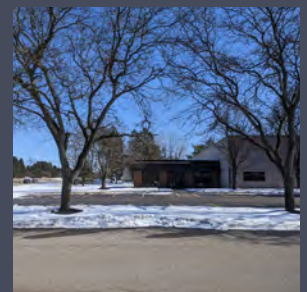


T O W N S H I P

2 0 2 3 M a s t e r P l a n







Acknowledgments

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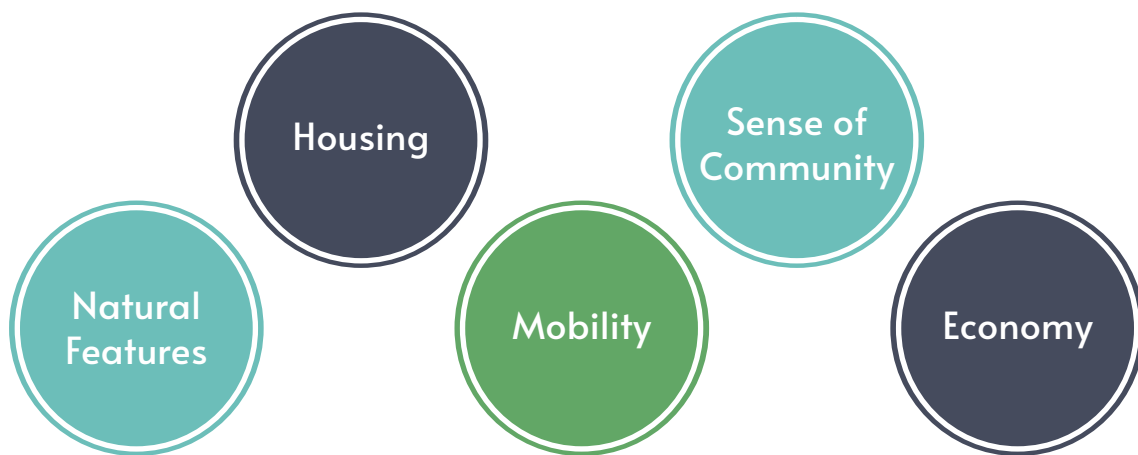
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Resolution

Executive Summary

Ada Township features a wide spectrum of land uses within its 37 square miles. From rural residences nestled in forest settings to large-scale professional offices and warehouses to a vibrant and growing mixed-use village area, Ada Township is far from a typical suburban community. Acknowledging this, the land use policies and recommendations included in this plan are created with enhancing each of Ada's unique "character areas" in mind. These policies were guided from the extensive community engagement held throughout the planning process. Through pop-up engagement meetings, focus groups, an online survey, and numerous community events, residents and stakeholders provided their thoughts and vision for Ada Township's future. Five guiding themes emerged from this feedback, including natural features, housing, mobility, sense of community, and economy. These provide a lens in which land use policies and recommendations would be viewed for the township.



Above: Key Themes of Ada Township Master Plan.

Recognizing Ada Township's diversity of land uses, the plan focuses on addressing each of these values in the township's four identified character areas. These areas include:

Rural Preserve – Defined by its rural woodland setting, this character area features residences dispersed on large, wooded lots as well as legacy agricultural uses and natural open spaces. This area is defined by its intentional lack of infrastructure and desire to remain in its rural state.

Corridors – Defined as the major transportation corridors through the township, this character area is centered along Fulton Street and Cascade Road. This character area seeks to encourage professional office parks with extensive landscape screening while discouraging suburban-style commercial strip shopping centers.

Neighborhood – Defined as the existing residential subdivisions that typically occur in the southwest portion of the township, this character area emphasizes increased housing options in the form of incremental development as well as increased non-motorized connectivity to the village and regional parks.

Village – Defined as the center of the community, this character area is the central gathering place of Ada Township and features a vibrant mixed-use environment that combines residential, retail, and restaurant offerings in a walkable setting.

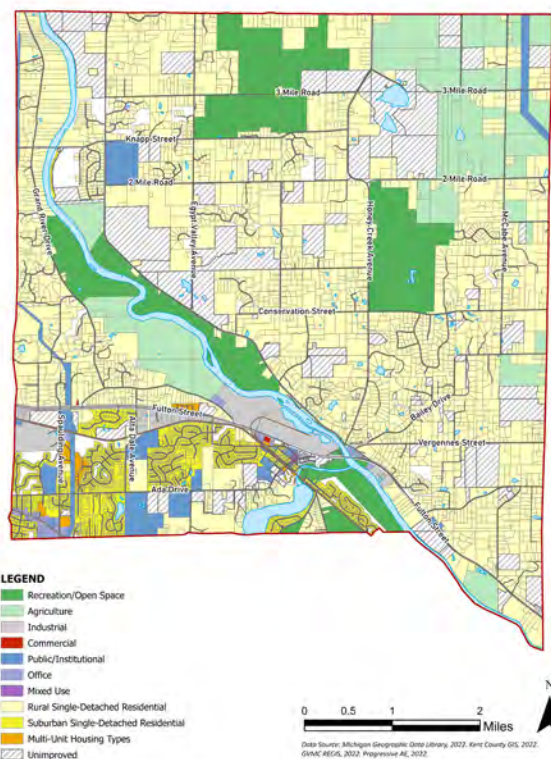
These character areas directly relate to the simplification of Ada Township's Future Land Use Map. With the four desired character areas defined, the Future Land Use Map identifies which land uses are appropriate and conducive to creating the four environments identified in the plan.

The plan's place-based approach recognizes that different areas of the township face different land use planning challenges. This shifts the plan's focus away from establishing goals & objectives from a top-down perspective but instead focuses on enhancing the strengths of Ada Township's unique character areas.

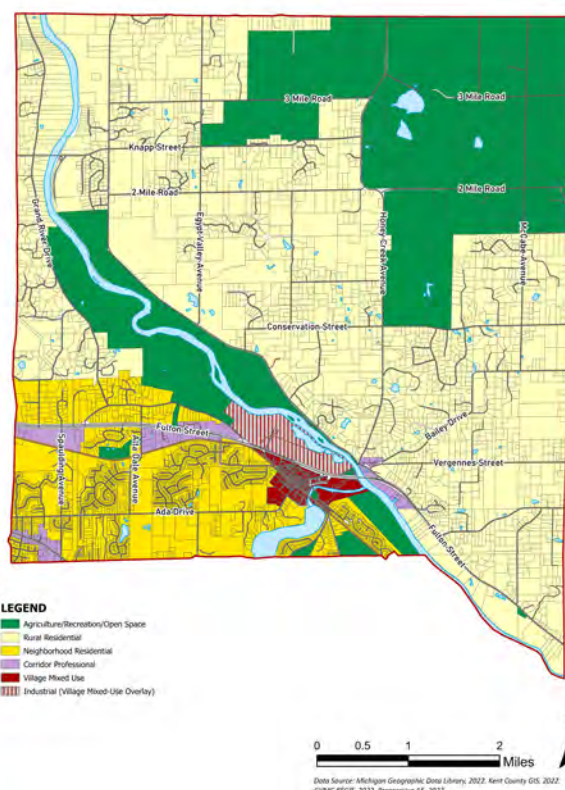


Above: Graphic illustrating Ada Township's four character areas.

In this way, Township officials, staff, and residents will be empowered to shape the township's overall future vision. Coupled with a Zoning Plan that proposes ordinance revisions to achieve this future vision, this plan provides a policy framework for the township to follow over the coming years. This encourages the township to grow in a sustainable manner that cherishes its past while creating vibrant places conducive to local business and convenient for nearby residences - all immersed in the natural woodland setting that is distinct to Ada Township.



Above: Ada Township Existing Land Use Map.



Above: Ada Township Future Land Use Map.

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Chapter I: Ada in Context



What is a Master Plan?

The master plan, also known as a comprehensive plan or land-use plan, is a policy document designed to guide a community's growth and development. It presents a vision for the future, with long-range goals and objectives to manage change over the 20-year planning period. A master plan is critically important as it:

- Serves as the foundation for Ada's zoning ordinance;
- Guides where and how development occurs;
- Identifies the identity and valued features contributing to Ada's quality of life;
- Recommends actions that will support and enhance Ada Village's vibrancy;
- Works to wisely invest taxpayer dollars in the right places to meet Ada's priorities;
- Ensures the sustainable use of resources for a prosperous future; and
- Sets the overall vision for the community's future.

The
Master Plan
Informs...

The
Zoning Ordinance
which Regulates...

Growth and
Development in
Ada Township

The People of Ada Township

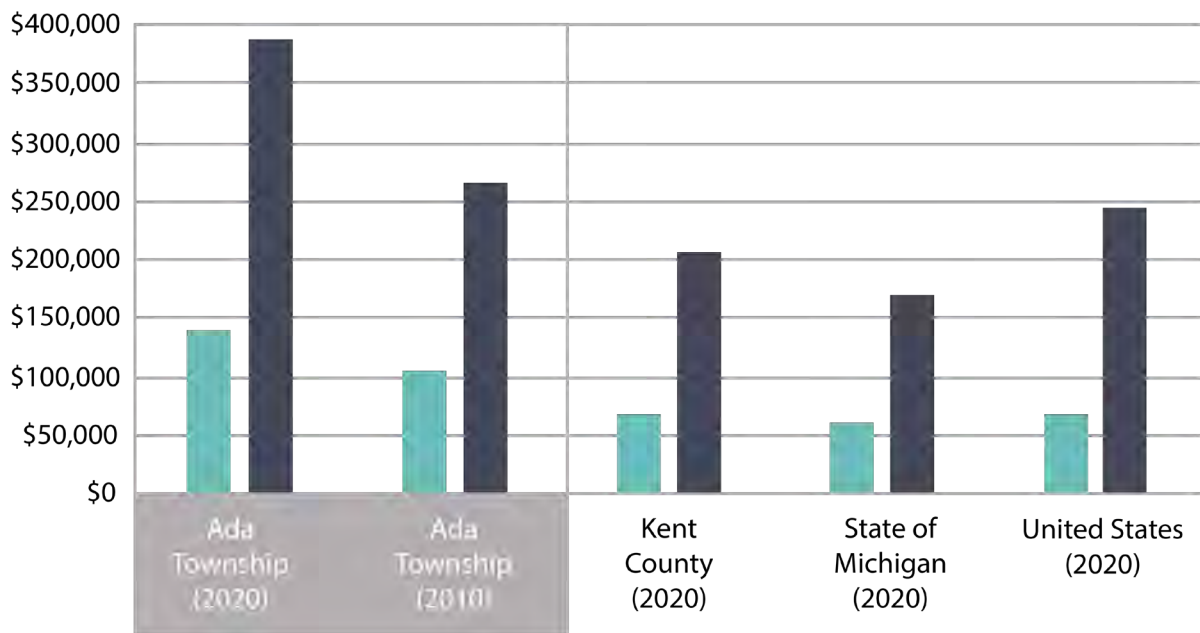
Home to over 14,000 residents, Ada's 37-square miles provides a range of contexts for residents to choose from to call home. The demographics of the township have been changing in different ways, which are unique from past trends. Residents are becoming older and more affluent, household sizes are shrinking, the number of employees in specific sectors are decreasing as housing prices have been rapidly rising, and there is a paradox of larger homes and rising demand for smaller units. Data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey shows that Ada added approximately 1,200 new residents in the last decade.



Ada Township's median age is 41, over two years older than in 2010. The share of households with a senior citizen in them increased from 18% to 27%, in a decade, which is a little higher than elsewhere in the region but less than the state (31%) or nation (30%). In general, this increase in median age is global and expected to continue. Both labor force participation and unemployment dropped between 2010 and 2021, suggesting that a portion of the population is aging out of the workforce.

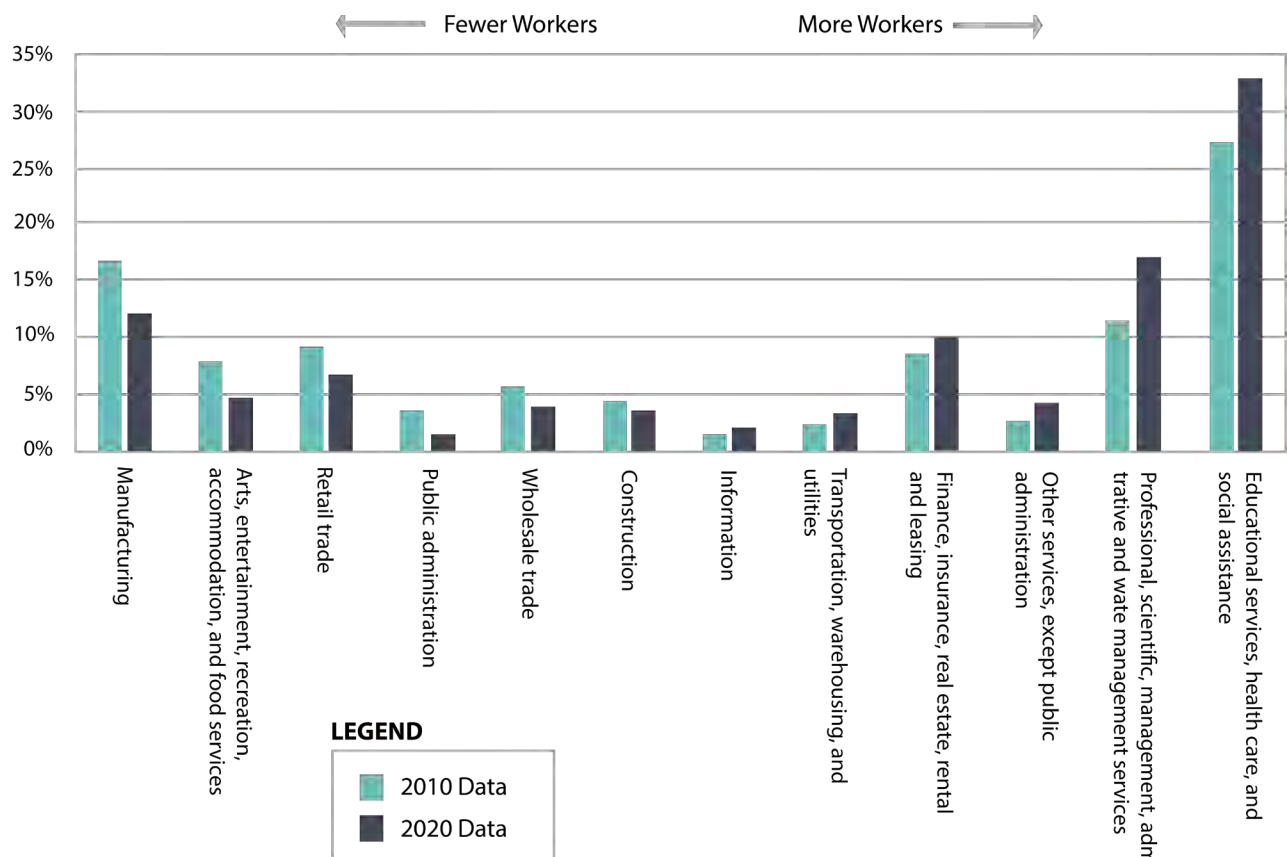
Over the past ten years, the residents of Ada Township have grown more affluent. Median income increased by \$36,000, and the average income has increased by almost twice that (\$72,330), which suggests that the values at the top of the scale are quite high indeed. A third of households now earn more than \$200,000 per year, which is five times the proportion of Michigan residents who earn that much. The poverty rate among all people dropped by a third, from an already-low 3.7% to 1.4% (the Kent County rate is 10%; Michigan is about 13%).





Above: Median Household Income and Housing Value (2010 to 2020).

Light blue demonstrates median household income while dark blue demonstrates housing value.
Data compiled from United States Census Bureau, Table S1901.



Above: Change in Work Industries of Ada Township Residents (2010 to 2021).



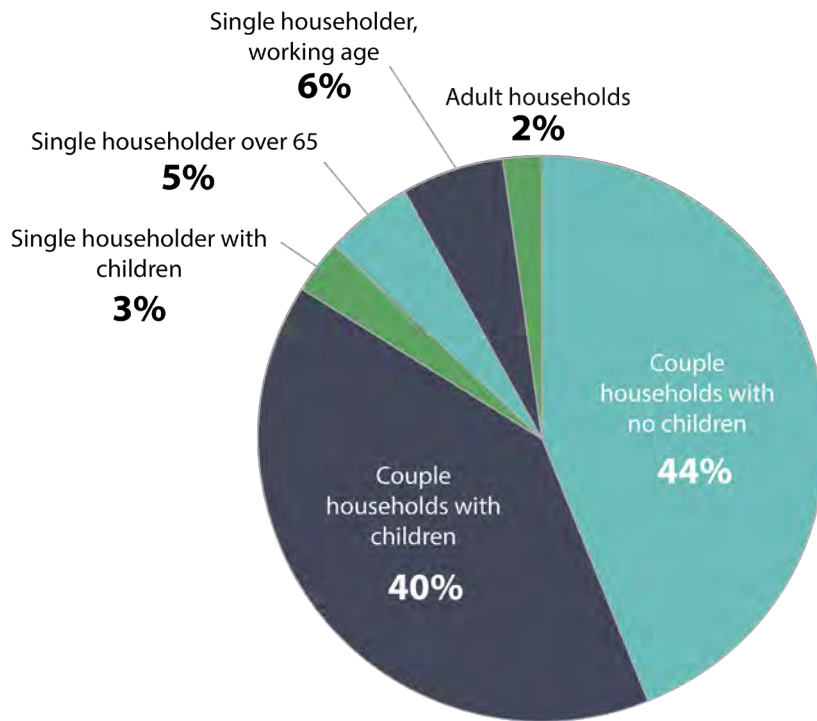
This is not to say that people who lived in Ada in 2010 are suddenly much more prosperous in 2021. The share of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher rose sharply during that time, from 57% to 69% (it's 38% in Kent County overall, 31% in Michigan and 34% in the US), suggesting that at least some new people with higher educational attainment have moved into the township. The types of work that township residents are employed in also shifted: there was a sharp rise in people who work in professions, management, education, and health care, accompanied by a drop in workers in manufacturing, retail, arts and hospitality, and public administration.

This change is fairly predictable. A rise in educational attainment is directly linked to a rise in income, which in turn creates an incentive for the same nearby houses to be sold at higher prices—simply because they can be. Such an increase in housing prices places housing in Ada out of reach for residents that are in the employment sectors that are declining (retail, arts, accommodation, and food service): between 2010 and 2021, workers in the retail industry dropped from 9% of the community's total workers to 6% (a loss of about 100 workers), and workers in art, entertainment, accommodation, and food service dropped from 8% of workers to less than 5% (loss of about 150 workers). In Kent County overall, the share of workers in each of these industry categories dropped by less than a percentage point, reinforcing the idea that this is not part of a larger shift away from these industries but rather that fewer of these workers live in Ada Township. This then becomes a staffing challenge for local businesses.

Households

Most of the households in Ada Township – over 80% of them – are married couples. Almost half of households have a child in them, which is fewer than in 2010 (43% vs 50%) but still more than the county, state, or nation on average. Household sizes for both homeowners and renters have gotten smaller since 2010, as have family sizes. The number of 1- and 2-person households in Ada Township is greater now than those with children at nearly 60%.





Above: Household Composition in Ada Township, 2020.

Smaller households and families generally mean higher demand for housing, as more structures are needed to hold the same number of people. The number of persons per household has been gradually decreasing in Ada Township, following state and national trends. The average size of families in Ada Township is also decreasing, from an average family size of 3.28 persons in 2010 to an average of 3.18 persons in 2020 – a 5% decrease. Even if Ada’s population were not increasing, more housing units would be needed to house current residents.

Persons per Household in Ada Township, 1970-2020

Year	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Persons per Household	3.55	3.32	3.10	3.03	2.95	2.90

Persons per Family in Ada Township, 1970-2020

Year	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Persons per Family	N/A	3.55	3.36	3.30	3.28	3.18

Housing in Ada

Decreasing household size and fewer children can contribute to an increased demand for smaller units and even smaller lot sizes, or a different type of housing than a large home on a big lot. In 2021, 90% of homes in Ada Township had 3 or more bedrooms. Recent housing data from Rocket Homes illustrates the substantial increase in value of homes with 2 bedrooms in Ada Township versus homes with more bedrooms. Demand for smaller units is evident, as the median housing price of a 2-bedroom unit rose by more than one-third within a 12-month period. The market has been responding, with Census data showing that the proportion of dwellings in the Township which are in the single-detached format has shrunk from about 94% in the 2010 American Community Survey to about 92% in 2021, with gains in new attached units and developments of 5 or more units. These new units have been developed in and around the village.



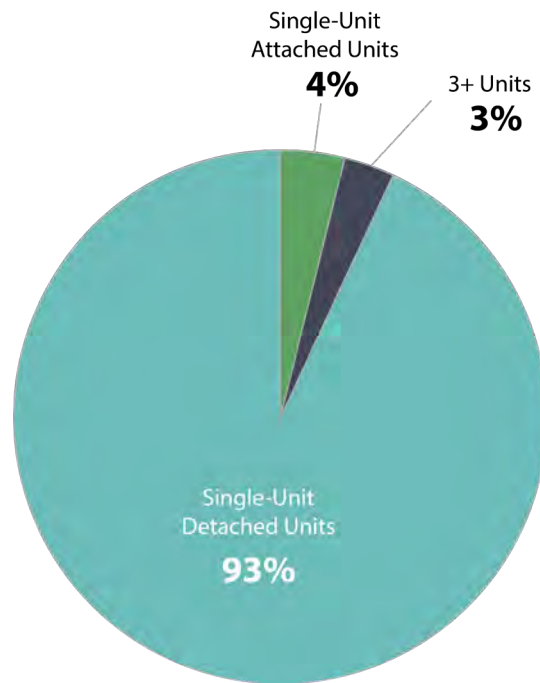
Median Sold Price by Bedroom Count	January 2022	January 2023	Percent Change
1 Bedroom	N/A	N/A	N/A
2 Bedrooms	\$310,000	\$425,500	+37.3%
3 Bedrooms	\$355,000	\$360,000	+1.4%
4 Bedrooms	\$447,500	\$526,500	+17.7%
5+ Bedrooms	\$628,500	\$682,700	+8.6%

Still, smaller housing units and unit sizes are more of an anomaly than a big event in Ada Township. New construction of single-detached residential structures in the Township are getting bigger. The median home has more than 9 rooms, compared to 5.5 nationally and 6.1 rooms in Kent County, up from 8.5 rooms in 2010. It also does not align with population trends described before: in 2021, only 10% of homes in Ada Township had 2 or fewer bedrooms, whereas almost 60% of households have just one or two people in them.

“Smaller households and families generally mean higher demand for housing, as more structures are needed to hold the same number of people.”

6

The cost of owning a home is increasing. Census data supports decreasing housing affordability. Median housing value in the township increased by 47% between 2010 and 2021, from \$263,600 to \$388,000. This was a faster rise than in Kent County (40%, from \$147,600 to \$206,600), which is also growing, and much faster than the state overall (19%, from \$144,200 to \$172,100), which is generally not. (US median value increase: 30%, from \$188,400 to \$244,900.) As the numbers show, this swift increase comes on top of the fact that Ada Township's housing value was higher than any of the comparison geographies already, further dwindling an already scarce resource.



Above: Housing Type Composition in Ada Township, 2020.

For those who already own a home in the Township, the Census reports that housing costs rose at a manageable rate between 2010 and 2021. Monthly owner costs for those units with a mortgage increased by 17% (\$2,089 to \$2,455), but housing actually became more affordable during that time period for this group: the percent of mortgage-holders that spent more than 30% of its household earnings on housing costs (known as “cost burdened”) dropped from 27% to 15%. This indicates rising wages for this group. Monthly owner costs for units without a mortgage increased by 20% (\$648 to \$780), and this group was also well able to withstand it: the percentage of homeowners with no mortgage who were cost-burdened dropped from 12% to 7%, again indicating that this group’s wages rose faster than their housing costs.

But for those 150+ households who are renters, costs increased by 59% over the same period (\$1,167 to \$1,850—a \$683 jump). In 2010, just 15% of renters paid more than \$1500 per month; today, over 90% do. This group’s wages are not keeping pace with their housing costs: in 2010, 40% of renters were cost-burdened, and that figure rose to 47% in 2021. This is not a sustainable situation for these households.

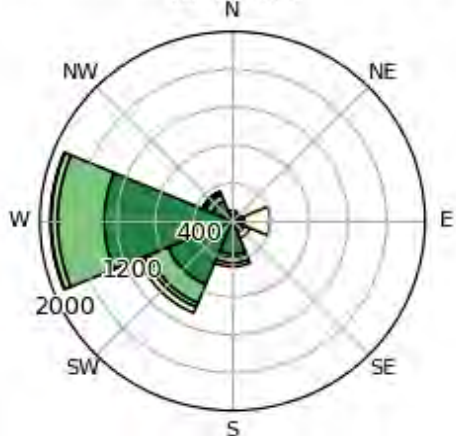
Commuting

Another sign that the population is changing can be found in the township's commuting patterns. The proportion of those who work from home rose by ten percentage points between 2010 and 2021 (4% to 14%), and it was offset by a decline in the share of workers who drive, either alone or in a carpool (93% to 83%). A similar, but less intense, trend happened across Kent County, Michigan, and the US, where work-from-home rose about five percentage points (4.1, 6.2, and 5.6 respectively) and driving decreased almost proportionately (-5.2, -4.7, and -4.6 percentage points respectively).

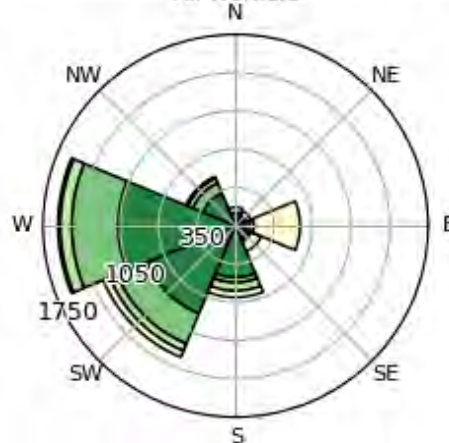
However, the overall average travel time to work rose by almost two minutes (19.4 to 21.2 minutes), which may suggest that the jobs to which township residents commute have changed. Commuting time increased in the county and state increased by less than a minute (0.8), and it was 1.6 minutes in the nation as a whole. The Census' On the Map feature combines data from the Census Bureau, Unemployment Insurance, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the Federal personnel office to show the relationship between where people live and where they work. The two radar charts below show the distance and direction of commutes from workers in Ada Township in 2010 and in 2019. Fewer workers are heading due west, toward Grand Rapids, while more workers are headed south and southwest.

"Fewer workers are heading due west, toward Grand Rapids, while more workers are headed south and southwest."

Job Counts by Distance/Direction in 2010
All Workers



Job Counts by Distance/Direction in 2019
All Workers



Legend

- Less than 10 Miles
- 10 to 24 Miles
- 25 to 50 Miles
- Greater than 50 Miles

While most Ada Township residents commute west towards Grand Rapids...

Since 2010 an increasing amount of residents commute southwest into Cascade Township and Kentwood

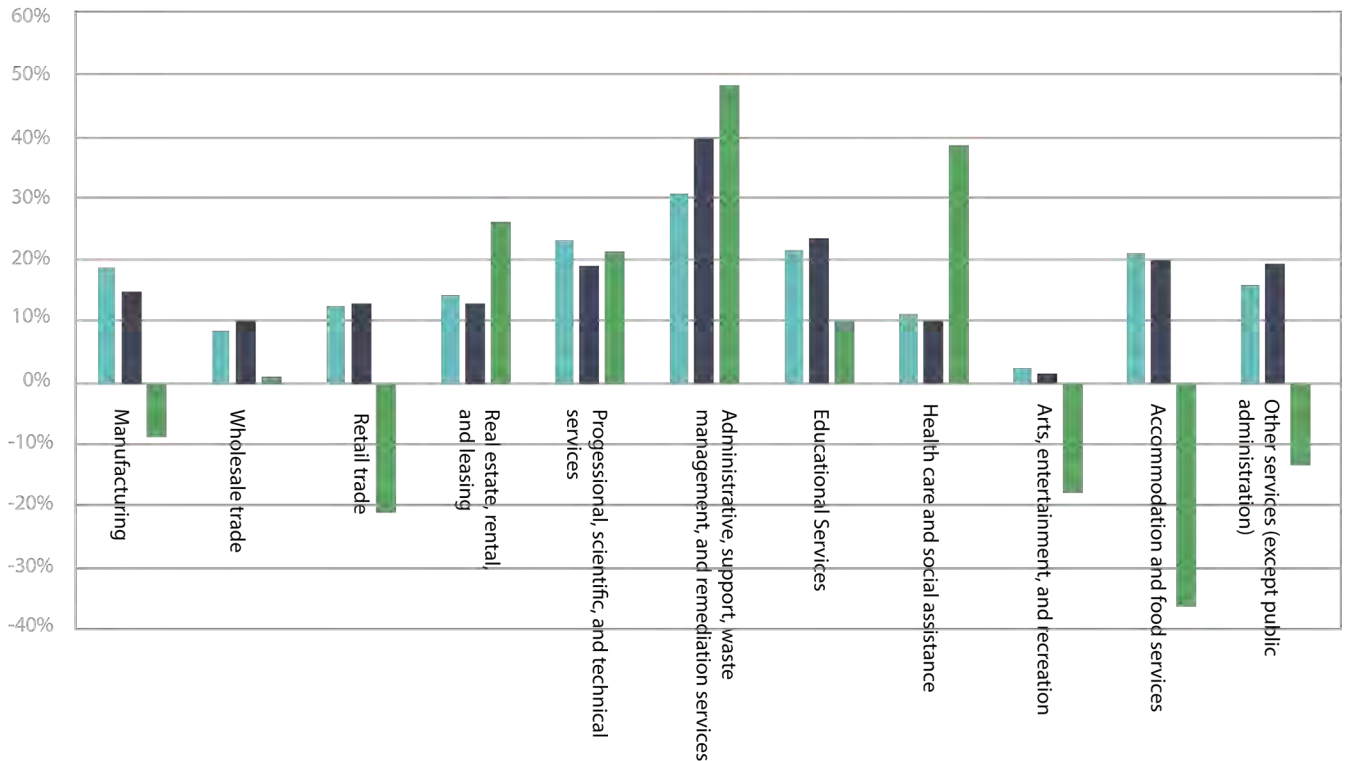


Regional Economy and Ada's Place in It

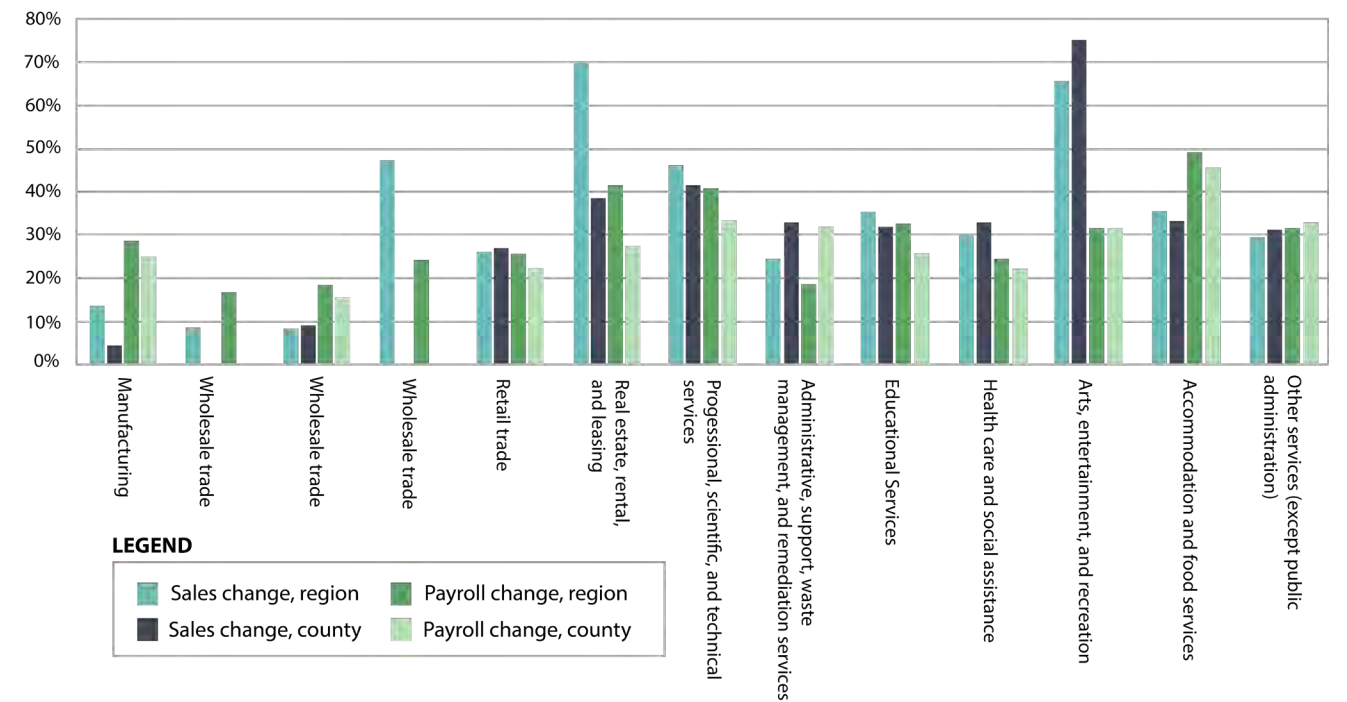
Economic systems are generally larger than municipal boundaries, and a well-developed one often incorporates several counties. This is the case with the Grand Rapids-Kentwood Metropolitan statistical area in which Ada Township is located: it includes Kent County as well as Ottawa, Ionia, and Montcalm Counties. Understanding the general strengths and direction of the regional economic system, as well as pinpointing Ada's place within it, helps identify economic trends that may affect Ada Township's development over the next several decades.

The 2017 and 2012 Economic Censuses show that manufacturing remains a primary driver of the region, generating over \$34 billion in sales and employing almost 66,000 people. During this five-year period, which includes the nation's exit from the Great Recession, the manufacturing sector added 4% more establishments, 14% in sales, 29% in payroll, and 19% more employees. The Census' On the Map feature, which estimates job information in geographies smaller than a county, shows that the manufacturing sector is also the largest source of jobs within Ada Township, employing 37% of the people who held a job in the community in 2017, or about 2,370 people. (In this section, a "job" is performed within Ada Township's boundaries, regardless of where the employee lives. This is in contrast to "workers" in the previous section, which refers to the employment held by a person who lives in Ada Township, regardless of where that job is performed.) However, the number of manufacturing jobs declined 9% in Ada since 2012.

Below: Jobs Change in Ada Township, 2012-2017.



The related wholesale trade industry is of similar size in the region, with higher sales (\$36B) but fewer employees (24,300) and slower growth. Yet it largely passes Ada by, with just 3% of the community's jobs in this sector.



Above: Sales and Payroll Changes within Region, 2012-2017.

The fastest-growing sector in the region during this time period was administrative and support services, which include waste management and remediation. Over 15,000 jobs were added in this sector, nearly all in Kent County, including about 385 in Ada Township. This was the highest jump in the township, representing an increase of about 48% from 2012. Health care and social assistance (human services, childcare, food and housing relief) has the second-highest payroll and employment figures in the region after manufacturing, with growth around 10%-30% across benchmarks. A relatively small share of Ada's jobs are in this sector (7%), but the number of jobs has grown by 39% between 2012 and 2017. For both of these sectors, the confluence of regional and local growth suggests a relevant trend. These are generally well-paying jobs, and their growth is likely contributing to the rising median income and housing values in Ada Township.



The third highest number of jobs in Ada Township are in the retail sector, even after a 21% decline between 2012 and 2017 (697 jobs to 552). This decline is in contrast to the region, which saw a 13% increase in retail jobs and a 27% increase in retail sales during that time period. The related accommodation and food services industry saw a similar trend: jobs in the region and the county grew by about 20% and sales increased by 33% or more, but the relatively small share of these jobs in Ada declined even further, shedding by about a third (173 jobs to 110). These are the types of jobs that indicate a community's vibrance and its pull as a destination, so the low figures in Ada compared to the region indicate an opportunity for Ada to improve its commercial offerings. However, they are typically low-paying positions, so any efforts to increase these jobs in the community would need to be accompanied by a housing strategy to ensure that the workers who perform them are not burdened by either housing or transportation costs that they cannot reasonably expect to afford.



Natural Features

Ada Township's natural features – the wooded ravines high over the Grand River, creeks and streams meandering through dense hardwood forests, prairie clearings and wetlands teeming with life – each contribute to the township's unique natural identity. Recognizing the irreplaceable value of these environments, land use planning must identify these areas and propose development patterns compatible with their preservation. This practice ensures that the township's environmental features guide potential development, protecting its natural characteristics.

Included in the following sections are significant natural features located in Ada Township and their influence on the Township's built environment.

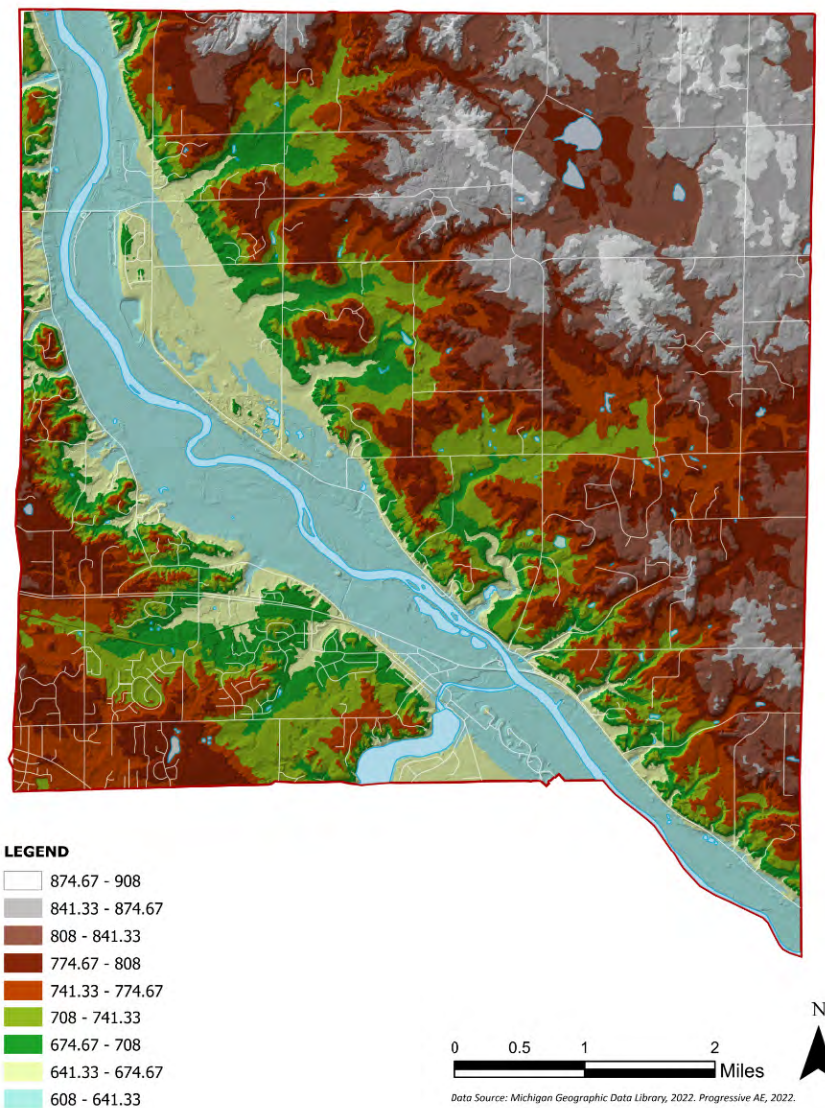


Topography

Truly the "Forest Hills" of the Grand Rapids region, Ada Township features sizable elevation changes within its 37 square miles. Areas near the Grand River valley feature the steepest elevations, as ravines give way to the relatively flat areas directly bordering the river. This is perhaps most evident along Grand River Drive near Roselle Park, Pettis Avenue near Chief Hazy Cloud Park, and along Fulton Street on the east side of the Grand River. The highest point in the Township is 883 feet above sea level near the Giles Avenue / 4-Mile Road intersection while the lowest points are those located along the banks of the Grand River at roughly 620 feet above sea level. The Township's varied topography creates interest and natural beauty.

"Ada is a land of oak openings of hill and dale, forming one of the most picturesque divisions of the county." (History of Kent County, Michigan, 1881. M.A. Leeson)

Steep slope areas are dynamic and vulnerable environments that pose unique development challenges. These exceptionally scenic areas are susceptible to erosion, posing threats to residents and the natural environment. Ridge lines and topographic high points are also visually prominent and can be seen from long distances. Because of these features, development should be limited in steep slope areas to preserve both the environmental and aesthetic quality of these unique environments.



Above: Topography Map of Ada Township.

Woodlands

Ada Township's dense tree coverage contributes to its natural identity. Mature upland forests abound as oak, beech, and maple trees provide a blanket of foliage across the township. Nine roadways within Ada Township are designated as "Natural Beauty Roads" by the Kent County Road Commission, more than any other township within the county. The Township's woodland environment not only adds to its rural character; it provides important habitat for wildlife, shade for residents, and moderates temperatures. Development patterns should acknowledge these intrinsic benefits and seek to preserve woodland areas as a natural amenity that enhances the entire township's desirability and quality of life.



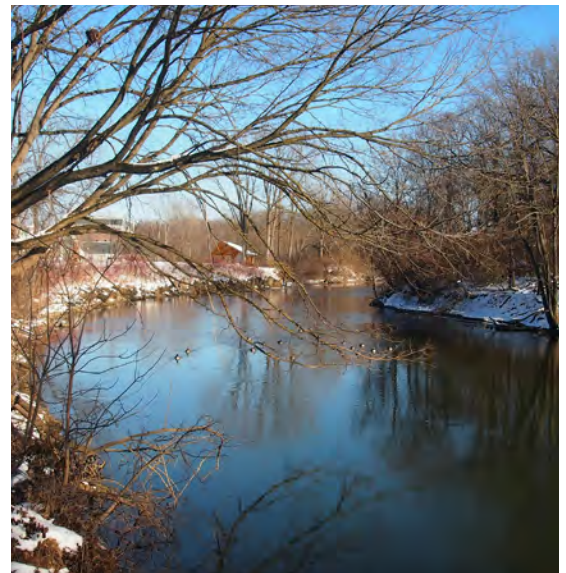
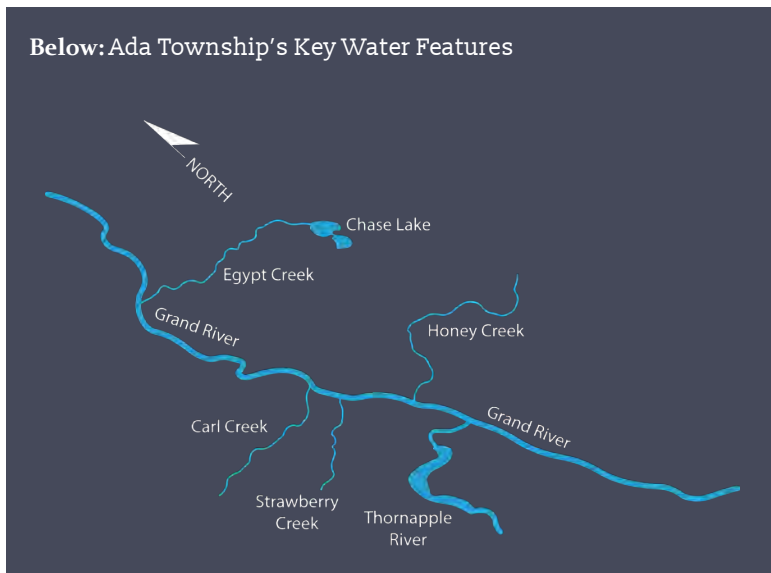
"Ada Township's natural features - the wooded ravines high over the Grand River, creeks and streams meandering through dense hardwood forests, prairie clearings and wetlands teeming with life - each contribute to the township's unique natural identity."

Above: Tree Canopy Cover Map of Ada Township.

Water

Perhaps Ada's most prominent natural features, the Grand River and Thornapple River wind through the township, providing definition and a useful geographic reference for residents. The Grand River divides the township from southeast to northwest while the Thornapple River flows from the south where it meets the Grand River, east of Ada Village. Both rivers provide abundant recreation opportunities, and Ada Township, Kent County, and the State of Michigan have dedicated natural spaces along their banks to take advantage of this regional amenity.

Feeding these large rivers are numerous creeks and streams. Egypt Creek is in the northern portion of the Township and runs roughly from Chase Lake to the Grand River. Honey Creek flows from the northeastern corner, passing through Seidman Park on its way to the Grand River. Carl Creek flows from the southwestern portion of the township, entering the Grand River between Roselle Park and the Amway campus. Strawberry Creek is also located in southwestern Ada Township, passing behind several neighborhoods before entering the Grand River just north of the Amway campus.



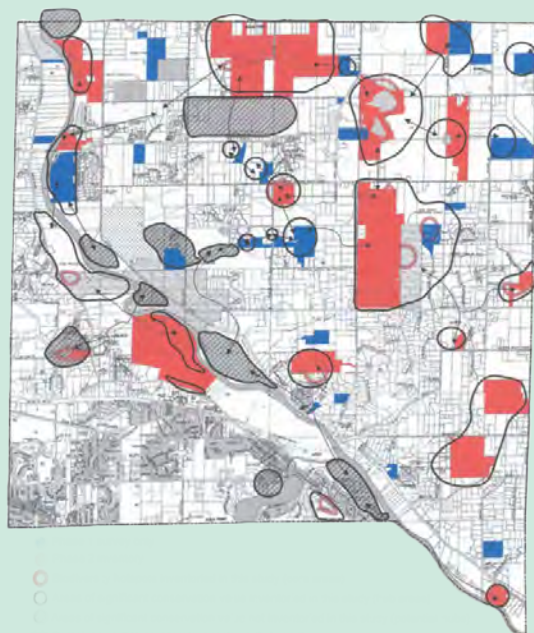
There are few natural lakes in Ada Township; the largest is Chase Lake to the northeast. This 50-acre eutrophic (stagnant water body lacking oxygen) lake is part of a marsh and wetland system that is fed by Egypt Creek and includes the smaller Downs Lake to the east. Since the damming of the Thornapple River in 1926, the Thornapple River is a man-made reservoir along Thornapple River Drive.

"Both the Grand River and Thornapple River wind through the township, providing definition and a useful geographic reference for residents."

While extensive surface water provides natural beauty and recreational amenities, it also increases flood risks for nearby areas. Wetland areas are another vulnerable water feature that regularly flood and are therefore incompatible for development. Both of these features result in water hazard areas that discourage development. Many of the low-lying areas near the Grand River are within the 100-year floodplain as determined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) while wetland features are concentrated along Carl Creek southeast of the Grand River, surrounding Chase Lake and Downs Lake, as well as scattered along other low-lying streams and tributaries throughout the Township.

Designing with Nature – Not Against It

In the past, development has often been at odds with the natural environment. Razing woodlands, filling wetlands, constructing in flood-prone areas – all represent development that ignores the intricacies and importance of our natural systems. Recognizing its abundance of natural features and their role in shaping its identity, Ada Township can focus development into a compact form that is contiguous with areas of existing disturbance. By directing development away from vulnerable areas, the character of Ada Township as a growing community that is immersed in nature can remain available for future generations.

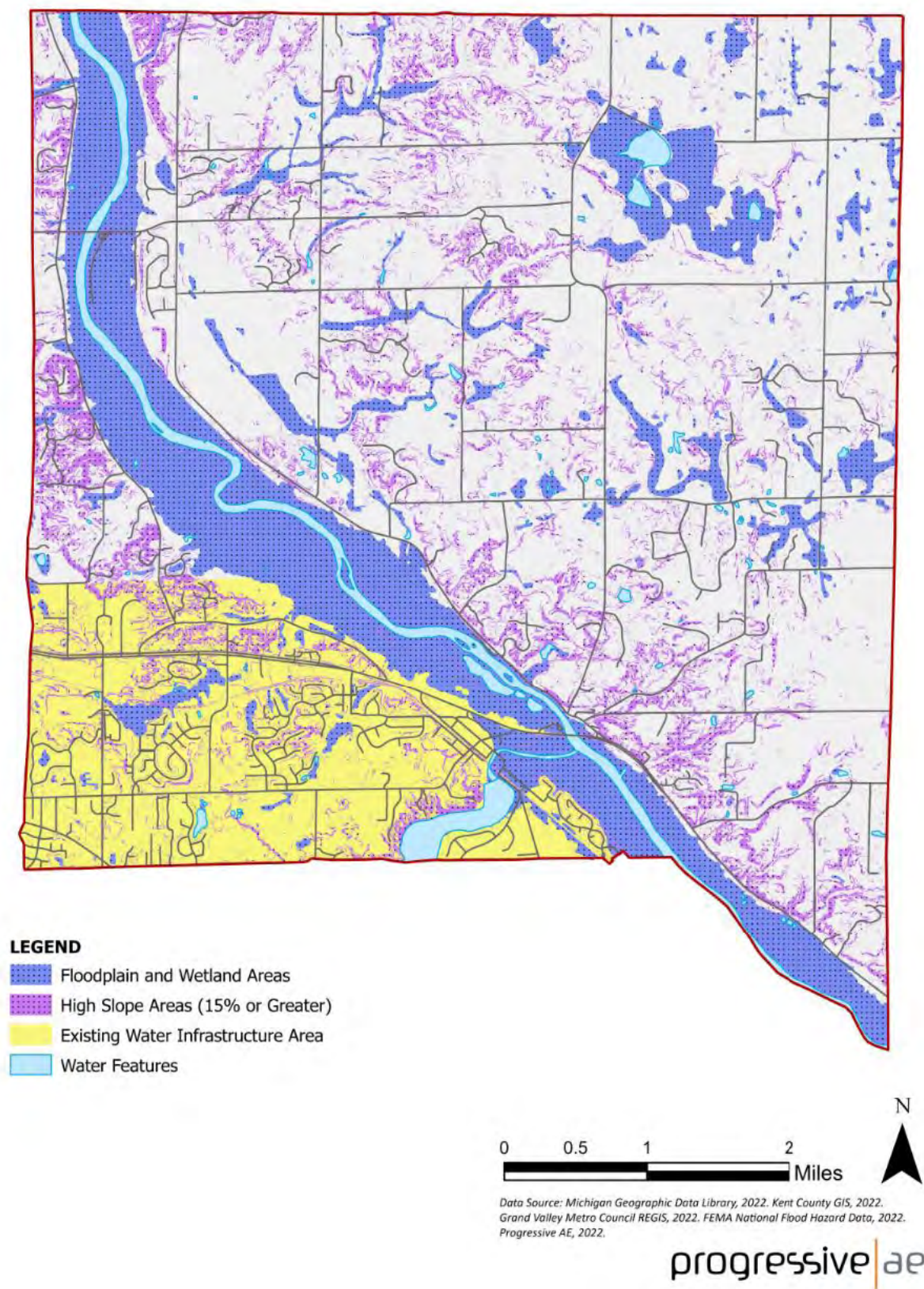


2006 Calvin University Open Space Study

Understanding the township's inventory of natural features is vital in ensuring its preservation. In 2006, a group of researchers from the Calvin University Biology Department studied Ada Township for high-quality natural areas. These areas were selected based on species biodiversity and their potential for landscape corridors connecting habitats across the region.

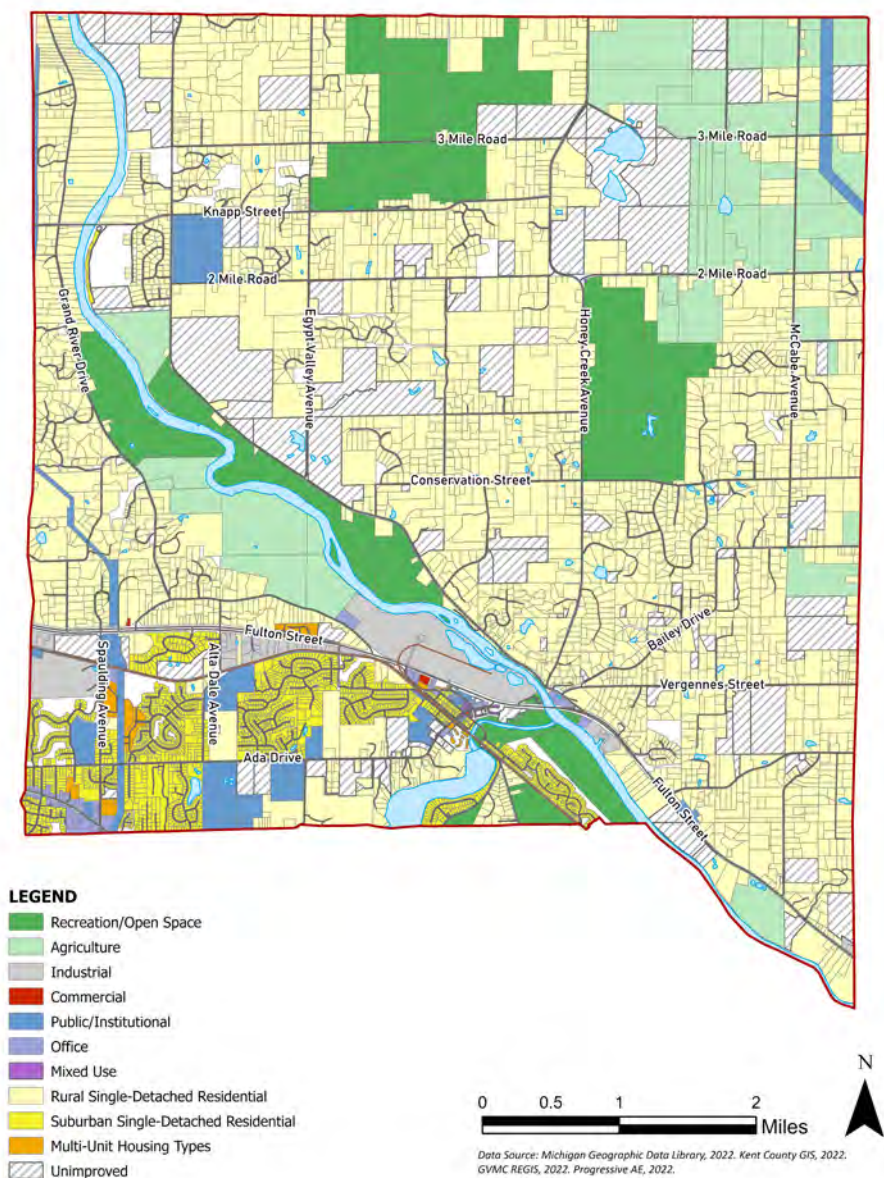
- Phase I Survey Only
- Phase 2 Inventory
- Biodiversity hot spots inventoried in the study (core areas)
- Areas of significant conservation value inventoried in this study (hub areas)
- Areas of significant conservation value not inventoried in this study (potential hub areas)
- ↔ Perceived wildlife corridors/connections (linkage)

Below: Map of Environmentally-Sensitive Areas in Ada Township.

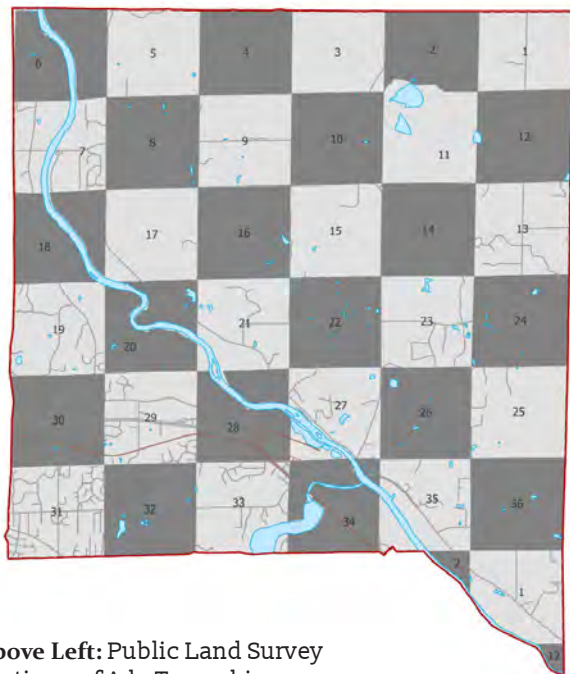


Existing Land Use

Ada Township includes a spectrum of land uses within its 37 square miles. These include rural agriculture operations, suburban residential neighborhoods, large industrial facilities, dense village blocks, and other land uses characteristic of a community in a metropolitan region. In general, this development pattern is influenced by the township's history, natural features, access to roadways and transportation facilities, and the provision of public water and sewer infrastructure. Ada Township also carries the legacy of being a public land survey township, as it was divided into square mile sections establishing the division of properties during the early 19th century. This makes identifying concentrations of existing land uses at a township-wide scale easier. The following text describes existing land uses in Ada Township and their characteristics.



Above: Existing Land Use Map of Ada Township.



Above Left: Public Land Survey Sections of Ada Township.

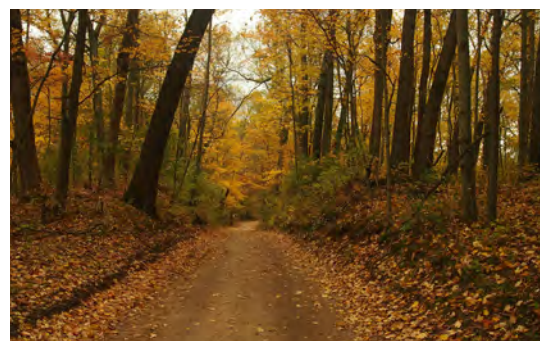
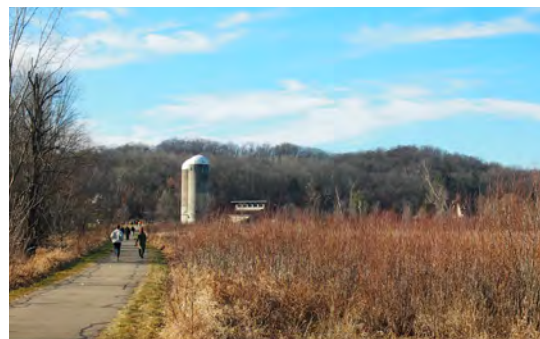


Above Right: 1900 Plat Map of Ada Township.

"In general, Ada Township's development pattern is influenced by its history, natural features, access to roadways and transportation facilities, and the provision of public water and sewer infrastructure."

Recreation/Open Space

Ada Township contains several preserved natural spaces in the form of township and county parks, nature preserves, and state game areas. The most significant of these include the Cannonsburg State Game Area located in the northern portion of the township (sections 3, 4, and 9), Seidman Park located in the eastern portion of the township (sections 14 and 23), Chief Hazy Cloud Park located along the eastern bank of the Grand River (sections 20, 21, and 28), and Roselle Park located along the western bank of the Grand River (sections 18, 19, and 20). Preserves in Ada include the Grand River Natural Area, Carl Creek Crossing Preserve, and Carl Creek Wetland Preserve. There are other public park spaces scattered throughout the township, preserving important natural features. See the Township's Parks and Recreation Master Plan for additional details.



Agriculture

Like many townships in Michigan, Ada Township has a history of farming, as settlers such as Edward Pettis and Amos Chase came to cultivate the rolling hills and river valleys during the 1840s. Since then, these legacy farms have given way to large-lot residences and subdivisions as the township has transitioned from primarily agriculture to residential land uses. Agriculture operations remain in select portions of the township, namely in the far northeastern corner (sections 1, 2, 11, and 12) as well as the old Alta Dale Dairy Farm property south of Roselle Park along the western banks of the Grand River (sections 20, 28, and 29). There are isolated agriculture parcels elsewhere in the township, mostly located along the eastern boundary of the township.

Industrial

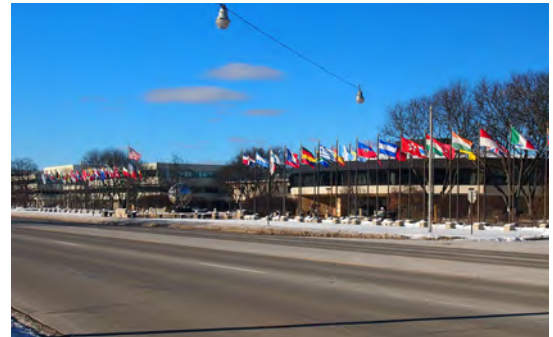
Ada Township has a concentration of industrial uses along the Fulton Street (M-21) corridor. The largest industrial land use in the township is the Amway global headquarters just north of Ada Village along the western bank of the Grand River. Just as mills were constructed in Ada Village near the Detroit & Milwaukee railroad during the 19th century, these modern warehouse and manufacturing operations are drawn to the logistical benefits of a state highway connecting them to the second-largest market in the state.

Mixed Use

Ada Village – located south of Fulton Street on the west side of the Grand River - contains first-floor storefronts, as well as second-floor office and residential units. The township is fortunate to have its traditional village center be the focus of significant private and philanthropic investment over the past decade, which has contributed to the evolution of the village's development pattern. Housing and businesses are increasingly located near each other in a manner that encourages a walkable and vibrant village center.

Commercial

Unlike many townships in metropolitan regions, Ada Township does not feature extensive strip shopping centers that are emblematic of many suburban communities. There is limited development of this category, with the few examples located primarily along the Fulton Street Corridor.



Public/Institutional

Ada Township features numerous public, semi-public, and institutional land uses. Many of these land uses are school campuses located in the southwestern portion of the township. A notable exception to this is Forest Hills Eastern Middle/High School located east of the Grand River (section 8). Ada Vista Elementary School and Ada Elementary School, both public schools, are located just south of the Ada Village area. Ada Christian School is a K-8 private primary school located near the southwest corner of Ada Drive and Fox Hollow Avenue. About 2/3 of the Township is within the Forest Hills School District, with the remaining nearly 1/3 served by Lowell Area Schools. A very small area west of the Grand River in the northwest corner of the Township is in the Northview Schools district.

Consumers Energy also maintains two power line easements through the township, one located near its southwestern border with Grand Rapids Township (sections 19, 30, and 31) and another in the northeast corner of the township (sections 1 and 12). A major power substation is located near the township's western border along Fulton Street at Spaulding Avenue, with a smaller facility located along Rix Street east of Ada Drive.

Office

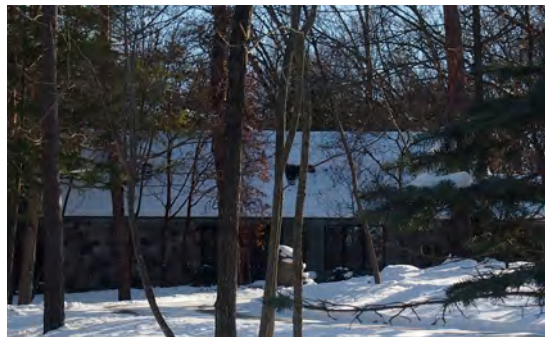
Office land uses are largely located in the southwestern portion of the township. The largest concentration of office land uses are located in the far southwestern corner along Cascade Road (section 31). Some of these include banks, medical offices, and other professional employment centers.

Residential

Residential land uses vary substantially in the township, from single-detached units on land with acreage, to suburban-style neighborhoods, and a variety of housing types found in and around Ada Village. The following residential categories apply:

Rural Single-Detached

The rural single-detached residential pattern is the most abundant development form found throughout Ada Township. Characterized by detached houses located on multi-acre lots, forested cul-de-sacs and a lack of municipal water and sewer facilities are often present. Over time, residential land uses have replaced agriculture east of the Grand River, as former farmland and open space has been subdivided for these purposes.



Suburban Single-Detached Residential

Corresponding with the provision of public water and sanitary infrastructure, suburban single-detached residential units are largely located in the southwest portion of the township (sections 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, and 34). In a typical suburban pattern, this area is characterized by winding streets and cul-de-sacs of single-detached houses arranged in residential neighborhoods. Many of these neighborhoods were constructed between 1960 – 1990 and are accessed from Fulton Street or Ada Drive.



Multi-Unit Housing Types

Ada Township features duplexes, townhouses, apartment units, and other residential housing types that are scattered throughout the southwest portion of the township. These housing types are generally used as a transition between single-detached neighborhoods and Ada Village, or near to higher-volume roadways.



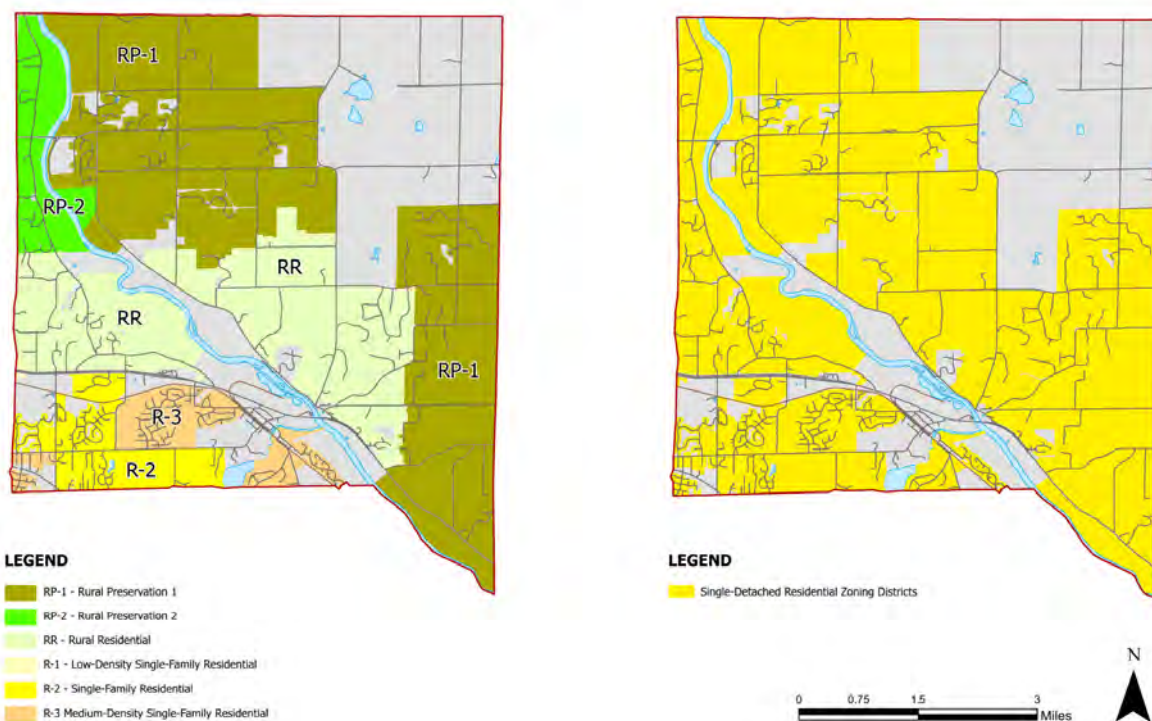
Unimproved

Although Ada Township is largely developed, there are still unimproved parcels scattered throughout the township. Two concentrations of unimproved land are located around Chase Lake and its surrounding wetlands in the northeast corner of the township (section 11) and the former gravel and concrete crushing operations along Pettis Avenue east of the Grand River (sections 17, 20, and 21). While unimproved land is often viewed for its development potential, many of the existing unimproved parcels are located in environmentally-sensitive areas lacking access to utilities and as such likely cannot support extensive development.



Existing Land Use Summary

Like other townships in the Grand Rapids metropolitan region, Ada Township exhibits many characteristics of a growing region, including farmland and open space being replaced by low-density residential development, with over 28 square miles dedicated to single-detached residential units.

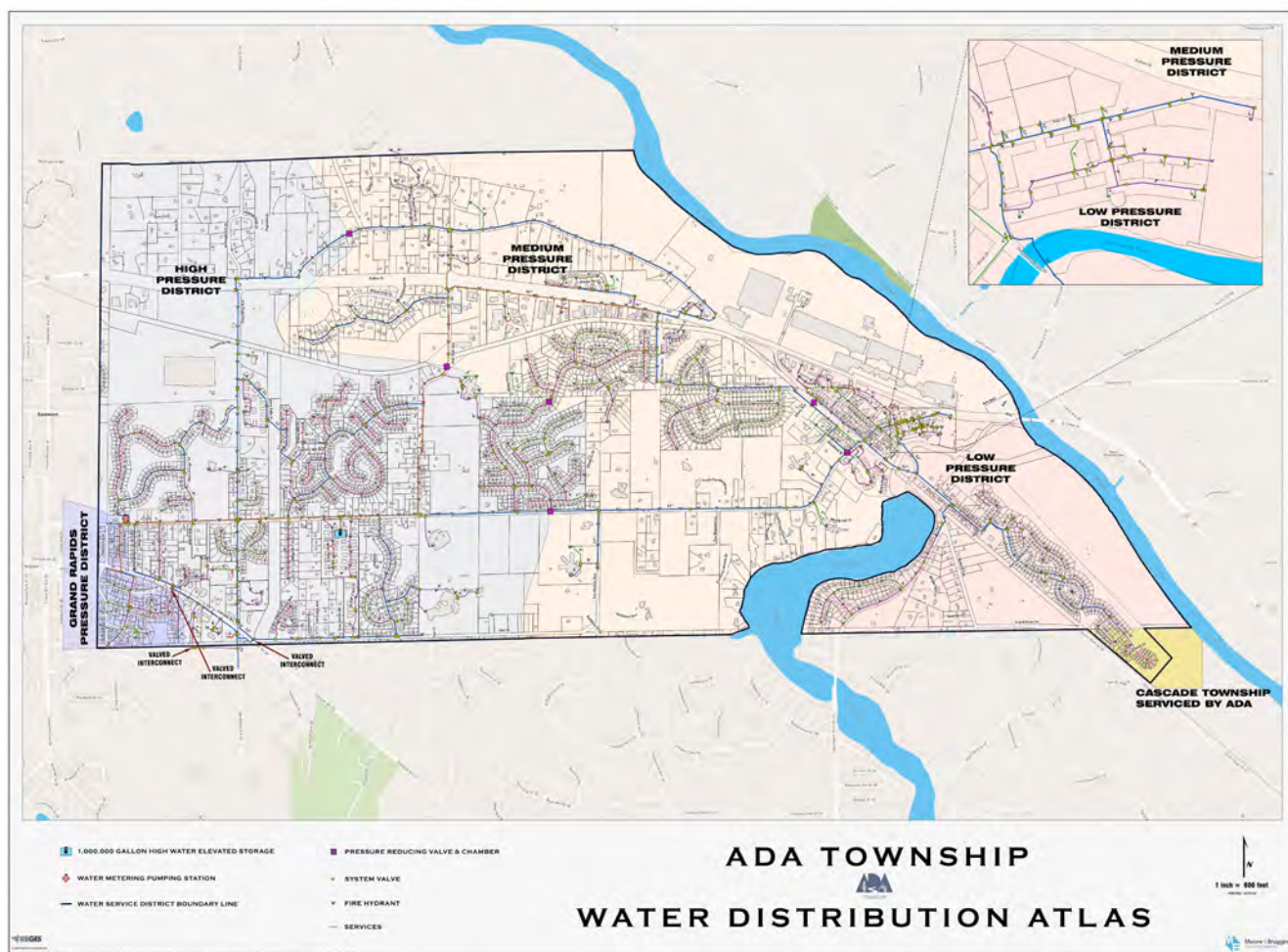


Above: Single-Family Residential Districts in Ada Township.

Although Ada Township shares some of the suburban characteristics of other neighboring townships, it is special in that it features a vibrant mixed use downtown district that is experiencing continued investment. Over the past few years, Ada Village has welcomed new development, bringing residents and businesses closer together while creating a regional destination with a unique identity. Combined, these existing land use features – rural homesteads nestled in the woods to village blocks bustling with activity and quiet suburban neighborhoods to large-scale warehouses and employment centers – all establish the current built environment of Ada Township.

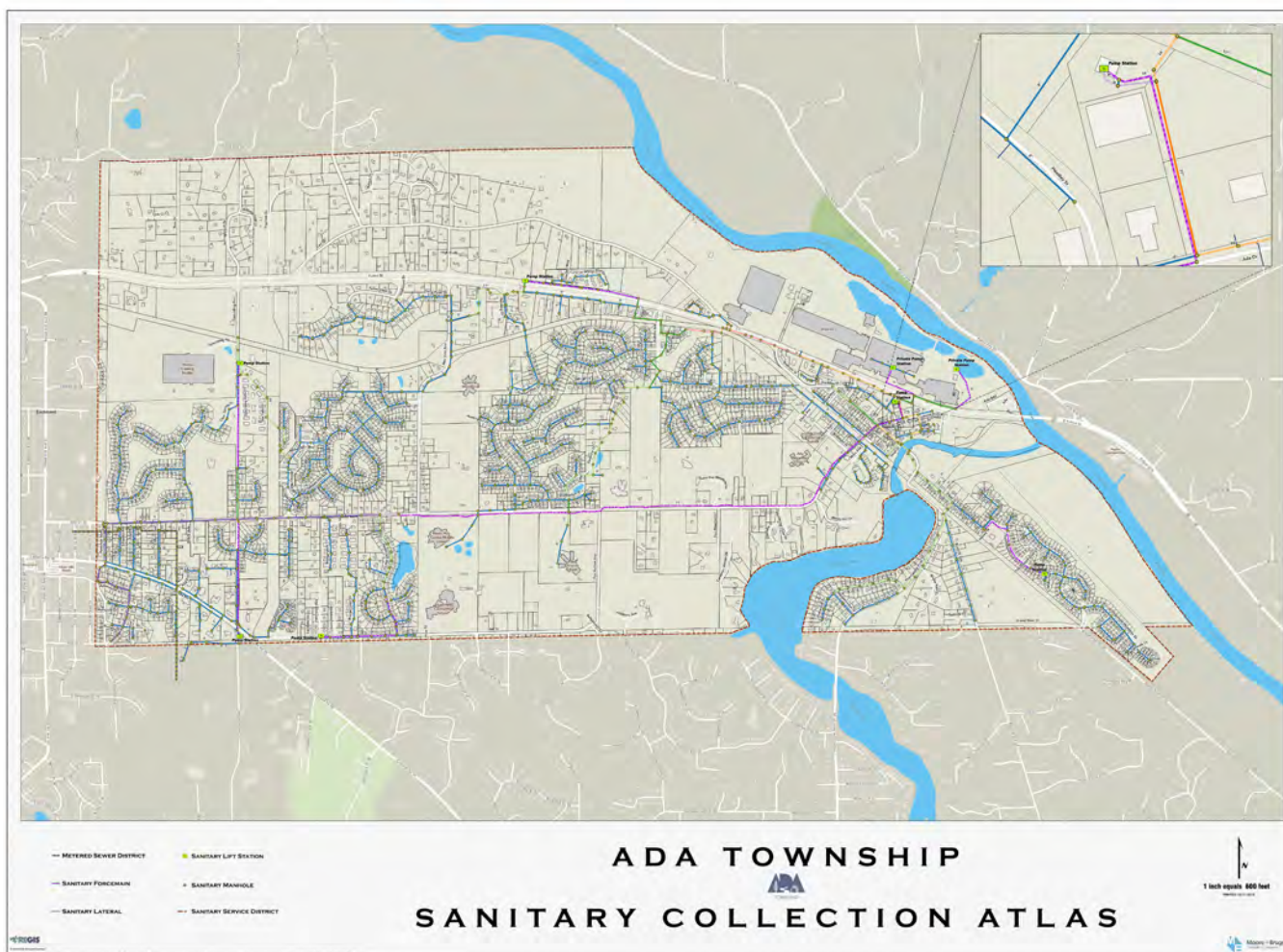
Public Water and Sewer Services

Ada Township purchases treated water on a “wholesale” basis from the City of Grand Rapids as well as its wastewater conveyance and treatment services. These services are provided pursuant to a “Water and Sanitary Sewer Service Agreement” between the Township and the City, that was first entered into in 1978. The system’s water usage has declined over the past decade, from 500 million gallons in 2010 to 450 million gallons in 2022. This can be attributed to the installation of domestic “low-flow” water fixtures along with a reduction in Amway’s water use.



Above: Water Distribution Infrastructure in Ada Township.

An additional area of public water service is the Grand Valley Estates water system, which serves the area near the intersection of Knapp Street and Pettis Avenue, including the Forest Hills Eastern school campus. Not connected to the balance of the Township’s water system or the City of Grand Rapids system, this separate water supply and distribution system was constructed by the developer of the Grand Valley Estates subdivision. Ownership and management of this system was taken over by Ada Township at the request of the subdivision developer. Areas outside the current public water service area are served by on-site private wells.



Above: Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure in Ada Township.

Overall, the Township's water distribution system and wastewater collection system have abundant capacity to meet anticipated growth within the current sewer and water service area boundaries. These services have been confined to the southwest area of the township due in part to past agreements to create an Urban Utility Boundary which would encourage infill development rather than infrastructure extensions into primarily rural areas. One potential challenge is a lack of customers to support the water distribution system, as Amway's declining water use increases rates for other water system users. If Amway were to discontinue production operations within the township, water and sewer service costs to residents would rise an estimated 50% per engineering estimates¹.

The rolling topography, wetlands, floodplain, and river crossing identified in the Natural Features section are cause for expensive scenarios if services are extended. These considerations raise the importance of redevelopment in areas serviced by water and sewer infrastructure as it ensures sufficient users to maintain the existing sewer and water systems.



1.) Moore and Bruggink Utility Capacity: Estimated Impacts. Email Retrieved February 21, 2023.

Community Engagement Events and Attendance

Beginning in the spring of 2022, the master planning team (composed of Township Staff and Progressive AE) sought creative and engaging ways of meeting the public and listening to their ideas for the future of Ada. In addition to dedicated community engagement events and an online master plan survey, township staff and members of the planning team attended concerts, parades, and the farmer's market to garner input from residents. In total, 368 people participated in the online survey, 67 people participated in focus group sessions, over 90 people attended community events, and over 100 people participated in various pop-up events over the summer. This indicates a high level of involvement and care that Ada Township residents have for their community and their intent to share their thoughts for its future.



Focus Group Listening Sessions

Township Staff and the planning team hosted three focus group sessions that brought stakeholders in specific fields together to discuss Ada Township's future. These groups were comprised of members of civic groups, local business leaders, and other individuals with unique knowledge of specific challenges impacting the township's future. These meetings are noted below:

- Community Connectors #1 (June 22, 2022) - 15 attendees
- Community Connectors #2 (June 28, 2022) - 17 attendees
- Ada Business Association (June 29, 2022) - 26 attendees

In these focus group sessions, a number of themes were mentioned. The groups identified the township's outdoor recreation and open space, sense of community, and support for local businesses as notable strengths. In the same vein, they also identified a decreasing amount of attainable housing, road safety, and a lack of diverse amenities for people of all ages as distinct weaknesses of the township. The group mentioned opportunities to pursue, such as increasing activities in the village, improving road safety, and expanding the diversity of businesses and restaurants. Some identified challenges included opportunities for public input, land use regulations, affordability and the cost of operating a business.

Pop-Up Events

To better engage and hear from residents, Township staff and the planning team went to events where residents would be in high attendance. This form of outreach ensures feedback from a broad transect of residents, as it meets residents where they're at instead of requesting they attend a meeting during a set date and time. Two events were attended:

- Music on the Lawn (June 29, 2022) - 50 participants
- Ada Farmer's Market (July 19, 2022) - 30 participants



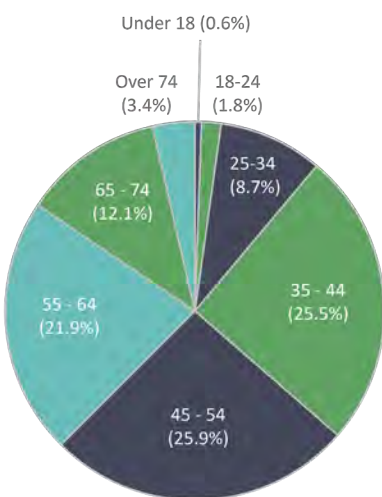
These events allowed residents to give their unfiltered thoughts towards the township's future. Some themes included the importance of the township's natural features and recreational amenities, its historic, "small-town" charm, and its quality school system. Residents identified the lack of attainable/affordable housing as well as a lack of diversity in household composition, income, and businesses as key challenges for the township to address in the future.



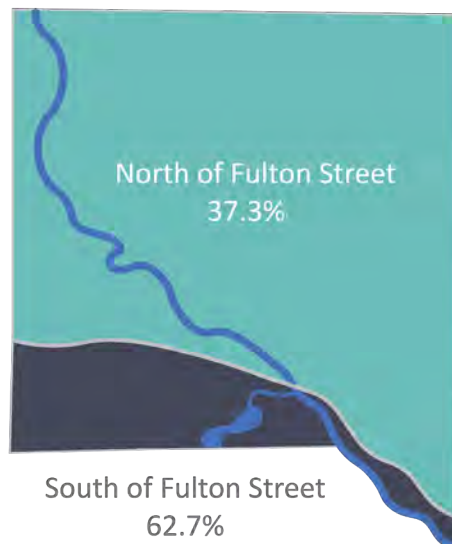
Community Survey

Starting in June 2022, a community survey was made available on the Ada Township website that gave residents an opportunity to offer their thoughts and insights in a convenient format. Three-hundred sixty-eight (368) respondents completed the survey which offered valuable data on which to inform the master plan update process.

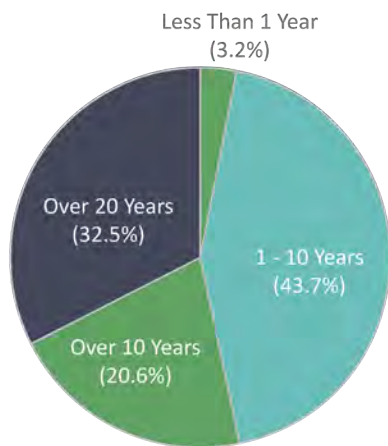
How old are you?



If a resident, which part of the Township do you live in?



If a resident, how long have you lived in Ada?



Survey respondents valued Ada Township's high-quality schools, "small-town" charm, the downtown village area, and its rural character. Respondents also mentioned a desire for more restaurants and shopping amenities along with enhancing local access to nature and recreation.

Community Meetings

Three community meetings were held at the Amy Van Andel Library. Summaries of each are included below.

Community Event #1 (August 16, 2022) - This event featured a summary of the community survey results and focus group sessions and prompted residents to identify themes, values, and vision statements. Over 25 people participated in the event, with their input informing the development of themes and values.



Community Event #2 (November 2, 2022) - This event focused on developing the township planning framework, involving interactive activities for participants to engage with. These included identifying locations for potential gateways in Ada Township, identifying land use opportunities along Fulton Street, and a neighborhood housing exercise that identified desirable housing types. Over 20 people participated in the event, with their input providing context on how people perceive Ada Township's future.



Community Event #3 (February 9, 2023) - This event featured a summary of the Master Plan process and outlined key themes and topics from the document. Over 40 people participated in the event's three exercises, validating the Future Land Use map, prioritizing draft goals & objectives as well as identifying potential entities to partner with in fulfilling the Master Plan's overall vision.

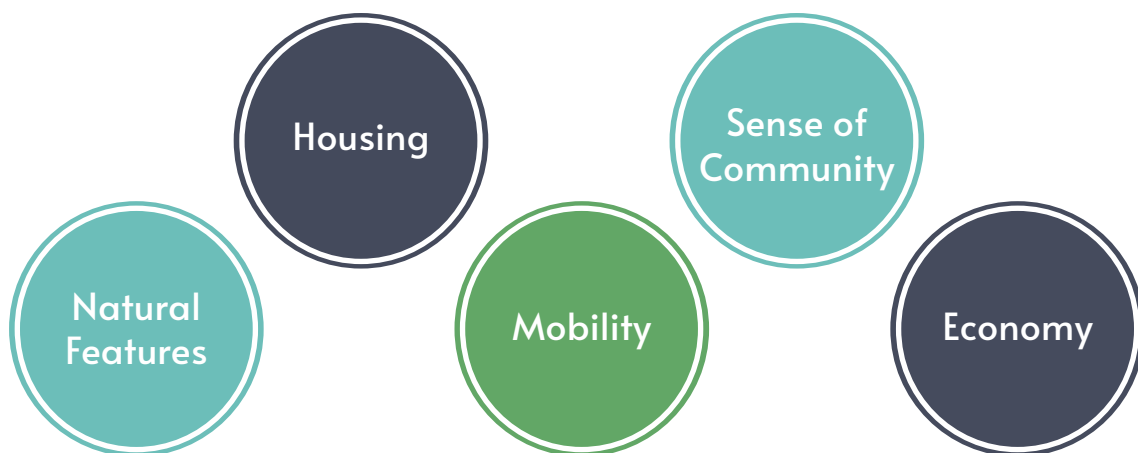


Chapter 2: Community Values and Themes



Community Values and Themes

Throughout the planning process, residents and other stakeholders identified values and priorities, representing what they cherish and desire for the future of Ada Township. This is translated into key themes that are infused throughout the planning process, informing the development of the Master Plan. As the “lens” in which we view land use topics, these five themes establish how these topics are framed in the plan to ensure the continuation of the community’s values and priorities. Each of these five themes is discussed on the following page.



Natural Features

Natural Features - Throughout community engagement events, open houses, and survey responses, residents reiterated how Ada Township's natural beauty is something to be cherished and protected. The township's identity is directly tied to its forested landscape, its rolling hills, and its access to rivers and streams. Because of their importance, natural features are a key theme that guides the development of the policies and recommendations within this plan.



Housing

Housing - Many residents and business-owners raised housing as a foundational theme that should be addressed. With Kent County's growing regional economy, Ada Township faces land use challenges in response to development pressure. Ada Township is a desirable residential location for many of the region's workers, particularly professional and high wage-earners, so local housing development plays a role in fostering a competitive regional economy. However, demand generated by regional growth and local attractiveness have combined to push housing costs up.

New housing is needed to meet the supply challenge, and new types of housing are needed to meet the affordability challenge as well as the needs of Ada's existing households. A variety of housing types at multiple price points accommodates people in different stages of life – people who work in local businesses and shop in local stores. In this manner, a diversified housing stock creates a wider consumer base for the township's businesses. By placing housing as a foundational theme, this plan affords us the opportunity to proactively plan for housing where it is appropriate. It also supports making Ada a community where aging adults can remain in their community.

Mobility

Mobility - Ada Township's extensive non-motorized trail network stands as a testament to the value the community places in recreation and alternative transportation modes. Residents mentioned the importance of accessing the township's abundance of nature as well as daily amenities by cycling or on foot. This theme addresses movement within the township with the intent of creating a balanced transportation system that provides residents and visitors with a broad array of options for getting around. Although Ada Township does not have direct control over the public streets that transect it (MDOT and Kent County Road Commission do), a strong desire was consistently expressed by residents to calm traffic.

High-speed roads pose a danger to vulnerable road users. Therefore, pedestrians and bicyclists of different ages and abilities must be considered in road design. The presence of school children along Ada Drive was especially noted as an area of concern.

Sense of Community

Sense of Community - Residents mentioned the shared sense of community among Ada Township residents – this was reflected in the high attendance at community events as well as resident’s willingness to offer thoughts and insights at various pop-up events throughout the summer. Residents mentioned the desirable identity of Ada Township and how people seek to maintain its association of being a high-quality environment to call home. Although it relies on factors far beyond land use planning policies, a sense of community still stands as a cross-cutting theme that this plan seeks to foster – as the sense of belonging tied to a geographic location is influenced by place-making.

People also contribute to a sense of community. school events, the village’s social district, downtown activities such as Beers on the Bridge and Movies in the Park, parades, the Farmer’s Market, and “third places” such as the library, coffee shop, and restaurants were mentioned as contributing factors. These opportunities to connect with neighbors, business owners, people of all different ages and backgrounds, and others are what help to contribute to Ada Township’s small-town character.



Economy

Economy - Ada Township acts as a key contributor to the region’s economy. Home to a Fortune 500 company and other successful businesses in a range of industries, considerations on how Ada Township’s future development pattern impacts these businesses were discussed. Besides its status as an employment destination, many workers in the Grand Rapids region live in Ada and work elsewhere. These factors frame how land use decisions influence employment and access to job opportunities within the township and greater region.

There was also a recognition on the interdependent nature of housing and jobs with the success and stability of businesses in Ada Village. “Heads in beds” and employees provide the necessary density of people to support the local grocery store, restaurants, and shops.



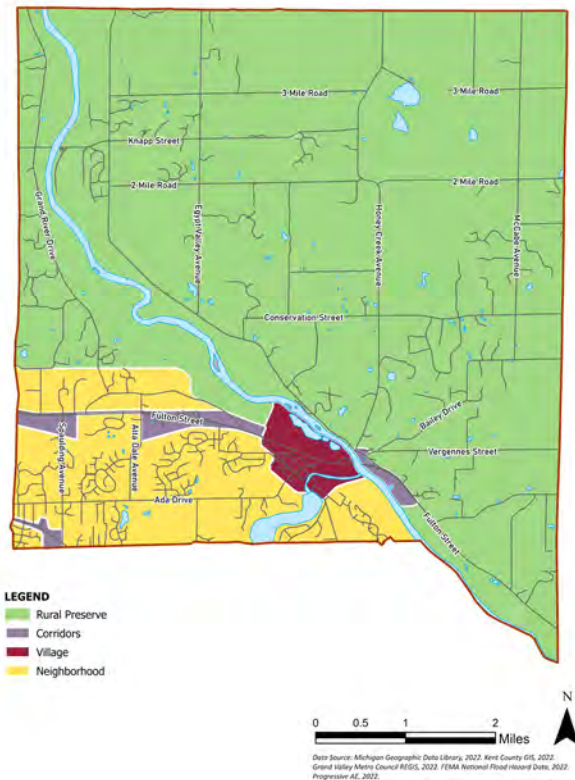
Chapter 3: Character Areas Overview



Defining Ada's Unique Character

Ada Township features many different land uses, covering a wide range of development types within its boundaries. As identified in the Existing Land Use section, different land uses types and development forms contribute to Ada Township's "sense of place." By recognizing these patterns and existing infrastructure (built environment) alongside the natural environment, areas with distinct characteristics can begin to be defined. The context of each "Character Area" represents existing patterns of development, which also aligns with the future vision for Ada.

"It is the intent that in identifying these character areas, the Township can establish desired land uses that contribute to one another, creating unique places that have lasting value."



Top: Rooker's Phillip's 66 Gas Station, 1966.
Image Courtesy of Ada Historical Society.

Above: Character Areas Map of Ada Township.





Ada Township is composed of four distinct character areas. These include:

- Rural Preserve
- Corridors
- Neighborhoods
- Village



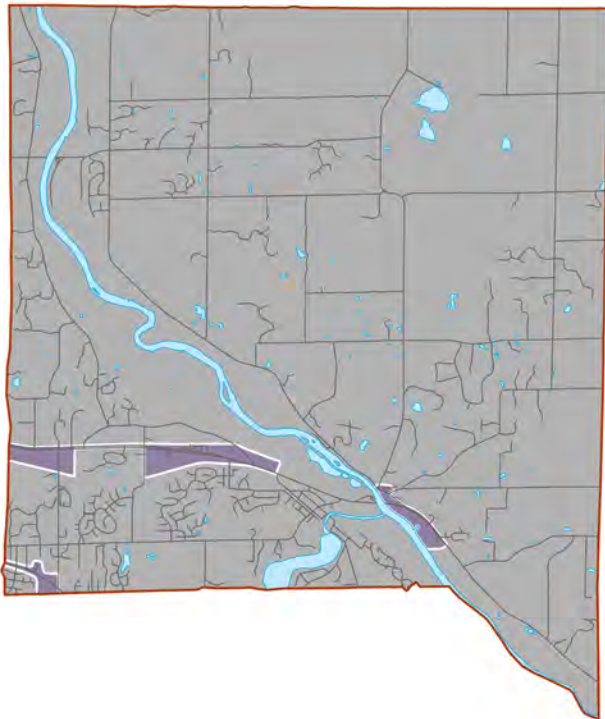
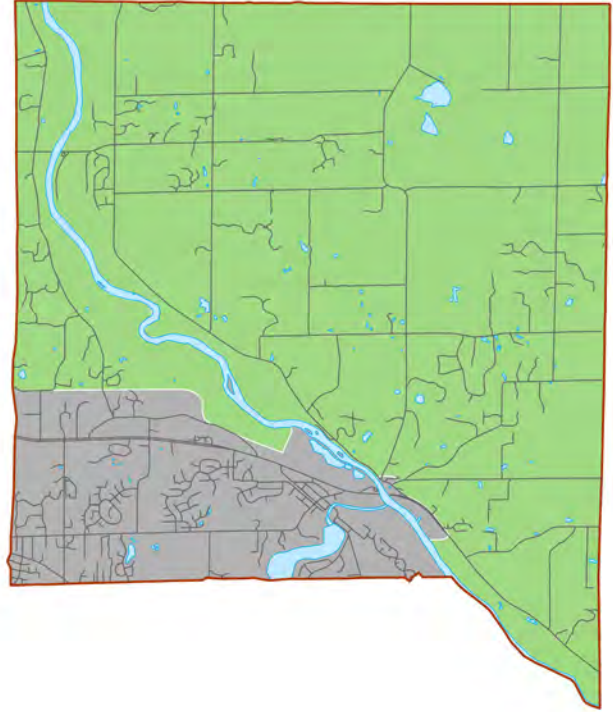
Above: Graphic Illustrating Character Areas of Ada Township.

By defining these areas as unique places with discernible characteristics, the Township can encourage development and enhancement efforts that build on each area's strengths, creating a "sense of place" in each of them. Unlike many communities that have experienced haphazard development patterns, the clear identity of these areas allows Ada Township to demonstrate how intentional planning can allow for change that is reinforcing, rather than degrading, to the built and natural environments. Each character area is discussed in detail on the following pages.

	Rural Preserve	Corridors	Neighborhood	Village
				
Character of Natural Space	Abundant natural landscapes and undeveloped natural spaces	Natural screening from highway corridor	Front yards with trees and landscape screening	Focused in central parks, squares, and public plazas
Housing Typology	Single-detached residential unit on large, wooded lot	Some scattered residential, but not a dominant form	Nearly entirely single-detached units	Mixed housing types with single-detached and attached, multi-unit, duplexes
Business Typology	Few non-conforming businesses	Large office and industrial buildings	Few non-conforming businesses	Close-knit mixed use buildings with first-floor retail, office, and restaurant
Street Pattern	Private drives, cul-de-sacs, occasionally unpaved	High-speed highway corridor, shared access driveways	Winding suburban streets, cul-de-sacs, some connectivity, big blocks	low-speed streets oriented in a grid pattern with small blocks
Walkability	Currently no sidewalks, limited non-motorized trails	Currently no sidewalks, limited non-motorized trails	Currently limited sidewalks, limited non-motorized trails	Abundant sidewalks, sidewalk dining and retail
Social Opportunities	Low, isolated	Low to moderate, in places of business	Moderate to high, depending on area	High, gathering place and event programming

Rural Preserve

Ada Township is a community defined by its rural woodland setting. The Rural Preserve character area comprises much of the township east of the Grand River as well as the west side of the Grand River from Roselle Park northward. Much of the northern and eastern parts of the Township are consist of single-detached houses placed on large, multi-acre lots. Legacy agricultural operations and preserved natural spaces are also prominent land uses. Its limited infrastructure reflects its low-density and rural nature, as this area is not served by public water and sewer and many roadways remain gravel. The natural features and intentionally limited infrastructure in this part of the township lends themselves to the preservation of its rural woodland character. This character area seeks to discourage large-lot suburban-sprawl development forms while emphasizing low-impact development that preserves natural environments.

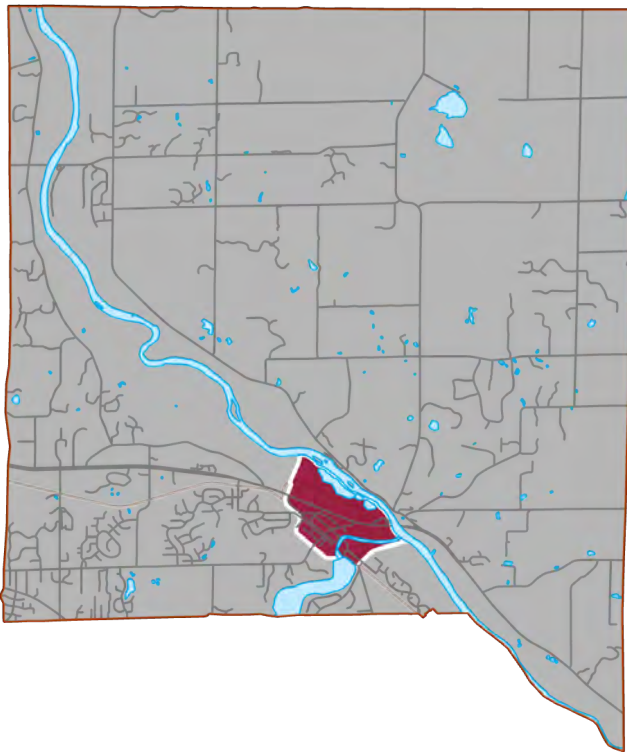
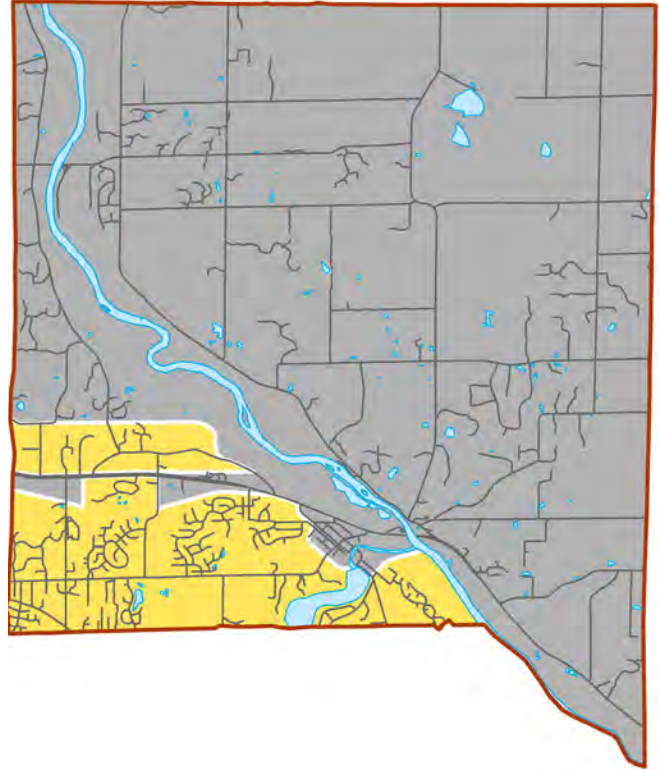


Corridors

Fulton Street (M-21) is the primary east-west corridor through Ada Township. This four/five-lane high-speed roadway provides access to residential neighborhoods and a variety of warehouse and industrial land uses. This character area is located in separate segments: the first running along Fulton Street from the township's western boundary to the Amway campus, another segment following Fulton Street from the Grand River south, and another centered around Cascade Road in the far southwestern corner. In the past, these areas have been places "to pass through," as people travel between Grand Rapids and Lowell. In the Corridors character area, efforts to improve design and encourage compatible land uses will create an enhanced sense of place through the Township's most visible and heavily traveled routes.

Neighborhoods

Located largely in the southwest portion of the township, Ada Township features many medium-density neighborhoods interspersed with parks and schools. Semi-suburban in nature, this character area is serviced by extensive infrastructure in the form of water and sanitary sewers, paved roads, and trails and sidewalks. It is the intent of the Neighborhoods character area to preserve its human-scaled residential area while accommodating compatible growth in the form of new residential development.



Village

As the business and cultural center of the community, Ada Village features characteristics of an urban mixed-use environment. Incorporating higher-density residential, commercial, and office uses fronting along walkable pedestrian-oriented streets, the Village character area encompasses the current Ada Village footprint as well as the Amway campus across Fulton Street. It is the intent of this character area to enhance the village district where residents can access a diverse array of services and shopping opportunities in close proximity to Neighborhood areas. Additional consideration for future development in the Village should be based on measures to retain and attract local businesses, as well as support vibrancy.



Interactions with Future Land Use

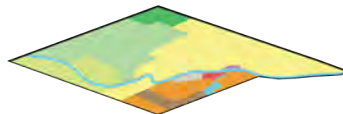
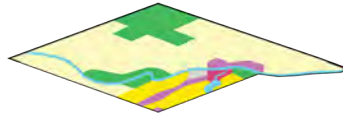
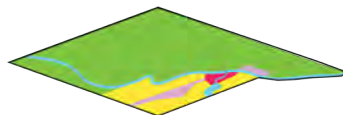
While broad in nature, these character areas help establish parameters for the Future Land Use districts that directly inform the Township's Zoning Ordinance. It is the intent that in identifying these character areas, the Township can establish desired land uses that contribute to one another, creating unique places that have lasting value.

Three Maps, One Vision

As land use change and development is a long-term and complex process, the following maps perform unique functions and work in tandem to fulfill Ada Township's vision

Adherence with the Future Land Use Map brings consistency and creates areas with a distinct "sense of place"

Sound zoning practices guide development to resemble the desired land uses identified in the Future Land Use Map



Character Areas Map

These are the identifying characteristics of Ada Township that we seek to emphasize and build on

Future Land Use Map

These are the proposed land uses that inform long-term land use decisions in the Township

Zoning Map

These are the current land use regulations guiding development in the Township

Above: Graphic Illustrating Character Areas Interaction with Future Land Use and Zoning Map.



Chapter 4: Rural Preserve



Community Priorities

The largest of the township's character areas, the Rural Preserve character area is identified by its proximity to nature. Winding cul-de-sacs give access to secluded residences sitting on large, wooded lots. Public parks and open spaces preserve ravines, creeks, and other sensitive natural spaces. Legacy agriculture operations abut tree-lined gravel roads, populating the rolling hills and open spaces of the township. While these areas are defined by their heavily forested rural environments, they face unique challenges in terms of an increasing demand for large-lot suburban development that is an inefficient use of land and fragments the landscape. Building a better understanding of the features that identify this character area enables us to develop preservation and enhancement strategies that build upon the Rural Preserve character area's strengths.

Natural Features

The Rural Preserve character area contains many of the township's prominent natural features.

Topography - Occupying the northern and eastern portions of the township, it contends with the township's unique topography in the form of hills and ravines, namely along Grand River Drive west of the Grand River and the area immediately east of Pettis Avenue. These ravine environments pose development hazards, as impacted slopes can erode and impact nearby ecosystems.

Water Features – The Rural Preserve area features many tributaries, creeks, and streams that run through forest environments, eventually feeding into the Grand River. Much of the low-lying areas abutting the Grand River are located within the floodplain, posing increased risk of flooding. Another notable water feature within the Rural Preserve area is Chase Lake in the northeast portion of the township. This lake features extensive wetlands and represents a marsh environment that is vulnerable to development.

Forest Canopy – The Rural Preserve area contains an extensive tree canopy cover. Large concentrations of forest exist in the Cannonsburg State Game Area and Seidman Park in the central northern portion of the township as well as north and east of the Pettis Avenue/Fulton Avenue intersection. This forest canopy exists not only within road rights-of-way but on the numerous residential parcels interspersed throughout the character area. With this forest canopy representing a public good that is largely held in private ownership, activities that would lead to extensive tree removal should be avoided.

Housing

While there are exceptions, the secluded single-detached house on a large, wooded parcel is the predominant development type in the Rural Preserve character area. Often located on multi-acre lots, these residences are far removed from the streets and are serviced by private wells and septic systems.

Following the construction of the expanded Fulton Street bridge over the Grand River in 1957, these residential land uses began replacing former agricultural operations on the east side of the Grand River. By the early 1970s, ranch-style houses and cul-de-sac subdivisions were being constructed along Honey Creek Drive and Bailey Drive. This development pattern continued into the later part of the twentieth century, as Ada Township gained nearly 3,500 residents between 1980 and 2000. Much of this growth was spurred by construction in the Rural Preserve character area during the 1990s, as 1,017 single-detached houses were constructed during this decade.

One of the unique aspects of Ada Township is that its development is distinctly rural or village/neighborhood with very little in between. Where additional residential development is desired here, the Township will need to carefully distinguish between the characteristics of land in the Rural Preserve area and those that would be more suitable in a Neighborhood area. Hybrid options – such as allowing 2-acre development with paved streets and infrastructure – is highly discouraged. Such hybrid development options are economically not functional as they necessitate significant street and utility investments that burden the community.

“This clear distinction between low density and low infrastructure on one hand and increased density and increased infrastructure on the other should continue.”

This clear distinction between low density and low infrastructure on one hand and increased density and increased infrastructure on the other should continue. The Township should discourage rezonings which incrementally increase density in this area. If the Township Board changes the zoning ordinance to support new development, it should require that the density and form of that development are consistent with the Neighborhood character area, and ensure the location is accessible to and connected with Ada neighborhoods.

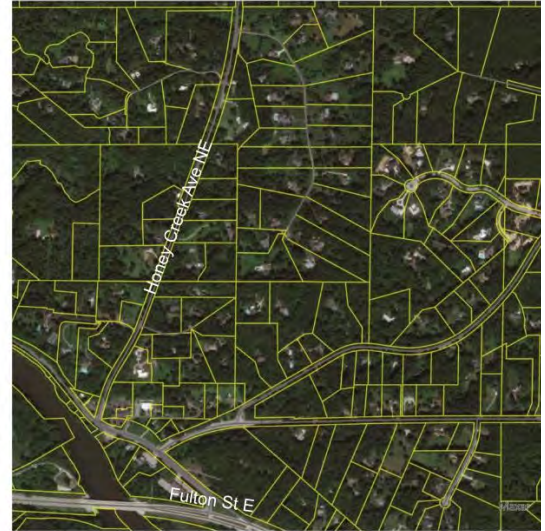


“One of the unique aspects of Ada Township is that its development is distinctly rural or village or neighborhood with very little in between.”

Economy

As mentioned earlier, this character area once featured agricultural farmsteads, vacant woodlots, and open fields. As late as the 1950s, much of Ada Township east of the Grand River was in active agricultural operations or was undeveloped. Most of the existing agricultural land uses in this character area are located in the far northeast corner of the township. These agricultural land uses are part of a larger contiguous area extending into nearby Grattan Township and Vergennes Township that was identified as priority preservation areas by the Kent County Farmland Preservation Program in 2010. While the presence of agriculture in the township has waned over time, the remaining farmsteads provide valuable rural character to the Rural Preserve character area.

Right: Aerial maps of Honey Creek Avenue and Fulton Street (Left: 1974; Right: 2022).



Although small compared to rural residential land uses within the character area, these agricultural land uses present a unique economic opportunity for agri-tourism and other niche cottage industry-style businesses. When successful, these businesses can cultivate a sense of place in rural settings and can be a destination that adds to the township's character.



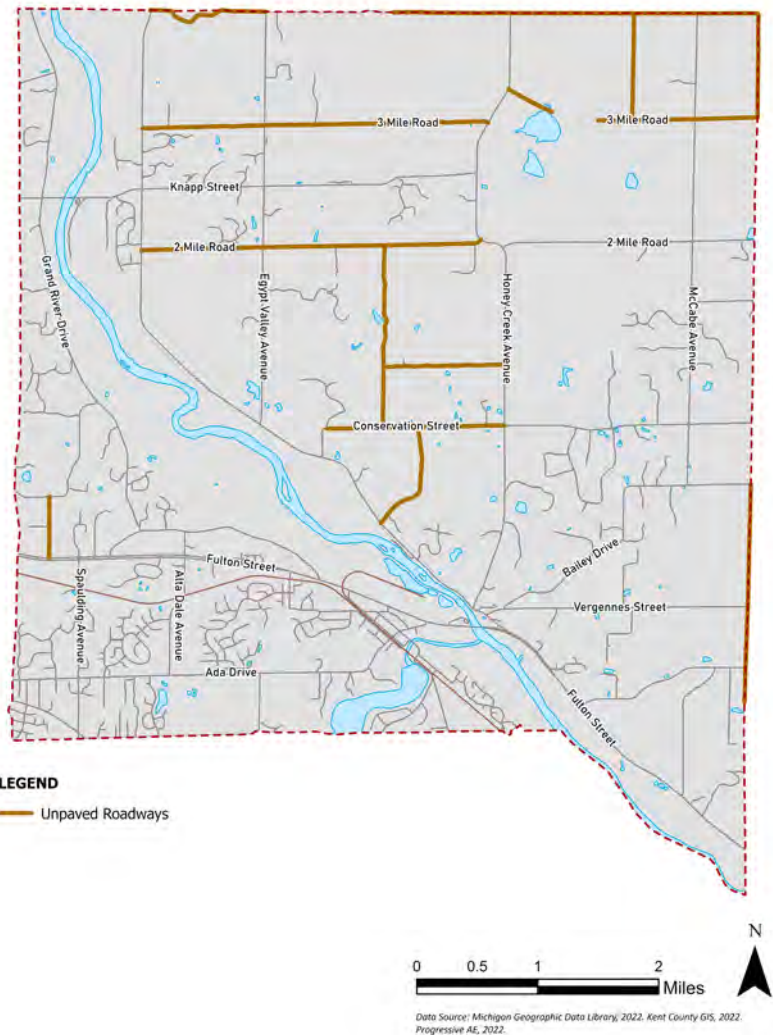
Mobility

Roads - Because of its rural and low-density nature, mobility infrastructure in this character area is typically in the form of two-lane county roadways. Due to their low traffic volumes, many of these roadways are unimproved.

Pettis Avenue, Honey Creek Avenue, Knapp Street, and Grand River Drive act as key corridors within the character area, connecting rural subdivisions to regional highways such as Fulton Street to the south and East Beltline Avenue to the west. Limited bridge crossings contribute to the area's lack of connectivity.



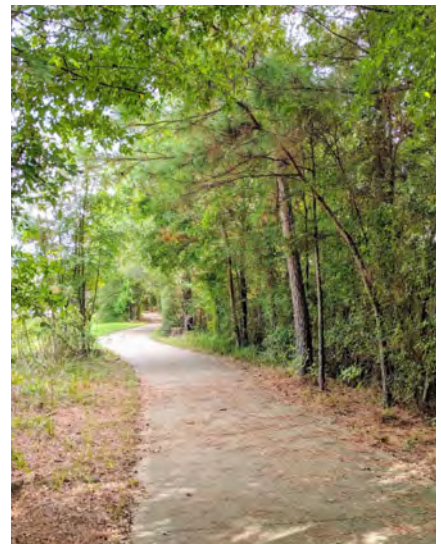
Pathways and Trails – There are a number of key non-motorized connections within the character area. Completed in 2022, the most significant of these is the Pettis Avenue pathway that runs from 3 Mile Road to Fulton Street. Grand River Drive, Conservation Street, Bailey Drive, Honey Creek Avenue, and Knapp Street also feature separated pathways that run parallel to the roadways. As part of the Connect Ada Plan completed in 2020, numerous pathways are planned for construction in the character area, such as pathways along Egypt Valley Avenue, 2 Mile Road, McCabe Avenue, Vergennes Street, and extensions to Grand River Drive, Honey Creek Avenue, and Bailey Drive. A pedestrian bridge is also slated for construction across the Grand River, connecting the Pettis Avenue pathway and Chief Hazy Cloud Park to Roselle Park.



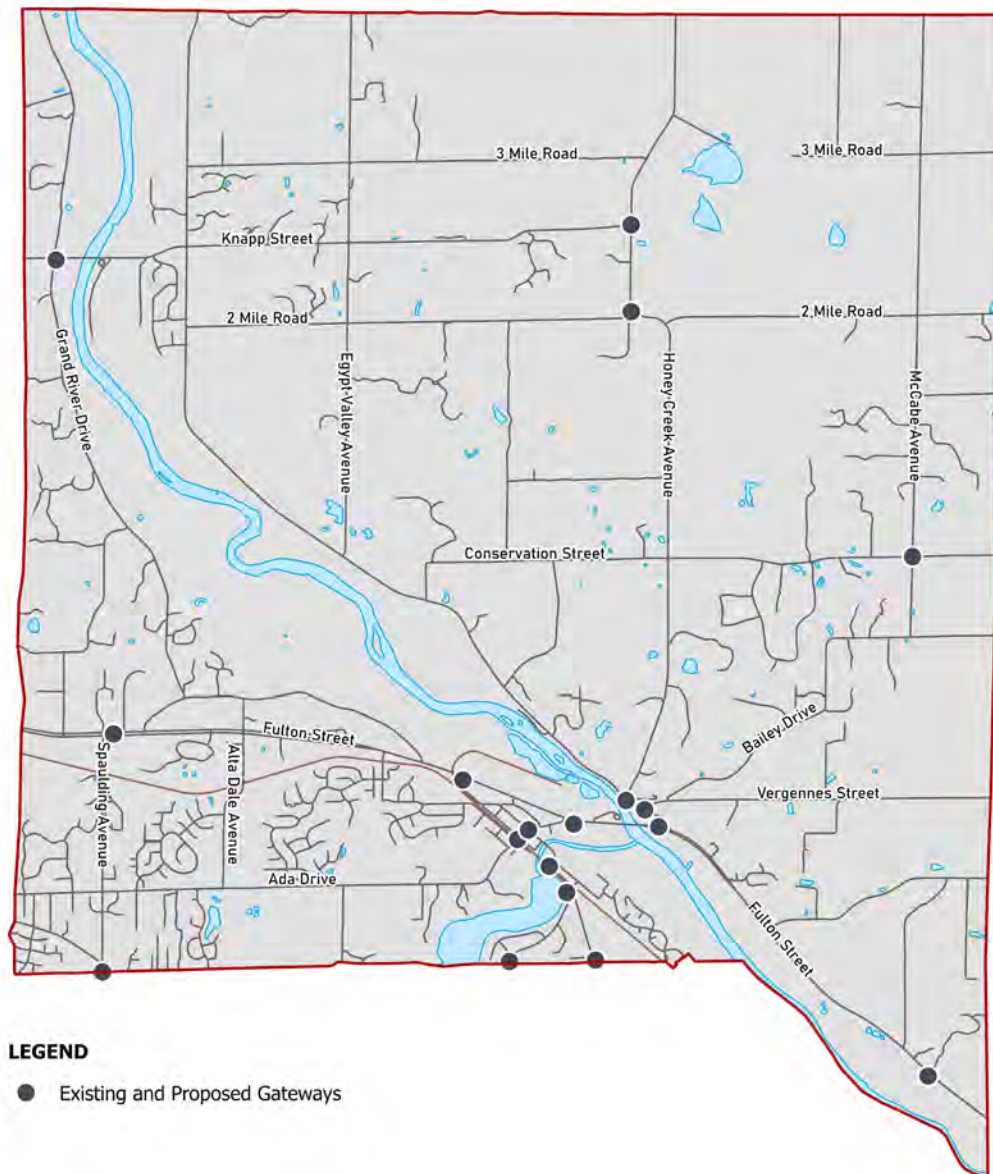
Above: Map of Unpaved Roadways in Ada Township.

A Community in Nature: The Woodlands, Texas

Created as a master-planned community in the 1970s, this Houston area suburb was constructed to maximize access to the region's natural pine forests. The community is divided into separate "villages" or mixed-use districts which are connected to nearby neighborhoods through a robust pathway system. This community-wide trail network allows residents to travel between neighborhoods, access regional parks, and travel to the mall and primary shopping district without interacting with vehicular traffic. Because of its cohesion with nature, extensive non-motorized trail network, and character as a "community of villages," The Woodlands is regularly listed as one of Texas' best suburbs to live in.

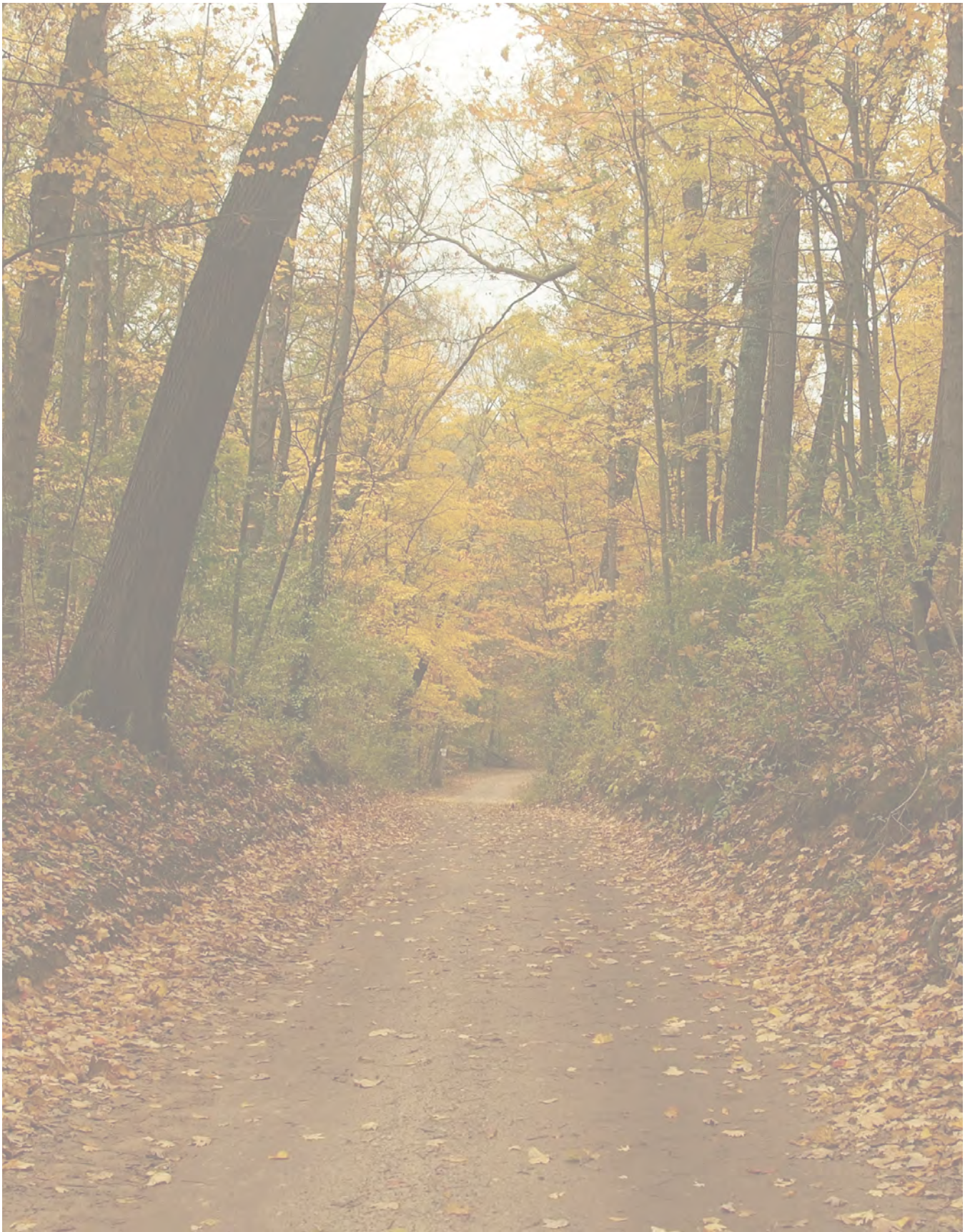


Gateways – While the Rural Preserve character area has “soft edges” (lacks discernible boundaries), defining where Ada Township begins and ends may be a worthwhile future endeavor. This can be denoted through signs or monument markers akin to the one existing at the intersection of Grand River Drive and Knapp Street. Some potential locations within the character area are the northwest corner of the Honey Creek Drive/2 Mile Road intersection and along Fulton Street south of the Sargent Avenue intersection.



Above: Map of Existing and Proposed Gateway Features From Community Engagement Events.

Data Source: Michigan Geographic Data Library, 2022. Kent County GIS, 2022. Progressive AE, 2022.



Chapter 5: Corridors



Community Priorities

This character area is defined by two key roadways in Ada Township – the Cascade Road Corridor and the Fulton Street Corridor. As the primary east-west roadway within the region, Fulton Street traverses the township as a high-speed boulevard, connecting Grand Rapids to Lowell and points further east. Cascade Road travels through the township’s far southwestern corner in a five-lane configuration. As the name suggests, the Corridors character area follows the path of Fulton Street and Cascade Road and encompasses their surrounding land uses. The Fulton Street roadway is primarily a four-lane highway featuring a wide grass median. Industrial warehouses, offices, and single-detached residences on large lots sit far removed from the roadway. Cascade Road is a five-lane cross-section with no center median and features office uses and access to nearby residential neighborhoods.

While this character area is a major employment corridor within the region, it lacks the commercial shopping center environment typical of major suburban roadways. The Fulton Street corridor retains a semi-natural aesthetic, as the center median and surrounding frontage features abundant trees, landscaping, and manicured lawns in front of industrial and office uses. Cascade Road is composed of largely professional office uses, although limited commercial land uses are present further west in Grand Rapids Township. As the most visible parts of the township, the Corridors character area has the opportunity to shape people’s perceptions of the community while providing employment opportunities for residents.



Natural Features

Centered along Fulton Street through the township as well as along Cascade Road, this character area has few natural limitations.

Topography – Following the natural slopes of the Grand River valley, the Fulton Street Corridor declines in elevation as it gets closer to the Grand River. East of the Grand River, the character area runs parallel to the river flatlands. Because of this, there are few topographical challenges within the character area directly abutting these roadways, but lot depth is constrained in several areas due to topography and the railroad. The Cascade Road Corridor also features few topographical challenges, as it traverses the township's far southwestern corner along relatively flat terrain.



Water Features – There are limited water features the Fulton Street Corridor contends with. The portion east of the Grand River runs parallel to the river and occupies part of the floodplain. The Cascade Road Corridor does not encounter any major waterways in its path through the township.

Forest Canopy - Except for large industrial and warehouse land uses, the Fulton Street Corridor features abundant tree canopy coverage along the corridor. Due to its more developed nature, the Cascade Road Corridor features less tree canopy coverage and more manicured landscaping when compared to the Fulton Street Corridor.

Housing

As it features the primary roadways through the township, the Corridors character area features a mixture of industrial and large-scale office land uses. In community discussions, the possibility of placing housing and better connections to the surrounding residential subdivisions was suggested. Accommodating residential development closer to the village could support the township's retail and employment centers, both along the corridor and in the village area; it would also provide opportunities to better blend housing and commercial uses around the

Economy

The intended focus of the Fulton Street Corridor is to remain a regional employment center, with industrial and professional office buildings concentrated east of Alta Dale Avenue along Fulton Street. Many of the legacy industrial operations existing between Alta Dale Avenue and Kulross Avenue do not conform with existing set-back requirements and pose unique access management challenges along Fulton Street. Because these land uses are oriented on cul-de-sacs accessed from Fulton Street, this area does not function as a cohesive industrial and employment district. The character area east of the Grand River largely contains rural residential and small-scale commercial uses.

The Cascade Road corridor includes more small-scale commercial and professional office uses than the Fulton Street corridor, with numerous drive-through banks, office buildings, and small commercial establishments lining the roadway. Because of this, it functions less as a separated rural highway and more as a busy suburban arterial roadway.

Throughout the planning process, the community indicated a desire for the Corridors character area to improve connectivity along Fulton Street while retaining its natural aesthetic. This can best be achieved through focusing on the corridor's role as a key employment hub. By viewing this character area as a linear office park, professional employment centers and industrial buildings can be oriented in a campus setting surrounded by natural landscaping. Key to maintaining its natural aesthetic, buildings should be placed far from the roadway and should be screened by abundant landscape features. The electrical substation can also be screened to offer visual continuity to the character area.

Screening Electrical Substations

While serving as an important distribution hub for the township's electrical grid, the Consumers Energy substation at the corner of Fulton Street and Spaulding Avenue is one of the most visible sites in the eastern part of the township while lacking the aesthetic quality consistent with the Corridors character area. Some proposed improvements include coordinating with MDOT on planting evergreen landscaping along the Fulton Street right-of-way as well as erecting an earthen berm to offer enhanced shielding. Another option is the utilization of art installations or wall features to break the visual monotony of the site. A wall feature can double as a community gateway, incorporating visual motifs important to Ada Township's identity.



Mobility

Roads - The Corridors character area is dominated by its namesakes; Fulton Street is the most prominent roadway in the township while Cascade Road is an important regional arterial; all land uses within the character area are influenced by these two roadways. Fulton Street is State trunk line highway (M-21) and serves as the major east-west traffic route in the Township, connecting Ada Township to the greater Grand Rapids metropolitan area to the west, and to the Interstate Highway system. From the west township boundary east to Kulross Avenue, Fulton is a 4-lane divided highway, with paved shoulders. From Kulross east to the Grand River, there is a 5-lane cross-section, with curb and gutter. East of the Grand River the segment of 4-lanes with median. Traffic signals are located at the Spaulding Ave., Bronson St., Ada Dr. and Pettis Ave. intersections. Fulton Street is heavily used by commuters to the Grand Rapids area from Ada Township and areas further east. It is also heavily traveled by employees and visitors to Amway's manufacturing facilities, world headquarters offices, and catalog distribution center, including substantial volumes of truck traffic. Other key roadways within the character area include Spaulding Avenue, Alta Dale Avenue, Grand River Drive, and Pettis Avenue.

Cascade Road is a five-lane configuration between the township's western border on Patterson Avenue to its southern border on Hall Street. The roadway features a slight curve as it travels through the township and eventually connects I-96 to 28th Street and Thornapple River Drive further southeast in Cascade Township.

Pathways and Trails – The character area includes pathways along Spaulding Avenue, Grand River Drive, and along the bridge over the Grand River. The 2020 Connect Ada Plan indicates an intended pathway parallel to Fulton Street, providing the township with a major east-west pathway of regional significance. It also calls for trails along Spaulding Avenue and Alta Dale Avenue, providing connectivity to the neighborhoods south of Fulton Street. Cascade Road connects to a non-motorized trail at the township's southern border.

Sidewalks – The Fulton Street Corridor lacks sidewalks and has perhaps the largest need for them, as Fulton Street is a crucial corridor that is currently inaccessible to pedestrians. Other major roadways such as Spaulding Avenue, Alta Dale Avenue, and Pettis Avenue also lack sidewalks. The need for pedestrian connections across Fulton Street between the village and Amway campus has been identified and will become even more important should redevelopment occur on the campus. In contrast to Fulton Street, Cascade Road features sidewalks on both sides along its extent through the township.



Gateways – As most people experience Ada Township from the Fulton Street Corridor, this character area is an ideal location for community gateways as deemed appropriate. Comments from community engagement have been mixed; while many people desire to better identify Ada Township, some have noted that constructing gateways is not a high priority. With that said, reducing traffic speeds and creating identity as people pass into the village were identified as priorities. In this sense, gateways can address both, as they denote lower speeds and a shift in priority from vehicles towards pedestrians that occurs in the village. In community meetings, attendees mentioned a variety of gateway treatment options, ranging from a gateway bridge over Fulton Street to the natural rock formations similar to the gateway at Grand River Drive and Knapp Street. Others mentioned that unique streetlamps and decorative banners may suffice in denoting the village's location. In general, identifying entrances to the village area were viewed as more important than identifying gateways into the township, although multiple gateways along Fulton Street were mentioned as desirable to slow traffic before it enters the community.

One proposed gateway location of note includes the electrical substation located at Spaulding Avenue and Fulton Street. This would enhance the beauty of the corridor by shielding the substation from the road and would provide a western gateway to the community.

Transit – Due to its status as a key east-west corridor, Fulton Street is discussed as a prime candidate for transit services within the township. Although residential density along the roadway is limited, the corridor features numerous employment centers and connects the Village to downtown Grand Rapids. Because of this, there may be a future desire to extend transit services in Ada Township to tap into the regional workforce as well as provide greater transportation choices, potentially reducing traffic volumes along Fulton Street. This transit service can connect into The Rapid’s current network, either in the form of a Route 14 (East Fulton) extension or as a separate commuter bus that emphasizes a park-and-ride model.



Above: Map of Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) levels of Ada Township’s roadways (2019).



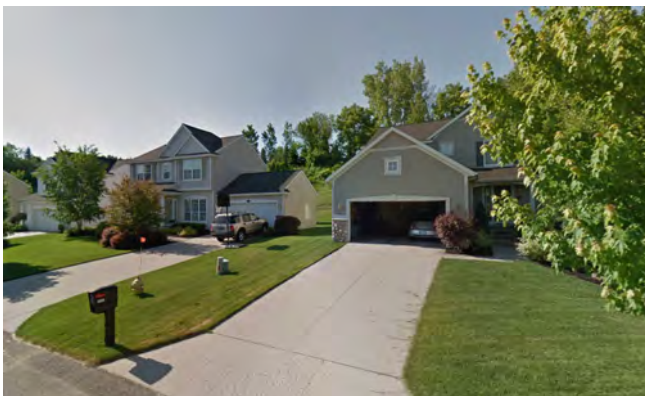
Chapter 6: Neighborhoods



Community Priorities

Located in the southwest portion of the township where infrastructure can support it, the Neighborhoods character area is largely identified by paved streets composed of single-detached houses and commercial and office uses along major streets. Compared to those in the Rural Preserve character area, houses in the Neighborhoods character area are on smaller lots and typically feature turf-grass lawns, side- or front-loaded garages, and are arranged in a uniform pattern on their streets. Commercial and office uses within this character area include large setbacks from the road and parking lots in front of the buildings.

Of the four distinct character areas, the Neighborhoods character area most closely resembles characteristics of a twentieth-century suburban environment. This character area presents an opportunity to optimize the value of the location's existing infrastructure, appropriately focusing housing choices in this high amenity area.



Schools within or near Neighborhoods Character Area

- Forest Hills Central Middle and High School
- Ada Christian School
- St. Roberts Catholic School
- Journey Academy
- Ada Elementary School
- Ada Vista Elementary School

Natural Features

Though smaller than the Rural Preserve character area, the Neighborhoods character area still possesses natural features that influence its development.

Topography – The northern portion of the character area along Grand River Drive south of Roselle Park features steep ravines. Like ravine environments elsewhere in the township, these areas pose development hazards, as impacted slopes can erode and impact nearby ecosystems.

Water Features – The Neighborhood character area features frontage along Ada Township's two rivers, the Grand River and the Thornapple River. The floodplains of these rivers are susceptible to flooding in extreme events. The area directly surrounding the Thornapple River reservoir sits on bluffs, outside of the floodplain. Carl Creek is another key water feature, which runs through the character area and flows into the Grand River upstream of the Amway campus.

Forest Canopy – Although this character area features more development than the Rural Preserve character area, there remains ample canopy cover within the area. While many subdivisions feature substantial tree coverage, much of the forest canopy is concentrated in undeveloped areas between subdivisions and on larger lots.

Housing

The Neighborhoods character area represents the largest concentrations of single-detached housing stock within Ada Township. Some of these neighborhoods, such as those between Ada Drive and Cascade Road, were developed in the 1950s. The Adacraft Commons neighborhood between Ada Drive and Fulton Street was developed during the 1970s and is the largest subdivision within the township. Further west, Clements Mill was developed during the 1990s and includes over 200 single-detached houses. These subdivisions are the foundation for the Neighborhoods character area designation.



Above: Advertisement for Adacraft Commons Neighborhood, 1970s. Courtesy of Ada Historical Society.

Right: Aerial maps of Alta Dale Avenue and Spaulding Avenue (Left: 1974; Right: 2022).



In the community survey, open-ended responses to questions about opportunities and challenges included a substantial number of comments focused on housing supply and affordability, often in conjunction with mention of newly-forming households, younger families, service workers and local employees, those with “blue collar” or “middle class” incomes, persons of diverse backgrounds, and retirees. Almost half (48%) of respondents who took the Ada Township community survey recognize a need for “housing that is more affordable than is currently available in the Township.” When asked about specific populations, 43% agreed that more housing was needed for “new families,” and 40% recognized a need for more housing aimed at “elderly and retired persons.”

As the survey comments suggest, without intervention, Ada’s existing housing stock will only support a small slice of households: those with incomes that are both high and increasing. Housing in Ada is priced at a premium due to its desirability. Notably, the proportion of families with children younger than six years old who have all parents in the labor force increased from 52% to 83% between 2010 and 2021. This is a startlingly quick rise compared to the county (2.6 percentage point increase), state (0.9 percentage point increase), and national (0.8 percentage point drop) change, which raises questions about whether housing affordability is a factor for families as well.

Some of today’s neighbors in the community will likely be unable to be a part of Ada Township’s future, such as those at the beginning or the end of their earning potential, those who are entering a different stage in life, and the service workers who support the local business ecosystem. Ada’s sense of community was identified as a major theme through community input. Is it the buildings that comprise “sense of community” or is it the people?

One intervention that Ada can pursue in its quest for a more balanced housing supply is to permit and recruit the development of “missing middle” housing: the range of housing types between single-detached dwellings and multi-unit residential buildings. This could be in the form of a “granny flat” (accessory dwelling unit), townhome, homes on smaller lots and/or in smaller structures, a “big house” (structure that looks like a large home but has several dwelling units), or other configurations that range from shared to private. Missing middle housing types typically require less maintenance than a detached structure under single ownership and may include shared amenities. For more on missing middle housing types, please refer to pages 64-65.



“Ada’s sense of community was identified as a major theme through community input. Is it the buildings that comprise ‘sense of community’ or is it the people?”



Economy

The Neighborhoods character area is largely comprised of zoning districts which permit only residential development. This residential development is a critical piece of the local and regional economy. It largely determines the pool of workers from which local businesses can most easily draw, and the wages paid by these local businesses also influences the demand for housing size and type. However, Ada Township is also part of a regional economy where people frequently live in one jurisdiction and work in another, and its housing prices indicate that it is attracting wage-earners from outside the municipality. This is traditionally referred to as a “bedroom community,” a circumstance in which the township’s residences are analogous to a commodity. The temptation to maximize the value of this quasi-commodity must be balanced with the understanding that housing and community are both fundamental human needs that don’t respond predictably to market forces.

The economics of residential districts also shapes the offerings in commercial districts. Site selection data relies on the demographics of the local trade area, with retailers and restaurateurs trying to match their wares with the means of the customer base and commercial landlords attempting to capture a commensurate margin of those sales. This is likely the dynamic on display in several comments in the community survey expressing frustration with “high end” and “unaffordable” offerings in the village. Diversification of households incentivizes diversity of commercial offerings. Neighborhoods with a greater variety in housing act as resources for local businesses to tap into, as residents seek convenient shops, restaurants, and other local businesses to frequent.

In addition to increasing the township’s capacity to support its local business ecosystem, additional housing choices bring residents closer to key employers, an important feature in an economy where employers struggle with staffing issues and attracting talent. In this sense, the Neighborhoods character area works in tandem with the township’s employment centers, truly creating a community where people can live, work, and play.

“In addition to increasing the township’s capacity to support its local business ecosystem, additional housing choices bring residents close to employers, an important feature in an economy where employers struggle with staffing issues and attracting talent.”



Mobility

Roads – Largely shaped by its suburban character, the Neighborhoods character area features winding low-speed residential streets that feed into collectors that connect to regional highways such as Fulton Street. Some major connector streets within the character area include Spaulding Avenue, Alta Dale Avenue, Ada Drive, and Grand River Drive.

Pathways and Trails – There are numerous trails within the character area. One key segment runs parallel to Grand River Drive and connects Knapp Street to the Fulton Street corridor. Another important pathway runs along Ada Drive and connects Forest Hills Drive and Ada Village. Additional segments are proposed for the character area, namely along Fulton Street as well as trails running parallel to the Grand River and Thornapple Rivers.

Sidewalks – Although this character area features many neighborhoods, most subdivisions lack sidewalks, forcing pedestrians to walk in the street. While this may be adequate on low-volume, low-speed streets, it can pose safety concerns for higher volume streets. There are also limited sidewalk connections between neighborhoods and retail amenities, limiting mobility options in the area.

Gateways – The Neighborhoods character area borders Cascade Township to the south and offers two locations that may be appropriate for community gateways. One potential location is the southwest corner of Lions Park and the other is at the Buttrick/Grand River Drive intersection in Ada Park. Both these locations offer high visibility and are located on township-owned property, making the construction process easier.

Housing Choice and Gentle Density

Missing middle formats can be used to gently integrate more housing choice into an existing context while maintaining the existing character. For example, accessory dwelling units which are contained entirely within the residential structure are undetectable from the street, as are well-designed detached units. A duplex with two small households may function identically to a single-dwelling unit with a large household, and a cottage court of four bungalows housing retirees may generate less traffic and noise than a large single household. Adjusting these districts to permit new household configurations in structures that align with the existing pattern can provide more housing choice for residents.



Ada Township Housing Quick Facts

As was discussed in Chapter 1: Ada in Context, the township's housing stock and population trends are shifting. Consider:

- In 2021, **90%** of homes in Ada Township had **3 or more bedrooms**, whereas nearly **60%** of households have just **one or two people**.
- Even if Ada's population were not increasing, more housing units would still be needed to house current residents as the number of persons per household continues to decline.
- The share of households with a senior citizen increased from **18%** to **27%** in a decade.
- A third of the township's households now earn more than **\$200,000 per year**, which is **five times** the proportion of Michigan residents who earn that much.
- The median home has more than **9 rooms**, compared to **5.5** nationally and **6.1** rooms in Kent County, up from **8.5** rooms in 2010.
- Housing became more affordable for homeowners between 2010-2021; the amount of mortgage-holders that spent more than **30%** of household earnings on housing costs (known as "cost burdened") dropped from **27%** to **15%**.
- Median housing value in the township increased by **47%** between 2010 and 2021, from **\$263,600** to **\$388,000**.
- Housing costs for renters have increased by **59%** since 2010; just **15%** of renters paid more than **\$1500** per month; today, over **90%** do.
- Workers in the retail industry dropped from **9%** of Ada's workforce to **6%** and those in art, entertainment, accommodation, and food service dropped from **8%** of workers to less than **5%**. In Kent County overall, the share of workers in each of these industry categories dropped by less than a percentage point.

Compact Housing: Another Term for Housing Choice

"Compact housing" often elicits images of tall apartment buildings and dense development that occupies an entire lot. While this terminology is widely used in planning circles, for others it may seem scary and unlike what is in Ada Township. Ada is nearly entirely comprised of single detached houses, often containing two stories, three or more bedrooms, and a two-car garage. These homes are sited on generous-sized lots and resemble one another. Given this context, any other housing type which deviates from being a single detached house on a large lot may be considered "compact". Yet, Ada does have compact housing types. Most recent development in the village has been in the form of townhouses, duplexes, and small apartments that fill up as soon as an occupancy permit is given.

Demand for new housing types is, in part, being driven by changing household demographics. Nearly 60% of Ada's households are comprised of 1- and 2-persons. There is an increasing number of residents, including older adults, "empty nesters", returning adult children, professionals, and young families, seeking housing. In all instances, additional housing stock that occurs in a smaller format provides these residents with the opportunity to call Ada Township home. Recognizing this, land use policies supporting this form of residential development simply represent a shift towards flexibility, allowing smaller footprint housing types to meet current household needs while also providing choice in the marketplace.





Chapter 7: Village



Community Priorities

The heart of Ada Township, Ada Village represents the downtown core of the community. Situated along the Thornapple River, the Village character area is composed of a traditional main street pattern with multi-story mixed-use buildings and small boutique-style retail offerings that occupy small footprint restaurants and storefronts. The character area also contains some blocks with 19th century residences situated on small urban lots and contains public facilities such as the community library, township offices, and office and commercial uses along Fulton Street. This designation also incorporates portions of the Amway campus, as well as frontage along the Grand River.

As the geographically smallest of the four character areas, the natural features of the area shape its development.



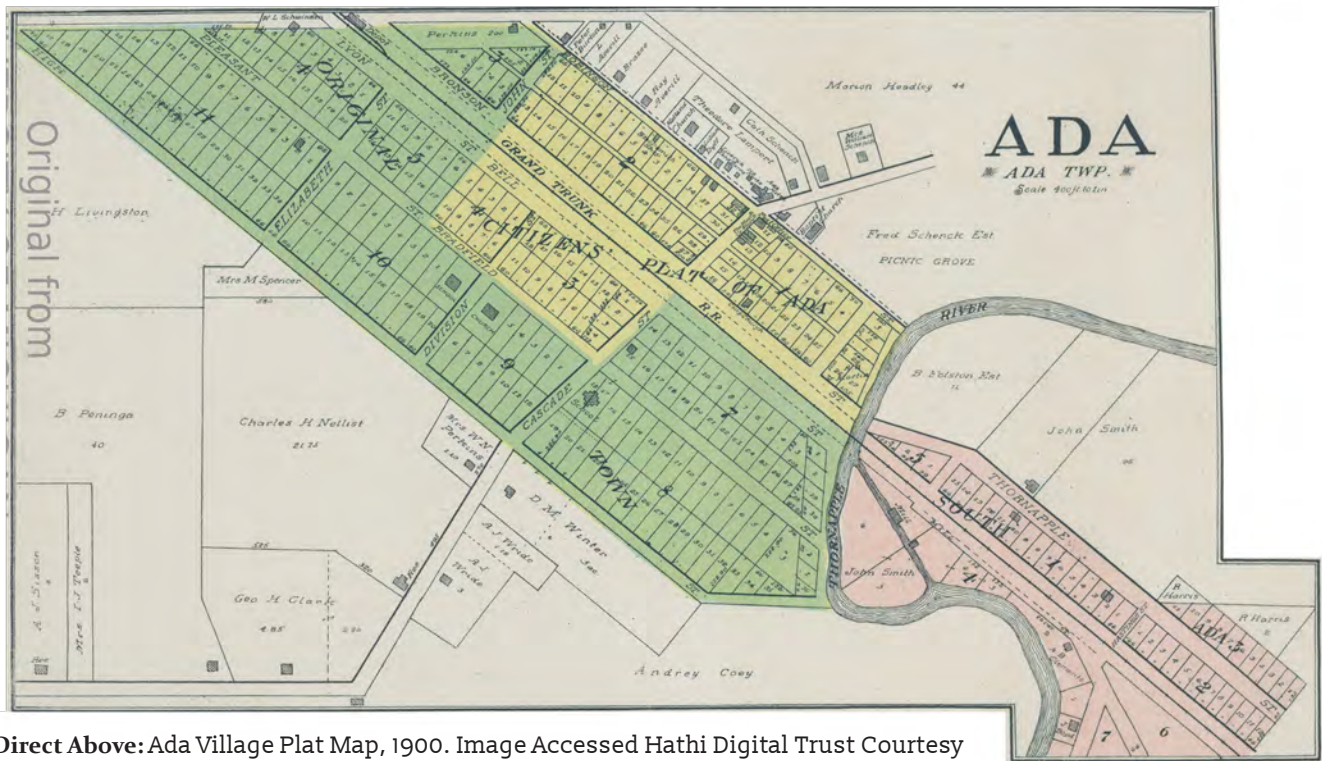
Above Left: Ada Drive, 1942. Image Courtesy of Ada Historical Society. **Above Right:** River Street, 2022.

Natural Features

Topography – Sitting at the lowest portion of the township near the confluence of the Grand River and Thornapple River, the Village character area lacks major topographical variation and is largely flat in nature.

Water Features – Due to its proximity to the Grand River and Thornapple River, much of the Village character area is located within a floodplain. This poses challenges for development near the waterfront and may require the clustering of development in adequate areas to allow for the preservation of vulnerable, low-lying areas.

Forest Canopy – As the most developed portion of the township, the Village character area contains street trees, with a more concentrated tree canopy found in parks and the undeveloped lowlands bordering the Thornapple River.



Direct Above: Ada Village Plat Map, 1900. Image Accessed Hathi Digital Trust Courtesy of The University of Michigan Digital Archives.

Housing

The Village character area is Ada Township's downtown district, featuring a mix of restaurants, offices, and retail options along with residential uses. A good deal of the township's residential growth has occurred in this character area in recent years, as attached residential units and mixed-use buildings have been constructed in the area. This diversified housing stock is reflected in Census data showing that the proportion of dwellings in the township which are in the single-detached format has shrunk from about 94% in the 2010 American Community Survey to about 92% in 2021, with gains in new attached units and developments of 5 or more units. For many, living in a connected, affordable, amenity-rich area with a degree of car independence is a welcome expansion of the traditional "American dream."

While many of these changes have occurred east of Headley Street in the core village area, townhouse developments have been approved along Fase Street, indicating the next increment of residential growth in this area. As of 2023, construction of Village East, a 92-unit residential development located just east of River Street, has been one of the largest developments. Recent approvals were granted for Oxbow, located south of the Thornapple River along Fase Street, an 88-unit development to include a mixture of multi-unit buildings, townhouses, and single detached residences which also preserves areas along the Grand River for natural open space and public recreation.



Above Left: Aerial of Ada Village, 1974. **Above Right:** Aerial of Ada Village, 2022.

As this new development demonstrates, the areas within and adjacent to the Village are the ideal site for Missing Middle housing types. The village's businesses and entertainment serve as amenities for the new housing, while the addition of new households strengthens the customer base for those businesses and establishments. Planning for this co-location also addresses a key concern raised by survey respondents: the increased traffic that accompanies new housing. Siting residences so that households can reach daily needs and entertainment without requiring the use of a car is an intentional planning measure to reduce the daily traffic demand that the new residents might induce.

Incremental Density Exercise at Second Community Event

As part of the November 2, 2022 Community Event, attendees were asked to determine the types of housing they desire to see in Ada Township's neighborhoods. A variety of housing choices were provided, these included the following:

- **Duplex (Side-by-Side)** - Two-unit residential building that shares a wall in the middle
- **Duplex (Stacked)** - Two-unit residential building with one lower unit and one upper unit
- **Fourplex** - Small format residential building with four units
- **Courtyard Building** - Residential building with multiple units oriented around a shared courtyard or open space
- **Cottage Court** - Small single-detached houses oriented around a common yard or open space
- **Townhouse** - Single-attached multi-story houses that share walls with their neighbors (ex: rowhouses)
- **Medium Multiplex** - Moderate-scale residential building with multiple units over multiple stories
- **Stacked Triplex** - Three-unit residential building with each unit occupying a separate floor
- **Live - Work** - Mixed-use building featuring first-floor retail or dining with offices and living spaces on the upper floors
- **Accessory Dwelling Unit** - Small single-detached house or residential unit that occupies an underutilized backyard, basement, or attic space

With these options, attendees identified the housing types and residential environment they desire for the Neighborhood character area. This exercise provided clarity on the building types attendees favored, these are ranked in order of popularity below:



#1 Townhouse
(28 Examples)



#5 Multiplex
(3 Examples)



#2 Accessory Dwelling Unit
(12 Examples)



#6 Triplex
(2 Examples)



#3 Duplex
(11 Examples)



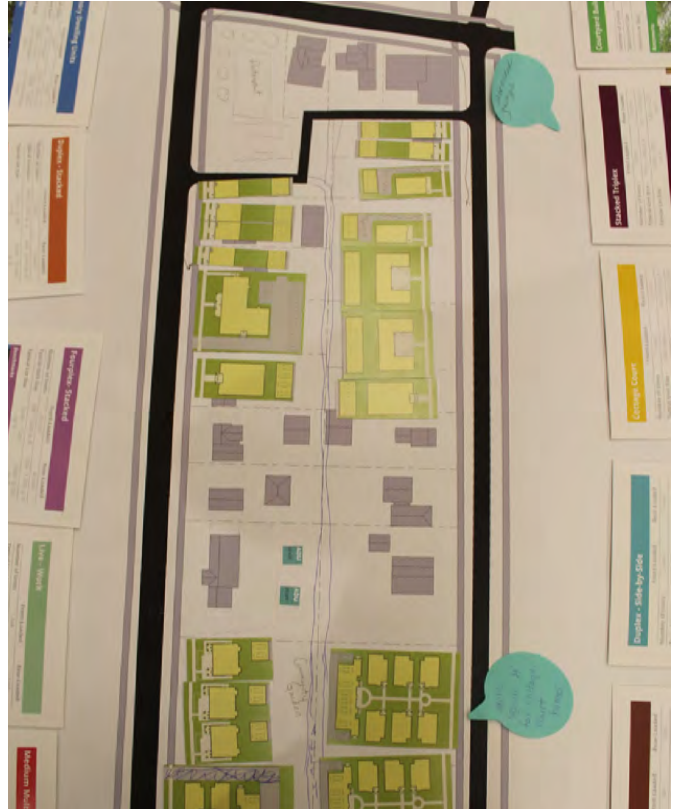
#7 Fourplex
(2 Examples)



#4 Courtyard Building
(4 Examples)

Incremental Density Exercise at Second Community Event (Continued)

Comments from the exercise mentioned a focus on high-quality architecture along with the incorporation of public green space in these areas. Other attendees desired residential development to focus on encouraging ownership instead of increasing rental units, this is perhaps reflected in the prioritization of townhouses, accessory dwelling units, cottage courtyards, and duplexes over other building types. Other comments mentioned that housing should be left to market forces to decide the building type while other comments desired to focus higher-density development towards major streets.



Given that missing middle housing types are often sited closer to commercial development and community recreation, the township can support the needs of seniors, small households, returning young adults, service workers, and others by increasing the types and amount of housing that is available. Ada has begun to diversify its housing stock: the proportion of dwellings which are in the single-detached format decreased by 2%; from about 94% in the 2010 American Community Survey to about 92% in 2021, due to the construction of new attached units and developments of 5 or more units. Methods to reduce the cost of land to improve affordability for all housing types, without subsidies, can include reducing lot area and width requirements.

What Makes a Vibrant Place?

Diversity of Uses

- Attracts more people
- Provides a broader range of services for the neighborhood
- More employment opportunities
- Extends street life over a longer portion of the day

Density of Development

- Promotes walkability
- Lessens traffic congestion
- More convenient for shopping
- Creates opportunities for housing

Well Designed Public Realm

- Consistent and well-maintained streetscape and sidewalks
- Space for cafes and plazas
- Sustainable design – stormwater management
- Street trees and green spaces
- Amenities – seating, lighting, and public art



Well Designed Private Realm: Buildings

- Appropriate mass and height to street
- Quality architecture and detailing
- Ground level window display

Well Designed Private Realm: Site

- Pedestrian/transit-oriented urban form
- Buildings placed along, and oriented to, the street to create outdoor rooms
- Parking placed behind buildings

Balance of Transportation Options

- Serves all users and all modes – people, transit riders, cyclists, autos, and freight
- Accommodates all abilities



2013 Envision Ada Summary

In 2013, Ada Township underwent a planning effort for Ada Village, envisioning the area as a vibrant, mixed-use district. The plan called for investments in high-quality public spaces as well as infrastructure improvements such as raising Ada Drive out of the floodplain. The plan provided landscape and architectural renderings that established much of the current design of the village.



The plan identified then-existing conditions within the character area, seeking to replace the auto-oriented stretch of Ada Drive (featuring the former Thornapple Village Shopping Center) north of Headley Street and enhancing the area's interface with the Thornapple River. Incorporating past planning efforts, the 2013 Envision Ada Plan proposed three alternatives that focused on increasing housing and retail opportunities oriented around public gathering spaces. These three alternatives are discussed below:

Plan A – This plan assumed the Thornapple Village Shopping Center would remain and sought to enhance its existing parking facilities while creating better connections to the Thornapple River. This plan also included a pedestrian bridge crossing the Thornapple River and for a roundabout at Fulton Street

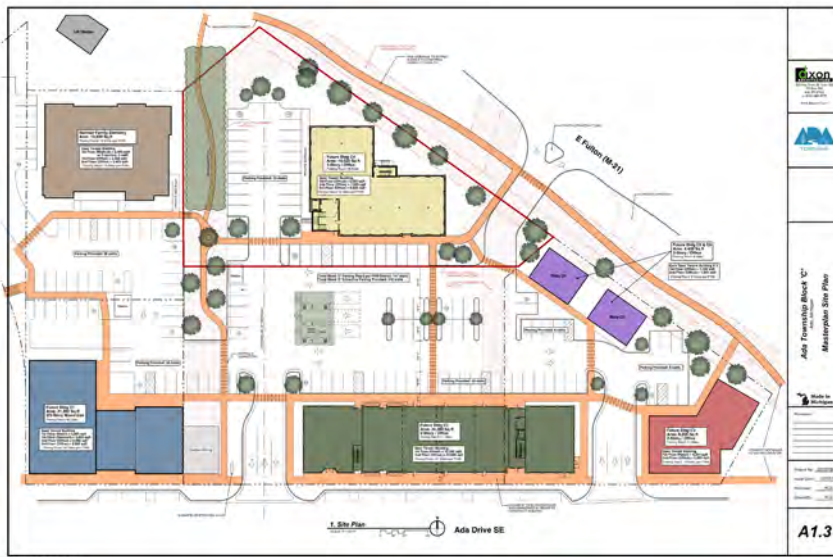
Plan B – This plan assumed the Thornapple Village Shopping Center would be demolished, opening up the parcel to new development. This plan envisioned a road running parallel to the Thornapple River as well as one connecting to Fulton Street between current Headley Street and Ada Drive. This plan encouraged development fronting the street with parking spaces located behind buildings.

Plan C – While not including a new street running parallel to the Thornapple River, this plan envisioned a green space connecting the river to Fulton Street, with the village oriented towards this public space. A forested green space with art installations was proposed closer to the confluence of the Grand River and Thornapple River.

These options were presented to the public and features from each can be seen in the final implementation of the plan. Some notable features include the creation of River Street, the linear green space along the Thornapple River, the down-sizing of Ada Drive to better accommodate pedestrians, and the creation of an amphitheater for concerts and other community events.

Block C Plan

Adopted in December of 2021, the Block C Conceptual Plan identified a preferred site plan for the portion of Ada Village east of Headley Street, north of Ada Drive, and south of Fulton Street. This plan follows the recent pattern of development within the village, elevating the pedestrian experience through improved streetscaping and urban design. Currently the site features two drive-through bank facilities, an animal clinic, a dentist office, and a lift station.



The plan focuses on enhancing Ada Village's built environment by embracing the following urban design themes listed below:

- Bringing buildings to the front of the lot, creating an interesting and inviting public space that further frames Ada Drive as a comfortable pedestrian street
- Increasing pedestrian throughout the site as well as connections between the Village and Fulton Street
- Placing parking on the interior of the site, creating a shared parking area
- Increasing professional office and residential density throughout the site, increasing the Village's overall vibrancy
- Consolidating roadway curb-cuts, reducing traffic conflicts

Economy

Throughout the community engagement process, residents identified Ada Village as being a strength of the community, as it provides a destination where people can meet for drinks, take the family out for dinner, or shop in the variety of retail businesses. A good portion of the village's center was reconstructed at an unusually swift pace in the past decade. Ada is also within the eddy of West Michigan's strong regional growth. While viewed largely as a positive, some residents have identified these changes as cause for concern; feeling these changes signify a deeper shift in the community's identity, as can be heard in survey and meeting participants' concern that Ada's "small town feel" is at risk.



Communities are in a constant state of change. While change will not stop, it can be proactively managed in a way that is guided by community values and goals. For Ada Township, this means working to keep the character areas of the township distinct from one another and directing growth where it is best served by water and sewer infrastructure, transportation options, goods and services, public amenities, and community activities.

Encouraging continued development in and near the Village character area furthers the area's viability as a center of activity and local commerce, as it focuses additional residents in closer proximity to local businesses. In conjunction with programmed activities and events, residents, visitors, and shoppers mingle in the comings and goings of daily life to create vibrancy. This intentional design is also a wise stewardship of limited resources. Growth in and near the village area lowers infrastructure costs (the same pipes are being used), conserves land (development is compact), and provides revenue which supports the expansion of community trails and preserved greenspace. Future expansion of the village could potentially occur with the inclusion of parts of the Amway campus, depending on evolving market conditions and the desires of ownership.

The key is for Ada to grow while retaining the characteristics that speak to its identity. The Architectural Standards in the Ada Township Zoning Ordinance's Planned Village Mixed Use Overlay District were developed with Ada's context and history in mind and should be deployed at every opportunity. This ensures that future development reflects the high-quality design residents value and contributes to creating a sense of place and identity for the village.



"Communities are in a constant state of change. While change will not stop, it can be proactively managed in a way that is guided by community values and goals."



Mobility

Roads – The Village character area contains a segment of Fulton Street near the Amway campus as well as the terminus of Ada Drive at Fulton Street. Other streets are low-speed and pedestrian-oriented in nature.

Pathways and Trails – As noted in the Corridor character area, there are limited pathways running parallel to Fulton Street, although one is planned for partial implementation in the summer of 2023. There are however ample connections to Ada Drive as well as pedestrian crossings across the Thornapple River via the historic covered bridge. The 2020 Connect Ada Plan also identifies a pedestrian pathway running parallel to the Thornapple River as a future feature of the character area.

Sidewalks – Due to its traditional development pattern, the character area features wide pedestrian-oriented sidewalks. This encourages walking as a viable mobility choice within the character area. Although prevalent within the blocks south of Fulton Street, there are limited pedestrian connections to the Amway campus that cross Fulton Street.

Gateways – Distinguishing entrances to Ada Village may be valuable from a community branding standpoint. Two potential locations for these signs include the Bronson Street and Fulton Street intersection and along Fulton Street east of Ada Drive. This would provide visibility from Fulton Street and better identify the character area's boundaries.

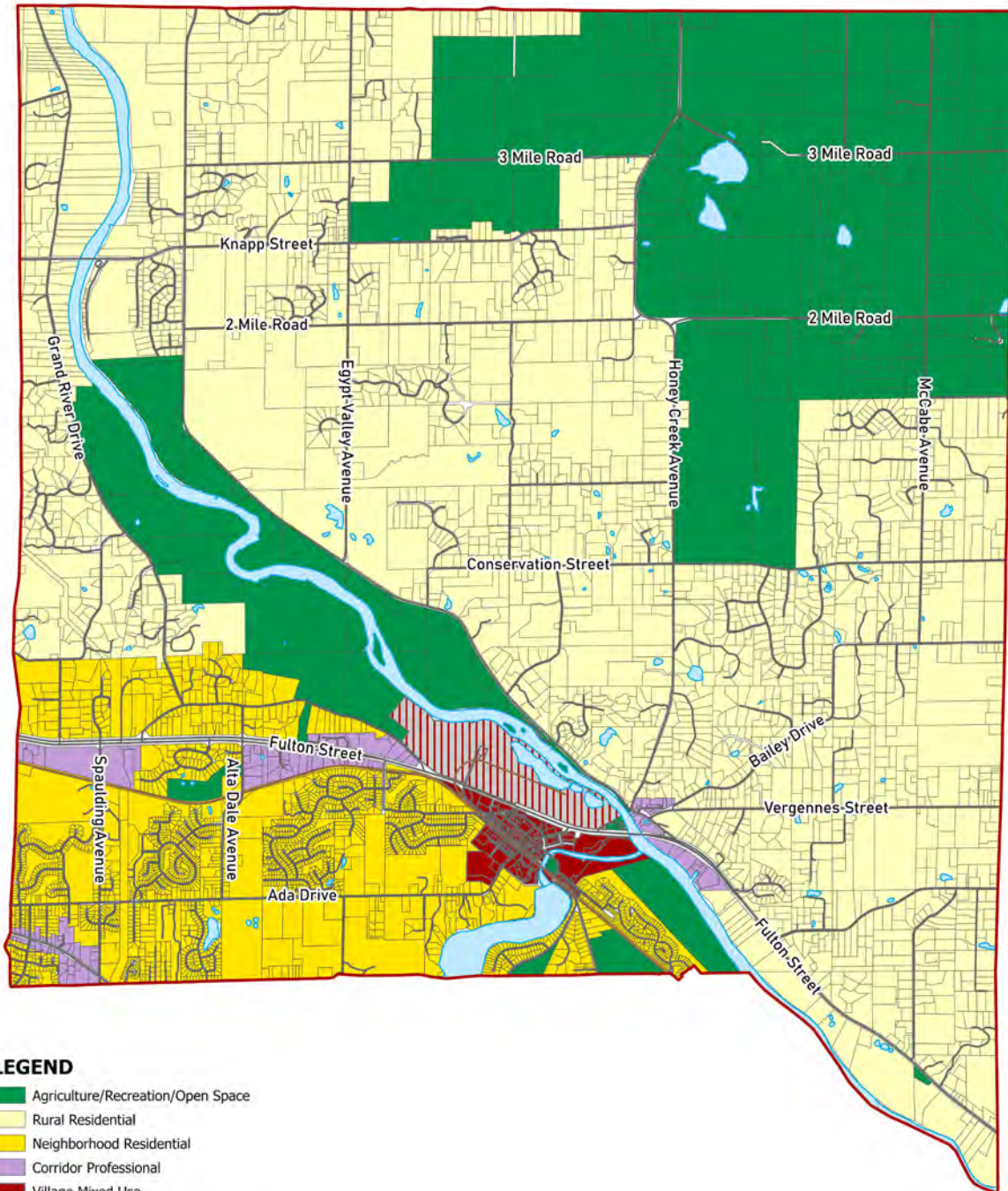
Transit – As the downtown district of Ada Township, the Village character area features key ingredients necessary for transit to become a viable form of transportation. With this in mind however, the Village character area remains compact and walkable, likely negating the need for transit services between locations within the Village. Because of this, transit services should be focused on transporting people to and from the Village from other parts of the region. This is most likely provided through a transit line running along Fulton Street, connecting the Village to Grand Rapids.



Chapter 8: Future Land Use Map



Ada Township's Overarching Community Vision:
“Ada Township’s future development
will reflect the distinct characteristics
that make it unique; creating a green,
walkable, inclusive, and vibrant
community.”



LEGEND

- Agriculture/Recreation/Open Space
- Rural Residential
- Neighborhood Residential
- Corridor Professional
- Village Mixed Use
- Industrial (Village Mixed-Use Overlay)

Ada Township Future Land Use Map



Data Source: Michigan Geographic Data Library, 2022. Kent County GIS, 2022.
GVMC REGIS, 2022. Progressive AE, 2022.

progressive | ae

Future Land Use Categories

The Future Land Use Map depicts the desired future development pattern in the Township. These future land use categories are consistent with the four identified Character Areas and informs the Ada Township Zoning Ordinance – the tool that guides development towards achieving the township’s future vision. A description of these future land use categories are included below.

Agriculture/Recreation

The Agriculture/Recreation land use category intends to preserve legacy agricultural operations in the northeast corner of the township as well as preserve vulnerable natural spaces and valuable parkland across the township. Areas planned for Agriculture/Recreation intend to remain undeveloped and in a natural state. Agricultural parcels within this land use category are intended to remain in agricultural uses as long as viable.

Rural Residential

The Rural Residential land use category intends to further the township’s vision of large-lot residential development in areas with abundant natural features (wetlands, flood plain, steep slopes, woodlands) and limited infrastructure. Residential parcels in this category are to be shielded from the street by natural vegetation and should retain the existing natural forest landscape. Low volume streets should remain unpaved to preserve the rural nature of the land use category.

Neighborhood Residential

The Neighborhood Residential land use category intends to enhance residential neighborhoods located in areas of extensive existing infrastructure while encouraging the gentle increase in housing types within these areas. This land use category intends to further the township’s goal of accommodating housing in appropriate locations and creating neighborhoods that can accommodate the housing needs of Ada’s residents. Neighborhood streets will include an extensive tree canopy and will be connected by sidewalks or trails to nearby retail and recreational amenities.

Corridor Mixed Use

The Corridor Mixed Use land use category intends to improve connectivity and cohesion along the Fulton Street Corridor and Cascade Road. This land use category includes professional office, warehouse, small-scale industrial, and residential developments in a context-sensitive manner that focuses development in select nodes. The intent of this land use category is to preserve the natural appeal of the Fulton Street and Cascade Road corridors while creating nodes of employment with a discernible sense of place. Streets will be interconnected and provide extensive tree canopies and non-motorized facilities.

Village Mixed Use

The Village Mixed Use land use category intends to focus a mixture of walkable development forms within Ada Village. This land use category includes retail, restaurant, hotel, office, and residential land uses in a traditional and village setting that is conducive to walking and non-motorized modes of transportation. Streets will follow a tight grid pattern and feature a robust urban tree canopy, wide sidewalks including outdoor seating and vending options, and non-motorized facilities.

Industrial and Mixed Use Overlay

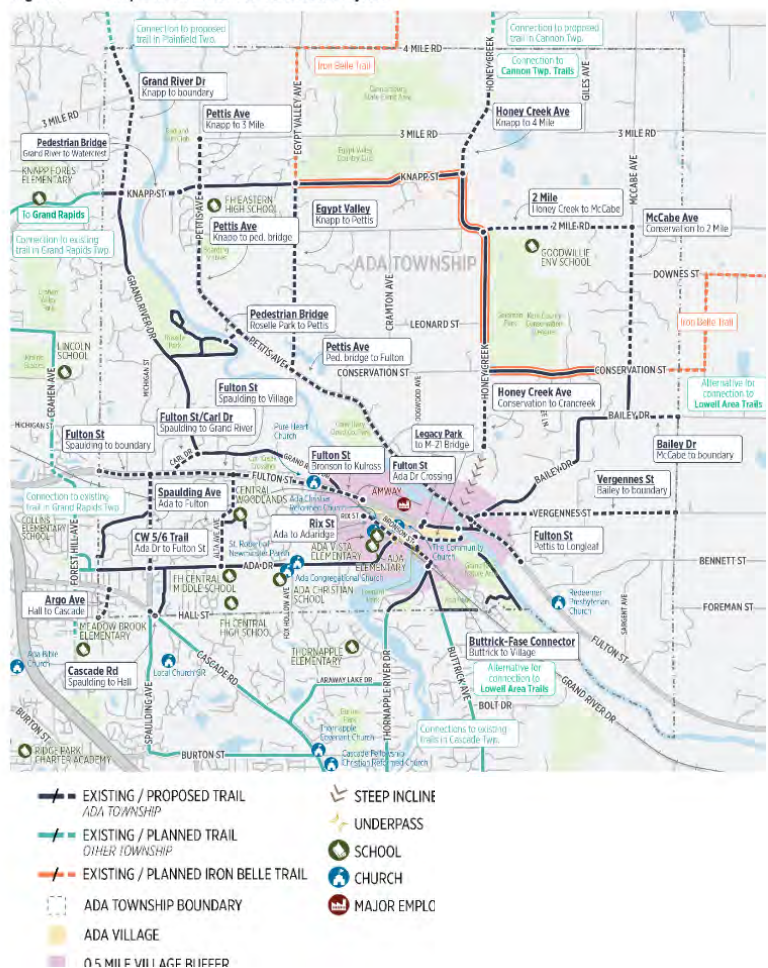
The Industrial land use category intends to provide a meaningful location for intensive industrial operation within the township. This land use should accommodate natural vegetation and landscaping that conceals large building masses far removed from adjacent roadways. Streets should feature high connectivity while also accounting for the efficient movement of freight.

The largest industrial site in the township, the Amway campus, is identified in both the industrial and village mixed-use future land use categories. Current uses on the campus are office and industrial in nature. Given national trends in manufacturing and production, it is possible to imagine that over the next 20 years there may be a desire to repurpose a portion of the campus into other uses. Should that occur, it is recommended that the Village Mixed-Use category be implemented to reinforce portions of the campus to be redeveloped as part of the Village. Stronger visual and physical ties should be created to connect the two areas, including coordinating with MDOT to make modifications to Fulton Street to improve accessibility for pedestrians and other non-motorized traffic.

Connect Ada (2020) Non-Motorized Transportation Plan

Land use and transportation are intricately connected; conditions in one drastically influence conditions in the other. Recognizing this relationship, Ada Township underwent a transportation planning effort in 2019 that sought to enhance the township's non-motorized network. The Connect Ada Plan identifies priority projects based on community feedback as well as their contribution into the township's overall mobility network. With these important non-motorized connections identified, the Future Land Use Plan can work to encourage land uses that support cycling and other active forms of transportation.

Figure 4 Map of Non-Motorized Candidate Projects

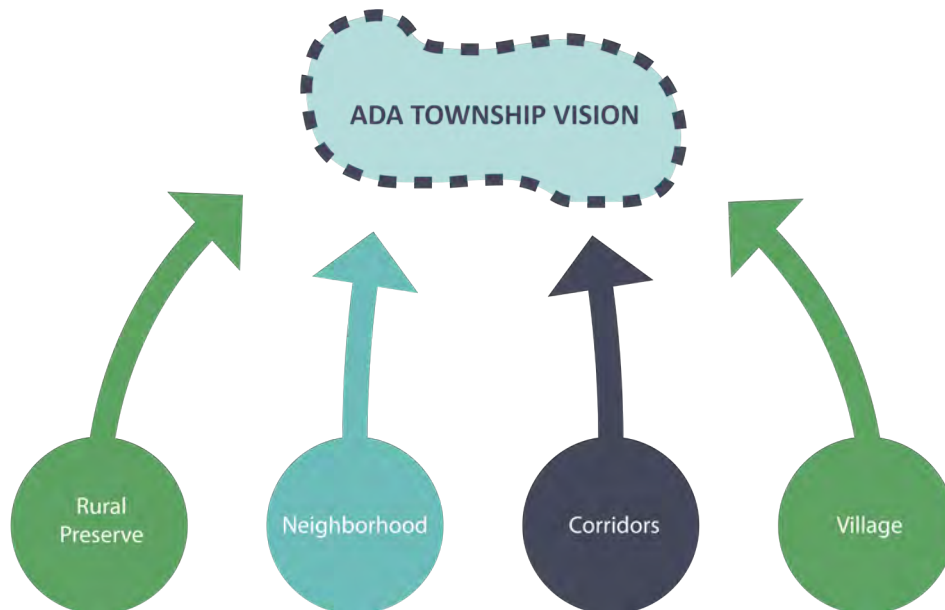


Above: Connect Ada Non-Motorized Map (2020). Map Provided Courtesy of Nelson Nygaard.

Chapter 9: Vision, Goals, and Objectives



With 37 square miles of rolling fields, leafy subdivisions, office campuses, and mixed-use main street environments, the setting of broad visions, goals, and objectives that would be applied to every area of the township would fail to adequately capture the complexities of these contexts. Together, these four character areas comprise the whole of Ada Township, each one equally important in defining the township's overall identity. Recognizing this, visions, goals, and objectives have been tailored towards building on each area's existing strengths, embracing what makes them unique and encouraging place-making in each one. In this way, Township officials, staff, and residents will be empowered to shape the township's overall future vision of that *"development will reflect the distinct characteristics that make Ada Township unique; creating a green, walkable, inclusive, and vibrant community."*





Rural Preserve

Vision Statement: “The Rural Preserve character area will preserve the rural environment of Ada Township, ensuring development occurs in intimate harmony with the township’s natural features.”

Why: The notion of protecting Ada Township’s natural features and rural charm has been identified as a key priority. Residents are passionate about the natural beauty of the township and seek to protect these features. As the largest character area in the township, the Rural Preserve area plays a large role in cultivating what makes Ada unique.

Goal I.1

Public Road Corridors will remain natural in appearance with houses and other structures set back from the road and shielded by extensive tree coverage.

- a.) Continue to support the destination of “Natural Beauty Roads” by the Kent County Road Commission.
- b.) Discourage paving and/or widening of gravel roads, in the absence of a demonstrated safety hazard.
- c.) Create an awareness and education program for property owners about the benefits of native plantings, natural landscapes, and habitats.
- d.) Establish greenbelt regulations within the zoning ordinance.
 - 1.) Lawns will emphasize native landscape features and be maintained in a natural, unmanicured state.
 - 2.) Include a section in “Landscaping Requirements and Standards” that defines native landscape features and identifies preferred species.

Goal I.2

A connected network of trails and pathways will provide non-motorized access throughout the Rural Preserve character area and serve as an asset.

- a.) Support the recommendations in the Connect Ada 2020 plan.
- b.) Participate in the further enhancement and support of the Iron Belle Trail segment and the North Country Trail that run through the township.

Goal 1.3

The long-term sustainability of the area's natural systems will be a primary consideration in all development proposals and public investment decisions.

- a.) Development will be limited in areas with sensitive natural features such as wetlands, floodplains, and steep slopes.
 - 1.) Designate on the Future Land Use Map areas with limited development potential due to sensitive natural features such as wetlands, floodplains, and steep slopes.
 - 2.) Examine the use of required buffer zones or an overlay district.
- b.) Update Township regulations and maps based on FEMA's new floodplain boundary information.
- c.) Acquire land or easements in high priority areas, as established in the Ada Township Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan.

Goal 1.4

The Rural Preserve character area will be characterized by its limited infrastructure and rural and low-density character.

- a.) Sprawl-type development on parcel sizes that are too big to efficiently use land and infrastructure, and too small to preserve the natural landscape and protect natural features, will be discouraged.
- b.) Maintain existing patterns of development and discourage rezoning requests; if higher densities are contemplated then land should be served by water and sewer infrastructure, be contiguous to the existing Neighborhoods character area, and align with the Neighborhoods character area goals.
- c.) Consider the possibility of allowing accessory dwelling units on existing home sites with sufficient well and septic capacity to allow for multi-generational housing and an affordable housing option.

Goal 1.5

The viability of agricultural land uses will be supported through the encouragement of agri-tourism and other appropriate cottage industries within agricultural and rural preserve areas.

Goal 1.6

Implement Best Management Practices (BMP) for stormwater management to alleviate flooding and protect sensitive environments within the character area.



Corridors

Vision Statement: “The Corridors character area will present as an attractive and cohesive entrance to the community, reinforce the Village as the center of activity by avoiding competitive uses, and provide an employment center of regional importance.”

Why: As the highest-traveled corridors within Ada Township, improvements to this character area are highly visible. Residents stated a desire to retain each corridor’s natural and green landscapes, and to avoid strip commercial and auto-oriented development. There is a desire to improve aesthetics along the Fulton Avenue corridor as the community’s “front porch.”

Goal 2.1

Corridors will retain their distinct natural, scenic, and uncluttered appearance.

- a.) Screen electrical substation to improve the aesthetics of Ada’s western gateway on Fulton Street.
- b.) Review landscape standards for major corridors and ensure that new development is compatible with adjoining residential neighborhoods.
- c.) Continue to support access management.

Goal 2.2

The Fulton Corridor will continue to serve as an employment hub of the community.

- a.) Additional commercial and retail development outside the existing C-1 and C-2 districts is discouraged.
- b.) Uses that require a larger footprint and high transportation access, such as industrial, office, and warehouse uses, are appropriate.

Goal 2.3

Development in Corridors will be supportive of, and complementary to, the Village.

- a.) More intense employment and housing options will be concentrated in the Fulton Corridor around the village.
- b.) Retail, restaurant, and other high traffic-generating uses that would compete with uses found within the village are discouraged along the Fulton Avenue, Cascade Road, and Spaulding Avenue corridors.

Goal 2.4

The Fulton Street Corridor will have non-motorized access and will connect adjacent neighborhoods to the corridor through sidewalks, pathways, and other non-motorized infrastructure.

- a.) Support the implementation of Connect Ada 2020, which includes a proposed trail along Fulton Street and several proposed connections to neighborhoods both north and south of the corridor.

Goal 2.5

Gateway treatments will welcome those arriving to or passing through Ada from the east and west.

- a.) Evaluate changes that can be made to Fulton Street which would provide a more identifiable entrance to the village using curbed medians, enhanced pedestrian crossings, landscaping, lighting, and/or signage.
- b.) Consider undertaking a corridor plan with adjoining communities to evaluate the Fulton Corridor's appearance and operations.

Goal 2.6

Implement Best Management Practices (BMP) for stormwater management to alleviate flooding and protect sensitive environments within the character area.



Neighborhoods

Vision Statement: “The Neighborhoods character area will leverage existing infrastructure to encourage gentle residential development, enhancing and creating neighborhoods that are connected to nature and daily amenities which accommodate people of all ages and households of all types.”

Why: Additional housing options have been identified as a key priority, as young professionals, service workers, growing families, and retired empty-nesters face challenges in finding available places to live in Ada Township. With its existing residential environment and the provision of adequate public infrastructure to support it, the Neighborhoods character area is well-positioned to accommodate a wider range of housing where appropriate.

Goal 3.1

Residential neighborhoods will include a mix of housing types and sizes to accommodate people in all stages of life, varied housing preferences, and varying incomes.

- a.) Consolidate residential zone districts to reduce complexity and add flexibility for housing types.
- b.) Allow accessory dwelling units, townhouses, duplexes, and cottage courts in areas served by municipal water and sewer infrastructure.
- c.) Revise zoning regulations that affect housing supply and choice, such as lot width and lot area requirements and minimum house size.
- d.) Consider permitting dwellings of up to four units (attached rowhouses or fourplexes that look like big homes) with administrative approval.

Goal 3.2

Development will be focused in areas with supporting infrastructure and will be designed in a manner that reinforces neighborhood character and sense of community.

- a.) Consider the use of pre-approved plans for new housing types.
- b.) Encourage inclusion of traditional neighborhood elements with a focus on a consistent local street network, sidewalks, street trees, and compact design.
- c.) Encourage walkable neighborhoods by emphasizing front porches and de-emphasizing garages and car parking.

Goal 3.3

Sidewalks and trails will knit neighborhoods together and provide connections to schools, parks, and shopping amenities.

- a.) Support the implementation of Connect Ada 2020, which identifies trail improvements to connect neighborhoods.
- b.) Connect neighborhoods to parks and greenspaces within a 15-minute walk.
- c.) Improve connectivity across the Thornapple River by creating a pedestrian bridge connecting Ada Village to Fase Street and Ada Moorings.

Goal 3.4

Ada will capitalize on opportunities to create community gateways with a natural feel in this character area, such as the one at Knapp Street and Grand River Drive.

Goal 3.5

Implement Best Management Practices (BMP) for stormwater management to alleviate flooding and protect sensitive environments within the character area.



Village

Vision Statement: “The Village character area will reflect the historic legacy of Ada while continuing to evolve into a vibrant, mixed-use district, and providing a variety of housing types in close proximity to daily amenities and recreation opportunities.”

Why: Containing the largest mix of residential, retail, office, and public land uses, the Village character area best exhibits the characteristics of a “complete neighborhood,” where daily amenities are within walking distance. Because of this, policies to support additional housing and local businesses can further make this area a vibrant business district and an attractive place to spend time in.

Goal 4.1

The Village of Ada area will be recognized as the hub of the community, with retail and restaurant offerings, business uses, residential diversity, public amenities and services, and civic spaces and activities.

- a.) Businesses that contribute to the vibrancy of the district, particularly restaurant and retail offerings, will be encouraged.
- b.) Support the work of the DDA, social zones, and other activities that advance programs and activities to build community.
- c.) Gateway signage will be installed to mark the entrance to the village, potentially at the intersection of Bronson and Fulton Streets in the west, and along Fulton Street east of Ada Drive.

Goal 4.2

The Village of Ada will continue to embrace high quality architecture in future development proposals.

- a.) Review the effectiveness of the Planned Village Mixed Use Overlay and consider adopting these standards into the Zoning Ordinance as part of the zone district instead of through an overlay district.
- b.) Develop a design book that provides examples of desired characteristics for new projects, including references to visual compatibility and history of existing structures.

Goal 4.3

Compact residential development will be encouraged in close proximity to businesses to support the local economy and build vibrancy.

- a.) Review and revise zoning districts within the Village district as necessary to provide clarity on multi-family and mixed-use residential development.
- b.) Allow for Missing Middle housing types, including accessory dwelling units, live/work units, townhouses, 2/3/4-plexes, courtyard buildings, and cottage courts.
- c.) Revise zoning regulations that affect housing supply and choice, such as lot width and lot area requirements and minimum house size.
- d.) Consider permitting new housing types with administrative approval.
- e.) Encourage the expansion of transit to connect the village to the region.

Goal 4.4

Development within the floodplains of the Grand River and Thornapple River will balance environmental sensitivity with access to these prized resources.

- a.) Require development proposals within the floodplain to demonstrate accommodation of potential flooding impacts.
- b.) Permit flexibility in site arrangement to concentrate permitted densities in areas less susceptible to flooding.

Goal 4.5

The area will provide an inviting and pleasant environment for pedestrians and will incorporate sidewalks and outdoor spaces to enhance the public realm.

- a.) Support the implementation of the Connect Ada 2020 Plan, which includes pedestrian improvements across Fulton Street to knit Ada Village and the Amway campus together, forming a cohesive area.
- b.) Non-motorized trails will connect the Village character area to other parts of the township and surrounding communities.
- c.) Support implementation of the Block C Plan for commercial redevelopment along Ada Drive, as well as its use as a model for redeveloping other portions of the Village area.

Goal 4.6

Implement Best Management Practices (BMP) for stormwater management to alleviate flooding and protect sensitive environments within the character area.



Chapter 10: Zoning Plan



This Master Plan, and its Future Land Use map, are powerful expressions of Ada Township's intentions for the future. Once it is adopted it serves as the "guide for growth" for the Township Board, Planning Commission, and staff. The Plan is a statement of policy, whereas the zoning ordinance is law. The primary difference between the two is timing. The Master Plan shows the intended future land use at the end of a 20-year planning period and provides the logic for zoning regulations. Zoning affects development projects that come in the door today.

This Chapter should be referred to when considering potential changes to the Zoning Ordinance. Additional dialogue and analysis is recommended prior to adopting ordinance amendments to ensure that an abundance of nonconformities are not created and that there is synchronicity between other ordinance provisions. The Future Land Use categories and Themes described in the preceding chapters serve as the foundation for suggested ordinance revisions.

Given that development regulations are among the most effective regulatory tools that can be used by the Township to help implement the vision, goals, and design concepts in this Plan, it makes sense to reconsider the number and types of zone districts that currently exist and how they align with the construct of the Master Plan's four Character Areas (Rural Preserve, Corridors, Neighborhoods, and Village). Ada Township's Zoning Ordinance is currently comprised of:

- Eight (8) residential zone districts (RP-1, RP-2, RR, R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, and V-R)
- Four (4) commercial business districts with one mixed-use overlay (PO, C-1, C-2, and PVM)
- One (1) PUD district that can substitute for a residential or a commercial zone district,
- Four (4) districts that address industrial and intense land uses (I, LI, U, and P-1A), and
- One (1) zone district for agricultural operations (AGP).

In some cases, zone districts that are listed in the ordinance are not designated in any location on the zoning map. In other instances, there is very little distinction between zone districts that make it worth having a unique designation. To that end, the following items should be considered regarding the organization of the Township's Zoning Ordinance:

- Keep the Agricultural Preservation (AGP) and Rural Preservation 1 (RP-1) zone districts which align with the agricultural and 5-acre lot characteristics of the Rural Preservation Character Area;
- Consider combining the Rural Preservation 2 (RP-2) and Rural Residential (RR) zone districts due to their similar characteristics;
- Allow the use of the Planned Unit Development (PUD) district to encourage sensitive development in the Rural Preserve area;
- Evaluate uses in the C-2 General Business zone district to determine which could be more appropriately identified as heavy commercial uses in an industrial district (e.g. car repair) and those uses which would provide supportive functions as the "donut" around the village along the Fulton Corridor;
- Consider combining the Professional Office (PO), Industrial (I), and Light Industrial (LI) zone districts to reflect the recommendations of the Corridors designation while still affording the opportunity for thoughtful consideration using the Special Land Use process and/or performance standards;
- Consider combining the Low-Density Single Family Residential (R-1), Single Family Residential (R-2), Medium Single-Family Residential (R-3), and Medium Density Residential (R-4) zone districts to reflect the recommendations of the Neighborhoods character area, while still affording the opportunity for thoughtful consideration of different housing types using the Special Land Use process and/or performance standards;
- Consider creating a Village Mixed Use district to provide clarity to the Village Residential (V-R) and Planned Village Mixed-Use Overlay (PVM) districts, keeping the form-based standards that characterize the village but simplifying the way in which the district is administered to be more in keeping with other zone districts;
- Evaluate locations where Planned Unit Developments (PUD) have been enacted and whether those areas zoned as PUD could be extinguished if all conditions of the PUD have been satisfied and determine whether the use of the PUD zone district should apply to the Neighborhoods and Village areas;
- Consider performance-based and/or design regulations for various uses to insure compatibility within the same zone district; and
- Create one common use table that identifies uses across all zone districts for ease of administration.

To help determine how the Character Area/Future Land Use recommendations align with the Zoning Ordinance, a preliminary audit was conducted to identify potential changes that would create a stronger connection between them.

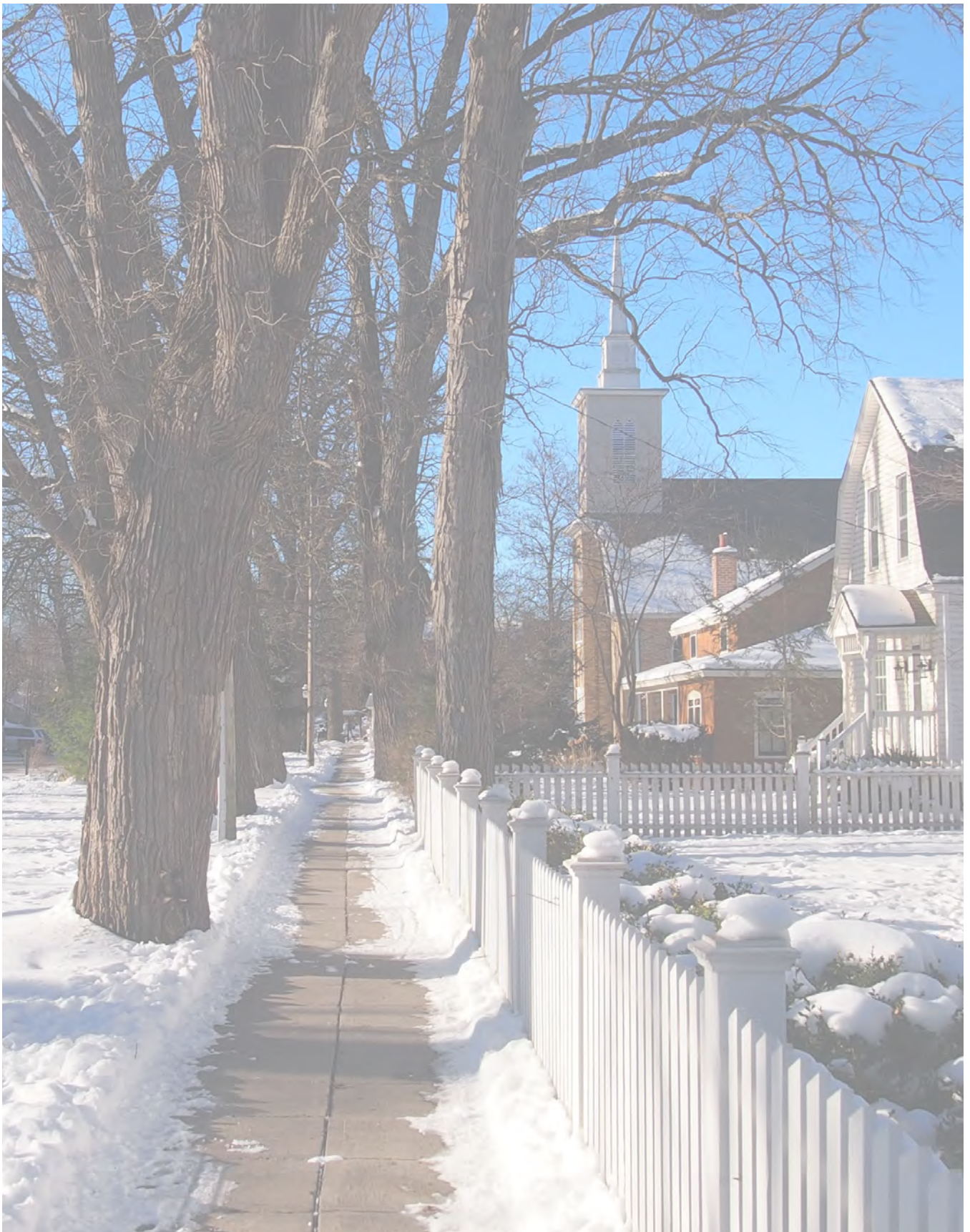
The table below provides ideas of how selected planning concepts could be manifested into development regulations. There are a number of approaches that could apply to each suggestion for consideration. The Planning Commission would need to engage in its own process to consider text and map amendments to the Zoning Ordinance, as required by State law, and then provide a recommendation to the Township Board.

Theme	Suggested Changes to Consider
Rural Preserve	
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance landscaping standards to maintain characteristics of the area, including natural buffers along roads and possibly a site's perimeter Tree protection standards for new development Define native landscape features, identify preferred species Adopt an updated "Protected Riparian Areas Inventory Map"
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow accessory dwelling units as an administrative special land use, subject to specific criteria
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider roadside stands on parcels greater than 5 acres (AGP district) Review sections pertaining to material processing/mining and whether a stand-alone zone district is necessary
Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No changes suggested
Corridors	
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review landscape standards to ensure the corridor has a consistent look and feel
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow residential development in the C-2 district, such as buildings with residential above commercial or standalone multi-unit residential buildings, with appropriate standards
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise the use list in the C-2 zone district to better compliment the village and place more intense uses in industrial areas
Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review street access requirements

Theme

Suggested Changes to Consider

Neighborhoods	
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review vegetation and buffer requirements
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permit accessory dwelling units, rowhouses, duplex, triplex, fourplex, cottage courts, and other “gentle density” housing types as a Special Land Use with design and performance criteria Restrict large multi-unit apartment complexes Conduct a lot size analysis and examine minimum lot area and width requirements Eliminate minimum house size requirement
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No changes suggested
Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require sidewalks or trails Modify Article 28 for public street access and private road and driveway standards to allow (private) and encourage (KCRC) pedestrian-oriented street design
Village	
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permit flexibility in site arrangement of properties within the floodplain to concentrate permitted densities in areas less susceptible to flooding Require street trees
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permit rowhouses, duplex, triplex, fourplex, cottage courts, and other “gentle density” housing types by right or as a Special Land Use with design and performance criteria Consider allowing accessory dwelling units as an administrative special land use Examine the use of pre-approved plans
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise the Planned Village Mixed Use Overlay and how it works with the Village Center and Village Core Areas Provide administrative departures for urban conditions
Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require sidewalks Require bicycle parking within Village district with space reductions for stipulations Incentivize shared parking agreements Modify Article 28 for public street access and private road and driveway standards to allow (private) and encourage (KCRC) pedestrian-oriented street design





T O W N S H I P

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