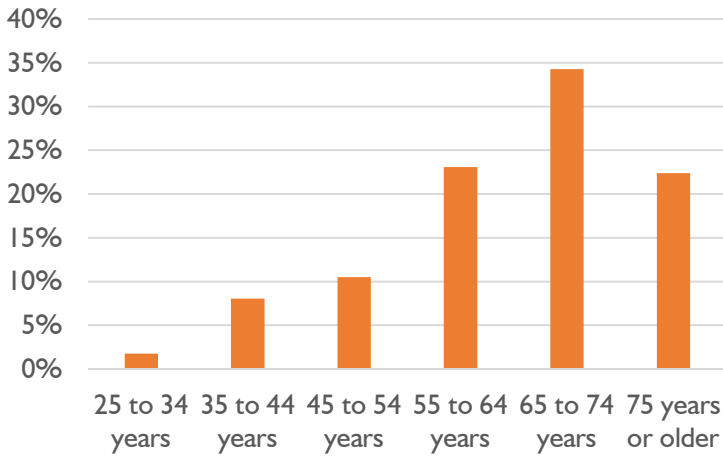
Answer Choices	Responses	
Professional, scientific, and management and administrative and waste management services	36.70%	40
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	33.94%	37
Other services, except public administration	19.27%	21
Construction	12.84%	14
Finances and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	11.01%	12
Manufacturing	8.26%	9
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	5.50%	6
Retail trade	2.75%	3
Wholesale trade	2.75%	3
Public administration	2.75%	3
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	1.83%	2
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodations and food services	0.92%	1
	Skipped	192
	Answered	109

15. Which of the following best describes your permanent residence? (Seasonal residents only)



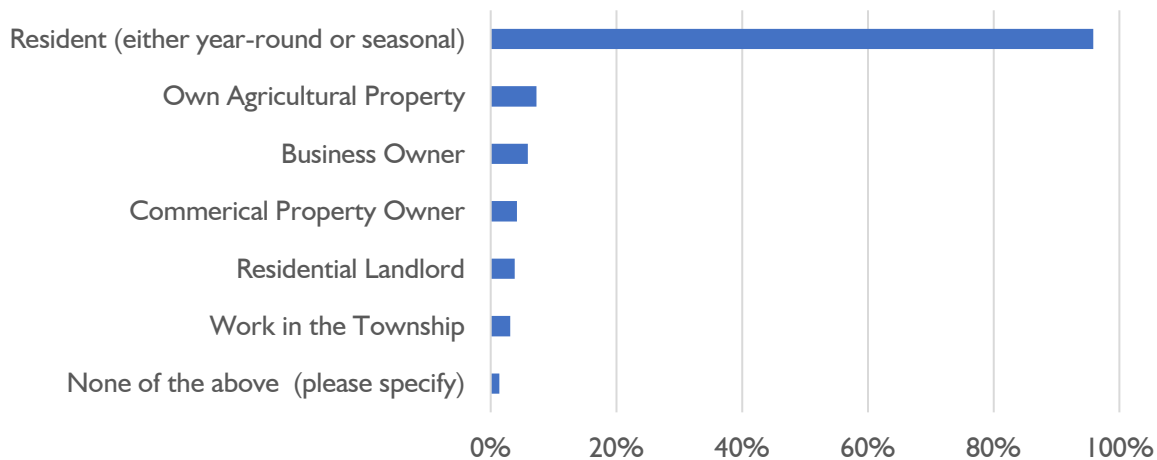
Answer Choices	Responses	
Single-family home (5+ acres)	5.13%	6
Single-family home (less than 5 acres)	75.21%	88
Lakefront single-family home	11.97%	14
Duplex	1.71%	2
Manufactured home	0.85%	1
Multi-family (3+ unit apartment or condo)	5.13%	6
	Answered	117
	Skipped	184

16. What is your age?



Answer Choices	Responses	
18 years or under	0.00%	0
19 to 24 years	0.00%	0
25 to 34 years	1.75%	5
35 to 44 years	8.04%	23
45 to 54 years	10.49%	30
55 to 64 years	23.08%	66
65 to 74 years	34.27%	98
75 years or older	22.38%	64
	Answered	286
	Skipped	15

17. Which of the following best characterizes your connection to Keeler Township?

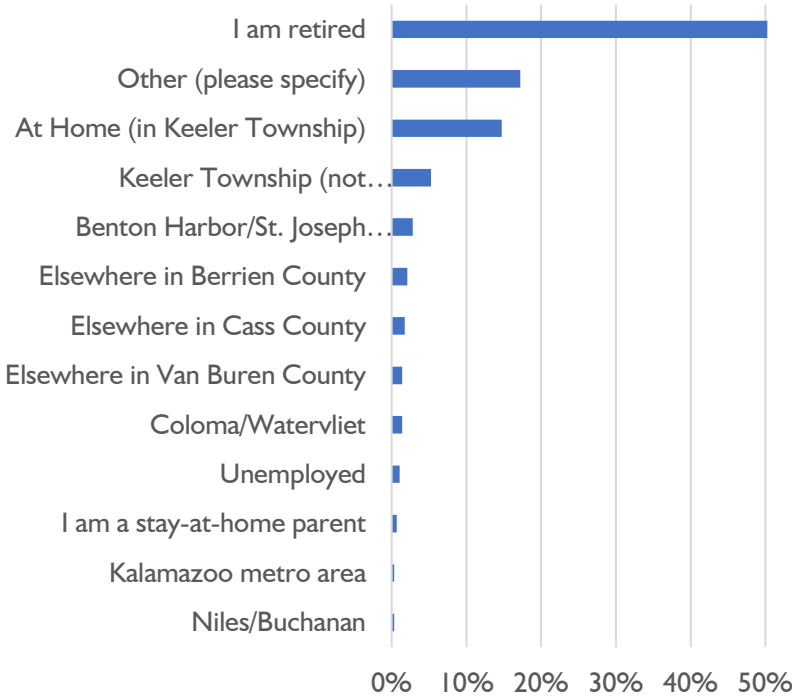


None of the above (please specify) responses:

- Rent a home every summer
- Owner-rent farm out
- Forestry property 86 acres
- Lived here my whole life

Answer Choices	Responses	
Resident (either year-round or seasonal)	95.83%	276
Own Agricultural Property	7.29%	21
Business Owner	5.90%	17
Commercial Property Owner	4.17%	12
Residential Landlord	3.82%	11
Work in the Township	3.13%	9
None of the above (please specify)	1.39%	4
Student	0.00%	0
	Answered	288
	Skipped	13

18. Where do you primarily work?

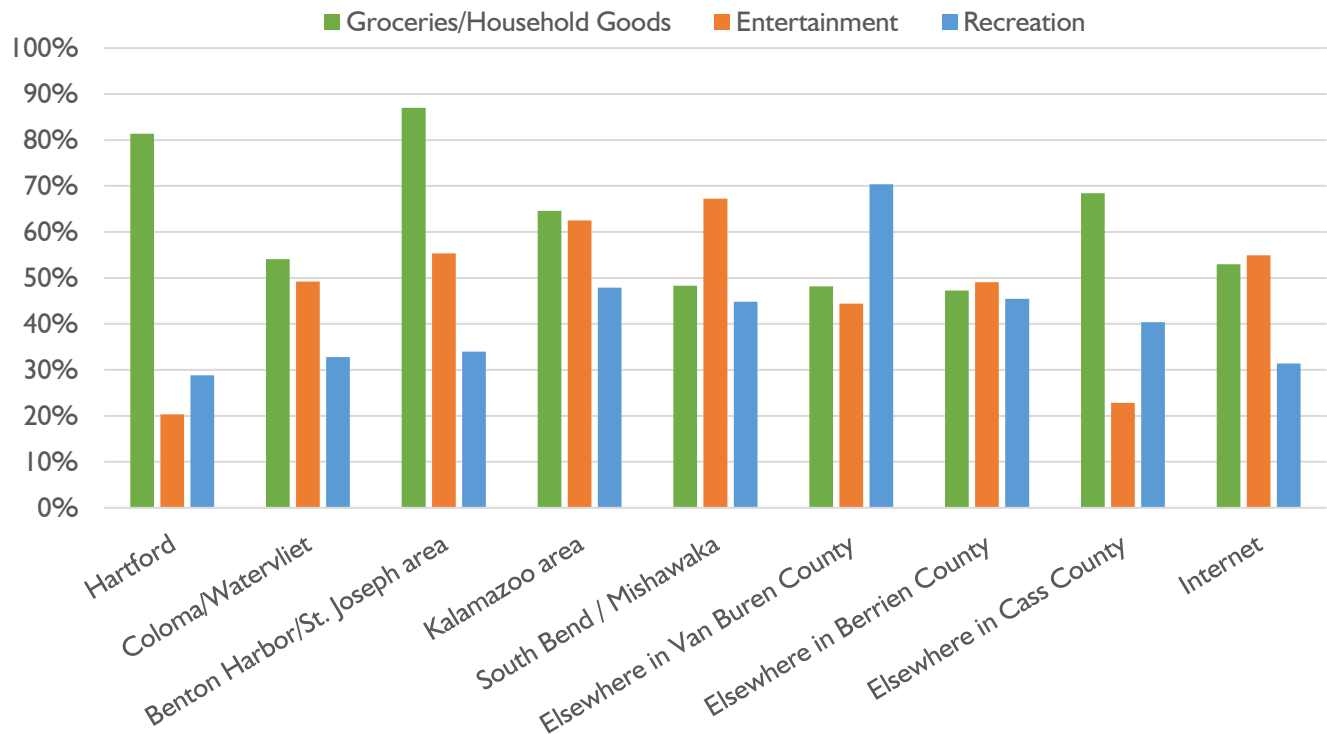


Answer Choices	Responses	Count
I am retired	50.88%	145
Other (please specify)	17.19%	49
At Home (in Keeler Township)	14.74%	42
Keeler Township (not includes home)	5.26%	15
Benton Harbor/St. Joseph metro area	2.81%	8
Elsewhere in Berrien County	2.11%	6
Elsewhere in Cass County	1.75%	5
Elsewhere in Van Buren County	1.40%	4
Coloma/Watervliet	1.40%	4
Unemployed	1.05%	3
I am a stay-at-home parent	0.70%	2
Niles/Buchanan	0.35%	1
Kalamazoo metro area	0.35%	1
South Haven	0.00%	0
I am a student	0.00%	0
Answered		285
Skipped		16

Other (please specify) responses:

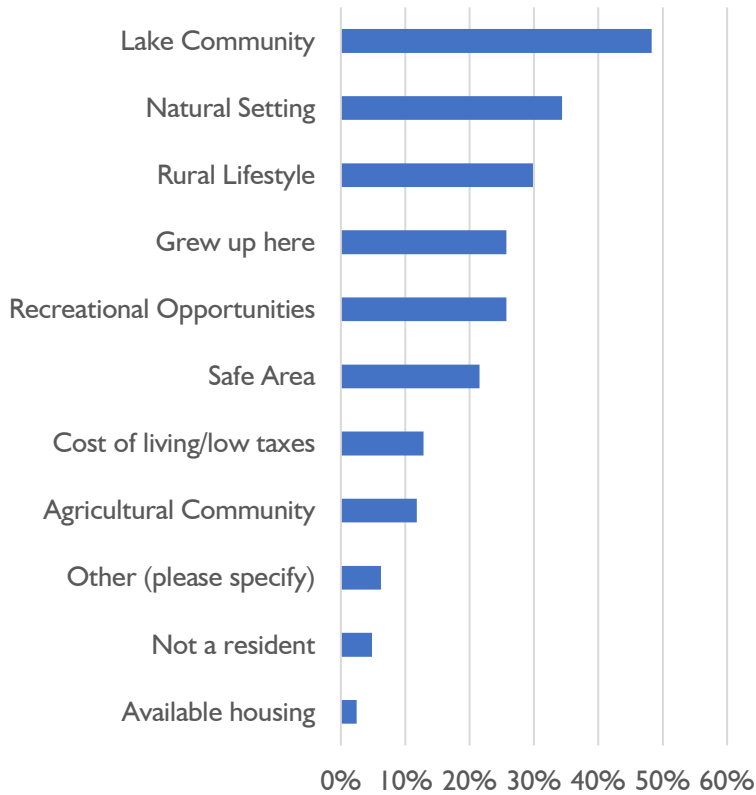
- Illinois
- St Joseph County (IN)
- Lansing, IL
- out of state
- Chicago Metropolitan area
- Illinois
- Illinois
- 60301
- Chicago
- Out of state
- Remotely Chicago area
- Dowagiac
- Indiana
- Elkhart
- out of state
- Wilmette, IL
- Midwest
- out of state
- Indiana / Illinois
- Three Rivers, MI
- Chicago
- Illinois workers
- Cook County, IL
- Bridgman, MI
- Chicago
- Indiana
- Lake County IN
- Chicago, IL
- Chicago
- Illinois
- attorney – Illinois
- Chicago / office
- Northwest Indiana
- Chicago
- Chicago / remote
- Hartford
- Illinois
- Work out of state
- Decatur
- not in Michigan
- sister lakes/Dowagiac
- office & school in Illinois
- Dearborn, MI
- University of Notre Dame
- Telecommute
- Chicago
- Chicago area
- Farm in Van Buren and Berrien County
- Out of state

19. Where are you most likely to go for the following goods and services?



	Groceries/Household Goods		Entertainment		Recreation		Total
Hartford	81.36%	48	20.34%	12	28.81%	17	59
Coloma/Watervliet	54.10%	33	49.18%	30	32.79%	20	61
Benton Harbor/St. Joseph area	86.98%	187	55.35%	119	33.95%	73	215
Kalamazoo area	64.58%	31	62.50%	30	47.92%	23	48
South Bend / Mishawaka	48.28%	28	67.24%	39	44.83%	26	58
Elsewhere in Van Buren County	48.15%	52	44.44%	48	70.37%	76	108
Elsewhere in Berrien County	47.27%	26	49.09%	27	45.45%	25	55
Elsewhere in Cass County	68.42%	39	22.81%	13	40.35%	23	57
Internet	52.94%	27	54.90%	28	31.37%	16	51
					Answered		287
					Skipped		14

20. From the following list, please select the most important reason(s) you have chosen to live in Keeler Township.



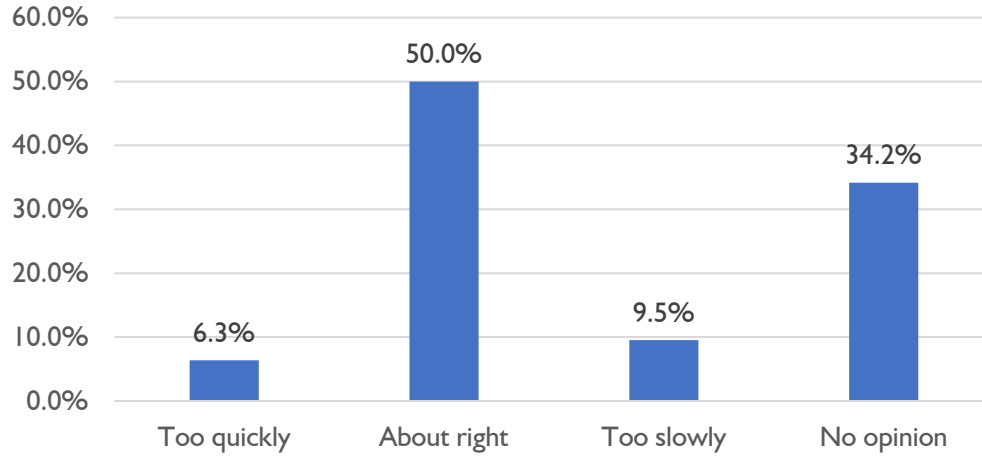
Answer Choices	Responses	
Lake Community	48.26%	139
Natural Setting	34.38%	99
Rural Lifestyle	29.86%	86
Recreational Opportunities	25.69%	74
Grew up here	25.69%	74
Safe Area	21.53%	62
Cost of living/low taxes	12.85%	37
Agricultural Community	11.81%	34
Other (please specify)	6.25%	18
Not a resident	4.86%	14
Available housing	2.43%	7
	Skipped	13
	Answered	288

Other (Please Specify) Responses:

- Came with parents 1964
- Family owned since 1962. Heart is here in sister lakes.
- Very little traffic
- Friends lived here
- Pretty women
- None
- DNA
- Summer cottage
- Great grandparents built homes
- Seasonal
- Home
- Family is here
- Close proximity to work
- Inherited property
- Inherited property
- Husband grew up on this property
- Family
- I really don't like living in the village keeler anymore

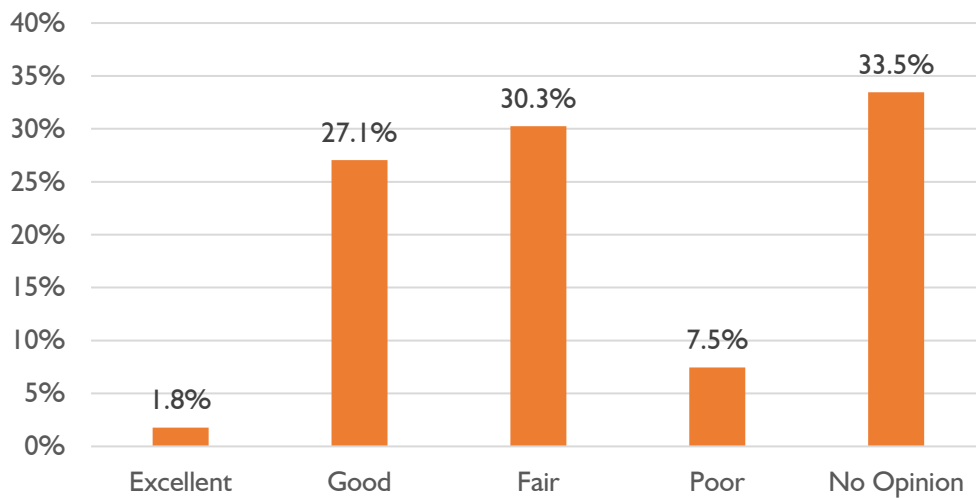
21. Regarding the growth of the Township, do you think Keeler Township is growing:

Too quickly	About right	Too slowly	No opinion	Answered	Skipped
6.3%	50.0%	9.5%	34.2%		
18	142	27	97	284	17



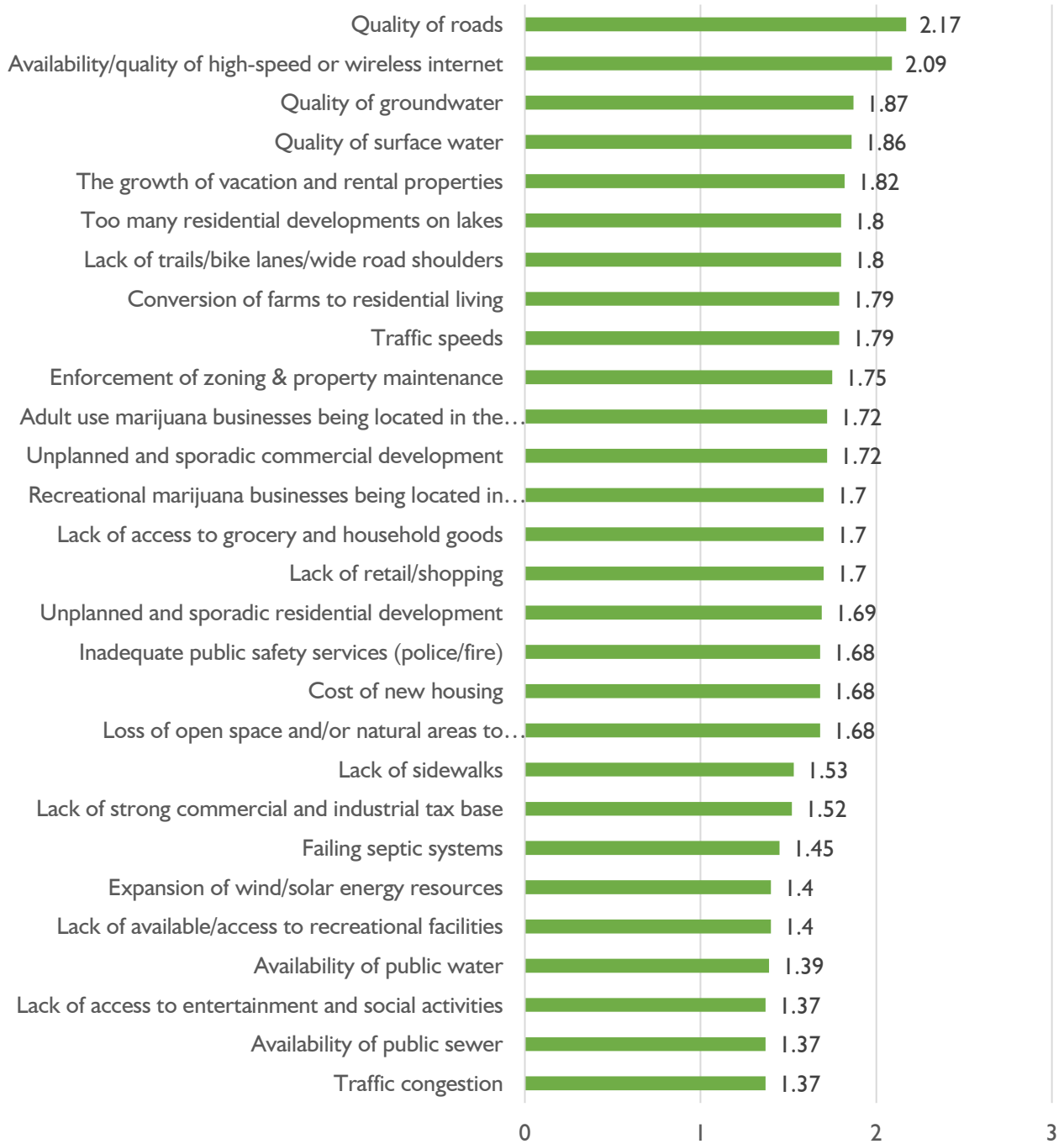
22. Please rate Keeler Township’s effort to guide and direct growth and development:

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion	Answered	Skipped
1.8%	27.1%	30.3%	7.5%	33.5%		
5	76	85	21	94	281	20



23. Please rate your level of concern regarding the following issues.

This question was analyzed on an ordinal scale. The answer choices were given a quantifiable value to get a weighted average. The values ranged from 0-3 with 0 being “no opinion”, 1 being “not concerned”, 2 being “somewhat concerned”, and 3 being “very concerned”. The weighted average represents the average level of concern regarding each issue in the chart below.

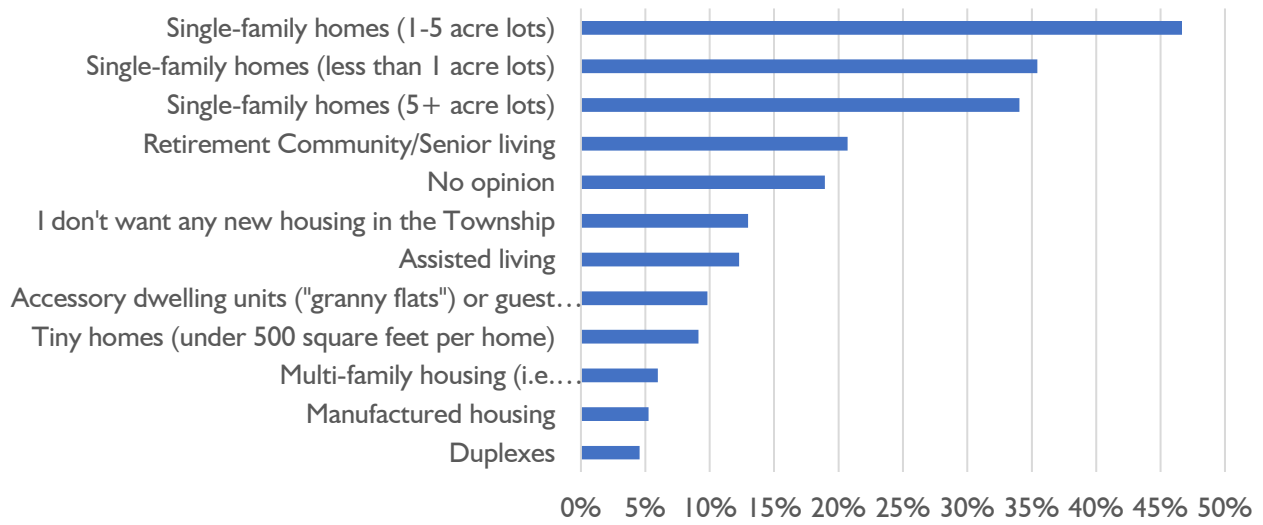


	Weighted Average
Traffic congestion	1.37
Availability of public sewer	1.37
Lack of access to entertainment and social activities	1.37
Availability of public water	1.39
Lack of available/access to recreational facilities	1.4
Expansion of wind/solar energy resources	1.4
Failing septic systems	1.45
Lack of strong commercial and industrial tax base	1.52
Lack of sidewalks	1.53
Loss of open space and/or natural areas to development	1.68
Cost of new housing	1.68
Inadequate public safety services (police/fire)	1.68
Unplanned and sporadic residential development	1.69
Lack of retail/shopping	1.7
Lack of access to grocery and household goods	1.7
Recreational marijuana businesses being located in the Township	1.7
Unplanned and sporadic commercial development	1.72
Adult use marijuana businesses being located in the Township	1.72
Enforcement of zoning & property maintenance	1.75
Traffic speeds	1.79
Conversion of farms to residential living	1.79
Lack of trails/bike lanes/wide road shoulders	1.8
Too many residential developments on lakes	1.8
The growth of vacation and rental properties	1.82
Quality of surface water	1.86
Quality of groundwater	1.87
Availability/quality of high-speed or wireless internet	2.09
	Answered 288
	Skipped 13

Other (please specify) responses:

- my road 68th St.
- Short-term rentals + golf carts on roads + snow plowing on non-certified streets that is ending.
- Roads. Territorial is awful, needs to be repaved.
- control of blight households
- 80th 68th St. south of 4-mile road wash out
- Lack of child play areas
- Need for renewable energy locally
- Lake access for extended days if you don't own lake front property
- trash on roads!
- lack of picking up trash, people throw in ditch by my property
- taxes
- trees being cut down
- stop killing trees
- Do NOT bring pot dispensary or growers to Keeler!!
- parks - very concerned
- too many they are everywhere
- Don't care to presume to increase tax revenue through sale of marijuana!! We don't need more stoned people walking around here!!

24. What type of housing would you like to see in Keeler Township? (Check all that apply)



Answer Choices	Responses	
Single-family homes (1-5 acre lots)	46.67%	133
Single-family homes (less than 1 acre lots)	35.44%	101
Single-family homes (5+ acre lots)	34.04%	97
Retirement Community/Senior living	20.70%	59
No opinion	18.95%	54
I don't want any new housing in the Township	12.98%	37
Assisted living	12.28%	35
Accessory dwelling units ("granny flats") or guest housing	9.82%	28
Tiny homes (under 500 square feet per home)	9.12%	26
Multi-family housing (i.e. apartments/condominium; 3+ units per building)	5.96%	17
Manufactured housing	5.26%	15
Duplexes	4.56%	13
Other (please specify)	1.40%	4
	Answered	285
	Skipped	16

Other (please specify) responses:

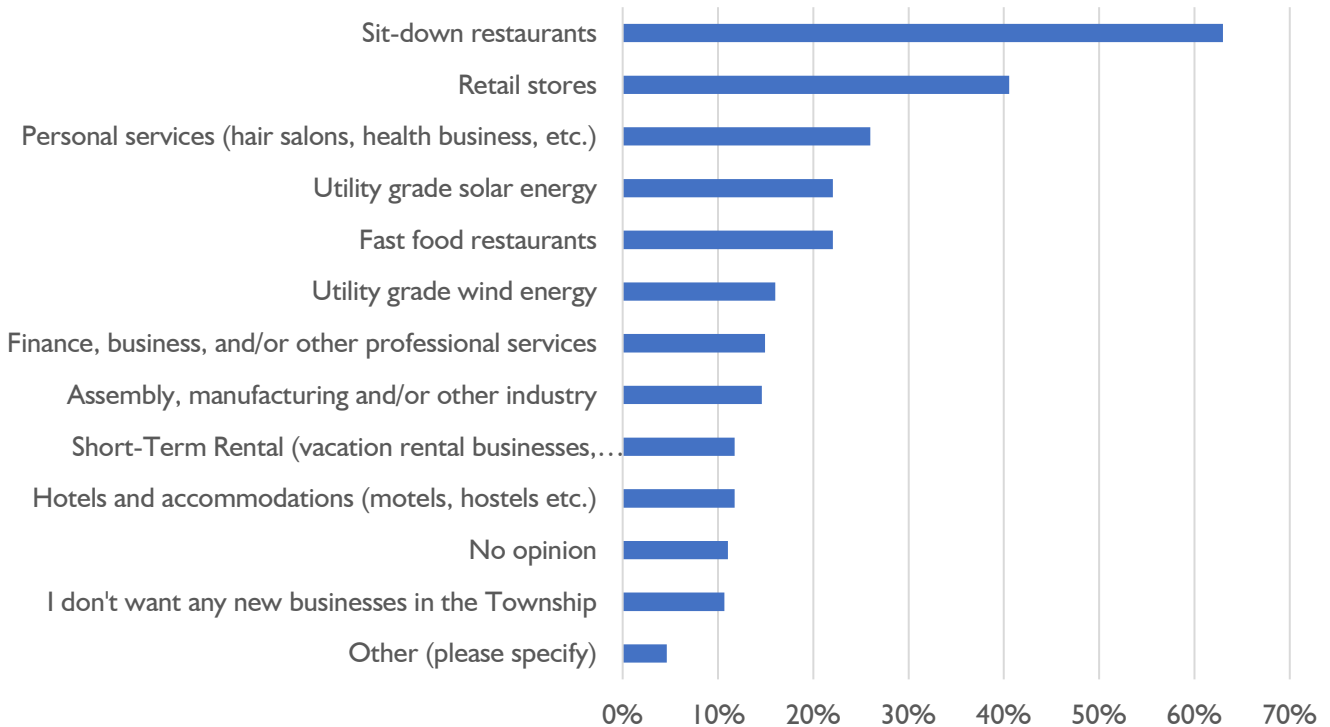
- Section 8 opportunities for all individuals
- Against high rises or apt complexes
- strip club and or dispensary
- the village need cleaned up

25. What type of businesses would you like to see in Keeler Township?

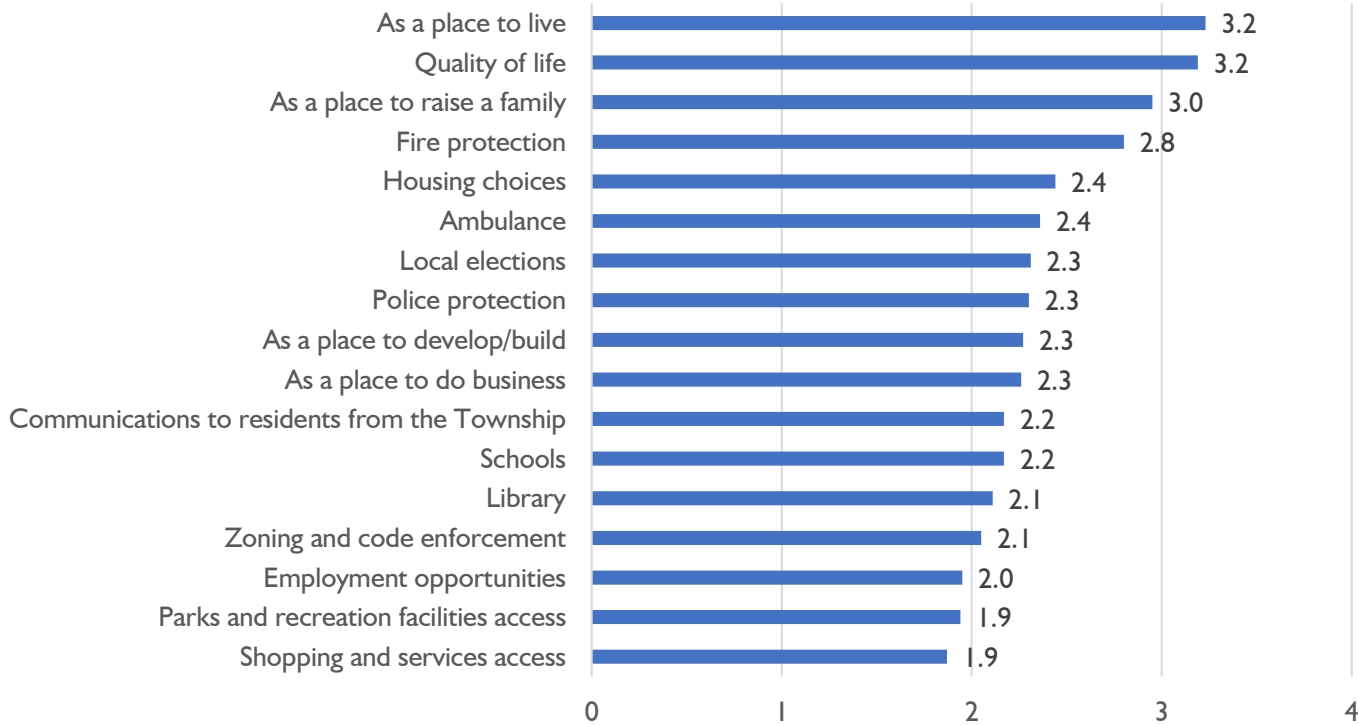
Other (please specify) responses:

- bank needed to return
- It is a seasonal area; people like to eat out. *No marijuana to ruin area!!
- yogo gift shops produce stands
- need bank
- grocery
- dispensary and or strip club
- grocery store
- grocery store
- welcome all new business
- groceries
- grocery store
- dispensary
- grocery

Answer Choices	Responses	
Sit-down restaurants	62.99%	177
Retail stores	40.57%	114
Personal services (hair salons, health business, etc.)	25.98%	73
Fast food restaurants	22.06%	62
Utility grade solar energy	22.06%	62
Utility grade wind energy	16.01%	45
Finance, business, and/or other professional services	14.95%	42
Assembly, manufacturing and/or other industry	14.59%	41
Hotels and accommodations (motels, hostels etc.)	11.74%	33
Short-Term Rental (vacation rental businesses, AirBnB, etc.)	11.74%	33
No opinion	11.03%	31
I don't want any new businesses in the Township	10.68%	30
Other (please specify)	4.63%	13
	Answered	281
	Skipped	20



26. How satisfied are you with the following aspects of Keeler Township?



This question was analyzed on an ordinal scale. The answer choices were given a quantifiable value to get a weighted average. The values ranged from 0-4 with 0 being “very dissatisfied”, 1 being “dissatisfied”, 2 being “neutral”, 3 being “satisfied”, and 4 being “very satisfied”. The weighted average represents the average level of satisfaction regarding each topic in the chart above.

	Weighted Average
As a place to live	3.23
Quality of life	3.19
As a place to raise a family	2.95
Fire protection	2.8
Housing choices	2.44
Ambulance	2.36
Local elections	2.31
Police protection	2.3
As a place to develop/build	2.27
As a place to do business	2.26
Communications to residents from the Township	2.17
Schools	2.17
Library	2.11
Zoning and code enforcement	2.05
Employment opportunities	1.95
Parks and recreation facilities access	1.94
Shopping and services access	1.87
Answered	282
Skipped	19

Other (Please Specify) Responses:

- A marina would be excellent
- It would be nice to have one playground.
- preserving businesses
- road maintenance
- post office, public transportation (marked as very dissatisfied)
- no opinions
- fickle zoning rules
- blight enforcement
- bad roads
- We do not have a library and should not pay such high taxes to support the one in Dowagiac.

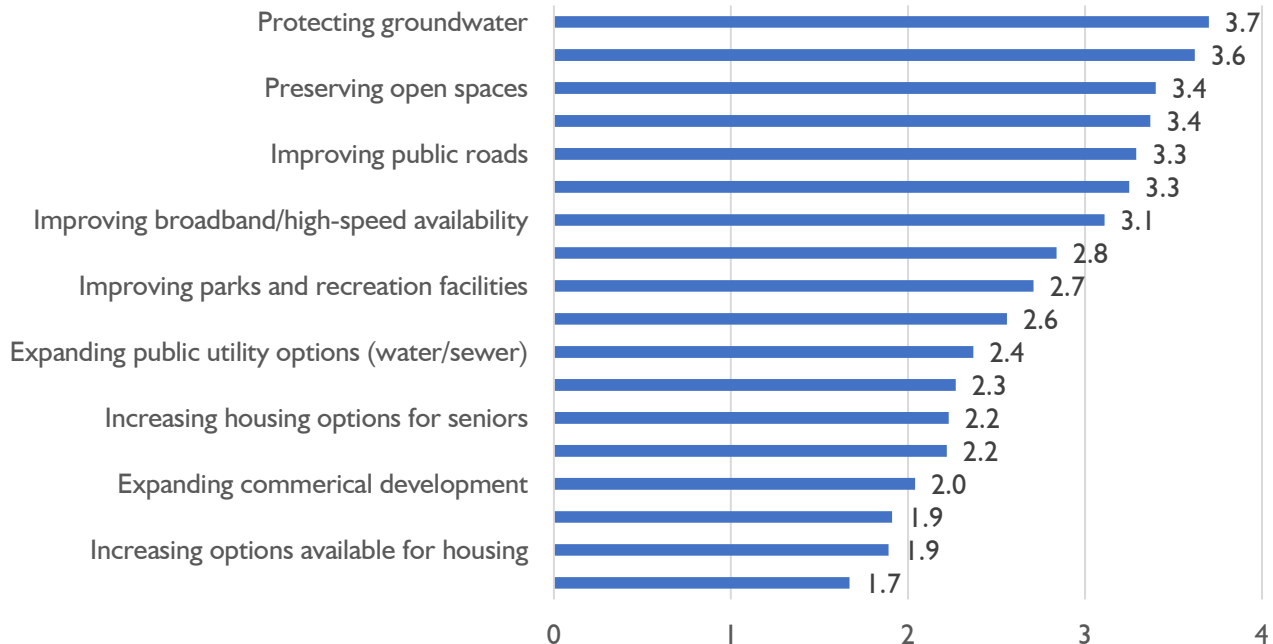
27. In terms of potential Township priorities, how important are the following?

	Weighted Average
Protecting groundwater	3.7
Protecting private property rights	3.62
Preserving open spaces	3.4
Preserving rural character	3.37
Improving public roads	3.29
Preserving farmland	3.25
Improving broadband/high-speed availability	3.11
Improving biking and walking opportunities	2.84
Improving parks and recreation facilities	2.71
Increasing support for new businesses	2.56
Expanding public utility options (water/sewer)	2.37
Promoting wind/solar energy	2.27
Increasing housing options for seniors	2.23
Increasing support for tourist-related businesses	2.22
Expanding commercial development	2.04
Increasing affordable/attainable housing	1.91
Increasing options available for housing	1.89
Expanding industrial development	1.67
Answered	284
Skipped	17

This question was analyzed on an ordinal scale. The answer choices were given a quantifiable value to get a weighted average. The values ranged from 0-4 with 0 being “not important at all”, 1 being “slightly unimportant”, 2 being “neutral”, 3 being “somewhat important”, and 4 being “very important”. The weighted average represents the average level of importance regarding each issue in the chart below.

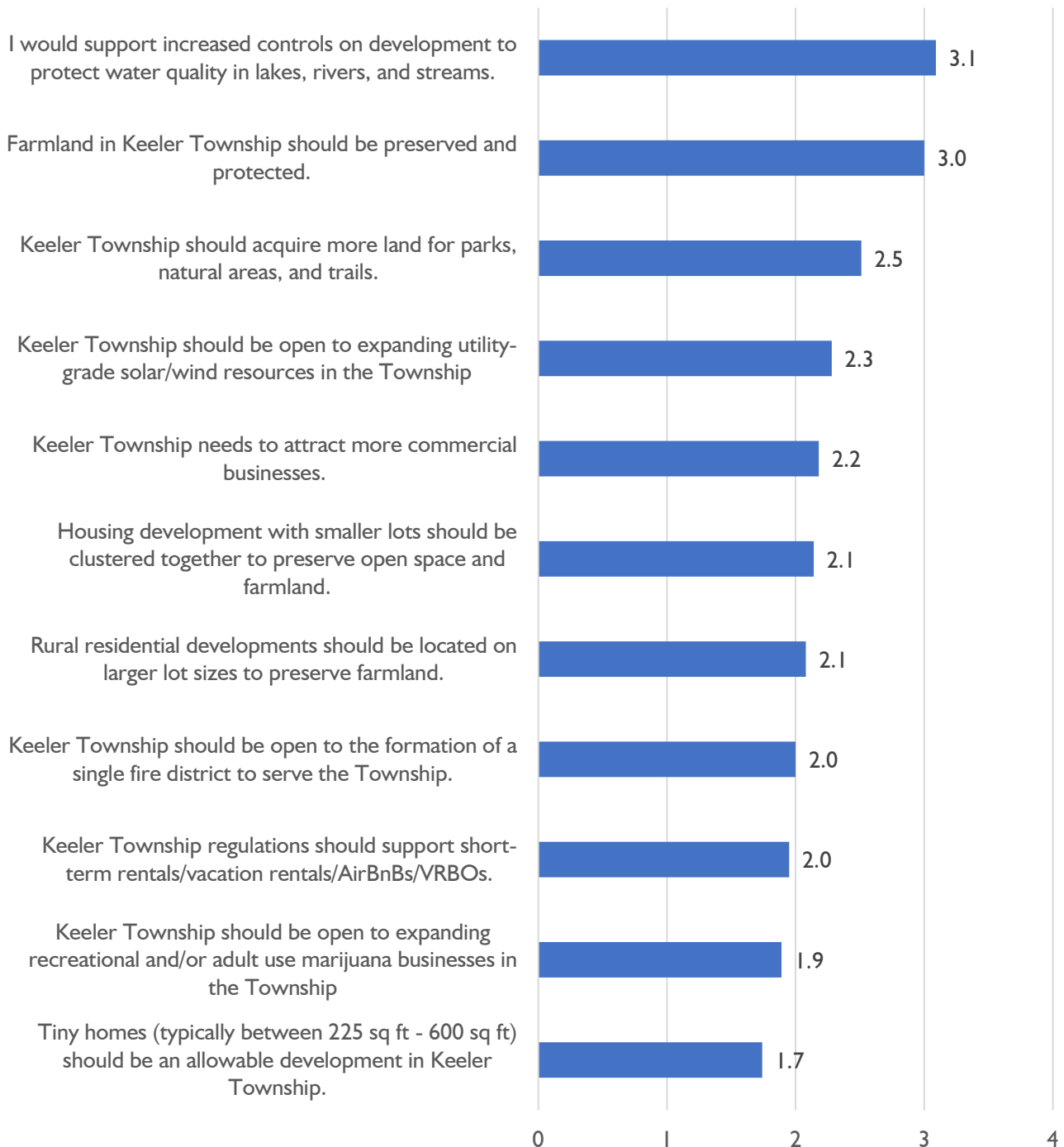
Other Responses:

- safety (police)
- Preserving our lakes, it is Sister Lakes!
- enforcing lake access laws
- neutral on all



28. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding Keeler Township?

This question was analyzed on an ordinal scale. The answer choices were given a quantifiable value to get a weighted average. The values ranged from 0-4 with 0 being “don’t know”, 1 being “strongly disagree”, 2 being “disagree”, 3 being “agree”, and 4 being “strongly agree”. The weighted average represents the average level of agreement regarding each statement in the chart below.



29. Please use the space below to provide additional thoughts about planning and zoning in Keeler Township.

- Focus on attracting new consumer focused business to the twp. More eating establishments would be wonderful too! Short-term rental support – a great idea!
- Underground electrical would be a positive move in the right direction. Even a little at a time. We (heart shape) Keeler Township!
- Not interested in wind energy – costly and unreliable.
- Keeler Township Board should provide open meetings (agendas + meeting minutes) for all residents (seasonal + permanent) – Agendas and meeting minutes are not posted in a timely manner.
- This is a beautiful place to live. I'd like to see it stay that way.
- Traffic, overall safety, and "peacefulness" are a concern. The Township has things to offer, is a beautiful place to live, and I'd like its charm to continue.
- Road maintenance can be improved, pot holes + better striping, snow removal + salting needs improvements.
- Should ban lake home to 4 bedrooms or less! Some of these houses look like hotels and cause traffic concerns!
- Our biggest concern is the explosion of short-term rentals and poor road conditions.
- Love the area I'm in. More wine trails, cycling trails, improved roads. Keep Keeler clean!
- Lower speed limits around lakes. People fly down 60th street at 60+ mph including school buses. It's a small residential area.
- You need to increase/diversify the tax base and find a creative way to generate income for the county/Township with less restrictions.
- Keeler Township should stop the funneling of boats on already crowded lakes!! -stop allowing some owners from selling dock spots.
- We need zoning laws that require people to clean up their property and limit number of party house rentals.
- Need to bring back the bank and medical building to better serve the community. More police patrol during summer-land-water.
- "Enforce zoning, require residents to clean up junk on property"
- Enforcement of no wake hours on lakes.
- none
- Restrict rentals more rules to protect locals who have to live with noisy new people every week.
- "Seasonal businesses are very important because of the recreational/lake area that is so important to Keeler T. Yet, difficult to get through slow winter...Hope Keeler can help with advertising, tax breaks, or whatever it takes to help them earn lots of money during the busy 4 months! Restaurants, golf courses, boat shops etc.
- (This is survey # 198. Many comments throughout survey.)"
- "Address the issues of meth houses.
- eg. 67211 95th street"
- Keeler Township should not be in Dowagiac school system unless Sister Lakes school goes up to 12th grade. We don't mind marijuana growers but sales/store fronts should be in business districts or commercial zones only.
- A homeowner should be allowed to construct a garage (out building) on their own property.
- Water Run-off from roads should be monitored as it is causing roadway shoulders to crumble and lakes and residences have to deal with negative effects.
- Thank you!

- We need a banking facility.
- We need police presence or vetting for Lions Park parties. I can tolerate the absurdly loud music. I cannot tolerate people shooting .45 caliber pistols 5 ft away from where I sleep!
- (Survey # 165. Many other side comments on this survey.)”
- *Funneling should be strongly enforced just like any other ordinance. This is most important.
- Laws regarding funneling should be enforced like all other laws. About or any other watercraft belonging to a lake front home owner should have a sticker.
- Internet services is needed thru Township – fiber optic for lakes area promotes business. Should have AT&T brig fiber optic to area. You gave them a bye.
- Territorial Road needs repaired surface ASAP.
- Pave roads
- “No comment
- OK so far with what you’re doing”
- Property owner 86 acres but no home exists
- On Round Lake the resident’s access to lake should be kept open, too many people putting piers way out into lake, locals have hard time access lake.
- Keeler Twp should continue to be a pleasant place to live with readily available services. Businesses welcome – no mobile home parks. (don’t create a future ghetto)
- The roads in Keeler need a lot of improvement. Housing in the area needs to be addressed, when the residents are allowed to live in run down properties.
- “Stop the noisy brewers, never had option about
- speeding on M152 thru traffic
- more police presence”
- “I. The stop sign at Center Dr and Lake shore is ignored, a camera would to wonders to stop the excessive speeders.

Some one child is going to run ahead up from the lake access and get hit.

- 2. The lake accesses are being taken over by seasonal people ->Hamilton and Lakeshore.
- 3. Why can’t the lake accesses be kept up better? We pay taxes too.”
- Keeler Township should not allow type of marijuana business. The Township has a unique family and natural setting which should be honored and preserved.
- The unpaved roads in our Township are in deplorable condition. Some are actually hazardous – pot holes, swampy areas, washboard ripples!
- We moved here to start a family in a quiet, rural, natural community. Please don’t let summer tourist ruin this beautiful area. Keep it natural & clean. Invest in solar & wind energy.
- Please respect the ag-res properties. Do not try to slip business in on ag.
- Make meetings accessible to the owners from out of town.
- The Township needs to begin enforcing laws around who truly has pier access on lakes.
- Keep the character of the Township as is! Its attraction is it’s rural “country” atmosphere. Do not make it a growing urban area!
- Thank you for my input.
- I’m open to it. 😊
- One of the best things about Keeler Township is the Keeler Township Fire department and ambulance. They are one of the best. Melinda Geresy
- “Public Transportation for Seniors.
- Discounted utilities + property taxes for Seniors.
- Quality housing development for Seniors.”
- Some zoning ordinances + building regs in Keeler Township were placed by some board members as a person preference, yet not consistent with enforcing. Rules are

important but some infringe on landowner rights.

- The Township has neither the authority or finances to repair roads. The Township commissioners should demand new roads!!!
- Rid the twp. Of dilapidated properties, slum landlords, known drug houses, etc. Better code enforcement to landlords not in compliance.
- Round Lake public access is dangerous and should be looked at. No sidewalks make walking with small children in Sister Lakes difficult and sometimes dangerous.
- I believe Keeler should stay natural, like going up north. But no we just keep raising property taxes here to support rich and out of state people.
- Too much noise, traffic, boom cars, parties, guns
- How can a house on Round Lake be taxes at 700,000.00 built 10 years or less be on the market for 3 mill when he bought the land for 400,000?
- Several lots in Oak Park with trailer and yard and trailer is trashed. Township needs to have this removed. Another trailer here was supposed to be removed after the elderly lady passed many years ago.
- The zoning laws need to be enforced. A person who files a permit to add on a bedroom built 3 stories and nothing was done. Enforcement is sporadic.
- The Township should put more effort in making sure people clean up their property!!!
- Please DO NOT encourage more industry here. There is enough already. Let some places remain rural.

- “2 times a month grade road between Territorial + Napier
- GRADE”
- “NO windfarms
- No pot dispensaries
- No pot growers
- Yes to Solar Business/grid
- Yes to faster internet”
- “Since I live in the village houses that have been bought to flip set on the lot not doing anything to get finished. Just setting there. The blight is terrible. Just get in your vehicle drive down Territorial open your eyes + do something done + side streets its pastime!
- (This is survey #13.)”
- Growth brings opportunity - \$. Expand tourism, more retail, antique stores, craft, car repairs, boutiques, fast food, restaurants, golf, disc golf. The internet is horrible! I will move if internet doesn't improve.
- There are enough pot shops. I like my community the way it is, that is why I move here for the peace + quiet. 😊
- My husband and I are conservative and chose Keeler for the rural beauty of it. We have been pleased with our Township. Thanks.
- “Not supportive of wind farms as they detract from the natural beauty that attracts us to Keeler. Solar = OK.
- No marijuana businesses!!!”
- Don't understand your map. I live in Oak Park.
- none
- It is nice that information is being gathered to determine what the majority of residents are in favor of and/or against. Keep it up, it you obtain good information on this one. Thanks for asking

Planning Implications and Trends

The following section contains a summary of trends and findings from the Community Survey.

RESIDENCY & AGE

- Survey responses largely represent residents (full-time and seasonal) who have lived in the Township for a long time (20+ years) and grew up in the area.
- A majority of the respondents were of age 55 years or older. About half of the survey respondents listed being retired. While developing the master plan, it is important to acknowledge the demographics of the population living in the Township and include housing and recreational opportunities that benefit these demographics.
- A majority of the participants listed staying in Keeler Township for more than 120 days in a given year and listed owning their own house in the Township.
- About 42% of the participants comprised of seasonal residents.
 - Most seasonal residents listed owning or renting a property in Keeler Township for 10 years or more and most residents listed owning their Keeler Township home.
 - Seasonal residents mostly fell into the \$100,000-\$149,999 or \$200,000+ income category, and a majority of the residents that responded to the survey reported receiving a bachelor's degree or a higher level of education.
 - A little less than half of the population listed 2 people in total living in their household followed by 4 people living in a household.
- Lake community, natural setting, and rural lifestyle were among the top three choices that survey respondents selected when they answered why they chose to live in Keeler Township. Other comments included inherited property and proximity to work. It is important to recognize the importance of the natural character of the township and the role it plays in retaining both full-time and seasonal residents. Preserving this character and limiting development to certain areas of the Township can help preserve the rural setting of the Township that is treasured by its residents.

HOUSING

- A large percentage of full-time residents responded living in either single-family homes or lakefront single-family homes and a small percentage listed living in manufactured homes, or multi-family (3+ unit apartments or condominiums).
- Single-family homes were the most desired type of housing in Keeler Township, especially for homes built on 1 to 5-acre lots. Retirement community/senior living and assisted living were also appealing to the survey participants. Additionally, participants were also interested in tiny homes (under 500 square feet per home) and accessory dwelling units or guest housing.
- Although the addition of more housing options and affordable housing was not identified as a top priority, there were a few open-ended responses from participants discovered a need for quality and affordable housing which may be addressed by the Planning Commission by encouraging high-quality and affordable housing through planning and zoning.

GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

- About half of the survey respondents believe that Keeler Township is growing about right, however, other respondents listed having no opinion regarding this question. A majority of the survey participants rated Keeler Township's effort to guide and direct growth and development as good or fair. Other participants rated the Township's effort as poor or the participants had no opinion regarding the Township's effort to guide and direct growth and development.
- Survey participants reported being mostly satisfied with Keeler Township as a place to live, as a place to raise a family, and the housing choices. Access to shopping/services, employment opportunities and the library were the least satisfactory for the participants. Encouraging these types of businesses through zoning and other incentives may help address the low satisfaction of residents in these areas of concern.
- Benton Harbor and St. Joseph areas scored the highest responses especially for groceries and household goods and for entertainment purposes followed by elsewhere in Van Buren County. Van Buren County was visited the most by respondents for recreational purposes followed by the Benton Harbor and St. Joseph area.
- Sit-down restaurants, retail stores, and personal services (hair salons, health businesses, etc.) were the top three businesses desired by the Keeler Township survey respondents. About 10% of the participants didn't want any new businesses in the Township. Some participants also reported their interest in utility-grade solar and wind energy systems in Keeler Township. The participants were also able to list other businesses that they would like to see in Keeler Township which included grocery stores and banks. It should be noted that there was mixed support for marijuana dispensaries.
- In terms of potential Township priorities, protecting groundwater, protecting private property rights, and preserving open spaces were among the top three priorities for the Keeler Township survey participants. Expanding industrial development, increasing options for housing, and increasing affordable/attainable housing were among the least important priorities for Keeler Township. The Planning Commission may utilize zoning regulations to protect and preserve the quality of groundwater. In addition, the Township may identify potential areas that contain prime farmland that add to the rural character of the Township and limit/restrict development in those areas.
- Survey participants strongly agreed with the statement, "I would support increased controls on developments to protect water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams." Followed by the statement, "Farmland in Keeler Township should be preserved and protected." It is important to carefully consider the extent of zoning regulations and its impact on private property rights. Maintaining a balance between enforcing laws and regulations while also allowing homeowners to enjoy their private property rights is crucial as survey participants identified protecting private property rights as the second most important priority in the survey.

CONCERNS

- Participants rated the quality of roads, availability/quality of high-speed or wireless internet, and quality of groundwater as the top three concerns in Keeler Township. The participants were least concerned about traffic congestion, availability of public sewer, and lack of access to entertainment and social activities.
- Major topics of concern that emerged from the open-ended comments were:
 - Attracting new consumer-focused businesses
 - Support and concerns regarding short-term rentals
 - Open/accessible communication between the Township officials and the residents, posting agendas and minutes in a timely manner, making meetings accessible for seasonal residents.
 - Improving road infrastructure, and adding more wine trails, bike trails, sidewalks, etc.
 - Discourage large houses on the lakefront

- Lower speed limits around the lakes
- Enforcement of zoning regulations regarding the upkeep of the property and identifying blighted properties
- Enforcement of no-wake hours on lakes
- No adult-use/recreational marijuana
- Keeping marijuana dispensaries in commercial or industrial zones only
- Issues regarding funneling and crowded lake
- Access to high-speed internet
- Support for solar energy
- Concerns regarding wind energy and its impact on the aesthetics of the Township
- Affordable housing and incentives for seniors.

Keeler Township



MASTER PLAN 2023