

LAKEWOOD ADDITIONS SUB-AREA PLAN



DALTON TOWNSHIP

MUSKEGON COUNTY, MICHIGAN

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1 | INTRODUCTION

Foreword

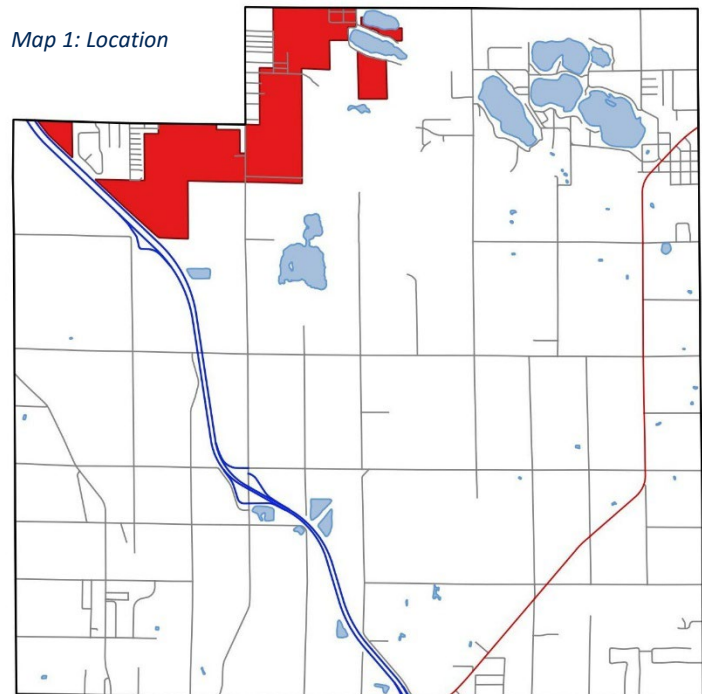
The lands for which this sub-plan has been developed bear a unique and interesting history. In 1912, tracts of land surrounding Fox Lake were platted into 100 ft by 25 ft lots. These lots were bundled with subscriptions to a Chicago-based newspaper. As lots were sold, resort amenities were built and Fox Lake became a summer destination for Chicago area residents. While the Village of Lakewood Club saw some growth and incorporated in 1967, much of the platted lands outside of the Village have remained largely as undeveloped natural areas. Over the years, many of these properties were forfeited into public ownership due to unpaid property taxes. Beginning in the 1980's, Dalton Township acquired these properties from the State of Michigan and the County of Muskegon with the intent of pursuing limited residential development and an area which would remain undeveloped and be dedicated as a community forest.

Why Plan?

The need for a comprehensive sub-area plan to address these lands has long been recognized, but was always categorized as a low priority until recently. In the years previous to this plan, the Township has begun to open sale of these lands into private ownership. This sudden uptick in the sale of these properties has revived this sub-area plan from the backburner and has made it one of the Township's foremost policy needs. A sub-area plan which is specific to the Lakewood Additions Sub-Area Plan will provide well researched guidance and direction to both the Township Officials charged with making the policy decisions which pertain to these lands. This includes decisions on the sale of Township owned property, private development, recreation, and the conservation of natural resources for the benefit of township residents and stakeholders. This plan will also serve as a guide to Township officials in the administration of these lands as they address both new and ongoing issues.

Sub-Plan Area Location

The lands which are part of this sub-plan are those which received the "Lakewood Additions Sub-Area Plan" designation in the Future Land Use Map and Plan contained within the 2018 Master Plan Update. The lands are located the northwest corner of the township as shown in *Map 1* to the right.





2 | EXISTING CONDITIONS

Purpose and Intent

A thorough analysis of the conditions within the sub-area is necessary in order to understand the obstacles and opportunities which are presented. Research into the Lakewood Additions was conducted by Township staff over the summer of 2025 to ascertain and document the present conditions within these lands. This understanding was foundational when planning for the future land use of this subarea.

Assessment of Physical Conditions

Township staff conducted an assessment of much of these lands in the summer of 2025. One such assessment was conducted and a report was provided to the Planning Commission in June of 2025. During this assessment, Township staff explored the most frequently used portions of these lands to assess their condition. The route taken is shown in blue on the map in *Map 2*. Staff travelled east along a two-track off of Russell (platted as Bristol Rd), then north on a trail through the Poppy Way right-of-way. Here, staff came across a trail heading west which roughly followed the Cherry St right-of way. This portion of the trail showed heavy use by off road vehicles as shown in *Photo 1*. Staff also discovered a fire pit surrounded by broken glass, and was filled with wood, tires and other refuse shown in *Photo 2*.



Map 2: Assessment Route



Photo 1: ORV Trail



Photo 2: Refuse in Fire Pit

Staff then continued north to the wetland area located northeast of Strand and Madison. A visual inspection of the wetland showed that heavy and unregulated use of off-road vehicles (ORVs) had significantly damaged the natural wetlands as shown by *Photo 3*. Some of the turns on the trail north of the wetland area have been built up and are significantly banked for the ORVs as shown in *Photo 4*. By contrast, staff explored a relatively untouched wetland to the west of Strand Rd and south of White Lake Dr. which is shown in *Photo 5*.



Photo 3: Damaged Wetlands



Photo 4: Banked Turn on Trail



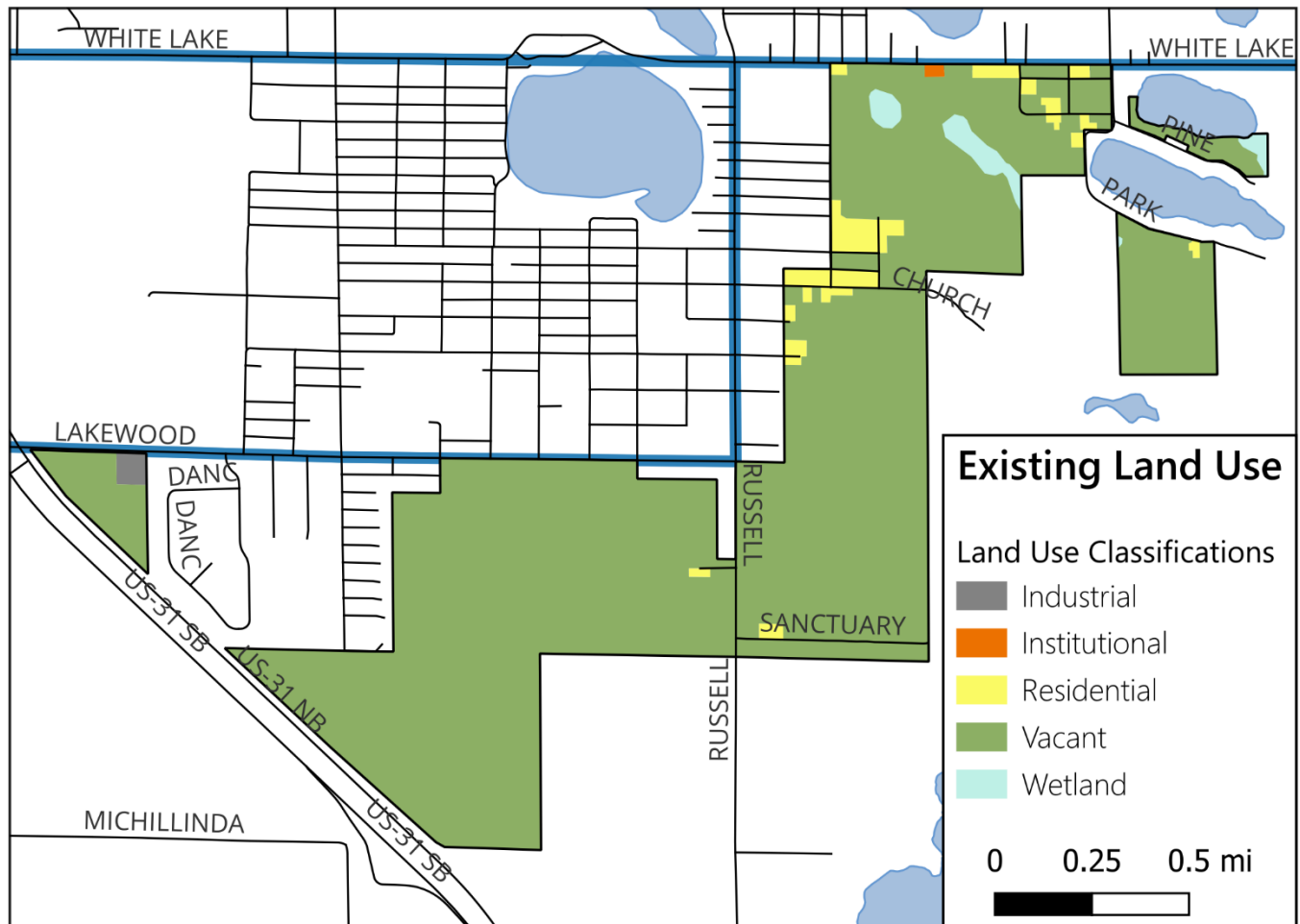
Photo 5: Undisturbed Wetland

ANALYSIS

Most of the trails that we travelled showed signs of recent use by vehicles. Garbage had also been dumped at many places along the trails. Some of the garbage appeared to have been present for quite some time, while some appeared to be recently discarded. It appears that the much of the active use of the property is could be considered to be unregulated recreational uses. While ORVs and other recreational usage should have a place within the plan, we will also need to address the negative environmental aspects which include dumping garbage, and damage to natural wetlands. While these lands lay vacant and undeveloped, a multitude of unofficial and unregulated uses have emerged. While some of these uses are detrimental and should be discouraged, others may demonstrate the needs and desires of the community that need to be addressed.

Existing Land Use

The Lakewood Additions Sub-Area encompasses 1040 acres, which is roughly 5% of Dalton Township's Planning Jurisdiction. Approximately 1,000 acres (96%) remain vacant and undeveloped. The type and distribution of existing land uses is shown in *Map 3* below. Current active uses within the sub-area include a total of 37 single family dwellings, one church, and an electrical substation.



Map 3: Existing Land Use

Obstacles and Opportunities

The Lakewood Additions contain a vast untapped potential to serve as an asset to the community. Unfortunately, there are also a number of obstacles that will need to be overcome in order to fully realize this opportunity.

ORIGINAL PLATTING

The original platting as described in the Foreword poses a unique challenge for these lands. The small lots which were platted as recreational lots are too small to accommodate a modern home with a well and a septic system. While the Village of Lakewood Club has developed well while utilizing the original grid style platting, this platting may hinder the management of large tracts of natural areas and it may be appropriate to deviate from this platting by re-platting large tracts of these lands.

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TRAILS AND PATHWAYS

Over time, a system of trails and pathways has developed as two-tracks throughout the Lakewood Additions which loosely follows some of the platted rights-of-way. Since this is publically owned property, these are often used by some residents as walking or hiking trails, but remain largely unregulated and mostly unmonitored, though township staff has recently begun to monitor some portions of the train network. While these trails offer tremendous potential for public enjoyment of the natural features available within these lands, they also serve as a conduit for unlawful activities which actively discourage these positive uses from developing on their own.

UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES

The most common issues within these lands are the dumping of garbage and illegal camping on Township owned property. These activities not only detract from the enjoyment of these lands by the general public, but also pose hazards to public health. Discarded materials can potentially leech into the ground and contaminate the groundwater as can raw sewage which is often dumped on the ground as a part of illegal camping activities.

DESTRUCTION OF NATURAL AREAS

The unregulated operation of ORVs, especially within wetland areas, has contributed to the destruction of natural areas. Healthy wetlands contribute positively to human flourishing in rural areas by naturally purifying water as it absorbs into the ground. They also provide habitat for wildlife and bolster biodiversity which increases their value as natural conservation and recreation areas.

3 | COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Purpose and Intent

Public input is a crucial component to this plan as it informs and directs the formulation of goals and objectives. Without it, policy decisions made by Township Officials risk departure from the will of the people to which they are accountable. This chapter contains an overview of public input process, the complete survey results, and analysis of the significance of those results as they relate to this plan.

Public Input

Information and opportunities for public input on the Lakewood Additions Sub-Area Plan were primarily disseminated to the public through the Township Website and Facebook page. A letter was also mailed to each owner of record for all properties within the sub-plan area.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OPEN HOUSE

A public Engagement open house was held on Monday, July 7, 2025 in the Board Room at the Dalton Township Hall from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. The general purpose of the open house was to prompt discussions pertaining to issues or concerns facing the sub-area, and provide the opportunity ask questions regarding this planning effort. Detailed maps of the sub-plan area, and an informational poster were also displayed at the open house and remained on display in the Board Room until November of 2025. The open house received 16 attendees. The event was publicized on the Township's Facebook page, the Township website, and within a letter describing the planning efforts and inviting public comment which was mailed to every property owner of record within the Lakewood Additions Sub-Plan Area Plan.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

In the summer of 2025, Dalton Township issued a concise seven question opinion survey for the purpose of gathering public opinions regarding the regarding the lands within the sub-plan area. The survey was made available to the public on July 1, 2025, and responses were accepted through August 15, 2025. The township received 25 responses to the survey which were submitted both online and on paper. The online version of the survey was hosted by Surveyplanet.com. The results provided quantifiable data and qualitative information which provided the Planning Commission with a foundation upon which to develop the contents of this plan.

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Survey Results

QUESTION 1

Which of the following best describes your connection to Dalton Township and the Lakewood Additions Sub-Plan Area?

I own property in the Sub-Plan Area	14	56%
I own Property in Dalton Township	4	16%
I live within the Sub-Plan Area	3	12%
I live within Dalton Township	3	12%
I live in a nearby Community	1	4%
I work in Dalton Township	0	0%

QUESTION 2

What concerns do you have with the present condition of the lands within the Lakewood Additions Sub-Plan Area? Please select all that apply.

Preservation of Natural Areas	11	Other:
Dumping of Garbage	9	• We own property in this area that we are currently clearing and will build on
Illegal Activities	7	• Not clear on the long term plan for the land use and implications for my ownership of the current land holdings.
Other	7	• It's hard to find your property which we pay taxes on.
Quality of Existing Streets	6	• None
Not Enough Housing	3	• Limited Wifi
Drinking Water Quality	2	
Public Recreation	2	

QUESTION 3

What types of land uses would you like to see within the Lakewood Additions?

Single Family Houses	10	Other:
Recreational Facilities	7	• NO HOA
Preserved Natural Areas	6	• Mixture of single homes and preserved natural areas.
Duplexes	4	
Small Local Commercial Uses	3	
Multi-Family Housing	3	
Other	3	
Light Industrial Uses	0	
Large Regional Commercial Uses	0	

QUESTION 4

How should the Township balance any potential development with the preservation of natural areas within the Lakewood Additions Sub-Plan Area?

- Dalton Twp area has had a large increase in traffic and growth since the pandemic started and people started moving to this area. The area is losing its peaceful tranquility and been becoming more like larger towns without the law enforcement presence to maintain order. Growth comes at a cost to existing citizens that want the area to stay natural not crammed full of duplexes or condos or anything like that.
- I bought land in Dalton Township because I enjoy the rural space. What I don't want to see is industry or a bunch of houses stacked on top each other. I enjoy not being able to see my neighbor from my front porch.

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- Public land to remain forested and residential lots limited to single family housing.
- It'd be great if some of the sub-plan area would be purchased for the purpose of keeping it preserved in a natural state or developed as parks or other recreational areas.
- I'd like to see some basic infrastructure come in so that mild development can occur!
- Absolutely.
- No HOA , fair development of trails not limited to horses clean and clear beaches boat launch and fishing locations. I purchased out of Lakewood club for a reason
- Keep the park and improve it and improve the lake. More like twin lake park area.
- My husband and I offered to purchases some of this land a few years back and told no we couldn't purchase now your doing this. We were on vacation during the meeting and come home to find this terrible news out. We own several lots near this and we would like the area to stay wooded for the wildlife and environment. I would also like to know why we were told we couldn't have our easement between all our properties forfeited when we own 2 entire blocks that connect without having to sue the county for rights.
- I would like to keep that area all natural. Maybe have picnic sites, camp sites. I would dig out goose egg lake to make it a fishing spot, it is like a giant swamp right now. Walking trails, etc. Would the county purchase my land from me?
- I think for the amount of land developed there should be a required amount of land untouched. This area is beautiful and I'd like to see it stay that way but it could have so much use for family's with new houses in the area.
- Allow individuals to purchase the property that is adjacent to it instead of denying individuals that own property next to it the ability to purchase it
- Property owners that have property butting up to or own 3 of 4 sides of a property and the township owns the 4 side should have the opportunity to purchase the 4 lot parcels. Instead of being denied when they have always paid their taxes with 1-2 weeks after receiving bill and NEVER HAD A FORFEITURE. Deny the good, hardworking individuals what they been working towards for years
- Allow local land owners to have the first opportunity to purchase!
- I don't want industries. I don't want to see rentals. I don't want to see multi-family homes.
- If houses are built, make it so that there is space so it is not compact.
- Clean Goose Egg Lake
- Clean up Goose Egg Lake
- Would like to see areas for preservation and recreation for everyone to enjoy.

QUESTION 5

What role should the Township play in guiding and facilitating the use and development of these lands?

- The township is just trying to make money off overpopulation vs keeping the area less overpopulated. Our township can't even maintain our area as it is yet alone expand. Roads are in bad shape with no improvement in sight. People park where ever they want and the township doesn't enforce the law. People break the rules of the twp ordinances and no repercussions. Growth will only increase these issues not decrease them.
- Probably very little, let the property owners decide
- Buying the vacant land to create a protected forest
- Keep the area quiet and peaceful. Don't let it be developed into a crowded city. Keep rural, rural.
- Increase road access (widen 2 tracks, etc.) to allow construction.
- Does the Township have funds to purchase property? Or can it play a role in getting grants, etc. from larger government entities, non-profits, etc.?
- Reducing the size of property needed to build.
- Guide several town hall meetings and individual meeting with landowners as need be during the entirety of any planning process. Ensure current landowners are guaranteed fairness during the process.
- Making property useable by size of purchase many 25x100 lots can't be used so sit vacant. Grand father any who wish not to be in Lakewood club
- Improve the lake, park, playground, and roads
- I think the county should purchase and own the land, and be the ones do develop it into a park/recreational area. Annual passes or day passes could be sold to help maintain it.

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- Once they decide their desire for the land, open it to buyers - local first.
- I don't want to see homes around us. So, Keep it as simple and natural as possible.
- I am for recreation use.
- Spearhead
- Not sure I just hope to not see the area flattened.
- Make sure it's developed the right way.
- Overlooking the project and area for public safety and maintenance.

QUESTION 6

How much of the lands presently owned by the Township should be kept in public ownership?

All	6
Most	5
Half	2
Some	7
None	3

QUESTION 7

How you would like the lands within the Lakewood Additions to look twenty years from now?

- Public lands are necessary with advantages, such as providing access to outdoor recreation, protecting natural resources like air and water quality, supporting wildlife habitats. Keep the area from overgrowth and preserve the benefits of a smaller community vs overdeveloped community.
- Thriving country community
- Natural
- Just the way it is now
- Peaceful and spacious
- Developed, small residential homes and cottages with some forested lots and parks.
- Some development for housing or commercial uses, if there's demand for such. Some retained for recreational use. Some left as natural.
- left alone
- Pleasant subdivision/housing with plenty of natural land preserved.
- Mixture of park, recreation and some single family homes.
- Maybe a few retail options, clean, useable
- Like Twin Lake Park with houses
- Wooded for nature/wildlife that's why we offered years ago to purchase some but was told no now we don't have the funds that we had then.... now you are doing this after denying us
- Natural or Parks
- like a well kept regional recreation area.
- Awesaliciouz
- A beautiful wooded natural looking neighborhood
- Wooded
- Wooded for wildlife and environment
- Private owned and maintained. Taken care of!
- Peaceful, quiet, and natural (nature) as possible
- I would like to see hiking/biking trails and natural areas. I love watching and hearing the wildlife.
- More affordable single family homes for low income people.
- Built up with more homes.
- Preserved as a natural resource for the community.

Analysis and Conclusions

Even though the number of responses was low, the survey nonetheless provided key insights into the desires of residents and property owners. Of the respondents, 68% either live or own property within the boundary of the Sub-Area Plan. As the survey results were reviewed, the following are the key insights gathered from the community survey which heavily informed the contents of this plan:

- The preservation and conservation of the natural areas within the Lakewood Additions should be a high priority for the future of these lands.
- Any future development of lands presently owned by the township should be limited to carefully balance any need for development with the need to preserve existing natural resources.
- Plan for the control of properties by seeking out and partnering with active participants.
- The misuse of public lands needs to be addressed.
- Single family homes are the most suitable type of development.

Overall, the survey highlighted a strong desire from stakeholders for the preservation of natural areas, limited residential developments, and active participation of the township to ensure that these lands are safe and enjoyable.



4 | DEVELOPMENT PLAN

This section provides a strategic framework for the future growth, development, and conservation of the Lakewood Additions. It outlines the strategies for how the Township should facilitate and direct development and includes a future land use map which illustrates future land use and development at specific locations.

Goals and Objectives

This sub-area plan is founded on the policies outlined in the following statements. The goals are intended to generally describe the desired condition of these lands twenty years from now. The subsequent objective statements are intended to be more specific and may be regarded as milestones to be reached on the way to achieving the stated goal.

GOAL 1: PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION

The Township will seek to protect large tracts of natural areas within the Lakewood Additions by creating and designating a community forest as was originally intended when these tracts were acquired from the State of Michigan.

Objectives:

1. Inventory and map large tracts of properties owned by the Township
2. Identify small tracts of privately owned land which could be acquired by the township.
4. Partner with state agencies to halt and mitigate damage to wetlands and other natural areas.

GOAL 2: CONTROLLED DEVELOPMENT

The Township will guide and facilitate the development of lands within the Lakewood Additions in a manner which is appropriate and consistent with the character of adjacent areas while seeking to consolidate and limit the geographic extent of such development.

Objectives:

1. Ensure that all new development will complement the existing character of the surrounding area.
2. Carefully review and consider the development of Township property based on its location, the availability of infrastructure, and the needs of the community.

GOAL 3: CODE ENFORCEMENT

The Township will partner with residents and property owners to monitor the lands within the Lakewood Additions, and prevent unlawful, undesirable, and destructive uses of these lands.

Objectives:

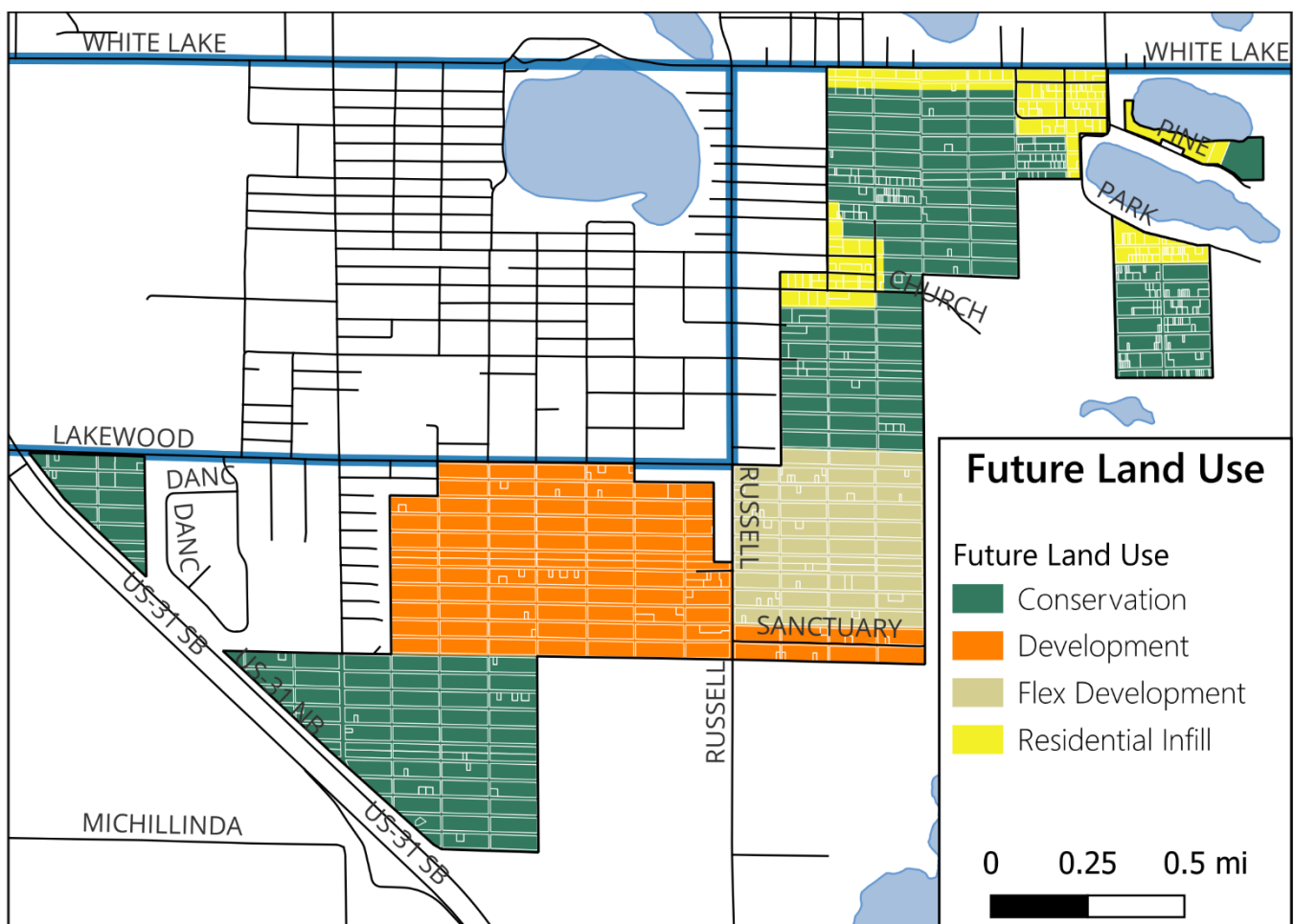
1. Increase the amount of monitoring and enforcement that these lands receive.

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2. Inventory and map areas of concern in order to develop strategies for preventing unlawful and undesirable activities being conducted on township property within the Lakewood Additions.
3. Review and develop ordinances which will better regulate the public use of these lands.
4. Work with law enforcement and other government agencies to address any ongoing illegal activities.

Future Land Use Plan

The future land use plan for the Lakewood Additions Sub-Area Plan serves as a guide to assist Township officials with decisions regarding day-to-day planning, zoning, land division, and public improvement issues. This section includes descriptions of land use categories planned for the Lakewood Additions, and a Future Land Use Map. The future land use plan is general in scope, and is not intended to establish precise boundaries of land use or exact locations of future uses in the same way as the Official Township Zoning Map. A future land use designation shown on a map does not mean that a rezoning of land to a compatible district is appropriate at the time of an application. This is rather a long-term vision, and certain land use decisions will depend on site-specific conditions at the time an application is received.



Map 4: Future Land Use

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CONSERVATION

The purpose of this future land use designation is to preserve and enhance the natural setting of these lands. Large tracts of land owned by the Township should be formed into community forest. Development of privately owned properties is best suited for recreation or sparse residential development on lots no smaller than one acre in size. Any sale of Township lands within this designation should be limited to smaller parcels which are either disconnected from other township parcels, or would not otherwise break up contiguous tracts of township property. Ideally large tracts of land would be retained by the Township, but private conservation may be considered in cases where it is determined and ensured that such private conservation would further the goals of this plan, and benefit the Township and Lakewood Additions as a whole.

DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of this future land use designation is to allow for owners of private properties to have the option to develop their land for medium density housing. It is anticipated that much of this development will utilize the layout of the existing subdivisions while modifying it slightly as necessary to accommodate larger lot sizes which are more in line with current development patterns. It is also the intent of this plan to encourage re-platting whenever possible in order to vacate platted roadways which remain unused and undeveloped. Lots should be no smaller than 20,000 sq ft. Streets should be developed to meet the needs of all types of users including motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Streets should also provide connectivity to each other in order to allow for better traffic circulation within the development.

FLEX DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of this future land use designation is to set aside lands which may be sold for limited residential development in the future at the discretion of the Township. Prior to any sale of Township property within these designated lands, the Township should evaluate the success of developments within the areas designated for Development, in conjunction with the conditions and needs of the housing market at that time. Lands approved for limited residential development within this land use designation should not exceed 45 acres, and will follow the land use plan as described within the Development future land use designation. All other lands which are not designated for limited development will follow the land use plan as described in the Conservation future land use designation.

RESIDENTIAL INFILL

The purpose of this future land use designation is to promote and support the development of properties within the sub-area which are already served by a public road and where other infrastructure necessary for residential development is readily accessible. Many of these properties are privately owned with some Township properties interspersed throughout. The lands within this designated future land should have minimum lot areas ranging from 20,000 sq ft to one acre. The township should support the development of privately owned properties within this designated land use area. The township may sell properties within this area as it deems necessary for the appropriate development of the lands within this area.

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Zoning Plan

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires that zoning be based on a plan. When the Master Plan was updated in 2018, no corresponding zoning districts were assigned for the Lakewood Additions Sub-Area Plan. The following table relates the more general future land use designation with compatible zoning districts.

Future Land Use	Corresponding Zoning District
Conservation	<u>R-1 Low Density Residential</u> . This district is intended to provide for predominantly low-density one-family detached dwellings on a minimum lot area of one (1) acre.
Development	<u>R-2 Medium Density Residential District</u> . Allowing higher densities, the R-2 district permits single family dwellings on 1 acre minimum lots, and two-family uses on 60,000 sq ft minimum lots where public water and sewer are not available. Additionally, the <u>RM – Manufactured Home District</u> permits single family uses on minimum 20,000 sq ft lots.
Flex Development	The corresponding zoning district will follow that of the Conservation future land use designation except for areas which are in the future designated for development at the discretion of the township. In that case, those land only will follow the corresponding zoning districts for the Development future land use designation.
Residential Infill	<u>R-2 Medium Density Residential District</u> . Allowing higher densities, the R-2 district permits single family dwellings on 1 acre minimum lots, and two-family uses on 60,000 sq ft minimum lots where public water and sewer are not available. Additionally, the <u>RM – Manufactured Home District</u> permits single family uses on minimum 20,000 sq ft lots.

Action Items

The purpose of this section is to identify specific actions that will work toward the implementation of the goals and objectives which are outlined in the plan. The Township must be proactive in order to accomplish the goals and objectives outlined in this Plan.

AMEND THE LAND SALE POLICY

The Township should amend its land sale policy in a manner which gives the township the flexibility to transfer ownership of certain properties to parties that will partner with the Township in working toward achieving the goals and objectives of this plan. Small disjointed parcels which would not otherwise be buildable or useful to the implementation of this plan could be made available to adjacent property owners with owner-occupied homesteads being given priority.

CREATE COMMUNITY NATURAL AREAS

The township should work toward formally designating large tracts of publicly owned land within the Lakewood Additions as a community forest. The Township should also partner with state agencies, property owners, and private firms to restore damaged wetlands. Specific plans for these areas should be created by Township staff and overseen by Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee as part of the Township's Parks and Recreation Plan.

DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS

The Township Board and Planning Commission should endeavor to limit the development of these lands to be in accordance with the principals laid forth in this plan. All development approvals should

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be consistent with the Future Land Use Plan. Township staff should endeavor to advise these boards on whether any proposed development application is consistent with this plan as well as the Master Plan

INCREASED MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT

Township staff should increase efforts to monitor these lands and proactively work to prevent damage, pollution, littering, and unlawful uses. This can be done through the strategic placement of cameras, and by working with law enforcement. The township may also work to block vehicular access where deemed necessary. These efforts should be spearheaded by township staff subject the approval by the Township Board where necessary.

PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

The township should partner with members of the community to clean up garbage and waste that has been dumped in order to enhance and repair the natural state of these lands. This effort should be led by Township staff.