

GARDEN TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN



Draft 3/21/2025

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CHAPTER 1

What is a Master Plan?

A Master Plan is a document developed by communities and their planning commissions to guide current and future land use decisions. Cities, counties, townships, and villages derive their authority to establish a Master Plan through the *Michigan Planning Enabling Act 33 of 2008* (MPEA). All meetings subject to the MPEA comply with the *Open Meetings Act*, and all Master Plan-related written materials are available to the public in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act.

As a living document, the Master Plan is designed to adapt to Garden Township's evolving needs. It may project 20 years or more into the future, but its true effectiveness lies in its ability to address and respond to the changing landscape of land use issues.

A Master Plan developed in accordance with the MPEA will promote Garden Township's current and future needs regarding public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare. A Master Plan includes a Future Land Use Map, and Zoning Plan intended to identify any inconsistencies between the Master plan's goals and strategies and existing zoning and guide changes to the Garden Township Zoning Ordinance.

For the Master Plan to truly serve its purpose as a tool for the Planning Commission, it must be a collaborative effort involving the residents of Garden Township. The development phase of

the Master Plan presents an excellent opportunity for the community to participate actively in the process. By attending Planning Commission meetings, requesting materials, and providing valuable comments and opinions, the residents of Garden Township can ensure that the Master Plan reflects their needs and aspirations for their community.

Planning Process

Until recently, Delta County conducted planning and zoning in Garden Township. As Garden Township began to experience pressure from renewable energy companies to place industrial-scale wind turbines on its peninsula, it became clear that Delta County did not have the planning documents at that time to guide where the turbines could or should be located. Their master plan and zoning ordinance were over twenty years old. As such, individual property owners and renewable energy companies determined the placement of wind turbines throughout the Township. The other residents, not benefiting from lease agreements with the renewable energy company, had no voice regarding the turbine locations, and neighbor-to-neighbor relationships began to erode.

Some farmers were grateful for the financial opportunity to retain their family farms through lease agreements with renewable energy producers as revenue from farming has continued to dwindle. Township residents who chose to live on the picturesque peninsula for its natural beauty felt the turbines obstructed their view shed and would decrease their property values.

Since then, Garden Township has decided to regulate its own zoning and plan for all types of development by following community-driven planning and zoning methods that bring the residents together. Renewable energy systems will continue to be an important topic, as will housing, roads, parks, recreational trails, access to small businesses that support the needs of the residents, and more.

In 2024, a survey was conducted to hear what the community had to say about various planning issues the Township is working through. Responses from the survey will be used through the master plan where relevant, and all results are located in the master plan's appendices.

CHAPTER 2

The Past

The Garden Peninsula has hosted cave dwellers, multiple Indian tribes, French adventurers, missionaries, and, eventually, families and farmers. Early settlements relied on the waterways surrounding the peninsula as the main link to the outside world, as roads were not an option until the early 1900s. The original settlers were more connected to the Green Bay area and the various islands along the way than the land mass areas we know today as Delta and Schoolcraft Counties. As such, settlements developed in Kate's Bay, Sac Harbor, Van's Harbor, Fayette Harbor, and Garden Bay, to name a few. Hunting, fishing, farming, trapping, logging, and working for the Jackson Iron Company were traditional occupations. Many stories exist about

the grit and ambition of the peninsula's early settlers and the survival skills they possessed.

Garden Township was created in 1863, and the first township meeting was held at the H.G. Squires home on the first Monday of April 1863. For reasons unknown, Garden Township was discontinued several years later and reestablished in 1882. H.G. Squires presided at the first township meeting with Thomas Streeter and William Olmstead. H.G. Squires's name is frequently used when researching the history of the Garden Peninsula. As an influential resident of Garden Peninsula, his documented accomplishments include starting the first school in Garden Village and teaching, serving in the Civil War, being a justice of the peace, and being the postmaster from 1883 to 1884.



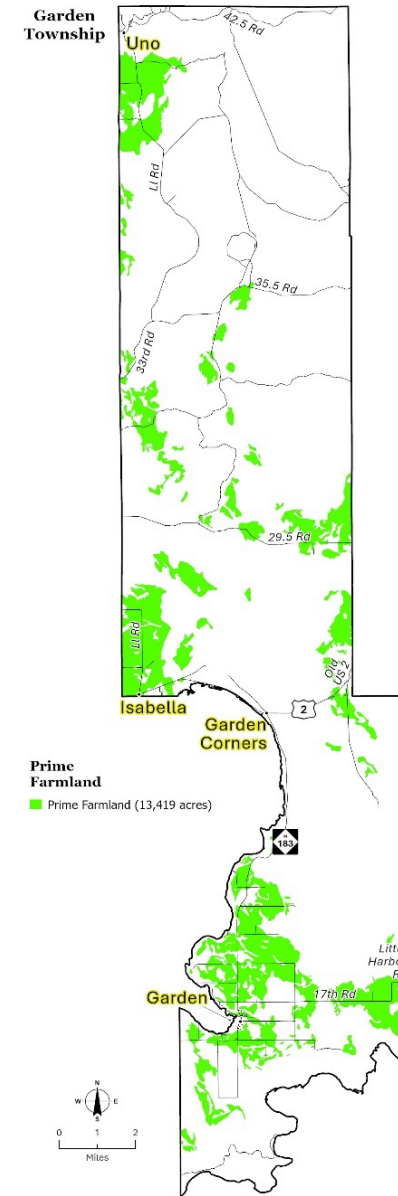
CHAPTER 3

Current Land Use in Garden Township

Prime Farmland

At one time, Garden Township was covered in beech, aspen, and maple forests. Early settlers cleared the land for timber to build houses and barns and charcoal production for smelting iron ore. An abundance of inexpensive land became available after removing valuable timber resources. This affordable land attracted families interested in farming. As the land was cultivated for agriculture, it became apparent that the soil was favorable for growing crops. Since then, the soil has been surveyed, inventoried, and determined to be of the highest quality for crop production. Approximately 13% of Garden Township has soil classified as prime farmland.

The United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service uses several soil classifications that indicate the potential for farming. These include “prime farmland,” “prime farmland if drained,” “not prime farmland,” and “farmland of local importance.” Prime farmland is classified as important as it meets the nation’s short- and long-term needs for food and fiber. Because the supply of high-quality farmland is limited, the US Department of Agriculture encourages local



governments and individual property owners to be responsible stewards of the nation's prime farmland. Prime farmland could be cultivated land, pastureland, forestland, or other land that is not urban or built up. Prime farmland is naturally resilient to flooding. It is permeable to water and air and is not erodible or saturated with water for long periods of time.

Climate adaptation is a phrase frequently used in land use planning that identifies the changing climate conditions across the nation and includes steps communities can take to reduce the negative impacts associated with warming temperatures, droughts, and floods. At this time, it seems that the Upper Peninsula of Michigan is uniquely located and shielded from some extreme conditions that other areas in the country face. Many of the regions in the nation currently struggling for water to grow crops are the primary crop producers for the entire nation. If persistent drought conditions continue, they may have to reduce their agriculture production out of necessity. As that occurs, retaining the prime farmland in Garden Township will be essential for the sustainability and resiliency of the local area and beyond.

Forestry Production

Another important land use in Garden Township is forestry production. Federal and state governments own most of the forested land. Other smaller areas are designated commercial forests and open to the public for hunting and fishing only. Of the 104,832 acres that make up Garden Township, approximately 73% is forested, with most of the forested area located north of US 2. The Hiawatha National Forest owns about 59% or 62,453 acres of forest land and provides public amenities for outdoor recreation such as camping, ORV trails, hunting, and fishing.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources owns about 16% or 16,962 acres. They also offer public amenities for outdoor recreation, such as snowmobile and ORV trails, parks, and campgrounds near Garden Township.

Commercial Use

Commercial use of some density is available in Garden Village. Garden Village has a municipal water system but no municipal wastewater system. Commercial use is limited in Garden Township, with few businesses that support residential needs, such as grocery stores or small shops that offer residents services and places for community entertainment. A desire for that type of development was frequently mentioned in the survey conducted to gather public comments before developing this plan. The current Zoning Map offers plenty of space for commercial development. Still, similar to other rural townships with a population of only 772 people, it isn't easy to justify the investment in owning a business where the population density is so low.

Natural geologic restrictions on water wells and septic systems will always limit commercial development on the Garden Peninsula. Public water and wastewater services are not available or being considered for the future. Connecting Garden Township to the water and wastewater infrastructure systems of Manistique or Gladstone is prohibitively expensive due to the distance to either city or the historically low population growth in Garden Township.

Residential Use

Residential use is predominantly around Lake Michigan's shoreline south of US 2 and along Kregg Bay on the south end of the township. According to the US Decennial Census 2020, there are 647 housing units and 370 households, suggesting the other 277 housing units were vacant at the time of the census. Vacant housing on the Garden Peninsula is probably a camp or second home, or it may be a short-term rental. Garden Township currently does not regulate the number of short-term rentals, so the exact number is unknown. However, Garden Township is a desirable location for short-term rentals.

Agricultural Use

At one time, agricultural use, such as crop growing and dairy farming, was a financially viable industry for many families living in Garden Township. Today, farmers have to deal with volatile commodity markets, unpredictable weather conditions, and rising production costs. Additionally, small-scale farmers compete with large-scale industrialized agriculture operations hundreds or thousands of miles away.

Farmers are aging and running out of time to earn back their losses. As the cost of agricultural production increases, many farmers can no longer afford to lose money while farming. The farm they hoped to pass on to their children doesn't always align with what the children want to do for a profession. Often, a farmer's only option is to diversify their income from farming with other income streams. Wind Turbines were installed in 2008 and 2012, and future solar leases are currently pending.

Public Lands

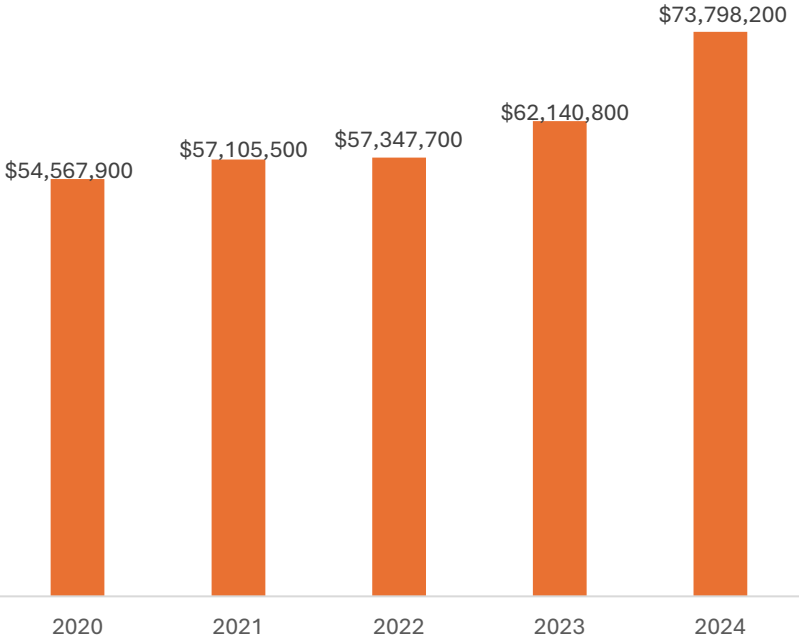
Public Lands, in this context, are Garden Township-owned land used to provide government services. Properties designated as public land are the school, three cemeteries, a transfer station, Garden Township Hall, and the Garden Township Fire Department building, both located in Garden Village, a separate municipality.

Assessed Property Values, State Equalized Values, and Millage Rates

Property values indicate the economic condition of the township. Assessed property values are 50% of the true cash value or market value of the property. The State Equalized Value or SEV is the assessed value that has been approved following County and State equalization. Property values increase with the market value but the actual amount of taxes a property owner pays, known as the taxable value, is capped at the assessed property value at the time of purchase and only increases at the rate of inflation or 5%, whichever is less.

A property owner's tax bill is determined by the local millage rate from all taxing entities, such as schools, fire and emergency, public transit, etc., and the property's taxable value. Millages are added to the property tax bill when the voters approve them for the township.

Garden Township State Equalization Value



Millage Rates for 2024

Millage Purpose	Millage Rate
Township Governance	0.69170
Fire	0.99310
Transfer Station	1.99980
Total Millage Rate	3.68460

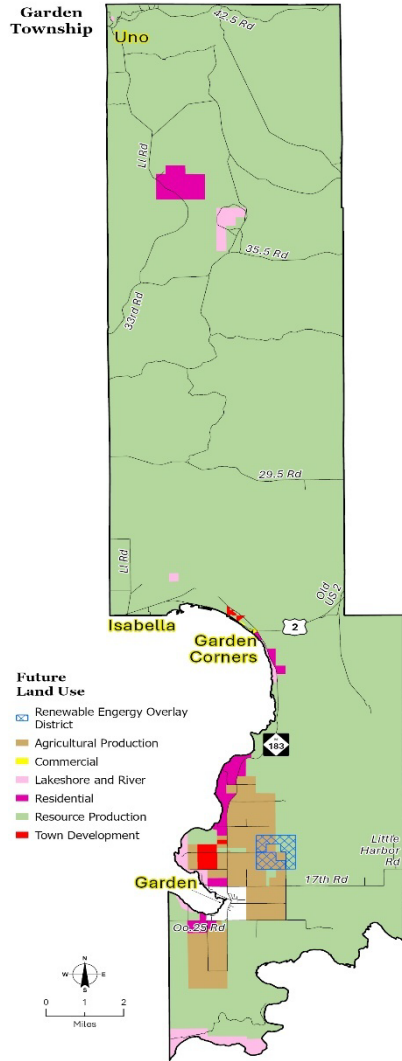
CHAPTER 3

Future Land Use in Garden Township

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008 requires the inclusion of a future land use map and zoning plan in the master plan. The future land use map is a generalized version of the Garden Township Zoning Map, but the future land use map is not used to enforce zoning. Instead, the planning commission uses the future land use map to guide them in making land use decisions within the township. The future land use map informs the zoning plan, and both work together to influence changes that may be made to the zoning ordinance. The future land use map is not intended to be used to identify future land use on a parcel-by-parcel basis. It is a generalized map that represents the desired future land use categories.

Future land use categories, such as zoning districts, are used on the future land use map so the planning commission can easily see how a proposed rezoning may either align with a desired future land use or conflict.

The Future Land Use Map



Future Land Use Category	Current Zoning Districts
Agriculture Production	Agriculture Production (AP) Open Space (OP)
Commercial	Commercial 1 (C1) Commercial 2 (C2)
Lakeshore and River	Lakeshore and River (LS)
Residential	Residential 2 (R2) Residential 3 (R3)
Resource Production	Resource Production (RP)
Town Development	Town Development (TD)

The Zoning Plan

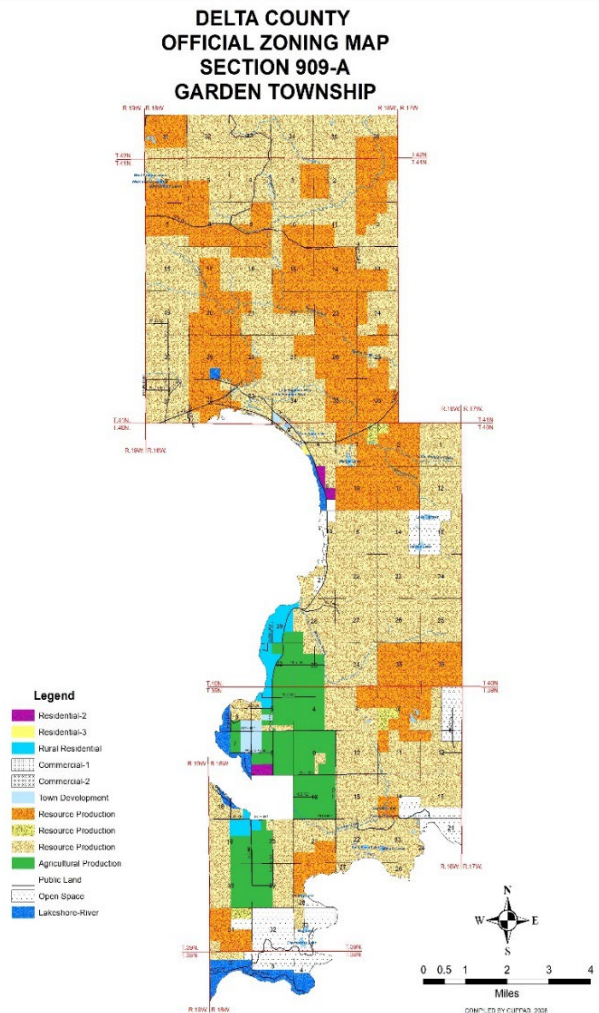
Zoning legislation in Michigan is governed by the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (MZEa) and the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEa). A master plan should promote the purposes of the MZEa and the MPEa to serve as the basis for zoning. The zoning plan covers the areas subject to zoning by the township.

The MPEa outlines the essential components of a zoning plan. This plan must include a description of each current zoning district along with its general purpose, such as residential, agricultural, etc. Additionally, it should detail the class of permitted uses within each district, including single-family, multi-family, commercial, or industrial options.

A zoning plan also needs to provide a schedule of regulations for each district, covering key factors such as building height, lot area, bulk, and setbacks. Furthermore, the plan should explain how the land use categories on the future land use map correspond to the districts on the current zoning map. It should also discuss any proposed zoning changes intended to guide the township towards its desired future land use gradually.

While the state does not mandate local government units to implement zoning, any changes must be based on a master plan. The zoning plan is informed by the recommendations set forth in the master plan. It identifies inconsistencies between the goals, strategies, and existing zoning to make it consistent with the future land use map and the goals and strategies included in this master plan. The Planning Commission will review all future proposed zoning text and map amendments to ensure they align with the future land use map and the zoning plan in this master plan along with the goals and strategies listed in chapter 9.

Current Zoning Map



Garden Township's Current Zoning Districts

Residential 2 – R-2: The intent is to establish and preserve quiet single-family home neighborhoods as desired by large numbers of people, free from other uses except those that are both compatible with and convenient to the residents of the district. The district is designed to accommodate residential opportunities for those who desire ex-urban residential living and are willing to assume the cost of providing many of their own services.

Permitted Principal Uses: Single-family dwellings. Private garages for non-commercial use. The keeping of domestic animals, such as cats or dogs, in a manner not constituting a nuisance to neighboring residents. Farm animals such as horses, cows, or fowl, are not permitted.

Residential 3 – R-3: The intent is to establish and preserve neighborhoods for medium-density residential uses, free from other uses except those that are both compatible with and convenient to the residents of such districts.

Permitted Principal Uses: Single and two-family dwellings, multiple dwellings, motels, and nursing homes. Private garages for non-commercial use. The keeping of domestic animals such as horses, cows, or fowl are not permitted.

Commercial 1 – C-1: The intent is to establish and preserve a compact business district suited to the needs if travelers, tourists, vacationers, and nearby residents.

Permitted Principal Uses: Retail establishments selling gifts, hardware, drugs, groceries, sporting goods, antiques, and baked goods, arts and crafts studios, barber and beauty shops, banks, restaurants, laundromats, and gas stations.

Commercial 2 – C-2: The intent is to establish and preserve general commercial areas consisting of shopping centers and commercial development.

Permitted Principal Uses: Offices, carwash establishments, clinics, kennels, hospitals; mental health centers; retail establishments selling gifts, hardware, drugs, groceries, sporting goods, antiques, and baked goods; arts and craft studios; barber and beauty shops; banks; restaurants; laundromats; gas stations; and all other retail and personal service establishments except those listed in Section 208 (B).

Resource Production – RP: To establish and maintain for low-intensity use those areas which because of their location, accessibility, and natural characteristics are suitable for a wide range of agriculture, forestry, and recreational uses.

Permitted Principal Uses: Single-family dwellings; mobile homes; churches; schools; parks; agriculture production operations including crop cultivation, pastures, orchards, and farmsteads, feedlots not to exceed 500 cows, 1,500 sheep, 1,000 hogs, as well as poultry farms; the growing and harvesting of timber under a scientific program of forest management and forest product yard which are incidental to actual timber production; season dwellings; and in addition

campgrounds, day camps, stables, winter sports facilities, and trails.

Agriculture Production – AP: The intent of this district is to maintain for agricultural purposes those lands which because of their soil characteristics and other factors, are well suited for agricultural uses.

Permitted Principal Uses: Agricultural production operations including crop cultivation, pastures, orchards, farmsteads, single-family dwellings, or mobile homes, and feedlots not to exceed 500 cows, 1,500 sheep, 1,000 hogs, and poultry farms.

Rural Residential – RR: The intent is to establish and maintain an alternative residential environment in accessible rural areas at very low densities.

Permitted Principal Uses: Single-family dwellings; mobile homes. Private garages for non-commercial use. Churches; schools; parks; agriculture production operations including crop cultivation, pastures, orchards, and farmsteads; and the growing and harvesting of timber under a scientific program of forest management and forest product yards which are incidental to actual timber production.

Open Space – OS: The intent of the open space district is to preserve those lands which because of their soil, drainage or topographic characteristics, their lack of accessibility, or because they are important wildlife habitats, such as deer yards, are not suitable for development.

Permitted Principal Uses: The growing and harvesting of timber and bush fruit, agricultural produce, and wildlife management.

Lake Shore Residential – LS/R: The intent of the LS/R district is to establish and maintain for residential and recreational use those areas with frontage in inland lakes and rivers and the Lake Michigan Shoreline which because of their natural characteristics and accessibility, are suitable for development.

Permitted Principal Uses: Single-family dwellings, mobile homes and seasonal dwellings. Private garages for non-commercial use. The keeping of domestic animals such as cats or dogs, in a manner not constituting a nuisance to neighboring residents. Farm animals such as horses, cows or fowl, are not permitted.

Town Development - TD: The intent of the town development district is to preserve a district for residential, retail, and service establishments, and certain government uses that are compatible with a small-town setting serving residents and tourists. This district is designed for small unincorporated town areas where a mix of residential and retail is in accord with established patterns of land use and the needs of the nearby residents.

Permitted Principal Uses: Single-family dwellings, two-family dwellings, cemeteries, township halls, community centers, fire halls, elevated water storage tanks, post offices, personal services, offices, general retail sales to the consumer, production may occur on the premise provided all

goods produced on the premises are sold on the premises

Height and Placement Regulations

District	Front	Side	Rear	Height	Minimum Lot Size	Minimum Lot Width
R-2	30'	10' B	30'	30'	20,000 sq. ft. D-E	100'
R-3	30'	10' B	30'	30'	20,000 sq. ft. D-E	100'
C-1	40'	5'	20'	30'	None	None
C-2	40'	5'	20'	30'	None	None
RP	30'	30'	30'	30'	20 acres D-E	None
OS	30'	30'	30'	30'	None D-E *20 acres Conditional Use	None
AP	30'	30'	30'	30'	20 acres D-E	None
RR	30'	30'	30'	30'	5 acres D-E *2 acres Conditional Uses	300' 200'
LS/R	30"	10' B	30'	30'	20,000 sq. ft. D-E	100'
TD	To be established by the Planning Commission					

- A. Height at any point on a structure shall not exceed horizontal distance to any lot line.
- B. A detached garage not exceeding 14 feet in height may be located within four feet of the side lot line.
- C. Lot line shall be measured at the front setback line.
- D. 12,000 sq. ft. where a lot is served by public sewer and water supply.
- E. 15,000 sq. ft. where a lot is served by public sewer or water supply.
- F. Lots created by natural or manmade barriers such as lakes, rivers, streams, public roads, or railroads shall be considered to be the same as lots of nonconforming sizes that were in existence and recorded before the adoption of this ordinance.

Any lot, before being utilized under this provision must be reviewed by the Township Planning Commission at a public hearing and must meet the following requirements:

1. The proposed structure must meet the height and set-back requirements of the district in which it is located.
2. The proposed lot is accessible on an improved public road.
3. The proposed lot is accessible to existing community facilities and public services.

Proposed Zoning Changes

As stated earlier, Delta County conducted zoning for Garden Township and nine other townships until August 10, 2022.

Garden Township did not have a master plan then, so any rezoning decisions made between August 10, 2022, and before this master plan is fully adopted could be legally challenged. Therefore, the planning commission should revisit and act upon them after adopting this master plan.

Zoning Map Considerations

Due to the transition from county zoning to township zoning, the Official Garden Township Zoning Map will need several amendments to make it a useful and reliable guide for map-level zoning in the township. While parcel boundaries are not required to delineate zoning districts, they are recommended for the administration and regulation of zoning districts. As such, the Garden Township digital parcel layer should become part of the township’s official zoning map. The Garden Township Zoning Administrator will decide which zoning district will prevail in locations with more than one zoning district on a parcel.

Renewable Energy Considerations

The installation of additional renewable energy systems will continue to put pressure on the township, as the infrastructure needed to capture and distribute the generated energy has already been established. Moreover, renewable energy systems are generally more cost-effective to install on open land.

To protect the township from large-scale renewable energy systems but allow residential-scale renewable energy, the

township should allow residential-scale solar installations regardless of zoning districts.

It is a priority to prevent the use of prime farmland for large-scale renewable energy systems over the coming decades. Survey results collected during the development of this master plan indicate that 74% of surveyed residents in Garden Township strongly oppose large-scale solar energy generation.

According to the new large-scale renewable energy siting legislation, known as PA 233, the Michigan Public Service Commission evaluates projects based on criteria that assess their impact on local land use. This evaluation includes considerations for renewable energy projects that may reduce prime farmland and takes into account the percentage of land that is already allocated for energy generation.

Garden Township contains prime farmland and has a significant number of wind turbines, showing that it has already contributed its fair share of renewable energy facilities. To further manage this, Garden Township has established an overlay district for the development of commercial or utility-scale wind, solar, and battery energy storage facilities.

Commercial and Residential Development

The Garden Peninsula's potential for large-scale commercial and housing developments is limited by its distinct bedrock and surface geology, which affects the availability of water wells and septic systems.

Also, any future residential growth should be restricted to all-season roads for the purpose of preserving the seasonal roads

during the spring thaw and providing greater access by emergency responders in the event of an emergency.

Current District Intent

The permitted uses in the zoning ordinance should reflect the township's limitations on development density and help preserve its rural character. The ordinance should not include districts that allow for impractical development due to the township's natural constraints, such as bedrock and surface geology. For example, the current Commercial 2 (C-2) and Town Development (TD) zoning districts are inconsistent with the future land use plans for Garden Township, especially as long as wells and septic systems are required for future growth.

Residential District Intent and Placement Regulations

The Residential 2 and Residential 3 districts should be Residential 1 and Residential 2, but most importantly, the intent of those two zoning districts should be specific to Garden Township and its unique development constraints.

The current zoning ordinance Height and Placement Regulations mention Placement Regulations D. and E. Both refer to the required square footage of a lot where a public sewer and water supply serves a lot. A public sewer and water system is not present or viable in the future for Garden Township, so those two Placement Regulations should be eliminated from the current Height and Placement Regulations.

Short Term Rentals

Garden Township is the perfect location for short-term rentals or vacation rentals. Having some short-term rentals can be good for the local economy as it supports local golf courses, wineries,

and restaurants. Yet the short-term rental business is market-driven and does not consider the impact on the local housing market or the demand for improved road systems and emergency systems. Therefore, limiting short-term rental activity to a permit or a specific zoning district supports greater compatibility between demand for township services and support for local economic opportunity.

Resource Production District

The Resource Production District is Garden Township's largest zoning district. If the Township decides to support additional residential development, it can allocate portions of the RP district to Residential Development.

CHAPTER 5

Community Trends and Demographics

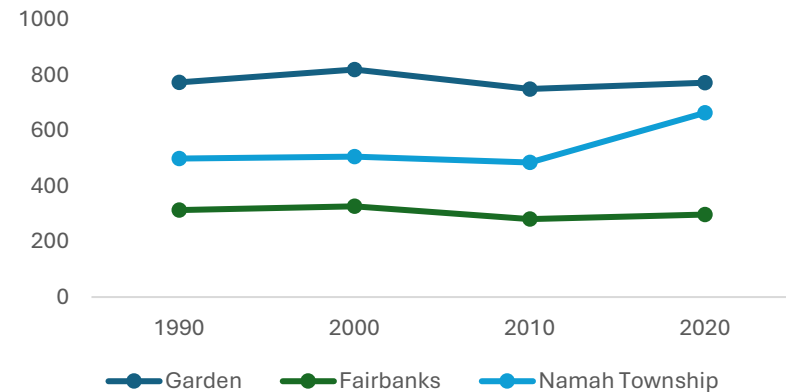
Planning the future of Garden Township includes understanding its residents and their characteristics, such as age, education, income, and economic challenges. This helps the planning commission and township board determine the community's needs.

Garden Township is located further from Gladstone and Escanaba in Delta County to the west than Manistique in Schoolcraft County to the east. The township is divided in half by US Highway 2, with heavily forested areas to the north and the more open areas on the peninsula extending into Lake Michigan situated to the south. According to the US Decennial Census

2020, there are about 772 people who live in Garden Township, which has about 159.8 square miles of land and 24.5 square miles of inland lakes and rivers. The population density is considered very low, at 4.4 people per square mile. Most residents live in the southern part of the township on the Garden Peninsula. US Census data shows that Garden Township's population has remained relatively stable over the past 30 years, as have their neighboring Fairbanks and Namah townships. In 2000, Garden Township had the highest population of 820 people. The population lowered by 70 people to 750 in 2010 and increased to 772 in 2020.

These fluctuations present a pattern of natural change, or births minus deaths, along with net migration, or in-migration minus out-migration.

Figure 1. Garden, Fairbanks and Nahma Population Trends

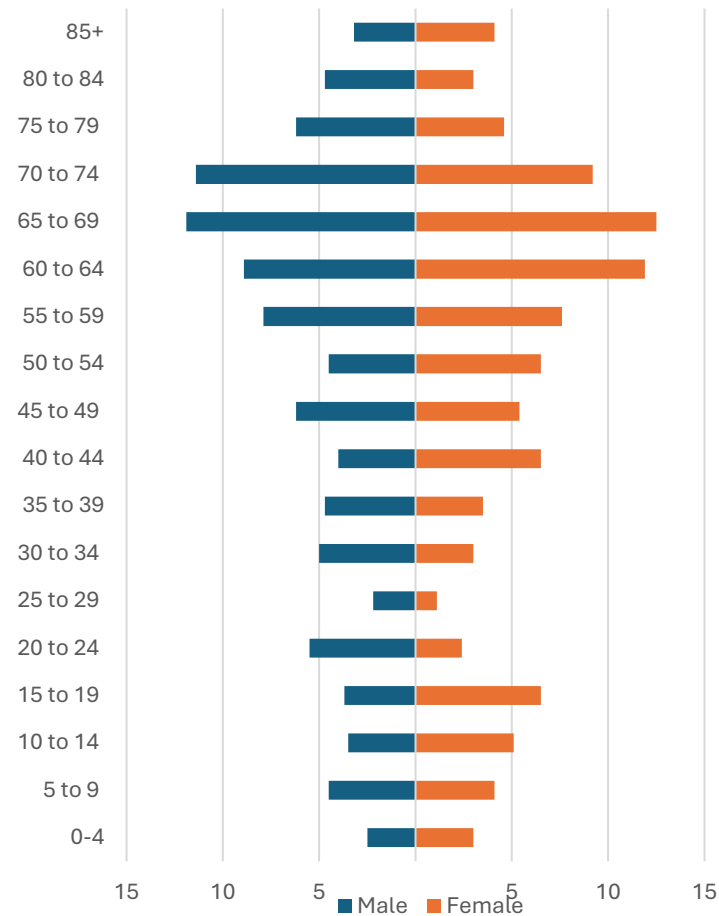


The State of Michigan has been trending toward more deaths than births before COVID-19. Births are projected to continue declining as baby boomers age into high-mortality years. These

projections are even more severe for small rural communities with limited economic growth to draw a younger workforce.

Understanding the community’s age structure is valuable to decision-makers who strive to maintain a safe and healthy lifestyle for their residents. The population pyramid below visually represents Garden Township’s age cohorts by gender. If the population pyramid is larger at the base, the community has a larger population of younger cohorts. Populations that are stable are equally lined up like a column. Garden Township has an inverted pyramid, meaning there is a higher aging population that will experience a natural decrease with fewer younger cohorts to replace them. The age cohorts showing the largest population in Garden Township are between 60 and 74 years old. An aging population of this size will have implications for township leaders as they strive to sustain a population that needs more supportive services such as healthcare, transportation, and supportive housing while trying to attract and retain young families. Fortunately, Garden Township is a unique and special place to live that will always be attractive to families and individuals who value location over modern conveniences. Also, a community of retired citizens means more people are available to assist in running the township by sharing their many years of expertise while in the workforce.

Figure 2. Garden Township Population Pyramid

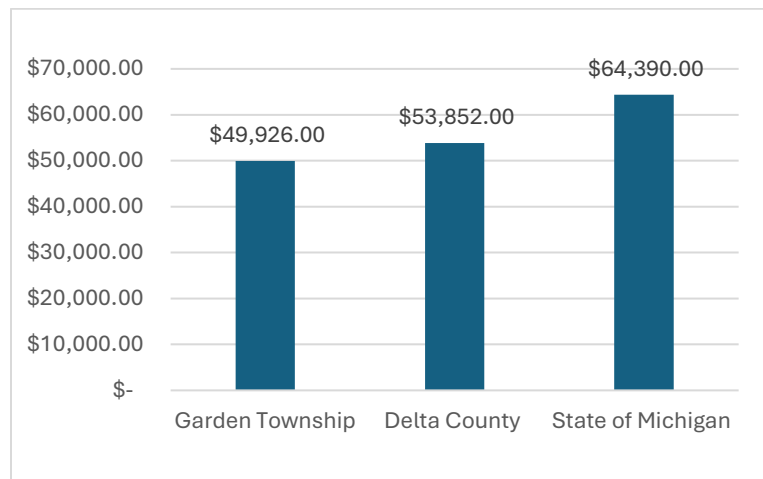


Source: US Census; Decennial 2020

A community's median income is linked to health, quality of life, and general well-being. A higher median income suggests there are more residents who can afford a millage to support services that are difficult to cover with township revenue alone. That is ideal for more remote locations that lack services because of their low population. A lower median income means many households in the township are struggling to provide the bare necessities, and additional assistance with food, healthcare, and transportation may be necessary to advocate for to offset their burden. Most rural townships in the Upper Peninsula tend to have a little of both.

Garden Township's median household income is \$49,926, which means half the township's population is above the median and the other half is below.

Figure 3.
Median Household Income Comparison: Garden Township, Delta County, and the State of Michigan



Garden Township's median household income suggests that some households may have difficulty covering basic necessities.

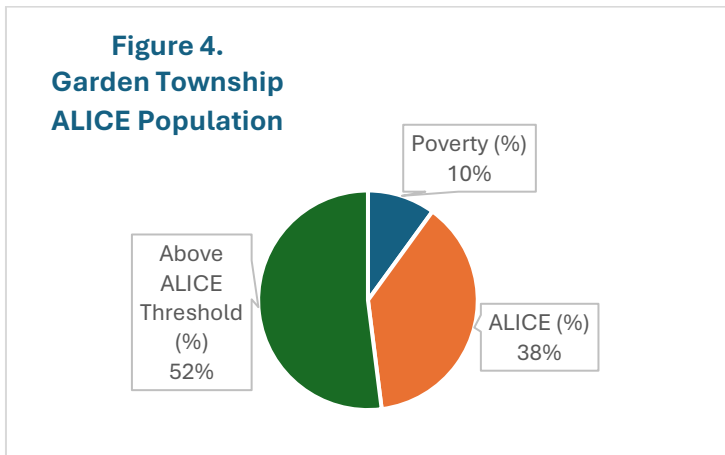
The federal poverty level (FPL) is a family's minimum income to cover necessities like food, clothing, transportation, and housing. It is adjusted annually for inflation and varies based on household size and location. The FPL also determines eligibility for programs like Medicaid, food and housing assistance, and the poverty tax exemption, in whole or in part, for the principal residence of persons who cannot pay their property taxes because of poverty. Eligibility is determined annually by the assessor.

Poverty in Garden Township is reported to affect approximately 12.5% of the total population, but this figure varies significantly by age group. For instance, individuals aged 18 years and younger represent the highest percentage of those living in poverty at 29.3%. In contrast, the poverty rate for those aged 18 to 64 years is 13.5%, while only 5.4% of individuals aged 65 and over fall below the poverty line. Recognizing that the youngest age group experiences the highest rates of poverty in the township can help decision-makers and local leaders find effective ways to alleviate the financial burden on families. The Big Bay De Noc School, located on the Garden Peninsula, plays a crucial role by providing free breakfast and lunch to all students, as well as assistance with school-related supplies through the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Back to School Program.

Another measure of household financial difficulty is not based on the poverty level, so it is not as easy to identify. These households earn more than the federal poverty level but cannot afford the cost of living in their area. These families are asset-

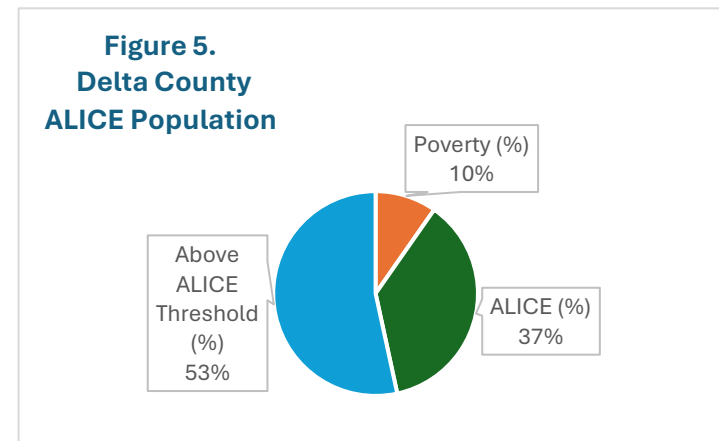
limited, income-constrained, and employed or ALICE. The ALICE population is a growing population estimated to represent about four in ten households in the United States. Many of these households have two incomes and are educated but struggle to afford basic needs like food, housing, childcare, healthcare, and transportation.

Awareness about the ALICE population is led by the United Way and is determined by US Census household size and income data compared to the minimum cost to live and work in the current economy by looking at the costs of rent, utilities, child care, food, transportation, etc. It also considers the labor force conditions, such as the number of hourly vs salaried employees. Hourly workers are likely to have fluctuations in their income and are less likely to receive benefits such as paid sick leave or healthcare, dental, and optical. The pie chart below shows the percentage of Garden Township households in poverty, ALICE households, and households above the ALICE threshold.



Source: <https://www.unitedforalice.org/county-reports/michigan>

Delta County, which includes Garden Township, has an ALICE population percentage that reflects similar trends throughout the region. This indicates that the challenges faced by the ALICE population are not unique to Garden Township but are instead influenced by enduring economic conditions at regional and national levels. However, increased awareness within the local community fosters support and understanding among community leaders eager to help and attract families and children.



Source: <https://www.unitedforalice.org/county-reports/michigan>

Educational Attainment

Education is essential for a community's economic success and an individual's quality of life. It offers opportunities to acquire new skills and knowledge, fostering positive change for individuals and their communities. By investing in education, individuals can achieve financial stability and enhance the well-being of their community.

A population's education level is a crucial factor for future employers. A community with a well-educated workforce with the right qualifications and skills will attract businesses and industries looking for skilled labor.

About 96.6% of the population in Garden Township that is 25 years and older have a high school degree or higher and 25.2% have a bachelor's degree or higher. This is higher than Delta County, where 92% of the selected population have a high school degree, and 19.7% have a bachelor's degree or higher. The State of Michigan also shows that 92% of the state's population have a bachelor's degree or higher, but there is a higher rate of bachelor's degree or higher at 32%.

School enrollment is slightly lower in Garden Township at 70.6% of the kindergarten to 12th grade compared to Delta County at 78.7%. Still, Garden Township and Delta County are higher than the state of Michigan at 68.7%.

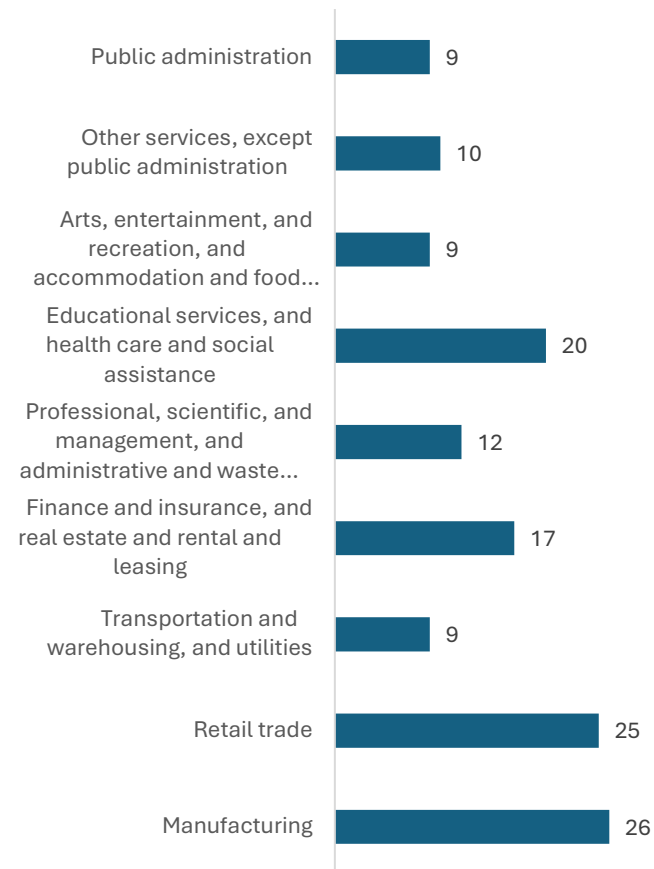
Employment

We know many of Garden Township's residents are of retirement age, but some may still choose to remain employed, whether out of necessity or desire. Many individuals in today's society enjoy their jobs and hope to work as long as possible. Their occupation gives them social status, community appreciation, and social engagement. Also, many people live longer, healthier lives that allow them to participate in the workforce longer than they ever thought they could.

According to the American Community Survey 2022 statistics, 179 people in Garden Township over 16 are either employed or actively seeking employment. There are 344 who are not in the labor force. About 164 of the employed commutes to work, and

their mean travel time is about 30 minutes. Only 14 currently work from home. The following chart shows Garden Township's workforce participation rates by industry.

Figure 6.
Garden Township Workforce Participation by Industry



Source: US Census; Decennial 2020

CHAPTER 6

Housing

Everyone needs a place to call home, regardless of their income level. Communities that offer a variety of housing types accessible to different income brackets foster vibrant, diverse neighborhoods. A mix of housing options—affordable homes for lower-income families and premium residences for those with higher incomes—can enhance local government resources and promote economic growth. For instance, if housing prices rise too high for young families, they may no longer be able to afford living in Garden Township. Conversely, if Garden Township only has housing for lower-income households, it could struggle to attract higher-income residents.

Households

The U.S. Census Bureau defines a household as a group of people who share a housing unit as their primary residence. This includes:

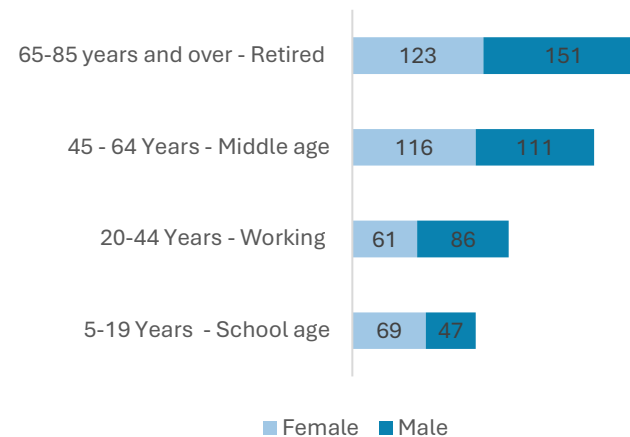
- Family members
- Unrelated people, such as lodgers, foster children, or employees
- A single person living alone
- A group of unrelated people, such as partners or roomers

The life stages of males and females in Garden Township households are another way of identifying the social needs of the family and non-family households. For example, younger

families rely on schools, childcare, libraries, and grocery stores. In contrast, adults living alone seek access to social events, entertainment, and personal care facilities such as hair salons, exercise studios, and walking trails. Many older adults living alone also need social opportunities but may need more support to access those locations. Older adults are a growing demographic in the township that will require special considerations for multiple services and housing.

Figure 7. shows that the majority of the households are middle-aged or retired. This demographic typically does not move as frequently as the earlier age cohorts. They tend to live in single-family-style houses for decades, and they are more likely to have their home mortgage paid off.

Figure 7.
Life Stage by Age of Householder



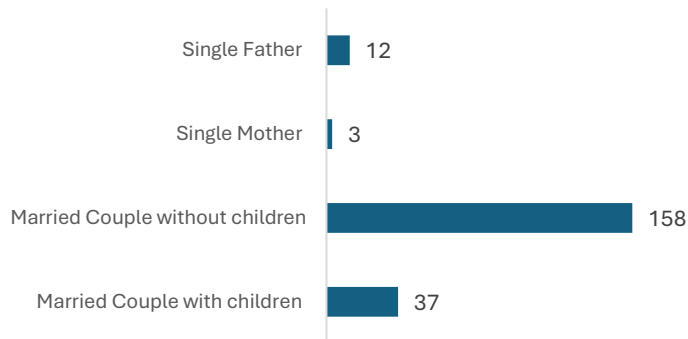
Family and Non-Family Households

Analyzing the current composition of households in Garden Township, including both family and non-family members, as well as the inhabitants' life stages, will provide valuable guidance for determining the types of housing units and supportive services needed by the Township.

Married couples with children typically need more living space, such as additional bedrooms and bathrooms and sports and recreational equipment storage. In contrast, married couples without children usually do not require a large home; however, they may possess a larger residence filled with accumulated belongings over the years and may not be ready to downsize. Single mothers and fathers also need enough bedrooms for their children but often face limitations based on their budget.

In Garden Township, there are 370 households. Of that number, 230 are families. Of the 230 families, 158 are married couples without children up to 18 years of age, 37 households are

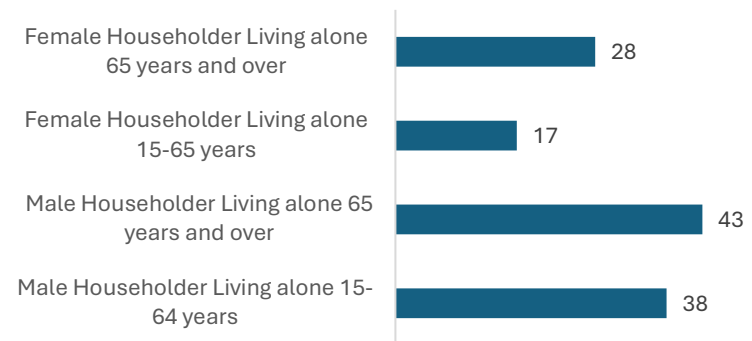
Figure 8.
Households by Family Type



married with children up to 18 years of age, 3 are single mothers, and 12 are single fathers, both with children up to 18 years of age. The number of married couples without children is directly related to the age and number of females and males in households where the majority of the males and females are 45 to 85 years and older so their children are over 18 years of age and not included in the census data table.

Non-family households consist of individuals who live alone or unrelated individuals living together. Figure 9 indicates that many males aged 15 to over 65 live alone. Additionally, among householders aged 65 and older, the number of males living alone surpasses that of females in the same age category.

Figure 9.
Nonfamily Households



Recognizing that an increasing number of households have elderly individuals living alone can encourage the community to provide support for them. These individuals may require assistance with transportation to non-emergency medical appointments, grocery shopping, obtaining household supplies, and attending social events.

The need for these services to the elderly is especially important in rural communities in the Upper Peninsula because there is no other way for them to get the assistance they need. Local volunteers have come together to assist elderly individuals living alone, even dedicating special vehicles for their transportation when necessary. A notable example of this initiative can be found in Burt Township, located in Alger County.

Housing for the elderly often requires modifications to their single-family homes to accommodate age-related mobility challenges. Home modifications or rehabilitation will be especially important for homes over 40, as these structures may not be designed to support aging in place. Additionally, smaller-scale assisted living facilities can provide alternative housing options for the elderly, allowing them to remain within their communities as they age.

Housing Units Occupied, Vacant, and Rentals

A housing unit is a house, an apartment, a mobile home or trailer, a group of rooms, or a single room that is occupied or, if vacant, is intended for occupancy as separate living quarters. Separate living quarters are those in which the occupants live separately from any other persons in the building and have direct access from outside or through a common hall.

The housing unit inventory includes both occupied and vacant housing units, with some exceptions. Recreational vehicles, boats, vans, tents, railroad cars, and similar structures are included only if they serve as someone's usual place of residence. Vacant mobile homes are counted as long as they are intended for occupancy at the location where they are situated.

Garden Township has approximately 647 housing units, of which about 370 are occupied and 277 are vacant. Among the 277 vacant units, around 27 were considered available for rent at the

time of the census count. Approximately 250 vacant housing units in Garden Township are unavailable for rent or sale. This suggests that these vacant homes are primarily used for seasonal purposes and are unoccupied for part of the year.

Garden Township does not regulate the number of vacation rentals or regulate by zoning district where vacation rentals or Airbnb properties can be located in the Township. Some vacant housing may be designated for short-term rentals, which is not a use reflected in US Census counts. However, a review of the Airbnb website shows that there are about 18 short-term rentals listed in Garden Township. Each of the rentals looks very inviting, and the price per night seems reasonable for what the host is offering as a short-term rental.

From 2012 to 2022, the number of multifamily buildings (with two or more housing units) decreased by five. Although we do not know the condition of the removed units, it is important to recognize that multifamily housing options are generally more affordable than single-family homes, making them suitable for both younger and older households.

Garden Township should support the future development of multifamily housing to attract and retain young adults and provide more affordable housing options for its aging population.

Quality of Housing Stock

Unless a home has been properly maintained over the years, owning an older house can present challenges and may not be as affordable as it seems. Also, dilapidated older homes tend to have a lower taxable value, negatively affecting local property values. In Michigan, laws designed to protect homeowners from structurally unsafe buildings and electrical, mechanical, and plumbing codes weren't mandated until January 1, 1973.

In Garden Township, most homes—approximately 67% (425 houses)—were built during the 1970s or earlier. While these older homes may be more affordable, they can be challenging to heat and often require significant repairs, such as new roofs, windows, doors, and upgrades to plumbing and electrical systems. In contrast, only 34% (222 houses) have been constructed since 1980, a period of 40 years.

Additionally, the State of Michigan has experienced a decline in new housing development from 1980 to 2021, with about 63% of homes built before 1980 and only 37% built during the subsequent four decades. This decline in housing development over the past 40 years has significantly contributed to the current lack of available housing.

Housing Costs and Affordability

The cost of housing in Garden Township is reasonable when compared to the median household income. The median household income represents the middle point, indicating that 50% of households earn \$49,926 or more.

Housing is deemed affordable if the total monthly mortgage, insurance, taxes, and utilities costs do not exceed 30% of a household's income. When housing costs surpass this 30% threshold, the household is considered overburdened by housing expenses.

According to the American Community Survey (ACS) 2022, Garden Township has 86 housing units with a mortgage and 212 housing units without a mortgage. The 86 units with a mortgage incur higher monthly housing costs. Figure 10 illustrates the number of households overburdened with housing expenses with a mortgage. It reveals that approximately 18 households shown with red bars, or 20%, qualify as overburdened according to the 30% cost threshold, and about 80% are not overburdened.

Figure 10.
Monthly Homeowner (with a mortgage)
costs as a percentage of Household
Income

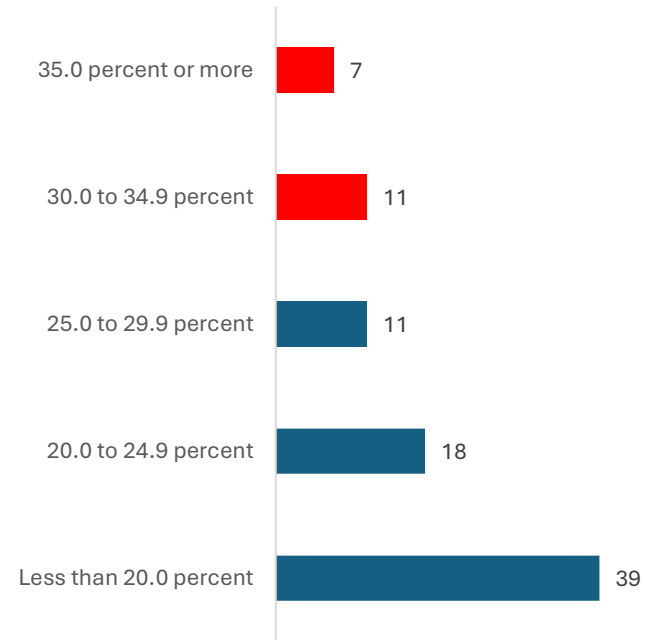
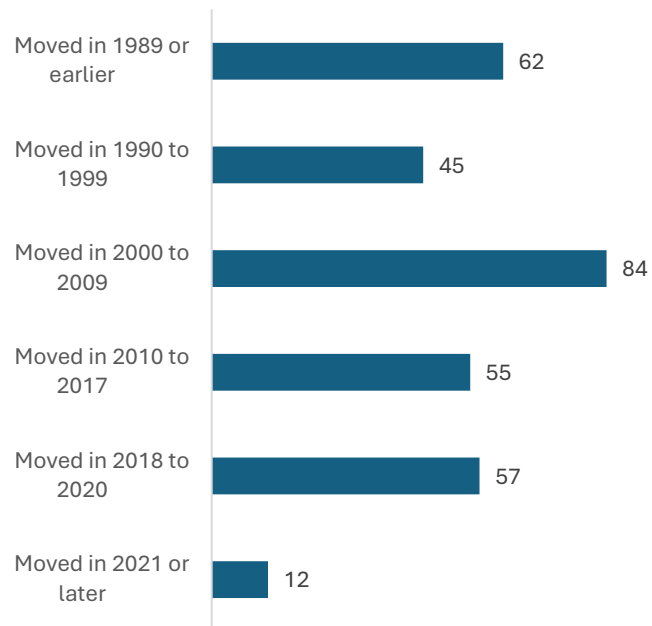


Figure 11 shows very little movement among most Garden Township households (60%). Once homeowners settle in, they tend to stay. This trend was also reflected in Garden Township survey results. When asked how long survey respondents have lived in Garden Township, over fifty-five indicated that they have lived in the township for over 20 years. Additionally, when asked about their plans to remain in Garden Township, more than one hundred respondents expressed their intention to stay indefinitely.

Figure 11.
Year Householder Moved into Unit

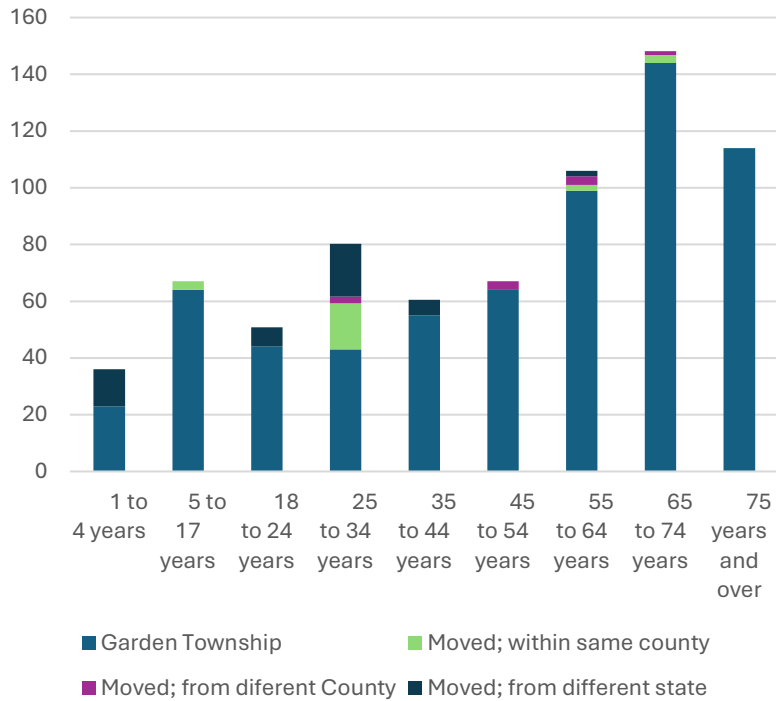


Housing Types

The type of housing available attracts a particular kind of householder. For example, younger householders may be looking for rental housing because they are not ready to settle down and purchase a single-family home. If rental housing options don't exist, younger householders are forced to live where rental housing is available.

Single-family homes constitute the largest portion of Garden Township's housing type, accounting for 92.7%, or 607 homes. The next largest category includes 48 homes (7.3%) that do not qualify as single-family or multifamily; these may be mobile homes or other more affordable housing types. Figure 12 below shows that the most mobile age group for housing is the 25 to 35-year-olds. This reflects an opportunity for the Township to support housing types that are affordable and available to the most mobile population.

Figure 12.
Households that Moved into Garden Township by Age Group



Considerations for Housing by the Planning Commission

1. Thriving Communities have a variety of safe, decent, and affordable housing for different types of households.
2. Most houses in Garden Township are single-family units that rarely become available for sale. This situation

creates challenges for young individuals and families starting in life.

- The Planning Commission should support new housing developments that are more affordable, such as allowing smaller housing types to be built and supporting the development of affordable modular homes. Careful consideration for the availability of water and the permitting of septic systems should always be considered with the placement of any new housing development.
3. Many Garden Township homes are old, which can pose challenges for elderly residents. These older houses often require more repairs and may not be suitable for those with mobility issues, mainly if bedrooms and bathrooms are located on the second floor. Additionally, they tend to be less energy-efficient than newer homes. This situation makes it difficult for seniors to age in place, particularly since they may have fixed incomes that do not allow for the costs of necessary repairs and renovations.
 - The Planning Commission should seek out local housing rehabilitation and repair programs and work with the Township Board to make that information available to their residents in mailings such as tax bills.
 4. Many seniors fear losing their independence and leaving their community for assisted living.

- The Planning Commission should seek creative ways to support assisted living facilities for the elderly in Garden Township. These facilities do not need to be sizeable senior housing complexes. Instead, they should be specifically designed to accommodate only a few local seniors at one time.
5. The number of vacation rentals in Garden Township appears to be increasing. For some property owners in Garden Peninsula, owning and managing vacation rentals can be profitable. However, this trend may negatively affect local housing prices and availability, particularly for starter homes and rental properties. Additionally, it could lead to increased demand for Township services.
- The Planning Commission and the Garden Township Board should consider establishing a permitting process to regulate the number and location of vacation rentals in the Township.

CHAPTER 7

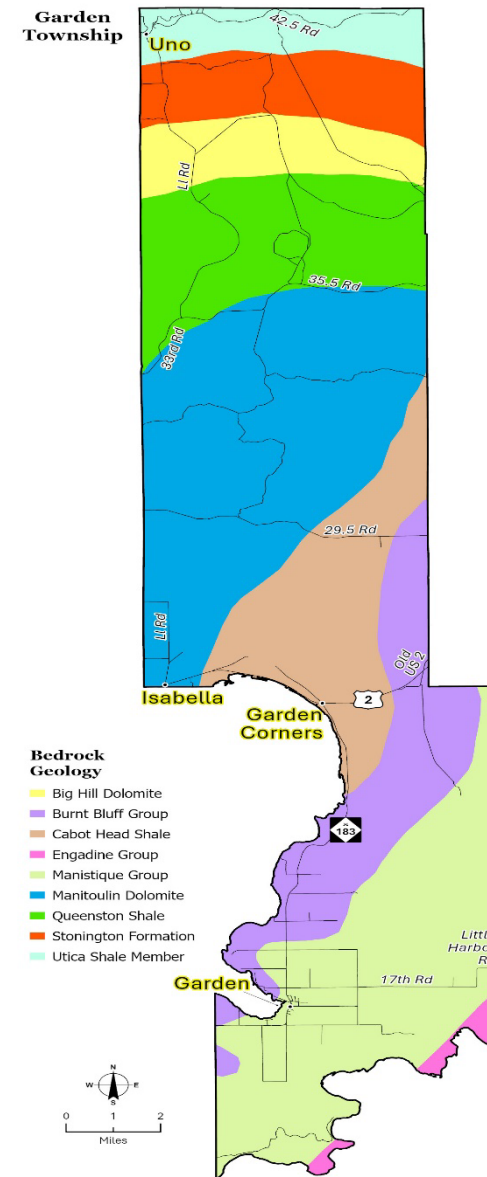
Natural Features and Land Use

Natural features, including soils, geology, water sources, and other natural resources, significantly influence a community's development. These physical characteristics can either constrain or promote growth. For instance, the types of soil and geological formations often affect a community's capacity to provide high-quality water and wastewater services. Furthermore, natural resources such as timber and minerals are frequently crucial in communities' establishment and growth or subsequent decline. These natural features are often interconnected; a disturbance in one area can impact others. Therefore, from a planning perspective, it is essential to understand these relationships and the role that natural features play in shaping a community's future development.

Bedrock Geology

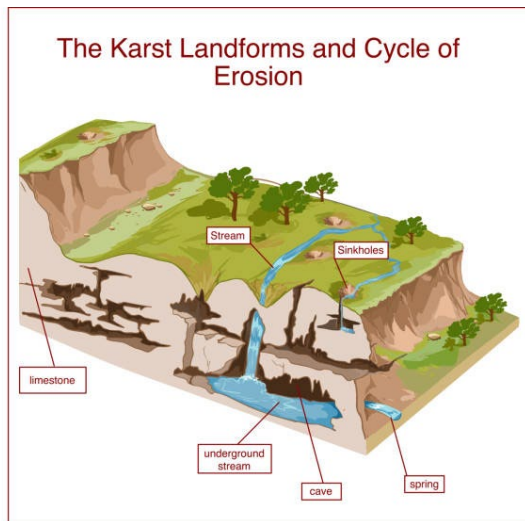
Both bedrock and surface geology significantly impact community development. Bedrock geology refers to the solid rock formations found below the soil, formed during the early periods of the Earth's evolution. Over millions of years, these formations have been extensively folded, uplifted, eroded, and weathered, and they are now covered by surface geology and soil.

Delta County's bedrock is mainly composed of sedimentary rocks formed during the Paleozoic Era, which occurred approximately 400 to 500 million years ago. The Paleozoic rocks in the area include limestone, dolomite, shale, sandstone, and gypsum. These rocks were deposited in the shallow seas that covered the



Michigan Basin for much of the Paleozoic Era. The variety of these sediments reflects the region's complex geological history, marked by fluctuating sea levels, changing shorelines, and different sediments.

Geology is important to a community's development because it supplies groundwater. The quality and quantity of groundwater are influenced by the types of bedrock present and the layers the water must pass through before being extracted. Certain types of bedrock can increase the risk of groundwater contamination, particularly when they are located close to the surface. Surface runoff is filtered through the soil, sand, and gravel that overlay the bedrock, which helps remove many contaminants through this filtering process. However, when bedrock is near the surface, there is less opportunity to filter out these contaminants, allowing polluted runoff to enter the groundwater table. If the bedrock is highly permeable, contaminants can quickly reach the same levels of groundwater used for domestic purposes.



In 1997, a significant study was conducted by local public health agencies and state water quality organizations, resulting in the publication of the Garden Peninsula Aquifer Protection Plan. This plan is unavailable online but can be reviewed at the Delta Menominee Public Health Department in Escanaba.

The plan describes the peninsula's karst landforms, how the erosion of soluble rock types such as limestone, dolomite, shale, sandstone, and gypsum formed them, and how these highly permeable karst formations contribute to non-point source pollution in the water table on the Garden Peninsula. It presents the findings from multiple voluntary water samples collected throughout the peninsula during the study period and identifies the types of contamination and their causes. It describes several mitigation measures implemented, including properly capping abandoned wells. Recommendations were also made available to the public to educate residents and encourage the discontinuation of behaviors causing water contamination. The information in the Garden Peninsula Aquifer Protection Plan should remain a valuable resource for future land use development planning on the Garden Peninsula. The natural bedrock formations will always impact water quality, and protection measures should be reinforced through planning and zoning.

Also, maintaining a broad understanding of the natural sensitivity of the soils and bedrock on the Garden Peninsula will be essential in promoting voluntary compliance, as most people recognize the importance of having access to clean, safe drinking water.

Common rural land use activities that cause groundwater contamination and should be discouraged are:

- Improperly functioning septic systems

- Abandon water wells
- Livestock wastes
- Pesticides and fertilizers for croplands
- Improperly constructed and maintained water wells
- Illegal garbage dumping
- Improper storage or disposal of petroleum products, including abandoned vehicles, equipment, and machinery that had not removed the toxic chemicals before being permanently retired.

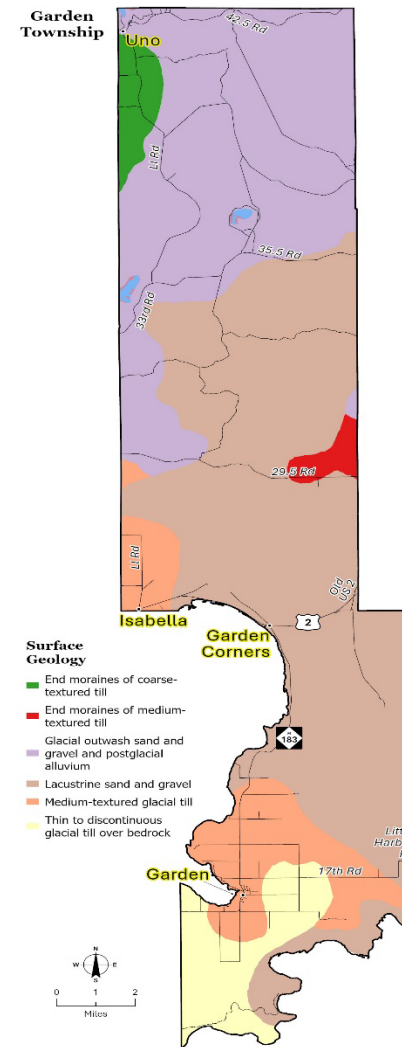
Today, few people know about the Garden Peninsula Aquifer Protection Plan. The original local and state agencies have not made an ongoing effort to determine whether there is a continuing problem. So, having your well water tested regularly is a good idea.

Surface Geology

The surface geology deposits in Delta County primarily result from glacial activity. These deposits can be categorized based on their material content and the processes by which they were formed. There are three main types of glacial deposits:

1. ****Till**** - Material deposited directly by glaciers, with minimal movement from surface water.
2. ****Outwash**** - Materials such as sand, silt, clay, gravel, and organic matter carried and deposited by moving streams, also known as alluvial deposits
3. ****Lake Deposits**** - Materials deposited by glacial lakes, also known as lacustrine deposits.

Additionally, end moraines or recessional moraines are types of till formed at the edge of a glacier or left behind as a glacier melts and retreats.



Understanding surface geology is important for land use planning because it reveals information about a location's ability to provide groundwater, suitable locations for building development, and land areas that should not be developed as they may be prone to flooding or erosion.

The map above shows that most of Garden Township is glacial outwash, lake deposits, and glacial till. Glacial outwash areas frequently provide very fertile farmland. Lake deposits or lacustrine, formed in or growing in lakes, are rock formations formed at the bottom of ancient lakes. The percentage of sand, silt, and clay determines the permeability of the lacustrine deposits and water availability.

Soils with more than 25 percent silt or clay can slow down the drainage process, forming swampy or marshy areas. When high concentrations of silt and clay are absent, the deposits are usually moderately to highly permeable. As discussed earlier, highly permeable soils allow surface water to drain quickly, reaching the water table before filtering out any contaminants on the surface. About 60 percent of the township area is estimated to have thin to intermittent lake deposits.

Wetlands

A wetland is an ecosystem that is saturated with water for varying periods and characterized by aquatic vegetation and hydric soils. About six wetland types are found in Michigan. They include marshes, wet prairies, bogs, fens, shrub wetlands, and forested wetlands.

Wetlands are protected from development by federal and state agencies regardless of zoning or land ownership because they are important to the existence of other natural features such as

inland lakes, groundwater, fisheries, wildlife, and the Great Lakes. Some of the many benefits provided by wetlands include:

- Flood and stormwater control due to water absorption and storage capacity
- Support for wildlife by providing breeding, nesting, and feeding grounds for many forms of wildlife species
- Protection of surface water resources, watersheds, and the recharging of water supplies
- Erosion control by serving as a sedimentation area and filtering basin absorbing silt and organic matter
- Providing sources of nutrients in water food cycles and nursery grounds for fish.

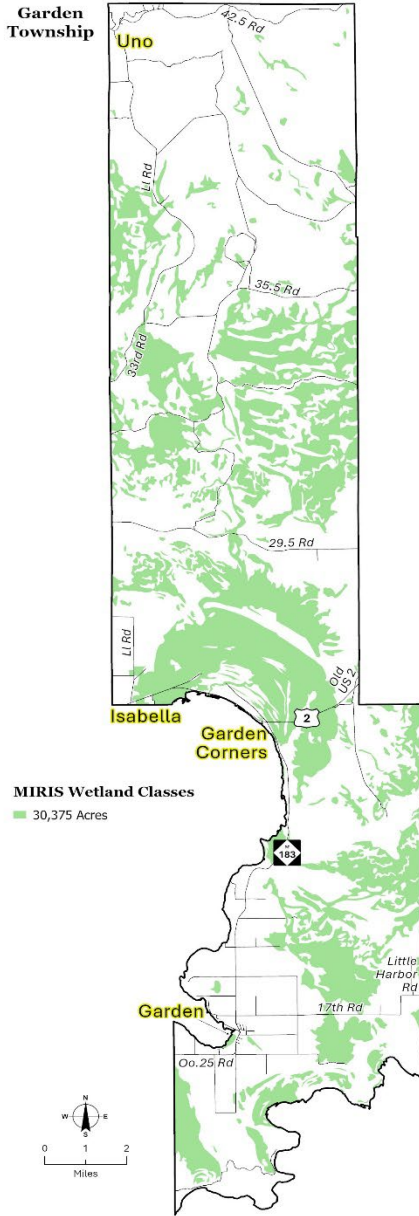
According to a 1991 report by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, over 50% of Michigan's original wetlands have been drained or filled. This makes the protection of the remaining wetlands even more crucial.

Part 303, Wetlands Protection, of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended, states that a person may not do any of the following activities in a wetland without a permit from EGLE:

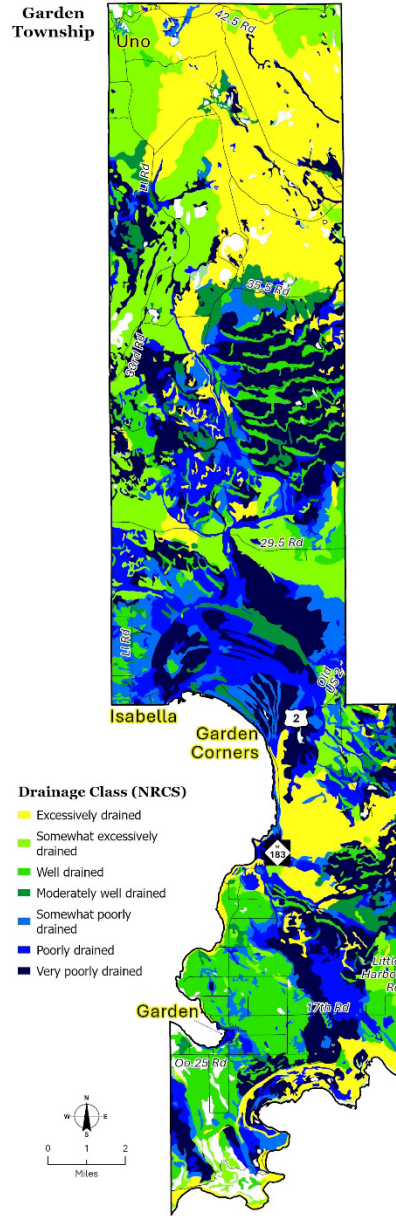
- Deposit or permit the placing of fill material
- Dredge, remove, or permit the removal of soils or minerals
- Construct, operate, or maintain any use or development
- Drain surface water

Below is an inventory map of the state and federal identified wetlands in Garden Township.

Garden Township



Garden Township



Soil Drainage

Drainage ensures that the soil is properly aerated. Having well-drained soil is important because the roots of most plants need to dry out in between waterings, or else they cannot get oxygen. Well-drained soils are necessary for successful crop production. The extent of soil drainage can either limit or support land use development. Excessively drained soils are often coarse-textured, rocky, or shallow and have a low capacity to hold water. Access to water or the ability to drill a well is limited, so building development on excessively drained soils is discouraged.

Poorly drained soils can also restrict building development. While these soils are not always classified as wetlands—since they may not be constantly saturated, flooded, or ponded—the water table is often higher. This elevated water table can complicate certain types of construction, especially basements and foundations.

The map above shows the drainage class of the soils in Garden Township, as provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service—USDA. Understanding the capacity of the soils allows for improved land management.

Biodiversity

Changes in land use often impact local ecosystems and contribute to a loss of biodiversity, which refers to the variation among plants, animals, and even bacteria. Current land uses in Garden Township that contribute to the local economy include agriculture, forestry, and fishing. When biodiversity is lacking, the plants and animals that make up the food chain become more vulnerable to pests and disease. The loss of pollinators for crop production due to habitat destruction or pesticide use is a

prime example of some of the negative impacts of biodiversity loss and demonstrates how it affects people locally. Awareness of sensitive natural systems and how the local community can support biodiversity is important to every thriving community.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife protects threatened and endangered species to prevent the loss of species that can only thrive in very specific habitats. However, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife does not provide an on-site inspection before land use development occurs, so local awareness and appreciation for species unique to Garden Township should be promoted whenever possible. For example, the dwarf lake iris is native to the Great Lakes shorelines, particularly in coastal cedar-spruce forests and limestone pavement grassland along the Garden Peninsula.



The dwarf lake iris requires habitat protection. It is sensitive to mechanical disturbances and the removal of substrate.

The Hines Emerald Dragonfly is a species that has existed since the Triassic and Jurassic periods and is found on the Garden Peninsula. It has been on the endangered species list since 1995 and is the only dragonfly on the list. This dragonfly has very specific habitat requirements, such as shallow, slow-moving water. Most threats stem from human development, such as the draining of wetlands for agriculture and pollution from pesticides.



The northern long-eared bat is a federally endangered species. The primary threat to this species is white-nose syndrome. Other causes of mortality include collisions with wind turbine blades. Additionally, highway construction and commercial development create longer distances between suitable roosting and foraging habitats, which places stress on the species.

CHAPTER 8

Community Facilities, Services, and Transportation

Garden Township owns and manages various facilities and services that benefit its residents. The most notable of these are the Garden Township Hall, also referred to as the Garden Township Community Center, and the Garden Township Fire Hall. The Garden Township Community Center is situated in Garden Village on State Street, while the Garden Township Fire Hall is located on Garden Avenue, also within the Village. Additionally, the township manages a transfer station and a cemetery.

The Township Board and Planning Commission utilize the Garden Township Hall Community Center for all government meetings. The hall and kitchen are also available for basketball, wedding receptions, showers, and other large gatherings. Availability is determined on a first-come, first-served basis and is secured with a fee and lease agreement.

Garden Township Transfer Station

The Garden Township Transfer Station is often highlighted as one of the most appreciated services by residents of Garden Township, and it's easy to see why. The transfer station is conveniently located between the Garden Township peninsula and the northern part of the township, and it is also relatively close to US 2. This accessibility makes it convenient for most residents of the township.

The transfer station accepts various recyclables, including broken-down cardboard, paper, plastic, and batteries. Additionally, for a fee, they accept televisions, mattresses, and furniture. However, they do not accept glass or building materials such as roofing, drywall, plywood, or flooring.

Emergency Services

Tristar EMS Medical Company provides ambulance services for Nahma, Fairbanks, and Garden Township. Tristar is a non-profit organization funded partly by an annual agreement fee from the three neighboring townships, collectively known as the Big Bay De Noc Ambulance Authority. Tristar employs emergency medical technicians (EMTs) to deliver emergency care and transport patients to local hospitals.

Responding to emergencies in a rural community can be challenging due to the distance and travel time involved in locating and reaching the incident site and transporting patients to the nearest hospital. To address this, Tristar often collaborates with Michigan Works to offer training for individuals who can provide immediate care to patients in emergency situations before Tristar arrives on the scene, such as the County Sheriff's patrol officers.

Garden Township Fire Department

The Garden Township Fire Hall is located about a quarter-mile away from the Garden Township Hall on Garden Avenue, also within the Garden Village limits. Currently, the Township has 23 volunteer firefighters.

Garden Township Cemeteries

Garden Township has three (3) cemeteries: Old Garden, New Garden, and Kate's Bay. They are managed by the Township Clerk and regulated in accordance with the Garden Township Cemetery Ordinance, as amended. This ordinance is available on the Garden Township website. It offers clear guidance on the rules that protect public health and safety while showing respect for the deceased and their families. The New Garden Township Cemetery is nearing capacity, and the Township is considering purchasing property across the road from the existing cemetery to meet future demand.

Education

The Big Bay De Noc School District is a one-building, Class D school offering classes from pre-K to 12 that serve students from the surrounding area. About 175 students are enrolled, and the average class size is about 15.

The school's webpage proudly announces that "the Big Bay de Noc School is a central hub for the surrounding communities. The people in these communities take great pride in their school and give meaning to the phrase "community-owned" school. The surrounding townships have supported and renewed a 10-year Sinking Fund Millage 3 times throughout the years, and it is currently in the 3rd revision. Such a millage aims to secure funding for building improvements without incurring long-term debt and using general fund monies needed for school operations. Since the inception of this millage, the entire school facility has received everything from small-scale remodeling projects such as new lockers, tile flooring, windows, and ceiling tiles to large-scale projects like state-of-the-art science labs, a

total refurbishment of the entire elementary wing and a completely redesigned entry to meet the needs of a secure, safe and locked campus".

A thriving school is a valuable asset to a community. When the community supports the school's ongoing success, it demonstrates its importance on education, the potential of an educated youth, and its desire to attract and retain young families.

Recreation

Access to recreation is essential for everyone's health and well-being. Outdoor recreation is valuable as it allows individuals to connect with nature and appreciate local ecosystems. Garden Township boasts an abundance of natural beauty and numerous outdoor recreation opportunities.

Lake Michigan and Big Bay De Noc provide year-round fishing for whitefish, walleye, yellow perch, and smallmouth bass. Inland, some landscapes are so stunning they can take your breath away. Several regional non-motorized trails border Garden Township, including the Sturgeon River Canoe Route and the Iron Belle Trail. Additionally, various motorized trails run through the peninsula, such as the Garden Grade, Nahma Trail, Town Trail, and Big Spring Trail.

Other public recreation facilities include the Garden Bay Boat Launch, Big Bay De Noc School playground, Camp Seven in the Hiawatha National Forest, Ozzie Hazen Garden Township Park, and Portage Bay Campground and its trails.

You can find more information about the recreation facilities and their locations in the Garden Peninsula Regional Recreation Plan

for 2022-2027. This plan was developed to meet the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requirement for a five-year recreation plan that allows the participating townships of Garden and Fairbanks and Garden Village to apply for DNR recreation grants.

Transportation

Transportation systems, including roads, have been heavily shaped by physical barriers like rivers, lakes, swamps, and rough terrain. Routes were chosen based on areas that presented the least resistance, facilitating the movement of people and goods to economic systems and services.

In Delta County, many roads suffer from heavy traffic and deterioration due to logging trucks and vehicles associated with natural resource extraction. The roads in the Garden Townships peninsula experience significantly less traffic than other parts of the county. Additionally, population growth in Garden Township has been relatively slow, making a more extensive transportation system unnecessary, as most employed residents commute out of the township for work.

Year-round road systems can be very costly for the township, as the Township is responsible for a portion of road maintenance expenses. Yet, inadequate road infrastructure can hinder economic growth and job creation opportunities. To address this issue, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) offers federally funded grants for road improvements. These grants are designed to assist road agencies and communities in enhancing transportation systems to support businesses and manufacturers better.

Road Maintenance

Michigan Act 51 of 1951 mandates that all counties and incorporated cities and villages establish and maintain road systems within their jurisdictions. The roads in the Township that fall under Act 51 are marked on the map below. Approximately 61 percent of the funding allocated through Act 51 for local roads is provided to counties, cities, and villages. The remaining 39 percent is designated for state highways managed by the Michigan Department of Transportation. Road funding allocation is determined by a formula that considers the road mileage.

Act 51 defines five road systems: state trunklines, county primary roads, county local roads, city/village major roads, and city/village minor roads. County primary roads facilitate traffic movement between smaller population centers and larger ones. They connect the local road network to the state trunklines.

County local roads have the lowest traffic volume but represent the longest stretches of roads in the township. While these roads are often called township roads, the county road commission has jurisdiction over all local township roads. The costs associated with maintaining these roads are sometimes shared between the townships and the county road commission. For this reason, townships often seek voter approval for a road millage. Currently, Garden Township does not levy a road millage to support the cost of road improvements.

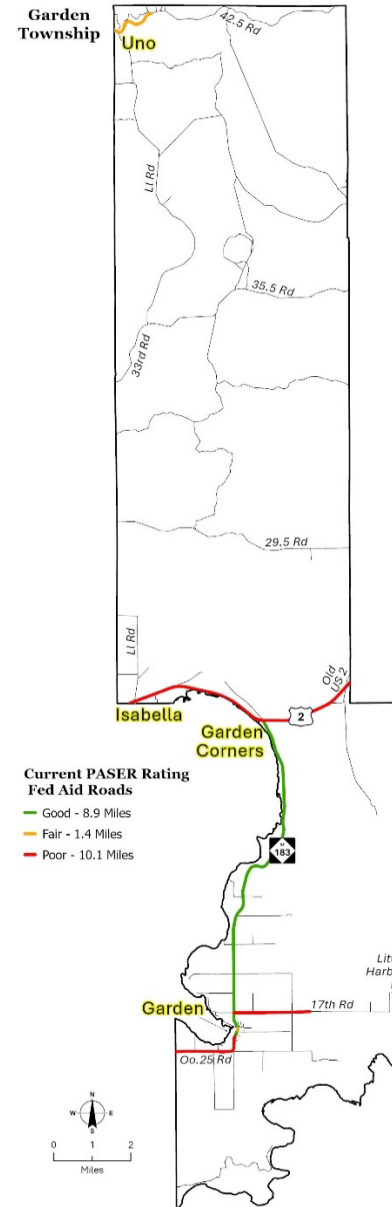
Road Condition Assessment Process

The Transportation Asset Management Council (TAMC) was formed under Public Act 499 of 2002 as an organization made up of professionals from road agencies, cities, township officials,

regional planning organizations, and state transportation department personnel. TAMC reports directly to the Michigan Infrastructure Council and functions as a resource for State Transportation Commission. TAMC 's mission is to collect the physical inventory and condition data in all roads and bridges in Michigan. PA Act 51 requires each local road agency and the Michigan Department of Transportation to report the road and bridge conditions to the TAMC annually. Regional Planning Agencies, such as CUPPAD, have been given the responsibility for gathering and reporting local road conditions according to TAMC guidelines based on a pavement surface rating and evaluation system (PASER) that ranks the pavement conditions on a scale from 1 to 10 and is reported as Good, Fair or Bad. Adjacent is a map of the Garden Township 2024 PASER Rating.

Public Transportation

The Delta Area Transit Authority (DATA) provides public transportation in Delta County. DATA also provides regional transportation between Manistique and Escanaba, which may be more compatible with the residents of Garden Township as they are closer to services in the City of Manistique, Schoolcraft County than the City of Gladstone in Delta County. Currently, it does not appear that DATA serves Garden Township, and the Schoolcraft County Transit Authority only serves Schoolcraft County public transit needs.



CHAPTER 9

Goals and Strategies

Community and People

Goal: Ensure the current population is sustained while managing future population growth.

Strategies:

- Encourage community services, events, and homeowner rehabilitation and improvement programs to support residents' ability to age in their homes.
- Enhance efforts to attract young families by promoting quality of life, access to schools, recreational opportunities, and amenities like high-speed internet to support digital inclusion and remote work.

Local Economy

Goal: Preserve the current economic foundation while promoting the growth of future businesses that enhance recreational opportunities in the Township.

Strategies:

- Encourage local businesses to remain in the township and support their expansion efforts whenever possible.
- Promote the development of high-speed internet in the area to attract remote workers and high-tech businesses.
- Promote collaboration among economic development organizations in the county and support initiatives that align with the township's goals.
- Promote the reuse of existing commercial sites whenever possible.
- Promote local historic sites, outdoor activities, and natural features to attract tourism to the township and county.

Housing

Goal: To encourage a diverse housing stock that accommodates different costs, types, and locations to satisfy the needs, preferences, and financial abilities of the local community.

Strategies:

- Participate in MSHDA housing programs that fund home repairs, rehabilitation, and homeownership.
- Establish and enforce regulations to safeguard public health and safety and address blight and structural decay.
- Regulate short-term or vacation rentals through a permit process or zoning regulations.
- Encourage new housing development to occur on year-round roads and prevent the development of housing on seasonal roads.

Natural Features and Land Use

Goal: To establish land use patterns in the township that preserve the community's sensitive, natural systems while ensuring residents' health, safety, and welfare.

Strategies:

- Remain cognizant of development constraints due to the unique surface and bedrock geology of the Garden Peninsula.
- Support future development that identifies and plans for methods to prevent the disturbance of wetlands and local biodiversity.
- Remind residents to properly cap abandoned water wells and have their well water tested regularly.
- Support development in proximity where development already exists to avoid disturbing pristine areas.

Community Facilities & Services

Goal: To maintain and support facilities and services that fulfill the needs of Garden Township residents.

Strategies:

- **Support the expansion of the New Garden Township Cemetery.**
- **Promote public transit and other innovative transportation options for providing non-emergency medical transportation to residents in need.**
- **Continue collaboration with the Village of Garden and Fairbanks Township to maintain an active 5-Year Garden Peninsula Regional Recreation Plan that provides recreational opportunities for Garden Peninsula residents.**
- **Continue to seek and recruit young volunteers to serve on the Garden Township Fire Department.**
- **Continue to provide opportunities for the residents of Garden Township to come together at the Garden Township Community Center to honor veterans, conduct family activities, sponsor**

spaghetti dinners to raise money for disadvantaged members of the community, or do anything else that will provide social opportunities for all residents and strengthen local relationships.