

Michiana Planning Task Force Updated Deck – Community Workshop

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August 7, 2025



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Vision

Vision Question

Q10 What do you like most about Michiana? Be specific. (up to 5 responses) Answered: 225

Narrative Overview from Community Survey

Residents overwhelmingly appreciate 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 highlight the low traffic, walkability, and lack of commercialization as essential to the village's charm. The village staff and services also receive high praise, as do the recreational activities, events, and improvements.

What do you like most about Michiana?

Category Mentions (# of mentions)

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

Conclusion: *Due to the overwhelming response of our Natural Features, the Task Force identified a Natural Features Goal that directly supports our future vision.*

Vision Statement (pre-workshop)

Michiana is a peaceful, tree-lined lakeside village where the natural beauty of Lake Michigan and our beaches meets the charm of a low-density, historic neighborhood. We are a close-knit community that values quiet living and green spaces that preserve our small-town character. With strong public services, safe streets, vibrant parks and recreation opportunities, we embrace a future that honors our past, protects our environment, and strengthens the bonds that make Michiana a treasured home for generations.

Vision Statement (post-workshop)

Approved

**Option
#1**

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.

**Option
#2**

Michiana envisions a future where the serene beauty of Lake Michigan, lush tree-lined landscapes, and historic charm is preserved. As a close-knit community, we commit to protecting our environment, enhancing public services, and fostering vibrant parks and safe streets. We strive to strengthen community bonds and maintain our small-town character for generations to come."



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Priorities

Priorities from Workshop

- P & Z - Short Term Rentals (22 responses)
- Beach - Beach Cleanliness (18)
- Beach - Beach Safety (15)
- I & PW - Roads, Streets and Traffic Management (14)
- Beach - Beach Policy (13)
- Beach - Beach Access (12)
- E & S - Police Patrols and Community Safety (11)
- I & PW -Water, Utilities and Cell (11)
- Natural Features - Dune, Shoreline, Beach Preservation (10)
- E & S - Public Safety and Governance (10)

All Suggestions by General Categories

Rank	Suggestions by General Category	#Mentions*	% of Total
1	Natural Features	293	23%
2	Beaches	228	18%
3	Policy & Zoning	191	15%
4	Infrastructure & Public Works	188	15%
5	Parks & Recreation	148	12%
6	Enforcement & Safety	131	10%
7	Village Management	78	6%

* #Mentions includes comments from original survey and community workshop
% of Total amounts are rounded to whole number

Narrative Overview of Community Suggestions Across All Categories:

Residents 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 smarter enforcement and more inclusive, transparent leadership.

Narrative Summaries by Category

- **Natural Features**

Residents 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 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 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 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. Ordinances on lighting, noise, and fire safety were also backed, along with transparent, equitable governance.

- **Parks and Recreation**

Parks and courts are vital to community well-being. Residents want them free, well-maintained, and accessible to all ages. Dog access drew mixed views, but most agreed on the need for responsible use. Other ideas included butterfly gardens, better walkways, and avoiding paid parking.

- **Enforcement and Safety**

Residents 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 seek leadership that reflects the whole community, communicates openly, and plans ahead. Many want second homeowners to have voting rights or representation. Other priorities include publishing board terms, aligning budgets with community input, and ensuring village-wide equity.

Goal Categories

Vision and Improvement Goals

12

#1
Natural
Features
(293 overall
responses)

Natural Features

Natural Features Goal

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.

Narrative Overview of Community Comments: (37 responses)

Residents want to preserve Michiana's natural character by protecting dunes, native habitats, and the shoreline. Many supported erosion control, native plantings, dark-sky lighting, and invasive species management. There's strong support for long-term ecological planning, public access to nature, and sustainability practices like composting and low-impact landscaping.

Natural Features Objectives and Action Steps

➤ **Establish a Village Resiliency Governance and Framework**

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. Hire a consultant to help design and implement a Natural Feature Preservation Framework and Plan
2. Build Natural Feature preservation into operational planning and budgeting
3. Determine governance reporting to Village Council

➤ **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. TREES – Removal of invasive species per Urban Forestry Management Plan (UFMP) and planting of natural flora suited for erosion control (Tree Board)
2. TREES – Pursue ongoing grant opportunities to fund work outlined in UFMP
3. TREES - Continue to look at grants to fund tree trims and removals identified in the Urban Forestry Management Plan and perform as scheduled.

➤ **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 objective into Resiliency Framework and Plan; integrate Resiliency into Village work

➤ **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.
 - Host community seminars and events.
 - Provide education in multiple categories (trees, dunes, waste, lighting).
2. Add Natural Features into the Village website and publish additional information.

15

#2
BEACHES
(228 overall
responses)

Beaches

#2 BEACHES

(156 responses
from original
survey)

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%

Key community comments on maintaining and/or improving beaches, stops, and stairs

Restore and maintain beaches by resuming regular cleaning, firepit cleanup, raking, and debris removal.

Improve trash management with a carry-in, carry-out policy, year-round garbage bins, and removal of unsightly cans.

Upgrade beach access through safer, wider, and ADA-accessible stairs and repairs—especially at Stop 43.

Enhance beach amenities with porta-potties, water stations, and gear storage for kayaks, SUPs, and chairs.

Keep beach access free and fair by eliminating extra fees for residents and allowing adequate storage per household.

Install safety features like life rings, AEDs, ropes, and clearly marked swim and boating zones with alert systems.

Strengthen enforcement of leash laws, dune protection, underage drinking, and swim boundaries with added patrols.

Improve signage and communication by posting clear rules at all stops, in rentals, and “No Dune Walking” signs.

Protect dunes and prevent erosion by planting dune grass, restoring dunes, and developing an erosion control plan.

Expand public access by acquiring lakefront parcels and opening all beach stops for year-round use.

Beaches Current State

The Village of Michiana maintains seven beach access points along its Lake Michigan shoreline, which are critical for both recreation and environmental stewardship. At each and at the top of the dune, there is a covered beach stop structure with benches, showers and a bike rack. On the beach, there are kayak racks.

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 is closed. To remedy the access, a new beach stop was built in an area with greater beach access called the new Stop 40. All beach stops have poison ivy, unkept grasses, fallen tree limbs and older Stop structures requiring cleaning and maintenance.

Beach management is overseen informally by the Beach Commissioner, who serves as a liaison to Public Works and the Village Council. There is currently no dedicated beach or shoreline committee, though there's an opportunity for 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 access for equipment. 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 Stops Current State

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 homeowners home. The other end of the beach borders a private beach area owned by the Dune Oak Beach Club. The beach stop has been cleared making access to the beach easier. A bench is still needed for residents to sit. 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 residents 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 ties are beginning to collapse due to the surrounding land.

Beach Stops Current State

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. The trees around the beach access stairs was cut on both sides and increase 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 built by a resident is currently under review by EGLE and the Village.

Stop 42 – The beach at Stop 42 is wide and a continuation of 41.5. There is a beach stop structure in good condition with a shower 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

Beach Goal

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 policies to preserve shoreline resources.

Narrative Overview of Community Comments: (72 comments)

Beaches are viewed as shared community spaces that need ongoing care. Residents want cleaner, safer, and more accessible beaches, with regular maintenance, better signage, and clear rules for all users. They are concerned with the impact to our beaches from short term rentals. Safety improvements and consistent enforcement—especially around unleashed dogs, fires, and overcrowding—were common requests. The community emphasized respectful use and shared responsibility for preserving the beach experience.

Beaches Objectives and Action Steps

- **Create a Beach governance committee reporting to the Council and led by the Beach Commissioner**
- **Ensure Michiana's beach access and stops are maintained and available**
 1. Implement yearly preservation and maintenance plans for each beach stop; work with Public Services to audit and maintain
 - Stop 43 – determine improvement plan to be approved by EGLE
 - Stop 40 – plan to remove metal, rebar and concrete
 2. Integrate beach stop preservation and maintenance needs into yearly budget; identify any special capital improvements
 3. Develop community awareness across the community
- **Ensure beaches are safe and clear of debris**

Implement the recreational plan ensuring that all residents can enjoy and benefit from recreational opportunities

 1. Remove all safety hazards
 2. Engage community teams to help implement in the respective service areas
- **Enforce all beach regulation and ordinances**
 1. Review and update beach ordinances
 2. Determine beachfront enforcement gaps and remediate; report to community
 3. Implement ordinance reporting, monitoring and management processes; report data to community
 4. Communicate beach rules regularly to community; foster community stewardship
- **Develop and implement Lakefront Preservation Plan with the new Natural Features Resiliency program**

Work to support Natural Feature Resiliency program to build Shoreline and Duneland Preservation

 1. Shoreline Preservation
 2. Dune Preservation at Lake Shore Drive
 3. Invasive species and mitigation

22

#3
Policy &
Zoning
(228 overall
responses)

Policy and Zoning

#3 Policy & Zoning (138 responses from original survey)

28% of 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	2	1%	<1%
12	Planning for inclusivity (disabled, older adults)	1	1%	<1%

Key community comments relating to short-term rentals, night-time lighting, and building, planning, zoning ordinances

Strengthen short-term rental regulations by limiting the number, setting minimum stay durations, and enforcing rules on noise, garbage, parking, and overcrowding.

Improve rental enforcement with stronger accountability for repeat offenders and security deposits forfeited for violations.

Adopt and enforce Dark Sky lighting standards to reduce glare, spotlighting, and unnecessary outdoor lighting that harms village ambiance and natural views.

Create a clear, enforceable noise ordinance to preserve peace and quiet throughout the Village.

Revise zoning to prevent oversized homes on small lots and ensure consistent application of building codes.

Discourage over-commercialization by limiting speculative building, modular units, and rentals used purely for profit.

Promote thoughtful development with larger lots, better spacing, and attention to neighborhood aesthetics and open space.

Ensure zoning decisions serve the whole Village, not just areas near the park or high-profile sites.

Clarify staff roles and responsibilities between the Building Inspector, Commissioner, and Zoning Administrator to improve oversight and accountability.

Include all structures in lot coverage rules—such as storage pods—to prevent overbuilt properties and preserve community character.

Policy and Zoning Current State

The Land Use Map and corresponding Policies and Zoning Ordinances are developed by the Planning Commission and approved by the Village Council. Our current Land Use from 2006 identifies three Zoning districts: Lakefront Residential (LR), Village Residential (VR) and Public Land (PL).

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. Our residential areas are largely built out with few remaining open lots. A growing development trend is the purchase and teardown adjacent homes to build a single larger house, but projects must still comply the building ordinances redefined 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 Trust committing the land to the community for recreational use.

Historically, our Land Use Maps have never dedicated any area to accommodate commercial and industrial development, and through ordinances have always reflected the natural resources in our community requiring conservation including beaches, sand dunes, wetlands, trees, floodplains and White Creek.

The Zoning Ordinances were updated in 2016. Current zoning priorities have been identified across all goal categories but immediate requests to update ordinances for short term rentals, lighting, building, noise, and sport court use.

Policy and Zoning Goal

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.

Narrative Overview of Community Comments:

Residents want clear, enforceable rules that protect neighborhood character and quality of life. Concerns about short-term rentals were widespread, with many calling for limits, longer stays, and stricter enforcement. They also supported ordinances on lighting, noise, fire safety and waste management. Transparent decision-making and governance—especially on zoning and equity—were key priorities.

Policy and Zoning

Objectives and Action Steps

► **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
2. Create Natural Feature governance for the Village

► **Update, Implement, Enforce Ordinances aligned with Master Plan**

Village policies and ordinances identified in the Master Plan support enforcement capabilities and long-term preservation goals.

1. Update high priority ordinances - Short Term Rentals, Lighting, Noise, Parking, Sports Courts, Waste Management, Dogs
 - + Update Zoning Districts, District regulation and Zoning Maps to align with new Land Use Maps
3. Clearly define, communicate and staff ordinance enforcement roles and responsibilities between the Police and the Zoning
4. Fill a Zoning Administrator position or Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) currently implemented by many local towns
5. Implement online program to record and follow up on resident's reports of noncompliance; report on citations

► **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. Review and recommend current Site Development Requirements and staffing to support new Future Land Map policies and zoning
2. Evaluate and provide recommendations for Zoning Board of Appeals structure and process

► **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

27

#4
Infrastructure
& Public
Works
(188 overall
responses)

Infrastructure and
Public Works

#4 Infrastructure & Public Works (144 responses from original survey)

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%

Key community comments on improving road maintenance and reliability of utility services

Fix and maintain roads with consistent repaving, pothole repair, and attention to high-use areas like Michiana Drive, Chicagami, and Lake Shore Drive.

Establish a long-term road and drainage plan that includes ice treatment, timely repairs, and stormwater improvements to reduce flooding and hazards.

Bury utility lines where possible to prevent outages, protect views, and improve aesthetics—especially along Lake Shore Drive.

Improve power reliability in outage-prone areas like the southeast Village and maintain overhead lines until buried.

Expand internet and cell service by allowing new providers, improving beach coverage, and exploring 5G and tower upgrades.

Increase transparency and updates on infrastructure projects, including timelines, budgets, and service disruptions.

Use digital tools like email and the Village website for better communication about repairs, improvements, and updates.

Trim vegetation regularly along roads and near power lines to improve safety and reduce fire risk.

Upgrade public fixtures by improving upkeep around hydrants, signs, and other visible infrastructure.

Treat infrastructure as a long-term investment by planning proactively and avoiding piecemeal or temporary fixes.

Infrastructure and Public Works Current State

- The Public Works Department (PWD) operates under the Village Council with 2 full-time employees, and 1 seasonal worker from June – August.
- Responsibilities include maintaining roads, water, parks, beaches, and public buildings and spaces, as well as snow plowing, tree removal, storm cleanup, and leaf pickup.
- The Village has 8.49 miles of roads. The PWD handles major road projects including road repairs and installing dry wells along Lake Shore Drive as required by EGLE.
- The PWD manages and maintains the Village water supply and pumphouse, performs regular water quality testing, annual hydrant flushing, bi-annual monthly meter routes, daily pump readings, and assists with frozen meters in winter.
- The Village of Michiana purchases pretreated water from Michigan City, IN and sells it to Grand Beach. In 2024, the village signed a 50-year contract with Michigan City and finalized a contract with Grand Beach in May 2025. The village is emergency-patched into the township's water lines, allowing both areas to provide water to each other in emergencies.
- Water sales contribute financially to the village, with the cost to users increasing by 10 cents per 10,000 gallons each year.
- Water quality testing is conducted regularly: bacteria testing monthly, lead and copper annually, and PFAS and other substances like trihalomethanes once a year, all regulated by EGLE.
- The village maintains a chlorination system in the pumphouse for emergency use and has a ½ million-gallon storage tank, which is cleaned every 3-5 years, with the last cleaning occurring two years ago. The pumps have been upgraded recently and can now pump 2,000 gallons per minute (equivalent to 2.7 million gallons per day). The system is digitized, with automated notifications.

Infrastructure and Public Works Goal

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

Narrative Overview of Community Comments:

Residents emphasized the need for proactive planning and consistent maintenance of roads, drainage, utilities, and public spaces. They want better traffic safety, underground utilities, reliable cell service, and visually clean streetscapes. These improvements should be guided by transparent budgets and long-term investment planning that reflect community priorities.

Infrastructure and Public Works Objectives and Action Steps

- **Ensure roads are routinely maintained**
 1. Replace, repair & maintain roads in an ongoing maintenance program.
 2. Develop resurface road plan; Explore grant to resurface roads
 3. Address stormwater issues with drainage improvements on Chickagami, Comanche, and Mohawk.
- **Improve public Wi-Fi and cellular service .**
 1. Install updated Wi-Fi in Village Hall.
 2. Explore obtaining two cellular towers
 3. Provide Wi-Fi access at beach stops for safety and convenience.
- **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
- **Ensure public safety and cleanliness**
 1. Manage sanitation, yard waste collection and maintenance of public spaces
 2. TREES – Continue compliance with Urban Forestry Management Plan (UFMP) and adhere to schedule for tree removals, trimming and planting.
 3. TREES – Pursue ongoing grant opportunities to fund UFMP work
 4. PARKS – Plan to maintain Village hall, park, courts, playground, parking,
 5. BEACHES – Plan to maintain Beach stops –
 - Stop 43 – determine improvement plan to be approved by EGLE
 - Stop 40 – plan to remove metal, rebar and concrete
- **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 completion by 2027 or 2028)

32

#5
Parks &
Recreation
(148 overall
responses)

Parks and Recreation

#5 Parks & Recreation (133 responses from original survey)

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%

Key community comments on creating more community events and adding amenities to the community hall

Improve year-round restroom access at parks, Village Hall, and the community center—avoiding reliance on portable toilets.
Host more community events such as concerts, food truck nights, happy hours, and mixers to build stronger resident connections.
Expand programming at the community center with yoga, art, gardening, music, and intergenerational classes.
Make Village Hall a true community hub with open hours, coffee socials, book clubs, card nights, and better accessibility.
Support park events and amenities including outdoor movie nights, live music, and a seasonal pavilion or stage.
Develop youth-focused programming such as tournaments, game nights, and events for teens and young adults.
Upgrade public facilities and equipment—improve flooring, bathrooms, sound systems, and consider EV charging stations.
Encourage sustainability efforts by restoring recycling services, collecting electronics, and exploring composting.
Preserve natural beauty with native gardens, butterfly plantings, garden walks, and more outdoor seating.
Balance park spending with village needs and explore grants to fund amenities and reduce strain on other priorities.

Parks and Recreation Current State

Currently a parks and recreation committee does not exist, although an Events Committee does exist, but it has not played much of a role in planning events. There seems to be an opportunity to restructure the group for better coordination of parks improvements and broader programming. The recently renovated Village Hall supports increased use, though access remains limited after regular hours and due to septic system constraints, requiring use of portable restrooms during events.

The park has had many recent improvements and there is also a butterfly garden across the creek. A comprehensive site plan developed by Pizzo was approved for the park and includes a children's play area, walking path, benches, and a bridge over the creek, with additional ideas like a welcoming entrance and improved landscaping under consideration. During the summer, the park is leased by the Michiana Women's Club for a Day Camp for youth. The Tree Board collaborates with the camp on environmental education, including tree surveys and lessons on invasive species .

Recreation infrastructure presents ongoing challenges and opportunities. Parking and bathrooms are a concern at the park. The pickleball court has seen increased use and there are concerns around resident access. Cracks and drainage problems indicate that court repairs will be needed. The Village is also exploring the potential for a trail along White Ditch, made feasible by existing easements but requiring EGLE permits. With no formal Parks Committee currently in place, there is a clear opportunity to foster greater community involvement through a dedicated advisory group, building on existing volunteer contributions.

Parks and Recreation Goal

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.

Narrative Overview of Community Comments:

Village parks and courts are seen as vital for community connection and well-being. Residents want free, well-maintained recreational spaces that welcome all ages. While dog access drew mixed views, most agreed on the need for responsible use. Suggestions also included natural features like butterfly gardens, improved walkways, and avoiding paid parking—balanced with village-wide needs.

Parks and Recreation Objectives and Action Steps

- **Create a Parks and Recreation Committee reporting to the Village Council and led by the Parks Commissioner**

- **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. Identify a service framework and Parks Committee to manage current resources: sport courts (pickle-ball, tennis and bocce ball), children's playground, Michiana Day Camp, butterfly garden and event services for the park and Village Hall spaces. Consider additional service suggestions from the community.
2. Design and implement management and governance structure for all service areas reporting into Village Council.
3. Establish clear policies, oversight, and community involvement in the management of the programs and services.

- **Successfully implement the Plan**

Implement the recreational plan ensuring that all residents can enjoy and benefit from recreational opportunities

1. Develop the Implementation Plan; ensure governance is in place reporting to Village Council
2. Engage community teams to help implement in the respective service areas

- **Ensure maintenance of the Recreational Plan**

Ensure our recreational resources and services are well-maintained, efficiently used, and financially sustainable..

1. Define and integrate maintenance plan into Public Service plans
2. Integrate into yearly budget process

- **Foster beach, sand dune, tree, wetland, floor plains and White Creek space preservation**

1. Partner with Natural Feature Resiliency program on all public space preservation planning.

- **Evaluate services and space for dog-friendly environments while minimizing waste complaints**

1. Allow leashed dogs in the main park and develop a designated dog area as a compromise policy.
2. Encourage community responsibility for cleaning up pet waste.
3. Evaluate resident input before finalizing any dog park policy.

37

#6
Enforcement
& Safety
(131 overall
responses)

Enforcement and Safety

#6 Enforcement & Safety (95 responses from original survey)

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%

Key community comments regarding road safety, noise, and public safety

Increase enforcement during peak seasons to address speeding, fireworks, noise, and ordinance violations—especially in summer.

Regulate golf cart use by enforcing age limits, requiring safety belts, controlling speeds, and possibly introducing licensing.

Strengthen fireworks restrictions by banning military-grade displays, prohibiting use near homes, and limiting permits to residents.

Lower and clearly mark speed limits in high-risk areas like hills and parks; install speed bumps where needed.

Improve road signage for speed limits, stop signs, pedestrian crossings, and safety zones to reduce confusion and risk.

Ensure safe street use and parking by ticketing dangerous parking, enforcing no-parking zones, and banning overnight parking on busy roads.

Enhance pedestrian safety by widening roads like Lake Shore Drive and promoting road-sharing etiquette.

Support local police presence by maintaining Village Police funding for responsive and community-focused enforcement.

Enforce short-term rental and noise rules—including minimum stays, quiet hours, and regulation of leaf blowers and court use.

Install life-saving equipment at beaches (e.g., rescue rings, buoys) and reassess fire service contracts with transparent performance reviews.

Enforcement and Safety Current State

Police and Public Safety

- The Michiana Police Department, founded in the 1950s, has been jointly operated with Grand Beach's police department since 2019 to improve efficiency. Governed by a Joint Police Board with two representatives from each village, the department ensures 24/7 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 24/7 coverage. The Department handles around 600 calls annually with 8-10% related to noise complaints from rental properties.
- 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 DPW area and water pumping stations.
- A key challenge facing the department is limited facilities, which restricts the use of certain investigative databases due to state and FBI regulations. The department is actively pursuing the development of a joint police facility for Michiana and Grand Beach, which would include interview space, better investigative tools, and a dedicated workspace. To support this project, a survey will be conducted. Public discussion is scheduled for July to gather additional community input.
- 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 website, mass emails, council meetings, and Nixle, a communication tool used by law enforcement.
- Since the merger of Michiana and Grand Beach Police Departments, calls have essentially doubled, which was anticipated due to the increased service area.
- The number of Rental Properties has remained flat at approximately 10 percent of homes in the Village.
- Full-time home occupancy increased during COVID, however, that root cause has decreased. Currently, more homeowners are retiring and residing full-time increasing home occupancy.

Enforcement and Safety Current State

Fire

- The New Buffalo Township Fire Department (established in 1869) is the Village of Michiana's designated fire department and is assisted by the Michiana Shores, Indiana Fire Department. NBTFD has 18 staff members that support Michiana. Calls have more than doubled from 130-150 in 2011 to around 300 in 2024, primarily due to a growing seasonal population. 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. 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.
- 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.

Enforcement and Safety Goal

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.

Narrative Overview of Community Comments:

Residents strongly supported consistent, visible enforcement of village rules—especially for traffic, rentals, and water safety. Many favored a community policing model over expanding infrastructure. Transparency around patrols, enforcement outcomes, and contract agreements was seen as essential to building trust and accountability.

Enforcement and Safety Objectives and Action Steps

► **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.

► **Safety and Ordinance Enforcement**

Quantitatively Improve and report on enforcement of laws and ordinances

1. Provide monthly, yearly and historic metrics of our safety and enforcement services. Participate in programs that capture safety metrics like FBI Crime Data Explorer Enforce.
2. Increase monitoring of our Lakeside and beaches during high traffic times: weekends, holidays and nights
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 processes for residents to report and receive follow up on ordinance violations (SeeClickFix); communicate processes for residents calling Dispatch through the website and all correspondence

► **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. Evaluate need based on quantitative needs (current and historic services)and one time and future costs of a new facility along with 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

► **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 to identify future needs and risks

43

#7
Village
Management
(78 overall
responses)

Village Management

#7 Village Management (47 responses from original survey)

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

Key community comments on Village taxes and spending, communications and politics

Expand voting rights and representation by allowing second homeowners to vote, join advisory roles, or have board representation.

Clarify eligibility rules for council participation and voting by defining residency criteria more clearly.

Improve budget transparency by publishing full budgets, including dispensary tax use, and offering easy-to-read summaries.

Create two-way budget communication with residents by providing channels for questions and feedback on financial decisions.

Increase communication and engagement through regular updates via newsletters, websites, and community forums.

Let residents validate planning decisions through formal master plan input or community voting.

Support fiscal responsibility by avoiding unnecessary projects, keeping taxes manageable, and reviewing resident fees.

Ensure inclusive leadership by actively listening to all residents and assigning board liaisons to key focus areas.

Provide resident resources such as an online directory, welcome updates, and a village-recommended service provider list.

Allow anonymous ordinance reporting to help residents report concerns without harming neighbor relations.

Village Management Current State

The Village Council has five elected members with one seat elected as President overseeing the community's operations, development and plans. Over the last two years, our council has completed long-range initiatives on our park and recreation areas while ensuring infrastructure and public service sustainability:

- Our village hall was renovated with new windows, doors, flooring and lighting. Our park was reseeded, playground updated, basketball area resealed, and significant ongoing improvements to the pickleball, tennis, and bocce ball areas. This year, our community will enjoy more musical events in the park. Access to our beaches and the preservation of our woodland areas continue to be an ongoing priority.
- Water management and service plans have largely been completed ensuring safe and sustainable water services. In addition, all Village contracts have been reviewed and renegotiated.

With long range initiatives ending, the Village Council directed a new Master Plan ensuring future Village Council plans serve the needs of our community. The Planning Commission began the process in 2024 with completion expected at the end of 2025.

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 Management Goal

Govern the Village in a way that reflects its shared vision and values by fostering transparent communication, sound fiscal stewardship and alignment with the Master Plan.

Narrative Overview of Community Comments:

Residents want leadership that reflects the full community, communicates clearly, and plans ahead. Many advocated for giving second homeowners more representation. Requests included publishing board terms and residency rules, aligning budgets with resident input, and ensuring equal attention to all areas of the village. Across the board, there's a desire for fair, open, and inclusive governance.

Village Management Objectives and Action Steps

► **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
2. Determine on-going community input process as input to yearly Master Planning/Operational planning
3. Develop an updated governance and management structure that support Master Plan initiatives and Zoning Board

► **Operational Planning and Coordination**

Promote effective planning and collaboration among Village Council, Planning Commission, and advisory boards implementing action plans and policies aligned with the Master Plan.

1. Integrate Actions Plans into ongoing departmental reports
2. Create annual Master Plan reporting; create, measure and report on performance goals for each goal area
3. Develop succession plans for key staff roles (e.g., Building Inspector, Maintenance) and consider outsourcing wherever appropriate

► **Fiscal Responsibility**

Promote transparency, accountability and long-term sustainability by aligning Village financial decisions with the priorities identified through the Master Plan.

1. Align Master Plan into yearly Budget Process
2. Integrate Master Plan into Capital Process

► **Responsive and Inclusive Governance**

Develop systems that ensure Village leadership is responsive to community needs

1. Identify and implement additional avenues for community to provide input and participate
2. Identify governance opportunities for community involvement; identify how second home-owners can participate without being able to be an elected official in the State of Michigan
3. Publish Officer terms and election process.

► **Community Reporting and Communication**

Ensure community concerns get logged, reviewed, responded and reported to the community for ongoing improvement and Master Plan refinement

1. Evaluate online systems (e.g., SeeClickFix by CivicPlus) used by many MI towns to track ordinance violations, infrastructure problems and nuisance issues
2. Identify and report on service metrics