



Saugatuck Township

Parks Commission Agenda

Tuesday, January 7, 2025, at 4 PM
Saugatuck Township Hall
3461 Blue Star Hwy
Saugatuck, MI 49453

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

3. Public Comments:

The Commission requests that speakers respect the three-minute time limit for individual comments and the five-minute time limit for an individual speaking on behalf of a group. This is not a question-and-answer session, it is an opportunity to voice your thoughts with the Township Parks Commission. Public comments using video equipment should be approved by the Clerk at least two days prior to the meeting.

4. Approval of Agenda

5. Consent Agenda

- a) December 4th, 2024, Meeting Minutes approval
- b) Financial Reports
- c) Bills
- d) Donation Report

6. New Business:

- a) Invite Travis for February Disc golf course discussion?
- b) Elect new officers.
- c) 2025 Meeting dates.

7. Old Business:

- a) Dog Park – Lynee maps and supplies acquired - Jim
- b) Dog Park sign estimate - Jim
- c) Dump site use update -Daniel/Jim
- d) Sundown Park update – Daniel/Jim
- e) Land acquisition survey – final report - Daniel
- f) QR code sign for dog park donations.
- g) Dowd property update – Jim/Daniel

8. Reports:

- a) Chairman report.
- b) Manager report.
- c) Commissioner's reports.

9. Public Comments

Previous Rules apply.

10. Next meeting: February 5th, 2025 at 5pm at the township hall.

11. Adjourn

Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services can contact Saugatuck Township for reasonable accommodations. If you require accommodations, please contact Township Clerk as soon as practically possible prior to the meeting in writing or by calling the Township Hall at (269) 857-7721 as some accommodations may require 48-hours to provide.

Saugatuck Township Parks Commission
Tuesday, December 4, 2024 – **DRAFT MINUTES**
Saugatuck Township Hall
3461 Blue Star Hwy
Saugatuck, MI 49453

1. Call to Order – Jim Searing called the meeting to order at 5:00pm
2. Roll Call
 - a. Present: Jim Searing, Dana Burd, Ken Butler, Elliot Sturm, Jame Dickie
 - b. Township Manager, Daniel DeFranco also in attendance
3. Public Comments
 - a. none
4. Approval of Agenda
 - a. ***Ken Butler moved to approve agenda with Land acquisition survey moved up to item a. under Old Business, Dana Burd seconded. Approved by all.***
5. Consent Agenda – ***Ken Butler moved to approve the consent agenda, Jim Searing seconded. Approved by all.***
 - a. November 6th, 2024 Minutes
 - b. Financial Reports
 - c. Bills
 - d. Donation Report
6. New Business
 - a. January meeting date? ***Ken Butler moved to approve January 7th at 4:00 pm as the revised January meeting date, Jim Searing seconded. Approved by all.***
7. Old Business
 - a. Land acquisition survey – Land preservation consultant Barry Lonik presented the draft strategic plan for land conservation and public access for Saugatuck Township. This report was prepared as part of the EGLE Coastal Management Grant received by Saugatuck Township. The 4 tasks were to inventory property, develop criteria to evaluate, general valuation, and summary report. Focus areas included: natural features, access to the Kalamazoo River and Lake Michigan, and Agricultural Land. Presentation included GIS maps and analysis as part of the report.

Land conservation toolbox can include: acquiring title (fee simple) purchase, conservation easement as deed restriction. Also purchase agreement is a tool, or option to purchase/right of refusal, or limited easements for access/trails. Funding sources can include DNR Acquisition Trust Fund, Michigan Coastal Management Program, USDA NRCS Ag Conservation easement program, Michigan Agricultural Preservation fund. The grant report will include recommendations on next steps such as defining an agricultural

preservation area in the master plan, a purchase of development right ordinance (these two must be done to be eligible for ag preservation grants). Other next steps may include public information sessions and landowner mailings with application.

Discussion by parks commissioners and comments followed the presentation. The report is to be finalized by the end of the year with comments included.

- b. Dog Park Mapping – Jim reported small/large maps to go at trailhead are being made.
- c. Dog Park parking lot engineering – Matt Levandoski from Prein&Newhof talked about the design/engineering to be done on the parking lot and entrance drive. Survey and soil borings to occur in winter. Design to follow. Potential bidding in March/April with summer construction.
- d. ODC signs – Daniel reported on his progress with Outdoor Discovery Center and a carpenter for permanent sign frames/holders for River Bluff Park.
- e. Sundown Park update – Jim reported on discussion of entrance sign for Sundown Park.
- f. QR Codes for parks donations – Jim and Daniel working on alternatives.

8. Reports

- a. Chairman – none.
- b. Manager – Daniel DeFranco reported Viridis is starting design on Sundown Park, Township is moving forward with exterior Township Hall re-design with an option for a small pocket park in front along Blue Star Highway. The Township also completed a Blue Star Highway corridor study with traffic calming and pedestrian concepts included.
- c. Commissioner's report
 - i. Elliot – reported on cameras at Dog Park and RiverBluff and at roundabout.

9. Public Comments

- a. none

10. Next Meeting: January 7, 2024 at 4:00PM at the Township Hall

11. Adjourn – Jim Searing adjourned the meeting at 6:49 pm.

REVENUE REPORT FOR SAUGATUCK TOWNSHIP
PERIOD ENDING 12/31/2024

GL NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	2024-25	YTD BALANCE	ACTIVITY FOR		AVAILABLE		% BDGT USED
		AMENDED BUDGET	12/31/2024 NORMAL (ABNORMAL)	MONTH 12/31/2024 INCREASE (DECREASE)	NORMAL (ABNORMAL)	BALANCE		
Fund 208 - PARK/RECREATION FUND								
Revenues								
Dept 000 - OTHER FUNCTIONS								
208-000-403.000	CURRENT PROP TAX	240,000.00	23,884.20	23,884.20		216,115.80		9.95
208-000-412.000	DELINQUENT TAX	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00		0.00
208-000-523.000	STATE GRANT	190,000.00	0.00	0.00		190,000.00		0.00
208-000-524.000	FEDERAL GRANT	35,000.00	6,651.00	0.00		28,349.00		19.00
208-000-665.000	INTEREST EARNED	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00		0.00
208-000-675.000	MISCELLANEOUS	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00		0.00
208-000-677.000	DONATIONS	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00		0.00
208-000-699.000	APPROPRIATION TRANSFERS IN	42,000.00	0.00	0.00		42,000.00		0.00
208-000-699.100	TRANSFER FROM FUND BALANCE	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00		0.00
Total Dept 000 - OTHER FUNCTIONS		507,000.00	30,535.20	23,884.20		476,464.80		6.02
TOTAL REVENUES		507,000.00	30,535.20	23,884.20		476,464.80		6.02
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Fund 208 - PARK/RECREATION FUND:								
TOTAL REVENUES		507,000.00	30,535.20	23,884.20		476,464.80		6.02

PERIOD ENDING 12/31/2024

GL NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	2024-25 AMENDED BUDGET	YTD BALANCE	ACTIVITY FOR		AVAILABLE		% BDGT USED
			12/31/2024	MONTH 12/31/2024	BALANCE			
			NORMAL (ABNORMAL)	INCREASE (DECREASE)	NORMAL (ABNORMAL)			
Fund 208 - PARK/RECREATION FUND								
Revenues								
Dept 000 - OTHER FUNCTIONS								
208-000-403.000	CURRENT PROP TAX	240,000.00	23,884.20	23,884.20	216,115.80	9.95		
208-000-412.000	DELINQUENT TAX	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		
208-000-523.000	STATE GRANT	190,000.00	0.00	0.00	190,000.00	0.00		
208-000-524.000	FEDERAL GRANT	35,000.00	6,651.00	0.00	28,349.00	19.00		
208-000-665.000	INTEREST EARNED	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		
208-000-675.000	MISCELLANEOUS	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		
208-000-677.000	DONATIONS	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		
208-000-699.000	APPROPRIATION TRANSFERS IN	42,000.00	0.00	0.00	42,000.00	0.00		
208-000-699.100	TRANSFER FROM FUND BALANCE	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		
Total Dept 000 - OTHER FUNCTIONS		507,000.00	30,535.20	23,884.20	476,464.80	6.02		
TOTAL REVENUES		507,000.00	30,535.20	23,884.20	476,464.80	6.02		
Expenditures								
Dept 751 - PARKS								
208-751-701.000	ELECTED OFFICIAL SALARIES	11,625.00	4,825.00	2,025.00	6,800.00	41.51		
208-751-709.000	SUBCONTRACTED LABOR	33,000.00	6,388.00	400.00	26,612.00	19.36		
208-751-801.000	ENGINEERING	4,000.00	0.00	0.00	4,000.00	0.00		
208-751-802.000	ATTORNEY FEES	3,000.00	1,844.90	0.00	1,155.10	61.50		
208-751-807.000	CONSULTING SERVICES	60,000.00	26,157.72	4,664.50	33,842.28	43.60		
208-751-809.000	PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	8,000.00	1,845.00	0.00	6,155.00	23.06		
208-751-810.000	FEDERAL GRANT PROJECT	35,000.00	5,977.50	0.00	29,022.50	17.08		
208-751-811.000	STATE GRANT PROJECT	200,000.00	6,195.00	0.00	193,805.00	3.10		
208-751-901.000	PRINTING & PUBLISHING	1,000.00	45.00	0.00	955.00	4.50		
208-751-920.000	GAS & ELECTRIC & INTERNET	2,000.00	717.05	143.81	1,282.95	35.85		
208-751-930.000	REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE	17,000.00	1,831.56	0.00	15,168.44	10.77		
208-751-955.000	MISCELLANEOUS	0.00	624.83	0.00	(624.83)	100.00		
208-751-961.000	TRAINING & SEMINARS	1,000.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	0.00		
208-751-971.000	CAPITAL OUTLAY	121,000.00	5,339.47	0.00	115,660.53	4.41		
208-751-995.000	APPROPRIATION TRANSFER OUT	10,000.00	0.00	0.00	10,000.00	0.00		
208-751-998.000	TRANSFER TO FUND BALANCE	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		
Total Dept 751 - PARKS		506,625.00	61,791.03	7,233.31	444,833.97	12.20		
TOTAL EXPENDITURES		506,625.00	61,791.03	7,233.31	444,833.97	12.20		
Fund 208 - PARK/RECREATION FUND:								
TOTAL REVENUES		507,000.00	30,535.20	23,884.20	476,464.80	6.02		
TOTAL EXPENDITURES		506,625.00	61,791.03	7,233.31	444,833.97	12.20		
NET OF REVENUES & EXPENDITURES		375.00	(31,255.83)	16,650.89	31,630.83	8,334.89		

Balances as of 12/31/2024

% Fiscal Year Completed: 50.41

Fund 208 - PARK/RECREATION FUND

GL Number	Description	2024-25 Orig Budget	2024-25 Amended Budget	YEAR-TO-DATE THRU 12/31/24	Available Balance	% Used
Expenditures						
Department 751: PARKS						
208-751-701.000	ELECTED OFFICIAL SALARIES					
09/26/2024	PR SUMMARY PR 09/26/2024		120652	2,800.00	324	
12/19/2024	PR SUMMARY PR 12/19/2024		121942	2,025.00	331	
208-751-701.000	ELECTED OFFICIAL SALARIES	11,625.00	11,625.00	4,825.00	6,800.00	41.51
208-751-709.000	SUBCONTRACTED LABOR					
07/10/2024	AP DOG PARK PORTABLE 7/2-7/30		117278	125.00	Inv #: '70778' Vendor '901'	
07/31/2024	AP JULY CEMETERY CONTRACT, LAWN MOWING TWP		118038	838.00	Inv #: '16227' Vendor '418'	
08/12/2024	AP WEEDS AT DOG PARK AND REPAIR WORK AT TWP		118043	110.00	Inv #: '16266' Vendor '418'	
08/12/2024	AP DOG PARK PORTABLE RESTROOM 7/30-8/27		118080	125.00	Inv #: '70950' Vendor '901'	
08/22/2024	AP PORTABLE RESTROOM 8/27-9/24		120017	125.00	Inv #: '71056' Vendor '901'	
08/30/2024	AP AUGUST MOWING & CEMETERY CONTRACT		119987	84.00	Inv #: '16278' Vendor '418'	
08/30/2024	AP AUGUST MOWING & CEMETERY CONTRACT		119987	84.00	Inv #: '16278' Vendor '418'	
08/30/2024	AP AUGUST MOWING & CEMETERY CONTRACT		119987	180.00	Inv #: '16278' Vendor '418'	
08/30/2024	AP AUGUST MOWING & CEMETERY CONTRACT		119987	392.00	Inv #: '16278' Vendor '418'	
09/16/2024	AP DOG PARK PORTABLE RESTROOM 9/24-10/22		120827	125.00	Inv #: '71203' Vendor '901'	
10/04/2024	AP OCTOBER CEMETERY CONTRACT AND MOWINGS		120798	84.00	Inv #: '16314' Vendor '418'	
10/04/2024	AP OCTOBER CEMETERY CONTRACT AND MOWINGS		120798	84.00	Inv #: '16314' Vendor '418'	
10/04/2024	AP OCTOBER CEMETERY CONTRACT AND MOWINGS		120798	90.00	Inv #: '16314' Vendor '418'	
10/04/2024	AP OCTOBER CEMETERY CONTRACT AND MOWINGS		120798	392.00	Inv #: '16314' Vendor '418'	
10/04/2024	AP REMOVE STUMPS AT RIVER PARK AND REPAIR B		120797	1,200.00	Inv #: '16315' Vendor '418'	
10/24/2024	AP NEW PAD BY BIKE BENCH, 9 LOADS OF CHIPS		121201	990.00	Inv #: '16343' Vendor '418'	
11/01/2024	AP OCTOBER MOWING AND CEMETERY CONTRACT		121202	42.00	Inv #: '16345' Vendor '418'	
11/01/2024	AP OCTOBER MOWING AND CEMETERY CONTRACT		121202	84.00	Inv #: '16345' Vendor '418'	
11/01/2024	AP OCTOBER MOWING AND CEMETERY CONTRACT		121202	90.00	Inv #: '16345' Vendor '418'	
11/01/2024	AP OCTOBER MOWING AND CEMETERY CONTRACT		121202	294.00	Inv #: '16345' Vendor '418'	
11/06/2024	AP REMOVE TRASH END OF DOG PARK ROAD		121204	165.00	Inv #: '16369' Vendor '418'	
11/12/2024	AP WINTERIZING DOG PARK		121216	160.00	Inv #: '8835' Vendor '289'	
11/21/2024	AP DOG PARK PORTABLE RESTROOM		121721	125.00	Inv #: '71531' Vendor '901'	
12/02/2024	AP INSTALLED 2 CAMERAS AT RIVER BLUFF AND 2		121720	400.00	Inv #: '1427' Vendor '897'	
208-751-709.000	SUBCONTRACTED LABOR	33,000.00	33,000.00	6,388.00	26,612.00	19.36
208-751-801.000	ENGINEERING	4,000.00	4,000.00	0.00	4,000.00	0.00
208-751-802.000	ATTORNEY FEES					
08/02/2024	AP ROUNABOUT, ZBA, ORDINANCE, POLICIES, PI		118033	343.90	Inv #: '840' Vendor '822'	
09/03/2024	AP PINE TRAIL, ZBA, RIVERSIDE DR & LAKESHOR		119978	1,501.00	Inv #: '849' Vendor '822'	
208-751-802.000	ATTORNEY FEES	3,000.00	3,000.00	1,844.90	1,155.10	61.50
208-751-807.000	CONSULTING SERVICES					
08/05/2024	AP SUNDOWN PARK DESIGN SERVICES		118091	1,760.00	Inv #: '2429-1' Vendor '957'	
08/07/2024	AP 2234 PINE TRAIL COMMUNITY PARK SITE PLAN		118054	730.00	Inv #: '1' Vendor '986'	
08/12/2024	AP TAILS AND TRAILS ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION A		118057	4,000.00	Inv #: '118290' Vendor '891'	
09/09/2024	AP PROFESSIONAL SERVICES FOR PINE TRAIL		120002	5,278.50	Inv #: '2' Vendor '986'	
09/09/2024	AP PLANNER FEES, PARKS STRATEGIC PLANNING A		119965	300.00	Inv #: '8.27' Vendor '833'	
10/01/2024	AP PLANNING, PARKS AND TRAILS VISIT AND ESC		120772	150.00	Inv #: '9.24' Vendor '833'	
10/04/2024	AP RIVERBLUFF GRANT FEASIBILITY STUDY		120794	1,412.22	Inv #: '025023126' Vendor '974'	
11/01/2024	AP PLANNER SERVCIIES, PARKS TAILS AND TRAILS		121178	2,000.00	Inv #: '10.29' Vendor '833'	
11/13/2024	AP NOAA GREAT LAKES FISH HABITAT		121227	5,862.50	Inv #: '85435' Vendor '190'	
12/10/2024	AP COASTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM GRANT		121727	1,677.50	Inv #: '2024-4' Vendor '991'	
12/11/2024	AP NOAA GREAT LAKES FISH HABITAT RESTORATIO		121712	2,987.00	Inv #: '85929' Vendor '190'	

Balances as of 12/31/2024

% Fiscal Year Completed: 50.41

Fund 208 - PARK/RECREATION FUND

GL Number	Description	2024-25 Orig Budget	2024-25 Amended Budget	YEAR-TO-DATE THRU 12/31/24	Available Balance	% Used
Expenditures						
Department 751: PARKS						
208-751-807.000	CONSULTING SERVICES	60,000.00	60,000.00	26,157.72	33,842.28	43.60
208-751-809.000	PROFESSIONAL SERVICES					
08/22/2024	AP RIVER BLUFF PARK ENGINEERING SERVICES-NO		119982	1,845.00	Inv #: '025022593' Vendor '974'	
208-751-809.000	PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	8,000.00	8,000.00	1,845.00	6,155.00	23.06
208-751-810.000	FEDERAL GRANT PROJECT					
09/10/2024	AP RIVERBLUFF PARK FEASIBILTIIY STUDY - GRAN		119983	4,806.00	Inv #: '025022758' Vendor '974'	
11/13/2024	AP RIVER BLUFF PARK ENGINEERING SERVICES		121199	1,171.50	Inv #: '025023541' Vendor '974'	
208-751-810.000	FEDERAL GRANT PROJECT	35,000.00	35,000.00	5,977.50	29,022.50	17.08
208-751-811.000	STATE GRANT PROJECT					
08/05/2024	AP AMELANCHIER PARK DESIGN SERVICES		118090	3,500.00	Inv #: '2427-1' Vendor '957'	
09/30/2024	AP COASTAL ZONE GRANT		120685	1,320.00	Inv #: '2024-1 8/31/24' Vendor '991'	
10/08/2024	AP COASTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM GRANT		120834	825.00	Inv #: '2024-2' Vendor '991'	
11/06/2024	AP COASTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM GRANT		121249	550.00	Inv #: '2024-3' Vendor '991'	
208-751-811.000	STATE GRANT PROJECT	200,000.00	200,000.00	6,195.00	193,805.00	3.10
208-751-901.000	PRINTING & PUBLISHING					
09/03/2024	AP RIVER BLUFF PARK SIGNBOARD		120020	45.00	Inv #: '13786' Vendor '699'	
208-751-901.000	PRINTING & PUBLISHING	1,000.00	1,000.00	45.00	955.00	4.50
208-751-920.000	GAS & ELECTRIC & INTERNET					
07/08/2024	AP RIVER BLUFF PARK QUARTERLY TRASH		117220	78.00	Inv #: '2917055' Vendor '876'	
07/10/2024	CD DOG PARK		117195	28.77	Check #: '1339(E) CHEM' Vendor '112'.	
07/24/2024	CD DOG PARK		117644	16.86	Check #: '1354(E) CHEM' Vendor '112'.	
08/01/2024	CD GAS & ELECTRIC & INTERNET		117779	24.12	Check #: '1358(E) CHEM' Vendor '120'.	
08/09/2024	CD DOG PARK		117921	28.77	Check #: '1364(E) CHEM' Vendor '112'.	
08/26/2024	CD DOG PARK		118329	17.02	Check #: '1374(E) CHEM' Vendor '112'.	
09/03/2024	CD DOG PARK		118570	31.99	Check #: '1379(E) CHEM' Vendor '120'.	
09/09/2024	CD DOG PARK		118993	28.77	Check #: '1386(E) CHEM' Vendor '112'.	
09/27/2024	CD DOG PARK		120672	16.91	Check #: '1402(E) CHEM' Vendor '112'.	
09/30/2024	CD DOG TRASH		120702	66.00	Check #: '1406(E) CHEM' Vendor '876'.	
10/01/2024	AP RIVER BLUFF PARK QUARTERLY TRASH		120778	78.00	Inv #: '2976004' Vendor '876'	
10/02/2024	CD GAS & ELECTRIC & INTERNET		120704	34.08	Check #: '1408(E) CHEM' Vendor '120'.	
10/09/2024	CD DOG PARK		120770	28.76	Check #: '1419(E) CHEM' Vendor '112'.	
10/24/2024	CD DOG PARK		121032	16.49	Check #: '1443(E) CHEM' Vendor '112'.	
11/01/2024	CD GAS & ELECTRIC & INTERNET		121113	33.48	Check #: '1450(E) CHEM' Vendor '120'.	
11/07/2024	CD DOG PARK		121167	28.76	Check #: '1458(E) CHEM' Vendor '112'.	
11/26/2024	CD DOG PARK		121356	16.46	Check #: '1489(E) CHEM' Vendor '112'.	
12/04/2024	CD GAS & ELECTRIC & INTERNET		121410	32.66	Check #: '1494(E) CHEM' Vendor '120'.	
12/10/2024	CD DOG PARK		121590	28.76	Check #: '1503(E) CHEM' Vendor '112'.	
12/17/2024	CD DOG TRASH		121906	66.00	Check #: '1524(E) CHEM' Vendor '876'.	
12/27/2024	CD DOG PARK		122177	16.39	Check #: '1531(E) CHEM' Vendor '112'.	
208-751-920.000	GAS & ELECTRIC & INTERNET	2,000.00	2,000.00	717.05	1,282.95	35.85
208-751-930.000	REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE					
07/08/2024	AP LIFETIME PASTEL SEMI LATEX FOR TAILS AND		117254	94.98	Inv #: '2407-776836' Vendor '111'	
07/08/2024	AP REIMBURSEMENT FOR CAMERAS FOR TAILS AND		117276	221.52	Inv #: '47713384259183' Vendor '897'	

Balances as of 12/31/2024

% Fiscal Year Completed: 50.41

Fund 208 - PARK/RECREATION FUND

GL Number	Description	2024-25 Orig Budget	2024-25 Amended Budget	YEAR-TO-DATE THRU 12/31/24	Available Balance	% Used
Expenditures						
Department 751: PARKS						
07/29/2024	AP NATURAL WELAND AREA SIGN		118084	45.00	Inv #: '13708' Vendor '699'	
08/01/2024	AP SANDISK FOR CAMERAS		118079	7.57	Inv #: '8/1' Vendor '897'	
08/12/2024	AP TAILS AND TRAILS DOG BOX		118059	31.99	Inv #: '2408-787015' Vendor '111'	
08/15/2024	AP SANDISK FOR CAMERAS		118133	63.00	Inv #: '8/1' Vendor '897'	
10/24/2024	AP NEW PAD BY BIKE BENCH, 9 LOADS OF CHIPS		121201	900.00	Inv #: '16343' Vendor '418'	
11/01/2024	AP MOVE TREES TO RIVER BLUFF PARK, CUT DOWN		121203	467.50	Inv #: '16346' Vendor '418'	
208-751-930.000	REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE	17,000.00	17,000.00	1,831.56	15,168.44	10.77
208-751-955.000	MISCELLANEOUS					
09/16/2024	AP MILEAGE FOR 3 TRIPS TO POLLY PRODUCTS AN		120805	505.18	Inv #: '9/16' Vendor '990'	
10/28/2024	CD FRAMES		121038	59.34	Check #: '1444 (E) CHEM' Vendor '126'.	
11/27/2024	CD DOG POOP DISPENSER AND BAGS		121359	60.31	Check #: '1490 (E) CHEM' Vendor '126'.	
208-751-955.000	MISCELLANEOUS	0.00	0.00	624.83	(624.83)	100.00
208-751-961.000	TRAINING & SEMINARS	1,000.00	1,000.00	0.00	1,000.00	0.00
208-751-971.000	CAPITAL OUTLAY					
08/08/2024	AP 2 REPLACEMENT BOARDS FOR LANE BENCH		118062	329.85	Inv #: 'INV76027' Vendor '895'	
08/08/2024	AP 2 PICNIC TABLES		118061	3,493.49	Inv #: 'INV76028' Vendor '895'	
08/09/2024	AP HACKNEY BENCH		118063	1,272.34	Inv #: 'INV76103' Vendor '895'	
10/15/2024	AP SOCCER NET		121236	243.79	Inv #: 'CR-1001' Vendor '165'	
208-751-971.000	CAPITAL OUTLAY	121,000.00	121,000.00	5,339.47	115,660.53	4.41
208-751-995.000	APPROPRIATION TRANSFER OUT	10,000.00	10,000.00	0.00	10,000.00	0.00
Total - Dept 751		506,625.00	506,625.00	61,791.03	444,833.97	12.20
Total Expenditures		506,625.00	506,625.00	61,791.03	444,833.97	12.20
NET OF REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES		(506,625.00)	(506,625.00)	(61,791.03)	(444,833.97)	

Check Date	Bank	Check	Vendor	Vendor Name	Description	Amount
Bank CHEM HUNTINGTON BANK GENERAL						
Check Type: EFT Transfer						
12/06/2024	CHEM	1500 (E)	112	CONSUMERS ENERGY	TWP HALL	228.66
12/06/2024	CHEM	1501 (E)	112	CONSUMERS ENERGY	RIVERSIDE CEMETERY	33.05
12/09/2024	CHEM	1497 (E)	748	DELTA DENTAL	EMPLOYEE BENEFITS, DENTAL	363.13
12/09/2024	CHEM	1498 (E)	112	CONSUMERS ENERGY	DOUGLAS CEMETERY	31.23
12/09/2024	CHEM	1499 (E)	603	COMCAST CABLE COMMUNICATIONS	GAS & ELECTRIC & INTERNET	251.07
12/10/2024	CHEM	1502 (E)	872	VERIZON WIRELESS	MANAGERS PHONE	66.10
12/10/2024	CHEM	1503 (E)	112	CONSUMERS ENERGY	DOG PARK	28.76
12/13/2024	CHEM	1523 (E)	124	MERS OF MICHIGAN	NOVEMBER SURPLUS	5,000.00
12/17/2024	CHEM	1524 (E)	876	ARROWASTE, INC	DOG TRASH	66.00
12/20/2024	CHEM	1526 (E)	124	MERS OF MICHIGAN	DECEMBER DC	471.04
12/20/2024	CHEM	1527 (E)	124	MERS OF MICHIGAN	DECEMBER MERS	4,741.03
12/26/2024	CHEM	1528 (E)	149	STATE OF MICHIGAN UIA	4TH QUARTER UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE	114.00
12/27/2024	CHEM	1529 (E)	112	CONSUMERS ENERGY	STREET LIGHT	36.32
12/27/2024	CHEM	1530 (E)	112	CONSUMERS ENERGY	LED LIGHT	349.42
12/27/2024	CHEM	1531 (E)	112	CONSUMERS ENERGY	DOG PARK	16.39
					STREET LIGHTS	1,459.52
						1,475.91
12/27/2024	CHEM	1532 (E)	126	CARDMEMBER SERVICE	MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION	26.78
					PETERS PRINTER	259.99
					PETERS STC SUBSCRIPTION	175.00
					NOVEMBER ELECTION	712.17
					FAN	21.20
					VOTER ID CARDS	46.00
					LORIS NOTARY APPLICATION	10.17
					MAILCHIMP SUBSCRIPTION	26.50
					WALL HOOK	12.71
					WALL CLOCK-GIFT CARD FOR RETURNED CLOCK	26.49
					WALL STREET SUBSCRIPTION	8.00
					ENVELOPES	898.10
					NEW CLOCK AND XMAS CARDS-USED GIFT CARD	33.91
					AMAZON PRIME SUBSCRIPTION	15.89
					CLERKS LUNCH	36.85
					CLERKS MMCA SUBSCRIPTION BALANCE	25.00
					PHONE MINUTE	32.30
					ZOOM SUBSCRIPTION	122.95
						2,490.01
12/31/2024	CHEM	1533 (E)	124	MERS OF MICHIGAN	SURPLUS UNASSOCIATED	5,000.00
01/02/2025	CHEM	1534 (E)	156	PRIORITY HEALTH	HEALTH INSURANCE	5,480.00
01/02/2025	CHEM	1535 (E)	120	K.L.S.W.A.	GAS & ELECTRIC & INTERNET	74.43
01/02/2025	CHEM	1536 (E)	120	K.L.S.W.A.	GAS & ELECTRIC & INTERNET	31.12
					Total EFT Transfer:	26,331.28
CHEM TOTALS:						
Total of 20 Checks:						
Less 0 Void Checks:						
Total of 20 Disbursements:						
						26,331.28
						0.00
						26,331.28

Receipt #	Wkstn	Received Of	Item	Reference	Post Date	Amount
Fund: 408 PARK PROJECT FUND						
GL #: 408-000-674.000		DONATIONS				
67440			DGPK1	DOG PARK DONATIONS	07/08/2024	21.00
68037		DOG PARK DONATION	DGPK1	DOG PARK DONATIONS	08/09/2024	19.00
68297		DOG PARK DONATION	DGPK1	DOG PARK DONATIONS	08/26/2024	23.00
69080		DOG PARK DONATION	DGPK1	DOG PARK DONATIONS	09/09/2024	25.00
69704		DOG PARK DONATION	DGPK1	DOG PARK DONATIONS	09/16/2024	250.00
70132		DOG PARK DONATION	DGPK1	DOG PARK DONATIONS	10/30/2024	29.00
Total For 408-000-674.000 DONATIONS:					367.00	
Total For Fund 408 PARK PROJECT FUND:					367.00	
Total Distributed Receipts:					367.00	
Grand Total:					367.00	



Saugatuck Township

Parks & Recreation Commission 2025 Meeting Calendar

Regular Board Meetings are the first Wednesday of the Month at 5 PM at the Township Hall

- January 7th *
- February 5th
- March 5th
- April 2nd
- May 7th
- June 4th
- July 2nd
- August 6th
- September 3rd
- October 1st
- November 5th
- December 3rd

**Indicates a change to the regular schedule*

Jim Searing, Chair
jsearing@saugatucktownshipmi.gov

Dana Burd
dburd@saugatucktownshipmi.gov

Elliott Sturm
esturm@saugatucktownshipmi.gov

Ken Butler
kbutler@saugatucktownshipmi.gov

Jane Dickie
jdickie@saugatucktownshipmi.gov



**Saugatuck
Township**

Strategic Plan for Land Conservation and Public Access Expansion

December 30, 2024



Acknowledgments

Financial assistance for this project was provided by the State of Michigan Coastal Management Program, Water Resources Division, Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE), with funding through the National Coastal Zone Management Program.

Thanks to the Saugatuck Township Parks Commission who provided input:

Jim Searing, Chair

Ken Butler, Vice-chair/Treasurer

Dana Burd, Secretary

Elliott Sturm

Jane Dickie

Big thanks to Saugatuck Township Manager Daniel DeFranco who championed the Parks and Trails millage, obtained the Coastal Management grant and provided direction and input throughout the process of report development.

Authors

Barry Lonik

Treemore Ecology and Land Services, Inc.

Rosie Pahl Donaldson

Three's Ecology and Planning



Disclaimer

The statements, findings, conclusions and recommendations in this report are those of Saugatuck Township and do not necessarily reflect the views of EGLE and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Executive Summary

Saugatuck Township's Land Conservation and Public Access Program is a strategic initiative to protect and enhance the Township's unique natural landscapes and ecologically significant habitats. Saugatuck is home to critical dune land, the scenic Lake Michigan bluffs, the Kalamazoo River and riparian wetlands, mature forests, ravines and tributaries—ecosystems that support diverse species and contribute to the area's environmental resilience. Conserving these natural areas is essential to maintaining biodiversity, protecting water quality and preserving the scenic beauty that defines Saugatuck's character.

With Saugatuck's growing popularity and development pressures increasing, the Township is also committed to preserving its valuable agricultural lands. These lands are central to Saugatuck's identity and heritage, supporting local food production, sustaining rural traditions and providing the open, pastoral landscapes that residents and visitors cherish. Protecting farmland is essential not only for economic sustainability but also for maintaining the Township's rural character and sense of place.

The Land Conservation and Public Access Program supports the strategic identification of priority lands for conservation through fee simple acquisition or easements, focusing on ecologically sensitive areas, prime farmland and parcels that enhance public access, particularly along and near the Lake Michigan shore and the Kalamazoo River. The program is primarily funded by the Parks and Trails Millage, approved by voters in 2022, which underscores the community's commitment to protecting both its natural and agricultural heritage.

Through this program, Saugatuck Township aims to conserve high-quality natural lands, restore vital habitats, protect farmland and expand recreational and water access. This balanced approach ensures that Saugatuck's natural beauty and agricultural resources continue to be integral to the community's quality of life and will remain defining features for generations to come.



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Introduction

Program Development and Community Support

The Saugatuck Township Land Conservation and Public Access Program was developed through a collaborative, community-centered approach, guided by extensive public input and the Township's 5-Year Parks and Recreation Plan. To ensure that program goals align with the needs and values of the community, the Township gathered feedback through multiple channels, including community surveys, an in-person open house, and a public hearing. This engagement provided residents with opportunities to voice their priorities, resulting in a program that reflects the community's shared vision for conservation and access.

Funding for land acquisition and the purchase of development rights is secured through a 10-year Parks and Trails Millage, which received strong community backing, passing with over 60% voter approval in 2022. This millage underscores the community's commitment to preserving Saugatuck's natural beauty, agricultural lands, and recreational spaces for future generations.

In addition to funding support, the Township has updated its Zoning Ordinance to reinforce conservation efforts. Key updates include expanded protections for natural areas and sensitive environments, promotion of sustainable development practices, and policies that enhance agricultural land use. The updated ordinance supports the growth of agrotourism and agrovoltatics, helping to sustain local agriculture while encouraging innovative, land-compatible uses that contribute to the Township's rural character.

These combined efforts ensure that the Land Conservation and Public Access Program is well-supported by both policy and funding, laying a strong foundation for Saugatuck Township's long-term goals of conserving natural areas, protecting agricultural lands, and enhancing public access.

Coastal Management Grant

In addition to the Parks and Trails Millage, funding support for this report was provided by a grant from the Michigan Coastal Management Program. The grant identified five tasks to be completed: contract with a land preservation consultant and GIS consultant; identify and inventory potential properties and

access/conservation alternatives; develop criteria to evaluate and prioritize land strategies, including public input on criteria; general valuation of properties; and a summary report.

Strategy for the Public Land and Access Program

To effectively implement the Public Land and Access Program, the Township will adopt a comprehensive strategy that includes the following key components:

1. Clarifying Preservation Criteria

Define Specific Criteria: Establish clear criteria for identifying properties suitable for preservation. Criteria may include ecological significance, presence of rare habitats, proximity to existing conservation areas, recreational value, cultural heritage, agricultural viability, and potential for public access.

Community Input: Involve stakeholders and residents in refining these criteria to ensure they reflect community values and priorities.

2. Maintaining a Mapping System

Parcel Mapping: Develop and maintain an interactive map of Township parcels that meet the established land preservation criteria. This map will serve as a visual tool for identifying priority areas for acquisition and preservation efforts.

Regular Updates: Ensure the mapping system is regularly updated to reflect new information, changes in land use, and conservation successes.

3. Developing and Utilize Scoring System

Scoring Framework: Create a scoring system to evaluate and rank properties based on their ecological, agricultural, and recreational value. The scoring system will help prioritize properties for acquisition or purchase of development rights, guiding decision-making.

Criteria Weighting: Assign weights to different criteria based on their importance to the Township's conservation goals, ensuring a transparent and objective evaluation process.

Consistently Use Scoring System: Consistently implement scoring system to ensure that property acquisition and purchase of development rights is consistent with program goals and public funds are being used responsibly.

5. Identify Acquisition Tools and Strategies

Research Strategies: Identify various tools and strategies for acquiring properties and conservation easements, including outright purchases, donations, and partnerships with land trusts.

Utilize Innovative Approaches: Investigate innovative approaches such as leaseback agreements, transfer of development rights, and other mechanisms that can facilitate land preservation.

6. Developing Communication Programs

Build Relationships with Property Owners: Establish a communication program aimed at building relationships with property owners of high-quality natural areas and prime farmland, fostering trust and collaboration.

Engagement Strategies: Utilize direct outreach, informational sessions, and community events to engage landowners in discussions about conservation opportunities and resources available to them.

7. Supporting Policy Efforts

Policy Development: Advocate for policies that protect rare and ecologically valuable habitats while balancing development needs with the preservation of natural areas.

Zoning and Land Use Regulations: Continue to refine zoning ordinances to promote sustainable development practices and support agricultural uses of prime farmland, including agrotourism and agrovoltatics.

Conservation Easements: Explore the use of conservation easements to protect valuable properties while allowing for compatible land uses.

8. Maximizing Financial Resources

Strategic Use of Millage Funds: Allocate funds from the Parks and Trails Millage strategically to support land acquisition, habitat restoration, and public access improvements, ensuring a sustainable financial model for the program.

Grant Exploration: Actively seek grant opportunities from state, federal, and nonprofit organizations that align with the goals of the Public Land and Access Program, expanding financial resources for conservation efforts.

9. Informing the Public

Public Awareness Campaign: Develop a public outreach program to inform residents about the Public Land and Access Program, its goals, and how it benefits the community.

Accessible Information: Make information readily available through various channels, including the Township website, social media, newsletters, and community meetings, to communicate opportunities for public participation in the

10. Identifying Partners

Local Partnerships: Identify and collaborate with local organizations, community groups, and land trusts to leverage resources, share expertise, and enhance conservation efforts.

Regional and State Collaboration: Engage with regional and state agencies to align efforts with broader conservation initiatives, sharing best practices and resources.

National Support: Explore partnerships with national organizations focused on land conservation and public access to tap into additional funding and advocacy resources.

By implementing this comprehensive strategy, Saugatuck Township can effectively advance its Public Land and Access Program, ensuring the preservation of valuable natural areas and agricultural lands while enhancing public access and community engagement. This proactive approach will help sustain the Township's unique character and quality of life for generations to come.



Land Conservation Toolbox

There are two primary ways for governments to conserve land in perpetuity: outright (or “fee simple”) acquisitions of a property’s title and the conveyance of certain rights (commonly called the “development rights”) through a deed restriction called a conservation easement. Both can be actualized by purchase, outright donation or the landowner’s discount of the sale price from the appraised value (a “bargain sale”).

Fee simple: acquiring title to a property and preferably all rights associated with it. In some cases there are outstanding mineral leases (oil, gas, gravel) that were previously conveyed through a lease. Often the lease has expired and an affidavit can be recorded stating that the lease is no longer pertinent. Owning land in fee requires posting boundaries, ensuring against undesirable trespass, developing access for public use (parking area, trails, info kiosks, fencing) and is more expensive as all rights are being acquired and removes the property from the tax roll.

Conservation easement: a permanent restriction on the use of land, voluntarily granted by its owner, limiting or prohibiting certain rights (division into smaller parcels, housing construction, surface mining for sand and gravel, etc.) that would diminish the property’s conservation values (agricultural soils, scenic views, natural features, water quality, wildlife habitat, etc.). Holding conservation easements entails a perpetual responsibility to ensure the agreement is being upheld, with the potential for legal action if a violation occurs. Since conservation easements involve conveyance of the development rights, the cost is less than a fee simple acquisition and the property remains in private ownership and on the tax roll

Purchase agreement: a legal document that, once executed, binds a landowner to sell land or an easement if the agreement’s terms are met and allows a purchaser time to conduct studies of a property (boundary survey, hazardous waste evaluation, valuation, condition of title).

Option to purchase; right of refusal: legal documents that provide the opportunity for a future purchase of land or an easement when a landowner is ready to sell or has an offer from another party.

Limited use easements: used when an entire property is not needed, or a landowner does not want to sell the property, trail or access easements can be negotiated to allow specified uses within a defined area (for example, along a roadway).

GIS Focus Area: Natural Area

Saugatuck Township is home to critical dune land, the scenic Lake Michigan bluffs, the Kalamazoo River and riparian wetlands, mature forests, ravines and tributaries—ecosystems that support diverse species and contribute to the area's environmental resilience. Conserving these natural areas is essential to maintaining biodiversity, protecting water quality and preserving the scenic beauty that defines Saugatuck's character.



Photo: Amanda Major

GIS Analysis

The GIS analysis was performed across all properties in Saugatuck Township. Adjacent tax parcels under the same ownership were combined and evaluated as a single property.

GIS Analysis Measurements

- Proximity to the Kalamazoo River
- Proximity to existing parks
- Creek presence
- Whether the property is on a public road
- Whether the property is adjacent to a property that is on a public road
- Percent of property area in natural area use
- Number of acres in natural area use
- Size of property
- In a 500-acre block of contiguous natural area
- Percent of property area in natural area
- Zoning
- Whether the property is in a Critical Dune Area

This analysis attempts to showcase properties that would be worth focusing on preserving for its natural area as a standalone project, especially as a conservation easement but also as a nature preserve. This is a somewhat restrictive set of criteria, primarily limited by the presence of a creek. Preserving high quality land surrounding creeks prevents sensitive areas from becoming nonpoint pollution sites, and catches other nonpoint source pollution before it hits the surface water.

The criteria applied to yield these results:

- Percent of property area in natural area use is $\geq 25\%$
- Creek is present
- Property is on a public road, and/or...
- Property is adjacent to a property that is on a public road

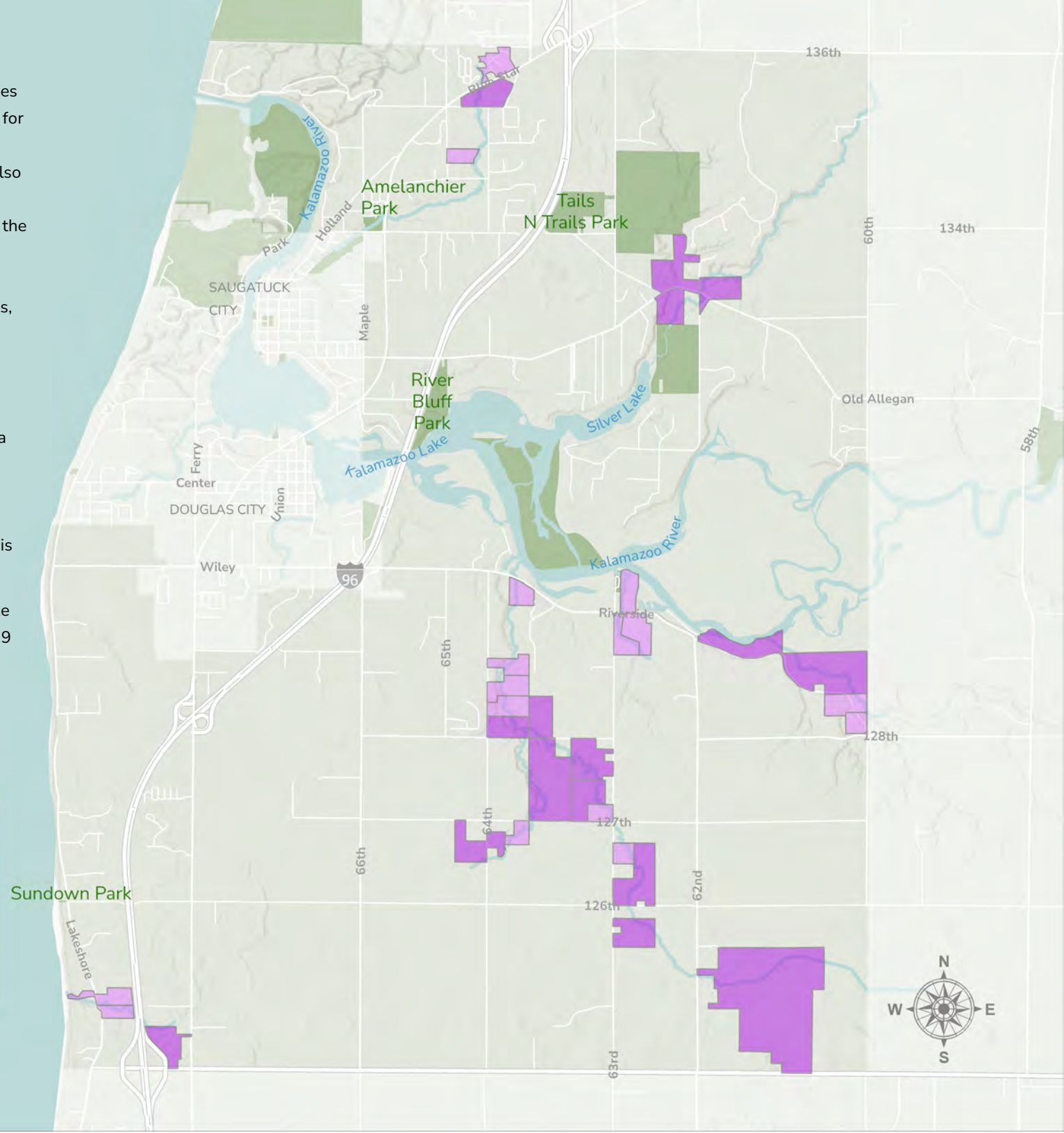
The results are divided and illustrated by size at 20 acres or larger (16 properties) and 9-19 acres (16 properties).

Legend

- Rivers and Lakes
- Parks
- Saugatuck Township
- Natural Area Preservation Opportunities, 20 acres or larger
- Natural Area Preservation Opportunities, 9-19 acres

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Data Credits: Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, FEMA, Allegan County, MI DNR

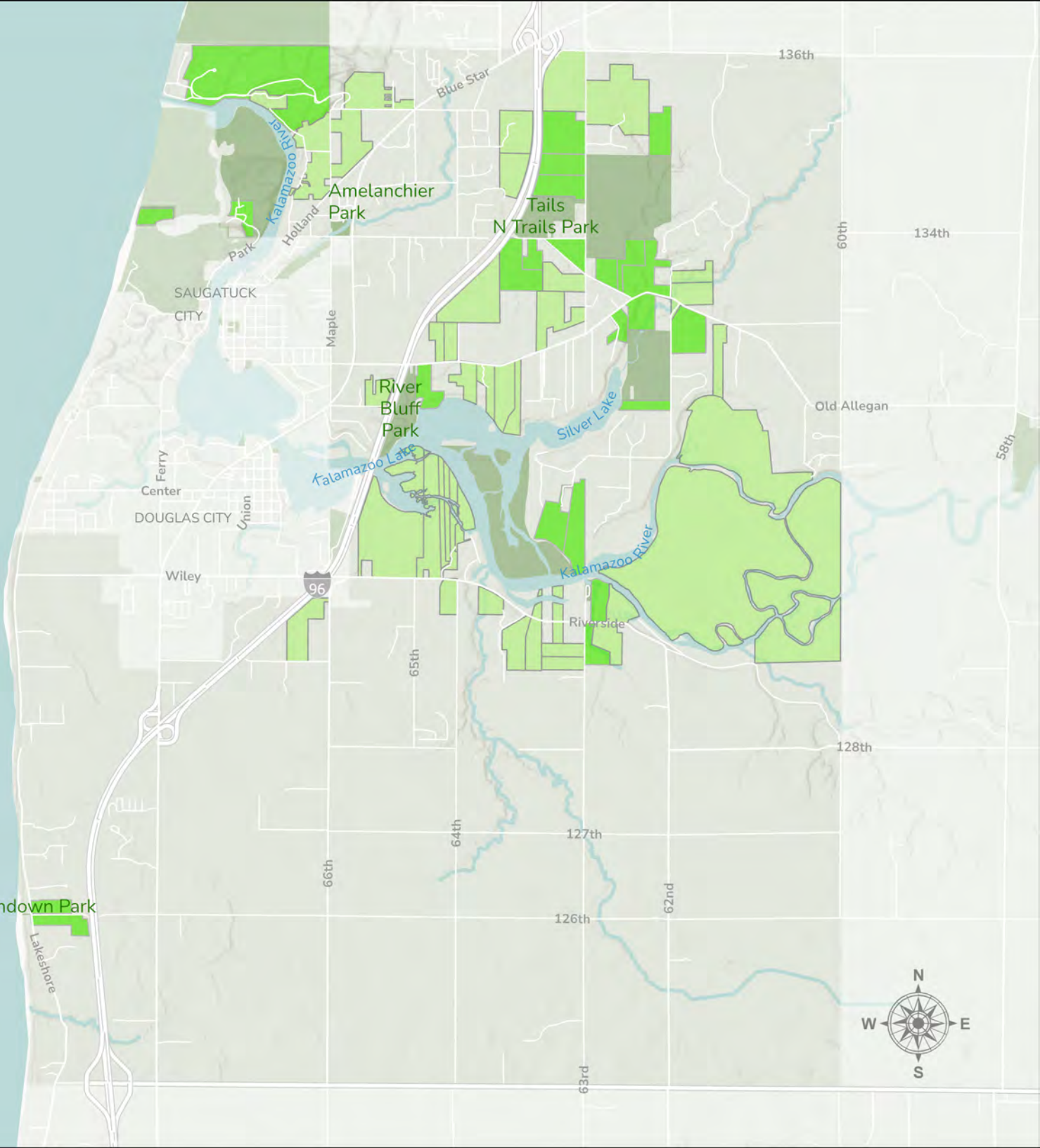


This analysis highlights natural area properties that would be potential expansions of existing parks in Saugatuck Township and its adjacent communities, or expansion of the spatial impact of the conservation values supported by existing parks (i.e. not necessarily fee simple acquisition). 16 properties are represented here.

The criteria applied to yield these results:

- Percent of property area in natural area use is $\geq 40\%$
- Size of property is >15 acres

Properties are then differentiated by their distance to existing parks. There are 16 adjacent properties and 23 within 1/4 mile.



Legend

— Rivers and Lakes

■ Parks

■ Saugatuck Township

Natural Area Preservation Opportunities

■ Adjacent

■ Within 1/4 mile

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Data Credits: Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS,
Allegan County, MI DNR

GIS Focus Area: Water Access

The riverfront and lakefront land has already been parceled into deep and narrow residential lots, and the vast majority of those lots have been developed. The shape of the lots prevents easy discussion with landowners about splitting any less developed part of their parcel. Having a residence does not necessarily mean that a parcel could not be purchased by the Township, but whether the existing buildings could be adapted to function the way the Township might need—as a boat rental center for example, or an entirely different recreational use such as a nature center—is particular to the individual buildings and out of the scope of this project. Demolishing buildings would also incur an additional cost. Thus, all properties presented in this Water Access section are either without buildings, or the property is large enough to split, which results in only a handful of opportunities.

This discussion deliberately excludes a deep dive into the Township north of the City of Saugatuck, which is all critical dune habitat and currently under a multi-year lawsuit. Given that permits for a marina have repeatedly been denied by the State of Michigan, developed motorized boat access would not be advised in that area. Non-motorized boat access could be considered at a future time.

A simple GIS analysis was employed for this focus area, as there are a limited number of properties along the river or lake. After the initial GIS information collection, the potential properties were individually evaluated.

GIS Analysis

Tax parcels adjacent to Lake Michigan and the Kalamazoo River were highlighted and examined for public water access opportunities. Along with needing to have legal water access, potential opportunities had to be on a public road.

The following information was collected for each property:

- Road Access: Is the property on a public road.
- Composition: Whether the property had enough upland to support public park development
- Owner presence: Whether the landowner likely lives on the property, based on matching property address to owner address.
- Building presence: Whether there is a building on the property.

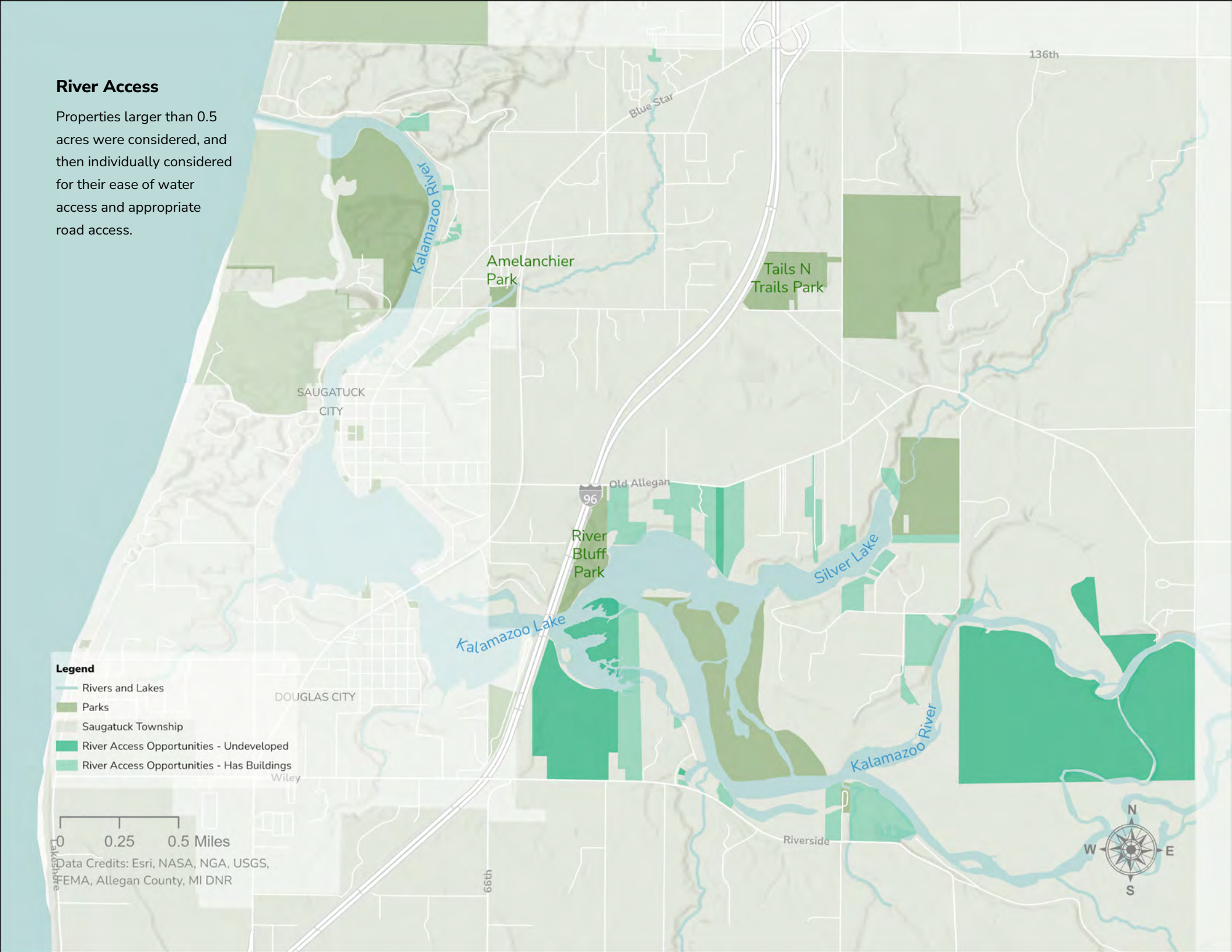
River Access

Properties larger than 0.5 acres were considered, and then individually considered for their ease of water access and appropriate road access.

- Legend**
- Rivers and Lakes
 - Parks
 - Saugatuck Township
 - River Access Opportunities - Undeveloped
 - River Access Opportunities - Has Buildings

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

Data Credits: Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, EMA, Allegan County, MI DNR



Lake Access

Lake Michigan access from Saugatuck Township relies heavily on Lakeshore Drive. Lakeshore Drive and the lakeshore area presents several challenges for any type of lake access: extensive residential/lakehouse development; isolation due to I-196 cutting off what would have been through-streets intersecting with Lakeshore.; steep slopes and dune habitat limiting any additional development and washing out part of Lakeshore Drive. Saugatuck has a small park, Sundown Park, here that exhibits the challenges the landscape presents. North of Birchmoor Drive, the descent to the Lake is very steep.

The properties highlighted here have more flatland on the west side of Lakeshore for easier recreation and are larger aggregations of vacant land. They are also nearer to intersections where cars would be more likely to slow down and watch for pedestrians, which helps improve the feasibility of developing recreational amenities on both sides of Lakeshore Drive and easing the strain on the land closest to the lake. It would be a better balance between conservation and recreation for the township to offer stair access down to the water from a larger, multi-use park likely to attract more visitation by residents, than to significantly disturb a smaller piece of land for only a handful of people to use at one time.

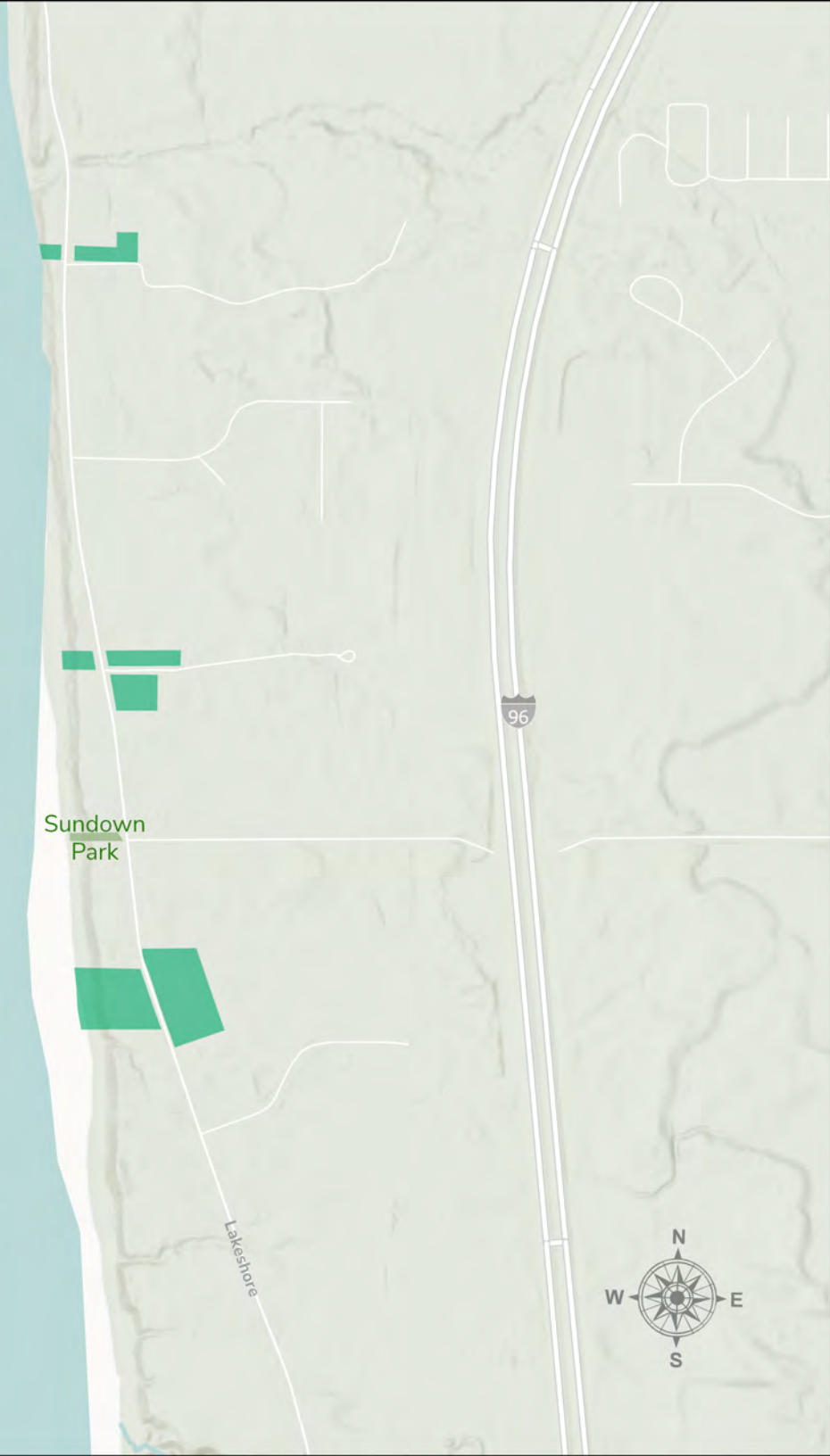
Generally, there is no opportunity here for motor boat access or easy kayak/canoe access. Were the Township to invest in acquisition and development of a larger park in this area, kayaks could be carried down a staircase by the ambitious.

Legend

- Rivers and Lakes
- Parks
- Saugatuck Township
- Lake Access Opportunities

0 0.25 Miles

Data Credits: Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, FEMA, Allegan County, MI DNR



GIS Focus Area: Agriculture

Saugatuck Township's agricultural lands are central to the area's identity and heritage, supporting local food production, sustaining rural traditions and providing the open, pastoral landscapes that residents and visitors cherish. Protecting farmland is essential not only for economic sustainability but also for maintaining the Township's rural character and sense of place.



GIS Analysis

The GIS analysis was performed only on properties that had compatible zoning to agriculture, specifically "Agricultural District" and "Rural Open Space District." Adjacent tax parcels under the same ownership were combined and evaluated as a single property.

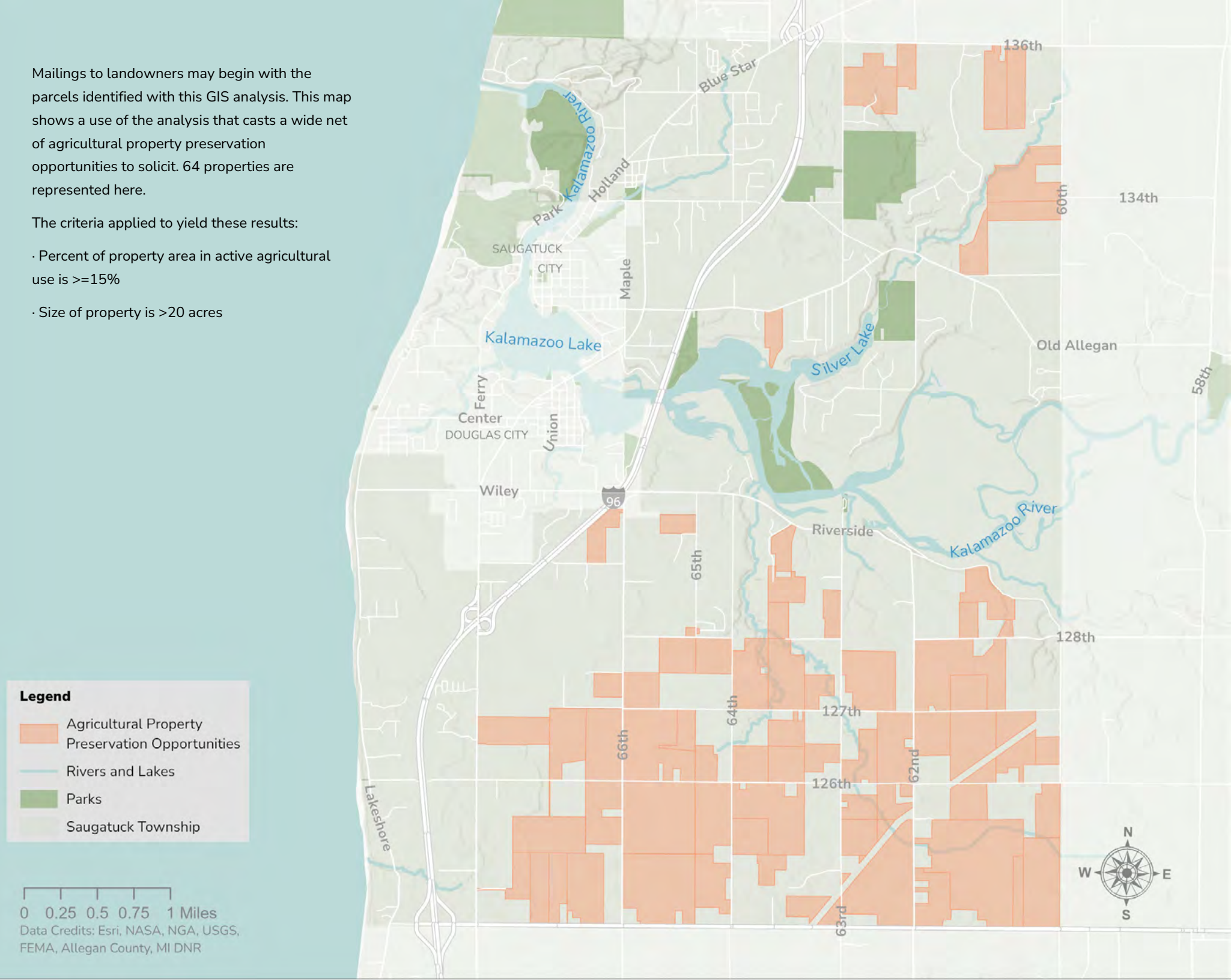
GIS Analysis Measurements

- Percent of property area in active agricultural use
- Size of property
- Whether or not the property is growing special crops (i.e. most anything that is not corn, soy, or wheat)
- Percent of property growing special crops
- Percent of property with prime or important agricultural soils
- In a 500-acre block of contiguous agricultural land
- Creek presence

Mailings to landowners may begin with the parcels identified with this GIS analysis. This map shows a use of the analysis that casts a wide net of agricultural property preservation opportunities to solicit. 64 properties are represented here.

The criteria applied to yield these results:

- Percent of property area in active agricultural use is $\geq 15\%$
- Size of property is >20 acres



If the Township would like to be more selective in its soliciting, GIS-produced constraints can be applied more strictly.

On top of two the criteria applied for the agricultural property preservation opportunities on the previous page (Percent of property area in active agricultural use is $\geq 15\%$; Size of property is >20 acres), additional selections were made to stratify the agricultural opportunities.

Tier 1 (15 properties):

- Percent of property with prime or important agricultural soils $\geq 50\%$
- In a 500-acre block of contiguous agricultural land
- Creek present

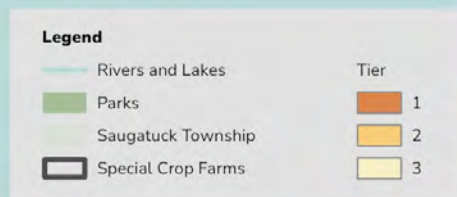
Tier 2 (30 properties):

- Percent of property with prime or important agricultural soils $\geq 50\%$
- In a 500-acre block of contiguous agricultural land

Tier 3: (19 properties)

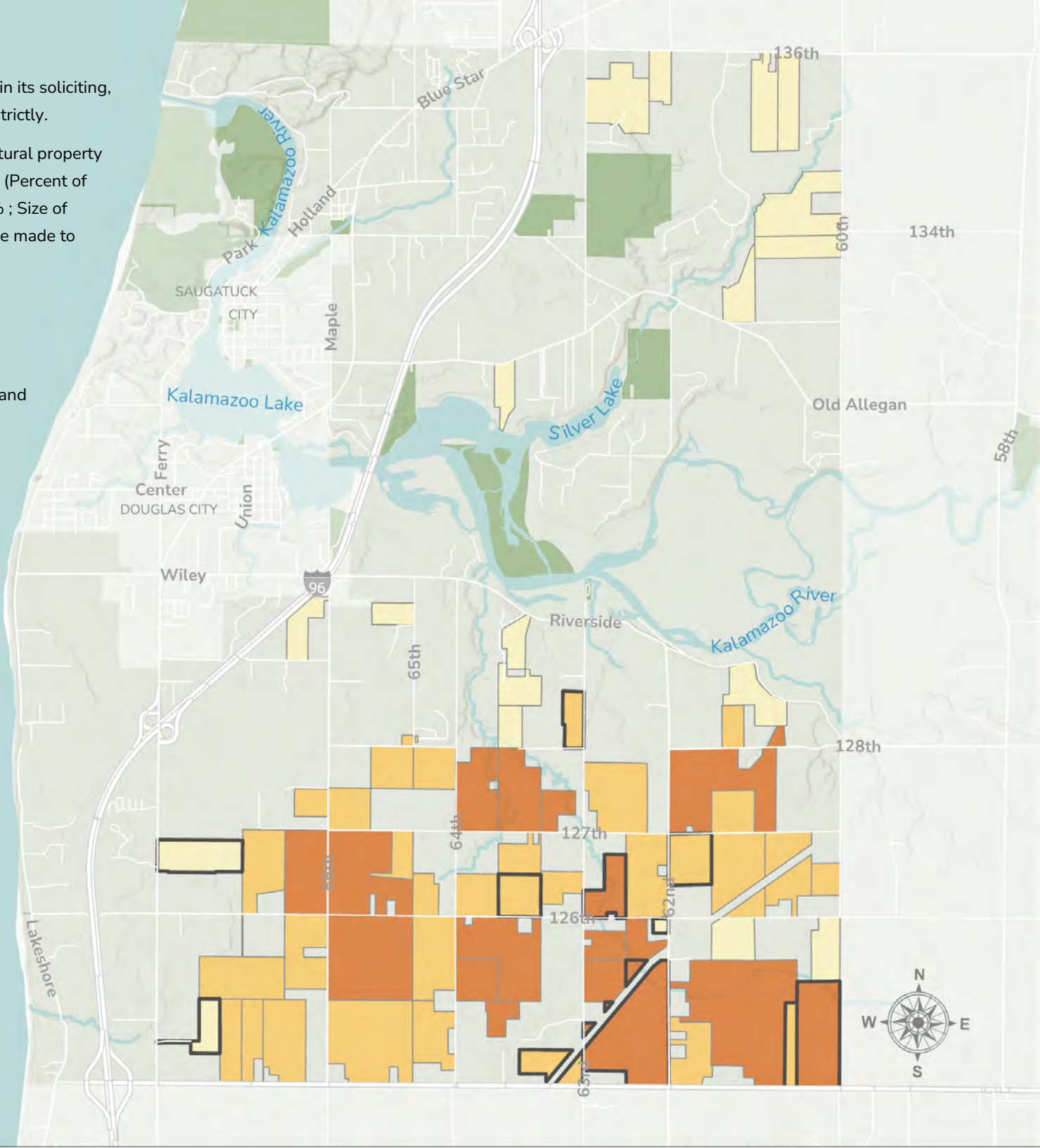
- Every property remaining

Properties likely growing special crops (Percent of property growing special crops $\geq 10\%$) are also shown on this map.



0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Data Credits: Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, FEMA, Allegan County, MI DNR



Property Evaluation Criteria

Land preservation programs that will be accepting applications from landowners must have a means to objectively evaluate the nominated properties and prioritize them. Doing so helps weed out less attractive properties and provides a defensible metric to justify actions. Typically that involves adopting a set of evaluation criteria and then scoring applications as they are received, which can be done by staff or a contractor. A proposed set of criteria is attached to this report as Appendix A, with separate sections for natural areas/open space and agricultural land. These criteria can be included in a land preservation ordinance adopted by the Township Board of Trustees, or as a separate document referenced in that ordinance. The latter provides greater flexibility for changing the system, although most local land preservation programs have kept the same scoring since their inception and can therefore look back over time and easily compare newer applications from older ones.

As part of the Coastal Zone Management grant, survey questions asking residents their opinion on acquiring land for parks and recreation, proposed evaluation criteria and agricultural land preservation. An online survey was developed by Township Manager Daniel DeFranco with input from the authors of this report. An impressive 176 responses were received, over 71% of which were permanent residents. A summary is attached as Appendix B; some of the key findings:

- For land purchases, 50% of respondents thought land should be acquired and improved for passive use (natural surface trails, picnicking) but 42% were favorable to leaving land undeveloped and 41% were supportive of both passive and active uses (they were allowed to choose two options)
- Almost 50% said protecting natural land and agricultural land was equally important, while almost 44% said natural land was more important; these percentages held after a short explanation of farmland preservation
- An impressive 71% of respondents had previously heard of conservation easements
- Over 11% of respondents own agricultural or natural land in Saugatuck Township.

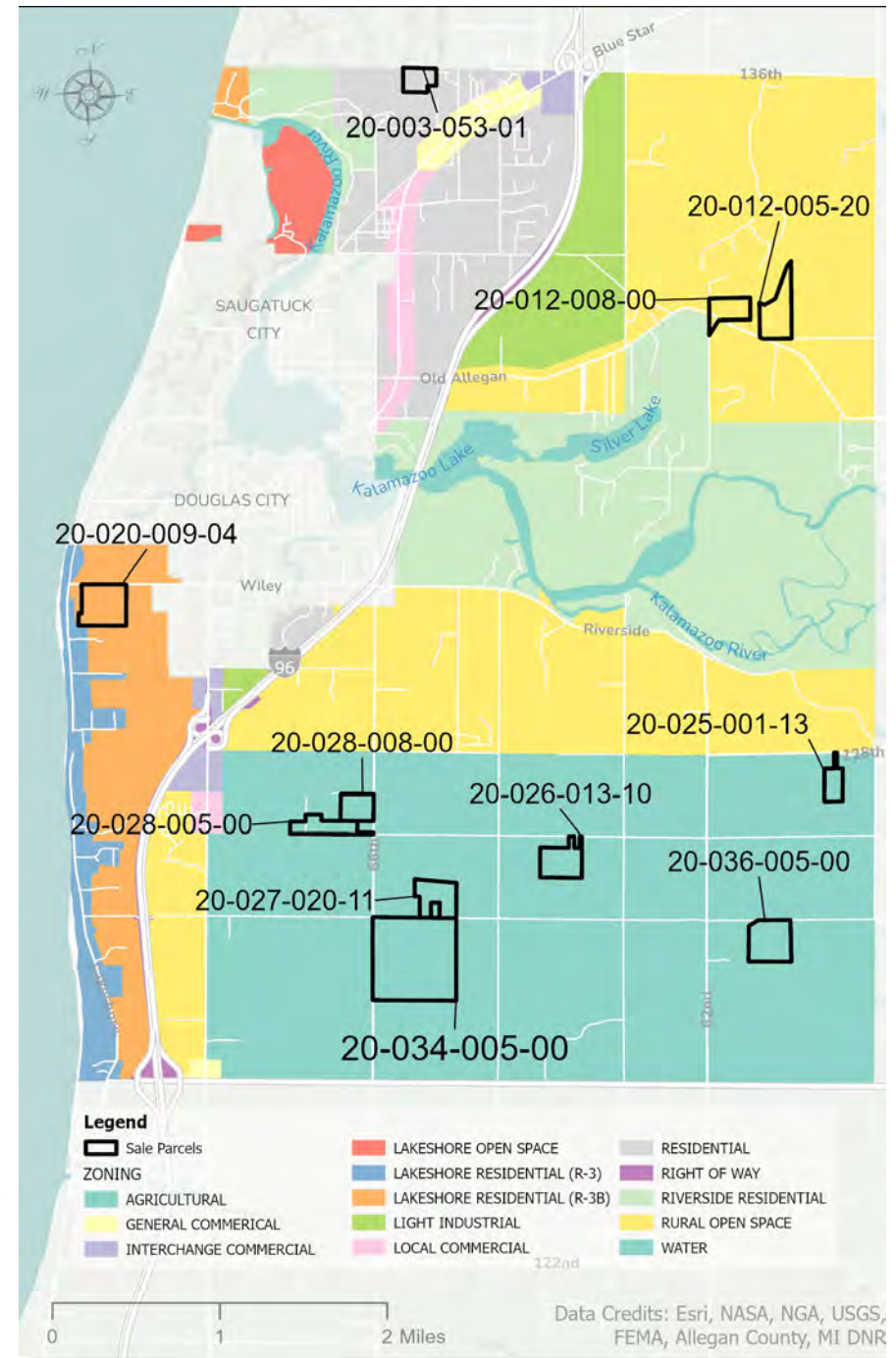
Financial Planning

Recent Sales Analysis

To gain a sense of the potential cost for land and conservation easement purchases, the Saugatuck Township assessor provided a list of properties vacant or with minimal development that sold between 2021 and 2023. Property sizes range from just under 15 acres to over 150, with some properties primarily natural (woods, wetlands), some primarily or exclusively agricultural, and a couple with a mix of features. The sales are scattered across the township with several north of the Kalamazoo River, a number south of the river and one near the Lake Michigan shoreline. See Appendix C for more details.

On a per-acre basis, these sales range from \$2,200 to \$30,000 for primarily natural and mixed feature properties, and \$6,500 to \$8,000 for primarily agricultural properties. The three with the highest values (\$25,000-30,000/acre) are wooded with Silver Lake Creek frontage (zoned A-2 Rural Open Space, and already divided into six parcels); mostly wooded (same zoning and already divided into seven parcels); and what appears to be old orchard just west of Lakeshore Dr. with the western part potentially with Lake Michigan views (zoned R-3B Lakeshore Residential). Clearly location and zoning play major roles in land values, as well as size and a property's features.

Saugatuck Township has a desire to acquire land for public ownership and use. Purchasing land in fee costs more than purchasing conservation easements, in which only the development rights (division, residential construction, surface mining, etc.) are conveyed. In neighboring Barry County, recent appraisals have cited the value of land after a conservation easement is conveyed at \$2,900 to \$3,300/acre. If similar values applied to Saugatuck Township, the highest value agricultural parcels could be conserved for around \$5,000/acre and some for as little as \$3,500/acre. As an example, purchasing an 80-acre parcel of natural area land for a park/preserve could cost \$25,000/acre = \$2,000,000 while purchasing a conservation easement on 80 acres at \$5,000/acre would cost \$400,000, excluding matching funds.



Funding Sources

The following are the primary funding sources for the purchase of land and conservation easements available to Saugatuck Township. Matching funds for these programs can be met with the Township's dedicated Parks and Trails millage, foundation grants, donations from benefactors and a landowner's willingness to discount the purchase price from the appraised value (a "bargain sale").

State of Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund

Fee simple acquisitions

Applications are evaluated on established criteria such as natural resource access and conservation, proximity to population clusters, applicant's committed matching funds, applicant's financial need and priority projects of the Trust Fund Board such as trails, regional significance, public access to lakes and rivers, wildlife habitat and hunting access. Applicants must have a local community recreation plan approved by February 1 with funding applications uploaded by April 1. No minimum/maximum limits on land acquisition grants. Applicant must cover at least 25% of the land value in cash and/or landowner discount. Technically can fund conservation easements, but the easement land has to have regular public access allowed, so easement funding is rarely pursued. Time intensive grant, requires planning. www.michigan.gov/dnr/Buy-and-Apply/grants/rec/mnrntf

State of Michigan Coastal Management Program

Fee simple acquisitions, conservation easements (natural area)

Acquisition projects are those that propose land acquisition, purchase of easements and purchase of development rights. Purchases must demonstrate significant ecological value and need for protection, and must be managed in perpetuity. Minimum grant \$10,000 up to \$500,000. Requires 1:1 local match. www.michigan.gov/egle/about/organization/water-resources/coastal-management

USDA-NRCS Agricultural Conservation Easement Program—Agricultural Land Easement (ACEP-ALE)

Conservation easements (agriculture, with natural area)

ACEP-ALE funds conservation easements to protect the agricultural viability and related conservation values of eligible land by limiting nonagricultural uses which negatively affect agricultural uses and conservation values, protect grazing uses and related conservation values, by conserving eligible crop or grazing land, Eligible properties in Michigan must have at least 33% of the parcel area devoted to agriculture, though a higher percent agriculture cover yields more points; any remainder land should be natural area. Applicants must have adopted a land preservation ordinance and a monitoring and enforcement policy, and be able to cover at least 50% of the appraised value for the conservation easement in cash and/or landowner discount. Deadline varies from November to March. www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/acep-agricultural-conservation-easement-program

State of Michigan Agricultural Preservation Fund

Conservation easements (agriculture)

The Agricultural Preservation Fund Board is charged with managing the distribution of grants to preserve farmland and help conserve Michigan's agricultural heritage. Must have adopted a land preservation ordinance, a master plan with an agricultural preservation area and a monitoring and enforcement policy. Deadline varies, generally winter. www.michigan.gov/mdard/about/boards/ag-preservation-fund

Donations, Bargain Sales

Fee simple acquisitions, conservation easements, trail easements

Selling land and easements to a public entity or qualified non-profit organization for less than appraised value is typically eligible as a federal income tax deduction for the difference between the sale price and the appraised value. The amount must be substantiated by an appraisal in the grantor's name, and IRS form 8283 (Non-cash Charitable Contributions) must be signed by the grantor, the appraiser and the

grantee and filed with the return for the year in which the conveyance was recorded. The deduction is eligible to be used in the year of conveyance and as many as 15 additional years. Grantors are encouraged to engage tax counsel to ensure proper filing and best use of the deduction.

Grants for Home Acquisitions

Fee simple acquisitions in high flood risk areas

Local communities may purchase flood-prone properties, remove the buildings and maintain the land as open space. Administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which may pay up to 75% of acquisition costs through its Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) with 25% non-federal.

www.fema.gov/fact-sheet/fema-grants-home-acquisitions

North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA)

Fee simple acquisitions

Competitive matching grants that support public-private partnerships that involve long-term protection, restoration and/or enhancement of wetlands and associated upland habitats. Administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

www.fws.gov/service/north-american-wetlands-conservation-act-nawca-us-standard-grants

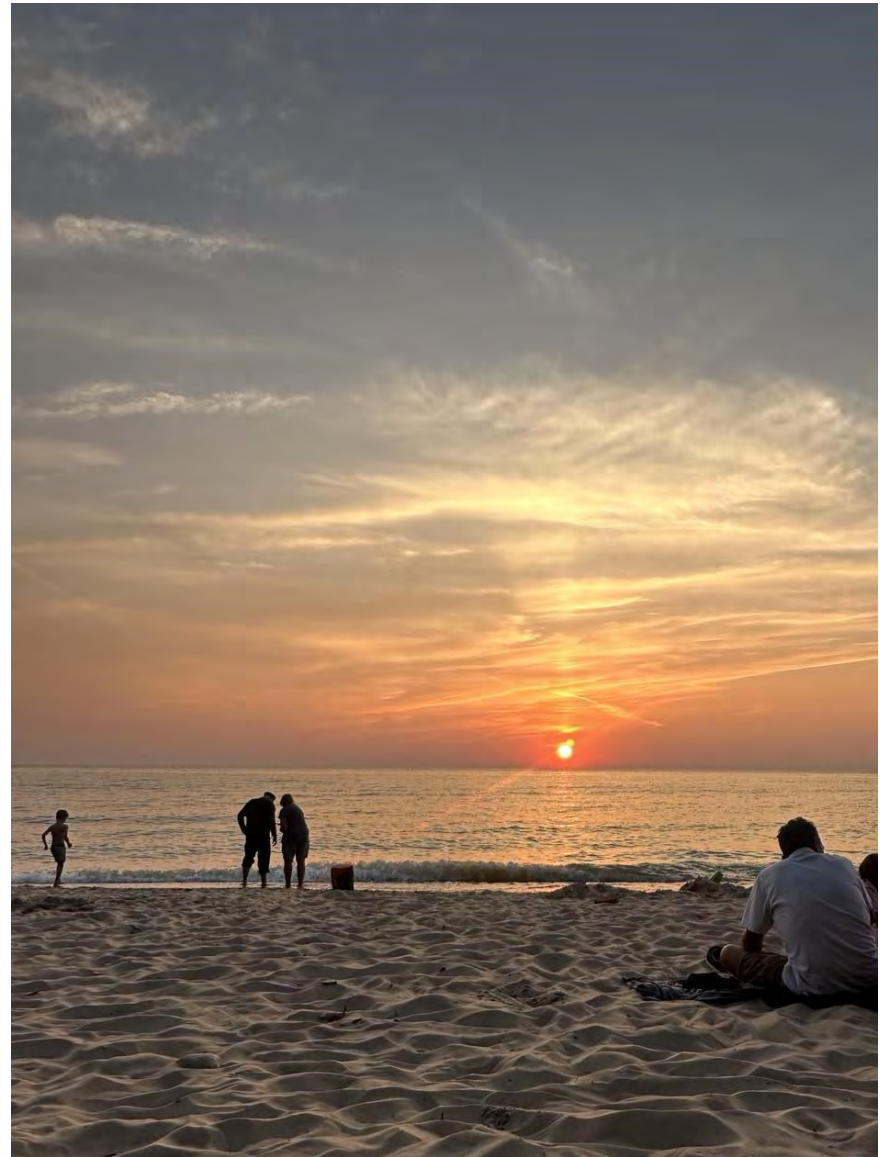


Photo: Amanda Major

Action Plan

Saugatuck Township is fortunate to have a dedicated millage that can be used to conserve critical landscapes, one of only 12 such millages in the State of Michigan. Millage funds can be used for other purposes (development and maintenance of parks and public trails) so it is imperative to leverage other funding sources to achieve the goal of protecting the Township's natural and agricultural heritage. The following are recommendations on how to achieve that.

1. **Hold informational sessions for parks commissioners and the Board of Trustees.** With land conservation a new concept in Saugatuck Township, elected officials need to become familiar with how acquisition programs work and the benefits they provide.
2. **Revise the Tri-Community Master Plan to include an Agricultural Preservation Area.** Identifying such an area is essential to gaining approval for grants from the State of Michigan Agricultural Preservation Fund.
3. **Adopt a Land Preservation Ordinance.** An ordinance allowing for the purchase of development rights (conservation easement) is also a requirement for grants from the State Ag Preservation Fund and the federal Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). Allowance for fee simple purchases of land can be included in the same ordinance.
4. **Approve a monitoring and enforcement plan for conservation easements.** Also a requirement for State Ag Preservation Fund grants (and good policy).
5. **Adopt the provided scoring systems for natural areas and farmland.** This can be done as part of the land preservation ordinance or as a separate document. Also a requirement for State Ag Preservation Fund grants.
6. **Hold public informational sessions on land conservation.** Such sessions for landowners and for the public (two different ones) will help residents understand how conservation programs work, gather additional input on priorities and begin to develop the relationships with landowners so essential to land conservati

7. **Produce advertising media.** Attract applications with brochures, flyers, and online media.

8. **Develop a program application.** Produce a two-page application with basic property info and addressing some of the criteria in the scoring systems for landowners to complete.

9. **Develop a land conservation page on the Township website.** Provide some of the basic info from the brochure, info on how land conservation works and the application.

10. **Conduct a landowner mailing.** Include program information and application.

11. **Ensure eligibility for other State funding programs.** The Natural Resources Trust Fund and Coastal Management Program provide funding for fee simple purchases, the latter also for easement purchases.

12. **Explore private funding options.** Foundations that serve the Saugatuck/Douglas area and individual donors could be an important source for seed money or donations that would support a land conservation project.

13. **Identify providers of due diligence.** Every government land conservation project must have a qualified real estate appraisal. Fewer appraisers have training or experience in the special conservation easement appraisal. Boundary surveys are also a requirement. Phase I Environmental Site Assessments are strongly advised for fee simple purchases and a good idea for conservation easements. Attorneys knowledgeable in real estate transactions are essential. Responsive and knowledgeable title companies are beneficial. For conservation easements, a baseline documentation report with maps, descriptions and photographs must be produced.

14. **Prepare for future grant application deadlines.** Know the available grants and prepare a plan in advance for which properties make the best applications for each one.

15. **Coordinate efforts with potential partners.** Identify and establish contact with potential project partners, especially the Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources and the Land Conservancy of West Michigan along with local groups who may hold or monitor conservation easements, own/co-own/manage acquired lands and fundraise.

Appendix A: Proposed Property Scoring Systems

Summary of Categories

- A. Natural Areas and Open Space
 - 1. Characteristics of the Land
 - 2. Context
 - 3. Additional Funding Sources
- B. Agricultural Land
 - 1. Characteristics of the Land
 - 2. Context
 - 3. Additional Funding Sources

Review Criteria and Scoring

A. Natural Areas and Open Space

- 1. Characteristics of the Land
 - a. **Public Water Resources Frontage.** Amount of frontage on open water or a perennial stream.

No frontage	0
<100 feet	1
100-500 feet	3
>500 feet	5

If the property has frontage on Lake Michigan or the Kalamazoo River, add five points.
 - b. **Tree Cover, Species and Natural Communities.** What percentage of the property features native tree cover?

<50%	1
50-75%	3
>75%	5

If the property has documented rare species, unique natural communities or high ecological value, add five points.

- c. **Parcel Size.**

<20 acres	1
20-40 acres	3
>40 acres	5
- d. **Groundwater Recharge/Protection.** Percent of the property serving as groundwater recharge area.

<50%	1
50-75%	3
>75%	5
- e. **Slopes.** Percent of the property that features slopes >12%.

<10%	0
10-20%	3
>20%	5
- f. **Wetlands, Critical Dunes, High Risk Erosion Areas and/or Floodplain.** Percent of the property with those features.

No features	0
<10%	1
10-20%	3
>20%	5
- g. **Recreation Potential.** Can or will the property provide access to public lands, waters, trails or other recreational lands, or protect a trail

corridor?

 5 Yes 0 No

If the property is located in a part of the township where recreation access is more than two miles away or would provide a type of recreation not currently present in the township, add five points.

cultural features eligible for National Register of Historic Place designation or have unique architectural structures?

One feature	1
Two features	3
Three features	5

2. Context

a. **Road Frontage.**

<500 feet	1
500-1,000 feet	3
>1,000 feet	5

b. **Proximity to Protected Land.** Distance to land that is permanently protected by a public agency, a land conservancy or other conservation organization, or by a perpetual conservation easement.

>1 mile	0
1 mile or less	5
adjacent	10

c. **Surrounding Land Use.** Percent of the properties contiguous with the subject property that is in an agricultural or open space use.

<50%	1
50-89%	3
90% or more	5

d. **Surrounding Zoning.** Percent of the properties contiguous with the subject property that is in agricultural or open space zoning.

<50%	1
50-89%	3
90% or more	5

e. **Scenic/Historic/Cultural/Architectural Features.** Does the property provide a broad, sweeping view from publicly accessible sites such as public roads and waterways, have important historical features, have

3. Additional Funding Sources

a. **Matching Funds.** Percent of the appraised value of development rights available from sources other than the landowner or the Township.

No matching funds	0
<20%	5
20-50%	8
>50%	10

b. **Landowner Discount.** Percent of the appraised value of development rights the landowner is willing to discount.

<5%	0
5-10%	4
10-20%	6
>20-30%	8
>30%	10

B. Agricultural Land

1. Characteristics of the Land

- a. **Soil Quality.** Percent of the property with prime, unique or locally important soil types (as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture).
For scoring, divide the number of acres of quality soils by total acres and then multiply that by 15 to produce the score.
- b. **Specialty Crops.** Percent of the property planted in specialty crops (orchards, vineyards, vegetables, flowers)
- | | |
|--------|---|
| 5-10% | 2 |
| 11-20% | 3 |
| >20% | 5 |
- c. **MAEAP Verification.** The property has achieved and maintains verification from the State of Michigan Agricultural Environmental Assurance Program.
- 10 Yes 0 No
- d. **Enrollment in P.A. 116.** The property has a current Farmland Development Rights Agreement with the State of Michigan.
- 5 Yes 0 No
- e. **Natural Features.** The property has woods, stream frontage or wetlands.
- 5 Yes 0 No
- f. **Parcel Size.**
- | | |
|-------------|---|
| <40 acres | 2 |
| 40-80 acres | 3 |
| >80 acres | 5 |

- g. **Land in Agricultural Use.** Percent of the property in active agricultural use.

<50%	2
50-75%	3
>75%	5

2. Context

- a. **Road Frontage.**
- | | |
|----------------|---|
| <500 feet | 0 |
| 500-1,000 feet | 1 |
| >1,000 feet | 2 |
- b. **Public Utilities Proximity.** Distance from the property to public water or sewer lines.
- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| More than two miles | 0 |
| One mile to two miles | 3 |
| ½ mile to one mile | 5 |
- c. **Proximity to Protected Land.** Distance to land that is permanently protected by a public agency, a land conservancy or other conservation organization, or by a perpetual conservation easement.
- | | |
|----------------|----|
| >1 mile | 0 |
| 1 mile or less | 5 |
| adjacent | 10 |
- d. **Surrounding Land Use.** Percent of the properties contiguous with the subject property that is in an agricultural or open space use.
- | | |
|-------------|---|
| <50% | 1 |
| 50-89% | 3 |
| 90% or more | 5 |
- e. **Surrounding Zoning.** Percent of the properties contiguous with the subject property that is in agricultural or open space zoning.
- | | |
|-------------|---|
| <50% | 1 |
| 50-89% | 3 |
| 90% or more | 5 |

		No matching funds	0
		<20%	5
		20-50%	8
		>50%	10
f.	Scenic/Historic/Cultural/Architectural Features. Does the property provide a broad, sweeping view from publicly accessible sites such as public roads and waterways, have important historical features, have cultural features eligible for National Register of Historic Place designation or have unique architectural structures?		
	One feature	1	
	Two features	2	
	Three features	3	
3.	Additional Funding Sources		
a.	Matching Funds. Percent of the appraised value of development rights available from sources other than the landowner or the Township.		
		b. Landowner Discount. Percent of the appraised value of development rights the landowner is willing to discount.	
		<5%	0
		5-10%	4
		10-20%	6
		>20-30%	8
		>30%	10

Glossary of Terms

Prime agricultural soils: Land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber and oilseed crops, and is available for these uses. It has the soil quality, growing season and moisture supply needed to produce economically sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods, including water management. In general, prime farmlands have an adequate and dependable water supply from precipitation or irrigation; a favorable temperature and growing season; acceptable acidity or alkalinity; acceptable salt and sodium content; and few or no rocks. They are permeable to water and air. Prime farmlands are not excessively erodible or saturated with water for a long period of time, and they either do not flood frequently or are protected from flooding.

Unique agricultural soils: Land other than prime farmland that is used for the production of specific high value food and fiber crops. It has the special combination of soil quality, location, growing season and moisture supply needed to produce economically sustained high quality and/or high yields of a specific crop when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Examples of crops are tree nuts, olives, cranberries, citrus and other fruits and vegetables.

Locally Important agricultural soils: Specified prime farmland soils with slopes of 6-18% and non-prime farmland soils with slopes up to 12%.

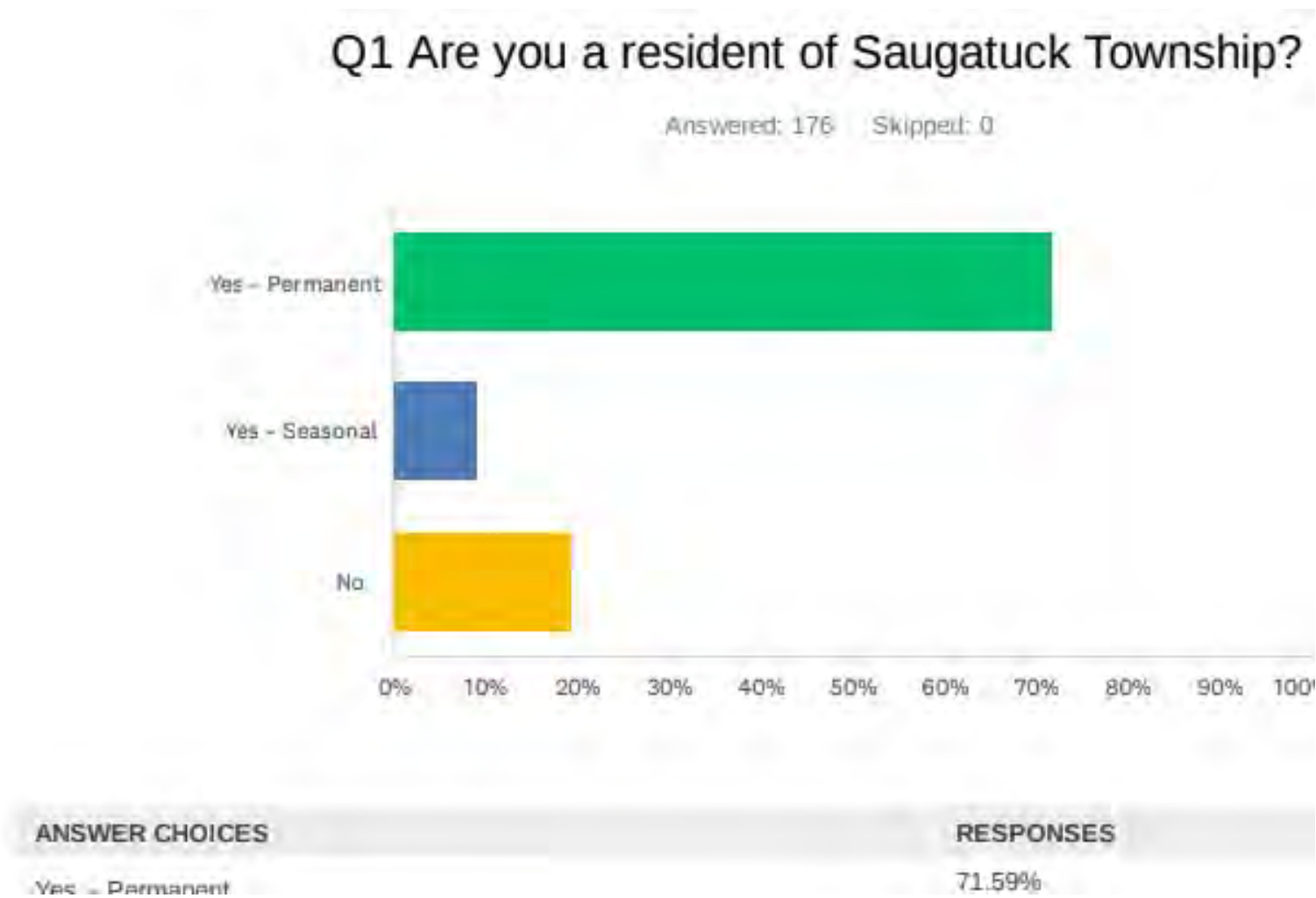
Groundwater recharge area: Land where permeable soil and rock materials relatively close to the land surface transfer an excess of water from precipitation to subsurface strata where it is stored in aquifers.

Natural community: An assemblage of interacting plants, animals and other organisms that repeatedly occurs under similar environmental conditions across the landscape and is predominantly structured by natural processes rather than modern anthropogenic disturbances.

Open water: A natural lake or pond of one acre in size or greater.

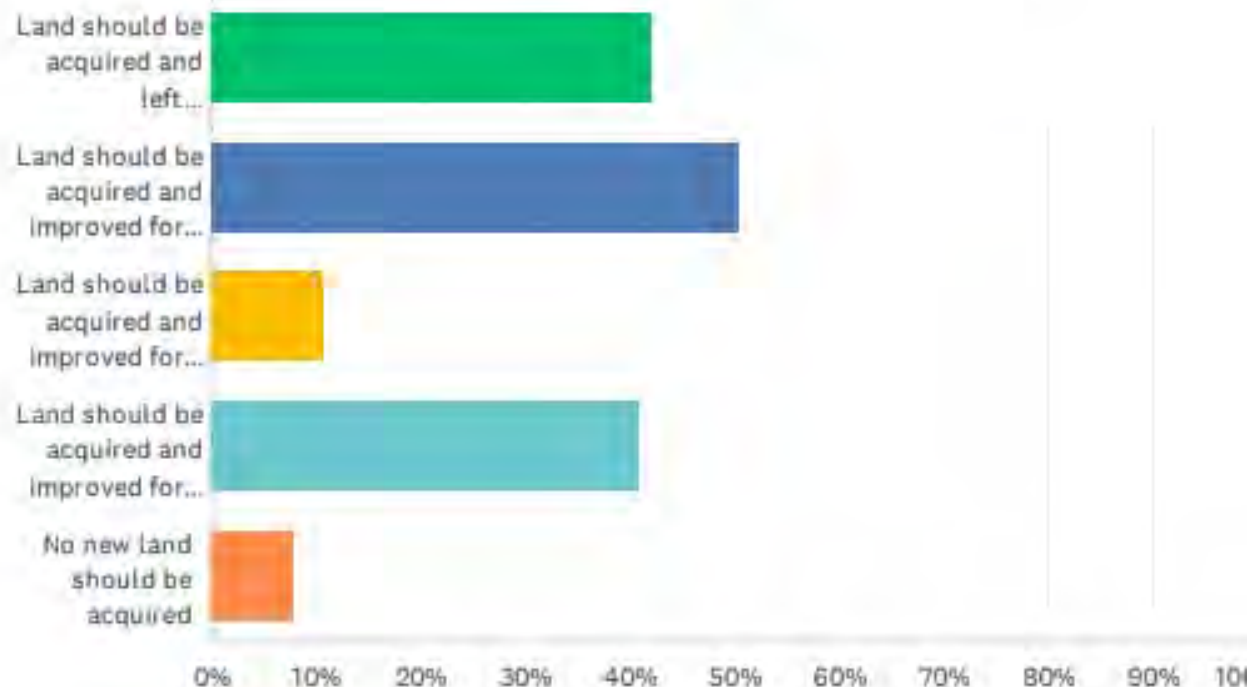
Perennial stream: A water body that flows continuously throughout the year.

Appendix B: Survey Results



Q2 From the list below, which TWO open space options for developing land for Parks and Recreation purposes would SUPPORT?

Answered: 176 Skipped: 0



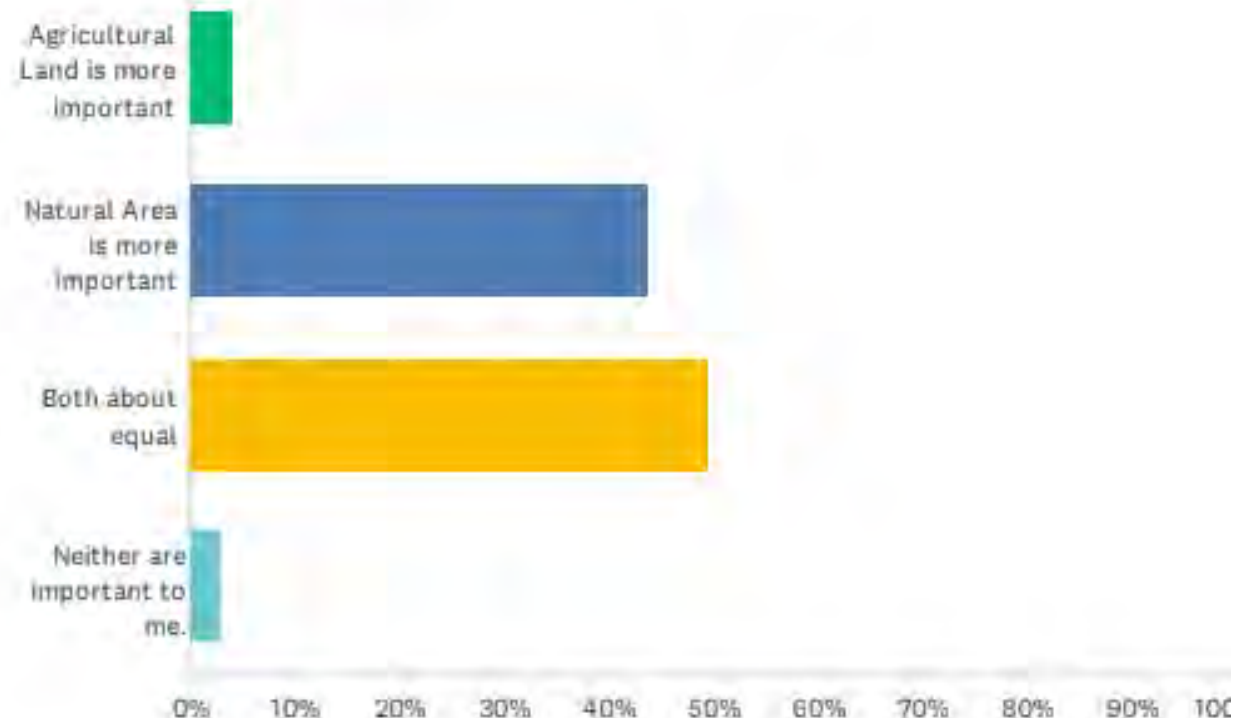
ANSWER CHOICES

Land should be acquired and left undeveloped for future generations (e.g. wildlife habitat with limited public access)

Q3 To identify and evaluate land to acquire as a park, nature
other protected natural area, Saugatuck Township is consid
following criteria: Frontage on open water or a perennial (y
stream Frontage on Lake Michigan or the Kalamazoo River
wooded Land that has rare species, unique natural commun
ecological value Land that has wetlands, critical dunes, high
areas or floodplain (along a stream) Land that can be purchas
into a park or preserve with public access Land that has sce
cultural or architectural features Are there natural area/p
characteristics that you think are important but are not reflect
help answer this question, consider the valuable aspects of yo
favorite public lands or lands you see on your travels in sa

Q4 How important to you is preserving agricultural land vs. (forests, wetlands, grassland) in the Township?

Answered: 176 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES

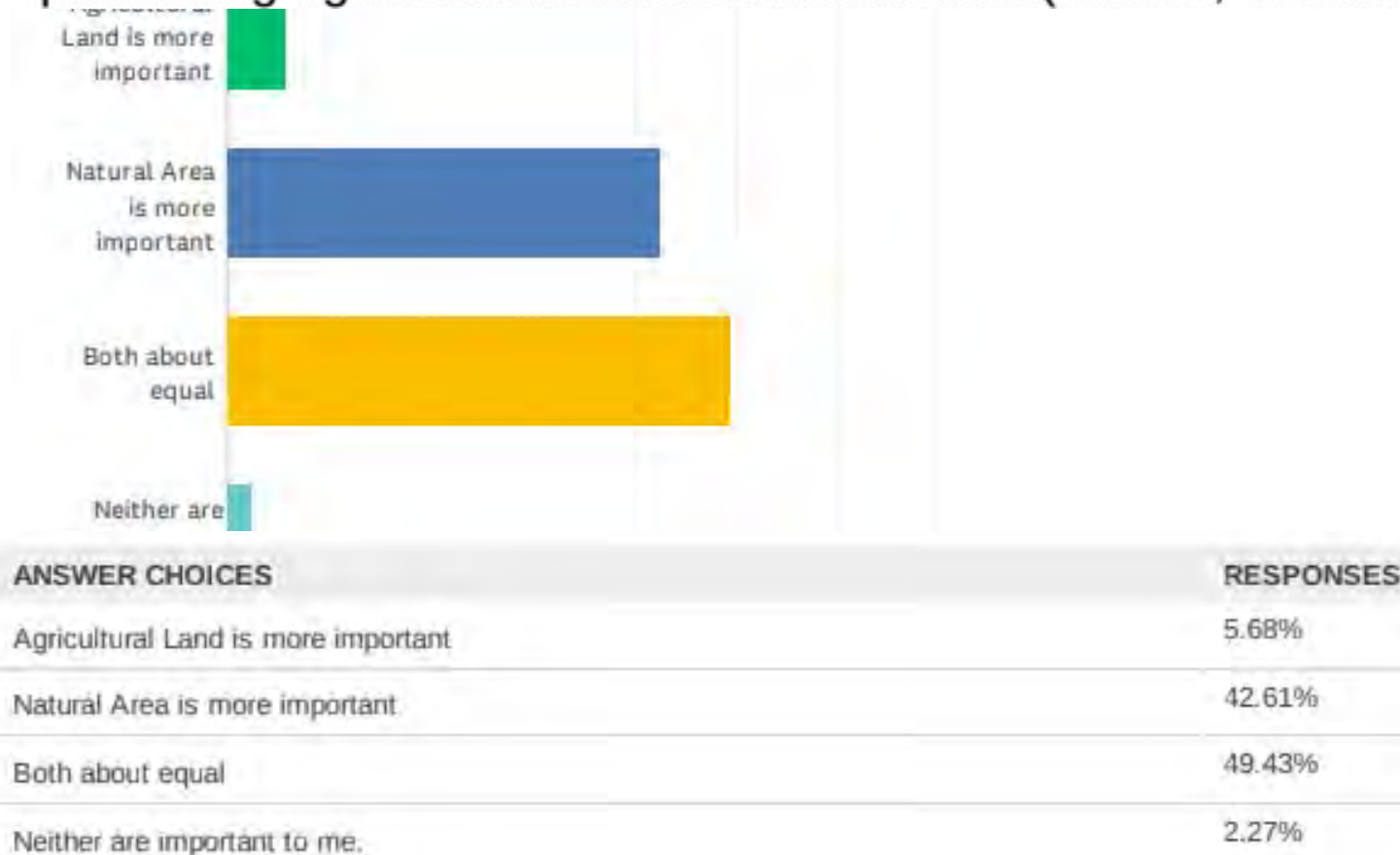
RESPONSES

Agricultural Land is more important

3 98%

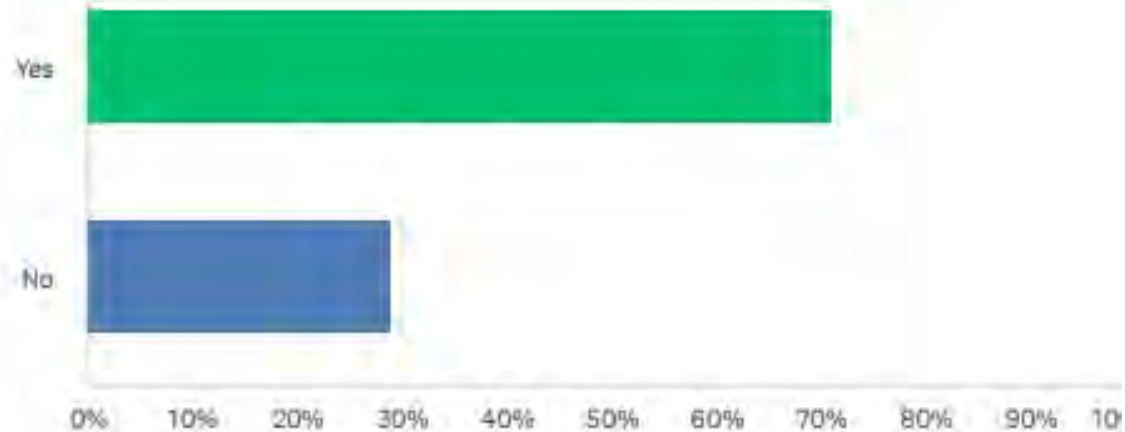
Q5 After natural areas, agriculture is the dominant land cover in Saugatuck Township, but Allegan County's agricultural acres decreased by 9% between 2017 and 2022. Agricultural land can also be preserved, often by purchasing a conservation easement, which is a permanent deed restriction that limits use of the land to agricultural and natural resources. The land remains in private ownership, usually with no public access available. This method of land protection costs less per acre than fully purchasing the land. After reading this information, answer this question again (your answer may or may not change): How important to you is preserving agricultural land vs. natural area (forests, wetlands, grassland) in the Township?

preserving agricultural land vs. natural area (forests, wetlands, grassland)



Q6 Have you previously heard of conservation easements?

Answered: 176 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES

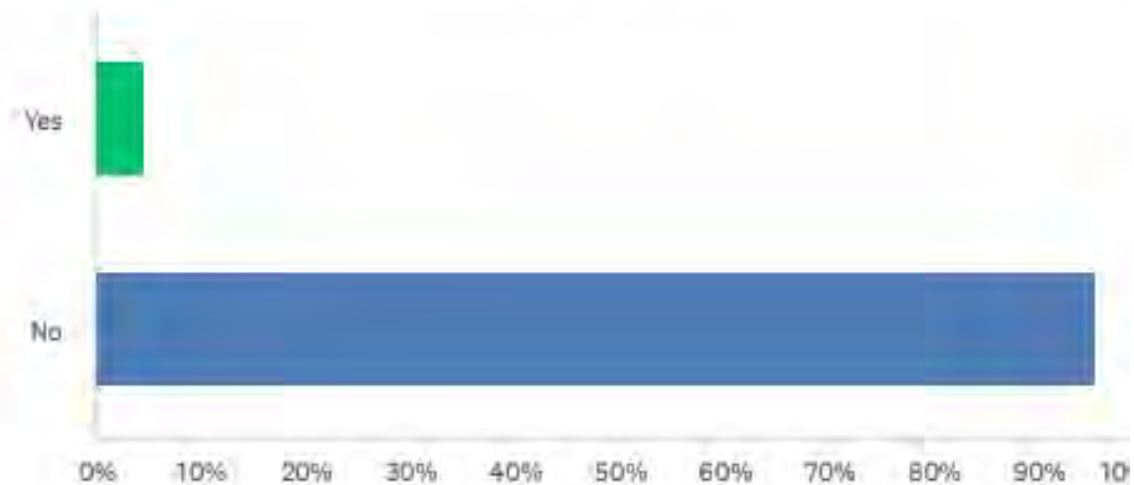
RESPONSES

Q7 To identify and evaluate agricultural land to preserve
Township is considering the following criteria: Soil quality
specialty crops (orchards, vineyards, vegetables, flowers)
been certified that it uses environmentally sound farming p
that also has natural features (woods, wetlands, streams)
(>80 acres) Land that is surrounded by agricultural/open sp
Land that has scenic, historic, cultural or architectural fea
information not reflected here that you think would be impc

Q8 Are there particular properties in Saugatuck Township that argue are environmentally or culturally significant or interesting coordinates or cross streets.

Q9 Are you a farmer or natural resource manager?

Answered: 175 Skipped: 1

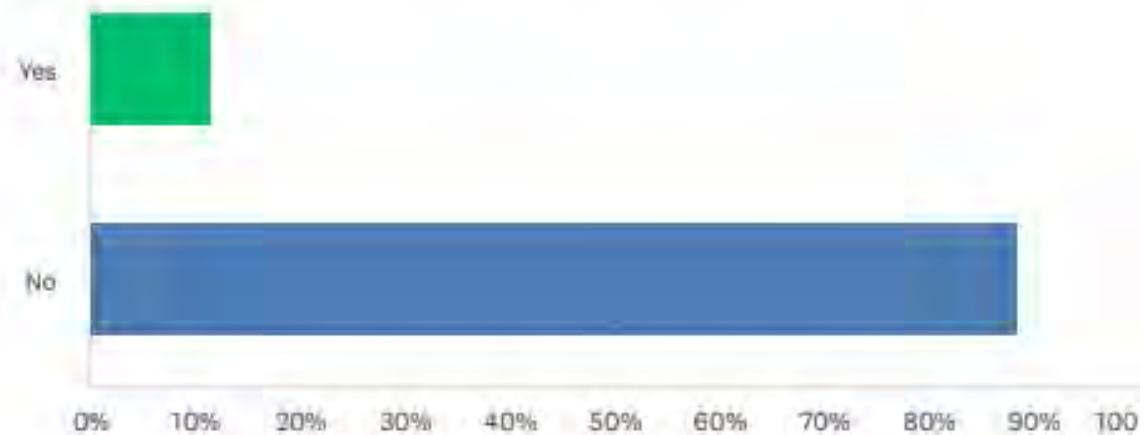


ANSWER CHOICES

RESPONSES

Q10 Do you own agricultural or natural land in Saugatuck Town (in acres)?

Answered: 176 Skipped: 1

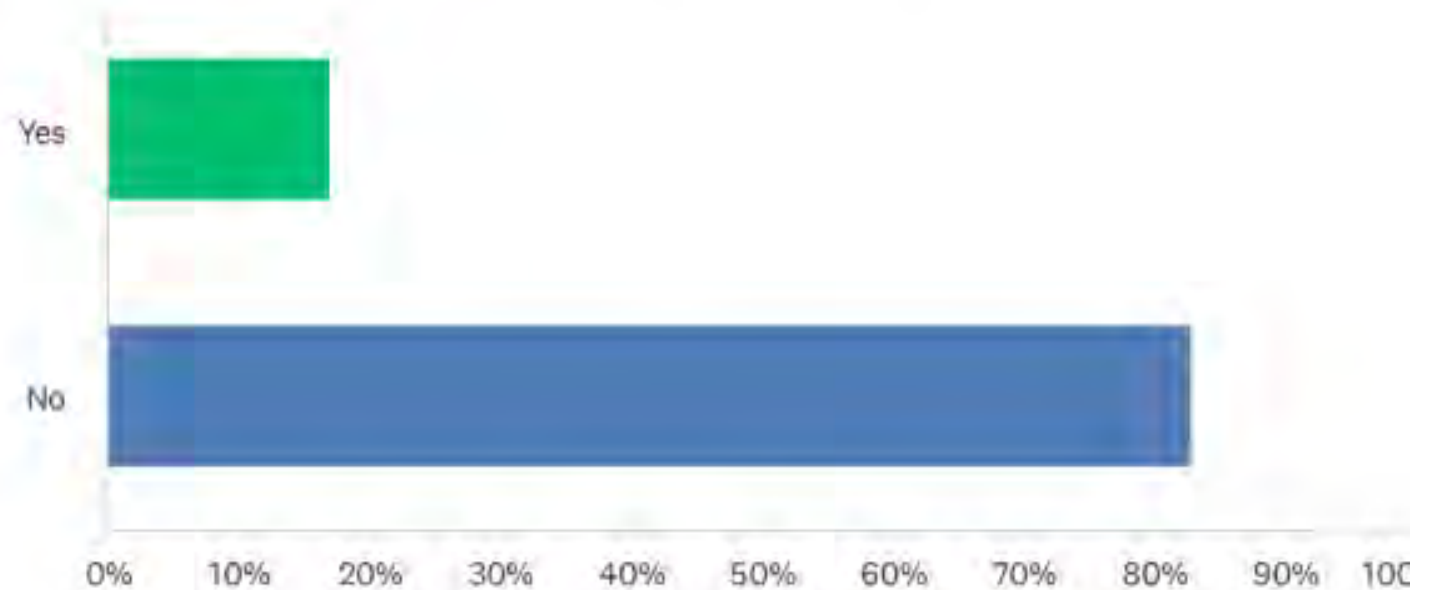


ANSWER CHOICES

RESPONSES

Q11 If yes, are you interested in learning more about preserved land?

Answered: 100 Skipped: 76



ANSWER CHOICES

RESPONSES

Appendix C: Financial Data

Sale Date	Adj. Sale \$	Asd. when Sold	Asd/Adj. Sale	Cur. Appraisal	Land Residual	Est. Land Value	Net Acres	Dollars/ Acre	ECF Area	Land Table	Use Code
04/28/22	\$188,255	\$0	0.00	\$246,375	\$188,255	\$246,375	17.17	\$10,962	SBNSBN - SUBURBAN NORTH		
09/15/23	\$900,000	\$167,200	18.58	\$371,922	\$900,000	\$371,922	36.00	\$25,000	RRNRRN-RURAL RESIDENTIAL NORTH	RES VAC	
04/14/22	\$650,000	\$136,200	20.95	\$279,223	\$650,000	\$279,223	21.46	\$30,289	RRNRRN-RURAL RESIDENTIAL NORTH	RES VAC	
04/15/22	\$1,350,000	\$839,400	62.18	\$1,327,930	\$1,350,000	\$1,327,930	45.85	\$29,444	LKSHRLMB-LAKE MICHIGAN BACKLOT/CHANNEL	RES 1 FAMILY	
09/11/23	\$187,000	\$90,700	48.50	\$218,715	\$161,557	\$193,272	18.19	\$8,882	RRSRRS-RURAL RES SOUTH	RESIDENTIAL	
05/10/21	\$195,000	\$74,200	38.05	\$241,828	\$195,000	\$241,828	30.13	\$6,472	AGAGR.AGRICULTURAL	AG VAC	
06/18/21	\$842,400	\$167,700	19.91	\$760,256	\$842,400	\$760,256	117.50	\$7,169	AGAGR.AGRICULTURAL	AG VAC	
09/30/22	\$49,000	\$25,500	52.04	\$64,570	\$49,000	\$64,570	22.70	\$2,159	RRSRRS-RURAL RES SOUTH	RES VAC	
05/28/21	\$110,000	\$44,900	40.82	\$133,218	\$110,000	\$133,218	20.27	\$5,427	AGAGR.AGRICULTURAL	AG VAC	
02/09/23	\$265,000	\$46,500	17.55	\$133,218	\$265,000	\$133,218	20.27	\$13,074	AGAGR.AGRICULTURAL	AG VAC	
12/13/22	\$1,264,000	\$318,900	25.23	\$1,055,673	\$1,203,058	\$994,731	152.16	\$7,906	AGAGR.AGRICULTURAL	AGRICULTURAL	
09/20/22	\$164,719	\$114,500	69.51	\$261,424	\$145,636	\$242,341	34.60	\$4,209	RRSRRS-RURAL RES SOUTH	RES VAC	

Totals:	\$6,165,374	\$2,025,700		\$5,094,352	\$6,059,906	\$4,988,884	536.31				
	Sale. Ratio =>	32.86				Average					
	Std. Dev. =>	20.81				per Net Acre=>	11,299.2 4				

Appendix D: Excel Workbook and GIS Data

See separately.