Cass County Master Plan

ADOPTED JANUARY 8, 2026



MCKENNA

A Prelude to Planning

"Think of the seven generations after you in your words, work, and actions... Remember the seven generations who came before you."

Attributed to the ancient philosophy of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy

This philosophy embodies the intent behind the Cass County Master Plan. The jurisdictions within the County have gone through many changes over the past seven generations. We must also consider that the people who contribute to this Plan will not be here seven generations from now, but the land will remain, and future residents will have to reckon with our impact. Unplanned growth and careless land practices can cause land use conflicts, environmental problems, and the unnecessary or excessive loss of fertile land.

It is the intent that the recommendations, programs, policies, and other aspects of this Plan will be initiated within the County, with support and input from the local communities, and most importantly, the residents and taxpayers of Cass County. This Plan is intended to represent the overall vision, priorities, and direction for the County over the next 20 years. It should serve as a decision-making tool for both public and private decision-makers, and implemented such to effectively protect the historic character and integrity of the community.

Acknowledgments

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01.

Introduction



What is a Master Plan?

A Master Plan is the long-range policy document that serves as a guide for communities over for the next 10-20 years and provides the legal basis for zoning and land use development regulations.

The Cass County Master Plan is a policy document adopted by the County for the purpose of guiding future land use and infrastructure development within its jurisdiction. Not only does this Plan reflect a comprehensive vision for the community, but it also serves as the key building block in establishing the policies, programs, and procedures to achieve that long-term community vision.

The Cass County Master Plan includes Marcellus, Pokagon and Volinia Townships, as well as the Village of Vandalia.

STATE AUTHORIZATION FOR PLANNING

In the State of Michigan, Master Plans are authorized by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Act 33 of 2008), also known as the MPEA.

According to the MPEA, a Master Plan should:

- Promote and protect the public health, safety, and general welfare;
- Encourage the use of resources in accordance with their character and adaptability;
- Facilitate the efficient use of land while preventing overcrowding of land by buildings or people;
- Lessen congestion on public roads and streets;
- Facilitate provisions for a system of transportation, sewage disposal, safe and adequate water supply, recreation, and other public improvements.
- Consider the appropriate land uses for different areas of the community; and
- Identify and develop strategies for the protection of delicate and finite natural resources and ecosystems.
- Adequately provide for a range of housing types, costs, affordability, attainability, ages, and other characteristics.



HOW WILL THE MASTER PLAN BE USED?

The Master Plan provides a future land use vision for the Cass County community at large and specifically serves as a guide for future land use decisions within Marcellus, Pokagon and Volinia Townships and the Village of Vandalia. The Plan is not a binding legal document; local zoning ordinances serve as the law that must be followed.

THE PLAN SUPPORTS THE ZONING ORDINANCE*

The Master Plan provides the foundation for a community's visions regarding future development to be translated into action through zoning. In application this occurs through rezoning decisions, site plan reviews, special land use approvals, and variances. In that the provisions contained within a zoning ordinance are developed with the intent to carry out the specific objectives and strategies of the Plan, each local zoning ordinance will be foundationally and legally defensible.

**This Plan supports the zoning ordinances of the participating communities of Marcellus, Pokagon and Volinia Townships and the Village of Vandalia.*

THE PLAN FACILITATES COOPERATION

The Master Plan is also intended to assist other government agencies that work within Cass County and in concert with local officials. The planning and development programs of other agencies involved in future land use decisions, such as the Michigan Department of Transportation, Cass County Road Commission, Van Buren/ Cass District Health Department, and the Cass County Drain Commissioner, can assist in the implementation of the Master Plan.

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02.

Cass County in Context

Geography

Cass County is 508 square miles in area (325,120 acres) and is located in the southwestern lower peninsula of Michigan, abutting the Michigan/Indiana state line. A picturesque rural community, Cass County is replete with natural prairies and abundant inland lakes, rivers, creeks, and low-lying wetlands, which are foundational to its residential and recreational character. Cass County also features a prominent farming industry, with nearly 86% of its land currently used for agriculture.

REGIONAL LOCATION

Cass County's proximity to numerous metropolitan areas is a notable feature of its situation in southwest Michigan. From the center of Cass County, Niles lies 17 miles southwest; Benton Harbor lies 33 miles northwest; Elkhart and South Bend are 19 and 28 miles to the south; and Kalamazoo and Battle Creek are roughly 45 and 68 miles northeast of Cass County. The Lake Michigan shoreline is roughly 30 miles to the west. This places many of southwest Michigan's and northern Indiana's important economic centers within easy commuting distance of Cass County.

Cass County's regional location provides convenient access to employment opportunities and economic centers, as well as to cultural and recreational amenities. As west Michigan continues to grow, the convenience of Cass County's location and its appealing rural environment will be driving factors in the County's long-range development.



Figure 1. Regional Location of Cass County



Map 1.

Distances to Metropolitan Centers

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025

LEGEND

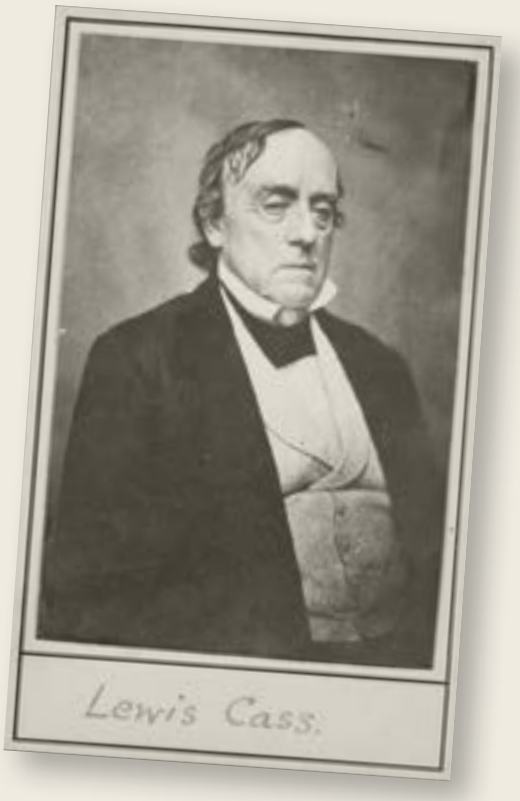
- Lake Michigan Shoreline
- Benton Harbor
- Kalamazoo
- Battle Creek
- Elkhart, IN
- South Bend, IN
- Niles

0 4 2 MILES

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a. Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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A Brief History

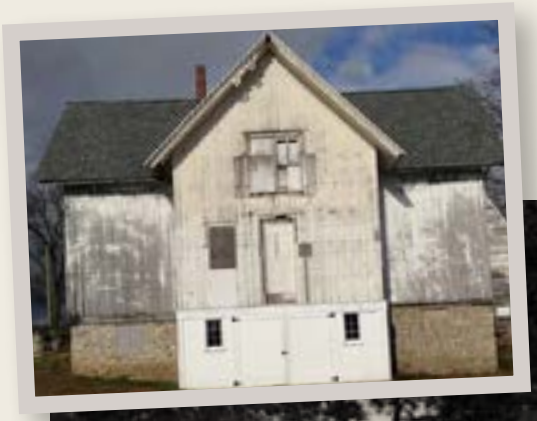


Cass County was organized in 1829 with an original population of nearly 900 people. It was named after Lewis Cass, the Michigan Territorial Governor at the time. It is primarily an agricultural community as, at the time of settlement, the County was not heavily forested like most other areas in Michigan. Instead, it contained prairie land, with fertile soils. By 1834, the County grew to over 3,000 people due to its successful farming and industrial opportunities.

Cass County was home to many in the Potawatomi Tribe. But by 1828 they had given up most of the land they occupied to settlers with the exception of a 49 square-mile reservation in Berrien County. In 1833, the Potawatomi gave up the rest of the land in response to agricultural demands.

One band, the Pokagon Band, of about 250 remained in Cass County. By 1837, the band had purchased 1,000 acres of land with the leadership of Leopold Pokagon.

Many of the people who settled in Cass County were abolitionists during the mid-nineteenth century. Cass County was home to many on their journeys on the Underground Railroad. Cass County is a community of people committed to these historical roots, with many historical sites to visit in the villages and the City of Dowagiac, including historical homes, schools, and museums.



Bonine Carriage House, Vandalia – period farm museum & station on the Underground Railroad (left)



Key Findings

- The abundance of inland lakes, waterbodies and rural open space makes the County an attractive place of residence and recreation.
- Cass County is a farming community, with nearly 86% of its land currently used for agriculture.
- Many Cass County residents commute to major nearby job centers (Niles, Benton Harbor, Elkhart, South Bend, Kalamazoo, and Battle Creek) located outside of the County.
- A major metropolitan center is not located within Cass County. Instead, the County consists of numerous small, close-knit communities within agricultural settings. These communities serve as social, civic and economic convenience centers for the rural population of the County.
- The rich history of the County has been preserved in a network of historically significant buildings, grounds and events that serve as regional destinations.

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03.

Cass County: its Places



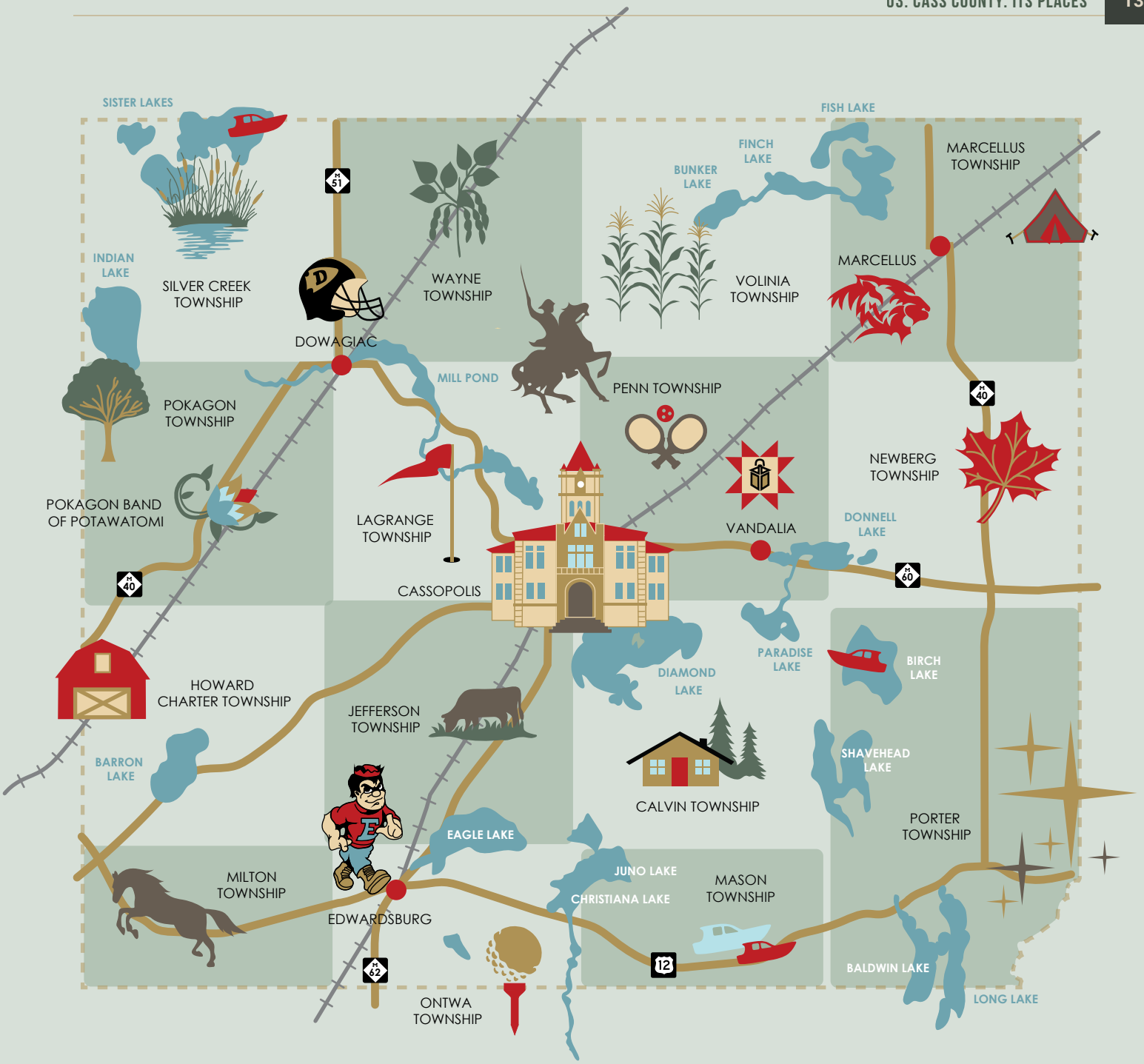
Dowagiac Music in the Park, Dowagiac Library Event Pavilion

Cass County was founded as an agricultural community and remains tied to this heritage today. It has also preserved much of its prairieland and natural water features. Though similar in some land characteristics such as these, each community within the County has its own unique character and sense of place.

Local Communities

Cass County consists of 15 townships, four villages, and one city. The County provides planning services for four of the 20 communities, but the Plan also includes a vision for the entire County.

The 20 municipalities are detailed on the following pages. Not included on the following pages are hamlets and other small communities that are not chartered or incorporated municipalities.



CASS COUNTY, MI

Silver Creek Township



Master Plan

Local

Township Hall Location

32764 Dixon Street
Dowagiac, MI 49047

Population (2022)

3,056

Key Natural and Recreational Features

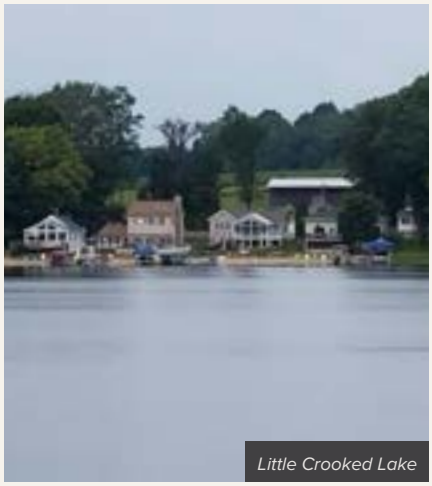
Located within the Township are many lakes, including Magician Lake, Dewey Lake, Cable Lake, Little Crooked Lake, and Indian Lake. A variety of recreational features highlight these inland lakes, including boat launches, resorts/inns, a yacht club and a golf course.

Key Commuting Routes and Economic Connectors

M-51, a recognized commuter corridor within the County, extends along the eastern boundary of Silver Creek Township and provides easy access to the City of Dowagiac. M-62 runs along the southern boundary of the Township and provides a direct link from adjacent Berrien County to the City of Dowagiac. The Dowagiac Union School District serves the entirety of the Township.



Magician Lake



Little Crooked Lake



Event Venue



Seasonal Market



Indian Lake

City of Dowagiac



Master Plan

Local

City Hall Location

241 S. Front Street
Dowagiac, MI 49047

Population (2022)

5,680

Key Natural and Recreational Features

The City of Dowagiac is home to many parks and golf courses, including Rudolphi Wildlife Refuge, James Heddon Park, Burling Park, the Fishing Park, Schuur Park, Dowagiac Skate Park, Beckwith Park, and City Hall Park. The City of Dowagiac is home to many and varied recreational features, including parks, golf courses, theaters and museums. The Dowagiac District Library is also situated downtown on Commercial Street.

Key Commuting Routes and Economic Connectors

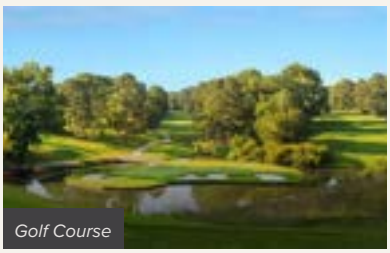
M-51 and M-62 extend into Dowagiac allowing for an easy commute into town. The City of Dowagiac has a variety of types of business contributing to their economy, including the Dowagiac Municipal Airport, as well as downtown stores and manufacturing businesses. A variety of restaurants line Front Street. Schools located in the area include a private school as well as various schools in the Dowagiac Union School District.



Dowagiac Music in the Park



Dowagiac Area History Museum



Golf Course



Schurr Park



Downtown Dowagiac

Wayne Township



Master Plan

Local

Township Hall Location

53950 Glenwood Road
Dowagiac, MI 49047

Population (2022)

2,574

Key Natural and Recreational Features

Key water features within the Township include the Dowagiac River, Twin Lakes, Mill Pond, Pitcher, Round, and Greer Lakes. Twin Lakes is notably surrounded by residential development. Various recreational attractions are found within the Township, including campgrounds, roadside markets, and seasonal u-picks.

Key Commuting Routes and Economic Connectors

M-152 and Marcellus Highway are the two main connectors in the community. M-152 connects the Township to Sister Lakes to the west. Marcellus Highway provides access to the City of Dowagiac to the southwest. Dowagiac Union School District serves the Township.



Ranch



Campground



Twin Lakes



Campground

Volinia Township



Master Plan

County

Township Hall Location

53254 Goodenough Road
Marcellus, MI 49067

Population (2022)

1,218

Key Natural and Recreational Features

Volinia Township is a community of abundant agricultural land use and open space. Public parks, preserves, and nature trail networks can be found throughout the Township. Several inland lakes, including Bunker Lake, Little Fish Lake, Finch Lake, Cowham Lake and Copley Lake define the eastern portion of Volinia Township.

Key Commuting Routes and Economic Connectors

There are no major commuting routes that extend through the Township. However, Marcellus Highway serves as a well-traveled east-west corridor within Volinia Township, providing easy connection to the City of Dowagiac and the Village of Marcellus. Decatur Road is another key corridor on the western edge of the Township running north-south.



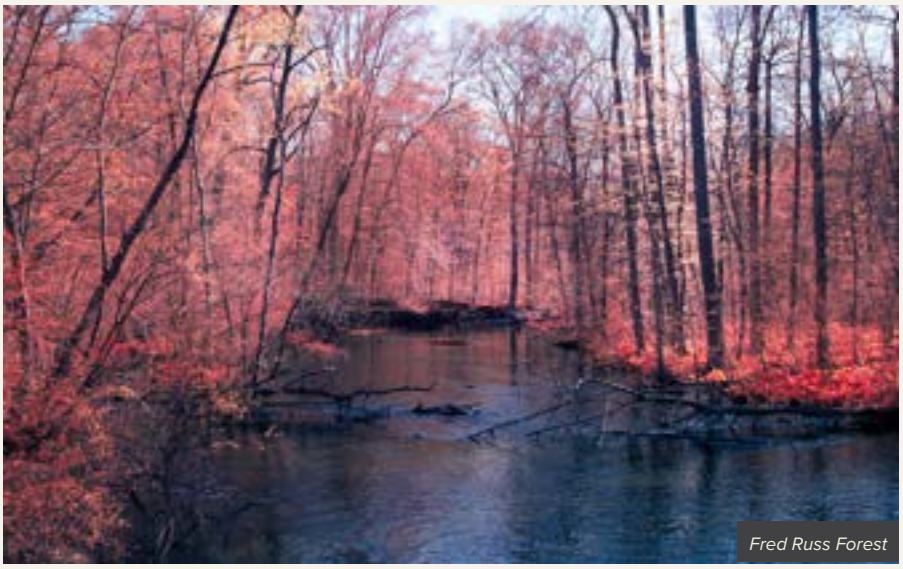
Eva Stevens Lakeside Park



Seasonal Market



Fred Russ Forest



Fred Russ Forest

Village of Marcellus



Master Plan

Local

Village Hall Location

177 East Main Street
Marcellus, MI 49067

Population (2022)

1,203

Key Natural and Recreational Features

Prime farmland and wetlands occupy the outskirts of the Village, with local recreational features consisting of community parks and school sports facilities.

Key Commuting Routes and Economic Connectors

M-40 extends east-west through the Village, then turns to continue north-south and exit the Village limits. M-216 is another primary east-west connector in the County and serves as a major downtown corridor. Marcellus Community Schools are located within the Village limits.



Downtown Marcellus



Gazebo in Downtown Marcellus





VFW Post 4054 Museum

Marcellus Township



Master Plan

County

Township Hall Location

463 W Main Street
Marcellus, MI 49067

Population (2022)

2,227

Key Natural and Recreational Features

Fish Lake, Goff Lake, Cranberry Lake, Saddlebag Lake, and Hemlock Lake are key natural features within the Township. Related recreational opportunities include various campground facilities located throughout the Township and on the lakes. Marcellus District Library is located on East Main Street.

Key Commuting Routes and Economic Connectors

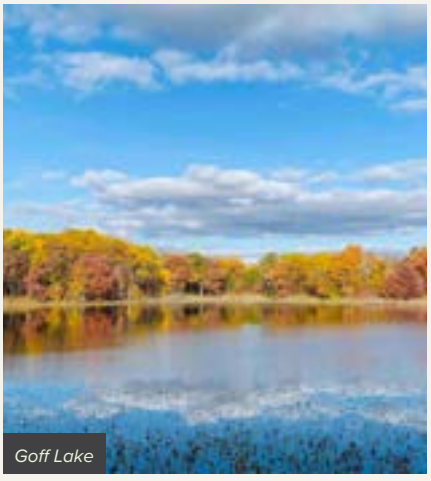
The Village of Marcellus serves as a population center within the Township. The downtown area provides convenience needs and social opportunities to local residents. M-40 runs north-south, and M-216 stretches east-west through the middle of the Township. Both major commuting routes extend through the Village of Marcellus and connect to adjacent communities.



Cranberry Lake



Campground



Goff Lake



Campground

Pokagon Township



Master Plan

County

Township Hall Location

30683 Peavine Street
Dowagiac, MI 49047

Population (2022)

2,002

Key Natural and Recreational Features

Pokagon Township consists largely of agricultural lands and open space. Parkland is plentiful and includes the Arthur Dodd Memorial Park and Dowagiac Woods Nature Sanctuary. There are several water features in the Township including Indian Lake, Little Smith Lake, and the Dowagiac River. River access points include the Dodd Park Canoe Launch, the DNR Canoe Launch on Peavine Street, and the Dowagiac River Bridge. The Four Winds Casino and other Pokagon Band properties are present in the Township. The Old Rugged Cross Church represents the only National Historic site in the Township.

Key Commuting Routes and Economic Connectors

M-51 extends from the northeast corner of the Township down to the southwest corner, connecting the Township to two nearby economic centers, the City of Dowagiac and the City of Niles. The M-51 and M-62 corridors not only serves as key commuter routes but also as gateway commercial corridors. M-62 extends along the northern boundary of the Pokagon Township, providing a direct route from adjacent Berrien County to the City of Dowagiac.



Indian Lake



Arthur Dodd Park Canoe Launch



Dowagiac Woods



Old Rugged Cross Church

LaGrange Township



Master Plan

Local

Township Hall Location

58253 M-62
Cassopolis, MI 49031

Population (2022)

3,762

Key Natural and Recreational Features

Similar to many Cass County communities, LaGrange Township is a primarily rural community with extensive agricultural lands and open spaces. The Township boasts many beautiful outdoor recreational features and venues.

Key Commuting Routes and Economic Connectors

The Village of Cassopolis exists as a population center within LaGrange Township. M-62 extends diagonally from the northwest corner of the Township south to the southeast corner, connecting the City of Dowagiac located northwest of the Township to the Village of Cassopolis. Southwestern Michigan College is located in the Township serving as an active catalyst in the area for young adults.



LaGrange Township Hall



Dirt Road



Inland Marsh



Countryside



Golf Course

Village of Cassopolis



Master Plan

Local

Village Hall Location

121 N Disbrow Street
Cassopolis, MI 49031

Population (2022)

1,750

Key Natural and Recreational Features

The Village of Cassopolis has one lake located within its boundaries, Stone Lake. Stone Lake Beach is where the Village hosts many of its events, like the Beach Bash and the Summer Concert Series. The Village's recreational assets include Clisbee Park, a skate and bike park, Ronald E. Bass Memorial, and Don Horne Park. The DNR also has a public access site on the lake in the Village.

Key Commuting Routes and Economic Connectors

M-60 and M-62 extend through the Village allowing for an easy commute to and from surrounding communities. The downtown businesses help to drive the economy of the community and include many great local eateries. As the County seat, Cassopolis is also home to the Cass County Fairgrounds, the Historical Library, and the recently renovated historic county courthouse. The Cassopolis Public School District serves the entirety of the Village.



Cass County Historic Courthouse



Seasonal Festival



Retailer



MEC Headquarters



Community Center



Lakefront



Beachfront at Stone Lake

Penn Township



Master Plan

Local

Township Hall Location

60717 Main Street
Vandalia, MI 49095

Population (2022)

2,149

Key Natural and Recreational Features

Penn Township has two bigger lakes: Donnell Lake and Diamond Lake, as well as several smaller lakes and Christiana Creek. Waterfront recreational features include a public boat launch, swimming access, several private clubs, and various cabin/inn accommodations. The James E. Bonine House, a historical landmark of the Underground Railroad, is also located within the Township.

Key Commuting Routes and Economic Connectors

The Village of Vandalia is a small population center within the Township, located along the M-60 corridor in the southern part of the Township and situated near active waterfront settlements. M-60 is a key commuting connector in the community, running east towards the Village of Cassopolis and west towards the hamlet of Jones.



James E. Bonine House



Diamond Lake



Donell Lake



Pickleball

Village of Vandalia



Master Plan

County

Village Hall Location

18035 State Street
Vandalia, MI 49095

Population (2022)

389

Key Natural and Recreational Features

The beautiful Christiana Creek flows through the Village of Vandalia and provides the backdrop to the Milo Barns Park and an Underground Railroad Historical Marker. Pickleball and tennis courts are located right behind Penn Township Hall in the center of town.

Key Commuting Routes and Economic Connectors

M-60, a major commuter route within the County, extends through the middle of the Village and serves as its major commercial corridor.



Community Center


Milo Barns Park



Underground Railroad Historical Marker


Milo Barns Park

Newberg Township



Master Plan

The Township does not have a Master Plan.

Township Hall Location

13020 Born Street
Jones, MI 49061

Population (2022)

1,688

Key Natural and Recreational Features

Swiss Valley Ski and Snowboard area and M-40 Speedway are major seasonal attractions within the Township. Newberg Township is also host to numerous recreational accommodations, including resorts, cabins, campgrounds, a popular wedding/event venue, and several specialty farms that host local festivals and outdoor concerts. The Crane Pond State Game Area is situated near several small inland lakes.

Key Commuting Routes and Economic Connectors

The hamlet of Jones serves as a small population center in the Township. M-40 and M-60 are key commuter routes extending through the Township and allow for easy connection to the nearby economic centers of Cassopolis and Three Rivers.



Dr. TK Lawless International Dark Sky Park



Historic Poe's Church



Newberg Township Hall



Michigan Maple Syrup Festival



Michigan Maple Syrup Festival



Michigan Maple Syrup Festival

Howard Charter Township



Master Plan

Local

Township Hall Location

1345 Barron Lake Road
Niles, MI 49120

Population (2022)

6,269

Key Commuting Routes and Economic Connectors

The Township is a mix of rural, agricultural and natural open spaces, with some waterfront residential densities. Several specialty parks are located within Howard Charter Township, including a disc golf course located at Jones Park; a local skate park; and, Sholtey Park, which has a nice playground for children. Barron Lake is known for its vibrant lakeside life. A Cass County District Library is located in the Township.

Key Commuting Routes and Economic Connectors

M-51, a primary commuting route, crosses the northwest corner of the Township. Additionally, M-60 extends diagonally through the Township, allowing for easy travel to Niles to the southwest and Cassopolis to the northeast. The Township is served by Niles Community School District, Cassopolis Public Schools, and Edwardsburg Public Schools.



Howard Charter Township Hall



Farm



Cass District Library Howard Branch



Carberry Road

Jefferson Township



Master Plan

Local

Township Hall Location

24725 Jefferson Center Street
Cassopolis, MI 49031

Population (2022)

2,580

Key Natural and Recreational Features

Jefferson Township is primarily rural agricultural. Outdoor recreational amenities include a horseback riding facility, a popular conservation club, and many local farm markets.

Key Commuting Routes and Economic Connectors

M-62 and M-60 stretch northwest through the Township allowing convenient access to the Village of Edwardsburg and the Village of Cassopolis. Pine Lake Street, Monette Street, and Dailey Road are three other main connectors in the Township. The Township is served by Cassopolis Public Schools and Edwardsburg Public Schools.



Jefferson Township Hall



Cass County Medical Care Facility



Greenhouse



Farm

Calvin Township



Master Plan

Local

Township Hall Location

18693 Mt. Zion Street
Cassopolis, MI 49031

Population (2022)

1,687

Key Natural and Recreational Features

Many small inland lakes dot the Township, including Paradise Lake, Chain Lake, Round Lake, Long Lake, Tharp Lake, Day Lake, Curtis Lake, Puterbaugh Lake, Robinson Lake, and Lenninger Lake, as well as portions of Juno Lake and Diamond Lake. Calvin Township is home to various farms, where many activities are hosted such as field trips and tours.

There are camp and retreat centers located in the Township offering a wide range of activities and camping opportunities for groups and organizations.

Key Commuting Routes and Economic Connectors

No major commuting routes extend through Calvin Township. The two main connectors within the Township are Calvin Hill Street and Calvin Center Road, which connect to M-60, M-62, and US-12.



Township Hall



Welcome Sign



Paradise Lake



Farm

Porter Township



Master Plan

Local

Township Hall Location

69373 Baldwin Prairie Road
Union, MI 49130

Population (2022)

3,819

Key Natural and Recreational Features

Porter Township is a community of numerous lakes: Bair Lake, Birch Lake, Shavehead Lake, Long Lake, and Baldwin Lake being the largest ones. Outdoor recreational features include campgrounds, Harmon Park, Henry Sears Boat Launch, and Dr. T.K. Lawless International Dark Sky County Park. Many of these are located on or around the lakes.

Key Commuting Routes and Economic Connectors

M-40 extends north-south through the Township as a major commuter route to major communities to the north. Similar to the other townships within the County that border the Indiana state line, US-12 extends east-west through the southern portion of the Township where it intersects with M-40 and serves as a primary connecting corridor.



Dr. T.K. Lawless International Dark Sky County Park



Dr. T.K. Lawless International Dark Sky County Park



Sears Memorial Park



Campground

Milton Township



Master Plan

Local

Township Hall Location

32097 Bertrand Road
Niles, MI 49120

Population (2022)

3,185

Key Natural and Recreational Features

Goose Lake is located in Milton Township. Milton Township Park is a small playground located outside of the Township Hall. There are several greenhouses and farms located throughout the Township. There are a few campgrounds located in the Township, as well as horseback riding facilities.

Key Commuting Routes and Economic Connectors

The southern boundary of Milton Township borders Indiana. US-12, a largely east-west commuting route within the County, extends the length of the Township. The M-60/US-12 interchange is situated in the northwest corner of the Township.



Greenhouse



Greenhouse



New Gumwood roundabout



Milton Township Park



Milton Township Hall



Redfield Road

Village of Edwardsburg



Master Plan

Local

Village Hall Location

26296 Main Street
Edwardsburg, MI 49112

Population (2022)

1,265

Key Natural and Recreational Features

Pleasant Lake is situated in the northwest corner of the Village and is host to Gunn Park, the site of the annual Memorial Day Festival, and Lindbergh Park, named for Charles Lindbergh's mother whose plane was forced down near this location.

The Ewardsburg Area Historical Museum, built in 1861 as a hotel, is located downtown Edwardsburg and offers a permanent collection of local artifacts and heirlooms for public enjoyment. Also unique to Edwardsburg is the elevator mural designed to celebrate the town's historical train station.

Key Commuting Routes and Economic Connectors

US-12 and M-62 intersect in the Village, allowing for convenient travel into and within the Village. The top industry in the Village of Edwardsburg is manufacturing. Most of this activity has developed along the railroad that extends through the Village. Four schools of the Edwardsburg Public School District are located within the Village boundaries.



"All Aboard" Mural



Edwardsburg Area Historical Museum



Edwardsburg Village Hall



Cass District Library Edwardsburg Ranch

Ontwa Township



Master Plan

Local

Township Hall Location

26225 US-12
Edwardsburg, MI 49112

Population (2022)

6,864

Key Natural and Recreational Features

There are many small lakes and parks spread throughout the Township, including Eagle Lake, Christiana Lake, Garver Lake, Pleasant Lake, and Kraus Memorial Park. Other recreational features include a local sports complex, golf courses, a private club and horse stables.

Key Commuting Routes and Economic Connectors

The growing Village of Edwardsburg serves as a population center within the Township. US-12 extends through Ontwa as a main east-west corridor intersecting with M-62 within the Village of Edwardsburg. Edwardsburg Public School District serves the Township.



Christiana Lake



Golf Course



Edwardsburg Sports Complex



Ontwa Township Hall



Eagle Lake Public Access

Mason Township



Master Plan

Local

Township Hall Location

17049 US-12
Edwardsburg, MI 49112

Population (2022)

2,844

Key Natural and Recreational Features

Juno Lake is a key natural resource in Mason Township and features a public access and boat launch pier. Cass District Library hosts events, activities, and educational opportunities throughout the year for residents of the Township. Local farms allow recreational opportunities such as a corn maze, pumpkin patch, hayride, train ride, jumping pillow, and other fall activities. The Township includes one park located behind the Township Hall.

Key Commuting Routes and Economic Connectors

US-12 stretches east-west through the Township connecting Mason Township to centers like the Village of Edwardsburg and other major state highways. Cassopolis Road and Calvin Center Road both extend north-south providing routes to adjacent communities in Indiana.



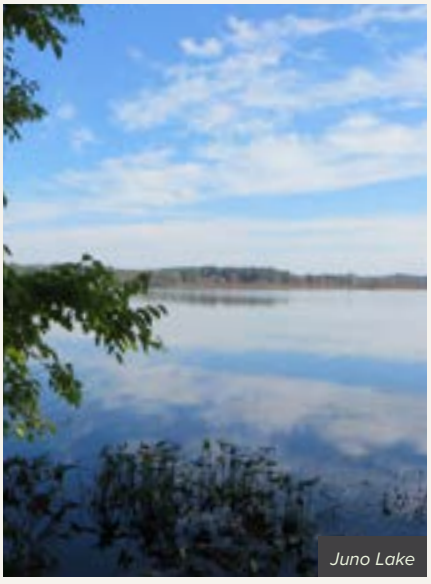
Fall Corn Maze



Township Hall



Pumpkin Patch



Juno Lake



Calvin Center Road

Signature Cass County Attractions and Destinations



Swiss Valley Ski and Snowboard Area

HISTORY

Discovering history in Cass County at the Dowagiac Area History Museum is a very popular activity in the County. The museum consists of three floors dedicated to the history of Dowagiac, Cass County, and Sister Lakes and features exhibits on the Potawatomi Indians, the Underground Railroad, the waterways and natural features of Cass County, the history of Dowagiac, Cassopolis and other Cass County towns, the local residents who made history, and the “Industrial Dowagiac”.

Other historical attractions include the Edwardsburg Area History Museum, the Bonine House, the Historic Newton House, the Red Brick School and the historic Cass County Courthouse. Several other historic landmarks are registered, and local history is celebrated by local civic groups and events.

PRESERVATION

At 384 acres in size, the Dowagiac Woods Nature Sanctuary located in Pokagon Township is the second largest Michigan Nature Association sanctuary in the lower peninsula. The majority of the sanctuary is left untouched allowing for visitors to experience Michigan in its natural state. There is a 1.5-mile walking loop with boardwalks and benches for visitors to traverse with ease. The woods are very biodiverse due to its variety of ecosystems and include floodplains, southern mesic forest, and hardwood swamp.

RECREATION

One of the widely known attractions in Cass County is the Swiss Valley Ski and Snowboard Area. The area includes 12 different runs with three ski lifts and four towing ropes. There are also two terrain parks with a total of 42 rotating features. Swiss Valley is home to the highest peak in Southwest Michigan at 225 feet. The ski lodge features a restaurant, café, rental shop, and service center.

Swiss Valley Ski and Snowboard Area hosts a variety of events during the winter season, including various park competitions like Night Race Leagues, Junior Development Team, and the beginners NASTAR race.

Kayak or canoe Christiana Creek for a fun outdoor adventure. One can enter the Creek through various access points like Juno Lake, where many also enjoy swimming. Stone, Hemlock, Harwood, Fish, Donnell, Dewey, and Corey Lakes are great swimming lakes as well, with public access, toilets, and plenty of parking for the small beaches. Dowagiac Creek is also a popular destination for kayaking, canoeing, and fly-fishing. The beautiful Fred Russ Forest Park provides equestrian trails, the historic Newton House, and key entrance to the creek. Magician Lake, Chain Lake, Paradise Lake, Shavehead Lake, Eagle Lake, Diamond Lake, and Stone Lake are well suited for ice fishing, for those who prefer fishing in the colder months.


Cassopolis Beach Bash

SEASONAL EVENTS

A variety of concerts, festivals and events dot the annual calendar in Cass County. Some of the more popular events include Under the Harvest Moon Festival in Dowagiac, the Blue Gill Frolic of Marcellus, the Rock the Block Summer Concerts in Cassopolis, and the Edwardsburg Fall Festival.

There are also several races hosted in Cass County from color runs and fundraisers to triathlons. One popular triathlon is the Diamond Lake Triathlon. The race draws swimmers, cyclists, and runners from all over the state and region.



Dowagiac Area History Museum


Diamond Lake


Cassopolis Beach Bash


Fat Cams Restaurant


Edwardsburg Memorial Day Festival



Diamond Lake Triathalon

The Cass County Fair hosts numerous events including Veterans Day event, Kiddie's Day, Law Enforcement Day, Senior Citizens Day, Handi Capable Day, and Frontline – Healthcare Workers Day. Each year the fair creates educational, social, cultural and economic opportunities to preserve and promote the County's traditions year-round generating economic stimulation and tourism development in the County. The Fair is more than 170 years old and gives County residents and youth a chance to show off their hard work and have fun.

Dr. T.K. Lawless International Dark Sky County Park stays open late several days throughout the year to host Dark Sky Viewing Nights for guests to bring a chair, cozy up with a blanket, and view the stars in the sky.

Throughout the year, cities, villages, and townships host events to celebrate the holidays. In the spring, Cass County and Dowagiac host their own "Egg"stravaganzas to celebrate Easter. In the fall, Cassopolis hosts a Ghouls Night Out for families to camp, participate in various spooky activities and contests, and enjoy a pancake breakfast the following morning. As winter approaches, the communities support their residents through various turkey, food, and toy drives. Also in the winter, many communities host Christmas celebrations like the Dowagiac Candlelight Christmas Parade, the Christmas in the Village celebration in Marcellus Township, and Winter Nights at Cass County Parks.

Summers in Cass County are filled with warm weather fun like the Cassopolis Beach Bash, First Fridays in Marcellus, and the many firework shows put on over the various holiday weekends like 4th of July and Labor Day. At the Beach Bash guests are able to enjoy concerts, beer, and food trucks at Stone Lake Beach. At First Fridays, guests enjoy live music, markets, food trucks, and other activities for people of all ages.

Existing Land Use

Understanding the existing land use pattern in Cass County is foundational to developing the future land use vision for the County. The manner in which land is used is central to how a community manages and promotes preservation and growth.

The current land use distribution is illustrated on the Existing Land Use Map using the land use categories described on the following pages.



Jefferson Township Farm



Jefferson Township Fields

PRESERVED OPEN SPACE / NATURAL FEATURES

This land use category includes Cass County's public and quasi-public lands and represents precious natural resources within the County. Some of these lands are in private ownership, including private conservation easements, or are controlled by the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy.



Fred Russ Forest Park

FARMLAND / RURAL RESIDENTIAL

This land use category encompasses all of Cass County's agricultural farm operations as well as the rural residential parcels that often result from agricultural lot splits. Rural residential uses are most commonly single-family farmhouses or large lot single-family houses that have been split from larger agricultural parcels. Residential densities in this land use category are typically well below 1 unit per acre.



Farmland / Rural Residential

OUTDOOR RECREATION

This land use category represents lands which tend to be similar in character to those categorized as Preserved Open Space/Natural Features, but which are used for outdoor recreation. This primarily includes large campgrounds, as well as things like shooting ranges, golf courses, and ski and snowboard areas.



Arthur Dodd Memorial Park

LAKE RESIDENTIAL

This land use category is characterized by the waterfront residential communities present on the numerous inland lakes within Cass County. Although many of the houses in this land use are summer cottages on small lots, there are also larger houses that are constructed as year-round residences. Because of the small lot sizes and compact lakefront neighborhoods, residential densities in this land use category are typically 4-8 units per acre.



Lake Residential

URBANIZED RESIDENTIAL

This land use category represents the concentrated areas of residential neighborhoods within Cass County. These include residential blocks in the City of Dowagiac and villages, multi-family apartments and condominium buildings, and single-family subdivision development. This land use category represents the suburban and urban residential forms within the County and typically features densities of 5-15 units per acre.



Eagle's Wood Apartments in Dowagiac

COMMERCIAL / INDUSTRIAL

This land use category encompasses both commercial and industrial operations within the County. This includes city and village "Main Street" businesses, suburban commercial centers, and large-scale industrial operations such as manufacturing and warehouses. Wireless communication towers are also included in this land use category.



Downtown Dowagiac

POKAGON BAND OF POTAWATOMI

This land use category includes lands under the ownership of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi.



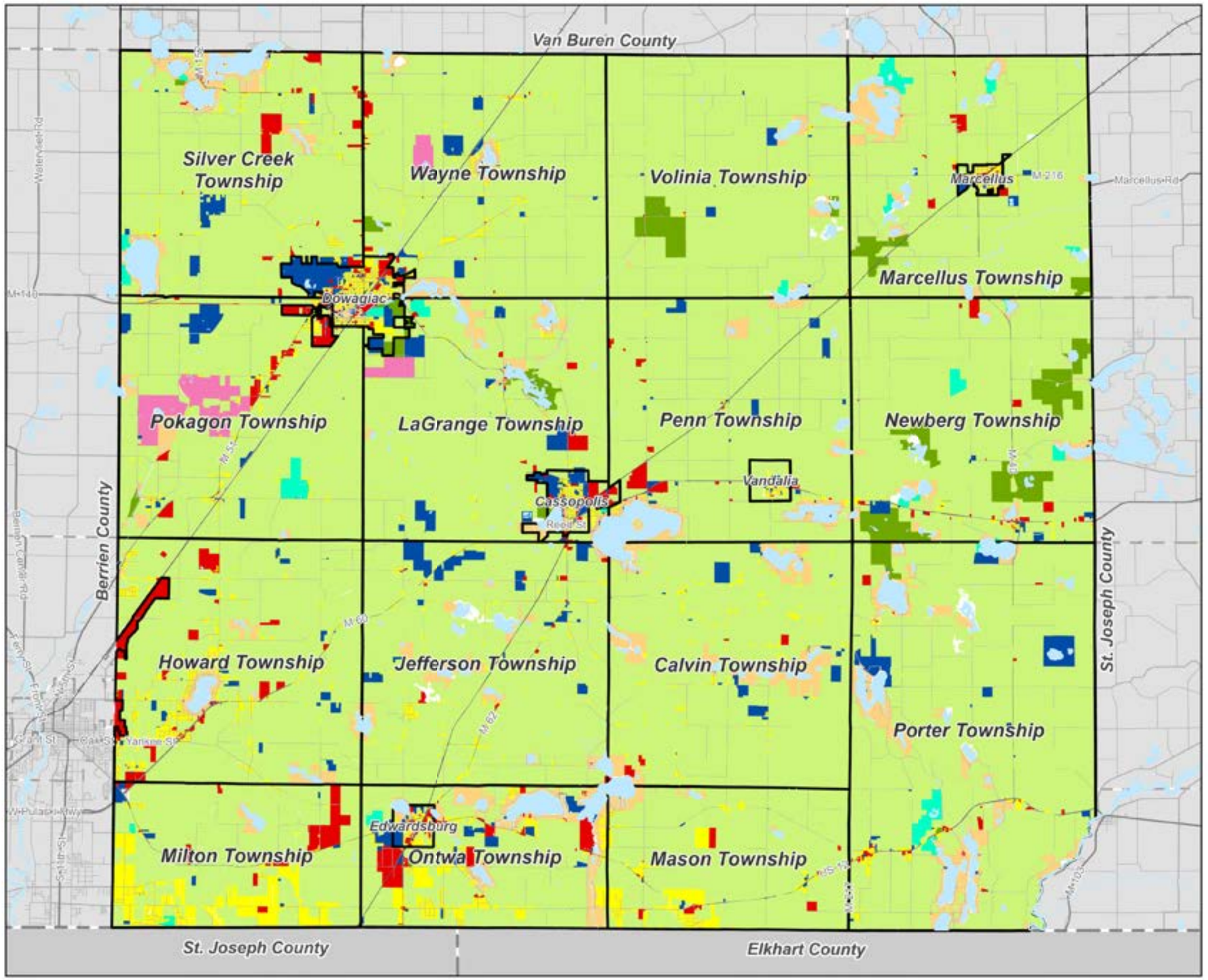
Pokagon Court & Peacemaking Center

PUBLIC / TAX EXEMPT USES

This land use category represents properties which are owned by government agencies, as well as certain tax-exempt properties which support local communities. Government offices, churches, schools, and non-profit organizations are common examples of this land use.



Cassopolis High School



Map 2.

Existing Land Use

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025

LEGEND

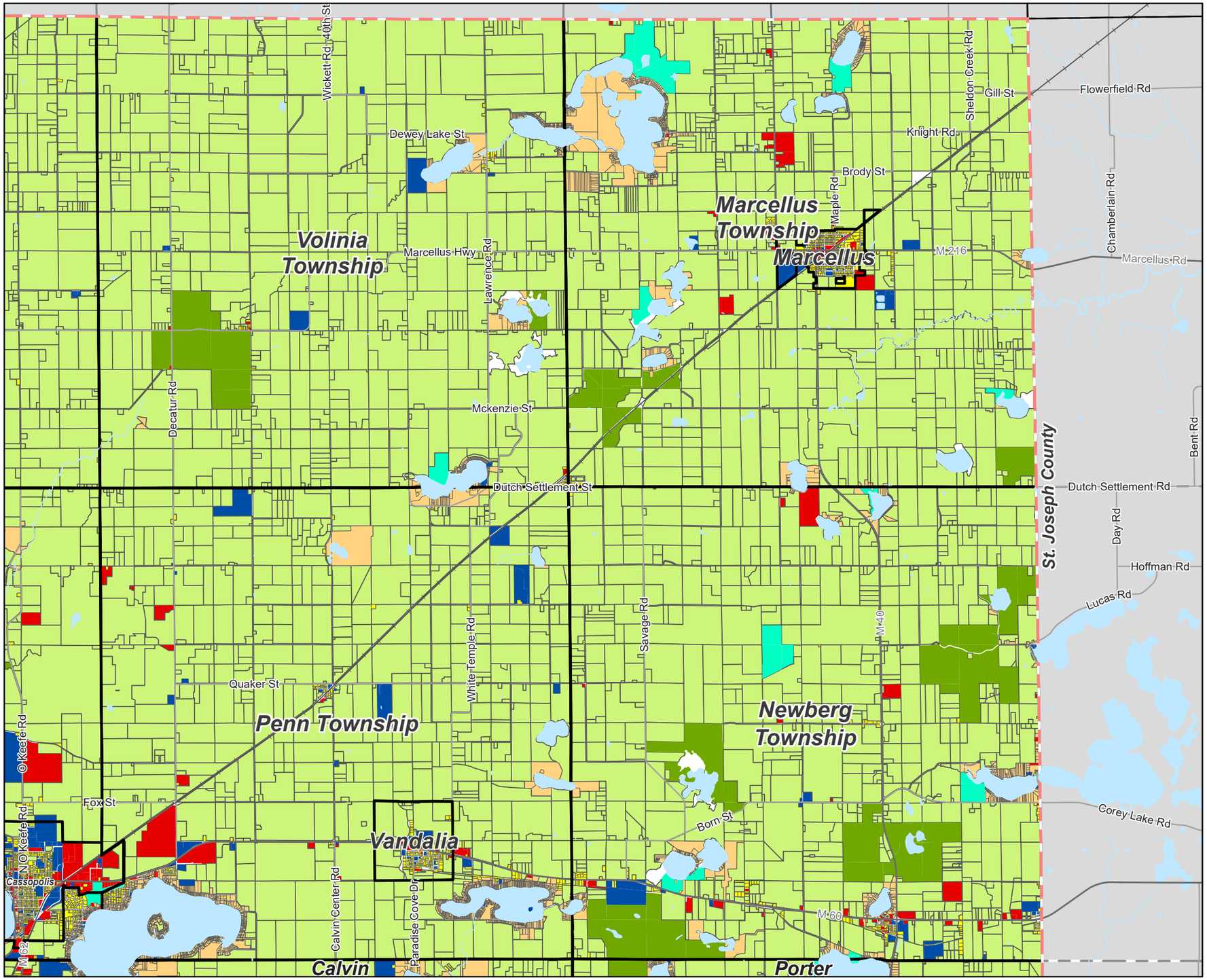
- Preserved Open Space / Natural Features
- Farmland / Rural Residential
- Outdoor Recreation
- Lake Residential
- Urbanized Residential
- Commercial / Industrial
- Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians
- Public / Tax Exempt

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MILES

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a.
Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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Map 3.

Existing Land Use – Northeast Quadrant

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025

LEGEND

- Preserved Open Space / Natural Features
- Farmland / Rural Residential
- Outdoor Recreation
- Lake Residential
- Urbanized Residential
- Commercial / Industrial
- Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians
- Public / Tax Exempt

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Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a.
Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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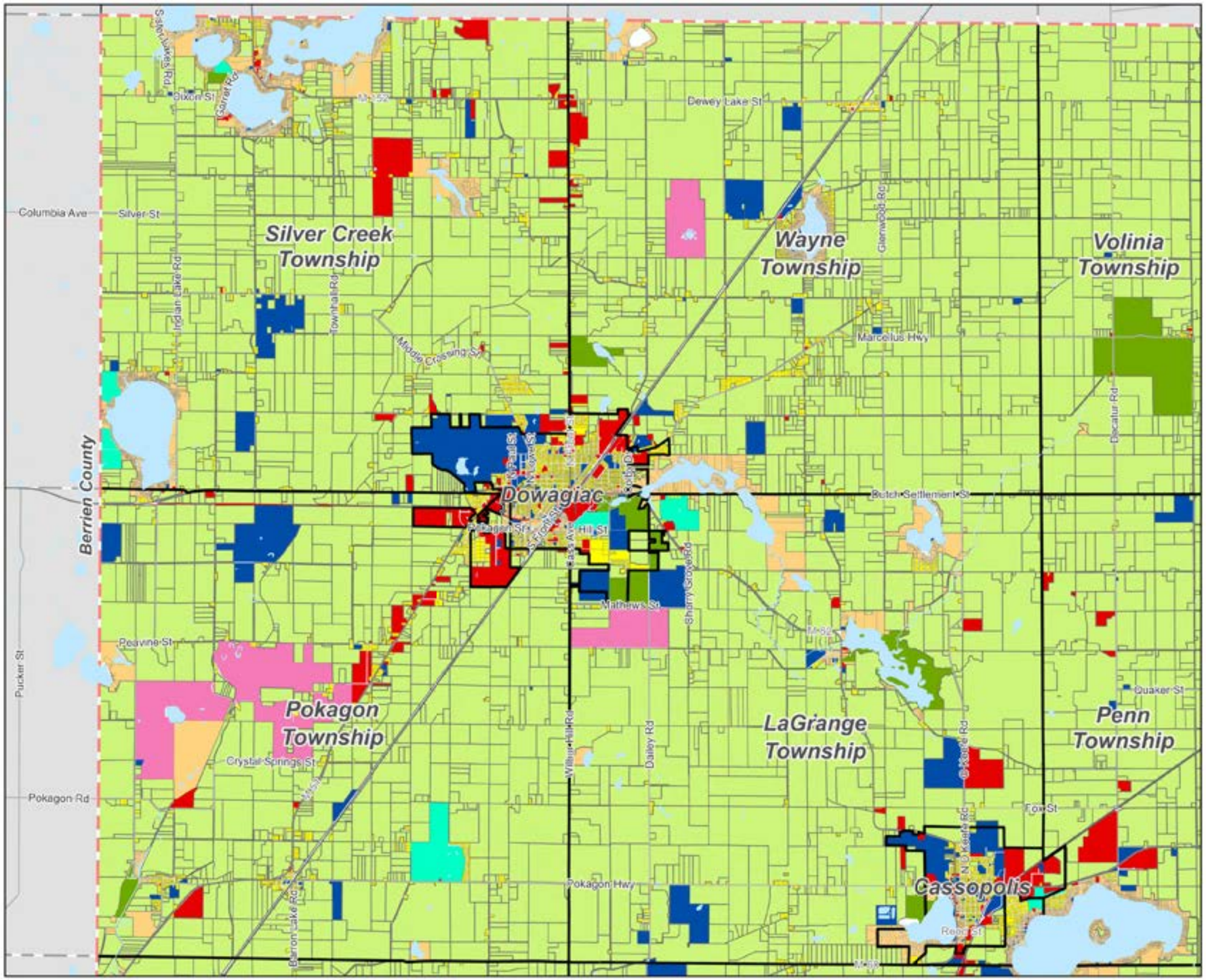
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Map 4.

Existing Land Use – Northwest Quadrant

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025



LEGEND

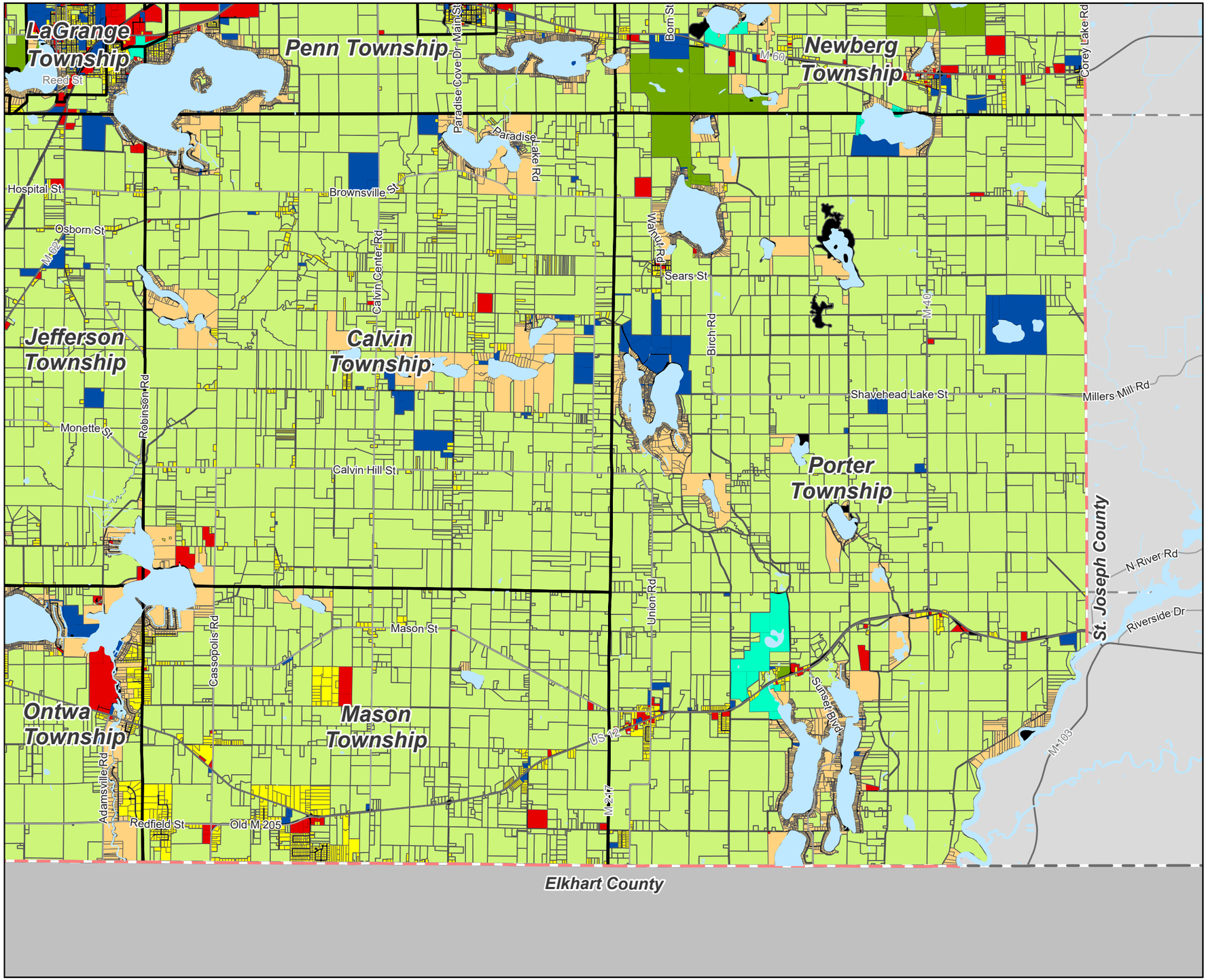
- Preserved Open Space / Natural Features
- Farmland / Rural Residential
- Outdoor Recreation
- Lake Residential
- Urbanized Residential
- Commercial / Industrial
- Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians
- Public / Tax Exempt

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Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a.
Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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Map 5.

Existing Land Use – Southeast Quadrant

Cass County, Michigan

April 14 2054

LEGEND

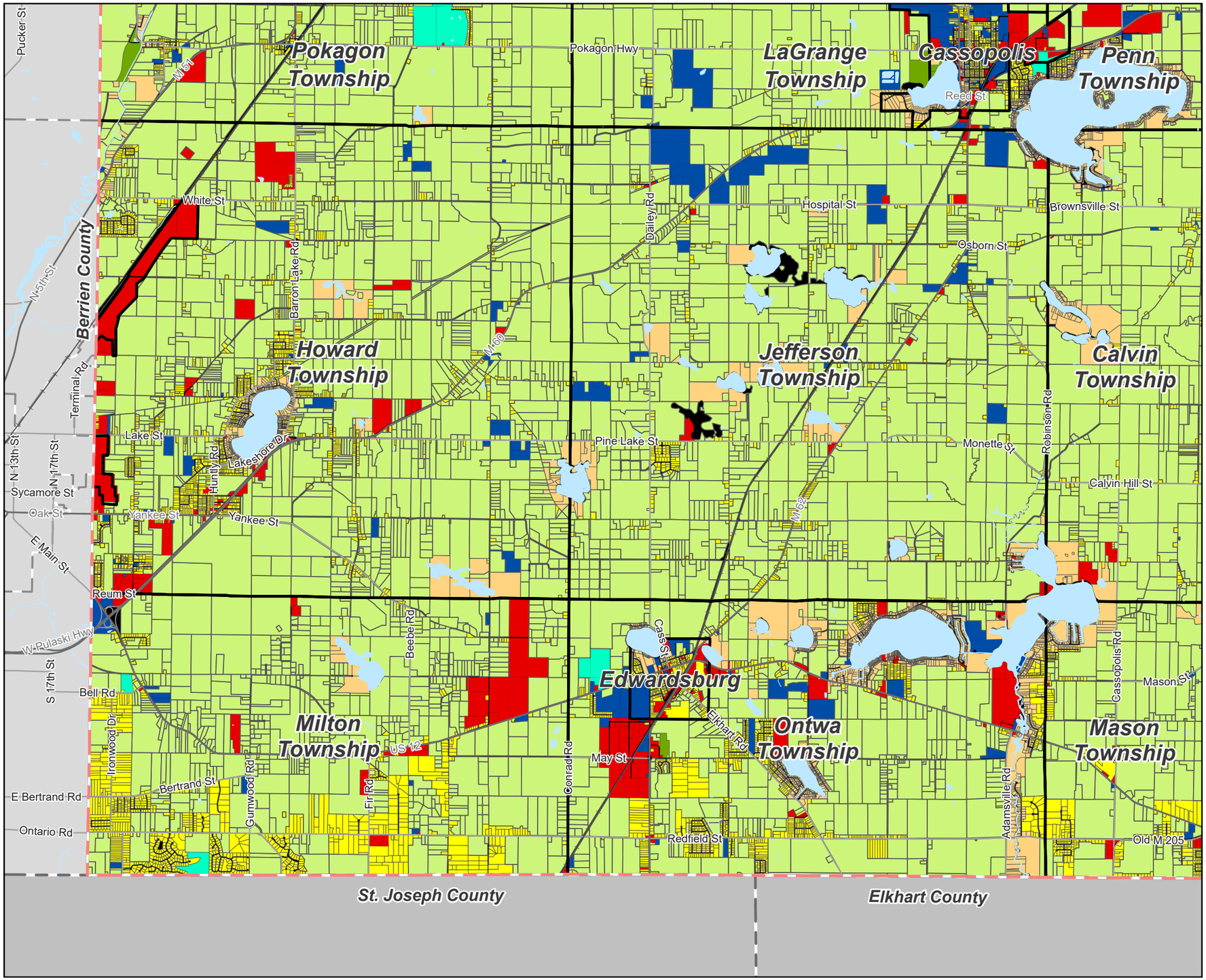
- Preserved Open Space / Natural Features
- Farmland / Rural Residential
- Outdoor Recreation
- Lake Residential
- Urbanized Residential
- Commercial / Industrial
- Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians
- Public / Tax Exempt

0 1 2 MILES

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a.
Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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Map 6.

Existing Land Use – Southwest Quadrant

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2024

LEGEND

- Preserved Open Space / Natural Features
- Farmland / Rural Residential
- Outdoor Recreation
- Lake Residential
- Urbanized Residential
- Commercial / Industrial
- Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians
- Public / Tax Exempt

0 1 2 MILES

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a.
Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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Key Findings

- Agriculture and rural residential land uses are the prevalent features of the County's landscape. Ensuring that land remains available in the future to support agricultural activities and rural residential development patterns is of primary importance to residents.

- Due to Cass County's proximity to the Indiana border and the large metropolitan centers of South Bend, Mishawaka, and Elkhart, urbanized residential development is becoming increasingly prevalent in the southern portion of the County. This has significant land use implications, as continued suburban development will result in the loss of agricultural lands, open space, and rural character within the County.

- Cass County features a high number of lakefront residential areas. With an abundance of inland lakes and waterways, the County will likely continue to attract growth in these areas. The trend of converting summer cottages or vacation homes to year-round residences could present infrastructure and capacity challenges.

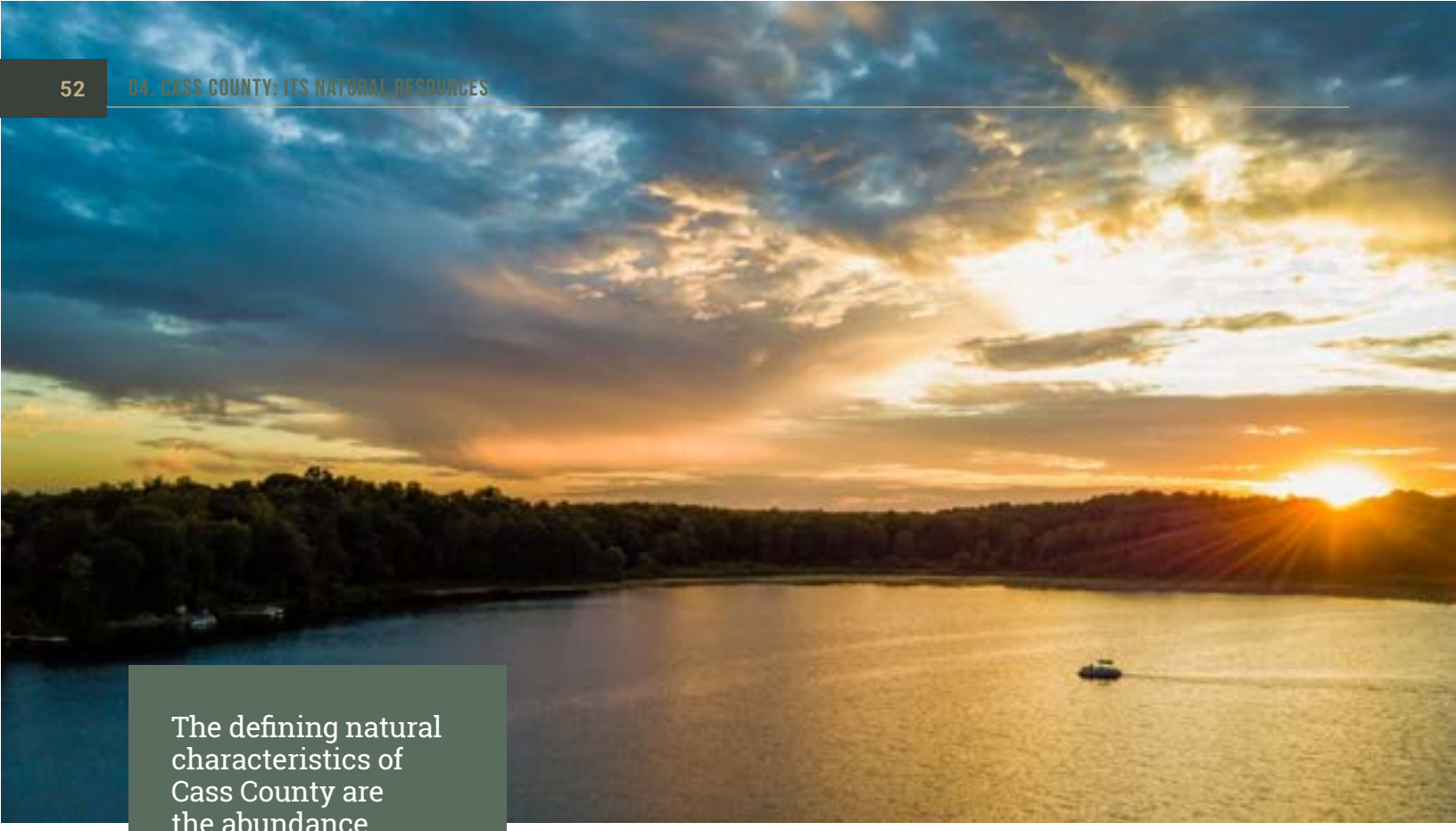
- Many Cass County residents work and shop outside of the County, indicating the importance of the region's major roadways. Growth within the County should be directed to areas served by key commuting routes and easy access to local commercial centers to accommodate traffic demands, while also encouraging local shopping and use of community amenities.

- The breadth of historical and recreational assets present in the County is unusual given the lack of major highways or a large metropolitan center. An opportunity exists for a unique 'destination' branding of Cass County.

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04.

Cass County: its Natural Resources



The defining natural characteristics of Cass County are the abundance of water features and farmland. Historically, Cass County has been a rural agricultural area due to its fertile soils and prairie land.

Water Features, Watersheds, and Floodplains

The Dowagiac River and Diamond Lake stand out as notable water features within the County.

The Dowagiac River begins in Van Buren County and enters Cass County in the northwest near the City of Dowagiac, before flowing into the St. Joseph River. The river flows through Volinia Township and LaGrange Township before exiting the County near the southwest corner and entering Berrien County, north of the City of Niles. The Dowagiac River Watershed includes 23 large lakes, 108 total river miles, and a total area of 287 square miles. The Dowagiac River is a significant water feature in the area and supports several key recreational assets in Cass County.

Diamond Lake is a 1,020-acre all sports lake and is one of the largest inland lakes in southwest Michigan. In addition to Diamond Lake, Cass County also has 20 major inland lakes and is dotted with nearly 200 smaller lakes. These features not only shape the geography of the County, but they also provide a large amount of the County's outdoor recreation and are an economic driver for the region.

MAJOR INLAND LAKES IN CASS COUNTY

- Belas Lake
- Birch Lake
- Bogart Lake
- Corey Lake
- Chain Lake
- Christiana Lake
- Dewey Lake
- Diamond Lake
- Donnell Lake
- Driskels Lake
- Eagle Lake
- Finch Lake
- Forked Lake
- Fox Lake
- Harwood Lake
- Hemlock Lake
- Indian Lake
- Juno Lake
- Kirk Lake
- Little Fish Lake
- Long Lake
- Magician Lake
- Paradise Lake
- Shavehead Lake
- Stone Lake

'Inland Lake' – A large body of water that is located within a landmass, rather than along the coast.

WATERSHEDS

Cass County is within two major watersheds: the Dowagiac River Watershed and the St. Joseph River Watershed. Five streams flow into the Dowagiac River Watershed and 12 streams feed into the St. Joseph River Watershed. Water quality in watersheds is directly related to the land practices that occur in the areas surrounding them. Increasing development and impervious surfaces can have a negative impact on stormwater runoff into the watersheds. Runoff that is produced by the application of fertilizers and pesticides is another major factor in reducing the quality of watersheds. The streams and their corresponding watersheds are listed below.

Dowagiac River Watershed:

- Dowagiac Creek
- McKinzie Creek
- Pokagon Creek
- Peavine Creek
- Silver Creek

St. Joseph River Watershed:

- Coldwater River
- Dowagiac River
- Swan Creek
- Prairie River
- Fawn River
- Pigeon River
- Elkhart River
- Little Elkhart River
- Nottawa Creek
- Paw Paw River
- Portage River
- Rocky River

GROUNDWATER AND SURFACE WATER

The quality of the groundwater in Cass County is ranked ‘good’ overall in their annual Water Quality Report required by the State and the U.S Environmental Protective Agency. Cass County’s drinking water comes from two, very deep, groundwater wells. They are tested and reported on annually. The 2023 report notes that the Cass County Water System wells were ranked “Moderately Low” for “susceptibility or potential contamination”. The water tends to be on the higher end of the calcium, hardness, and iron scales but still within the acceptable range for safe consumption levels. There have been some instances of contaminated groundwater in Cass County due to leaking underground storage tanks or other contamination sources.

As population growth and development occur in Cass County, there will be some degree of degradation of the County’s natural resources-including groundwater and surface water. There are several organizations that are involved with water quality in the Cass County area. They include the lake associations, the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, the Cass County Water System Department, the Michigan Water Stewardship Program alongside Van Buren/ Cass District Health Department, St. Joseph River Association, the Cass County Conservation District, and the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). These organizations all have an interest in water quality protection and provide various related services to the public.

FLOODPLAINS

Cass County has an abundance of freshwater lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams which can be associated with floodplains. Floodplains are those areas which are adjacent to lakes, rivers, streams, and ponds that are prone to overflow and flooding. They are an integral part of a water feature and are essential for a healthy and functioning ecosystem. Land within the 100-year flood plain statistically has a 1% chance of flooding in any given year, and therefore a 100% chance of flooding within a 100-year period. Floodplains differ greatly in size depending upon the permeability of the soil and the volume of water within the water body.

A floodplain contains three basic components. The channel, which is the area of normal stream flow. The floodway, which is the 100-year flood plain. And the flood fringe, which is the land between the floodway and the outer limits of the areas known to be subject to possible flooding. In Cass County, there are many areas which are mapped floodplain areas.

The following statements are generalized statements of map description and are not intended to indicate the flow of water. In the northwest portion of the County, there are numerous floodplains stretching southeast in a chain. The largest floodplain area in the northern portion of the County is in Silver Creek Township. This floodplain is created by Dowagiac Creek and Silver Creek flowing into the Dowagiac River. Dowagiac Creek flows southwest along the City of Dowagiac and continues west. Silver Creek flows from Magician Lake where there are also smaller floodplain areas. The Dowagiac River continues south and reaches Pokagon Creek. This creek continues east where there is a second large floodplain area. Most of the land surrounding these two floodplain areas is rural agriculture. The last large floodplain area is along Christiana Creek and the lakes it feeds into, namely Juno, Christiana, and Eagle Lakes. The area surrounding the Christiana Creek floodplain is rural agriculture with small housing clusters along the south shore of Christiana Lake as well as Eagle Lake.

The Dowagiac River starts in the southwest portion of the County and flows north through Pokagon towards Silver Creek Township. From there it continues and flows into Wayne Township and out of the County to the north. Dowagiac Creek branches from the Dowagiac River right along the border of Silver Creek Township and Pokagon Township where it combines with Silver Creek to create a large floodplain area. It runs northeast, bending around the south of the City of Dowagiac and into Mill Pond. The creek then flows into LaGrange Township where the next floodplain area begins. It then bends to the northeast, flowing into Wayne and Volinia Township.

Another significant floodplain is the area surrounding Juno, Christiana, and Eagle Lakes in Ontwa, Mason, Jefferson, and Calvin Townships. The floodplain around these lakes covers a large area, especially on the northern shores of Juno Lake spreading into Christiana Creek. Most of this area is agricultural and residential. This floodplain extends northeast along Christiana Creek through Calvin Township.

The whole of Cass County is dotted with small lakes and ponds. Many of the areas surrounding these freshwater bodies are 100-year floodplains. There are two large floodplain areas in the County, one along the Dowagiac River to the northwest and the other in the south straddling Jefferson, Calvin, Ontwa, and Mason Townships. This large, marshy floodplain area around the Dowagiac River is created by a series of small lakes that are connected by McKinzie Creek, Silver Creek, and Mill Pond. Some of the lakes in the chain are Lake LaGrange, Indian Lake, Magician Lake, Dewey Lake and Cable Lake. The marshy area around Christiana Lake is created by creeks and lakes surrounding it: Christiana Creek, Juno Lake, Painter Lake, and Eagle Lake.

Two other minor floodplain areas are present in Cass County. One is created by Diamond Lake, Stone Lake, and Pokagon Creek in LaGrange and Penn Townships. This floodplain area is in the middle region of the County in Penn Township and LaGrange Township. LaGrange Township has several freshwater lakes and ponds, including Lake LaGrange and Kelsey Lake. The other floodplain, Mud Creek, creates a marshy area that is surrounded mostly by forestry and extends south into Indiana. This minor floodplain area in Porter Township is in the southwest corner of the Township south of Shavehead Lake.

A floodplain has the natural significance of being an area likely to flood, and thereby endangering life and property. In 1968 the U.S. Congress passed the National Flood Insurance Act (NFIA), creating the National Flood Insurance Program, which gave floodplains a regulatory significance as well. The NFIA shifted the financial burden of funding flood disaster from the government (and therefore the taxpayers as a whole) to those most likely to need the dollars through the establishment of a self-funding insurance program. Flood insurance, which had not been available before, was made available and was made a requirement of receiving a mortgage from any federally backed lender for structures located in the 100-year floodplain. The program is administered at the local and state level and imposes strict limitations on any type of development activity within the 100-year floodplain.

Communities “participate” by adopting local floodplain management ordinances and must be “participating” for residents to be eligible for the insurance. In addition, floodplains are regulated by state statute (Part 31 of P.A. 451 of 1994). A permit from EGLE is required for all activities within the floodplain that reduce storage capacity.

Communities participating in the National Flood Insurance Program

- Calvin Township
- Village of Cassopolis
- City of Dowagiac
- Village of Edwardsburg
- Jefferson Township
- LaGrange Township
- Mason Township
- City of Niles
- Ontwa Township
- Penn Township
- Pokagon Township
- Porter Township
- Silver Creek Township
- Village of Vandalia
- Volinia Township
- Wayne Township

Communities not participating in the National Flood Insurance Program

- Howard Charter Township
- Village of Marcellus
- Marcellus Township
- Milton Township
- Newberg Township

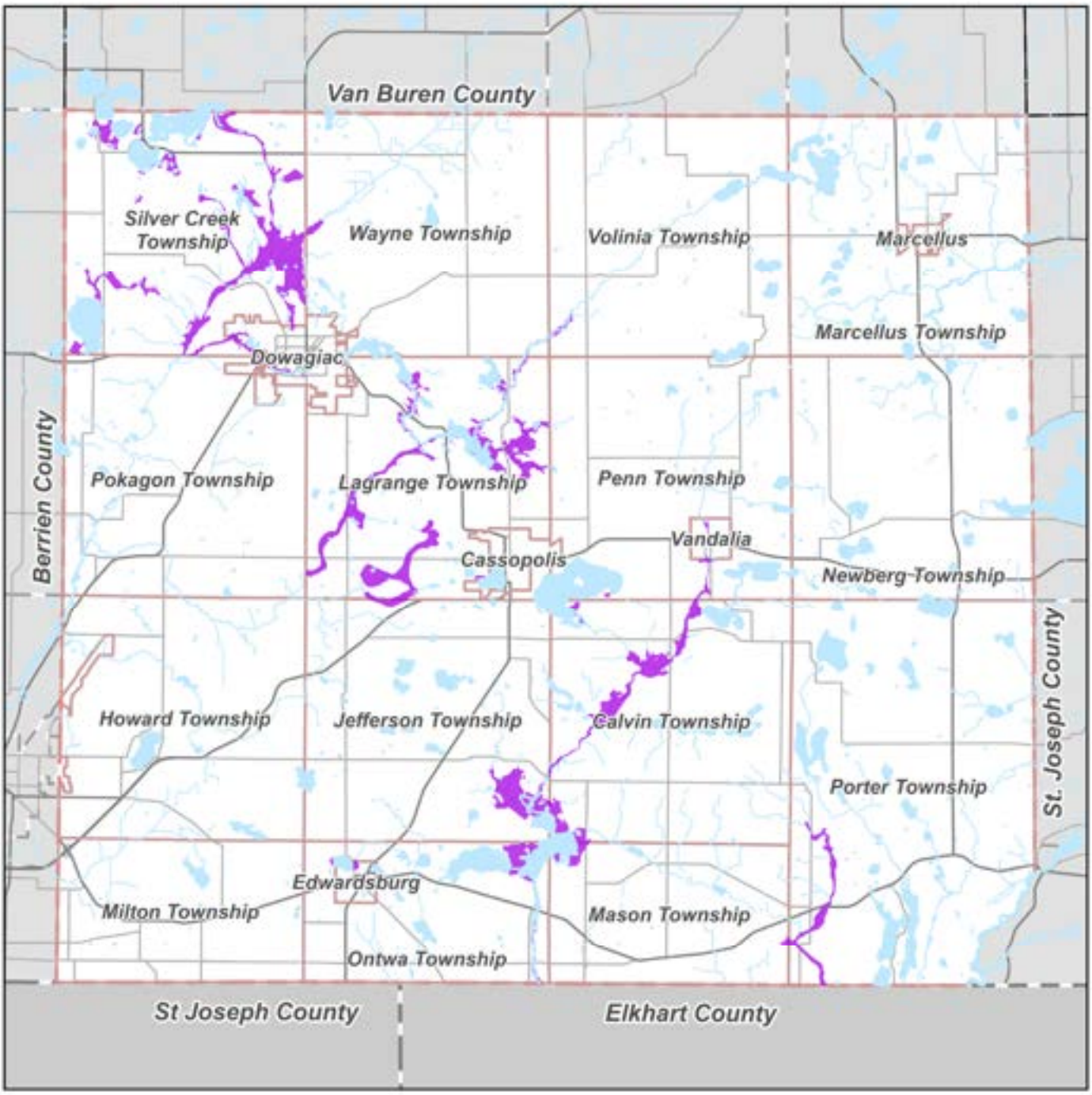
It should be noted that these communities do not have any 100-year Annual Flood Zones.

There are several policy implications at the County level as result of the NFIA. Financial incentives are built in to encourage correct administration of the program. EGLE has the authority to issue permits for development activities within the regulated floodplain area, but it is local administrators who assure that the permits are secured when required. An administrative oversight which allows construction in the floodplain will cost a resident property owner money through annual flood insurance premiums and will affect property value. Communities which fail to comply with Program requirements may be suspended from the Program, eliminating local lending options for residents.

Communities are offered an additional financial incentive for doing more than the minimum required by the NFIA. The NFIA establishes a voluntary community rating system (CRS), scored from 1-10 with nonparticipating communities being given automatic score of 10. In communities where a lower rating is achieved, residents receive reduced insurance rates. Recognized activities within the CRS scoring schedule include public information, mapping, and flood damage reduction. Cass County may choose to participate in the CRS program.



Creek



Map 7.

100-Year Floodplains

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025

LEGEND

- Cass County Boundary
- Cass County Municipalities
- Indiana County Lines
- 1% Annual Flood Zone (100-Year)
- Streams and Drains
- Bodies of Water

0 1 2 MILES

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a. Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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Dowagiac Creek winds through LaGrange Valley Wetlands

WETLANDS

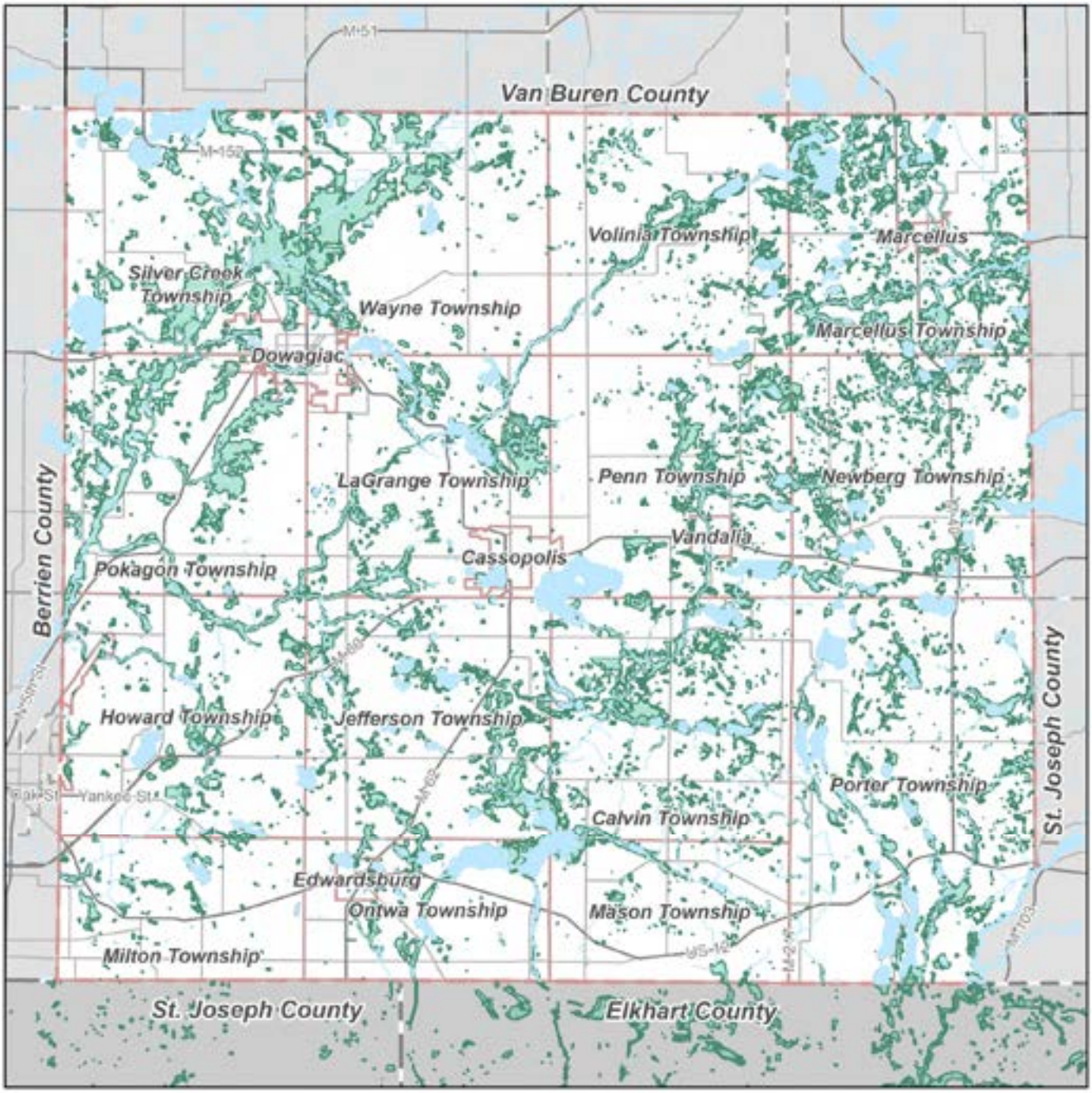
Wetlands are characterized by water saturation in the root zone, or above the soil surface, for a certain amount of time during the year. The fluctuation of the water table above and below the soil surface is unique to each wetland type.

Wetlands play a critical role in regulating the movement of water within watersheds. They store precipitation and surface water and then slowly release the water into associated water resources, ground water, and the atmosphere. Wetlands also help maintain the level of the water table and may serve as filters for sediments and organic matter. They may also serve as a sink to catch water, or transform nutrients, organic compounds, metals, and components of organic matter. Wetlands can impact levels of nitrogen, phosphorous, carbon, sulfur, and various metals. Without them, water quality decreases, areas are prone to flash flooding and habitat for specialized plants and animals is reduced.

The wetlands in Cass County are dispersed and are primarily associated with low-lying areas, drainages, creeks, and rivers. The three categories seen on the map are riverine, palustrine, and lacustrine wetlands. Riverine wetlands include areas along a river or channel. Palustrine wetlands are areas along marshes, swamps, bogs, fens, and wet prairies. These are freshwater wetlands and include trees, shrubs, persistent emergents, vegetation that persists throughout the year, and mosses. Lacustrine wetlands are areas associated with lakes, depressions, or dammed channels greater than 10,000 meters squared.

Floodplains vs Wetlands

Wetlands differ from floodplains in that a wetland is consistently saturated with water in the root zone (or above), except in extreme dry conditions. Floodplains, on the other hand, are uplands that are consistently dry, except in extremely wet conditions, where nearby water bodies can overflow their banks. Wetlands can exist within floodplains, however, especially when they are in close proximity to bodies of water.



Map 8.

Wetlands

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025

LEGEND

- Cass County Boundary
- Cass County Municipalities
- Indiana County Lines
- Wetlands
- Streams and Drains
- Bodies of Water

0 1 2 MILES

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a. Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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Soils

Michigan State University and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, classify the soils of Cass County into six different general soil associations and 10 specific soil associations. A detailed description of each soil type, location in the County, and suitable uses is noted below.

SOIL CATEGORIES

Loamy Soils Underlain by Sand and Gravel
- » Spinks-Oshtemo-Boyer Association
- » Schoolcraft-Kalamazoo-Elston Association
- » Kalamazoo-Oshtemo Association

Wet Sandy and Wet Loamy Soils Underlain by Sand and Gravel
- » Brady-Wasepi-Gilford Association

Sandy Soils
- » Oakville- Plainfield -Spinks Association

Loamy Soils
- » Hillsdale-Riddles Association
- » Riddles-Teasdale Association
- » Boyer-Riddles-Marlette Association

Clayey Soils
- » Morley-Glynwood-Blount Association

Wet Organic and Loamy Soils
- » Houghton-Palms-Sloan Association

The **Spinks-Oshtemo-Boyer Association** exists primarily in the northern portion of Cass County as well as the southeast corner, including portions of Silver Creek, Wayne, Volinia, Penn, Milton, Howard Charter, and LaGrange Townships. These are deep, well drained loamy and sandy soils on slopes ranging from 0 to 35 percent. They have low to moderate available water capacity and moderately rapid to rapid permeability. Most of these soils are used for general farming and woodlands.

The **Schoolcraft-Kalamazoo-Elston Association** exists primarily in the center of the County as well as the southeast corner, including portions of the Village of Cassopolis, the Village of Edwardsburg as well as Penn, Milton, Jefferson, and Ontwa Townships. These are deep, well drained loamy soils on almost level to moderately sloped topography with 0 to 4 percent slopes. They have moderate available water capacity and moderate over rapid permeability. Elston soils are moderately rapidly permeable. These characteristics make this association ideal for septic systems. They are mainly used for general farming with some woodlands.

The **Kalamazoo-Oshtemo Association** exists in much of the County. It is located in portions of the Village of Vandalia, the City of Dowagiac, and Wayne, Penn, Newberg, Calvin, Jefferson, LaGrange, Pokagon, Howard Charter, Ontwa, and Mason Townships. This soil association includes deep, well drained loamy soils on slopes of 0 to 18 percent. They have moderate available water capacity. Kalamazoo soils have moderate over rapid permeability whereas Oshtemo soils are moderately rapidly permeable. The low slope areas are generally well suited to building site development and septic system function. Most of these soils are used for general farming as well as woodlandf.

The **Brady-Wasepi-Gilford Association** is located in portions of the City of Dowagiac as well as Pokagon and Wayne Townships. This soil association includes deep, somewhat poorly and very poorly drained loamy on slopes that are almost level, 0 to 2 percent. They have low or moderate available water capacity and moderately rapid permeability. They are mainly used for general farming and woodlands.

The **Oakville-Plainfield-Spinks Association** is located in a very small portion of Silver Creek Township in the northwest corner of the County. These soils are deep, moderately well to excessively drained sandy soils on 0 to 12 percent slopes. They have low available water capacity and rapid permeability making them well suited for septic system function. These soils main uses include pasture, woodland, and idle land.

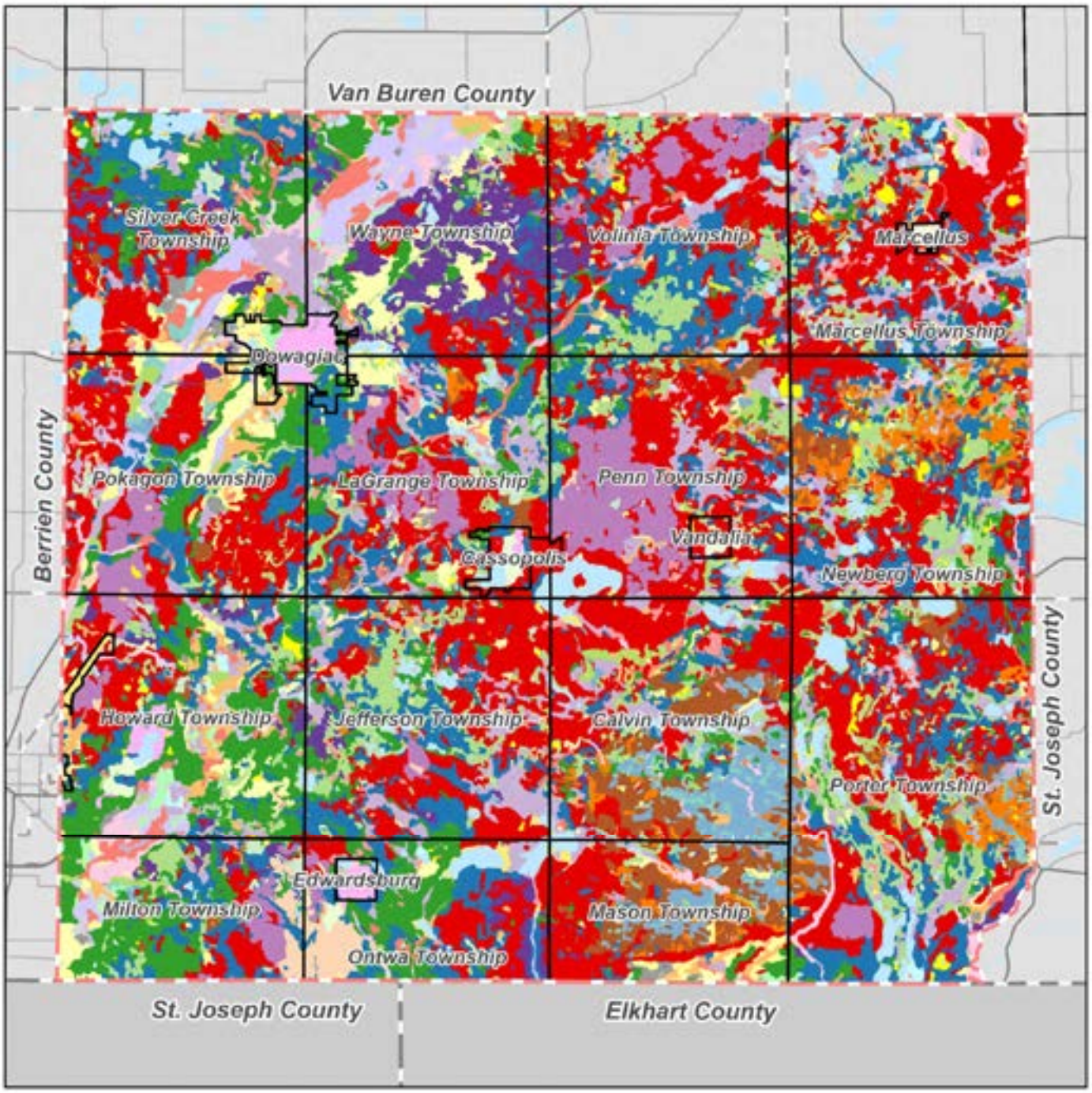
The **Hillsdale-Riddles Association** is located in portions of the Villages of Marcellus and Vandalia as well as Marcellus, Volinia, Newberg, and Porter Townships. The soils association includes deep, well drained loamy soils on slopes ranging from quite level to steep topography, slopes of 6 to 35 percent. They have moderate or high available water capacity and moderate permeability. These soils are well suited for septic system function. They are used mostly for general farming and woodlands.

The **Riddles-Teasdale Association** is located in portions of Calvin and Porter Townships. These are deep, well to somewhat poorly drained, loamy soils on slopes of 0 to 35 percent, almost level to very steep. They have high available water capacity and moderate permeability making them suitable for septic systems. They are mainly used for general farming and woodlands.

The **Boyer-Riddles-Marrlette Association** is located in a portion of Silver Creek Township in the northwest corner of the County. These soils are deep, well and moderately well drained loamy soils on slopes of 6 to 35 percent. They have low to high available water capacity and have moderately slow to moderately rapid permeability. These soils main uses include general farming and woodlands.

The **Morely-Glynwood-Blount Association** is located on the western edge of the County including portions of Silver Creek, Pokagon, Howard Charter, and Milton Township. These soils are deep, well to somewhat poorly drained loamy and clayey soils on nearly level to strongly sloping topography. They have moderate or high available water capacity and moderately slow or slow permeability. Main uses of these soils include general farming and woodland.

The **Houghton-Palms-Sloan Association** is located in a portion of Volinia and Marcellus Townships. These are deep, very poorly drained organic and loamy soils on nearly level or depressional topography on floodplains, 0 to 1 percent slopes. They have very high or high available water capacity and moderately slow to moderately rapid permeability. The primary uses are in pasture, woodland, or marsh vegetation. Very little is used for crops.



Map 9.

Soils

Cass County, Michigan

June 18, 2025

LEGEND

- Kalmazoo loam
- Oshtemo sandy loam
- Spinks-Oshtemo complex
- Spinks loamy sand
- Histosols and Aquents, ponded
- Water
- Gilford sandy loam
- Riddles fine sandy loam
- Houghton muck
- Ormas loamy sand
- Brady sandy loam
- Cassopolis fine sandy loam
- Berry loam
- Colonie loamy sand
- Bronson loamy sand
- Adrian muck
- Teasdale fine sandy loam
- Napoleon muck
- Palms muck, lake moderated
- Cohoctah loam
- Tedrow loamy sand
- Schoolcraft loam
- Pits
- Udipsamments and Udorthents
- Glendora muck
- Brems loamy sand
- Elston sandy loam
- Edwards muck
- Urban land-Spinks complex
- Urban land-Kalamazoo complex

0 1 2 MILES

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a. Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

MCKENNA



Farmland

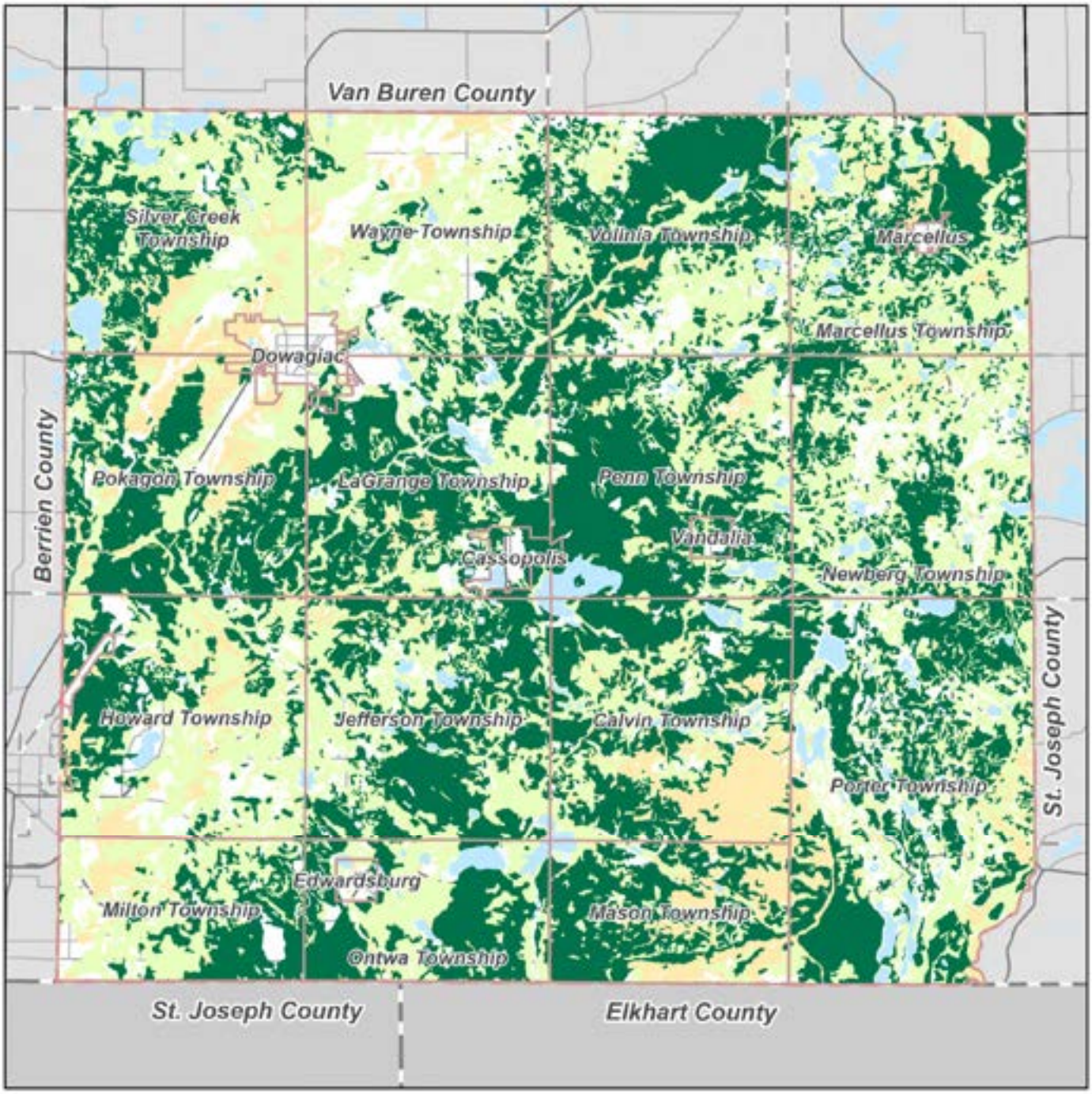
To preserve farmland, Michigan has enacted the PA 116 farmland preservation program. PA 116, the Michigan Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act, is a law designed to preserve farmland from being developed.

The law, which was passed in 1974, allows a farm landowner to enter into an agreement with the State that ensures that the land remain in agricultural use for a minimum of 10 years up to 90 years. In return, the farm owner is entitled to income tax benefits and exemption from special assessments on the land. Today, 3.3 million acres of land in Michigan is protected under this program.

Cass County has 36-50% of its land protected by PA 116. In addition to PA 116 properties, the County also has a large amount of prime farmland (13,125 acres). Prime farmland is a USDA designation for land that has the ideal conditions for agriculture. The largest sections of prime farmland are in the western half of Penn Township and in Volinia and Mason Townships. The smallest sections of prime farmland are in Wayne Township and portions of Newberg, Howard Charter, and Milton Townships. These areas have more wetland and water features.

Map 10 designates prime farmland as well as farmland of local importance. The USDA defines prime farmland as “land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses. It can be cultivated land, pastureland, forestland, or other land, but it is not urban or built-up land or water areas.” Farmland of local importance has similar limitations but is designated by local agencies. See *Appendix: USDA Farmland Designations*.

This classification is based on optimal inherent physical and chemical soil properties for unique crop production or for ideal crop production at a local level.



Map 10.

Prime Farmland

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 202

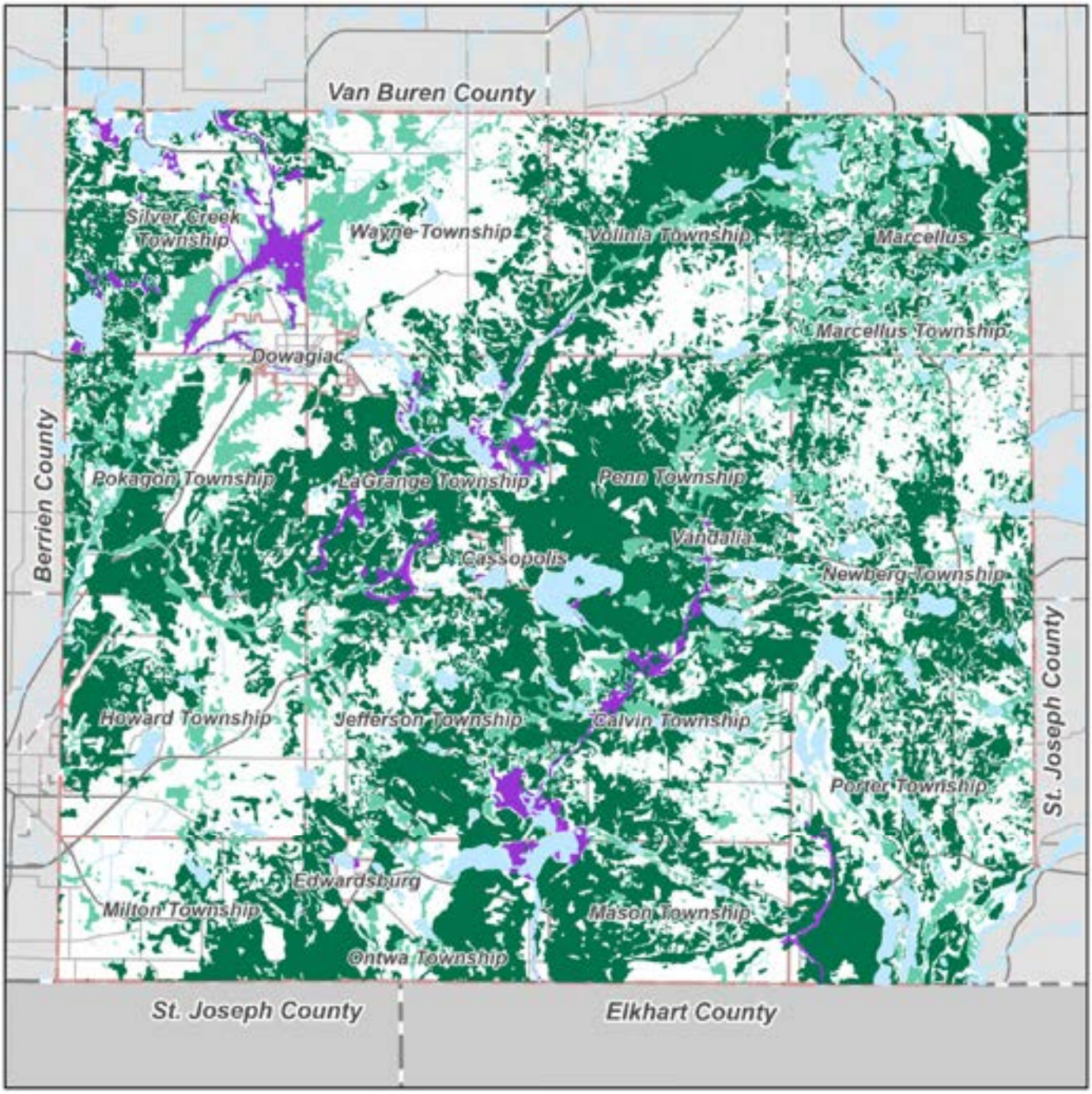
LEGEND

- Cass County Boundary
- Cass County Municipalities
- Indiana County Lines
- Prime Farmland
- Farmland of Local Importance
- Prime Farmland if Drained

0 1 2 MILES

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a. Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

MCKENNA



Map 11.

Preserved Land

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025

LEGEND

- Cass County Boundary
- Cass County Municipalities
- Indiana County Lines
- 1% Annual Flood Zone (100-Year)
- Prime Farmland
- Wetlands
- Streams and Drains
- Bodies of Water

0 1 2 MILES

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a. Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

MCKENNA

Mineral Mining

Many areas of Cass County have soils that are ideal for mineral mining and processing. An overview of these soil types and their locations is presented below.

The Kalamazoo-Oshtemo series of soils is Cass County's best soil for potential gravel mining and processing. The soil can be found throughout much of the County, specifically in western Pokagon Township, western LaGrange Township, western Calvin Township, and the majority of Jefferson, Ontwa, and Mason Townships.

The Spinks-Oshtemo-Boyer soil is another potential soil for gravel mining and processing. This soil is found in the southwest portion of the County in Milton Township, as well as parts of Howard Charter and Jefferson Townships.

The Schoolcraft-Kalamazoo-Elston soil can be found in parts of Jefferson and Ontwa Townships and is also suitable for mineral mining.

Lastly, the Hillsdale-Riddles soil, which is found in the northeastern portion of the County, would also potentially be suitable for mining and processing. This soil is a mixture of two soils that are present in many parts of the County.

Boyer-Riddles-Marlette, Oakville-Plainfield-Spinks, Riddles-Teasdale, and Morley-Glynwood-Blount soils can be good for mineral mining but would need further study by location for suitability.

There are a few other soil types in Cass County that are not suitable for gravel mining. These include the Brady-Wasepi-Gilford and Houghton-Palms-Sloan soils. Quite often, these are wetland areas that make up small portions of the northern edge of Cass County.

Detailed descriptions of the individual soils in Cass County and their suitability for gravel mining and processing are listed to the right.

Good

Boyer. The Boyer series consists of very deep, well drained soils formed in sandy and loamy drift underlain by sand or gravelly sand outwash at depths of 20 to 40 inches. The soils are on outwash plains, valley trains, kames, beach ridges, river terraces, lake terraces, deltas, and moraines. The slope ranges from 0 to 50 percent.

Kalamazoo. The Kalamazoo soil consists of very deep, well drained soils formed in loess-influenced loamy outwash overlying sand, loamy sand, or sand and gravel outwash on outwash plains, terraces, valley trains, and low lying moraines. The slope ranges from 0 to 18 percent. Saturated hydraulic conductivity is moderately low to moderately high in the loamy materials and high in the sandy materials.

Oshtemo. The Oshtemo series consists of very deep, well drained soils formed in stratified loamy and sandy deposits on outwash plains, valley trains, moraines, and beach ridges. The slope ranges from 0 to 55 percent.

Spinks. The Spinks series consists of very deep, well drained soils formed in sandy eolian or outwash material. They are on dunes, moraines, till plains, outwash plains, beach ridges, and lake plains. The slope ranges from 0 to 70 percent.

Oakville. The Oakville series consists of very deep, excessively drained soils formed in sandy eolian deposits on dunes and beach ridges on outwash plains, lake plains, and moraines. The slope ranges from 0 to 60 percent.

Plainfield. The Plainfield series consists of very deep, excessively drained soils formed in sandy drift on outwash plains, valley trains, glacial lake basins, stream terraces, moraines and other upland areas.

Permeability is rapid or very rapid. The slopes range from 0 to 70 percent.

Hillsdale. The Hillsdale series consists of very deep, well drained soils formed in loamy till on ground moraines and end moraines. The slope ranges from 0 to 40 percent.

Riddles. The Riddles series consists of very deep, well drained soils formed in loamy and sandy till on till plains and moraines. The slope ranges from 0 to 35 percent.

Possible

Marlette. The Marlette series consists of very deep, moderately well drained soils formed in loamy till. These soils are on till plains, ground moraines, and end moraines. Slope ranges from 2 to 12 percent.

Schoolcraft. The Schoolcraft series consists of very deep, well drained soils formed in loamy material over sand or gravelly sand on outwash plains, terraces, and valley trains. The slope ranges from 0 to 12 percent.

Elston. The Elston series consists of very deep, well drained soils that formed in loamy over sandy outwash. They are on outwash plains. The slope ranges from 0 to 12 percent.

Morely. The Morley series consists of very deep, moderately well drained soils that are moderately deep to dense till. Morley soils formed in as much as 18 inches of loess and in the underlying clay loam or silty clay loam till. They are on till plains and moraines. The slope ranges from 1 to 18 percent.

Glynwood. The Glynwood series consists of very deep, moderately well drained soils that are moderately deep or deep to dense till. They formed in a thin layer of loess and the underlying till. These soils are on ground moraines and end moraines. The slope ranges from 0 to 40 percent.

Not Suitable

Houghton. The Houghton series consists of very deep, very poorly drained soils formed in herbaceous organic materials more than 51 inches thick in depressions and drainageways on lake plains, outwash plains, ground moraines, end moraines, till plains, and floodplains. The slope ranges from 0 to 2 percent.

Sloan. The Sloan series consists of very deep, very poorly drained soils formed in loamy alluvium on flood plains. The slope ranges from 0 to 2 percent.

Brady. The Brady series consists of very deep, somewhat poorly drained soils formed in loamy outwash materials on outwash plains, valley trains, terraces, and lake plains. The slope ranges from 0 to 6 percent.

Wasepi. The Wasepi series consists of very deep, somewhat poorly drained soils formed in loamy and sandy glaciofluvial deposits underlain by sand and gravel at 20 to 40 inches. Wasepi soils are on outwash plains, deltas, valley trains, glacial drainageways, and lake plains. The slope ranges from 0 to 6 percent.

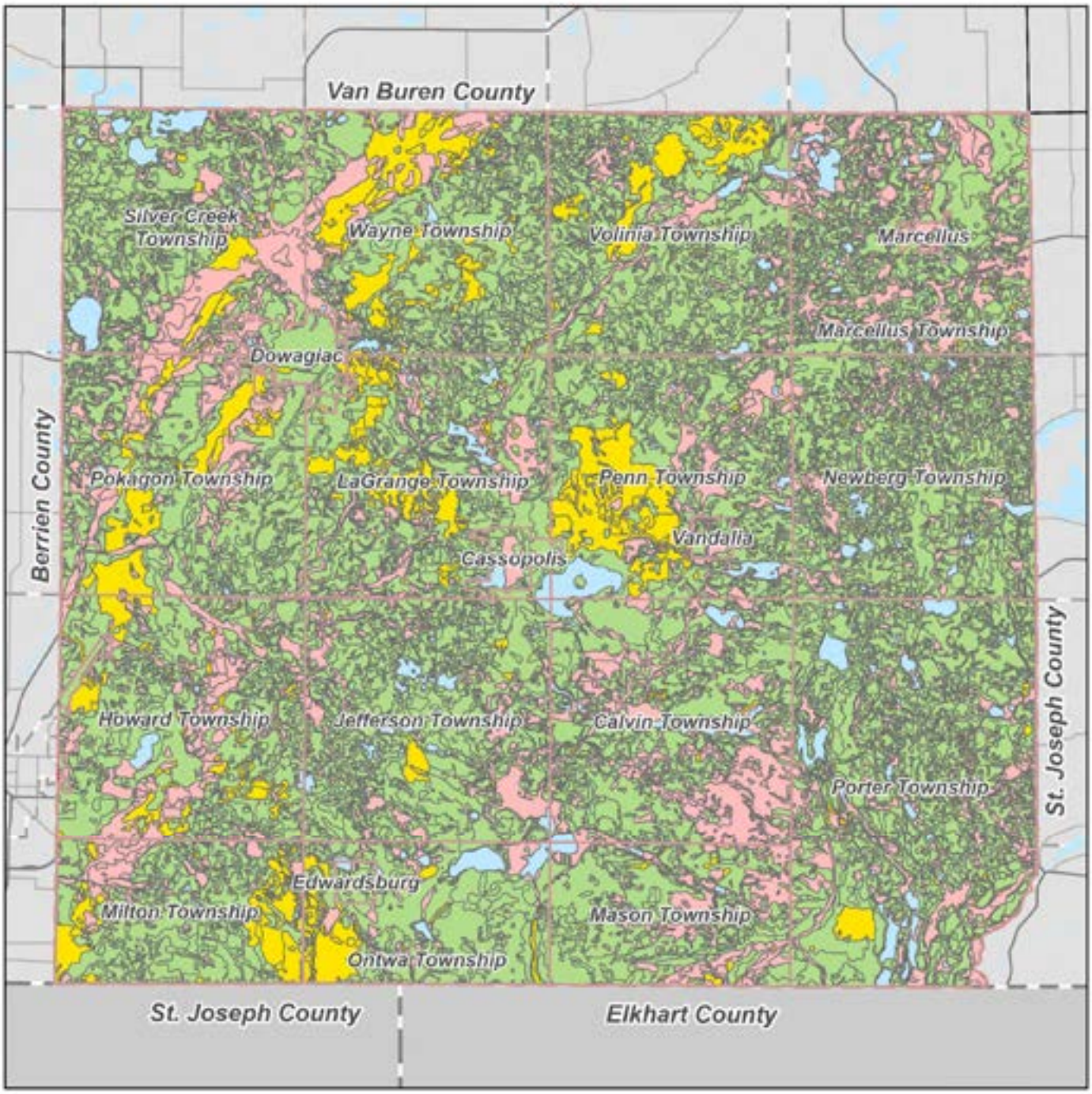
Gilford. The Gilford series consists of very deep, poorly drained or very poorly drained soils formed in loamy over sandy sediments on outwash plains, glacial drainage channels, near-shore zones, and flood-plain steps. The slope ranges from 0 to 2 percent.

Teasdale. The Teasdale series consists of very deep, somewhat poorly drained soils formed in loamy till on ground moraines and end moraines. The slope ranges from 0 to 4 percent.

Blount. The Blount series consists of very deep, somewhat poorly drained soils that are moderately deep or deep to dense till. Blount soils formed in till and are on wave-worked till plains, till plains, and near-shore zones. The slope ranges from 0 to 6 percent.

Palms. The Palms series consist of very deep, very poorly drained soils formed in herbaceous organic materials 16 to 51 in thick and the underlying loamy deposits in closed depressions on moraines, lake plains, till plains, outwash plains, and hillside seep areas, and on backswamps of flood plains. The slope ranges from 0 to 6 percent.

The map on the following page shows the parts of the County that will be most susceptible to interest from mineral mining companies, based on the soil type, proximity of wetlands, potential for development, and other factors. The County does not necessarily endorse the use of land in these areas for mineral mining but understands that the need may arise for mines. Local zoning ordinances should be updated to ensure the regulation of mineral mining is consistent with the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act regarding mineral mining and establishes allowed environmental protection and reclamation standards.



Map 12.

Mineral Extraction

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025

LEGEND

- Good
- Possible
- Not Suitable
- Bodies of Water

0 1 2 MILES

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a. Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species

ENDANGERED ANIMAL SPECIES

According to the Michigan Natural Features Inventory, several animal species are listed as endangered in Cass County. As development continues in the region, Cass County must plan for species and habitat preservation or risk losing valuable biodiversity.

Cass County has four endangered animal species—the Indiana bat, the Mitchell's satyr, the Cerulean Warbler, and the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Indiana bat is a medium-sized Myotis, resembling the little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) but differing in coloration. Its fur is a dull grayish chestnut rather than bronze, with the basal portion of the hairs on the back a dull-lead color. The species' historical range included Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia.

The Cerulean Warbler (*Setophaga cerulea*) is a small songbird in the family Parulidae. It is a long-distance migrant, breeding in eastern North American hardwood forests. In the non-breeding season, it winters on the eastern slope of the Andes in South America, preferring subtropical forests.

The Mitchell's satyr is a dark, chocolate brown, medium-sized butterfly with a wingspan that ranges from 1.5 to 1.75 inches (3.8-4.4 cm). The underside of the forewing and hindwing, contains a row of four to five black, yellow-ringed eyespots, with the central three eyespots on the hindwing being the largest. Two orange bands encircle the eyespots. Mature larvae are pale green with pale, longitudinal stripes and a pronged tail. The Mitchell's satyr is endangered in the U.S., Michigan, and Cass County. It is ranked S1 or critically imperiled and is legally protected in Michigan. Cass County should take steps to provide habitat improvements for these and other endangered species.

Lastly, the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake is a unique and fascinating part of Michigan's natural heritage. It is Michigan's only venomous snake, and one of only two rattlesnake species that occur in the Great Lakes region. It is a small- to medium-sized snake, with adult lengths averaging 2 to 3 feet. The eastern massasauga is primarily associated with wetland habitats, but some populations also utilize adjacent upland habitats for parts of its life history.



Indiana bat



Mitchell's Satyr



Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake



Cerulean Warbler

SPECIAL CONCERN SPECIES

Cass County is home to a few invasive species of plants and insects including the Asian Long-horned Beetle, Black Swallow-wort, Pale Swallow-wort, Chinese Yam, European Frogbit, Flowering Rush, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, Japanese Knotweed, and Phragmite. Zebra mussels and the Eurasian milfoil (marine plant) can be found in the waterways of Cass County.

MARINE PLANT SPECIES

Methods to control the spreading of these exotic marine species include thermal flushing, chlorination, mechanical filtration, anti-fouling paints, acoustics, and electrical shock. However, these solutions are generally only useful for spot control. Cass County boaters can also assist in the process. After boating in waters likely contaminated, the following are recommended tasks to ensure that the mussels do not spread.

- Do not transport bait used in infested waters, wash bait pails with hot water.
- Leave the boat out of water for at least three days in hot, dry conditions (zebra mussels can stay alive up to five days out of water).
- If the boat trailer has water in it, drain it immediately.
- Utilize boat washes provided at public boat landings.

LAND PLANT SPECIES

Black and Pale Swallow-worts are plants that threaten the County's habitats. Purple loosestrife is another invasive species that threatens habitat and is difficult to combat once it has taken over a large area. Remediation methods like burning, digging, herbicides, and cutting are impractical to manage this invasive plant. Biological control and introducing natural enemies into the habitat can be effective. They produce compounds that inhibit the growth of many fungi, bacteria, and pathogens. The roots contain toxins that harm animals.

Spongy Moths can also threaten the County's plant habitat. Remediation techniques should be followed for each of these invasive species. Aerially spraying with pesticides to repress outbreaks of Spongy Moths has been an effective mechanism for managing the pest. Also, "tree banding," which precludes caterpillars from climbing trees to feed, destroying eggs, and natural parasites, viruses, and diseases, is another method to help eradicate the moth.


Asian Long-horned Beetle


Black Swallow-wort


Eurasian milfoil


Zebra mussels


Purple loosestrife

Key Findings

- The defining natural characteristics of Cass County are the abundance and quality of surface water and the extent of prime farmland soils.
- Cass County has 25 larger inland lakes and nearly 200 smaller lakes. The inland lakes support residential development, attract service and marine commercial activity, and provide recreation amenities for the region. The inland lakes serve as an economic driver for the County.
- The County has two major watersheds. Water quality in watersheds is directly related to the land practices within the watershed. Low impact development standards in waterfront areas can help address this challenge.
- Wetlands exist throughout the County and are important in protecting watersheds and habitats. Wetland regulations have not been adopted at the County but do exist at local levels.
- Many areas of the County have soils ideal for mineral mining. Areas vulnerable to mineral extraction should be identified and appropriate standards to protect preserved lands, require environmentally responsible operations, and ensure reclamation should be established.
- Prime farmland exists throughout the County, though it is most prevalent in the central townships. Over 13,000 acres of farmland in Cass County are being protected through the Michigan Farmland Preservation Program (PA 116).
- There are several plant and animal species listed as endangered in Cass County. As the human population of the County continues to expand, it is possible that plant and animal diversity will continue to decrease unless intentional actions are taken to protect vulnerable species.
- Invasive species have been found in the waterways of Cass County. Spongy moths and purple loosestrife are threats to the County's vegetation. Active remediation techniques are needed Countywide to control invasive species.

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05.

Cass County: its People



Population and demographic trends are a key measure in observing how Cass County has changed over the past decade. This section highlights crucial demographic information to assess its influence on future land use trends.

Demographic Profile

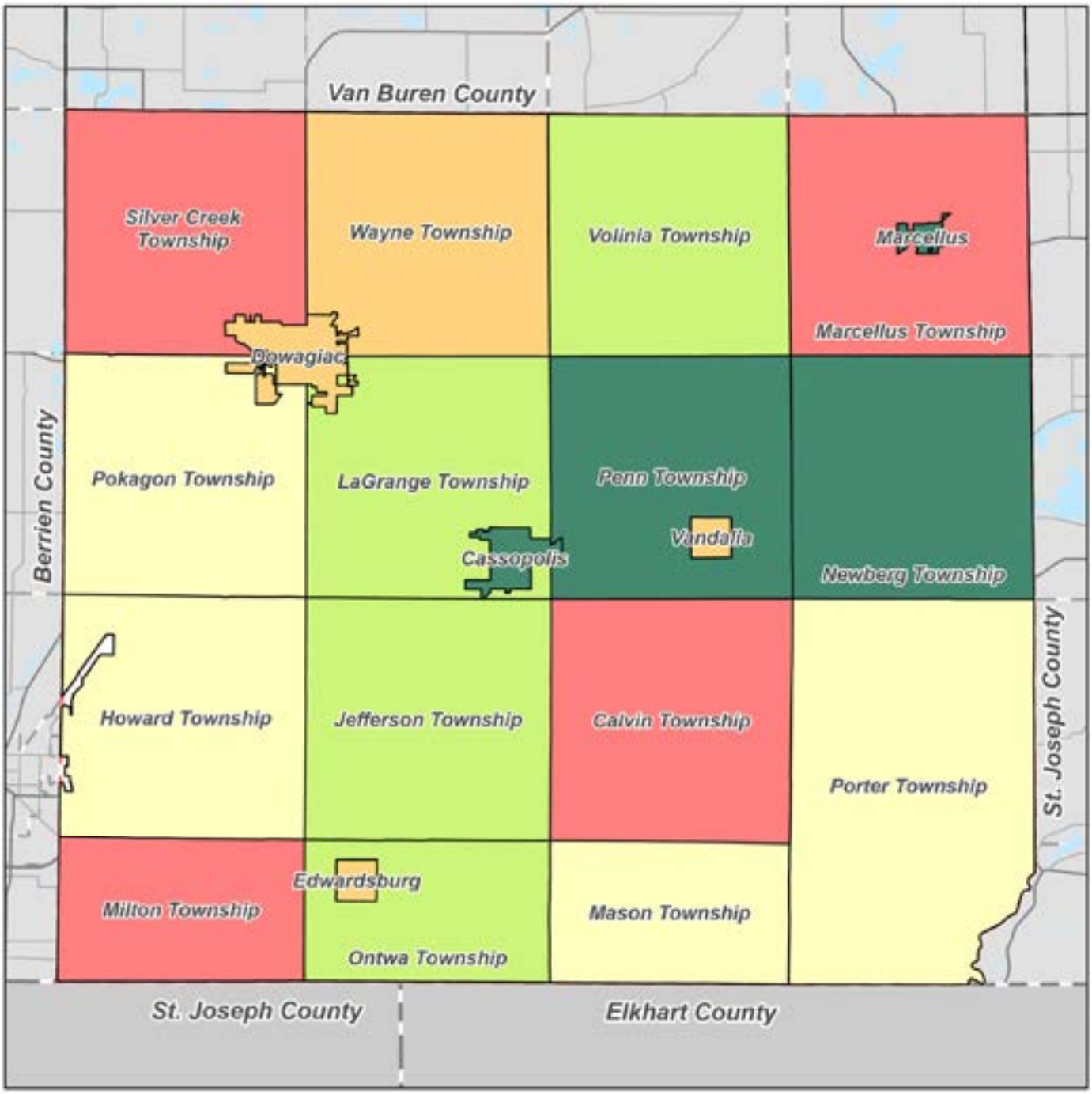
Cass County has had an approximately 8% reduction in population over the past decade, losing 797 residents. The population of Cass County now stands at 51,632, according to 2021 Census Data. As the table below indicates, the decline is concentrated in about half of the communities while the remaining communities experienced an increase in population since 2010.

The data indicates that the central portions of the County generally experienced a slight increase in population, while generally those communities bordering Indiana to the south and Van Buren County to the north saw their populations decline.

Table 1. Population Change – Cass County, 2010-2021

	2021 Population	2010 Population	Percent Change (2010-2021)
Cass County	51,632	52,429	-1.52%
Calvin Township	1,638	2,163	-24.27%
Village of Cassopolis	1,842	1,668	10.43%
City of Dowagiac	5,731	5,930	-3.36%
Village of Edwardsburg	1,207	1,280	-5.70%
Howard Charter Township	6,288	6,268	0.32%
Jefferson Township	2,576	2,526	1.98%
LaGrange Township	3,619	3,512	3.05%
Village of Marcellus	1,254	1,046	19.89%
Marcellus Township	2,232	2,599	-14.12%
Mason Township	2,862	2,896	-1.17%
Milton Township	3,235	3,680	-12.09%
Newberg Township	1,720	1,474	16.69%
Ontwa Township	6,868	6,466	6.22%
Penn Township	2,080	1,764	17.91%
Pokagon Township	2,163	2,207	-1.99%
Porter Township	3,801	3,832	-0.81%
Silver Creek Township	3,073	3,290	-6.60%
Village of Vandalia	353	366	-3.55%
Volinia Township	1,194	1,105	8.05%
Wayne Township	2,552	2,717	-6.07%

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. (2021). Table B01003 Total Population



Map 13.

Population Change 2010-2021

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025

LEGEND

- -24 to -6.6%
- -6.5 to -3.4%
- -3.3 to 0.32%
- 0.33 to 8.1 %
- 8.2 to 20%

0 1 2 MILES

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a. Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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Population Projection

In order to project the population in the future, a Cohort-Component Population Projection was used. Cohort-Component Population Projections are developed using the following methodology:

COHORT-COMPONENT

The population is divided into ten-year age cohorts, using US Census data. At each ten-year interval, individual age cohorts are moved up the ladder. For instance, the group that was 30-40 years old in 2010 became the 40-50-year-olds in 2020, minus those who die during that time frame based on the mortality rate for their age group. In order to calculate the number of people aged 0-10, the population of women of childbearing age was calculated and a 10-year birthrate per thousand (from the Michigan Department of Community Health) applied to give the number of births. By using the average death and birth rates, the analysis predicts how many people should be living in the County in 2020, if no one had moved in or out of the County.



Fall Fest in Marcellus Township

NET MIGRATION CALCULATION

To account for migration, the population projection also includes a net migration factor. The net migration factor was calculated by comparing the population we would have predicted from 2010, to the actual population in 2020, which we now know. The Cohort-Component Analysis predicted a County population of 58,726, but the actual population was 51,613. Therefore, the analysis estimates a net loss of 7,113 people, or a -13.8% net migration rate out of the County. If that same net migration rate were to continue over the next 10-20 years, the table below shows the projected population change in Cass County.

Table 2. Population Projection – Cass County

Year	Population	Percent Change
2000	51,146	
2010	52,534	2.71%
2020	51,613	-1.75%
2030 (Projected)	49,937	-3.25%
2040 (Projected)	48,233	-3.41%

Source: US Census, ESRI, McKenna Calculation

If current trends continue, the population of Cass County will slowly shrink over the next 15-20 years. However, those trends can be reversed. Manageable and rural-scale growth can occur through strategic investment in key parts of the County, as shown on the County Framework and Future Land Use Maps. Specifically, growth can be targeted to the M-60 corridor between Cassopolis and Vandalia, the areas around Dowagiac, Marcellus, and Edwardsburg, and the portions of Milton and Ontwa Townships adjacent to the growing communities across the State Line in Indiana.

Table 3 breaks down the migration rate further into individual age groups, to see which age groups had the biggest change between predicted and actual. Table 3 also demonstrates how the rate of change in the County compares with the rate of change in Michigan.



Fall Fest in Volinia Township

Table 3. Population Change in Age Structure – Cass County

	2010	2020			Actual % Change	
	Population	Predicted	Actual	Migration Rate	Cass County	Michigan
Total Population	52,534	58,726	51,613	-13.8%	-1.8%	-11.2%
0-9 years	6,291	7,959	5,258	-33.93%	-16.4%	16.0%
10-19 years	7,602	6,241	6,675	6.95%	-12.2%	5.9%
20-29 years	5,086	7,577	5,345	-29.46%	5.1%	-32.9%
30-39 years	6,187	5,030	5,358	6.52%	-13.4%	-15.6%
40-49 years	7,655	6,083	6,301	3.58%	-17.7%	-9.6%
50-59 years	8,284	7,446	7,556	1.48%	-8.8%	-32.4%
60-69 years	5,872	7,759	8,029	3.47%	36.7%	-30.9%
70-79 years	3,460	5,073	4,932	-2.78%	42.5%	21.5%
80+ years	2,097	5,557	2,159	-3.87%	2.9%	36.7%

The population change table above reflects a shifting demographic trend, particularly within the 0-9 and 20-29 age groups. College-aged individuals are increasingly leaving home, contributing to a decline in these younger age cohorts. Additionally, the trend of delayed or reduced childbearing further impacts the population's growth. However, the chart also highlights a promising opportunity for revitalization, with an influx of individuals in their 30s and 40s, potentially due to the appeal of lakefront properties and large lots conducive to raising families. This demographic shift suggests a need to focus on retaining mid-life residents, while also developing strategies to support younger populations and create conditions conducive to family growth. This mix of age groups could present a unique opportunity to balance both the short-term challenges and long-term sustainability of the community.



Age Characteristics

Understanding the age characteristics of Cass County residents helps identify factors that have profound economic, public health, and land use planning implications.

For example, a high number of working-age adults may indicate a strong employment base—an attractive feature for many manufacturing and consumer-based industries. A high number of school age children (5-18 yrs old) old will indicate future school facility and parkland needs. A high population of retired and elderly residents will highlight potential demand for senior services and specific recreation opportunities.

Table 4 provides age demographics of communities within Cass County as of 2022. Some summary points of this data are included below.

» **Young Children as Percentage of Total Population.** 9.6% of Cass County's total population is under the age of 9 years old. Although this is slightly lower than the State average of 11.3%, some communities such as the Village of Vandalia (26.9%) and Mason Township (19.5%) are higher than the State average, indicating a larger number of children in those communities.

» **Working-Age Adults as Percentage of Total Population.** 47.1% of Cass County's total population is between the ages of 20 and 59. This is lower than the State average of 51.2%. The Village of Edwardsburg features the highest percentage of residents in this age cohort (57.3%) along with the Village of Vandalia (55.2%). This likely has downstream impacts on employment, family creation, and natural population growth, as this age cohort is most likely to be in the workforce and starting families.

» **Senior Citizens as Percentage of Total Population.** 29.8% of Cass County's total population is over 60 years old. This is higher than the State average of 24.8%. The communities in Cass County with the highest percentage of this age cohort are Porter Township (40.4%) and Penn Township (39.2%).

Generally, Cass County's overall population is older than the State average, although the communities experiencing population growth tend to feature higher percentages of younger residents.



Table 4. Age Demographics – Cass County

2022 Data	0-9 Years	10-19 Years	20-29 Years	30-39 Years	40-49 Years	50-59 Years	60-69 Years	70-79 Years	80+ Years
Cass County	4,952	6,939	5,330	5,531	6,006	7,467	7,890	5,128	2,361
Calvin Township	195	240	135	95	243	255	279	151	94
Village of Cassopolis	187	232	276	178	199	285	155	166	72
City of Dowagiac	611	758	950	716	461	835	620	477	282
Village of Edwardsburg	142	131	168	159	153	212	141	57	102
Howard Charter Township	54	1,162	462	498	709	1,182	944	726	373
Jefferson Township	205	323	267	284	349	386	390	210	121
LaGrange Township	262	508	484	389	416	521	686	323	173
Village of Marcellus	134	126	207	89	111	267	103	128	38
Marcellus Township	113	259	258	200	243	442	280	254	93
Mason Township	557	352	330	386	354	254	341	183	87
Milton Township	319	559	232	303	590	421	381	285	95
Newberg Township	154	202	167	187	225	243	369	109	32
Ontwa Township	743	944	637	744	825	969	1,131	604	267
Milton Township	319	559	232	303	590	421	381	285	95
Newberg Township	154	202	167	187	225	243	369	109	32
Ontwa Township	743	944	637	744	825	969	1,131	604	267
Penn Township	256	221	194	196	207	260	264	459	92
Pokagon Township	237	231	242	298	168	265	303	214	44
Porter Township	294	428	264	438	378	482	834	607	94
Silver Creek Township	133	364	281	335	551	37	497	200	308
Village of Vandalia	95	35	67	59	28	41	33	21	10
Volinia Township	222	81	50	249	88	211	172	77	68
Wayne Township	308	307	377	213	199	354	399	279	138

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. (2022). Table S0101 Age and Sex.

Household/Family Characteristics

Household and family data provides insight on the living arrangements of Cass County residents. The following table illustrates the size of total households and families in communities across the County.

Table 5. Households and Families

2022 Data	Total Households	Average Household Size	Total Families	Average Family Size
Cass County	20,779	2.46	14,138	2.92
Calvin Township	641	2.63	489	3.01
Village of Cassopolis	759	2.24	396	2.89
City of Dowagiac	2,541	2.23	1,303	2.84
Village of Edwardsburg	616	2.05	303	2.77
Howard Charter Township	2,297	2.72	1,626	3.23
Jefferson Township	973	2.57	667	3.01
LaGrange Township	1,527	2.33	985	2.78
Village of Marcellus	422	2.85	337	3.11
Marcellus Township	842	2.64	625	3.03
Mason Township	1,056	2.69	768	3.1
Milton Township	1,175	2.71	973	2.96
Newberg Township	700	2.41	529	2.72
Ontwa Township	2,918	2.35	1,935	2.87
Penn Township	856	2.51	636	2.87
Pokagon Township	795	2.51	579	2.85
Porter Township	1,656	2.31	1,219	2.6
Silver Creek Township	1,413	2.13	824	2.76
Village of Vandalia	125	3.11	78	4.05
Volinia Township	462	2.64	369	2.9
Wayne Township	927	2.74	611	3.11

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. (2022). Table S1101 Households and Families.

Cass County's average household size and family size are lower than the national average of 2.50 persons per household and 3.11 persons per family, but higher than the State average if 2.45 persons per household and 3.07 persons per family. The majority of the County's communities (Calvin Township, Howard Charter Township, Jefferson Township, Village of Marcellus, Marcellus Township, Mason Township, Milton Township, Penn Township, Pokagon Township, the Village of Vandalia, Volinia Township, and Wayne Township) feature average household sizes that exceed the national average. However, the Village of Vandalia is the only community that features an average family size exceeding the national average.

The Village of Edwardsburg features the smallest average household size and Porter Township features the smallest average family size in the County.

'Family' - A group of two people or more related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together.

'Household' - Related family members and all the unrelated people who occupy a housing unit.

Education Characteristics

Education levels display strong correlations with median income and business attraction, noting that a region's educated workforce can indicate the size of the available talent pool.

90% of Cass County adults aged 25+ have a high school diploma, slightly less than the Michigan average of 92%. Cass County also has a lower percentage of residents aged 25+ with bachelor's degrees (21%) than does Michigan, where 31% of adults 25+ have a bachelor's degree.

The following table represents educational attainment for residents over the age of 25 in communities across Cass County.

Table 6. Educational Attainment

	Less than 9th Grade	9th to 12th Grade	High School Graduate	Some College, No Degree	Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree	High School Graduate or Higher	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Cass County	2.6%	7.7%	33.9%	23.4%	11.2%	13.6%	7.5%	89.7%	21.2%
Calvin Township	4.3%	8.5%	28.3%	28.0%	10.0%	11.9%	8.9%	87.1%	20.7%
Village of Cassopolis	2.9%	8.9%	48.9%	25.1%	6.2%	5.3%	2.6%	88.2%	7.9%
City of Dowagiac	3.3%	12.7%	30.8%	26.4%	11.7%	12.0%	3.2%	84.0%	15.1%
Village of Edwardsburg	3.7%	4.9%	33.3%	30.1%	10.0%	14.3%	3.7%	91.3%	18.0%
Howard Charter Township	1.3%	5.5%	42.8%	18.0%	12.2%	10.5%	9.7%	93.2%	20.2%
Jefferson Township	2.1%	7.8%	36.2%	23.3%	9.8%	14.1%	6.7%	90.1%	20.8%
LaGrange Township	2.8%	6.4%	43.0%	22.5%	6.4%	9.8%	9.2%	90.8%	19.0%
Villarge of Marcellus	5.2%	4.8%	41.2%	22.0%	12.6%	11.7%	3.8%	90.1%	14.2%
Marcellus Township	3.5%	7.8%	36.4%	21.5%	13.4%	12.9%	4.5%	88.7%	17.4%
Mason Township	3.2%	15.9%	29.2%	16.9%	15.0%	13.0%	6.9%	80.9%	19.9%
Milton Township	2.9%	2.0%	30.0%	24.8%	13.1%	13.5%	13.8%	95.1%	27.3%
Newberg Township	3.7%	8.9%	34.6%	20.8%	17.2%	9.8%	5.0%	87.4%	14.8%
Ontwa Township	2.2%	5.4%	30.2%	31.4%	10.1%	15.0%	5.7%	92.5%	20.7%
Penn Township	3.7%	7.2%	29.1%	18.4%	6.9%	26.2%	8.5%	89.1%	34.7%
Pokagon Township	1.4%	8.0%	32.5%	23.5%	11.4%	15.7%	7.5%	90.6%	23.2%
Porter Township	1.6%	6.7%	32.4%	22.8%	11.6%	15.8%	9.2%	91.7%	25.0%
Silver Creek Township	2.7%	4.9%	35.5%	19.9%	7.6%	20.1%	9.4%	92.4%	29.4%
Village of Vandalia	11.6%	15.7%	31.9%	26.4%	7.4%	5.1%	1.9%	72.7%	6.9%
Volinia Township	4.4%	8.5%	27.4%	29.4%	13.0%	10.6%	6.7%	87.1%	17.3%
Wayne Township	2.6%	13.7%	31.5%	22.0%	15.1%	9.2%	5.9%	83.7%	15.0%

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. (2022). Table S1501 Educational Attainment.

Employment Characteristics

Table 7 presents employment data by occupation for Cass County, which provides a perspective on the local economic conditions and workforce characteristics.

Table 7. Cass County Resident Type of Occupation

	Civilian Workforce Over 16 Years Old	Management, Business, Science, and Art	Service	Sales and Office	Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance	Production, Transportation, and Material Moving
Cass County	23,921	31.4%	15.5%	18.3%	11.7%	23.0%
Calvin Township	706	31.2%	13.6%	15.7%	9.2%	30.3%
Village of Cassopolis	686	18.5%	17.3%	20.4%	7.1%	36.6%
City of Dowagiac	2,516	20.2%	27.9%	14.3%	13.8%	23.8%
Village of Edwardsburg	646	20.6%	22.4%	21.8%	11.5%	23.7%
Howard Charter Township	2,764	33.0%	14.5%	16.5%	13.6%	22.4%
Jefferson Township	1,366	35.0%	19.9%	8.3%	10.9%	25.8%
LaGrange Township	1,783	24.7%	12.4%	23.7%	11.4%	27.8%
Village of Marcellus	556	22.3%	10.3%	6.8%	16.9%	43.7%
Marcellus Township	1,026	27.7%	10.0%	13.5%	12.6%	36.2%
Mason Township	1,184	26.5%	16.3%	23.5%	11.7%	22.0%
Milton Township	1,671	41.5%	13.9%	18.6%	12.3%	13.6%
Newberg Township	761	35.7%	17.9%	13.9%	7.2%	25.2%
Ontwa Township	3,786	35.2%	14.9%	17.9%	9.2%	22.8%
Penn Township	841	24.7%	13.8%	20.8%	12.5%	28.2%
Pokagon Township	892	34.0%	9.6%	25.8%	9.6%	21.0%
Porter Township	1,677	30.9%	14.3%	25.6%	7.6%	21.5%
Silver Creek Township	1,369	35.6%	10.2%	20.3%	18.6%	15.3%
Village of Vandalia	176	8.5%	16.5%	20.5%	18.8%	35.8%
Volinia Township	564	39.0%	9.9%	11.3%	16.0%	23.8%
Wayne Township	1,015	32.4%	15.9%	22.7%	12.6%	16.5%

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. (2022). Table S2401 Occupation by Sex for the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over.

The data demonstrates that most residents in Cass County work in either the management, business, science, and art occupations or in the production, transportation, and material moving occupations.

Table 8 further details employment data of County residents by industry. Most residents are employed in manufacturing, educational, health care, and social assistance occupations. The percentage of residents employed in manufacturing occupations is about 15% higher than the national average and 7% higher than the State average, indicating a strong manufacturing presence in Cass County.

Table 8. Cass County Resident Occupation by Industry

2022 Data	Civil and Work force Over 16 Years Old	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Mining	Construction	Manufacturing	Wholesale Trade	Retail Trade	Transportation and Warehousing, and Utilities	Information	Finance and Insurance, Real estate and Rental	Professional, Scientific, and Management	Educational Services, Health Care, and Social Assistance	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	Other Services
Cass County	23,921	1.9%	9.2%	25.6%	2.5%	10.4%	4.5%	1.1%	4.4%	6.5%	20.4%	7.1%	3.8%
Calvin Township	706	1.0%	5.2%	30.2%	3.1%	11.0%	6.1%	1.0%	0.3%	12.9%	18.4%	5.2%	3.7%
Village of Cassopolis	686	0.4%	4.5%	22.7%	0.0%	21.4%	7.1%	1.2%	3.4%	4.8%	10.9%	12.0%	7.7%
City of Dowagiac	2,516	1.0%	6.5%	21.9%	2.5%	10.5%	6.5%	0.0%	3.4%	7.7%	25.2%	8.1%	4.7%
Village of Edwardsburg	646	0.0%	5.3%	28.9%	2.3%	11.9%	4.5%	0.6%	4.5%	9.3%	13.0%	13.3%	2.9%
Howard Charter Township	2,764	0.2%	15.6%	20.9%	1.9%	11.1%	4.0%	1.2%	3.3%	6.9%	21.2%	8.3%	4.5%
Jefferson Township	1,366	0.9%	10.6%	32.0%	0.3%	3.8%	2.2%	0.4%	4.2%	8.9%	16.2%	15.4%	4.2%
LaGrange Township	1,783	0.2%	10.4%	24.1%	0.4%	18.0%	5.4%	1.8%	2.1%	3.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Village of Marcellus	556	2.2%	6.3%	40.3%	7.2%	11.2%	3.1%	0.0%	6.8%	1.3%	12.1%	5.9%	3.8%
Marcellus Township	1,026	1.8%	6.4%	34.3%	6.3%	10.6%	3.3%	0.0%	4.7%	5.5%	15.8%	4.8%	3.4%
Mason Township	1,184	1.9%	9.5%	25.8%	0.4%	14.1%	2.0%	1.2%	1.9%	15.6%	19.3%	3.3%	2.1%
Milton Township	1,671	1.2%	11.1%	22.1%	5.4%	8.7%	2.8%	0.0%	6.2%	4.4%	25.0%	8.9%	1.9%
Newberg Township	761	2.9%	3.8%	31.5%	3.9%	5.9%	10.0%	0.4%	2.2%	9.3%	14.3%	8.9%	3.3%
Ontwa Township	3,786	0.8%	4.6%	28.8%	1.9%	10.2%	3.4%	1.7%	8.0%	3.9%	23.0%	5.8%	4.7%
Penn Township	841	3.1%	7.1%	28.2%	3.2%	8.2%	10.2%	0.5%	4.9%	5.2%	14.3%	5.0%	5.6%
Pokagon Township	892	0.0%	4.1%	24.7%	3.0%	16.6%	7.0%	0.6%	5.3%	6.2%	16.8%	4.8%	3.4%
Porter Township	1,677	5.1%	11.1%	31.8%	1.3%	10.2%	1.8%	1.3%	3.5%	5.2%	16.8%	6.3%	3.6%
Silver Creek Township	1,369	4.2%	16.1%	15.5%	2.2%	6.5%	4.2%	4.0%	4.1%	8.7%	24.3%	3.4%	3.4%
Village of Vandalia	176	2.8%	9.7%	29.0%	2.8%	8.5%	4.5%	0.0%	2.8%	8.5%	15.3%	4.5%	10.8
Volinia Township	564	7.8%	12.2%	31.6%	1.6%	5.5%	6.2%	1.8%	1.4%	0.5%	20.0%	1.4%	6.0%
Wayne Township	1,015	6.2%	10.3%	16.6%	5.9%	11.1%	6.0%	0.6%	7.3%	4.9%	13.7%	13.8%	1.6%

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. (2022). Table S2405 Occupation for the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over.

Income Characteristics

Income data can be used as a measure of economic stability and financial well-being. Higher median household incomes typically correspond with reduced poverty among residents. A higher household income also increases a household's purchasing power, resulting in positive economic "spillover" effects such as purchasing new cars and appliances, dining out more frequently, and home and property improvements. Because of this, observing median household income is a valuable method of studying the financial health of a community.

Table 9 reflects the median household income for communities in Cass County between 2010-2022. These values were adjusted to account for inflation using the Consumer Price Index Tool produced by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This provides a more accurate representation of how income has changed over the past decade.

Table 9. Median Household Income (in 2024 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) – Cass County

	2022	2015	2010
Cass County	$71,505.20	$61,457.21	$64,301.76
Calvin Township	$81,932.11	$56,474.12	$69,054.25
Village of Cassopolis	$42,900.05	$33,879.98	$36,102.75
City of Dowagiac	$45,924.46	$37,138.26	$45,575.01
Village of Edwardsburg	$58,523.61	$40,277.44	$47,814.84
Howard Charter Township	$78,423.93	$65,339.69	$74,502.76
Jefferson Township	$73,882.39	$72,093.78	$67,512.79
LaGrange Township	$53,879.84	$46,071.13	$48,697.80
Villarge of Marcellus	$73,203.35	$57,735.73	$56,380.93
Marcellus Township	$73,963.56	$65,826.65	$60,075.89
Mason Township	$70,543.14	$62,650.19	$61,146.24
Milton Township	$125,879.79	$70,568.24	$99,428.11
Newberg Township	$76,447.15	$62,296.52	$63,241.38
Ontwa Township	$65,996.11	$66,510.24	$70,999.95
Penn Township	$94,387.35	$66,629.01	$80,062.28
Pokagon Township	$66,971.34	$57,783.24	$60,618.18
Porter Township	$90,982.29	$68,645.47	$74,541.19
Silver Creek Township	$75,545.42	$81,504.37	$70,572.95
Village of Vandalia	$64,448.26	$47,632.31	$37,718.23
Volinia Township	$76,331.97	$67,039.43	$62,778.79
Wayne Township	$59,534.83	$58,584.28	$60,128.55

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. (2022). Table S1901 Household Income Over the Past 12 Months. Values are adjusted for inflation using the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI Calculator.

Cass County features a median household income that is lower than the national average, but generally consistent with the state average. Over the past ten years, the average median household income in Cass County has increased from $64,302 in 2010 to $71,505 in 2022. Milton Township features the highest median household income in 2022 at $125,880 while the Village of Cassopolis features the lowest median household income in 2022 at $42,900. Sixteen of the 20 communities in Cass County feature a lower median household income than the national average of $82,006. Cass County has a relatively low percentage of its residents living in poverty at 12.1%, in 2022, compared to the State at 13.1% and the nation at 12.5%.

Housing Characteristics

A community's housing stock profile informs on the type of housing units available in the community, including the relative size and age of those units. In a period where demographic trends are shifting and alternative housing arrangements are needed to accommodate working professionals and aging empty-nesters, a mix of housing types of various sizes and ages signals a community's capacity to house a broader spectrum of residents. The following table illustrates housing characteristics of Cass County.

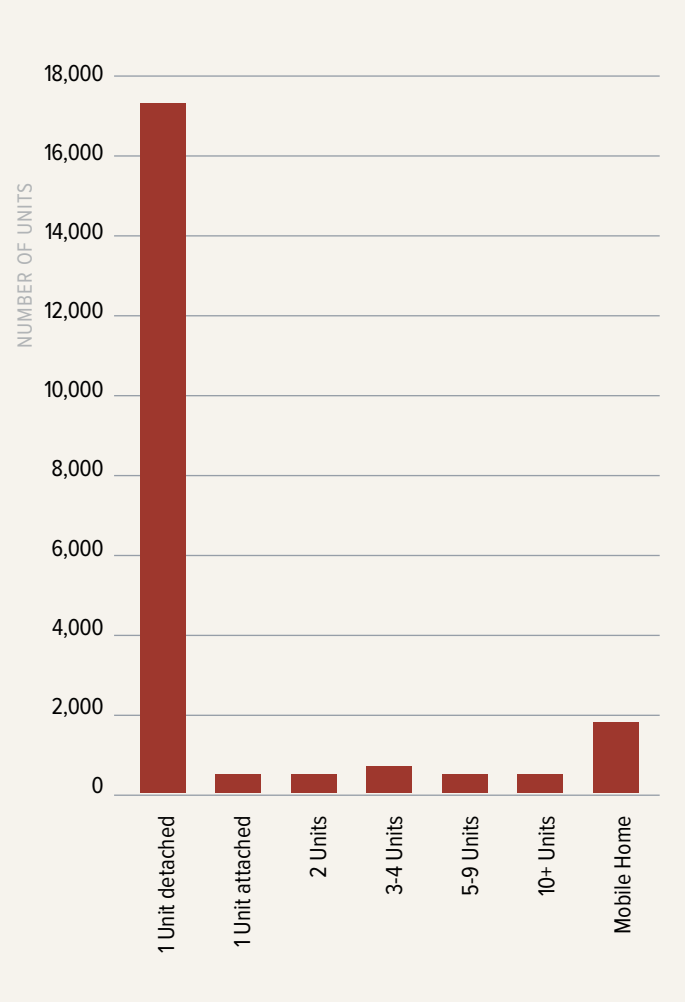
Table 10. Housing Characteristics – Cass County

Occupied Housing Units	20,779
1 unit detached	17,462
1 unit attached	283
2 unit apartment	268
3-4 unit apartment	368
5-9 unit apartment	342
10+ unit apartment	418
Mobile home or other type of housing	1,638
Year Structure Built	
2020 or later	76
2010 to 2019	912
2000 to 2009	2,461
1980 to 1999	4,044
1960 to 1979	5,895
1940 to 1959	3,616
1939 or earlier	3,775
Number of Bedrooms in Unit	
No bedroom	239
1 bedroom	1,186
2 or 3 bedrooms	14,690
4 or more bedrooms	4,664

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. (2022). Table S2504 Physical Housing Characteristics for Occupied Housing Units.

Over 84% of the housing units in Cass County are single-family detached dwellings, while only 5% are within multi-unit structures. 64% of the County's housing stock was constructed prior to 1979 while only 5% of the County's housing stock was built between 2010-2022. This data suggests that the County's housing stock is primarily comprised of older single-family houses. The figure below illustrates the gap between housing types available in the County.

Figure 2. Available Housing Types in Cass County



The median value of a single-family home in Cass County was $181,100 in 2022. The median value of a single-family home in Michigan in 2022 was $320,900.



Single-Family Detached Dwelling - Neighborhood



Single-Family Detached Dwelling - Neighborhood



Single-Family Detached Dwellings - Rural Subdivision



Single-Family Detached Dwellings - Rural

There are 25,458 housing units in Cass County. 20,779 of these units are occupied, meaning 4,679, or 18.4%, are vacant. A unique factor contributing to the vacancy rate in Cass County is seasonal housing. Specifically, 2,993 of the 4,679 units (64%) are intended for seasonal use, meaning these housing units are occupied only during certain times/seasons of the year intentionally. Census estimates show that Cass County has a single-family home ownership rate of 81.5% while the State of Michigan had an owner-occupied rate of 72.5% for the same period.

Table 11. Vacancy Status – Cass County

Vacancy	Count
Total:	4,679
For rent	293
Rented, not occupied	39
For sale only	278
Sold, not occupied	139
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	2,993
For migrant workers	135
Other vacant	802

New neighborhoods in the County's population centers are encouraged to contain a variety of housing types to allow for a range of price points and to create increased density without impacting the character of existing adjacent neighborhoods. Single family detached, single family attached, duplexes, quadplexes and townhomes represent missing middle housing types to be considered. The target density of new residential construction should be compatible with the existing built environment.

Neighborhoods should be designed with connected street patterns, including connections to existing neighborhoods where possible, and should have amenities (such as parks and schools) within their boundaries. Businesses and retail should be within walking distance, along major corridors. The target density of new residential construction should be compatible with the existing built environment.

Commuting Characteristics

Due to the County's close proximity to nearby economic centers, many residents work in surrounding communities. Identifying and visualizing commuting patterns within Cass County is valuable in identifying areas of potential growth and future infrastructure needs. The following table illustrates the overall commuting characteristics for Cass County residents.

Table 12. Countywide Commute Destination – Cass County

Location	Count	Percentage
Total Commuters	10,356	100.00%
Cass County, MI	4,571	44.10%
Berrien County, MI	1,869	18.00%
St. Joseph County, IN	865	8.40%
Van Buren County, MI	761	7.30%
Elkhart County, IN	505	4.90%
St. Joseph County, MI	348	3.40%
Kalamazoo County, MI	318	3.10%
Allegan County, MI	109	1.10%
Calhoun County, MI	84	0.80%
LaPorte County, IN	58	0.60%
All Other Locations	868	8.40%

Source: US Census On the Map

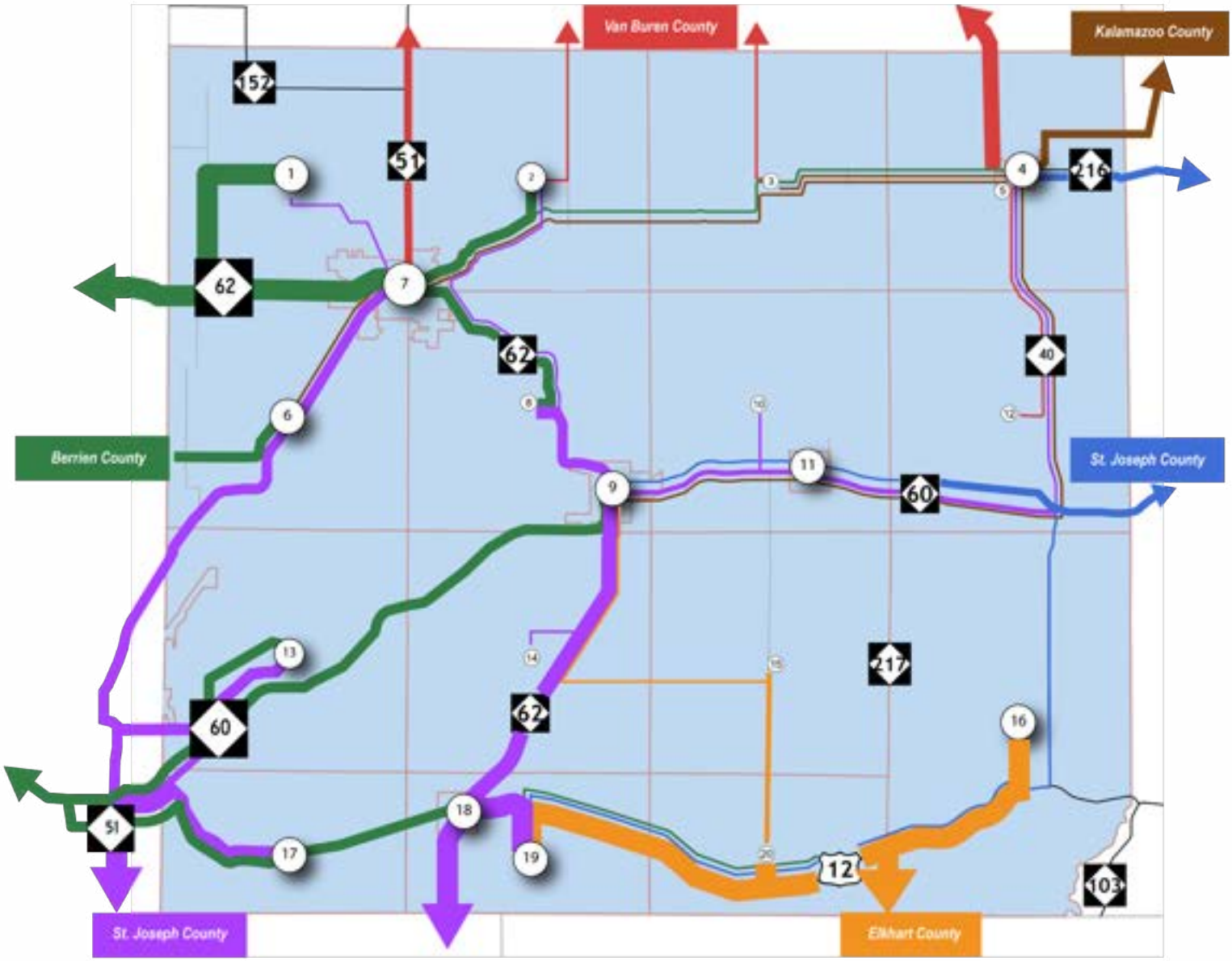
The data indicates that 56% of Cass County residents work in surrounding counties. The largest number of those residents commute to Berrien County. Relatively few residents commute into LaPorte, Calhoun, or Allegan Counties.

Map 11 indicates the estimated commuting patterns using data accessed from the United States Census Bureau's On The Map Data Portal. This flow map provides a visual representation of where residents of Cass County communities work and the routes they likely take every day. While destinations and the exact routes used by commuters are granular datasets that are not easily obtained, Table 13 provides a useful exercise in illustrating which communities in Cass County have higher amounts of commuters, indicating they may serve as "bedroom communities" for surrounding metropolitan areas.

Unsurprisingly, each community's proximity to surrounding metropolitan areas and major transportation corridors has an outsized influence on commuting patterns. These patterns and their relation to specific destination counties are discussed on the following pages.



M-62 in Cassopolis



Map 14.

Commuter Flow

Cass County, Michigan

June 18, 2025

LEGEND

- Under 25 commuters
- 25-50 commuters
- 50-75 commuters
- 75-100 commuters
- Over 100 commuters

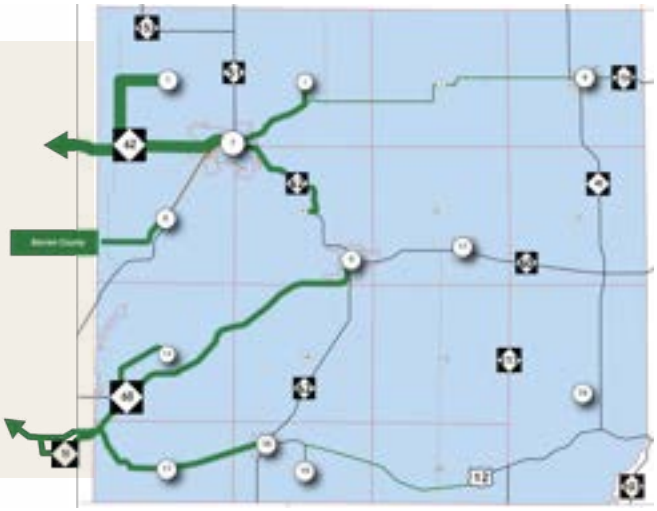
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Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a. Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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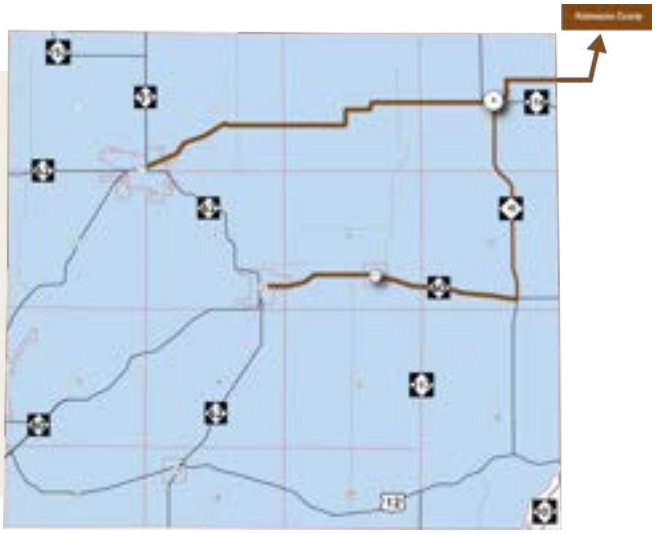
BERRIEN COUNTY, MI

Eighteen percent of Cass County commuter travel to Berrien County for work every day, home to the greater Niles area. While most communities in Cass County feature residents who work in Berrien County, the western portion of Cass County features the highest number of commuters traveling to Berrien County regularly. This is likely driven by easy access to M-51, M-60, and M-62 along with close proximity to Niles.



KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MI

Some residents in the northeast portion of Cass County commute to Kalamazoo County regularly. This is likely due to convenient access to M-216 which connects these communities to Kalamazoo.



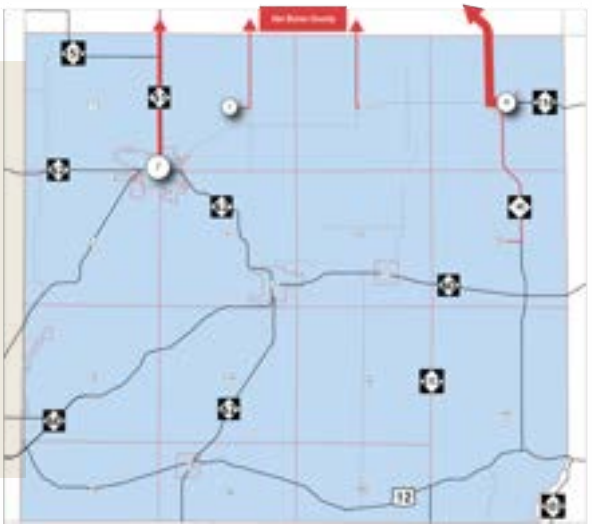
ST. JOSEPH COUNTY, MI

Some residents in the northeast portion of Cass County commute to St. Joseph County, Michigan, regularly. This is driven by access to M-60 and M-216 as well as US-12. A large portion of these commuters travel to the City of Three Rivers.



VAN BUREN COUNTY, MI

A few residents in the northern portion of the County commute to Van Buren County.



ELKHART COUNTY, IN

Many residents commute south to Elkhart County, located along Cass County's southern border in the State of Indiana. These commuters largely reside in the southeastern portion of Cass County and are generally traveling to the City of Elkhart.



ST. JOSEPH COUNTY, IN

St. Joseph County, also in the State of Indiana, is a prominent destination among Cass County commuters, as US-131 provides easy access to the City of South Bend. While these commuters are largely concentrated in the southern portion of Cass County, there is a noticeable number of commuters from the County's central communities as well.



Table 13. Commuter Destination Data – Cass County

1. Calvin Township	Count	Percentage
Total Commuters	26	100%
Cass County, MI	3	11.5%
Berrien County, MI	2	7.6%
Elhart County, IN	1	3.8%
All Other Locations	20	76.9%

2. Village of Cassopolis	Count	Percentage
Total Commuters	1,048	100%
Cass County, MI	165	15.7%
St. Joseph County, IN	47	4.4%
Berrien County, MI	39	3.7%
Elkhart County, IN	14	1.3%
St. Joseph County, MI	11	1.0%
Kalamazoo County, MI	10	1.0%
All Other Locations	762	72.7%

3. City of Dowagiac	Count	Percentage
Total Commuters	2,095	100%
Cass County, MI	331	15.8%
Berrien County, MI	182	8.7%
St. Joseph County, IN	46	2.0%
Calhoun County, MI	19	0.9%
All Other Locations	1,517	72.4%

4. Village of Edwardsburg	Count	Percentage
Total Commuters	597	100%
St. Joseph County, IN	53	8.9%
Cass County, MI	52	8.7%
St. Joseph County, MI	19	3.1%
Elkhart County, IN	18	3.0%
Berrien County, MI	13	2.2%
Kalamazoo County, MI	5	0.8%
All Other Locations	437	73.20%

5. Howard Charter Township	Count	Percentage
Total Commuters	476	100%
Berrien County, MI	63	13.2%
St. Joseph County, IN	33	6.9%
Cass County, MI	7	1.5%
Elkhart County, IN	4	0.8%
LaPorte County, IN	2	0.4%
All Other Locations	367	77.1%

6. Jefferson Township	Count	Percentage
Total Commuters	275	100%
Cass County, MI	30	10.9%
St. Joseph County, IN	18	6.6%
Elkhart County, IN	8	2.9%
Berrien County, MI	7	2.5%
Kalamazoo County, MI	3	1.1%
All Other Locations	209	76.0%

7. LaGrange Township	Count	Percentage
Total Commuters	1,500	100%
Cass County, MI	242	16.1%
St. Joseph County, IN	77	5.1%
Berrien County, MI	51	3.4%
Elkhart County, IN	18	1.2%
Kalamazoo County, MI	13	0.9%
St. Joseph County, MI	12	0.8%
All Other Locations	1,087	72.5%

8. Marcellus Township	Count	Percentage
Total Commuters	483	100%
Cass County, MI	245	50.7%
Van Buren County, MI	97	20.1%
St. Joseph County, MI	45	9.3%
Kalamazoo County, MI	29	6.0%
Berrien County, MI	15	3.1%
St. Joseph County, IN	11	2.3%
Elkhart County, IN	6	1.2%
Allegan County, MI	5	1.0%
Calhoun County, MI	4	0.8%
Barry County, MI	3	0.6%
All Other Locations	23	4.8%

9. Village of Marcellus	Count	Percentage
Total Commuters	261	100%
Cass County, MI	46	17.6%
Kalamazoo County, MI	7	2.7%
Van Buren County, MI	5	1.9%
St. Joseph County, MI	3	1.1%
Bay County, IL	2	0.8%
Elkhart County, IN	1	0.4%
St. Joseph County, IN	1	0.4%
All Other Locations	196	75.1%

10. Mason Township	Count	Percentage
Total Commuters	198	100%
Elkhart County, IN	26	13.1%
St. Joseph County, IN	10	5.0%
Cass County, MI	10	5.0%
St. Joseph County, MI	7	3.5%
All Other Locations	145	73.2%

11. Milton Township	Count	Percentage
Total Commuters	666	100%
Berrien County, MI	87	13.1%
St. Joseph County, IN	64	9.7%
Cass County, MI	53	8.0%
Van Buren County, MI	15	2.3%
LaPorte County, IN	12	1.8%
All Other Locations	435	65.3%

12. Newberg Township	Count	Percentage
Total Commuters	217	100%
Cass County, MI	15	6.9%
Van Buren County, MI	9	4.1%
Kalamazoo County, MI	6	2.8%
St. Joseph County, IN	6	2.8%
St. Joseph County, MI	3	1.4%
Elkhart County, IN	2	0.9%
All Other Locations	176	81.1%

13. Ontwa Township	Count	Percentage
Total Commuters	1,963	100%
St. Joseph County, IN	283	14.4%
Cass County, MI	133	6.7%
Elkhart County, IN	117	9.3%
Berrien County, MI	91	7.9%
All Other Locations	1,339	68.2%

14. Penn Township	Count	Percentage
Total Commuters	435	100.00%
Cass County, MI	47	10.80%
St. Joseph County, IN	20	4.60%
St. Joseph County, MI	13	3.00%
Berrien County, MI	10	2.30%
Elkhart County, IN	6	1.40%
Cook County, IL	2	0.50%
All Other Locations	337	77.50%

15. Pokagon Township	Count	Percentage
Total Commuters	513	100.00%
Cass County, MI	64	12.50%
Berrien County, MI	30	5.90%
Kalamazoo County, MI	8	1.60%
St. Joseph County, IN	8	1.60%
Ingham County, MI	3	0.60%
All Other Locations	400	78.00%

16. Porter Township	Count	Percentage
Total Commuters	348	100.00%
Cass County, MI	193	55.50%
Elkhart County, IN	40	11.50%
St. Joseph County, MI	33	9.50%
St. Joseph County, IN	20	5.70%
Berrien County, MI	17	4.90%
Kalamazoo County, MI	7	2.00%
Van Buren County, MI	5	1.40%
Clinton County, MI	3	0.90%
Kent County, MI	3	0.90%

17. Silver Creek Township	Count	Percentage
Total Commuters	447	100%
Cass County, MI	42	9.4%
Berrien County, MI	31	6.8%
St. Joseph County, IN	13	2.9%
All Other Locations	361	80.8%

18. Village of Vandalia	Count	Percentage
Total Commuters	31	100%
St. Joseph County, IN	5	16.10%
Cass County, MI	5	16.20%
Genesee County, MI	1	3.20%
Berrien County, MI	1	3.20%
All Other Locations	19	61.30%

19. Volinia Township	Count	Percentage
Total Commuters	35	100%
Cass County, MI	6	17.2%
Kalamazoo County, MI	2	5.8%
Washtenaw County, MI	1	2.9%
Calhoun County, MI	1	2.9%
Eaton County, MI	1	2.9%
Van Buren County, MI	1	2.9%
St. Joseph County, IN	1	2.9%
All Other Locations	22	62.9%

20. Wayne Township	Count	Percentage
Total Commuters	634	100%
Cass County, MI	105	16.6%
Berrien County, MI	58	9.1%
Van Buren County, MI	8	1.3%
Branch County, MI	4	0.6%
St. Joseph County, IN	4	0.6%
All Other Locations	455	71.8%

Key Findings

- Overall, Cass County has experienced a decrease in population since 2010, however, almost half of the communities within the County are growing in population.
- Much of the population growth is occurring in the central part of the County.
- Although almost 30% of Cass County's total population is over 60 years old, higher than the national average of 23.8%, the communities growing fastest feature higher numbers of children.
- Many residents are employed in management, business, science and arts. The unemployment rate in the County is similar to the State of Michigan and steadily decreasing.
- Median household incomes in Cass County are similar to the state average.
- The County's existing housing stock is composed mostly of older single-family residences.
- Cass County has a single-family home ownership rate of 81.5%, higher than the average for the State of Michigan.
- 56% of Cass County residents travel outside of the County for work. Although many residents also work within Cass County, its rural quality of life in proximity to major economic centers makes the County an attractive "bedroom community" to those centers.
- Berrien County is the largest draw for Cass County commuters, with 18% of residents traveling there for work. St. Joseph County, Indiana and Van Buren County, Michigan also represent strong employment destinations, drawing a combined 16% of Cass County commuters.

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06.

Cass County: its Infrastructure



Public infrastructure supports the economic and social life of a community, and plays a key role in growth, preservation, and community character. This chapter outlines the utility, transportation, parkland and public facility infrastructure of Cass County.

Water and Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure

Due to a dispersed population density, numerous public authorities provide water and sanitary sewer service in Cass County. The entities providing municipal water and sanitary sewer infrastructure across the County are described in the table on the following page.

Table 14. Public Sewer and Water Authorities in Cass County

Public Authority	General Description	Municipal Water Service Area	Sanitary Sewer Service Area
City of Dowagiac	Drinking water is sourced from 4 wells and treated at the Dowagiac Water Treatment Plant, which was constructed in 1974. The City operates wastewater collection and treatment through 33 miles of gravity sewer. The City's stormwater and wastewater collection systems are almost completely separate.	Within City Boundaries. Future extension is planned to serve to some portions of the Pokagon Band Tribal Lands.	Within City boundaries. The Dowagiac Wastewater Treatment Plant collects and treats wastewater from the Village of Cassopolis, Cassopolis Area Utility Authority, Southwest Michigan College, Sister Lakes Area Utility Authority, and Indian Lake.
Village of Cassopolis	Drinking water is sourced from 2 wells, installed in 1998. Village participates in the Wellhead Protection Program.	Within Village boundaries, as well as some properties in LaGrange, Jefferson, and Penn Townships. Service also extends to the Village of Vandalia.	See Cassopolis Area Utilities Authority.
Cassopolis Area Utilities Authority (CAUA)	Wastewater is transported to the City of Dowagiac for treatment.	None	Properties in Calvin, Jefferson, LaGrange, and Penn Townships, and the Villages of Cassopolis and Vandalia.
Sister Lakes Area Utilities Authority	The Sister Lakes wastewater collection system provides services in Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties.	None	Silver Creek Township, Sister Lakes area and Indian Lake, including some properties in Van Buren County.
Village of Marcellus	Drinking water is sourced from 2 wells.	Within Village boundaries.	Within Village boundaries. Village of Marcellus Sewer Lagoon System with backup wastewater management from Lakes Area Sewer Authority.
Village of Edwardsburg	A new Iron Removal Plant began operation in 2024 to improve drinking water quality,	Within Village boundaries.	Within Village boundaries and around the Perimeter of Pleasant Lake.
Ontwa Township	There are multiple wastewater collection districts throughout Ontwa Township.	None	Some parts of Ontwa Township, including Garver Lake, Eagle Lake, Christiana & Juno Lakes, as well as in the Southwest corner of the Township.
Lakes Area Sewer Authority	The wastewater collection and treatment program operates in both Cass County and Van Buren County. The project received the 2011 Southwest Michigan Planning Commission "Graham Woodhouse Intergovernmental Effort" Award and the 2011 Local and State American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) "Quality of Life" Award.	None	The Village of Marcellus, Marcellus and Volinia Townships, around the Finch, Fish, and West Saddlebag Lake areas.
White Pigeon Sanitary System	The White Pigeon Sanitary System treatment facility is located in Porter Township near the St. Joseph River.	None	This wastewater treatment system service area extends from the Village of White Pigeon in St. Joseph County, Michigan and throughout southeast Porter Township.

The following maps illustrate the location of municipal water and sanitary sewer systems. The orange lines indicate the approximate outer boundary of future service that could be provided by the entities.

DRINKING WATER

Public water infrastructure is limited to concentrated pockets of the County where population density is highest, including some urbanized lake areas. This infrastructure includes facilities that provide some level of water treatment, involving basic filtration and removal of heavy metals such as iron, and providing simple tests for hazardous chemicals. Most County residents rely on private water wells.

SANITARY SEWER

The sanitary sewer infrastructure is located mostly in areas with higher population densities, such as the City of Dowagiac and the Villages of Cassopolis, Edwardsburg, Marcellus, and Vandalia; there are also wastewater treatment systems around the Sister Lakes region and in Southeast Porter Township. A new sewer line will be added in 2025, running from the City of Dowagiac to Pokagon Township. In other areas, residents rely on septic systems for sewage disposal. Some communities have established “community sewer systems” to serve their subdivision or small neighborhood development.

Moreso than water districts, sanitary sewer infrastructure tends to extend beyond municipal boundaries. Most wastewater collection facilities in Cass County operate in multiple jurisdictions, and some operate within multiple counties. Some wastewater districts in southern Cass County transport wastewater to Indiana facilities for treatment.

A county-wide sewer study was completed in 1999 and this study presented recommendations regarding how sewer service could most appropriately be expanded to address local needs. The County’s population has likely grown by about 1,400 persons since the study was completed. The majority of local communities in the County have either updated or adopted new master plans and the policies of the plans typically address where planned growth areas are to be located and implications for sewage disposal and potable water services.



Map 15.

Municipal Water Infrastructure

Cass County, Michigan

June 12, 2025

LEGEND

- Communities with Municipal Water Systems
- Planned Service Extension
- Pokagon Band Land

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Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a. Data Source: Local Units of Government and the Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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Map 16.

Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure

Cass County, Michigan

June 12, 2025

LEGEND

- Sanitary Sewer Service Area
- Wastewater Treatment Systems
- Planned Service Extension
- Pokagon Band Land
- (A) Sister Lakes Area Utilities Authorities
- (B) Lakes Area Sewer Authority
- (C) City of Dowagiac Wastewater System
- (D) Cassopolis Area Utilities Authority
- (E) City of Niles Wastewater Treatment
- (F) Ontwa Township Wastewater Treatment
- (G) White Pigeon Sanitary System

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Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a. Data Source: Local Units of Government and the Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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Transportation Network

Cass County contains 369 miles of roadways that service its 490.1 square mile area. Although it is located in close proximity to larger metropolitan regions such as South Bend, Benton Harbor, and Kalamazoo, there are no freeways or interstates that extend through the County. Instead, it is largely rural and low-density in character, and most of the County's transportation network is in the form of two-lane roadways.

Numerous entities are tasked with providing regular maintenance and rehabilitation of area roadways. The most relevant agencies are listed below:

- **Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT).** MDOT is the state-wide transportation agency tasked with maintaining all state trunklines in Cass County. These include all "M-Routes" such as M-152, M-51, M-62, M-216, M-40, and M-60, as well as Interstate Route 12. MDOT also disburses federal transportation funding for eligible projects across the County.
- **Cass County Road Commission (CCRC).** CCRC is the local road agency for all of Cass County. Deriving much of its operating revenue from state transportation funding and local townships, they are tasked with road maintenance of all roadways in Cass County's 15 townships.
- **Southwest Michigna Planning Commission (SWMPC).** SWMPC is the Metropolitan Planning Organization of this region. They are responsible for the transportation planning in the area. Municipalities in their region can become members of the organization, appointing representatives to serve on subcommittees that provide input on the development and transportation planning services.
- **Niles-Buchanan-Cass Area Transportation Study.** NATS represents the urbanized areas in Niles, Buchanan, and Cass underneath the SWMPC.
- **Cities and Villages.** Due to how state transportation funding is distributed in Michigan, cities and villages maintain control and responsibility for all non MDOT roadways within their jurisdictions. The City of Dowagiac, Village of Cassopolis, Village of Edwardsburg, Village of Marcellus and Village of Vandalia all perform maintenance of their local streets.

All of these entities rely on a mix of federal, state, and local funding sources to maintain the roadways in Cass County. The applicable funding and disbursement systems are detailed below.

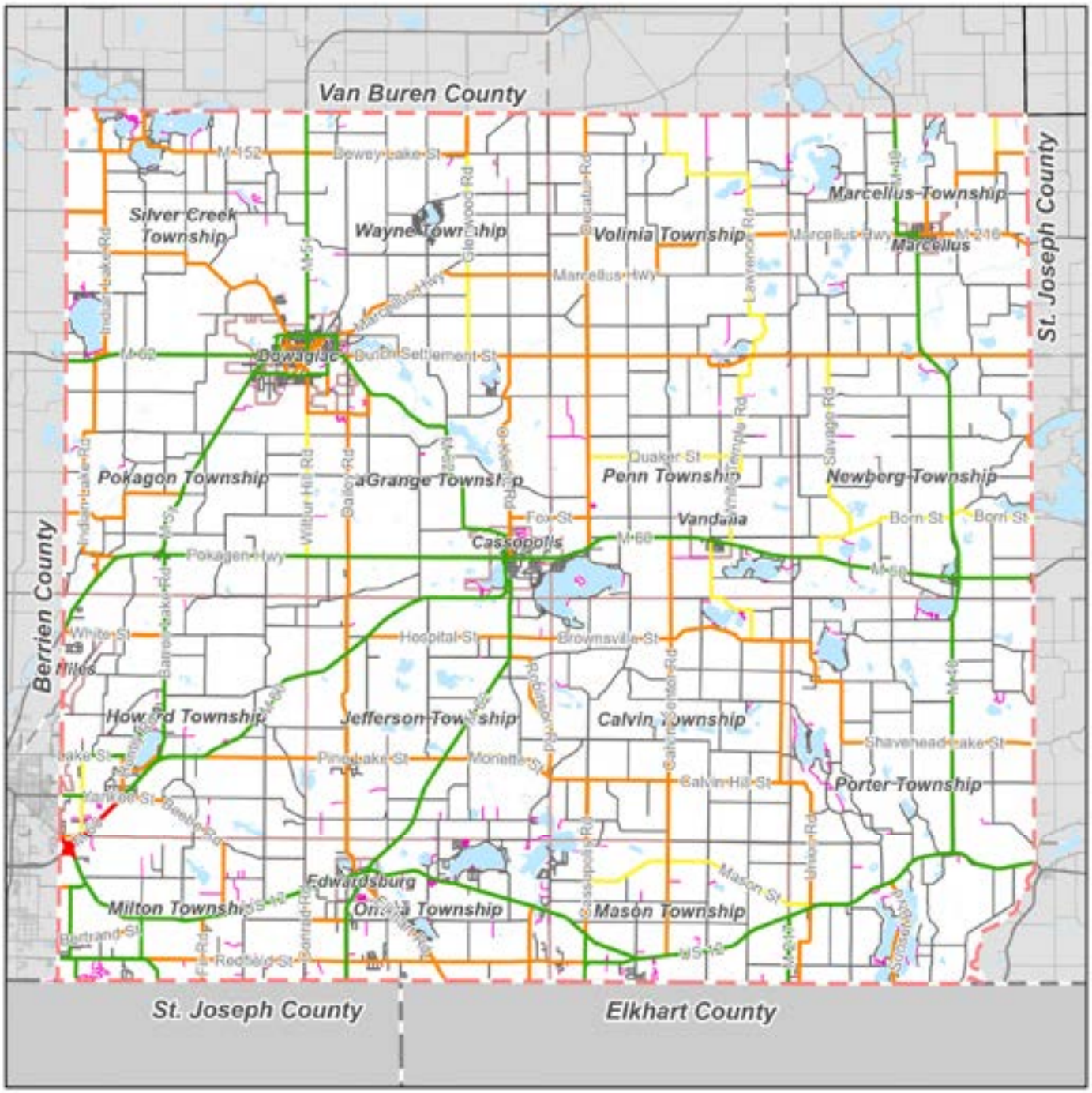
NATIONAL FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION (NFC) SYSTEM

Roadways eligible for federal funding are identified through the National Functional Classification (NFC) system which separates roadways into categories based on their functions and traffic characteristics.

Following this system, the only roadways not eligible for federal aid are those that are identified as "Local Roads," such as residential streets or lightly-traveled County roads. Many of Cass County's roadways are eligible for federal transportation funding, with only the lesser-traveled county roads and city streets remaining ineligible for funding.



County Road



Map 17.

National Functional Classifications

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025

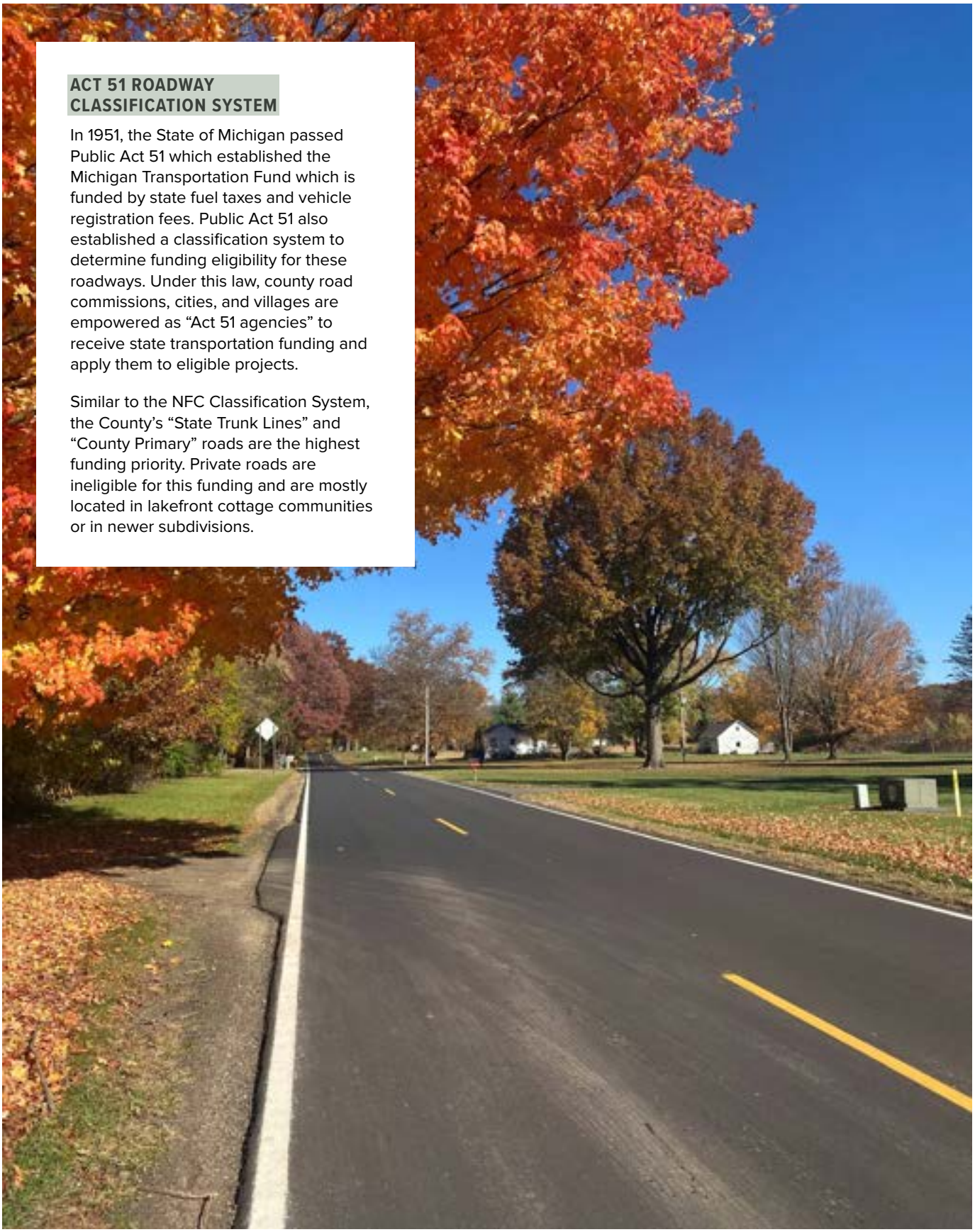
LEGEND

- Cass County Boundary
- Cass County Municipalities
- Indiana County Lines
- Other Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Local Road
- Non-Certified

0 1 2 MILES

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a. Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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ACT 51 ROADWAY CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

In 1951, the State of Michigan passed Public Act 51 which established the Michigan Transportation Fund which is funded by state fuel taxes and vehicle registration fees. Public Act 51 also established a classification system to determine funding eligibility for these roadways. Under this law, county road commissions, cities, and villages are empowered as “Act 51 agencies” to receive state transportation funding and apply them to eligible projects.

Similar to the NFC Classification System, the County’s “State Trunk Lines” and “County Primary” roads are the highest funding priority. Private roads are ineligible for this funding and are mostly located in lakefront cottage communities or in newer subdivisions.



Map 18.

Act 51 Roadway Classifications

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025

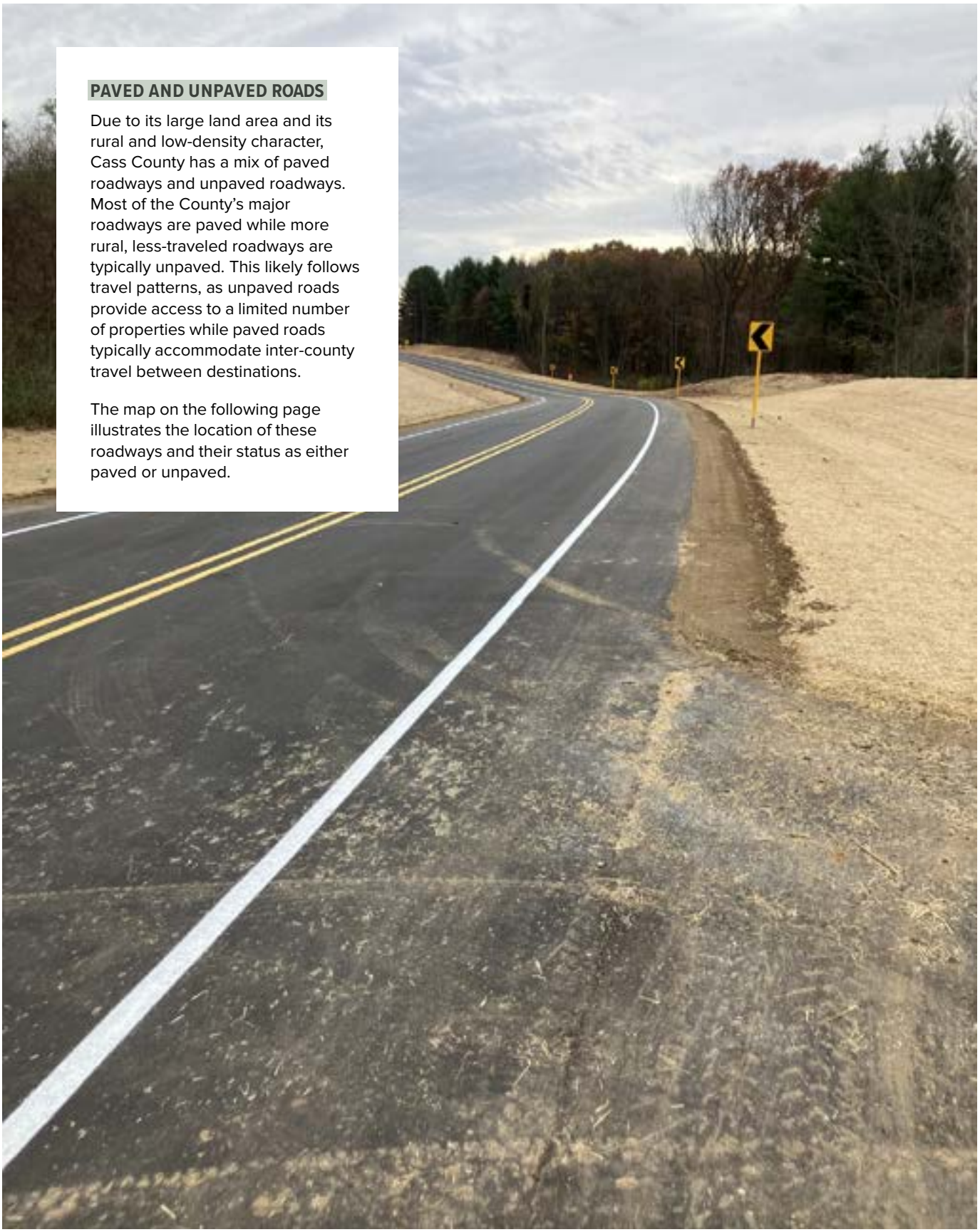
LEGEND

- Cass County Boundary
- Cass County Municipalities
- Indiana County Lines
- Federal Trunkline
- State Trunkline
- County Primary
- County Local
- City or Village Road
- Non-Certified

0 1 2 MILES

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a. Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

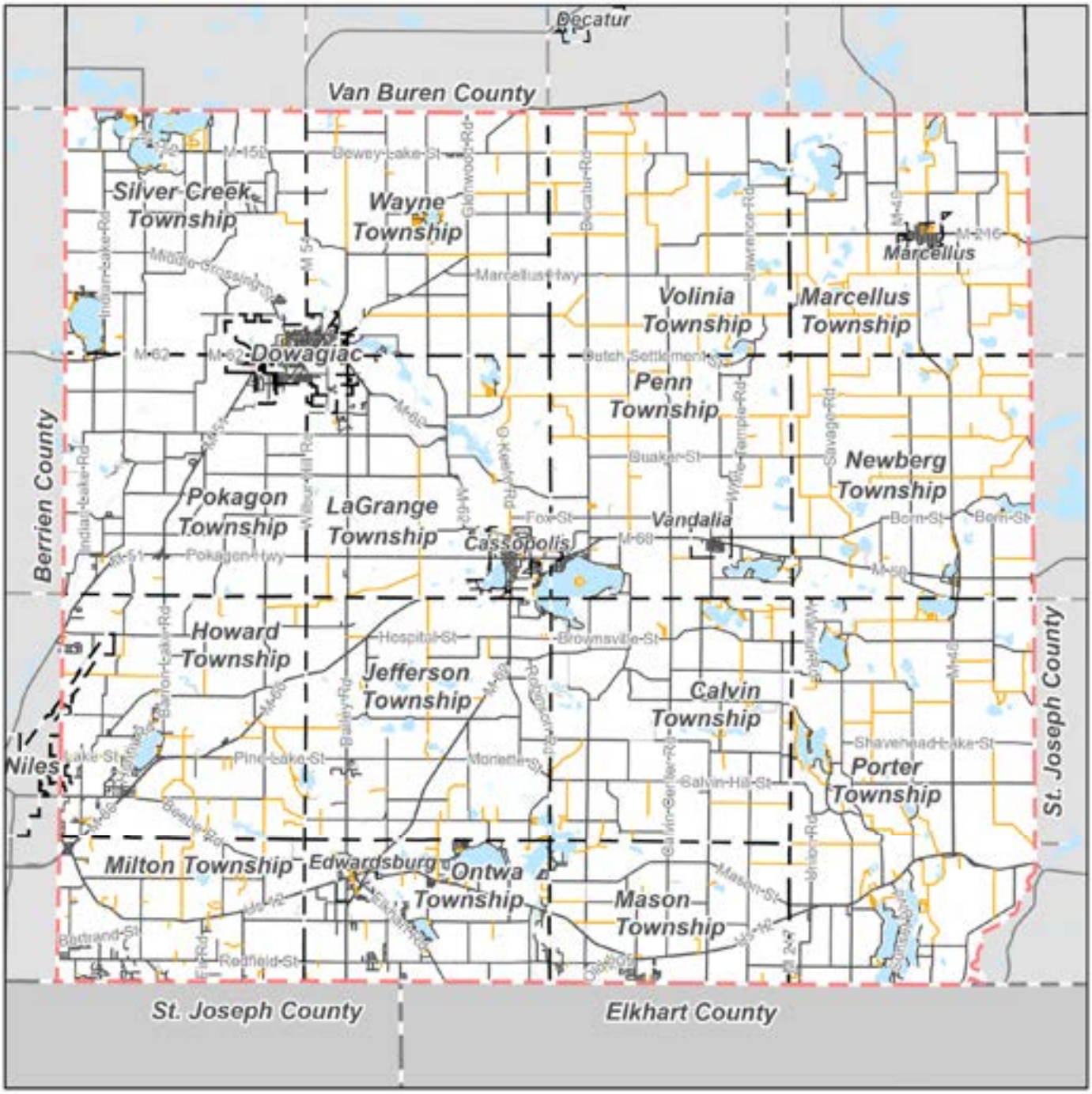
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PAVED AND UNPAVED ROADS

Due to its large land area and its rural and low-density character, Cass County has a mix of paved roadways and unpaved roadways. Most of the County's major roadways are paved while more rural, less-traveled roadways are typically unpaved. This likely follows travel patterns, as unpaved roads provide access to a limited number of properties while paved roads typically accommodate inter-county travel between destinations.

The map on the following page illustrates the location of these roadways and their status as either paved or unpaved.



Map 19.

Current Road Conditions

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025

LEGEND

- Cass County Boundary
- Cass County Municipalities
- Indiana County Lines

Surfaces

- Paved Roads
- Unpaved Roads

0 1 2 MILES

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a. Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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TRAFFIC

Every few years, MDOT analyzes Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) on major roadways, providing an estimate of the number of vehicles driving on the road daily. The map on the following page indicates the AADT of these roads in Cass County.

According to the Estimated Traffic Volumes Map of 2022, M-51 going through the City of Dowagiac is the most heavily trafficked corridor in Cass County. Other heavy traffic corridors include M-62 connecting the Village of Cassopolis down to Indiana, as well as US-12 running east-west along the southern border.

TRANSIT

Cass County is serviced by Cass County Transit which partners with both the Dowagiac Dial a Ride system, as well as the Niles Dial a Ride bus system. Cass County Transit services the Cities of Dowagiac and Niles, the Villages of Cassopolis, Edwardsburg, Marcellus and Vandalia, and the Townships of: Calvin, Howard, Jefferson, LaGrange, Marcellus, Mason, Milton, Newberg, Ontwa, Penn, Pokagon, Porter, Silver Creek, Volinia and Wayne.

RAIL AND AIR TRANSPORT

The Canadian National (CN) Railway train track enters Cass County in the Village of Marcellus in the northeast corner of Marcellus Township. The track enters the County going southwest and exits the County into Indiana. The Amtrak track enters from the north into Wayne Township and heads southwest exiting into Berrien County to the west.

The CN tracks connect the Marcellus area to freight hubs in Battle Creek and Lansing, with further connections to Flint, Detroit, Port Huron, and Chicago.

The Amtrak passenger rail connects to stations in Grand Rapids, East Lansing, and Detroit as well as Chicago and Indianapolis.

The rest of the County is unserved by rail, with historic tracks removed. Some have been converted to bike trails, providing recreational opportunities. The lack of rail limits industrial opportunities within the County, though the County's rural beauty and proximity to major employment centers offset the lack of industry.

AIRPORTS

The Jerry Tyler Memorial Airport is a privately owned airport in Niles, and is partially located within Cass County. The airport hosts special events and showcases vintage and historical aircraft.

Dowagiac Municipal Airport is owned by the City of Dowagiac. The airport is located in the northwest end of the City of Dowagiac. The airport serves general aviation uses, mainly personal pilots but also a few crop-dusting aircrafts. It is also the home to a flight training company.



Dowagiac Municipal Airport



Map 20.

Traffic Volumes

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025

LEGEND

- Cass County Boundary
- Cass County Municipalities
- Indiana County Lines
- Railroads

2023 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)

- 1,000 or Fewer
- 1,001 - 2,500
- 2,501 - 5,000
- 5,001 - 10,000
- Greater than 10,000

0 1 2 MILES

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a. Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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Broadband Connectivity

Broadband internet, with its fast download speeds and consistent connectivity, helps connect residents, businesses, students and patients to the online world. As more and more economic and social activity moves online, communities lacking internet connectivity are placed at a competitive disadvantage.

As shown on the map developed by a countywide Broadband study, Cass County features broadband infrastructure, however there are some areas of underserved as well as unserved households within the County.

Broadband download data is provided by Cass County GIS Department as well as the Michigan Economic Development Corporation Broadband Initiative, a state corporation with ties to key partners that seek to expand broadband access in Michigan.

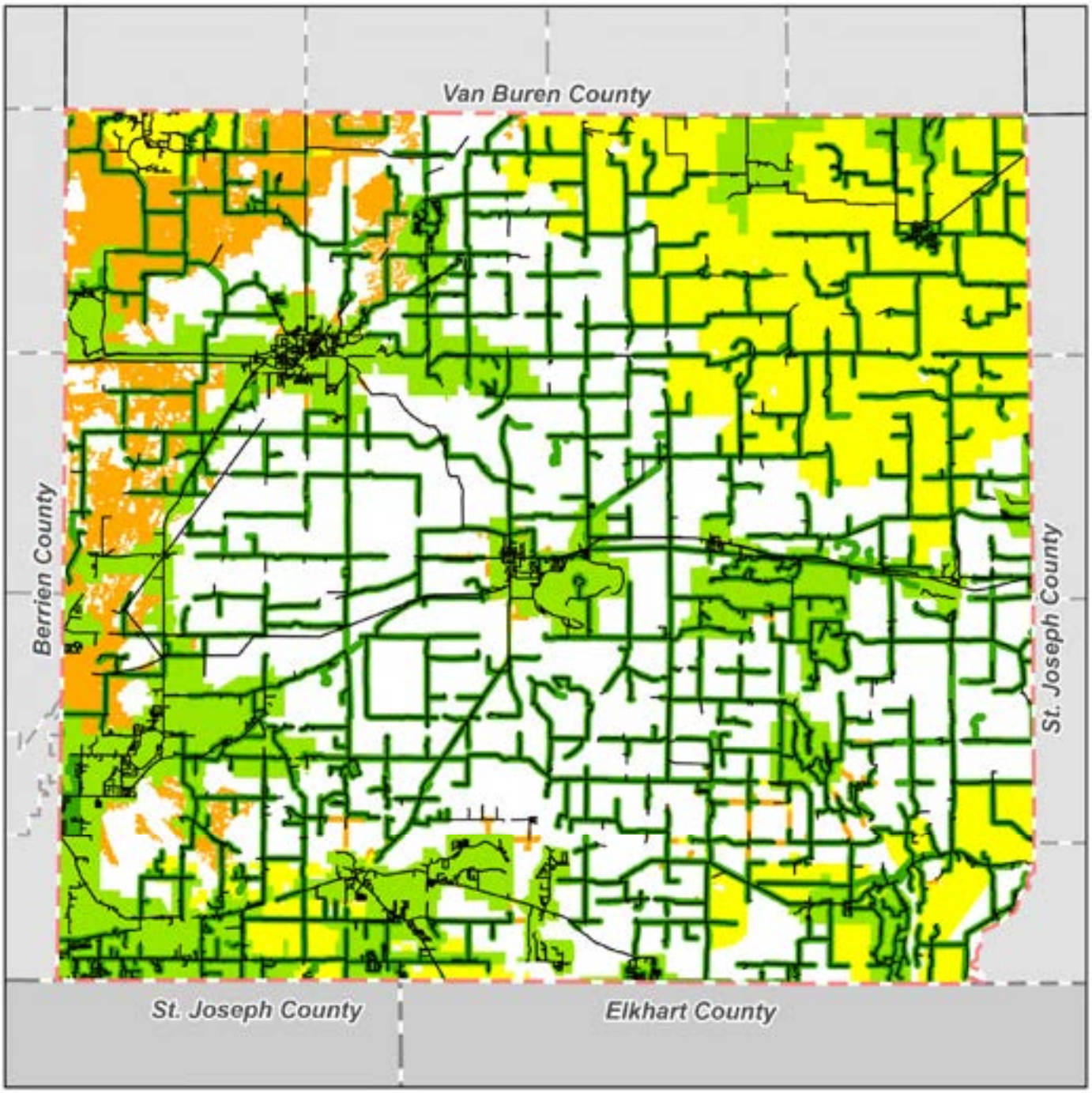
The figure below shows which internet service providers are offering internet service within Cass County. Most areas of the County have the ability to access the internet from at least one provider. Midwest Energy & Communications (MEC) provides service in most low density rural areas. Comcast and Mercury Broadband are the other most common internet service providers in the County.

Further study is being done to identify the extent of recent updates and expansions to local internet access and speeds. Internet download speeds are measured by how much data can be transferred in one second. The Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) goal is for all households to be able to upload and download at least 10 Megabytes per second (Mbps) per user. A minimum of 25 Mbps is necessary to allow for regular telecommuting and high-quality video streaming.

The Broadband Availability Map demonstrates the available speeds within Cass County as of September 2021. The areas with the most high-speed internet availability are those around Dowagiac, Cassopolis, Vandalia, Niles, and in Ontwa and Milton Townships around Edwardsburg. Additionally, there are some lake areas in the County that have invested in broadband internet infrastructure at high speeds. While adequate internet speeds are available in many parts of the County, many in the County struggle with internet availability and speeds.

Figure 3. Cass County Internet Providers, 2024





Map 21.

Available Broadband Speeds

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025

LEGEND

Broadband Infrastructure Lines

Average Maximum Broadband Speed

- 1 Gbps
- 100 Mbps
- 25 Mbps
- 10 Mbps

(White areas indicate no broadband coverage)

0 1 2 MILES

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a. Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. Connected Nation Michigan Public Broadband Data, 2021. Department of LEO - ROBIN Program, 2022. McKenna, 2024.

MCKENNA

Alternative Energy

Utility-scale energy generating and/or storage systems should be developed with careful consideration of the impacts on local ecosystems, farmland, rural beauty, and the health, safety, and welfare of the County's residents. In adopting ordinance regulations and reviewing proposed alternative energy facilities, local units should consider the following objectives:

» **The County's natural beauty must be preserved, especially wetlands and woodlands.** To the extent possible, existing wetlands and woodlands should not be removed for energy development. Alternative energy development (particularly wind turbines) should take place well away from lakes and other recreational areas. Local units may also require the provision of pollinator habitat within solar farms, in order to promote a healthy ecosystem.

» **The County's agricultural systems must be protected.** While the loss of some farmland to energy production and/or storage may be unavoidable under current State law, local units should seek an appropriate balance of land uses to retain the vibrant food production economy that already exists in the community.

» **Nearby residents must be protected from glare, noise, vibration, and aesthetic degradation,** through appropriate setbacks, and in the case of solar farms, landscaping.

» **Alternative energy generation and/or storage should be located in appropriate locations with regard to transmission infrastructure.** Certain parts of the County do not have efficient access to long-distance electric transmission lines. Energy generation and/or storage facilities should not be located in these areas, because of the need to erect unsightly and potentially hazardous high-tension power corridors in order to connect the new energy generation systems to the grid.

» **Alternative energy development should not exceed transmission capacity.** The region's long-distance electric transmission lines have finite capacity. Local units should seek to limit the size and/or number of approved facilities within its boundaries if the capacity of the transmission lines becomes insufficient for additional energy production.

» **Utility-Scale Wind Turbines have significant off-site impacts due to their height, noise, vibration, and motion.** Therefore, any utility scale wind turbines located in Cass County must be carefully sited, with the following key considerations in mind:

» **Utility-scale wind turbines should not be sited in locations that disrupt key ecosystems, watersheds, or migratory bird flight patterns.** Wetlands in particular should be protected.

- Utility-scale wind turbines should not be sited in locations that will disrupt the quiet enjoyment of residents, particularly those that do not have lease or "Good Neighbor" agreements with the wind company.
- Utility-scale wind turbines should not be located in places where they will aesthetically degrade the natural and historic beauty of the County, or where they will disrupt the recreational experience in the County's outdoor recreational areas, rivers, and lakes.

SOLAR SUITABILITY

Solar energy takes up large amounts of land and holds them for decades, preventing other uses. The County supports local restriction in the size and proliferation of principal use solar energy facilities based upon the County's "solar limit".

Specifically, the County's "solar limit" shall be 4,851 to 8,086 acres of large, freestanding solar arrays. Small "back yard" arrays and rooftop arrays shall not be counted in this limit. The County determined the limit as follows:

» Cass County consists of approximately **325,000 acres**.

» **12,674 acres** (approximately 3.9%) of the County is water. The County does not support solar installations on water bodies in the County.

» The County also contains **50,242 acres of wetlands,** many of which surround the bodies of water. These are highly susceptible to damage from solar installations and should not be encumbered by them.

» The County Framework presented in this plan designates **77,029 acres** of existing development— small towns, neighborhoods, and business areas—as "Enhance" areas. These places are not intended to change in character but are intended to be the "best version of themselves." Large scale solar does not fit into that vision.

» The County Framework also includes **23,344 acres** designated for "Grow." Large scale solar would inhibit the planned growth.

» Subtracting out the acreage above leaves 161,711 acres in the County where large scale solar might be allowed. The County must protect its natural beauty, rural character, and ecosystems. Therefore, **no more than 3-5% of that land can be dedicated to large scale solar arrays—leaving a Cass County "solar limit" of 4,851 to 8,086 acres.**

» The limit is presented as a range to provide flexibility. But it should be taken into account when reviewing large scale solar arrays, especially as the County approaches the limit.

HYDROELECTRIC DAMS

Cass County is home to several dams along the Dowagiac River and around its many lakes. The dams help to control the flow of the river and create clean, renewable electricity through the use of turbines. Major dams in Cass County include: Upper Mill Dam, Centennial Mill Dam, and Adamsville Hydroelectric Dam.

OTHER ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES

Biodigesters and "mini" prefabricated nuclear plants are being developed in some parts of Michigan and the United States as a whole as solutions to future energy needs. These uses, if proposed in Cass County, should be understood as industrial uses, and should only be approved if negative impacts can be sufficiently mitigated.

Trails and Non-Motorized Transportation

Hiking and biking trails are important in a rural community like Cass County. They allow residents to explore the natural beauty of the County and provide recreational amenities that do not compromise rural character. Being largely rural in nature with pockets of urbanized areas, scenic views of farmland, and plentiful lakes, Cass County is in a prime position for a premiere non-motorized transportation system. In general, the County's non-motorized transportation system includes the following types of infrastructure:

» **Separated pathways or trails.** Typically 8 feet or wider and intended for leisure biking and walking or jogging.

» **Paved Shoulders.** Typically 4 feet or wider and intended for rural roads and more serious cyclists that travel at faster speeds.

TRAILS

There are six separated trails located within Cass County:

» **Dowagiac Woods Nature Preserve** includes a 2.5-mile trail system.

» **Dr. T.K. Lawless International Dark Sky County Park** includes 17 miles of trails for hiking and mountain biking.

» **Fred Russ Forest Park** includes 4 miles of trails for hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding.

» **Rudolphi Woods Wildlife Refuge** includes an 8-mile trail system used for hiking, running, and cross-country skiing.

» **Cass County Council on Aging/MEC Smart Park** includes 0.7 miles of trails.

» **Spirit Springs Sanctuary** includes 2.3 miles of walking trails.

» **Arthur Dodd Memorial Park** includes 1 mile of hiking trails.



Rudolphi Woods

CURRENT PAVED SHOULDERS SYSTEM

In addition to the County's separated pathway/trail network, there are also several major thoroughfares in the County fitted with paved shoulders 4-feet or wider. According to the 2019-2023 Cass County Parks and Recreation Plan, the following major corridors include paved shoulders:

» M-60 from Cassopolis east to Three Rivers in St. Joseph County.

» M-62 from Edwardsburg south to Indiana, and from Dowagiac west to Eau Claire, Berrien County.

» M-62 from Edwardsburg south to the Indiana state line.

» M-217 from Union south to the Indiana state line.

» US-12 from Edwardsburg west to Niles in Berrien County and beyond.

» US-12 from Union west to Redfield Road in Mason Township.

» Lake Street in Howard Charter Township, from Bailey Road west to Niles, Berrien County.

» Yankee Street in Howard Charter Township, from M-60 west to Niles, Berrien County.

NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM PLANNING

The County has several gaps in the non-motorized transportation system where future paved shoulders would likely be beneficial. In general, the methodology behind planning locations for paved shoulders includes the following considerations:

» Closing major gaps in the network by connecting existing paved shoulder routes to one another.

» Planning for paved shoulders in areas of the County that are otherwise underserved in terms of nonmotorized transportation infrastructure.

» Providing connections to regional recreation assets, such as connecting County (and local) parkland or trails to one another and providing access to natural features such as lakes.

» Identifying primary roads within the County that are already paved that could be enhanced with paved shoulders in the future.

» Connecting urbanized areas to rural areas through non-motorized infrastructure.

Parks

Cass County is home to state parks, county parks, and local and municipal parks, including preserves, recreation areas and campgrounds. The facility descriptions provided below are highlights of the County's park and natural lands inventory within the Cass County Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plan.

- **Crane Pond State Game Area is a 4,114-acre nature preserve.** The Crane Pond State Game Area provides critical habitat for a myriad of game and non-game species. Their priority is wildlife conservation and management with only 2 miles of narrow and natural trails. They are managed by the DNR Wildlife Division.
- **Dr. T.K. Lawless International Dark Sky County Park contains 10 miles of advanced level mountain biking trails.** The mountain biking staging and parking can be found just north of Monkey Run Street. The rest of the park includes 10 miles of leisure biking trails, 1 mile of paved access trail, 7 miles of hiking trails, as well as sports fields and courts, disc golf, picnic shelters, horseshoe pits, fishing ponds, and winter activities such as tubing and cross-country skiing.
- **Dowagiac Woods Nature Preserve contains 2.5 miles of natural hiking trails.** It is under the protection of Michigan Nature Association sanctuaries. Much of the property has been allowed to grow lush without clearcutting or plowing practices. Because of this, it is a very diverse sanctuary with more than 50 species of wildflowers as well as many other plants and animals.
- **Fred Russ Forest Park is located within the 580 acres of Fred Russ research forest.** The park is 13 acres in size with trails to hike or ride on horseback. There is also access to Dowagiac Creek to fish and canoe.
- **Rudolphi Woods Wildlife Refuge is 325 acres in size.** It contains over 8 miles of hiking, running, and cross-country skiing trails.
- **Arthur Dodd Memorial Park is a 51-acre park near the eastern county line.** It contains a campground, hiking paths, picnic shelters, playground, as well as horseshoe pits. Dowagiac River passes through allowing for fishing, canoeing, and kayaking.
- **Harmon Park West and East are both located on Shavehead Lake.** Harmon Park West is located on the Shavehead peninsula and provides access to the lake through a boat launch. Harmon Park East has a picnic area as well as public swimming access to the lake.
- **Henry Sears Boat Launch is located on the southern side of Birch Lake.** It offers boat access to the lake as well as a park known as Birch Lake Sears Memorial Park. The small park is maintained by Cass County Parks and Recreation Department.
- **Eva Stevens Lakeside Park is small, 2 acres in size, offering access to Little Fish Lake.** It is located north of the lake off of Stevens Forest Lake Road. The park includes a picnic shelter, bathrooms, a field, as well as a swimming area.



Arther Dodd Memorial Park

Local Trails and Parks:

Park Name	Amenities	Location
Arthur Dodd Memorial Park	Located along the Dowagiac Creek near the County line, this 51-acre park includes a boat landing, fishing, hiking trail, yard games, picnic areas, playsets, volleyball courts, and restrooms.	61437 Creek Road Niles, MI 49120
Beckwith Park	This park includes a gazebo as well as picnicking areas and walking paths.	121 S Front Street Dowagiac, MI 49047
Beeson Street Roadside Park	This park includes open grass fields and trees along Beeson Street and M-62.	Beeson M-62 Cutoff Cassopolis, MI 49031
Clisbee Park	Clisbee Park has playground equipment, basketball courts, 2 pavilions, a concrete bowl skate park and paved skills course.	414 N Broadway Street Cassopolis, MI 49031
Dowagiac Woods Nature Preserve	These woods are home to various species of wildflowers and trees along a 1.5 mile walking trail	31748-32498, Frost St Dowagiac, MI 49047
Don Horne Park	Don Horne Park contains approximately 36 acres and has baseball and softball fields, picnic areas, restrooms, playgrounds, and 2 small pavilions.	Don Horne Park Road, Block 1015 Cassopolis, MI 49031
Dr. T.K. Lawless International Dark Sky County Park	This 820-acre nature park has activities like athletic fields, playsets, cross-country skiing, mountain biking and hiking trails, disk golf, fishing, sledding, volleyball courts, and picnic areas.	15122 Monkey Run Street Jones, MI 49061
East Harmon Park	East Harmon Park includes picnic and swimming areas.	Harmon Drive, Block 3006 Cassopolis, MI 49031
Ferndale Park	Ferndale Park includes access to Eagle Lake.	Block 1033 Edwardsburg, MI 49112
Fred Russ Forest Park (Newton's Woods)	Located within the 580-acre Fred Russ research forest, this 13-acre park includes picnic areas, restrooms, playgrounds, hiking, cross-country skiing, and equestrian trails, fishing, and a boat landing.	20419 Marcellus Highway Decatur, MI 49045
Gunn Park	Gunn Park covers 3.2 acres and offers picnic areas and a swing set.	67564-67882 Lake Street Edwardsburg, MI 49112
Hatcherville Park	Hatcherville Park features a basketball court, a playground and a picnic pavilion.	2209-2227 Moulder Drive Niles, MI 49120
Henry Sears Park (Birch Lake Memorial Park and Boat Launch)	This park offers boat access to Birch Lake, with limited parking.	Birch Road, Block 1012 Vandalia, MI 49095
Howell Point Park	This park includes picnic areas as well as a beach and swimming area.	61113 Beardsley Lane Cassopolis, MI 49031
James Heddon Park	This park includes fishing and picnicking areas.	Lake Access Road Dowagiac, MI 49047


Fred Russ Forest Park


James Heddon Park

Park Name	Amenities	Location
Jones Park	Jones Memorial Park has tennis courts, basketball courts, baseball pitches, a soccer field, a sandbox, a playground and pavilion.	1345 Barron Lake Road Niles, MI 49120
Kraus Memorial Park	This park offers a pavilion, picnic area, playground, and seating areas. Visitors can enjoy a variety of activities such as walking, running, and picnicking amidst the picturesque surroundings.	69911 Rolen Drive Edwardsburg, MI 49112
Kiddie Corral	Kiddie Corral Park includes playsets as well as a pavilion.	1400 Barron Lake Road Niles, MI 49120
Lions Club Park	This park includes a pavilion, playset, and large open fields.	53126-53196 Centre Street Marcellus, MI 49067
Lions Optimist Park	Lions Optimist Park is a four-acre park located on Dowagiac Creek with a pedestrian bridge and grassy areas.	S Front Street, Block 4028 Dowagiac, MI 49047
Milo Barnes Park	This park has open fields, a picnic area, pavilion, and playset.	60680-60698 Water Street Vandalia, MI 49095
Milton Township Park	This park includes a playset, pavilion, open fields, and restroom facilities.	32019 Bertrand Street Niles, MI 49120
Penn Township Sport Court Park	This park includes pickleball courts and a tennis court that converts to pickleball courts.	60717 S Main Street Vandalia, MI 49095
Pepper Martin Park	The Pepper Martin Park includes baseball and softball fields as well as pavilions for picnicking.	2401-2499 Lone Elm Dr Niles, MI 49120
Pokagon Township Park	This park includes a playset as well as grassy fields.	30683 Peavine St Dowagiac, MI 49047
Rotary Park	Rotary Park provides baseball and softball fields with bleachers, and playsets.	Riverside Drive Dowagiac, MI 49047
Rudolphi Woods Wildlife Refuge	This 325-acre natural space features hiking, running, and cross-country skiing trails.	57000 Daily Road Dowagiac, MI 49047
Russom Park	Russom Park is an 18-acre park with athletic fields, walking and biking trails, and a playground area.	28776 Yaw Street Dowagiac, MI 49047
Schuur Park	This park is located along Dowagiac Creek and includes picnicking, fishing, and walking areas.	103 Cass Avenue Dowagiac, MI 49047
Sholtey Park	Sholtey Park has a pavilion, volleyball court, as well as playground equipment spread throughout the park.	2547-2553 Huntly Road Niles, MI 49120
Eva Stevens Lakeside Park	The park is located south off Stevens Forest Lake Road and down to the north side of Little Fish Lake. There is a two-acre swimming area along with picnic areas and open fields.	17090 Stevens Forest Lake Street Cassopolis, MI 49031
Stone Lake Beach	Stone Lake Beach is a public beach with a fishing pier, boat slips, picnic areas, food truck parking, a pavilion/stage, and a concession stand for kayak, paddle board, and paddle boats rentals.	Lake Street Cassopolis, MI 49031
Walter Ward Park	The three-acre Walter Ward Park offers basketball courts, a softball field, playground, and picnic shelter.	Thickstun Street Dowagiac, MI 49047
West Harmon Park	West Harmon Park includes picnic and swimming areas.	Harmon Drive Cassopolis, MI 49031



Penn Township Sport Court Park



Campgound on Goff Lake



Campgound on Cranberry Lake



Campground on Pitcher Lake

Local Museums

Museum Name	Location
Cass County Local History Library	145 N Broadway Street · Cassopolis, MI 49031
Dowagiac Area History Museum	201 E Division Street · Dowagiac, MI 49047
Edwardsburg Area History Museum	26818 W Main Street · Edwardsburg, MI 49112
Edward Lowe Foundation Information Center	58220 Decatur Road · Cassopolis, MI 49031
Heddon Museum	115 S Front Street · Dowagiac, MI 49047
Historic Newton Home	20689 Marcellus Highway · Decatur, MI 49045
James E. Bonine House	18970 M-60 · Vandalia, MI 49095
Marcellus VFW #4054 Military Museum	53550 M-40 · Marcellus, MI 49067
Old Rugged Cross Museum	61041 Vermont St · Dowagiac, MI 49047
Pioneer Log Cabin Museum	400 S Broadway Street · Cassopolis, MI 49031
Sinclair Station	200 S Broadway Street · Cassopolis, MI 49031



Dowagiac Area History Museum

School Districts

There are 10 school districts that serve students within Cass County, though only four high schools are located within the County (Cassopolis Ross Beatty High School, Dowagiac Union High School, Marcellus High School, and Edwardsburg High School). Many students choose to attend districts outside of the County. The school district boundaries are shown on the following map, developed from the Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget.

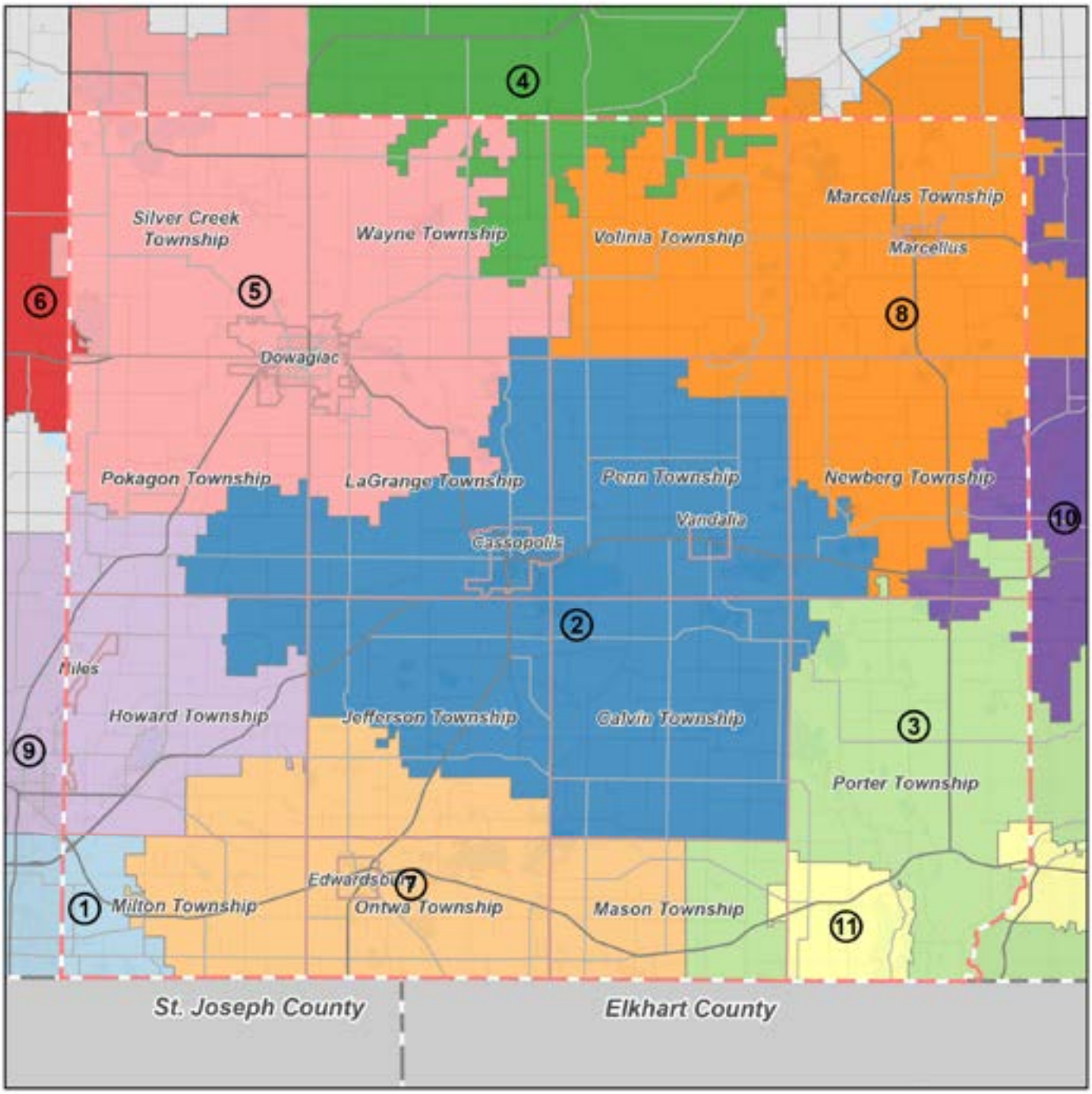
Table 15. Cass County School Enrollment of Population 3 Years and Over (2022-23 School Year)

Enrollment Category	Enrollment Count
Total Populations 3 Years and Over	50,189
Enrolled in school	10,175
Enrolled in nursery school, preschool	420
Enrolled in kindergarten	430
Enrolled in grade 1 to grade 4	2,052
Enrolled in grade 5 to grade 8	2,704
Enrolled in grade 9 to grade 12	2,709
Enrolled in college, undergraduate years	1,517
Graduate or professional school	343
Not enrolled in school	40,014

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. (2022). Table B14001: School Enrollment by Level of School for the Population 3 Years and Over



Edwardsburg High School



Map 22.

School District Jurisdictions

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025

LEGEND

	1	Brandywine Community Schools
	2	Cassopolis Public Schools
	3	Constantine Public School District
	4	Decatur Public Schools
	5	Dowagiac Union School District
	6	Eau Claire Public Schools
	7	Edwardsburg Public Schools
	8	Marcellus Community Schools
	9	Niles Community School District
	10	Three Rivers Community Schools
	11	White Pigeon Community Schools

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MILES

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a. Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. State of Michigan Open GIS Portal, 2017. McKenna, 2024.

MCKENNA

Key Findings

- There are nine different authorities that own and operate public water and/or sanitary sewer systems in Cass County. Water systems tend to be limited to the population centers such as the City of Dowagiac and the Villages of Cassopolis, Marcellus and Edwardsburg. Sewer systems also exist in those places, as well as the various lakefront communities and abutting township lands.

- Unpaved roads are common in the rural areas of the County, particularly in the northeast portion. Though these roads may currently be sufficient for local use, some unpaved roads may need to be paved in the future to continue to provide safe and reliable access for residents.

- Cass County does not suffer from traffic congestion. However, many of its residents commute long distances, and would benefit from a well-maintained road system designed to connect to nearby job centers.

- While adequate internet speeds are available in many parts of the County, many residents struggle with internet availability and speeds.

- In order to preserve viable farmland, precious ecosystems, and the health, safety, and welfare of the County's residents, thoughtful and detailed local zoning ordinances should be adopted to control the development of utility-scale alternative energy generation and storage facilities.

- Cass County has many recreational and transportation assets, including local trails, parks, nature preserves, campgrounds, and museums. However, the County's trail systems are not connected and there are limited paved shoulders that can foster safe non-motorized transportation.

- The County operates six parks: Aurther Dodd Memorial Park, Fred Russ Forest Park, Henry Sears Park, Dr. T.K. Lawless International Dark Sky County Park, Harmon Park, and Eva Stevens Lakeside Park. Most of these parks allow river or lake access and include trail networks.

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07.

Cass County: the Visions



The visions for Cass County expressed by the community, and supported by the key findings of the physical and data analysis conducted, provide the foundation for the overall framework of the Master Plan.



Planning Commission Visioning Session

The visioning process kicked off with a strategic planning session with the Cass County Planning Commission. The feedback provided on key land use topics was used to design the two public engagement opportunities.

COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE

On Wednesday, July 24th, 2024, the County hosted a public open house at the Cass County Road Commission Offices in Cassopolis.

About 30 people were in attendance, the majority of whom were residents of the County. Participants came largely from the Village of Cassopolis and Jefferson Township, as well as Volinia, Silver Creek, Newberg, Porter, Calvin, and Milton Townships. Participants also included people who work or attend church in the County.

Attendees were invited to participate in a number of exercises designed to provide insight on land use visions and preferences for the County. Prompts included priority-setting games, a visual preference survey, and mapping exercises.



COMMUNITY SURVEY

A critical component of the public engagement effort was the online community survey, which was conducted from June through August of 2024. The County was intent on raising awareness and making the survey as accessible as possible. The survey was advertised on the Cass County Web Page, throughout the community with flyers, and at the Open House event. The survey was available both online via the County's website and in print version at the County Administration Building. Paper surveys were also made available at the July 24th Open House. The survey received 735 responses.

Positive Aspects of Living in Cass County: inland lakes; open space; rural character; conservation; wetlands; mobility; natural features; farmland; parks/ trails; home business; ag business; small towns; low density.

Negative Aspects of Living in Cass County: lack of jobs; slow growth; limited housing choice; lack of senior housing; emergency/medical response; local shopping options; blight; short-term rental.

Full results of the Community Survey are provided in the Appendix.



Cass County Master Plan Open House

Intersection of Ideas

The results from all of the summer's public engagement efforts have been compiled and organized under land use themes. The feedback received is reflected in the following diagram as position statements and dominant preferences. The input provided is foundational to the Key Findings of this chapter outlined on page 127 and the Master Plan Framework detailed in Chapter 8.

Public Engagement Efforts

Cass County Planning Commission

Community Open House

Community Survey

The average respondent was a long-time resident and property owner in the 45 yrs or older range with no children in the household – consistent with the profile of the County population base

Land Use Themes

Natural Features / Farmland Preservation	Housing	Direction for New Development	Public Service and Infrastructure

Position Statements

Natural Features / Farmland Preservation	Housing	Direction for New Development	Public Service and Infrastructure
Protect natural areas from development (62% strong support)	75% rated housing choice in the County as “poor” or “average”	Direct growth to already developed areas (44% Strong Support)	Heavily restrict wind farms – 45%; allow with natural features protection – 36%
Limit development in agricultural areas (46% strong support; 39% moderate support)	Expand allowable housing types (47% low-moderate support)	Establish targeted areas for growth (36% Strong Support)	Heavily restrict solar farms – 37%; allow with natural feature protection) 37%
Restrict development on prime farmland (41% moderate support)	Nearly 50% support/strongly support options for housing density	Encourage new commercial businesses/services (43% Strong Support)	Heavily restrict battery storage systems – 49%; allow with natural feature protection – 34%
Establish a county program to permanently preserve active farmland (46% support)	Allow short-term rental housing with some or no restrictions (69% support)	Attract new manufacturing businesses for jobs (37% strong support)	Availability of emergency medical response/ ambulance service – 79% poor-average
		Encourage residential development (39% low-moderate support)	Availability of ride-share – 74% poor-average
		Cass County is growing “too slow” (57%); rate of growth is “just fine” (40%)	Availability of childcare – 63% poor-average
		Do not support as a ‘next door neighbor’: Wind turbine (53%), Warehousing (53%), Manufacturing (50%), Multiple Family Residential (48%) Solar Farm (46%)	Current parks and recreation facilities need upgrade or maintenance – 59%
		82% do support natural preservation, farmland, farm markets, and parks as a ‘next door neighbor’:	

Dominant Preferences

Respondents say the proximity to inland lakes (79%), natural open space (68%), and defined rural character (59%) are the best aspects of living in Cass County.

Natural feature conservation, wetland/ shoreline protection, and stormwater management dominated the Vision Map for Cass County.

Availability of senior housing was identified as a priority issue within the County.

Single-family dwellings, low density housing patterns and rural landscapes received the most Visual Preference votes.

Need for local convenience commercial and preservation of small-town character was frequently highlighted on the Vision Map for Cass County.

61 % said limited local shopping options was a “negative aspect of living in Cass County”

Ag business, farm markets, home business, and manufacturing were highlighted as ‘preferred economies’

70% support all identified County efforts for ‘improvement’ if they are done at no additional cost or using existing funds.

45% support a millage to improve emergency medical response and ambulance services; 55% support only with use of existing funds.

Blight was one of the most selected “negative aspects of living in Cass County”

Nearly 1/2 support use of existing funds to improve ride-share and childcare services in the County

About 1/3 say additional recreational facilities, trails/paths, or programming are needed.

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Key Findings

- Most public participation was received from long-time residents and property owners in the age range of 45 years or older, with no children in the household. Cass County was also geographically well-represented in the public input received.
- The County's agricultural and rural landscapes are precious to County residents and priorities for preservation.
- Farmland and natural feature preservation policies/programs and parks/recreation development are widely supported by residents.
- Low density single-family housing, farmland, agricultural-related businesses, and rural-recreation/tourism define Cass County.
- The need for increased housing choice and additional commercial services/manufacturing businesses is recognized. It is desired to direct growth in these sectors to existing economic/employment centers (small towns) and planned areas where infrastructure is already present and small-town sustainability is a priority.
- Short-term rentals, senior housing and emergency medical response were identified as priority issues.
- Utility grade alternative energy systems are not supported and should be heavily restricted.
- Cass County has many recreational and transportation assets, including local trails, parks, nature preserves, campgrounds, and museums. However, the County's trail systems are not connected and there are limited paved shoulders that can foster safe non-motorized transportation.
- Emergency medical response and ambulance services are primary issues in the County and should be prioritized for funding.

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08.

Cass County: the Framework



The Master Plan Framework serves as the foundational structure for the Future Land Use Plan and all subsequent strategies and initiatives. This Chapter defines the Framework categories and summarizes and categorizes the Key Findings of the Plan within this Framework. This Framework is then translated into the Framework Map.

The Framework will serve as a road map for the Future Land Use Plan and ensure consistency with the overarching Vision and planning values of the Master Plan.

STEP 1:

Three Framework categories were defined: Preserve; Enhance; Grow.

Preserve

Cass County is committed to not only maintaining the County's rural landscapes, neighborhoods and businesses, but also to identifying areas in which the County's important agricultural lands can be preserved into the future even as the County continues to grow.

Enhance

Similar to Preserve, areas within the County that have been identified as Enhance are anticipated to remain within the same general land uses in the future. In this context, Enhance has been utilized as more of a general term to describe certain improvements and investments that can be made within these areas, while still maintaining the overall density and character.

Grow

The goal of this framework category is to target future land uses that fit with the surrounding character of specific areas as well as to help steer the County into a thriving and vibrant future through targeted development. By targeting growth to specific areas that have existing infrastructure and other key attributes, the County can preserve its overall rural and agricultural character.

STEP 2:

The Framework categories, as well as their locations on the Framework Map, were developed through an analysis of the Key Findings from each of the preceding chapters of the Plan.

These Key Findings are summarized; organized by subject; and, color-coded by Framework category in the following Framework Chart.

Summary of Key Findings

Context	Places	Natural Resources	People	Infrastructure	Visions
The abundance of inland lakes, waterbodies and rural open space makes the County an attractive place of residence and recreation.	Ensuring that land remains available in the future to support agricultural activities and rural development patterns is of primary importance to residents.	The defining natural characteristics of Cass County are the abundance and quality of surface water and the extent of prime farmland soils.	Overall, Cass County has experienced a decreasing population since 2010, however, almost half of the communities within the County are growing in population.	There are nine different authorities that own/operate public water and/or sanitary sewer systems in Cass County. Water systems tend to be limited to the population centers. Sewer systems also exist in those places, as well as the various lakefront communities and abutting township lands.	The County's agricultural heritage and rural landscapes are precious to residents and priorities for preservation.
Cass County is a farming community, with nearly 86% of its land currently used for agriculture.	Urbanized development is becoming increasingly prevalent in the southern portion of the County, which will result in the loss of agricultural lands, open space, and rural character within the County.	The numerous inland lakes support residential development, attract service and marine commercial activity, and provide recreation amenities for the region.	Much of the population growth is occurring in the central part of the County.	Unpaved roads are common in the rural areas of the County, particularly in the northeast portion. Though these roads may currently be sufficient for local use, some unpaved roads may need to be paved in the future to continue to provide safe and reliable access for residents.	Farmland and natural feature preservation policies/programs and parks/recreation development are widely supported by residents.
Many Cass County residents commute to major nearby job centers located outside of the County.	The County will likely continue to attract growth in lakefront residential areas. The trend of converting summer cottages to year-round residences could present infrastructure and capacity challenges.	Water quality in watersheds is directly related to the land practices within the watershed. Low impact development standards in waterfront areas can help address this challenge.	Although almost 30% of Cass County's total population is over 60 years old, higher than the national average of 23.8%, the communities growing fastest feature higher numbers of children.	Cass County does not suffer from traffic congestion. However, many of its residents commute long distances, and would benefit from a well-maintained road system designed to connect to nearby job centers.	Low density single-family housing, farmland, agricultural-related businesses, and rural-recreation/tourism define Cass County.
A major metropolitan center is not located within Cass County. Instead, the County consists of small, close-knit communities within agricultural settings. These communities serve as social, civic and economic centers for the rural population.	Growth within the County should be directed to areas served by key commuting routes and easy access to local commercial centers.	Wetlands exist throughout the County and are important in protecting watersheds and habitats. Wetland regulations have not been adopted at the County or local levels.	Many residents are employed in management, business, science and arts. The unemployment rate in the County is similar to the State of Michigan and steadily decreasing.	While adequate internet speeds are available in many parts of the County, many residents struggle with internet availability and speeds.	Increased housing choice and additional commercial development is needed in the County and should be directed to existing economic centers (small towns).
The rich history of the County has been preserved in a network of historically significant buildings, grounds and events that serve as regional destinations.	The breadth of historical and recreational assets present in the County is unusual given the lack of major highways or a large metropolitan center. An opportunity exists for a unique 'destination' branding of Cass County.	Areas vulnerable to mineral extraction should be identified and appropriate standards to protect preserved lands, require environmentally responsible operations, and ensure reclamation should be established.	Median household incomes in Cass County are similar to the State average.	In order to preserve viable farmland, precious ecosystems, and the health, safety, and welfare of the County's residents, Cass County's communities must adopt thoughtful and detailed local zoning ordinances to control the development of utility-scale alternative energy generation and storage facilities.	Utility grade alternative energy systems are not supported and should be heavily restricted.
		Over 13,000 acres of farmland in Cass County are being protected through the Michigan Farmland Preservation Program (PA 116).	The County's existing housing stock is composed mostly of older single-family residences.	Cass County has many recreational and transportation assets, including local trails, parks, nature preserves, campgrounds, and museums. However, the County's trail systems are not connected and there are limited paved shoulders that can foster safe non-motorized transportation.	Senior housing and short-term rentals are recognized housing issues within the County.
		As the human population of the County continues to expand, it is possible that plant and animal diversity will continue to decrease unless intentional actions are taken.	Cass County has a single-family home ownership rate of 81.5%, higher than the average for the State of Michigan.	The County operates six parks. Most of these parks allow river or lake access and include trail networks.	Emergency medical response and ambulance services are primary issues in the County and should be prioritized for funding.
		Invasive species have been found in the waterways of Cass County. Spongy moths and purple loosestrife are threats to the County's vegetation. Active remediation techniques are needed to control invasive species.	56% of Cass County residents travel outside of the County for work. Although many residents also work within Cass County, its rural quality of life in proximity to major economic centers makes the County an attractive "bedroom community" to those centers.		
			Berrien County is the largest draw for Cass County commuters, with 18% of residents traveling there for work. St. Joseph County, Indiana and Van Buren County, Michigan also represent destinations, drawing a combined 16% of Cass County residents.		

Preserve

Enhance

Grow

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STEP 3:

The locations of the categories on the Framework Map were developed through an analysis of the Key Findings.

Preserve

Some of the main reasons why specific areas in the County have been categorized as Preserve include:

- To preserve natural features and watersheds.
- To encourage development in target areas to prevent further sprawl.
- To work alongside the agricultural community to save prime agricultural land as farmland areas continue to diminish nationwide.
- To maintain the County's high-quality parkland.
- To maintain the County's rural character.

Enhance

In the County framework, the Enhance areas are typically located in urbanized areas, including historic town centers such as the Village of Cassopolis, Edwardsburg, and the City of Dowagiac. The term 'enhance' is intended to describe the following kinds of improvements that can be made within these areas.

- Redevelopment and infill development within built-out areas.
- Improving or implementing non-motorized infrastructure in neighborhoods.
- Adding sewer or water infrastructure to protect natural features.
- Improving communications infrastructure.
- Implementing beautification elements such as landscaping, tree planting, or public art.
- Increasing connectivity and efficiency of road networks, including potentially paving or redesigning roadways.
- Investment in parks and recreation.
- Improving the appearance of existing buildings or structures.

Grow

Large vacant and never-been developed areas within the County that have been identified as prime locations for future development opportunities have been categorized as Grow. Many of these areas are located along the Indiana border in the southern portion of the County, along M-60 and M-62 in the center of the County, and other places where pockets of suburban development already exist.

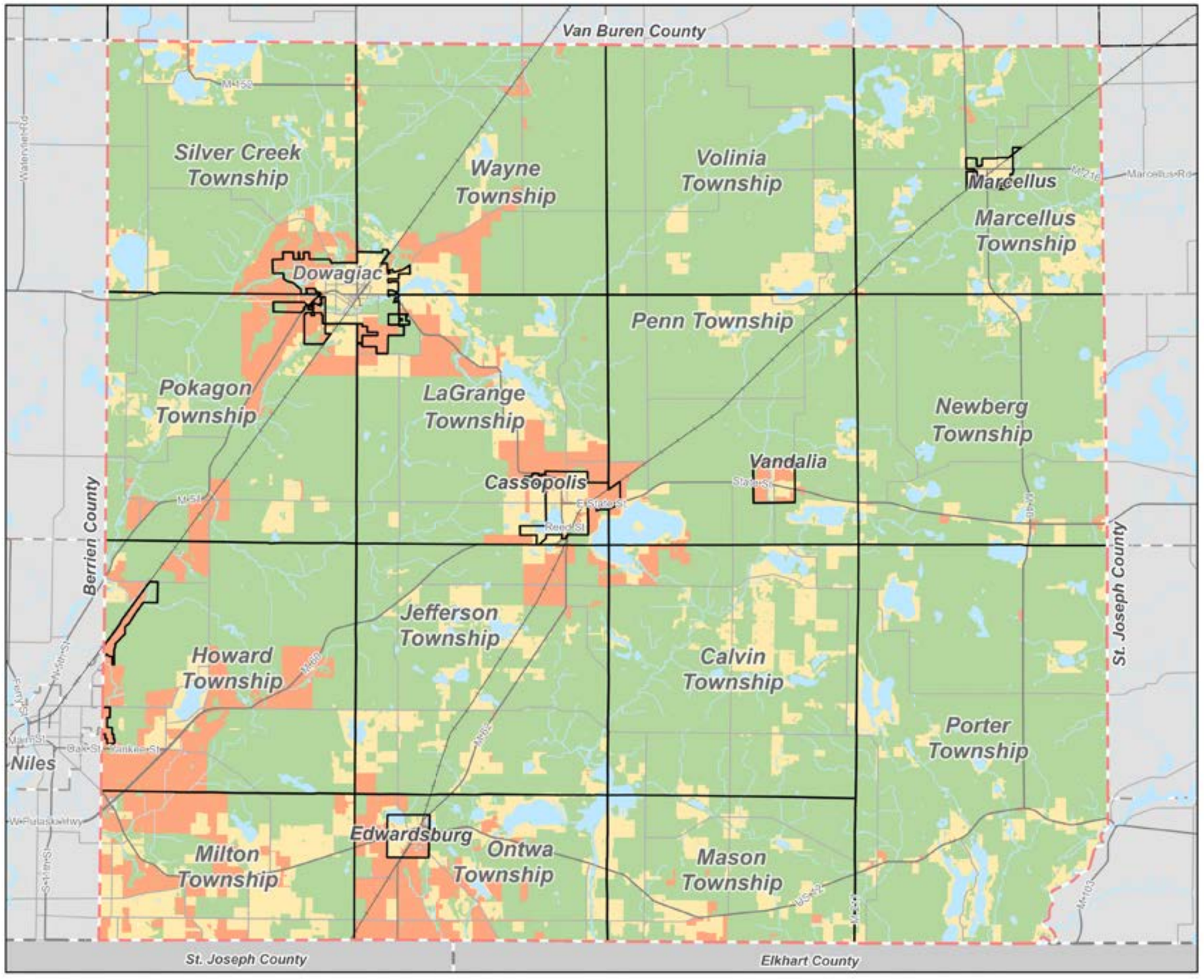
Growth could occur in:

- New residential neighborhoods
- New walkable, mixed use "town centers"
- New industrial or business parks

STEP 4:

The future land use maps for those communities within Cass County that have local planning and zoning were analyzed and translated into the Framework categories. This step ensures that the County Framework Map effectively takes into consideration the plans of these communities, allowing for meaningful comparison in boundary areas. It also results in the development of a Future Land Use Plan that can be viewed through a County-wide lens.

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Map 23.

Framework Map

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025

FRAMEWORK AREAS

- Preserve
- Enhance
- Grow

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Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a.
Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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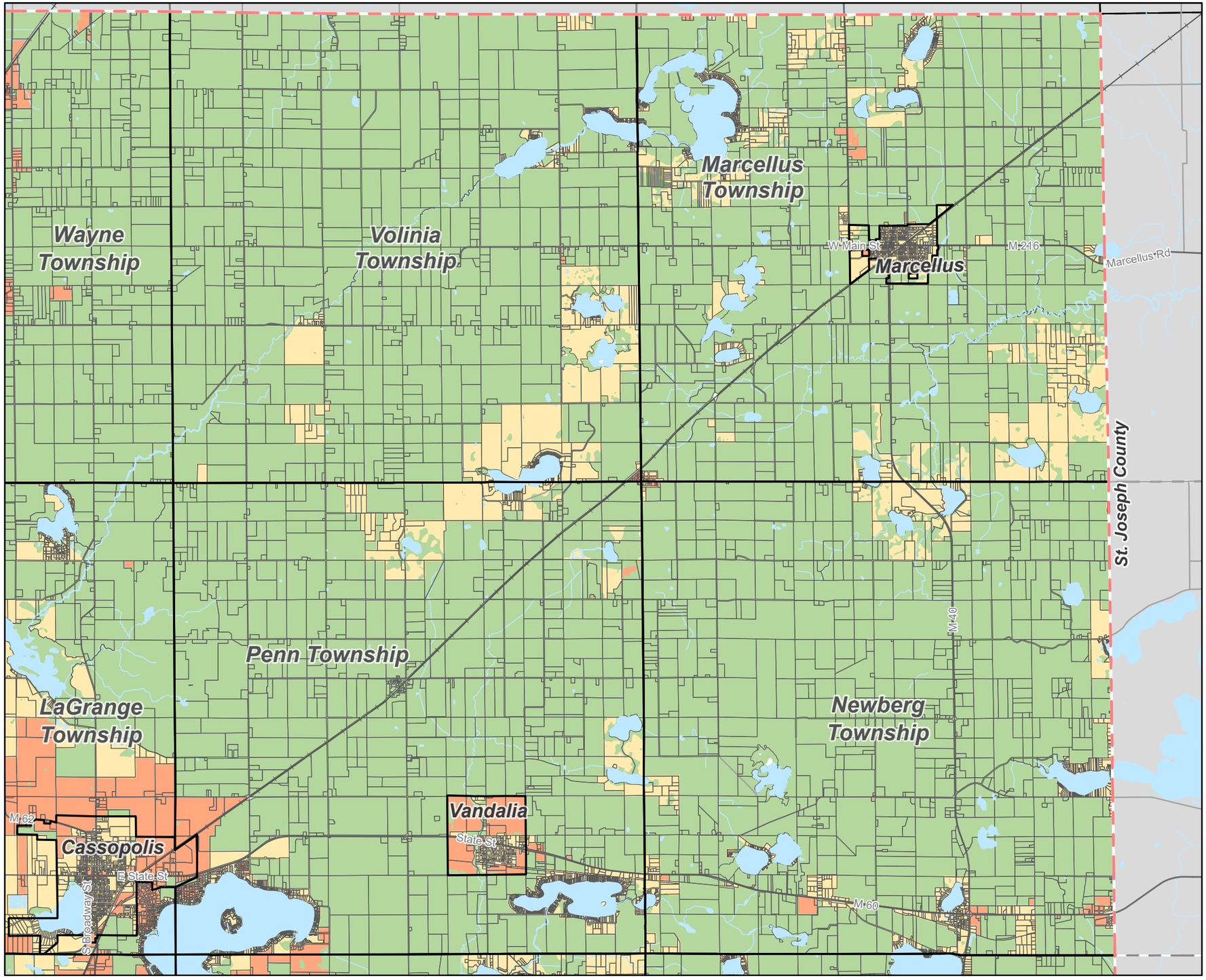
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Map 24.

Framework Map – Northeast Quadrant

Cass County, Michigan

December 12, 2024



FRAMEWORK AREAS

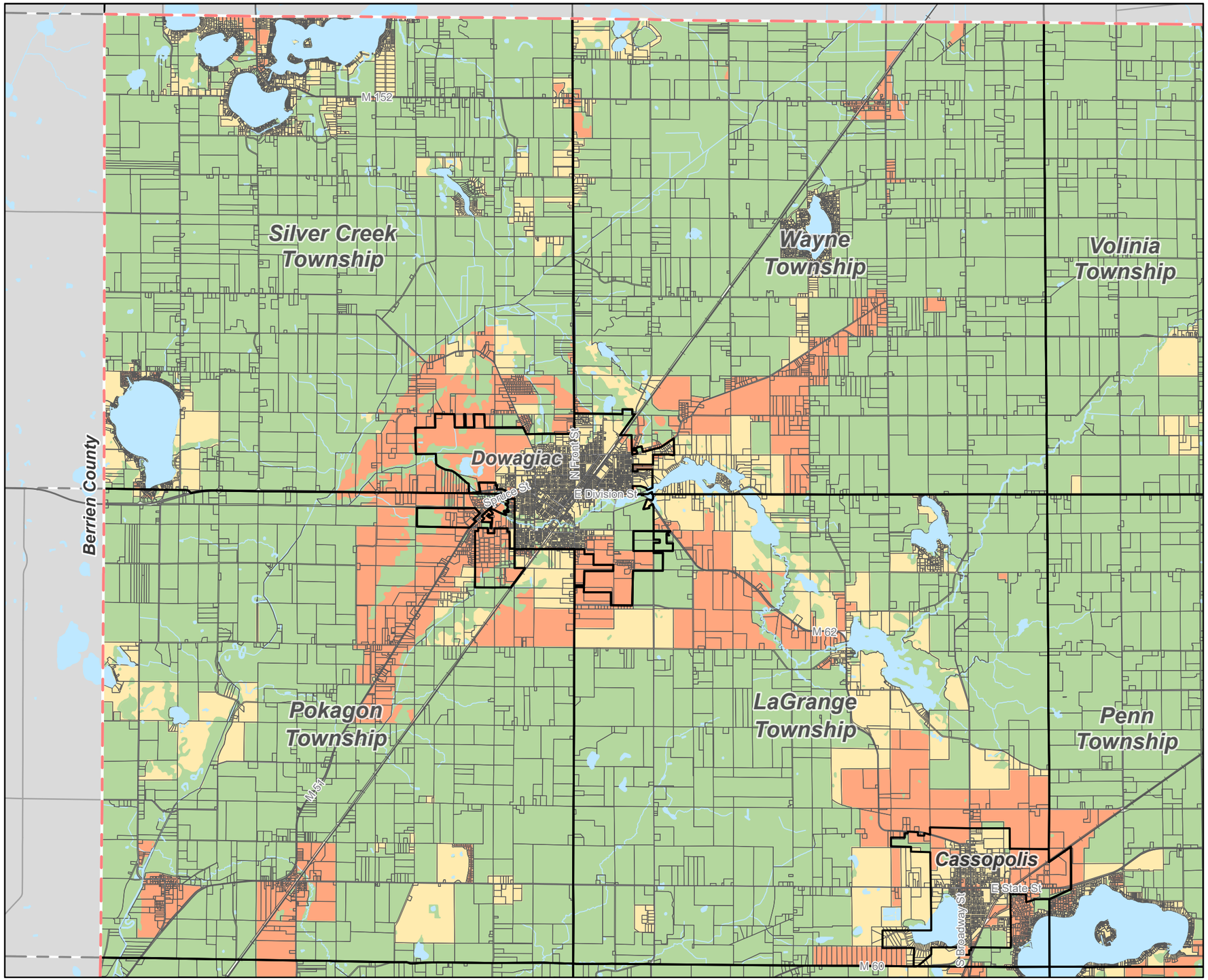
- Preserve
- Enhance
- Grow

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Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a.
Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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Map 25.

Framework Map – Northwest Quadrant

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025

FRAMEWORK AREAS

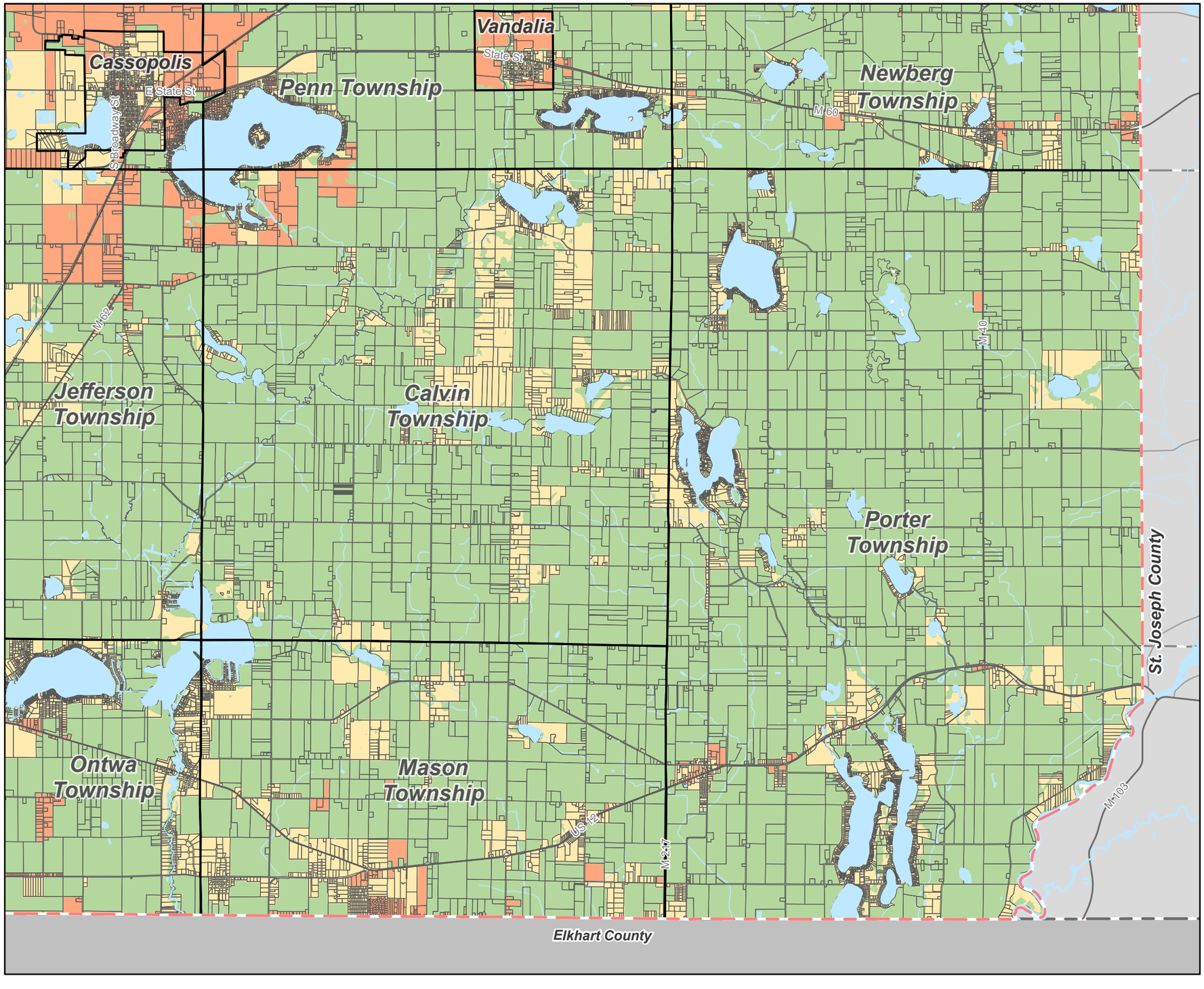
- Preserve
- Enhance
- Grow

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Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a.
Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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Map 26.

Framework Map – Southeast Quadrant

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025

FRAMEWORK AREAS

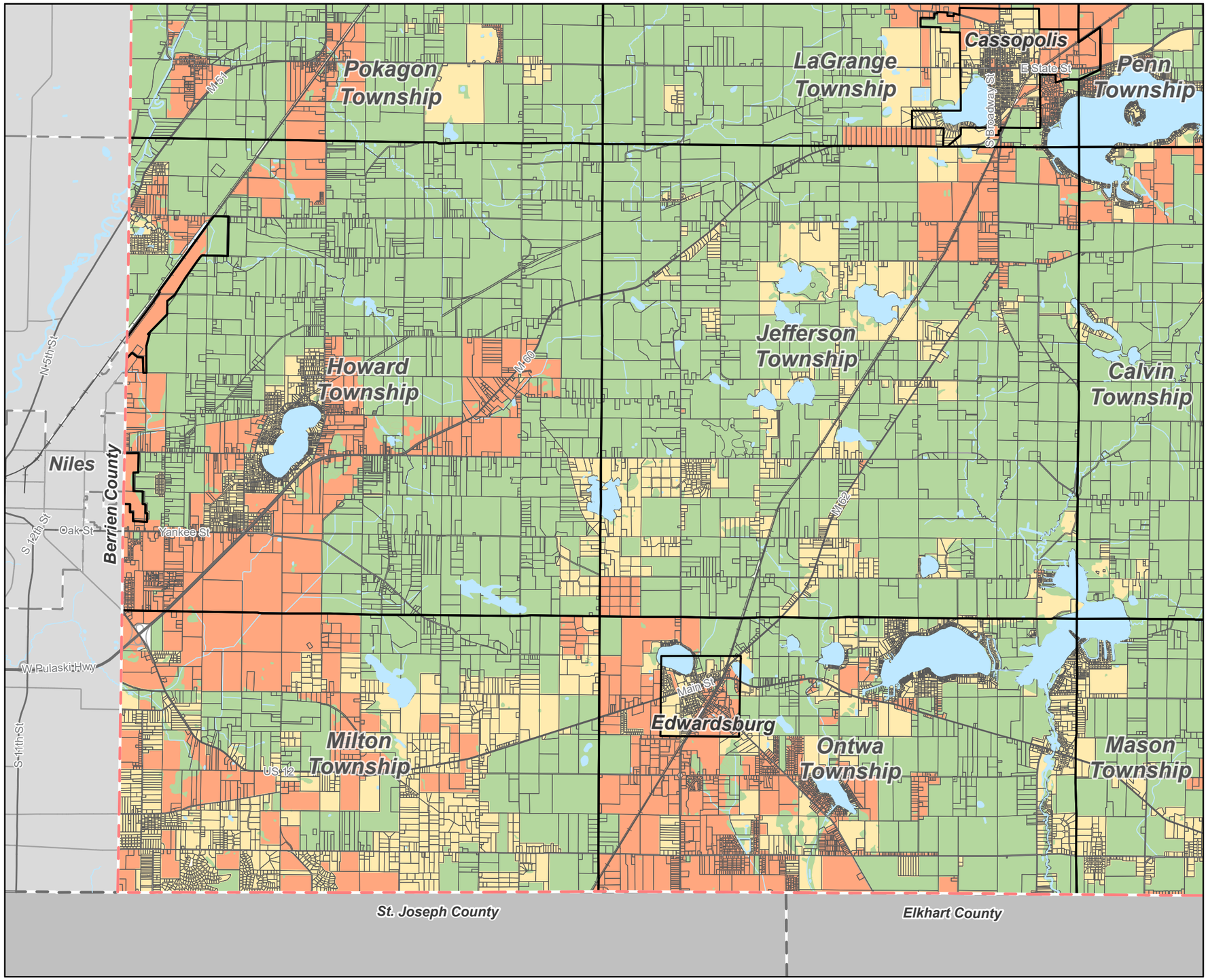
- Preserve
- Enhance
- Grow

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Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a.
Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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Map 27.

Framework Map – Southwest Quadrant

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025

FRAMEWORK AREAS

- Preserve
- Enhance
- Grow

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Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a.
Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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09.

Cass County: the Plan



The Plan for Cass County presents a detailed Future Land Use plan grounded in the framework structure of: preserve, enhance and grow; Zoning Plans (for the four communities served by the Plan) that move the Future Land Use plan forward by zoning district; and culminates in an Action Plan with specific implementation tasks. The strength of this approach is the ability to move the County Plan forward and to also recognize and respond to the plans of those communities in the County with local planning and zoning.

Future Land Use

The Future Land Use Map was created from the Framework Map, with three distinct Future Land Use classifications further delineating the vision within each of the three Framework categories. The Future Land Use classifications are listed below:

Preserve:

- Agriculture
- Recreation
- Natural Preservation

Enhance:

- Thriving Neighborhood
- Historic Town Center
- Lakefront Community

Grow:

- Neighborhood Growth
- Rural Crossroads
- Business Growth



Agriculture

This classification includes active farmland, agricultural businesses, and rural residential land use. The goal of the Agriculture future land use classification is to preserve important farmland in Cass County, preserve prime agricultural soils for farming or agribusiness uses, and to preserve the rural landscape. Lots associated with the Agriculture classification are typically larger in size in order to ensure that sufficient land is available for viable farming.

APPROPRIATE LAND USES

Appropriate uses include dwelling units matching the character and density of the surrounding uses, parks, agri-businesses, and farms, including the keeping of large and small animals, including bees, chickens, and other domesticated farm animals, as well as growing crops.

STREETS AND TRANSPORTATION

Streets in Agriculture areas are typically higher in speed and can accommodate larger vehicles transporting heavy equipment needed for agricultural purposes. Unpaved roads are appropriate for low-traffic local corridors.



Recreation

This classification includes designated park land and open spaces, including land owned by the County and State, as well as local jurisdictions. Areas within Recreation can include both passive and active recreation land use.

APPROPRIATE LAND USES

All areas should maintain uses which promote access by the public and include recreational and gathering opportunities.

STREETS AND TRANSPORTATION

Existing non-motorized pathways should be maintained. Additional non-motorized pathways and associated amenities (i.e. bicycle racks, water fountains, wayfinding signage, lighting, etc.) should be established as needed. Connecting established parkland using non-motorized pathways is strongly encouraged.

Except for regional thoroughfares and highways, roadways should be low speed and designed for safe hiking, running, cycling, and, where appropriate in season, snowmobiling, cross country skiing, and snowshoeing.

BUILDING AND SITE DESIGN

High quality architecture is encouraged. Buildings should be well lit and highly visible, but of scale and appearance that is consistent with the surrounding landscape and density of development. Public amenities should be included.

Sufficient parking should be provided for public facilities. Parking areas should be designed to minimize stormwater runoff and implement low-impact development techniques (pervious pavement, bioswales, etc.).



Natural Preservation

This Future Land Use classification is applied to sensitive natural features, such as floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, significant woodlands, and other areas that need to be protected not only from development, but also from agricultural uses that could be damaging to them.

APPROPRIATE LAND USES

These areas should be protected from development and preserved. Appropriate land uses may include lower intensity recreation.

STREETS AND TRANSPORTATION

Streets extending through Natural Preservation areas should be minimal, as there is no need for vehicular access. Trails are encouraged but should be unpaved unless they run along the side of a major roadway.

BUILDING AND SITE DESIGN

No buildings should be constructed within Natural Preservation areas, unless specifically permitted by State and/or Federal environmental regulatory bodies.



Thriving Neighborhood

This classification generally includes existing residential areas in the County. These areas are typically comprised of single-family homes in low-density neighborhoods, but other typologies and densities also exist. The purpose of this Future Land Use classification is to retain the current residential character, while enhancing amenities and infrastructure to promote high quality of life.

APPROPRIATE LAND USES

Typical uses include neighborhoods with densities between 1 and 4 dwelling units per acre, though densities up to 8 units per acre may be appropriate where infrastructure is sufficient. The neighborhoods are generally adjacent to town centers such as Edwardsburg, Marcellus, Vandalia, or Dowagiac, or along major corridors such as M-60 or M-62.

Importantly, new development in Thriving Neighborhood areas should be rare, and, when it occurs, it should be infill development that matches the existing character and density of the surroundings. The Neighborhood Growth category designates the appropriate areas for new residential development.

STREETS AND TRANSPORTATION

Streets should be well-connected to one another in grid patterns that provide access to major arterial roads as well as to adjacent neighborhoods. These streets have lower traffic volumes and are characterized by lower speeds. The streets should also have sidewalk or bike path infrastructure to provide local non-motorized access and connect to larger systems.

BUILDING AND SITE DESIGN

New homes should be designed with quality materials and consistent with surrounding homes in terms of scale, massing, and site design.



Historic Town Center

This Future Land Use classification designates those legacy communities with historic, dense cores, within Cass County, including Cassopolis, Dowagiac, Edwardsburg, Marcellus, and Vandalia. Their position as centers of commerce, culture, and civic engagement are important to the County's economy and quality of life.

APPROPRIATE LAND USES

A wide variety of land uses are appropriate, as designated by local planning and zoning, with the overarching goal of preserving the historic character of Michigan small towns.

STREETS AND TRANSPORTATION

Historic Town Centers should capitalize on their walkable character to promote pedestrianism and cycling. Roads should be designed for slow speeds, and local access. In some cases, bypasses may be appropriate to steer regional traffic away from walkable, dense, and/or historic areas.

BUILDING AND SITE DESIGN

New buildings, of all types, should be designed with quality materials and should be consistent with Michigan small town character in terms of scale, massing, and site design.



Lakefront Community

This Future Land Use classification is characterized by the existing residential development that surrounds many of the County's lakes. That development pattern has unique zoning and infrastructure needs in order to protect the lake's ecosystem, recreational opportunities, and the overall rural and natural character.

APPROPRIATE LAND USES

Typical uses include homes lining the water that are densely packed together, with very low densities (or even recreational or preserved land) inland. Commercial uses at intersections may be appropriate, and on larger lakes lakefront dining or lodging may be appropriate.

STREETS AND TRANSPORTATION

Streets need to provide access to homes and to recreational amenities. They may also serve as boat launches in some locations. Design speeds should be very low, due to the number of recreational activities that take place in close proximity, residential densities, and the frequent need for overflow parking.

Trails are encouraged, especially along public lakefronts, but sidewalks are rare.

BUILDING AND SITE DESIGN

New homes should be designed with quality materials and consistent with surrounding homes in terms of scale, massing, and site design.

Businesses should respect the lakefront and the quiet enjoyment of private residences nearby.

All land development should respect the natural ecosystem, and the enjoyment of the lake and lakefront by all users and abutting property owners.



Neighborhood Growth

This classification marks the locations where new residential development is appropriate within the County.

Single family houses, and other housing types such as townhouses, duplexes, quadplexes, and multi-family buildings are all appropriate. New neighborhoods are encouraged to contain a variety of housing types, to allow for a variety of price points and housing preferences.

Neighborhoods should be designed with connected street patterns, including connections to existing neighborhoods where possible, and should have amenities (such as parks and schools) within their boundaries. Businesses and retail should be nearby, along major corridors.

APPROPRIATE LAND USES

Typical uses include residential homes and units, schools, parks, open space, and other compatible municipal or civic uses. Retail, schools, and other amenities should be located within nearby “Neighborhood Nodes”, that may or may not be built as part of the same development.

STREETS AND TRANSPORTATION

Streets should follow a connected pattern that respects topography and natural features, and therefore may not constitute a true “grid.” Streets should feature elements such as sidewalks, pedestrian scale lighting, and a tree canopy. Streets can be classified as minor arterials or major collectors.

BUILDING AND SITE DESIGN

Sites should be designed to give homes a front and back yard (or, in the case of two-family buildings, nearby usable green space), while maintaining a human, walkable scale that promotes social interaction and reduces unnecessary and unused lawn space.

Buildings should be designed with quality materials and consistent with architectural styles common in West Michigan. Alternative architectural styles may be appropriate in some neighborhoods, provided that the unique design enhances the general character of the area.



Rural Crossroads

This Future Land Use classification is designed to encompass compact areas of mixed-use development in appropriate places in the County, while preserving rural character. In Rural Crossroads, land uses can include bottom floor restaurants, offices, and businesses with upper floor multi-family units or businesses, tucked within an otherwise rural environment. This development pattern has a deep history throughout the Midwest and is generally called a "hamlet."

APPROPRIATE LAND USES

In Rural Crossroads, appropriate land uses include multi-family and two-family residential developments alongside commercial developments. Low-intensity businesses such as small retail stores, personal services, small offices (including medical offices) should populate ground floors of buildings. Residential uses or office uses could be on upper floors.

STREETS AND TRANSPORTATION

Streets in Rural Crossroads should provide connections to principal arterials and major arterial roads. Within developments, streets should provide safe walking and biking opportunities on both sides of the street. Additionally, on-street parking should be included in development design with the absence of culs-de-sac or dead-end roads.

BUILDING AND SITE DESIGN

Buildings should be built with high-quality materials and should be architecturally compatible with surrounding neighborhoods. Buildings with a connection to the street, including designs with attractive front facades, entrances, and porches are all highly encouraged. Open spaces should be functional and allow for recreational enjoyment and the preservation of natural features. Architectural variation is highly encouraged to create a character on long and connected facades.

Parking areas may be located in the front, side, or rear yards for buildings, but, where practical, buildings should front the street and provide parking to the rear. Large areas of parking should be broken up with landscaped islands and trees. Parking space requirements may vary based on the location of the development and availability of shared parking.



Business Growth

Business Growth areas are designated for the expansion of commercial and industrial uses, to ensure sufficient jobs, tax base, and retail amenities for Cass County residents. As noted previously in the Plan, Business Growth areas are limited in size in recognition of infrastructure and the availability of jobs and services in nearby metropolitan centers.

APPROPRIATE LAND USES

Appropriate uses include office, light manufacturing, artisan production, food and beverage production, and research and development uses, as well as commercial businesses such as retail stores, personal services, and restaurants.

Parking areas, outdoor storage, and loading zones should be properly buffered and landscaped.

STREETS AND TRANSPORTATION

Business uses are typically served by major arterial and principal arterial roads, which are characterized by higher volumes of traffic, heavier vehicles, and faster speeds. These roadways should be designed to allow for regional connectivity, as well as pedestrian access. Roadside landscaping and other beautification elements should be considered in these areas due to the high volumes of both motorists and pedestrians traveling to these areas.

BUILDING AND SITE DESIGN

Buildings should be constructed of high-quality materials which wrap around the entire building and feature attractive signage. Robust landscaping should be installed throughout the site. Commercial buildings should be supported by sufficient but not overly excessive parking areas. Large areas of parking should be broken up with landscaped islands and trees.

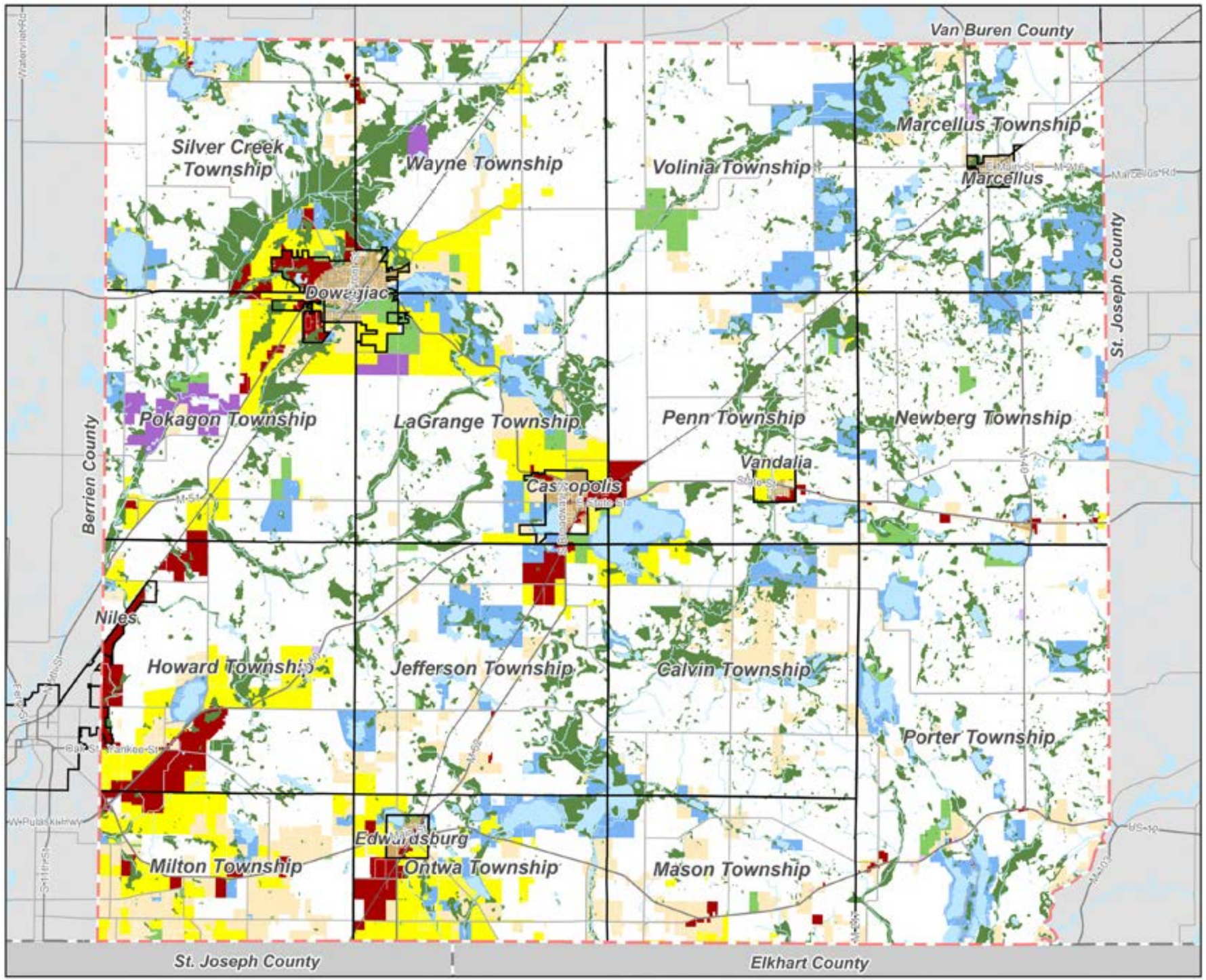
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Map 28.

Future Land Use

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025



LEGEND

PRESERVE
- Tribal Trust Lands
- Agriculture
- Recreation
- Natural Preservation

ENHANCE
- Thriving Neighborhood
- Historic Town Center
- Lakefront Community

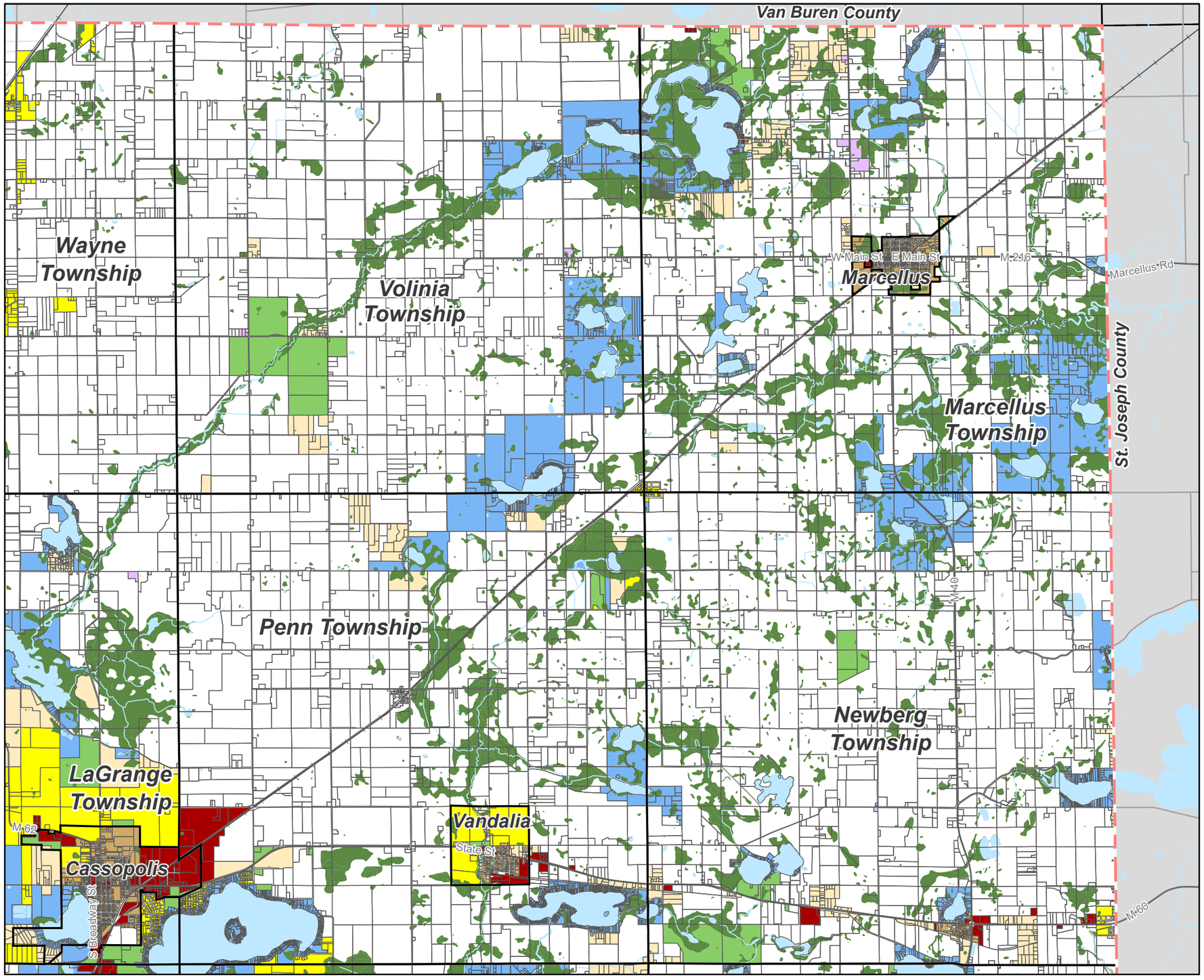
GROW
- Neighborhood Growth
- Rural Crossroads
- Business Growth

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Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a.
Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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Map 29.

Future Land Use – Northeast Quadrant

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025

LEGEND

Tribal Trust Lands

PRESERVE

- Agriculture
- Recreation
- Natural Preservation

ENHANCE

- Thriving Neighborhood
- Historic Town Center
- Lakefront Community

GROW

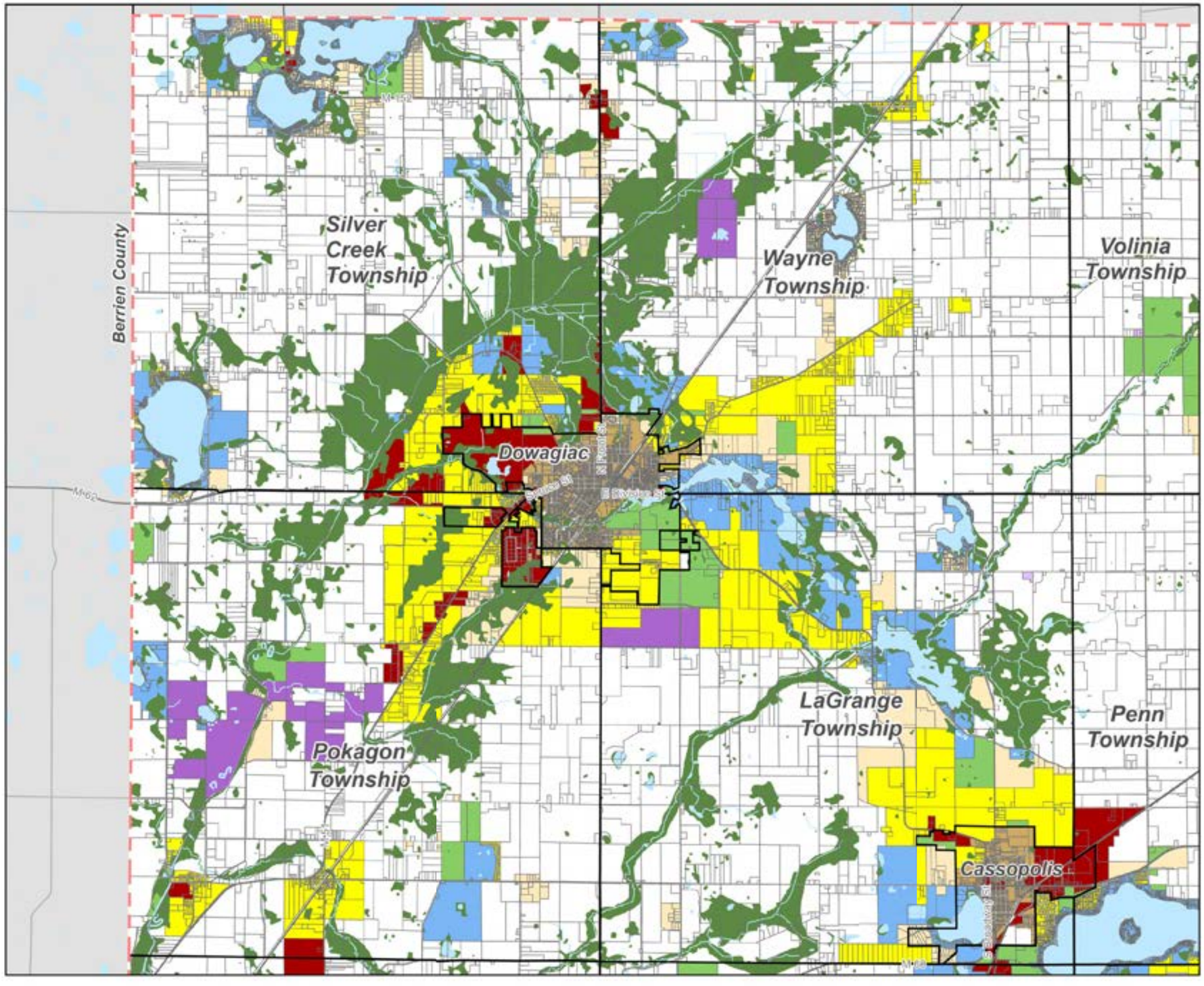
- Neighborhood Growth
- Rural Crossroads
- Business Growth

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Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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Map 30.

Future Land Use – Northwest Quadrant

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025

LEGEND

Tribal Trust Lands

PRESERVE

Agriculture
Recreation
Natural Preservation

ENHANCE

Thriving Neighborhood
Historic Town Center
Lakefront Community

GROW

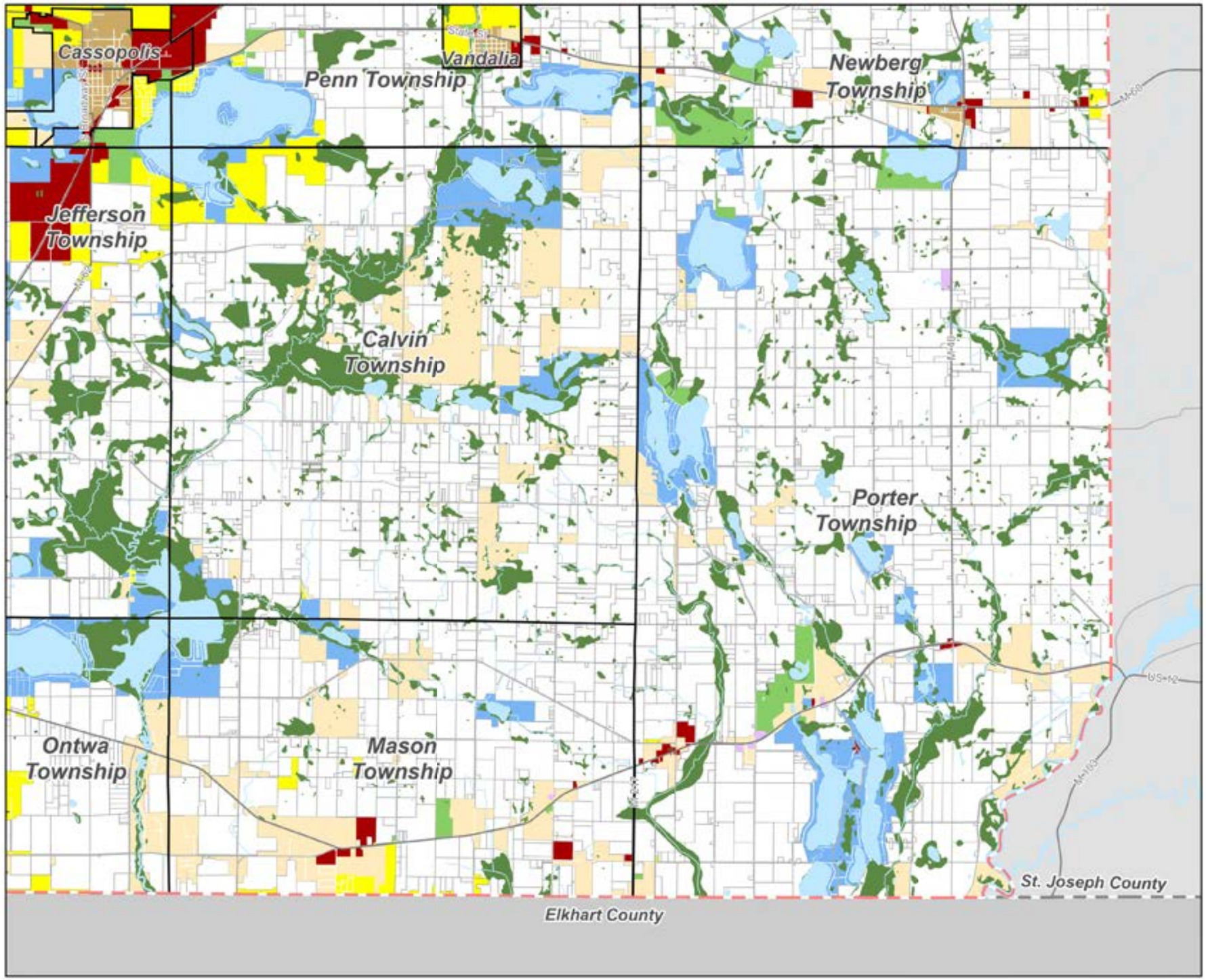
Neighborhood Growth
Rural Crossroads
Business Growth

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Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a.
Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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Map 31.

Future Land Use – Southeast Quadrant

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025

LEGEND

Tribal Trust Lands

PRESERVE

- Agriculture
- Recreation
- Natural Preservation

ENHANCE

- Thriving Neighborhood
- Historic Town Center
- Lakefront Community

GROW

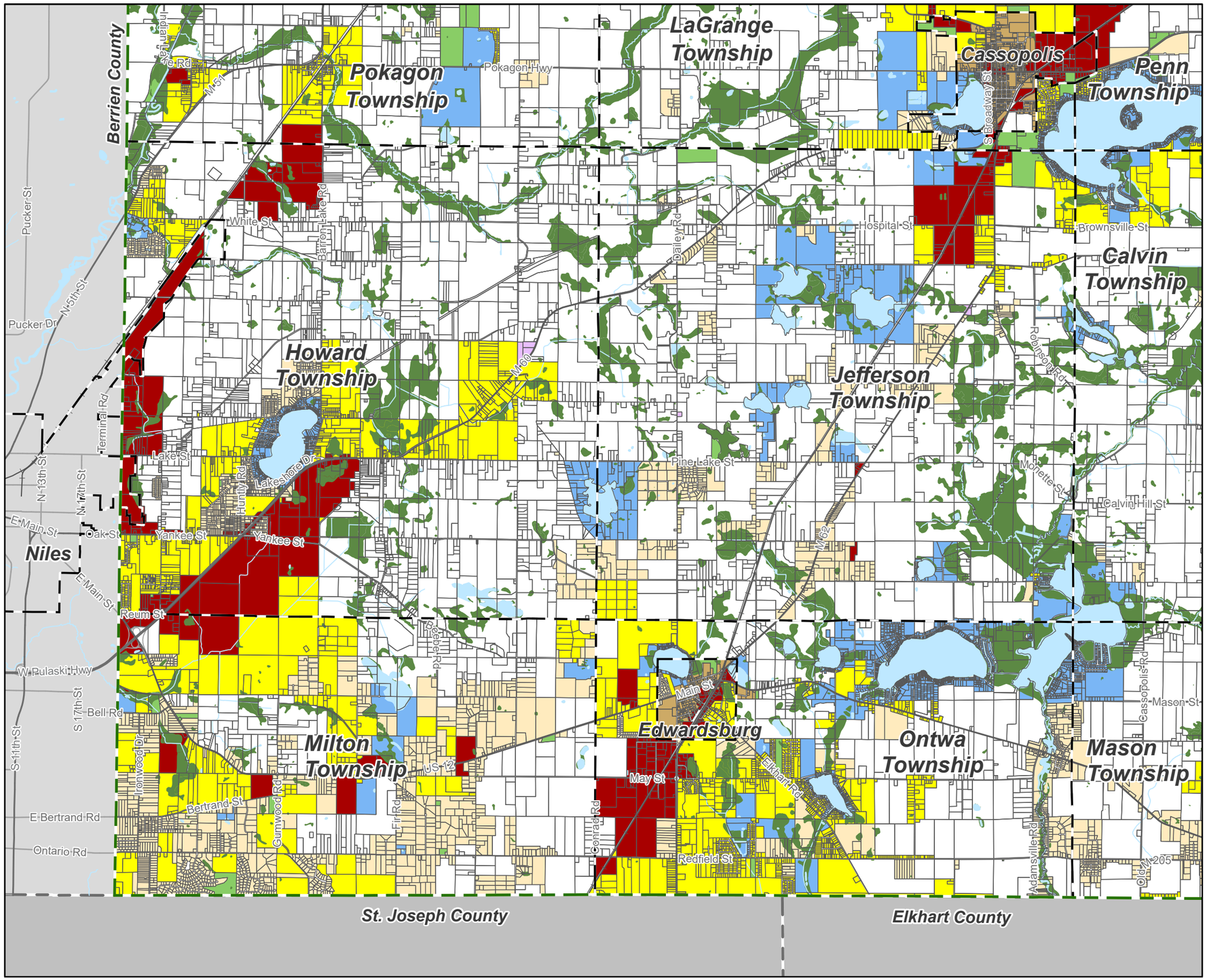
- Neighborhood Growth
- Rural Crossroads
- Business Growth

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Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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Map 32.

Future Land Use – Southwest Quadrant

Cass County, Michigan

April 14, 2025

LEGEND

Tribal Trust Lands

PRESERVE

- Agriculture
- Recreation
- Natural Preservation

ENHANCE

- Thriving Neighborhood
- Historic Town Center
- Lakefront Community

GROW

- Neighborhood Growth
- Rural Crossroads
- Business Growth

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Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v.17a.
Data Source: Cass County GIS Dept. 2024. McKenna, 2024.

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Zoning Plan – Guiding Local Zoning Decisions

Four communities in Cass County have opted to utilize the Cass County Master Plan to guide in the development of their zoning and land use ordinances and in related decision-making. For each of these communities, a Zoning Plan follows that shows the local zoning districts that would best implement the vision of the Framework categories and Future Land Use classifications. A rezoning should be reviewed against the Zoning Plan to determine whether the zoning amendment under consideration is supported by the Master Plan.

FRAMEWORK VS. FUTURE LAND USE

The Framework Map and the Future Land Use Map were designed to provide guidance on zoning ordinance development and rezoning decisions in the following manner:

Framework: Framework categories should be considered to have 'hard edges'.

A rezoning should only be approved within a given Framework category if the zoning district is listed as appropriate for that category in the community's Zoning Plan. The purpose of the 'hard edge' is to preserve the County's rural and small-town character. If an area is designated for 'preservation' or 'enhancement', zoning districts designed to support 'growth', which can effectively and dramatically alter character, should not be approved.

An amendment of the Master Plan would be required to support a rezoning inconsistent with the Framework Map.

Future Land Use: Future Land Use classifications should be considered to have 'soft edges'.

Within the more rigidly defined Framework categories, the Future Land Use classifications may be considered more fluid. It may be that after a detailed evaluation, it is determined that a particular site is more appropriate for Business Growth than Residential Growth. Or, there may be important natural features within an otherwise agricultural area . . or a neighborhood near a lake that requires a more suitable zoning district to maintain its character. Each example cited would be consistent with the Framework Map, but likely contrary to the Future Land Use Map.

In such instances, rezoning to a district that is not consistent with (listed for) the Future Land Use classification of the property, but is consistent with (listed for) the Framework category of the property, could be supported without requiring an amendment of the Master Plan.

IMPACT ON LOCAL ZONING DECISIONS

The future land use maps of the communities within the County where local planning exists have been translated and incorporated into the Cass County Framework Map and Future Land Use Map. Therefore, it is anticipated that zoning decisions that are compatible with local master plans will also be compatible with this Master Plan. The County Planning Commission, in its advisory role in local zoning decisions, should use the Framework and Future Land Use Maps in the manner previously described to guide the recommendation process.

Marcellus Township Zoning Plan

Framework Category	Future Land Use Categories	Zoning Districts		Key Rezoning Guidelines
Preserve	Agriculture	A-R	Agricultural Production	There currently are no zoning districts in the Village's ordinance which provide exclusively for natural preservation or recreation. Parks, open space, natural areas, and agriculture would be permitted in the districts listed.
	Recreation	A-R	Agricultural Production	
	Natural Preservation	A-R	Agricultural Production	
Enhance	Thriving Neighborhood	R-1	Single-Family Residential District	Rezonings should be rare and highly discouraged in areas designated "Thriving Neighborhood", to preserve the existing character of the area. Where rezonings do occur, it should be to whichever category most closely matches the existing character or designed in a way which provides continuity with adjacent uses, or to correspond to historic development patterns.
		RM- 1	Multiple Family Residential District	
	Historic Town Center	C	Commercial	This represents the historic commercial and residential cores of the Village. Businesses are located along the ground floor of the main street, in this case primarily Maple Road, Center Street, and Main Street, and residences and offices are located on the second floor. Single-family and some small-scale multi-family homes are in nearby neighborhoods. Rezonings should emulate the traditional historic scale. Zoning should permit mixed-use and some higher densities where appropriate and to-scale with the surrounding uses. New businesses that support local residents' daily needs should be encouraged.
		R-1	Single Family Residential Neighborhood	
		RM-1	Multiple Family Residential District	
		V	Village of Marcellus	
	Lakefront Residential	A-R	Agricultural Residential	Rezoning new land to allow lakefront residential development should be done with high consideration for the impact on existing natural features and the availability of infrastructure. Other districts may be appropriate as permitted by available infrastructure and existing character, but all development should take the above into consideration
		R-1	Single- Family Residential District	
Grow	Neighborhood Growth	R-1	Single-Family Residential District	High quality housing of all types is encouraged to provide housing choice to residents and offer homes that suit a range of lifestyles. Appropriate density should be determined based on the availability of infrastructure and the character of the surrounding areas. A development of a higher level of density might be appropriate near one which is lower in density, but only if designed to be in harmony with existing residences.
		RM- 1	Multiple Family Residential District	
	Rural Crossroads	C	Commercial	These are areas where communities come together, often located at an intersection of two major roads. These areas should be arranged with a denser core and less density and intensity toward the edges of the area.
		C-HW	Highway Development District	
		R-1	Single-Family Residential District	
		RM- 1	Multiple Family Residential District	
	Business Growth	I	Industrial	Rezonings to allow business growth and enterprise should be permitted in particular nearby existing businesses. Performance guarantees should prevent impacts on nearby residential areas, and harmful industries should always be located far from residents and sensitive natural features.
		C	Commercial District	
		C-HW	Highway Development District	

Pokagon Township Zoning Plan

Framework Category	Future Land Use Classifications	Zoning Districts		Key Rezoning Guidelines
Preserve	Agriculture	OSP	Open Space Preservation	Agricultural Residential should only be used in these areas when the overall housing density does not exceed one unit per 10 acres, in order to ensure that rural character is preserved.
		A-1	Agricultural Production	
		A-2	Agricultural Residential	
	Recreation	OSP	Open Space Preservation	Rezoning is generally discouraged except as necessary for recreational amenities.
		A-1	Agricultural Production	
		A-2	Agricultural Residential	
	Natural Preservation	OSP	Open Space Preservation	Rezoning is generally discouraged except to preserve natural features.
Enhance	Thriving Neighborhood	R-1	Low-Density Residential	Rezonings should be rare and highly discouraged in areas designated "Thriving Neighborhood", to preserve the existing character of the area. Where rezonings do occur, it should be to whichever category most closely matches the existing character or designed in a way which provides continuity with adjacent uses.
		R-2	Medium Density Residential	
		R-3	High Density Residential	
		R-MF	Multiple Family	
	Historic Town Center	R-2	Medium Density Residential	The historic town pattern of a central commercial area with homes built around them exists in some areas of the Township. Within these areas, some small scale multi-family may be mixed in with single-family homes, and people are within walking distance of businesses. New businesses that serve the local residents should be permitted and encouraged in these areas.
		R-3	High Density Residential	
		R-MF	Multiple Family	
		C-1	Local Commercial	
	Lakefront Community	A-2	Agricultural- Residential	The Township does not currently have a zoning district exclusively dedicated to lakefront residential areas.
		R-1	Low-Density Residential	
Grow	Neighborhood Growth	R-1	Low Density Residential	Appropriate density should be determined based on the availability of infrastructure and the character of the surrounding areas. A development of a higher level of density may be permitted near one which is lower in density, but should provide buffering and a gradual transition between density levels.
		R-2	Medium Density Residential	
		R-3	High Density Residential	
		R-MF	Multiple Family	
		PUD	Planned Unit Development	
	Rural Crossroads	R-3	High Density Residential	These are areas where communities come together, often located at an intersection of two major roads. These areas should be arranged with a denser core and less density and intensity toward the edges of the area. Planned Unit Developments can be appropriate ways of implementing this Category. Appropriate density should be determined based on the availability of infrastructure and the character of the surrounding areas. A development of a higher level of density might be appropriate near one which is lower in density, but only if designed to be in harmony with existing residences.
		R-MF	Multiple Family	
		C-1	Local Commercial	
		C-2	General Commercial	
		PUD	Planned Unit Development	
	Business Growth	C-1	Local Commercial	The appropriate zoning district should be based on the available infrastructure and character of the surroundings.
		C-2	General Commercial	
		I-1	Industrial Light	
		PUD	Planned Unit Development	

Village of Vandalia Zoning Plan

Framework Category	Future Land Use Categories	Zoning Districts		Key Rezoning Guidelines
Preserve	Agriculture	AR	Agricultural - Rural Residential	Agricultural Residential should only be used in these areas when the overall housing density does not exceed one unit per 10 acres, in order to ensure that rural character is preserved.
	Recreation	AR	Agricultural - Rural Residential	The Township does not currently have a zoning district dedicated exclusively to recreational land.
		R-1	Low Density Residential	
	Natural Preservation	R-1	Low Density Residential	The Village does not currently have a zoning district dedicated to natural features preservation. Local parks fit within the R-1 district.
		AR	Agricultural - Rural Residential	
Enhance	Thriving Neighborhood	R-1	Low Density Residential	Rezonings should be rare and highly discouraged in areas designated "Thriving Neighborhood", to preserve the existing character of the area. Where rezonings do occur, it should be to whichever category most closely matches the existing character or designed in a way which provides continuity with adjacent uses.
		R-2	Medium Density Residential	
		R-MF	Multiple Family Residential	
		R-M HC	Manufactured Housing Community District	
	Historic Town Center	C-1	Local Commercial	This area represents the historic homes and buildings in the Village. Residences are within walking distance of local amenities and businesses, and there are some small multi-family buildings mixed in with single-family residential homes.
		R-1	Low Density Residential	
		R-2	Medium Density Residential	
	Lakefront Community			There are no lakefront properties within the Village of Vandalia's jurisdiction.
Grow	Neighborhood Growth	R-1	Low Density Residential	Appropriate density should be determined based on the availability of infrastructure and the character of the surrounding areas. A development of a higher level of density might be appropriate near one which is lower in density, but only if designed to be in harmony with existing residences.
		R-2	Medium Density Residential	
		R-MF	Multiple Family Residential	
		PUD	Planned Unit Development	
	Rural Crossroads	C-1	Local Commercial	These are areas where communities come together, often located at an intersection of two major roads. These areas should be arranged with a denser core and less density and intensity toward the edges of the area. Planned Unit Developments can be appropriate ways of implementing this Future Land Use Category.
		R-2	Medium Density Residential	
		R-MF	Multiple Family Residential	
		PUD	Planned Unit Development	
	Business Growth	C-1	Local Commercial	The appropriate zoning district should be based on the available infrastructure and character of the surroundings.
		C-2	General Commercial	
		I-1	Light Industrial District	

Volinia Township Zoning Plan

Framework Category	Future Land Use Categories	Zoning Districts		Key Rezoning Guidelines
Preserve	Agriculture	AP	Agricultural Production	Agricultural Residential should only be used in these areas when the overall housing density does not exceed one unit per 10 acres, in order to ensure that rural character is preserved.
		AR	Agricultural Residential	
	Recreation	R-L	Lakefront Residential	The Township does not currently have a zoning district dedicated exclusively to recreational land.
		R-1	Low Density Residential	
	Natural Preservation	R-L	Lakefront Residential	The Township does not currently have a zoning district dedicated to natural features preservation.
		R-1	Low Density Residential	
		AP	Agricultural Production	
		AR	Agricultural Residential	
Enhance	Thriving Neighborhood	R-1	Low Density Residential	Rezonings should be rare and highly discouraged in areas designated "Thriving Neighborhood", to preserve the existing character of the area. Where rezonings do occur, it should be to whichever category most closely matches the existing character or designed in a way which provides continuity with adjacent uses.
		R-2	Medium Density Residential	
		R-MF	Multiple Family Residential	
		R-MHC	Manufactured Housing Community	
	Lakefront Community	R-L	Lakefront Residential	Rezoning new land to allow lakefront residential development should be done with high consideration for the impact on existing natural features and the availability of infrastructure. Other districts may be appropriate as permitted by available infrastructure and existing character, but all development should take the above into consideration.
Grow	Neighborhood Growth	R-1	Low Density Residential	Appropriate density should be determined based on the availability of infrastructure and the character of the surrounding areas. A development of a higher level of density might be appropriate near one which is lower in density, but only if designed to be in harmony with existing residences.
		R-2	Medium Density Residential	
		R-MF	Multiple Family Residential	
		PUD	Planned Unit Development	
	Rural Crossroads	C-1	Local Commercial	These are areas where communities come together, often located at an intersection of two major roads. These areas should be arranged with a denser core and less density and intensity toward the edges of the area. Planned Unit Developments can be appropriate ways of implementing this Future Land Use Category.
		R-2	Medium Density Residential	
		R-MF	Multiple Family Residential	
		PUD	Planned Unit Development	
	Business Growth	C-1	Local Commercial	The appropriate zoning district should be based on the available infrastructure and character of the surroundings.
		AP	Agricultural Production	

Defining Vision:

To recognize and build upon the County's assets to take advantage of opportunities that can attract new development and residents while conserving Cass County's natural resources and agricultural potential.

Planning Commission Platform:

Encourage and facilitate local planning efforts, especially with respect to coordinated planning – **encourage and convene participants.**

Emphasize the importance of ongoing education and training for local appointed and elected officials in order to uphold responsible, effective decision-making – **deliver education.**

Help communities understand the need to plan in order to proactively mitigate land use conflicts, resolve issues, and make development decisions that are predictable and cost effective – **provide resources and guidance.**

Action Plan

Successful implementation of this Plan will be the result of actions taken by County and local elected and appointed officials, County and local staff, public agencies and private citizens and organizations.

The following Action Plan identifies and describes implementation tasks available to effectively consider and/or execute the Plan's Key Findings, which are foundational to the Master Plan Vision, Framework, and Future Land Use Plan.

KEY

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

RESPONSIBILITY (ABBREVIATION)

BO	Business Owners
CC	County Commission
CM	Community Members
CS	County Staff
LC	Local Community
NC	Neighboring Communities
PC	Planning Commission
PS	Public Schools
RA	Regulatory Agency
RC	Road Commission

FUNDING

Public	Includes public funds from the County operating budget, County, and State funding. May also include local government bonds and grants.
Private	Includes funds from private sources such as grant monies, corporate funding, or property owners.

ACTIVE PLANNING							
			RESPONSIBILITY			FUNDING	
PROJECT	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	COUNTY	OTHER GOV'T	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE
Develop a Planning Commission Annual Report/Work Plan every year and identify work items rooted in the implementation elements of the Master Plan.	B	1	PC CS			●	
Coordinate the County's Capital Improvement Plan with Master Plan implementation priorities.	B	1	PC CC CS			●	
Review and update the Master Plan every five years, at a minimum	C	3	PC CC CS			●	
Periodic adjustment to the Master Plan will be required. Supplemental plans for specific issues or areas may be prepared as amendments to the Master Plan, such as a corridor plan or a character area plan.	C	3	PC CC CS			●	
Pursue and support cooperative planning efforts with Cass County communities engaged in local planning and zoning.	C	3	PC CC CS	NC		●	
STRATEGIC ZONING							
Provide reviews of participating communities' zoning ordinances to identify recommended amendments to improve consistency with and implementation of the Master Plan.	A	2	PC CS	LC		●	
Serve as a resource to local communities for sample ordinances/ text related to zoning ordinance amendments needed to better implement the Master Plan.	B	2	PC CS			●	
Promote an Open Space Preservation Development zoning option that incentivizes exceptional design and community benefits. Promote as a common zoning approach to open space preservation development within the County.	B	2	PC CS	NC		●	
Promote rural character design standards as a guide for the design and layout of non-residential development within the County's rural and sub-rural areas.	B	2	PC CS	NC		●	
Provide model ordinances on key County-wide land use/development issues.	C	3	PC CS			●	

NATURAL RESOURCES

PROJECT	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY			FUNDING	
			COUNTY	OTHER GOV'T	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE
Encourage Cass County communities to develop a County-wide waterfront/shoreline protection approach that incentivizes low-impact development, waterfront setbacks and vegetative shoreline buffers.	A	2	PC CS	NC	CM	●	
Prohibit the use of phosphorus-based fertilizers and other potential contaminants in the maintenance of public infrastructure and property.	B	1	CC CS			●	
Wetlands are regulated by state law, but County partnerships should also be developed to provide leadership and direction on how to protect this important natural feature.	B	2	PC CC CS			●	
Support and explore a variety of mechanisms for open space acquisition, to include land dedication, conservation easements, and outside funding for the public purchase of environmentally significant lands.	B	3	CC CS		CM	●	
Administer the County's farmland preservation programs and land banking program in a single coordinated strategy to effectively preserve the County's prime farmland and/or large tracts of undeveloped agricultural land.	B	3	CC CS		CM	●	●
Develop/compile best management practices and successful approaches to the protection of the County's water resources, soils and natural vegetation. Provide to Cass County communities to inform local zoning ordinance development and guide land use decisions.	C	3	PC CS	RA		●	
Develop/compile best management practices and successful approaches to stormwater management that minimize the negative impacts that land use can have on runoff and water quality, such as reductions in parking requirements and use of permeable materials. Provide to Cass County communities to inform local zoning ordinance development and guide land use decisions.	C	3	CC CS	RA		●	
Develop a plan to inventory, evaluate, protect, and connect the green infrastructure system of Cass County, consisting of a series of interconnected habitats, natural features, and related infrastructure (e.g. trails, parkland, blueways, etc).	C	3	PC CC CS	NC	CM	●	●

PROJECT	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY			FUNDING	
			COUNTY	OTHER GOV'T	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE
INFRASTRUCTURE							
Use the County's asset management plan and capital improvement plan to coordinate infrastructure expansions/upgrades in direct consideration of planned growth areas.	A	1	CS			•	
Actively foster the build-out of broadband communications infrastructure in the County.	A	1	CC CS		BO CM	•	•
Convene discussions among local jurisdictions about infrastructure growth plans, specifically regarding sewer/water, options for alternate energy facilities, and broadband.	A	2	CS			•	
Support implementation of the Cass County Parks & Recreation Plan through capital improvement planning; zoning and site plan review decisions; and education/advocacy efforts.	B	1	PC CC CS	NC		•	
Develop/compile low-impact development techniques and approaches. Apply to in the development of public infrastructure and property. Provide to Cass County communities to inform local zoning ordinance development and guide land use decisions.	B	2	PC CC CS			•	
Prioritize the improvement of motorized and non-motorized transportation systems that connect population and job centers.	B	3	CC CS	RA NC	CM	•	•
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT							
Activate the Future Land Use Plan by using it to designate areas of growth and concentrated development in the County.	A	1	PC CS			•	
Assist local communities to target housing development of density and business growth toward designated growth areas to lower utility and transportation costs, support local employers, and protect the County's agricultural lands.	A	2	PC CS	RA NC		•	
Investigate ways to evolve Cass County's tourism and recreation industry (e.g., hiking, biking, paddling) to diversify the economic base of the region.	C	2	CC CS		BO CM	•	•
Promote Cass County as a commuter community to St Joe/Benton Harbor, Niles, South Bend, and Elkhart.	C	3	CS		BO	•	•
Support enhancement of primary commuter routes through zoning standards and infrastructure improvements.	C	3	CC PC CS RC	RA NC		•	

COMMUNICATION/EDUCATION/ADVOCACY

PROJECT	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY			FUNDING	
			COUNTY	OTHER GOV'T	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE
Adopt a clearly stated and advertised board recruitment and appointment process.	A	1	CC CS			●	
Establish an orientation and training plan for each board.	A	1	CC CS			●	
Engage in continuing educational development regarding land use planning techniques, practices and policies.	A	1	PC CS			●	
Build Planning Commission site plan review skills to take advantage of the opportunity to impact site design and fully realize the objectives of local zoning standards, especially those designed specifically to address County-wide land use issues represented in the Master Plan.	A	2	PC CS			●	
Employ a 'committee approach' to issue-study in order to involve community members in County planning and zoning activities and decision-making.	A	3	PC CS	NC	CM	●	
Develop a strategic platform for collaboration that 1) reinforces existing joint efforts, 2) identifies new partnerships; 3) identifies partnership projects, and 4) establishes a communication medium for partners.	B	2	CS	RA NC PS		●	
Continuously inform and educate the public on the overall planning goals of the County and the measures and processes developed to achieve those goals.	B	3	PC CS			●	
Routinely engage in community outreach to get input on Cass County land use issues–host education sessions on topics related to identified Master Plan issues/efforts to obtain feedback; promote public education; and, encourage partnerships.	C	3	PC CS	NC	CM	●	
Participate with and/or monitor area advocacy and service organizations. Invite representatives of these organizations to Planning Commission meetings to share ongoing projects, programs and new land use concepts and proposals.	C	3	PC PC		CM	●	

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Appendix

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USDA Farmland Designations

USDA United States Department of Agriculture

Designating Farmland of Local Importance
in New Jersey



What is Farmland of Local Importance and How is it Classified?

Farmland of Local Importance is land that is locally important for crop production, but not categorized as prime farmland, unique farmland, or farmland of statewide importance.

Farmland classification is one of the tools utilized by government entities and private organizations to value the soil for farmland protection. The farmland classification classes found in New Jersey are prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, farmland of statewide importance (if drained), farmland of unique importance, and Farmland of Local importance.

This classification is based on optimal inherent physical and chemical soil properties for unique crop production or for ideal crop production at a local level. Some soils in New Jersey in current production do not fit these classes. The chart below details the designation process to request soils in agricultural production be classified as Farmland of Local Importance. Farmland of Local Importance classifications are made at the county level and do not impact the same soil mapped in other counties in New Jersey.

Conditions to Consider for Farmland of Local Importance Classification

Criteria	Description
Soil in agricultural production	Soil in agricultural production is any evidence not limited to recent aerial imagery or crop history that could be of assistance to NRCS determination.
NCCPI	The National Commodity Crop Productivity Index (NCCPI) is an interpretation in the National Soil Information System (NASIS). It is for non-irrigated commodity crops only. The interpretation uses natural relationships of soil, landscape, and climate factors to model the response of commodity crops.
LCC	The Land capability classification (LCC) is one of a number of interpretive groupings made primarily for agricultural purposes. In this classification the soils are grouped according to their potential and limitations for sustained production of the common cultivated crops that do not require specialized site conditioning or site treatment
EI	The Erodibility Index (EI) is a numerical expression of the potential of a soil to erode, considering climatic factors and the physical and chemical properties of the soil. The higher the index, the greater the investment needed to maintain the sustainability of the soil resource base if intensively cropped. The EI for a soil map unit is determined by dividing the potential erodibility for the soil map unit by the soil loss tolerance (T) value established for the soil in the FOTG as of Jan. 1, 1990.
HEL Criteria	Soils with an EI of 8 or greater are soils with a maximum annual rate of soil loss that could cause a decline in long-term productivity (Title 7, Code of Federal Regulation, Part 12, Subpart B). A soil map unit with an EI of 8 or greater is considered to be highly erodible land (HEL) as set forth in the regulation and subsequently under the HEL provision (NFSAM, Part 510).
LESA (LE) Manual 601.10)	The Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) system helps state and local officials make sound decisions about land use. LESA can provide a technical framework to numerically rank land parcels based on local resource evaluation and site considerations. In agricultural land evaluation (LE), soils are rated and placed into groups ranging from the best to the least suited for a specific agricultural use, such as cropland, forestland, or rangeland. The land evaluation is based on data from the National Cooperative Soil Survey

Why Designate Farmland of Local Importance?

Organizations and municipalities interested in the conservation of land suited for agricultural production and open space should know that the Code of Federal Regulations includes a section about important farmlands which states:

The Nation needs to know the extent and location of the best land for producing food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops.

The regulation directs USDA-NRCS to identify and inventory prime and unique farmland and specifies that farmlands that are of statewide and local importance for producing these crops also need to be identified.

These designations are applicable to USDA and other conservation program eligibility.

New Jersey
Natural Resources Conservation Service
nj.nrcs.usda.gov/

USDA United States Department of Agriculture

Designation process*

Activity	Entity responsible	Possible source of information
Recognize soil map units not classified as prime farmland	State, local government, or organizations concerned with farmland protection and open space, land trust, or easement program partner may appeal to NRCS for assistance	Important farmland classes are provided at the Web Soil Survey or NRCS Prime and other Important Farmlands
Compile evidence of the suitability for crop production. Crop production includes cultivated crops, perennial fruit and nut crops, hay and other feed crops, and improved pasture	State or local government unit or organization concerned with farmland protection	Evidence may include aerial imagery or other documentation of crop history
Evaluate the Soil Survey map unit associated with the land in question for mapping accuracy throughout the locality	NRCS Soil Scientist	The evaluation process may extend to multiple map units where the potential for additional farmlands of local importance are recognized
Consider resource concerns	NRCS Compliance Specialist	For example, ensuring that the important farmland designation will not compromise the wetland conservation compliance provisions of the federal Food Security Act
Verify those Soil Survey map units that meet criteria for Farmland of Local Importance, with qualifiers as applicable	NRCS Soil Scientist	For example, Soil Survey map units on steep slopes that are highly erodible if disturbed may be qualified as Farmland of Local Importance where suitable for hay or perennial fruit production
Sign a document identifying the Soil Survey map units as Farmland of Local Importance within the locality	The NRCS State Conservationist and the local agency or organization representative	The designation is recorded in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide which is available to the public

*Modified from Farmland of Local Importance Designations factsheet.

For More Information

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NJ 2022 - November 2022

New Jersey
Natural Resources Conservation Service
nj.nrcs.usda.gov/

Prime Farmland Soils (622.04)

a. **Definition.** Prime farmland is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and that is available for these uses. It has the combination of soil properties, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops in an economic manner if it is treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. In general, prime farmland has an adequate and dependable water supply from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, an acceptable level of acidity or alkalinity, an acceptable content of salt or sodium, and few or no rocks. Its soils are permeable to water and air. Prime farmland is not excessively eroded or saturated with water for long periods of time, and it either does not flood frequently during the growing season or is protected from flooding. Users of the lists of prime farmland map units should recognize that soil properties are only one of several criteria that are necessary. Other considerations include land use, frequency of flooding, irrigation, water table, and wind erodibility.

   Lists of prime farmland can be generated from Web Soil Survey at:
   http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/

b. **Purpose.** The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is committed to the management and maintenance of the resource base that supports the productive capacity of American agriculture. This management and maintenance includes identifying of the location and extent of the most suitable land for producing food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. Prime farmland information may be supplemented with separate designations of soil map units that have state-wide, local, or unique importance as farmland capable of producing these crops.

c. **Code of Federal Regulations.** NRCS policy and procedures on prime and unique farmlands are published in the Code of Federal Regulations 7CFR657. The content is reproduced in Exhibit 622-1 of the National Soil Survey Handbook:
   http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/soils/survey/publication/?cid=nrcs142p2_054226#ex1 for convenience. The website is:
   http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_00/7cfr657_00.html.

d. **Policy.** State soil scientists prepare and maintain an up-to-date list of soil survey map units that meet the soil criteria for prime farmland. The list given in field office technical guides for users concerned with only a single area is a subset of the state list. The list of prime farmland soils should be kept up-to-date. The state soil scientist ensures that prime farmland soil interpretations are made for all soil mapping units in that state. Mapping units continuing across state lines should be coordinated with the adjoining state. Other policy guidance is given in part 510 of the National Inventory and Monitoring Manual.

e. **List of Prime Farmland Map Units.** Soil survey map units that meet the soil requirements for prime farmland are to be identified, coordinated, and listed. The list or its subset is to be available to users of soil survey information.

f. **Quality Control of Prime Farmland Map Units**

1. Computer generation of prime farmland map units in each state is based on guidelines provided by the National Soil Survey Center. The guidelines provide checks to identify concerns in the classification of prime farmland based on soil properties. The computer checks can be used for guidance but do not suffice as the sole determinant for prime farmland map units.

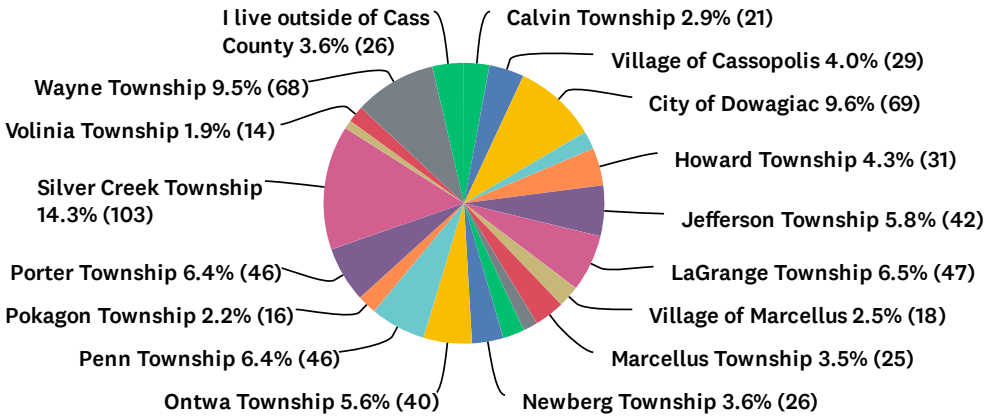
2. Each prime farmland map unit must be documented, either by the computer check or by a statement of reasons that explain the decision.

3. Some soil survey map units may meet the soil criteria for prime farmland, but additional investigation is needed before a final determination is made. The measures needed to qualify the soil as prime farmland are indicated by an appropriate footnote or in a parenthetic statement of explanation that follows the map unit name on the list.

Survey Results

Q1 In which jurisdiction do you live?

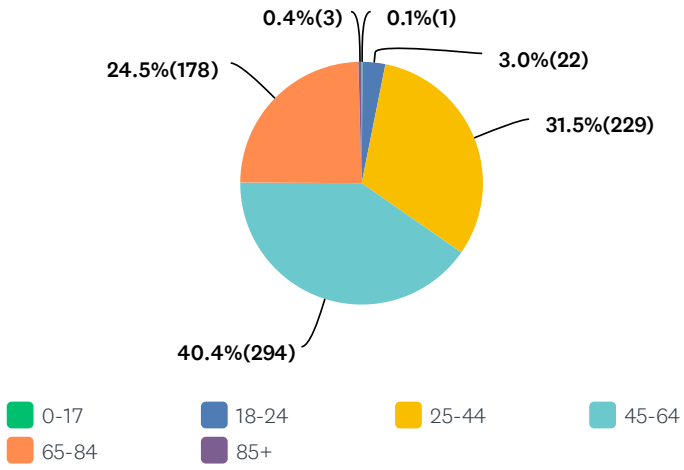
Answered: 719 Skipped: 10



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Calvin Township	2.9%	21
Village of Cassopolis	4.0%	29
City of Dowagiac	9.6%	69
Village of Edwardsburg	2.1%	15
Howard Township	4.3%	31
Jefferson Township	5.8%	42
LaGrange Township	6.5%	47
Village of Marcellus	2.5%	18
Marcellus Township	3.5%	25
Mason Township	1.7%	12
Milton Township	2.5%	18
Newberg Township	3.6%	26
Ontwa Township	5.6%	40
Penn Township	6.4%	46
Pokagon Township	2.2%	16
Porter Township	6.4%	46
Silver Creek Township	14.3%	103
Village of Vandalia	1.0%	7
Volinia Township	1.9%	14
Wayne Township	9.5%	68
I live outside of Cass County	3.6%	26
TOTAL		719

Q2 Please indicate your age range.

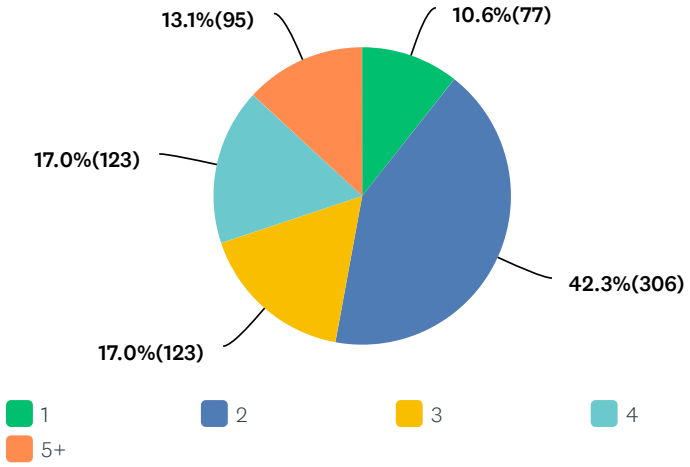
Answered: 727 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0-17	0.1%	1
18-24	3.0%	22
25-44	31.5%	229
45-64	40.4%	294
65-84	24.5%	178
85+	0.4%	3
TOTAL		727

Q3 How many people live in your household?

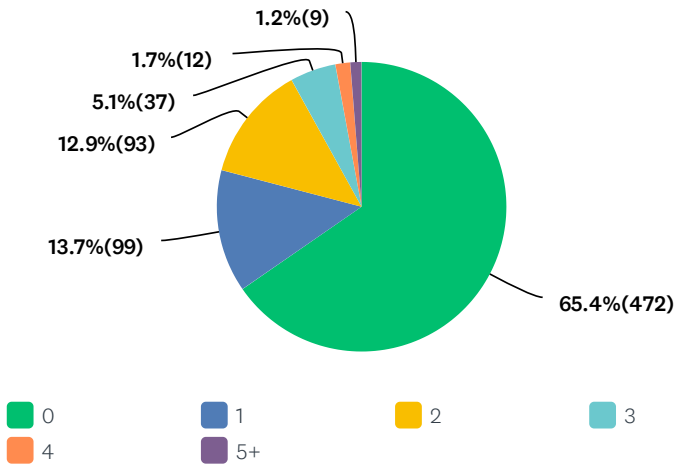
Answered: 724 Skipped: 5



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1	10.6%	77
2	42.3%	306
3	17.0%	123
4	17.0%	123
5+	13.1%	95
TOTAL		724

Q4 How many children under the age of 18 live in your household?

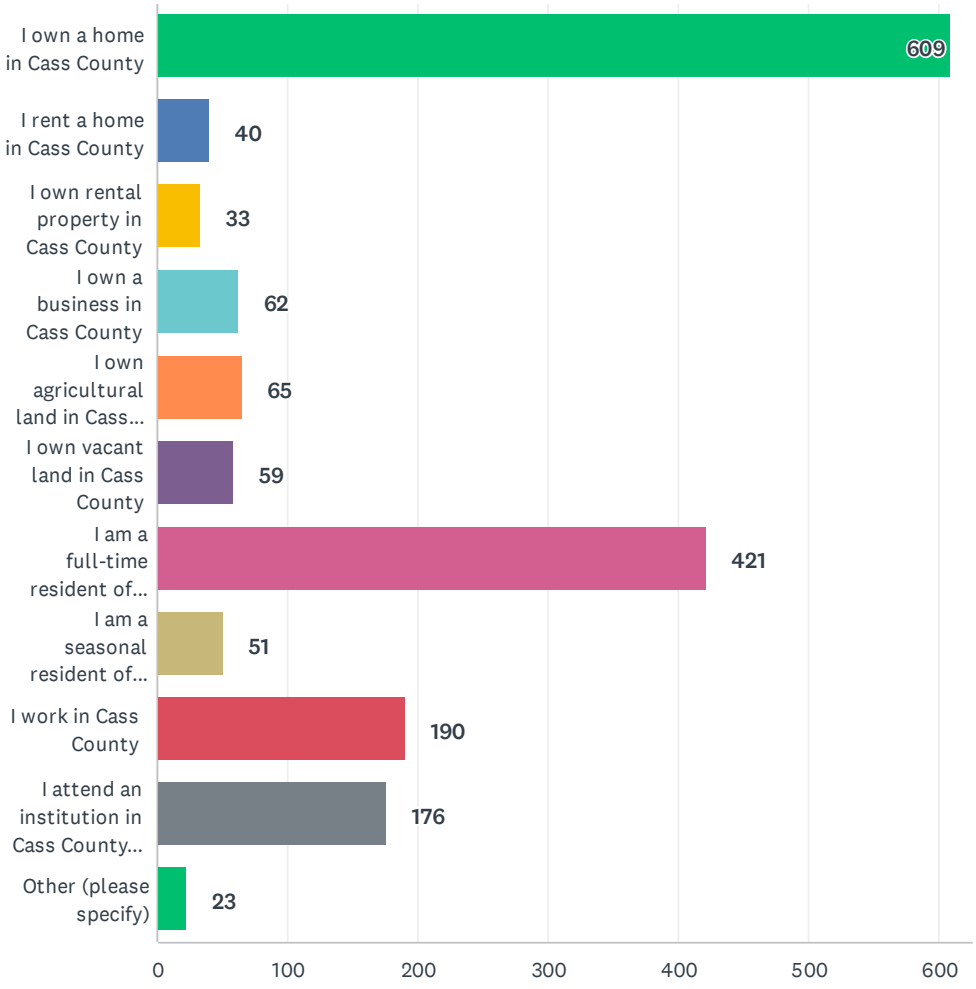
Answered: 722 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0	65.4%	472
1	13.7%	99
2	12.9%	93
3	5.1%	37
4	1.7%	12
5+	1.2%	9
TOTAL		722

Q5 Select all that apply

Answered: 728 Skipped: 1



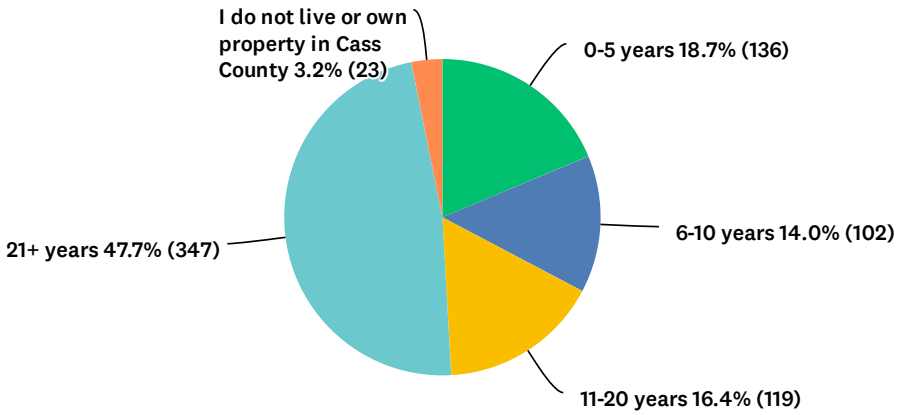
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I own a home in Cass County	83.65%	609
I rent a home in Cass County	5.49%	40
I own rental property in Cass County	4.53%	33
I own a business in Cass County	8.52%	62
I own agricultural land in Cass County	8.93%	65
I own vacant land in Cass County	8.10%	59
I am a full-time resident of Cass County	57.83%	421
I am a seasonal resident of Cass County	7.01%	51
I work in Cass County	26.10%	190
I attend an institution in Cass County (e.g., church, library, school, etc.)	24.18%	176
Other (please specify)	3.16%	23
Total Respondents: 728		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	I own a 2nd home in Cass county on a lake	7/31/2024 10:12 PM
2	I live near Cass Co.	7/29/2024 12:22 PM
3	Board Member Edwardsburg Food Pantry	7/27/2024 6:05 PM
4	own a property in Van Buren near the county line	7/27/2024 5:42 PM
5	Edwardsburg Food Pantry volunteer and Board Member	7/26/2024 3:59 PM
6	Rent an Apartment	7/26/2024 3:58 PM
7	Grew up in Cassopolis and now stay part time there..Daughter and grandson stay at the home full time	7/26/2024 3:37 PM
8	I also work on our farm in cass county.	7/25/2024 10:09 PM
9	I shop at businesses and frequent outdoor locations for exercise.	7/25/2024 9:10 PM
10	attend meetings and provide community service and provide grant funds from my employer to our local not-for-profit	7/25/2024 8:28 AM
11	Library only	7/24/2024 8:21 PM
12	I work in Berrien Springs	7/24/2024 10:16 AM
13	retired from working in Cass County	7/24/2024 8:56 AM
14	We live in Mishawaka.	7/15/2024 6:29 PM
15	Retired	7/12/2024 10:07 AM
16	Previous cass county resident	7/11/2024 11:05 PM
17	I visit	7/11/2024 10:37 PM
18	Work outside Cass County	7/11/2024 1:29 PM
19	Family	7/9/2024 2:37 PM
20	Former life ling resident of Cass County	7/9/2024 1:32 PM
21	54	6/28/2024 4:34 PM

22	Museum	6/27/2024 3:18 PM
23	Live on family farm	6/27/2024 1:07 PM

Q6 How long have you lived or owned property in Cass County?

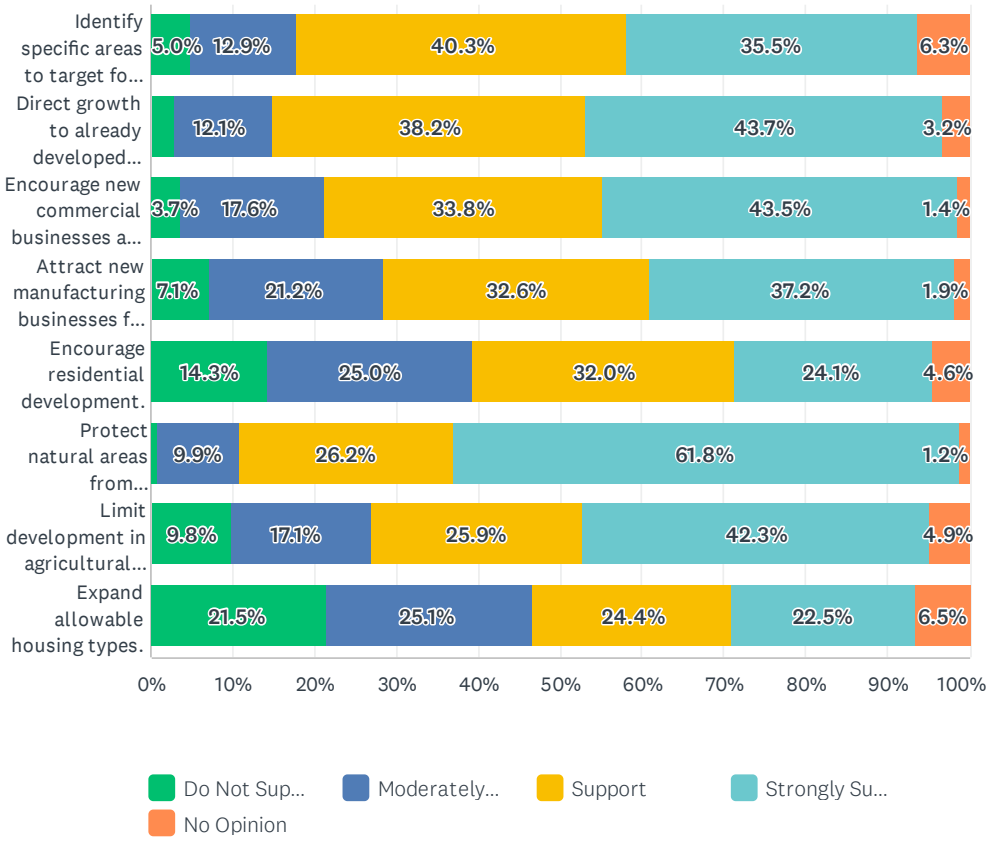
Answered: 727 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0-5 years	18.7%	136
6-10 years	14.0%	102
11-20 years	16.4%	119
21+ years	47.7%	347
I do not live or own property in Cass County	3.2%	23
TOTAL		727

Q7 Please indicate your level of support for the following directions for new development in Cass County.

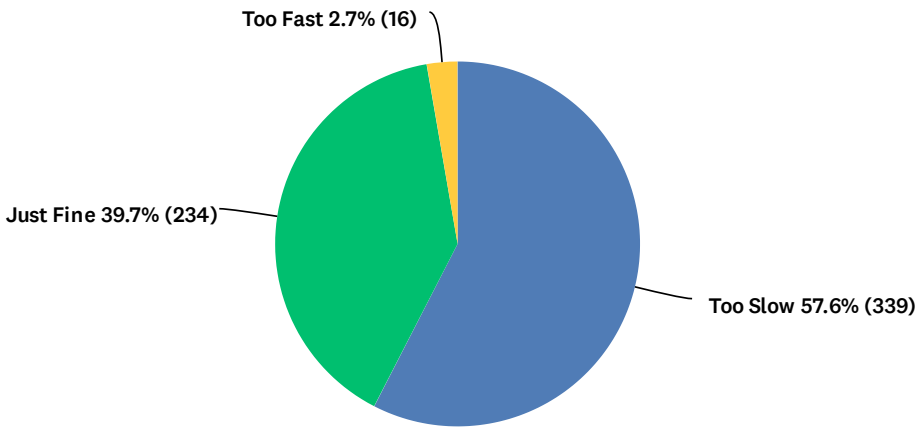
Answered: 596 Skipped: 133



	DO NOT SUPPORT	MODERATELY SUPPORT	SUPPORT	STRONGLY SUPPORT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Identify specific areas to target for growth.	5.0% 29	12.9% 75	40.3% 235	35.5% 207	6.3% 37	583	3.14
Direct growth to already developed areas.	2.9% 17	12.1% 72	38.2% 227	43.7% 260	3.2% 19	595	3.27
Encourage new commercial businesses and services.	3.7% 22	17.6% 104	33.8% 200	43.5% 257	1.4% 8	591	3.19
Attract new manufacturing businesses for jobs.	7.1% 42	21.2% 125	32.6% 192	37.2% 219	1.9% 11	589	3.02
Encourage residential development.	14.3% 85	25.0% 148	32.0% 190	24.1% 143	4.6% 27	593	2.69
Protect natural areas from development.	0.8% 5	9.9% 59	26.2% 156	61.8% 368	1.2% 7	595	3.51
Limit development in agricultural areas.	9.8% 58	17.1% 101	25.9% 153	42.3% 250	4.9% 29	591	3.06
Expand allowable housing types.	21.5% 126	25.1% 147	24.4% 143	22.5% 132	6.5% 38	586	2.51

Q8 How would you describe the current rate of economic development in Cass County?

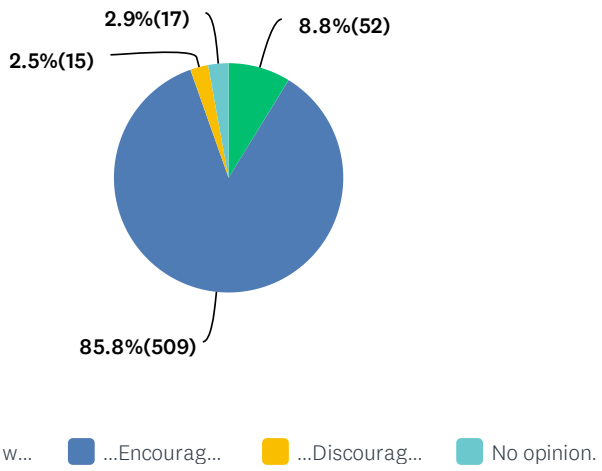
Answered: 589 Skipped: 140



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Too Slow	57.6%	339
Just Fine	39.7%	234
Too Fast	2.7%	16
TOTAL		589

Q9 How do you feel generally about economic development in Cass County? ("Economic Development should be...")

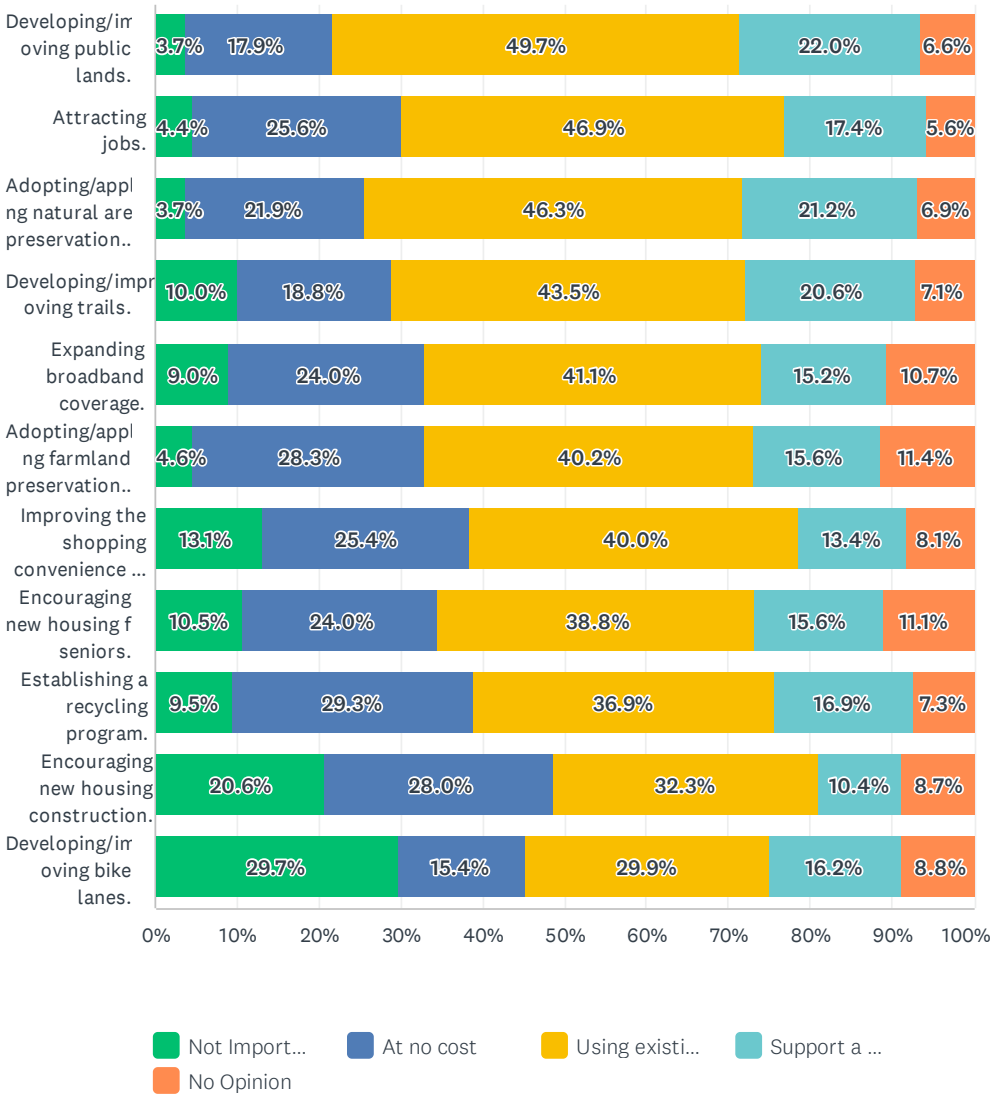
Answered: 593 Skipped: 136



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
...Allowed with as few restrictions as possible.	8.8%	52
...Encouraged in planned areas.	85.8%	509
...Discouraged.	2.5%	15
No opinion.	2.9%	17
TOTAL		593

Q10 How do you feel the following efforts should be supported by the County over the next 5 years?

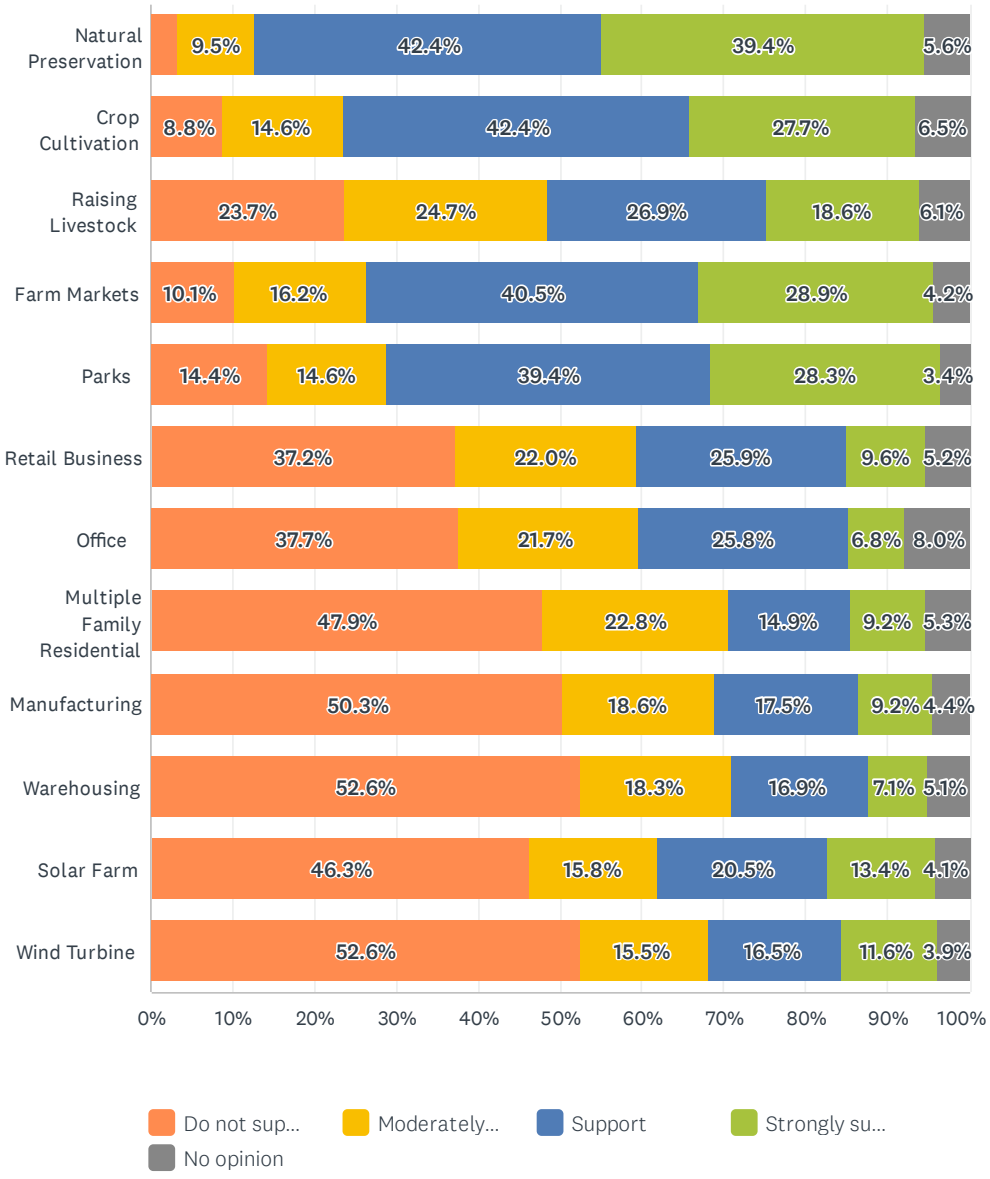
Answered: 594 Skipped: 135



	NOT IMPORTANT/DO NOT SUPPORT	AT NO COST	USING EXISTING FUNDS	SUPPORT A MILLAGE	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Developing/improving public lands.	3.7% 22	17.9% 105	49.7% 292	22.0% 129	6.6% 39	587	2.96
Attracting jobs.	4.4% 26	25.6% 150	46.9% 275	17.4% 102	5.6% 33	586	2.82
Adopting/applying natural area preservation techniques.	3.7% 22	21.9% 129	46.3% 273	21.2% 125	6.9% 41	590	2.91
Developing/improving trails.	10.0% 59	18.8% 111	43.5% 257	20.6% 122	7.1% 42	591	2.81
Expanding broadband coverage.	9.0% 53	24.0% 142	41.1% 243	15.2% 90	10.7% 63	591	2.70
Adopting/applying farmland preservation techniques.	4.6% 27	28.3% 167	40.2% 237	15.6% 92	11.4% 67	590	2.75
Improving the shopping convenience for everyday items.	13.1% 77	25.4% 150	40.0% 236	13.4% 79	8.1% 48	590	2.58
Encouraging new housing for seniors.	10.5% 62	24.0% 141	38.8% 228	15.6% 92	11.1% 65	588	2.67
Establishing a recycling program.	9.5% 56	29.3% 173	36.9% 218	16.9% 100	7.3% 43	590	2.66
Encouraging new housing construction.	20.6% 121	28.0% 164	32.3% 189	10.4% 61	8.7% 51	586	2.36
Developing/improving bike lanes.	29.7% 176	15.4% 91	29.9% 177	16.2% 96	8.8% 52	592	2.36

Q11 Would you approve of your neighbor using their land for the following purposes?

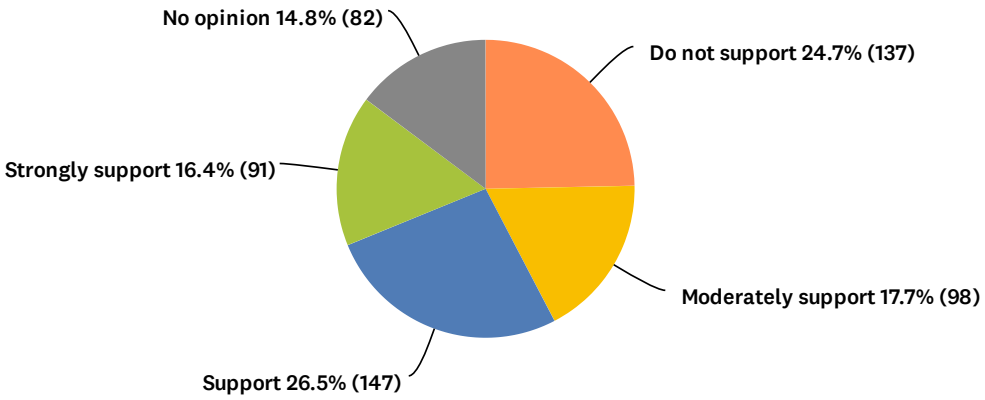
Answered: 593 Skipped: 136



	DO NOT SUPPORT	MODERATELY SUPPORT	SUPPORT	STRONGLY SUPPORT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Natural Preservation	3.2% 19	9.5% 56	42.4% 251	39.4% 233	5.6% 33	592	3.35
Crop Cultivation	8.8% 52	14.6% 86	42.4% 250	27.7% 163	6.5% 38	589	3.08
Raising Livestock	23.7% 140	24.7% 146	26.9% 159	18.6% 110	6.1% 36	591	2.59
Farm Markets	10.1% 60	16.2% 96	40.5% 240	28.9% 171	4.2% 25	592	3.01
Parks	14.4% 85	14.6% 86	39.4% 233	28.3% 167	3.4% 20	591	2.92
Retail Business	37.2% 220	22.0% 130	25.9% 153	9.6% 57	5.2% 31	591	2.24
Office	37.7% 222	21.7% 128	25.8% 152	6.8% 40	8.0% 47	589	2.26
Multiple Family Residential	47.9% 282	22.8% 134	14.9% 88	9.2% 54	5.3% 31	589	2.01
Manufacturing	50.3% 297	18.6% 110	17.5% 103	9.2% 54	4.4% 26	590	1.99
Warehousing	52.6% 311	18.3% 108	16.9% 100	7.1% 42	5.1% 30	591	1.94
Solar Farm	46.3% 273	15.8% 93	20.5% 121	13.4% 79	4.1% 24	590	2.13
Wind Turbine	52.6% 309	15.5% 91	16.5% 97	11.6% 68	3.9% 23	588	1.99

Q12 Please rate your support for the following housing options: Houses - 1 per 40 acres

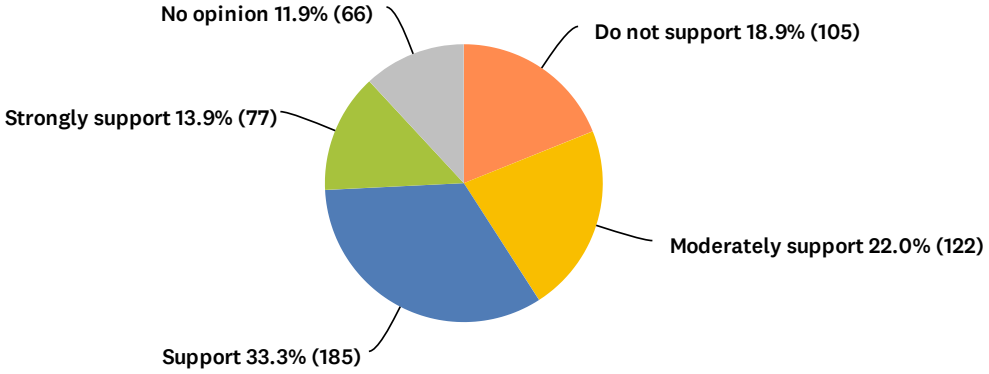
Answered: 555 Skipped: 174



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Do not support	24.7%	137
Moderately support	17.7%	98
Support	26.5%	147
Strongly support	16.4%	91
No opinion	14.8%	82
TOTAL		555

Q13 Please rate your support for the following housing options: Houses - 1 per 10 acres

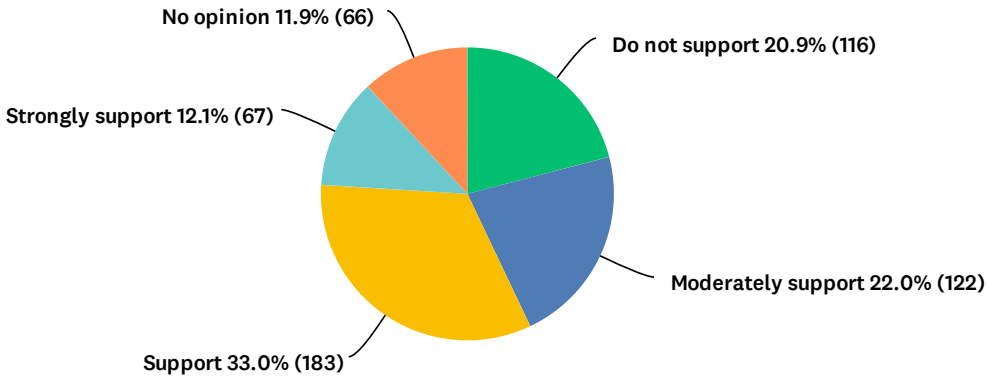
Answered: 555 Skipped: 174



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Do not support	18.9%	105
Moderately support	22.0%	122
Support	33.3%	185
Strongly support	13.9%	77
No opinion	11.9%	66
TOTAL		555

Q14 Please rate your support for the following housing options: Houses - 1 per 10 acres, but on 5 acre lots to preserve farmland

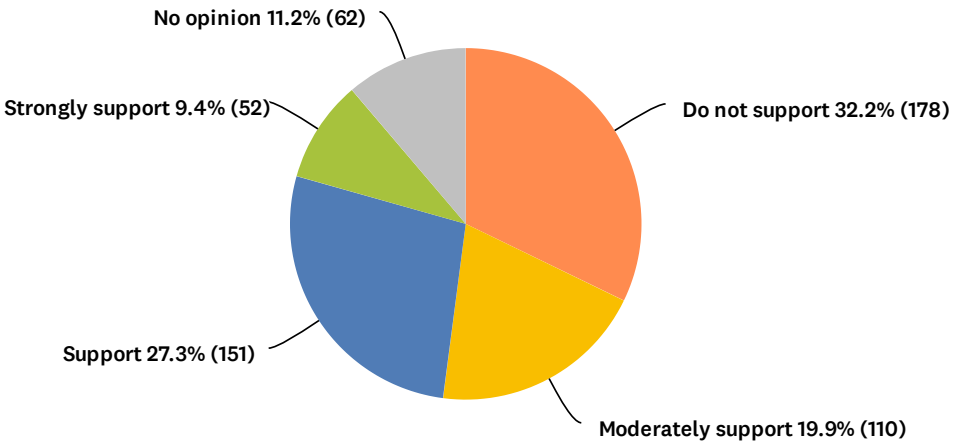
Answered: 554 Skipped: 175



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Do not support	20.9%	116
Moderately support	22.0%	122
Support	33.0%	183
Strongly support	12.1%	67
No opinion	11.9%	66
TOTAL		554

Q15 Please rate your support for the following housing options: Houses - 1 per 5 acres

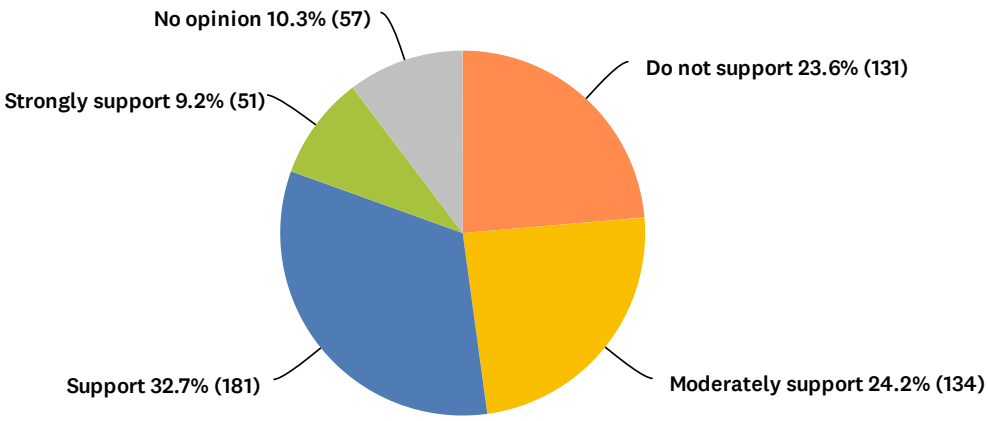
Answered: 553 Skipped: 176



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Do not support	32.2%	178
Moderately support	19.9%	110
Support	27.3%	151
Strongly support	9.4%	52
No opinion	11.2%	62
TOTAL		553

Q16 Please rate your support for the following housing options: Houses - 1 per 2 acres

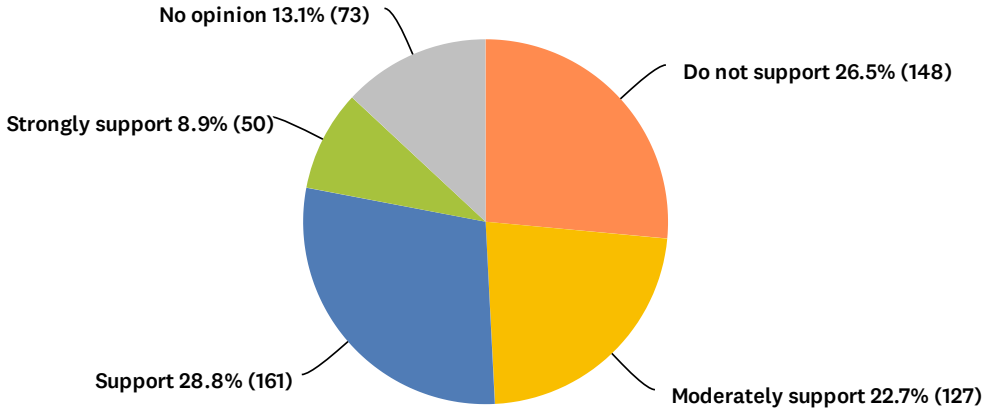
Answered: 554 Skipped: 175



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Do not support	23.6%	131
Moderately support	24.2%	134
Support	32.7%	181
Strongly support	9.2%	51
No opinion	10.3%	57
TOTAL		554

Q17 Please rate your support for the following housing options: Houses - 1 per 2 acres, but on 1 acre lots to preserve farmland

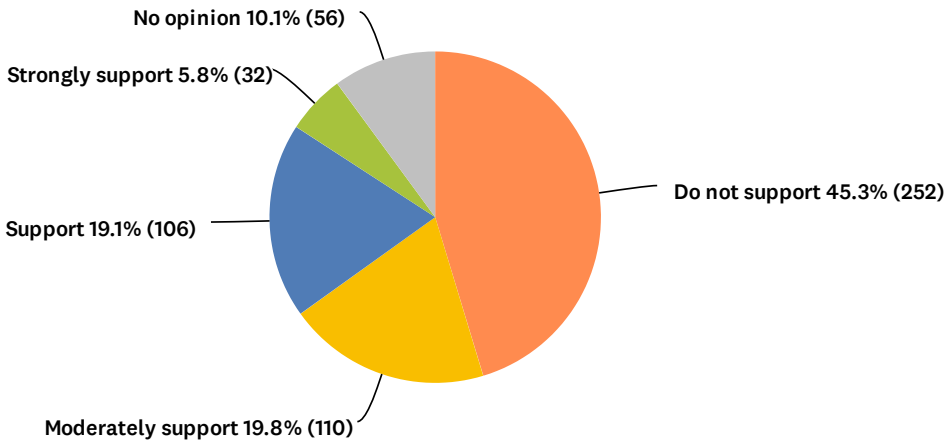
Answered: 559 Skipped: 170



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Do not support	26.5%	148
Moderately support	22.7%	127
Support	28.8%	161
Strongly support	8.9%	50
No opinion	13.1%	73
TOTAL		559

Q18 Please rate your support for the following housing options: Houses - 1 (or more) per acre

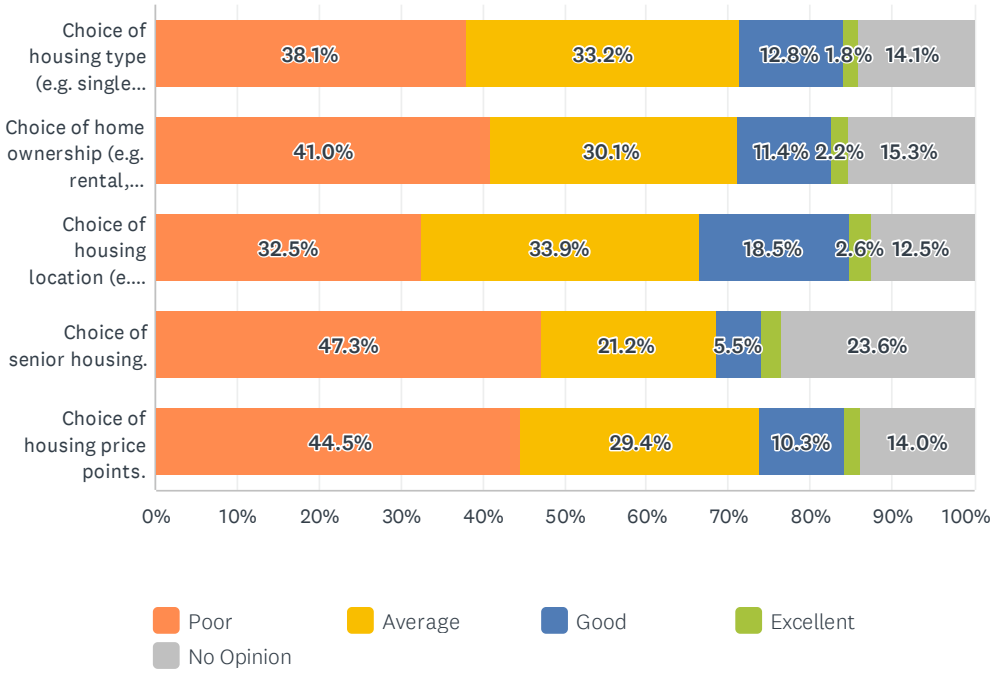
Answered: 556 Skipped: 173



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Do not support	45.3%	252
Moderately support	19.8%	110
Support	19.1%	106
Strongly support	5.8%	32
No opinion	10.1%	56
TOTAL		556

Q19 Please rate the availability of housing choice in Cass County.

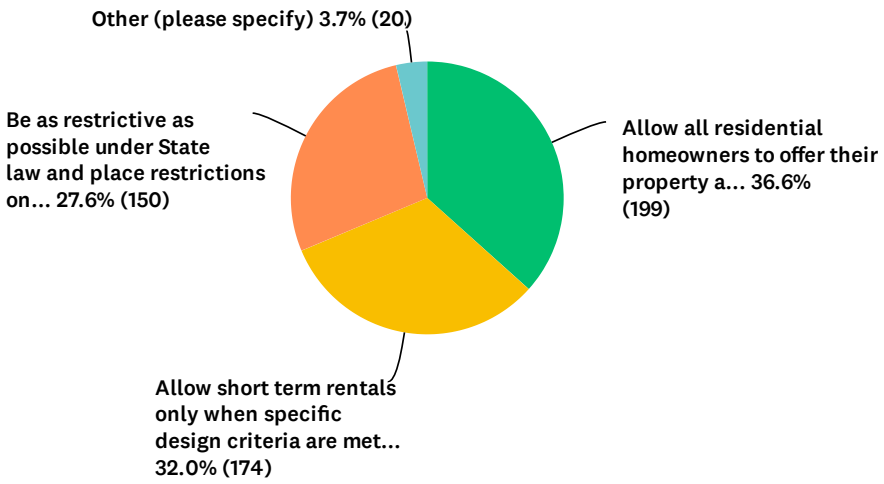
Answered: 548 Skipped: 181



	POOR	AVERAGE	GOOD	EXCELLENT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Choice of housing type (e.g. single family, two-family, attached single family, multi-family).	38.1% 209	33.2% 182	12.8% 70	1.8% 10	14.1% 77	548	1.75
Choice of home ownership (e.g. rental, condominium).	41.0% 223	30.1% 164	11.4% 62	2.2% 12	15.3% 83	544	1.70
Choice of housing location (e.g. rural, neighborhood, downtown).	32.5% 176	33.9% 184	18.5% 100	2.6% 14	12.5% 68	542	1.90
Choice of senior housing.	47.3% 257	21.2% 115	5.5% 30	2.4% 13	23.6% 128	543	1.52
Choice of housing price points.	44.5% 242	29.4% 160	10.3% 56	1.8% 10	14.0% 76	544	1.65

Q20 When it comes to short term rentals (e.g., Airbnb, vacation rentals, VRBO, etc.), communities in the County should:

Answered: 543 Skipped: 186



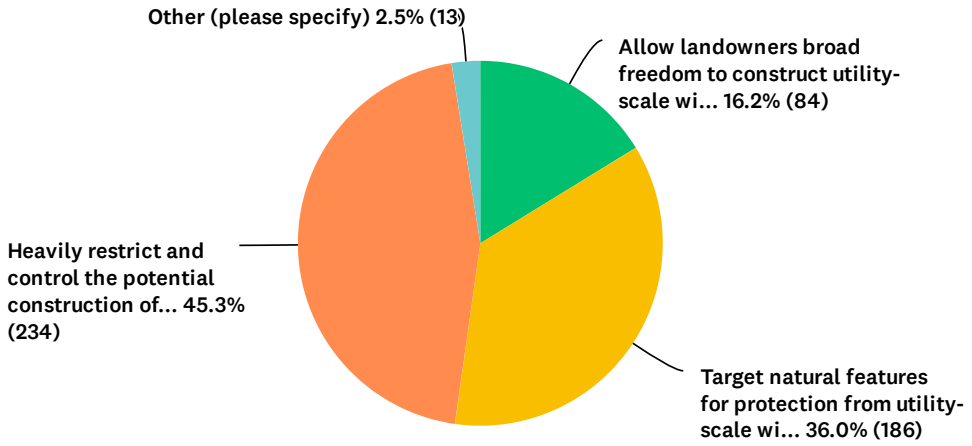
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Allow all residential homeowners to offer their property as a short-term rental as they see fit.	36.6%	199
Allow short term rentals only when specific design criteria are met (such as size or distance from neighbors).	32.0%	174
Be as restrictive as possible under State law and place restrictions on operating a short-term rental.	27.6%	150
Other (please specify)	3.7%	20
TOTAL		543

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	People who are using a home as a short term rental should pay much higher property tax than people who are actually living in their homes	7/29/2024 1:49 PM
2	Regulate for safety and annoyance issues, surtax on rental income	7/29/2024 10:50 AM
3	Community set rules	7/27/2024 9:07 PM
4	only additional/accessory spaces to ensure on-site management	7/27/2024 5:46 PM
5	This should be the landowners choice.	7/26/2024 3:48 PM
6	I do not know enough to give an educated response.	7/26/2024 11:33 AM
7	Allow homeowners to do what they see fit with their homes	7/25/2024 11:25 AM
8	increase tax on rentals if they are rented out more than 40% of the year	7/25/2024 9:31 AM
9	Local option	7/25/2024 8:34 AM
10	Allow but find a way to discourage multiple being owned by the same person/company. Especially if they don't even live in the area. Too many vacation only rentals removed housing and drives up cost.	7/25/2024 8:21 AM
11	Some safety and occupancy requirements and registration of the rental with the county. People should be able to rent out their home if they want without too many restrictions.	7/25/2024 8:05 AM

12	Allow short term rentals when specific criteria are met and each rental that is short-term (1-60 days) is taxed according to length of visit. Higher taxes for shorter term rentals, etc.	7/22/2024 1:42 PM
13	As Indiana residents this doesn't matter to us.	7/15/2024 6:32 PM
14	No opinion	7/9/2024 10:53 AM
15	Don't care	7/9/2024 8:39 AM
16	ZONE should have an impact on restrictions. Rentals in a Residential zone have greater impact on neighbors than might rentals in an Ag or Ag-Res zone. *MANY considerations to discuss!	7/8/2024 5:14 PM
17	Drugs in neighborhoods renting them properties should be very selective who you rent to. People who have a high record of drugs and alcohol problems should not be allowed to rent them. It creates problems and havoc in our communities.	7/5/2024 8:22 PM
18	Township restrictions	6/27/2024 3:36 PM
19	I support rentals as long as the tenants and landlords do not infringe on neighboring person's peace and that landlords follow state codes.	6/14/2024 11:41 AM
20	Restrictions along with neighbor agreements	6/13/2024 3:38 PM

Q21 When it comes to utility-scale wind energy (e.g., large wind turbine farms), should communities in the County:

Answered: 517 Skipped: 212



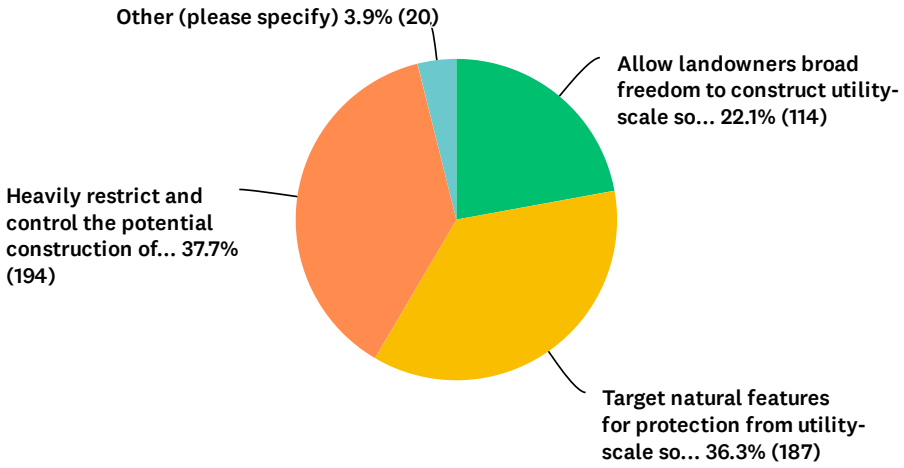
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Allow landowners broad freedom to construct utility-scale wind energy facilities on their property.	16.2%	84
Target natural features for protection from utility-scale wind energy facilities, but generally allow them in other areas.	36.0%	186
Heavily restrict and control the potential construction of utility-scale wind energy facilities.	45.3%	234
Other (please specify)	2.5%	13
TOTAL		517

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Do not allow	7/27/2024 1:02 AM
2	Don’t allow at all	7/25/2024 10:44 PM
3	Ban all utility-scale wind energy in county	7/25/2024 4:58 PM
4	None	7/25/2024 8:21 AM
5	Don't allow.	7/21/2024 8:04 AM
6	Not a good odea	7/11/2024 4:53 PM
7	No	7/11/2024 7:13 AM
8	Ban wind turbines. They have a net negative on the environment based on my research.	7/10/2024 7:29 PM
9	None period!	7/9/2024 4:29 PM
10	IMPACT on neighboring properties, regardless of zone, has been an issue across the country. County should be allowed to prohibit wind farms or large scale wind turbines.	7/8/2024 5:18 PM
11	Should not allow wind turbines on private properties it should be the homeowners choice not somebody just taking over somebody’s land	7/5/2024 8:25 PM
12	large scale projects should be limited to industrial areas with regs in place for sight, sound and	6/28/2024 11:37 AM

	environmental issues. Single installations should be allowed in residential with height restrictions and with a minimal land requirement for the height of said wind turbine l	
13	Township Ordinances	6/27/2024 3:43 PM

Q22 When it comes to utility-scale solar energy (e.g., large solar panel farms), should communities in the County:

Answered: 515 Skipped: 214



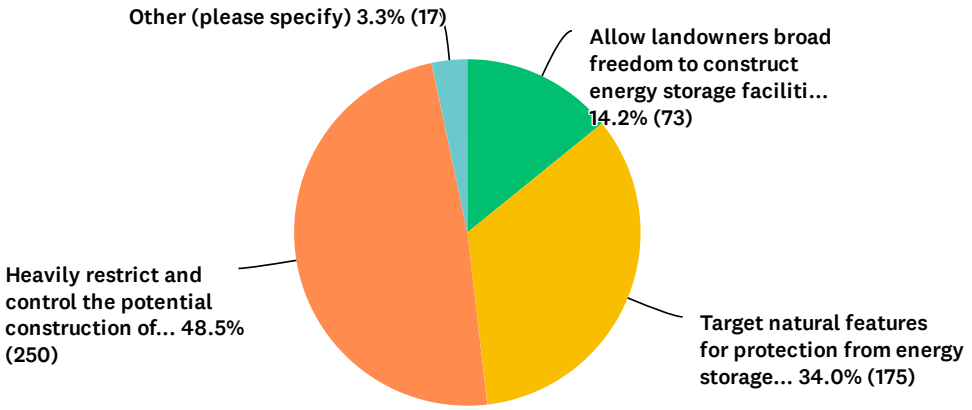
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Allow landowners broad freedom to construct utility-scale solar energy facilities on their property.	22.1%	114
Target natural features for protection from utility-scale solar energy facilities, but generally allow them in other areas.	36.3%	187
Heavily restrict and control the potential construction of utility-scale solar energy facilities.	37.7%	194
Other (please specify)	3.9%	20
TOTAL		515

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Na	7/29/2024 9:09 PM
2	Put panels on business rooftops	7/29/2024 2:52 PM
3	This should be the land owners choice	7/26/2024 3:51 PM
4	Don’t allow at all	7/25/2024 10:44 PM
5	I think solar panels are stupid and just being pushed by the government and there’s no feasible way to scale this. Fossil fuels are more efficient and better for the environment too.	7/25/2024 10:21 PM
6	Do not allow. Period.	7/25/2024 7:50 PM
7	Ban all utility-scale solar energy in county	7/25/2024 4:58 PM
8	No large solar farms no-what-so-ever. Furnish solar panels on large flat roof buildings instead.	7/25/2024 8:25 AM
9	None allowed	7/25/2024 8:21 AM
10	Don't allow	7/21/2024 8:04 AM
11	Not a good idea	7/11/2024 4:53 PM
12	No	7/11/2024 7:13 AM

13	Ban solar farms as they have a net negative on the environment.	7/10/2024 7:29 PM
14	Choose agriculture over large scale solar energy facilities	7/9/2024 9:58 PM
15	Not sure	7/9/2024 6:49 PM
16	None period!	7/9/2024 4:29 PM
17	Not have them. Too much farmland needed for these facilities	7/9/2024 1:06 PM
18	banthem entirely. THEY ARE SOLAR FACTORIES< NOT FARMS. Many factors locally indicate that we would only be contributing to corporate profits (the instal and medium itself, not solar productivity!!)	7/1/2024 12:58 PM
19	thoughts on this are the same as on wind turbines for very large scale projects. But I do believe farms should be able to delegate a portion of their land for solar development with a few regs in place to protect the concerned neighbors as for as sight lines and the types of panels being installed (non toxic are now coming to market) so as not to pollute unintentially if they (the panels) should become cracked or broken. I would love for there to be a program in the future for residences to have the option of installing solar for private use at a much lower cost than is out there now.	6/28/2024 11:37 AM
20	Township Ordinances	6/27/2024 3:43 PM

Q23 When it comes to energy storage facilities (e.g., battery storage facilities), should communities in the County:

Answered: 515 Skipped: 214



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Allow landowners broad freedom to construct energy storage facilities on their property.	14.2%	73
Target natural features for protection from energy storage facilities, but generally allow them in other areas.	34.0%	175
Heavily restrict and control the potential construction of energy storage facilities.	48.5%	250
Other (please specify)	3.3%	17
TOTAL		515

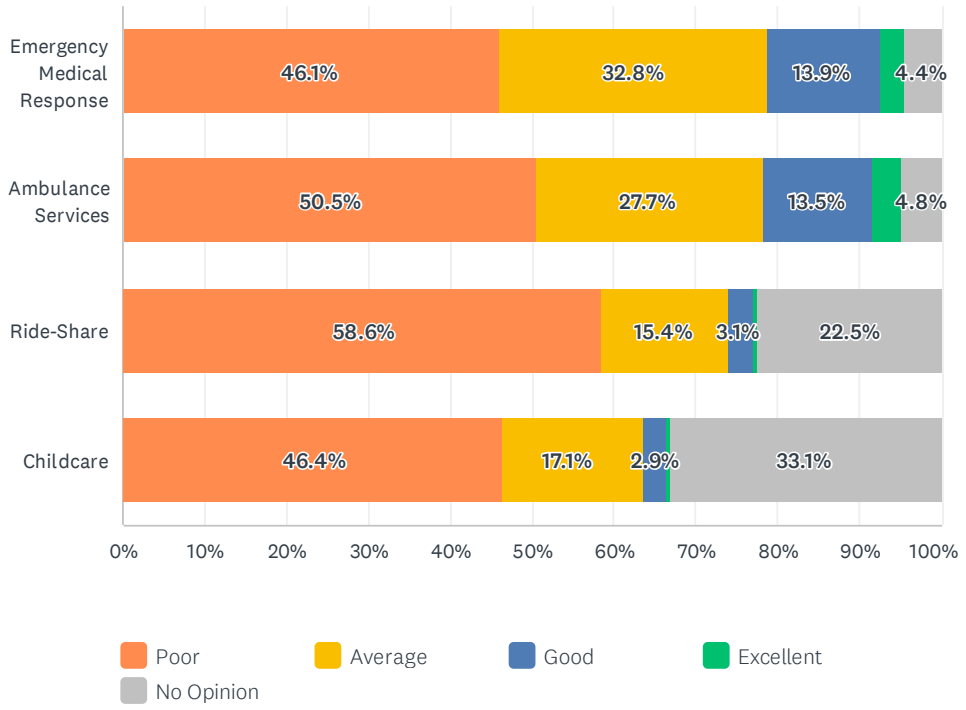
#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Na	7/29/2024 9:09 PM
2	This should be the land owners choice	7/26/2024 3:51 PM
3	Don’t allow at all	7/25/2024 10:44 PM
4	I think solar panels are stupid and just being pushed by the government and there’s no feasible way to scale this. Fossil fuels are more efficient and better for the environment too.	7/25/2024 10:21 PM
5	Do not allow due to hazard potential	7/25/2024 9:54 PM
6	Do not allow. The destruction of farmland due to poisoning the land.	7/25/2024 7:50 PM
7	Battery waste is more harmful to the environment than fossil fuels no battery waste in our county	7/25/2024 1:59 PM
8	Would like to see resarch into solar panel construction over parking lots to limit use of farmland and provide protection from the elements to vehicles/drivers	7/25/2024 9:14 AM
9	None allowed	7/25/2024 8:21 AM
10	Consolidate in specific areas	7/24/2024 11:11 AM
11	Not a good idea	7/11/2024 4:53 PM

Cass County Master Plan 2024

12	No	7/11/2024 7:13 AM
13	Don’t want	7/9/2024 7:04 PM
14	NONE!!	7/9/2024 4:29 PM
15	NONE ENTIRELY	7/1/2024 12:58 PM
16	again, large facilities should be limited to industrial areas.(non farm land) Residential should be allowed storage large enough for personal use only d be allowed as	6/28/2024 11:37 AM
17	Township Ordinances	6/27/2024 3:43 PM

Q24 Please rate the availability of health-related services in your area in Cass County.

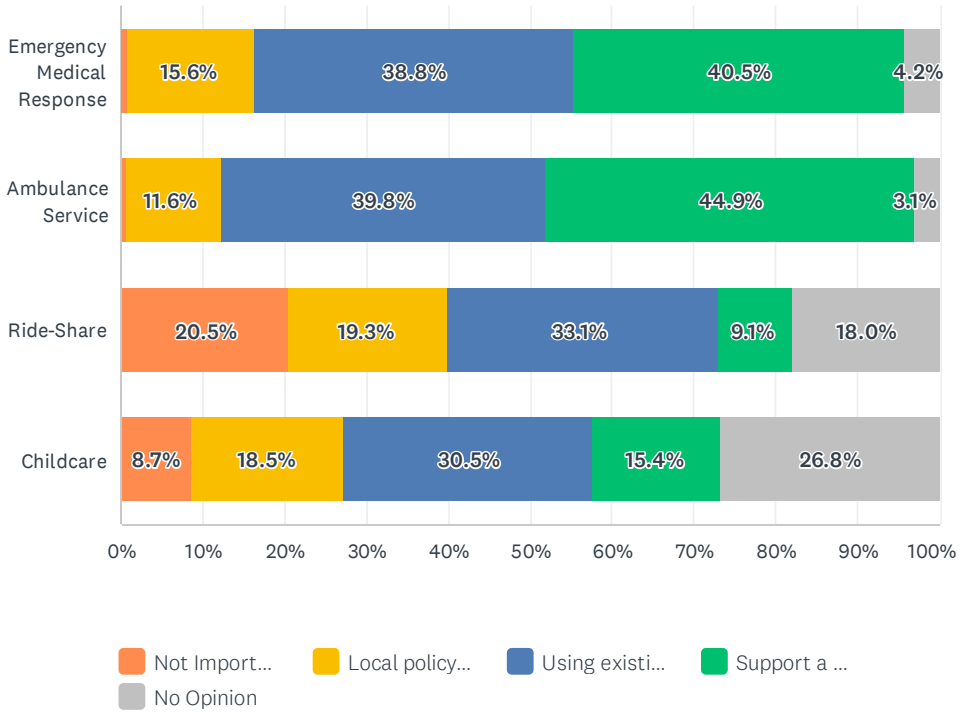
Answered: 519 Skipped: 210



	POOR	AVERAGE	GOOD	EXCELLENT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Emergency Medical Response	46.1% 239	32.8% 170	13.9% 72	2.9% 15	4.4% 23	519	1.72
Ambulance Services	50.5% 262	27.7% 144	13.5% 70	3.5% 18	4.8% 25	519	1.68
Ride-Share	58.6% 304	15.4% 80	3.1% 16	0.4% 2	22.5% 117	519	1.29
Childcare	46.4% 241	17.1% 89	2.9% 15	0.4% 2	33.1% 172	519	1.36

Q25 How do you feel the following improvements to these health-related services should be supported by the County over the next 5 years?

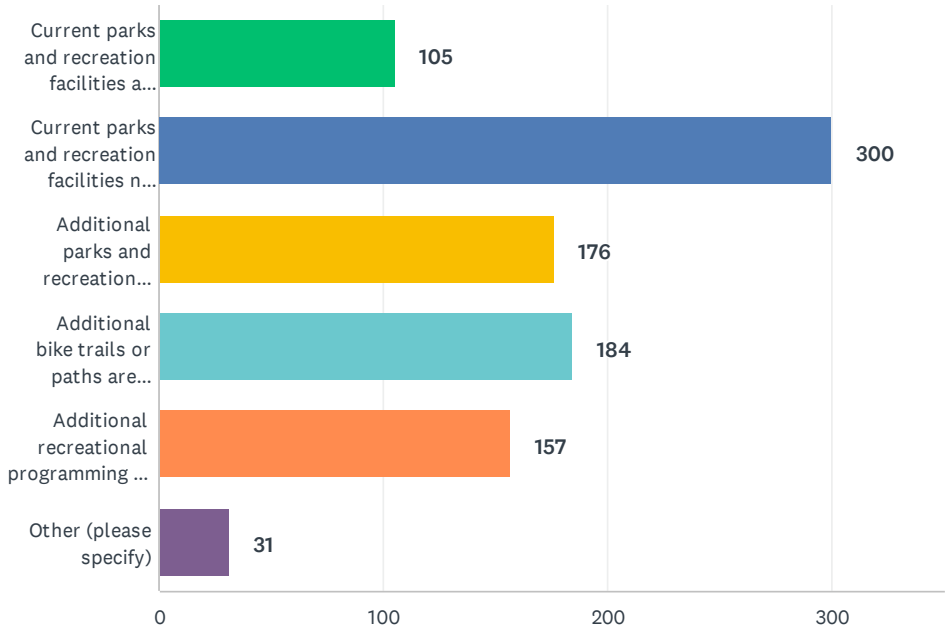
Answered: 520 Skipped: 209



	NOT IMPORTANT/DO NOT SUPPORT	LOCAL POLICY/ZONING SUPPORT.	USING EXISTING FUNDS	SUPPORT A MILLAGE	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Emergency Medical Response	0.8% 4	15.6% 81	38.8% 201	40.5% 210	4.2% 22	518	3.24
Ambulance Service	0.6% 3	11.6% 60	39.8% 206	44.9% 232	3.1% 16	517	3.33
Ride-Share	20.5% 106	19.3% 100	33.1% 171	9.1% 47	18.0% 93	517	2.38
Childcare	8.7% 45	18.5% 96	30.5% 158	15.4% 80	26.8% 139	518	2.72

Q26 Which best describes your opinion? (check all that apply)

Answered: 508 Skipped: 221



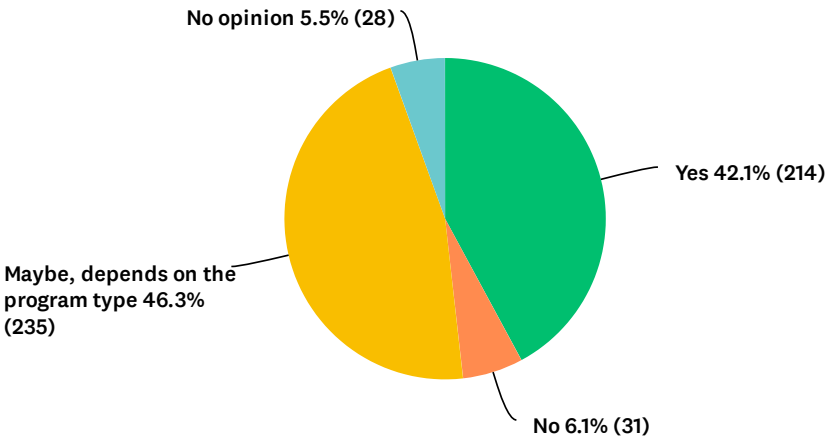
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Current parks and recreation facilities are fine the way they are.	20.67%	105
Current parks and recreation facilities need some upgrades/maintenance.	59.06%	300
Additional parks and recreation facilities are needed.	34.65%	176
Additional bike trails or paths are needed.	36.22%	184
Additional recreational programming is needed.	30.91%	157
Other (please specify)	6.10%	31
Total Respondents: 508		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Housing should be the priority over parks & recreation facilities	9/5/2024 11:04 PM
2	Downtown Dowagiac needs a playground within walking distance of the library.	7/30/2024 5:23 PM
3	Still waiting on swings for laylin park from march	7/29/2024 2:53 PM
4	No opinion since I don't use them	7/29/2024 12:20 PM
5	Should create a bike path connecting Sister Lakes, this is encourage growth and recreational use and make it a destinations through out Michigan	7/29/2024 12:11 PM
6	Splash pad is needed	7/27/2024 2:30 PM
7	If your going to put in bike paths then it should be along roads already used by bikers and they	7/26/2024 3:52 PM

	should be ticketed if they are in the road instead of on the bike path.	
8	It would be nice to have a year round pool.	7/26/2024 11:35 AM
9	Need bird watching ares	7/26/2024 5:15 AM
10	Local splash pad would be nice, maintain parks that we have for safety, russom park playground is being neglected	7/25/2024 10:49 AM
11	Please support and build pickleball courts. Cass County is behind the other counties	7/25/2024 9:34 AM
12	Parks Director is a Great Guy! He deserves a high Christmas Bonus!	7/24/2024 11:25 PM
13	After school programs	7/22/2024 9:02 AM
14	Why does the dark sky park have such limited availability?	7/15/2024 6:34 PM
15	More nights for dark sky viewing!	7/11/2024 10:03 PM
16	International disc golf course	7/10/2024 8:04 PM
17	Need paths to walk in Sister Lakes	7/9/2024 11:09 PM
18	I don’t use the parks	7/9/2024 4:29 PM
19	No significant opinion	7/8/2024 10:47 PM
20	Mountain bike trails with lift service ie great add to place like swiss valley	7/8/2024 8:08 PM
21	Parks in Dowagiac are generally good, especially those near the water, but we could use more/better ones with equipment/activities for kids (not a splash pad, though)	7/8/2024 6:35 PM
22	Somewhere to ride atv off road	7/8/2024 6:14 PM
23	It doesn't matter what you do, people tend to ruin everything good.	7/8/2024 2:46 PM
24	Building parks for children in the neighboring community. There should be more policing and cameras put in them parks to keep down the havoc and drug activity and vandalism. I support parks but people vandalize everything you put money into there needs to be a change and protection for the children to enjoy their selves in a public park	7/5/2024 8:27 PM
25	When we moved here, a rural area, we were astouded at the excess of parks... & that townships supported these seldom used parks. Has anyone ever tracked how little usage per dollar each of them gets?????	7/1/2024 12:59 PM
26	I live near Pepper martin park which is great park and resource for those who love baseball but there is a lack of thing/activities for anything else. Would love to see other ideas for other outdoor activities (thinking older kids) the play equipment just needs up dated/maintained for the younger kids. Would like to see something geared towards older kids in the area without having to go down to Niles of miles from home	6/28/2024 11:43 AM
27	Why have a dark sky park if it is rarely open to stargaze?	6/27/2024 10:58 PM
28	Open Diamond lake to year round residents	6/27/2024 1:44 PM
29	Community swimming pool that can be used when it is no longer hot summer.	6/27/2024 12:14 PM
30	Current parks need to be supported and maintanied. Burling's is a new one on Dowagiac, and it's not been mowed in weeks..	6/27/2024 11:54 AM
31	With the Sheriff Dept. so close, a shooting range where public can pay to go as well as one where officers can go to train would be utilized very much.	6/13/2024 4:23 PM

Q27 Do you think communities in the County should actively pursue prime farmland preservation policies and programs?

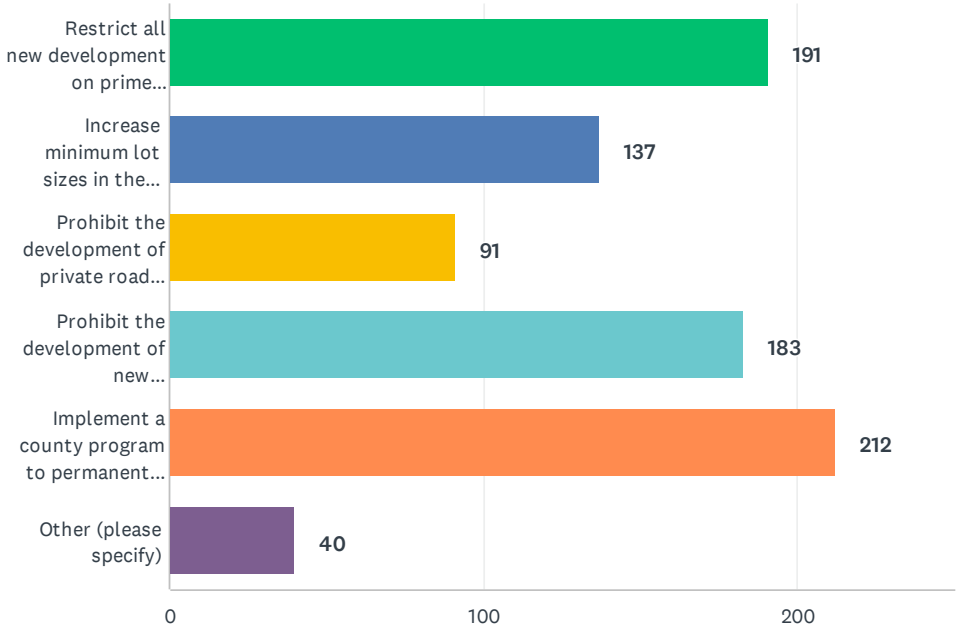
Answered: 508 Skipped: 221



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	42.1%	214
No	6.1%	31
Maybe, depends on the program type	46.3%	235
No opinion	5.5%	28
TOTAL		508

Q28 Which programs or policies would you support for farmland preservation? (check all that apply)

Answered: 463 Skipped: 266



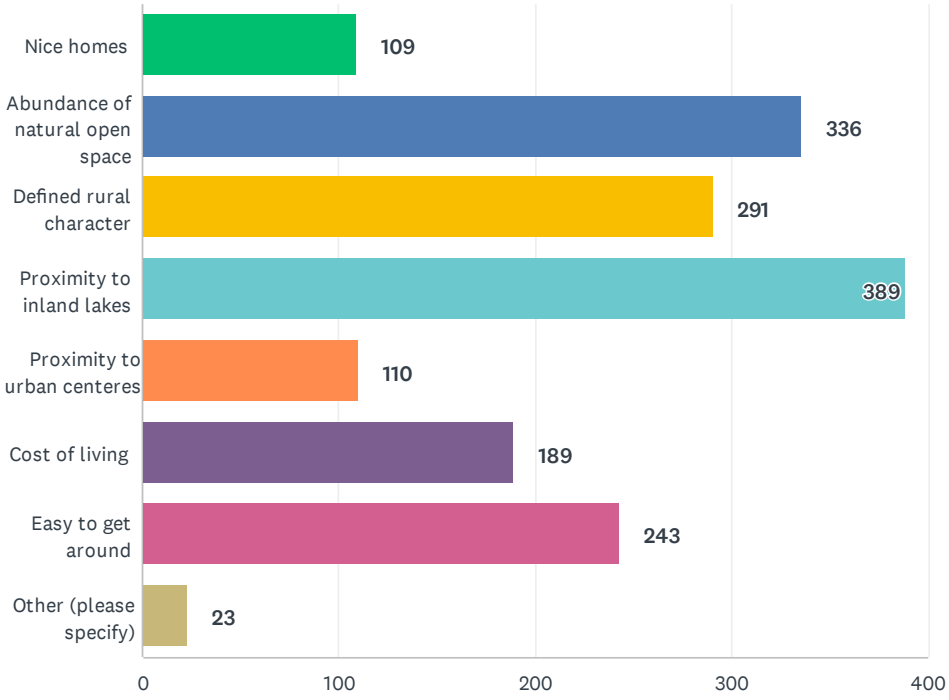
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Restrict all new development on prime farmland areas (except development necessary for agricultural businesses).	41%	191
Increase minimum lot sizes in the agricultural zoning district to reduce lot splits.	30%	137
Prohibit the development of private roads in agricultural areas.	20%	91
Prohibit the development of new neighborhood developments in agricultural and rural residential districts.	40%	183
Implement a county program to permanently preserve active farmland in Cass County.	46%	212
Other (please specify)	9%	40
Total Respondents: 463		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	We are top heavy in active farmland. There needs to be increased housing developed within areas currently zoned agricultural.	9/5/2024 11:08 PM
2	STOP ALLOWING FACTORY FARMING SPECIFICALLY CHICKENS	8/2/2024 9:59 AM
3	I am not knowledgeable enough to respond to this	7/30/2024 8:27 AM
4	None of the above	7/29/2024 10:47 AM
5	All depends on the individual proposals	7/28/2024 10:27 PM
6	This should be the land owners choice	7/26/2024 3:54 PM

7	Conserve and preserve farmland and support farmers.	7/26/2024 11:36 AM
8	There should be no preservation of farmland	7/25/2024 8:19 PM
9	I support preserving farmland that is currently being used but do not have the knowledge on the best way to continue this	7/25/2024 10:50 AM
10	None!	7/25/2024 8:12 AM
11	Need more info	7/25/2024 1:33 AM
12	None	7/23/2024 10:55 AM
13	Hard to support ag preservation when they are putting smelly pot farms next to neighborhoods.	7/23/2024 8:00 AM
14	I don’t understand enough of the issue	7/22/2024 10:15 AM
15	Eliminate the pot farms	7/22/2024 9:04 AM
16	Do not support any of the above.	7/18/2024 5:34 PM
17	Master Plan Shows Future Growth	7/16/2024 12:43 PM
18	Again, we live in Indiana.	7/15/2024 6:35 PM
19	Look at each proposal.	7/11/2024 1:52 PM
20	Their property to use as they want	7/9/2024 7:14 PM
21	Not sure	7/9/2024 6:51 PM
22	Rehabilitate vacant and rundown properties, develop existing residential areas	7/9/2024 5:12 PM
23	We need to preserve farmland, but I do not have an informed opinion as to how the county should approach that.	7/9/2024 2:34 PM
24	No opinion,	7/9/2024 10:58 AM
25	Encourage personal food growth, restrict corn/soy growth	7/8/2024 7:35 PM
26	FUTURE LAND USE PLANS are critical to informing development decisions!	7/8/2024 5:19 PM
27	Don’t care	7/6/2024 4:45 PM
28	None	7/6/2024 12:32 AM
29	Building apartment complexes and duplexes opens up a lot of problems due to the fact of the drug problem we have in Cass County. The sheriffs department does not support us as it is.	7/5/2024 8:28 PM
30	I think we should protect farmland, but I am not sure what the best methods are	7/2/2024 1:07 PM
31	None	7/1/2024 12:03 PM
32	don't support	7/1/2024 10:56 AM
33	None	7/1/2024 8:42 AM
34	I for one am very tired of seeing large tracts of land being it farm field or wooded areas torn apart and ripped under for subdivisions. So that being said, I would need lots more information on the above listed categories to form a better opinion as to what should and should not be allowed rural farmland communities	6/28/2024 11:52 AM
35	None of the above	6/27/2024 8:55 PM
36	No opinion	6/27/2024 1:28 PM
37	Do not support preserving farmland via County restrictions	6/27/2024 11:28 AM
38	None	6/27/2024 8:59 AM
39	I need to know more	6/19/2024 10:41 AM
40	Farmland is precious and should be treated as such. Bringing features to Cass County is also important, but I don’t think we should do it at the expense of our farmland or other natural areas worth protecting.	6/18/2024 9:37 PM

Q29 What are some positive aspects of living in Cass County? (Select all that apply.)

Answered: 493 Skipped: 236



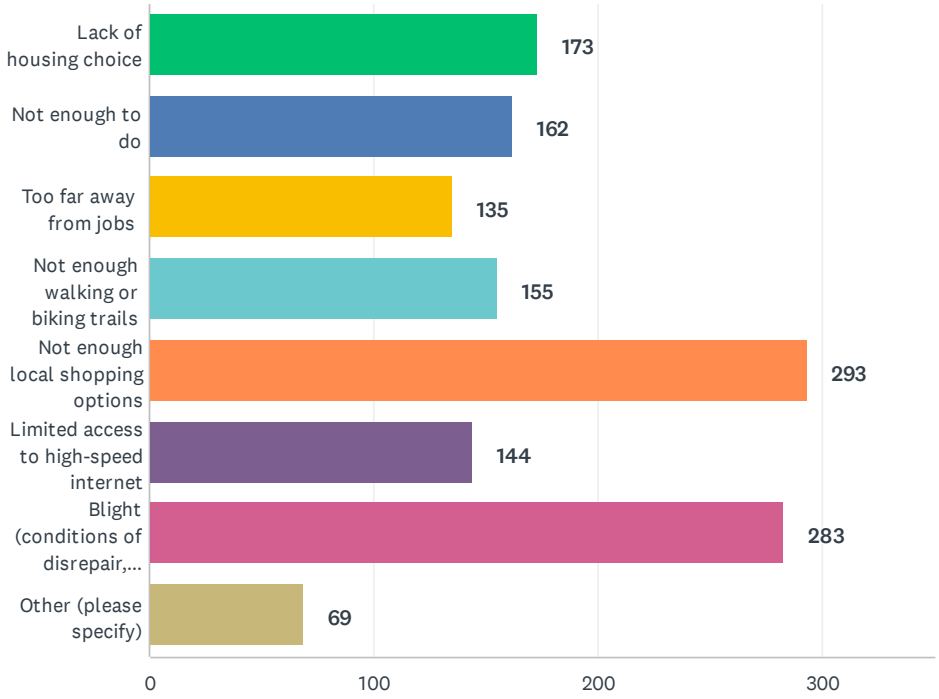
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Nice homes	22.11%	109
Abundance of natural open space	68.15%	336
Defined rural character	59.03%	291
Proximity to inland lakes	78.90%	389
Proximity to urban centeres	22.31%	110
Cost of living	38.34%	189
Easy to get around	49.29%	243
Other (please specify)	4.67%	23
Total Respondents: 493		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Lakes have decreased public access for swimming, without a car, it is hard to get around, there is no Uber/Lyft, there are too many rental houses operated by slum landlords in Cass County.	9/5/2024 11:17 PM
2	Historic Downtown and Historic Homes. More needs to be done to preserve our Historic	7/31/2024 8:25 PM

	buildings	
3	The people of Cass county	7/29/2024 1:51 PM
4	Diverse populations	7/27/2024 8:12 AM
5	This is my home town. I enjoy the comradery and the pride of being a Ranger. A lot of the people I went to school with either still live in the area or come and visit on a regular basis.	7/26/2024 3:58 PM
6	Good people	7/26/2024 5:23 AM
7	except on Calvin Center NEED speed limit and no passing signs immediately	7/24/2024 12:44 PM
8	We do like the rural vibe.	7/15/2024 6:37 PM
9	Very quiet and peaceful. Keep it that way!	7/11/2024 7:25 AM
10	Family	7/9/2024 5:43 PM
11	HISTORY! NATURAL BEAUTY! MIDWESTERN FRIENDLINESS!	7/8/2024 5:23 PM
12	In	7/8/2024 4:55 PM
13	No weed shops	7/8/2024 1:08 PM
14	Close to granger, in	7/6/2024 4:53 PM
15	Family & schools	7/6/2024 12:35 AM
16	Well kept homes, farms.	7/1/2024 1:06 PM
17	diverse population	7/1/2024 11:07 AM
18	There are no advantages the town needs strangers that do there job not big family names that been here forever with no education but we got them in Al bodies of government with no education always someone behind the scenes helping them keep and do there job	6/29/2024 10:33 PM
19	I like cass county because of the rural feel in most locations. It is becoming a rarer and rarer thing as time goes on.	6/28/2024 12:28 PM
20	Community!	6/27/2024 5:56 PM
21	The people	6/27/2024 3:30 PM
22	Family atmosphere	6/13/2024 5:28 PM
23	There is a nice rural character to Cass County. We have good people here, willing to help a neighbor in need. There are job and volunteer opertunities, curches, good schools, and recreation. Healthcare needs improvement, not many doctors or dentists. Being close to Indiana is a plus and a negative. My community doesn't have a grocery store and we could use some more restaurants. All that said, it is a good place to live.	6/13/2024 3:34 PM

Q30 What do you consider to be negative aspects of living in Cass County? (Select all that apply.)

Answered: 481 Skipped: 248



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Lack of housing choice	35.97%	173
Not enough to do	33.68%	162
Too far away from jobs	28.07%	135
Not enough walking or biking trails	32.22%	155
Not enough local shopping options	60.91%	293
Limited access to high-speed internet	29.94%	144
Blight (conditions of disrepair, neglect, or inadequate maintenance)	58.84%	283
Other (please specify)	14.35%	69
Total Respondents: 481		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Lack of child care	8/14/2024 6:03 PM
2	No access to swimming or public beach areas. STOP ALLOWING FACTORY FARMING SPECIFICALLY CHICKENS	8/2/2024 10:07 AM

3	Roads are bad. Low paying jobs. Parks are in despair. County needs help	7/29/2024 2:56 PM
4	Drug issues	7/29/2024 1:41 PM
5	Medical	7/29/2024 1:36 PM
6	Need to improve cell phone service.	7/29/2024 12:33 PM
7	Currently there is no ambulance service in my township. This needs to be addressed ASAP!	7/29/2024 10:28 AM
8	Cell phone coverage	7/28/2024 10:25 PM
9	Lack of zoning planning	7/27/2024 2:55 PM
10	Lack of health care services & non-emergency medical transport	7/27/2024 8:12 AM
11	Illinois lake people. We need to triple their tax rate so that they will sell their houses and move back. They are ruining our grocery stores, loud, disrespectful, and shoot off illegal fireworks during permitted times and after permitted times. It is time for us locals to send these people back to Illinois. This will allow the county to flourish.	7/26/2024 4:25 PM
12	We would have more housing available if we could fix up or demolish/rebuild some of the falling apart houses.	7/26/2024 11:47 AM
13	I'm pretty happy here	7/26/2024 5:23 AM
14	It would be super nice to have more nice local restaurants to eat. Some major restaurant franchises in the Cassopolis area and dowagiac would be great.	7/25/2024 10:27 PM
15	Streets need to be fixed asap. West State st especially	7/25/2024 8:58 PM
16	No youth oriented options such as boy/ girls club or just a place where kids can hang out safely	7/25/2024 5:52 PM
17	Housing cost are too high. People are moving to our beautiful town & offering to pay more than market price to get the home & pricing locals out of the market.	7/25/2024 4:55 PM
18	The smell of marijuana ruining our fresh air for our families and children. It is so unfair to innocent children to have to breathe it in.	7/25/2024 10:57 AM
19	local zoning ordinance enforcement is a joke. Be consistent and enforce	7/25/2024 9:03 AM
20	Dirt roads need to be black topped or oiled 3 times a year to dusty	7/25/2024 7:49 AM
21	Outdoor wood stoves should not be allowed within 100 feet of a neighbors property.	7/24/2024 10:36 PM
22	Too many weed farms allowed	7/24/2024 8:16 PM
23	High taxes	7/24/2024 6:08 PM
24	Blight inforcement lacking	7/24/2024 11:17 AM
25	Stinky pot farms ruining Pure Michigan vibe	7/23/2024 8:03 AM
26	Medical resources are limited. Additional family-friendly food establishment needed (in Vandalia area). Organized rural market open on weekdays & weekends needed (seasonal). Youth center with access to seasonal medical resources needed.	7/22/2024 1:54 PM
27	Too many pot shops and farms	7/22/2024 9:09 AM
28	Lack of county sewer system. Septics are going into the lakes.	7/17/2024 11:59 AM
29	Public bathrooms in town	7/16/2024 7:55 PM
30	The dark sky park's stargazing schedule is too limited.	7/15/2024 6:37 PM
31	If you want Granger, go live in Granger. Leave farm land alone amd stop changing zoning.	7/14/2024 9:54 AM
32	Police on sunset for the speeders.	7/11/2024 4:57 PM
33	Illegal Drug problems	7/11/2024 2:02 PM
34	Blight doesn’t crack down on these people who are outdoor hoarders and trash everywhere outside. Really fed up with my neighbors trash ending up in my yard cause they are too lazy to	7/11/2024 7:25 AM

	take care of it. There needs to be better curb appeal instead of trashy yards.	
35	The roads are shameful in many areas. Breakdown of the nuclear family causing most social and some economic problems. Manufacturing is never coming back but training for some lower skill jobs might be possible.	7/10/2024 7:36 PM
36	MEC, lack of reliable electricity solar farms that no one wants	7/10/2024 11:26 AM
37	Lack of emergency services and high quality hospital	7/9/2024 11:18 PM
38	Too many short term rentals, making it difficult for locals to own homes	7/9/2024 1:42 PM
39	Too many homeowner yards are allowed to be junk filled and worn down. Too many meth houses and get reported and nothing is done. Too many criminal activity reported and nothing is done about it. Zero police presence in rural Wayne township. Poor conditions of roads	7/9/2024 1:31 PM
40	Lack of law enforcement, emergency response support from county	7/9/2024 11:45 AM
41	Blight in Dowagiac is Disgusting!	7/9/2024 11:15 AM
42	Not enough healthy choices.	7/9/2024 11:01 AM
43	None.	7/9/2024 9:47 AM
44	Too many gravel roads. And paved roads need upkeep	7/9/2024 8:33 AM
45	Blight due to lack of personal responsibility.	7/8/2024 7:36 PM
46	Lack of drug stores, restaurants	7/8/2024 6:00 PM
47	Inability of many in decision-making positions to SEE, EMBRACE, and UTILIZE a PLAN FOR THE FUTURE!	7/8/2024 5:23 PM
48	Ambulance service is a complete joke. The hospital in Dowagiac is a complete joke	7/6/2024 4:53 PM
49	Way too much drug activity and not enough enforcement you report drug activity for the safety of my grandchildren and it’s ignored. I am not the only one that has noticed this been here six years and it’s been going on since and it’s just getting worse.. finding meth Needles crack pipes in our yard and not allowing us to build a fence to protect Our children people coming on our property	7/5/2024 8:35 PM
50	Limited medical and community mental health services	7/2/2024 8:47 AM
51	In the summer, often feel like second class citizens compared to summer visitors.	7/1/2024 1:28 PM
52	There are spots of Neglect, piles of unorganized junk in some places. We had one horrific trash bin of cars, rodents, parts, and garbage on Pleasant Drive off Carberry. It took TWO years of complaints, recurring to ge this within 'normal' standards. ACK	7/1/2024 1:06 PM
53	people that are too conservative in their thinking	7/1/2024 11:07 AM
54	Roads in village are bad.	6/30/2024 4:57 PM
55	All negative aspects roads bad big family names are inner twined in the school courthouse and small government scary place	6/29/2024 10:33 PM
56	This being said, I would be nice to see other stores brought in but only to the in town areas, or to somehow bring the businesses that are already here expand to carry more options in their stores at affordable pricing. Not sure how you could go about this but I flash back to the days of East Gate shopping center that was in Niles	6/28/2024 12:28 PM
57	Road repair	6/28/2024 7:55 AM
58	lack of paved roads	6/28/2024 12:10 AM
59	Twps a waste of money, should be abolished.	6/27/2024 9:21 PM
60	There are so many gorgeous houses in Cass that need TLC.	6/27/2024 12:21 PM
61	Not enough it done to landowners to upkeep and maintain their yards/homes. Many are run down and not maintained.	6/27/2024 12:00 PM
62	Lack of childcare	6/27/2024 11:53 AM

63	Need to better support Conservation efforts	6/24/2024 10:15 PM
64	I would like to see more restrictions on light trespass.	6/19/2024 10:58 AM
65	Rapid housing development in Milton and Hoard township on farmland	6/16/2024 12:12 PM
66	Dowagiac needs a breakfast place downtown	6/16/2024 11:26 AM
67	BLIGHT!!!! It's so bad! It is very apparent that many Cass Co residents don't take pride in maintaining their property, and that's a real bummer for those that do and have to deal with it.	6/13/2024 4:21 PM
68	Blight is a HUGE problem in our county.	6/13/2024 3:43 PM
69	Limited Public Transportation	6/13/2024 3:36 PM

Q31 Please list your top five issues for Cass County Master Plan.

Answered: 261 Skipped: 468

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Housing, Affordable child care options for parents working 2nd & 3rd shifts, increased transportation options to food and clothing shopping, medical & other services in nearby cities, just outside the Cass County line.	9/5/2024 11:17 PM
2	Lack of child care Lack of affordable housing Lack of ambulance service Lack of staffing of local fire depts	8/14/2024 6:03 PM
3	More recreation, more housing, more local businesses so tax money stays in the community, more paths and trails, more listening to young people and not just the older generations most likely to fill out these surveys or show up to meetings	8/9/2024 9:30 PM
4	Flexibility in land use regulations to encourage new uses as technology changes - but protect homeowners from noise pollution, noxious odors, contamination, etc. Protect the environment. Consolidate new manufacturing and warehouse uses in deemed areas to protect homes and retail businesses from nuisances. Encourage multi-family housing and affordable homes. Encourage economic development of businesses using clean energy and those with modest energy needs.	8/6/2024 9:17 AM
5	1. STOP ALLOWING FACTORY FARMING SPECIFICALLY CHICKENS. My home and property were here BEFORE this farmer! Support FAMILY FARMS, NOT FACTORY FARMS! 2. Make public beaches in Twin Lakes and Sister Lakes with safe parking. 3. Reinstate the ambulance service within local fire stations. 4. Road maintenance and pot holes need priority. 5. MOW the roadsides, especially the corners for SAFETY.	8/2/2024 10:07 AM
6	need medical services county wide! put needs before wants!!!! we didn't need a 9mil remodel!	7/31/2024 10:26 PM
7	We depend on revenue from tourists in Cass County, but our little towns look run down. I think blight is a big issue and should be addressed to increase tourism. Facade grants for low income homeowners on the "main" roads would be a good place to start. This will ensure that tourists aren't seeing run down homes as much as they do now.	7/31/2024 8:25 PM
8	Road maintenance, Park upgrades, More biking trails and bike lanes alongside roadways, try to control blighted areas	7/30/2024 11:10 PM
9	Fire/ EMS consolidation, Bring all county fire departments under one command structure. Integrate EMS into the fire service. Regulate/Limit the short term rentals in the lake areas. Provide pedestrian walking in the lake areas to remove pedestrians walking in the roadways. Slow housing development, prevent Cass county from becoming the next Mishawalka Indiana, stop the urban sprawl into non developed areas.	7/30/2024 9:33 PM
10	My biggest suggestion is to add a playground to the downtown Dowagiac area. The community has done a wonderful job of planning downtown events, concert series, and the library has great children's programming but an active outdoor play space within walking distance of the library and downtown area is lacking. We homeschool and very frequently visit other communities to use their parks and playgrounds every week. Russom park is a nice option but it's away from the downtown area and has no shade seating for parents. The land behind the snow building on front street would be an excellent space for this. It would give families more incentive to visit the downtown area and give community children a place to play. It doesn't need to be huge or expansive either - just a simple playground where families can visit while they're in the downtown area and parents can sit would be a great step in the right direction toward fostering a walkable downtown and stronger sense of community. As a homeschool mom I can also guarantee it's use on a regular basis by those within the homeschool community. Dowagiac is rarely on the list of communities where homeschool co-ops choose to meet due to its lack of a central park or playground space for meeting. Local businesses would benefit from the additional foot traffic in the area on week days when other families are working or in school if homeschool groups had an outdoor play space to gather at on a regular basis.	7/30/2024 5:36 PM

	Steps have definitely been made in the right direction to beautify the downtown area but this is the one important piece of the puzzle that is missing.	
11	More green energy choices. More affordable housing that anyone qualifies for. Better and cheaper healthcare options. Getting rid of blight in city limits. Most houses in Dowagiac either look abandoned, or rotting. More restrictions on Airbnb's, and vacation homes for the wealthy operating in Cass county, it's a slap in the face to actual residents of Cass county that cannot find housing because they're being bought up by non residents.	7/30/2024 1:25 PM
12	Jobs, senior housing, ambulance service, better welcome service for new residents, jobs.	7/30/2024 8:31 AM
13	Ambulance services Healthcare facilities--no specialists available Need more spaces to walk/ not just trails Blight enforcement	7/30/2024 4:16 AM
14	Need more permanent jobs in manufacturing and warehousing. We need to get back to a agriculture and manufacturing county not a tourist county we need jobs that support communities within	7/30/2024 3:22 AM
15	Make people clean up there yards even if it's out in the country.	7/29/2024 9:16 PM
16	Preserve country living, promote affordable housing - duplexes not four +. Bring back a Shopko type store. Assistance plan for blight homes/property.	7/29/2024 9:06 PM
17	Bike and walking trails Internet	7/29/2024 8:42 PM
18	Need rules for short term rentals, lack of recycling, need curbside leaf pickup options to reduce burning, attract full time jobs, improve attractions (shopping, restaurants, entertainment).	7/29/2024 8:29 PM
19	1. Ambulance Service ***** 2.Walking trails 3. Preserve farm land 4. Limit wind and solar farms 5. Over development of multi-housing units	7/29/2024 6:28 PM
20	1. Affordable housing 2. Child care desserts 3. Jobs/manufacturing 4. Things to do with kids/teens 5. Keeping local farm/nature areas	7/29/2024 5:57 PM
21	Dowagiac is not keeping up with Cassopolis or Niles in terms of community development.	7/29/2024 5:37 PM
22	EMS ambulance coverage sucks for most of the county. waiting 30mins or more for a ambulance is unacceptable Lack of decent paying jobs Lack of affordable housing more choices for grocery shopping in the county more manufacturers in the county would be nice	7/29/2024 5:29 PM
23	Parks and recreation. Landlord control over high rent on condemned homes. Need more jobs and entertainment. Ambulance service been millage for years. Where that money going?	7/29/2024 2:56 PM
24	Education Jobs Blight Programs for children both in public school and home school	7/29/2024 2:34 PM
25	1. More children’s parks/playgrounds 2. Sports fields for children’s sports 3. Keeping the rivers and lakes clean and healthy 4. Non Us citizens buying up land and homes 5. Support less section 8 housing and work more on cleaning up the area and keeping drugs off the streets.	7/29/2024 1:58 PM
26	We need more affordable grocery choices (example: Aldi in Dowagiac). I'd love to see a halt in building neighborhoods with many houses on small parcels and instead help support those who want to build homes in rural areas while still preserving most of their acreage for homesteading activities and raising livestock etc. to feed their families.	7/29/2024 1:53 PM
27	Better medical services, better paying jobs, need less section 8 housing and more single homes, retail shopping (dollar general is filthy and not stocked) higher paying jobs	7/29/2024 1:36 PM
28	Blight, homeless living in storage shed “communities “, no ambulance service and horrible healthcare options.	7/29/2024 12:59 PM
29	1) internet 2) retail convenience 3)restaurant variety 4)better parks	7/29/2024 12:50 PM
30	Manufacturing More police presence in Sister lakes during the summer Wider shoulders for all county roads so people are not walking In the road	7/29/2024 12:48 PM
31	There needs to be more low income/elderly/disabled housing available and NEVER let it be sold to the pokagon band.	7/29/2024 12:39 PM
32	Seems the county desires large unlimited growth. I live here because it's a rural, country setting with plenty of 'bug city's options close by. No need to ruin the environment.	7/29/2024 12:25 PM
33	Bike path connecting Sister Lakes Bring down property taxes	7/29/2024 12:14 PM

34	Investors interested in preserving local character through traditional business are prevented by unimaginative and counterproductive policies that make it impossible to make economic investments. The county doesn't seem to want to help investors find a way to make business work in an area that could has that investment.	7/29/2024 11:49 AM
35	Jobs, pharmacy, senior housing, locally housed ambulance, lower property taxes	7/29/2024 10:55 AM
36	Ambulance service Childcare options Blight enforcement Affordable housing options (purchase, rentals, elder) Public beaches Car washes (Drive N Shine)	7/29/2024 10:01 AM
37	Ambulance service Blight	7/29/2024 9:53 AM
38	It would be nice if I was able to raise a couple of chickens responsibly on my own land. Cell coverage School districts are lack luster with the EXCEPTION of Edwardsburg	7/28/2024 10:25 PM
39	The lack of actual grocery shopping is real. Our tax dollars are going to Indiana for so many things. There is nowhere for senior citizens to go! My mother gets Social Security of $1200/month and has to pay over $900 in rent to live in an unkempt apartment. Blight of vacant buildings makes it unwelcoming, and caused us to have second thoughts about buying here. The only reason for tourism where outsiders spend money in our area are lakes. But even visiting the lakes, there's little shopping opportunity for visitors to spend dollars that may help the community.	7/28/2024 3:54 PM
40	Childcare Jobs Housing Farming	7/27/2024 9:10 PM
41	How do we grow How do we not increase taxes How do improve schools , medical care, services	7/27/2024 6:16 PM
42	public transit expansion targeted density trail/off-street bicycle infrastructure housing options at different scales (duplex, adu, shop front buildings with apartments, cottage courts, conservation subdivisions, other compatible housing patterns to increase supply in appropriate areas	7/27/2024 5:51 PM
43	Retain farmland. Control retail and business growth to designated areas. Limit approval of rezoning requests.	7/27/2024 2:55 PM
44	We moved here to live in the country. Bringing in businesses brings housing developments. I left Kalamazoo for this very reason. The rural land I grew up in is now full of developments and the wildlife has no where to go. Preserve what we have!!!	7/27/2024 9:11 AM
45	1. Need long-term ambulance/helicopter service contracts for entire county. 2. Need uniform non-emergency medical transport for entire county 3. Need more options variety/ethnic restaurants 4. Need childcare options 5. County needs to write & obtain grants rather than ask for tax millages for everything.	7/27/2024 8:12 AM
46	I do not support solar or wind projects. I do not support raising taxes.	7/27/2024 7:57 AM
47	1. more third spaces and community centers 2. less fake greenwashed energy plans. more real plans that are sustainable and good for the earth. 3. way less money to cops 4. see 1 5. see 1	7/26/2024 11:00 PM
48	housing	7/26/2024 6:39 PM
49	Illinois lake people, grocery options, too expensive golf rates (this is due to the Illinois lake people), poor roads (the "fixes" are terrible and just reappear within 6 months), bike paths	7/26/2024 4:25 PM
50	1.) I like the small town, and I want to keep it a small town. 2.) I would like to see resources put into fixing up blighted properties to attract home buyers. 3.) I would love it if MEC and Hydro would plant hundreds of trees between the plant and my neighborhood bc hearing industrial fans at night and early morning at the Lis's of hearing birds and insects is really making me sad. I hate it. 4.) use existing vacant or underused space to encourage business growth. Ex: former gas station lot across from Biggby's could be developed into something useful. Fill the empty 5/3 bank and soon-to-be-empty Rite Aid, and the old Myers grocery with something. 5.) Activities, recreation, and employment opportunities for youth, whether it be in helping with childcare/early childhood programming, working at family recreation activities….splash pad, mini golf, bowling/arcade, whatever….opportunities for our high school aged population to get exposure to employment, career interests, etc.	7/26/2024 11:47 AM
51	No new neighborhood up keep what there is now leave farmland and rural areas alone	7/26/2024 10:44 AM

52	Not enough housing for Seniors, or general population of citizens. No general merchandise stores for odds/ends type of purchases.	7/26/2024 9:13 AM
53	Housing, shopping, healthcare,jobs	7/26/2024 9:01 AM
54	Roads and expanded EMS services	7/26/2024 7:40 AM
55	Hopefully not out of our taxes	7/26/2024 6:06 AM
56	1. Bird watching areas 2. Encourage protection of natural areas 3. Maintain and expand economic base 4. Maintain and expand emergency services 5. Maintain senior services	7/26/2024 5:23 AM
57	Bad roads. Repair the roads please.	7/26/2024 1:07 AM
58	The main library should be the best library in the county, not reduced in size. We should be proud, not embarrassed.	7/25/2024 10:48 PM
59	There are no children's parks to play on. If there are they are run down. No adequate shopping centers in the northern half of the county. Fire departments are not receiving adequate funding. Lack of CTE programs in the schools.	7/25/2024 10:40 PM
60	My and better restaurants, grocery store like aldis, less dispensaries as those are really annoying, more places for people to work, and less government programs stopping people from going out and finding work themselves.	7/25/2024 10:27 PM
61	1.) In the designated climate of our county, there is not enough funding and attention being given to adequate road conditions. Winter road conditions on Redfield Street (specifically the intersections of Kline and Fir) are treacherous. Accidents occur seasonally, and salting occurs too late in the day for the morning commute. Preparation is key to avoid dangerous collisions and black ice. 2.) More attention needs to be given to existing parks and recreation. Benches, lamp posts, and recreational walking areas in county owned natural areas could be an improvement. 3.) Encroaching private subdivisions threaten the identity of Cass County. Without the rural and natural countrysides of Southwest Michigan, residential developments will slowly overcome agriculture and private ownership. As a member of the younger generation, (25 years old), local properties are getting smaller and hidden subdivisions are appearing without local support or sufficient communication. These developments need to be considered and addressed. No one will give up their private subdivisions once they are built and the county's agricultural economy will be compromised let alone its beauty. Rural land is a sanctuary from Indiana's suburbia and people/developers will capitalize on the essence of our county.	7/25/2024 9:36 PM
62	Streets, upgraded stores, upgrade businesses on Broadway, funding fir already established businesses for improvements. Attract more manufactures after housing has been established. Quit making people go elsewhere like Indiana to shop	7/25/2024 8:58 PM
63	None	7/25/2024 8:28 PM
64	Affordable housing, economic development, ending the preservation of farmland, improving roads and other infrastructure, preserving natural spaces like woodlands and wetlands.	7/25/2024 8:23 PM
65	I feel like there should be a entertainment district in cassopolis especially in the smart park area.... I don't want to live in a area that's mostly factories and farms!	7/25/2024 7:57 PM
66	Preserve farmland - stop allowing weed farms everywhere! They're hideous, they stink. I can smell the one on Kelsey Lake and Decatur Rd from my home east of Gards Prairie on Dutch Settlement. I also like to take back roads for bird watching and taking photographs of different birds, but every back road seems to have a weed farm. No more weed farms. No more weed farms. No more weed farms. Another fast food establishment might be a nice option.	7/25/2024 7:44 PM
67	Bike lanes on busy roads. YouthDevelopment. Reduced costs for disabled housing. Starbucks to compete with Starbucks, Grocery store...at least 1	7/25/2024 5:52 PM
68	Village cassopolis dressed up broadway. Rest of home in kept siding missing yard not mowed trash in yards. You can put lipstick on a pig still a pig	7/25/2024 2:01 PM
69	An ice cream shop is needed in Edwardsburg	7/25/2024 1:04 PM
70	Create business, manufacturing, retail corridors to increase tax base and take burden off residents. This would also improve job opportunities and increase options for shopping. Develop neighborhoods for new build homes to attract more families.	7/25/2024 12:53 PM

71	Inter community walking and bike trails. Solid waste disposal with full recycling More housing options to keep families living and working locally	7/25/2024 12:37 PM
72	No Section 8; No more Dollar General stores; No increased spending; Better snow removal, and Lessen property taxes.	7/25/2024 12:36 PM
73	Bring in larger store chains, not Dollar General or low income shopping. Increase amount of apartments and housing that is not income based and therefore open to more residents. Bike trails to connect the major towns- increasing safety of travel and allowing some people an option to save money on fuel or cut down on their carbon emissions. Let people develop the areas that have been started before they tear out woods and decrease the biodiversity of our area. Protect our water and air, since a large portion of Cass County is on well water.	7/25/2024 11:10 AM
74	Bring industry to Cass County and utilize location on main roadways, maintain the shopping facilities we have. We need to take care of what we have including housing. For example, look at Dowagiac Dollar General. We are losing a drug store that took years to fix their parking lot. There have been a few and existing upgrades which is nice to see. It would be great to see that these businesses are maintained.	7/25/2024 10:57 AM
75	We lack emergency housing for people in mental health crisis, abuse (elder, spousal) situation or other displacement. People in mental health crisis end up at facilities across the state because there are no local emergency residential facilities. There is NO place for people to go - except the ER or jail. What are the priorities - to preserve lakes for the wealthy or care for the poor, elderly and ill?	7/25/2024 10:32 AM
76	1. Give us our money back from the millage for CCDET since there is no CCDET.	7/25/2024 9:36 AM
77	Improve existing establishments, I.E. historic downtown No solar development or any large company coming into town Preserve Cassopolis as a safe haven from neighboring urban areas and mega cities	7/25/2024 9:36 AM
78	Solar issue Attractive/affordable housing in mid-range cost Senior community with levels of need for housing with easy access to services/needs Preservation of farming community Growth monitoring in lake communities Coordination of school needs	7/25/2024 9:17 AM
79	prioritize local economic development - Cassopolis and Dowagiac are making good strides here. Prioritize local shopping. We have to go to Indiana to grocery shop, pharmacy and hardware	7/25/2024 9:03 AM
80	1. Restrict use of chemical pesticides for vegetation control. 2. Reward/invest in organic farming practices. 3. Improve shopping in areas already designated for that purpose. 4. Restrict the number of short-term rentals. 5. Protect lakes and waterways, by avoiding the use of chemicals and managing runoff from entities using pesticides and non organic fertilizer.	7/25/2024 8:39 AM
81	Preserve farmland No industrial development No solar, wind farms, and no more marijuana farms Work hard to keep Cass a unique place to live Don't model it after other counties and over develop. Place to escape and find peace in a rural setting	7/25/2024 8:32 AM
82	Lack of low income housing Medical services Internet available Bad roads Too many marijuana places	7/25/2024 8:30 AM
83	I do not support being a suburb of Chicago. Keep the rural and Ag character of the County in tact.	7/25/2024 8:28 AM
84	1. Road improvement & maintenance 2.Emergency services (police, law enforcement, ambulance response, fire 3. More public recreation areas such as bike trails, parks. 4. County parks for camping similar to corp of engineer programs 5. Airport improvement for commuter flights	7/25/2024 8:20 AM
85	No, I don’t want to. You can’t make me. Trump 2024	7/25/2024 8:14 AM
86	Housing Childcare Clean air/water Jobs Poverty	7/25/2024 8:13 AM
87	Road right of way should be mowed regular, not once a year. You have to pull out to road to see if it's clear. Our roads look like nobody cares about how they look .	7/25/2024 8:11 AM
88	Biking lanes Hiking trails Dedicated bike paths	7/25/2024 7:49 AM
89	1. Lack of housing options for single and young families. 2. Need more to do for Adults like Co-	7/25/2024 7:33 AM

	Ed sports, clubs 3. Declining population 4. Need Jobs and an actual economy	
90	Planned development along 12 & 62 intersection. Light industrial park development. Planned development & improvement of infrastructure. Attracting emerging tech businesses. Providing opportunities for small/start up businesses.	7/25/2024 6:51 AM
91	Age of Infrastructure. Lack of commercial/industrial growth. Lack of youth population growth. Regulations against solar projects. Illegal drug and firearm possessions.	7/24/2024 11:32 PM
92	Outdoor wood stoves should be illegal within 100 feet of a neighbors property. And no one should be grandfathered in.	7/24/2024 10:36 PM
93	Not enough grocery or pharmacy stores need of emergency sirens Need more public transportation Nothing for teens to do Need more affordable family and senior friendly things to do a small movie place would be nice in town	7/24/2024 10:12 PM
94	Keep Cass County Rural	7/24/2024 10:08 PM
95	Park upgrades, increase police presence and response time outside Dowagiac and Cassopolis, increase funding for parks, additional resources for Niles Cass county residence, increase support to howard and milton townships	7/24/2024 9:54 PM
96	1. Ambulance services 2. Solar farms using valuable agricultural land 3. Lack of housing options 4. Restrictive housing regulations with regards to private property 5. Cost of living is too high	7/24/2024 9:16 PM
97	Schools, parks and trails, more housing options, local activities, library improvement	7/24/2024 8:50 PM
98	Recreational opportunities, shopping, restaurants, health care options	7/24/2024 8:31 PM
99	1. important to keep our rural living conditions 2. make sure we maintain our zoning regulations for new business and housing. 3. ambulance services are maintained 4. blight regulations are maintained 5. ---	7/24/2024 4:32 PM
100	Keep our rural living standard as rural as possible. Keep commercial and industrial in commercially and industrial zoned areas. No housing developments in rural areas. No Marijuana farms. No gravel pit in rural areas.	7/24/2024 4:04 PM
101	Public Safety & including ambulance service law & order Maintain rural character Keep farmland producing true Ag products Road maintenance	7/24/2024 3:02 PM
102	Outdoor recreation opportunities need to increase. Too many dispensaries and not enough grocery stores. Private residence blight. Invest in small towns. Make housing affordable.	7/24/2024 1:36 PM
103	We need Zoning We need Blight inforcement done.	7/24/2024 11:17 AM
104	good paying jobs, better shopping opportunities, recreational activities, better cell service in rural areas, affordable broadband	7/24/2024 9:16 AM
105	No solar/wind farms, no subdivisions, preserve farmland, preserve natural areas and state lands	7/24/2024 8:21 AM
106	Senior housing, jobs, shopping options, public transportation	7/23/2024 11:26 PM
107	Access to Good quality Medical Care, Closer employment that pays well, more stores locally to keep from traveling far, more restaurants and entertainment to keep from traveling far, accessible transportation to get to places that isn't so expensive	7/23/2024 1:02 PM
108	Business development, housing, post K-12 technical schools.	7/23/2024 10:57 AM
109	Get pot farms far from neighborhoods or grow indoors. Rec programs for children. Higher end restaurant choices. Walking trails. Biking trails.	7/23/2024 8:03 AM
110	safety emergency open space preservation bike , hiking trails keep small town feel, dark sky space - no big city lights!	7/22/2024 9:43 PM
111	Jobs - manufacturing housing - developments - responsible with decent sized lots recreation -	7/22/2024 2:07 PM
112	Restaurant in Vandalia. Seasonal, rural market open weekdays and weekends (to provide support for local small businesses) like SB Farmers Market. Medical pop-ups in area and youth center in conjunction with COA where inter-generational training/programs can be held. Fair housing with maintainable grounds, rather than HOA-style rules. Cass County has the	7/22/2024 1:54 PM

	potential to think outside-the-box with this through novel urban planning and create a sustainable and attractive solution that compliments surrounding upscale lake communities. Stop giving all the permits and licenses to only a handful of basic developers and get creative.	
113	Blight Housing Jobs Sustainable Farming Lack of Arts programming	7/22/2024 10:17 AM
114	Reduce housing blight, better choices for food, shopping, better choices for restaurants, make owners of vacant buildings maintain the property and limit the number of pot shops and pot farms	7/22/2024 9:09 AM
115	Develop a policy on Marijuana cultivation. A controversial topic in Penn Twsp	7/21/2024 8:07 AM
116	Let people decide how they want to use their property to current policies and zoning. Limit solar and wind turbine as they are not as green as advertised.	7/18/2024 5:37 PM
117	Stop commercial weed farms in Cass County!	7/17/2024 6:10 PM
118	Expand county sewer systems to stop the use of septics that deteriorate and waste gets into the lakes.	7/17/2024 11:59 AM
119	Village and Township work closer together Walking path to schools, parks, churches, and shops Bike paths for long rides Grocery store and restaurants	7/16/2024 12:44 PM
120	Natural areas protection and parks/trails. Services for seniors. Housing options for moderate and lower income residents. Farmland preservation.	7/15/2024 10:54 PM
121	Don't allow farmland to be developed. It is not wasted but for our food production. Preserve & protect our farmland!! DO NOT allow foreign entities to purchase farmland! Allow but Restrict solar farming but reward for home solar panels. No recycling facilities. Milton Township residents feel less than important to County for services. Have to pay taxes for police protection but twnshp pays extra to get a patrol officer. Live on stateline but public transportation won't take vets to VA facility in Mishawaka.	7/14/2024 11:52 AM
122	Stop developing. Leave small towns as small towns. You want Granger go live there! Stop changing zoning on farm land. Support farmers and not solar plants.	7/14/2024 9:54 AM
123	Holding property owners responsible of neglect and maintenance of property. Ex. Junk cars on property, not mowing grass, house in disrepair.	7/12/2024 9:53 PM
124	Medical Establishments Lack of industry...lack of those jobs Housing for "average" citizens...lower to medium income Lack of child/teen affordabke establishments in Dowagiac Need for long term, without college degree jobs	7/12/2024 10:20 AM
125	1) Roads are terrible 2) would like to see more being done about the homeless population 3) why, don’t we have community gardens? Senior citizens would love this, plus it can be very educational of kids to learn also.	7/11/2024 11:56 PM
126	Police on sunset for speeders. Someone is going to get killed. Never see police.	7/11/2024 4:57 PM
127	programing for families with children, music venues, drugstore availabilities,substance abuse and family mental health programming	7/11/2024 2:31 PM
128	Sadly it is a feel good do nothing document. It is designed to give NGO's a revenue stream. Municipalities are manipulated into doing this to be eligible for grants programs. Often after the project is done the municipality experiences more budget pressure to maintain the new infrastructure.	7/11/2024 2:02 PM
129	Quality food markets, not Dollar General Enhance rural roads, no gravel Designated neighborhoods with convenience store access	7/11/2024 1:41 PM
130	Don’t agree with solar energy at all. We like our small towns to remain small and quiet. Expanding also is likely to increase crime rate…..NO THANK YOU! Leave our farmers alone. We DO NOT need any bike paths!	7/11/2024 7:25 AM
131	Holding road construction accountable for faulty work. Moldy weed from dispensary. No organic regulations. Subdivisions were not supposed to be in the planning. Water	7/10/2024 8:09 PM
132	Roads if that is under the jurisdiction. Public safety and emergency services. School quality with a focus on reading, writing and STEM not social ideology. Preserving open space with a ban on farmland sales to foreign entities. Inland lake water quality impacted by farm runoff.	7/10/2024 7:36 PM

133	Sneaky board Nothing for teens Poor housing options	7/10/2024 5:01 PM
134	Selling off and allowing large-scale agricultural businesses like poultry farms. Going up near homes. Solar farms going up near homes without actual research into the harm that this causes your residents.	7/10/2024 11:26 AM
135	Over regulation. Lack of services and safety.	7/10/2024 10:49 AM
136	It should focus on a balance of preserving the rural qualities, sense of small town community, and carefully improving whats here, without a detremental impact on environment and agriculture.	7/10/2024 10:34 AM
137	1) Increase walking and bicycle paths 2) Increase retail business in the area 3) Increase senior education programs 4) Many residential properties in Cassopolis are in disrepair. The Village needds an upgrade 5) Mobile homes/trailers should not be allowed. Existing mobile homes should be removed.	7/10/2024 10:05 AM
138	Get rid of blight throughout the county. Beutify the lake areas. Allow new housing development. Build nice parks and trsils. Allow new businesses and shopping experiences	7/10/2024 7:15 AM
139	Emergency services Quality hospital services and emergency room	7/9/2024 11:18 PM
140	Need stores--businesses in Sister Lakes. Need ambulance service, areas to walk, uber	7/9/2024 11:12 PM
141	Get a recycling program started. Protect our agricultural lands. . Senior housing. Shopping options Jobs	7/9/2024 10:09 PM
142	Use of farmland for housing. Housing too close together. Blighted homes Marijuana farms buying out tillable farm ground for high prices.	7/9/2024 9:09 PM
143	Senior housing, bike paths and nature trails, local shopping options, availability of high speed internet, parks	7/9/2024 8:13 PM
144	Preserve farmland No solar No wind More bike trails	7/9/2024 7:25 PM
145	•Protection from sprawl •Managing the buddy system that allows for misuse of funds and fair decision making • environmental pollution from over industrialization • providing the needs at a cost beyond what the demographic in our county can afford • Maintanence and manpower	7/9/2024 7:11 PM
146	There needs to be more focus on things for kids to do. Affordable housing. Blight issues addressed Clean up of lakes and ponds that overgrown or getting there. Schools need to be upgraded…	7/9/2024 6:57 PM
147	Childcare options are few and far between. The only options in Dowagiac are terrible. I was driving out of my way to take my kids to Cass but now that they are in school I only have terrible options as a choice because they go to Dowagiac schools.	7/9/2024 6:17 PM
148	1 road maintenance. 2.ambulance service.3 adequate staffing for sherrif dept 4limit solar farms,wind farms. 5 attract new business	7/9/2024 5:44 PM
149	Park improvements & recreation Rail Trails and more rural areas Senior housing and rental options Local retail options No solar or wind turbines	7/9/2024 5:44 PM
150	Homes, parks new business, help business	7/9/2024 5:43 PM
151	Housing high speed internet better roads more businesses savings farm land	7/9/2024 5:18 PM
152	Lack of zoning and building code enforcement, lack of access to quality medical care, lack of police enforcement and officers on duty, blight, no noise ordinance	7/9/2024 5:17 PM
153	Preserve farmland Maintain roads Better county fair	7/9/2024 4:33 PM
154	more low and middle income housing options; child care and adult day care; increased access to affordable health care options (e.g. dental); community recycling; increased programming for outdoor free and low cost recreational activities that take advantage of our parks and natural resources (e.g. where are there nice public beach areas, and more emphasis on non-motorized activities)	7/9/2024 2:44 PM
155	Reduce millage. Preserve rural feel. Restrict factory farming. Preserve quality of inland lakes. Partially restrict short term rentals.	7/9/2024 2:19 PM
156	Crime reduction More police presence in rural areas Fines for property conditions Roadways	7/9/2024 1:31 PM

	More action to remove meth houses	
157	Preserve farmland No solar farms (not worth it taking up farm land and half the panels don't work and then what to do with the poisonous junk afterwards)	7/9/2024 1:11 PM
158	Pedestrian accessibility. Bikes +walking paths Lake preservation from invasive species Diamond lake environmental repair programs. Kid focused entertainment, festivals Arts and theatre Blight homes	7/9/2024 12:13 PM
159	I do not have 5 issues, just one major issue. The most evident issue that should be handled is why we keep loosing law enforcement deputies to other counties. Perhaps the retirement issue should be addressed and repaired immediately. Our communities are becoming unsafe due to lower amount of deputies able to respond. This in turn also makes the job our deputies do unsafe. Our deputies are vastly unsupported by the county officials and that is shameful.	7/9/2024 11:45 AM
160	1. Road repair/replace! 2. Blight in Dowagiac! 3,4,5. Improve Everything in Dowagiac except the Downtown!! Start out with a New Major!! And City Manager!!!	7/9/2024 11:15 AM
161	I would rather look at farm land vs solar pannels or wind turbines. Did not move to the country for it to look like a city.	7/9/2024 11:05 AM
162	Poor road conditions, many homes not well maintained	7/9/2024 11:02 AM
163	Not enough health conscious stores and restaurants.	7/9/2024 11:01 AM
164	Growth of the social community that includes both local residents and seasonal residents to create collaboration	7/9/2024 10:35 AM
165	We need quality, affordable housing, but not at the cost of our farmland and natural areas. We need grocery stores and pharmacies that go beyond dollar general. We need to support downtown development of our villages -- conserve their historic character but upgrade to provide housing, attract businesses, encourage tourism	7/9/2024 9:56 AM
166	1: as a "master plan" it seems there is no idea of said "plan". 2: it's more focused on asking about rural housing development. Housing Development needs to be focused closer to inner cities. 3: needs to be more detailed on specific areas (townships, villages, cities) for potential development. We can make a better informed opinion. 4: no proximities of distance from towns for development. (This is focused more towards the idea of multifamily or subsides housing.) In my opinion multifamily or subsidized housing needs to be located as close to town as possible.	7/9/2024 9:47 AM
167	You just want to raise taxes to hurt the people living in the county that's already paying a lot of so luttle	7/9/2024 8:42 AM
168	1. Bringing in more businesses for tax purposes 2 you didn't mention roads but it's high priority.	7/9/2024 8:33 AM
169	Blight!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! No affordable shopping, ex. Walmart, etc. Blight! Blight!	7/9/2024 8:24 AM
170	Increase reasonable housing/apartment options, address public transportation options.	7/8/2024 10:51 PM
171	Child care and activities for kids and families to do together	7/8/2024 8:11 PM
172	Better roads. More bike lanes to get bikes off rural roads that are too hilly and dangerous for bikes.	7/8/2024 7:36 PM
173	Housing development at multiple price points Jobs/economic development Blight reduction Education	7/8/2024 6:38 PM
174	Atv riding area off road Higher paying job development Not raising property taxes More police presence in Marcellus Event center	7/8/2024 6:16 PM
175	Shopping, family restaurants, parks, road repair,	7/8/2024 5:57 PM
176	Long-term LAND USE PLAN. Incorporate various land uses AFTER THOROUGH consideration of consequences of those uses. Embrace the PAST (history) AND the FUTURE (plan for it)! Celebrate our uniqueness! Celebrate and protect all that attracts people to this wonderful County!!	7/8/2024 5:23 PM
177	Xxxxx	7/8/2024 4:06 PM

178	Blight, road conditions, mental health services for youth	7/8/2024 3:31 PM
179	Get rid of pot fields Corrupt township government. Blight of some areas Affordable/modern grocery stores	7/8/2024 2:36 PM
180	1) local pharmacy 2)ambulance service 3)road maintenance (esp gravel) 4)youth center 5)recreational path walk & bike	7/8/2024 1:55 PM
181	Keeping Marajuana factories and stores out of Cass County. Focus on getting our pig farms back, keeping our emergency services up and adequately employed, keeping our taxes at affordable rates.	7/8/2024 1:08 PM
182	Lack of reliable ambulance service is a huge problem. I'm sick of smelling marijuana constantly and the worthless township people don't reply to emails. You want to be known for marijuana then good job. You're all idiots.	7/6/2024 4:53 PM
183	- Public Health Support - Define Ag Zones but allow more housing -Increase Multifamily Housing options -Increase Outdoor Public Space	7/6/2024 12:35 PM
184	More development for housing, childcare options, more for kids/families to do in the area, invest in schools	7/6/2024 12:35 AM
185	Support from our local law-enforcement Ambulance service really sucks if you are in a rich neighborhood, they will step it up and get here considering where I live we are considered and their eyes low life's Bullion in the school system and racism and a transportation system for our children law does not support that when it comes to illegal things going on on our school, buses, the blind eye Is turned they need to get that changed Speed enforcement is a big thing going through Vandalia on M 60 a State Highway is not enforced. People come through a 30 mile an hour zone running 60 and nothing has done about it even when you call and report it. The zoning issues I've been able to put up fences to protect your property, and your children is another problem	7/5/2024 8:35 PM
186	Should be a combined effort with the Township, like it was in 2014	7/3/2024 4:13 PM
187	1. Housing 2. Transportation options 3. Indoor recreation 4. Career Tech, voc Ed 5. Political leadership	7/2/2024 9:48 PM
188	Need more childcare Need more affordable housing Need more jobs Need more parks, biking trails, natural areas Support essential/emergency services- fire, ambulance, police	7/2/2024 1:13 PM
189	Focus on decisions that promote equity and diversity; Enhance childcare options; Support Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs (i.e., perhaps through the development of a CTE center that's a partnership between local businesses and industries and the ISD and community schools); Expand access to medical/hospital services and community mental health; Attract commercial retail (such as Meijer)	7/2/2024 8:47 AM
190	Need to attract new businesses, upgrade parks, offer Wi-Fi to everyone,restrict to sizes	7/1/2024 8:14 PM
191	-Daycare options & cost -All for economic development, but want us to remain a tight-knit rural community & not be pushed out by big companies or those with money -Internet service - many people do not have stable internet service for reasons beyond just price -school improvement - continue to improve our schools and our students - long-term investment - preserve our natural areas & wildlife	7/1/2024 1:28 PM
192	I want to see more PLANNING and awareness of the plan. The master plan must take into account short and long term goals as well as consequences for people, traffic, immediate environment. IT SEEMS HATEFUL TO INSTALL SOLAR FACTORIES WITHOUT LOOKING AT ALL FACTORS & FACTS!!! Also, If there could be enforcement for violations: whether individuals OR businesses!! Do we have a health inspector for restaurants???	7/1/2024 1:06 PM
193	Oversight and guidance of local township boards. Many boards such as zoning are not objective and favor friends and family. Wayne Township Zoning Board openly threatens citizens and make discriminatory remarks in hearings to residents.	7/1/2024 12:09 PM
194	1. Affordable Housing 2. Childcare 3. Buildings in disrepair 4. Local shopping options 5. Community/recreational centers parks for children/teens	7/1/2024 11:11 AM
195	Improve affordable housing options, support public education, increase transportation options, improve child care options, increase recreational opportunities	7/1/2024 11:07 AM

196	Broadband/High Speed Internet services , improved cellular data service/coverage	7/1/2024 8:44 AM
197	1. Address roads. 2. Keep low income housing development out of village. 3. Encourage homes (not modular) be built on empty lots. 4. Attract another pharmacy to take over Rite Aid. 5. Don't fill all empty farmland with crappy housing developments	6/30/2024 4:57 PM
198	More shopping choices, more housing availability especially for elderly and disabled people, more public transportation, more jobs	6/30/2024 12:11 PM
199	Consistency. Being told in a formal meeting setting that you can do something on your land and then being penalized for it because the answer you received from the township was incorrect.	6/30/2024 8:52 AM
200	1. Lack of walking and biking trails 2. Development of new businesses 3. Lack of housing 4. Blight and disrepair in vacant and owned lots 5. Lack of activity and opportunity	6/29/2024 10:52 PM
201	Make over for all organizations courthouse police dept sesc soil erosion all small body government treasurer county clerk village president village manager etc complete makeover stranger will care more about the community than friends and family	6/29/2024 10:33 PM
202	Ambulance, property taxes, no fault auto insurance, auto registration fees,	6/29/2024 10:42 AM
203	Inland lake preservation, Short term rental restrictions, Local road Maintenance,Increased social activities, public Transportation	6/29/2024 10:39 AM
204	Balance the budget and eliminate wasteful spending on unused resources.	6/29/2024 9:40 AM
205	Pot farms should NOT be allowed in Cass County.	6/28/2024 7:03 PM
206	1. Biggest mistake was allowing that stupid power plant against peoples wishes to be built, Yes I know it sits in "industrial space" and in Berrien BUT it effects those in our county as it sit on the "line". It would be nice if there was something our county could do to help those neighbors affected near it and for the noise those in Cass County have to deal with because of it. So, please consider all of the people affected by what ever it may be that you allow to be brought into the county. 2. Try to preserve and protect as much of the native land left in Cass (farm and forest). 3. and not sure who this falls on, Police patrols, would love to have more than 1 officer patrolling on 24hr in our area. Howard use to have their own dept but since that was done away with I know we only have 1 officer over this way (sure its the same in other areas) and response time is awful unless you reach out to State. 3. This a good job statement to the drug enforcement teams, keep up the good work! There is more out there everyday, keep taking the illegal drugs off the streets. Would like to see more police/community interaction. 4 Vets and homeless, we don't see much of this in Cass but as I live on the boarder of Berrien I do see/hear about it. Is there more that Cass can do to help the local Vets chapters ? This also goes for the elderly trying to stay in their homes but cant not afford to do repairs. I have seen that there are programs but not near enough for the need. I listed these thought s in the way they came to me but none is more important over the other. And I would say that they are just quick things that came to me as the questions were asked. There are a lot of other concerns but they do not directly relate to Cass County but to Berrien... schools would be one but my child and grand child attend Niles Comm. so I did not include my concerns with that here, I cannot speak to the schools in Cass County. But I see a great need for more GOOD teachers and funding for our schools, Health care is another problem area for everyone. Not sure if there is a solution maybe with Southwestern there or not... A more direct program of some sort?	6/28/2024 12:28 PM
207	streets around the lakes-fooding is a big problem for the homes near lakes.	6/28/2024 11:09 AM
208	recycling program/bins, solar panel parking lots/ on manufacturing and large building roofs (incentive program), and more underground utilities (less poles to replace/tree trimming).	6/28/2024 8:00 AM
209	Restrict solar and wind to unoccupied or abandoned commercial areas.	6/28/2024 7:55 AM
210	Keep our area rural. Limit new builds for residential and commercial. Plenty of unused or derelict commercial properties that could be remained instead of encroaching on farmland or private rural areas.	6/28/2024 12:42 AM
211	social services more paved roads monitoring of farm run-off and water usage	6/28/2024 12:10 AM
212	No more millages and raising taxes. I enjoy rural small town with affordable housing not too far from cities.	6/27/2024 10:59 PM

213	see above	6/27/2024 9:21 PM
214	Preserve wildlife habitat. Stop any further destruction of wildlife habitat on Stone Lake. Preserve Farmland for future generations. Protect wetlands and forests from development. Put in a roundabout at Daily Rd and M60.	6/27/2024 8:04 PM
215	1. Community Center - including health & wellness & daycare 2. Ambulance/Essential Services 3. Senior housing	6/27/2024 7:04 PM
216	Access to emergency services, access to retail shopping/dining, high speed internet, water preservation,	6/27/2024 6:59 PM
217	Housing Emergency services	6/27/2024 5:56 PM
218	Expand housing options Infill rather than new development Transit Year 'round recreation Clean energy Clean water	6/27/2024 4:04 PM
219	We have a homeless situation in the county, would we ever be willing to address this with a shelter + services??	6/27/2024 4:03 PM
220	Ambulance, better job opportunities, clean up blight, preserve farmland	6/27/2024 3:56 PM
221	Need more walking paths on the northwest side of the county. Need a park on the northwest side of the county. The county needs to pay more attention to the northwest side of the county. We are always left out of everything.	6/27/2024 3:19 PM
222	New Parks, beaches, stuff for kids and events	6/27/2024 2:35 PM
223	1.Jobs with increased buisnesss plant opportunities 2.Family friendly activities and program personnel and 3.Parks recreation facilities and staff 4. Upgrade what's already existing 5. Neighborhood development	6/27/2024 2:31 PM
224	Lack of Housing Lack of businesses Empty buildings Lack of public transportation	6/27/2024 2:08 PM
225	Cass Transit ! They suck Taxes too high for seniors Big farm companies buying or renting too much land and then not taking care of it . Get rid of these people on township boards that have been there too long !	6/27/2024 1:47 PM
226	Health care, ambulance service, preservation of farmland, infrastructure maintenance and upgrades, coordination between municipalities	6/27/2024 1:36 PM
227	More bike paths. Connect new MEC smart park all the way to town. Make sure there is protected bike lane or sidewalk between McDonald's and start of new trail. Sidewalks throughout the village of Cassopolis are in desperate need of repair. Most village street surfaces are horrible and need resurfaced. More business downtown needs to be encouraged. Blight, property maintenance needs improvement. Would be nice if entrance into Cassopolis was more welcoming. 60 from the east is unattractive and unkept. Entrance from south looks worn out and depressed. Would be nice if that area could be cleaned up. Let's demolish any vacant/abandoned blighted homes.	6/27/2024 1:34 PM
228	Poor maintenance of home and yards throughout the city, poor access to shopping, poor access to healthcare	6/27/2024 1:31 PM
229	Housing is needed to help focus the tax burden across the spectrum. Cass county is an aging community that needs to attract younger families so that the older citizens are not taxed out of their forever homes.	6/27/2024 1:31 PM
230	Need decent Drug store, Grocery Store. Cassopolis is generally an eyesore. Many houses are littered with junk and our in general disrepair. There needs to be more pride in personal peoperty.	6/27/2024 1:26 PM
231	Blight issues. Including mowing in the country. No retail shopping, exapmle Small scale WaltMart etc. with affordable pricing.	6/27/2024 1:12 PM
232	Farm to table/healthy restaurant options. Bike paths. Cost effective shopping/dining that is geared toward locals and not Chicago people	6/27/2024 12:38 PM
233	Enforcement to prevent blight areas throughout the county including non-operating vehicles or equipment and storage of junk in visible areas.	6/27/2024 12:35 PM
234	1.) Business to occupy empty space…get pharmacy and bank here. 2.) Repair blighted homes	6/27/2024 12:21 PM

	or demolish if too far neglected. 3.) Activities for youth: a community pool, restore tennis courts at high school, bike trails, summer camps, etc. 4.) Housing options: I am frequently seeing posts by people looking for housing to rent or buy. 5.) Keep the small town atmosphere. Housing on existing lots or in town, but not sprawling “Granger” subdivisions.	
235	Develop more small business such as retail/department stores in towns. Home ownership promoted. Build more affordable housing for residents, whether to buy or rent. Hold homeowners responsible for their property maintenance. Bring more jobs to the area.	6/27/2024 12:00 PM
236	Quality Housing,	6/27/2024 11:29 AM
237	Work with the Edwardsburg Sports Complex, a not-for-profit, to add more items for the community. This such as a splash pad, frisbee golf course, a structured summer program for kids that would help with childcare when they are out of school, pickle ball courts, etc.	6/27/2024 11:13 AM
238	Lack of consistent governing To many politics Meeting the needs of the few not the needs of the many	6/25/2024 12:33 PM
239	1. Affordable housing 2. Additional long-term renting options 3. Recreation Areas that have trails 4. Sustainable farming practices 5. If renewable energy fields are brought to Cass Co. please don’t allow them to disturb the beauty of the rural landscape	6/25/2024 12:09 AM
240	Invest in conservation Invest in education Stop solar developments Remove existing blight Develop affordable housing (tiny homes)	6/24/2024 10:15 PM
241	Housing- affordable, Parks upgrade in places other than County seat, Support of Small Businesses, Support of Short Term rentals & Compost Site for food waste/ Recycling	6/24/2024 2:21 PM
242	1. Require responsible lighting. 2. Bike lanes on all roads 3. Allow growth and development in a way that preserves or adds natural areas. 4. Support development of rental apartments and or complexes. 5. Designate areas for farm land preservation and areas for development.	6/19/2024 10:58 AM
243	-More walking trails -More public access to lakes (like Lindbergh Park and Stone Lake, for example) -More childcare / preschool options -More restaurants -More access to grocery stores!	6/18/2024 9:40 PM
244	Affordable housing Affordable Childcare Blight	6/18/2024 10:15 AM
245	Affordable housing. Allow for “tiny” homes for affordability. Bike paths, recreation options for youth and adults.	6/17/2024 7:27 AM
246	Limit residential development. Do not need more housing development even if higher income.	6/16/2024 8:11 PM
247	Attract business Senior housing Housing Child care Lack of in county facilities for domestic abuse, homelessness, housing, etc	6/16/2024 2:14 PM
248	I lived here all my life, if I wanted to live in Mishawaka or Granger I would of moved there	6/16/2024 12:12 PM
249	Housing, medical care	6/16/2024 11:29 AM
250	Ambulance	6/16/2024 11:13 AM
251	Continue to update park & recreation areas, more dining/eating businesses, more Community activities for families (such as outdoor music in the summer), bring more businesses to downtown areas in vacant buildings, and continue to restore the history of our community.	6/14/2024 9:56 AM
252	More housing options More youth/community type centers & activities for youth Ambulance availability More local shops and restaurants Homeless shelter	6/13/2024 9:11 PM
253	Clean up blight and abandon properties. Downtown redevelopment and improvements . Attract jobs and retail options. Capitalize on and facilitate tourism opportunities in Cass County.	6/13/2024 8:40 PM
254	Not a lot to attract people to the towns or city centers. More development needed for natural assets…farmland, natural areas, parks	6/13/2024 6:12 PM
255	Road condition improvement More grocery shopping options Access to high speed internet Transparency with county/township officials	6/13/2024 4:27 PM
256	Too many drug dealers, too many drugs, need more police to make the city and surrounding place feel safe and secure. Families don't want to move into the city due to low police staff	6/13/2024 4:25 PM

	numbers. Housing prices are incredibly inflated, need more housing available. Again more security and less crime.	
257	Child care, housing, recreation/things to do, blight, economic development.	6/13/2024 4:21 PM
258	Blight, residential development, restaurants or other commercial space, road development by new industrial park, from town to K&M.	6/13/2024 3:43 PM
259	More affordable housing for all More child care More shopping options More restaurants More employers	6/13/2024 3:38 PM
260	Preserve farmland Need for some specific economic development Housing Preserve lakes Achieve a balance between rural character and progress	6/13/2024 3:34 PM
261	Limit development Preserve farmland Preserve natural features Preserve rural character Stop wind/solar farming	6/13/2024 2:01 PM

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CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

R-02-26

A RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE MASTER PLAN FOR CASS COUNTY

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, authorizes counties to conduct a Master Plan process.

WHEREAS, the Cass County Planning Commission, utilizing a public process and engaging the residents of Cass County, has created a draft Master Plan.

WHEREAS, the draft Master Plan was distributed to neighboring communities, regional entities, and the general public for review and comment, as required by Public Act 33 of 2008.

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has recommended adoption of the Master Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Master Plan is hereby adopted by the County Commission.

ADOPTED THIS 8TH DAY OF JANUARY, 2026

ATTEST:

Monica McMichael

Monica McMichael, Clerk/Register
County of Cass

Jeremiah Jones, Chair
County of Cass Board of Commissioners



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