


THE
FORD
RIVER
TOWNSHIP
2024 MASTER PLAN



04.12.2024 FINAL DRAFT

An aerial photograph of a scenic landscape. A paved road curves along the edge of a large, calm body of water. The shoreline is lined with trees in various shades of green, yellow, and orange, indicating autumn. In the background, a dense forest covers a hillside. The sky is filled with large, dramatic clouds, with some light breaking through. The overall mood is peaceful and scenic.

***“We love the
small town of
Ford River, and its
people.”***

Comment from resident survey



Photo Credit: Deanna Zeits 2023

Acknowledgments

- Steve Nelson, Supervisor
- Debbi Brown, Clerk
- Amanda Wagner, Treasurer
- Jayne Church, Trustee
- Bob Valentine, Trustee

- Township Planning Commission**
- Keith Mineau, Chairman
 - Richard Ness, Vice Chairman
 - Jayne Church, Secretary
 - Sara Ribble, Deputy Secretary
 - Ray Fettig

Consultant Team





Photo Credit: Deanna Zeits 2023

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1. INTRODUCTION

What is a Master Plan?

Master Plans, governed by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008), serve as both a document and a policy guide. A Master Plan not only describes the community's existing conditions, but also outlines its vision for the future and guides decision-making to help make that vision a reality. Master Plans may project 20 years or more into the future, but are most effective when they include short-, mid-, and long-term action items, as well as the flexibility to respond to new and emerging issues and challenges.

Community input plays a critical role in the formation of a Master Plan to ensure that it represents the needs of the residents, both now and in the future. In addition, a community's Master Plan is most useful when it is customized to each community's unique characteristics, priorities, and challenges. Therefore, this plan is organized so as to focus on three major themes: Land Use, Systems, and Economic Development. Chapter 3 "Vision Framework" describes this organization in more detail.

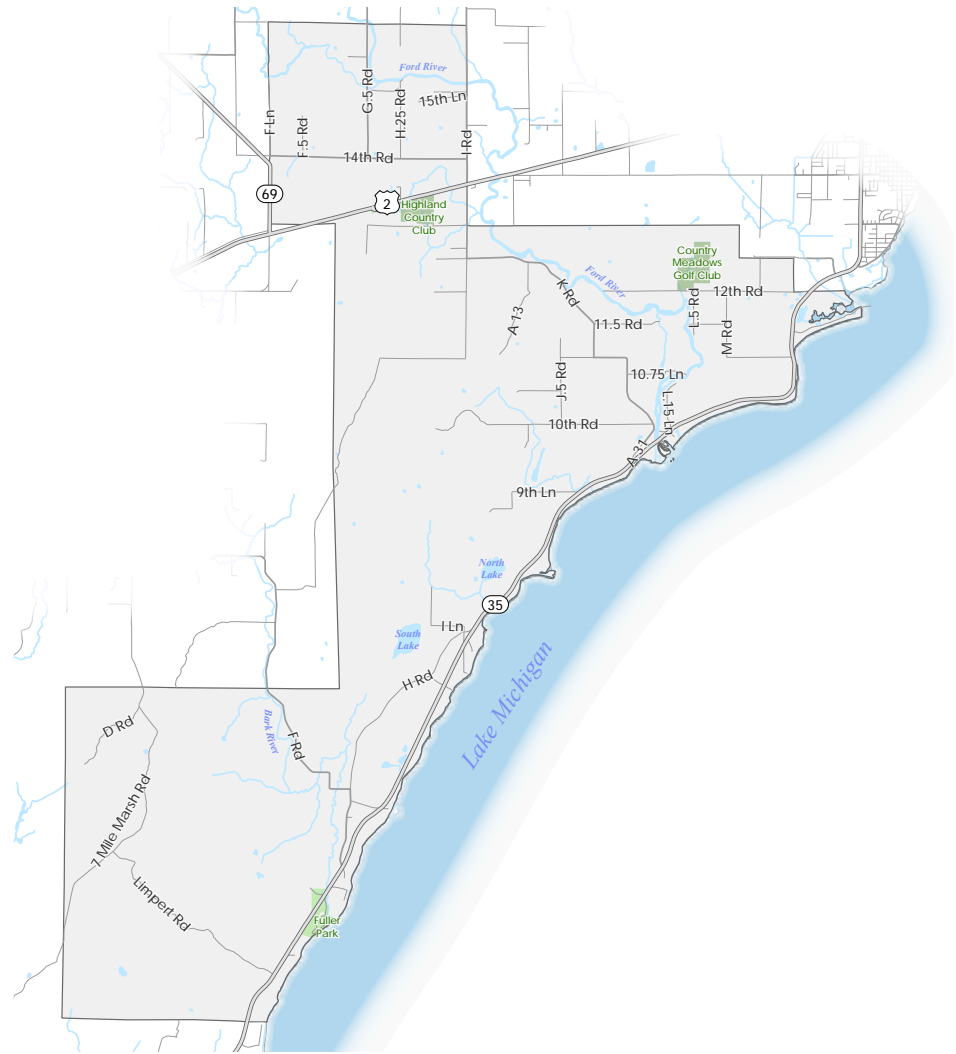


Image Source: CUPPAD, GRAEF

Planning Process

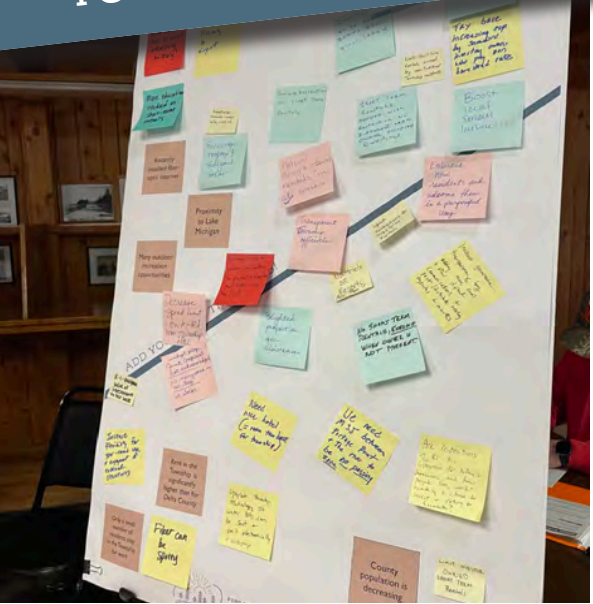
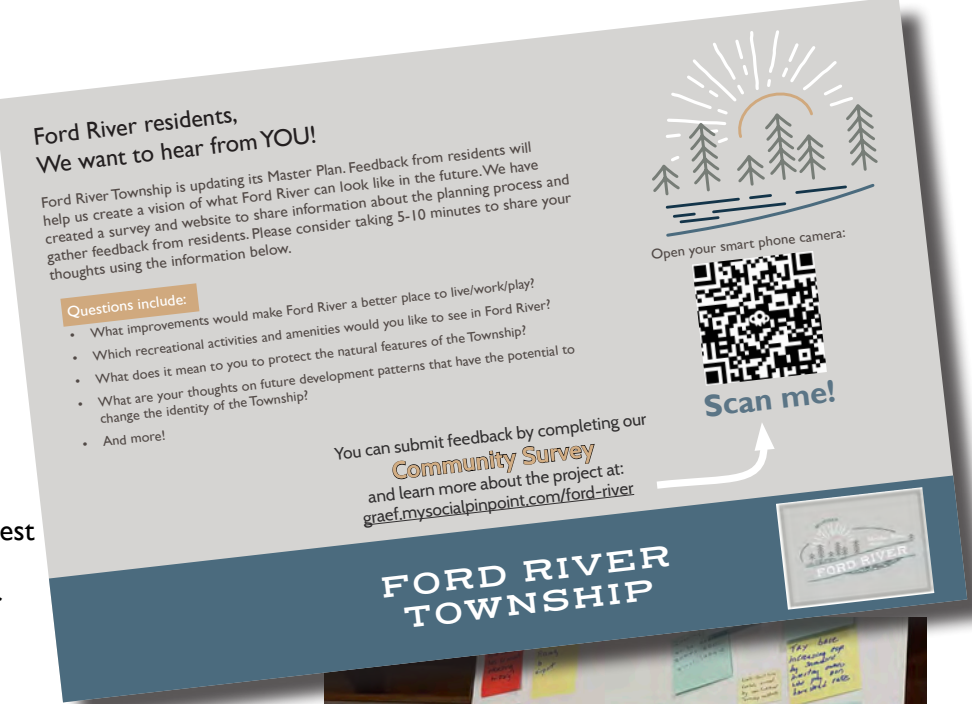
Ford River Township began the process to update the community's Master Plan in 2022. The Planning Commission and Township Board engaged the services of a planning consultant, GRAEF, to help conduct the community engagement process and draft the Plan. The Planning Commission guided the overall planning process with support from the consultant.

In February 2023, a Community Open House was hosted at Township Hall to solicit public feedback on community issues, challenges, and goals. This included an analysis of Ford River's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis, as well as the kickoff for a community survey. The Planning Commission also hosted a Master Plan Workshop during the same evening in order to review the past plan's goals and objectives, and to discuss the overall vision for the Master Plan update. The community survey launched at the Open House was accessible for approximately four months until May 2023, after which the consultant worked to compile feedback into a Master Plan draft.

The draft plan was reviewed by the Planning Commission as well as the public in [Review Date]. Feedback was incorporated into the final draft, which was adopted by the Township Board on [Adoption date]. Since planning is a process

that requires ongoing review and analysis, the Ford River Master Plan should be reviewed at least every five years as required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. This Plan will remain a work-in progress and will require timely and thoughtful revision to be of the greatest benefit as trends and opportunities change over time.

Ford River Township has been proactive in land use planning since the 1970s. In 1981, the Ford River Township Board passed a resolution recognizing that the Township had experienced significant growth and would undoubtedly continue to grow, particularly with the expansion of the former Mead Paper Company. The Board also realized that growth would place additional demands on land in the coastal zone area of the Township, and resolved to plan and minimize the impact of future development along the coastal zone areas. These basic principles continue to guide land use planning in the Township today.



February 2023 Open House invitation and engagement board. Source: GRAEF.

Regional Context

A history of Ford River Township

The Ford River, the namesake of Ford River Township, was named for Thomas Ford, a governor of Illinois who in 1842-46 explored a portion of the Michigan Upper Peninsula ("UP") wilderness. Following the 1780 establishment of an early Native American Village at Misery Bay, the Ford River Lumber Company moved into the Township in 1866. The community of Ford River was once a typical sawmill town and thriving lumber community of approximately 800 inhabitants. For the most part, everyone in the community worked in the lumber camps or the mills during these early years. Several large buildings formed the heart of the community, supporting the needs of the early inhabitants of Ford River. These included the store and office building, the boarding house, sleeping house, community privy, town hall, company barns, schoolhouse, and a non-denominational church. These original buildings are no longer standing in Ford River Township, but provided the framework for the community as it stands today.

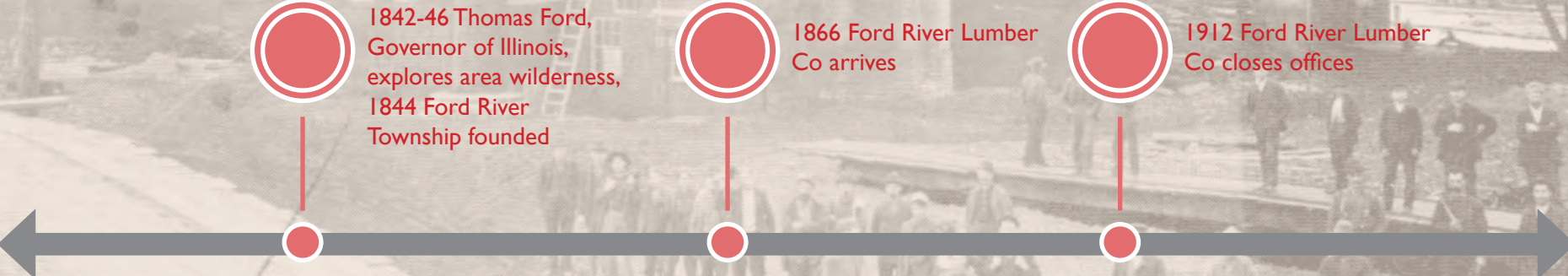
For a large portion of the Township's history, the Ford River Lumber Company owned about 10,000 acres of dense forest lands along the river. Here, trees were cut into logs during the winter and hauled to the riverbanks where, in spring, they were floated down the river to the mills. Logs were then cut into lumber, ties, lathes, and shingles, after which they were piled onto lumber schooners to be taken to Chicago and Milwaukee.



Historic Boarding House
Image Source: Ford River Township

Ford River Township boasted three sawmills operated by the Ford River Lumber Company: the Large Pine Mill, the Little Mill, and the Shingle Mill. When it became apparent that the company was no longer profitable, operations were suspended.

Looking Back



1842-46 Thomas Ford, Governor of Illinois, explores area wilderness, 1844 Ford River Township founded

1866 Ford River Lumber Co arrives

1912 Ford River Lumber Co closes offices

In 1911, a transfer of the remaining holdings of the Ford River Lumber Company was made, consisting of 9,500 acres of virgin (first-cut, or never previously harvested) hardwood. The Ford River Lumber Company closed their offices in the fall of 1912. By this time, most of the sawmill employees had migrated elsewhere in the UP, primarily to Wells and Nahma. The population of Ford River declined substantially over the following years as residents were forced to seek other employment. Many settled in the UP and became farmers.

Today, Ford River Township is synonymous with stunning views and access to Lake Michigan and the Ford and Bark Rivers. The Township is known as a rural bedroom community near the City of Escanaba, with most of the residential development concentrated near the original settlements and along the Lake Michigan shoreline.

The Township offers residents and visitors an abundance of outdoor recreational opportunities and supports a variety of native wildlife. Logging and timber production are still common throughout the Township.

Background Image Source: Ford River Township, Lumber Mill



Photo Credit: Nate Johnston/Unsplash

2. COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Who is Ford River?

Ford River is a rural community of 2,019 residents living in 906 households (as of the 2020 U.S. Census). The Township is located in Michigan's Upper Peninsula ("UP"), just south of the cities of Escanaba and Gladstone (approximately 20 minutes and 30 minutes away, respectively). The Ford River community is closely connected to water resources, especially its namesake the Ford River, as well as Lake Michigan. Ford River's residents enjoy a quiet lifestyle connected to nature with many recreational opportunities only a stone's-throw away. Township Hall provides a central gathering space for community events.

Like any community, Ford River has its fair share of challenges: a shortage of housing stock presents a barrier for young families who might want to move to the area, burgeoning shoreline development creates land use conflicts and threatens sensitive natural resources, and changing trends in needs for services and amenities are cropping up. Ford River is also witnessing an aging population, and many long-term residents may be forced to move elsewhere when it is time for them to seek a retirement community or assisted living facilities. Rapid increases in industrial-scale solar across the nation and the State of Michigan also poses a challenge to the rural atmosphere of the community.

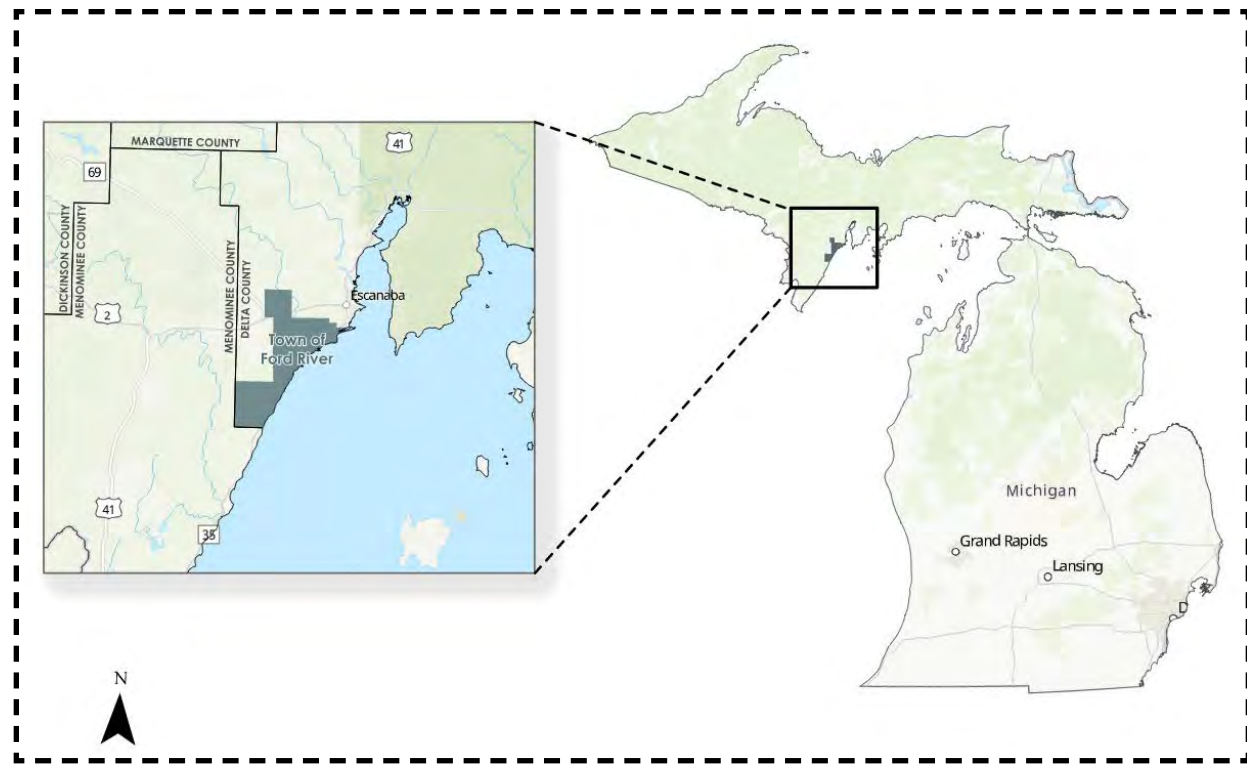


Image Source: CUPPAD, GRAEF

Population

Population change is a primary component in tracking a community's growth and provides a lens to forecast future population trends. Population trends can indicate potentially changing needs for services and amenities. Population characteristics relate directly to housing, educational, recreational, transportation, health care, and future economic development needs of a community. The growth and characteristics of an area's population are subject to changes in prevailing economic conditions. Because communities do not exist in a vacuum, it is important to examine trends in the surrounding areas as well. Residents of one community may work in another community, send their children to school in a different place, and travel to other areas to purchase goods and services.

Total Population: 2,019



Source: US Census 2020



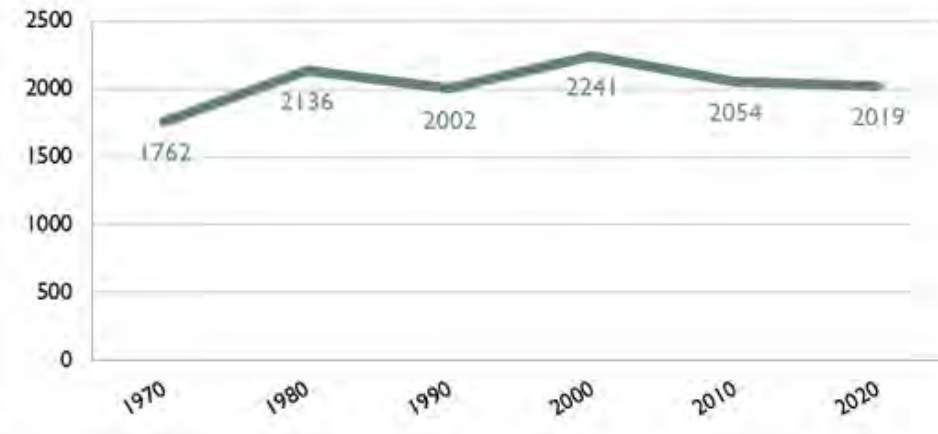
906 Households

Source: 2021 ACS 5 Year Estimate S1101

A word of caution:
Data analysis for a small community

The data used for this Master Plan Update was sourced from the US Census, the American Community Survey (which are estimates based on a sample of households and individuals), and the Michigan Department of Technology, Management, & Budget. As Ford River is a very small community, a population change of only a few residents can dramatically change demographic information and rates quoted in the US Census and in the American Community Survey. The data used in this plan are the best estimates of what is happening in Ford River now, in the past, and what might happen in the future, but proceed with caution when referring to data visualizations.

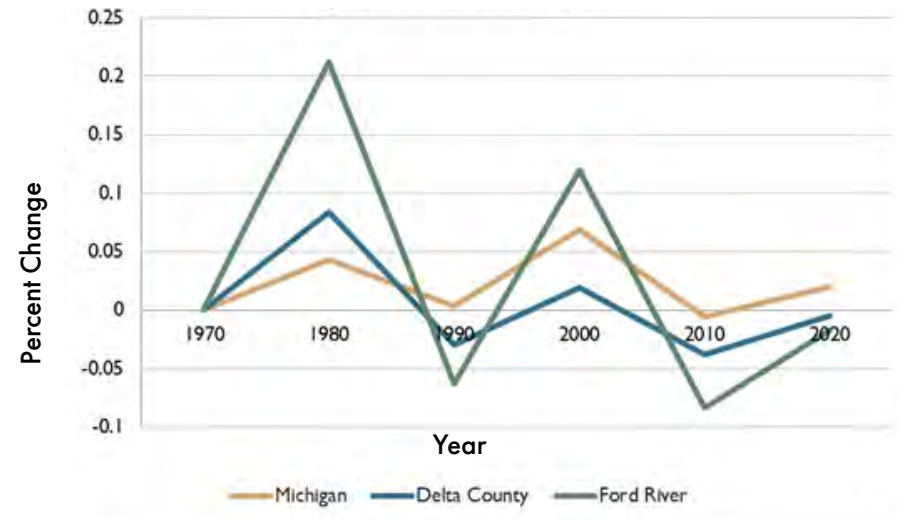
Figure 1 - Ford River Township Population History



Source: U.S. Census, 1970-2020

The total population of Ford River was 2,019 as of the 2020 U.S. Census count. As shown in Figure 1, the population within the Township has held relatively steady since 1970, with some minor fluctuations. When compared the Delta County and the State of Michigan, Ford River's population growth appears as more volatile, especially via a population increase between 1970-1980 and a population decrease between 2000-2010. See the note on the previous page for a word of caution when comparing population trends for small communities.

Figure 2 - Population Growth 1970-2020



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, and Michigan Dept. of Technology, Management & Budget

The age structure of a community's population as well as the trend of the population (i.e. whether overall the community is getting younger, older or remaining about the same) can be an indicator of the types of facilities and services a community may be in need of. Table 1 on the next page shows the age and gender distribution of Ford River's residents as compared to the State of Michigan and Delta County. Overall, the Township has fewer young children under 9 years of age, fewer young professionals aged 25-29 years, and fewer established professionals aged 35-39 years as compared to both the state and the county.

This data supports the theory that college aged individuals are more likely to pursue careers outside of the Township and Delta County. Conversely, the Township has a higher percentage of residents approaching retirement age as well as those in retirement, ages 60-79 years, suggesting that the Township has an aging population.

These trends can help identify the types of facilities the community may need to focus on, such as additional health care facilities, community services such as meals or transportation, and specialized housing for an older population. Understanding these trends can also help inform priorities for economic development, recreation, and land use, discussed further in the following chapters.

Table 1 - Ford River Age and Gender Comparison

Age	Michigan		Delta County		Ford River Township	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Under 5 years	5.90%	5.50%	4.90%	4.70%	0.50%	3.00%
5 to 9 years	6.10%	5.70%	4.80%	5.00%	1.90%	4.20%
10 to 14 years	6.50%	6.00%	6.90%	5.50%	9.40%	3.00%
15 to 19 years	6.80%	6.30%	6.10%	5.40%	5.00%	7.40%
20 to 24 years	7.20%	6.70%	4.70%	4.70%	5.80%	4.30%
25 to 29 years	7.10%	6.60%	5.40%	5.10%	3.20%	1.10%
30 to 34 years	6.20%	6.00%	5.30%	4.60%	7.20%	3.70%
35 to 39 years	6.10%	5.90%	5.90%	4.90%	1.80%	1.80%
40 to 44 years	5.70%	5.70%	4.90%	5.60%	7.60%	3.00%
45 to 49 years	6.30%	6.20%	5.80%	5.50%	6.60%	3.00%
50 to 54 years	6.70%	6.60%	6.40%	6.90%	7.20%	6.50%
55 to 59 years	7.00%	7.20%	7.60%	7.00%	3.40%	6.80%
60 to 64 years	6.80%	7.00%	9.00%	9.40%		
65 to 69 years	5.60%	5.90%	8.60%	9.10%		7.90%
70 to 74 years	4.10%	4.60%	5.10%	5.00%		
75 to 79 years	2.70%	3.20%	3.50%	4.60%	2.50%	
80 to 84 years	1.70%	2.20%	2.80%	3.40%	3.70%	2.40%
85 years and over	1.60%	2.80%	2.30%	3.60%	1.10%	3.00%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, and Michigan Dept. of Technology, Management & Budget

Table 2 - Percent Change in Race, 2000-2020

Race	2000		2010		2020		Percent Change 2000-2020
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
White	2,161	96.4%	1,981	96.4%	1,891	93.7%	-12.5%
African American	3	0.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	N/A
Native American - Alaskan Native	34	1.5%	36	1.8%	30	1.5%	-11.8%
Asian	7	0.3%	2	0.1%	5	0.2%	-28.6%
Pacific Islander - Native Hawaiian	1	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	N/A
Other Race	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	0.2%	N/A
Two or More Races	27	1.2%	23	1.1%	61	3.0%	125.9%
Hispanic or Latino	8	0.4%	12	0.6%	27	1.3%	237.5%

Source: 2000,2010,2020 Decennial Census

Consistent with Delta County, the racial composition of Ford River Township is overwhelmingly white, as shown in Table 2.

However, the percentage of white residents has decreased slightly since 2000, suggesting that the area might be becoming slightly more racially diverse.

The largest nonwhite racial group identified was the American Indian, Eskimo or Aleut category, followed by the Hispanic or Latino category, which increased the most of any category between 2000-2020 (an increase of 38 individuals). Note because of the Township's small population size, even a few residents arriving in or departing the community can have a seemingly dramatic impact on race and ethnicity statistics when displayed as percentages.

Population projections are useful for units of government to project future residential demand for public services. However, the major component of population change, in- and out-migration, is very difficult to predict. This data depends heavily on future economic trends of the locality and other areas. The other components of population changes, fertility (birth) and mortality (death), have less of an impact on population change, particularly for smaller jurisdictions. The Michigan Department of Technology, Management, & Budget most recently (2019) prepared baseline population projections for counties to the year 2045. The projections are based on a formula

that utilizes the three main components of population change; birth, death and migration.

The Department's projections predict that Delta County is anticipated to see a population decrease by 2045 as deaths outweigh births and net migration remains steady or slightly decreases. By 2030, Delta County is projected to see a population decrease of 4.9%. Delta County is not an outlier in the Upper Peninsula with this trend; in fact, nearly every UP county is anticipated to witness a population decrease by 2030. Only Houghton and the southern portion of Keweenaw counties are anticipated to see

modest population increases of approximately 1.5%. Of the UP counties expected to see population declines, Delta County's projected 4.9% decrease is not as severe as others are projected to be: Schoolcraft, Iron, northern Keweenaw, and Ontonagon counties are anticipated to experience population decreases of 10.3%, 11.4%, 18.2%, and 19.8%, respectively.

State population dynamics may shed some light on what could be seen in Ford River. The Department predicts the State of Michigan as a whole will witness periods of population dynamic changes through 2045. In the short-term, the Department anticipates Michigan's population will continue to increase as baby boomer retirements attract out-of-state workers to fill vacant positions. After 2029, the Department projects that Michigan's net migration will start to decline because most job openings vacated by baby boomer retirements will have been filled.

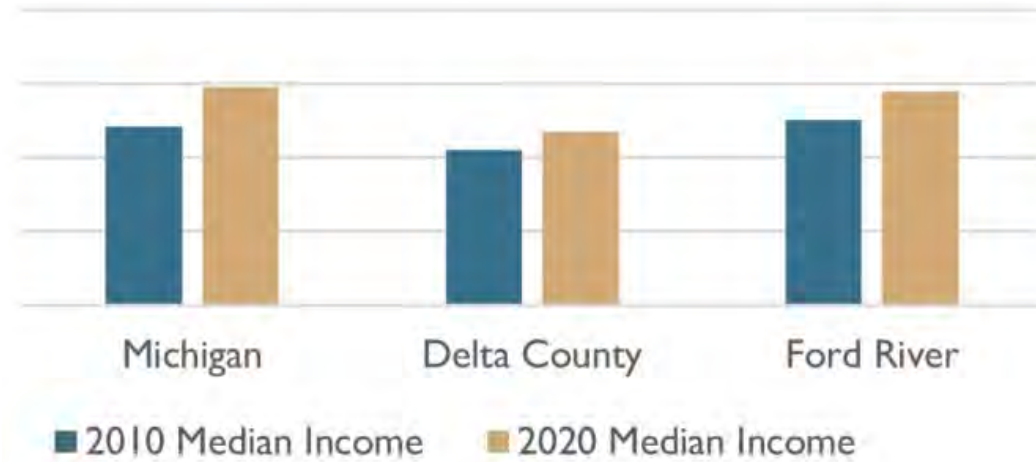
As Ford River™s population is significantly represented by the baby boomer generation, this is a trend that could be reasonably expected in Ford River as well. Lastly, as migration into the state recedes, Michigan™s population is projected to decrease as the baby boomer generation recedes. Therefore, Ford River™s ability to attract and retain younger families as residents will have an impact on its population in the mid-to long term.

Income

According to the 2010-2020 American Community Survey (ACS), the median income in Ford River increased from \$50,086 to \$57,940, an increase of nearly \$8,000 over 10 years. Figure 3 shows that this is slightly less than the increase the State of Michigan witnessed during the same time frame (just over \$10,000 between 2010-2020). The median household income in Michigan was slightly higher than that of Ford River in 2020 at \$59,235. Conversely, Ford River's median income is just over \$10,000 higher than the median income in Delta County.

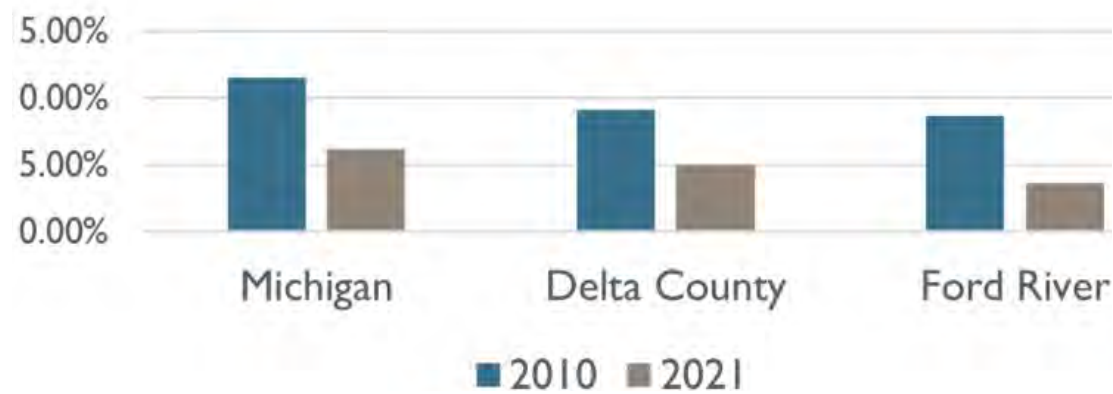
The unemployment rate in Ford River has been, and remains, consistently lower than that of Delta County and Michigan as a whole. From 2010-2020, the unemployment rate in Ford River was cut in half, suggesting residents were able to secure jobs either within the Township, within neighboring communities, or work remotely. Figure 4 shows that, in 2021, Ford River's unemployment rate hovered at 3.6%, slightly less than that of Delta County (5%) and the State of Michigan (6.2%).

Figure 3 - Median Income 2010-2020



Source: American Community Survey, 2010-2020

Figure 4 - Percentage of Unemployed 2010-2021



Source: American Community Survey, 2010-2020

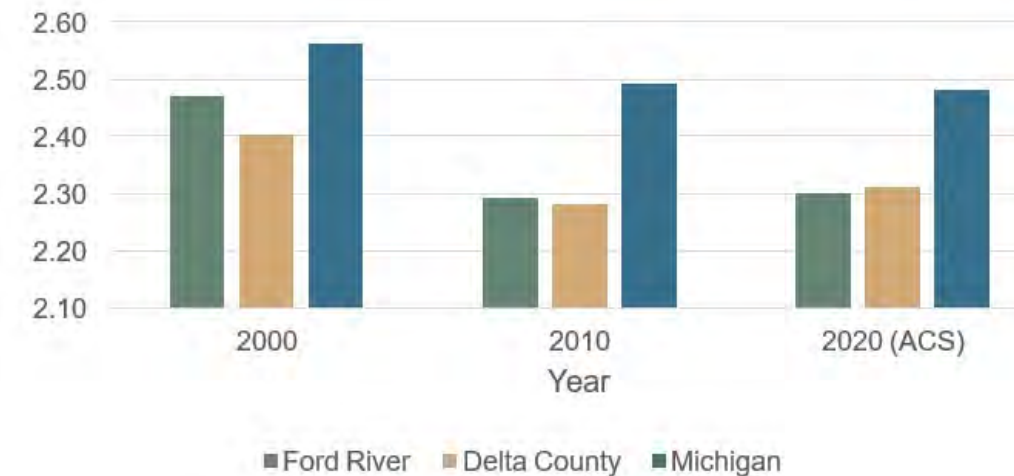
Interestingly, the household size decreased in Ford River from 2.47 in 2000 to 2.3 in 2020. Some reasons for this decrease could be: children aging and leaving their parents' homes for new opportunities in other areas, or a decrease in the number of families having children, among others.

Housing

Evaluation of the changes in household characteristics in a community can often provide valuable insights into population trends. Household relationships reflect changing social values, economic conditions, and demographic changes such as longer life spans and the increasing mobility of our society. The U.S. Bureau of the Census defines a household as "all persons who occupy a housing unit (i.e., a single family, one person living alone, two or more families living together, or any groups of related or unrelated persons sharing the same living quarters.)" A family consists of a householder and one or more persons living in the same household who are related by birth, marriage or adoption. A non-family household can be one person living alone, or any combination of people not related by blood, marriage or adoption. Figure 5 shows the changes in overall household size between 2000-2020 in Ford River compared to Delta County and the State of Michigan as a whole.

From 2000-2020, the average household size in Ford River remained slightly smaller than that of the State of Michigan but roughly the same as that of Delta County.

Figure 5 - Household Size



Source: American Community Survey, 2000-2020

Table 3 - Household Change

Place	2010			2020		
	Total Households	Householder Living Alone	Households Age 65+ Living Alone	Total Households	Householder Living Alone	Households Age 65+ Living Alone
Ford River	928	11.4%	13.5%	906	20.8%	7.7%
Delta County	16,339	29.2%	26.4%	15,695	30.5%	16.1%
Michigan	3,843,997	28.2%	9.9%	3,976,729	29.9%	12.3%

Source: American Community Survey, 2010,2021

Comparing the years on some related housing statistics, more of Ford River's housing units were occupied in 2020 than in 2010, and, correspondingly, less units were vacant. Ford River did not see a significant increase in the overall number of housing units between 2010 and 2020. From 2010 to 2020, the percentage of householders in Ford River who lived alone increased from 11.4% to 20.8%, although both are still less than the percentage of those who lived alone in Delta County and the State of Michigan. Interestingly, Table 3 shows that the percentage of householders aged 65+ who lived alone decreased from 2010-2020, suggesting that spouses may be living together longer, or older children may be moving back home to care for older parents for a period of time.



Photo Credit: Deanna Zeits 2023

3. VISION FRAMEWORK

What We Heard

Community Engagement

strong industry



City to be in residential development

Ambulance Access



Active Lion + Lionness

Hwy 45 -visibility -access



Info and for (se

Image Source: GRAEF

The Master Plan team spoke with Ford River residents at the Public Open House in early 2023 to identify their biggest priorities for the community, both now and in the future. A public Planning Commission workshop was also conducted to discuss issues and opportunities with elected officials. Participants that attended the Open House or public Planning Commission workshop were able to weigh in on Ford River's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges, and share ideas about their vision for Ford River's future.

Opportunity to plan for senior housing

Opportunity for a unified school district

STOCK

Resident retention in rental

Ford River residents would love to have more recreational space and facilities. Ideas included: adding more kayak/canoe access points, developing motorized and non-motorized recreational trails and paths for walking, hiking, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing, and adding public beach access.

Big Ideas & What's Next

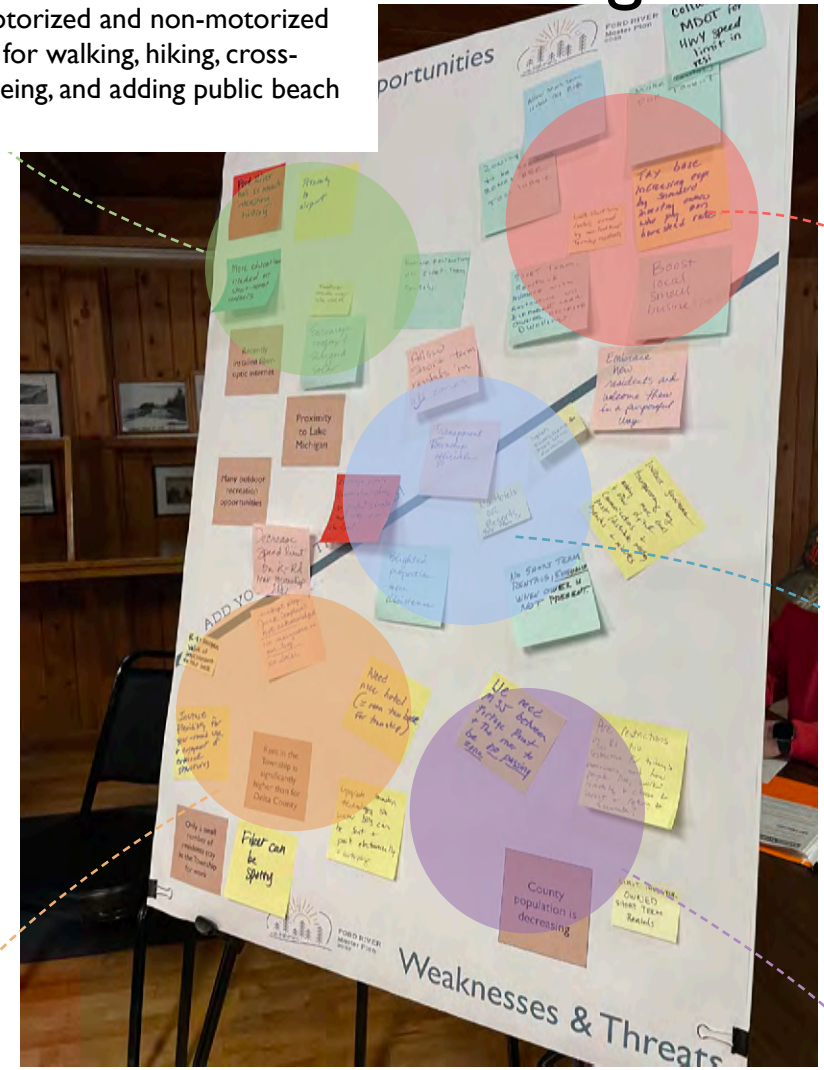


Image Source: GRAEF

Ford River residents want to support local businesses and would like to see the diversity of business types expanded so there are more options to meet the needs of locals and visitors.

Ford River residents would like to address more formal regulations around short-term rentals, although the ideas for changes were mixed between allowing more flexibility for short-term rentals versus implementing stronger restrictions.

Ford River residents are cautious about industrial scale solar and would like to understand more about the costs and benefits. Small-scale rooftop solar is generally preferred as it is less visually intrusive.

More low-density housing is needed in Ford River, but should be done in a way that does not detract from the rural atmosphere. Residents strongly value the rural character of the community.



Figure 7 - Engagement Results

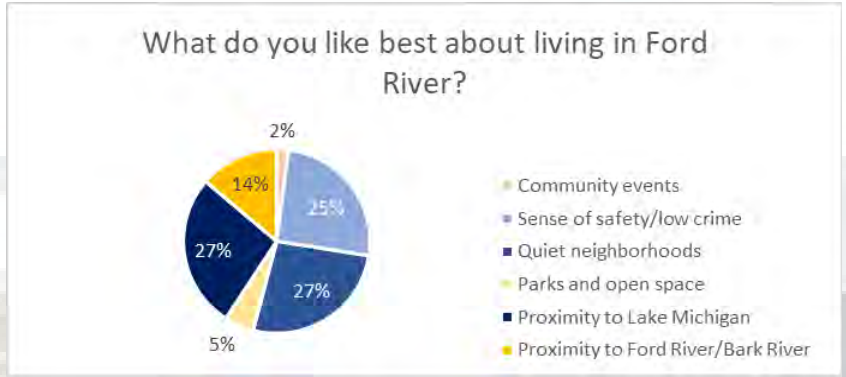


Figure 6 - Engagement Results

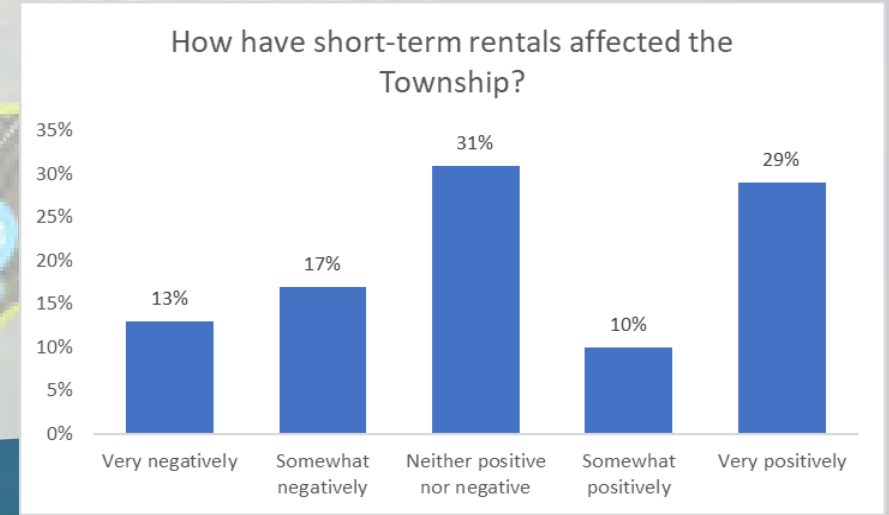


Figure 8 - Engagement Results

TAKE THE SURVEY

A community survey provided an opportunity for residents to respond to specific content areas important to the Master Plan. These topics included housing/residential development, economic development, recreation, trails, and natural resources, and transportation. The community survey was accessible via an online website platform and hard copy surveys were available at Township Hall. The survey was promoted via the Township website, Facebook page, and a postcard that was mailed to all residents. Township residents were also able to share geographic-specific ideas via an online map module. This interactive map and the community survey results informed many of the ideas that are reflected in this Plan.

Future Vision

Ford River will: support housing maintenance and development that suits a mix of needs and is consistent with the area's rural character.

Ford River will: support local employers as well as targeted economic growth that provides job opportunities and meets the basic needs of residents and visitors.

Ford River will: provide and support a diversity of services and recreational amenities for residents and visitors to access and enjoy.



Photo Credit: GRAEF

4. LAND USE & ZONING

Land Use in Ford River

Existing

The general historic land uses common to the Upper Peninsula are reflected in the land use patterns that have developed in Ford River Township. Logging and timber production were common throughout Ford River Township in the past, and still are today. An abundance of inexpensive land became available following the removal of valuable timber resources during the lumbering boom. Families interested in farming were attracted by this affordable land. Where favorable soil conditions existed, agriculture was successful in the Township. Agriculture remains an important industry today, but on a much more limited basis.

Natural features and cultural influences were also important determinants of how land was used. Rugged terrain and swampland, for instance, were not inviting for the establishment of settlements. Cultural influences are reflected in the types of buildings constructed, local commercial practices, and community traditions and activities. Therefore, it is important for Ford River to understand how past land uses and patterns have an effect on land use today.

Local governments like Ford River can exert the most effective influence on land use changes through zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, building codes, and public investment in roads, water and sewer systems, parks, etc. Local planning efforts that seek to define the most desirable and appropriate uses for the various parts of a community, and anticipate and prepare for growth, can serve to guide future land use decision-making. The Township currently utilizes a zoning ordinance to regulate land use.

Zoning Districts
Town of Ford River Master Plan

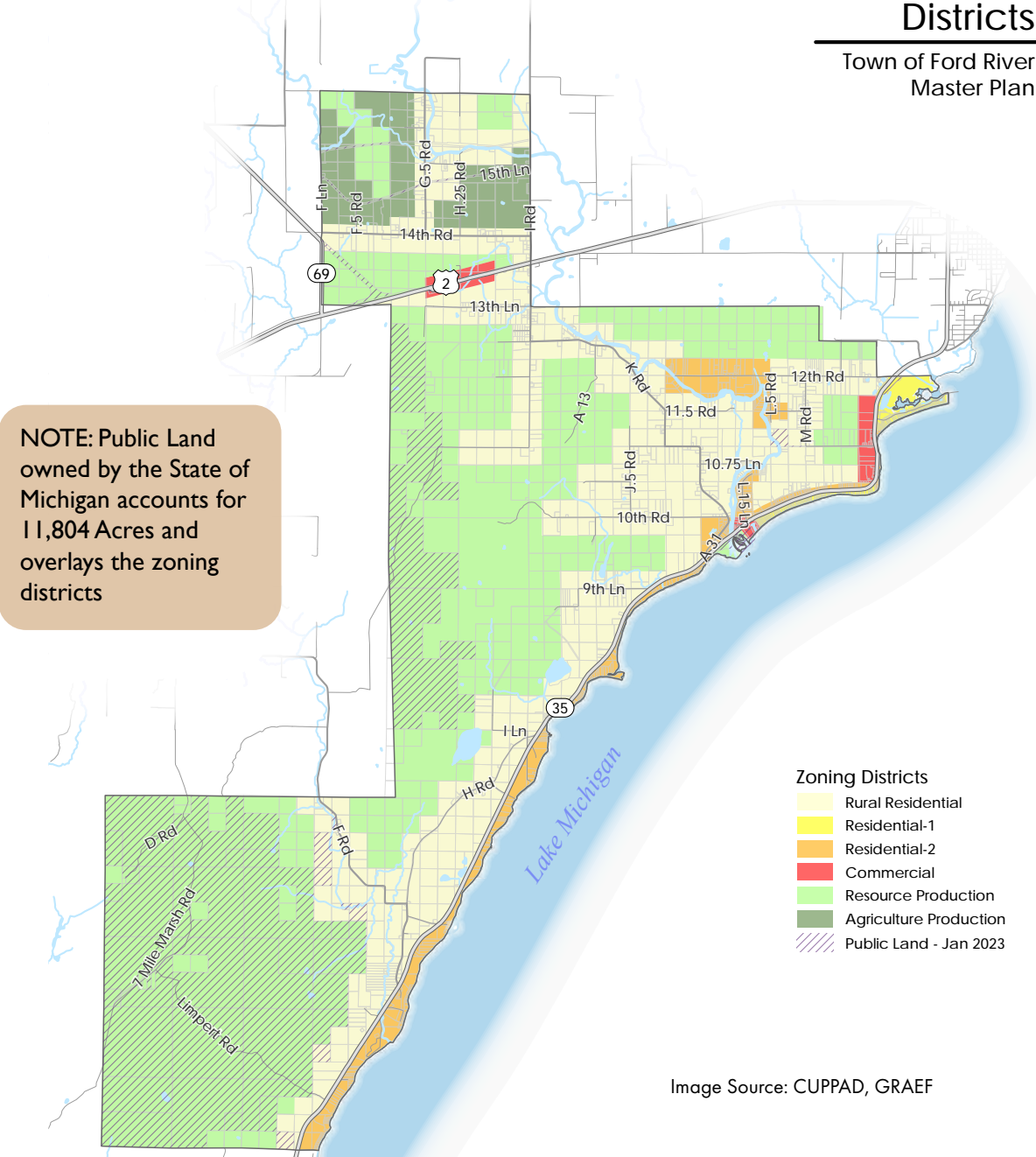


Image Source: CUPPAD, GRAEF

Public Land Ownership
Town of Ford River Master Plan

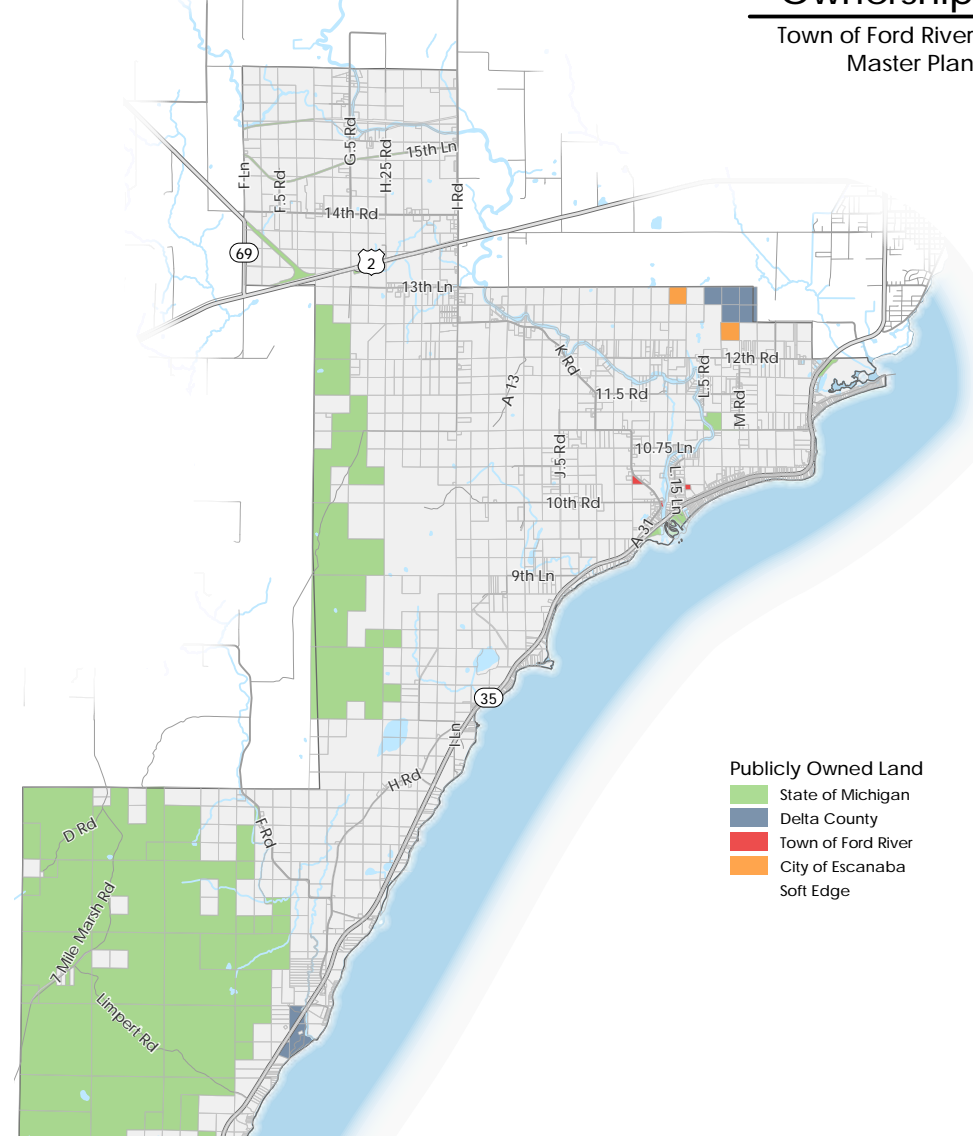


Image Source: CUPPAD, GRAEF

Land Use Inventory

The Ford River Zoning Map on the previous page provides a lens with which to understand existing land use. The following chart reflects existing land use based upon the interpretation of the current Ford River Township Zoning map. The majority of land within the Township is zoned as “Resource Production” (56%) followed by “Rural Residential” (32%). The Resource Production District is intended “to maintain low density rural areas which because of their rural character and location, accessibility, natural characteristics and the potentially high cost of providing public services for intensive uses are suitable for a wide range of forestry, agricultural, natural resource and recreational uses.” Though the majority of this land is currently undeveloped, much of it may not be suitable for development other than forestry or outdoor recreation uses, largely due to the presence of wetlands or other natural features that severely limit the feasibility of building on it.

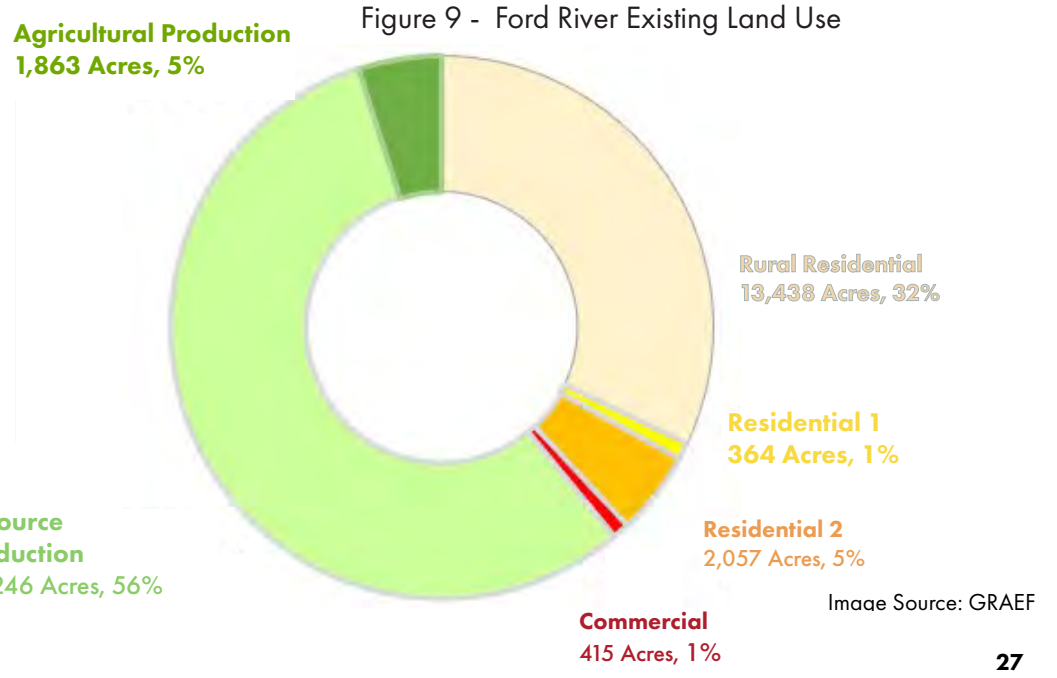


Image Source: GRAEF

Future Land Use

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008 requires the inclusion of a future land use map and zoning plan in the master plan. The future land use map and categories identify a generalized, preferred organization of future land uses in the Town of Ford River. It is a general framework intended to guide land use and policy decisions within the township over the next 20 years. It guides the development of the Zoning Plan and ultimately influences changes that may be made to the zoning ordinance. The Future Land Use Map is not intended to be used to identify future land use on a parcel-by-parcel basis, but rather to identify areas that may evolve within the Town.

Future Land Use Categories

Rural Residential: The Rural Residential District preserves the existing character and use of low-intensity rural or agricultural uses with single-family homes on larger, potentially wooded, lots.

Residential-1: The R-1 Category is intended for larger exurban or low-density single-family residential neighborhoods, along with walkable neighborhoods to commercial uses along M-35, and access to Lake Michigan's shoreline.

Residential-2: The R-2 Category provides space for quiet neighborhoods for single-family dwellings, two-family dwellings, and potentially small clusters of mobile homes.

Commercial: The Commercial Category is home to varied business and commercial uses that provide goods and services, including small mixed-uses with a residential component.

Agricultural Production: The Agricultural Production Category is suited for farming, dairying, forestry operations, and other similar agricultural operations, with a potential residential component for owner/operators.

Resource Production: The Resource Production Category is suitable for a wide range of forestry, agricultural, natural resource and recreational uses.

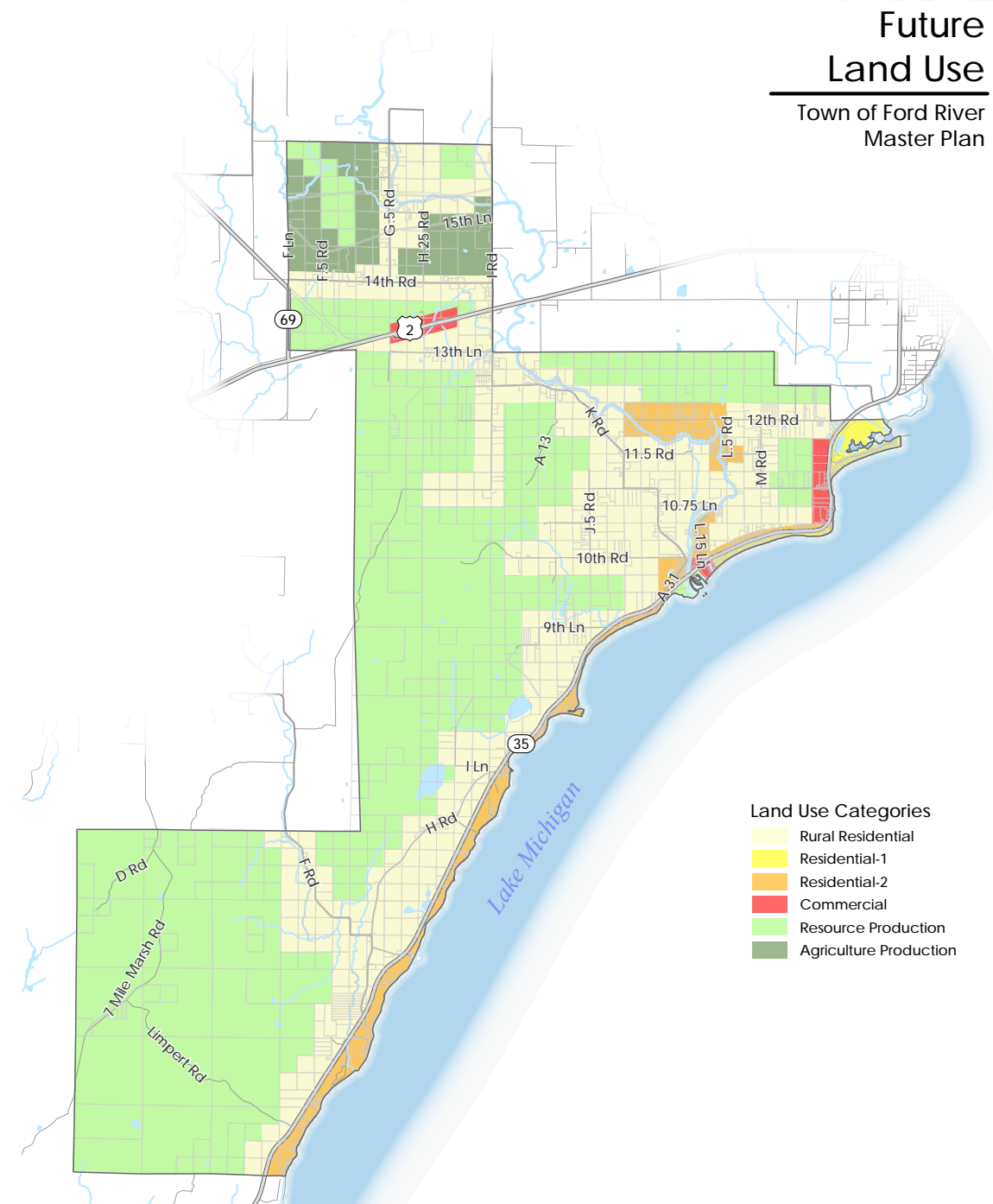


Image Source: CUPPAD, GRAEF

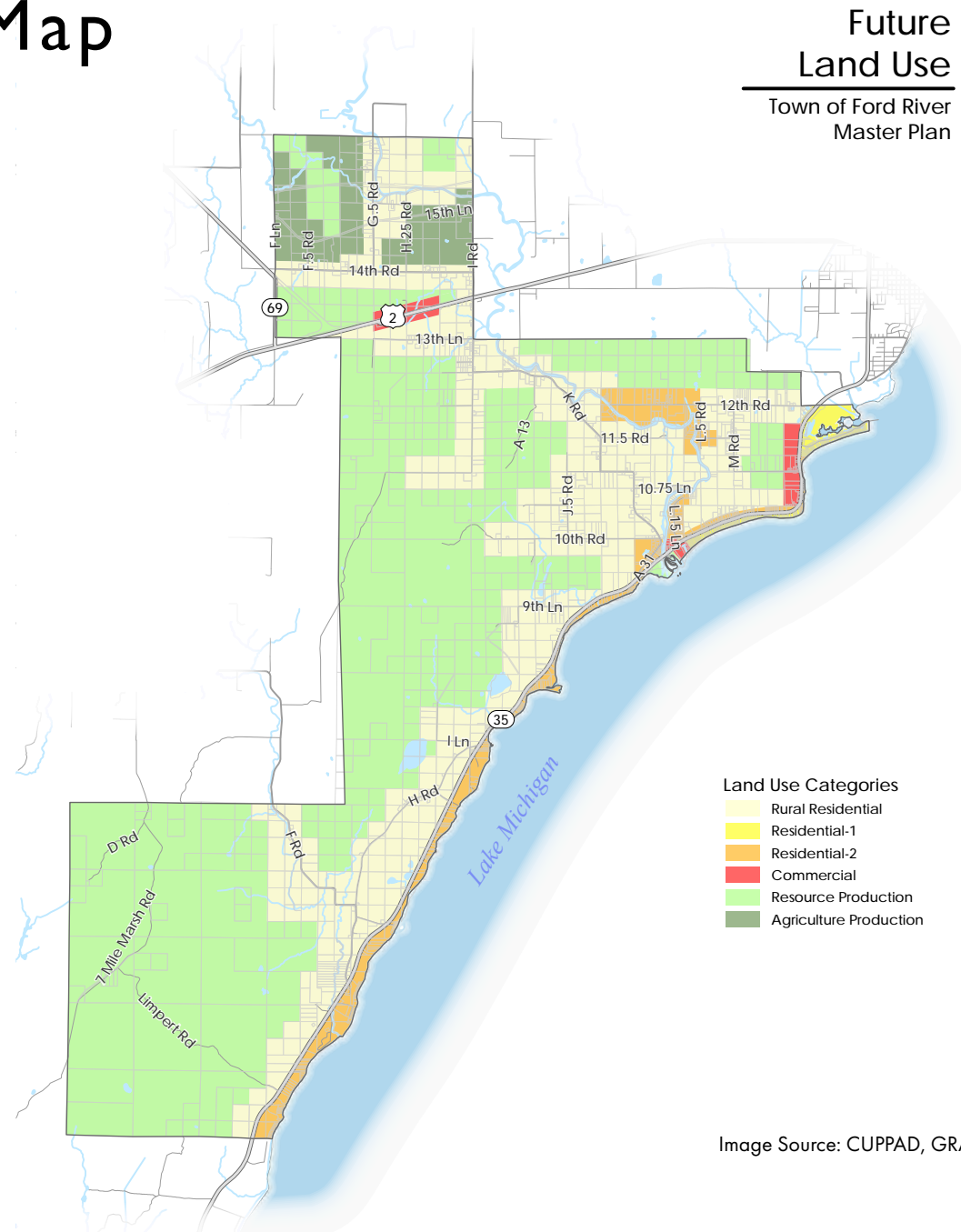
Mixed-Use in Ford River

“Mixed-use” is a planning term that emphasizes development patterns that integrate residential units, offices, retail, restaurants, and similar uses in close proximity to each other. Facilitating mixed-use development can create diversity within the Ford River community that meets the daily needs of residents and specialty needs of tourists. The mix of uses can also serve to diversify the Township’s economy so that the community is not reliant on one single use of land, but rather a balance of commercial and residential uses. The goal for mixed-use development in Ford River emphasizes lower-intensity uses, primarily living units such as apartments or condos on the second floor of low-intensity commercial buildings.

Commercial uses that may integrate well within the Ford River community include coffee shops/ family restaurants, outdoor recreation supply stores, art galleries, offices, owner-occupied bed and breakfasts, and beyond. Mixed-use development should be limited to two-three floors to best integrate with the rural character of the Township. Mixed-use development could be sited within the existing commercial corridors along US-2 and M-35, within the transition zones between the commercial districts and residential districts, or integrated within residential districts to provide walkable amenities for residents. Mixed-use development should also be considered near the waterfronts of Lake Michigan and the Ford River.

Future Land Use Map & Table

The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) provides a general program of desired land uses and intensities. The FLUM is distinct from the Zoning Map: the FLUM is a policy document showing future preferences, whereas the Zoning Map is a regulatory tool that prescribes specific uses, configurations, materials, and other details of each site in the community. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, PA 110 of 2006, requires that a community's Zoning Ordinance "shall be based upon a plan" and that it "shall be made with reasonable consideration of the character of each district." This is the primary function of the Future Land Use Map. It also serves the Planning Commission directly by offering a signpost toward the desired future, to be used in consideration of requests for rezoning, special land uses, and planned unit developments. In the case of Ford River, there is currently no major differences between the FLUM and the existing Zoning Map. The Town should continue to regularly review and update the FLUM to ensure it is reflective of the long-term vision for the community.



The below Future Land Use Table is meant to guide future development in Ford River by identifying the range of desirable uses that would be appropriate in each Future Land Use Category. This table should be used in combination with the Future Land Use Map as a tool for evaluating future development proposals and plans. When evaluating rezoning proposals, the Township should consider whether the parcel in question is aligned both Future Land Use and the Desired Character of the district that the parcel falls within.

Table 4 - Future Land Use

Future Land Use Category	Desired Characteristics	Existing Uses	Single-Family Residential	Multi-Family Residential	Mobile Homes	Commercial	Community Facilities	Mixed-Use	Industrial	Agricultural	Utilities	Parks & Open Space
Rural Residential	The Rural Residential Category preserves the existing character and use of low-intensity rural or agricultural uses with single-family homes on larger, potentially wooded, lots.	A	D	u	u	u	u	u	u	A	u	D
Residential-1	The R-1 Category is intended for larger exurban or low-density single-family residential neighborhoods, along with walkable neighborhoods to commercial uses along M-35, and access to Lake Michigan's shoreline.	A	D	A	u	u	u	A	u	u	u	A
Residential-2	The R-2 Category provides space for quiet neighborhoods for single-family dwellings, two-family dwellings, and potentially small clusters of mobile homes.	A	D	A	A	u	u	A	u	A	u	A
Commercial	The Commercial Category is home to varied business and commercial uses that provide goods and services, including small mixed-uses with a residential component.	A	u	u	u	D	A	D	A	u	u	u
Resource Production	The Resource Production Category is suitable for a wide range of forestry, agricultural, natural resource, and recreational uses.	A	A	u	u	A	A	u	u	A	A	D
Agricultural Production	The Agricultural Production Category is suited for farming, dairying, forestry operations, and other similar agricultural operations, with a potential residential component for owner/operators.	A	u	u	u	A	A	A	u	D	A	D

D	Desirable – These uses should be encouraged to support the character and goals of the area.
A	Allowable – These uses are generally appropriate for the area but may require additional considerations.
u	Undesirable – These uses should not be encouraged except under special circumstances.

NOTE: A designation of Desirable or Allowable for a particular future land use category does not imply that the use or activity will automatically be approved or judged suitable for every parcel within that future land use map location. Similarly, an Undesirable rating does not automatically exclude the use or activity from every parcel within that general place. Rather the designation of a use as Desirable, Allowable, or Undesirable within a particular place is intended as a guide to inform the discussion about the general suitability of a proposed use and its appropriateness in supporting the overall future vision for the area and its compatibility with existing and planned uses in and around the neighborhood or district. Furthermore, the designation of Desirable or Allowable does not imply an entitlement to that future land use on any particular parcel of land within the Town. The appropriateness of any specific future land use on any particular parcel will be determined on a case-by-case basis through application of the Zoning Code and is subject to further detailed review, evaluation and approval by the Town as part of any and all applicable local ordinances and development review and zoning processes.

Zoning Plan

As was mentioned previously in this chapter, Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (MZEA) requires in Sec. 203 (1) that zoning be based on a plan. Similarly, Sec. 7 (2) of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA) sets forth the purposes for which a master plan must be created. In order for a master plan to serve as the basis for zoning, it should promote the purposes in the MZEA and MPEA. As a key component, the zoning plan is based on recommendations outlined here in the Master Plan Update and is intended to identify any inconsistencies between objectives and strategies and existing zoning; and guide changes to the Zoning Ordinance.

Any zoning amendments in the Town shall use the below table to ensure the proposed zoning is consistent with the Future Land Use Map.

Table 5 - Relationship between Future Land Use Category and the Implementing Zoning District

Future Land Use Category	Current Zoning District
Rural Residential	Rural Residential (RR)
Residential-1	Residential One (R-1)
Residential-2	Residential Two (R-2)
Commercial	Commercial (C); Industrial (I); or PUD
Resource Production	Resource Production (RC); or Public Land (PL)
Agricultural Production	Agricultural Production (AP)

Current Zoning Districts

District R-1: Residential One

Intent: The R-1, Residential One, District is intended for the establishment and preservation of single-family home neighborhoods as desired by large numbers of people, free from other uses except those which are both comparable with and convenient to the residents of such a district. The R-1 District is designed to accommodate residential opportunities for those who desire exurban residential living and are willing to assume the costs of providing many of their own services. For the individual lot split type of residential development, it is reasonable to require spacious lots, insuring a safe, potable water supply and treatment of wastewater on the same lot, considering the excessive cost of extending public water to virtually any area of the District. For the larger, unified developments, such facilities will be necessary, and this District includes properties to which such services are provided or could be readily provided.

District R-2: Residential Two

Intent: The R-2, Residential Two, District is intended for the establishment and preservation of quiet neighborhoods for single-family dwellings, two-family dwellings, and mobile homes, free from other uses except those which are both comparable with and convenient to the residents in this District. For the individual lot split type of residential development, it is reasonable to require spacious lots, insuring a safe, potable water supply and treatment of wastewater on the same lot - considering the excessive cost of extending public water to virtually any area of the District.

District RR: Rural Residential

Intent: The RR, Rural Residential, District is established to protect and generally preserve the existing character and use of those areas of Ford River Township which are presently rural or agricultural. Soil and natural conditions vary throughout this District, including substantial wood lots and some active farms. These areas are considered to be suitable for both rural (predominantly scattered-site) residential development and the perpetuation of existing farming or other low intensity uses.

District AP: Agricultural Production

Intent: The AP, Agricultural Production, District is intended to maintain for agricultural purposes those lands which because of their soil characteristics, drainage and other factors, are especially well suited for farming, dairying, forestry operations and other similar agricultural operations and to ensure that uses within this District are retained for agricultural purposes.

District RP: Resource Production

Intent: The RP, Resource Production, District, is established to maintain low density rural areas which because of their rural character and location, accessibility, natural characteristics and the potentially high cost of providing public services for intensive uses are suitable for a wide range of forestry, agricultural, natural resource and recreational uses.

District PL: Public Land

Intent: The PL, Public Lands, District is intended to acknowledge the publicly owned properties that presently exist within the Township. This District applies to only those properties that are used or authorized for public and quasi-public use, in tax-exempt status or public recreation.

District C: Commercial

Intent: The C. Commercial, District is established to preserve general commercial areas consisting of shopping centers and commercial areas where customers reach individual business establishments primarily by motor vehicle.

District I: Industrial (Reserved for Future Use)

Planned Unit Development, PUD

Intent: To permit more flexibility and consequently encourage a greater imaginative and creative use and design of structures and land than is allowable under the other districts of the Zoning Ordinance, where such modifications will not be contrary to the intent of the ordinance or significantly inconsistent with the Master Plan. It is further intended to promote more efficient and economical use of the land, while providing a harmonious variety of housing choices, a higher level of urban amenities, the preservation of natural scenic qualities of open space and to give the developer reasonable assurances of ultimate approval before expending complete design monies while providing Township officials with assurances that the project will retain the character at the time of project approval.

Recent Zoning Amendments

RECENT ZONING AMENDMENTS

As stated in the Ford River Zoning Ordinance, Amended 11-2019, the following table and floor area ratio description provide the latest building restrictions for existing zoning districts.

Table 6 - Section IV General Regulations, Section 401 Height, Bulk and Placement Regulations

SCHEDULE OF REGULATIONS						
DISTRICT	MINIMUM LOT SIZE (SQ FT)	MINIMUM LOT WIDTH (FEET) ^A	SETBACK			MAXIMUM HEIGHT (FEET)
			FRONT	SIDE (FEET)	REAR (FEET) ^E	
R-1	33,000	165	30	10 ^B	35 ^C	30
R-2	33,000	165	30	10 ^B	35 ^C	30
RR	1 Acre	165	30	10	30	30
AP	20 Acres	200	30	30	30	^D
RP	1 Acre	165	30	30	30	^D
PL	None	None	None	None	None	None
C	1 Acre	165	30	5	20	30

Image Source: Ford River Township

Article IV General Regulations, Section 402 Minimum Building Floor Area states:

Every year-round dwelling unit in District R-1 shall have a building area of not less than 750 square feet, exclusive of basements, garages, porches and breezeways. Every dwelling unit in all other districts shall have a minimum building area of at least 600 square feet. Recreational structures where permitted and if located on a parcel of 20 acres or more have no minimum building area. Recreational structures located on a parcel of less than 20 acres must have a minimum building area of at least 600 square feet.

Proposed Zoning Changes

District regulations sometimes are inconsistent with actual development patterns within the Township. Where possible, these inconsistencies should be rectified in the zoning ordinance to reduce non-conformities and promote harmonious development patterns and land use recommendations set forth in this plan. One example would be to allow for smaller minimum lot sizes in R-2 to provide flexibility in developing both single-family and multi-family residential housing types.

Another zoning plan change is consideration of allowing accessory dwelling units as permitted and/or conditional uses in R-1 and R-2. This directly responds to the desire for more affordable and diverse housing options ensuring Ford River Township attracts and retains a robust population base for all ages, family sizes, and income levels.

Finally, the Township should take a further look at updating definitions and allowance around short-term rentals, and if quantity restriction within the Township is desired.

A couple administration tools to consider include:

- updating the zoning code with proper descriptions and definitions
- development of supplemental standards for short-term rentals including permitting, registration, agent management, and maintenance
- develop a separate short-term rental license ordinance and regulations, include number of total allowed licenses



Photo Credit: Deanna Zeits

5. SYSTEMS

Natural Features

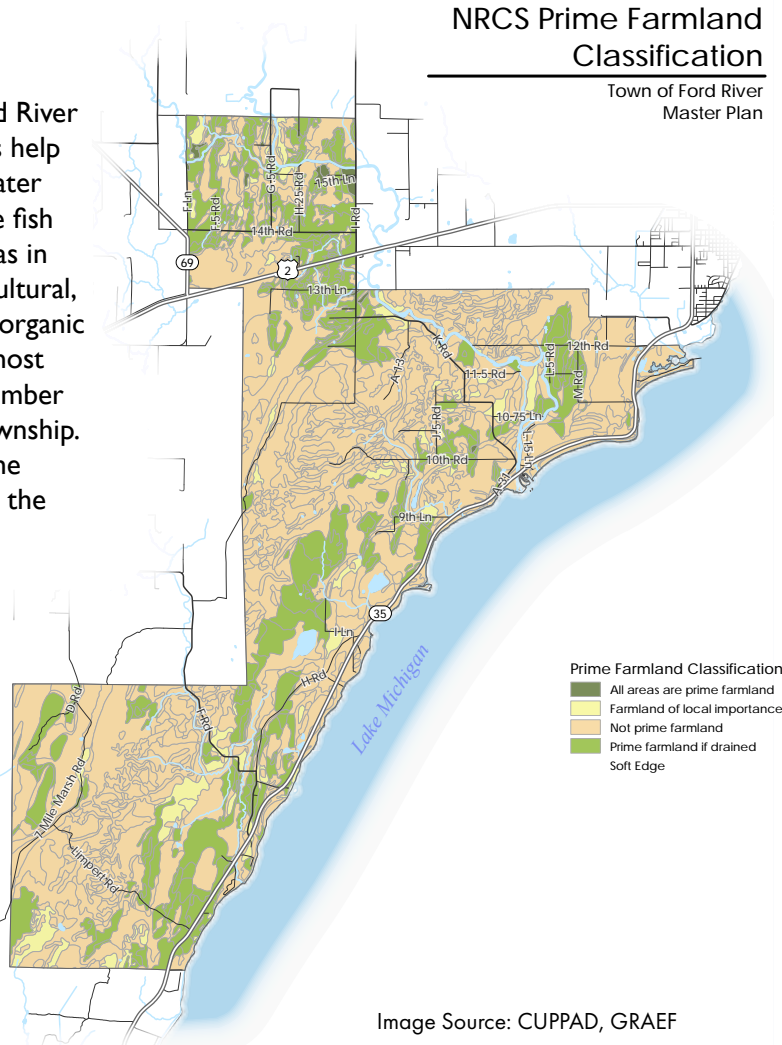
& Waterfront

Wetlands & Woodlands

Wetland areas are located throughout much of Ford River Township, mainly occurring in inland areas. Wetlands help regulate water levels within watersheds, improve water quality, reduce flood and storm damage, and provide fish and wildlife habitats. Most of the inland wetland areas in Ford River are very poorly suited for forestry, agricultural, recreational, or residential uses because of the wet organic soil. Therefore, the majority of Ford River’s land is most suitable for woodland and recreation. Logging and timber production occur on woodlands throughout the Township. Any development in wetland areas is regulated by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Agricultural Land

The majority of land within Ford River is designated as “not prime farmland,” primarily due to the presence of very wet soils. There are several pockets of agricultural land designated as “farmland of local importance” in Ford River, primarily clustered in the southwest portion near the Bark River. Very few parcels zoned “agricultural production” are also designated as prime farmland, clustered along I5th Lane and F Lane in the northern portion of Ford River.



Parks & Open Space

Access to the outdoors and nature is a defining feature of Ford River Township. Ford River’s parks and open space form an important part of the natural resources land and are enjoyed by many residents and visitors. Parks and recreation are described in more detail in the Communities Facilities section.

Waterfront

One of the aspects residents like the most about living in Ford River is the proximity to Lake Michigan, the Ford River, and the Bark River. There are numerous smaller lakes and rivers in Ford River Township as well, including North Lake, South Lake, Henderson Lakes, Sevenmile Marsh, Ten Mile Creek, Finnlands Creek, Sunny Brook and No See-um Creek.

The Township is bordered to the east by Lake Michigan, specifically the Bay of Green Bay. The Bay provides residents and tourists with a variety of recreational opportunities like beaches and prime fishing areas. Many small communities along M-35 in Michigan and communities in Northern Wisconsin are centered on a tourist base that takes advantage of the recreational opportunities presented by Lake Michigan. Therefore, many residences along the Lake Michigan shoreline are used seasonally. There are several waterfront rental opportunities for tourists in Ford River located on Lake Michigan’s shoreline including: Fishery Pointe Cottages, Sandy Shores Cottages, and St. Michael’s Lakeside Resort.

The coastal areas along the Great Lakes area are a valuable yet sometimes fragile resource. While these areas offer scenic beauty which attracts residents and visitors and provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species, they also may be at high-risk for erosion and flooding. These shoreline challenges are in direct competition with high development pressures. Waterfront property is very desirable for residential development and is vital for certain commercial and industrial uses as well. Much of the new construction over the past 20 years in the Upper Peninsula, including in Ford River, has been in waterfront areas, either along the Great Lakes or along inland lakes and rivers. Waterfront development in high-risk erosion areas is regulated by the MDNRE.



Photo Credit: Deanna Zeits 2023



Photo Credit: Deanna Zeits 2023

Community Facilities & Services

Township Facilities

Ford River Township’s public and community facilities include Township Hall, the Ford River Fire Department, the Delor Wellman Recreational Facility, and two cemeteries. Township Hall contains meeting space, offices, and restrooms. The Ford River Fire Department is composed of a staff of volunteer firefighters. In the future, Ford River intends to pursue funding to build a new fire hall at the same location as the existing hall. The Delor Wellman Recreational Facility is described in detail in the Recreation, Trails, and Connectivity section of this Plan. The West Ford River Cemetery is located at 4400 block of K Road, and the South Ford River Cemetery is located at 2144 H Road. The creation of a maintenance plan for these cemeteries is in-progress as of the writing of this Master Plan.



Ford River Township Hall

Energy & Internet

In 2022, Highline Internet completed a project to make fiber-internet available throughout the Township. Spectrum internet is also available in the same service area as the water system, with the addition of the area between where the water system ends to the north and the Escanaba City limits. Since 2010, Verizon and T-Mobile have constructed cell towers within the Township, improving cell service. Natural gas is available in the same area as the water system is available. DTE is currently working on a project to make natural gas available in the portion of the community north of Township Hall and the US-2 corridor.

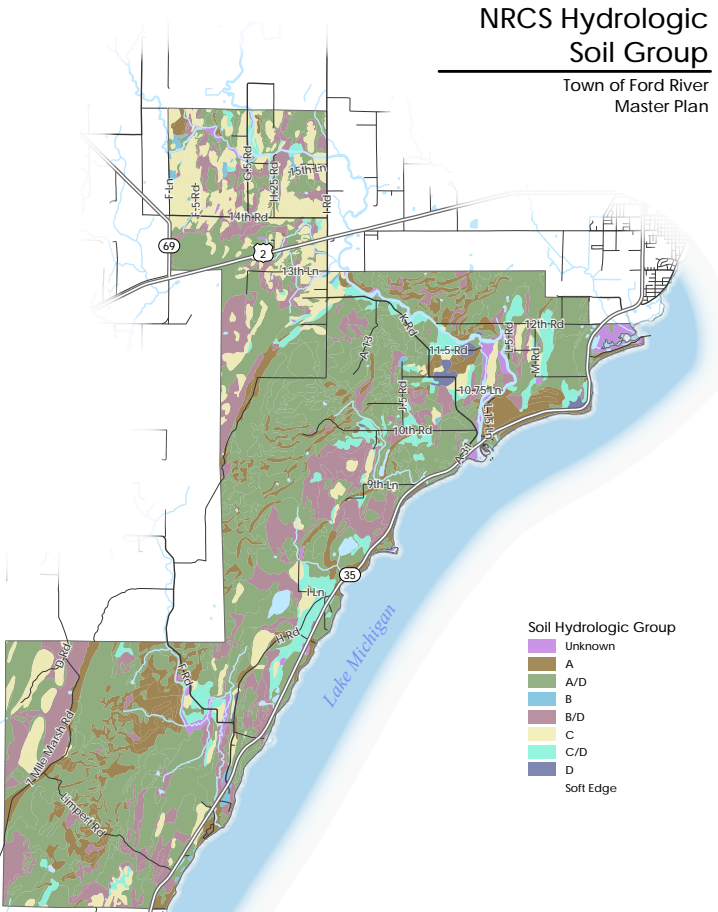


Image Source: CUPPAD, GRAEF

Water/Wastewater

The water supply system for Ford River Township can be described as a small distribution system

serving mainly residential users. The Ford River Township water plant is located at 3750 L.15 Lane. The water system serves approximately 200 customers along the M-35 corridor for about 3

miles, part way down L.15 Lane, and up K Road to where Township Hall is located. Those not connected to the Township water system are served by private wells.

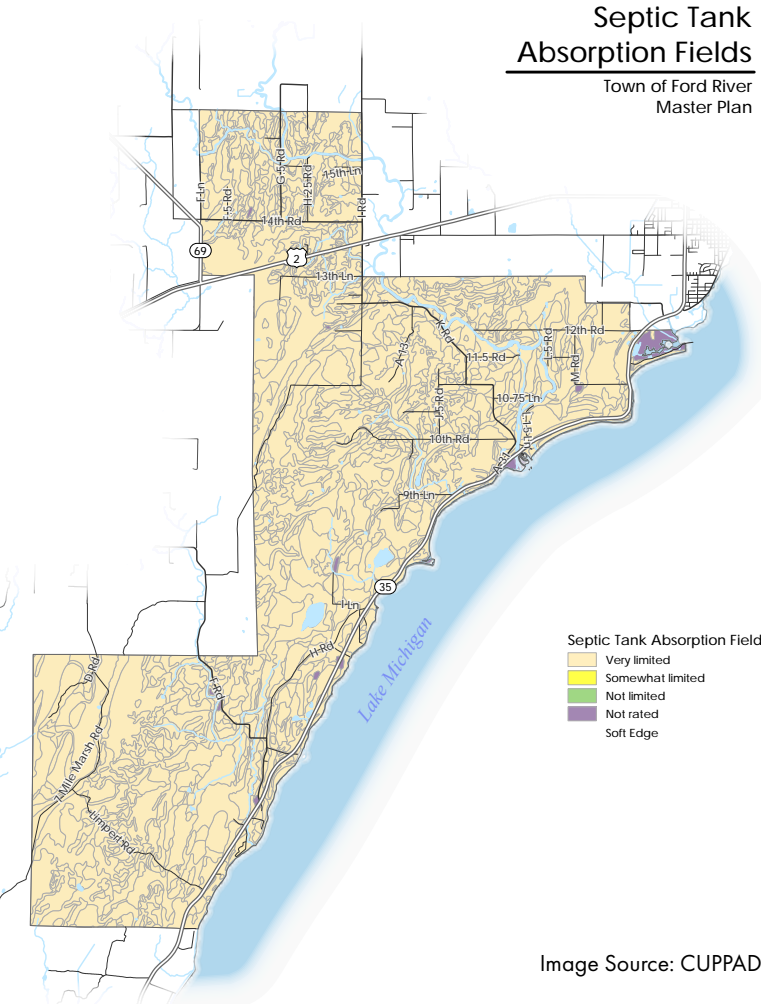


Image Source: CUPPAD, GRAEF

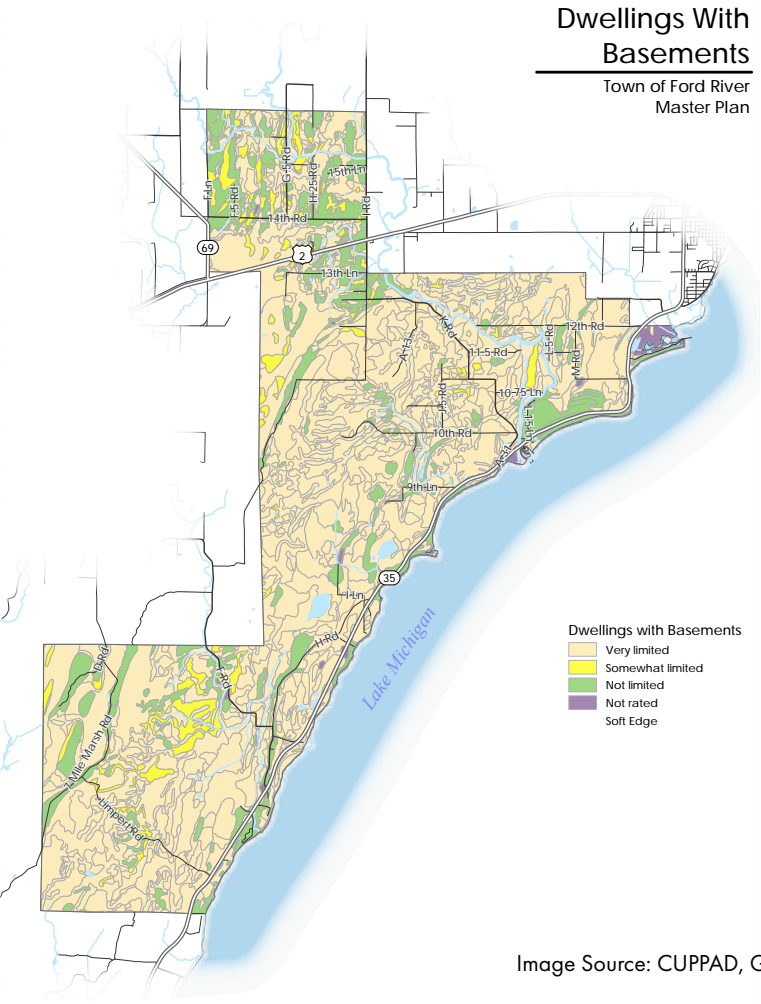


Image Source: CUPPAD, GRAEF

Recreation, Trails & Connectivity

Under Public Act 157 of 1905, the Ford River Township Board maintains responsibility for parks and recreation development in the Township. The Township provides and maintains recreational facilities for users but currently does not provide any recreation programming. The main recreational facilities in the Township are at the Municipal Complex, comprised of the Ford River Township Hall, the Township Fire Hall, and the Delor Wellman Recreational Facility. The Township Hall is available to rent for graduations, memorial services, birthday parties, showers, reunions, weddings, or business activities. The Delor Wellman Recreational Facility consists of approximately 4 acres: 2 acres are developed and 2 acres are undeveloped. The facility is fully accessible and includes a playground and rent-able pavilion that is open to the general public during the spring, summer, and fall.

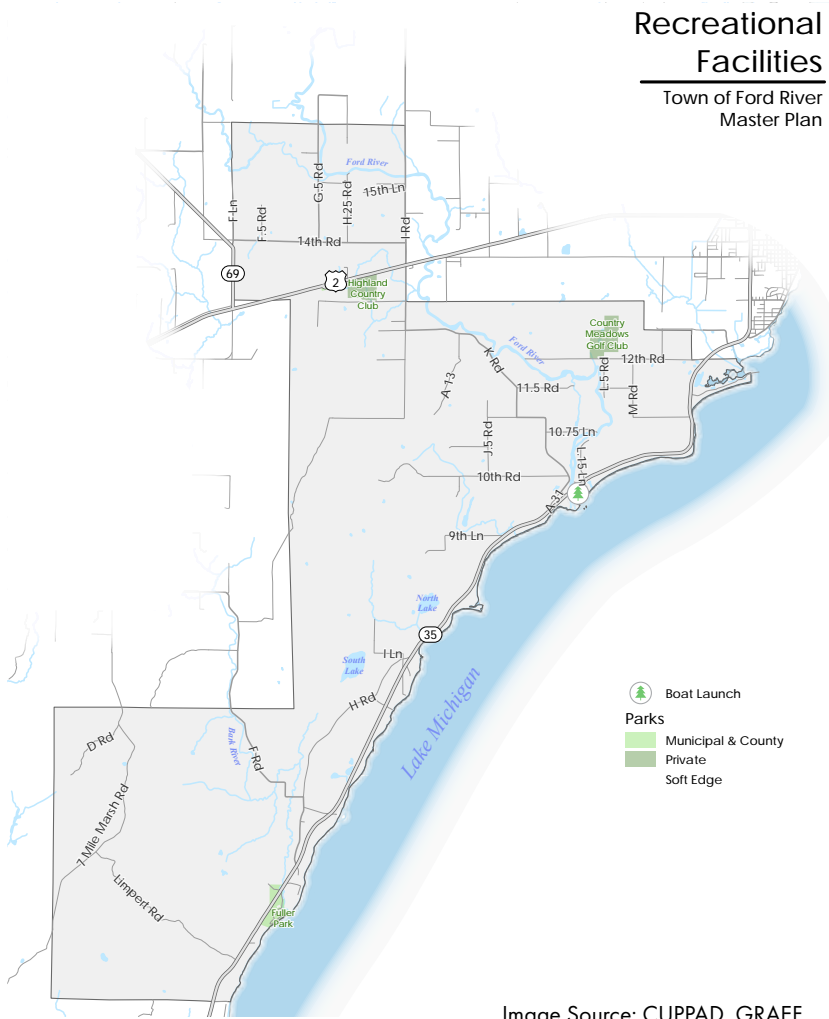


Image Source: CUPPAD, GRAEF

In addition to the facilities within the Township, attractions and facilities located in close proximity to the Township present many opportunities for active and passive recreation. The MDNR Boat Launch is located at the mouth of the Ford River and is maintained by the Parks and Recreation division of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). The Boat Launch features a parking area, hard surfaced ramp to accommodate most trailer-able boats, a courtesy pier for loading and unloading passengers at the boat launch ramp, restrooms, and a picnic area. Additional recreation facilities located near the Township include the No See-um Creek Scenic Overlook, the MDNR Portage Marsh Wildlife Area Boat Launch, and the MDOT Roadside Park. Hunting, fishing, biking, and boating are popular outdoor activities for Township residents and visitors.

Recreation related to tourism is crucial to area economics and is an expanding industry nationwide. Heritage-based tourism and ecology-based tourism are becoming increasingly popular. Having adequate recreational facilities to meet the needs of visitors and as well as residents is vital to the Ford River community. Feedback from Ford River residents helped identify areas to focus on. In particular, kayak/canoe access points, unpaved/cross-country ski trails, paved trails, and fishing access points were highly desired by residents. There was also strong support for more picnic areas, boat ramps, and a seasonal outdoor ice-skating rink. Improving public access to Lake Michigan and Ford River and exploring the creation of a multi-use trail system may support many of these priorities. Potential locations for the trail system include:

- **Access points from all major roads in the Township**
- **Connection from Escanaba to the Ford River boat launch**
- **Along the Ford River, Bark River, and Lake Michigan**
- **Connections to existing DNR trails**
- **Public beach walk**

Funding to support these initiatives may be available from the MDNR. A five-year Recreation Plan approved by the MDNR is required to apply for MDNR Trust Fund grants for recreation development and property acquisition. In 2022, Ford River Township adopted a Recreation Plan to guide planning efforts from 2022-2026. Major priorities under the Recreation Plan include:

- **Ford River Township Municipal Complex Enhancements, including:**
 - **Rain garden with native plants**
 - **Splash pad**
 - **Multi-sport field**
 - **Portable restrooms**
 - **Multi-generational exercise loop trail**
 - **9-hole disc-golf course**
- **Establishment of a formal Ford River Bike Loop**
- **Creation of an off-highway multi-modal trail**
- **Creation of an off-highway non-motorized trail with protected bike lanes**

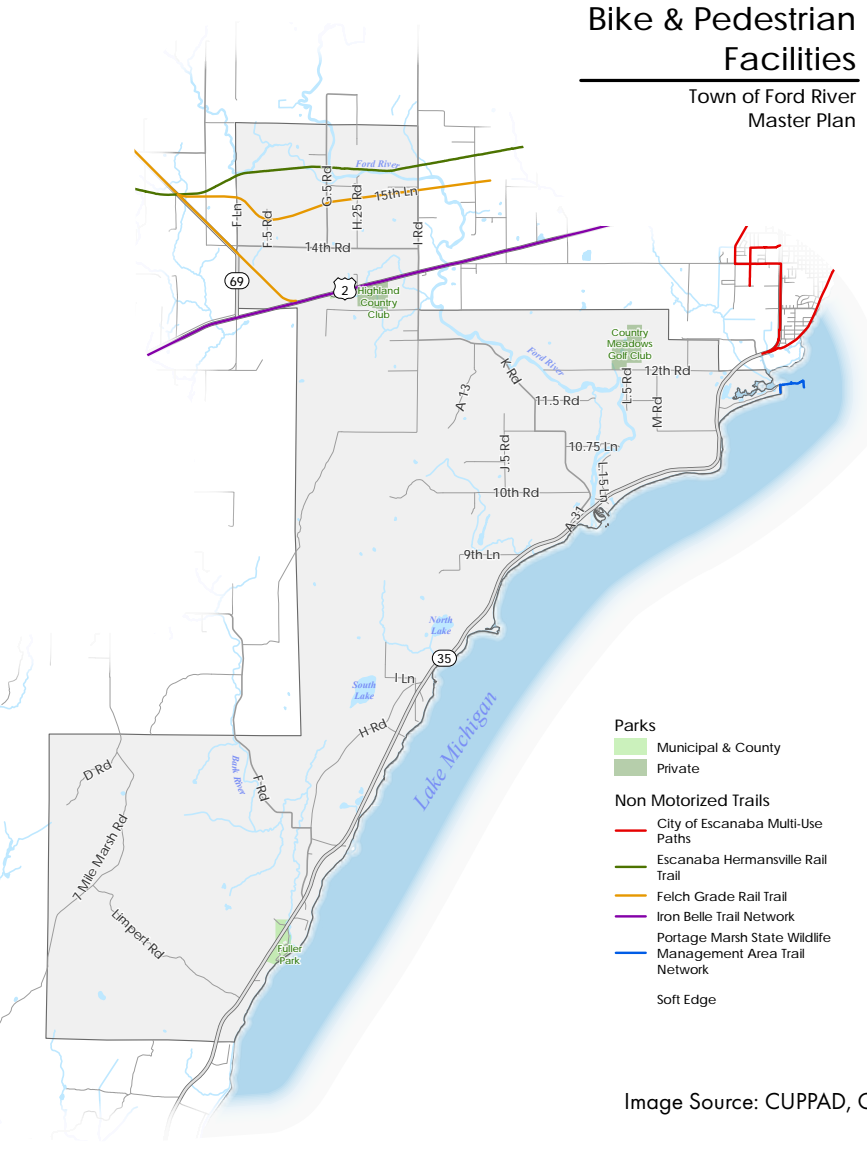
Transportation

Walking & Biking

Currently, the Township does not have an abundance of non-motorized transportation opportunities. The Township also does not maintain any sidewalks at this time. Sidewalks help pedestrian feel safe and protected from accidents with cars. Residents have expressed an interest in developing nature trails and multi-use trails throughout the Township. There is a large amount of state land in the Township where trails could potentially be developed. Any work on non-motorized trails and facilities should be coordinated with the surrounding communities to establish links when possible. Alternate modes of transportation are encouraged and made safer by facilities such as bike lanes and walking paths.

Snowmobile & ATV Trail Network

The Township has an Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) trail passing through the northern end of the Township. The trail begins at I Road and ends on F Road and is part of a 120-mile trail network maintained by the Normenco Sportsman’s Club, based in Spalding Township. The Felch Grade Trail also passes through a portion of the Township. The Felch Grade Trail is a 38-mile multi-use trail that winds through Delta, Menominee, and Dickinson Counties. For two-thirds of its length, the trail parallels highway M-69. It is used by off-road vehicle enthusiasts, hikers, bikers, and horseback riders in the summer months, and snowmobilers, skiers, and snowshoers in the winter.



Street Network & Road Classifications

Road prefixes “M” and “US” denote state and federal highways respectively, and both are included in the category of “state trunkline highways.” State trunklines provide the highest level of traffic mobility for the public. M-35 in Ford River Township extends from the City of Escanaba boundary/northern Township boundary south along the eastern portion of the township along Lake Michigan. M-35 is one of the two principal north-south routes across the Upper Peninsula.

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has designated 64 miles of M-35 between Gladstone and Menominee as the “UP. Hidden Coast Recreation Heritage Route” to promote tourism and economic development in the area. The Heritage Route passes through both Delta and Menominee counties on the western shoreline of Lake Michigan and features parks, waterways, forests, trails, attractions, boat launches, harbors and campgrounds. M-35 is also designated as a segment of the Lake Michigan Circle Tour. Safety is a concern along M-35 in Ford River, both for bikers and those pulling out of their driveways, mostly due to speeding and semi-truck traffic. US-2, a major east-west corridor in the Upper Peninsula, extends across the northeastern end of the Township near Hyde to the northwestern corner of the Township. Combined, state trunklines account for approximately 17.25 miles of Township roadways.

There are 12.9 miles of county primary roads located within Ford River Township. Primary roads within the Township are paved and include the portions of the following roads: I 11th Road, 14th Road, F Road, G.5 Road, H Road, I Road, K Road. Roads not classified as

primary are considered local. Local roads comprise the most miles in the county system, but have the lowest level of traffic. The roads in this system are often referred to as “township roads,” although the county road commission maintains jurisdiction of these roads. There are 31.08 miles of local roads in Ford River Township.

Approximately 21.7 miles of private roads exist within the Township. The maintenance of these roads (snow plowing, grading, dust control, drainage ditch maintenance, etc.) becomes the responsibility of the residents living along these roads, who usually accomplish these tasks either on their own or through a contract agreement with a private entity. The condition and location of private roads may affect some of the services provided to the residents such as fire protection, garbage collection, and emergency services. Access for fire and emergency vehicles on private roads can be difficult, especially if the roads are badly maintained, narrow, and/or lack enough space for turning around. As further development occurs along private roads, the possibility of conflicts between residents living along these roads with ongoing maintenance may occur. Generally, school buses will only pickup students on public roadways, which may pose a challenge for families with school-aged children who live on private roads.

Housing

There are 1,151 housing units in Ford River, and as of the 2021 ACS, 906 of those units were occupied. Many of the vacant units are used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. The majority of occupied housing units are occupied by the owners, but 111 units are rented out. 83% of Ford River’s housing stock consists of single-family homes. Mobile homes comprise the next largest portion of housing stock at 15%. 2-unit homes (duplexes) make up the smallest portion of the housing stock at 1%. The Township currently has only a couple multi-family housing units larger than a duplex. Nearly half (46%) of Ford River’s residents moved into the community prior to 2010, and nearly one-fifth (18%) moved into Ford River prior to 1990, signifying that many within the Township are long-term residents.

Housing development in Ford River since 2000 has been slow. Of the existing housing stock in the Township, only 8% was built between 2000 and 2021. Conversely, 60% of housing units within Ford River were built prior to 1980, with nearly one-third (31%) constructed prior to 1960. While an older housing stock is not necessarily inadequate

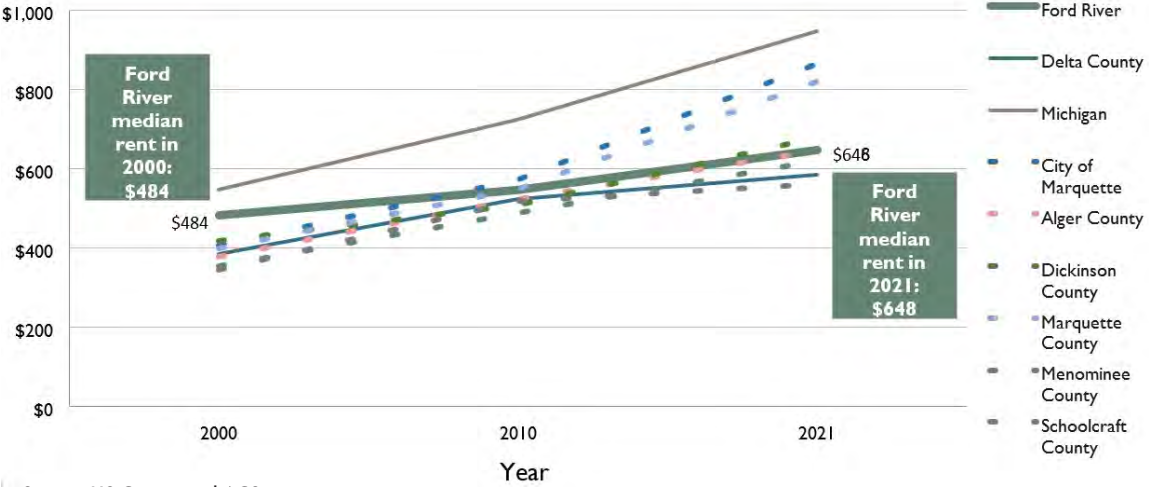
or of poorer quality than newer structures, it is more prone to deterioration if not properly maintained. Since a relatively large number of householders within Ford River are over the age of 65, when maintenance may also become increasingly difficult, some of the Township’s housing stock may be vulnerable. Generally, Ford River residents agree that stronger enforcement of property maintenance/upkeep would help improve the overall appearance of the Township. Older housing units often lack the amenities desired by more affluent, younger households, such as multiple bathrooms, large bedrooms, family rooms, and large garages. Older units often have narrow doorways, steep stairs, and other features which make them difficult for older residents to enjoy, and increased maintenance demands may also make these homes less desirable to an aging population. There are also no assisted living or community-style retirement developments in Ford River, so older adults may be forced to leave the community in order to find housing that meets their needs as they age.

Looking forward...

turn to the “Implementaiton” chapter for a list of recommendations and strategies related to the Systems chapter



Figure 11 - Median Rent 2000-2021

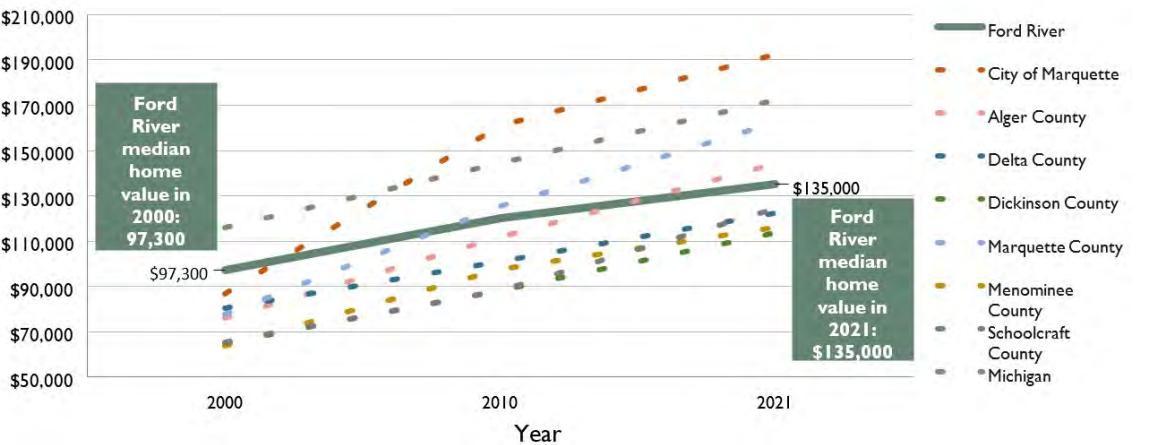


Source: US Census and ACS

Housing Costs

Figure 11 shows that, in comparison to Delta County as well as the State of Michigan as a whole, median gross rent in Ford River (\$648) was slightly higher in 2021, although median rent in all of these areas as well as surrounding Upper Peninsula counties rose from 2000-2021. Ford River had a 0% rental vacancy rate in 2021, whereas Delta County and the State of Michigan displayed vacancy rates of 3.1% and 4.8%, respectively. Higher rent combined with a low rental vacancy rate signals that there is a lack of affordable rental opportunities in Ford River. As Ford River Township is relatively low density, most of the rental units in Delta County are concentrated in the City of Escanaba and the City of Gladstone.

Figure 12 - Median Home Value 2000-2021



Source: US Census and ACS

Figure 12 shows that, when compared, the median value of owner-occupied homes in Ford River was slightly higher than that of Delta County but was significantly lower than the State of Michigan as a whole (22% less). However, Ford River’s median home value (\$135,000) shows similar parallels to Delta County, surrounding Upper Peninsula counties, and the state when looking at the increase from 2000-2021. Median home value in the Township increased by nearly \$38,000 from 2000-2021. Similarly, the median home value rose by \$42,000 in Delta County and by \$56,500 in the State of Michigan over the same time period.

Housing Demand

New housing in the Township has been increasingly popular along the Lake Michigan shoreline as well as along the Ford River. These waterfront properties are highly desirable, and prices for these parcels have skyrocketed in recent years. Concurrently, nationwide trends in telecommuting or “work from home” originating from the COVID-19 pandemic have enabled people to seek out a more rural lifestyle, as the need to live in close proximity to one’s workplace has diminished. Coupled with the availability of fiber service recently added to the Township, more prospective “Zoombird” residents, so named for their ability to work remotely via platforms such as Zoom, may consider Ford River as a community to relocate to. They may face challenges finding available homes to purchase as some within Ford River “snowbird” outside of the community during the winter.

Snowbirds are typically retirees aged 60+ who own one home in a state like Michigan, but spend the winter in a warmer, sunnier climate such as Florida, Texas, or Arizona. As more people retire within the Upper Peninsula and the State

of Michigan as a whole, and even beyond, they may seek a new, quieter community to settle in rather than their urban or suburban communities close to work. Therefore, Ford River may face pressure for more housing from a variety of different sources. However, much of the highly desirable available waterfront property in the Township has already been developed or has been retained by families for generations, so many of the most desirable parcels are no longer available. Potential buyers will now be looking at secondary waterfront properties (defined as properties that do not have direct frontage, but may still have close proximity or views of a water resource).

In addition to migration, commuter trends, the cost of land and construction, and other housing related elements, there are several key non-housing factors that can influence an area’s housing market. Quality education is one of the primary locational factors for families with school-age children. Public safety, or a lack of, can influence where people choose to buy a home and raise a family. Area access to employment, shopping, and other entertainment needs also

factor into the purchase of a home. While the cost of housing and the type of housing available are typically determined by market factors, local governments can have a powerful impact on housing in a community through zoning and other land use controls, the provision of infrastructure and services, and efforts to attract new residents.

Community engagement results related to housing show the Ford River community is generally supportive of more development of single-family residential and mostly opposed to higher-density housing types, especially those with over 9 units. Generally, residents agreed that more housing options within the Township is something to consider in certain areas, but structures should be limited to single-family homes and duplexes. With the majority of the available building sites along Lake Michigan already developed, new housing should be directed to other areas of the Township with consideration of maintaining the rustic, rural atmosphere of the community.

Housing & Tourism

Since Ford River’s last Master Plan, advances in technology have made the ability to post, manage, and book short-term rentals (defined as residential rentals for less than 30 days) significantly more accessible and convenient. Short-term rentals provide an alternative place for travelers and tourists to stay, especially in areas where traditional hotels, motels, and bed-and-breakfast establishments may be limited or quickly fill-up during peak seasons. A short-term rental may take the form of an entire home, a separate area or room within a home or above a garage, or an accessory building. Many travelers may prefer the amenities offered by a short-term rental, such as access to a kitchen, bedroom space, outdoor amenities, and more that may not be offered at a hotel or motel. Short-term rentals can provide a more “homey” environment and help tourists feel as if they are in a “home away from home.” Over the past several years, there has been an uptick in interest from Ford River residents who want to offer short-term rentals out of their properties. As of the writing of this Plan, short-term rentals were only allowed as conditional uses in the R-2 District.

Short-term rentals in Ford River can benefit the community by enabling residents to secure a passive form of income. They can also provide more space for tourists to stay within the community and patronize local businesses. Short-term rentals can also pose challenges relating to parking, safety, and noise.

Nationally, many investors have purchased secondary properties in vacation communities to rent out as a source of passive income. This can limit the number of homes available for prospective residents to purchase that may be interested in moving to the community. Ford River residents have strong feelings about short-term rentals, and it is recommended that the Township closely evaluate the costs and benefits to the community when considering modifications to the existing ordinance governing this topic to ensure the needs and preferences of the community are met.

SHORT-TERM RENTAL Considerations
(Also outlined in the Zoning Plan in Chapter 4)

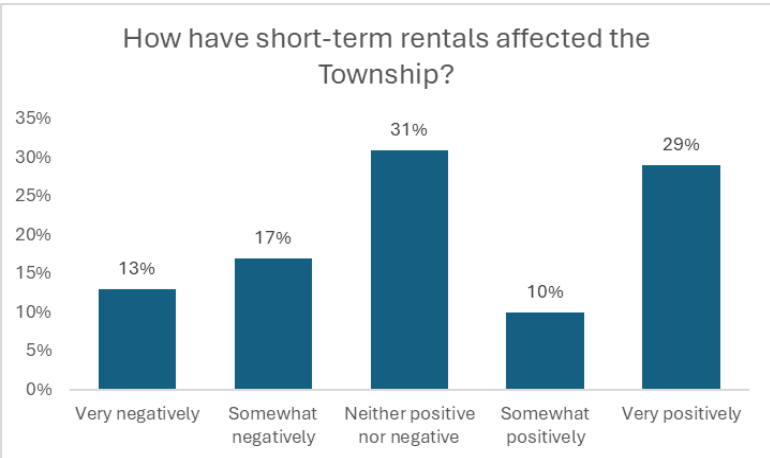
Update Zoning Code with proper Short-Term rental definitions

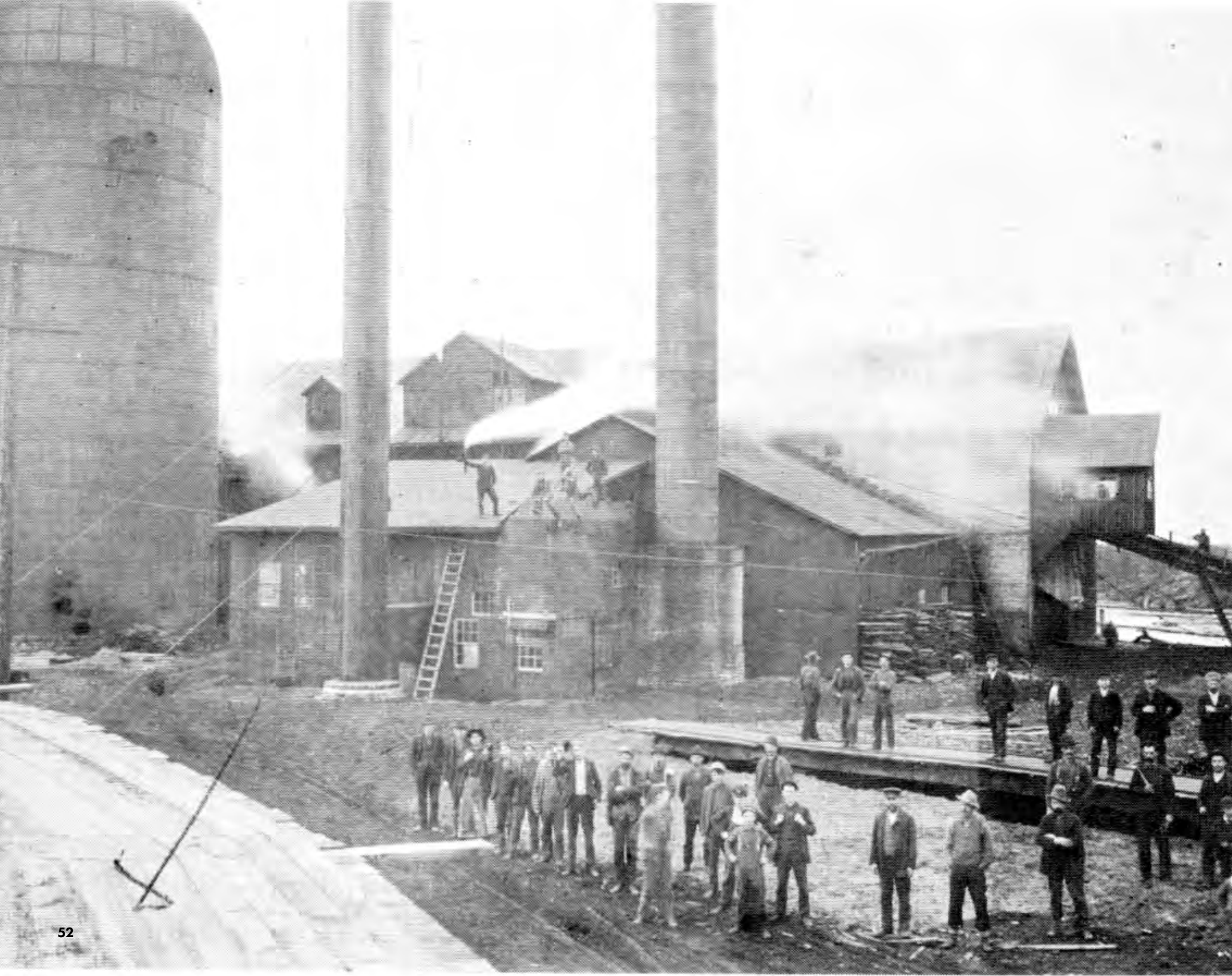
Develop supplemental standards pertaining to registration, agent management, and maintenance

Develop a separate short-term rental license ordinance and corresponding regulations

Consider a limit to license quantity and include in ordinance

Figure 13 - Engagement Results





6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Who Works in Ford River?

...and where do they work?

Central to a community's stability and growth is its economic base. Two major sectors make up an economy:

1. A basic or export sector that provides goods and services for markets outside of the community, and;
2. A non-basic sector that provides goods and services for local consumption.

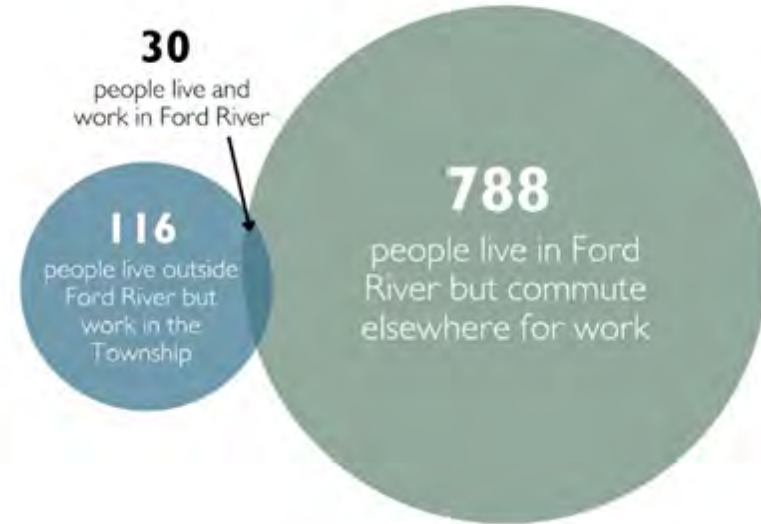
Economic vitality and balance rely heavily on the creation and retention of local basic sector jobs. The factors that influence the economic base in a community extend beyond its boundaries, increasingly so as the effects of the global economy are realized. Therefore, this chapter will not only include information that is specific to Ford River Township, but it will also include comparative data from the county, region, and state.

The changes in population of an area are generally closely related to changes in the amount of economic activity. The segment of the population that is most closely related to the economy is the labor force, which is defined as "residents 16 years of age and older, that are either employed at one or more jobs or are actively seeking employment." The employed portion of the labor force provides the primary economic support of the total population. Most Ford River residents do not work in the Township; many residents work in Escanaba and the surrounding areas. This further confirms that Ford River Township

More people commute out of Ford River to work elsewhere than to commute within Ford River.

may be considered a "bedroom community" for the cities of Escanaba and Gladstone. Bedroom communities are residential communities, often located on the borders of larger employment areas, but offer few employment opportunities in their own right.

Figure 14 - Ford River Employment Inflow-Outflow



Source: (2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates DP03)

Employment

Some of the major employers within Delta County that may employ Ford River residents include:

- Hannahville Indian Community (about 1,100 employees)
- Billerud Escanaba Mill (about 830 employees)
- Verso Corporation - Escanaba Paper Company (about 750 employees)
- OSF St. Francis Hospital & Medical Group (about 600 employees)
- EMP - Engineered Machine Products - Escanaba (about 400 employees)
- Bay College (about 350 employees)

Ford River's workforce is employed in a wide range of industries. Table 6.1 shows Ford River has a smaller proportion of its workforce in the professional, scientific and management, and administrative and waste management services industries in comparison to Delta County and Michigan as a whole. Conversely, a higher proportion of the Ford River workforce is employed in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining industry than either the county or the state. This is consistent with the area's prevalence in the forestry industry in the past. About 10% of employed Ford River residents work in the public administration industry, which is nearly double the proportion than Delta County or Michigan as a whole. 8% of Ford River residents work in the transportation and warehousing, and utilities industry, which is slightly higher than the surrounding county and the state.

18.2% of Ford River employees work in educational services, health care and social assistance

Slightly lower than surrounding Delta County and MI as a whole

7.5% of Ford River employees work in agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining

Higher than surrounding Delta County and MI as a whole

14.7% of Ford River employees work in the manufacturing industry, which is slightly lower than the surrounding county and state as a whole. This is unsurprising considering there is only one industrial use in Ford River Township (a sawmill). The Ford River Township Zoning Ordinance does provide for industrial uses and the district is designated as “reserved for future use.” The most practical location for industrial development may be near or adjacent to the Delta County Renaissance Zone located at the Delta County Airport. Locating future industrial uses in this vicinity may prove beneficial to the Township due to the relative simplicity of extending utility services that are currently located at the County Airport and surrounding area.

14.7% of Ford River employees work in manufacturing

Slightly lower than surrounding Delta counties

0.9% of Ford River employees work in Wholesale Trade

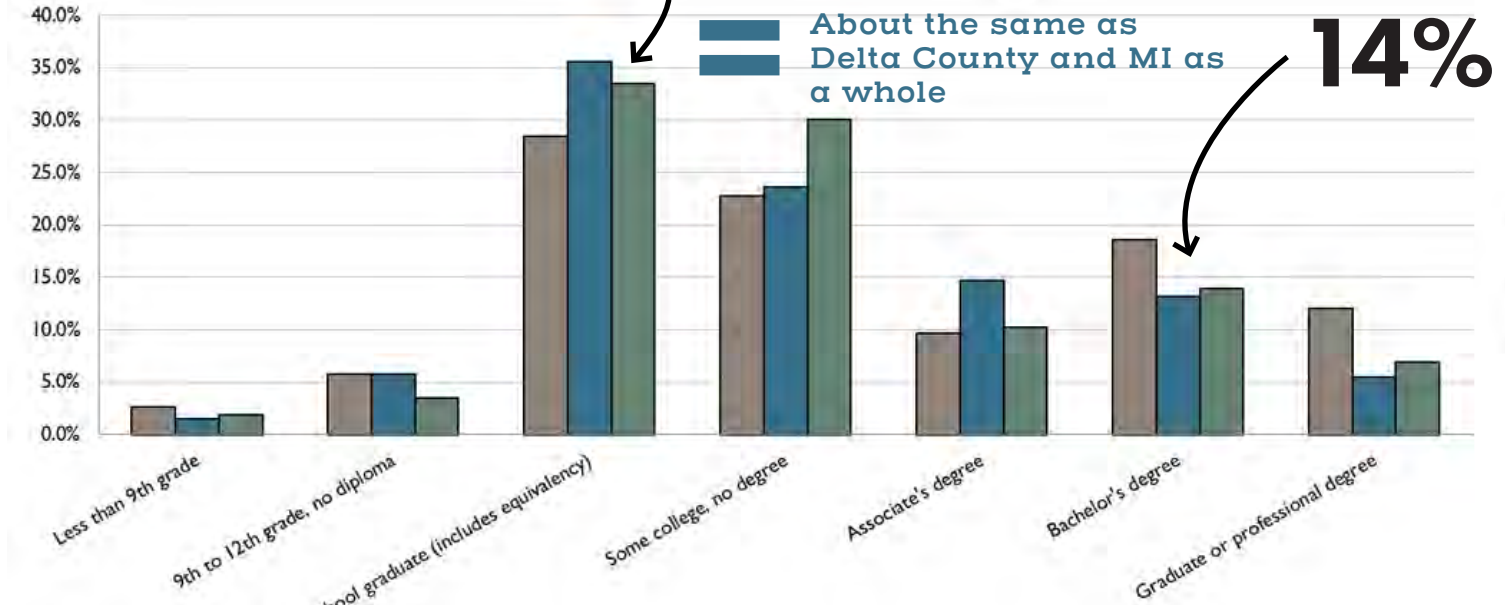
Lower than surrounding Delta county and MI as a whole

Table 7 - Employment by Industry

Industry	Michigan		Delta County		Ford River	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	51,210	1.1%	279	1.8%	58	7.5%
Construction	263,339	5.6%	1,048	6.9%	61	7.9%
Manufacturing	876,706	18.7%	2,473	16.2%	114	14.7%
Wholesale trade	108,313	2.3%	352	2.3%	7	0.9%
Retail trade	506,344	10.8%	1,998	13.1%	88	11.4%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	213,865	4.6%	727	4.8%	62	8.0%
Information	59,653	1.3%	236	1.5%	10	1.3%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	265,900	5.7%	737	4.8%	43	5.6%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste	459,228	9.8%	598	3.9%	9	1.2%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1,093,193	23.3%	3,438	22.5%	141	18.2%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	420,427	9.0%	1,848	12.1%	74	9.6%
Other services, except public administration	212,533	4.5%	786	5.2%	31	4.0%
Public administration	161,698	3.4%	728	4.8%	76	9.8%
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	4,692,409	100%	15,248	100%	774	100%

Source: (2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates DP03)

34% Percent of Ford River residents whose highest level of education is a high school diploma



Source: 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates S1501

Education

Educational and training requirements have been increasing for workforce entrants. Employers who previously required little in the ways of formal education are now looking for employees with post-high school education, primarily due to the complexity of the equipment and methods being utilized in the modern workplace. A highly trained, educated workforce is an asset in attracting employers to a community. Figure 6.1 shows the educational attainment for Ford River residents. One-third (33.5%) of Ford River residents have graduated from high school (or received their GED) as their highest level of education – slightly less than Delta County and slightly higher than the proportion in the state of Michigan as a whole. A little more than 10% of Ford River residents have an Associates degree – again, slightly less than

Delta County and slightly more than Michigan as a whole.

Proportionally fewer Ford River residents obtain a Bachelor's degree, graduate, or professional degree than Michigan residents as a whole – in fact, about 30% of Michigan residents have college or graduate degrees in contrast to Ford River's 21%. This discrepancy may be related to the employment opportunities in Ford River and in the communities surrounding Ford River. It is possible that many of the jobs in Ford River and surrounding areas do not require a Bachelor's or Master's degree, which would explain why proportionally fewer Ford River residents have invested the time and financial resources to obtain these higher-level degrees. Higher levels of poverty may also impact the ability of Ford River residents to pursue higher education degrees.

The workplace as we have come to know it has been greatly influenced by technological advancement and economic globalization. It has been predicted that one-third of the 21st Century workforce will be independent regarding location; telephone and internet services will be the only requirements. Due to the mobile workforce, areas that can offer quality living environments will be the locations of choice for these types of work arrangements. With the Township's recent addition of a fiber-optic line, more potential residents may consider Ford River as a place to live and enjoy home occupations for employment. The Township currently has regulations in the Zoning Ordinance regarding home occupations, specifically requiring a special use permit to operate in residential districts. This should be evaluated to ensure the Ordinance is not arbitrarily preventing potential residents from coming to Ford River.

Economic Development & Land Use

As with most of the residential development in the Township, the majority of commercial development is concentrated near transportation corridors. Land is designated for commercial use along M-35 in the northeast corner of the Township, just south of the Escanaba city limits. The uses mainly consist of rental cabins and associated businesses, which are mixed in amongst residential uses. There is another small concentration of businesses further south along M-35 and an additional commercial district was established along US-2, concentrated in the Hyde area, including a medical office.

Currently, the businesses located within the Township are focused in the recreation, food service, medical, and forestry industries. These include the Highland Golf Club, Breezy Point Bar, Ford River Pub, Meisters Party Store, Ford River Lumber, Cedar Hill Medical Clinic, B & D Transmission, Bittner's Excavating, Golden Acre Kennels, Lakeview Accounting Services, HR Nelson Forest Products and Nelson Well Drilling, among other hospitality and service-related businesses.

When it comes to economic development efforts, the Master Planning team heard from residents that the Township should prioritize retaining existing businesses and helping them grow, followed by attracting additional businesses. Residents expressed caution about the pace of development, with the majority feeling as though the current pace of development was about right or slightly more development is needed. Some residents expressed they felt the job opportunities in close-by Escanaba were sufficient, while others expressed their ability to work entirely remote from home, thereby not needing additional employment opportunities within the Township.

When it comes to types of businesses that residents would like to see more of in Ford River, residents identified restaurants (including fast-casual, sit-down, family, bar restaurant, etc.), grocery, and retail (clothing store, hardware store, bakery, etc.) as the top desires. Adding more of these types of businesses in the future may help provide more opportunities for those who live in Ford River to also work within the community,

while boosting the local economy. There is potential for compatible commercial development in "downtown" Ford River along M-35; vacant land is available. Future commercial development could be established along the US-2 corridor as well.

Tourism and/or outdoor recreation-based businesses would also pair well with Ford River's existing natural amenities. Tourism is an important and growing industry throughout the Upper Peninsula. What was once a short business season has become year-round due to the popularity of winter sports such as snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, ice fishing, and snowshoeing. The Ford River area is abundant with opportunities for hiking, kayaking, canoing, bird watching, and many other outdoor activities. Increasing tourism has resulted in the emergence of new businesses such as motels, campgrounds, restaurants, and specialty shops and services. The former Park Place of the North campground may be a potential site for redevelopment if the property becomes for sale in the future.

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looking forward...

turn to the next chapter "Implementation" for a list of recommendations and strategies related to Economic Development



Image Source: Visit Escanaba

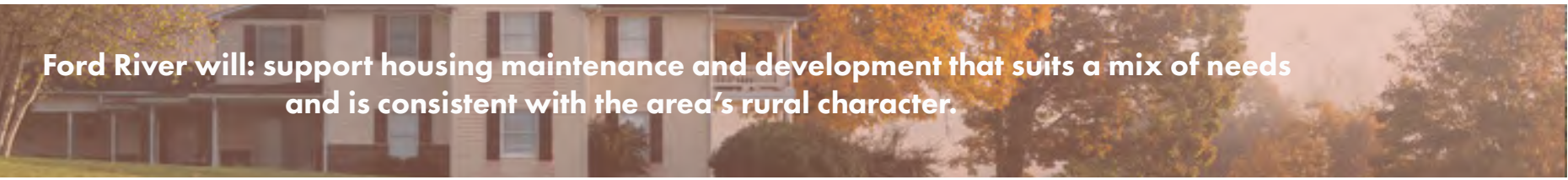
7. IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation

Throughout the preceding chapters of this Master Plan, detailed information has been presented defining the historical trends and current situation in Ford River Township. This background information has helped the Planning Commission gain an understanding of the forces which have shaped the growth and development of the Township to this point. In order for a community to have a sound plan for growth and development, it is essential that goals be set. These goals are broad statements which reflect the desired future conditions and are based on the background information, assumptions, alternatives and policy variables presented in earlier chapters. More specific objectives are then developed, defining actions that can be taken to implement the goals.

The final stage of the planning process, implementation, begins once the goals and objectives have been defined. The first step in implementation is the adoption of this plan by the Planning Commission and the Township Board following a public hearing and consideration of any public comments received. Plan implementation continues through adherence to the goals and objectives set forth in this plan. It should be emphasized, however, that these goals and objectives are only a guide and provide a long-term vision; ideas and projects mentioned are adjustable per the community's needs. While the Planning Commission has developed these goals and objectives based on the best information available and the needs of the community at a point in time, changing needs and desires within Ford River or changes in the local population or economy may mean that these goals and objectives will need to be reevaluated.

This Plan must remain flexible enough to respond to changing needs and conditions, while still providing a strong guiding mechanism for future development. The Planning Commission and Township Board, together with other groups, organizations, and individuals, can use this Plan as a dynamic decision-making tool, and should assure that the plan is referred to frequently and updated periodically.



1 Manage reasonable growth in the Township that maintains the community's rural character and connection to natural areas.

lead: Township staff, Planning Commission
investment: existing contracts and staff
impact: ●●●

2 Emphasize the area's low crime rate, cost of living advantages, and overall quality of life to attract new residents.

lead: Township staff, Planning Commission
investment: existing contracts and staff
impact: ●●●

3 Encourage alternative energy usage to improve local sustainability and strengthen energy independence.

lead: Township staff, Planning Commission
investment: existing contracts and staff
impact: ●●

4 Develop housing stock that offers a range of cost, type, and location to meet the needs, preferences and financial capabilities of the local population, including housing types appropriate for all income levels, the elderly, and persons with special needs.

lead: Planning Commission, local developers
investment: existing contracts and staff
impact: ●●●●

5 Review and update the land use regulations related to the types of housing and short-term rentals allowed in the Township.

lead: Planning Commission, Township Board
investment: new contract for zoning re-write
impact: ●●●●

6 Consider Zoning Ordinance revisions to provide for additional multi-family and senior housing, including townhouses and condos.

lead: Planning Commission, Township Board
investment: new contract for zoning re-write
impact: ●●●



Ford River will: support local employers as well as targeted economic growth that provides job opportunities and meets the basic needs of residents and visitors.

1 Encourage unique small business and low-intensity mixed-use development in Ford River.

lead: Township staff, local employers, Delta County Chamber of Commerce
investment: existing contracts and staff
impact: ●●●●

2 Encourage the balance of a “rural township” lifestyle with the potential for an increased tax base with additional low-impact business.

lead: Township staff, local employers
investment: existing contracts and staff
impact: ●●●●

3 Continue to support the renovation and reuse of vacant or underutilized buildings and land throughout the Township.

lead: Planning Commission, Delta County Chamber of Commerce
investment: existing contracts and staff
impact: ●●●

4 Develop and strengthen relationships with area technical colleges, training centers, and large area employers.

lead: Township staff, Township Board, local institutions and employers
investment: existing staff and partners
impact: ●●

5 Actively meet with area employers to discuss issues and opportunities related to their retention and expansion within the Township.

lead: Township staff, local employers
investment: existing staff and partners
impact: ●●●

6 Continue to develop compatible businesses along the US-2 and M-35 corridors and where utilities already exist or where utilities could be easily extended.

lead: Township staff, Planning Commission, local employers
investment: existing staff and resources
impact: ●●●



Ford River will: provide and support a diversity of services and recreational amenities for residents and visitors to access and enjoy.

1 Create and implement a long-range road improvement plan.

lead: Township staff, Delta County Road Commission, planning consultant
investment: new contract for transportation plan
impact: ●●●●●

2 Provide a safe, well maintained, efficient, and visually attractive multi-modal transportation network.

lead: Township Staff, Delta County Road Commission
investment: existing contracts and partners
impact: ●●●●

3 Pursue non-motorized transportation opportunities and encourage neighborhood “walkability.”

lead: Planning Commission, Delta County Road Commission, MNDRE, planning consultant
investment: new contract for feasibility study
impact: ●●●●

4 Support waterfront access improvements to facilitate expanded recreational opportunities.

lead: Township staff, MNDRE
investment: existing contracts and resources
impact: ●●●●●

5 Implement the action items within the 2022-2026 Ford River Recreation Plan, and continually update the Plan to ensure eligibility for MDNRE grants.

lead: Township staff, planning consultants, MNDRE
investment: existing grants, new planning contract
impact: ●●●

6 Collaborate with neighboring communities to share knowledge and information related to trends, costs, and benefits of industrial-scale solar development.

lead: Township staff, Planning Commission, Delta County
investment: existing resources and partners
impact: ●●

7 Pursue funding for expanded fire department equipment, gear, and vehicles.

lead: Township staff
investment: existing staff
impact: ●●●

8 Explore technological opportunities to streamline and improve Township communications and billing.

lead: Township staff
investment: existing resources or new contract
impact: ●●●

9 Consider code revisions addressing more stringent rules and requirements around the maintenance and use of private roads.

lead: Planning Commission, Township Board, Delta County Road Commission
investment: new contract for zoning re-write
impact: ●●●



8. APPENDIX



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MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission
Ford River Township

CC: Charles Detiege, Zoning Administrator

FROM: GRAEF
Brianna Fiorillo, Planner

DATE: May 30, 2023

SUBJECT: Master Plan Update: Community Engagement Results

This memo was prepared to provide the results of the online community survey and comment map following the promotion of the Master Plan Update engagement process.

I. SOCIAL PINPOINT WEBSITE

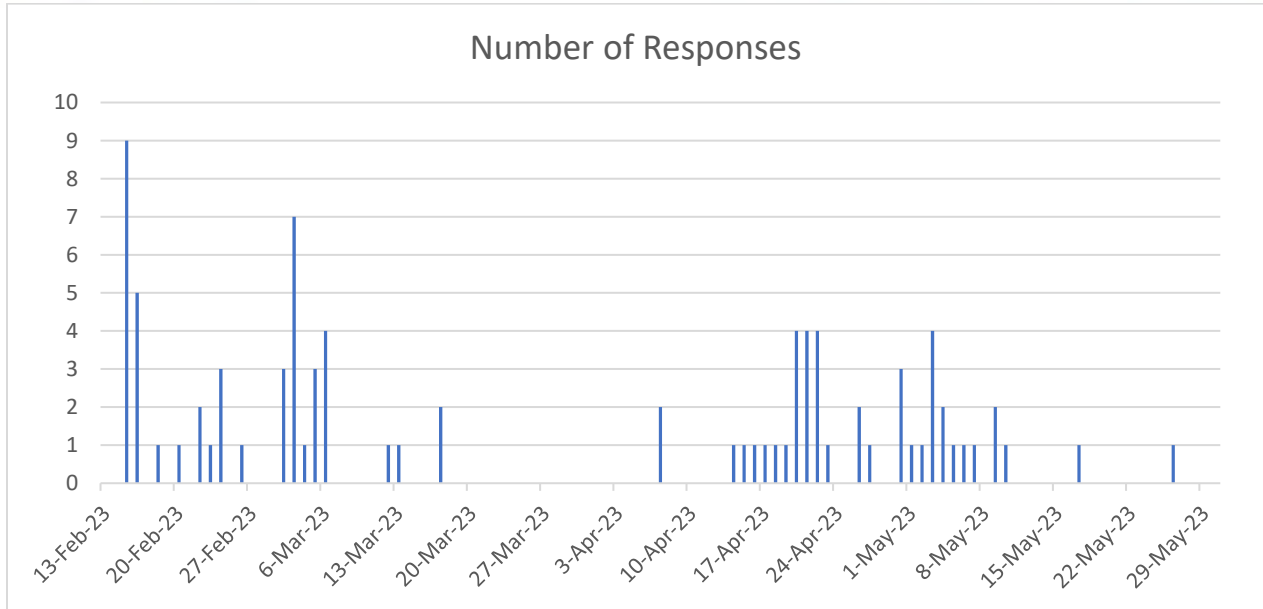
A Social Pinpoint website (<https://graef.mysocialpinpoint.com/ford-river>) was created as a way for residents of Ford River Township to provide feedback to inform the Master Plan Update. The website provided a user-friendly platform for residents to access information about the planning process, project timeline, and complete the engagement modules from any mobile device. The website was launched on February 13, 2023 and remained open for feedback through May 29, 2023. Although the community survey and comment map are closed for feedback, the Social Pinpoint website remains live for residents to check on the project progress, announcements, and information about upcoming meetings. The following table summarizes the responses on the Social Pinpoint website:

Statistic	Number of Stakeholders
Unique Users	517
Total Survey Responses:	88
Comments on Interactive Map:	19

Note: Social Pinpoint defines "Unique Users" as the total number of unique people viewing the website (generally determined by using the same browser).



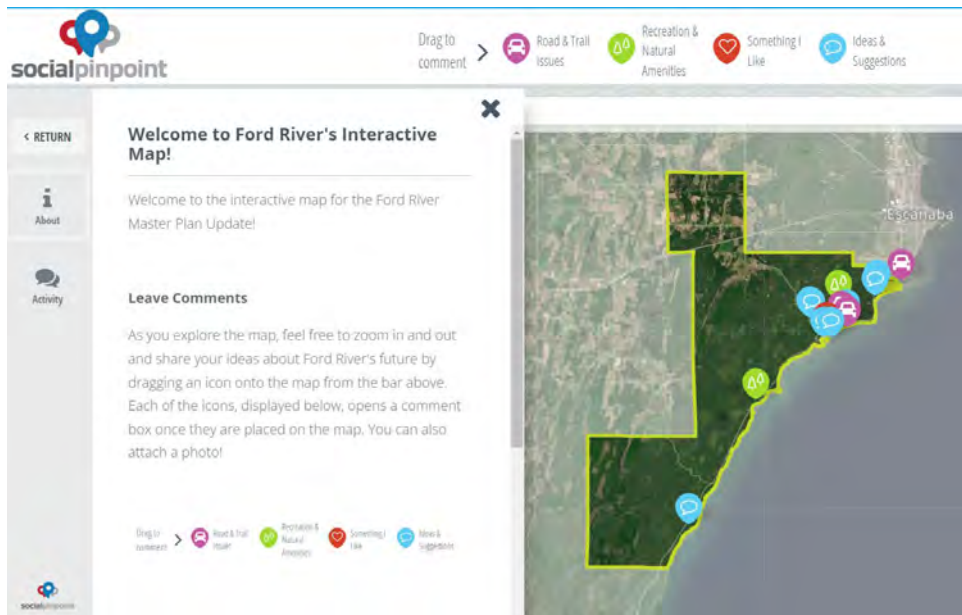
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Most responses occurred in mid-February and early March. This engagement is likely due to the Township’s promotion of the Social Pinpoint website alongside the Community Open House in mid-February and corresponding social media (Facebook) promotion of the survey launch in early March.

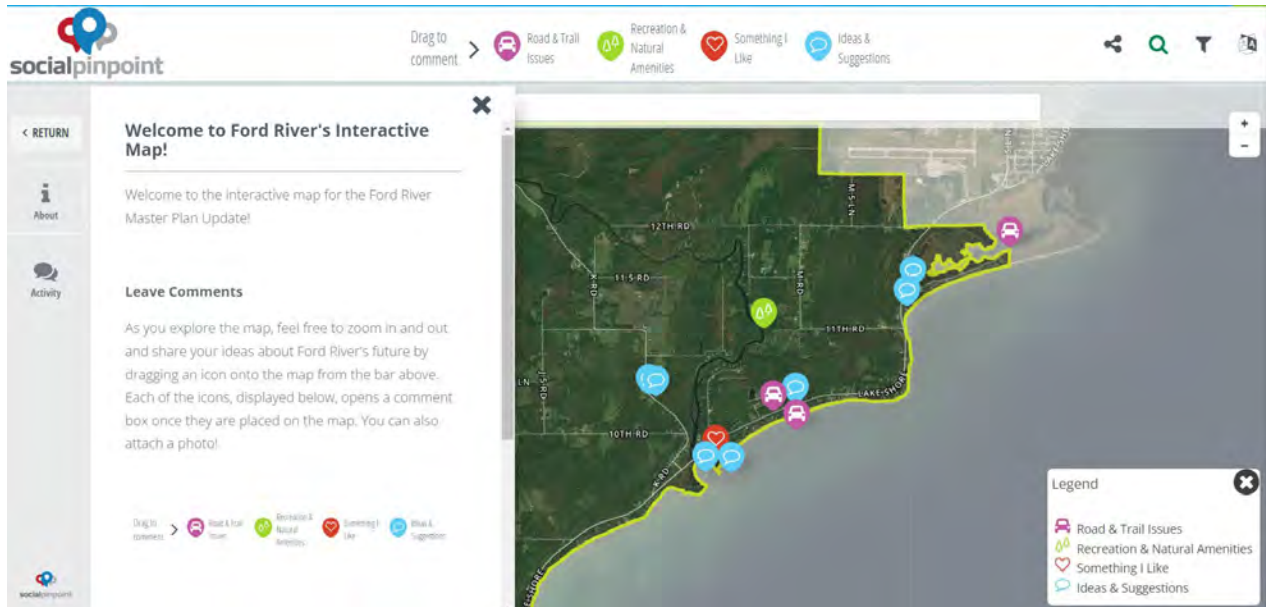
II. COMMENTS ON THE INTERACTIVE MAP

There are 19 comments on the interactive map. The distribution of comments is shown in the images below:





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Visitors to the website were able to “Like” or “Dislike” comments made by other visitors. Included below are the most liked comments:

- **Land Use:**
 - *“I would love to see FRT buy this property [former campground site] and create a revenue-generating campground. In addition, it would provide residents with a sandy beach, playground, and park. The income from camping could help offset the cost for the land. Another possible way to generate revenue would be through annual large events.” – 12 likes, 0 dislikes*
 - *“Zoning considerations for the property where the boat business currently is (and is for sale) should be zoned for a hotel at this location. On the river, near the lake, across from the boat launch, its ideal for outdoors people. Good for local businesses. Many of the historic cabins have been developed. We need to replace those cabins, especially if air bnb remains outlawed. [It’s] good for business. [It’s] a beautiful, unused spot in need of a new use.” – 5 likes, 3 dislikes*
 - *“Enforce Ford River’s existing lighting ordinance to eliminate lighted billboards too close to residences. Further restrict commercial and civic outdoor lighting (lower intensity [and] lower K rating) to protect and preserve the beauty of the night sky.” – 8 likes, 0 dislikes*
- **Transportation:**
 - *“Ford River, especially in the winter, is dangerous for any pedestrian to have any way of walking, with the lack of a sidewalk. There was a wood walkway on this stretch historically, if safety is an issue in ANY way, in light of accidents and the fatality at the store in Sept 2021, this should be a top priority. A neighborhood needs at least ONE sidewalk.” – 8 likes, 1 dislike*



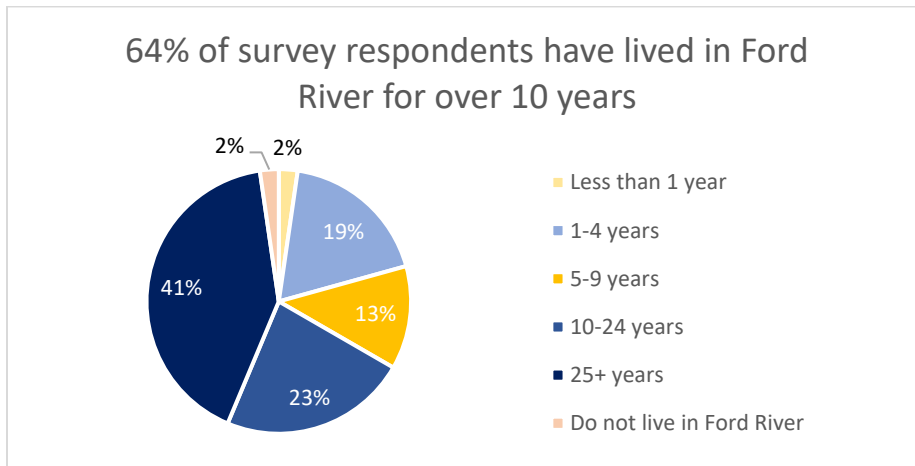
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• **Natural Resources & Recreation:**

- *“This area [just north of Island View] would make a nice small roadside park with access to the shoreline if developed with better parking and picnic tables. A kayak launch might also be possible.” – 5 likes, 0 dislikes*
- *“Possible non-motorized bridge across the Ford on State of Michigan land.” – 7 likes, 2 dislikes*
- *“Engage the county on forming a Parks and Recreation Commission for county parks. If a township has a county park within its boundaries, they would assign a township board member to serve on that commission and would represent their residents feedback relating to that park.” – 5 likes, 0 dislikes*

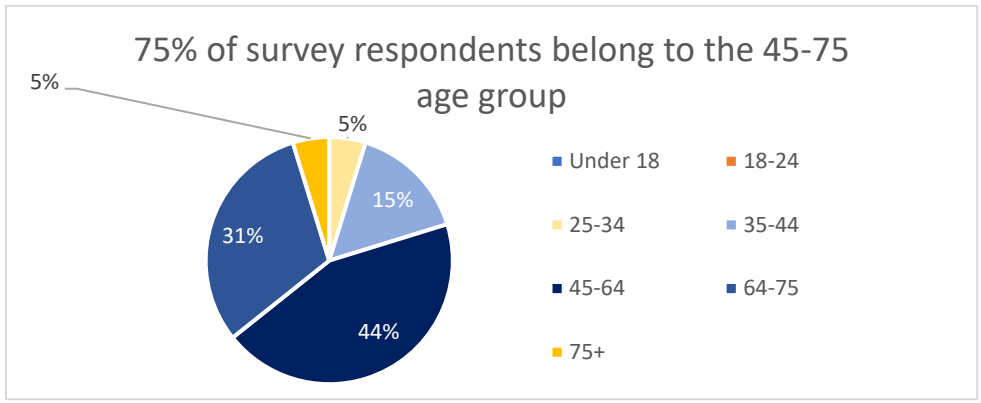
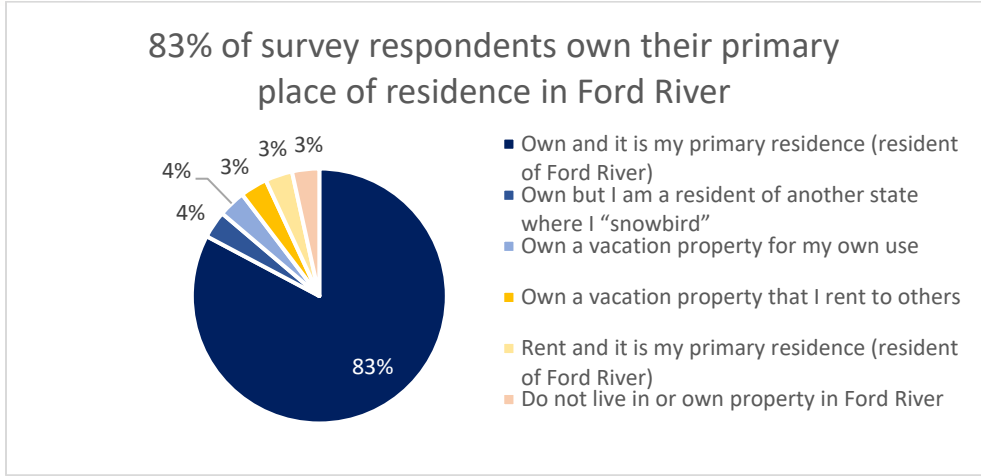
III. WHO ANSWERED THE COMMUNITY SURVEY?

The majority of survey respondents were residents of Ford River who own their place of residence and have lived in the Township for over 10 years. 71% of survey respondents belong to the 45-75 age group, while only 20% of survey respondents belonged to the 25-44 age group. Most respondents lived in a household with 2-3 adults and nearly 75% responded that they live in a household with no children (under 18).



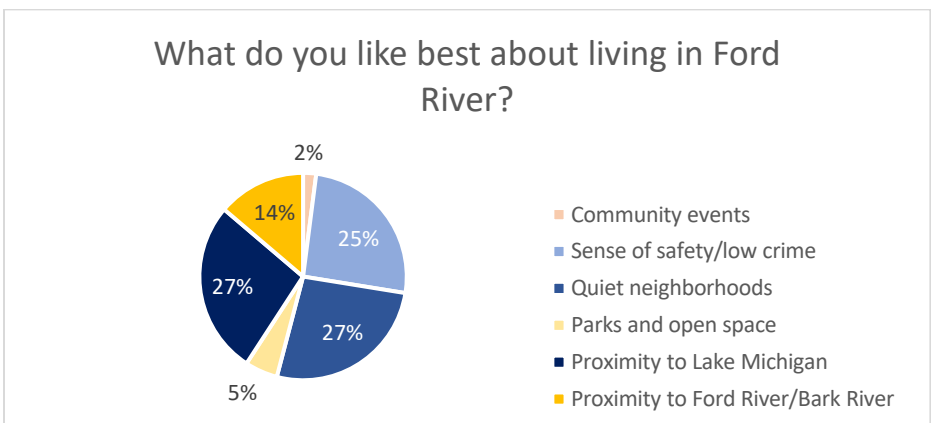


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IV. SURVEY RESULTS BY TOPIC

A. 41% of respondents expressed proximity to the lakefront and/or riverfront as one of the top things they like about living in Ford River. Other top choices were the Township's quiet neighborhoods, and sense of safety/low crime (respondents were able to pick up to 3).





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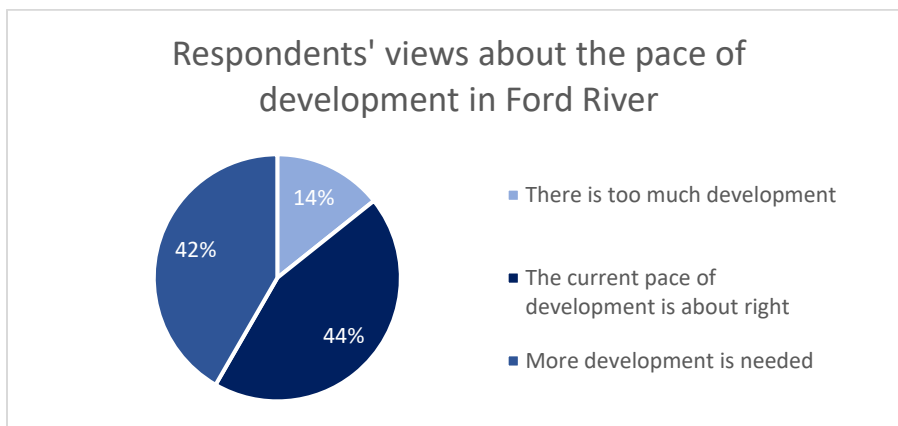
Respondents were also able to describe reasons they love living in Ford River. Responses included:

- Proximity to Escanaba (2 response)
- Grew up in the area (1 response)
- Family (1 response)
- Privacy (1 response)

B. Respondents were able to describe their ideas for improvements that would make Ford River a better place to live/work/play. The following major themes represent comments left by multiple survey respondents and are in no particular order:

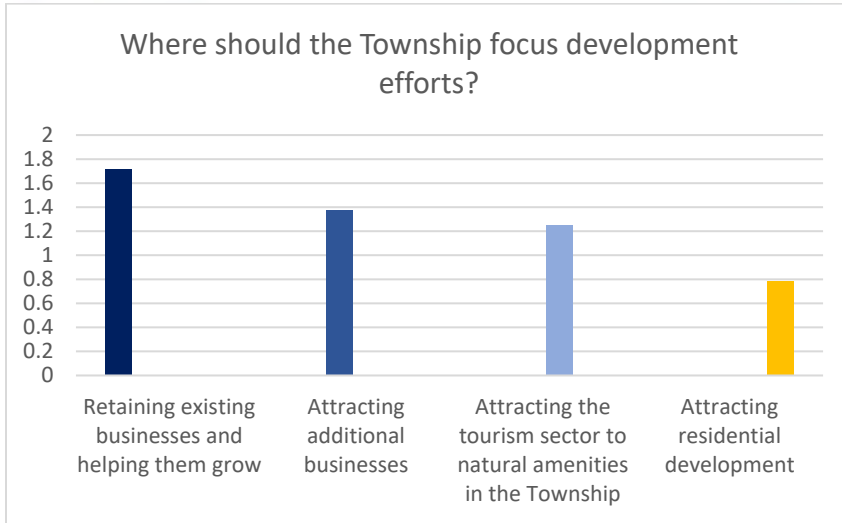
- **Natural Resources:** Access to [public] beaches/harbor
- **Recreation:** More bike/walking/hiking trails; motorized trails; activity areas
- **Land Use:** More housing options for visitors/tourists; improved property maintenance
- **Housing:** More single-family housing options; more options for short-term rentals
- **Community Facilities/Utilities:** More community events/larger community center; road surface improvements;
- **Transportation:** Safety improvements along M-35; access to river transportation (kayaking/canoeing)

C. Respondents were divided in their views about whether Ford River needs more development or if the current pace of development is about right (development was defined as residential, commercial, or industrial growth) in Ford River.

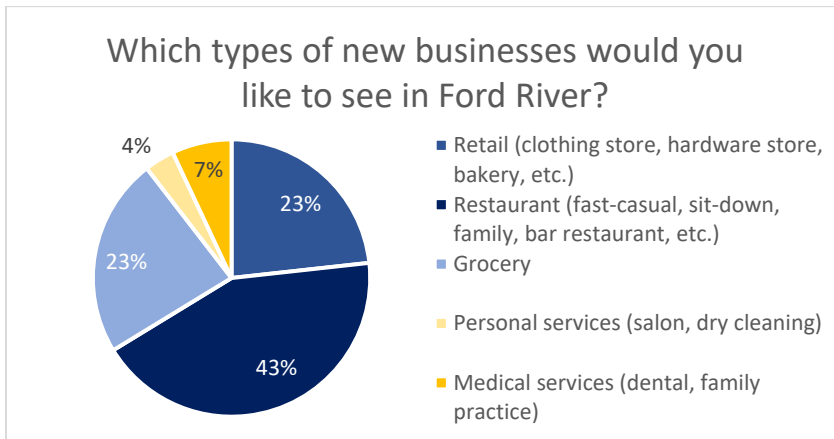




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D. For those respondents who did want to see new businesses move into the community, restaurants and retail were the top types desired, followed by grocery and personal services.



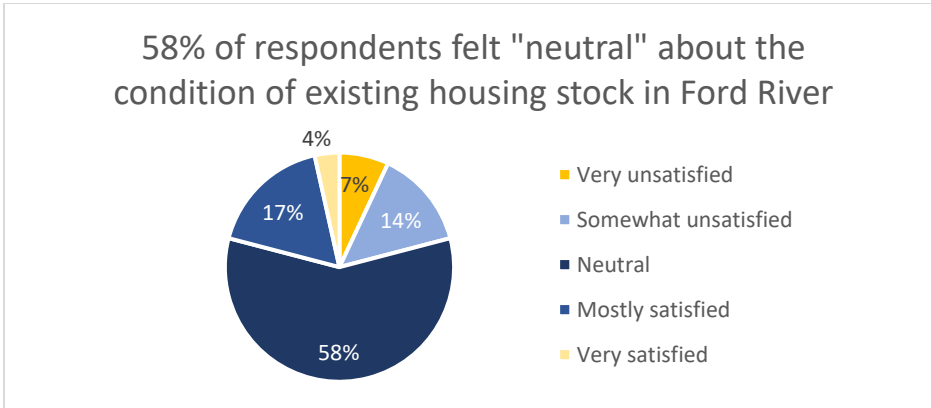
Many respondents also left their own comments for the types of businesses they'd like to see, including and in no particular order:

- Year-round hotel(s)
- Activity-based businesses (outdoor recreation, equipment rentals, etc.)
- Gas station(s)
- Coffee shop

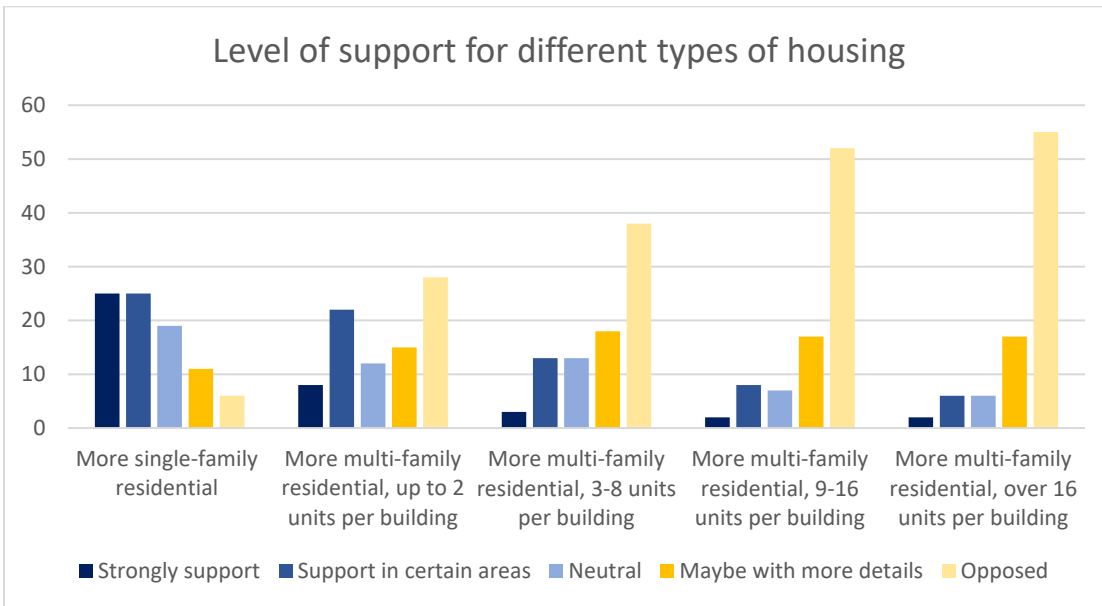


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E. The majority of respondents indicated they felt “neutral” about the existing housing inventory within Ford River.



F. Respondents were generally supportive of more single-family residential housing, and mostly opposed to residential buildings with over 8 units per building.



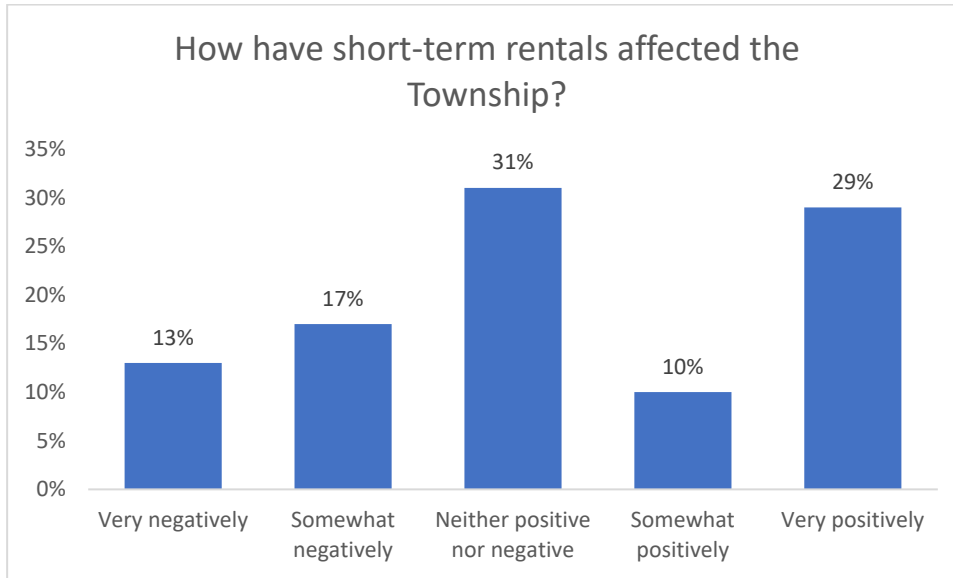
In addition, residents left comments related housing. Major themes included:

- Desire for stronger enforcement of property maintenance/upkeep
- Encouraging single-family residential development in other areas besides along the lakeshore
- Concern over expansion of water/sewer to accommodate new housing
- Maintain the rustic/rural atmosphere of the Township
- Desire to update the zoning ordinance, especially approval processes and content on short-term rentals

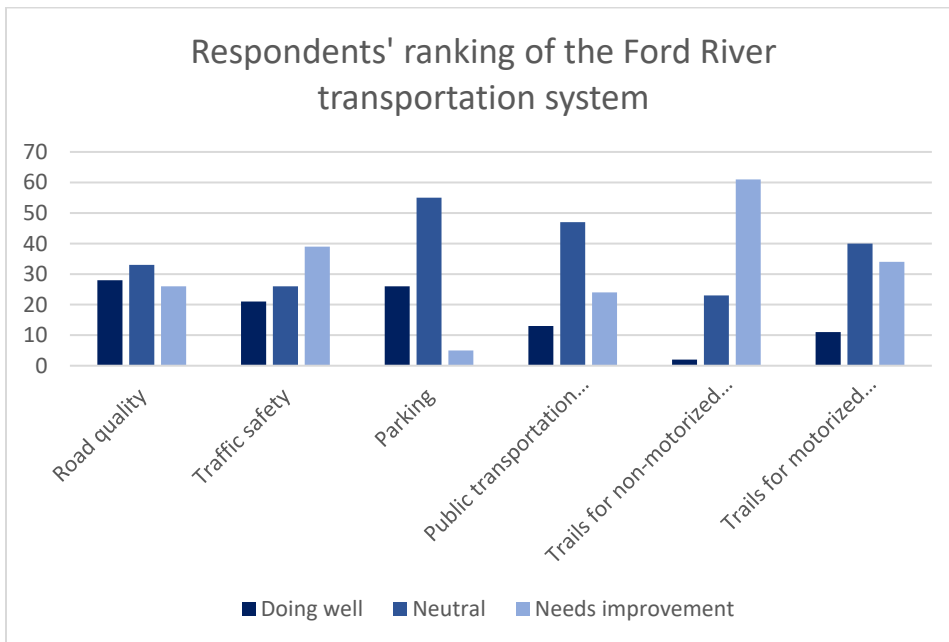


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G. When asked about views on short-term rentals, responses were fairly even split between positive, neutral and negative effects on the Township. 39% of respondents viewed short-term rentals as having very or somewhat positive effects; 31% were neutral; and 30% responded that short-term rentals somewhat or very negatively affected the Township.



H. Respondents identified traffic safety and trails for non-motorized activity as “needing improvement.”



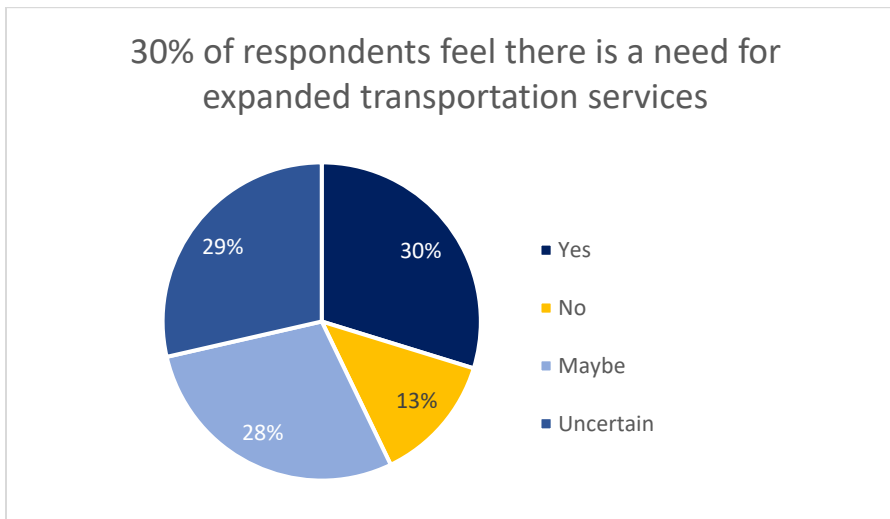


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Respondents also left comments on their thoughts for the transportation system. Major themes included:

- Desire for public hiking, walking, and biking trails
- Safety is a concern along M-35 both for bikers and those pulling out of their driveways, mostly due to speeding and semi-truck traffic
- Desire for expanded motorized trails to attract recreational users to the area
- Taxi/rideshare options are seen as being expensive or unavailable in Ford River

I. Approximately one-third of respondents felt there was a need for expanded transportation services, such as transportation for older adults to doctor's appointments.



In addition, respondents commented some specific ideas and concerns about the transportation system. Major themes included:

- Interest in seeing the Township work with the County to reduce speeds and passing along M-35
- Some respondents felt there was a need for bus/shuttle service between Ford River and Escanaba/Gladstone, while others felt there were sufficient options for transportation



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J. Respondents were asked to select which recreational amenities and activities they would like to see in Ford River (respondents could select up to 10). The following table shows the amenities that received the most votes:

Amenity	Number of votes
Kayak/canoe access points	49
Unpaved trails	40
Cross-country ski trails	36
Fishing access points	33
Paved trails	32
Picnic areas with tables and grills	27
Boat ramps	27
Outdoor ice-skating rinks	25
Baseball/softball fields	22
Restrooms	20
Playground equipment	16
Archery ranges	15
Basketball courts	15
Biergarten	15
Disc golf courses	15
Pickleball courts	15
Community center	14
Dog parks	13
Rentable shelters	10
Outdoor pool/aquatic center	10
Shade area or benches	6
Tennis courts	5
Outdoor fitness equipment	5
Skate parks	2
Football fields	1
Soccer fields	0
Lacrosse fields	0

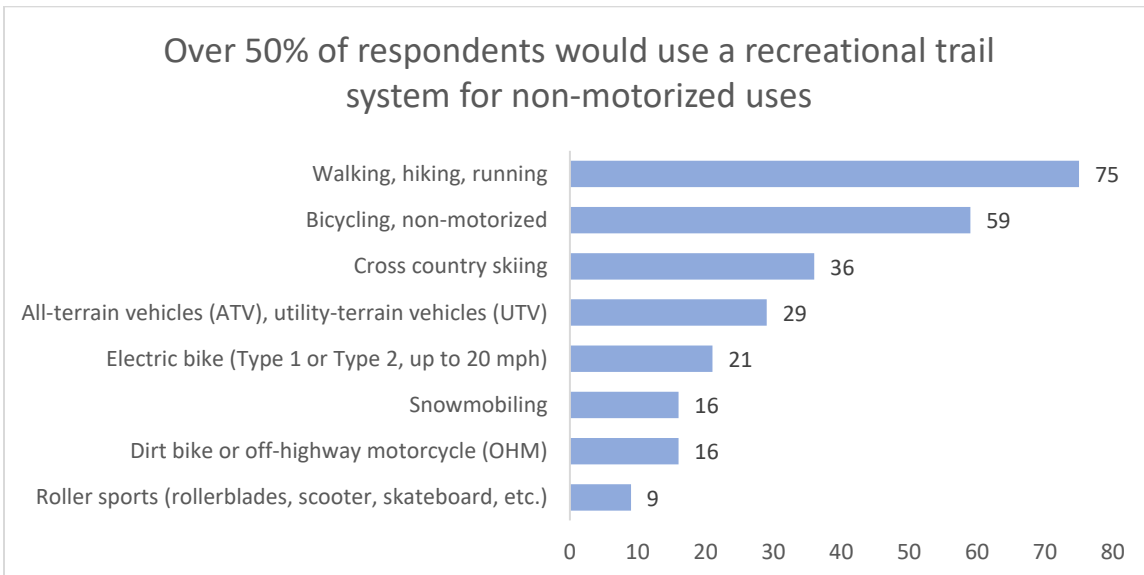


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- K. A large majority of respondents (90%) felt it was at least “somewhat” or “very” important to develop a recreational trail system in the Township.



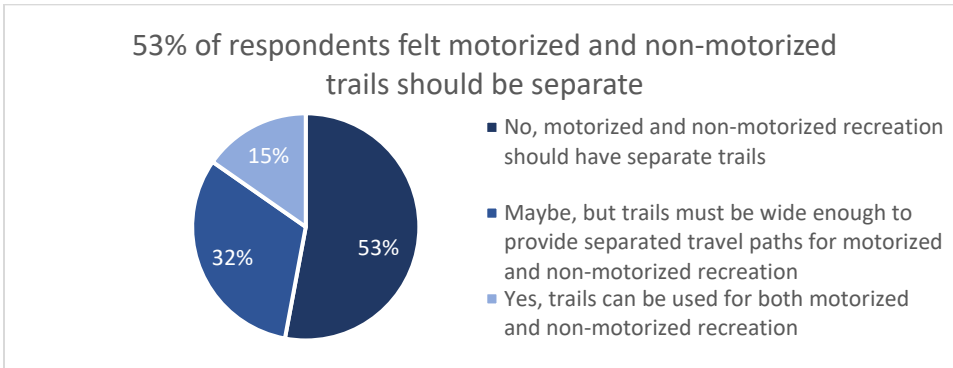
- L. Respondents indicated they would use a recreational trail system for a variety of uses, especially non-motorized uses such as walking, hiking, biking, running, and cross-country skiing.





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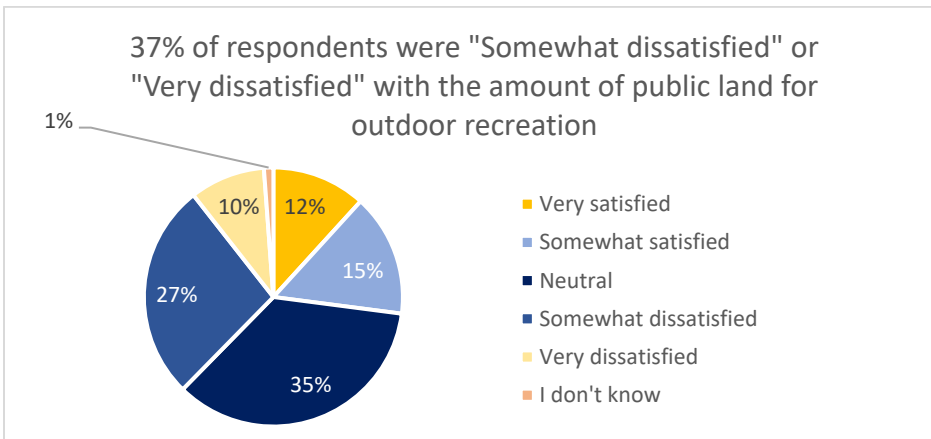
M. The majority of respondents felt that motorized and non-motorized trails should be separate.



Respondents identified many potential ideas for new trails, paths, crossings, and connections. Major themes include:

- Access points from all major roads in the Township
- Connection from Escanaba to the Ford River boat launch
- Along the Ford River, Bark River, and Lake Michigan
- Connections to existing DNR trails
- Public beach walk

N. Approximately one-third of respondents were “somewhat” or “very” dissatisfied with the amount of public land available for outdoor recreation, such as walking trails, wildlife observation, canoeing, kayaking, bicycling, picnicking, etc., within the Township while approximately one-third were “neutral” and nearly one-third were “somewhat” or “very” satisfied.





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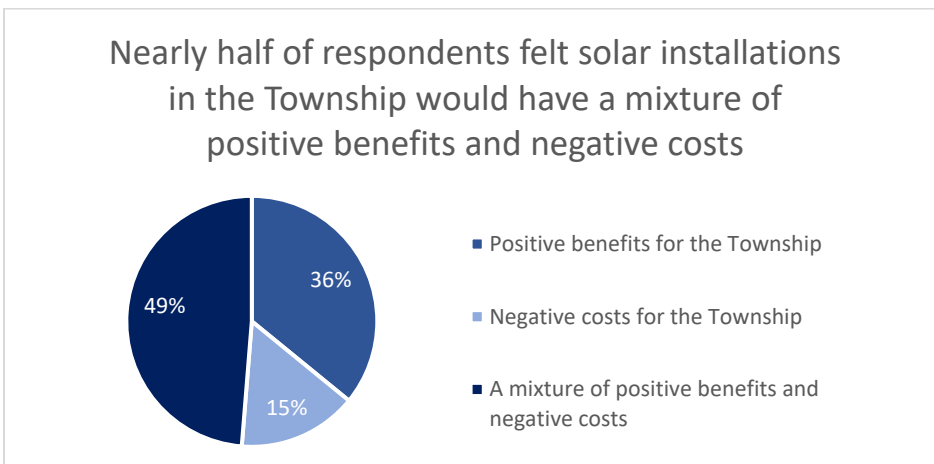
O. Respondents were asked to describe what “protecting the natural features of the Township” meant to them. Major themes included:

- Protecting the natural features and utilizing them at the same time
- Protecting natural features while also promoting growth
- Access to nature is a defining feature of the community
- Keeping the rivers and lake clean and free of trash/pollution; prevent erosion
- Protecting sensitive habitats such as bird-nesting areas, especially those habitats important to tourism
- Protect tracts of forest for wildlife

P. Respondents were asked to share their thoughts on the question: “What improvements would help increase public access to Lake Michigan and the Ford River?” Major themes included:

- Promote existing access points
- Ensure adequate parking for residents and tourists
- Provide additional boat/canoe/kayak access points with restrooms
- Provide a public beach/harbor
- Expand existing facilities at the boat launch
- More fishing docks

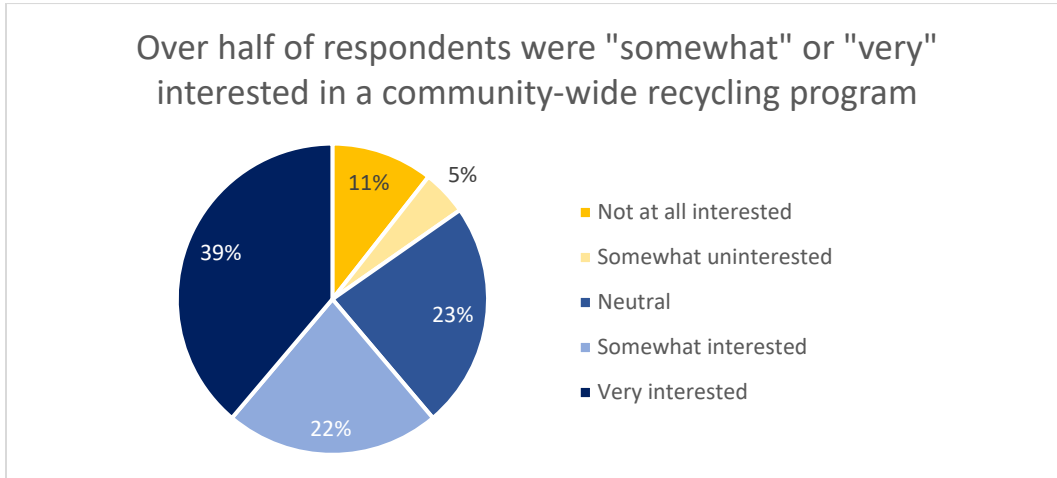
Q. Approximately one-third of respondents felt solar installations in Ford River would have positive benefits for the Township, while 15% felt they would have negative costs.





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- R. Over half of respondents stated they would be at least somewhat interested in a community-wide recycling program, while 16% were “somewhat” or “not at all” interested.



- S. Respondents were asked to provide their thoughts on the following question: “What are your thoughts on future development patterns that have the potential to change the identity of the Township?” Major themes included:
- Address water and sewer expansion prior to more development
 - Ensure any potential development complements or maintains the rural character of the Township
 - Explore ways to promote and encourage tourism to help Ford River grow
 - Clean up the existing infrastructure within the Township
 - Promote smaller, privately owned businesses
 - Address short-term rental policy
 - Moderate growth could be good for the Township
- T. To conclude the survey, respondents were asked to provide their thoughts on the following question: “Any other thoughts you’d like to share with us on the future vision for Ford River Township?” Major themes (that have not already been stated within this summary) included:
- *“I’d like to see Ford River Township become more ‘modern.’”*
 - *“I’d like to see Ford River Township to be more stop by and enjoy the community instead of a drive thru community.”*
 - *“I would highly encourage the development of a formal welcome package for new residents.”*
 - *“We are opposed to any marijuana businesses in our community.”*