



Ganges Township Master Plan

GANGES TOWNSHIP, ALLEGAN COUNTY, MICHIGAN

DRAFT • MARCH 28, 2023

GANGES TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

Ganges Township, Allegan County Michigan

DRAFT · March 28, 2023

Approved by Planning Commission: XXXX XX, 2023

Approved by Township Board: XXXX XX, 2023

Prepared with the assistance of



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Special thanks to the previous Planning Commission for their contributions to this Plan.

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PREFACE

"... we are not absolute owners, but caretakers of land which should not be diminished in quality during our tenure."

- The Land Stewardship Initiative of the Michigan Environmental Council



This phrase states the purpose and goals of revising the land use plan. The purpose is to provide an atmosphere that assures a prime quality of life and safeguards the citizens of Ganges Township. The primary goal is to allow and encourage land uses that best utilize the land while preserving its heritage, protecting the natural resources, and enhancing the economy.

Unplanned growth and careless land practices can cause land use conflicts, environmental problems, and the unnecessary or excessive loss of fertile land.

This plan is one of many necessary tools to help ensure all decision makers implement a successful program to protect the rural character and integrity of Ganges Township. The land is eternal, and people vary its use. Past people have affected the present, and people now will affect the future.

Who are We the People of Ganges Township

Ganges Township's preferred future is focused on protecting and maintaining its existing rural character and high quality of life in an atmosphere of continued growth. The Township's desired future includes preservation of the Township's agricultural areas, environmentally sensitive areas and natural features. Protection of agricultural uses, lakes, wetlands, groundwater and dunes are paramount. Also critical is ensuring that land uses are targeted to areas that have the capacity to accommodate those uses. Only light industrial uses will be encouraged.

In order to maintain the beauty of the area and to preserve its rural character, the Township intends to maintain the integrity and intent of this Plan through its consistent application.

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INTRODUCTION

01

Allegan County prepared a county plan in 1974, which was known as "The Allegan County General Development Plan."

In June of 1989, the Ganges Township Planning Commission appointed a Land Use Plan Committee to revise the township's portion of the 1974 Allegan County plan. The Plan was intended to be utilized by all Ganges Township decision makers as a guidance tool for revising the Ganges Township Zoning Ordinance for future use. The Planning Commission approved the Land Use Plan on July 23, 1991. This Plan was reviewed and again revised in 2007 and again in 2012. It was reviewed in 2017 as well, but no changes were made.

The Land Use Plan contains useful and practical information. This is to be utilized as a guide for Township officials in land use, development, zoning and capital improvement decisions. In particular, the vision and goals, along with the future land use map, provide direction for those decisions.



History

Ganges Township was the fourteenth settlement in Allegan County. It was settled by Harrison Hutchins in 1837. Organization of the township began in 1847. The first town meeting was at the home of Orlando Weed on April 5, 1847. Twenty-seven votes were cast. Positions filled included the supervisor, clerk, treasurer, justice of the peace, school inspectors, and directors of the poor, commissioners of highways, constables, and path-masters.

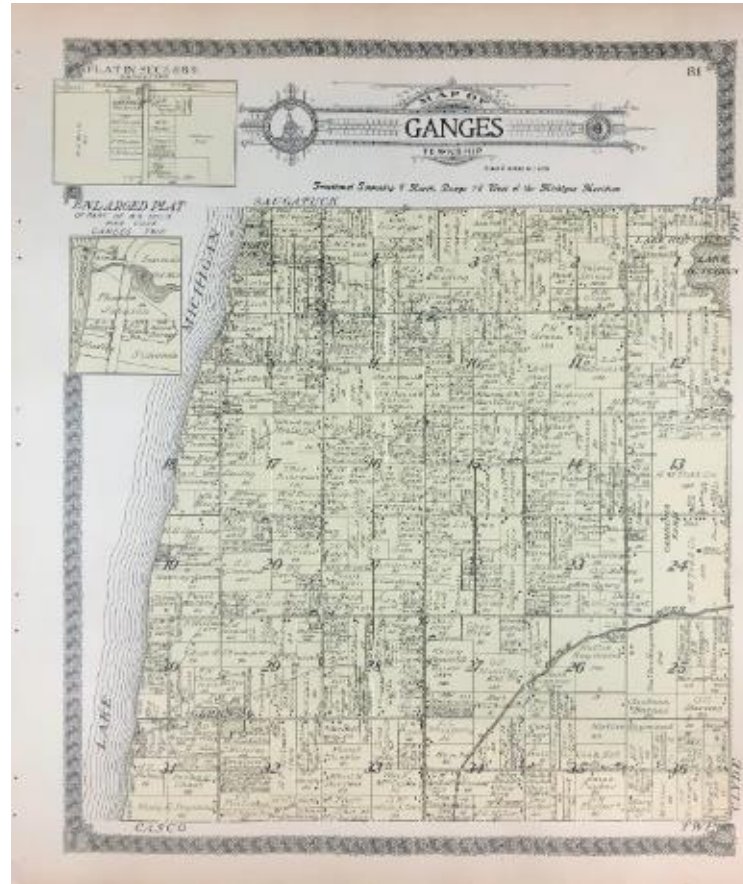
There are several stories about how the township was named. The one most told is that Dr. Joseph Coats named Ganges Township. Dr. Coats' original petition to the legislature to name the township had to be changed because the name selected was already in use. The reason Ganges was submitted on Dr. Coats' second petition doesn't seem to be known.

During this time the township was mostly forest. Many changes were occurring throughout the township which can be directly associated to the shores of Lake Michigan. The area was covered with a rich forest of beech, pine, and maple trees. Lumber was in great demand for building material in cities and residences developing along the lake shore. There was also a need for tan bark by tanneries, as a result a vast lumber trade developed. After the land was cleared and farm crops were planted, settlers realized that the lake shore climate was ideal for growing, not only garden products, but fruit trees as well. Agriculture soon began to be the popular trade.

Some of the pioneers to the area included Harrison Hutchins, John Billings, Cyrus Cole, James Wadsworth, James McCormick, and Levi Loomis. Other occupants of the township included friendly Indians, who were willing to trade with the pioneers, as well as wolves and deer. The wolves were so numerous that sheep raising was impossible.

Glenn was first settled in 1843. Before 1876 this area was known by many names, including Packards Corner and New Casco. The name Glenn has been used since 1856. Shipping became necessary, so piers were built out into the lake. The boats that carried fruit into the cities would bring vacation-bound passengers on the return trip. The resort business increased, and Glenn grew rapidly. By 1897 the community had developed enough to support three grocery stores, a drug store, a meat market, two blacksmiths, a barber shop, two hotels, and several other businesses. During the 1920's truck transportation replaced the need for the piers. The blizzard of 1937 established Glenn as a community filled with hospitality. Travelers who were marooned in Glenn spread the word about this area's people and warmth. A pancake festival was set up to celebrate the blizzard that next spring. This festival continued until 1941, when World War II forced its cancellation.

The festival was revived in the 1960's and continues today. Since the construction of Interstate 196 rerouted traffic, Glenn saw a decline in tourism during the 1960's. The resort businesses were gone, and lifestyles were changed forever.



Plummerville was founded in 1846. This was a joint effort by Benjamin Plummer and Orlando Weed. A sawmill was set up near the creek. A tannery was soon flourishing nearby. Mr. Plummer opened a store. A pier, measuring approximately 400 feet long, was built. The sawmill operated until 1876. When operations ceased, most of the buildings in the area were moved or torn down. Eventually, the pier was washed away.

Pier Cove was laid out by Deacon Sutherland in 1851 as a platted town in Allegan County. A steam sawmill and wood shop were constructed. The wood shop was later made into a grist mill, which was needed in the area. Two piers, measuring approximately 323 feet, were built. This area was thought of as a village, which boasted about its twenty families, four stores, a tavern, post office, grist mill and three hotels. As the cord wood supply was depleted, the fire of 1871 occurred, and the railroad came to Fennville, the Village of Pier Cove diminished in population and importance. One pier remained in service into 1919. Both piers were destroyed by storms in the 1900's and were not rebuilt.

Ganges, located at the corners of 122nd Avenue and 68th Street, was formerly known as the "Johnson comers." Mr. A. A. Johnson owned the land and had a blacksmith shop and later a general store. By 1916, Fred and William Haile purchased some property from Johnson and established a receiving station. They built a large garage with an open second floor that was used for community social gatherings and political meetings. This building is known today as the Plummer Bros. Garage. The Ganges Post Office (discontinued in November of 1954), Ganges Union School, Greyhound Bus line, and a general store (closed 1970) once served the community. Today, the general store is a woodworking shop. But the Ganges United Methodist Church, as well as the Ganges Baptist Church and the Monastery, still hold worship services for the community.

In 1901 the Ganges Canning & Packing Company began business. Although the company reported "fairly successful" years, in 1903 the local banks foreclosed on the cannery. By 1905, the machinery was sold, and the building was transformed into a mint processing distillery.

Schools in the area (Glenn & Pier Cove) began in April of 1847. The first classrooms were in the home of James Wadsworth. Between 1847 and 1880 ten school districts were organized. A "unit school system" was approved by

voters in 1912. This unit system only lasted two years. The township voters then voted for individual boards for each district. From 1960 to 1963 all of these districts, with the exception of the Glenn School, were annexed into the Fennville school system.

Churches in the area included the Ganges Baptist Church. Its first meetings were in the Lewis School. In 1880, the congregation built its own building. The Ganges Methodist Church was established around 1840. The church constructed a building at Pier Cove in 1867, which was later moved to an area by Johnson's Corner. A fire, on February 22, 1929, destroyed the wooden church. In 1931 the new building was dedicated.

The Vivekanada Society came to the area in 1966. A retreat and monastery were established. This area was selected at least partially because of the name Ganges, the same name as the Ganges River in India.

The West Michigan Pike (sections of 68th Street and 114th Avenue) went through the area in 1916. An electric light company was organized and started producing electricity in the fall of 1919. The township had a Grange Hall, located at the corner of 122nd Avenue and 66th Street, until it was torn down in 1996.

Ganges Township today is a steadily growing and changing community. Although farming still supplies a base to the area, an extensive amount of farmland has been converted to residential uses. The Township has grown to include a public school, two fire stations, three general stores, wineries, four cemeteries, two metal fabricating shops, four industrial facilities, three restaurants, one gas station/convenience store, and many other small businesses (including home businesses). The township currently has home rentals and several bed and breakfast establishments to offer visitors lodging accommodations.

Both the Allegan County and Ganges Township parks, as well as other accesses to Lake Michigan, provide lake recreational uses for the township residents and visitors to the area.

The Planning Process

At its most basic and fundamental level, a community master plan is a guiding policy document. Not only does a master plan reflect a comprehensive vision for a community, but it also serves as the key building block to implement policies, programs, and procedures to achieve a long-term community vision. Whether the vision is for agricultural preservation, conservation of rural character, and/or a guide to target growth and development areas, a community master plan influences the vision of a community and land use fabric for years to come.

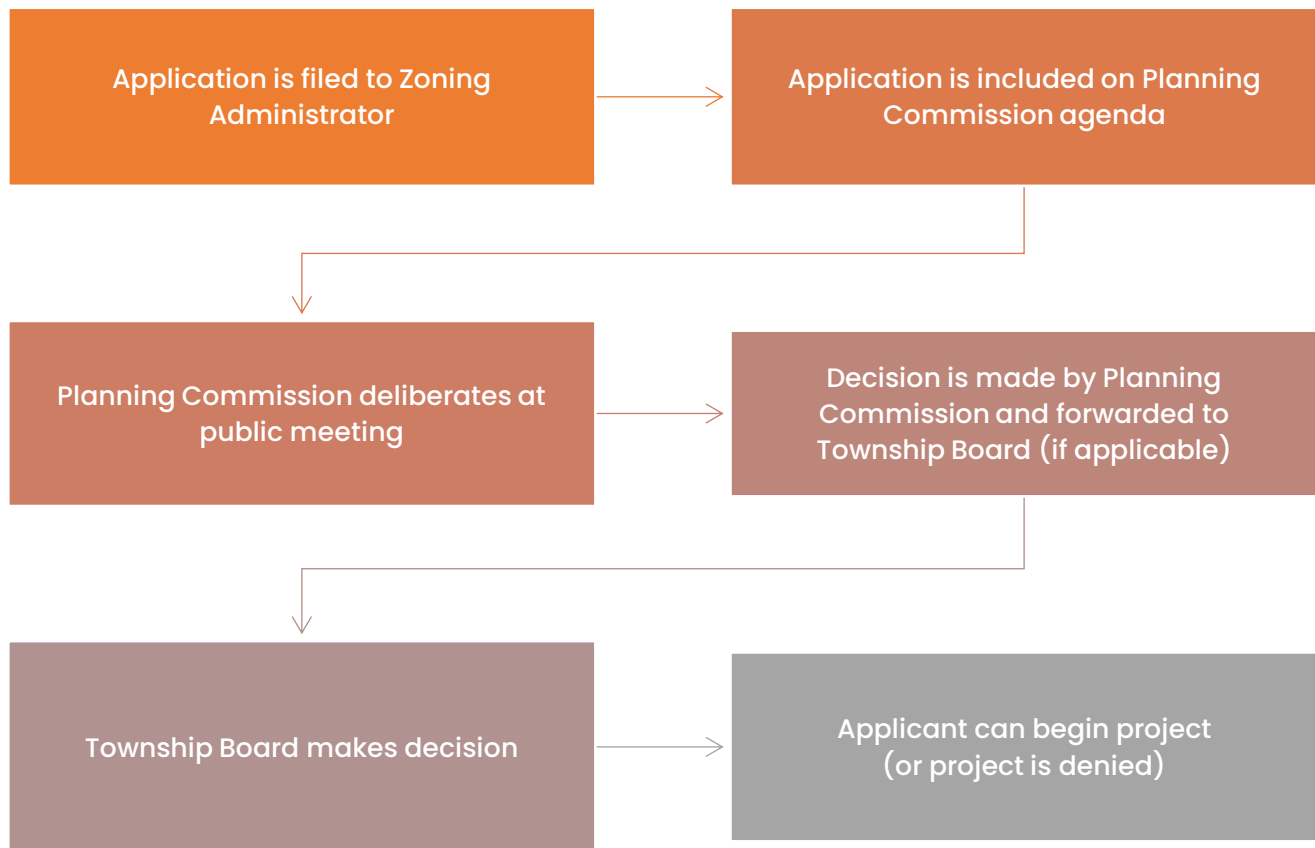
It is the intent that the recommendations, programs, policies, and other aspects of this Plan will be initiated by the Ganges Township Planning Commission, with support and input from the Township Board and, most importantly, the Township residents and taxpayers. This Plan represents the overall vision, priorities, and direction for Ganges Township over the next 10+ years. However, it should be acknowledged that master plans are also intended to be a living document. As such, the Planning Commission intends to continually monitor this Plan to ensure that decisions being made at the local level accurately reflect the spirit of this document and changes will be made if deemed necessary.

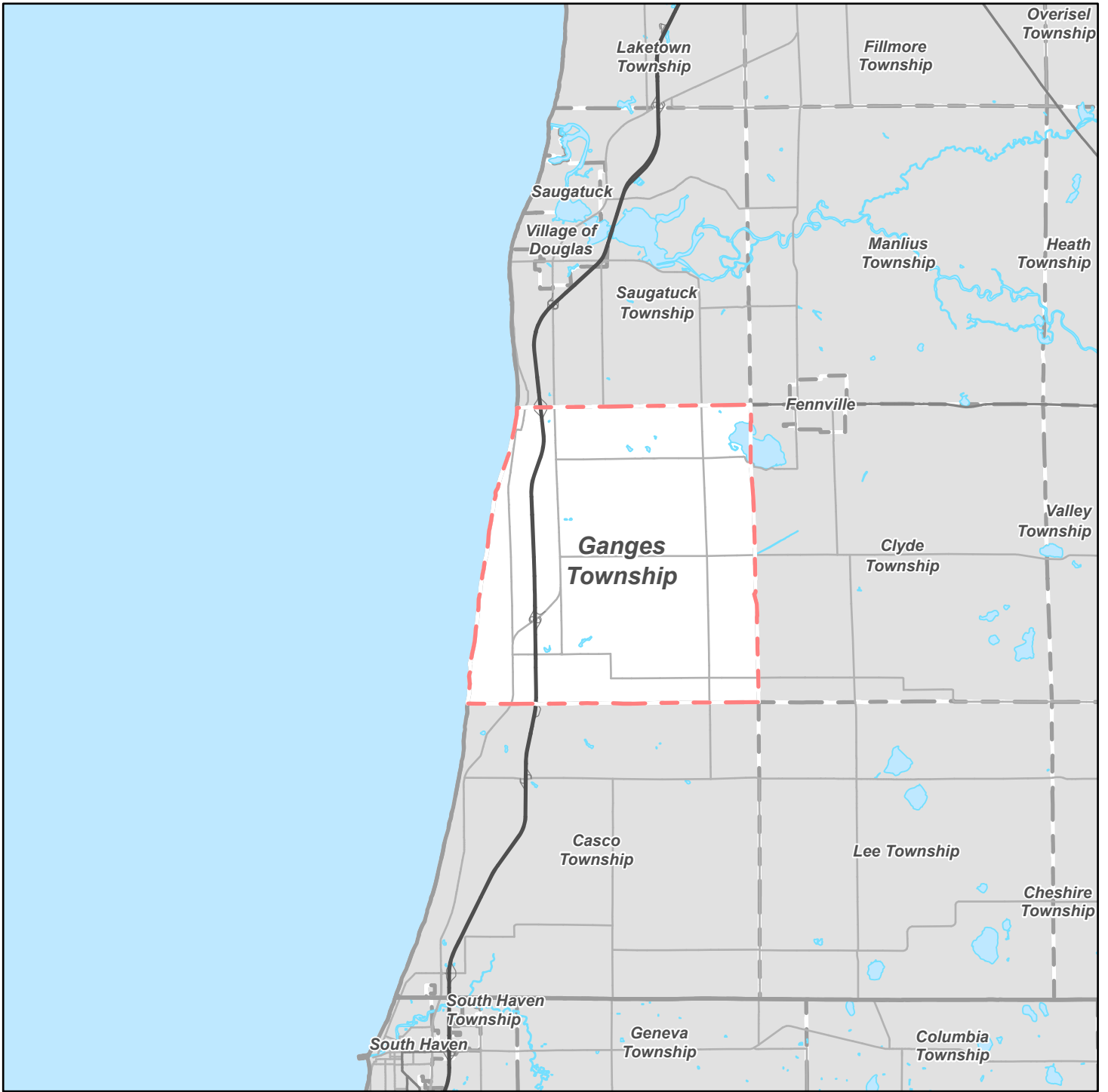
In general, this Master Plan will serve as a tool for the Planning Commission for reference when new development opportunities arise (in addition to other elements such as infrastructure goals and environmental sustainability). With each new development (or redevelopment) proposal, the Planning Commission utilizes Township requirements, such as the zoning ordinance, as well as this document to make an informed decision for an approval or denial. For instance, a typical development process involving the master plan may involve these steps:

1. A property owner (or their representative) submits an application to the Township for a new development or special land use to the Ganges Township Zoning Administrator. This includes a site plan which will be generated by a licensed engineer or architect.
2. The Zoning Administrator includes the application on the next Planning Commission Agenda for discussion. The Planning Commission holds a public meeting each month at the Ganges Township Hall.
3. The Planning Commission holds a public discussion on the proposal. This may or may not include a public hearing, depending on the project requirements. In either case, each Planning Commission meeting includes opportunity for public comment.

4. The Planning Commission makes a decision (approval, denial, or table) of the proposal. This decision is forwarded to the Township Board (if applicable) for consideration. The decision is largely based on compliance with the Township zoning ordinance requirements, best practices in planning and zoning, quality of life assessment, and compatibility with this Master Plan.
5. The proposal will go to the Township Board for final decision (if applicable).
6. If approved, the applicant will then be permitted to continue forward with the project (e.g., securing permits, working with other State or County entities, inspections, certificate of occupancy, etc.). If tabled, it is likely that the applicant is required to obtain more information for the Planning Commission prior to an approval taking place. If denied, the applicant cannot continue with the application process.

The typical planning process is a multi-pronged approach involving the collaboration among various Township, County, and State entities, each with a defined role. The Ganges Township Planning Commission is committed to ensuring that the spirit of this Master Plan is carried forward with each development review, ordinance amendment, and public discussion.







Regional Location

Ganges Township, Allegan County, MI

September 26, 2022

LEGEND

-  Ganges Township
-  Surrounding Municipalities



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: Allegan County 2022. McKenna 2022.



NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

02

Climate

Climate data in Ganges Township is not readily available due to the lack of reporting stations in the Township. Ganges Township is also impacted by global climate change, thus monitoring climate trends is important when planning for the future of the Township. The local weather is affected by the prevailing westerly breezes off Lake Michigan. Ganges Township is also impacted by global climate change, thus monitoring climate trends is important when planning for the future of the Township. The spring and summer winds moderate the daily temperatures downward while the fall and winter temperatures are moderated upward. The table below lists the yearly averages.

Table 1: Summary of Relevant Climate Conditions, Allegan County

Climate Variables	Average Condition
Coldest Months	January / February
Average Temperature in Coldest Months	20°F - 32°F
Hottest Month	July
Average Temperature in Hottest Month	63°F - 82°F
Annual Average Temperature	49.3° F
Average Annual Rainfall	38 inches
Average Annual Snowfall	77 inches
Average Growing Season	176 Days
Elevation Above Sea Level	730 feet
Prevailing Winds	Westerly

Source: weatherspark.com.com, climate-data.org

Topography

The topography of Ganges Township is relatively flat and ranges from 600 feet above sea level to approximately 730 feet above sea level. The western boundary of the Township is the Lake Michigan shoreline, which is dotted with sand dunes, none of which are classified as "critical dunes" by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Both the shoreline south of the Township and the shoreline north of the township include areas designated as "critical dunes." This is visible to the viewer by the way the shoreline bank raises to the south and to the north of the Township.

The lakeshore area is composed of small summer cottages, large summer and year- round homes for the many lakeshore residents. Along with the beauty, serenity and sunsets of Lake Michigan, the residents are faced with shoreline erosion and its on-going problems. The lakeshore erosion along the entire western Ganges Township boundary is not unique, but it is a continuous problem along the shorelines of all the great lakes. The situation is exacerbated during periods of higher water levels in the lake's basin. Every foot of bluff that is lost to erosion is a loss of land that is a non-retrievable resource.

A small inland lake named Hutchins Lake, located in the northeast corner of the township, provides a reservoir for drainage that flows south and east through the center of the township. The western portion of the township drains into Lake Michigan through the creeks including Pier Cove Creek, Plummerville Creek, and the Glenn Creek. The remainder of the township, basically the east half, drains into the Black River Basin that runs south and west draining into Lake Michigan at South Haven.

Soils

The soils in the Township are well documented in the soil survey completed for Allegan County by the USDA Soil Conservation Service in March 1987. Since then, the USDA has not updated the County's soil survey. However, soil data within the Township can be classified into the following categories:

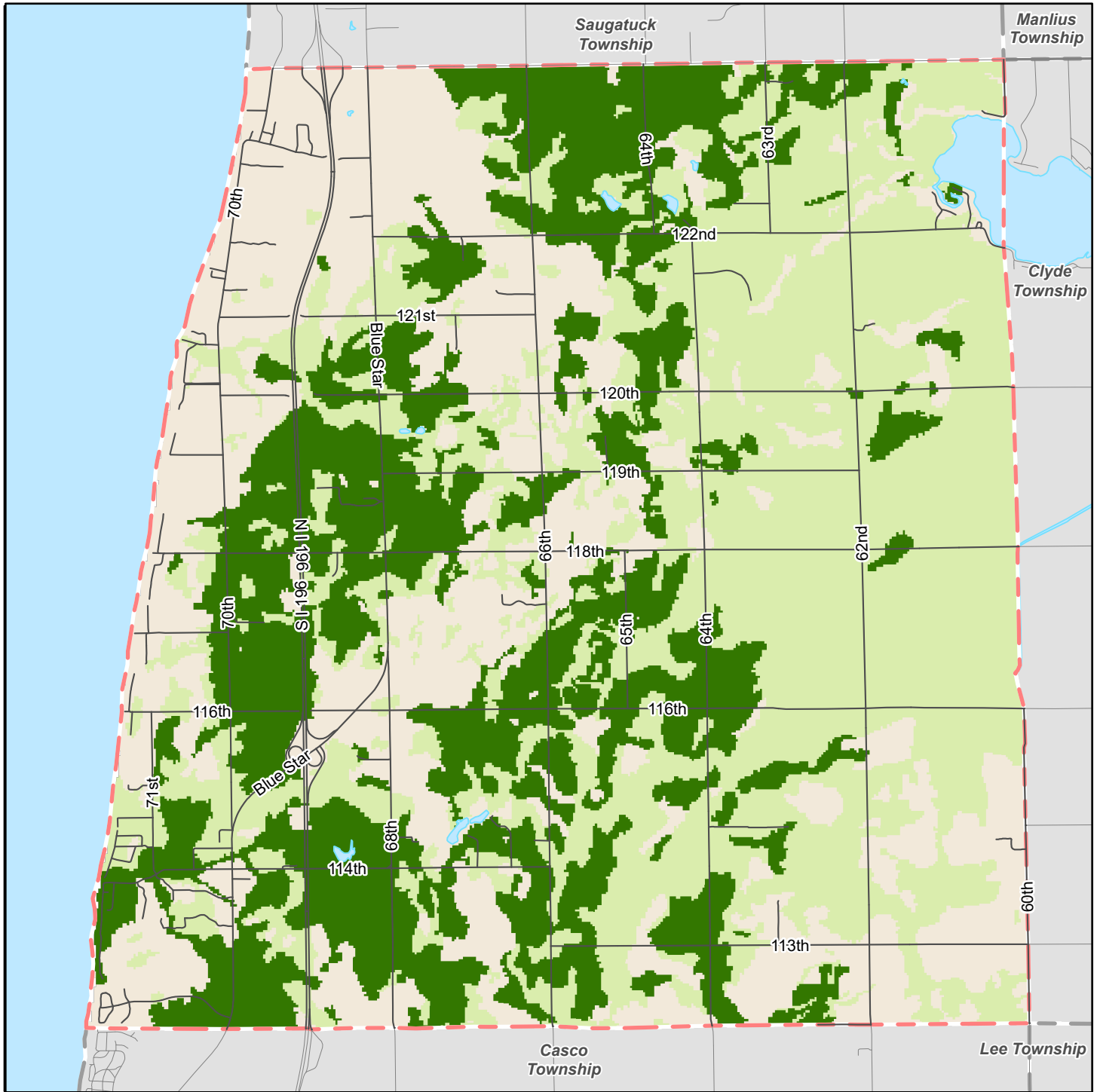
- Prime farmland
- Farmland of local importance
- Not prime farmland

According to the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture, prime farmland is classified as "land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses. It could be cultivated land, pastureland, forestland, or other land, but it is not urban or built upland or water areas." In Ganges Township, prime farmland areas are located in the central part of the Township, near I-196 and Blue Star Highway. Prime Farmland areas are also located in the northcentral portion of the Township, just south of Saugatuck Township and the southcentral portion of the Township, surrounding 116th Avenue and 114th Avenue.

Further, "land is considered to be Farmland of Local Importance for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. This farmland is identified by the appropriate local agencies. Farmland of Local Importance may include tracts of land that have been designated for agriculture by local ordinance." In Ganges Township, areas designated as Farmland of Local Importance include those soils located along the eastern portion of the Township, as well as surrounding the periphery of the Prime Farmland areas.

Areas that are designated as Not Prime Farmland are generally located along the shore of Lake Michigan and a smaller pocket in the central portion of the Township.

The following map depicts the areas of the Township that are classified as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, and Not Prime Farmland as designated by the NRCS.



Prime Farmland

Ganges Township, Allegan County, MI

October 14, 2022

LEGEND

- Prime Farmland
- Farmland of Local Importance
- Not Prime Farmland
- Lakes and Rivers



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: Allegan County 2022. McKenna 2022.



Shoreline & Water Features

The State of Michigan has long been concerned with our shorelines as the state is bounded by Lake Michigan on the West, Lake Huron on the East, and Lake Superior to the North of the Upper Peninsula. There are also many inland lakes, rivers, and streams, which abound across this state.

The State Legislature has provided legislation over the years to protect, control, and administrate the use of these water courses and their interfaces with our ever-growing population. These laws are administered by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE).

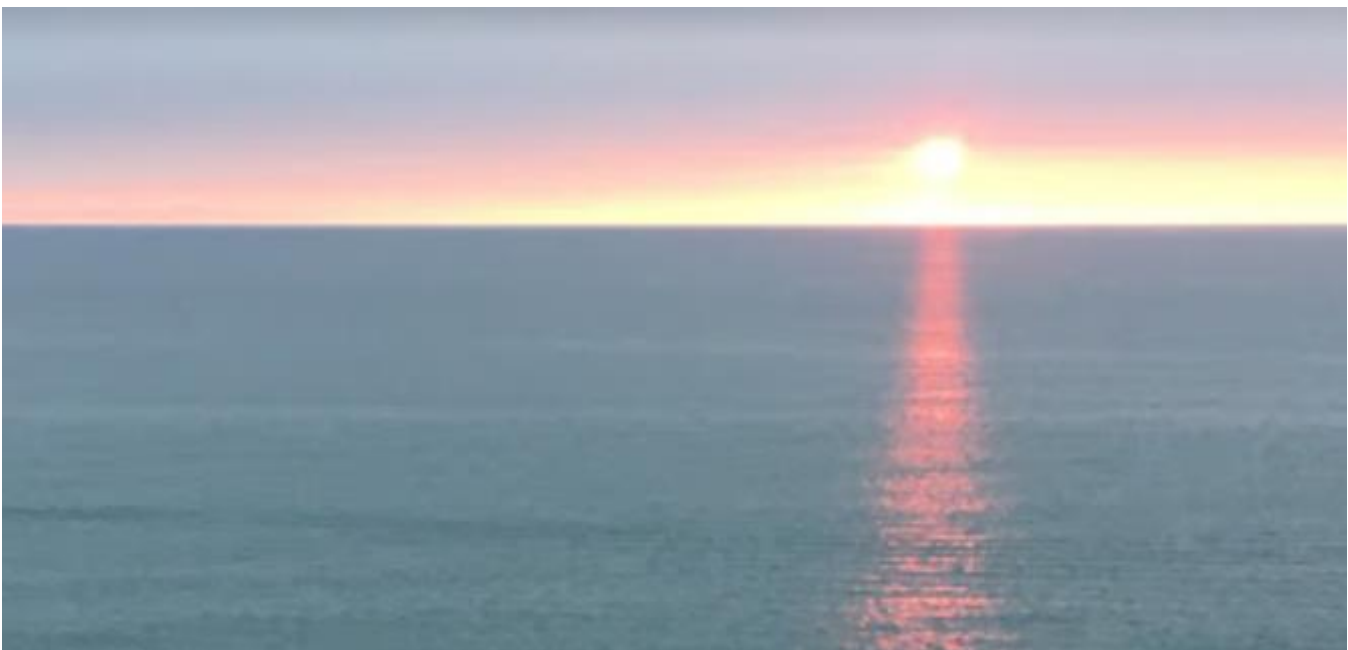
Ganges Township is a participant in the National Flood Insurance Program, which is available to all township residents.

Aquifers & Hydrology

The hydrology of the township is characterized by features such as Lake Michigan, Hutchins Lake, and Plummerville Creek. Nearby hydrological features include the Kalamazoo River, Black River, and Rabbit River. Groundwater in Allegan County primarily discharges to major surface water bodies such as the rivers and Lake Michigan.

Within the Township, groundwater is found in both glacial and bedrock aquifers. The depth of these aquifers ranges from 25 feet to 470 feet. . Additionally, the estimate aquifer yield of Ganges is considered small at less than 70 gallons per minute (GPM). Despite the small aquifer yield estimate, Ganges has 810 wells as of 2021. Ganges Township also has one of the highest water uses including uses for irrigation, public supply, industrial and commercial uses, and household uses. Portions of the Township in the North and South have some of the lowest recharge rate in the County at 8.1 to 9 inches per year.

In terms of water quality, Ganges Township has the highest secondary water quality severity index ranking due to high iron concentrations. The secondary water quality index was calculated using non-mandatory water quality standards: chloride and iron.



Wetlands & High-Quality Natural Areas

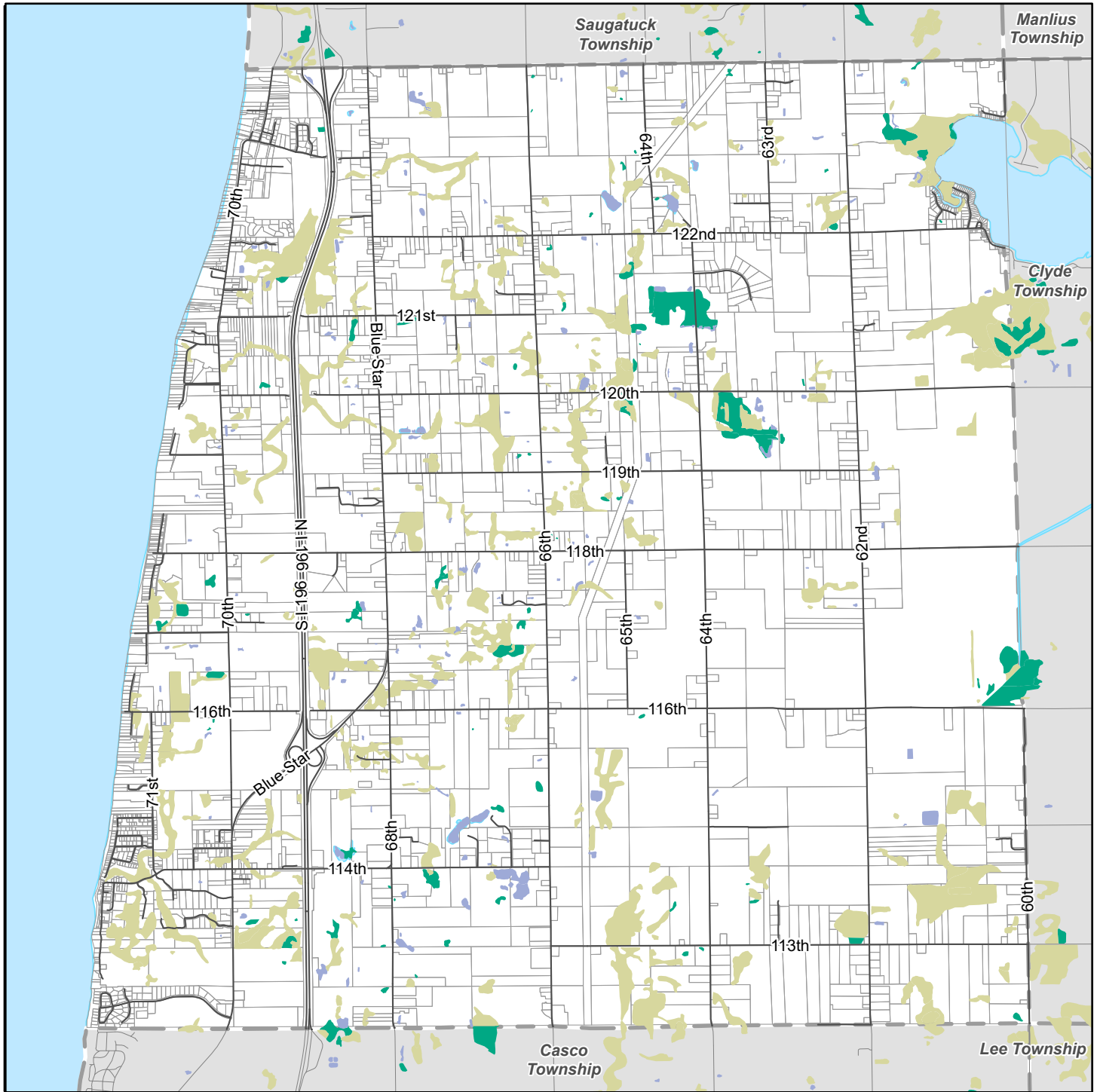
The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) has identified wetlands throughout Michigan by aerial photography. Wetlands are of essential concern in the township due to the integral role that they play in planning, zoning, land use, and the development process. Given the protection afforded wetlands by the state and federal governments, the flexibility for local decision and control relative to wetlands is limited.

59% of Ganges Township is located in the Black River Watershed according to the 2009 Black River Watershed Management Plan, MEAGLE Tracking Code 2002-0067, April 2005. Wetlands act as filters and have the ability to filter pollutants such as sediment, nutrients and chemical pollutants. Wetlands filter these pollutants out of surface and groundwater through several pathways, including uptake of plant life and absorption into sediments (Cwikiel2003). Wetlands also store floodwaters and release them slowly, significantly reducing downstream flooding. Analysis of wetland loss indicates that urban and rural development, agriculture and silviculture are primarily responsible (Dahl2000). It has been estimated that Michigan has lost 50% of its original wetland habitats (Cwikiel2003) and significant wetland loss has occurred in the Black River Watershed.

Several high-quality natural areas exist in the Black River Watershed. These properties include a variety of habitats, such as wetlands, floodplains and upland forests, and support a diversity of plant and animal life. Additional high quality natural areas exist in private ownership. The State of Michigan, DNR also owns a considerable amount of land in the watershed, approximately 12,000 acres. . This game area is highly diverse, containing over 800 plant species, and 30 threatened or endangered species. (MI DNR 1993) (Black River Watershed Management Plan-September 2009) Ganges Township has about 1,215 acres of DNR owned land within this watershed. Another high-quality natural area is the Wau-Ke-Na WE Smith Preserve and North Tract.

Within Ganges Township, the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) identifies three types of wetlands: Freshwater Emergent, Freshwater Forested/Shrub, and Freshwater Pond. Freshwater emergent wetlands are characterized by herbaceous marsh, fen, swale, and wet meadow. Freshwater forested/shrub wetlands are characterized by forested swamp or wetland shrub bog or wetland. Finally, freshwater ponds are characterized by a small area of still surface water. These wetland areas are important natural features that should be considered and protected when planning future development in the Township.





Environmental Features

Ganges Township, Allegan County, MI

October 14, 2022

LEGEND

- Freshwater Emergent Wetland
- Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland
- Freshwater Pond
- Lakes and Rivers



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: Allegan County 2022. McKenna 2022.



BUILT ENVIRONMENT

03

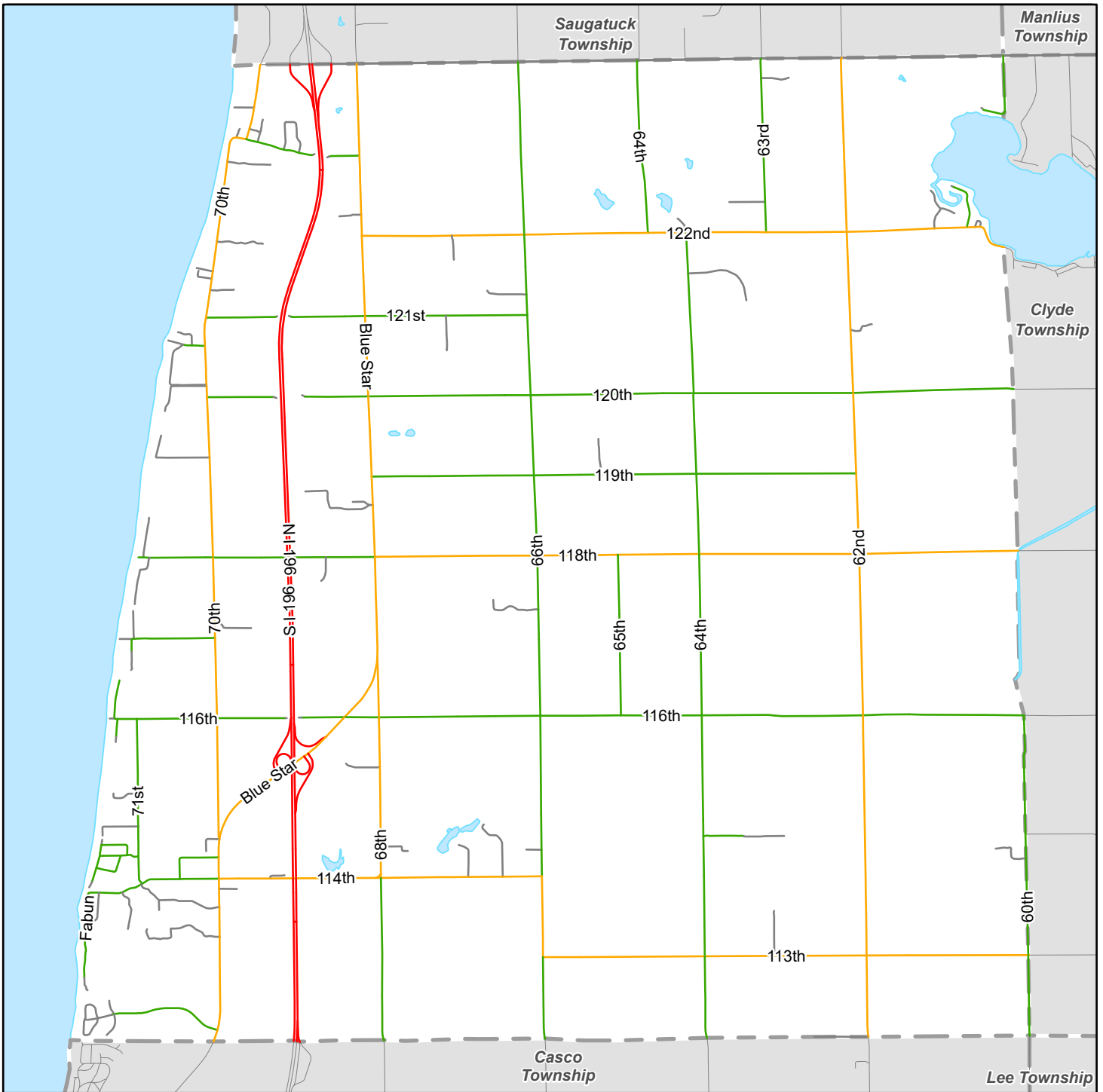
Transportation Systems

The Federal I-196 Interstate and the State of Michigan M-89 (124th Avenue) carry much of the regional traffic through the Township. County primary paved roads include Blue Star Highway, 62nd St., 70th St., 113th Ave., 114th Ave., 118th Ave., 122nd Ave., and 66th Street between 113th and 114th Ave. There are no unpaved primary roads in Ganges Township. The "all-season" primary roads include the Blue Star Highway, 118th Avenue east from Blue Star Highway, and part of 62nd from M-89, south, for approximately 4.5 miles. Several county and township roads assure excellent traffic flow throughout the Township.

Lakeshore Drive (70th Street) runs north and south; starting at M-89 running through the township along Lake Michigan until it reaches the Village of Glenn. This county road provides access for the many lakeshore residents, as well as tourists traveling through the scenic lakeshore area. Both biking and walking paths are present along Blue Star Highway and Lakeshore Drive and there is good road shoulder room for bikes along 118th Avenue.

The Township roads are classified as primary and secondary. The Township contains approximately 72.06 miles of road; 33.89 are primary and 38.17 are secondary. All of the primary roads are paved while 17.8 miles of the secondary system are unpaved. The township also has a primary bridge located on 113th Avenue.

In 2006 the County Road Commission relinquished its authority over the west end of 121st Ave. ceding its authority over this road-end beach access easement to the Township.



Transportation Network

Ganges Township, Allegan County, MI

September 26, 2022

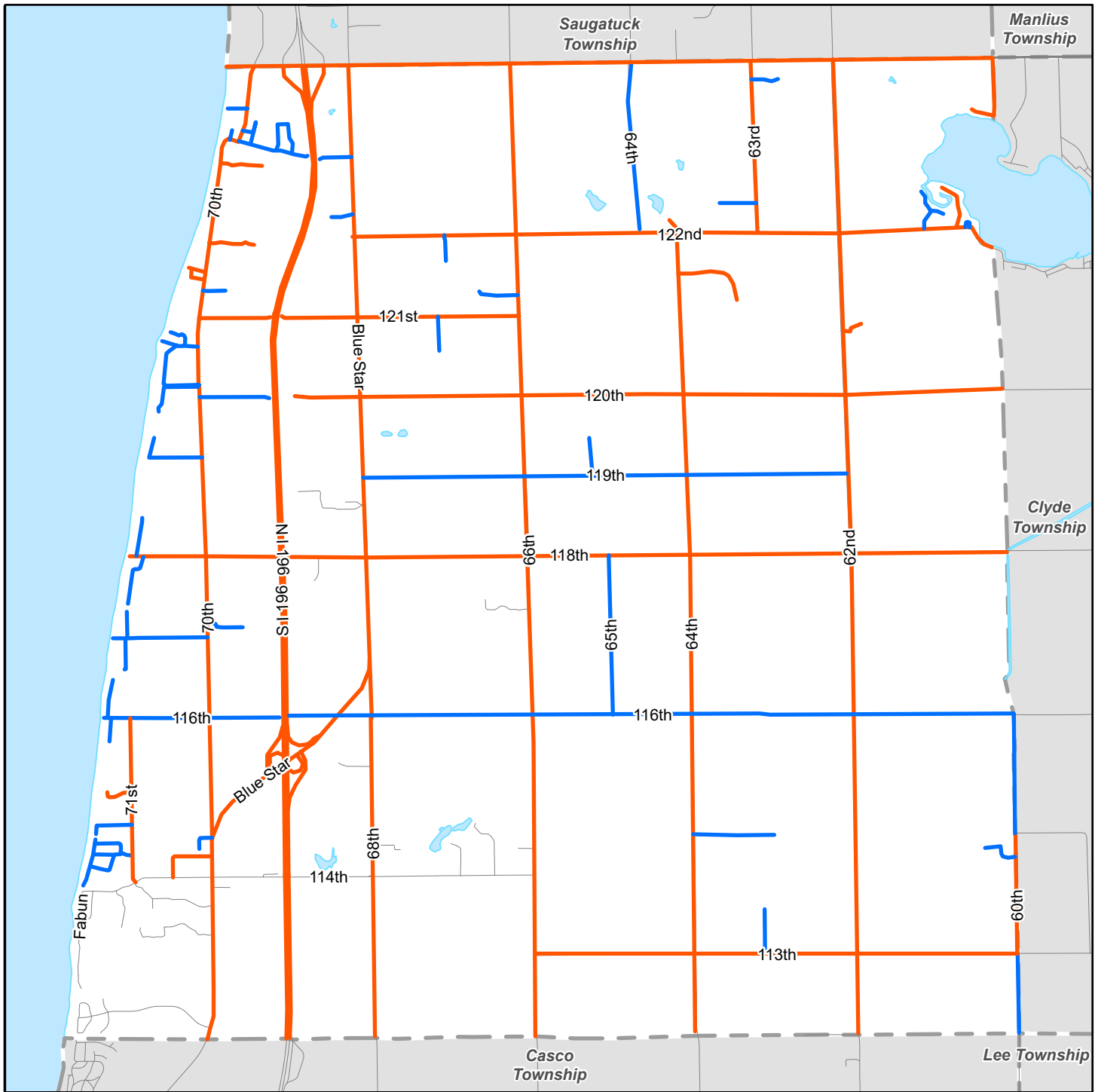
LEGEND

- Limited Access Interstate
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Non-Certified



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: Allegan County 2022. McKenna 2022.





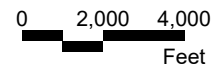
Paved & Unpaved Roads

Ganges Township, Allegan County, MI

February 9, 2023

LEGEND

- Paved
- Unpaved



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: Allegan County 2022. McKenna 2022.



Community Facilities

Ganges Township has only one public facility - the Township Hall, located at the corner of 119th Avenue and 64th Street. This structure, formerly the Reid School, is used to hold township meetings and township elections. This facility was extensively remodeled in 2006, allowing for central location of records and an office space for township officials. The township has an on-call fire department and first responder unit, which maintains two fire stations: one located in Glenn and one near the intersection of 62nd Street and M-89. Further, the township currently has several active religious institutions.

Ganges Township voted to adopt a Senior Millage in 2006. The following services are offered to senior citizens: adult day care, home delivered meals, in home supports, personal emergency response systems, and senior transportation.

There is a school facility in Glenn. Glenn Public Schools is the oldest 2-room rural schoolhouse still in use in Michigan and only serves grades K-5.

Ganges Township maintains four cemeteries: Hutchins (Crane) located at M-89, Loomis at the corner of 122nd Avenue and 63rd Street, Taylor on Blue Star Highway just south of M-89, and Plummerville on Lakeshore Drive north of 120th Avenue.

Recreational Activities

The residents and visitors of the township are fortunate to have access to several public beaches in this community. The West Side Park is maintained and operated by the Allegan County Parks Division, and Pier Cove Park is a Township park. There is also a dedicated public beach and access to Lake Michigan available at 114th Avenue. There is one road-end beach access easements to Lake Michigan located at 118th Avenue. Public access to Hutchins Lake is located off 60th Street, just south of M-89.

The West Side Park, Glenn Community Center and Glenn Public School have areas for outdoor recreational activities, such as baseball and soccer. The township's youth can also enjoy playing basketball at the Glenn Public School's court. The Todd Farm, a State of Michigan facility, is open for goose hunting in fall and winter and general observation year-round and has become a major sightseer delight. The Township also has a 70-acre preserve known as Pier Cove Ravine Trust located where Pier Cove Creek flows into Lake Michigan. In 2006, a 365-acre land preserve was donated to the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy, by the William Erby Smith estate. This large parcel is known as Wau-Ke-Na and is located on Lakeshore Dr. The Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy is a nonprofit organization located in Galesburg, Michigan that was established in 1991 to "improve habitat, protect water quality, support biodiversity, connect people with nature, and help families to conserve the land that they love." In total, the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy supports 18 public nature preserves. Only one, the Wau-Ke-Na, W.E. Smith Preserve, is located in Allegan County. The Wau-Ke-Na, W.E. Smith Preserve boasts scenic views along the shore of Lake Michigan and offers other recreational opportunities such as fishing, hiking, paddling, snowshoeing, swimming, wildlife, and bird watching, and site seeing. There are two tracts, North and South, each offering different opportunities. Fenn Valley Winery has also placed a large parcel of land into a land conservancy.

Agri-tourism as defined by the USDA is "a form of commercial enterprise that links agriculture production and/or processing with tourism to attract visitors onto a farm, ranch, or other agriculture business for the purpose of entertaining and/or educating the visitors while generating income for the farm, ranch or business owner." Agri-tourism includes businesses such as wineries, cider mills, and orchards.

The Township is a popular vacation spot for those who enjoy boating, fishing, or other types of water and beach recreational activities. The Ganges Township Lake Michigan shoreline is a part of the Southwest Michigan Underwater Preserve. The area is also known for its many working artist studios scattered throughout the countryside. Other recreational opportunities and activities are readily accessible in Fennville, Holland, Allegan, South Haven, and other areas within a half an hour of travel time from the Township.

There are several lodging accommodations that attract people to the Ganges Township area. Many of these accommodations include summer apartments and house rentals to cabins and Bed and Breakfast establishments on Lake Michigan and Hutchins Lake. There is one brewery, Waypost Brewing Co. near Blue Star Hwy and 116th Ave. There is one gas station, operated by Shell, on the southwest intersection on M-89 and Blue Star Highway.

The rural location and natural settings draw people from as far as Chicago, Detroit, and Indiana to these establishments. Overall, the location of Ganges Township leads to its character and country charm. The natural beauty, wildlife, and recreational activities bring people to this area and many become residents of the community.



DEMOGRAPHICS & THE ECONOMY



Population & Housing

When considering the population and housing in Ganges Township, it is important to note the frequent occurrence of seasonal homes and thus seasonal population as well. Second homes or vacation homes are common in townships along the Lake Michigan Lakefront, and Ganges Township is no exception. Property owners of seasonal homes are not fulltime residents of the Township, and they do not work or attend schools in the Township. Because of their transient nature, these seasonal residents are not factored into the demographic or economic calculations in this section. While they are not accounted for in population or economic figures, it should be noted that the numbers may vary seasonally, as the population varies seasonally.

According to the 2020 U.S. Census, Ganges Township land area consists of 32.5 square miles. In comparing the several communities located in Allegan County as noted above, the 8.2% increase in the county as a whole was concentrated in nearby Saugatuck and Manlius Townships. Ganges Township experienced a small increase in population compared to others, but still had some growth compared to the losses in Casco, and Clyde Townships.

Table 2: Total Population, 2020

Community	Total Population
Ganges Township	2,574
Saugatuck Township	3,443
Clyde Township	2,060
Casco Township	2,823
Allegan County	120,502
State of Michigan	10,077,331

Source: US Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial Census

Table 3: Population Change, 2010-2020

Year	Ganges Twp	Saugatuck Twp	Manlius Twp	Clyde Twp	Casco Twp	Allegan County	State of Michigan
2010	2,530	2,944	3,017	2,084	2,823	111,403	9,952,687
2020	2,574	3,443	3,312	2,060	2,796	120,502	10,077,331
% Change	+1.7%	+17%	+9.8%	-1.2%	-1.0%	+8.2%	+1.3%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2010 & 2020 Decennial Census

Households

This section analyzes the composition and characteristics of households in Ganges Township. Changes in the number of households in a community are an indication of changing demand for housing units, retail and office space, and community services. Tracking household changes ensures sufficient land is set aside in appropriate locations to accommodate future growth and demand for housing.

Ganges Township has grown by 6.8% with an increase of 70 households since 2010. The growth in households being higher than the growth in population is consistent with the slightly lowered average household size, displayed below. An increase in households can also signal future growth in housing demand. However, these overall increases are not dramatic and are indicative of gradual, positive growth.

Average household size is another indicator of community composition. Larger average household sizes generally mean more children and fewer single-parent families. Nationally, household sizes are shrinking as young singles wait longer to get married and life expectancy increases for the senior population. Increases in household sizes can also sometimes indicate struggles with housing availability, as people join households in order to reduce housing costs. The table below compares the change in average household size since 2010 for Ganges Township, the comparison communities, the County, and the State. In Michigan, the average household size has risen slightly over the past 10 years.

Ganges Township experienced a slight decrease in the average household size from year 2010 to 2020. The county experienced a more significant decrease in average household size in comparing with the sample communities. The change over the past ten years has not been very large for any of the comparison communities, except for Clyde Township which has decreased by 19%. The decrease in Ganges Township is only by 3.2%, which is a stable change.

Table 4: Average Household Size, 2010-2020

Year	Ganges Twp	Saugatuck Twp	Manlius Twp	Clyde Twp	Casco Twp	Allegan County	State of Michigan
2010	2.48	2.62	2.28	2.75	2.61	2.58	2.46
2020	2.40	2.64	2.3	2.96	3.1	2.39	2.53

Source: US Census Bureau, 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census

Age

Information on the age groups of Ganges Township residents provide useful information on the economic, transportation, and recreational needs for specific age groups and how these needs will change as the population changes.

The age of a community’s population has very real implications for planning and development, whether it is an increased or decreased need for schools to serve the population under 18, needs for programs for aging in place or youth recreation programs, or a need for housing alternatives and services for empty nesters and older residents. Ganges Township’s median age is approximately 52.2 years old, which is consistent with the other comparison communities, with exception of Manlius Township and Clyde Township, that have slightly younger median ages.

Age structure (analyzing which proportions of a municipality’s population are in which stages of life) gives a nuanced view of the makeup of a community. To compare age structure, the population is divided into the following groupings:

- Under 5 (Pre School)
- 5 to 19 (School Aged)
- 20 to 44 (Family Forming)
- 45 to 64 (Mature families)
- Over 65 (Retirement)

Table 5: Age Distribution, 2020

Age Group	Population	Percent of Total Population
Under 5 (Pre School)	20	0.8%
5 to 19 (School Aged)	434	16.4%
20 to 44 (Family Forming)	703	26.5%
45 to 64 (Mature Families)	840	31.7%
Over 65 (Retirement)	653	24.6%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2010 and 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

As the table above suggests, the highest percentage of Ganges Township residents fall into the 45 to 64 years old age range, or “Mature Families” age. This is consistent with the Township’s relatively older middle-aged median age as well as the average household size of 2.40 people. This data suggests that in general, residents in the Township are typically older families with children living outside home, or perhaps college-aged children that live at home part-time.

It should also be noted that the second highest population group is aged between 20 to 44 years old. This can indicate that the Township is growing in terms of younger families moving from other areas into the Township. These younger families likely have middle school and high school-aged children. Overall, the Township is well-positioned to support the needs of existing families in the Township but should also be mindful of the needs of aging residents as well as supporting and encouraging new younger residents simultaneously.

Table 6: Age Distribution, Comparison Communities, 2021

Community	Pre School	School Aged	Family Forming	Mature Families	Retirement
Ganges Township	0.8%	16.4%	26.5%	31.7%	24.6%
Saugatuck Township	2.6%	17.2%	21.3%	31.6%	27.1%
Clyde Township	5.3%	23.7%	24.8%	33.8%	12.6%
Casco Township	4%	12.2%	23.7%	29.9%	30%
Allegan County	5.5%	20.3%	29.4%	27%	17.5%
State of Michigan	5.4%	18.6%	38.1%	26.1%	18.1%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Housing

According to US Census data, there are 1,621 housing units in Ganges Township in 2020. Each housing unit represents one single family dwelling unit – a house, apartment, condominium, etc. In 2010, the Township had approximately 1,626 housing units. Between 2010 and 2020, the Township experienced a decline of 5 housing units. Interestingly, although the Township’s population increased slightly between the sample years, the number of housing units decreased. Thus, it can be inferred that families moving into the Township are larger in size and purchasing homes already built, rather than building new. This could explain the “family forming” age group population size. Further, US Census data also notes that the number of vacant housing units decreased from 2010 to 2020 by approximately 55 units.

The table below indicates the age of existing housing units in the Township. Between years 1980-1999, the Township experienced the most growth in construction of new homes.

Table 7: Age of Housing, 2020

Year Structure Built	# of Units	Percent
2014 or Later	51	4.6%
2010-13	62	5.6%
2000-09	125	11.6%
1980-99	370	33.6%
1960-79	260	23.6%
1940-59	119	10.8%
1939 or earlier	114	10.4%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

As housing ages, it requires greater investment of time and money to keep it in good condition. Typically, residences that are 30 years and older will require substantial maintenance to prevent blight and decline for the broader community. Also, older homes tend to lack features that support handicapped access and may not be suitable without significant retrofitting for an aging population. This is a concern for the community given the older age of half of the housing stock.

Table 8: Housing Ownership Status and Tenure, 2020

Ganges Township	Number of Dwelling Units	Percentage of Total
Owner-Occupied	1,027	63.4%
Renter-Occupied	73	4.5%
Vacant	521	32.0%
Total Housing Units	1,621	100%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Housing tenure describes how housing is occupied – by the owner, by a renter, or whether it is vacant. The table above shows that the majority of dwellings in Ganges Township are owner-occupied. The Township has a relatively high vacancy rate at around 32 percent. However, it should be noted that the Township has a high population of seasonal residents, or residents with cottages/recreational homes in the Township. This factor is likely contributing to the higher vacancy rate calculated by the US Census Bureau.

This section analyzes the types of housing present in Ganges Township and their proportions, as compared to the proportions in Allegan County. As the table below indicates, the Township has similar proportions to the County in providing two-family housing units and mobile home units. However, the Township does not have any two-unit homes, and a very small quantity of 2+ unit homes. Therefore, it can be inferred that the Township has a wide gap of medium density/missing middle housing options. It should also be noted that the Township has a relatively high percentage of mobile homes compared to other housing types and Allegan County as a whole. This can also be indicative of a coastal community, or a community with an aging population where those who are retired may not live in the Township all year round. At least 50 of the mobile homes in the Township are located on Lake Michigan.

Table 10: Housing Type, 2020

Housing Type	Ganges Township		Allegan County	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Single Family Detached	944	85.7%	34,275	78.0%
Single Family Attached	47	4.3%	1,270	2.9%
Two Units	0	0.0%	699	1.6%
Multiple Family (More than 2 units)	2	0.2%	2,646	6.0%
Mobile Home or other Type of Housing	108	9.8%	5,037	11.5%
Total	1,101		43,927	

Source: US Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

The value of the homes in Ganges Township is one measure of the quality of life in the community and the health of the economy. The median home value in the Ganges Township in 2020 is \$185,500, but the larger question is whether the value of homes in Ganges Township is rising more quickly after adjusted for inflation, thus giving homeowners real equity in their property. The median home value in 2010 was \$204,700 This is a total decrease in median home value within a 9-year time period of approximately \$19,200.

From the sample years, 2019-2022, the Township has experienced a general increase in the state equalized value for land uses including agriculture, residential, commercial, and industrial. Further, the number of permits issued for new housing, demolitions, accessory structures, and others, appeared to fluctuate over the same time period, but shows a gradual overall increase.

In the past, as the residential housing units increased, so did the property state equalized values. In recent years, however, each has moderated. Table 12 illustrates the total ad valorem property equalized values by tax assessment classification.

Table 9: Building Permits

Year	New Housing	Demolitions	Shed / Garage / Pole Barn	Repair/ Remodel / Addition	Commercial / Industrial	Other
2019	15	5	13	14	2	13
2020	8	4	16	15	1	5
2021	29	8	11	14	1	16
2022	22	8	13	13	4	10

Source: Ganges Township Zoning Administrator, 2022

Table 10: SEV by Property Class

Property Class	2019	2020	2021	2022
Agriculture	24,662,300	25,020,100	26,139,300	26,448,700
Residential	288,159,700	292,770,300	293,068,800	309,368,400
Commercial	5,896,900	6,171,200	6,546,500	9,555,800
Industrial	1,571,300	1,636,400	1,791,600	1,985,000

Economics

Income

Ganges Township's median household income is \$65,750. Of all the sample areas, Saugatuck Township has the highest median income, which is aligned with the fact that Saugatuck Township seems to be growing in both population and investment over the last number of years. However, it should be noted that Ganges Township experienced an overall increase in median income by approximately \$15,575.

Table 11: Median Income, 2010-2020

	Ganges Twp	Saugatuck Twp	Manlius Twp	Clyde Twp	Casco Twp	Allegan County	State of Michigan
2010*	\$50,175	\$54,053	\$57,708	\$42,222	\$47,582	\$50,240	\$48,432
2020	\$65,750	\$97,204	\$76,840	\$51,875	\$64,250	\$65,071	\$59,584

Source: US Census Bureau, 2010 and 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
(* 2010 inflation adjusted dollars)

Occupation

This section addresses the employment of Ganges Township residents. This is not an analysis of what kind of jobs are available or what businesses are located within the community, but rather in what occupations members of the community are employed, regardless of where they work. Thus, commuters from Ganges Township to other areas are included in this analysis, but commuters from other locations coming into the Township are not. Major occupational sectors for Ganges Township residents are employed in the manufacturing, education, and healthcare industries.

Table 12: Employment of Full-Time, Year-Round Civilian Employed Population Age 16 and Over

Sector	Ganges Township		Allegan County	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Mining	48	5.6%	1030	3.0%
Construction	38	4.1%	3,641	4.7%
Manufacturing	348	31.7%	12,739	38.0%
Wolesale Trade	22	3.8%	1,464	4.6%
Retail Trade	55	0.5%	3,391	0.3%
Transportation and Warehousing, Utilities	12	1.9%	1,722	3.0%
Information	12	12.5%	330	8.6%

Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	40	2.7%	1,559	3.5%
Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative and Waste Management services	63	7.9%	2,850	5.2%
Education, Health Care, and Social Assistance	158	20.0%	6,053	17.3%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services	24	5.2%	1,833	5.8%
Public Administration	64	4.6%	2,064	3.5%
Other Services	9	4.2%	848	4.3%
Total	893		39,524	

Source: US Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Commuting

The table below shows the commute time of Township residents, with an average commute time of 23.9 minutes. Approximately 40.4% of residents travel 19 minutes or less to work, meaning a remaining 59.6% of residents travel 20 minutes or more to work. The higher percentage of longer commute times notes the desirability to live in Ganges Township, that more residents are willing to travel a bit further to work.

Table 13: Commute Time of Ganges Township Residents

Time of Commute	Destination	Percentage of Residents
Less than 10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ganges Township · Fennville · Glenn 	13.6%
10 to 14 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Saugatuck · Douglas 	13.8%
15 to 19 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Pullman 	13.0%
20 to 24 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Allegan · South Haven 	19.2%
25 to 29 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Holland · Bangor 	6.9%
30 to 34 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Bloomingdale 	14.5%
35 to 44 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Grand Rapids · Benton Harbor 	8.3%
45 to 59 minutes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Plainwell · Wayland 	6.7%
60 or more minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Kalamazoo · Battle Creek 	4.1%
Mean travel time to work		23.9

Source: US Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

UTILITIES

05

Water and Sewer

There are no parcels residential, commercial or any classification currently served by public water and sanitary sewer systems, and there are no plans to develop these public services within the foreseeable future.

Phone, Internet, Electricity, & Gas

Frontier Communications Inc. serves the Ganges area land-line telecommunications. There are several cellular communications companies who provide service within the township. Comcast Corporation supplies cable television and broadband internet access to numerous residents throughout the township. Rural Gig and i2k Inc also provide internet service.

Further, Allegan County is in the process of launching the “Broadband Internet Access Project” which is a Countywide effort to increase availability and reliability of broadband to underserved areas. The project will be largely funded through ARPA funds granted from the federal government.

Recently, Allegan County signed a Public Private Partnership agreement with 123NET to help carry out the project. 123NET will be responsible for providing fiber for high-speed internet service to close to 12,000 addresses. As of March 2023, 123NET and Allegan County are still securing federal funding sources, but once funding is secure, the anticipated timeline for this project is 24 months.

Consumers Energy currently supplies the area with electrical utilities. Michigan Gas Utilities, Inc. continues to expand and offer their services throughout Ganges Township. Projects which have been completed include extending service to the Hutchins Lake neighborhood (1990), to Vivekanda Monastery (1988), along 121st Avenue to the Lakeshore Drive areas (1991, 1992, and 1995), on 68th Street/Blue Star Highway (1993), in Lake Park Mobile Home Park (1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, and 1997), on Lakeshore Court (1992), and 66th Street (1997). Services were later extended to Lakewood Beach subdivision and the Glenn area. No further update is available at this time regarding expansion projects.

Further, Allegan County is in the process of launching the “Broadband Internet Access Project” which is a Countywide effort to increase availability and reliability of broadband to underserved areas. The project will be largely funded through ARPA funds granted from the federal government.

EXISTING LAND USES

06

Ganges aims to preserve the agricultural character of the Township. The trend in land use in Ganges Township has been a slow decline from agricultural use, accompanied by a steady increase in rural residential uses. The result is a decline in the township's agricultural and forest resources. This can have a significant impact on the quality of the township's air, land, and water unless great care is taken to protect these vital resources.

Agriculture

Farmland is a valued and economically important resource that provides the essential and irreplaceable basis for production of dairy products, livestock, hay, grains, vegetables, fruit, nursery plants (ornamental trees, shrubs and ground covers) and greenhouse crops.

Ganges Township has a variety of different soil types and favorable climate conditions for growing crops and raising livestock. Some of the horticulture crops include apples, tart and sweet cherries, grapes, blueberries, peaches, apricots, pears, nectarines, plums, strawberries, and raspberries. Vegetable crops that can be grown are onions, carrots, asparagus, cauliflower, peppers, Brussels sprouts, and much more.

Cash grain farming has become more extensive in the township with corn, wheat, soybeans, oats, and hay being grown. Livestock farming includes beef cattle, hogs, goats, sheep, and horses. Indoor agriculture includes greenhouses, as well as Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) for dairy farming and hog farming.

Horticulture farming and agriculture is still an important part of the township as it employs people, provides commercial and recreational opportunities, promotes wildlife and retains the rural, country charm of the area.

According to the Allegan County LIS Office, there are approximately 20,800 acres in Ganges Township. There are 6,324 acres being used for agriculture.



Agricultural/Residential

Those other rural areas of the Township that are not actively used for farming, livestock, agri-business, or other related agriculture purposes can be classified as agricultural/residential land uses. In general, agricultural/residential land uses are comprised of single-family homes (with accessory structures) on large lots, typically at least multiple acres in size. In Ganges Township, majority of the housing stock falls within this existing land use category. Agricultural/Residential areas are low density, and the road network generally consists of County primary roads.

Residential

Single-family homes located on smaller lots are grouped within the “residential” existing land use category. This category also encompasses the single-family homes located on Lake Michigan and Hutchins Lake. The street network in this existing land use category generally consists of County primary roads, as well as private residential streets. Toward the lakeshore, the lots tend to reduce in size.

Commercial

Commercial land uses are those that are designed for the sale of goods and services. In Ganges Township, several small-scale commercial establishments exist in all areas throughout the Township, with the exception of the lakeshore and active farmland areas. In general, the commercial areas can be described as easily accessible to the area’s major throughfares and serve the local area.

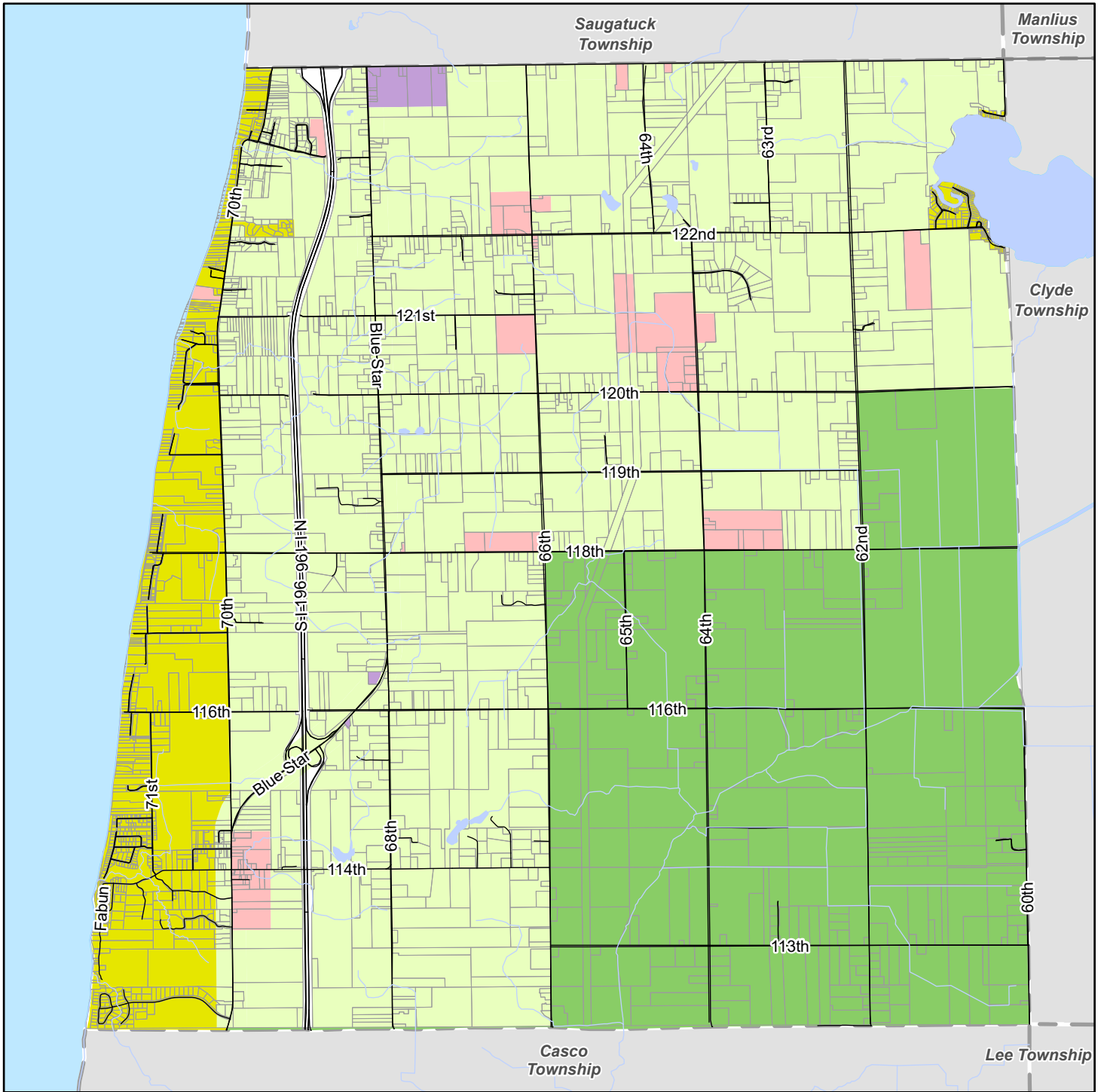
Industrial

In general, industrial land uses are comprised of manufacturing, fabrication, warehousing, and other similar type uses. Ganges Township has a small pocket of industrial land uses on the north side of the Township, on the border with Saugatuck Township.

Public/Semi Public

These land uses comprise Township owned properties, such as the Township Hall and public parks.





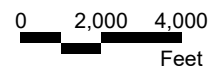
Existing Land Use

Ganges Township, Allegan County, MI

April 4, 2023

LEGEND

- Agriculture
- Agriculture/Residential
- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Bodies of Water



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: Allegan County 2022. McKenna 2022.



COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS



Ganges Township values community input and ensuring that resident's voices are heard. Provisions are made at every public meeting and hearing in the Township for the public to offer input and discussion with elected and appointed officials. Community conversations are continuous processes year-round at every meeting.

An important component of the public engagement program for the Plan was the online survey. The survey was designed to take about 10 minutes for respondents to complete. Overall, the survey sought to gauge:

- The value residents receive from the services provided in the Township.
- If current planning and development priorities were on track.
- What should be the Township's future priorities.

Survey Summary

- A total of **195 people responded to the survey** between August of 2022 and January of 2023.
- **Preserving the rural character of the Township is a common theme throughout the survey results.** This is consistent with the current vision statement. Strong desire to maintain the rural character can be seen in responses to development where most respondents are not against development but want to ensure it will not impede the quality of life the rural nature of the community provides.
- **Respondents want to restrict business and housing growth in the Township.** Respondents most commonly responded they wanted to restrict business and housing growth to certain areas. Those in favor of business or housing growth believe it is needed to be competitive with neighboring communities, but do not want to see the natural beauty of the Township negatively impacted.
- **Broadband internet is an infrastructure improvement survey respondents feel the Township should take a role in ensuring service.** The majority of respondents believe the Township should have an active role in encouraging Townshipwide high-speed broad band internet, rather than let the market dictate where infrastructure should be built. There was concern that infrastructure would be built in areas disruptive to residents.
- **Survey Respondents are against utility-scale energy in the Township.** Respondents were supportive of regulating utility-scale solar and wind energy. They stated they wanted to control the construction of these facilities or target natural resource areas for protection. A common theme was the protection of the Lake Michigan coastline.

- **There are split opinions on tourism and tourism land uses, however most respondents are in favor of allowing these uses but wish for restrictions to be placed on them.** When considering tourism uses, respondents are most in favor of agri-tourism. Respondents are less in favor of event halls and similar venues such as wedding barns, stating a desire for more restrictions on the locations of these venues. The most contentious use, however, is short term rentals. Most respondents want to allow them with design criteria restrictions, but many want to restrict them all together. Other concerns raised include not being competitive with neighboring communities that allow short term rentals and tourism raising the cost of living for residents if short term rentals are allowed.
- **Respondents are against allowing marijuana land uses in the Township.** The majority of respondents were against allowing any marijuana use in the Township. The next most occurring response was allowing all uses throughout the Township. The smaller minority want only certain uses allowed such as growing or sales. Concerns include wanting increased education, already having enough marijuana uses currently, and the Township already opting out.
- **Preserving the Lake Michigan coastline is very important to residents.** Respondents want to protect the lakeshore by restricting development. It is also clear the Lake Michigan coastline is important when considering other answers in the survey. When asked about utility-scale energy, respondents reflected a desire to protect the coastline.
- **Survey respondents were split on adding more publicly owned recreation areas or enhancing existing recreation areas.** The biggest concern when it came to publicly owned recreation areas was budgetary. Respondents were concerned that there were more important considerations such as emergency services and were skeptical about the Township's budgeting abilities. Respondents were split on wanting to add new recreation areas through grants or similar programs or just enhancing existing recreation areas.
- **A majority of respondents believe that the Township should enforce ordinances when brought to their attention.** Respondents believe the Township should not aggressively or proactively enforce ordinances, but rather respond and enforce when complaints are made. Respondents also state the desire to review the current ordinances for relevance and have improved education on Township ordinances.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES



Rural Character

1. Accommodate growth in housing and population without sacrificing the rural character of the Township or the quality of the natural resources.
 - a) Rural site design should encourage clustering of dwellings, and protection of natural open space.
 - b) Support a system of organized land uses to provide housing choices, where new development and redevelopment areas respect and integrate with existing neighborhoods and contexts.
 - c) Continue to maintain the delicate balance between rural lands and new development.
 - d) Discourage non-farm development in the areas designated as Agricultural in the Future Land Use Plan.
2. Protect existing agricultural areas and natural features in the Township in order to preserve the rural character of the Township.
 - a) Educate the public and property owners on the value of preserving open space and agriculture.
 - b) Strengthen relationships with local producers to assist with farmland preservation, agri-business efforts, and succession efforts, as applicable.
 - c) Identify areas of prime farmland and farmland of local importance in the Township to target preservation efforts.
 - d) Limit development in areas designated as “agriculture” in the Future Land Use Plan.
3. Adopt local regulations to preserve the significant, existing natural features in the Township.
 - a) Consider creation of regulations to protect precious surface and groundwater resources.



Agricultural/Residential

1. Accommodate growth in housing and population without sacrificing the rural/recreational character of the Township or the quality of the agricultural lands and natural resources.
 - a) When residential development does occur in the Agricultural area, techniques such as cluster development and open space preservation should be encouraged to limit impacts on the agricultural uses.
 - b) Appropriately designate areas on the Future Land Use Map as Agricultural in order to limit the expansion of residential development in agricultural areas.
 - c) Discourage non-farm residential development in the Agricultural district.
2. Allow value added agriculture related uses to enhance the incomes of farm families in other ways besides development.
3. Limit higher density residential development to areas planned for those uses, which are provided with adequate services for the expected densities and provide reasonable standards in the Zoning Ordinance for those uses to ensure quality development.
4. Continue to enforce the Township Codes and Ordinances to ensure the physical character of housing and housing sites is preserved.
5. Concentrate growth of new residential sites to specific areas best suited to that use and that does not reduce agricultural use or rural character.



Commercial

1. Encourage the development of uses similar in scale and scope to those already existing in the community while acknowledging the limitations of the infrastructure and the marketplace to support large scale commercial uses.
2. Encourage and retain mixed use residential/commercial uses as they exist in Township.

Industrial

1. Restrict industrial development to the areas of the Township master planned for industrial development.
 - a) Restrict industrial development to areas of the Township that have appropriate public facilities and transportation networks to support industrial intensities.
 - b) Discourage scattered industrial uses throughout the Township.
2. Protect the natural resources and the rural character of the Township from the potential impacts of industrial development.
 - a) Provide requirements that will protect adjacent residential uses from potential impacts of industrial uses, including groundwater and soil contamination.
 - b) Eliminate substantial negative impacts of industrial development on sensitive environmental areas, including ground water contamination, by requiring all significant environmental impacts be documented prior to approval.
3. Provide for moderate industrial growth near existing industrial uses.
 - a) Adjust current land use plan based on existing marketplace, demand, and public input.
 - b) Maintain room for moderate growth to allow for additional jobs and tax growth.
 - c) Encourage growth of light industrial uses.

Natural Resources

Natural resources shall include sensitive areas of significant value including but not limited to wetlands, dunes, high erosion areas, floodplains, groundwater, prime soils, rivers, streams, inland lakes, and Lake Michigan.

4. Prevent environmental degradation of the natural resources in the Township.
 - a) Require new development to maintain and/or enhance the quality of the air, soil, surface water, and groundwater.
 - b) Potential for impact on the natural environment will be a consideration of approval when reviewing development applications in areas including or surrounding sensitive areas or requiring the use of wells.
 - c) Encourage environmental sustainability elements into new development proposals.
 - d) For the protection of our lakes, there are regulations protecting lake frontage with anti-keyholing ordinances for Hutchins Lake and Lake Michigan. There is also a requirement for EGLE permits for setbacks from Lake Michigan.
 - e) Continue to actively pursue opportunities to preserve and protect the Township's inland lakes and wetlands.
5. Protect, preserve, and enhance the unique and desirable natural amenities of Ganges Township.
 - a) Require that all natural features be clearly delineated on site plans submitted for approval.
 - b) Elimination of light pollution caused by the unnecessary illumination of parking lots, buildings, and similar areas.
 - c) Ensure that development within and adjacent to the Fennville State Game Refuge is appropriate and will not negatively impact the Allegan State Game Area Refuge.

Community Facilities

1. Create a functional, safe circulation system throughout the Township.
 - a) The only public transportation facilities or components of a transportation system in Ganges Township that are pertinent to our future development are streets and bridges.
 - b) Promote the establishment of an internal road network between adjacent developments.
 - c) Encourage adjacent developments to tie into the internal road network.
 - d) Encourage a program to pave and maintain major roads providing access to the freeway and to Blue Star Highway, in order to provide for safe movement of people and goods.
2. Maintain the rural character of the Township while improving and maintaining the circulation system.
 - a) Where possible, maintain the natural beauty and rural character of Township roads as they are improved, if safety is not compromised or sacrificed.
 - b) Pursue Natural Beauty Road designation for appropriate roads within the Township.
3. Create opportunities for active and passive recreation in the Township.
 - a) Work to provide additional public access to the Lakes.
 - b) As opportunities may arise, expand the Township's parks and recreation amenities to include more land and passive recreation activities, such as hiking and birdwatching.
4. Discourage extension of public water and/or sewer into Township from adjoining municipalities, except where needed for Township residents' health and safety.
 - a) Public utilities should not be extended into areas master planned for agricultural uses in any case. Lands master planned for agricultural uses are not appropriate for high intensity uses requiring public sewer and/or water.
 - b) Establish a review system to analyze the implications of any proposed private wastewater treatment plant and/or community septic system.



FUTURE LAND USE PLAN



Planning Principles

The Future Land Use Map, coupled with this text, constitutes the development policy of the Township. As the Township grows, the Future Land Use map and text should be updated to address the impacts of growth affecting the community.

Land use planning principles are used as a guide in evaluating development alternatives and public policy decisions. The following are general planning principles that should be applied to all land use categories:

Consistency with the Plan

Development should be reviewed for general consistency with the intent of the Land Use Plan, as well as sub-area or regional plans. In addition, other governing bodies, such as the State or County, should be encouraged to use the Land Use Plan in considering programming or decisions for Ganges Township.

Concurrency and Compactness

Growth should generally be compact and in most cases directed to areas that maximize the use of the public infrastructure. While Ganges Township currently has no existing or planned public sewer or water facilities, should facilities become available, higher intensity development should be located in areas that are served by public utilities. Additionally, development should occur concurrently with the provision of infrastructure, like roads and utilities. New commercial or residential development (such as neighborhoods) should occur in areas adjacent to existing development, as to reduce the impacts on the Township's rural character and prevent any "leapfrog" development affects.

Sustainability of Natural Systems

Special consideration should be given when development is proposed in environmentally sensitive and open space areas, particularly around (or near) the Township's inland lakes, Lake Michigan, surface water, ground water recharge areas and agricultural lands.

Compatibility of Uses

Special attention should be given to developing transitions between uses of greater intensity (e.g., commercial and industrial uses) to uses of lower intensity (e.g. residential uses).

Future Land Use Categories

The land use categories are graphically displayed on the Future Land Use Map and are described in this section of the Master Plan. The elected and appointed officials of Ganges Township will be responsible for the interpretation of the intent of the Future Land Use Map and the land use categories. At their discretion, they shall revise the Map and the categories to facilitate the needs of the Township and its residents.

Agriculture

Agriculture land use is permitted and can be found throughout the Township. Much of the prime agricultural land is found within the Ag planning district. The east half of the Township is dominated by agricultural use, and agricultural land uses should be protected everywhere in the Township. However, it is recognized that some agricultural uses such as Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) can be offensive to proximate residential uses. The Agriculture planning district is established to provide a planned area permitting these intensive agricultural uses. While residential use is allowed in this district, it is not promoted.



The economic challenges and climate hardships imposed on our farmers now require them to offer farm stands and farm product sales in order to sustain their operation. Local Farm outlets for Vegetable Produce, Blueberries, Apples, Fruits, Goat Cheese, Flowers, Shrubs and Trees, Wineries are commonplace in Ganges Township. These add to the Rural, Cultural and Esthetic living experience of our community residents and visitors also aid in the ongoing sustainability of Agricultural Lands. They should be encouraged and enabled.

Non-farm related development should be limited or managed in the Agriculture Future Land Use areas, to insure the continued viability of agricultural operations. For instance, if non-farm related residential development does occur in Agriculture areas, the non-farm uses should be limited to large lot single-family homes.

Through this Master Plan, the Township is identifying areas which should remain primarily agricultural. There are a number of reasons why non-farm related development in these Agriculture areas should be limited or managed:

- Sporadic residential development in the agriculture portion of the Township creates land use conflicts between residential and agricultural activities. Moreover, Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices (GAAMPs), as promulgated by the Michigan Department of Agriculture, might restrict expansion of active agricultural operations, premised upon the expansion and addition of new residential uses in agricultural areas.
- Limiting residential development protects agricultural land from being permanently removed from the Township's inventory.
- The Agriculture Future Land Use District will allow for some development to permit landowners to provide housing for farm workers and family or to recover costs for needed farm improvements.
- Limiting residential development and encouraging the use of cluster housing or open space preservation, may help limit the amount of strip residential development along the Township's roads, thereby protecting rural scenic views and the scenic beauty of the Township.

The Future Land Use designation of Agriculture reflects the Township's commitment to maintaining these areas for primarily agricultural activities. The Agricultural land use category and the Agriculture Zoning District are identical. At this time, there is no need to alter this relationship.

Agricultural / Residential

This is the largest future land use district, reflecting the community's desire to maintain its rural residential character.. This land use category provides an opportunity for residents to live the Township's traditional rural residential lifestyle if they choose. Additionally, agricultural activities are appropriate for this land use designation. The majority of future residential development in the Township will be in these areas. In addition to single family residential development, public and quasi- public uses such as schools, parks, churches, and municipal facilities are also appropriate, when located on paved county primary road or a road of a higher classification.



Two techniques that may be used for residential development in this district include open space development and planned unit development (PUD). Each of these allows for more flexibility in the design of the development and provides an opportunity for the developer and the Township to work together to accomplish mutual goals. Open space development provides an opportunity to develop homes on sites that are smaller than the Ordinance allows in order to protect open space or desirable natural features on the site. PUDs allow for the Township and developer to negotiate flexible application of the Zoning Ordinance standards, including the uses allowed on the site, in order to enhance the quality of the development and the impact on the community. Both tools could be effectively used in the Residential/Agricultural area. It is encouraged for new PUDs in areas designated as Ag/Res to include, preserve, and/or incorporate agricultural uses as a condition of development. Such as, if the use is currently agriculture in nature, the clustering of homes in the PUD can encourage agricultural operations to continue, but perhaps on a smaller portion of land than prior to the PUD.

It is envisioned that development in the Ag/Res future land use category will have a maximum density of 1 ½ - 2 acres per unit. This will allow for larger home sites, greater protection of open space, and preservation of rural vistas. It is not anticipated, nor is it the Township's intent, that public utilities will be available in the Ag/Res area within the timeframe of this Master Plan.

The areas defined by the Township as appropriate for Ag/Res development were chosen based on the following factors:

- Current land uses and development patterns
- Township preference for continued agricultural opportunities and rural lifestyles
- Parcel sizes
- Contiguousness of large parcels

It is envisioned that the Ag/Res areas will maintain its rural character and appeal regardless of future development activity. Care should be taken in the planning and design of the development to ensure that the resulting site layout will have minimal impact on the surrounding properties, natural features, and character of the area. Currently the Ag/Res planning category and the Residential/Agricultural zoning district are identical.

Residential

The Residential category characterizes residential development located along, or within close proximity to, the Township's lake frontages. Ganges Township is proud of its Lake Michigan and Hutchins Lake shorelines and understands how precious these resources are. Therefore, a separate land use category has been created to apply to those properties with frontage along or in the immediate vicinity of these lakes. Residential development in these areas has occurred at a higher density than elsewhere in the Township, due to the desirability of lakefront and lake access property. Existing land uses in these areas include single family homes located on parcels or in subdivisions, with some scattered commercial development. In order to accommodate more housing in appropriate areas and establish a proactive approach for more housing in this desirable community, residential land uses are planned to span from Lake Michigan to Blue Star Highway. Blue Star Highway serves as an excellent natural "cutoff" for residential uses as density decreases significantly on the east side of the Highway, toward rural residential and agricultural land uses.



It is expected that the primary use in this future land use category will be similar single family residential development, occurring either as platted subdivisions or as site condominiums. Appropriate residential densities in this district are 1/2 acre lots (35,000 square feet if adequate water supply and septic accommodations or sewer are available).

While there are no plans at present for the extension of public utilities into Ganges Township, some proposed residential developments in the Single-Family Residential future land use area include private wastewater treatment facilities. In such cases, greater residential densities can be achieved, over and above what may be permitted if individual wells and septic systems are used. In these cases, the Township needs to ensure that any development in the Residential future land use area provides adequate wastewater and water services to residents. As several properties in the Township are currently affected by groundwater contamination, compromising the livability and value of these properties, the Township should ensure that new development will not adversely impact the Township's natural resources. Currently, the Single-Family Residential land use category and the Residential Zoning District are identical.

Manufactured Housing

Manufactured houses and mobile homes are a segment of the housing stock in Ganges Township. Whether these are full-time residences or seasonal homes, they play a role in the Township and must be considered in the planning for the future. It is recognized that there may be several locations within the township where a manufactured housing park could be located with site appropriate conditions. At a minimum the site should abut or have direct access to a primary road. We have established no specific locations at this time. We believe it is appropriate that any proposed manufactured housing park require a rezoning of property. In this way any specific development can be judged independently. As a rezoning the decision is also subject to referendum.

Any manufactured housing park would have to satisfy both the specifications of the Ganges Township Zoning Ordinance and the Michigan Manufactured Housing Commission.

Commercial

The Commercial future land use district encompasses lands with frontage on M-89 and Blue Star Highway in Ganges Township and existing commercial businesses. In certain areas of the Commercial future land use district, commercial uses have already been established and are appropriate. In other locations, established residential uses, agricultural uses or environmental constraints may make further commercial development inappropriate. Existing Commercial Districts throughout the Township should remain unchanged to ensure that property owners' right to use their properties as currently zoned. All Commercial properties may be rezoned to that of the surrounding properties at the owner's request.

Care must be taken when new commercial development abuts existing residential or agricultural uses. Appropriate setbacks and screening should be required. Special Land Use provisions placed upon high impact commercial uses should include standards that insure a continuation of the present coexistence of Residential, Agricultural and Commercial uses.

Along Blue Star Highway and M-89, the depth of the Commercial District is recommended to be 500 feet deep from the center of the street. . New commercial development in areas designated as "Commercial" should be located adjacent to existing development, as to prevent "leapfrog" development patterns in the Township.

Until public water and sewer are made available, we do not recommend PUDs with significant commercial development. Site Plan Review for all commercial uses should address, at a minimum:

- Right-of-way preservation
- Building and parking setbacks
- Access Management, including driveway spacing and location
- Groundwater protection

Hamlet Mixed Use

This Future Land Use category is intended to accommodate and target mixed use growth and development in the Glen Hamlet area. Currently, this area includes some low intensity commercial/entertainment uses, residential homes with smaller lot sizes, religious institution, and a school facility. The Hamlet Mixed Use designation is intended primarily for new "horizontal" mixed uses, as in a mix of single uses adjacent to one another – not necessarily a traditional-style mixed use building with lower floor commercial and upper floor residential. A traditional-style mixed-use building is not discouraged in this area as long as it is deemed appropriate to the surrounding uses and character. Public facilities, such as water and sewer, are not planned in this area.

Given the Glen Hamlet's close proximity to I-196 and Blue Star Highway, as well as Residential land uses along the Lakeshore, new residential land uses and neighborhood streets with higher density are appropriate in this area. Further, the Hamlet Mixed Use designation is intended to compliment the area's existing mixed-use character and small-town atmosphere. Buildings should be constructed of high-quality materials in similar appearance to existing buildings, be close to the street with little setback, rear parking lots, and attractive landscaping and signage elements.



Industrial

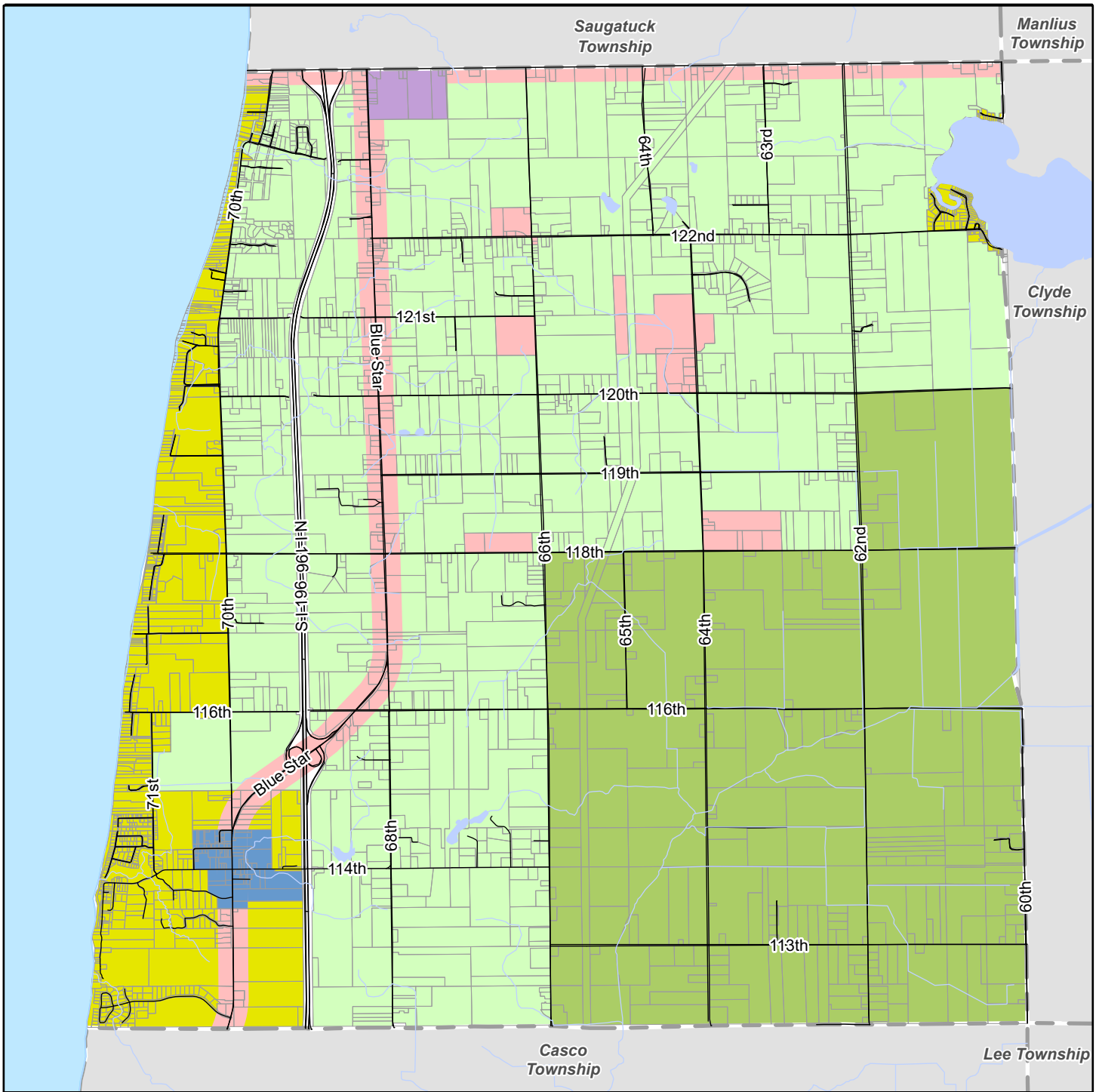
The Industrial future land use designation is provided along M-89, abutting M-89's intersection with Blue Star Highway. This area is the most appropriate for industrial uses, as it has good transportation access to M-89, Blue Star Highway and the 1-196 expressway.

Until water and sewer are made available, and the Light Industrial District is expanded, the provision for Industrial Planned Unit development is not advised or encouraged.

In this District, it is most appropriate to encourage light industrial land uses, such as warehousing, storage facilities, office and research facilities or other light industrial uses, which will not require public water and sewer. As noted above, Ganges Township has no current plans for extending public water or sewer into Ganges Township. Therefore, higher intensity land uses, including light industrial uses, have been targeted towards areas already developed with such uses, as well as towards lands likely to receive public facilities, if they become available. The Industrial Future Land Use District and the Industrial Zoning District are identical.

No expansion of lands for industrial uses has been indicated on the Master Plan. Any land to be rezoned for industrial use should also meet the conditions of "good transportation access" and proximity to "area already zoned and developed for industrial use." In any case the rezoning must receive Township Board approval and be subject to public referendum.

Also critical with respect to future light industrial uses is an acknowledgment of their potential effect on surrounding permitted land uses. It is important to recognize that groundwater and wellhead protection should be incorporated into the standards governing the industrial or light industrial zoning districts. Likewise, industrial uses should be landscaped and buffered from adjoining residential uses. Setbacks for industrial uses may be greater, to force separation of uses. Last, traffic impacts from industrial uses should be minimized, through access management issues, as well as through appropriate site design and size to insure truck maneuverability on site.



Future Land Use

Ganges Township, Allegan County, MI

April 4, 2023

LEGEND

- Agriculture
- Agriculture/Residential
- Residential
- Commercial
- Hamlet Mixed Use
- Industrial



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: Allegan County 2022. McKenna 2022.



Relationship to Zoning Districts

Future Land Use Categories	Zoning District
Agricultural	Agricultural
Agricultural/Residential	Agricultural/Residential
Residential	Residential Manufactured Home Community
Commercial	Commercial
Hamlet Mixed Use	Residential Mixed Use PUD
Industrial	Industrial
Recreation	All Districts

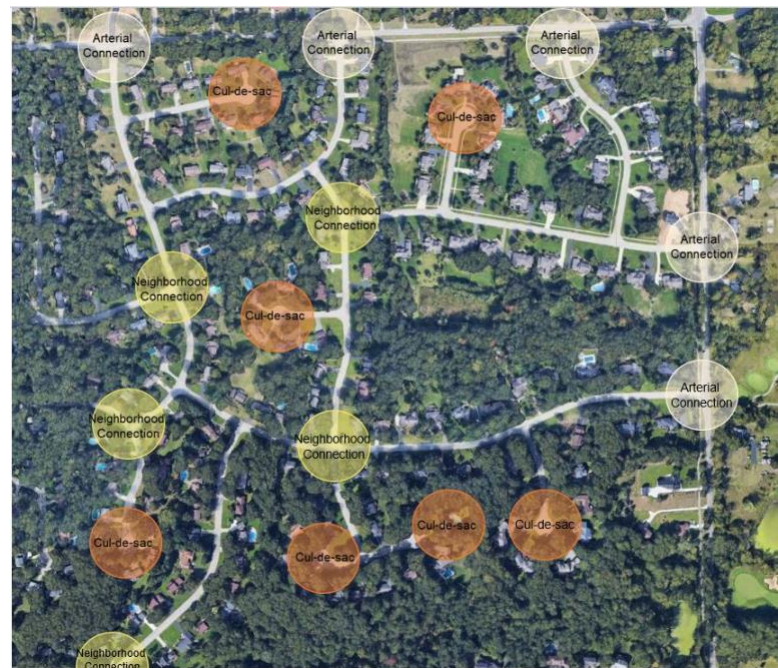
Agricultural District Recommendations

- Prohibit the development of private roads in the Agricultural District.
- Prohibit planned unit developments in the Agricultural District. New PUDs should be encouraged to be located within the Ag/Res or Residential Districts.
- Deter and discourage rezoning requests in the Agricultural District. Especially those not supported by the Future Land Use Plan.
- Continually monitor the permitted uses in the Agriculture District as to ensure that the Township is kept abreast of value-added agricultural enterprises (e.g., bed and breakfasts, wineries, distilleries, cider mills, etc.)

Residential District Recommendations

The following recommendations pertain to the Ag/Res and Residential zoning districts in the Township.

- Promote the connection of housing developments between one another through the design of stub streets, access easements, or development phasing. Refer to the image below for an example of best practices in residential neighborhood design. Some of these elements include:
 - » Multiple connections to arterials roads to alleviate congestion.
 - » Neighborhood connector streets.
 - » Limited cul-de-sac designs.
 - » Preservation of mature trees and natural features.
 - » Winding streets with curves to reduce speeding.
- Consider adopting open space preservation regulations that allow for limited smaller lot development opportunities in Agricultural/Residential areas in exchange for preserving open space in the form of large setbacks.
- When new housing is proposed, encourage “cluster development.” Conventional site development places lots on every available acre of the site. Cluster development on the other hand, allows for the grouping of dwellings onto part of the site, and a permanent easement covers the remainder preserving it as open space. The cluster of dwellings can be placed either within woodlands, to preserve agricultural land, or on the agricultural land, preserving the woodlands and other existing natural features. The development also typically has a large setback from the road and limited access points in order to preserve the rural views and limit the corridor development effect.
- Monitor the Township’s open space development standards and update as necessary to ensure these standards continue to be robust and encourage the preservation of rural character. These standards should be no more difficult than implementing a conventional residential development.



Commercial District Recommendations

- Provide standards to accommodate the unique commercial uses that exist in the Township.
- Continue to monitor current market trends to assess permitted land uses in the Commercial District to accommodate changing trends in consumerism.
- Ensure that commercial development is consistent with the Future Land Use Plan to prevent the “leapfrog” of commercial properties in the Township. New commercial uses along Blue Star Highway should be located adjacent to existing commercial businesses to prevent the leapfrog development effect.
- Rename the “Residential Mixed Use PUD” District to “Hamlet Mixed Use.” The intent of the current District is to permit small scale and low impact retail and commercial businesses to nearby neighborhoods. The current RMU/PUD District permits many small-scale commercial and retail uses along with residential uses. The purpose to rename the District will be to target residential and commercial growth to support the livelihood of the Glenn Hamlet area. The most appropriate location for future hamlet mixed use development is within (and directly adjacent to) the Glenn Hamlet area.
- Confine the RMU/PUD District to the Glenn Hamlet area.
- Create a schedule of regulations for the “Hamlet Mixed Use” district. Setbacks should be minimal and minimum lot sizes should be considered.
- Create additional district standards for the Hamlet Mixed Use District, pertaining to parking, landscaping, and architectural.

Industrial District Recommendations

- Assess market trends and permit additional light industrial uses that may be consistent with the intent of the Zoning Ordinance. This may include innovative and flexible land uses such as an “artisan/maker spaces.” Artisan/maker spaces serve as a light industrial land use with commercial components. These spaces offer solutions for both a work studio and retail space for artisans, craftsmen, and small-scale manufacturers, often working in a communal setting.

Other Zoning Recommendations

- Ensure that the Township’s provisions pertaining to wind and solar energy facilities are periodically reviewed as to maintain relevance to emerging technologies and land use patterns.
- Consider shoreline protection with all new development proposals along the Lakeshore. Consider if supplementary standards, such as an overlay, is applicable in the future.
- Keep abreast of merging trends in agri-tourism, limiting non-agriculture or residential land uses to ensure that the Township’s regulations are current and up to date. This will help preserve the Township’s rural character and natural features, while supporting agricultural operations and local producers

UTILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE

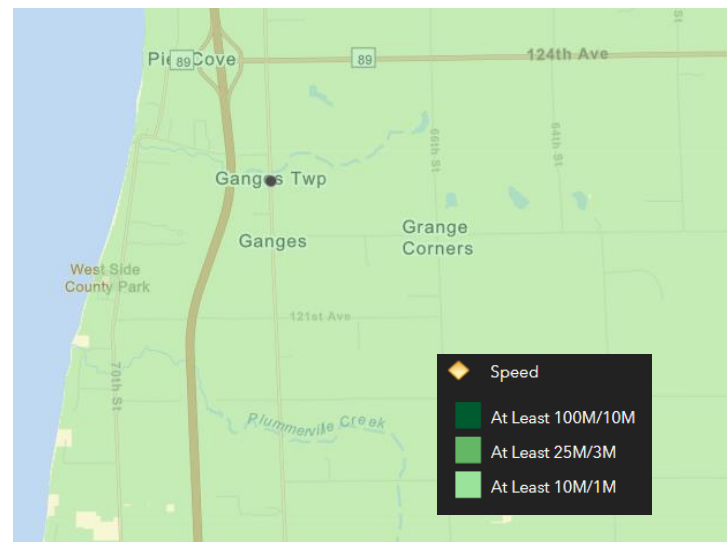
Broadband

Through the public engagement process, residents and taxpayers in the Township identified enhanced broadband infrastructure as a top priority for the master plan. As such, the Township will work to improve internet and communications service access throughout the community, including both broadband and wireless internet.

Additionally, Allegan County is in the process of launching a Countywide broadband accessibility project to expand internet access and reliability for County residents and businesses. The intent of this Plan, as well as recommendations listed below, is to work in tandem with the County's efforts, and assist when feasible.

The following list includes several mechanisms that can be used to support the growth and advancement of the Township's broadband and wireless services:

- Assess where the broadband “dead zone” areas exist.
- Plan for communications service connectivity, and work with providers to expand service in the community.
- Specifically, aim to provide 5G wireless service throughout the community.
- Seek grant opportunities or other funding sources to ensure the economic viability of broadband expansion in the community.
- Advocate for improved communications services in the Township among public and private sector decision makers to prevent the community being overlooked due to its low density.
- Support the construction of wireless telecommunications infrastructure in parts of the Township that are currently underserved.
- Partner with private landowners, especially those with tall structures like silos, to locate telecommunications infrastructure in strategic locations.
- Partner with MDOT and Allegan County to locate communications infrastructure in public rights-of-way.
- Remove zoning and other local regulatory barriers to the installation of communications technology, especially “small cell” wireless devices.



Water & Sewer

Expansions to infrastructure, particularly water and sewer utilities, are **not** planned or supported by this Master Plan.

Roads

Throughout the duration of this Plan, the Township will continue relationships with the Allegan County Road Commission, MDOT, and other applicable entities on the continued maintenance and upkeep of roads. The Township will also assess any need for paving and repaving of roads as appropriate.

Solar and Wind Energy Facilities

To preserve the natural, rural beauty of the Township, the viability of the Township's farmland, the precious ecosystems contained within the Township, and the health, safety, and welfare of the Township's residents, Ganges Township should continue to monitor trends and emerging technologies with regard to the development and regulation of solar energy and wind energy facilities (both commercial and non-commercial).

It is important to consider the preservation of the natural, rural beauty of the township, the viability of the Township's farmland, the ecosystems contained within the Township, the natural shoreline, and the health, safety and welfare of the residents.

While solar and wind energy facilities gain popularity nationwide and renewable energy resource trends continue to shift, the Township should continue to take a proactive role in the upkeep and maintenance of the Township's regulatory language pertaining to these facilities. This will ensure that regulations are current and reflect applicable provisions as new technologies continue to emerge throughout the duration of this Plan.



SHORELINE PROTECTION & COASTAL RESILIENCY

12

Some of Ganges Township's greatest environmental and physical assets is the Lake Michigan shoreline and its plentiful inland lakes, such as Hutchins Lake. Land uses in this area range from residential land uses to recreation land uses. Protecting these important local and regional assets are a key component of this Master Plan.

This Plan envisions the preservation and protection of the Lake Michigan shoreline, Hutchins Lake, Township wetlands, and other bodies of water. Some strategies that can be implemented to support the preservation of these important natural resources include:



- Continue working relationships with EGLE to implement best practices with regard to development along the lakeshore, inland lakes, and within close proximity to wetlands
- Consider zoning regulations that pertain to environmental protection, such as natural landscaping, native plantings, overlay districts, increased setbacks, and other similar regulations.
 - » Consider waterfront setbacks to be measured from the Regulatory Ordinary High Water Mark (ROHWM), set by EGLE.
- Keep updated on publications pertaining to shoreline preservation and environmental sustainability for the Great Lakes region.
- Continue to promote cluster development near sensitive areas.
- Limit the percentage of impervious surfaces in developments. Or heighten provisions on maximum lot coverage for impervious surfaces. The amount of buildable area should not include area that which is underwater, beach, or bluff.
- Continue working with home owners associations along the Lakeshore (on both Lake Michigan and Hutchins Lake) to ensure that all standards, rules, and regulations for lakefront homes work in tandem on efforts for shoreline protection and resiliency.
- Identify high priority public lands for EGLE protection and/or restoration grants, as applicable.
- Promote residential layouts that are conducive to shoreline preservation, such as long lot formats.
- Consider “scenario-based planning” principles to mitigate impacts on coastal development. Scenarios are used to determine possible risks and benefits to coastal communities, based on various climate scenarios.

ACTION PLAN

12

The Ganges 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 to preserve the Township's rural character.

The goals and objectives of this plan should be reviewed often and be considered in decision making by the Township. Successful implementation of this Plan will be the result of actions taken by elected and appointed officials, Township staff, the Planning Commission, public agencies, and private citizens and organizations.

This section identifies and describes actions and tools available to implement the vision created in this Plan. Broadly stated, the Plan will be implemented through the following overarching categories:

Agricultural Preservation and Rural Character: Actively pursuing policy, land use, and partnership measures to preserve the Township's agricultural community and assisting local farmers where needed. Some of the highest priorities identified for this category include:

- Continue to monitor trends in best practices for preservation of agriculture and rural residential land uses. This can include minimum lot sizes, agri-tourism uses, limiting non-agriculture or residential uses in the Agriculture and Ag/Res Districts, and other zoning ordinance amendments that are conducive to agriculture preservation and preservation of rural character.
- Establish and foster relationships with local producers and agriculture groups as needed and applicable. These groups may include any programs administered by Allegan County, MDARD, MSU-E, local 4-H programs, and others.

Environmental, Sustainability, and Infrastructure: Continue to be mindful of the potential adverse effects of development to the surrounding rural setting of the Township and actively working to protect and maintain the Township's natural beauty. Some activities to implement this category include:

- Keep abreast of regulations pertaining to solar and wind energy facilities. As new technologies in these fields emerge over time, the Township should consider periodic review and updates of wind and solar regulations, as deemed appropriate.
- Continue to prioritize the preservation and upkeep of the Township's lakeshore areas to prevent any adverse effects over time.
- Throughout the duration of this Plan, maintain relationships with County and State road agencies as to ensure the Township's transportation network is well-maintained.

Residential, Neighborhoods, and Business: Preserve the Township’s existing housing stock, including rural residential land uses and higher density residential uses toward the Lakeshore. Support commercial business and economic growth in the Township by targeting new commercial and business uses to appropriate areas. Some items that can be taken into consideration throughout the duration of this Plan to implement this category include:

- Implement the zoning ordinance recommendations as described in this Plan (as applicable) to encourage the continuation of high-quality residential development and prevent the degradation of the Township’s natural beauty.
- Target new residential developments (such as neighborhoods with multiple units and PUDs) to the areas designated as “residential” in the Future Land Use Plan.
- Continue to support the establishment and development of mixed uses along the M-89 and Blue Star Highway corridors.



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