

WHITEWATER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
AGENDA FOR SPECIAL MEETING *March 11, 2022*
7:00 p.m., at the Whitewater Township Hall and via Zoom
5777 Vinton Road, Williamsburg, MI 49690
Phone 231-267-5141/Fax 231-267-9020

Zoom access has been implemented by Whitewater Township for the public through 12/31/2022.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87509128655?pwd=UndnS3pYcFhpc1g1NnRaOUF5WXpVdz09>

Meeting ID: 875 0912 8655

Passcode: 861338

Dial by your location

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Kim Mangus, Chairperson – pc4@whitewatertownship.org

Mickey Dean, Vice Chairperson – pc1@whitewatertownship.org

Mike Jacobson, Secretary – PO Box 159, Williamsburg MI 49690

Carlyle Wroubel – pc5@whitewatertownship.org

Alex Darrow – pc2@whitewatertownship.org

Al Keaton – PO Box 159, Williamsburg MI 49690

Vacancy – Township Board Representative

1. Call to Order/Pledge Allegiance
2. Roll Call of Commission Members
3. Set/Adjust Meeting Agenda
4. Declaration of Conflict of Interest
5. **Public Comment:** Any person shall be permitted to address a meeting of the Planning Commission. Public comments shall be carried out in accordance with the following rules and procedures:
 - a. Comments shall be directed to the Commission, with questions directed to the Chair.
 - b. Any person wishing to address the Commission shall speak from the lectern and may state his/her name and address.
 - c. Persons may address the commission on matters that are relevant to township planning and zoning issues.
 - d. No person shall be allowed to speak more than once on the same matter.
 - e. Public comment shall be limited to 3 minutes, excluding the time needed to answer Commission members' questions.
6. Public Hearing: NA
7. Approval of minutes: NA
8. Correspondence: NA
9. Reports/Presentations/Announcements/Comments
 - a. Zoning Administrator, Hall:
 - b. Chair, Mangus:
 - c. Township Board Representative: No representative assigned
 - d. ZBA Representative, Wroubel:

10. Special Meeting Business:

- a. Article 25, Special Use Permit Amendment, draft update
- b. Master Plan, review and consultation with Mr. Grobbel

11. Next Regular Meeting April 6, 2022

12. Public Comment

13. Commission Discussion/Comments

14. Continuing Education: NA

15. Adjournment

Whitewater Township will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services to individuals with disabilities who are planning to attend. Contact the Township Clerk at 231-267-5141.

Chapter X: COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

Introduction

It is important to know the demographic composition of Whitewater Township when planning for its future. Assessed over time, trends emerge and changes become evident that will most likely effect future land uses and community services. In the following sections, information is reviewed regarding Whitewater Township's population by age groups (including senior citizens), employment trends, housing trends, persons with disabilities, population trends and projections, race and ethnic groups, gender, measures of income, etc. In most discussions, 2010 and 2019 U.S. Census data were used directly from the U.S. Census website.¹ When available Whitewater Township data was compared to Grand Traverse County and Michigan census data.

Age Groups

The median age of Whitewater Township residents was 46.5 years in 2019, which is about 10% higher than that of Grand Traverse County at 42.8 years and 20% higher than the State of Michigan at 39.7%. Table 1 compares Whitewater Township's population from 2010 to 2019. Whitewater Township's largest population segment during this period was comprised of Mature Family (45-64 years) persons at approximately 36%.

Whitewater Township's largest population segment in 2010 consisted of Mature Family (45-64 years) at 38.9%. However, there was a relative loss of Mature Family aged persons (a 5-percentage point loss) from 2010 as compared to 2019. A slight increase in the Township's proportion of Family Forming persons (20-44 years) (3 percentage points increase) was observed during this period. While there was a slight increase in Seniors (65-74 years), there was also a slight decrease in school aged children (ages 5-19). This trend could suggest the gradual aging of Whitewater Township's population, and the slow loss of young families. Because Whitewater Township has a relatively small total population, even a small spurt or influx by any age group could significantly alter the Township's age group composition.

¹ United States Census Bureau, *available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=0600000US2605587040&tid=ACST5Y2019.S0101&hidePreview=true>* (last visited November 12, 2021).

TABLE 1 WHITEWATER TOWNSHIP 2010 & 2019 Population Distribution						
Age Group	2010		2019		Change	
					2010-2019	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Preschool	131	5.1%	180	6.4%	+49	1.3%
(0-4 yrs)						
School	578	22.5%	538	19.2%	-40	-3.3%
(5-19 yrs)						
Family Forming	497	19.2%	500	22%	+3	2.8%
(20-44 yrs)						
Mature Family	919	38.9%	946	33.9%	+27	-5%
(45-64 yrs)						
Seniors	276	10.7%	363	13%	+87	2.3%
(65-74 yrs)						
Elderly	175	6.8%	150	5.4%	-25	-1.4%
(75+ yrs)						
Total	2,576	100%	2,793	100%	+217	+8.4%
Source: 2010 and 2019 U.S. Census						

Table 2 compares Whitewater Township's population with that of Grand Traverse County and the State of Michigan. Whitewater Township has a greater percentage of preschool children than the State of Michigan. Whitewater Township also has a higher percentage of school-aged children than the State of Michigan. However, the State of Michigan has a higher percentage of Family Forming aged persons than that of the Township and County. The percentages of Mature Families and Retirement age persons in both Grand Traverse County and Whitewater Township higher than the State of Michigan. These comparisons support the finding that an increasing trend in Townships residents' age currently exists within Whitewater Township.

TABLE 2 AGE GROUP COMPARISONS 2019				
Age Groups	Whitewater Twp.	Whitewater Twp.	Grand Traverse County	State of Michigan
Preschool (under 5 years)	180	6.4%	5.1%	5.7%
School Age (5-19 years)	538	19.2%	19.9%	18.5%
Family Forming (20-44 years)	616	22%	23.8%	31.6%
Mature Family (45-64 years)	946	33.9%	30.6%	26.5%
Retirement Age (65 years & older)	513	18.4%	20.8%	17.6%
TOTALS	2,793	100%*	100%*	100%*

Source: U.S. Census 2019. - ACS Demographic Estimates

*Figures provided by U.S. Census do not equal exactly 100% due to figure rounding.

Household Size

Table 3 below summarizes trends in the size of households from 2015 to 2019.

Whitewater Township's average number of persons per household slightly increased from 2015 to 2019. This appears to be consistent with the decreasing average family size experienced by Grand Traverse County. Never before in our nation's history have so many people lived in such small household groups within so many dwelling units.

TABLE 3 HOUSEHOLD SIZE 2015-2019 (Persons Per Household)		
Community	2015	2019
Whitewater Township	2.60	2.71
Grand Traverse County	2.41	2.44
State of Michigan	2.47	2.47

Source: U.S. Census 2015 - 2019.

Population Trends

Table 4 tracks population trends over an approximately nine-year period from 2100 to 2019, comparing Whitewater Township with Grand Traverse County, and the State of Michigan.

TABLE 4 POPULATION TRENDS				
Community	2010	2015	2019	2010 to 2019 Percent Change
Whitewater Township	2,576	2,708	2,793	+8.4%
Grand Traverse County	86,983	91,541	93,088	+7.0%
State of Michigan	9,952,687	9,900,571	9,965,265	+0.1%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, Years: 2010-2019, Table B01003, last visited on November 10, 2021.

Whitewater Township's slight population increase was higher than Grand Traverse County's population increase during 2010-2019, and more than eight times that of the State of Michigan overall population gain (+0.1%). These population trends suggest that Grand Traverse County and Whitewater Township have been "discovered" as desirable places to live, work, and recreate.

Table 5 represents demographic trends from 2010 to 2019 within Grand Traverse County as a whole. All townships within the county are grouped into small geographic subgroups.

TABLE 5 DEMOGRAPHICS BY COUNTY SUB-AREAS GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY 2010-2019				
County Sub-Area Communities	Population		2010–2019 Change	
	2010	2019	Number	Percent
Northern Grand Traverse County				
▪ Peninsula Twp	5,433	6,068	635	11.7
▪ Acme Twp	4,375	4,456	81	1.9
▪ Garfield Charter Twp	16,256	19,499	3,243	19.9
▪ East Bay Twp	10,663	11,589	926	8.7
▪ Whitewater Twp	2,579	2,688	109	8.4

▪ Traverse City	14,482	15,341	859	5.9
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>53,788</i>	<i>59,641</i>	<i>5,853</i>	<i>10.9</i>
Eastern Grand Traverse County				
▪ Union Twp	405	468	63	15.6
▪ Fife Lake Twp	2,791	1,526	-1,265	-45.3
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>3,196</i>	<i>1,994</i>	<i>-1,252</i>	<i>-39.2</i>
Western Grand Traverse County				
▪ Long Lake Twp	8,662	9,956	1,296	14.9
▪ Green Lake Twp	5,784	6,703	919	15.9
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>14,446</i>	<i>16,659</i>	<i>2,213</i>	<i>15.3</i>
Southern Grand Traverse County				
▪ Grant Twp	1,066	1,212	146	13.7
▪ Mayfield Twp	1,550	1,786	236	15.2
▪ Paradise Twp	4,713	4,952	239	5.1
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>7,329</i>	<i>7,950</i>	<i>621</i>	<i>8.5</i>
TOTAL COUNTY	86,986	95,238	8,252	9.5

Source: U.S. Census 2010 and 2019.

Note: Village populations included in Township total population counts.

Table 5 above shows that the eastern region of Grand Traverse County experienced a substantial rate of population decline between 2010 and 2019. Table 5 also indicates that the fastest growing areas were in the northern and western parts of Grand Traverse County. This substantial population growth experienced in these communities in the past decade is likely attributed to retirement, the migration to residential development along lakes, rivers, and streams. To the contrary Fife Lake Township experienced a significant population loss.

Population Projections

Table 6 presents population projections for 2010 and 2019. Estimating future population numbers helps in planning for community services, recreation, and public facilities needs to adequately serve the additional Township residents while retaining the essential community character and natural resources.

Using a straight-line population projection method based on recent growth trends produced a mid-range population projection estimate for Whitewater Township. The straight-line arithmetic method assumes the population will grow in a linear fashion,

based on the past ten years.

TABLE 6 POPULATION PROJECTIONS						
Entity	2010 Census	2019 Census	2010-2019		2030 Projection	2040 Projection
			Change #	%		
Whitewater Township	2,576	2,793	217	8.4	2,801	3,018
Acme Township	4,375	4,736	361	8.3	5,097	5,458
East Bay Township	10,663	11,621	958	8.9	12,579	13,537
Kalkaska County	17,147	18,038	891	5.2	18,929	19,820
Grand Traverse County	86,983	93,088	6,105	7%	99,193	105,298

Sources: 2010 and 2019 U.S. Census and Michigan Department of Technology, Management & Budget, Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives, www.milmi.org/DataSearch/POPPROJ, last visited November 11, 2021.

Using this population projection method (and recognizing its limitations), the population for Whitewater Township could increase slightly by the year 2040 to 3,018 people.

There are many factors that influence population growth, although most are not easily quantifiable. However, based on the fact that Whitewater Township exists near Traverse City and possesses abundant rural character, along with high quality lakes, rivers, and streams, it is reasonable to project that the Township will continue to grow steadily.

Given these trends and projections, it is likely that Whitewater Township will be an attractive rural area in which to settle through the year 2040. Although Whitewater Township has limited public sewer or water services, it does possess numerous available future home sites and an abundant number of residential lots two acres and larger. Its year-round attraction as a prime recreational area possessing hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, boating, canoeing, and other recreational features, as well as full-time employment opportunities, add to its attractiveness for seasonal and permanent housing.

Racial and Ethnic Composition

Table 7 shows Whitewater Township's racial composition and national origin to be relatively similar to Grand Traverse County with 94.7% of the population reported as white, 2.6% of the population as American Indian/Alaskan Natives, 0.2% reported as black or African American, and 2.5% as Hispanic or Latino. Whitewater Township possesses a racial composition of fewer of all racial and ethnic minorities than Grand Traverse County as whole, except for American Indian/Alaskan Natives, and the State of Michigan overall.

TABLE 7 RACE AND NATIONAL ORIGIN 2019				
Race/National Origin	Whitewater Township Number	Whitewater Township Percent	Grand Traverse County Percent	State of Michigan Percent
White	2,473	94.7%	92.6%	74.7%
American Indian and Alaskan Native	45	2.6%	0.9%	0.5%
Black or African American	5	0.2%	0.9%	13.5%
Asian/Pacific Islander	15	1.5%	0.6%	3.3%
Hispanic or Latino	33	2.5%	2.9%	5.3%
Total (one race/national origin)	2,571	97.5%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census 2019:DEC Redistricting Data (PL 94-171) and Census Reporter, www.censusreporter.org, last visited November 11, 2021.

Population by Gender

Table 8 shows population by gender for Whitewater Township, Grand Traverse County, and the State of Michigan. In 2019 Whitewater Township possessed an even ratio of males to females.

TABLE 8 POPULATION BY GENDER 2019			
	% Male	% Female	All Persons
Whitewater Township	50%	50%	2,793
Grand Traverse County	49.3%	50.7%	93,008
State of Michigan	49.2%	50.8%	9,986,857

Source: U.S. Census 2020:DEC Redistricting Data (PL 94-171) and Census Reporter, available at www.censusreporter.org, last visited Nov. 11, 2021.

Seasonal Housing

Table 9 shows the percentage of seasonal housing for Whitewater Township and three additional Grand Traverse County townships, Grand Traverse County as a whole, and the State of Michigan. Whitewater and Fife Lake Townships show higher rates of seasonal, occasional, or recreational housing uses in 2019 than in 2010. These homeowners likely have more than one home, likely to enjoy seasonal opportunities and/or visit recreational areas at different times of the year. Both the State of Michigan and Grand Traverse County also saw a rise in seasonal housing since 2010.

TABLE 9 PERCENT SEASONAL HOUSING YEARS 2000-2010		
Governmental Jurisdiction	Year 2010	Year 2019
Whitewater Township	271	385
Acme Township	400	343
East Bay Township	720	559
Fife Lake Township	177	243
Grand Traverse County	3,770	4,346
State of Michigan	266,930	289,020

Source: U.S. Census 2010 & 2019

There are several variables to consider when discussing seasonal population. Much depends on how persons completing U.S. Census surveys interpret the words “occupied” and “vacant,” particularly when they reside in two or more different locations at different times of the year. The economic downturn caused by the COVID pandemic has likely contributed to the statewide increase in reported vacant housing units in from 14.6% in

2010 to 17% in 2019 as evidenced in Table 10 below. However, Grand Traverse County as whole experienced an opposite trend in the increased occupation of housing units during this period.

TABLE 10 VACANT HOUSES YEARS 2010-2019		
Governmental Jurisdiction	Year 2010	Year 2019
Whitewater Township	317	385
Acme Township	607	595
East Bay Township	1,074	952
Fife Lake Township	268	318
Grand Traverse County	807	628
State of Michigan	151,452	223,774

Source: U.S. Census 2010 & 2019.

It is assumed that the information provided by the U.S. Census above is useful, together with other data, for Township planning purposes. Whitewater Township's proximity to Elk Lake and its natural resource base will continue to attract seasonal/recreational visitors. It is a fair assumption that the numerous high-quality water resources in the region will continue to be a major attraction for the residents and visitors alike, and that the demand for seasonal dwellings will continue to increase.

Relocation to Whitewater Township and Grand Traverse County

In terms of population mobility, 9.6% of Whitewater residents reported moving into the community since 2018, which is about 2/3rds of the rate in Grand Traverse County 13.6% and Michigan at 13.9%. U.S. Census data show an up-tick in Grand Traverse County's population at 9.5%. Only 0.7% of Whitewater Township's 2019 population reported being foreign-born, which is about a quarter of Grand Traverse County's foreign-born rate at 2.7% and about 10% of the foreign-born rate in State of Michigan at 6.9%. There appears to be an increase in population in Traverse City and in all the townships in the County, except for Fife Lake Township, which reportedly lost nearly half its population. For the rest, the smallest population growth took place in Acme Township, at 1.9%. Traverse City grew by 5.9%. Overall, Grand Traverse County's population increased by 8,252 people. 8.5% of Whitewater Township residents reported status as being U.S. service veterans, about the same as that of Grand Traverse County and about 20% higher than the State of Michigan as a whole. While Grand Traverse County saw an increase in its population, many other parts of the state are experiencing population declines.

Employment by Occupation

Table 11 shows the percentage of employment by occupation for Whitewater Township residents during the period of 2010 to 2019. Whitewater Township's leading occupations in 2019 were Management, Business, Science and Related occupations, followed by Sales and Office occupations and then Service occupations, such as retail, tourism, healthcare support, and law enforcement, etc.

TABLE 11 WHITEWATER TOWNSHIP Estimated Employment by Occupation (Employed Civilian Population, 16 years and Older)								
Occupation	2010				2019			
	Whitewater Township		Grand Traverse County		Whitewater Township		Grand Traverse County	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Management, Professional, and Related	56	9%	2,088	33%	158	30.6%	2,727	38.3%
Service	236	38.1%	1,234	19.5%	75	14.5%	1,230	17.4%
Sales and Office	97	15.7%	1,620	25.6%	104	20.1%	1,689	23.6%
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	18	2.9%	177	2.8%	15	2.9%	198	2.8%
Construction, Extraction & Maintenance	168	27.1%	595	9.4%	72	13.9%	565	8.0%
Production, Transportation & Material Moving	44	7.1%	614	9.7%	92	17.8%	707	10.0%
Total	619	—	6,328	—	516	—	7,065	—

Source: 2019 U.S. Census, and 2010-2019 U.S. Census Estimates

The percentage of people with Social Security income in Whitewater Township 37.8% in 2010. The percentage with retirement income was 30.5%. An additional 5.6% received other supplemental income, such as public assistance benefits like SNAP. In 2019, 37.7% reported social security income; 29.0% with retirement income, and 8.5% with other supplemental public assistance income.

Travel Time to Work

According to the U.S. Census, Whitewater Township residents reported an average of 26.3 minutes of travel time to work in 2019, which is about 25% higher than that for Grand Traverse County residents at 20.9 minutes and 10% higher for Michigan as a whole at 24.6 minutes in 2019. In 2010 the average commute time reported was 25.8 minutes. These numbers suggest that currently a significant proportion of Whitewater Township residents continue to drive an hour or more (i.e., both ways) in daily travel to and from work.

Income Measures

Per capita income in 2019 among Whitewater Township residents was \$33,900/year, which is a little less than that of Grand Traverse County residents at \$35,405 and slightly higher than Michiganders as a whole at \$31,713/year. U.S. Census data in Table 12 below indicate a moderate increase in median family income (6.0%) and median household income (8.3%) in Whitewater Township from 2010 to 2019. Whitewater Township's median household income was \$67,784/year in 2019, which is about 10% higher than that in Grand Traverse County at \$63,757/year and about 20% higher than that of Michigan residents as a whole at \$57,144/year.

As summarized in Table 13 below, during the same period Whitewater Township families living below the poverty line increased from 76 to 96 from 2010 to 2019. People below poverty in Whitewater Township in 2019 were at 3.5% (3% for Children below the age of 18, and 5% for Seniors aged 65 and over) of the Township's population, as compared to 9.6% for Grand Traverse County and 14.4% for the State of Michigan. This trend of increased poverty compares to Grand Traverse County at 7.2% and Michigan at 11.3% at the time of the 2019 census, mirroring the difficult economic climate within Whitewater Township, Grand Traverse County, the State of Michigan and nation during the COVID 19 pandemic.

TABLE 12 WHITEWATER TOWNSHIP Household Income				
	2010	2019	Change	
Household Income			2010-2019	
	No.	No.	No.	Percent
Less than \$10,000	29	15	-14	-48.3%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	22	8	-14	-63.6%

\$15,000 to \$24,999	79	64	-15	-18.9%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	58	73	+15	+25.9%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	176	155	-21	-11.9%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	226	243	+17	+7.5%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	154	164	+10	+6.5%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	158	148	-10	-6.3%
\$150,000 or more	80	159	+79	+98.8%
Total Households	982	1,029	+47	—
Median Income	62,976	67,784	4,808	7.6%
Family Income	2010	2019	2010-2019	
	No.	No.	No.	Percent
Less than \$10,000	8	11	+3	+37.5%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	5	8	+3	+60%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	49	33	-16	-32.6%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	52	57	+5	+9.6%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	143	133	-10	-6.9%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	175	156	-19	-10.9%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	148	139	-11	-7.4%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	152	117	-35	-23.0%
\$150,000 or more	73	150	+77	+105%
Total Families	805	804	-1	—
Median Income	70,298	76,111	5,831	8.3%
Source: U.S. Census 2010 and 2019				

TABLE 13 INCOME STATUS 2010-2019 WHITEWATER TOWNSHIP		
	2010	2019
Median Household Income	\$49,572	\$67,784
Median Family Income	\$54,737	\$76,111
Families Below Poverty Level	3.4%	3.5%

Source: U.S. Census 2010 and 2019; *Poverty level stat taken from 2012 American Community Survey, as 2010 was not available

Household Types

From 2010 to 2019 there were an estimated 982 to 1,029 households in Whitewater Township. The average household size was 2.71 people per household. Families made up 1029 to 805 of the households in the Township, including both married-couple families and other families. There were approximately 185 non-family households in Whitewater Township during this period, most of which were people living alone.

Schools

Whitewater Township exists within the Elk Rapids and Traverse City Public school districts. In the 2019 Census, there were about 718 school-aged children in the Township. This suggests that there is a modest increase in the number of families with school-aged children, as summarized in Table 14 below.

TABLE 14 SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN Whitewater Township, Grand Traverse County, Michigan 2010/2019 School Years				
	2010	2019	Number Change	Percent Change
Up to 9yrs old	256	318	62	24.2%
Ages 10-14	224	232	8	3.6%
Ages 15-19	229	168	- 61	-26.6%

Total	709	718	9	1.3%
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US Census ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates Survey 2010 and 2019

While the number of high-school aged children in Whitewater Township decreased between 2010 and 2019, there was an increase nearly equal to that amount of children age 9 and under. Overall, there was a very modest rise in school-aged children in the township over the past 10 years. With the proportion of elementary students within the school district increasing over this decade, older students between ages 15 and 19 decreased most significantly. These data suggest a continuing, general trend in the overall decrease in average population age within the school district, and increased enrollment in private schools and/or home schooling.

Federal School Lunch Program

Students from families with incomes below 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for free or reduced prices in the federal School Lunch Program. Students from families reporting income between 130 and 185 percent of the federal poverty line are eligible for reduced priced meals, while children from families with incomes below 130 percent of poverty are eligible for a fully subsidized or “free” school lunch meal. See Table 15 below.

TABLE 15 STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH PROGRAM Whitewater Township 2010/2019 School Years			
	2010	2019	Percent Change 2010- 2019
K through 12 th Grades	18%	20%	+2%

Sources: Michigan Department of Education, Food and Nutrition Services, Office of Nutrition, www.michigan.gov/cepi.

Education Level of Population in Whitewater Township, Michigan: 2019

95.5% of Whitewater Township’s population of 25-years and older have earned at least a high school degree or a higher degree, which compares to about the same rate in Grand Traverse County at 95.2% and is slightly higher than the educational rate as a whole in the State of Michigan at 90.8%. 34.4% of this age-group within Whitewater Township have earned a bachelor’s degree or higher, which is a little less than that within in Grand Traverse County at 36% and is higher than Michigan’s population as a whole at 29.1%.

The Elk Rapids School District (05060) in 2019-2020 academic year earned a 87.2% graduation rate as compared to the Traverse City Area Public Schools (TCAPS) District (28010) at 90.5%, with 1,237 enrolled students as compared to TCAPs 8,971 enrolled pupils. Similarly, Elk Rapids schools in 2020-2021 possessed 32.8% economically disadvantaged students, as compared to 33.6% at TCAPS, with a 22:1 as compared to a 24:1 pupil/teacher ratio, at Elk Rapids and TCAPS, respectively. 50% of Elk Rapids and TCAPS students met overall college readiness benchmarks, and 52% of Elk Rapids graduates enrolled in college in 2019-2020, as compared to 65% at TCAPS.

Housing Measures

Owner-Occupied Housing Units

In 2019 1,414 housing units existed in Whitewater Township, 73% of which were occupied and 27% vacant, and about 90% were owner-occupied and 10% were renter occupied. Table 16 below summarizes trends in owner and renter occupied housing units in Whitewater Township from 2010 to 2019. 97% of housing units in Whitewater Township were single-family dwellings. This indicates that the housing stock in Whitewater Township at 89.7% owner-occupied from in 2019, ahead of both Grand Traverse County at 76.3% and an overall owner occupation rate of 71.2% statewide. The median value of owner-occupied housing units in 2019 was \$238,400, as compared to \$212,500 in Grand Traverse County and \$154,900 in Michigan as a whole. These data suggest a stability of homeowner occupation of housing units in Whitewater Township, i.e., houses are less likely to be rented to a third party than in Grand Traverse County or Michigan overall and may represent barriers to young families and others moving into Whitewater Township.

TABLE 16 WHITEWATER TOWNSHIP Owner Occupied/Renter Occupied Housing Units 2019		
	Percent Owner Occupied	Percent Renter Occupied
Whitewater Township	89.7%	10.3%
Grand Traverse County	76.3%	23.7%
State of Michigan	71.2%	28.8%

Source: U.S. Census 2019.

Total Housing Units/Units in Structures

Table 17 below summarizes trends in housing stock within Whitewater Township and Grand Traverse County from 2010 to 2019. The Table shows that the housing stock in

increased during that time period. The average number of persons per housing unit during this period in Whitewater Township was 2.71 persons/household, as compared to 2.4 persons per household for Grand Traverse County and 2.5 persons/household for Michigan as a whole. Married couple represent 77% of households in Whitewater township, as compared male or female householders and non-family occupied homes. Important to consider is the housing affordability needs of future Township residents in comparison with the list prices of new housing and/or costs for constructing additions to existing homes.

TABLE 17
WHITEWATER TOWNSHIP
Total Housing Units/Units in Structure

Housing Units	2010				2019			
	Whitewater Township		Grand Traverse County		Whitewater Township		Grand Traverse County	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1-unit, detached	1,196	92%	25,588	74%	1,342	94.9%	26,540	70.9%
1-unit, attached	57	4.4%	1,279	3.7%	28	2.0%	1,561	4.2%
2 to 4 units	7	0.5%	1,037	3.0%	10	0.7%	1,468	3.9%
5 to 9 units	0	0	1,072	3.1%	0	0	2,070	5.5%
10 or more units	0	0	2,075	6.0%	0	0	3,162	8.5%
Mobile Homes	39	3.0%	3,181	9.2%	34	2.4%	2,607	70%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0	0	0	0	2	0.3%	0	0
Totals	1,299	—	34,578	—	1,414	—	37,408	—

Source: 2010 and 2019 U.S. Census

“—” = Not available.

Year Structure Built

Table 18 below summarizes trends in the age of housing stock within Whitewater Township from 2010-2019. Table 18 indicates that the largest proportion of housing stock in Whitewater Township was constructed either between 1990-1999. Also, a significant number of homes was built between 1960-1979. Consequently, some consideration should be paid to the adequacy of the older housing stock to meet current and future Township housing needs of residents. It is also important to consider the affordability or retrofitting and upgrading older housing stock to meet the future needs of current and future Whitewater Township residents.

Total Housing Units	TABLE 18 WHITEWATER TOWNSHIP Year Structure Built		
	Whitewater Township 2010	Whitewater Township 2019	Change
	%	%	%
2010-2019	--	3.7%	+3.7%
2000-2009	19.3%	16.5%	-2.8%
1990-1999	22.1%	28%	+5.9%
1980-1989	14.1%	12.6%	-1.5%
1960-1979	26.6%	23.8%	-2.8%
1940-1959	8.4%	8.1%	-0.3%
1939 or earlier	9.6%	7.3%	-2.3%
Total	100	100	-0.1

Housing Market Value

Table 19 below summarizes median housing market value estimates for structures built within Grand Traverse County. Table 19 shows the estimated value of the homes based on the year they were built. Assuming this data is generally applicable to Whitewater Township, residents likely have an additional need for affordable housing. Thus, it is important to consider the availability of affordable housing within Whitewater Township.

Year Built	TABLE 19 GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY Median Value By Year Structure Built
2014 or later	\$292,300
2010-2013	\$312,800
2000-2009	\$273,300
1990-1999	\$252,100
1980-1989	\$191,900
1970-1979	\$198,300
1960-1969	\$222,100
1940-1959	\$233,600
1939 or earlier	\$312,600
Average	\$230,973

Source: 2019 Estimate, U.S. Census values only available for Grand Traverse County.

Summary of Findings

This section of the Master Plan provides a description of the community by analyzing and summarizing the demographic composition of Whitewater Township. The fastest growing age groups in Whitewater Township are the Mature Family (aged 45-64 years) and Family Forming persons (aged 20 to 44 years). Household sizes appear to be slightly increasing at 2.71 persons per household in 2019 (2.60 in 2015), while the overall Township population (examined from 2010 until 2019) continued to slightly increase (at 8.4% during the 2010 to 2019). Townships within the eastern portion of Grand Traverse County generally experienced the highest rate of growth from 2010 to 2019, while eastern communities – including Fife Lake Township – experienced very significant population loss. The population of Whitewater Township is expected to increase by a total of 217 people, representing a 8.4% increase from the 2010 population by 2019.

The racial composition of Whitewater Township is predominantly white. Whitewater Township has an important proportion of households indicated as seasonal. With the onset and continuation of the retirement of the baby boomer segment of the population, Whitewater Township will likely see an increased conversion of seasonal to permanent housing and new full-time residences in future year.

Employment by occupation in Whitewater Township was led by Management, Professional and Related Occupations in 2019, while Farm, Forestry and Fishing declined slightly in the Township during this period. The fastest growing occupation within Whitewater Township residents in 2019 was Management, Professional & Related, followed by Sales & Office.

Household income in Whitewater Township increased 7.6% and family income was up 8.3% between 2010 and 2019. Families living below poverty in Whitewater Township rose slightly from 3.4% to 3.5% during this period. Housing stock within Whitewater Township has generally kept pace with Township population and is mostly less than 50 years old.

Chapter X: TRANSPORTATION

Introduction

Michigan law requires a community master plan to include transportation planning, or a “master street plan” (including a Complete Streets analysis and approach). This requirement must be in any community’s plan adopted or amended 90 days after December 17, 2010. More broadly, inventorying existing public infrastructure, such as public roads and thoroughfares, is an important component of the planning process. Public roads within Whitewater Township include state and county-owned and maintains, highways, roads, and streets.



Roads and Transportation

M-72 State Highway exists as the primary east-west route through within Whitewater Township, and Williamsburg Road, a primary paved county road, exists as the primary north-south route through the Township. A two-way stop light exists at the intersection of M-72 Highway and Williamsburg Road. Other paved, primary east-west routes with the



Township include Supply Road, Old M-72, Townline Road, Angell Road, Deal Road, Watson Road, Mable Road, Hawley Road, Crain Road, Ayers Road, Odell Road, Cook Road, and Church Road. Paved north-south, primary, paved county roads include Vinton Road, Broomhead Road, Skegemog Road (with an unlighted, dangerous intersection at M-72 Highway), Munro Road, and Bates Road.

Other generally less-traveled collector and unpaved east-west roads include Bunkerhill Rod, Erickson Road, Crisp Road, Whitney Road, Hursh Road, Guernsey Lake Road, Loosie Road, Gay Road, and Park Road. Collector, unpaved north-south roads include Moore Road.

Seasonal roads while county-owned are typically unpaved with no winter maintenance. Seasonal roads within Whitewater Township include Sand Lakes Road, Roots Lake Road, and Smales Road. Minor collector, paved and unpaved roads in Whitewater Township include Lackey Road, Palestum Road, and Miami Beach Road.

Unpaved, graded gravel roads in the southern portion of the Township are known for their natural beauty, access to high quality lakes, streams/rivers, camping, hunting, trails, mountain biking and other recreational pursuits, and adjoining Sand Lakes Quiet Area, Brown Bridge Quiet/Natural Area, Boardman River, and Pere Marquette State Forest

lands. These routes are pleasant rides at any time of year, but are especially beautiful during the fall color season. M-72 is heavily traveled by cars and trucks, and it and its crossings are generally considered unpleasant and even unsafe for non-motorized travel and pedestrians within Whitewater Township. These and other roads within Whitewater Township can be viewed on the following Base Map on page X-X.



Transportation Trends

Many Whitewater Township roads are unpaved. Development trends are currently increasing the demands for road improvements, potentially ultimately changing the character of rural areas of Whitewater Township and using up limited state and local highway dollars. At the same time an increase in private roads, driveways and other access points along Whitewater Township roads has the potential for increasing the number of hazardous stops and turning patterns. Unregulated private road development and road access can lead to dangerous conditions and increased stop and go traffic, which in turn leads to congestion and the reduces the carrying capacity of roads and public safety.



Complete Streets

Michigan's Complete Streets policy recognizes that the last half-century of transportation planning and design has created many miles of "incomplete" streets within Michigan communities, i.e., those without safe places to walk, bike, or connect with public transportation. Such streets are particularly dangerous for older adults, children, and those living in lower income neighborhoods. The aforementioned populations can

suffer disproportionately from poor street design in many ways including: increased likelihood of illness, injury, and even death; being cut-off from jobs from a lack of or ineffective provision of public transportation options; and access to healthcare professionals, family, and friends. Additionally, the populations mentioned above tend to spend a larger proportion of their budget on transportation than other populations in Grand Traverse County.

As growth occurs in Whitewater Township a connected network of safe pedestrian routes, trails, and shared streets and roads could provides convenient access to all parts of the Township and importantly connecting pedestrians and non-motorized traffic with safe and convenient routes to schools, population centers, retail and services and parks and

recreational resources. Complete streets are designed for equitable access, comfort, and mobility of any and all users regardless of ability, age, income, or ethnicity.

Whitewater Township recognizes Complete Streets as a valuable guiding tool and opportunity to further many of its strategic goals as laid out in the Township's Master Plan. The Township's complete street vision includes:

A Connected Township – By creating and implementing a Complete Streets policy, the Township will work toward a network of connected streets designed for all users.

Inviting Public Spaces – Public roads and streets make up a significant portion of the public infrastructure in Whitewater Township. This policy endeavors to make this public space more comfortable and safe for all users, and expand opportunities for safe, shared use of the right-of-way.

Environmental Responsibility – Complete Streets design also offers the Township the opportunity to make streets more environmentally friendly. Whether through tree and native flower plantings, using permeable pavement where appropriate, or allowing for the separation and safe for bikes, electric bikes, scooters, etc. and auto traffic, there are many options for incorporating environmental practices into complete street designs.

Safe Community – The focus of the Township's Complete Streets policy is to create right-of-ways and road and street crossing that are safe for all users. This policy works to improve the overall design and configuration of streets to promote the safety of all users.

Complete Neighborhoods – Through the implementation of a Complete Streets policy, the Township also promotes completed networks of street and pedestrian infrastructure that connect to the whole Township, street designs that provide safe accommodations for any and all users, thus creating comfortable spaces for residents to walk, run, bike, and enjoy other physical activities.

Economic Vitality – Street design also plays an integral role in creating economically viable places and communities. Through increasing the walkability and over all pleasantness of streets and roads, it makes a place where people want to go to, spending time and money, and to explore. Consequently, Complete Streets design often brings tools to bear to slow traffic, giving travelers the opportunity to notice and frequent Township businesses that could have otherwise been a blur out a car window when passing through commercial corridor(s).

Whitewater Township recognizes that while some in our Township can choose to leave their car at home on a nice day and bike or walk to their destination, there are many who do not have a choice. It is for those users that this policy acknowledges that not every user who moves by a certain mode is the same, i.e., parents with strollers or cycling with children, elders perhaps requiring more time and may benefit more from clear markings and signage when driving, people with vision impairments require audible and tactile stimuli to travel independently, those using wheelchairs, scooters, and strollers need curb ramps and sidewalks that can accommodate them. This policy endeavors to design streets that will meet these needs to the maximum extent possible.

Whitewater Township recognizes that all projects, new, maintenance, or reconstruction, are potential opportunities to apply Complete Streets design principles. The Township will, to the maximum extent practical, design, construct, maintain, and operate all roads to provide for a comprehensive and integrated network of streets, trails, and rights-of-way for people of all ages and abilities throughout the Township.

In order to create a complete network, this policy will apply to all publicly and privately funded projects including: new construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, repair, and maintenance of transportation facilities on roads and streets, and redevelopment projects. All transportation infrastructure and street design projects requiring funding or approval by the Township, as well as projects funded solely or in part by the county, state and/or federal funding, shall comply with the Whitewater Township Complete Streets policy. Private developments and related street and road design components or related components shall also incorporate the Complete Streets policy.

In order to create Complete Streets, the latest design guidance, standards, and recommendations available shall be used in the implementation including, but not limited to:

- The Michigan Department of Transportation Project Design and Development Guidebook
- The latest edition of American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) A Policy on Geometric Design of Highway and Streets
- The United States Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration's Manual on Uniform Traffic Design Controls (2009).
- The Architectural Access Board (AAB) 521CMR Rules and Regulations
- Documents and plans created for Whitewater Township, as available such as bicycle and pedestrian network plans, highway corridor plans, street type design guides, landscape and streetscape design guides.
- The latest edition of the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban StreetDesign Guide

Complete Streets Performance Measures

Complete Streets implementation and effectiveness should be evaluated for success and opportunities for improvement. Furthermore, the Township will develop performance measures to gauge implementation and effectiveness of the policy. These measures will set the baseline understanding for where the Township's infrastructure is currently at. The metrics will also inform goals and project selection for future years.

Metrics to be considered:

- a. Lineal feet of new or reconstructed sidewalks, pathways and bikeways
- b. Miles of new or re-striped on and off-street bicycle facilities
- c. New or reconstructed curb ramps
- d. New or repaired crosswalks
- e. New way-finding or safety signage installed
- f. New street trees/percentage of streets with tree canopy
- g. Percentage complete of bicycle and pedestrian networks
- h. Efficiency of transit vehicles on routes
- i. Percentage of transit stops with shelters
- j. Percentage of transit stops accessible via sidewalks and curb ramps
- k. Multimodal Level of Service (MMLOS)
- l. Auto trips generated
- m. Decrease in rate of crashes, injuries, and fatalities by mode
- n. Pedestrian and bicycle counts (i.e., chart increase in people biking and walking)
- o. Vehicle Miles Traveled trip reductions
- p. PASER rating; pavement conditions
- q. Satisfaction/comfort levels expressed on a preference survey

Complete Streets Implementation

Whitewater Township commits to making Complete Streets practices a routine part of everyday operations including but not limited to site plan review, maintenance activities, and after action evaluation. The Township will train pertinent staff and decision-makers on the content of Complete Streets principles and best practices for implementing policy through workshops, professional development opportunities, and other appropriate means.

The Township shall review and either revise or develop proposed revisions to all appropriate planning documents (i.e., master plan, Planned Unit Develop/site condominium standards, private road design guides, landscape/open space, and recreation planning, etc.), zoning and subdivision codes, laws, procedures, rules, regulations, guidelines, programs, and templates to integrate Complete Streets principles into all

right-of-way projects on and off roads and streets that carry pedestrians, bicyclists, equestrians, and motor vehicles; and include guidance from this updated Master Plan.

Whitewater Township shall develop and maintain a comprehensive inventory of pedestrian and bicycle facility infrastructure that will prioritize projects to eliminate gaps in the sidewalk and bikeway network in the Township's Master Planning process.

Every five years, during the Township shall review and update its Master Plan, including the existing non-motorized network.

Whitewater Township will evaluate its Capital Improvement Projects prioritization to encourage implementation of Complete Streets.

Whitewater Township will utilize inter-governmental, inter-agency, and inter-departmental coordination to promote the most responsible and efficient use of resources for activities within public right of ways.

Whitewater Township will seek out appropriate sources of funding and grants for implementation of its Complete Streets policies, and enhance and support regional efforts to develop public and pedestrian-oriented transportation choices and facilities.

Finally, the Township will also encourage county-wide and regional transportation and access management planning, and coordinate with adjacent counties as well as county, state and federal agencies on transportation planning and implementation. The Township will encourage county-wide trails planning, and coordinate with adjacent counties as well as state and federal agencies on recreational resource planning and implementation.

Public Transportation

The Bay Area Transportation Authority (BATA) provides over half a million rides to residents and visitors of Leelanau and Grand Traverse counties, including Whitewater Township and the city of Traverse City. BATA provides public transportation services to both counties from a voter-approved a multi-year millage.

BATA provides on-line bus schedules and maps will help regional riders find bus loop stop closest to them and offers shelter, benches, and bike racks at numerous established loop pick-up locations. BATA also provides a fixed loop service for downtown Traverse City, and villages in Grand Traverse and Leelanau Counties. Riders outside of fixed bus loops can link to on-demand services to request a ride, similar to Lyft or UBER, and BATA's Village Link service helps rural area riders communicate with BATA Dispatch Services to schedule connections and pick-ups. Since 2017 BATA has grown to employ 120 people, acquired new, greener buses, added and renovated transfer stations.

Summary of Findings

It is anticipated that future residential and commercial development within Whitewater Township will necessarily translate into more vehicle trips on primary Township roads, with calls to straighten curves, build deceleration and passing lanes, erect more signage or even traffic lights, calm traffic, advance its Complete Street policy, etc.

Chapter XX: Economic Development

Michigan and Whitewater Township are facing challenging economic times. This is in significant part due to relatively recent changes in the economy which have moved more toward a service and information-based economy in a global setting. Some call it the “new economy.” In summary some of the characteristics of the new economy include:

- **Entrepreneurship** – including innovative small business start-ups with community support and assistance, such as educational programs, opportunities to network, working within a culture supportive of entrepreneurship, availability to resources, access to business incubators, access to business planning and economic advisors (such as SCORE), etc.
- **Knowledge-based** – within which skills, creativity, and talent are highly-valued and abundant. Economic success often is rooted within an area’s quality of life, natural area protection/conservation, water quality, arts and entertainment resources, recreational opportunities, access to excellent health care and schools, dark night sky, opportunities for quiet/revitalization, etc. Success also relies upon an ability to incorporate knowledge, technology, creativity, innovation, and cooperative public-private-nonprofit endeavors, cooperative regional relationships, regional branding, etc.
- **Global** – Within the existing climate of worldwide economic competition, regions rather than towns or municipalities must be strong economic players necessitating the pooling of resources.

It may help to compare the old economy with the new economy. The following table presents a comparison:¹

Old Economy	New Economy
Inexpensive place to do business was the key.	Being rich in talent and ideas is key.
A high-quality physical environment was key to attracting cost-conscious businesses.	Physical, natural and cultural amenities are key in attracting knowledge workers.

¹ Adelaja, Adesoji “Soji” O., Wyckoff, Mark A., et. al., *New Economy 101: Fundamentals of the New Economy*, Spring 2010; Part 3, PowerPoint, slides #44-45.

Success = fixed competitive advantage in some resource or skill.	Success = organizations and individuals with the ability to collaborate, learn and adapt.
Economic development was government-led.	Partnerships with business/private sector, government and nonprofit sector lead change.
Industrial/manufacturing) focus.	Economic diversity is desired, and clustering of related businesses is desirable.
Fossil fuel-dependent manufacturing.	Communications-dependent & providing services.
People followed jobs.	Talented, well-educated people choose location first, then look for a job.
Location matters.	Desirable places with a high quality of life matter more.
Dirty and hollowed-out communities, and a poor quality environment were common unintended outcomes.	Clean, green environment and proximity to open space, cultural and quality recreational opportunities are critical.

Fundamental to future economic development and economic development planning in the new economy are regionalism and regional strategies. This is important because in the new economy, we are competing with other regions globally. On a smaller scale it may be that Northwest Michigan is competing with Northeast Wisconsin, but on a larger scale the Great Lakes Basin may well be competing with northern India, eastern China, and Brazil. This larger scale has a much greater impact on our future prosperity and the success of economic development for the Whitewater Township geographic area and for Grand Traverse County.

As a result it is important to leverage local assets and align local strategies with those in our region and subregion. It is also to acquire resources and align strategies with the state's economic planning, and within the Great Lakes basin.

Each economic development region, often multiple counties in size, need to have plans that build on unique regional assets, resources, amenities and opportunities. Thereby a region and its counties and municipalities, may capitalize on regional comparative advantage in building regional and global competitiveness. Five Regional Strategic Growth principles have been developed:²

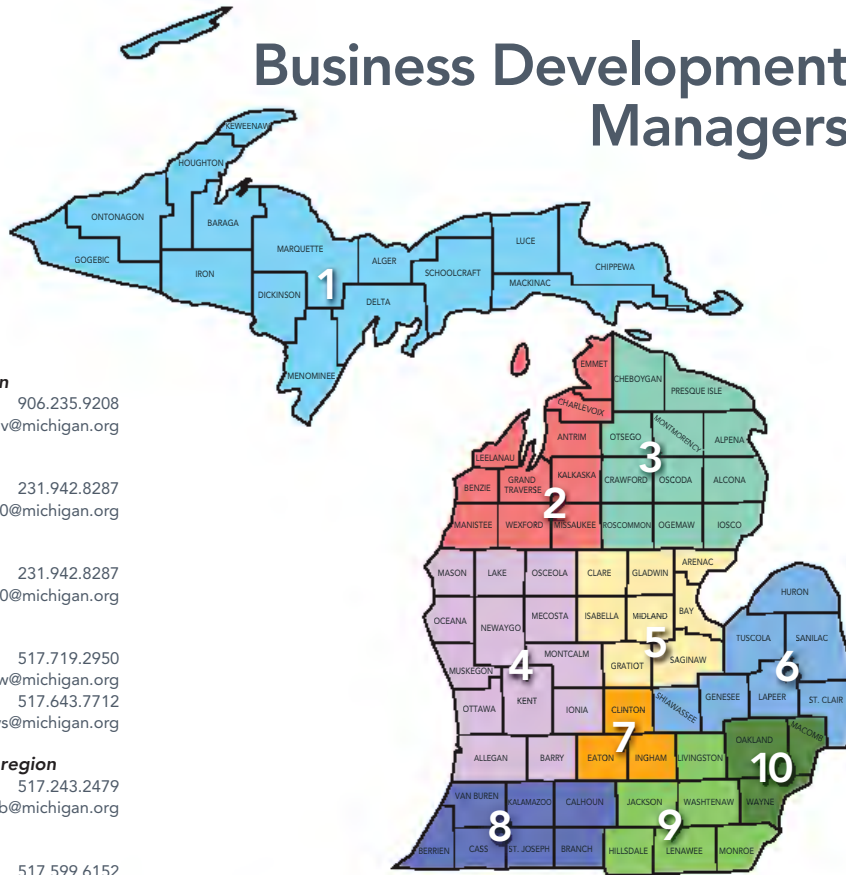
² Dr. Soji Adelaja, Director, Michigan State University, Land Policy Institute, 2007

- Regionalism
- Urban-Rural Interdependency
- Strategic Assets Assessment & Strategic Growth Plan
- Targeting of Resources
- Importance of Regional Plans

This Master Plan update is prepared by Whitewater Township with the intent to complement and work with in Grand Traverse and Kalkaska Counties, which in turn coordinates such planning within the 10-county Northwest Michigan Prosperity Region.³

³ Michigan Economic Development Corporation's Prosperity Initiative Region map, <https://www.michiganbusiness.org/about-medc/regional-prosperity-initiative/>

Business Development Managers



REGIONS

- 1 Upper Peninsula region**
Vicki Schwab 906.235.9208
schwabv@michigan.org
- 2 Northwest region**
Jessie Mitchell 231.942.8287
mitchellj20@michigan.org
- 3 Northeast region**
Jessie Mitchell 231.942.8287
mitchellj20@michigan.org
- 4 West Michigan region**
Bill Kratz 517.719.2950
kratzw@michigan.org
Sam Sedlecky 517.643.7712
sedleckys@michigan.org
- 5 East Central Michigan region**
Brenda Flory 517.243.2479
floryb@michigan.org
- 6 East Michigan region**
Tyler DeBrabander 517.599.6152
debrabandert@michigan.org
Joe McCulloch 517.896.4346
mccullochj3@michigan.org
- 7 South Central region**
Tyler DeBrabander 517.599.6152
debrabandert@michigan.org
- 8 Southwest region**
Brenda Stewart 517.282.8541
stewartb6@michigan.org
- 9 Southeast Michigan region**
Jim Coutu 517.420.1647
coutuj@michigan.org
- 10 Detroit Metro region/City of Detroit**
Genna Hines 517.599.5388
hinesg@michigan.org
- 10 Detroit Metro region/Macomb County**
Ricardo Gonzalez 517.449.7645
gonzalezr3@michigan.org

- 10 Detroit Metro region/Oakland County**
Amanda Baker 517.285.9080
bakera22@michigan.org
Amanda Eisbrenner 517.420.0977
eisbrennera@michigan.org
Elizabeth Weir 517.930.6361
weire2@michigan.org
- 10 Detroit Metro region/Wayne County**
Andrea Benson 517.420.1614
bensona5@michigan.org
Genna Hines 517.599.5388
hinesg@michigan.org
Elizabeth Weir 517.930.6361
weire2@michigan.org

Michigan Tribes
Tom Durkee 517.763.4437
durkeet@michigan.org

See page 2 for specific county/city breakdowns within each region.

Regional director assignments

BDMs within each region report to an MEDC regional director:

Regions 1–4, 7–9, Tribal:
Ryan Hundt 517.614.1274
hundtr1@michigan.org

Regions 5, 6, 10:
Nicole Thomson 248.766.5794
thomsonn1@michigan.org



**MICHIGAN ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

Whitewater Township's efforts are not able to be everything to everybody, but it is part of a region that can strive to be. When coordinating with subregion and regional plans, the process in preparation of this plan was to determine which parts of those subregion and region plans should link to specifics for this part of Grand Traverse County. For example an analysis was done by looking at various planning maps, such as special and unique areas, to identify features who's spacial extent includes territory in the jurisdiction of Whitewater Township and beyond, and features who's spacial extent is completely with in the territory of Whitewater Township, but raises to a subregion or regional importance. This review was done across all aspects of planning for:

- Sustainable economic development.
- Attract talent and sustaining population.
- Diversify regional economy.
- Expand our markets.
- Embrace the new economy & its focus on regional public transportation and alternative energy.
- Promote and support entrepreneurialism.
- Focus on talent retention and new talent attraction.
- Focus on population retention and attraction of family-aged new residents
- Focus on effective place-making and place-based strategies.
- Right size and maintain our physical and social infrastructures.
- Continue workforce development and increase participation in lifelong education.
- Create regional asset-based economic development strategies.
- Work cooperatively to identify and target new resources to implement regional strategies.
- Reform financing of public services and investments in our future.
- Use Strategic Growth Planning to attract federal and other resources.

- Foster distinctive, attractive places with a strong sense of place.
- Create walkable neighborhoods within appropriate areas.
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
- Mixing land uses.
- Provide a variety of transportation choices, including non-motorized, pedestrian-based transportation (i.e., Complete Streets).
- Preserve/conserve open space, productive farmland, historic, and environmentally significant areas.
- Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities and existing infrastructure.
- Take advantage of compact building design. and low impact development (LID) and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for Neighborhood Development.
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration.
- Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective.
- New Urbanism
- Livable, healthy and sustainable communities (i.e., economic, environmental and social sustainability)

Michigan Strategic Growth

The Michigan Strategic Growth Plan combines the following elements:

- New Economy Principles
- Pillars of Prosperity
Sustainability
- Principles of Strategic Growth

- Smart Growth.

Each of these elements need to come together for a region of the state to capitalize on and succeed in job creation in the next couple decades. Each element is covered in more detail here.

New Economy Principles

The New Economy principles focus on the following:

- Communities with people who are rich in talent
- Communities that can attract such talent
- Presence of physical and cultural amenities
- Communities which can learn and adopt
- Communities that create partnerships, i.e., business + government + non-profits

Pillars of Prosperity

The process of building a prosperous community is built upon a few basic pillars or building blocks:

- Vibrant and successful communities
- Thriving agriculture and productive, intact forestlands
- Inclusive and entrepreneurial culture
- Natural resource conservation/protection for recreation and jobs

Principles of Sustainability

Specific programs put in place by Whitewater Township should be sustainable. “Sustainability” can be thought of as being built upon the following three characteristics, and are adjusted from time-to-time to remain in balance over the long-term:

- Economic

- Environmental
- Political
- Social Equity

Principles of Strategic Growth

The following are the basic principles of strategic growth, and each requires a county-wide or regional approach:

- **Regional:** The “Michigan Strategic Growth Plan” must be implemented on a regional basis, i.e., thinking in terms of regions rather than villages, cities, townships, or even counties. Think in terms of regions, one can identify areas where people move about to live, work, play, shop, i.e., an area which is always larger than one municipality.
- **Urban-rural interdependency:** A number of “Michigan Strategic Growth” strategies can only be accomplished in rural areas, and others are only possible to do in urban areas - but both must be done. A “region” includes both urban and rural municipalities, and as they are interdependent on one another, these entities must work together.
- **Strategic assets assessment & strategic growth planning:** Regional assets must be identified and then planning can take place to: (1) describe and map assets to initiate coordinated multi-jurisdiction planning and/or management; (2) market and capitalize on those assets as selling points to attract talented people to the region (i.e., future economic development); and (3) take steps to ensure those assets are protected/conserved as vital parts of the community’s character, natural environment, economy, etc.
- **Targeting resources:** Coordination between municipalities to identify tools, actions, budgets to implement a regional plan.

Smart Growth

Following are ten (10) principles of “Smart Growth.” Whitewater Township with this Master Plan update, adopts these principles as the basis for planning and recognizing these as state land use goals:

- Mix Land Uses
- Compact Building Design
- Increase Housing Choice
- Encourage Walking
- Offer Transportation Variety
- Create Sense of Place
- Protect Farms, Unique Natural Features, Open Spaces
- Direct New Development to Existing Communities
- Make Development Process Fair, Predictable, Efficient
- Involve Stakeholders

These principles are intended to help achieve the long-term goal of sustainable development in the jurisdiction of Whitewater Township. These principles aim to ensure the needs of the present generation are met without compromising the quality of life for future generations. The goals, objectives, strategies, methods, and policies that contribute to this Master Plan update should supersede in the event of a conflict. In short, smart growth is development that serves the economy, community, and the environment. Smart growth provides a framework for communities to make informed decisions about how and where they grow.

Whitewater Township has adopted these principles because:

It makes Dollars and Sense

- Financially Conservative
- Environmentally Responsible
- Socially Beneficial

It is Financially Conservative

- Responsible use of public money
- Reuse existing buildings
- Use existing roads and highways
- Use higher density to maximize the value of publicly-funded facilities and services
- Keep taxes and public service costs low

Environmentally Responsible

- Use and/or reuse developed areas
- Keep impervious surfaces to a minimum through dense development
- Build to fit existing land rather than changing the land to fit what is built
- Avoid oversized lots and yards to reduce excessive mowing, fertilizing, etc.

Socially Beneficial

- Encourage people to live close enough to be another, where appropriate, to create opportunities for social interaction.
- Design residential areas for conversation from the sidewalk to the front porch
- Encourage “eyes on the street” at all hours to reduce crime and fear of crime concentrating dense development

Regional Planning

To support regional planning, Whitewater Township shall:

- Recognize that member Township’s natural resources and community are connected to and an important part of much larger systems, and that both often cross other boundaries and can impact other natural and human communities.

- Be aware that decisions in one community may affect other nearby communities, encourage and promote cooperation among local governments on development decisions that affect more than one community.
- Enhance communication and cooperate with adjacent Townships, Grand Traverse County and nearby Counties on planning and other shared issues.
- Engage and fully utilize planning resources and assistance provided by the Networks Northwest regional planning agency.
- Support regional strategies to better protect and preserve forestlands, waterways, active farmland, open spaces and other natural features along Township boundaries.
- Support and promote consistency between this Master Plan update, the *2015 Whitewater Township Master Plan* and adjacent townships' master plans.
- Encourage county-wide and regional transportation and access management planning, and coordinate with adjacent counties as well as county, state and federal agencies on transportation planning and implementation.
- Encourage county-wide trails planning, and coordinate with adjacent counties as well as state and federal agencies on recreational resource planning and implementation.
- Direct future appropriate commercial uses to established, mixed residential and commercially zoned areas within member Townships (i.e., the rural town center of Williamsburg, etc.).
- Cooperate with county, regional, state and federal agencies to facilitate a range of housing choices.
- Enhance and support regional efforts to develop public and pedestrian-oriented transportation choices and facilities.

Chapter XX: Blighted Areas

Blighted properties in Michigan is not just a big city problem, there also are a challenge in rural areas of Michigan, including Whitewater Township. Homes that are occupied and well-maintained increase the property values of the area and improve quality of life in that neighborhood. Maintaining the value of properties within a Township can attract both community and economic development. Blighted property can be described as land that is dilapidated, unsafe or unsightly. Michigan municipalities, including Townships, may develop ordinances outlining the specific criteria for what is considered a blighted property, and how there are to be addressed.

The State of Michigan has recognized the problem of rural blight by making grants available to smaller, rural communities to address blight. Emerging research on rural blight has highlighted its prevalence, and has noted that rural blight requires different handling than urban blight.

Michigan law defines a “blighted area” as a developed or undeveloped business or residential property marked by a demonstrated pattern of deterioration in physical, economic, or social conditions, and blight is a localized issue that affects both urban and rural areas.¹ The Michigan definition of a “blighted property” consists of property:

- a. that has been declared a public nuisance,
- b. is an attractive nuisance because of physical condition or use,
- c. is a fire hazard or otherwise dangerous to safety of persons or property,
- d. disconnected, destroyed or removed utilities for a year or more,
- e. is tax-reverted,
- F. under the control of land bank,
- g. vacant for 5 years or more and not maintained in accordance with local property or housing codes or ordinance, or
- h. code violations at the property pose a sever and immediate health and safety threat, and has not been substantially remediated within 1 year of receiving a notice to rehabilitate

¹ Blighted Area Rehabilitation Act, Public Act 344 of 1945, as amended.

The identification of blighted properties is somewhat subjective and difficult to quantify as blight may be observable at different stages of severity. Blight may therefore be considered a stage of depreciation rather than an objective condition, which means that blight is created over time through neglect, vandalism or other damaging actions. Since blight can be locally subjective, the conditions that constitute blight may be broadly construed to permit a Township to make an early identification of problem, and to take quick remedial action to correct a demonstrated pattern of deterioration blight conditions. However, an overly broad definition of blight can provide too much discretion, and it can be a challenging balancing act for a local unit of government.

When blight is not addressed, it tends to get worse. Moderate blight can worsen and spread to nearby properties, creating pockets of blight, if it is not addressed. Blighted properties can also be shelters for illegal activity, and havens for the infestation of nuisance animals. Such conditions do not benefit surrounding properties or the community as a whole.

In Michigan communities, it is estimated that 70 to 80 percent of the blighted residential properties are rental properties.² This can lead to a cyclical problem where the issues of blight are not remedied by the property owner because they do not live on the property or by renters because they do not own the property. Renters can get stuck living in unsanitary conditions, yet also face losing their shelter if blight is not addressed. Blight tends to most impact individuals with lower socioeconomic status, and it usually is more severe in communities that are fiscally challenged. This makes managing and preventing blight are real challenge in many communities.

Current Michigan Tools to Manage Blight

The state does provide local governments, both urban and rural, with the authority to address blight through a number of state laws. The Blighted Area Rehabilitation Act³ defines blight and gives counties and local governments the authority to prevent, eliminate, or rehabilitate blight through purchase, condemnation, and/or eminent domain. The Neighborhood Area Improvements Act⁴ authorizes local governments to carry out public improvements in neighborhoods to prevent blight. Further state laws deal with blight prevention through economic

² <https://www.lenconnect.com/story/news/local/2021/12/14/adrian-committee-10-million-investment-10-years-blight/6495336001/>

³ Michigan Public Act 344 of 1945, as amended.

⁴ Michigan Public Act 208 of 1949, as amended.

development or provide public-private partnerships to fund blight remediation through tax-increment financing.

A significant tool in the Michigan for managing blight is the state's land bank program. State law provides for the creation of land bank fast track authorities to assist local governments in remediating blight.⁵ Land banks assist local governments by acquiring property and quieting or clearing titles when necessary. Land banks may take title of properties that the private market is not interested in because of the costs of remediation or the associated delinquent taxes. The first land bank was created in 2004, and Michigan now has 46 individual county land banks, including Grand Traverse County's Land Bank Authority, and one state land bank that serves the remaining 37 counties.

Land banks can help communities address blight, but they cannot ameliorate all instances of blight, and have not been without controversy. They must be held accountable and transparent and complement other community efforts to prevent and remediate blight within the communities that they serve.

Michigan Guidance for Addressing Blight

The Michigan Vacant Property Campaign (MVPC) was organized in 2012 to assist local and state leaders in turning their vacant properties, including blighted properties, into community assets. The MVPC is a partnership among the Michigan Center for Community Progress, Community Economic Development Association of Michigan, Michigan Community Resources and Michigan Municipal League. Each partner provides specific expertise to address blight and property vacancy issues.

The Michigan Blight Elimination guidebook was developed by MVPC under the leadership of Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), is written to assist local leaders in identifying their community's blight issues as a starting point and obtaining specific community data to develop a plan for elimination. The guidebook recognizes that every community has different issues and challenges but they all have limited resources. It offers communities a variety of blight elimination non-financial resources and helps prepare them for future funding opportunities that may become available through state agencies, foundations or national organizations.

⁵ Michigan Land Bank Fast Track Act, Public Act 258 of 2003, as amended.

The guidebook covers 5 steps in addressing blight:

1. Assessing Blight: collect and analyze data regarding blighted properties in the Township
2. Setting Goals: determine Township goals in addressing blighted properties
3. Available Resources: identify tools, partners, and potential funding sources
4. Making a Plan: publicly develop a strategic plan to address blighted properties; and
5. Plan Implementation: undertake the plan to address blighted properties, evaluation success, update the plan as needed.

The Michigan Department of Treasury and the Michigan State Land Bank Authority (SLBA) provide joint blight elimination grants of up to \$200,000 is available for “Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC)” to address blight in their communities. A total of \$800,000 is awarded annually with a maximum project award of \$200,000 per Redevelopment Ready Community.

To be eligible Michigan communities must be certified by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) are “redevelopment ready.” Eligible properties must be publicly-owned, and must pose an immediate public safety or health risk. Awarded funds are on a basis of reimbursement for actual costs, and funded activities must be completed by September 1 of the award year. All documentation for final payment must be submitted by September 5 of the year.

Priority is given to proposed blight elimination project that pose an immediate risk to public safety and health of the community residents, which may include, but are not limited to:

- Has had utilities, plumbing, heating or sewerage disconnected, destroyed, removed, or rendered ineffective so that the property is unfit for the intended use.
- Has contamination requiring immediate remediation.
- Failure to demonstrate any immediate public safety and health issue may lead to disqualification.

Blight elimination proposals are evaluated based on their anticipated impact in promoting public safety and health, enhancing economic development, public and private investment in the project, and their alignment with a Township’s Master Plan or other place-making effort.

Applicant communities must also demonstrate the capacity to administer the grant funds in a cost-efficient manner and to meet applicable deadlines including specific information on staffing,

status of procured contractors and ability to procure and manage the project. Applicants may be asked for additional information and documentation.

Additionally, the SLBA provides guidance to assist local units of government in establishing their own local mechanism(s) to address blight removal/demolition using the Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act.⁶ The SBLA is charged with assisting local units of government in accessing brownfield redevelopment funds to redevelop brownfield properties and facilities, i.e., under-utilized, dilapidated and/or contaminated properties.

Addressing Blight Requires Constant Vigilance

Communities, both big and small, urban and rural, are constantly attempting to manage and prevent blight. Some are using a regulatory approach and others are applying economic development tools to prevent blight, or a mixture of the two. Some communities rely on land banks, and others on committees or local government officials to identify, monitor, and ameliorate blight. Communities across the State rely on tax revenues, federal and state grants, and other funds to address issues related to blight.

Other resources for Whitewater Township in addressing blighted properties and areas:

- Center for Community Progress, headquartered in Flint, Michigan, is the only national nonprofit organization solely dedicated to building a future in which entrenched blight and vacancy no longer exist. [Community Progress](#) offers technical assistance, education, research, and policy development to municipalities and states nationwide.
- Community Economic Development Association of Michigan (CEDAM) provides policy and advocacy work, technical assistance, and education opportunities to Michigan nonprofit organizations involved in community economic development.
- Michigan Community Resources (MCR) supports and empowers nonprofit community organizations in Michigan that serve low-income individuals and communities, with an emphasis on community economic development, by providing pro bono legal services and technical assistance.
- Michigan Township Association (MTA) provides legal advice, advocacy, training, information, and technical assistance to Townships.
- Michigan Land Bank Authority provides blight elimination grants for municipalities to address blighted properties with “redevelopment ready” communities.
- Michigan State University Extension provides information on home maintenance.

⁶ Michigan Public Act 381 of 1996, as amended.