

# **Lawrence Recreation District Master Plan 2023-2027**

**A Joint Project of the Village of Lawrence and Lawrence Township**

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## COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Lawrence Township and Village are located in the southwest quadrant of Van Buren County, in Southwest Lower Michigan. Located along Interstate 94, it is approximately 22 miles west of the City of Kalamazoo and approximately 22 miles east of the City of St. Joseph.

The Lawrence community (Village of Lawrence and Lawrence Township) is accessible by Interstate 94 as it traverses the center of the community from east to west with exit 52 located virtually at the center of the community; other main thoroughfares include Red Arrow Highway, County Road 365, County Road 215, County Road 673 and Paw Paw Street as well as other County and Local Roads.

The statistical collection and analysis of socioeconomic data is undertaken to gain insight into the composition of this community’s population, economy, and general welfare in relation to its surrounding region. Statistical trend lines that show upward spikes or downward depressions are carefully examined for future impact on public services and land use. In terms of recreation, understanding the characteristics of the population can assist in determining future facilities and programs.

### Population Characteristics

Historic population trends are used to predict future population growth and resulting needs. Fast growing communities require new or used land for development/redevelopment and the expansion of services required to accommodate the growth. Outward bound communities need to develop strategies to retain and attract the necessary population and economic base to support their community.

As of the 2020 census the Lawrence Recreation District (LRD) consists of the Village of Lawrence and Lawrence Township and has a population of 3,288. However included in this population should also be the Southern part of Arlington Township as its population also utilizes the services of the LRD as most are in the Lawrence School District and this adds approximately 1,000 persons being served by this document. See Plan Attachments, Maps.

### 2020 Census Overview (see also **Plan Attachments, 2010 Census Data**)

Age	Lawrence Township			Village of Lawrence		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Total Population	1602	1706	3259	471	588	996
Under 5 years	79	98	208	45	47	92
5 – 9	41	108	226	30	55	85
10 – 14	56	117	248	42	60	102
15 – 19	130	139	266	40	45	85
20 – 24	127	76	157	33	38	71
25 – 29	115	78	169	28	39	67
30 – 34	54	83	179	37	34	71
35 – 39	54	117	205	40	33	73
40 – 44	111	100	213	38	48	86
45 – 49	130	107	237	32	23	55
50 – 54	39	128	244	29	45	74
55 – 59	173	133	258	21	29	50
60 – 64	92	110	230	15	22	37
65 – 69	104	79	150	12	13	25
70 – 74	129	56	110	9	15	24
75 – 79	57	38	73	9	17	26
80 – 84	43	26	47	5	7	12
85 – 89	68	21	39	5	11	16
Median age (years)	44.5	39.5	29.5	29.5	31.4	29.5

**Table 2**  
**Profile of Selected Social Characteristics**  
 US Census Bureau , 2010 Census

Subject	Lawrence Township	
	Number	Percent
<b>SCHOOL ENROLLMENT</b>		
Population 3 years and over enrolled in school	<b>889</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Nursery school, preschool	40	4.5
Kindergarten	72	8.1
Elementary school (grades 1-8)	463	52.1
High school (grades 9-12)	238	26.8
College or graduate school	76	8.5
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>		
Population 15 years and over	<b>2,496</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Never married	582	23.3
Now married, except separated	1,469	58.9
Separated	53	2.1
Widowed	184	7.4
Female	146	5.8
Divorced	208	8.3
Female	117	4.7
<b>GRANDPARENTS AS CAREGIVERS</b>		
Grandparent living in household with one or more own grandchildren under 18 years	<b>38</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Grandparent responsible for grandchildren	8	21.1
<b>VETERAN STATUS</b>		
Civilian population 18 years and over	<b>2,317</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Civilian veterans	304	13.1
<b>DISABILITY STATUS OF THE CIVILIAN NONINSTITUTIONALIZED POPULATION</b>		
Population 5 to 20 years	<b>806</b>	<b>100.0</b>
With a disability	77	9.6
Population 21 to 64 years	<b>1,795</b>	<b>100.0</b>
With a disability	436	24.3
Percent employed	54.1	(X)
No disability	1,359	75.7
Percent employed	83.8	(X)
Population 65 years and over	<b>405</b>	<b>100.0</b>
With a disability	257	63.5
<b>RESIDENCE IN 1995</b>		
Population 5 years and over	<b>3,028</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Same house in 1995	1,920	63.4
Different house in the U.S. in 1995	1,067	35.2
Same county	581	19.2
Different county	486	16.1
Same state	299	9.9
Different state	187	6.2
Elsewhere in 1995	41	1.4
<b>NATIVITY AND PLACE OF BIRTH</b>		
Total population	<b>3,252</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Native	3,047	93.7
Born in United States	3,043	93.6
State of residence	2,010	61.8
Different state	1,033	31.8
Born outside United States	4	0.1
Foreign born	205	6.3
Entered 1990 to March 2000	95	2.9
Naturalized citizen	48	1.5
Not a citizen	157	4.8
<b>REGION OF BIRTH OF FOREIGN BORN</b>		
Total (excluding born at sea)	<b>205</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Europe	23	11.2
Asia	7	3.4
Africa	2	1.0
Oceania	0	0.0
Latin America	173	84.4
Northern America	0	0.0

<b>LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME</b>		
<b>Population 5 years and over</b>	<b>3,028</b>	<b>100.0</b>
English only	2,536	83.8
Language other than English	492	16.2
Speak English less than 'very well	224	7.4
Spanish	387	12.8
Speak English less than "very well"	157	5.2
Other Indo-European languages	94	3.1
Speak English less than "very well"	57	1.9
Asian and Pacific Island languages	0	0.0
Speak English less than "very well"	0	0.0

(X) Not applicable.

The data represent a combination of two ancestries shown separately in Summary File 3. Czech includes Czechoslovakian. French includes Alsatian. French Canadian includes Acadian/Cajun. Irish includes Celtic.

[Place of Birth Code List \(PDF 74KB\)](#)

[Language Code List \(PDF 17KB\)](#)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 3, Matrices P18, P19, P21, P22, P24, P36, P37, P39, P42, PCT8, PCT16, PCT17, and PCT19

## Age-Life Cycle

As humans progress through life, they pass through stages of life that generally correspond to their age levels. Life cycle analysis is used by demographers and policy makers to anticipate future changes in items such as housing, medical care, education and recreation. In this analysis six life cycles are defined:

1. Preschool (less than five years of age)
2. School (5-19 years)
3. Family Formation (20-44 years)
4. Empty Nest (45-64 years)
5. Senior (65-74 years)
6. Elderly (75 years or more)

Nationwide the largest population group is the "baby boomers" born between 1946-1964; in 1990 this group comprised 82 million persons and was 40.2% of the population. In 2000 this group was still 82 million persons while the share of the population percentage has dropped to 30.4%, most of which are in or entering the empty nest age life cycle.

As the " boomers " age they will impact the need for leisure and recreation markets as well as moving into smaller more manageable homes that they can age in, which will impact transportation improvements. In the near future this group will swell the ranks of the seniors and elderly.

Children of the "boomers" are often referred to as the echo bulge as they make up 21% of the population and are currently in or will be entering the family formation years very soon.

In 2000 the LRD had 48.9% or 1,635 persons of the population was male, and 51.1% or 1,706 persons of the population were female. Table 3 shows the age-life cycle of the LRD using 1990 and 2000 census information.

<b>Table 3</b>						
<b>1990-2000 Age Life Cycle</b>						
Lawrence Recreation District, Van Buren County, Michigan						
Age Group	1990		2000		Change 1990 - 2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Preschool (0-5)	229	0.0756	226	0.0676	-3	-0.0131
School (5-19)	873	0.2881	835	0.2499	-38	-0.04353
Family Formation (20-44)	1014	0.3347	1071	0.3206	57	0.05621
Empty Nest (45-64)	537	0.1772	803	0.2403	266	0.49534
Senior (65-74)	292	0.0964	211	0.0632	-81	-0.2774
Elderly (75+)	190	0.0627	195	0.0584	5	0.02632

### Persons Per Household Trends

A trend that is occurring nationwide, and is characteristic of the population today is the declining size of households. A household includes all of the persons who occupy a housing unit. It is not uncommon for communities to register a net increase in the housing supply while not experiencing a proportional population increase or, in some cases even recording a population loss. There are several factors which demographers have linked to the declining size of households, including the fact that people are marrying at a later age than a generation ago, postponing having children, and having fewer children when they do start a family. Nationwide married couple families still comprise the largest group of households, but the number of single parent (male and/or female) headed households is rising and is expected to grow. This trend will further reduce the average household.

<b>Table 4</b>		
<b>Household Size</b>		
Subject	Number	Percent
<b>TENURE</b>		
Occupied housing units	1,224	100.0
Owned with a mortgage or loan	657	53.7
Owned free and clear	320	26.1
Renter occupied	247	20.2
<b>TENURE BY HOUSEHOLD SIZE</b>		
Owner-occupied housing units	977	100.0
1-person household	215	22.0
2-person household	370	37.9
3-person household	143	14.6
4-person household	125	12.8
5-person household	77	7.9
6-person household	27	2.8
7-or-more-person household	20	2.0
Renter-occupied housing units	247	100.0
1-person household	80	32.4
2-person household	64	25.9
3-person household	38	15.4
4-person household	28	11.3
5-person household	19	7.7
6-person household	7	2.8
7-or-more-person household	11	4.5



Table 4 Households US Census Bureau , 2010 Census				
	Michigan	Van Buren County	Lawrence Township	Lawrence Village
Total	3,785,661	27,982	1,194	392

Table 5 Comparative Persons Per Household US Census Bureau , 2010 Census				
Place	1980	1990	2000	2010
Lawrence Community	2.54	2.75	3.16	2.56

## Race and Ethnicity

The racial and ethnic composition of the Community's population is represented in Table 6. Overall the predominant race in the Community in the 2010 Census was white (85%).

Table 6 Racial and Ethnic Composition US Census Bureau , 2010 Census	
	LRD
Total:	3,341
Not Hispanic or Latino:	2,893
White alone	2,771
Black or African American alone	62
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	30
Asian alone	10
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0
Some other race alone	0
Two or more races	83
Hispanic or Latino:	582
White alone	247
Black or African American alone	0
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	6
Asian alone	0
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0
Some other race alone	303
Two or more races	25

## Persons with Disabilities

The disability status of a population is especially significant when considering the recreation needs for a community. These people may have difficulty participating in recreational programs, utilizing facilities, or even getting to designated public areas. Understanding the disability status of the LRD's population may assist decision makers in determining adequate programs and appropriate locations for recreational activities. Also, with the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), all areas of public service and accommodation became subject to barrier-free requirements, including parks and recreation facilities and programs.

The following table documents the extent of the LRD's population which, as reported in the 2000 Census, was considered disabled, either with mobility and /or a self limitation. The Census collects disability data for two major groups: those between 16 and 64 years of age and those aged 65 or more. The first age group refers most commonly to the working age population and the second to the senior and elderly population. In neither case are data regarding the preschool and school age population who may be disabled included. The population threshold in the 2010 Census was too low to accurately measure numbers.

<b>Table 7</b> <b>Population with Disabilities</b> US Census Bureau , 2000 Census		
	Lawrence township	Lawrence village
Total:	3,006	896
Male:	1,476	391
5 to 15 years:	320	73
16 to 20 years:	97	30
21 to 64 years:	884	260
65 years and over:	175	28
Female:	1,530	505
5 to 15 years:	297	115
16 to 20 years:	92	31
21 to 64 years:	911	298
65 years and over:	230	61

### **Educational Attainment**

The level of educational attainment reached by residents reveals insights into the capabilities of the workforce, income levels, and the overall economic vitality of the community. The U. S. Census compiles data on the educational attainment for people aged 25 years and over. It is important to note that the figures are not cumulative; rather they are independent from one another. For example if a respondent had only a bachelor's degree, that person would check that answer only even though a high school diploma was also attained.

Table 8 depicts the education levels for the LRD:

<b>Table 8</b> <b>Educational Attainment</b> <b>Sex by Age over 18 years</b> Lawrence Recreation District US Census Bureau , 2010 Census					
Age	9-12, no diploma	High School Graduate (Incl. equivalency)	Some College or associate degree	Bachelor's Degree or higher	TOTAL
Males					
18-24	9	53	20		82
25-34	58	54	57	11	252
35-44	60	111	50	18	328
45-64	52	124	113	68	474
65 and over	29	61	35	9	203
Females					
18-24	51	58	57	6	172
25-34	48	92	81	30	281
35-44	32	102	88	31	310
45-64	88	155	136	31	508
65 and over	44	100	44	18	291

## Income & Employment

The type and rate of growth and development in a community is largely dependent on its economic situation relative to the surrounding region. Affluent communities generally attract high end shopping centers, specialty shops and upscale services, while low income communities may bring marginal corner businesses and general goods. Low income communities commonly have low home ownership rates, blighted housing areas, and higher crime rates. Understanding where the LRD is positioned in the economic spectrum can aid in addressing associated needs.

### Median Income Measures

Three measures of income (median household, median family, and per capita) are depicted in Tables 9, 10 and 11 for the LRD using 2010 census data. It is important to note that the Census information reflects information from the previous calendar year and is not adjusted for inflation.

Table 9 Households with Income US Census Bureau , 2010 Census	
	Lawrence township
Total:	1,375
With wage or salary income	1070
No wage or salary income	305

Households are the basic consumer unit and supplier of labor to the market. A household represents all persons who occupy the housing unit whether related or not. A household may be made of up of one or more persons. Median Household income is a broad measure of a community's economic health and is defined as that level of income at which half of all households earn more and half of all households earn less.

In 2016, adjusted for inflation, the LRD had a median household income of \$48, 656. Family income data accounts for income earned by all members 15 years and older in a family.

Table 10 Median Family Income in 2009 (Dollars) US Census Bureau , 2010 Census			
	Michigan	Van Buren County	Lawrence community
Median family income in 1999	53,457	45,824	45,781

The per capita income statistic represents, as is implied, income per person. Individuals saw great gains in income during the 1980's. Per capita incomes rose 64.7 percent in the District, 83.9 percent in the County, and 84.1 percent at the State level. A disparity in income still exists, however, between the Community and the larger region.

Table 11 Per capita income (2009) US Census Bureau , 2010 Census			
	Michigan	Van Buren County, Michigan	Lawrence village, Van Buren County, Michigan
Per capita income in 1999	22,168	17,878	16,246

Household Income Distribution and Poverty Rate information follows in Tables 12 and 13.

### Household Income Distribution

Table 12 Family Income in 2009 US Census Bureau , 2010 Census	
	Lawrence township
Total:	855
Less than \$10,000	47
\$10,000 to \$14,999	38
\$15,000 to \$24,999	38
\$25,000 to \$34,999	130
\$35,000 to \$49,999	110
\$50,000 to \$74,999	195
\$75,000 to \$99,999	182
\$100,000 to \$149,999	52
\$150,000 to \$199,999	41
\$200,000 and over	22

### Poverty Rate

Table 13 Poverty Rate (2009) US Census Bureau , 2010 Census	
	Van Buren County
Total:	3,200
Income in 2009 below poverty level:	410
Under 65 years:	21.3%
In married-couple family households	7.7%
Female householder, no husband present	26.7%
65 to 74 years:	4.5%

### Employment

This section examines employment trends, within the Community of Lawrence, in terms of what a person does while on the job. Industry information relates to the nature of the business in which a person is employed. Understanding the composition of the workforce may provide insight into how a community may be impacted by a sudden change in the economy. For example, a plant or office closing may economically devastate a community that relies on a particular industry for its employment.

Table 14 shows employment by selected occupation in the Lawrence community. The decade (1990-2000) saw a reduction in operators, fabricators, and laborers from 26.8 percent to 17.5 percent of the workforce. Village residents employed in the farming, forestry, and fishing occupations saw growth while other occupational groups remained relatively stagnant. The deindustrialization of America crept its way into the community of Lawrence's economy during the 1980s. In 1980, the manufacturing industry employed 29 percent of the Community's workforce. By 2000, this statistic dropped to 15.0 percent. Significant gains, however, were made in the personal, entertainment, and recreation services industry, computer industries, and the wholesale and retail industry.

Table 14 Employment by Occupation US Census Bureau , 2010 Census			
Occupation	Lawrence Township		
	Total	Male	Female
<b>Employed civilian population 16 years and over</b>			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,339</b>	<b>734</b>	<b>605</b>
Management, business, science and arts occupations	396	135	261
Management, business, and financial occupations	113	47	66
Management occupations	96	40	56
Business and financial operations occupations	17	7	10
Computers, engineering, and science occupations	59	47	12
Computer and mathematical occupations	18	18	0
Architecture and engineering occupations	41	29	12
Life, physical, and social science occupations	0	0	0
Education, legal, community service, arts, and media occupations	181	28	153
Community and social services occupations	31	21	10
Legal occupations	15	4	11
Education, training, and library occupations	116	14	102
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations	19	0	19
Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations	43	13	30
Health diagnosing and treating practitioners and technical occupations	28	13	15
Health technologists and technicians	15	0	15
Service occupations	152	61	91
Healthcare support occupations	22	0	22
Protective service occupations	21	11	10
Fire fighting, prevention, and law enforcement workers, including supervisors	10	10	0
Other protective service occupations, including supervisors	0	0	0
Food preparation and serving related occupations	39	3	36
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations	38	32	6
Personal care and service occupations	32	15	17
Sales and office occupations	261	102	159
Sales and related occupations	122	80	42
Office and administrative support occupations	139	22	117
Natural Resources, Construction, and maintenance occupations	272	265	7
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	76	76	0
Construction and extraction occupations	121	121	0
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	67	67	0
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	258	171	87
Production occupations	111	53	58
Transportation occupations	87	73	14
Material moving occupations	60	45	15

# Physical Characteristics

## Existing Land Use (See Attachments, Maps for all referenced maps)

The Existing Land Use Profile details the location, type, and extent of land development in the community. Knowledge of existing land development patterns is an essential component of the comprehensive planning process. Without a clear understanding of current land development patterns and issues, it is impossible to prepare a sensible plan for future land development.

The information contained in this profile will also serve as useful reference on land development as Lawrence officials consider future land development proposals as well as the need for public facility and infrastructure improvements.

The Village has generally developed within a framework of short stub streets that extend north and south from St. Joseph Street. Moreover, Paw Paw Street and St. Joseph Street form the supporting axis from which all local streets stem. Its origin is where the downtown developed to include a mix of commercial and public buildings. This area is referred to hereafter as the Central Business District (CBD). Residential neighborhoods have generally developed in a concentrated area north of the Kalamazoo & West Michigan Railroad Company around the CBD in an east-west pattern. The periphery of the Village holds larger parcels that remain vacant or are used for public or industrial purposes. A state-certified industrial park was developed in 1998 at the South Paw Paw Street, which becomes County Road 365 N, interchange with Interstate-94.

The Township is 37 square miles beginning at the North with 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue that traverses the Township east to west town lines, is bordered on the south by 72<sup>nd</sup> Avenue that traverses the Township from east to west from 46<sup>th</sup> Street to C. R. 215 and is undeveloped from C. R. 681 to C. R. 215, the East border is 46<sup>th</sup> Street which traverses the Township North to South from Territorial road to 72<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and a dead end strip from C. R. 374 North approximately a 1/2 mile, the western border of the Township is C. R. 681 that traverses the Township north to south. Other primary roads that pass through the Township north to south include C. R. 215, C. R. 673, C. R. 365, C. R. 358, East to west primary roads are Interstate 94 Red Arrow Highway which is a Emergency Route for Interstate 94, C. R. 358, C. R. 374, C. R. 365 and C. R. 673. It should be noted that the first state road through the Township was Territorial Road which angles through the Township from southwest to northeast entering the Township at 72<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and exiting the Township at 46<sup>th</sup> Street and is now severed by Interstate 94.

## Survey Methodology

A field survey of existing land uses was completed in August 1999. Each parcel of property in the Village of Lawrence was inspected and the current use recorded on a property line base map. The use of each parcel was in turn categorized in accordance with a predetermined land use classification system, which is compatible with the Michigan Land Cover/Use Classification System developed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)) and used by the Michigan Resource Information System (MIRIS). The field data was then entered into a computer mapping file as an overlay to the Village's property line base map. Finally, the land coverage for each use category was calculated.

The Township stated land use planning first in 1963 and has been zoned since the adoption in April 1963. The land use, Master and rezoning was revised in November of 2001, which resulted in a 10 year Master Plan that was being reviewed as of this writing. The Township and Village Planning Commissions are meeting jointly to accommodate future growth in the community.

## Existing Land Use Inventory

As shown on the Existing Land Use Map, land use in the Village of Lawrence can be classified into seven major categories: single-family residential, multiple-family residential, mobile home park;  
Revised December 2022

public/semi-public, commercial, industrial, and vacant, other land, and rights-of-way. The Village Planning Commission currently is in the process of bringing the Zoning into compliance with the 2003 Master Plan. Primary changes include an expanded Central Business District and the designated use of the Planned Unit Development.

The Township can be classified as shown on the land use map as five existing categories and eight that are referenced in the Zoning Ordinance, Agricultural, Rural Residential, Waterfront, Commercial and Industrial are the current classifications and Professional Office, Multiple Family Residential and Medium Density Residential are regulated and planned for in the Zoning Ordinance.

Table 16 summarizes the classification system used to categorize existing land uses in the Lawrence Recreation District.

<b>Table 16</b> <b>Land Use / Zoning Descriptions</b> Master Plan, Village of Lawrence; Zoning Ordinance, Lawrence Township	
Classification	Description
Agricultural	Most of the Township is in this zoning classification approximately 79%. This classification includes single family residential as well as the various agricultural ventures in the Township. Most of the Property in this classification, approximately 50% is vacant, wetlands or Public Right of Way for roads.
Single-Family Residential (Urban Residential)	Land occupied by single-family detached dwelling units, seasonal dwellings, manufactured homes outside of designated mobile home parks and their related accessory building.  Single-family residential land uses in the Village are found on relatively small parcels in neighborhood areas around the central business district north and south of Main Street. Larger residential lots are found north of the Paw Paw River along Bangor County Road and along the outer edges of the neighborhood areas.
Single-Family Residential (Rural Residential)	This district is approximately 10% of the Township area and is located generally along Waterfront or classification, 54 <sup>th</sup> street and West Red Arrow Highway.
Multiple-Family Residential	Land occupied by multiple-family dwelling units (structures which contain 3 or more dwelling units) such as apartments, townhouses, and the like , and accessory uses such as parking lots and small recreational facilities such as tennis courts and swimming pools. -ISD Housing complex on Corwin Road, in the village of Lawrence. Currently has no defined area in the Township.
Medium Density Residential	Currently has no defined area in the Township.
Mobile Home Park	Land occupied by manufactured dwelling units sited in a planned community and their related accessory service structures and recreational spaces.
Public/Semi-Public	Public uses are land and facilities that are publicly operated and available for use by the public. Examples include schools, government buildings, parks, sewer and water utilities, correctional facilities, hospitals, airports and marinas.  Semi-public uses are land and facilities which may be privately owned or operated and used by the public or a limited number of persons. Examples include churches, cemeteries and private clubs.  Public and semi-public land uses account for nearly 40-percent of the Village's developed land area. The Lawrence Public Schools and the Van Buren Intermediate School District facilities are the largest developments within this category. Park and recreation areas within Village and Township are:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Village Park</li> <li>● North River Park</li> <li>● Brausch Park</li> <li>● Lawrence Public School property</li> <li>● Van Buren Intermediate School District property</li> <li>● Tiger Den Sports Complex</li> </ul> <p>Lawrence Twp. has 10 acres of land that is being developed with the Lawrence Rec. Program to create a sports complex that includes, 3 baseball and softball fields and one football/soccer field. The State of Michigan maintains three DNR boat launches one on Hall Lake, Shafer Lake and Reynolds Lake respectively.</p>
Commercial	<p>Land that is predominantly occupied for the retail sale and/or service of products such as retail establishments, personal and business service uses, and repair service facilities. These uses may be located within a central business district, a planned shopping center, or a neighborhood commercial area.</p> <p>Village Commercial land uses originated at the intersection of St. Joseph Street (Red Arrow Highway) and Paw Paw Street. From this intersection, the Central Business District (CBD) expanded north to Baker Street, east to Exchange Street, and west to 1st Street. Outside the CBD, commercial land uses have developed primarily along South Paw Paw Street at the railroad crossing and Corwin Road intersection.</p> <p>This Township zoning district is primarily along the C. R. 365 North Corridor of the Township with a few locations along the Red Arrow Corridor that were in existence from the original zoning in the Township. This district represents about 5% of the Township area.</p>
Professional Office	Currently at the Township.
Industrial	<p>Land occupied by manufacturing industries, processing facilities, warehouses and non-manufacturing uses which are primarily industrial in nature. Lands so classified may include areas with or without building where raw or semi-finished materials are fabricated or those using or storing raw materials for primary production or extractive operations such as mining.</p> <p>Industry inside the Village has developed on large tracts of land along the Kalamazoo &amp; Chicago railroad generally at the St. Joseph Street and South Paw Paw Street crossings. A fully improved 110-acre Planned Unit Development (PUD) which is a commercial-industrial mix has been developed northwest of the 1-94 interchange with Paw Paw Street. Quality Assured Plastics is the first tenant to locate in the industrial park.</p> <p>This District represents less than 1% of the Township area and represents those areas of the Township along the Red Arrow Corridor that were in existence prior to the updated zoning and land use maps.</p>
Waterfront	<p>This district represents about 10% of the Township area and is located around three highly developed Lakes, Reynolds Lake is located on the eastern border of the Township and is a two part lake that includes Reynolds and Little Reynolds Lake that are connected by a wetland that has a manmade causeway allowing access between lakes. Christie Lake is located in the Southeastern corner of the Township and is highly developed with subdivisions almost completely covering the lake frontage with the exception of the eastern end which has no road built to that end at this time. Shafer Lake is located on the western edge of the Township along Interstate 94 on the North, C. R. 681 on the West and C. R. 365 on the South and is as developed as Christie Lake with the northeast quadrant of the lake the least developed. Several other smaller lakes are beginning to develop at this writing and</p>





will almost assuredly be added to this zoning district in the near future. Also, access to Hall Lake.

## Natural Features

The natural features of a community include its wetlands, water resources and woodland areas. From an aesthetic standpoint, natural features are elements which should be preserved and protected by whatever means possible. They lend character and uniqueness to the area, and allow residents to attribute a distinct "sense of place" about their community. From a development standpoint, it is important to identify where these elements are located, the extent of their boundaries, and how they relate to the overall landscape of the area. Natural features also play an integral part in recreation, providing fishing and boating access, scenic beauty, wildlife refuges, etc. By assessing these factors, as well as others, community leaders working in tandem with planners are able to make more informed decisions regarding the course of community development in the future.

### Climate

Survey data regarding climate for the Lawrence community was obtained from the V. S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Survey of Van Buren County, Michigan (1986). The average annual daily temperature for the Lawrence area is 48.1°F, with an average winter temperature of 25.5°F and an average summer temperature of 69.1°F. Proximity to Lake Michigan (approximately 17 miles due west) tends to moderate broad temperature fluctuations in this area. This moderating effect on the climate provides a good environment for extensive fruit tree production.

Total annual precipitation for the community area amounts to 38.28 inches. Of this amount, about 56 percent usually falls between the months of April and September. Average seasonal snowfalls total 91.4 inches annually. Again, with the relative closeness of this area to Lake Michigan, precipitation and snowfall accumulations tend to be larger than those found in the eastern portions of the State.

### Geology and Topography

The landscape of Van Buren County was formed through the complex actions of the Lake Michigan Lobe of the Wisconsinan Glaciation period, which took place during the last ice age approximately 10,000 years ago. Glacial activity which took place here resulted in the formation of five dominant landscape features - moraines, till plains, outwash plains, lake plains and drainage-ways. Areas on till plains were covered with muck and silt, deposited by ponded water. Some areas of moraines and till plains were modified by windblown sand, others were modified by shallow water.

### Soils

Soil data for the Lawrence community was obtained from the V. S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Survey of Van Buren County, Michigan (1986).

According to the Soils Association Table 14, soils in the community area are characteristically well drained and found on nearly level to hilly lands. For the most part, these soils adequately support building site development; however, there are areas where slope and flooding are major concerns. More specifically, urbanized areas of the area lie on soils which are well suited for building site development, although it is recommended that sanitary facilities be connected to a central sewer system or treatment facility, due to filtering capacity limitations.

Soils within the Paw Paw River floodplain tend to flood frequently and are poorly drained. Therefore, it is recommended that these areas be left in their natural state, as slope. Alternatively, soils found in the southeastern portions of the Village tend to be very well suited for building site development as well as for

recreational purposes. It is recommended that an on-site investigation take place before any type of  
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development occurs on these soils to determine the actual suitability for a specific type of use.

There are areas directly south of the Village in the Township proper which are also well suited for building site development. Again, care should be taken to ensure that structures placed in these areas conform to the landscape as much as possible, minimizing the slope factor. These areas also tend to be well suited for either septic tank absorption fields or sewage lagoons, providing that distribution layouts for these facilities follow the natural contours of the land as well.

## **Water**

The major water source for the Lawrence community is the main branch of the Paw Paw River. The River along with its tributaries drain the central portion of Van Buren County. The River follows a general east-to west course across the County, ultimately emptying into Lake Michigan near the cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph in Berrien County. The watershed of the Paw Paw River is the largest in the County, encompassing approximately 346 square miles. The other significant waterway in the Lawrence area, Brush Creek originates at Johnson Lake in northern Hamilton Township, is fed by White and Red Creeks and other smaller tributaries that originate from springs throughout the Township and follows a northerly path along the eastern boundary of the Village, emptying into the Paw Paw River near the northeast corner of the Village limits.

## **Wetlands**

In basic terms, a wetland is an area that is influenced by water in which certain water tolerant plants are likely to survive and reproduce. This may include areas that are seasonally wet, by a surface or groundwater influence, as well as areas that are permanently saturated or ponded throughout the year'.

Wetlands are important because they are a contributing factor to the quality of other valuable natural resources, such as inland lakes, groundwater, fisheries, wildlife and the Great Lakes. Wetlands provide places for breeding, nesting and rearing of young waterfowl and other species of birds, mammals, fish and reptiles. They intercept and hold flood or storm waters, naturally dissipating them over a period of time. They also intercept and retain excess nutrients from surface water, generated mainly by human practices such as agriculture or lawn fertilizing, sewage treatment or road salt application. Wetland systems filter these excess nutrients out of the surface runoff, lessening the occurrence of unwanted plant and algae growth in inland lakes and streams'.

Part 303 of the Michigan State Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, PA 451 of 1994, defines a wetland as:

"Land characterized by the presence of water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances does support, wetland vegetation or aquatic life and is commonly referred to as a bog, swamp, or marsh and which is any of the following:

- Contiguous to the Great Lakes or Lake St. Clair, an inland lake or pond, or a river or stream.
- Not contiguous to the Great Lakes, an inland lake or pond, or a river or stream; and more than five acres in size; except this subdivision shall not be of effect, except for the purpose of inventorying, in counties of less than 100,000 population.
- Not contiguous to the Great Lakes, an inland lake or pond, or a river or stream; and five acres or less in size if the department determines that protection of the area is essential to the preservation of the natural resources of the state from pollution, impairment, or destruction and the department has so notified the owner."

The Wetland Act authorizes the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) to preserve certain wetland areas. The MDEQ may require permits before altering regulated wetlands and may prohibit development in some locations. Among the criteria used by the MDEQ when conducting a wetland determination are:

- Presence of standing water (at least one week of the year).
- Presence of hydric soil types that are saturated, flooded, or ponded sufficiently to favor wetland vegetation (usually black or dark brown in color).
- Predominance of wetland vegetation/plant material, or aquatic life, such as cattails, reeds, willows, dogwood, elderberries, and/or red or silver maple trees.
- Presence of important or endangered plant or wildlife habitat or a rare ecosystem.
- The area serves as an important groundwater recharge.
- Size and Location - minimum size to be state regulated is five acres unless the wetland is contiguous to a lake, pond, river or stream, or is considered to be "essential to the preservation of natural resources of the state."

The determination that a site contains a regulated wetland can have several consequences:

- The MDEQ may issue a permit to fill the wetland.
- The MDEQ may require mitigation, such as replacing the wetlands. Sometimes this involves increasing the overall on-site wetland acreage by two or three times.
- The MDEQ may prohibit development in the wetland area if it is determined that there is a "prudent" alternative.

Wetlands identified on the Natural Features Map were determined using maps and data obtained from the Michigan Resource Information System (MIRIS). Two significant areas of wetland are found in the Lawrence Planning area. One is located in the north-central portion of the Village along Brush Creek, near the point where it joins the Paw Paw River and southerly through the Township to 72<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. For the most part, this is considered a riparian forested wetland. Riparian forested wetlands are linear systems that are found along lakes, streams and rivers, which are saturated or inundated with water during the winter and in the summer, except during flood conditions. Riparian forested wetlands are particularly productive ecosystems, receiving large inputs of water and nutrients from upstream sources during flooding. These areas contain primarily oaks, red maple, elm, ash, alder and willow.

The other significant wetland is located just to the west of County Road 215 as it leaves the Village from the north and continues north and west which encompass Nicholas and Lane Lake drains. This wetland is primarily considered a non-forested wetland; it becomes a forested wetland the further south and west as it gets closer to the Paw Paw River. Non-forested wetlands include fresh-water meadows and inland marshes, wet prairies and open bogs. Plant species consist of cattail, bulrush, sedges, water lily, pickerel weed and arrowhead.

## **Woodlands**

Woodlands are a very valuable natural asset to have in a community. They provide necessary functions such as: habitat for many wildlife species, climate moderators, watershed protection from situation and soil erosion caused by stormwater runoff, wind and noise buffers, as well as aesthetic and recreational enjoyment. To the extent possible, woodlands should be conserved during future land development.

Woodlands identified on the Natural Features Map were also determined using maps and data obtained from MIRIS. The map indicates that the Lawrence community is dominated by a significant amount of lowland deciduous forest land that lie within the flood plains of the Paw Paw River and Brush Creek. Lowland deciduous forests consist of ash, elm, cottonwood and soft maple as well as other lowland hardwood species.

There are also upland deciduous woodlands of various sizes found to the north and south of the Village of Lawrence village limits as well as stands of woodlands throughout the Township. These forests consist of a variety of broadleaved species such oak, maple, beech, birch ash, hickory and aspen. These areas may also be intermixed with stands of sugar and red maple, elm, basswood and cherry.

# Transportation Systems

Streets within the Lawrence Village can be classified according to a three level functional hierarchy of service while the Township Roads are classified as either County Primary or County Local or private. The hierarchy is described as follows:

## VILLAGE

### Local (minor) Streets

Local streets are primarily designed to provide access to immediately adjacent properties. Through movement may be possible, but is not encouraged by operational controls, it may be impossible in the case of cul-de-sacs. Part of the street width is usually allocated to vehicle parking without restrictions, although special snow emergency parking prohibitions may be necessary. Each abutting property may have a driveway connection to the street. Examples of local streets are First Street, Elizabeth Street, Cross Street and South Street.

### Collector Streets

Collector streets are primarily designed to provide access to abutting land parcels, and also enable moderate quantities of traffic to move expeditiously between local streets and the major network. Examples of collector streets are James Street and Blackman Street.

### Major Thoroughfares

Major thoroughfares are primarily designed for the efficient movement of through traffic at speeds which are as high as can be reasonably allowed in view of safety considerations and the amount of access being provided. Capacity is obtained by provision of wide street cross sections and high capacity controls at intersections, or by elimination of intersections by grade separation. Speed results from provision of good horizontal and vertical alignments and removal of potential safety hazards, especially access friction. The primary purpose of a major thoroughfare is to carry high volumes of traffic over longer distances with minimal interruption. Interstate-94, St. Joseph Street (Red Arrow Highway), and Paw Paw Street are examples of major thoroughfares.

### Village Street Pattern

The Village of Lawrence has developed within a partial grid of rectangular streets networking through compact neighborhoods relatively consistent with nontraditional design objectives. According to design objectives, the optimal size of a neighborhood is 1/4 to 1/3 of a mile from the center to its edge, a distance equal to a five to ten minute walk at an easy pace. Its limited area gathers the population within walking distance of many of its daily needs. Further, streets are designed to accommodate the needs of all modes of transportation. Moreover, a neighborhood consists of an interconnected network of small thoroughfares with smaller blocks to provide multiple routes. This pattern keeps through traffic off local streets.

Many of the residential streets within the Village of Lawrence are stubbed (i.e. the numbered streets stemming north from Main Street) and provide little opportunity for future interconnections. It should be noted that natural features, such as the Paw Paw River, hinder an expansion of residential development in the northwest quadrant of the Village, while Brush Creek may provide a barrier to expanded development in the north east quadrant. These features should be viewed as assets rather than liabilities, and should be integrated into overall neighborhood design as a unique amenity that may provide future opportunities for public enjoyment.

## TOWNSHIP

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**County Primary Roads** are described as C. R. designated roads. These roads are under the County Road Commissions Jurisdiction and are Improved Roads such as C. R. 215.

**County Local Roads** are described as those roads that have a Road, Street or Avenue designation such as 72<sup>nd</sup> Avenue or 50<sup>th</sup> Street.

**Private Roads** are those roads that are not under the Jurisdiction of the Van Buren County Road Commission and are maintained by private individuals such as McMahan Road.

### **Township Street Pattern**

The Township Street Pattern was established primarily by the Van Buren County Road Commission and is predominantly a true grid pattern. The exception to straight north and south Streets and east and west Avenues are roads that predated the inception of the County Road Commission. Those roads being old M-40 which is now C. R. 215 (Bangor Road and Paw Paw street in the Village) and Territorial Road which was the original Road that connected Detroit and Chicago.

### **RECENT STREET IMPROVEMENTS**

During the past five years, a series of street improvements have been carried out in the Village. In addition to the major improvements listed below, many local roads have been slurry-sealed. Slurry-seal is an all weather road sealant alternative to the traditional chip sealant that has been used in the past. Its use may prolong the life of the road for several years.

1. East St. Joseph, Blackman street and South Street were all repaved since 2018.
2. North and South Paw Paw Streets were repaved from the south Village limits to the North Bridge crossing the Paw Paw River. This paving project also included repair of the railroad crossing on South Paw Paw Street.
3. Working together with the private railroad company who owns the rail system, extensive work was performed on this crossing to improve it for vehicle traffic, all safety markings on the paved approaches to the crossing were also replaced after the paving was completed.
4. The West bound lane at the main intersection of Paw Paw Street and St. Joseph Street was repaved due to excessive ruts that developed in that lane at the traffic light. Fourth Street which is a local street was paved. Pavement overlay was applied on South Elizabeth Street from East James Street to the south.
5. North 2<sup>nd</sup> street has had a new storm drainage system installed. This construction included installing larger pipe so it can handle the next phase which will drain water from West St. Joseph Street, South 2<sup>nd</sup> Street as well as part of West James Street in the future.
6. A new stop light was installed at the main intersection of Paw Paw Street and St. Joseph Street which included extra lighting on the southeast and northwest corners of the intersection to improve visibility of the light system. Pedestrian crossing signals were also installed at the crosswalks for the intersection to provide a safer crossing.
7. Other improvements that have been done since 2000 include:
  - a. Paving Michigan Street from James Street south to the end of the street – this street was upgraded from a gravel surface.
  - b. Paving the south end of Blackman Street from South Street to the end of the street – this street was upgraded from a gravel surface.
  - c. Pavement overlay applied on West James Street from the railroad track crossing to Michigan Street.
  - d. Pavement overlay applied on Michigan Street from James Street to West St. Joseph Street.
  - e. All of the streets as well as the infrastructure in the Industrial Park.

An ambitious plan for future street upgrades exists in the Village for the next four years provided funding continues to be available from the Van Buren County's Tea-21 program as well as the State of Michigan's Act-51 program.

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The Road Commission is responsible for maintenance of the roads within the Township however this should not be misconstrued as the Township is, under Act 51, required to participate in the road system financially for anything that is not defined as maintenance in Act 51 for local designated streets. The Township uses the Road Commission standard of Tar and Slag applied to the Road surfaces as a way to prolong the driving surface of paved roads and all paved roads are on a 5-year reseal. Major improvements in the last five years include bituminous surface on Red Arrow Highway, major reconstruction of Butcher Road from 56<sup>th</sup> Street to Red Arrow Highway, Bituminous surface of 54<sup>th</sup> Street from CR 215 to Red Arrow Highway, seal coat of Red Arrow Highway from west Village limits to CR 681, major reconstruction of CR 681 from Red Arrow Highway south to CR 36 West.

## **SAFETY CONCERNS**

The railroad crossing on West St. Joseph Street is definitely in need of repair and it has already been discussed briefly with the railroad company. They are aware of our concern regarding this crossing. (According to the Village Attorney, the railroad is responsible for the repair of the crossing)

Blackman Street continues to experience more traffic volume than in earlier years due to the fact the Van Buren Intermediate School District has made an entrance to their technology center parking lot off this street. The concern is vehicle traffic and pedestrians using the same paved surface for travel.

West James Street is used extensively when school is in session and the traffic pattern needs review. Parents drop off students at the Lawrence schools on West St. Joseph and then use Michigan Street to West James Street to return to a major thoroughfare.

Drainage on West St. Joseph Street in front of the Lawrence Public Schools on both sides of the street is a concern as parents dropping off students do not want to pull off the street completely because of puddles that form on the shoulder of the street. Along with storm drainage, the shoulder on the south side of the street should be paved to assure proper water drainage.

## **ZONING FOR RECREATION FACILITIES**

The Village of Lawrence Zoning Ordinance designates those districts in which public parks and recreation facilities are permitted, Publicly owned and operated libraries, parks, parkways and recreational facilities are principal use permitted by right within the R-1 and R-2, One-Family Residential Districts as well as the RM-1, Multiple Family Residential District. The R-1 and R-2 Zoning Districts are designed "to be the most restrictive of the residential districts. The intent is to provide for an environment of predominantly low-density, one-family detached dwellings along with other residentially related facilities which serve the residents in the district." The following uses are permitted by right within the R -1 and R-2 Districts:

- One-family detached dwellings
- Farms on those parcels of land separately owned outside the boundaries of either a proprietary or assessor's plat, having an area of not less than five (5) acres....
- Publicly owned and operated libraries, parks, parkways and recreational facilities.
- Cemeteries which lawfully occupied land at the time of adoption of this Ordinance.
- Public, parochial and other private elementary schools offering courses in general education, and not operated for profit.
- Accessory buildings and uses, customarily incident to any of the above permitted uses.

Private non commercial recreational areas, institutional or community recreation centers; nonprofit swimming pool clubs, and golf courses are permitted subject to special conditions within the R-1 and R-2 Districts.

The purpose of the District is to "provide sites for multiple-family dwelling structures, and related uses,

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which will generally serve as zones of transition between the nonresidential districts and lower-density Single-Family Districts, The Multiple-Family District is further provided to serve the limited needs for the apartment type of unit in an otherwise medium-density, single-family community."

The principal uses permitted within the RM-1 District include:

- All uses permitted and as regulated in the R-1 and R-2 One-Family Residential Districts.
- Multiple-family dwellings
- Accessory buildings and uses customarily incident to any of the above permitted uses.

**Township Parks** that are non-commercial in nature are allowed by right in the Agricultural District, the Rural Residential District, the Medium Density Residential District, the Waterfront Residential District, the Multi-Family Residential District, the Commercial District and the Industrial District.

## INVENTORY OF EXISTING RECREATION FACILITIES

A crucial component of Recreation Planning is the completion of an inventory of the existing recreation facilities within the District. A detailed inventory provides a baseline of existing conditions and can be used to assist in the determination of future needs. The type and number of existing facilities can also be compared to published standards to identify both acreage and facility deficiencies.

This portion of the Recreation Plan details the existing facilities and programs offered in the District as well as the public school district.

### Programs

The senior citizens in the Village meet the second and fourth Thursdays at the Township Hall where there are organized games and activities.

The Lawrence Lions Club is active and meets monthly at the township hall.

Other organizations include the Lawrence Garden Club, American Legion and Auxiliary.

Non-school based youth organizations include the Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H, and AWANA.

The Fire Department has Business meetings and two training sessions monthly. The Quick Response team meets monthly for business meetings.

The Lawrence Branch of the Van Buren District Library sponsors programs for residents including a Writer's Group, Reader's Café, Teen Group and a full schedule of children's programs including a very successful Summer Reading Program. The Friends of the Lawrence Library meet quarterly and sponsor public programs including music, art exhibitions, craft and skill training, as well as special events.

Youth Sports Programs include Summer Ball, Flag Football, Boys and Girls basketball and regional youth soccer.

Three walking trail systems exist within the Village; two are established, groomed trails and one is awaiting upgrade.

The annual Labor Day weekend Ox Roast Celebration brings people from the area as well as former residents to the Village for alumni activities, sanctioned tractor pull events, a basketball tournament, Ox Roast Walk and Run and the area's major Labor Day Parade.

Since 2004 to present, the Lawrence DDA operates a very successful Farmer's Market which runs every  
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Saturday morning from mid-July through early October. In addition to the Market activities included craft vendors, cooking classes and musical entertainment.

## **Facilities**

Residents of the Lawrence community have access to four public parks: the Village Park, the North River Park and Robert Brausch, Jr. Park, Tiger Den.

Traversing across the northern Village is a stretch of the Paw Paw River which enters the Village limits from the northeast, meanders through the northern portion of the Village and continues west into Paw Paw Lake and carries on to the City of St. Joseph and Lake Michigan.

## **Lawrence Village Parks**

The approximately 2.5-acre Village Park is located on a Village block and bordered by St Joseph, Baker, Elizabeth and Exchange Streets. The park is a traditional 'commons' area reminiscent of many small towns throughout Michigan. The park is bordered to its west by the Central Business District, and by single-family residential homes to its north and east. The park is one of the main attractions in the Village and offers residents a variety of recreational opportunities. There is an abundance of open space at the park with beautiful mature trees and benches for resting and viewing scattered throughout, The Park contains a large, fenced, \$82,000 wood-structure playground area for children of various ages. There are permanent restroom facilities in addition to picnicking facilities, including tables, a shelter and grills. Village Park also contains basketball courts.

The North River Park comprises approximately 1.0-acre of land located on the west side of Paw Paw Street and adjacent to the Paw Paw River. The park contains open space, a few picnic tables and provides residents with fishing access in the Paw Paw River. The Department of Natural Resources has a small boat launch in the area. The river park remains predominately undeveloped with few constructed facilities. The Lawrence Joint Parks and Recreation has in place a plan for development in conjunction with the Recreation District. Plan includes a kayak launch which was installed in 2022, picnic area and a trail connector to the Lawrence Public School's trail along the Paw Paw River.

Robert Brausch, Jr. Park is located in the Lawrence-Crandall Business Centre on approximately 8 acres of wetland which includes a stocked fishing pond and the future site of a public access.

## **Lawrence Township Parks**

The Township has one park, The Tiger Den, consisting of three baseball fields, and one football/soccer field. In addition, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources has three Boat Launches, one each on Hall Lake, Shafer Lake and Reynolds Lake. Restroom facilities are supplied at Hall and Reynolds Lake Boat Launches respectively.

## **Schools**

**Lawrence Public Schools:** The Elementary, Jr./Sr. High School are all located on a 48.6-acre campus-like environment in the northwest part of town along St Joseph Street. The school property includes a Disc Golf course, a High School baseball field, a softball field, football field and track facility and a nature trail, as well as open space.

**Van Buren County Intermediate School's campus:** The VBISD owns land in the southeast portion of the Village, east of Paw Paw Street and south of the railroad tracks. This property includes a playground, a raised wooden walking path that connects to a wood chip nature trail.

## ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION

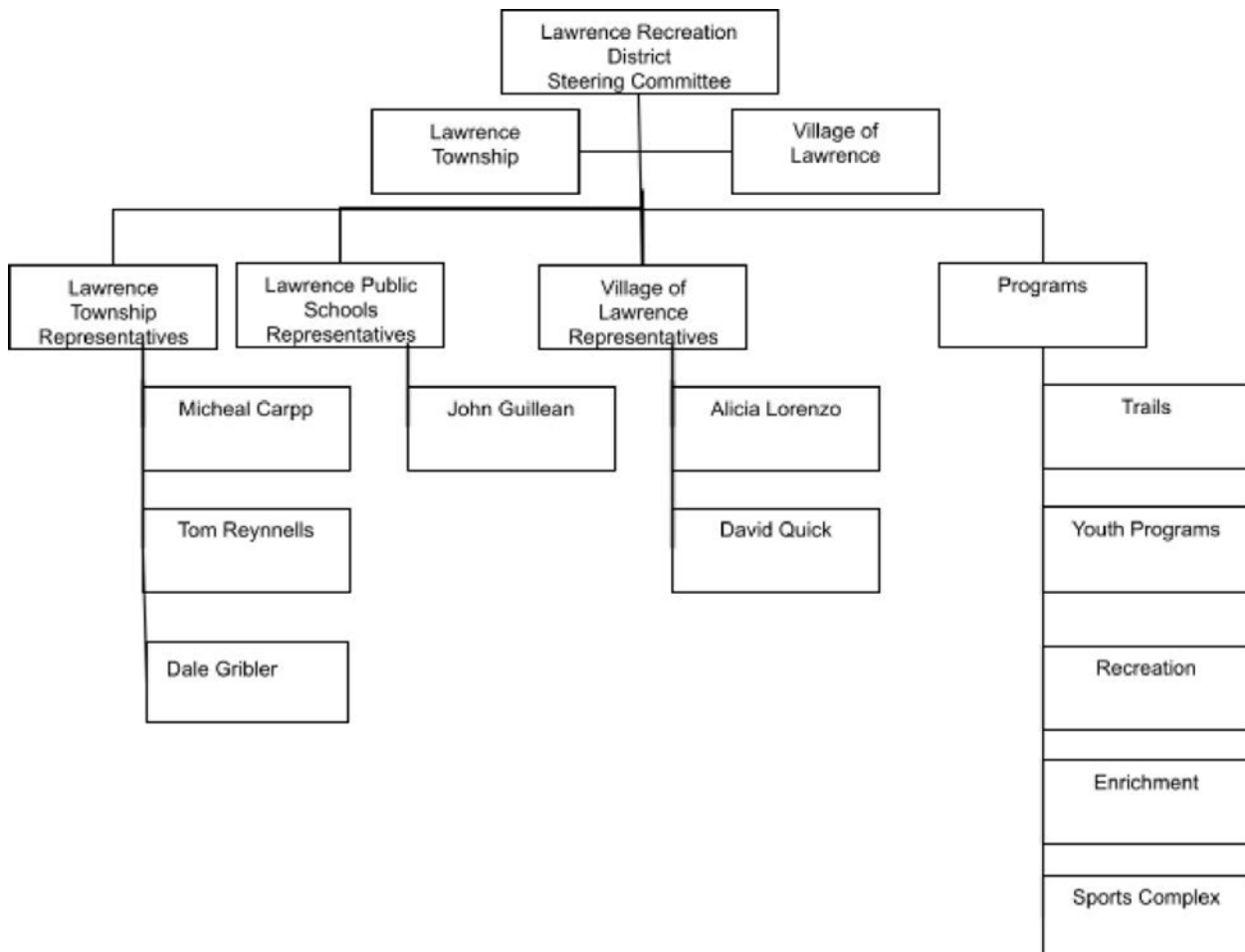
Public Act 156 of 1917 entitled Local Government, Operate System of Public Recreation is an act authorizing Cities, Villages, Counties, Townships, and School Districts to operate systems of public recreation and playgrounds.

Section a: Any City, Village, County, or Township may::

1. Operate a system of public recreation and playgrounds;
2. Acquire, equip, and maintain land buildings, or other recreational facilities.;
3. Employ a superintendent of recreation and assistants and,
4. Vote and expend funds for the operation of such a system.

The Joint Village of Lawrence – Lawrence Township (Lawrence Recreation District) organizational structure in regards to recreation is depicted in the following diagram. Park responsibilities including maintenance fall under the Village Department of Public Works and employees.

There are currently six people serving on the Lawrence Recreation District Steering Committee with one open position. The Committee meets on a monthly basis and acts as the guiding body throughout the recreation planning process. Outside of LRD Steering Committee members serve in other local organizations including: trustees of the Village or Township governments, members of both Planning Commissions, Lawrence Public Schools, Lawrence Recreational Sports Group, Township Fire Department, Ox Roast Committee, LPS Parent Teacher Organization, Lion’s Club, LEO’s club, the American Legion and the Friends of the Library Group.



## Recreation District Segments

The activities of the Recreation District are broken down based on interest areas expressed by the Recreation Survey. The responses were easily classified into the following six segments:

- **Sports**
  - Includes both youth sporting activities: baseball, softball, T-ball, football, basketball, soccer, volleyball, disc golf and adult co-ed sports.
  - Incorporates school and community based programs
    - School based programs are well established with sufficient facilities
    - Existing local programs are focused only on youth participants. The survey indicated a strong desire for sporting program opportunities such as intramural leagues for District adults.
- **Recreation**
  - The “desired opportunity” response in the Recreation Survey was a canoe/kayak launching site at North River Park.
  - Additional responses under recreation were: walking facility, reading, music, hiking, biking, craft, kayaking, fishing, canoeing.
  - Local facilities currently include: pickleball courts, basketball courts in the Village Park, sporadic opportunities to use gymnasium and weight room at Lawrence High School, fishing pond in Robert Brausch, Jr. Park, new canoe/kayak launch area in North River Park (Paw Paw River) and picnic areas in Village and North River Parks.
- **Trails**
  - The survey’s second favorite activity “we enjoy” is hiking. The District currently is home to 3 distinct walking/hiking trails (located adjacent to the LPS complex, the VBISD complex and in the PUD).
  - The Lawrence Joint Parks and Recreation committee has plans in development for a trail adjacent to the Paw Paw River to join the North River Park and the public school’s trail.
  - The long-term plan for the District is to join these three segments and extend the system to a Recreation Complex. The outcome will be approximately 16 miles of usable trail in the Recreation District for walking, biking, and cross country skiing.
- **Enrichment**
  - Enrichment programs of all kinds ranked high in the list of opportunities desired by the residents of the District. These included, but are not limited to: reading, parades, arts, crafts, music, gardening, sports, computers and internet, language classes and special interest groups.
  - Organizations to address some of these opportunities currently exist and will support expansion. Facilities that can be available on a regular basis will facilitate development and participation.
  - A structure for development and implementation of enrichment opportunities will now exist within the Recreation District plan.
- **Youth**
  - This area currently is defined based on existing programs like Scouts, 4-H, Library Summer Program, school clubs and fraternal or religious based youth programs as well as utilization of Kid’s PALACE in the Village Park.
  - The survey clearly ranked these activities and facilities as very important to both youth and their families.
  - The Recreation District Committee recognizes that support of existing non-sports programs for our youth and development of additional opportunities are important to both the well being and growth of our community.
- **Operations**
  - The Operations segment initially includes all of the activities of the Recreation District Steering Committee. This volunteer organization, supported by the Common Council of the Village of Lawrence and the Lawrence Township Board, has been tasked to:
    - Update and submit a Recreation /District Parks and Recreation Plan
    - Oversee future development of programs and facilities to benefit all of the residents of the Lawrence Recreation District (defined as the Lawrence Public School District – Lawrence Township, the Village of Lawrence and a designated section of Arlington Township).

- Establish a support organization to implement the Action Plan
- This segment also addresses evaluation and improvement of current facilities including a plan for a Tree Maintenance and Replacement Program to ensure our parks maintain their beauty and appeal for the residents of the District.
- The Lawrence Recreation District plan requires strong leadership and the Action Plan calls for establishment of a Recreation District Director by 2023 to oversee operations of existing facilities and programs, as well as oversee the funding and building of a Recreation District Community Center.

## **Revenues and Expenditures**

The Village budget for Parks and Recreation historically has provided funds for general maintenance of the 3 Village Parks and tree restoration as deemed necessary within other areas of the Village. Development of park facilities has historically been funded by local organizations and community efforts. The Lions funded and built the shelter and bathrooms in the Village Park and a local committee was founded to fund, build and maintain the Kid's PALACE play structure. Local organizations provide recreational activities at their own or public facilities including the parks. The Township and Village has budgeted \$5,000 annually for parks or recreation to date.

The 2018-2023 Action Plan addresses both funding for Capital Improvements and for ongoing operations of the Recreation District.

## **National Planning Standards**

In the process of determining and prioritizing needs it is imperative to compare the provision of local recreation facilities to published standards. This comparison of existing facilities to standard acreage and facility requirements may be used as one tool to determine needs within the Lawrence Recreation District.

## **Acreage Standards**

The National Recreation and Parks Association has developed a classification systems for local and regional recreation open space.

- A mini park is an area of specialized facilities that serve a concentration or limited population or specific group, such as tots or senior citizens. It has a service area of less than' mile in radius, with a desirable size of one acre or less. The standard for development is one acre per 1,000 population, while desirable site characteristics include location within a neighborhood in close proximity to apartment complexes, townhouse developments, or housing for the elderly.
- A neighborhood park/playground is an area for intense recreational activities, such as field games, court games, crafts, playground apparatus area, skating, picnicking, wading pools, etc. It has a service area of 1 to 5 miles in radius to serve a population up to 5,000 (a neighborhood). The desirable size for a neighborhood park/playground is at least 15 acres, with a standard of one to two acres per 1,000 population. Desirable site characteristics include suitability for intense development, easy accessibility to neighborhood population, and geographically centered with safe walking and bike access. Such neighborhood park/playground may be developed as a school-park facility.
- A community park is an area of diverse environmental quality, which may include areas suited for intense recreational facilities (such as athletic complexes and large swimming pools) or may be an area of natural quality for outdoor recreation (such as walking, viewing, sitting, and picnicking) or depending on site suitability and community needs, may be any combination of the above. It has a service area of several neighborhoods within a one to two mile radius. The desirable size for a community park is at least twenty-five acres, with a standard of five to eight acres per 1,000 population. Desirable site characteristics include natural features (such as bodies of water) and areas suited for intense development, which are easily accessible to the neighborhoods served.

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## Community Park

While the NRPA has identified the above noted three tier system, for purposes of this plan, each of the parks within the Lawrence community are considered to be community parks. While, with the exception of the school property, none of the facilities within the Village meet the size requirement for community parks according to the NRPA, the amount, location and amenities at each of the parks within the Village, distinguish them as community parks which serve and are accessible to nearly everyone. The small geographical size of the Village enables each park/facility to be in walking distance from nearly every point of the Village. Each park offers unique recreation opportunities that residents would walk or drive to utilize. Thus, the standard acreage requirements for community parks was applied to facilities within the Village to begin to determine any needs in terms of land acquisition.

The LRD is projected to have 4,300 people by the year 2027. Based on NRPA standards, this population will require between 23 and 37 acres of community park land. The District currently has approximately 57.7 acres of land designated as community park land; this figure includes the public school property of 48.6 acres and the VBISD property in the southeast portion of the Village. Subtracting this number of total acreage, the Village contains approximately 4.1 acres of community park land. This is significantly less than the NRPA standard of 23-37 acres for the District.

## ACTION PLAN

The following describes the Village of Lawrence's program to maintain and improve recreational opportunities in the community. Factors considered for this recreation planning program are: 1) expected demand and need for future recreational activities; 2) goals and guidelines of the Master Plan; 3) needs identified and observed by staff and 4) funding sources and availability.

Table 17 Lawrence Recreation District Action Plan		
Year	Actions	Segment
2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Complete and submit updated Recreation District 5-year plan</li> <li>● Align Lawrence Joint Parks and Recreation committee activities North River Park and Trail w/ Recreation District plan</li> <li>● Pursue funding for renovation and restoration of basketball courts as well Kid's Palace development/renovation and equipment in Village Park and North park</li> <li>● Establish Summer Arts series to coincide with the Farmer's</li> <li>● Continue development of Tiger Den Sports Complex which includes Signaged to recognize founders.</li> <li>● Pursue funding for Blackman trail extender</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Operations</li> <li>● Recreation, Sports</li> <li>● Recreation, Sports</li> <li>● Trails</li> <li>● Recreation, Trails</li> <li>● Recreation,</li> <li>● Enrichment, Youth</li> <li>● Enrichment, Youth</li> </ul>
2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Request and support passage of mileage to support Recreation District</li> <li>● Continue fundraising activities for Tiger Den Sports Complex; begin infrastructure improvements</li> <li>● Establish Enrichment Committee to coordinate and develop enrichment programs primarily for adults</li> <li>● Establish Intramural Sports Committee</li> <li>● Evaluate, maintain and upgrade programs already in place</li> <li>● Complete Blackman trail extender</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sports, Recreation</li> <li>● Trails</li> <li>● Recreation</li> <li>● Recreation, Youth, Operations</li> <li>● Enrichment</li> <li>● Sports</li> <li>● All</li> </ul>

2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Establish Tree Replacement Program</li> <li>● Begin curriculum of Enrichment opportunities</li> <li>● Pursue funding to develop ADA compliant trail connector from South portion of Village to village parks and schools.</li> <li>● Evaluate, maintain and upgrade programs already in place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sports, Recreation</li> <li>● Operations</li> <li>● Sports</li> <li>● Enrichment</li> <li>● Trails</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Operations</li> <li>● Operations, All</li> </ul>
2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Establish Recreation and Friends of the library group to coordinate and develop programs for youth and adult programs.</li> <li>● Evaluate, maintain and upgrade programs and parks already in place</li> <li>● Evaluate funds and mileage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Operations</li> <li>● Recreation, Youth, Enrichment</li> <li>● Trails</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All</li> </ul>
2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Review Recreation 5 Year Plan; update and submit to meet State requirements</li> <li>● Evaluate, maintain and upgrade programs already in place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Operations</li> <li>● Operations</li> <li>● Operations</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All</li> <li>● All</li> </ul>

### Capital Improvements Schedule

The capital improvements schedule for this Recreation Plan has been established not only to provide a framework for decision makers but also to enable the Recreation District to apply for grant funding for proposed projects.

The following capital improvements table details the proposed improvement projects for the year 2023-2027. The schedule is organized by year and includes project names, cost estimates as well as a break down of those costs by the anticipated funding sources. See

<b>Table 18</b> <b>Capital Improvements Schedule</b> 2018-2023 LRD Master Plan			
Year	Project	Cost Estimate	Funding Sources
2023	1. Evaluate, maintain and upgrade programs already in place	\$10,000	a. Joint Parks and Recreational Committee b. MDNR grant funding
	2. Development/renovation of Village Kid's Palace as well as basketball courts and equipment in Village Park and North park.	TBD	
2024	1. Tiger Den Sports Complex 2. Evaluate, maintain and upgrade programs already in place	\$2,500	a. Municipal funding b. In-kind donations of labor and supplies c. Local fundraising efforts
		\$3,000	
		\$5,000	
2025	1. Trail connector from LPS to North River Park	\$40,000	a. MDNR development grant b. In-kind donations of labor and supplies

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	2. Establish Tree Replacement Program  3. Evaluate, maintain and upgrade programs already in place	\$10,000  \$5000	c. Local fundraising efforts d. Corporate donations e. Grant funding f. DNR grant g. Municipal funding
2026	1. Pursue for funding for a Multi-purpose building for Tiger Den. 2. Evaluate, maintain and upgrade programs already in place.	\$40,000  \$5000	a. In-kind donations of labor and supplies b. Local fundraising efforts c. Corporate donations d. Grant funding e. MDOT/ DNR grant
2027	1. Construction of the Multipurpose building of Tiger Den complex.	\$130,000	a. Local fundraising efforts (2020-2023) including Pledge drive

### Rationale

The following observations and comments serve as the drivers of this Recreation Plan:

- Village Park is arguably the most used and highly visible of all of the inventoried facilities within the District. The park anchors the Village downtown and has for many years been one of the focal points and main attractions. Due to its importance, renovations and improvements have been in the past 5 years at Village Park.
- The Recreation District encompasses the Village of Lawrence and Lawrence Township and serves as not only the center for commerce in the area but also provides recreational opportunities to residents. We recognize the role it plays and believe it is essential to survey not only District residents but also households in the surrounding community. Participants should be surveyed on a number of issues including park usage, programs and funding opportunities. We believe that this survey will act as a springboard for the determination of future recreation projects.
- In the process of creating this 5-year Recreation Master Plan, those involved were made aware of the numerous entities within the community who were at some level involved in the provision, maintenance or improvement of public recreation facilities. In the first year of this plan, the commission highly recommends that a coordinated effort be put in place to bring the various groups together for discussions on upcoming events, projects and ideas. Groups including the Village, the Township, LPS, DDA, Lion's Club, American Legion, Alumni Association and Garden Club should coordinate their efforts to ensure that activities are taking place that reflect the direction of the Recreation Plan.
- Community sports and recreation leaders at LPS have identified a significant portion of funding which comes from revenue from both The PUD and DDA, that could be used for potential facility upgrades at village and township parks and programs.
- North River Park is located on the banks of the Paw Paw River. It is the desire of the Village to make improvements at this site to enable the public to again regularly use the park as a canoe and kayak livery. We envision a plan to improve access to the site as well as incorporate picnic tables, benches and a trail along the river connecting to the existing trail at the Lawrence Public Schools.
- Constructing a non-motorized trail system within the District has been in the Recreation plan for the last five years. The need for non-motorized transportation as well as recreational activity in the form of a trail is a recognized need in the community. With the recent development of the new industrial park in the southern portion of the Village, discussions have been held with State Representatives, the Lion's Club, Schools, etc, and potential funding sources, indicate this is the opportune time to approach such a large endeavor. The West Michigan Rail Road which traverses the Village is also slated for a Rail-To-Trail project connecting to the proposed system.
- The District has many mature trees not only lining its streets but also shading its parks. Our goal is to

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preserve, maintain and continue to enhance this character element throughout the District. To accomplish this, we are proposing to incorporate a tree replacement program in conjunction with the school district to replenish damaged or diseased vegetation within street right-of-ways and public facilities.

This plan is the result of care and concern on the part of community leaders and residents over the future maintenance of and improvements to the District's parks and recreational facilities. It is a primary objective of this plan to set in place a foundation for long term management and coordinated program delivery. To that end, capital improvements are interwoven in this plan with direction for citizen action and public involvement.

The Lawrence Recreation District Committee acted as the reviewing and guiding body for this Recreation Master Plan. Beginning in October of 2017, members met on a monthly basis to review, discuss and proceed with the formulation of the plan, eventually presenting it to the Village Council and the Township Board. Their familiarity with the operation of recreation within the community as well as their understanding of the needs of the community was invaluable in the creation of this plan.

## **Background Studies**

The first step of the planning process involved gathering base data as background information relative to the Recreation District. Such information included both a social and physical profile of the community. The majority of the socioeconomic data was collected from the US Census Bureau with supplemental data gathered from the County Planning Department. Information to conduct the examination of the physical characteristics of the community was gathered from a number of sources including the Soil Conservation Service, the Michigan Resource Information System (MIRIS), the Village of Lawrence, Lawrence Township and windshield surveys.

Prior to determining and discussing recreation needs and priority projects, an inventory of the existing recreation facilities was conducted. This inventory includes public parks and facilities, public and private school facilities, private recreation opportunities as well as recreation opportunities in the Recreation District.

### **Administrative Structure**

A description of how parks and recreation functions are carried out within the Lawrence Recreation District was prepared to define the responsibilities of the operation and maintenance of parks and recreation in the District, to understand the role and responsibilities of the Recreation Committee and to analyze recent expenditures in regards to recreation. All of the information included within this section was received from the governing bodies.

### **Needs Assessment**

#### **A. Accessibility Evaluation**

An accessibility assessment was conducted as part of the recreation inventory. The District has worked to include accessibility to the parks as they continue to update and further develop them. The rating for the parks based on the following guidelines criteria is listed below.

- 1 = none of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 2 = some of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 3 = most of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 4 = the entire park meets accessibility guidelines
- 5 = the entire park was developed/renovated using the principals of universal design

The District will look to continue public comment throughout the implementation process, especially from those with special needs. Their suggestions play a key role in developing and implementing proposed barrier-free improvements.

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Village Park: Consists of street parking, and a good mix of park elements in the park, however there are no accessible pathways connecting the sidewalk network or parking to the park elements. The playground has some accessible components. This park is an assessment level 2.

North River Park: This park has gravel parking and access to the River. There are benches, a bike rack and trash receptacle as well as a kayak launch. No accessible parking is provided and there is not an accessible route throughout the site. This park is an assessment level 1.

Robert Brausch, Jr. Park: Has a gravel parking lot and lawn pathways to the fishing pond. This park is an assessment level 1

#### **B. Public Input Process:**

A citizen survey was created for the District which asked residents some demographic information as well as their current park usage and preferences. This survey was distributed to the public by mail and additional copies posted in VB Lawrence Branch Library on Wednesday, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

The survey was available to the public from Wednesday, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018- Wednesday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018. A copy of the survey and a tabulation of the results are included in the appendix.

A conversation with Carrie Moore from Leather & Associates Playground (original builders of Village Parks, Kid's Palace) gave recommendation for an assessment on the park to give the committee timeline for either renovation or rebuild. Copy of the Kid's Palace assessment in appendix. Meeting held with Southwest Michigan Planning Committee, Marcy Hamilton, to enter into a contract with them to implement Paw Paw River Water Trail.

The Recreation Committee recommended the adoption of the plan to Village Council and the Township Board in January, 2022 (see appendix). The plan was adopted by resolution of the Village Council on February 13, 2018 and the Township Board on February 8, 2018. The District Recreation Master Plan was then presented to the public at a public hearing held in front of the joint governing bodies. Members of the public were invited to review the draft through an announcement on the village and township websites, as well as the Lawrence Community Facebook page.

Village Website: <http://www.lawrencemi.org/>

Village FB page: <https://www.facebook.com/VillageofLawrenceMI>

Township Website: <https://www.lawrence-township.org/>

The second public input method used by the committee was the public hearing, which was held Saturday, Monday, January 9<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm at the Lawrence Township Hall. Members of the public were invited to the public hearing through an announcement on the village and township websites, as well as the Lawrence Community Facebook page.

Since one of the several factors involved in determining the recreational needs of a community is comparison to recreation standards, park classifications and facility standards were included as a reference for analysis of specific needs. Once existing site and facility data was collected, it was analyzed and compared to the standards recommended by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) in its most recent Community Recreation Planning publication.

The Lawrence Recreation Survey was used to help determine direction and interest in a comprehensive District Recreation Plan.

## **Action Program**

Action programming is the process whereby recreation needs are prioritized for action. Priorities were based upon several factors including identified needs, community attitude, the goals for recreation and potential funding sources.

The Lawrence Recreation District was established and came to consensus on the goals for recreation in the District as well as the prioritization of the capital improvements schedule for the next five years. The projects were prioritized by year, cost, and candidate funding sources.

The entire draft District Recreation Plan was reviewed by the Steering Committee. It was then reviewed by the Township Board and the Village Council. From these reviews, modifications were made and the draft plan finalized for public review.

## **Plan Review and Adoption**

### **Public Hearing publication documentation**

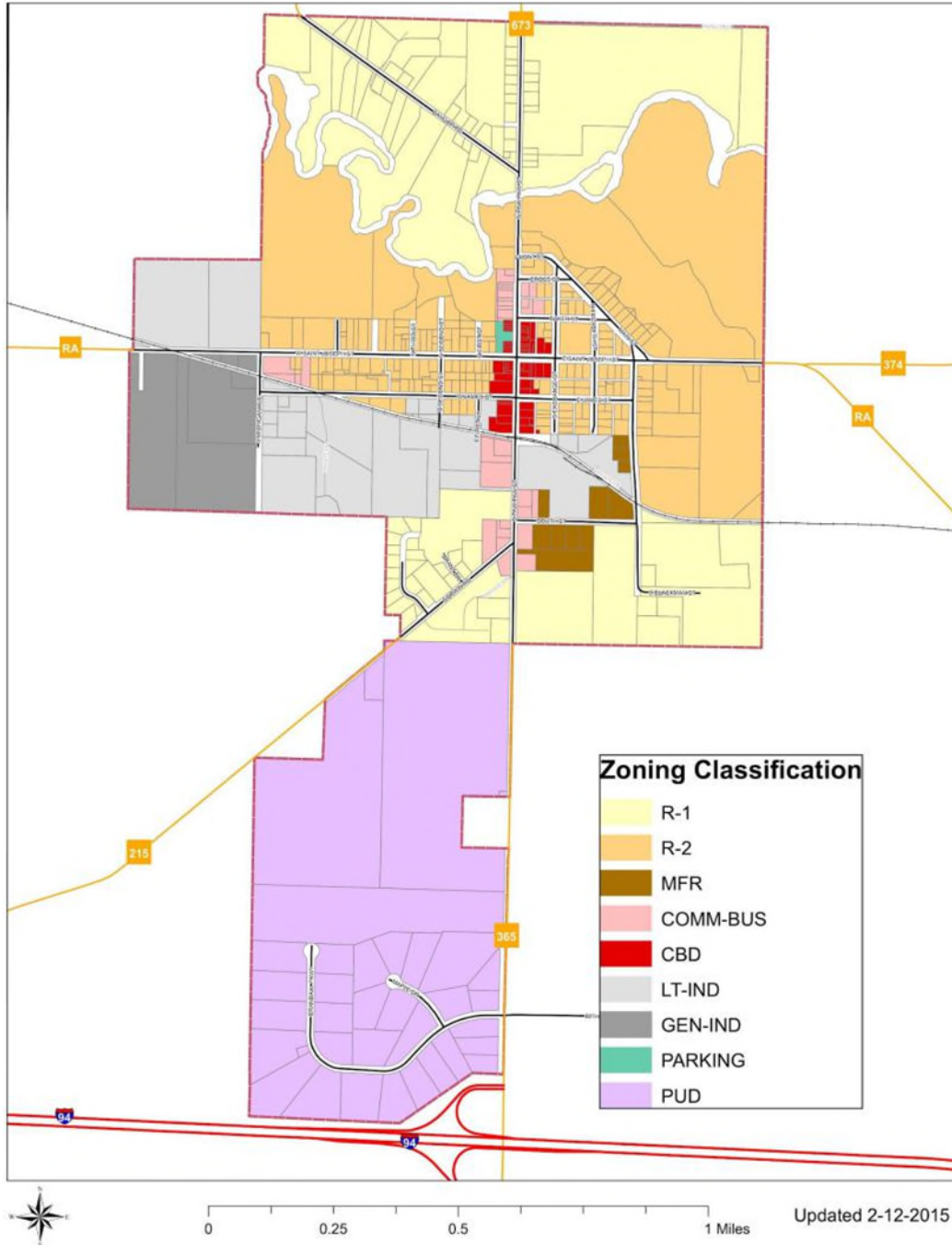
The Recreation Committee recommended the adoption of the plan to Village Council and the Township Board in January, 2022. The plan was adopted by resolution of the Village Council on ( ) and the Township Board on \_\_\_\_\_. The District Recreation Master Plan was then presented to the public at a public hearing held in front of the joint governing bodies on Monday, January 9th, 2022. Following the public hearing, a meeting was held by the Recreation District Steering Committee to adopt the final Master Plan. After adoption, the MDNR checklist was completed and certified and a copy of the Lawrence Recreation District Master Plan was transmitted to the South Central Michigan Planning Council, the Van Buren County Planning Commission and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

# Attachments, Maps

Sec. 32-149. - Zoning map.

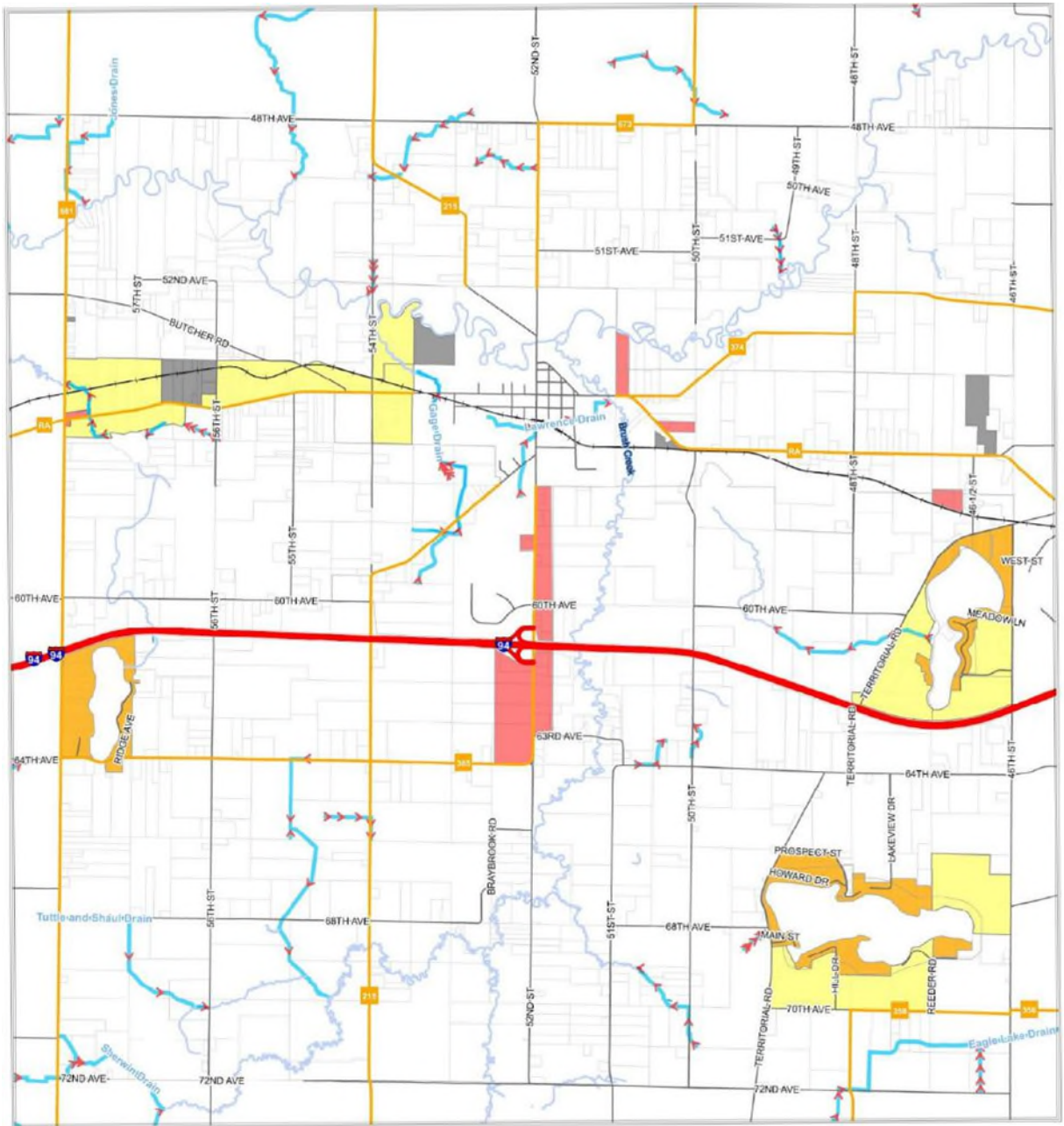
Following is the Village of Lawrence zoning map:

Village of Lawrence Zoning, 2015



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# Lawrence Township Zoning Map, 2014



**Zoning**

- ag Agriculture
- r-3 Waterfront
- r-1 Rural Residential
- c-1 Commercial
- I-1 Industrial



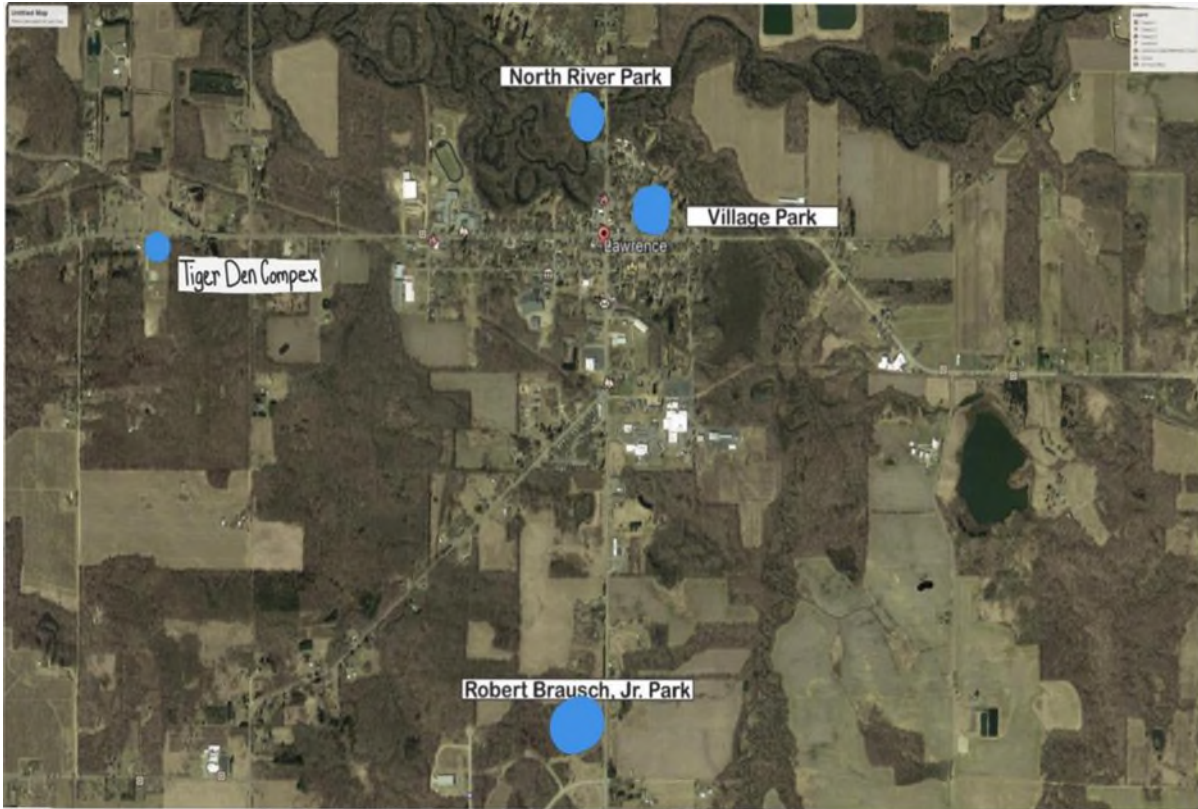
0 0.5 1 2 Miles



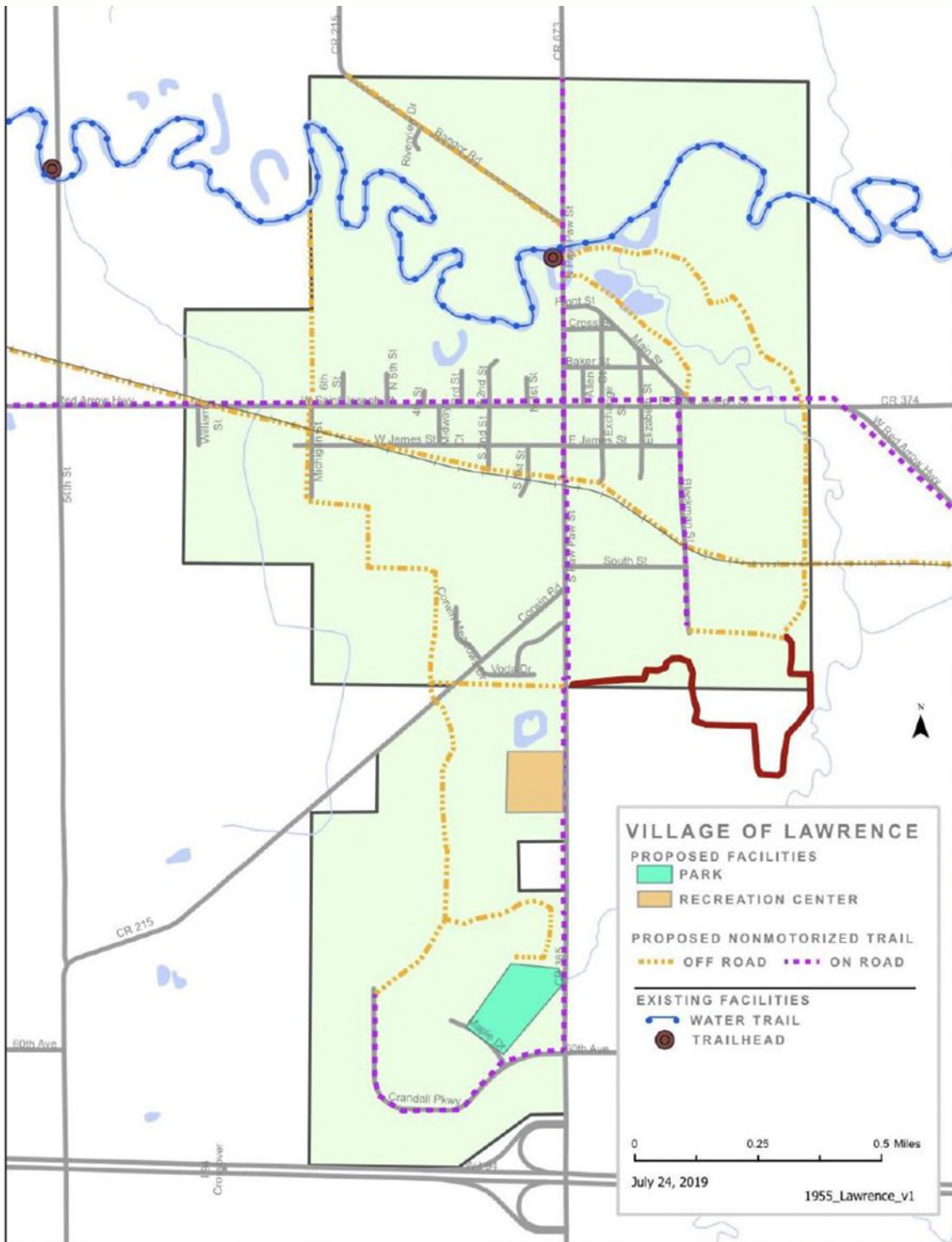
Van Buren County GIS  
 219 Paw Paw St.  
 Paw Paw, MI 49079  
[www.vbco.org](http://www.vbco.org)  
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Tristram R. Orndorff, Supervisor  
 Lawrence Township, Van SWIM County, MI. Adopted \_\_\_\_\_  
 Clerk

# Attachments, Park Location Map



# Attachments, Trail Location Map





## Attachments, Survey Data

Appendix

[Lawrence Parks and Recreation Survey 2018](#)

[Lawrence Parks and Recreation Survey Summary 2018](#)

[Playground Assessment Report](#)

[Lawrence Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2018-2023](#)

# Attachments, Municipal Documents

[Minutes of a village adoption of master plan](#)  
[Public Hearing Minutes April 2018](#)