

# **AGENDA**

**SPARTA TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
Tuesday, February 10, 2026  
7 P.M.**

**Sparta Township Hall  
160 East Division Street  
Sparta, MI 49345**

This meeting can be viewed live or recorded at  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCu9bOagfR6m02k7rdmX3TLA>

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Pledge of Allegiance**
- III. Additions or Corrections to Agenda**
- IV. Minutes of January 13, 2026, Regular Meeting**
- V. Public Comment (for items on the agenda)**
  - A. Public Hearing – Moratorium Amendment**
  - B. Public Hearing – Master Plan Review and Adoption**
  - C. Accessory Dwelling Unit Regulations**
  - D. Data Center Regulations Review**
- VII. Public Comment (for items on or not on the agenda)**
- VIII. Staff and Commissioner Comments**
  - Land Division Act Amendment
- IX. Adjournment**

MINUTES OF THE SPARTA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting of Tuesday, January 13, 2026, 7 PM  
Sparta Township Hall, 160 E. Division St., Sparta MI

This meeting could be viewed live or recorded at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCu9bOagfR6m02k7rdmX3TLA>.

Present: Chairperson Terry Hartman (9/28), Vice Chairperson Tim Driscoll (9/28), Commissioners Don Doyle (9/27), Dale Flanery (9/27), and Ken Humphreys (9/27)

Also Present: Zoning Administrator/Planner Kevin Yeomans of Fresh Coast Planning, Sparta Township Supervisor Dale Bergman, Sparta Township Board Trustee Bill Goodfellow, and Recording Secretary Toni Potes

Absent: Secretary Linda Anderson (9/28) and Township Board Trustee Barb Johnson (12/28)

I. / II. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance: Chairperson Hartman called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Additions or Corrections to Agenda: Motion by Doyle, second by Humphreys, to approve the Agenda as written. Motion carried unanimously.

IV. Minutes of November 11, 2025, Regular Meeting: Motion by Flanery, second by Doyle, to approve the Minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

V. Public Comment (for items on the Agenda):

Brook Burg, of 10870 Phelps Rd., is in favor of a moratorium, having the expectation of love your neighbor, wanting quiet and water and power usage, and Sparta not losing its identity. Data centers affect farming and bees.

Julie Sanford, of 370 Nelson, supports a moratorium. She has a masters in environmental science and offered to help. Her concerns were water issues, outrageous noise, and lights would affect night skies. Environmental assessments and impact statements need to be gathered.

Jackie Landon, of 3957 15 Mile, supports a moratorium. She had water and air pollution concerns causing cancer, and lack of economic impact for the locals. Sparta is not a place for data centers.

Greg Rademacher, of 11095 Phelps Ave., stated a data center would impact his boys, the environment, and the noise levels. He questioned if the moratorium is against a data center on that property, and if there is any talk about a financial gain to it being there.

Joan Kenoshneg, of 1065 Indian Lakes, discussed low frequency sound concerns for people and animals.

Morgan Anderson, of 12665 Phelps Ave., also agrees with a moratorium. She asks the Planning Commission to please be transparent.

## VI. Business Items

A. Public Hearing—Accessory Dwelling Unit Regulations: Zoning Administrator/Planner Yeomans provided an update since the October meeting.

Public Hearing opened at 7:19 PM

Joan Kenoshneg, of 1065 Indian Lakes, questioned a situation of a basement/in-law suite: it is not an accessory building. She questioned Airbnb-use: language is included.

Bill Goodfellow, of 2267 12 Mile Rd., pointed out that rental to the general public is not mentioned in the proposed document. The property owner has to maintain residency. Long-term rental language is not included.

Public Hearing closed at 7:27 PM

Motion by Humphreys, second by Flanery, to table the matter to prepare language that the accessory dwelling unit is not used as a rental. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Data Center Regulations & Moratorium Amendment Review: Zoning Administrator/- Planner Yeomans explained that an amendment to the zoning ordinance would give the Township Board authority to issue a moratorium by resolution. Motion by Driscoll, second by Flanery, to proceed to public hearing on a zoning ordinance amendment for a moratorium. Motion carried unanimously. Pending review of the information provided regarding sample regulations for data centers, the topic was tabled.

C. Review of 2026 Schedule: Motion by Driscoll, second by Humphreys, to approve the Planning Commission meeting schedule on the following Tuesdays in 2026: January 13, February 10, March 10, April 14, May 12, June 9, July 14, August 11, September 8, October 13, November 10, and December 8.

## VII. Public Comment (for items on or not on the Agenda):

Jackie Landon, of 3957 15 Mile, offered information from the Michigan EDRA for the Planning Commission's review. The Right Place is helping data centers acquire property, and the Village has a relationship with them. She appreciates the Planning Commission's openness.

Michael Johnson, of 12240 Fruit Ridge, stated a complaint was made on him for his lawn care and snowplowing business being run out of his house. He asked if the Township could look into helping. Zoning Administrator/Planner Yeomans explained that the business is operated from the pole barn, not the house, which is not allowed.

Joan Kenoshneg, of 1065 Indian Lakes, stated data centers are so new, you need 12 months to work it out. Other townships are doing one-year moratoriums. Regarding accessory units, she had concerns about "family" vs. "partner" identification. Agencies will get involved if it can't be a rental unit. Tiny houses are replacing the accessory building, which is more

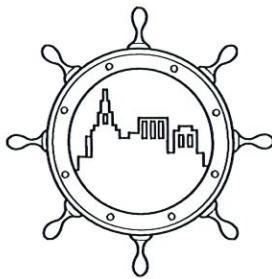
favorable than adding on to the house. She also stated she's a member of the Sparta Garden Club and desires a community garden; grants are available.

Jason Reister, of 12077 N. Division, asked if the Planning Commission would consider a double-wide on ag land. Zoning Administrator/Planner Yeomans explained the situation of a private road, pending land division, and duplex use by right; he will work on it.

**VIII. Staff and Commissioner Comments:** Driscoll stated he is not 100% against data centers because he needs to educate himself. But he and all of the Commissioners do what is best for the community. Zoning Administrator/Planner Yeomans addressed the Land Division Act Amendment which has been in process at the state level for about one year. He discussed changes made at the end of 2025 and how the changes apply to Sparta's zoning ordinances. He will bring other updates as they occur. The issue of pole barn businesses, in lieu of home occupation, will be added to the Planning Commission list of items to review.

**IX. Adjournment:** Motion by Driscoll, second by Humphreys, to adjourn at 8:30 PM. Motion carried unanimously. The next regular meeting of the Sparta Township Planning Commission will be Tuesday, February 10, 2026, at 7 PM. Pending are the Master Plan Distribution Comments.

Respectfully submitted,  
—Toni Potes  
Recording Secretary



## Fresh Coast Planning

119 1/2 Washington Avenue, Studio B  
Grand Haven, MI 49417  
[www.freshcoastplanning.com](http://www.freshcoastplanning.com)

**Gregory L. Ransford, MPA**

**Kevin Yeomans**

**Alexis Gulker**  
616-200-1000

**Aaron Bigelow**  
616-200-1000

**Andrea Goodell**  
616-200-1000

# MEMORANDUM

To: Sparta Township Planning Commission  
From: Kevin Yeomans  
Date: 1/26/2026  
Re: Moratorium Zoning Ordinance Amendment

At your January 13, 2026, meeting the Planning Commission conducted a preliminary review of a zoning ordinance text amendment that will allow the Township Board to initiate a moratorium by resolution. This will apply to all future moratoriums and will not be specific to data centers. As part of your preliminary review the Planning Commission had no concerns with the proposed language and approved the amendment for public hearing.

A public hearing for the proposed moratorium amendment is scheduled for your February 10, 2026, meeting.

As you're aware, this amendment was initiated by the Township Board in response to concerns regarding data centers. Pending the conclusion of the public hearing, the Planning Commission will need to make a recommendation to the Township Board on whether to adopt the proposed amendment with or without changes.

### Draft Motions

The following draft motions have been prepared for your use.

#### Adopt as Presented

Motion to recommend adoption of the moratorium ordinance as presented to the Township Board.

#### Adopt with Changes

Motion to recommend the Township Board adopt the moratorium ordinance, with the following changes:

1. Changes identified by the Planning Commission.

#### Do Not Adopt

Motion to recommend the Township Board does not adopt the moratorium ordinance.

*Kevin Yeomans*

Kevin Yeomans

Planner

Attachments

CC: Dale Bergman, Township Supervisor

**SPARTA TOWNSHIP**

**ORDINANCE NO.**

**AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE ZONING ORDINANCE REGARDING  
MORATORIUMS**

The Township of Sparta ordains:

**Section 1. Addition of New Section 154.430 to the Zoning Ordinance.**

A new Section 154.430 is added to Chapter 154 of the Sparta Township Code and reads in its entirety as follows:

Section 154.430 – Moratorium by Resolution

- A. The Township Board may, by resolution, impose a temporary moratorium on the review or issuance of any applications, permits, rezonings, licenses, or approvals for existing, new, or emerging land uses in the Township if the Township Board determines that a temporary moratorium is necessary to review, enact, or amend provisions of the master plan or zoning ordinance to address land uses that may impact the health, safety, or welfare of Township residents or property. A temporary moratorium may also be imposed by the Township Board upon the recommendation of the Planning Commission when the Planning Commission determines that a moratorium is needed to allow it sufficient time to review and recommend amendments to the master plan or zoning ordinance concerning existing, new, or emerging land uses that may adversely affect the health, safety, or welfare of Township residents or property.
- B. The resolution must state the purpose of the moratorium and include findings of the Township Board or Planning Commission in support of the moratorium and why the Township Board has determined that the temporary moratorium is necessary and in the best interest of the public health, safety, or welfare.
- C. Any resolution adopted pursuant to this Section must specify the length of the initial moratorium which shall not exceed twelve (12) months. In addition to the initial moratorium, the Township Board may extend the temporary moratorium if the Township Board determines that more time is necessary to review, enact, or amend provisions of the master plan or zoning ordinance to regulate land uses. Any extension shall not exceed six (6) additional months.
- D. Notice of the resolution must be published within seven (7) days of its adoption. The notice must include the following:
  1. A summary of the resolution's effect.
  2. The length of the moratorium and whether an extension is possible.
  3. Where the public may inspect the resolution enacting the moratorium.

**Section 2.     Validity and Severability.**

If any portion of this Ordinance is found invalid for any reason, such holding will not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Ordinance.

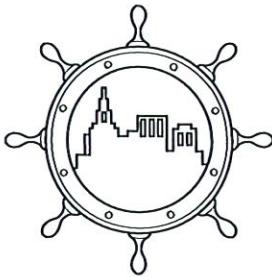
**Section 3.     Repealer.**

Any ordinances or parts of ordinances that conflict with this Ordinance are repealed, but only to the extent necessary to give this Ordinance full force and effect.

**Section 4.     Effective Date.**

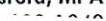
This Ordinance takes effect upon the expiration of seven (7) days after its publication pursuant to MCL 125.3401.

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## Fresh Coast Planning

119 1/2 Washington Avenue, Studio B  
Grand Haven, MI 49417  
[www.freshcoastplanning.com](http://www.freshcoastplanning.com)

**Gregory L. Ransford, MPA**  


**Kevin Yeomans**  


**Alexis Gukler**  


**Aaron Bigelow**  


**Andrea Goodell**  


# MEMORANDUM

To: Sparta Township Planning Commission  
From: Kevin Yeomans  
Date: 1/22/2026  
Re: 2026 Master Plan – Public Hearing

The required 63-day public comment period for the draft 2026 Sparta Township Master Plan (the “Master Plan”) was completed on January 19, 2026. During that time, the Township received one comment from The Rapid. A copy of the letter from The Rapid is attached to this memorandum.

Review of the Master Plan has been scheduled for public hearing at your February 10, 2026, meeting.

### Final Review and Proposed Edits

Additionally, we have completed a final review of the Master Plan alongside Supervisor Bergman. As part of our final review the following items were identified.

#### A. Mixed-Use Residential Commercial

While this classification was included in the Master Plan Map. A land use classification description was not included in the Master Plan. The following recommended changes are as follows:

- a. Pg. 9 (Residential Uses) the following recommendation was added:

In coordination with the Commercial goals of this plan, create a Mixed-Use Residential Commercial District.

- b. Pg. 11 (Commercial Uses) the following recommendation was added:

In coordination with the Residential goals of this plan, create a Mixed-Use Residential Commercial District.

- c. Pg. 20 (Implementation) Mixed Use Residential Commercial was added to both tables on this page.

- d. Pg. 22 (Implementation) A land use classification description has been added.

B. The Commercial/Industrial Classification is currently identified as being expanded to 500 feet along both sides of Sparta Avenue. With the updates to the Master Plan Map the intent to expand the commercial area along Sparta Avenue did not clearly carry over into the updated Master Plan. On pg. 22 we have included text to the Commercial/Industrial description to clearly state the area may be extended to a depth of 500 feet.

#### Public Hearing

As mentioned above, the required public hearing for the Master Plan has been scheduled for February 10, 2026. Pending the conclusion of the public hearing and the receipt of public comment, the Planning Commission will need to decide on whether to adopt the Master Plan, as presented, or if further revisions are necessary.

*Kevin Yeomans*

Kevin Yeomans  
Planner

Attachments

CC: Dale Bergman, Township Supervisor



Kevin Yeomans &lt;

## Draft of Sparta Township Master Plan - Solicitation of Comments

**Joshua Brink**

To: "

Cc: "

Tue, Nov 25, 2025 at 1:30 PM

To whom it may concern,

We at The Rapid have reviewed your Master Plan and appreciate the opportunity to provide a response. We are excited about the future of our region, and we firmly believe that public transportation plays a key role in shaping that future. The emphasis you placed on transportation within your planning process is important, as a major part of how people experience a community begins with how they move through it.

We noticed that public transportation was mentioned once in the document (Chapter 7; Page 17: "Ensure road improvements promote growth in a way that improves public and private transit and is consistent with adopted goals and policies relating to land use and transportation"), but the implications for your community were unclear. Beyond this reference, the plan focuses primarily on personal vehicle travel, with no indication of interest in exploring alternative transportation solutions. If public transportation is something your community would like to consider, we as the largest regional provider would welcome the opportunity to begin that conversation. As you may know, we currently collaborate with a number of surrounding communities and agencies through contracted services.

Providing alternatives to personal vehicle travel offers not only significant economic benefits but also meaningful public health advantages. The Rapid adds substantial value to the communities we serve while offering a low-cost, low-carbon transportation option for riders. We would be glad to discuss how public transit could support your long-term goals and strengthen mobility within your community. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Best regards,

**Josh Brink**

*Planner*

**The Rapid**

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RESOLUTION  
TOWNSHIP OF SPARTA  
COUNTY OF KENT, MICHIGAN

SPARTA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION  
RESOLUTION TO ADOPT MASTER PLAN

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

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

WHEREAS, the Sparta Township Planning Commission made the necessary inquiries, investigations, and surveys of the appropriate resources of the Township, and considered the character of the Township and its suitability for particular uses judged in terms of such factors as the trend in land and population development; and

WHEREAS, the Master Plan, as proposed, will promote public health, safety and general welfare; will encourage the use of resources in accordance with their character and adaptability; will avoid the overcrowding of land by buildings or people; will lessen congestion on public roads and streets; and will facilitate provision for a system of transportation, sewage disposal, safe and adequate water supply, recreation and other public improvements; and

WHEREAS, the Master Plan, as proposed, includes the material described in the following Table of Contents, Appendices, and Maps:

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CHAPTER SIX: UTILITIES AND FACILITIES .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER SEVEN: TRANSPORTATION.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER EIGHT: IMPLEMENTATION .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

APPENDIX

- Selected Demographic Information
- Master Plan Survey Summary
- Informative Community Maps

- County Drains
- Natural River Area
- PA116 Lands
- Prime Farmland Soils
- Wetlands

WHEREAS, on September 11, 2025, the Sparta Township Board reviewed the proposed Master Plan prepared by the Planning Commission and authorized distribution of the Master Plan to surrounding municipalities and regional planning organizations as identified in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, notice was provided to the surrounding municipalities and regional planning organizations as provided in the Michigan Planning Enabling Act; and

WHEREAS, the Sparta Township Planning Commission held a public hearing on February 10, 2026, to consider public comment on the proposed new Master Plan, and to further review and comment on the proposed Master Plan; and

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

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS RESOLVED, that the Sparta Township Planning Commission adopts the Master Plan, as presented to the public on February 10, 2026.

The foregoing resolution was offered by Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_; second offered by Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_.

Upon roll call vote the following voted:

“Aye”:

“Nay”:

The Chair declared the resolution adopted.

---

Linda Anderson, Secretary

## CERTIFICATE

I, the undersigned, the Secretary of the Planning Commission of the Township of Sparta, Kent County, Michigan, certify that the foregoing is a true and complete copy of a resolution adopted by the Planning Commission at a regular meeting held on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2026. I further certify that public notice of said meeting was given pursuant to and in full compliance with Michigan Act 267 of 1976, as amended, and that the minutes of said meeting were kept and will be or have been made available as required by the Act.

---

Linda Anderson, Secretary  
Sparta Township Planning Commission

# Sparta Township

## 2026 MASTER PLAN

### Planning Commission:

Terry Hartman – Chairperson

Tim Driscoll – Vice-Chairperson

Linda Anderson – Secretary

Don Doyle – Member

Dale Flanery – Member

Ken Humphreys – Member

Barb Johnson – Member

### Board of Trustees:

Dale Bergman – Supervisor

Marcy Savage – Clerk

Ashley Johnson – Treasurer

Jason Bradford – Trustee

Bill Goodfellow – Trustee

Barb Johnson – Trustee

Rob Steffens – Trustee

### With Assistance By:



Fresh Coast Planning

Sparta Township – 160 E. Division Street

Sparta – Michigan – 49345

Kent County

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## INTRODUCTION & COMMUNITY PROFILE

### Preface

In accordance with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Act 33 of 2008, as amended, this Master Plan was created to serve as a guide for growth and development within Sparta Township (the “Township”). The Master Plan is a policy tool used by Township officials to coordinate growth and to serve as the basis for zoning. It guides the location and future arrangement of agricultural, industrial, residential, commercial, and recreational areas. These locations must consider a multitude of factors such as utilities and infrastructure, existing land use, physical characteristics of the land, traffic volumes and traffic routes, as well as environmental limitations.

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act specifically provides townships with the authority to prepare and officially adopt a master plan. The Township’s Master Plan functions as an official advisory policy statement for the orderly and efficient use of land. The Master Plan provides the coordination of land uses with other land uses, with streets, and with other necessary public infrastructure. The Master Plan also provides the legal and logical basis for local zoning, subdivision design, and public improvement plans, and for facilitating and guiding the work of the Sparta Township Planning Commission (the “Planning Commission”) and the Sparta Township Board (the “Township Board”). It is also a means of communicating to surrounding communities, private organizations, and individuals about how they need to relate their future development plans and building projects to the official plans of the Township.

Despite its purpose as a policy document, it is important to recognize that the Master Plan is general in scope. It is not always intended to establish the precise boundaries of land use areas or exact locations of future uses. Rather, the Master Plan is an organized approach to analyzing development issues and proposing strategies to address these issues. Its function is to guide growth, providing a framework to ensure that future detailed decisions for development can be made based on a community-wide perspective. Given that the needs and desires of the community change over time, the Master Plan must be regularly reviewed and periodically updated. The Master Plan projects more than twenty years into the future and must be revisited at least every five years to ensure its legitimacy.

### Community

Physical and environmental conditions establish limitations on how some areas of the Township will develop. The physical and environmental makeup of the Township influences the population, housing, economic, and labor force composition of the community. Given likely continued efforts to convert farmland to residential or commercial properties, demands will continue for additional infrastructure, yet also for the preservation of the natural environment. The Master Plan must therefore establish future residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and recreational areas within the Township in order to adequately address the needs of the community as a whole and prevent incompatible uses.

Sparta Township is located in northwest Kent County and is approximately 33.5 square miles in size. The Township is bounded on the north by 16-Mile Road, on the east by Division Avenue, on the south by Ten Mile Road, and on the west by Kenowa Avenue.

Sparta Township is a part of the Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area. According to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, as of July 1, 2024, the City of Grand Rapids is the fastest growing economy in the United States of America. This growth ripples through the region, creating demand for residential housing and

commercial development. Sparta Township is located approximately 16.5 miles or a 25-minute drive from the City of Grand Rapids. Primary access to and from Grand Rapids is via M-37, which traverses the Township in primarily a north-south direction.

Two natural characteristics that have played a major role in the development of the Township, both historically and today, are the Rogue River which lies in the eastern portion of the Township and the concentration of prime farmland soils in areas west of M-37 (the "Ridge") and areas north of the Village of Sparta. The Rogue River and prime farmland soils have helped create a community with a rich agricultural and rural character. In order to protect the community's agricultural and rural character, the Township has historically encouraged commercial and industrial development to be focused in the Village of Sparta; with residential development and some commercial development encouraged east of M-37, west of the Rogue River, and south of the Village of Sparta.

Other characteristics that play a significant role in the development of Sparta Township are M-37, the active rail line, and the Sparta Municipal Airport which lies in the southeast portion of the Township.

#### How to Use this Plan

For each land use or related chapter, the Master Plan provides a purpose statement, general description of appropriate uses, and recommendations which form the basis for future development. The purpose statement, general description, and recommendations are designed as follows:

- Purpose Statement – Identifies the purpose and intent of the land use classification or community attribute.
- General Description of Appropriate Uses – Provides examples of uses that may be appropriate within each land use classification.
- Goals – Identifies the goals in list format for ease of use when reviewing land use and zoning ordinance amendment proposals.
- Recommendations – Provides recommendations on how the Township may help promote and create the desired future state of the land use as identified in the Purpose Statement.

## General Goals and Objectives of Land Use Policy in Sparta Township

The listed items below are the overarching goals and objectives of future land use development within the Township. They are intended as a way to tie the individual land use classifications and community attributes together and are used as part of the foundation for the creation of other content within this plan.

- Develop policies and regulations designed to protect and preserve the rural, agricultural, and natural assets of the community.
- Develop policies and regulations designed to encourage the concentration of development near the Village of Sparta.
- Develop policies that will increase residents' access to commercial services and goods within Sparta Township or the Village of Sparta.
- Ensure that the above listed policies are balanced to allow for continued residential growth while protecting the rural, agricultural, and natural assets of the community.
- Develop policies designed to preserve the agricultural look and feel of the community.
- Develop policies that will require new developments to be designed in such a way that they preserve or enhance the agricultural and rural character of the community.
- Develop policies that will preserve or enhance natural areas within the Township.

## Definition of Terms

Given the value of preserving agricultural and natural areas for the Sparta Township community, the following terms are recognized as defined below, in order to streamline the content of the Master Plan.

- *Rural Character* – is recognized as the natural features of the earth that minimize the visual exposure of buildings, structures, or other man-made features and which create scenic character. It is also recognized as the natural features of the earth that provide environmental buffers and/or habitat that is characteristic of the Township. Such features include:
  - Woods, woodlots, forest areas, and trees
  - Wetlands
  - Natural vegetation
  - Wildlife habitat
  - Natural field areas
  - Scenic vistasRural Character also includes farmland, which is recognized as part of the natural features that are organized and managed by people.
- *Open Space* – is recognized as areas of land unoccupied by buildings, structures, or other man-made features, that are preserved to be unoccupied by buildings, structures, or other man-made features within a project. Open Space is not intended to include displays of art or other cultural features; bridges, signage, utilities, and other essential service structures; or grade level features such as ponds.

## CHAPTER ONE: AGRICULTURAL USES

### Purpose Statement

Based on feedback received as part of the Master Plan community input survey conducted in early 2024, the preservation of natural areas and farmland is a top priority for the community. Given this, the primary intent and purpose of the Agricultural Land Use Classification is to protect prime agricultural areas based on farming best practices and farming operations.

The secondary intent and purpose of the Agricultural Land Use Classification is to protect and preserve Open Space and the Rural Character of the community.

### General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

The primary or principal uses intended for Agricultural lands are cropland, pastureland, rangeland, forest land, and other similar uses. Any other uses within agricultural lands should be designed to promote and facilitate the primary intended uses.

Any non-farm use should be located and designed so as to protect farmland and natural areas and the rural character of these lands. Further, non-farm uses should be directed to occur in areas that are classified as Rural Agriculture.

### Goals

- Preserve lands suitable for agricultural use in the Township and manage growth to minimize the encroachment of residential, commercial, and industrial uses into areas valued for agricultural purposes.
- Plan for and guide new development in a manner which preserves the most significant natural features in the Township, as well as the rural views and character.
- Preserve woodland and wetlands associated with farms which are valuable as water retention and groundwater recharge areas, and as a habitat for plant and animal life.
- Prevent dense residential or commercial developments west of M-37 to protect premature development and loss of farmland.
- Encourage accessory agritourism uses that support local farmers and growers by promoting individuals to visit the area and buy from local farmers and businesses.

### Recommendations

- Continue to support zoning regulations which restrict non-farm development in areas consisting primarily of prime farmland; in general, these areas consist mainly of those lands west of M-37.
- Develop zoning regulations which make lands which are less suitable for agriculture use more attractive to develop than prime agricultural land.
- Promote agriculture as a strong component of the local economic base.
- Periodically review zoning ordinance regulations to ensure they are not negatively impacting the safe, efficient, and financial feasibility of farming operations.
- Periodically review the Prime Agricultural Preservation, Agricultural, and other zoning districts to ensure the regulations complement each other and provide for the protection of farming, Open Space, and the orderly development of the community.

- Review and develop lot area, width, depth, and other regulations to ensure parcels are developed and oriented to protect the rural image and blend development with the natural landscape.
- Encourage soil conservation practices, the prudent use of fertilizers and pesticides and other means of conserving wildlife habitats, wetlands, and woodlands.
- Consider adopting regulations which require the preservation of a natural vegetation filtration strip along lakes, rivers, and streams.
- Review and develop regulations to accommodate and protect wildlife corridors.
- Periodically review the zoning ordinance to ensure that the number and location of new dwellings permitted to be built within Agricultural lands reflects the community's priorities.
- Periodically review zoning ordinance provisions pertaining to "value-added" opportunities in the Agricultural District, to ensure that regulations are current, consistent across uses, and support activities such as farm markets, processing of products for food or beverage, recreation and tourism, and other agricultural enterprises.

## CHAPTER TWO: RESIDENTIAL USES

### Purpose Statement

The primary intent and purpose of residential land uses is to provide people with a range of residential living styles that provide individuals and families with the opportunity to live in a way that meets their needs and desires in a manner that is safe, affordable, and enhances a sense of community.

Further, in recognizing the high demand for housing in Western Michigan and the importance of residential growth in supporting the local economy, the Township encourages limited residential growth in appropriate areas of the Township.

Where the preservation of prime agricultural lands conflicts with the development of new housing developments, the goal of preserving prime agricultural land should generally prevail.

### General Description of Appropriate Land Use

Residential land uses vary in terms of densities and intensity of land use. The denser a residential land use is, the more intense its use of the land and the land's resources. As such, denser residential uses such as apartments, multi-family housing, and residential developments with densities greater than one unit per acre should be located where public utilities and infrastructure are available, with less dense residential uses being located in areas that are not near public utilities and private well and septic systems are able to be safely installed, used and maintained.

### Goals

- To create attractive, safe, and convenient residential environments.
- Provide for a variety of housing opportunities near schools, parks, utilities, and other facilities determined desirable or necessary for community involvement.
- Provide housing for a variety of income levels and needs.
- Limit mobile homes located within mobile home parks to 20% of the total number of dwelling units within the Township, to ensure a balance in housing types.
- Direct residential development to occur east of M-37 and west of the Rogue River in areas that are able to connect to public utilities and services.
- Discourage residential development in areas with Prime Farmland Soils.
- Ensure that new housing developments are constructed and designed in such a way that preserves and enhances the rural and agricultural character of the community.
- Ensure that residential land uses are organized in such a way that they are harmonious with agricultural areas, natural areas, and the existing character of the surrounding area.
- Ensure the preservation of open space, wildlife habitats, and recreation opportunities.

### Recommendations

- Develop standards to encourage that the highest concentrations of residential development be located where the greatest potential exists for public utilities and services.
- Establish density limits with ranges or variations that are consistent with the natural capacity of soils to handle on-site septic systems, and which promote the preservation of the Township's natural resources and rural and suburban qualities.

- Establish development design standards that utilize small lot, cluster development where appropriate and which require that open space and existing roadside views be preserved.
- Develop incentives that require creative design of residential developments to set aside suitable portions of land for the preservation of natural features, open space accessible to all people, neighborhood parks, and road easements for non-motorized paths.
- Establish landscaping guidelines for existing and future residential development.
- Develop a mixed use residential/commercial zoning district that will apply to lands located south of the Village as identified on the Master Plan Map.
- Develop standards to encourage interconnectivity with existing sidewalks, non-motorized paths, open space, and parks.
- Encourage development layouts that blend with the natural features and existing physical attributes.
- Review and develop standards to encourage, where appropriate, light pollution regulations to preserve the night sky.
- Review and develop regulations to accommodate and protect wildlife corridors.
- Coordinate with the Village of Sparta to encourage new residential developments with densities greater than one unit per acre to connect to public water, sanitary sewer, stormwater services, and existing motorized and non-motorized transportation infrastructure.
- Periodically review standards for residential development in agricultural areas to ensure residential uses are compatible with existing and future agricultural uses.
- Review minimum dwelling requirements to ensure that the Township allows for a variety of housing styles and methods of construction where appropriate.
- In coordination with the Commercial goals of this plan, create a Mixed-Use Residential Commercial District.

## CHAPTER THREE: COMMERCIAL USES

### Purpose Statement

The intent and purpose of commercial uses is to provide residents and visitors with the goods and services they need or want. The purpose of commercial areas within the Township is to encourage diversified businesses that offer people a variety of goods and services in convenient locations.

### General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

Ranging from grocery stores and gas stations to restaurants and automotive repair facilities, there are a variety of appropriate local commercial uses that can provide goods and services to individuals. Recognizing that different commercial uses place varying levels of demand on public infrastructure (roads and utilities), more intense commercial land uses should be designed and located in areas where the appropriate public infrastructure exists.

### Goals

- Identify and provide for the service and shopping needs of the Township's residents and visitors in suitable locations which will provide a safe and efficient traffic circulation pattern.
- Work with the Village of Sparta to ensure a unified commercial district that reflects a high quality of development along Sparta Avenue.
- Encourage the development of a variety of commercial uses.

### Recommendations

- Develop a Commercial/Industrial zoning district that will apply to lands adjacent to portions of Sparta Avenue south of the Village of Sparta.
- Develop a mixed use residential/commercial zoning district that will apply to lands south of the Village as identified on the Master Plan Map.
- In order to minimize traffic congestion and hazards, develop regulations which require the shared use of commercial driveways and access roads, limit the number and spacing of driveways, and encourage the use of frontage roads or service drives.
- Review and develop regulations for setbacks, landscaping, architectural features and designs, and performance standards into the Township Zoning Ordinance that will achieve a high standard for commercial development which is aesthetically appealing, and which operates in a safe and efficient manner.
- Review regulations for pedestrian access in order to ensure safe and orderly pedestrian access to commercial sites.
- Review allowed uses, setbacks, and other regulations between commercial districts to ensure a clear distinction between districts.
- Review existing provisions and investigate the development of zoning provisions that would allow for the development of mixed uses.
- Require that development layouts blend with natural features and existing physical attributes.
- Encourage the preservation of trees and other existing natural features.
- Encourage wildlife corridors within developments.
- Nuisances such as air pollution, water pollution, vibration, noise, and outdoor storage of materials should be controlled by adequate site improvements.

- Encourage architectural features that enhance and preserve the rural and agricultural character of the community.
- In coordination with the Residential goals of this plan, create a Mixed-Use Residential Commercial District.

## CHAPTER FOUR: INDUSTRIAL USES

### Purpose Statement

Industrial uses may produce odors, smoke, noise, traffic, and other similar byproducts that can be disruptive to the health, welfare, and safety of individuals. As such, the primary intent and purpose of the industrial land use classification is to identify uses that may negatively impact nearby properties and provide appropriate locations for industrial uses.

Additionally, industrial uses can play a vital role in a community's economy by providing jobs, offering opportunities to diversify the local economy, and creating a ripple effect that can extend to existing local, regional, and state businesses. As such, the secondary intent of the industrial land use classification is to capitalize on the positive impacts that industrial uses can have.

### General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

Industrial uses provide for the manufacturing, assembly, processing, packaging, storage and distribution of products and materials.

### Goals

- Provide for a variety of industrial development in areas served by adequate transportation systems and which are or will potentially be served by public utilities and services.
- Achieve high quality industrial development through appropriate zoning and performance requirements, while expanding economic opportunities to industrial developers.
- Separate industrial uses from less intense land uses such as residential through appropriate use of buffer strips, landscaping, open space, or transitional land uses.
- Protect and preserve, to the extent practicable, those elements which contribute to the rural character of the Township including woodlands, wetlands, wildlife habitats, farms, pastures, fields, open spaces and other natural areas, particularly those that are useful as water retention and ground water discharge areas and have important aesthetic and scenic value
- Preserve the natural resources and groundwater quality of the Township.

### Recommendations

- Encourage the extension of public utilities and services to those areas identified as desirable for industrial development.
- Work with local and regional economic development agencies to attract and retain desirable manufacturing, processing, or technological operations to the Sparta area.
- Develop a Commercial/Industrial zoning district that will apply to lands adjacent to portions of Sparta Avenue south of the Village of Sparta.
- Review and develop landscaping guidelines for existing and industrial development.
- Differentiate between light and heavy industrial uses, what utilities are necessary for each, what transportation infrastructure is necessary for each, and develop standards to ensure they are properly located.
- Engage with local farmers and business owners to determine what, if any, industrial uses would be beneficial to their existing operations.
- Review and evaluate the Zoning Ordinance to ensure that existing regulations are encouraging industrial uses to develop in a way that is consistent with the goals of the Master Plan.

- Require that development layouts blend with natural features and existing physical attributes.
- Encourage the preservation of trees and other existing natural features.
- Encourage wildlife corridors within developments.
- Develop standards to ensure that industrial nuisances such as air pollution, water pollution, vibration, noise, and outdoor storage of materials are controlled by adequate site improvements.
- Encourage architectural features that enhance and preserve the rural and agricultural character of the community.

## CHAPTER FIVE: RECREATIONAL FACILITIES & THE ENVIRONMENT

### Purpose Statement

Recreational facilities, both public and private, are vital components of a community. Recreational facilities create shared spaces which allow space to be used economically and provide opportunities for individuals to connect with their neighbors and the outdoors.

Further, based on the feedback received from the 2024 Master Plan Survey, the preservation of natural areas is a top priority for the community. These natural areas provide an essential element which both enhances and protects the quality of life in Sparta Township. Availability and access to recreational facilities and natural areas can increase an individual's overall health and welfare, among other benefits.

### General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

Recreational facilities can take many forms. They can be natural areas (such as lakes and woodlands) or developed spaces (such as playgrounds), or a mix of natural areas and developed spaces. The following list identifies some types of developed spaces and natural areas, but is by no means exhaustive: trails, buffers, playgrounds, sports fields, pools, lakes and other bodies of water, beaches, picnic areas, forested areas and many more.

### Goals

- Plan for and develop active and passive outdoor recreation facilities to meet the needs of existing and future residents of the Township.
- Encourage the development of recreational facilities and areas to ensure that all residents have convenient access to recreational opportunities.
- Encourage interconnection between recreational facilities.
- Create and preserve public access to bodies of water and other natural areas in the Township.
- Preserve and enhance access to safe drinking water from groundwater sources.
- Preserve the aesthetics (views, serenity, rural nature, etc.) available in the Township.

### Recommendations

- Work with developers to set aside suitable portions of land for neighborhood parks, and road easements for pedestrian/bicycle paths.
- Review and develop regulations that require developments (residential, commercial, and industrial) to include new pathways and other recreational amenities.
- Review and strengthen ordinance provisions to reduce flooding, control runoff, and improve water quality of all bodies of water in the Township.
- Develop a Recreation Plan for the Township.
- Maximize the utilization of public buildings and grounds for multi-functional services.
- Coordinate with the Village of Sparta, Kent County, and other nearby communities to ensure that a variety of recreational activities are developed and accessible to area residents.
- Coordinate with local, regional, and state agencies and officials to identify environmentally sensitive areas.
- Review and (as necessary) amend policies and overlay districts related to decision making and development in environmentally sensitive areas.

## CHAPTER SIX: UTILITIES AND FACILITIES

### Purpose Statement

Utilities provide essential services such as heat, power, potable water, waste disposal, and communications to individuals and organizations. Many utilities such as electricity, natural gas, internet, television, telephone and trash disposal are often provided by quasi-public or private companies. However, other utilities such as water, storm sewer, and sanitary sewer are often provided by municipalities or other public organizations.

In order for individuals to have the opportunity to live the highest quality of life, a township must work with both private and public organizations to build, maintain, and strengthen the facilities and infrastructures that provide these essential services to its community members.

Lastly, when utilities are expanded and strengthened, they can provide economic development opportunities for the community by providing the services necessary to support a more diverse range of commercial and industrial uses.

### General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

Sparta Township currently does not provide any public utilities. As the necessary infrastructure can be prohibitively expensive to construct, the Township will need to coordinate with nearby municipalities to extend and strengthen their existing facilities and infrastructures to serve appropriate areas of the community.

Further, more intensive land uses such as residential developments greater than one unit per acre, restaurants, food processing plants and other uses that have a high demand for water and sanitary sewer should be located in areas where they are able to connect to existing utility systems. This allows for the orderly development of utilities and aids in their long-term sustainability.

The development of utilities should be done in conjunction with the development of roads and other transportation methods.

### Goals

- Provide for adequate infrastructure that will ensure balanced, orderly growth and ensure the safety and well-being of Township residents.
- Maintain an adequate level of community facilities and services that will ensure the safety, quality of life, and education of present and future Township residents.
- Develop adequate utilities that will ensure balanced, orderly growth and protect the safety and well-being of Township residents.
- Protect existing wells and access to potable water.

### Recommendations

- Create a sub-area plan for Sparta Avenue, south of the Village of Sparta, and create a Zoning Overlay District to ensure that future development occurs in a manner that is consistent with the goals of the Master Plan.
- Limit higher densities of development to areas where future public utilities and services can be most economically and efficiently provided.

- Coordinate with the Village of Sparta to establish a Growth Management Plan that reflects a mutually agreed upon phasing for growth and development of residential, commercial, and industrial services and the public water, sanitary sewer, and stormwater services necessary to support the growth.
- Require residential development proposals denser than one unit per acre to construct public utilities where feasible.
- For all types of development, work with County and State officials to enforce acceptable standards and best practices regarding the construction of private water and sanitary sewer systems.
- Coordinate with the Village of Sparta and Sparta Fire and Rescue to ensure that all types of development occur in a manner that is safe and efficient.
- Encourage funding practices for improvements to public utilities that, to the extent possible, appropriately place the cost of utilities on users.
- Design incentives to encourage private investment in public water and/or sewer expansion.
- Encourage the extension of natural gas lines into the Township to provide more cost-effective sources of energy.
- Encourage the extension of services to provide one hundred percent accessibility to the internet.
- Prepare capital improvement plans for things such as roads, parks and recreation, utilities, and other improvements.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: TRANSPORTATION

### Purpose Statement

The road system within the Township serves as one of the backbones for growth and development. By providing a means for internal and external traffic circulation, the road system within the Township influences the shape and intensity of land use.

The road system is limited by the natural features, which pose a significant impediment to convenient traffic movement throughout the community. In many cases, hilly terrain, lakes, wetlands, ravines, and rivers have dictated the locations of roads and in some cases have resulted in the disruption of roads that would have otherwise been constructed in a complete grid pattern. Nevertheless, the Township is generally well served by a primary system of roadways that operate at varying levels of service.

### General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

For planning purposes, it is useful to recognize that the various roads within the Township can have distinct functions. An understanding of these functions can lead to decisions as to the desirable use of each road segment, road right-of-way widths, building setbacks, and adjoining land use. In its 2021 Strategic Plan, the Kent County Road Commission (KCRC) categorizes roads as follows:

- Primary Roads: Primary roads are generally the County's longer-distance, higher-volume roadways that connect centers of population and employment and provide access to Michigan's highway network.
  - All-season Roads: KCRC has identified a portion of the primary road network that provides vital connections between population centers, areas of economic activity, and the state trunkline network. Consequently, this portion of KCRC's primary road network carries higher volumes of traffic and commercial activity.
- Local Roads: Local roads comprise 65 percent of KCRC's network, which includes over 1,000 paved road miles and nearly 311 unpaved (gravel) road miles. Kent County's 21 townships share costs with KCRC to fund local road improvements, so strategies are tailored to use available resources and meet specific township needs.

### Goals

- Provide for the orderly development and interconnection of motorized and non-motorized pathways.
- Maximize the efficiency, safety, and ease of maintenance of the vehicular transportation system and non-motorized pathway (i.e. bike path and sidewalk) system.
- Ensure road improvements promote growth in a way that improves public and private transit and is consistent with adopted goals and policies relating to land use and transportation.
- Ensure that existing roadways can handle future projected traffic volumes resulting from new development.

### Recommendations

- Encourage design and construction standards for private roads to ensure the possibility of converting private roads to public roads; where possible, coordinate private road development so that these roads may connect logically and efficiently with public road systems and adjacent private road systems.

- Encourage the construction of non-motorized pathways on major arterial streets.
- Coordinate with the Kent County Road Commission and adjacent municipalities regarding the funding, maintenance, and development of roads.
- Encourage property owners to improve existing driveway and private road designs.
- Review and ensure that setbacks for signs, parking, and buildings are adequate to avoid conflicts with roads or pathways.
- Establish zoning and subdivision regulations that institute access controls intended to reduce traffic conflicts along County Primary and Local Roads and thereby preserving their volume and function.
- Create access management provisions in the Zoning Ordinance for commercial and industrial development.
- Limit the number of access points along County Primary Roads by encouraging shared access for commercial establishments through site plan review and other means.
- Strengthen ordinance provisions to require developers to provide road easements for non-motorized pathways.
- Review and develop regulations to ensure that new roads (public and private) conform to County road standards.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: IMPLEMENTATION

### Introduction

In order for the Master Plan to serve as an effective guide for the continued development of Sparta Township, it must be implemented. Primary responsibility for implementing the plan rests with the Township Board, the Planning Commission, and the Township staff. This is done with a number of methods. These include ordinances, programs, policies, and administrative procedures.

This implementation must come from the decisions of the Township Board and Planning Commission to provide needed public improvements and to administer and establish regulatory measures related to the use of land.

The private sector, which includes individual landowners as well as developers, is also involved in fulfilling the recommendations of the Master Plan by the actual physical development of land and through the rezoning of land. The authority for this, however, comes from the Township. Cooperation and coordination among individuals, private developers, and public agencies is, therefore, important in successful implementation of the Master Plan.

### Zoning and Land Use Regulations

Zoning represents a legal means for the Township to regulate private property to achieve orderly land use relationships. Zoning is the process most commonly used to implement community plans. The zoning process consists of an official Zoning Map and accompanying Zoning Ordinance text. The official Zoning Map divides the community into different districts within which certain uses are allowed. The Zoning Ordinance text establishes permitted uses and regulations to control densities, height, bulk, setbacks, lot sizes and accessory uses, among other physical and linear attributes. The Zoning Ordinance also sets forth procedures for special approval provisions and regulates accessory structures such as signs. These measures permit the Township to control the quality as well as type of development.

The Planning Commission and Township Board should periodically review and make any necessary revisions to the zoning regulations based on the Strategies of this plan to ensure that the Goals and Recommendations of the Master Plan are instituted. Further, the Zoning Ordinance requires systematic and frequent updates to address needs resulting from changing trends, case law and state statutes.

### Relationship of Master Plan Classifications to Zoning Districts (Zoning Plan)

Complementing the text of the Master Plan is its map, which identifies land use classifications by which the Township organizes and intends future improvements and uses. These classification terms are intentionally general in nature so as to not necessarily be specific to one use or type of uses permitted by the Zoning Ordinance and its map. In other words, while the land use classifications are related to the Zoning Districts identified on the Zoning Ordinance map, as shown in the table below, specific future uses are determined by numerous natural and man-made features of the landscape such as public utilities, topography, soils, road improvements, surrounding uses, existing densities, and etcetera, as well as other planning considerations such as compatibility, public safety, access, and etcetera. Consequently, while the land use classifications of the Master Plan Map are designed to serve as a guide for future uses, they are not considered to be a mandate for immediate improvements, public, private, or otherwise.

Ultimately, while the Master Plan Map identifies areas for future uses, the feasibility of a proposed use is determined by the aforementioned, and the Zoning Ordinance with its regulations regarding height, area, bulk, location, etc. for each of its Zoning Districts.

Table of Master Plan Classification Terms & Zoning Ordinance Map District Terms

Master Plan Map Classification Terms	Zoning Ordinance Map Districts
Agricultural Preservation (AP)	Prime Agricultural Preservation (AG-1)
Rural Agriculture (RA)	Agricultural (AG-2)
Low Density Residential (LDR)	Low Density – Single Family (R-1), Medium Density – Single Family (R-2)
Medium High Density Residential (MHDR)	Medium-High Density – Multiple Family (R-3)
Mobile Home Park (MHP)	Medium-High Density – Mobile Home Park (R-4)
<b>Mixed Use Residential Commercial</b>	<u>To be created.</u>
Commercial (C)	General Commercial (C-1), Highway Commercial (C-2)
Commercial/Light Industrial (C/I)	Neighborhood Business District (C-1)
Industrial (I)	Light Industrial (I-1), Heavy Industrial (I-2)
Natural River Area (NR)	Rogue River Natural River Zone (RR)

#### Relationship of Master Plan Map Classification Terms to Master Plan Chapters

Several Chapters of this Master Plan identify the goals, recommendations, and strategies regarding future land uses within the Township. While the goals, recommendations, and strategies will likely always evolve, the intended uses related to the chapter titles will remain the same. Those chapter titles can generally be related to the Master Plan Map terms as provided in the table below.

Master Plan Map Classification Terms	Master Plan Chapters
Agricultural Preservation (AP)	Agricultural Uses
Rural Agriculture (RA)	Agricultural Uses/Residential Uses
Low Density Residential (LDR)	Residential Uses
Medium High Density Residential (MHDR)	Residential Uses/ Commercial Uses
Mobile Home Park (MHP)	Residential Uses
<b>Mixed Use Residential Commercial</b>	<u>Residential Uses/Commercial Uses</u>
Commercial (C)	Commercial Uses
Commercial/Light Industrial (C/I)	Commercial Uses/Industrial Uses
Industrial (I)	Industrial Uses
Natural River Area (NR)	Recreational Facilities and the Environment

## Master Plan Classification Terms

The following is a description of land use Classifications identified within this Master Plan.

### *Agricultural Preservation*

The Agricultural Preservation Classification is intended to preserve a vital component of the Sparta Township economy, and to preserve an irreplaceable resource in soils that are unique for fruit and other crops production.

This classification recognizes lands which are best suited for farming based on location, current utility served areas, soil type, parcel size, and active farm operations. This classification consists of agricultural land but provides opportunities for limited land divisions for the creation of non-farm dwellings, to preserve natural features, preserve rural character, and minimize encroachment of non-agricultural uses. Public water and sanitary sewer are not envisioned within this Classification.

### *Rural Agriculture*

The Rural Agriculture classified lands are intended to provide for residential development in a rural setting along with active agricultural uses. General farming activities will continue but are envisioned to be of less frequent occurrence than in the Agricultural Preservation classification. Farming activities may decline with the scope of the planning period.

Areas planned for Rural Agricultural already have an established pattern of residential land use. Rural Agricultural areas are designed to function as a transition from Agricultural Preservation areas to more intense land uses.

It may be appropriate to allow lands within the Rural Agriculture classification to be developed as open space neighborhoods. Open space neighborhoods are characterized by the clustering of residential dwelling units to a few select areas on a parcel while the remainder of the land would be set aside as permanent open space for use by residents. To appropriately act as a transition from Agricultural Preservation areas to more intense land uses, any residential development within the Rural Agricultural classification should be designed to buffer the residential land uses from nearby agricultural uses.

### *Low Density Residential (LDR)*

The Low Density Residential classification is intended primarily for single family houses in a subdivision or clustered housing setting. These lands are intended to be served by public water and sanitary sewer. Lot sizes will vary depending on the type of utility service provided.

Open space neighborhoods should be encouraged in Low Density Residential areas to help preserve rural views, wildlife habitat, and natural areas for recreation.

### *Medium High Density Residential (MHDR)*

The Medium High Density Residential Classification is intended to accommodate more dwelling units per acre than areas classified as Low Density Residential. These lands are intended to be served by public water

and sewer. Additionally, two-family, and multi-family dwelling units are envisioned as being a use by right in MHDR areas.

Planned Unit Developments and other similar residential or mixed residential/commercial developments should be encouraged in MHDR areas.

#### Mobile Home Park

Lands classified as Mobile Home Park are lands that are currently being used as mobile home parks. In order to provide for a balance in housing types, the Township has elected to establish a goal of maintaining a future housing mix of no more than 20% mobile homes located with mobile home parks as the maximum percentage of all dwellings in the Township.

In the event the Township grows at a faster rate than expected and the percentage of dwellings in mobile home parks falls to less than 20% of the total number of dwellings located with the Township, the Township will then look to amending the Master Plan to designated an additional site for mobile home park development.

#### Mixed-Use Residential Commercial

Mixed-Use Residential Commercial classified lands are intended to provide flexibility in development of the land south of the Village of Sparta, allowing for a variety of uses (single family dwellings, apartments, office, and commercial) within a single area. Emphasis should be placed on open space, village greens, sidewalks, and other design standards to help create a neighborhood. While these lands are identified to be just south of the Village of Sparta, other locations may be appropriate.

#### Commercial

Commercial classified lands are intended to serve the convenience shopping needs of Township residents and the traveling public, as well as provide an area for contractor services and office spaces. These uses typically generate large volumes of traffic and benefit from increased visibility and accessibility. Outdoor display and storage of goods are also common characteristics of uses in this land use classification, although design standards should be developed to manage the intensity, aesthetic, location, and environmental impact of such outdoor displays. Commercial planned areas should be designed to be automobile oriented and be served by adequately developed roads.

#### Commercial/Industrial

The Commercial/Industrial classification requires the development of a new zoning district. Commercial uses allowed within this area should not compete directly with uses in downtown Sparta or commercial uses elsewhere within the Village. Additionally, industrial uses that are not likely to generate a large amount of traffic but still need good year-round access to Class A roads would be appropriate in this area. Any commercial or industrial use that requires connection to public water or sanitary sewer should be located adjacent to the Village of Sparta.

The Commercial/Industrial area may be extended to a depth of 500 feet.

### Industrial

It is recognized that industrial development is important to the economy and tax base of the region. The areas designated for Industrial classification are located for easy access and where utilities are either available or are in the process of being established. It is intended that a request to rezone to the light industrial or heavy industrial zoning district will be evaluated on the basis of the availability of adequate infrastructure, compatibility with adjacent land uses, and the potential for danger or offense to nearby residents.

### Natural River Area

This land use classification recognizes the importance of protecting the Rogue River as well as the woodlands and wetlands in immediate association with the river. This area encompasses a strip of land 5400 feet wide on each side of the river as measured from the river's edge or ordinary high-water mark. The Natural River area as it exists in Sparta Township is a result of the State of Michigan naming the Rogue River as a natural river under the 1970 Natural River Act and other factors.

### Master Plan Map

On the following page is the Master Plan Map, which depicts the future desired land uses with the Township.

## Appendix

The following information can be found within the attached appendix:

- Selected Demographic Information
- Master Plan Survey Summary
- Informative Community Maps

# Sparta Township

## 2026 MASTER PLAN

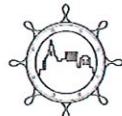
### Planning Commission:

Terry Hartman – Chairperson  
Tim Driscoll – Vice-Chairperson  
Linda Anderson – Secretary  
Don Doyle – Member  
Dale Flanery – Member  
Ken Humphreys – Member  
Barb Johnson – Member

### Board of Trustees:

Dale Bergman – Supervisor  
Marcy Savage – Clerk  
Ashley Johnson – Treasurer  
Jason Bradford – Trustee  
Bill Goodfellow – Trustee  
Barb Johnson – Trustee  
Rob Steffens – Trustee

### With Assistance By:



Fresh Coast Planning

Sparta Township – 160 E. Division Street

Sparta – Michigan – 49345

Kent County

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## INTRODUCTION & COMMUNITY PROFILE

### **Preface**

In accordance with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Act 33 of 2008, as amended, this Master Plan was created to serve as a guide for growth and development within Sparta Township (the “Township”). The Master Plan is a policy tool used by Township officials to coordinate growth and to serve as the basis for zoning. It guides the location and future arrangement of agricultural, industrial, residential, commercial, and recreational areas. These locations must consider a multitude of factors such as utilities and infrastructure, existing land use, physical characteristics of the land, traffic volumes and traffic routes, as well as environmental limitations.

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act specifically provides townships with the authority to prepare and officially adopt a master plan. The Township’s Master Plan functions as an official advisory policy statement for the orderly and efficient use of land. The Master Plan provides the coordination of land uses with other land uses, with streets, and with other necessary public infrastructure. The Master Plan also provides the legal and logical basis for local zoning, subdivision design, and public improvement plans, and for facilitating and guiding the work of the Sparta Township Planning Commission (the “Planning Commission”) and the Sparta Township Board (the “Township Board”). It is also a means of communicating to surrounding communities, private organizations, and individuals about how they need to relate their future development plans and building projects to the official plans of the Township.

Despite its purpose as a policy document, it is important to recognize that the Master Plan is general in scope. It is not always intended to establish the precise boundaries of land use areas or exact locations of future uses. Rather, the Master Plan is an organized approach to analyzing development issues and proposing strategies to address these issues. Its function is to guide growth, providing a framework to ensure that future detailed decisions for development can be made based on a community-wide perspective. Given that the needs and desires of the community change over time, the Master Plan must be regularly reviewed and periodically updated. The Master Plan projects more than twenty years into the future and must be revisited at least every five years to ensure its legitimacy.

### **Community**

Physical and environmental conditions establish limitations on how some areas of the Township will develop. The physical and environmental makeup of the Township influences the population, housing, economic, and labor force composition of the community. Given likely continued efforts to convert farmland to residential or commercial properties, demands will continue for additional infrastructure, yet also for the preservation of the natural environment. The Master Plan must therefore establish future residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and recreational areas within the Township in order to adequately address the needs of the community as a whole and prevent incompatible uses.

Sparta Township is located in northwest Kent County and is approximately 33.5 square miles in size. The Township is bounded on the north by 16-Mile Road, on the east by Division Avenue, on the south by Ten Mile Road, and on the west by Kenowa Avenue.

Sparta Township is a part of the Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area. According to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, as of July 1, 2024, the City of Grand Rapids is the fastest growing economy in the United States of America. This growth ripples through the region, creating demand for residential housing and

commercial development. Sparta Township is located approximately 16.5 miles or a 25-minute drive from the City of Grand Rapids. Primary access to and from Grand Rapids is via M-37, which traverses the Township in primarily a north-south direction.

Two natural characteristics that have played a major role in the development of the Township, both historically and today, are the Rogue River which lies in the eastern portion of the Township and the concentration of prime farmland soils in areas west of M-37 (the “Ridge”) and areas north of the Village of Sparta. The Rogue River and prime farmland soils have helped create a community with a rich agricultural and rural character. In order to protect the community’s agricultural and rural character, the Township has historically encouraged commercial and industrial development to be focused in the Village of Sparta; with residential development and some commercial development encouraged east of M-37, west of the Rogue River, and south of the Village of Sparta.

Other characteristics that play a significant role in the development of Sparta Township are M-37, the active rail line, and the Sparta Municipal Airport which lies in the southeast portion of the Township.

### **How to Use this Plan**

For each land use or related chapter, the Master Plan provides a purpose statement, general description of appropriate uses, and recommendations which form the basis for future development. The purpose statement, general description, and recommendations are designed as follows:

- Purpose Statement – Identifies the purpose and intent of the land use classification or community attribute.
- General Description of Appropriate Uses – Provides examples of uses that may be appropriate within each land use classification.
- Goals – Identifies the goals in list format for ease of use when reviewing land use and zoning ordinance amendment proposals.
- Recommendations – Provides recommendations on how the Township may help promote and create the desired future state of the land use as identified in the Purpose Statement.

## General Goals and Objectives of Land Use Policy in Sparta Township

The listed items below are the overarching goals and objectives of future land use development within the Township. They are intended as a way to tie the individual land use classifications and community attributes together and are used as part of the foundation for the creation of other content within this plan.

- Develop policies and regulations designed to protect and preserve the rural, agricultural, and natural assets of the community.
- Develop policies and regulations designed to encourage the concentration of development near the Village of Sparta.
- Develop policies that will increase residents' access to commercial services and goods within Sparta Township or the Village of Sparta.
- Ensure that the above listed policies are balanced to allow for continued residential growth while protecting the rural, agricultural, and natural assets of the community.
- Develop policies designed to preserve the agricultural look and feel of the community.
- Develop policies that will require new developments to be designed in such a way that they preserve or enhance the agricultural and rural character of the community.
- Develop policies that will preserve or enhance natural areas within the Township.

## Definition of Terms

Given the value of preserving agricultural and natural areas for the Sparta Township community, the following terms are recognized as defined below, in order to streamline the content of the Master Plan.

- *Rural Character* – is recognized as the natural features of the earth that minimize the visual exposure of buildings, structures, or other man-made features and which create scenic character. It is also recognized as the natural features of the earth that provide environmental buffers and/or habitat that is characteristic of the Township. Such features include:
  - Woods, woodlots, forest areas, and trees
  - Wetlands
  - Natural vegetation
  - Wildlife habitat
  - Natural field areas
  - Scenic vistas

Rural Character also includes farmland, which is recognized as part of the natural features that are organized and managed by people.

- *Open Space* – is recognized as areas of land unoccupied by buildings, structures, or other man-made features, that are preserved to be unoccupied by buildings, structures, or other man-made features within a project. Open Space is not intended to include displays of art or other cultural features; bridges, signage, utilities, and other essential service structures; or grade level features such as ponds.

## CHAPTER ONE: AGRICULTURAL USES

### Purpose Statement

Based on feedback received as part of the Master Plan community input survey conducted in early 2024, the preservation of natural areas and farmland is a top priority for the community. Given this, the primary intent and purpose of the Agricultural Land Use Classification is to protect prime agricultural areas based on farming best practices and farming operations.

The secondary intent and purpose of the Agricultural Land Use Classification is to protect and preserve Open Space and the Rural Character of the community.

### General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

The primary or principal uses intended for Agricultural lands are cropland, pastureland, rangeland, forest land, and other similar uses. Any other uses within agricultural lands should be designed to promote and facilitate the primary intended uses.

Any non-farm use should be located and designed so as to protect farmland and natural areas and the rural character of these lands. Further, non-farm uses should be directed to occur in areas that are classified as Rural Agriculture.

### Goals

- Preserve lands suitable for agricultural use in the Township and manage growth to minimize the encroachment of residential, commercial, and industrial uses into areas valued for agricultural purposes.
- Plan for and guide new development in a manner which preserves the most significant natural features in the Township, as well as the rural views and character.
- Preserve woodland and wetlands associated with farms which are valuable as water retention and groundwater recharge areas, and as a habitat for plant and animal life.
- Prevent dense residential or commercial developments west of M-37 to protect premature development and loss of farmland.
- Encourage accessory agritourism uses that support local farmers and growers by promoting individuals to visit the area and buy from local farmers and businesses.

### Recommendations

- Continue to support zoning regulations which restrict non-farm development in areas consisting primarily of prime farmland; in general, these areas consist mainly of those lands west of M-37.
- Develop zoning regulations which make lands which are less suitable for agriculture use more attractive to develop than prime agricultural land.
- Promote agriculture as a strong component of the local economic base.
- Periodically review zoning ordinance regulations to ensure they are not negatively impacting the safe, efficient, and financial feasibility of farming operations.
- Periodically review the Prime Agricultural Preservation, Agricultural, and other zoning districts to ensure the regulations complement each other and provide for the protection of farming, Open Space, and the orderly development of the community.

- Review and develop lot area, width, depth, and other regulations to ensure parcels are developed and oriented to protect the rural image and blend development with the natural landscape.
- Encourage soil conservation practices, the prudent use of fertilizers and pesticides and other means of conserving wildlife habitats, wetlands, and woodlands.
- Consider adopting regulations which require the preservation of a natural vegetation filtration strip along lakes, rivers, and streams.
- Review and develop regulations to accommodate and protect wildlife corridors.
- Periodically review the zoning ordinance to ensure that the number and location of new dwellings permitted to be built within Agricultural lands reflects the community's priorities.
- Periodically review zoning ordinance provisions pertaining to "value-added" opportunities in the Agricultural District, to ensure that regulations are current, consistent across uses, and support activities such as farm markets, processing of products for food or beverage, recreation and tourism, and other agricultural enterprises.

## CHAPTER TWO: RESIDENTIAL USES

### Purpose Statement

The primary intent and purpose of residential land uses is to provide people with a range of residential living styles that provide individuals and families with the opportunity to live in a way that meets their needs and desires in a manner that is safe, affordable, and enhances a sense of community.

Further, in recognizing the high demand for housing in Western Michigan and the importance of residential growth in supporting the local economy, the Township encourages limited residential growth in appropriate areas of the Township.

Where the preservation of prime agricultural lands conflicts with the development of new housing developments, the goal of preserving prime agricultural land should generally prevail.

### General Description of Appropriate Land Use

Residential land uses vary in terms of densities and intensity of land use. The denser a residential land use is, the more intense its use of the land and the land's resources. As such, denser residential uses such as apartments, multi-family housing, and residential developments with densities greater than one unit per acre should be located where public utilities and infrastructure are available, with less dense residential uses being located in areas that are not near public utilities and private well and septic systems are able to be safely installed, used and maintained.

### Goals

- To create attractive, safe, and convenient residential environments.
- Provide for a variety of housing opportunities near schools, parks, utilities, and other facilities determined desirable or necessary for community involvement.
- Provide housing for a variety of income levels and needs.
- Limit mobile homes located within mobile home parks to 20% of the total number of dwelling units within the Township, to ensure a balance in housing types.
- Direct residential development to occur east of M-37 and west of the Rogue River in areas that are able to connect to public utilities and services.
- Discourage residential development in areas with Prime Farmland Soils.
- Ensure that new housing developments are constructed and designed in such a way that preserves and enhances the rural and agricultural character of the community.
- Ensure that residential land uses are organized in such a way that they are harmonious with agricultural areas, natural areas, and the existing character of the surrounding area.
- Ensure the preservation of open space, wildlife habitats, and recreation opportunities.

### Recommendations

- Develop standards to encourage that the highest concentrations of residential development be located where the greatest potential exists for public utilities and services.
- Establish density limits with ranges or variations that are consistent with the natural capacity of soils to handle on-site septic systems, and which promote the preservation of the Township's natural resources and rural and suburban qualities.

- Establish development design standards that utilize small lot, cluster development where appropriate and which require that open space and existing roadside views be preserved.
- Develop incentives that require creative design of residential developments to set aside suitable portions of land for the preservation of natural features, open space accessible to all people, neighborhood parks, and road easements for non-motorized paths.
- Establish landscaping guidelines for existing and future residential development.
- Develop a mixed use residential/commercial zoning district that will apply to lands located south of the Village as identified on the Master Plan Map.
- Develop standards to encourage interconnectivity with existing sidewalks, non-motorized paths, open space, and parks.
- Encourage development layouts that blend with the natural features and existing physical attributes.
- Review and develop standards to encourage, where appropriate, light pollution regulations to preserve the night sky.
- Review and develop regulations to accommodate and protect wildlife corridors.
- Coordinate with the Village of Sparta to encourage new residential developments with densities greater than one unit per acre to connect to public water, sanitary sewer, stormwater services, and existing motorized and non-motorized transportation infrastructure.
- Periodically review standards for residential development in agricultural areas to ensure residential uses are compatible with existing and future agricultural uses.
- Review minimum dwelling requirements to ensure that the Township allows for a variety of housing styles and methods of construction where appropriate.
- In coordination with the Commercial goals of this plan, create a Mixed-Use Residential Commercial District.

## CHAPTER THREE: COMMERCIAL USES

### Purpose Statement

The intent and purpose of commercial uses is to provide residents and visitors with the goods and services they need or want. The purpose of commercial areas within the Township is to encourage diversified businesses that offer people a variety of goods and services in convenient locations.

### General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

Ranging from grocery stores and gas stations to restaurants and automotive repair facilities, there are a variety of appropriate local commercial uses that can provide goods and services to individuals. Recognizing that different commercial uses place varying levels of demand on public infrastructure (roads and utilities), more intense commercial land uses should be designed and located in areas where the appropriate public infrastructure exists.

### Goals

- Identify and provide for the service and shopping needs of the Township's residents and visitors in suitable locations which will provide a safe and efficient traffic circulation pattern.
- Work with the Village of Sparta to ensure a unified commercial district that reflects a high quality of development along Sparta Avenue.
- Encourage the development of a variety of commercial uses.

### Recommendations

- Develop a Commercial/Industrial zoning district that will apply to lands adjacent to portions of Sparta Avenue south of the Village of Sparta.
- Develop a mixed use residential/commercial zoning district that will apply to lands south of the Village as identified on the Master Plan Map.
- In order to minimize traffic congestion and hazards, develop regulations which require the shared use of commercial driveways and access roads, limit the number and spacing of driveways, and encourage the use of frontage roads or service drives.
- Review and develop regulations for setbacks, landscaping, architectural features and designs, and performance standards into the Township Zoning Ordinance that will achieve a high standard for commercial development which is aesthetically appealing, and which operates in a safe and efficient manner.
- Review regulations for pedestrian access in order to ensure safe and orderly pedestrian access to commercial sites.
- Review allowed uses, setbacks, and other regulations between commercial districts to ensure a clear distinction between districts.
- Review existing provisions and investigate the development of zoning provisions that would allow for the development of mixed uses.
- Require that development layouts blend with natural features and existing physical attributes.
- Encourage the preservation of trees and other existing natural features.
- Encourage wildlife corridors within developments.
- Nuisances such as air pollution, water pollution, vibration, noise, and outdoor storage of materials should be controlled by adequate site improvements.

- Encourage architectural features that enhance and preserve the rural and agricultural character of the community.
- In coordination with the Residential goals of this plan, create a Mixed-Use Residential Commercial District.

## CHAPTER FOUR: INDUSTRIAL USES

### Purpose Statement

Industrial uses may produce odors, smoke, noise, traffic, and other similar byproducts that can be disruptive to the health, welfare, and safety of individuals. As such, the primary intent and purpose of the industrial land use classification is to identify uses that may negatively impact nearby properties and provide appropriate locations for industrial uses.

Additionally, industrial uses can play a vital role in a community's economy by providing jobs, offering opportunities to diversify the local economy, and creating a ripple effect that can extend to existing local, regional, and state businesses. As such, the secondary intent of the industrial land use classification is to capitalize on the positive impacts that industrial uses can have.

### General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

Industrial uses provide for the manufacturing, assembly, processing, packaging, storage and distribution of products and materials.

### Goals

- Provide for a variety of industrial development in areas served by adequate transportation systems and which are or will potentially be served by public utilities and services.
- Achieve high quality industrial development through appropriate zoning and performance requirements, while expanding economic opportunities to industrial developers.
- Separate industrial uses from less intense land uses such as residential through appropriate use of buffer strips, landscaping, open space, or transitional land uses.
- Protect and preserve, to the extent practicable, those elements which contribute to the rural character of the Township including woodlands, wetlands, wildlife habitats, farms, pastures, fields, open spaces and other natural areas, particularly those that are useful as water retention and ground water discharge areas and have important aesthetic and scenic value
- Preserve the natural resources and groundwater quality of the Township.

### Recommendations

- Encourage the extension of public utilities and services to those areas identified as desirable for industrial development.
- Work with local and regional economic development agencies to attract and retain desirable manufacturing, processing, or technological operations to the Sparta area.
- Develop a Commercial/Industrial zoning district that will apply to lands adjacent to portions of Sparta Avenue south of the Village of Sparta.
- Review and develop landscaping guidelines for existing and industrial development.
- Differentiate between light and heavy industrial uses, what utilities are necessary for each, what transportation infrastructure is necessary for each, and develop standards to ensure they are properly located.
- Engage with local farmers and business owners to determine what, if any, industrial uses would be beneficial to their existing operations.
- Review and evaluate the Zoning Ordinance to ensure that existing regulations are encouraging industrial uses to develop in a way that is consistent with the goals of the Master Plan.

- Require that development layouts blend with natural features and existing physical attributes.
- Encourage the preservation of trees and other existing natural features.
- Encourage wildlife corridors within developments.
- Develop standards to ensure that industrial nuisances such as air pollution, water pollution, vibration, noise, and outdoor storage of materials are controlled by adequate site improvements.
- Encourage architectural features that enhance and preserve the rural and agricultural character of the community.

## CHAPTER FIVE: RECREATIONAL FACILITIES & THE ENVIRONMENT

### Purpose Statement

Recreational facilities, both public and private, are vital components of a community. Recreational facilities create shared spaces which allow space to be used economically and provide opportunities for individuals to connect with their neighbors and the outdoors.

Further, based on the feedback received from the 2024 Master Plan Survey, the preservation of natural areas is a top priority for the community. These natural areas provide an essential element which both enhances and protects the quality of life in Sparta Township. Availability and access to recreational facilities and natural areas can increase an individual's overall health and welfare, among other benefits.

### General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

Recreational facilities can take many forms. They can be natural areas (such as lakes and woodlands) or developed spaces (such as playgrounds), or a mix of natural areas and developed spaces. The following list identifies some types of developed spaces and natural areas, but is by no means exhaustive: trails, buffers, playgrounds, sports fields, pools, lakes and other bodies of water, beaches, picnic areas, forested areas and many more.

### Goals

- Plan for and develop active and passive outdoor recreation facilities to meet the needs of existing and future residents of the Township.
- Encourage the development of recreational facilities and areas to ensure that all residents have convenient access to recreational opportunities.
- Encourage interconnection between recreational facilities.
- Create and preserve public access to bodies of water and other natural areas in the Township.
- Preserve and enhance access to safe drinking water from groundwater sources.
- Preserve the aesthetics (views, serenity, rural nature, etc.) available in the Township.

### Recommendations

- Work with developers to set aside suitable portions of land for neighborhood parks, and road easements for pedestrian/bicycle paths.
- Review and develop regulations that require developments (residential, commercial, and industrial) to include new pathways and other recreational amenities.
- Review and strengthen ordinance provisions to reduce flooding, control runoff, and improve water quality of all bodies of water in the Township.
- Develop a Recreation Plan for the Township.
- Maximize the utilization of public buildings and grounds for multi-functional services.
- Coordinate with the Village of Sparta, Kent County, and other nearby communities to ensure that a variety of recreational activities are developed and accessible to area residents.
- Coordinate with local, regional, and state agencies and officials to identify environmentally sensitive areas.
- Review and (as necessary) amend policies and overlay districts related to decision making and development in environmentally sensitive areas.

## CHAPTER SIX: UTILITIES AND FACILITIES

### Purpose Statement

Utilities provide essential services such as heat, power, potable water, waste disposal, and communications to individuals and organizations. Many utilities such as electricity, natural gas, internet, television, telephone and trash disposal are often provided by quasi-public or private companies. However, other utilities such as water, storm sewer, and sanitary sewer are often provided by municipalities or other public organizations.

In order for individuals to have the opportunity to live the highest quality of life, a township must work with both private and public organizations to build, maintain, and strengthen the facilities and infrastructures that provide these essential services to its community members.

Lastly, when utilities are expanded and strengthened, they can provide economic development opportunities for the community by providing the services necessary to support a more diverse range of commercial and industrial uses.

### General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

Sparta Township currently does not provide any public utilities. As the necessary infrastructure can be prohibitively expensive to construct, the Township will need to coordinate with nearby municipalities to extend and strengthen their existing facilities and infrastructures to serve appropriate areas of the community.

Further, more intensive land uses such as residential developments greater than one unit per acre, restaurants, food processing plants and other uses that have a high demand for water and sanitary sewer should be located in areas where they are able to connect to existing utility systems. This allows for the orderly development of utilities and aids in their long-term sustainability.

The development of utilities should be done in conjunction with the development of roads and other transportation methods.

### Goals

- Provide for adequate infrastructure that will ensure balanced, orderly growth and ensure the safety and well-being of Township residents.
- Maintain an adequate level of community facilities and services that will ensure the safety, quality of life, and education of present and future Township residents.
- Develop adequate utilities that will ensure balanced, orderly growth and protect the safety and well-being of Township residents.
- Protect existing wells and access to potable water.

### Recommendations

- Create a sub-area plan for Sparta Avenue, south of the Village of Sparta, and create a Zoning Overlay District to ensure that future development occurs in a manner that is consistent with the goals of the Master Plan.
- Limit higher densities of development to areas where future public utilities and services can be most economically and efficiently provided.

- Coordinate with the Village of Sparta to establish a Growth Management Plan that reflects a mutually agreed upon phasing for growth and development of residential, commercial, and industrial services and the public water, sanitary sewer, and stormwater services necessary to support the growth.
- Require residential development proposals denser than one unit per acre to construct public utilities where feasible.
- For all types of development, work with County and State officials to enforce acceptable standards and best practices regarding the construction of private water and sanitary sewer systems.
- Coordinate with the Village of Sparta and Sparta Fire and Rescue to ensure that all types of development occur in a manner that is safe and efficient.
- Encourage funding practices for improvements to public utilities that, to the extent possible, appropriately place the cost of utilities on users.
- Design incentives to encourage private investment in public water and/or sewer expansion.
- Encourage the extension of natural gas lines into the Township to provide more cost-effective sources of energy.
- Encourage the extension of services to provide one hundred percent accessibility to the internet.
- Prepare capital improvement plans for things such as roads, parks and recreation, utilities, and other improvements.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: TRANSPORTATION

### Purpose Statement

The road system within the Township serves as one of the backbones for growth and development. By providing a means for internal and external traffic circulation, the road system within the Township influences the shape and intensity of land use.

The road system is limited by the natural features, which pose a significant impediment to convenient traffic movement throughout the community. In many cases, hilly terrain, lakes, wetlands, ravines, and rivers have dictated the locations of roads and in some cases have resulted in the disruption of roads that would have otherwise been constructed in a complete grid pattern. Nevertheless, the Township is generally well served by a primary system of roadways that operate at varying levels of service.

### General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

For planning purposes, it is useful to recognize that the various roads within the Township can have distinct functions. An understanding of these functions can lead to decisions as to the desirable use of each road segment, road right-of-way widths, building setbacks, and adjoining land use. In its 2021 Strategic Plan, the Kent County Road Commission (KCRC) categorizes roads as follows:

- Primary Roads: Primary roads are generally the County's longer-distance, higher-volume roadways that connect centers of population and employment and provide access to Michigan's highway network.
  - All-season Roads: KCRC has identified a portion of the primary road network that provides vital connections between population centers, areas of economic activity, and the state trunkline network. Consequently, this portion of KCRC's primary road network carries higher volumes of traffic and commercial activity.
- Local Roads: Local roads comprise 65 percent of KCRC's network, which includes over 1,000 paved road miles and nearly 311 unpaved (gravel) road miles. Kent County's 21 townships share costs with KCRC to fund local road improvements, so strategies are tailored to use available resources and meet specific township needs.

### Goals

- Provide for the orderly development and interconnection of motorized and non-motorized pathways.
- Maximize the efficiency, safety, and ease of maintenance of the vehicular transportation system and non-motorized pathway (i.e. bike path and sidewalk) system.
- Ensure road improvements promote growth in a way that improves public and private transit and is consistent with adopted goals and policies relating to land use and transportation.
- Ensure that existing roadways can handle future projected traffic volumes resulting from new development.

### Recommendations

- Encourage design and construction standards for private roads to ensure the possibility of converting private roads to public roads; where possible, coordinate private road development so that these roads may connect logically and efficiently with public road systems and adjacent private road systems.

- Encourage the construction of non-motorized pathways on major arterial streets.
- Coordinate with the Kent County Road Commission and adjacent municipalities regarding the funding, maintenance, and development of roads.
- Encourage property owners to improve existing driveway and private road designs.
- Review and ensure that setbacks for signs, parking, and buildings are adequate to avoid conflicts with roads or pathways.
- Establish zoning and subdivision regulations that institute access controls intended to reduce traffic conflicts along County Primary and Local Roads and thereby preserving their volume and function.
- Create access management provisions in the Zoning Ordinance for commercial and industrial development.
- Limit the number of access points along County Primary Roads by encouraging shared access for commercial establishments through site plan review and other means.
- Strengthen ordinance provisions to require developers to provide road easements for non-motorized pathways.
- Review and develop regulations to ensure that new roads (public and private) conform to County road standards.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: IMPLEMENTATION

### Introduction

In order for the Master Plan to serve as an effective guide for the continued development of Sparta Township, it must be implemented. Primary responsibility for implementing the plan rests with the Township Board, the Planning Commission, and the Township staff. This is done with a number of methods. These include ordinances, programs, policies, and administrative procedures.

This implementation must come from the decisions of the Township Board and Planning Commission to provide needed public improvements and to administer and establish regulatory measures related to the use of land.

The private sector, which includes individual landowners as well as developers, is also involved in fulfilling the recommendations of the Master Plan by the actual physical development of land and through the rezoning of land. The authority for this, however, comes from the Township. Cooperation and coordination among individuals, private developers, and public agencies is, therefore, important in successful implementation of the Master Plan.

### Zoning and Land Use Regulations

Zoning represents a legal means for the Township to regulate private property to achieve orderly land use relationships. Zoning is the process most commonly used to implement community plans. The zoning process consists of an official Zoning Map and accompanying Zoning Ordinance text. The official Zoning Map divides the community into different districts within which certain uses are allowed. The Zoning Ordinance text establishes permitted uses and regulations to control densities, height, bulk, setbacks, lot sizes and accessory uses, among other physical and linear attributes. The Zoning Ordinance also sets forth procedures for special approval provisions and regulates accessory structures such as signs. These measures permit the Township to control the quality as well as type of development.

The Planning Commission and Township Board should periodically review and make any necessary revisions to the zoning regulations based on the Strategies of this plan to ensure that the Goals and Recommendations of the Master Plan are instituted. Further, the Zoning Ordinance requires systematic and frequent updates to address needs resulting from changing trends, case law and state statutes.

### Relationship of Master Plan Classifications to Zoning Districts (Zoning Plan)

Complementing the text of the Master Plan is its map, which identifies land use classifications by which the Township organizes and intends future improvements and uses. These classification terms are intentionally general in nature so as to not necessarily be specific to one use or type of uses permitted by the Zoning Ordinance and its map. In other words, while the land use classifications are related to the Zoning Districts identified on the Zoning Ordinance map, as shown in the table below, specific future uses are determined by numerous natural and man-made features of the landscape such as public utilities, topography, soils, road improvements, surrounding uses, existing densities, and etcetera, as well as other planning considerations such as compatibility, public safety, access, and etcetera. Consequently, while the land use classifications of the Master Plan Map are designed to serve as a guide for future uses, they are not considered to be a mandate for immediate improvements, public, private, or otherwise.

Ultimately, while the Master Plan Map identifies areas for future uses, the feasibility of a proposed use is determined by the aforementioned, and the Zoning Ordinance with its regulations regarding height, area, bulk, location, etc. for each of its Zoning Districts.

Table of Master Plan Classification Terms & Zoning Ordinance Map District Terms

Master Plan Map Classification Terms	Zoning Ordinance Map Districts
Agricultural Preservation (AP)	Prime Agricultural Preservation (AG-1)
Rural Agriculture (RA)	Agricultural (AG-2)
Low Density Residential (LDR)	Low Density – Single Family (R-1), Medium Density – Single Family (R-2)
Medium High Density Residential (MHDR)	Medium-High Density – Multiple Family (R-3)
Mobile Home Park (MHP)	Medium-High Density – Mobile Home Park (R-4)
Mixed Use Residential Commercial	To be created.
Commercial (C)	General Commercial (C-1), Highway Commercial (C-2)
Commercial/Light Industrial (C/I)	Neighborhood Business District (C-1)
Industrial (I)	Light Industrial (I-1), Heavy Industrial (I-2)
Natural River Area (NR)	Rogue River Natural River Zone (RR)

#### Relationship of Master Plan Map Classification Terms to Master Plan Chapters

Several Chapters of this Master Plan identify the goals, recommendations, and strategies regarding future land uses within the Township. While the goals, recommendations, and strategies will likely always evolve, the intended uses related to the chapter titles will remain the same. Those chapter titles can generally be related to the Master Plan Map terms as provided in the table below.

Master Plan Map Classification Terms	Master Plan Chapters
Agricultural Preservation (AP)	Agricultural Uses
Rural Agriculture (RA)	Agricultural Uses/Residential Uses
Low Density Residential (LDR)	Residential Uses
Medium High Density Residential (MHDR)	Residential Uses/ Commercial Uses
Mobile Home Park (MHP)	Residential Uses
Mixed Use Residential Commercial	Residential Uses/Commercial Uses
Commercial (C)	Commercial Uses
Commercial/Light Industrial (C/I)	Commercial Uses/Industrial Uses
Industrial (I)	Industrial Uses
Natural River Area (NR)	Recreational Facilities and the Environment

## **Master Plan Classification Terms**

The following is a description of land use Classifications identified within this Master Plan.

### **Agricultural Preservation**

The Agricultural Preservation Classification is intended to preserve a vital component of the Sparta Township economy, and to preserve an irreplaceable resource in soils that are unique for fruit and other crops production.

This classification recognizes lands which are best suited for farming based on location, current utility served areas, soil type, parcel size, and active farm operations. This classification consists of agricultural land but provides opportunities for limited land divisions for the creation of non-farm dwellings, to preserve natural features, preserve rural character, and minimize encroachment of non-agricultural uses. Public water and sanitary sewer are not envisioned within this Classification.

### **Rural Agriculture**

The Rural Agriculture classified lands are intended to provide for residential development in a rural setting along with active agricultural uses. General farming activities will continue but are envisioned to be of less frequent occurrence than in the Agricultural Preservation classification. Farming activities may decline with the scope of the planning period.

Areas planned for Rural Agricultural already have an established pattern of residential land use. Rural Agricultural areas are designed to function as a transition from Agricultural Preservation areas to more intense land uses.

It may be appropriate to allow lands within the Rural Agriculture classification to be developed as open space neighborhoods. Open space neighborhoods are characterized by the clustering of residential dwelling units to a few select areas on a parcel while the remainder of the land would be set aside as permanent open space for use by residents. To appropriately act as a transition from Agricultural Preservation areas to more intense land uses, any residential development within the Rural Agricultural classification should be designed to buffer the residential land uses from nearby agricultural uses.

### **Low Density Residential (LDR)**

The Low Density Residential classification is intended primarily for single family houses in a subdivision or clustered housing setting. These lands are intended to be served by public water and sanitary sewer. Lot sizes will vary depending on the type of utility service provided.

Open space neighborhoods should be encouraged in Low Density Residential areas to help preserve rural views, wildlife habitat, and natural areas for recreation.

### **Medium High Density Residential (MHDR)**

The Medium High Density Residential Classification is intended to accommodate more dwelling units per acre than areas classified as Low Density Residential. These lands are intended to be served by public water

and sewer. Additionally, two-family, and multi-family dwelling units are envisioned as being a use by right in MHDR areas.

Planned Unit Developments and other similar residential or mixed residential/commercial developments should be encouraged in MHDR areas.

#### Mobile Home Park

Lands classified as Mobile Home Park are lands that are currently being used as mobile home parks. In order to provide for a balance in housing types, the Township has elected to establish a goal of maintaining a future housing mix of no more than 20% mobile homes located with mobile home parks as the maximum percentage of all dwellings in the Township.

In the event the Township grows at a faster rate than expected and the percentage of dwellings in mobile home parks falls to less than 20% of the total number of dwellings located with the Township, the Township will then look to amending the Master Plan to designated an additional site for mobile home park development.

#### Mixed-Use Residential Commercial

Mixed-Use Residential Commercial classified lands are intended to provide flexibility in development of the land south of the Village of Sparta, allowing for a variety of uses (single family dwellings, apartments, office, and commercial) within a single area. Emphasis should be placed on open space, village greens, sidewalks, and other design standards to help create a neighborhood. While these lands are identified to be just south of the Village of Sparta, other locations may be appropriate.

#### Commercial

Commercial classified lands are intended to serve the convenience shopping needs of Township residents and the traveling public, as well as provide an area for contractor services and office spaces. These uses typically generate large volumes of traffic and benefit from increased visibility and accessibility. Outdoor display and storage of goods are also common characteristics of uses in this land use classification, although design standards should be developed to manage the intensity, aesthetic, location, and environmental impact of such outdoor displays. Commercial planned areas should be designed to be automobile oriented and be served by adequately developed roads.

#### Commercial/Industrial

The Commercial/Industrial classification requires the development of a new zoning district. Commercial uses allowed within this area should not compete directly with uses in downtown Sparta or commercial uses elsewhere within the Village. Additionally, industrial uses that are not likely to generate a large amount of traffic but still need good year-round access to Class A roads would be appropriate in this area. Any commercial or industrial use that requires connection to public water or sanitary sewer should be located adjacent to the Village of Sparta.

The Commercial/Industrial area may be extended to a depth of 500 feet.

#### Industrial

It is recognized that industrial development is important to the economy and tax base of the region. The areas designated for Industrial classification are located for easy access and where utilities are either available or are in the process of being established. It is intended that a request to rezone to the light industrial or heavy industrial zoning district will be evaluated on the basis of the availability of adequate infrastructure, compatibility with adjacent land uses, and the potential for danger or offense to nearby residents.

#### Natural River Area

This land use classification recognizes the importance of protecting the Rogue River as well as the woodlands and wetlands in immediate association with the river. This area encompasses a strip of land 400 feet wide on each side of the river as measured from the river's edge or ordinary high-water mark. The Natural River area as it exists in Sparta Township is a result of the State of Michigan naming the Rogue River as a natural river under the 1970 Natural River Act and other factors.

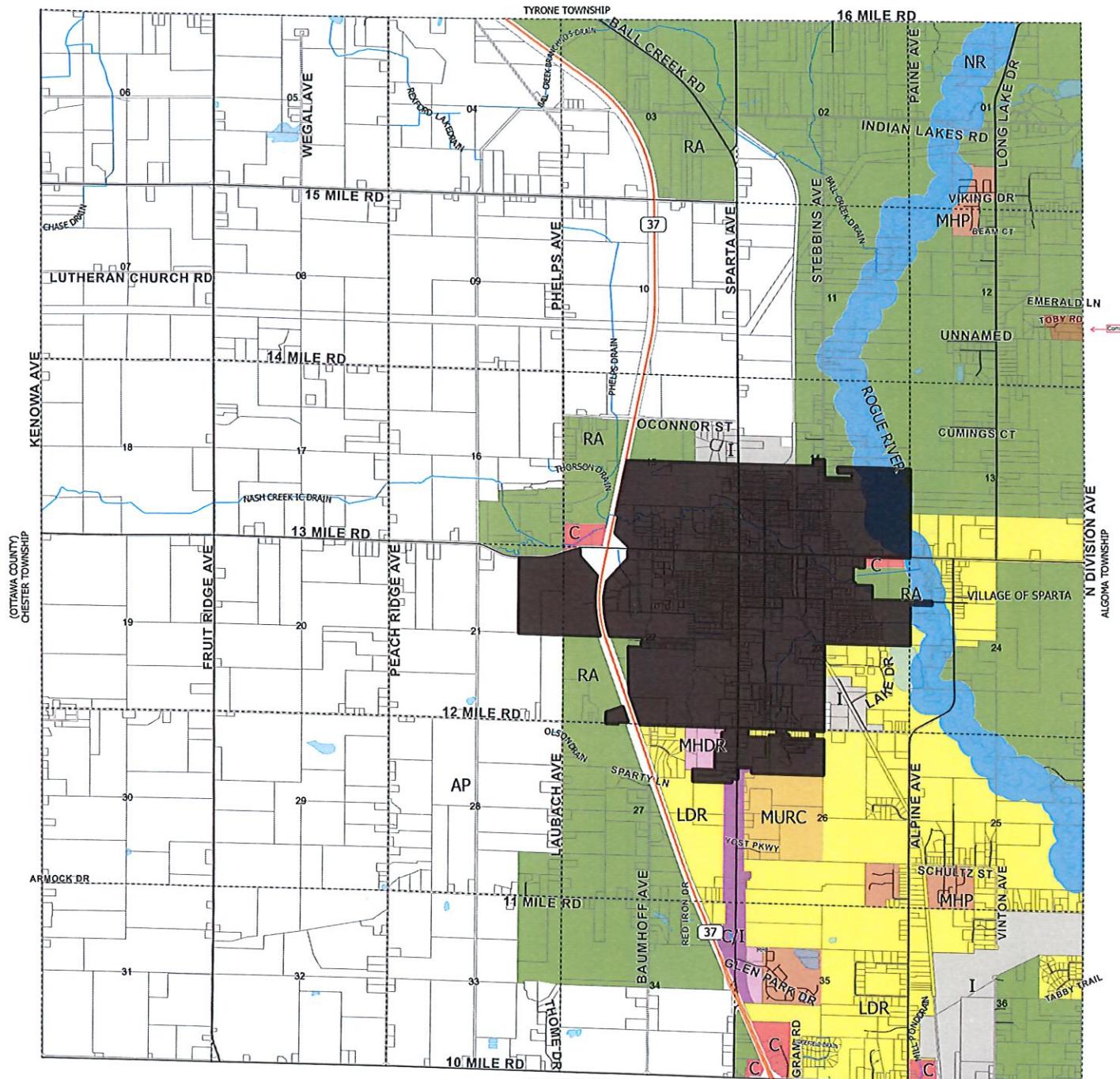
#### Master Plan Map

On the following page is the Master Plan Map, which depicts the future desired land uses with the Township.

## Appendix

The following information can be found within the attached appendix:

- Selected Demographic Information
- Master Plan Survey Summary
- Informative Community Maps



## Appendix

The following information can be found within the appendix:

- Selected Demographic Information
- Master Plan Survey Summary
- Informative Community Maps

Sparta Township, MI

# Selected Demographic Information

Fresh Coast Planning  
1-23-2025

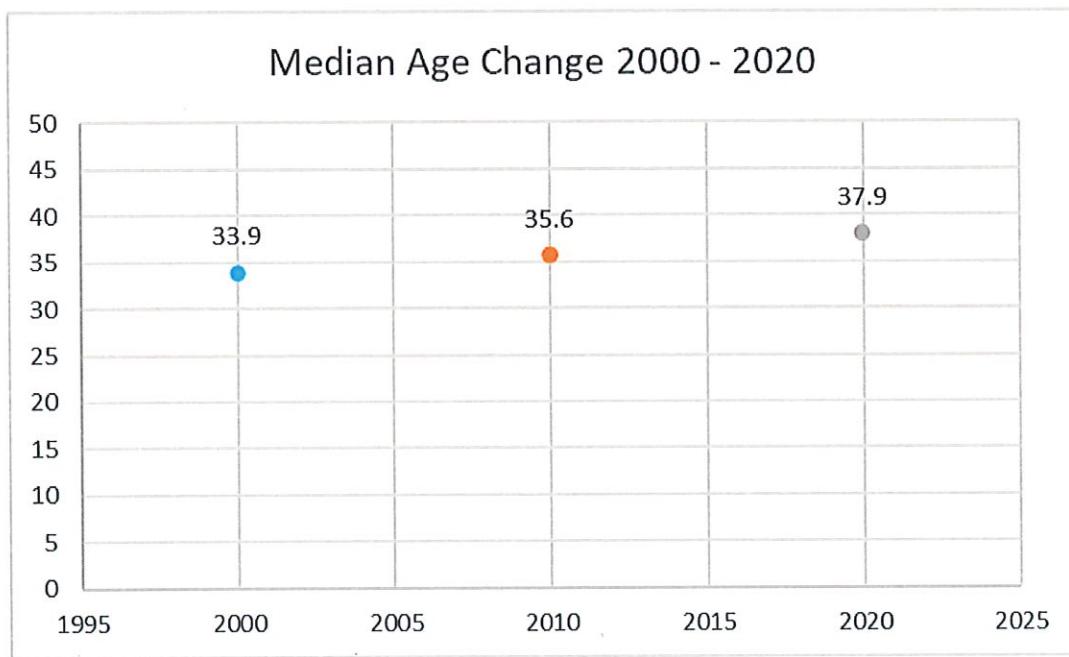
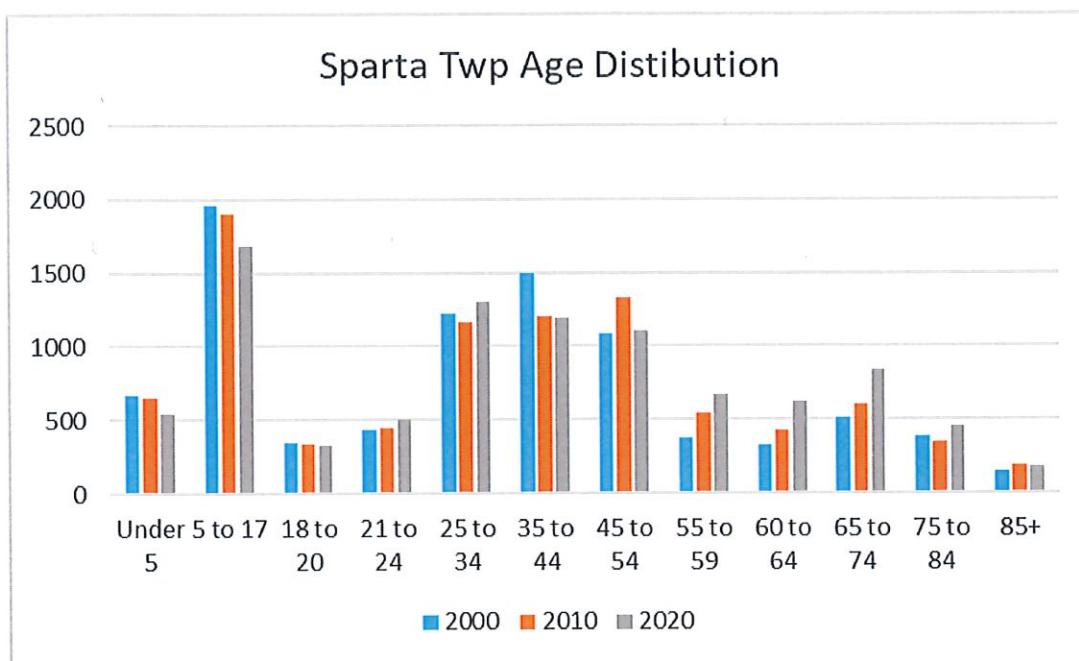
## Summary

The following demographic data was gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau. The data presented in this report was gathered from Decennial Censuses (Census) and the American Community Survey (ACS). As described by the U.S. Census Bureau *"The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing survey that provides vital information on a yearly basis about our nation and its people."* If you have any questions about the Census or ACS, please let us know.

Based on our review of the data provided below, Sparta Township appears to be doing well in regards to many of the demographic metrics provided. However, it also appears that Sparta Township has a much higher level of unemployment than surrounding communities. The Township may want to work with regional partners to develop strategies to provide more job opportunities for Sparta residents.

Population Growth 2000 - 2020							
	2000	Δ %	Δ #	2010	Δ %	Δ #	2020
Kent County	574,335	4.93%	28,287	602,622	9.19%	55,352	657,974
<b>Sparta Township</b>	<b>8,938</b>	<b>1.92%</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>9,110</b>	<b>3.13%</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>9,395</b>
<i>Sparta Village</i>	4,159	-0.46%	(19)	4,140	2.51%	104	4,244
Tyrone Township	4,304	9.92%	427	4,731	6.13%	290	5,021
<i>Kent City Village</i>	1,061	-0.38%	(4)	1,057	19.39%	205	1,262
Solon Township	4,662	28.14%	1,312	5,974	8.74%	522	6,496
Algoma Township	7,596	30.75%	2,336	9,932	21.38%	2,123	12,055
Plainfield Township	30,195	2.51%	757	30,952	8.35%	2,583	33,535
Alpine Township	13,976	-4.58%	(640)	13,336	5.57%	743	14,079
Ottawa County	238,314	10.69%	25,487	263,801	12.28%	32,399	296,200
Wright Township	3,286	-4.23%	(139)	3,147	1.37%	43	3,190
Chester Township	2,315	-12.87%	(298)	2,017	3.92%	79	2,096
Mukwonago County	170,200	1.17%	1,988	172,188	2.11%	3,636	175,824
Casnovia Township	2,652	5.77%	153	2,805	-0.43%	(12)	2,793
<i>Casnovia Village</i>	315	1.27%	4	319	-0.94%	(3)	316

Sparta Township Age Distribution and Median Age													
Under 5	5 to 17	18 to 20	21 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 59	60 to 64	65 to 74	75 to 84	85+	Median Age	
2000	669	1964	343	430	1224	1495	1082	371	326	512	379	143	33.9
2010	652	1899	335	442	1160	1202	1327	541	426	601	342	183	35.6
2020	546	1680	322	500	1303	1188	1100	673	619	838	449	177	37.9



Median Age Comparison			
	2000	2010	2020
<u>Kent County</u>	32.5	34.4	35.5
<b>Sparta Township</b>	<b>33.9</b>	<b>35.6</b>	<b>37.9</b>
<i>Sparta Village</i>	31.5	34	36.3
Tyrone Township	32.5	34.9	35.2
<i>Kent City Village</i>	28.1	30.6	29.8
Solon Township	35.4	37.5	40.1
Algoma Township	35.3	38.6	38.8
Plainfiled Township	35.1	39.7	41.4
Alpine Township	29	32.6	34.0
Ottawa County	32.3	34.5	36.1
Wright Township	35.6	39.8	40.2
Chester Township	34.6	41.3	40.9
<u>Mukegon County</u>	35.5	38.2	40.4
Casnovia Township	32.8	35.5	38.3
<i>Casnovia Village</i>	N/A	N/A	38.3

Total Housing Unit Comparison							
	2000	Δ %	Δ #	2010	Δ %	Δ #	2020
<u>Kent County</u>	224,000	10.22%	22,901	246,901	7.33%	18,101	265,002
<b>Sparta Township</b>	<b>3,449</b>	<b>5.45%</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>3,637</b>	<b>3.41%</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>3,761</b>
<i>Sparta Village</i>	1,704	4.58%	78	1,782	2.08%	37	1,819
Tyrone Township	1,503	13.84%	208	1,711	5.32%	91	1,802
<i>Kent City Village</i>	392	3.83%	15	407	12.04%	49	456
Solon Township	1,778	33.30%	592	2,370	7.13%	169	2,539
Algoma Township	2,692	32.28%	869	3,561	22.89%	815	4,376
Plainfiled Township	11,456	9.59%	1,099	12,555	8.71%	1,094	13,649
Alpine Township	5,830	1.37%	80	5,910	2.52%	149	6,059
Ottawa County	86,856	18.01%	15,639	102,495	11.54%	11,823	114,318
Wright Township	1,082	9.06%	98	1,180	2.97%	35	1,215
Chester Township	793	3.40%	27	820	0.37%	3	823
<u>Mukegon County</u>	68,556	7.30%	5,005	73,561	1.40%	1,030	74,591
Casnovia Township	955	7.02%	67	1,022	1.96%	20	1,042
<i>Casnovia Village</i>	126	3.97%	5	131	-0.76%	(1)	130

2020 Education Level Comparison			
	Less than High School	Highschool or Higher	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Kent County	8.60%	91.40%	36.84%
<u>Sparta Township</u>	<b>9.72%</b>	<b>90.28%</b>	<b>20.14%</b>
<i>Sparta Village</i>	5.23%	94.77%	17.75%
Tyrone Township	13.75%	86.25%	14.12%
<i>Kent City Village</i>	15.89%	84.11%	8.28%
Solon Township	5.59%	94.41%	25.21%
Algoma Township	3.81%	96.19%	37.17%
Plainfiled Township	4.31%	95.69%	36.77%
Alpine Township	9.06%	90.94%	22.92%
Ottawa County	6.61%	93.39%	35.08%
Wright Township	4.43%	95.57%	18.52%
Chester Township	8.30%	91.70%	26.64%
<u>Mukegon County</u>	8.65%	91.35%	19.74%
Casnovia Township	7.78%	92.22%	19.52%
<i>Casnovia Village</i>	8.16%	91.84%	13.78%

2020 Employment Comparison				
	Civilian labor force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
Kent County	352,347	336,145	16,202	4.60%
<u>Sparta Township</u>	<b>5,007</b>	<b>4,586</b>	<b>421</b>	<b>8.41%</b>
<i>Sparta Village</i>	2,252	2,123	129	5.73%
Tyrone Township	2,385	2,033	352	14.76%
<i>Kent City Village</i>	620	582	38	6.13%
Solon Township	3,413	3,322	91	2.67%
Algoma Township	6,212	6,058	154	2.48%
Plainfiled Township	18,740	17,948	792	4.23%
Alpine Township	7,211	6,961	250	3.47%
Ottawa County	156,116	149,666	6,285	4.03%
Wright Township	1,740	1,707	33	1.90%
Chester Township	1,260	1,236	24	1.90%
<u>Mukegon County</u>	82,669	76,653	5,955	7.20%
Casnovia Township	1,537	1,518	19	1.24%
<i>Casnovia Village</i>	153	150	3	1.96%

2020 Household Income & Poverty Rate				
	Median household income (dollars)	Mean household income (dollars)	Population in poverty	
<u>Kent County</u>	\$ 65,722	\$ 87,911		11.10%
<u>Sparta Township</u>	\$ 64,750	\$ 82,621		8.80%
<i>Sparta Village</i>	\$ 47,958	\$ 62,598		10.60%
<u>Tyrone Township</u>	\$ 63,933	\$ 71,357		8.30%
<i>Kent City Village</i>	\$ 56,250	\$ 60,487		14.50%
<u>Solon Township</u>	\$ 69,254	\$ 79,940		4.00%
<u>Algoma Township</u>	\$ 96,217	\$ 107,368		2.50%
<u>Plainfield Township</u>	\$ 73,961	\$ 94,542		6.40%
<u>Alpine Township</u>	\$ 56,881	\$ 72,301		9.00%
<u>Ottawa County</u>	\$ 72,418	\$ 91,035		7.9%
<u>Wright Township</u>	\$ 76,708	\$ 91,531		6.1%
<u>Chester Township</u>	\$ 67,821	\$ 89,170		2.5%
<u>Muskegon County</u>	\$ 53,478	\$ 68,850		14.1%
<u>Casnovia Township</u>	\$ 70,542	\$ 79,676		8.4%
<i>Casnovia Village</i>	\$ 52,000	\$ 64,067		10.5%

#### Sparta Township Affordable Housing Costs (Including Utilities)

Affordable Housing = 30% or less of Household Income

	Annual Income	Affordable Annual Housing Budget	Affordable Monthly Housing Budget
Median Household Income	\$ 64,750	\$ 19,425	\$ 1,619
Mean Household Income	\$ 82,621	\$ 24,786	\$ 2,066

#### Affordable Home Price

Assumptions	Monthly Housing Budget	Home Price
\$200 Monthly Utility Cost	\$ 1,619	\$ 158,162
No Down Payment	\$ 2,066	\$ 209,849
7% Interest Rate		
1.2% Property Taxes		
\$950/annual home insurance costs		

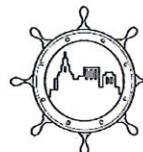
2020 Median House Values		
Median House Value		
Kent County	\$	193,200
<b>Sparta Township</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>159,700</b>
<i>Sparta Village</i>	\$	130,700
Tyrone Township	\$	176,900
<i>Kent City Village</i>	\$	134,400
Solon Township	\$	189,700
Algoma Township	\$	246,900
Plainfiled Township	\$	208,400
Alpine Township	\$	176,300
Ottawa County	\$	338,900
Wright Township	\$	249,000
Chester Township	\$	232,500
<b>Mukegon County</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>137,500</b>
Casnova Township	\$	176,600
<i>Casnova Village</i>	\$	125,000

Sparta Township, MI

# Master Plan Survey

Summary of Responses

Fresh Coast Planning  
2-26-2024



**Fresh Coast  
Planning**

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## Section 1. Executive Summary

It is clear that respondents value the rural and agricultural character of Sparta Township, with the preservation of natural areas, farmlands, and roads being top priorities for the community. Respondents appear to be mostly satisfied with their access to jobs, services, and recreational opportunities. However, some of these needs are likely being met outside of the community, which could be why roads are such a high priority.

While respondents are willing to drive further for jobs, services, and recreational opportunities, that does not mean they are completely opposed to more development in the community. Most respondents appear to be satisfied with the rate of development in Sparta and may be supportive of more residential and commercial development so long as it happens in a way that protects the rural and agricultural character of the community. Along the same note, respondents appear to be supportive of regulations and beautification projects that would enhance the rural and agricultural visual character of the community.

In short, it appears that the community is supportive of the current rate of development and may be supportive of more residential and commercial growth so long as it happens in a way that protects and enhances the rural and agricultural character they value above all else.

KLY

Associate, Fresh Coast Planning

In addition to the summaries provided in this report we have attached the following reports from SurveyMonkey:

- Unfiltered Survey Results
- Results Filtered by Age
- Results Filtered by Location
- Results Filtered by Years Lived in Township
- Additional Comments Provided

## Section 2. Representativeness and Reliability

When reviewing the survey results, we first want to test whether the responses are valid and can be relied on in order to provide a representative sample of your community. In order to test the representativeness and reliability of the survey results we'll look at three things.

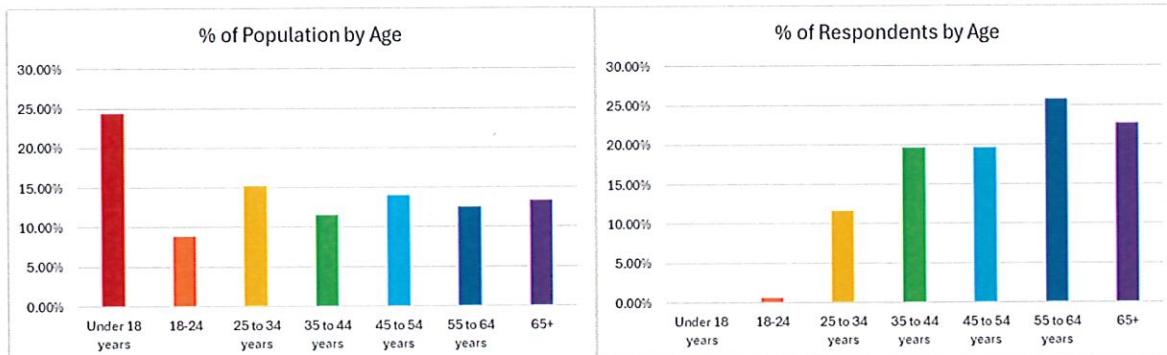
First, are the ages of those that responded reflective of the age groups identified by the latest American Community Survey. The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing annual survey conducted by the United States Census Bureau. The ACS uses a random sample of addresses to collect responses and provide estimates on information similar to what is included in the Decennial Census, such as age, education, and other population and housing metrics.

Second, we look at where respondents stated they live in order to ensure that the respondents are representative of the different geographical areas in the Township.

Lastly, we will look at the number of people who responded compared to the total population. By comparing these numbers we will be able to determine how confident we are that the survey results are accurate.

### 2.1. Representativeness by Age

As expected, all age groups were not represented in the survey results. Respondents were mostly over the age of twenty-five with residents thirty-five and older being best represented. That being said, the survey results appear to have been gathered fairly equally across multiple age groups and should be reflective of how people in various stages of life feel about the community.



### 2.2. Representativeness by Location

Identifying representativeness by geographic location is less definitive than representativeness by age. We do not have the information that identifies how many total dwellings are contained within each section identified within the survey. When creating the sections, we relied on the different zoning district designations and easily identifiable roads to split the sections. As such, we would expect a greater number of responses from the more densely populated sections of the Township (Sections 5, 6, 10 and 12). With less densely populated sections (Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9 and 11) having a lower number of responses.

It appears that responses generally meet our expectations and the results of the survey appear to be representative of all locations within the Township.

Further, we recognize that M-37 represents a border within the Township; with land east of the highway predominantly being used for more dense and higher intensity land uses and lands west of the highway predominantly being used for less dense, agricultural uses. As such we have broken down responses based on whether they were from sections east or west of the highway. While there were a slightly greater number of responses from respondents east of the highway, it does not appear that the responses were so much greater that the results are overly skewed towards the desires of the eastern portion of the Community. Lastly, where people lived did appear to have some impact on how they answered some questions, but more broadly respondents living on both sides of the highway appear to have similar values and desires for land development in the community.

#### East of the Highway

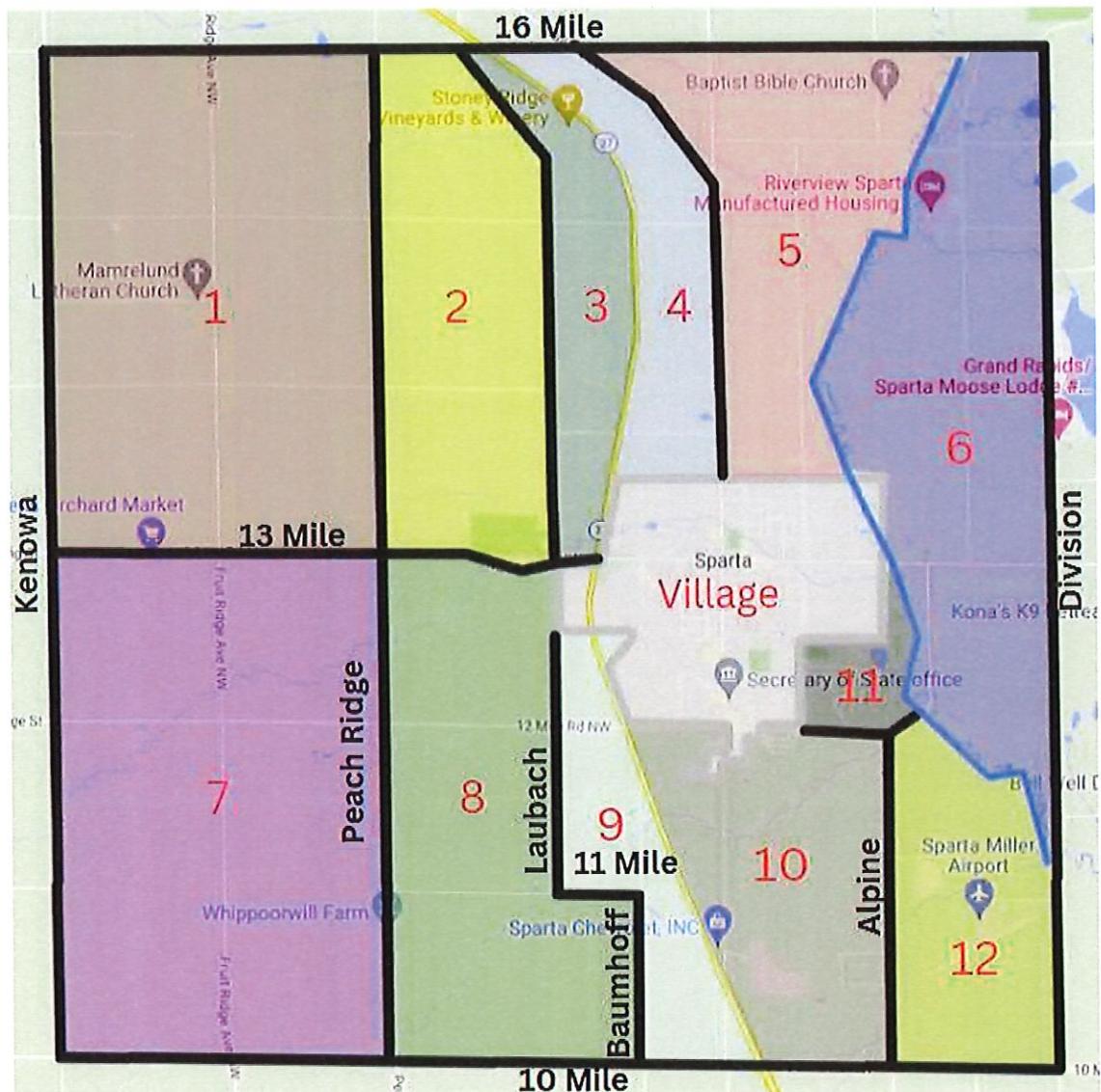
<u>Area of Township</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Percent of Respondents</u>
Section 6	Rural Agriculture with many smaller lots, includes some low density residential and some high density residential	16%
Section 10	Mix of Commercial, Rural Agriculture and High Density Residential	14%
Section 5	Rural Agriculture with many smaller lots also includes larger agricultural parcels	10%
Village of Sparta		8%
Section 12	Low Density Residential - Sparta Airport and Industrial District take up a large portion of the section.	8%
Section 4	Rural Agriculture with some smaller parcels but predominantly large Ag parcels	2%
Section 11	Industrial with some low density residential	2%
	SUB-TOTAL	60%

#### West of the Highway

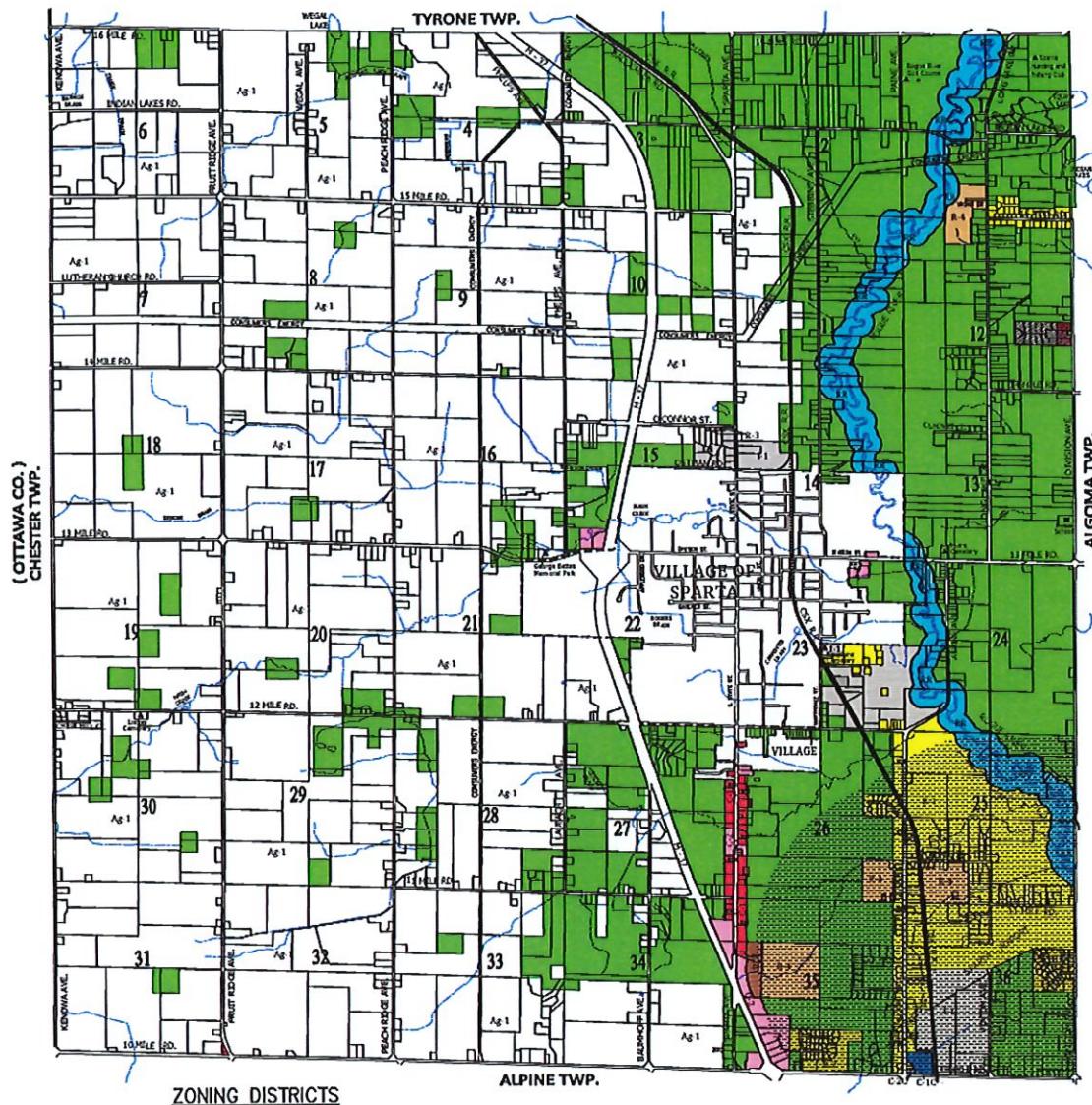
<u>Area of Township</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Percent of Respondents</u>
Section 7	Prime Agriculture - Large Ag Parcels with small parcels along public roads	9%
Section 8	Prime Agriculture - Large Ag Parcels with some small parcels along public roads	8%
Section 1	Prime Agriculture - Large Ag Parcels with limited small parcels along public roads	7%
Section 9	Rural Agriculture with some smaller parcels but predominantly large Ag parcels	6%
Section 2	Prime Agriculture - Large Ag Parcels with limited small parcels along public roads	4%
Section 3	Prime Agriculture - Large Ag Parcels with some small parcels along public roads	3%
	SUB-TOTAL	37%

#### Other

I don't live in Sparta Township	Predominately People who work or own property in the Township	3%
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Where you live map from Master Plan Survey



**ZONING MAP OF  
SPARTA TOWNSHIP  
KENT COUNTY, MICHIGAN  
T 9 N, R 12 W**

Latest Revision: 2-2-23

GRAPHIC SCALE  
0' 2000' 4000' 6000'  
(IN FEET)

### 2.3. Reliability of Survey

While the results of the 2024 Master Plan Survey appear to be a mostly representative sample based on age and where people live within the Township, we also want to make sure that enough responses were received to ensure the results are reliable.

When speaking to the reliability of a survey we are trying to determine how likely it is that if we repeated the survey with another group of residents, we would get the same or similar results. A general rule of thumb is if you have a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%, your results are likely accurate and precise and can be relied on.

Based on the 2022 American Community Survey conducted by the United States Census Bureau Sparta Township has approximately 9,421 residents. Approximately 331 residents (369 total respondents – 27 Village Residents – 11 non-residents) responded to the survey. Based on this information we were able to calculate the survey's margin of error. At a 95% confidence level there is a 5% margin of error. As such, the results of this survey appear to be a reliable representation of how the community feels.

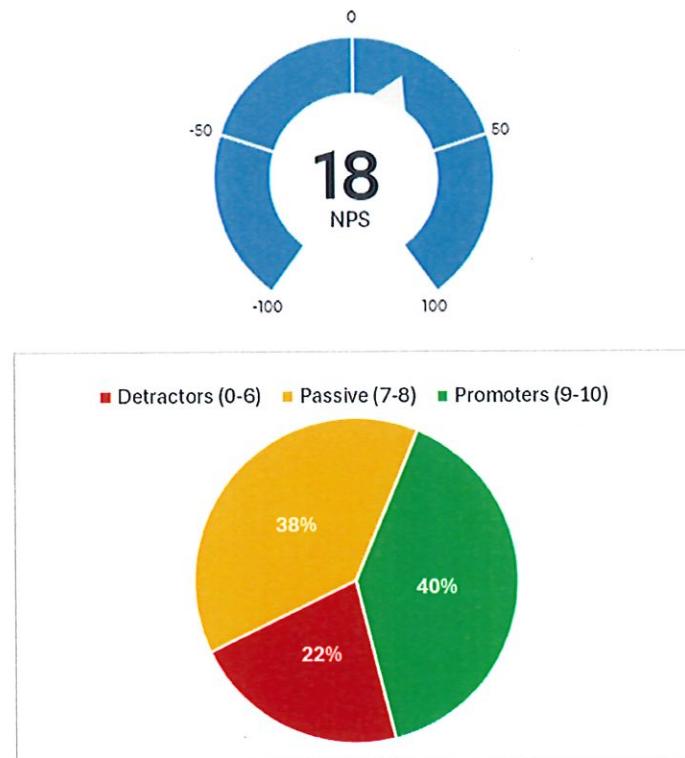
## Section 3. Survey Results

The following are summaries of the individual survey questions.

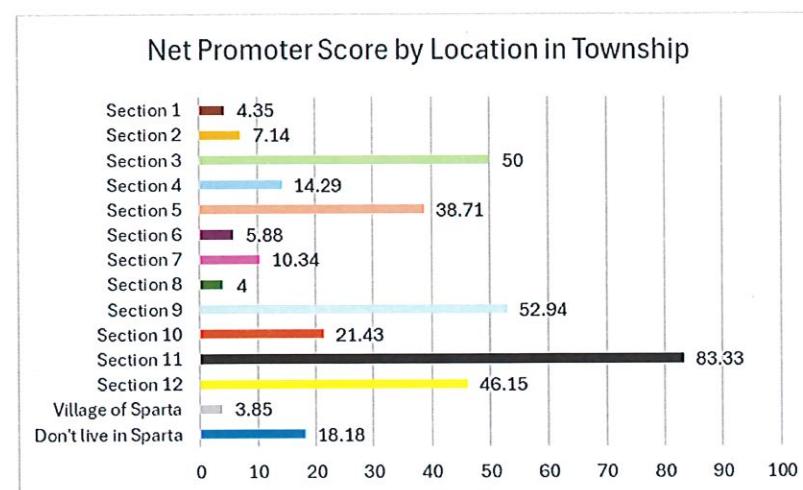
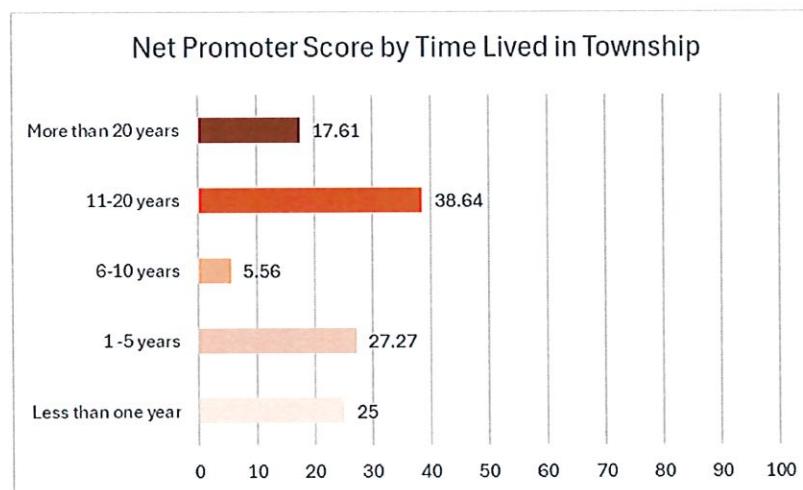
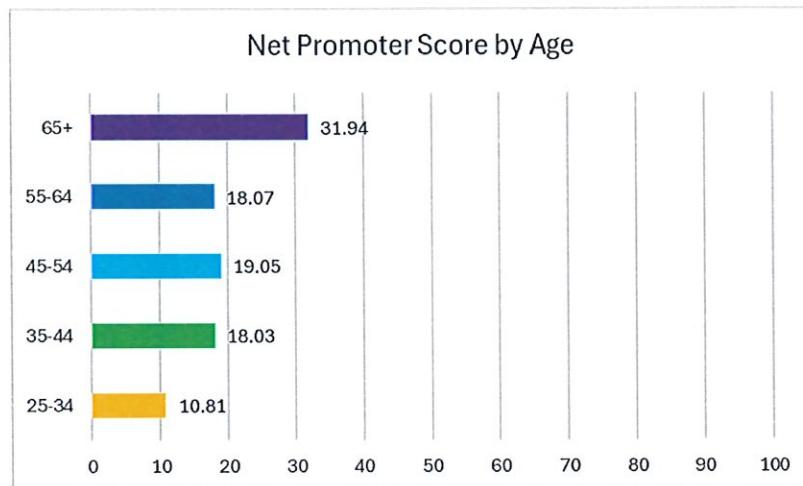
### 3.1. How likely is it that you would recommend living in Sparta Township to a friend or colleague?

This question is called Net Promoter Score, it was designed in 2003 as a way to gauge customer experience for private companies. We use the Net Promoter Score in your survey as a way to gauge the experience and relationship your residents have with the Township. Respondents are broken into three categories: promoters, passives, and detractors. Promoters are the residents that are the individuals that love the community and will go out of their way to promote it. Passives are those individuals that like the community but may not go out of their way to promote it. Detractors are the individuals who are unhappy with the community and may go out of their way to dissuade others from coming to your community. For a more detailed review of the meaning of net promoter score you can visit <https://delighted.com/net-promoter-score>

In addition to showing how many individuals are Promoters, Passives, and Detractors a net promoter score is also calculated. The net promoter scale goes from -100 to 100, with -100 meaning no one is happy with the community and 100 meaning everyone is happy with the community. As you review the following information regarding promoters/detractors and net promoter score please keep in mind that there is no universal benchmark for what a "good" net promoter score is. Please also keep in mind that for the public sector our job is not always to make individual residents happy, but to protect and promote the health, safety, and welfare of those we serve. In general, it appears that the community as a whole has a positive relationship with the Township and the Township has many more people who love or like the Township opposed to those who dislike the Township.

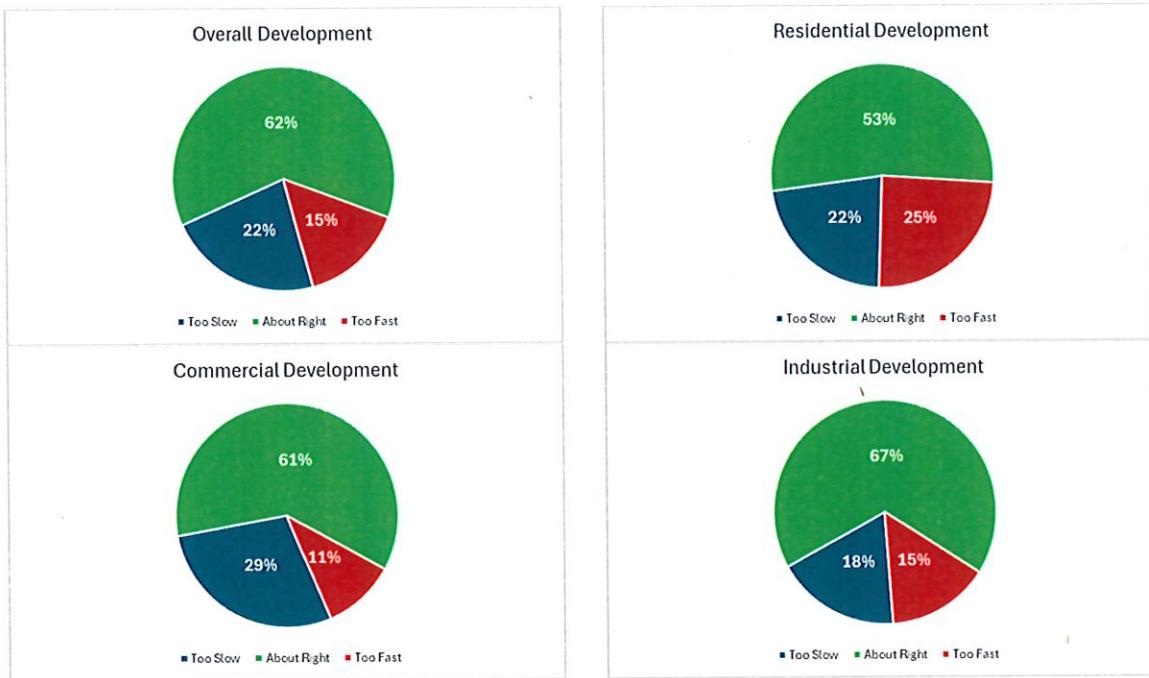


Further, we see that how old people are, how long they have lived in the Township, and where they live in the Township all have an impact on how likely they are to recommend living in the Township to others.



### 3.2. How would you characterize the rate of the following types of development?

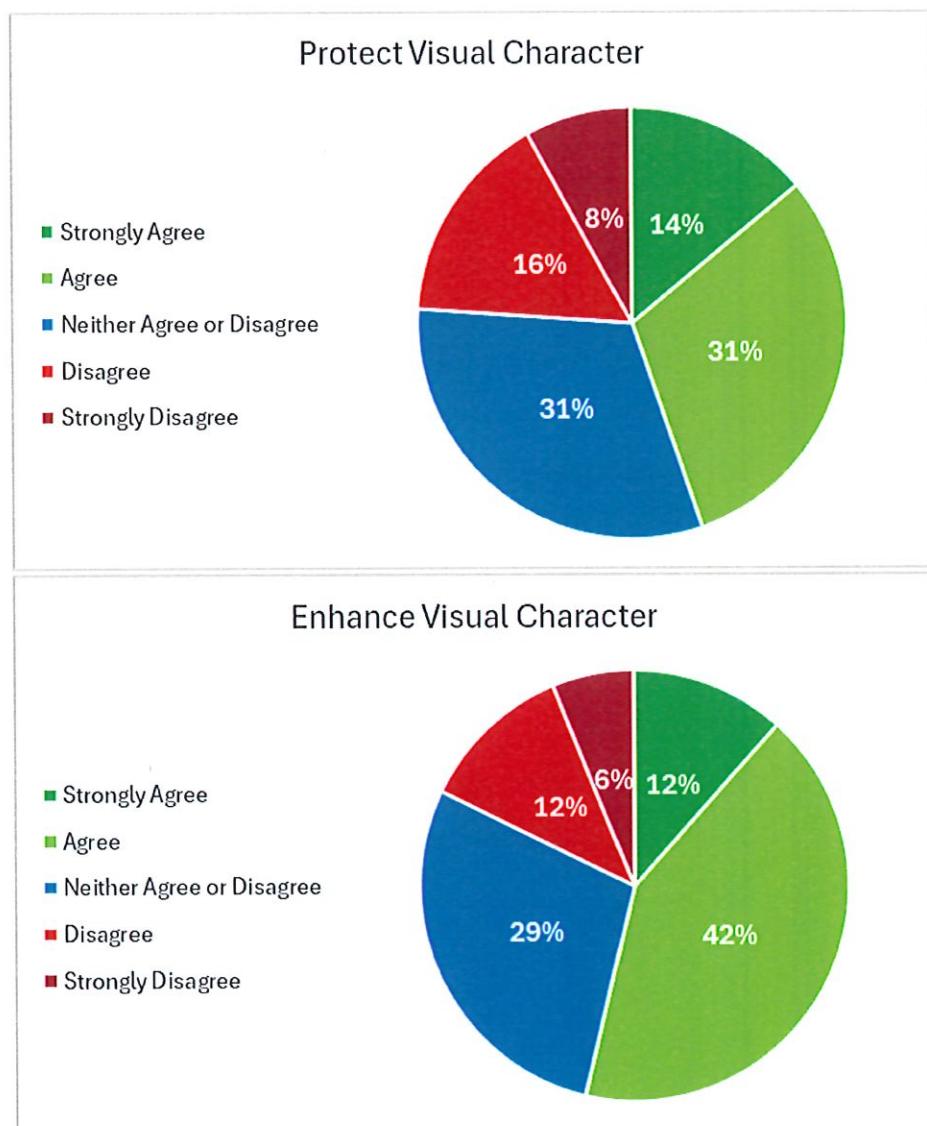
Overall, a majority of respondents feel that the rate of residential, commercial, and industrial development is happening at about the right speed. There may be some concern around how fast residential development is happening and some desire for more commercial development. This feeling seems to be consistent across age groups, how long they've lived in the Township and where people live in the Township.



### 3.3. Visual Character

Two questions were asked to gauge how people felt about protecting and/or enhancing the visual character of the Township. Should the Township do more to protect the visual character of the community? and Should the Township do more to enhance the visual character of the community? Both questions were accompanied by an explanation and example of what types of regulations may be put in place to accomplish these goals.

While many respondents were supportive of doing more to protect visual character and keep the community looking the same, a majority of respondents were neutral and opposed to “protecting visual character.” However, in regard to enhancing the visual character of the community a majority of respondents appear to be supportive of regulations and investments that would enhance the look and feel of the community. More insights on what types of regulations and investments may be desired by the community may be provided in the review of other questions included in the survey. Additionally, if the Township determines to develop regulations to enhance visual character further engagement with subcommittees and/or the public may help better identify what is desired by the community.



### 3.4. If the Township had extra funds, how would you prioritize its use?

When asked how they would prioritize the expenditure of “extra” funds survey respondents universally identified roads as the main priority. However, outside of roads, respondent age appears to impact how the prioritize the listed items.

25-34		35-44	
Roads	6.61	Roads	6.31
Parks and Recreation	5.55	Parks and Recreation	6.17
Fire and EMS	5.42	Fire and EMS	5.14
Internet Access	4.79	Internet Access	4.72
Police	4.37	Public Water and Sanitary Sewer	4.41
Public Water and Sanitary Sewer	4.37	Police	4.3
Senior Services	3.89	Senior Services	3.95
45-54		55-64	
Roads	6.81	Roads	6.45
Fire and EMS	5.52	Fire and EMS	5.45
Internet Access	5.08	Police	4.87
Police	4.92	Senior Services	4.82
Parks and Recreation	4.59	Internet Access	4.75
Senior Services	4.39	Public Water and Sanitary Sewer	4.39
Public Water and Sanitary Sewer	3.69	Parks and Recreation	4.26
65+			
Roads	6.5		
Fire and EMS	5.85		
Police	5.24		
Senior Services	4.85		
Internet Access	4.43		
Parks and Recreation	4.38		
Public Water and Sanitary Sewer	3.74		

### 3.5. How likely is it that you would support an increase in property taxes to support the following?

At best respondents appear to be neutral to an increase in taxes to support the identified potential funding priorities. Based on this information it does not appear that a millage to support any of these items would have the support needed to pass. However, we are able to see how respondents prioritize projects when viewed with the lens that they would have to pay extra for their improvement.

Funding Priority	Will a Tax Millage be Supported
Fire and EMS	3.2
Agricultural Preservation Programs	3.13
Road Repairs and Improvement	3.06
Police	2.99
Improve and expand public park and recreation facilities	2.85
Attract and retain commercial businesses	2.52
Expansion of public water and sewer	2.52
Attract and retain Industrial businesses	2.38

5 = Highly Likely

4 = Likely

3 = Neutral

2 = Unlikely

1 = Highly Unlikely

### 3.6. Please rate each of the following characteristics of Sparta Township.

In general respondents appear to be happy with the character of the community. Rural Character and Ease of Travel were the two most highly rated items with access to job opportunities, availability of quality, affordable housing, and diverse housing options receiving a rating of fair. This may mean that the development of increased and more diverse housing options would better satisfy the desires of the community. However, with how highly rated rural character is, the development of residential uses should be directed to happen in such a way that the rural character of the community is maintained.

Characteristic	Rating
Rural Character	4.78
Ease of Travel	4.72
Access to healthcare facilities	4.36
Good educational opportunities	4.32
Recreational Opportunities	4.23
Access to shopping amenities	4.17
Access to job opportunities	3.51
Availability of quality, affordable housing	3.2
Diverse housing options	3.15

5 = Excellent  
 4 = Good  
 3 = Fair  
 2 = Poor  
 1 = I don't know

### 3.7. Please prioritize the following in the order that is most important to you. 1 = Most Important, 9 = Least Important.

The preservation of natural areas and farmlands are a clear priority for respondents, with the condition of roads a close third. After that access to recreational activities both private and public and affordable homes were the next priorities. With access to public utilities and jobs in the community not appearing to be a priority.

It appears that respondents value the natural/rural character of the community above all else. While access to more recreational opportunities may be desired, respondents are willing to trade these opportunities for the ability to live in a rural community. Further, respondents appear to be willing to drive from their homes to jobs outside of the community and there may be some concern regarding the availability of affordable housing in the community.

Item	Priority Rating
Preservation of natural areas (woods, non farmed fields, etc)	6.2
Preservation of farmland	6.11
Condition of roads	5.98
Access to commercial services (grocery, restaurant, bar, hairsalons and barbers, etc.)	5.57
Availability of public parks and recreational opportunities	5.02
Availability of homes that people can afford	4.99
Access to public water and sanitary sewer	4.21
Availability of office jobs in the community	3.51
Availability of industrial jobs in the community	3.42

### 3.8. Please rate your satisfaction with the availability of the following.

Overall respondents appear to be satisfied with the availability of Goods and Services within the Community. However, there may be some desire for more entertainment services such as movies and restaurants.



### 3.9. How supportive are you of the following types of residential projects?

Based on the results of this question, we not only see what types of residential projects respondents are supportive of, but we may also get some insight into how that development is desired to look.

#### Senior Citizen Housing

Respondents are supportive of senior citizen housing. Not only are a majority of respondents supportive of senior citizen housing, but there is very little opposition. However, senior citizen housing can be developed in many different ways (site condo, duplexes, apartments, mixed housing types) as such where and how senior citizen housing is developed can be informed on the responses towards other housing development types.

#### Single Family Neighborhood Developments

Similar to senior citizen housing, a majority of respondents appear to be supportive of single-family neighborhood developments. However, there is a stronger level of opposition to single family neighborhood

developments. This response paired with a possible desire for more regulations to enhance the visual character of the Township could mean that the community is supportive of more single-family housing as long as it happens in locations and with design elements that will protect and enhance the rural character of the community.

#### Mixed-use (Commercial/Residential) and Townhomes

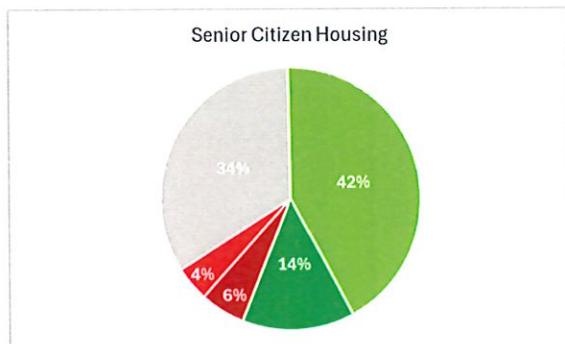
There is no strong support or opposition for these types of development. Respondents are split in their support of mixed-use and townhome developments. If desired these types of developments will likely require a large amount of community input to identify where they are best located and what type of architectural styles and design elements are desired.

#### Duplexes

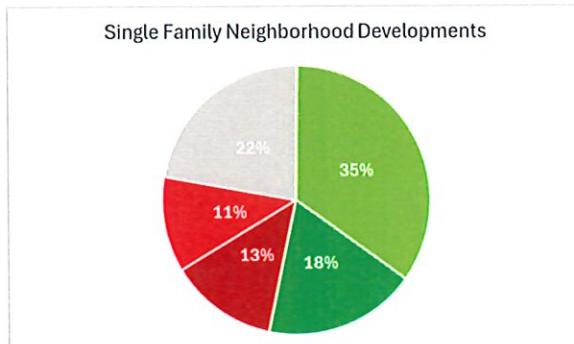
Similar to mixed-use and townhome developments there is no strong support for or opposition to duplexes. However, it appears that respondents lean towards opposing this type of residential development.

#### Apartments

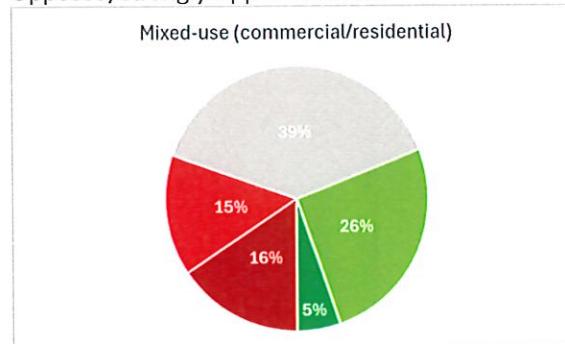
Respondents are clearly opposed to apartment style development. This does not mean that respondents are opposed to multi-family development, but it seems clear that apartment style residential development is not desired in the community.



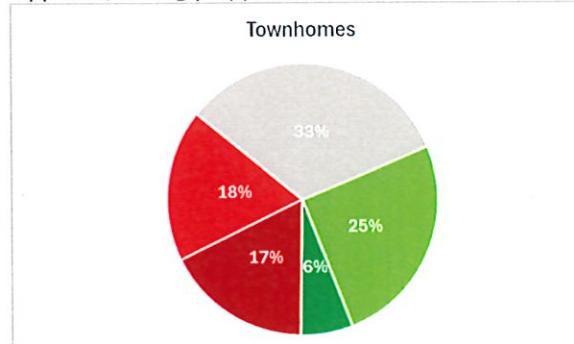
Support/Very Supportive = 56%  
Neutral = 34%  
Opposed/Strongly Opposed = 10%



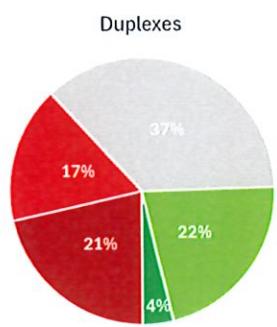
Support/Very Supportive = 53%  
Neutral = 22%  
Opposed/Strongly Opposed = 24%



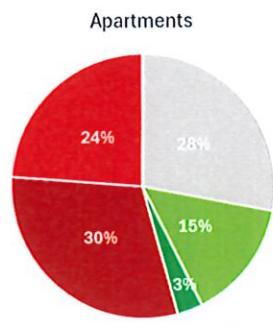
Support/Very Supportive = 31%  
Neutral = 39%  
Opposed/Strongly Opposed = 31%



Support/Very Supportive = 31%  
Neutral = 33%  
Opposed/Strongly Opposed = 35%

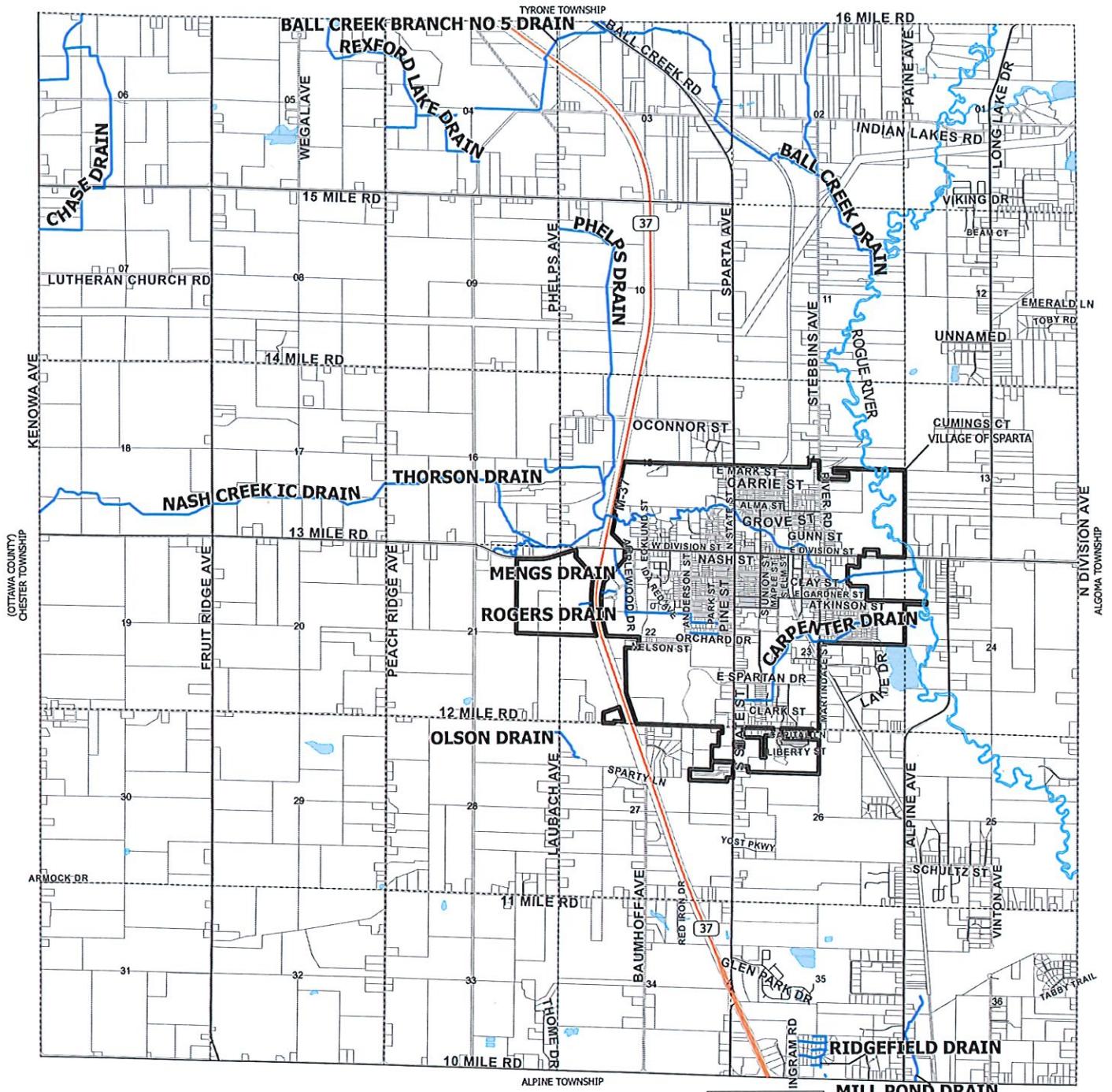


Support/Very Supportive = 26%  
Neutral = 37%  
Opposed/Strongly Opposed = 38%



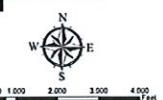
Support/Very Supportive = 18%  
Neutral = 28%  
Opposed/Strongly Opposed = 54%

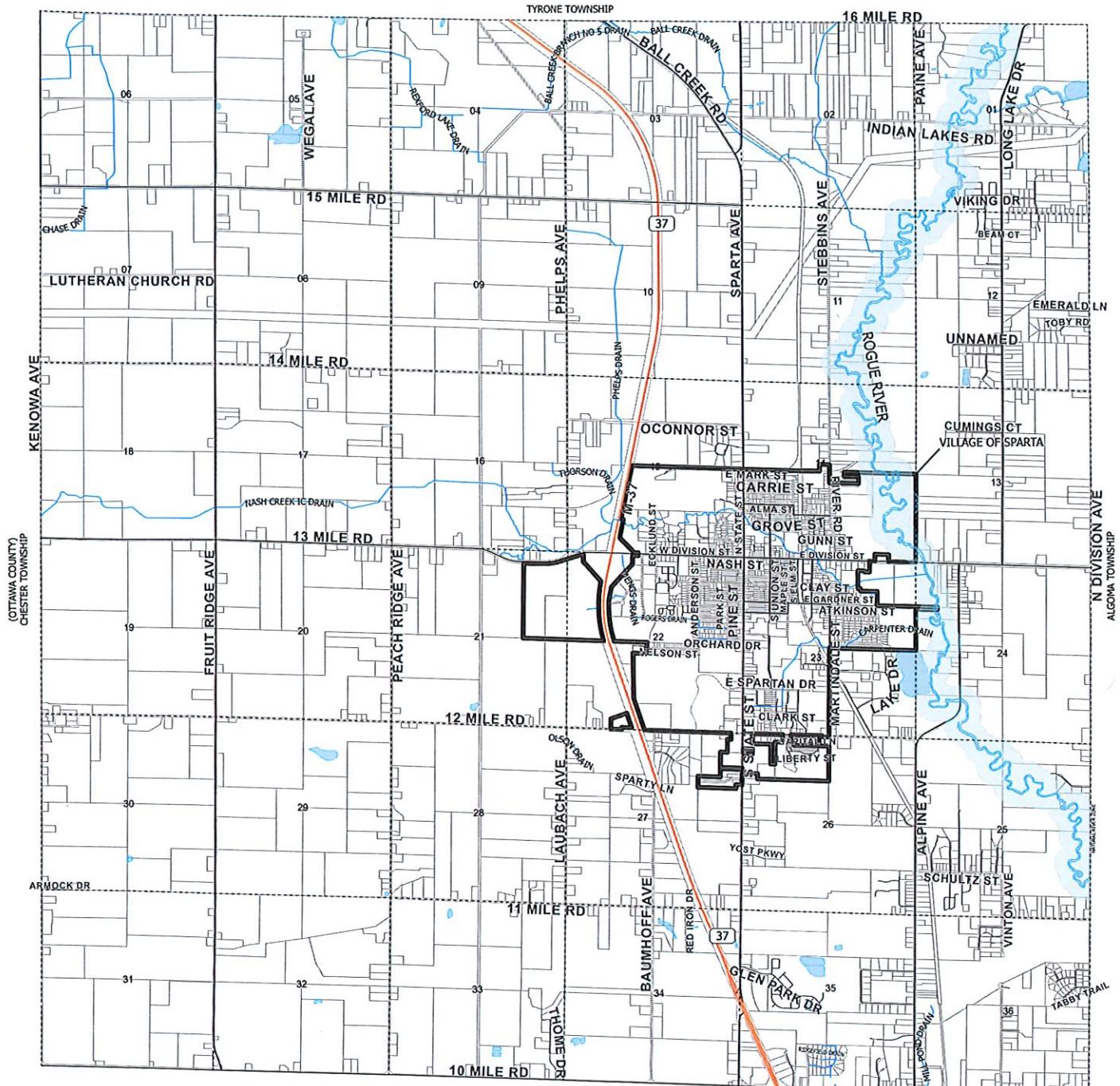
**END OF REPORT**

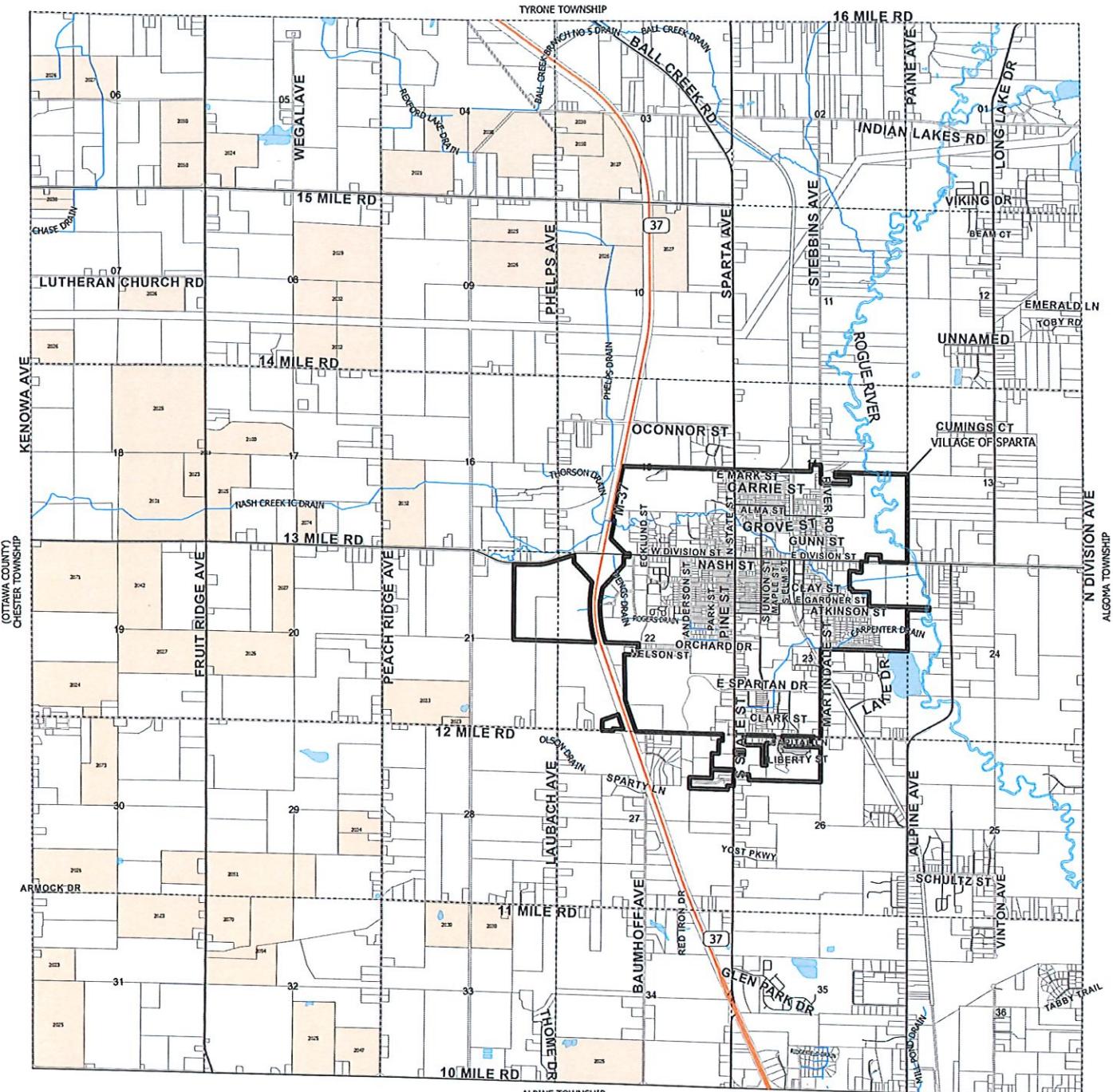


## County Drains

Sparta Township, MI  
As of January 23, 2025







Fresh Coast  
Planning



Vriesman  
& Korhorn

## PA116 Lands

Sparta Township, MI  
As of January 23, 2025

The legend is titled "Legend" and contains two main sections: "Road Types" and "Parcels".

**Road Types**

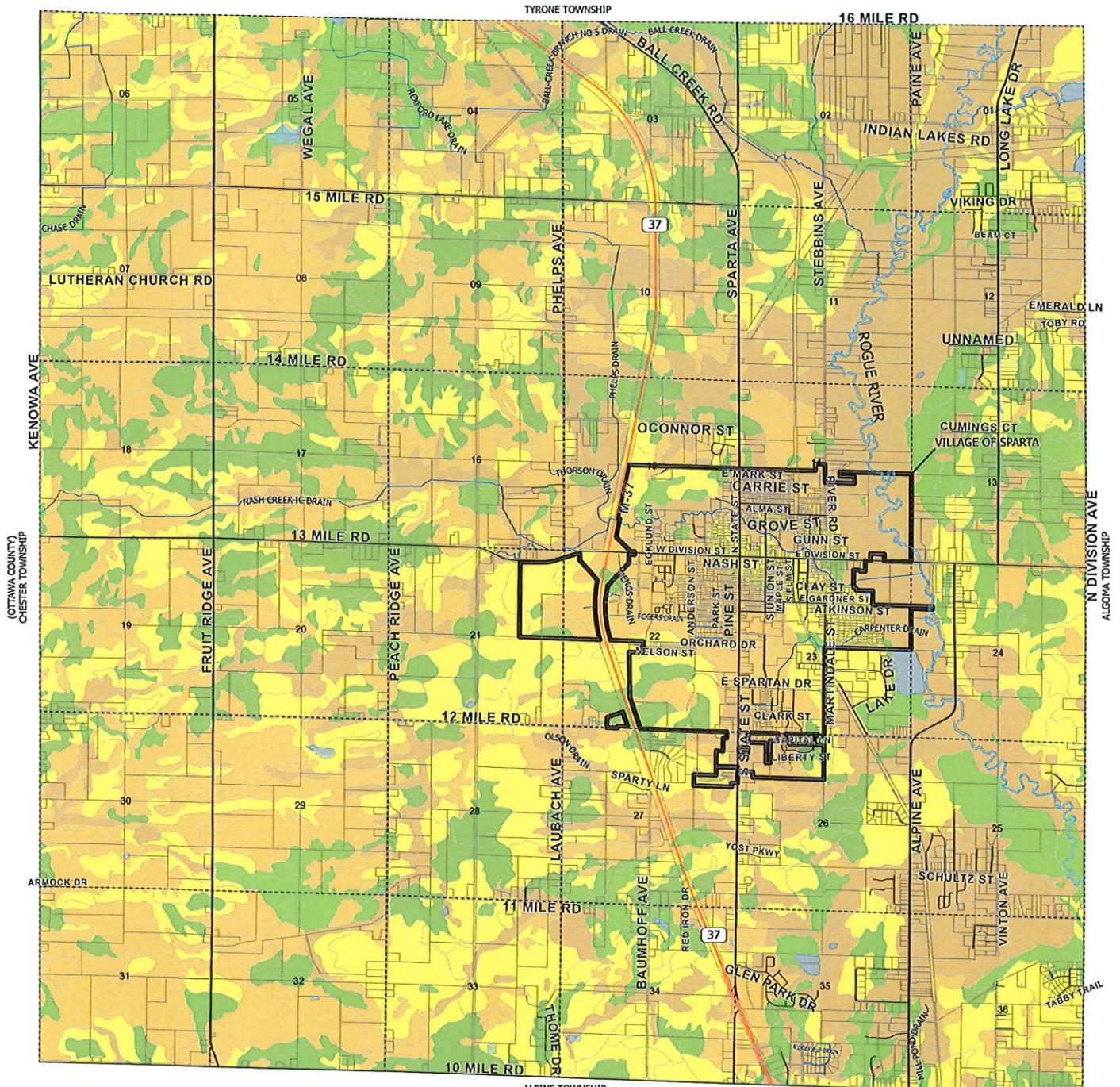
- City Minor (grey line)
- City Major (dark grey line)
- County Local (light grey line)
- County Primary (dark grey line)
- Private (grey line)
- State ThruLine (orange line)

**Parcels**

- PA15 Parcels (grey line with a small grey square icon)
- PA15 Parcels Enclosed in PA15 Boundary (grey line with a grey square icon)
- Parcels (white square)
- County Drains (blue line)
- Streams & Rivers (dark blue line)
- Lakes & Ponds (light blue line)
- Sections (grey line with a small grey square icon)



S 0 500 1,000 2,000 3,000 4,000



## Prime Farmland Soils

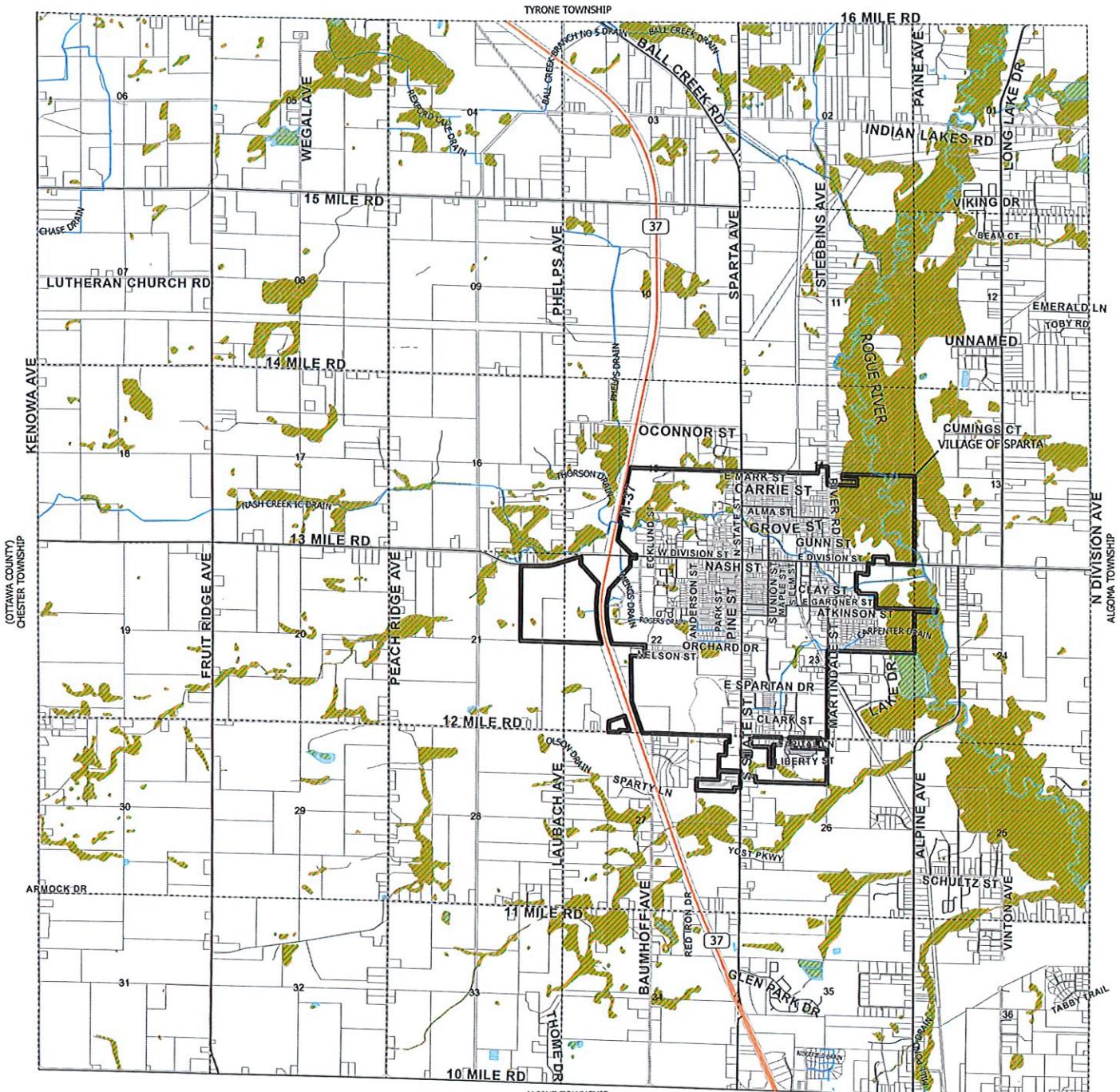
Sparta Township, MI  
As of January 23, 2025

**Legend**

Road Types	Soil Rating
City Street	All soils are prime
City Highway	Farm land
County Local	Farm land of local importance
County Primary	Farm land of state importance
State Primary	Non-farm land
State Secondary	Non-farm land of local importance
State Tertiary	Waste land



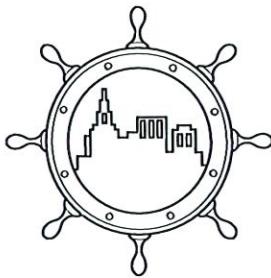
S  
0 500 1,000 2,000 3,000 4,000



## Wetlands

Sparta Township, MI  
As of January 23, 2025





## Fresh Coast Planning

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**Andrea Goodell**  
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[andrea@freshcoastplanning.com](mailto:andrea@freshcoastplanning.com)

# MEMORANDUM

To: Sparta Township Planning Commission  
From: Kevin Yeomans  
Date: 2/2/2026  
Re: Accessory Dwelling Units

*KLY*

Pending the conclusion of the public hearing and further discussion at your January meeting, the Planning Commission directed us to make updates to the proposed regulations for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). Review of the proposed changes is scheduled for your February 10, 2026, meeting.

Based on our notes from the meeting, we have made the following changes:

1. Subsection (B) has been updated to only allow ADUs as a special use.
2. Subsection (E) has been added to only allow family members of the property owner to reside in the ADU or Principal Dwelling. This combined with subsection (D) means the property owner has to live in the Principal Dwelling or the ADU and that only a family member can reside in the other dwelling. In other words, the amendment doesn't care which dwelling the property owner lives in as long as they live on the property.

A copy of the amendment with the proposed changes has been attached to this memorandum.

### What is Family?

When determining when someone is a family member of the property the following definition, taken from the Sparta Township Zoning Ordinance, will be used.

*FAMILY. Either of the following:*

*(a) A domestic family, which is one or more persons living together and related by the bonds of blood, marriage or adoption, together with servants of the principal occupants and not more than one additional unrelated person, with all of the individuals being domiciled together as a single, domestic, housekeeping unit in a dwelling; or*

*(b) The functional equivalent of the domestic family, which is persons living together in a dwelling unit whose relationship is of a permanent and distinct character and is the functional equivalent of a domestic family with a demonstrable and recognizable bond which constitutes the functional equivalent of the bonds which render the domestic family a cohesive unit. All persons of the functional equivalent of the domestic family must operate as a single housekeeping unit. This definition shall not include any society, club, fraternity, sorority, association, lodge, coterie, organization or group where the common living arrangement and/or the basis for the establishment of the functional equivalency of the domestic family is likely or contemplated to exist for a limited or temporary duration.*

**SPARTA TOWNSHIP  
KENT COUNTY, MICHIGAN**

**ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_**

**AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE ZONING ORDINANCE REGARDING  
ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS**

THE TOWNSHIP OF SPARTA ORDAINS:

**Section 1. Amendment of Section 154.006 of the Sparta Township Zoning Ordinance.**

Section 154.006 of the Sparta Township Zoning Ordinance is amended by the addition of the following definition, which shall be inserted in alphabetical order:

***ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT (ADU).*** A detached residential living unit on the same parcel on which a single-family dwelling is located that provides independent living facilities, including basic requirements for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation, for one (1) or more person(s).

**Section 2. Renumbering Sections 154.253 through 154.270 of the Sparta Township Zoning Ordinance.**

The numbers of Section 154.253 through 154.270 of the Sparta Township Zoning Ordinance shall be increased by 0.001, such that the new numbering will correspond with the chart below:

<b>Title</b>	<b>Old Section Number</b>	<b>New Section Number</b>
EXCEPTIONS TO HEIGHT REGULATIONS	154.253	154.254
EXCEPTIONS TO YARD SETBACK REGULATIONS	154.254	154.255
UNDERGROUND HOMES	154.255	154.256
MOBILE HOMES	154.256	154.257
ANTENNAS	154.257	154.258
LOTS	154.258	154.259
UTILITIES	154.259	154.26
PARKING	154.260	154.261
OUTDOOR FURNACES	154.261	154.262
ANIMALS, LIVESTOCK AND FOWL	154.262	154.263
CHURCHES; DAY CARE AND CHILD CARE CENTERS	154.263	154.264
TRANSITION ZONING	154.264	154.265
LIGHTING, SCREENING AND FENCES	154.265	154.266
AMATEUR RADIO TOWERS	154.266	154.267
MEDICAL MARIJUANA DISPENSARIES AND OTHER FACILITIES	154.267	154.268

MISCELLANEOUS USES	154.268	154.269
MINING; NATURAL RESOURCES	154.269	154.27
BED AND BREAKFAST ESTABLISHMENTS	154.270	154.271

### **Section 3. Revision of Internal References.**

Any internal references within the Sparta Township Zoning Ordinance to the sections renumbered in Section 2 above shall be revised to reflect the new section numbers as indicated in the chart. This includes, but is not limited to, cross-references found in other sections of the Zoning Ordinance, tables of contents, indexes, appendices, and any other citations or references that rely on the previous numbering.

### **Section 4. Addition of a New Section 154.253 to the Sparta Township Zoning Ordinance.**

The Sparta Township Zoning Ordinance is amended by the addition of a new Section 154.253, which reads in its entirety as follows:

#### **§ 154.253 ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS**

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are intended to provide flexible, long-term living quarters for extended family or non-family members. ADUs are subject to the following regulations.

- (A) An ADU shall be detached from the principal dwelling.
- (B) ADUs shall be permitted as a Special Use in all districts where single-family dwellings are permitted by right or by special land use.
- (C) ADUs shall only be permitted as an accessory use to a single-family dwelling.
- (D) The property owner shall maintain residence on the property, either in the principal dwelling or the ADU.
- (E)(F) Persons occupying the dwelling not occupied by the property owner shall be a Family member of the property owner.
- (E)(F) ADUs shall have their own separate entrances, kitchens, sleeping areas, and full bathroom facilities.
- (F)(G) ADUs shall only be located in the rear yard.
- (G)(H) The dwelling area of an ADU shall meet all setback requirements applicable to the principal dwelling. For the purposes of this Section, “dwelling area” means the portion of a structure used for habitation, including sleeping, cooking, and sanitation facilities.
- (H)(I) ADUs shall meet all applicable building, safety, and fire codes.

(I)(J) ADUs shall be connected to a sewage disposal system and water supply system approved by the County Health Department. Proof of Health Department approval must be provided prior to the issuance of a building permit.

(I)(K) Exterior building materials and designs shall be of similar style and character as that of the principal dwelling.

(K)(L) An ADU shall have a minimum Floor Area of 300 square feet.

(L)(M) An ADU shall have a maximum Floor Area of 850 square feet.

(M)(N) ADU side wall height, as measured from the existing grade to the bearing point of the roof truss, shall not exceed sixteen (16) feet.

(N)(O) No more than two persons shall reside in an ADU.

(O)(P) ADUs shall count toward the maximum number and square footage for Accessory Buildings.

(P)(Q) ADUs may be erected as an integral part of a permitted Accessory Building.

(Q)(R) Mobile Homes, recreational vehicles, and temporary structures shall not be used as an ADU.

(R)(S) An ADU shall not be utilized as a Motel, Hotel, Motor Hotel, Boarding House, Lodging House, Rooming House, or Bed and Breakfast.

## **Section 5. Severability.**

If any provision of this Ordinance is declared invalid for any reason, that declaration does not affect the validity of all other sections of this Ordinance.

## **Section 6. Repealer.**

This Ordinance expressly repeals all other Township ordinances and parts of ordinances in conflict with this Ordinance.

## **Section 7. Effective Date.**

This Ordinance takes effect seven (7) days after publication of this Ordinance or of a summary of it as permitted by law.

ADOPTED.

YEAS: \_\_\_\_\_

NAYS: \_\_\_\_\_

STATE OF MICHIGAN        )  
                              ) ss  
COUNTY OF KENT        )

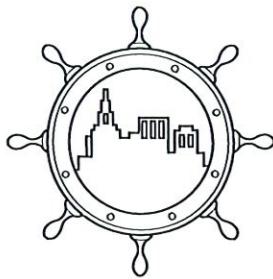
**Clerk's Certification**

I, the undersigned, the duly qualified and acting Clerk of the Township of Sparta, Kent County, Michigan, certify that the above Ordinance was adopted at a regular meeting of the Sparta Township Board on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2025, by a majority of the members of the board members present and voting.

---

Marcy Savage  
Sparta Township Clerk

89716:00001:202123352-1



## Fresh Coast Planning

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# MEMORANDUM

To: Sparta Township Planning Commission  
From: Kevin Yeomans *KLY*  
Date: 2/2/2026  
Re: Data Center Regulations

At your January 2026 meeting the Planning Commission determined to table review of draft data center regulations in order to give Commissioners more time to review provided materials and further research the topic. Further review of data center regulations is scheduled for your February 10, 2026, meeting.

In addition to the materials provided for your last meeting, we have attached a copy of a recent article from Michigan Townships Association on data centers.

### Existing in Draft Regulations

The following items are addressed in the draft regulations. Does the Planning Commission have any concerns, or questions on how these items are regulated? Are there any changes you'd like to see?

1. Power Usage
2. Water Usage
3. Visual Impact
4. Emergency Preparedness
5. Decommissioning

### Items for Consideration

Based on our review of the draft regulations the Planning Commission may want to consider including additional regulations for the following items:

- A. Minimum Lot Area
- B. Increased Setbacks
- C. Screening/Greenbelts
- D. Noise
- E. Architectural Standards
- F. Other Standards as identified by the Planning Commission.

Robert E. Thall and Michael Bila,  
MTA Legal Counsel, Bauckham, Thall,  
Seeber, Kaufman & Koches, PC



## Q What is a data center?

A data center is a large warehouse or series of warehouses that house computer systems, servers and associated components. Data centers form the backbone of the internet—all the information you see on the internet (websites you visit, emails you write, news articles you read) has to be kept somewhere—and that somewhere is usually a data center. Data centers also run artificial intelligence (AI) systems like ChatGPT. Private companies and the federal government are heavily promoting AI development, which has spurred developers across the country to look for sites to construct new data centers.

Modern data centers can range from a series of smaller modules that fit in a single building to several massive warehouses forming a “campus.” Most new data centers are considered “hyperscale” data centers containing a massive number of servers to support AI. These facilities are also designed to be expandable, allowing for construction in multiple phases. Data centers are also extremely expensive to build, often requiring investments of more than \$1 billion.

A data center can be constructed by a single large company for its own business use—such as Meta (Facebook), Google and OpenAI. A data center may also be constructed by a third-party developer, which then leases access to the computers to other companies.

## Q What are the major things our township should consider when planning and zoning for data centers?

As with any new land use, there are many factors to consider to ensure that the proposed development fits your community's needs and vision. Here are a few key considerations:

- **Master plan, zoning ordinance and districts:** The first and most important step is to review your township's current master plan and zoning ordinance for any references to a data center or similar construction. Data centers are often treated as an industrial use because they require a large amount of space and access to substantial utilities. Some zoning ordinances list data centers as a permitted use in certain zoning districts with no special restrictions. These ordinances were typically drafted many years ago, before the rise of the hyperscale data centers we see today. Given the size and scale of data centers today, it is good practice to treat them as a special land use.

Regulating data centers as a special land use allows for specific regulations related to this land use and a required

public hearing as part of the township approval process. You should evaluate your current master land use plan and zoning ordinance to determine if there is an appropriate area of the township where a data center could be located. Also keep in mind that completely prohibiting data centers may lead to a claim of exclusionary zoning. The township must comply with MCL 125.3207.

- **Electricity:** Data centers require substantial amounts of electricity to power all of their computers. The location for most data centers depends almost entirely on where high-voltage electricity is available and where the utility provider has the capacity on their lines to support the use. The federal Department of Energy (energy.gov) hosts a website where you can view the excess capacity of all power lines in your community, which can help identify areas where data centers may be more likely.
- **Cooling and noise:** The computers in a data center generate a significant amount of heat and need to be cooled off in order to function effectively. Some data centers cool their computers using liquid, where millions of gallons of water may be loaded into a closed-loop system and recirculated. Many data centers provide cooling through air conditioners or large fans. These systems can generate noise depending on their exact type and location.
- **Screening and security:** Data centers hold extremely valuable data that companies pay a lot of money to protect. Many data centers are constructed with fences and walls to limit access, feature 24/7 security and high-powered lighting. These security features can impact neighboring properties, and should be considered when drafting any regulations.
- **Tax base and incentives:** These facilities can contribute significantly to the local tax base (as noted previously, they cost upwards of \$1 billion). Although developers may seek long-term tax abatements or incentives, many townships will still experience a substantial increase in taxable value. You should carefully examine these potential incentives and balance them against other local impacts like service and infrastructure demands.

## Q What are the big concerns with data centers?

Several concerns have been raised in communities hosting or considering data center developments. Here are a few key issues you should be aware of:

- **Energy consumption:** Data centers consume large amounts of energy. There are growing concerns about their impact on grid capacity, energy prices and carbon emissions.

Local officials should check with developers and utility providers to understand the impact a data center may have in your area. Local officials may also engage their own professionals to advise on these issues.

- **Liquid cooling:** Some data centers consume significant amounts of water, which may add extra strain to local systems. This is not the case for all centers though, and you should carefully review each specific project to understand its impact. This is also an issue that can be addressed through specific zoning regulations.
- **Farmland usage:** Some communities see significant pushback from residents based on the location of these data centers, which they believe are infringing on or limiting prime farmland. Many townships consider and adopt specific regulations to protect prime farmland.
- **Data privacy:** Although not directly related to zoning, many communities have seen residents concerned about what exactly is kept in the data center. Some data centers can hold significant amounts of personal information on individuals who use the internet, which many take issue with, especially when it is in their own community.

## Q Can the township enter a moratorium while we update our ordinances to include data centers or better regulate them?

Yes—but only if done properly. Townships should always consult with legal counsel before entering into a moratorium of any kind. At a minimum, the moratorium should be adopted by ordinance (not resolution), it should specifically lay out the reasons for the moratorium, and it should provide a clear end-date or time limit. You must also use the pause to take action—a moratorium is not a tool for delay, but to allow time for meaningful review and ultimately new regulations.

A moratorium on data centers may require both a zoning ordinance and police-power ordinance, meaning it must be reviewed by the planning commission and township board



and follow the legal steps for ordinance adoption. Always check with your township legal counsel regarding how to properly institute a moratorium.



## Where can I learn more?

Several communities in Michigan are already working on data centers. You can review other township's ordinances to get some ideas, but never copy an ordinance directly from another community, as it will not be designed for your needs and may be unlawful. MTA is also working with its Legal Counsel to develop a sample data center ordinance. Watch MTA's website, *Township Insights* weekly enewsletter and *Township Focus* for details when available.

MTA is also offering several upcoming educational opportunities with information on data centers, including zoning considerations:

- *Now You Know* lunchtime webinars on Jan. 21: *Planning & Zoning: NIMBY is Not an Option, Now What?*, taught by MTA Staff Attorney Catherine Mullhaupt; and on Feb. 18: *Cloud Control: Navigating Data Center Impacts*, taught by MTA Legal Counsel. These hour-long live online learning opportunities include time for questions and answers. They are also recorded and available for on-demand viewing if you are not able to participate during the events. Registration and more information is available online at [bit.ly/NYKmta](http://bit.ly/NYKmta). Cost is just \$25 per session. Townships with MTA Online subscriptions at the Premium level have free access for their entire township team, including planning and zoning officials.
- The 2026 MTA Capital Conference, held March 17 at the Lansing Center, will include an expert-led session, including MTA Legal Counsel, exploring considerations for data centers and renewable energy facilities. Turn to the inside back cover for additional information on the Capital Conference or visit [michigantownships.org](http://michigantownships.org) (under the "Advocacy" tab.). The early-bird registration deadline ends Feb. 3.
- Two Business Solution Sessions, held Tuesday, April 21 at the 2026 MTA Annual Conference & Expo, will tackle the topic, with "Powering Michigan's Future: Approaching Data Center Growth," taught by Lauren Snyder, senior vice president and chief customer & growth officer with Consumers Energy; and "Data In or Data Out?," led by an attorney with Mika Meyers. These sessions are taught by MTA Allied Service Providers. Learn more, including session descriptions, in the Conference registration brochure included in this issue of *Township Focus* and on [michigantownships.org](http://michigantownships.org).

*Hello, MTA ... ?* provides general information on typical questions asked by township officials. Readers are encouraged to contact an attorney when specific legal guidance is needed. Member township officials and personnel may contact MTA Member Information Services with questions or requests from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., weekdays, at (517) 321-6467 (press 1) or fax (517) 321-8908.

**TOWNSHIP OF SPARTA****ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_****AN ORDINANCE TO REGULATE CRYPTOCURRENCY DATA MINING FACILITIES  
AND DATA CENTERS**

The Township of Sparta ordains:

**Section 1. Addition of New Section 154.235 to the Zoning Ordinance.**

A new Section 154.235 entitled “Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facilities and Data Centers” is hereby added to the Township’s Zoning Ordinance, to read, in its entirety, as follows:

**Section 154.235 Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facilities and Data Centers.****A. Definitions.**

**CRYPTOCURRENCY DATA MINING FACILITY.** A facility dedicated to operating data processing equipment for commercial cryptocurrency mining and the process by which cryptocurrency transactions are verified and added to digital ledgers.

**DATA CENTER.** A structure that houses information technology infrastructure and equipment for building, running, and delivering applications, and the storage of digital data. This includes Artificial Intelligence (“AI”) Data Centers.

**B. General Provisions.**

- (1) Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facilities and Data Centers are permitted in the Township only as a special land use in the Industrial Zoning District.
- (2) The Township may enforce any remedy or enforcement, including but not limited to, the removal of any Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facilities and Data Centers pursuant to the Zoning Ordinance or as otherwise authorized by law if the Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center does not comply with this Section.

**C. Special Land Use Application Requirements.** In addition to the requirements of Section 154.186 an applicant for special land use approval of a Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center must provide the Township with all of the following:

- (1) An application fee in an amount set by resolution of the Township Board.
- (2) A list of all parcel numbers that the Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center will use; documentation establishing ownership of each parcel; and any lease agreements, easements, or purchase agreements for the subject parcels.

- (3) An operations agreement setting forth the parameters of the operation, the name and contact information of the operator, the applicant's inspection protocol, emergency procedures, and general safety documentation.
- (4) Current photographs of the subject property.
- (5) A site plan that includes all proposed structures and the location of all equipment, as well as all setbacks, the location of property lines, signage, fences, greenbelts and screening, drain tiles, easements, floodplains, bodies of water, proposed access routes, and road right of ways. The site plan must be drawn to scale and must indicate how the Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center will be connected to the power grid.
- (6) A written plan for maintaining the subject property, including a plan for maintaining and inspecting drain tiles and addressing stormwater management, which is subject to the Township's review and approval.
- (7) A decommissioning and land reclamation plan describing the actions to be taken following the abandonment or discontinuation of the Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center, including evidence of proposed commitments with property owners to ensure proper final reclamation, repairs to roads, and other steps necessary to fully remove the Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center and restore the subject parcels, which is subject to the Township's review and approval.
- (8) A deposit for an escrow account in an amount set by resolution or fee schedule approved by the Township Board. The escrow account is used to cover all costs and expenses associated with the special land use review and/or approval process, which costs can include, but are not limited to, review fees of the Township Attorney, Township Planner, and Township Engineer, as well as any reports or studies which the Township anticipates will be required during the review and/or approval process for the application. At any point during the review process, the Township may require that the applicant place additional monies into escrow with the Township if the existing escrowed funds on account with the Township will be insufficient, in the determination of the Township, to cover any remaining costs or expenses with the review and/or approval process. If additional funds are required by the Township to be placed in escrow and the applicant refuses to do so within 14 days after receiving notice, the Township will cease the zoning review and/or approval process until and unless the applicant makes the required escrow deposit. Any escrow amounts in excess of actual cost will be returned to the applicant. An itemized billing of all expenses will be provided to the applicant upon request.
- (9) A plan for resolving complaints from the public or other property owners concerning the construction and operation of the Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center, which is subject to the Township's review and approval.

- (10) A plan for managing any hazardous waste, which is subject to the Township's review and approval.
- (11) A fire protection plan, which identifies the fire risks associated with the Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center; describes the fire suppression system that will be implemented; describes what measures will be used to reduce the risk of fires re-igniting (i.e., implementing a "fire watch"); identifies the water sources that will be available for the local fire department to protect adjacent properties; identifies a system for continuous monitoring, early detection sensors, and appropriate venting; and explains all other measures that will be implemented to prevent, detect, control, and suppress fires and explosions.
- (12) A transportation plan for construction and operation phases, including any applicable agreements with the County Road Commission and Michigan Department of Transportation, which is subject to the Township's review and approval.
- (13) An attestation that the applicant will indemnify and hold the Township harmless from any costs or liability arising from the approval, installation, construction, maintenance, use, repair, or removal of the Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center, which is subject to the Township's review and approval.
- (14) Proof of environmental compliance, including compliance with Part 31, Water Resources Protection, of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act; (MCL 324.3101 et. seq.; Part 91, Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control (MCL 324.9101 et. seq.) and any corresponding County ordinances; Part 301, Inland Lakes and Streams, (MCL 324.30101 et. seq.); Part 303, Wetlands (MCL 324.30301 et. seq.); Part 365, Endangered Species Protection (MCL 324.36501 et. seq.); and any other applicable laws and rules in force at the time the Township considers the application.
- (15) Any additional information or documentation requested by the Planning Commission, Township Board, or other Township representative.

D. System and Location Requirements. In addition to the requirements of Section 154.170 for a site plan, the site plan must include all of the following:

- (1) Equipment. All equipment used in any Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center must be housed in a metered, electrically grounded, and pre-engineered or prefabricated metal-encased structure with a fire rating designed to resist an internal electrical fire for at least 30 minutes.
- (2) Structures. All principal and accessory structures used for cryptocurrency mining operations and/or data centers, shall be arranged, designed, and constructed to be harmonious and compatible with the site and with the surrounding properties. If prefabricated, pre-engineered, or modular structures are installed, the following standards are required:

- a) All structures shall have concrete foundations.
- b) All exterior facades shall have muted earth tone colors that will blend the facility into the natural setting and existing environment, and shall not be defective, decayed or corroded.
- c) If intermodal shipping containers are utilized such installation shall comply with current National Electrical Code standards.

(3) Lighting. The lighting of the Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center is limited to the minimum light necessary for safe operation. Illumination from any lighting must not extend beyond the perimeter of the lot(s) used for the Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center. The Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center must not produce any glare that is visible to neighboring lots or persons traveling on public or private roads.

(4) Security Fencing. Security fencing must be installed around all electrical equipment related to the Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center. Such fencing must be a minimum seven (7) feet tall and must use materials, colors, textures, screening and landscaping, that will blend the facility into the natural setting and existing environment.

(5) Noise. The noise generated by the Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center must not exceed 45 dBA Lmax, as measured at the property line of any adjacent parcel.

(6) Signage. The Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center shall provide a 24-hour emergency contact signage visible at the access entrance. Signs shall include company name if applicable, owner/representative name, telephone number, and corresponding local power company and telephone number.

(7) Underground Transmission. All power transmission or other lines, wires, or conduits from a Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center to any building or other structure must be located underground at a depth that complies with current National Electrical Code standards, except for power switchyards or the area within a substation.

(8) Drain Tile Inspections. The Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center must be maintained in working condition at all times while in operation. The applicant or operator must inspect all drain tiles at least once every three years using a robotic camera, with the first inspection occurring before the Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center is in operation. The applicant or operator must submit proof of the inspection to the Township. The owner or operator must repair any damage or failure of the drain tile within sixty (60) days after discovery and submit proof of the repair to the Township. The Township is entitled, but not required, to have a representative present at each inspection or to conduct an independent inspection.

(9) Fire Protection.

- a) Before any construction of the Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center begins, the Township's fire department (or the fire department with which the Township contracts for fire service) will review the fire protection plan submitted with the application. The fire chief will determine whether the fire protection plan adequately protects the Township's residents and property and whether there is sufficient water supply to comply with the fire protection plan and to respond to fire or explosion incidents. If the fire chief determines that the plan is adequate, then the fire chief will notify the Township or his or her designee of that determination. If the fire chief determines that the plan is inadequate, then the fire chief may propose modifications to the plan, which the applicant or operator of the Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center must implement. The fire chief's decision may be appealed to the Township Board, and the Township Board will hear the appeal at an open meeting. The Township Board may affirm, reverse, or modify the fire chief's determination. The Township Board's decision is final, subject to any appellate rights available under applicable law.
- b) The applicant or operator may amend the fire protection plan from time-to-time in light of changing technology or other factors. Any proposed amendment must be submitted to the fire department for review and approval under subsection (a).
- c) The Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center must comply with the fire protection plan as approved by the fire chief (or as approved by the Township Board in the event of an appeal).
- d) The Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center must contain an internal fire suppression system that shall be reviewed and tested once every twelve (12) months by a third-party contractor approved by the fire chief.

(10) Applicant must provide all Township Fire Department contractors with the appropriate equipment and training to address fires in the Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center.

(11) Insurance. The applicant or operator will maintain property/casualty insurance and general commercial liability insurance in an amount of at least \$5 million per occurrence. The Township shall be listed as an additional insured on the policy at all times.

(12) Permits. All required county, state, and federal permits must be obtained before the Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center begins operating. A building permit is required for construction of a Cryptocurrency Data Mining

Facility or Data Center regardless of whether the applicant or operator is otherwise exempt under state law.

- (13) Decommissioning. If a Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center is abandoned or otherwise nonoperational for a period of one year, the property owner or the operator must notify the Township and must remove the system within six (6) months after the date of abandonment. Removal requires receipt of a demolition permit from the Building Official and full restoration of the site to the satisfaction of the Zoning Administrator. The site must be filled and covered with top soil and restored to a state compatible with the surrounding vegetation. The requirements of this subsection also apply to a Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center that is never fully completed or operational if construction has been halted for a period of one (1) year.
- (14) Financial Security. To ensure proper decommissioning of a Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center upon abandonment, the applicant must post financial security in the form of a security bond or escrow payment in an amount equal to 125% of the total estimated cost of decommissioning, code enforcement, and reclamation, which cost estimate must be approved by the Township. The operator and the Township will review the amount of the financial security every two (2) years to ensure that the amount remains adequate. This financial security must be posted within fifteen (15) business days after approval of the special use application.
- (15) Extraordinary Events. If the Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center experiences a failure, fire, leakage of hazardous materials, personal injury, or other extraordinary or catastrophic event, the applicant or operator must notify the Township within 24 hours.
- (16) Annual Report. The applicant or operator must submit a report on or before January 1 of each year that includes all of the following:
  - a) Current proof of insurance;
  - b) Verification of financial security; and
  - c) A summary of all complaints, complaint resolutions, and extraordinary events.
- (17) Inspections. The Township may inspect a Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center at any time by providing 24-hour advance notice to the applicant or operator.
- (18) Transferability. A conditional land use permit for a Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center is transferable to a new owner. The new owner must register their name and business address with the Township and must comply with this Ordinance and all approvals and conditions issued by the Township.

(19) Remedies. If an applicant or operator fails to comply with this Ordinance, the Township, may pursue any remedy or enforcement, including but not limited to the removal of any Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facility or Data Center pursuant to the Zoning Ordinance or as otherwise authorized by law. Additionally, the Township may pursue any legal or equitable action to abate a violation and recover any and all costs, including the Township's actual attorney fees and costs.

**Section 2. Amendment of Section 154.247.**

Section 154.247, is hereby amended to add Cryptocurrency Data Mining Facilities and Data Centers to the Table of Use Regulations as a special land use in the Industrial zoning district.

**Section 3. Validity and Severability.**

If any portion of this Ordinance is found invalid for any reason, such holding will not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Ordinance.

**Section 4. Repealer.**

All other ordinances inconsistent with the provisions of this Ordinance are hereby repealed to the extent necessary to give this Ordinance full force and effect.

**Section 5. Effective Date.**

This Ordinance takes effect upon the expiration of 7 days after publication as required by MCL 125.3401(7).

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