



Community Master Plan DRAFT

ROYAL OAK TOWNSHIP, OAKLAND COUNTY, MICHIGAN

DRAFT 1.0



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Thank You!

The participation and cooperation of residents, community leaders, and members of local civic organizations in the preparation of the Charter Township of Royal Oak Community Master Plan is greatly appreciated. In particular, we acknowledge the efforts of the following individuals:

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Second New Hope Missionary Baptist Church
Ferndale Youth Assistance
Urge Imprint
Ferndale Park Co-Op
Oakdale Co-Op

Local Boards and Commissions

Royal Oak Township Board of Trustees
Royal Oak Township Housing Commission
Royal Oak Township Parks and Recreation Board (Special Thanks to Director Donovan Jackson and Member Armond Respress)
Royal Oak Township Library Board (Special Thanks to Director Destynee Nixon)

Township Residents

A special thanks to all of the Township residents who contributed their thoughts to this Plan. Through the survey, workshops, meetings, and other events, they have given their time and attention to this process, making the outcome more meaningful and valuable for all. We would also like to extend a special thanks to our community members who offered their extra time to be interviewed for the community history portion of this Plan.

This Plan was funded by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) through a \$40,000 grant. We would like to extend special thanks to SEMCOG Planning Director Kevin Vettraino for supporting this work and Royal Oak Township.

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Executive Overview

What is the Community Plan?

The Community Master Plan is a document that serves as a guideline for the community of Royal Oak Township to ensure that all future policies, programs, and projects are in-line with the community's vision for the next 5-20 years. New buildings, infrastructure, parks, and more are all evaluated against the Community Master Plan. The Plan also lays out the community's shared goals for the future and concrete steps that will help achieve the goals.

Vision for the Future

Our collective vision for the future is the basis for all action. The future Royal Oak Township will be clean and safe, welcoming and comfortable, and accessible to all. Royal Oak Township will be a fun and modern community, inviting and affordable to people from all walks of life. It will be a celebration of identity, culture, and social connection, where people are hopeful for the future.

Shared Goals

Community History

1. Improve awareness of the township's history and pursue new ways for residents to engage with local history
2. Protect the township's historical resources from loss or damage
3. Elevate the township's history at the regional level

People and Health

1. Improve township-wide awareness of healthy living opportunities
2. Support a healthy, active lifestyle for all township residents, regardless of age or level of ability
3. Improve the built environment to facilitate healthy aging in place
4. Pursue a holistic approach to community health

Housing

1. Provide a balance of housing types to support aging in place for people at all stages of life
2. Reinforce the integrity of existing neighborhoods

3. Encourage infill development on the residential and mixed-use parcels throughout the township
4. Improve the quality and availability of housing in the township

Jobs and Economy

1. Support existing and encourage new businesses
2. Encourage talent development and recruit entrepreneurs to the township
3. Facilitate the development of under-used commercial and mixed-use properties
4. Promote the township as a welcoming place for business

Parks and Environment

1. Maintain and improve existing parks
2. Support healthy living and active lifestyles through parks and recreation
3. Ensure equitable access to all parks and future facilities
4. Increase opportunities for community connection
5. Use parkland as a placemaking opportunity
6. Improve options for nature-based engagement in the parks

Civic Services and Infrastructure

1. Maintain and improve existing civic infrastructure
2. Support utility resilience for residences and businesses
3. Support and encourage new childcare and higher education offerings in the township
4. Consolidate civic building assets

Transportation

1. Maintain and enhance the existing network for all types of transportation users
2. Create a safe, comfortable, and healthy transportation system
3. Support and initiate safe connections to neighboring cities, services, and amenities
4. Enhance township and regional placemaking through transportation improvements

Land Use

1. Modernize the Township's land use regulations to incorporate new information and best practices
2. Encourage the redevelopment of opportunity sites
3. Maintain an appropriate balance of land uses to support a healthy tax base

1. Introduction

Welcome to the Charter Township of Royal Oak's 2024 Community Master Plan. This document is a twenty-year vision for our community's future, based on the ambitions, needs, and desires of our residents. These needs are contextualized within the housing, transportation, and economic conditions of the larger region. This document is our guide for the future – it informs, connects, and inspires action. The Community Master Plan is used to help guide Township policy and private investment, working together to make our vision a reality.

About – Why We Plan

The Community Master Plan is a document that serves as a **guideline for the community of Royal Oak Township to ensure that all future policies, programs, and projects are in-line with the community's vision** for the next 5-20 years. New buildings, infrastructure, parks, and more are all evaluated against the Community Master Plan.

The Community Master Plan seeks to maximize the potential of Royal Oak Township and reflect the unique characteristics of the Township and its residents. This plan outlines potential redevelopment opportunities and strategies for preservation and rehabilitation of existing built areas. The plan includes strategies for Royal Oak Township's neighborhoods and commercial areas to be retrofitted for walkability, for protection of natural features, and to create downtown development. This plan addresses these and other important planning principles and provides guidance in the form of goals and objectives, policies and guidelines, and maps.

The Community Master Plan is based upon data collection, analysis, public outreach, meetings and discussions by the Township's Planning Department staff and Planning Commission. It consists of text, charts, maps, and analysis regarding development within the community. The text of the Plan and the Future Land Use Map provide the foundation for the Township's Zoning Map and Zoning Ordinance.

The State of Michigan requires every township to update their Plan every five years to ensure the document accurately reflects community sentiment (required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act i.e., Act 33 of 2008). **Royal Oak Township's first Master Plan was written in 1956, and the Township has been updating it Plan routinely over the past seventy years.**



HOW THE PLAN IS USED



A Basis for Community Programs and Decision Making: The goals and policies outlined in the Plan will guide the Planning Commission and Township Board in their deliberations on zoning, subdivisions, capital improvements, and other matters relating to land use and development. This provides a stable, long-term basis for decision-making.



A Source for Planning Studies: Few Community Master Plans can, and do, address every issue in sufficient detail. However, a Master Plan can identify specific needs and recommend further study to address these needs through specific courses of action.



A Source of Information: The Master Plan is a valuable source of information for citizens, developers, businesses, prospective residents, the Planning Commission, the Township Board, and other local boards, commissions, and agencies. It gives a clear indication of the Township's direction for the future.



A Long-term Guide: The plan will assist in evaluating public and private proposals that affect the community's physical, social, economic, and environmental characteristics. It is a long-range statement of general goals and policies aimed at unified and coordinated development.



A Basis for Regulatory Actions: It provides the statutory basis upon which land use decisions are made. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act requires that the zoning ordinance be in accordance with a Community Master plan that addresses housing, transportation, natural resources, and population.

Goals of the Planning Process

Every Community Master Plan creates goals for the future – things that the community aspires toward, things we want to achieve in terms of housing, transportation, parks, and more. But every Community Master Plan also has goals for itself – the things that we want to achieve during the planning process, as the actual document is created.

For the 2024 Community Master Plan, the following goals for the planning process were set:

1. **Ground the planning process in the Township's community history**
2. **Create a document that gives a holistic view of the Township**
3. **Give every single Township resident the opportunity to provide their feedback**
4. **Provide a range of engagement options, so people can engage in the way that is most comfortable for them**
5. **Ensure everyone who participates understands how their feedback will be used, in combination with the feedback of their friends and neighbors**
6. **Provide transparency, make all documents permanently available to the public**
7. **Use the planning process as an opportunity to connect with external stakeholders and governments who may be important implementation partners in the future**



Public Engagement Summary

The 2024 Community Master Plan engaged Township residents, regional stakeholders, governmental agencies, and more to ensure the Plan is both specific to the needs of Royal Oak Township and the broader needs of the region. The following table summarizes the various engagement efforts used across the 9-month planning period.

	Project Month								
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Kick-Off	x								
Walking Tour: 8 Mile		x							
Public Survey				x					
Public Workshop #1				x					
Listening Sessions (6)		x	x	x	x				
Public Workshop #2/Jazz Concert						x			
Technical Working Group Meeting #1				x					
Community Member Interviews						x	x	x	
Government Employee Interviews				x	x				
Technical Working Group Meeting #2						x			
Church Activity						x			
Planning Commission Meetings	x	x		x		x	x	x	x
Board of Trustees Meetings	x			x			x		x

Total People Engaged To-Date: 170 Township Residents, 24 External Stakeholders

PUBLIC SURVEY

A two-page public survey was mailed to every residential address in the Township to solicit feedback on major issues (survey sample is in the appendix). A survey drop-box was also set up at the Ferndale Park Co-Op in recognition that individual mailings could not be sent to every apartment, and Co-Op administrators advertised the survey to residents. With each survey, residents also received a flier advertising how to get another survey (online or print) for other people in the household, as well as the time and location of Workshop #1. Feedback was used to identify resident priorities for housing, parks, jobs, and more. 78 residents returned a print survey and 8 submitted an online survey.

PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

Workshop #1 – Visioning

The first public workshop was held on a Wednesday evening in the gymnasium at Grant School (the Tri-County Educational Center). Residents were presented with a welcome table of snacks and pizza, and then given the choice to wander between 6 stations. Each station had an interactive display board and a staff member, and the stations covered Visioning, Housing, Jobs and Economy, Parks and Recreation, Transportation, and Community History. Feedback was directly used to craft the plan's Vision and to identify key issues that needed to be addressed in the Plan. This event was put on in partnership with UrgelImpact, a community engagement firm. 20 residents attended the event.



Residents look at activity boards during Workshop #1

Workshop #2 / Jazz Concert – Downtown Development

The second public workshop was held on a Saturday afternoon in the gymnasium at Grant School (the Tri-County Educational Center), in tandem with a community jazz concert. To solicit feedback from residents who may not typically attend workshops, project staff hired Elemental Jazz Trio to perform a free community concert. The Parks and Recreation Board and Library Director helped advertise the event by passing out several hundred flyers door-to-door, and advertising via social media. At the rear of the event, attendees were given the option to comment on activity boards which asked questions about downtown development like “Which of these images matches your vision for a future downtown?” Feedback was directly used to create the future land use vision for Key Site Area #2 (see the Future Land Use chapter for more detail). The Community Timeline was also available for residents to add to if they wished. 30 residents attended the event.



The Elemental Jazz Trio (above), residents attend Workshop #2 (below)



LISTENING SESSIONS

Planning staff attended six existing meetings and events around the Township to conduct Listening Sessions. During a Listening Session, staff attend as information-gatherers and listen to the main issues before them at the event. At these events, people talked about what they know and think and sometimes answered specific questions about the Community Plan. The Listening Sessions were specifically designed to try to gather information from groups that are otherwise hard to reach.

- Parks and Recreation Board (7 people engaged)
- Senior Black History Month Event (4 people engaged)
- Housing Commission (8 people engaged)
- Ferndale Park Co-Op (8 people engaged)
- Ferndale School Board (2 people engaged)
- Library Board (6 people engaged)



Parks and Recreation Board (left), Ferndale Park Co-Op (top right) with UrgelImpact, Housing Commission (bottom right)

INTERVIEWS

Government Employee Interviews

Planning staff interviewed government employees from Oak Park, Ferndale, and Detroit to ensure that the Township's Community Master Plan aligned with each community's long-term transportation and land use plans. Additionally, staff interviewed representatives from the Detroit Housing Revitalization Department and the Michigan Department of Transportation about specific issues related to

housing infill and 8 Mile Road. In total, 6 government employee interviews were conducted and each lasted 30-45 minutes.

Community Interviews

As of the release of this Draft, resident interviews are still underway. Project staff are conducting phone interviews with 6-12 township residents about their family history and memories of the township's past. The information from these interviews will be added to the Community History section of the Plan.

8 MILE WALKING TOUR

In November, Planning staff hosted an 8 Mile walking tour which ran from the ALDI down to the American Inn and back, the full length of the Township. All Planning Commissioners and Township Trustees were invited to join the tour, which was held on a late Friday afternoon. One representative of the Planning Commission, the Micro-mobility Planner for the City of Detroit, and the Planning Director for SEMCOG attended the event. On the tour, attendees discussed the transportation and development issues along the Township's stretch of 8 Mile.

TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

Meeting #1

For the duration of the Community Plan, staff assembled a Technical Working Group of regional experts to discuss transportation and parks. The Group consisted of 7 staff from Oakland County Planning, Oakland County Parks, Oakland County Environmental, Oakland County Transit, SEMCOG, MDOT, and the 8 Mile Boulevard Association. At the first virtual meeting, experts were asked coordinating questions about transit, infrastructure, parks, funding, and planning in the region.

Meeting #2

At the second virtual meeting the Technical Working Group reviewed the draft Future Transportation chapter of the Community Master Plan. Members gave comments on technical feasibility, the ability of the roads to accommodate the planned facilities, and best practices for safety. These comments were then incorporated into a revised version of the chapter.

CHURCH ACTIVITY

At the outset of the community engagement plan, staff reached out to the five (5) churches in the Township to set up the Visioning activity board at each place of worship. However, Second New Hope Missionary Baptist Church was the sole respondent to conduct the activity. The feedback gathered from congregants was directly used to inform the community Vision statement.



Other Plans that Impact the Community Plan

It is important to review other local, regional, and state-level plans as a part of any Community Master Plan. Reviewing other plans helps communities ensure their goals and objectives are aligned with their own past projects, their neighbors, and the region, to avoid duplication of efforts or conflicts during implementation. Additionally, regional and state plans often already have useful summaries and analyses that the Township can use. The following plan summaries highlights the relevant portions of these local, regional, and state plans to Royal Oak Township.

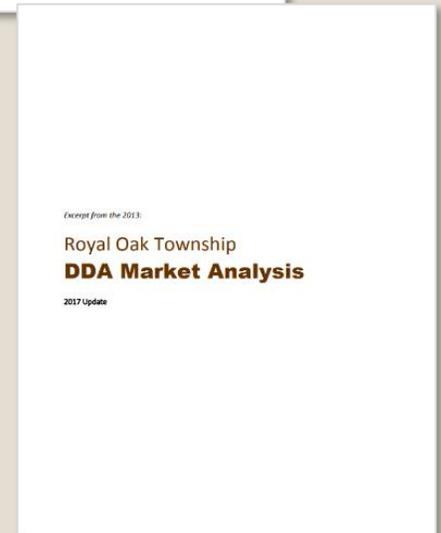
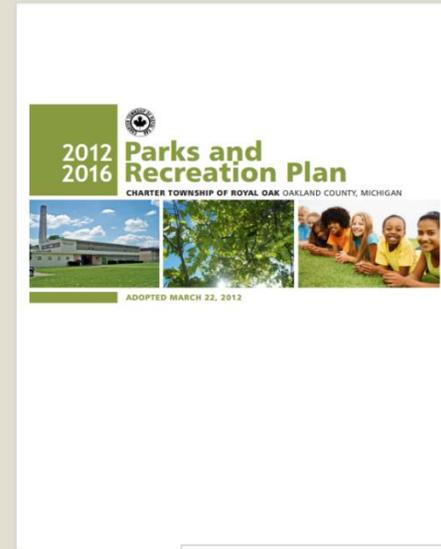
TOWNSHIP PLANS

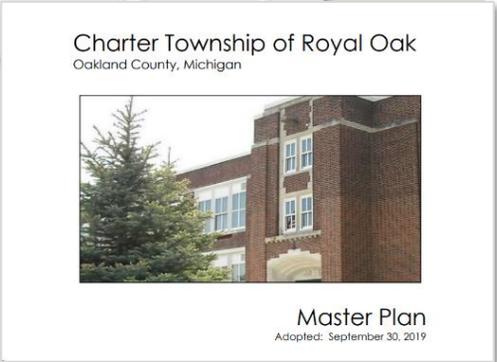
Parks and Recreation 5-Year Plan (2012)

The Parks and Recreation Plan lays out the plan for the Township’s recreation buildings, parks, and programs for a five-year period. In 2012, the Township was still operating the Recreation Center and offering classes like ceramics, basketball, jazz, bowling, guitar, and more. When surveyed in 2012, residents voiced a need for more programs for people with disabilities, teens, and during the summer months for kids. In general, the Plan found high demand for programs of all types – fitness, art, wellness, sports, etc. It also found that the main deficiencies facing the township’s recreation system were 1) a reliance on school properties, 2) a lack of accessibility for people with disabilities, 3) a lack of team sports offerings due to coach shortages, and 4) old equipment.

DDA Market Analysis and Strategic Plan (2017)

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Strategic Plan identifies the projects and programs that are needed to fully realize the community’s vision for the future of Royal Oak Township. Although the DDA no longer exists, the plan contains valuable findings about market demands and gaps. The Plan notes that there is more than adequate consumer spending in the trade area to support significant retail and entertainment, and Township residents were clear in their desire to see fewer auto related uses and more substantial retail and entertainment uses in the redevelopment of the former auto dealerships. If dealership redevelopment requires public ownership of real property for any length of time, then establishing an Economic Development Corporation (EDC) could help lower the costs of redevelopment. The Plan also encourages the purchase of major sites by the Township, if financially possible, to control future development options and proactive business recruitment along 8 Mile Road. Lastly, the plan encourages establishing incentive programs for facade improvements and vacant parcel redevelopment.





Activation Strategy (2018)

The focus of the Activation Strategy is to develop a set of action-oriented recommendations that encourages redevelopment in two areas: 1) the “Key Site Area” which includes the former school property, the existing recreation center, and vacant park area and 2) the 136 vacant residential lots found mostly throughout the eastern portion of the township. The Activation Strategy focuses on marketing of priority sites, rehabbing and infilling residential neighborhoods, and improving recreation offerings and programs. The 2018 Activation Strategy is attached as an appendix to this Plan.

Master Plan (2019)

The township Master Plan was last updated in 2019, and the Plan largely derived its findings from the 2018 Activation Strategy. The Plan also included an updated housing analysis, which found that there is a mismatch between the supply of detached housing and the demand among migrating singles of all ages seeking townhouses, urban lofts, and walk-up multiplexes. A housing contradiction is in force with migrating households bypassing the Township because it does not have a variety of housing choices that meet their lifestyle preference. The Plan recommends that detached houses should be used to infill vacant parcels midblock and between existing houses, across the street from existing houses, and on parcels that had a house razed or demolished. Townhouses, lofts, multi-family dwellings should be used in locations that transition into busier corridors, and for corner parcels overlooking town squares, township parks, or multi-story structures including senior residential towers, medical centers, and school buildings. The Plan also recommends the incorporation of ADUs on single-family parcels in the Township to help meet housing demand.

REGIONAL PLANS

Improving Transit in Southeast Michigan: A Framework for Action (2001)

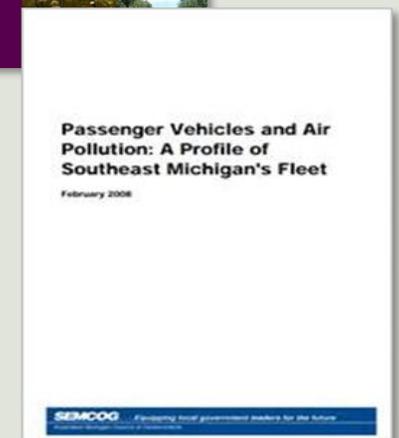
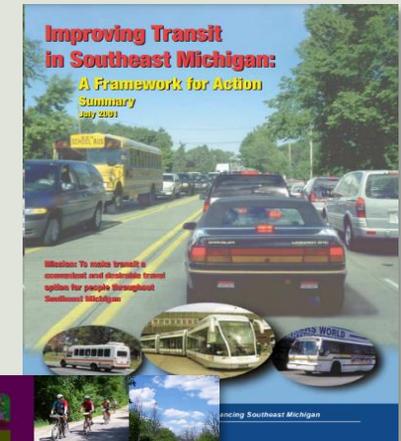
The region-wide transit plan for southeast Michigan, prepared by SEMCOG, lays out how the regional transit system can become more reliable and efficient. The Plan examines not just SMART and DDOT, but all 7 of the public transit providers in the region. In the Plan, the Township is identified as a Transit Supportive Area, meaning it has at least three households or four jobs per acre, which is the minimum level of development that can support hourly fixed-route transit service. Most importantly, the Plan recommends that 8 Mile Road be prioritized for Tier 1 Rapid Transit (fast, frequent, and reliable service for people making relatively long trips in heavily traveled corridors).

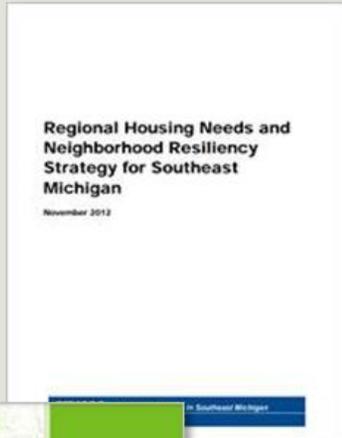
Oakland County Trails Master Plan (2008)

The Oakland County Trails plan lays out the 20-year plan for trail planning across the county. An important focus of the Plan is the bridging of several primary “gaps,” or critical missing links that exist in the major trail system. The Plan envisions the use of 9 Mile Road and Woodard Avenue as connectors to established trails in the region. Improving these roads would allow bicyclists or pedestrians to access the high-quality, off-street trails which are located in the farther parts of the county, including the I-275 Metro Trail, Clinton River Trail, and West Bloomfield Trail. Additionally, the Plan proposes a bike route along W Marshall St in Ferndale, just northeast of the Township, which can serve as a connector to any future bicycle facilities in the Township. Another bike route is proposed along Scotia Rd in Oak Park, which has the potential to connect to the Township’s sidewalk network.

Passenger Vehicles and Air Pollution: A Profile of Southeast Michigan's Fleet (2008)

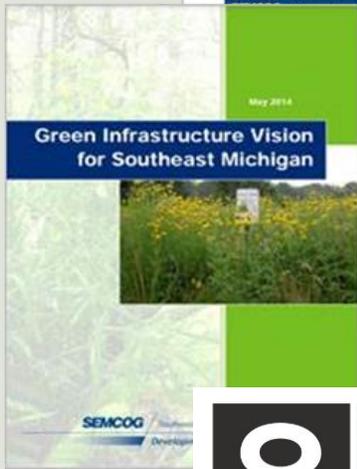
As the lead agency responsible for air quality planning in Southeast Michigan, SEMCOG conducted a study to determine the proportion of high polluting vehicles in the region and how pollution can be reduced. The majority of passenger vehicles on the road today have relatively low pollutant emissions. Nevertheless, passenger vehicles currently contribute 17 percent of ozone-causing emissions and the vast majority of their emissions come from a small fraction of vehicles. The study found that 2% of vehicles account for disproportionately high emissions: 70% of total on-road vehicle pollution. The study indicates that the best way to fix these vehicles is simply through public education, as well as providing financial assistance for those who cannot afford repairs.





Regional Housing Needs and Neighborhood Resiliency Strategy for Southeast Michigan (2012)

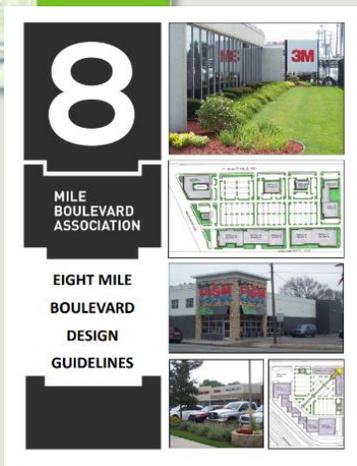
A region's housing market is one of the main indicators of economic stability and, therefore, the condition, quality, and availability of diverse housing types create stronger markets and desirable communities. The regional Housing Strategy recommend that local governments support housing development by facilitating more infill housing, promoting energy efficiency measures to homeowners, improving public transit to connect people to jobs and services, and encourage needed housing types through local land use, building, and zoning regulations. Additionally, the Strategy recommends that communities increase education campaigns on the community benefits of providing affordable and inclusive housing options.



Green Infrastructure Vision for Southeast Michigan (2014)

The Green Infrastructure Vision for Southeast Michigan is a framework that guides preservation and future implementation of green infrastructure in Southeast Michigan. The vision benchmarks the amount of green infrastructure in the region, visions future green infrastructure opportunities, and recommends strategic implementation approaches. Green infrastructure – rain gardens, trees, swales, wetlands, and more – has a wide variety of benefits to local communities. Adding green amenities helps to improve water quality, reduce flooding, provide recreation opportunities, make roadways safer, save taxpayer money on stormwater and road infrastructure, increase property values, improve air quality and reduce heat stress, and provide mor habitat for native plants and animals.

To help implement the Vision, the plan recommend that local governments adopt green-friendly zoning regulations, pursue publicly funded green infrastructure projects, educate the public on the value of green infrastructure, and evaluate vacant parcels for potential purchase and conservation/restoration. Additionally, it recommends that DDAs work with road agencies to launch integrated techniques, such as street trees, tree infiltration trenches, and bioswales that manage stormwater runoff.



8 Mile Boulevard Design Guidelines (2013) and Unifying Framework (2018)

Created by the 8 Mile Boulevard Association (8MBA), these two documents lay out a unified physical design and policy vision for the 8 Mile corridor. The corridor Design Guidelines specify a vibrant, transit-friendly, human-scale design for the corridor with an emphasis on mixed land uses plus discouragement of automotive uses and parking lots. The Guidelines also include sample building designs which can be used by local governments to help unify the corridor's style as developments arrive. The Framework identifies the Mel Far site in the Township as one of the key sites to market for redevelopment. For this site, the 8MBA aims to provide strategic mapping, engagement, marketing, and programming support, as well as support of arts and placemaking initiatives.

Parks and Recreation Plan for Southeast Michigan (2019)

The regional Parks and Recreation Plan, prepared by SEMCOG, sets for the general ambitions for parkland in southeast Michigan. The plan found that only 55% of residents reported that there were enough recreation opportunities in their community, while 95% reported that parks had a positive impact on their quality of life. Due to the low-density nature of the region, 64% of survey respondents said they drive to reach their favorite park. Ultimately the plan recommends that communities continue to acquire and improve local parks, promote universal accessibility and design, encourage environmentally sustainable design, and provide recreation amenities that help attract and retain new residents.

2045 Regional Transportation Plan for Southeast Michigan (2019)

The 2045 Regional Transportation Plan for Southeast Michigan serves as the region's guiding policy document for transportation investment. It describes how more than \$35 billion in revenues will be invested in 174 projects to support the region's transportation system through 2045. The plan identified three main challenges for transportation in the region: new advanced technology, an aging population and labor shortages, and a lack of transportation funding. The majority of public funding (74%) goes to pavement restoration, while 14% goes to large-scale capital projects costing \$100 million or more each. Near the Township, the Plan includes a reconstruction of the I-75 bridge over 8 Mile Road and a capacity increase for Telegraph Road in Southfield.

Climate Resiliency and Flooding Mitigation Study (2020)

The Climate and Flooding Study assesses the flooding risk for roads, bridges, culverts, and pump stations within the southeast region. As severe flooding events persist and potentially worsen into the future, it is important to understand vulnerabilities and best practices to address these challenges. In addition to environmental and social impacts, flooding of roads can have numerous economic implications, including costs to public agencies and the traveling public. In Royal Oak Township, there are no roads that are considered at high risk for flooding.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Plan for Southeast Michigan (2020)

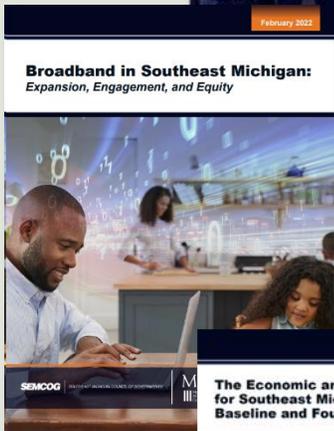
The regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Plan aims to ensure that the region's nonmotorized system meets the transportation, quality of life, health, and accessibility needs of its residents and visitors, as well as the economic development priorities and goals of the region and local communities. Currently, there are 329 miles of complete walking and biking routes in the region, but there are still 682 miles that have gaps in the planned network. The Township is adjacent to the Ferndale-Royal Oak area, which is the second-highest hub for pedestrian activity in the region, surpassed only by Ann Arbor. Additionally, the Township lies within the high-demand area for places that do not have bicycle infrastructure within ½ mile. Lastly, the regional Plan emphasizes the importance of last-mile connections, curbside management, construction zone access, electric infrastructure, accessibility and micro-mobility, and safe routes to school as key items that governments should consider when reviewing transportation networks.





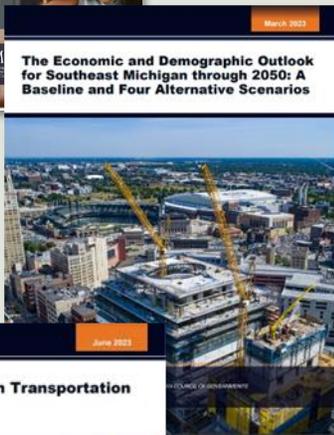
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Southeast Michigan (2021)

Prepared by SEMCOG, the Development Strategy is a document which outlines the path forward to create a resilient economy in southeast Michigan. The strategy notes that anticipating demand for different land uses will be key to the success of the region. In particular, it recommends that communities consider and evaluate the needs for additional housing, fulfillment centers, and critical infrastructure, all of which are in immediate demand. Additionally, the strategy emphasized the importance of redeveloping brownfield sites to help meet these needs, especially in areas like the Township which are largely built-up. Lastly, the Strategy aims to coordinate project planning and timing for water, sewer, broadband, electricity, solid waste, and other utilities.



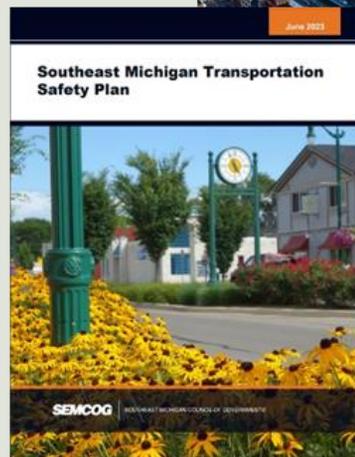
Broadband in Southeast Michigan (2022)

SMCOG's Broadband plan identifies challenges, opportunities, and policy recommendations for expanding internet access throughout the region. The Broadband Plan includes a comprehensive view of federal grants and loans that can be used to finance local broadband projects. It also reports that approximately 1/4 of Black households and 1/2 of households earning under \$20,000 per year have access to broadband. Lastly, the report includes a Community Broadband Preparedness Checklist, which guides local governments through the broadband improvement process.



Economic and Demographic Outlook for Southeast Michigan Through 2050 (2023)

The 2050 Economic Outlook predicts a moderate increase in population and job growth over the next thirty years. The report predicts that the region's population will decline by an additional 9,500 people in 2022, after which the population will grow again, driven by people moving to Michigan from other states and countries. Southeast Michigan's population has long been supported by immigration, and it is expected that approximately 14,000 people will move to the area in 2024. The report also notes that the region will soon be contending with an aging population. The region lost 90,000 residents aged 24 and younger between 2010 and 2020, while it gained 200,000 residents 65 and over during the same time.



Southeast Michigan Transportation Safety Plan (2023)

The purpose of the Southeast Michigan Transportation Safety Plan is to identify the region's key safety needs and guide investment decisions to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on our roadways for all road users, while promoting safe travel for all modes. The plan identified five areas for improvement: safer people (driver behavior), safer roads, safer vehicles, safer speeds, and better post-crash care. For local governments like Royal Oak Township, the plan recommends that the community take four key steps toward improvement: adopt policies that promote transportation safety and communicate benefits to the public; implement safety strategies and infrastructure projects on local roads, prioritizing the needs of all users and the land use context; provide first response for crashes and participate in education and enforcement initiatives; and recommend projects for federal funding that meet regional transportation safety goals.

Siting Optimal Charging Infrastructure in Southeast Michigan (2023)

There are currently a total of 386 unique non-residential EV charging station locations in Macomb, Oakland, and Wayne Counties. Local governments can improve and enhance development of the EV network by streamlining permitting policies and providing clarity around where EV charging is permitted. The Siting Strategy recommends that local governments 1) adopt clear EV policies and zoning ordinance standards, 2) streamline the permitting process to decrease submissions, reviews, and approval timelines, and 3) provide easily accessible and established safety, design, and other standards. Include standards for all types of EV chargers, regardless of whether they are for private or public use. Together, these measures would help facilitate the expansion of the EV network and industry in southeast Michigan.

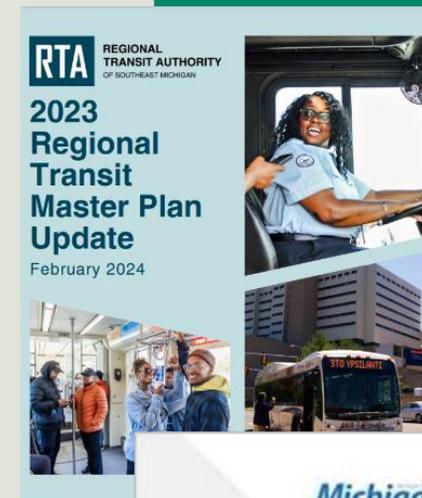
RTA Regional Transit Master Plan Update (2023)

The Regional Transit Authority (RTA) serves Oakland, Wayne, Washtenaw, and Macomb Counties through 5 transit systems: AAATA, DDOT, SMART, the Q-Line, and the Detroit People Mover. RTA develops regional transit plans, coordinates a complex network of local service providers, accelerates pilot projects and programs, and distributes public transportation funds regionally. RTA's 2023 Update identifies implementing rapid transit, increasing frequency and reliability, and improving on-demand ride services as their top priorities. 8 Mile Road is identified as one of the target rapid transit corridors, running from Southfield to Eastpointe.

STATE PLANS

Michigan Mobility 2045 (2021)

Michigan Mobility 2045 is the State's plan for the long-term direction and vision for the future of Michigan's multimodal transportation network for all users. The plan discusses 4 possible future scenarios for 2045 which model the traffic impacts of rapid economic growth, rapid tech growth, both, and neither. In all 4 scenarios, at the statewide scale, Michigan's transportation network will be largely uncongested and appears well positioned to handle even significant increases in travel from a strong economy or technological adoption. Most importantly for Royal Oak Township, the plan estimates that getting all of the state's major roads (including 8 Mile) into good repair will require doubling the expenditure on roads by 2045.





Michigan Broadband Roadmap (2021)

The state Broadband Roadmap outlines the importance of broadband internet in everyday life. Having quality internet access leads to better education and health outcomes for individuals, and it can boost community quality of life by facilitating economic gains, public safety connectivity, and informed political participation. The plan found that residents 65 and older, households earning under \$20k annually, and Black and Latino residents are the most likely to lack a home broadband connection (either due to no availability or unaffordability). The plan also found that 40% of low- and middle-income households report that they cannot afford to pay for a home internet high-speed service subscription at all. 38% say they can pay something in the range of entry-level subscription plans that range from \$55 to \$70 per month, while 22%, are comfortable paying about \$25 per month for internet service. Ultimately, the plan sets a goal to ensure high-speed internet is available to every household.



Michigan Statewide Housing Plan (2022)

The state's Housing Plan addresses complex, intersecting challenges through five statewide housing targets, eight priority areas, with 37 goals, plus 134 suggested strategies for addressing the goals. The Plan found that nearly half of Michigan's housing stock was built before 1970, and construction of new units falls very short of demand. Businesses of all sizes and locations have made it clear that both housing costs and the lack of housing availability impacts their ability to recruit and retain staff. Additionally, 38% of households struggle to afford the basic necessities of housing, childcare, food, technology, health care, and transportation. The state aims to create 75,000 new or rehabilitated housing units over the next five years. It encourages local governments to allow for greater housing density, a wider range of housing types, age-friendly housing formats, and faster permitting to help meet this goal.



Michigan State Plan on Aging (2024)

The State Plan on Aging (SPOA) aims to help improve aging-in-place for Michiganders, and examines the main obstacles to healthy, happy aging. Michigan has 16 Area Agencies on Aging and a large network of independent agencies who support seniors. The SPOA found that lack of knowledge and awareness surrounding community resources and how to access them is preventing older Michiganders from receiving needed services. The SPOA also found that caregiver support and workforce capacity are key issues facing Michigan's aging population. These gaps in information and labor are critical to Royal Oak Township, since the township does not have any senior living facilities beyond the Ferndale Park Co-Op and heavily relies on partnerships to advertise services to residents.

2. Community History

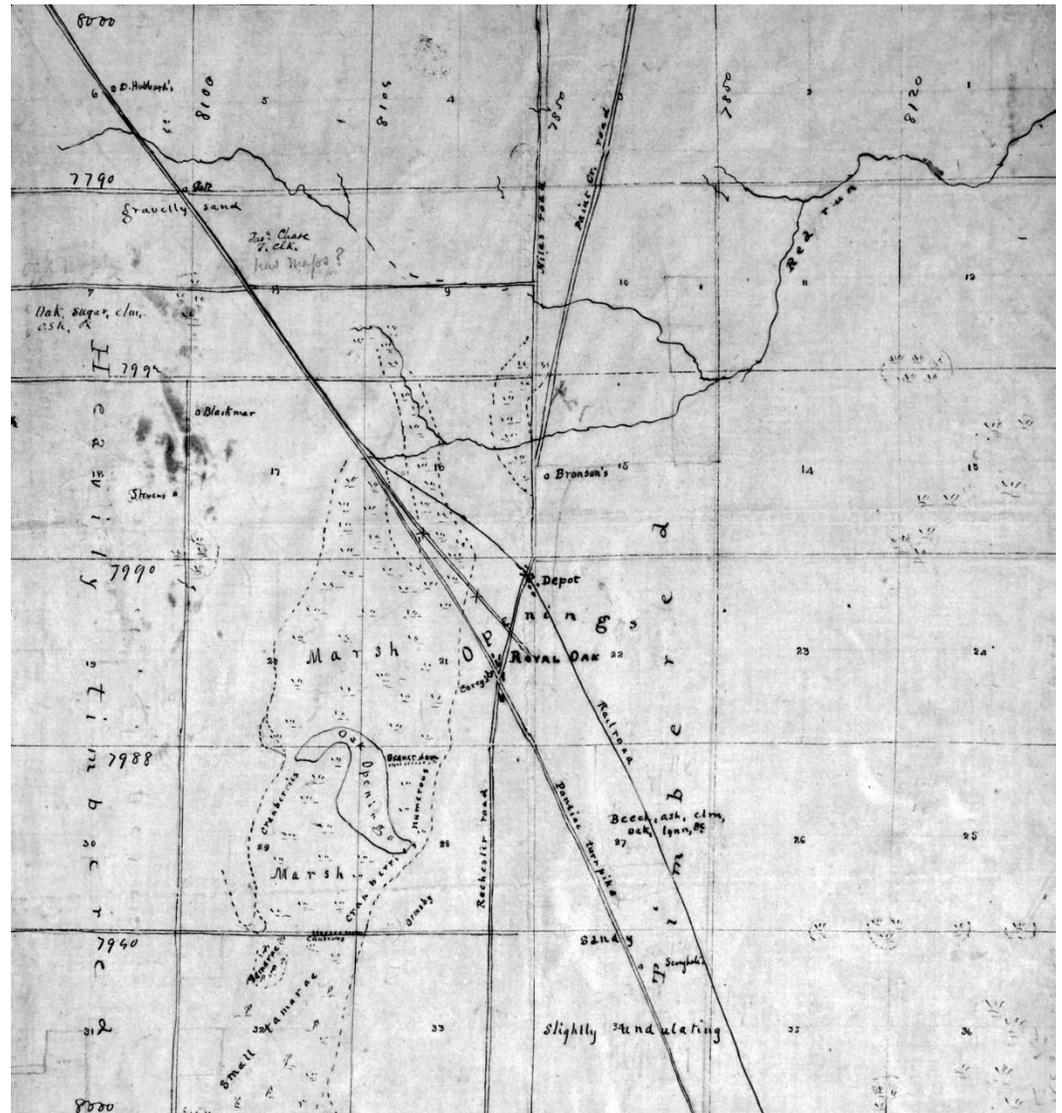
“The Township is a historical fact. I am thankful to be a part of the community. God is good.” - 2024 public survey respondent

Royal Oak Township's History

EARLY ESTABLISHMENT

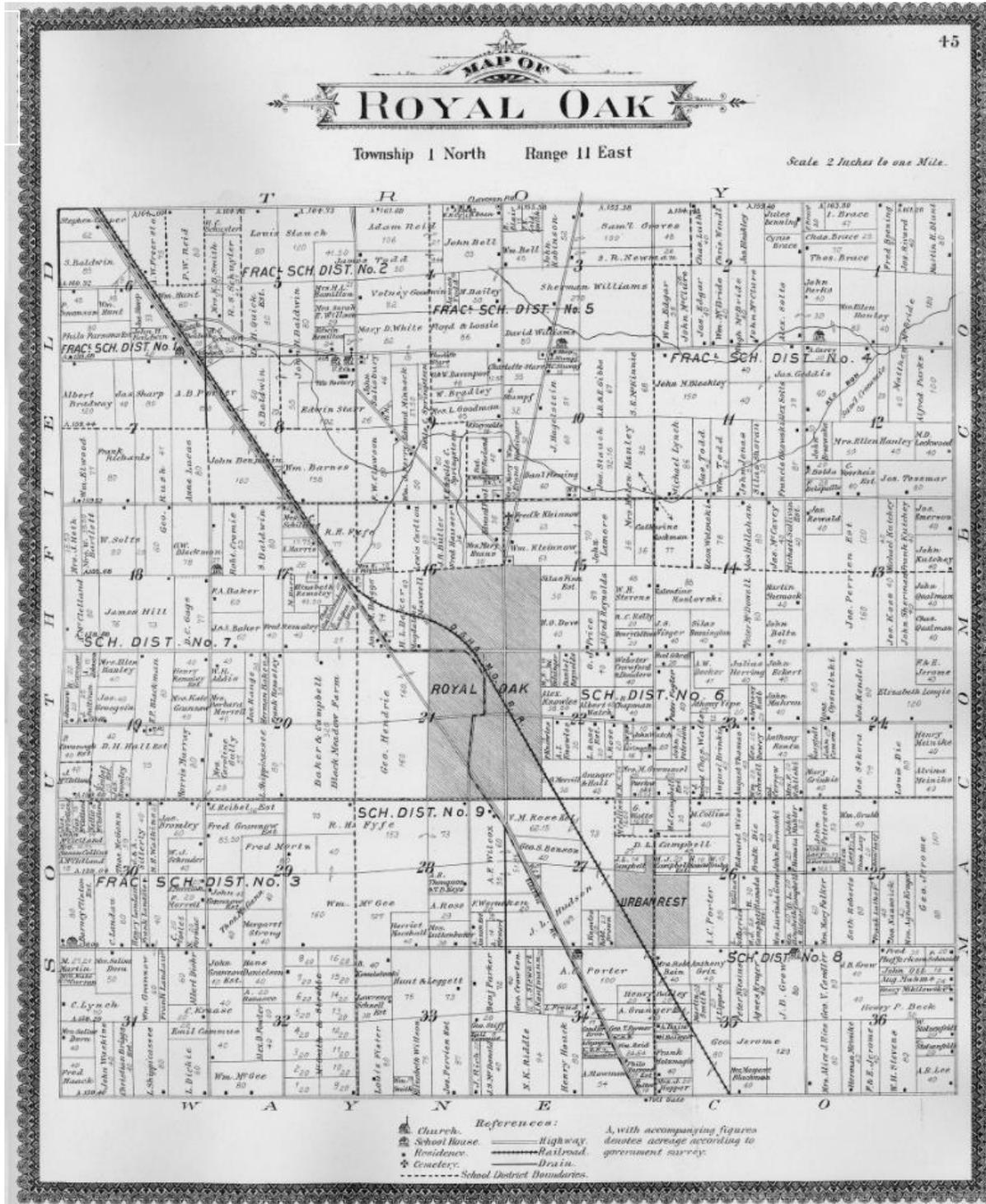
Royal Oak Township shares a rich history dating back to its establishment in 1833, before Michigan's statehood in 1837. The Township is said to have gotten its name after an oak tree that General Cass had nicknamed "The Royal Oak."¹ In 1838, the most notable features of Royal Oak Township were the railroad depot, cranberry marsh, large forests of tamarack and oak trees, Red Run creek, and the 4 dirt roads that ran through the Township. At this time, only a handful of farmers resided within the Township's boundaries. In 1850, Black freedom-seekers Henry and Elizabeth Hamer escaped slavery in Kentucky and settled in the Township via the underground railroad.

Royal Oak Township once spanned at least 36 square miles in Oakland County before diminishing in size as cities broke off and became incorporated through land annexations. In 1908, Royal Oak was an established village but not yet a city. Ferndale was also a named place, but not a village or city, and the northern portion was called "Urban Rest" while the southern portion was called "Ferndale." Royal Oak Township's development has been greatly influenced by city-wide and nation-wide social, racial, and economic trends.



1838 Survey Map of Royal Oak Township. Courtesy of: Oakland History Center

1896 Map of Royal Oak Township
 Courtesy of: Oakland History Center

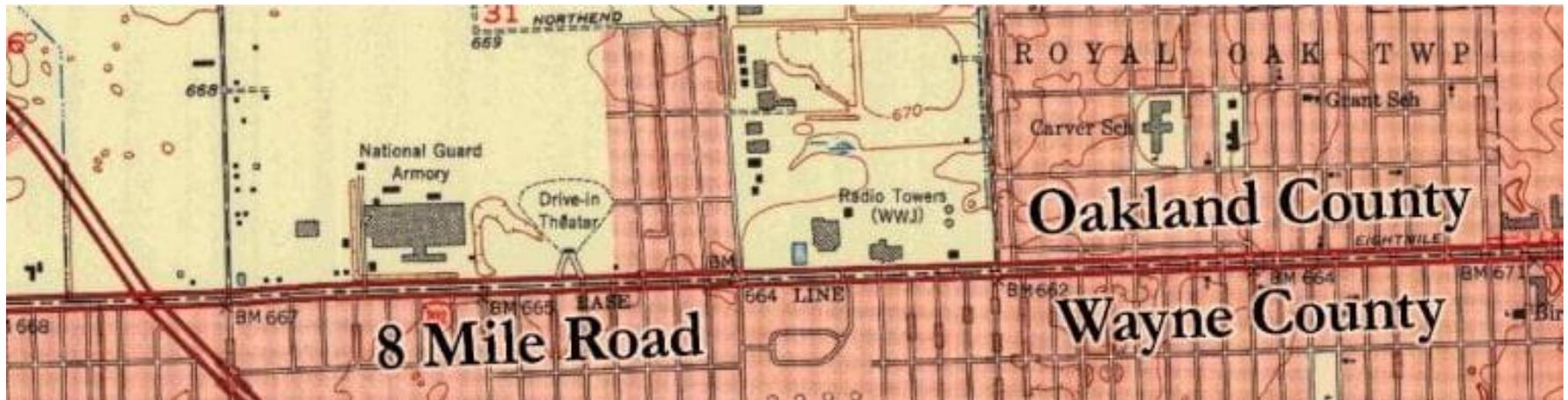


WARTIME

Although African Americans had been living in Detroit prior to American Independence, the most prominent population growth in the Eight Mile area happened in three different waves before World War I,² with industrial expansion following both World Wars. During the Great Migration in the 1910s, African Americans coming from the rural South were attracted to the semi-rural area north of Eight Mile because it resembled an open, rural environment,³ which was an escape from crowded areas of the City.⁴ It also presented the opportunity for home and land ownership, as African Americans were unable to move into the suburbs outside of Detroit, like Birmingham and Grosse Pointe, due to discriminatory planning practices such as restrictive covenants,⁵ and redlining.⁶

- **COVENANTS:** Restrictive covenants are clauses in deeds (the physical document proving the ownership of a house or land) that prohibit non-white people from buying or living in the house. During the 1920s, covenants were used as a tool to deliberately exclude Black homebuyers from white neighborhoods. In the 1948 landmark case of *Shelley v. Kramer*, the Supreme Court ruled that local governments could not enforce restrictive covenants, on the basis that it violated the “equal protection” section of the US Constitution. However, individual homeowners continued to exclude residents using restrictive covenants through the 1960s.
- **REDLINING:** Redlining is the systematic denial of services such as mortgages, insurance loans, and other financial services related to property ownership to residents of certain areas based on their race. The term redlining originated in the 1920s, when the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) created mortgage rating maps for every major city in America. Areas with Black residents were colored red and deemed “dangerous” or “hazardous” for mortgage lenders. The FHA refused to provide federally backed mortgages in these areas, and the maps were also used by private lenders to refuse mortgages or insurance to Black residents. As a result, Black homeowners were excluded from many of the financial supports that white people could access during the WWI recovery period. Even though redlining informally ended in the 1930s and was officially outlawed by the 1968 Fair Housing Act, the patterns it created persist today.

1952 redlining map showing the redlining of Detroit and Royal Oak Township (upper right).



“The FHA [Federal Housing Administration] stopped its redlining practices even before the passage of the Fair Housing Act [in 1934]... Indeed, FHA redlining was simply dismissed as a problem of location and not of race. The FHA claimed it decided to exclude urban areas from its insurance because of the age and condition of the structures in those areas. FHA officials, of course, failed to take into account their own references to race as part of the underwriting criteria used to determine eligibility for mortgage insurance. It was not the case that African Americans and other unworthy racial and ethnic groups were in the wrong place at the wrong time, but the conditions of distress and dilapidation within those communities were attributed to the race and ethnicity of the people who lived there. In the earliest days of the FHA, theories of eugenics and racial inferiority informed its policymaking with regard to Black people. African Americans were regarded as a pestilence or as a contagion that necessitated containment or quarantine for fear of its ability to destroy value surrounding it.”

“Coming to terms with the racism embedded in past federal practices was not about redress, restitution, or repair; instead, it was necessary to contextualize the conditions found in African American communities. Identifying racially inscribed policies, such as redlining, from an earlier era was also critical to implementing new policies that aspired to open up and improve Black housing opportunities. Instead, by ignoring race, new practices that were intended to facilitate inclusion reinforced existing patterns of inequality and discrimination. For example, poor housing and neighborhood conditions caused by earlier FHA policies became the basis on which new lenders, in the new era of FHA colorblindness and an end to redlining, could still continue to treat potential Black homeowners differently. African American neighborhoods were given the racially neutral descriptor “subprime.” This distinction allowed for certain kinds of lenders while justifying the continued inactivity of other lenders. Though race was apparently no longer a factor, its cumulative effect had already marked Black neighborhoods in such ways that still made them distinguishable and vulnerable to new forms of financial manipulation. Inclusion was possible, but on predatory and exploitative terms.”

- ‘Race for Profit’ by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor



When a portion of the area lying south of Eight Mile Road was annexed by the City of Detroit around 1925–26,⁷ African Americans residing in this area looked to Royal Oak Township for alternative housing,⁸ and the community began facing density pressures.

At the end of 1939, a group of Royal Oak Township residents organized and called for incorporation into a new City. Led by non-resident William L. Sherrill, the group argued that incorporation would create representation in County government and allow Black residents to protect their property from discriminatory financing practices. The NAACP led the opposition, arguing that incorporation would endorse segregation. Ultimately, the effort to incorporate failed.⁹

In 1944, the George Washington Carver Elementary School was built to serve Black students after increased migration during World War II prompted Royal Oak Township's Clinton School District to split into two racially segregated districts,¹⁰ the district serving Black students called the Carver School District.

POST-WAR

During World War II there was a need for emergency housing.¹¹ In 1945, the federal government established two general public housing and temporary wartime housing community north of Eight Mile Road for Black people, called Oakdale Gardens and the Oakdale Gardens Cooperative Housing project.¹² It covered approximately one square mile of Royal Oak Township and was originally open to Black war workers.¹³ The increase in population placed a burden on the Township and its existing housing as the population increased by 84% over a yearlong period.¹⁴ While the Township faced population growth and deterioration pressures from dilapidated housing, the surrounding areas were being built up by an affluent white population whose residents had left the Detroit during the period of mass “white flight.”¹⁵ During this time development of the Eight Mile Road business corridor was restricted until the late 1940s.¹⁶

In 1954, the Housing and Home Finance Agency of the federal government allocated money to assist Royal Oak Township in replacing the temporary housing units in Oakdale Gardens with permanent homes for veterans and families.¹⁷ In 1959 the Township took advantage of the Housing Act of 1954,¹⁸ approving a federally supported urban renewal project covering most of the Eight Mile segment,¹⁹ and project activities were completed as part of the Township's Community Development Program.²⁰ The renewal project was terminated in

1975.²¹ Due to the Township's isolation from surrounding suburbs which pushed Black residents out, Black-owned businesses grew in the Township,²² and the business district developed along Eight-Mile Road.²³

MID-CENTURY

Throughout the twentieth century, Detroit grew in area while Royal Oak Township shrank,²⁴ both in population and area. Communities had broken off from Royal Oak Township between 1921 and 1950 to become incorporated cities, and by 1955 the remaining unincorporated areas of Royal Oak Township were the Black enclave adjacent to Eight Mile Road and the Jewish enclave that had formed adjacent to Ten Mile Road.²⁵ During the mid-twentieth century, the Carver School District was struggling to support a high school after a drop in tax revenue, but neighboring districts wouldn't accept Carver's Black students. Then-Governor G. Mennen Williams forced a merger between the Carver and Oak Park Districts in 1960, and the Carver School closed soon after in 1982. It was divided into the Royal Oak Township Recreation Center on the northern portion and Oak Park Academy (now closed) on the southern portion of the building.

Royal Oak Township became a charter township in 1972²⁶ to provide itself greater protection from annexation.²⁷ From 2003–04, the Jewish enclaves broke off and became a part of Oak Park.²⁸ Much of what used to be the Township now consists of all or a portion of the cities of Berkley, Clawson, Ferndale, Hazel Park, Huntington Woods, Madison Heights, Pleasant Ridge, Oak Park, and Royal Oak. This left the historically Black Eight Mile community as the remaining piece of Royal Oak Township, which was reduced to a size of 0.55 square miles.²⁹

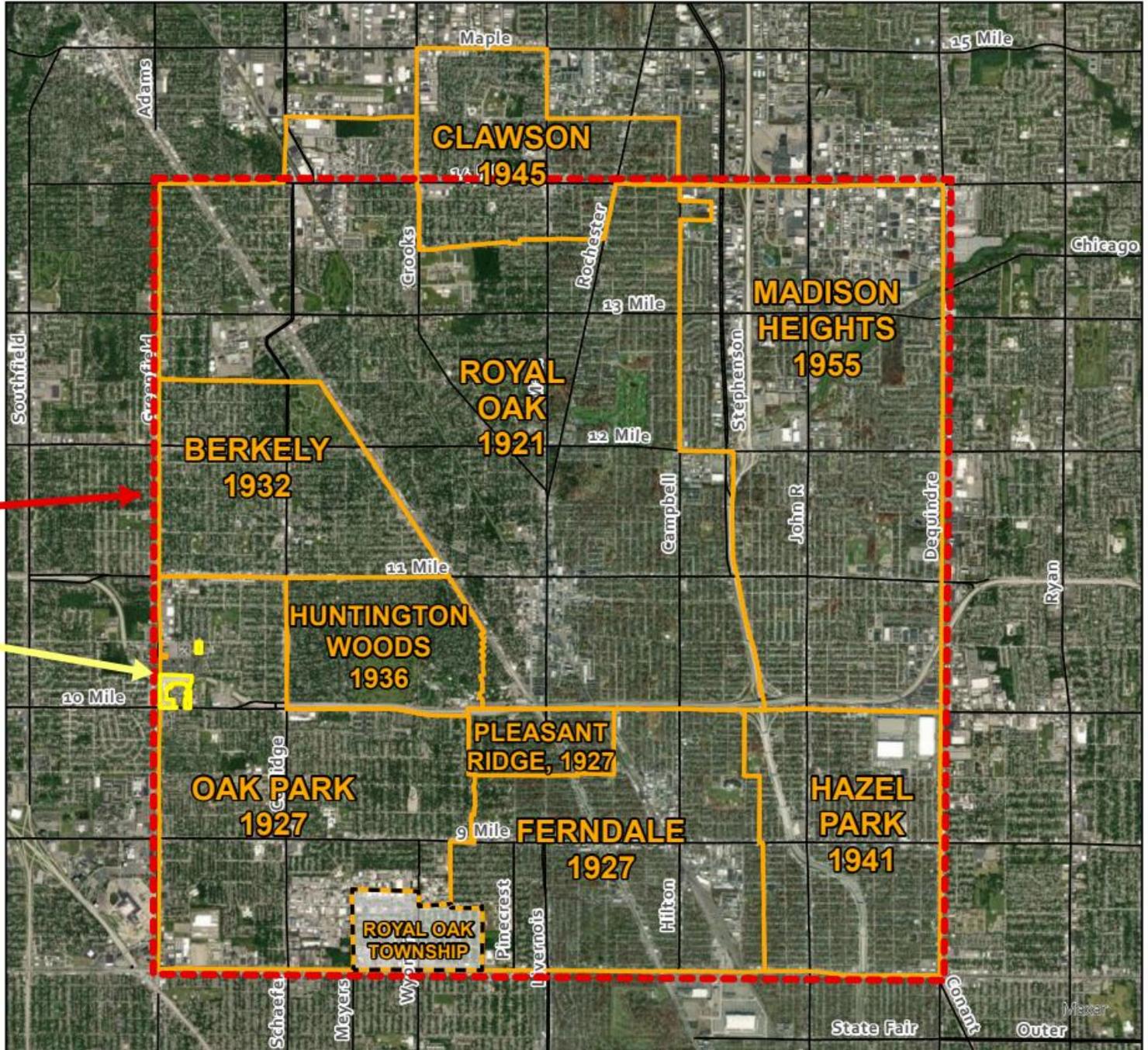
TODAY

The incorporation of the cities that were once a part of Royal Oak Township created barriers for Black residents to access housing, education, and business opportunities, among other sectors, in those communities.³⁰ Despite the challenges residents of the Township have faced, the community stands strong against attempts to erase the Township's presence and historic contributions to Oakland County. Today, residents enjoy Royal Oak Township for its sense of community, residential atmosphere, and family-oriented amenities. **Royal Oak Township remains the oldest historically Black community in Oakland County, a point of pride for residents - past, present, and future.**

Annexation History Map

Royal Oak Township

February 26, 2024



Original size of Township in 1833, 36 square miles.

Small Township "island" is annexed into Oak Park in 2004.



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.
 Data Source: County or Local Community Source. McKenna 2023.
 State of Michigan, 2023.
 SEMCOG Open Data Portal, 2023.

Community-Built Timeline

The history of Royal Oak Township is a living history, embodied by residents and their knowledge of the Township. One of the goals of this project is to ground the Community Master Plan in not just history, but community history. Through the survey, workshops, listening sessions, interviews, and conversations, the residents of Royal Oak Township created this Community-Built Timeline.



Where possible, planning staff looked up dates for individual events. The exact dates for some events could not be identified, so these are shown around the edges of the timeline. Additionally, people were asked to put forward any past residents they believe deserve recognition - these people are named in the “Resident Recognitions” section below the timeline.

1833: Township is founded!



1870: Township resident John Almon Starr leads the push to build the first Township Hall and telephone line. His home is later declared a historic site in Royal Oak.



1917: St Paul's Methodist Church on 9-Mile is the first modern church built in the Township.



1927: Oak Park, Ferndale, and Pleasant Ridge annex out of the Township.



1936: The new Ferndale HS is built. Mozella McIntyre, Township resident, is in the first graduating class.

1945: The School District is segregated, Carver School is built for Black students.



1950s: Members of two famous Motown groups attend George Washington Carver Jr school in the Township.

1955: Madison Heights annexes out of the Township.



1956: The Township's population peaks at 11,000 people.

1960: The Federal government orders the Ferndale School District to desegregate.

1830

1834: The first railroad is constructed between the Township and Detroit.



1900

1891: Township resident Charles A. Allen circulates petitions and leads the establishment of Royal Oak as a village, decades before it becomes a city.

Elizabeth Hamer & Children



1850: Freedom-seekers Henry and Elizabeth Hamer escape slavery in Kentucky and arrive in the Township via the underground railroad. Their great-granddaughter Edna goes on to tell their story in 1971.

1920

1921: Royal Oak annexes out of the Township.

1932: Berkely annexes out of the Township.

1936: Huntington Woods annexes out of the Township.



1915: Township resident Lucius Jackson graduates from the Tuskegee Institute in the last class of Booker T Washington.

1940

1941: Hazel Park annexes out of the Township.

1945: Clawson annexes out of the Township.



1942: Squalls Market, the oldest continuously operating business in the Township, opens.

1958: Diana Ross takes singing lessons from Mrs. Glen on Mitcheldale Ave.

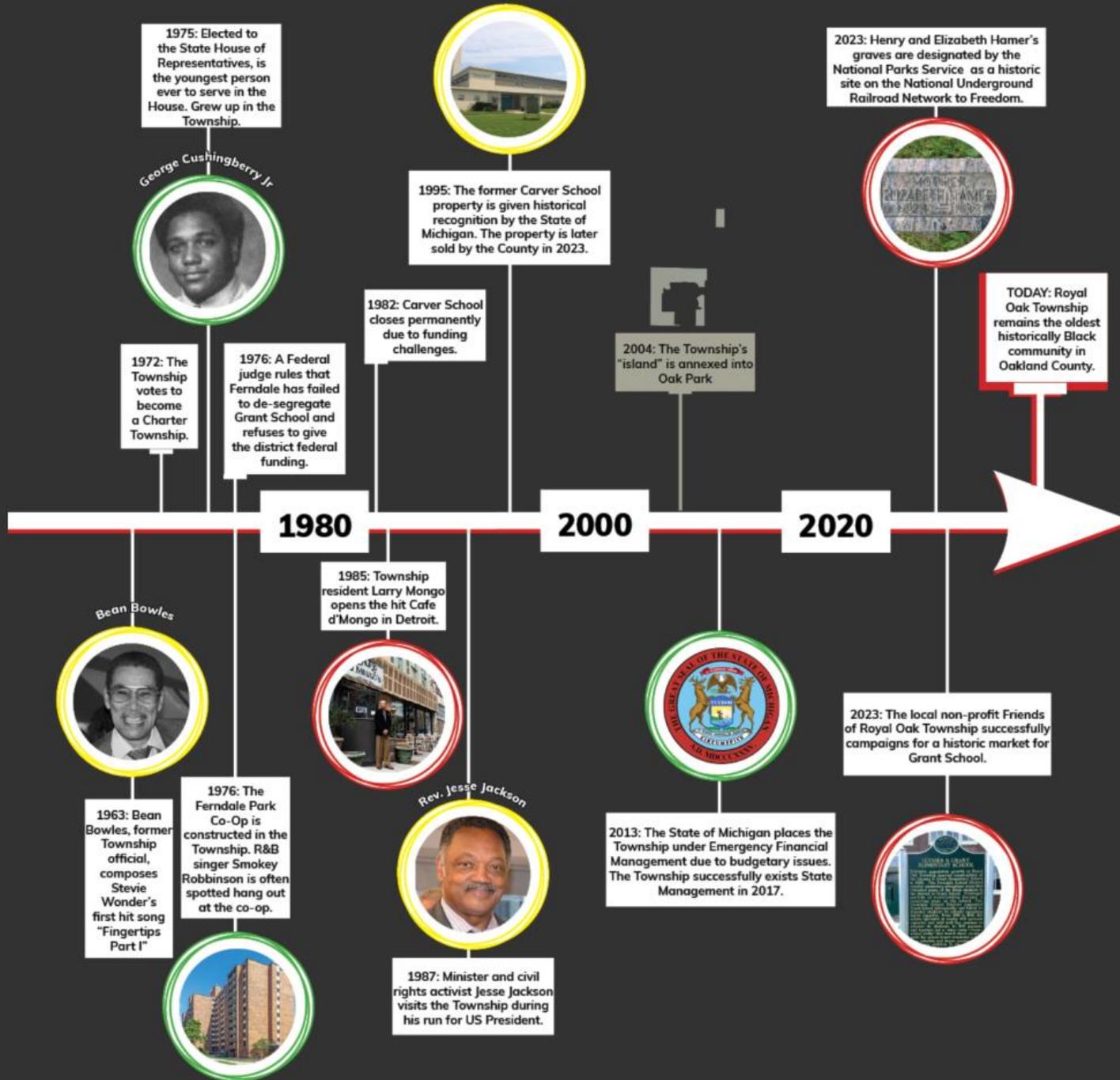


1958: The new Oak Park HS is built. Jollie Dixon, Township resident, is in the first Black resident to attend.



1960

RESIDENT RECOGNITION



Stella J. Jackson



Cynthia Phillips
(former Treasurer)



Madeline Shipp



Richard Jones
(Vietnam veteran)



Francine Thurman
(former Trustee and historian)

Shared Goals

- 1. IMPROVE AWARENESS OF THE TOWNSHIP'S HISTORY AND PURSUE NEW WAYS FOR RESIDENTS TO ENGAGE WITH LOCAL HISTORY**
- 2. PROTECT THE TOWNSHIP'S HISTORAL RESOURCES FROM LOSS OR DAMAGE**
- 3. ELEVATE THE TOWNSHIP'S HISTORY AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL**



Township Today

3. People and Health

To understand health in Royal Oak Township, it's important to look at internal factors (demographics and personal health) and external factors (environmental and social factors). This chapter examines the population, age, education, and racial composition of the Township, as well as mortality causes, pollution, and the access to healthy food, fitness, and healthcare.

“Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.”

- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Current Conditions

POPULATION

Royal Oak Township's unique history of annexation has resulted in many drastic declines in population over the course of its history. Table 1 shows the Township's change in population since 1960 compared to the surrounding communities of Oak Park and Ferndale, along with Oakland County and the State of Michigan to provide a regional and statewide context. All but one of the annexations from the Township occurred before 1960, with the final one occurring in 2004. This final annexation resulted in the Township's population dropping by nearly half (48%) between 2000 and 2010.

Table 1: Population Over Time

Year	Royal Oak Township	City of Oak Park	City of Ferndale	Oakland County	State of Michigan
1960	8,147	36,632	31,347	690,259	7,823,194
1970	6,326	36,762	30,850	907,871	8,881,826
1980	5,784	31,537	26,227	1,011,793	9,255,553
1990	5,006	30,468	25,084	1,083,592	9,310,462
2000	5,446	29,793	22,105	1,194,156	9,938,444
2010	2,834	29,892	20,286	1,201,113	9,952,687
2020	2,400	29,495	19,264	1,272,264	10,057,921

The regional planning agency that governs Royal Oak Township, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), provides projections for population growth and insights into demographic changes across the region. The following table demonstrates the projected growth of the Township and overall region out into 2050.

Table 2: Population Change and Projection

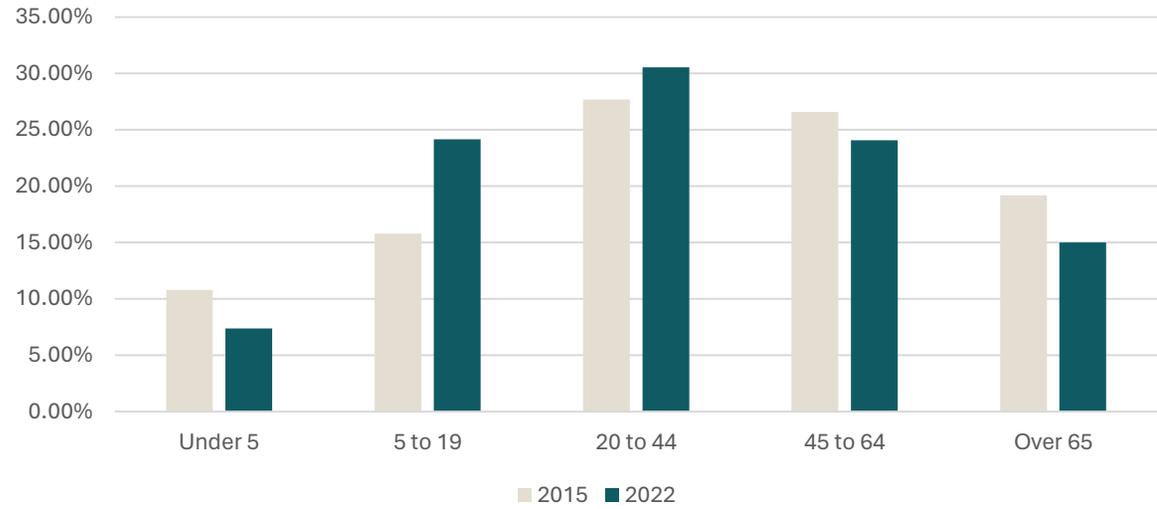
Year	Royal Oak Township	City of Oak Park	City of Ferndale	Oakland County
2022	2,400	29,495	19,264	1,272,264
2030	2,367	29,401	19,488	1,316,009
2040	2,421	30,000	19,838	1,368,815
2050	2,521	30,104	19,913	1,387,838

SEMCOG: Southeast Michigan Council of Governments

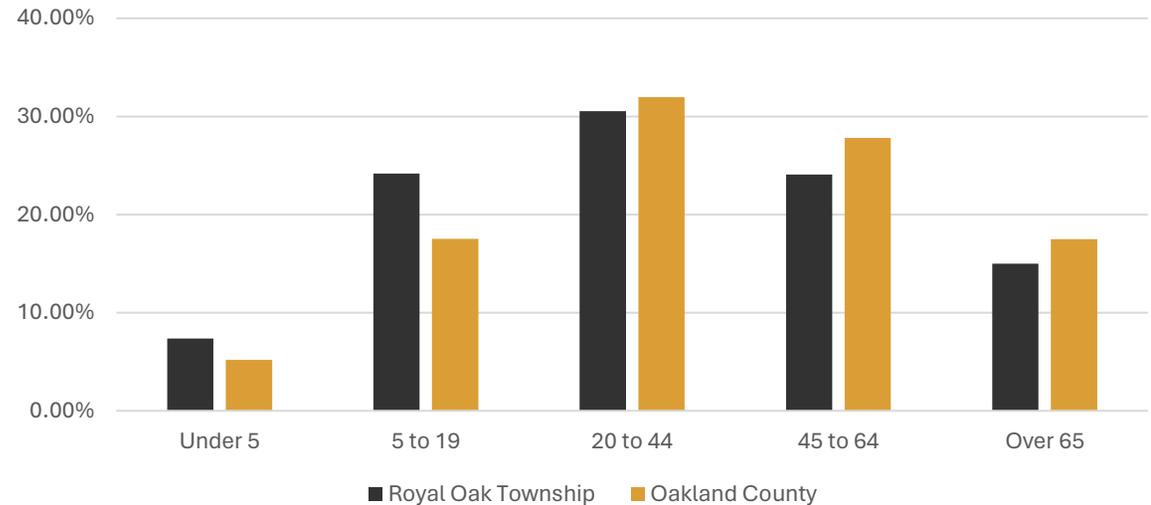
AGE

Like the state of Michigan, Royal Oak Township has been aging over time. However, the Township still has a lower median age than the state and Oakland County. **Between 2015 and 2022, the Township saw a reduction in the percentage of children under five, as well as residents over 65. Meanwhile, the percentage of high school and middle-aged residents rose.** However, it is important to note that the 2020 Covid-19 Pandemic led to a disproportionate number of deaths in Black communities across the country. Most residents in the Township know a friend, family member, or friend who passed during the pandemic, and seniors were much more at risk of mortality than younger age groups. As such, part of the decline in residents over 65 may be attributed to the losses during 2020 and 2021.

Change in Age Structure, 2010 to 2022



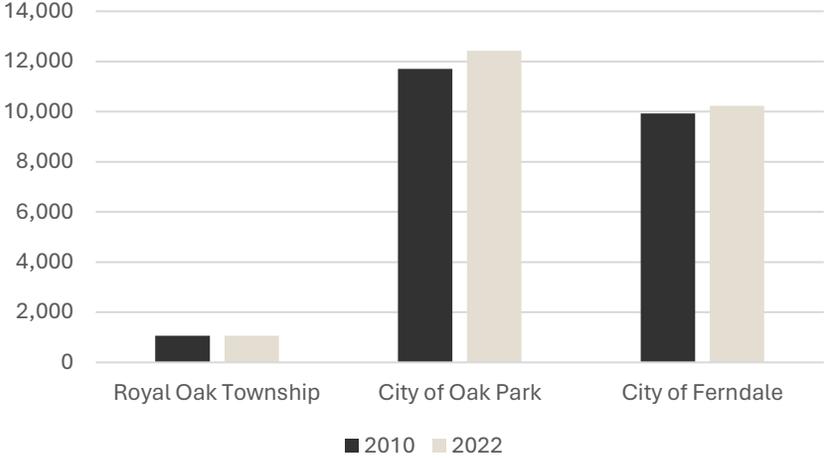
Regional vs Local Age Structure, 2022



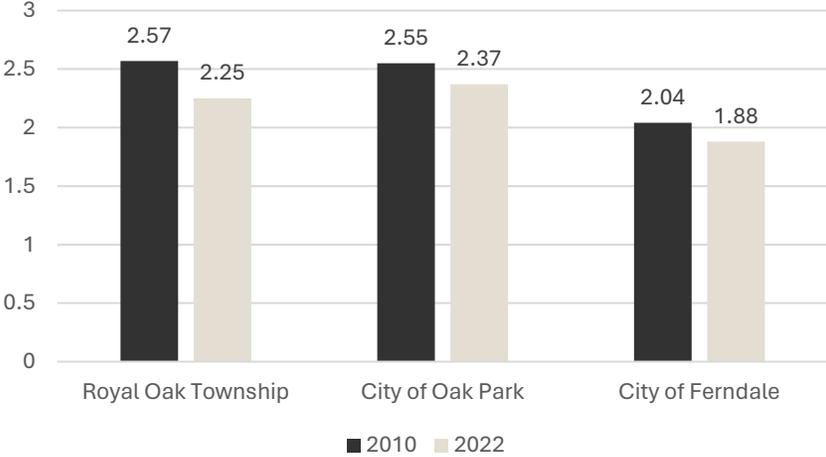
HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES

A “household” is the term for all of the people that share one housing unit. For example, two parents and two children sharing a single house would amount to one household, while one person living alone in an apartment would also amount to one household. By tracking the number of households over time, Royal Oak Township can understand broader trends about how people live – when young people are moving in with their parents, when seniors are living alone, and more. **In the last decade, the Township’s household size has declined, indicating there are more people living alone.** This is consistent with the drops in Ferndale, Oak, Park, and the state overall, with isolation becoming a larger community issue.

Number of Households, 2010 to 2022



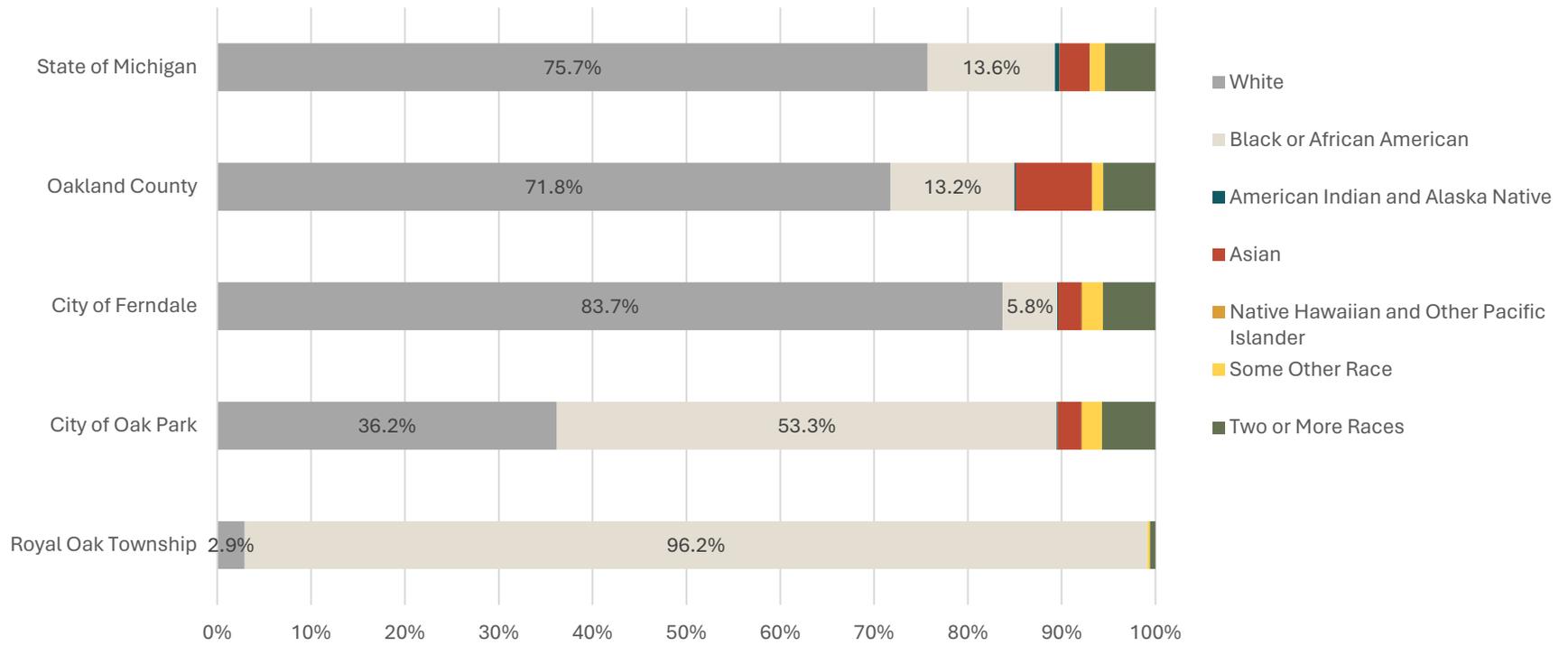
Average Household Size, 2010 to 2022



RACE AND ETHNICITY

Royal Oak Township is unique in the Oakland County areas as the oldest historically Black community in the county. Along with Southfield, Pontiac and Oak Park, the Township is one the 4 majority-Black communities in Oakland County.

Racial Makeup, 2022



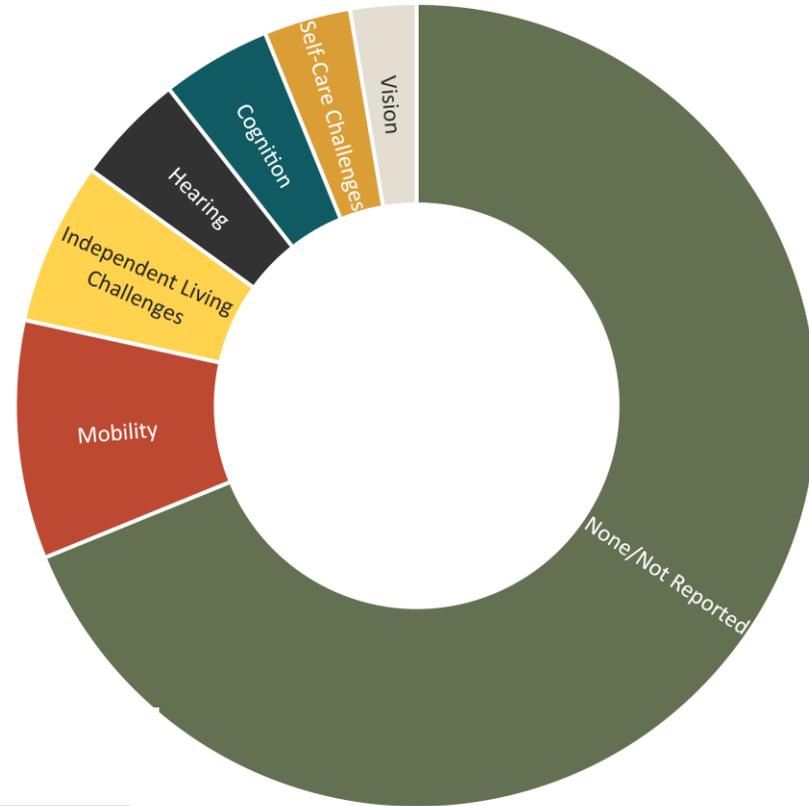
DISABILITY

Approximately 15% of Township residents are living with a reported disability. **Most people with disabilities are over 65 years old** – 44% of the older population has one or more disabilities.

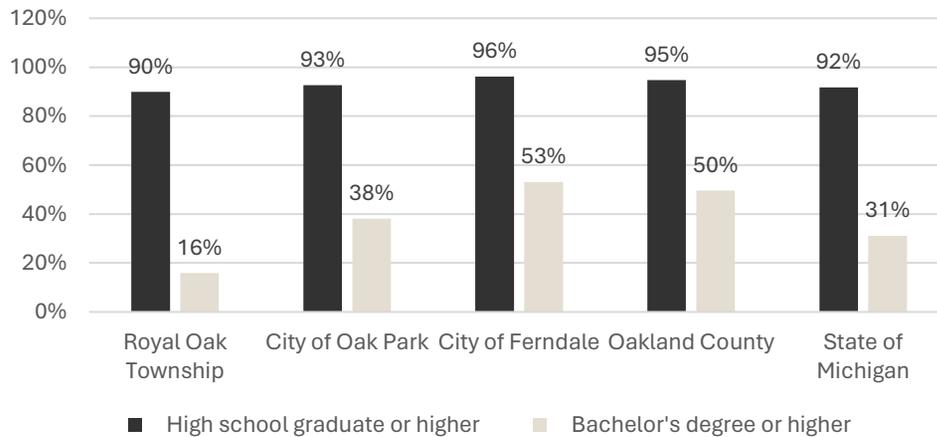
EDUCATION

The Township has lower levels of education attainment than Ferndale, Oak Park, Oakland County, and the State of Michigan. Only 4% of the Township’s population has received a graduate degree (Masters or PhD). However, everyone in the Township has made it past their 9th grade education, while roughly 3% of Michigan residents did not make it into high school.

Prevalence of Disabilities within Township, 2022



Educational Attainment, 2022



PUBLIC HEALTH

Healthy Living

The physical design of the Township affects our health every time someone steps out the front door. Health is the state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease. This means that health is more than being free of disease or not feeling sick - it is also a state of holistic happiness, contentment, and security.

Major factors that determine health are:

- 1) **Family Health History:** Many people have a family health history of some chronic diseases (like cancer, coronary heart disease, and diabetes) and health conditions (like high blood pressure). People who have a close family member with a chronic disease may have a higher risk for developing that disease than those without such a family member.
- 2) **Behaviors/Lifestyles:** We all make choices that affect our health. Some people choose to eat healthy, get regular physical activity and maintain a healthy weight; they don't smoke or put themselves at risk for injury or catching a disease.
- 3) **Environment:** The environment can directly influence our health, such as when we are exposed to pollution or injured due to environmental hazards, and it also influences our behavior and lifestyle. Behaviors and lifestyle choices are in part shaped by the environment where people are born, grow, live, work, worship, and age and the health systems available to them. The term "environment" can include the social, cultural, political, natural, and built environments. These environments can affect physical and mental health. The fabric of a community and the community pool of human resources available to it are often called "social capital." This term refers to the individual and communal time and energy available for such things as community improvement, social networking, civic

engagement, personal recreation, and other activities that create social bonds between individuals and groups. Such activities and bonds can affect mental and physical health.

Health Equity (Social Determinates of Health)

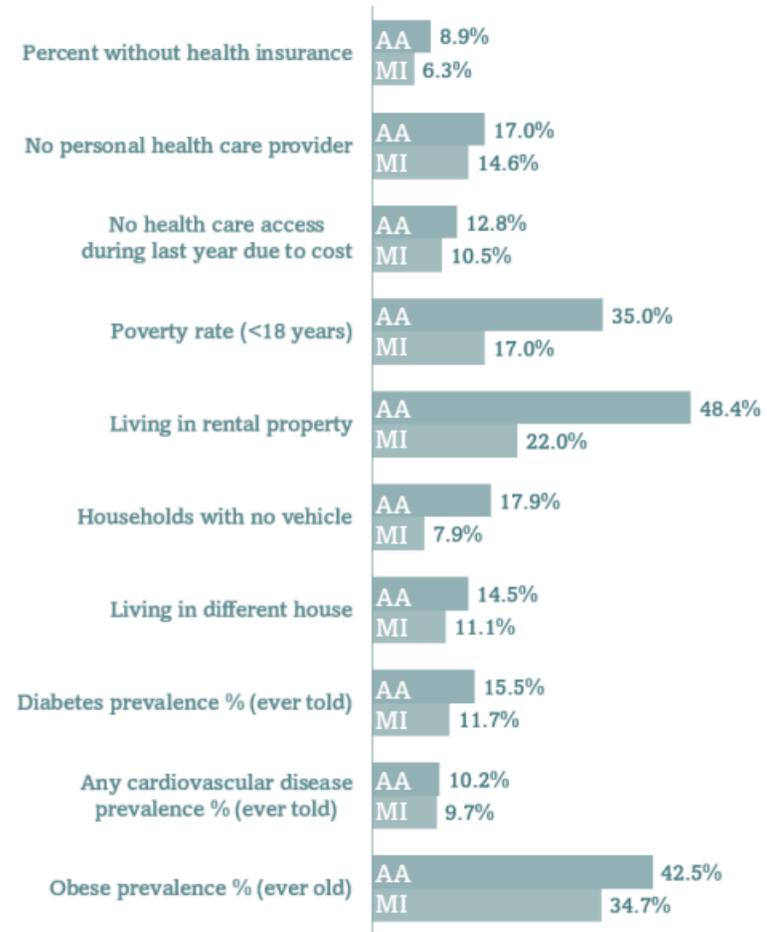
The Michigan Division for Vital Records & Health Statistics (DVRHS) is responsible for collecting and reporting health statistics in the state of Michigan. Because Royal Oak Township has less than 70,000 people, it is aggregated with surrounding communities and data is reported as a part of Oakland County overall. However, it is important to recognize that Black Michiganders have higher rates of disease and mortality than their white counterparts, and that the figures for Oakland County are under-estimates for Royal Oak Township. This is because Black residents have been systematically excluded from the traditional healthcare system and obtaining safe, reliable care is much more difficult due to biases in the medical field.



Additionally, Black Americans have been historically excluded from many of the economic and social resources that support healthy living – the social determinants of health. Social determinants include access to quality housing and education, employment, healthy foods, safe and walkable neighborhoods, good air quality, medical care, etc. A greater emphasis on social determinants is important to eliminating health disparities. “Health equity” refers to the fair, just distribution of social resources and opportunities needed to achieve wellbeing. Put another way, health equity assures all groups, irrespective of race, ethnicity, disability, etc., have equitable access to social and environmental conditions (social determinants) that promote health.³¹

As a historically Black community, Royal Oak Township faces a great challenge when it comes to health equity. State-wide, only 22% of Black residents own their own homes, compared to 48.4% of white residents. Although the homeownership rate in the Township is higher than the state average, many residents still struggle – in the public survey, 65% of respondents reported struggling to afford repairs on their home. Additionally, Royal Oak Township lacks many of the resources that other communities in Oakland County have – good air quality, high-skill job opportunities, higher education – that impact personal health. As such, an approach to remedying the health inequities in the Township will require a multi-pronged approach, which seeks to:

- 1) Inspire and support personal lifestyle change
- 2) Recruit health care providers and partners to serve Township residents
- 3) Change the physical fabric of the Township to improve the social determinants of health



Healthcare Statistics for African American Michiganders vs All Michiganders, 2021

AA: African American
MI: All Michiganders



*The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, a charitable organization focused on public health, recommends the following **four steps to addressing health inequity**:*

- 1. Identify important health disparities. Many disparities in health are rooted in inequities in the opportunities and resources needed to be as healthy as possible. The determinants of health include living and working conditions, education, income, neighborhood characteristics, social inclusion, and medical care. An increase in opportunities to be healthier will benefit everyone but more focus should be placed on groups that have been excluded or marginalized in the past.*
- 2. Change and implement policies, laws, systems, environments, and practices to reduce inequities in the opportunities and resources needed to be as healthy as possible. Eliminate the unfair individual and institutional social conditions that give rise to the inequities.*
- 3. Evaluate and monitor efforts using short- and long-term measures as it may take decades or generations to reduce some health disparities. In order not to underestimate the size of the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged, disadvantaged groups should not be compared to the general population but to advantaged groups.*
- 4. Reassess process strategies and outcomes/plan next steps. Actively engage those most affected by disparities in the identification, design, implementation, and evaluation of promising solutions.*

Healthy community design principles support social equity by promoting:

- Communities where people of all abilities and ages can move about their community for all their needs, and should they choose, remain in their community all their lives.*
- Diverse housing options and price levels so that all persons regardless of income can live in the same community where they work, play and worship.*
- Neighborhoods clustered around one or more well-defined neighborhood centers that support jobs of all types and skills, commercial activity, and a range of amenities.*

Healthcare

Royal Oak Township is fortunate to have the Henry Ford Kingswood Hospital within its border, just off 8 Mile Road. The hospital operates from 8AM to 8PM on weekdays and has general practice, emergency, and psychiatric services. However, the Henry Ford Health System announced the planned closure of Kingswood in 2020 due to the age of the facility and the inability to upgrade the building. Once closed, residents will be 4 miles from the nearest hospital (Ascension Hospital in Southfield) rather than a quarter mile. **The loss of Kingswood may not have a dramatic effect on residents who can drive or be driven to the hospital but will impact those who must walk or take the bus.** Access to the Ascension will require a minimum 30-minute bus ride or 1-hour walk. For residents who are seeking healthcare that does not require insurance or provides low-income financial assistance, they may have to travel up to 1.5 hours away.

Additionally, emergency room (ER) visits at hospitals often cost thousands of dollars, while urgent care is much more affordable. With the loss of Kingswood, residents will have neither an ER nor urgent care within 1 mile of the Township. As a part of the Plan engagement, residents were asked what types of new services they would like to have from private providers. Over 51% of respondents said that they would like to have urgent care in the Township, making it the most-request privately provided service.



Mortality and Disease

COVID-19: The year 2020 had many unique and unprecedented challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic posed threats to Michigan's entire population, particularly to marginalized and Black communities. Since the beginning of the pandemic, racial and ethnic minority populations have experienced a disproportionate impact, both in terms of morbidity and mortality as well as economic harm. Black Americans had the highest mortality rate for COVID-19 at 221 deaths per 100,000, compared to white Michiganders, which had the second highest rate of 112 deaths per 100,000.³² As a majority Black community, these impacts have hit particularly close to home for Township residents.



INFANT MORTALITY: All Michigan mothers, infants and families have the right to optimal health. Disparities that show up in every facet of maternal and infant health are rooted in long standing systemic inequities, often based on race. In 2017, 2.8 Black babies died for every white baby that died. That same year, there were 6.8 infant deaths for every 1,000 live births, well above the national rate of 5.8. Institutions, policymakers, government, communities, and extended families and friends play an integral role in improving these health outcomes and eliminating these disparities.³³ In Oakland County, the infant mortality rate for white infants had declined over the last decade, dropping from 5.6% to 2.9%. At the same time, the Black infant mortality rate has climbed from 11.1% to 11.6%. **In Oakland County, Royal Oak Township has a higher infant mortality rate than all its neighboring cities, except Detroit.**



CARDIOVASCULAR: In Michigan, **the rate of hypertension in Black residents is almost double the state average.** Many of the other diseases associated with cardiac problems are also higher for Black Michiganders, including obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. In Oakland County, heart disease is the leading cause of death, followed closely by cancer.³⁴ Additionally, the rates of diabetes-related death in Oakland County have been rising steeply over time, jumping from 47.7 deaths per 100,000 people in 1980 to 84.8 deaths in 2022.³⁵



ANIMAL-RELATED DISEASE (ZONOTIC): As an urban community, Royal Oak Township does not have to confront many of the animal-related diseases that are found in the rural parts of Michigan. However, this does not mean that zoonotic diseases are absent in the Township. In 2022, the state identified numerous cases of West Nile Virus and rabies in southern Oakland County. Additionally, Oakland County was the only county in the state where rabies was found in a cat (as opposed to a bat, dog, or raccoon). However, it is important to note that only 5 rabies cases were found in Oakland County in 2022,³⁶ and rabies is almost never found in possums, chipmunks, rats, squirrels, and other small mammals. As such, the most important and cost-effective measures communities can take against rabies is education on identifying, reporting, and getting treatment for rabies. For West Nile Virus, the most effective strategy is to eliminate areas of standing water in parks, streets, and yards where mosquitos lay their eggs. Ponding most frequently occurs in the commercial and industrial parking lots throughout the Township.



MENTAL HEALTH: Physical and mental health are directly intertwined, and a lack of mental health support can severely impact people's quality-of-life. Although Black Michiganders have lower reported rates of depression than their white counterparts, it remains a reality that over 20% of all residents suffer from depression.³⁷ In particular, **Michigan seniors are at high risk of depression due to social isolation.**³⁸ Local communities can help improve mental health by fostering social connection, creating opportunities for play and joy, and improving the economic prospects for their residents. Communities can also help connect residents to health services that already exist.



SUBSTANCE ABUSE: Substance abuse (aka drug addiction) is now considered a disease by the national Centers for Disease control. There is not one single driving factor that leads to addiction. Some people may use drugs to help cope with stress, trauma, or to help with mental health issues. Some may even develop opioid use disorder after misusing opioids prescribed by doctors. Combating the cycle of drug sales and use is important to community stability and overall public health. In Oakland County, the agency in charge of combating substance abuse is the County CMH Authority, which is assisted by other non-profits such as the Oakland County health Network. **In 2019, alcohol was the most widely reported primary substance used, representing 41% of admissions for substance use treatment in Oakland County.** From 2013 to 2018 the rate of opioid overdose deaths in Oakland County has risen from 2.27 overdoses to 5.48 overdoses per 100,000 people. In 2019, the county surveyed the general population and found that 84% of opioid users were white. However, the County acknowledged that they were not successful in reaching Black residents and set a goal to improve targeted outreach efforts to promote positive treatment outcomes and reduce the stigma associated with misuse.³⁹

The Township and its residents are also acutely aware that certain properties have chronic issues with substance abuse. Rental and lodging properties, vacant homes, and commercial properties that are not property-supervised or secured invite substance abuse. Although the Township is not a public health agency, it can help combat substance abuse by ensuring these properties are properly managed and secured through code enforcement, as well as working to find new, productive uses for these sites.

Food Security & Quality

In Royal Oak Township, *food security* can be defined as all community members having constant access to nutritional and culturally appropriate foods that are produced using methods that are environmentally just.⁴⁰

Food security depends on a number of factors, including those below:

- **Income and Employment:** Low-income households or individuals with low-wage jobs may not be able to regularly afford food. Healthy foods may be financially out-of-reach because healthier foods are more expensive than less healthy foods.
- **Race and Discrimination:** Throughout centuries of slavery, segregation, and discrimination, Black Americans continuously fought for the right to access healthy food and define their own food systems. Today, there are systemic barriers in many aspects of society (e.g., employment, housing, etc.) that place them at greater risk of food insecurity.
- **(Dis)Ability and Health:** Individuals with disabilities or chronic health conditions may lack the ability to leave their house to access food. It can also be harder for them to work to earn money to purchase food.
- **Access to Housing:** Low-income households and those facing homelessness might have to choose between covering housing costs and bills over food.

Many factors that contribute to food security are intertwined with race and ethnicity in America. Historically Black Americans have been discriminated through policies that restrict employment and educational opportunities based on color. This has contributed to generational poverty, therefore increasing the risk of chronic insecurity. According to Feeding America, nearly 1 in 5 Black Americans experienced food insecurity in 2022, and black children are more likely to experience food insecurity than children of other races.⁴¹ Using data from Feeding America, the food insecurity rate for Royal Oak Township is best estimated by reviewing data provided by Forgotten Harvest, a non-profit food

rescue organization with a location in Oak Park. Forgotten Harvest estimates that the communities it serves have a **food insecurity rate of about 11%**. Data from Feeding America estimates the food security rate to be about 9% across Oakland County, compared to Wayne County which is about 14%. Since Royal Oak Township's median household income is lower than the county median and statewide median household incomes, this could indicate that **Township residents have greater instances of food insecurity than its adjacent wealthier municipalities.**

Why is achieving food security important?

- *It can improve overall health and well-being by lowering the risk of obesity and other chronic health conditions*
- *It can increase preparedness for emergencies and natural disasters*
- *It can increase productivity for workers and schoolchildren who are adequately fed with the right nutrients to function*
- *It can lead to feeling of relief and empowerment for families and communities who can afford the food they enjoy eating*



THE CURRENT FOODSCAPE: Visualizing the current foodscape is helpful for identifying sources of foods, barriers to access current food sources, and key assets in ROT that aim to promote food security. This review’s scope is primarily within Royal Oak Township, but that doesn’t mean that ROT community members are using those assets. Members might opt to shop in other areas if they have the transportation available to seek foods that are appropriate for their nutritional, cultural, and spiritual needs.



Supermarket chains offer a wide selection of products beyond groceries, including clothing, electronics, and household items. Most supermarkets have a private brand that they sell many goods under (e.g., Great Value, Kirkland). They are convenient for shoppers who want to complete all of their shopping at once. Two supermarket chains— Kroger and Aldi—are located on Eight Mile Road between Wyoming Avenue and Mitchelldale Avenue. Kroger is a part of the shopping center Royal Town Center.



Grocery stores are smaller than supermarkets and usually only offer groceries and a small selection of household items, such as hygienic and cleaning products. The benefit of smaller grocery stores is that they offer a more personalized shopping experience and can be more community-oriented than supermarkets. Squalls Grocery is in the heart of Royal Oak Township’s single-family residential area. Nash Market is a small grocery store located west of Kroger.



Discount and convenience stores are small local places that are for smaller, quick shopping trips. Most convenience stores have groceries, everyday household items, and ready-to-eat meals. Dollar Tree typically offers canned and packaged goods, snacks, and drinks. It is located in the retail development Royal Town Center, which is between Kroger and Aldi.



Farmers markets [Data Source] are a way to purchase local produce directly from the source—the producer. Farmers' markets vary in size, but they generally sell products including fruits and vegetables, dairy products, meats, and value-added products (e.g., jams, pastries, etc.). Farmers markets create access to healthy foods and community members get to know who is providing their food. There are no farmers markets located in Royal Oak Township. The three nearest farmers' markets to Royal Oak Township are all in adjacent cities. The Oak Park Farmers Market, located in the City of Oak Park, is over 2.5 miles away. Hazel Park Growers and Makers Market, located in the City of Hazel Park, is about 4 miles away. Royal Oak Farmers Market, located in the City of Royal Oak, is about 4 miles away.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS: Grant Park is the home of the designated community garden in Royal Oak Township. Prior to the pandemic, these gardens were run with the help of the Senior. However, the gardens fell into disrepair and many of the planter boxes had to be removed. The park is still available for gardening, but community uptake is low. The other community food resource available to Township residents is the Friends of Royal Oak Charter Township’s (FOROT) Sankofa Community Garden, which is used in conjunction with their Food Champions and Health and Nutrition series. It grew out of the urban farming and agriculture movement, which has its roots in Detroit. FOROT offers an 8-week “teaching and learning” program which exposes youth aged 6–15 to all aspects of organic gardening and urban agriculture while providing education and an opportunity for physical activity. The program offers instruction for youth as they make garden plots available to community residents for planting crops or flowers.⁴²

COUNTY RESOURCES: There are resources available at the County level to improve food access, including fresh produce prescriptions (*Prescription for A Health Oakland*), coupon vouchers to eligible older adults to purchase Michigan grown produce from farmers markets and farm stands (*Senior Market FRESH*), education on healthy eating (*SNAP Education programs*).⁴³

Pollution

AIR POLLUTION: Because of its high concentration of highways, factories, landfills, and businesses, southeast Michigan has higher levels of air pollution than the rest of the State. From 1980 to 2022, the rates of death due to respiratory illness in Oakland County rose from 19.4 to 37.3 deaths per 100,000 people.⁴⁴ However, in the past few years, the air quality has been improving in southeast Michigan. In 2018, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designated southeast Michigan as one of several “ozone nonattainment areas.” This designation meant that the air has unsafe levels of ozone, which is a highly reactive and unstable gas capable of damaging human lungs. Long-term, ozone can damage lungs, cause inflammation, and contribute to asthma, just like many other airborne pollutants. To address this, the state created several working groups that developed new laws and rules regarding emissions. By May of 2023, the EPA was able to redesignate southeast Michigan as “in attainment,” meaning it brought its ozone down to safe levels. **Although the area still struggles with other types of pollution, the progress made on ozone levels suggests further opportunity to reduce airborne pollution.**

NOISE: Constant exposure to noise has a negative effect on the human body by disturbing sleep, raising stress levels, suppressing mental performance, and generally disrupting heart and physical health. **Royal Oak Township**

experiences the effect of noise pollution acutely, due to the Township’s location on 8 Mile Road. Across the country, noise pollution disproportionately affects Black and other minority communities due to the history of intentional discrimination and marginalization of these areas.⁴⁵ The location of industrial plants and construction of highways through communities of color has created a legacy of noise pollution that persists today. Although MDOT has never conducted a noise study for 8 Mile, Township residents are keenly aware of the negative effect that noise pollution has on public health and the desirability of walking and shopping along 8 Mile.

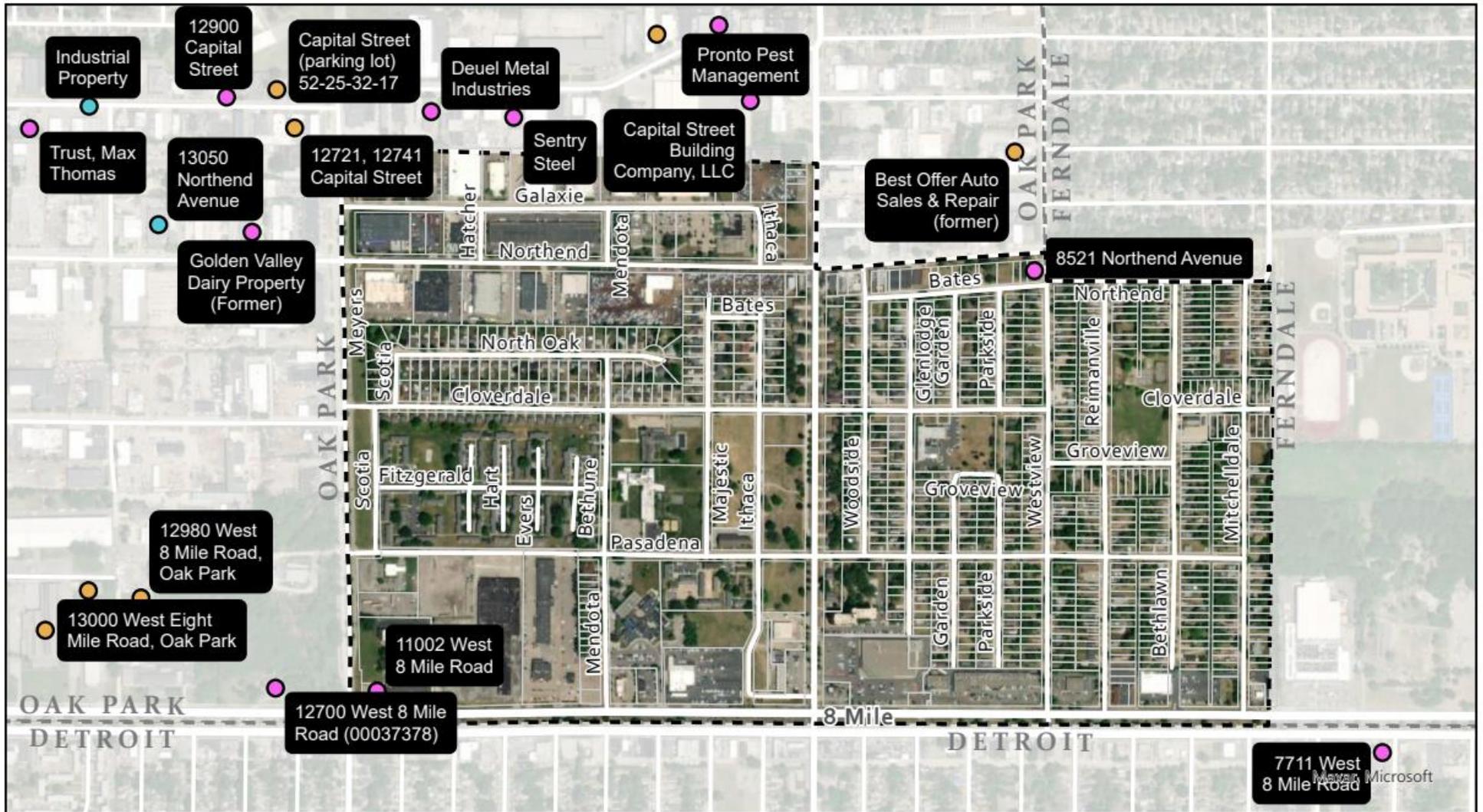
RADON: Radon is a radioactive gas you cannot see, smell, or taste. Radon is formed by the natural decay of uranium in rock, soil, and water. It can move through soil and into outdoor air, or it can seep into homes and buildings through cracks in floors and walls, or gaps around service pipes. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer, and it is estimated that ¼ of all Michigan homes have radon level that exceed safe limits (4 picocuries per liter, pCi/L). Homeowners can install a radon fan to push the gas to the outside, but many do not know their radon levels in the first place. Radon is a particular concern for people living in homes with basements, which is a common housing arrangement in Royal Oak Township. In the Township and neighboring Ferndale, the average radon level in homes was 0.939 picocuries per liter, pCi/L.⁴⁶ As of 2023, **only about 2 in 100 homes in the area had radon levels over the safe threshold, making it a relatively minor concern.**

CONTAMINATED PROPERTIES: The State of Michigan tracks contaminated properties through the Part 201 and Part 231 Programs. These programs track sites where leaky underground tanks, dumping, or other sources of contamination have released chemicals that could harm public health. The State then works with property owners to clean up these sites, either by actively removing the contamination or allowing the land to sit vacant long enough for the contamination to dissipate. As shown in the Contamination Sites Map, **there are 2 contaminated sites of concern in the Township – 11002 W 8 Mile Road (the old Percy’s Super Station) and 8521 Northend Ave (the old Royal Roofing Company). Both sites are listed as contaminated because they have leaking underground storage tanks.**

Numerous other locations in the Township have had a history of contamination issues which have since been resolved or the state is actively working to resolve. For these sites, it’s critical that any interested developers perform their due diligence before purchasing or developing the property. These sites are all clustered along 8 Mile Road, and include:

- New Way Dodge dealership – 10500 W 8 Mile Rd
- Former Mel Far dealership (previously NAEL Petroleum Inc.) - 11002 W 8 Mile Rd
- Legend Motors dealership (previously AY Collision) - 10200 W 8 Mile Rd
- Dollar General – 20735 Wyoming Ave
- Autozone – 8888 W 8 Mile Rd

Most of the actively contaminated sites are located just outside the Township’s northwest boundary in Oak Park. This is because the Township abuts the industrial district in Oak Park. Of the 17 sites in Oak Park, 2 have their risks under control, 7 have risks that require long-term action, and 8 have risks that require immediate action. No sites have risks that pose a present and immediate danger to public health or the environment. The closest property to people living on the west side of the Township is the former Golden Valley Dairy Factory at 12800 Northend Ave in Oak Park. On this site, chlorine and petroleum contaminants were found.



Contamination Sites Near or In Township

Royal Oak Township

March 5, 2024

LEGEND

- Risks Controlled-Interim
- Risks Present and Require Action in Long-term
- Risks Present and Require Action in Short-term



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.
 Data Source: County or Local Community Source. McKenna 2023.
 State of Michigan, 2023.
 SEMCOG Open Data Portal, 2023.



Trends and Changes

STATE INVESTMENT IN HEALTH EQUITY

The Michigan Office of Equity Minority Health was first established in 1988, and its goal is to provide a persistent and continuing focus on assuring health equity and eliminating health disparities among Michigan's populations of color. Over time, the Office has expanded its program offerings to include a wider variety of learning and funding options. Most recently, the Office launched a Health Equity Online Training program which addresses environmental and social determinates of health, systemic racism, and building healthy communities. MDHHS employees are now asked to complete these courses. The Office has also created anti-racism digital resource library, designed to facilitate anti-racist work and thereby advance health equity. Lastly, the Office has launched a Minority Health Agency capacity-building training series, which helps minority non-profits and community health centers increase their capacity and reach within their communities.⁴⁷

NEW STATE BROWNFIELD FUNDING RULES

Contaminated sites, aka brownfields, are regulated by the State of Michigan department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). Funding for the cleanup of these sites is also provided through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). Cleanup is either funded through 1) direct grants or 2) brownfield redevelopment authorities. Brownfield authorities are government agencies whose sole purpose is to collect taxes to support cleanup of these sites. In 2023, the State changed its brownfield funding rules to allow tax revenues captured through local brownfield redevelopment authorities to fund residential construction projects with the approval of the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, making it easier and more affordable to build affordable housing in Michigan. The State also established the Transformational Brownfield Fund to help convert underutilized, vacant, or abandoned property in communities across Michigan into productive space ready for business investment and community revitalization projects.⁴⁸

COGNABILITY

One under-addressed domain of public health is “cognability,” which is a term for the ways your neighborhood supports cognitive health through places to exercise, connect with other people, and keep your mind active. Cognability is not just an issue that affects seniors, but an issue that affects everyone. However, it is especially important for seniors who have lost the regular social interactions they used to experience through work and friends. The study of cognability assesses how the physical design of neighborhoods and the amenities in the community impact cognitive health. For example, wide shady sidewalks make it safer and more pleasant to walk. Grocery stores with a variety of affordable fresh fruits and vegetables make it easier to eat healthily. Welcoming community spaces and public events provide us with opportunities to connect with other people.

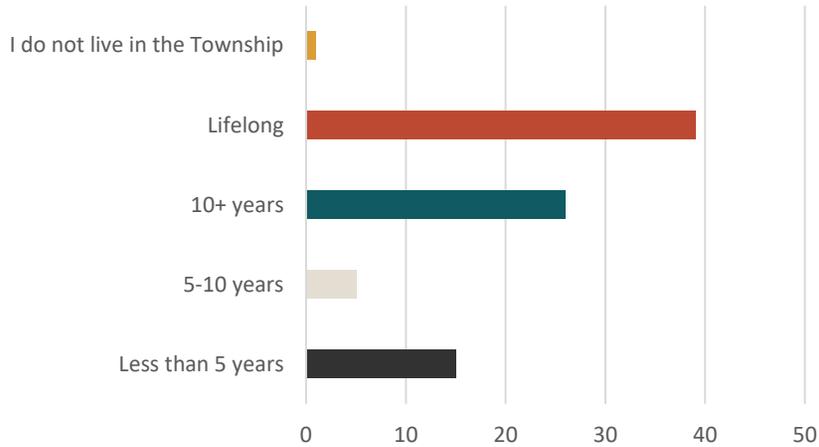
In 2023, the University of Michigan conducted a regional cognability assessment of every community. The study looked at places to exercise, places to connect with others, and places to keep the mind busy, as well as threats to public health like highways and pollution. The study found that places like downtown Ferndale and Royal Oak had very high cognability due to their high number of civic organizations, art sites and museums, rec centers, and grocery stores. Meanwhile, Royal Oak Township had average cognability; although religious institutions and grocery stores were higher than average, the score was brought down by the low number of art and education offerings and rec/senior centers.⁴⁹

IN-SCHOOL HEALTH CLINICS

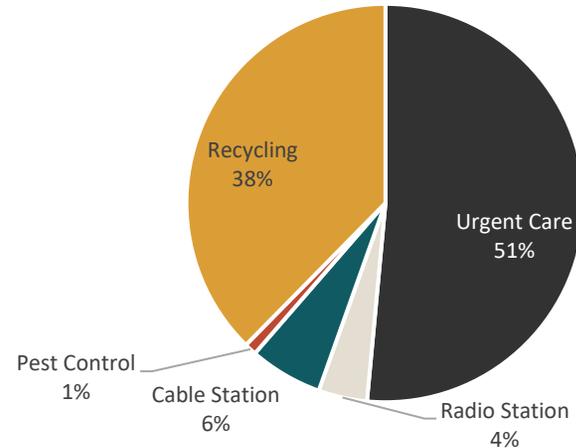
In many small communities where urgent cares and hospitals are absent, in-school health clinics are a popular alternative. The School-Community Health Alliance of Michigan tracks these clinics, and today there are 2020 operating across the state. Some clinics are only available to students, while others are open to the public. For example, the Ferndale High School clinic is open to students only, while the River Rouge clinic is open to all. Although the hours are limited to the school day, these clinics are still helpful in spaces where healthcare is lacking.⁵⁰

Public Feedback

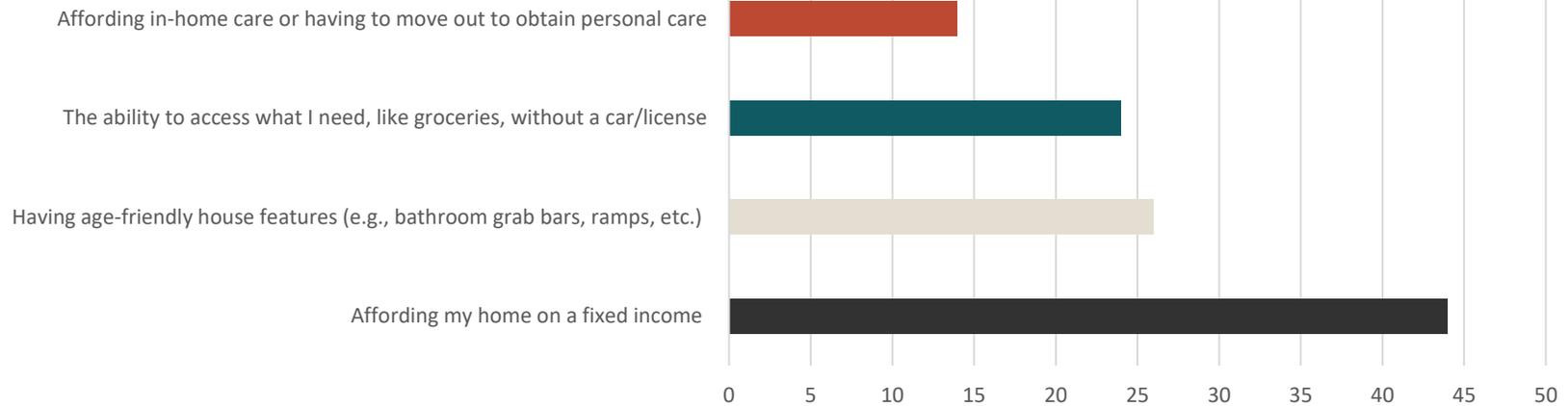
How long have you lived in the Township?



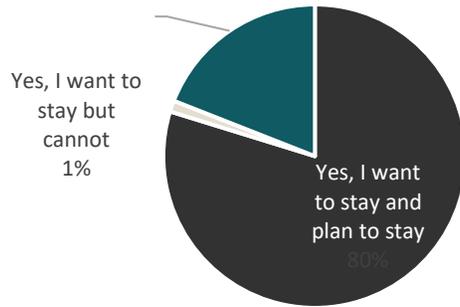
What other things from external providers would you like to see in Royal Oak Township?



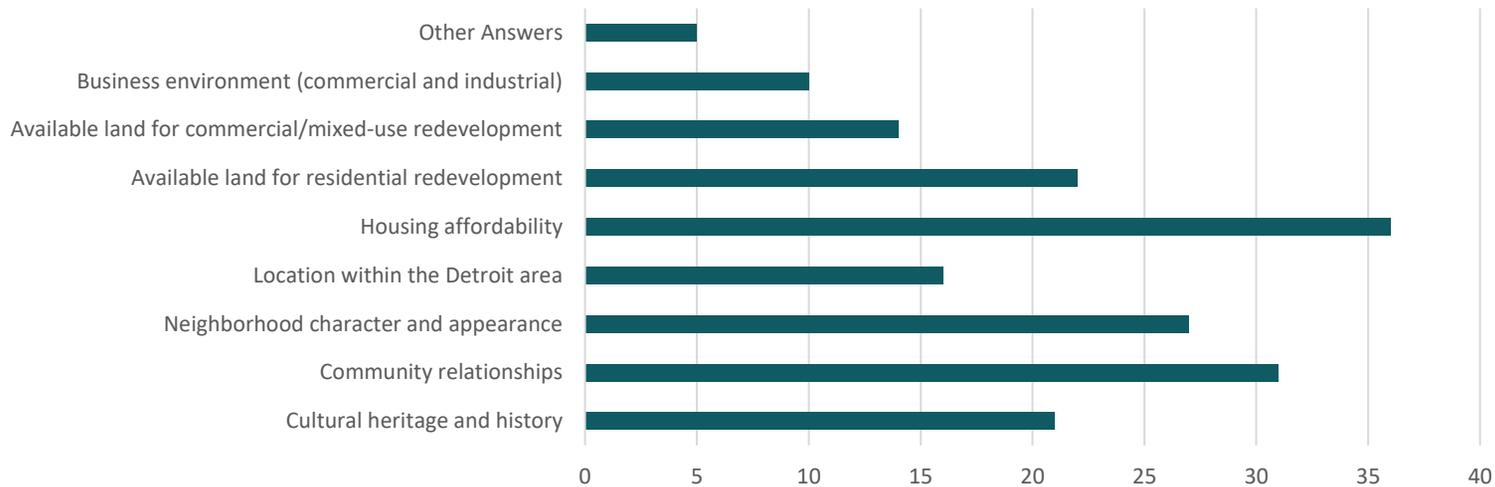
Seniors - do you worry about any of the following items when thinking about staying in your home as you age? Choose all that apply.



Do you want to live in the Township for the next 10-20 years?



What do you feel the Township's greatest asset is as we look to the future?
Choose 2 to 3 options.



Key Takeaways

CREATING A HEALTHY BUILT ENVIRONMENT

When it comes to the environmental impacts of health, the biggest issue in Royal Oak Township is the lack of physical options for active living, which contributes to cardiovascular and mental health issues. Excessive noise and lack of healthy food access also compound these health issues. Without the Recreation Center, residents must rely on the parks, sidewalk network, and adjacent cities' resources to get and stay active. Although it is largely complete, the Township's sidewalk network is not designed to encourage running, biking, and traveling with a wheelchair, making it hard to lead an active lifestyle. Additionally, there are insufficient facilities for play and recreation in the parks for older adults, and very few places for people to gather and socialize in comfort. To promote public health, the township must re-think its transportation network to provide walking paths, bike routes, and connections to activity centers outside the Township's borders. Equally important is minimizing the impact of 8 Mile Road on physical and mental health, by transforming it into a comfortable corridor rather than an antagonistic one. Lastly, the Township must take advantage of parkland as resources for mental and physical health and incorporate facilities that welcome, engage, and move residents of all ages.

AGING IN PLACE

NOTE: For more discussion on aging in place housing, please see the Housing chapter below.

Compared to other communities, Royal Oak Township has a high proportion of residents over 65. This is partially because of the Ferndale Park Co-Op, but it is also because people have long family legacies in the community and want to stay in the Township as they age. "Aging in place" is about being able to live and thrive in the community throughout all stages of life. From childhood to old age, it's the ability to stay in the communities with friends, family, and neighbors.

Today, there are numerous aspects of life in the township that support aging in place, including a tight community and access to grocery stores. Compared to other communities, Royal Oak Township has a high level of connection between seniors, in part due to its small size and extensive family-based history. However,

there are also many aspects of the township that work against aging in place, including the housing stock and the built environment. Seniors in the Township do not have many affordable or local options for assisted or independent living, so many choose to stay in their homes rather than move out of the Township. This means that older adults are living in homes that are not built to be age-friendly (without features like ramps, grab bars, and no-step entries). The lack of age-supportive home features was ranked as the number two concern for seniors who responded to the public survey; number one was affording their home on a fixed income.

Meanwhile, young families struggle to get a foothold in the Township because the housing turnover is so low. This can have a compounding negative effect - less kids in school, less working-age people to support the economy, and less support for seniors. The lack of alternative housing options such as senior living apartments/condos, multigenerational housing, or ADUs makes it hard for all generations to age in place. Public survey respondents ranked housing affordability as the Township's number one asset in the future, but this must be paired with increased availability to support young residents.

In addition to housing, the Township's physical design does not adequately support people of all ages and those with disabilities. As noted above, the built environment is not designed to support health or connection. Although the Township is generally walkable and people live close to one another, seniors and people with disabilities still lack options for healthy living. During the public engagement for this Plan, residents routinely reported a lack of safe sidewalk connections to local parks for those using wheelchairs or mobility devices. Having access to exercise options, social engagement, and green spaces are all important for happy aging in place and improving cognability for all ages.

To make the Township an age-friendly community, the Township must address the ways that housing, transportation, and amenities are currently under-serving old adults. The Township must also make room for a greater diversity of housing types, to ensure that people can stay in the Township through all their stages of life and that new residents have a place to land.

LEVERAGING PARTNERS AND EXISTING INFORMATION

There are many public health issues beyond the built environment, such as radon or zoonotic disease, which are already being tackled by external agencies and non-profits. Additionally, many organizations already offer on-site health clinics, checkups, and other services. Because of its small staff the Township must take advantage of these existing resources and create partnerships with

organizations to help fill public health gaps. For example, the City of Southfield partners with Providence Hospital (PH), American Cancer Society (ACS), American Heart Association (AHA), Lawrence Technological University (LTU), to support health initiatives. Additionally, St. John Providence Community Health offers a variety of programs designed to improve healthy living, such as the Infant Mortality Project. Additionally, there are numerous aging and senior support services available to Township residents through agencies like the Detroit Area Agency on Aging. To support health, the Township must advertise these services to residents through existing or new communications channels.

Shared Goals

- 1. IMPROVE TOWNSHIP-WIDE AWARENESS OF HEALTHY LIVING OPPORTUNITIES**
- 2. SUPPORT A HEALTHY, ACTIVE LIFESTYLE FOR ALL TOWNSHIP RESIDENTS, REGARDLESS OF AGE OR LEVEL OF ABILITY**
- 3. IMPROVE THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT TO FACILITATE HEALTHY AGING IN PLACE**
- 4. PURSUE A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO COMMUNITY HEALTH**

4. Housing

Housing is a basic human need and the foundation for security, health, and comfort. This chapter provides background information on housing in Royal Oak Township and serves as a basis for the future land use plan strategies regarding housing and public improvements to support the needs of residents.

Current Conditions

HOUSING STOCK

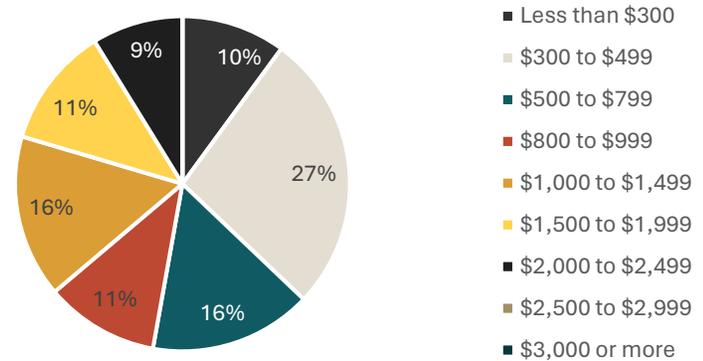
“What is a housing unit and what is a household?”

- A housing unit is one building - or one part of a building - that is used as personal living space. One single-family house, one apartment, or one side of a duplex are all considered one housing unit.
- A household is the group of people who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence. Households come in a variety of sizes and shapes, such as married couple families, female-headed households, or a single person living alone.

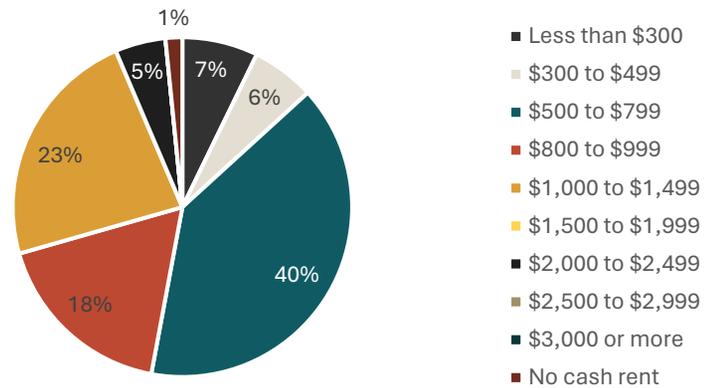
Affordability

NATURALLY OCCURRING AFFORDABLE HOUSING: Naturally occurring affordable housing refers to unsubsidized, privately-owned housing units that are affordable to households earning 60% or less of the Area Median Income (AMI). The definition includes both single-family and multiple-family housing units. **Most of the housing units in Royal Oak Township can be classified as naturally occurring affordable housing, given that 60% of the AMI is \$57,000. With a typical house price of about \$150,000 in Royal Oak Township, this means that a person earning 60% AMI could pay off the mortgage for a single-family home in less than 10 years without spending more than 1/3 of their income on housing.** During the public engagement for this Plan, residents ranked housing affordability as the Township’s number one asset when looking to the future.

Housing Costs for Owners, 2022
Royal Oak Township



Housing Costs for Renters, 2022
Royal Oak Township



AFFORDABLE VS SUBSIDIZED HOUSING: Affordable housing, also known as workforce housing, refers to housing that is generally affordable to someone working a lower- or middle-class job. To be considered affordable, the costs of housing (rent, mortgage, and all other costs) must be less than 1/3 of a person or family’s monthly income. **Subsidized housing, also known as public housing, refers to housing subsidized by the federal government.** Subsidized housing may be single-family homes or apartments, and they are managed by local housing agencies. Subsidized housing has strict price limitations and is only open to people who qualify as low-income in federal terms.

In Royal Oak Township, the Housing Commission manages the subsidized housing units throughout the Township. These units include both single-family homes, duplexes, and apartments, which are mostly located along Wyoming and Pasadena Avenues. The subsidized units in the Township have a distinct appearance with a brick base and a triangular wood-framed roof. Some are single-story units, while others are two-story. The Housing Commission is an independent agency, separate from Royal Oak Township. Currently, the Commission’s main priorities are maintaining and beautifying the existing units in the Township. This includes exterior upgrades to lighting and mailboxes, mold abatement, new CO2 detectors, and general repairs.

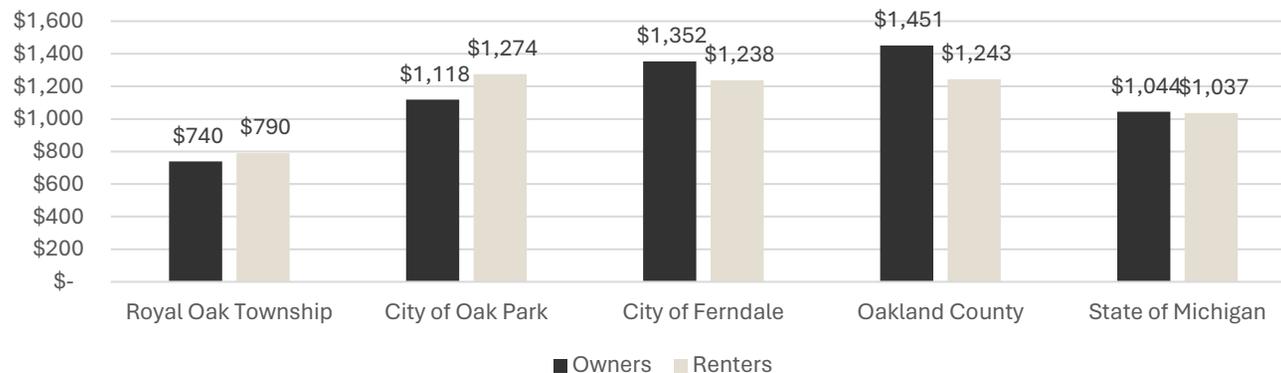
DEVELOPER-INITIATED AFFORDABLE HOUSING: Another approach to affordable housing development is when private developers choose to set price limits on their own developments to make them more affordable. This choice is most common for non-profit developers, whose main objective is to increase the high-quality housing stock in the region. For example, the CSI Co-Op (owners of

Ferndale Park Co-Op) operates as a non-profit and sets price limits on their units to make them affordable for low-income seniors.

Some single-family housing developers also use public-private partnerships to help make homeownership more attainable. In this arrangement, the developer obtains grant funding for new housing construction through the county, state or federal government. Then, the developer partners with a local government where the housing is going to be built to further offset the costs to residents through a Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program. In most PILOT programs, the developer agrees to provide a payment to the local government to cover the cost of services provided by the local government in exchange for not having to pay property taxes. This way, the local government still receives income, but the cost of taxes is not borne by the residents of the new units. The developer is then able to sell or rent-to-own the homes at a lower price, making them affordable for working home seekers. Once the PILOT period expires (usually between 10 and 20 years), the properties return to the tax rolls as normal. In Royal Oak Township, both the Venture Homes and the soon-to be-constructed Southwest Solutions homes were financed under this type of partnership.

This public-private partnership strategy is especially effective in areas where the cost of building a new home is more than the appraised value, a condition which makes it hard for prospective home buyers to obtain a home loan. New homes built through a partnership not only improve the visual community fabric, but also help raise taxable value of neighboring properties and bring new income-earning residents into the area.⁵¹

Median Housing Cost for Renters vs Owners, 2022



Quality

During the public survey and workshop for this Plan, residents were asked which housing element was most urgent to improve: affordability, quality, or availability. **A majority of respondents choose quality, reflecting a dissatisfaction with the Township's current housing stock.** Most of the single-family housing in the Township was built in the post-war period between 1930 and 1950, while most of the multi-family housing was built in the 1960s and 1970s. As such, many units do not have modern amenities like air conditioning or accessibility features like barrier-free entryways. Additionally, homeowners reported across the survey and workshop that they struggled to afford repairs and find qualified contractors, leading to a decline in home quality.

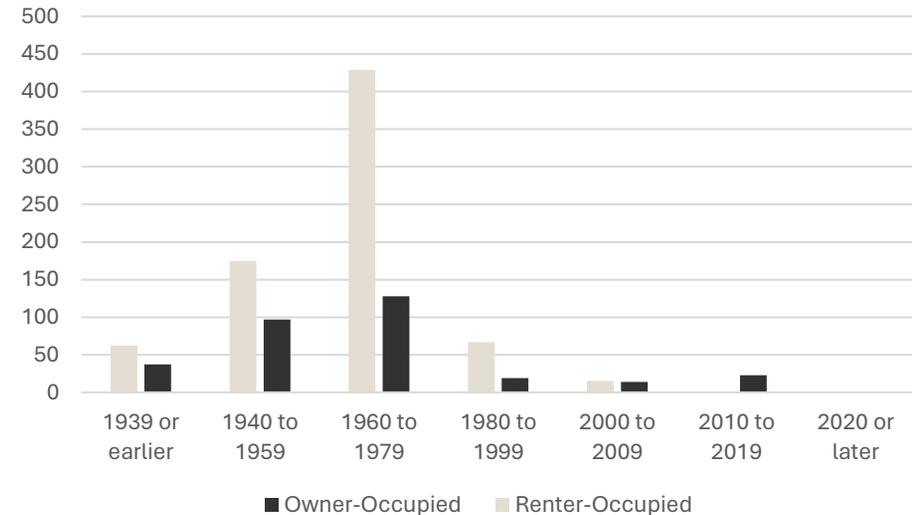
Residential design is currently regulated by the Residential Design Standards within the Township's Zoning Ordinance. These standards regulate exterior finish materials, roof pitches and style, window and door placement, and overall layout. Adopted in 1992, these regulations have been applied to new single-family homes constructed in the Township. The standards are intended to improve neighborhood-wide quality by limiting the repetition of design elements and encouraging a greater variety and interest in the design of individual buildings, as well as less repetition from structure-to-structure to avoid design monotony within neighborhoods.

Availability

As of 2020, Royal Oak Township has 1,106 housing units across all types – apartments single-family homes, duplexes, etc. Of these units, around 657 are stand-alone houses and another 141 are attached duplexes. In 2023, according to the real estate website Zillow, only 30 stand-alone houses and duplexes were sold in the Township, reflecting a turnover rate of approximately 3%. Additionally, the Housing Commission, Oakdale Co-Op, and Ferndale Park Co-Op have all reported high wait times for their apartment units.

This means that very little housing is available for people who either 1) currently live in the Township and want to change housing types, and 2) people that want to move to the Township. During the public engagement for this plan, respondents under 25 reported having an especially hard time finding housing that was both affordable and met their needs due to low availability. As such, redeveloping vacant residential lots scattered throughout the township and the large mixed-use sites off 8 Mile Road are of great importance.

Year Built of Occupied Housing Units
Royal Oak Township

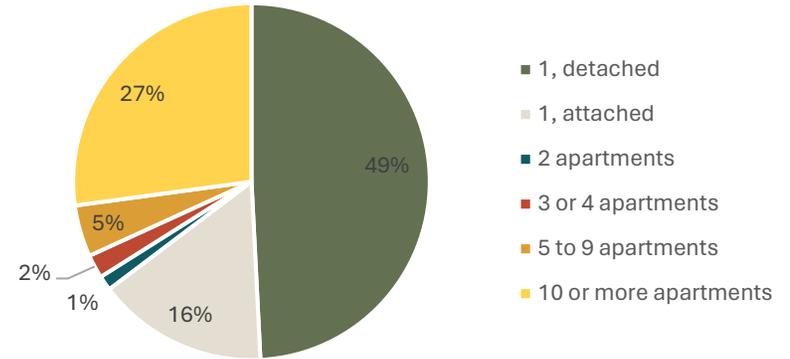


Ownership and Type

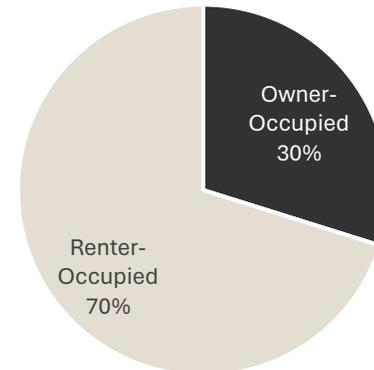
In Royal Oak Township, **a majority of residents are renters as opposed to homeowners.** This is largely due to the presence of several multi-family developments in the Township: the Ferndale Park Co-Op, Oakdale Co-Op, and Housing Commission (on Pasadena). Together, these developments take up very little land area but contribute to a high number of renters. However, the dominant type of rental unit is still single-family homes. Rental units alone do not create problems for the township – on the contrary, they provide a valuable steppingstone for young people on the path homeownership, seniors looking to downsize, or people who simply prefer to rent. However, unregistered rentals do create issues because they require increased code enforcement to bring them into compliance.



Renter-Occupied Housing Type Breakdown

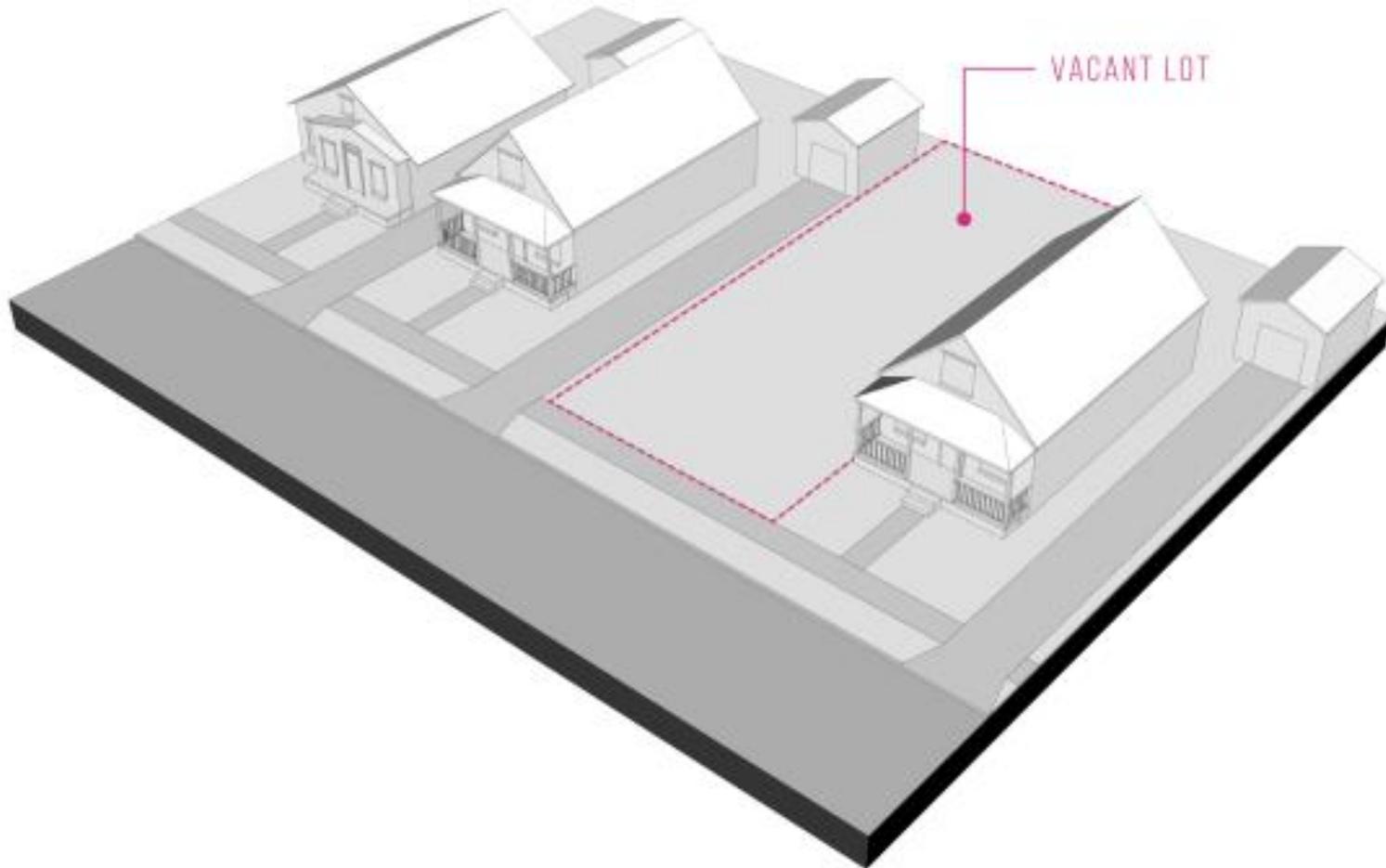


Occupied Housing Units, 2022 Royal Oak Township



RESIDENTIAL INFILL

Single vacant lots are scattered throughout the neighborhood blocks, specifically in the eastern portions of the Township. Most of these sites are owned by the Township, but a handful are either privately-owned or held by the Oakland County Land Bank. These lots are ideal for small-scale interventions, as well as future single-family homes and ADUs. Some may be temporarily configured into gardens or permanent neighborhood greenways that link pedestrians through blocks to community destinations with meandering paths and gardens. Ultimately, the goal is to “infill” as many of these lots as possible through development, thereby returning them to the tax rolls and increasing the number of available housing units.





Vacant Township-Owned Residential Lots 2024

Royal Oak Township

March 5, 2024

LEGEND

- Township-Owned Vacant Residential Parcels
- Under Purchase Option
- Royal Oak Township Boundary



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.
 Data Source: County or Local Community Source. McKenna 2023.
 State of Michigan, 2023.
 SEMCOG Open Data Portal, 2023.



ADULT FOSTER CARE

Adult Foster Cares (AFCs) are homes for adults who are aged 60 or older, mentally ill, developmentally disabled, or physically disabled who require supervision on an ongoing basis but who do not require continuous nursing care. "Foster care" means the provision of supervision, personal care, and protection in addition to room and board, for 24 hours a day, 5 or more days a week, and for 2 or more consecutive weeks for compensation provided at a single address.

In Royal Oak Township, the most common type of AFC is one that houses 1-6 people, supervised by an adult who lives in the house and provides assistance. With limited senior housing options Township, these are important supplements in the senior care system. The State of Michigan prohibits all local governments, including the Township, from restricting the number or concentration of these homes because disabled individuals are protected under the US Fair Housing Act. However, this does not mean that AFCs are unregulated - these homes have very strict licensing requirements from the State of Michigan, which is responsible for tracking and inspecting all AFCs (per State Act 218 of 1979).

According to the State's online database, there are only two AFCs currently operating in the Township. However, resident testimony gathered at Board meetings during the public engagement process suggest this count is inaccurate. Many residents expressed frustration at having multiple AFCs on their block and the high residential turnover associated with these operations. This suggests that many AFCs may be operating illegally in the Township, creating an unsafe situation for both Township and AFC residents.

To bring these operations into compliance, they must first be reported to the State so they can be investigated by the licensing division. If they are found to be providing the services of an AFC, the State will take immediate disciplinary action to close the facility. If they are found to be operating more like a simple rental

than an AFC, then the Township can enforce compliance by having them register as a rental and undergo routine inspection. In both cases, compliance depends on neighbors reporting these sites to the State and Township.

ABSENTEE LANDLORDS

An absentee landlord is a landlord who does not live in the same region or state as their property. Due to their distance, absentee landlords do not keep a close eye on their rental properties. Oftentimes, these properties fall into decline because the landlord is not accountable to the tenant, and often unreachable when it comes to code enforcement complaints.

Similar to absentee landlords, absentee property owners are people who buy up vacant property as an investment without the intention of developing it. Absentee property owners often cause similar community issues by letting their properties exist un-maintained.

Both absentee landlords and property owners are hard to deter, and Royal Oak Township struggles with both. Local governments cannot pick and choose who buys property. However, some local governments have taken a new approach to control absentee landlords through updated rental regulations.

For example, the city of Southfield requires that "If the property is owned by a person other than an individual and/or the owner is located more than thirty (30) miles away, a local property management company shall be contracted to perform weekly inspections to verify that the requirements of this section and any other applicable laws are being met."⁵²

Trends and Changes

SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTIONS

The ongoing shortage of housing materials and housing units is rising, in part because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (FHLMC or Freddie Mac) estimates that the shortage of total housing units has increased by 52% from 2018 to today, with an even more pronounced shortage of entry-level homes that are affordable to first-time buyers. **Even pre-pandemic, the share of entry-level homes in construction declined from 40% in the early 1980s to around 7% in 2019.**

The U.S. is currently experiencing an increase in housing demand during the pandemic because people are spending more time at home. This high demand has exacerbated the shortage and caused home prices to rise over 12% between 2020 and 2021. The combination of low supply and high demand is causing entry-level prices to rise rapidly, which is triggering affordability issues for buyers of all income levels.⁵³

AGE IN PLACE HOUSING

NOTE: For more on Aging in Place, please see the Key Findings of the People and Health chapter, above.

Providing appropriate age-friendly housing options that are safe, attractive, and stimulating is increasingly important as the general population ages. Fewer financial resources are available to older residents, and so they need affordable options that are. Right now, Michigan has more than 2 million adults over age 60, accounting for nearly 25% of the state's population. As people live longer on average, residents 85 and older remain the fastest-growing age group. As such, many municipalities across the state are launching initiatives to **find ways for residents to comfortably age-in-place, either by modifying their existing homes to be accessible or by providing more housing options, such as apartments, duplexes, and assisted living facilities.**

Zoning laws in most communities create obstacles for those trying to remain in their neighborhoods as they age. In addition to isolating residential neighborhoods from everyday commercial services, most housing built in the

last 50 years exclude by law any housing form except single family. When a home or town home becomes difficult to maintain, older adults cannot “downsize” and remain in their community. Zoning regulations prevent older adults from converting a garage or basement into apartment space for a caregiver. Children of older adults face the same barriers trying to convert their homes or locate their parents nearby.

The inner-ring suburbs of Detroit, including Royal Oak Township, face a particular challenge when it comes to providing new age-friendly housing: limited land. When the nearby City of Huntington Woods conducted its Senior Amenities and Lifestyle Analysis in 2020, it found that only approximately 2% of the land in the City was immediately available for the construction of new housing. As such, the City had to think creatively about ways to adapt existing housing to assist with aging-in-place. Some of these ideas included creating a floating zoning district that accommodates more accessible lot layouts and floors plans and amending the zoning code to allow a greater range of ADUs. Although the Township is not as limited in land availability as many of its neighbors, similar challenges with age-in-place housing exist as the population continues to trend older.

MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING

“Missing Middle Housing” is a term that encompasses all the housing types that residents want to live in but do not currently exist in a community, usually because they are not provided for the zoning ordinance and/or master plan. Common missing middle housing types in older Michigan communities, which typically have a high number of single-family homes, include duplexes, fourplexes, cottage courts, second-floor apartments above commercial businesses, and multiplexes. These types of housing are generally compatible with the character of existing single-family residential neighborhoods and can work to support walkability, provide locally serving retail, and improve access to public transportation options. They can also provide a range of affordability to address the discrepancy between the cost of available housing stock and the prices people can afford. As such, many municipalities are filling in the missing middle portions of their zoning codes by allowing one or more of these missing middle types by-right.

“About 25% of new households prefer condos and urban townhomes.”
- Roger K. Lewis, published April 22, 2011, *The Washington Post*



PRE-APPROVED INFILL HOUSING

Across the country, local governments are reviving the kit-home strategies of the 1940s to help meet rising housing demand. Today, these are called pre-approved infill programs. A local government hires an architect to create a series of home blueprints, often with a few different options for house size and design. The blueprints are designed to work on the average lot within the community in terms of size. Then, the government releases the home plans for free on their website, where individuals and developers can download them for free. From there, the user hires a surveyor and a contractor to plot the house on their property, and then submits to the local government for construction permits. The permitting process can be expedited because the local government has already reviewed the plans, making homebuilding simpler and faster.

Pre-approved infill plans save time and money when the average 800 square-foot home plan costs \$10,000. These plans are most popular in the western US, where housing production is booming, and in the Midwest, where communities are looking for creative ways to incentivize infill. In Michigan, these plans can help make development profitable for developers in areas where home prices are nearly equal to construction costs. They can also help young homebuyers get a foot in the door to homeownership, by allowing them to build a brand-new starter home. In Michigan, the cities of Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, and Ecorse are all creating their own pre-approved infill programs.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs), also known as granny flats, mother-in-law apartments, or carriage houses, are housing units constructed on the same parcel as an existing primary residence, such as a single-family home. ADUs might be in an accessory building, such as a converted garage or new construction, or attached to the primary residence, such as a converted living space, attached garage, or an addition. **Today, Royal Oak Township already allows single-unit ADUs in all residential districts, and ADUs are required to match the existing building design of the block.**

Municipalities have consistently found that ADUs are a cheap, easy way to increase the number of housing options while also meeting the needs of older adults, empty-nesters, and young working professionals, many of whom are priced out of traditional homeownership. They also provide rental income for homeowners, giving people a way to “cash in” on the equity of their home without having to sell it. ADUs are one of the most affordable options for both individuals and cities because they are often simple conversions, do not require the purchase of new land, and are on lots that are already serviced by utilities.⁵⁴

SUBSIDIZED HOUSING AS A TOOL FOR RAISING PROPERTY VALUES

Since the 1960s, subsidized housing has typically been seen as a threat to local property values. Much of this perception can be attributed to the public housing projects of the era, whose unattractive boxy design and poor management often affected the neighborhoods around them. However, the national attitudes toward subsidized housing are changing, and many cities are now realizing that subsidized projects may in fact be desirable when they result in an upgrading of the housing stock at a scale sufficient to change the neighborhood trajectory.

The Center for Housing Policy recently carried out a comprehensive review of past research studies that examined the impacts of subsidized housing on property values. The Center found that the vast majority of studies have found **that subsidized housing does not depress neighboring property values and may even raise them in some cases.** Much of the research suggests that the

type of subsidized housing (house, apartment, etc.) matters less than the quality of the properties' design, management, and maintenance. Where good-looking development replaces blighted or obsolete structures, it can have an even more positive effect.⁵⁵ As such, beautifully designed developments, both subsidized and market-rate, can be used as a tool to help improve property values of surrounding private properties.

Why Do Property Values Matter?

“Generally, rising property values indicate positive trends for a neighborhood. They signal that a neighborhood has become a desirable place to live and to locate a business, and influence developers’ decisions to make long-term investments in its future. For individual homeowners, who depend on home equity to provide resources for retirement or finance a child’s education, home values are extremely important. Property values also may be a proxy for quality of life factors that can be hard to measure and often reflect access to good schools, jobs, shops, parks, and other amenities.

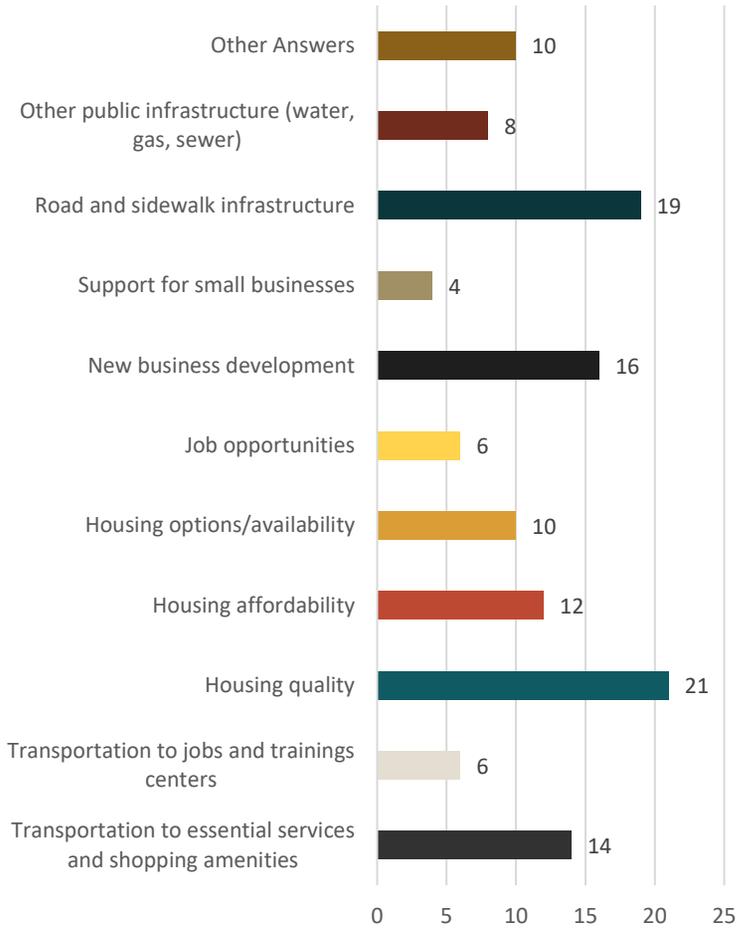
In distressed neighborhoods, rising property values are a sign of hope that the stage is being set for economic renewal. Measurable rises in home prices and rents as well as a general increase in real estate activity represent important benchmarks for successful neighborhood revitalization. In this sense, affordable housing that stabilizes or increases nearby property values may also contribute more broadly to stronger neighborhoods.

Generally, price increases are a positive development, but when rising rapidly, teachers, nurses, firefighters, and other working families can be priced out of their neighborhoods. Certain strategies may need to be put in place to ensure the long-term affordability of a portion of the housing stock.”

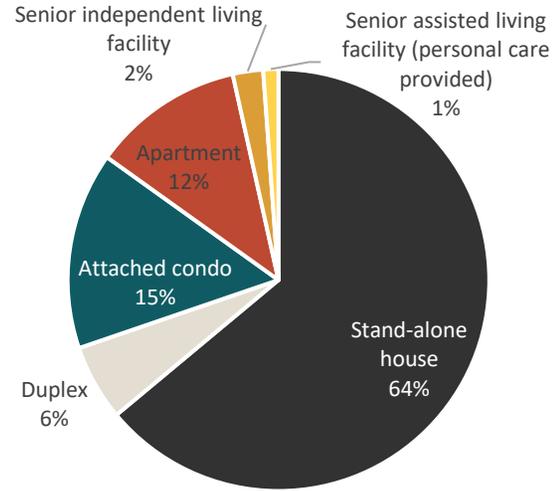
- Center for Housing Policy

Public Feedback

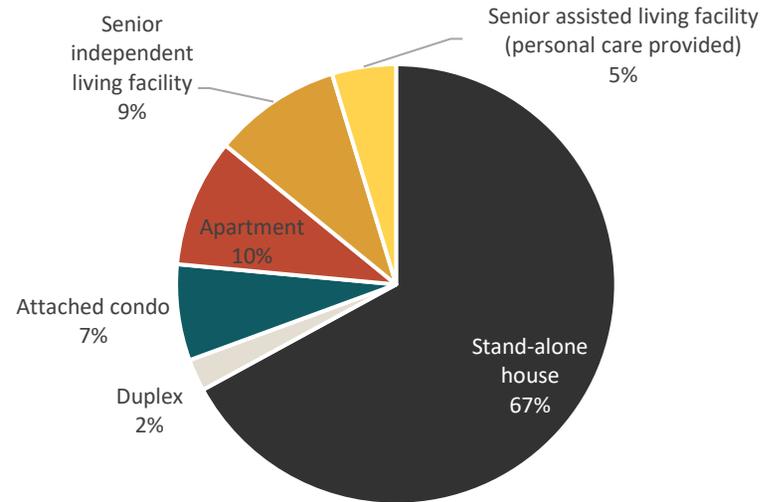
Out of the options below, which one is the most urgent to improve, in your opinion?



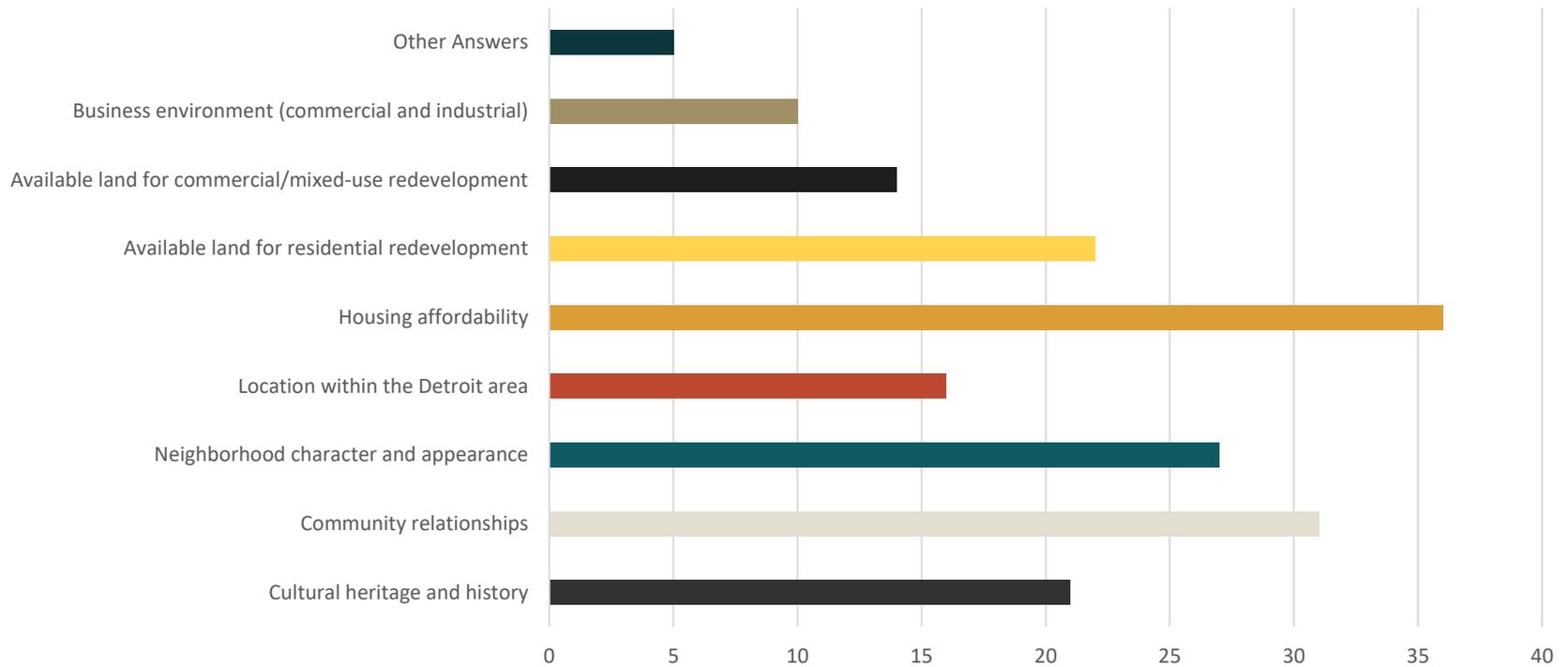
What type of home do you currently live in?

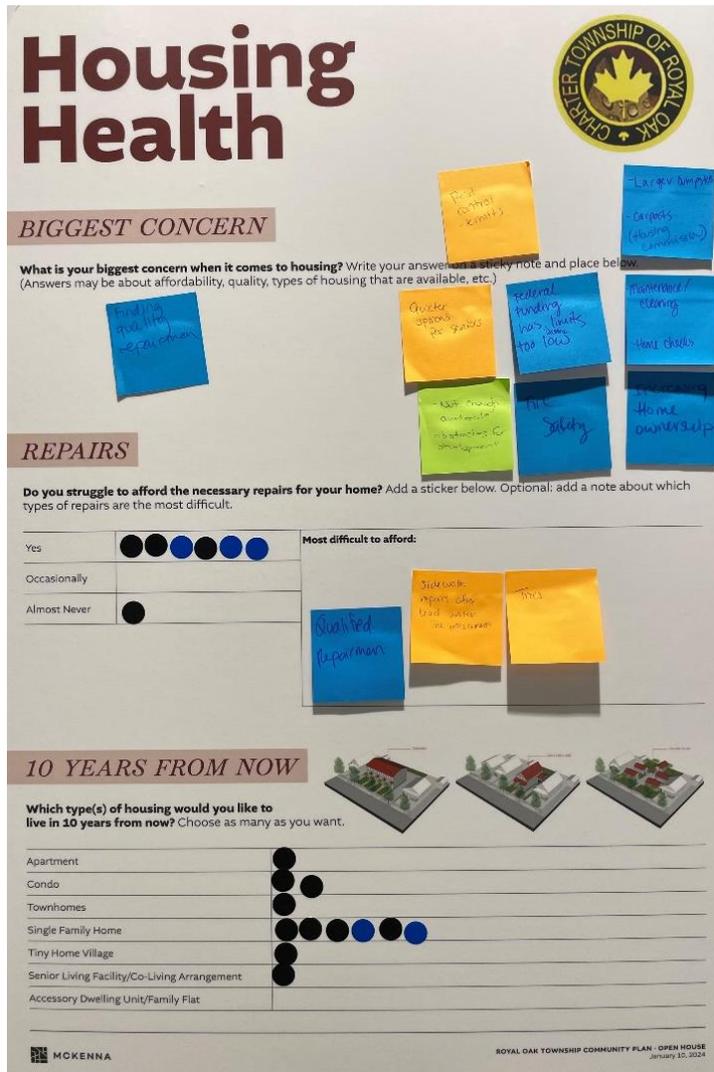


What type of home would you like to live in 10 years from now?

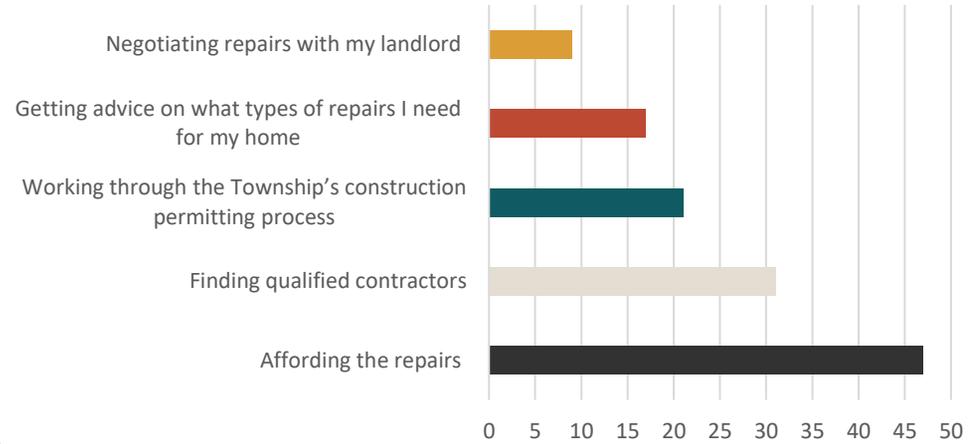


What do you feel the Township's greatest asset is as we look to the future? Choose 2 to 3 options.



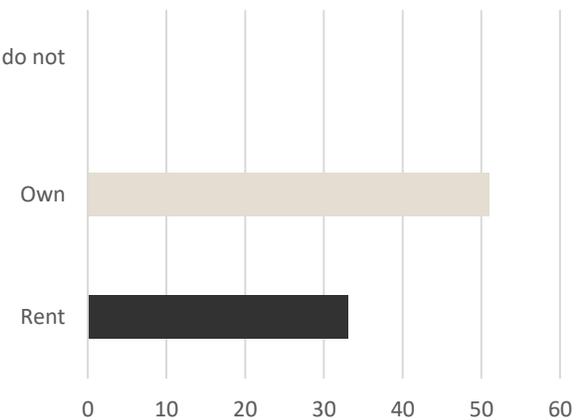


When considering home or business repairs, what is the biggest challenge you face? Choose all that apply.



Do you rent, own, or neither?

Neither, I live with family/friends and do not pay rent



Key Takeaways

INFILL AS A CATALYST FOR MORE DEMAND

In Royal Oak Township, concentrating investment in priority areas is more likely to produce the highest return on investment. This means that infilling groups of vacant residential sites or major mixed-use sites is essential to catalyze more development. Infill ignites more general demand, leading to higher property values and a more favorable climate for construction. Single, vacant lots that exist in Royal Oak Township, especially mid-block, present an opportunity to use a phased infill approach. This strategy involves converting single lots into temporary and permanent urban gardens, pathways, and parks, until they are redeveloped into single-family lots. Mixed-use sites, especially large sites along 8 Mile Road, present an opportunity for major catalytic development, especially where blighted structures are replaced. The Township must continue to encourage and recruit infill developers for these sites to continue encouraging demand.

HOUSING AS MEANS FOR WEALTH

In Royal Oak Township, single-family homeownership is still an important way to accrue wealth. As a historically Black community, homeownership is an important way to build generational wealth. During the public survey, most survey respondents reported wanting to live in a single-family home in the next ten years. Single-family homeowners not only accrue wealth through property, but they also have the opportunity to build wealth by renting their property for profit. In particular, ADUs are a way for homeowners to claim revenue while continuing to live in their house. To encourage this wealth building, the Township must support the redevelopment of the interior-block vacant single-family lots throughout the Township and the establishment of owner-occupied wealth-building mechanisms like ADUs and split-level conversions.

AGE-FRIENDLY HOUSING OBSTACLES

When talking about housing and aging, there are two aspects to consider: the individual home and the community.

The first aspect to consider is the individual home - is this home accessible for people at all stages of life and with all physical abilities? All of these aspects, and more, come together to determine if a home is age-in-place-friendly. This means asking questions like:

- Does this home have a roll in shower?
- Does this home have a step free entry?
- Does this home have countertops that can accommodate people at both sitting and standing heights?
- Does this home have a fridge that can be used equally easily by a child or an adult?

In Royal Oak Township, most homes and apartments are not age-friendly. This is in large part due to the age of the housing units, but also the lack of funding for home improvements. During the public engagement, residents reported that affording repairs was their number one obstacle to home improvement. The Township must help residents overcome these design obstacles to aging in place.

The second aspect to consider is the housing stock of the community. In Royal Oak Township, the existing housing stock does not meet the needs of people in different age groups, both in terms of availability and the mix of housing types. Apartments and starter homes for young couples, single family homes and townhomes for people with children, condos and ranch style homes for people who are downsizing, and independent living facilities all work together to ensure that a community is age-friendly. In the Township, both young and old residents are pushed out due to a lack of housing options for aging in place, or forced to live in a unit that is not suitable for their needs. To ensure people can stay in the community that they love their whole life, the Township must support the establishment of these missing middle housing types in appropriate locations to support aging in place.

SUPPORT FOR HOME IMPROVEMENTS

The quality of a community's housing stock must be renewed periodically through maintenance, modification and/or reconstruction. Many homes require remodeling or retrofitting to accommodate changes in an occupant's mobility. The Township must support and advertise programs for home improvement to help beautify the Township and improve overall quality of life for residents.

Shared Goals

- 1. PROVIDE A BALANCE OF HOUSING TYPES TO SUPPORT AGING IN PLACE FOR PEOPLE AT ALL STAGES OF LIFE**
- 2. REINFORCE THE INTEGRITY OF EXISTING NEIGHBORHOODS**
- 3. ENCOURAGE INFILL DEVELOPMENT ON THE RESIDENTIAL AND MIXED-USE PARCELS THROUGHOUT THE TOWNSHIP**
- 4. IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND AVAILABILITY OF HOUSING IN THE TOWNSHIP**

5. Jobs and Economy

Though challenged by underutilized and vacant commercial properties, the Township's commercial districts contain opportunities for redevelopment, boosting the local economy while enhancing a vibrant and pedestrian friendly environment. The Community Master Plan promotes an integrated system of commercial and mixed-use businesses that will serve the needs of the residents, enhance the image of the Township, and strengthen the tax and employment base.

Current Conditions

WHAT IS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT?

According to the International Economic Development Council, economic development is defined as “a program, group of policies, or activities that seeks to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for a community by creating and / or retaining jobs that facilitate growth and provide a stable tax base.” To achieve such an end goal, economic development activities must be planned and long-term. The following actions are all considered a part of economic development:

- **Tax base development** – private sector investment increases the public sector’s ability to provide necessary services that benefit the community by increasing the quality of life and leveraging additional investment.
- **Job creation or replacement** – new jobs can be an important element of economic development, but more important is creating a job base that improves the median wages of each sector of the community and providing a broad base of employment options when a once vital businesses ceases to operate.
- **Supporting existing businesses** – economic development can provide the means of expanding an existing business while working with local entrepreneurs to produce the goods and services presently only available outside of the community.
- **Positive marketing** – promoting the community via press releases, newsletters, web pages, and engaging professionals can foster a consistent “one voice” approach to marketing the attributes of the city (i.e. housing options, parks and recreation, employment opportunities, schools, etc.), thus, providing for previously unrealized economic development opportunities. Building upon the Township’s service friendly initiatives – continually increasing the service levels within the community will ensure an improved relationship and greater support from the residents, business owners, and developers.
- **Streamlined development procedures** – modification of the time frame and providing increased flexibility within the zoning ordinance equates to a more expedient development process and potential decreased costs for the developer.



INCOME AND POVERTY

Oakland County

Average adjusted household income in Oakland County is significantly higher than in Michigan overall, reflecting Oakland’s relative prosperity. Average adjusted household income growth between 2012 and 2019 for Oakland County grew by 25%, from \$113,000 to \$142,000. In the state, average adjusted income grew from \$84,000 to \$103,000. Only 18% of Oakland County residents live in lower-income households, compared to 28% of Michigan residents. Conversely, 32% of Oakland County residents lived in upper-income households, compared to only 19% of Michigan residents.

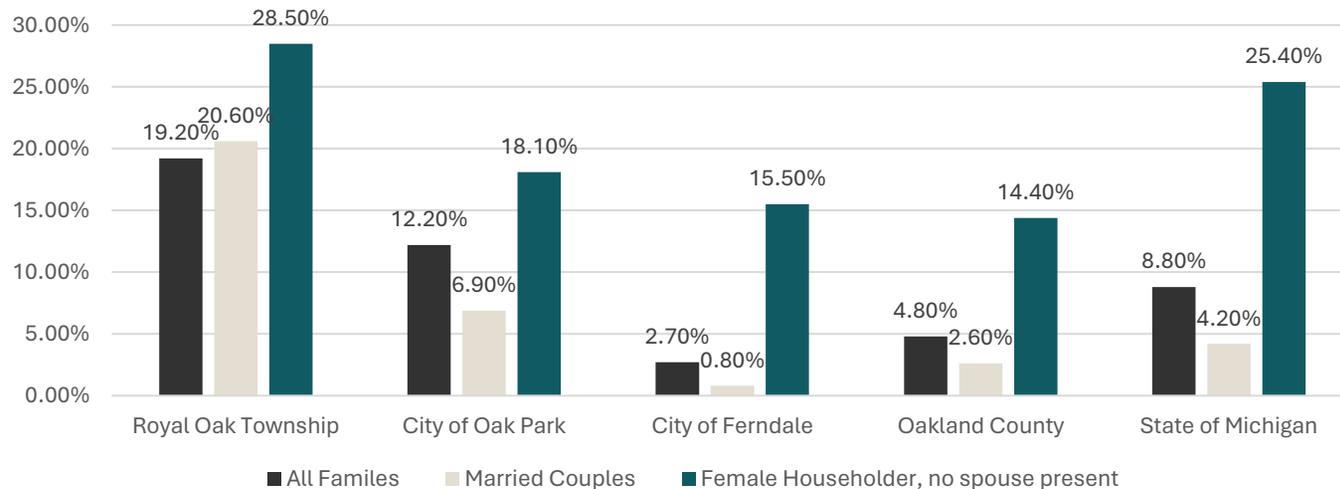
However, the sharp economic disparities along racial and ethnic lines that exist at the state level are also present in Oakland County. Although only 13% of Non-Hispanic Asian and 14% of Non-Hispanic white residents live in lower-income households, 27% of Hispanic and 33% of Non-Hispanic Black residents live in lower-income households.

The average real wage in Oakland County has consistently run about 15% higher than in the state of Michigan. Both Oakland County and Michigan overall saw a large jump in average real wages during last year’s pandemic recession; real wages grew by 6.2% in Oakland County and by 5.8% statewide, the largest single-year increases in real wages on record. The jump in average wages last year represented the disproportionate loss of lower-paying jobs relative to higher-paying jobs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Few individual workers experienced wage increases of that magnitude. As the economy recovers from the pandemic, employment among lower-income workers is expected to increase more quickly than among higher-income workers.

Royal Oak Township

Royal Oak Township has higher rates of poverty than surrounding communities and the state of Michigan. Poverty is particularly acute among single mothers, 28.5% of whom are living below the federal poverty line.

Poverty Status by Household Type, 2022



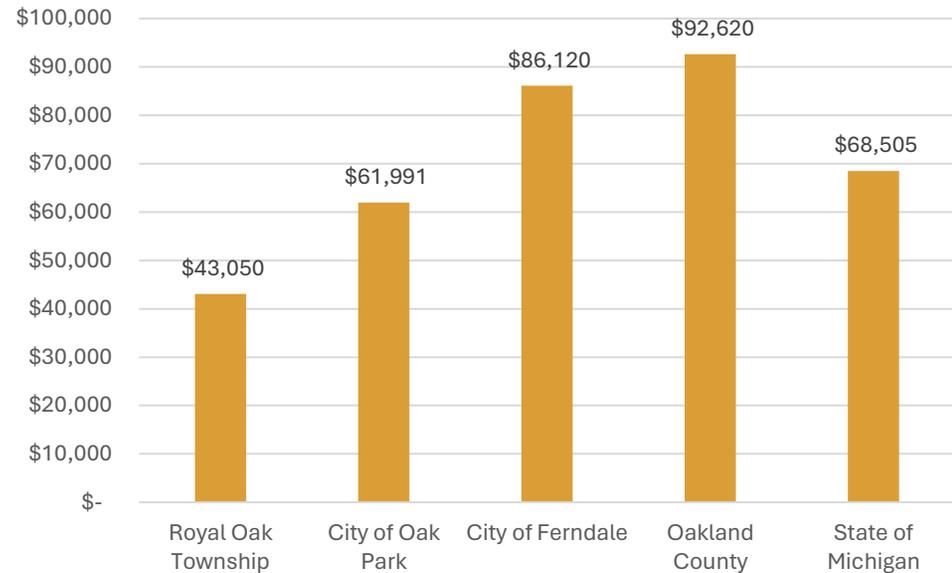
BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE TOWNSHIP

Businesses are concentrated in two areas of the Township: 8 Mile Road and Northend/Galaxie Avenue. 8 Mile Road is the main commercial corridor of the Township and has a range of both small and large businesses, from Royal’s Pharmacy and Simply Breakfast to Kroger and Burger King. All the businesses on 8 Mile serve Township residents and customers beyond the Township’s borders, and most are designed to appeal to customers arriving by car. There are also several automotive dealerships, open and vacant, along 8 Mile Road which take up roughly 1/3 of the commercial frontage along the corridor. Over the 2018 Activation Strategy, 2019 Master Plan, and current Community Plan engagement, residents have consistently expressed a desire to cultivate a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use commercial environment along 8 Mile. **Reuse of the existing automotive sites and their parking lots is especially critical to making room for new small businesses and employers, which are in high demand and necessary to open new job and entrepreneurship options to residents.**

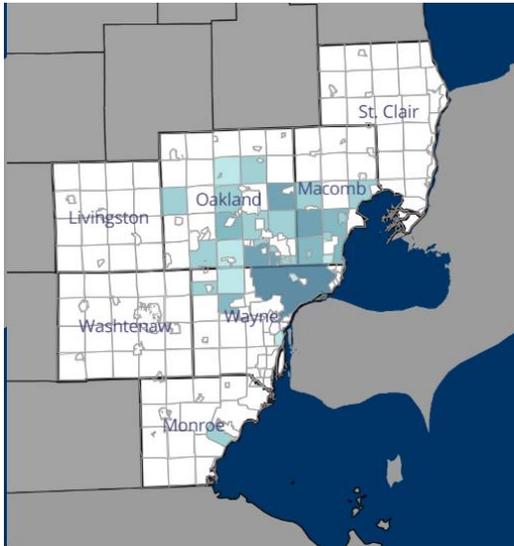
The Northend/Galaxie area is the hub for the Township’s industrial businesses, which include long-standing employers like Eaton Steel, the Beasley Media Group, and Midland Tool and Supply. The district has a mix of stand-alone and multi-tenant buildings, thus serving both large and small industrial businesses. Unlike 8 Mile, there is little vacant land available near Northend/Galaxie, except a small area between Radio Plaza and Wyoming Avenue. The Northend/Galaxie district directly abuts Oak Park’s industrial district, which is roughly 5 times larger than that of the Township.

Home occupations, such as tax prep, accounting, music teaching, and childcare are located at private residences throughout the Township. Home occupations are not visible from the exterior of residences and cannot be advertised through signage on the property. A small handful of businesses also exist within the residential neighborhoods of the township and are attached to existing homes. Unlike home occupations, these businesses may have multiple employees and advertise through on-site signage. These businesses are considered “microbusinesses” because they employ less than 10 people. Most of these businesses are considered “legal nonconformities,” which means they were permitted at the time they opened but are now restricted in terms of expansion and re-establishment through the Township’s Zoning Ordinance. **The demand for both microbusinesses and home occupations is growing as a means for wealth-building in Black communities across Michigan.**

Median Household Income in Township, 2022



BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT OUTSIDE THE TOWNSHIP



Business Centers and Jobs

Because of the lack of employment within the Township’s borders, most residents commute outward to other cities for their jobs. During the public survey for this Plan, a vast majority of respondents said they work outside the Township – 7 times more than work inside the Township. As such, it’s important to understand how residents are commuting to their jobs and how the transportation system affects the ability to reach concentrated employment centers.

The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) analyzes commuting patterns for the metro-Detroit area and examines the “laborshed,” which is the area or region from which an employment center draws its commuting workers. As of 2019, SEMCOG estimates that there are 719 workers living in the Township, but 1,153 people working in the Township (some of whom are residents, some of whom commute from elsewhere). Most of these workers are in retail or health, education, and social services. The Tri-County Educational Center and Henry Ford Kingswood Hospital account for most of these workers. **Over 1/3 of the workers commuting into the Township are coming from Detroit, while the rest are spread across the region.**

Meanwhile, Township workers are mostly commuting to Detroit, Warren, Southfield, and Troy.⁵⁶

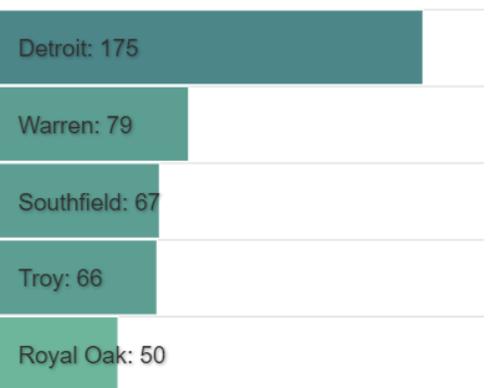
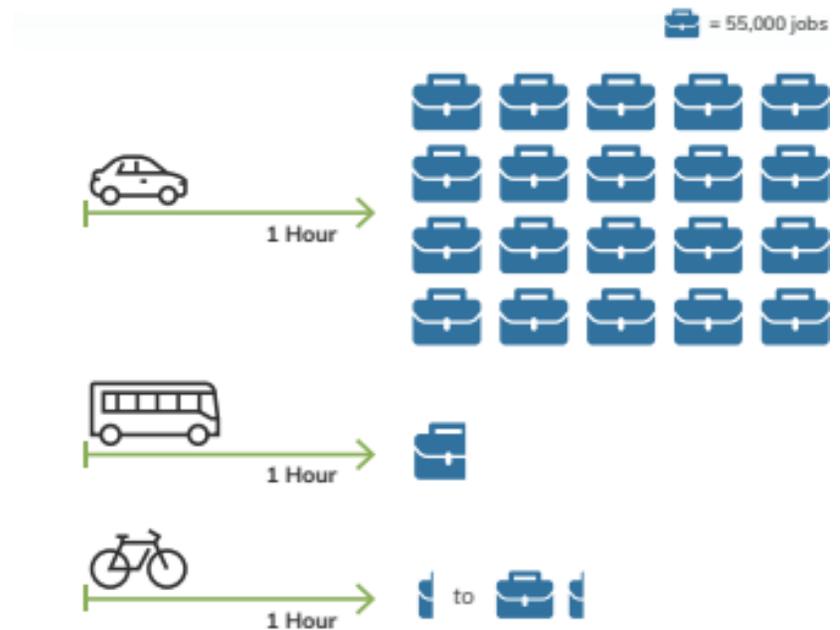


Table 3: Industry Employment Breakdown, 2022

	Royal Oak Township	City of Oak Park	City of Ferndale	Oakland County	State of Michigan
Civilian employed population 16 & over	769	14,909	13,598	659,664	4,711,444
Management, business, science, and arts occupations:	267	6,812	8,123	347,071	1,834,970
Service occupations:	137	2,061	1,588	84,998	782,021
Sales and office occupations:	225	3,459	2,264	128,772	939,713
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations:	19	552	406	34,037	373,699
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations:	121	2,025	1,217	64,786	781,041
Unemployment Rate	28.7%	9.9%	3.7%	4.8%	6.0%

Royal Oak Township has a much higher unemployment rate than the surrounding area. Residents’ access to jobs is dictated by the types of transportation they have available. The Michigan Mobility 2045 Plan found that workers with a car have access to 20 times more jobs within a 1-hour radius than those who use the bus or bike. This issue is called the “spatial mismatch,” and it disproportionately affects low-income and Black workers in the Detroit area. As employers move farther out from Detroit, centrally located workers are faced with an inadequate transportation system that provides only weak links to the suburbs.⁵⁷ Remedying this mismatch requires both recruiting businesses and improving transit and bicycling options.



Pandemic Losses

During the Great Recession, the unemployment rate in Michigan peaked at 13.8% in the third quarter of 2009, while in Oakland the rate peaked one quarter later, at 13.3%. The unemployment rate in the state and Oakland County will likely continue to decline through the end of 2024. During Michigan's lost decade culminating in the Great Recession, Oakland County lost jobs at a faster rate than the state. The COVID-19 recession led employment in the state of Michigan to decline by 846,700 (19.1%) in the second quarter of 2020, while Oakland County lost 145,851 jobs (19.6%).

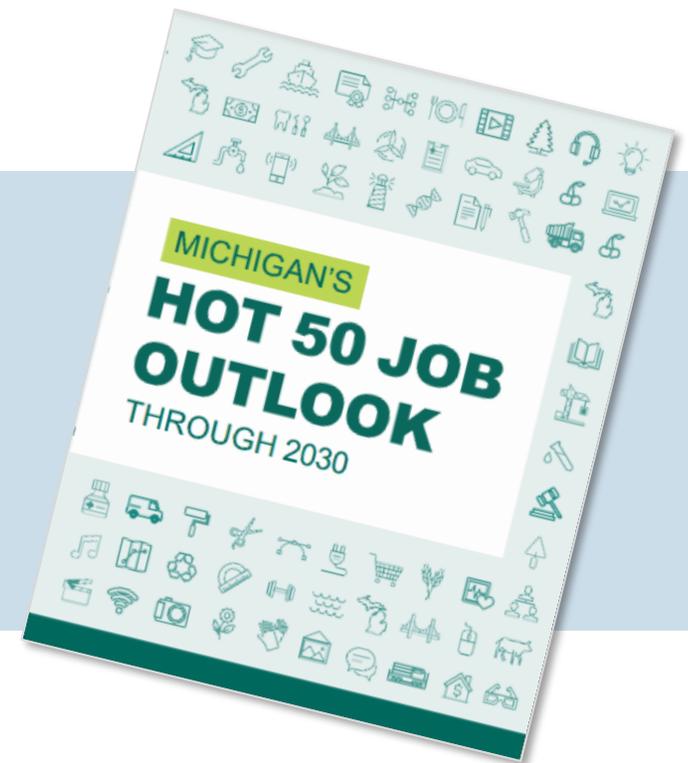
Job Resource Agencies

Job resource agencies are public and non-profit institutions which help connect people to jobs and training opportunities. Royal Oak Township does not have any job resource agencies within its borders, but several are located nearby. The most notable agency is Michigan Works!, which has locations in Oak Park, Southfield, and the Schulze neighborhood of Detroit.

Up and Coming Industries

The State of Michigan Bureau of Labor Market Information (BLMI) estimates that **the greatest industry growth from 2024 to 2030 will be for nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and physical therapy assistants**. Each of these professions is projected to have over 30% growth in the next 5 years, with nursing growing 50%. The labor opportunity in these professions has largely been driven by the mass quitting that resulted from the pandemic, causing a dire shortage of medical workers today.

The BLMI also estimates that the following careers will see growth over 20% by 2030: health specialty teachers, nursing teachers, flight attendants, industrial engineers and mechanics, logisticians, market analyst, massage therapists, software developers, speech pathologists, and substance, mental, and behavioral health counselors.⁵⁸



Trends and Changes

AGING WORKFORCE

The United States population is growing older, and the nation’s workforce is reflecting these demographic changes. **Today, people aged 65 and older represent one of the highest U.S. labor force participation rates in the developed world.** As a result, some employers that typically depend on younger employees, such as retail and restaurants, are projecting labor shortages. Many businesses are now investing in older employee retention programs, such as better healthcare packages, to keep a firm grasp on their knowledge base. Other businesses are rethinking their model to make do with less employees overall.

Loss of Young Workers

Currently, Michigan ranks 49th in population growth. Much of this stagnation is due to the loss of talented young residents. The 2023 Growing Michigan Together report by the State found that from 1980 to 2020, Michigan’s 19 and under and 20- to 34-year-old populations decreased by 22% and 18%, respectively. During this same period, the 65+ population in Michigan grew by 98%. The report found that Michigan fails to retain college graduates in the most critical areas of the growing technology and knowledge economy. Another reason for student exodus is a lack of access to internships and opportunities for meaningful on-the-job experience prior to entering the full-time workforce. “In the absence of a clear opportunity for career growth with a Michigan-based company, young talent will continue to seek high-paying jobs with employers in states and regions with concentrated industries and networks of professionals, exacerbating the state’s existing labor shortage.”⁵⁹



MAKER SPACES AND MICROBUSINESS

Businesses that have 500 or more employees comprise less than 1% of all businesses. Meanwhile, **Michigan is seeing a rise in microbusinesses, which are local businesses with than 10 employees, and maker spaces, which are DIY workshops that blend education, experimentation, and industry to help spark new business.** Michigan is experiencing its fastest small business growth rate in 23 years, and many of the new microbusinesses and maker spaces popping up are started by Black, female, and/or young residents. In 2023, the Michigan Microbusiness Coalition was established to help emerging entrepreneurs and small business get a foothold in Michigan.⁶⁰ Supporting these intraneural businesses is a priority of the State, but local governments have been slow to change their land use regulations. In many cases, local governments enacted land use regulations in the 1970s which prohibit these kinds of businesses. Today, many local governments in the Detroit area, such as Eastpointe, Grosse Pointe Park, and Southfield, are changing their local laws to help make microbusinesses and makerspaces simple to start.

REMOTE WORK

The COVID-19 pandemic and State of Michigan mandates changed the office work environment overnight in March 2020. In May of 2021, employers are now contemplating bringing employees back, albeit slowly, to the workforce for in-person work because the State of Michigan and the CDC will no longer need to require remote work for most employee’s due to higher levels of those getting the COVID-19 vaccines. Further, companies are responding to employee concerns and comments regarding hybrid “3-2-2” work schedules (in office and work from home options) that allow for a greater work-life balance. The 3-2-2 schedule balances traditional and remote work, where employees work for three days in office, two days remote, and two days off. Employers are also embracing digital nomads: a person who earns a living working online in various locations of their choosing rather than a fixed business location.

INFLATION

The annual inflation rate in the US accelerated to 9.1% in June of 2022, the highest since November of 1981, from 8.6% in May and above market forecasts of 8.8%. Energy prices rose 41.6%, the most since April 1980, boosted by gasoline (59.9%, the largest increase since March 1980), fuel oil (98.5%), electricity (13.7%, the largest increase since April 2006), and natural gas (38.4%, the largest increase since October 2005). Food costs surged 10.4%, the most since February 1981, with food at home jumping 12.2%, the most since April 1979. Prices also increased significantly for shelter (5.6%, the most since February 1991).⁶¹

GREEN AND HIGH-TECH JOBS

The Midwest has historically been known as the manufacturing center of the United States. However, new careers are taking the top spot as “hot jobs” in recent years, with high wages and high demand. In particular, the green manufacturing and high technology sectors have had a rise in demand for trained workers. The Michigan Bureau of Labor Market Information estimates that **civil engineers, electricians, logisticians, industrial mechanics and managers, and software developers will all see a 10%+ growth in their industries by 2030.**⁶² The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) has also been aggressively recruiting high-tech companies to relocate to Michigan.

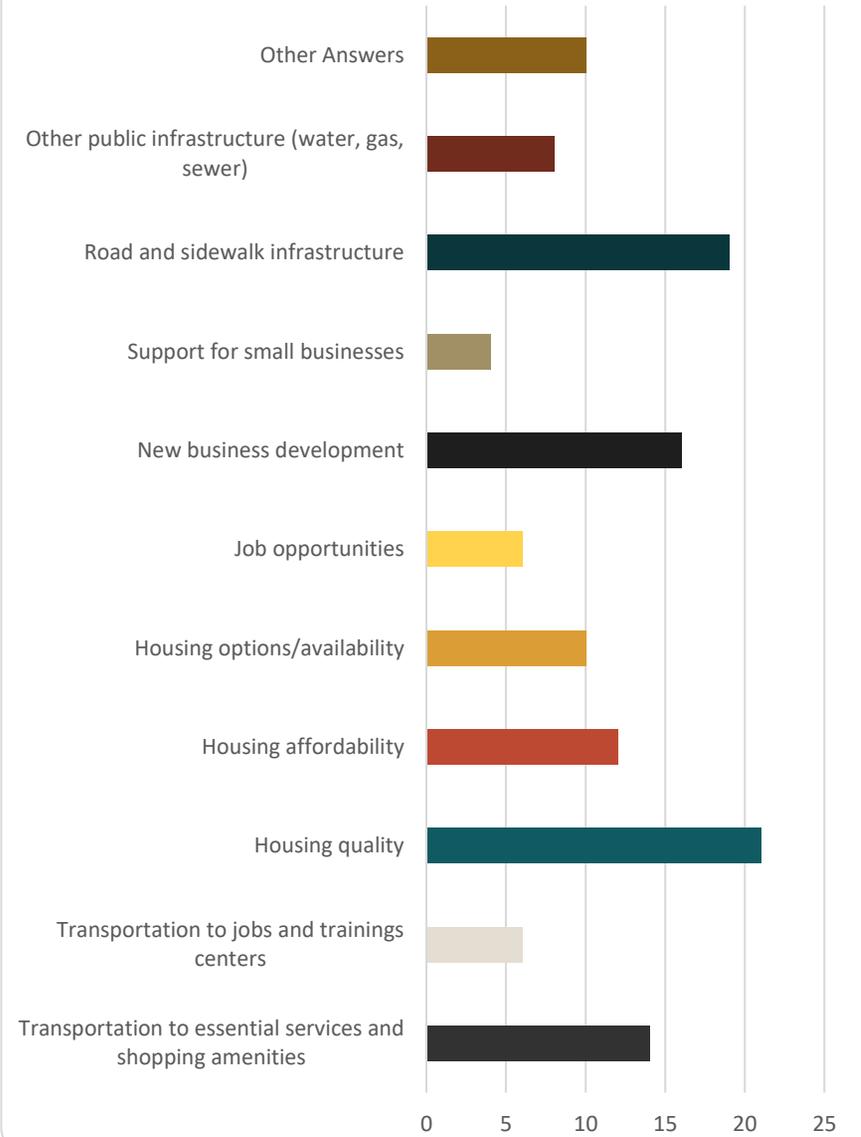
About 5 miles from the Township, the Southfield SmartZone is a tech accelerator working to create green and high-tech jobs. The Southfield SmartZone is a 384-acre certified technology park bordered by Telegraph Road to the east, Inkster Road to the west, and adjacent to I-696 at the northwest corner of the City of Southfield. It is home to 413 businesses employing over 4,000 total employees. Notable companies located in the Southfield SmartZone include Sun Communities, Veoneer, Tenneco, Citizens Bank, Grant Thornton LLP, CBS TV, and Hantz Group.



What types of trade or degree?

- *Social work, audio technology*
- *Mental health and entrepreneur*
- *digital content management, library and archival sciences*
- *Municipal Government*
- *Automotive, Culinary, Telecom*
- *Finance & Food Service*
- *medical and facilities industry*
- *Healthcare*
- *Medical/pharmacy*
- *Auto*
- *Medicine*
- *Nursing*
- *Therapy*
- *Music*
- *Business*
- *Accounting*
- *Social worker - me*
- *Social work and accounting*
- *I am a licensed practical nurse.*
- *Social worker*
- *Medical billing*
- *Business, engineer, human resources, accountant*
- *Son got college degree / I have a criminal justice certificate*
- *Business administration*
- *Truck driving*
- *Business administration*
- *Early childhood*
- *Army*
- *Science, nursing*
- *medical*
- *cosmetology*

Out of the options below, which one is the most urgent to improve, in your opinion?



Key Takeaways

MAKING DO WITH LIMITED LAND

Due to the limited available land in the Township, strategies for mixed-use and adaptive reuse developments are very important. In particular, the Township must encourage the redevelopment of large sites along 8 Mile Road rites for mix-use developments of all sizes that trade automotive dependence for a pedestrian focus.

Additionally, there is growing demand for home businesses and microbusinesses across the region, as well as financial support for these types of operations. The Township's regulations on home occupations were last updated in 1992, before the advent of remote work and online businesses. As such, the Township's regulations on home occupations and microbusinesses are outdated, leading to lost economic gains for residents. The Township must reassess the diversity of ways that residential land can be used to build local wealth and entrepreneurship.

LEVERAGING EXISTING RESOURCES AND PARTNERS

Many economic development resources for job training, business repairs and loans, and entrepreneurship already exist and are available to Township residents. However, the de-centralized nature of these resources makes it hard to take advantage of what is available. Some large platforms like Michigan Works!, Pure Michigan Talent Connect, the Detroit Regional Chamber, Oakland Thrive, and Michigan Pathfinder try to consolidate these resources. To better connect residents to these resources, the Township must advertise these programs and partner with these key agencies to help connect people to jobs and employers to workers. Workshop attendees also highly supported having a job resource center office located in the Township.

Because of the limited capacity of the Township, existing resources and partnerships are essential to economic development. These resources are also key to helping facilitate small business repairs and helping business owners find qualified contractors.

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF EMERGING MARKETS AND ENTREPRENEURS

With the loss of talented and educated young residents, the Township is also losing out on the economic gains of growing sectors like health care, high technology, and renewable industry jobs. Half of all public survey respondents reported having no skilled tradespeople in their families in the Township. To avoid the further loss of young workers, the Township must support entrepreneurs and help connect residents with jobs in these emerging markets in nearby locations. This may involve on-site job resources, as well as partnering with expert agencies. One way that other communities are tackling this issue is through the Michigan New Jobs Training Program, which allows community colleges to provide free training for employers that are creating new jobs and/or expanding operations in Michigan. Providing young workers and entrepreneurs with affordable housing in the township, plus convenient connections to jobs, can help support the economic health of the community.

MARKETABLE IDENTITY

The Township's lack of a clear marketable identity has made it challenging to draw new businesses to the area. Both online and in real life, the Township does not have a consistent "brand" with which to recruit new development, entrepreneurs, or small business. Residents and owners expressed a consistent desire for clearer entry signage and a cohesive brand, which sets the Township apart from Ferndale and Oak Park. Residents also wanted these identity markers to reflect the deep history of the Township.

Today, the gateways into the Township currently do not effectively announce arrival or communicate the sense of pride and the character that embodies the area. Gateways are physical symbols or signs that express a sense of territory to those entering. They can vary in almost any aspect of their existence. Signs usually display the actual name of the area being entered while sign materials and landscaping express the tone. Depending on their location, they can simply be set alongside the adjacent thoroughfare or can be incorporated into the thoroughfare via boulevards or traffic circles.

Shared Goals

- 1. SUPPORT EXISTING AND ENCOURAGE NEW BUSINESSES**
- 2. ENCOURAGE TALENT DEVELOPMENT AND RECRUIT ENTREPRENEURS TO THE TOWNSHIP**
- 3. FACILITATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNDER-USED COMMERCIAL AND MIXED-USE PROPERTIES**
- 4. PROMOTE THE TOWNSHIP AS A WELCOMING PLACE FOR BUSINESS**

6. Parks and Environment

Green spaces – from parks to wilderness – provide shade and relief from the heat, improve people’s mental health, and offer spaces for residents of all ages to explore, recreate, and flourish. The conversion of natural land into urban land creates surfaces that deflect stormwater and increase flooding and pollution in waterways. Green space helps to counteract this by absorbing stormwater, which improves not only water quality and lowering infrastructure costs while providing numerous public health benefits.

Current Conditions

PARKLAND AND RECREATION

NOTE: For more information on the Recreation Center, please see the Civic Buildings and Services chapter.

Township Parks and Recreation

Royal Oak Township owns and operates 3 community parks: Civic Center Park, Mack-Rowe Memorial Park, and Grant Park. The operations and maintenance of all Township parks are done by the Parks and Recreation Department, which operates under the Parks and Recreation Commission. The Parks and Recreation Department not only maintains the parks, but also:

- Coordinates grant funds for park improvement and installs new equipment
- Organizes and hosts major community events, such as the Juneteenth Celebration, Holiday Extravaganza, Mother's Day Celebration, Prayer in the Park, and more
- Works directly with Oakland County and Ferndale Public Schools to co-host events for the Township's youth
- Hosts food distribution events, health clinics, and other essential community health services
- Takes Township youth on off-site trips focused on both recreation and higher education

Previously, the Recreation Department also ran the Township's Recreation Center and indoor recreation programs before the facility's closure. The Township's Recreation Center building is discussed under the next chapter, Civic Services and Facilities. Today, residents must rely on Ferndale Schools or the City of Oak Park for indoor recreation programs. For example, many Township students participate in Ferndale Schools sports and summer camp programming.

The City of Oak Park Recreation Department also offers an extensive recreation program in which Township residents are eligible to participate. In addition to the registration fees, Royal Oak Township residents must pay an additional five dollars as a non-resident to participate in the programs offered by the City of Oak Park Recreation Department. The Oak Park Community Center is located approximately 1½ miles northwest of Royal Oak Township.

CIVIC CENTER PARK: Also called Township Park, this is the largest park in Royal Oak Township. The park is at the intersection of Wyoming and Cloverdale Avenues and is composed of three separate properties. The park is divided down the center by Ithaca Ave. Sidewalks run around and throughout the park, but the network is incomplete, with the biggest gaps along Ithaca and Majestic Avenues. Currently, the park has an ice-skating rink, covered picnic pavilion with grills, two play structures, and several benches. In 2023, a tree planting project was recently completed by Oakland County in the park, where new maple and oak trees were planted around the park's edges. Civic Center Park is often used to host community-wide events in the pavilion.

As a part of the public engagement for this plan, residents were asked about which new amenities they would like to see at each park. At the public workshop and Listening Sessions, a new walking path, seating, and flower beds emerged as a clear priority for Civic Park. Many residents also commented that they had no idea it was named Civic Park and would like to new signage for all the parks.



MACK-ROWE MEMORIAL PARK: Mack-Rowe Memorial Park is the second-largest park in the Township. The park is at the intersection of Reimenville and Groveview Avenues, bordered to the east by Bethlawn Boulevard. The Park has the highest concentration of amenities and features a baseball diamond, two basketball courts, a tennis court, playground, and picnic tables. Additionally, the Park will be receiving a new accessible playground with the help of Oakland County in 2024.

Currently, many of the sports facilities in the park are in disrepair, with the tennis court being in the worst condition. However, the basketball courts recently had 4 new hoops installed. Through the public engagement, residents expressed a desire for more seating areas in the park, with a focus on modern seating (modern benches or swinging benches). Macke Row Park attracted the least comments overall during the engagement process, possibly due to the recent outreach conducted by Oakland County for the playground.



GRANT PARK: Located immediately east of Grant School, this park is the home of the Township's community garden. The park is accessible from both Cloverdale and Groveview Avenue. The park features several raised garden beds, a small lawn space, a vacant basketball court, and a picnic table. However, many of the garden beds have since been removed from the open space due to deterioration of the frames. The vacant court is used to store gardening equipment. A chain link fence and wall of shrubs separates the park from the school-owned portion of Grant Park.

For Grant Park, engagement respondents had a clear preference for produce gardens, flower beds, and nature-based learning activities. Some residents also suggested adding more gathering spaces or equipment (play/fitness) in the park.



Private Recreation

SCHOOLS: There are indoor and outdoor recreation facilities at Grant School, within the Township, and at the four schools in Oak Park. The school-owned park at Grant School does not have any play structures, although there are several small hills and trees at the back. Instead, the open lawn space is used as a de facto sports field, without any specific field striping or equipment. The Academy of Oak Park Charter School is a vacant school facility near the center of the Township in the former Carver School building – this facility is closed and no longer has any offerings.

Although the school facilities in the Oak Park School District are not within the Township boundaries, they are open to, and used by, residents of Royal Oak Township. Ferndale Public School facilities are also adjacent to the Township, most notably Ferndale High School and Thomas Jefferson School. However, these facilities are not included in the analysis because they are not publicly available and are used by Ferndale High School for after-school events. As a result, Royal Oak Township residents do not use these facilities. In terms of total acreage, public facilities within the Township account for 59% of all public recreation facilities while school district facilities (including Oak Park School facilities used by Township residents) account for 41%.

CO-OPERATIVES: Private recreation facilities including tot-lots, basketball courts, tennis courts and outdoor swimming pools are also in the Oakdale Co-Op in the Township. These private open spaces serve the needs of the apartment residents. Similarly, the Ferndale Park Co-Op has a private park on the north side with trees and picnic tables which is surrounded by a fence. Lastly, the housing commission buildings at the corner of Ithaca Ave and Pasadena Ave have their own internal playground.

OTHER: Several privately-owned recreation facilities are also located adjacent to Royal Oak Township. Although use of these facilities is limited to those who can afford the fees, they do address certain recreation needs. Private recreation facilities include the Jewish Community Campus (City of Oak Park), Northwest Activities Center (Detroit), Oakland YMCA (City of Royal Oak), Rackham Golf Course (Huntington Woods), Palmer Park Golf Course (Detroit) and the Chandler Park Golf Course (Detroit).

Regional Recreation

The Township does not have any regional recreation facilities, yet there are several regional recreational areas within an hour drive. Regional recreation areas are large facilities serving people within a broad geographic area. The region has been defined as the area within roughly an hour driving radius of Royal Oak Township. The size and type of facilities vary, but in general these are 200 acres or more. The regional park facilities closest to Royal Oak Township include the Detroit Zoo, Belle Isle Park and several public golf courses. Four public golf courses and several inland lakes are also within a short drive of the Township. In addition, there are private and commercial recreation facilities that fulfill certain recreational needs.





Parks & Recreation

Royal Oak Township

March 5, 2024

LEGEND

- Royal Oak Township Boundary
- Public Parks and Facilities
- Private Parks



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.
 Data Source: County or Local Community Source, McKenna 2023.
 State of Michigan, 2023.
 SEMCOG Open Data Portal, 2023.



TREES AND NATURAL AREAS

As an urbanized community, Royal Oak Township has very few areas with large, mature trees. **Most of the larger trees are located in private back yards on the properties between Mitchelldale and Westview Avenues.** The Township's parks generally have trees located around the outside but are not very vegetated overall. There are almost no trees located between the roadway and the sidewalk in the township because the lawn extensions are too small to accommodate fully grown trees. As such, the township's tree canopy is largely privatized, with Oakland County only having jurisdiction over the few street trees.

Before suburbanization, the Township was covered in a mix of Oak, Ash, and Beech trees and some marshlands. Today, the township's tree mix is mostly Oak, Maple, Locust, and Cottonwood trees, which are common for areas that were built up in the post-war period. There are also a few evergreen trees scattered throughout the township, which provide greenery even in winter. The trees that remain today are very important for providing shade and respite from heat for Township residents, as well as natural beauty during the warmer months. On either side of the township – at the Detroit Axle Company property in Ferndale and the WUDL radio station in Oak Park – there are large, forested areas which are a valuable opportunity to create new nature areas in an otherwise urbanized region. However, both properties are privately owned and not currently proposed for preservation.

As such, Township residents must travel outside of the Township to find undisturbed natural areas such as forests, marshes, lakes, and rivers. **Palmer Park, located off Woodward and 7 Mile, is the closest place for residents to immerse themselves in nature.** Access to nature areas is extremely important for public health. In a study of 20,000 people, the University of Exeter found that people who spent two hours a week in green spaces were substantially more likely to report good health and psychological well-being than those who don't. It can lower blood pressure and stress hormone levels, reduce nervous system arousal, enhance immune system function, increase self-esteem, reduce anxiety, and improve mood. Attention Deficit Disorder and aggression lessen in natural environments, which also help speed the rate of healing. In a recent study, psychiatric unit researchers found that **being in nature reduced feelings of isolation, promoted calm, and lifted mood** among patients.⁶³ Local parks help meet many public health needs, but naturalized areas are also needed to receive the full suite of health benefits.



Tree Cover and Historic Landscape

Royal Oak Township

March 5, 2024

LEGEND

Parks and Recreation Properties

Historic Landcover - 1800

- Black Ash Swamp
- Mixed Hardwood Swamp
- Mixed Oak Savannah
- Bog



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.
 Data Source: County or Local Community Source, McKenna 2023.
 State of Michigan, 2023.
 SEMCOG Open Data Portal, 2023.



STORM WATER AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Storms

As more people move to Michigan over the next century, many cities will experience a strain on their existing infrastructure as more people use their water, stormwater, and sanitary sewer systems. Royal Oak Township may face a particular challenge due to its aging infrastructure and high impervious surface area, which makes it more susceptible to flooding. According to the SEMCOG flooding risk assessment, **both Wyoming Ave and 8 Mile Rd are at medium risk for increased flooding**. Even though there are no open bodies of water in the township, these areas can still be impacted by heavy storm events. 53% of the Township’s surface area is covered by pavement or buildings, which deflect stormwater rather than absorbing it, and this high impervious percentage contributed to the roads’ classifications as medium risk.⁶⁴

The Township has experienced more frequent Category 2 storms in the last few years than ever before, which have caused power outages, property damage, and flooding. Additionally, utility company response times are very slow in Royal Oak Township, so preventing outages in the first place is more important than ever.

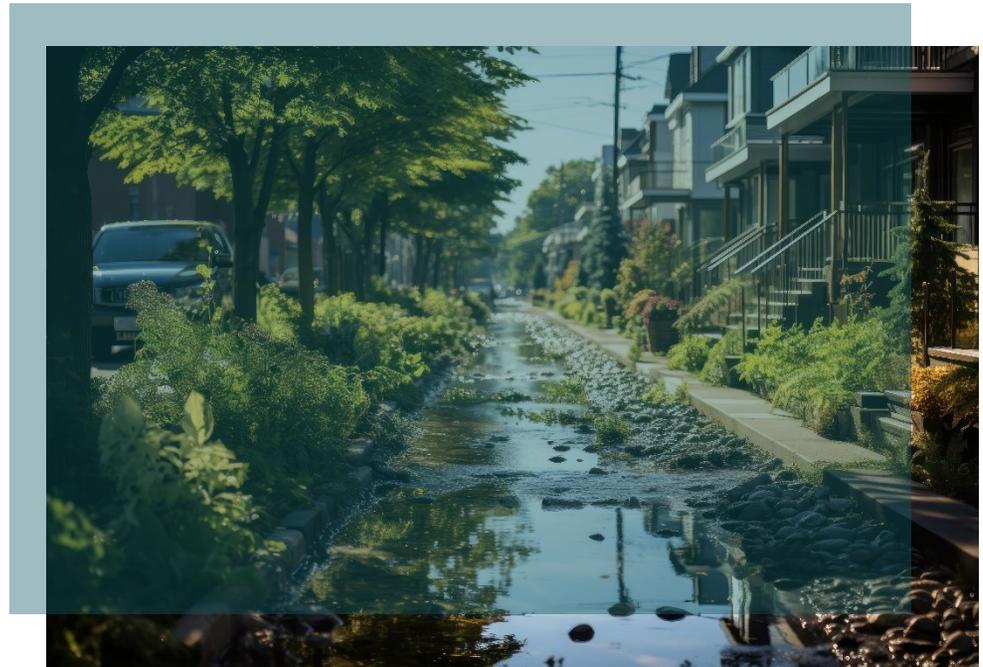
Green Infrastructure

Vegetative surfaces that capture stormwater are now considered a part of the stormwater infrastructure system because they **help control floods and naturally cleanse dirty rainwater**. Instead of flowing straight to the river, the water is slowed down by the vegetation and absorbed back into the soil. These features are referred to as green infrastructure (or bioretention)—rain gardens, wetlands, and swales are some of the features that improve water quality and **make the community more attractive**. Green infrastructure features also lower the impact that storms have on the community by **reducing the burden on pipes, reducing flooding, and providing numerous environmental benefits**. **As a bonus, these features provide urban wildlife habitat and help lower air temperatures.**

Green infrastructure is defined in two broad categories in Southeast Michigan:

- 1) Natural that are present in the natural, undisturbed environment such as wetlands, woodlands, prairies, and parks.
- 2) Constructed or built infrastructure such as rain gardens, bioswales, or community gardens, all of which capture runoff.

Although Royal Oak Township does not have any green infrastructure today, there are numerous public and private locations where it would be suitable throughout the Township, especially in parts of the parks where periodic flooding is an issue.



Benefits of Green Infrastructure

<i>Water Quality</i>		Green infrastructure reduces the amount of polluted stormwater runoff entering our rivers and lakes. In cities with combined sewer systems, green infrastructure is being used to reduce sewer overflows during storms.
<i>Flooding</i>		Green infrastructure can reduce flood risk by slowing and reducing stormwater runoff into waterways.
<i>Water Supply</i>		Harvesting rainwater is good for outdoor irrigation and some indoor uses. Water infiltrated into the soil recharges groundwater and increases flow into rivers.
<i>Quality of Life</i>		Green infrastructure provides aesthetic benefits to the area by increasing the amount of a community's green space.
<i>Recreation</i>		Green infrastructure can provide recreational and tourism opportunities including increased access to hiking, hunting, fishing, and bird watching.
<i>Economic Growth</i>		Green infrastructure can increase residential property values located near trails, parks, and waterways. In addition, green infrastructure is one way to attract and retain the knowledge-based workforce in our region.
<i>Traffic Calming</i>		Green infrastructure techniques along roads can also be used to slow traffic and provide a buffer between the roadway and pedestrians.
<i>Habitat Connections</i>		Green infrastructure can provide needed links in habitat corridors to strengthen and support rare and important plant and animal areas in the community.
<i>Air Quality</i>		Increased vegetation positively impacts air quality through carbon sequestration, the capture of fugitive dust, and removal of air pollutants.
<i>Individual Health</i>		Green infrastructure encourages outdoor physical activity, which can have a positive impact in fighting obesity and chronic diseases.
<i>Public Finances</i>		Green infrastructure can reduce a community's infrastructure costs by using natural systems rather than built systems, and by avoiding building lengthy new stormwater pipes.
<i>Energy and Climate</i>		Implementing techniques such as green roofs, increased tree plantings around buildings, converting turfgrass to no-mow areas, and reclaiming stormwater for use onsite can reduce energy consumption and save money.

CLIMATE AND HEAT

Due to climate change, Michigan is becoming warmer and wetter. Extreme storm events can cause infrastructure damage and impact human health by causing injuries, property damage, or spreading infectious diseases (source). Climate change is also **increasing the number of days with extreme heat in the summer, which can lead to heat cramps, heat exhaustion, heat syncope, and heat stroke.**

Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. These shifts may be natural, such as through variations in the solar cycle. But since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to burning fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas. Burning fossil fuels generates greenhouse gas emissions that act like a blanket wrapped around the Earth, trapping the sun's heat and raising temperatures. Examples of greenhouse gas emissions causing climate change include carbon dioxide and methane. Energy, industry, transport, buildings, agriculture, and construction are among the main emitters.

Heat

The climate of Royal Oak Township and southeast Michigan is influenced by its location within the urban "heat island" of metro Detroit. Climate change is already having noticeable health impacts as temperatures rise, leading to more dangerously hot days, and pollution increases, affecting those with lung conditions.

The more natural vegetation is replaced with buildings and pavement, the hotter the city gets. Two factors create the urban heat island effect: the loss of trees and vegetative cover to development and the construction of dark surfaces

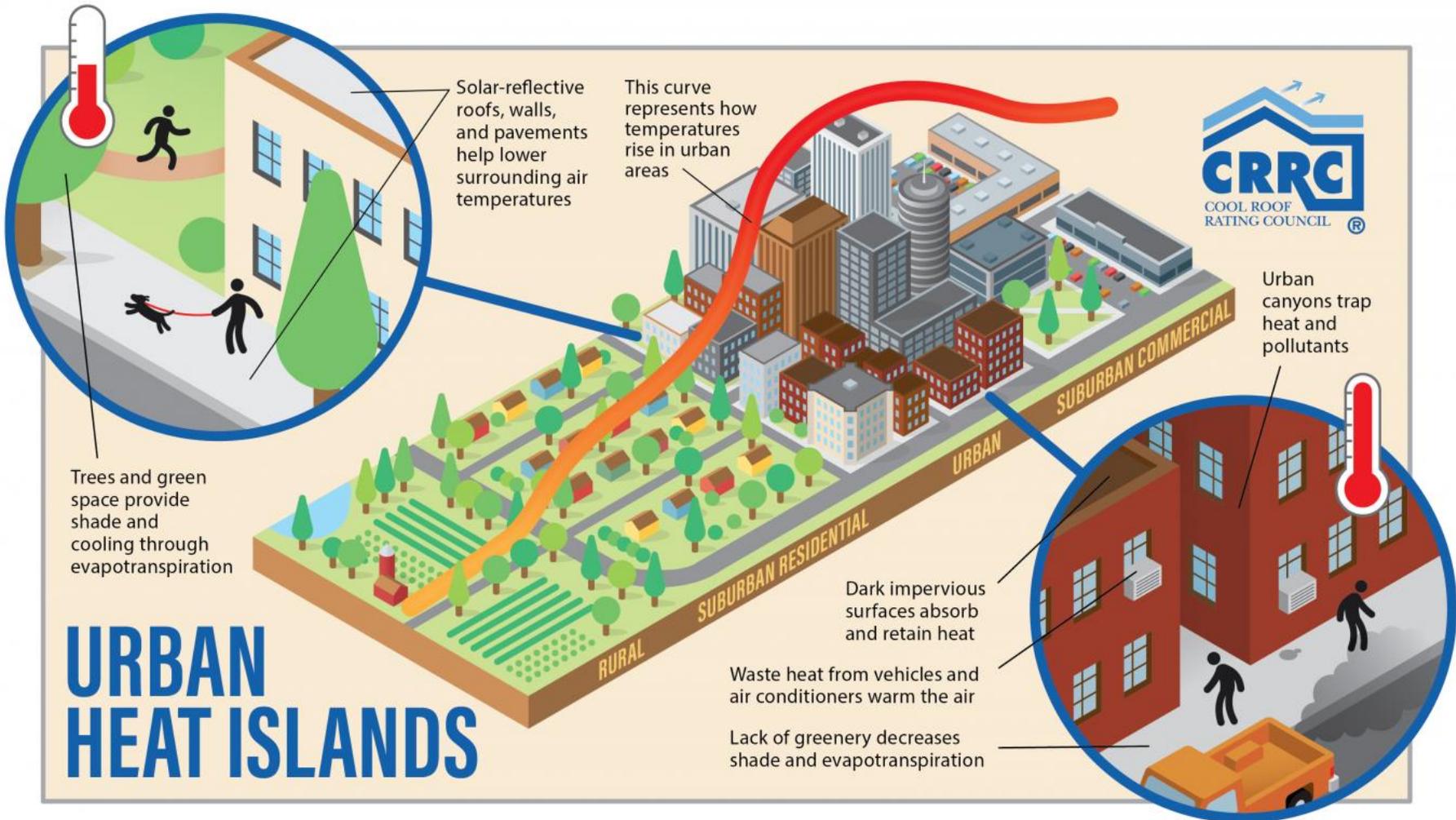
(especially pavement and rooftops) that absorb heat and re-radiate that heat. Trees and plantings help cool communities by shading surfaces, buildings, and waterways, deflecting solar radiation and transpiring water back to the atmosphere.

A 2020 study in Scientific Reports magazine found that greenery alone can mitigate the urban heat island effect by up to 21%. In general, research has found that trees can reduce local temperatures by up to 5°F, providing significant relief during summer months. For example, when comparing two hypothetical parks where one has 30% less trees than the other, the park with less trees would be an average of 4°F hotter. This poses a great risk to public health, given that heat wave mortality risk increases by 2.5% for each 1°F increase in air temperature.

Heat is also a considerable factor in the wear and tear of surface parking lots and asphalt roads. Increased temperatures lower the structural integrity of asphalt roads, leading to buckling and cracking over time. When feasible, park roads and sidewalks should be constructed of concrete, which is considerably more durable than asphalt even though concrete roads come with higher construction costs. This measure is a simple way to reduce maintenance and improve sustainability over time.

Community design elements that may help lessen the urban heat island effect, in addition to providing air and water quality benefits described above, include:

- Creating parks, green rooftop parks, gardens, and green spaces
- Promoting green infrastructure stormwater management techniques in site design, including the trees, green roofs, permeable pavements, and other plantings that filter water and reduce heat island effects
- Making buildings energy-efficient
- Minimizing the use of dark surfaces that absorb heat and re-radiate that heat during the evenings, when the land would otherwise cool down



Trends and Changes

UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Across the nation, cities are reconsidering how their parks and recreation facilities can better accommodate a diverse resident base, which includes people with physical and cognitive disabilities. “Universal design” is a key principle that ensures **all individuals, regardless of age or ability, can enjoy the parks and recreation facilities**. To implement universal design effectively, cities are using a variety of strategies.

- **Inclusive Play Areas:** Creating inclusive play areas in parks by incorporating universally designed playground equipment allows children of all abilities to engage in play together.
- **Accessible Trails and Pathways:** Developing accessible trails and pathways that connect different park amenities allows everyone to explore and enjoy the natural environment. Pathways should ensure that curb cuts are accessible from parking areas and crosswalks.
- **Seating and Rest Areas:** Installing seating and rest areas at regular intervals throughout parks better accommodates individuals with varying mobility needs.
- **Accessible Restrooms:** Upgrading or building new restroom facilities with accessible stalls, changing tables, and clear signage indicating their location allows individuals to stay at parks longer and enjoy more amenities.
- **Universal Signage:** Implementing universally designed signage throughout parks by using clear and simple language, large fonts, and high-contrast colors helps allow people to more easily locate facilities.
- **Shade and Shelter:** Providing shade structures and shelters with accessible seating areas allows park visitors to take refuge from the sun or rain.
- **Adult Fitness Equipment:** Incorporating adult fitness equipment creates opportunities to increase health and fitness for a wider range of users, especially older adults.



In tandem with these physical considerations, the cognitive design of parks is being re-evaluated. It is important to acknowledge the potential to foster social-emotional development. This means outdoor environments intentionally designed to encourage emotional expression, support the nurturing of relationships, and facilitate positive social interactions among community members. The emphasis here is on interaction and cooperation, providing opportunities for people to connect through outdoor activities while honing essential relationship skills.

Furthermore, development of inclusive, universally designed playgrounds can help to instill self-confidence by helping children interact with others and the environment in a variety of ways. A creatively designed recreation space can also embrace the sensory domain, encompassing the seven senses. By integrating sensory experiences into park design, spaces are created that cater to varying sensory needs, benefiting all visitors, including those with sensory sensitivities. Parks and playgrounds should also thoughtfully consider cognitive development by encouraging features that promote problem-solving, abstract thinking, and experiential learning.

Currently, the Township Parks and Recreation Department is working on installing a new physically accessible playground in Mack-Rowe Memorial Park.

This project is currently in the construction phase and is expected to be completed in 2024. In the meantime, nearby universal playgrounds can be found at:

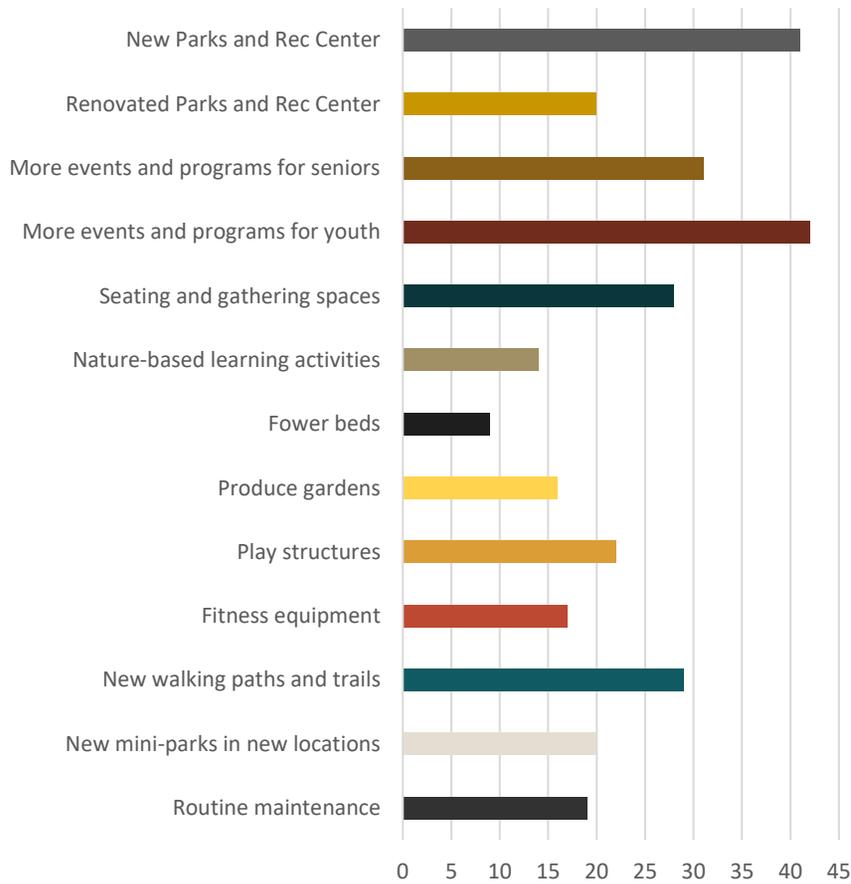
- Inglenook Park in Southfield
- Beech Woods Park in Southfield
- Ferndale Early Childhood Center

TREES AS INFRASTRUCTURE

Communities around the US are increasingly starting to think of trees as a key part of the stormwater infrastructure system. Trees act as a “living utility” by intercepting stormwater and absorbing it before it becomes a burden on municipal pipes and waterways. For example, the City of Ann Arbor maintains an extensive street tree network that captures 65 million gallons of stormwater each year, amounting to approximately \$4 million in infrastructure savings for the city. As cities trend toward more invocative definitions for “utilities,” it may be time for the Township to consider the inclusion of natural features, beyond green infrastructure, as a formal infrastructure asset.

Public Feedback

How could the Township's parks and recreation system be improved? Choose up to 5 options.



Parks and Recreation

ROYAL OAK TOWNSHIP OF ROYAL OAK

PARK AMENITIES AND PROGRAMS

Which of the following possible amenities would you use in the parks?

	Chic Center Park <i>located between Majestic and Majestic</i>	Mack-Rowe Park <i>located between Reinswite and Bertelawn</i>	Grant Park <i>located off Chivalrydale between Garden Lane and Westview</i>
paths and trails	●●●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●
Play structures	●●●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●
Produce gardens	●●●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●
Flower beds	●●●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●
Nature-based learning activities	●●●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●
Seating and gathering spaces	●●●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●
Others?			

Sticky notes on the chart include: "Need more lighting/safety", "parks could use emergency lights", "flower beds/butterfly garden", "conversation areas in park", "more staff on the empty bit of chic center park", "need more accessible paths of all types", "Restrooms", "Accessible bathrooms at Chic Center Park", "Add a 'Sticky' (just say it so you can't see it)", "Walking/scenic path", "game days", "Seating, chairs/benches, swinging benches", "Places to gather and converse, hang out", "dog park and sports courts to rest", "health? if so, which activities do you currently do in the parks (walking, township launches new programs in the park, which active lifestyle)", "Indoor/Winter Programs too", "Emergency call boxes", "Need more exercise programs/jackie hall", "wellness programs", "lots of police activity near park - makes it feel unwelcoming", "Want to feel safe to let their kids go out to the park", "Need website to advertise events in zones", "Just do one thing or the other with the rec center", "NEED SIGNAGE TO IDENTIFY PARK NAMES", "KEEP THE PARKS CLEAN!", "school (children ride) not being well-maintained", "WHY DID YOU REMOVE THE PLAYSCAPE @ GRANT PARK?", "Get rid of existing park signs", "Public safety - concerns about the cops, concern near the bridge walk (low visibility)", "Use the parks to improve basketball, garden, would you like to see?"

BRAINSTORM

How can the Township address the future of the Recreation Center while keeping the community history in mind? Write your idea(s) on a sticky note and place below.

Sticky notes on the brainstorm section include: "Need website to advertise events in zones", "Just do one thing or the other with the rec center", "NEED SIGNAGE TO IDENTIFY PARK NAMES", "KEEP THE PARKS CLEAN!", "school (children ride) not being well-maintained", "WHY DID YOU REMOVE THE PLAYSCAPE @ GRANT PARK?", "Get rid of existing park signs", "Public safety - concerns about the cops, concern near the bridge walk (low visibility)", "Use the parks to improve basketball, garden, would you like to see?"

ROYAL OAK TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY PLAN - OPEN HOUSE
JANUARY 30, 2024

Key Takeaways

NOTE: For more information on the Recreation Center, please see the Civic Buildings and Services chapter.

SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING

During the public survey, workshop, and listening sessions, many residents mentioned the lack of quality signage as an issue. People visiting the Township did not know they had entered the community, and numerous long-lived residents did not know the name of Civic Center Park due to the lack of signage. Furthermore, the signage on Meyers Road appears to suggest to drivers that they are entering Oak Park rather than the Township. Residents asked for consistent signage across properties and Township entry points to help encourage the use of the parks and make the Township more welcoming.

HEALTHY AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

Trails and Fitness

Without the Recreation Center, the demand for fitness and walking amenities in the parks is higher than ever. Through the public survey, residents reported new walking paths and trails as their third-highest priority, after a new/renovated Recreation Center and programs for seniors and youth. Fitness equipment was also desired, particularly in Civic Center Park. Fitness amenities would also help support the public health and healthy living goals in the People and Health chapter of this plan.

Universal Accessibility

Throughout the listening sessions and public workshop, a common theme emerged – a lack of accessible options in the parks. Many of the park sidewalks have segments in disrepair, and the structures within the park cannot be reached by someone who uses a mobility device. Not only is universal design in the parks important but having safe access to the parks as well. The Township must support efforts to improve pedestrian connections, lighting, and other accessibility components which help residents reach and feel comfortable in the parks.

AMENITIES AND ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGES

Play and Connection

Across all of the public engagement, residents voiced the need for more gathering spaces to connect with one another. Every park should have spaces for active play and recreation programming, as well as seating and respite areas for rest and socialization. Without the Recreation Center, providing these spaces in the parks is critically important. Today, most of the Township's parks only have one or the other, and much of the space is underused. Residents of all ages ranked seating and gathering spaces and play structures and two of the most important features for new park renovations.

Multigenerational Offerings

Multigenerational offerings are amenities and programs which allow youth, seniors, and everyone in-between to recreate together. Residents want more indoor and outdoor options for seniors and youth, and multigenerational offerings can help meet both needs. For example, converting the existing tennis court at Grant Park into a pickleball court would help reactivate the space and offer a sport that is enjoyed by people of all ages. At any future Recreation Center, residents also want programs for young children, teens, and seniors as a top priority.

Flowers, Food, and Nature

Currently, the Township lacks three key types of nature-based activities: flower gardens, produce gardens, and natural space (woodlands or similar spaces). Although the Township's urban character means it will never have an undisturbed natural area, there are still opportunities to provide these amenities. Through the public engagement for this Plan, residents expressed an especially strong desire for flower gardens at Civic Center and Grant Parks. Adding new trees in parks is one of the simplest ways to help fight the urban heat island effect. It is also wise to retain and protect existing trees, since their wide, mature leaf canopies provide ample cooling, and they are less costly than planting new trees. There is an opportunity to expand the parkland with existing trees through dedication of new mini-parks or the incorporation of the vacant parcels north of Mack-Rowe Park (the most naturalized property left in the Township). Any future park dedications should focus on parcels which have either mature trees or opportunities for walking trail access.

Shared Goals

- 1. MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE EXISTING PARKS**
- 2. SUPPORT HEALTHY LIVING AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLES THROUGH PARKS AND RECREATION**
- 3. ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ALL PARKS AND FUTURE FACILITIES**
- 4. INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY CONNECTION**
- 5. USE PARKLAND AS A PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITY**
- 6. IMPROVE OPTIONS FOR NATURE-BASED ENGAGEMENT IN THE PARKS**

7. Civic Services and Infrastructure

Civic services and facilities – from drinking water to broadband internet – are essential to everyday life. These assets are provided by both governmental agencies and private companies. The Community Master Plan envisions continued and enhanced public service provision, enhanced accessibility to public places, and increased recreational opportunities in Royal Oak Township.

Current Conditions

TOWNSHIP BUILDINGS

Township Hall (Grant School)

21131 Garden Lane is the headquarters of the Township administration, housed inside of Grant School. The Township occupies roughly 75% of the rooms on the second floor and shares the building with the Tri-County Educational Center. The Township Clerk, Building Department, Supervisor’s Office, Treasurer, and Finance Department are all located at Township Hall.

Recreation Building

The Recreation Center was constructed in 1944 as the George Washington Carver Elementary School. In 1968, the Oak Park School District renovated the school and divided it into two sections. The southern portion was used for kindergarten through eighth grades, while the northern portion was sold to the Township to be used as a Recreation Center in 1971. The center offered limited programs of various types, including both indoor and outdoor classes, sports teams, and events. The former elementary school portion has been vacant on and off since 1982 and until recently was the home of the Academy of Oak Park Charter School.

The Recreation Center has been vacant since 2020 due to the pandemic, and the structural damage incurred during this time has prevented its reopening. The 2019 Master Plan set a goal of renovating the building, but due to extensive repair needed the Recreation Commission may not have the financial resources to pursue this option. During the public engagement for this Plan, residents were roughly evenly divided on whether to rehab or replace the building, with a slight majority suggesting a brand-new Recreation Center over renovation. This division is partly due to the historic nature of the site, where many residents attended school. The Carver School and Recreation Center is listed on the State Register of Historic Sites as a building “associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history” due to its part in school desegregation.



PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Public infrastructure and services are community benefits run by a governmental agency or contracted by one. Generally, these services are paid for through property taxes. Some services, such as drinking water, are run by a government agency but are funded through user fees, meaning only the people using the service are charged.

NOTE: For information about stormwater and street trees, please see the Parks and Environment chapter above. For information about roads and sidewalks, please see the Transportation chapter below.



Fire

The Township contracts with the Ferndale Fire Department to provide emergency services. The closest fire station is at Livernois and 9 Mile, which is the headquarters of the department.



Police

The Township contracts with the Michigan State Police to provide law enforcement and emergency services. The Metro North Post is at 14350 10 Mile Road in Oak Park, north of the Township. In 1998, Township residents voted to abolish the local police department due to the running financial deficits and several scandals. Since then, the Township was served for a brief period by the Oakland County Sherrif's Department before switching to the State Police.



Trash and Waste

Since 2014, the Township has contracted with GFL to provide trash collection services. GFL picks up general trash and yard waste but does not provide recycling services to township residents.



Schools

The Township is served by two school districts: Ferndale Schools and Oak Park Schools. Wyoming Avenue is the dividing line between the two districts. The only school located within the Township's boundary is Grant School (aka the Tri-County Educational Center), which is a part of the Ferndale School District. Grant School is an alternative school which caters to students who have gotten off-track at their local high school and need special assistance. Currently, the school serves students aged 16 - 21 and adult students aged 22+ from Oakland, Wayne, and Macomb Counties.



Library

The Royal Oak Township Library is in Grant School at 21131 Garden Ln and operates from 11AM to 6PM Tuesday through Thursday. The Library provides critical computer and internet access for residents, with internet extending into the parking lot helping to supplement service on days when the library is closed. In 2024, the Library has been undergoing renovations to slim down its book collection, update its walls and carpet, and fix plumbing issues in the space. Additionally, the Library is currently working on expanding its reach through marketing, event planning, and adding other services for residents. The Library already offers many valuable options for residents, from the Michigan Activities Pass to the Hoopla online library, and raising awareness of these items is a key priority. The Library is governed by the Library Board, which is an autonomous body separate from the Township Board of Trustees.



Senior Services

With the closure of the Recreation Center, the Township's senior services have been scaled back. As of 2024, the Township's Senior Services Coordinator operates the Fannie Adams Transportation service, which provides on-demand bus service for seniors, disabled residents, low-income residents, and children. The Senior Coordinator also helped administer the Senior Garden, located in Grant Park, prior to the pandemic. The Township hosts several routine senior events in Room 210 of the Tri-County Educational center, such as knitting and bingo. In 2020, the Township received funding for large screen television, laptops, and re-charge stations for computers and to hire technology instructors for seniors.



Drinking Water

Royal Oak Township's water is purchased from the Southeastern Oakland County Water Authority (SOCWA). SOCWA provides Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) water through its member distribution systems to a population of 210,000 within a 56 square mile area. All water billing for properties in the township is done by Oakland County.

The drinking water comes from the Detroit River, which ultimately receives its water from rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, reservoirs, springs, and wells. As water travels over the surface of the land or through the ground, it dissolves naturally occurring minerals and, in some cases, radioactive material, and can pick up substances resulting from the presence of animals or from human activity.

In order to ensure that tap water is safe to drink, EPA prescribes regulations, which limit the number of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations establish limits for contaminants in bottled water, which must provide the same protection for public health. The State of Michigan, in partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey, the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department, and the Michigan Public Health Institute, performed a source water assessment to determine the susceptibility of GLWA's Detroit River source water for potential contamination. The report described GLWA's Detroit River intakes as highly susceptible to potential contamination, but not currently contaminated. **All four GLWA water treatment plants that draw water from the Detroit River have historically provided satisfactory treatment and meet drinking water standards.**

In June of 2018, the State of Michigan adopted one of the strictest lead and copper rule provisions of the Safe Drinking Water Act in the Nation. Among these new changes is the requirement to inventory all lead water service lines and complete full-service line replacements at an annual rate so that all lead service lines are removed within 20 years. Over the past 4 years, the Township has replaced the lead service lines to all residences willing to participate, at no cost to the homeowner. As the program wraps up in 2024, a handful of residents have not responded or could not be contacted, and the Township is currently navigating how to manage the remaining project funds.

PRIVATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Private infrastructure and services are those which provide a community benefit but are run by a private corporation. These services are funded entirely through user fees, meaning only the people using the service are charged. Michigan has privatized many of the essential infrastructure services that are public in other states.

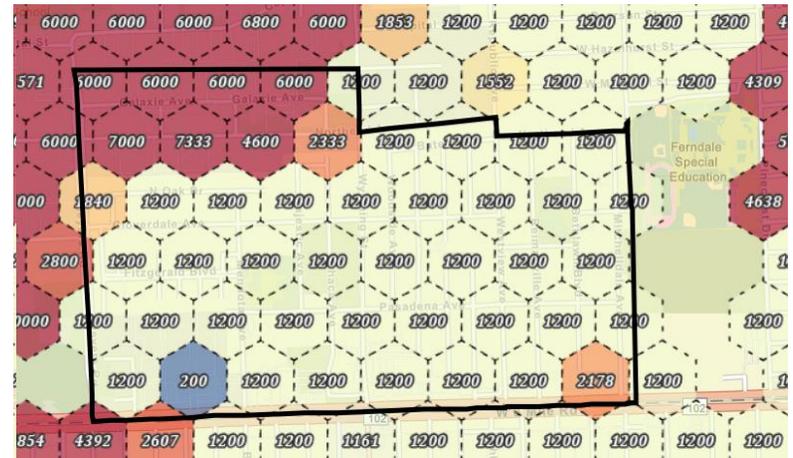
Internet and Telecommunications

The term “broadband” refers to high-speed internet. **Internet access is no longer an optional amenity in the modern day – it is a necessity.** When people lack internet access or the ability to use a computer, they lack the ability to look for jobs, services, and information. Children now use the internet to submit homework, while seniors use it to locate aging support agencies and home contractors; this internet is no longer just for a subset of society, but for everyone. Because the internet connects us socially and economically, providing broadband in Royal Oak Township is extremely important.

Broadband comes in many forms and can generally be divided into two categories: fixed infrastructure (cable, fiberoptics, and DLS) and mobile infrastructure (wireless, cellular, and satellite). For those who pay for internet service, Royal Oak Township has decently fast internet. Most people have download speeds of 1,200 Mbps or higher, which allows you to do most tasks on a computer without delay. The entire Township is served by Xfinity (Comcast) cable service at a maximum of 1,200 Mbps, while roughly 1/3 of the Township is served by AT&T fiberoptic service at a maximum speed of 1,000 Mbps.⁶⁵

This means the main issues in the Township facing internet users are not access, but cost and a lack of choices among internet providers. Roughly half of the Township only has two internet providers to choose between, and the other half has only three. When comparison shopping, this limits residents' options for getting internet at an affordable price. Fixed fiberoptics are still important because they can host multiple internet providers at once using the same infrastructure, thus increasing competition between companies and lowering prices for consumers.

However, individual internet providers are moving away from new fiberoptics due to the high infrastructure cost of installation and moving toward mobile broadband options. Any future new individual providers in the Township will likely offer mobile broadband, such as home 5G or satellite, rather than expanding the fixed broadband network. As such, the task of coordinating new fiberoptics has largely fallen to local governments in Michigan, putting communities in the strange position of trying to facilitate private infrastructure as though it were public.⁶⁶ In most cases where local governments have decided to help fund fixed broadband, they have coordinated it with other planned roadwork (repaving, sewer replacements, etc.) to try to reduce costs.



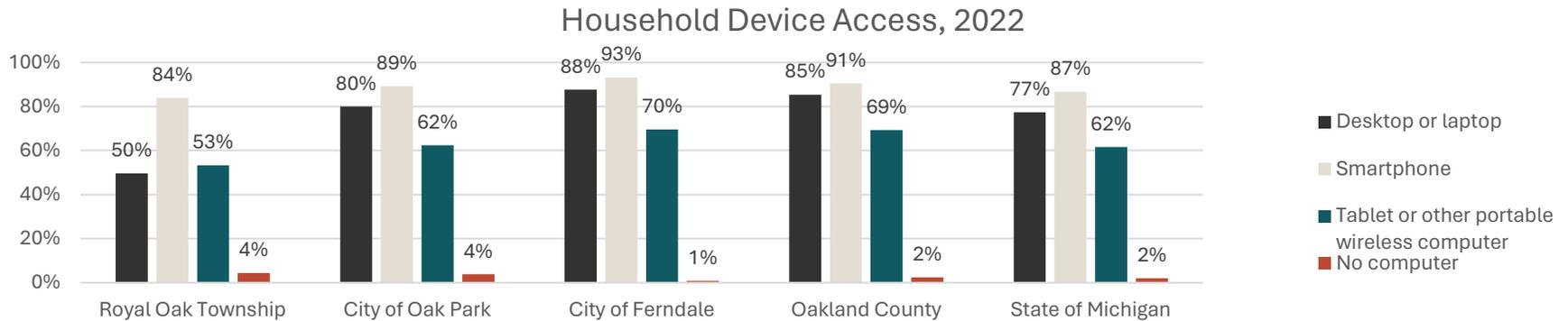
Township internet speeds in Mbps, 2023



Township number of internet providers per address, 2023

Device Access

To access the internet, residents must also have internet-capable devices. Township residents have lower access to internet capable devices than the state and adjacent cities, making computer access at schools and libraries critical.



Higher Education

Although there are no trade schools, colleges, or universities in the Township, there are several located within a 4-mile radius. The bulk of the offerings are trade schools related to medical training and cosmetology, with fewer options for two- and four-year colleges and universities. Higher education institutions across the state are also improving their online offerings, which are discounted for all in-state residents. The Township is approximately 1.5 miles away from the Lewis College of Business, the first and only historically Black college in Michigan.

Trade Schools

- Davis Pressley School of Cosmetology, Royal Oak
- Douglas J Aveda Institute, Royal Oak
- Jardon Vocational School, Ferndale
- Detroit Carpentry Apprentice, Ferndale
- P&A Beauty Scholars, Southfield
- HVAC U, Southfield
- Northwestern Technological Institute, Southfield
- Specs Howard School of Media Arts (within Lawrence Tech University), Southfield
- Michigan Health Institute, Southfield

- Abcott Institute, Southfield
- National Personal Training Institute, Detroit
- A. Philip Randolph Career and Technical Center, Detroit
- Greater Horizon Training Institute, Detroit
- Cambridge Computer Institute, Detroit
- Phlebotomy Express Training Centers LLC, Detroit
- Odyssey Educational Center, Detroit
- Samuels International Cosmetology Academy, Detroit

- Oakland Community College, Royal Oak
- Baker College, Royal Oak
- Wayne County Community College, Detroit
- Lewis College of Business, Detroit

Universities

- University of Detroit Mercy, Detroit
- Lawrence Tech University, Southfield
- Spring Arbor University, Southfield
- Central Michigan University, Southfield
- Siena Heights University, Southfield

Two- and Four-Year Colleges

- Oakland Community College, Southfield

Gas and Energy

Township electricity is provided by DTE Electric, while gas is provided by Consumers Energy. As storms are becoming more frequent and intense in Michigan, **power outages have been on the rise due to downed tree limbs and power lines.** In 2023 the Michigan Public Service Commission held several town halls to discuss the outage issue. Customers from both DTE and Consumers Energy territories spoke about outage credits, the length of storm related outages, the frequency of outages in their communities, reliability and safety concerns surrounding downed wires, frustration with high electricity rates, difficulty reaching the utility by phone, inaccurate and changing restoration time estimates, and poor customer service and communication provided by the utilities throughout the outages. An outage credit is a penalty for poor utility performance outlined in rules approved by the MPSC. The penalty, or outage credit, is paid to impacted utility customers when the utility does not meet performance standards. The MPSC recently increased the outage credit from a single \$25 credit per event to \$35 per event with an additional \$35 per day for outages longer than outlined in the rules.⁶⁷

The majority of customers in Michigan now have newer automated meters which allow the utility to know when power is out, allowing utilities to dispatch crews to impacted areas more quickly. **Customers with older analog meters need to contact the utility to let them know when their power is out – this is common in Royal Oak Township.** However, when the power goes out, phone service and internet service also go out. This means that Township residents who do not have a data-enabled phone or tablet have a very hard time reporting outage. **As a community with a high number of seniors, children, and low-income residents, consistent power access is critical for public health and safety in the Township.**

Following a settlement in 2023, DTE is now required to report more details information on its customer service during outages. The most recent annual report found that DTE was meeting most of its compliance benchmarks, with the exception of service restoration during catastrophic events. Catastrophic events are storms which cut power to more than 10% of all electricity customers. In 2023, the MPSC set a benchmark for DTE to restore service to over 90% of customers within 60 hours, but the company was only able to restore 83% within the timeframe.⁶⁸

Childcare

Michigan has two general categories of childcare: family/group childcare and commercial childcare. Family/group childcare is when a resident provides daytime childcare for other people's children at their home. In Michigan, any residential property may be used for family childcare if it serves less than 6 children and meets the licensing requirements of Michigan. Commercial childcare refers to businesses where people drop off their children for the full day at a location other than a residential home; stand-alone buildings or church-based childcare facilities both fall into this group. Like family childcare, commercial childcare also requires licensing through the State of Michigan. However, commercial childcare is also regulated by local governments through Zoning Ordinances, which restrict where commercial childcare can be located.

Royal Oak Township currently has 4 childcare businesses operating within its borders, and all are family/group homes. This means that there are approximately 24 childcare “seats” available for the 148 children under 5 years old living in the township, per the 2020 Census. When more than 3 children are competing for a seat, an area is classified as a “childcare desert,” meaning there is not enough service for the population. The 48220 ZIP code, which encompasses the Township and Ferndale, is a childcare desert.⁶⁹



Trends and Changes

GROWING SUPPORT FOR INTERNET ACCESS

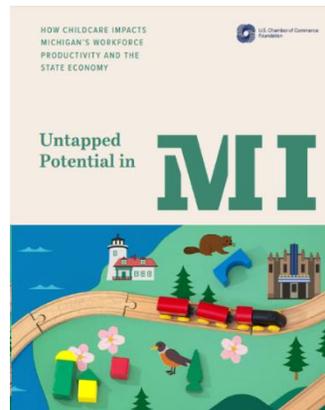
Recognizing the need for affordable, universal internet, the state created the Michigan High-Speed Internet (MIHI) Office in June 2021. Since then, the Office has helped launch the Affordability Connectivity Program for all Michigan residents, offered grant programs for rural communities to improve their internet access, created a resource map of free Wi-Fi hotspots, and more.⁷⁰ **As the state recognizes the economic and health impacts of poor internet, funding support for affordable access has grown.**

Additionally, private companies continue to support internet access through innovation and experimentation. Over time, new inventions emerge that revolutionize the internet landscape – most recently 5G has been sweeping the nation with higher reliability and faster speeds. Over time, internet offerings will continue to evolve and provide new solutions to access and affordability challenges.

CHILDCARE AS AN ECONOMIC NECESSITY

According to a recent study by the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Michigan ranks 39th in labor force participation relative to other states and many parents may not be able to continue working without adequate childcare options. The report found that **insufficient childcare availability is costing Michigan \$2.88 billion in lost economic activity each year.** 63% of young parents had to miss work or school due to childcare issues in 2021, and 14% had to quit their job to provide childcare at home.

Children given appropriate childcare perform better in school, are less likely to drop out, and achieve higher test scores, and allows parents the flexibility to pursue careers or enhance their education or vocational skills. Lack of access to



childcare means many people miss out on these opportunities. For childcare to be considered affordable, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) states that it should not consume more than 7% of a family's household income. The Foundation's survey found that low-income families spend on average 16% of their household income on childcare. The report also found that local governments miss out on the tax gains from childcare businesses, totaling \$576 million lost state-wide.⁷¹

ENERGY RESILIENCE

Energy resilience refers to the ability to bounce back, as both a homeowner and community, from energy outages. Energy resilience is increased by having more energy options (solar, wind, etc.) for individual buildings, and a more reliable power grid.

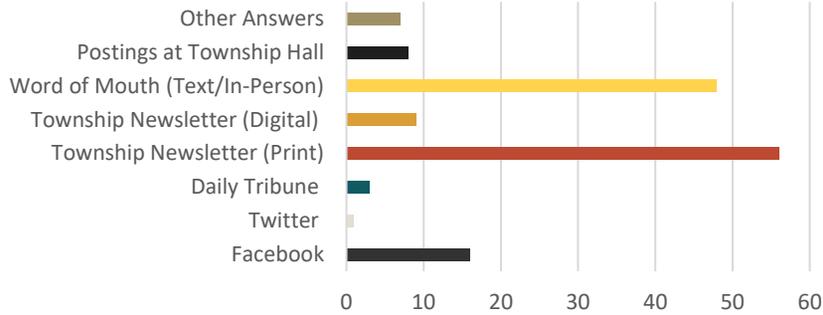
Over the long term, rooftop solar can save homeowners thousands of dollars on electric bills. Combined with inverters or battery storage to work off-grid, it can also make communities more resilient to power outages from natural disasters. However, there are racial, ethnic, and income-based disparities in solar access. A recent study found that predominantly Black census tracts had a rate of rooftop-solar adoption 69% lower than tracts with no racial majority, while predominantly Hispanic tracts had a rate that was 30% lower. This is partially due to the high up-front cost of installing a rooftop solar system and partially due to the high rates of rentership in many Black neighborhoods across America. Negotiating solar installation with a landlord requires much more work, resulting in lower adoption rates.⁷²

Some communities are easing their solar regulations to allow for easier installation. For example, homeowners in River Rouge, MI can install solar panels in their side and back yards, rather than having to mount them on the roof, which makes the process dramatically cheaper and easier. In Royal Oak Township, new solar installations can be found on a select few homes as well as the ALDI supermarket.

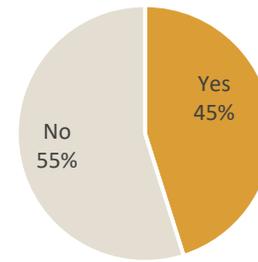
Simultaneously, the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) has been pushing to make the state-wide energy grid more resilient to storm events and failures. In 2023, the MPSC enacted new Service Quality and Reliability Standards for utility companies improve wire down response times, provide automatic outage credits to qualifying customers, discourage long duration distribution system outages, and provide the Commission greater transparency for reviewing utilities companies.⁷³

Public Feedback

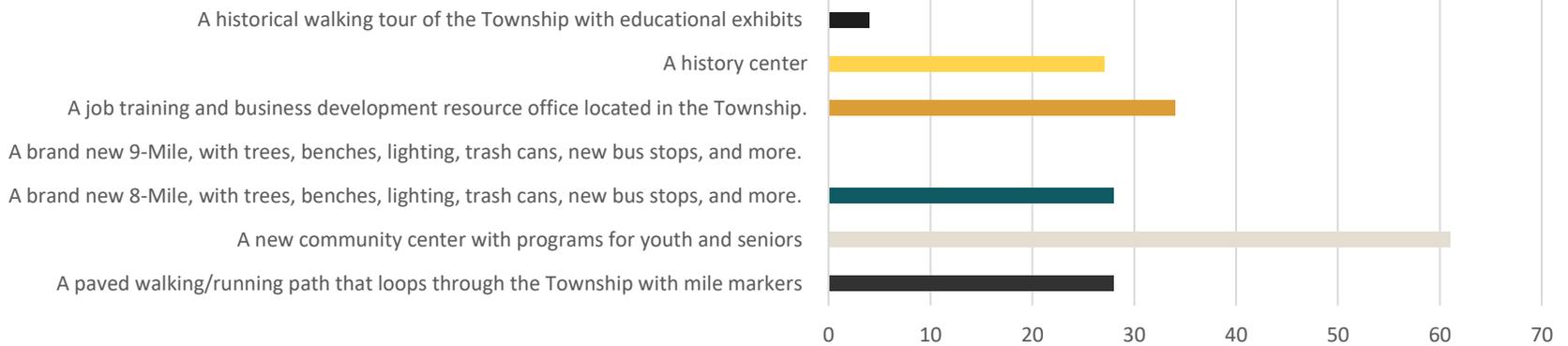
How do you find information about what is going on in the Township? Choose all that apply.



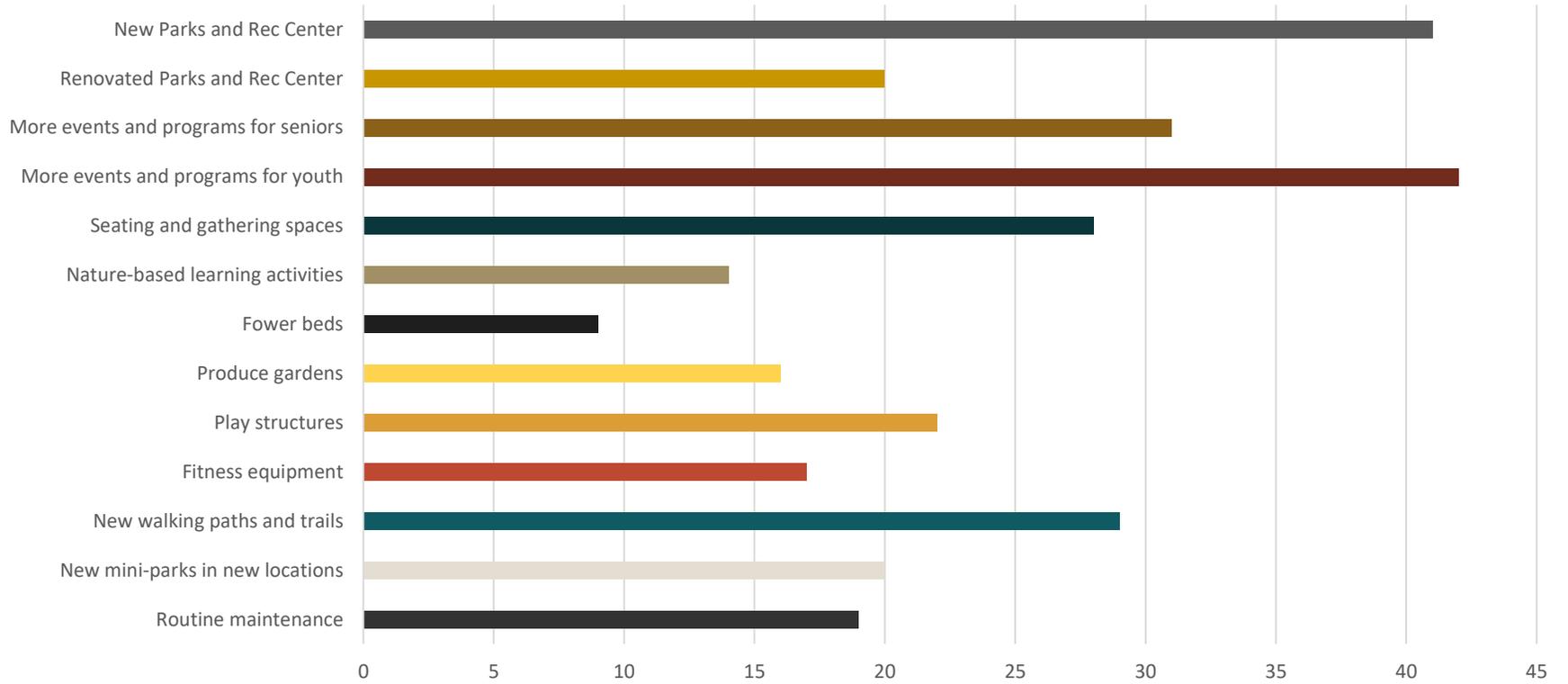
Do any College Graduates (or Certified Skilled Trades) in your family live in the Township?



The Master Plan is our opportunity to dream big for the future. Which of the following big ideas would you most like to see? Choose 2 to 3 options.



How could the Township's parks and recreation system be improved? Choose up to 5 options.



Key Takeaways

DEMAND FOR NEW TOWNSHIP OFFICE AND COMMUNITY CENTER

Residents are divided on whether to renovate or replace the existing Recreation Center, but all agree that a new Community Center is essential. During the public survey, respondents voted a new Community Center as the top “big idea” for the Township’s future – 2 times more than any other option. Residents expressed support for a scaled-down Community Center, smaller than the Recreation Building, which would have less maintenance costs but still provide space for classes, sports, and other activities. Additionally, residents emphasized the need for a modern facility with disability access, heating and cooling, and other new features.

There are several options for the location of any future Township offices and Community Center. The current Recreation Center property and the former administrative offices property, at the corner of Wyoming and Cloverdale, are the simplest candidates. Both properties are already owned by the Township and would require less planning than other privately-owned sites. They are also both centrally located and already served by utilities. There are also several mixed-use redevelopment sites where the Township could pursue a community center in tandem with a future private development. For example, a Community Center could be located on the first floor of a multi-family residential building that is constructed as a part of a Planned Unit Development on the former Mel Far dealership site.

EASING CHILDCARE PRESSURE

Today, the Township’s Zoning regulations make it almost impossible to establish commercial childcare facilities within the Township’s borders. By setting stricter standards for parking, outdoor space, and setbacks than the State, the Township is forcing childcare onto families or out of the community. These conditions have created a childcare “desert,” where there are five times as many young children as there are childcare openings. This childcare pressure leads to economic losses for young parents and lower educational outcomes for children. To support the health and prosperity of Township residents, the Township must ease its childcare regulations and alleviate the pressure on the system.

INCREASING OPTIONS AND AFFORDABILITY

For both broadband internet and energy, Township residents lack options when it comes to providers. Broadband and energy are available to every household in the Township, but the lack of provider choices means that residents cannot comparison shop for lower prices. As such, many are forced to choose a slower broadband plan or forgo internet altogether. Additionally, when a power outage occurs, residents do not have an alternative energy or internet option. As such, the Township must support projects that improve the number of broadband offerings, as well as advertise internet affordability resources. Similarly, the Township must adapt its regulations to allow more micro-grid energy projects, such as rooftop and backyard solar, and give property owners more options for energy resilience.

Shared Goals

- 1. MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE EXISTING CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE**
- 2. SUPPORT UTILITY RESILIENCE FOR RESIDENCES AND BUSINESSES**
- 3. SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE NEW CHILDCARE AND HIGHER EDUCATION OFFERINGS IN THE TOWNSHIP**
- 4. CONSOLIDATE CIVIC BUILDING ASSETS**

8. Transportation

Royal Oak Township is located at the heart of the regional transportation network and serves both local residents and people from all surrounding cities. The Community Master Plan envisions increased safety, managed truck traffic, pedestrian-focused enhancements and a circulation system that equitably serves all users of the public rights of way in Royal Oak Township.

Current Conditions

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Royal Oak Township is at the heart of the metro-Detroit transportation system. 8 Mile Road, a major east-west route runs along the southern edge of the Township and carries approximately 30,000 vehicular trips per day. Woodward Avenue, located about two miles east of the Township, is a main north-south transportation corridor that extends from Detroit to Pontiac. In addition, access to two major highways, US-10 and I-696, is within two miles of the Township. The Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport located in Romulus is the primary international airport for the Metro Detroit area and provides passenger and cargo service to the region.

Jurisdiction – Road Ownership & Maintenance Funding

All streets in the Township are either under the jurisdiction of the Oakland County Road Commission or the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) – the Township does not own any of its own roads. This means that permission from a higher government agency is required for any road, sidewalk, street tree, or lighting improvements. However, this does not mean that these agencies bear the full costs of new infrastructure. The Township is still required to contribute funds for transportation improvements, and the percentage that must be contributed differs depending on **1) the project scope, 2) the project location, and 2) the County/State program under which the project is funded.**

- **SCOPE:** A road improvement is a major road project such as repaving or conversion of gravel roads to paved roads. Road repair, on the other hand, is regular maintenance of road defects such as pothole filler, gravel road grading, crack sealer, shoulder work, etc. Road improvements are funded either partially or entirely by the Township. Road repairs are funded by the County, which provides basic maintenance.
- **LOCATION:** 8 Mile Road is controlled by MDOT, which has a planned update schedule for all its roads. Similarly, Wyoming Ave is controlled by the County, which has a planned update schedule for all its roads. This means that these roads will be updated every few decades using taxpayer funds without the Township intervening. If these roads are in

bad shape and the Township wants them fixed ahead of the planned schedule, the Township will need to contribute some of the funds to fix them.

- **FUNDING:** For example, when a transportation project is funded under the County’s Tri-Party Local Road Improvement Program, the Township must contribute 33% of the total funding. When a transportation project is funded under the State of Michigan’s Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), the Township must contribute 20% of the total funding. If the Township undertakes a local project without being part of a County or State program, the Township is responsible for 100% of the funding.

For every other road in the township – except Wyoming and 8 Mile – the Township is wholly responsible for funding re-paving. The County performs basic road maintenance, but any major repaving must be paid for by residents who live on the road through a special assessment, whereby those residents are charged a fee on their taxes for the repaving. This is because all the other roads in the township are considered “sub-local” roads. More information on sub-local roads can be found below and later in this chapter in the Classifying the Road System section.

The jurisdictional problem faced by the Township is not unique to Royal Oak Township. In every Township across the state, the County or State has jurisdiction over the roads. However, the funding problem for road maintenance is more unique in Royal Oak Township. Even though sub-local roads are under the jurisdiction of the County, the County will not contribute funds to improve

What is a sub-local road? A sub-local road is one that was built as part of a subdivision to serve residents of that subdivision. The Township today is comprised of multiple subdivisions built in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, so all roads are classified as sub-local.



them. This funding system makes sense for new subdivisions being built in the rural parts of the county. For example, the roads in a new subdivision in Holly Township are only serving the people who live in that subdivision, so the general county taxpayer shouldn't have to pay for those roads. Or in Bloomfield Township, where every subdivision is an isolated, winding series of cul-de-sacs where the roads do not connect to anything; they only serve the residents that live on them.

The sub-local road funding system does not work as well when applied to Royal Oak Township. Royal Oak Township is the most urbanized township in the County, and all its roads are built on a grid system, designed to carry people within and beyond the Township's borders. Although the Township has been reduced over the decades by annexation, its road system still carries between Detroit, Ferndale, Oak Park, and the Township.

The County's main strategy for addressing this issue is through the Tri-Party Local Road Improvement Program, which helps fund sub-local road improvements. The Township has and continues to use these funds to update

roads, but the funding can only support a small handful of roads every few years. If the Township wants to improve (repave) all its roads, it will either have to charge a special assessment on property owners or identify alternative grant-funded options, either through the County, State, or Federal government.

Truck Routes

The only state-designated highway through the Township is 8 Mile Road, which is designed to accommodate semi-trucks of all sizes and weights. In addition, the County designates Wyoming Avenue as a "Normal" truck route (formerly called a "Class B" truck route), which allows only limited-weight semi-trucks. Additionally, trucks traveling on Wyoming Ave are subject to a 35% weight reduction during the spring, when the roads are soft and vulnerable to cracking. Any semi-trucks vehicles that are overweight during spring, or driving off the designated route, are subject to a penalty under the state's "frost law," also known as Seasonal Weight Restrictions. Lastly, Meyers Road, which is owned by the City of Oak Park, is designated locally as a truck route for traffic travelling north off 8 Mile Road to the industrial districts of Oak Park and the Township.

CLASSIFYING THE ROAD SYSTEM

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) developed the National Functional Classification (NFC) to classify all highways, streets, and roads according to their function. This system has been in place since the 1960s and is recognized as the official road classification system by the FHWA. The following paragraphs describe each category in the NFC.

Principal Arterials

Principal arterials carry vehicles over long distances and connect population centers. They provide access to places that create major traffic, such as airports and regional shopping centers. Examples of principal arterials are interstate highways and other freeways, as well as state routes between large cities and significant surface streets in large cities. In the Township, **8 Mile Rd** is the only principal arterial.

Minor Arterials

Minor arterials are similar in function to principal arterials, except they function to carry trips of shorter distances. In the Township, **Wyoming Ave** is the only minor arterial.

Collector Streets

Collector streets connect neighborhood areas of concentrated land use development to minor and principal arterials. They provide access to parcels of property and funnel traffic from residential areas to arterials. The Township has **no collector streets**.

Local Streets

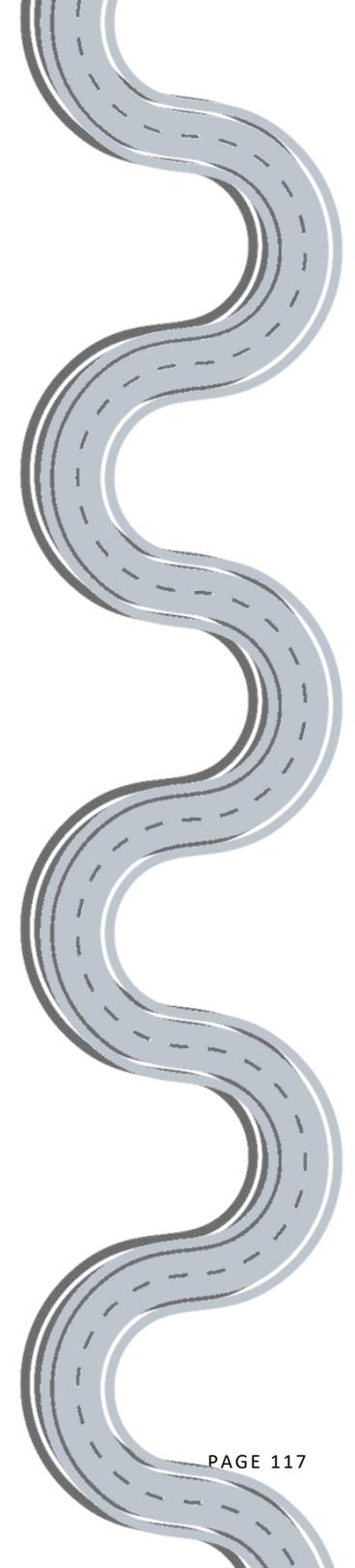
Local streets provide access from individual properties to collector streets. They serve as routes through residential development. Local streets are the main interior streets, depending on the density of residential development. Car traffic is deliberately discouraged on local streets. There are **no local streets** in the Township.

Sub-Local Roads

Sub-local roads are similar to local roads, but they were constructed as part of a subdivision. These roads tend to serve only residents of the subdivision, especially if designed in a cul-de-sac. **All the neighborhood streets** in the Township are sub-local roads.

Private Roads

Private roads are roads of any size that are privately owned and maintained. The only private roads in the Township are **the roads in the Oakdale Co-Op and the small portion of Pasadena Ave** that lies within the old Mel Far car dealership property. The maintenance of private roads is funded only by the property owners who use them.



ROADWAYS

8 Mile Road

8 Mile Road (also known as State highway M-102) is the main commercial street in the Township and runs the length of the southern border. At its widest point (the Wyoming-8 Mile intersection), the road is 6 lanes wide on each side. During the first public workshop, residents reported feeling unsafe while crossing 8 Mile due to the speed of oncoming traffic, erratic behavior of drivers, and short duration of the crosswalk light. In addition to serving drivers and pedestrians, **8 Mile is the only bus route in and out of the Township.** 8 Mile carries around 22,500 cars each day, as measured in 2018 (pre-pandemic).

Wyoming Ave

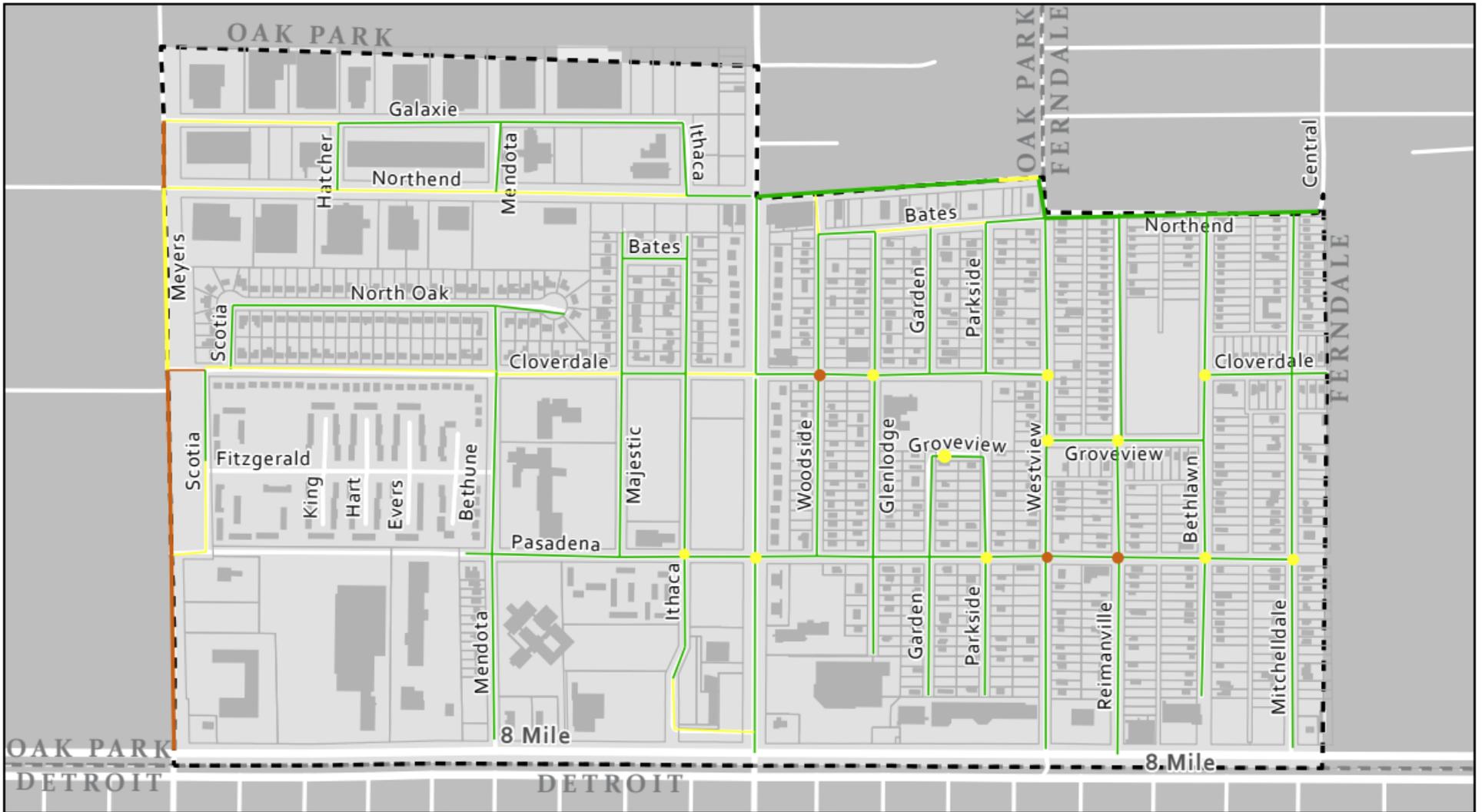
Wyoming Avenue runs through the center of the Township, running north-south between 8 Mile Road and 9 Mile Road. Wyoming is one of only two streets which runs north-south through the whole community, making it vitally important to people living in and traveling through the Township. **Wyoming is also the dividing line between the Ferndale and Oak Park school districts.** Wyoming carries around 7,100 cars each day, as measured in 2018 (pre-pandemic).

Other Roads

During the public survey for this Plan, respondents were asked about which transportation changes would be the most important to them – repairs to roads and sidewalks was the top answer. Planning staff conducted an inventory of the road system as a part of this Plan and found that none of Township’s roads were in “exceptional” condition. However, most of the roads were classified as “fair” condition, meaning people can safely use them with the exception of a few bumps and cracks. **Northend, Ithaca, and the western portions of Cloverdale and Galaxie were rated as “deteriorating,” meaning that visible wear was occurring on the road surface and curbs. Meyers was the worst-rated road in the Township due to the high number of potholes, cracks, and other obstacles that force drivers to swerve.**

Due to their industrial nature, Meyers, Northend, and Galaxie have historically been de-prioritized, and the Township has opted to improve residential roads first. In general, residents have supported this prioritization system. In addition to Cloverdale, problem areas were found along Pasadena, Westview, and Reimanville. Although the general condition of Pasadena was “fair,” most of the intersections along Pasadena were rated as “deteriorating” or “poor” condition. The only other intersection rated “poor” was at Cloverdale and Woodside. Having an inventory of these problem locations gives the Township a system for prioritizing roadway repair funds, and the inventory should be updated routinely.





Road Condition Survey

Royal Oak Township

March 5, 2024

LEGEND

- Poor Condition Intersection
- Deteriorating Condition Intersection
- Fair Condition Road
- Deteriorating Condition Road
- Poor Condition Road



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.
 Data Source: County or Local Community Source. McKenna 2023.
 State of Michigan, 2023.
 SEMCOG Open Data Portal, 2023.

SIDEWALKS

In a healthy, socially vibrant community, residents must be able to walk. From kids to seniors, everyone has at least one period of their life where they cannot drive or ride a bicycle. Walking is the favored mode of transportation for seniors who are either uncomfortable driving or unable to do so. Walking also helps maintain health and important social interactions. Most importantly, sidewalks should connect people to destinations like parks, grocery stores, theatres, and other jobs and amenities that contribute to a rich life.

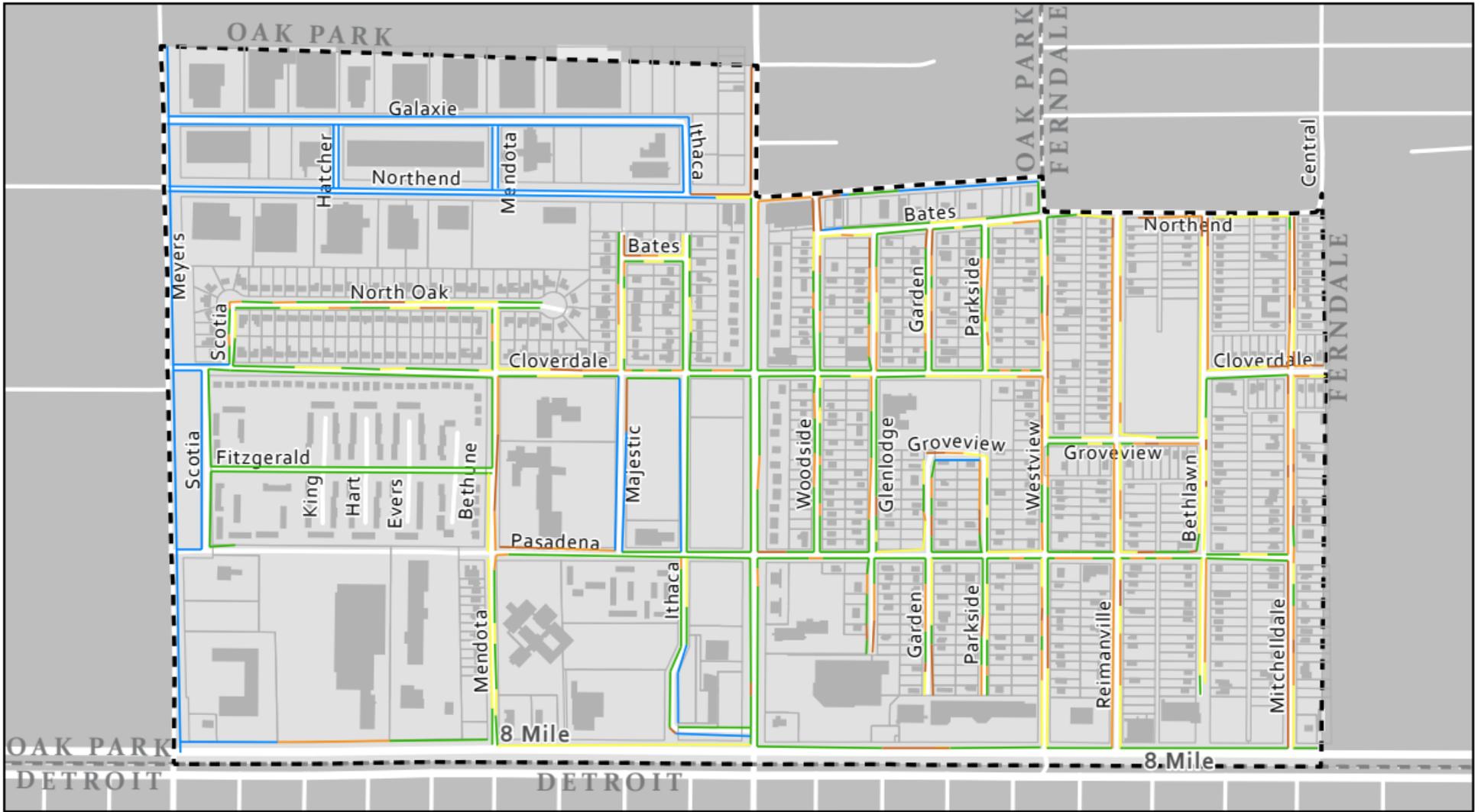
The southeast quadrant of Oakland County, where Royal Oak Township is located, is the most developed area within the county and is also heavily used by bikers and pedestrians for travel and recreation, demonstrating the desire for sidewalks that are both safe and connected. Additionally, during the public engagement conducted for this Plan, 23% of survey respondents said they use walking as their *primary* way of getting around the Township. Respondents also rated “Improving roads and sidewalks” as the second-most urgent problem to address in the township.

The Township has an almost-complete sidewalk network. However, some key gaps remain:

- Northend and Galaxie Avenues
- Meyers Road
- Majestic Avenue and Ithaca Road, adjacent to Civic Center Park
- 8 Mile Road, far southwest corner of Township

Additionally, planning staff conducted an inventory of sidewalk quality as a part of this Plan. **Small segments of sidewalks rated “very poor” were found throughout the Township. Overall, the sidewalks in the eastern portions of the Township were worse in quality than those in the central and eastern portions.** On the eastern side of the Township, Pasadena and Mendota adjacent to Carver School were in the worst condition, while on the western side of the Township, Mitchelldale and Reimanville were in the worst condition. Wyoming was generally in good condition except for the far north end at which the sidewalk on the west side completely disintegrates and pedestrians are forced to cross to the west. Lastly, 8 Mile Road’s sidewalks were found to be in fair condition, with the exception of a destroyed segment in front of the strip mall.





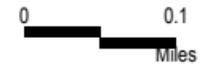
Sidewalk Condition Survey

Royal Oak Township

March 5, 2024

LEGEND

- No Sidewalk
- Good Condition
- Fair Condition
- Poor Condition
- Very Poor Condition



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.
 Data Source: County or Local Community Source, McKenna 2023.
 State of Michigan, 2023.
 SEMCOG Open Data Portal, 2023.

BUS ROUTES AND STOPS

DDOT Bus

The Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) operates two routes that directly serve the Township on 8 Mile Road. Route 17 runs east-west along 8 Mile, connecting Harper Woods to Southfield, and can be used to transfer to major routes that carry riders into Detroit. Route 54 runs along a small portion of 8 Mile, but mainly north-south along Wyoming Ave. Starting in Ferndale and ending in the Delray neighborhood of southwest Detroit, route 54 is mostly used by commuters who are trying to reach job centers.

SMART Bus

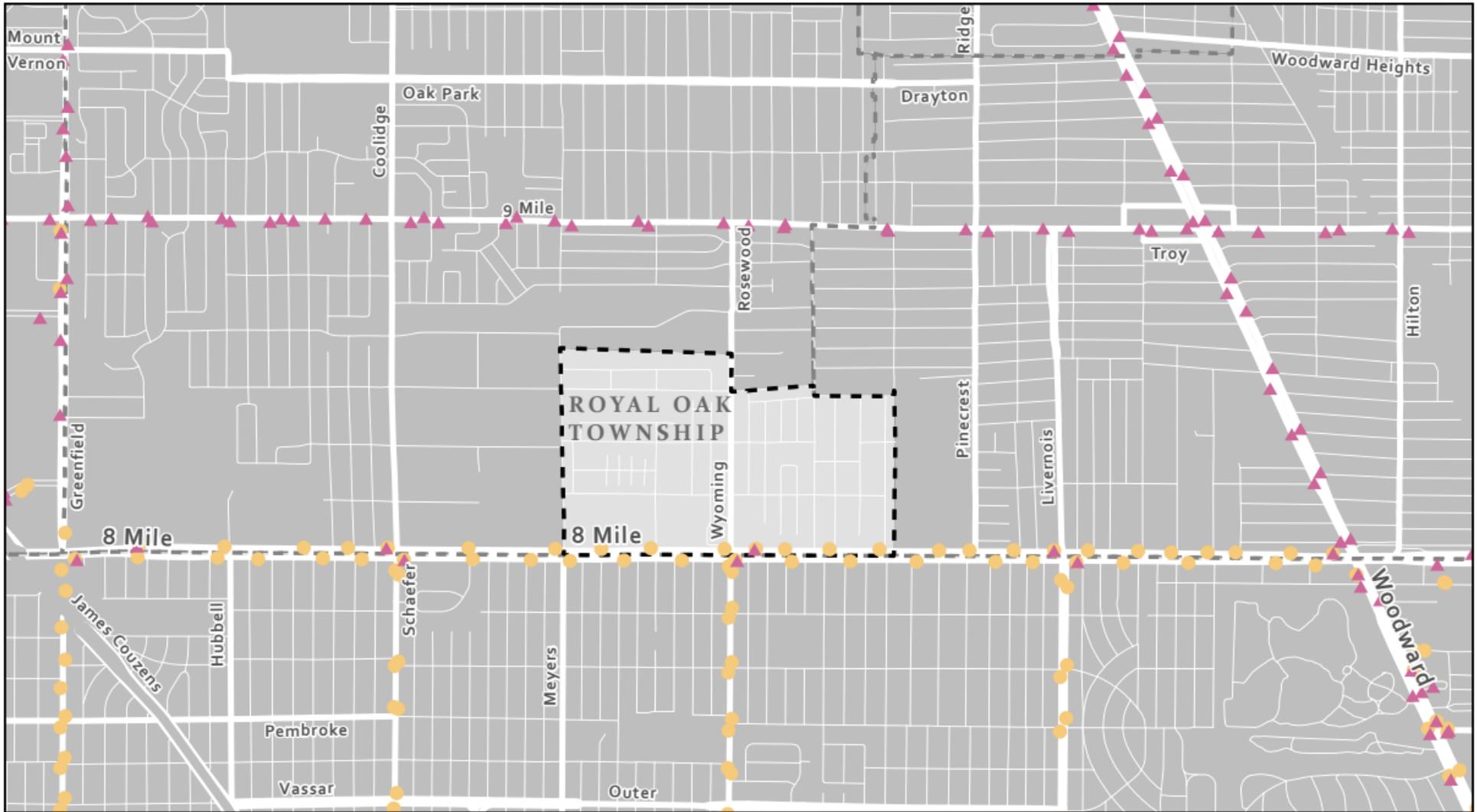
The Suburban Mobility Authority Regional Transportation system (SMART) operates one route – 405 – along 8 Mile Road in the Township. Route 405 begins at the State Fair Transit Center in Detroit and runs northwest, ending at the Henry Ford Medical center in West Bloomfield Township. The 405 is the critical link to healthcare, jobs, and entertainment outside of the Township, and can be used to transfer to many other SMART routes.

SMART also operates route 710 along 9 Mile Road, just north of the Township. Only two north/south streets, Westview and Wyoming Avenues, extend north through the entire Township to connect 8 Mile and 9 Mile Roads, and residents must use one of these streets to reach route 710. Route 710 runs east-west along 9 Mile, connecting Telegraph Road in Southfield all the way to Saint Clair Shores. Route 710 not only serves commuters, but also takes people to nightlife and weekend destinations across the region.

Connector Bus (aka Senior Bus)

Royal Oak Township operates a connector bus, supplied by SMART, which provides curb-to-curb bus service for seniors, children, people with disabilities, and low-income residents. The connector bus is run by the Fannie Adam Transportation service and runs from 8:30AM to 4PM during the week. Riders must call 2 days in advance to request service and must purchase tickets at the Township office at Grant School. During the Listening Session at the Ferndale Park Co-Op, some seniors reported using the bus while others said they had not heard of it. Some did not ride because of cost, and the lack of online payment and scheduling options for the bus also contributed to the low awareness and use by residents. However, there is a dedicated set of residents who use the senior bus routinely to reach destinations outside the Township.





Transit

Royal Oak Township

March 5, 2024

LEGEND

- ▲ SMART Bus Stops
- DDOT Bus Stops
- Royal Oak Township Boundary



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.
 Data Source: County or Local Community Source. McKenna 2023.
 State of Michigan, 2023.
 SEMCOG Open Data Portal, 2023.

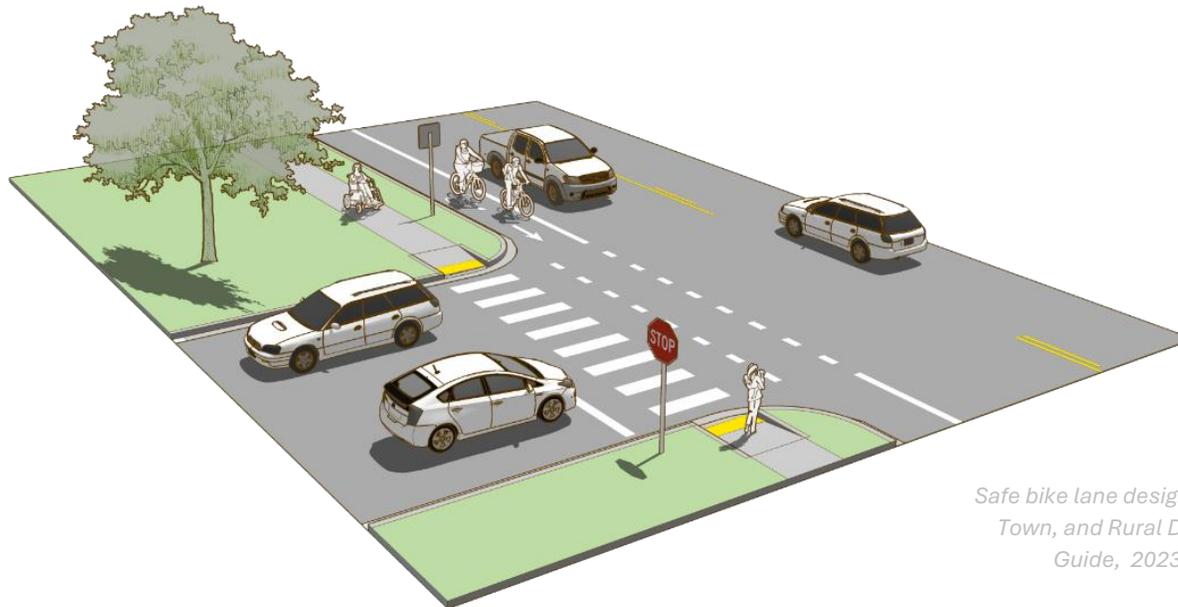


BIKES & ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION

Bicycling in the Township

Over the last two decades the number of bicycle trips in the southeast region has doubled, while the number of walking trips has increased by 28%. **Today, the township does not have any designated bike lanes or other types of on-street bike infrastructure. Cyclists must either choose to bike on the roadway or the sidewalk, either of which can pose risks of conflicting with pedestrians or drivers. Bike lanes help make roadways safer by keeping cars, cyclists, and pedestrians out of each other's way.** Especially in communities that have narrow sidewalks, there may not be room for a cyclist to squeeze by a pedestrian, particularly if they are in a wheelchair or pushing a stroller.

During the public engagement period of the Plan, residents reported low usage of bicycles because of the lack of bike lanes and the feeling of being unsafe on the roads. Only 3% of survey respondents reported using a bike as their primary means of transportation (this figure is likely an underestimate due to the lack of youth survey responses). Most of the roads in the Township have sufficient width to accommodate bike lanes, which need to be at least 5- feet wide. However, not all the roads in the Township need a bike lane to make them safer. Many of the Township's internal streets have so few cars that cyclists and drivers can use the road with very little risk of conflict. Bike lanes may be an advantage on the higher volume roads in the Township, such as 8 Mile Road, Wyoming Avenue, Meyers Road, and Pasadena Avenue.



Safe bike lane design, Small Town, and Rural Design Guide, 2023

Currently, the closest bike share rental station (MoGo) is on 9 Mile Road at the intersection with Scotia Road. From there, riders could drop off their bikes at various stops in Ferndale, Oak Park, Pleasant Ridge, Highland Park, Berkley, downtown Detroit, and Royal Oak. No stops currently exist southwest of the Scotia station, and the current system is designed to carry cyclists along the Woodward Corridor, in and out of Detroit.

As a part of the 2018 Activation Strategy, the Township set a goal of investigating the attractiveness of a new MoGo station in the Township. If a MoGo station were installed at 8 Mile and Wyoming, it would cost approximately \$3 for a user to ride the 1.5 miles to the Scotia station (if they were trying to connect between the DDOT bus on 8 Mile and the SMART bus on 9 Mile, for example). A ride to downtown Ferndale would cost about \$4-5, depending on the rider's speed (\$0.25 per minute). This makes MoGo about break-even with traditional bus service when riding to nearby destinations, but much more expensive if traveling to Detroit or Royal Oak. However, MoGo would be faster and more direct for local destinations – a bike ride from the Township's Kroger to downtown Ferndale

takes 12 minutes, while a bus ride would take over 30 minutes and require a connection.

Through the survey and public workshop, residents were asked about their interest in a bike share rental program. Respondents ranked a new bike share program as the least urgent transportation improvement, instead opting to prioritize road and sidewalk maintenance, lighting, and bus shelters. This does not mean that bike sharing is undesirable, but rather that safe infrastructure for biking and walking should come first. Additionally, **safe bike lanes would need to be installed on Wyoming Avenue first to incentivize any future bike share riders.**

Currently, the Township's Parks and Recreation Board has focused on providing free bikes to the community. Most recently, ten bikes were given away as a part of the Township's holiday event. The most interest in bikes has been from youth, who cannot yet drive or do not have a car. Creating a community biking culture, where knowledge about bicycle repairs and safety are shared endemically, can help encourage healthy, active lifestyles for Township residents.



"The long-term health benefits of using bike share vastly outweigh the short-term risks, even in the most polluted and car-dominated U.S. cities, a new study finds – and cities who invest in reducing those risks by loosening car dominance can save even more lives and millions in precious public health dollars.

Riders themselves were saved a collective total of 737 "disability adjusted life years," or years spent living with debilitating health conditions such as cancer, dementia, and ischemic heart disease, thanks to the preventative power of active transportation.

Famously, zero American residents died on bike share vehicles from 2007 through 2014, and deaths on the mode are still rare.

The more [bike share] users we attract, and the more we improve the street environment, the more we increase the public health benefits."

- Kea Wilson, STREETS BLOG USA, July 23, 2021

Using a Mobility Aid in the Township

Because of the high number of older residents, it is very common for people to use mobility aids (wheelchairs, walkers, canes, or other devices). To get around the Township, people with mobility aids tend to use the sidewalks, although some people motorized wheelchairs ride in the road. The highest concentration of people with mobility aids is in the Ferndale Park Co-Op, the senior living complex which houses over 200 residents (roughly 8% of the Township). During the public Listening Session at the Co-Op, residents were asked about their biggest challenges in getting around the Township. **The biggest reported issue was safe crosswalks, which are needed to access parks, the Kingswood hospital, and other key destinations. In particular, the Wyoming Ave crosswalk was reported as dangerous due to poor lighting and signage;** this issue was also reported by residents who attended the first open public workshop at Grant School. People using mobility aids also reported numerous sidewalks ramps throughout the townships that were in disrepair and identified sidewalk repair as a priority.



Mobility aid-friendly crosswalk design, Small Town, and Rural Design Guide, 2023

CRASHES

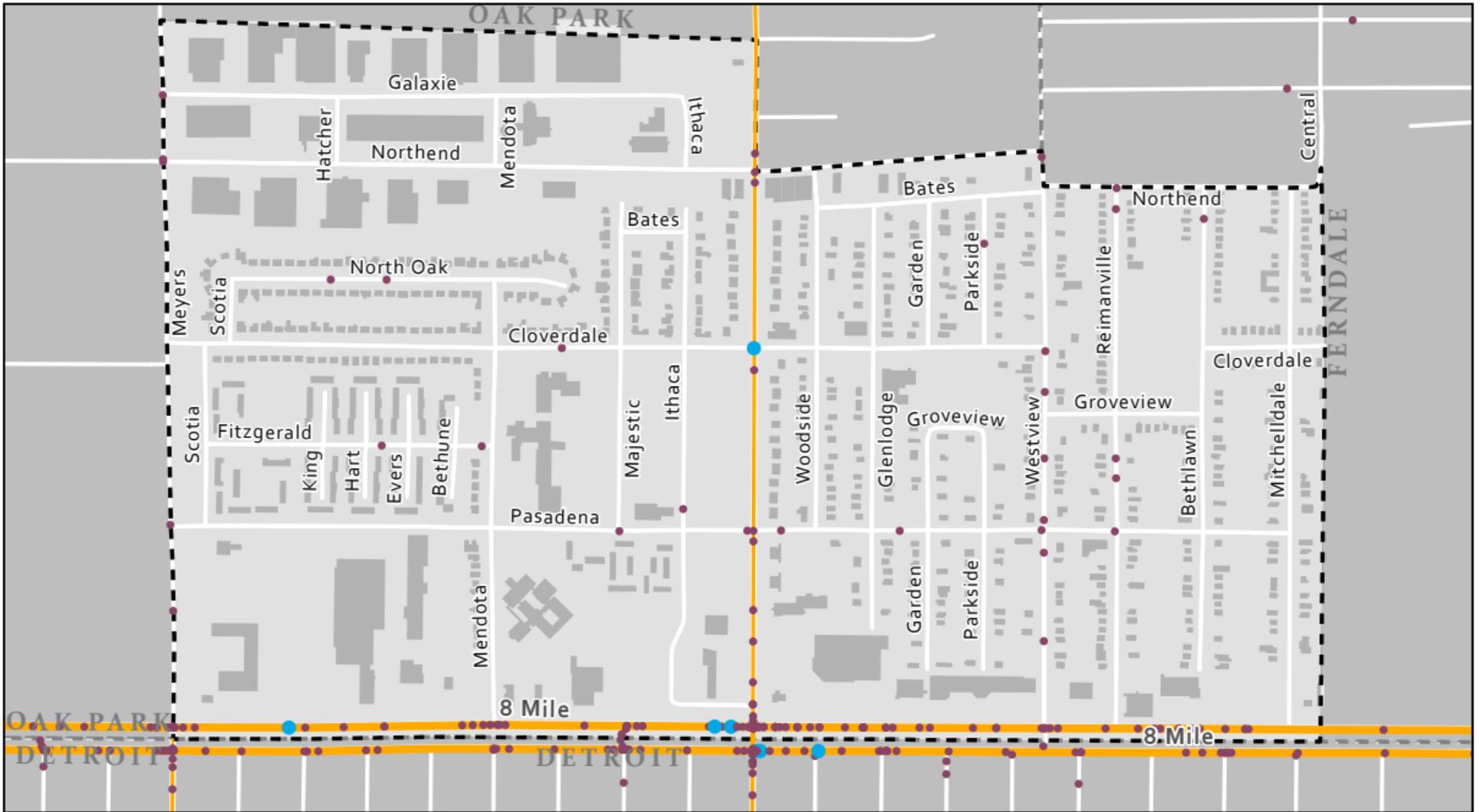
The Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) issues traffic reports every calendar year. The 2017-2022 traffic reports were analyzed as a part of this Community Master Plan.⁷⁴ All the recent crashes between 2021 and 2022 are also displayed on the Crash Map, which differentiates between pedestrian and automotive crashes.

Through the crash data, **8 Mile Road was identified as the most dangerous area for pedestrians**, with 8 Mile and Wyoming being the most dangerous intersection. In 2018 township resident Leonard Ross was killed when a driver ran a red light at the intersection, and in 2023 a Ferndale woman was struck and injured in the crosswalk at the same location. Although the posted speed is 40MPH, many drivers drive 50MPH on 8 Mile. At 50MPH, the average risk of death for a pedestrian is 75%,⁷⁵ and even higher for children, seniors, or people using mobility aids. Additionally, large trucks and SUVs are 45% more likely to kill a pedestrian than sedans, hatchbacks, or older pickup trucks.⁷⁶ With the growing popularity of larger vehicles, 8 Mile has become even more dangerous in recent years.

Table 4: Traffic Crashes in Royal Oak Township from 2017-2022

Report Key Points	Crash Details	
Total Traffic Crashes, 2017-2022	Crash Type*	Number of Crashes, 2017-2022
422 Total	Bicyclist Hit	2
3 Fatal	Pedestrian Hit	6
5 Major Injury	Drugs or Alcohol Involved	29
24 Minor Injury	Speeding Involved	33
83 Possible Unreported Injury	Distracted Driver	38
307 Vehicle Damage Only	Red Light Run by Driver	39

* The Crash Type categories are not exclusive; may overlap between multiple categories.



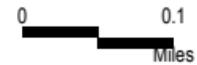
Road Volume and 2021-2022 Crashes

Royal Oak Township

March 5, 2024

LEGEND

- Royal Oak Township Boundary
- Building Footprints
- Crash Types**
- Pedestrian Involved
- No Pedestrian Involved
- Average Cars Per Day**
- 3501 - 7000
- 7001 - 14000
- 14001 - 25000
- 25001 - 100000



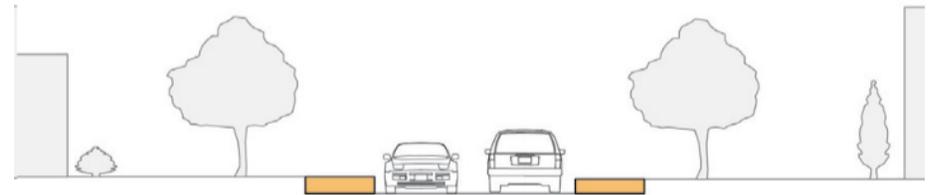
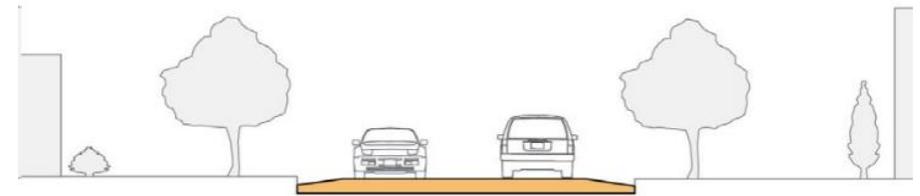
Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.
 Data Source: County or Local Community Source. McKenna 2023.
 State of Michigan, 2023.
 SEMCOG Open Data Portal, 2023.



Trends and Changes

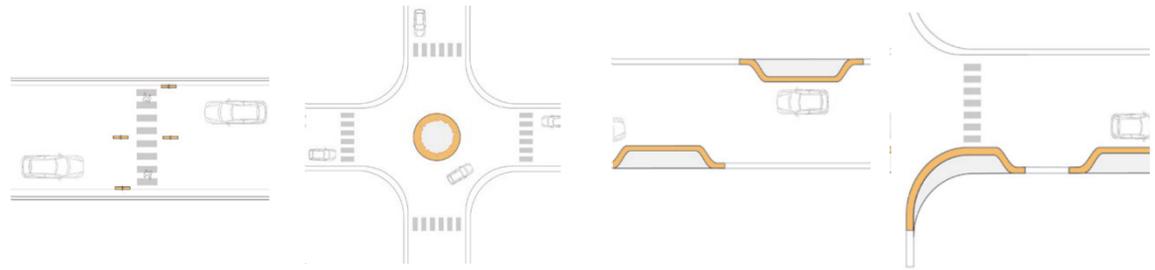
TRAFFIC CALMING

Traffic calming uses physical design to improve safety for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists. It has become a tool to combat speeding and other unsafe behaviors of drivers in the neighborhoods. It aims to encourage safer, more responsible driving and potentially reduce traffic flow. Speed bumps and roundabouts are both traffic calming devices, and most people have seen these in their own neighborhoods. In the Township, the Westview Ave speed bumps are a local example of traffic calming. However, there are many more strategies today beyond these two classics. **Traffic calming measures are grouped within 4 categories: horizontal deflection, vertical deflection, street width reduction, and routing restriction.**



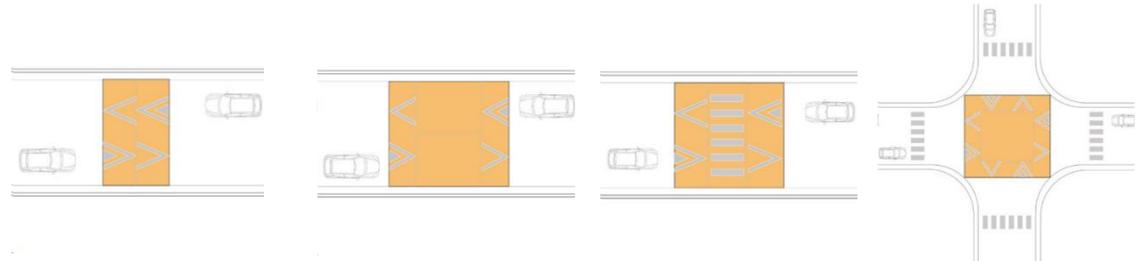
Horizontal deflection forces a driver to move to either the right or the left when driving, thereby slowing the car down.

- In-Lane pedestrian bollards
- Roundabout
- Chicane
- Curb bump-out



Vertical deflection forces a driver to drive over something, thereby slowing the car down.

- Speed bump
- Speed table
- Raised crosswalk
- Raised intersection



Street width reduction narrows the width of a driving lane to make it feel narrower, which changes driver's perceptions of the road and slows the car down. The measure can also reduce the distance that a pedestrian travels to cross a street, reducing exposure to pedestrian/vehicle conflicts.

- Choker (i.e., a midblock curb extension)
- Median island
- On-street parking
- Lane reduction



Routing restriction deters cut-through traffic at intersections.

- Full or half street closure
- Median barrier

MICRO-MOBILITY

Across the US, there is increased demand for micro-mobility solutions to rethink the design of public rights-of-way. Micro-mobility describes the range of transportation options for short distances besides walking. **Scooters, e-bikes, bike sharing, and skateboards are just a few examples of micro-mobility.** Today, sidewalks and pathways are not only used by pedestrians, but also electric scooter riders, wheelchair users, roller bladers, and more. In particular, bike sharing and e-bikes have seen a steep rise in demand since the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

COMPLETE STREETS

Over the past decade, the concept of “complete streets” has been sweeping across the US. A complete street is **a street that is planned, designed, and constructed to provide appropriate access to everyone, whether by car, truck, transit, mobility aid, foot or bicycle.** Michigan’s Complete Streets legislation was signed into law in 2010 through two public acts: Public Act 134 and Public Act 135. These laws give new responsibilities to local government, county, and state transportation agencies to address transportation needs of all legal users (including pedestrians and bicyclists) in their community Master Plans.

Communities with Complete Streets policies help to ensure that roadways are designed to accommodate all users, not just drivers. Facilities that make a street “complete” depend on existing conditions and the intended users; it’s never a one-size fits-all situation. Examples of complete streets projects include new curb ramps, audible or tactile signals for blind pedestrians, longer crossing times, and smooth sidewalks and bike lanes that are free of obstacles.

Complete Streets provide a number of benefits such as:

- Improved safety for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and drivers
- Improved human health by encouraging walking and bicycling
- Decreased car traffic, reducing the dependence on gasoline and petroleum products, and improved air quality
- More transportation options
- More livable communities with an improved quality of life

NEW SAFE STREETS FOR ALL PROGRAM

The U.S. Department of Transportation administers the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) discretionary program. Established by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), the program will provide \$5-6 billion in grant monies over 5 years to qualifying entities (including cities) to prevent roadway deaths and serious injuries. Development of a “Comprehensive Safety Action Plan” is required to receive planning, design, or development support, and implementing projects identified within the Action Plan are eligible for funding. After the development of the Action Plan, communities can pursue funding for:

- Implementing improvements along an expanded multimodal network of reconfigured roads with separated bicycle lanes and improved safety features for pedestrian crossings.
- Applying low-cost safety treatments such as rumble strips, wider edge lines, flashing beacons, and better signage along high-crash rural corridors.
- Conducting speed management projects such as implementing traffic calming road design changes and setting appropriate speed limits for all road users.
- Installing safety enhancements such as safer pedestrian crossings, sidewalks, and additional lighting for people walking, rolling, or using mobility assistive devices.
- Addressing alcohol-impaired driving along key corridors through education, outreach, and publicized sobriety checkpoints on weekends and holidays.
- Making street design changes informed by culturally competent education and community outreach.
- Creating safe routes to school and public transit services through multiple activities that lead to people safely walking, biking, and rolling in underserved communities.

CHANGES IN BUS RIDERSHIP

According to the RTA’s 2023 Update, transit ridership has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels, though it is beginning to recover. COVID-19 had a huge impact on transit service with ridership declining as people left their homes less often and many office workers began working from home. As of the end of 2023, national transit ridership was at 77% of pre-pandemic levels. Ridership has been recovering since 2021, when annual ridership in Southeast Michigan declined to

14.1 million due to the pandemic. In 2023, people rode transit over 22.8 million times, 54% of pre-pandemic ridership. **Ridership recovery has varied by mode and agency, and some US transit systems have even exceeded pre-pandemic ridership. Improving service reliability and on-time performance can help increase ridership but can be challenging in the face of the national transit workforce shortage. Investments like bus lanes, signal priority, and high-frequency services can also help boost reliability.**

Additionally, most trips are not work-related and since the pandemic, trips have been more spread out throughout the day rather than during rush hours. The higher proportion of work-related transit trips in Southeast Michigan (53% of trips) may indicate that there is a greater need for transit services to better accommodate non-commute trips. One way to achieve this might be increasing service throughout the day, in the evenings, and at weekends.

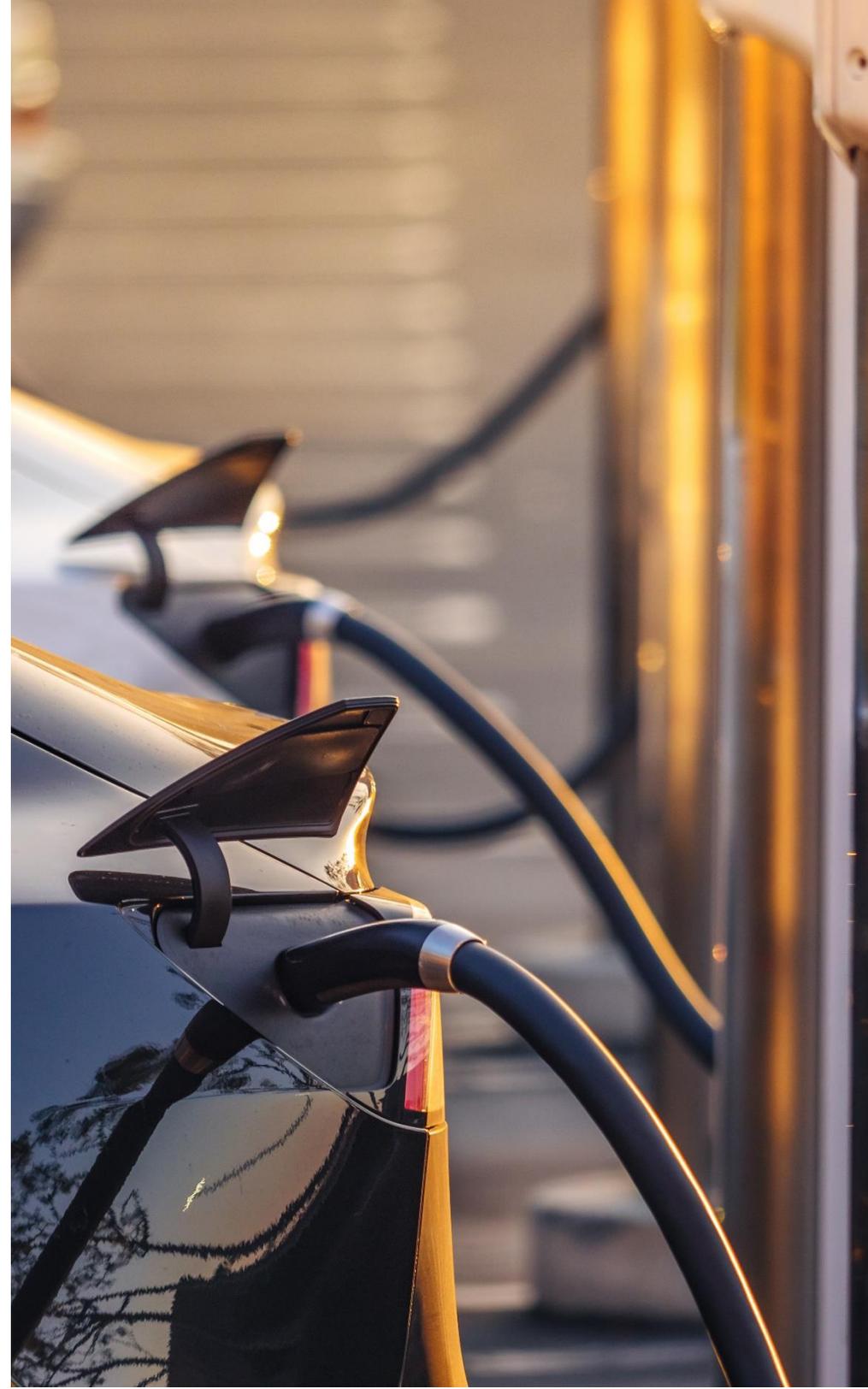
ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Michigan currently offers 480 publicly accessible charging stations featuring nearly 1,400 charging outlets, in addition to 146 private charging stations throughout the state. Michigan continues to build out this infrastructure to encourage further EV adoption, putting the state within the top 25% of states for electric vehicle registrations.

Although electric vehicles are an environmentally conscious alternative to a standard vehicle, there are challenges regarding the use of electric vehicles. Fire Departments are often concerned about safety hazards related to fires caused by the high-voltage, lithium-ion batteries. Electric vehicle fires are rare but pose a threat when they do occur. The cost of owning an electric vehicle can also be a challenge, especially in low-income households. The lack of charging stations may also hinder residents from purchasing an electric vehicle.

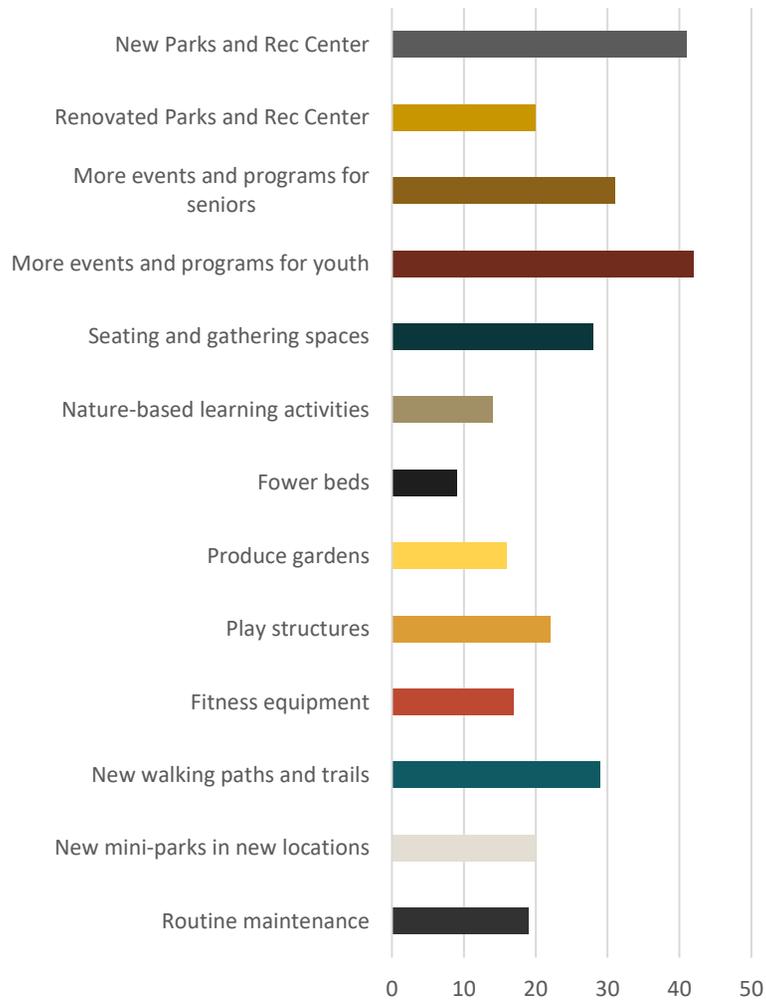
“Today, electric vehicles account for only 2 percent of the nation’s vehicle fleet, and there are large gaps in electric charging infrastructure. Michigan’s Office of Future Mobility and Electrification is working actively to accelerate electric vehicle adoption in the state.”

- Michigan Mobility 2045 Plan

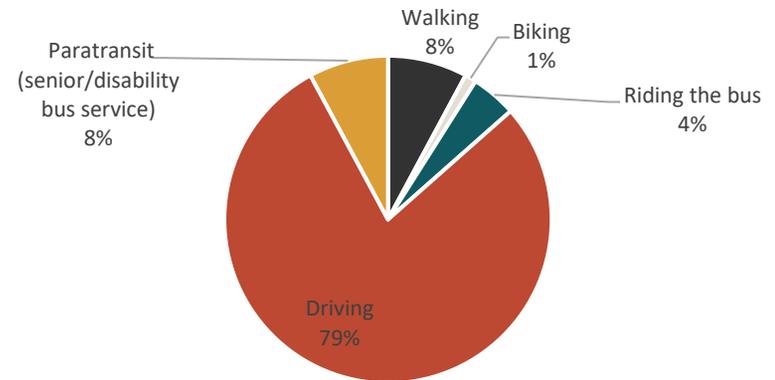


Public Feedback

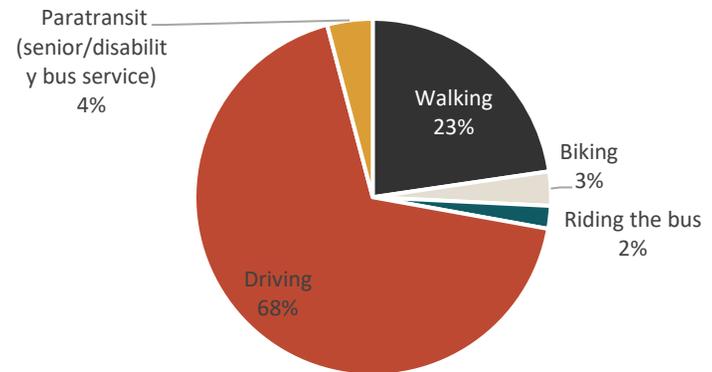
How could the Township's parks and recreation system be improved? Choose up to 5 options.



Which type of transportation do you use most often to get to destinations outside the Township?



Which type of transportation do you use most often to get around the Township?



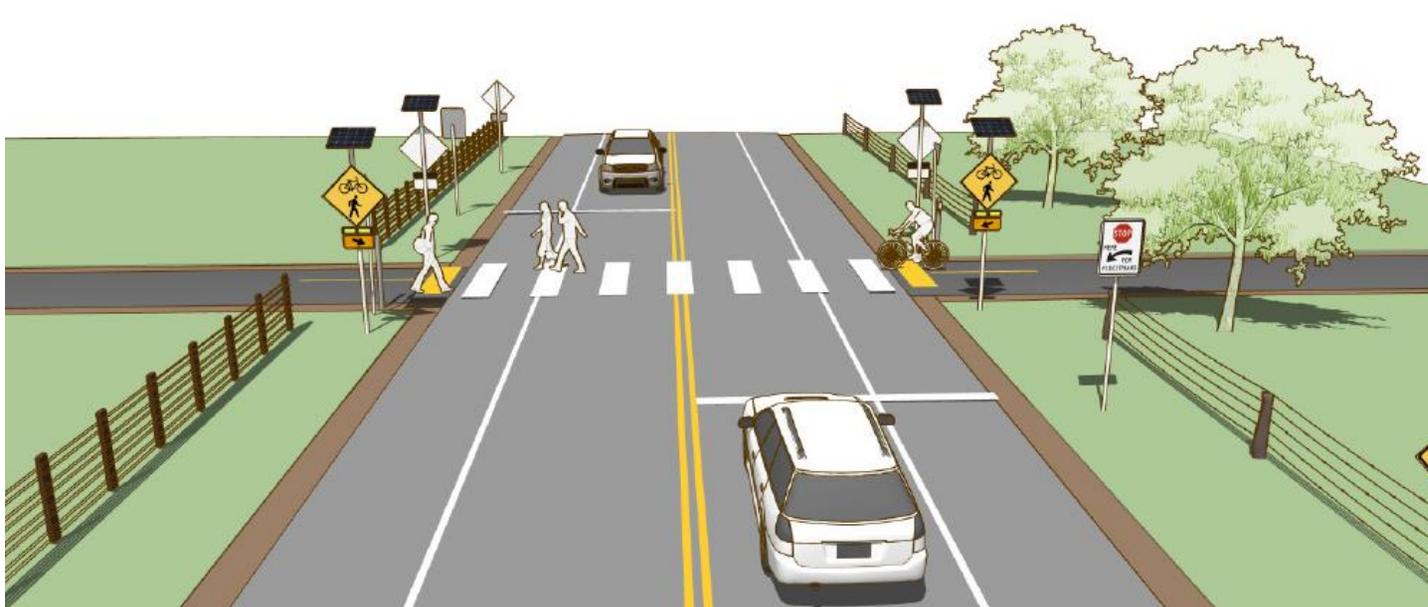
Key Takeaways

PRIORITY SPOTS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Throughout the Township, there are numerous road and sidewalk segments that require immediate improvement, as shown on the Sidewalk and Road Inventory maps. When asked which elements of this transportation system were most urgent to improve, over 2/3 of public survey respondents chose roads and sidewalks. The Township must prioritize the segments that are both the worst quality and have the highest traffic in order to keep the transportation system in basic working order. These improvements will require coordination with the

County, as well as an aggressive pursuit of alternative funding programs, to address all the priority spots.

In addition to basic maintenance, several other priority spots were identified over the course of the transportation inventory, public engagement, and technical reviews, which require improvements to make them safe. In general, most intersection crossings in the Township require new painted lines and better lighting. In particular, the crossing over Wyoming Ave next to the Ferndale Park Co-Op was identified as an immediate issue. Residents both young and old expressed a desire for better lighting, flashing crosswalk signs, and/or mid-lane bollards at this intersection.



Safe crosswalk design, Small Town, and Rural Design Guide, 2023

In addition, the following locations were identified a priority spots:

- Pasadena Ave: Issues with speeding and damaged intersections. Need for traffic calming measures and intersection repair.
- Ithaca Ave: Issues with the location of the “no parking” signs that were installed on the wrong side of the road, leading to challenging vehicular passage.
- East-side streets: Issues along multiple streets with work vehicles and trailers left on the street for long periods of time, leading to challenging vehicular passage and a decline in neighborhood aesthetics. Some vehicles belonged to individuals, while others are associated with unlicensed home repair businesses.

SAFE CONNECTIONS TO NEIGHBORING CITIES

During the public engagement for this Plan, residents were asked about which types of transportation they used most often to get around the township and which type they used to get outside the Township. While 23% said they most often used walking to get around the Township, only 8% said they used walking to get to destinations beyond the Township. Biking saw a similar drop in users beyond the Township’s borders. This reflects the **lack of safety for pedestrians trying to access neighboring cities, Oak Park and Ferndale Schools, and job centers.** When residents were asked to choose between 11 options for the most urgent improvement for life in the Township, the fourth most popular answer was “transportation to essential services and shopping centers.”

To help residents access neighboring cities and attract visitors, workers, and shoppers to the Township, safe bicycle and walking connections must be established to neighboring cities. Having connections means having safe connections in all directions - bikers riding up to 9 Mile, kids walking to Ferndale High School, transit riders traveling along 8 Mile, pedestrians walking to the Oak Park community center, and more.

Currently, many obstacles exist to these connections. There is no sidewalk across Meyers to give schoolkids a safe route to Oak Park schools, no bike route to carry people between 8 and 9 Mile, and there is a 1-mile stretch between Wyoming and Livernois where there is not a single pedestrian crossing over 8 Mile. These barriers, and more, prevent Township residents from safely accessing the necessities and amenities beyond the Township’s borders. The Township must collaborate with neighboring governments to establish these safe connections, serving both local residents and the region.

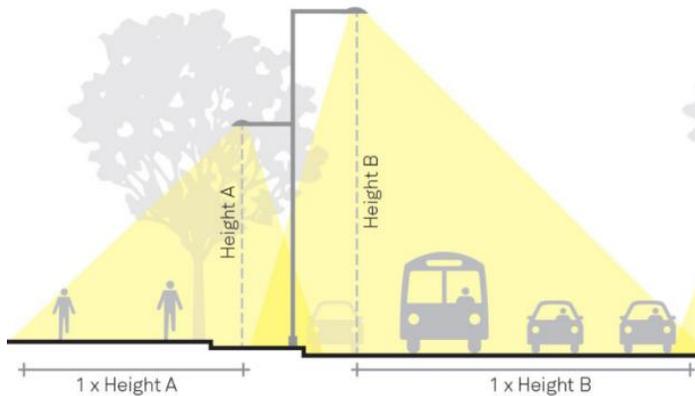


A badly damaged sidewalk in front of Kroger on 8 Mile Rd, 2023.

HUMAN AMENITIES

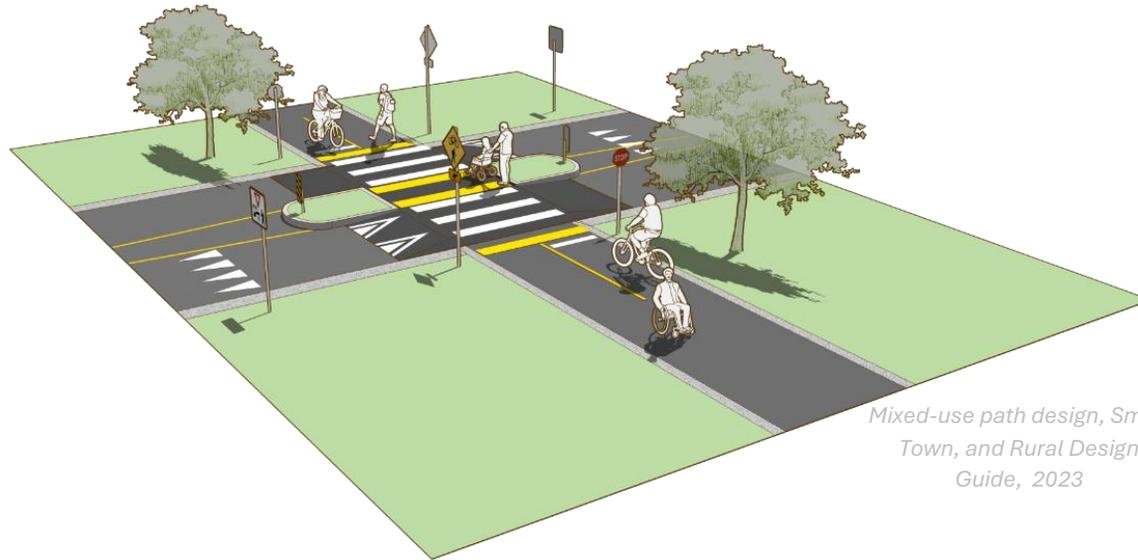
Today, the Township's main corridors are designed to carry vehicles rather than humans. The signage, lighting, signal timing, and other features of 8 Mile Road are all configured to support the flow of vehicles, with little regard for other transportation users. Across the public engagement for this Plan, **residents of all ages asked for better human-scale amenities such as pedestrian-level lighting, benches, improved bus stations, and trash cans.**

For example, many of the existing 8 Mile bus stops in and across from the Township are simply poles with rider schedules attached. Today, a good bus stop is designed to include covered seating, solar lights, a trash can, bike racks, and more. Although the Township does not have control over its roadways, it must still support public and private infrastructure projects which provide human amenities along transportation corridors.



Walking Paths

In addition to other human-scale amenities, residents voice a clear priority for walking paths throughout the Township. In both discussions about recreation and transportation, residents said they wanted a connected, complete walking trail throughout the Township. Furthermore, residents suggested working in plantings, flowerbeds, Township history art installations, and mile markers as a part of any path. The Township must support efforts to provide an off-street walking path in Civic Center Park, as well as a hybrid route that connects throughout the entire community.



Mixed-use path design, Small Town, and Rural Design Guide, 2023

A RENEWED 8 MILE STREETSCAPE

Today, 8 Mile Road has 4 lanes on each side – with the median, this means that it is as wide as a football field. The corridor is essential to commerce and commuting, but the immense scale, noise, and unpleasant experience created by its existing design harms adjacent communities. Furthermore, the lack of crossings and numerous crashes along 8 Mile speak to the danger of its current design. Across all engagement efforts for this Plan, residents and technical stakeholders expressed support for a new 8 Mile design that promotes safety, comfort, and style while still carrying people and goods. More frequent crossings, bus rapid transit, bike lanes, lighting, and thicker lawn extensions with trees and vegetation emerged as top priorities for any future redesign.

“Nearly 800 lane miles of MDOT roads and 600 lane miles of city, village, and county roads are candidates for lane reductions. Reducing lanes saves in long-term costs and better balances the safety and needs of all users... less than 10 percent of Michigan’s lane-miles will be congested in 2045, and many miles of uncongested locally and state-owned highways and roads will have excess capacity that can be rebalanced to comfortably accommodate people walking, biking, and taking transit” - Michigan Mobility 2045 Plan

Shared Goals

- 1. MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE EXISTING NETWORK FOR ALL TYPES OF TRANSPORTATION USERS**
- 2. CREATE A SAFE, COMFORTABLE, AND HEALTHY TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM**
- 3. SUPPORT AND INITIATE SAFE CONNECTIONS TO NEIGHBORING CITIES, SERVICES, AND AMENITIES**
- 4. ENHANCE TOWNSHIP AND REGIONAL PLACEMAKING THROUGH TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS**

9. Land Use

Through land use planning, the Township can help ensure that the character of neighborhoods is preserved, that housing diversity supports new and existing residents throughout their life and at multiple income levels, that economic development is encouraged, and that the designated mixed-use areas become vibrant and exciting places.

Current Conditions

“What is land use?”

- Land use is a term that refers to the activities happening on a piece of property. Land use can be described in general or very specific terms. For example, the land use for the Kroger on 8 Mile could be called “grocery,” or more generally “commercial.” Similarly, the land use for Grant School could be called “education,” or more generally “semi-public.”

Examining existing land uses is an essential first step in the preparation of a community master plan. The existing land use survey provides a snapshot of land use and development activity at a given moment in time and becomes part of the community’s historical record of development patterns, activities and land uses. As a community shapes its master plan and resolves and balances its land use and development issues, the land use survey remains a valuable resource and reference point.

LAND USE CATEGORY OVERVIEW

Civic/Recreation		Township buildings and parks, school properties, and other public or semi-public land.
Commercial		Businesses that sell goods and services directly to the customer, such as restaurants, beauty supply shops, dollar stores, groceries, and other forms of retail.
Industrial		Businesses that use land for an industrial purpose, such as assembly of automotive parts, warehousing, machine shops, contractor’s yards, metal manufacturing, or scrap yards.
Office		Businesses that provide professional services, such as legal, real estate, financial, or other office services, to clients.
Religious Institution		Churches and other places of worship.
Single-Family Residential		Stand-alone single-family homes, as well as any accessory structures or dwelling units that are located on the same property.
Residential w/Home Occupation or Microbusiness		Single-family homes where the owner resides in the house and either 1) has a home occupation, conducted out of the house, or 2) has a microbusiness attached to the house. A microbusiness is a small business with less than 10 employees.
Multi-Family Residential		Duplexes, attached condominiums, apartments, residential flats above commercial spaces, and all other types of housing that accommodate multiple units in the same building.
Vacant		Land that either has no structures or has a structure that is vacant.
Roadways		Land dedicated to streets, lawn extensions, and sidewalks – everything that lies outside individual property boundaries.



Existing Land Use 2024

Royal Oak Township

March 5, 2024

LEGEND

- | | |
|--|---|
| ■ Civic/Recreation | ■ Religious Institution |
| ■ Commercial | ■ Residential w/Home Occupation or Microbusiness |
| ■ Industrial | ■ Single-Family Residential |
| ■ Multi-Family Residential | ■ Vacant |
| ■ Office | Royal Oak Township Boundary |

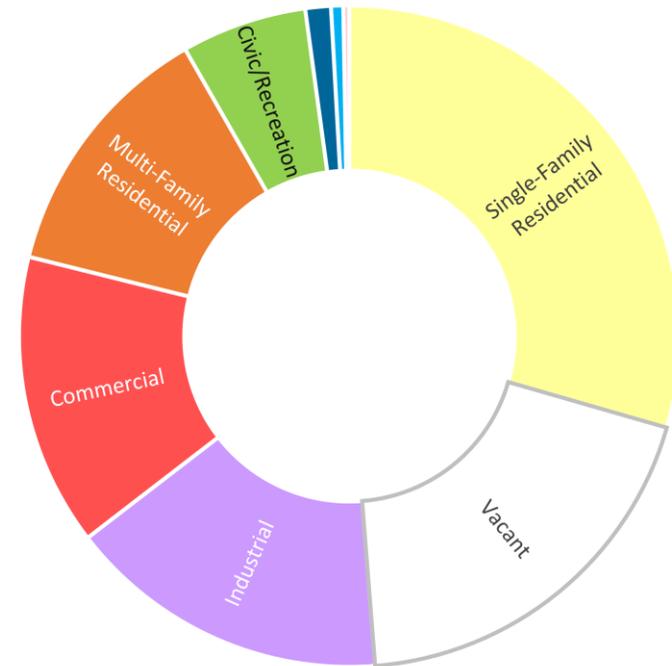


Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.
 Data Source: County or Local Community Source. McKenna 2023.
 State of Michigan, 2023.
 SEMCOG Open Data Portal, 2023.



Table 5: Existing Land Use Breakdown, 2023

Land Use	Square Miles	Percentage of Total
Civic/Recreation	0.03	4.8%
Commercial	0.06	11.1%
Industrial	0.07	12.3%
Office	0.00	0.5%
Religious Institution	0.01	1.0%
Single-Family Residential	0.12	22.9%
Residential w/Home Occupation or Microbusiness	0.00	0.2%
Multi-Family Residential	0.05	10.0%
Vacant	0.08	15.0%
Roadways	0.12	22.3%
TOTAL	0.54 sq mi	100%



Source: McKenna 2023 and Wayne County

MANAGING LAND USES

The Township regulates land uses by grouping them into “zoning districts” – every piece of property in the city is assigned to a zoning district, which is shown on the Zoning Map. The Map is then combined with the Zoning Ordinance, which is a local law adopted by the Township. The Zoning Ordinance lists the land uses that are allowed in each zoning district. It also includes regulations on the appearance of properties – heights, building materials, landscaping, fencing, and more. Together, the Zoning Ordinance and Map show where every property is, what it is zoned, and what land uses are allowed in that zone, thereby regulating land within the Township.

Trends and Changes

MIXED-USE

Parks, green spaces and public places for leisure and social activities and communities that are mixed-use, which means a mix of housing, civic uses, and commercial uses, including retail, restaurants, and offices. **Mixed-use allows people to work closer to where they live, thus reducing their amount of commuting time and increasing their time for leisure and social activities.**

Finding a good home in a safe neighborhood, that's convenient for jobs, good schools, and other daily needs, can be difficult. Usually, neighborhoods with lots of amenities are more expensive because more people want to live there. People who work in these neighborhoods, but can't afford to live there, may have to live far away in areas that are not safe. Workers like police officers, firefighters, and teachers who contribute so much to a community may have to sacrifice safety and convenience for affordability.

Healthy community design principles support social equity by promoting:

- Communities where people of all abilities and ages can move about their community for all their needs, and should they choose, remain in their community all their lives.
- Diverse housing options and price levels so that all persons regardless of income can live in the same community where they work, play and worship.
- Neighborhoods clustered around one or more well-defined neighborhood centers that support jobs of all types and skills, commercial activity, and a range of amenities.

ADAPTIVE REUSE

Adaptive reuse is a specific form of redevelopment that, in recent decades, has driven the revitalization of historic neighborhoods around the world. Adaptive reuse refers to a specific variety of **redevelopment that makes use of existing building stock for the purposes of contemporary living**. The adaptive reuse process involves the renovation of an existing building, whereas renovation stops at freshening and refinishing a building for its original purpose. Adaptive reuse implies a transformation of use; vacant office buildings have been adapted into residential buildings, industrial warehouses into co-workspaces, and more.

The city of Los Angeles has catalyzed significant adaptive reuse in downtown Los Angeles through changes in the city code. The city's Adaptive Reuse Ordinance reduced the minimum size for apartments and condominiums, waived density standards within the zones where the Adaptive Reuse Ordinance applies, removed the requirement for developers to seek height and setback variances for their adaptive reuse projects, and eliminated requirements for developers to add parking spaces. These changes made adaptive reuse projects more financially feasible. In the 30 years prior to the adaptive reuse ordinance, downtown Los Angeles added only 4,300 housing units. In the 10 years following the city's adoption of the Adaptive Reuse Ordinance, in 1999, the downtown added at least 7,300.⁷⁷

Public Feedback

Imagine Downtown

OUR COLLECTIVE FUTURE

When you imagine the future of the Township, which images of downtown are you drawn to? Why?
Place a dot by the images you prefer.

STREET FRONTAGE
SHOPS & RESTAURANTS
PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED
PUBLIC SPACE
ARTS & CULTURE
COMMUNITY BUILDINGS

Public Safety
Shops, dining
on the way

Downtown
from the
your road
viewpoint

More outdoor
spaces like
parks, plazas

Like the
modern style
and plants

Love the
high rises
behind the
shops

Love the
historic
buildings
with
modern
interiors

Love the
historic
buildings
with
modern
interiors

Key Takeaways

NEW ZONING ORDINANCE

To be an effective tool for regulation, the Zoning Ordinance must be up-to-date and reflect the most current state laws, court decisions, and best practices for sound planning. The Township’s Zoning Ordinance received its last comprehensive update in 1992. As such, many sections of the ordinance are dated or inaccurate, and not reflective of current needs and conditions. Despite receiving periodic changes over the last 30 years, the Zoning Ordinance still needs to be updated.

MAKING USE OF OPPORTUNITY SITES

“Vacant” is the second largest land use category in the Township today. Part of the reason that the amount of vacant land is so high is due to the large-scale commercial and mixed-use sites that sit unused, including the former Mel Far Automotive dealership site, Carver School campus, and Recreation Center. There are also several large sites with no buildings, including the Administrative Offices site, former Royal Oak Township theatre site, and the property at the southeast corner of Ithaca and Pasadena Aves. These large-scale sites present a very valuable opportunity for the Township for transformational change. Through the engagement for both this Plan and the 2018 Activation strategy, residents expressed a desire to see these sites re-used for mixed-use developments that combine residential units, retail, open space, and other amenities together. The Township must support and carefully manage the redevelopment of these sites, to ensure they contribute to a vibrant and pedestrian-oriented future and act as a catalyst for desirable development.

Shared Goals

- 1. MODERNIZE THE TOWNSHIP'S LAND USE REGULATIONS TO INCORPORATE NEW INFORMATION AND BEST PRACTICES**
- 2. ENCOURAGE THE REDEVELOPMENT OF OPPORTUNITY SITES**
- 3. MAINTAIN AN APPROPRIATE BALANCE OF LAND USES TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY TAX BASE**

A photograph of a family playing soccer in a park. A man on the left is kicking a soccer ball. A woman and two children are running towards him. The scene is outdoors with trees in the background. The image has a warm, yellowish tint.

TOWNSHIP TOMORROW



10. Vision for the Future

Our collective vision for the future is the basis for all action. The future Royal Oak Township will be clean and safe, welcoming and comfortable, and accessible to all. Royal Oak Township will be a fun and modern community, inviting and affordable to people from all walks of life. It will be a celebration of identity, culture, and social connection, where people are hopeful for the future.

11. Future Transportation

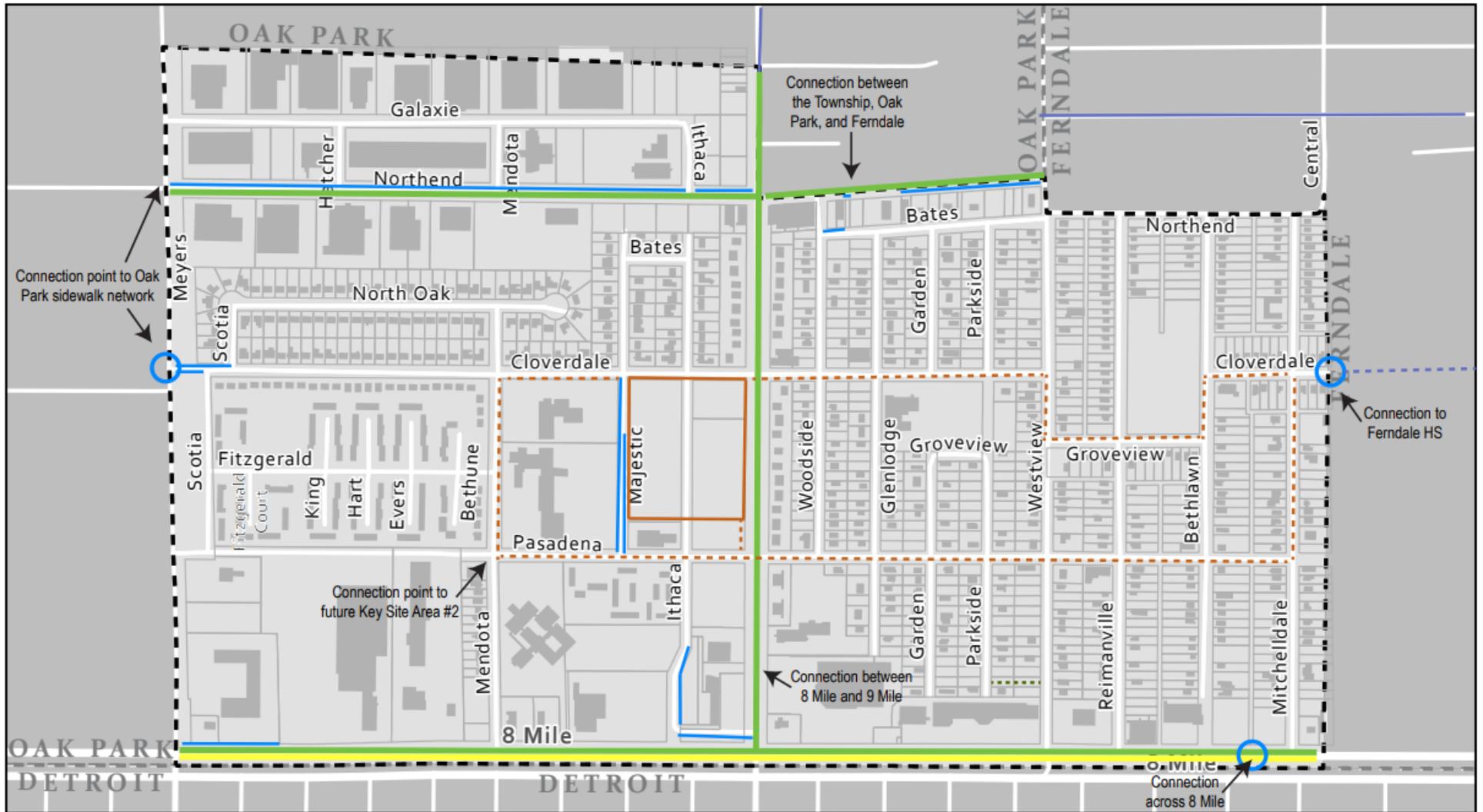
The following chapter describes the plans for transportation improvements throughout Royal Oak Township over the next 5 to 20 years. These plans are dependent on regional coordination with roadway owners, transportation planning agencies, and transit agencies. Together, we can build a transportation system that supports public health, local business, and equitable access for all.

Future Transportation Plan



DEFINING FUTURE TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES

- ← **Sidewalks** are concrete paths wide enough to accommodate two pedestrians traveling side-by-side, or the passage of someone using a wheelchair. They are typically 5 feet wide and should be separated from roadways by a lawn extension. Sidewalks offer people safe ways to get to school, jobs, and amenities, as well as ways to visit neighbors and get exercise. Sidewalks are considered “complete” when they have no missing segments, and all ramps are curb-free. Painted crosswalks alert drivers of where to expect people crossing. Crosswalks are typically two white lines across the street, but other designs draw more attention to the crossing and tend not to wear away as quickly. Special paving or colored markings may also be used.
- ← **Shared use paths/walking paths** are paved concrete or asphalt paths wide enough to comfortably accommodate both pedestrians and bicyclists traveling in two directions. They are typically a minimum of 10 feet wide with 2 feet of clearance on either side of the path. Shared use paths offer cyclists a safe place to bike off-street when there is no space for a bike lane, or it is unsafe to bike on the street. For the planned shared-use paths in the Township, exclusive walking paths may be more appropriate, given that there is ample roadway space on Cloverdale and Pasadena to accommodate bikes. Depending on the amount of roadway available bicycles can be considered as a shared use, but pedestrians and people using mobility devices should be prioritized. Additionally, at least a 1-foot landscape buffer should separate any paths from roadways.
- ← **Bike lanes** are dedicated space for cyclists on a roadway. A double-sided bike lane is when there is a unidirectional bike lane on each side of a road. A two-way bike lane is when there is a bidirectional bike lane on one side of a road. Bike lanes are indicated by on-street markings, including white and green stripes, which can be supplemented with signage and removable bollards. Bike lanes reinforce proper roadway etiquette, raise the visibility of bicyclists, and help both bicyclists and drivers behave predictably when sharing road space. For safe cycling, bike lanes should be 4 - 6 feet wide. On 8 Mile Road, any bike lane should be protected, meaning they should have a physical barrier (bollards, curb, planters, etc.) that protects cyclists from drivers.
- ← **Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)** is a type of bus service that provides increased speeds and frequency at a fewer number of stops, thus making service rapid. BRT is designed to improve the capacity and reliability of the bus network, carrying more people to their destinations faster than traditional buses. BRT typically has a dedicated lane which is exclusive for buses, and this lane is often painted red and/or separated from regular car traffic. On 8 Mile Road, any BRT planned and executed by the Regional Transit Authority should be adequately separated from car and bicycle traffic and be accompanied by high quality transit stops.



Future New Transportation Facilities

Royal Oak Township

March 5, 2024

LEGEND

- New 5-foot Sidewalk
- New Double-Sided On-Street Bike Lane
- New Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Lane
- New Walking Path
- - - Potential Route of New Walking/Multi-Use Path
- - - New Temporary Mid-Block Path
- Planned Bike Lane Outside Township
- - - Planned Sidewalk Outside Township
- New Multi-Jurisdictional Crosswalk



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.
 Data Source: County or Local Community Source. McKenna 2023.
 State of Michigan, 2023.
 SEMCOG Open Data Portal, 2023.

Priority Spots

INSIDE THE TOWNSHIP

“Very Poor” Rated Sidewalk Segments and Ramps

Based on the sidewalk inventory, there are numerous “very poor” condition segments throughout the Township. Replacement of these segments should be prioritized. Additionally, crossings that do not have ADA-compliant ramps or safe ramps in general are a priority for improvement.

Pasadena Ave – Safe Speeds and Intersections

Due to the high speeds, traffic calming should be deployed along Pasadena Ave. This may take different forms, such as narrowing lanes, adding gateway signage, planting more street trees, etc. The planned walking path could also be used to intentionally slow down cars by taking up road space, thereby making the roadway seem narrower.

Ithaca Ave – Street Signs

The “no parking” signs installed on the incorrect side of the street along Ithaca Ave should be fixed.

Shared Street Parking – Enforcement

Particularly on the east side of the Township, enforcement of illegally parked vehicles should be prioritized. This includes commercial and abandoned vehicles, trailers, and others that are parked in a way that makes passage difficult.

Wyoming Ave – Crossing at Ferndale Park Co-Op

The mid-block crossing over Wyoming Ave, next to the Ferndale Park Co-Op, should be improved to increase pedestrian comfort and visibility. Additional lighting and traffic calming measures like gateway signage, or a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) should be installed to alert drivers to crossing pedestrians.

To the right is an example of a crosswalk which includes an RRFB as well as enhanced signage to alert drivers about the crossing point.



THROUGHOUT OR ON BORDERS WITH THE TOWNSHIP

Wyoming & Northend

The ramps and crosswalks at the intersection of Wyoming and Northend Aves should be repaired and improved. Since the only complete north-south sidewalk is on the east side, ensuring a safe crossing is essential. Additionally, better lighting, striping, and signage should be provided at this intersection to improve the sense of safety for all users.

Safe Routes to School

Establishing Safe Routes to School for students attending both the Oak Park and Ferndale School Districts should be a top priority. For Oak Park, this should include establishing a complete sidewalk along Cloverdale Ave and a safe crossing over Meyers Rd. For Ferndale, this should include creating a direct access point into the High School campus.

East-West Connectors

Continuous east-west sidewalk and bicycle connections should be established to allow residents to travel between the Township, Oak Park, and Ferndale. Northend and 8 Mile should be established as complete routes since they provide the most direct passage and connect with existing sidewalks and bike lanes outside the Township.

North-South Connectors

Continuous north-south bicycle connections should be established to allow people to travel directly between 8 and 9 Mile Roads. A bike land should be added on Wyoming Avenue, which then could connect with the new protected bike lane on 9 Mile and the broader Oakland County Trail System. Adding bike facilities would not only help calm traffic, but help connect residents to jobs, amenities, and recreation.

8 Mile Road Crossings

Changes to improve the safety of pedestrians crossing 8 Mile is a high priority. Additional crossings should be added at locations where informal crossings are common. In the Township, the priority location for a new crossing is currently across from the ALDI, which has an establish traffic light but no crosswalk. However, MDOT input would be required to conduct an engineering feasibility study to determine the exact location of new crosswalks.

For crossings that exist today, making them more conducive to pedestrians is also a priority. Signal times should be adjusted to allow more time for people with disabilities to cross 8 Mile, and improved lighting should be provided to better illuminate pedestrians.

“Over the next 25 years, Michigan’s safety needs amount to \$3.2 billion. The safety needs include the cost of installing safety countermeasures to address systemic improvements (such as rumble strips, traffic signals, cable median barriers), freeway pavement markings, and non-freeway pavement markings on roads owned by MDOT. The full accounting of safety needs is likely considerably higher, as the needs do not account for cyber security, mode-specific needs (like improvements for people walking and biking), and safety improvements on local roads.” - Michigan Mobility 2045 Plan

OUTSIDE THE TOWNSHIP

There are several areas of improvement located just outside the Township which the Township would like to support. Improvements at these locations would positively impact the entire transportation network for the area, serving Township residents and others. The Township may choose to lend political support, grant or financial support, and other forms of support for projects which pursue these improvements, which are shown on the following map.



Future Broader Network Improvements that are Township-Supported

Royal Oak Township

March 5, 2024



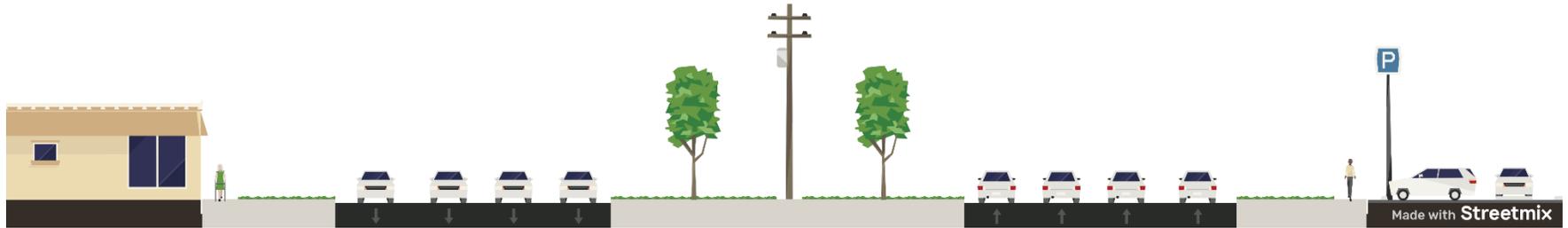
Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.
 Data Source: County or Local Community Source, McKenna 2023.
 State of Michigan, 2023.
 SEMCOG Open Data Portal, 2023.



A VISION FOR A NEW 8 MILE

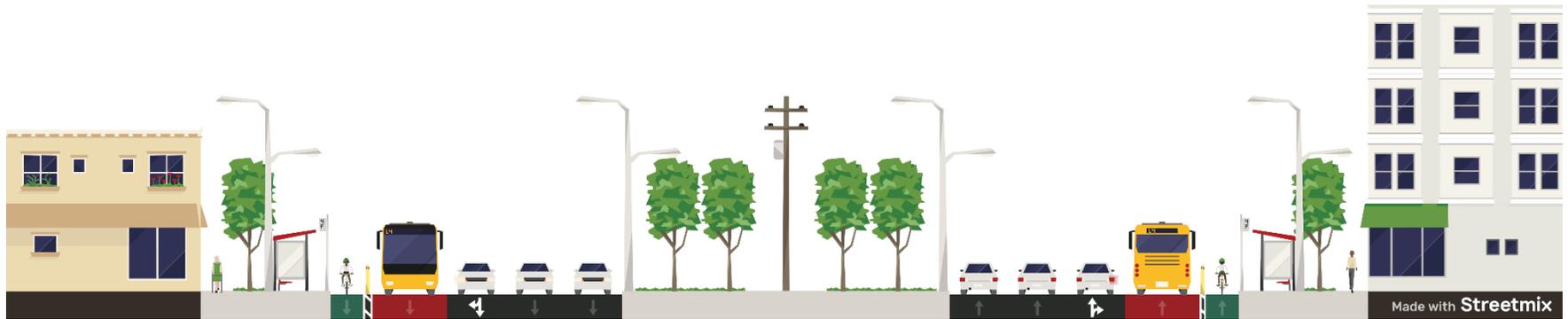
Current 8 Mile (No Turn Lanes)

< Detroit | Royal Oak Township >



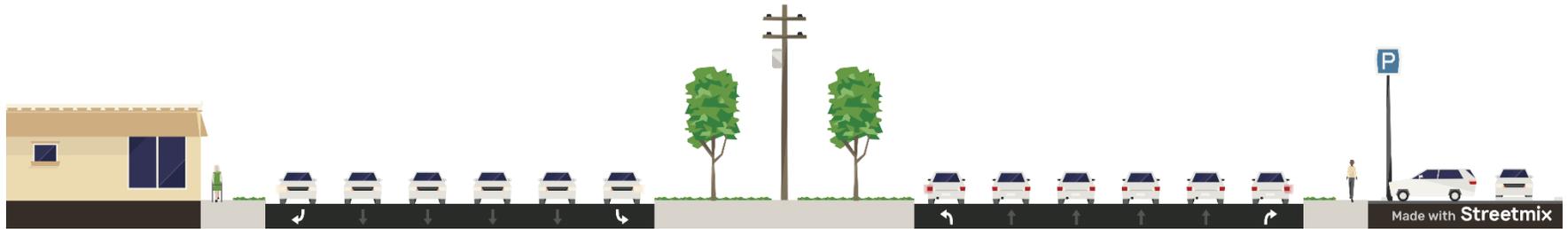
Future 8 Mile (No Turn Lanes)

< Detroit | Royal Oak Township >



Current 8 Mile (With Turn Lanes)

< Detroit | Royal Oak Township >



Future 8 Mile (With Turn Lanes)

< Detroit | Royal Oak Township >



Future Amenity Improvements

LANDSCAPING

Landscaping along transportation corridors should:

- Provide ample shade
- Serve as a buffer between vehicles and pedestrians
- Be beautiful and incorporate decorative plants
- Incorporate deciduous trees in lawn extensions
- Use a variety of native plants and non-native decorative plants
- Enhance the sense of place
- Supplement traffic calming, where appropriate
- Be consistent along blocks or throughout a site
- Contribute to a Township-wide complete tree network
- Avoid conflicts with utility lines
- Be well maintained year-round
- Be designed to encourage “right use” (aka deter jaywalking)



TRANSIT STOPS

Transit stops along transportation corridors should:

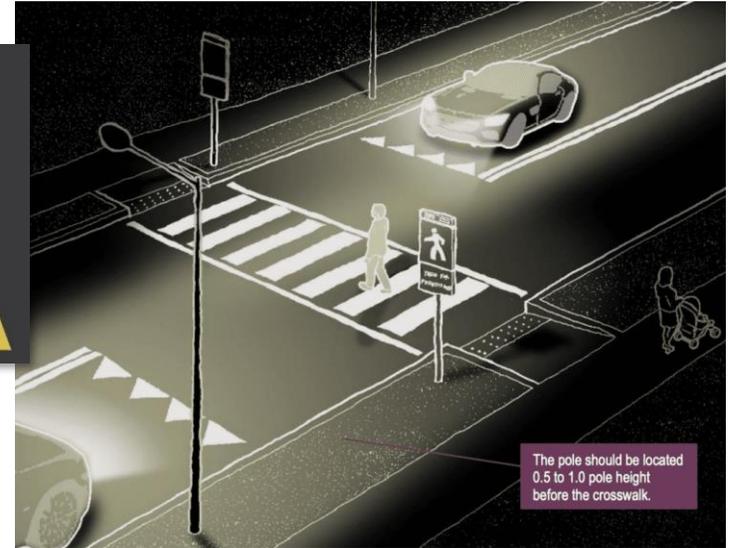
- Include shelters that provide protection from year-round weather
- Include comfortable seating for people of all ages and abilities
- Be adequately lighted
- Include trash cans
- Include solar powered amenities, such as charging ports or heating elements
- Be accompanied by bike racks
- Have a connected paved surface for people boarding
- Have clear and up-to-date signage
- Be located in a way that minimizes bus-bicyclist conflicts
- Have a consistent design throughout the corridor
- Provide transit riders with a safe, comfortable experience



STREET LIGHTING

Street lighting along transportation corridors should:

- Provide proper contrast of people using crosswalks at night
- Be consistent in form and light hue
- Include pedestrian-scale and vehicle-scale lights
- Create a complete lighting network across the Township
- Make corridors feel safe and welcoming at night
- Include electrical outlets
- Include mounting locations for banner signs in downtown areas
- Provide for broadband mounting locations
- Be used to highlight and draw people to areas of activity



[standard-street-light](#)

CROSSWALKS AND SIDEWALKS

Crosswalks and sidewalks along transportation corridors should:

- Be clearly striped or delineated
- Be constructed of durable, low-maintenance materials
- Include safe ADA-compliant ramps
- Include countdown pedestrian lights at all signalized crossings
- Have a landscaped buffer between the sidewalk and road
- Prioritize safety through design
- Provide crossings at frequent intervals
- Incorporate green infrastructure where possible



PUBLIC ART

Public art can have a great impact on a community. It can create attachment and pride in one's community. Public art can act as an economic driver by providing employment for local artists and acting as a center for culture and tourism. The Township should build a stronger cultural presence through the creation of specific physical spaces and new initiatives that showcase arts and culture, while simultaneously leveraging regional opportunities that will provide residents with a plethora of vibrant art and cultural venues.

Public art along transportation corridors should:

- Be readily visible
- Encourage learning about the township's history
- Elevate township artists
- Create variation and interest
- Be located to highlight key activity areas of the township
- Respect the immediate context in mass and form
- Allow or invite direct interaction



12. Future Land Use

Planned for how land will be used in the future is the key to achieving the Township's desired future. The development of public and private land has the potential to not only catalyze progress, but also impact the daily lives of Township residents. Having a future land use plan is necessary to manage change so that it aligns with the community vision.

Future Land Use Categories and Map

<p>Traditional Residential</p>	<p>This category encompasses the established neighborhoods of the Township. The predominant future land use should be single-family residential houses and attendant accessory dwelling units. These may be arranged in the traditional grid fashion, or as cottage courts. Other low-density residential uses, such as duplexes, triplexes, and townhomes, are also included as secondary future land uses. However, these uses should be located on high traffic thoroughfares (such as Wyoming) for corner parcels overlooking town squares, parks, or multi-story structures including senior residential towers, medical centers, and school buildings.</p> <p>This category also encompasses home occupations and microbusinesses (office and smaller-scale commercial uses that lend themselves to encouraging a walkable, pedestrian oriented neighborhood), that are attached to a residence as secondary land use. Small-scale commercial childcare establishments should be limited to block edges. All non-residential uses should be reviewed to ensure they are compatible with their neighborhood context and harmonious in design.</p>
<p>Multi-Family Residential</p>	<p>This category encompasses the multi-family areas of the township. The predominant land use should be medium-density multi-family residential buildings, including apartments of varying heights and walk-ups. Senior living facilities are also included as a part of the multi-family future land use.</p>
<p>Mixed-Use Residential</p>	<p>This category is a blend of multiple residential uses, achieving an overall low-to-medium living density. The future land uses in this category should be a mix of single-family homes, duplexes, quadplexes, mid-rise apartments, and other residential styles which harmonize with one another. This category is also intended to accommodate the adaptive reuse of existing institutional buildings into residential housing. Recreation and shared open space, including public parks, should be included in tandem with any mixed-use residential land uses and designed to be an integral component.</p>
<p>Commercial</p>	<p>This category encompasses the commercial-only areas of the township. Future land uses should include a wide variety of retail and commercial uses that serve both Township residents and the surrounding communities. This includes businesses like restaurants, banks, convenience stores, banks, salons, maker spaces, and more. Uses which generate greater volumes of traffic and activities which must be specifically considered to minimize adverse effects on adjacent properties and should be restricted to this category. Auto-dependent uses should be specifically excluded.</p>
<p>Mixed-Use Commercial & Residential</p>	<p>This category is a blend of high-density residential and community-oriented commercial uses. This category is intended to revitalize the 8 Mile corridor through the creation of social and economic connections with the community, to promote local businesses, and to create quality housing. The intent of this category is also to provide a "downtown identity," indicating to residents and visitors that they are in Royal Oak Township. This can be accomplished through visual cues such as prominent public buildings, lively street venues, and changes in scale. Commercial uses should be pedestrian-oriented and compatible with upper-story residential, and may include businesses like restaurants, clothing shops, and other retail. Secondary land uses may also include childcare, higher education and training facilities, co-workspaces, and maker spaces. Residential uses should be varied, meeting the needs of young professionals and aging in place populations who may want a housing type not currently offered in other parts of the Township.</p>
<p>Industrial</p>	<p>This category encompasses the industrial areas of the township. The predominant land use should be wholesale activities, warehouses, and industrial operations whose external, physical effects are restricted to the area of the district and in no manner affect in a detrimental way any of the surrounding districts. In particular, businesses that provide numerous jobs and green industry opportunities should be encouraged. Offices are also included as a secondary land use, mixed within the industrial district. However, medical offices and those that serve vulnerable populations should be carefully reviewed to ensure compatibility with surrounding industry.</p>
<p>Recreation</p>	<p>This category encompasses the Township-owned open spaces throughout the Township. Future land uses should include parks, natural space, gardens, and recreation buildings.</p>

NOTE: Public schools, local government buildings, and churches are envisioned in all future land use categories except industrial. Churches and private schools in the mixed-use residential and commercial category should be limited due to their higher demand for parking, which works against pedestrian-oriented design.



Future Land Use

Royal Oak Township

March 5, 2024

LEGEND

- Traditional Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Mixed-Use Residential
- Commercial
- Mixed-Use Commercial & Residential
- Industrial
- Recreation
- Royal Oak Township Boundary



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.
 Data Source: County or Local Community Source. McKenna 2023.
 State of Michigan, 2023.
 SEMCOG Open Data Portal, 2023.



Opportunity Sites

It is vital that redevelopment occurs in a planned fashion to meet the needs of both existing residents and to attract new people and businesses. The redevelopment or reuse of underutilized areas has the potential to catalyze positive change for the community and local economy. The main areas targeted for such redevelopment are considered “Key Site Areas.”

KEY SITE AREA #1

The Civic Center Park Area, bounded by Wyoming, Pasadena, Mendota, and Cloverdale, is one of the largest blocks of land in the Township. With the exception of the New Mt Vernon Missionary Church and the former Carver School, the entire area is owned by the Township. This means the Township has the unique ability to control any future development on this site. Key Site Area #1 was the subject of intense review during the 2018 Activation Strategy, which set forth several design concepts for the site (including the Carver School). This site is ideal for a mix of residential and recreational uses which are low-to medium density, and particularly those which employ adaptive reuse.



KEY SITE AREA #2

The former Mel Far automotive dealership, located on 8 Mile, is the largest vacant site in the Township. Over the past several years, communities across Michigan have dealt with large retail and industrial buildings that sit vacant without much activity. These vacant buildings can impact the economic viability of the community as they appeal to the Michigan Tax Tribunal to have their tax assessments cut by 50%.

The dealership also directly abuts two under-utilized (but not vacant) properties: the Baymont Hotel (aka American Inn) and the New Way Motors dealership. If these sites were included in a redevelopment proposal, they would further increase the range of options for Key Site Area #2. This site is ideal for mixed-use commercial and residential development, with lower-floor retail and offices and upper-floor living. This site could also incorporate institutional uses, such as higher education or job training, to expand service reach. Automotive and industrial uses should be explicitly excluded from any development.





Opportunity Sites

Royal Oak Township

March 5, 2024

LEGEND

 Royal Oak Township Boundary

 Key Site Area #1

 Key Site Area #2



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a.
 Data Source: County or Local Community Source. McKenna 2023.
 State of Michigan, 2023.
 SEMCOG Open Data Portal, 2023.



Vision Image Samples for Key Site Area #1

For Site Design Concepts from the 2018 Activation Strategy, refer to the Appendix.





Future Building Design Strategy

TRADITIONAL AND MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL



In all residential developments, roofs should contain a variety of peaks, gables, or dormers to break long, monotonous roof lines. Facades should increase a variety of window openings and architectural features, such as casements and usable balconies. Building materials should be high quality, such as masonry, on all facades to reduce maintenance.



Infill development in the mixed-use residential areas should be medium density and employ context-sensitive design. Where such development incorporates single-family elements, they should have small building footprints help the densities feel more tenable to existing residents and neighbors.



In all residential developments, garages that make up a significant portion of the front façade should be avoided. Garages and carports, if any, should be permitted in the rear of the unit, screened from road rights-of-way. For multi-family developments, parking should be permitted in the rear yard only and screened from road rights-of-way.



For duplexes, townhomes, fourplexes, and other low-density multi-family developments, shared hallways are discouraged (each unit should have its own entry accessible from outside the building). Each unit should also have trees and enhanced landscaping, including street trees. Three-level walk-ups should have four units on each level, for a total of twelve units. This format provides windows on two sides of the building for each unit.



For multi-family projects, the design of blocks should promote social interaction, walkability, and safety. Pedestrian paths should be provided that connect to the sidewalk system. Buildings should be connected to their surroundings and designed to be harmonious. Architectural styling should break up elevations into smaller masses and use elements that are not repetitive.

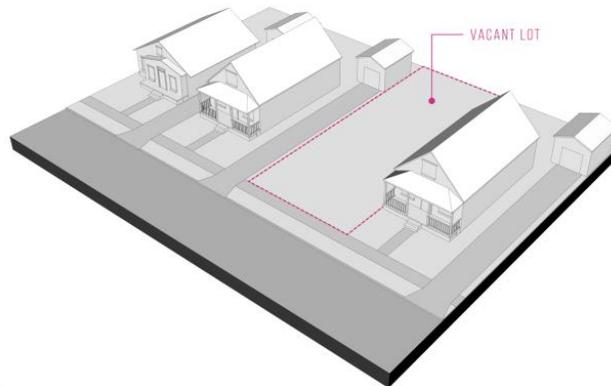


For single-family infill, densities should be blended, and small- to medium-sized building footprints should be maintained. Infill should be laid out to support the existing street grid, and houses should face each other. Where two new houses with accessory dwellings are built on two adjacent lots, they can be located on the parcels in ways that create a courtyard that is shared by the owners and tenants.

2018 Activation Strategy for Residential Infill Lots

EXISTING: SINGULAR VACANT LOTS

Single vacant lots are scattered throughout the neighborhood blocks, specifically in the eastern portions of the Township. These lots are ideal for small scale interventions, as well as future single family homes. Some may be temporarily configured into gardens or permanent neighborhood greenways. Greenways link pedestrians through blocks to community destinations with meandering paths and gardens.



INFILL STRATEGY 1: GREENWAYS & GARDENS

Single, vacant lots that exist in Royal Oak Township, especially mid-block, present an opportunity to use a phased infill approach. This strategy involves converting single lots into temporary and permanent urban gardens and greenway. Urban gardens could be adopted and managed by community volunteers or non-profits. The prime greenway identified in the strategy will connect the community to the Key Site Area through an intimate, natural setting with the goal of ultimately constructing a non-motorized pathway to provide more opportunities for recreation.

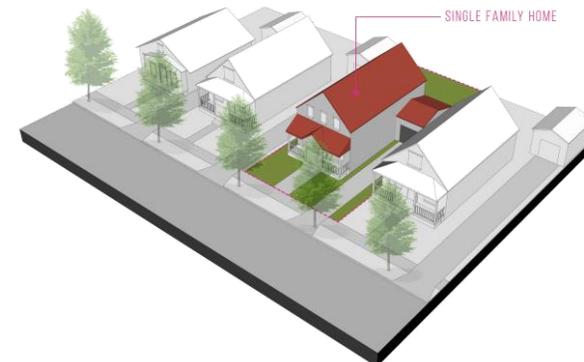


Greenways as imagined for the Fitzgerald neighborhood, Detroit - Mikiyoung Kim Design



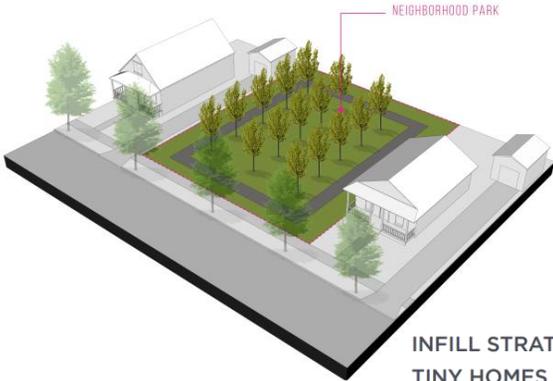
INFILL STRATEGY 2: SINGLE FAMILY HOME

Single family homes would be placed in stand alone vacant lots without buildings. These homes will reflect the character of the neighborhood and may inspire overall rehabilitation or upkeep of surrounding single family homes. Stakeholders repeatedly stressed their desire for single family residential in the Township. Replacing single family homes on singular lots complete the appearance of a street with a few vacancies.



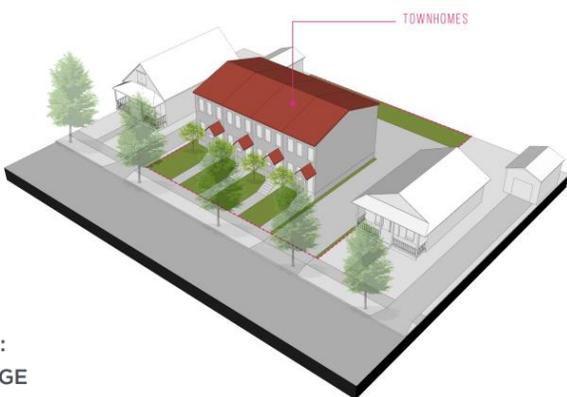
**INFILL STRATEGY 1:
NEIGHBORHOOD PARK**

Multiple adjacent vacant lots are ideal sizes for neighborhood parks. Some urban gardens or tree nurseries on larger pieces of vacant land could be privatized for growing and selling their products. Design guidelines could ensure that portions of the land could be dedicated as open space for the public.



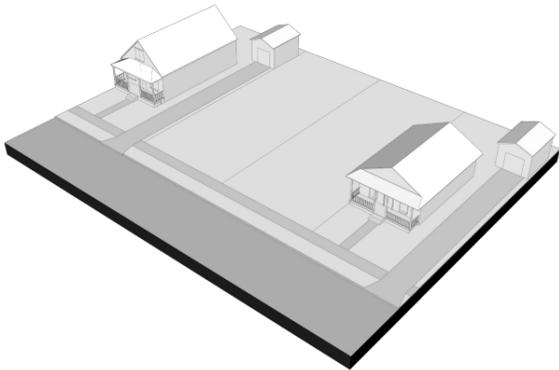
**INFILL STRATEGY 2:
MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL**

Future phases of smaller multi-family residential development (i.e. duplexes and triplexes) are appropriate to target on corner lots and/or adjacent to existing larger parks. Multiple adjacent lots are ideal for this type of housing and are more attractive to developers.



**EXISTING: MULTIPLE ADJACENT
VACANT LOTS**

Vacant, adjacent lots consisting of two more contiguous parcels can also be identified for permanent and temporary parks, urban gardens, and greenway opportunities. Temporary open space solutions may positively impact the overall appearance of the neighborhood and draw development of multifamily residential in the future.



**INFILL STRATEGY 3:
TINY HOMES VILLAGE**

Stakeholders indicated both a desire for single family homes, but also housing for active seniors and young professionals. Tiny home communities, made up of numerous studio-layout single family homes, can be configured into these side-by-side lots. The shared space is ideal for independent residents still wanting single family homes, but do not desire upkeep yards or multi-floor layouts.



COMMERCIAL



New commercial buildings should provide large display windows at the street level, and primary commercial building entrances should be oriented to the street. Entranceways should be inviting to pedestrians, and display windows should attract the interest of passersby. Façades should be constructed of high-quality materials such as brick.



Commercial buildings should be landscaped with foundation plantings. Landscaping should be provided around parking lot perimeters, and at intermediate points within parking lots. Parking lot end islands and medians should be landscaped. Street trees should be provided to buffer pedestrians from moving vehicles, define corridor edges, and enhance roadways. Vegetation and large specimen trees should be incorporated into new commercial site design.



The layout of commercial building or business centers should follow a more compact development pattern to encourage pedestrian activity and take advantage of existing infrastructure. The redevelopment of under-used parking lots should be encouraged.



Loading areas, dumpsters, mechanical equipment, and other service areas should be oriented away from primary elevations, and screened using berms, walls, or other landscaping. Even when service areas are to the rear, it is important for impacts on adjacent properties to be considered when determining appropriate placement and screening.



Parking lot lighting should consist of fully shielded fixtures with 100 percent light output below the horizontal plane. These design elements eliminate glare by shielding the light source from direct view and control the unwanted spread of light onto adjoining properties and roadways. Lighting should also be “soft” and avoid harsh hues.



Decorative pedestrian-scaled light fixtures should be provided to illuminate pedestrian pathways and other pedestrian areas. Reasonable levels of building accent lighting are recommended to highlight architectural character of commercial buildings. Soft lighting of building façades from soffit fixtures or landscape areas is preferable to high intensity spotlights mounted on poles or floodlights. Ornamental light fixtures should also be used to create interest on façades.



Coordinated landscaping, lighting, street furniture, and signage should be used to create a unique identity for each commercial area and/or gateway. Within each area, landscaping, lighting, street furniture, and signage should be compatible. A common palette of colors, materials, and design should be developed and used for street furniture (benches, trash receptacles, and the like).

MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL

In addition to the general standards for Commercial developments mixed-use developments with a residential component should incorporate the following principles. Mixed-use projects should reflect the design feel of the sample images included on the following pages, selected through the public engagement process.



Open space areas should be provided as a part of any development. Pocket parks, plazas, and other pedestrian areas should be landscaped with shade trees and planters. Building should employ walkable development principles, including building-lined roadways, pedestrian orientation, and articulated facades with visual interest.



Areas that face major thoroughfares should incorporate ground-floor retail, service/office, or institutional uses, which are open at a range of times. Any retail mix should include businesses which serve as a neighborhood asset, such as grocery stores and coffee shops, and provide locations for social connection and collaboration. Other compatible non-retail uses, like childcare and higher education, should also be present.



Buildings should incorporate a variety of heights, making the best use of site while still providing a pedestrian-scale feel at edges. Buildings should not exceed the height of the Ferndale Park Co-Op (approx. 8-10 stories in height, including the ground floor). For development above 4 stories, building should incorporate a step-back for the upper floors.

Example of a building step-back, where taller buildings are set behind shorter ones.

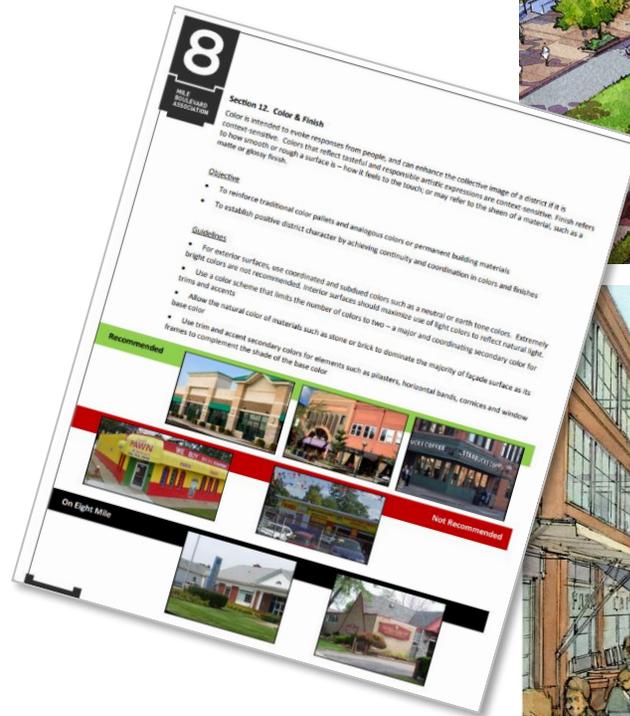




8 MILE CORRIDOR

Along 8 Mile, architectural design should generally conform to the design standards set forth by the 8 Mile Boulevard Association in the *Boulevard Design Guidelines*. These guidelines should be flowed together with the other design desires specified within the Royal Oak Township Community Master Plan. The *Boulevard Design Guidelines* include standards on:

- Building placement and orientation
- Circulation
- Fencing
- Massing, scale, and form
- Style
- Fenestration (windows) and architectural detail
- Transparency
- Entryways
- Materials, color, and finish
- Awnings, canopies, and marquees
- Lighting
- Security features
- Utilities and service areas
- Historic and significant existing buildings
- Surface and structure parking
- Signage
- Landscaping
- Streetscaping and open space
- Sustainable and green buildings



INDUSTRIAL



While the design of industrial buildings generally emphasizes functionality, design should also focus on making buildings visually appealing. Techniques should be employed to reduce the perceived mass of large industrial buildings. Variations in wall plane, materials, patterns, textures, and colors can be used to break up façades and add interest. Windows, bay divisions, vertical columns and piers, cornices, and other ornamentation that mark floor height are also effective means



Building entries should be attractive, welcoming, and readily identifiable. Projections, recesses, columns, roof structures, or other design elements can be used to make entrances stand out. Landscaping should be used to further emphasize and enhance entryways.



Where appropriate, industrial buildings should be designed with high ceilings and open floor plans, so that spaces are flexible, and buildings may accommodate a variety of users over their life spans. Accessory and utility buildings should be incorporated into the overall site design and should match the main building.



General vehicle circulation and truck circulation should occur in separate areas of a site. Public roadways are not to be used for truck maneuvering. Access management techniques should be utilized to reduce the number of driveways for industrial sites. Shared driveways and internal connections between individual sites should be pursued, to reduce the impact of industrial traffic on roadways.



Buildings should be oriented to prevent direct public view into loading zones, service, and repair areas. Loading areas and truck storage areas should be located to the side or rear of buildings and screened from view. Rear yard loading areas are preferable to side yard loading. Landscaping, berms, and walls – including wing walls extending from the building – may be used to screen loading areas.



Industrial sites often have expansive buildings and parking lots. Landscaping along rights-of-way should be used to soften the appearance of industrial buildings and sites. Parking should not dominate the view of an industrial site from the roadway. Landscaping should be provided not only around parking lot perimeters, but also at intermediate points within parking lots. Parking lot end islands and medians should be landscaped. Expanses of asphalt are to be avoided.



More intense and/or unique landscaping should be provided at focal points: entries into the property, building entrances, and pedestrian spaces. Buildings should be surrounded by foundation landscaping.

Zoning Plan

Table 6: Future Land Use and Zoning Map Correlation

Future Land Use Designation	Zoning Districts
Traditional Residential	R-1A and R-1B
Multi-Family Residential	R-M
Mixed-Use Residential	R-M
Commercial	C-2
Mixed-Use Residential & Commercial	C-3
Industrial	M-1
Recreation	Any District
Key Site Areas	Ideal Districts Vary, Suitable for Planned Unit Development

Text Amendments

Text amendments can be used to help implement the Community Master Plan. Text amendments apply either to the entire Zoning Ordinance or across an entire zoning district. Text amendment can be a fast and effective way to change allowable building dimensions, add or remove permitted uses within a district, or set performance controls on certain types of land uses. Text amendments are also necessary whenever a new zoning district must be created.

The Zoning Ordinance text should be updated continuously to reflect the many goals and objectives throughout the Community Master Plan. Based on the findings of the Plan, some near-term text changes include:

- Revising the residential uses allowed in all of the Township’s residential districts to match the Future Land Use plan.
- Providing for a limited range of compatible microbusinesses in the R1-A and R-1B (Residential) districts.
- Creating new standards to allow more layout and design flexibility for areas planned as Mixed-Use Residential.
- Revising the regulations for home occupations to reflect the modern conditions of at-home work and provide for a broader range of entrepreneurship occupations.
- Modifying the allowable number of stories in the C-3 (Mixed-Use) district and adding building and streetscape design regulations.
- Modifying the site development standards for childcare facilities to be no stricter than those imposed by the State of Michigan.
- Revising the design standards for small-scale solar energy systems to allow for a wider variety of installation options.
- Removing regulations on certain uses, such as public schools, which have been pre-empted by state law.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

Rezoning and Text Amendment

Zoning is the primary regulatory tool used by the City to implement the master plan. The land use classifications on the Future Land Use Map provide the primary basis for evaluating future rezoning requests, although the text of the Community Master Plan also affect rezoning decisions. Zoning actions that are consistent with the Future Land Use Map and Plan text usually receive deferential and favorable judicial review if challenged. The Plan should be the principal source of information in the investigation of all rezoning requests. The Township may initiate rezonings necessary to place land in conformance with the Future Land Use Map, or it may wait for property owners to come forward. Text amendments are modifications to the Zoning Ordinance text, rather than the map. Text amendments are used to make broad use changes across an entire zoning district or the entire Township.

Planned Unit Development

Planned development involves the use of special zoning requirements and review procedures that provide design and regulatory flexibility, so as to encourage innovation in land use planning and design. Planned developments should achieve a higher quality of development than might otherwise be possible. Continued use of planned development is recommended to achieve development in accordance with the goals and objectives of this Plan. Planned development can be used as the regulatory tool to permit open space zoning or cluster development and to facilitate mixed use redevelopment in the downtown area.

Planned unit developments should be considered for the unique larger sites in the township, such as the Key Site Areas, to allow for greater flexibility and the establishment of public benefits. Additionally, the Zoning Ordinance text regarding Planned Unit Development should be updated to better reflect state enabling legislation.

Incentive Zoning

Incentive zoning allows a developer to exceed the dimensional limitations in the Zoning Ordinance if the developer agrees to fulfill conditions specified in the Ordinance. Incentive zoning should be considered to promote innovative land planning techniques identified in the Plan. For example, a possible increase in density can be used as an incentive for developments that implement public improvements or enhanced architecture.

Overlay Zoning

Overlay zoning allows the Township to impose a new set of regulations on a special area within an existing zoning district. In an area where an overlay zone is established, the property is placed simultaneously in the two zones, and the property may be developed only under the applicable conditions and requirements of both zones. Thus, the overlay district regulations supplement the regulations of the underlying zoning district. Overlay zoning has been used in other communities to address special conditions and features, such as historic areas, wetlands, and other environmentally sensitive areas, without disrupting the underlying zoning plan.

Performance Standards

Rather than simply regulate development on the basis of dimensional standards, many communities are establishing performance standards to regulate development based on the permissible effects or impacts of a proposed use. Performance standards should be used to supplement conventional zoning standards. Performance standards can be developed to regulate noise, dust, vibration, odor, glare and heat, safety hazards, and environmental impacts such as air and water pollution. The complexity of the performance standards should be based in part on the capacity of Township staff to administer the standards.

13. Implementation: Goals Into Actions

This chapter of the plan presents tools and techniques that residents, community leaders, and Township staff can use to implement the land use plan. These implementation measures are workable if there are people in the community with vision and tenacity who are willing to invest the time and effort required to make them work. Community improvement requires a compelling vision; persistence; the flexibility needed to respond to changing needs, opportunities, and circumstances; and an ability to achieve consensus.

How to Read the Implementation Strategy

The Implementation Strategy below consolidates all the goals from each chapter and assigns objectives (actions) to each goal. Each objective is assigned a timeline, priority, and a lead agency, department, or public board/commission. The purpose of the Implementation Strategy is to keep Royal Oak Township accountable for the Community Master Plan and to ensure the goals are translated into reality.

H	Higher Priority	Near	Near-Term (1-2 years)
M	Medium Priority	Medium	Medium-Term (3-5 years)
L	Lower Priority	Long	Long-Term. (5-10 years)

- ROT = Royal Oak Township
 - PC = Planning Commission
 - Board = Board of Trustees
 - Park & Rec = Park and Recreation Commission
- SEMCOG = Southeast Michigan Council of Governments
- RTA = Regional Transportation Authority
- 8 MBA = 8 Mile Boulevard Association

The tools and techniques identified in this chapter can be implemented under current enabling legislation. Legislation has been proposed in recent years that would give communities additional tools to implement land use recommendations, such as, regional impact coordination, impact fees, and tax incentives. If adoption of any such new legislation is uncertain, this chapter focuses on the tools available under current law.

Implementation Strategy

COMMUNITY HISTORY

	Lead(s)	Partners	Timeline	Priority
GOAL 1: IMPROVE AWARENESS OF THE TOWNSHIP'S HISTORY AND PURSUE NEW WAYS FOR RESIDENTS TO ENGAGE WITH LOCAL HISTORY				
Advertise the existing historical learning resources, both public and private, that are freely available to township residents.	ROT Library		Near	H
Create an endemic history exhibit in the Township library.	ROT Library	Public & Non-Profits	Medium	M
Pursue partnerships with higher education institutions and other organizations which can help create interactive, online history learning options.	ROT Library	UM, LTU, Wayne State, etc.	Medium	L
Install public art projects which include significant learning elements about the Township history.	ROT Staff	Local Artists	Long	M
Create a formal or informal Historic Commission that is charged with collecting and disseminating local history.	ROT Board		Long	L
Support community-led projects which engage residents about the township's history through storytelling or other means.	Public	ROT Board	Long	L
GOAL 2: PROTECT THE TOWNSHIP'S HISTORAL RESOURCES FROM LOSS OR DAMAGE				
Train relevant Library and Township staff on proper preservation procedures.	ROT Library		Near	H
Digitize the existing historical assets at the Township Library.	ROT Library		Near	H
Create a structured file storage system for digital and physical resources, as well as a procedure for resource protection and retention.	ROT Manager		Medium	M
Routinely release a "call for resources" to the community, asking residents to bring forth historical documents they have for digitization.	ROT Library		Long	L
GOAL 3: ELEVATE THE TOWNSHIP'S HISTORY AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL				
Pursue media opportunities to spread information about the township's regional significance and history.	ROT Board	ROT Library	Medium	H
Support community-led projects which teach-out about the township's history.	Public	ROT Board	Long	M
Collaborate with historical societies in neighboring cities to find pre-annexation historical resources.	ROT Library	Ferndale, Oak Park, etc.	Long	L
Collaborate with historical societies in neighboring cities to educate residents of those communities about the history of the Township as a part of their own history.	ROT Library	Ferndale, Oak Park, etc.	Long	L

PEOPLE AND HEALTH

	Lead(s)	Partners	Timeline	Priority
GOAL 1: IMPROVE TOWNSHIP-WIDE AWARENESS OF HEALTHY LIVING OPPORTUNITIES				
Advertise food security programs hosted through the County and State.	ROT Staff		Near	H
Create a community health web resource that can be updated with information on a wide variety of public health topics.	ROT Staff		Near	M
Routinely disseminate information prepared by health agencies on common issues, such as cardiovascular health and air pollution, to township residents.	ROT Staff		Near	M
Support agencies and non-profits who are interested in hosting health-based clinics or classes in the township.	ROT Park & Rec		Long	H
Partner with area hospitals, universities, and health agencies to provide on-site healthy living classes in-township.	ROT Park & Rec	UM, Wayne State, Trinity, etc.	Long	H
Partner with adjoining cities to launch a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Program.	ROT Staff	Ferndale, etc.	Long	L
GOAL 2: SUPPORT A HEALTHY, ACTIVE LIFESTYLE FOR ALL TOWNSHIP RESIDENTS, REGARDLESS OF AGE OR LEVEL OF ABILITY				
Create bicycle facilities which connect residents to the broader Oakland County Trails system and nearby recreation centers.	OC	ROT Staff	Near	M
Collaborate with external agencies and local governments to ensure residents can access nearby parks and nature areas.	ROT Staff	OC, SEMCOG	Long	M
Complete and maintain the existing sidewalk network to support outdoor exercise.	ROT Staff	OC	Long	L
GOAL 3: IMPROVE THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT TO FACILITATE HEALTHY AGING IN PLACE				
Create a recruitment and incentive package to attract urgent care and other healthcare providers to the township.	ROT Staff		Near	H
Modify the Zoning Ordinance to discourage or prohibit new polluting uses, especially those which might cause long-term contamination problems.	ROT PC		Near	H
Support developers who want to re-use vacant sites as they seek brownfield funding.	ROT Manager	OC, State of MI	Medium	H
Encourage the integration of a continuous region-wide bike/walkway system, seamlessly connecting to adjoining communities.	OC	SEMCOG	Long	H
Support projects which intercept or reduce noise from 8 Mile Rd, such as new buildings, landscaping, and sound reductions.	ROT Staff	SEMCOG, State of MI	Long	M
GOAL 4: PURSUE A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO COMMUNITY HEALTH				
Seek out partners who may be willing to establish an in-school health clinic.	ROT Staff	Non-Profits	Near	H
Encourage public and private amenities that improve cognability for residents.	ROT Board		Medium	M
Encourage a mix of housing to ensure that people can stay in the Township through all their stages of life.	ROT PC	State of MI	Long	H
Support health and wellness programs, including those which foster social connection.	ROT Park & Rec		Long	M
Foster and implement volunteerism and philanthropy.	ROT Park & Rec	Public	Long	L

HOUSING

	Lead(s)	Partners	Timeline	Priority
GOAL 1: PROVIDE A BALANCE OF HOUSING TYPES TO SUPPORT AGING IN PLACE FOR PEOPLE AT ALL STAGES OF LIFE				
Update the uses in the Zoning Ordinance's residential districts to reflect the Future Land Use Plan.	ROT PC		Near	H
Update the dimensional and design regulations in the Zoning Ordinance's residential districts to reflect the Future Land Use Plan.	ROT PC		Near	H
Support mixed-use development projects which incorporate a creative residential component that meets a market need that is currently under-served.	ROT Board	OC	Medium	H
Encourage or require developers of new residential projects to include age-friendly home features in their unit design.	ROT PC & Staff	Non-Profits	Medium	M
GOAL 2: REINFORCE THE INTEGRITY OF EXISTING NEIGHBORHOODS				
Publicize the reporting steps and mechanism for Adult Foster Care facilities.	ROT Staff		Near	H
Encourage reporting of un-registered rentals, especially those serving vulnerable tenants.	ROT Board		Near	H
Strengthen enforcement of un-registered rentals.	ROT Staff	Public	Near	H
Enforce ordinances to ensure maintenance of lots, with an emphasis on vacant lots.	ROT Staff		Near	H
Adopt an ordinance requiring that absentee landlords have a local maintenance company who can provide repairs and service to tenants.	ROT Board		Near	M
Target older subsidized housing units on Wyoming and Pasadena Ave for refurbishment.	ROT Housing	OC	Long	L
Provide infrastructure improvements and assist with infrastructure, utility, and liens fees across existing neighborhoods.	ROT Board	OC	Long	L
GOAL 3: ENCOURAGE INFILL DEVELOPMENT ON THE RESIDENTIAL AND MIXED-USE PARCELS THROUGHOUT THE TOWNSHIP				
Launch the Township-owned single family residential lot sale program.	ROT Staff		Near	H
Update the marketing packages for the scattered site and mixed-use residential properties throughout the Township.	ROT Staff		Near	M
Create an updated vacant parcel map that accurately reflects both public and private parcels.	ROT Staff		Near	L
Streamline the permitting process for new residential development.	ROT Board		Medium	H
Launch a pre-approved single-family infill program.	ROT Staff	State of MI	Medium	L
Increase the reach of the Township's marketing materials through real estate and agency partnerships.	ROT Board		Medium	L
Prioritize and apply for funding for infill and infrastructure projects from public and private resources.	ROT Manager	OC, SEMCOG	Long	M
GOAL 4: IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND AVAILABILITY OF HOUSING IN THE TOWNSHIP				
Publicize the home improvement funding and assistance available through the County and other agencies/non-profits.	ROT Staff	OC & Non-Profits	Near	H
Publicize learning opportunities for home repair how-to and contractor's courses.	ROT Staff	Wayne State, etc	Near	M

Revise the Zoning Ordinance to allow ADUs by-right and update the design and location standards to ensure safety and visual harmony.	ROT PC		Near	L
Establish basic design, sustainability, and accessibility standards for residential projects.	ROT PC		Medium	L
Partner with external agencies to provide home improvement sessions about funding, the application process, etc. to residents.	ROT Staff	Non-Profits & OC	Medium	L
Create incentives within the approval process for projects meeting specific design criteria.	ROT Staff		Long	M
Establish a tool/equipment library for people to make their own home improvements.	ROT Park & Rec	Non-Profit	Long	L

JOBS AND ECONOMY

	Lead(s)	Partners	Timeline	Priority
GOAL 1: SUPPORT EXISTING AND ENCOURAGE NEW BUSINESSES				
Create recruiting materials for specific desired business types.	ROT Staff		Near	H
Connect local business owners to opportunities for funding through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.	ROT Staff	State of MI	Medium	L
Connect local business owners to opportunities for funding through Oakland County and other non-profit agencies.	ROT Staff	OC & Non-Profits	Medium	L
Actively recruit desired business types through publication and partnership to locate in the Township.	ROT Supervisor & Staff		Long	H
Develop strategies and incentives to retain existing industrial employers.	ROT Staff	OC	Long	L
Evaluate the financial feasibility of offering direct and indirect local incentives for construction and rehabilitation of buildings.	ROT Staff		Long	L
GOAL 2: ENCOURAGE TALENT DEVELOPMENT AND RECRUIT ENTREPRENEURS TO THE TOWNSHIP				
Publicize job training and educational opportunities from nearby institutions to residents.	ROT Staff		Near	H
Update the Zoning Ordinance to incorporate emerging industrial and commercial uses, such as high-tech uses and maker spaces, which are currently absent.	ROT PC		Near	M
Improve marketing efforts to attract new high-tech, research and development uses to the township.	State of MI	ROT Board	Medium	L
Promote partnerships the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, and other agencies to attract new industrial investment and jobs.	State of MI	ROT Board	Medium	L
Partner with business incubators and entrepreneurship support organizations to provide services to township residents.	ROT Staff	Michigan Works!, etc.	Long	H
Recruit training and higher-ed institutions to relocate or establish satellite facilities in the township.	ROT Staff	UM, Wayne State, OCC, etc.	Long	H
Partner with local universities and colleges to open the doors for township youth and expose them to a diverse range of job opportunities.	ROT Staff	UM, Wayne State, OCC, etc.	Long	H

Promote lifelong learning opportunities that are both online and in-person for undersaturated industries in the township.	ROT Library	UM, Wayne State, OCC, etc.	Long	M
GOAL 3: FACILITATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNDER-USED COMMERCIAL AND MIXED-USE PROPERTIES				
Update the marketing packages for the commercial and mixed-use residential properties throughout the Township.	ROT Staff		Near	H
Feature pop-up events at infill sites to draw awareness and interest.	ROT Supervisor		Near	M
Update the Zoning Ordinance to reflect the desired design standards for new commercial and mixed-use properties.	ROT PC		Near	L
Ensure the Zoning Ordinance allows for adaptive reuse of existing buildings.	ROT PC		Medium	M
Advertise marketing packages through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, local real estate agencies, and more.	State of MI	State of MI	Long	H
Promote revitalization and improvement of older commercial areas and vacant parcels.	ROT Board		Long	L
Allow opportunities for artists to activate public space through art installations.	ROT Board	ROT Library	Long	L
Create volunteer opportunities to clean up vacant and blighted properties to prep them for infill.	ROT Park & Rec	Non-Profits	Long	L
GOAL 4: PROMOTE THE TOWNSHIP AS A WELCOMING PLACE FOR BUSINESS				
Create a one-stop development guide for new and existing projects which guides them through the approval process.	ROT Staff		Near	H
Create a unified signage design for the Township.	ROT Staff		Near	H
Enroll in the Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) program.	ROT Board	State of MI	Near	M
Implement signage at key entry points and all public facilities throughout the Township to improve wayfinding and establish a clear character.	ROT Staff		Near	M
Create a Marketing Plan for the Township that creates a local "brand."	ROT Staff		Near	L
Implement the Marketing Plan.	ROT Staff		Medium	L
Create and disseminate a promotional video on the Township.	ROT Staff	School District	Medium	L
Partner with external agencies, such as the Michigan Main Street program or Michigan Economic Development Corporation, to help champion the Township.	ROT Supervisor	State of MI, SEMCOG	Long	L
Support events that activate public spaces (i.e. block parties, pop-up restaurants, etc.)	ROT Supervisor		Long	L
Develop public-private partnerships to provide ongoing programming and market local events.	ROT Manager		Long	L

PARKS AND ENVIRONMENT

	Lead(s)	Partners	Timeline	Priority
GOAL 1: MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE EXISTING PARKS				
Update the Parks and Recreation Plan to be eligible for MDNR funding and Recreation Grants that require a plan update every 5 years.	ROT Park & Rec		Near	H

Invest in park and equipment maintenance.	ROT Board		Long	H
Fill underused space in parks with new amenities for a variety of ages and levels of ability.	ROT Park & Rec		Long	H
GOAL 2: SUPPORT HEALTHY LIVING AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLES THROUGH PARKS AND RECREATION				
Develop additional specific programs to accommodate special populations, such as people with disabilities and the growing number of elderly residents.	ROT Park & Rec		Medium	M
Install outdoor fitness equipment in the parks.	ROT Park & Rec	OC, Non-Profits	Medium	M
Provide indoor year-round classes on healthy living and mindfulness.	ROT Park & Rec	School Districts	Medium	L
Create regular fitness challenges which motivate residents to get active.	ROT Park & Rec	School Districts	Medium	L
Plant trees throughout the parks to create a continuous canopy route around and through every park, providing respite on hot days.	ROT Park & Rec	OC	Long	M
GOAL 3: ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ALL PARKS AND FUTURE FACILITIES				
For all new equipment, ensure it is designed to be universally accessible.	ROT Staff		Long	H
Ensured sidewalk approaches to all facilities are accessible.	ROT Staff	OC, SEMCOG	Long	H
Ensure that all new equipment encourages play for all ages, including older adults.	ROT Staff	OC	Long	M
Maintain a balance of parks in the township to ensure all neighborhoods have access.	ROT Park & Rec	OC, SEMCOG	Long	L
GOAL 4: INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY CONNECTION				
Provide multigenerational programs that are both fitness and non-fitness focused.	ROT Park & Rec	School Districts	Near	M
Partner with local instructors or service providers to increase the range of program offerings and include create options that bring residents together.	ROT Park & Rec		Near	L
Create multiple seated gathering spaces in each of the parks which provide a comfortable space for socialization.	ROT Park & Rec	OC, SEMCOG	Medium	H
Increase the number and variety of programs to help residents connect with one another.	ROT Park & Rec	ROT Library	Medium	H
GOAL 5: USE PARKLAND AS A PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITY				
Create a uniform signage system for the parks.	ROT Board		Near	H
Target vacant residential sites for permanent and temporary green space, community gardens, etc.	ROT Board		Medium	H
Routinely program events in the parks that draw both residents and visitors from beyond the Township.	ROT Park & Rec	School Districts	Medium	M
Promote tree preservation and require tree replacement when existing woodland resources are impacted by construction.	ROT Board	ROT PC	Long	L
GOAL 6: IMPROVE OPTIONS FOR NATURE-BASED ENGAGEMENT IN THE PARKS				
Acquire vacant parcels that have mature trees and develop them into temporary or permanent nature-based learning spaces.	ROT Board		Near	M
Create or support programming which teaches residents and children about nature, plants, gardening, and urban foraging.	ROT Park & Rec	School Districts	Medium	L
Install green infrastructure in appropriate places through the parks and accompany features with educational signage and nature-based learning activities.	ROT Staff	SEMCOG	Long	L

CIVIC SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

	Lead(s)	Partners	Timeline	Priority
GOAL 1: MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE EXISTING CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE				
Continue current police and fire protection and provide such services to adequately meet the Township's future needs.	ROT Board	Ferndale & State of MI	Near	H
Participate in the state-wide capital coordination program when launched.	ROT Manager	State of MI	Near	H
Create a prioritization strategy for co-locating infrastructure during opportune construction projects.	ROT Staff		Near	M
Pursue grants and alternative funding to improve broadband infrastructure broadband providers.	ROT Manager	SEMCOG	Long	M
Evaluate the financial feasibility of recycling for residents and businesses.	ROT Staff		Long	L
GOAL 2: SUPPORT UTILITY RESILIENCE FOR RESIDENCES AND BUSINESSES				
Advertise broadband subsidy programs to residents.	ROT Staff		Near	H
Modify the Zoning Ordinance to increase the variety and site arrangement of alternative energy equipment that can be installed.	ROT PC		Near	H
Streamline the permitting process for new accessory solar equipment to rely only on building review.	ROT Staff & PC		Near	M
Support the co-location of small-scale broadband facilities on existing poles as supplements to the existing broadband network.	ROT Board		Medium	M
Collaborate with DTE to improve the overall resilience of the grid in the township.	ROT Manager	DTE	Long	H
Advocate utility reform during comment periods before the Michigan Public Service Commission.	ROT Supervisor	State of MI	Long	L
GOAL 3: SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE NEW CHILDCARE AND HIGHER EDUCATION OFFERINGS IN THE TOWNSHIP				
Modify the Zoning Ordinance to reflect the state-level design standards for childcare facilities.	ROT PC		Near	H
Increase the range of districts in which childcare is permitted and streamline the permitting process to avoid redundancies with state procedures.	ROT PC		Near	H
Increase the range of districts in which higher education is permitted.	ROT PC		Near	M
Work with developers and existing building owners to help recruit higher education satellite campuses or extensions to locate in the township.	ROT Supervisor	UM, Wayne State, OCC, etc.	Long	M
GOAL 4: CONSOLIDATE CIVIC BUILDING ASSETS				
Evaluate the feasibility of rehabilitating the existing Recreation Center.	ROT Manager		Medium	H
Construct a new Civic Center building which houses all of the Township's departments and the Library, as well modest indoor recreation and rental space.	ROT Board		Long	H

TRANSPORTATION

	Lead(s)	Partners	Timeline	Priority
GOAL 1: MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE EXISTING NETWORK FOR ALL TYPES OF TRANSPORTATION USERS				
Implement the near-term local priority improvements in the Future Transportation Plan.	ROT Staff & OC	SEMCOG	Near	H
Support regional transit agencies with planned route improvements and future BRT projects.	RTA	ROT Staff	Medium	H
Ensure that all sidewalks, roads, and other transportation facilities are well maintained during all seasons.	ROT Staff & OC		Long	H
Improve crossings and ramps to ensure they are safe.	OC	ROT Staff	Long	M
Pursue funding for all types of amenity improvements.	RTA	SECMOG	Long	M
GOAL 2: CREATE A SAFE, COMFORTABLE, AND HEALTHY TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM				
Conduct a Road Safety Audit (RSA) for 8 Mile Road.	State of MI	SEMCOG	Near	H
Develop and/or refine standards that require non-motorized facilities as a part of all new development.	ROT PC		Near	L
Implement near-term RSA recommendations.	State of MI	ROT Staff	Medium	H
Collaborate with surrounding municipalities to pursue federal fundings, such as SS4A funding, to improve the safety of the overall network.	ROT Staff	Ferndale, Oak Park, Detroit	Medium	H
Establish a walking path in Civic Center Park.	ROT Park & Rec	OC	Medium	H
Partner with neighboring jurisdiction to pursue funding to implement Future Transportation Plan and long-term RSA recommendations.	State of MI	ROT, Ferndale, Oak Park, Detroit	Long	M
Implement the complete streets principles contained in the Future Transportation Plan.	ROT Staff & OC		Long	M
Establish a walking/shared-use path through the entire township that includes recreation amenities throughout.	ROT Staff	OC	Long	M
GOAL 3: SUPPORT AND INITIATE SAFE CONNECTIONS TO NEIGHBORING CITIES, SERVICES, AND AMENITIES				
Complete sidewalk network segments that are key to establishing Safe Routes to School.	ROT Staff	OC	Medium	H
Establish multi-modal north-south connections that connect 8 Mile and 9 Mile Roads.	OC	OC, SEMCOG	Medium	M
Establish multi-modal east-west connections through the township.	ROT Staff	OC, SEMCOG	Medium	L
Support regional network improvements that serve township residents.	ROT Supervisor	OC, SEMCOG	Long	M
Install a bike-share station near 8 Mile and Wyoming.	ROT Staff	Non-Profits	Long	L
GOAL 4: ENHANCE TOWNSHIP AND REGIONAL PLACEMAKING THROUGH TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS				
Require new developments to provide cohesive transportation corridor amenities, such as street trees, lighting, trash, and more, to enhance placemaking.	ROT PC	8 MBA	Near	M
Continue to improve the streetscape along Wyoming Ave to create a distinct sense of place.	ROT Manager	OC, SEMCOG	Long	H
Support the redevelopment of 8 Mile into a regional amenity through both transportation and land use improvements.	State of MI	SEMCOG, OC, RTA, ROT Staff	Long	H
Encourage or incentivize public art along major transportation corridors.	ROT Board	Non-Profits	Long	L

LAND USE

	Lead(s)	Partners	Timeline	Priority
GOAL 1: MODERNIZE THE TOWNSHIP'S LAND USE REGULATIONS TO INCORPORATE NEW INFORMATION AND BEST PRACTICES				
Update the Zoning Ordinance in accordance with the Community Master Plan and ensure it is compliant with state and case law.	ROT PC		Near	H
GOAL 2: ENCOURAGE THE REDEVELOPMENT OF OPPORTUNITY SITES				
Create a template Development Agreement for large mixed-use sites.	ROT Staff		Near	H
Develop RFQ packages for major development sites.	ROT Manager		Near	M
Encourage private owners of opportunity sites to market their properties for PUDs which incorporate the desired uses within the Future Land Use Plan.	ROT Staff		Medium	H
Help connect developers with county and state resources, such as brownfield funds, which aid in site redevelopment.	ROT Staff	OC	Long	M
Provide local development incentives for commercial and residential development on opportunity sites.	ROT Board	OC	Long	L
GOAL 3: MAINTAIN AN APPROPRIATE BALANCE OF LAND USES TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY TAX BASE				
Update the Zoning Ordinance to reflect the balance and mix of land uses under the Future Land Use Plan.	ROT PC		Near	H
Encourage commercial and industrial land uses which are both compatible with the Future Land Use Plan and provide significant improvements to the tax base.	ROT Supervisor		Long	H
Encourage the redevelopment of vacant sites throughout the township.	ROT Board		Long	H

General Implementation Toolbox

FISCAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

Fiscal impact analysis involves the projection of direct, current, public costs and revenues associated with a proposed development. It involves a description and quantification of the public costs (police, fire, public works, transportation, and educational facilities) that come about as a result of development, as well as the revenues generated from property taxes, user charges, intergovernmental transfers, and other fees.

As with other types of impact analysis, a fiscal impact analysis is most effective if the Township establishes explicit guidelines and then participates with the developer in completing the impact analysis. The guidelines should identify the appropriate method (average-costing, marginal-costing, or econometric), sources of base data, and appropriate demographic multipliers.

Fiscal impact analysis is one of several other types of analyses that the Township could complete while reviewing a proposed development proposal. Consequently, the results of a fiscal impact analysis should be just one part of development review and should not be the sole basis for approval or disapproval of a particular land use.

DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENTS

Although there is no explicit legislative authority for such agreements, many Michigan communities have used development agreements to achieve a mutual understanding between the developer and Township concerning the conditions under which development can occur. Development agreements are often negotiated as part of PUD approval, allowing the community and developer to address complex issues that cannot be adequately addressed on a typical site plan. Development agreements might prove useful to achieve desired developments, especially if or when a mixed-use development is proposed.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM

A comprehensive capital improvements program should be adopted by the Township on an annual basis. The program should set out the Township's priorities for infrastructure improvements, utility upgrades, development and improvement of community facilities, and the purchase of major pieces of equipment. The program should be prepared and adopted by both the Planning Commission and Board of Trustees, and then reviewed annually at a joint meeting of both.

Capital programming influences land redevelopment decisions. By properly coordinating utility upgrades and other capital improvements with its planning program, the Township can control the pace of redevelopment. Capital programming should be viewed as more than just a ministerial act. Using the master plan to delineate the location and type of development desired and the Capital Improvements Program to schedule the provision of services, the Township can inform developers when development of a particular parcel will be encouraged and the type of development that will be allowed.

The need for several important capital improvements have been identified in this Community Master Plan, most notably roads, non-motorized transportation improvements, and community facility improvements. The capital improvements plan must identify feasible funding options for each improvement, such as developer financing, special assessments, grants, loans, dedicated millage, etc.

DEDICATED MILLAGE

Special millages can be used to generate revenues for a specific purpose. For example, one Michigan community has a special land acquisition fund that is supported by a one-quarter mill property tax. Millages can be used to generate funds for capital improvements. For example, a millage could be used to address streetscape improvements within the Township.

SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS

Special assessments are compulsory contributions collected from the owners of property benefitted by specific public improvements (paving, drainage improvements, etc.) to defray the costs of such improvements. Special assessments are apportioned according to the assumed benefits to the property affected. Special assessment funding might prove useful to implement some of the recommendations for the Jefferson Avenue corridor core area. Special assessments are also useful in upgrading street lighting in residential areas, and street trees and streetscaping in highly visible areas.

MDNR RECREATION GRANT PROGRAMS

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) grants are available for park development and land acquisition. The Township must first update the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, after which it could use this program to improve the parks system.

TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM (TAP) GRANT

The MAP-21 Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) provides for a variety of alternative transportation projects, including many that were previously eligible activities under separately funded programs. The TAP replaces the funding from pre-MAP-21 programs including Transportation Enhancements, Recreational Trails, Safe Routes to School, and several other discretionary programs, wrapping them into a single funding source. The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) offers funding opportunities to help expand transportation choices and enhance the transportation experience through implementing a number of transportation improvements, including pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and safety programs, historic preservation and rehabilitation of transportation facilities, environmental mitigation activities, and safe routes to school programs.

SEMCOG awarded over \$6 million in TAP funding in fiscal year 2014. Funds can be used for a wide variety of projects, including non-motorized improvements, green infrastructure, and projects encouraging students in grades K through 8 to walk or bike to school. Eligible applicants include incorporated cities and villages, county road commissions, and public transit agencies. Other organizations can apply, but they must be sponsored by one of the eligible applicants just described. A signed agreement between the sponsored and sponsoring agencies must be completed for the application to be considered.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS (CDBG)

CDBG funds can be used for numerous community improvement projects in addition to housing rehabilitation. CDBG funds can also be used for community economic development. The 2018 Activation Strategy's plans for residential infill development includes activities that would be eligible under CDBG funding. However, CDBG funding can be used for far more than just residential projects.

Immediate Funding Opportunities & Resources

COMMUNITY HISTORY

For Governments

- Federal Leadership Grants for Libraries
- State of Michigan Historic Preservation Program
- Federal NPS Preserve American Grants
- Michigan Arts and Culture Council Grants

For Individuals

- [National Endowment for the Arts Grants](#)
- [University of Michigan Public Library Management Certificate](#)
- [African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund](#)
- [Museum Grants for African American History and Culture](#)

PEOPLE AND HEALTH

For Governments

- [Michigan Perinatal Quality Collaborative](#)
- [State of Michigan Emerging Diseases](#)
- [State of Michigan MDHSS Child Welfare Programs](#)
- [Oakland County Food Access Programs](#)
- [Oakland County Brownfield Program](#)

For Individuals

- [State of Michigan Air Quality Notices](#)
- [State of Michigan Radon Test Kit Finder](#)
- [Federal SNAP-Ed](#)
- [Rx for Healthy Oakland](#)
- [State of Michigan Senior Project Fresh Program](#)
- [Oakland County WIC](#)

- [MiBridges Healthcare and Food Access Program](#)

HOUSING

For Governments

- State of Michigan Single Family Home Repair Program
- Federal Single Family Home Repair Program
- Federal Homeowner Rehab Program
- Federal HUD HOME Program
- State of Michigan Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- AARP Community Challenge Grant
- State of Michigan MSHDA Housing Readiness Grant Incentive Program
- Federal Older Americans Act (OAA) Programs
- Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)
- Thome Aging Well Grant
- State of Michigan MSHDA Missing Middle Housing Program
- Federal FCC Affordable Connectivity Program
- Federal USDA Housing Preservation Grant

For Individuals

- [Oakland County Home Improvement Program](#)
- [OaklandSaves](#)
- VA Specially Adapted Housing Grant
- Federal USDA Single Family Housing Repair Loans & Grant
- State of Michigan MSHDA Property Improvement Program
- Federal FHLBI Accessibility Modifications Program
- Federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program
- Federal FDIC HomeReady Mortgages

JOBS AND ECONOMY

For Governments

- State of Michigan Strategic Site Readiness Program
- Michigan Main Streets Program
- State of Michigan Building Strong Communities Program
- Match on Main Grant Program
- State of Michigan Revitalization and Placemaking (RAP) Program
- State of Michigan Community Revitalization Program (MCRP)
- Public Spaces Community Places Crowdfunding Program

For Individuals

- [Michigan Business Development Program](#)
- [Michigan Talent Action Team](#)
- [State Essential Services Assessment \(SESA\) Exemption](#)
- [Michigan Works!](#)
- [State of Michigan Business Development Services](#)
- DTE Energy Efficient Program for Businesses
- [BuildMI Community Program](#)
- [Oakland County Training Program](#)
- [State of Michigan Accelerate your Degree Programs](#)

PARKS AND ENVIRONMENT

For Governments

- [Federal NPS Urban Programs](#)
- [National Trust for Public Land Technical Assistance](#)
- State of Michigan SPARK Grants
- State of Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
- State of Michigan Land and Water Conservation Fund
- State of Michigan Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program
- State of Michigan Recreation Passport Program
- Oakland County [Healthy Communities Park and Outdoor Recreation Investment Plan](#)
- Oakland County Community Habitat Improvement Grant Program
- Oakland County RAPP (Recreation Assistance Partnership Program)

CIVIC SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

For Governments

- [SEMCOG Broadband Framework](#)
- [DTE Charging Forward](#)
- Federal HUD Choice Neighborhoods Program
- Federal Full Service Community Schools Program
- Federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program
- Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
- Federal WaterSMART Grants

For Individuals

- [Consumers Energy Assessments](#)
- [DTE Energy Efficiency Program](#)
- [Federal Solar Tax Credit](#)
- [GLWA Water Residential Assistance Program](#)

TRANSPORTATION

For Governments

- MDOT Road Safety Audit (RSA) Grant Program
- MDOT Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)
- Federal Reconnecting Communities Program
- Federal Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Program
- Oakland County Tri-Party Program

LAND USE

For Governments

- State of Michigan Housing Readiness Incentive Grant Program (MSHDA)
- State of Michigan Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) Program (MEDC)

14. Coordination

The Community Master Plan should not become a static document. Michigan planning statute requires that the Planning Commission review and, if needed, amend the Plan or adopt a new plan at least every five years. However, the Township must constantly be coordinating with neighboring governments, the county, the state, transit agencies, and other partners to ensure the Plan is implemented.

Updates and Review

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

The success of the master plan depends to a great extent on efforts to inform and educate residents about the Plan and the need for regulatory measures to implement the Plan. Successful implementation requires the support and active participation of residents, property owners, and business owners. A thoughtfully prepared public education program is needed that creates a sense of ownership by residents.

For example, regularly discussing the master plan at Planning Commission meetings will enable the public to interact with the Township on the plan's implementation. A joint workshop could be conducted annually by the Board and Planning Commission to discuss the implementation of this plan. The focus of meetings and public engagement should be plan implementation, not revising the content. Substantial advertising is essential to draw residents to participate in Planning Commission meetings. The Township must continuously keep its residents updated on the progress of the plan. Residents, business groups, and public agencies must all be involved in the implementation of this plan to make it successful.

MAINTAINING THE PLAN

Another way for the general public to stay informed about the master plan is to keep the Planning Commission and Board actively involved in maintaining it. The plan should be an active document and regularly reviewed and updated. An annual, joint meeting between the Commission and Board should be held to review the plan and any amendments that may become necessary. This will help ensure that the plan is not forgotten, and that its strategies and recommendations are implemented. Then, every five years or earlier if the Commission feels appropriate, another full-scale master planning effort should be undertaken. These steps will not only help keep the public aware of the plan but will also create a culture of community improvement within Royal Oak Township and make future plan updates more meaningful to residents.

Regional Coordination

The process of creating this Community Master Plan has been a testament to the willingness of regional partners to support the Township. Implementation will require continued cooperation between governmental units. For example, road improvements will affect quality of life and are made by the Oakland County Roads Commission, Michigan Department of Transportation, and SEMCOG. The Township pledges to continue to be an active participant in regional programs, cooperative councils, and planning programs. Additionally, the Township will maintain a close partnership with its 3 neighbor cities and support their planning efforts, including the currently underway Detroit Master Plan. Lastly, the Township will inform regional partners of planning projects, Community Master Plan updates, and private development projects that will have a major impact.



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15. Appendices

Complete Public Engagement Results

TO BE INSERTED AT END OF PROJECT

Resolution of Adoption

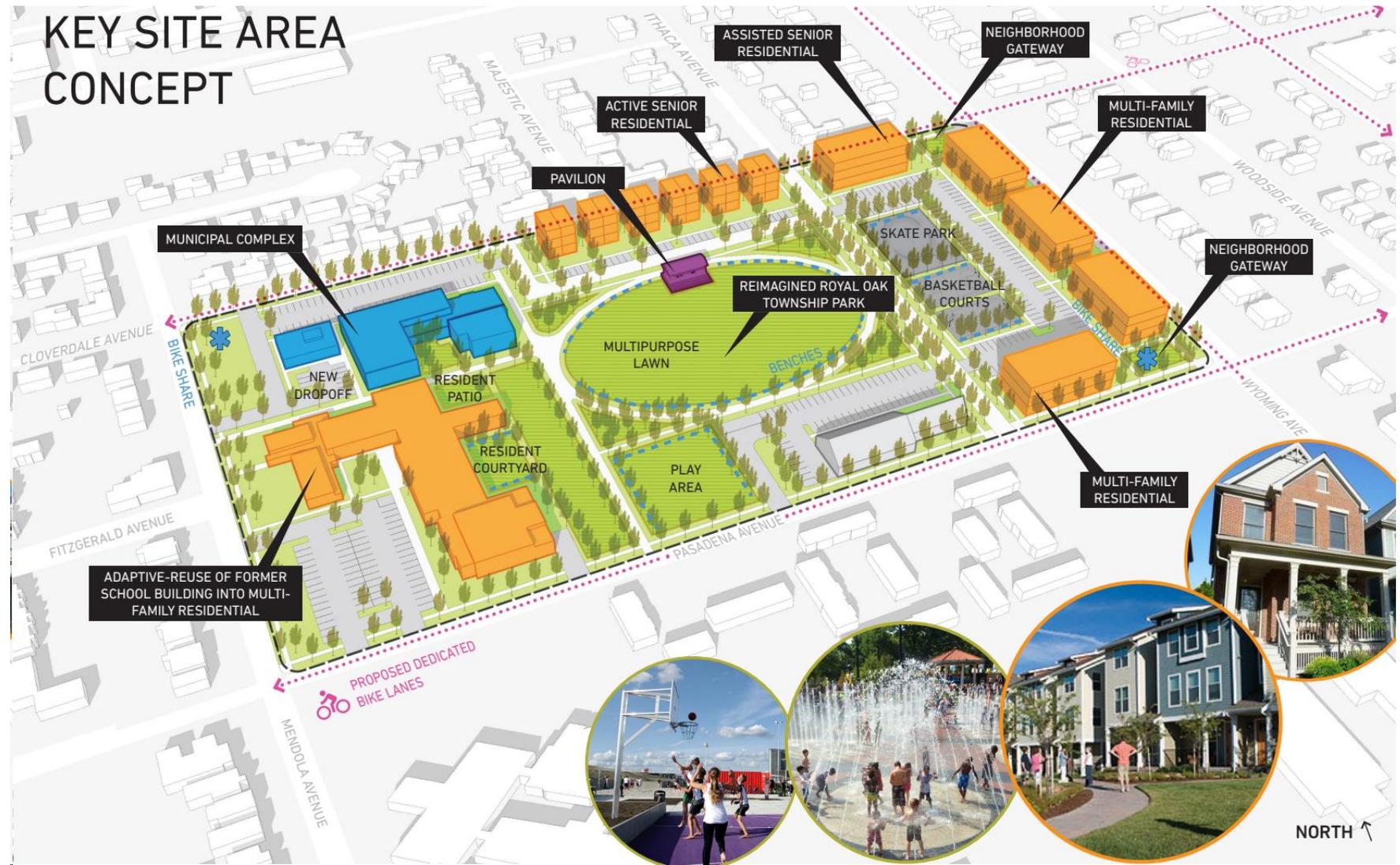
TO BE INSERTED AT END OF PROJECT

Sample Public Notices

TO BE INSERTED AT END OF PROJECT

2018 Activation Strategy Segments

2018 Activation Strategy for Key Site Area #1



OPTION 2



Endnotes (NOTE: Endnotes have not yet been formatted.)

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- ¹ <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=32443>
- ² <https://www.royaloaktwp.com/index.php/history-2#:~:text=The%20Wyoming/Eight%20Mile%20Road%20area%20was%20a%20feasible%20and%20desirable%20option%20for%20African%2DAmerican%20families%20seeking%20an%20escape%20from%20crowded%20areas%20of%20the%20City.>
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