

Meeting of the Sparta Township Board
Sparta Township Hall 160 East Division Street, Sparta, MI. 49345
Watch meeting Live @ [Sparta Township - YouTube](#)

September 11th, 2025

7:00 p.m.

AGENDA

CALL TO ORDER

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO AGENDA

PUBLIC COMMENT FOR AGENDA ITEMS

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES AND TREASURER'S REPORT

1. Approval of Minutes – August 14th, 2025, and Closed Session
2. Treasurer's Report
3. Building Department Monthly Report

BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Approval of Bills
2. Earned Sick Time
3. Township Hall Safety and Security-Door Locks
4. Civic Center Trade for Historical Commission Research Facility Agreement
5. Master Plan Approval for Distribution
6. Planning Commission Recommendation Bed and Breakfasts
7. Re-Appointments to Z.B.A., Mike Lockard, Andrew Barnum and Alternate Larry Goodfellow
8. Re-Appointments to Construction Board of Appeals, Gary Moody, Tim Driscoll, and Bill Taylor
9. Tree Removal Work at Fairplains Cemetery

OTHER INFORMATIONAL

PUBLIC COMMENT

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting of Sparta Township Board
Sparta Township Hall - 160 E Division St - Sparta MI 49345
Watch Meeting live @ Sparta Township - YouTube
August 14, 2025 - 7pm

Present: Supervisor Dale Bergman, Clerk Marcy Savage, Treasurer Ashley Johnson, Trustee Jason Bradford, Bill Goodfellow, Barb Johnson, and Rob Steffens. Also, attorney Michael Homier.

Also Present: Historical Society Chairman Doug Pinckey, Village of Sparta President Bob Whalen, Village of Sparta Manager Jim Lower, and Recording Secretary Sarah Fischer.

Absent: None

1. **Call to order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance:** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
3. **Additions or corrections to the agenda:** None. Motion to approve the agenda by Bill Goodfellow with a second by Jason Bradford. Passed unanimously.
4. **Public comment for agenda items:** Mercantile Bank, Karla Childers Assistant Vice President and Government Banking Sales Officer with Kathy Kelvin Community Development Officer presented Commercial Banking Services Proposal (handout provided).
5. **Approval of minutes and treasure report:**
 - a. **Approval of minutes of July 10th, 2025:** Motion by Barb Johnson with a second by Ashley Johnson. The motion passed unanimously.
 - b. **Treasurer's Report:** Motion by Bill Goodfellow with a second by Rob Steffens to approve. Passed unanimously.
 - c. **Building Department Monthly Report:** this is informational only.
6. **Business items:**
 - a. **Approval of bills:** Motion by Bill Goodfellow with a second by Ashley Johnson. Motion passed unanimously.
 - b. **Metro Act Application: Surf Internet:** Tina Clipfell provided an update on the transport line application for Sparta, noting potential service eligibility for nearby homes and future rural expansion opportunities if approved.

Motion to approve the internet services request by Bill Goodfellow and second by Marcy Savage. Passed unanimously.

- c. **Earned Sick Time:** Marcy Savage led the discussion, and the board agreed to collaborate with Attorney Michael Homier's team for further amendments. This matter tabled until next month with unanimous approval.
- d. **Michigan Class Resolution and Policy Update:** Ashley Johnson recommended the Township move to MI Class, noting strong recommendation from the Village, Cindy Dodge, and others. With Bill Goodfellow's experience collaborating with MI Class and investments in the past, they partnered with MI Class representatives to update the outdated 1998 investment policy. A minor amendment was made to item five, adding letter E; no other changes were made. Per Jeff with MI Class, a resolution is included and must be signed to move forward with Michigan Class. Motion to approve the policy and the resolution. Motion to approve the Policy, approved by Bill Goodfellow and seconded by Barb Johnson. Motion to approve the Resolution, approved by Bill Goodfellow and seconded by Rob Steffens. Passed unanimously.
- e. **Deputy Treasurer Wages:** Led by Ashley Johnson, Support the Treasurer Duty position to be filled by Christina Beach, and request for her wages to be \$20 dollars an hour. With many years of customer services and accounting experience, Christina has adapted well to the role and has already shown enormous potential and promise to the role and Township. Motion to Welcome Christina Beach and to pay her \$20 dollars an hour, was moved by Barb Johnson and seconded by Bill Goodfellow. Passed unanimously.
- f. **Elevator Repair Options:** Dale Bergman shared that option one, replace the roller guides on the elevator for a cost of \$6,967.32 or option two, to repair/replace Code items along with the roller guides for \$18,019.22. Motion for support of option two by Bill Goodfellow and seconded by Barb Johnson. Passed unanimously.
- g. **Township Hall Safety and Security:** Ashley Johnson recommended upgrading building locks due to security concerns with untracked keys and the recent sale of the adjoining building previously owned by the Village of Sparta. Dale advised separating the issues being discussed.

- i. **Issue 1 – Updating the Lock System:** A motion by Marcy Savage, supported by Barb Johnson, to table any lock system changes until next month to obtain additional quotes for either replacing the current locks and keys or installing key fobs, passed unanimously.
 - ii. **Issue 2 – Addressing the Shared Door:** Village Manager Jim Lower noted that the adjoining building, now owned by Chad Momber, will remove the shared door and install drywall on their side. The Township may do the same on their side at the Township expense. Approved by Dale Bergman.
- h. **Expansion of the Hard Drive:** Discussion led by Marcy Savage, Township's current hard drive is getting full. Recommendation by Gary Glass IT is to replace the hard drive with one sold from Amazon. Comment by Bill Goodfellow to improve from the recommended 8TB for \$169.05 to the 24TB for \$280 dollars which offers more storage space. Additionally, needing a quote for the labor to install the new hard drive. Motion by Bill Goodfellow to go with Gary for the 24TB with a second by Barb Johnson. Passed unanimously.
- i. **Civic Center Trade for Historical Commission Research Facility:** Dale Bergman led a discussion on page 4 of 16, item 9, "Future Sales Conditions," suggesting removal of sales conditions, though it might be unlikely. Bill Goodfellow proposed splitting any sale revenue between the Village and Township. Village Manager Jim Lower, Michael Homier (Township Attorney), and Historical Society Chairman Doug Pinckney provided input on the matter. Jim spoke on behalf of the Village board regarding building ownership, profit rights, while Doug shared historical context on the building sales and donations. Dale Bergman tabled decisions until next month for legal review. Village Manager Jim Lower emphasized the need for an immediate decision on the Township's position regarding the property split, and the board agreed with the Village's proposal.
- j. **Village - Cityhood Discussion:** Michael Homier (Township Attorney) drafted a legal opinion on the Village - Cityhood and 425 Agreement and stated that the board must adjourn to a close session to review the document and discuss it as it is confidential attorney client privilege communication exempt from disclosure by State or Federal law and therefore, permissible purpose for a closed session. Dale Bergman proposed that before the board breaks for a closed-door session, they hear

from the Village of Sparta 12 Mile Road on their 425 Agreement Presentation (which was item 11 on the Meeting agenda plan). The board decided to move to the topic of the 425 - Agreement Presentation from the Village of Sparta.

k. 425 Agreement Presentation from the Village of Sparta 12 Mile Road:

Jim Lower spoke on behalf of the Village of Sparta regarding the agreement in conjunction with the agreement being a partnership between all three Village, Township, and property owners. Handed out a concept plan map for the proposed land and provided amendments to his memo on the agreement, paragraph one, sentence one, changed the typo zoned R-2 to Ag-2. Jim Lower presented the request to get representatives from the Township, the Village and property owner together to hash out a finalized plan that is a compromise and agreement between all. After reviewing the concept plan and hearing the presentation, Dale Bergman summarized that, based on the discussion, the group is aiming to move the conversation to the subcommittee level, where more detailed, back-and-forth dialogue can take place. Jim Lower agreed this would be the ideal next step but emphasized the importance of first confirming whether the Township is open to considering the 425 agreement before moving forward with establishing a subcommittee. Dale leaned on Michael Homier (Township Attorney) for his opinion on how to proceed with the remainder of the meeting, and Michael advised that they could open the remainder of the meeting to the public for additional comments, but reassured that with any 425 agreement a public hearing would need to be conducted at a separate time.

- i. Village President Bob Whalen 273 River Road, spoke about the 425 agreement, emphasizing that the Village supports development of the property and that legal opinion backs their stance that certain restrictions in the agreement—such as limiting future votes or uses of the property—were improper. The Village anticipated a lawsuit and, at the property owner's request, pursued direct annexation through the county, which shields the Village but not the Township from legal action. Whalen also noted that Sparta's potential Cityhood would not include the property in question. In contrast, he shared that Jim Lower suggested returning to the Township to avoid a lawsuit, stressing that all Village taxpayers pay the Township tax and would bear the costs.

- ii. Travis Ward 2169 Sparty Lane, nearby property owner, disputed the Village Manager's memo, paragraph five, sentence three, arguing it misrepresented Kent County Corporate Counsel's position. He stated that the county's review found statutes and case law prevented it from considering the Village's annexation petition, making the 425-agreement valid and enforceable. Ward emphasized that the litigation talk was premature, as both the Township and Village are bound by the agreement. He urged the Township to wait for clarity on Sparta's Cityhood before making decisions, so all information is available for potential compromise. Ward also noted he supports development, provided it follows Township zoning under Ag 2.
- iii. Attorney Bernard Schaefer representing the owners of the Momber property, Chad Momber, and John Klamt, argued that the Township should avoid litigation over the 425 agreement. He stated the Village's annexation petition was valid, and the 425-language restricting annexation was misapplied since it pertained to the Corewell Health property, not the Momber property. Schaefer warned that using the agreement to block development could constitute an unconstitutional taking of property rights, exposing the Township—and board members personally—to liability and compensation claims. He cited case law and past legal outcomes where governments faced costly consequences. Schaefer urged the Township to focus on collaboration with the Village for a mutually beneficial resolution, noting annexation and development would increase tax revenue without harming Sparta Township's rural character.
- iv. Todd Olin 4060 Plymouth MN, a former resident now living in Minnesota, shared his experience working on the Bedford Falls project, which faced strong opposition during its annexation and 425 agreement process. He explained that despite initial resistance, the parties involved—including neighbors, the Township, the Village, and the developer—worked together to reach a compromise on project details such as density and transition. Olin urged the board to follow a similar collaborative approach for the current situation, using attorneys to facilitate solutions rather than escalating conflict. He

emphasized the importance of good faith efforts from all sides and offered his technical expertise on the current project if needed.

- v. Jim Knauf expressed concern that allowing commercial development, such as restaurants, malls, or gas stations, on the proposed property near 12 Mile Road would harm downtown Sparta. He noted that J&J Investments has already invested heavily in revitalizing the downtown area, and new development outside of it could draw people away, undermining those efforts and potentially forcing downtown spaces to convert to offices.
- vi. John Kosel 9356 Laubach Sparta, a licensed builder and engineer, argued that the property in question was purchased with known zoning conditions, and the current owners should bear responsibility for those restrictions rather than shifting the burden to the Township. He stressed that zoning and the master plan must be upheld to protect farmland and prevent uncontrolled commercial or residential expansion. Kosel warned that development near 12 Mile and Laubach could trigger further sprawl, undermine Sparta's downtown investments, and erode the township's agricultural character, particularly its valuable apple-growing land. He urged the board to prioritize the master plan and long-term township interests over short-term development pressures.
- vii. Chad Momber, the property owner, stated that when he purchased the farm in 2017, he was unaware of the restrictive 425 agreement language regarding water and sewer access. He emphasized that neither he nor the previous owner, Phil Saur, knew of the clause, and that it was not disclosed at closing or by attorneys involved. Chad argued that if he had known, he would not have purchased the property until the issue was resolved. He also noted that the Township itself rezoned the land from agricultural (A1) to A2 years earlier, and that he followed Township guidance by purchasing additional acreage and developing large residential lots to protect the southern border from further development. Chad urged the board to recognize that rumors suggesting he knowingly bought the property with restrictions are false.
- viii. Richard Ebers at 1705 10 Mile Road, lives just outside the township, stated that he does not believe the Township's role is to preserve farmland for the apple industry but rather to protect farmers

themselves. He argued that consumer demand will determine the future of farming, not zoning boards. Ebers expressed concern that the Township may be using “preserving farmland” as an excuse while restricting farmers’ ability to expand operations, such as labor camps or packing sheds. He emphasized that the Michigan Right to Farm Act was intended to shield farmers from outside interference. While noting he saw issues with Chad’s conceptual plan, Ebers said he did not believe it created public safety concerns and urged the board to focus on protecting farmers over farmland.

- ix. Nick Curcio 16905 Birch View Drive Nunica, MI, legal counsel for the Village of Sparta, clarified that while the development plan is currently conceptual, enforceable parameters can and will be built into the new agreement. He explained that the draft agreement already includes binding provisions specific to this property, unlike the broader 425 agreement. Curcio noted that additional safeguards important to the Township could be established through a subcommittee, ensuring the plan’s terms are legally enforceable and not subject to future disputes.
- x. Dale Bergman asked if it was necessary to make a motion to enter a closed session for the purpose of considering a written confidential legal opinion with the Township’s attorney pursuant to Section 15.268(1)(h). Motioned by Barb Johnson and a second by Ashley Johnson. Roll call was conducted for a vote, all aye’s.
- xi. Motion by Barb Johnson to come out of closed-door meeting, seconded by Bill Goodfellow. All aye’s.
- xii. Motion by Rob Steffens to set up a subcommittee to discuss the 425 agreement, with a second by Bill Goodfellow. All aye’s. Passed unanimously.
- xiii. Marcy Savage made the motion that Jason, Rob, and Ashley to be on the subcommittee, with a second by Bill Goodfellow. All aye’s. Passed unanimously.

7. Other information: Comment from Rob Steffens sharing that Sparta Sports Park had a little vandalism last week in the bathroom.

8. Public Comment: Robert Carlstrom, representing the Village Council, spoke in favor of Cityhood, using the Nash Creek drainage project as an example of township mismanagement. He outlined the project timeline,

noting that the Sparta Township Board petitioned Kent County in December 2020 and was liable for a portion of the project costs. Public meetings were held between 2022 and 2024, with initial estimates of \$8.9 million. By May 2025, the total cost was finalized at \$6 million, with \$2 million covered by state grants, leaving the township responsible for \$4 million. In July 2025, the township voted to pay \$600,000 in full, partly to limit funds potentially owed to the village if it became a city. Carlstrom criticized the township for poor financial planning, stating that spending decisions and lack of preparation put the township at financial risk, neglected fiduciary responsibilities, and demonstrated poor governance. He emphasized that the village did not petition for the project but still paid a portion of the costs, illustrating why cityhood could provide the village with more control and accountability over local projects.

John Kosal 9356 Laubach Sparta, a licensed professional engineer and builder in Michigan, acknowledged he was unaware of the Nash Creek project's implementation, citing COVID-related distractions but taking full responsibility for not staying informed. He recommended that the township form a citizen committee to monitor project costs, timelines, change orders, and communications among the state, county, Village of Sparta, and affected townships. He emphasized the need for collaboration between village and township residents to prevent cost overruns, missed deadlines, or poor contractor performance, ensuring better oversight and accountability for the project.

Bob Whalen, 273 River Road, commended Ashley, and Bill for transferring funds to Michigan CLASS, noting it was overdue and resulted in missed interest earnings but was glad it was completed. He also clarified that the village has never claimed to be rare, only that it is the second-largest village in Michigan, among fifty-five villages compared to 276 cities.

Historical Society Chairman Doug Pinckney 11353 Stebbins Avenue, commented on the lack of communication from the drain commissioner since 2020. He noted that previous requests for decisions or cost information were never provided, leaving the township unaware of ongoing matters. When he inquired about township costs for the 2025 budget, the drain commissioner was unable to provide answers and left the meeting when questioned.

9. Adjournment: Motion to adjourn at 9:25 by Barb Johnson, with a second by Marcy Savage. All aye's.

Submitted by: Sarah Fischer

Reviewed by: Marcy Savage, Clerk

Draft Earned Sick Time Policy

Sparta Township (“Township”) provides eligible employees earned sick time (“Sick Time”) as required by the Michigan Earned Sick Time Act (“Act”). The established Benefit Year is from April 1 through March 31. Township Trustees, members of publicly appointed boards and commissions, independent contractors, and persons determined ineligible under the Act using the economic reality test are not considered eligible employees for purposes of this policy and the application of the Act.

Frontloading

- All eligible full-time employees will receive 40 hours of Sick Time per Benefit Year.
- All eligible part-time employees will receive Sick Time based on the number of hours budgeted for their position, frontloaded at the rate of one hour of Sick Time per 30 hours expected to be worked in the Benefit Year. Part-time employees will be notified in writing of how many hours they are expected to work in a year by March 31 of each Benefit Year.
- For the first year, Sick Time for both eligible full-time and part-time employees will be prorated beginning February 21, 2025. Thereafter, Sick Time shall be frontloaded by April 1 of each Benefit Year or the date that the employee was hired, whichever is later.
- For hourly employees, time spent not actually working, including, but not limited to, time spent on vacation, holidays, disability leave, family medical leave, and any other types of leave, does not count as hours worked for purposes of Sick Time accrual.
- Exempt employees who do not record worked hours accrue Sick Time based upon a 40-hour workweek or the number of hours in their normally scheduled workweek, in which case earned sick time shall accrue based upon their normal workweek.

Use

- Eligible employees may begin to use Sick Time immediately under this policy in increments of one hour, up to a maximum of 40 hours of paid Sick Time in a Benefit Year.
- Employees may use Sick Time to care for their own, or their family member’s, mental illness, physical illness, injury, health condition, or preventative medical treatment, or for any other reason specified in the Act.
- Per the Act, family members include, but are not limited to, biological and adopted children, biological and adoptive parents, grandparents, grandchildren, siblings, and domestic partners.
- When using paid Sick Time, employees will be paid their normal wage rate, base wage, or minimum wage as established under the Improved Workforce Opportunity Wage Act, whichever is greater. The calculation of an employee’s normal wage rate and base wage excludes overtime pay, holiday pay, bonuses, commissions, and supplemental pay.

Procedure for Use

- Employees requesting time off under this policy should provide as much advanced notice to the Township as practicable, not to exceed seven days before the date the Sick Time is to begin.
- Employees who take more than three days of Sick Time may be required to provide reasonable documentation to the Township in support of the Sick Time taken within 15 days of the Township's request. Out-of-pocket expenses incurred by the employee to secure such documentation shall be reimbursed by the Township. Documentation should not include a description of the illness, assault, or violence subject to the use of the Sick Time.
- The Township shall not require an employee to search for or secure a replacement worker as a condition for using Sick Time.

Carry-Over/No Cash Out

- Sick Time may not be carried over from one Benefit Year into the next.
- Unused Sick Time under this policy is not paid out at the time of separation from employment. However, employees who are re-employed with the Township within two months of separation will have their unused Sick Time under this policy made available to them.

Administration and Amendments of this Policy

- The Township shall maintain records that document the hours worked and earned sick time taken by employees for not less than three years.
- This policy is not to be construed as a contract existing between any individual, including any employee, and the Township.
- No policy can anticipate every circumstance or question, and there may be situations where the need arises for the Township to revise, add to, or cancel this policy. Therefore, the Township reserves the right to change, interpret, or cancel this policy at any time consistent with, and with the intent of complying with, federal, state, and local laws.

D. A. YOUNG
 11385 Tebeau Dr.
 Sparta, MI 49345
 1-616-887-5776
 dayoungcw@yahoo.com

Quotation

Quote Number
10465

Quote Date
Aug 21, 2025

Page:
1

Quoted to:

SPARTA TOWNSHIP
 160 E. DIVISION
 SPARTA MI 49345, MI 49345

SPARTA TOWNSHIP
 160 E. DIVISION
 SPARTA MI 49345, MI 49345

Customer ID	Good Thru	Payment Terms	Sales Rep
SPARTA TOWNSHIP	9/20/25	Net 10 Days	

Quantity	Item	Description	Unit Price	Extension
2.00		CDVI A22KITSTB 2 DOOR CARD ACCESS KIT		
2.00		12VDC 7AH BATTERY		
1.00		UPS350 POWER SUPPLY		
1.00		PROX CARDS 25 PK		
500.00		22/6 SH WIRE		
500.00		18/2 WIRE		
1.00		TOTAL	3,194.20	3,194.20
1.00	LABOR	INSTALL A 4 DOOR CARD ACCESS SYSTEM. 2 FRONT DOORS AND 2 EAST DOORS.	2,500.00	2,500.00
1.00		-----		
1.00		ALL DOOR HARDWARE PROVIDED AND INSTALLED BY OTHERS		
1.00		110VAC SHOULD BE UPGRADED IN SERVER ROOM TO ELIMINATE EXTENSION CORD BY OTHERS.		
			Subtotal	5,694.20
			Sales Tax	191.65
			Freigh	
			- Total	5,885.85

ESTIMATE

A-E Lock and Safe LLC
3262 13 Mile Rd NW
Sparta, MI 49345-9796

csemergencylock@att.net
+1 (616) 292-4144

Bill to
Sparta Township
Attn: Racheal Shangle
160 East Division St.
Sparta, MI 49345

Ship to
Sparta Township
Attn: Racheal Shangle
160 East Division St.
Sparta, MI 49345

Estimate details

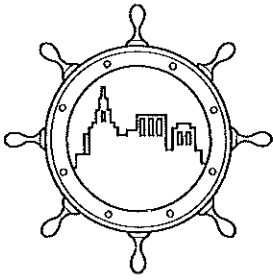
Estimate no.: 1001
Estimate date: 08/25/2025
Expiration date: 09/24/2025

#	Product or service	Description	Qty	Rate	Amount
1.	Trip Charge	Trip Charge	1	\$70.00	\$70.00
2.	Labor		1	\$75.00	\$75.00
3.	Cylinder change	cylinder change Master Key only	7	\$10.00	\$70.00
4.	Cylinder change	cylinder change K/MIK	4	\$12.00	\$48.00
5.	Set up key	1st Set up key	2	\$5.00	\$10.00
6.	Dup key	Sargent LA 5 PIN	13	\$2.50	\$32.50
				Total	\$305.50

Expiry date 09/24/2025

Accepted date

Accepted by



Fresh Coast Planning

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MEMORANDUM

To: Sparta Township Board of Trustees
From: Kevin Yeomans
Date: 8/13/2025
Re: Master Plan – Distribution of Master Plan

The Planning Commission has been working through a review and update of the Sparta Township Master Plan (the "Master Plan"). Attached is a draft of the Master Plan for the Board to review. The draft has been reviewed by Township Legal Counsel, and all recommended changes from legal counsel were accepted by the Planning Commission.

If the Board finds the proposed Master Plan acceptable, we need you to approve the Master Plan for distribution. Distribution of the Master Plan includes letters being sent to surrounding municipalities and a required 63-day comment period. After the distribution period is complete the following steps will need to be taken before the Planning Commission can formally adopt the Master Plan.

1. Comments received during the distribution period are shared with the Planning Commission and they will determine whether to make any further changes to the Master Plan.
2. The Planning Commission will then hold a public hearing on the Master Plan.
3. After the conclusion of the public hearing, the Planning Commission will determine whether any additional changes are necessary, or they may adopt the Master Plan as written.

Potential Motions

Pending the Board's review of the Master Plan the following motions may be used.

Motion 1: Distribute as Written

Motion to approve the Master Plan for distribution.

Motion 2: Return the Master Plan to the PC

Motion to send the Master Plan back to the Planning Commission in order to address the following concerns:

- Concerns identified by the Board of Trustees

Motion 3: Table for Review

Motion to table review of the Master Plan until a future meeting to provide Board Members with more time to review the Master Plan.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.

KLY
Planner

CC: Terry Hartman, Planning Commission Chair

Sparta Township

2025 MASTER PLAN

Planning Commission:

Terry Hartman – Chairperson

Tim Driscoll – Vice-Chairperson

Linda Anderson – Secretary

Don Doyle – Member

Dale Flanery – Member

Ken Humphreys – Member

Barb Johnson – Member

Board of Trustees:

Dale Bergman – Supervisor

Marcy Savage – Clerk

Ashley Johnson – Treasurer

Jason Bradford – Trustee

Bill Goodfellow – Trustee

Barb Johnson – Trustee

Rob Steffens – Trustee

With Assistance By:



Fresh Coast Planning

Sparta Township – 160 E. Division Street

Sparta – Michigan – 49345

Kent County

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INTRODUCTION & COMMUNITY PROFILE

Preface

In accordance with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Act 33 of 2008, as amended, this Master Plan was created to serve as a guide for growth and development within Sparta Township (the "Township"). The Master Plan is a policy tool used by Township officials to coordinate growth and to serve as the basis for zoning. It guides the location and future arrangement of agricultural, industrial, residential, commercial, and recreational areas. These locations must consider a multitude of factors such as utilities and infrastructure, existing land use, physical characteristics of the land, traffic volumes and traffic routes, as well as environmental limitations.

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act specifically provides townships with the authority to prepare and officially adopt a master plan. The Township's Master Plan functions as an official advisory policy statement for the orderly and efficient use of land. The Master Plan provides the coordination of land uses with other land uses, with streets, and with other necessary public infrastructure. The Master Plan also provides the legal and logical basis for local zoning, subdivision design, and public improvement plans, and for facilitating and guiding the work of the Sparta Township Planning Commission (the "Planning Commission") and the Sparta Township Board (the "Township Board"). It is also a means of communicating to surrounding communities, private organizations, and individuals about how they need to relate their future development plans and building projects to the official plans of the Township.

Despite its purpose as a policy document, it is important to recognize that the Master Plan is general in scope. It is not always intended to establish the precise boundaries of land use areas or exact locations of future uses. Rather, the Master Plan is an organized approach to analyzing development issues and proposing strategies to address these issues. Its function is to guide growth, providing a framework to ensure that future detailed decisions for development can be made based on a community-wide perspective. Given that the needs and desires of the community change over time, the Master Plan must be regularly reviewed and periodically updated. The Master Plan projects more than twenty years into the future and must be revisited at least every five years to ensure its legitimacy.

Community

Physical and environmental conditions establish limitations on how some areas of the Township will develop. The physical and environmental makeup of the Township influences the population, housing, economic, and labor force composition of the community. Given likely continued efforts to convert farmland to residential or commercial properties, demands will continue for additional infrastructure, yet also for the preservation of the natural environment. The Master Plan must therefore establish future residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and recreational areas within the Township in order to adequately address the needs of the community as a whole and prevent incompatible uses.

Sparta Township is located in northwest Kent County and is approximately 33.5 square miles in size. The Township is bounded on the north by 16-Mile Road, on the east by Division Avenue, on the south by Ten Mile Road, and on the west by Kenowa Avenue.

Sparta Township is a part of the Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area. According to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, as of July 1, 2024, the City of Grand Rapids is the fastest growing economy in the United States of America. This growth ripples through the region, creating demand for residential housing and

commercial development. Sparta Township is located approximately 16.5 miles or a 25-minute drive from the City of Grand Rapids. Primary access to and from Grand Rapids is via M-37, which traverses the Township in primarily a north-south direction.

Two natural characteristics that have played a major role in the development of the Township, both historically and today, are the Rogue River which lies in the eastern portion of the Township and the concentration of prime farmland soils in areas west of M-37 (the "Ridge") and areas north of the Village of Sparta. The Rogue River and prime farmland soils have helped create a community with a rich agricultural and rural character. In order to protect the community's agricultural and rural character, the Township has historically encouraged commercial and industrial development to be focused in the Village of Sparta; with residential development and some commercial development encouraged east of M-37, west of the Rogue River, and south of the Village of Sparta.

Other characteristics that play a significant role in the development of Sparta Township are M-37, the active rail line, and the Sparta Municipal Airport which lies in the southeast portion of the Township.

How to Use this Plan

For each land use or related chapter, the Master Plan provides a purpose statement, general description of appropriate uses, and recommendations which form the basis for future development. The purpose statement, general description, and recommendations are designed as follows:

- Purpose Statement – Identifies the purpose and intent of the land use classification or community attribute.
- General Description of Appropriate Uses – Provides examples of uses that may be appropriate within each land use classification.
- Goals – Identifies the goals in list format for ease of use when reviewing land use and zoning ordinance amendment proposals.
- Recommendations – Provides recommendations on how the Township may help promote and create the desired future state of the land use as identified in the Purpose Statement.

General Goals and Objectives of Land Use Policy in Sparta Township

The listed items below are the overarching goals and objectives of future land use development within the Township. They are intended as a way to tie the individual land use classifications and community attributes together and are used as part of the foundation for the creation of other content within this plan.

- Develop policies and regulations designed to protect and preserve the rural, agricultural, and natural assets of the community.
- Develop policies and regulations designed to encourage the concentration of development near the Village of Sparta.
- Develop policies that will increase residents' access to commercial services and goods within Sparta Township or the Village of Sparta.
- Ensure that the above listed policies are balanced to allow for continued residential growth while protecting the rural, agricultural, and natural assets of the community.
- Develop policies designed to preserve the agricultural look and feel of the community.
- Develop policies that will require new developments to be designed in such a way that they preserve or enhance the agricultural and rural character of the community.
- Develop policies that will preserve or enhance natural areas within the Township.

Definition of Terms

Given the value of preserving agricultural and natural areas for the Sparta Township community, the following terms are recognized as defined below, in order to streamline the content of the Master Plan.

- *Rural Character* – is recognized as the natural features of the earth that minimize the visual exposure of buildings, structures, or other man-made features and which create scenic character. It is also recognized as the natural features of the earth that provide environmental buffers and/or habitat that is characteristic of the Township. Such features include:
 - Woods, woodlots, forest areas, and trees
 - Wetlands
 - Natural vegetation
 - Wildlife habitat
 - Natural field areas
 - Scenic vistas

Rural Character also includes farmland, which is recognized as part of the natural features that are organized and managed by people.

- *Open Space* – is recognized as areas of land unoccupied by buildings, structures, or other man-made features, that are preserved to be unoccupied by buildings, structures, or other man-made features within a project. Open Space is not intended to include displays of art or other cultural features; bridges, signage, utilities, and other essential service structures; or grade level features such as ponds.

CHAPTER ONE: AGRICULTURAL USES

Purpose Statement

Based on feedback received as part of the Master Plan community input survey conducted in early 2024, the preservation of natural areas and farmland is a top priority for the community. Given this, the primary intent and purpose of the Agricultural Land Use Classification is to protect prime agricultural areas based on farming best practices and farming operations.

The secondary intent and purpose of the Agricultural Land Use Classification is to protect and preserve Open Space and the Rural Character of the community.

General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

The primary or principal uses intended for Agricultural lands are cropland, pastureland, rangeland, forest land, and other similar uses. Any other uses within agricultural lands should be designed to promote and facilitate the primary intended uses.

Any non-farm use should be located and designed so as to protect farmland and natural areas and the rural character of these lands. Further, non-farm uses should be directed to occur in areas that are classified as Rural Agriculture.

Goals

- Preserve lands suitable for agricultural use in the Township and manage growth to minimize the encroachment of residential, commercial, and industrial uses into areas valued for agricultural purposes.
- Plan for and guide new development in a manner which preserves the most significant natural features in the Township, as well as the rural views and character.
- Preserve woodland and wetlands associated with farms which are valuable as water retention and groundwater recharge areas, and as a habitat for plant and animal life.
- Prevent dense residential or commercial developments west of M-37 to protect premature development and loss of farmland.
- Encourage accessory agritourism uses that support local farmers and growers by promoting individuals to visit the area and buy from local farmers and businesses.

Recommendations

- Continue to support zoning regulations which restrict non-farm development in areas consisting primarily of prime farmland; in general, these areas consist mainly of those lands west of M-37.
- Develop zoning regulations which make lands which are less suitable for agriculture use more attractive to develop than prime agricultural land.
- Promote agriculture as a strong component of the local economic base.
- Periodically review zoning ordinance regulations to ensure they are not negatively impacting the safe, efficient, and financial feasibility of farming operations.
- Periodically review the Prime Agricultural Preservation, Agricultural, and other zoning districts to ensure the regulations complement each other and provide for the protection of farming, Open Space, and the orderly development of the community.

- Review and develop lot area, width, depth, and other regulations to ensure parcels are developed and oriented to protect the rural image and blend development with the natural landscape.
- Encourage soil conservation practices, the prudent use of fertilizers and pesticides and other means of conserving wildlife habitats, wetlands, and woodlands.
- Consider adopting regulations which require the preservation of a natural vegetation filtration strip along lakes, rivers, and streams.
- Review and develop regulations to accommodate and protect wildlife corridors.
- Periodically review the zoning ordinance to ensure that the number and location of new dwellings permitted to be built within Agricultural lands reflects the community's priorities.
- Periodically review zoning ordinance provisions pertaining to "value-added" opportunities in the Agricultural District, to ensure that regulations are current, consistent across uses, and support activities such as farm markets, processing of products for food or beverage, recreation and tourism, and other agricultural enterprises.

CHAPTER TWO: RESIDENTIAL USES

Purpose Statement

The primary intent and purpose of residential land uses is to provide people with a range of residential living styles that provide individuals and families with the opportunity to live in a way that meets their needs and desires in a manner that is safe, affordable, and enhances a sense of community.

Further, in recognizing the high demand for housing in Western Michigan and the importance of residential growth in supporting the local economy, the Township encourages limited residential growth in appropriate areas of the Township.

Where the preservation of prime agricultural lands conflicts with the development of new housing developments, the goal of preserving prime agricultural land should generally prevail.

General Description of Appropriate Land Use

Residential land uses vary in terms of densities and intensity of land use. The denser a residential land use is, the more intense its use of the land and the land's resources. As such, denser residential uses such as apartments, multi-family housing, and residential developments with densities greater than one unit per acre should be located where public utilities and infrastructure are available, with less dense residential uses being located in areas that are not near public utilities and private well and septic systems are able to be safely installed, used and maintained.

Goals

- To create attractive, safe, and convenient residential environments.
- Provide for a variety of housing opportunities near schools, parks, utilities, and other facilities determined desirable or necessary for community involvement.
- Provide housing for a variety of income levels and needs.
- Limit mobile homes located within mobile home parks to 20% of the total number of dwelling units within the Township, to ensure a balance in housing types.
- Direct residential development to occur east of M-37 and west of the Rogue River in areas that are able to connect to public utilities and services.
- Discourage residential development in areas with Prime Farmland Soils.
- Ensure that new housing developments are constructed and designed in such a way that preserves and enhances the rural and agricultural character of the community.
- Ensure that residential land uses are organized in such a way that they are harmonious with agricultural areas, natural areas, and the existing character of the surrounding area.
- Ensure the preservation of open space, wildlife habitats, and recreation opportunities.

Recommendations

- Develop standards to encourage that the highest concentrations of residential development be located where the greatest potential exists for public utilities and services.
- Establish density limits with ranges or variations that are consistent with the natural capacity of soils to handle on-site septic systems, and which promote the preservation of the Township's natural resources and rural and suburban qualities.

- Establish development design standards that utilize small lot, cluster development where appropriate and which require that open space and existing roadside views be preserved.
- Develop incentives that require creative design of residential developments to set aside suitable portions of land for the preservation of natural features, open space accessible to all people, neighborhood parks, and road easements for non-motorized paths.
- Establish landscaping guidelines for existing and future residential development.
- Develop a mixed use residential/commercial zoning district that will apply to lands located south of the Village as identified on the Master Plan Map.
- Develop standards to encourage interconnectivity with existing sidewalks, non-motorized paths, open space, and parks.
- Encourage development layouts that blend with the natural features and existing physical attributes.
- Review and develop standards to encourage, where appropriate, light pollution regulations to preserve the night sky.
- Review and develop regulations to accommodate and protect wildlife corridors.
- Coordinate with the Village of Sparta to encourage new residential developments with densities greater than one unit per acre to connect to public water, sanitary sewer, stormwater services, and existing motorized and non-motorized transportation infrastructure.
- Periodically review standards for residential development in agricultural areas to ensure residential uses are compatible with existing and future agricultural uses.
- Review minimum dwelling requirements to ensure that the Township allows for a variety of housing styles and methods of construction where appropriate.

CHAPTER THREE: COMMERCIAL USES

Purpose Statement

The intent and purpose of commercial uses is to provide residents and visitors with the goods and services they need or want. The purpose of commercial areas within the Township is to encourage diversified businesses that offer people a variety of goods and services in convenient locations.

General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

Ranging from grocery stores and gas stations to restaurants and automotive repair facilities, there are a variety of appropriate local commercial uses that can provide goods and services to individuals. Recognizing that different commercial uses place varying levels of demand on public infrastructure (roads and utilities), more intense commercial land uses should be designed and located in areas where the appropriate public infrastructure exists.

Goals

- Identify and provide for the service and shopping needs of the Township's residents and visitors in suitable locations which will provide a safe and efficient traffic circulation pattern.
- Work with the Village of Sparta to ensure a unified commercial district that reflects a high quality of development along Sparta Avenue.
- Encourage the development of a variety of commercial uses.

Recommendations

- Develop a Commercial/Industrial zoning district that will apply to lands adjacent to portions of Sparta Avenue south of the Village of Sparta.
- Develop a mixed use residential/commercial zoning district that will apply to lands south of the Village as identified on the Master Plan Map.
- In order to minimize traffic congestion and hazards, develop regulations which require the shared use of commercial driveways and access roads, limit the number and spacing of driveways, and encourage the use of frontage roads or service drives.
- Review and develop regulations for setbacks, landscaping, architectural features and designs, and performance standards into the Township Zoning Ordinance that will achieve a high standard for commercial development which is aesthetically appealing, and which operates in a safe and efficient manner.
- Review regulations for pedestrian access in order to ensure safe and orderly pedestrian access to commercial sites.
- Review allowed uses, setbacks, and other regulations between commercial districts to ensure a clear distinction between districts.
- Review existing provisions and investigate the development of zoning provisions that would allow for the development of mixed uses.
- Require that development layouts blend with natural features and existing physical attributes.
- Encourage the preservation of trees and other existing natural features.
- Encourage wildlife corridors within developments.
- Nuisances such as air pollution, water pollution, vibration, noise, and outdoor storage of materials should be controlled by adequate site improvements.

- Encourage architectural features that enhance and preserve the rural and agricultural character of the community.

CHAPTER FOUR: INDUSTRIAL USES

Purpose Statement

Industrial uses may produce odors, smoke, noise, traffic, and other similar byproducts that can be disruptive to the health, welfare, and safety of individuals. As such, the primary intent and purpose of the industrial land use classification is to identify uses that may negatively impact nearby properties and provide appropriate locations for industrial uses.

Additionally, industrial uses can play a vital role in a community's economy by providing jobs, offering opportunities to diversify the local economy, and creating a ripple effect that can extend to existing local, regional, and state businesses. As such, the secondary intent of the industrial land use classification is to capitalize on the positive impacts that industrial uses can have.

General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

Industrial uses provide for the manufacturing, assembly, processing, packaging, storage and distribution of products and materials.

Goals

- Provide for a variety of industrial development in areas served by adequate transportation systems and which are or will potentially be served by public utilities and services.
- Achieve high quality industrial development through appropriate zoning and performance requirements, while expanding economic opportunities to industrial developers.
- Separate industrial uses from less intense land uses such as residential through appropriate use of buffer strips, landscaping, open space, or transitional land uses.
- Protect and preserve, to the extent practicable, those elements which contribute to the rural character of the Township including woodlands, wetlands, wildlife habitats, farms, pastures, fields, open spaces and other natural areas, particularly those that are useful as water retention and ground water discharge areas and have important aesthetic and scenic value
- Preserve the natural resources and groundwater quality of the Township.

Recommendations

- Encourage the extension of public utilities and services to those areas identified as desirable for industrial development.
- Work with local and regional economic development agencies to attract and retain desirable manufacturing, processing, or technological operations to the Sparta area.
- Develop a Commercial/Industrial zoning district that will apply to lands adjacent to portions of Sparta Avenue south of the Village of Sparta.
- Review and develop landscaping guidelines for existing and industrial development.
- Differentiate between light and heavy industrial uses, what utilities are necessary for each, what transportation infrastructure is necessary for each, and develop standards to ensure they are properly located.
- Engage with local farmers and business owners to determine what, if any, industrial uses would be beneficial to their existing operations.
- Review and evaluate the Zoning Ordinance to ensure that existing regulations are encouraging industrial uses to develop in a way that is consistent with the goals of the Master Plan.

- Require that development layouts blend with natural features and existing physical attributes.
- Encourage the preservation of trees and other existing natural features.
- Encourage wildlife corridors within developments.
- Develop standards to ensure that industrial nuisances such as air pollution, water pollution, vibration, noise, and outdoor storage of materials are controlled by adequate site improvements.
- Encourage architectural features that enhance and preserve the rural and agricultural character of the community.

CHAPTER FIVE: RECREATIONAL FACILITIES & THE ENVIRONMENT

Purpose Statement

Recreational facilities, both public and private, are vital components of a community. Recreational facilities create shared spaces which allow space to be used economically and provide opportunities for individuals to connect with their neighbors and the outdoors.

Further, based on the feedback received from the 2024 Master Plan Survey, the preservation of natural areas is a top priority for the community. These natural areas provide an essential element which both enhances and protects the quality of life in Sparta Township. Availability and access to recreational facilities and natural areas can increase an individual's overall health and welfare, among other benefits.

General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

Recreational facilities can take many forms. They can be natural areas (such as lakes and woodlands) or developed spaces (such as playgrounds), or a mix of natural areas and developed spaces. The following list identifies some types of developed spaces and natural areas, but is by no means exhaustive: trails, buffers, playgrounds, sports fields, pools, lakes and other bodies of water, beaches, picnic areas, forested areas and many more.

Goals

- Plan for and develop active and passive outdoor recreation facilities to meet the needs of existing and future residents of the Township.
- Encourage the development of recreational facilities and areas to ensure that all residents have convenient access to recreational opportunities.
- Encourage interconnection between recreational facilities.
- Create and preserve public access to bodies of water and other natural areas in the Township.
- Preserve and enhance access to safe drinking water from groundwater sources.
- Preserve the aesthetics (views, serenity, rural nature, etc.) available in the Township.

Recommendations

- Work with developers to set aside suitable portions of land for neighborhood parks, and road easements for pedestrian/bicycle paths.
- Review and develop regulations that require developments (residential, commercial, and industrial) to include new pathways and other recreational amenities.
- Review and strengthen ordinance provisions to reduce flooding, control runoff, and improve water quality of all bodies of water in the Township.
- Develop a Recreation Plan for the Township.
- Maximize the utilization of public buildings and grounds for multi-functional services.
- Coordinate with the Village of Sparta, Kent County, and other nearby communities to ensure that a variety of recreational activities are developed and accessible to area residents.
- Coordinate with local, regional, and state agencies and officials to identify environmentally sensitive areas.
- Review and (as necessary) amend policies and overlay districts related to decision making and development in environmentally sensitive areas.

CHAPTER SIX: UTILITIES AND FACILITIES

Purpose Statement

Utilities provide essential services such as heat, power, potable water, waste disposal, and communications to individuals and organizations. Many utilities such as electricity, natural gas, internet, television, telephone and trash disposal are often provided by quasi-public or private companies. However, other utilities such as water, storm sewer, and sanitary sewer are often provided by municipalities or other public organizations.

In order for individuals to have the opportunity to live the highest quality of life, a township must work with both private and public organizations to build, maintain, and strengthen the facilities and infrastructures that provide these essential services to its community members.

Lastly, when utilities are expanded and strengthened, they can provide economic development opportunities for the community by providing the services necessary to support a more diverse range of commercial and industrial uses.

General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

Sparta Township currently does not provide any public utilities. As the necessary infrastructure can be prohibitively expensive to construct, the Township will need to coordinate with nearby municipalities to extend and strengthen their existing facilities and infrastructures to serve appropriate areas of the community.

Further, more intensive land uses such as residential developments greater than one unit per acre, restaurants, food processing plants and other uses that have a high demand for water and sanitary sewer should be located in areas where they are able to connect to existing utility systems. This allows for the orderly development of utilities and aids in their long-term sustainability.

The development of utilities should be done in conjunction with the development of roads and other transportation methods.

Goals

- Provide for adequate infrastructure that will ensure balanced, orderly growth and ensure the safety and well-being of Township residents.
- Maintain an adequate level of community facilities and services that will ensure the safety, quality of life, and education of present and future Township residents.
- Develop adequate utilities that will ensure balanced, orderly growth and protect the safety and well-being of Township residents.
- Protect existing wells and access to potable water.

Recommendations

- Create a sub-area plan for Sparta Avenue, south of the Village of Sparta, and create a Zoning Overlay District to ensure that future development occurs in a manner that is consistent with the goals of the Master Plan.
- Limit higher densities of development to areas where future public utilities and services can be most economically and efficiently provided.

- Coordinate with the Village of Sparta to establish a Growth Management Plan that reflects a mutually agreed upon phasing for growth and development of residential, commercial, and industrial services and the public water, sanitary sewer, and stormwater services necessary to support the growth.
- Require residential development proposals denser than one unit per acre to construct public utilities where feasible.
- For all types of development, work with County and State officials to enforce acceptable standards and best practices regarding the construction of private water and sanitary sewer systems.
- Coordinate with the Village of Sparta and Sparta Fire and Rescue to ensure that all types of development occur in a manner that is safe and efficient.
- Encourage funding practices for improvements to public utilities that, to the extent possible, appropriately place the cost of utilities on users.
- Design incentives to encourage private investment in public water and/or sewer expansion.
- Encourage the extension of natural gas lines into the Township to provide more cost-effective sources of energy.
- Encourage the extension of services to provide one hundred percent accessibility to the internet.
- Prepare capital improvement plans for things such as roads, parks and recreation, utilities, and other improvements.

CHAPTER SEVEN: TRANSPORTATION

Purpose Statement

The road system within the Township serves as one of the backbones for growth and development. By providing a means for internal and external traffic circulation, the road system within the Township influences the shape and intensity of land use.

The road system is limited by the natural features, which pose a significant impediment to convenient traffic movement throughout the community. In many cases, hilly terrain, lakes, wetlands, ravines, and rivers have dictated the locations of roads and in some cases have resulted in the disruption of roads that would have otherwise been constructed in a complete grid pattern. Nevertheless, the Township is generally well served by a primary system of roadways that operate at varying levels of service.

General Description of Appropriate Land Uses

For planning purposes, it is useful to recognize that the various roads within the Township can have distinct functions. An understanding of these functions can lead to decisions as to the desirable use of each road segment, road right-of-way widths, building setbacks, and adjoining land use. In its 2021 Strategic Plan, the Kent County Road Commission (KCRC) categorizes roads as follows:

- Primary Roads: Primary roads are generally the County's longer-distance, higher-volume roadways that connect centers of population and employment and provide access to Michigan's highway network.
 - All-season Roads: KCRC has identified a portion of the primary road network that provides vital connections between population centers, areas of economic activity, and the state trunkline network. Consequently, this portion of KCRC's primary road network carries higher volumes of traffic and commercial activity.
- Local Roads: Local roads comprise 65 percent of KCRC's network, which includes over 1,000 paved road miles and nearly 311 unpaved (gravel) road miles. Kent County's 21 townships share costs with KCRC to fund local road improvements, so strategies are tailored to use available resources and meet specific township needs.

Goals

- Provide for the orderly development and interconnection of motorized and non-motorized pathways.
- Maximize the efficiency, safety, and ease of maintenance of the vehicular transportation system and non-motorized pathway (i.e. bike path and sidewalk) system.
- Ensure road improvements promote growth in a way that improves public and private transit and is consistent with adopted goals and policies relating to land use and transportation.
- Ensure that existing roadways can handle future projected traffic volumes resulting from new development.

Recommendations

- Encourage design and construction standards for private roads to ensure the possibility of converting private roads to public roads; where possible, coordinate private road development so that these roads may connect logically and efficiently with public road systems and adjacent private road systems.

- Encourage the construction of non-motorized pathways on major arterial streets.
- Coordinate with the Kent County Road Commission and adjacent municipalities regarding the funding, maintenance, and development of roads.
- Encourage property owners to improve existing driveway and private road designs.
- Review and ensure that setbacks for signs, parking, and buildings are adequate to avoid conflicts with roads or pathways.
- Establish zoning and subdivision regulations that institute access controls intended to reduce traffic conflicts along County Primary and Local Roads and thereby preserving their volume and function.
- Create access management provisions in the Zoning Ordinance for commercial and industrial development.
- Limit the number of access points along County Primary Roads by encouraging shared access for commercial establishments through site plan review and other means.
- Strengthen ordinance provisions to require developers to provide road easements for non-motorized pathways.
- Review and develop regulations to ensure that new roads (public and private) conform to County road standards.

CHAPTER EIGHT: IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

In order for the Master Plan to serve as an effective guide for the continued development of Sparta Township, it must be implemented. Primary responsibility for implementing the plan rests with the Township Board, the Planning Commission, and the Township staff. This is done with a number of methods. These include ordinances, programs, policies, and administrative procedures.

This implementation must come from the decisions of the Township Board and Planning Commission to provide needed public improvements and to administer and establish regulatory measures related to the use of land.

The private sector, which includes individual landowners as well as developers, is also involved in fulfilling the recommendations of the Master Plan by the actual physical development of land and through the rezoning of land. The authority for this, however, comes from the Township. Cooperation and coordination among individuals, private developers, and public agencies is, therefore, important in successful implementation of the Master Plan.

Zoning and Land Use Regulations

Zoning represents a legal means for the Township to regulate private property to achieve orderly land use relationships. Zoning is the process most commonly used to implement community plans. The zoning process consists of an official Zoning Map and accompanying Zoning Ordinance text. The official Zoning Map divides the community into different districts within which certain uses are allowed. The Zoning Ordinance text establishes permitted uses and regulations to control densities, height, bulk, setbacks, lot sizes and accessory uses, among other physical and linear attributes. The Zoning Ordinance also sets forth procedures for special approval provisions and regulates accessory structures such as signs. These measures permit the Township to control the quality as well as type of development.

The Planning Commission and Township Board should periodically review and make any necessary revisions to the zoning regulations based on the Strategies of this plan to ensure that the Goals and Recommendations of the Master Plan are instituted. Further, the Zoning Ordinance requires systematic and frequent updates to address needs resulting from changing trends, case law and state statutes.

Relationship of Master Plan Classifications to Zoning Districts (Zoning Plan)

Complementing the text of the Master Plan is its map, which identifies land use classifications by which the Township organizes and intends future improvements and uses. These classification terms are intentionally general in nature so as to not necessarily be specific to one use or type of uses permitted by the Zoning Ordinance and its map. In other words, while the land use classifications are related to the Zoning Districts identified on the Zoning Ordinance map, as shown in the table below, specific future uses are determined by numerous natural and man-made features of the landscape such as public utilities, topography, soils, road improvements, surrounding uses, existing densities, and etcetera, as well as other planning considerations such as compatibility, public safety, access, and etcetera. Consequently, while the land use classifications of the Master Plan Map are designed to serve as a guide for future uses, they are not considered to be a mandate for immediate improvements, public, private, or otherwise.

Ultimately, while the Master Plan Map identifies areas for future uses, the feasibility of a proposed use is determined by the aforementioned, and the Zoning Ordinance with its regulations regarding height, area, bulk, location, etc. for each of its Zoning Districts.

Table of Master Plan Classification Terms & Zoning Ordinance Map District Terms

Master Plan Map Classification Terms	Zoning Ordinance Map Districts
Agricultural Preservation (AP)	Prime Agricultural Preservation (AG-1)
Rural Agriculture (RA)	Agricultural (AG-2)
Low Density Residential (LDR)	Low Density – Single Family (R-1), Medium Density – Single Family (R-2)
Medium High Density Residential (MHDR)	Medium-High Density – Multiple Family (R-3)
Mobile Home Park (MHP)	Medium-High Density – Mobile Home Park (R-4)
Commercial (C)	General Commercial (C-1), Highway Commercial (C-2)
Commercial/Light Industrial (C/I)	Neighborhood Business District (C-1)
Industrial (I)	Light Industrial (I-1), Heavy Industrial (I-2)
Natural River Area (NR)	Rogue River Natural River Zone (RR)

Relationship of Master Plan Map Classification Terms to Master Plan Chapters

Several Chapters of this Master Plan identify the goals, recommendations, and strategies regarding future land uses within the Township. While the goals, recommendations, and strategies will likely always evolve, the intended uses related to the chapter titles will remain the same. Those chapter titles can generally be related to the Master Plan Map terms as provided in the table below.

Master Plan Map Classification Terms	Master Plan Chapters
Agricultural Preservation (AP)	Agricultural Uses
Rural Agriculture (RA)	Agricultural Uses/Residential Uses
Low Density Residential (LDR)	Residential Uses
Medium High Density Residential (MHDR)	Residential Uses/ Commercial Uses
Mobile Home Park (MHP)	Residential Uses
Commercial (C)	Commercial Uses
Commercial/Light Industrial (C/I)	Commercial Uses/Industrial Uses
Industrial (I)	Industrial Uses
Natural River Area (NR)	Recreational Facilities and the Environment

Master Plan Classification Terms

The following is a description of land use Classifications identified within this Master Plan.

Agricultural Preservation

The Agricultural Preservation Classification is intended to preserve a vital component of the Sparta Township economy, and to preserve an irreplaceable resource in soils that are unique for fruit and other crops production.

This classification recognizes lands which are best suited for farming based on location, current utility served areas, soil type, parcel size, and active farm operations. This classification consists of agricultural land but provides opportunities for limited land divisions for the creation of non-farm dwellings, to preserve natural features, preserve rural character, and minimize encroachment of non-agricultural uses. Public water and sanitary sewer are not envisioned within this Classification.

Rural Agriculture

The Rural Agriculture classified lands are intended to provide for residential development in a rural setting along with active agricultural uses. General farming activities will continue but are envisioned to be of less frequent occurrence than in the Agricultural Preservation classification. Farming activities may decline with the scope of the planning period.

Areas planned for Rural Agricultural already have an established pattern of residential land use. Rural Agricultural areas are designed to function as a transition from Agricultural Preservation areas to more intense land uses.

It may be appropriate to allow lands within the Rural Agriculture classification to be developed as open space neighborhoods. Open space neighborhoods are characterized by the clustering of residential dwelling units to a few select areas on a parcel while the remainder of the land would be set aside as permanent open space for use by residents. To appropriately act as a transition from Agricultural Preservation areas to more intense land uses, any residential development within the Rural Agricultural classification should be designed to buffer the residential land uses from nearby agricultural uses.

Low Density Residential (LDR)

The Low Density Residential classification is intended primarily for single family houses in a subdivision or clustered housing setting. These lands are intended to be served by public water and sanitary sewer. Lot sizes will vary depending on the type of utility service provided.

Open space neighborhoods should be encouraged in Low Density Residential areas to help preserve rural views, wildlife habitat, and natural areas for recreation.

Medium High Density Residential (MHDR)

The Medium High Density Residential Classification is intended to accommodate more dwelling units per acre than areas classified as Low Density Residential. These lands are intended to be served by public water

and sewer. Additionally, two-family, and multi-family dwelling units are envisioned as being a use by right in MHDR areas.

Planned Unit Developments and other similar residential or mixed residential/commercial developments should be encouraged in MHDR areas.

Mobile Home Park

Lands classified as Mobile Home Park are lands that are currently being used as mobile home parks. In order to provide for a balance in housing types, the Township has elected to establish a goal of maintaining a future housing mix of no more than 20% mobile homes located with mobile home parks as the maximum percentage of all dwellings in the Township.

In the event the Township grows at a faster rate than expected and the percentage of dwellings in mobile home parks falls to less than 20% of the total number of dwellings located with the Township, the Township will then look to amending the Master Plan to designate an additional site for mobile home park development.

Commercial

Commercial classified lands are intended to serve the convenience shopping needs of Township residents and the traveling public, as well as provide an area for contractor services and office spaces. These uses typically generate large volumes of traffic and benefit from increased visibility and accessibility. Outdoor display and storage of goods are also common characteristics of uses in this land use classification, although design standards should be developed to manage the intensity, aesthetic, location, and environmental impact of such outdoor displays. Commercial planned areas should be designed to be automobile oriented and be served by adequately developed roads.

Commercial/Industrial

The Commercial/Industrial classification requires the development of a new zoning district. Commercial uses allowed within this area should not compete directly with uses in downtown Sparta or commercial uses elsewhere within the Village. Additionally, industrial uses that are not likely to generate a large amount of traffic but still need good year-round access to Class A roads would be appropriate in this area. Any commercial or industrial use that requires connection to public water or sanitary sewer should be located adjacent to the Village of Sparta.

Industrial

It is recognized that industrial development is important to the economy and tax base of the region. The areas designated for Industrial classification are located for easy access and where utilities are either available or are in the process of being established. It is intended that a request to rezone to the light industrial or heavy industrial zoning district will be evaluated on the basis of the availability of adequate infrastructure, compatibility with adjacent land uses, and the potential for danger of offense to nearby residents.

Natural River Area

This land use classification recognizes the importance of protecting the Rogue River as well as the woodlands and wetlands in immediate association with the river. This area encompasses a strip of land 500 feet wide on each side of the river as measured from the river's edge or ordinary high-water mark. The Natural River area as it exists in Sparta Township is a result of the State of Michigan naming the Rogue River as a natural river under the 1970 Natural River Act and other factors.

Master Plan Map

On the following page is the Master Plan Map, which depicts the future desired land uses with the Township.

Appendix

The following information can be found within the attached appendix:

- Selected Demographic Information
- Master Plan Survey Summary
- Informative Community Maps

Sparta Township, MI

Selected Demographic Information

Fresh Coast Planning
1-23-2025

Summary

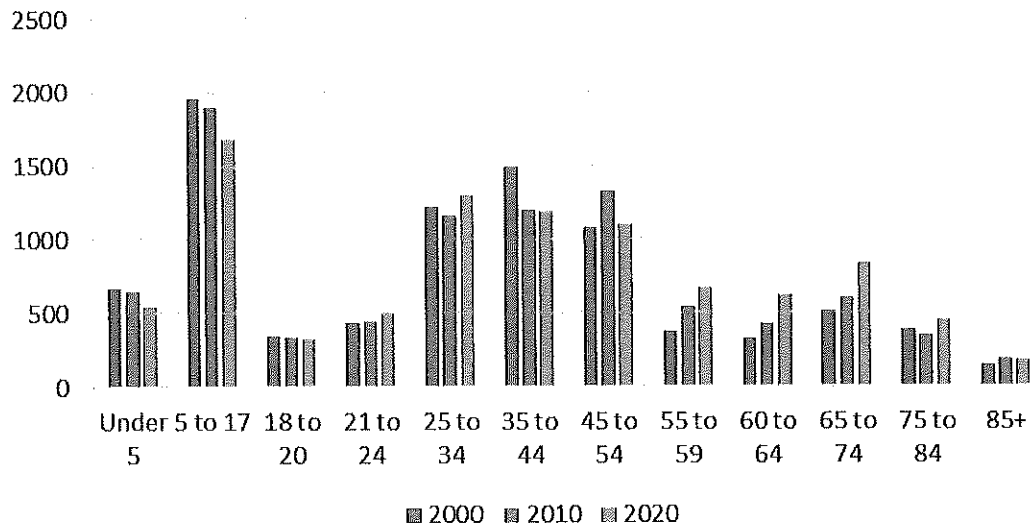
The following demographic data was gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau. The data presented in this report was gathered from Decennial Censuses (Census) and the American Community Survey (ACS). As described by the U.S. Census Bureau "The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing survey that provides vital information on a yearly basis about our nation and its people." If you have any questions about the Census or ACS, please let us know.

Based on our review of the data provided below, Sparta Township appears to be doing well in regards to many of the demographic metrics provided. However, it also appears that Sparta Township has a much higher level of unemployment than surrounding communities. The Township may want to work with regional partners to develop strategies to provide more job opportunities for Sparta residents.

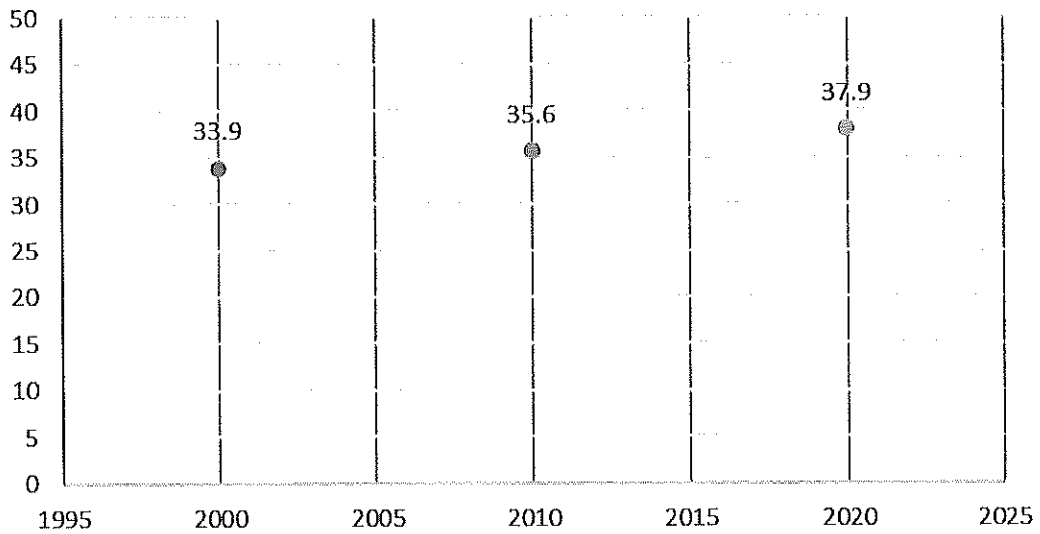
Population Growth 2000 - 2020							
	2000	Δ%	Δ#	2010	Δ%	Δ#	2020
Kent County	574,335	4.93%	28,287	602,622	9.19%	55,352	657,974
Sparta Township	8,938	1.92%	172	9,110	3.13%	285	9,395
<i>Sparta Village</i>	4,159	-0.46%	(19)	4,140	2.51%	104	4,244
Tyrone Township	4,304	9.92%	427	4,731	6.13%	290	5,021
<i>Kent City Village</i>	1,061	-0.38%	(4)	1,057	19.39%	205	1,262
Solon Township	4,662	28.14%	1,312	5,974	8.74%	522	6,496
Algoma Township	7,596	30.75%	2,336	9,932	21.38%	2,123	12,055
Plainfield Township	30,195	2.51%	757	30,952	8.35%	2,583	33,535
Alpine Township	13,976	-4.58%	(640)	13,336	5.57%	743	14,079
Ottawa County	238,314	10.69%	25,487	263,801	12.28%	32,399	296,200
Wright Township	3,286	-4.23%	(139)	3,147	1.37%	43	3,190
Chester Township	2,315	-12.87%	(298)	2,017	3.92%	79	2,096
Muegdon County	170,200	1.17%	1,988	172,188	2.11%	3,636	175,824
Casnovia Township	2,652	5.77%	153	2,805	-0.43%	(12)	2,793
<i>Casnovia Village</i>	315	1.27%	4	319	-0.94%	(3)	316

Sparta Township Age Distribution and Median Age													
	Under 5	5 to 17	18 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75 to 84	85+	Median Age		
2000	669	1964	343	430	1224	1495	1082	371	326	512	379	143	33.9
2010	652	1899	335	442	1160	1202	1327	541	426	601	342	183	35.6
2020	546	1680	322	500	1303	1188	1100	673	619	838	449	177	37.9

Sparta Twp Age Distribution



Median Age Change 2000 - 2020



Median Age Comparison			
	2010	2011	2012
Kent County	32.5	34.4	35.5
Sparta Township	33.9	35.6	37.9
<i>Sparta Village</i>	31.5	34	36.3
Tyrone Township	32.5	34.9	35.2
<i>Kent City Village</i>	28.1	30.6	29.8
Solon Township	35.4	37.5	40.1
Algoma Township	35.3	38.6	38.8
Plainfiled Township	35.1	39.7	41.4
Alpine Township	29	32.6	34.0
Ottawa County	32.3	34.5	36.1
Wright Township	35.6	39.8	40.2
Chester Township	34.6	41.3	40.9
Mukegon County	35.5	38.2	40.4
Casnovia Township	32.8	35.5	38.3
<i>Casnovia Village</i>	N/A	N/A	38.3

Total Housing Unit Comparison							
	2000	Δ%	Δ#	2010	Δ%	Δ#	2020
Kent County	224,000	10.22%	22,901	246,901	7.33%	18,101	265,002
Sparta Township	3,449	5.45%	188	3,637	3.41%	124	3,761
<i>Sparta Village</i>	1,704	4.58%	78	1,782	2.08%	37	1,819
Tyrone Township	1,503	13.84%	208	1,711	5.32%	91	1,802
<i>Kent City Village</i>	392	3.83%	15	407	12.04%	49	456
Solon Township	1,778	33.30%	592	2,370	7.13%	169	2,539
Algoma Township	2,692	32.28%	869	3,561	22.89%	815	4,376
Plainfiled Township	11,456	9.59%	1,099	12,555	8.71%	1,094	13,649
Alpine Township	5,830	1.37%	80	5,910	2.52%	149	6,059
Ottawa County	86,856	18.01%	15,639	102,495	11.54%	11,823	114,318
Wright Township	1,082	9.06%	98	1,180	2.97%	35	1,215
Chester Township	793	3.40%	27	820	0.37%	3	823
Mukegon County	68,556	7.30%	5,005	73,561	1.40%	1,030	74,591
Casnovia Township	955	7.02%	67	1,022	1.96%	20	1,042
<i>Casnovia Village</i>	126	3.97%	5	131	-0.76%	(1)	130

2020 Education Level Comparison			
	Less than High School	High School or Higher	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Kent County	8.60%	91.40%	36.84%
Sparta Township	9.72%	90.28%	20.14%
<i>Sparta Village</i>	5.23%	94.77%	17.75%
Tyrone Township	13.75%	86.25%	14.12%
<i>Kent City Village</i>	15.89%	84.11%	8.28%
Solon Township	5.59%	94.41%	25.21%
Algoma Township	3.81%	96.19%	37.17%
Plainfield Township	4.31%	95.69%	36.77%
Alpine Township	9.06%	90.94%	22.92%
Ottawa County	6.61%	93.39%	35.08%
Wright Township	4.43%	95.57%	18.52%
Chester Township	8.30%	91.70%	26.64%
Mukegon County	8.65%	91.35%	19.74%
Casnovia Township	7.78%	92.22%	19.52%
<i>Casnovia Village</i>	8.16%	91.84%	13.78%

2020 Employment Comparison				
	Civilian Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
Kent County	352,347	336,145	16,202	4.60%
Sparta Township	5,007	4,586	421	8.41%
<i>Sparta Village</i>	2,252	2,123	129	5.73%
Tyrone Township	2,385	2,033	352	14.76%
<i>Kent City Village</i>	620	582	38	6.13%
Solon Township	3,413	3,322	91	2.67%
Algoma Township	6,212	6,058	154	2.48%
Plainfield Township	18,740	17,948	792	4.23%
Alpine Township	7,211	6,961	250	3.47%
Ottawa County	156,116	149,666	6,285	4.03%
Wright Township	1,740	1,707	33	1.90%
Chester Township	1,260	1,236	24	1.90%
Mukegon County	82,669	76,653	5,955	7.20%
Casnovia Township	1,537	1,518	19	1.24%
<i>Casnovia Village</i>	153	150	3	1.96%

2020 Household Income & Poverty Rate			
	Median household income (dollars)	Mean household income (dollars)	Population in poverty
Kent County	\$ 65,722	\$ 87,911	11.10%
Sparta Township	\$ 64,750	\$ 82,621	8.80%
<i>Sparta Village</i>	\$ 47,958	\$ 62,598	10.60%
Tyrone Township	\$ 63,933	\$ 71,357	8.30%
<i>Kent City Village</i>	\$ 56,250	\$ 60,487	14.50%
Solon Township	\$ 69,254	\$ 79,940	4.00%
Algoma Township	\$ 96,217	\$ 107,368	2.50%
Plainfield Township	\$ 73,961	\$ 94,542	6.40%
Alpine Township	\$ 56,881	\$ 72,301	9.00%
Ottawa County	\$ 72,418	\$ 91,035	7.9%
Wright Township	\$ 76,708	\$ 91,531	6.1%
Chester Township	\$ 67,821	\$ 89,170	2.5%
Muegon County	\$ 53,478	\$ 68,850	14.1%
Casnovia Township	\$ 70,542	\$ 79,676	8.4%
<i>Casnovia Village</i>	\$ 52,000	\$ 64,067	10.5%

Sparta Township Affordable Housing Costs (Including Utilities)
Affordable Housing = 30% or less of Household Income

	Annual Income	Affordable Annual Housing Budget	Affordable Monthly Housing Budget
Median Household Income	\$ 64,750	\$ 19,425	\$ 1,619
Mean Household Income	\$ 82,621	\$ 24,786	\$ 2,066

Affordable Home Price

Assumptions	Monthly Housing Budget	Home Price
\$200 Monthly Utility Cost	\$ 1,619	\$ 158,162
No Down Payment	\$ 2,066	\$ 209,849
7% Interest Rate		
1.2% Property Taxes		
\$950/annual home insurance costs		

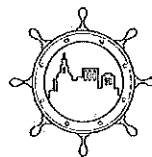
2020 Median House Values	
	Median House Value
Kent County	\$ 193,200
Sparta Township	\$ 159,700
<i>Sparta Village</i>	\$ 130,700
Tyrone Township	\$ 176,900
<i>Kent City Village</i>	\$ 134,400
Solon Township	\$ 189,700
Algoma Township	\$ 246,900
Plainfield Township	\$ 208,400
Alpine Township	\$ 176,300
Ottawa County	\$ 338,900
Wright Township	\$ 249,000
Chester Township	\$ 232,500
Muskegon County	\$ 137,500
Casnovia Township	\$ 176,600
<i>Casnovia Village</i>	\$ 125,000

Sparta Township, MI

Master Plan Survey

Summary of Responses

Fresh Coast Planning
2-26-2024



Fresh Coast
Planning

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Section 1. Executive Summary

It is clear that respondents value the rural and agricultural character of Sparta Township, with the preservation of natural areas, farmlands, and roads being top priorities for the community. Respondents appear to be mostly satisfied with their access to jobs, services, and recreational opportunities. However, some of these needs are likely being met outside of the community, which could be why roads are such a high priority.

While respondents are willing to drive further for jobs, services, and recreational opportunities, that does not mean they are completely opposed to more development in the community. Most respondents appear to be satisfied with the rate of development in Sparta and may be supportive of more residential and commercial development so long as it happens in a way that protects the rural and agricultural character of the community. Along the same note, respondents appear to be supportive of regulations and beautification projects that would enhance the rural and agricultural visual character of the community.

In short, it appears that the community is supportive of the current rate of development and may be supportive of more residential and commercial growth so long as it happens in a way that protects and enhances the rural and agricultural character they value above all else.

KLY

Associate, Fresh Coast Planning

In addition to the summaries provided in this report we have attached the following reports from SurveyMonkey:

- Unfiltered Survey Results
- Results Filtered by Age
- Results Filtered by Location
- Results Filtered by Years Lived in Township
- Additional Comments Provided

Section 2. Representativeness and Reliability

When reviewing the survey results, we first want to test whether the responses are valid and can be relied on in order to provide a representative sample of your community. In order to test the representativeness and reliability of the survey results we'll look at three things.

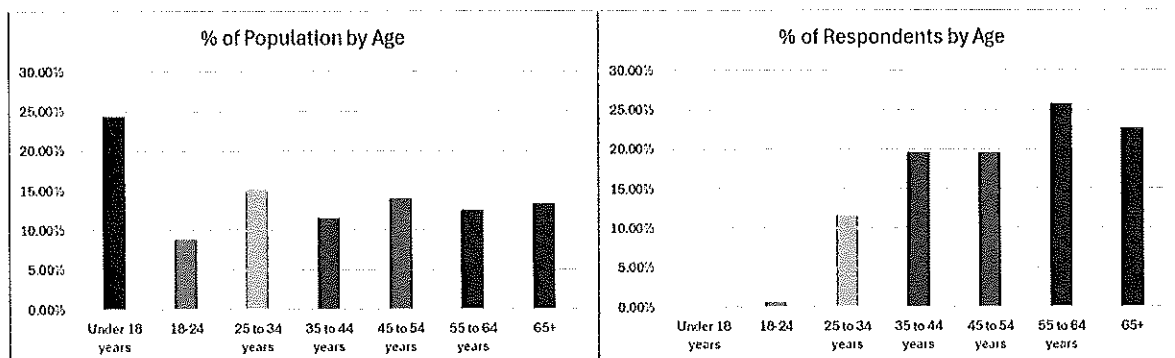
First, are the ages of those that responded reflective of the age groups identified by the latest American Community Survey. The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing annual survey conducted by the United States Census Bureau. The ACS uses a random sample of addresses to collect responses and provide estimates on information similar to what is included in the Decennial Census, such as age, education, and other population and housing metrics.

Second, we look at where respondents stated they live in order to ensure that the respondents are representative of the different geographical areas in the Township.

Lastly, we will look at the number of people who responded compared to the total population. By comparing these numbers we will be able to determine how confident we are that the survey results are accurate.

2.1. Representativeness by Age

As expected, all age groups were not represented in the survey results. Respondents were mostly over the age of twenty-five with residents thirty-five and older being best represented. That being said, the survey results appear to have been gathered fairly equally across multiple age groups and should be reflective of how people in various stages of life feel about the community.



2.2. Representativeness by Location

Identifying representativeness by geographic location is less definitive than representativeness by age. We do not have the information that identifies how many total dwellings are contained within each section identified within the survey. When creating the sections, we relied on the different zoning district designations and easily identifiable roads to split the sections. As such, we would expect a greater number of responses from the more densely populated sections of the Township (Sections 5, 6, 10 and 12). With less densely populated sections (Sections 1,2,3,4, 7, 8, 9 and 11) having a lower number of responses.

It appears that responses generally meet our expectations and the results of the survey appear to be representative of all locations within the Township.

Further, we recognize that M-37 represents a border within the Township; with land east of the highway predominantly being used for more dense and higher intensity land uses and lands west of the highway predominantly being used for less dense, agricultural uses. As such we have broken down responses based on whether they were from sections east or west of the highway. While there were a slightly greater number of responses from respondents east of the highway, it does not appear that the responses were so much greater that the results are overly skewed towards the desires of the eastern portion of the Community. Lastly, where people lived did appear to have some impact on how they answered some questions, but more broadly respondents living on both sides of the highway appear to have similar values and desires for land development in the community.

East of the Highway

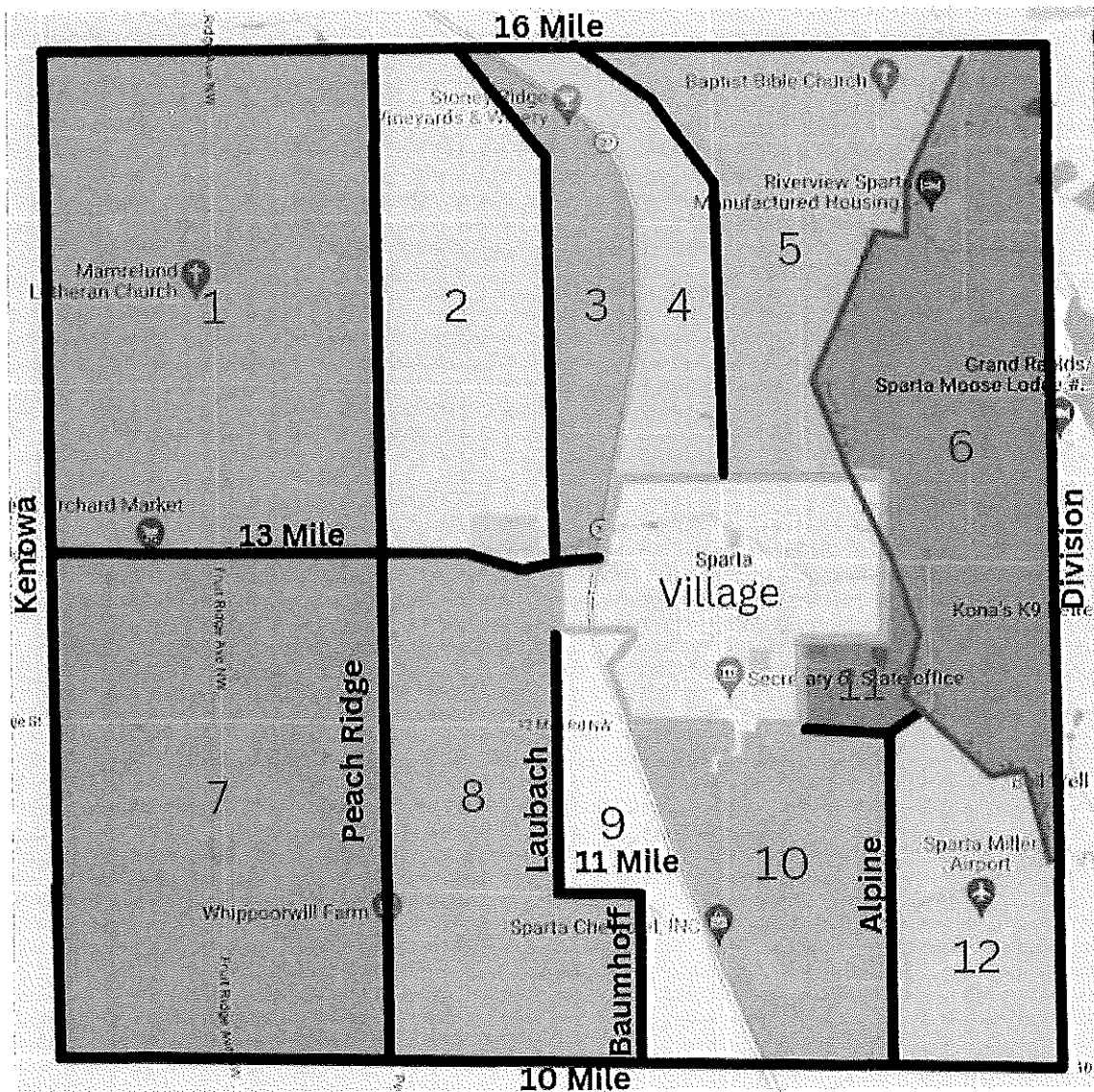
<u>Area of Township</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Percent of Respondents</u>
Section 6	Rural Agriculture with many smaller lots, includes some low density residential and some high density residential	16%
Section 10	Mix of Commercial, Rural Agriculture and High Density Residential	14%
Section 5	Rural Agriculture with many smaller lots also includes larger agricultural parcels	10%
Village of Sparta		8%
Section 12	Low Density Residential - Sparta Airport and Industrial District take up a large portion of the section.	8%
Section 4	Rural Agriculture with some smaller parcels but predominantly large Ag parcels	2%
Section 11	Industrial with some low density residential	2%
SUB-TOTAL		60%

West of the Highway

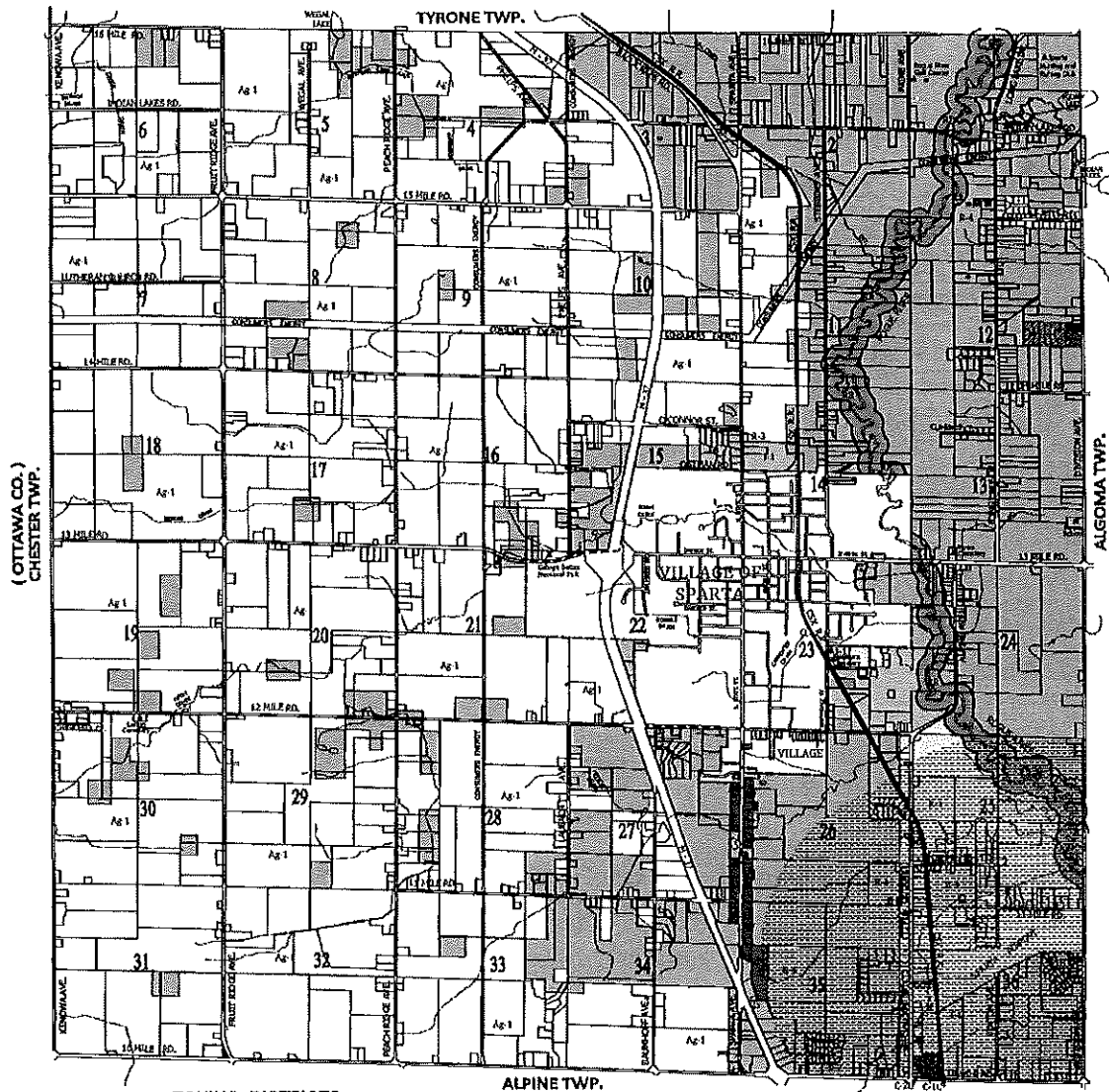
<u>Area of Township</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Percent of Respondents</u>
Section 7	Prime Agriculture - Large Ag Parcels with small parcels along public roads	9%
Section 8	Prime Agriculture - Large Ag Parcels with some small parcels along public roads	8%
Section 1	Prime Agriculture - Large Ag Parcels with limited small parcels along public roads	7%
Section 9	Rural Agriculture with some smaller parcels but predominantly large Ag parcels	6%
Section 2	Prime Agriculture - Large Ag Parcels with limited small parcels along public roads	4%
Section 3	Prime Agriculture - Large Ag Parcels with some small parcels along public roads	3%
SUB-TOTAL		37%

Other

I don't live in Sparta Township	Predominately People who work or own property in the Township	3%
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Where you live map from Master Plan Survey

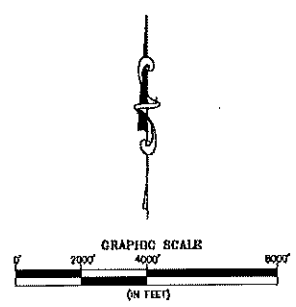


ZONING DISTRICTS

- Ag-1 PRIME AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION
- Ag-2 AGRICULTURAL
- R-1 LOW DENSITY - SINGLE FAMILY
- R-2 MEDIUM DENSITY - SINGLE FAMILY
- R-3 MEDIUM-HIGH DENSITY: MULTIPLE FAMILY
- R-4 MEDIUM-HIGH DENSITY: MOBILE HOME PARK
- C-1 GENERAL COMMERCIAL
- C-2 HWY COMMERCIAL
- C-1C CONDITIONAL ZONING
- C-2C CONDITIONAL ZONING
- MPUD MIXED USED P.U.D.
- I-1 LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
- I-2 HEAVY INDUSTRIAL
- Ap AIRPORT OVERLAY ZONE
THE AIRPORT OVERLAY ZONE IS DEFINED AS THAT AREA WITHIN ONE (1) MILE OF THE SPARTA AIRPORT MEASURED FROM THE AIRPORT PROPERTY LINE.
- RR ROGUE RIVER NATURAL RIVER ZONE
300' FROM BOTH SIDES OF RIVER'S EDGE (NOT TO SCALE)
- Cj CONSENT JUDGEMENT
DATED 12-1-1997, CASE NO. 97-062350C C-2 USES ALLOWED WITH BEHINDING AND GREENBELT AREA REQUIREMENTS

17

SECTION NUMBER



ZONING MAP OF SPARTA TOWNSHIP
 KENT COUNTY, MICHIGAN
 T 9 N, R 12 W

Latest Revision: 2-2-23

2.3. Reliability of Survey

While the results of the 2024 Master Plan Survey appear to be a mostly representative sample based on age and where people live within the Township, we also want to make sure that enough responses were received to ensure the results are reliable.

When speaking to the reliability of a survey we are trying to determine how likely it is that if we repeated the survey with another group of residents, we would get the same or similar results. A general rule of thumb is if you have a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%, your results are likely accurate and precise and can be relied on.

Based on the 2022 American Community Survey conducted by the United States Census Bureau Sparta Township has approximately 9,421 residents. Approximately 331 residents (369 total respondents – 27 Village Residents – 11 non-residents) responded to the survey. Based on this information we were able to calculate the survey's margin of error. At a 95% confidence level there is a 5% margin of error. As such, the results of this survey appear to be a reliable representation of how the community feels.

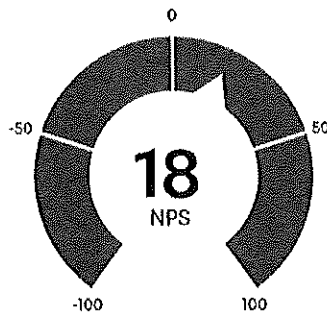
Section 3. Survey Results

The following are summaries of the individual survey questions.

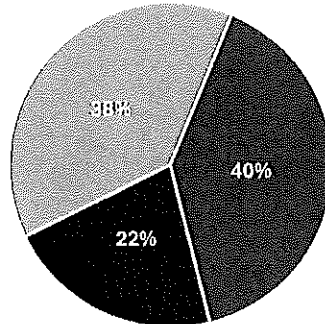
3.1. How likely is it that you would recommend living in Sparta Township to a friend or colleague?

This question is called Net Promoter Score, it was designed in 2003 as a way to gauge customer experience for private companies. We use the Net Promoter Score in your survey as a way to gauge the experience and relationship your residents have with the Township. Respondents are broken into three categories: promoters, passives, and detractors. Promoters are the residents that are the individuals that love the community and will go out of their way to promote it. Passives are those individuals that like the community but may not go out of their way to promote it. Detractors are the individuals who are unhappy with the community and may go out of their way to dissuade others from coming to your community. For a more detailed review of the meaning of net promoter score you can visit <https://delighted.com/net-promoter-score>

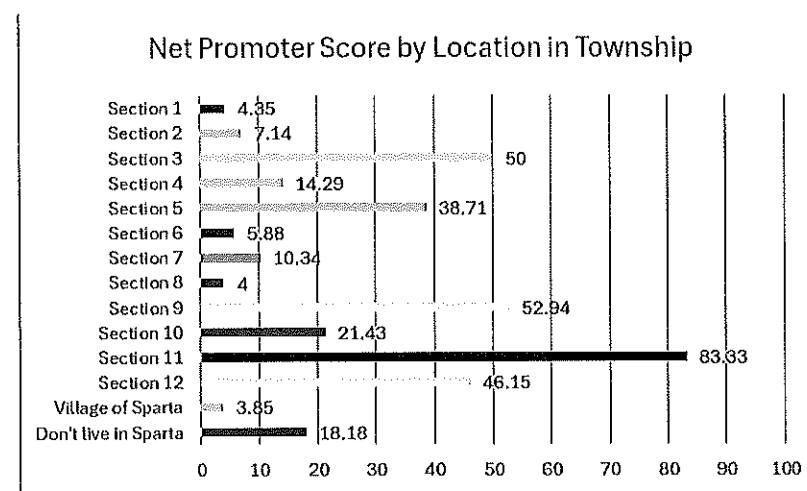
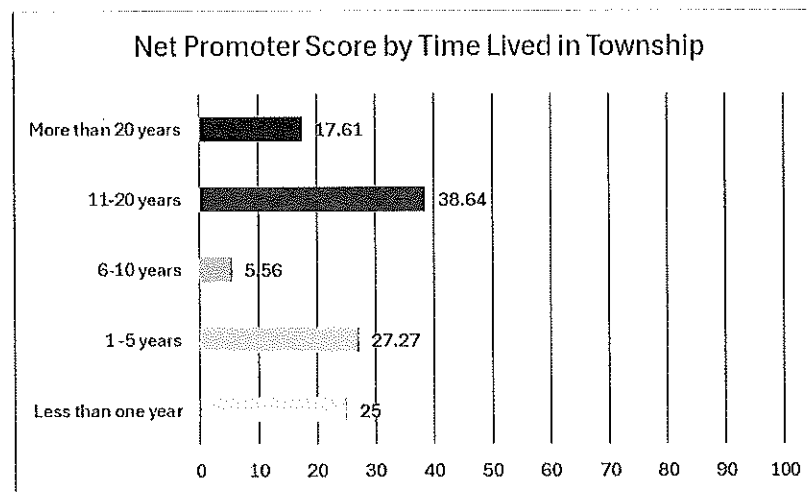
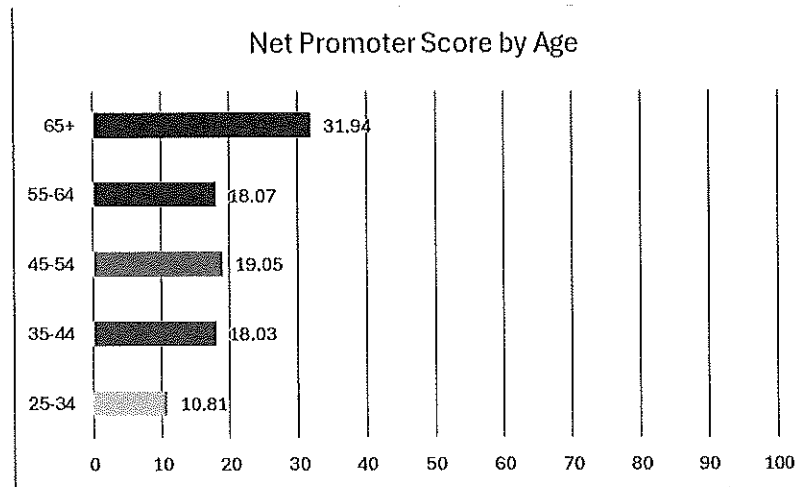
In addition to showing how many individuals are Promoters, Passives, and Detractors a net promoter score is also calculated. The net promoter scale goes from -100 to 100, with -100 meaning no one is happy with the community and 100 meaning everyone is happy with the community. As you review the following information regarding promoters/detractors and net promoter score please keep in mind that there is no universal benchmark for what a "good" net promoter score is. Please also keep in mind that for the public sector our job is not always to make individual residents happy, but to protect and promote the health, safety, and welfare of those we serve. In general, it appears that the community as a whole has a positive relationship with the Township and the Township has many more people who love or like the Township opposed to those who dislike the Township.



■ Detractors (0-6) ■ Passive (7-8) ■ Promoters (9-10)

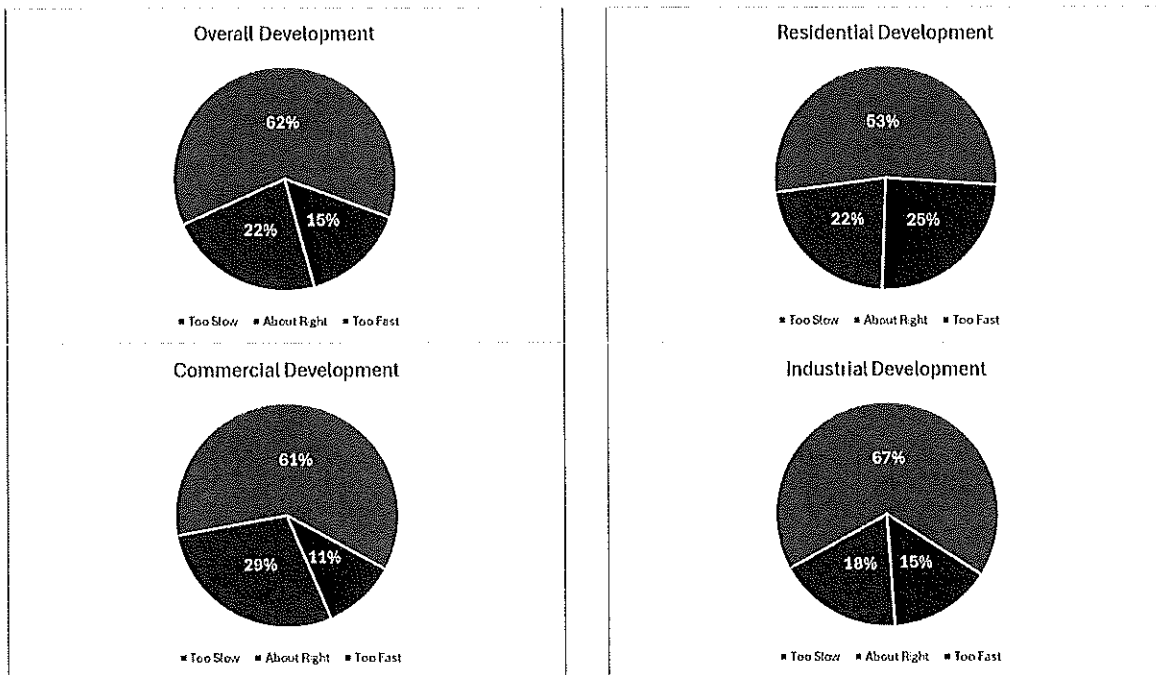


Further, we see that how old people are, how long they have lived in the Township, and where they live in the Township all have an impact on how likely they are to recommend living in the Township to others.



3.2. How would you characterize the rate of the following types of development?

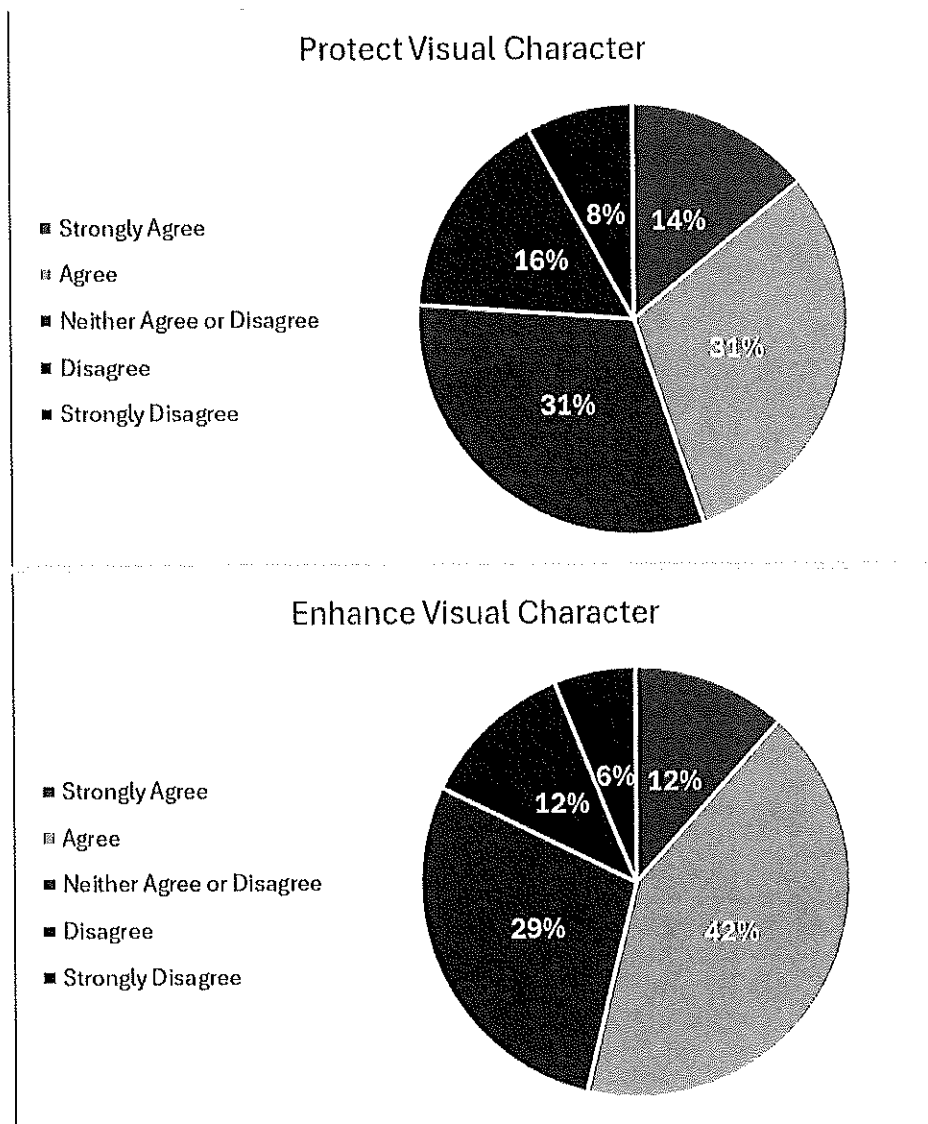
Overall, a majority of respondents feel that the rate of residential, commercial, and industrial development is happening at about the right speed. There may be some concern around how fast residential development is happening and some desire for more commercial development. This feeling seems to be consistent across age groups, how long they've lived in the Township and where people live in the Township.



3.3. Visual Character

Two questions were asked to gauge how people felt about protecting and/or enhancing the visual character of the Township. Should the Township do more to protect the visual character of the community? and Should the Township do more to enhance the visual character of the community? Both questions were accompanied by an explanation and example of what types of regulations may be put in place to accomplish these goals.

While many respondents were supportive of doing more to protect visual character and keep the community looking the same, a majority of respondents were neutral and opposed to “protecting visual character.” However, in regard to enhancing the visual character of the community a majority of respondents appear to be supportive of regulations and investments that would enhance the look and feel of the community. More insights on what types of regulations and investments may be desired by the community may be provided in the review of other questions included in the survey. Additionally, if the Township determines to develop regulations to enhance visual character further engagement with subcommittees and/or the public may help better identify what is desired by the community.



3.4. If the Township had extra funds, how would you prioritize its use?

When asked how they would prioritize the expenditure of "extra" funds survey respondents universally identified roads as the main priority. However, outside of roads, respondent age appears to impact how the prioritize the listed items.

25-34		35-44	
Roads	6.61	Roads	6.31
Parks and Recreation	5.55	Parks and Recreation	6.17
Fire and EMS	5.42	Fire and EMS	5.14
Internet Access	4.79	Internet Access	4.72
Police	4.37	Public Water and Sanitary Sewer	4.41
Public Water and Sanitary Sewer	4.37	Police	4.3
Senior Services	3.89	Senior Services	3.95
45-54		55-64	
Roads	6.81	Roads	6.45
Fire and EMS	5.52	Fire and EMS	5.45
Internet Access	5.08	Police	4.87
Police	4.92	Senior Services	4.82
Parks and Recreation	4.59	Internet Access	4.75
Senior Services	4.39	Public Water and Sanitary Sewer	4.39
Public Water and Sanitary Sewer	3.69	Parks and Recreation	4.26
65+			
Roads	6.5		
Fire and EMS	5.85		
Police	5.24		
Senior Services	4.85		
Internet Access	4.43		
Parks and Recreation	4.38		
Public Water and Sanitary Sewer	3.74		

3.5. How likely is it that you would support an increase in property taxes to support the following?

At best respondents appear to be neutral to an increase in taxes to support the identified potential funding priorities. Based on this information it does not appear that a millage to support any of these items would have the support needed to pass. However, we are able to see how respondents prioritize projects when viewed with the lens that they would have to pay extra for their improvement.

Funding Priority	Will a Tax Millage be Supported
Fire and EMS	3.2
Agricultural Preservation Programs	3.13
Road Repairs and Improvement	3.06
Police	2.99
Improve and expand public park and recreation facilities	2.85
Attract and retain commercial businesses	2.52
Expansion of public water and sewer	2.52
Attract and retain Industrial businesses	2.38

- 5 = Highly Likely
- 4 = Likely
- 3 = Neutral
- 2 = Unlikely
- 1 = Highly Unlikely

3.6. Please rate each of the following characteristics of Sparta Township.

In general respondents appear to be happy with the character of the community. Rural Character and Ease of Travel were the two most highly rated items with access to job opportunities, availability of quality, affordable housing, and diverse housing options receiving a rating of fair. This may mean that the development of increased and more diverse housing options would better satisfy the desires of the community. However, with how highly rated rural character is, the development of residential uses should be directed to happen in such a way that the rural character of the community is maintained.

Characteristic	Rating
Rural Character	4.78
Ease of Travel	4.72
Access to healthcare facilities	4.36
Good educational opportunities	4.32
Recreational Opportunities	4.23
Access to shopping amenities	4.17
Access to job opportunities	3.51
Availability of quality, affordable housing	3.2
Diverse housing options	3.15

- 5 = Excellent
- 4 = Good
- 3 = Fair
- 2 = Poor
- 1 = I don't know

3.7. Please prioritize the following in the order that is most important to you. 1 = Most Important, 9 = Least Important.

The preservation of natural areas and farmlands are a clear priority for respondents, with the condition of roads a close third. After that access to recreational activities both private and public and affordable homes were the next priorities. With access to public utilities and jobs in the community not appearing to be a priority.

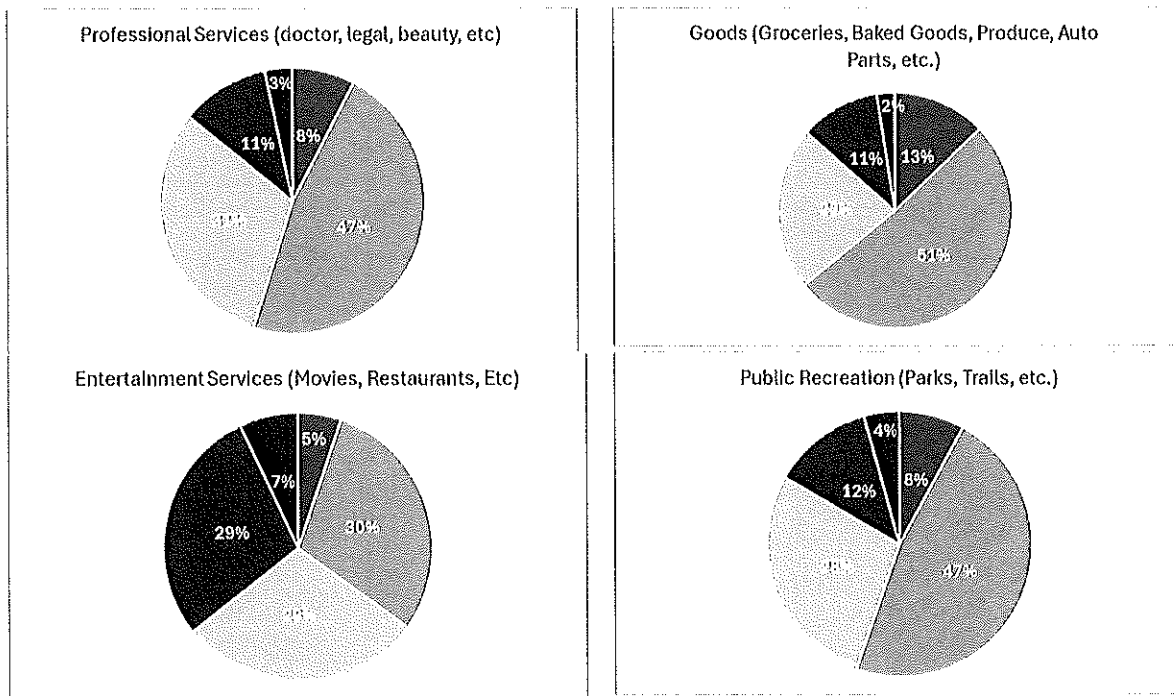
It appears that respondents value the natural/rural character of the community above all else. While access to more recreational opportunities may be desired, respondents are willing to trade these opportunities for the ability to live in a rural community. Further, respondents appear to be willing to drive from their homes to jobs outside of the community and there may be some concern regarding the availability of affordable housing in the community.

Item	Priority Rating
Preservation of natural areas (woods, non farmed fields, etc)	6.2
Preservation of farmland	6.11
Condition of roads	5.98
Access to commercial services (grocery, restaurant, bar, hairsalons and barbers, etc.)	5.57
Availability of public parks and recreational opportunities	5.02
Availability of homes that people can afford	4.99
Access to public water and sanitary sewer	4.21
Availability of office jobs in the community	3.51
Availability of industrial jobs in the community	3.42

3.8. Please rate your satisfaction with the availability of the following.

Overall respondents appear to be satisfied with the availability of Goods and Services within the Community. However, there may be some desire for more entertainment services such as movies and restaurants.

- Very Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied or unsatisfied
- Unsatisfied
- Very Unsatisfied



3.9. How supportive are you of the following types of residential projects?

Based on the results of this question, we not only see what types of residential projects respondents are supportive of, but we may also get some insight into how that development is desired to look.

Senior Citizen Housing

Respondents are supportive of senior citizen housing. Not only are a majority of respondents supportive of senior citizen housing, but there is very little opposition. However, senior citizen housing can be developed in many different ways (site condo, duplexes, apartments, mixed housing types) as such where and how senior citizen housing is developed can be informed on the responses towards other housing development types.

Single Family Neighborhood Developments

Similar to senior citizen housing, a majority of respondents appear to be supportive of single-family neighborhood developments. However, there is a stronger level of opposition to single family neighborhood

developments. This response paired with a possible desire for more regulations to enhance the visual character of the Township could mean that the community is supportive of more single-family housing as long as it happens in locations and with design elements that will protect and enhance the rural character of the community.

Mixed-use (Commercial/Residential) and Townhomes

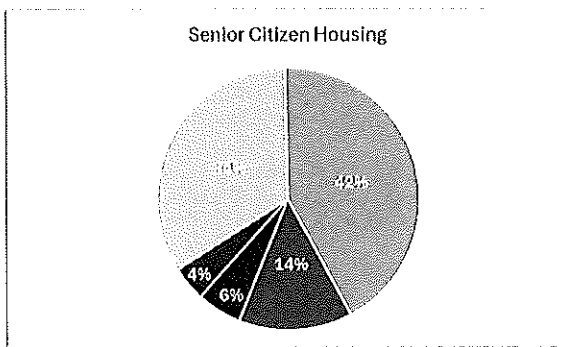
There is no strong support or opposition for these types of development. Respondents are split in their support of mixed-use and townhome developments. If desired these types of developments will likely require a large amount of community input to identify where they are best located and what type of architectural styles and design elements are desired.

Duplexes

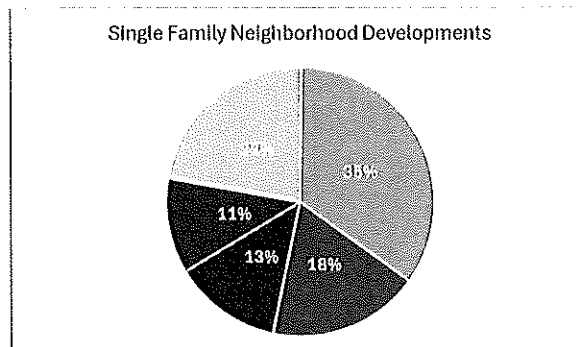
Similar to mixed-use and townhome developments there is no strong support for or opposition to duplexes. However, it appears that respondents lean towards opposing this type of residential development.

Apartments

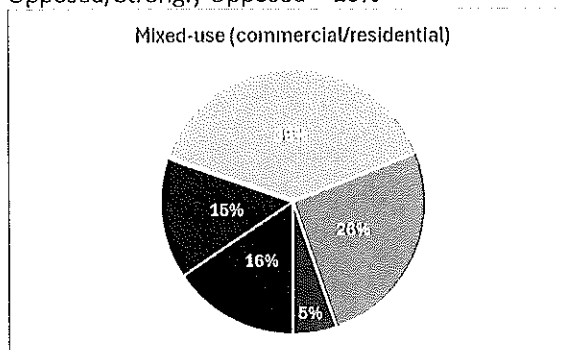
Respondents are clearly opposed to apartment style development. This does not mean that respondents are opposed to multi-family development, but it seems clear that apartment style residential development is not desired in the community.



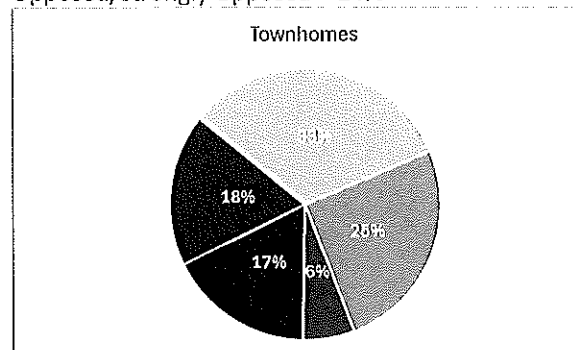
Support/Very Supportive = 56%
Neutral = 34%
Opposed/Strongly Opposed = 10%



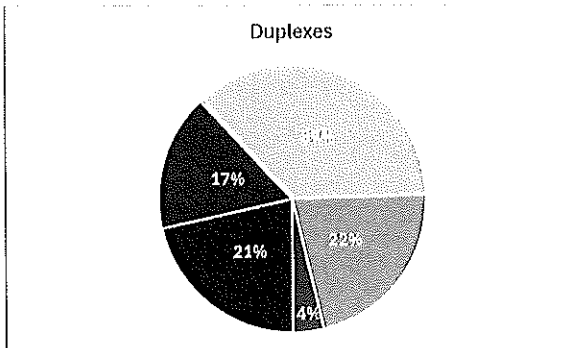
Support/Very Supportive = 53%
Neutral = 22%
Opposed/Strongly Opposed = 24%



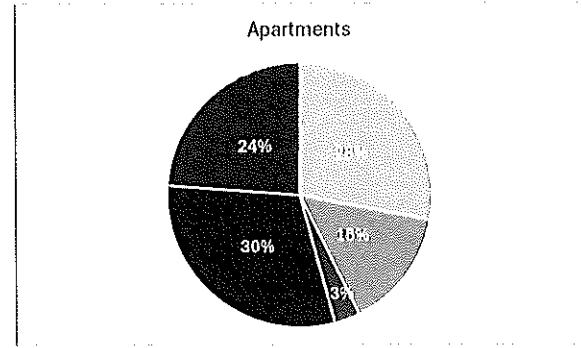
Support/Very Supportive = 31%
Neutral = 39%
Opposed/Strongly Opposed = 31%



Support/Very Supportive = 31%
Neutral = 33%
Opposed/Strongly Opposed = 35%

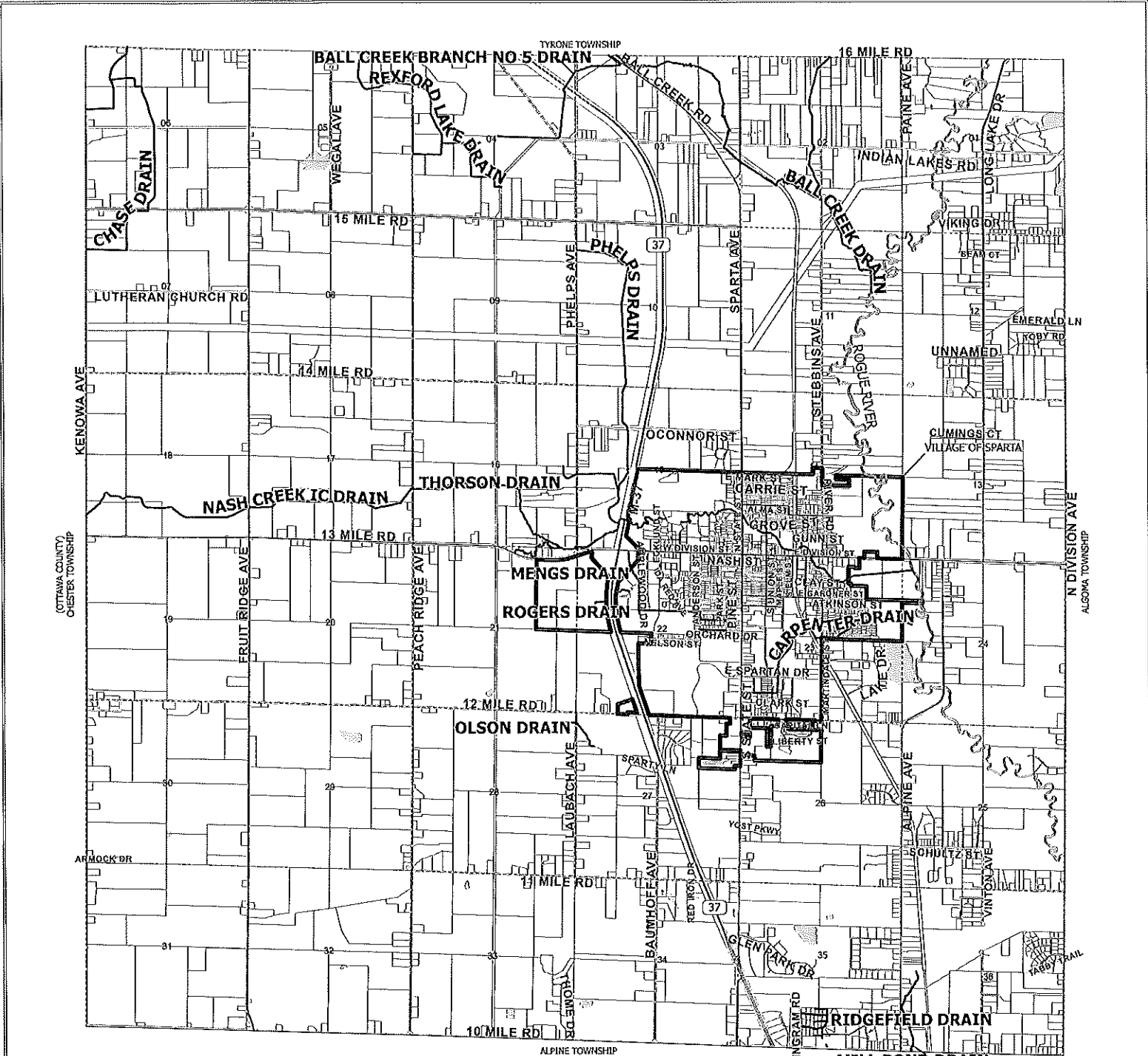


Support/Very Supportive = 26%
 Neutral = 37%
 Opposed/Strongly Opposed = 38%



Support/Very Supportive = 18%
 Neutral = 28%
 Opposed/Strongly Opposed = 54%

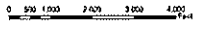
END OF REPORT



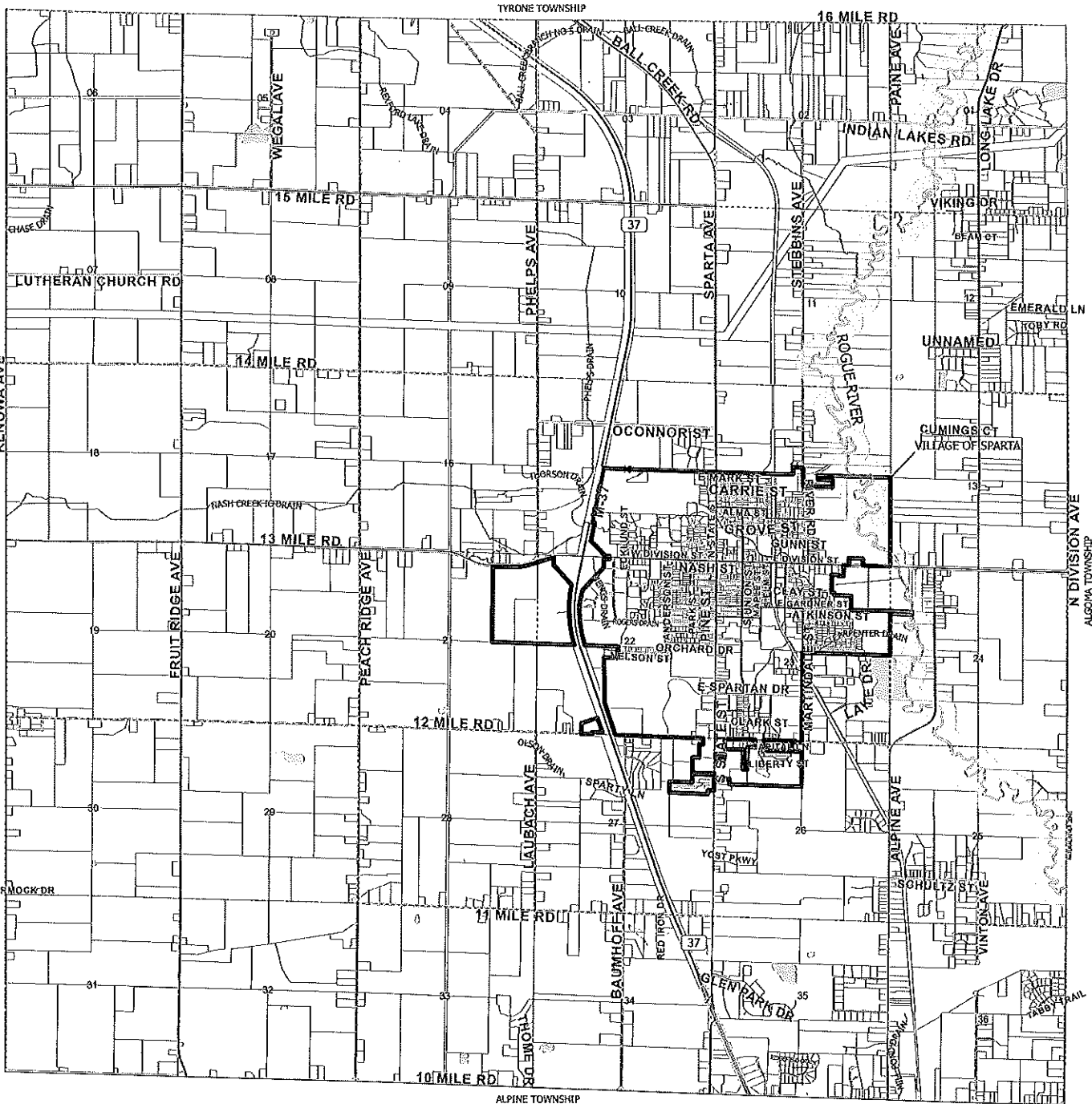
County Drains

Sparta Township, MI
As of January 23, 2025

Legend	
	Road Types
	City Water
	City High
	County Road
	County Parkway
	Field
	State Route
	Perch
	Small County Drain
	Streams & Creeks
	Canals & Branch
	Canals
	Barriers



SPARTA TOWNSHIP
 Fresh Coast Planning
 Vriesman & Korhorn
 CIVIL



TYRONE TOWNSHIP

16 MILE RD

KENOWA AVE

(OTTAWA COUNTY)
CHESTER TOWNSHIP

ARMOCK DR

ALPINE TOWNSHIP

N DIVISION AVE
ALCOHA TOWNSHIP

Natural River Area

Sparta Township, MI
As of January 23, 2025

Legend	
Road Types	Fences
City Road	Natural River
County Road	County Drain
County Road	State & River
County Primary	Lakes & Ponds
Private	Section
State & State	

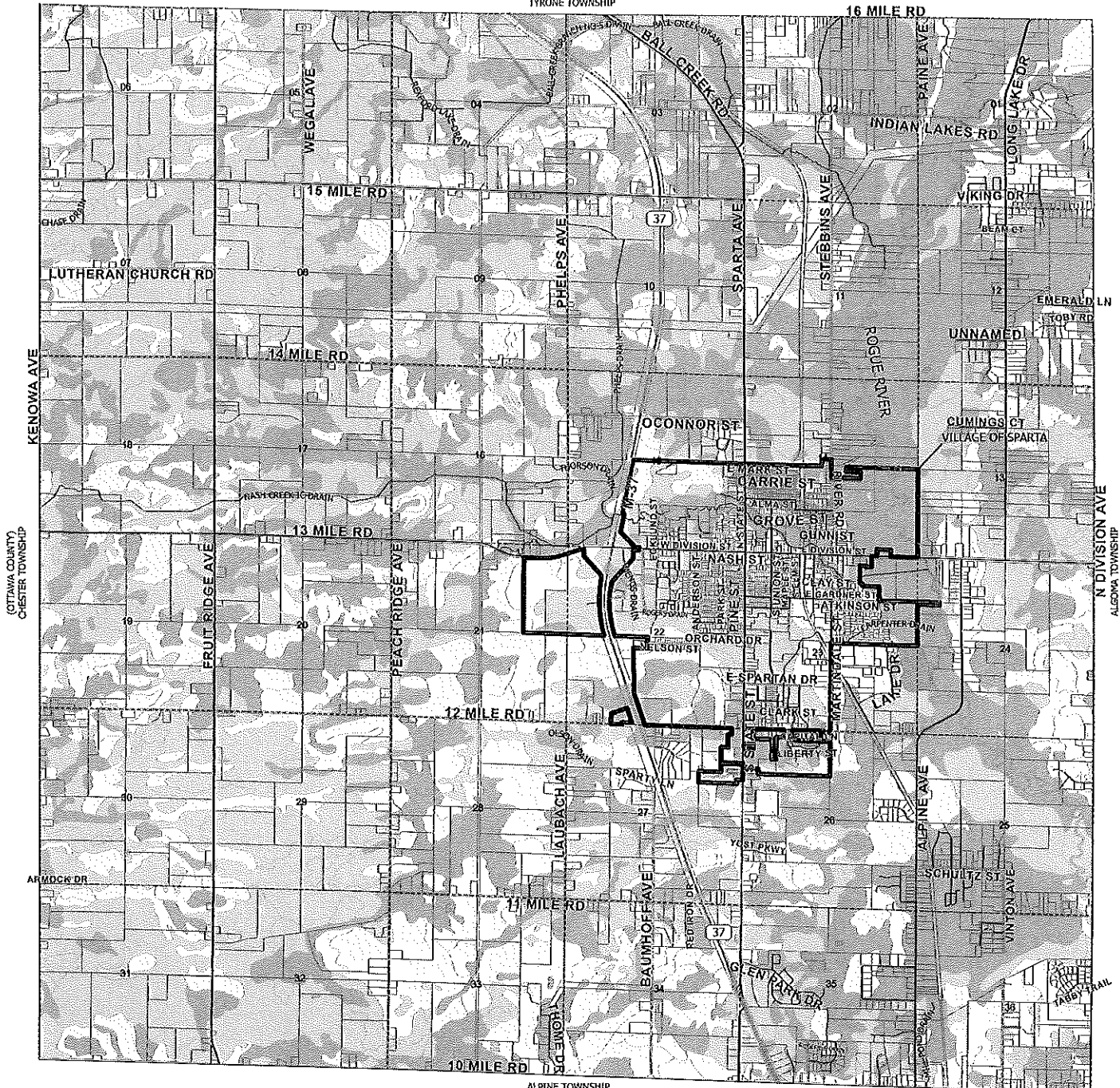


0 500 1000 2000 3000 4000
Feet



TYRONE TOWNSHIP

16 MILE RD

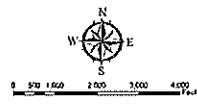


ALPINE TOWNSHIP

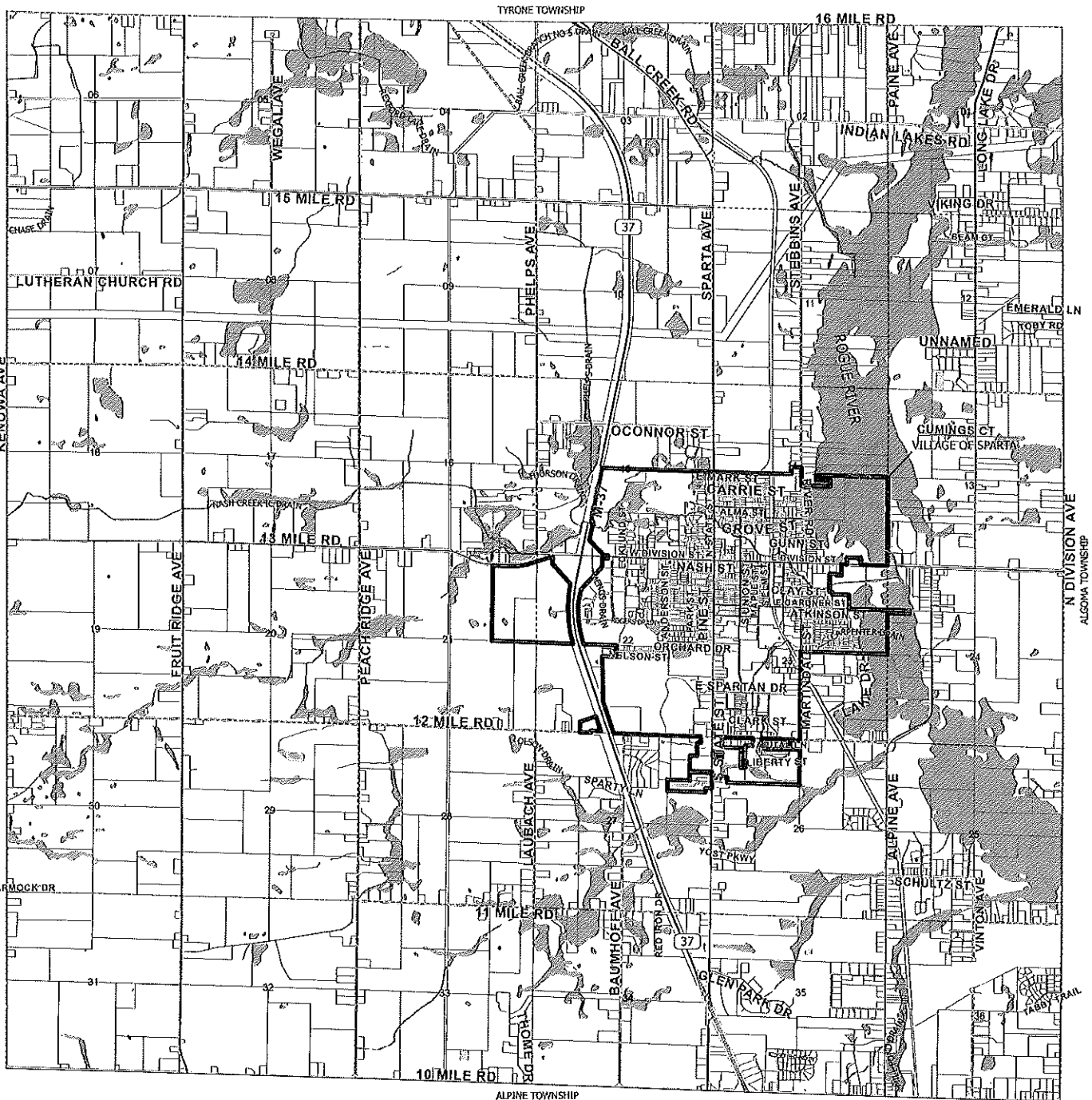
Prime Farmland Soils

Sparta Township, MI
As of January 23, 2025

Legend	



SPARTA TOWNSHIP
 Fresh Coast Planning
 Vriesman & Korhorn



Wetlands

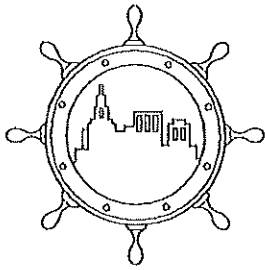
Sparta Township, MI
As of January 23, 2025

Legend	
—	Wetland
—	Wetland Buffer Zone
—	City Street
—	City Road
—	County Road
—	County Primary
—	Private
—	State Trunkline
—	Water Body
—	Water Body Buffer Zone
—	Water Body
—	County District
—	Section & Range
—	Section



0 500 1000 2000 3000 4000 Feet





Fresh Coast Planning

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Alexis Gulker
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alexis@freshcoastplanning.com

MEMORANDUM

To: Sparta Township Board of Trustees
From: Kevin Yeomans
Date: 8/18/2025
Re: Bed and Breakfast as a Special Land Use in C-1

As you may be aware, the Township had previously adopted a Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment that allowed Bed and Breakfast as a special land use in the C-1 General Commercial Zoning District. However, this amendment was not captured when the Zoning Ordinance was codified and readopted.

The result is that though the intent of the Township was to allow Bed and Breakfast establishments as a special land use in the C1 Zoning District, they are currently not allowed in the C1 Zoning District at all.

The Planning Commission held a public hearing at their August 12, 2025, meeting and has recommended adoption of the attached ordinance.

Items for Consideration

1. Hotels and motels are currently allowed in the C1 Zoning District
2. Sparta Township currently has two commercial zoning districts, C-1 and C-2. C-1 is generally for indoor commercial uses and C-2 is generally for outdoor commercial uses.
3. As stated in Section 154.022 – Purposes and Objectives of Districts of the Sparta Township Zoning Ordinance, the intent of the C-1, General Commercial Zoning District is as follows:

The C-1 Zoning District is intended for general convenience type retail businesses and personal service uses, that are deemed desirable and appropriate to the surrounding residential areas of the township. Beyond this character of commercial development, new or additional uses that would create safety and health hazards, offensive and loud noises, vibration, smoke, glare, heavy truck traffic or late hours of operation, are hereby prohibited. By the inclusion of this zoning district, it is also the intent of the township to prevent against the fringe development of convenience businesses and the random scatteration of similar uses elsewhere in the unincorporated portions of the community.

Given that the hotels and motels are currently allowed in the C-1 Zoning District, Bed and Breakfast are an indoor commercial use, personal service uses are intended for the C-1 District, and the previous adoption of a similar amendment by Sparta Township, allowing Bed and Breakfast as a special land use may be appropriate.

Draft Motion

If the Board determines adoption is appropriate, the following draft motion may be used.

Motion to adopt the Bed & Breakfast in the C-1 Zoning District amendment, as written.

KLY
Planner

CC: Terry Hartman, Planning Commission Chair

Attachments

SPARTA TOWNSHIP
KENT COUNTY, MICHIGAN

(Bed & Breakfast in the C-1 Zoning District)

(Ordinance No. _____)

At a _____ meeting of the Township Board for Sparta Township held at the Township offices on _____, 2024, beginning at ____ p.m., this Ordinance/ordinance amendment was offered for adoption by Township Board Member _____ and was seconded by Township Board Member _____:

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDMENT TO AMEND THE
SPARTA TOWNSHIP ZONING ORDINANCE, AS
AMENDED, REGARDING BED AND BREAKFAST
IN THE C-1 ZONING DISTRICT AND SIMILAR
MATTERS.**

THE TOWNSHIP OF SPARTA (the "TOWNSHIP") ORDAINS:

Article 1 – Appendix A, Table of Use Regulations. Appendix A of the Sparta Township Zoning Ordinance shall be amended to add the following language:

Appendix A: C-1 General Commercial Zoning District

Column 3 (Special Uses): 11. Bed and Breakfast Establishments per Section 154.270

Article 2 – Bed and Breakfast Establishments. Section 154.270 of the Sparta Township Zoning Ordinance shall be amended to read in its entirety as follows:

SECTION 154.270 BED AND BREAKFAST ESTABLISHMENTS.

A bed and breakfast establishment may be approved by the Planning Commission as a special use in the Ag-1, and Ag-2, and C-1 Zoning Districts upon compliance with the following requirements.

(A) through (L) No change.

Article 3 – Conflicting Ordinances.

All other ordinances and parts of ordinances, or amendments thereto, in conflict with the provisions of this ordinance are hereby repealed.

Article 4 – Severability.

If any section, clause, or provision of this Ordinance/ordinance amendment is declared to be unconstitutional or otherwise invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, that declaration shall not affect the remainder of the Ordinance/ordinance amendment. The Township Board hereby declares that it would have passed this Ordinance/ordinance amendment and each part, section, subsection, phrase, sentence and clause irrespective of the fact that any one or more parts, sections, subsections, phrases, sentences or clauses be declared invalid.

Article 5 – The Balance of the Sparta Township Code of Ordinances (as amended) Remains Unchanged and in Effect.

Except as expressly amended by this Ordinance/ordinance amendment, the balance of the Sparta Township Code of Ordinances, as amended, remains unchanged and in full force and effect.

Article 6 – Effective Date.

This Ordinance/ordinance amendment shall become effective upon the expiration of seven (7) days after this Ordinance/ordinance amendment (or a summary thereof) appears in the newspaper as provided by law.

The vote to adopt this Ordinance/ordinance amendment was as follows:

YEAS: _____

NAYS: _____

ABSTAIN/ABSENT: _____

THIS ORDINANCE/ORDINANCE AMENDMENT IS HEREBY DECLARED
ADOPTED.

CERTIFICATION

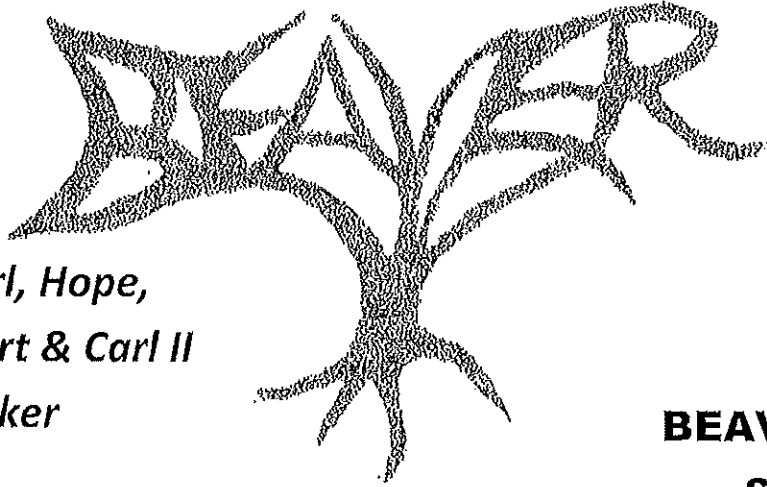
I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of an Ordinance/Ordinance amendment adopted by the Township Board for Sparta Township at the time, date, and place specified above pursuant to the required statutory procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

By: _____

Marcy Savage
Sparta Township Clerk

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Date	Name	Address	Phone #	Fax/Email
8/29/25	Sparta Township	Martin Dale Cemetery		supervisor@spartatownship.org

Removal of cedar Tree, Trimming of maple limb over drive Chip Brush, Haul Wood

\$550.00

Grinding of 2 stumps, Clean Up & Topsoil

\$325.00

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