



VILLAGE OF MICHIANA

Berrien County, Michigan

2026 Master Plan

VISION

Michiana embraces a future that honors our past, protects our future and strengthens the bonds that make Michiana a treasured home for generations. We commit to preserving the serene beauty of our Lake Michigan beaches, lush tree-lined landscapes, and quiet, small-town character through safe-guarding our community, protecting our environment and enhancing our public services and parks.

Adopted by the Village Planning Commission on _____

Adopted by the Village Council on _____

Acknowledgements

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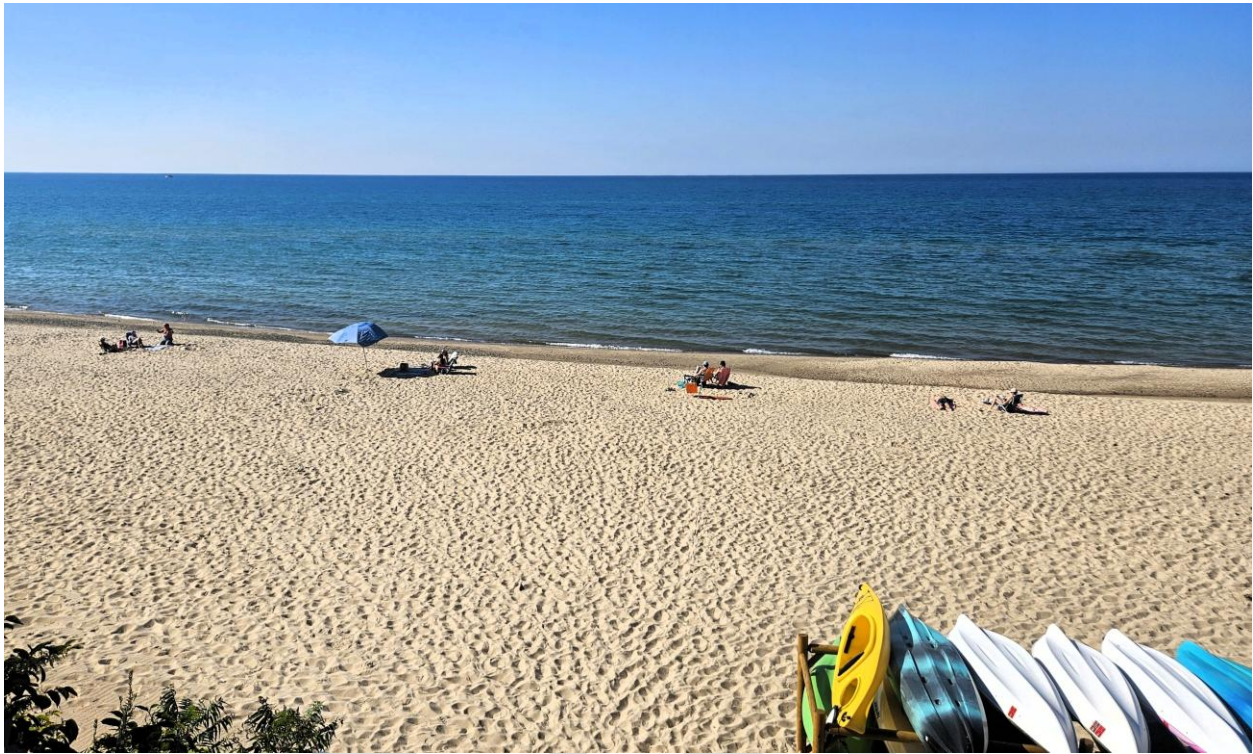
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CHAPTER 1 OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION



WELCOME

Welcome to the Village of Michiana 2026 Master Plan—a forward-looking policy document that will guide the direction of the future of the Village for the next 5 years. To preserve the community’s exceptional quality of life, rich traditions, natural beauty, and outstanding recreational opportunities, a shared vision of that future is required.

Developed through an open, public process led by dedicated community volunteers, this plan reflects a commitment to an enduring vision of the Village of Michiana as a place where residents can live, play, and relax with their families. It is guided by the belief that the power to shape the Village’s future lies in its residents. While change is inevitable, this plan ensures the determination of the direction and response to change moving forward.

PURPOSE AND INTENT

The Master Plan provides a long-term vision for the Village of Michiana, guiding decisions on land use, infrastructure, management of resources, and community priorities. It examines current conditions, potential changes, and the aspirations of residents, property owners and local leaders to establish a framework for decision making about the direction and long-term development of the Village.

While not a regulatory document like zoning ordinances, it significantly influences policies, zoning decisions, and capital improvements. Courts often reference it in zoning rulings, highlighting its importance in planning.

Building on previous Master Plans and the efforts of the Village Council, this plan meets the requirements of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended) and establishes a framework to:

- Promote public health, safety, and welfare.
- Ensure responsible resource use.
- Prevent overcrowding and traffic congestion.
- Support transportation, utilities, and public infrastructure.
- Align land use with community growth trends.

Serving as a policy document, the Master Plan guides decision making about land use, housing requirements, resource management, infrastructure maintenance, future development and presents a vision for the next 5 years while outlining short-term implementation strategies. Ultimately, the Master Plan is a vital blueprint for Michiana's growth, ensuring development aligns with community goals and legal requirements.

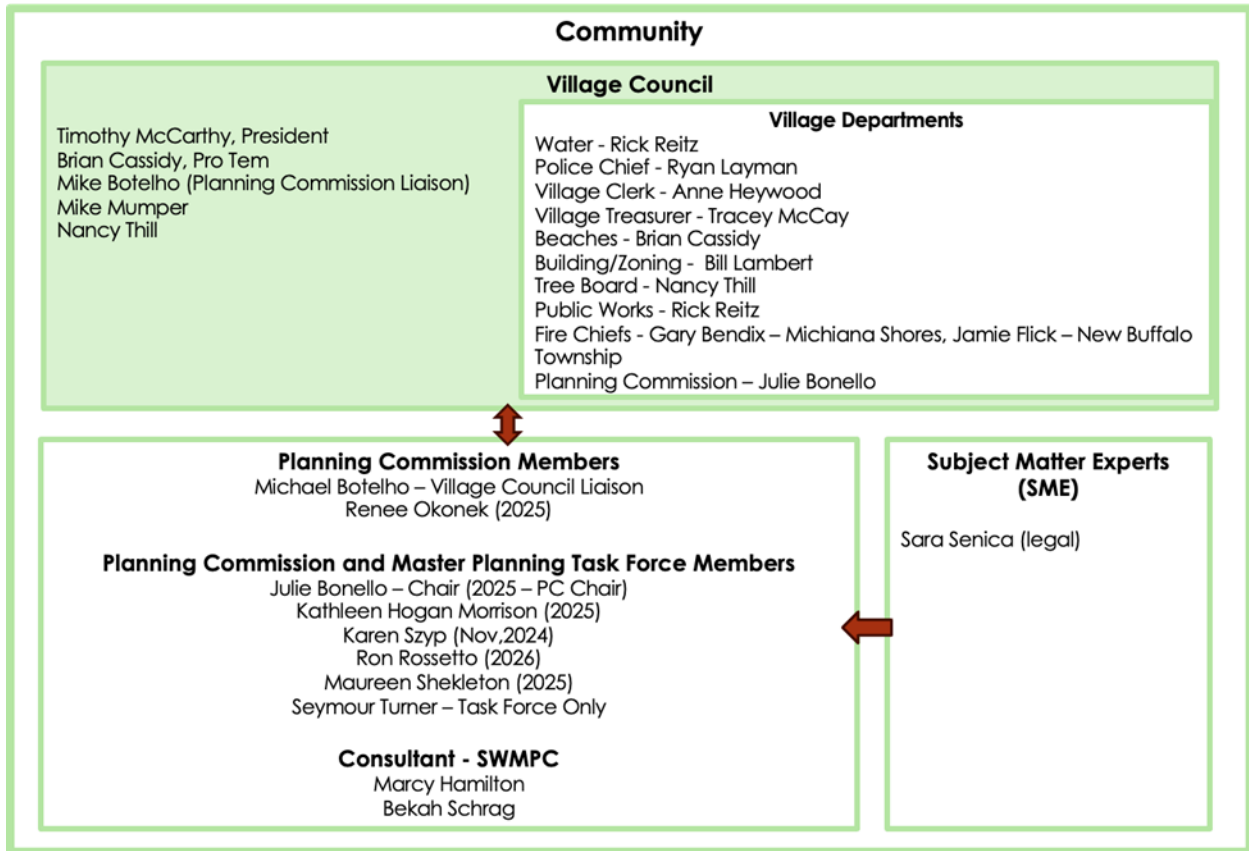
To remain relevant, municipalities must review and update the Master Plan every five years per the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (Public Act 110 of 2006, as amended). The act further mandates that zoning ordinances be based on a Master Plan, reinforcing its role in shaping land use policies.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The Planning Commission was appointed and tasked with creating a new Master Plan by the Village Council at a regular meeting on June 14, 2024 (See Figure 1.1) The commission is responsible for guiding the overall planning process, evaluating data, and ensuring the plan reflects the community's vision and priorities while the Village Council is charged with the adoption and implementation of the Plan.

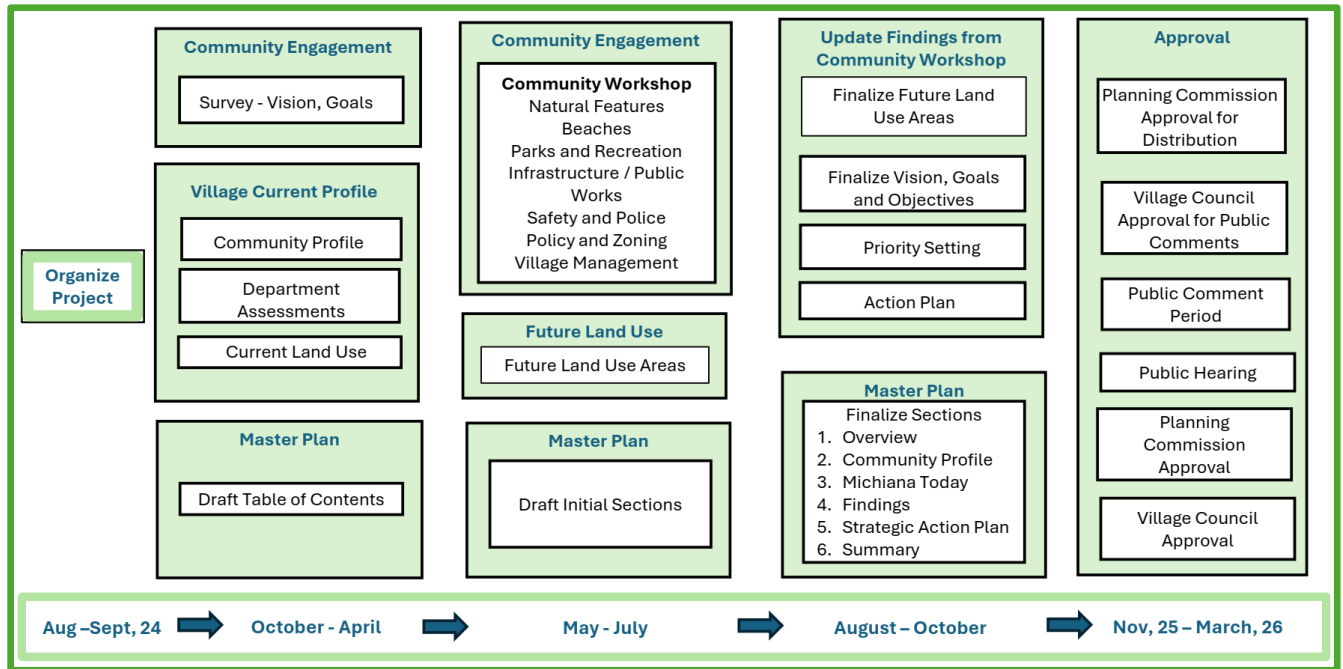
A subgroup of the Commission, the Master Planning Task Force, was created on August 16, 2024 to help expedite the development process and coordinate with the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission representatives. The Task Force organized the assessment phase of the plan development process and organized the collected data and information for review and analysis by the total Planning Commission.

Figure 1.1 Master Planning Project Team



A schematic overview of the development process is presented in Figure 1.2. Information about the current state of the Village was collected from all relevant stakeholders including property owners, the Village Council and board/commission members, and from staff employees and law enforcement officers. Village property owners were given the opportunity to respond to an online survey from January 2, 2025 until February 7, 2025 to assess likes, concerns and priorities. A public community workshop was held on July 26, 2025 from 11am – 2pm for property owners to give additional input on the Village’s vision, Future Land Use Map and Categories, and goals and objectives for the Master Plan. Interviews and assessment meetings were held with each Village Department to better understand current responsibilities, challenges, and future opportunities. The first assessment meeting with the Village’s Administration occurred on March 11, 2025. Additional meetings were held on March 13, 2025 with the Police and Fire Board, Building and Zoning, and the Public Works Department. On May 2, 2025 another session of assessment meetings was held about Beaches and Parks, and the Tree Board.

Figure 1.2 Master Planning Process and Timeline



At the conclusion of the 10-month data gathering phases with the community and Village Departments, the Master Planning Task Force consolidated the findings into a Draft Master Plan identifying the Village Vision Statement along with the priorities, goals and objectives guiding our Village direction over the next 5 years.

On November 14, 2025, The Village of Michiana Planning Commission approved the Draft Master Plan to be submitted to the Village Council for distribution, as required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended).

Following the 63-day comment periods as required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended), the Planning Commission held a public hearing on _____.

The Planning Commission recommended the adoption of the 2026 Village of Michiana Master Plan by the Village Council on _____.

At a regular meeting of the Michiana Village Council held on _____, the Village Council approved the adoption of the 2026 Village of Michiana Master Plan.

ORGANIZATION AND CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Introduces the Village of Michiana 2026 Master Plan, explaining its purpose, legal foundation, and role in shaping the community's future. It sets the stage for the rest of the document by clarifying why the plan matters and how it will guide growth and preservation.

CHAPTER 2: COMMUNITY PROFILE

Analyzes the Village's current conditions, including location, history, demographics, housing, and household composition. It also reviews natural features such as water resources, flood zones, dunes, potential wetland restoration areas, critical dunes, trees and current land use and zoning.

CHAPTER 3: MICHIANA TODAY

Provides an overview of the Village today, focusing on management, finances, facilities, utilities, safety services, roads, and beaches. It highlights current challenges and resources, establishing the foundation for future planning decisions.

CHAPTER 4: COMMUNITY INPUT AND FINDINGS

Emphasizes the importance of community input, showing how surveys, workshops, and meetings helped shape the plan's goals and priorities. It communicates how the plan reflects resident engagement and aligns future strategies with community needs.

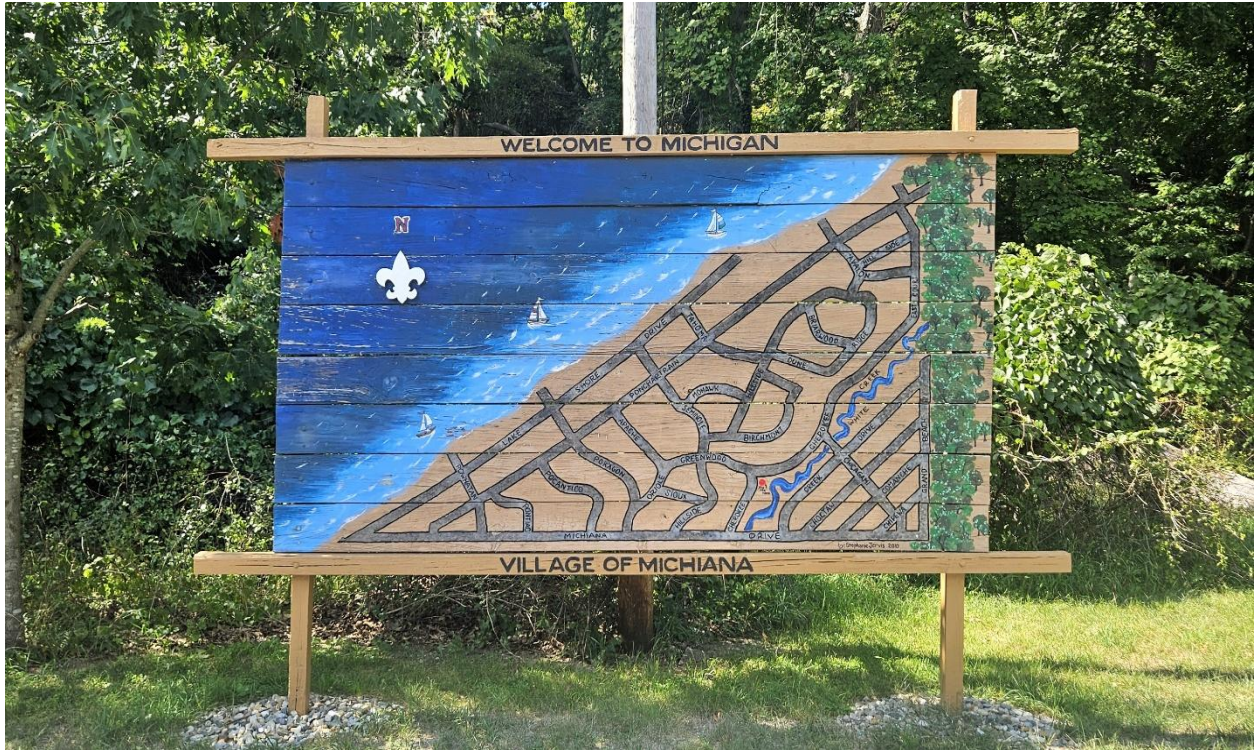
CHAPTER 5: STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN

Outlines the components of the final plan including the vision, goals, objectives, workplan, and requirements for evaluation and accountability. The **detailed Action Work Plan** identifies the roadmap of the projects, policies, or programs within each objective that should be implemented based on their priority and implementation dependencies.

CHAPTER 6: FUTURE LAND USE STRATEGY

Identifies the regulatory work of the Planning Commission done once the master plan is accepted and required to fully implement the plan. Once the Master Plan is formally adopted, the Planning Commission is responsible for ensuring that the Village's Zoning Plan and Zoning Ordinance reflect the community's newly established goals, policies, and land use designations.

CHAPTER 2 COMMUNITY PROFILE



OVERVIEW

The Village of Michiana is a quiet, residential shoreline community which is part of the Southwestern Michigan area referred to by the tourism industry as Harbor Country. The region draws visitors to enjoy many amenities such as lakeshore beaches, sand dune recreation, biking, snowmobiling and hiking trails, wildlife habitats, conservation areas, and parks. Nearby attractions include Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, other Lake Michigan beaches including Grand Mere, Warren Dunes, and Indiana Dunes State Parks, while both Michigan and Indiana have inland State or National Parks in the region. Besides the natural assets, restaurants, entertainment venues, wineries, breweries, and shopping have become major destinations in the area.

LOCATION

The Village of Michiana is situated in the southwestern most section of Berrien County in New Buffalo Township in the State of Michigan as shown in Figure 2.1 below. The Village borders Lake Michigan to the West, and the State of Indiana to the South along Michiana Drive. To the East is Grand Beach Village with a portion of New Buffalo Township located between the Villages' borders. Michiana Village is adjacent to Michiana Shores, Indiana. Triangular in shape, the Village of Michiana covers approximately 0.37 square miles (233.4 acres).

Michiana Village lies within driving distance of major cities, including South Bend (35 miles east), Chicago (70 miles west), Kalamazoo (80 miles northeast), and Grand Rapids (115 miles north-northeast). Surrounding local municipalities are shown in Figure 2.2. Regional access to Michiana is primarily by Interstate 94 (I-94) and U.S.12. Railroad transportation between urban areas is available from Amtrak and the South Shore line. Michiana’s road network consists of a mix of curving residential streets and direct access routes, such as El Portal, Ponchartrain Drive, and Michiana Drive, contributing to its unique layout and connectivity (Map 5 in the Maps Appendix).

Figure 2.1 Village of Michiana location in the Southwest section of Berrien County



Figure 2.2 Village of Michiana and surrounding Municipalities



HISTORY

The name “Michiana” is also used to refer to the Great Lakes region encompassing southwest Michigan and northwest Indiana. The region's history is tied to early indigenous trails, fur trading posts like the one that became South Bend and eventually became home to communities that evolved from log cabin resorts to year-round communities. The Great Lakes region was inhabited by Native American tribes for thousands of years prior to becoming a hub for French explorers and fur traders in the 1600’s and eventually a center of industrialization.

Indigenous people originally populated the Michiana area. Trails used by the Native Americans became some of the early roads in the region. The Potawatomi were the predominant Native American tribe, known as "Keepers of the Sacred Fire" in the Council of Three Fires, an alliance with the Ojibwe and Odawa tribes. The Pokagon band of the Potawatomi were the exception to the forced removal of Native American tribes in the 1840’s and maintain an influential presence in the area today.

The Village of Michiana is characterized by its densely wooded and marshy terrain, and was one of the last resort communities to develop in the southwest corner of Berrien County. In 1927, the area was divided between Michigan and Indiana, with both sections developed by the Long Beach Development Company. The area became known for its log homes built for Chicago vacationers during the 1920’s. The Michigan portion of the area was the first to be incorporated as Michiana Village in 1946. Over time, the Village evolved from a vacation resort into a thriving year-round residential community. The notable community landmark, the Signal Oak, once stood at the corner of Michiana Drive and Ponchartrain Trail. The Long Beach Development Company built an amphitheater around the tree, using it as a gathering place to entertain prospective buyers with Native American ceremonies. This site later became a meeting place for the Michiana Community Association, which managed community affairs.

Today, the Village of Michiana is a small, residential community located on the Indiana/Michigan border. Nestled among woodlands and dunes, it offers property owners easy access to sandy beaches. While the beaches remain open to the public, the Village provides no public parking. Michiana has a vibrant resident community, with many homes owned by Chicago-area residents who are drawn to its relaxed, scenic lifestyle, making it a desirable destination for both adults and families with young children.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic analysis allows identification of changes in the stability of the population trends and socio-economic status of a community. This, in turn, guides data driven planning for future resource development and management. Data sources include the US Census Bureau’s Decennial Census and Berrien County tax records. Taken every ten years, the Census is considered the most reliable source of demographic and housing data.

POPULATION: AGE, EDUCATION & INCOME

According to the 2020 census the Village of Michiana has a population of 200, which is higher than its 2010 population of 182. Table 2.1 Village of Michiana Population from 1970 to 2020 shows changes in the overall village population over three decades. The Village of Michiana’s population peaked in 1980, when it was 333, and then dropped by over half its population in 1990 to 164 residents. Since then, the population has hovered below or at 200 residents. Berrien County gained population during the 1990s, but lost population over the past decade and the year-round population is now smaller than it was 20 years ago, even with the rate of population loss slowing over the past several years. (US Census)

Table 2.1 Village of Michiana Population from 1970 to 2020

Year	Population
1970	233
1980	333
1990	164
2000	200
2010	182
2020	200

Source: 2020 US Decennial Census

Age

Data related to resident ages show that the Village of Michiana has an older population compared to Berrien County and Michigan as a whole (Table 2.2). A significant portion of the population is aged 60 and over, with 55.5% of residents falling into this category, compared to 28.4% in Berrien County and 26% statewide. The largest age group in Michiana is 70 to 74 years, making up 16.5% of the population, which is more than three times the percentage in Michigan (4.7%) and Berrien County (5.4%).

In contrast, younger age groups are underrepresented. The 20 to 34 age range is nearly absent, with only 0.5% of the population between 20 and 24 years and none in the 25 to 34 range, compared to more balanced distributions at the county and state levels.

Additionally, children under 18 years make up a small portion of the population, with each

age group under 15 years comprising less than 5.0% of residents. These trends highlight Michiana’s role as a retirement-friendly community, with a significantly older population compared to regional and statewide averages.

Table 2.2 Age Distribution in the Village of Michiana Compared to Berrien County and Michigan

Age Group	Village of Michiana	Berrien County	Michigan
Under 5 years	5.0%	5.3%	5.4%
5 to 9 years	5.0%	6.1%	5.9%
10 to 14 years	4.5%	6.3%	6.2%
15 to 19 years	3.0%	6.3%	6.6%
20 to 24 years	0.5%	5.4%	6.7%
25 to 29 years	0.0%	5.5%	6.6%
30 to 34 years	0.0%	5.8%	6.4%
35 to 39 years	3.0%	5.8%	6.0%
40 to 44 years	3.0%	5.6%	5.7%
45 to 49 years	2.0%	5.8%	6.0%
50 to 54 years	7.5%	6.3%	6.4%
55 to 59 years	11.0%	7.4%	7.1%
60 to 64 years	13.0%	7.5%	7.0%
65 to 69 years	12.0%	6.7%	6.0%
70 to 74 years	16.5%	5.4%	4.7%
75 to 79 years	7.5%	3.7%	3.2%
80 to 84 years	2.5%	2.5%	2.0%
85 years and over	4.0%	2.6%	2.1%

Source: 2020 US Decennial Census

Education

The Village of Michiana has a more educated population compared to Berrien County and the state of Michigan (Table 2.3). Nearly all residents (99.6%) have at least a high school diploma, exceeding county (92.3%) and state (91.9%) averages. Additionally, 81.4% of residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher, more than double the rates in Berrien County (30.2%) and Michigan (31.8%). The Village also has a significantly higher proportion of residents with graduate or professional degrees (56.4%) compared to the county (12.2%) and state (12.5%).

Table 2.3 Educational Attainment by Percentage

Educational Attainment for Population 25 years and older	Village of Michiana (Percent)	Berrien County (Percent)	Michigan (Percent)
Less than 9th grade	0	2.3	2.6
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	0.4	5.3	5.5
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	5.7	27.9	28.2
Some college, no degree	10.7	23.1	22.2
Associate's degree	1.8	11	9.7
Bachelor's degree	25	18	19.3
Graduate or professional degree	56.4	12.2	12.5
High school graduate or higher	99.6	92.3	91.9
Bachelor's degree or higher	81.4	30.2	31.8

Source: American Community Survey 2023 5-year Estimates

Income

The median household income in the Village of Michiana was estimated at \$162,708 according to the 2023 American Community Survey 5-year average, indicating that household income is significantly higher than in nearby communities in Berrien County and Michigan (Table 2.4).

Table 2.4 Village of Michiana Income Distribution in 2023 Inflation Adjusted Dollars

Income and Benefits	Village of Michiana	Berrien	Michigan
Total	157	63,651	4,040,168
Less than \$10,000	4	3,315	203,820
\$10,000 to \$14,999	5	3,213	159,020
\$15,000 to \$24,999	8	5,290	285,693
\$25,000 to \$34,999	3	5,693	306,135
\$35,000 to \$49,999	2	7,999	477,109
\$50,000 to \$74,999	23	11,009	684,499
\$75,000 to \$99,999	7	7,562	541,255
\$100,000 to \$149,999	18	10,067	683,314
\$150,000 to \$199,999	30	4,459	336,160
\$200,000 or more	57	5,044	363,163
Median income (dollars)	\$162,708	\$63,152	\$71,149

Source: American Community Survey 2023 5-year Estimates

HOUSING AND HOUSEHOLDS

Number & Occupancy

According to census data, there were 374 housing units in the Village in 2020, of which 245 (73.3%) were unoccupied. This is a stark contrast to Berrien County (16.7%) and Michigan (11.6%). (See Table 2.5) However, most vacant units (245 out of 374) are designated for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use, reflecting the Village’s role as a vacation or second-home community. In contrast, only 26.7% of Michiana’s housing units are occupied, significantly lower than Berrien County (83.3%) and Michigan (88.4%). Among the occupied units, nearly all (99%) are owner-occupied, with only 1% being renter-occupied, further highlighting the Village’s predominantly residential and seasonal nature. In 2025 the number of homes increased to 377 per village staff reflecting new building.

Table 2.5 Housing Occupancy in the Village of Michiana, Berrien County and Michigan

Housing Occupancy	Village of Michiana	Berrien	Michigan
Total housing units	374	76,821	4,570,173
Occupied housing units	100	63,955	4,041,760
Owner-occupied housing units	99	45,580	2,865,305
Renter-occupied housing units	1	18,375	1,176,455
Vacant housing units	274	12,866	528,413
For rent	10	1,814	100,095
Rented, not occupied	2	205	11,186
For sale only	5	653	38,276
Sold, not occupied	8	413	19,708
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	245	7,543	242,831
All other vacant	4	2,238	116,317

Source: 2020 US Decennial Census

A map of properties with no homestead exemptions (Map 1 in the Maps Appendix) shows the parcels that do not have a recorded homestead exemption, which means that it could be a second home or rental property. The map indicates 254 properties that may be rentals and second homes, which are found throughout the Village, but especially along Ponchartrain Drive and Lake Shore Drive, as well as on the west side of White Creek. 128 parcels are not shaded, which generally represent primary residences, indicating a mix of full-time and seasonal occupancy. Note that these data are from 2020.

Property Mix

The Village of Michiana has a wide range of residential property values, reflecting its mix of lakefront homes, seasonal properties, and year-round residences (Map 2). Assessed values

range from \$22,700 to \$1.37 million, with a mean value of \$257,906. Higher-value properties (\$306,201–\$1,379,500) are concentrated along Lake Shore Drive and near Ponchartrain Drive, where proximity to Lake Michigan drives demand. Upper-mid-range homes (\$228,801–\$306,200) are found throughout central neighborhoods such as Mohawk Trail, Hillside Trail, and Cherokee Drive. Moderate-value properties (\$154,401–\$228,800) are scattered across interior streets like Sioux Trail and Greenwood Trail, while lower-value parcels (\$22,700–\$154,400) are primarily located along Comanche Trail, Chippewa Trail, and portions of Michiana Drive. Property values generally increase closer to the lake, while interior neighborhoods show more variation. (See Map 2 in the Maps Appendix.)

The Vacant Residential Parcel Assessed Value Map (Map 3 in the Maps Appendix) illustrates the assessed values of vacant residential parcels in the Village of Michiana, with values ranging from \$4,000 to \$540,600. A vacant property does not always indicate unused land or unoccupied homes but rather may contain seasonal residences or properties used as short-term rentals that are not considered primary residences. In Michiana Village, most of these vacant properties are most likely second homes or short-term rentals.

Vacant parcels are distributed throughout the Village but are concentrated near Lake Shore Drive, Ponchartrain Drive, and portions of Cherokee Drive. Higher-value vacant properties (\$68,001–\$540,600) are typically located close to Lake Michigan and represent prime redevelopment opportunities. Mid-value vacant parcels (\$48,001–\$68,000) are scattered across interior streets, while lower-value parcels (\$4,000–\$48,000) are more common in southern neighborhoods along Chippewa Trail, Comanche Trail, and Michiana Drive.

Composition

The household composition of the Village of Michiana reflects a strong presence of older adults and a relatively small number of families with young children. Of the 100 occupied households, the majority (54%) are married couple households, though only a small portion (4 households) include children under 18 years. Single-person households are significant, with 35% of all households consisting of individuals living alone, particularly among older adults aged 65 or older. Compared to Berrien County and the state of Michigan, Michiana has a much higher proportion of households with individuals 65 and over (61%), reflecting the community's demographic trend toward an aging population. Meanwhile, households with children under 18 years are far less common, comprising just 9% of the Village's total households. (See Table 2.6)

Table 2.6 Household Composition in the Village of Michiana, Berrien County and Michigan

Households by Type	Village of Michiana	Berrien	Michigan
Total households	100	63,955	4,041,760
Married couple household	54	28,916	1,831,996
With own children under 18	4	9,084	647,653
Cohabiting couple household	1	4,347	284,772
With own children under 18	0	1,527	95,805
Male householder, no spouse or partner present:	19	12,241	797,856
Living alone	16	8,989	564,737
65 years and over	7	3,081	171,024
With own children under 18	1	911	60,949
Female householder, no spouse or partner present:	26	18,451	1,127,136
Living alone	19	10,675	634,059
65 years and over	12	5,851	325,950
With own children under 18	0	3,404	200,716
Households with individuals under 18 years	9	16,978	1,128,766
Households with individuals 65 years and over	61	22,924	1,294,461

Source: 2020 US Decennial Census

NATURAL FEATURES

A community's natural features provide a strong sense of place and emotional connection for residents and greatly influence the overall character and livability of the area. Natural features are generally approached in one of two ways: preservation or integration. Preservation is appropriate for areas that are highly sensitive or valued, where any significant change could negatively affect aesthetics, environmental health, or property value. Integration is suitable for areas where natural features are important but not as vulnerable to change.

Thoughtful development can take place in harmony with the landscape, allowing nature and community growth to coexist. These features should still be carefully monitored, as even minor disturbances over time can have cumulative effects.

Michiana has historically protected the environment with current zoning regulations requiring building permits in high-risk erosion areas, critical dune areas, floodplain areas and White Creek, many of which are defined and classified by the State of Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE).



In 2022, Michiana moved forward with the preservation of our forested areas by forming the Tree Board and implementing a detailed tree ordinance that sets standards for tree planting and care and enforces protections against the removal or damage of public trees. This work is setting the standard of defining future natural feature preservation efforts.

Key natural features of the Village of Michiana include its Lake Michigan coastline, the critical dunescape, its vibrant forests, and the White Creek area. Key water features include Lake Michigan and White Creek, which flows through the southeastern section of the Village. Sustainability of these natural resources requires the following actions:

- Promotion of coastal resiliency through beach restoration and maintenance
- Protection of critical dune areas and ecology
- Maintenance of forested, rural features through conservancy efforts, tree protection, and removal of invasive species
- Restoration of White Creek

Basic to these actions is watershed management and flood control through wetland restoration and critical dune ecology. Restoring wetlands contributes to enhanced water quality, flood protection, habitat diversity, and overall watershed health. Specific local regulations, such as those pertaining to site plan review standards, encouraging open space developments with incentives, increasing water body setbacks, maintaining buffers around streams and wetlands, protecting floodplains, instituting proper impervious cover standards, using overlay districts to protect natural features and reducing density in areas with soil limitations for septic systems or requiring sanitary sewer infrastructure are among the techniques that can assist in protecting surface and ground water quality.

WATERSHED

A watershed is the area of land that catches rain and snow and drains or seeps into a marsh, stream, river, lake or groundwater. See Map 4 in the Maps Appendix for the Watersheds of Berrien County.

The Village of Michiana drains to White Creek and Lake Michigan. Upstream activities in Indiana and New Buffalo Township will affect the water quality of White Creek as it traverses through the Village to Lake Michigan. Collaborating with stakeholders and neighboring jurisdictions to support water quality improvements remains an important priority for the Village. The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission developed a Watershed Management Plan for the small tributaries of southern Berrien County that drain to Lake Michigan. Information on the project can be found here www.betterbeachesswmi.org/ and the plan can be viewed here <https://www.swmpc.org/downloads/finalplanwithappendices.pdf>.

FLOOD RISK

Parts of the Village are in flood prone areas according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Flood risk in the Village is primarily concentrated along the shoreline of Lake Michigan and the around White Creek. Map 6 identifies areas with a 1% annual chance of flooding, commonly referred to as the 100-year floodplain.

Along the lakefront, the flood risk extends inland, and has an additional hazard associated with storm waves, indicating a heightened vulnerability during severe weather events.

These high-risk zones are particularly relevant for properties along Lake Shore Drive and adjacent roads, where lake-induced flooding could impact infrastructure.

Flood risk is also concentrated along White Creek. The creek's floodplain includes areas along Creek Drive and Grand Beach Road. Heavy rainfall or seasonal water level fluctuations could cause localized flooding, impacting homes and roads in low-lying areas.

POTENTIAL WETLAND RESTORATION AREAS

Potential Wetland Restoration Areas are sites suitable for wetland restoration. Some of these areas were identified from historical land use data (circa 1800) compiled by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI), indicating their status as pre-settlement wetlands or lost wetlands

Potential wetland restoration areas in the Village are primarily concentrated along the shoreline of Lake Michigan in the southwest and northeast sections of the Village. Map 7 highlights nine acres within the Village that are likely to have conditions suitable for wetland restoration efforts. Along the lakefront, these restoration areas are strategically positioned to serve as natural buffers against storm waves and flooding, helping to absorb excess water and reduce erosion. Restoring wetlands in these locations could enhance coastal resilience, providing protection for properties along Lake Shore Drive and adjacent roads that are vulnerable to lake-induced flooding.

CRITICAL DUNES

Critical dunes are among the most ecologically and visually significant dune formations along Michigan's Great Lakes coastline. Recognized for their unique landscapes, biodiversity, and natural functions, these dunes stabilize the shoreline, reduce erosion, and provide habitats for a variety of native plants and wildlife. They act as natural barriers against coastal storms and flooding, protecting homes and infrastructure, while also supporting biodiversity and enhancing recreational and scenic value.

Preserving critical dunes is essential for long-term environmental conservation, coastal resiliency, and the character of Michigan's lakefront communities. Because of their importance, critical dunes are protected under the Michigan Sand Dune Protection and Management Act, which regulates development, landscaping, and other land-altering activities to prevent dune degradation.

Within the Village of Michiana, critical dunes extend inland from Lake Shore Drive, covering much of the western portion of the Village. Properties and roads along Ponchartrain Drive, Pontiac Trail, Mohawk Trail, and surrounding neighborhoods are situated within or adjacent to these protected areas. Development and landscaping in these zones are strictly regulated to prevent destabilization, which could lead to increased erosion, loss of habitat and biodiversity, and diminished storm protection.

The Village of Michiana Critical Dunes Map (Map 8 in Maps Appendix) shows the area of critical dunes, showing the extent of local protection under the state's Critical Dune program. In total, 200 acres (85.7%) of the Village is designated as critical dunes, underscoring their importance to the Village's environmental health, community identity, and long-term resilience.

TREES

Trees and canopy coverage play a vital role in shaping the character, livability, and sustainability of a community. A healthy tree canopy provides numerous environmental benefits, including improved air quality, reduced urban heat island effects, and enhanced stormwater management by intercepting rainfall and reducing runoff. Strategically planted trees also contribute to energy efficiency by offering natural shade and windbreaks, lowering heating and cooling demands. Beyond environmental performance, trees significantly improve the visual appeal and comfort of public spaces, creating shaded walkways, inviting parks, and vibrant streetscapes that encourage walking and outdoor activity.

The Village of Michiana contains 200 acres of tree canopy, which can be seen in the aerial image depicted in Figure 2.3. Tree canopy coverage is spread throughout the Village and is concentrated around residential land uses. The beaches and the Village Park are some of the only areas of the Village without canopy coverage, with the exception of a few small pockets along Ponchartrain Drive, Lake Shore Drive, and East Ct. The Village has conducted a tree survey and developed a plan for removal of non-native species and damaged and diseased trees.

Figure 2.3 Aerial Imagery of the Village of Michiana



ELEVATION

The elevation in the Village of Michiana varies from 584 feet near the shoreline of Lake Michigan to approximately 676 feet in the inland dune ridges as shown in Map 9 in the Maps Appendix. The lowest elevations are found along the lakefront and near White Creek. These lower-lying areas are generally flatter, with gentle slopes leading up to the higher elevations. As one moves away from the shoreline, the terrain becomes more varied, with rolling hills and dunes creating distinct elevation changes throughout the Village. East of White Creek, the topography levels off and becomes flatter.

The highest elevations, between 646 and 676 feet, are concentrated in the inland dune formations, particularly along Dune Ridge Drive, Birchmont Trail, and Hillside Trail. These areas are characterized by steep inclines and ridgelines that shape the landscape. The contours indicate that the elevation of the dunes creates natural drainage patterns, directing water toward lower areas such as the White Creek subwatershed.

TRANSPORTATION

The Village of Michiana maintains 8.49 miles of local roads. The Village does not have any roads that are eligible for federal aid, and none of the roads are considered major or minor arterials via the National Function Class rating.

The Village of Michiana is part of the Twin Cities Area Transportation Study (TwinCATS) Planning Area, which represents the Benton Harbor-St. Joseph Urbanized Area (www.swmpc.org/twincats.asp). Members of this study, such as cities, townships, villages, counties, public transit agencies, the airport authority, and the road department appoint representatives to serve on sub-committees, who then provide local, state, and federal input toward the development of essential transportation planning services.

NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION

The right-of-way in the Village is limited and narrow and roughly ends at the edge of the road. While sidewalks, off-road facilities, and wide shoulders may not be feasible within the Village, most roads can accommodate multiple uses safely (golf carts, pedestrians, and cyclists) due to the low speed limits.

The Marquette Greenway will be a 60-mile shared use path connecting downtown New Buffalo to east Chicago. Over 35 miles have been completed and the section along Grand Beach Road just outside of the village limits will be completed in 2026-27. The Marquette Greenway accommodates multiple non-motorized users (mainly pedestrians and bicyclists) and will be a minimum 10-foot width. Due to separation from vehicular traffic, it provides a popular alternative means of travel for users.

In 2023, the Village of Michiana Village Council passed a resolution in support of the Marquette Greenway. While the Marquette Greenway doesn't directly pass through the Village of Michiana, there is an opportunity for the Village to connect to this regionally significant trail system. For more information visit www.berrientrails.org/marquettegw.asp.

Another important non-motorized asset near the Village is U.S. Bicycle Route 35 which is a 500-mile route that runs from Indiana through Michigan to Sault Ste. Marie, Canada, generally following the Lake Michigan shoreline and through the eastern Upper Peninsula. The Michigan portion of U.S. Bicycle Route 35 extends from New Buffalo, MI to Sault Ste. Marie. For more information visit www.swmpc.org/usbr35.asp.

CURRENT LAND USE

The current Village Land Use Map developed in 2016 consists of residential, governmental and open space/natural areas. Of the 233 acres in the Village, 200 of those are designated critical dune, 2.3 acres are parkland and 13 acres are beaches. There currently is no commercial or industrial land use in the Village. The zoning map (Map 12 in the Maps Appendix) identifies one public area and two residential areas and represents the current land use in the Village.

Public Lands (PL) – It is the purpose of the Public Lands District to recognize, accommodate and protect public resources in the Village. Such resources include public facilities associated with government administration, such as the Village Hall, and public facilities associated with governmental services, such as fire stations and parks. These public resources provide vital facilities and services to the Village and its residents on a day-to-day and long-term basis and improve public health, safety and welfare. Such public resources also include public open spaces comprising special and important natural resources, including shoreline and dunal areas, the protection of which is of great public interest to the Village of Michiana and the State of Michigan due to their environmental, recreational, visual and historical character. This district is established to ensure the protection of and continued viability of such facilities, services and resources and that they not be altered except where it is determined that such alterations maintain or enhance their public good.

Lakefront Residential (LR) – It is the purpose of the Lakefront Residential District to provide opportunities for single-family residential development patterns and lifestyles of a village character along the Lake Michigan shoreline, based on lot size, setback, open space and other development regulations that ensure a stable and sound residential environment and community character, including the preservation of the stability and integrity of the Village's shoreline and dunal features and compliance with all local, state and federal regulations regarding shoreline protection.

Village Residential (VR) - Village Residential is the largest land use area in the Village. It is the purpose of the Village Residential District to provide opportunities for single-family residential development patterns and lifestyles of a village character, based on lot size, setback, open space and other development regulations which ensure a stable and sound residential environment and community character.

In addition to the categories above on the Zoning Map, the Village has received donations of open lots from residents and purchased some open beachfront lots. Discussions about future conservation of these properties have occurred with Chikaming Open Lands (a local land conservancy).

DRAFT

CHAPTER 3 VILLAGE OF MICHIANA TODAY



OVERVIEW

Village of Michiana Today provides a **snapshot of the Village’s current conditions**, focusing on services, infrastructure, land use, and resources. It evaluates how the Village is functioning today—what is working well, where there are gaps, and what challenges may affect the future. This factual baseline establishes a common understanding of “where we are now,” so that when combined with needs of our community, can inform realistic goals, objectives, and priority projects in the Master Plan.

A series of working group meetings with departmental operations and service areas were held to understand current conditions, ongoing initiatives, and future needs alongside community improvement survey findings. Meetings began on March 13, 2025, at Michiana Village Hall, with additional sessions held on May 2, 2025. Each session included village leadership, department representatives, members of the Master Planning Task Force, and the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC). The meetings focused on reviewing community survey findings, understanding existing services and infrastructure, and discussing emerging priorities and challenges across departments.

The process emphasized collaboration, integrating input from staff, officials, and property owners to guide decision-making and establish actionable strategies for public safety, infrastructure, environmental preservation, recreation, and overall community development.

VILLAGE OF MICHIANA MANAGEMENT

The Village Council has five elected members including one seat elected as President. The Council oversees the community’s operations, development and plans. There are nine departments each overseen by the Village President or a designated Village Council member (See Table 3.1). Committees or Project Workgroups are often formed to support or advise projects or ongoing operations. Monthly Council meetings are open to the public in person and online.

Over the last two years, the council completed long-range initiatives related to upgrades of recreation areas and infrastructure and ensuring public service sustainability. Contracts for village services have been reviewed and renegotiated. Ongoing priorities continue to be access to beaches and the preservation of woodland areas. With current long-range initiatives ending, the Village Council directed development of a new Master Plan to ensure future Village Council plans serve the needs of the community.

Table 3.1 Village of Michiana Governance Structure

Village Council Governance Structure			
Village Council Members	Timothy McCarthy, President Brian Cassidy, Pro Tem Mike Botelho Mike Mumper Nancy Thill		
Department	Village Council Lead	Department Lead	Committee or Workgroup
Water	Mike Mumper	Rick Reitz	Water Board
Police	Timothy McCarthy, Village President	Ryan Layman, Police Chief	
Clerk and Treasurer	Timothy McCarthy, Village President	Anne Heywood - Clerk Tracey McCay - Treasurer	
Beaches and Parks	Brian Cassidy – Beaches Mike Mumper - Parks	Rick Reitz	Events Committee
Building and Zoning	Timothy McCarthy, Village President	Bill Lampert, Building Inspector	
Tree	Nancy Thill	Rick Reitz	Tree Board
Public Works Department	Mike Mumper	Rick Reitz	
Fire	Timothy McCarthy, Village President	Gary Bendix, Michiana Shores Fire Chief Jamie Flick, New Buffalo Township Fire Chief	
Planning Commission	Mike Botelho, Commission Liaison	Julie Bonello, Planning Commissioner	Master Planning Task Force

VILLAGE FINANCES

The Village of Michiana manages five financial funds:

- The General Fund, primarily funded by property taxes, covers daily operations, including the Police Department. Tax revenues flow into this fund and may be distributed to other funds as approved by the Village Council.
- The Major Street Fund and Local Street Fund receive allocations from the General Fund and the State of Michigan under Act 51.
- The Building Fund is supported by building permit fees, while
- The Water Fund is financed through utility revenues. Revenues designated for specific funds cannot be transferred, except for General Fund revenues, which the Village Council may reallocate.

Each year, the Village Council develops a balanced budget through a collaborative process. The Treasurer, department heads, and two Council members assess financial needs, future expenditures, and priorities, compiling all budget items—including staff benefits and insurance costs—into a worksheet. A budget workshop allows for discussion before presenting the final budget to the Council. The Village’s fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30.

The Village’s total operating millage for the 2025 year is 8.3883 including 6.5174 operating millage plus a 0.9122 Village operating and a 0.9047 Village emergency services millage funding police and fire services proposed by our Council and voted on by our residents.

Village property owners also pay property taxes to the township, which fund a variety of services and programs, including county taxes, the state education tax, Lake Michigan College, Berrien Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) General (education), RESA Special Education, county law enforcement, county 911, county senior center, county parks, township services, public safety, parks, the library, and the Library Bond. Non homestead property owners contribute an additional 18.0 mills to the New Buffalo School District.

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

BUILDINGS

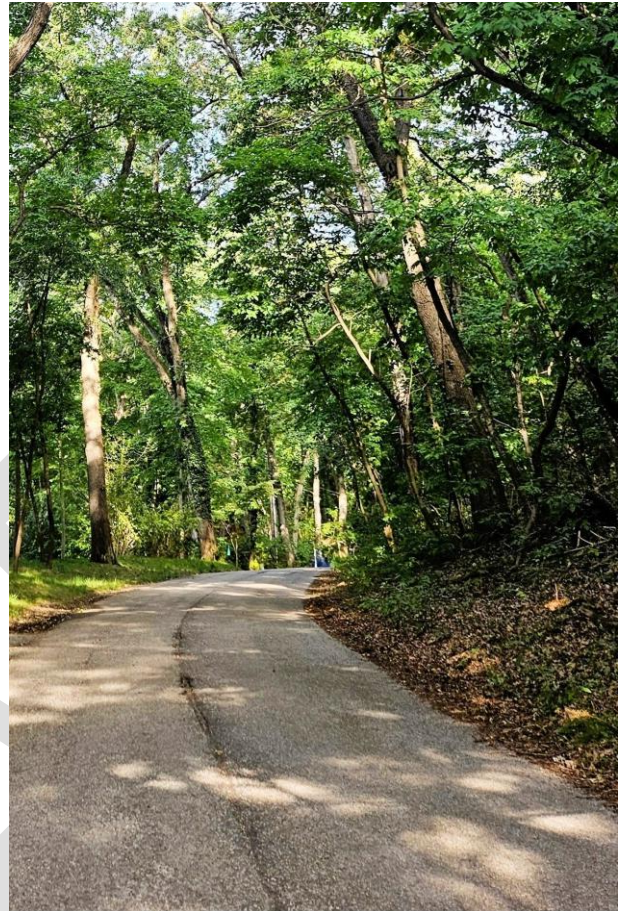
The Village of Michiana owns two distinct buildings/structures:

- The Village Hall was recently renovated with new windows, doors, flooring and lighting. The Hall houses the Village Clerk/Treasurer Offices, Police Department and Public Works Department and serves as an emergency shelter.
- The water pump station is located on Michiana Drive adjacent to White Creek Ditch.

ROADS

The Village maintains 8.49 miles of asphalt roads, with a right-of-way width of 30 feet in most areas. Michiana Village does not contain sidewalks and is a golf cart friendly community. This means that roads are shared with pedestrians, cyclists, golf carts, and cars. Under Michigan's Act 51, villages and cities receive state transportation funding from the Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF). The "10k rule" requires each recipient community to invest, on average, at least 1% of these funds over a ten-year period in non-motorized facilities such as sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails to support walking and biking.

The roads in Michiana have deteriorated overtime due to weather, changes in temperature, and larger and heavier vehicles using the roads. To combat deteriorating roads, the Public Works Department fills potholes with hot patching, typically in May or June. The Village is aware of the disrepair of the roads and in 2025 applied for a grant to replace about half of the Village's roads. The Village is continuing to apply for grants that will help cover costs to repave and repair roads throughout the Village. There are no plans or needs to add additional roads throughout Michiana.



WATER

The Michiana Water Authority Commission currently has three (3) members (plus the Village Clerk & a Resident Liaison) and is governed by Michiana Village Ordinance 14-40. This ordinance establishes a water authority and provides for its organization, its powers and duties, and prescribes its enforcement. The Commission guides decisions about water supply, delivery and quality, applies for grants, and negotiates contracts.

The Village of Michiana purchases water from Michigan City, Indiana, and recently signed a 50-year contract. The Village provides water to its residents as well as the Village of Grand Beach. The contract with the Village of Grand Beach for this service was renewed in May 2025. The Village maintains about 8.5 miles of water mains and has two interconnects.

These interconnects are located at Evergreen and Grand Beach Drive, Ponchartrain Drive and the Village/Township line.

The Village conducts numerous tests on the water to ensure compliance with EGLE. Some of these tests include checking levels of bacteria, lead and copper, and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). To keep up with expenses, the Village increases water costs by 10 cents per 10,000 gallons every year.

In 2025 the Village received a grant to replace the water main along Creek Drive between Grand Beach Road and Chicagami Trail with an 8-inch main. Future upgrades include replacing the water main along Chicagami Trail, Choctaw Trail, and Comanche Trail.

SANITATION SYSTEM

The Village of Michiana does not contain a sewer system, but rather each building has its own septic system or tank. New construction must comply with Berrien County Health Department requirements on septic location and sizing.

OUTSIDE UTILITIES AND SERVICES

Natural gas is provided by Semco Energy, and the electric utility provider is Indiana Michigan Power (an AEP Company). During high winds or storms, the Village is prone to blackouts due to aging infrastructure and lack of multiple connections to the grid. Comcast is the only cable and internet provider.

Cellular connections are poor throughout the Village and at the beaches. The Village is looking into options for providing better cell service within the Village.

The Village has a single hauler contract for trash and recycling services with Republic Services.

POLICE AND FIRE

POLICE

The Michiana Police Department, founded in the 1950s, has been jointly operating with Grand Beach's police department since 2019 to maximize resources and improve efficiency. Governed by a Joint Police Board with two representatives from each village, the department ensures coverage for 350 homes in Michiana and 450 in Grand Beach. The January 1, 2025, agreement extends the partnership indefinitely, requiring a one-year notice for withdrawal.

The department consists of five full-time officers and three part-time officers. Staffing remains a challenge due to high area housing costs and competition within the law enforcement field. However, the joint department has improved efficiency by consolidating

leadership under one police chief, selling a patrol vehicle, and ensuring coverage. The Department handles around 600 calls annually that are concentrated between Memorial Day and Labor Day with 8-10% related to noise complaints from rental properties. Since the merger of the two Departments, calls have essentially doubled, which was anticipated due to the increased service area.

Security measures include license plate readers—one at Beach Stop 37 in Michiana and three in Grand Beach. Additionally, security cameras at the Village Hall provide 24/7 surveillance, with one camera facing the park and another covering the Department of Public Works area and water pumping station.

A key challenge facing the department is limited facilities, which restrict the use of certain investigative databases due to state and FBI regulations. The Village of Grand Beach and Village of Michiana currently maintain separate police facilities and are actively exploring building a new police facility for the combined force. A new facility would include an interview space, better investigation tools and capacity, and a dedicated workspace. A survey and public discussion will be conducted to gather community input about feasibility and need.

The department communicates with residents through mass emails, social media, quarterly newsletters, and council meeting updates. They also host summer outreach events, such as “Coffee with a Cop”. To inform residents and visitors about golf cart regulations and updated laws or ordinances, the department shares information through Facebook, the Village’s website, mass emails, council meetings, and Nixle, a communication tool used by law enforcement.

FIRE

The New Buffalo Township Fire Department (NBTFD) was established in 1869 and is the Village of Michiana’s designated fire department. The NBTFD is assisted by the Michiana Shores, Indiana Fire Department. Calls have more than doubled from 130-150 in 2011 to around 300 in 2024, primarily due to a growing seasonal population.

NBTFD has 18 paid on call staff members that support Michiana. To address long-term staffing concerns, discussions are underway to form a regional fire authority with New Buffalo Township, Chikaming Township, Three Oaks Township, and New Buffalo City, which would create a full-time fire station for the area.

The Michiana Shores Volunteer Fire Department, which has served Michiana and Michiana Shores since 1955, provides basic life support services, while Advanced Life Support (ALS) is contracted through Medic One, with La Porte County stepping in if Medic One is unavailable. The department remains primarily volunteer-based, but recruiting new members is difficult due to housing costs. Additionally, equipping a single firefighter costs

approximately \$14,000, further straining resources. Despite these challenges, equipment and fire trucks remain in good condition. In 2024, the department responded to a record 164 calls, most of which were non-emergencies like fire alarms and fallen trees.

Community outreach includes events like a CPR/AED training course attended by 40 residents, and an annual pancake breakfast. Additionally, two new AED units have been installed at Village Hall.

BEACH RESOURCES AND SERVICES

The Village of Michiana maintains eight beach access points along its Lake Michigan shoreline, which are critical for both recreation and environmental stewardship. At most of the access points, there is a covered beach structure with benches, showers and a bike rack. On the beach, there are kayak racks with spots available for rent by residents.



All beach stops have been impacted by critical dune erosion over the past 10 years. As a result, beach access at Stop 40, 41 and 43 have been closed. To remedy the access problem, a new beach stop was built in an area with better beach access called the New Stop 40 Beach Access. Almost all beach stops have poison ivy, unkempt grasses, fallen tree limbs and older structures requiring cleaning and maintenance.

Beach management is overseen informally by the Beach Commissioner, who serves as a liaison to Public Works Department and the Village Council. There is currently no dedicated beach or shoreline committee, but an opportunity exists to create one. The Beach Commissioner along with Public Works develop an annual plan for maintenance.

The current focus is on maintenance (parking and stairs), cleanliness, safety concerns, and user fees. Currently buoys are installed by Michigan City. Raking the beach is no longer possible because there is no beach access point for equipment. Use of the beach for dog walking and play is limited to restricted hours during the summer season and requires adherence to the village ordinance requiring dogs to be leashed. While most beaches are public and placed in a conservancy for future preservation, there are a few privately held beaches that make consistent community regulation more difficult.

BEACH DESCRIPTIONS

Stop 37 and 37.5 – The beach is widening and becoming more attractive even though large boulders are on village property on one side of the beach after the Village agreed to the revetment to save the adjacent homeowner's home. Stop 37 has a covered shelter with bench seating. The other end of the beach borders a private beach area owned by the Dune Oaks Beach Club. The beach stop has been cleared making access to the beach easier, although there is no bench seating. There is an entrance point at 37.5 that is closed but could be used for additional beach access if needed.

Stop 38 – This is the biggest, widest and most beautiful beach in the Village. The beach has several private beach entrances. The beach stop is in good condition and has steep steps to the beach with a metal ladder that inhibits some from using the beach. The area around the stop is inconsistently covered with dune grass, invasive plants, or barren areas.

Stop 39 – This is a small, crescent shaped beach unlikely to grow due to hard armoring around the homes that border the beach. Due to dune erosion and to safeguard the road and utilities, traps bags were installed on the dune side. The bags have worked and are covered by beach sand in spots but are monitored by EGLE due to the risk the bags can burst and litter the dune and beach. The beach structure is in good shape. The area surrounding the stop is a mixture of dune grass, trees and invasive species around the beach shower and bike rack. Railroad tie retaining structures are beginning to shift due to the surrounding dunes collapsing.

Stop 40 – The original Stop 40 access was closed several years ago and stairs removed. The beach stop structure with benches is still heavily used by the community. There is a new Stop 40 with beach access built in the last few years. The beach is filled with rebar, rusted steel frames, broken cement and large rocks that are a safety hazard. The wooden beach stairs with aluminum ladder steps end on a wooden platform on the beach. Recently, the trees around the beach access stairs were cut illegally on both sides and will potentially result in increased duneland erosion.

Stop 41 and Stop 41.5 – The original Stop 41 access was closed and stairs removed due to erosion. The community still enjoys sitting on the benches at the beach stop structure. Beach access is a short walk away at Stop 41.5. Stop 41.5 does not have a beach structure but has a bike rack and shower with easy stairs down to the beach. A non-permitted beach pergola was determined by EGLE to require removal.

Stop 42 – The beach at Stop 42 is wide and a continuation of 41.5. There is a beach stop structure in good condition and a bike rack. Like other beach stops, downed trees and limbs need to be removed. The stairs and metal ladder to the beach are in good condition.

Stop 43 - Although there is a small but growing beach, there is no beach structure and no beach access. Two benches have been placed at the dune top and are available for viewing the lake and sunsets. Temporary fencing has been placed at the perimeter to discourage climbing due to the steep drop to the water. There has been no consistent open access.

PARKS AND RECREATION

The Village of Michiana is a summer community that offers a variety of recreational activities for homeowners and visitors. Due to the proximity of Lake Michigan, sand and water activities are easily accessible and numerous. Recreational facilities, including beach stops can be found on Map 10 in the Maps appendix.

Currently a parks and recreation committee does not exist. A separate Events Committee exists. There is an opportunity to structure a Committee for better coordination of parks, recreation and event improvement and programming.

VILLAGE PARK

The Michiana Village Park is 2.3 acres located next to Village Hall in the southern area of the Village and is within a 20-minute walk from anywhere in the Village. The park has one tennis court, four pickleball courts, a bocce ball court, a covered picnic area, a covered sitting area, a playground, a volleyball net, and ample benches throughout. A butterfly garden borders the creek. The park also offers free Wi-Fi and bathrooms. The bathrooms are available when Village Hall is open, but there are also two temporary, portable facilities provided during the Spring, Summer, and Fall.



A comprehensive site plan developed by Pizzo (Appendix A: Village Park Renovations Plan) was approved and includes, a walking path, benches, and a bridge over the creek, with additional ideas like a welcoming entrance and improved landscaping. With the plan as a guide, the park has had many recent improvements: the park was reseeded, the playground was updated and mulched, the basketball area was resealed, and significant ongoing improvements have



been made to the pickleball, tennis, and bocce ball areas. In 2025, our community enjoyed more musical events in the park. During the summer, the park is leased by the Michiana Women's Club for a Day Camp for children.

Recreation infrastructure presents ongoing challenges and opportunities. Availability of parking and bathrooms is a concern at the park. The pickleball court has seen increased use and there are concerns around resident access and noise. Cracks and drainage problems require that court repairs will be needed. The Village is also exploring how land bordering White Creek ditch can be maintained and utilized. With no formal Parks Committee currently in place, there is an opportunity to foster greater community involvement through a dedicated advisory group, building on existing volunteer contributions.

TREE BOARD

The Tree Board is implementing a 5-year Urban Forestry Management Plan and a recently completed Tree ordinance. The Tree ordinance outlines the responsibilities of the Tree Board, sets standards for tree planning and care, and enforces protections against the removal or damage of public trees.

A recently completed Great Lakes Urban Forestry (GLUF) tree inventory revealed that 71% of the Village's tree population is comprised of oak species, with an additional 24% made up of invasive species and only 5% representing other varieties. This lack of diversity poses significant ecological risks, including increased vulnerability to diseases and pests such as Oak Wilt. Consequently, the Tree Board has been actively promoting the use of native species in landscaping and tree replacement efforts. Property owners are required to secure permits from the Village and, in some circumstances, EGLE before engaging in any tree removal or service work in the Critical Dune Area.

Beyond regulatory oversight, the Board has been actively involved in planning and implementing new plantings, with ten trees planted over the past two years. In the future, the Tree Board would like to integrate with activities that involve parks, beaches and other activities affecting trees. There is also an opportunity to partner with Grand Beach.

The Tree Board collaborates with the Women's Club Day Camp on environmental education, including tree care and lessons on invasive species. The Tree board also plans to develop a public awareness campaign to help property owners take part in managing and preserving our urban forest. Potential ideas are an annual workshop and newsletter articles.

POLICY AND ZONING

The Land Use Map and corresponding Policies and Zoning Ordinances are developed by the Planning Commission and approved by the Village Council. The current Land Use Map from 2016 identifies three Zoning districts: Lakefront Residential (LR), Village Residential (VR) and Public Land (PL). Historically, the Village Land Use Maps never dedicated any area to accommodate commercial and industrial development, and through ordinances have always reflected the community natural resources requiring conservation including beaches, sand dunes, wetlands, trees, floodplains and White Creek.

The LR and VR residential policies support single family development based on lot sizes, set back and open space while preserving our community character and environmental preservation of our shoreline, critical dune, green space and wetland areas. Residential areas are largely built out with few remaining open lots. A growing development trend is the purchase and teardown of adjacent homes to build a single larger house, but projects must still comply with the building ordinances adopted in 2016.

The Public Land (PL) area protects the Village public resources including the Village Hall, Village Park, facilities for our public services (Police, Fire and Infrastructure), and all open spaces protecting our natural resources. In 2016, Village of Michiana placed more than 40 beachfront and residential properties into the Chikaming Open Lands (COL) Trust committing the land to the community for recreational use and preservation. This district ensures the protection of and continued viability of such facilities, services and resources and that they not be altered except where it is determined that such alterations maintain or enhance their public good for the community.

The Zoning Ordinances identifying permitted land use and establishing regulations to control density, height, lot coverage, setbacks, lot sizes, and other elements were updated in 2016. The zoning ordinance also sets forth procedures for site plan review, special land uses, signs, landscaping, lighting, parking, noise, stormwater, and other elements of development.

The Village issues a zoning compliance certificate and then a building permit. In Michiana, a building permit may also serve as the zoning compliance certificate. The Building Inspector also acts as the Zoning Administrator and conducts inspections for setbacks, footings, foundation and insulation, while the State handles inspections for plumbing, electrical, and mechanical work. Once all inspections are complete, the Village issues a Certificate of Occupancy. Variances are rarely granted due to the strict hardship requirement, with only four requests in the past 12 years. When there is an issue, the Village Council along with the Zoning Administrator acts in an independent capacity as the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) to hear and decide administrative appeals.

Other zoning concerns include illegal sheds, which are difficult to remove once built.

Since 2020, 86 new homeowners have moved into the Village, doubling the number of full-time residents from 15% to around 30%, with more younger families settling in. Many building permits are for roof replacements and home renovation, rather than new construction. Contractor work is restricted to weekdays between 8 AM and 5 PM, Saturdays from 10 AM to 5 PM with no work allowed on Sundays.

Current ordinances require that short-term rentals undergo annual inspections, ensuring compliance with smoke and CO₂ detector requirements, and that homeowners pay a \$300 per-bedroom fee. Because the residential density of the Village has increased during peak periods due to vacation rentals the Village is currently exploring potential regulations on the number of rentals allowed and possible minimum stay requirements.

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CHAPTER 4 COMMUNITY INPUT AND FINDINGS



OVERVIEW

Community engagement ensures the acceptance and successful implementation of a master plan. Gathering input throughout the process increases public awareness of community projects, promotes government transparency, and empowers residents to shape the community's future. Great attention was given to ensure every resident had an opportunity to contribute through responding to a survey, participating in a community goals workshop, attending Planning Commission meetings and having access to up-to-date planning information on the Village's website. Data from community engagement was used to identify a new vision statement and the future goals and objectives for the Master Plan.

PUBLIC SURVEY

The initial step in the Michiana Master Planning project was conducting a community survey from December 2024 through February 17, 2025. Community data on our visitors and services is essential for building future recreational activities while increasing supporting services to preserve Michiana's unique character.

The Master Planning Task Force distributed the survey to gather community feedback on the most valued aspects of the Village and areas for improvement. The survey was completed by 232 village residents/property owners, a 62% response rate. Survey results served as the foundation in drafting a new vision statement and establishing the Master Plan future goals and priorities for the Village. The survey responses by question are included in Appendix B.

From the survey data, it was determined that 32.76% of respondents were full-time residents, while 67.24% lived in other cities or states. The survey also showed that 55.65% of respondents were over the age of 65, and 32.61% were between 51 and 65 years old, highlighting an older demographic within the community. These responses are consistent with the 2020 census data.

Survey responses support Michiana as a vibrant recreational community that welcomes not only homeowners but also families, friends and visitors of all ages. Nearly half of respondents host visitors with children aged 0-18 years each summer, while an even greater number host adult visitors in the Village.

VISION RESPONSES

The survey asked property owners to identify up to 5 responses on what they liked most about Michiana. There were 225 responses. Respondents overwhelmingly communicated appreciation for Michiana's natural beauty, peacefulness, and small-town feel. The beaches, forests, and wildlife are major draws, along with the strong sense of community and safety. Many highlighted the low traffic, walkability, and lack of commercialization as essential to the Village's charm. Village staff and services also received high praise, as did the recreational activities, events, and improvements. A summary of what is most liked about Michiana is presented in the box below.

What do you like most about Michiana?

Beaches & Lake Michigan (112) - The beauty, access, and tranquility of the beach and lake, including clean and uncrowded shores.

Peace & Quiet (97) - Residents love the peaceful, quiet environment, especially outside of peak rental seasons.

Trees & Natural Beauty (89) - The wooded environment, rolling hills, dunes, and lush greenery are highly valued.

Community & Friendliness (78) - The close-knit, welcoming, and friendly nature of the village and its residents.

Low Traffic & Walkability (62) - Minimal traffic, walkable streets, and a safe environment for walking and biking.

Small-Town Charm & Atmosphere (56) - Quaint, nostalgic feel with a slower pace, free from commercialization.

Village Services & Safety (55) - Well-maintained roads, parks, and beach stops, plus excellent police and fire services.

Recreational Activities (49) - Pickleball, playgrounds, biking, and walking trails were frequently mentioned.

Dark Skies & Minimal Streetlights (32) - Many appreciate the lack of bright streetlights, preserving nighttime stargazing.

Events & Social Gatherings (30) - Community events like the 4th of July parade, Oktoberfest, and summer activities.

Proximity to New Buffalo & Michigan City (27) - Convenient access to nearby towns for shopping, dining, and entertainment.

Privacy & Seclusion (24) - Many value the village's sense of privacy and feeling of escape from urban life.

Wildlife and Natural Habitat (23) - Love for local wildlife, birds, and the preservation of nature.

IMPROVEMENT FINDINGS

Survey respondents provided 713 responses about desired improvements. The responses were reviewed, edited, and organized based on three iterations of sentiment analysis using ChatGPT. This resulted in forty-three sub-categories under 6 main categories which were then prioritized by total responses. The methodology to collect, categorize and analyze the data served as the foundation for identifying preliminary goals and objectives in the Master Plan.

Table 4.1 Rank by Service Category then by Priority Suggestions within Category shows ranking of the highest priority improvement requests by service category. Beaches received the most suggestions for improvement followed by Infrastructure & Public Works, Policy & Zoning and Parks and Recreation. Table 4.2 shows the highest priority improvement requests by percent of total response regardless of service category. The highest priority improvement request as a percentage of total responses was **improving beaches, stops and stairs (13%)**. The next largest percentage of total responses was **improving road maintenance (6%)**

Table 4.1 Rank by Service Category then by Priority Suggestions within Category

% Total Response (713)	Service Category	Priority Ranking within Category	Suggestions - Rank by Highest Priority per Service Category	% Total within Category	% of Total Responses (713)
22%	Beaches	1	Maintain/Improve beaches, stops, stairs	62%	13%
	Beaches	2	Remove beach hazards	12%	3%
	Beaches	3	Erosion control	11%	2%
	Beaches	4	Enforce village ordinances	7%	2%
20%	Infrastructure & Public Works	1	Improve road maintenance	28%	6%
	Infrastructure & Public Works	2	Improve reliability of electric service	17%	4%
	Infrastructure & Public Works	3	Improve telecommunication systems	13%	3%
	Infrastructure & Public Works	4	Improve clean-up on public property	13%	3%
	Infrastructure & Public Works	5	Improve yard waste pickup	12%	2%
	Infrastructure & Public Works	6	Improve sanitation services	9%	2%
	Infrastructure & Public Works	7	Improve water,sewer,drainage systems	8%	2%
19%	Policy & Zoning	1	Issues with short-term rentals	28%	5%
	Policy & Zoning	2	Limit night-time lighting	15%	3%
	Policy & Zoning	3	Issues with building, planning, & zoning ordinances	12%	2%
	Policy & Zoning	4	Control non-resident access	9%	2%
	Policy & Zoning	5	Improve environmental & sustainability efforts	9%	2%
19%	Parks & Recreation	1	Create more community events	27%	5%
	Parks & Recreation	2	Add amenities at community hall	26%	5%
	Parks & Recreation	3	Maintain/Improve park facilities	14%	3%
	Parks & Recreation	4	Improve sport courts	11%	2%
	Parks & Recreation	5	More nature & bike trails	10%	2%
	Parks & Recreation	6	More pet access	9%	2%
13%	Enforcement & Safety	1	Reduce unsafe driving & road hazards	41%	5%
	Enforcement & Safety	2	Enforce noise ordinance	20%	3%
	Enforcement & Safety	3	Increase police patrols	19%	3%
7%	Village Management	1	Reduce Village taxes, fees & spending	32%	2%
	Village Management	2	Improve communications from Village	30%	2%
100%					

Table 4.2 Rank of Suggestions by Percentage of Total Responses

% of Total Responses (713)	Service Category	Ranking as % of Total Responses	Suggestion
13%	Beaches	1	Maintain/Improve beaches, stops, stairs
6%	Infrastructure & Public Works	2	Improve road maintenance
5%	Enforcement & Safety	3	Reduce unsafe driving & road hazards
5%	Policy & Zoning		Issues with short-term rentals
5%	Parks & Recreation		Create more community events
5%	Parks & Recreation		Add amenities at community hall
4%	Infrastructure & Public Works	4	Improve reliability of electric service
3%	Enforcement & Safety	5	Enforce noise ordinance
3%	Enforcement & Safety		Increase police patrols
3%	Policy & Zoning		Limit night-time lighting
3%	Parks & Recreation		Maintain/Improve park facilities
3%	Infrastructure & Public Works		Improve telecommunication systems
3%	Infrastructure & Public Works		Improve clean-up on public property
3%	Beaches		Remove beach hazards
2%	Village Management	6	Reduce Village taxes, fees & spending
2%	Village Management		Improve communications from Village
2%	Infrastructure & Public Works		Improve yard waste pickup
2%	Policy & Zoning		Issues with building, planning, & zoning ordinances
2%	Beaches		Erosion control
2%	Parks & Recreation		Improve sport courts
2%	Parks & Recreation		More nature & bike trails
2%	Infrastructure & Public Works		Improve sanitation services
2%	Policy & Zoning		Control non-resident access
2%	Policy & Zoning		Improve environmental & sustainability efforts
2%	Parks & Recreation		More pet access
2%	Infrastructure & Public Works		Improve water, sewer, drainage systems
2%	Beaches		Enforce village ordinances
90%	This subset of 27 suggestions add up to 90% of all responses received.		

PUBLIC WORKSHOP

A public workshop was held on July 26, 2025 from 11am -2pm, Eastern Time. Over 48 residents/property owners attended to give their input on the Future Land Use Map, the vision for the Village, and goals and objectives for the Master Plan. Attendees were given a chance to provide feedback on seven categories corresponding to the initial Master Plan Goals and Objectives. A comprehensive description of the format and responses from the workshop can be found in Appendix C: Public Workshop.



LAND USE

Before the workshop, a natural features goal was created to support future conservation initiatives aimed at preserving our community’s natural environment. Thirty-five percent of all survey responses for the question asking “what you like most about Michiana” identified a desire to preserve our natural features. National and state master planning processes recognize the importance of including conservation into master planning. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended) requires a local master plan be based on an *inventory of conditions* including integrating natural-features overlays into existing land-use / planning maps.

To align with the new natural features goal, the Planning Commission voted on June 13, 2025 to update the existing Land Use Map to include natural feature overlays: high-risk erosion areas, critical sand dunes, trees, floodplains and White Creek areas. It reflects increasing recognition that mapping our natural features overlaid onto our housing and other land use maps will allow future long-term sustainability of the Village’s vision.

WORKSHOP FINDINGS

Attendees provided an additional 136 responses to the 7 goals and priorities identified in the survey including the new Natural Features goal. Similar to the process used for the survey analysis, the responses were reviewed, edited, and organized based on three iterations of sentiment analysis using ChatGPT. For each **goal category**, responses were counted and reviewed for **repeating or overlapping ideas**, grouped into key themes and added to the survey response data. Each goal section mentioned improvement priorities that were **merged or deduplicated insights** across more than one goal category. Below is a summary of the findings.

Workshop responses are summarized in Table 4.3 and Table 4.4. The analysis of comments demonstrated consistency with the survey results and provided further clarity in three areas for improvement below:

- The community desire for a new short term rental ordinance received 16% of the total workshop responses and demonstrated even stronger support than the initial survey.
- The Beach category with 4 beach priorities received 43% of the total workshop responses. Our community continued to communicate that beach improvements are the highest priority service improvements requested for the Master Plan. The beach priorities including the preservation of our beaches are also included under the new Natural Features category.
- Workshop responses referencing preservation of our natural features were added to the natural feature survey vision responses and attributed to the new Natural Features goal category. The Natural Features category became the highest priority category (23%) followed by the other goal categories: Beaches (18%), Infrastructure and Public Works (15%), Policy and Zoning (15%), Parks and Recreation (12%), Enforcement and Safety (10%) and Village Management (6%).

Table 4.3 Community Workshop Findings- Ranking by Response Subcategories

Rank	Response Subcategories	# of Mentions	% of Total Mentions
1	Short term Rentals	22	16%
2	Beach Cleanliness	18	13%
3	Beach Safety	15	11%
4	Roads, Streets and Traffic Management	14	10%
5	Beach Policy	13	10%
6	Beach Access	12	9%
7	Police Patrols and Community Safety	11	8%
7	Water, Utilities and Cell	11	8%
8	Dune, Shoreline, Beach Preservation	10	7%
8	Public Safety and Governance	10	7%
		136	100%

Table 4.4 Community Workshop Findings- Ranking by Response Category

Rank	Service Category	Survey Responses	% of Total (Survey)	Updated Workshop Responses	Updated % of Total (Workshop)
1	Natural Features			293	23%
2	Beaches	156	22%	228	18%
3	Infrastructure and Public Works	138	19%	188	15%
4	Policy and Zoning	144	20%	191	15%
5	Parks and Recreation	133	19%	148	12%
6	Enforcement and Safety	95	13%	131	10%
7	Village Management	47	7%	78	6%

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WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Residents/property owners want to preserve Michiana’s natural character through long-term ecological planning, habitat protection, and sustainable practices. They also support cleaner, safer beaches, proactive infrastructure upgrades, stricter rental rules, and modest park improvements alongside enforcement and more inclusive, transparent leadership.

Natural Features

Residents/property owners want to preserve Michiana’s natural character by protecting dunes, native habitats, and the shoreline. Many support erosion control, native plantings, dark-sky lighting, and managing invasive species. There's strong interest in ecological planning, access to nature, and sustainable practices like composting and low-impact landscaping.

Beaches

Residents/property owners view beaches as shared spaces needing ongoing care. They want cleaner, safer, and more accessible beaches with regular maintenance, better signage, and clear rules. Safety upgrades and consistent enforcement, especially for dogs, fires, and overcrowding, were frequently mentioned. Respectful use and shared responsibility were emphasized.

Infrastructure and Public Works

Residents/property owners want proactive maintenance of roads, drainage, utilities, and public spaces. Priorities include traffic safety, buried utilities, improved cell service, and cleaner streetscapes. These improvements should follow transparent budgets and long-term plans that reflect community values.

Policy and Zoning

Residents/property owners support enforceable rules that protect neighborhood character and quality of life. Short-term rental concerns were widespread, with calls for limits, longer stays, and better enforcement of existing ordinances. Ordinances on lighting, noise, and fire safety were also supported, along with transparent, equitable governance.

Parks and Recreation

Parks and courts are vital to community well-being. Residents/property owners want them to remain free, well-maintained, and accessible to all ages and abilities with a priority for Michiana Village residents. Dog access drew mixed views, but most agreed on the need for



responsible owner supervision and control of pet behavior. Other ideas included butterfly gardens, better walkways, and avoiding paid parking.

Enforcement and Safety

Residents/property owners want visible, consistent enforcement of traffic, rental, and water safety rules. Many prefer community-based policing over more infrastructure. Transparency around patrols, violations, and contracts is essential to building public trust.

Village Management

Residents/property owners seek leadership that reflects the whole community, communicates openly, and establishes future plans. Many want more representation from second homeowners. Other priorities include establishing committees/workgroups that include broad community representation, publishing board terms, developing and aligning budgets with community input, and ensuring village-wide and equitable treatment.



CHAPTER 5 STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN



OVERVIEW

The Strategic Master Plan presented in this chapter serves as a guide for Village officials and residents in making future decisions regarding future land use, infrastructure, services, budgeting, and all other choices that impact the future of the community. The Plan ensures that decisions are consistent with the community's vision and priorities for the future.

The Master Planning Task Force reporting to the Planning Commission developed the Village Strategic Master Plan after a year-long process of collecting and analyzing data from the Community, the Village Council, and Village employees along with supporting expertise from the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC). The Plan was created based on data describing current services and most needed improvements collected through a survey, a community workshop, and several departmental meetings with Village Council and Village employees.

The Michiana community was consistently engaged throughout the planning process, providing input on what makes Michiana Village a special place to live and what improvements should be implemented for the future. As detailed in Chapter 4, this input was gathered through surveys, workshops, and stakeholder meetings, and systematically analyzed to identify common themes and priorities. The identified community priorities

were quantitatively reviewed and used to form the basis of the master plan goals and objectives.

The Strategic Master Plan includes the vision, goals, objectives, workplan, and evaluation and accountability sections based on the priorities identified through the process:

- The **vision** expresses the desired future state or overarching aspiration that guides an organization's purpose and direction.
- **Goals** define the broad, long-term aims that support this vision and articulate what the organization seeks to achieve.
- **Objectives** are the specific, measurable steps that translate these goals into actionable and trackable outcomes. Each objective has several projects that are organized initiatives to accomplish each major objective.
- **A detailed Action Work Plan** identifies the roadmap of projects, policies, or programs within each objective that should be implemented, and in what order they should be implemented based on their priority and implementation dependencies.
- **Evaluation and Accountability** section **defines the responsibilities and process by which the Village measures and reports** on the **progress** of the Master Plan.

VILLAGE OF MICHIANA VISION STATEMENT

Michiana embraces a future that honors our past, protects our future and strengthens the bonds that make Michiana a treasured home for generations.

We commit to preserving the serene beauty of our Lake Michigan beaches, lush tree-lined landscapes, and quiet, small-town character through safeguarding our community, protecting our environment and enhancing our public services and parks.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1: NATURAL FEATURES

Protect, preserve, and enhance the Village's vital natural features—its beaches/shoreline, sand dunes, wetlands, trees, floodplains and White Creek—as irreplaceable ecological, recreational, and scenic resources that define the Village's identity, support resilience to environmental change, and ensure public enjoyment for generations to come.

Objective Summary: The Natural Feature objectives center on establishing the Village's first Natural Feature Preservation program that creates a long-term plan to preserve and manage environmentally sensitive areas, integrating the activities into village operations and developing a public awareness program to educate and engage the Community. A consultant is recommended to help establish the initial program framework and identify grant opportunities.

GOAL 2: BEACHES

Protect and preserve Michiana's beaches to ensure their viability, safety and ecological health. Beaches are Michiana's natural community treasure requiring maintenance of safe and accessible beach access points, measures to mitigate erosion and environmental hazards, and polices to preserve shoreline resources.

Objective Summary: Maintaining, improving, and preserving our beaches is the focus of all Beach objectives with an immediate priority to create yearly plans to improve beach stops, plant dune grass for duneland preservation, remove beach hazards with shoreline preservation and improve beach safety through more beach enforcement, improved beach ordinances and the implementation of an online community reporting and tracking system.

GOAL 3: POLICY AND ZONING

Ensure that village policies and zoning ordinances protect the Village's unique character, respond to the needs of residents/property owners and reflect a shared commitment to

privacy, low-density living, environmental stewardship, and responsible use of private and public spaces.

Objective Summary: The Policy and Zoning objectives focus on reviewing and updating the highest need ordinances including short term rentals, home lighting, noise, parking, garbage collection, and pursuing immediate master planning next steps for the Planning Commission as regulated by the Michigan Planning and Enabling Act. Our new Planning Commission is required to update policies and zoning regulations aligned with the new Land Use Map, most importantly, our new Natural Features Land Use Overlay with the acceptance of a new Master Plan.

GOAL 4: INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC SERVICES

Ensure safe, reliable, and resilient public spaces by managing road maintenance, utility reliability, and modern communication systems, while enhancing stormwater and water resources.

Objective Summary: Ensuring safe roads is the highest priority objective including initiatives to identify a program to replace, repair, and maintain the roads, reduce road hazards and address stormwater drainage issues followed by initiatives maintaining our beach stops, improving cellular service, working with the electric company on service initiatives, and replacing the water main in several village areas.

GOAL 5: PARKS AND RECREATION

Provide nature focused spaces and inclusive recreational and social opportunities and events that meet the diverse needs of residents/property owners, align with the Village's character, scale, and values, and promote peaceful living and a sense of community within the Village.

Objective Summary: The Parks and Recreation objectives encompass projects to create, implement and maintain a Recreational and Events Plan including a service framework for sports courts, playground, day camp, and gardens with yearly events and increased amenities as the highest priority need requested by the community.

GOAL 6: SAFETY AND ENFORCEMENT

Ensure a high standard of public safety by supporting consistent police and fire services that prioritize visibility, timely response, and proactive patrolling of both public and private areas. Law enforcement should regularly monitor community parks, beaches, and shared spaces to help preserve the Village's treasured natural environment, protect quality of life, and uphold laws and ordinances. Fire services will continue to maintain strong readiness and emergency response capabilities to safeguard residents and property.

Objective Summary: The major Safety and Enforcement objectives identify initiatives to increase the police visibility and proactive patrolling, increase communication to the community, provide regular quantitative reports on services and enforcement metrics, and implement an online solution for residents to report issues. An important future objective is evaluating the proposal for a new police facility and determining a new future fire service contract. The highest-ranking community request is to reduce unsafe driving, enforce ordinances and increase police patrolling.

GOAL 7: VILLAGE MANAGEMENT

Govern the Village in a way that reflects its shared vision and values by fostering transparent communication, sound fiscal stewardship, and community-driven planning.

Objective Summary: The Village Management objectives focus on the major work needed to implement the Master Plan including developing a process to implement, track and report on the Plan, determining what necessary community resources are necessary to support the Plan, updating a community communications plan, providing an online solution for residents to report issues, and adjusting the Plan based on future fiscal or funding requirements.

THE ACTION WORK PLAN

The Action Work Plan is the bridge between **vision and implementation**. It turns the **Master Plan's vision and priorities into an actionable roadmap**, ensuring that the work can be advanced in a clear, accountable way.

The Action Work Plan ("Work Plan") is presented in Table 5.1. It is a detailed blueprint that identifies a 5-year implementation roadmap. The Work Plan is a living document that is meant to change in response to potential constraints that may be experienced with implementation. It is recommended that the Work Plan sections be given to the responsible departments for implementation and management.

Each department should consider the Work Plan in relation to its own internal budgets, including previously planned projects and expenses. Departments should endeavor to align future goals and initiatives with those outlined in the Work Plan as they prepare their budgets and envision future projects. It is understood that the Work Plan will be continually refined in the coming years, subject to available funding and other financial priorities that arise within the Village.

WORK PLAN ORGANIZATION

Each goal identified in the master planning process has its own section in the Work Plan. A brief narrative describing the goal begins each section. Priorities and timelines were adjusted based on dependencies that needed to be completed before successful project kick-off (projects that required forming project committees/workgroups or funding) or had regulatory requirements that required immediate implementation (the Zoning Plan).

Objective Numbering: Every item in the Work Plan is identified with the goal number followed by the item number. For example, the first item for goal 1 is identified as 1.1.

Objective Description: Defines the specific, measurable outcome or target the project aims to achieve. It serves as a benchmark for success and provides a clear direction for the entire team and all stakeholders involved.

Projects: The specific projects that must be completed to achieve the objective. They break down larger activities into small, discrete tasks that are listed in the logical order in which they need to be completed, considering any dependencies where one task must finish before another can start.

Priority: Defines the relative importance (highest, high, medium, low) of a project compared to other tasks. It is intended to help in resource allocation and scheduling ensuring that the most critical tasks required for success are addressed first.

Considerations/Dependencies: Documents any internal or external factors, constraints, potential challenges, assumptions, or important contextual information that could influence the execution, success, or overall direction of the strategic actions.

Timelines: The timeline suggests short-, mid-, or long-term timeframes needed to implement the objective based on priority, funding and needed resources.

Responsibility: The responsible owner and supporting resources needed to successfully complete the objective was identified for each initiative. The Village Council will determine what committee or workgroup is needed for the priority.

Funding Requirements: Needed funding is identified allowing the Village time to align budgets, staffing and grant-seeking opportunities with larger community initiatives.

EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Master Plan is a living document intended to guide the Village of Michiana's land use decisions, infrastructure investments, and community priorities over the next several years. To remain effective, the plan must be regularly reviewed and evaluated to ensure it reflects changing conditions, community goals, and new opportunities. The evaluation and implementation accountability is the responsibility of the Village of Michiana Village

Council and listed in the Strategic Action Plan under the Village Management goals and objectives work plan.

PLAN REVIEW

- The Planning Commission will formally review the entire Master Plan at least once every five years, as required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended). The Planning Commission will work with the Village Council to determine an appropriate review process preferably built into a regularly scheduled operating review process.
- Reviews will include an assessment of development trends, demographic shifts, infrastructure needs, environmental conditions, and alignment with regional plans.
- Public input will be sought during each review period to confirm that the Plan continues to represent the community's values and vision.

IMPLEMENTATION TRACKING

- The Village will maintain a list of priority actions identified in the Plan, including zoning ordinance updates, infrastructure projects, and community initiatives.
- Progress will be tracked through an annual Planning Commission report to the Village Council, noting completed projects, ongoing efforts, and barriers to implementation.
- Success will be measured through performance indicators to track whether the plan's goals are being achieved and also by the extent to which the Vision's guiding principles—preservation of natural features, safeguarding our community, and enhancing our public services and parks—are reflected in local decisions.

PLAN AMENDMENTS

- Amendments may be undertaken between formal five-year reviews if significant changes occur, such as new state or federal regulations, environmental challenges, or major development proposals.
- Amendments will follow statutory procedures, including proper public notice and opportunities for input.

REGIONAL COORDINATION

- The Village will work and partner with surrounding communities where the Village's enforcement, fire, environmental, and transportation systems are closely connected.


Through consistent monitoring, transparent reporting, and meaningful community engagement, the Village of Michiana will ensure that the Master Plan remains a practical, forward-looking guide that protects its unique natural setting while supporting a vibrant and resilient community.

STRATEGIC ACTION WORK PLAN ORGANIZATION

In the following Work Plan Table, each goal identified in the master planning process has its own section. A brief narrative describing the goal begins each section. Priorities and timelines were adjusted based on dependencies that needed to be completed before successful project kick-off or had regulatory requirements that required immediate implementation (the Zoning Plan). *In Table 5.1, these projects are shown in red type.*

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Table 5.1 Strategic Action Work Plan

 Goal 1: Natural Features Protect, preserve, and enhance the Village’s vital natural features—its beaches/shoreline, sand dunes, wetlands, trees, floodplains and White Creek—as irreplaceable ecological, recreational, and scenic resources that define the Village’s identity, support resilience to environmental change, and ensure public enjoyment for generations to come.								
#	Objective Description	Recommended Projects	Priority	Considerations Dependencies	Timeframe	Responsibility		Funding
						Owner	Support	
1.1	Establish a Village Natural Feature Preservation Program Develop an approach to long-term resiliency planning that addresses shoreline erosion, flooding, stormwater runoff, and climate-related risks, especially in public and coastal areas	1. Council determines steps to organize a preservation program	Highest		1 year Immediate	Village Mgmt		
		2. Council consider a consultant to help design and implement an initial Natural Feature Preservation Framework and Plan	Highest	Highest Priority (23%)	1-2 years	Village Mgmt		✓
		3. Build Natural Feature preservation program into operational planning and budgeting	High		Ongoing	Village Mgmt		
1.2	Establish a long-term plan to preserve and manage Environmentally Sensitive Areas Protect, actively manage and pursue grants to preserve key natural resources—including beaches/shoreline, sand dunes, wetlands, trees, floodplains and White Creek—through local policies, ordinance enforcement, and community education.	1. Tree Board a) Removal of invasive species per Urban Forestry Management Plan (UFMP) and planting of natural flora suited for erosion control b) Pursue grants to fund work outlined in UFMP c) Perform tree trims and removals as scheduled in the UFMP. Pursue grants	Medium		Ongoing	Tree Board	Public Works	
		2. Shoreline and Dune Preservation a) Develop shoreline dune landscape plan b) Budget and begin phased implementation	High		1-2 years	TBD		✓
		3. Begin phased implementation of Dune and Shoreline Preservation	High		2-3 years	TBD		✓
		4. Identify Wetland and FloodPlains Action Plans	Medium		2-3 years	TBD		
1.3	Integrate Natural Features into Planning and Infrastructure Decisions Ensure that future Village infrastructure investments (e.g., drainage, paths, public works) are designed to preserve or enhance natural systems.	1. Incorporate Program action steps into department plans responsible for preservation work.	High		Ongoing	Village Mgmt		
1.4	Establish public awareness Educational opportunities helping residents become good stewards of our natural resources	1. Create workshops and publish informational articles in the Village newsletter. a)Host community seminars and events. b)Provide education in multiple categories (trees, dunes, waste, lighting).	High		1-2 years	TBD		✓
		2. Add Natural Features into the Village website and publish additional information	High		1-2 years	Village Mgmt		

#	Objective Description (Major Initiative)	Recommended Projects	Priority	Considerations Dependencies	Timeframe	Responsibility		Funding
						Owner	Support	
Goal 2: Beaches Protect and preserve Michiana's beaches to ensure their viability, safety and ecological health. Beaches are Michiana's natural community treasure requiring maintenance of safe and accessible beach access points, measures to mitigate erosion and environmental hazards, and polices to preserve shoreline resources.								
2.1	Ensure there are sufficient community and village resources to preserve our beaches	Council determines how to identify community participation	Highest		1 year Immediate	Village Mgmt		
2.2	Ensure Michiana's beach access and stops are maintained and available	1. Resolve/remove beach structure - Stop 42	High		1 year Immediate	Village Mgmt	Public Works	
		2. Resolve Stop 40; Return dune and trees to beach stop - Plant dune grass and trees	High		1 year Immediate	Village Mgmt	Tree Board/ Public	✓
		3. Conduct yearly beach stop assessments with aligned maintenance plans for each beach stop and access Stop 43 - Improvement plan to be approved by EGLE. Stop 40 - Plan to remove rebar and concrete	Highest	Highest Priority (13.5%)	1 year Immediate/ Ongoing	TBD	Public Works	
		4. Develop and implement a trash program to manage excess trash at the beach.	High		1-2 years	TBD	Public Works	
		5. Integrate beach stop preservation and maintenance needs into yearly budget; identify any special capital improvements	High		1-2 years	TBD	Public Works	✓
		6. Implement Community Awareness Communication Plan	High		1-2 years	TBD		
2.3	Enforce safety through strong beach regulation and ordinances	1. Review and update beach ordinances	High		1-2 years	TBD	Village Mgmt	
		2. Determine beachfront enforcement gaps and remediate; report to community	High		1-2 years	Safety/ Enforce		
		3. Implement online solution for residents to report issues, identify repair needs, share feedback, and ask questions of their local government leaders	Highest	Critical Dependency - Funding	1 year Immediate	Safety/ Enforce	Village Mgmt	✓
		4. Communicate beach rules regularly to community; foster community stewardship	High		Ongoing	TBD		
2.4	Ensure Natural Feature Resiliency program to build Shoreline and Duneland Preservation	1. Align Natural Features and Beach work	High		1-2 years	TBD	Village Mgmt	
		2. Design Dune Preservation plan for Lake Shore Drive	High		2-3 years	TBD	Village Mgmt	
		3. Participate in the Invasive species and mitigation plan for LakeShore Drive	High		1-2 years	TBD	Village Mgmt	

#	Objective Description (Major Initiative)	Recommended Projects	Priority	Considerations Dependencies	Timeframe	Responsibility		Funding
						Owner	Support	
	Goal 3: Policy and Zoning Ensure that Village policies and zoning ordinances protect the Village's unique character, respond to the needs of residents, and reflect a shared commitment to privacy, low-density living, environmental stewardship, and responsible use of private and public spaces.							
3.1	Ensure that high priority ordinances identified in the Master Plan are updated, implemented and enforced. Ordinances identified in the Master Plan are the most critical to preserving our community and supporting our Vision	1. Highest Priority Ordinances						
		a) Short Term Rentals (STR)	Highest	Highest Policy Priorities (8.0%)	1 year Immediate	Village Mgmt		
		b) Home Lighting	Highest		1 year Immediate	Village Mgmt		
		c) Noise	High	Linked to STR	1-2 years	Village Mgmt		
		d) Parking	Medium		1-2 years	Village Mgmt		
		e) Beach - Waste Mgmt, Dogs, etc	Medium	Linked to STR	1-2 years	Village Mgmt		
		2. Clarify ordinance enforcement roles and responsibilities between Safety and Enforcement and Zoning	High		1-2 years	Village Mgmt	Planning Com	
		3. Determine an enforcement strategy. Consider a Zoning Administrator position or Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) currently implemented by many local towns	Highest	Dependency - Michigan Planning Enabling Act	1 year Immediate	Village Mgmt	Planning Com	
4. Implement online solution for residents to report issues, identify repair needs, share feedback, and ask questions of their local government leaders	Highest	Dependency - funding	1 year Immediate	Village Mgmt		✓		
3.2	Promote Environmental Stewardship of our Natural Features Provide sustainable environmental preservation through Natural Environment zoning policies, ordinances and land use decisions	1. Determine new Natural Feature polices and zoning in our Village Codes, Article X, Environmental Protection	High	Dependency - Michigan Planning Enabling Act	1 year Immediate	Planning Com	Village Mgmt	
		2. Council determines how to address new work	Highest	Dependency - Michigan Planning Enabling Act	1 year Immediate	Village Mgmt		
3.3	Preserve Community Character through Design and Density Standards Ensure new building permits align with the Village's historical scale, architecture, and low-density patterns	1. Update Zoning Districts, District regulation and Zoning Maps to align with new Land Use Maps	Medium	Dependency - Michigan Planning Enabling Act	1 year Immediate	Planning Com	Village Mgmt	
		2. Review and recommend current Site Development Requirements and staffing to support new Future Land Map policies and zoning.	Medium		1 year Immediate	Planning Com	Village Mgmt	
		3. Evaluate and provide recommendations for Zoning Board of Appeals structure and process	Medium		1 year Immediate	Planning Com	Village Mgmt	
3.4	Ensure Zoning Ordinances Support Equity, Safety, and Accessibility Enhance community access to resources with ordinances that support all community resident need	1. Understand new accessibility, safety and equity community needs, update ordinance requirements	Low		Ongoing	Village Mgmt		
		2. Include equity, safety, and accessibility in all new or updated ordinances	Low		Ongoing	Village Mgmt		

Goal 4: Infrastructure and Public Services Ensure safe, reliable, and resilient public spaces by managing road maintenance, utility reliability, and modern communication systems, while enhancing stormwater and water resources.								
#	Objective Description (Major Initiative)	Recommended Projects	Priority	Considerations Dependencies	Timeframe	Responsibility		Funding
						Owner	Support	
4.1	Ensure Roads are routinely managed	1. Replace, repair & maintain roads in an ongoing maintenance program.	Highest	Highest Goal Priority (6.0%)	Ongoing	Infra/Public Works		✓
		2. Develop resurface road plan; Explore grant to resurface roads			1 year Immediate	Infra/Public Works		✓
		3. Reduce road hazards and speed bumps	High	1 year Immediate	Infra/Public Works			
		4. Address stormwater issues with drainage improvements on Chickagami, Comanche, and Mohawk	High	2-3 years	Infra/Public Works	Water Board	✓	
4.2	Ensure public safety and cleanliness Provide resources and services to support public services aligned with departmental needs and initiatives	1. BEACHES - Yearly Maintenance and Project Plan – a) Stop 43 – determine improvement plan to be approved by EGLE b) Stop 40 – plan to remediate metal, rebar and concrete	Highest	Highest Goal Priority (13.5%)	1 year Immediate	Infra/Public Works		✓
		2. PARKS – Plan to maintain Village hall, park, courts, playground, parking,	Medium		1-2 years	Infra/Public Works		✓
		3. TREES – a) Continue compliance with Urban Forestry Management Plan (UFMP) and adhere to schedule for tree removals, trimming and planting. b) Pursue ongoing grant opportunities to fund UFMP work	Medium		Ongoing	Infra/Public Works		✓
4.3	Improve public Wi-Fi and cellular service	1. Explore obtaining two cellular towers	High	Evaluation underway	1-2 years	Infra/Public Works	Village Mgmt	✓
		2. Provide Wi-Fi access at beach stops for safety and convenience	Medium		1-2 years	Infra/Public Works		✓
		3. Install updated Wi-Fi in Village Hall	Medium	Completed	1-2 years	Infra/Public Works		✓
4.4	Ensure water supply meets prescribed standards	1. Implement 2025/26 water main replacement plan (water main on Creek Dr. between Chickagami and Grand Beach Rd, water main on Lake Shore Drive by fall/2025; water main on Chickagami, Choctaw, and Comanche estimated by 2027 or 2028)	Highest	Dependency - funding	1-2 years	Infra/Public Works	Village Mgmt	✓
		2. Manage sanitation, yard waste collection and maintenance of public spaces			Ongoing	Infra/Public Works	Village Mgmt	
4.5	Plan with utility companies and communicate when work impacts the community	1. Explore and develop a plan for working with the electrical company in managing future electrical projects	Medium		2-3 years	Infra/Public Works	Village Mgmt	

#	Objective Description (Major Initiative)	Recommended Projects	Priority	Considerations Dependencies	Timeframe	Responsibility		Funding
						Owner	Support	
 Goal 5: Parks and Recreation Provide nature focused spaces and inclusive recreational and social opportunities and events that meet the diverse needs of residents, align with the Village's character, scale, and values, and promote peaceful living and a sense of community within the Village.								
5.1	Create all inclusive Recreational and Events Plan Develop a community-centered recreational plan that enhances and maintains our current services and supports the interests of our community.	1. Council determines how to organize a Recreational and Events Plan with the community	Highest	Dependency - Structure and governance	1 year Immediate	Village Mgmt		
		2. Identify a service framework to manage current resources: a) sport courts (pickle-ball, tennis and bocce ball), b) children's playground, c) Michiana Day Camp, d) butterfly garden and e) event services for the park and Village Hall spaces. Consider additional service suggestions from the community.	Medium		1-2 years	TBD	Tree Board	
		3. Determine yearly community events and Village Hall amenities	Highest	Highest Goal Priorities (10.0 %)	1 year Immediate	TBD		✓
		4. Establish clear policies, oversight, and determine community involvement in programs and services	Medium		1-2 years	TBD	Village Mgmt	
5.2	Successfully implement the Plan Implement the recreational plan ensuring that all residents can enjoy and benefit from recreational opportunities	1. Develop the Implementation Plan	Medium		2-3 years	TBD	Village Mgmt	
		2. Engage community participation	Medium		2-3 years	TBD		
5.3	Ensure maintenance of the Recreational Plan Ensure our recreational resources and services are well-maintained, efficiently used, and financially sustainable..	1. Align maintenance plan with Public Service plans	Medium		Ongoing	TBD	Infra/ Public Works	
		2. Integrate into yearly budget process	Medium		2-3 years	Village Mgmt		
5.4	Evaluate services and space for dog-friendly environments while minimizing waste complaints	1. Update Dog Ordinance - include resident input before finalizing any dog park policy. Considerations: a) Beach policy and enforcement b) leashed dogs in the main park c) designated dog area d) community responsibility for cleaning up pet waste	Low		2-3 years	TBD		
5.5	Support beach, sand dune, tree, wetland, floor plains and White Creek space preservation in Park Planning	1. Include Natural Feature Resiliency plans into public space preservation planning.	Medium		1-2 years	TBD		

#	Objective Description (Major Initiative)	Recommended Projects	Priority	Considerations Dependencies	Timeframe	Responsibility		Funding
						Owner	Support	
	Goal 6: Safety and Enforcement Ensure a high standard of public safety by supporting consistent police and fire services that prioritize visibility, timely response, and proactive patrolling of both public and private areas. Law enforcement should regularly monitor community parks, beaches, and shared spaces to help preserve the Village's treasured natural environment, protect quality of life, and uphold Village ordinances. Fire services will continue to maintain strong readiness and emergency response capabilities to safeguard residents and property							
6.1	Visibility, Communications and Proactive Patrolling Increase police visibility and communication with residents and maintain a high level of response to emergency and non-emergency situations	1. Publish police coverage for weekdays, weekends and holidays 2. Publish police patrolling reports to increase resident comfort with safety 3. Continue utilizing Nixle www.nixle.com and Coffee with a Cop to communicate with residents 4. Implement the New Buffalo Township Fire Department COMMUNITY CONNECT to enhance emergency preparedness and response 5. Proactively Monitor and communicate to residents Moving vehicles (Motorized and non-motorized), Road Conditions and Hazards and document findings 6. Publish an annual review of shared police services with Grand Beach, including costs and performance.	High High Medium Medium Medium High		Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Annually	Safety/ Enforce Safety/ Enforce Safety/ Enforce Safety/ Enforce Safety/ Enforce Safety/ Enforce	Michiana and Grand Beach VC Michiana and Grand Beach VC Michiana and Grand Beach VC Michiana and Grand Beach VC Michiana and Grand Beach VC Michiana and Grand Beach VC	
6.2	Safety and Ordinance Enforcement Report on quantitative improvement- enforcement of laws and ordinances	1. Provide monthly, yearly and historic metrics of our safety and enforcement services. Participate in national programs that capture safety metrics. 2. Reduce unsafe driving & road hazards, ordinances, and increase police patrols. 3. Increase citations for violations and and capture enforcement data on short term rentals, beaches, and other high priority laws and ordinances 4. Implement online solution for residents to report issues, identify repair needs, share feedback, and ask questions of their local government leaders	High Highest High Highest		Ongoing 1 year Immediate Ongoing 1 year Immediate	Safety/ Enforce Safety/ Enforce Safety/ Enforce Safety/ Enforce	Michiana and Grand Beach VC Michiana and Grand Beach VC Michiana and Grand Beach VC Michiana and Grand Beach VC	
6.3	Evaluate request for a new Police Facility for Grand Beach and Michiana Police departments Data driven evaluation before investing in a new police facility	1. Gain community support based on quantitative needs (current and historic services), one time and future costs of a new facility, expected service improvements; hold public hearings 2. Provide to the community a service description of our Grand Beach/ Michiana Police contract on our website with key performance requirements	Highest High	Dependency - Funding	1-2 years 1-2 years	Safety/ Enforce Safety/ Enforce	Michiana and Grand Beach VC Michiana and Grand Beach VC	✓ ✓
6.4	Develop a Fire and EMS Strategic Plan to meet the Villages needs	1. Develop the Regional Fire Authority with New Buffalo Township, Chikaming Township, Three Oaks Township, and New Buffalo City 2. Evaluate future Fire Services contract 3. Publish Fire and EMS performance metrics on a monthly, yearly, historic basis	Medium High High		2-3 years 1-2 years Ongoing	Safety/ Enforce Safety/ Enforce Safety/ Enforce		✓

Goal 7: Village Management Manage the Village in a way that reflects its shared vision and values by fostering transparent communication, sound fiscal stewardship, and community-driven planning.								
#	Objective Description (Major Initiative)	Recommended Projects	Priority	Considerations Dependencies	Timeframe	Responsibility		Funding
						Owner	Support	
7.1	Master Plan Integration Create a practical, ongoing planning process that is integrated into Village operations, enabling regular updates to the Master Plan that reflect current community needs and priorities.	1. Integrate Master Plan process and updates into annual operating planning and budgets	High	Dependency - Michigan Planning Enabling Act	1 year Immediate	Village Mgmt		
		2. Determine on-going community input process as input into yearly Master Plan/Operational Plan updates	High	Dependency - Michigan Planning Enabling Act	1 year Immediate	Village Mgmt		
		3. Council determines what resources and structures are needed to support the Plan	Highest	Dependency - Michigan Planning Enabling Act	1 year Immediate	Village Mgmt		
7.2	Community Reporting and Communication Ensure community concerns get logged, reviewed, serviced and reported. Use data for ongoing Operational Plans/Master Plan Updates	1. Implement online solution for residents to report issues, identify repair needs, share feedback, and ask questions of their local government leaders	Highest	Dependency - Michigan Planning Enabling Act	1 year Immediate	Village Mgmt		✓
		2. Report on service metrics and improvement opportunities at all Village Council meetings	Highest	Dependency - Michigan Planning Enabling Act	Ongoing	Village Mgmt		
7.3	Inclusion Village leadership is responsive to community needs.	1. Council identifies additional avenues for community input and participation.	Highest		1 year Immediate	Village Mgmt		
		2. Identify and communicate to second home residents how they can participate. Communicate regulations on elected officials in the State of Michigan	Medium		1-2 Years	Village Mgmt		
		3. Publish Officer terms and election process on the Village website	Medium		1-2 Years	Village Mgmt		
7.4	Fiscal Responsibility Promote transparency, accountability and long-term sustainability by aligning Village financial decisions with the priorities identified in the Master Plan.	1. Include Master Plan into yearly budget process	High		1-2 Years	Village Mgmt		
		2. Evaluate and determine future tax recommendations to support needs	Highest	Long Term Dependency - Fiscal	2-3 years	Village Mgmt		✓
		3. Integrate Master Plan into capital process.	High		1-2 Years	Village Mgmt		
7.5	Operational Planning and Coordination Promote effective collaboration among Village Council and staff to implement action plans and policies aligned with the Master Plan	1. Master Plan action items are included in Departmental Reports to Village Council	High		Ongoing	Village Mgmt		
		2. Implement Master Plan annual report; report on performance goals for each goal area	Highest	Dependency - Michigan Planning Enabling Act	Annually	Village Mgmt		
		3. Develop resource plans for key staff; consider outsourcing wherever appropriate	High		1-2 Years	Village Mgmt		✓

CHAPTER 6 FUTURE LAND USE STRATEGY



OVERVIEW

The Future Land Use Strategy identifies the future desired pattern of land use and development throughout the Village. The Strategy is implemented through the Zoning Ordinance, regulatory policies that implement the land use and are aligned with the Plan's goals and objectives. The Village Master Plan and its Zoning Ordinance are closely interconnected tools that guide a community's growth and development. The Master Plan establishes a long-term vision by outlining goals, land use patterns, and priorities for the future, reflecting the community's values and desired character. The Zoning Ordinance, in turn, serves as the legal mechanism that implements this vision by regulating how land can be used and developed on a parcel-by-parcel basis. Together, they ensure that day-to-day development decisions align with broader planning objectives, promoting orderly growth, protecting community resources, and enhancing the overall quality of life.

Once the Master Plan is formally adopted, the Planning Commission is responsible for updating the Village's Zoning Ordinance to reflect the community's newly established goals, policies, and land use designations. Descriptions for each Land Use category will be reviewed or developed along with corresponding regulations to support the Strategy. Public engagement will continue throughout this process, and the Village Council will review and adopt the final zoning amendments. Together, these actions ensure that the Master Plan's vision is carried forward through clear, consistent, and enforceable land use regulations.

FUTURE LAND USE

The Strategy divides the Village land into categories and identifies the predominant land use planned for each and associated policies. These categories collectively make up the future land use pattern for the Village as depicted on the Future Land Use Map. The Future Land Use Plan designates two additional future land use categories in addition to the three existing categories.

Table 6.1 Existing and New Land Use Categories

Land Use Category	Existing	New
VR – Village Residential District	X	
LR – Lakefront Residential District	X	
PL – Public Lands District	X	
PP – Park/Preserve		X
NFOD - Natural Features Overlay District		X

The land use categories may or may not correspond to existing zoning districts within the Village of Michiana Zoning Ordinance. In some cases, a new zoning district or overlay district may be recommended to implement the future land use recommendation for an area. The new areas and regulations will be proposed by the Planning Commission when the Master Plan is approved. This work is in the Policy and Zoning section of the Strategic Action Work Plan.

The Future Land Use Plan and Map do not change the underlying existing zoning in an area. Recommended future land use in an area which is not permitted by the existing zoning in an area can only be implemented through a rezoning or other change such as amending an existing zoning district to permit uses and development regulations that are not currently permitted within that district. Recommendations for amendments to the Zoning Ordinance, or other regulatory and policy changes, are discussed in the next section, the Zoning Plan.

The following are the Future Land Use categories for the Village followed by a description of each category. See Map 11 in the Appendix for Future Land Use.

FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

VR – Village Residential District: It is the purpose of the Village Residential District to provide opportunities for single-family residential development patterns and lifestyles of a village character. The current zoning regulations for this district establish setbacks (front/rear 20 feet, and each side 10 feet), open space (maximum building lot coverage 30%) and other development regulations (maximum building height 30 feet) which ensure a

stable and sound residential environment and community character. To this end, this district prohibits uses that undermine the intended character of such residential area. Certain nonresidential land uses may be permitted where considered compatible with and/or supportive of the primary purpose of the district, including certain special land uses.

LR – Lakefront Residential: It is the purpose of the Lakefront Residential District to provide opportunities for single-family residential development patterns and lifestyles of a village character along the Lake Michigan shoreline. The current zoning regulations for this district setbacks (front 20 feet, and each side 10 feet), open space (maximum building lot coverage 30%) and other development regulations (maximum building height 25 feet) that ensure a stable and sound residential environment and community character, including the preservation of the stability and integrity of the Village's shoreline and dune features and compliance with all local, state and federal regulations regarding shoreline protection. Other land uses may be permitted where considered compatible with and/or supportive of the primary purpose of the district, including certain special land uses. Lakefront Residential is concentrated along Lake Shore Drive and Lake Michigan.

PL - Public Lands: It is the purpose of the Public Lands District to recognize, accommodate and protect public resources in the Village. Such resources include public facilities associated with government administration, such as the Village Hall, and public facilities associated with governmental services, such as drinking water infrastructure. These public resources provide vital facilities and services to the Village and its residents on a day-to-day and long-term basis and improve public health, safety and welfare. This district continues to ensure the protection of and continued viability of such facilities, services and resources and that they not be altered except where it is determined that such alterations maintain or enhance their public good. Future improvements to public sites will continue to maintain the existing character, services and integrity of such sites for the Village community.

PP – Park/Preserve: It is the purpose of the Park/Preserve District to recognize, accommodate and protect public resources including public parks and open spaces comprising special and important natural resources, including shoreline and dune areas, the protection of which is of great public interest to the Village of Michiana and the State of Michigan due to their environmental, recreational, visual and historical character. This district is established to ensure the protection of and continued viability of such resources and that they not be altered except where it is determined that such alterations maintain or enhance their public good.

Starting in 2016, the Village has partnered with Chikaming Open Lands (COL) to establish COL's first-ever easement with a municipality. This easement, covering approximately 11

acres of critical dune and beach habitat, permanently prohibits development, ensuring that the land remains accessible for public recreation, while preserving the delicate dune ecosystem that defines the area.

COL is a regional land trust committed to preserving the natural and rural character of southwest Berrien County, Michigan, focused on protecting ecologically important habitats like prairies, wetlands, forests, and farmlands, as well as improving water quality and supporting native plant and animal communities. They accomplish this through two primary methods: conservation easements, which place permanent, voluntary legal protections on privately owned land, and the management of nature preserves that are open to the public for passive recreation and environmental education.

The park/preserve land use is planned for areas that already exist as beaches, parks, or lands held in conservation easements by Chikaming Open Lands (COL). The Village has also had discussions with COL about including other open land deeded to the Village in the Conservancy.

NFOD - Natural Features Overlay District: It is the purpose of this district to protect and preserve the Village of Michiana's most sensitive and dynamic natural resources, including high-risk erosion areas, critical sand dunes, floodplains, and the riparian buffer around White Creek. This overlay district is intended to complement the underlying zoning districts by applying additional development standards and land use regulations in order to minimize environmental impact, protect public safety, and preserve the natural character and ecological functions of these unique landscapes. The NFOD overlay district is planned for all areas of the Village within the Critical Dunes Area and is intended to protect public safety and preserve the natural character, and ecological functions of this unique landscape.

This district is intended to support the Village's long-term goals for sustainable land use, climate resiliency, and the protection of natural systems. Its use ensures that future development and land alterations are conducted in a manner that respects natural processes and reduces the risk of property damage, erosion, and flooding. Any land use or development activity within the NFOD shall require site plan review by the Planning Commission and may require consultation with state or federal agencies, including EGLE and Federal Emergency Management Agency, depending on location-specific regulations. Variances or exceptions shall only be granted under strict criteria demonstrating that impacts are minimized and the intent of this overlay is upheld.

All Districts: It is the purpose of all districts to protect sensitive environmental resources which may be present on a development site, and that the district uses are adequately served by facilities and services, including, but not necessarily limited to, sewage disposal, potable water, fire protection and road infrastructure.

Commercial and Industrial Development: Consistent with the 2005 Master Plan, the Strategy does not provide areas dedicated to the accommodation of commercial and industrial development. The Village of Michiana is entirely residential and does not have the infrastructure or services to support commercialization or industrial development within any land use category. Nearby communities offer a full complement of conveniently located consumer services and have the necessary infrastructure to support commercial and industrial development. The Village residents have historically voiced strong opposition to the introduction of any commercial or industrial uses or initiatives in the Village.

ZONING PLAN

Zoning is the predominant legal means for a municipality to regulate private property to achieve consistent land use relationships. The authority to regulate land use through zoning is established by the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (Public Act 110 of 2006, as amended), which requires that zoning be based on a plan.

Local control of land use, as ensured by zoning, is an accepted legal practice. The principles on which zoning is based include the need to:

- Balance the interests of all landowners with the rights of individual landowners.
- Help implement a long-term vision for the community.
- Protect the environment.
- Ensure development is adequately served by roads and utilities.
- Achieve the quality of life desired by landowners.
- Provide fair and consistent review of development applications; and,
- Protect public health, safety, and welfare.

Land Use Maps identify how land is used; the Zoning Plan defines how to regulate that land use. The Zoning Plan develops the regulations that implement the Land Use Maps through zoning ordinances. It is the job of the Planning Commission to update and implement the Zoning Ordinance based on the new Future Land Use Map once the Village Council has approved the Master Plan. These priorities are listed in the Policy and Zoning section of the Strategic Action Plan.

The official zoning map divides the community into different zones or districts where different permitted land use is identified for each. The zoning ordinance regulates permitted land use by area and establishes regulations to control density, height, lot coverage, setbacks, lot sizes, and other elements. The zoning ordinance also sets forth procedures for site plan review, special land uses, fences, signs, landscaping, lighting, parking, stormwater, and other elements of development. See Map 12 in the Appendix for the current zoning map.

The Zoning Plan in Table 6.2 shows how the Future Land Use categories integrate into the Village’s existing zoning districts. As noted below, the Park/Preserve and Natural Features Overlay District zoning districts and corresponding regulations will need to be created, as they do not currently exist. For the existing zoning districts, the Planning Commission will review the current regulations such as lot size, setbacks, lot coverage and building height restrictions and propose any changes needed to align with the adopted Master Plan.

These zoning classifications maintain a structured approach to land use, ensuring compatibility between different land types while supporting natural resources preservation and quiet residential living. Additionally, all current Zoning and Supplemental Zoning Ordinances will be reviewed and updated as required.

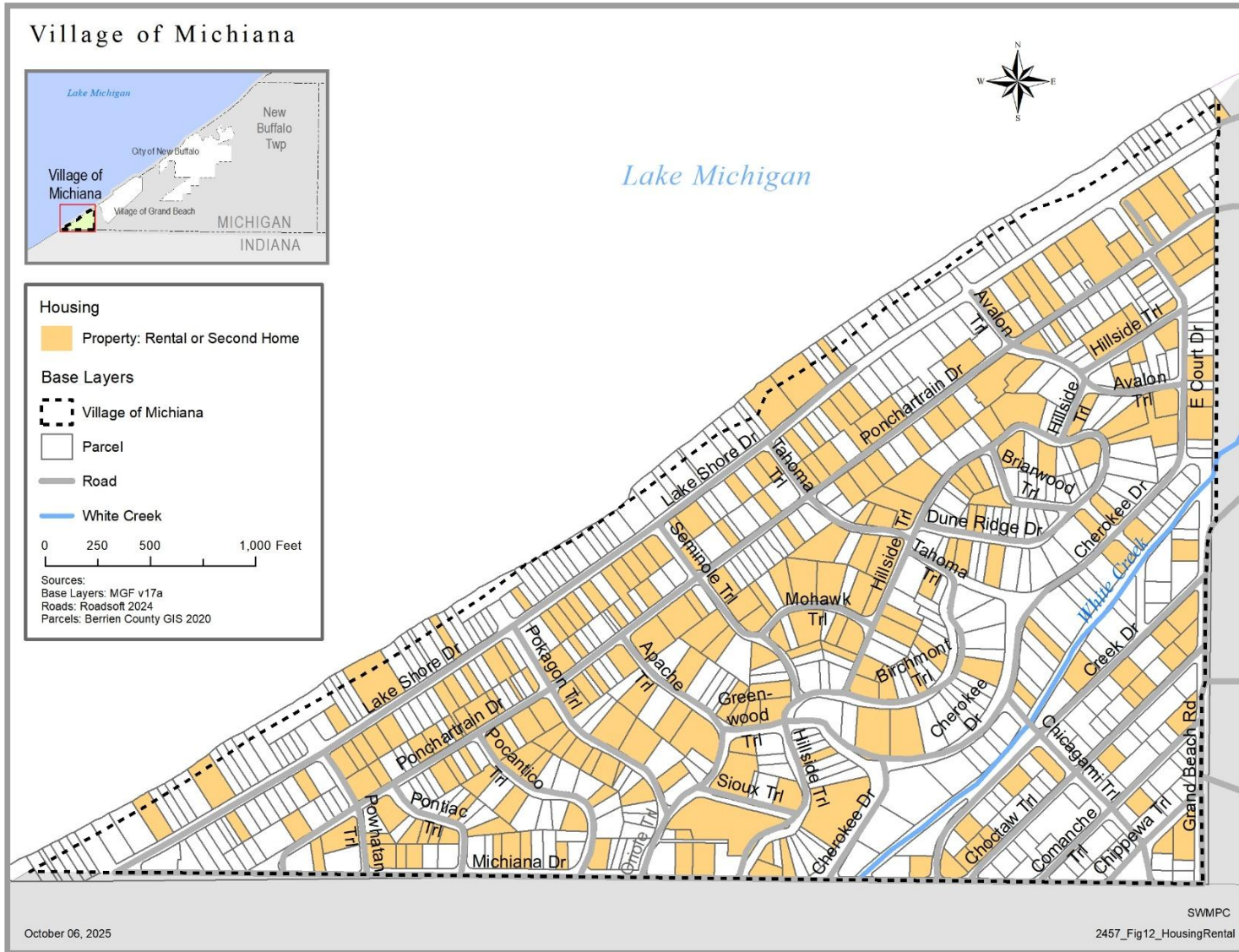
Table 6.2 Future Land Use Categories with Corresponding Zoning Districts

Future Land Use Category	Corresponding Zoning District
Village Residential	Village Residential
Lakefront Residential	Lakefront Residential
Public Lands	Public Lands
Park/Preserve	Needs to be created
Natural Features Overlay District	Needs to be created
Supplemental Zoning Ordinances	Needs to be updated

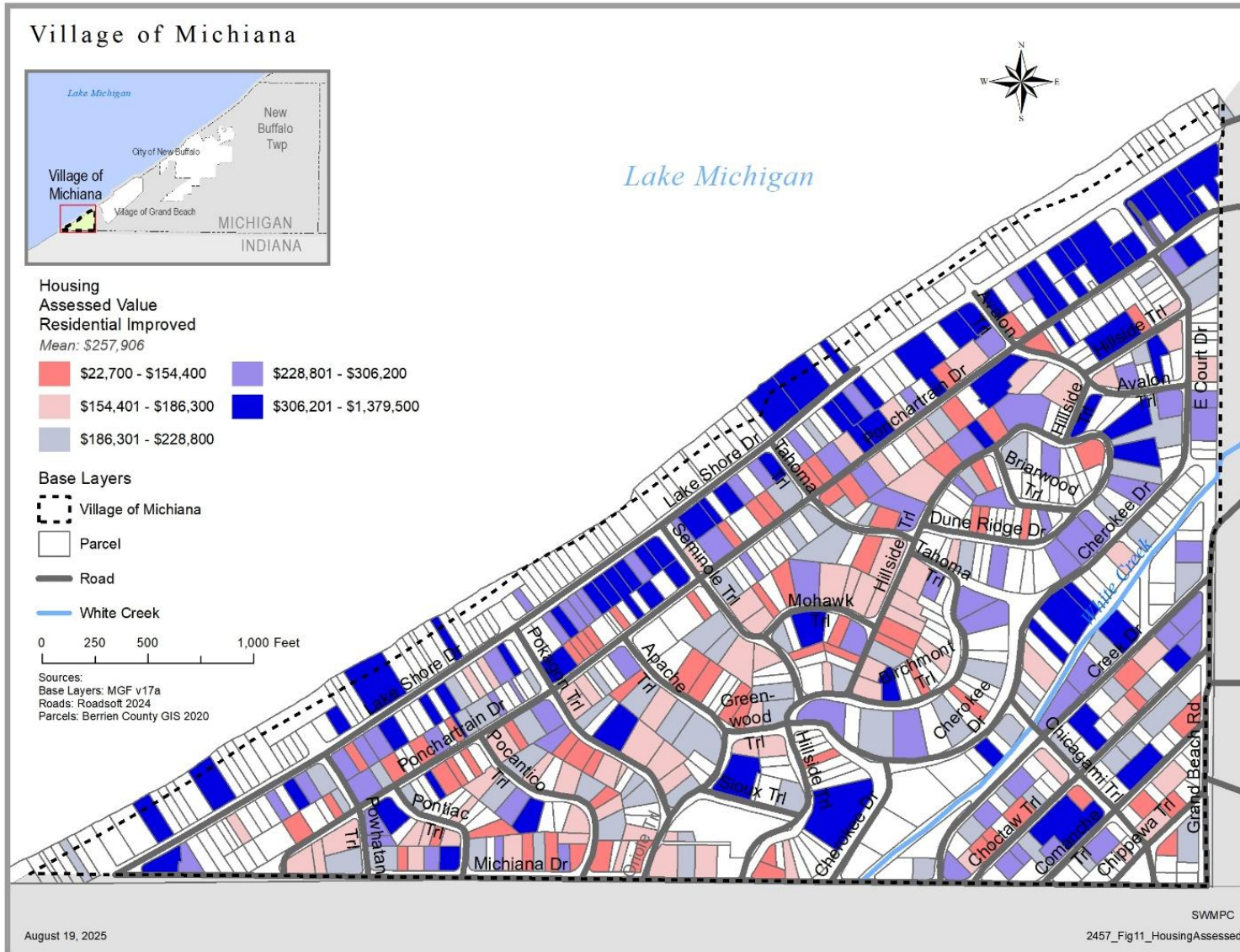
APPENDIX: MAPS

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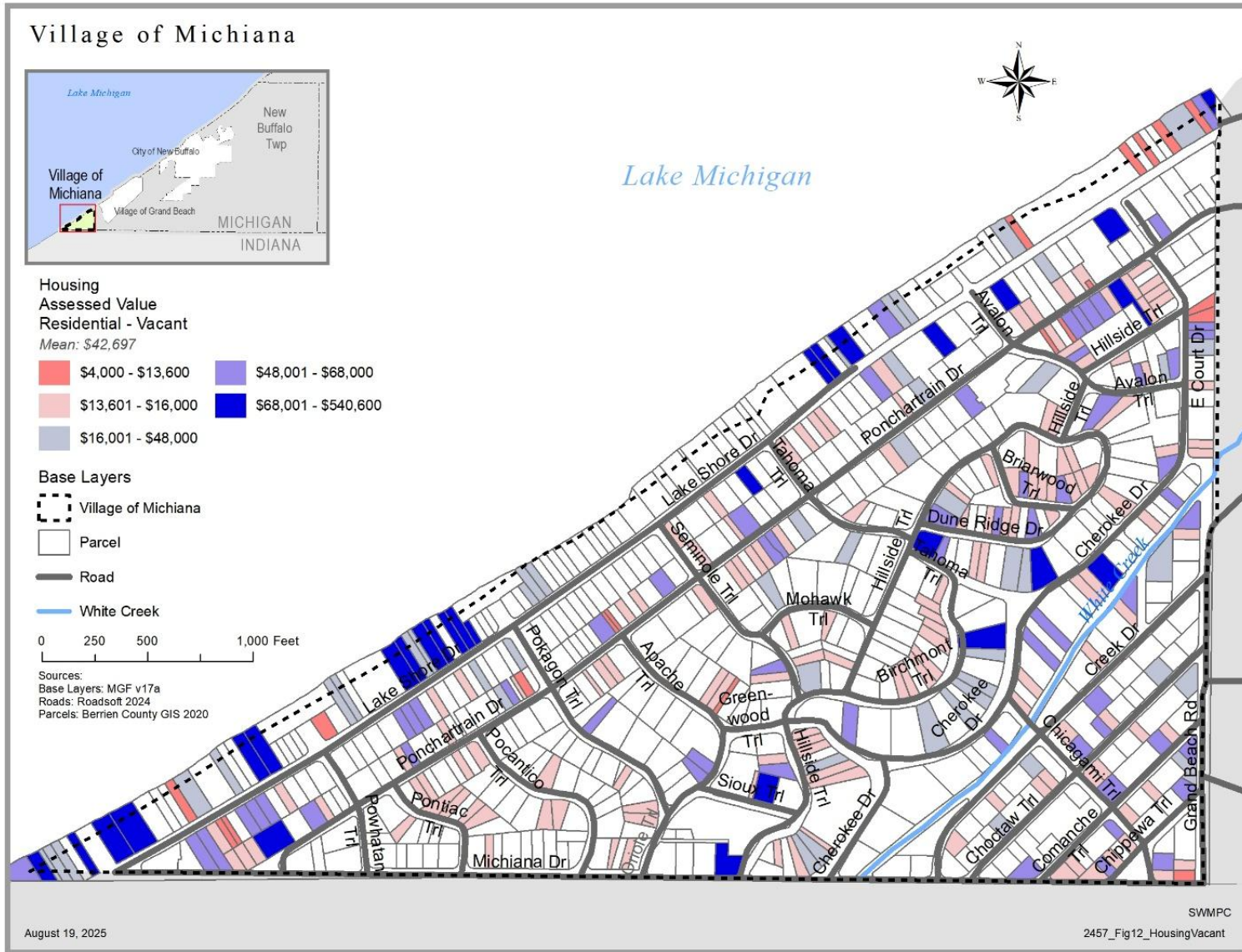
Map 1 Properties with No Homestead Exemptions (2020)



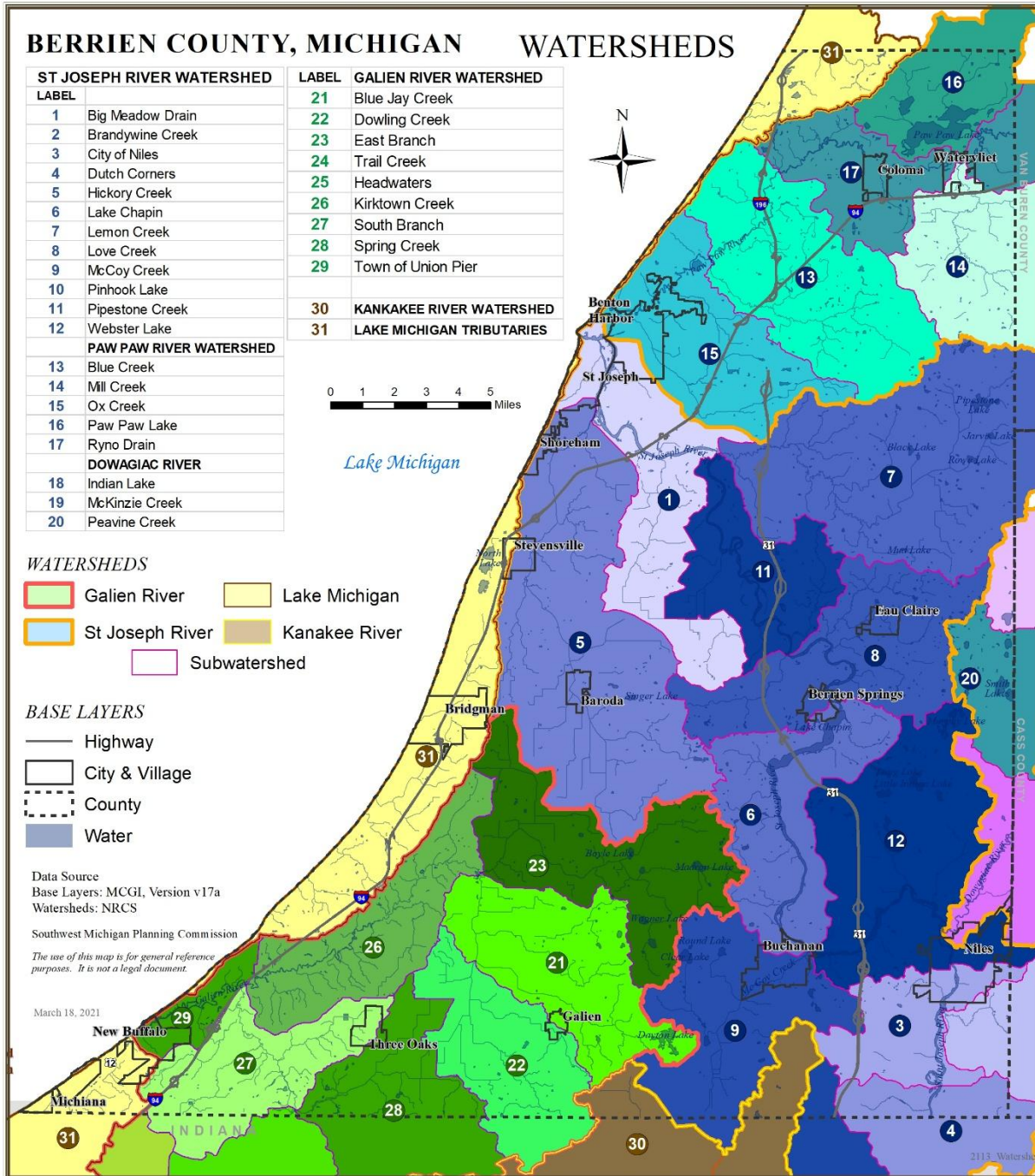
Map 2 Parcels Assessed Values (2020)



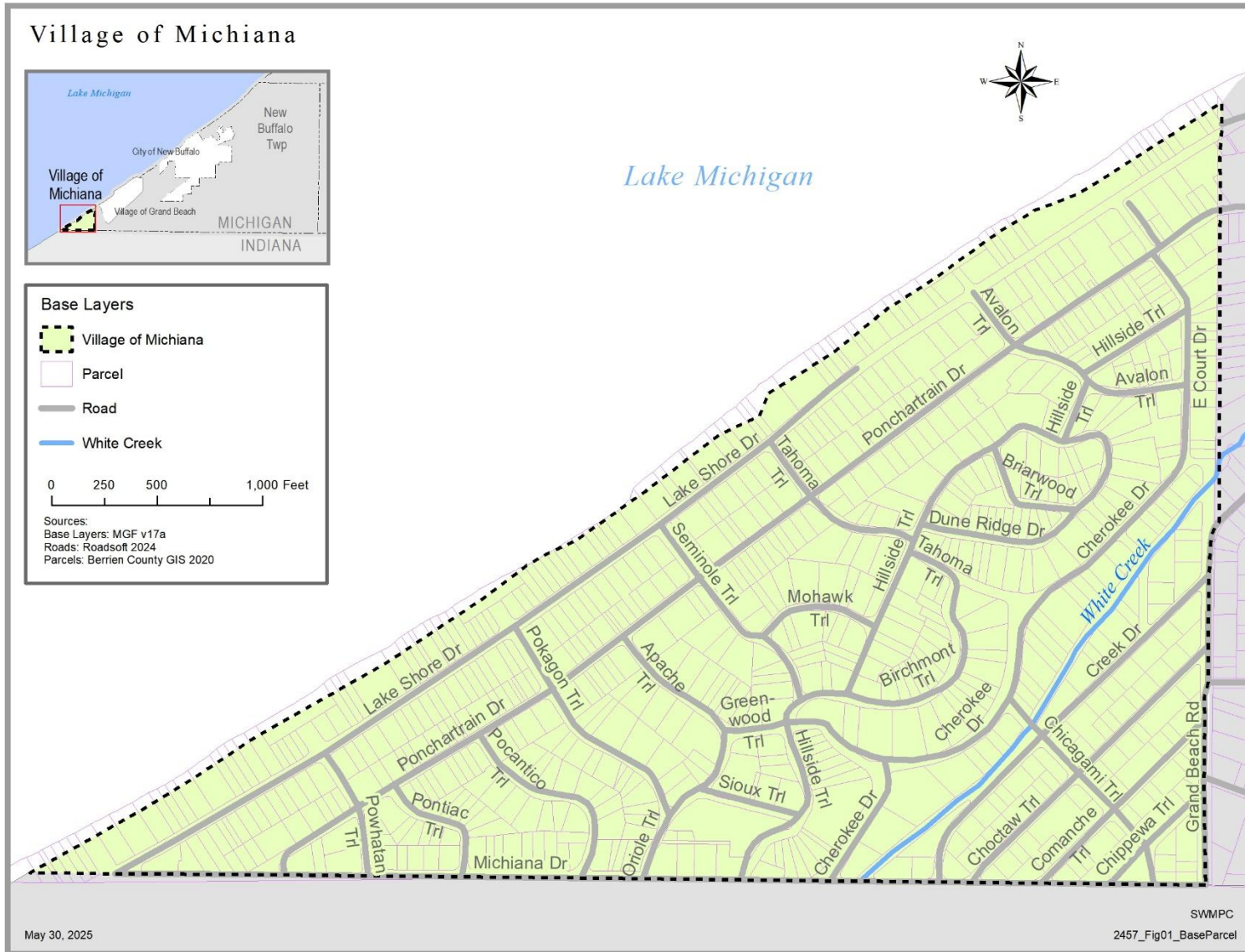
Map 3 Vacant Residential Parcel Assessed Values(2020)



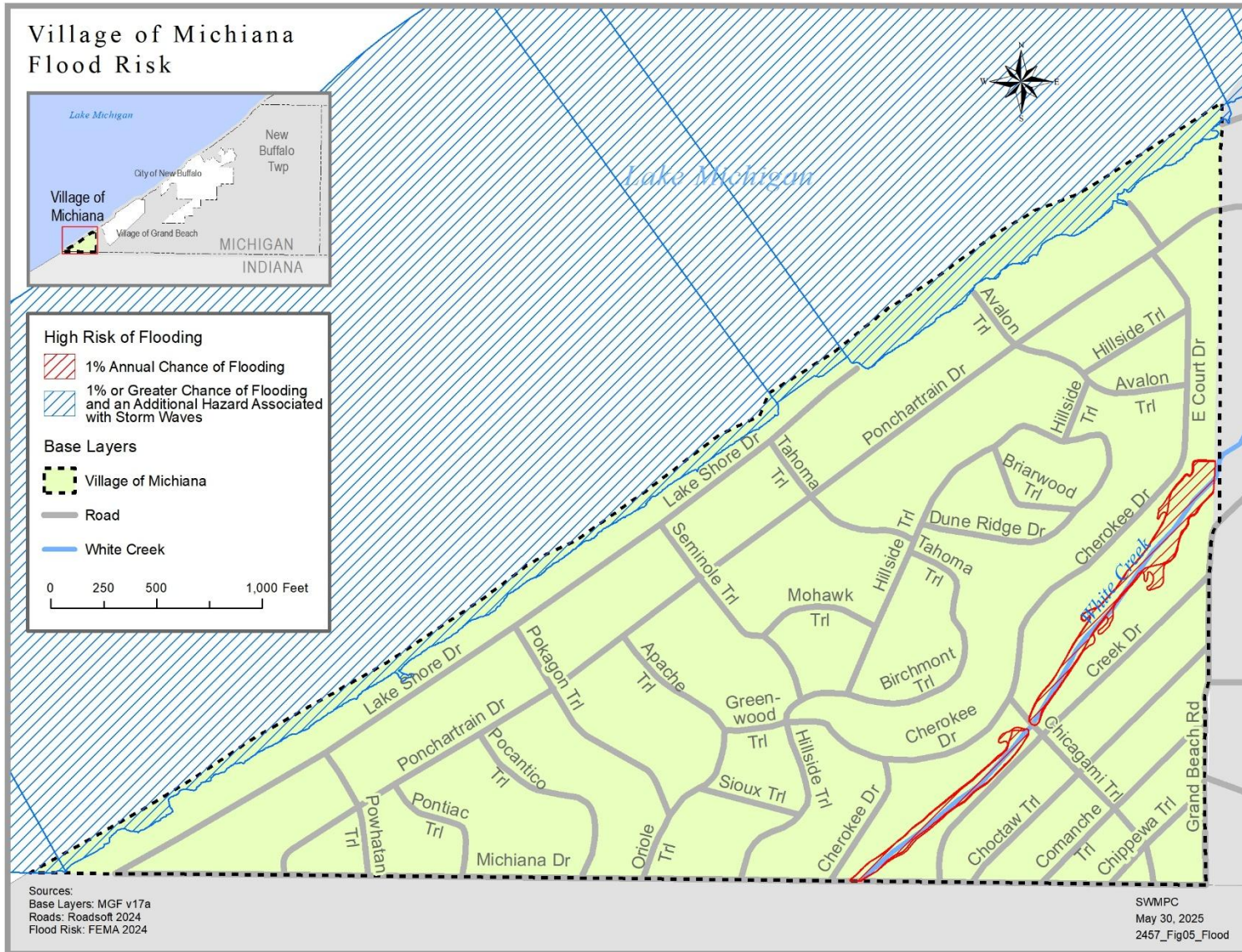
Map 4 Berrien County Watersheds



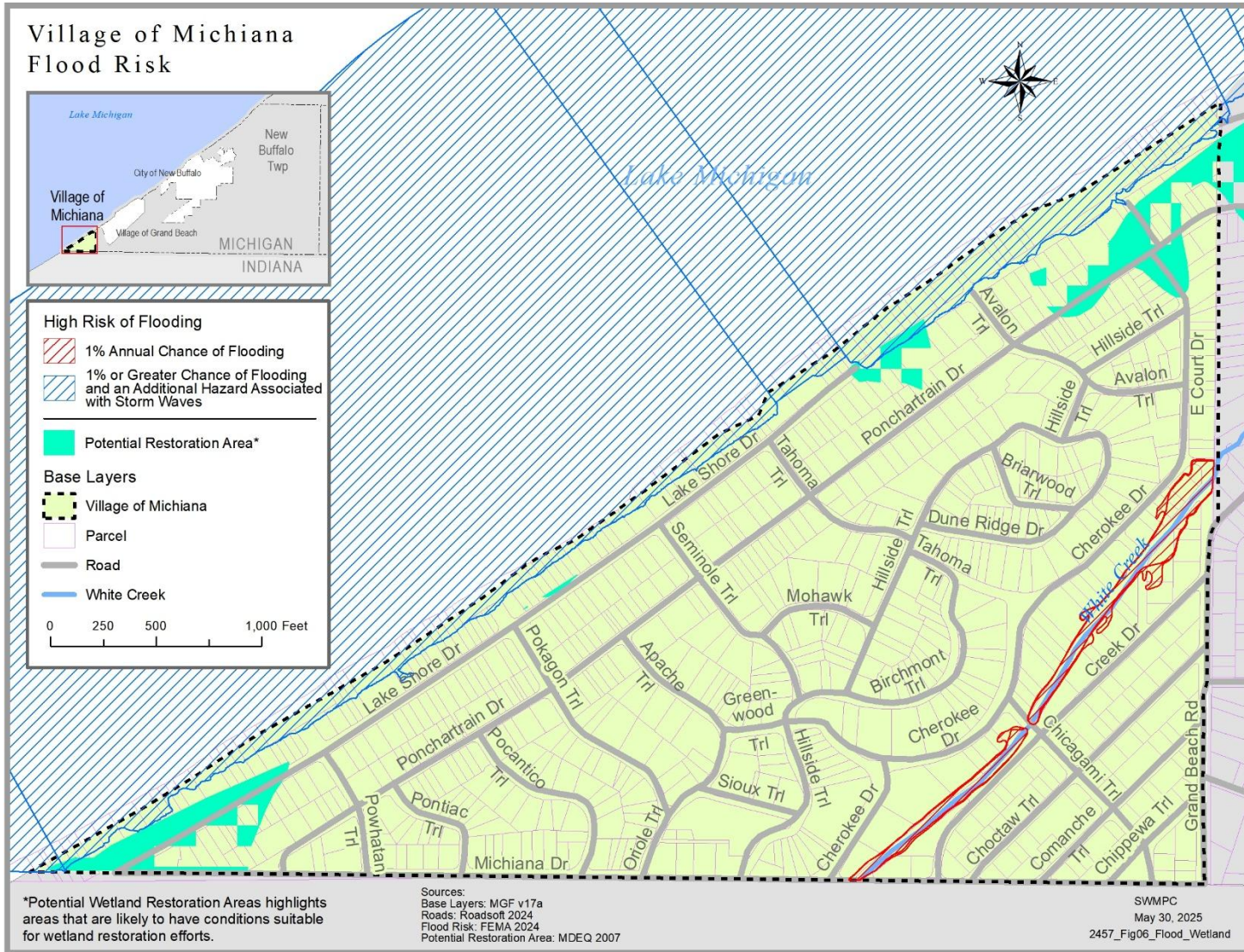
Map 5 Village of Michiana Boundaries and Roads



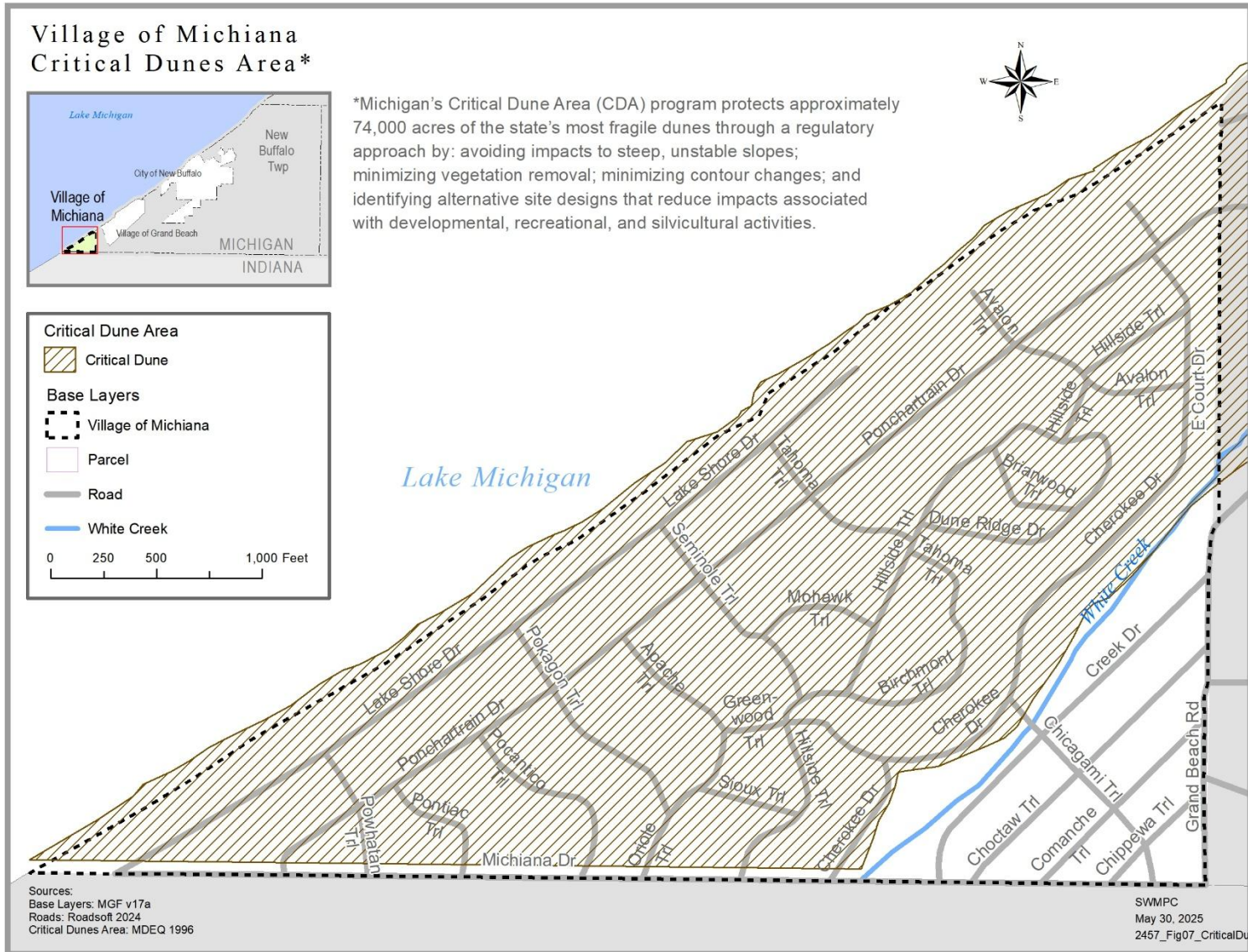
Map 6 Village of Michiana Flood Risk



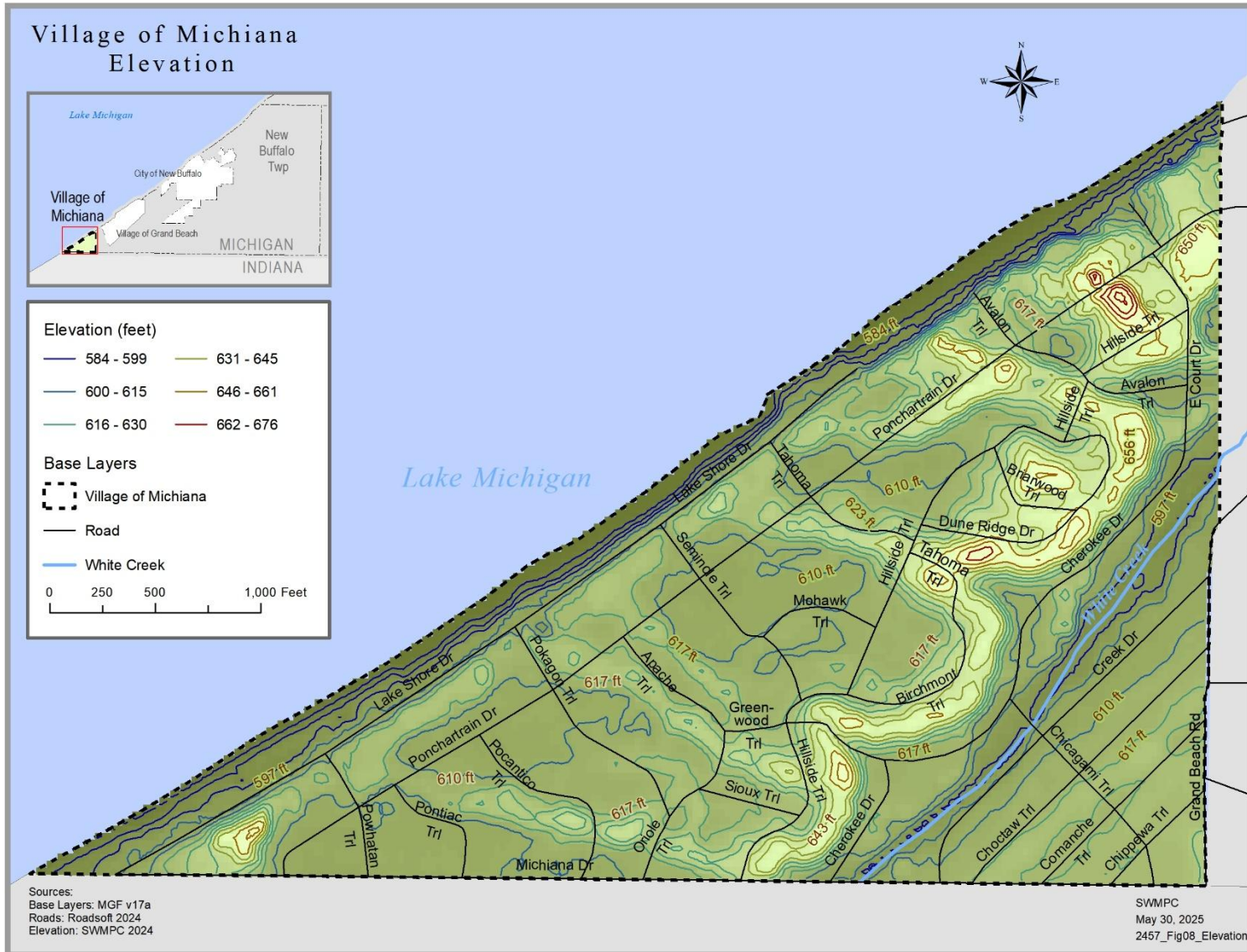
Map 7 Village of Michiana Potential Restoration Areas



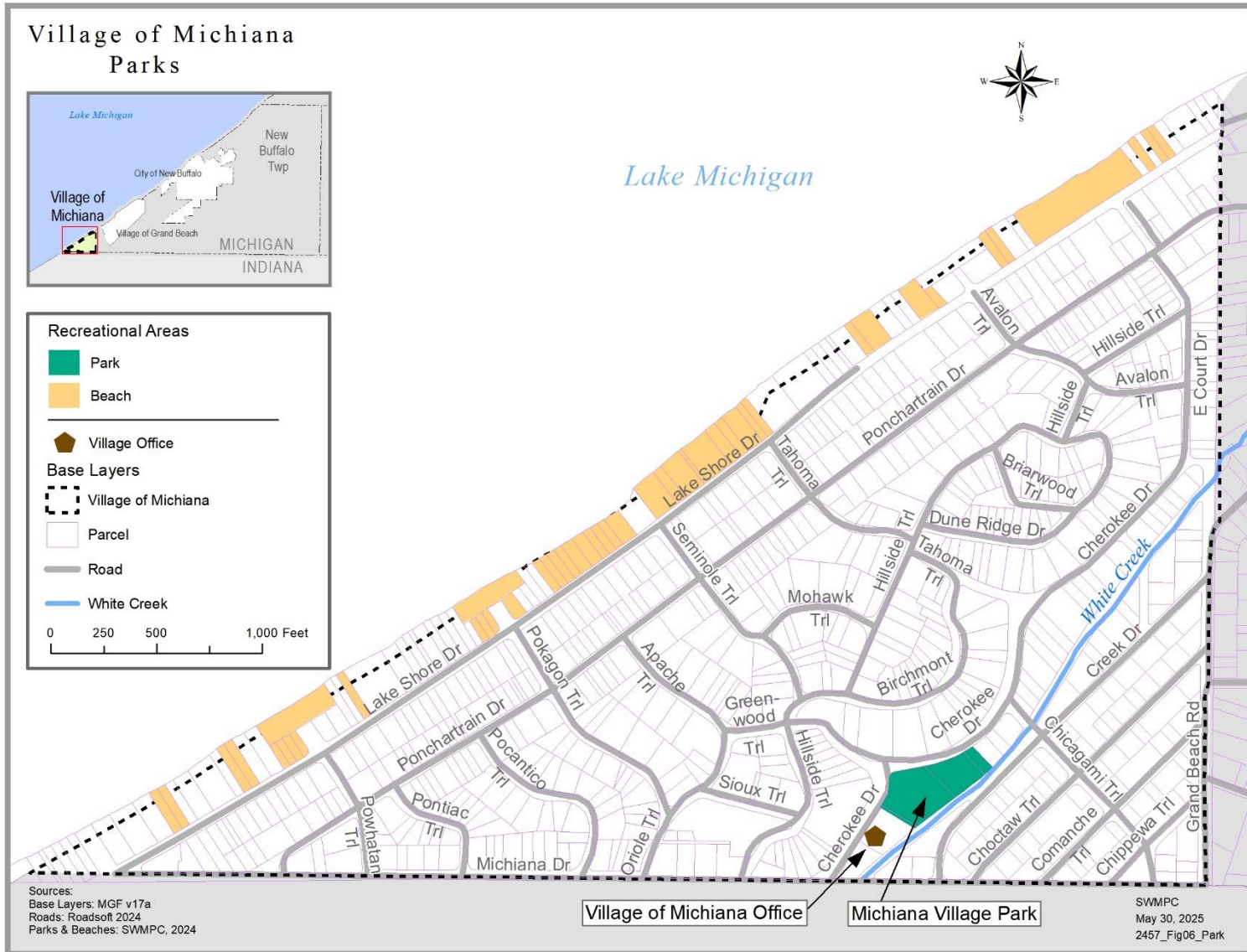
Map 8 Village of Michiana Critical Dunes



Map 9 Village of Michiana Elevation

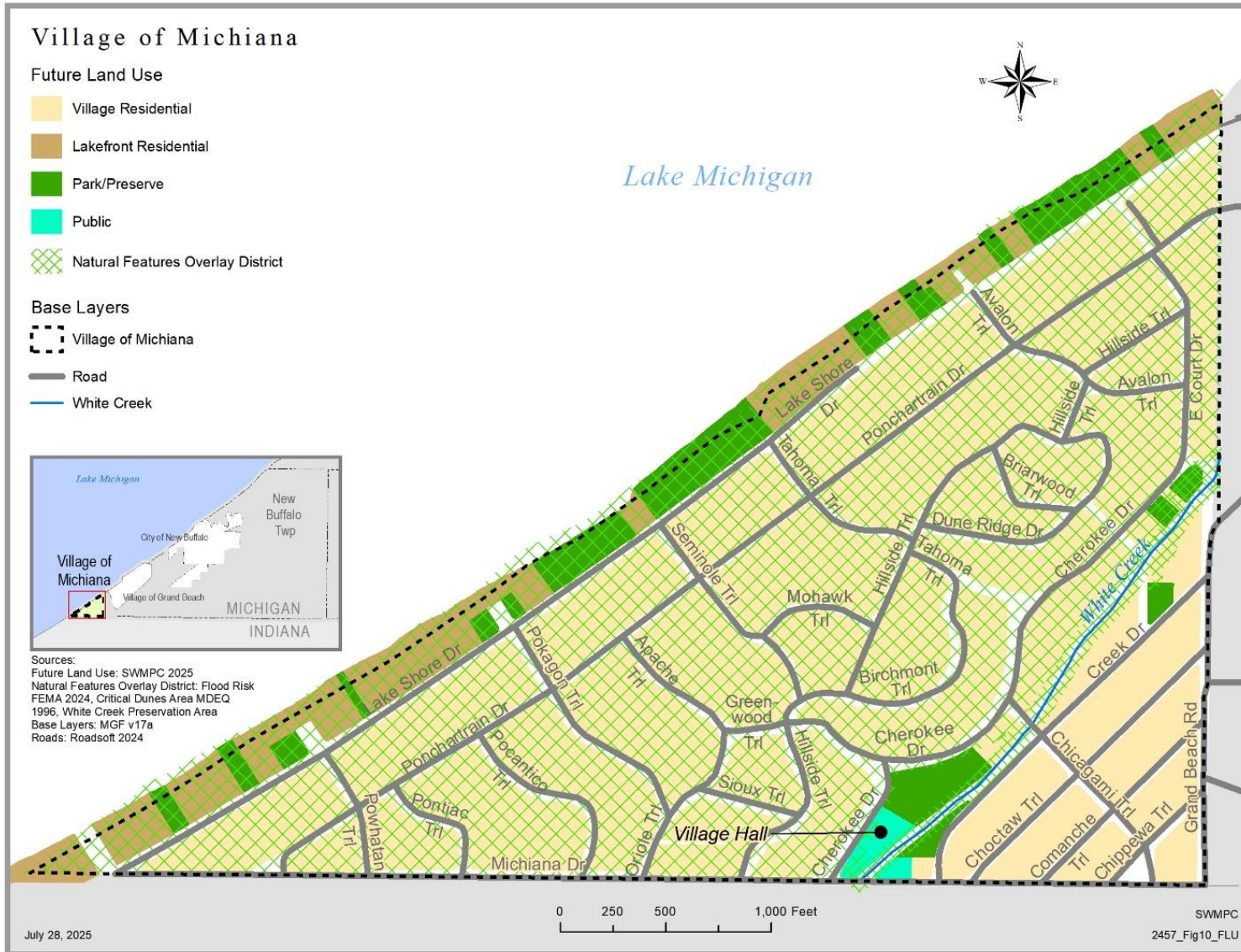


Map 10 Village of Michiana Parks and Beaches



*Beach Stop numbers will be added in the future.

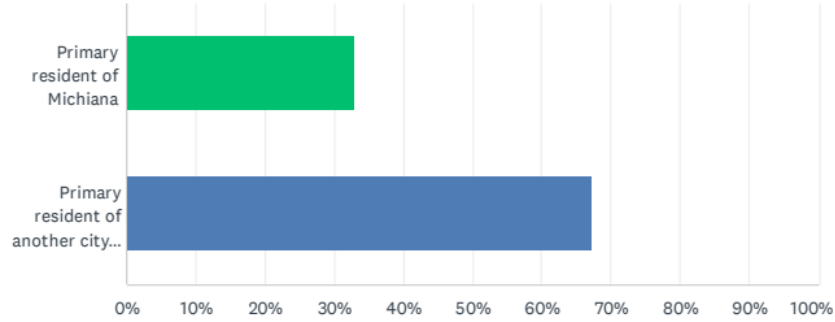
Map 11 Village of Michiana Future Land Use Map



APPENDIX B: PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS

Q1 Which of the following best describes you?

Answered: 232 Skipped: 0

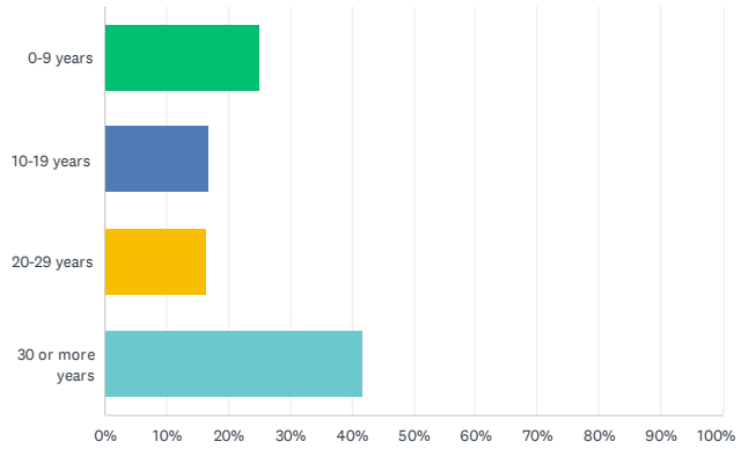


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Primary resident of Michiana	32.76%	76
Primary resident of another city or state	67.24%	156
TOTAL		232

DRAFT

Q2 How long have you owned a home in Michiana?

Answered: 232 Skipped: 0

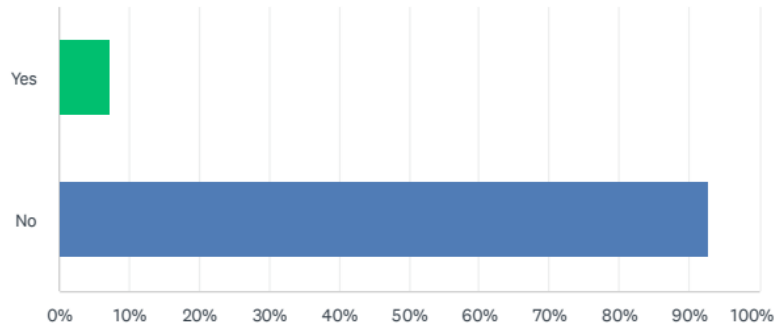


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0-9 years	25.00%	58
10-19 years	16.81%	39
20-29 years	16.38%	38
30 or more years	41.81%	97
TOTAL		232

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Q3 Do you rent your home?

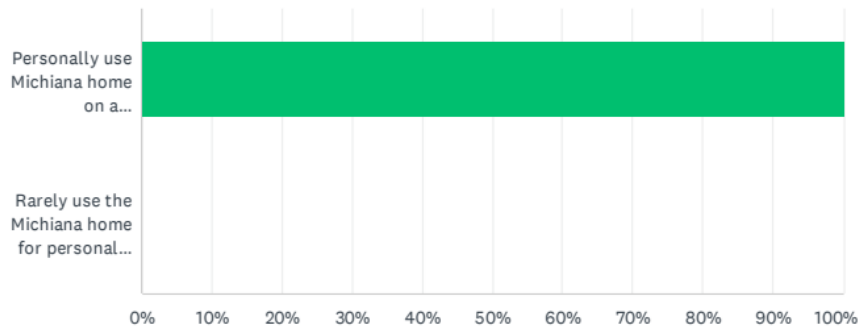
Answered: 232 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	7.33%	17
No	92.67%	215
TOTAL		232

Q4 If you rent your home, how would you characterize your rental services? (Select one)

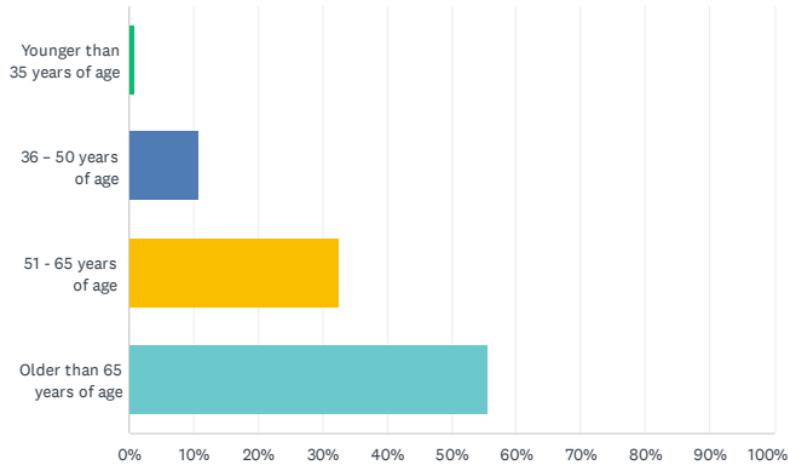
Answered: 26 Skipped: 206



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Personally use Michiana home on a part-time/seasonal basis or rent out home part-time	100.00%	26
Rarely use the Michiana home for personal use (not more than 6 times a year)	0.00%	0
TOTAL		26

Q5 What is your age?

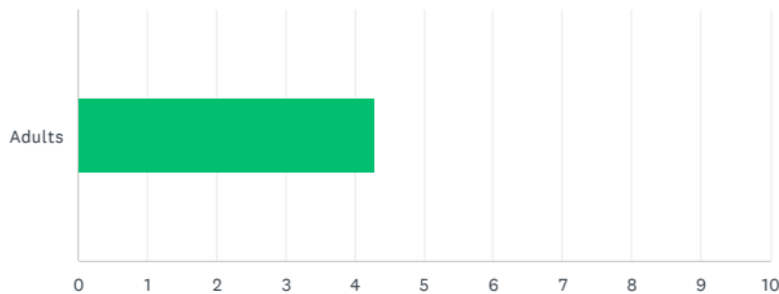
Answered: 230 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Younger than 35 years of age	0.87% 2
36 - 50 years of age	10.87% 25
51 - 65 years of age	32.61% 75
Older than 65 years of age	55.65% 128
TOTAL	230

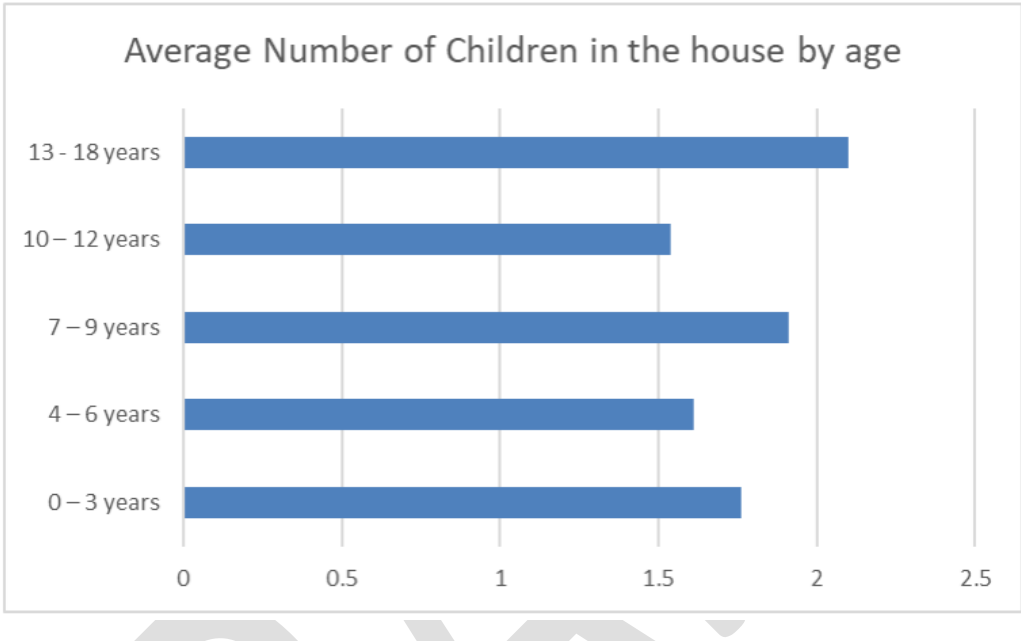
Q6 During the summer/seasonal months, how many adults (age 19 and over) stay at your home at one time? This can include family, friends, and renters (your best estimate, we know it will vary but the information helps us in maintaining our services). Please include numbers only.

Answered: 230 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
Adults	4	988	230
Total Respondents: 230			

Q7 During the summer/seasonal months, how many children are staying/living in your house that are ages 0-18? This can include family, friends, and renters (your best estimate, we know it will vary but the information helps us in maintaining our recreation services). Please include numbers only.



Q8 Which beach stop do you, your family, your visitors and/or renters use most often?

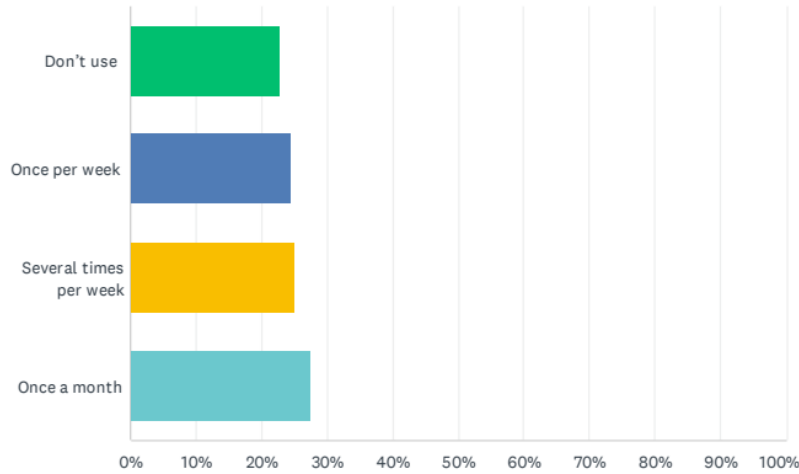
Answered: 231 Skipped: 1



Response	Count
41.5	45
42	22
38	27
39	29
39.5	5
40	31
38.5	1
42.5	4
41	9
43	10
37	7
49.5	1
40.5	1
Private	2
All	1

Q9 Do you, your family, your visitors and/or renters use the park and if so, how often?

Answered: 232 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Don't use	22.84%	53
Once per week	24.57%	57
Several times per week	25.00%	58
Once a month	27.59%	64
TOTAL		232

Q10 What do you like most about Michiana?

1. Beaches and Lake Michigan - 112
2. Peace and Quiet - 97
3. Trees and Nature - 89
4. Zoning - 86 if including references to Low Density, Historical, Architectural and Small Town Charm, and Privacy/Security
5. Public Works and Maintenance - 82
6. Community and Friendliness - 78
7. Park/Recreational Activities - 74 including also references to access to Park Trails and Summer Camp
8. Public Safety - 70

There are references to many generic topics like Wildlife, Golf Carts, Generational Memories, etc.

The Responses above, however, are in the general order of number received. Hope this tally clarifies what Michiana Residents like about Michiana.

Q11 What improvements would you like to see in the Village?

Survey Overview

Question 11 of the survey asked,

“What improvements would you like to see in the Village?”

The question was answered by **216 respondents**:

- There were **713 individual suggestions** for “improvement”
- There were 22 responses that were unclear or neutral

2

Methodology

- Responses containing several ideas were separated into individual suggestions
- The individual suggestions were edited to clarify their meaning
 - If the reviewer was unsure of his interpretation the suggestion was reviewed by ChatGPT4.0 for meaning
- A list of 101 gross categories were created and each of the suggestions was assigned to up to three
 - See Table 1
- The gross categories were then assigned to 43 sub-categories under six main categories
 - See Table 2

See spreadsheet “Michiana Survey - Suggestions for Improvement Data 2025-03-19” for data set.

3

**All
Suggestions
by General
Categories**
(713 responses)

Beaches received the most suggestions for improvement followed by Infrastructure & Public Works, Policy & Zoning, and Parks & Recreation.

Rank	Suggestions by General Category	Mentions	% of Total
1	Beaches	156	22%
2	Infrastructure & Public Works	144	20%
3	Policy & Zoning	138	19%
4	Parks & Recreation	133	19%
5	Enforcement & Safety	95	13%
6	Village Management	47	7%

% of Total amounts are rounded to whole number

4

**#1
BEACHES**
(156 responses)

Over 60% of all responses about beaches were suggestions to maintain and improve beach access. Another 23% were concerns about beach hazards and erosion.

Rank	Beach Suggestions	# of Mentions	% of Section	% of all Suggestions
1	Maintain/Improve beaches, stops, stairs	96	62%	13%
2	Remove beach hazards	18	12%	3%
3	Erosion control	17	11%	2%
4	Enforce village ordinances	11	7%	2%
5	More parking at beach	6	4%	1%
6	More pet access	5	3%	1%
7	Control non-resident access	3	2%	<1%

% of Total amounts are rounded to whole number

5

#2
Infrastructure & Public Works
 (144 responses)

28% of all responses about infrastructure & public works suggested improvements in road maintenance followed by better electricity reliability, telecommunication systems, and public property clean-up.

Rank	Infrastructure & Public Works Suggestions	# of Mentions	% of Section	% of all Suggestions
1	Improve road maintenance	40	28%	6%
2	Improve reliability of electric service	25	17%	4%
3	Improve telecommunication systems	19	13%	3%
4	Improve clean-up on public property	18	13%	3%
5	Improve yard waste pickup	17	12%	2%
6	Improve sanitation services	13	9%	2%
7	Improve water, sewer, drainage systems	12	8%	2%

% of Total amounts are rounded to whole number

6

#3
Policy & Zoning
 (138 responses)

Almost 30% of all responses about Village policies & zoning were related to short-term rentals.

Rank	Policy & Zoning Suggestions	# of Mentions	% of Section	% of all Suggestions
1	Issues with short-term rentals	39	28%	5%
2	Limit night-time lighting	21	15%	3%
3	Issues with building, planning, & zoning ordinances	17	12%	2%
4	Control non-resident access	13	9%	2%
4	Improve environmental & sustainability efforts	13	9%	2%
6	Enforce noise ordinance	10	7%	1%
7	Preserve the Village character	9	7%	1%
8	Concerns with Tree Board & policies	6	4%	1%
9	Issues with nearby cannabis trade	4	3%	1%
10	Create inter-village transportation service	3	2%	<1%
10	More parking	3	1%	<1%
12	Planning for inclusivity (disabled, older adults)	1	1%	<1%

% of Total amounts are rounded to whole number

7

#4
Parks & Recreation
(133 responses)

Over half of all responses about parks & recreation were suggestions to create more community events and to add amenities at the community hall

Rank	Parks & Recreation Suggestions	# of Mentions	% of Section	% of all Suggestions
1	Create more community events	36	27%	5%
2	Add amenities at community hall	35	26%	5%
3	Maintain/Improve park facilities	18	14%	3%
4	Improve sport courts	15	11%	2%
5	More nature & bike trails	13	10%	2%
6	More pet access	12	9%	2%
7	Keep & improve the day camp	4	3%	1%

% of Total amounts are rounded to whole number

8

#5
Enforcement & Safety
(95 responses)

80% of all responses about enforcement & safety were related unsafe driving & road hazards, noise, and police patrols.

Rank	Enforcement & Safety Suggestions	# of Mentions	% of Section	% of all Suggestions
1	Reduce unsafe driving & road hazards	39	41%	5%
2	Enforce noise ordinance	19	20%	3%
3	Increase police patrols	18	19%	3%
4	Remove speed bumps	10	11%	1%
5	Enforce pet ordinances (leash, waste)	7	7%	1%
6	Improve EMS & fire protection services	2	2%	<1%

% of Total amounts are rounded to whole number

9

#6
Village
Management
(31 responses)

Almost 80% of all responses about Village management were related to taxes & spending, improvements in communications from the Village, and general concerns about Village politics

Rank	Village Management Suggestions	# of Mentions	% of Section	% of all Suggestions
1	Reduce Village taxes, fees & spending	15	32%	2%
2	Improve communications from Village	14	30%	2%
3	Concerns with Village politics	8	17%	1%
4	Improve wildlife management	5	11%	1%
5	Concerns with long-term Village finances	2	4%	<1%
5	Improve general Village services	2	4%	<1%
7	Prohibit community corrections workers	1	2%	<1%

% of Total amounts are rounded to whole number

10

Table 1

Gross Categorization of Suggestions

Accessibility	Electric	Maintenance	Recycling	Taxes & fees
AED's	Enforcement	Men's club	Resident representation	Teens
Aesthetics	Environmental	Motorcycles	Residents	Tennis
Ambience	Erosion	Nature	Responsiveness	Traffic
Amenities	Events	No new police station	Restaurant/café	Trails
Beach	Finances	Noise	Roads	Transportation
Biking	Fire protection	Non-residents	Safety	Tree Commission
Budget/finances	Fireworks	Overhead wires	Sanitation	Trees
Building code	Generators	Park	Seniors	Vehicles
Cable	Golf carts	Parking	Sewer	Vendor management
Cannabis vendors	Grand Total	Personnel	Shade	Village character
Children	Health	Pets	Short-term rental	Village hall
Communication	Infrastructure	Phone	Signage	Village representation
Community	Internet	Pickleball	Small business	Volleyball
Construction	Invasive plants	Planning	Speed bumps	Waste
Council	Landscaping	Police	Speeding	Water
Dark sky	Leaf removal	Policy	Sports	Wifi
Day camp	Lifeguards	Privacy	Summer residents	Wildlife
Debris	Lighting	Productivity	Sustainability	Yard waste
Density	Long-term plan	Public safety	Swimming pool	Zoning
Drainage				

11



Main Categories & Sub-Categories

<p>1. BEACHES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain/improve beaches, stops, stairs • Remove beach hazards • Erosion control • Enforce village ordinances • More parking at beach • <i>More pet access</i> • <i>Control non-resident access</i> 	<p>4. PARKS & RECREATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create more community events • Add amenities at community hall • Maintain & improve park facilities • Improve sport courts • More nature & bike trails • <i>More pet access</i> • Keep & improve the day camp
<p>2. INFRASTRUCTURE & PUBLIC WORKS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve road maintenance • Improve reliability of electric service • Improve telecommunication systems • Improve clean-up on public property • Improve yard waste pickup • Improve sanitation services • Improve water, sewer, drainage systems 	<p>5. ENFORCEMENT & SAFETY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce unsafe driving & road hazards • <i>Enforce noise ordinance</i> • Increase police patrols • Remove speed bumps • Enforce pet ordinances (leash, waste) • Improve EMS & fire protection services
<p>3. POLICY & ZONING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues with short-term rentals • Limit night-time lighting • Issues with building, planning, & zoning ordinances • <i>Control non-resident access</i> • Improve environmental & sustainability efforts • <i>Enforce noise ordinance</i> • Preserve the Village character • Concerns with Tree Board & policies • Issues with nearby cannabis trade • Create inter-village transportation service • More parking • Planning for inclusivity (disabled, older adults) 	<p>6. VILLAGE MANAGEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce Village taxes, fees & spending • Improve communications from Village • Concerns with Village politics • Improve wildlife management • Concerns with long-term Village finances • Improve general Village services • Prohibit community corrections workers

Highlighted text appears in more than one category

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APPENDIX C: PUBLIC WORKSHOP

Summary of Community Comments on the Vision Statement

Here is a consolidated summary of community comments on the suggested vision statement, formatted with:

- Grouped and deduplicated themes
- Estimated mention counts to reflect frequency and emphasis
- Language framed for strategic incorporation into planning and visioning documents

Preserve Residential Character & Peacefulness (~2 mentions)

- (2) Ban or strictly limit short-term rentals to preserve the quiet, peaceful, residential nature of the Village. Rentals are seen as inconsistent with Michiana’s ban on commercial activity and have noticeably changed the Village’s character.
- Enhance Street & Pedestrian Safety (~1 mention)
- (1) Address safety issues caused by speeding vehicles and improperly driven golf carts and mopeds—particularly by minors—to restore a safe environment for residents and pedestrians.
- Adopt Dark Sky Policies (~2 mentions)
- (2) Protect the night sky and reduce light pollution by adopting "dark sky" policies similar to those in Beverly Shores—such as using low-level lighting and setting time-based light curfews (e.g., off after midnight).
- Beach Cleanliness & Environmental Responsibility (~2 mentions)
- (1) Maintain clean beaches by regularly removing debris and burnt firewood.
- (1) Remove public trash cans at beach stops and adopt a "leave no trace" policy, encouraging residents and visitors to take their trash home—mirroring Long Beach’s successful approach.

Summary of Community Comments on Beaches

Here is a consolidated summary with estimated mention counts of the beach related community feedback. Each section includes merged, deduplicated insights with preserved nuance and mention frequency estimates.

Beach Cleanliness & Waste Management (~18 mentions total)

- (4) Resume or increase frequency of beach cleaning, including daily or weekly sweeps and firepit/firewood removal.
- (3) Remove all trash cans and adopt a “carry-in, carry-out” or “leave no trace” policy modeled after Long Beach and National Parks.
- (3) Improve garbage service — current weekly pickup is insufficient; cans are often overflowing and unsightly.

- (2) Develop a beach garbage management ordinance.
- (2) Allow dumpster access during holidays to prevent overflow.
- (2) Install more attractive, functional, or better-placed receptacles.
- (1) Prohibit use of beach trash cans for excess residential garbage.
- (1) Staff should walk beaches regularly to address abandoned gear and trash.
- Beach Safety & Emergency Readiness (~15 mentions total)
- (3) Repair or replace hazardous stairs at Stops 38 and 39; widen and adjust metal landings for accessibility.
- (2) Remove submerged or exposed rebar, concrete, and debris near Stops 39–43.
- (2) Install life preservers, ropes, or rescue equipment at multiple stops.
- (2) Install defibrillators (AEDs) at beach locations.
- (2) Create and implement a shoreline safety and maintenance plan.
- (1) Mark designated swim zones and post no-boating boundaries.
- (1) Construct breakwall at Stop 41 to reduce erosion.
- (1) Ensure cell signal at the beach for safety alerts.
- (1) Use Everbridge/NIXLE system to distribute hazard alerts.
- Beach Policy, Rules & Enforcement (~13 mentions total)
- (3) Enforce leash laws and restrict dogs on the beach during prohibited times.
- (3) Enforce rules prohibiting climbing on dunes or over rocks.
- (2) Enforce underage drinking restrictions.
- (2) Enforce swim area boundaries to keep boats out.
- (2) Deploy police or safety officers to patrol beaches on weekends and holidays.
- (1) Consider allowing limited bonfires at one designated beach stop.

Beach Infrastructure & Access Improvements (~12 mentions total)

- (3) Improve, repair, or rebuild Stop 43 (Sunset Beach); share plans and gather input.
- (2) Install a boardwalk at Stop 43 to improve accessibility.
- (2) Widen beach steps or metal walkways to improve mobility.
- (2) Add designated storage racks for beach chairs to manage clutter.
- (1) Ensure stairs are accessible to older adults and people with disabilities.
- (1) Improve signage and wayfinding at beach stops.

Beach Use Pressure & Rental Impact (~8 mentions total)

- (3) Short-term rentals are increasing beach crowding, noise, and trash.
- (2) Address overcrowding from large group drop-offs.
- (2) Review rental policies as part of beach management strategy.
- (1) Rentals mislead visitors with inaccurate beach access claims.
- Public Education & Awareness (~6 mentions total)
- (2) Educate residents and renters about Michigan laws and Michiana-specific beach ordinances.

- (2) Create and distribute visual guides with rules, parking info, and access zones.
- (1) Post signage to reinforce public vs. private areas and protect sensitive zones.
- (1) Include rules and preservation info in rental communications.

Property Boundaries & Shared Use (~6 mentions total)

- (2) Clarify and mark boundaries between public and private beach zones.
- (2) Address tension caused by trespassing and misuse of private property by renters.
- (1) Encourage shared use and discourage aggressive signage like “Private Property.”
- (1) Address resident reluctance to confront violators directly.

Summary of Community Comments on Natural Features

Here is a consolidated summary with estimated mention counts of the natural features related community feedback. Each section includes merged, deduplicated insights with preserved nuance and mention frequency estimates.

Dunes, Shoreline & Beachfront Preservation (~10 mentions total)

- (3) Restore dunes along the entire village shoreline and install “No Dune Walking” signs modeled after existing examples on Michiana beaches. Include this information in rental materials to educate visitors.
- (2) Plant dune grass at all beach stops to stabilize and protect the shoreline.
- (1) Create a landscape plan to manage and prevent dune erosion.
- (1) Consider removing rocks and using biodegradable sandbags at Stop 43 to manage cyclical shoreline shifts.
- (1) Ensure the Vision Statement and planning efforts prioritize preservation of natural features and beaches.
- (1) Use community surveys and comments to guide natural feature priorities.
- (1) Prioritize grant applications for natural feature protection by forming a community-led team.

Trees, Habitat, and Native Plantings (~9 mentions total)

- (2) Host seminars and community plantings promoting native trees, wildflowers, and Michigan plants—similar to efforts in Beverly Shores.
- (2) Prohibit clear-cutting of trees to protect the natural landscape and forest character.
- (1) Study the ecological value of dead trees (e.g., as habitat for woodpeckers and other species).
- (1) Implement a stewardship and invasive species removal program with habitat restoration experts, focusing on protected dunes.
- (1) Allow residents more freedom in managing vegetation in their own yards (planting or removal).

- (1) Remove select trees along Lakeshore Drive to improve visibility and safety near beach access.
- (1) Remove the flower planter at Stop 41½, which obstructs traffic flow to the beach.
- Pollinators & Wildlife Support (~2 mentions total)
- (1) Plant milkweed to support monarch butterflies.
- (1) Promote wildlife-friendly landscaping by encouraging native species and habitat preservation.

Light & Air Quality / Night Sky Preservation (~3 mentions total)

- (2) Promote low-voltage or dark sky-friendly exterior lighting to reduce light pollution and preserve nighttime sky views.
- (1) Consider adopting formal dark sky lighting rules to reinforce these goals.

Waste Reduction, Recycling & Public Education (~7 mentions total)

- (2) Promote waste reduction through composting and community education.
- (2) Organize spring/fall cleanouts to support reuse, recycling, and neighbor engagement.
- (2) Expand and clearly communicate recycling options available to residents.
- (1) Provide large dumpsters on winter weekends to help manage overflow trash and waste.

Parks, Public Land & Access to Nature (~5 mentions total)

- (2) Create a nature walk along the creek, similar to the one in Michiana Shores.
- (2) Prioritize acquisition of beachfront parcels when they become available—ensure they are reserved for public use and cannot be resold.
- (1) Consider limiting bonfires to a single designated beach stop to simplify oversight and reduce environmental impact.

Water Quality & Marine Use (~1 mention total)

- (1) Address water pollution from boats or small watercraft by establishing and enforcing protective rules to safeguard local waterways.

Summary of Community Comments on Infrastructure & Public Works

Here is a consolidated summary with estimated mention counts of the infrastructure & public works related community feedback. Each section includes merged, deduplicated insights with preserved nuance and mention frequency estimates.

Roads, Streets & Traffic Management (~14 mentions total)

- (4) Prioritize road repairs and resurfacing throughout the Village, including Lake Shore Drive.
- (2) Develop a yearly repaving plan—target 1–2 blocks per year.
- (2) Clear gravel and weeds from roads and curbs to improve pedestrian and biker safety.

- (2) Reevaluate speed bump design and placement—some are too large; others should be adjusted for bike access.
- (1) Reinstall the stop sign at Pontiac & Michiana.
- (1) Increase stop sign compliance enforcement, particularly on Lake Shore Drive.
- (1) Add more speed humps to slow traffic in certain areas.
- (1) Address drainage and stormwater flooding on roads like Chikagami, Comanche, and Mohawk—install a French drain and curb where needed.

Water, Utilities & Cell Coverage (~11 mentions total)

- (3) Address unresolved issues with the water system, including leaking street valves that cause puddles and ice.
- (3) Improve cell phone coverage—many residents request a cell tower (Stop 40 is often mentioned), though some oppose unsightly installations.
- (3) Explore converting overhead utilities to underground systems to improve reliability and aesthetics.
- (1) Provide public Wi-Fi at the beach for safety and convenience.
- (1) Consider outsourcing infrastructure staff or services, especially with upcoming retirements.

Landscaping, Trees & Green Space Maintenance (~7 mentions total)

- (2) Improve and regularly trim roadside vegetation, especially along rights-of-way (e.g., Oriole, Pokagon).
- (2) Inspect and trim trees near power lines, particularly on Mohawk.
- (1) Clean up remaining debris at Stop 40.
- (1) Consider the ecological value of dead trees before removal—preserve where safe.
- (1) Reassess the Tree Board's approach to removals and regulations.

Signage, Parking & Aesthetic Improvements (~5 mentions total)

- (2) Avoid paid parking signs and reduce signage clutter—residents want to preserve the village charm.
- (1) Consider removing parking signs near the community center.
- (1) Remove garbage cans at beach stops to improve appearance and reduce maintenance, following Long Beach's example.
- (1) Clear weeds around signs, hydrants, and other public fixtures to improve appearance and visibility.

Public Facilities & Recreation (~3 mentions total)

- (1) Allocate funding for ongoing maintenance of pickleball courts.
- (1) Recognize that pickleball players contribute positively—not all are causing issues.
- (1) Hire someone or create a checklist to ensure regular upkeep of beach stops and public spaces.

Village-Wide Infrastructure Planning (~4 mentions total)

- (2) Create a comprehensive infrastructure plan for managing aging systems (some over 75 years old).
- (1) Include budget transparency and project updates in this plan.
- (1) Improve communications about public works through emails and the Village's website (e.g., road repairs, Stop 43).

Summary of Community Comments on Policy & Zoning

Here is a consolidated summary with estimated mention counts of the policy & zoning related community feedback. Each section includes merged, deduplicated insights with preserved nuance and mention frequency estimates.

Short-Term Rentals & Regulation (~22 mentions)

- (6) Limit or eliminate short-term rentals to preserve residential character. Options include a full ban, moratorium, or capping the number of rental homes.
- (4) Establish a minimum rental period (e.g., one week or 30 days) to reduce turnover and protect neighborhood integrity.
- (3) Require large security deposits for rentals, forfeited if renters break rules or cause nuisances.
- (2) Assign a village representative or enforcement staff to monitor compliance and prevent rule evasion (e.g., house swaps).
- (2) Monitor rentals more proactively (e.g., 5-day compliance checks, weekend inspections).
- (2) Improve renter communication through:
 - Welcome packets with maps, fines, and rules.
 - Friday email or text blasts summarizing rules and beach/bonfire notices.
 - Refrigerator magnets listing key village guidelines.
- (2) Notify nearby neighbors when a rental is scheduled and provide contact info for owner or manager.
- (1) Ban bonfires at non-designated areas; consider requiring clean-up and pre-approval.

Lighting Policies & Dark Sky (~6 mentions)

- (3) Adopt Dark Sky-friendly lighting rules to reduce light pollution and preserve night views.
- (2) Set time limits or brightness caps for exterior lighting.
- (1) Address light "nuisance" issues, such as spotlight glare onto streets and homes.
- Ordinance Enforcement & Governance (~6 mentions)

- (2) Develop a clear noise ordinance with enforceable guidelines (not just general noise policies).
- (2) Broaden the definition of "nuisance" to include bonfires, smoke, marijuana odors, and light.
- (1) Require Village Council review of all construction permits (not just a single inspector).
- (1) Require neighbor notification for zoning variance requests that affect adjacent properties.

Voting Rights for Second Homeowners (~5 mentions)

- (5) Amend village rules to allow second homeowners to vote in Board elections, recognizing their tax contributions.
- Pickleball & Park Policy (~4 mentions)
- (2) Restrict court use to residents only or implement a fee for nonresidents.
- (1) Maintain and support sports courts (pickleball and tennis) as valuable community assets.
- (1) Address other noise sources (construction, lawn equipment) if pickleball is being singled out.

Cell Service, Parking & Access (~4 mentions)

- (2) Improve cell phone coverage for safety and reliability, especially near the lake.
- (1) Address beach parking congestion to ensure accessibility.
- (1) Manage nonresident use of beach stops, particularly from Michiana Shores.

Communications, Cleanliness & Access (~4 mentions)

- (1) Appoint a Beach Commissioner to manage beach safety and enforcement.
- (1) Allow Michiana residents to rent Village Hall at discounted rates compared to nonresidents.
- (1) Ensure village cleanup (beach/creek) is handled by staff, not inmates.
- (1) Consider holiday dumpster access for residents to manage seasonal overflow trash.

Zoning & Development (~2 mentions)

- (1) Count storage pods toward lot coverage in zoning assessments.
- (1) Ensure village-wide attention, not just focus on the park areas.

Summary of Community Comments on Parks & Recreation

Here is a consolidated summary with estimated mention counts of the parks & recreation related community feedback. Each section includes merged, deduplicated insights with preserved nuance and mention frequency estimates.

Pickleball & Tennis Courts (~7 mentions total)

- (2) Keep both pickleball and tennis courts open and well maintained. They're valued for promoting health and well-being across all ages.
- (2) Invest in court repair or replacement to improve surface quality and user experience.
- (1) Post clear usage rules at the pickleball courts, including a “Play at your own risk” sign.
- (1) Maintain free access to pickleball courts for residents and nonresidents to promote inclusion and active living.
- (1) Acknowledge the community benefits and challenges of pickleball—while it fosters togetherness, the influx of outside players may affect the village atmosphere and skill level comfort.

Dogs in the Park (~4 mentions total)

- (1) Prohibit dogs in the park.
- (1) Allow leashed dogs in the park.
- (1) Build a designated dog park.
- (1) Compromise: allow leashed dogs in the main park and create a separate dog area. Also encourage community accountability for pet waste.

Nature Features & Pollinators (~1 mention total)

- (1) Plant milkweed to enhance the butterfly garden and support monarch butterflies.
- Park Paths & Walkways (~1 mention total)
- (1) Add a walkway beside the courts to provide a clean, dry path—currently pedestrians walk through mud and grass.

Parking & Village Priorities (~2 mentions total)

- (1) Avoid paid parking near parks or courts—residents oppose monetizing access.
- (1) Concern that the Village allocates too many resources to the park compared to other priorities.

Parks & Recreation Action Plan Highlights

- Courts: Maintain and resurface pickleball and tennis courts, post usage rules.
- Access: Keep courts free and inclusive, while monitoring outside use.
- Dogs: Consider compromise—leashed dogs in park + designated dog area.
- Nature: Add pollinator plants to butterfly garden.
- Paths: Build walkway near courts for dry access.
- Parking: Avoid paid parking near parks; balance park investment with other needs.

Summary of Community Comments on Enforcement & Safety

Here is a consolidated summary with estimated mention counts of the enforcement & safety related community feedback. Each section includes merged, deduplicated insights with preserved nuance and mention frequency estimates.

Traffic & Street Safety (~8 mentions total)

- (3) Address speeding on Ponchartrain and other residential roads. Increased monitoring and enforcement of speed limits and golf cart laws—especially regarding underage drivers—are needed where there are no sidewalks.
- (1) Set a 20 mph speed limit for residential areas and replace outdated or hidden signage (e.g., at Cherokee and Chickamee).
- (1) Modify speed bumps on Ponchartrain to be safer for bicycles while still slowing cars.
- (1) Request that the States of Indiana and Michigan install stoplights at key village entrances to improve safety.
- (1) Educate pedestrians, parents, and children on safe street use, including walking against traffic and biking cautiously.
- (1) Enforce parking rules, especially on busy streets where vehicles often jut into the road.

Ordinance Enforcement & Legal Process (~6 mentions total)

- (3) Enforce short-term rental regulations and establish a minimum rental period (suggestions range from one week to one month).
- (1) Follow through with the full legal process: police issue citations, prosecutors escalate cases, and judges decide outcomes—streamlining this path is key.
- (1) Hire a dedicated code enforcement officer to ensure follow-through on violations.
- (1) Ensure enforcement of all new and existing ordinances from the Village Master Plan.

Policing, Patrols & Community Safety (~11 mentions total)

- (3) Increase visible police patrols—especially on the beach, near the lake, and during major holidays.
- (3) Emphasize community policing over infrastructure—multiple comments question the need for a new police station.
- (2) Share patrol schedules and reports with the public to improve transparency and accountability.
- (1) Enforce leash laws and beach dog rules to protect residents who are uncomfortable around dogs.
- (2) Install and maintain life-saving beach equipment—including buoys and rescue rings—to improve water safety.
- Public Safety Governance & Transparency (~10 mentions total)
- (2) Conduct and publish an annual review of shared Grand Beach/Michiana police services, focusing on performance and cost.

- (1) Post a summary of the joint police contract—including patrol hours and cost—on the Village’s website.
- (2) Publish monthly, annual, and historical enforcement and safety metrics at the local, state, and federal levels.
- (1) Join national public safety tracking programs like the FBI Crime Data Explorer to benchmark local data.
- (1) Use data-driven criteria to evaluate whether a new police station is needed before committing funding.
- (1) Consider outsourcing police services to the Township or contracting private security to reduce costs.
- (1) Review the fire services contract in light of recent legal rulings, using operational and budget data.
- (1) Publish fire service performance metrics on the Village’s website.

Governance & Village Policy (~1 mention total)

- (1) Establish a Homeowners Association (HOA) to prioritize resident needs and ensure that village amenities serve property owners first.
- Enforcement & Safety Action Plan Highlights
- Traffic: Reduce speeding, improve signage, adjust bumps, educate walkers and drivers.
- Ordinances: Enforce rental rules, hire a code officer, ensure legal follow-through.
- Policing: Increase patrols, emphasize community policing, add beach safety equipment.
- Transparency: Publish safety data, contract details, and evaluate shared services.
- Governance: Explore HOA formation to represent resident priorities.

Summary of Community Comments on Village Management

Here is a consolidated summary with estimated mention counts of the village management related community feedback. Each section includes merged, deduplicated insights with preserved nuance and mention frequency estimates.

Representation & Voting Rights (~7 mentions)

- (3) Amend rules to allow second homeowners to vote for the Village Board and on local issues.
- (2) Create Board seats for non–full-time residents or appoint a designated representative to voice their concerns.
- (1) Concerns raised that council members are often “appointed,” making elections feel unrepresentative.
- (1) Clarify how residency is defined for council eligibility and voter participation.

Board Transparency & Term Info (~4 mentions)

- (3) Publish Board member term expiration dates on the website.
- (1) Post term limits and ensure clarity about Board member selection and tenure.

Budget Transparency & Financial Access (~6 mentions)

- (3) Ensure the budget is itemized, published, and easily accessible online—not just at Village Hall.
- (2) Provide summary financial statements to help residents understand village finances.
- (1) Residents should be able to ask questions about the budget and get answers clearly.

Planning, Prioritization & Process (~5 mentions)

- (2) Create an open process for prioritizing planning actions based on community input.
- (1) Ensure that budget allocations match the priorities identified in surveys and planning.
- (1) Let residents vote on priorities or validate decisions through the master plan.
- (1) Adopt policies like Grand Beach rental regulations for consistency.

Rental Policy & Enforcement (~3 mentions)

- (1) Revise rental rules to prohibit day-by-day rentals, requiring a minimum stay.
- (1) Adopt Grand Beach’s rental policies as a model.
- (1) Clarify and enforce rental rules and rights, especially regarding access and transparency.

Staffing & Succession Planning (~2 mentions)

- (1) Develop a succession plan for key roles (e.g., Building Inspector, Maintenance Head).
- (1) Outsource key operations like accounting to reduce risk of service gaps during turnover.
- Equity in Attention & Access (~3 mentions)
- (1) Ensure attention and funding are balanced across the whole Village—not just the park.
- (1) Guarantee all tax-paying residents can access Village Hall for events and functions.
- (1) Clarify beach deeded rights so residents understand what access and uses are permitted.

Traffic & Entrance Safety (~1 mention)

- (1) Urgently address the dangerous Michiana/Michiana Shores entrance, potentially through state coordination.

Summary of Other Community Comments

Here is a consolidated summary of the miscellaneous or cross-cutting comments from the community feedback that don't fit neatly into one of the prior thematic categories, but they still raise clear concerns and suggestions for improving village safety, aesthetics, transparency, and livability.

Street Use, Safety & Design (~3 mentions total)

- (2) Redesign Lakeshore Drive to better handle its current mix of walkers, bikers, cars, dogs, and golf carts. The street is too narrow and unsafe for its level of use.
- (1) Excessive speeding by cars, trucks, mopeds, and golf carts—often driven by minors—creates a significant safety hazard on village streets.

Short-Term Rental Regulation (~3 mentions total)

- (1) Prohibit short-term rentals entirely to protect the residential character of the Village, since commercial businesses are already banned.
- (1) Conduct rental property inspections on weekends to ensure compliance with occupancy and parking rules.
- (1) Eliminate the "2+ guest" occupancy clause and cap the number of rentals to reduce community strain—mirroring concerns raised about other public resources like pickleball courts.

Lighting & Visual Pollution (~2 mentions total)

- (2) Update ordinances to ban overly bright or misdirected spotlight lighting, which causes glare for drivers, disrupts neighbors, and reduces nighttime visibility. A specific problem area is cited at Pokagon and Pontchartrain.

Infrastructure & Utilities (~1 mention total)

- (1) Place electric wires underground along Lakeshore Drive to reduce power outage risk and improve visual appeal.
- Parks & Pet Access (~1 mention total)
- (1) Allow leashed dogs (8-foot maximum) in parks and provide pet waste bag stations, following the example of other communities.
- Governance & Financial Transparency (~1 mention total)
- (1) Include summary profit and loss statements in the village budget to make financial information more accessible and understandable to residents.