

# Master Plan 2019

BENTON CHARTER TOWNSHIP · BERRIEN COUNTY · MICHIGAN

DRAFT · July 22, 2019





# Master Plan 2019

BENTON CHARTER TOWNSHIP · BERRIEN COUNTY · MICHIGAN

DRAFT · July 22, 2019



**MCKENNA**

Communities for real life.

235 E. Main Street, Suite 105  
Northville, Michigan 48167  
(248) 596-0920

[mcka.com](http://mcka.com)



# Acknowledgments

## TOWNSHIP BOARD

Supervisor Kevin White  
Clerk Carolyn Phillips  
Treasurer Debra Boothby  
Trustee Carolyn Fowler  
Trustee Rosie Hudson  
Trustee Cathy Yates  
Trustee Linda Scarbrough

## PLANNING COMMISSION

Heidi Closson  
Jennifer Swingler  
Marletta Seats  
A. Candy Gaddy  
Clerk Carolyn Phillips

## STEERING COMMITTEE

Supervisor Kevin White  
Clerk Carolyn Phillips  
Treasurer Debra Boothby  
Township Superintendent Kelli Nelson  
Chief Building Official Chris Fuchs  
Building Inspector Andy Dean

## TOWNSHIP STAFF

Stephanie Turney

## CONSULTING TEAM—MCKENNA

John R. Jackson, AICP—President  
Rebecca Harvey, AICP—Project Manager  
Christopher Khorey, AICP—Planner  
Deanna Dupuy—Planner  
Carrie Leitner—Graphic Design





# Table of Contents

## *Acknowledgments*

<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. LAND USE PLAN .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Introduction.....	6
Community Character Areas Plan.....	8
Roads Plan.....	13
<b>3. ACTION PLAN .....</b>	<b>51</b>
Zoning Plan.....	52
<b>4. BACKGROUND &amp; ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>75</b>
Existing Land Use.....	76
Public Facilities.....	85
Natural Resources.....	93
Transportation .....	101
Community Profile.....	111
Public Engagement Opportunities.....	123
 <b>Companion Documents</b>	
2019-2021 Three Year Transportation Plan for Berrien County	
Napier Avenue Corridor Study Area	
Napier Avenue Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan	
Ox Creek Watershed Plan	
River Park Master Plan	
US-31 Relocation Project, Berrien County	



LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Existing Land Use..... 78

Table 2: I-94 Traffic Volumes ..... 105

Table 3: I-94 Truck Traffic Volumes..... 105

Table 4: Principal Arterials Street Traffic Volumes ..... 106

Table 5: Minor Arterial Traffic Volumes ..... 106

Table 6: Collector Road Traffic Volumes..... 106

Table 7: Median Age.....115

Table 8: Median Home Value .....115

Table 9: Median Rent.....115

Table 10: Benton Charter Township Housing Types .....116

Table 11: Percentage of Labor Force Employed by Industry..... 117

Table 12: Commute Times from Benton Charter Township.....117

Table 13: Median Household Income .....119

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Population History .....113

Figure 2: Household Size.....113

Figure 3: Age Distribution .....114

Figure 4: Household Income Distribution.....118

Figure 5: Median Household Income .....119

LIST OF MAPS

Map 1: Community Character Areas ..... 11

Map 2: Transportation Plan ..... 15

Map 3: Existing Land Use..... 83

Map 4: Wetlands ..... 97

Map 5: Flood Hazards ..... 99

Map 6: Functional Classification of Roadways ..... 105

Map 7: Comparison Communities.....113





# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Benton Charter Township Master Plan is the community's vision for its future. From a technical and legal standpoint, it is the basis for the Zoning Ordinance and the Township's land use decisions. But this is not just a technical and legal document. It is a statement of where we are, where we're going, and where we want to be.

The Master Plan is divided into three sections:

**The first section, the Land Use Plan,** discusses the future uses of land throughout the Township in terms of Community Character Areas. These areas highlight the Township's existing neighborhood assets and provide guidance on how to strengthen the areas, including the character of development that is envisioned, the areas to be preserved as rural farmland, and the layout of the community as it grows.

**The second section, the Action Plan,** describes the methods of achieving the goals and objectives detailed for each community character area. The action plan provides a zoning plan and specific strategies for land use and transportation improvements.

**The third section, Background Data and Analysis,** includes a detailed description of the Township's existing land use and transportation network, a demographic analysis using the most up-to-date Census information available at the time of the 2018 update, as well as information on public outreach efforts.

The Benton Charter Township Master Plan and its goals, objectives, and strategies recommend a future vision for the community. This vision is to build upon the Township's existing assets and make the most of opportunities that can attract new development and residents to the community while protecting the Township's natural beauty and resources.

**To put it simply, the plan for Benton Charter Township is to create an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable community where people want to live, work, visit, and play.**







## 2. LAND USE PLAN

## Introduction

The Land Use Plan is the guide for the physical development of the Township. It strives to achieve the community's vision for itself and to accomplish the stated goals of the plan in a tangible, physical sense.

The Land Use Plan sets forth recommendations for continued use, new development, and reuse of land within specific areas of the Township over the next two to three decades through the Community Character Areas Plan. The Community Character Areas Plan Map and Character Area designations establish a link between what exists and what Township leaders and citizens envision as future possibilities.

The Character Area designations were identified through deliberations involving Township residents, Planning Commission and Township Board members, and Township staff. The Character Areas as reflected on the map are generalized and are not intended to be site specific or to follow specific property lines.

Together, the Community Character Areas Plan and Roads Plan provide a flexible guide to promote informed, intelligent, well-organized public and private action for the betterment of the Township.

Although the Master Plan forms the basis for the Zoning Ordinance and other regulatory controls, the Community Character Areas Plan is intended to be a policy document and decision-making guide.



# Community Character Areas Plan

A Community Character Areas Plan is a step beyond a future land use plan to identify and show how different parts of Benton Charter Township should look and function. A traditional future land use plan identifies appropriate land uses for different parts of the community and establishes basic use and density requirements. A Community Character Areas Plan includes other important factors which create community character, such as the look and feel of streets, how buildings look and function, how uses relate to each other, and the overall intensity of use.

This Community Character Areas Plan recognizes that there are many contexts that exist in Benton Charter Township—the urban residential neighborhoods extending from Benton Harbor, the more suburban neighborhoods found to the north and east, the high intensity commercial destinations near Ox Creek, the rural land east of the freeways, and others. Each of these character areas reflect a different combination of design, use, and density that create the different contexts. The purpose of the Community Character Areas Plan is to identify each area’s component parts that add up to create character.

## COMPONENTS OF THE COMMUNITY CHARACTER AREAS PLAN

The Community Character Areas Plan explains each character area and offers recommendations for design, use, density, and infrastructure within each area. The Plan components include:

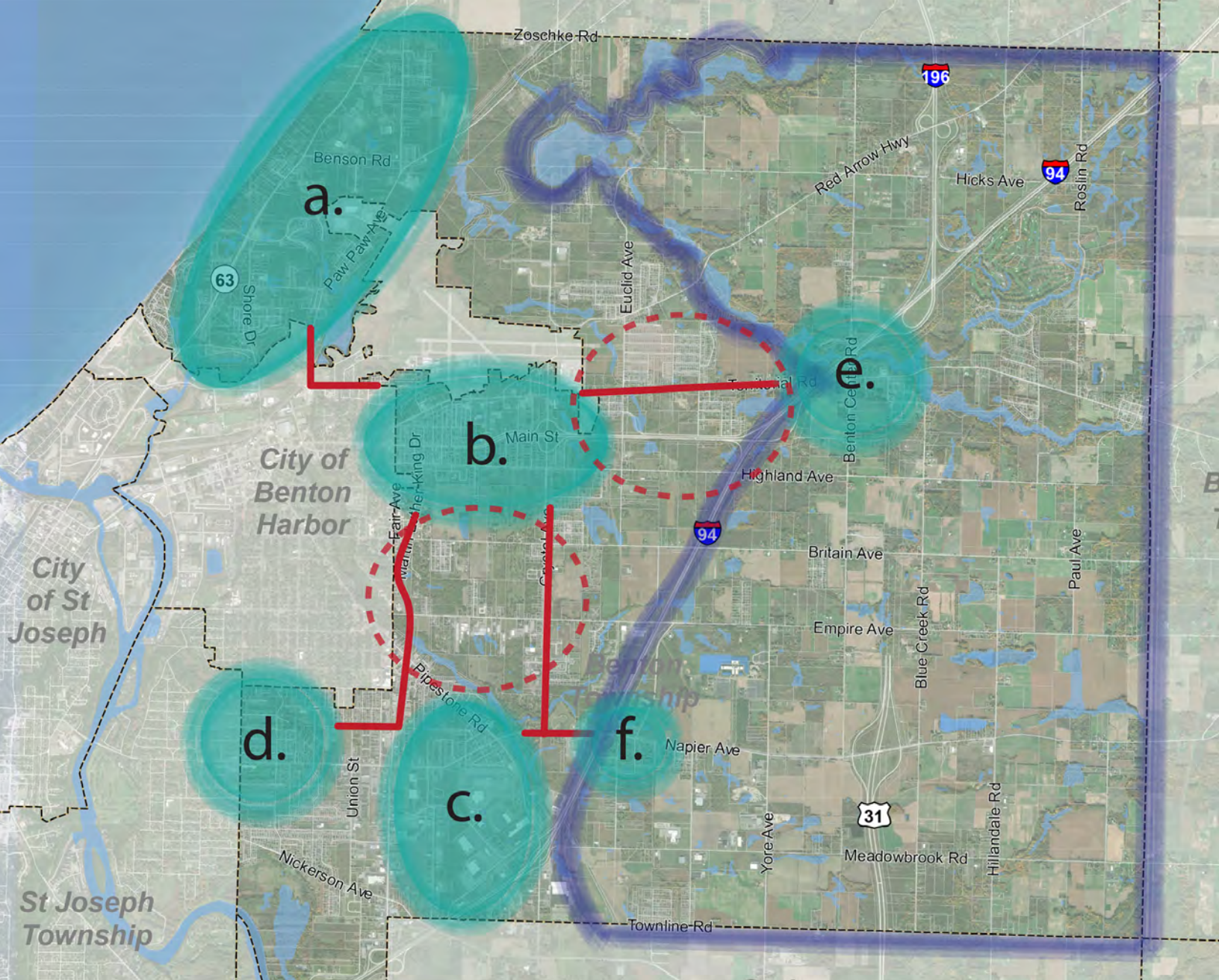
- » **Character:** A detailed description of the Area with a focus on its issues and opportunities.
- » **Design:** The situation and design of the Area’s private and public realm.
- » **Function:** The functional role of the Area in the community.
- » **Mobility:** The mobility options afforded through the Area’s road network and pedestrian infrastructure.

## COMMUNITY CHARACTER AREAS

The Community Character Areas are defined by the general characteristics of each area. Using local landmarks such as Lake Michigan, the Paw Paw River, freeways, the Cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph, and the Township borders, eight distinct Community Character Areas were identified throughout Benton Charter Township.

The Community Character Areas are graphically displayed on the Community Character Areas Plan Map and are described in this section of the Master Plan. The elected and appointed officials of Benton Charter Township will be responsible for the interpretation of the intent of the Community Character Areas Plan Map and the boundaries of each Character Area.

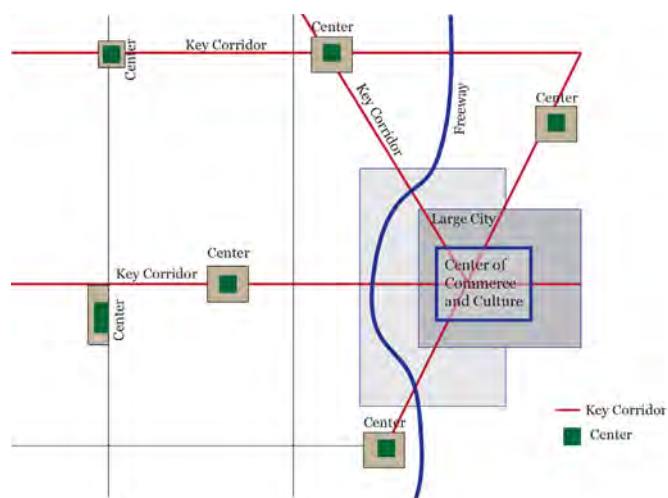




## Schematic Community Character Areas and Key Corridors

- a. Lakeview
- b. Main Street Gateway
- c. Ox Creek
- d. Fairplain
- e. Wine Trail Corners
- f. Crystal Springs

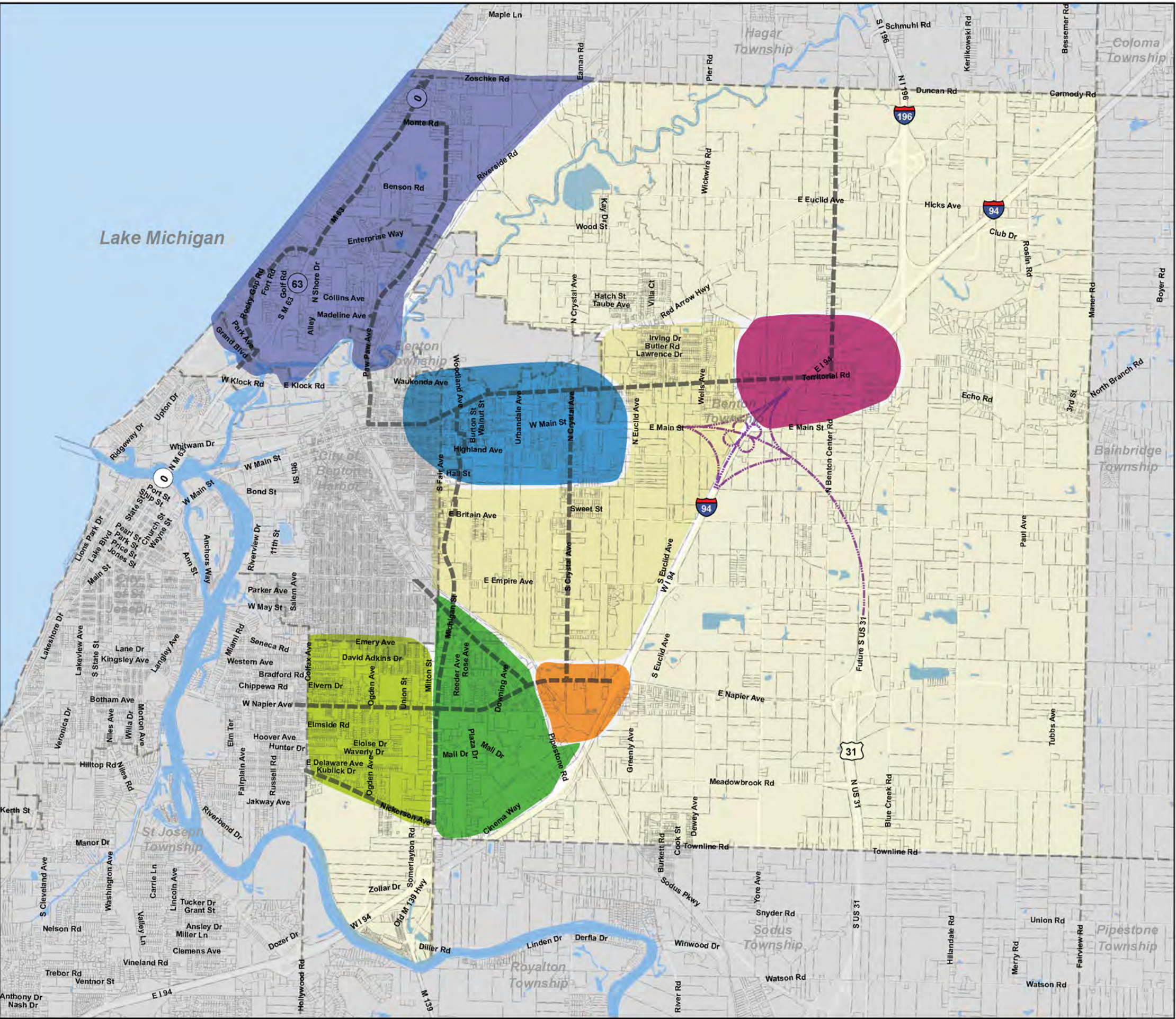
- Quality Growth Area
- Quality Rural Area
- Key Corridors



**Target Placemaking  
in Centers and Key Corridors**

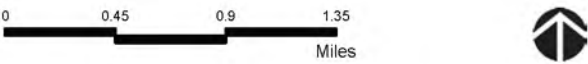
intentionally left blank





MAP 1  
**Community  
Character Areas**  
Benton Charter Township, Berrien County, MI

- LEGEND**
- Key Corridors
  - Future US-31
  - Lakeview
  - Main Street Gateway
  - Ox Creek
  - Fair Plain
  - Wine Trail Corners
  - Crystal Springs
  - Quality Growth Area
  - Quality Rural Area



Data Source: Sources: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community; McKenna 2018; Michigan GIS Open Data Portal 2018



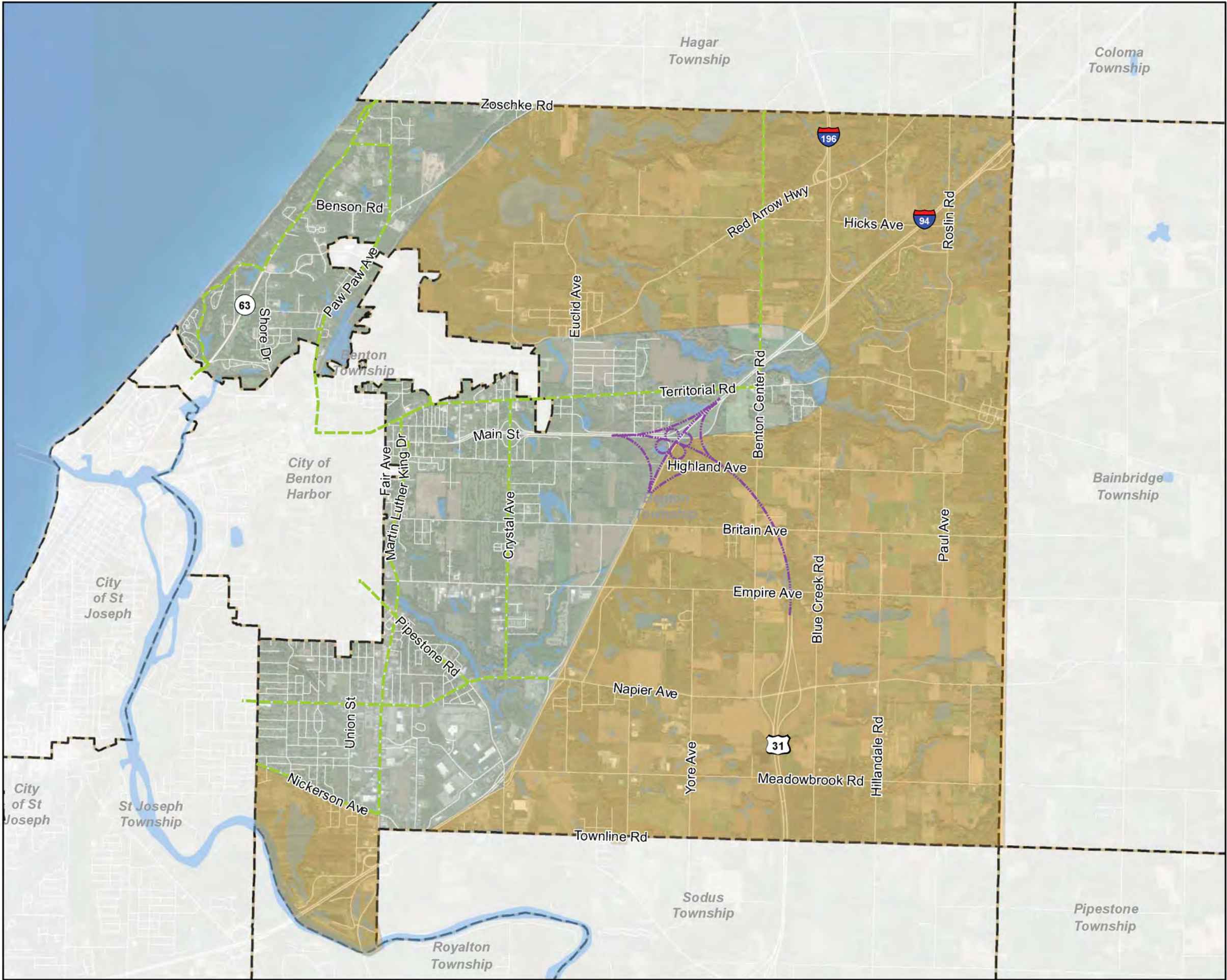
intentionally left blank

# Roads Plan

The Roads Plan maintains the existing functional classification designations of the street, as well as acknowledges the proposed completion of US-31. The Roads Plan and detailed mobility sections of the Community Character Areas Plan set forth recommendations for the development of public right-of-way in a manner consistent with and supportive of each community character area. They further recommend specific roadways and corridors to focus on for the implementation of context sensitive pathways, crossing improvements, gateway creation, and complete streets, each with pedestrian, bus transit, and bicycle facilities. The overall network is designed to establish easy to navigate connections for people to walk, bike, drive, and take transit in their neighborhoods and around the Township.

intentionally left blank





MAP 2  
**Transportation Plan**  
Benton Charter Township, Berrien County, MI

- LEGEND**
- Non-motorized Improvement Route
  - Future US-31
  - Rural Complete Streets Area





# Community Character Areas



LAKEVIEW



MAIN STREET GATEWAY



OX CREEK



FAIRPLAIN



WINE TRAIL CORNERS



CRYSTAL SPRINGS

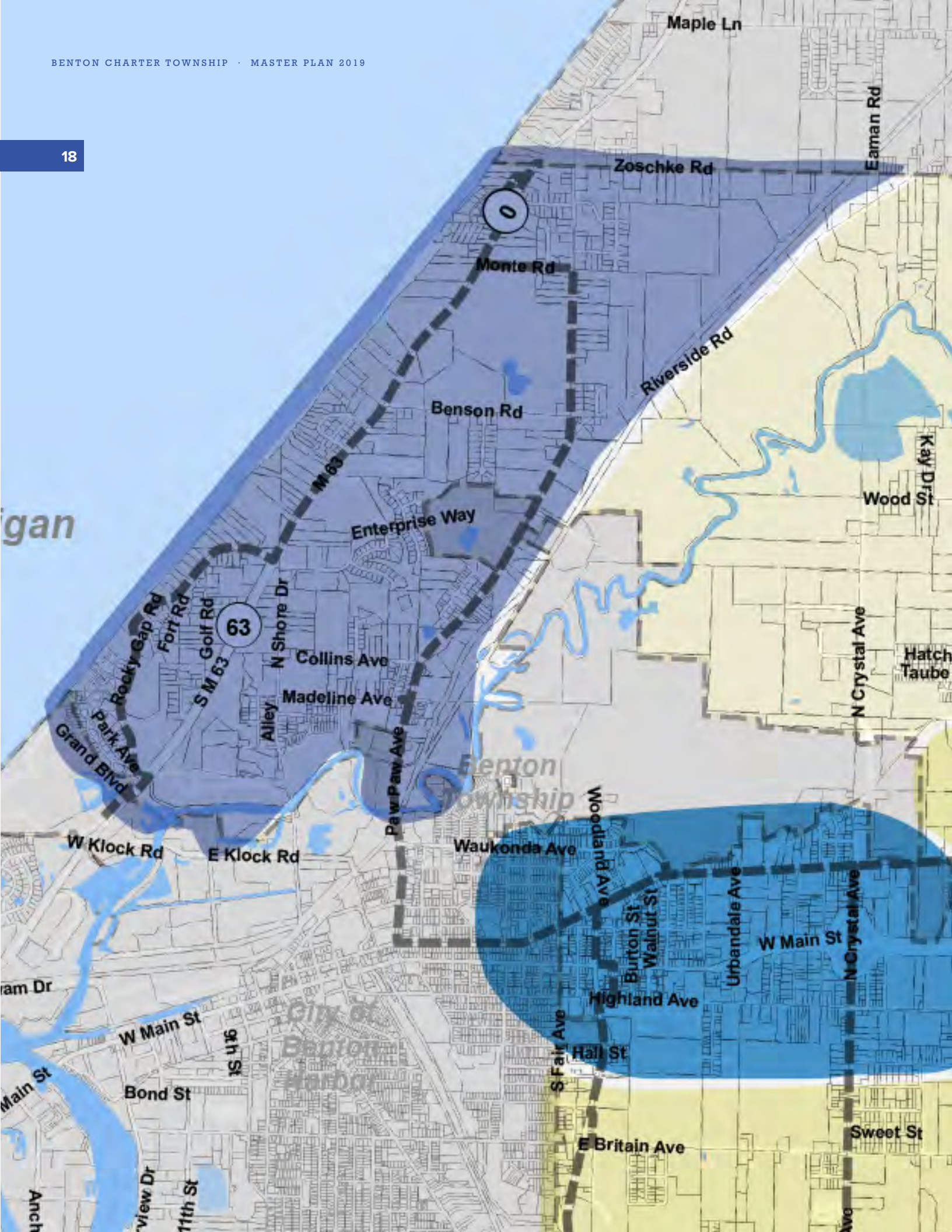


QUALITY GROWTH AREA



QUALITY RURAL AREA









## GOALS

- » *Establish the Lakeview area as a connected and cohesive geography of the Township.*
- » *Recognize the value of the area's significant natural assets to create quality destination spots and an identity for both the Lakeview area and the Township.*
- » *Provide for key connections between the waterfront, established and potential residential areas, major employers in the area, and the Cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph.*
- » *Use the focus of the Lake Michigan coastline, the residential and industrial land use emphasis, and the interaction between these elements to create the foundational identity for the Lakeview Character Area.*

- Lakeview
- Main Street Gateway
- Ox Creek
- Fairplain
- Wine Trail Corners
- Crystal Springs
- Quality Growth Area
- Quality Rural Area

■ ■ ■ Key Corridors

## CHARACTER (ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES)

The Lakeview Character Area is located in the northwest corner of the Township, between Lake Michigan and the Paw Paw River. This community character area is home to assets such as 4.75 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, the Whirlpool Corporation World Headquarters, Berrien County's Rocky Gap Park, US Bicycle Route 35, and established neighborhoods and industrial areas. Despite its abundant natural beauty, high-value housing, beloved parks, and strong employment destinations, the Lakeview area lacks cohesiveness. The various parts do not connect together, it has no central gathering place, and it has no unifying brand (the "Lakeview" designation was created for this plan).



## DESIGN

- » New development should be situated and designed to provide physical or visual access to the natural beauty of the lake, river, and dunes.
- » Residential development should incorporate a mix of housing types ranging from single family homes on lakefront lots to medium density "missing middle" housing that preserves the character of the area while increasing housing options near important employment centers.
- » Commercial uses should be limited, low-intensity and located to promote the nearby waterfront recreation.
- » Industrial growth should be directed to areas of existing industrial development to allow for complimentary site designs and efficient use of infrastructure.
- » Waterfront park spaces should be used to create a network of key gathering places for the residents and workforce of the Lakeview area.
- » The entire area should be traversable safely and efficiently by bicycle and pedestrian via Rocky Gap Park.



# Lakeview

21

## FUNCTION

The Lakeview Character Area is functionally separated from much of Benton Charter Township, but encompasses the Township's entire Lake Michigan coastline; represents a vibrant industrial element of the Township; and provides a significant amount of the Township's high-end housing. Its adjacency to the City of Benton Harbor lends a regional focus to the area as well.

## MOBILITY

State Route M-63 and Paw Paw Avenue are the main corridors that connect the Lakeview Character Area with the Cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph and Hagar Township. The road network within the area consists largely of curvilinear streets connecting residential neighborhoods to either M-63 or Paw Paw Avenue. As development occurs in this area, new streets should be designed to strengthen the connectivity between neighborhoods and consider the area's topography and water features, such as allowing for scenic Lake Michigan viewsheds.

Pedestrian infrastructure such as non-motorized pathways or multi-use pathways should be provided along every street. Specifically, US Bicycle Route 35 should be upgraded with a shared use path along M-63, diverting onto Rocky Gap Road, to provide respite from the busy highway and access to Lake Michigan.

## PUBLIC FEEDBACK

Throughout the public engagement process, residents and stakeholders expressed a desire to create a sense of place within the Lakeview area. Residents expressed contentment with the beauty of the area and its convenient access to nearby urban centers but wanted a stronger sense of place anchored around neighborhood-scale commercial, service, and recreational destinations.

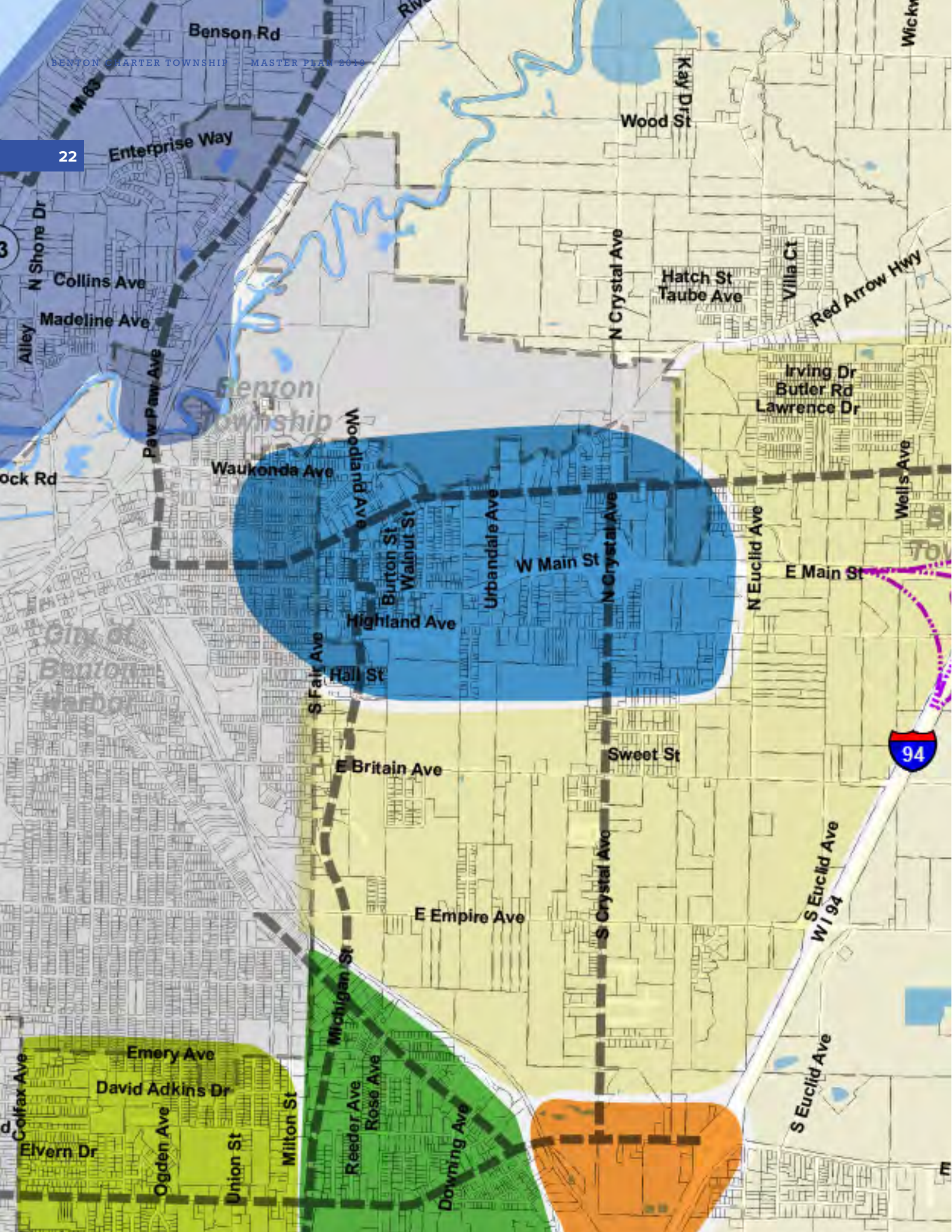


*"Bicycle trails and open land"*

*"Build on the diversity of the area and continue to attract tourists who can bring in outside dollars in the market"*

*"The area needs to concentrate on non-motorized connectivity to businesses both in the commercial district and along the lake front so Whirlpool's campuses can be served"*







# Main Street Gateway

23



## GOALS

- » *Strengthen the Main Street connection to the adjacent City of Benton Harbor.*
- » *Continue small retail and urban housing infill development along Main Street.*
- » *Establish corridor frontage-based site design standards that are based on existing development patterns along Main Street.*
- » *Incorporate Main Street corridor design similar to that present within the adjacent City of Benton Harbor to visually and functionally establish this segment of Main Street as a 'gateway' corridor.*

- Lakeview
- Main Street Gateway
- Ox Creek
- Fairplain
- Wine Trail Corners
- Crystal Springs
- Quality Growth Area
- Quality Rural Area

■ ■ ■ Key Corridors

## CHARACTER (ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES)

The Main Street Gateway Character Area extends east from Benton Harbor along Main Street to Crystal Avenue. This character area consists of housing and business destinations located to the north and south of Main Street. Residential neighborhoods reflect modest homes within a strong grid network. A continuous sidewalk follows Main Street along its northern edge with frontage consisting of intermittent pedestrian scale businesses and mixed-density housing. This character area has the potential to strengthen its connection to Benton Harbor by extending commercial destinations eastward, supporting non-motorized connections, and by providing diverse housing options within close proximity to the area employment centers.

The Main Street Gateway Character Area has the potential to be a walkable, mixed-use neighborhood with a variety of housing types that attracts talented young employees (from other local companies). It has the bones of a great urban neighborhood—they just need to be identified and strengthened. However, new development in this area must be done with equity in the minds of the Township and the business community. Existing residents have worked hard to enhance the neighborhood's quality of life, and they should benefit from, not be displaced by new investment.



## DESIGN

- » Residential and local commercial infill development should be the focus along this segment of Main Street.
- » Infill residential development should be allowed to include a diverse range of housing density, housing style, and housing type.
- » Infill commercial development should be limited to small, local businesses with pedestrian-friendly building and site design.
- » New development in this area should be done in strong consideration of existing land use patterns and site designs. Existing owners have worked hard to enhance the neighborhood's quality of life; development that compliments that work will increase the sustainability of the area.
- » Corridor improvements that serve efficient motorized travel and safe and convenient non-motorized travel should be supported with a focus on coordinating streetscape design elements from Crystal Avenue west into the City.



# Main Street Gateway

25

## FUNCTION

The Main Street Gateway Character Area has the ability to strengthen the connection between Benton Charter Township and the City of Benton Harbor. A strengthened connection will benefit the Township through the realization of the economic potential of the Main Street corridor that will result from build-out. A strengthened connection will also benefit the City by using the positive design energy of the corridor to announce entry into the City and draw travelers westward; by extending commercial destinations eastward; by supporting non-motorized connections, and, by providing diverse housing options within close proximity to the urban job center.

## MOBILITY

As an off-ramp from I-94 and the designated I-94 Business Loop, Main Street functions as a limited access highway from I-94 until the speed limit drops to 45 miles per hour and the roadway narrows to three lanes with a center turn lane at Urbandale Avenue. Further west, the roadway picks up marked bicycle lanes at Butternut Street which continue for three blocks until it drops at Chestnut Street to one bicycle lane on the southern edge of Main Street. The neighborhoods on either side of Main Street consist of established grid networks, with Fair Avenue and Martin Luther King Drive being the major north/south connecting corridors.

New roads and roadway improvements should follow the traditional grid pattern with common elements such as non-motorized pathways, pedestrian scale lighting, and a tree canopy. Pedestrian scale road improvements, including bike lanes, should connect people to commercial destinations along Main Street and Territorial Road, as well as provide connections to Main Street destinations in the City.

## PUBLIC FEEDBACK

Residents reported a need for housing that is affordable for a single person, low-maintenance condos, and incentives for first time homeowners. The neighborhoods adjacent to Main Street are amenable locations for these housing options and programs due to the small lot sizes, space for infill development, and close proximity to nearby employment opportunities.

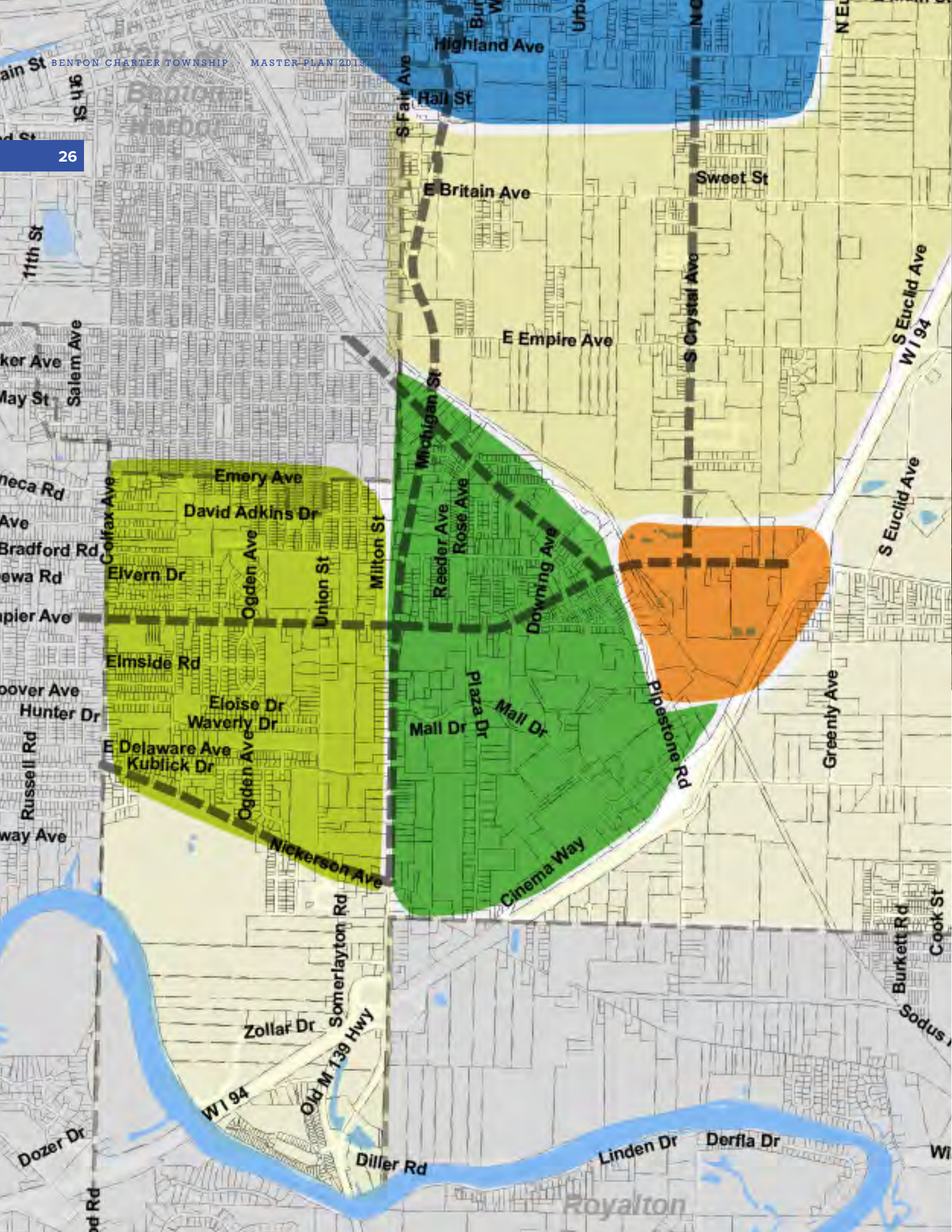


*"I'd like to see a better path to home ownership for those currently renting in affordable housing."*

*"Promote repurposing of existing structures."*

*"We do not have enough apartment choices for young professionals that come to the area."*







## Ox Creek

27



## GOALS

- » *Realize the potential of the Ox Creek Character Area as a thriving regional economic center.*
- » *Emphasize the Ox Creek Character Area as a cohesive shopping, entertainment and activity district.*
- » *Expand the focus of this area to include community recreational opportunities and civic destinations.*
- » *Implement the strategies and designs of the Ox Creek Watershed Plan to artfully incorporate innovative stormwater management systems and establish open space networks into this highly developed area.*

- Lakeview
- Main Street Gateway
- Ox Creek
- Fairplain
- Wine Trail Corners
- Crystal Springs
- Quality Growth Area
- Quality Rural Area

■ ■ ■ Key Corridors

## CHARACTER (ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES)

The Ox Creek Character Area is one of the most developed sections of the Township. This area, extending from Empire Avenue to Nickerson Avenue, encompasses both sensitive wetland areas, such as Ox Creek, and regional commercial destinations connecting Fairplain Plaza, Orchards Mall, and Pipestone Plaza. Typical of large big box shopping plazas, this area is largely auto dependent with little non-motorized infrastructure—including non-motorized pathways. Due to its centralized location and abundance of commercial and service destinations, the area attracts customers from across the region. However, this area has not been immune to the changes in the retail environment with many stores experiencing decline and/or closures as customers are shifting to online retail shopping.

The Ox Creek Character Area is a regional shopping and dining destination that has the potential to be a thriving economic center for the region. Emphasis should be on envisioning the Ox Creek Character Area as a cohesive shopping, entertainment, and activity district. Future development within this area should be responsive to the changing retail sector and focus on creating an experience for residents.

All development should be sensitive to natural areas around the shopping district and should strive to improve the quality of Ox Creek. In addition, all development should focus on improving non-motorized connections, especially non-motorized pathways, from nearby housing to shopping centers.



## DESIGN

- » The land use pattern in this area should be expanded to include residential development, community recreation opportunities, and civic destinations.
- » Parking standards should be evaluated and shared parking arrangements required. Areas of excess parking should be redeveloped as outlots to bring businesses and people to the street fronts.
- » Safe walkways from street frontages to building fronts through large parking lots should be established. These walkways should tie into an area-wide sidewalk network and link with existing/planned transit stops.
- » The stormwater management approaches and open space networks detailed in the Ox Creek Watershed Plan should be incorporated into each site development plan.

# Ox Creek

29

## FUNCTION

The Ox Creek Character Area is a regional activity center and represents the most highly developed area of the Township. Its location within the Ox Creek Watershed and the presence of valuable wetland areas makes this area a major contributor to the health of the watershed and a potential showcase for state-of-the-art stormwater management design and urban green space planning.

## MOBILITY

Regardless of the type of development, every effort should be made to connect destinations within the area, both for vehicular and non-motorized traffic. Similarly, since existing establishments have an abundance of parking space, efforts should be made to share parking, as well create safe walkways from street frontage to the building front through large parking lots. Sidewalks along Napier Avenue, M-139, Plaza Drive, and Starlite Drive should be required as a condition of redevelopment to connect nearby residential areas to development.

This area is also served by a bus line. As commercial sites redevelop, the needs of transit users should be considered in the site design.

## PUBLIC FEEDBACK

Stakeholders expressed a desire for vibrancy and a mixture of uses to be located in this area. Ideas expressed included utilizing the large vacant spaces at the Orchards Mall for new community and service-oriented destinations rather than retail, including testing centers, sports complexes, indoor playgrounds, etc. In addition, concerns about the health of the Ox Creek Watershed were also vocalized. Residents wanted programs to encourage better farming practices and stormwater management.



*"We need to figure out how to revitalize the mall and make it attractive. The stronger the shopping area the easier it is to attract top talent."*

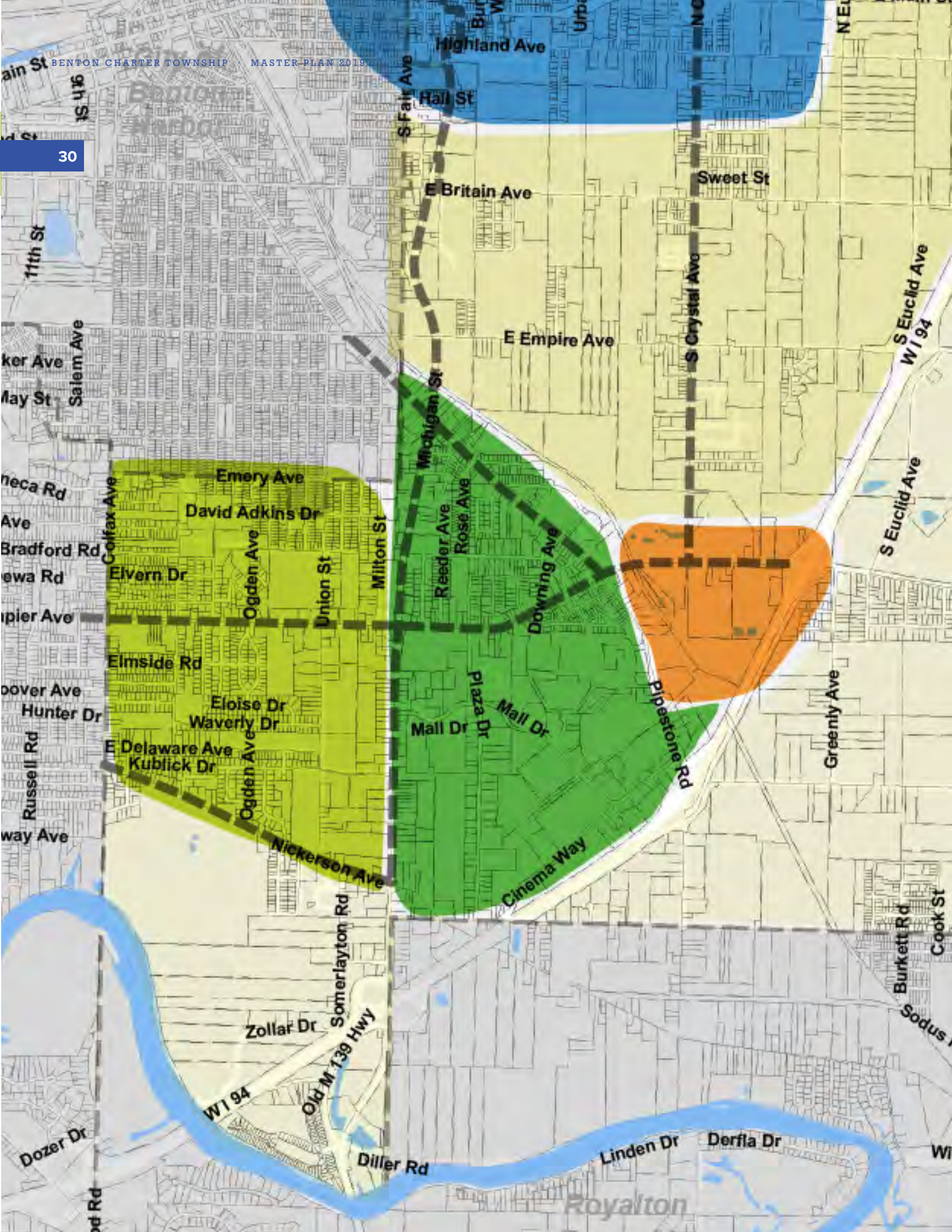
*"We need better stores – Ann Taylor, Loft, H&M, Forever 21, etc."*

*"When the mall closes, the plaza survives"*

*"Plant grass and trees in the area around the map. This helps to solve the Ox creek pollution problem with runoff."*

*"Try start up incubators with, hopefully, some venture capital funds to create home grown new entities"*







# Fairplain



## GOALS

- » *Maintain this area’s overall strong sense of neighborhood.*
- » *Establish the intersection of Napier Avenue and Colfax Avenue as the neighborhood center.*
- » *Establish/maintain non-motorized connections between the neighborhood and area activity centers, such as schools/parks and Napier Avenue destinations.*

Lakeview

Main Street Gateway

Ox Creek

Fairplain

Wine Trail Corners

Crystal Springs

Quality Growth Area

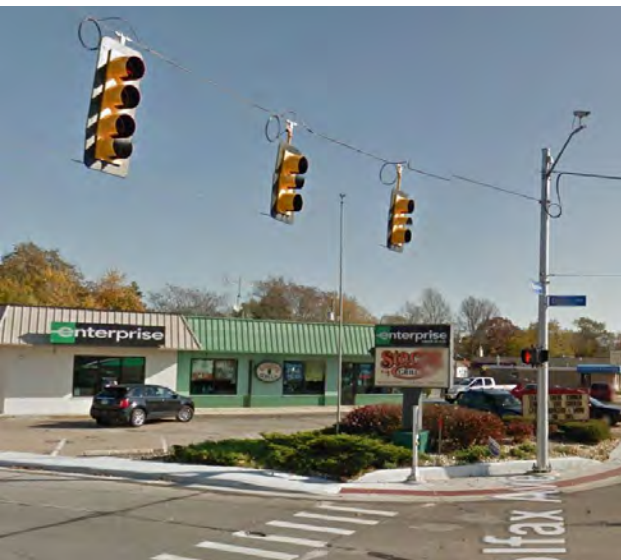
Quality Rural Area

Key Corridors

## CHARACTER (ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES)

The Fairplain Character Area is located on the southwestern edge of the Township. This established neighborhood not only includes a portion of Benton Charter Township, but also consists of that portion of St. Joseph Charter Township lying northeast of the St. Joseph River. This area evolved into a residential district after World War II, with many stately homes overlooking the River on the west side of the neighborhood and traditional postwar suburban subdivisions located to the east in Benton Charter Township. This character area has a strong grid system with small streets and single-family lots, each contributing to the area's vibrant neighborhood-focused residential character. There are few existing businesses located along Napier Avenue and Colfax Avenue, with institutional uses like churches and schools scattered throughout the neighborhood.

Future development within this character area should focus on maintaining the area's strong sense of neighborhood culture, and strengthening neighborhood scale commercial and service destinations.



## DESIGN

- » Future residential development should occur within or mimicking the existing grid structure.
- » A mix of housing types and densities should be allowed in areas where they can blend seamlessly with the existing single-family neighborhood.
- » Neighborhood-scale commercial and service destinations should be directed to the business district at the intersection of Napier Avenue and Colfax Avenue.
- » New commercial development should be located and designed in strong consideration of sustaining a small neighborhood center.
- » A sidewalk network plan should be developed for the area and implemented through site development reviews and at the time of new construction.



# Fairplain

33

## FUNCTION

The Fairplain Character Area represents a well-established and vibrant residential area in the Township and provides the community with strong neighborhood-based housing options. Its proximity to the Cities of Benton Harbor and St Joseph and the Ox Creek development area also allows this neighborhood to function as a necessary residential component of the nearby urban center.

## MOBILITY

Residential streets within the Fairplain Character Area should be designed for slow traffic and easy pedestrian and bicycle usage. New streets should form a connected, logical pattern with as many connections to the existing street system as possible.

New non-motorized pathways should be incorporated consistent with the Napier Avenue Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan.

## PUBLIC FEEDBACK

Residents expressed desires for increased non-motorized infrastructure within the Fairplain Area. Stakeholders envisioned a neighborhood connected by pathways that lead to destinations along Napier and connect the neighborhood to the major destinations within the Ox Creek/Orchards Mall area. Stakeholders also expressed a desire for mixed use housing and retail along major corridors.

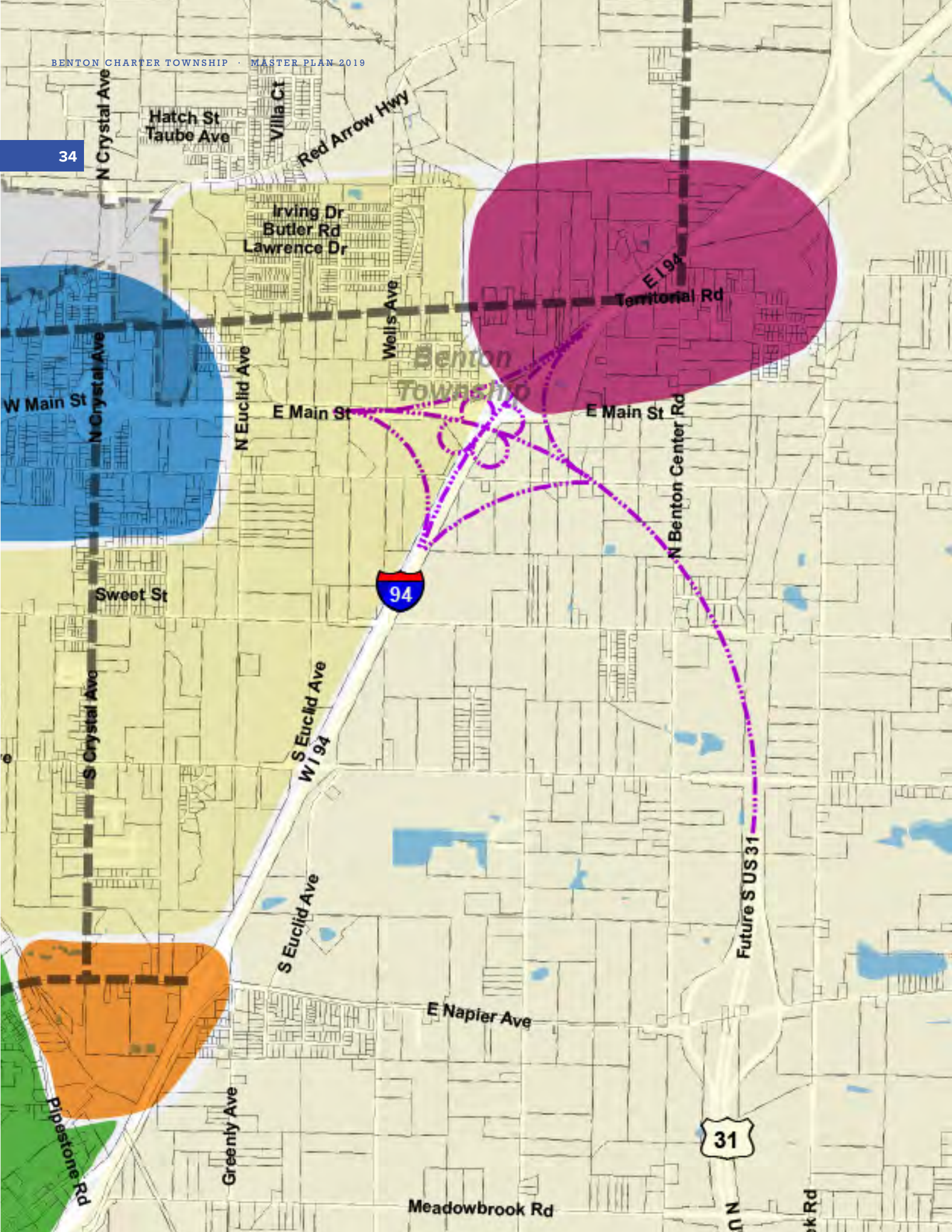


*“More bicycle paths!!”*

*“The commercial areas need to be enhanced from strip development to a sense of place (gathering spot). Also, the commercial district needs to provide better non-motorized access and connection”*

*“The area has a high demand for multifamily complexes with amenities or near first class recreational facilities “*







# Wine Trail Corners

35



## GOALS

- » *Recognize the larger area's federal designation as the Lake Michigan Shore American Viticultural Area.*
- » *Build off the Wine Trail Designation of Benton Center Road to support and highlight the Township's agritourism destinations.*
- » *Establish the intersection of Benton Center Road and Territorial Road as the 'hub' of the Township's agritourism industry.*
- » *Recognize Territorial Road as the key corridor that connects the urban core to the area's agritourism.*
- » *Recognize the messaging value of the area's proximity to I-94 / I-196 / US-31.*

- Lakeview
- Main Street Gateway
- Ox Creek
- Fairplain
- Wine Trail Corners
- Crystal Springs
- Quality Growth Area
- Quality Rural Area

■ ■ ■ Key Corridors

## CHARACTER

The Lake Michigan Shore Wine Trail is a collection and collaboration of 20 distinct wineries located within the beach towns of West Michigan. Benton Charter Township's Wine Trail Designation is an asset as it benefits from the region's travel and agritourism marketing efforts. The Wine Trail Corners Character Area should build off the Township's Wine Trail Designation. Located at the intersection of Benton Center Road and Territorial Road, the area, though not developed now, is primed to become the hub of the Township's agritourism industry.



## DESIGN

- » Additional agritourism destinations, like wineries, orchards, and farm stands should be located along Benton Center Road and Territorial Road.
- » The intersection of Benton Center Road and Territorial Road should feature land use that complements the Township's agritourism destinations and provides services to area travelers.
- » A branding scheme should be utilized to establish a sense of place at the '4-corners'.
- » Wayfinding signs should be used to provide a clear connection between the Cities of Benton Harbor/St. Joseph and Wine Trail Corners for local and regional travelers.
- » Site development within the '4-corners' should include design elements that cater to non-motorized travel.

# Wine Trail Corners

37

## FUNCTION

The Wine Trail Corners Character Area represents the only 'character area' situated within the Quality Rural Area of the Township. Though it stands out as a 'character area' because of its advantageous situation in relation to valuable regional and local destinations, it also functions as the 'starting point' at which to collect travelers to the area (from I-94/I-196 or nearby destinations) and direct them westward along the Territorial Road corridor to the Cities of Benton Harbor and St Joseph and the Lake Michigan coast.

## MOBILITY

All roads within this area should incorporate context-sensitive complete streets which would include drainage, paved shoulders, and/or sidepaths. Benton Center Road and Territorial Road should be developed to safely accommodate vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic. These roads should include non-motorized pathways (or at least paved shoulders) that connect the Wine Trail Corners Character Area to other assets within the rural areas of the Township (Sarett Nature Center) and to the population and commercial centers (Fairplain) to the west.

## PUBLIC FEEDBACK

Stakeholders expressed interest in celebrating the Township's agricultural assets. Agritourism ideas were provided by residents and included the support of Bed and Breakfast Inns, Community Gardens, and U-Pick Farms.

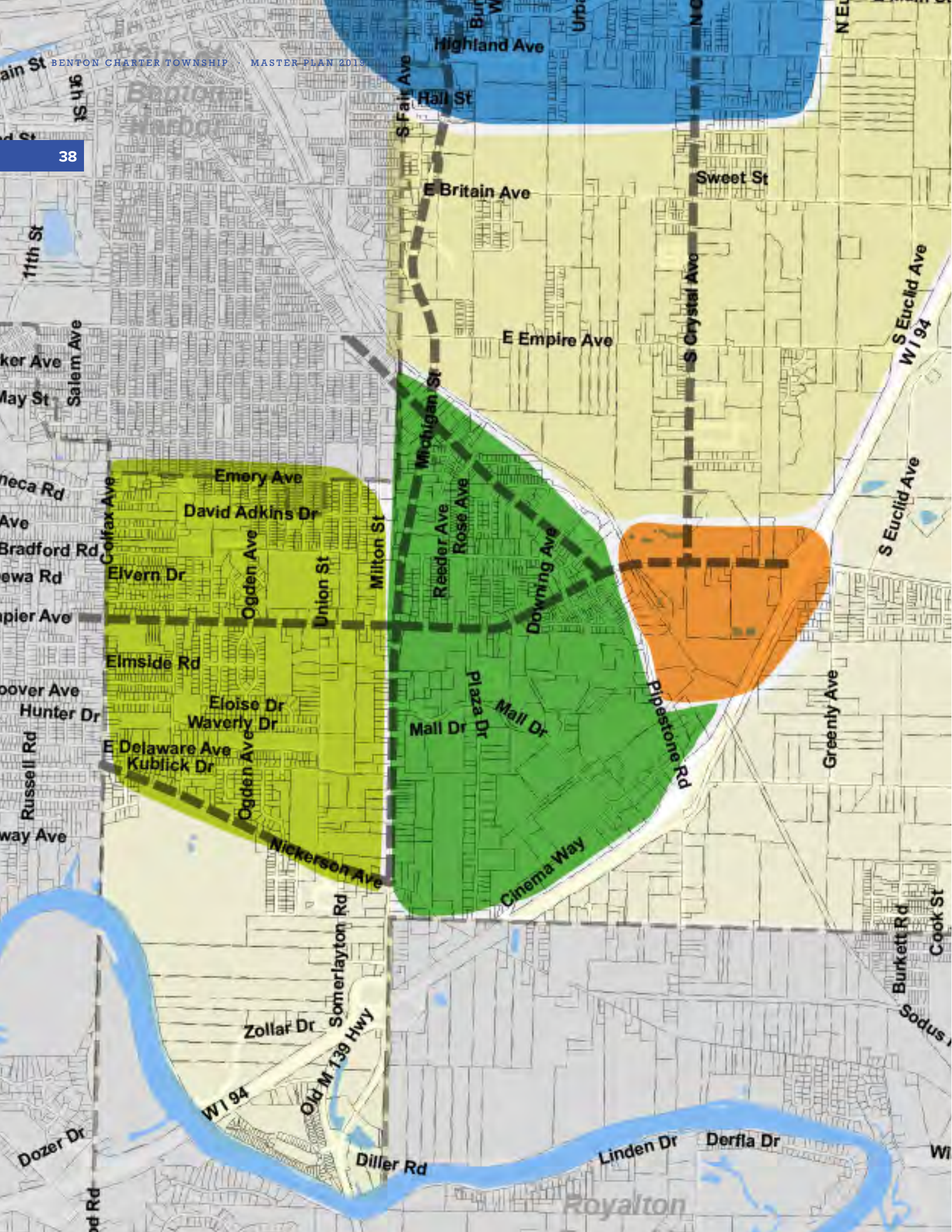
*"Continue to enhance the wine production of the area. This will also lead to more tourism year-round."*

*"Pay attention to the Millennial generation and what interests them. Things like Renewable energy, organic & locally grown foods, the Internet, and lifestyle balance."*

*"Consider non-motorized travel paths through the north part of the township, south of the Paw Paw river... (12 corners, Sarett Nature Center, etc.) Perhaps via easements or dedicated bike lanes, etc."*









# Crystal Springs

39



## GOALS

- » *Recognize that this interchange represents an 'entry' point into the Township and should be used to introduce the traveler to the larger community.*
- » *Strike a balance between respecting the peaceful landscape of the area's cemeteries and the encroachment eastward of commercial development.*
- » *Redevelop existing commercial interchange sites prior to the expansion of commercial development onto undeveloped sites.*

- Lakeview
- Main Street Gateway
- Ox Creek
- Fairplain
- Wine Trail Corners
- Crystal Springs
- Quality Growth Area
- Quality Rural Area

■ ■ ■ Key Corridors

## CHARACTER (ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES)

The Crystal Springs Character Area extends on either side of I-94 along Napier Avenue until it reaches the Quality Rural Area to the east and the Ox Creek Character Area to the west. This area serves as a transition from the intensive development of Ox Creek to the rural area. However, as it exists now, Napier Avenue serves as an extension of US-31, connecting travelers to St. Joseph. Napier Avenue should be redesigned once the US-31 designation is removed as envisioned in the Napier Avenue Corridor Study. Future development should balance both the peaceful landscape of the adjacent cemeteries and the potential for encroaching commercial development.



## DESIGN

- » New commercial land use should be directed first to interchange redevelopment sites.
- » New development sites should provide open space and landscape elements that are in character with the area's existing cemetery landscape.
- » Limited access and cross-access arrangements should be required to maintain the low density character of this important gateway corridor.
- » Signage should be responsive to this area's role as a community entry point.



# Crystal Springs

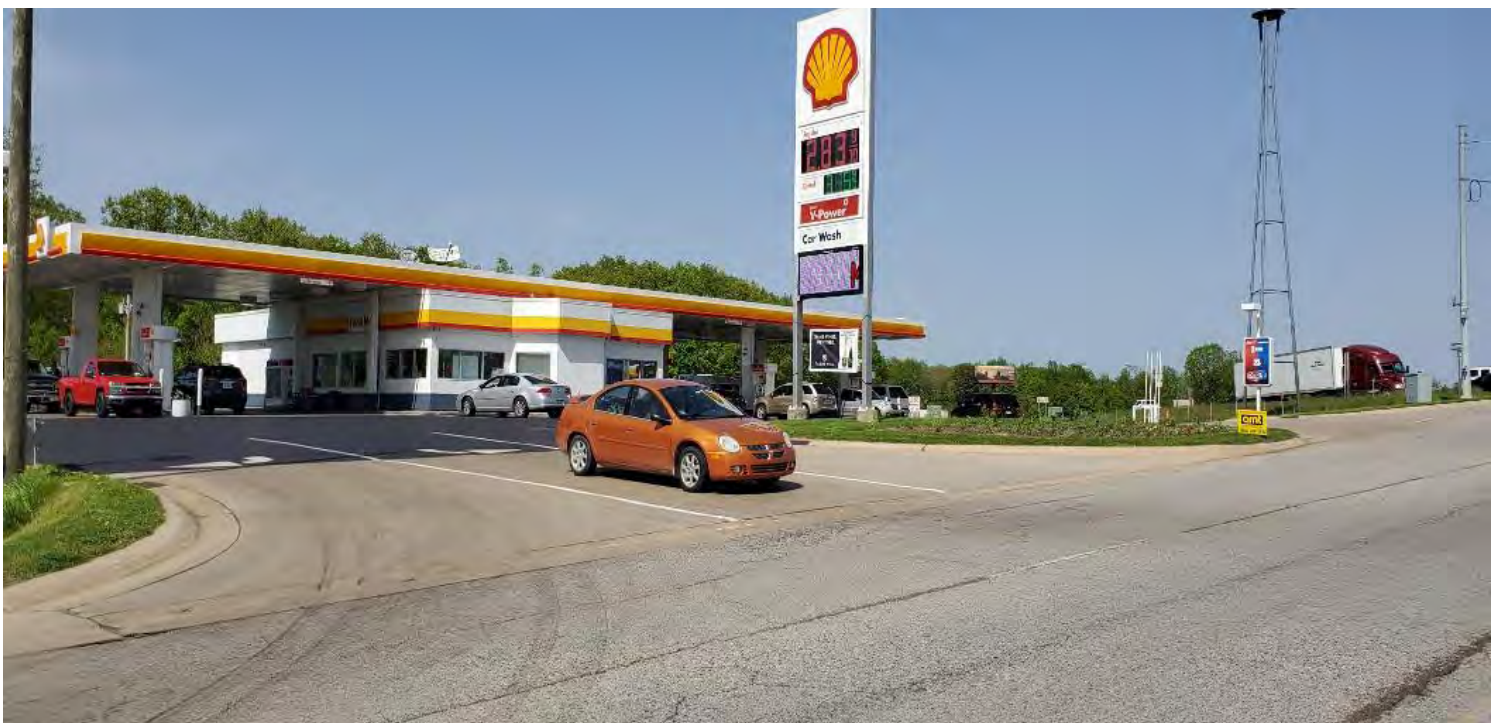
41

## FUNCTION

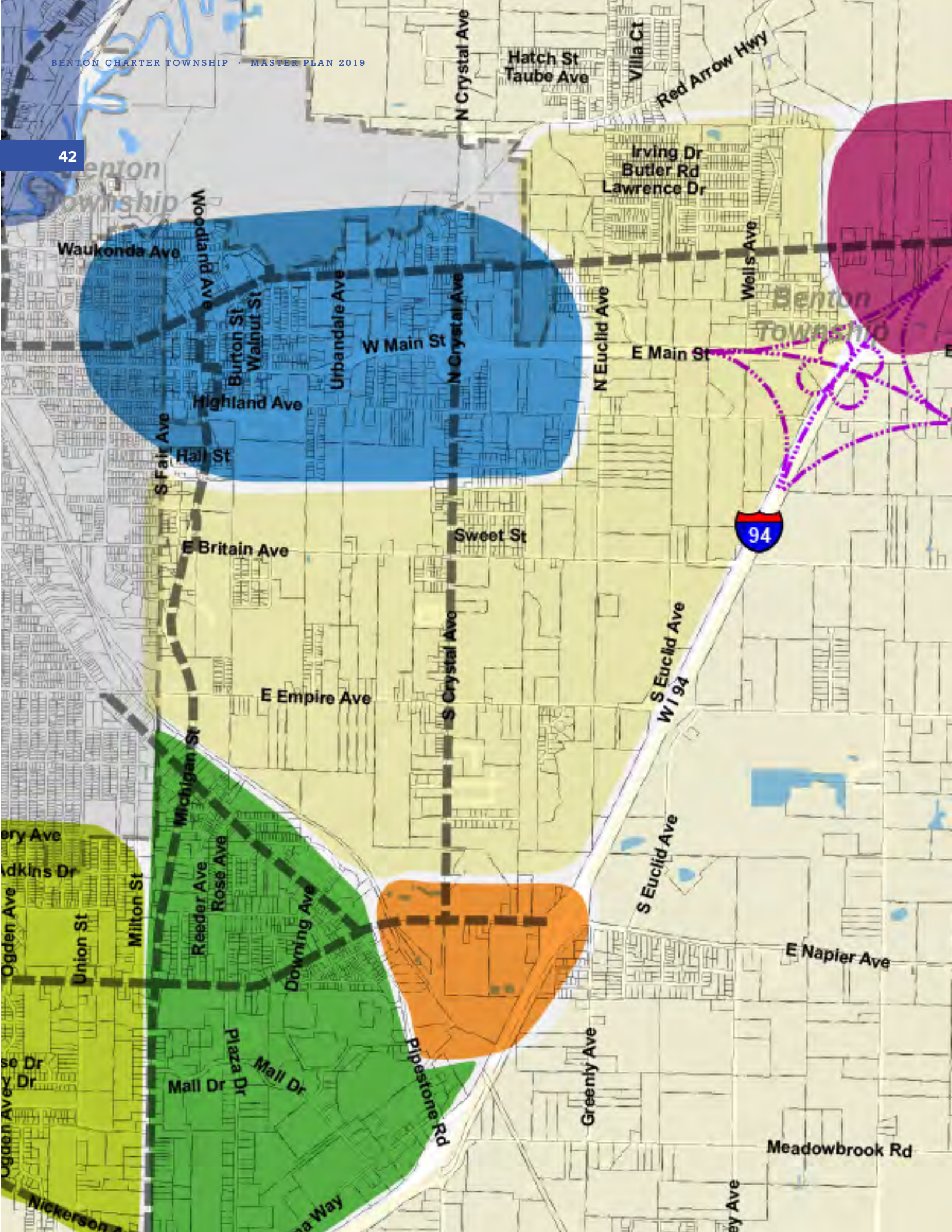
The Crystal Springs Character Area represents a key entry point into Benton Charter Township; the regional commercial center of Ox Creek; and, essentially, the City of Benton Harbor and the City of St Joseph. As a largely undeveloped gateway area, it is positioned well for land use arrangements and site designs that are advantageous to promoting the community.

## MOBILITY

The Crystal Springs Character Area is centered by Napier Avenue and bounded by Crystal Avenue and I-94. There are few existing connecting collector roads within the area. Future development sites should be designed so as to incorporate shared access drives and connections between parcels ("cross access") in order to reduce the number of curb cuts onto the corridors. The streetscape should be well designed and landscaped. Street connections and/or pedestrian connections should be provided between commercial areas and adjacent neighborhoods, and the Napier overpass should be upgraded to provide better safety for cyclists (and, less often, pedestrians) crossing I-94.









# Quality Growth Area

43



## GOALS

- » *Provide for growth areas within the Township that will result in compatible development arrangements that take advantage of existing infrastructure.*
- » *Establish growth areas within the Township that consider the function and character of existing Community Character Areas and Township corridors.*
- » *Identify growth areas that will complement and function with existing land use patterns in the adjacent communities.*

- Lakeview
- Main Street Gateway
- Ox Creek
- Fairplain
- Wine Trail Corners
- Crystal Springs
- Quality Growth Area
- Quality Rural Area

— — — Key Corridors

## CHARACTER (ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES)

The Quality Growth Area is connected to each of the community character areas and represent an area well-positioned and logical for future development. Currently, the neighborhoods in these growth areas are underdeveloped and lack a unifying character. However, with careful planning and development, these areas can grow and function as extensions of the adjacent community character areas. Targeting growth within these areas will serve to protect and preserve the Quality Rural Area from sprawl and over-development. In addition, by funneling development to the character areas and the growth area, resources and placemaking efforts can be focused where destinations and population centers already exist and public infrastructure can be provided in a cost-effective manner (See Schematic: Target Placemaking in Centers and Key Corridors – pg 9).





# Quality Growth Area

45

## DESIGN

- » New development and redevelopment should be targeted to key corridors within the Quality Growth Area near existing centers.
- » The intensity, orientation and design of development/redevelopment will be guided by the Master Plan design objectives and existing development patterns of the adjacent Community Character Area(s).
- » Efficient motorized travel, safe and convenient non-motorized travel, shared access arrangements and coordinated streetscape design remain primary objectives for the three key corridors in the Quality Growth Areas: Territorial Road, S. Crystal Avenue, and M-139.

## FUNCTION

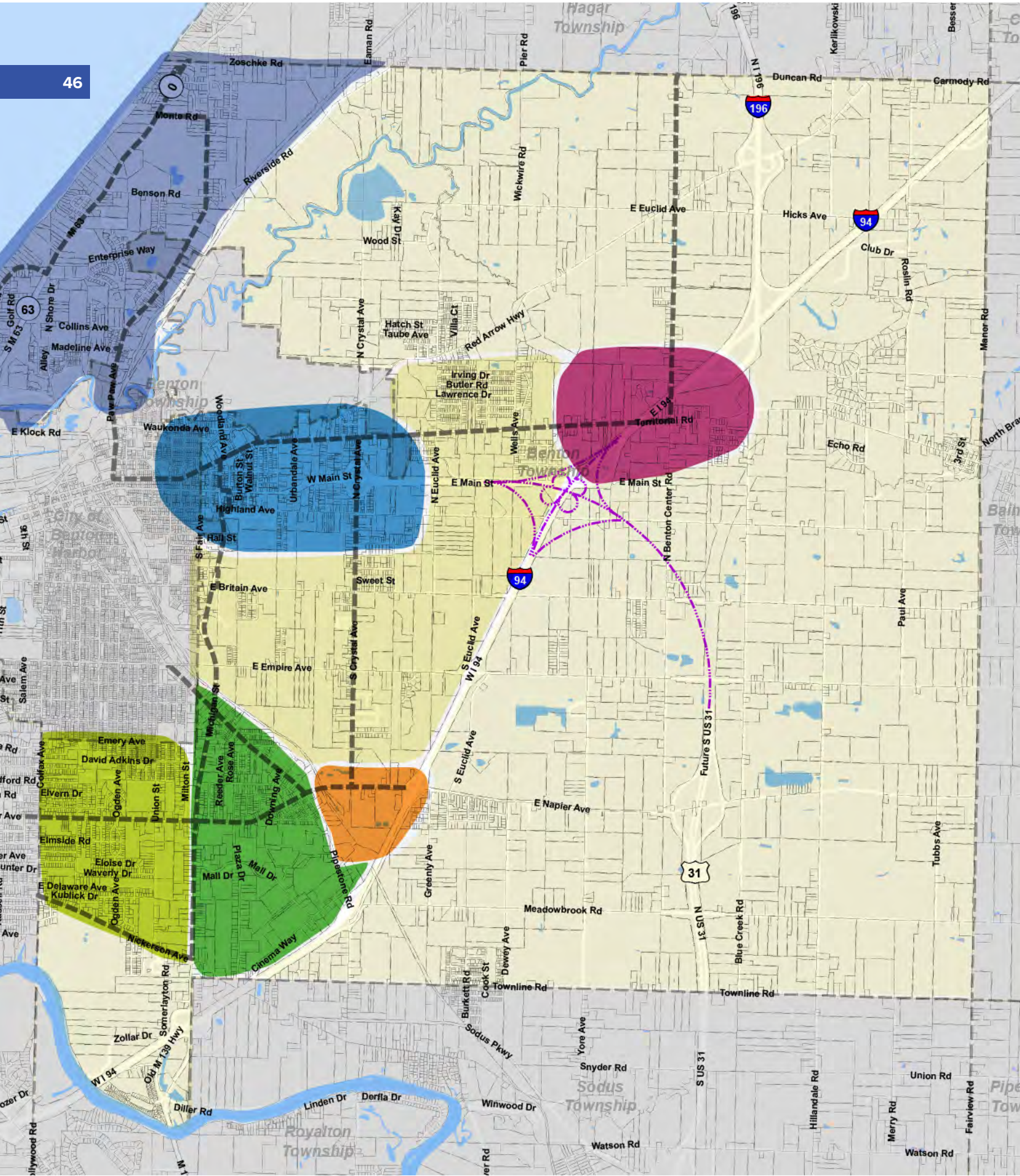
The Quality Growth Areas is envisioned to be logical and planned extensions of the adjacent community character areas upon build-out. This focus for new development allows for the protection of the Quality Rural Area from sprawl and the loss of natural assets, as well as the ability to focus resources and efforts in areas where population centers and infrastructure already exists.

## MOBILITY

The Quality Growth Area is connected to each community character area via major corridors of Territorial Road, Crystal Avenue, Martin Luther King Drive, Pipestone Road, and Paw Paw Ave. New residential and commercial development should connect to the street grid of the existing neighborhoods and adjacent community character areas. Streets within any new development must connect in a logical (preferably gridded) pattern. Sites should be so designed as to incorporate shared access drives and connections between parcels (“cross access”) in order to reduce the number of curb-cuts onto the street. The streetscape should be well designed and landscaped. Street connections and/or pedestrian connections should be provided between commercial areas and adjacent neighborhoods.









# Quality Rural Area

47



## GOALS

- » *Preserve the character of the Quality Rural Area.*
- » *Limit infrastructure upgrades and discourage intensive development in this area.*
- » *Increase access to this area through recreational opportunities and non-motorized transportation.*
- » *Realize renewable energy opportunities within the rural area, including harnessing alternative energy sources.*

- Lakeview
- Main Street Gateway
- Ox Creek
- Fairplain
- Wine Trail Corners
- Crystal Springs
- Quality Growth Area
- Quality Rural Area

— — — Key Corridors



## CHARACTER (ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES)

The Quality Rural Area, located to the east of I-94 and in the northern edges of the Township, represents the traditional rural character of the Township. This area encompasses a variety of uses ranging from agriculture, to recreation, to institutional, to low-density suburban housing. Ultimately, the Quality Rural Area within the Township presents a cohesive vision for a natural, green, and quiet area. Infrastructure upgrades should be limited and intensive development should be strongly discouraged. Efforts should be made to increase access to and within rural areas through recreational opportunities and non-motorized transportation.

To preserve the quality rural characterization, low intensity development should be encouraged only in areas adjacent to the proposed US-31 completion. This area near the highway could function as a community gathering space to celebrate the historical and rural character of the Township. Uses could include community gardening space, recreation destinations, and/or an open air/farmer's market.



## DESIGN

- » A range of low density residential development options that focus on clustering and open space preservation should be offered.
- » Land consumptive residential development patterns should not be allowed.
- » Nonresidential land use options should focus on agricultural, agritourism, renewable energy, and recreation activities.
- » Natural features preservation should be a key design component of any land use activity in the rural area.

# Quality Rural Area

49

## FUNCTION

The Quality Rural Area comprises the majority of the Township's land area and has established agriculture and agritourism as a primary economic driver in Benton Charter Township. This area joins nicely the agricultural and rural areas of the adjacent Townships in establishing the agricultural and rural base of the larger community and region.

## MOBILITY

The quality rural area is served by east/west and north/south routes at mile intervals, with Highland Avenue, Britain Avenue, and Empire Avenue connecting from the City of Benton Harbor to Bainbridge Township. Several north/south connections are disjointed due to US-31, I-94, and I-196.

Future roadway development and expansion within this area should implement a "rural complete streets" approach which is context sensitive and likely incorporate drainage ditches and paved shoulders or sidepaths. An emphasis should be placed on making non-motorized connections to open space in the northern portion of the township. Connections to assets like the Paw Paw River, 12 Corners Winery, and Sarett Nature Center can promote vibrancy and a sense of place within the Quality Rural Area.

## PUBLIC FEEDBACK

Stakeholders recognized the importance of the Quality Rural Area within the Township, specifically maintaining and incentivizing best practices in environmentally friendly farming and utilizing rural areas for green energy farming, like wind and solar. Stakeholders also expressed the desire to highlight the Township's agricultural tourism opportunities like the event venues, retreat centers, and community gardens.



*"Small family farms are important to this area. Promote them, don't destroy them with corporation farms and food deserts!"*

*"Leave the land vacant for agricultural uses."*

*"Renewable energy incentives for property owners who are good Stewards of the land."*

*"The best tasting fruit and vegetables in the world are found right here! Support our small farm heritage, and stop paving over our precious resources with parking lots, brick and mortar buildings, and old school thinking!"*







## 3. ACTION PLAN

## Zoning Plan

A Zoning Plan is required by the Michigan Planning and Zoning Enabling Acts. Section 33(d) of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, PA 33 of 2008, as amended, requires that the Master Plan prepared under that act shall serve as the basis for the community's zoning plan. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, PA 110 of 2006, as amended, requires a zoning plan to be prepared as the basis for the Zoning Ordinance. The zoning plan must be based on an inventory of conditions pertinent to zoning in the municipality and the purposes for which zoning may be adopted (as described in Section 201 of the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act). The zoning plan identifies the zoning districts and their purposes, as well as the basic standards proposed to control the height, area, bulk, location, and use of buildings and premises in the Township. These matters are regulated by the specific provisions in the Zoning Ordinance.

The zoning plan is a key implementation tool to achieve the vision of the Master Plan. In order to realize that vision, the Township must ensure that ordinances and regulations permit the type and style of development recommended by the Master Plan.

This section outlines the zoning plan for the Township. The zoning districts in the Township are described and their relationship to the Master Plan discussed along with recommended changes to the Zoning Ordinance to integrate new land use designations.





# Lakeview

	VISION	APPROPRIATE DISTRICTS	RECOMMENDED ZONING AMENDMENTS
<b>RESIDENTIAL</b>	<p>The Lakeview Character Area should include high-quality residences that provide access to the abundant natural beauty of the lake, river, area waterways, and sandy beaches.</p> <p>Residential development should be encouraged in places where infrastructure is appropriate and environmentally sensitive areas will not be negatively impacted.</p> <p>Missing middle or denser housing types should be encouraged where they can be easily integrated into the existing character of the district, where they will not burden infrastructure or environmentally sensitive areas, and where their residents can enjoy the benefits of the natural beauty of the area.</p>	<p><b>A-1</b></p> <p><b>A-2</b></p> <p><b>B</b></p> <p><b>C</b></p>	<p>Consider an overlay district that protects the Lake Michigan shoreline and the Paw Paw River Watershed.</p> <p>Consider an overlay district that requires site design and architectural standards for missing middle/multi-family housing developments, in order to ensure compatibility with the existing character.</p> <p>Consider requiring non-motorized pathways within all new developments, and requiring non-motorized pathways and bike paths along major roads adjacent to new developments.</p>
<b>COMMERCIAL / OFFICE</b>	<p>The Lakeview Character area should include small-scale neighborhood commercial uses along major roads, such as portions of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M-63</li> <li>• Paw Paw Avenue</li> <li>• Riverside Road</li> <li>• North Shore Drive</li> <li>• Benson Road</li> </ul> <p>The Whirlpool Lakeview Campus should be encouraged to expand and improve within its current boundaries, and could be allowed to expand onto nearby properties, if designed to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.</p>	<p><b>D-1</b></p> <p><b>D-2</b></p>	<p>Consider an overlay district for site design and architectural standards to ensure commercial development maintains the character of the area.</p> <p>Consider requiring non-motorized pathways and/or bike paths along major roads adjacent to new developments.</p>

The images on this page are aspirational and designed to illustrate the concepts. They are not meant to inform zoning decisions in and of themselves.



# Lakeview

55

VISION	APPROPRIATE DISTRICTS	RECOMMENDED ZONING AMENDMENTS	OPEN SPACE
<p>The Lakeview Character Area should maintain its current natural beauty, including protecting the lakefront and the river. Retaining natural areas within development should be encouraged.</p>	<p><b>A-A</b></p>	<p>Consider natural features and environmentally sensitive areas when considering rezoning to categories other than A-A.</p> <p>Consider creating a High Risk Erosion Protection Ordinance.</p> <p>Consider an overlay district that protects the lakeshore, and the Paw Paw River Watershed.</p>	

*The images on this page are aspirational and designed to illustrate the concepts. They are not meant to inform zoning decisions in and of themselves.*



# Main Street Gateway

	VISION	APPROPRIATE DISTRICTS	RECOMMENDED ZONING AMENDMENTS
<b>RESIDENTIAL</b>	<p>The Main Street Gateway Character Area should include a wide variety of housing types built within the existing neighborhood grid, or in new developments that mimic the existing character and development pattern, including the gridded and highly connected street system. Lot sizes should be similar to the existing neighborhoods. Single family development should be A-2, not A-1, to ensure appropriate lot sizes and density.</p> <p>Residential development should be encouraged throughout the character area.</p> <p>Missing middle or denser housing types are highly appropriate for this district, but should be located in logical places where they can seamlessly interact with adjacent single family residences. Appropriate locations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Along major corridors (Main, Britain, Crystal, Euclid, Territorial, Highland, and Martin Luther King).</li> <li>• At intersections within neighborhoods.</li> </ul> <p>However, this plan does not support tearing down buildings that are occupied and in good condition in order to build new housing. Infill housing should be built on empty lots or to replace vacant buildings.</p>	<p><b>A-2</b></p> <p><b>B</b></p> <p><b>C</b></p>	<p>Consider creating a new district that is a hybrid of the A-2, B, and C districts that could be used throughout residential areas in the Main Street Gateway, allowing additional density in appropriate locations, like intersections and major corridor.</p> <p>Investigate existing setback and lot sizes within the neighborhoods and consider exempting older properties from being dimensional non-conformities, if necessary, in order to encourage investment and ensure that home improvements can be financed.</p> <p>Require the building of non-motorized pathways with new development, along all roads.</p>
<b>COMMERCIAL / OFFICE</b>	<p>The Main Street Gateway Character Area contains existing business districts along Main Street and Territorial Road. These districts should be supported and expanded.</p> <p>Mixed-use developments should be allowed along existing commercial corridors, such as Main Street and Territorial Road, with commercial uses on the first floor and residential or office uses above.</p>	<p><b>New Zoning District</b></p>	<p>A new zoning district should be created to encourage the desired development pattern.</p> <p>Relax or eliminate setback and minimum parking requirements within the Main Street Gateway, in order to encourage more urban-style and mixed-use development.</p> <p>Allow residential uses as part of mixed-use developments.</p> <p>Consider a Form-Based Code for the new zoning district.</p> <p>Require the building of non-motorized pathways with new development, along all roads.</p>



# Main Street Gateway

57

VISION	APPROPRIATE DISTRICTS	RECOMMENDED ZONING AMENDMENTS	
<p>The existing industrial district along Territorial Road and Urbandale Avenue should be maintained and improved, provided that it does not negatively impact nearby residential.</p> <p>Outside of that area, no industrial or manufacturing zoning should be established.</p>	<b>E</b>	Add additional screening and buffering requirements for business uses that are adjacent to residential uses.	<b>INDUSTRIAL / MANUFACTURING</b>
<p>Generally, the Main Street Gateway Character Area is envisioned to be fully built-out as a cohesive walkable neighborhood. However, environmentally sensitive areas should be preserved where necessary.</p>	<b>None</b>	No land in this Character Area should be zoned A-A.	<b>OPEN SPACE</b>

*The images on this page are aspirational and designed to illustrate the concepts. They are not meant to inform zoning decisions in and of themselves.*



# Ox Creek

	VISION	APPROPRIATE DISTRICTS	RECOMMENDED ZONING AMENDMENTS
<b>RESIDENTIAL</b>	<p>Residential development in the Ox Creek Character Area should be limited to the portions of the district that will not be negatively impacted by high-intensity commercial and industrial development.</p> <p>However, additional residential development is important in creating a lively 24-hour district.</p> <p>The type and character of residential development should be determined by the surroundings. Areas nearby to major roads and intensive uses should have higher residential densities, while more secluded areas could have single-family.</p>	<p><b>A-1</b></p> <p><b>A-2</b></p> <p><b>B</b></p> <p><b>C</b></p>	<p>Develop screening standards that ensure that residential development is appropriately screened and buffered from intense commercial and industrial uses.</p>
<b>COMMERCIAL / OFFICE</b>	<p>The Ox Creek Character Area is a regional shopping and dining destination that has the potential to be enlivened and improved. Emphasis should be on creating a sense of place and a high-quality shopping center, rather than merely a collection of highway-adjacent businesses.</p> <p>Mixed-use developments should be allowed along existing commercial corridors, such as Napier Avenue and Pipestone Road, with commercial uses on the first floor and residential or office uses above.</p>	<p><b>D-1</b></p> <p><b>D-2</b></p> <p><b>New Zoning District</b></p>	<p>Enhance the requirements for landscaping, lighting, and site-design, to ensure a high-quality shopping center that can attract and retain tenants.</p> <p>Consider requiring pedestrian infrastructure and amenities with new development.</p> <p>Ensure that public transportation riders have a safe and attractive place to wait for buses.</p>

The images on this page are aspirational and designed to illustrate the concepts. They are not meant to inform zoning decisions in and of themselves.





## Ox Creek

59

VISION	APPROPRIATE DISTRICTS	RECOMMENDED ZONING AMENDMENTS	
The Ox Creek Character Area contains the Township's premier industrial and manufacturing district. It should be enhanced, improved, and marketed to new businesses.	<b>E</b> <b>F</b>	Add additional screening and buffering requirements for business uses that are adjacent to residential uses.	<b>INDUSTRIAL / MANUFACTURING</b>
Generally, the Ox Creek Character Area is envisioned to be fully built-out as a high-quality district for high-intensity uses. However, environmentally sensitive areas should be preserved where they exist.	<b>None</b>	No land in this Character Area should be zoned A-A, unless it is entirely contained within a flood plain or wetland.  Develop an overlay district designed specifically to implement the Ox Creek Watershed Plan.	<b>OPEN SPACE</b>

*The images on this page are aspirational and designed to illustrate the concepts. They are not meant to inform zoning decisions in and of themselves.*





# Fairplain

	VISION	APPROPRIATE DISTRICTS	RECOMMENDED ZONING AMENDMENTS
<b>RESIDENTIAL</b>	<p>The Fairplain Character Area should include a wide variety of housing types built within the existing neighborhood grid, or in new developments that mimic the existing character and development pattern, including the gridded and highly connected street system. Lot sizes should be similar to the existing neighborhoods. Single family development should be A-2, not A-1, to ensure appropriate lot sizes and density.</p> <p>Residential development should be encouraged throughout the character area.</p> <p>Missing middle or denser housing types are highly appropriate for this district, but should be located in logical places where they can seamlessly interact with adjacent single family residences. Appropriate locations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Along major corridors (Colfax, Napier, Nickerson, Union, Scottdale).</li> <li>• At intersections within neighborhoods.</li> </ul> <p>However, this plan does not support tearing down buildings that are occupied and in good condition in order to build new housing. Infill housing should be built on empty lots or to replace vacant buildings.</p>	<p><b>A-2</b></p> <p><b>B</b></p> <p><b>C</b></p>	<p>Consider creating a new district that is a hybrid of the A-2, B, and C districts that could be used throughout residential areas in the Fairplain Character Area, allowing additional density in appropriate locations, like intersections and major corridors.</p> <p>Investigate existing setback and lot sizes within the neighborhoods and consider exempting older properties from being dimensional non-conformities, if necessary, in order to encourage investment and ensure that home improvements can be financed.</p> <p>Require the building of non-motorized pathways with new development, along all roads.</p>
<b>COMMERCIAL / OFFICE</b>	<p>The Fairplain Character Area contains existing business district along Napier Avenue and Colfax Avenue, although the west side of the business district is in St. Joseph Township. This business district should be encouraged to become a true neighborhood center for Fairplain residents in both Townships, with both businesses and Renaissance Middle School creating foot traffic and vibrancy.</p> <p>Mixed-use developments should be allowed along Napier Avenue.</p>	<p><b>New</b></p>	<p>A new zoning district should be created to encourage the desired development pattern.</p> <p>Relax or eliminate setback and minimum parking requirements along Napier Avenue, in order to encourage more urban-style and mixed-use development.</p> <p>Allow residential uses as part of mixed-use developments.</p> <p>Consider a Form-Based Code for the new zoning district.</p> <p>Require the building of non-motorized pathways with new development, along all roads.</p>

# Fairplain

VISION	APPROPRIATE DISTRICTS	RECOMMENDED ZONING AMENDMENTS	
The Fairplain Character Area does not have any appropriate locations for industrial or manufacturing development. It should be discouraged, except for small scale production associated with commercial businesses.	None	Consider allowing small scale production associated with commercial uses.	INDUSTRIAL / MANUFACTURING
	None		OPEN SPACE

The images on this page are aspirational and designed to illustrate the concepts. They are not meant to inform zoning decisions in and of themselves.



# Crystal Springs

	VISION	APPROPRIATE DISTRICTS	RECOMMENDED ZONING AMENDMENTS
<b>RESIDENTIAL</b>	<p>The Crystal Springs Character Area is located near I-94, and therefore residential development in the area should be designed to withstand the possible negative impacts of the freeway.</p> <p>That means the two extremes of residential development are the most appropriate. Low density single family can buffer the highway with trees and distance, and is especially appropriate east of I-94, where the character area abuts the Quality Rural Area. On the other end of the spectrum, high density residential can use building and site design to offset negative impacts from the highway.</p> <p>Residential development should only be encouraged where I-94 and other nearby uses do not pose potential conflicts and where adequate utilities exist.</p>	<p><b>A-1</b></p> <p><b>C</b></p>	<p>Require residential developers to provide screening and buffering when adjacent to I-94.</p>
<b>COMMERCIAL / OFFICE</b>	<p>The Crystal Springs Character Area can become an expansion of the Ox Creek business area with similarly intense commercial development. However, the following must be kept in mind when approving rezonings and other zoning approvals in the area:</p> <p>Ox Creek itself should be protected and preserved. Development should not occur in the flood plain, and runoff into the creek should be prevented by site design and sound land use decisions.</p> <p>Commercial development should be limited to areas along Euclid Avenue.</p> <p>The cemeteries should be kept quiet and peace, with their existing natural surroundings preserved.</p>	<p><b>D-1</b></p> <p><b>D-2</b></p>	<p>Consider requiring setbacks from cemeteries, creeks and flood plains for new development in the D-1 and D-2 districts.</p> <p>Require high-quality landscaping, access, lighting, and other site design to maintain a quality gateway for the community.</p>

The images on this page are aspirational and designed to illustrate the concepts. They are not meant to inform zoning decisions in and of themselves.





# Crystal Springs

VISION	APPROPRIATE DISTRICTS	RECOMMENDED ZONING AMENDMENTS	
Light manufacturing and research and development could be appropriate, if the goals described in the Commercial/Office section above can be met despite the more intense use.	E	Add additional screening and buffering requirements for business uses that are adjacent to residential uses, cemeteries, and natural features such as creeks and flood plains.	INDUSTRIAL / MANUFACTURING
Ox Creek and its flood plain should be protected, including by zoning them A-A. This character area abuts the Quality Rural Area, so areas east of I-94 should reflect rural character, with intensive development restricted.	A-A		OPEN SPACE

The images on this page are aspirational and designed to illustrate the concepts. They are not meant to inform zoning decisions in and of themselves.



# Wine Trail Corners

	VISION	APPROPRIATE DISTRICTS	RECOMMENDED ZONING AMENDMENTS
<b>RESIDENTIAL</b>	Residential development in the Wine Trail Corners Area should reflect the character of the Quality Rural Area that surrounds it. Housing should be low density and blend naturally into the surrounding farmland and woodlands.	<b>A-1</b>	Consider creating a stringent open space preservation lot split system that prevents clear-cutting and encourages homes to cluster around wooded and natural areas.
<b>COMMERCIAL / OFFICE</b>	<p>Commercial development should be clustered around the corner of Benton Center and Territorial Roads, and should be designed in keeping with a “rural corner store” aesthetic.</p> <p>The intersection should be a welcoming gateway to the Township’s Wine Trail, and should support and enhance the wineries in the area.</p>	<b>D-1</b> <b>New Zoning District Or Overlay</b>	<p>While D-1 could work for this area, a new zoning district or overlay with design standards specifically for Wine Trail Corners may be more effective.</p> <p>Some of the design standards might be more restrictive than current zoning (such as architectural standards), but others might be less so, such as allowing unpaved parking lots.</p>

The images on this page are aspirational and designed to illustrate the concepts. They are not meant to inform zoning decisions in and of themselves.



# Wine Trail Corners

VISION	APPROPRIATE DISTRICTS	RECOMMENDED ZONING AMENDMENTS	
Small scale production, especially artisan production that will attract tourism, should be encouraged. However, large-scale manufacturing uses should not be allowed.	None	Consider allowing small scale production associated with commercial uses.	INDUSTRIAL / MANUFACTURING
Most of this character area should be preserved open space, similar to the Quality Rural Area that surrounds it. However, the corner of Benton Center and Territorial Roads should be a commercial node that forms the gateway to the Wine Trail.	A-A		OPEN SPACE

The images on this page are aspirational and designed to illustrate the concepts. They are not meant to inform zoning decisions in and of themselves.





# Quality Growth Area

	VISION	APPROPRIATE DISTRICTS	RECOMMENDED ZONING AMENDMENTS
<b>RESIDENTIAL</b>	<p>The Quality Growth Area should include a wide variety of housing types built within a newly constructed street grid that mimics the existing grids in the Main Street Gateway and Fairplain Character Areas. Deviations from a straight grid should be allowed to accommodate natural features and existing development, but the roads should form a connected, coherent pattern that allows residents to move easily throughout the new neighborhoods.</p> <p>Lot sizes should be similar to the adjacent neighborhoods. Single family development should be A-2, not A-1, to ensure appropriate lot sizes and density—and to allow growth while also protecting the Quality Rural Area from development pressure.</p> <p>Residential development should be encouraged throughout the Quality Growth Area, except along major thoroughfares, where commercial or office development would be more appropriate.</p> <p>Missing middle or denser housing types are highly appropriate for this district, but should be located in logical places where they can seamlessly interact with adjacent single-family residences.</p>	<p><b>A-2</b></p> <p><b>B</b></p> <p><b>C</b></p>	<p>Consider creating a new district that is a hybrid of the A-2, B, and C districts that could be used throughout residential areas in the Quality Growth Area, allowing additional density in appropriate locations, like intersections and major corridors.</p> <p>Investigate existing setback and lot sizes within the neighborhoods and consider exempting older properties from being dimensional non-conformities, if necessary, in order to encourage investment and ensure that home improvements can be financed.</p> <p>Require the building of non-motorized pathways with new development, along all roads.</p>
<b>COMMERCIAL / OFFICE</b>	<p>Commercial and office development should be encouraged along thoroughfares and at major intersections. Commercial development should be designed to be able to integrate seamlessly with nearby residential areas, including being part of mixed-use developments in places deemed appropriate by the Township.</p> <p>High intensity commercial uses, such as big box stores, are not appropriate for this area, and should be concentrated in the Ox Creek character area. D-2 zoning should be used judiciously and only in locations where negative impacts on existing or planned residential districts can be mitigated.</p>	<p><b>D-1</b></p> <p><b>D-2</b></p> <p><b>New Zoning District</b></p>	<p>The new zoning district recommended for the commercial portions of the Main Street Gateway and Fairplain Character Areas may be appropriate in some parts of the Quality Growth Area.</p>

*The images on this page are aspirational and designed to illustrate the concepts. They are not meant to inform zoning decisions in and of themselves.*



# Quality Growth Area

67

VISION	APPROPRIATE DISTRICTS	RECOMMENDED ZONING AMENDMENTS	
Manufacturing uses may be appropriate in the parts of the Quality Growth Area that are secluded from residential uses, especially near I-94 and the airport. When rezoning property to E or F, the Township should take into account the chilling effect that industrial development will have on nearby residential. If residential development is not determined to be desirable nearby, then E or F zoning could be approved.	<b>E</b> <b>F</b>	Consider allowing small scale production associated with commercial uses.	<b>INDUSTRIAL / MANUFACTURING</b>
<p>New neighborhoods should have parks and residential amenities within them, in a central location, easily accessible by foot or bike to most residents.</p> <p>The purpose of the Quality Growth Area is to allow for the development of certain undeveloped areas, so A-A zoning in this district should largely be considered a placeholder until development comes along that requires a different zoning classification.</p>	<b>A-A</b>		<b>OPEN SPACE</b>

*The images on this page are aspirational and designed to illustrate the concepts. They are not meant to inform zoning decisions in and of themselves.*



# Quality Rural Area

	VISION	APPROPRIATE DISTRICTS	RECOMMENDED ZONING AMENDMENTS
<b>RESIDENTIAL</b>	<p>Residential development should protect the rural quality of this Area. Housing should be low density and blend naturally into the surrounding farmland and woodlands. Large neighborhoods should be discouraged. Lot sizes should be large, preferably several acres, except in the case of open space preservation developments.</p> <p>A-1 zoning may be appropriate, but should not replace A-A except in areas that already have adequate water, sewer, and road infrastructure.</p> <p>A-2 zoning is only appropriate within the hamlet of Millburg.</p>	<p><b>A-1</b></p> <p><b>A-2 (Millburg ONLY)</b></p> <p><b>New Zoning District</b></p>	<p>Create a new “Rural Residential” zoning district that requires larger lots than A-1 and allows agri-tourism activity.</p> <p>Consider creating a stringent open space preservation lot split system that prevents clear-cutting and encourages homes to cluster around wooded and natural areas.</p>
<b>COMMERCIAL / OFFICE</b>	<p>Commercial development should be very low intensity, should be located only at major intersections, and should be designed in keeping with a “rural corner store” aesthetic.</p>	<p><b>D-1</b></p> <p><b>New Zoning District or Overlay</b></p>	<p>While the D-1 District could work for the Area, the new zoning district or overlay envisioned for Wine Trail Corners Character Area could also be appropriate in parts of the Quality Rural Area.</p> <p>The Commercial portion of Millburg could be zoned to the new district envisioned for Main Street Gateway and Fairplain Character Areas, or could be zoned D-1.</p>

The images on this page are aspirational and designed to illustrate the concepts. They are not meant to inform zoning decisions in and of themselves.





# Quality Rural Area

69

VISION	APPROPRIATE DISTRICTS	RECOMMENDED ZONING AMENDMENTS	
Small scale production, especially artisan production that will attract tourism, should be encouraged, including on agricultural or large residential lots. However, large-scale manufacturing uses, especially those that require infrastructure, should not be allowed.	<b>None</b>	Consider allowing small scale production associated with commercial uses.  Consider allowing property owners to engage in very small scale artisan production on large lots as a home occupation.	<b>INDUSTRIAL / MANUFACTURING</b>
The purpose of the Quality Rural Area is preserve open space, woodlands, natural vistas, and farmland. The vast majority of the district should be zoned A-A (except for Millburg), and rezonings to anything else should only be approved after careful consideration of the impact on the surroundings and the rural character.	<b>A-A</b>		<b>OPEN SPACE</b>

*The images on this page are aspirational and designed to illustrate the concepts. They are not meant to inform zoning decisions in and of themselves.*



# Action Plan Matrix

The tables on the following pages present a detailed summary of all the recommended implementation activities from the Plan document, including the party responsible for completing the activity, available funding resources, and a priority and timeline for each activity.

KEY				
Priority		Timeframe		Responsibility (Color)
A	Most Important	1	Within one year	Project Lead
B	Very Important	2	1-3 years	Key Participant
C	Important	3	3+ years	Contributor
		4	As available	
		5	Ongoing	

RESPONSIBILITY		FUNDING	
TB	Township Board	PUBLIC	Includes public funds from the City operating budget, County, and State funding, and may also include local government bonds and grants.
TS	Township Staff		
PC	Planning Commission	PRIVATE	Includes funds from private sources such as grant monies, corporate funding, or property owners.
PO	Property Owners		
BO	Business Owners	DDA/TIF	Tax increment financing provided by an authorized body.
BC	Berrien County		
NC	Neighboring Communities		
FED	US Federal Government		
SOM	State of Michigan		
PD	Private Developers		

## PLANNING AND ZONING

PROJECT	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY			FUNDING		
			TOWNSHIP	OTHER GOV'T	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE	DDA/TIF
Amend the Zoning Ordinance to require non-motorized pathways with all new developments, except in the Quality Rural Area.	A	1	PC TB			●		
Amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow small scale production uses associated with Community uses.	A	1	PC TB			●		
Investigate existing setback and lot sizes within the neighborhoods and consider exempting older properties from being dimensional non-conformities, if necessary, in order to encourage investment and ensure that home improvements can be financed.	A	1	PC TB			●		
Enhance the landscaping, lighting, and site design requirements of the D-1, D-2, E, and F districts.	A	1	PC TB			●		
Add a setback from cemeteries in the D-1, D-2, E, and F districts.	A	1	PC TB			●		
Create an Overlay District to protect the Lake Michigan Shoreline.	B	2	PC TB PO			●		
Create an Overlay District for the Lakeview Area to regulate the character and design of new developments in close proximity to Lake Michigan. (This may be combined with the Lake Michigan Shoreline Overlay)	B	2	PC TB PO			●		
Create a hybrid zoning district combining A-2, B, and C for the residential portions of the Main Street Gateway and Fairplain Character Areas.	B	2	PC TB PO			●		
Create a new Mixed-Use/Form Based Zoning District for the commercial corridors in the Main Street Gateway, Fairplain, and Ox Chreek Character Areas, and, where appropriate, the Quality Growth Areas.	B	2	PC TB PO			●		
Create a High Risk Erosion Protection Ordinance.	B	2	PC TB PO					
Amend the Zoning Ordinance and Rental Registry Policy to address short-term rentals.	B	2	PC TB PO			●		
Review and update this plan every five years.	C	5	PC TB			●		



## TRANSPORTATION

PROJECT	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY			FUNDING		
			TOWNSHIP	OTHER GOV'T	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE	DDA/TIF
Update the Township's CIP to reflect the priorities of this plan and being budgeting for the envisioned improvements.	A	1	TS PC TB			●		
Complete the connection between US-31 and I-94/Main Street.	A	2	TB	SOM FED		●		
Upgrade the section of US Bike Highway 35 through the Township, including routing it onto Rocky Gap Road and providing a shared use path along M-63.	A	2	TS TB	BC SOM FED	PO	●	●	●
Develop and, over time, implement a plan to construct non-motorized pathways on residential streets within the Fairplain and the Main Street Gateway Character Areas on roads where they do not already exist.	B	2	TS TB	BC SOM FED	PO	●	●	●
Upgrade pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure along Paw Paw Avenue.	B	3	TS TB	BC SOM FED	PO	●	●	●
Upgrade pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure along Territorial Road west of Crystal Avenue.	B	3	TS TB	BC SOM FED	PO	●	●	●
Upgrade pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure along Martin Luther King Drive and Fair Avenue.	B	3	TS TB	BC SOM FED	PO	●	●	●
Upgrade pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure along Napier Avenue west of Pipestone Road.	B	3	TS TB	BC SOM FED	PO	●	●	●
Upgrade pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure along Pipestone Road.	B	3	TS TB	BC SOM FED	PO	●	●	●
Upgrade pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure along Nickerson Avenue	B	3	TS TB	BC SOM FED	PO	●	●	●
Upgrade pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure along Crystal Avenue south of Territorial Road.	C	4	TS TB	BC SOM FED	PO	●	●	●
Build paved shoulders along Benton Center Road where they do not currently exist. Install signage encouraging cyclists to use them.	C	4	TS TB	BC SOM FED	PO	●	●	●
Build paved shoulders along Territorial Road, east of Crystal Avenue, where they do not currently exist. Install signage encouraging cyclists to use them.	C	4	TS TB	BC SOM FED	PO	●	●	●
Upgrade pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure along Napier Avenue east of Pipestone Road.	C	4	TS TB	BC SOM FED	PO	●	●	●

## PARKS AND RECREATION

PROJECT	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY			FUNDING		
			CITY	OTHER GOV'T	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE	DDA/TIF
Review and update the 2013-2018 Parks & Recreation Plan to maintain eligibility for grants and provide a guide for parks and recreation improvement efforts.	A	1	TS PC TB			●		
Activate the Parks Advisory Committee to provide oversight to the review and update of the Parks & Recreation Plan and to provide recommendations on parks programming and recreational issues.	B	1	TS TB			●		
Support community events and other activities in the Township parks and recreational lands.	A	1	TS PO BO			●	●	
Update the Township's CIP to reflect the priorities of the updated Parks & Recreation Plan.	A	1	TS PC TB			●		
Direct effort toward the completion/submission of grant applications to implement the updated Parks & Recreation Plan.	B	2	TS			●		







## 4. BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

## Existing Land Use

A basic foundation for any land use planning process is an analysis of how the land is currently being used. This analysis provides insight into the patterns within an area, the capacity of the area to support or accept future development, and the relationship among the various activities within the community.

The Existing Land Use Map illustrates the current land uses according to Township records and an aerial survey conducted by McKenna in October 2017. Table 1 shows the estimated acreage quantities for various land uses as shown on the map.

The land use patterns in Benton Charter Township are affected by geographic factors including major transportation corridors, the presence of Lake Michigan, agricultural history in the Township, land division patterns, and proximity to the Cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph. The Township continues to have denser residential development near Benton Harbor city limits, large-lot suburban homes along the Lake, and agricultural land use in the northern and eastern parts of the Township. Steady increases in residential development continue, particularly near Lake Michigan and in subdivisions near the Interstates. However, since the last Master Plan update in 2001, the amount of developed land (that is not agricultural, or vacant) has stayed nearly the same. The 2017 classification of agricultural land included active farms, vacant property, and large lot rural estates (over 5 acres). There are still large areas of the Township that are rural, and it is essential to protect these areas even as the Township anticipates future growth. The following section includes a discussion of trends in each individual category of land use in the Township.







Table 1: Existing Land Use

LAND USE CATEGORY	ESTIMATED ACRES (2017)	PERCENTAGE
<b>Residential</b>	<b>2,936</b>	<b>13.04%</b>
Rural Residential (1-5 acres)	1,142.5	5.45%
Suburban Residential (less than 1 acre)	1,321.3	6.3%
Urban Residential (grid streets)	270.8	1.29%
Multiple Family	201.4	0.96%
Agricultural / Undeveloped / Vacant / Large lot rural estates	12,189.8	58.14%
Commercial/Office	459.4	4.38%
Neighborhood Commercial	378.0	1.80%
Regional Commercial	540.8	2.58%
<b>Industrial</b>	<b>646.7</b>	<b>6.17%</b>
Light Industrial	935.2	4.46%
Heavy Industrial	358.2	1.71%
Public and Semi-Public Land Uses	944.5	9.01%
Public-Semi Public (Public Buildings, Schools, and Religious Institutions)	1,224.6	5.84%
Recreation	664.5	3.17%
Rights-of-Way	1,636.5	7.81%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,965.5</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: 2017 Data from Aerial Survey by McKenna



## Rural Residential

Rural Residential refers to residential properties typically located on lots between one and five acres in size. These homes are surrounded by other large lot residences or agricultural/undeveloped land. These residences are typically located in the northeastern part of the Township or along the Township's northern border of Lake Michigan.



## Suburban Residential

Suburban Residential lands are usually a part of existing subdivisions and consist of lots less than an acre in size. These neighborhoods typically have non-motorized pathways, attached garages, and driveways. This land use type is mostly found extending east from the City of St. Joseph and south from the City of Benton Harbor, including the newly established Woodridge and Carolyn Manor neighborhoods.



## Urban Residential

The Urban Residential areas of the Township extend east from the City of Benton Harbor. These areas consist of housing which includes single family homes located on small lots with setbacks near the street. The urban residential areas of the Township are likely to be built out and/or extend out of the larger street grid/network. These locations are in close proximity to commercial destinations and are often located off major corridors.





## Multiple Family

This category includes buildings that contain more than two dwelling units, such as apartment buildings, townhouses and senior housing facilities. The large multiple family complexes are scattered throughout the Township, often located off major roads near established single family neighborhoods and commercial shopping centers. Two of the apartment communities are supported by the Benton Charter Township Housing Commission.



## Neighborhood Commercial

Neighborhood Commercial uses are intended to provide convenience to nearby residents. The majority of the neighborhood commercial is located along major roads but adjacent to subdivisions.



## Regional Commercial

The need for commercial services is directly related to the growing population within the region. Regional commercial destinations are intensive use shopping districts that are intended to attract customers from around the region. The Township has a significant portion of its regional commercial uses located west of I-94 and south of Napier Avenue.



## Light Industrial / Heavy Industrial

The Township's heavy industrial land use is primarily located south of Napier Avenue extending south towards the Township's border, along Paw Paw Avenue. Light industrial uses, such as warehousing, auto repair, and manufacturing are located on the periphery of the transportation corridors and north of the airport.





## Institutional

Institutional uses are scattered throughout the Township. These uses encompass a variety of activities ranging from churches, academic institutions, medical clinics, and numerous County facilities.



## Recreation / Tourism

This category includes parks, athletic fields, and other recreational facilities. Some are publicly owned, such as Benton Charter Township River Park and Rocky Gap County Park. Others are privately owned, such as the City of Mary, the Israelite House of David, Eden Springs Park, and Sarett Nature Center. Reserving land for recreation helps protect natural vistas and decreases the impacts of suburban sprawl.



## Agricultural / Undeveloped / Vacant

The Township's Agricultural community is integral to the local and regional economy. Berrien County's climate and soils provide fertile ground for a large variety of crops. Protecting prime farmland is a key goal of this plan.

## Existing Land Use Findings

- » **Pattern of Land Use Shows Conformance with 2001 Future Land Use Plan**—The pattern of land use that was called for in the 2001 Future Land Use Plan has successfully guided the changes in actual land use since its adoption.
- » **Development of a Regional Commercial Destination**—The Fairplain and Ox Creek Character Areas, located between Napier Avenue and Townline Road and Union Street and I-94, represent the Township's commercial hub and serves as a regional shopping destination for neighboring communities.
- » **Increasing Recreation/Tourism Opportunities**—Since the 2001 Plan, the Township has seen a growth in recreation and tourism opportunities. The Existing Land Use Map shows the development of new golf courses and other tourist attractions such as vineyards, orchards, and event spaces.
- » **US-31 Right of Way Preservation**—For nearly 30 years, the planning and construction of US-31 freeway connection to I-94 just south of the existing I-94/Business Loop has been delayed. The connection was delayed for a variety of reasons, including insufficient state funds and the discovery of an extremely rare butterfly, the Mitchell's Satyr. In 2004, MDOT completed a final design study and selected a final design which reduced expected construction costs and limited the disturbance of the butterfly's habitat. This area, which includes land north of US-31, has not been developed in anticipation of the completion of the US-31 interchange in the next five years

## Opportunity Zones (OZ) –‘There is No Place Like Home’

The Township is well positioned to take advantage of the new Opportunity Zones concept recently enacted in the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. This federal program is designed to ‘incentivize capital investments in low-income communities that have been cut off from capital and are experiencing a lack of business growth.’

The new Opportunity Zone tax incentive was created to spur economic development and job creation by encouraging long-term investments. Specifically, the Opportunity Zone incentive offers capital gains tax relief for new investment in designated areas. Benefits include tax forgiveness on gains on investments held for at least 10 years and deferral of tax on prior gains if the gain is invested in an Opportunity Fund. An Opportunity Fund is the investment vehicle used to invest in Opportunity Zone property.

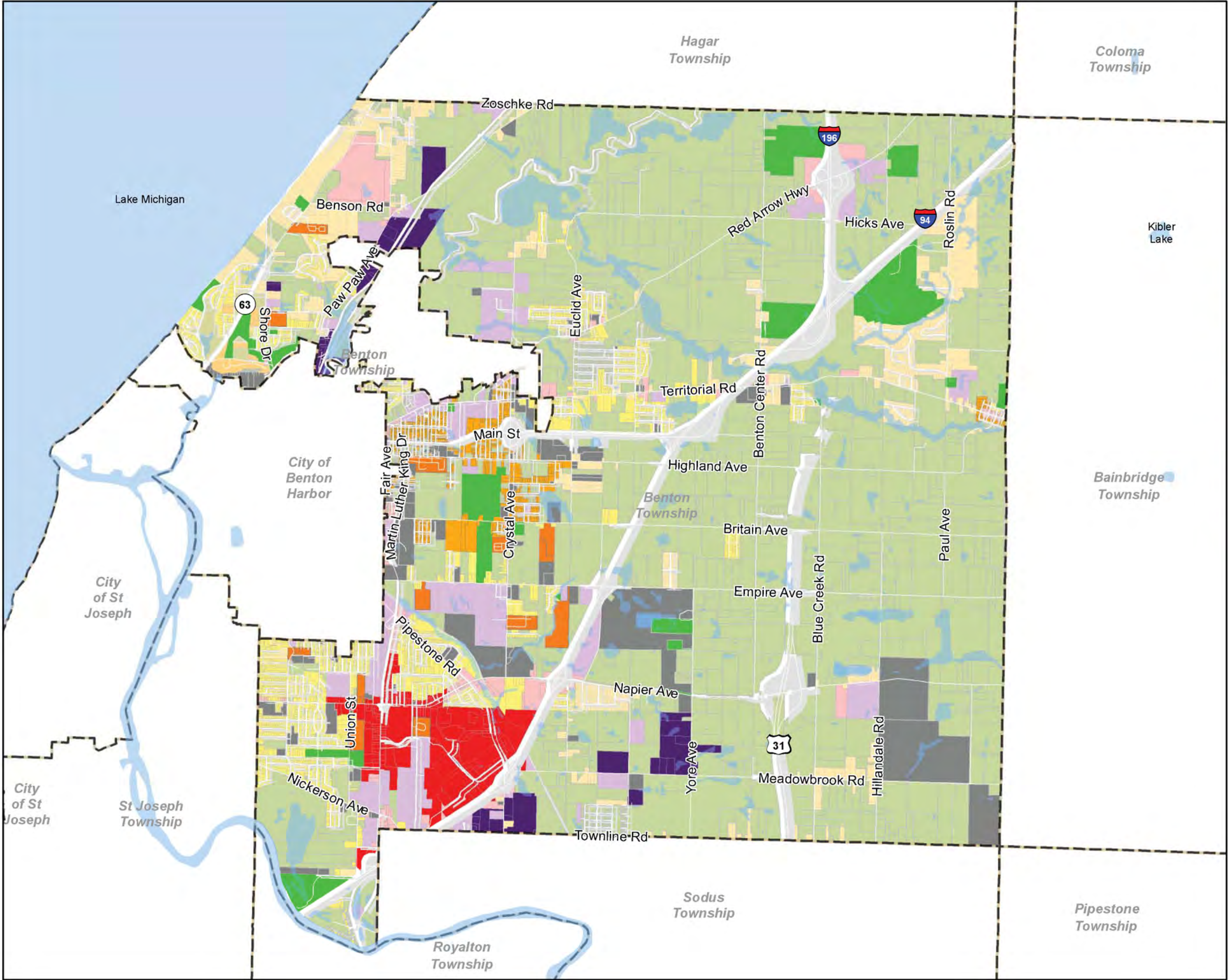
An Opportunity Fund can be used to create new businesses, new commercial or residential real estate or infrastructure. Opportunity Funds can also be used to invest in existing businesses if it doubles the investment basis over 30 months. The incentive can also be combined with other incentives such as New Market Tax Credits (NMTC), Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) and historic rehabilitation tax credit, adding a valuable tool for economic and community development in the Township.

In Michigan, 288 census tracts qualified as Opportunity Zones. Five of the qualified census tracts are located in Berrien County, with three of the five tracts being situated entirely or partially within Benton Charter Township. These designated Opportunity Zones are generally located west of the I-94 corridor and have been recognized as key ‘character areas’ and ‘quality growth areas’ in the Benton Charter Township Land Use Plan.



MSHDA Michigan's Opportunity Zones – Berrien County





MAP 3  
**Existing Land Use**  
Benton Charter Township, Berrien County, MI

- LEGEND**
- Agricultural/Undeveloped
  - Rural Residential
  - Suburban Residential
  - Urban Residential
  - Multiple Dwelling
  - Neighborhood Commercial
  - Regional Commercial
  - Light Industrial
  - Heavy Industrial
  - Institutional
  - Recreational
  - ROW

0 0.4 0.8 1.2  
Miles

Data Source: McKenna 2018; Michigan GIS Open Data Portal 2018



intentionally left blank

## Public Facilities

The pride, identity, and desirability of a community are each related in part to the level and quality of public services it can offer, including education, parks and recreation, police and fire services. The responsibility for providing public services to residents of Benton Charter Township is shared by several public entities, including several Berrien County governmental units and Benton Charter Township departments, various State of Michigan agencies, and the Benton Harbor and Coloma School Districts. Key determinants of future demand for public services include population, number of households, and types of land uses.





The Township provides a wide range of services, including fire and police protection, distribution of water, wastewater collection, and garbage/trash collection/disposal. Library services, parks, open space preservation and leisure time activities are also provided by the Township. Educational needs of Township residents are provided by independent taxing bodies.

Of all services provided by the Township, municipal utilities are the largest responsibility and most visible. The Township owns and maintains water transmission lines that supply services to approximately 35 percent of the Township land area. Water is purchased from the City of Benton Harbor based on a 30-year purchase contract. The Benton Harbor - St. Joseph Joint Wastewater Treatment Water Authority provides wastewater treatment services. In addition to these services, the Township provides building and construction inspection services, code enforcement and is responsible for landscaping and maintenance of all Township-owned property.

The Township's water and wastewater systems were designed to accommodate the Township reaching a population of 15,000 people or more. The water system throughout the Township has been constructed as development has moved out from the City of Benton Harbor, with a majority of the system constructed between 1950 and 1970. The newest parts of the system were built since to accommodate existing and new development in Fairplain, Benton Heights, and near the lake.

A sewer bypass, which directly discharges the Township's sewerage into the treatment plant (bypassing the City of Benton Harbor transmission lines) was completed in 2001. At present, there is no capital improvement program for funding utility system needs. The Township Board of Trustees annually identifies system improvements which are necessary, and includes budget estimates within the annual Township operating budget.

The Township Public Works Department operates with a full-time and seasonal part-time staff complement. It operates a full fleet of vehicles besides several specialized pieces of equipment for snow removal, water and sewer system maintenance, maintenance of public buildings, etc. Dump trucks, light duty trucks and specialized equipment are replaced on as needed basis, based on their condition and projected useful remaining life.

Challenges that face Public Works operations in the future include installation of system extensions and existing system maintenance. If utilities are extended to serve the area east of I-94, additional equipment and more personnel will most likely be needed depending on the amount and type of municipal service expansions.



## Water Treatment and Distribution

The Township has its own water treatment plant and operates a 77-mile water distribution system ranging in size from 4" all the way to 20", with typical daily use of about 1,200,000 gallons per day. The township serves 2,153 residential customers, 406 commercial customers, and 29 industrial customers. Elevated towers and ground storage tanks provide approximately 50-60 pounds of pressure throughout the system. There are 1,083 valves at various locations throughout the township as well as 699 fire hydrants. The township's two ground storage facilities, one at the water plant with a capacity of 1 million gallons and another on Paw Paw Avenue with a capacity of 800,000 gallons. There is also a stand pipe on South Euclid Avenue, which you may see driving on the highway, with a capacity of 4 million gallons. The total capacity of water in the Township is around 5.8 million gallons. The system is cross connected to the City of St. Joseph water systems and Benton Harbor to assure supply in case of emergency. The Township currently holds an Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating of 6 in the area where municipal water service is available and a rating of 9 in non-serviced areas within the Township. The last ISO rating was conducted in November 1990. Several recommendations were made at this time concerning the water distribution and firefighting capacity of the Township and efforts to implement these recommendations have been completed. At present there is no schedule for requesting a reevaluation.



87

## Wastewater Collection and Treatment

Wastewater (sewer) collection is provided to a majority of homes and businesses in the Township. Wastewater is collected through about 40 miles of pipe, located in the street right-of-way or rear property line easements, which empties into a main transmission line which flows into the river siphon to the Joint Wastewater Treatment Plant in St. Joseph. Treatment capacity appears sufficient for current and future needs of the Township. The construction of the bypass transmission line has assured that transmission capacity is available for future development.

## Stormwater Collection and Detention System

Storm water collection in the Township is accomplished through a network of private drains and county drains. County drains are under the jurisdiction of the Berrien County Drain Commissioner, which also administers the county's Guidelines for Storm Water Management. The Township does not have requirements for new development to provide stormwater collection and management systems, other than, compliance with the regulations imposed by the Berrien County Drain Commissioner. Presently, there are no prevalent stormwater management problems within the Township.

## Township Building and Grounds

The responsibility for the provision of building space for all Township needs rests with the Township Board of Trustees.

The current Township Hall was constructed in 2003 and has approximately 21,300 square feet of space; housing general government administration, the building/code inspection department, and the Board of Trustees Chambers. The Police Department operates in the previously combined Township Hall and Police Department. The building was constructed in 1990 and has approximately 18,600 square feet of space. The Township also has a Public Works service garage and has considered constructing a new building for future expansion of administration office space on the adjacent Township owned lot.

## Fire Protection

The Township has a combination full time/part-time/paid-on-call department comprising the Chief, 10 full time, 4 part-time and 6 paid on call firefighters and one part-time administrative staff. These personnel operate under a command structure in which the Fire Chief administers the department through a command staff that consists of the Chief and six Lieutenants. In addition to the Township, firefighting services are provided by contract to the west half of Bainbridge Township. The department responds to approximately 700 calls annually from two stations, strategically located in the Township. Fire calls are dispatched through Berrien County Dispatch Operations.

Equipment and administrative services are housed in the main station located at 781 S. Crystal Avenue. The other station principally house personnel and equipment. There are six pieces of rolling stock, currently assigned to the Fire Department. A 75-foot ladder truck, pumper, tanker and mini pumper/grass fire truck containing the “Jaws-of-Life” equipment, are housed at the Crystal Avenue Station. Two pumpers are located at the other station. A staff service automobile is assigned to the Chief and an additional Pick-up is assigned at Station 1.

The Ladder truck at Station 1 is the oldest piece of equipment in the fleet and is a 1983. The rescue-grass rig, pumper and engine are newer and in good shape for years to come. The two engines at Station two are older and a new engine is currently being built to replace the 1988 engine at station 2. The second engine is a 1985 and will be the back-up engine for that station.

The department has mutual aid agreements all municipalities in Berrien County which expands the complement of equipment and personnel, in needed situations. The Fire Department also has several automatic aid agreements with local fire departments. The Township Department conducts periodic building fire inspections and, upon request, educational programs for school, senior and other groups.

In the future, it is anticipated that the Department will need to consider current level of service to existing and projected new areas of development. To continue the present level of services, due to legislation requiring two firefighters to remain as back-up when two firefighters enter a burning structure (the 2 in - 2 out rule), may require expansion of the current staff complement. Additionally, new equipment and hose (based on hose testing) will need to be addressed, to retain current ISO standards of readiness.

The firefighter staff complement may also need to increase, depending upon the type of commercial, industrial and other development which occurs in the US-31 & Napier corridor. This could prompt the addition or relocation of fire stations to serve these new developing areas. The extent of this need will be dependent on the specific type of businesses, industries and other development located east of I-94.

## Emergency Medical Services

Emergency Medical Services are provided to Benton Charter Township residents by Medic 1 Ambulance. A not-for-profit Municipal Authority owned and operated by seventeen local municipalities within Berrien County, since May 5, 1975. The Board of Directors is comprised of a representative from each participating governmental unit, who elects officers for the Board and hires the Executive Director to manage day-to-day operations

Medic 1 Ambulance operates and dispatches its units from its main office located at Napier Avenue and Union Avenue in Benton Charter Township, with satellite locations in Berrien Springs, Bridgman and New Buffalo. A staff complement of 75 persons (44 full time and 31 part time) which is made up of 49 Paramedics/EMTs that work on the ambulances and 15 wheelchair transport personnel and 5 dispatchers along with the administrative staff providing 24-hour total advanced life support emergency and transportation services to its residences. Units are staffed and assigned based on past trends of service needs. As a result Medic 1 Ambulance provides an eight-minute on the average response time compared to the twelve-minute goal established by Berrien County Medical Control Authority.

Medic 1 Ambulance has 12 ambulances and 8 wheelchair vans and a quick response Expedition. Two ambulances are housed at each satellite location with the remaining five ambulance located at the Napier station.

In September of 2000, Medic 1 achieved National Accreditation, becoming only the 77th agency to receive CAAS (Commission On Accreditation Of Ambulance Services) accreditation in the nation and was the 20th in Michigan to become accredited at that time. Accreditation has been maintained to date and is renewed every three years.

Medic 1 Ambulance also has an Education Department that is also Nationally Accredited allowing us to teach classes to the Paramedic level along with CPR and First Aid Classes.

Medic 1 Ambulance receives funding from each of the municipalities that owns the service this funding is provided on a per capita basis and makes up about 22% of its overall budget with the rest coming from patient billings for services provided.

## Police

The Township provides 24-hour police services through a 28-person Police Department. The current staff complement contains 22 full-time sworn officers. In addition to the road patrol and detective bureau, there are an additional 4 persons filling the records department. The Police Department also has 1 full-time and 1 part-time persons working in ordinance. The department maintains a minimum of two patrol vehicles "on-duty" at all times for day and midnight shifts, while afternoon shift has a minimum staffing of three patrol vehicles. Additional patrol vehicles are added during peak service hours and these minimum staffing levels exclude a designated patrol vehicle assigned as a business car in the business area from noon to 8pm.

The department responds to over 12,000 incident complaints annually. In the future, it is believed that even with a stabilized future population, the number of incidents will increase due to the concentration of commercial development and anticipated development.

The department maintains 16 marked and unmarked patrol vehicles. Police vehicles are replaced on a cycle based on mileage and mechanical condition of the vehicle; typically, two vehicles being replaced yearly. All vehicles are fully equipped allowing direct communication capability to the Berrien County 911 Dispatch center as well as other agencies throughout the State of Michigan.

The Police Station is currently located in the center of the Township at the Township Hall and contains a training room, records department, evidence storage, three separate interview rooms, assorted office space and two short-term holding cells.





## Lake Michigan College

The Lake Michigan College, Napier campus, consists of approximately 26 acres of land approved as a Planned Unit Development (PUD) by the Benton Charter Township Planning Commission and Board of Trustees in March 16, 1993. The campus also houses Western Michigan University. There are 660 employees and 3,477 students. The college has 4 campuses spread out in southwest Michigan. One is situated on former farmland with in Benton Township between US 31 and I 94, the Benton Harbor Campus on Napier Avenue was completed in 1976. The original building, the Campus Center is now joined by The Mendel Center, Western Michigan University Southwest Campus, Beckwith Residence Hall and the Hanson Technology Center.

## Benton Harbor School District

The Benton Harbor School District serves almost all residents of Benton Charter Township except those living in the northernmost portion of the Township. The District encompasses all of the City of Benton Harbor, the Fairplain portion of St. Joseph Township, the southern one third of Hagar Township, the eastern half of Bainbridge Township and the northwestern portion of Sodus Township. The District operates six school buildings, five of which are located in Benton Charter Township. In the 2018-19 school year, the District served approximately 2200 students.



## Libraries

The Township is served by the Benton Harbor Public Library located in downtown Benton Harbor. The library was organized in 1899 and opened the current library building in 1968. The library is funded by City of Benton Harbor property taxes and receives a portion of penal fines levied by the county. The Benton Harbor Public Library serves over 20,000 residents of the City of Benton Harbor and Benton Charter Township. The library offers access to over 100,000 books, DVDs, periodicals, and other items through our online catalog. The library houses an award-winning collection of federal documents available in both print and electronic formats. Computers for public internet access are located in both the Adult and Junior Departments. The library also offers numerous educational programs aimed at children and teenagers. The library is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors of which the City Commission appoints five members and the Township Board of Trustees, two members. The library is open 53 hours each week; 9:00 am to 5:30 pm on Monday and Friday; 9:00 am to 7:00 pm on Tuesday through Thursday; and 9:00 am to 3:00 pm on Saturday.





## Township Parks

The Township and other organizations provide for public parks, recreation, open space and other leisure time pursuits worthy of mention and assessment as it relates to future land use implications. These organizations also provide services that make available education and other pastime activities for the residents of the Township. The Township has a park system consisting of three parks and a disc golf course totaling 68.6 acres and ranging in size from 0.6 acres to 58 acres. In addition to Township owned facilities, there are park and playground facilities located on the campuses of ten schools in the Township, Butler Field located on the campus of Martindale School, outdoor recreational facilities on the campus of Lake Michigan College and Lake Michigan beach access provided by the County-owned Rocky Gap Park. In addition, the Township is home to four golf courses; Blossom Trails, Lake Michigan Hills, Harbor Shores and Pointe 'O Woods. The 280-acre Sarett Nature Center is located in the northern portion of the Township along Paw Paw River. These facilities provide for a wide range of park and recreational pursuits by Township residents.



## Natural Resources

The natural assets of Benton Charter Township are essential to its continued agricultural and recreational success. Owing its present physical attributes to the glaciers which covered Michigan during the Ice Age, the Township boasts rolling topography, both moderately well-drained and poorly-drained soils, major river tributaries and floodplain areas, and a rich Lake Michigan shoreline eco-system. The climate of the area is influenced by prevailing winds from the west that are warmed and cooled by Lake Michigan that contribute to moderate average temperatures and annual rainfall. The natural resource picture in Benton Charter Township supports agricultural diversity, active fruit production, recreational hot spots, and a wealth of ‘destinations’





## Paw Paw / St. Joseph River WaterShed

Nearly all of Benton Charter Township is located within the Paw Paw River Watershed. The Paw Paw River Watershed (PPRW) is all of the land that drains into the Paw Paw River. Wetlands, lakes, streams, and other surface water bodies are also part of the watershed. Water is a critical resource for recreation, irrigation, and increasing the value of adjacent real estate.

The Paw Paw River flows westward through southwestern Lower Michigan before joining the St. Joseph River and emptying into Lake Michigan near the City of Benton Harbor. The PPRW encompasses approximately 285,557 acres (446 square miles) in Kalamazoo, Van Buren and Berrien Counties. The total length of the Paw Paw River and its significant tributaries, including Ox Creek, is approximately 145 miles. The PPRW includes 5,818 acres of lakes and ponds.

The watershed includes rare Great Lakes marshes and floodplain forests, which serve as habitats for many migratory birds and several rare and endangered species. The river and the wetlands are home to over 39 species of fish.

Numerous agencies have partnered together to preserve, restore, and plan for the smart use of the Paw Paw River Watershed, including each County Conservation District, the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, The Nature Conservancy, Michigan State University Extension, Two Rivers Coalition, and Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy. Planning efforts include the 2008 PPRW Management Plan.



## Ox Creek

Ox Creek is a warm water stream that flows through Benton Harbor and Benton Charter Township where it joins the Paw Paw River. It originates in agricultural lands east of the City and drains an area of 16.5 square miles. The lower portion of the watershed is heavily influenced by urbanization and stormwater.

The State of Michigan has identified Ox Creek as an area of concern because it does not meet the “other indigenous aquatic life and wildlife” designated use indicated by poor macroinvertebrate community ratings. With Ox Creek not meeting state water quality standards and not being healthy for fish and other wildlife due to the large amount of polluted runoff it receives from the land, partners are coming together to bring in grant funds to address the pollution issues.

The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission is partnering with the Berrien Conservation District and Two Rivers Coalition to work with agricultural producers in headwaters to implement best practices such as no-till, cover crops, buffers and wetland restoration.

Also, SWMPC is partnering with many to revitalize the retail area to be friendlier to Ox Creek while also better accommodating pedestrians and bicyclists and spurring additional development and redevelopment. The retail area is a key regional shopping district and a gateway to the Twin Cities. There are many opportunities to improve Ox Creek while also revitalizing this important economic activity center by greening it up to slow down and clean up polluted runoff.

## Designated Flood Prone Areas

Parts of the Township are located in a designated flood area according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency maps for the Township. The flood prone areas are shown on the accompanying map. The Township has enacted ordinances that restrict development of the land areas subject to flooding. This allows Township property owners to secure Federal Flood Insurance for properties subject to flooding hazards. Any construction in flood prone areas is subject to minimum building requirements.



## Prime Farmland

Farming is an important part of Berrien County's history, culture and economic structure. In 2004, Berrien County ranked #1 in grapes, #2 in apples, #4 in blueberries and #5 in asparagus in the State of Michigan.

Several programs and zoning strategies are available to manage growth and preserve farmland. Agricultural preservation methods primarily fall in one of four categories: 1) purchase of agricultural easement programs (such as Berrien County's Purchase of Development Rights Program), 2) right to farm laws, 3) agricultural zoning, and 4) tax relief. No one technique is right for all areas. Protecting farmland, even as the Township grows in population, is an important goal of this plan.



## Other Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Benton Charter Township has some additional areas that have unique environmental concerns that should be taken into account during the planning, zoning, and development process:

### LAKEFRONT

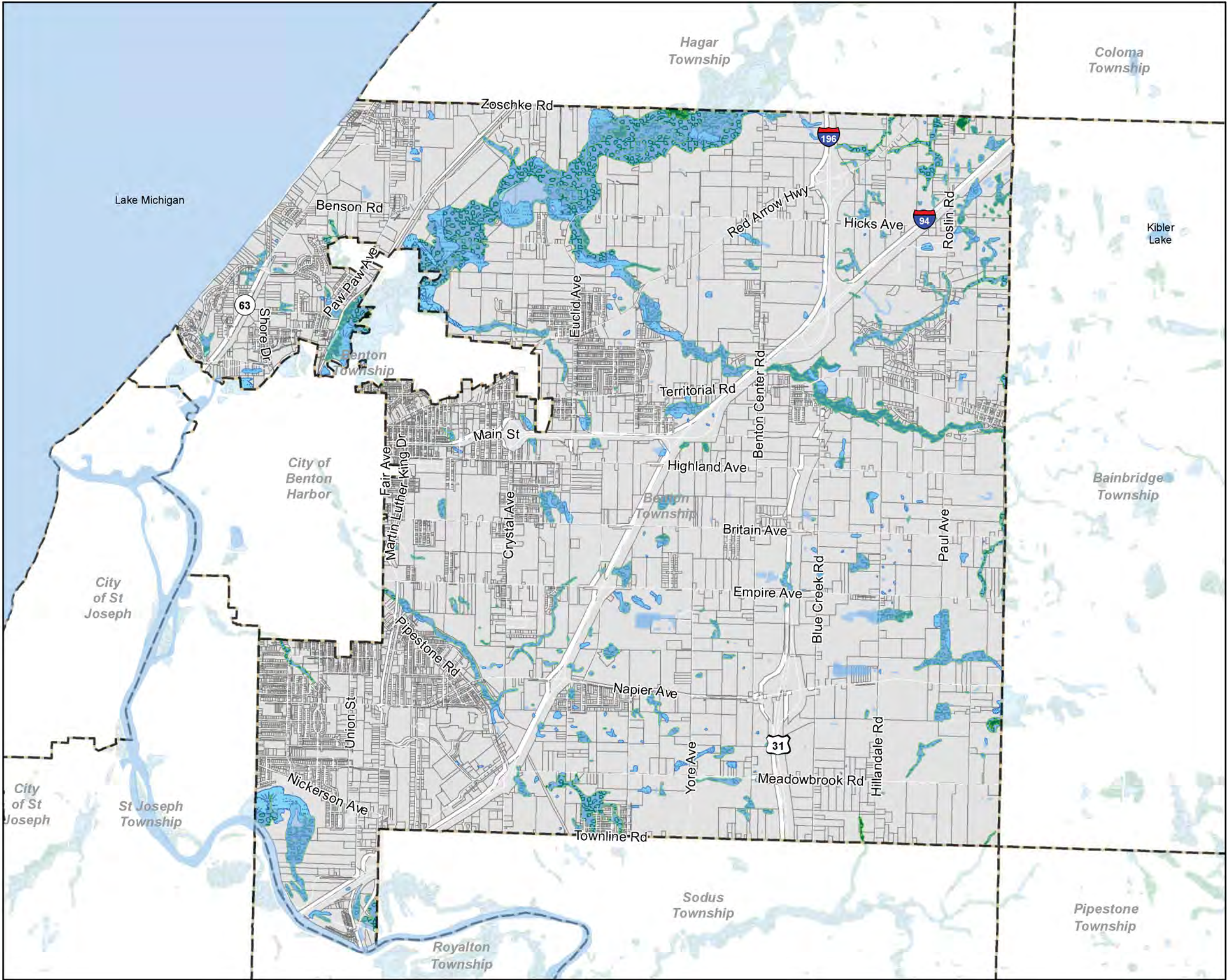
The Township's entire western boundary is Lake Michigan lakefront. Some of the lakefront is sandy or rocky beaches, while other areas have sea walls or other man-made edge treatments.

The beach communities adjacent to Lake Michigan have been in existence for decades, so substantial changes to the lakefront are unlikely. Instead, steps should be taken to mitigate the impact of flooding and reduce potential damage to the ecosystem.

In the small percentage of lakefront land that is not already developed or preserved, any development should be carefully designed to protect water quality, ecosystems, and the beauty of the beaches. High Risk Bluff Erosion areas have minimum building requirements







MAP 4  
**Wetlands**

Benton Charter Township, Berrien County, MI

LEGEND

Wetland Type

-  Aquatic Bed
-  Emergent
-  Forested
-  Scrub-Shrub
-  Parcels

0 0.4 0.8 1.2  
Miles

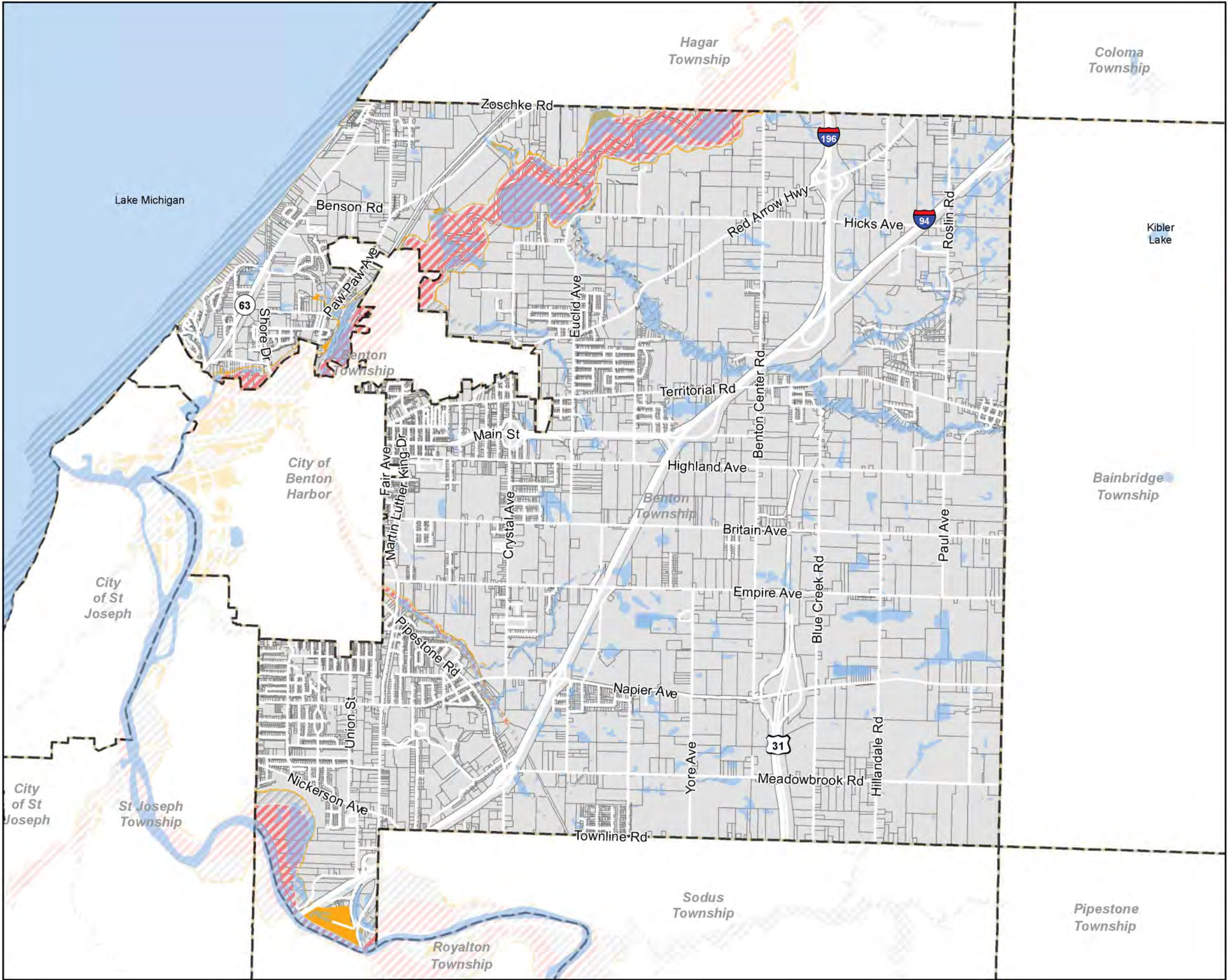


Data Source: McKenna 2018; Michigan GIS Open Data Portal 2018; Michigan Department of Natural Resources



INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



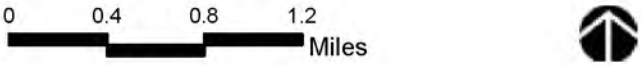


MAP 5  
**Flood Hazard Zones**  
Benton Charter Township, Berrien County, MI

**LEGEND**

**Flood Hazard Zones**

- Regulatory Floodway
- 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard
- 0.2% Annual Chance Flood Hazard
- Parcels



Data Source: McKenna 2018; Michigan GIS Open Data Portal 2018; Michigan Department of Natural Resources





# Transportation

Land use patterns and transportation systems are inherently interconnected. Proximity to efficient and connected transportation networks is a primary factor in determining where new development occurs. However, the traffic generated from new development often exceeds the capacity of transportation systems and traffic becomes more congested. Traffic congestion is often the largest complaint of residents in growing urban fringe communities such as Benton Charter Township, so it is important for land use planning and transportation planning to be coordinated, and for the transportation system to allow individuals to get around not only by car, but also by walking, bicycle, or public transportation. This section is an analysis of the current transportation system in the Township.





INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



The existing road network in the Township is under the jurisdiction of the Berrien County Road Department and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). The major roadways that pass-through Benton Charter Township are Interstate 94 and 196 (I-94) (I-196), US-31, and M-63. Interstate 94 runs diagonally across the Township, following along Lake Michigan before heading east towards Detroit. I-196 branches off of I-94 in the northern portion of the Township, meets M-63, and follows Lake Michigan north to Holland. US-31 ends a dedicated highway in the southern part of the Township at Napier Avenue and connects to I-94.

The Township has had to rely on surface roads and streets to serve its commercial and industrial economic base, especially as development east of I-94 has expanded. It is likely that several of the current Township “county roads” will need to be upgraded to a higher standard of traffic flow during the term of the planning period. However, the planned connection of US-31 will likely change traffic patterns within the area.

The construction, maintenance and improvement of local roads and neighborhood streets is the responsibility of the Berrien County Road Department. The Road Department maintains approximately 150.5 miles of roads within the Township. The majority of these roads have an asphalt or seal coat surface with grassed shoulder. Maintenance includes winter snow removal, mowing, and pothole patches, as well as road treatment options that include ‘preventative maintenance’ (crack seal; sealcoat), ‘rehabilitation’ (double seal; overlay), and ‘reconstruction’ (includes grind, gravel, prime and double seal).

The primary source of funding for the local road network is the Michigan Transportation Fund which is supported by vehicle registrations fees and the Michigan state gas tax, as well contributions from the Township. The Berrien County Road Department’s township contribution match formula is based largely on the amount of lane miles within each township.



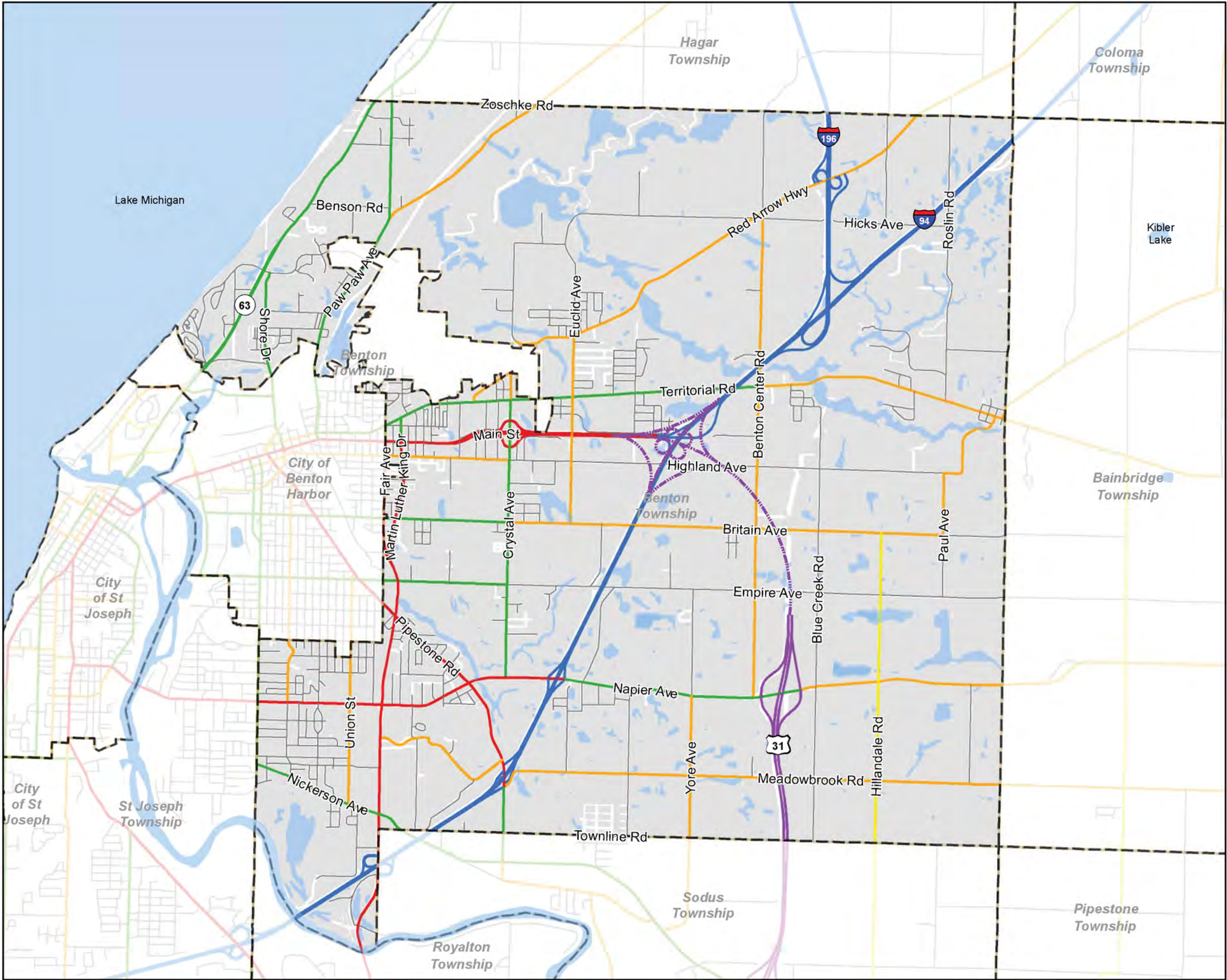
## Functional Classification of Roadways

The Twin Cities Area Transportation Study (Twin CATS) and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), in association with the Berrien County Road Department and the Township, have determined the functional classification of roads in the Township as shown in Map 9. This map illustrates that the Township is impacted by interstate, principal arterial and major arterial roads throughout the Township. The Township also has a system of urban, major and minor collector roads, connecting local collector and neighborhood streets to the interstate and arterial roads.

I-94, I-94 BL, M-63, Red Arrow Highway, Napier Avenue, Riverside Road, Empire Avenue, Britain Avenue, Highland Avenue and Territorial Road provide excellent east-west access while M-139, Pipestone Road and Crystal Avenue provide north-south access as designated interstate, principal or minor arterial roads. Upon completion, US-31 at the east side of the Township will provide a “much needed” north-south access way, in the eastern portion of the Township.

The Michigan Department of Transportation, the Berrien County Road Department and the Southwestern Michigan Planning Commission periodically record traffic count information for selected locations within the transportation planning area.





MAP 6

# Functional Classification of Roadways

Benton Charter Township, Berrien County, MI

LEGEND

Future US-31

National Functional Classification

- Interstate
- Other Freeway
- Other Principal Arterials
- Minor Arterials
- Major Collectors
- Minor Collectors
- Local
- Parcels

0 0.4 0.8 1.2 Miles

Data Source: McKenna 2018; Michigan GIS Open Data Portal 2018

INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## Freeways

Freeways are designed to handle large volumes of traffic moving at high speeds over long distances. As noted, the principal freeways serving Benton Charter Township is Interstate 94 and 196; the segments of I-94 through the Township carry between 38,000 and 67,000 vehicles per day, including commercial traffic. Interstate 94, which is the primary link from Detroit to Chicago, saw a large increase in traffic between 1996 and 2000. The 2015 traffic levels show a decrease in traffic south of Pipestone Road but a dramatic increase in the segments between Pipestone Road and I-196.

**Table 2: I-94 Traffic Volumes**

Portion of I-94	Average Daily Traffic			Percentage Change (1996-2015)
	1996	2000	2015	
JCT M-139 to Pipestone Road	55,800	64,100	53,400	-4%
Pipestone Road to Napier Avenue	49,600	57,900	52,000	5%
Napier Avenue to E JCT I-94 BL	47,900	56,400	60,100	25%
E JCT I-94 BL to E JCT I-196 BL	52,300	58,700	67,700	29%
E JCT I-196 BL to Friday Road	—	—	38,038	—

Source: MDOT, 2017

Interstate 94 carries a large volume of commercial truck traffic, as it is the primary Eastern gateway into Michigan from Chicago. The portions of I-94 within the Township saw its commercial average annual daily traffic count decline between 2000 and 2015 from 14,000 to 11,000. Truck traffic patterns may change with continued economic growth within the region and the completion of US-31.

**Table 3: I-94 Truck Traffic Volumes**

Portion of I-94	Commercial Average Daily Traffic			Percentage Increase (1996-2015)
	1996	2000	2015	
JCT M-139 to Pipestone Road	8,400	14,400	11,251	34%
Pipestone Road to Napier Avenue	8,400	14,400	11,251	34%
Napier Avenue to E JCT I-94 BL	8,400	14,400	11,251	34%
E JCT I-94 BL to E JCT I-196 BL	8,700	14,400	11,251	29%
E JCT I-196 BL to Friday Road	—	—	7,204	—

Source: MDOT, 2017



## Principal Arterials

Principal arterial roads and highways serve the major centers of activity, the highest traffic volume corridors, and the longest trips. Principal arterials serve major traffic movements within the Township and region. M-139, Napier Avenue and Pipestone Road serve as principal arterials for Benton Charter Township. Due to limitations of the traffic counts collected by SWMPC, different road counts are collected each year. However, when comparing the Freeways to Principal Arterials, some roads such as Napier Avenue and M-139 have a higher Average Daily Traffic (ADT) than I-94.

**Table 4: Principal Arterials Street Traffic Volumes**

Roadway	Section	Average Daily Traffic
Napier Ave	Between Colfax and Broadway (2017)	11,996
Pipestone Rd	Between Catalpa and Division (2017)	7,810
M-139	South of Napier (2009)	12,640

Source: Southwestern Michigan Planning Commission

## Minor Arterials

Minor arterial roads interconnect with the principal arterial system and provide access to destinations of moderate distance with a lower level of traffic mobility. Minor arterial roads place more emphasis on land access than do principal arterials. Minor arterials in Benton Charter Township include Napier Avenue east of I-94, Crystal Avenue, and Territorial Road. Territorial Road has far less traffic volume than the more intensive road classifications.

**Table 5: Minor Arterial Traffic Volumes**

Roadway	Section	Average Daily Traffic
Napier Rd	East of I-94	5,519
Territorial Rd	West of Rosalyn Rd (2014)	2,371
Territorial Rd	Between Fair Ave and Red Arrow Hwy (2010)	4,733

Source: Southwestern Michigan Planning Commission.  
Note: No data available for Crystal Ave.

## Collector Roads

Collectors provide both access to abutting properties and traffic circulation within residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural areas. The purpose of a collector road is to collect traffic from the Township and channel it to the arterial system. The existing collector roads in the Township are: Red Arrow Hwy, Riverside Road, Britain Avenue (east of Crystal), Hagar Road, and Meadowbrook Road. The volume of traffic varies on each collector road.

**Table 6: Collector Road Traffic Volumes**

Roadway	Section	Average Daily Traffic
Britain Ave	West of Hillandale (2014)	844
Riverview Dr	South of Whitwam Dr (2015)	2,105
Meadowbrook Rd	West of Tubbs Ave (2014)	2,042

NOTE: No data available for Red Arrow Hwy

## Road Improvements

The Berrien County Road Department currently inventories the capacity and classification schedules of all roads within the Township, and conducts maintenance and reconstruction based on these characteristics. The recently completed 2019-2021 Three Year Transportation Plan for Berrien County provides an evaluation of the roadway network and applies the Asset Management process to identify road improvement and maintenance projects throughout the County for the next three years. The Plan has established the long term goal for both the County primary and local road network to move 75% of the roads to 'Good' or 'Fair' condition by 2029.

A considerable level of progress was made toward that goal in 2018, increasing the percentage of roads in the County rated 'Good' from 6% to 19% and decreasing the percentage of 'Poor' rated roads from 74% to 45%. Crucial projects on primary roads are slated for the next three years, including pavement treatments to Napier Avenue, Pipestone Road, Britain Avenue, Territorial Road, Crystal Avenue and Meadowbrook Road. These projects, in addition to the projects planned for the local network, will continue to improve the condition of the roadway network within Benton Township.

## Walking and Biking

The non-motorized transportation system and infrastructure within the Township is limited. The existing non-motorized pathways are mostly located in new subdivisions and other new developments, as many main roads in the Township do not have a sidewalk system. However, a number of thoroughfares do have paved shoulders, allowing for safe bicycling. The paved shoulders are, in some areas, disconnected from each other and do not form a complete network.

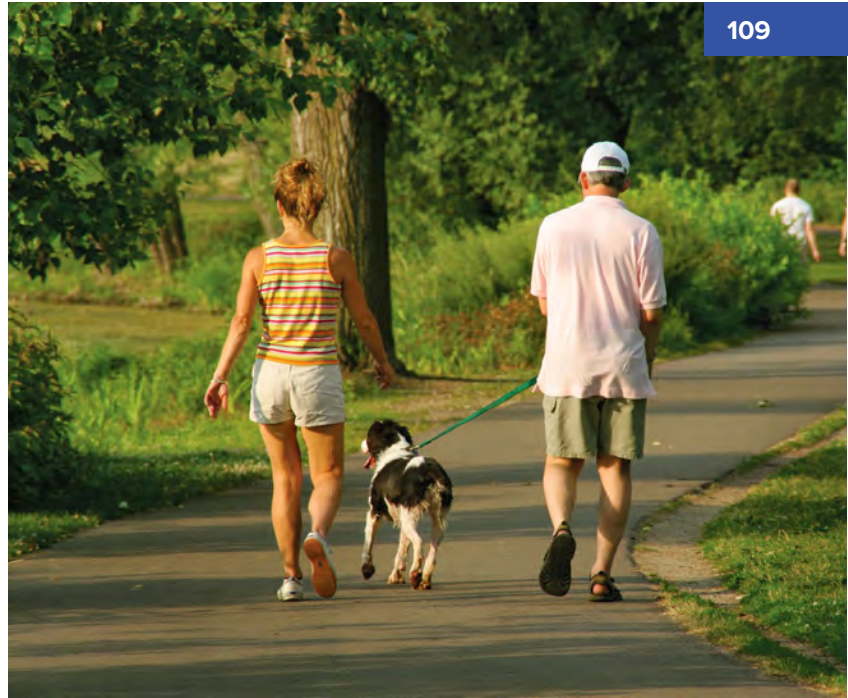
The public input survey and community engagement session for the Master Plan revealed that many residents are concerned about the ability and safety of people walking and biking around the Township. Additions to the non-motorized infrastructure should be considered as opportunities arise, especially during the reconstruction of roadways, to provide non-motorized access to major destinations and create a more connected system.

## Public Transportation

The Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority (TCATA) was established in 1978 to provide transportation service to the residents of Berrien County, specifically Benton Harbor, Benton Charter Township, St. Joseph, Shoreham, and Stevensville. Fixed route service is provided in Benton Charter Township on the following routes:

- » **Red Route** makes a one-hour loop through Benton Harbor, St. Joseph, St. Joseph Township, and Stevensville. Hours for the Red Route Monday through Friday 6am to 10pm and Saturdays from 8am to 10pm. There are four stops along the Red Route where passengers can transfer to and from the Blue Route.
- » **Blue Route** It makes a one-hour loop through Benton Harbor and the Benton Charter Township (Fairplain) retail area. The Blue Route runs twice an hour, servicing some locations four times an hour. Passengers can transfer for free to the Red Route at four locations.

TCATA also offers same day dial-a-ride service to riders with disabilities and Benton Charter Township residents who do not have access to fixed route services.



Residents within Benton Charter Township also have access to the Berrien Bus. Berrien Bus services the entire county of Berrien. With 24-hour advance reservations, either individuals or groups may use the bus for shopping trips, visiting friends, medical, dental and other appointments. Berrien Bus coordinates its service with the transit systems in Benton Harbor/St. Joseph, Niles and Buchanan.

In 2014, SWMPC published “Moving Forward: A Plan for Public Transit in Berrien County.” The plan recommends a coordinated approach to providing transit to residents in Berrien County. The plan provides valuable insight into the benefits and constraints of consolidating the four systems operating within the County.

## Railroads

Good rail service is an advantage in attracting industrial users. One major railroad line traverses Benton Charter Township in a southwest to northeast direction. CSX rail freight service and Amtrak Passenger Service runs parallel to Paw Paw Avenue and Riverside Road in the northwestern edge of the Township.

While the railroads are an important economic driver, they have the potential to present problems for connectivity and public safety in the Township. Waits for motorists at grade crossings are common throughout the day and night, including for trains that have come to a complete stop for switching operations. The Township will work with the railroads to improve efficiency at grade crossings, however, fire protection is provided both north and south of the railroad track.

## Airports

Southwest Michigan Regional Airport (KBEH) is centrally located in Southwest Michigan within the borders of Benton Charter Township, providing easy access to the business centers and direct access to the area's tourist attractions.

The Airport is owned by the cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph. The Southwest Michigan Regional Airport (BEH) Authority was established in 1997 and is responsible for the airport operations. The Airport Authority is comprised of six municipalities: the Cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph, Benton Charter Township, Lincoln Charter Township, Royalton Township, and St. Joseph Charter Township, which contribute millage revenue for the purposes of airport operations.

In addition to the 64 privately owned aircraft housed at the airport, SWMRA is also home to several corporate aircraft, including a Fortune 500 international corporation fleet. Over 400 companies from all over the US and Canada annually fly their aircraft into Southwest Michigan Regional Airport.

The latest economic impact estimate conducted (2014) by Michigan DOT showed the airport's contribution to the local economy to be \$30 million.

Current projects include adding additional General Aviation hangars to improve the overall viability of the airport. The hangars will serve new tenants coming to the area, increase revenues, and eventually replace aging units. SWMRA plans to break ground the summer of 2019 constructing two new hangars with a total of 20 additional units. Each hangar row will consist of ten hangars with the end units designed to be oversized to accommodate larger aircraft. There are currently 12 aircraft on the waiting list.





# Community Profile

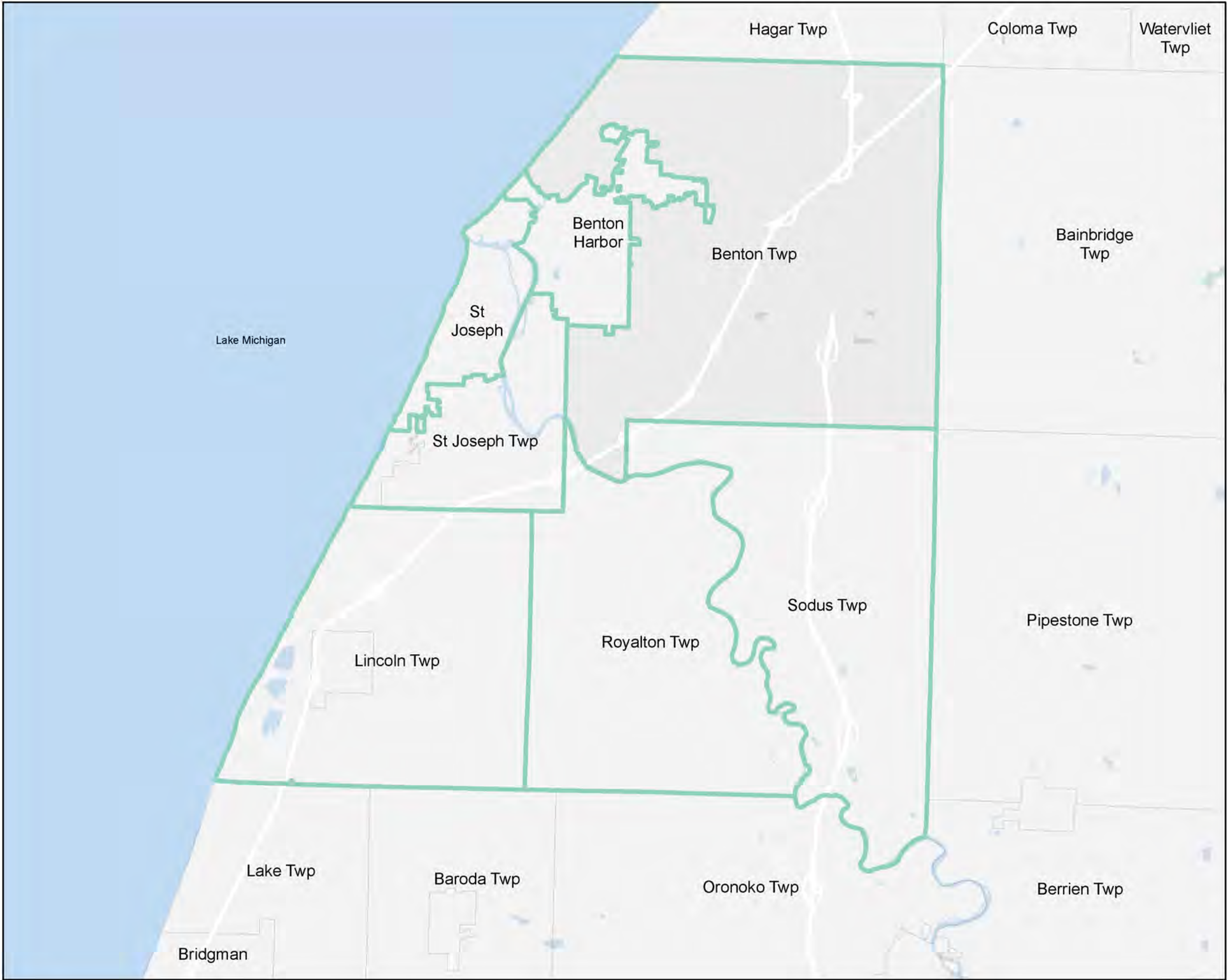
## DATA SOURCES

Benton Charter Township's current demographic situation and trends provide understanding to critical areas of planning, including neighborhoods, parks and open space, walkability and connectivity, and economic redevelopment.

The data used in this Plan comes from the 2010 US Census Bureau, as well as the 2011/15 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year data. The ACS uses statistical sampling over a 5-year period to describe the average characteristics over the period of collection. Additional comparisons were made with the 2000 US Census and other earlier data sources for greater insight on historical trends. Comparisons were made with neighboring communities, Berrien County and the State of Michigan.




INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



**MAP 7**  
**Comparison Communities**

Benton Charter Township, Berrien County, Michigan

**LEGEND**

 Comparison Communities

Benton Harbor  
Lincoln Charter Township  
Royalton Township  
St. Joseph  
St. Joseph Charter Township  
Sodus Township  
Shoreham Village  
Stevensville Village

0 0.9 1.8 2.7  
Miles



Data Source: McKenna 2018; Michigan GIS Open Data Portal 2018



INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## Population and Age Demographic Trends

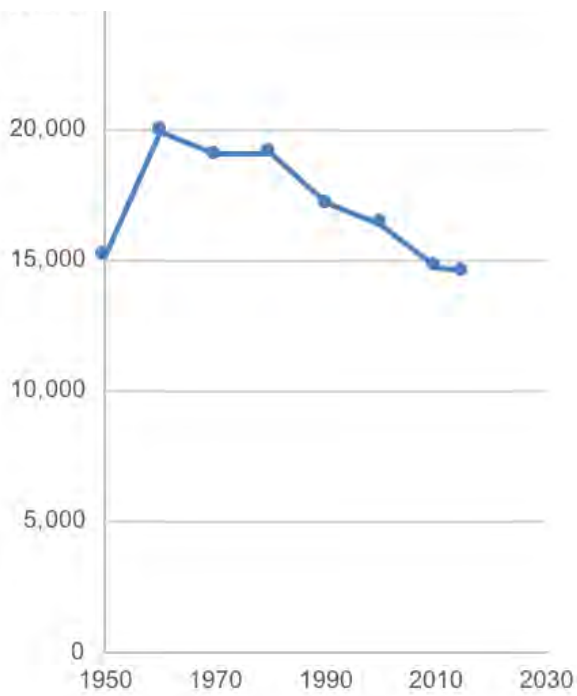
### SHIFTING POPULATION CENTERS

The Township's gradual population decrease since the 1980's reflects the continued migration of residents from the area due to changing locations of economic opportunity. The Township population decreased by 1,655 persons (about 10%) in the ten-year period between 2000 and 2010. This is in comparison to a rate of decrease in Berrien County as a whole of 1% during the same period. As of 2015, the population of Berrien County was approximately 156,813.

### POPULATION DECLINE SLOWS

The 2015 population estimate for the Township shows a slowdown in the rate of population decline from 2010 to 2015, with only a decrease of about 184 persons (1.2%) over the five-year period. While this number is an improvement from the previous years, the percentage of population decline in the Township was the second worst of the comparison communities after Sodus Township which lost 5.4% of its population in the same time period (Figure 1).

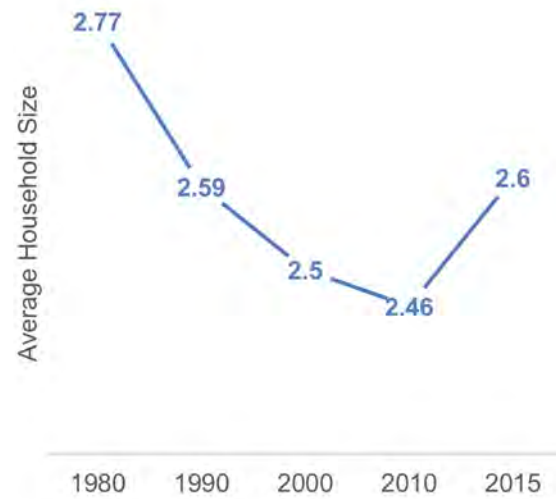
**Figure 1: Population History, Benton Charter Township**



### CHANGING FAMILY STRUCTURES

Since the 1980's, Benton Charter Township has been experiencing a decline in the number of people per household. The trend is illustrated in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Household Size, 1980-2015**



Source: US Census Bureau: 2010 Census and 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

The decrease in household size may be caused by several factors. Families today generally include fewer children than was common in the past. Single person and single parent households are also more common today than in the past. One consequence of this trend is that fewer people take up more living space. Again, this trend has implications regarding the types of housing units that will be in demand in the coming years, which in turn has implications for property values. If this trend continues, there likely will be a reduced demand for large single-family homes and greater demand for condominiums, apartments and other smaller living arrangements.

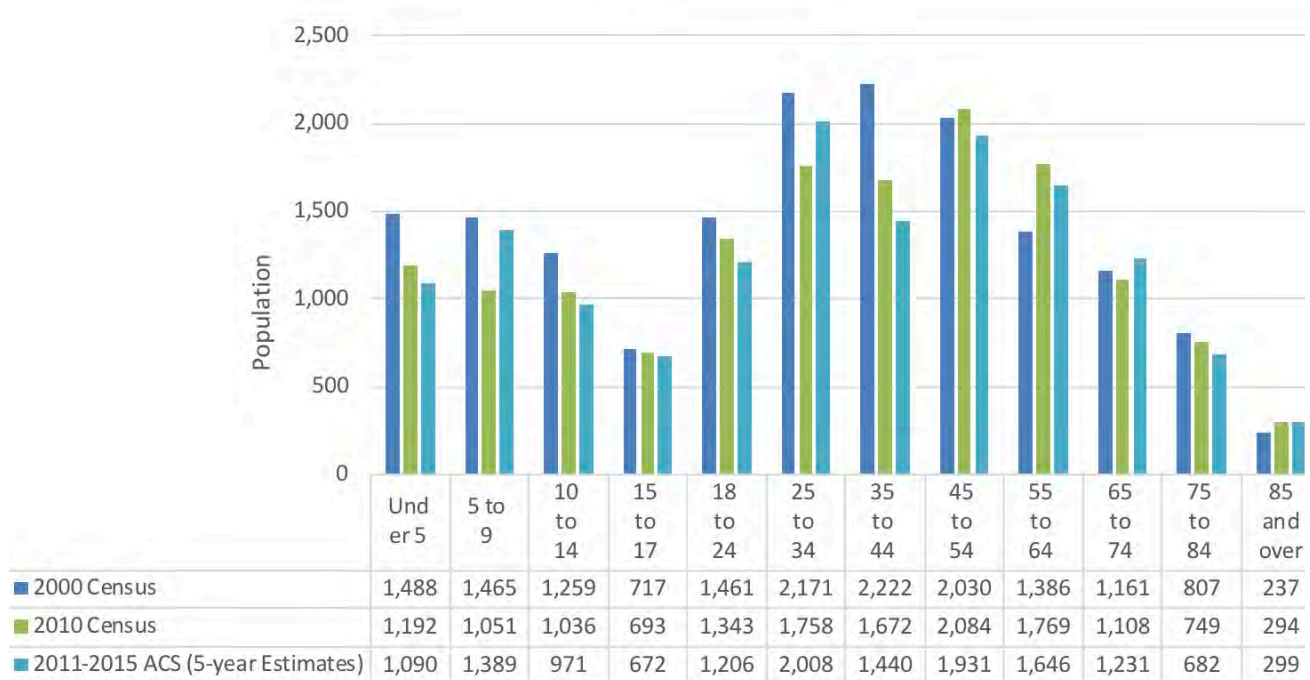
However, in the past five years Benton Charter Township has experienced an increase in its average household size, rising from 2.46 in 2010 to 2.6 in 2015. In the same period, the number of single parent households dropped by 18% with the number of married-coupled households increasing by 21%. While these numbers have only begun to change in the past five years, it suggests that there may be a growing population of young families with several children within the Township. An increase in this population will also have implications for the type of housing available in the future and the need for quality school systems.

## Maturing Families and Increases in Young Families

Of specific importance to the future of the Township is data concerning the age of the population and householders. Benton Charter Township historically developed as a Township of families within close proximity to jobs offered in the Township or the City of Benton Harbor. As the children of these families grew older and moved away, the parents remained. The historical data concerning the number of persons per household documents this trend. As with other areas of the nation, this trend has caused the average age of the population of Benton Charter Township and Berrien County to increase. The median age for Benton Charter Township increased from 33.2 in 2000 to 37.2 in 2010. While during the same time period, the median age of the population in Berrien County, increased from 37.4 to 41.

However, the 2015 ACS estimates illustrate a fall in the median age of Benton Charter Township to 34.8, suggesting that as existing residents are aging, new families are moving into the Township to repeat the cycle of raising a family in the Township. Figure 3 illustrates the age distribution in Benton Charter Township in the 2000 Census, the 2010 Census, and the 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates. While the Township experienced an overall decline in population, the 5 to 9-year-old age group and 25 to 34-year-old age group experienced some of the largest increases in population from 2010 to 2015.

**Figure 3: Age Distribution, 2000-2015 — Benton Charter Township**





Benton Charter Township's young median age stands out as an outlier in the Greater Benton Harbor/St. Joseph's Region as shown in Table 7, with Benton Charter Township being 7.8 years younger than Royalton Township (the next youngest community). In addition, when comparing the youth population of other areas in the region, Benton Charter Township has the second largest youth population (28.3%), second only to the City of Benton Harbor (32.9%). The City of St. Joseph has the smallest percentage of the population under 18 years old in the region with only 14.1%.

**Table 7: Median Age**

Community	Median Age
Benton Charter Township	34.8
Benton Harbor	30.4
Lincoln Charter Township	43.5
Royalton Township	42.6
St. Joseph	42.6
St. Joseph Charter Township	46.5
Sodus Township	50.6
Shoreham Village	46.6
Stevensville Village	51.5

For planning purposes, the two age ranges are particularly noteworthy. As stated above, for the past thirty years, the number of children in Benton Charter Township has been declining. However, the 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates shows an increase in both the 5 to 9 populations and the 25 to 34 populations. The Township may be experiencing an increase in these populations as young families are attracted to the Township's location to jobs and affordable family housing. Also, the population of 65 to 74-year-old and 85 and older age groups have all shown increases in the most recent ACS estimates. These trends have implications regarding housing types that will be in demand for residents of the Township in the coming years and for other types of community facilities that will be needed.

## Housing Trends

### HOUSING COSTS

Table 8 shows the estimates for median home value from 2011 to 2015, and Table 9 shows the estimates for median rent from 2011 to 2015. The ACS 5-year Estimates include five years of data, so these estimates all include data from the recession and after the national housing market collapse. Estimates show a slow rebound in median home value and a steady trend of increasing rents in the Township.

**Table 8: Median Home Value, 2011-2015**

ACS 5-year Estimates	Median Home Value (Unadjusted)
2006 to 2010	\$83,200
2007 to 2011	\$82,000
2008 to 2012	\$82,700
2009 to 2013	\$80,480
2010 to 2014	\$79,800
2011 to 2015	\$80,000

Source: US Census Bureau: American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

**Table 9: Median Rent, 2011-2015**

ACS 5-year Estimates	Median Rent (Unadjusted)
2006 to 2010	\$499
2007 to 2011	\$531
2008 to 2012	\$527
2009 to 2013	\$557
2010 to 2014	\$574
2011 to 2015	\$603

Source: US Census Bureau: American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

### INCREASING PERCENTAGES OF RENTERS

According to the 2010 Census, 56.2% of the dwelling units in Benton Charter Township are owner-occupied. This is a decrease of just 0.2% over the ownership levels in 2000. According to the 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, about 55% of dwelling units are owner-occupied. These numbers suggest while owner-occupancy is still the majority in the Township, there is a declining trend of homeownership.

The mix of single family and multiple family housing units has stayed roughly the same in the Township over the past 25 years. The estimates from the 2011-2015 American Community Survey show the distribution as 75.3% single family dwelling units and 24.7% multiple family dwelling units. Single family detached housing units are the most common housing type at 67.8% of units in the Township. The next most common is multiple family structures with ten or more units. Mobile homes make up 6.4% of the housing units.

The 2015 estimates suggests a higher share of multiple family housing than in 2000 and the 2009 ACS estimates. This indicates that Benton Charter Township residents may be unable to invest in single family homes as they are still recovering from the national recession and lagging housing market. The 2015 data also show a net loss of nearly 1,000 housing units between 2009 and 2015. The 2005-2009 and 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-year estimates contain samples of data from 5 consecutive years, and the decline in number of housing units may be attributable to errors with the estimates. Any findings related to current housing in the Township should take into account the fact that data for housing depends on estimates or came from the time period when the national recession impacted the housing market throughout the country.

**Table 10: Benton Charter Township Housing Types, 1990-2015**

	1990		2000		ACS 2005-2009		Percentage Change (1990-2009)	ACS 2011-2015	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage
SF: Detached	4,850	69.1%	4,696	66.2%	5,175	69.3%	6.7%	4,470	67.8%
SF: Attached	162	2.3%	180	2.5%	109	1.5%	-32.7%	73	1.1%
Mobile Home	613	8.7%	532	7.5%	358	4.8%	-41.6%	422	6.4%
<b>Single Family</b>	<b>5,625</b>	<b>80.2%</b>	<b>5,408</b>	<b>76.2%</b>	<b>5,642</b>	<b>75.5%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>4,965</b>	<b>75.3%</b>
2-4 Units	430	6.1%	431	6.1%	474	6.3%	10.2%	389	5.9%
5-9 Units	425	6.1%	512	7.2%	540	7.2%	27.1%	412	6.2%
10+ Units	538	7.7%	745	10.5%	814	10.9%	51.3%	827	12.5%
<b>Multiple Family</b>	<b>1,393</b>	<b>19.8%</b>	<b>1,688</b>	<b>23.8%</b>	<b>1,828</b>	<b>24.5%</b>	<b>31.2%</b>	<b>1,628</b>	<b>24.7%</b>
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>7,018</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>7,096</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>7,470</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>6.4%</b>	<b>6,593</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: US Census Bureau: 2000 Census and 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

## Employment and Economic Trends

### A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

Benton Charter Township today offers a balanced mix of both white- and blue-collar occupations which is largely due to the loss felt, consistent with national employment trends, within the manufacturing and industrial sector. Major employment occupations include office and administrative support, production, professional services, transportation, and sales.

Understanding the types of facilities that current industries are looking for, including live/work spaces with individuals working remotely, will be key for positioning the Township in the future. Data for the type of positions held by the residents by industry is shown in Table 11. This information shows that a majority of residents work within the manufacturing, educational, or accommodation services. Land use designations must ensure that these industries have room to grow within the Township.

The 2015 ACS data shows that Benton Charter Township has a labor force of around 5,831 persons and an unemployment rate of 13.5%. The percentage of individuals over the age of 16 and not in the labor force is the highest of the surrounding region (46.2% compared to 43.5% of individuals over the age of 16 in the City of Benton Harbor). This population may require additional support services including affordable housing, recreational outlets, etc.

**Table 11: Percentage of Labor Force Employed by Industry, Benton Charter Township**

Industry Sector	Percent of Labor Force (2015)
Manufacturing	23.6%
Educational Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance	22.9%
Retail Trade	10.6%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services	9.9%
Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative and Waste Management Services	8.7%
Other Services, Except Public Administration	5.1%
Construction	4.2%
Transportation and Warehousing, and Utilities	4.1%
Public Administration	3.0%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Mining	2.5%
Finance and Insurance, and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	2.5%
Information	1.6%
Wholesale Trade	1.3%

Source: US Census Bureau: 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

## COMMUTING

Table 12 shows the commute times for workers living within Benton Charter Township. According to the 2011-2015 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, the mean commute to work time was 18 minutes. These data suggest that the economic and labor market is very localized within this area of Berrien County.

**Table 12: Commute Times from Benton Charter Township**

Commute Time Range	2000 Census	2005-2009 ACS	2011-2015 ACS
Less than 10 Minutes	21%	20.9%	18.5%
10 to 19 Minutes	43.8%	46.7%	44.3%
20 to 29 Minutes	17.5%	20.2%	16.6%
30 to 39 Minutes	7.5%	6.0%	9.7%
40 to 59 Minutes	2.7%	2.0%	4.9%
60 to 89 Minutes	1.7%	1.8%	1.6%
90 or More Minutes	2.6%	0.8%	1.1%
Worked at Home	3.0%	1.6%	3.3%

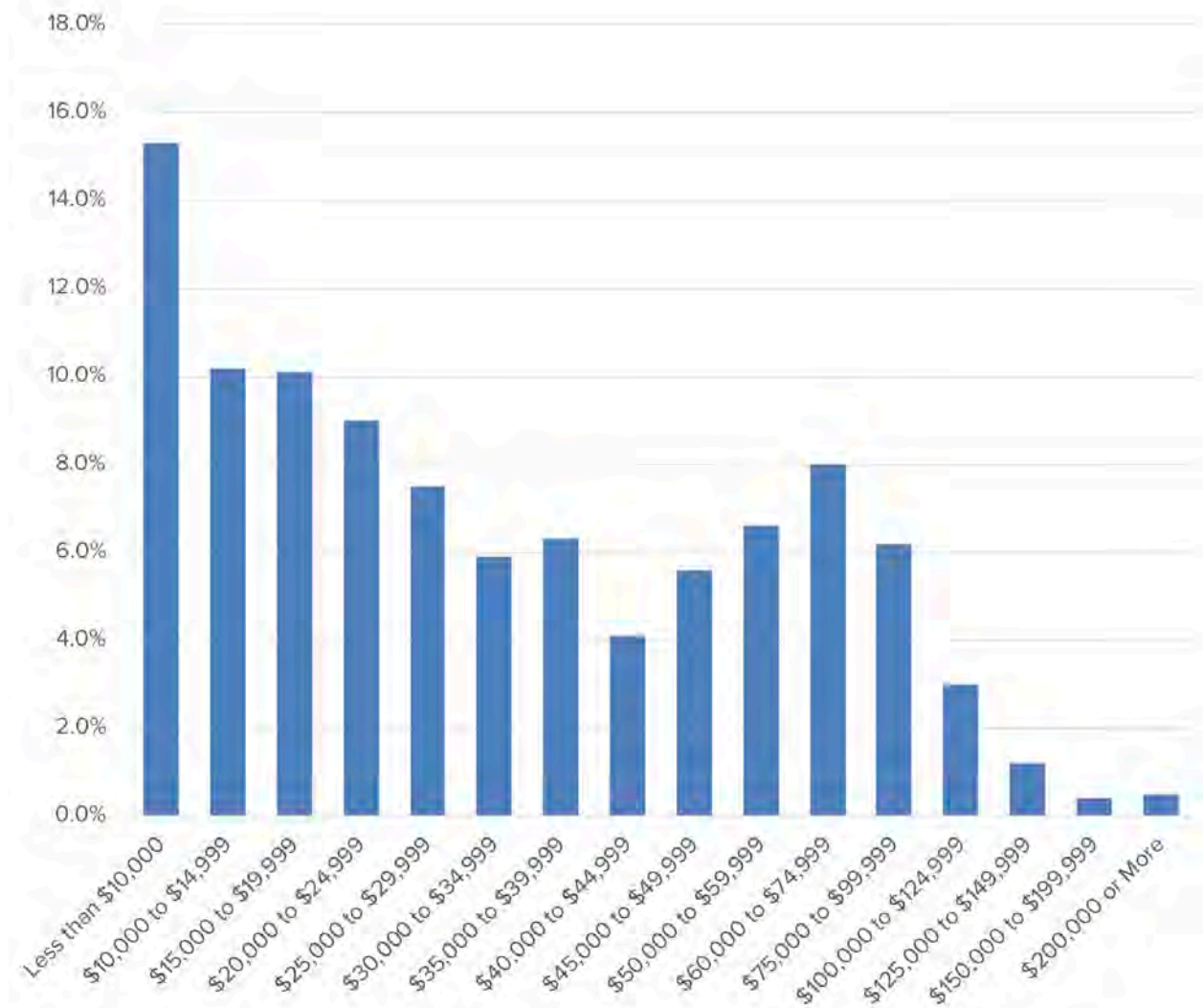
Source: US Census Bureau: 2000 Census; 2005-2009 and 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates



## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

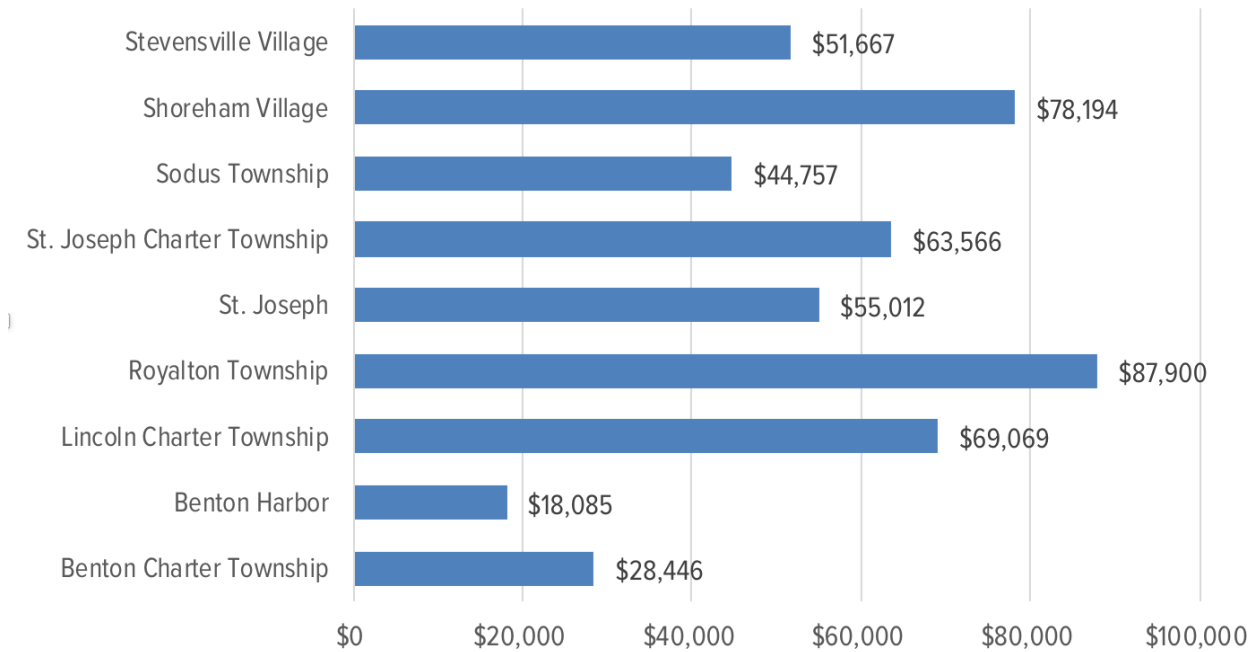
Figure 4 shows data for the distribution of income groups in Benton Charter Township based on the 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. According to the 2015 ACS estimates, the median household income in the Township was \$28,446 and the mean household income was \$39,555. (Note: The mean is calculated by adding up all of the household incomes in the Township and dividing by the number of households. The median is determined by ordering the household incomes in the Township from highest to lowest and determining the number in the middle). Half of all households in Benton Charter Township earned more than \$28,446, while half earned less. Since the mean income is greater than the median income, it suggests that there are a few households in Benton Charter Township that earn substantially more money than the median.

**Figure 4: Household Income Distribution, 2015**



Source: US Census Bureau: 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

The Township's and comparison communities' median household incomes are displayed in Figure 5. In 2015 dollars, Benton Charter Township's Median Household Income was greater than the City of Benton Harbor, but significantly less than the remaining neighboring communities.

**Figure 5: Median Household Income (2015 Dollars)**

Source: US Census Bureau: 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

### REBOUNDED HOUSEHOLD INCOME

While the median household income for residents of Benton Charter Township is low in comparison to surrounding communities, Table 13 shows that the Township median income is increasing a positive trend which could be related to the increase in working age families.

**Table 13: Median Household Income, 2009-2015**

ACS 5-year Estimates	Median Household Income (Unadjusted)
2005 to 2009	\$25,932
2006 to 2010	\$24,804
2007 to 2011	\$25,554
2008 to 2012	\$24,686
2009 to 2013	\$25,083
2010 to 2014	\$26,329
2011 to 2015	\$28,446

Source: US Census Bureau: American Community Survey 5-year Estimates and 2015 ESRI Demographic and Income Profile





## Public Engagement Opportunities

The Township conducted various outreach events throughout the planning process for robust and open community input. Participants at such events included residents, Township stakeholders, and community organizations' representatives.





Three methods of public engagement were used as part of the Master Plan development process that have resulted in meaningful input:

1. **Planning Commission Open Meeting**—The Planning Commission held a working meeting on October 16, 2017 with an agenda to discuss strategic planning issues related to the update of the Master Plan. The meeting was held at the Township Hall and was open to the public for feedback and comment.
2. **Community Input Session**—On November 13, 2017 the Township conducted a Community Input Session at the Hilton Garden Inn from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m which was attended by over 40 residents, local business owners, and members of the Planning Commission and Township Board. Individuals in attendance had the opportunity to provide feedback, ideas, and/or land use suggestions at eight different engagement stations.
3. **Online and Hard Copy Survey**—The Township also launched online and hard copy surveys related to the Township's housing, land use, and transportation opportunities. Links to the surveys were made available on the Benton Charter Township's Website and on social media. Hard copy surveys were available at Township Hall and the Community Input Session. Survey responses were collected for 40 days.



## Findings

Each engagement opportunity attempted to generate feedback on strategic planning issues within the Township, including housing choice, land use, economic development and transportation. The main ideas generated through each of the engagement tools are as follows:

- » **Housing Choice**—Key issues regarding housing choice related to the need to provide a range of housing options (condos, assisted living, campus housing, mixed-use etc.) and associated ancillary services. Participants also expressed a desire to rehabilitate existing housing stock and encourage first time homeownership through innovative financing and/or incentive methods. The need for adequate non-motorized connections, like non-motorized pathways, between housing and commercial/employment destinations was also identified. Some participants acknowledged that strength of their existing neighborhoods and wanted the Township to play an active role in “branding” successful residential areas, like the Lakeview Character Area.
- » **Commercial Redevelopment Opportunities**—Participants expressed a desire to balance commercial growth with an emphasis on respecting the environment, with specific reference to the Ox Creek Watershed, stormwater management, and providing transportation options other than the automobile. Innovative ideas to revitalize specific locations were provided such as a tutoring or culinary arts center at Pipestone Road and Napier Avenue, mixed-use housing at Fairplain Plaza, and family attractions (Legoland, indoor playground, sports center) at the Orchards Mall. Most comments wished for a balance between repurposing existing structures and rehabilitating buildings with a modern look.
- » **Industrial Redevelopment Opportunities**—Key issues regarding industrial redevelopment were discussed in terms of improving access to existing industrial sites. Participants expressed the desire for better flood control at industrial sites and non-motorized pathways to each destination.
- » **Economic Development**—In terms of economic development, participants expressed interest in attracting specific retail and businesses to the Township, including chain restaurants, healthy/craft grocery stores, and entertainment venues. In addition, participants also expressed a need to cultivate talent within the Township. Suggestions on how to do so included: business incubators, workforce development programs, apprenticeships, and improvements to the school districts.



- » **Transportation Network / US-31 Completion**—The potential of the US-31 completion generated many ideas about what to do with the untouched right-of-way and how to use the land near the freeway. Ideas included farmer/fruit market space, dogparks, daycare/intergenerational centers, sports complexes, and convenience commercial retail. Participants also expressed concern about the increased potential for accidents and the continued need for more public transportation even with the highway completion.
- » **Non-motorized Transportation**—Participants expressed significant support for commuter and recreational non-motorized transportation options throughout the Township. Specifically, participants expressed a desire for coordination of the bicycle system throughout the region (the Township, Benton Harbor, and St. Joseph) as well as recreational connections to the northside of the Township and the Paw Paw River. Improvements were requested to connect the two Whirlpool campuses and for a recreational trail along the established and branded Wine Trail on Benton Center Road. Furthermore, participants expressed the need for non-motorized transportation for daily commute trips. Participants indicated a strong desire for non-motorized pathways or paths and appropriate lighting from residences to stores.
- » **Agricultural / Recreational Tourism**— Benton Charter Township’s agricultural and recreational destinations were highlighted as an asset within the community. Many participants shared a desire to augment and market these uses to attract investment. Participants expressed a need for festival spaces, non-motorized connections between farms, wineries, bed & breakfasts, and more recreation destinations near the freeways. One participant suggested making Benton Center Road the “center” of the Agricultural/Recreational area, providing wayfinding signage to draw travelers.

The ideas from the Community Input Session, survey, and Planning Commission Feedback Session centered on re-envisioning and re-purposing the Township’s existing assets to meet the needs of the area’s existing and diverse populations. This includes positioning the Township to be a community that embraces both its rural and urban/suburban neighborhoods, a community that offers residents a variety of housing types and mixed use development, a community that respects the environment, a community that is business savvy, and a community that values its history but is forward looking.

Reflected in the Master Plan are the ideas generated by the engagement sessions: the identified places and neighborhoods that are enjoyed by residents and add character to the community, the housing stock with room for improvement and redevelopment, and the transportation opportunities to link the Township’s amenities and create safer environments for pedestrians, cyclists, public transit users, and drivers.

