

# **Arlington Township Master Plan 2026**



**Arlington Township  
Van Buren County, Michigan**  
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# Introduction

A Master Plan provides a long-term vision for the growth and development of Arlington Township by assessing current conditions, identifying opportunities for change, and reflecting the aspirations of residents and community leaders. This plan is implemented through zoning regulations, capital improvement projects, citizen committees, and other strategic tools to achieve the community's vision, goals, and objectives.

Master Plans in Michigan are authorized by the **Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008**, which outlines their core purposes and requirements. According to the Act, Master Plans should:

- Promote public health, safety, and general welfare;
- Encourage the responsible use of resources in accordance with their character and adaptability;
- Prevent overcrowding of land by buildings or population;
- Reduce congestion on public roads and streets;
- Support the development of infrastructure, including transportation systems, sewage disposal, water supply, and recreational facilities; and
- Consider the township's character and suitability for various land uses, taking into account trends in land and population development.

While a Master Plan itself does not regulate development in the way that zoning ordinances and other local regulations do, it plays a critical role in shaping those policies. Courts frequently reference Master Plans when making decisions on zoning ordinance provisions, further underscoring their significance. Ultimately, the Master Plan serves as a foundational guide for shaping the long-term character and development of Arlington Township, informing future ordinance updates and land-use policies.

A key component of this process is the **community's vision for the future**. This vision was shaped through input from residents, property owners, and other stakeholders, ensuring broad community support. It serves as a guiding force for public and private decision-making, influencing choices made by citizens, investors, and elected officials.

The planning process also provides an opportunity for the Township to define its core values, assess potential challenges, and take proactive steps to safeguard its future. By engaging in this process, Arlington Township can ensure that growth and development align with the community's priorities while preserving the qualities that make it a desirable place to live, work, and invest.

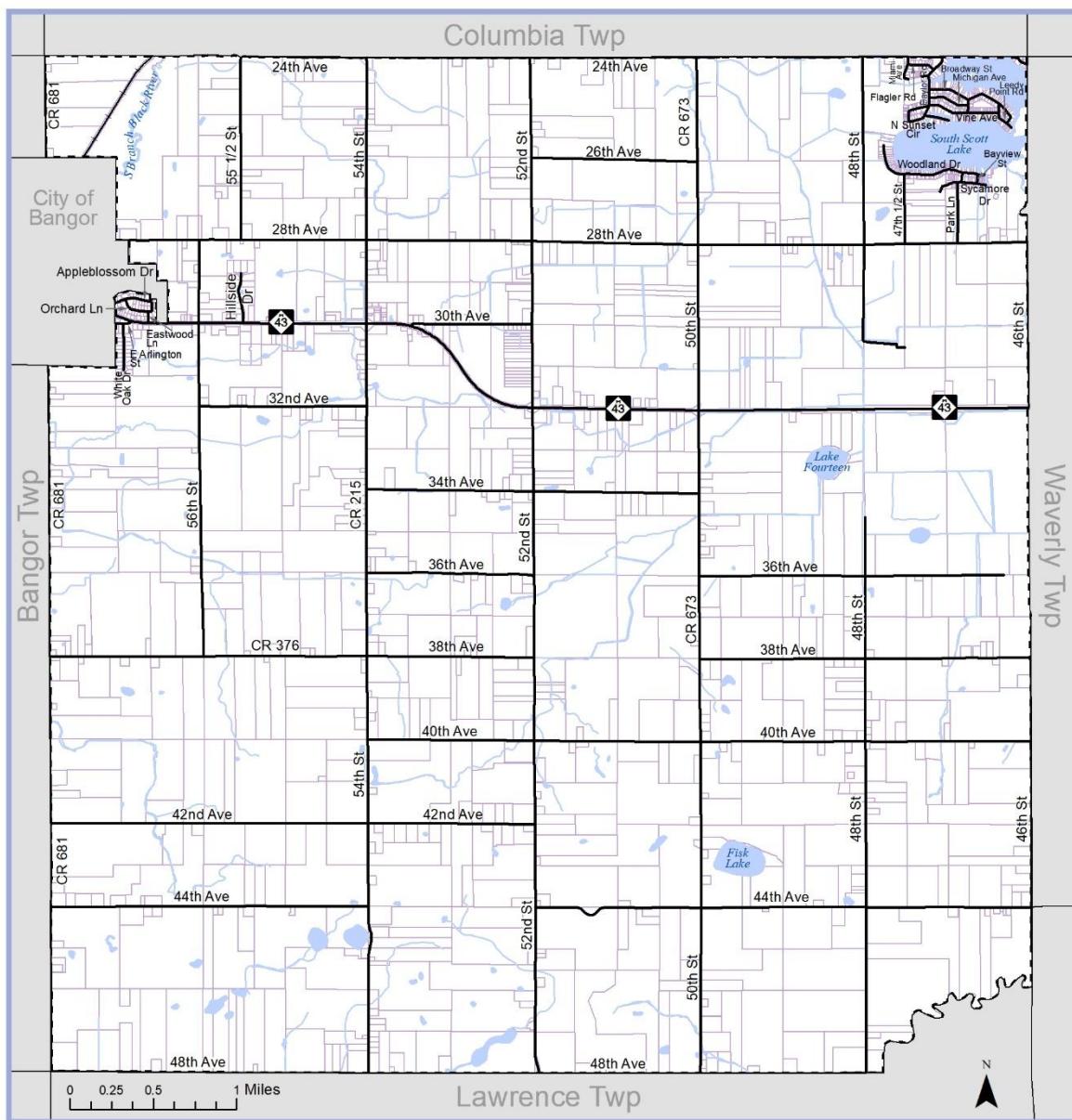
## Regional Location

**Arlington Township** is located in southwest Michigan, near the geographic center of Van Buren County. It is bordered by Columbia Township to the north, Waverly Township to the east, Lawrence Township to the south, and Bangor Township to the west. A portion of the City of Bangor extends into the township, but otherwise, the area contains no other incorporated towns or villages.

The township is home to several small lakes, with Scott Lake being the largest and a popular destination for recreation. The Paw Paw and Black Rivers also traverse portions of the township, along with smaller tributaries like Elizabeth Creek. The landscape features a mix of sandy and clay soils, which support a diverse agricultural economy. Local farms produce fruit, vegetables, grains, mint, and Christmas trees.

Transportation through the township is anchored by M-43, a major state highway linking Kalamazoo and South Haven. Additional local routes, including 52nd and 54th Streets, provide regional access, including connections to the nearby Village of Lawrence. Residential development is concentrated near Scott Lake, around the City of Bangor, and at key intersections along M-43.

## Arlington Township Base Map



### Arlington Township Base Map

June 11, 2024



- Arlington Township
- Parcels
- Water
- State Road
- Road
- +— Railroad

Sources  
Base Layers: MGI Framework17v  
Roads: Roadssoft 2023  
Parcel: Van Buren County GIS, 2024  
SWMPC

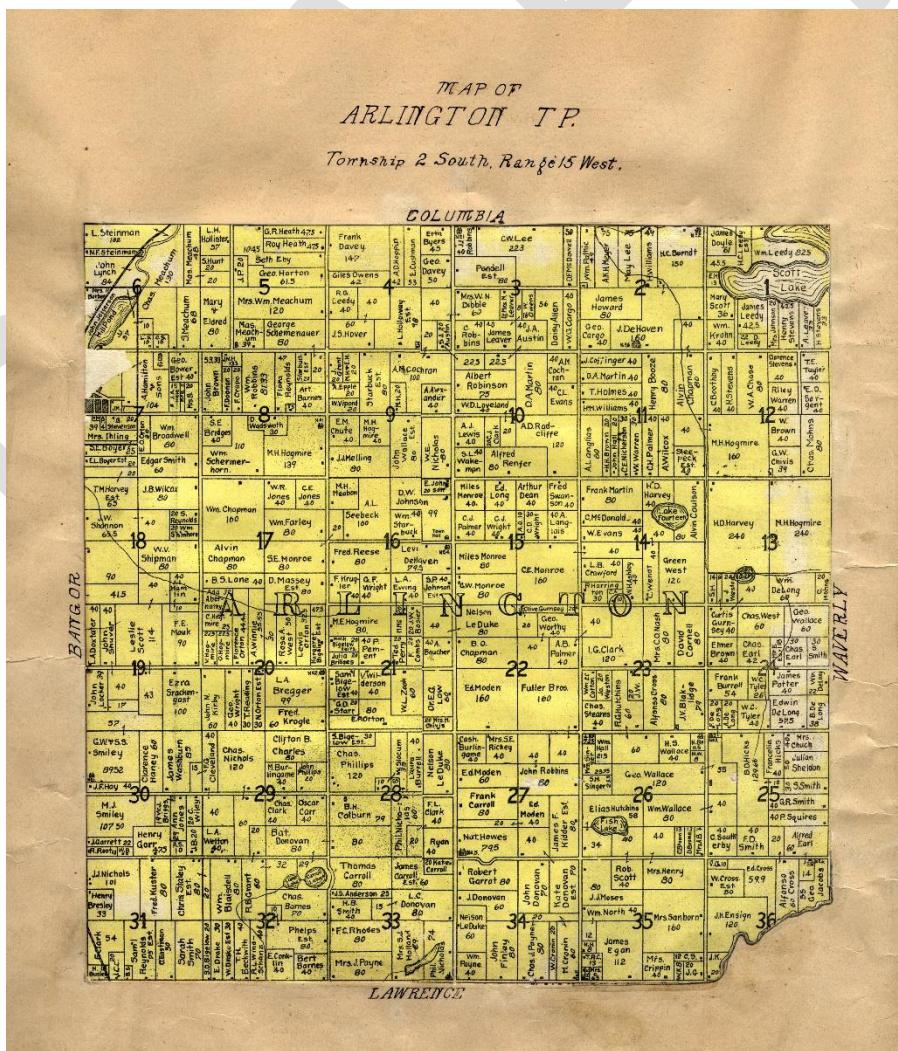
The use of this map is for general reference purposes. It is not a legal document.

2429\_01\_Base

## History

For over 10,000 years, Native Americans populated the region of southwest. The recorded history of Arlington Township started when William N. Taylor came to the area in 1835 with a group of pioneers. Arlington Township was established in 1842 and was named by one of its earliest residents – a Revolutionary veteran named James Stevens, after his native town the Green Mountain State. A few residents gathered to choose officers for the ensuing year, but the population was so small that only 14 electors were present.

During the early settlement of Arlington Township highways were not abundant and pioneers were inconvenienced by obstacles that slowed their progress in traversing the country. One of the township's creeks, Elizabeth Creek, got its namesake from when a woman was thrown out of a vehicle in a sudden lurch and landed in the creek. The earliest surveyed highway was known as Monroe Road, which followed a diagonal course through Arlington Township and connected Paw Paw with South Haven.



## Existing Conditions

This chapter reviews Arlington Township's existing conditions such as the population, housing, economics, natural features and land uses. This lays the foundation for determining community values and implementing the Master Plan.

### Demographics

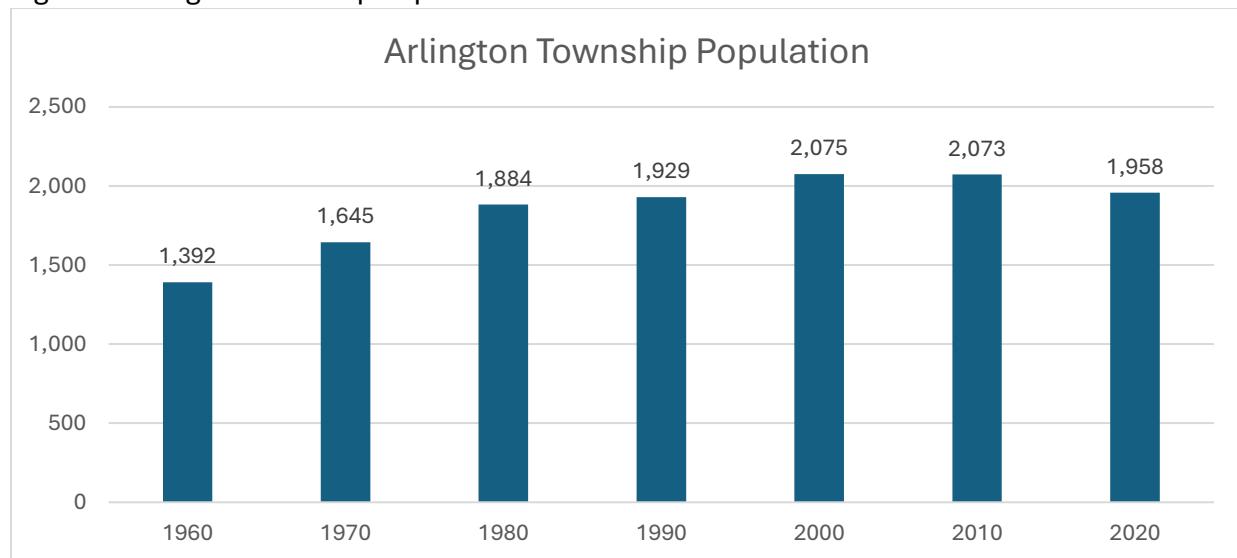
Arlington Township experienced its peak population in 2000 with 2,075 residents. With a population of 1,958 in 2020, Arlington Township experienced a slight decline of 5.78% since 2000. Compared to neighboring communities, Arlington Township experienced moderate change in population. Bangor Township recorded a larger decrease of 8.58% over the same period, while Geneva Township saw a significant decline of 14.06%. In contrast, Waverly Township observed a modest increase of 1.58%. The City of Bangor, with 2,016 residents in 2020, saw a slight increase of 4.29% since 2000. In addition, Van Buren County experienced a marginal decrease of 0.89% in population from 2000 to 2020.

Figure 1. Population 1960-2020

Municipality	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	% Change 2000-2020
Arlington Township	1,392	1,645	1,884	1,929	2,075	2,073	1,958	-5.78%
Bangor Township	1,443	1,708	1,993	1,948	2,121	2,147	1,939	-8.58%
Bloomingdale Township	1,176	1,493	1,953	2,351	3,364	3,103	2,930	-12.90%
Columbia Township	1,374	1,657	2,004	2,339	2,714	2,588	2,546	-6.19%
Geneva Township	1,850	2,392	2,984	3,162	3,975	3,573	3,416	-14.06%
Hartford Township	1,746	2,211	2,707	3,032	3,159	3,274	3,021	-4.37%
Lawrence Township	1,421	1,555	2,114	2,115	3,341	3,259	3,289	-1.56%
Paw Paw Township	2,067	2,592	3,207	3,645	7,091	7,041	6,881	-2.96%
Waverly Township	1,044	1,313	2,130	2,188	2,467	2,554	2,506	1.58%
City of Bangor	2,109	2,050	2,001	1,922	1,933	1,885	2,016	4.29%
Van Buren County	48,395	56,173	66,814	70,060	76,263	76,258	75,587	-0.89%

1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020 Decennial Census

Figure 2. Arlington Township Population 1960-2020



Arlington Township has a median age of 44.9 years, which is higher than Van Buren County which has a median age of 42.1 years. Arlington Township's age cohorts are as follows: 24.6% aged 0-19, 25.6% aged 20-44, 29.5% aged 45-64, and 20.3% aged 65 and over. This is compared to Van Buren County which has a population makeup of 25.5% aged 0-19, 28.6% aged 20-44, 28.0% aged 45-64, and 18.1% aged 65 and over.

Figure 3. Age Cohorts 2020

Municipality	Median Age	2020 Population	Percent Age 0-19	Percent Age 20-44	Percent Age 45-64	Percent Age 65 and Over
<b>Arlington Township</b>	<b>44.9</b>	<b>1,958</b>	<b>24.60%</b>	<b>25.60%</b>	<b>29.50%</b>	<b>20.30%</b>
Bangor Township	41.1	1,939	26.70%	27.50%	27.10%	18.70%
Bloomingdale Township	46.4	2,930	22.30%	26.30%	30.10%	21.30%
Columbia Township	41.2	2,546	25.70%	28.90%	27.90%	17.60%
Geneva Township	42.5	3,416	25.30%	27.50%	28.70%	18.60%
Hartford Township	40.6	3,021	28.10%	26.70%	27.80%	17.40%
Lawrence Township	41	3,289	25.80%	29.00%	25.90%	19.30%
Paw Paw Township	44.1	6,881	22.50%	28.30%	27.70%	21.50%
Waverly Township	42.5	2,506	24.90%	28.20%	30.10%	16.70%
City of Bangor	34.4	2,016	31.70%	31.90%	23.30%	13.00%
<b>Van Buren County</b>	<b>42.1</b>	<b>75,587</b>	<b>25.50%</b>	<b>28.60%</b>	<b>28.00%</b>	<b>18.10%</b>
2020 Decennial Census						

In Arlington Township the racial makeup includes a white population of 1,621, a black population of 23, a Native American population of 24, an Asian population of 2, a Native Hawaiian population of 2, a Hispanic or Latino population of 287, another race population of 139, and a multi-race population of 147. Hispanic or Latino is considered an ethnicity and

thus members of this group may be black, white or other. Arlington Township has a Hispanic or Latino population of 287, making up 14.7% of the overall population. Arlington Township's Hispanic and Latino population has grown despite the overall population shrinking in 2020 compared to 2010, increasing 2.5% from 12.2% of the 2010 population to 14.7% of the 2020 population.

Figure 4. Communities by Race 2020

Community	Total Population	White alone	Black or African American alone	American Indian and Alaska Native alone	Asian alone	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	Some Other Race alone	Population of two or more races:
Arlington Township	1,958	1,621	23	24	2	2	139	147
Van Buren County	75,587	61,345	2,428	819	386	40	4,397	6,172
Bangor City	2,016	1,294	150	28	11	2	243	288
Bangor Township	1,939	1,497	58	51	7	-	176	150
Bloomingdale Township	2,930	2,627	49	8	5	1	67	173
Columbia Township	2,546	2,081	53	34	-	5	147	226
Geneva Township	3,416	2,585	171	44	15	3	320	278
Hartford Township	3,021	2,112	21	74	6	-	500	308
Lawrence Township	3,289	2,517	36	62	3	1	238	432
Paw Paw Township	6,881	5,988	139	63	46	3	202	440
Waverly Township	2,506	2,238	26	13	-	1	66	162
2020 US Census Bureau Decennial Census								

Figure 5. Hispanic or Latino Population 2010 - 2020

	2010	2020	Percent 2010	Percent 2020	Percent Change 2010-2020
<b>Arlington Township</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>12.2%</b>	<b>14.7%</b>	<b>2.5%</b>
Van Buren County	7,758	8,966	10.2%	11.9%	1.7%
Bangor City	271	552	14.4%	27.4%	13.0%
Bangor Township	307	333	14.3%	17.2%	2.9%
Bloomingdale Township	97	142	3.1%	4.8%	1.7%
Columbia Township	372	406	14.4%	15.9%	1.6%
Geneva Township	484	512	13.5%	15.0%	1.4%
Hartford Township	727	778	22.2%	25.8%	3.5%
Lawrence Township	582	620	17.9%	18.9%	1.0%
Paw Paw Township	387	479	5.5%	7.0%	1.5%
Waverly Township	123	163	4.8%	6.5%	1.7%

## Housing and Household Characteristics

Among the jurisdictions in Van Buren County, Arlington Township exhibits distinct trends in household composition. Between 2010 and 2020, one-person households in the township increased slightly from 18.9% to 19.2%, while two-person households grew significantly from 37.2% to 44.2%. In contrast, three-person households declined from 20.7% to 18.2%, and four-person households dropped from 23.2% to 18.4%.

In comparison, other townships in the county show varying patterns. Bangor Township experienced a sharp decline in two-person households—from 41.9% to 30.7—alongside a substantial rise in four-person or larger households, which increased from 23.7% to 39.2%. Bloomingdale Township followed more typical regional trends, with modest growth in one-person households and a slight decrease in three-person households, while four-person or larger households remained stable.

Geneva Township saw a significant reduction in two-person households (from 38.4% to 31.5%) coupled with increases in both three-person and four-person or larger households. Lawrence Township showed a notable decline in both three-person households (from 14.6% to 9.8%) and four-person or larger households (from 25.5% to 16.5%). Meanwhile, the City of Bangor reported increases across one-person, two-person, and four-person or larger households.

Overall, while Arlington Township mirrors some of the broader demographic shifts occurring across Van Buren County, each community displays unique household composition trends—reflecting the diverse socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the region.

Figure 6. Household Composition 2020

Municipalities	1-person households		2-person households		3-person households		4-person + households	
	2010	2020	2010	2020	2010	2020	2010	2020
Arlington Township	18.90%	19.20%	37.20%	44.20%	20.70%	18.20%	23.20%	18.40%
Bangor Township	19.20%	21.80%	41.90%	30.70%	15.20%	8.30%	23.70%	39.20%
Bloomingdale Township	22.70%	26.20%	41.30%	42.20%	14.00%	9.10%	22.00%	22.50%
Columbia Township	22.00%	21.20%	39.10%	35.70%	16%	11.90%	23.10%	31.20%
Geneva Township	20.30%	13.50%	38.40%	31.50%	17%	14.50%	24.50%	40.40%
Hartford Township	21.10%	18.20%	34.60%	35.60%	17%	11.60%	27.10%	34.70%
Lawrence Township	22.00%	16.30%	37.90%	57.40%	15%	9.80%	25.50%	16.50%
Paw Paw Township	21.40%	16.90%	40.90%	40.00%	17%	16.30%	20.60%	26.80%
Waverly Township	18.80%	22.90%	40.00%	39.90%	15%	18.60%	25.80%	18.60%
City of Bangor	24.20%	29.10%	32.30%	24.40%	13.10%	8.00%	30.40%	38.50%
<b>Van Buren County</b>	<b>20.70%</b>	<b>22.23%</b>	<b>38.70%</b>	<b>40.28%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>12.41%</b>	<b>24.70%</b>	<b>25%</b>
2020 Decennial Census								

Arlington Township has a slightly higher average household size (2.67) compared to Van Buren County (2.51). The average family size in Arlington Township (2.96) and is comparable to Van Buren County (2.97), suggesting similar family structures.

Figure 7. Household and Family Size 2022

Jurisdiction	Total Households	Total Families	Average Household Size	Average Family Size
Arlington Township	580	436	2.67	2.96
Bangor Township	739	539	2.96	3.44
Bloomingdale Township	1,212	900	2.38	2.79
Columbia Township	850	618	2.88	3.42
Geneva Township	1,172	937	2.82	3.16
Hartford Township	1,076	780	2.78	3.34
Lawrence Township	1,250	985	2.61	2.9
Paw Paw Township	2,687	1,935	2.5	2.94
Waverly Township	1,106	689	2.27	2.74
City of Bangor	716	480	2.89	3.62
<b>Van Buren County</b>	<b>29,609</b>	<b>20,989</b>	<b>2.51</b>	<b>2.97</b>
2022 ACS Census Bureau				

It is notable that the percentage of owner-occupied housing in Arlington Township is relatively high at 85.40%, compared to the county average of 77.80%. Additionally, Arlington Township has a higher percentage of vacant housing at 21.90% compared to the county average of 20.13%.

Figure 8. Housing Unit by Type 2020

Municipalities	Population	Total housing units	Occupied Housing %	Vacant Housing %	Percent of Occupied Housing		% of population in group quarters
					Owner-occupied %	Renter-occupied %	
Arlington Township	1,958	980	78.1%	21.9%	85.4%	14.60%	1.4%
Bangor Township	1,939	906	75.1%	24.9%	83.7%	16.30%	3.8%
Bloomingdale Township	2,930	1,541	77.7%	22.3%	79.7%	20.30%	0.2%
Columbia Township	2,546	1,486	65.0%	34.7%	85.4%	14.60%	0.9%
Geneva Township	3,416	702	75.1%	24.9%	86.1%	13.90%	0.1%
Hartford Township	3,021	1,260	90.0%	9.7%	75.5%	24.50%	0.0%
Lawrence Township	3,289	1,571	78.0%	22.0%	79.0%	21.00%	0.3%
Paw Paw Township	6,881	3,496	86.0%	14.2%	66.6%	33.40%	0.0%
Waverly Township	2,506	1,079	90.2%	9.8%	86.8%	13.20%	0.0%
City of Bangor	2,016	8,223	90.2%	9.8%	67.9%	32.10%	0.0%
<b>Van Buren County</b>	<b>75,587</b>	<b>36,948</b>	<b>79.9%</b>	<b>20.1%</b>	<b>77.8%</b>	<b>22.20%</b>	

2020 ACS Census Bureau

Arlington Township has a slightly higher percentage of seasonal units relative to its vacant units compared to Van Buren County overall. In Arlington Township, 70.23% of vacant units are seasonal, while in Van Buren County overall, 68% of vacant units are seasonal. Arlington Township also shows a higher percentage of seasonal units compared to its total housing units when compared to Van Buren County overall. In Arlington Township, 15.41% of all units are seasonal, whereas in Van Buren County overall, 13.63% of all units are seasonal.

Figure 9. Vacant Unit by Type 2020

Municipality	Total Housing Units	Vacant Units	Seasonal Units	Seasonal Units as % of Vacant Units	Seasonal Units as % of Total Units
Arlington Township	980	215	151	70%	15%
Bangor Township	906	226	145	64%	16%
Bloomingdale Township	1,541	343	213	62%	14%
Columbia Township	1,486	515	361	70%	24%
Geneva Township	702	241	110	46%	16%
Hartford Township	1,260	122	39	32%	3%
Lawrence Township	1,571	346	240	69%	15%
Paw Paw Township	3,496	498	303	61%	9%
Waverly Township	1,079	106	64	60%	6%
City of Bangor	828	97	63	65%	8%
<b>Van Buren County</b>	<b>36,948</b>	<b>7,438</b>	<b>5,037</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>14%</b>
2020 ACS Census Bureau					

While Van Buren County experienced a modest increase in total housing units between 2010 and 2020, Arlington Township saw a slight decline—from 1,004 to 980 units—indicating that its residential growth did not keep pace with the broader county trend. However, Arlington Township's housing numbers remained relatively stable compared to several neighboring jurisdictions.

For example, Bangor Township experienced a more substantial decline, with housing units dropping from 1,038 to 906, while Hartford Township saw a reduction from 1,335 to 1,260 units during the same period. Although Arlington Township did experience a decrease, the change was modest by comparison, suggesting a greater degree of residential stability. This relative steadiness in housing stock highlights Arlington Township's resilience amid shifting population and development patterns within Van Buren County.

Figure 10. Number of Households 2010-2020

Year	2010	2020
Arlington Township	1,004	980
Bangor Township	1,038	906
Bloomingdale Township	1,576	1,541
Columbia Township	1,511	1,486
Geneva Township	1,569	1,569
Hartford Township	1,335	1,260
Lawrence Township	1,588	1,571
Paw Paw Township	3,505	3,496
Waverly Township	1,092	1,079
City of Bangor	835	823
<b>Van Buren County</b>	<b>36,785</b>	<b>36,948</b>

2010, 2020 Decennial Census

Arlington Township has a total of 526 owner-occupied housing units, with values distributed across a broad range. Approximately 3.4% are valued under \$50,000, while 24.0% fall between \$50,000 and \$99,999. The largest share of homes (24.9%), are valued between \$100,000 and \$149,999, followed by 14.1% in the \$150,000 to \$199,999 range. About 20.5% of units are valued between \$200,000 and \$299,999, 9.5% between \$300,000 and \$499,999, 2.5% between \$500,000 and \$999,999, and 1.1% at \$1 million or more. The median value of owner-occupied homes in the township is \$146,400.

Compared to Van Buren County overall, Arlington Township's housing values are more concentrated in the lower-to-middle price ranges. While 39% of owner-occupied homes in Arlington fall between \$100,000 and \$199,999, the county's largest share (20.9%) is in the \$200,000 to \$299,999 range. Additionally, Arlington Township's median home value of \$146,400 is notably lower than the countywide median of \$172,100, highlighting its more affordable housing market relative to the broader region.

Figure 11. Owner Occupied Housing Values 2022

	Van Buren County			Arlington Township		
	Estimate	Margin of Error	Percent	Estimate	Margin of Error	Percent
Owner-occupied units	23,731	549	100.0%	526	59	100.0%
Less than \$50,000	2,121	226	8.9%	18	10	3.4%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	3,495	343	14.7%	126	39	24.0%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	3,834	384	16.2%	131	33	24.9%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	4,391	421	18.5%	74	24	14.1%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	4,954	402	20.9%	108	37	20.5%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	3,336	354	14.1%	50	19	9.5%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	1,333	183	5.6%	13	14	2.5%
\$1,000,000 or more	267	81	1.1%	6	6	1.1%
Median (dollars)	172,100	3,952		146,400	12,158	
2022 ACS Census Bureau						

## Economic Conditions

Arlington Township has a population of 1,333 individuals aged 15 and older, compared to 61,302 in Van Buren County. In 2022, the median individual income in Arlington Township was estimated at \$28,523, while the countywide median was \$32,857. In Arlington Township, 50% of individuals earn less than \$34,999, compared to 47.4% in Van Buren County.

Although the difference in median income may appear significant, it falls within the U.S. Census Bureau's margin of error, suggesting that the true median income in Arlington Township could be similar to the county's. However, given Arlington Township's higher poverty rates and lower housing values, it is more likely that its median income is genuinely lower than the county average. That said, the actual figure may still vary from the current estimate, underscoring the limitations of small-area census data.

Figure 12. Individuals' Income in The Past 12 Months (In 2022 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)

	Arlington Township		Van Buren County	
	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error
Population 15 years and over	1,333	139	61,302	25
\$1 to \$9,999 or less	16.4%	5.7%	12.2%	0.8%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	8.6%	2.4%	9.2%	0.8%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	12.3%	2.5%	14.3%	0.9%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	12.7%	3.9%	11.7%	0.9%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	10.7%	3.3%	13.2%	1.1%
\$50,000 to \$64,999	9.8%	2.8%	10.0%	0.8%
\$65,000 to \$74,999	7.4%	2.5%	5.2%	0.6%
\$75,000 or more	7.5%	1.7%	13.4%	0.8%
Median income (dollars)	\$28,523	4,840	\$32,857	1,067

2022 ACS US Census Bureau

Arlington Township has a population of 1,143 adults 25 years of age or older as of 2022. Of this population, 11.7% have not obtained a high school degree, 34.4% have obtained only a high school diploma, 35.9% have some college or an associate's degree, 10.5% have completed at most a bachelor's degree, and 7.5% have a graduate or professional degree. Comparatively, Van Buren County has a population of 52,266 adults 25 years of age or older, with 11.6% not having completed a high school diploma, 32.7% with only a high school diploma, 33.5% with some college or an associate's degree, 14.2% with at most a bachelor's degree, and 8% with a graduate or professional degree. Arlington Township exhibits the same general trend as the county, with the only difference being that Arlington Township's population with some college or an associate's degree is 2.4% higher than Van Buren County, while its population has 3.7% of individuals with a bachelor's degree less than Van Buren County.

Figure 13. Educational Attainment 2022

	Arlington Township		Van Buren County	
	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error
Population 25 years and over	1,143	112	52,266	95
Less than high school graduate	11.7%	3.6%	11.6%	1.0%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	34.4%	5.6%	32.7%	1.4%
Some college or associate's degree	35.9%	5.1%	33.5%	1.5%
Bachelor's degree	10.5%	2.8%	14.2%	1.0%
Graduate or professional degree	7.5%	3.0%	8.0%	0.7%

2022 ACS US Census Bureau

## Poverty

The table below shows the amount of money considered as the poverty guideline for different sizes of households in the United States. The first column tells how many people are in a family or household, ranging from one person up to eight people. The second column shows the corresponding income level that is considered the poverty guideline for each household size. For instance, if there's only one person in a household, the income level considered as the poverty guideline is \$15,060. For a family of four, the poverty guideline is \$31,200. If a household has more than eight people, you would add \$5,380 for each additional person beyond eight.

Arlington Township has a higher poverty rate than most surrounding communities. With a poverty rate of 14.30%, Arlington Township falls above the county average for Van Buren County (13.70%) and slightly above the statewide average for Michigan (13.20%).

Compared to surrounding communities, Arlington Township's poverty rate is surpassed by Columbia Township, which has the highest poverty rate at 21.10%. In contrast, Arlington Township's poverty rate is higher than several other municipalities, including Geneva Township (7.60%), Bloomingdale Township (10.40%), Hartford Township (10.80%), Lawrence Township (8.60%), Paw Paw Township (8.80%), and the City of Bangor (13.30%). While Arlington Township's poverty rate is not the highest among its neighbors, it indicates that a significant portion of its population is experiencing economic hardship.

Figure 14. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2024 Poverty Threshold

Persons in family/household	Poverty guideline
1	\$15,060
2	\$20,440
3	\$25,820
4	\$31,200
5	\$36,580
6	\$41,960
7	\$47,340
8	\$52,720
For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$5,380 for each additional person.	

Figure 15. Poverty Rates 2020

Municipality	Poverty Rate
Arlington Township	14.30%
Bangor Township	13.20%
Bloomingdale Township	10.40%
Columbia Township	21.10%
Geneva Township	7.60%
Hartford Township	10.80%
Lawrence Township	8.60%
Paw Paw Township	8.80%
Waverly Township	3.20%
City of Bangor	13.30%
<b>Van Buren County</b>	<b>13.70%</b>
Michigan	13.20%
2020 ACS Census Bureau	

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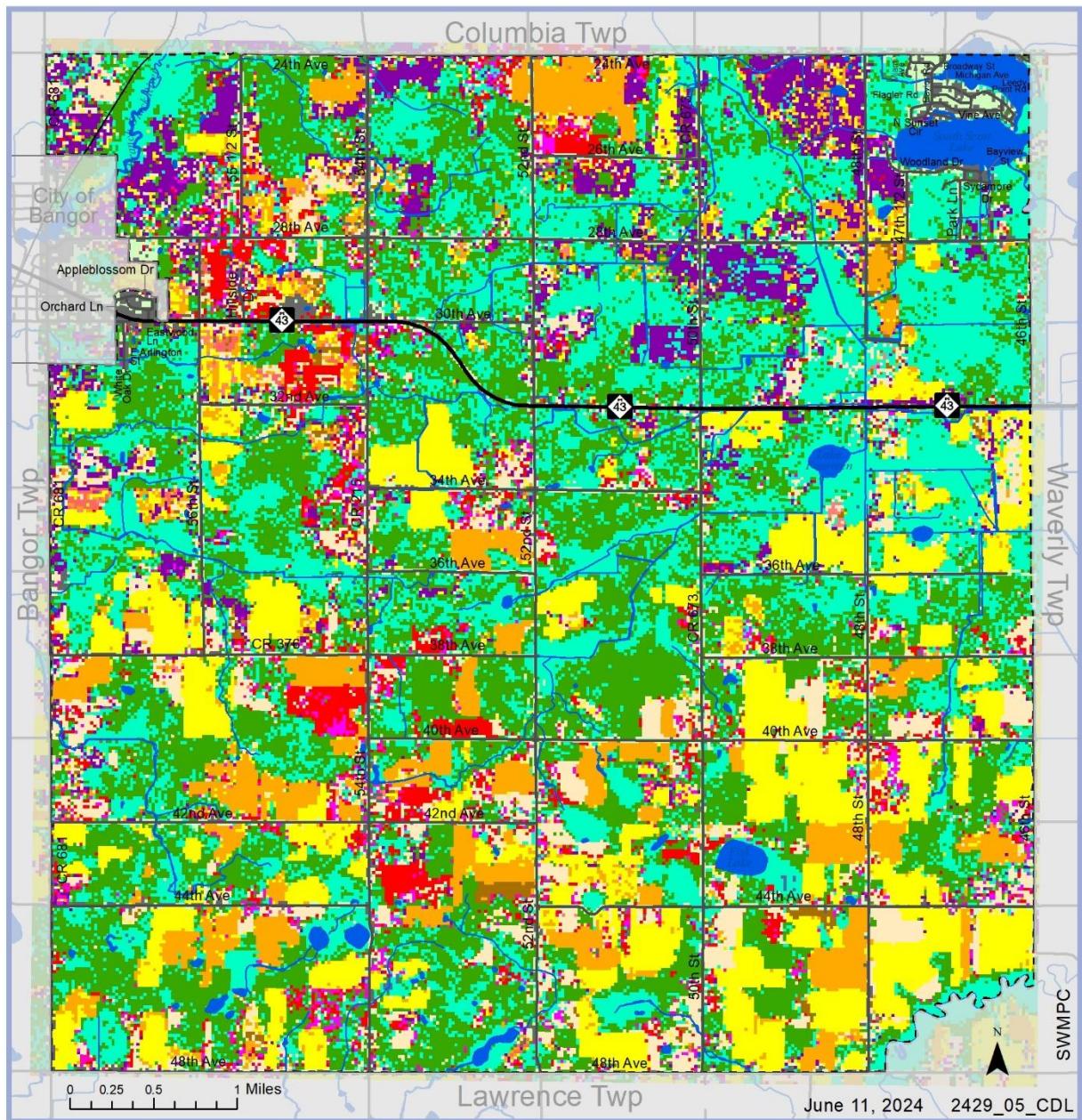
## Agricultural Economy

Agriculture serves as the primary economic engine of Arlington Township. Farming generates employment, produces goods for local and regional markets, and contributes to the local tax base. It is also deeply rooted in tradition, with family-owned farms passed down through generations, reinforcing a strong social and economic fabric centered around community and family.

Farmland protection is grounded in the understanding that farming is an economically viable activity deserving support particularly when the land is of high quality, strategically located, and contributes significantly to the local economy.

Several location-based factors enhance the value of agricultural land, including climate, air and water quality, and reliable water availability. High-quality agricultural land is defined by the right balance of soil composition, temperature, sunlight, and moisture, all of which contribute to high yields or the production of unique crops. For example, proximity to Lake Michigan creates a microclimate that moderates temperature extremes and increases precipitation—conditions ideal for fruit production.

These unique microclimates are particularly important for crops like blueberries, grapes, and apples, which thrive in this region. Recognizing and protecting these areas is essential for sustaining the agricultural identity and economic vitality of Arlington Township and the broader region.



Arlington Township: Cropland - 2023

## Land Use/Land Cover

Alfalfa/Hay	Forest
Apples	Grains
Blueberries	Orchard/Vineyard
Corn	Soybean
Developed	Vegetables
Developed/ Open Space	Wetlands

Sources  
Base Layers: MGI Framework17v  
Roads: Roadsoft 2023  
Land Cover/Land Use: Cropland  
Data Layer USDA 2023

## Base Layers

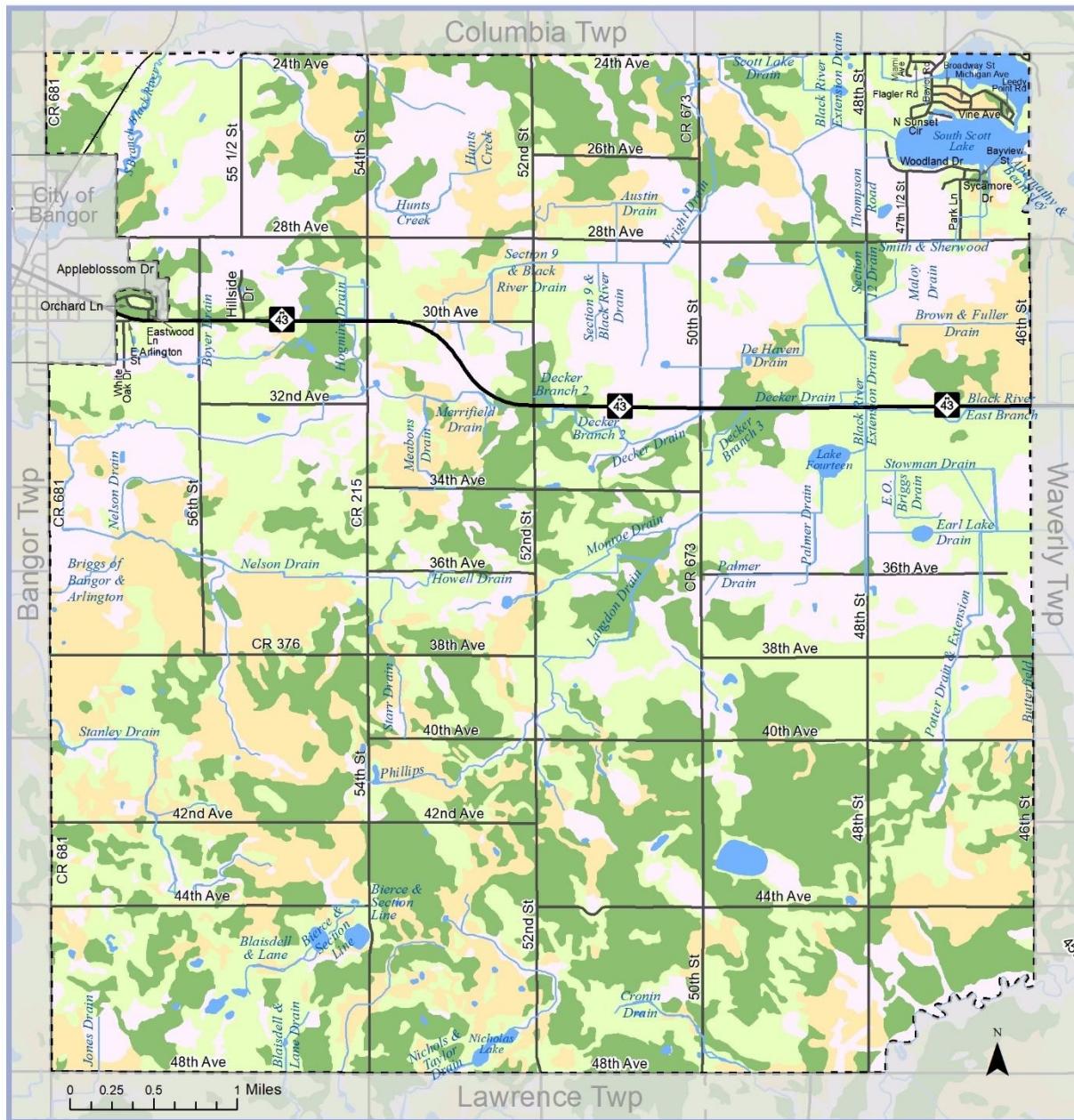
Dashed box: Arlington Township  
Blue square: Water  
Black line: State Road  
Grey line: Road  
Dashed line: Railroad

Figure 16: Land Cover and Cropland, 2023

Class	Acres	Percent
Corn	2,970	13.3%
Soybeans	1,659	7.4%
Grains	188	0.8%
Alfalfa/Other Hay	1,695	7.6%
Vegetable	85	0.4%
Orchard/Grape	404	1.8%
Apple	923	4.1%
Blueberries	1,293	5.8%
Developed	584	2.6%
Developed Open	896	4.0%
Forest	5,793	25.9%
Wetland	5,601	25.1%
Water	252	1.1%

Most of the cropland in the Township is dedicated to corn and soybeans, covering over 4,600 acres, or 20.7% of the Township's land. Fruits, such as blueberries, apples, and grapes, make up the second largest category, occupying over 2,600 acres, or 11.7% of the Township's land.

Arlington Township is very suitable for farming with 26% of total land being prime farmland, 31.5% of land being farmland of local significance, and 16.8% of land being prime farmland if drained. Only 25.6% of land is considered not prime farmland.



## Arlington Township - Prime Farmland

### Prime Farmland

- All areas are prime farmland
- Farmland of local importance
- Prime farmland if drained
- Not prime farmland

### Base Layers

- Arlington Township
- Water
- State Road
- Road
- Railroad

June 06, 2024

Sources  
 Base Layers: MGF 17v  
 Roads: Roadsoft 2023  
 Prime Farmland: SSURGO  
 Soil, NRCS, 2007

SWMPC

2429\_11\_Prime

Some communities view farmlands as holding areas for a future time when fields and pastures will be converted to residential, commercial, or industrial uses. This may be appropriate in areas where public utilities, land prices, property divisions, and growth pressures have made farming difficult. Agricultural lands, even those with considerable value, may be difficult to preserve where urban services and development have been introduced. Extraordinary efforts to preserve farmland in these areas is counterproductive and should only be undertaken in the most unusual circumstances. In Arlington Township there are large areas where infrastructure is not available, and high-quality agricultural lands are present.

The rate and location of farmland loss are critical factors to be considered when assessing the need for farmland preservation policies and programs. If the rate of loss has accelerated to an uncontrollable degree because of market prices and demand, preservation efforts may be futile. However, if the trend of conversion is recognized early enough, effective preservation efforts may be able to be implemented. Arlington Township is still in a position where its agricultural resources can be afforded protection.

Directing new development into areas which are zoned for development purposes and discouraging the expansion of low-density development into rural agricultural zones can assist in protecting farmland. Encouraging higher density development in areas where urban services are available can assist in the protection of farmlands elsewhere. The Future Land Use Plan is intended to reflect the Township's commitment to the protection of farmland by encouraging new development in areas where it belongs.

#### *Economic Value*

The past trend of small, family-owned farms is today less common. As advances in technology have been implemented and scales of economy increased, larger farm operations have tended to be more successful than many smaller, less profitable farms. These economic factors must be considered when evaluating the "value" of a piece of farmland:

#### **Agriculture and Taxes**

Agricultural lands do not require the extent of services that residential, commercial, and industrial uses do. Farm fields do not send ears of corn to school, require an extensive transportation network, request public water and sewer, or demand police and fire services. For example, a study conducted in Scio Township, near Ann Arbor, revealed that for every tax dollar new non-agricultural development contributed to the community, \$1.40 was required for services. Conversely, agricultural land only required \$0.62 in services for every dollar contributed.

- Value of agricultural production, by commodity
- Value and contribution of agriculture in local and regional economies (e.g. employment data, dollar values)
- Farming cost factors such as land prices, taxes, and the cost of inputs like water, energy, fertilizers, etc.

A thorough economic analysis of the agricultural industry should include the range and value of agricultural commodities produced locally, as well as within the county, and historic trends of growth and decline of commodity sales and acreage. Factors that affect the production and marketing of various commodities, such as market access and availability of process and support facilities, can be included in this assessment. Finally, economic factors well beyond the control of local governments or farmers, including commodity prices, export/import laws, and other factors have a dominant effect on agricultural practices and the ability to continue agriculture use on even productive lands.

## Land Cover

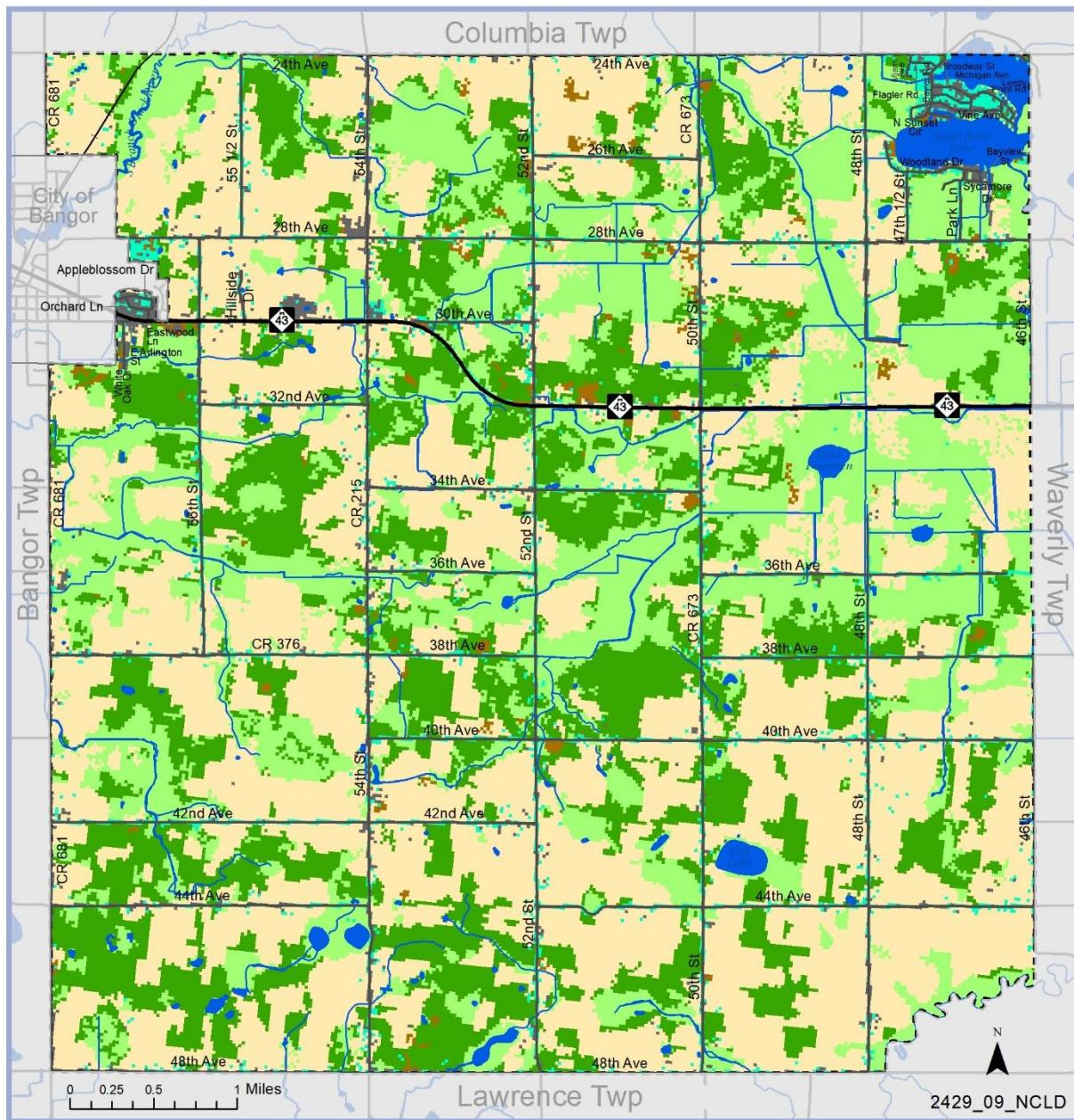
Understanding the current pattern of land cover in Arlington Township is the foundation for smart, practical planning. This section describes the distribution of the land cover that currently shapes the township - including forests and woodlands, wetlands and surface waters, agricultural fields, developed land, transportation corridors, and undeveloped/open lands. That baseline helps the township evaluate natural resource values, identify development opportunities and constraints, set realistic goals for conservation and growth.

The following table shows the amount of each land cover in the Township. Most of the Township is in agricultural, wetlands and forests.

Figure 17: Land Cover, 2021

CLASS	Acres	Percent
Open Water	240	1.1%
Developed, Open Space	896	4.0%
Developed	579	2.6%
Forest	4,832	21.6%
Pasture/Hay/Grassland	162	0.7%
Crops	9,807	43.9%
Wetlands	5,841	26.1%

Agricultural – Agricultural land uses dominate Arlington Township. Over 9,800 acres – or 44.1% of the total land in the Township is agricultural including cropland and pasture/hay/grassland. Agriculture in the Township usual refers to field crops or fruit, but it can also include dairy, animals, or other traditional agricultural uses. Blueberries are most common in the Northern part of the Township while corn dominates the Southern parts of the Township, but general agricultural uses are spread throughout the Township. Both orchard uses and field crops can be found in all these areas. The township is a strong farming community, as evidenced by its high percentage of agricultural land use. As is typical in most farming communities, however, only a small percentage of its residents are employed in agriculture.



Arlington Township: 2021 National Land Cover

### Land Use/Land Cover

Legend for land use categories:

- Cultivated Crops
- Developed
- Developed/  
Open Space
- Forest
- Pasture/Hay/Grassland
- Wetlands

## Base Layers

June 11, 2024

SWMPC

Sources  
Base Layers: MGF 17v  
Roads: Roadsoft 2023  
NLCD: EROS 2021

Developed Land – Only 2.6% of the land in Arlington Township is developed. Residences are sometimes built in clusters such as subdivisions, but many residences are built as scattered dwelling units – especially in the Northeast section of the Township near the City of Bangor and along M-43. Much of the single-family development has occurred in strips along existing roadways. Virtually all residential use is single family housing with relatively few duplexes and multi-family units. Residential land is the most common developed land use. Even though it is the most common, it is obviously still only a small portion of the total Township land. Commercial development is very limited in Arlington Township. There are only a few retail projects scattered throughout the Township with a small concentration on the outskirts of the City of Bangor. Industrial property is even smaller than the amount of commercial land. The final developed land is the transportation network (road surfaces).

Developed Open Space – Only 4% of the land in Arlington Township is comprised of developed open space. This category includes areas with a mix of shrubs, bushes, and young trees. These areas play a crucial role in maintaining biodiversity, offering habitats for various wildlife species, and contributing to the ecological health of the Township.

Forested Area – The next largest existing land use is wooded areas. Although the wooded areas include coniferous, deciduous woods, mixed forests, and deciduous woods are the overwhelming forested area in the Township. Woods cover over 4,800 acres amounting to 21.6% of the total Township land. A fair portion of the wooded properties are adjacent to the various wetlands throughout the Township. These woods are not located in urban environments and therefore include many naturally occurring plants and animals.

Water – Surface water comprises 240 acres, 1.1%, of Arlington Township, the majority of it dominated by Scott Lake in the Northeast corner of the Township. Scott Lake is large enough for recreational uses and is mostly surrounded by residential development. Other lakes include Lake Fourteen, Fisk Lake, and Nicholas Lake, all of which are small and undeveloped. The Paw Paw River flows along the southeast corner of the Township and the South Branch Black River flows through the northwest section of the Township. There are numerous drains and streams throughout the Township, which help to drain agricultural fields.

Wetlands – Wetlands comprise over 5,800 acres of land and 26.1% of the Township area. They are largely connected and surround water bodies and waterways. Many of the wetlands are adjacent to and continuations of shallow lakes while others are independent wetland areas. As with all wetlands, they are generally incubators of a variety of plant and animal species. Some of them are protected under State of Michigan and/or Federal laws; however

smaller non-connected wetlands may not be, and local protection should be considered in these instances, especially during site plan reviews.

The analysis of existing conditions in the Township reveals that the significant domination of rural residential and agricultural land uses is not only tolerated by the residents but represents the fulfillment of their fundamental desire to maintain that kind of community character.

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## Natural Features and Environmental Quality

There are some community features that any resident would readily recognize as important to the character of the area and to their personal quality of life. These features are often the ones that residents will use to identify or connect themselves to a community. Some of these may be cultural, such as a downtown business district, historic buildings, lighthouses, or other similar man-made features.

Often natural features such as lakes, woods, wildlife, views, and other similar features connect residents to their community. How these natural features are included in the fabric of a township can have a profound influence on the overall character of the community. Generally, the value of natural features is either recognized as needing preservation, or they may simply be folded into the community and integrated into the cultural (man-made) landscape.

*Preservation* measures should apply to those features which are so sensitive or valued that any alteration may have negative impacts on aesthetics, property or environmental quality. Development should be encouraged in areas which only have a slight effect on these natural features. An identified habitat for endangered plants or animals is an example of lands requiring preservation techniques. In many instances, the value of these features is so great that specific legislation has been enacted for their protection.

In areas where the natural features are an integral part of the community's character, but where minor changes only slightly impact the quality of life, integration may provide adequate protection. Integration allows natural features to co-exist with development yet remain largely undisturbed. The community should carefully monitor land use in areas rich in these features.

## Water Resources

There is an integral relationship between water resources, water quality, and land use. People need and use water for everyday life. People also live by bodies of water for aesthetics and recreational purposes. Farmers use water as part of their farming activities and industry uses water for processing and wastewater discharge. The variety of applications for water means that there is constant pressure from different user groups on how to allocate this valuable resource.

Water quality is a term used to describe the chemical, physical, and biological characteristics of water, usually in respect to its suitability for a particular purpose such as drinking, swimming, fishing, etc.

Water resources are vital to planning and guiding land use decisions. Certain land uses require access to water; others require isolation from it. Individual landowners, whether residential, agricultural, or industrial, are rarely aware of the complexity of water resources or of the effect that their actions may have. This lack of awareness, coupled with the economic and cultural value of water resources, creates a need for action by the community.

The preservation and conservation of surface and groundwater quality is important for economic development, property values, tourism and recreation, drinking water supplies and plant and animal life. Proactive and effective planning can be a step in the right direction for the future of water quality within a community. A combination of poor soils unsuitable for septic systems, a high-water table and an increasing amount of rural development resulting in increased runoff may begin to threaten the quality of an area's surface and groundwater supplies. Specific local regulations, such as those pertaining to site plan review standards, encouraging open space developments with incentives, increasing water body setbacks, maintaining buffers around streams and wetlands, protecting floodplains, instituting proper impervious cover standards, using overlay districts to protect natural features and reducing density in areas with soil limitations for septic systems are among the techniques that can assist in protecting surface and ground water quality.

The following table illustrates practices that will protect or improve water quality.

<b>Best Management Practices for Protecting Water Quality</b>			
<b>Homeowners</b>	<b>Agriculture Landowners</b>	<b>Developers/Builders</b>	<b>Municipalities</b>
Use native plants in landscaping	Leave vegetated strips along water bodies	Use low impact development techniques	Enact ordinances protecting water and natural resources
Establish and maintain natural vegetation along drains, creeks, rivers and lakes	Use conservation tillage	Use porous pavements	Describe the value of water and natural resources in the master plan
Use porous pavement	Use fertilizer management	Cluster developments and preserve open spaces	Ensure zoning and future land use maps direct development towards existing development and infrastructure
Install rain barrels and rain gardens	Use animal waste management	Minimize impervious areas to allow for infiltration	Direct high-density development away from natural areas and unsuitable soils
Reduce or eliminate fertilizer/pesticide use		Use native plants in landscaping	

The northern part of Arlington Township drains to the Black River Watershed when flows out to Lake Michigan in South Haven. Water in the northern part of Arlington Township flows through several drains and Maple Creek before entering the Black River downstream of the Township. The southern part of Arlington Township drains to the Paw Paw River Watershed which flows into the St. Joseph River in Benton Harbor and then out to Lake Michigan. Water in the southern part of the Township drains south and westward through drains in the headwaters area, Hog Creek subwatershed and Mud Lake Drain subwatershed before entering the Paw Paw River.

A watershed is an area of land that drains to common body of water. Arlington Township drains to the Black and Paw Paw River Watersheds. These two watersheds drain to Lake Michigan.

Scott Lake is the largest and most significant feature in Arlington Township which significantly imparts local cultural identity. The township is home to 105 lakes and ponds, with a total of 327 acres of water bodies, including 84 smaller ponds that are under 1 acre each. Despite this abundance, only seven lakes in the township are named. South Scott Lake is entirely within Arlington Township. North Scott Lake spans a total of 76 acres, but only 65 acres fall within Arlington Township's boundaries, with the remainder extending beyond the township. Arlington Township is also crisscrossed by many small streams.

These lakes and streams are central to the township's identity and environmental health, giving people recreation opportunities as well as providing wildlife habitat.

**Natural Shorelines** are a key component of a healthy lake, stream, drain or river. The conversion of shorelines to turf grass and/or seawalls is the most destructive action for lake ecosystems. Turf grass provides little habitat (except for geese) and has shorter and weaker root systems compared to native plants. The short roots of turf grass provide less protection from eroding forces of wave and ice action. Below are some tips from the Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership. You can find more information at [www.mishorelinepartnership.org/](http://www.mishorelinepartnership.org/).

## Protecting the Shoreline

### **Prevention**

- 1) Site your house a minimum of 100 ft away from the lake (if building new)
- 2) For reconstruction - keep the footprint of the house the same.
- 3) Minimize impervious areas (hard surfaces).
- 4) Keep it natural! Do not remove the trees, shrubs and other vegetation to put in a lawn.
- 5) Keep stormwater from running directly into the lake.
- 6) Keep some woody branches in the lake to provide habitat.
- 7) Keep the native plants in the lake or only remove a limited amount for boating access or swimming.
- 8) Don't put in a seawall - *there are more natural alternatives.*

### **Restoration:**

- 1) Replace as much turf grass as you can with native vegetation. You can have fun and create some beautiful landscapes
- 2) Erosion Control: Different sites require different solutions. The lower the wave energy at your site generally the easier and less complex the solution. Some sites will only need to have the plants restored some will require more complex techniques using a system of coir fiber logs and plants and some will require the use of rock as well.
- 3) Restore the near shore areas (littoral zone): Share the space with the plants and provide safe havens for frogs, turtles and fish. Plants in the water along the shore help protect the shoreline by absorbing wave energy as waves come into the shore.

Stream corridors help absorb floodwaters, stabilize streambanks, and filter sediments and polluted runoff. Stream corridors also provide critical habitat for a variety of species. Riparian areas are important for water quality, plant species, wildlife species and fisheries.

## Riparian Buffers

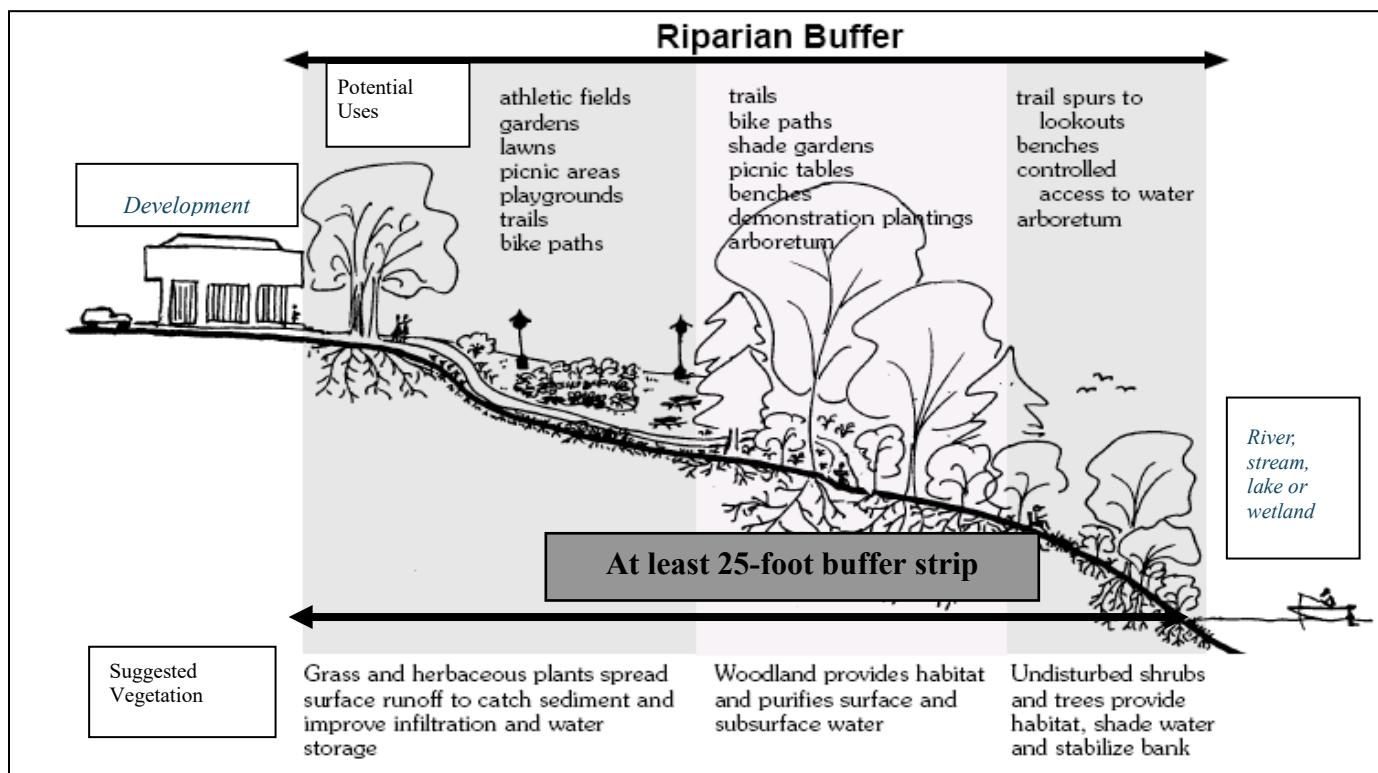
One of the most important things a community or property owner can do to protect water quality is to maintain a vegetated riparian buffer along streams, ditches, rivers, lakes and wetlands. Many stream or lake edges are currently mowed on a periodic basis for a manicured-lawn or park like setting. Although this may be aesthetically pleasing to certain residents, this practice is detrimental to water quality and the fish community. A *riparian buffer* or buffer zone is a corridor of vegetation along rivers, streams, or wetlands, which help to protect water quality by providing a transition between upland development and adjoining surface waters. The native vegetation strip should be at least 30 to 100 feet wide to improve the water quality of runoff. The setbacks of buildings should be at least 100 feet, but may be more if wetlands, floodplains or steep slopes are present along streams, rivers or lakes.

### Buffers Protect Property

Streamside land is a high-risk area for development even above flood elevation. Using vegetated buffers to set back human developments and land uses from shorelines is cost effective protection against the hazards caused by flooding, shoreline erosion and moving streams.

### Benefits of vegetated riparian buffers include:

- Reduce erosion and stabilize stream banks;
- Encourage infiltration of stormwater runoff and minimize public investment for stormwater management efforts;
- Filter and reduce pollution and sediment;
- Provide storage for floodwaters;
- Shade and cool the water;
- Provide wildlife habitat
- Offer scenic value and recreational opportunities for trails and greenways;
- Filter air and noise pollution; and
- Protect property from flood damage and shoreline erosion hazards.



## Wetlands

Part 303 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA) defines a wetland as "Land characterized by the presence of water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances does support, wetland vegetation or aquatic life and is commonly referred to as a bog, swamp, or marsh." "Wetland" is the collective term for marshes, swamps, bogs, and similar areas often found between open water and upland areas. Of the estimated 11 million acres of wetlands that stood in Michigan 150 years ago, only 3 million acres remain. Only one-fourth of the original 400,000 acres of coastal wetlands now line Michigan shores.

Wetlands play a key role in environmental quality and are quite common throughout the township. They act as filters for lakes and rivers. Wetlands offer a natural system for minimizing sedimentation and nutrient laden runoff into streams, rivers and inland lakes. They help prevent flooding and supply key habitat areas for wildlife to thrive. Preservation of wetlands and marshes is extremely important to the future quality and quantity of water resources in Arlington Township.

There are many intact wetlands surrounding several of the inland lakes and small drains/streams in the Township. Protecting wetlands is imperative to protect the water quality of these lakes and streams. Any development should be sensitive to the wetlands as these areas provide such important functions to the community (maintaining water quality, mitigating flooding, etc.). The maps on the following pages show details of the existing and lost wetlands and other important conservation areas in the Township. The wetland function maps show which wetlands in the Township are most helpful for reducing sediment and transforming nutrients. These functions help to protect surface and ground water resources.

Part 303 of NREPA is the regulation that Michigan uses to protect wetland resources through regulating land which meets the statutory definition of a wetland, based on vegetation, water table, and soil type. Certain activities require a permit from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) such as: filling or placing of material in a wetland; draining of water from a wetland; removing vegetation, including trees, if such removal would adversely affect the wetland; constructing or maintaining a use or development in a wetland; and/or dredging or removing soil from a wetland. Certain activities are exempt from permit requirements. In general, exempt activities include fishing, trapping or hunting, hiking and similar activities; existing, established farm activities; and harvesting of forest products.

Wetland areas subject to regulation by EGLE include wetlands, regardless of size, which are contiguous to, or are within 500 feet of the ordinary high water mark of, any lake, stream, or pond; wetlands which are larger than five acres and not contiguous to any lake, stream, or pond; and those wetlands which are not contiguous to any lake, stream or pond, but are essential to the preservation of natural resources.

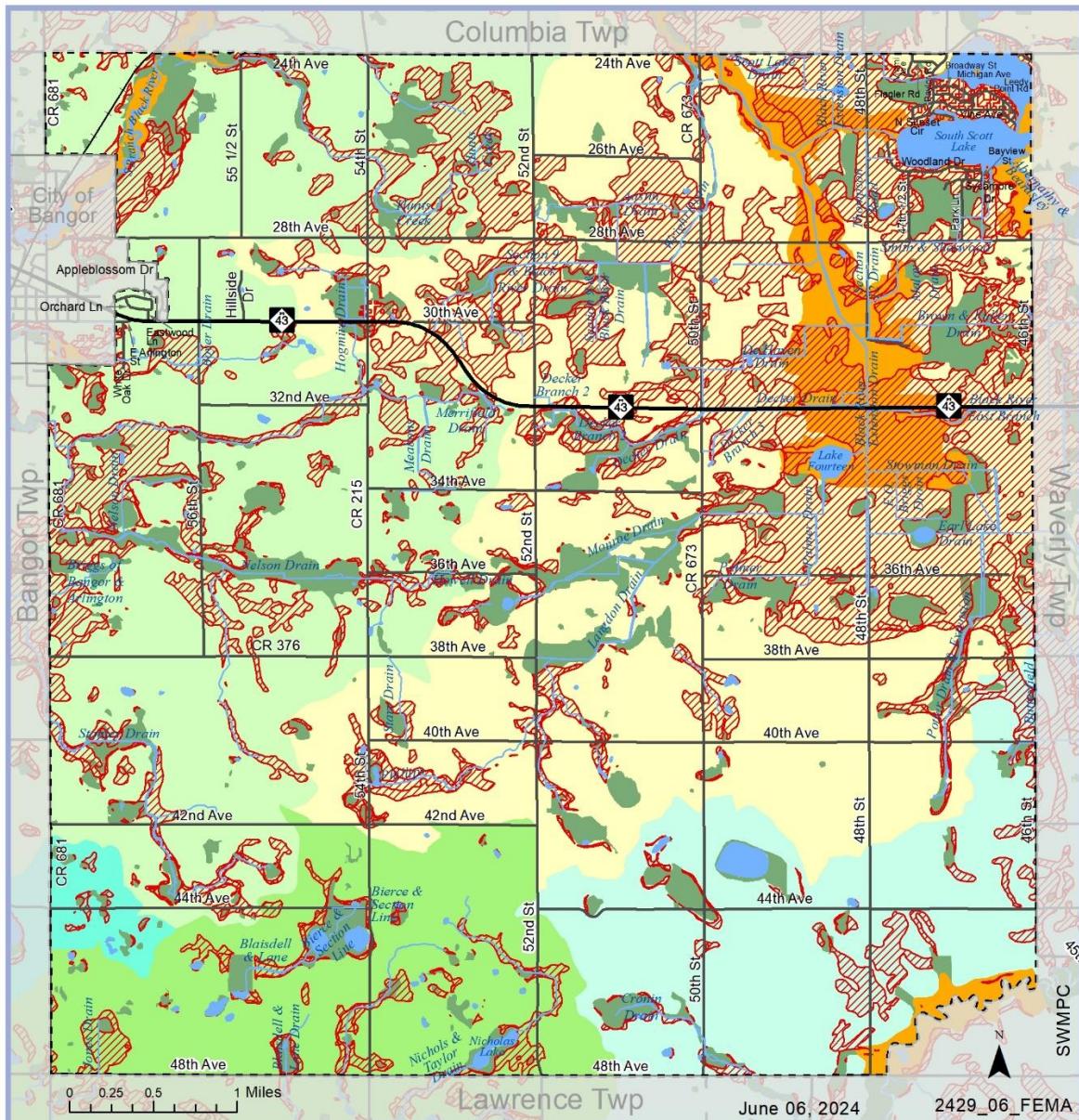
Generally, wetlands must be identified through individual site determinations. Accordingly, when site plans are reviewed that appear to have potential wetlands, the Township may elect to require the site determination to ensure that existing wetlands are protected to the degree possible. The wetland function maps show which wetlands in the Township are or were most helpful for reducing sediment and transforming nutrients. These functions help to protect surface and ground water resources.

The Township has had most of its wetlands drained or filled and those are shown as potential wetland restoration areas. As the following maps show, there was significant loss of wetlands in the northeast corner of the Township (shown as potential wetland restoration areas). The wetland function maps show that many of these wetlands were of high or medium importance for nutrient transformation and flood mitigation (flood water storage). The remaining 2,854 acres of wetlands are critical for protecting water quality and mitigating flooding.

Figure 18: Existing and Potential Wetland Restoration Acres

<b>Existing Wetland</b>	<b>Potential Wetland Restoration</b>
2,854	5,546

Source: USFWS 2007, MDEQ 2007



### Arlington Township High Risk Flood Areas, Wetlands & Watersheds

#### Watersheds

Black River Watershed

Headwaters

Maple Creek

Paw Paw River Watershed

Headwaters

Hog Creek

Mud Lake Drain

#### High Risk Flood Hazard

1% Annual Chance  
of Flooding

#### Wetlands

Existing Wetland

Potential Wetland  
Restoration Area\*

#### Base Layers

Arlington Township

Water

State Road

Road

Railroad

#### Sources

Base Layers: MGI Framework17v

Roads: Roadssoft 2023

Flood Hazard: FEMA 2023

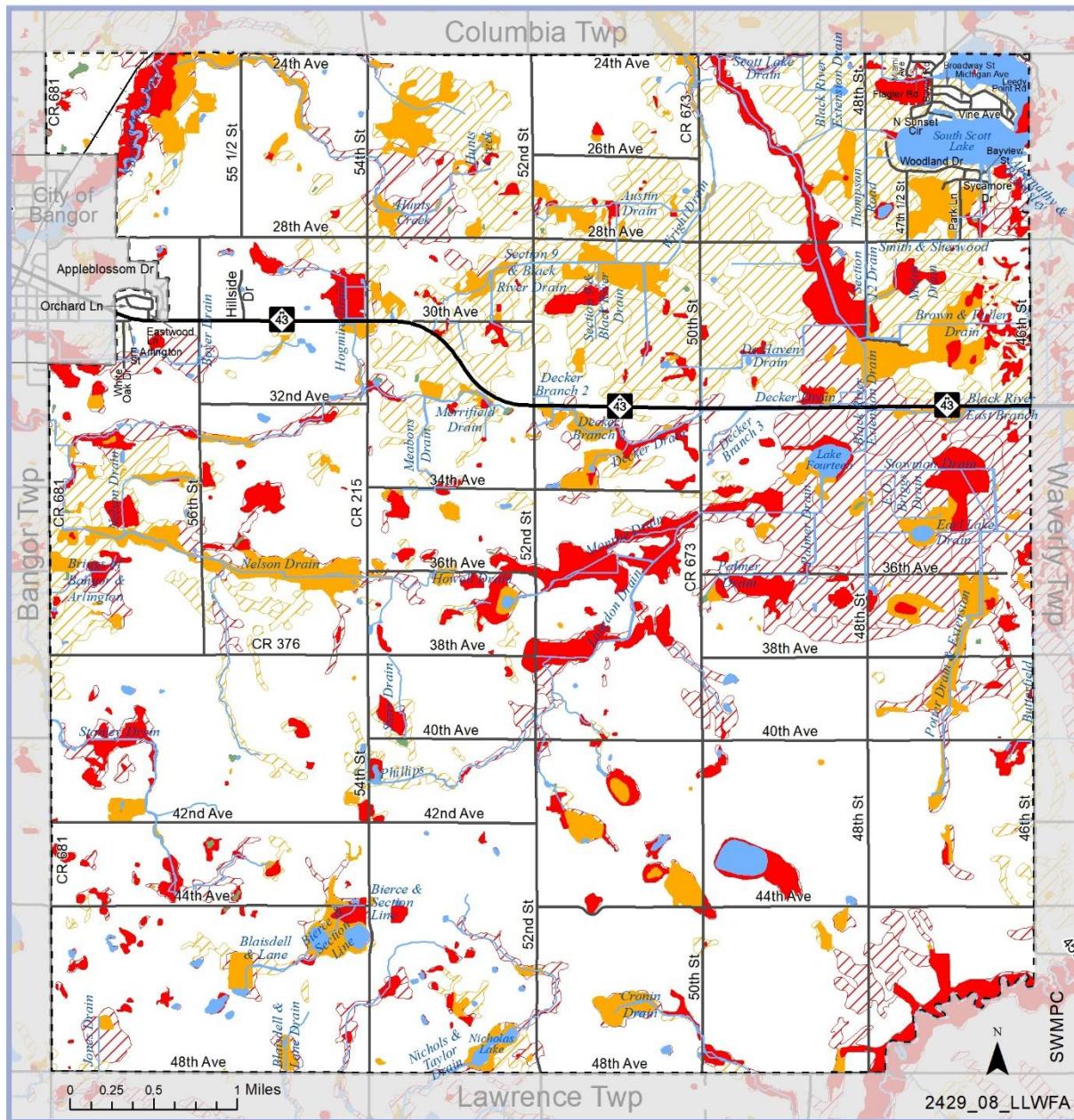
Wetland, Current: U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Service 2007

Wetland Potential: MDEQ 2007

Watersheds: NHDPlus, USGS 2016

\*Potential Wetland Restoration  
Areas highlights areas likely to  
have conditions suitable for  
wetland restoration efforts.



**Wetland Function\***  
**Nutrient Transformation\*\***  
**Existing Wetlands**  
█ High Significance  
█ Medium Significance  
█ Wetland (not shown in Function categories)  
**Lost Wetlands**  
 High Significance  
 Medium Significance

## Arlington Township Wetland Function - Nutrient Transformation

September 05, 2024

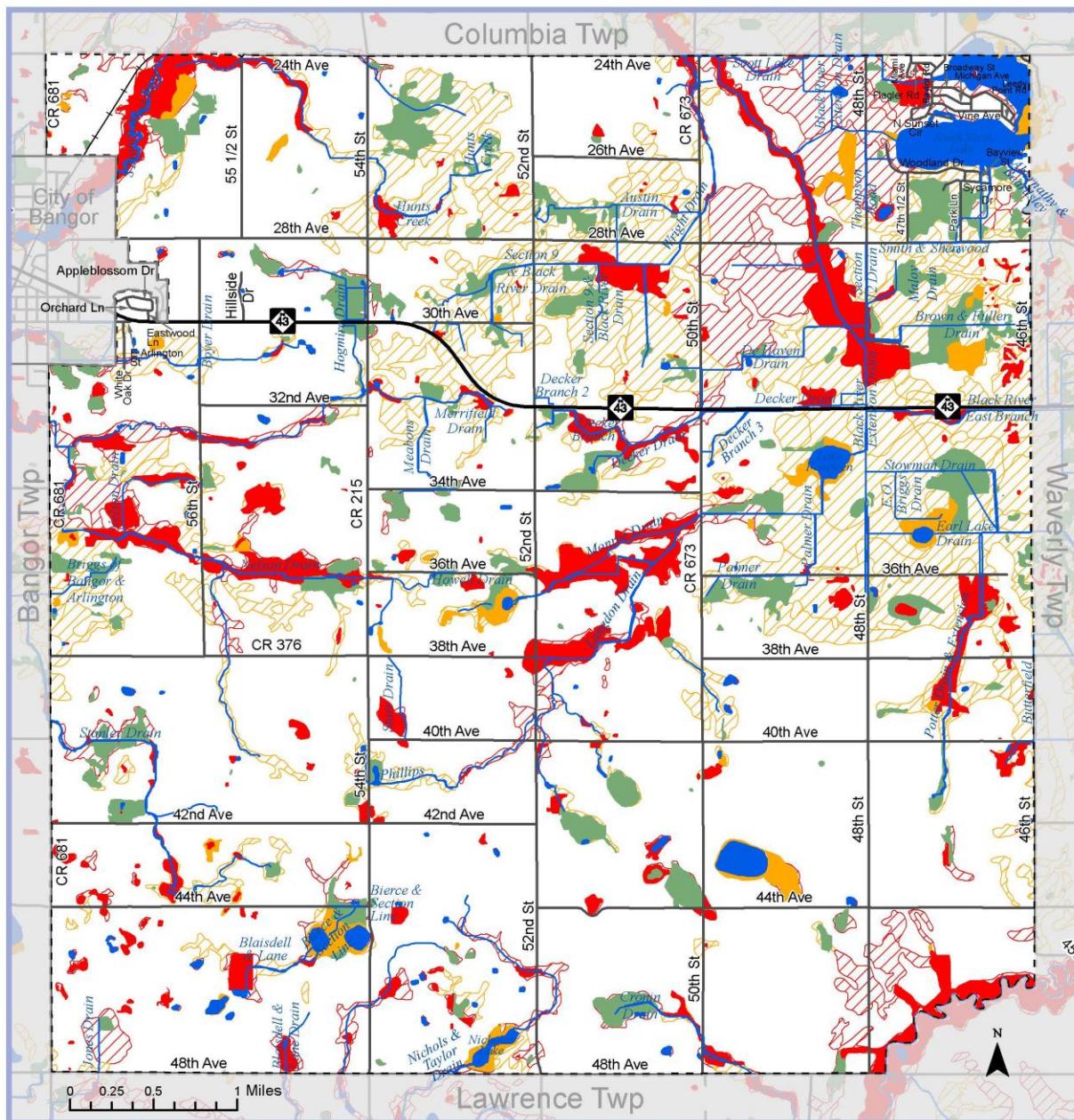
**Base Layers**  
Arlington Township  
█ Water  
— State Road  
— Road  
++ Railroad

\*Wetland Functions describe the biological, chemical and physical operation of a wetland it performs in a landscape.

\*\*Nutrient transformation as a wetland function help by slowing the flow of water causing deposition of mineral and organic particles.

Nutrient transformation is especially important to lessen nutrient runoff from agricultural areas because excess nutrients leads to increased algae in the water and impairing recreational activities.

Sources: Base Layers MGF v17a  
Wetlands: MDEQ 2012



## Wetland Function\* Flood Water Storage\*\*

## Fixed Water Stor Existing Wetlands

Existing Wetlands



High Significance

Medium Significance

Wetland (not shown in Function categories)

## Lost Wetlands

 High Significance  
 Medium Significance

## Arlington Township Wetland Function - Flood Water Storage

September 05, 2024

\*Wetland Functions describe the biological, chemical and physical operation of a wetland it performs in a landscape.

\*\*Wetlands function to store flood waters by acting as a sponge, temporarily storing flood waters and releasing them slowly. In addition, the physical properties of the vegetation in a wetland slows the speed of water entering rivers and streams. This function is important for reducing downstream flooding and lowering flood heights.

Sources  
Base Layers: MGI Framework 17v  
Roads: Roadsoft 2023  
Wetland Function: MDEQ 2012

SWMPC

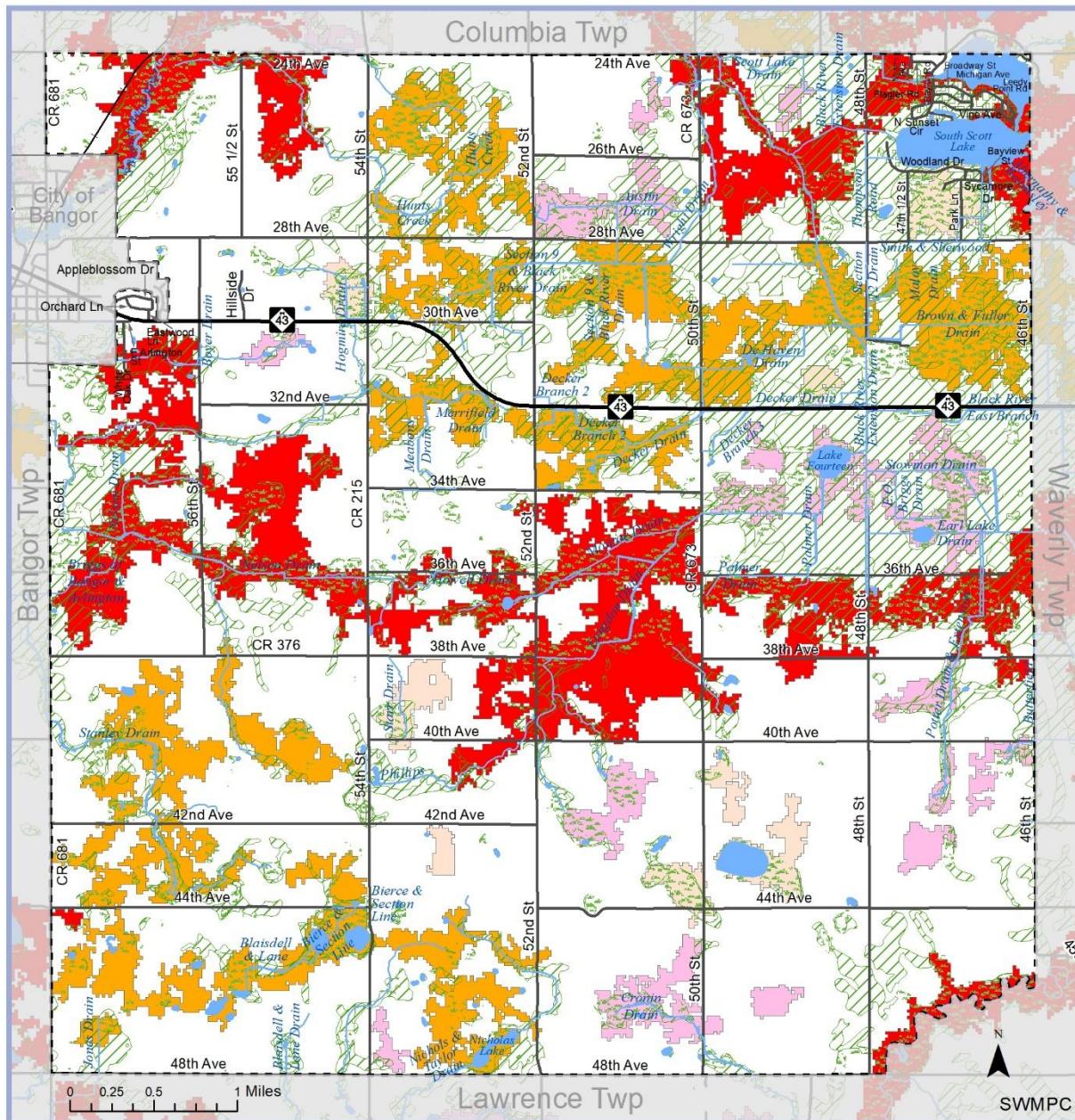
2429 10 FloodFun

## High Quality Natural Areas

The community should carefully monitor land use in areas rich in these features which have been identified on the Potential Conservation Areas map. **Potential Conservation Areas (PCAs)** are defined as places on the landscape dominated by native vegetation that have various levels of potential for harboring high quality natural areas and unique natural features. Scoring criteria to prioritize areas included: total size, size of core area, length of stream corridor, landscape connectivity, restorability of surrounding land, vegetation quality, and biological rarity score.

The Potential Conservation Areas map represents the last remaining remnants of the area's ecosystems and natural plant communities. The map ranks areas where the landscape is dominated by native vegetation that have various levels of potential for harboring high quality natural areas and unique natural features. In addition, these areas provide critical ecological services such as maintaining water quality and quantity, soil development and stabilization, habitat for pollinators of cropland, wildlife travel corridors, stopover sites for migratory birds, sources of genetic diversity and floodwater retention. Consequently, it is to a community's advantage that these sites be carefully integrated into the planning for future development.

Striking a balance between development and natural resource conservation and preservation is critical if Arlington Township is to maintain its unique natural heritage. Areas with the highest concentration of PCAs in Arlington Township are located through the center of the Township, following numerous drains, with the largest area surrounding Fuller Woods State Game Area. The PCA map shows significant intact wildlife corridors which should be taken into consideration when development is being proposed. Overall, all the natural (woodlands, wetlands, undeveloped areas) and agricultural lands in the Township provide not only significant habitat for plants and animals but also provide resilience for reducing pollution and moderating the impacts of storm events.



## Arlington Township Potential Conservation Areas (PCA)\*

September 05, 2024

### Potential Conservation Areas Score\*

## Wetlands

 **Wetland**

 Potential Wetland  
Restoration Area\*\*

*\*\*Areas likely to have conditions suitable for wetland restoration efforts.*

## Base Layers

Arlington  
Township

Water  
State Road  
Road  
Railroad

Sources  
Base Layers: MGI Framework17v  
Roads: Roadsoft 2023  
PCA: SWMPC 2007  
Wetland: MDEQ 2012

\*Potential Conservation Areas (PCA) are defined as places on the landscape dominated by native vegetation that have various levels of potential for harboring high quality natural areas and unique natural features.

2429\_07\_PCA

## Soils

Soils play a fundamental role in shaping Arlington Township's natural landscape and guiding how land can be safely and sustainably used. Soil characteristics influence agricultural productivity, groundwater recharge, septic system suitability, stormwater infiltration, road and building construction costs, and the protection of wetlands and surface waters. This section summarizes the general soil types found in the township and their key limitations and opportunities for development, conservation, and infrastructure planning. Understanding these soil conditions helps ensure that future land-use decisions align with the physical capabilities of the land, reduce environmental impacts, and support the long-term health, safety, and economic vitality of the community.

Hydrologic Soil Groups (HSGs) classify soils based on their ability to absorb water, which is crucial for estimating runoff potential and understanding the soil's infiltration capacity. These groups are determined by how quickly water can penetrate the soil when it is wet, unprotected by vegetation, and exposed to prolonged precipitation.

### **HSG A**

HSG A has the highest infiltration rate and includes deep, well-drained sands or gravelly sands, resulting in low runoff potential.

### **HSG B**

HSG B has a moderately low runoff potential and consists of soils with 10–20% clay and 50–90% sand.

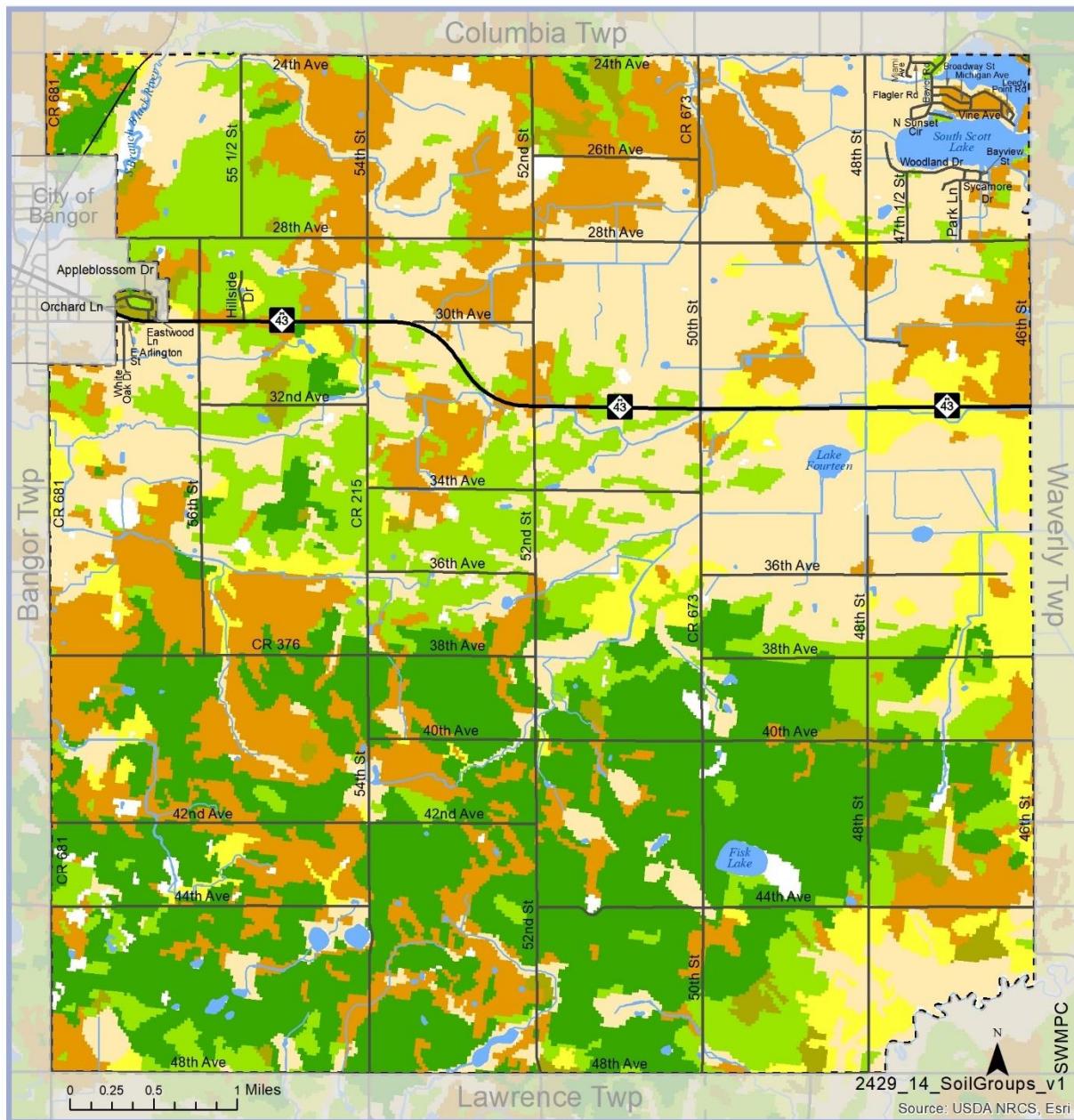
### **HSG C**

HSG C has a moderately high runoff potential, containing soils with 20–40% clay and less than 50% sand.

### **HSG D**

HSG D has the lowest infiltration rate and highest runoff potential, comprising soils with more than 40% clay and less than 50% sand. If a soil is in group D due to a high-water table, it may be assigned to a dual hydrologic group, such as A/D, B/D, or C/D. The first letter of the pair represents the soil's group if drained, and the D represents the natural condition.

Arlington Township is made up of 15.2% of group A soil, 24.1% of group B soil, 1.8% of group C soil, 30.6% of group A/D soil, 6.9% of group B/D soil, and 21.4% of group C/D soil. Much of the Township has high water table and soils that are made up of sand and gravel resulting in very vulnerable groundwater. Groundwater is a crucial resource as it supplies the drinking water for Township residents and is critical for sustaining agriculture.



### Arlington Township: Hydrologic Soil Groups

#### Soil Groups

- Group A - High Infiltration and Low Runoff Rates
- Group B - Moderate Infiltration and Runoff
- Group C - Slow Rate of Infiltration

#### Sources

Base Layers: MGF 17v  
 Roads: Roadssoft 2023  
 Soil: USDA NRCS 2023

#### Soils Groups with High Water Table

- Group A/D - High Infiltration and Low Runoff Rates if Drained
- Group B/D - Moderate Rate of Infiltration and Runoff if Drained
- Group C/D - Slow Infiltration Rate of Infiltration if Drained

#### Base Layers

- Arlington Township
- Water
- State Road
- Road
- Railroad

June 13, 2024

## Drinking Water and Sanitary Waste

Most of the Township homes are on septic systems for treating sanitary waste and on individual wells for drinking water. There is a small area of the Township near the City of Bangor on White Oak Drive where residences are served by sanitary sewer and city water.

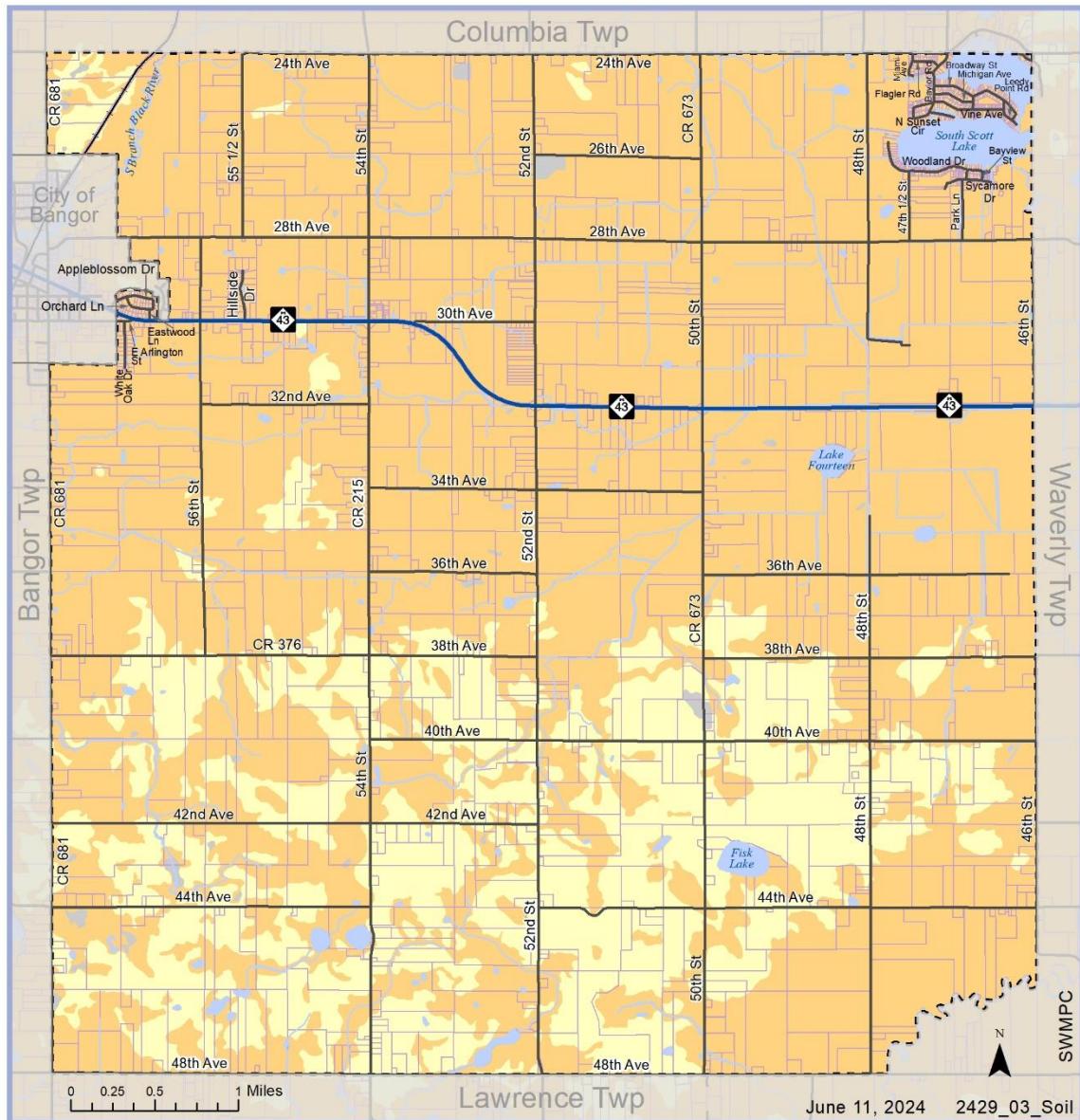
The Township has two designated wellhead protection areas (WHPAs). (See Future Land Use Map for locations.) A WHPA is defined as the surface and subsurface area surrounding a water well or wellfield, supplying a public water system, through which contaminants are reasonably likely to move toward and reach such water well or wellfield. The area near Bangor is a Type 1 Provisional WHPA where “community” public water supplies whose WHPAs have been identified using the Michigan Groundwater Management Tool (developed by Michigan State University Engineering) and existing databases. The smaller area in the middle of Arlington Township is a Type 2 Provisional WHPA and registered to the VAN BUREN COUNTY REHAB FACILITY. Type 2 WHPAs are for the “non-transient, noncommunity” public water supplies in the state which were also identified with the Michigan Groundwater Management Tool. A non-transient, noncommunity public water supply serves the same 25 persons on a regular basis: at least 4 hours a day, 4 days a week, and at least 6 months a year, such as schools, day care centers, factories and larger restaurants. Non-transient water supplies are required to have state certified operators to oversee the water supply system.

WHPAs are important for several reasons:

To prevent contamination: Wellhead protection areas identify where contaminants are most likely to travel to a public well. By managing potential sources like chemical storage, fertilizers, or industrial sites, communities can stop pollutants from entering the aquifer before they become a problem. To protect public health: A wellhead protection plan helps ensure that the water delivered to customers is safe to drink by keeping contaminants out of the source water. Many man-made contaminants cannot be removed by standard water treatment processes, making prevention crucial. To be cost-effective: Preventing contamination is far cheaper than cleaning it up. A contamination event could force a community to spend large sums on new wells, treatment systems, or alternate water sources. To support economic growth: A reliable and clean water supply is essential for economic development. Communities with active wellhead protection programs can avoid the negative economic consequences of a contaminated water supply, such as job losses or declining property values. To comply with federal and state requirements: The Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1986 require states to develop and implement wellhead protection programs for public water systems.

According to the soils map, Arlington Township is not ideal for septic tanks. The northern half of the township along with about half of the southern half of the township is very limited by the soil for septic tanks. The rest of Arlington Township is also somewhat limited for septic tank suitability. It is of upmost importance that Township residences adequately maintain their septic systems to mitigate the pollution of ground and surface waters.

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## Transportation

The roads in Arlington Township are under the jurisdiction of Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the County Road Commission or they are private roads. The Township has a road millage and works with the County Road Commission to pay for the maintenance of the County's roads classified as local.

### Road Classifications

**Major arterial roads**, or arterial thoroughfares, are high-capacity urban roads that rank just below freeways or motorways in the road hierarchy. Their primary function is to channel traffic from collector roads to freeways or expressways and between urban centers, offering the highest possible level of service.

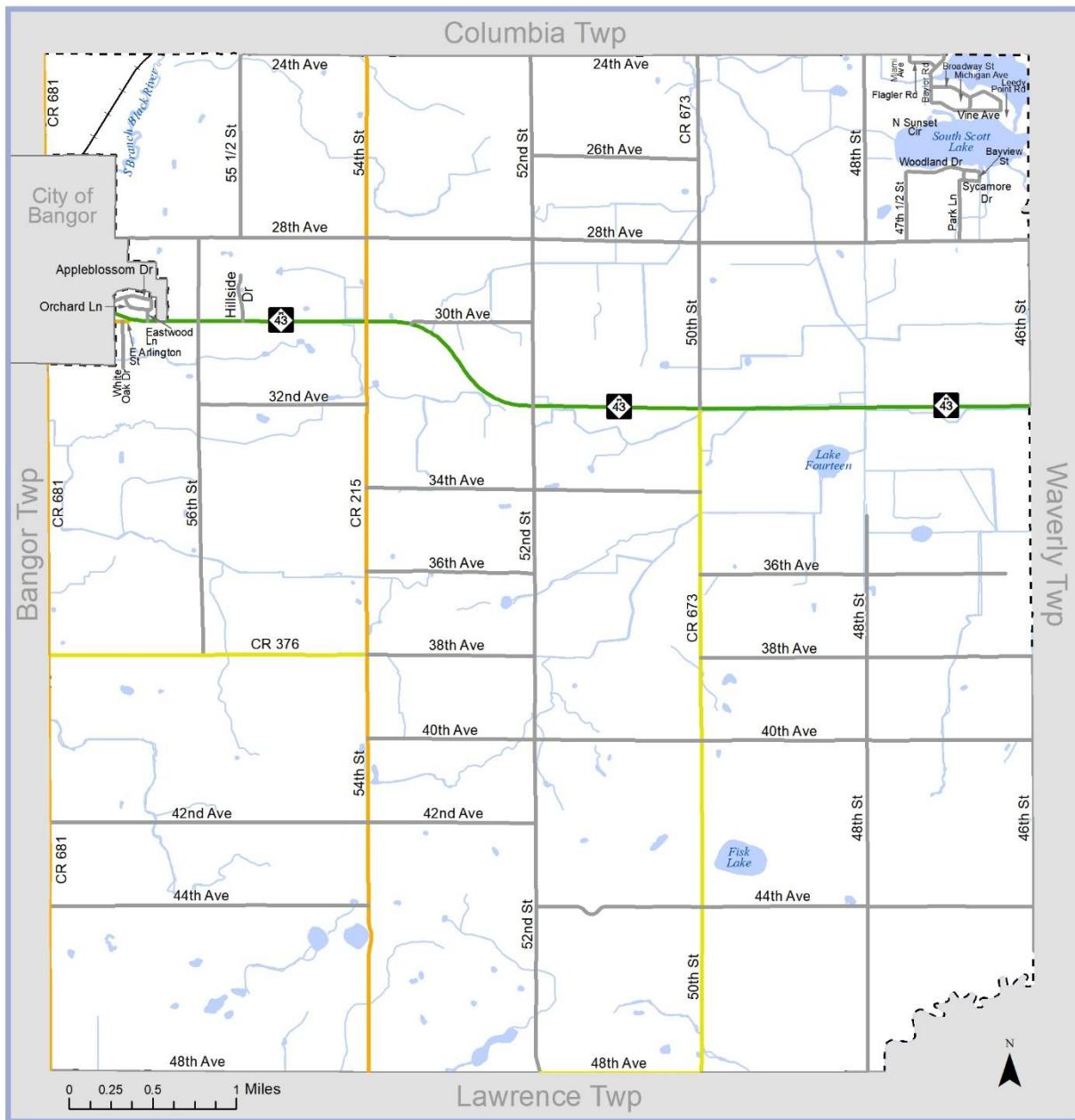
**Minor arterials** primarily facilitate traffic movement within a community, rather than connecting to other communities or expressways. Because access to adjacent land uses is as crucial as traffic flow, speeds on minor arterials are generally slower than on major arterials.

**Major collector roads** channel traffic from local roads to arterial roads while also providing access to nearby properties. These roads are typically over three-quarters of a mile long, have lower speeds and traffic volumes compared to arterials, and often feature signal-controlled intersections.

**Minor collectors** connect neighborhoods to arterials or major collectors. They are usually shorter than major collectors, often less than three-quarters of a mile in urban areas, with fewer lanes and direct driveway connections to residences.

**Local roads** are designed for low traffic volumes and speeds, primarily serving residential areas, businesses, and farms. They offer direct access to adjacent land, including driveways, alleys, and access roads.

Arlington Township is primarily made up of local roads, with some major and minor collector roads. The Township major collectors include 54<sup>th</sup> Street running between Columbia and Lawrence Township and CR681 along the western border of the township. M-43 is the one minor arterial running between the City of Bangor and Waverly Township.



### Arlington Township National Functional Class (NFC)

National Functional Class (NFC)	Base Layers
Minor Arterial	Arlington Township
Major Collector	Parcels
Minor Collector	Water
Local	Railroad

Sources  
Base Layers: MGI Framework17v  
NFC Roads: Roadssoft 2023

The use of this map is for general reference purposes. It is not a legal document.

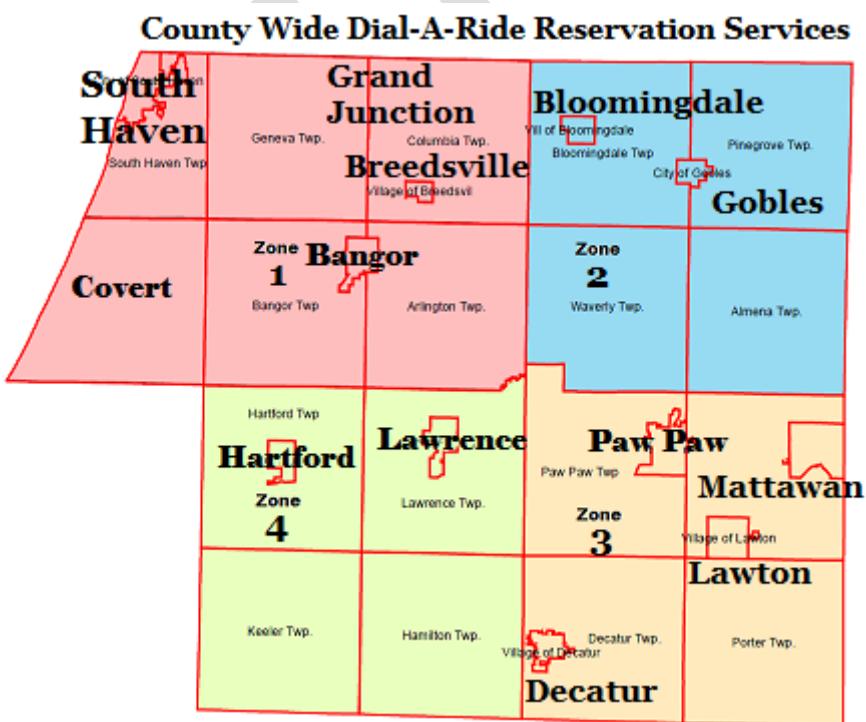
SWMPC  
2429\_02\_NFC

June 11, 2024

## Public Transit

Van Buren Public Transit (VBPT) is governed by a five-member board appointed by the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners and is supported by a countywide millage, which provides stable funding to maintain and expand services.

Van Buren Public Transit has several strengths and limitations that shape how the system serves the community, including townships such as Arlington Township. On the positive side, it provides broad coverage across the county, reaching even very rural areas where options are otherwise limited. The reservation service is particularly important for residents in places like Arlington Township, where fixed loops or city-based routes are not available. The system also prioritizes vulnerable populations such as seniors, people with disabilities, and veterans by offering discounted or free rides. Flex loops add localized, more accessible service in larger communities, while advanced scheduling makes it possible to coordinate both local and out-of-county travel for medical or legal needs. A dedicated Veterans Shuttle further enhances access to essential care outside of Van Buren County.



However, the system also faces challenges. Service hours are limited, with most rides operating only on weekdays during business hours, and midday breaks on loop routes reduce convenience. Reservation rides can involve broad pickup windows and longer travel times, particularly in rural areas like Arlington Township, where multiple stops are required. Payment options are limited, as drivers do not carry change and credit cards are not accepted. Finally, capacity and vehicle availability can restrict service, especially for out-of-county trips, which typically require advance reservation.

## Recreation

The National Recreation and Park Association recommends that communities have 10.6 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents and 1 park for every 2,386 residents. Arlington Township contains the Fuller Woods State Game Area which consists of 85 acres of wooded area and managed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR.) The Fuller Woods State Game Area Master Plan states that the property provides limited recreational use, with the primary use being hunting followed by hiking and wildlife viewing.

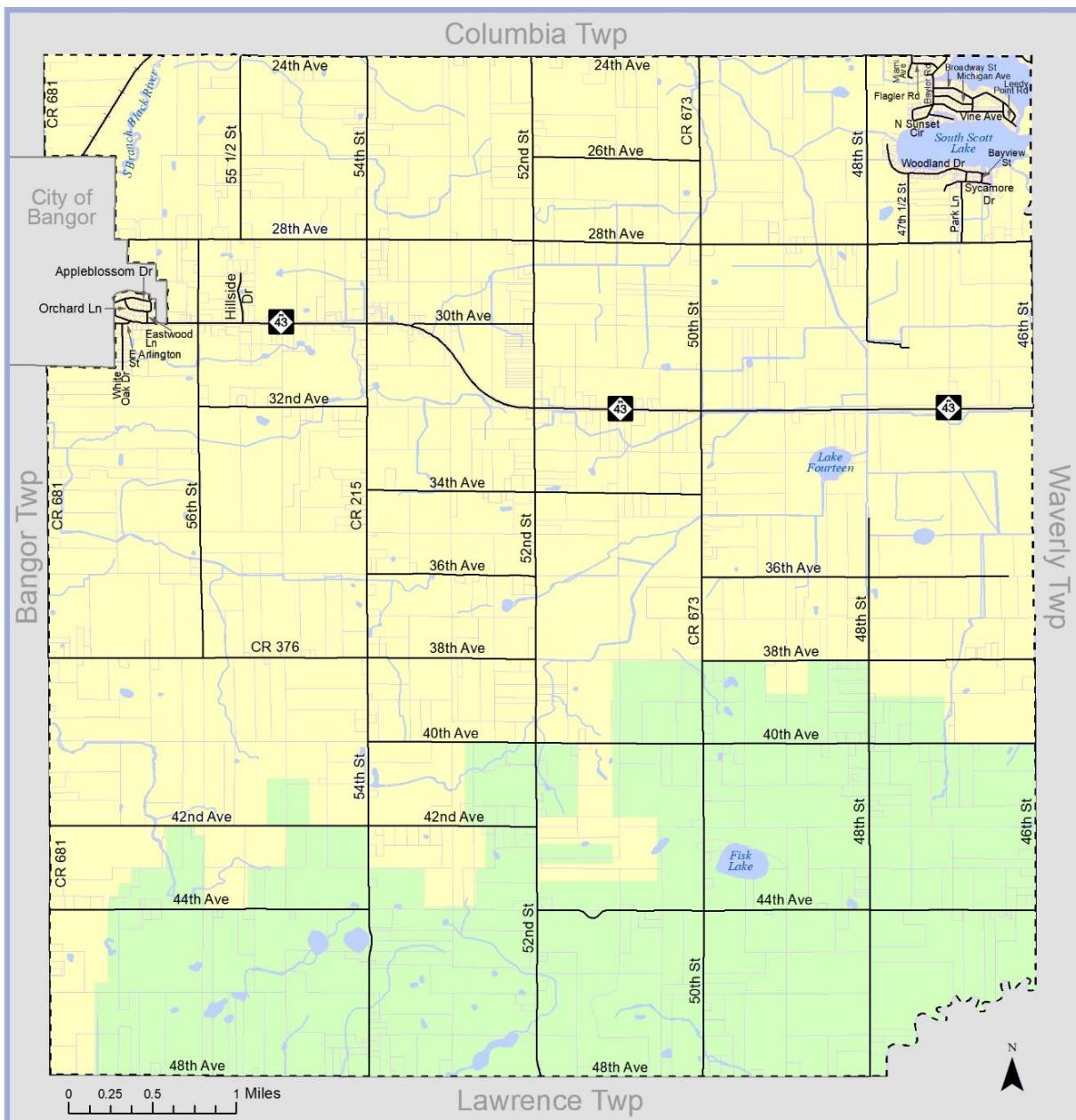
In addition, North Scott Lake and South Scott Lake are almost entirely within Arlington Township and provide recreation opportunities for residents. There is a MDNR boat launch on the northern shore of North Scott Lake located in Columbia township that provides access to the lake for residents.

It is likely that residents of Arlington Township travel outside of the township for recreational activities in Bangor, Lawrence, or surrounding communities, as many recreational facilities and parklands exist just outside of Arlington Township's boundaries.

## School Districts

Arlington Township does not have any schools within it but is instead served by Bangor and Lawrence Public Schools just outside its boundaries. Bangor Public Schools serve the north and western parts of Arlington Township while Lawrence Public Schools serve more of the southeastern area of the township. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES,) Bangor Highschool served 998 students across all jurisdictions it serves in the 2022-2023 school year, while Lawrence Public Schools served 419 students during the 2022-2023 school year. Additionally, Van Buren Intermediate School District is in Lawrence and serves students in Van Buren County including Arlington Township.

## Arlington Township School Districts Map



### Arlington Township School Districts

#### School District

- Bangor Public School (Yellow)
- Lawrence Public School (Green)

#### Base Layers

- Arlington Township (Dashed Box)
- Parcels
- Water
- Road
- Railroad

Sources  
Base Layers and School Districts:  
MGF 17v  
NFC Roads: Roadsoft 2023

The use of this map is for general reference purposes. It is not a legal document.

SWMPC  
2429\_12\_School

June 14, 2024

# Planning Process

The Arlington Township Master Plan was developed through a transparent, inclusive, and collaborative planning process designed to reflect both community values and sound planning principles. Public input was a critical component at every stage, ensuring that the plan is grounded in the lived experiences, priorities, and concerns of residents, property owners, business stakeholders, and partner agencies. Engagement tools included a public workshop/open house, a survey, meetings with the Planning Commission and Township Board, and ongoing opportunities for comment. This combined technical analysis and community-driven feedback provides the foundation for the goals, policies, and future land-use recommendations presented in this plan.

## Survey Summary

Arlington Township also conducted a survey of residents in 2022 to gather input from the community. The survey, found in Appendix A, was sent to each taxpayer. Appendix A also has detailed survey results.

### **Total Responses:**

- 130 total respondents
- 112 residents
- 15 nonresidents
- 3 did not specify residency

### **Overall Satisfaction:**

- 71% of respondents expressed overall satisfaction with living in the township

### **Top Issues Rated as Most Important:**

- Low crime rates
- Protection of water resources
- Adequate police services

### **Issues with Lowest Satisfaction Among Residents:**

- Presence of marijuana in the township
- Lack of reliable high-speed internet
- Poor road infrastructure

### **Greatest Gaps Between Importance and Satisfaction:**

- Road infrastructure
- Reliable internet access
- Minimizing blight

### **Areas Where Satisfaction Exceeded Importance:**

- Convenience to work
- Convenience to shopping
- Proximity to parks

## Public Input Open House

Arlington Township Planning Commission held a Public Input Open House opportunity on October 23, 2024. The open house was promoted with a postcard mailer to residents, articles in local newspapers, flyers at the Township Hall and social media posts. At the open house, residents were asked to review the draft goals and objectives and to provide comments. They also were able to comment on the Future Land Use Map.

At the Public Input Open House held on October 23, 2024, seventeen residents provided feedback on the township's draft planning goals and proposed zoning map updates. The comments reflected strong support for maintaining Arlington Township's rural and agricultural character. Many residents voiced support for maintaining agriculture (AG) zoning and expressed concern about incompatible developments. Several comments emphasized the importance of keeping current agricultural lands intact—particularly along 28th Street and other areas noted directly on the zoning map—while also expressing hesitation about expanding industrial zones.

There was general support for increasing housing options, including tiny homes and rebuilding on non-conforming lots. However, some residents raised questions about the purpose behind higher-density development near service centers, expressing concern over increased traffic and potential changes to the township's character.

Commercial development drew mixed responses. While some residents supported encouraging small businesses and preserving historic assets, others voiced strong opposition to marijuana operations and sought clarification on commercial zoning along M-43.

Feedback on transportation and environmental goals was mostly positive, with support for low-impact development, improved road safety, and maintaining scenic rural roads. Specific suggestions included paving certain roads and widening shoulders for nonmotorized travel. Residents also expressed a desire for more transparency in government decision-making, broader public involvement, and ideas to help the township raise additional revenue.

## Plan Adoption – Public Input

The public also had the opportunity to provide input on the draft master plan before adoption. The Township had a public comment period and held a public hearing for the draft master plan on \_\_\_\_\_, 2026. See documentation of the adoption process in Appendix C.

# Goals, and Objectives

Goals are broad statements about the long-term outcome that is intended to be achieved. Objectives are the specific actions that need to happen to obtain the goal. The Township has set the following overall goals to guide its future.

- To create an optimum human environment for the current and future residents of Arlington Township, an environment that will meet their physical, social, and economic needs while preserving the rural character of the community.
- To preserve and promote the rights of individual property owners while preserving aesthetic character of the township.
- To relate land use to the natural characteristics of the land and the long-term needs of the township, rather than to short-term economic gain.
- 

The Township also developed the following goals and objectives around the following - topics/issues: Agriculture Development and Preservation, Commercial Development, Industrial Development, Transportation, Environmental Protection and Government Administration.

## **Agriculture Development and Preservation**

Preserve the agricultural economic base of the township and protect its productive farmland from incompatible development. This goal will be reached by pursuing the following objectives:

1. Periodically re-evaluate the future land use map and zoning map boundaries of the A Agriculture District to allow for expansion of existing agriculture operations. (immediate, on-going)
2. Review and update the special use standards in the A Agriculture District. (immediate)
3. Review the definition of "Agribusiness" in the zoning ordinance and evaluate if mining should be included as a special use. (immediate)
4. Encourage specialty farms and agriculture recreation to enhance agriculture-tourism business opportunities such as "you-pick" operations, farmers markets, farm tours, corn-mazes and farm to table dining. (immediate)
5. Work with Van Buren County to participate in the Agricultural Preservation Program. (intermediate)

6. In the event the township receives a request for a single-family residential development via site condominium development, encourage the use of cluster development. (long term)

### **Residential Development Goal**

Within the overarching goal of maintaining the township's rural character, encourage a variety of affordable residential dwelling types in the geographic areas best suited for residential development. The mix of housing will be consistent with the needs of the changing economy and population. This goal will be reached by pursuing the following objectives:

1. Review zoning ordinance and consider permitting small or tiny house development, thereby addressing affordable housing needs. (immediate)
2. Review and update future land use map, zoning ordinance and zoning map to provide for smaller lot residential development near service centers, like the city of Bangor. (immediate)
3. Update zoning ordinance to discourage lot divisions that create narrow frontage lots that exceed 1 to 4 width to depth ratios. (immediate)
4. Continue code enforcement efforts that address outdoor storage of junk and unsafe housing. (immediate, on-going)
5. Review future land use and zoning map to maintain the predominance of low density rural residential development as transitions between active farming and higher density residential development. (intermediate)
6. Protect rural residential development from incompatible nonresidential land uses. (immediate)
7. Review and update the Lake Residential District regulations in the zoning ordinance to ensure adequate setbacks and lot sizes with the goal of providing enough area for septic systems while also reducing the number of non-conforming lots. (immediate)

### **Commercial Development Goal**

Provide for the basic service and shopping needs of residents by directing commercial development to suitable areas but in a manner that limits commercial strip development, minimizes conflicts with surrounding land use and prevents unnecessary conflicts with movement of traffic along M-43. This goal will be reached by pursuing the following objectives:

1. Review site plan review and special use permit standards to ensure high quality commercial development. (immediate)

2. Review future land use and zoning maps to ensure ample commercially zoned property near road intersections and commercial uses, thereby encouraging new commercial development to locate near existing commercial development. (intermediate)
3. Review and update special use permit regulations to address unique characteristics of commercial businesses that would contribute to the availability of services for township residents. (immediate)
4. Explore the strategy of permitting specialized commercial uses as uses subject to a special use permit in the A-Agriculture District rather than pursue the rezoning of property. (immediate)
5. Discourage unsafe strip commercial development along M-43 by coordinating with MDOT on access management (driveway permit program). (intermediate)
6. Consider establishing a "mixed-use" zoning district which allows for combinations of commercial and light industrial uses within the same zoning district. (intermediate)

### **Industrial Development Goal**

Encourage the location of non-polluting light industry in areas without damaging the environment, contaminating ground and surface water, spoiling the scenic beauty of the township or overburdening local roads. This goal will be reached by pursuing the following objectives:

1. Review future land use and zoning map to identify locations for designating lands in the Industrial District category. (immediate)
2. Zone for industrial uses as close to municipal services as possible, such as electric, gas, solid waste services, city sewer and water. (immediate)
3. Update site plan review and special use permit standards to require loading and unloading at the rear of buildings, attractive landscaping and buffers for nonindustrial uses that may be adjacent. (immediate)
4. Develop a commercial and industrial mixed-use zoning district which would form symbiotic relationships between businesses. (immediate)
5. Recognize that promoting agribusiness can legitimately be part of expanding the township's industrial base and ensure the zoning ordinance supports this. (immediate)
6. Allow for industrial uses that do not require large quantities of ground water usage and waste disposal (intermediate)

### **Transportation Goal**

While MDOT and the county road commission are responsible for public roads and streets, and all highways, land use decisions are made by local governments. Road authorities are responsible for activity within the right-of-way and for connections to public roads, highways

and right-of-way. The Township should work with the County and MDOT to preserve the traffic carrying capacity of roadways to minimize costly improvements, minimize pedestrian and bicycle conflicts with vehicles and reduce vehicular crashes. This goal will be reached by pursuing the following objectives:

1. Form a Resident Road Advisory Committee to advise the Township Planning Commission and Township Board Trustees. (immediate)
2. Coordinate with MDOT on the review of any development on M-43 that needs a new driveway or will increase the use of an existing driveway. (immediate)
3. Prohibit flag lot development along roadways to reduce driveway conflicts. (immediate)
4. Require site plan review by the Van Buren County Road Commission for all development along county roads that may have sight line limitations, such as curves and grades. (immediate)
5. Work with MDOT to undertake an M-43 corridor plan to encourage safe driveway spacing and preserve the rural vistas of the roadway. (intermediate)
6. Work with MDOT to adopt an access management plan along M-43 to minimize driveways and establish ample setbacks for businesses to permit ROW expansion for possible road widening. (intermediate)
7. Work with MDOT and County Road Commission to review which roads have or should have wider (4 ft) shoulders to accommodate nonmotorized travel. (intermediate)

### **Environmental Protection Goal**

The environment and natural beauty of the township must be protected. New development must be done in a manner that reduces the risk for soil erosion, flooding, disrupting the natural drainage network and eliminating natural features. This goal will be reached by pursuing the following objectives:

1. Review and update site plan review and special use permit standards to ensure that any land development protects natural features, such as wetlands, steep slopes, hydrology and natural vegetation and utilizes low impact development techniques to manage stormwater. (immediate)
2. Utilize the site plan review and approval process to protect known wildlife corridors and areas of natural habitat. (immediate)
3. Coordinate with the Van Buren County Drain Office to require new development or redevelopment with large areas of impervious surface to use low impact design techniques for stormwater management. (immediate)
4. Consider the development of an anti-keyhole ordinance to protect inland lakes from overuse. (immediate)

5. Consider the development of a surface water protection overlay district to protect wetlands, streams, drains and inland lake shorelines. (immediate)
6. Work with a consultant to develop a hydrogeology map to identify vulnerable groundwater resources and develop measures to protect groundwater. (intermediate)

### **Government Administration Goal**

Administer government services relating to land use in a timely and legally sound manner. This goal will be reached by pursuing the following objectives:

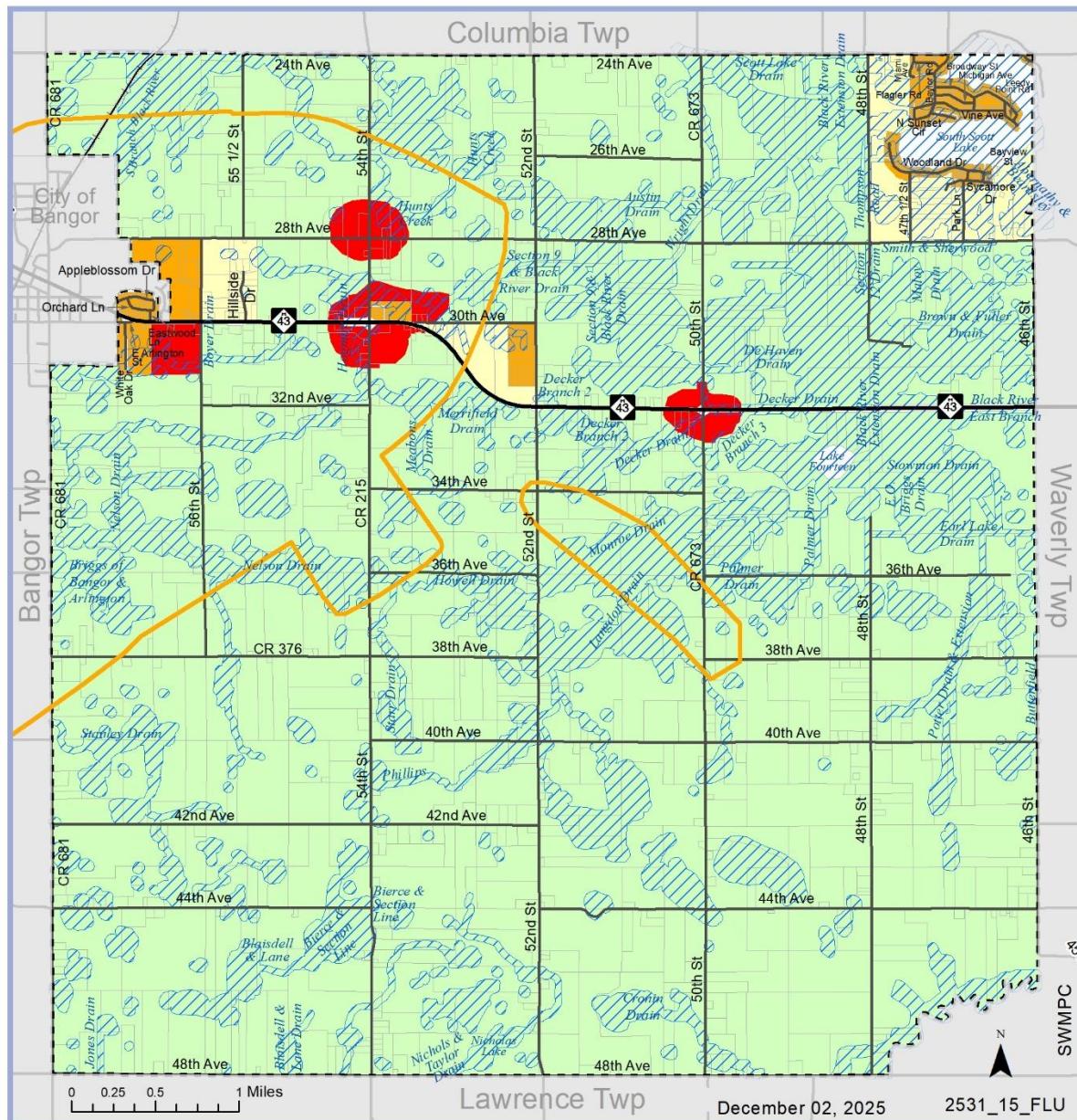
1. Always make sure that rezoning decisions are based upon the policies contained in the official land use plan. (immediate)
2. Update the current zoning ordinance and zoning map to reflect the many amendments adopted and to reflect current development standards. (immediate)
3. Follow recommended public hearing and administrative procedures prepared by the township attorney to ensure minimal litigation exposure. (immediate)
4. Review the current plan at least every 5 years and update as needed (on-going)
5. Support regular maintenance, restoration efforts and responsible stewardship of historically significant locations such as cemeteries.
6. Form a citizen advisory committee to inventory historical and cultural resources and propose protection measures. (immediate)
7. Investigate options that ensure equitable access to broadband/internet services. (intermediate)

## Future Land Use

The Future Land Use Map establishes a roadmap for guiding land use decisions, preserving farmland, and promoting responsible growth in Arlington Township. This plan defines and assigns lands to future land use categories. The categories may not correspond to existing zoning districts within the Arlington Township Zoning Ordinance. For detailed regulations, permitted uses, dimensional standards, and procedures related to zoning, please refer to the full Arlington Township Zoning Ordinance, available at [www.arlingtontownship.com](http://www.arlingtontownship.com) or contact the Township Office.

The Future Land Use Plan and map does not change the existing zoning in an area. Recommended future land use in an area which is not permitted by the existing zoning in an area can only be implemented through a rezoning or other change such as amending an existing zoning district to permit uses and development regulations that are not currently permitted within that district. Recommendations for amendments to the Zoning Ordinance, or other regulatory and policy changes, are discussed in the Zoning Plan sections of the next chapter.

## Arlington Township Future Land Use Map



### Arlington Township - Future Land Use

#### Future Land Use

- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Office/Commercial/Light Industrial
- Agriculture

#### Protected Areas

- Wellhead Protection Areas
- Surface Water Protection Overlay

#### Base Layers

- Arlington Township
- Parcel
- State Road
- Road
- Railroad

Sources  
 Base Layers: MGI Framework17v  
 Roads: Roadssoft 2023  
 Wellhead Protection Area: MDEQ 2021  
 Water Protection Overlay: SWMPC 2025

## Future Land Use Categories

- Agriculture
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Office/Commercial. Light Industrial
- Surface Water Protection Overlay

### Agriculture

The vast majority of Arlington Township is designated for Agriculture, dominating the central, southern, and eastern areas and surrounding all other land use categories. The Township is committed to the preservation of farmland, the protection of its agricultural character, and the responsible management of underground natural resources. Maintaining the Township's rural and agricultural identity supports the local economy, conserves open space, and safeguards valuable natural assets for future generations. The Township will promote sustainable land use practices, protect prime agricultural soils, and encourage resource management strategies that balance economic development with environmental stewardship.

A core goal of the Master Plan is to maintain the township's agricultural economy and prevent incompatible development from encroaching on farmland. The Agriculture land use category supports this by encouraging large open areas for farming, conservation, and very low-density residential use, thereby protecting rural character, supporting existing farming operations, and discouraging sprawl or fragmented development that could undermine long-term agricultural viability.

### Low Density Residential

In Arlington Township, Low Density Residential designated areas are primarily found near the northwest and northeast parts of the township, particularly surrounding the medium-density clusters around the east side of South Scott Lake, around Bangor city limits, and along M-43.

Low Density Residential areas are intended to serve as a transitional buffer between agricultural land and more developed parts of the township. These areas are characterized by large-lot single-family homes, open space, and a rural atmosphere. The goal is to maintain low housing densities to reduce pressure on farmland, minimize conflicts between residential and agricultural uses, and preserve the township's rural identity.

## **Medium Density Residential**

Medium Density Residential land use in the township is mostly found in the northern section of the township, concentrating around North and South Scott Lake, the City of Bangor, and along 52<sup>nd</sup> Street near M-43.

Medium Density Residential areas are intended to provide relatively higher-density residential—primarily two-family and multi-family dwellings—in appropriate locations with access to transportation, shops, and other amenities. These areas are appropriate for smaller lot single-family homes, cottages, and alternative housing types such as tiny houses. The goal is to have this type of development in areas with better access to existing infrastructure and community services—particularly those adjacent to the city of Bangor. This development would also be located in select rural locations where existing development patterns already support this density, such as the area near 52<sup>nd</sup> Street and M-43, where residential uses are well established.

Areas adjacent to North and South Scott Lake are not served by public sanitary sewer systems. As such, development must be carefully managed to protect soil and water quality. Inadequate septic systems and fertilizer use already pose risks to lake health. Expanding homes or increasing density can further strain on-site systems. To mitigate these impacts, adequate lot sizes are required, and proposals for increased density should be limited unless appropriate infrastructure is in place. Certain additional uses may be considered through Special Use Permits, provided they are compatible with the residential character of the area.

## **Office/Commercial/Light Industrial Use (Mixed Use)**

The land designated for Office/Commercial/Light Industrial use is mainly located along M-43 with sections near the City of Bangor, 56<sup>th</sup> street, . These areas are intended to support local employment and essential services, while being compatible with surrounding residential and agricultural uses.

This future land use designation supports the Township's objective of providing essential goods and services for residents while promoting orderly, high-quality development. This land use category is intended to concentrate commercial and compatible light industrial development in areas best suited to handle such activity, particularly near major road intersections and existing commercial clusters. The intent is to encourage efficient, attractive, and accessible development while limiting sprawl, preserving rural character, and maintaining the safe and efficient movement of traffic along the M-43 corridor.

## **Surface Water Protection Overlay**

Overlay zones are special districts that supplement, but do not replace, the existing applicable underlying zoning regulations. Overlay zones can be used to achieve different objectives, in this case, to protect surface water bodies and wetlands in the Township. Development and land use activities near waterbodies directly impacts the quality of water resources. The Surface Water Protection Overlay encompasses all wetlands and a 100 foot buffer around them and a 100 foot buffer around all waterbodies (lakes, rivers, major streams and drains).

The Surface Water Protection Overlay District should require vegetated greenbelts around waterbodies and setbacks for buildings. Greenbelts or vegetated buffers are an effective way to address soil erosion and reduce the effects of runoff on surface water quality. The attraction of surface water for residential or other land uses often leads to the desire for additional views to the water by clearing vegetation along streambanks and lake shorelines. This clearing contributes to reduced water quality and may lead to the eventual loss of aesthetic value.

## **Historic Sites**

Historic sites and structures contribute to Arlington Township's unique identity, sense of place, and connection to its past. As future land-use decisions are made, it is important to recognize and consider these resources as cultural, educational, and economic assets. The Future Land Use Plan seeks to balance growth and change with the preservation of historically significant areas by encouraging compatible development, adaptive reuse where appropriate, and protection of key sites that reflect the township's heritage. Integrating historic resources into future land-use planning supports long-term community character while allowing the township to evolve in a thoughtful and sustainable manner.

The Township is committed to the identification, preservation, and protection of sites, structures, and landscapes of historical, cultural, and archaeological significance. The Township recognizes the importance of these resources in maintaining community heritage and identity, and will work collaboratively with local, state, and federal agencies, as well as property owners and preservation organizations, to ensure their long-term conservation and responsible stewardship."

The Township recognizes the importance of maintaining and preserving cemeteries and historical sites as essential elements of the community's heritage and identity. Proper upkeep of these sites honors past generations, provides educational and cultural value,

and ensures that these places remain dignified, safe, and accessible for future generations. The Township is committed to supporting regular maintenance, restoration efforts, and responsible stewardship of these historically significant locations."

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## Zoning Plan

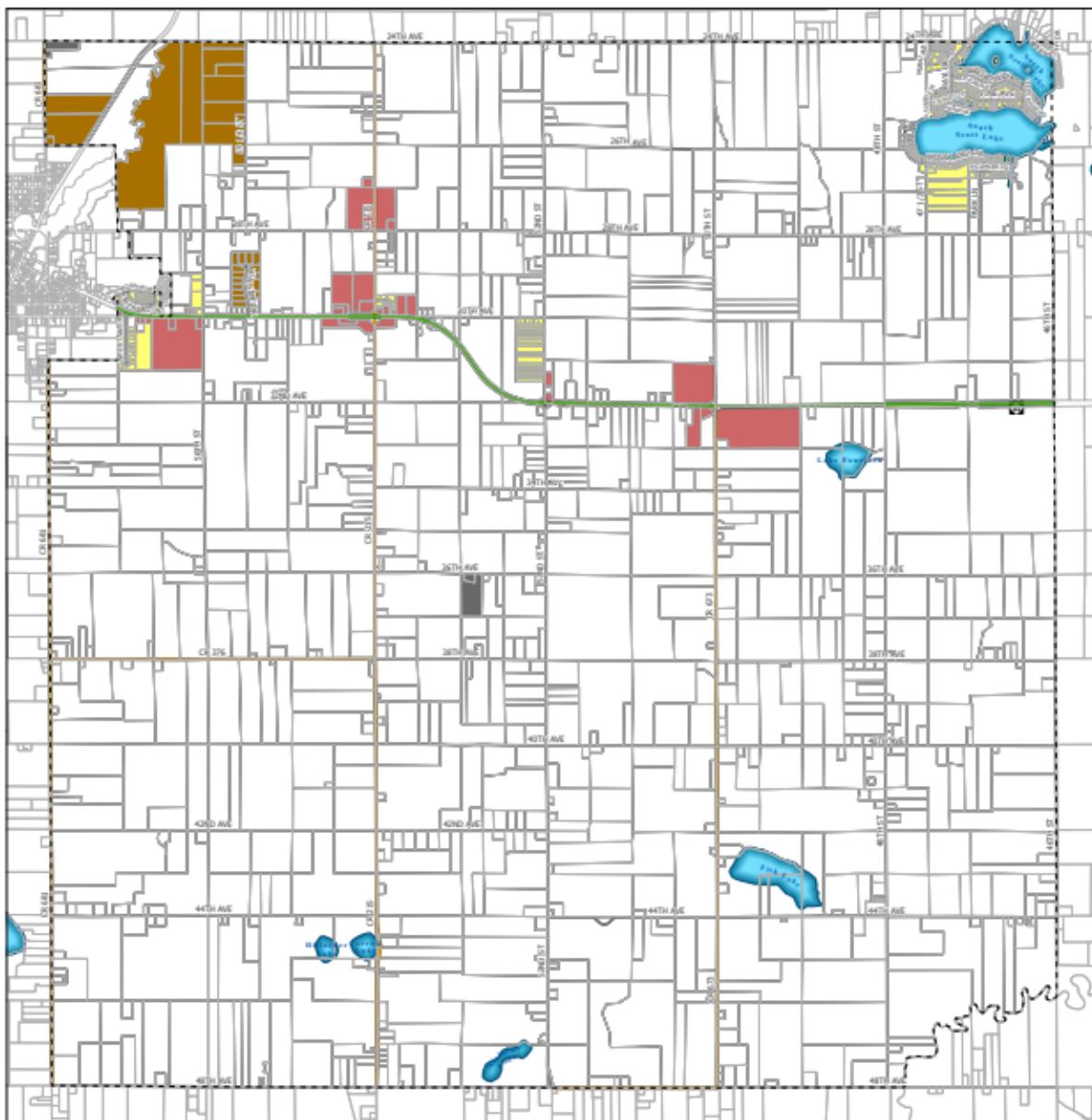
The Michigan Planning enabling Act requires that a Master Plan include a Zoning Plan, which includes an explanation of how the land use classifications set forth on the Future Land Use Map relate to the districts on the zoning map. The Zoning Plan sets forth the future land use classifications and identifies the corresponding zoning districts from the Township Zoning Ordinances Recommendations regarding the implementation of the Master Plan through the regulations of the Zoning Ordinance are set forth in the detailed future land use classification descriptions.

The following table shows how the future land use categories in this plan align with the Township's Zoning Ordinance.

<b>Future Land Use Category</b>	<b>Corresponding Zoning District</b>
Agriculture	A – Agriculture R-3 – Very Low Density Residential District
Low Density Residential	R-1 – Residential- Low density District
Medium Density Residential	R-2 – One and Two Family Residential District MH P/S – Mobile Home Park/Subdivision District RM – Residential Multiple Family District
Office/Commercial/Light Industrial (Mixed Use)	C – Commercial District I – Industrial District
Surface Water Protection Overlay	Needs to be created

## Arlington Township Zoning Map

# ARLINGTON TOWNSHIP - ZONING



Arlington Township Zoning Map

STATE HIGHWAY	(Ind) Industrial
COUNTY ROAD	R-1
STREETS/AVENUES	R-2
LOCAL ROAD	R-3
MINOR CIVIL DIVISIONS selection	Ag
LAKES	(Com) Commercial
Parcels	



Map Date: 01/08/2026

0 0.35 0.7 1.4 2.1 2.8  
Miles



Van Buren County DID  
219 E. Paw Paw St. Suite 201  
Paw Paw, MI 49079  
Office: (269) 657-8243  
[www.vanburencountymi.gov](http://www.vanburencountymi.gov)

The **A – Agriculture zoning district** should preserve large lot sizes and limit non-farm uses to protect the Township’s agricultural base. In some agricultural areas, **R-3 – Very Low Density Residential zoning district** could support large-lot single-family homes. The current zoning map indicates these areas near Bangor in the northwest portion of the Township. Where appropriate, rezoning to the R-3 district may be considered for rural, non-farm residences, provided such requests align with the Master Plan’s goal of balancing limited rural housing with agricultural preservation. For additional recommendations for preserving farmland and natural resources see Appendix B.

The Township affirms its support for existing legally established marijuana enterprises operating in compliance with state and local regulations. However, the Township acknowledges that community feedback indicates a lack of resident support for the further expansion or growth of such operations within the Township.

The future land use Low Density Residential category is expanded beyond the current **R-1 – Low Density Residential zoning district** into areas around North and South Scott Lakes, 52<sup>nd</sup> Street and M-43 and near Bangor.

The Medium Density Residential future land use category is expanded beyond the **R-2 - One and Two Family Residential zoning district** in the current zoning map. The **MH P/S – Mobile Home Park/Subdivision zoning district** and the **RM – Residential Multiple Family zoning district** are not on the current zoning map, but could be proposed in Medium Density Residential designated areas on the Future Land Use Map. However, it will be important to have appropriate sanitary infrastructure in place for these types of developments.

As shown on the Future Land Use Map, commercial and light industrial development within the Township should be strategically directed along the M-43 corridor. Concentrating such development in this area will promote efficient land use, support transportation accessibility, and enhance economic growth while minimizing impacts on residential and agricultural areas. The **C – Commercial zoning district** aligns well with the Office/Commercial/Light Industrial (mixed use) category on the Future Land Use Map. Currently, the **I – Industrial zoning district** is located east of County Road 215 on 36<sup>th</sup> Street to accommodate an existing business.

A **Surface Water Protection Overlay district** should be created to implement the corresponding future land use category. Important elements of overlay zones for natural resources protection include protection of vegetation and trees; setbacks from sensitive areas such as wetlands and streams; percentage requirements for open space preservation; and avoidance of critical habitat areas. The zoning ordinance should include water body setbacks from water bodies with a portion of the setback areas reserved for a

native vegetative strip to filter pollutants and sediment. Setbacks from inland lakes and streams can be established through the zoning ordinance. Regulations may specify a minimum 100-foot setback for structures and septic systems from the shoreline. Setbacks will generally mirror the minimum requirements of the Natural Rivers Act, which provides a basis for setbacks. Setback requirements may include the preservation of at least a 25-foot wide native, uncleared vegetation buffer strip immediately adjacent to the shoreline. Boat storage and dock facilities may also be regulated. In general, smaller buffers may be adequate when the buffer is in good condition (e.g. dense native vegetation, undisturbed soils), when the water body or resource is of low functional value (highly disturbed, invaded by non-native species such as purple loosestrife), and the adjacent land use has low impact potential (park land or very low-density residential development). Larger buffers will provide water quality protection for high impact land uses such as highly developed commercial areas dominated by large parking lots (highly impervious surfaces).

## Conclusion

The Arlington Township Master Plan provides a comprehensive vision for the Township's growth, preservation, and quality of life over the coming decades. By examining existing conditions, including natural resources, land use, soils, infrastructure, and community assets, the plan establishes a foundation for informed decision-making. It reflects the values, priorities, and input of residents, property owners, and stakeholders, ensuring that future development, conservation, and public investments align with the Township's goals. The plan balances the need for responsible growth with the protection of natural, agricultural, and historic resources that define Arlington Township's character.

Implementation of the plan will require coordinated action, periodic review, and continued public engagement. Zoning updates, capital improvements, conservation initiatives, and policy decisions should be guided by the principles and strategies outlined herein. By following this plan, Arlington Township can promote a sustainable, vibrant, and resilient community—one that supports economic opportunity, preserves its unique identity, and enhances the quality of life for all residents now and for generations to come.

## Appendix A: Community Survey

The Arlington Township Planning Commission and Board of Trustees want to know what issues are important to you, and how satisfied you are with their status. Your responses to this survey will help inform decisions regarding future improvements and development in Arlington Township.

The Survey should be completed by the property owner and/or head of household and returned in the envelope provided by December 31, 2022. Returned, completed surveys will be entered into a raffle for a chance to win one of two \$50 VISA gift cards.

**Please print your name and address if you want to be entered into the raffle for the \$50 VISA gift cards.**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

We welcome all comments and thank you for your sharing your thoughts.

Arlington Township Planning Commission - Donna Romanak, Chair

**1. Are you a current resident of Arlington Township?**

No

Yes, complete 3 questions below

1a. Current residents, how many years have you resided in the Township?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- More than 20 years

1b. Current residents, how many people live at your residence by age group?

- 0-17
- 18-25
- 26-40
- 41-64
- 65 and older

1c. Current residents, please describe your current living arrangement, **check all that apply.**

- House
- Mobile Home
- Townhouse or Apartment
- Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Own Free and Clear
- Pay Mortgage
- Pay Rent
- Pay Land Contract
- Rent my Property
- Farm Residence
- Rural Residence
- Lake Residence
- Subdivision Residence
- Other, specify \_\_\_\_\_

**2. How satisfied are you with Arlington Township as a place to live?**

Satisfied

Dissatisfied; please specify why \_\_\_\_\_

**3. How do you access the internet? Check all that apply.**

- Computer at home
- Cell phone at home
- Computer at library
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- No access

4. Please circle the number indicating the importance of the issues listed below and your current level of satisfaction with the issues listed below.

**Importance 1=Very Important 2=Important 3=No Opinion 4=Low Importance 5=Not Important**

**Satisfaction 1=Very Satisfied 2=Satisfied 3=No Opinion 4=Dissatisfied 5=Very Dissatisfied**

Issue	Importance					Satisfaction					Comments
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Protect Wildlife Habitat	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Protect Natural Environment	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Protect Wetlands	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Protect Water Sources	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Proximity to Parks and Recreation	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Township Growth/Development	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Affordable Housing	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Convenience to Shopping	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Reliable, High-Speed Internet	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Presence of Marijuana in Township	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Convenience to Employment	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Senior Services	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Township Communication	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Township Interest in Residents and Property Owners Concerns	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Township Response to Concerns	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Low Crime Rate	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Police Services	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Schools	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Emergency Services	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Fire Services	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Roads	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Sense of Community	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Minimizing Blight	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Rural Character of Township	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Residential Lot Size	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	

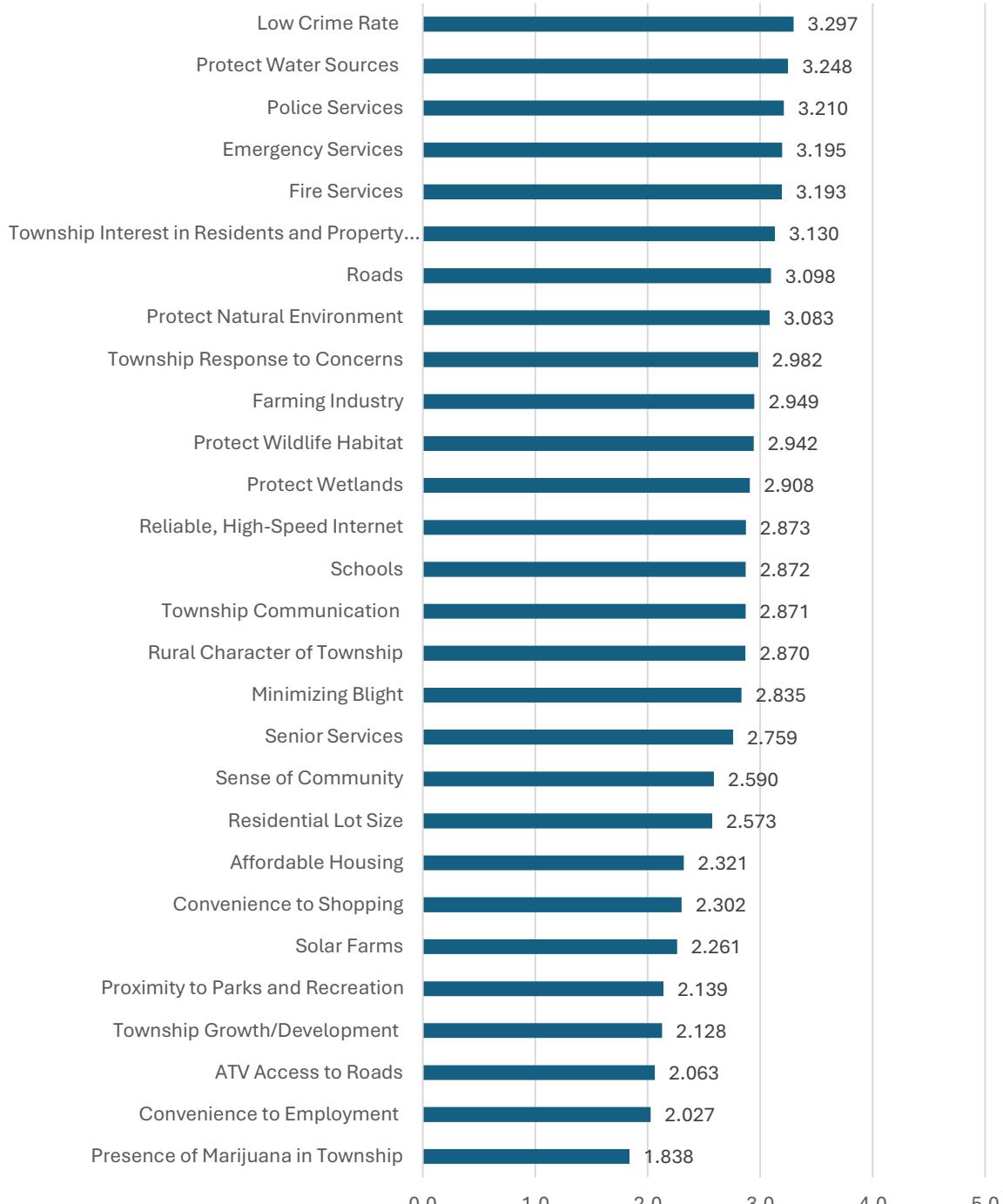
Farming Industry	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
ATV Access to Roads	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Other (specify):	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	

Arlington Township received 130 survey responses: 112 from residents, 15 from nonresidents, and 3 unreported. Of those who answered, 71% expressed overall satisfaction with living in the township.

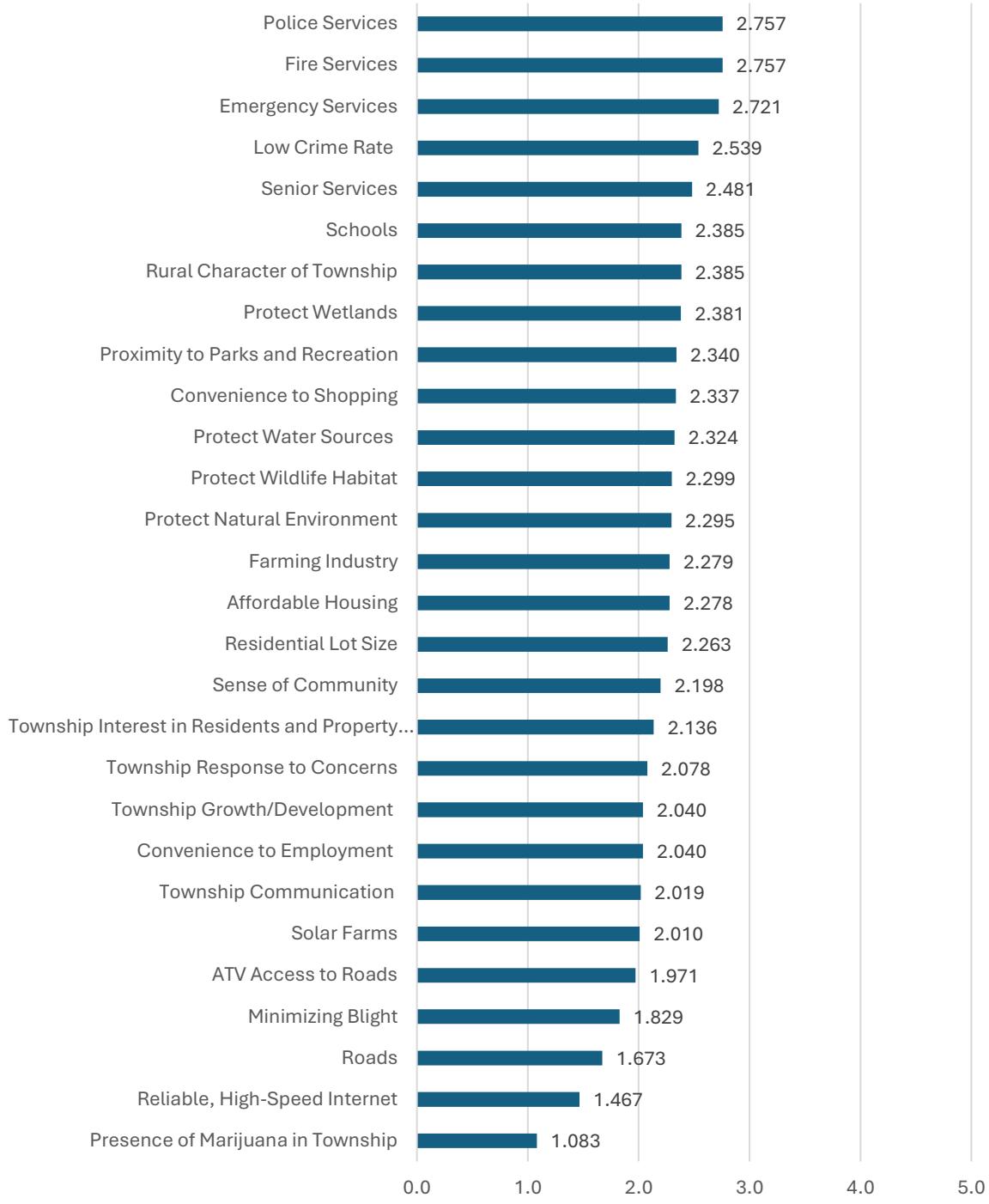
Survey results showed the highest priorities for respondents were low crime rates, protecting water resources, and adequate police services. The lowest satisfaction areas were marijuana presence, internet reliability, and road infrastructure.

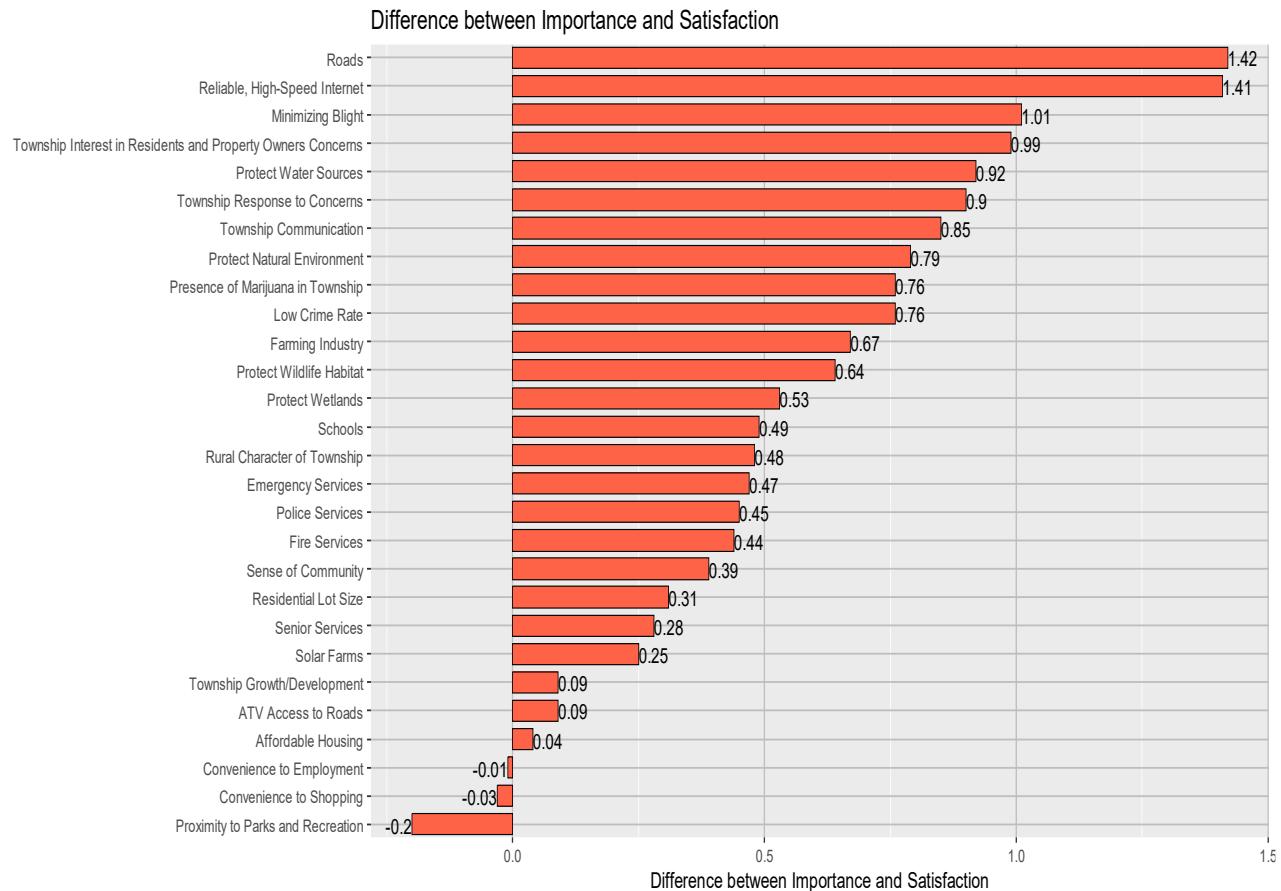
A comparison of importance versus satisfaction revealed the largest gaps in roads, reliable internet, and blight reduction—key areas for potential improvement. Conversely, convenience to work, shopping, and parks were areas where satisfaction exceeded importance. These findings can help township leaders prioritize actions based on resident needs and expectations.

**2022 Resident survey**  
**1 not Important vs 5 Very Important**



**2022 Resident survey**  
**1 very dissatisfied vs 5 Very satisfied**





## Appendix B: Preserving Farmland, Natural Features, and Rural Character

### **Farmland and Development Conflicts: Right-to-Farm Law**

State tax assessment guidelines and local land use regulations are often not conducive to protecting farmland. In many rural areas this has caused rapid development of single-family homes on large lots, land fragmentation, and increased farmland property values (beyond its agricultural worth).

The effects of non-agricultural development on existing farm operations is a particularly troublesome issue. New development can make daily farming operations difficult and sometimes dangerous. New residents in farming areas may not understand basic farming needs, such as manure handling. As a result, farmers are forced to contend with increased traffic and nuisance complaints by new neighbors who object to slow moving vehicles on roadways, noise, dust, odors, and late hours of operation. As development pressures build, so will additional complaints regarding agricultural practices.

In 1981, Michigan passed the Right-to-Farm Law to protect farmers from public or private nuisance suits if the farm operation conforms to generally accepted agricultural management practices. The law states: *A farm or farm operation shall not be found to be a public or private nuisance if the farm or farm operation existed before a change in the land use or occupancy of the land within one mile of the boundaries of the farm, and if before that change in land use or occupancy of land, the farm or farm operation would not have been a nuisance.*”

Citizen complaints against agricultural operations are filed with the Michigan Department of Agriculture's Right-to-Farm Office. Complaints primarily center around flies, odors, and/or manure handling related to livestock operations. According to the Act, farmers are protected as long as they comply with the Best Management Practices for agricultural activities as required by the state of Michigan. This does not, however, eliminate the efforts that farmers must put forth to defend their actions from complaints. Amendments to this Act have affected the ability of local governments to control the operational effects that certain agricultural activities may have on surrounding properties.

### **Zoning Techniques**

#### ***Agricultural Buffers***

Balancing the need to continue agricultural practices and the desire to develop land for non-agricultural purposes can be challenging. Open space buffers between active agricultural areas and other uses, such as residential development, can help reduce land use conflicts, particularly where residential and agricultural conflicts are occurring with greater

frequency. The use of buffers can aid in easing land use conflicts and improving the relationship of agricultural uses and new residents.

Buffers are generally imposed on residential developments, rather than on farming operations, principally because the farm was probably the first use in place. Buffers should be sufficiently wide to protect the farming operation from lawn fertilizers, playing children, and other conflicts. At the same time, they cannot be so burdensome as to require excessive land commitments from residential property owners. Buffers are most effective if a "no-disturb" zone is provided between residential properties and farmland. This requirement should be tied to subdivision, site condominium, planned unit development, or land division approval. It should also be required that the buffer be described in the property deed to alert potential buyers of the need to honor the no-disturb area.

### ***Large Lot Zoning***

This technique may be effective in maintaining rural character, but usually not farmland. This technique simply increases the lot size required in residential zone districts where farming operations exist, except perhaps, where public utilities are/can be provided. Lot sizes are generally greater than 10 acres, depending on the objective (farmland preservation vs. rural character). In areas where farmland preservation is particularly important to the community individual lot sizes of 40 to 160 acres may be applicable. Large lot zoning, however, can create parcel sizes which are "too big to mow, but too little to plow." In areas of marginal farming production this technique can have a detrimental effect by requiring large lots for individual homes and taking large parcels out of production for that purpose.

### ***Open Space Preservation (Cluster) Development***

Another approach to farmland, open space and rural character preservation is to concentrate less on restricting development of property and work instead on the efficient use of land. Open Space Development (or as it is sometimes known, cluster development) provides for a denser concentration of development in a limited area, with no increase in the overall, or "gross density" of the site. The object of clustering is not to increase the number of units developed, but to regulate the amount of land disturbed by structures, lawns, and drives. The gross density must still fall into the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.

On larger parcels, the acreage not used in the development may be set aside for farming, natural area or community open space. This development style permits areas of agricultural lands to remain in production, even as other parts of the property are developed for residential use.

The open space provisions are to be provided as an “option” to the landowner. Regulations added to the ordinance must provide a minimum of 50 percent open space for developments in townships and that the open space be permanently protected from development by some legal means that assures its preservation. Another provision requires that the development not be subject to a requirement of providing either public water or public sewer systems unless those systems would otherwise be required even without the open space. The open space preservation provisions do not override any applicable ordinances or laws related to groundwater protection or approval of sanitary sewer disposal systems where public systems are unavailable.

Currently, open space development in western Michigan is not particularly prevalent. One of the reasons that many buyers are looking in the rural areas is to avoid being too near other homes. Unlike southeastern Michigan, where land values are generally higher, open lands are abundant in western Michigan and land prices are very reasonable.

However, there is a segment of the marketplace that appreciates the value of preserving larger open spaces within a development. Thus, offering incentives to developers for using this development technique is appropriate. The basic incentive to which developers will most readily respond is an increase in the number of units which could be permitted over the base density calculated under the parallel plan. This is generally considered a development “bonus.”

The amount of the bonus may vary depending on the nature of the development, and they may be used in combinations of one or more different incentives. As an example, incentives may include an increase in the number of units if:

- additional open space is provided, beyond that normally gained in the lowering of individual lot sizes;
- a community wastewater and/or domestic water system is used (avoiding the need for septic systems and individual wells);
- recreational amenities are provided, such as tennis courts, club house, or other similar facility;
- walkways, trails, or bike paths are included within the development;
- significant areas of active agricultural lands are preserved; and
- where appropriate, commercial uses may be permitted (usually subject to certain restrictions to limit size and effect on the area).

### ***Lot Depth, Width and Setbacks***

Perceptions of rural character may be formed by natural settings along the roadside. Homes spaced out along roadways, particularly when near the street, tend to detract from the rural character of the area when the view is more of buildings than of open space. A byproduct of strip residential development, the inefficient use of land, also occurs when homes are placed near the front property line. A number of properties in the Township may be divided into relatively large lots, with the frontage taken up by individual homes.

This type of development tends to create relatively deep lots which leaves sizeable portions of properties cut off from road access and essentially unusable. While this may not be a problem for the original and some subsequent owners, others may look for opportunities to use the back portions of these lots for further development and seek variances or other approvals from the township to do so.

The 1997 amendments to the state Subdivision Control Act (now called the Land Division Act) provides limits to the depth of lots created, but access to interior properties will continue to be an important consideration in reviewing future development proposals.

The number of driveways along these roadways can become a traffic issue, particularly in areas where zoning allows relatively narrow lot widths. In fact, current access management guidelines call for driveway spacing of 550 feet for roadways with an average speed of 55 miles per hour (see table). Although individually these driveways do not generate excessive amounts of traffic, over time an increase in their number on a busy roadway can present problems with additional turn movements, especially where vehicle speeds are high.

<b>Average Speed (MPH)</b>	<b>Minimum Driveway Spacing (in Feet)</b>
25	125
35	185
45	300
55	550
<b>Access Management Guidelines (MDOT)</b>	

Increasing lot widths can have the effect of separating the distance between homes for a more "open" feeling. This requires changing the applicable zoning requirements along certain defined roadways (generally county arterial roads). Other applicable provisions for these fronting lots could include such elements as:

- Increased lot width and/or area.
- Greater setback requirements.
- Provisions minimizing urban vegetation (manicured lawns, flower gardens, etc.) and preservation of larger trees in areas visible from the roadway.

However, simply changing the district requirements would mean that the width requirements would apply to all roadways. Therefore, to make this regulation more effective, and to discourage development along the roadway, a companion change to encourage development into the site may be needed. This could be accomplished by decreasing the lot frontage required on roads that are part of the development project. Again, this does not imply that the site density needs to be greater, only that the lot widths for interior streets be less than what is required along the arterial roadway.

Implementing these provisions requires adoption of an “overlay” district that would apply to residential zone districts along arterial roadways. Lots fronting on the interior streets would require less widths and setbacks.

Another provision that could be implemented would require a minimum development setback for residential projects of more than a single lot. The setback would require that no building that is part of the development could be nearer to the arterial roadway than 200-300 feet. (The weakness of this provision is that it would be more difficult to apply it to individual home sites.)



Other provisions applying to this setback area would be that no native or natural vegetation be removed from the setback, nor any grading or changes in topography occur, except that necessary for entrance roads. The Ordinance could allow the Planning Commission to modify this requirement if the developer demonstrated that the clearing of existing vegetation would contribute significantly to the purpose and objectives of the development.

Or, the Planning Commission could reduce the setback if existing landscaping provided a natural screen, or if the proposed development provided a new landscape screen. There should, however, still be some minimum setback. This provision would also have to include some allowance for lot variations so that the overall density permitted by the Ordinance could be maintained.

These tools can be integrated into the Township’s zoning ordinance and even modified for Arlington Township’s particular circumstance and goals.

### **Voluntary Preservation Techniques**

#### ***Conservation Easements***

A conservation easement is the voluntary donation of land to have restrictions placed on it for the protection of agriculture, open space, and natural resources. The landowner still

owns the land and can use it for specific conditions that the landowner and the nonprofit easement holder have agreed upon. Agricultural easements are designed to benefit the landowner, to assist him in keeping agricultural lands productive and protected from development.

The easement is considered a charitable contribution for which the landowner does not receive direct income benefits from the donation of their land. The landowner benefits from the donation through federal and state income tax deduction, lower property taxes, and reduction in estate and inheritance taxes. The value of the conservation easement is the difference between the fair market value and the value of the land after restrictions have been imposed.

The easement value is determined by a professional assessment considering the fair market value related to the development pressures on the land. The tax relief that the landowner receives can be used to keep the land productive without having to sell more land and ensure the property for the use of future generations.

Conservation easements are flexible to the landowners needs and may have limited provisions for use and development. Certain rights to use the property can be held such as the right to grow crops, cut timber, construction of new farm buildings, careful location of house for family members, or subdivision of a lot for resale. Requesting to keep these rights will affect the value of what the conservation easement is worth. The easement holder assumes the responsibility to make sure that all the restrictions are enforced.

The length of the easement may be flexible from a few years to permanent preservation. However, federal tax benefits are only available on permanent easements. The conservation easement stays in effect if the property is bought, sold, given or transferred to another owner. The new owner than assumes all responsibility of the conservation easement. When the surrounding areas change to the extent that the restrictions of the conservation easement can no longer be met the easement may be changed or terminated by the courts.

#### **P.A. 116**

The Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act, P.A. 116, was established in the 1985 farm bill. P.A. 116 is a founding act for farmland and open space preservation programs which offered tax relief to landowners who enrolled farmland in the program for 10 years or more. Currently 45% of Michigan's farmland is in the P.A. 116 program. In 1996 Michigan's Governor approved amendments to P.A. 116 in H.B. 4325. These changes were designed to keep P.A. 116 a desirable program for landowners.

### ***Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)***

The purchase of development rights has a similar setup and advantages as conservation easements. The landowner voluntarily sells the development right to his property, for compensation for not developing the land. Like conservation easements the landowner maintains full ownership of their land for agricultural uses and the land can be sold or transferred but can never be used for non-farm development.

The value for the purchase of the development rights is the difference between the fair market value and the agricultural use value of the land. With the income from the sale of the development rights the landowner has money to expand the farm operation, pay off debt, college education, inheritance to non-farm related children, retirement, and much more. Besides extra income, the sale of development rights allows the land to be assessed at a lower tax rate, decreasing property tax and inheritance taxes of the land.

However, none of these programs are entirely permanent and may be designed to allow some way out by proving through stringent tests that keeping the land open for productive agriculture is no longer possible in that area. Then most programs allow landowners to buy back development rights.

One fundamental concern with PDR programs is funding the program. The funds may come from private agencies like American Farmland Trust, state bond referendums, grants, donations, P.A. 116 lien fund, or an increase in other local funding sources. State funding for PDR programs is tending to emphasize county-wide programs, rather than community by community efforts. Accordingly, Berrien Township is actively involved in Berrien County efforts to establish a county-wide PDR program.

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## Appendix C: Public Input/Adoption Documents

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## Intent to Plan Letter

To: The Communities of Geneva Township, Columbia Township, Bloomingdale Township, Waverly Township, Paw Paw Township, Lawrence Township, Hartford Township, Bangor Township, City of Bangor, and the Van Buren County Planning Commission  
From: Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (for Arlington Township)

Date: March 15, 2024

Re: Master Plan Update Notice

Arlington Township is in the process of updating its Master Plan. The master plan is a long-range planning tool used to define the township's vision, goals, and policies. An effective plan accurately communicates citizen needs and desires about their community and recommends specific strategies to achieve those values.

Arlington Township will welcome your cooperation and comments. As required by law, you will receive a copy of the draft plan for review and comment. The draft plan will be provided in digital format, unless otherwise requested.

Sincerely,

*Marcy Hamilton*

Marcy Hamilton, Senior Planner/Deputy Executive Director  
Southwest Michigan Planning Commission  
376 W Main Street, Suite 130  
Benton Harbor, MI 49022  
269-925-1137 x 1525  
[hamiltonm@smpc.org](mailto:hamiltonm@smpc.org)  
[www.smpc.org](http://www.smpc.org)

Arlington Township  
Residents

## Join Us!

Arlington Township is updating their Master Plan to better plan for the future and we want to hear from you!



View the  
draft plan  
here!

## Master Plan Open House - Public Input Session

**Wednesday  
October 23, 2024**

6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.  
Come anytime!

### Arlington Township Hall

52022 34th Avenue  
Bangor, MI 49013

Georgette Peterson, Supervisor  
Susan Wilson, Clerk  
Jill Sanborn, Treasurer

Ron Klein, Trustee  
Ted Swanson, Trustee

ARLINGTON TOWNSHIP  
52022 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Bangor, Michigan  
**BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

December 10, 2025

Georgette Peterson called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Roll Call:** Ted Swanson, Ron Klein, Jill Sanborn, Susan Wilson, and Georgette Peterson all present.

**Others Present:** Scott Graham, Arlington Township Attorney

Ron Klein left the meeting during public comments. Susan Wilson left the meeting during the snow plowing discussion.

Georgette Peterson stated that one of the trustees is resigning from the board and asked if anyone would like to volunteer to fill the trustee position. No one at the meeting volunteered.

Georgette Peterson asked Scott Graham to give an update on what was occurring with the litigation of the 'gravel pit' on 42<sup>nd</sup> Ave and CR 215. Scott stated that the trial has been pushed back to sometime into the future. No date has been finalized. Once a date is established it will be posted on the township website. Townships cannot stop the mining of gravel pits; however, townships can place certain parameters and conditions on a company as to what they can or cannot do. Currently the gravel pit is operating under the special use permit (SUP) of Roger Smith which has expired. StoneCo has not adhered to the parameters set by that particular SUP. SUPs are to be renewed on a yearly basis. StoneCo has never formally presented their own SUP or site plan for approval by the Planning Commission. Residents living near the gravel pit spoke about the company not adhering to conditions that had been set such as berms failing, lack of dust control, and water run-off.

**Approval of Agenda:** Ron Klein asked if 'Distribution of the Master Plan' under New Business can be placed under the Planning Commission's Report. He will give a formal review of the master plan.

**Ted Swanson made a motion to approve the agenda as amended above, supported by Susan Wilson. All in favor. Motion carried.**

**Reports:**

Consent Agenda Reports  
Assessor's Report  
Supervisor's Report  
Clerk's Report  
Road Commission Report

There were no reports submitted by the assessor, clerk, or road commission. Road commission road planning for 2026 will be discussed under New Business.

**Motion was made by Ted Swanson to approve the November 19, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes, supported by Ron Klein. All in favor. Motion carried.**

Reports

**Law Enforcement:** Deputy Holly Daniel reported there were a total of 69 calls in November for Arlington Township. A resident shared their experience at the Fifth/Third ATM bank in Bangor. Residents were made aware of a potential issue that could occur.

**Fire Departments:**

Bangor (ABB): Derek Babcock stated that the department's audit report went well. In November there were a total of 46 calls, 9 were from Arlington. The total number of calls for the year is 548. This is 100 calls more than last year at this time. This is the highest total number of calls made in several years. The previous time calls exceeded 548 was about 18 years ago. A new full-time firefighter will be starting on January 5, 2026.

Lawrence (LTES): No report.

**Senior Service's Report**: No report.

**Commissioner's Report**: No report.

**Treasurer's Report**: Jill Sanborn asked for approval of the following:

To pay the November 20, 2025 – December 10, 2025, expenses. Checks with 12/10/25 dates are post board approval and checks dated prior to this date were issued prior to board approval per township policy or were previously approved by the board.

**Ted Swanson made a motion to approve payment of the expenses. Ron Klein supported the motion. Roll Call Vote: Ted Swanson, Ron Klein, Jill Sanborn, Susan Wilson and Georgette Peterson all in favor. Motion carried.**

To amend the Treasurer's FY 2025/2026 budget by decreasing 101-253-727 (Office Supplies) by \$20.00 (a change from \$2,745 to \$2,725.00) and increase 101-253-955 (Misc) by \$20.00 (a change from \$3,355 to \$3,375.00). The amendment request was for postage.

**Ted Swanson made a motion to approve the above amendment. Susan Wilson supported the motion. Roll Call Vote: Ted Swanson, Ron Klein, Jill Sanborn, Susan Wilson and Georgette Peterson all in favor. Motion carried.**

- 1) To invest \$250,000, with interest earned, from maturing SAFRA CD into a General Fund CD and/or MM account with the best interest rates. Consumers Credit Union has had interest rates as high as 5.2%.
- 2) To invest \$250,000 from the Goldman Sachs MM into a CD with the best interest rates.
- 3) To invest money above \$150,000 from the MBL checking account into the JP Morgan MM.
- 4) To invest \$250,000 from the JP Morgan MM into a new CD or MM account with the best interest rates.

**Ted Swanson made a motion to approve the above investment changes. Ron Klein supported the motion. Roll Call Vote: Ted Swanson, Ron Klein, Jill Sanborn, Susan Wilson and Georgette Peterson all in favor. Motion carried.**

Georgette Peterson asked to amend the budget as follows: Move \$128.00 from account 101-215-955.000 (Misc expense) to account 101-215-860.000 (Mileage expense). The Clerk travels to and from the bank and/or post office on an average of twice a week. There are 16 weeks remaining in the fiscal year. Two trips on average per week equals 32 trips. 32 trips at \$4.00 per trip equals \$128.00 for the remainder of the fiscal year. It is recommended that this be paid either quarterly or biannually.

**Ted Swanson made a motion to approve the above amendment to the budget. Susan Wilson supported the motion. Roll Call Vote: Ted Swanson, Ron Klein, Jill Sanborn, Susan Wilson and Georgette Peterson all in favor. Motion carried.**

**Planning Commission:** A special meeting was held in November to review a special use permit (SUP) to operate a bed and breakfast on property located on Woodland Drive in the South Scott Lake area. The property is in the agricultural district which has specific regulations. The property does not meet these regulations, and a SUP is not allowed. Georgette Peterson asked if this SUP should have gone to the zoning administrator. Ron Klein replied probably. Georgette Peterson will talk to the zoning admin about the bed and breakfast on Woodland Drive.

At a meeting held on December 3, 2025, the Planning Commission (PC) approved of submitting the proposed Arlington Township Master Plan 2026 to the Board of Trustees for their review and comment. Minutes to that meeting were approved by the PC on December 10, 2025. Specific steps are to be followed to officially approve the master plan. Marcy from the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission will assist with this process. Ron Klein formally presented the Master Plan 2026 to the Board highlighting important facts, statistics and statements. Master plans should promote public health, safety, and general welfare. One area of particular concern is water, the quality and quantity needs to be protected and conserved. Once the master plan is approved for distribution by the Board; a public comment's period will occur and a hearing planned. There have been discussions among area townships to come together to develop mutual master plans.

**Georgette Peterson made a motion to approve of the distribution of the proposed Arlington Township Master Plan 2026 for review and comments. Susan Wilson supported the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.**

**Public Comments:** D. Babcock, A. Davison-Funke, N. Baker, C. Passmore, M. Butler, P. Douglas, and Deputy H. Daniel made public comments.

**Marijuana Coordinator's Report:** Georgette Peterson recommended approval to renew the following marijuana business licenses and special use permits (SUP):

Dragonfly Kitchen II, Inc. – 26980 CR 215, Bangor, MI 49013. Parcel No. 80-03-005-016-10. Ching Ho is President and Michael Sossin is CEO. 14 Licenses: P-2021-50, P-2021-60, GM2021-5, GM-2021-9, GM-2021-76, GM-2021-77, GA-2021-33, GA-2021-40, GA-2021-41, GA-2021-42, GA-2021-108, GAX-2021-12, GAX-2021-27, GAX-2021-28. SUP changes were approved and made during the year. Patrick Kohn, Director of Operations, represented the company at the meeting. Patrick thanked the marijuana coordinator stating, "she has personally been good to me, my company, and in turn my family."

**Georgette Peterson made a motion to renew the 14 licenses and 1 SUP for Dragonfly Kitchen II, Inc. Ted Swanson supported the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.**

50405 (50504) 28<sup>th</sup> Ave. – 50405 28<sup>th</sup> Ave., Bangor, MI 49013. Parcel No. 80-03-010-018. Owned by Ouida Abdulnoor. 8 Licenses: GA-2021-20, GA-2021-21, GA-2021-22, GA-2021-23, GA-2021-24, GAX-2021-25, GM-2021-26, GM-2021-56

**Georgette Peterson made a motion to renew the 8 licenses and 1 SUP for 50504 28<sup>th</sup> Ave. Ted Swanson supported the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.**

Smiitty's, Inc. – 50680 28<sup>th</sup> Ave., Bangor, MI 49013. Parcel No. 80-03-003-001-00. Owned by Urban Legal Group, Corey Lord (Officer, Director and Shareholder). 6 Licenses: GM-2021-32, GA-2021-29, GA-2021-30, GA-2021-31, GA-2021-109, GA-2021-110.

**Georgette Peterson made a motion to renew the 6 licenses and 1 SUP for Smiitty's, Inc. Susan Wilson supported the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.**

**New Business:**

Treasurer Position – Jill Sanborn would like to stay on as deputy treasurer. She submitted her resignation as Arlington Township Treasurer as of 12/31/25.

**Georgette Peterson made a motion to accept the above resignation as of 12/31/25. Ted Swanson supported the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.**

Treasurer Position – Jeff Douglas was nominated as the new Treasurer for Arlington Township as of 1/1/26. Ted Swanson supported the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

Trustee Position – Ron Klein submitted his resignation as Arlington Township Trustee with his last day being 12/10/25.

**Georgette Peterson made a motion to accept the above resignation with the last day being 12/10/25. Ted Swanson supported the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.**

Security System – This subject was tabled.

Snow Plowing of Transfer Station – Out-On-A-Limb has agreed to plow the Transfer Station. Plowing needs to be maintained if we are going to continue recycling from December to March. Ted Swanson initially plowed, so the township should not have to pay \$150.00 for the first snowplow.

**Ted Swanson made a motion to contract with Out-On-A-Limb for plowing snow at the Transfer Station from December 1, 2025 to March 1, 2026. Georgette Peterson supported the motion. Motion was tabled and continued under Old Business.**

Road Commission (RC) 2026 Road Planning & Park Lane – The west side of Park Lane still needs to be completed. The east side was completed in 2024. The estimated cost is \$38,525.40 to finish the project. The RC is requesting a 2026 Road Plan. Two options were proposed by the commission. With option A, the township would develop their own plan, with option B the RC would implement a 3–5-year plan where RC staff would complete an evaluation and propose a plan for the township to review. The RC was unable to schedule the brush spray on the local road system which was requested this past fall. RC wants to know if the township requests the project to be carried over to 2026. The township needs to request more information from the RC on this subject.

**Ted Swanson made a motion to choose Option B and spend up to \$200,000 on the 2026 Road Plan. Georgette Peterson supported the motion. The motion was rescinded by Georgette Peterson and Ted Swanson.**

**Jill Sanborn made a motion to choose Option B and spend up to \$200,000 on the 2026 Road Plan which includes Project #489.2851 to complete the west side of Park Lane in the amount of \$38,525.40. Georgette Peterson supported the motion. Roll Call Vote: Ted Swanson, Jill Sanborn, and Georgette Peterson all in favor. Motion carried.**

Letterhead and Welcome Letter – A previous township supervisor had created a letterhead, but it cannot be located. Georgette Peterson read the Welcome Letter out loud. The clerk, Susan Wilson, plans to mail the letter out when sending new voter registration cards.

**Georgette Peterson made a motion to accept the letterhead and welcome letter. Ted Swanson supported the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.**

**Old Business:**

Transfer Station – Winter Hours – It was decided to keep the recycling portion open during the winter months at a previous board meeting. Ted Swanson contacted Kallie Marshall from the Van Buren Conservation District to discuss hours of operation from 12/1/25 to 3/1/26. Recycling could be open for one Saturday per month or every first and third Saturday of each month.

**Ted Swanson made a motion to keep the recycling open on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month for four hours from 9:00am to 1:00pm during the winter months (12/1/25 to 3/1/26). Georgette Peterson supported the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.**

**Continuation of the motion regarding Transfer Station Snow Plowing: Ted Swanson made a motion to contract with Out-On-A-Limb for plowing snow at the Transfer Station from 12/1/25 to 3/1/26. Georgette Peterson supported the motion.**

Further discussion occurred. Even though recycling will only be open for two Saturdays a month, the plowing needs to be maintained to avoid a buildup of heavy snow. Plowing is costly. We could use this year as a 'test run' or revisit this again at a later meeting. Hours of operation will be posted on the website.

**Revision of motion: Ted Swanson made a motion to contract with Out-On-A-Limb to snowplow the Transfer Station for accumulations of 3 to 6 inches of snow at a rate of \$100.00 for each occurrence. Georgette Peterson supported the motion. Roll Call Vote: Ted Swanson, Jill Sanborn, and Georgette Peterson all in favor. Motion carried.**

Transfer Station – Attendant – The attendant has had some issues. He now calls Ted Swanson when he arrives at the station and when he leaves. Ted has also physically checked on him, at times, to make sure there are no problems.

Bloomingdale Communications - Issue has been resolved.

**Adjournment: Ted Swanson motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:28 pm. Seconded by Jill Sanborn. All in favor. Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted by,

*Peggy Douglas*

Peggy Douglas, Administrative Assistant

Co-Signed by,

*Susan Wilson*

Susan Wilson, Clerk



To: The Communities of Geneva Township, Columbia Township, Bloomingdale Township, Waverly Township, Paw Paw Township, Lawrence Township, Hartford Township, Bangor Township, City of Bangor, and the Van Buren County Planning Commission

From: Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (for Arlington Township)

Date: December 11, 2025

Re: Notice of Draft Plan Review

On behalf of Arlington Township, we are pleased to announce that the Draft Master Plan (2026) is available for your review and comment. The draft can be viewed at <https://tinyurl.com/ArlingtonTownshipMasterPlan>.

Please contact [clerk@arlingtontownship.com](mailto:clerk@arlingtontownship.com) or 269-427-7300 to request a printed copy.

Comments may be submitted until February 13, 2026 to Arlington Township, 52022 34<sup>th</sup> Ave, Bangor, MI 49013 or by email to [clerk@arlingtontownship.com](mailto:clerk@arlingtontownship.com).

Learn more about Arlington Township at their website at

<https://www.arlingtontownship.com/>.

Sincerely,

*Marcy Hamilton*

Marcy Hamilton  
Senior Planner