

HAYES TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

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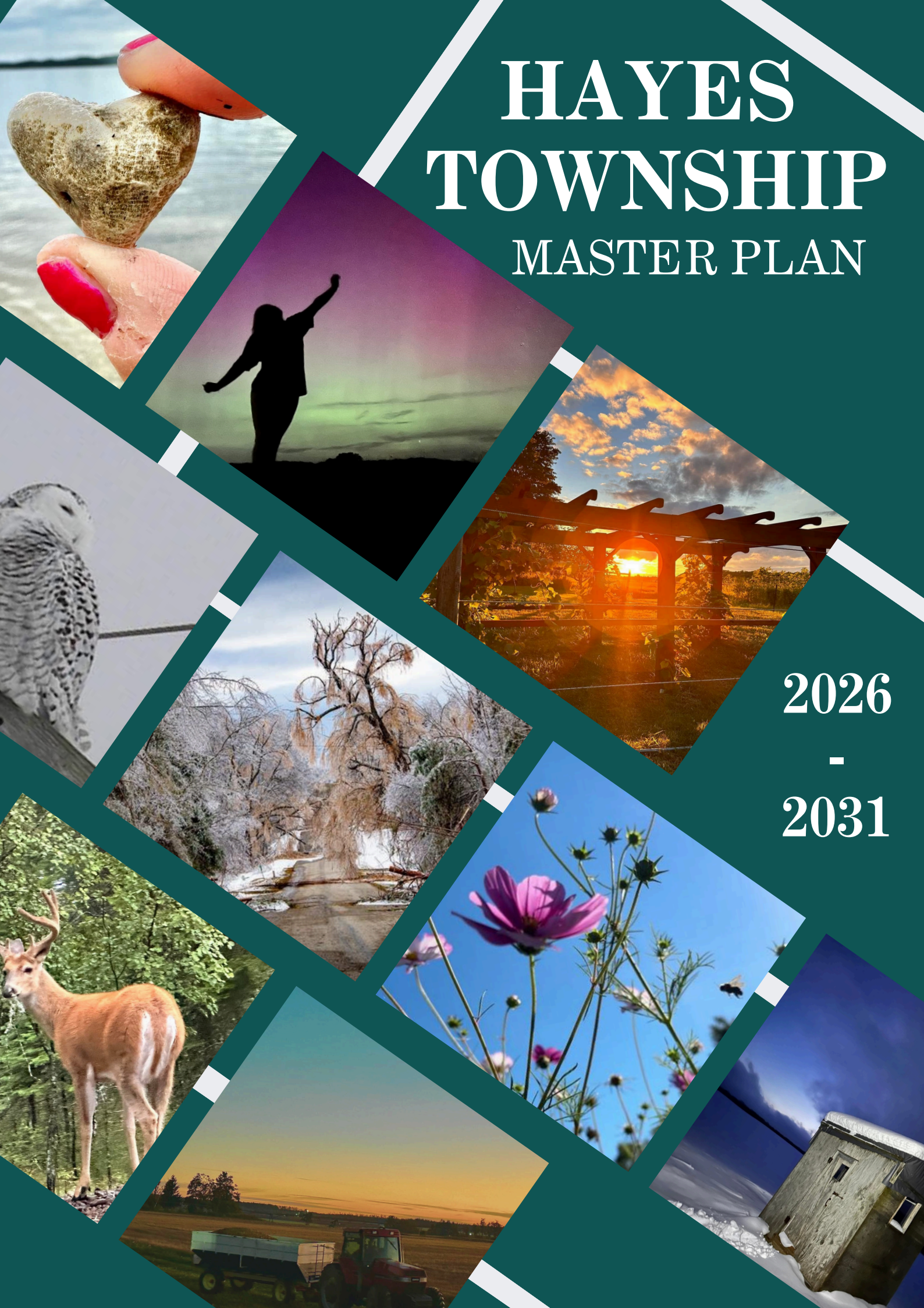


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Socio-Economic Data Sources:
2023 American Community Survey
US Census
Otsego County Equalization

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Introduction and History 1

The Purpose and Process of a Master Plan

The purpose of the Hayes Township Master Plan is to provide guidelines for future physical development of the community while protecting water resources, other natural resources, and rural township character. This plan presents background information for the Township and the surrounding area, including social and economic data, description and mapping of natural resources, housing inventory, and inventory of existing community facilities. The background information is analyzed to identify characteristics, changes, and trends occurring in Hayes Township. Community concerns are identified based on the Township Board and planning committee's comments and input provided at public meetings and public surveys. Community goals and policies are presented to guide future development based on these background studies, key land use trends, and community issues. These goals, along with a map of existing land uses, provide the basis for the Future Land Use Map. The Future Land Use Map recommends locations for various types of future development within the Township.

According to Michigan law, a zoning ordinance must align with an adopted Master Plan to be valid and enforceable. In 2024, wishing to pursue master planning for the community as an independent governmental unit and break from the County's Master Plan, Hayes Township engaged in a process to create its first Master Plan.

The authority to develop the master plan is provided through the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended. Public Act 33 of 2008 requires the Planning Commission to hold a public hearing before the final adoption of a master plan as well as when the Planning Commission alters, amends, or expands the scope of its master plan after its original adoption.

A Master Plan is generally described by these characteristics:

- **Future Oriented:** The Plan outlines long-term strategies for growth and land use, serving as both a snapshot of the community today and a guide for its development over the next five to ten years.
- **General:** The plan sets broad principles and policies to guide future growth and land use.
- **Comprehensive:** The plan addresses all types of land uses and the practical geographic boundaries of each.
- **A Plan:** The land use plan is a tangible document, which consists of both text and maps, with maps typically illustrating the policies set forth within the text.

Master Plans serve to:

- Seek citizen input on needs and services.
- Provide an overall perspective of the land, how it is being used, and how it should be used in the future.
- Create a general statement of the goals and objectives of the community.
- Preserve the quality of life in the community.
- Promote public health, safety, and welfare for the region's citizens.
- Guide the use of limited resources and preservation in the most effective manner possible through clear and logical zoning decisions.

The Master Plan aims to preserve and develop a community that benefits both its residents and neighboring areas. To accomplish this, the Plan provides an analysis of the community's existing resources and serves as a guide for making informed land use decisions.

Master Plans do not carry the force of law; rather, they serve as guides meant to be regularly referenced and updated. The Future Land Use Plan is a central element of the Master Plan, informing decisions related to zoning, capital improvements, utility expansions, land divisions, and interactions with neighboring communities. It is important to note that, as a guide rather than an engineering tool, the maps in this document should not be used to measure property lines, serve as a definitive source for tax purposes, or determine precise boundaries for floodplains or wetlands.



History

Hayes Township was incorporated in 1877 as a general law township and named in honor of then-President Rutherford B. Hayes. Classified as a double township, it encompasses approximately 46,000 acres across 72 sections of land, including Township 29N R4W and Township 30N R4W, located on the western edge of Otsego County.

Lumbering played a foundational role in the early growth of Hayes Township and northern Michigan. The DeWard Hills area, situated in the township's southwest corner, is recognized by the State of Michigan as a historic representation of the region's lumbering industry. The expansion of the lumber trade spurred the development of railroad infrastructure, which supported economic growth across the township and surrounding areas. Many local roads still bear the names of early settlers and pioneers who shaped the community.

Agriculture also significantly influenced the township's development. Large farming operations were vital to the local economy, including the notable Skops Dairy and the Estelle family's potato farm. Estelle Farms remains active today, recognized especially for its strawberry production.

Between 1870 and 1890, Hayes Township operated four rural schools serving the local community. One was located near the intersection of Hayes Tower Road and Lake Manuka Road, another at Van Tyle Road and Cogier Road. The Section 13 School stood along Mancelona Road, while the Swanson School was near Lynn Lake Road. These early schools reflect the township's longstanding commitment to education. A comprehensive history of rural schools in the county is available through the Otsego County Historical Society.

In the early 1900s, Hayes Grange #871 began constructing a meeting hall at the southwest corner of Van Tyle Road and Estelle Road. Facing funding shortages, the Grange partnered with Hayes Township to complete the building. The township used the main floor for official meetings and social events, while the Grange held meetings on the second floor.

In the 1980s, the Grange added a second building on the east side of the property to support its activities. By 1993, the original township hall was sold to a private owner after a new hall was constructed at the corner of Hayes Tower Road and M-32 West. This site, formerly a nursery, saw construction begin in 1992 and is located adjacent to the Hayes Township Cemetery.

Significant residential growth in Hayes Township began with the subdivision of large land tracts. Lake Arrowhead, one of the township's major developments, includes six subdivisions with approximately 1,500 lots and acreage parcels. Six subdivisions around Manuka Lake further contributed to seasonal home growth.

Wilderness Valley, in the southern portion of Township 29, was a key development featuring a golf course that attracted both seasonal and year-round residents. A second golf course, Black Forest, was later added in the southern part of the development. Although both golf courses have since closed, they played important roles in early residential growth.

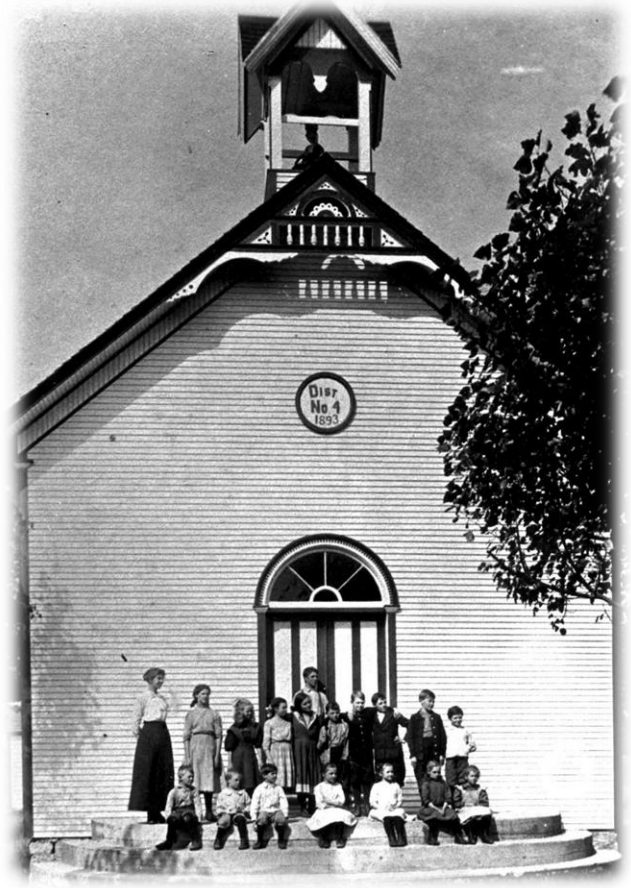
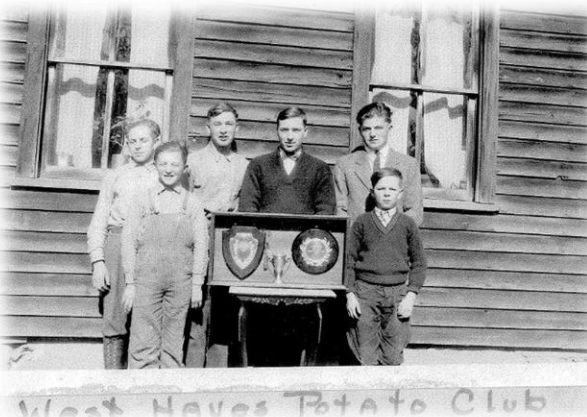
Developer Jack Morris also contributed to expansion by surveying and dividing large portions of Township 30 into 10-acre tracts, leading to new homes and increased population.

The Antrim gas and oil industry began in Hayes Township in 1969 with Shell Oil's opening of the Gaylord–Tecon Lake Field. Rapid growth throughout the 1970s and 1980s spread energy development across nearly the entire township. During this time, Otsego County became Michigan's leading source of natural gas production. Hayes Township was at the center of this boom, with thousands of wells drilled, which brought significant economic benefits and infrastructure development.

Winter sports have gained popularity in Hayes Township, with well-maintained snowmobile and cross-country ski trails attracting outdoor enthusiasts. The township's proximity to nearby ski areas has further supported seasonal growth and tourism.

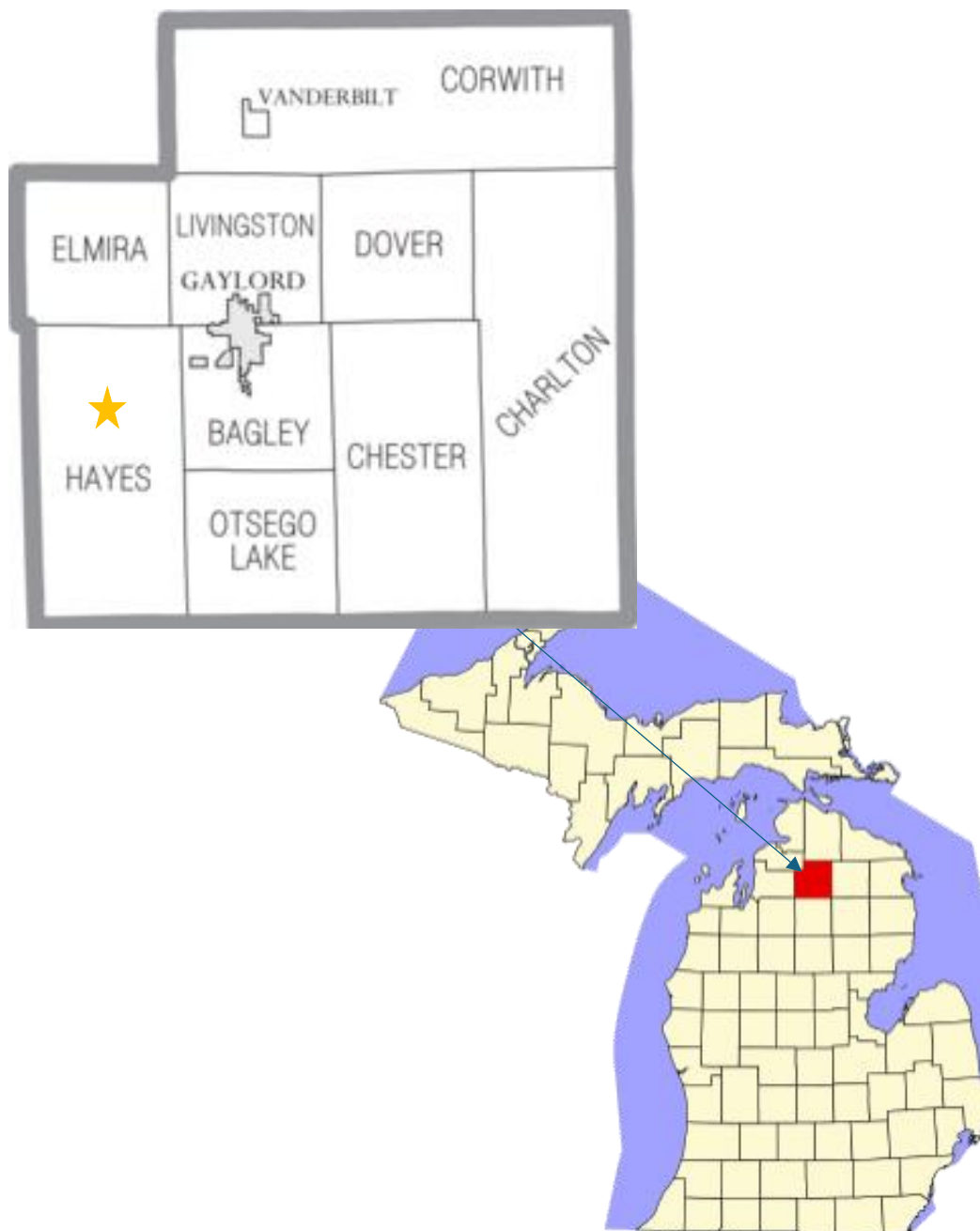
Primarily a bedroom community, Hayes Township lacks a defined town center. The construction of the I-75 expressway in the 1960s enhanced access and travel to the area, facilitating economic growth. Nearby employers such as Standard Products and US Plywood provided steady employment, supporting the local economy.

In 1986, Grace Baptist Church opened at the eastern boundary of the township on South Townline Road. The church remains active today and operated a private school on the site for many years, serving as an important institution within the community.



Location

Hayes Township is located on the southwest side of Otsego County. Hayes Township is bordered by Bagley and Otsego Lake Townships to the east, Livingston and Elmira Township to the north, Antrim County's Star and Mancelona Townships to the west, and Kalkaska County's Blue Lake Township and Crawford County's Fredric and Maple Forest Townships to the south.



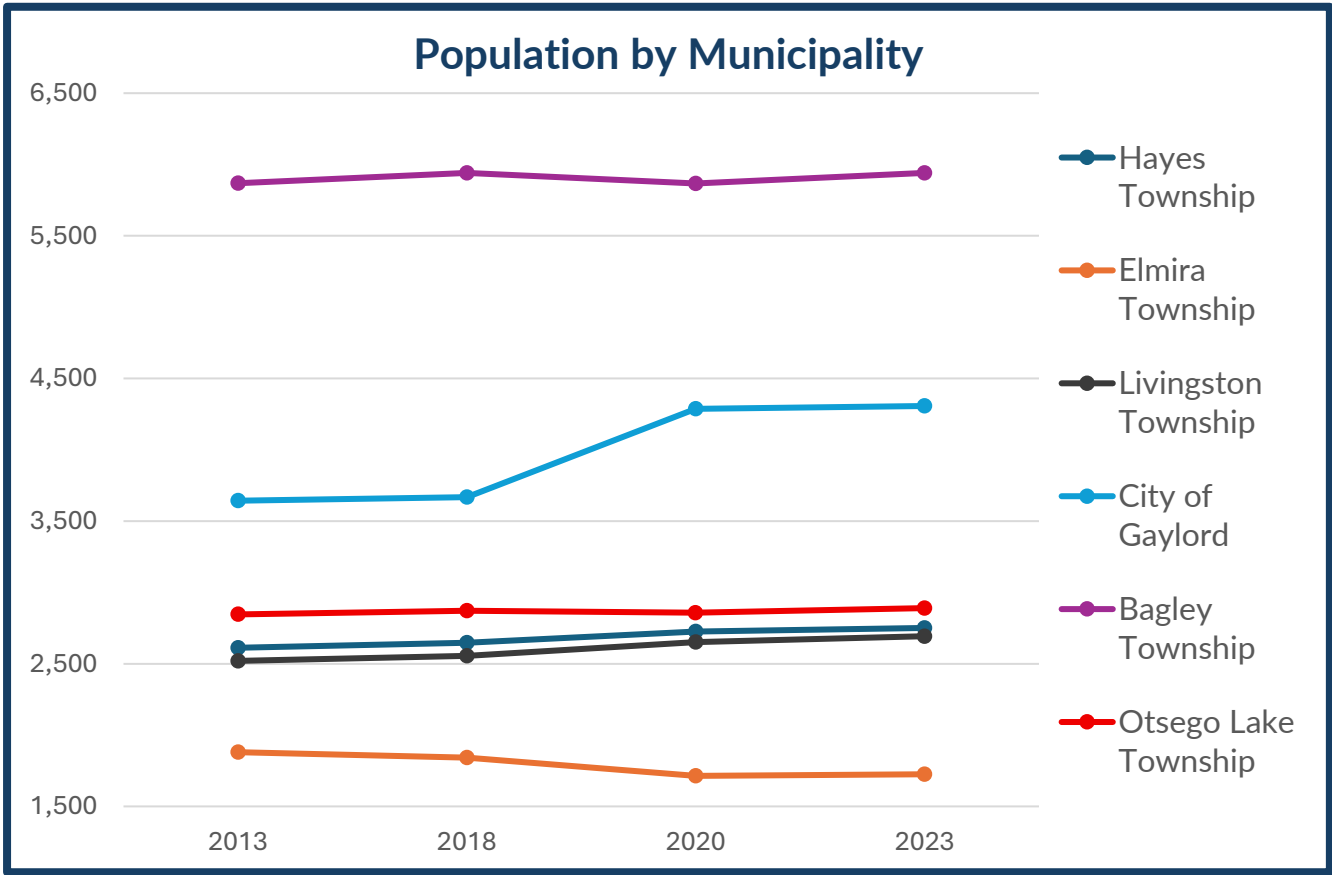


Population and Age Distribution

The population trends in Hayes Township and Otsego County show significant fluctuations over the years. While Hayes Township experienced a drastic decrease in population in the 1930s, possibly due to the lumbering era coming to an end, both areas have shown steady growth since then. Hayes Township saw a slight increase in population from 2013 to 2023, similar to Otsego County. This contrasts with most other counties in the northeast region.

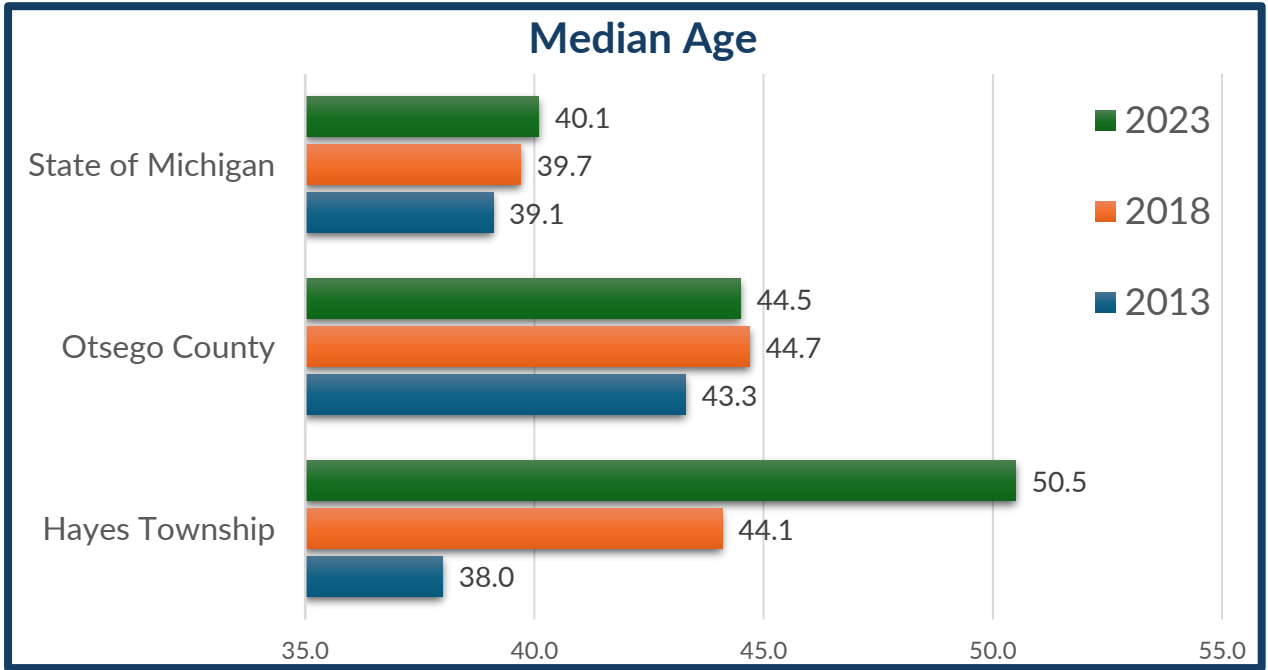
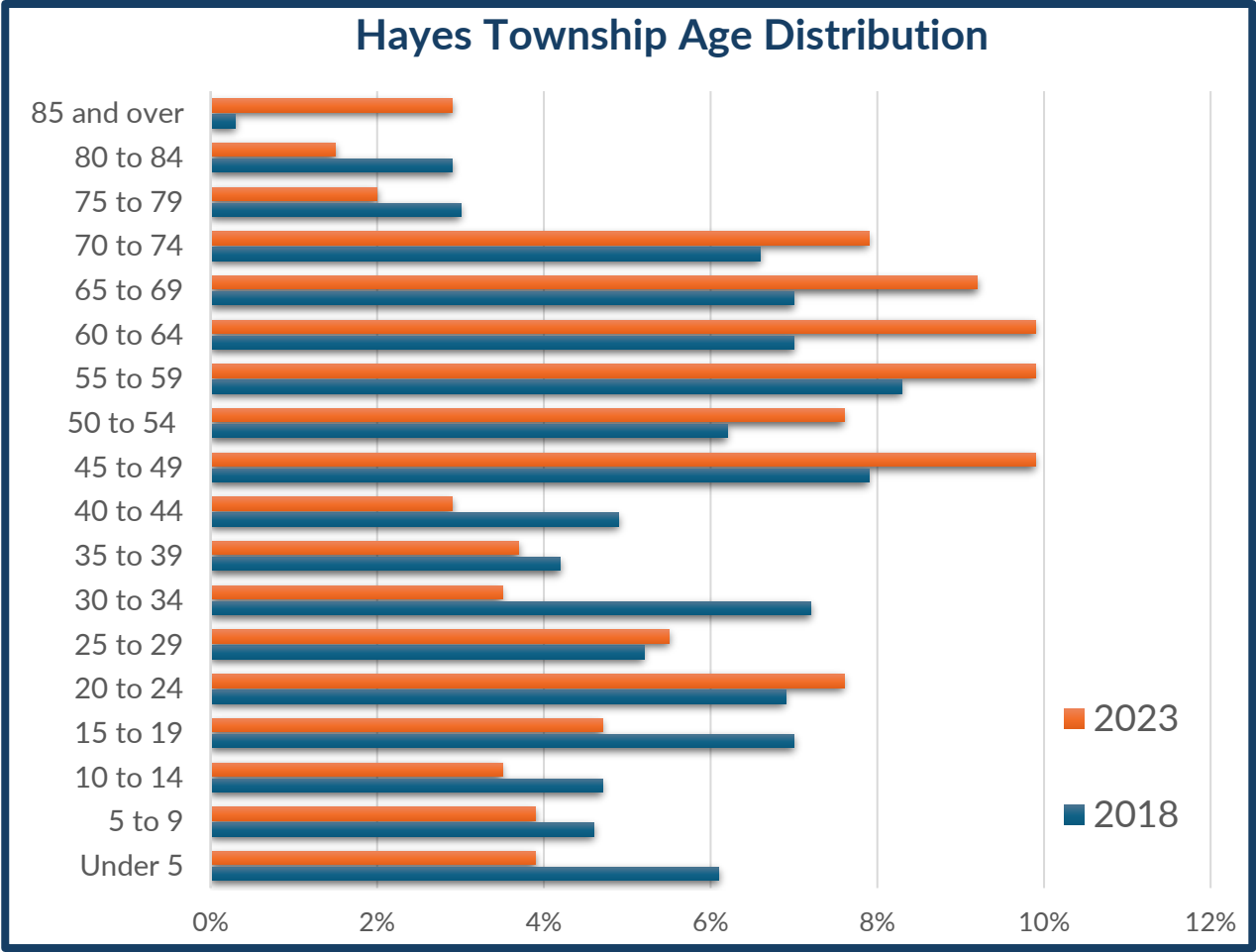
As of the most recent census data, the population of the municipalities in Otsego County has shown some steady but muted growth over the past few years. From 2013 to 2023, there has been a slight increase in the overall population of Hayes Township and the nearby municipalities. It is important for local government officials and community leaders to stay informed about these population trends to effectively plan for future infrastructure and services. By analyzing this data, they can make informed decisions to meet the needs of their growing community.

Table 2-1 Population				
	2013	2018	2020	2023
Hayes Township	2,612	2,648	2,725	2,751
Elmira Township	1,880	1,841	1,714	1,725
Livingston Township	2,520	2,556	2,652	2,693
City of Gaylord	3,643	3,667	4,286	4,307
Bagley Township	5,868	5,941	5,867	5,941
Otsego Lake Township	2,846	2,872	2,857	2,890
Otsego County	24,127	24,397	25,091	25,352



The population by age in Hayes Township, Otsego County, and Michigan shows a diverse distribution across different age groups. Hayes Township, with a total population of 2,751, the median age stands at 50.5 years. Unlike the state and county, whose median ages have gone up only by small amounts, the township's median age has drastically increased from 38.0 years in 2013. The data indicates a significant number of residents in the 45 to 74 age group, reflecting a trend towards an aging population. Along with a slight increase in individuals in their 20s, this was the sole population segment to experience appreciable increases when compared to 2018. By contrast, most other age groups below 45 years saw decreases, as did those 75-85 years of age (though not 85 and over), likely due to death rates. This demographic information is crucial for policymakers and businesses to understand the needs and preferences of residents in the area.

Table 2-2 Age Distribution						
	Hayes Township		Otsego County		State of Michigan	
	2018	2023	2018	2023	2018	2023
Under 5	6.1%	3.9%	5.4%	5.1%	5.7%	5.5%
5 to 9	4.6%	3.9%	6.4%	6.1%	6.0%	5.9%
10 to 14	4.7%	3.5%	5.5%	5.8%	6.3%	6.2%
15 to 19	7.0%	4.7%	6.2%	5.9%	6.7%	6.5%
20 to 24	6.9%	7.6%	5.9%	4.9%	7.2%	6.6%
25 to 29	5.2%	5.5%	5.6%	5.4%	6.5%	6.6%
30 to 34	7.2%	3.5%	5.0%	5.8%	6.0%	6.5%
35 to 39	4.2%	3.7%	5.3%	6.0%	5.9%	6.1%
40 to 44	4.9%	2.9%	5.2%	5.7%	5.9%	5.9%
45 to 49	7.9%	9.9%	6.7%	5.3%	6.5%	5.8%
50 to 54	6.2%	7.6%	7.4%	6.8%	7.0%	6.4%
55 to 59	8.3%	9.9%	8.4%	8.5%	7.3%	6.7%
60 to 64	7.0%	9.9%	6.9%	7.0%	6.7%	7.1%
65 to 69	7.0%	9.2%	6.6%	7.2%	5.5%	6.1%
70 to 74	6.6%	7.9%	5.3%	6.3%	4.0%	4.9%
75 to 79	3.0%	2.0%	3.4%	4.3%	2.8%	3.1%
80 to 84	2.9%	1.5%	2.5%	1.7%	1.9%	2.0%
85 and over	0.3%	2.9%	2.3%	2.2%	2.1%	2.1%
Median Age	44.1	50.5	44.7	44.5	39.7	40.1

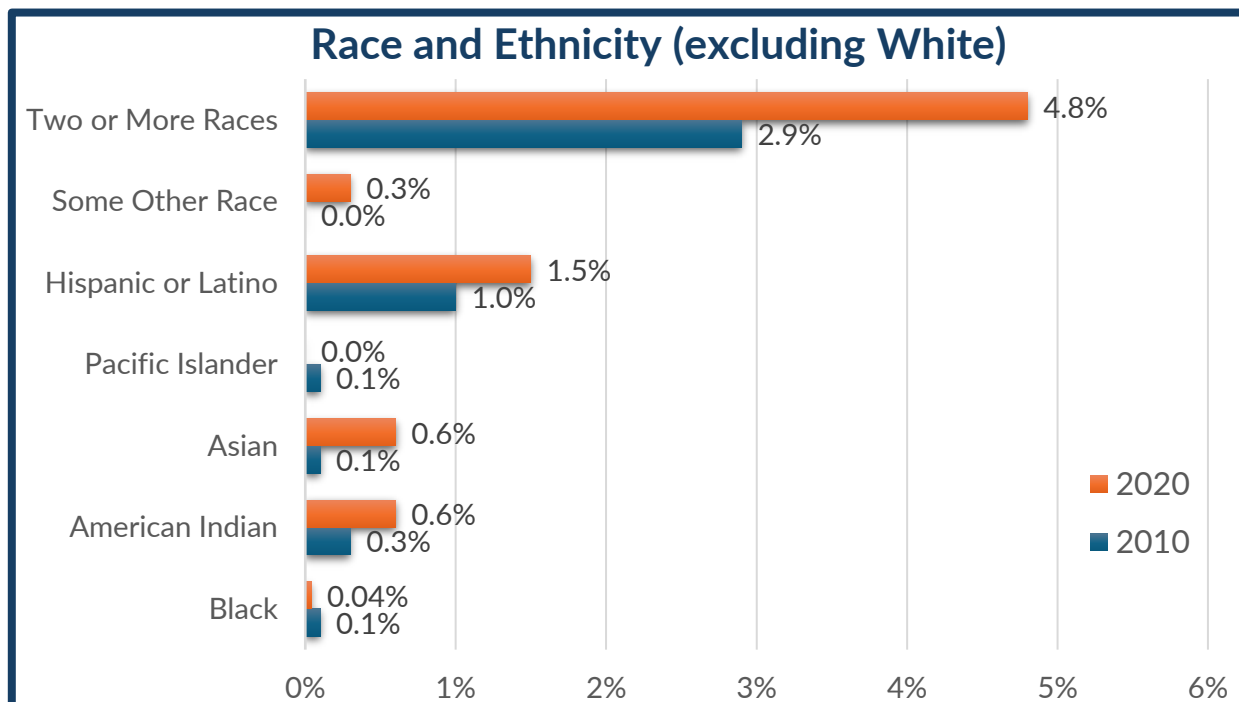


Race and Ethnicity

The majority of residents in Hayes Township identify as White, making up 92.3% of the population. Individuals of American Indian and Alaska Native descent, as well as Asians, each account for 0.55% of the population. The township also has small percentages of Black or African American residents and those identified as another race. People of two or more races represent 4.8% of the population, while Hispanic or Latino individuals make up 1.5%. There are no Pacific Islanders in the township, which marks a decrease from 2010. The share of non-White ethnic groups has notably increased compared to the previous Census. Otsego County reflects similar demographic trends.

Table 2-3 Race & Ethnicity

	Hayes Township		Otsego County		State of Michigan	
	2010	2020	2010	2020	2010	2020
White	95.5%	92.3%	96.0%	92.3%	76.6%	72.4%
Black or African American	0.1%	<0.1%	0.3%	0.4%	14.0%	13.5%
American Indian & Alaska Native	0.3%	0.55%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.5%
Asian	0.1%	0.55%	0.4%	0.4%	2.4%	3.3%
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.0%	<0.1%	0.0%	<0.1%	<0.1%
Hispanic or Latino (any race)	1.0%	1.5%	1.2%	1.8%	4.4%	5.6%
Some Other Race Alone	0.0%	0.3%	<0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.4%
Two or More Races	2.9%	4.8%	1.4%	4.3%	1.9%	4.3%
Total	2,619	2,725	24,164	25,091	9,883,640	10,077,331



School Enrollment and Educational Attainment

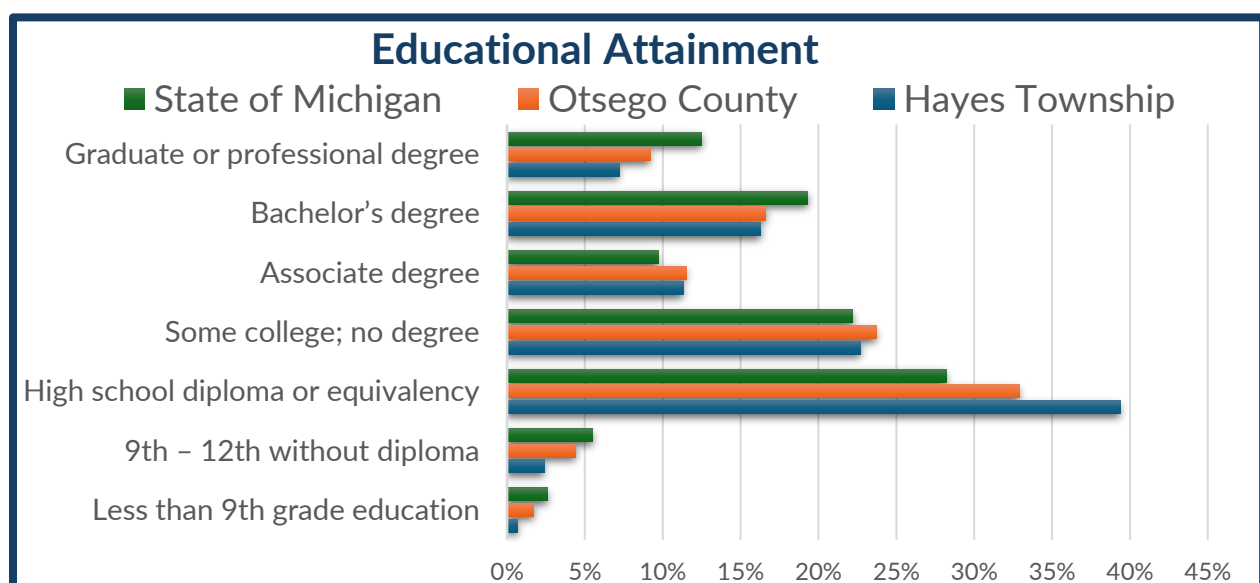
Hayes Township is part of the Gaylord Area School District. School Enrollment across the district for the 2023-2024 school year consisted of 2,866 children in grades K-12. There were 1,472 elementary students, 437 middle school students, and 957 high school students. Postsecondary education is serviced by the University Center in Gaylord.

Out of the 2,105 township residents who were 25 years and older, 96.9 percent were high school graduates or higher, and 23.5 percent held a bachelor's degree or higher. Residents in Otsego County have slightly lower high school graduation levels than the township residents, but slightly higher college degree rates, and the State of Michigan's high school graduation rates are lower than both, though bachelor's degree rates exceed both. This may be attributable to the higher population and proximity to one of the region's larger cities, as well as more access to higher educational opportunities within the area compared to most communities in the northeast region.

The educational attainment of both the township's and county's residents has improved over the last decade, especially at the highest levels, with more individuals graduating high school and pursuing some college education or higher, as well as the possibility of new residents possessing higher education degrees. Both the township's and county's educational levels overall are generally higher and therefore much closer to the state's levels than many other municipalities in the region.

Table 2-4 Educational Attainment

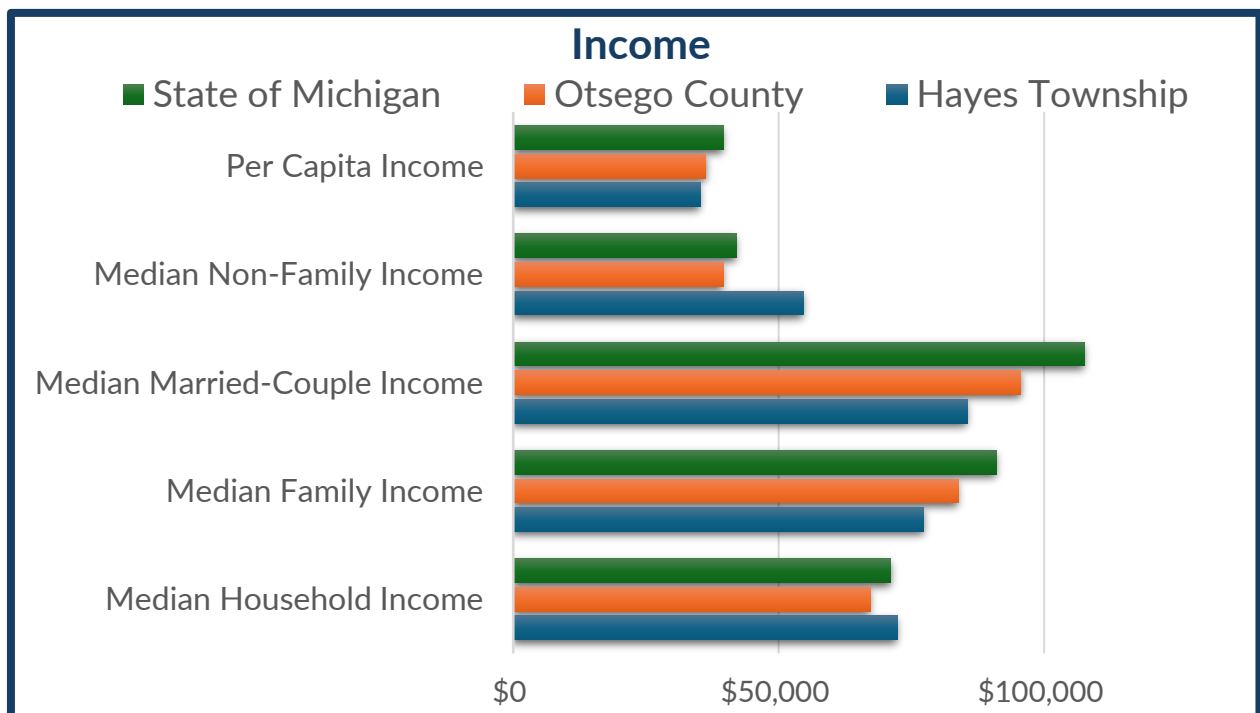
	Hayes Township	Otsego County	State of Michigan
Population 25 and over	2,105	18,308	6,967,452
Less than 9 th grade education	0.7%	1.7%	2.6%
9 th – 12 th without diploma	2.4%	4.4%	5.5%
High school diploma or equivalency	39.4%	32.9%	28.2%
Some college; no degree	22.7%	23.7%	22.2%
Associate degree	11.3%	11.5%	9.7%
Bachelor's degree	16.3%	16.6%	19.3%
Graduate or professional degree	7.2%	9.2%	12.5%
High school graduate or higher	96.9%	93.9%	91.9%
Bachelor's degree or higher	23.5%	25.8%	31.8%



In Hayes Township, the median household income is \$72,326, which is slightly higher than Otsego County's median of \$67,285 and on par with the State of Michigan's median of \$71,149. However, the township's median family income is \$77,356, which is lower than Otsego County's median of \$83,786 and the state's median of \$90,947. For married couples, the median income in Hayes Township is \$85,478, falling below Otsego County's median of \$95,583 and the state's median of \$107,521. On the other hand, Hayes Township stands out with a significantly higher median non-family income of \$54,643 compared to Otsego County's \$39,533 and the state's \$42,017. Finally, the per capita income in Hayes Township is \$35,211, which is slightly lower than Otsego County's \$36,269 and the state's \$39,538. Overall, while Hayes Township's household income is relatively strong, it lags behind in family and married couple incomes but excels in non-family earnings.

Table 2-5 Median Income

	Hayes Township	Otsego County	State of Michigan
Median Household	\$72,326	\$67,285	\$71,149
Median Family	\$77,356	\$83,786	\$90,947
Median Married Couple	\$85,478	\$95,583	\$107,521
Median Non-Family	\$54,643	\$39,533	\$42,017
Per Capita	\$35,211	\$36,269	\$39,538



The percentage of income earnings from employment was higher in the township than in the county and the state, though mean earnings were beneath both. In addition, the similar percentage of people receiving income from social security and retirement incomes at all three levels indicates a similarly-aged population structure to the county in the 65+ age range. The percentage of the population receiving supplemental security income in the township is comparatively higher than in the county, but both are far lower than the state. The township and county are reversed from this for the percentage of the population receiving cash public assistance. The percentage of people receiving food stamps/SNAP benefits is higher in the township than the state and much higher in the county than either.

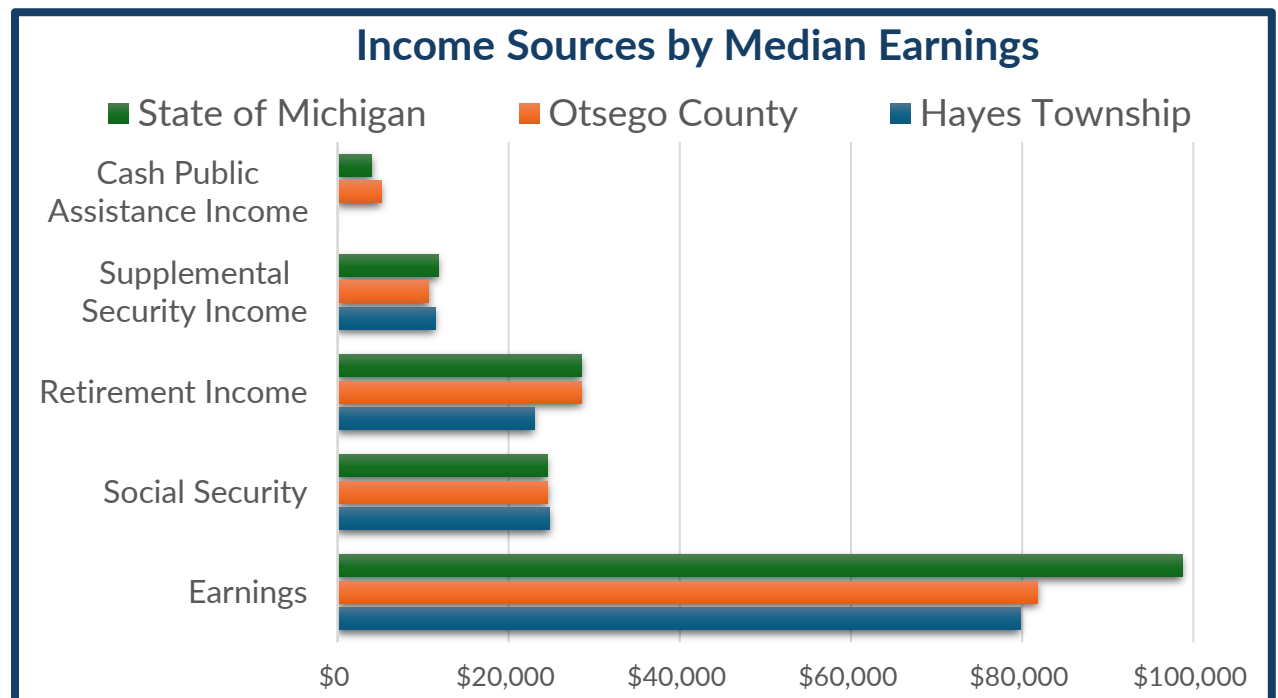
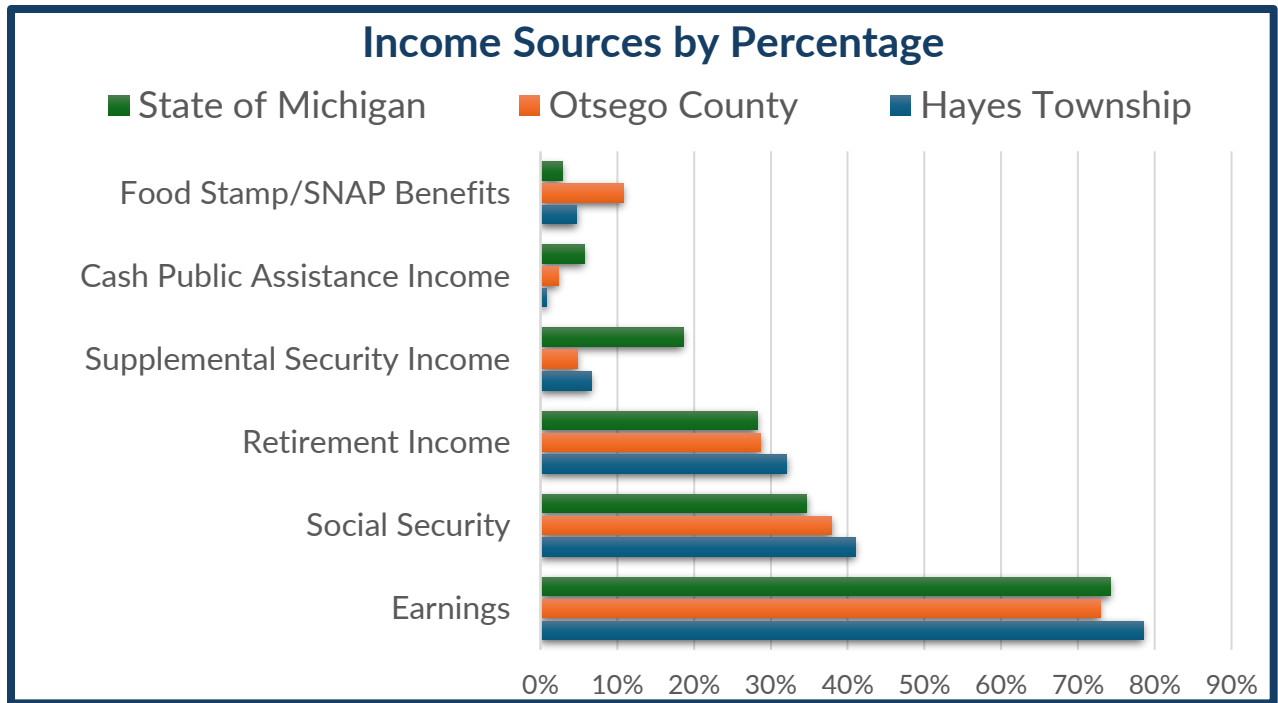
Table 2-6 Income Sources

Income Source	Hayes Township		Otsego County		State of Michigan	
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
With earnings	924	78.5%	8,013	72.9%	2,997,809	74.2%
<i>Mean earnings</i>	\$79,790	---	\$81,815	---	\$98,676	---
With Social Security	483	41.0%	4,166	37.9%	1,402,046	34.7%
<i>Mean Social Security Income</i>	\$24,807	---	\$24,554	---	\$24,503	---
With retirement income	378	32.1%	3,152	28.7%	1,140,598	28.2%
<i>Mean retirement income</i>	\$22,962	---	\$28,492	---	\$28,541	---
With Supplemental Security Income	78	6.6%	533	4.8%	232,206	18.6%
<i>Mean Supplemental Security Income</i>	\$11,422	---	\$10,639	---	\$11,736	---
With cash public assistance income	9	0.8%	258	2.3%	114,859	5.7%
<i>Mean cash public assistance income</i>	---	---	\$5,091	---	\$3,993	---
With Food Stamp/SNAP benefits in the past 12 months	56	4.7%	1,077	10.8%	455,939	2.8%

In Hayes Township, the poverty rate is 10.8%, with a population of 2,751 individuals. This is slightly higher than the poverty rate in Otsego County, which stands at 9.6% for a population of 25,352. In comparison, the State of Michigan has a higher overall poverty rate of 13.1%, affecting a population of 10,051,595. Despite the smaller population in Hayes Township, its poverty rate is still lower than the State's, but higher than that of Otsego County.

Table 2-7 Poverty

	Hayes Township	Otsego County	State of Michigan
Population	2,751	25,352	10,051,595
Rate	10.8%	9.6%	13.1%



Disability

In Hayes Township, the disability status data reveals important insights into the prevalence of disabilities across different age groups. For the 0-17 age group, there are 405 total individuals, of which 17 have a disability, representing just 4.2% of the youth population. This indicates that disability rates are relatively low among children and adolescents in the township.

Table 2-8 Disability Status

	Total 0-17	# 0-17 with disability	% 0-17 with disability	Total 18-64	# 18-64 with disability	% 18-64 with disability	Total 65 & over	# 65 & over with disability	% 65 & over with disability
Hayes Township	405	17	4.2%	1,696	220	13.0%	645	241	37.4%
Otsego County	5,298	481	9.1%	14,490	1,901	13.1%	5,401	1,780	33.0%
State of Michigan	2,152,619	106,124	4.9%	6,006,064	733,099	12.2%	1,785,615	575,211	32.2%

In contrast, the 18-64 age group, which represents working-age adults, has a total of 1,696 individuals, with 220 (13.0%) experiencing some form of disability. This marks a noticeable increase in the percentage of people with disabilities compared to the younger age group, reflecting a higher occurrence of disabilities among adults in their prime working years.

Table 2-9 Disability Type*

Category	Hayes Township		Otsego County		State of Michigan	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
With a hearing difficulty	195	7.1%	1,398	5.6%	373,471	3.8%
With a vision difficulty	56	2.0%	618	2.5%	220,663	2.2%
With a cognitive difficulty	165	6.3%	1,436	6.0%	578,137	6.2%
With an ambulatory difficulty	238	9.0%	1,850	7.7%	672,811	7.2%
With self-care difficulty	28	1.1%	719	3.0%	255,437	2.7%
With an independent living difficulty	108	4.6%	1,242	6.2%	503,351	6.5%

*The total number in the disability type table is greater than the total number of disabled people in the table above. This is because some people may have more than one disability, so they appear multiple times in the disability type table.

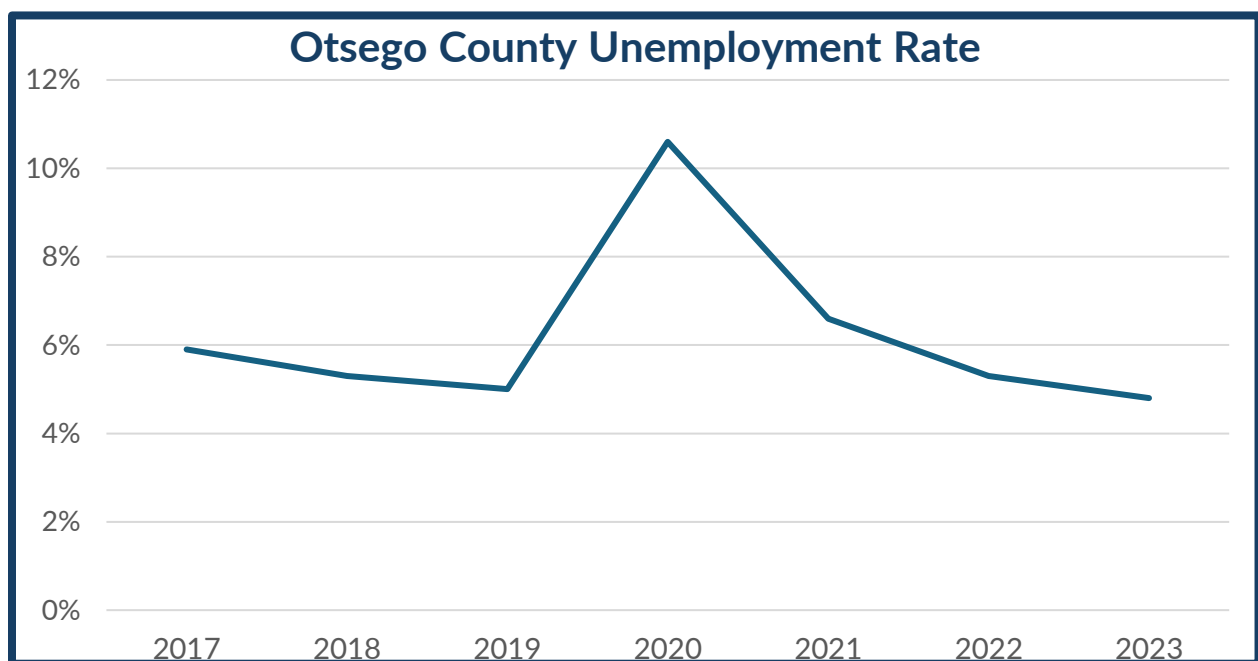
The most significant disparity is seen in the 65 and over age group, where the total population is 645 individuals. Of these, 241 (37.4%) have a disability, making this age group the most affected in Hayes Township. This trend is common in aging populations, where the likelihood of experiencing disability increases due to factors such as physical decline, chronic conditions, or the natural aging process. Overall, Hayes Township's data shows a clear upward trend in the percentage of people with disabilities as age increases, particularly in the senior population.

Employment and Unemployment

The civilian labor force is defined as all civilian individuals over the age of 16 who are employed or actively seeking employment. Labor force numbers can change rather quickly in response to economic conditions. During prolonged periods of unemployment, unsuccessful job seekers can drop out of the workforce by going back to school, leaving the area to search for work, or stopping the work search. Hayes Township and Otsego County have seen fluctuations in their civilian labor force and employment numbers since 2000. However, the United States experienced an economic downturn due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in many people without work and a source of income. Data collected during the pandemic may not accurately portray conditions due to data collection issues and COVID-19 policies and procedures.

Table 2-10 Employment Information Otsego County

Year	Civilian Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
2023	11,851	11,284	567	4.8%
2022	11,544	10,935	609	5.3%
2021	11,397	10,648	749	6.6%
2020	11,658	10,420	1,238	10.6%
2019	11,665	11,079	586	5.0%
2018	11,616	11,004	612	5.3%
2017	11,660	10,970	690	5.9%



The largest employment industry in the township is services, which collectively employ 27.1% of the township's workforce. Manufacturing is the second largest employment industry and employs 18.5% of workers, followed by retail trade, which employs 13.4% of workers. However, this data may underrepresent certain industries depending upon who responded during the data collection period.

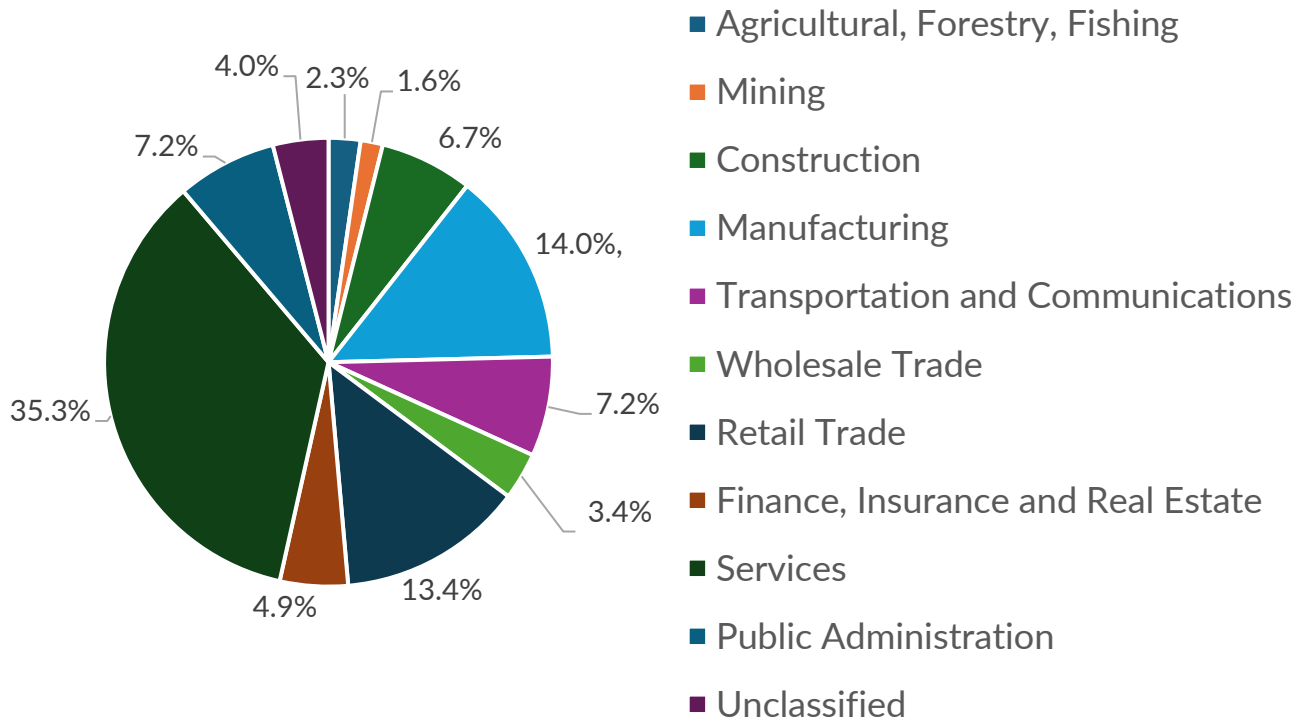
About 85.8% of residents drive alone to work. 7.5% of residents carpool to work. Other forms of transportation are much less popular in Hayes Township, likely due to the higher income levels allowing more residents to afford vehicles, despite the relatively short travel distances to Gaylord. The proximity to a major interstate and the central location between the majority of the northeast and northwest regions may also allow some residents to have jobs located further away, which would necessitate owning a vehicle or carpooling. 16.1 percent of people traveled less than 15 minutes to work while 31.4 percent traveled 30 minutes or more to work.

Table 2-11 Major Employment Type

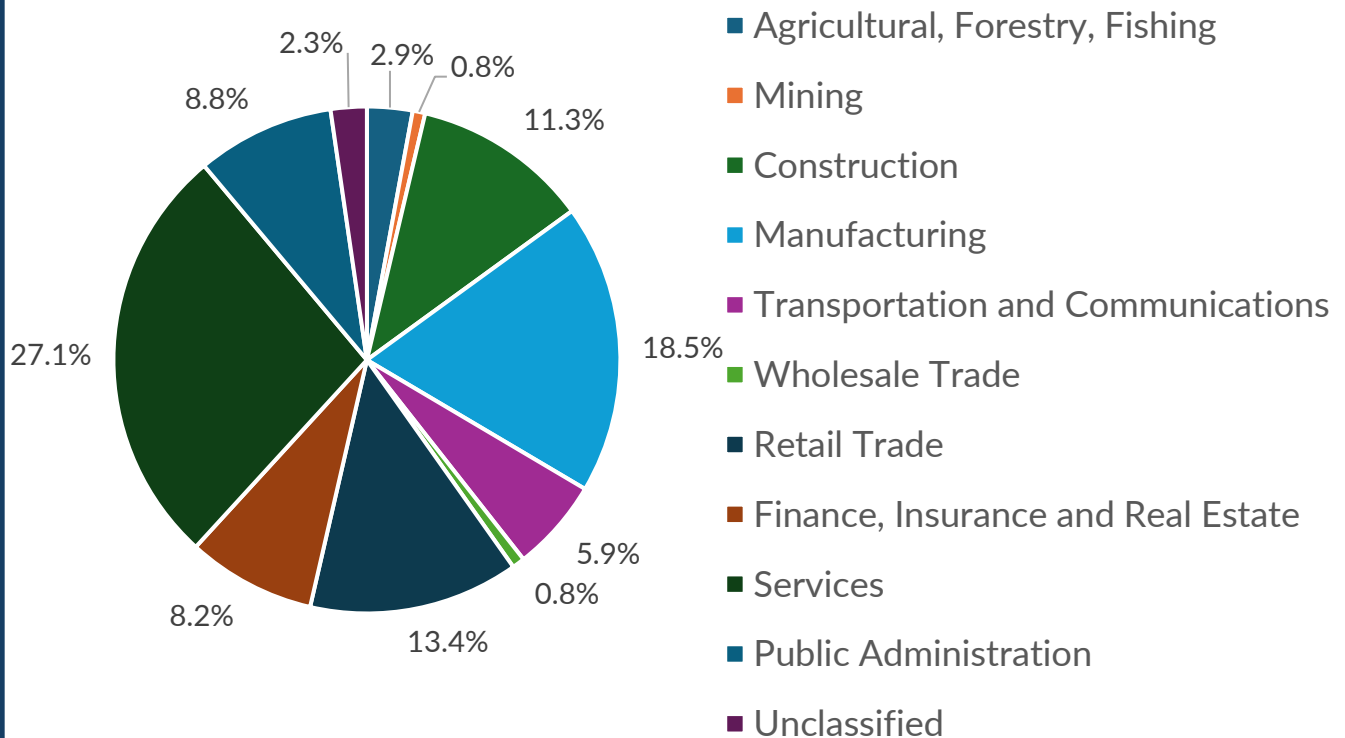
Category	Hayes Township		Otsego County	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Agricultural, Forestry, Fishing	26	2.9%	191	2.3%
Mining/Oil & Gas	7	0.8%	133	1.6%
Construction	103	11.3%	549	6.7%
Manufacturing	168	18.5%	1,145	14.0%
Transportation and Communications	54	5.9%	589	7.2%
Wholesale Trade	7	0.8%	282	3.4%
Retail Trade	122	13.4%	1,097	13.4%
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	75	8.2%	400	4.9%
Services	246	27.1%	2,896	35.3%
Public Administration	80	8.8%	591	7.2%
Unclassified	21	2.3%	331	4.0%



Otsego County Employment by Industry



Hayes Township Employment by Industry



State Equalized Value (SEV)

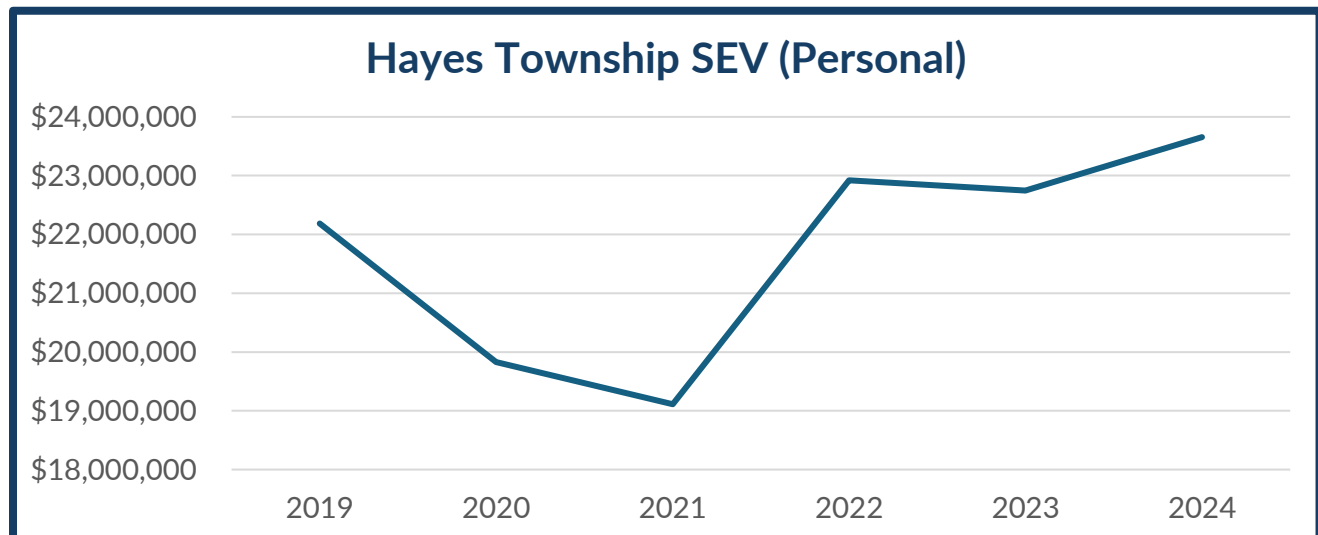
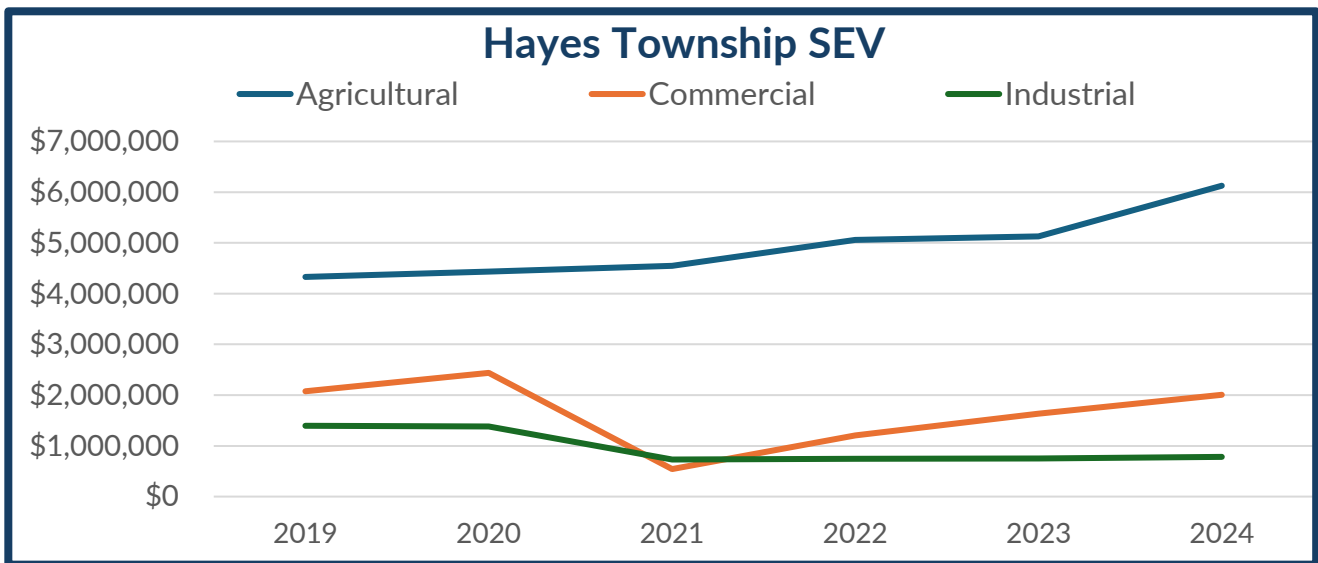
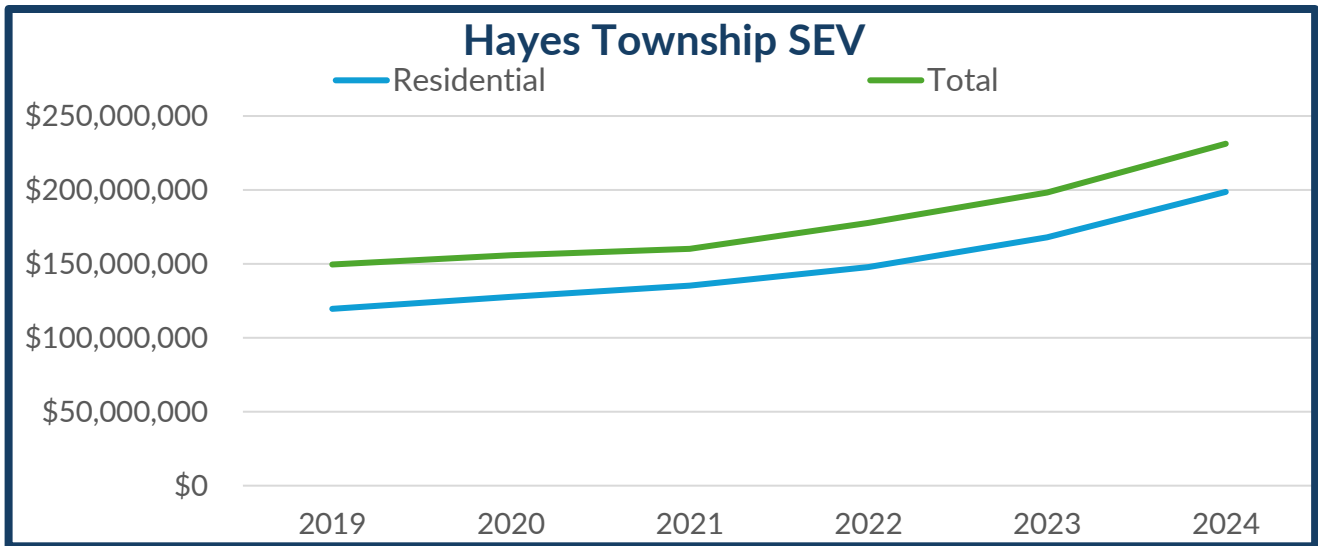
Another measure of community wealth is land value. Real and personal property is an important part of a community's tax base and can provide income to support local government services, including law enforcement, emergency services, education, health and social services, land use controls, environmental protection, and public administration.

Characteristics of property values can be obtained through the analysis of the State Equalized Value (SEV). Overall, Hayes Township's SEV has consistently increased since 2019. Personal property generally decreased from 2019 to 2021 but spiked back to 2019 levels in 2022 and fluctuated from there. Just under 86 percent of the township's SEV is comprised of residential property followed by agricultural land at 2.6 percent. Commercial land is currently 0.9 percent of the township, though, after 2019 and 2020, it dropped to a quarter of its value and only returned to previous levels by the most recent year. The total value of the industrial category is relatively negligible at 0.3 percent of the total SEV. Industrial land decreased slightly between 2019 and 2020 and then dramatically in 2021, and though it has slowly rebounded, is only around half of its 2019 value. Taxable personal property is the non-depreciated value of machinery and equipment owned by businesses and industries.

Table 2-12 Hayes Township SEV

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Agricultural	\$4,329,500	\$4,436,700	\$4,549,300	\$5,059,600	\$5,127,300	\$6,127,000
Commercial	\$2,077,800	\$2,438,100	\$542,500	\$1,203,900	\$1,636,200	\$2,003,200
Industrial	\$1,395,600	\$1,380,900	\$730,700	\$744,800	\$748,600	\$783,600
Residential	\$119,595,700	\$127,793,300	\$135,300,400	\$147,827,000	\$167,986,000	\$198,674,700
Personal	\$22,185,100	\$19,828,600	\$19,111,400	\$22,922,200	\$22,748,000	\$23,655,200
Total	\$149,583,700	\$155,877,600	\$160,234,300	\$177,757,500	\$198,246,100	\$231,243,700





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Transportation

Otsego County, where Hayes Township is located, has a well-developed transportation network, advanced public safety services, healthcare, and educational systems supporting county residents and commercial activity. The vast majority of Otsego County residents use the county's infrastructure, facilities, and services on a regular basis.

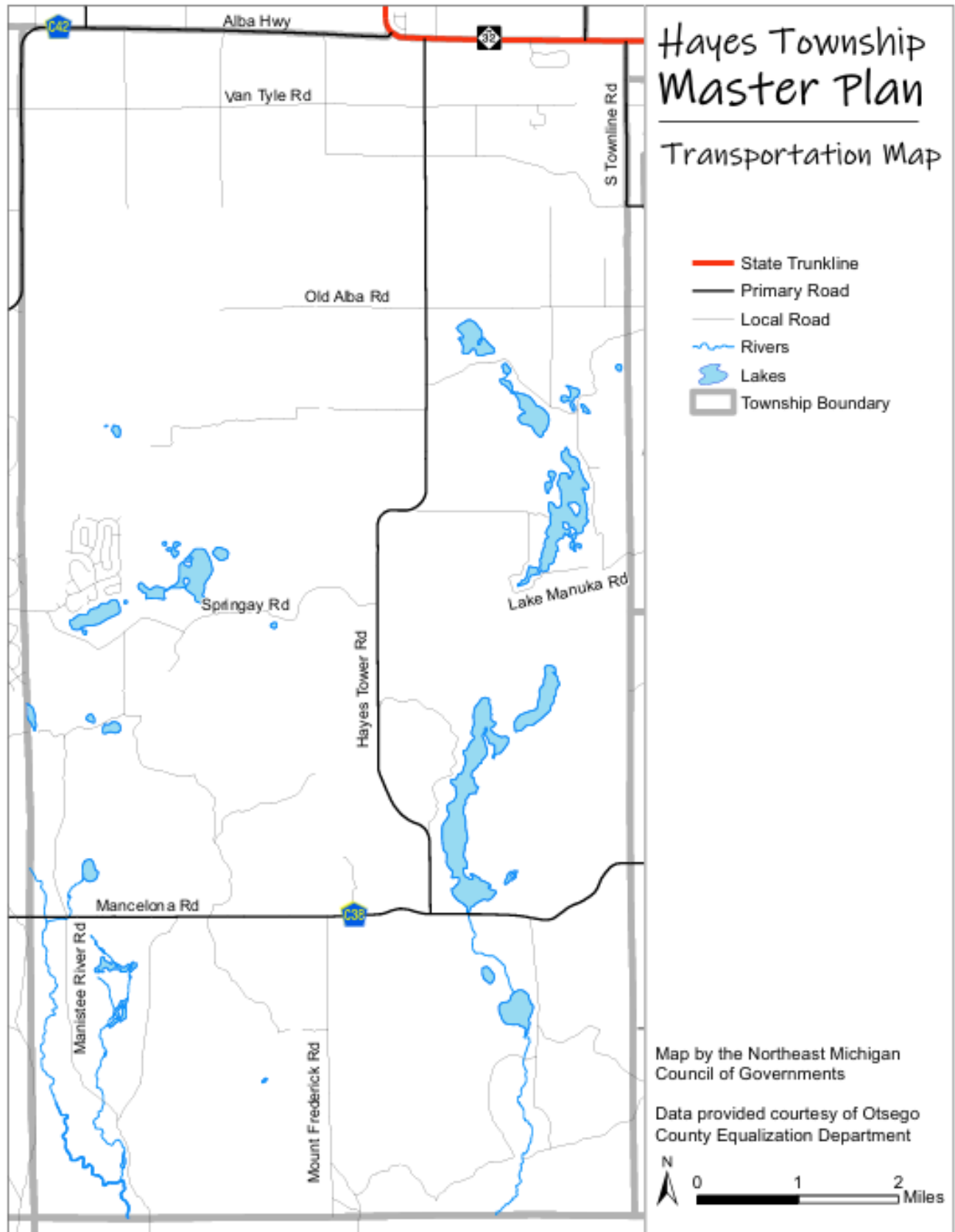
Hayes Township's northern border is defined by State Highway M-32 and Alba Road, two major roads running east and west through Otsego County. M-32 connects the township to surrounding areas, providing access to various communities and key destinations. Alba Road runs parallel to M-32, further enhancing the township's connectivity with neighboring regions.

The largest north-south route through the township is Hayes Tower Road, which begins at M-32 and extends southward to Mancelona Road. This road serves as a primary route for residents traveling within the township and to nearby areas, linking them to other important roadways. Mancelona Road, another significant east-west route, is frequently used by township residents, offering direct access to neighboring towns and communities. These major roads provide essential transportation infrastructure, supporting both local traffic and regional connectivity for Hayes Township.

Just east of Hayes Township's border, residents have convenient access to Interstate 75, one of the major highways in the United States that runs from Canada to Florida. This interstate serves as a critical transportation corridor, linking northern and southern regions of the U.S. and providing direct routes to various cities and states along the way. For Hayes Township residents, this access to I-75 opens up a wide range of travel opportunities, whether for business, leisure, or commuting. The interstate's connection to both Canada and Florida makes it a vital route for long-distance travel, and its proximity enhances the township's accessibility to major metropolitan areas, regional hubs, and a variety of destinations across the country.

To the east of Hayes Township, Old US 27 runs parallel to Interstate 75 and offers an alternative route for travelers. This historic highway, which once served as the primary north-south route before the construction of the interstate, continues to be an important road for local traffic and provides access to smaller towns and rural areas. Old US 27 connects Hayes Township to nearby communities and provides a more scenic, less trafficked option for those who prefer to avoid the busy interstate. The road also offers convenient access to various local businesses, residential areas, and recreational spots, making it a valuable route for township residents and visitors alike. Its role in connecting local areas with broader regional destinations remains significant, even as Interstate 75 has become the primary thoroughfare for long-distance travel.





Bus Service

The Otsego County Bus system offers dial-a-ride service throughout the county, providing flexible transportation options for residents. The bus system operates during regular hours, and special charters can be scheduled outside of those hours to accommodate specific needs. For longer-distance travel, the Indian Trails Bus System offers nationwide service, with regular stops in Gaylord, providing convenient access to destinations across the country. These transportation services help ensure that residents of Hayes Township and the surrounding areas have reliable options for both local and regional travel.

Air Service

Just east of Hayes Township, Otsego County operates a general aviation airport located southwest of Gaylord. This airport caters to private and charter aircraft, offering services such as fuel, major and minor repairs for piston aircraft, and car rentals. Recently, a new terminal building was completed, further enhancing its facilities. While air charter services are available, there is no commercial passenger service directly to Gaylord at this time. Residents and visitors looking to fly commercially typically connect through nearby airports in Pellston, Alpena, or Traverse City. This airport provides vital support for air travel needs in the region while offering convenient access to broader travel networks.

Rail

Though not directly within Hayes Township, Lake State Railroad offers rail freight service on tracks leased from the Detroit & Mackinac Railroad. In northern Michigan, its service extends south from Gaylord through Grayling and West Branch to Bay City, where connections can be made to other rail lines serving destinations across the region. However, rail service is no longer available to Vanderbilt. This rail network plays a key role in the movement of goods throughout the area, linking northern Michigan to broader regional and national freight systems.



Public Facilities & Services

Hayes Township does not provide direct public services; however, it works in partnership with Otsego County to ensure essential services such as police, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS) are available to its residents. For law enforcement, the township relies on the Otsego County Sheriff's Department, which provides patrol, response to emergencies, and crime prevention throughout the area. Fire protection services are provided through partnerships with local fire departments, ensuring prompt response times for fire emergencies. Currently the Otsego County Fire Authority provides Fire protection for all of Hayes Township. Similarly, Hayes Township partners with the county's EMS services, which are responsible for providing emergency medical care and transportation to local hospitals. This collaboration allows Hayes Township to effectively manage public safety and emergency services without maintaining separate, independent departments.

In addition to these services, the county has established a Reverse 9-1-1 system, an early warning system used to contact people and businesses within the county during emergency situations. This system allows for rapid dissemination of critical information, including evacuation orders, severe weather alerts, or public safety threats, ensuring that residents are informed and can take appropriate action during emergencies. By working with Otsego County, the township ensures that residents have access to critical services while keeping costs and administrative burdens manageable.

The nearest hospital is Otsego Memorial Hospital, part of Munson Healthcare, which is a 46-bed facility in Gaylord, Michigan, nationally recognized for quality and safety. Founded in 1951, it has grown to provide advanced care, including emergency services, heart and cancer treatment, maternity, diagnostics, and robotic-assisted surgery. Currently there is a \$33 million dollar expansion to the hospital for the birthing center, ICU, and the med-surgical unit. Also an outpatient surgery center is close to completion adjacent to the hospital grounds.

With over 70 providers and 800+ staff, the hospital offers expert, compassionate care close to home. Key services include a state-of-the-art ICU, birthing center, advanced diagnostics, and a top-tier emergency department. Serving multiple northern Michigan communities, Otsego Memorial Hospital remains committed to innovation and patient-centered care. The Otsego Health Center is located at 825 N. Center St., Gaylord, MI 49735.

Navy Corpsman Steve Andrews Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Clinic, located at 2782 South Otsego Avenue, Gaylord, provides primary care and specialty health services, including mental health services, treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), women's health services, laboratory services, and more.

Utilities

The Township's utility system includes private suppliers of electric, natural gas, telephones, solid waste disposal, and cable television services. These suppliers are faced with the task of providing services to a relatively low-density, dispersed population.

Electric

The most widely distributed utility service in Hayes Township is electricity, provided by Consumers Power and Great Lakes Energy. Over the past decade, the expansion of electrical service has been rapid, and this growth is expected to continue as both the population of Otsego County and its business and industrial sectors expand. As Hayes Township experiences growth, the demand for reliable electricity services will increase, ensuring that residents and businesses remain connected to the grid.

In addition, there have been significant developments in the township's energy landscape. In October 2014, Wolverine Power Cooperative proposed constructing a natural gas turbine power generation facility just one mile east of Elmira in Otsego County. The facility's construction was approved after a rezoning request for 168 acres along M-32 in Elmira Township was granted, allowing the land to be used for business and light manufacturing. This facility, located near Hayes Township, will have an impact on the region's energy infrastructure and may influence future utility developments and environmental considerations in the area. The facility's construction represents a growing shift toward alternative energy sources, which has affected Hayes Township's energy landscape with the expansion of the ITC substation in north Hayes section 4.

Currently RWE Solar Energy is developing the parallel 45 solar energy complex centered around the Northland Ranch Caple properties.

Telephone Service

Telephone landline service is available throughout Hayes Township, provided by private utility companies such as Frontier, Pigeon, Charter Communications, and AT&T. Wireless services are offered by multiple providers including AT&T, Verizon, and T-Mobile, ensuring that both landline and mobile connectivity options are accessible to township residents.

Internet Service

In Hayes Township, Michigan, residents have access to several internet providers, including TrueStream Fiber-Internet and Voice Services, AVS Broadband, and Frontier Communications. TrueStream offers high-speed fiber-optic internet. AVS Broadband provides DSL and fiber options, focusing on rural communities with a commitment to enhancing connectivity. Frontier Communications delivers fiber internet. Service availability can vary, so it's recommended to check with each provider for specific coverage in Hayes Township.

Gas Service

Natural gas is provided to portions of the Township by DTE. Gas is supplied by a pipeline that generally follows I-75. Bottled gas, propane, is provided by private suppliers and is widely used for heating in portions that are not able to use natural gas.

Water & Sewer

Water and sewer service is not available in Hayes Township. However, the City of Gaylord provides these services to most of the city and may extend them further as population growth and development occur.

Waste Management

Throughout Hayes Township, trash pick-up and hauling are provided by several independent local haulers. There are also sites within Otsego County where residents can deposit recyclables. Local haulers transport waste to a landfill owned by Waste Management. The landfill serves Otsego County as well as other northern Michigan counties, and a Solid Waste Management Plan provides a framework for managing the facility. The landfill is located in northern Crawford County; however, a portion of the landfill's buffer zone is located in southern Otsego County. Waste Management is preparing to expand the facility however this does not include future expansion into Otsego County through the acquisition of additional acreage.

Currently there are five recycling sites in Otsego County. The nearest one is located directly south of Township Hall on Hayes Tower Road.



Educational Facilities

Schools

Residents of Hayes Township are served by the Gaylord Community School District, which includes two elementary schools—South Maple and North Ohio—along with an Intermediate School, Middle School, and High School. Preschool and Head Start programs are also available in the area. In addition, there are four parochial schools nearby: Otsego Christian School, Grace Baptist Christian School, and St. Mary's Catholic School.



Higher Education

The Kirtland University Center, formed by the merger of Kirtland Gaylord M-TEC and University Center Gaylord, offers educational programs that prepare individuals for high-skill, high-wage employment. The center provides specialized programs in areas such as cardiac sonography, electrical technology, HVAC, mechatronics, and welding. It also offers general education courses designed for transfer to universities.

Kirtland University Center partners with other colleges and universities to provide certificates and degrees, equipping students with the skills needed for a competitive workforce. Additionally, it offers training for current employees and provides customizable programs for local businesses. The center is fully accredited by the Higher Learning Commission.

The center also serves as a resource for students with career or academic direction concerns, offering guidance and support, as well as financial aid assistance. Kirtland University Center is an approved testing site for Pearson VUE and offers computer-based testing for various certifications, including GED.

Furthermore, the Kirtland University Center manages the UCMAN broadband network, which provides high-speed internet to schools, courts, businesses, and residences in the region. The center also houses a data center, supporting server hosting and broadband distribution for the community.

Library

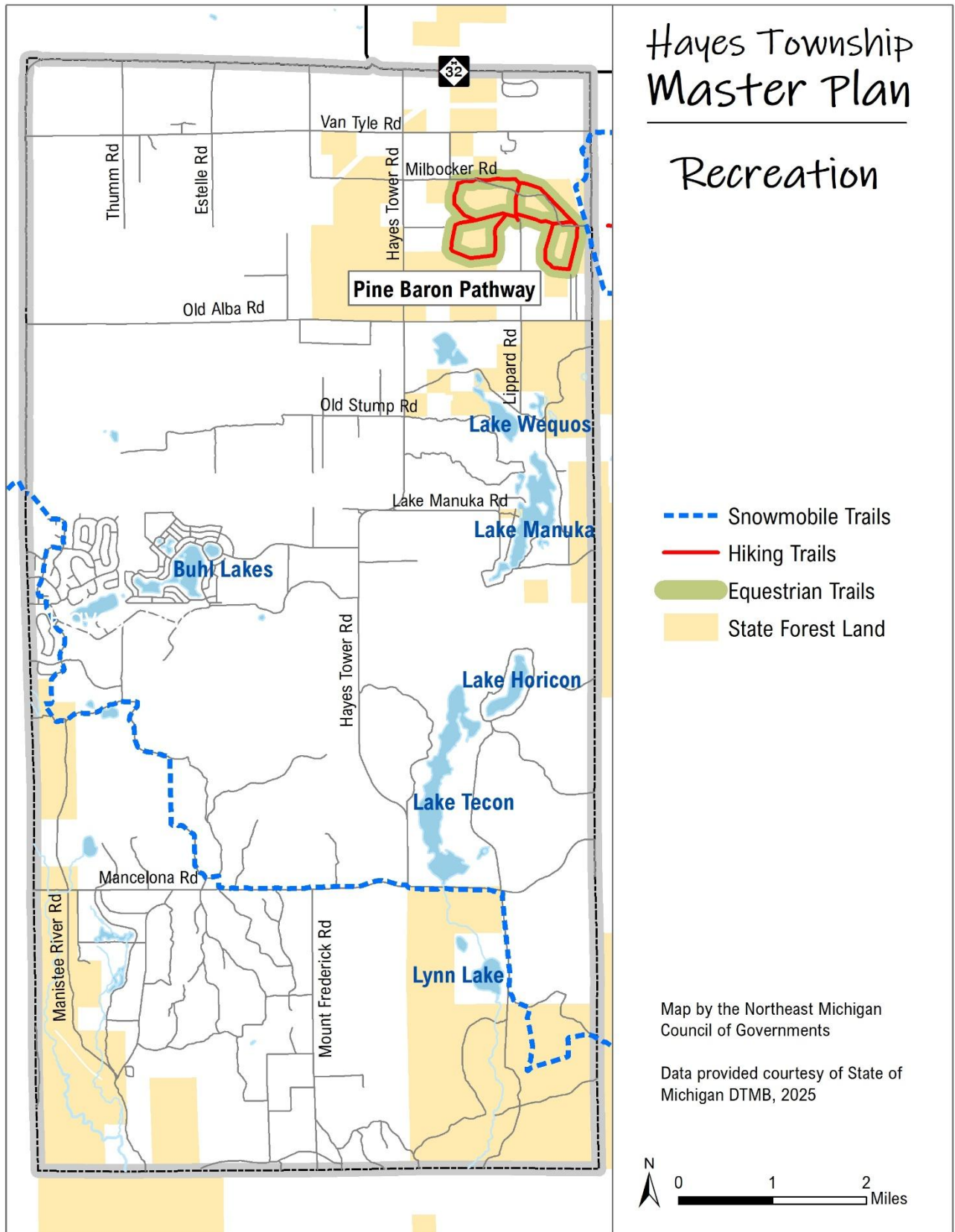
Residents of Hayes Township are served by the Otsego County Library system, which provides access to a wide range of educational and recreational resources. The closest and most frequently used location is the Main Branch, conveniently situated in the nearby city of Gaylord, on South Otsego Street. This branch offers a variety of services including book lending, public computer access, free Wi-Fi, community events, educational programs for all ages, and digital resources such as e-books and online databases. The library serves as a valuable hub for lifelong learning, community engagement, and cultural enrichment for residents of Hayes Township and the surrounding areas.



Parks and Recreation

Hayes Township does not own any parks or recreational areas, however, there are a few public locations for recreation in the Township and snowmobile trails. Manuka Lake holds a public access boat ramp, maintained by the Michigan DNR and the Pine Baron Pathway, hiking and cross-country ski trails, are located off Old Alba and Lone Pine Roads. The Township is also very close to multiple golf courses.

Hayes Township benefits from access to a regional network of recreational trails that support hiking, cross-country skiing, ORV use, and snowmobiling—key drivers of outdoor tourism in the area. However, the 2025 Ice Storm had a significant impact across Northeast Michigan, including Otsego County, causing severe damage to natural landscapes, public lands, and recreational infrastructure. In Hayes Township, downed trees and debris have rendered many trails inaccessible, disrupting seasonal tourism and local recreation. Trail closures threaten economic activity tied to outdoor use. Future planning should prioritize trail restoration, inter-agency coordination, and investments in resilient infrastructure to support long-term recovery and sustainable recreation.





Natural Resources 4

Climate

Hayes Township has a humid continental climate, with no significant climate moderation from the Great Lakes, which are located farther away. However, the lakes do contribute to increased cloudiness and higher snowfall during the fall and winter months, particularly due to lake-effect snow. The area experiences four distinct seasons, with an average summer temperature of 65.5°F and a winter average of 19.5°F. From November to March, 93% of days are below freezing, with about 20 days reaching subzero temperatures. The average last spring freeze is May 28, while the first fall freeze typically occurs on September 17. The growing season lasts about 112 days annually.

Precipitation in Hayes Township is evenly distributed throughout the year, with the growing season (April to September) receiving an average of 19.18 inches, which makes up 57% of the total annual average. The average annual snowfall for the area is 145 inches, and the total annual precipitation water equivalent is approximately 34 inches.

The climate of Hayes Township plays a key role in shaping its physical character by supporting specific types of vegetation and fostering wildlife habitats. It also influences agricultural productivity and the availability of public recreation options. These factors collectively impact the township's appearance, economy, and overall development. In essence, the climate directly affects how people experience living, working, and enjoying their leisure time in Hayes Township.



Existing Land Cover

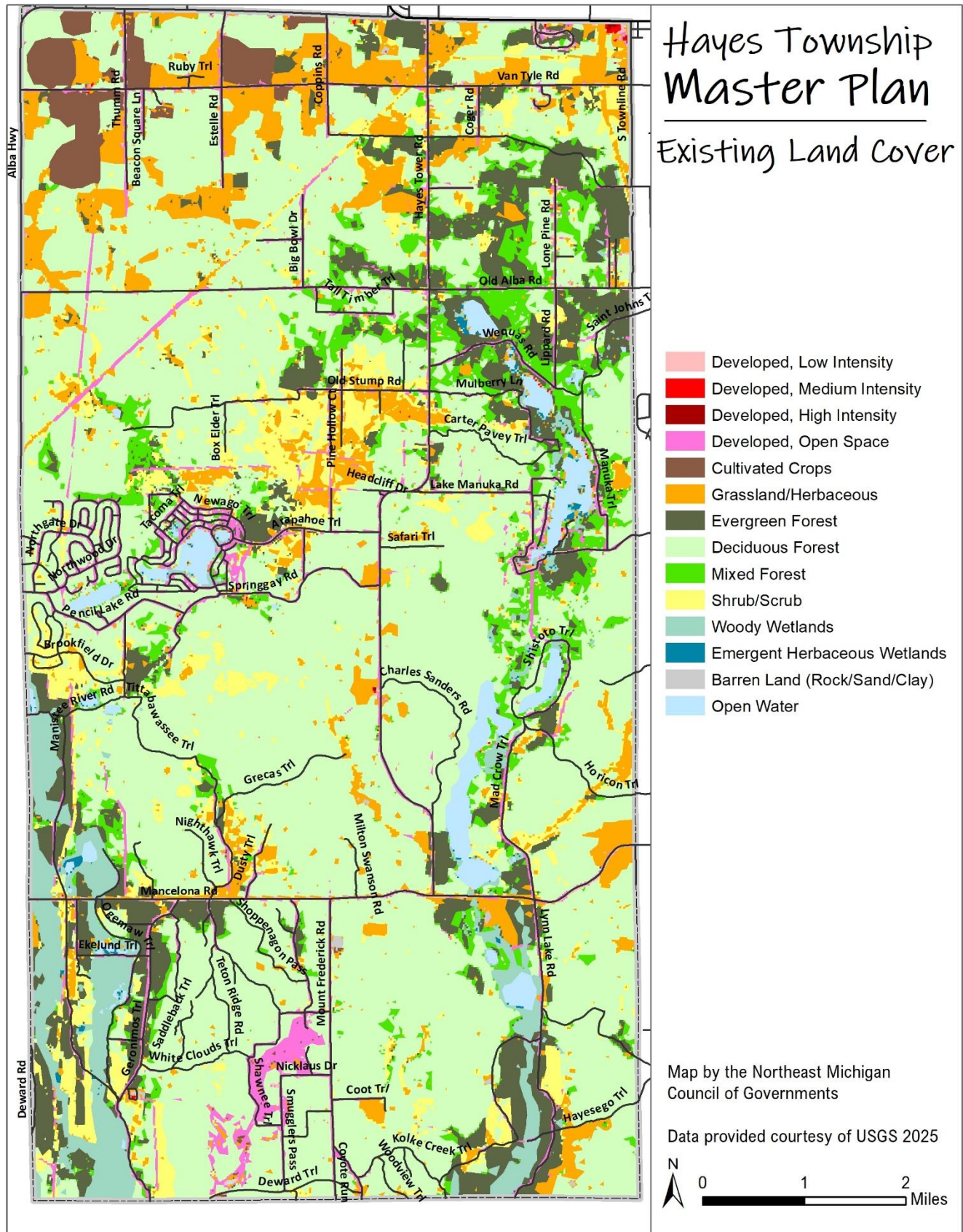
The Existing Land Cover map provides a comprehensive overview of the current land use and natural features throughout Hayes Township. Created by the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments using data from the USGS (2025), the map depicts various land cover types, offering a detailed understanding of how the land is utilized and preserved. Developed areas are categorized by intensity: low, medium, and high, and are shown in shades of pink, red, and purple, respectively. These are mostly concentrated in the southwestern and southern regions. Lighter peach areas represent developed open spaces, while cultivated crop lands, shown in yellow, are scattered across the central and southern zones.

Forested regions dominate the landscape, with evergreen, deciduous, and mixed forests depicted in varying shades of green. These forests are interspersed with grasslands, herbaceous areas, and shrublands, adding to the township's ecological diversity. Wetlands also feature prominently, especially near lakes and low-lying areas, and are represented by dark olive (woody wetlands) and light teal (emergent herbaceous wetlands). Blue areas indicate open water, with notable water bodies such as Lake Manuka marked on the map. The presence of barren land, marked in beige-grey, highlights rocky or sandy terrain with minimal vegetation.

Topography

Hayes Township's topography was shaped by glaciers during the Pleistocene Epoch, about 10,000 years ago. The area is mostly hilly, with elevations in Otsego County ranging from 800 feet in the northeast to 1,400 feet in the central and southwest parts. A narrow plain runs from Elmira through Gaylord to the county's eastern and southeastern borders. Swampy lowlands and kettle lakes, common in glaciated regions, are also present.





Geology

The surface geology of Otsego County was shaped by glaciers over 10,000 years ago, leaving a thick layer of glacial drift, sand, gravel, rock, and clay, over 400 feet deep. An end moraine, rich in sand, gravel, and some clay, runs through the county, providing prime agricultural land. The drift in the moraine area helps protect water wells by creating layers beneath the surface. North of the moraine, glacial till and outwash areas consist of sand and gravel, with outwash areas being more permeable and vulnerable to contaminants. Glacial ice blocks formed kettle lakes across the county. Beneath the drift lies bedrock, with the Coldwater Shale in the south and Antrim Shale in the north. Natural gas and oil are extracted from the bedrock, though oil production is less successful where Antrim Shale is present.

Slope

The Slopes map shows the variation in land elevation across the township using color-coded slope categories, the map identifies five slope ranges. Steeply sloping areas (30–45%) in red are concentrated in the southern part of the township, especially near Mancelona Road, Mount Frederick Road, and Manistee River Road. Strongly sloping areas (15–30%) in orange appear alongside the steep zones, while moderately sloping areas (9–15%) in light brown are more dispersed but still common in the south-central region.

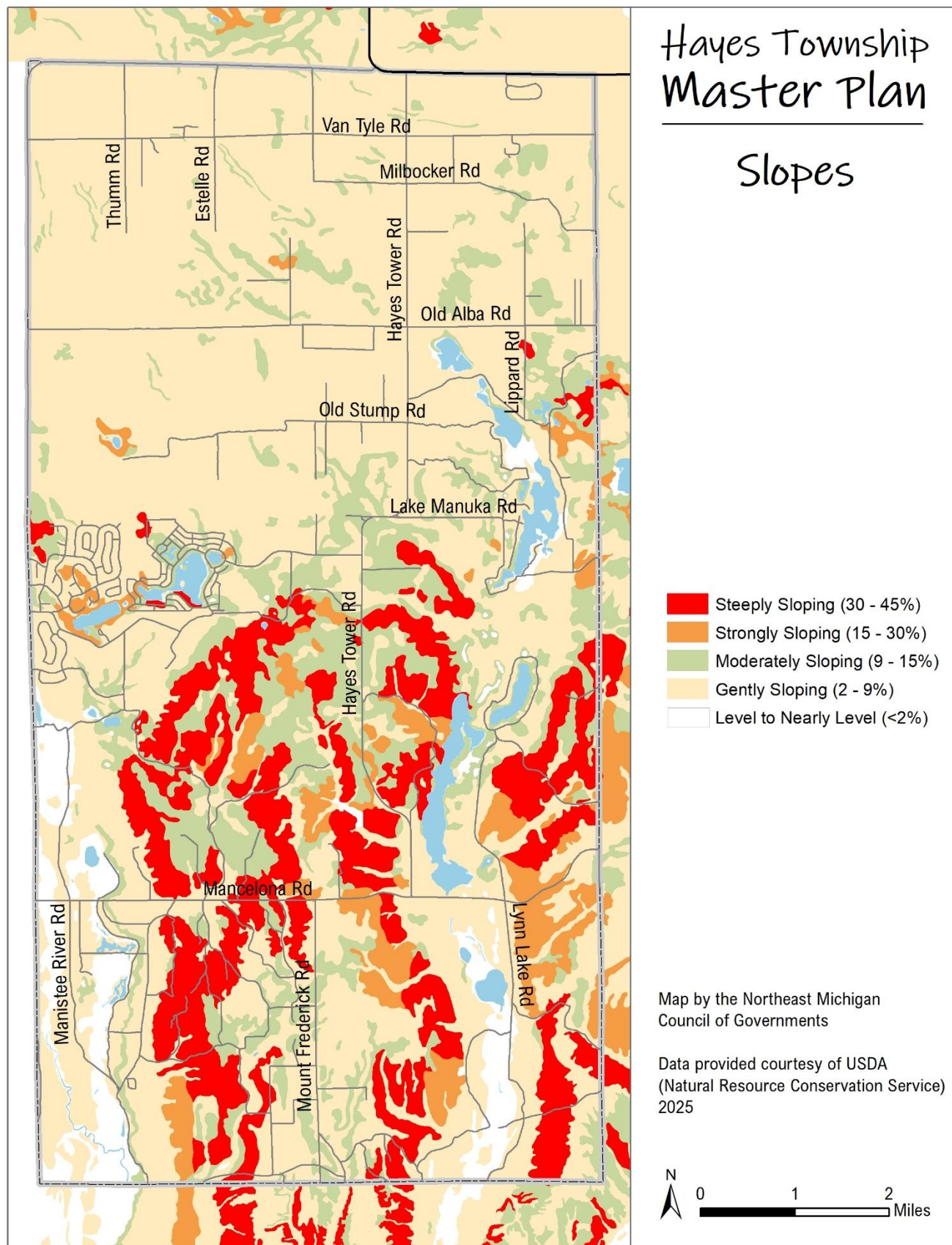
Gently sloping land (2–9%), shown in light green, is more widespread across the central and northern areas, including near Lake Manuka and along Old Stump and Hayes Tower Roads. The flattest areas, labeled as level to nearly level (<2%) in cream, dominate the northern parts of the township and are found along roads like Van Tyle and Old Alba. This map is useful for guiding land use decisions, highlighting areas better suited for development, agriculture, or conservation based on slope conditions.

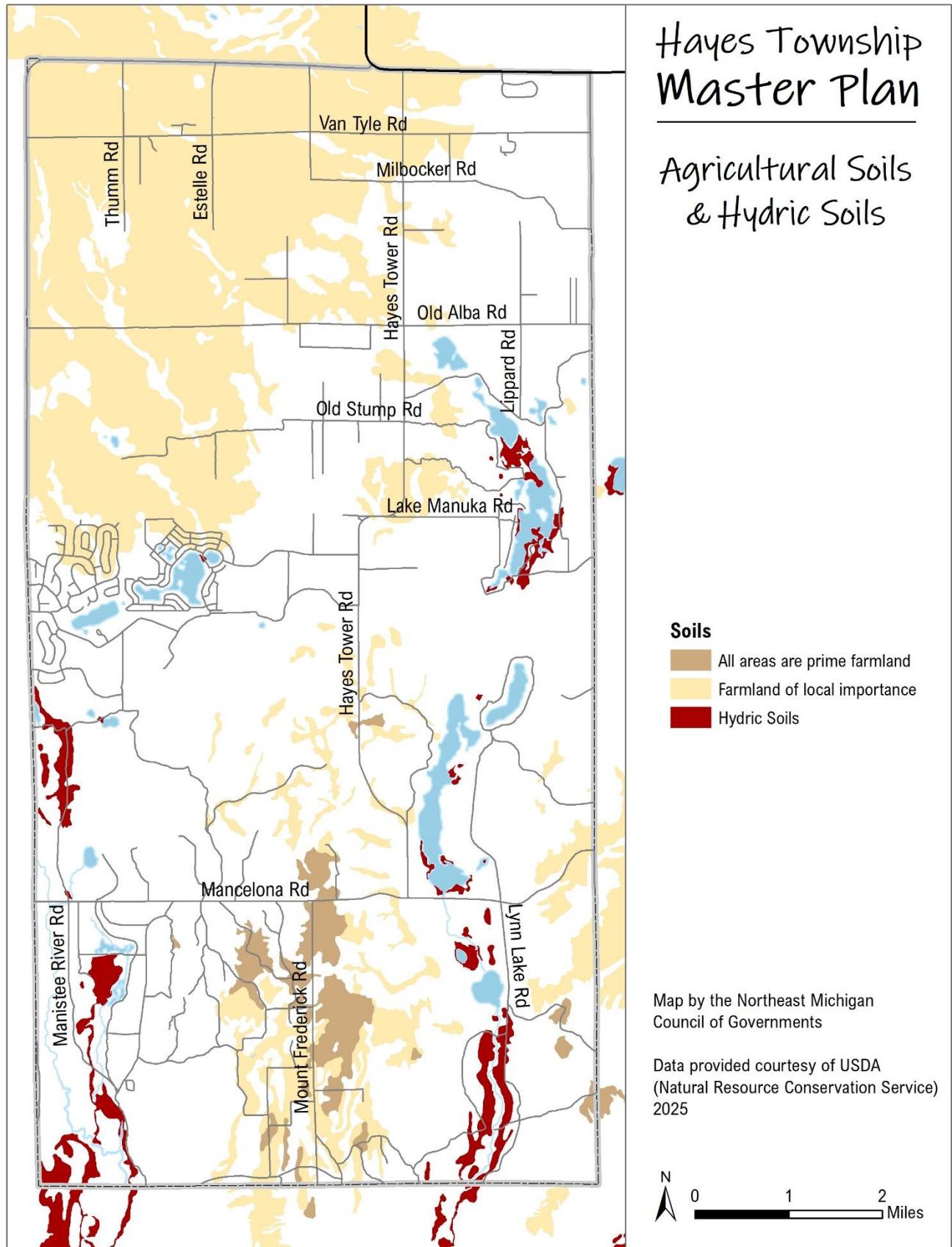
Soils

The Soil Survey, completed by the US Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource and Conservation Service, is a vital tool for land use decisions, offering key insights into soil characteristics relevant to building, wastewater systems, agriculture, and development. It helps predict limitations and opportunities based on soil types.

An important soil characteristic is permeability, which refers to how easily water or air moves through the soil. Soils with high permeability allow water to filter quickly into the ground, which is beneficial for drainage. However, these soils are less effective at filtering and absorbing fertilizers, nutrients, and other chemicals, potentially leading to contamination of groundwater. In Hayes Township, the soils are considered Moderately Rapid or Rapid Permeability, 28 to 92 Ksaf.

The Agricultural Soils & Hydric Soils map shows key soil types for farming and planning. Prime farmland (light yellow) is common in the north and center, while locally important farmland (brown) is mainly in the south near Mancelona and Mount Frederick Roads. Hydric soils (red), found near water bodies like Lake Manuka and Lynn Lake Road, have poor drainage and are better suited for conservation than development. The map helps guide land use by identifying suitable agricultural areas and limiting development in sensitive zones.





Water-Rivers, Streams, Lakes

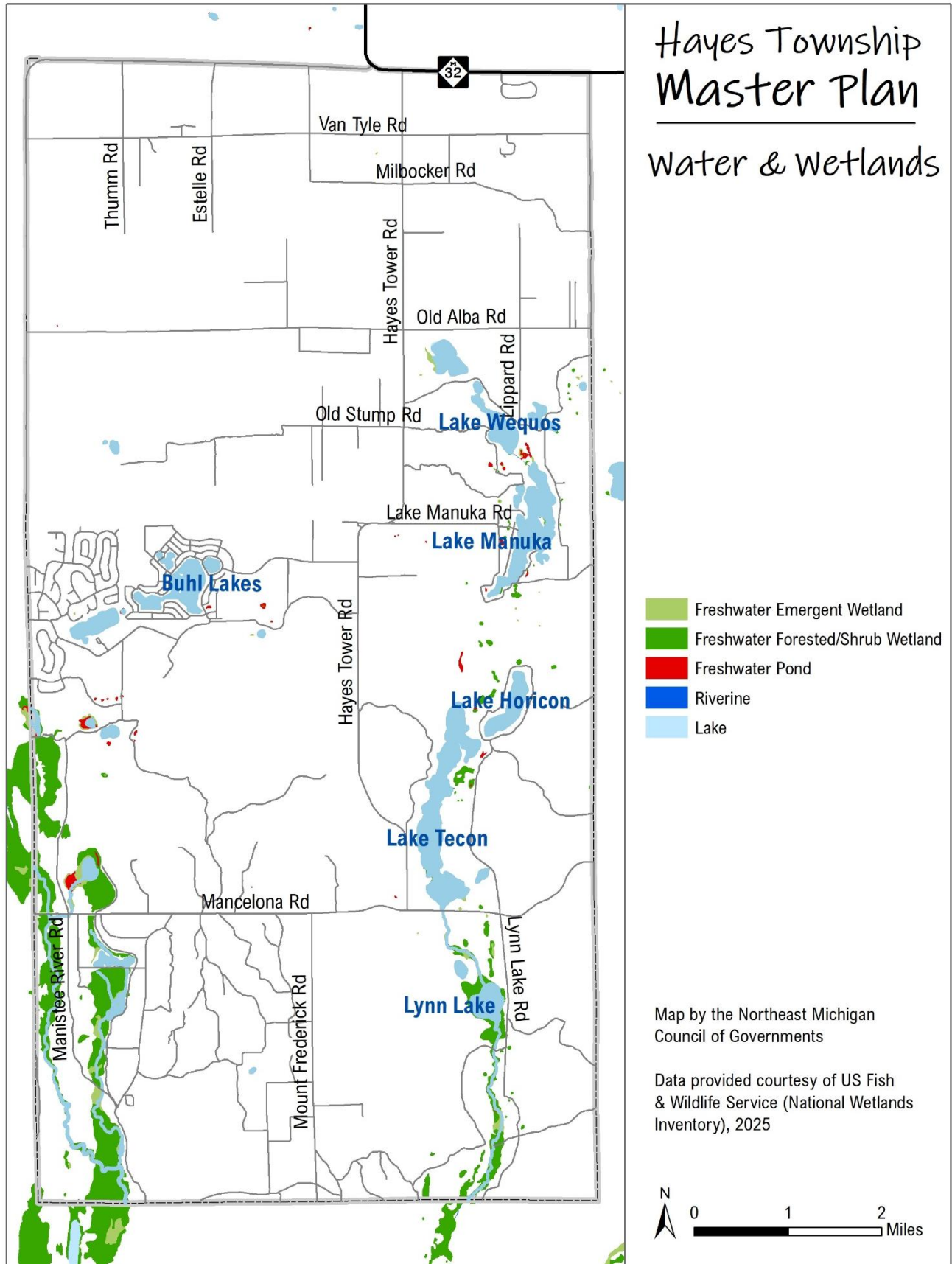
Lakes, streams, and wetlands play a critical role in both the ecological health and aesthetic value of a community, making them essential considerations in land use planning. This is especially true in Hayes Township, which is home to more than 20 lakes, ponds, and streams. Development near these water bodies carries the potential risk of degrading water quality, particularly through contamination from septic systems and runoff from landscaped areas. Septic systems installed in locations with poor soil drainage or close proximity to water sources can allow harmful contaminants to leach into lakes and streams. Similarly, stormwater runoff from lawns can carry fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemicals, all of which contribute to water pollution, degrade aquatic ecosystems, and threaten environmental health. Careful planning and effective environmental management are vital to mitigate these risks.

These pollutants not only affect surface water but can also infiltrate groundwater supplies. When water from septic systems or yard runoff seeps into the ground, it can carry contaminants through the soil and into underground aquifers that provide drinking water. This risk is heightened in areas with highly permeable soils, where pollutants can travel more rapidly. To protect both surface and groundwater resources, it's essential to implement proper waste management systems, maintain buffer zones, and adopt other protective strategies.



The Water and Wetlands map illustrates the township's network of lakes, rivers, and wetlands using data from the US Fish & Wildlife Service's 2025 National Wetlands Inventory. Key lakes such as Buhl Lakes, Lake Wequos, Lake Manuka, Lake Horicon, Lake Tecon, and Lynn Lake are prominently labeled. The map differentiates wetland types using color: freshwater emergent wetlands in light green, forested/shrub wetlands in dark green, and freshwater ponds in red. Riverine systems are shown with blue lines, providing a clear depiction of the township's hydrology. Major roads including Hayes Tower Road, Mancelona Road, and Manistee River Road offer geographic context.

Additionally, the Oil and Gas Wells map offers insight into the distribution and operational status of energy infrastructure throughout the township, based on 2025 data from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes & Energy. Each well is marked with a color-coded diamond to indicate its status, ranging from producing and active wells to those that are shut-in, plugged, or permitted. This dense and detailed mapping, combined with the water and wetlands data, supports informed decision-making in township planning, helping to balance development with environmental protection.



Sites of Environmental Contamination

The Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended regulates facilities of environmental contamination in Michigan. The Remediation and Redevelopment Division of the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) works towards managing and revitalizing sites of environmental contamination to protect the environment. The division administers two programs: Environmental Remediation (release of hazardous substances from facilities) and Leaking Underground Storage Tanks (release of hazardous substances from underground storage tanks).

The facility inventory database has information for Sites of Environmental Contamination (Part 201), Leaking Underground Storage Tanks (Part 213), and Baseline Environmental Assessments (BEA). The Baseline Environmental Assessment documents the existing contamination and allows a facility to be acquired and/or operated without being held liable for the existing contamination. EGLE also has an online mapping application, Environmental Mapper, which allows users to view sites of environmental contamination, leaking underground storage tank sites, and any land use or resource use restrictions imposed on a property that has been provided to EGLE. Information about the sites of environmental contamination in Hayes Township can be found in Table 4-1 and underground storage tanks can be found in Table 4-2.

Table 4-1 Sites of Environmental Contamination Part 201 Sites

Facility Name	Address	Risk	Contaminants
Lake Tecon Property	Hayes Tower Rd.	Present	Petroleum Volatile & Semi-Volatile Organic Compounds
Caple NADV 3, Site #3		Contact Lead Division	not listed
S. Caple Antrim Project CPF		Contact Lead Division	not listed
Caple NADV 3, Site #5		Contact Lead Division	not listed

Source: Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy

Table 4-2 Underground Storage Tanks

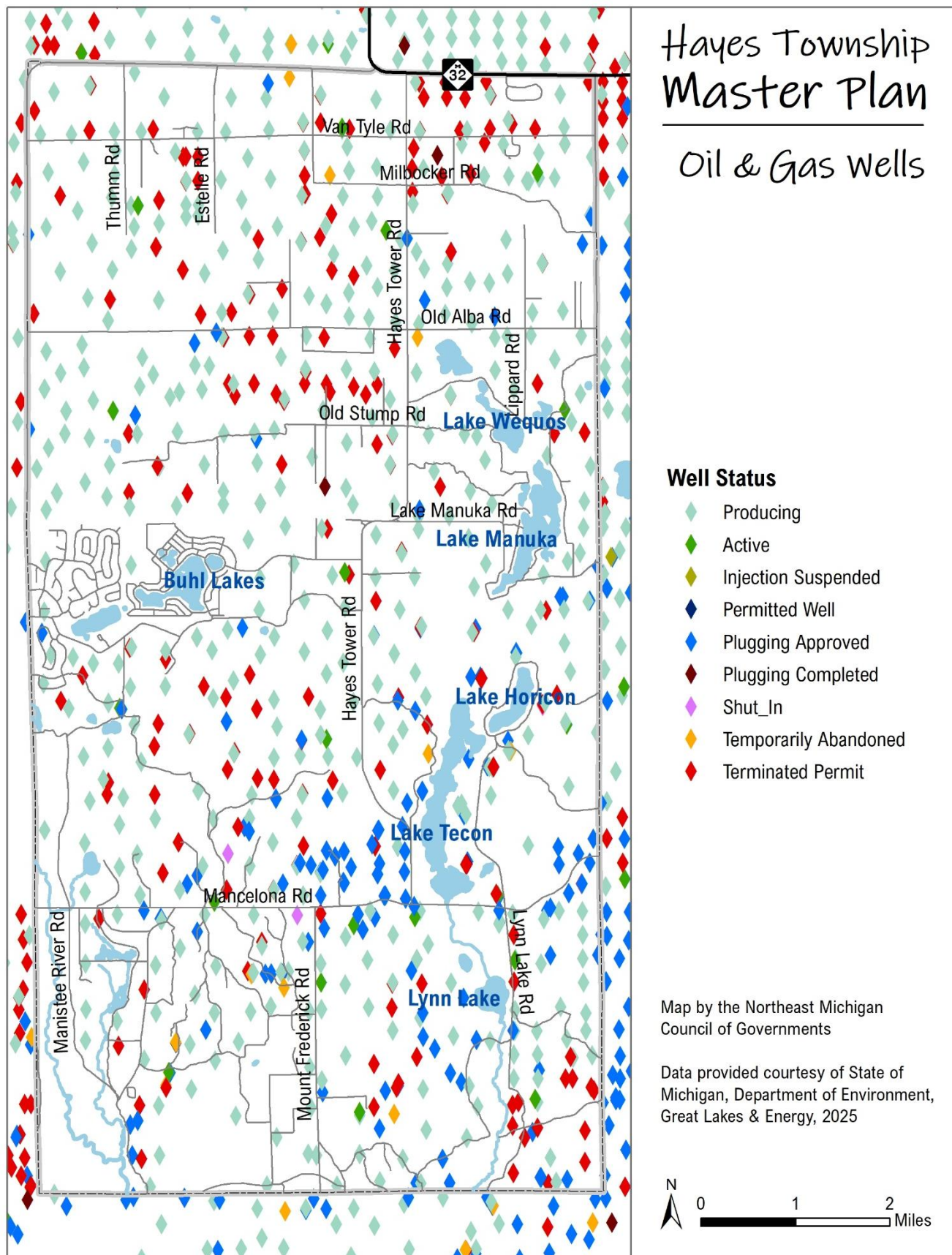
Facility Name	Address	Total Tanks	Active Tanks	Total Known Releases ¹	Active Known Releases ²	Has a BEA? ³
Auto Glass Specialists	925 Van Tyle Rd.	1	0	0	0	No
Wilderness Valley	7519 Mancelona Rd.	4	0	0	0	No

Source: Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy

¹ Total Known Releases are the total number of releases known to have occurred at the site.

² Active Known Releases are the number of releases at a site for which no known actions have been taken to address the leak.

³ BEA stands for Baseline Environmental Assessment.



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Housing 5

Housing Overview

In many communities, both young adults and the elderly face significant challenges in securing suitable housing, largely due to the intersection of lower income levels and the rising cost and limited availability of housing options. This issue is particularly pronounced in urban areas, where demand for affordable housing often outpaces supply, leaving individuals and families to compete for a dwindling number of rental units or homes. For young adults, student loan debt and lower entry-level wages exacerbate financial strain, while older adults—particularly those on fixed incomes—often struggle with limited financial flexibility as they face the rising cost of living.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recommends that households allocate no more than 30% of their income to housing costs, a standard intended to ensure that families can also afford other essential expenses, such as food, healthcare, and transportation. However, for many individuals, especially in high-demand cities, spending 30% on housing is increasingly unrealistic. Studies show that a significant portion of the population, particularly low-income renters and homeowners, often find themselves paying well above this threshold, sometimes as much as 40%, 50%, or even 60% of their income, toward housing costs.

This financial burden leaves households with little disposable income to cover other necessary expenses. The consequences are far-reaching: families may forgo essential services like healthcare, skip meals, or delay purchases of necessary items such as clothing, utilities, or transportation. In extreme cases, individuals may face the risk of eviction or foreclosure, creating a cycle of financial instability that can be difficult to escape.

Moreover, the lack of affordable housing impacts communities, contributing to increased homelessness, overcrowded living conditions, and a general decline in quality of life. The scarcity of affordable housing also limits mobility for many, especially young people looking to start families or older adults seeking to downsize or relocate. With fewer affordable housing options, people are often forced to remain in environments that no longer suit their needs, whether due to rising rent prices, inadequate living conditions, or social and economic isolation.

Ultimately, the quest for attainable housing presents a formidable challenge that extends beyond financial difficulties—it is a systemic issue that affects the overall well-being of individuals and families across multiple generations. As housing prices continue to rise and wages stagnate, the gap between income and housing costs only widens, further straining family finances and perpetuating the cycle of housing insecurity.

Household Characteristics

Hayes Township has a total of 1,777 households with an average household size of 2.32, which is slightly smaller than Otsego Lake Township and Bagley Township but larger than the City of Gaylord. It has the lowest percentage of individuals living alone at 14.5 percent, a figure significantly below the county and state averages, and well below Gaylord's 47 percent. Only 6.1 percent of households in Hayes Township consist of individuals aged 65 or older living alone, matching Chester Township and notably lower than surrounding areas like the townships of Otsego Lake and Bagley. About 21.2 percent of Hayes Township households include at least one person under 18, which is considerably lower than neighboring townships and the county average. However, 35.7 percent of households have someone aged 65 or older, a proportion slightly above the state average and close to the county figure, though still lower than Otsego Lake and Bagley Townships. Overall, Hayes Township stands out for having fewer people living alone and fewer households with children, while maintaining a relatively high share of older adult residents.

Household Types						
	Total Households	Average Size	Living Alone	Living Alone 65+	With 1 or + under 18	With a or + over 65
Hayes Township	1,777	2.32	14.5%	6.1%	21.2%	35.7%
Otsego Lake Township	1,152	2.49	18.7%	10.9%	31.3%	42.3%
Bagley Township	2,532	2.34	21.3%	10.4%	31.8%	38.2%
Chester Township	508	2.34	19.1%	6.1%	26.6%	31.1%
City of Gaylord	2,201	1.88	47%	16.6%	33.0%	27.8%
Otsego County	10,996	2.27	26.5%	11.9%	29.3%	34.9%
State of Michigan	4,040,168	2.43	30.7%	12.9%	27.5%	32.3%



Income

In terms of income, Hayes Township has a median household income of \$72,326, which is slightly higher than the Otsego County median of \$67,285 and just above the state median of \$71,149. However, when looking at median family income, Hayes Township falls below both the county and state averages. The median family income in Hayes Township is \$77,356, compared to \$83,786 for Otsego County and \$90,947 for the state of Michigan. This suggests that while general household earnings in Hayes Township are relatively strong, families in the area tend to earn less than their counterparts both within the county and statewide.

Income			
	Hayes Township	Otsego County	State of Michigan
Median Household	\$72,326	\$67,285	\$71,149
Median Family	\$77,356	\$83,786	\$90,947

Housing Stock

The housing stock in Hayes Township reflects a mix of construction periods, with a significant portion of homes built in the latter half of the 20th century. The largest share of homes was built between 1970 and 1979, totaling 458 units, followed by 386 units constructed in the 1990s. Housing development was also active during the 2000s, contributing 240 units, and the 1980s with 230 units. More recent construction has been limited, with only 128 units built between 2010 and 2019 and just 9 homes added since 2020. Older housing is relatively scarce in the township, with only 6 homes built in the 1950s, none from the 1940s, and 39 units built before 1940. In total, Hayes Township contains 1,670 housing units, with the bulk of the housing stock being between 25 and 55 years old.

Age of Housing Stock

Year	Units
2020 or after	9
2010 – 2019	128
2000 – 2009	240
1990 - 1999	386
1980 - 1989	230
1970 - 1979	458
1960 - 1969	174
1950 – 1959	6
1940 – 1949	0
1939 or before	39
Total Units	1,670

Hayes Township contains a total of 1,670 housing units, of which 1,177 are currently occupied. The majority of the housing units are single detached homes, totaling 1,539 units, with 1,061 of these occupied. There are 141 single attached units, though only 14 are occupied. The township does not have any apartment buildings, whether they are duplexes, small complexes with three to nine units, or larger buildings with ten or more units. Mobile homes account for 117 units, with 102 currently occupied. This distribution highlights a predominantly low-density residential character, with a strong emphasis on single detached housing and a small number of mobile homes.

Types of Housing Units

	All Units	Occupied Units
Single Detached	1,539	1,061
Single attached	141	14
2 apartments	0	0
3-9 apartments	0	0
10 or more apartments	0	0
Mobile Home	117	102
Total Units	1,670	1,177

Housing Statistics

In Hayes Township, there are a total of 1,670 housing units, of which 1,177 are occupied and 493 are vacant, resulting in a vacancy rate of 29.5 percent. A significant portion of these vacant units, 442 in total, are designated as seasonal homes, making up 89.7 percent of the vacant housing stock. When compared to surrounding areas, Otsego Lake Township has a higher vacancy rate of 48.5 percent, with 1,052 of its 1,087 vacant units used seasonally, accounting for 96.8 percent. Bagley Township has 3,121 housing units and a vacancy rate of 18.9 percent, with 529 seasonal units making up 89.8 percent of its 589 vacancies. Chester Township has a vacancy rate of 35.3 percent, with 255 of its 277 vacant homes used seasonally, representing 92.1 percent. In contrast, the City of Gaylord shows a much lower vacancy rate of 4.1 percent, with all 93 vacant units used for seasonal purposes. Countywide, Otsego County has 14,893 housing units and a vacancy rate of 26.2 percent, with 3,631 seasonal units making up 93.2 percent of vacant homes. At the state level, Michigan has a vacancy rate of 12.2 percent across nearly 4.6 million housing units, and about half of its vacant units are designated as seasonal, totaling 260,162 or 49.5 percent. This comparison highlights that Hayes Township, like much of Otsego County, has a high proportion of seasonal housing compared to the state overall.

All Housing Units						
	Total	Occupied	Vacant	Percent Vacant	Seasonal	Percent Seasonal of Vacant
Hayes Township	1,670	1,177	493	29.5%	442	89.7%
Otsego Lake Township	2,239	1,152	1,087	48.5%	1,052	96.8%
Bagley Township	3,121	2,532	589	18.9%	529	89.8%
Chester Township	785	508	277	35.3%	255	92.1%
City of Gaylord	2,294	2,201	93	4.1%	93	100.0%
Otsego County	14,893	10,996	3,897	26.2%	3,631	93.2%
State of Michigan	4,599,683	4,040,168	559,515	12.2%	260,162	49.5%



Demographics of Occupied Units

In Hayes Township, among the 1,177 occupied housing units, the majority are home to married couples, accounting for 679 households. Of these, 660 are owner-occupied and only 19 are renter-occupied. There are 65 households headed by a male with no spouse present, all of which are owner-occupied. Female householders with no spouse make up 81 households, with 49 owning their homes and 32 renting. Individuals living alone under the age of 65 account for 171 households, the majority of which, 156, are owner-occupied, while 15 are rentals. There are 72 households with individuals living alone who are over the age of 65, with 65 owning their homes and 7 renting. Ownership is dominant across all household types, with particularly high ownership rates among married couples and single male householders.

Demographics for Occupied Units			
	Overall Units	Own	Rent
Married Couples	679	660	19
Male Householder – no spouse	65	65	0
Female Householder – no spouse	81	49	32
Householder alone under 65	171	156	15
Householder alone over 65	72	65	7



Household Expenses

In Hayes Township, vehicle ownership is common among households, with only a small fraction, 26 out of 1,177 occupied units, reporting no access to a vehicle. The majority of households own multiple vehicles, with 560 households owning two vehicles and 285 owning three or more. Another 228 households have just one vehicle. This distribution suggests a strong dependence on personal vehicles, which is typical in rural or less densely populated areas where public transportation options may be limited or unavailable.

Vehicular Assets	
Vehicles	Units
None	26
1	228
2	560
3 or more	285

The high rate of vehicle ownership has important implications for household budgets. Owning multiple vehicles can significantly increase expenses, including costs for fuel, insurance, maintenance, registration, and loan payments. For households with limited income, these expenses can place a considerable strain on finances. On the other hand, vehicle ownership provides essential mobility for work, school, shopping, and accessing services, especially in areas like Hayes Township where destinations may be spread out. Overall, while vehicles are a necessary asset for most households in the township, they also represent a substantial and ongoing financial commitment.



In Hayes Township, households rely on a variety of heat sources, reflecting the rural character and limited access to centralized utilities in some areas. The most common source of heat is propane or bottled fuel, used in 493 homes. Natural gas follows, providing heat to 303 households. Another 312 homes use other sources, which may include wood, coal, or alternative heating methods. A smaller number of households, 51, use electric heat, while 18 rely on fuel oil, kerosene, or similar fuels. Notably, every occupied home in the township has some form of heating, as no units report having no heat source. This mix of heating methods suggests both diversity in household infrastructure and a reliance on off-grid or independent heating options for a significant portion of the community.

Heat Source	
Source	Units
Natural Gas	303
Propane/Bottled Fuel	493
Electric	51
Fuel Oil, Kerosene, etc.	18
Other Sources	312
None	0

Cost of Homeownership

Construction Costs

In Hayes Township, the Great Recession significantly slowed construction activity, as its broader economic fallout led to a decline in local job opportunities and forced many residents to seek employment elsewhere. The recession, which lasted from late 2007 to around 2009, was triggered by the collapse of the U.S. housing bubble and escalated into a global financial crisis with widespread impacts.

More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped housing trends. With the rise of remote work, many seasonal homes in Hayes Township have become more attractive as year-round residences. At the same time, rising construction costs—driven in part by recent natural disasters and supply chain disruptions—have created additional barriers to new development, further impacting housing availability and affordability in the area.

In Michigan, building a 1,500-square-foot home with builder-grade finishes, and basic materials without luxury upgrades like granite countertops or hardwood flooring, can be a costly endeavor. On average, the construction alone costs about \$315,000, not including the price of land. While the statewide average cost of land is roughly \$13,000 per acre, this figure excludes the cost of making a parcel build-ready.



In Hayes Township, where municipal water and sewer services are unavailable, all new homes must rely on private infrastructure. A typical 4-inch well installation costs around \$9,500, while a septic system adds another \$11,000. Additional infrastructure expenses include electric grid connection, which can range from \$1,000 to \$30,000, and natural gas hookup, averaging between \$500 and \$2,000. For properties that require both a well and septic system, the total average cost for these essential services is about \$37,250. If municipal utilities were accessible, this figure could drop to approximately \$22,900.

Currently, there are 12 buildable lots listed for sale in Hayes Township. These parcels average 6.4 acres in size and have an average asking price of \$32,500. Factoring in land, construction, and infrastructure, the total estimated cost to build a home in the Township is roughly \$384,750.

To finance such a project, a construction loan would typically require a 20% down payment, about \$76,950 in this scenario, and result in monthly mortgage payments of approximately \$2,172, (mortgage payments include principal, interest, taxes and insurance.) Utility costs are not being factored into this estimate. For these costs to meet the standard of “attainable housing,” meaning they do not exceed 30% of a household’s income, *a buyer would need to earn at least \$88,000 annually.* If adding in an additional, modest, utility cost of \$100 per utility, electric, gas, phone and internet, the required income would rise to around \$103,000.

This required income is \$10,700 to \$30,700 higher than the current median household income in Hayes Township, highlighting a significant gap between homebuilding costs and local affordability.



Purchase Price

Current real estate listings show six homes for sale in Hayes Township, with an average asking price of \$271,200. For a home at this price to be considered “attainable”—meaning the cost does not exceed 30% of a household’s gross income—a buyer would need to earn approximately \$78,000 per year. This estimate includes only the principal and interest on a mortgage, along with property taxes and homeowners’ insurance.

However, this calculation excludes other essential monthly housing expenses such as utilities and communication services. Estimating modest costs of \$100 per month for each of the following, electricity, gas, internet, and phone, adds \$400 to the monthly budget. Factoring in these additional costs raises the income requirement to about \$90,000 to remain within the 30% affordability threshold.



In comparison, current average household incomes in Hayes Township range from \$72,000 to \$77,000. This places the average home on the market out of financial reach for many residents. While the gap is not insurmountable, it poses a significant challenge, particularly for first-time buyers or households without substantial savings or home equity.

It’s important to note that the \$271,200 figure represents an average, meaning several homes are listed below that price point. These more affordable listings may fall within reach for households earning closer to the Township’s median income, offering potential opportunities for some buyers. Variables such as home size, condition, age, and proximity to services or amenities can greatly affect pricing, creating some degree of flexibility in the market.

Still, the limited housing inventory, only six homes currently for sale, adds pressure. With so few options available,

competition among buyers can drive prices up, reduce bargaining power, or simply leave many without viable choices. This tight inventory underscores a broader issue of constrained housing supply, which can exacerbate affordability problems even when prices appear marginally within range.

In Conclusion

The housing landscape in Hayes Township reflects a complex intersection of rising construction costs, limited infrastructure, and stagnant income growth, all of which contribute to a growing affordability gap. While a few existing homes may still fall within reach for some residents, both purchasing and building a home remain financially out of reach for many, particularly when factoring in the full cost of ownership, including utilities and essential services. The small inventory of available homes further limits options and drives competition, putting additional strain on local buyers. To address these challenges, efforts must focus on increasing the availability of affordable housing, whether through expanded infrastructure, incentives for lower-cost development, or targeted financial assistance, to ensure that the opportunity for homeownership remains accessible to a broader segment of the community. Without such measures, the Township risks becoming increasingly unaffordable for the very residents who form its foundation.





Existing Land Use 6

Existing Land Use Statistics

Prior to determining future land use recommendations and developing a future land use map, a community must have an accurate assessment of existing land uses. This chapter presents information on both types and locations of existing land uses. The map of existing land use, shown in the map, illustrates the distribution of land uses within the Township. Table 4-1 breaks down the percentage of the township in each land use category. The existing land use map was derived from an analysis of parcel data from the Otsego County Equalization Department, tax classifications, and aerial photo interpretation by the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments.

Table 4-1: Hayes Township Existing Land Use

Category	Acres	% of Township
Residential - Improved	8,945	19.78%
Residential - Vacant	20,429	45.19%
Agricultural - Improved	889	1.97%
Agricultural - Vacant	4,212	9.32%
Commercial - Improved	454	1.00%
Commercial - Vacant	10	0.02%
Industrial - Improved	84	0.19%
Industrial - Vacant	374	0.83%
Local Government-Owned	120	0.26%
State of Michigan	8,409	18.60%
Water	980	2.17%
Other	304	0.67%
TOTAL	45,210	100.00%

Source: Otsego County Equalization Department 2023 and NEMCOG



Residential Uses

As can be seen from Table 4-1, the amount of land being used for residential purposes is 65 percent of the township. Nearly 20 percent of the township is improved residential while a large portion of the township – over 45 percent of the land – is classified as vacant residential. This means nearly half of the land in the county is available for residential development, but no residential structure currently exists on the land. Residential uses are found throughout the Township on both large and small lots, with the majority of improved residential parcels located in the northern half of the Township while the southern half is primarily vacant.



Agricultural Uses

Agricultural uses are mainly contained in the northwest corner of the township and account for only 11 percent of land. Improved agricultural include those parcels which have structures on them while vacant agricultural parcels do not include structures. Over four-fifths of agricultural land is vacant. Active agricultural farming has decreased drastically since the late 1980's, there is now a strong presence of hobby farms focused on recreational activities instead of food production.



Commercial Uses

Commercial uses comprise only one percent of the land in the township with 454 acres existing as improved commercial. The amount of vacant commercial property is negligible, totaling only ten acres. Commercial lots are mainly found on the south-central township border.



Industrial Uses

Industrial uses make up only slightly more than one percent of the township and are distributed along the northern border of the township and occur sporadically in other areas.



State of Michigan Land

Land owned by the State of Michigan totals nearly 8,500 acres and accounts for over 18 and a half percent of township land. Most of the state land is located in the northeast, southwest, and southeast corners of the Township, this includes all designated DNR properties.



Township and County Land

Local governmental entities own 0.26 percent of the land in the township. Hayes Township itself owns only a tenth of a percent of the Township's total area.



Water

Bodies of water comprise 2.17 percent of the Township. Pencil Lake and Buhl Lakes are located in the western half of the township, with Lake Manuka, Lake Horicon, and Lake Tecon in the east. Other lakes within the township include Hardwood Lake, Lake Little Bear, Thomas Lake, Gump Lake, Pants Lake, Lake Weqous, Lake Washwomen, Deer Lake, Frenchman Creek, King Pond, and Lynn Lake. The Manistee River is located in the southwest corner of the Township.

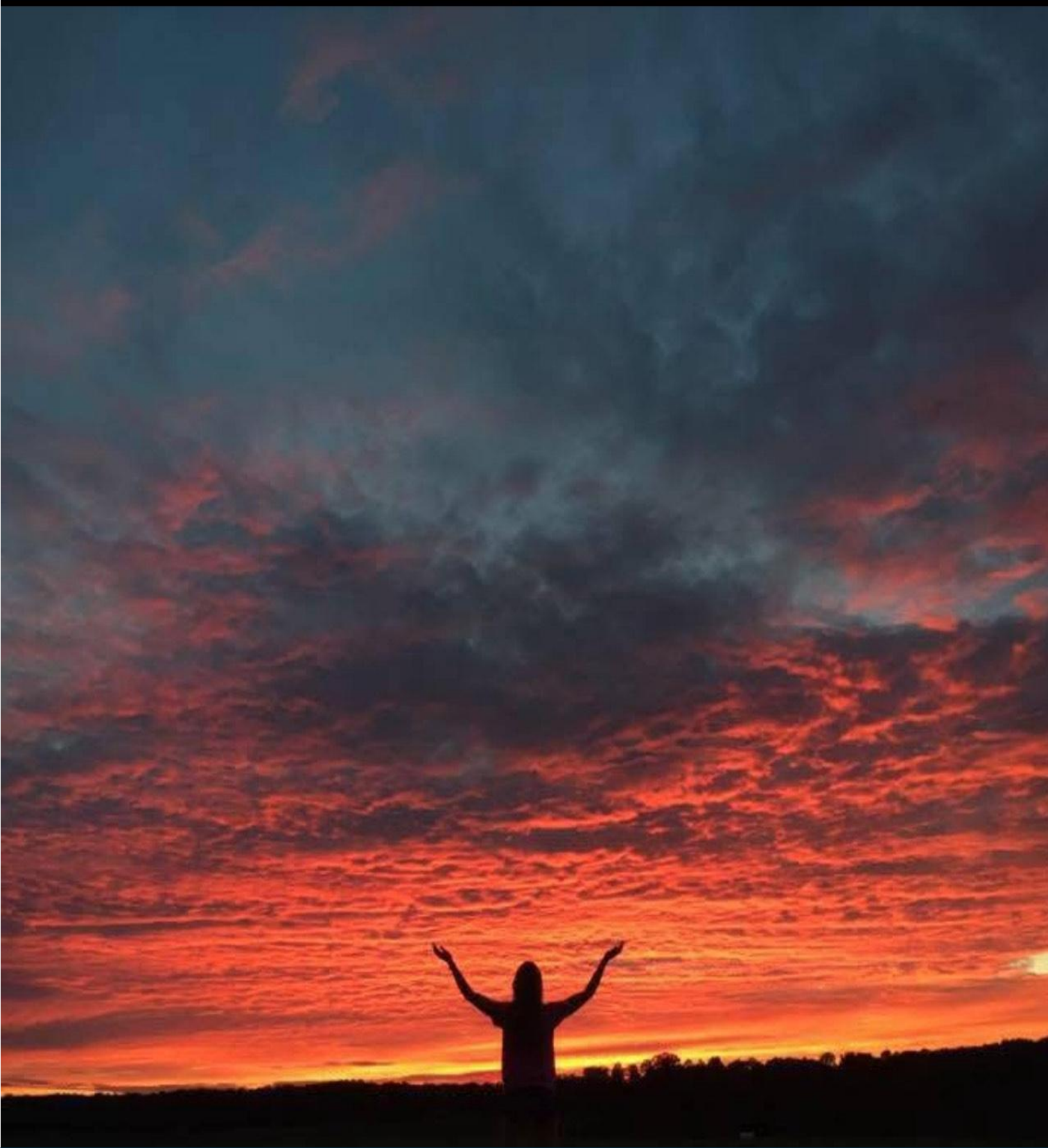


Other

The remaining 304 acres (0.67%) of the township consist of various parcels unaccounted for in any category. These are primarily uses such as road rights-of-way.



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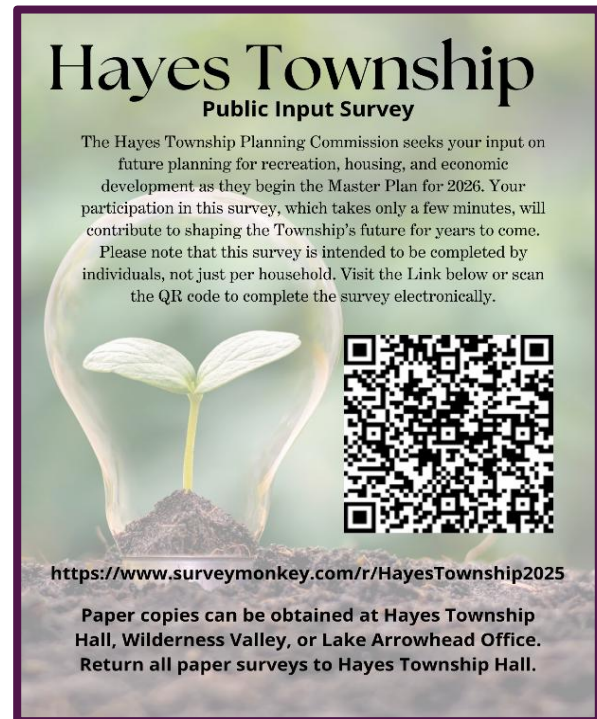
Community Input & Goals

7

Public Input Synopsis

Hayes Township put out a public input survey through the assistance of NEMCOG on the Survey Monkey platform. Paper copies of the survey could also be obtained at the Township hall, Wilderness Valley and Lake Arrowhead offices. There were 187 responses to the survey. Full results of the survey are located in the appendix; a summary of the results follows:

- Almost 39% of respondents were between the ages of 46-65, another almost 27% were between the ages of 26-45 years of age.
- Over 72% of respondents own a home in the Township and reside in it full-time, just shy over 30% own land within the Township.
- 54% of respondents have been in Hayes Township over 11 years, 27% of those same respondents have been in the Township over 25 years.
- 77% of respondents live in the Township years round.
- 52% of respondents were drawn to the beauty of the area, 43% to the recreational opportunities and 33% for rural living.
- Almost 85% of respondents felt that more needed to be done to protect forest lands, 80% to protect lakes and rivers, and 75% wildlife habitats.
- Over 58% of respondents feel that residential areas should be connected to employment and shopping areas with non-motorized transportation pathways.
- 61% of respondents would accept wide paved shoulders for the non-motorized pathways connecting residential areas to shopping and employment.
- Over 40% of respondents felt there was a good or excellent current effort to protect the natural environment of the Township.
- Over 75% of respondents **do not** support the development of Utility-Scale Solar Energy Facilities on agricultural or forest land.
- Over 75% of respondents **do not** support the development of Utility-Scale Wind Energy Facilities on agricultural or forest land.
- Almost 80% of respondents are concerned about the loss of farmland due to alternative energy sources. 78% are concerned about the loss of rural vistas and 69% are concerned about the noise of inverters used in solar energy.
- 47% of respondents use Uber and another 39% use the county bus system.



- 56% of respondents do not feel that traffic is a problem in the Township, however 56% feel that season traffic is a problem in the Township.
- Almost 50% of the respondents do not feel that truck routing is a problem in the Township.
- Almost 57% of the respondents support local financial incentives to attract and retain new jobs and businesses.
- 46% of respondents **do not** believe that the Township should expand commercially.
- Almost 49% of respondents feel that increasing the number of jobs is an important economic development concept, over 43% feel that attracting more workforce is important and 43% feel that attracting professional services and businesses is important.
- Over 36% of respondents prefer **no** new development, while almost 29% feel that restaurants are missing in the Township.
- 49% of respondents feel that short-term rentals should be held to a certain number.
- Almost 53% of respondents feel that there should be a business permit process for Airbnb and Vrbo rentals.
- Over 48% of respondents feel that there should be an annual inspection for short-term rentals and long-term rentals.
- Almost 53% of respondents **do not** believe that vacation rentals are a problem in residential areas.
- Almost 29% of respondents feel that single family homes are the best option for Hayes Township while developing housing in the Township.
- Almost 83% of respondents feel that requiring a large lot is important to preserving forestland.
- Almost 78% of respondents feel that requiring a large lot size to preserve wetlands.
- Almost 74% of respondents feel that a large lot size is important to preserving farmland.
- Almost 57% of respondents feel that the Township should find and promote opportunities to encourage an increase in affordable housing.
- 48% of respondents support garage apartments.
- 84% of respondents currently live in single family homes, over 9% live in a manufactured home.
- 43% of respondents have a budget range of \$1001-\$1500 for rent or a mortgage, another almost 43% have a range of \$750-\$1000.
- Almost 20% of respondents looked for and **could not** find housing to meet their needs in Otsego County.
- Almost 97% of respondents believe that if you work hard and save you should be able to live in a home in your community that you can afford to rent or own.
- Almost 88% feel that it is important that people who work in Otsego County/Hayes Township be able to live in our community.
- 86% feel that a variety of housing options, rental and owned, are important tools for promoting economic development.
- 81% of respondents feel that the lack of affordable housing affects the economic wellbeing of the local workforce, 80% believe that it affects the ability of employers to get/keep workers. 73% think that it affects workforce supply and 69% feel that that affects the school population.

Goals

The following goals and objectives reflect the shared vision of Hayes Township residents, shaped through a series of public input sessions held during the spring and summer of 2025. These goals serve as a foundation for long-term planning and decision-making. As a community, we are committed to actively planning for thoughtful, sustainable growth and ensuring that development is supported by the necessary infrastructure.

Agricultural Goals

To sustain and enhance the agricultural landscape of Hayes Township by supporting active farming practices, preserving valuable farmland and open spaces, fostering community engagement and education, and implementing flexible land use policies that balance agricultural productivity with thoughtful growth and development.

1. Support Continued Agricultural Use	Encourage the ongoing use of active prime farmland by promoting feasible agricultural practices and preserving key agricultural lands identified by prime or locally important soils.
2. Preserve Farmland and Open Space	Protect agricultural areas through state programs (e.g., P.A. 116), zoning tools (e.g., TDRs, PDRs), conservation easements, and strategic land use policies that reduce conflicts between agriculture and development.
3. Promote Agricultural Awareness and Education	Share information about agriculture's economic role in Hayes Township and educate the public on land preservation, smart growth strategies (e.g., infill, PUDs), and the distinction between open space and working farmland.
4. Engage the Community	Conduct surveys and host workshops to involve residents, farmers, and officials in discussions about agricultural preservation, land use tools, and future development strategies.
5. Enable Flexible Land Use for Farmers	Allow agricultural landowners to create smaller parcels for residential or farming purposes while maintaining the rural character and productivity of the land.



Forestry Goals

To conserve and enhance Hayes Township's forest resources by promoting sustainable forest management, protecting critical forest lands from fragmentation, increasing public awareness, and fostering collaborative, informed land use decisions that support environmental health and responsible growth.

1. Promote Reforestation and Sustainable Forest Management	Support reforestation and the responsible management of forest lands, especially on productive soils, by adopting policies that encourage retention and educating landowners on sustainable forestry practices.
2. Preserve Forest Resources	Identify and protect key forest areas through land use planning, conservation tools (e.g., TDRs, PDRs), and policies that direct development toward already developed areas to minimize fragmentation of forest land.
3. Raise Public Awareness and Engagement	Educate the community, property owners, and officials on the economic and environmental value of forests, the difference between open space and forest land, and land preservation options through workshops and outreach.
4. Support Informed Land Use Decisions	Host public forums and workshops to build consensus on priority forest areas for preservation and promote smart growth practices like infill development, adaptive reuse, and Brownfield redevelopment.



Housing Goals

To create and sustain diverse, safe, and affordable housing options within well-designed, livable neighborhoods that meet the needs of all residents, while preserving and enhancing existing residential areas through quality development, maintenance, and community-focused planning.

1. Encourage Safe, Affordable, and Diverse Housing	Promote a variety of housing types to accommodate different income levels, household sizes, and life stages. Support both single-family and multi-family options, including mixed-use and higher-density developments near schools, parks, and community amenities.
2. Foster Well-Designed, Livable Neighborhoods	Support creative and walkable neighborhood design with sidewalks, bike paths, open spaces, and parks. Ensure new development aligns with the capacity of local infrastructure and preserves the character of surrounding areas through appropriate density and buffering.
3. Protect and Enhance Existing Residential Areas	Maintain the quality of established neighborhoods by preventing incompatible uses, encouraging reinvestment, and supporting rehabilitation of substandard housing through partnerships with programs like MSHDA.
4. Promote Safe and Well-Maintained Housing Stock	Explore rental inspection programs and offer incentives to landlords to ensure housing remains safe, sanitary, code compliant and well-maintained across all short- and long-term rentals.
5. Accelerate Building Process	Streamline permitting and zoning processes to reduce barriers making some uses such as duplexes and accessory dwelling units allowable by right, avoiding the special use permit process.
6. Support First-time Owners & Homebuyers	Promote the knowledge of existing programs and agencies that provide resources and education for first-time homebuyers on financing, affordability, and home maintenance. Partner with nonprofit housing organizations to help residents qualify for affordable homeownership opportunities.



Natural Resource Goals

To protect and enhance Hayes Township’s natural resources by promoting responsible land use and development practices that safeguard water quality, preserve ecosystems and wildlife habitats, support sustainable forestry, and balance resource extraction with environmental stewardship for the benefit of current and future generations.

1. Protect Water Quality	Promote land use practices that safeguard surface and groundwater by limiting development near sensitive areas, managing stormwater, preserving shoreline greenbelts, and using data such as aquifer vulnerability maps. Work with agencies to address contamination, enforce regulations, and participate in regional sewer planning and public education.
2. Encourage Environmentally Responsible Development	Ensure development minimizes environmental impact through erosion control, soil suitability analysis, and responsible site design—especially on steep or erosion-prone land. Collaborate with agencies to uphold best practices.
3. Preserve Natural Ecosystems and Open Space	Protect forests, wetlands, wildlife corridors, and open spaces through zoning tools, conservation incentives (e.g., TDR/PDR), and thoughtful site planning. Support biodiversity, prevent invasive species, and promote open spaces for recreation and ecological health.
4. Promote Sustainable Forestry	Recognize forests as key environmental and economic assets. Use Prime Forestlands mapping to guide development, support responsible forest management, and educate landowners on conservation tools and tax benefits. Collaborate with MDNR and conservation groups to enhance forest Alternative
5. Support Wildlife and Habitat Protection	Encourage land use that maintains and enhances critical wildlife habitats, especially those of ecological or economic importance.

Alternative Energy Goals

To responsibly integrate renewable energy developments within the township by fostering collaboration between developers and local authorities, implementing balanced zoning standards that protect property owners, agricultural land, and the natural environment, while ensuring public safety and planning for long-term site decommissioning.

1. Proposed Developments	Encourage developers to work locally with the Township to site needed utility-scale solar, utility-scale wind, and off-site battery energy storage systems.
2. County Planning & Zoning	Ensure that the zoning ordinance contains renewable energy standards that developers consider workable but which protect non-participating property owners through setbacks, screening, and noise standards, ensure protection of the natural environment including soil, surface water, groundwater, and wildlife, ensure adequate emergency services personnel, equipment, and training are available, ensure decommissioning is planned for, protect prime agricultural land, and protect the township residents in general.

Utility Goals

Expand and improve access to natural gas, electrical, and telecommunication services throughout Hayes Township to support residential and agricultural development, improve energy efficiency and enhance quality of life.

1. Partner with Utility Providers	Establish formal collaboration with regional natural gas utility providers to develop expansion plans that are financially and logistically feasible.
2. Secure Funding for Infrastructure Expansion	Apply for state or federal grants (e.g., USDA Rural Development, Michigan Economic Development Corporation programs) to support the planning, engineering, or construction of new service lines.
3. Develop a Phased Implementation Plan	Create a multi-phase infrastructure development plan, prioritizing high-need areas such as dense residential neighborhoods and agricultural zones.
4. Coordinate with County and Regional Planning Efforts	Align natural gas expansion objectives with county-wide utility plans and regional infrastructure development strategies.



Technology Goals

Increase access to reliable, high-speed internet in underserved and unserved areas by investing in broadband infrastructure and partnerships. This effort aims to close the digital divide and support education, healthcare, and economic opportunity.

1. Identify and Prioritize	Develop a phased plan to ensure coverage to the underserved and unserved areas within Hayes Township with reliable high-speed internet access.
2. Promote Installation of Fiber Infrastructure	Collaborate with regional fiber providers for infrastructure investment.
3. Accelerate Deployment	Streamline permitting and zoning processes to reduce barriers of high-speed fiber-optic infrastructure to support long-term digital connectivity and economic growth.
4. Increase Affordability and Accessibility	Ensure that all residents, regardless of income level, can afford and access high-quality internet service.



Hayes Township's future land use plan outlines a long-term strategy for guiding responsible development while safeguarding the area's natural features and rural identity. Rather than prescribing exact outcomes, the plan offers general direction to inform land use decisions, including rezoning considerations. It emphasizes thoughtful growth, encourages coordination with neighboring communities, including Otsego County, and promotes land use patterns that align with the Township's values and priorities. Effective implementation relies on available infrastructure, road networks, environmental impacts, and alignment between land use needs and zoning availability. Township leaders are encouraged to review site-specific details, such as impact assessments and technical studies, when evaluating proposals to ensure decisions support both current and future community needs.

Future Land Use Plan

Hayes Township's future land use plan includes both narrative descriptions of intended land use categories and a corresponding map to illustrate these concepts. The map is not meant to define exact parcel boundaries or dimensions, but rather to show general areas where certain types of land use are envisioned. It also includes areas beyond the Township's borders that may influence local services or affect Township residents, reflecting Hayes Township's commitment to collaborative planning with neighboring jurisdictions. The plan is intended to be flexible and may evolve in response to shifts in economic trends, population changes, development patterns, infrastructure availability, or zoning conditions. Any updates to the plan should remain consistent with the Township's broader long-term goals and the guiding principles outlined in its master plan.

The future land use plan identifies nine future land use designations. The Township has chosen to use future land use designations that generally correlate to the County's zoning districts. However, it should be noted that the names of the future land use designations do not match the names of the zoning districts, since the names of the future land use designations are intended to describe the type of recommended land use.

Zoning Plan

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008) requires that the Master Plan contain a zoning plan that includes an explanation of how the land use categories on the Future Land Use Map relate to the zoning districts. Table 8-1 includes a listing of the future land use plan categories and the equivalent zoning districts. Since the Township is governed by Otsego County Zoning, the County Zoning Plan is found within the discussion of intended land use and specific objectives of the future land use categories.

Table 8-1: Land Uses	
Future Land Use Designation	Zoning Designation(s)
Agricultural	Agricultural
Environmental Protection	Not a zoning district, however, residential recreational is the closest designation.
Forest	Forest Recreation
Recreation	Forest Recreation and Residential Recreation
Low-Density Residential	Residential Recreation and Forest Recreation
Medium-Density Residential	Residential Estates
Residential Recreational	Residential Recreation/Forest Recreation
Retail/Business/Office	B-1 Local Business District
Government & Institutional	No Zoning District



Agriculture



Specific Objectives

The Agriculture land use category identifies areas where land is primarily used for farming, livestock production, and related agricultural activities. This category supports the continuation and expansion of agricultural operations, including crop cultivation, animal husbandry, and ancillary uses such as barns, storage facilities, and small-scale agribusinesses. It is intended to preserve rural character, protect natural resources, and promote the long-term viability of the agricultural economy.



General Location

These areas are generally located on the northwestern half of the Township. These areas are characterized by low-density development patterns and are intended to support traditional neighborhood forms, emphasizing single-family homes.



Intended Land Uses

Typical uses within this designation include farms, veterinary hospitals, clinics with indoor kennels, wildlife plan and habitat preservation areas, woodlots, single-family homes, family and group childcare homes, adult daycare facilities, and home occupations.



Compatible Zoning District

The zoning district within the Otsego County Zoning Ordinance that implements the agricultural future land use designation is the AR or Agricultural Zoning District.

Environmental Protection



Specific Objectives

The Environmental Protection land use category is intended to preserve and safeguard the county's critical natural resources and maintain high water quality standards. This category encompasses sensitive environmental features such as wetlands, forests, steep slopes, lakes, rivers, riparian zones, and wildlife corridors. Land within this category is protected to support biodiversity, prevent environmental degradation, mitigate flood risks, and promote the ecological health and resilience of the region.



General Location

These areas generally are located along bodies of water throughout the Township, such as lakes and the Manistee River.



Intended Land Uses

Low-impact educational, recreational, and agricultural activities are consistent with the objectives set forth by this land use category and include, but are not limited to, nature trails, hunting, fishing, and farming. To prevent the fragmentation of environmentally sensitive lands in Otsego County, residential development should be limited while still allowing for a range of residential densities in the Environmental Preservation land use category.



Compatible Zoning District

This is not a zoning district; however, the closest designation would be Residential Recreational, or RR.

Forest



Specific Objectives

The forest land use category includes areas to be used primarily for silviculture practices as a means of providing forest products, wildlife habitat, and maintaining water quality, as well as opportunities for low-impact farming and/or recreation.



General Location

This designation consumes the majority of the Township, starting in the central northern portion and running south throughout the Township.



Intended Land Uses

Low-density single-family homes, low-impact farming, and/or recreational opportunities may include, but are not limited to, farming, hunting, fishing, skiing, and hiking.



Compatible Zoning District

The zoning district within the Otsego County Zoning Ordinance that implements the forest future land use designation is the FR or Forest Recreation District.





Specific Objectives

The Recreation land use category is intended to identify and preserve areas primarily dedicated to recreational activities and open space. These areas are designed to support a wide range of active and passive recreational opportunities for both residents and tourists, contributing to the community's quality of life, health, and economic vitality.



General Location

This designation can be found along and west of Mount Fredrick Road.



Intended Land Uses

Acceptable land uses in this category include, but are not limited to, parks, campgrounds, trails, golf courses, ski resorts, and recreational facilities. Residential homes could be allowed where compatible with surrounding uses. Residential densities within this land use category could range from one (1) unit per two (2) to five (5) acres. Since Hayes Township does not have municipal water and sewer systems, the well and septic systems are approved by the land use services department and the District Health Department.



Compatible Zoning District

The zoning districts within the Otsego County Zoning Ordinance that implement the recreation future land use designation are the Forest Recreation, FR, and Residential Recreation Districts, RR.

Low-Density Residential



Specific Objectives

The Low-Density Residential land use category is intended to accommodate residential development on large lots, typically ranging from one building per two to five acres. This low-intensity development pattern provides greater privacy, open space, and a rural or semi-rural character by maintaining significant separation between homes and other developments.



General Location

This designation can be found along the far eastern edge of the southern half of the Township.



Intended Land Uses

While traditional large-lot subdivisions are supported, clustering of residential parcels may be encouraged as an alternative design approach, including duplexes. Cluster development can help preserve environmentally sensitive areas, protect forested lands and agricultural soils, and reduce the overall development footprint while maintaining the allowable density. Other uses that are consistent with this land use category would include parks and other recreational facilities. Since municipal water or sewer is not available in the Township, individual well and septic systems will need to be utilized and approved by the District Health Department.



Compatible Zoning District

The zoning districts within the Otsego County Zoning Ordinance that implement the low-density residential future land use designation are the Forest Recreation, FR, and Residential Recreation, RR, Districts.

Medium-Density Residential



Specific Objectives

The Medium-Density Residential land use category is intended to accommodate both existing and future residential development at moderate densities, typically ranging from one dwelling unit per one-half (0.5) acre to two (2) acres.



General Location

This designation can be found in the northeast corner of the Township, in the northwestern side of the Township, and around Lake Arrowhead.



Intended Land Uses

This category supports a mix of housing types, primarily single-family homes and duplexes, in a manner that balances efficient land use with neighborhood character. It is suitable for areas with access to basic infrastructure and services, and may serve as a transition between lower-density rural areas and higher-density urban or suburban neighborhoods. Development within this category should be designed to promote walkability, connectivity, and compatibility with surrounding land uses. Clustering residential development in these areas is an option to preserve environmentally sensitive areas, forests, and farmlands. This category is designed to include a wide range of residential densities and should serve as the transition between low-density residential and high-density residential areas.



Compatible Zoning District

The zoning district within the Otsego County Zoning Ordinance that implements the medium-density residential future land use designation is the Residential Estates District, R3.

Residential Recreational



Specific Objectives

The residential recreational land use category is designed to accommodate existing and future single-family development on waterfront properties with an allowed density of one (1) unit per one (1) acre or as approved by the District Health Department.



General Location

This designation can be found around lakes within the Township.



Intended Land Uses

Residential Recreational areas may require water and sewer systems comparable to municipal services, subject to approval by the District Health Department. All waterfront properties must comply with the County's Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Program and applicable State of Michigan regulations. Additional land uses may be permitted through development tools outlined in the Otsego County Zoning Ordinance. Where municipal or equivalent water and sewer services are available and approved by both the municipality and the District Health Department, higher residential densities may be allowed.



Compatible Zoning District

The zoning districts within the Otsego County Zoning Ordinance that implement the Residential Recreational future land use designation are the Residential Recreation, RR, and the Forest Recreation, FR.

Retail/Business/Office Commercial



Specific Objectives

The Retail/Business/Office land use category encompasses areas designated for small-scale retail stores, personal services, professional offices, food establishments, lodging facilities, residential uses, and light manufacturing. This category supports a diverse mix of commercial and light industrial activities that serve the daily needs of the community while promoting local economic development.



General Location

This designation is limited to the northeast corner of the Township.



Intended Land Uses

This category includes areas with small-scale retail stores, businesses, personal services, professional offices, food services, lodging facilities, residential, and light manufacturing. When adjacent to residential neighborhoods, these areas shall include buffering and screening techniques to maintain the integrity of the residential area and minimize any negative impacts. Appropriate pedestrian access from nearby residential neighborhoods and commercial areas shall also be provided whenever possible.



Compatible Zoning District

The zoning district within the Otsego County Zoning Ordinance that implements the retail/business/office commercial future land use designation is the Local Business District, B-1.

Government & Institutional



Specific Objectives

The government and institutional land use category comprises of facilities owned by the federal, state, or local governments, as well as institutional facilities.



General Location

This designation is limited to the northeast corner of Hayes Tower Road and State Highway M-32.



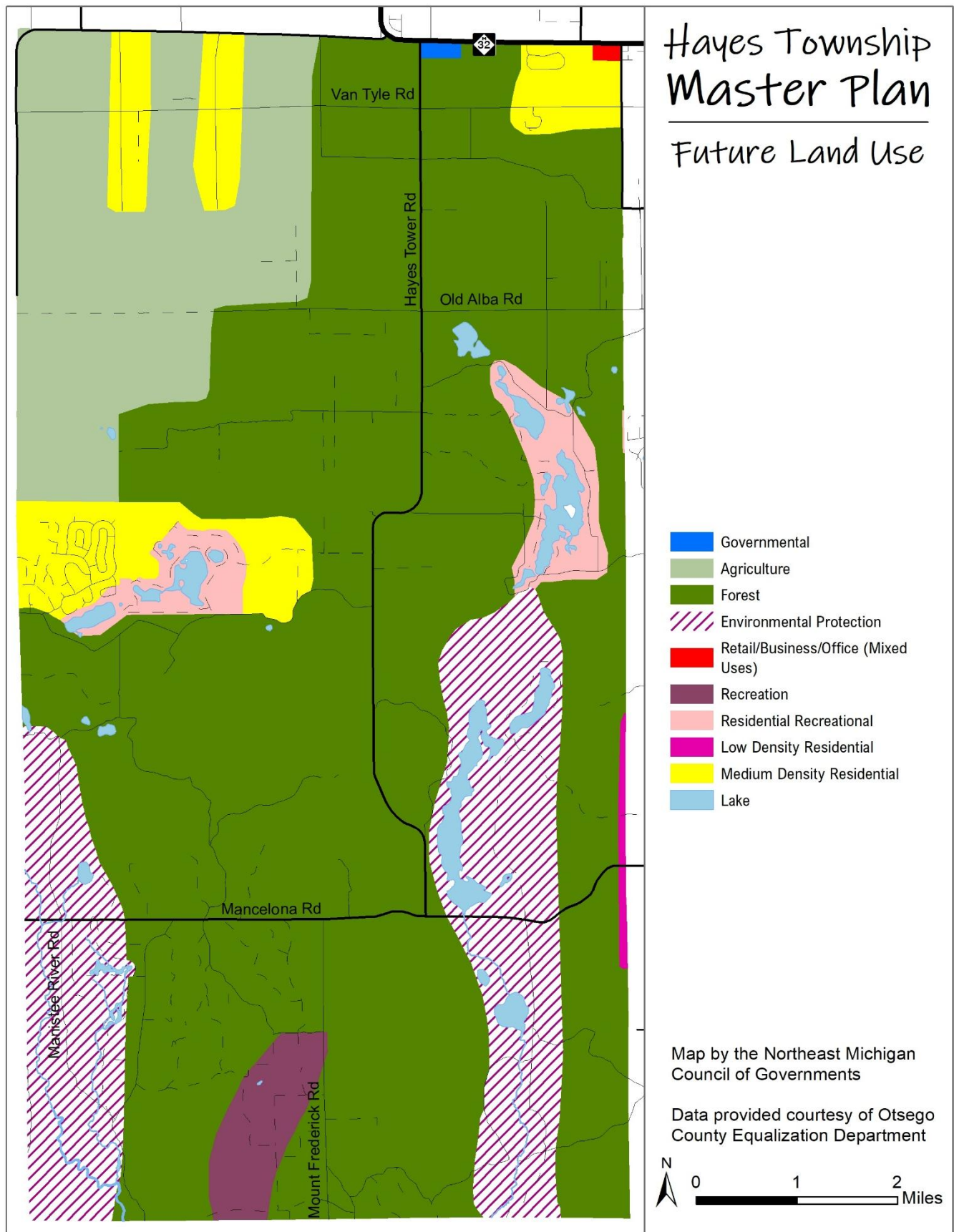
Intended Land Uses

Land uses in this category in Hayes Township serve the public interest and include, but are not limited to, municipal halls and offices, educational, recreational, religious institutions, and cemeteries.



Compatible Zoning District

There is no zoning district for this land use.



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Adoption & Implementation 9

Plan Coordination

As required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008), as amended, notification of intent to develop the Hayes Township Master Plan was sent to all adjacent communities and other relevant entities. After the draft plan was completed by the Hayes Township Planning Commission, a draft was transmitted to the Township Board for approval to distribute the plan for review and comment. The draft plan was transmitted to the entities notified at the initiation of the plan update. After the required comment period, public hearing, and plan adoption, the final plan was transmitted to all required entities.

Public Hearing

A public hearing on the proposed Master Plan for Hayes Township, as required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008) as amended, was held on XXXXXXX. The purpose of the public hearing was to present the proposed master plan and to accept comments from the public.

Section 43 (1) of the Act requires 15-day notice prior to the public hearing to be given in a publication of general circulation in the municipality. A notice of the public hearing was published in the Weekly Choice Newspaper on XXXXXXX. During the review period, the draft plan was available for review on the Township website, by contacting the Township, or available on the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG) website.

Plan Adoption

The Hayes Township Planning Commission formally adopted the Master Plan on (Insert Date). The Township Board passed a resolution of adoption of the Master Plan on (Insert Date).

Documentation

Michigan Planning law requires that the adopted Master Plan be transmitted to communities and agencies that received the review draft. Copies of these transmittal letters appear in the Appendix.

Plan Implementation

The Master Plan was developed to provide a vision of the community's future. It will serve as a tool for decision-making on future development proposals. The plan will also act as a guide for future public investments and service decisions, such as the local budget, grant applications, road maintenance and development, community group activities, tax incentive decisions and administration of utilities and services.

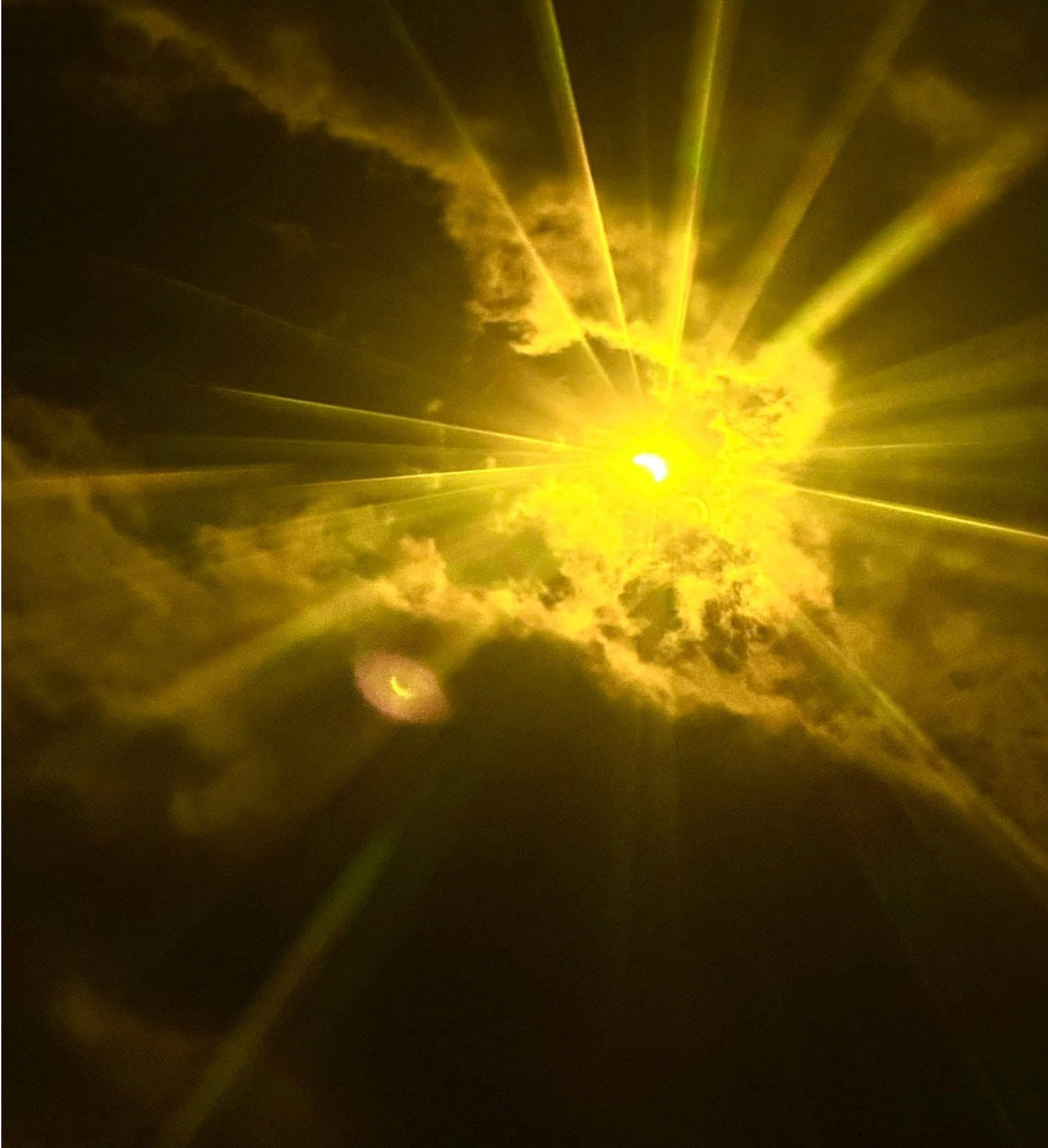
Zoning

The Zoning Ordinance is the most important tool for implementing the Master Plan. Zoning is the authority to regulate private use of land by creating land use zones and applying development standards in various zoning districts. Hayes Township is covered by the Otsego County Zoning Ordinance regulating land use activities. The current Otsego County Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 2003. The Otsego County Zoning Ordinance pertaining to Hayes Township should now be reviewed to ensure the Ordinance is consistent with the goals and the Future Land Use Plan presented in this Master Plan. Hayes Township wishes to work with the County Planning Department to ensure that the County Zoning Ordinance is consistent with the Township's vision for the future.

Grant and Capital Improvements

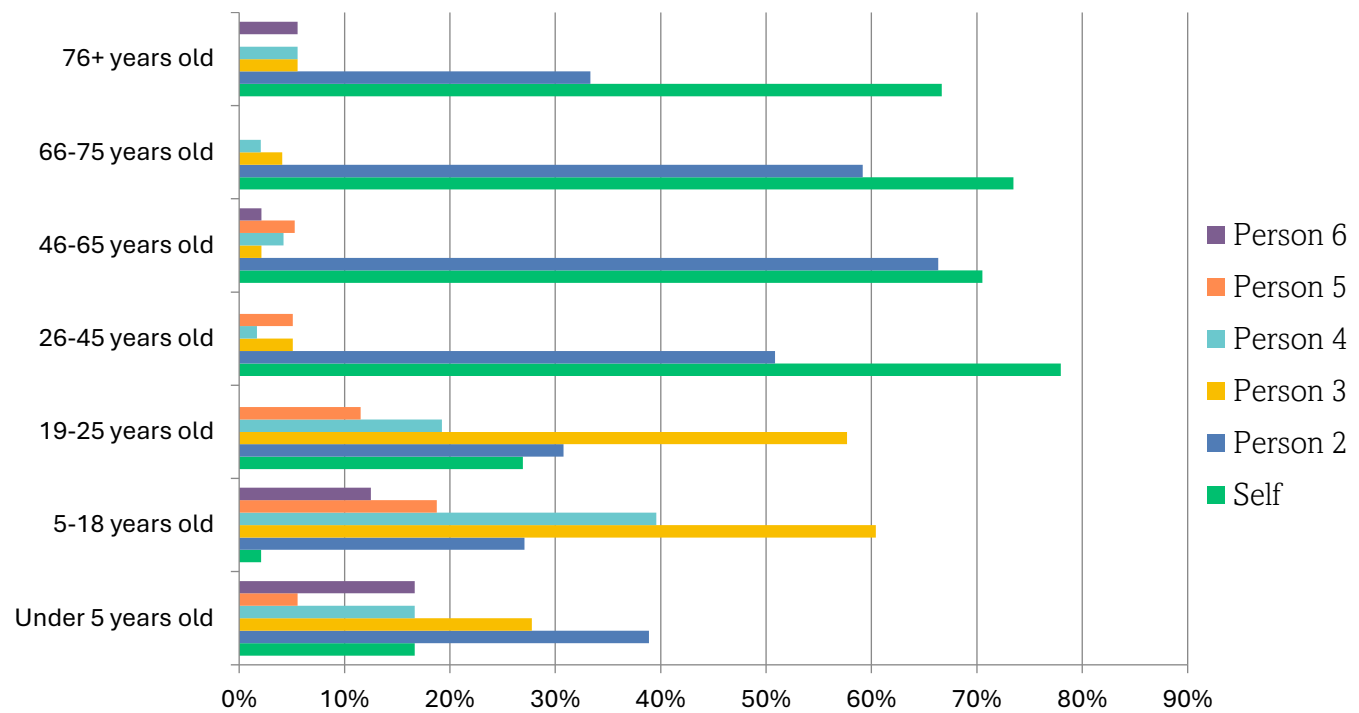
The Master Plan can also be used as a guide for future public investments and service decisions, such as the local budget, grant applications, and administration of services. Many communities prioritize and budget for capital improvement projects such as infrastructure improvements, park improvements, etc. A Capital Improvements Program (CIP) typically looks five years into the future to establish a schedule for all anticipated capital improvement projects in the Community. A CIP includes cost estimates and sources for financing each project. It can therefore serve as both a budgetary and policy document to aid in the implementation of a community's master plan.

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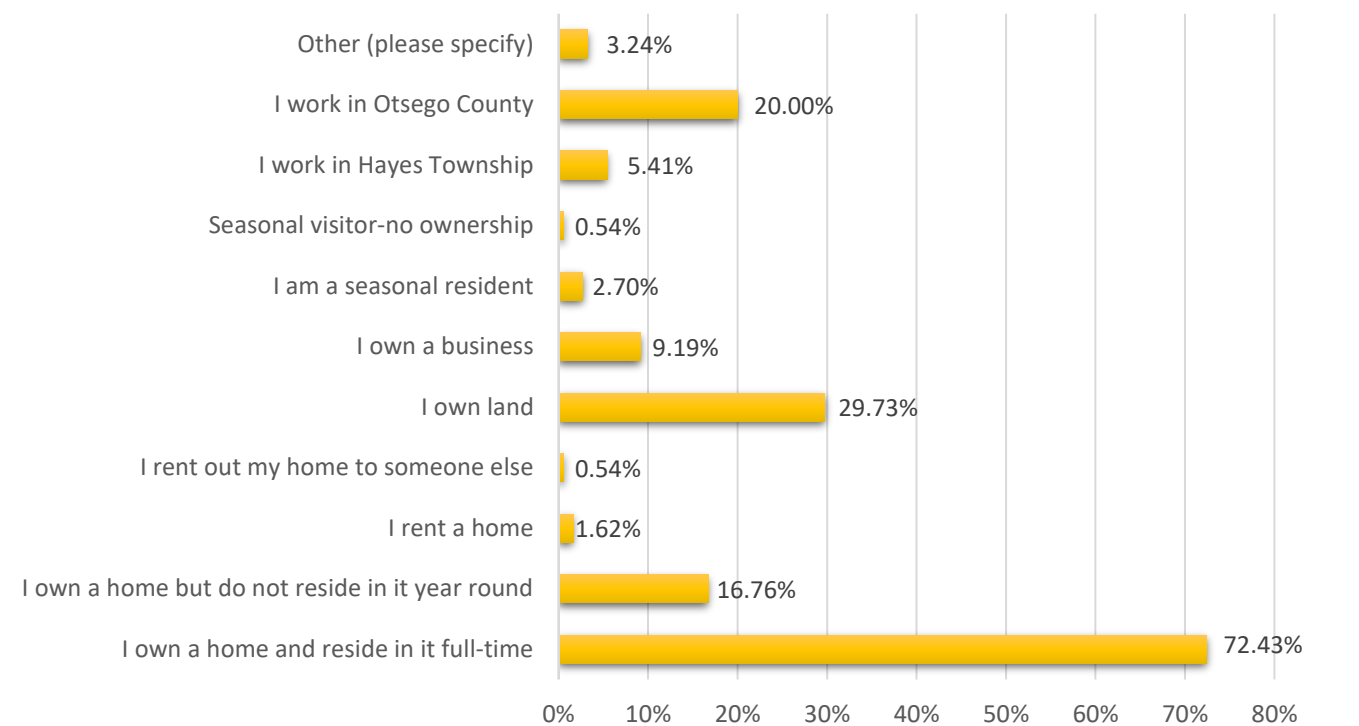


Appendix
Survey Results **A**

1: Enter the age of the members of your household, including yourself:



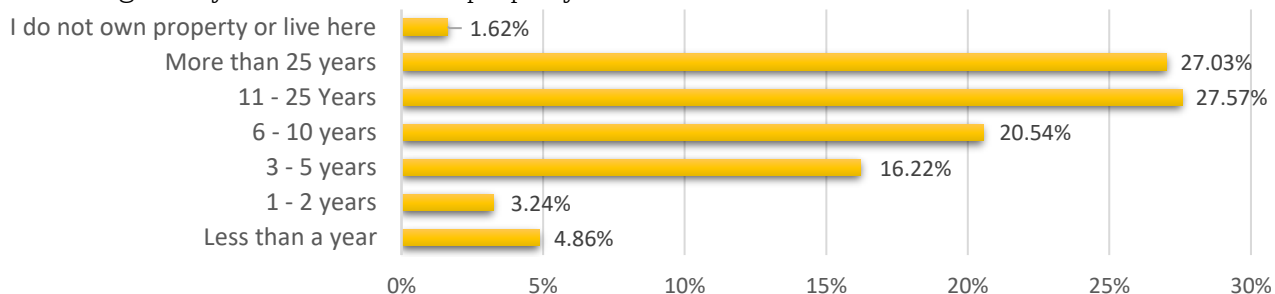
2: What is your property interest? Mark all that apply.



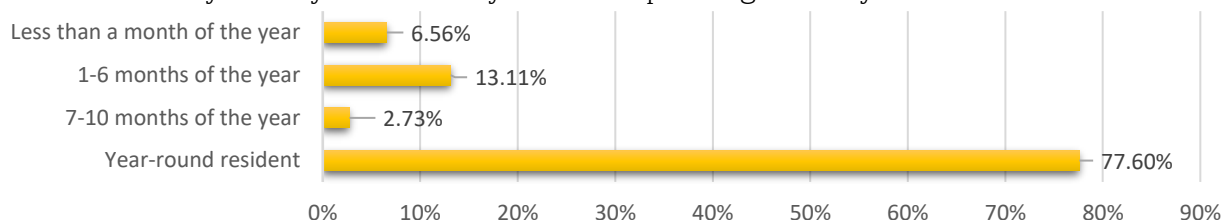
“Other” responses include:

- Partner owns the house we reside in full-time
- Land contract
- My wife works in Otsego County
- Have a farm
- I build homes in otsego county
- Raise livestock

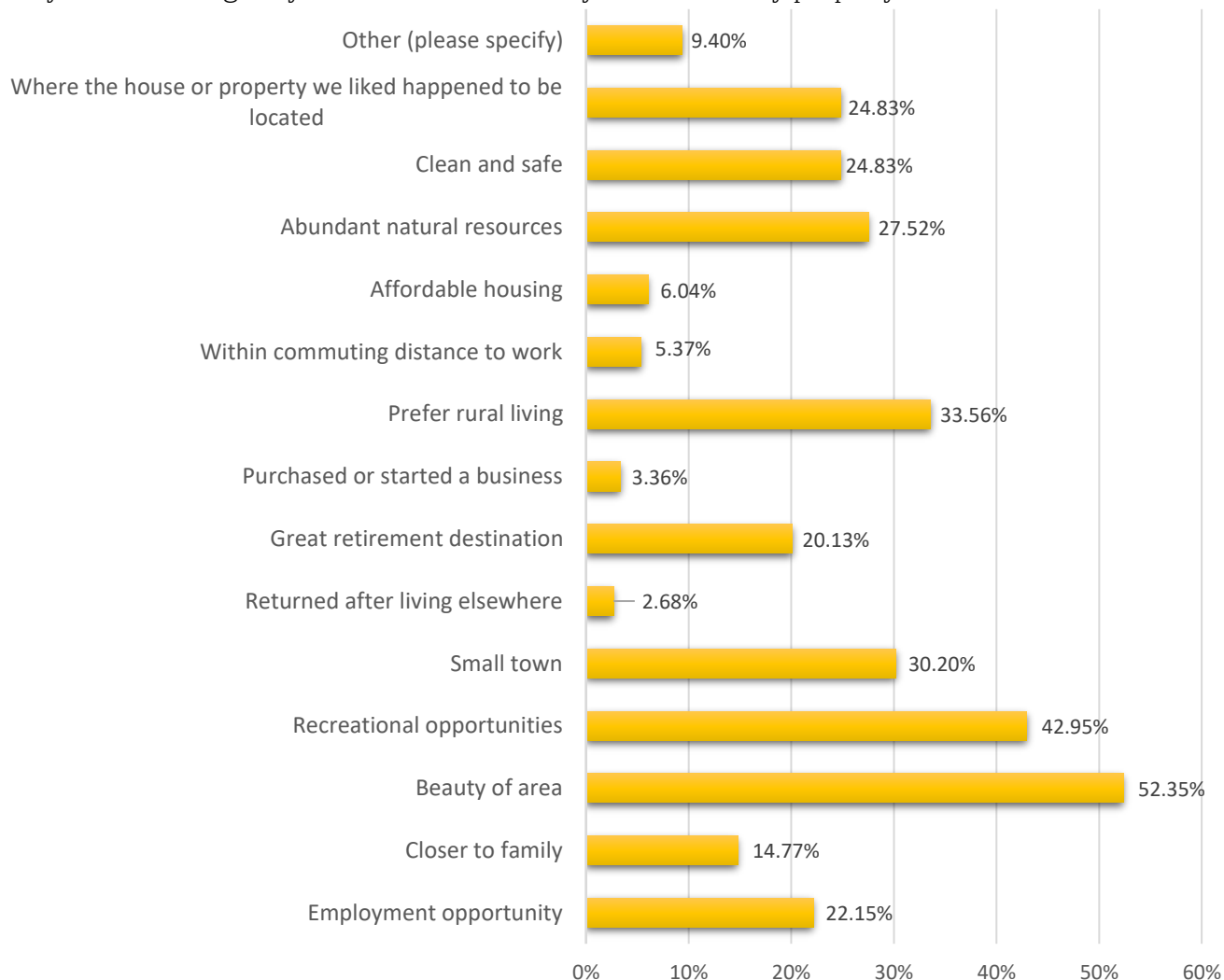
3: How long have you lived or owned property here?



4: How much of the year do you live in Hayes Township/Otsego County?



5: If you are not originally from here, what made you move or buy property here?

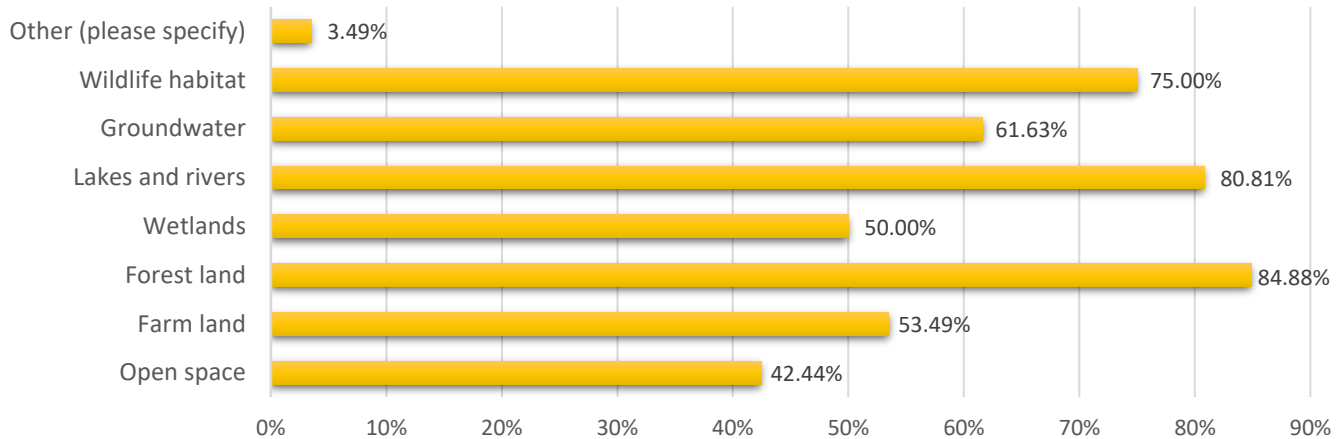


“Other” responses include:

- Schools when we came in 2010, have declined since then
- Proximity to the UP versus Traverse City
- Family cottage
- Inherited property that has been in my family for 60 years.
- Always from the area
- Friends in the area

- Live in Otsego County all my life
- Bought lot adjoining my Grandmother's lot.
- Schools
- My parents moved here in my childhood
- Grew up here
- Boating and golfing
- Retirement
- Beautiful lakes, trees, nature place to live

6: Do you feel more should be done to preserve or protect any of the following natural resources?

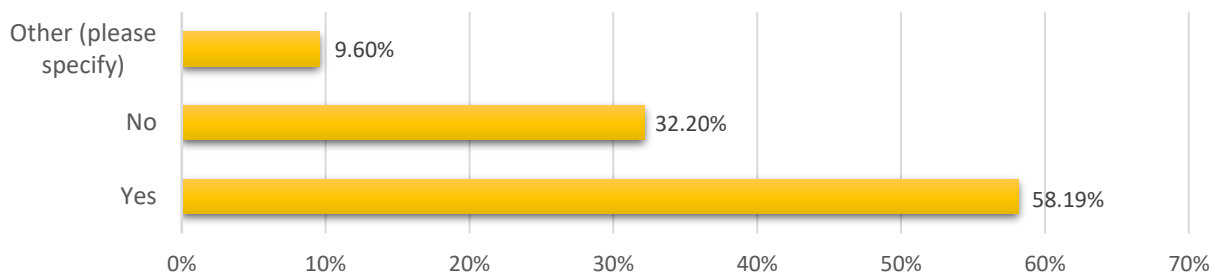


“Other” responses include:

- Stop clear cutting the woods and spraying chemicals like round up from planes
- Tranquility - no bombing range noise
- Lakes
- Small Town feel

- Stop clearing trees on properties we have already lost a lot of trees from the ice storm
- No, we are ridiculous how we put everything on this list first before people.

7: Should residential areas be connected to employment and shopping areas with bike paths, sidewalks, or other non-motorized transportation facilities?



“Other” responses include:

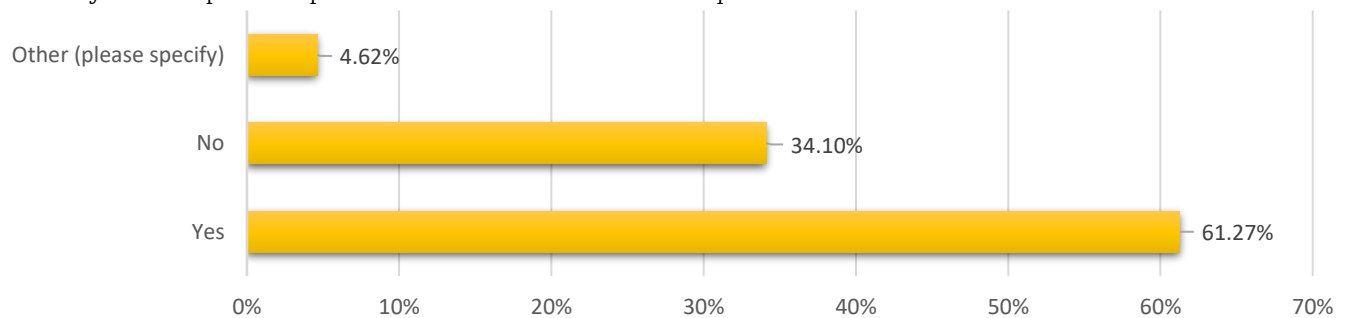
- Unsure x3
- With the long and snowy winters, does this make sense at all?

- Not here but in more densely populated areas or town
- Close to town, Hayes is too far outside and no trails

- Depends on location of residential area/city vs country
- The ones in town or within a certain distance to town
- That is a nice idea if it can be done sustainably, without negative impacts to the environment.
- Not sure
- Only if the county can afford it without federal and state grants
- If the shopping area is within walking distance from the home, +/- 1 mile the bike paths and sidewalks would be used. Otherwise it's a waste of money.

- No opinion
- Just widen the roads a little with bike lanes on sides so people walking or riding bikes are not in road and in winter widen the areas where bus stops are for parents to park vehicles at end of rd without stopping traffic
- Should is too strong But there's nothing wrong with it
- If it made sense to connect it. Not all property's will
- To far for bike paths to this stuff

8: Would you accept wide paved shoulders for the above question?

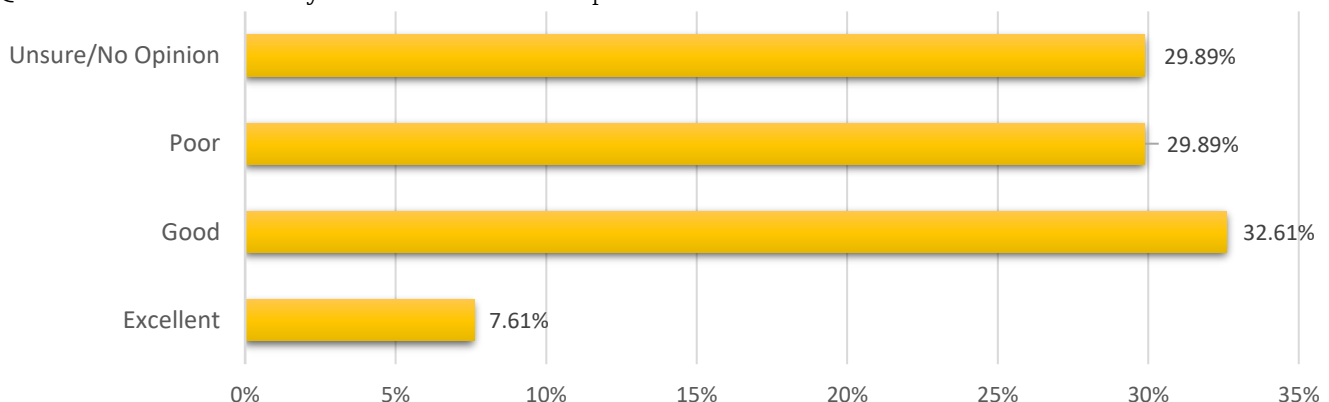


“Other” responses include:

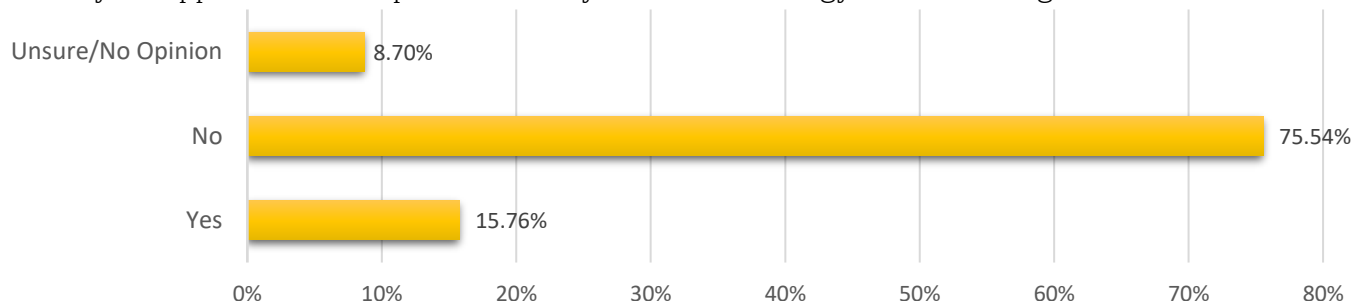
- in some area not beside rds. with 50mph speed limits
- separated pathway along roadway, not just extended shoulders.
- It depends on what roads/traffic patterns would be impacted.
- Possibly, depending on the area and it's impact on the land.

- Unsure
- Only if u allow the atv's to ride on it. The bike people pay Nothing towards road work!
- Yes if that road was already scheduled for repave and the county can afford it
- Not sure..

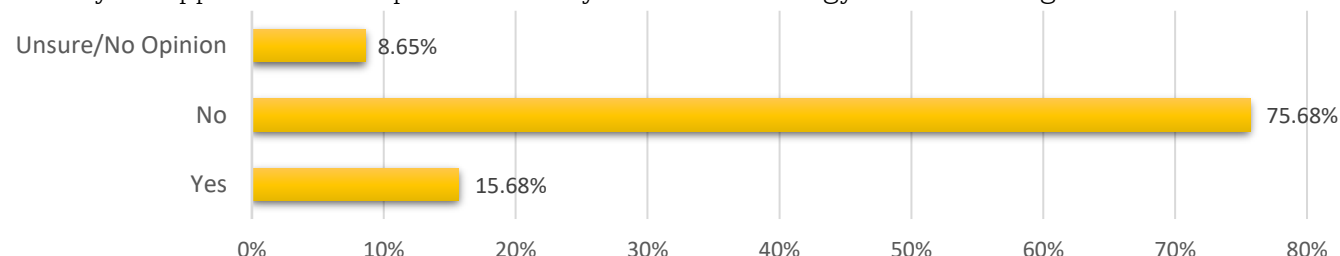
Question 9: How would you rate the efforts to protect the natural environment?



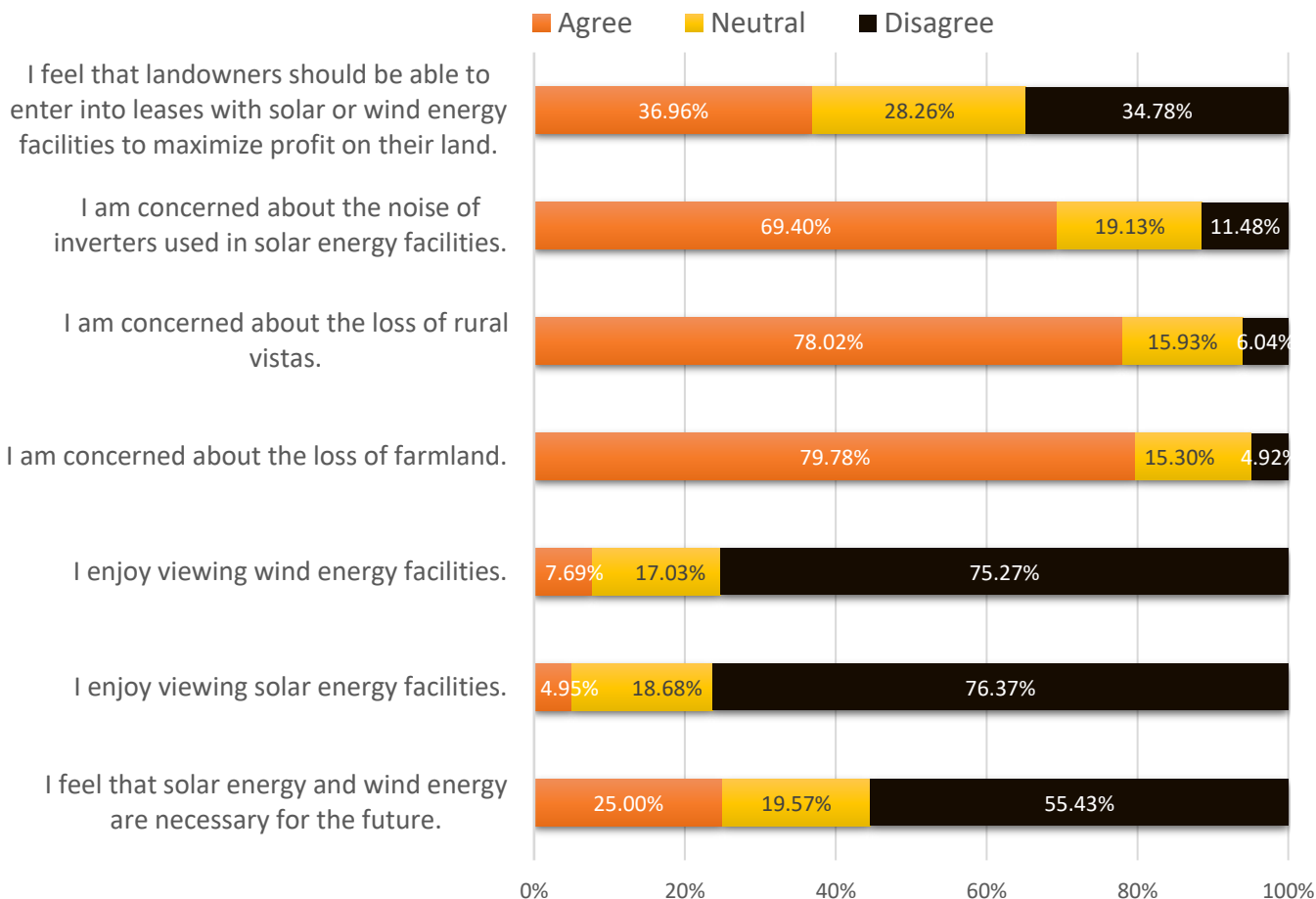
10: Do you support the development of Utility-Scale Solar Energy Facilities on agricultural/forest land?



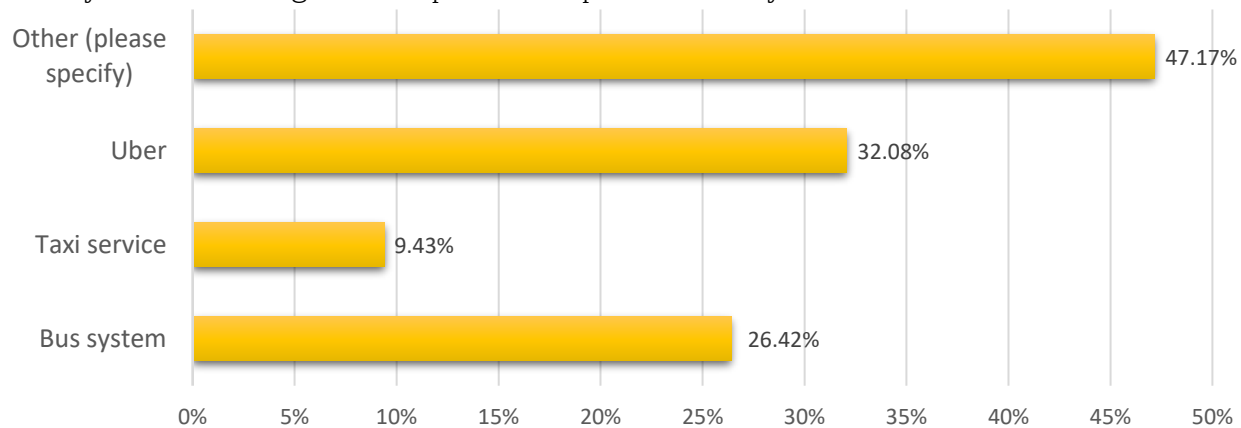
11: Do you support the development of Utility-Scale Wind Energy Facilities on agricultural/forest land?



12: Solar and wind energy facilities are typically located on farmland (large flat areas). The average current acreage of a solar energy facility is between 800-1,300 acres, and wind energy facilities require a larger area. Please tell us how you feel about the following statements regarding this type of development.



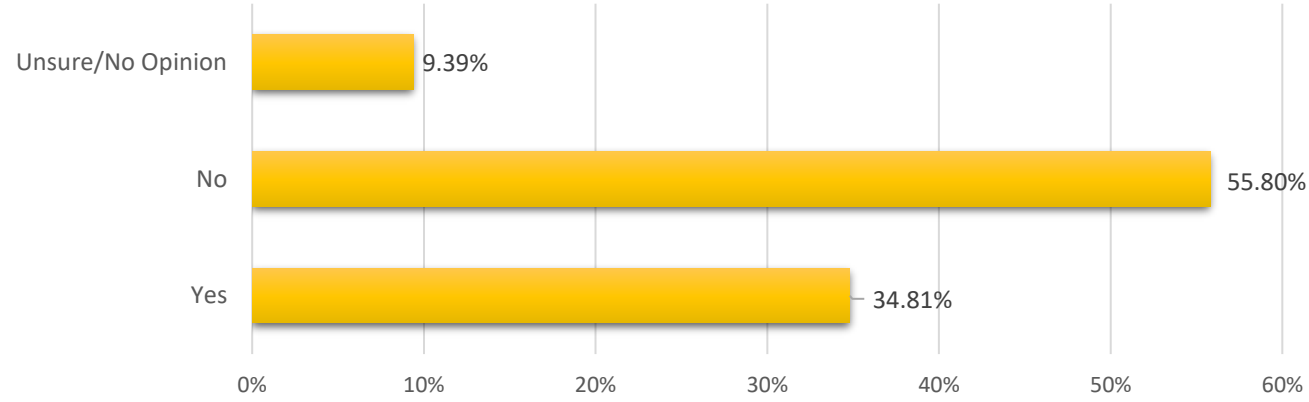
13: Mark any of the following forms of public transportation that you use?



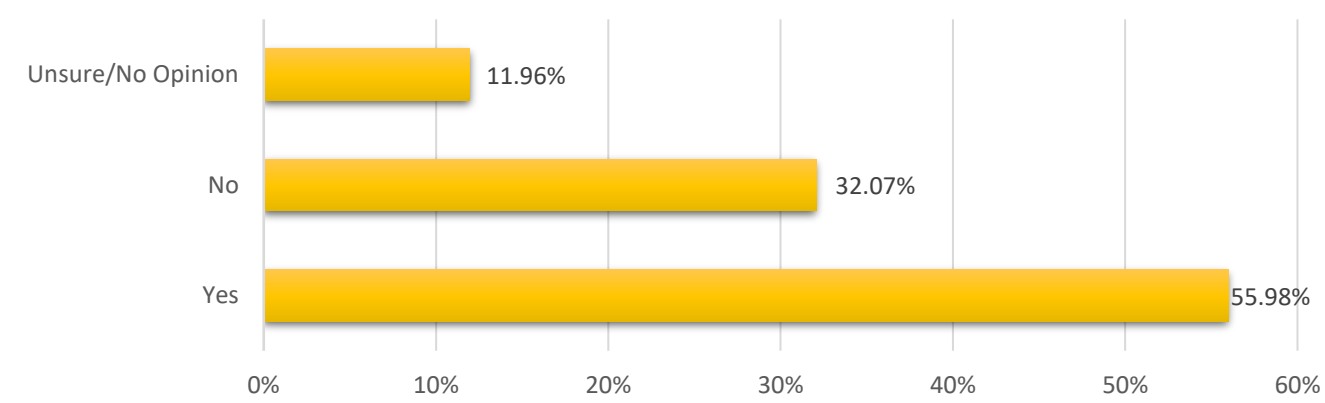
“Other” responses include:

- None x13
- None at this time, might use bus system in the future
- Own vehicle
- My car
- I don’t
- Do ot use public transportation
- None, I’m from Detroit, MI and I drive a car
- Do not use
- None, I drive myown car
- Amtrak when downstate
- Car and Bike
- Car
- None have a car

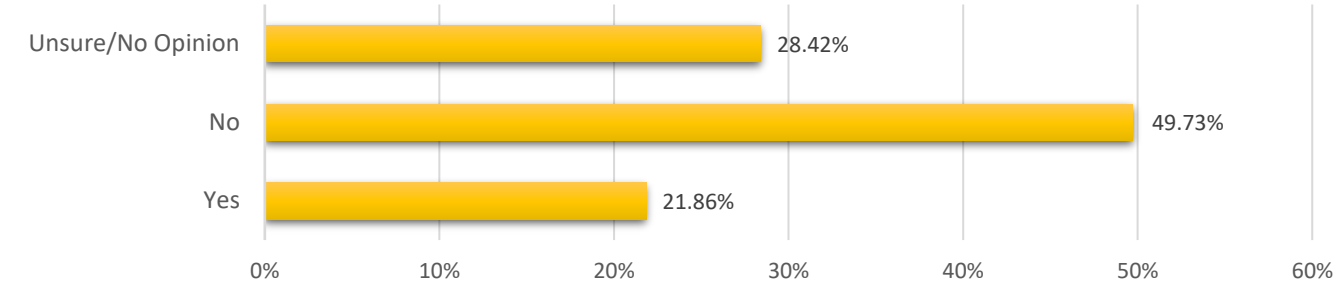
14: Is traffic a problem?



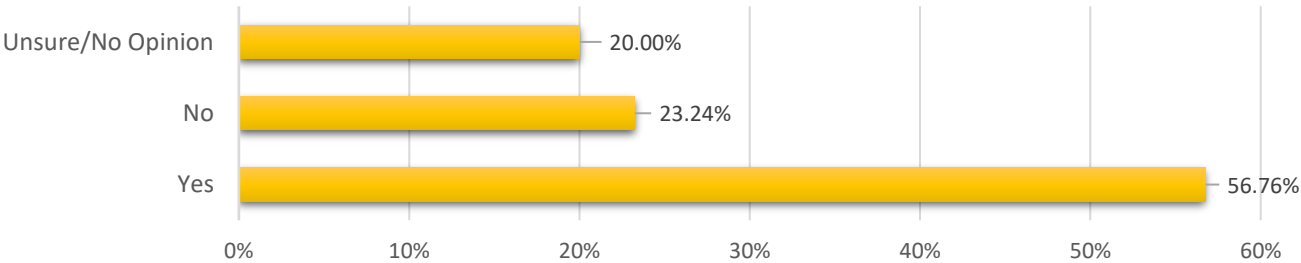
15: Are there seasonal traffic issues in the municipality?



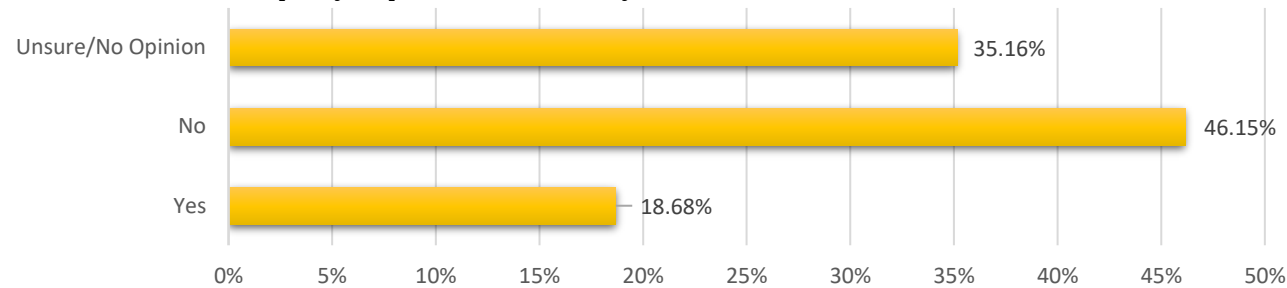
16: Are commercial trucks or is truck routing a problem in the municipality?



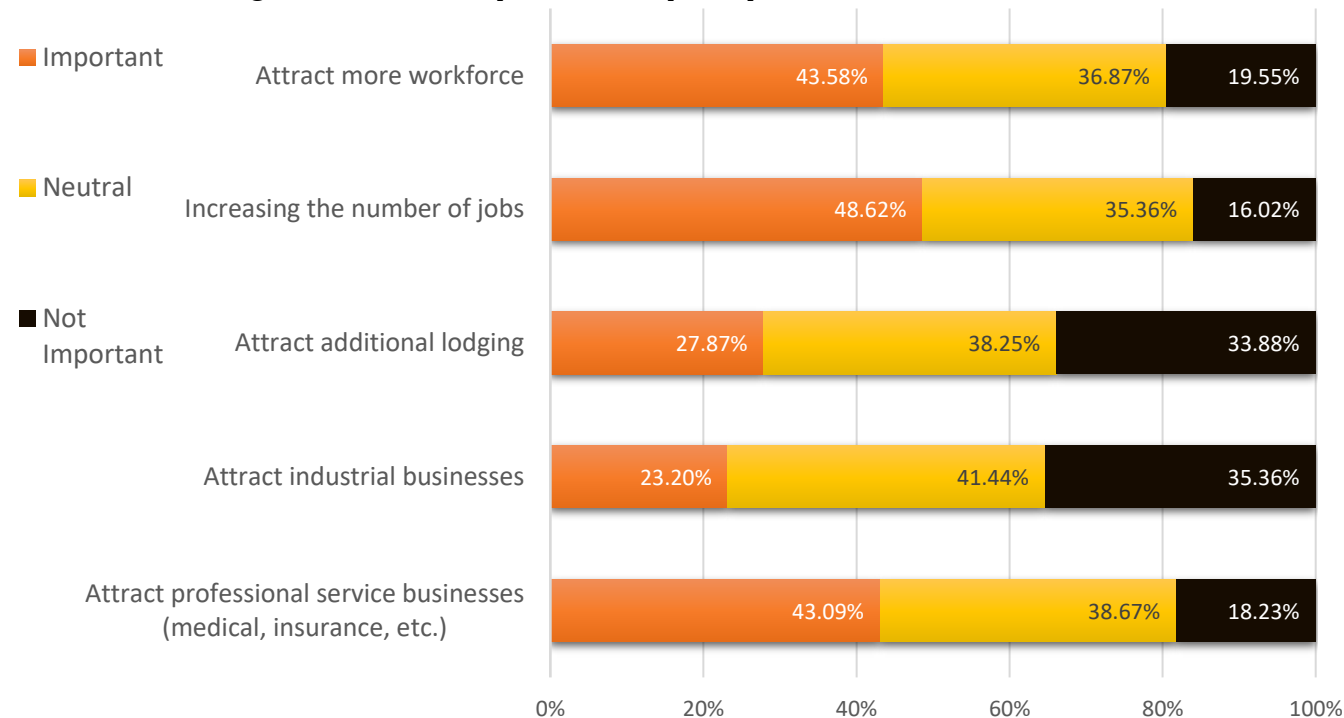
17: Do you support local financial incentives to attract and retain new jobs and businesses?



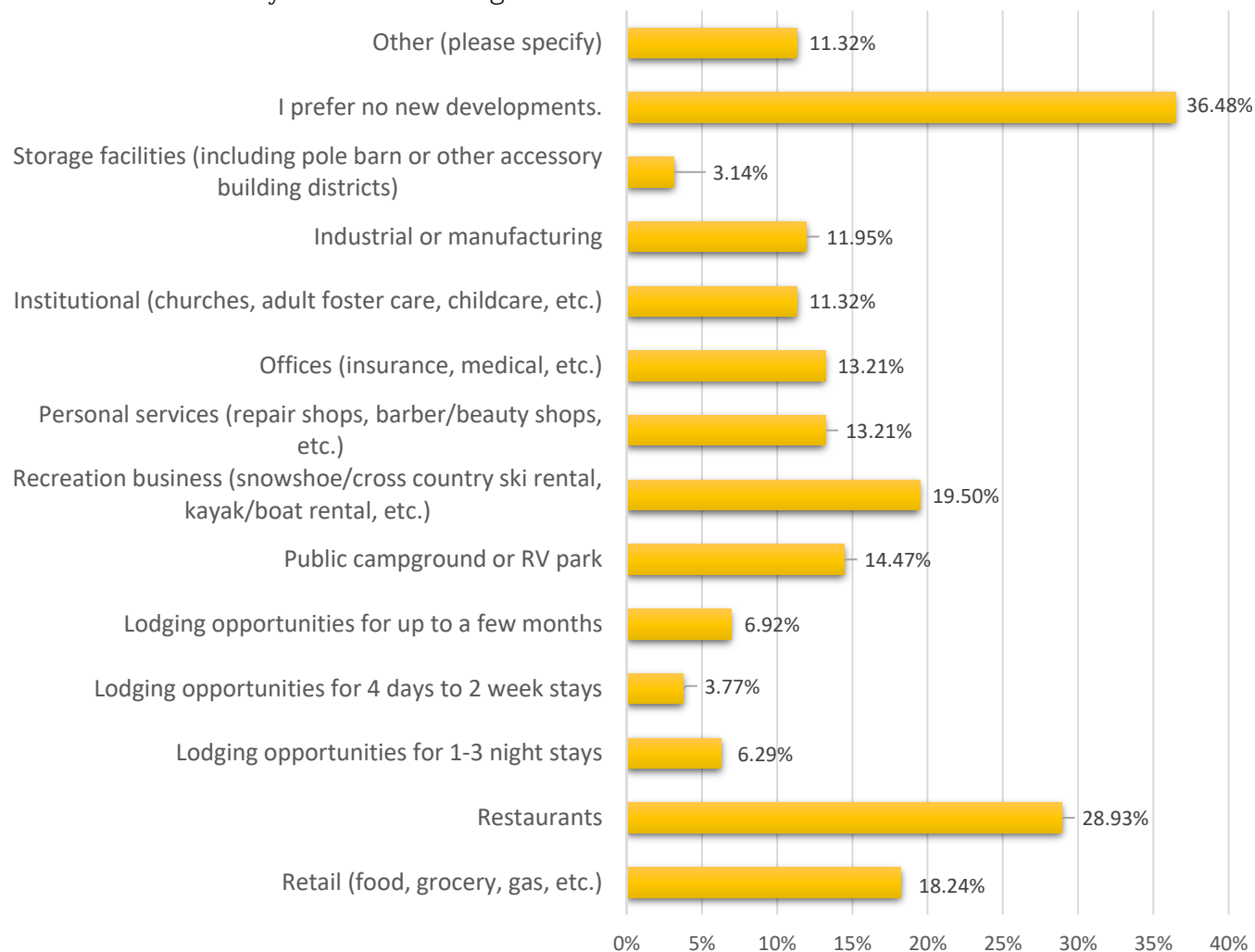
18: Should the municipality expand commercially?



19: Are the following economic development concepts important?



20: What services do you feel are missing?



“Other” responses include:

- Music and Arts Venue
- no more short term rentals
- clothing, small shops
- No great shopping for clothing and household
- Stop trying to make up up north downstate. We live up here to be left alone.
- Public indoor areas to walk in the winter
- Childcare
- Gaylord has already been ruined.
- We need better medical care
- Need to broadened ownership of rentals or number of units owned by one family.
- Pickleball courts
- Things to entertain children
- Maintain the special features that this community already possesses: Lake accesses, dead tree control

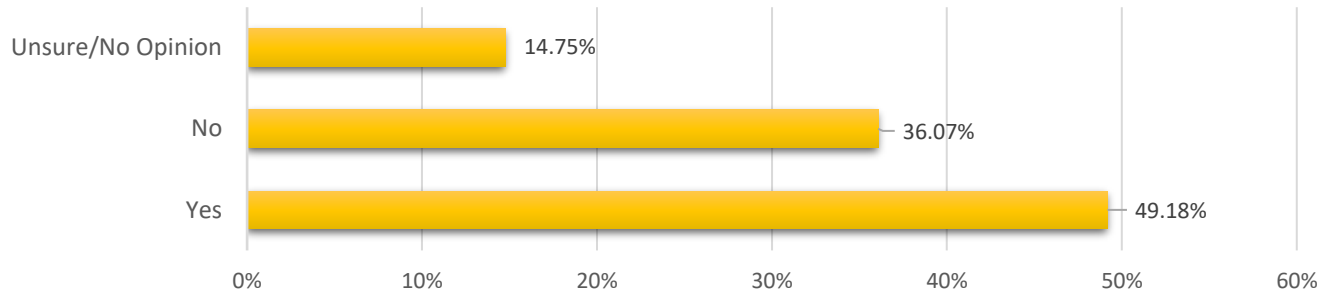
and waterways, road maintenance and timely snow plows, water restrictions and ENFORCEMENT for after hours high speed boating, preservation of quit times for fishermen and kayakers in late evening and early mornings, land cleanup after logging of raised Forrest areas, no more cutting of forest areas

- A real hospital; not a triage for TC or Petosky
- People that want to with what we have
- We need housing for the over 800 units that we are short.
- Solutions for homelessness
- I wish gaylord had a Trader Joe’s or Whole with in walking distance to downtown. Costco would be amazing we don’t need anymore hardware stores. I think that in the winter you could attract more visitors by making a mini Frankenmuth by making the focus

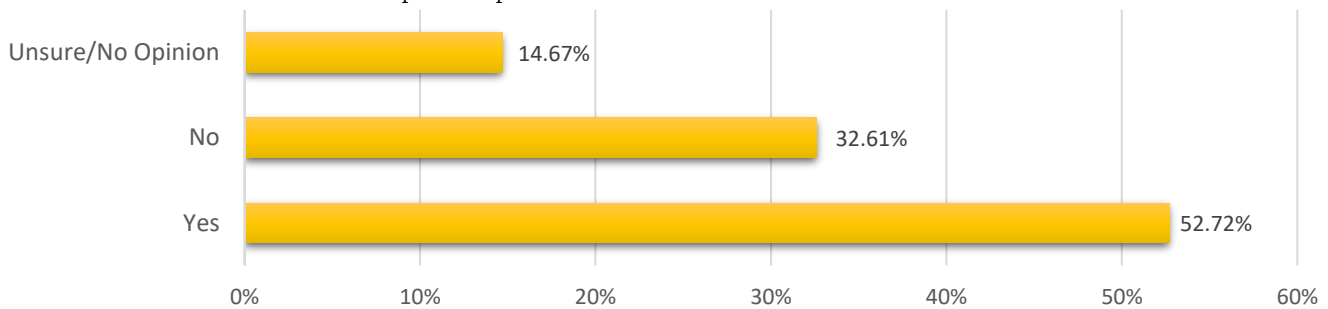
on Christmas. I also think there should be a skating rink somewhere downtown. Just like having alpinfest you could have a Christmas festival or winter festival. I would also like some better retail stores. Since

snowmobiles are big maybe a ski and snowmobiles festival. I wish there was a retail store for snowmobile clothes and golf clothes.

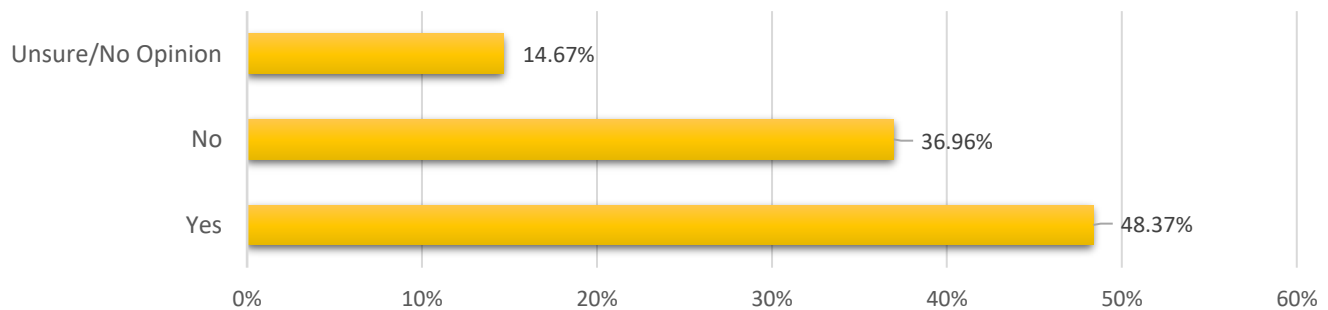
21: Do you feel that short-term rentals such as Airbnb and Vrbo should be held to a certain number?



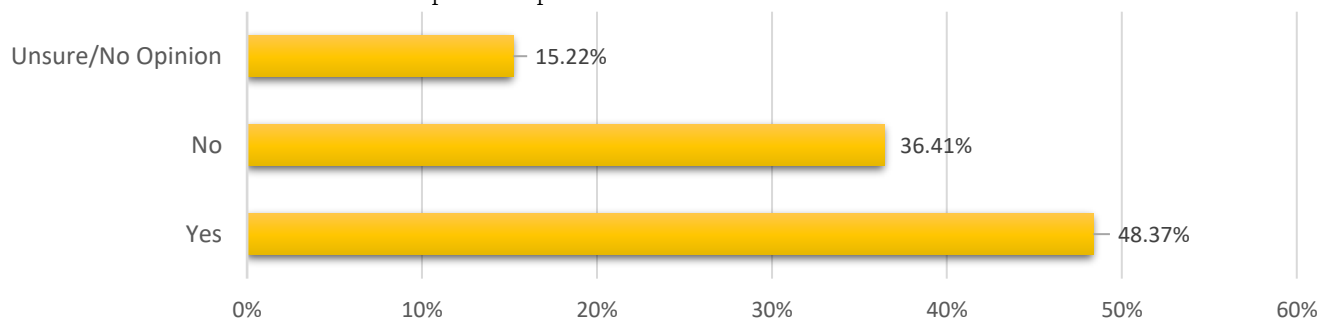
22: Should there be a business permit process for Airbnb or Vrbo rentals?



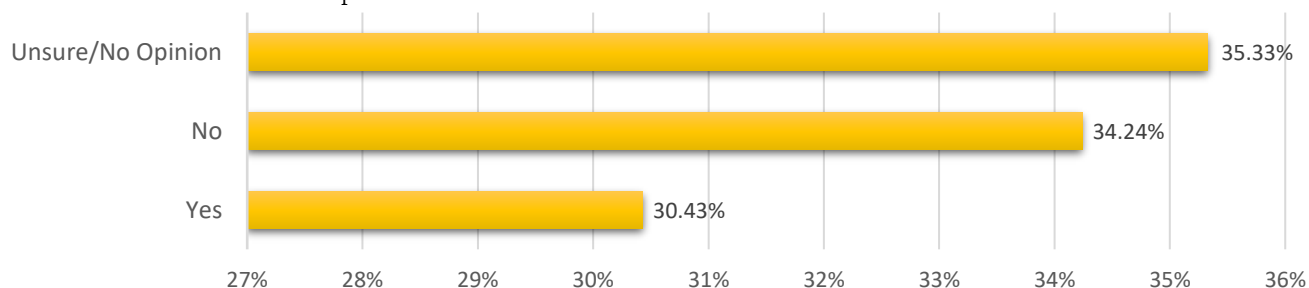
23: Should there be an annual inspection process for short-term rentals?



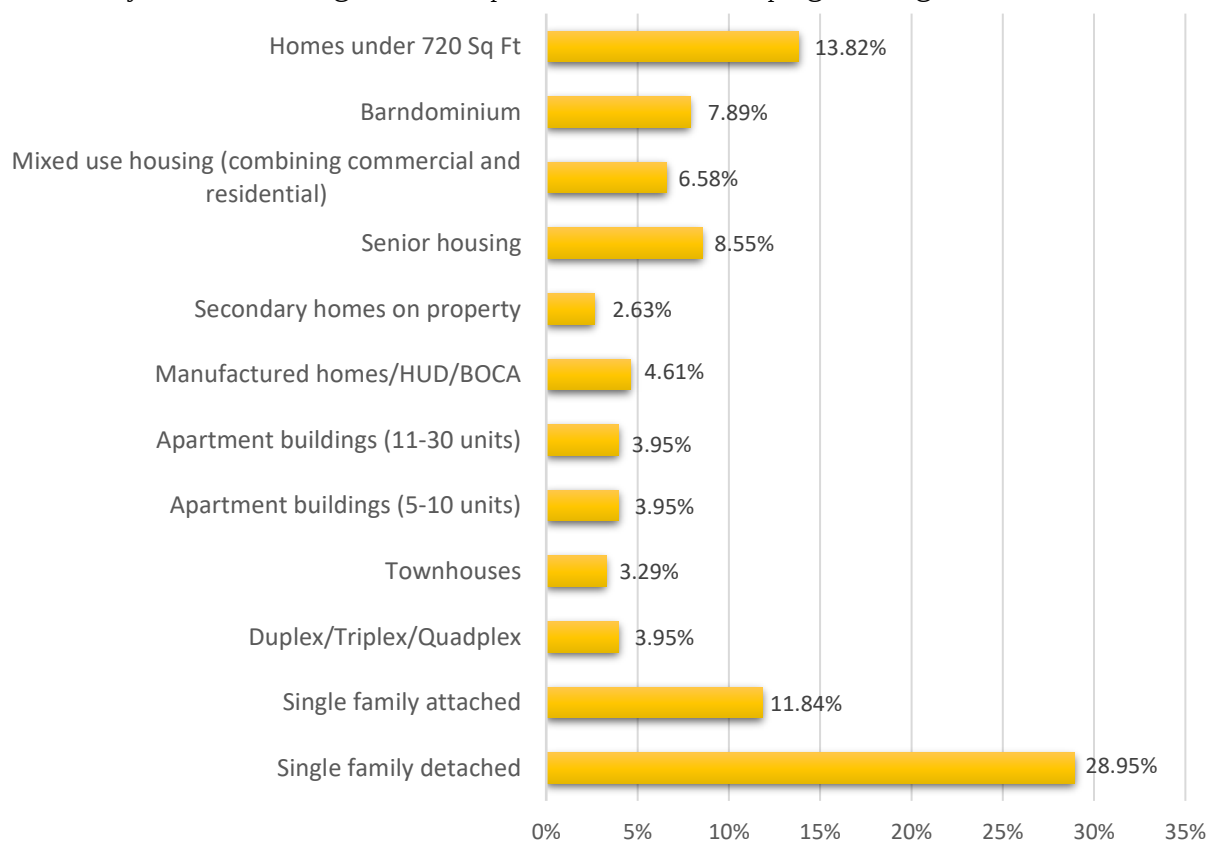
24: Should there be an annual inspection process for all rental units?



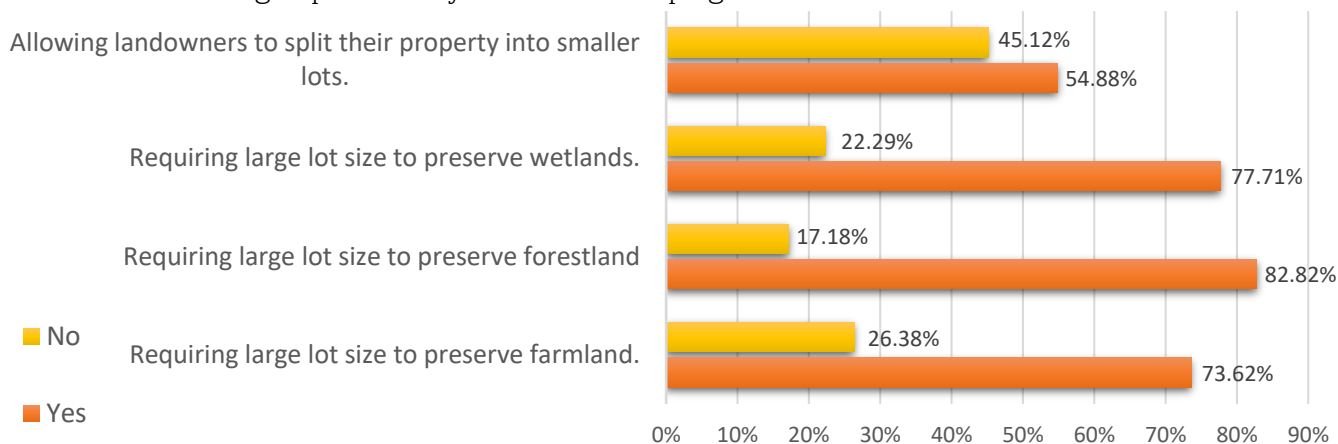
25: Are vacation rentals a problem in residential areas?



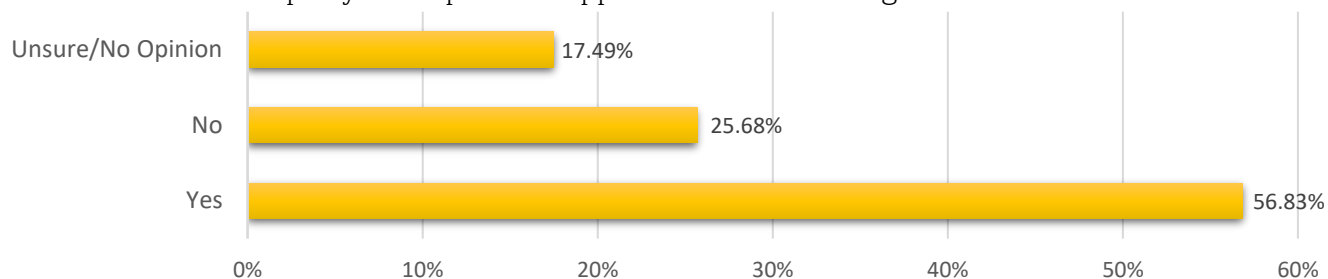
26: Do you feel any of the following should be pursued when developing housing in the area?



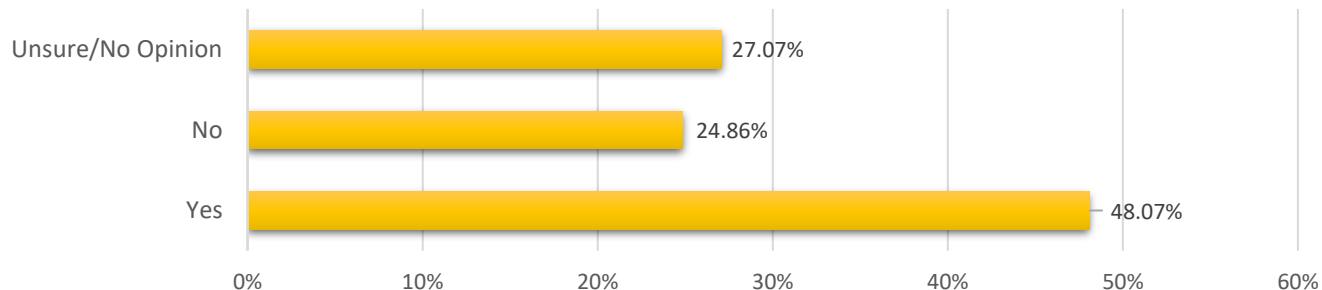
27: Are the following important to you when developing an area?



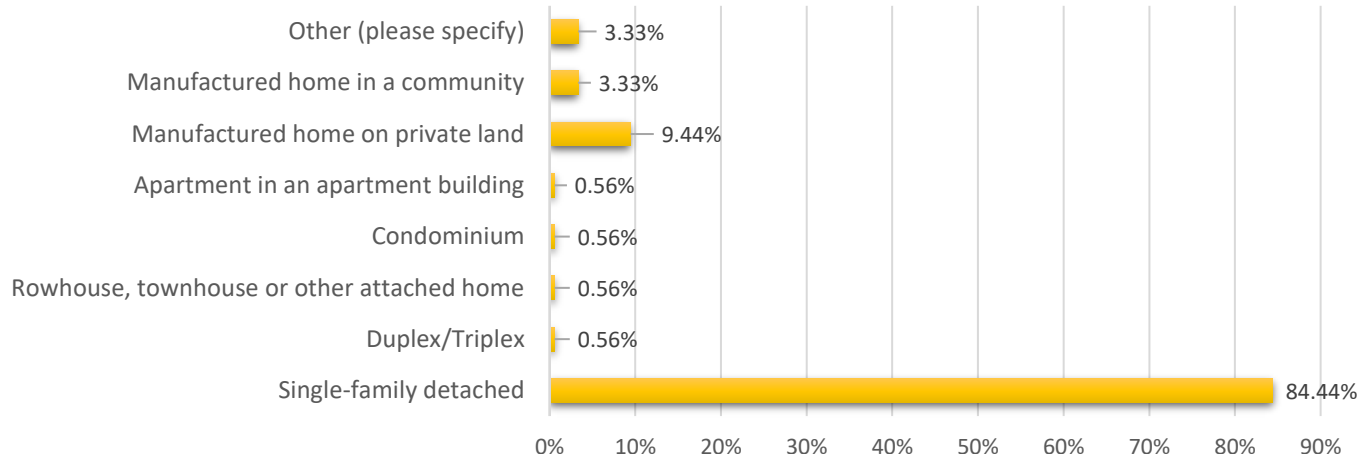
28: Should the municipality find a promote opportunities to encourage an increase in affordable housing?



29: Do you support garage apartments?



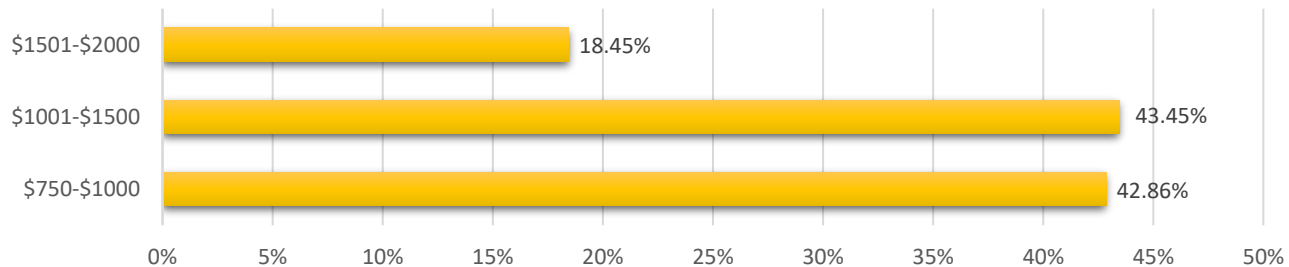
30: How would you describe your current home in Hayes Township?



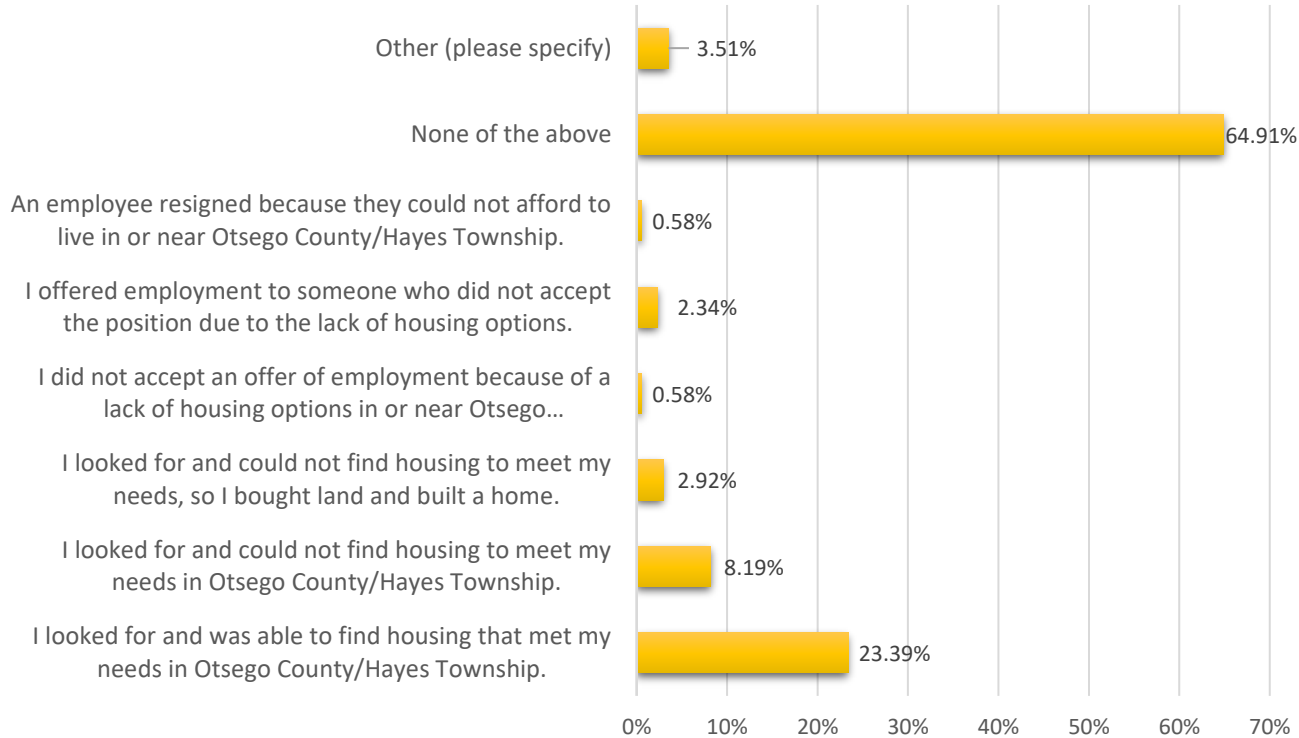
“Other” responses include:

- New Build
- I Own Land
- Property only x2
- Vacant Land
- Farm

31: What would be a budget range for you to pay rent or mortgage?



32: Which of the following, if any, have you personally experienced in the past 5 years in Otsego County/Hayes Township?

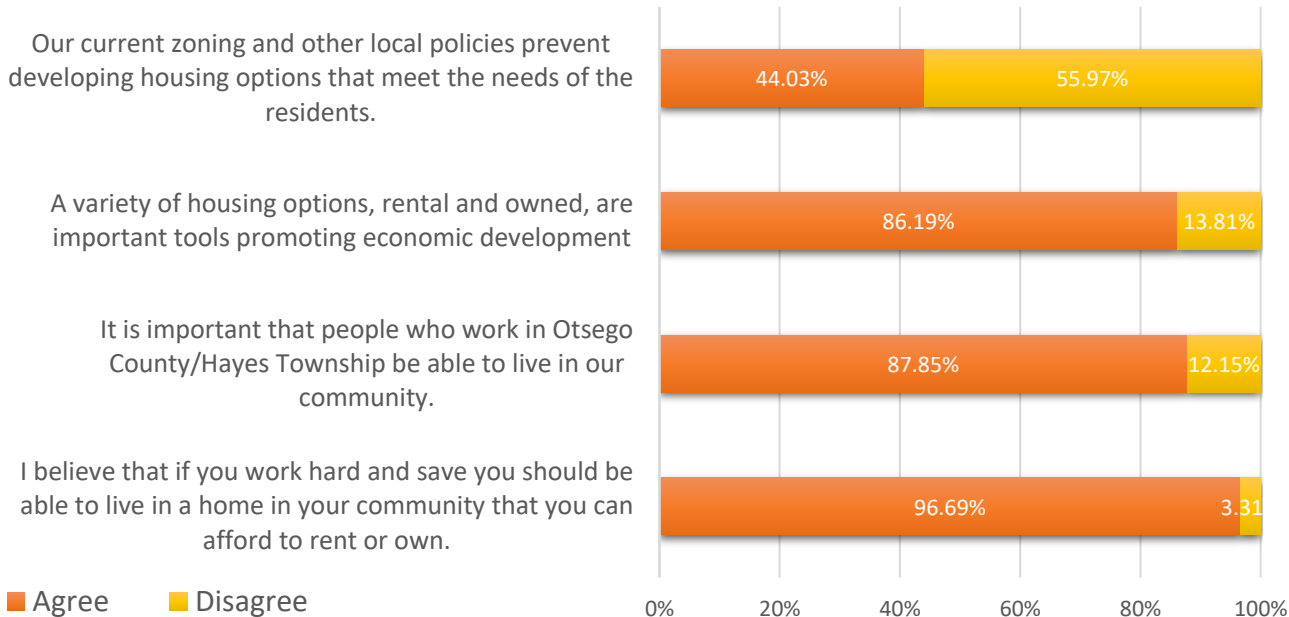


“Other” responses include:

- Moved back
- Very hard for people to find decent affordable housing. >\$1,000

- N/a
- Can’t
- I built a new home because I wanted to be in the area.

33: Please state if you agree or disagree with the following statements about housing and opportunities in our community:



34: The lack of affordable housing affects: (Mark if you agree or disagree with the statement)

