



# BYRON TOWNSHIP

## Master Plan Update

Adopted 1.23.17

Amended 2.26.18

Update Draft 1.4.24

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Byron Township Master Plan benefited from significant collaboration with the Township Board, Planning Commission, stakeholders and citizens of the community. Without this support and input, completion of this plan would not have been possible.

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PLANNING COMMISSION ADOPTION  
RESOLUTION

TOWNSHIP BOARD ADOPTION RESOLUTION

PLANNING COMMISSION AMENDMENT  
RESOLUTION

TOWNSHIP BOARD AMENDMENT  
RESOLUTION

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A scenic view of a residential development featuring large, multi-story houses with dark roofs and light-colored siding. The houses are situated along a large body of water, likely a lake or reservoir. In the background, there is a line of trees and a water tower on a hill. The sky is clear and blue. The foreground shows a grassy area with some yellow flowers and a sandy patch.

# CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



## FOREWORD

The 2024 Byron Township Master Plan Update reflects the community's deep concern for rural preservation, small town values, economic vitality and natural resource preservation. The plan represents the culmination of a year and a half of work by residents and officials. The effort illustrates a strong commitment to retain and strengthen local quality of life. This document outlines the preferred future for Byron Township and a comprehensive plan to achieve it. The plan is appropriately general, recognizing planning for the future is a delicate blend of art and science and sufficient flexibility will be needed to respond to the challenges of the future.

The 2024 Byron Township Master Plan Update, referred to as the "master plan" or "plan" in this document, was developed in accordance with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. The planning process allowed for the citizens of the Township to make decisions today that will create the Township of tomorrow. It is based on a recognition on the part of the Planning Commission that the pace and character of growth and development should be viewed in the context of its long-term impact on the community.

Byron Township has emerged from the recent recessionary period and has experienced consistent and significant growth since that time. Through the community input process of this plan, the residents of the Township have chosen to proceed with low impact patterns of development designed to enhance the sustainability of the region while encouraging higher intensity development in targeted and specific areas of the Township.

The master plan is a guiding tool and provides the framework for land use and zoning decisions and serves as a basis for capital improvement decisions and programming. Further, the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act requires zoning ordinances to be based on a master plan. Use of the master plan ensures that the desires of the community regarding future land development are translated into action - one special land use permit, site plan approval, variance or rezoning at a time. The day-to-day decisions and capital improvements collectively dictate the future of Byron Township.

## PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS

Byron Township's first master plan was completed in 1968. Subsequent plans were promulgated in 1988, 1998 and 2007. A downtown development authority (DDA) was established and the 2008 Byron Township DDA Master Plan was adopted for the downtown Byron Center area. Most recently in 2010, the Interchange Subarea Plan was adopted to guide development at three major interchanges within the Township. This 2024 plan update represents the Township's latest effort to respond to a changing environment, economy and demographic makeup of the Township and is based upon the wishes, needs, concerns and ideas of those who live, work and play in the community. These wishes and needs form the basis of the goals and vision presented in this plan.

## VISION AND GOALS

The following community vision and goal statements provide the foundation for the recommendations included in Chapter 5: Implementation. The community vision statement is a declaration of Byron Township's objectives and aspirations and is intended to guide its internal decision-making. Goals are identified as specific means of achieving the vision for the Township.

### Community Vision

Byron Township will be a tranquil, attractive, fiscally-responsible and family-oriented community which provides excellent educational, social, employment and cultural opportunities fostering strong, cohesive neighborhoods and a prosperous business community.

Goal 1. Large tracts of interconnected woodlands, open space and habitat will be preserved throughout the Township and public parks and recreational lands will be conveniently located, safe and well-maintained.

Goal 2. The residents and visitors of Byron Township will enjoy a safe and efficient network of trails, pathways and sidewalks between neighborhoods, services, schools, shopping areas and parks.

Goal 3. A safe, efficient, aesthetically attractive and well-maintained system of roadways will serve the businesses and residents of Byron Township, providing effective linkages between and among neighborhoods, shopping and employment areas and within the larger West Michigan region.

Goal 4. The Downtown Village Center will remain a quaint and vibrant shopping and living area with an attractive streetscape that will host a diverse range of opportunities for arts and recreation.

Goal 5. Byron Township will have a quality community image and an attractive identity in the area. The Township will be home to a diverse mix of businesses and industries, attractively developed and maintained and providing meaningful employment opportunities.

Goal 6. Byron Township will assume a leadership role in nurturing cooperative and productive communication with neighboring jurisdictions and local and regional agencies for the benefit of the Township and region.

Goal 7. The future land use ambitions of the Township will guide and direct the rational and sequential expansions of the public water and wastewater systems in the Township. Storm water will be effectively managed through advanced techniques that are sensitive to environmental impacts and offer aesthetic amenities to the community.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE MASTER PLAN

This plan is organized into five chapters:

### Chapter 1 Introduction

This chapter contains the community's vision and goals for the Township, a summary of past master planning efforts, an explanation of the purpose and goals of a master plan, and the organization of the plan.

### Chapter 2 Byron Today

Byron Today is an overview of existing conditions in the Township including population, housing, public utilities, land use, transportation, natural features, and community facilities. Existing conditions are analyzed and key findings are noted.

### Chapter 3 Public Input & Visioning

Citizen involvement in the planning effort is documented in this chapter. Further, the chapter references the public survey results gathered during the master planning process.

### Chapter 4 Byron Tomorrow

Byron Tomorrow is a framework for future land use distinctions and community character. It outlines and describes future land use and includes maps that illustrate prescribed land uses at specific locations.

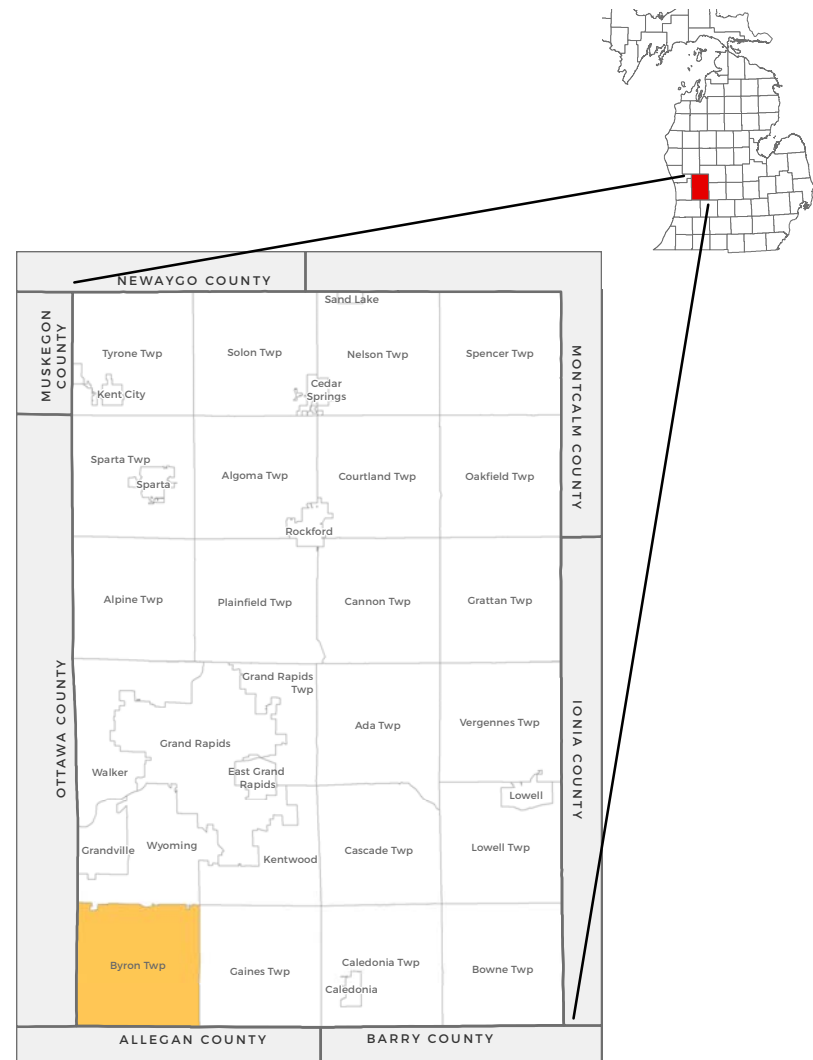
### Chapter 5 Implementation

Finally, the Implementation chapter includes a description of the policies and actions that will assist the Township to realizing the vision of this plan.

Map 1.

## Location of Byron Township

Byron Township is situated in the southwestern portion of Michigan's Lower Peninsula approximately seven miles from downtown Grand Rapids, the state's second largest city. The Township is approximately thirty-six square miles in area.





# CHAPTER 2

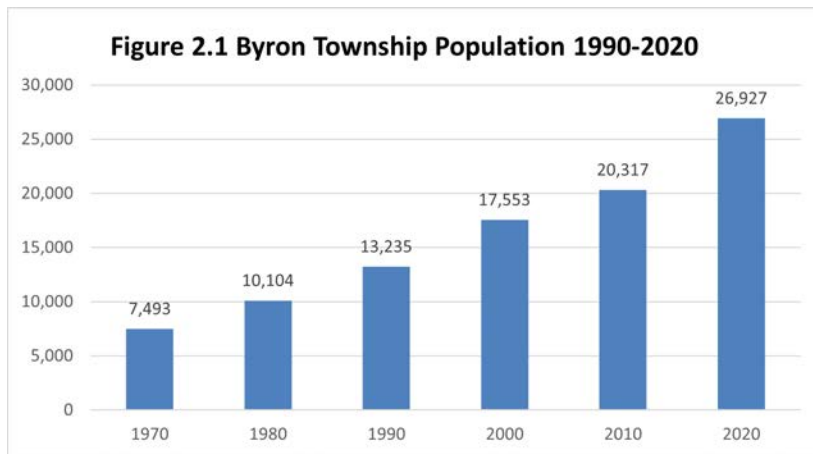
BYRON TODAY

## POPULATION

Population and demographic change are among the most important measures to express growth and its likely impact on land uses in a community. Therefore, it is helpful to recognize the Township’s population and growth trends in preparing a realistic and meaningful master plan. This section of Byron Today describes Township population and demographic characteristics and serves as part of the foundation for drawing conclusions about the Township’s likely future.

### Population and Projections

Byron Township has undergone considerable population, economic and land use changes in the last 20 years. Understanding population characteristics is important for determining the type of housing demands and recreational facilities that may be needed. Younger residents joining the community will demand greater public services in terms of education and park and recreation facilities. An aging population will require additional senior living facilities and the provision of affordable housing to allow residents to “age in place” as living and support needs change.



The Township has grown steadily, as shown in Figure 2.1. Between 1970 and 2020, the average 10-year growth rate was just over 29%. Using that same rate, the Township could expect close to 35,000 residents in 2030, 45,000 residents in 2040, and 58,000 in 2050, or a doubling of the population over the next 30 years.

In the last 10 years, Byron Township (32.8%) was only surpassed by Jamestown Charter Township (36.9%) in growth, although the population of Jamestown is significantly smaller (Figure 2.2). Georgetown Charter Township saw the greatest increase in residents (7,106) compared to Byron’s (6,655), but the rate (15.1%) was slower. Byron Township’s growth rate significantly exceeded Kent County’s growth rate (9.2%).

| Community               | 2010    | 2020    | Increase | % Change |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|----------|----------|
| Byron Twp.              | 20,317  | 26,972  | 6,655    | 32.8%    |
| Dorr Twp.               | 7,439   | 7,916   | 477      | 6.4%     |
| Gaines Charter Twp.     | 25,146  | 28,812  | 3,666    | 14.6%    |
| Grandville              | 15,378  | 16,803  | 1,425    | 9.3%     |
| Jamestown Charter Twp.  | 7,034   | 9,630   | 2,596    | 36.9%    |
| Salem Twp.              | 4,446   | 5,156   | 710      | 16.0%    |
| Georgetown Charter Twp. | 46,985  | 54,091  | 7,106    | 15.1%    |
| Kent County             | 602,662 | 657,974 | 55,312   | 9.2%     |

### Age, Gender, Ethnicity and Race

In 2000, Byron Township’s median age of residents was 33.9 years. By 2010, that figure had risen to 38.8 years and then dropped to 37.6 in 2021. The population trend lines have remains fairly similar over the last 20 years, with the majority of the population within the working adult age category from 18 to 64 (58% of population).

Figure 2.3 Byron Township Population by Age 2000-2020

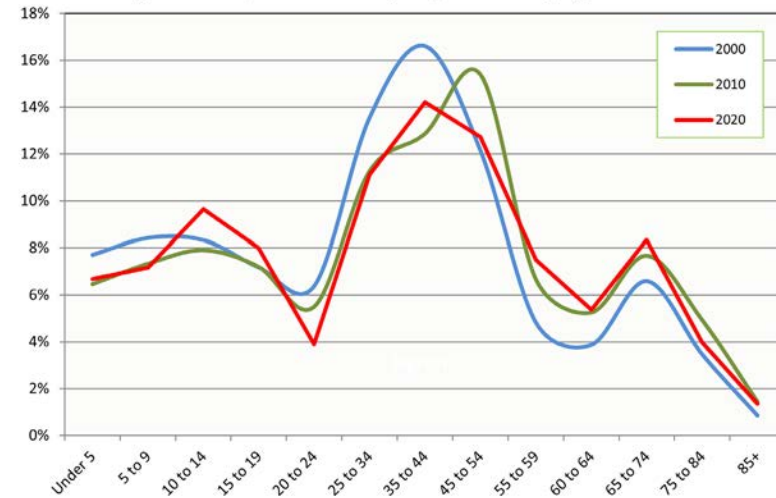


Figure 2.4 Byron Township Households 2021

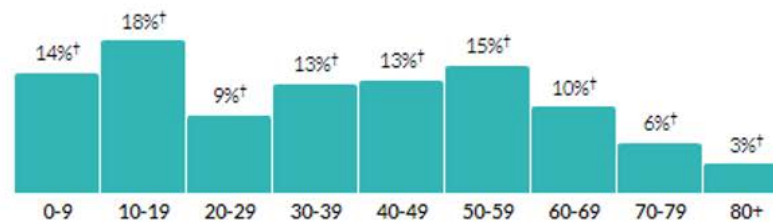
**37.6**

Median age

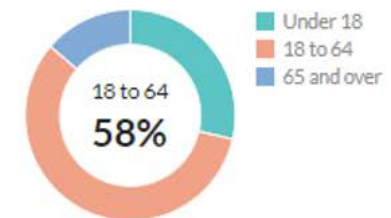
a little higher than the figure in Kent County: 35.5

a little less than the figure in Michigan: 39.8

Population by age range



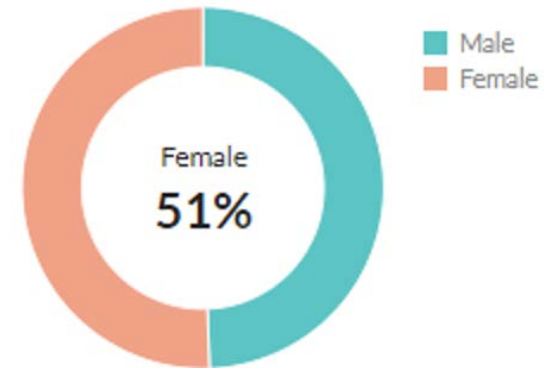
Population by age category



Approximately 51% of the population is female and 49% male.

Concerning race and ethnicity, the 81% of residents are white, one race alone. However, the Township is becoming more diverse over time with Black, Asian, Hispanic, residents, and those with two or more races, as show by the decrease from 93% white, one race alone, in 2010.

**Figure 2.5 Byron Township Gender 2021**



**Figure 2.6 Byron Township Race and Ethnicity 2021**



## Households

The total number of households in Byron Township in 2021 was 9,204, with an average of 2.9 persons per household (Figure 2.7). The number of persons per household exceeded the household size for Kent County and Michigan. The quality of the community and schools is certainly a reason for this higher figure.

Married couples made up the majority of households (72%) with female householder (13%), non-family household (10%), and male household (6%) following.

## Income and Education Attainment

Bouncing back from the recessionary period, median household income increase from \$51,774 in 2010 to \$81,323 in 2021 (Figure 2.8). This increase (57.1%) was significantly greater than nearby jurisdictions. Median household in 2021 was 20% higher than Kent County and 130% greater than the state of Michigan.

A higher median income may be attributed to the high level of educational attainment in Byron Township. Nearly 94% of Township residents have at least a high school diploma or equivalency (Figure 2.9), up from 91% in 2010. Over 33% of Township residents have a bachelor's degree or higher, up from 29% in 2014.

**Figure 2.7 Byron Township Households 2021**

**9,204**

Number of households

Kent County: 249,821

Michigan: 3,976,729

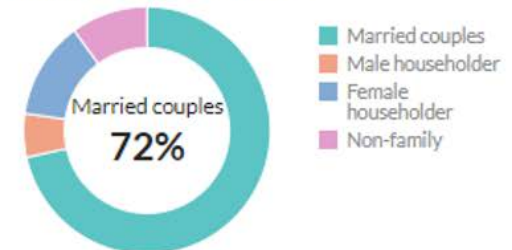
**2.9**

Persons per household

about 10 percent higher than the figure in Kent County: 2.6

about 20 percent higher than the figure in Michigan: 2.5

Population by household type





**\$35,307**

Per capita income

about the same as the amount in Kent County: \$35,751

about the same as the amount in Michigan: \$34,768

**Figure 2.8 Byron Township Household Income 2021**

**\$81,323**

Median household income

about 20 percent higher than the amount in Kent County: \$69,786

about 1.3 times the amount in Michigan: \$63,202

Household income



**Figure 2.9 Byron Township Educational Attainment 2021**

**94%**

High school grad or higher

about the same as the rate in Kent County: 92.1%

a little higher than the rate in Michigan: 91.6%

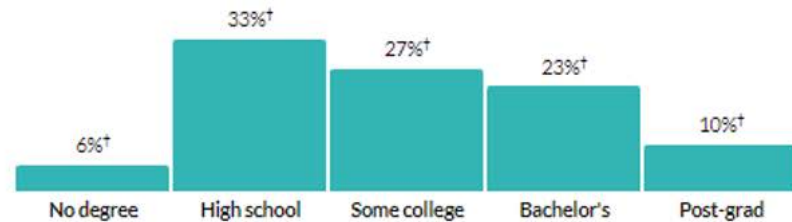
**33.4%**

Bachelor's degree or higher

about 90 percent of the rate in Kent County: 38.1%

about 10 percent higher than the rate in Michigan: 30.6%

Population by highest level of education



## HISTORIC AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Byron Township is characterized by several major creeks, gently rolling hills, open fields, the unincorporated village of Byron Center and newer residential and industrial development. Byron Township is comprised of lands falling under urban, suburban and rural contexts.

The Township abuts the City of Wyoming to the north, a “first tier” suburb of Grand Rapids that, for years, appeared to absorb much of the growth of southwestern Kent County. Over time, as Wyoming has approached build-out, the open spaces and rural atmosphere that embodied Byron Township served as a magnet for residential development, resulting in increasing growth pressures. While the pace and scale of growth is manageable, there is a risk that without effective planning, this growth will begin to degrade the very natural and aesthetic resources that draw it.

### Historic Resources

The first town meeting was held at the house of Charles H. Oaks, in the Village of Granville (to the northwest of Byron) on Monday, May 2, 1836. The State Legislature created Byron, originally part of Wyoming Township, in 1848. The first general election was held November of that year, where twenty votes were cast for President and Vice President.

Byron’s first years progressed gradually, as did growth in the Township. The Township was heavily wooded and moving to the community to farm meant encountering the hazards of opening up a forest. Over time, however, Byron became one of Kent County’s most productive agricultural communities, with varied soil well



adapted to farming and livestock. Fruit orchards were especially successful in Byron, and by 1870, the population had grown to 1,328 people.

Balanced with modern industrial facilities, planned residential developments, a quaint village center and vast open spaces, the Township enjoys a unique identity.

Today, Byron is emerging as a “second tier” suburb of Grand Rapids, Michigan, though the Township still retains much of its rural roots. Balanced with modern industrial facilities, planned residential developments, a quaint village center and vast open spaces, the Township enjoys a unique identity.

Preserving and expressing the Township’s history, the Byron Center Historical Society maintains a museum on Prescott Street in the former Township Hall. The museum displays historic artifacts relevant to Byron Township and collects current artifacts to exhibit for future generations. In addition, photos and descriptions of historical sites in the Township available at the Township Offices.

## Water Resources

### Creeks and Watersheds

While there are no significant natural lakes or rivers, several creeks and the springs that form these creeks flow throughout the Township. These waterways comprise the four prominent drainage basins, or sub-watersheds, in the Township.

- » Black Creek. The Buck Creek watershed is located generally in the eastern half of the Township and flows north through the City of Wyoming to the Grand River. Buck Creek is within the Grand River watershed.
- » East Branch of Rush Creek. The East Branch Creek watershed is comprised of north and west portions of the Township. The watershed drains to the northwest and west into Ottawa County and its waters ultimately flow into the Grand River.
- » Buck Creek. The Black Creek watershed drains into

Allegan County, to the south of the Township. The Creek’s watershed is towards the southwest of the Township and is part of the Rabbit River watershed.

- » Little Rabbit River. The Little Rabbit River watershed is located within the south-central portions of the Township, just south of the Downtown Village Center. It drains into Allegan County to the south and into the Rabbit River.





Water quality within a watershed is directly related to the land management practices within that watershed. For example, where new development creates large amounts of impervious surface, and stormwater is not properly managed, it is possible that the flow of the runoff into a creek or stream could be increased to a point that stream bank erosion occurs. Stream bank erosion has the potential of increasing silt material on the stream bed, changing the chemistry of the water with phosphates, nitrogen and other chemicals, and altering the turbidity of the water. All of these changes may have an effect on the wildlife that is dependent on the waterway for survival. Map 2 illustrates the watersheds, creeks, streams, drains and lakes in the Township. A watershed, being an area where all of these water attributes are interconnected, should be looked at closely when assessing the impacts of new development within the Township.

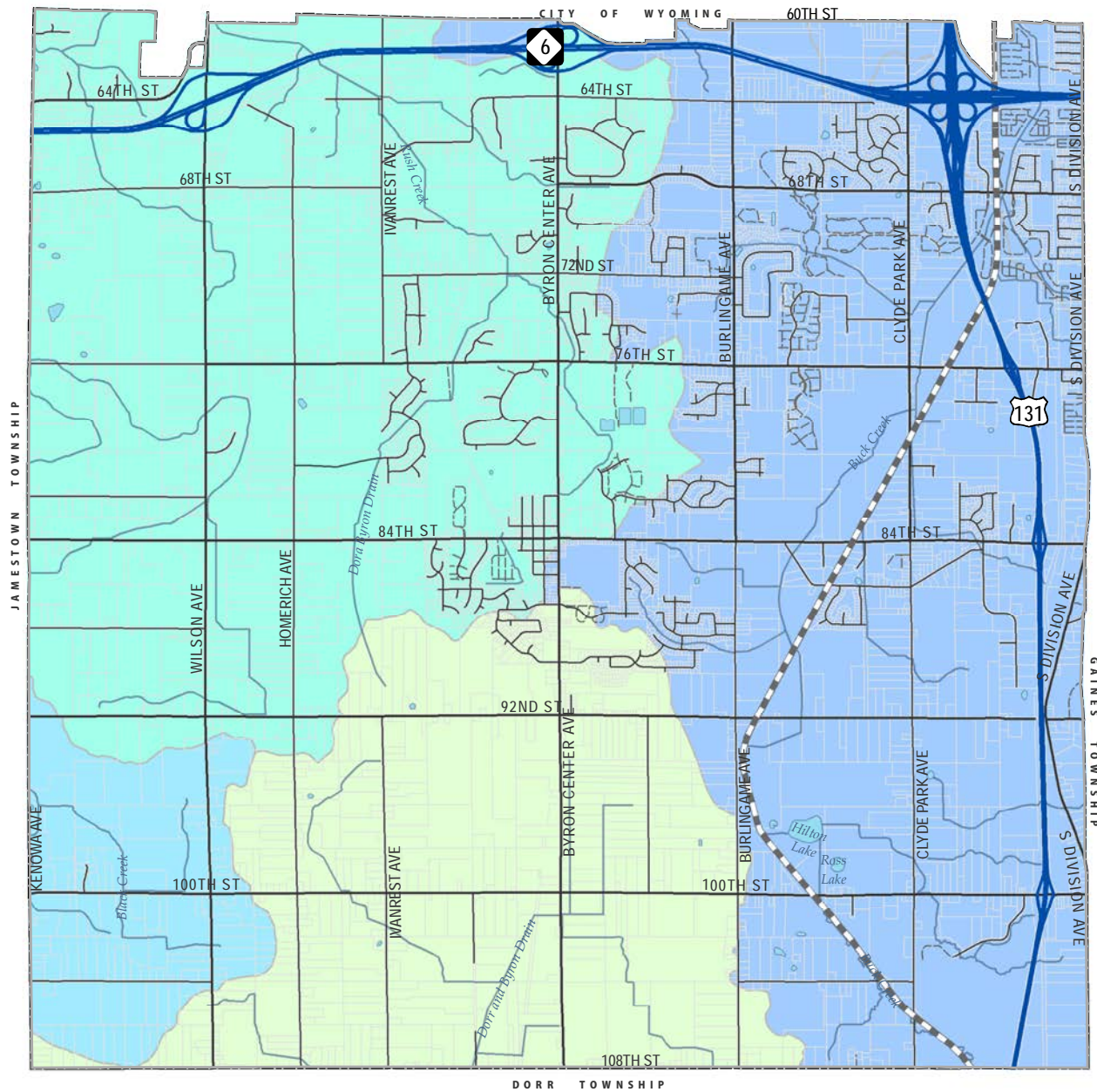
### Groundwater

The rural portion of the Township receives potable water from groundwater sources. It is important that quality of groundwater in the Township be protected from potential sources of contamination. There are a few ways groundwater can be polluted. Two primary contributors are application of fertilizer on crops and residential lawns and septic tank drainfield effluent. Proper fertilizer application management and septic tank maintenance may help to significantly reduce nitrate levels in groundwater. Abandoned wells may also be a threat to groundwater quality if they have not been properly closed or “capped.” In addition, open wells may expose groundwater supplies to surface contaminants.

As the population in Byron Township continues to grow, natural resources will inevitably be impacted. The groundwater supplies

Map 2.  
Watersheds

-  Black Creek
-  Buck Creek
-  East Branch Rush Creek
-  Little Rabbit River



in the Township, even though abundant, can be affected as more area becomes impervious and with greater demand placed on groundwater supplies. Since some drinking water in Byron Township is derived from groundwater sources – from private wells – protecting this key resource is of vital interest to the Township.

### Wetlands

Wetlands play a significant role in regulating the movement of water within watersheds. Wetlands are characterized by water saturation in the root zone, or above the soil surface, for a certain amount of time during the year. The fluctuation of the water table above and below the soil surface is unique to each wetland type.

In addition, wetlands store precipitation and surface water and then slowly release the water into groundwater and the



*Without wetlands, water quality decreases, areas are prone to flash flooding and habitat for specialized plants and animals is reduced.*

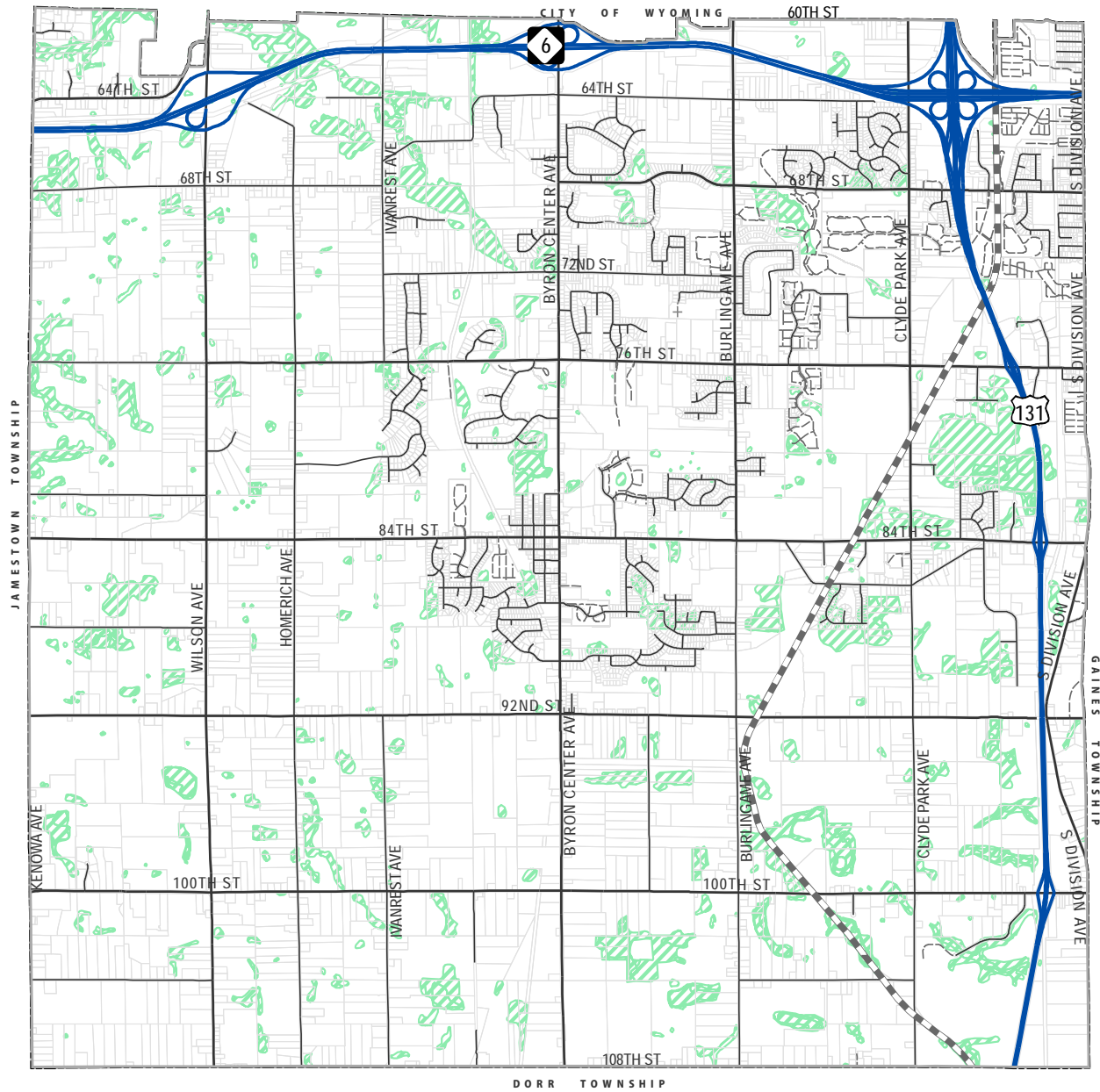
atmosphere. They help maintain the level of the water table and may serve as filters for sediments and organic matter. They may also serve as a sink to catch water, or transform nutrients, organic compounds, metals, and components of organic matter. Wetlands have the ability to impact levels of nitrogen, phosphorous, carbon, sulfur, and various metals. Wetlands can help improve water quality, reduce flash flooding and augment habitat for specialized plants and animals.

The substantial wetlands in Byron Township are found primarily near Buck Creek, along the Knight Drain and along the Hamm Drain. Scattered, isolated wetland areas are identified on Map 3, which was drawn from the REGIS geographic information system and the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI). A variety of federal government agencies helped to create this map, and the process included the consolidation and interpretation of aerial photographs, land cover maps and soil maps. This map is intended to illustrate the general location of wetlands and the exact location of any wetland should be determined during a field site inspection by a qualified specialist.

Wetlands are an important resource that should be prioritized for protection during large-scale development proposals and open space development.

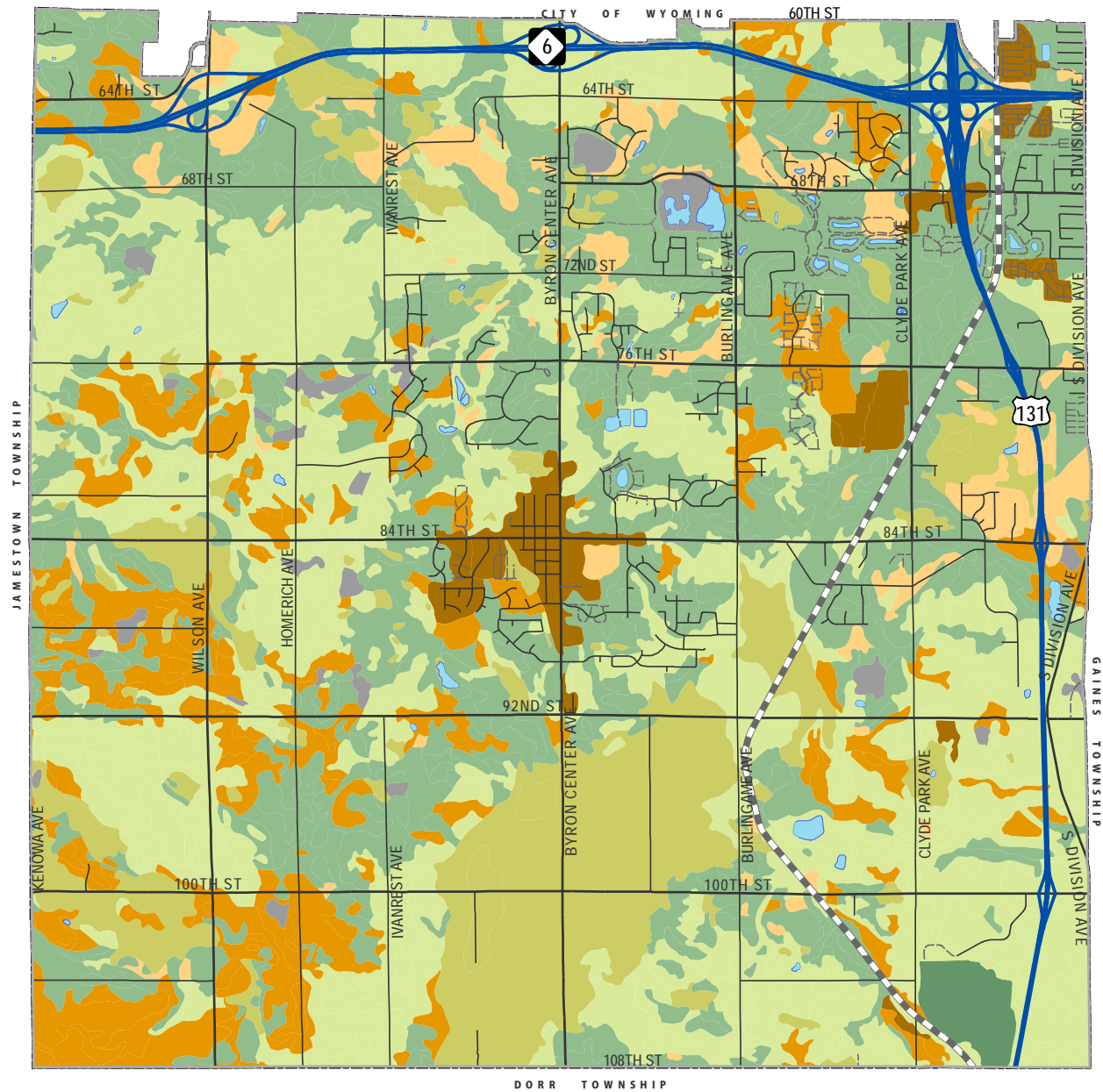
Map 3.  
Wetlands

 Wetlands



Map 4.  
Soils

-  Varies
-  Loam
-  Muck
-  Sand
-  Loamy-Sand
-  Sandy-Loam
-  Gravel
-  Urban (Complex)



## Soils

Natural features can provide enhanced opportunities for development and agriculture but may also limit land use intensity or development altogether. Soil composition is a significant element of land use planning, as soil characteristics play an integral role in determining development suitability. For example, some soils are not well suited for individual septic systems; the composition of soils determines stability and suitability for structural development and therefore may threaten groundwater quality as well due to lack of proper filtration. Agricultural productivity is also determined, in part, by the fertility and permeability of the soil. Nonetheless, sizeable growth in these areas will warrant the development and/or extension of public utilities. Map 4 indicates soil types in Byron Township.

## HOUSING & ECONOMY

This section analyzes the housing and economic development trends within the community and will also analyze building permit trends, general housing characteristics and employment characteristics of the Township.

### Housing

#### Units, Occupancy and Ownership

The dominant form of housing in the Township is single-family, with 77% of units classified single-family detached homes.

Since 2014, the total number of housing units in Byron Township has increase from 8,213 to 9,628 (Figure 2.10). Of the current number of units, 96% are occupied, leaving only 424 vacant, or 4.4%. Of the occupied units, 85% (7,787) are owner-occupied and 15% (1,417) are renter-occupied. The proportion of renter-occupied units increased slightly from 2014, where 14% (1,082) of units were renter-occupied and 86% (6,640) of units were owner-occupied.

### Housing Values

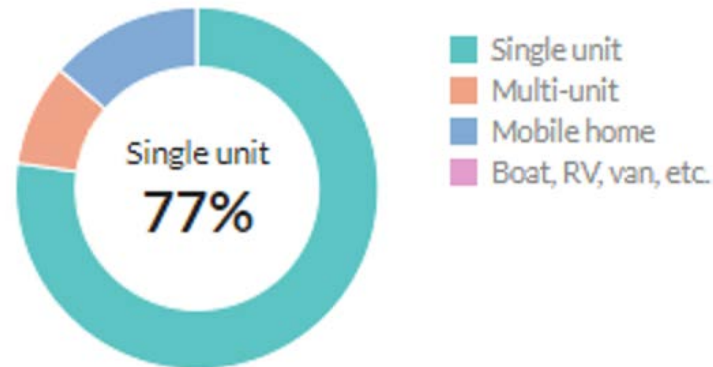
Median housing value of owner-occupied units in the Township has increased significantly since 2010, from \$170,000 to \$253,700. Compared to Kent County, the median value is 25% greater and is 150% greater than the median value for owner-occupied homes in the State of Michigan.

### Housing Age

There move-in years of new Byron Township residents give an indication of when new housing units became available. For instance, 64% of residents moved into the Township since 2010, meaning the number of new housing units increased at a similar rate to accommodate the move-ins.



**Figure 2.10 Byron Township Households 2021**



**Figure 2.11 Byron Township Housing and Occupancy 2021**

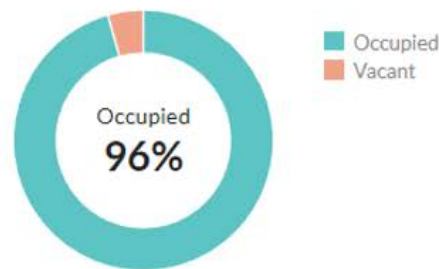
**9,628**

Number of housing units

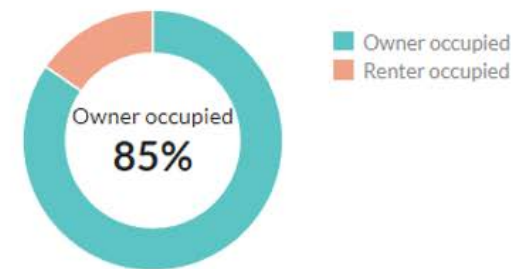
Kent County: 262,724

Michigan: 4,566,504

Occupied vs. Vacant



Ownership of occupied units



**Figure 2.12 Byron Township Housing Value 2021**

**\$253,700**

Median value of owner-occupied housing units

about 25 percent higher than the amount in Kent County: \$206,600

about 1.5 times the amount in Michigan: \$172,100

Value of owner-occupied housing units



**Figure 2.13 Year Moved In- Percentage of Population 2021**



## Commercial Development

Commercial development projects continue to be approved and constructed in Byron Township. Permits for new commercial, office, and industrial buildings have added consistent non-residential growth in the Township.

## Employment

2022 Census data shows unemployment in Byron Township and Kent County in the range of 8%. While 10.6% of residents in Kent County live below the poverty line, only 6.6% of residents in Byron Township are below the line.

In conjunction with a large portion of the population employed in manufacturing industries, the Township is home to a number of major employers and institutions. Over 1,600 acres in the Township is devoted to commercial and industrial land in the Township. The Township has several industrial parks and commercial clusters. The following is a listing of several of the larger employers with locations in the Township:

- » Tanger Outlets
- » SpartanNash
- » Center Manufacturing
- » Buist Electric
- » VanHaren Electric
- » Frito Lay
- » Gypsum Supply
- » Byron Center Public Schools

## EXISTING LAND USE

The manner in which the land in a community is presently being used influences the Township's tax base, services offered, quality of life, traffic flow and utility and infrastructure needs. The existing land use pattern provides a template to evaluate key issues and strategies related to future land planning. Land use in Byron Township covers the spectrum from wooded and agricultural areas to high-density residential, commercial and industrial uses. Currently, the land use pattern in the Township is primarily rural, although the Township has begun to emerge as a second-tier suburb of Grand Rapids. The land use categories used on the existing land use map (Map 6) are defined as follows:

### Agricultural

The majority of agricultural land in the Township exists in the southern, southwestern, and western reaches of the Township. These areas exist outside the water and sewer utility service boundary.

### Residential

The most predominant land use in the Township is residential. This includes a variety of housing types including condominiums, single-family attached and detached, and two-family units on varying lot sizes. The majority of recent approved residential developments as seen in Map 5 can be found within short distance of the interchanges in the northeast portion of the Township.

### Manufactured Home Park

Manufactured Home Parks within the Township are primarily found in the northeast adjacent to the US-131/M-6 interchange. Additionally, one more manufactured home park exists south of 84th Street just to the west of the Downtown Village Center.

## Multi-Family Residential

Multi-family residential includes land occupied by structures containing dwelling units for three or more households. There is very limited multi-family residential use within the Township. The most notable multi-family development is the Byron Lakes Apartments south of 68th Street between Clyde Park and Burlingame avenues.

## Office

Includes parcels used for professional services, such as medical and dental centers and professional and business offices.

## Commercial

These are areas used for wholesale, retail, entertainment or services and include ancillary parking areas. Commercial development within the Township has increased within recent years most notably with the recently-completed Tanger Outlet Mall near the US-131/84th Street interchange. Commercial nodes are scattered elsewhere throughout the Township as well, primarily in the Downtown Village Center, along the west edge of Division Avenue, and concentrated around the 68th and 76th Street interchanges.

## Industrial

This designation includes parcels used for manufacturing and processes purposes (with or without buildings). The 76th Street and Clyde Park corridors contains several major industrial uses including Spartan Stores' distribution center, large vehicle service stations and several other distribution and logistics centers. Byron Commerce Drive south and west of the new Tanger Mall contains a number of truck centers and vehicle equipment locations. The area north of Alles Drive is another major industrial center within the Township as well containing uses such as electrical contractors, heavy equipment rental and automobile components manufacturing.

## Public/Quasi-Public

Areas designated public or quasi-public include public and private schools, places of worship, public parks and trailways, government buildings, preserved open spaces within residential developments, private recreational facilities, and all publicly-owned lands (including landfills and rights-of-way) fall under the category of Public/Quasi-Public.

## SUB-AREAS

One of Byron Township's many strengths is the diversity of unique areas within it and the variety of neighborhoods, employment districts, shopping centers and developable lands. The seven areas below include key locations within the Township where future development will play a critical role in defining the Township's image and character. These are areas where there is the highest likelihood of new development or redevelopment.

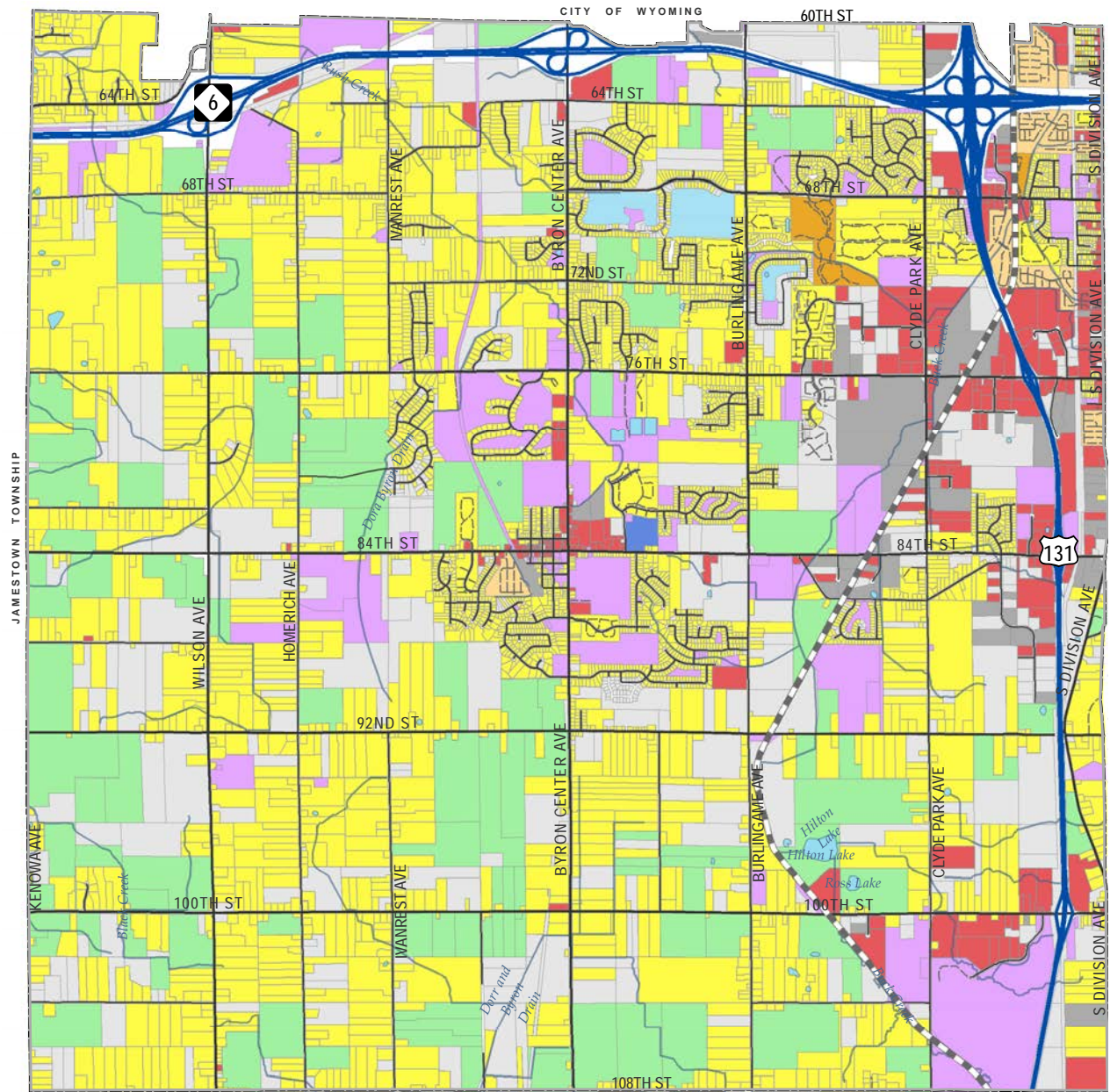
### Wilson Gateway

This sub-area includes the environs surrounding the M-6 highway interchange with Wilson Avenue. The dominant land use is currently rural and residential with homes situated on larger lots located along major roadways. Additionally, some land in active agricultural production can be found as well. Several drainage channels and wetlands are found in this location as well. The largest of these wetlands is located north of M-6 and impedes the potential for development east of Wilson Avenue.

A few small scale commercial uses are located near the intersection currently. Ironwood Golf Course and Plant 1 Landscape Supply are situated to the southeast of the interchange but are only accessible from 64th Street. A small Spectrum Health urgent care facility is located in an 85.4-acre 425 Agreement area north of the highway interchange under the jurisdiction of the City of Wyoming.

Map 5.  
Existing Land Use

-  Agricultural
-  Residential
-  Manufactured Home Park
-  Multi-Family Residential
-  Office
-  Commercial
-  Industrial
-  Public/Quasi-public
-  Vacant



While much of this area is currently undeveloped or developed with low-intensity uses, the area provides a key gateway into the Township given the visibility at this interchange. Natural resources, namely wetlands and watercourses, and availability and capacity of public utilities pose a significant issue as future development in this location is considered. As utilities extend from the north, the development potential of this area must be reconsidered.

### North Gateway

Centered around the M-6 interchange with Byron Center Avenue, this sub-area is defined by Burlingame Avenue on the east, Ivanrest Avenue on the west, 64th Street on the south, and the City of Wyoming corporate boundary on the north. Current land uses are primarily agriculture with scattered single-family homes along Ivanrest and Byron Center avenues. A major church is located on 64th Street east of Byron Center Avenue. On the northeast corner of the 64th Street-Byron Center Avenue intersection is the Saint Mary's medical facility with the much larger Metro Health Hospital Village located on the east side of Byron Center Avenue north of M-6 in the City of Wyoming. The Township has entered into a 425 Agreement with Wyoming to provide utilities and services to a 27.3-acre area immediately north of the interchange.

Development pressures near this interchange are quickly rising. Medical facilities and associated medical and residential land uses are beginning to take shape surrounding the interchange. Large, undeveloped parcels south of the highway lend themselves to larger-scale development.

### Downtown Village Center

The downtown is an unincorporated "village" in the geographic center of the Township at the intersection of Byron Center Avenue and 84th Street. Byron Center is a unique place within the Township. Similar to small, historic villages in Michigan, the downtown includes a core central business district with one- and two-story buildings close to or lining the sidewalk. Surrounding the commercial core are established single-family homes on modest-sized lots, places of worship, parks and limited industrial and office

uses. The village was originally a train stop along the New York Central Railroad and several of the buildings are well over 100 years old. Because of this, the downtown provides a historic charm and unique sense of place and identity.

Until somewhat recently (within the last 40 years), the community was set amidst agricultural fields and open land. Today, the Downtown Village Center is surrounded by subdivisions and condominiums, and pressures for strip commercial development, particularly to the east, are escalating. Some strip-style commercial development has already occurred along the district's fringes; however, the core of the business district has been relatively stagnant in recent years.

### Burlingame-84th

As 84th Street extends east out of the Downtown Village Center, the first major intersection is with Burlingame Avenue. Currently, this area is predominantly open space and agricultural land. Only one of the four corners of the intersection has been developed, the Byron Center High School at the southeast corner. This particular intersection remains a key development location situated between the Downtown Village Center and the development off 84th Street near the US-131 interchange (84th Street East).

### Southeast Industrial

This area includes the property near the US-131 and 100th Street interchange. Division Avenue forms the eastern edge of the sub-area (also the boundary with Gaines Township), while Clyde Park Avenue borders to the west. Natural drainage channels define the northern and southern boundaries. Small-scale light industrial and service commercial users are currently located along both sides of 100th Street and transition to residential near the intersection of 100th Street and Clyde Park. Homes, service commercial uses and a church are located between US-131 and Division Avenue. To the south of the sub-area west of US-131 is the South Kent Landfill.

The interchange is itself an impediment to new development given its design constraints and limited capacity to handle significant traffic volumes. No major upgrades to the interchange are planned

by MDOT in the near future. The area is well-served by water and sewer service and could accommodate additional growth in the area.

## TRANSPORTATION

A safe and well-balanced transportation network is essential to the health of any jurisdiction, as it links activities and land uses within a community to those in the broader region. In addition, features of transportation resources typically play a critical role in determining the nature and intensities of land uses in a community.

Byron Township is fortunate to have a transportation system providing abundant access for motorists. The Township's land uses do not generate congestion on the level that many Kent County communities experience. Further, due to a lack of natural or man-made obstacles, most roads in Byron navigate straight through the Township, providing sufficient connections with neighboring communities. In other words, roads largely follow a grid pattern. Two limited-access expressways (M-6 and US-131) connect the Township to the larger West Michigan region. The recently-completed M-6 highway has fueled concerns of increased "sprawl" in the community.

### Commuting Patterns

As described earlier in this chapter, the automobile is overwhelmingly the most used form of transportation in Byron Township. This is likely due to disposable incomes, low and moderate density land use patterns and the segregation of land uses. The latter two are common attributes of most rural and suburban communities that preclude the feasibility of walking to meaningful destinations, since most land uses are too far apart (in other words, dwellings are separated from places of employment and services by distances which make walking to these places undesirable).

This general pattern is emerging in Byron Township, which is driven by current zoning that groups similar land uses together. While this ensures land use compatibility, it may discourage

practical pedestrian trips. Despite the Township's reliance on the automobile, non-motorized forms of transportation can help improve regional air problems and help combat obesity, which may lead to heart disease, diabetes, certain cancers, high blood pressure and other health maladies. The Township currently lacks a comprehensive sidewalk system linking schools, neighborhoods and businesses.

### Highways

As growth pressures increase, areas surrounding the highway interchanges are anticipated to alter the character of adjacent land in the future. These interchanges have also perceptibly altered traffic patterns in the Township. Prior to completion of the M-6, east-west traffic along major corridors, such as 84th Street, was relatively heavy. Without a better connection between industry along the US-131 corridor and I-196 in Ottawa County, trucks and employees would travel east-west Township roads. However, motorists traveling between US-131 and Ottawa County recognize the swift alternative that M-6 offers. Residents and truck drivers in the Township travel north to access M-6, and thus M-6 has fostered more north-south traffic in the community. Meanwhile, east-west traffic may have lessened.

### Roads

An approach to gaining a better understanding of transportation networks has been to categorize roads into "classifications" pursuant to the road's function, character or capacity. Kent County roads are divided into several categories. Highways include limited-access roadways and designed to carry large volumes of traffic at high speeds.

Major arterials serve major centers of metropolitan areas, provide a high degree of mobility and can also provide mobility through rural areas. Unlike their access-controlled counterparts, abutting land uses can be served directly. Forms of access include driveways to specific parcels and at-grade intersections with other roadways.

Minor arterials provide service for trips of moderate length, serve geographic areas that are smaller than major arterials.

Major and minor collectors serve a critical role in the roadway network by gathering traffic from local roads and funneling them to the arterial network. Generally, major collector routes are longer in length; have lower connecting driveway densities; have higher speed limits; are spaced at greater intervals; have higher annual average traffic volumes; and may have more travel lanes than their minor collector counterparts.

Local roads include other section-line collector roads and residential streets. Roads in Byron Township are under the jurisdiction of the Kent County Road Commission (KCRC). The KCRC promulgates regulations for curb cuts, driveway distances, landscaping in the public right-of-way, and other aspects of road development. The Township and the KCRC jointly fund improvements and maintenance for local roads. Generally, roads in the Township are in good condition. Map 7 illustrates roadway classifications, and Map 8 indicates 2015 traffic counts.

Many of the county local roads are rolling, two-lane, high-speed highways cutting through rural lands. As land abutting these roadways develops, the placement of curb cuts needs to be strategic to guarantee motorist safety and adequate clear vision distances.

### Public Transit

The Rapid provides fixed-route services to Byron Township and the Cities of Grand Rapids, East Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kentwood, Walker, and Wyoming and the Townships of Gaines, Cascade and Alpine. In Byron Township, Route 1 travels south along Division Avenue, then west along 68th Street, then north along Clyde Park Avenue into the City of Wyoming. The two stops in the Township are at 68th Street and Division Avenue, and 68th Street and Clyde Park Avenue. Additionally, the recently-implemented Silver Line BRT (bus rapid transit) provides rapid bus service (peak service every seven minutes with a dedicated travel lane) to the downtown Central Station just outside the Township with a park-and-ride lot

and bus station located on the northeast corner of 60th Street and Division Avenue.

### Complete Streets

Planning the Township's transportation system involves more than just moving vehicles efficiently and safely. A transportation system needs to meet the needs of all types of users - motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and individuals with disabilities. In some cases, this is accomplished with lower vehicle speeds to be supportive of bicyclists and pedestrians, while in other places, wider vehicle lanes and higher speeds may be needed to allow for movement of vehicles and goods.

The design of the transportation system also needs to reflect the context of adjacent land uses. Nationally, this approach is often referred to as "complete streets," harmonizing streets with their surroundings while interlacing transportation networks to meet the mobility needs of all users. The Township should implement context-sensitive street design solutions to accommodate all users and ability levels by installing ADA-compliant curbs and ramps, pedestrian-friendly crosswalks, sidewalks of appropriate width and distance from roadway, and on-street bicycle facilities (where feasible and appropriate).

### Sidewalks and Trails

Sidewalks for pedestrian traffic and other non-motorized transportation is provided throughout the Township. However, sidewalks tend to be intermittent along the primary corridors of the Township and there are numerous gaps that must be connected by capital infrastructure projects or by private developers during formal development reviews.

Kent Trails provides a key linkage from the north end of the Township to the Downtown Village Center. The trail is relatively flat and accessible to bicyclists, runners, walkers and all other forms of non-motorized transportation. The Fred Meijer M-6 trail complements the trail network by providing an east-west connection just north of the South Beltline Highway. An additional



leg of Kent Trails connects the Sierrafield Condominiums on the north side of 76th Street to Douglas Walker Park passing just east of Winchester Cemetery.

With the future Interurban Trail from Kalamazoo to Grand Rapids currently in the planning stages, trail connections to this new regional trail should be made from the existing Township trail network.

### Air and Rail

There are no airports located within Byron Township. Commercial passenger air service is available to local residents through the Gerald R. Ford International Airport, located approximately eight miles from Byron in Cascade Township. The Gerald R. Ford International Airport is Michigan's second busiest commercial airport, offering ten passenger airlines that serve 7,000 travelers each day. The airport provides daily service to regional hubs and direct flights to select cities throughout the country.

The Penn Central Railroad provides north-south Conrail service regularly in the Township, though the line is not used very frequently. Several smaller enterprises and the distribution center for Spartan Foods are the primary users of the railroad in Byron. The New York Central Railroad has been abandoned for some time, and the majority of the right-of-way south of 84th Street has been sold to adjacent property owners. The northern portion of the railway has been developed into the Kent Trails trail facility.

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Community facilities play an elemental role in augmenting civic engagement, sponsoring cultural events, and promoting community pride. Recreational opportunities, such as a trailway that links communities, are quality of life indicators and such facilities characterize Byron Township. The health and leisure benefits of the Kent Trails and other recreation lands extend beyond the Township. In addition to recreational facilities, public schools and a fine arts center provide neighborhood spaces for interaction, learning, and community building, and safety services provide a compulsory

service to the community.

### Educational Facilities

#### Private and Charter Schools

Private school facilities can provide local residents with a unique educational opportunity. Four private schools are located within the Township. These include Zion Christian School, located at 7555 Byron Center Avenue; South Christian High School, located at 160 68th Street; Byron Center Christian School, located at 8840 Byron Center Avenue, and Legacy Christian School (K-8) at 67 68th Street SW. The Learning Center Academy, a charter school, is located at 9930 Burlingame Avenue. Private schools located outside the Township also serve residents in the Byron community.

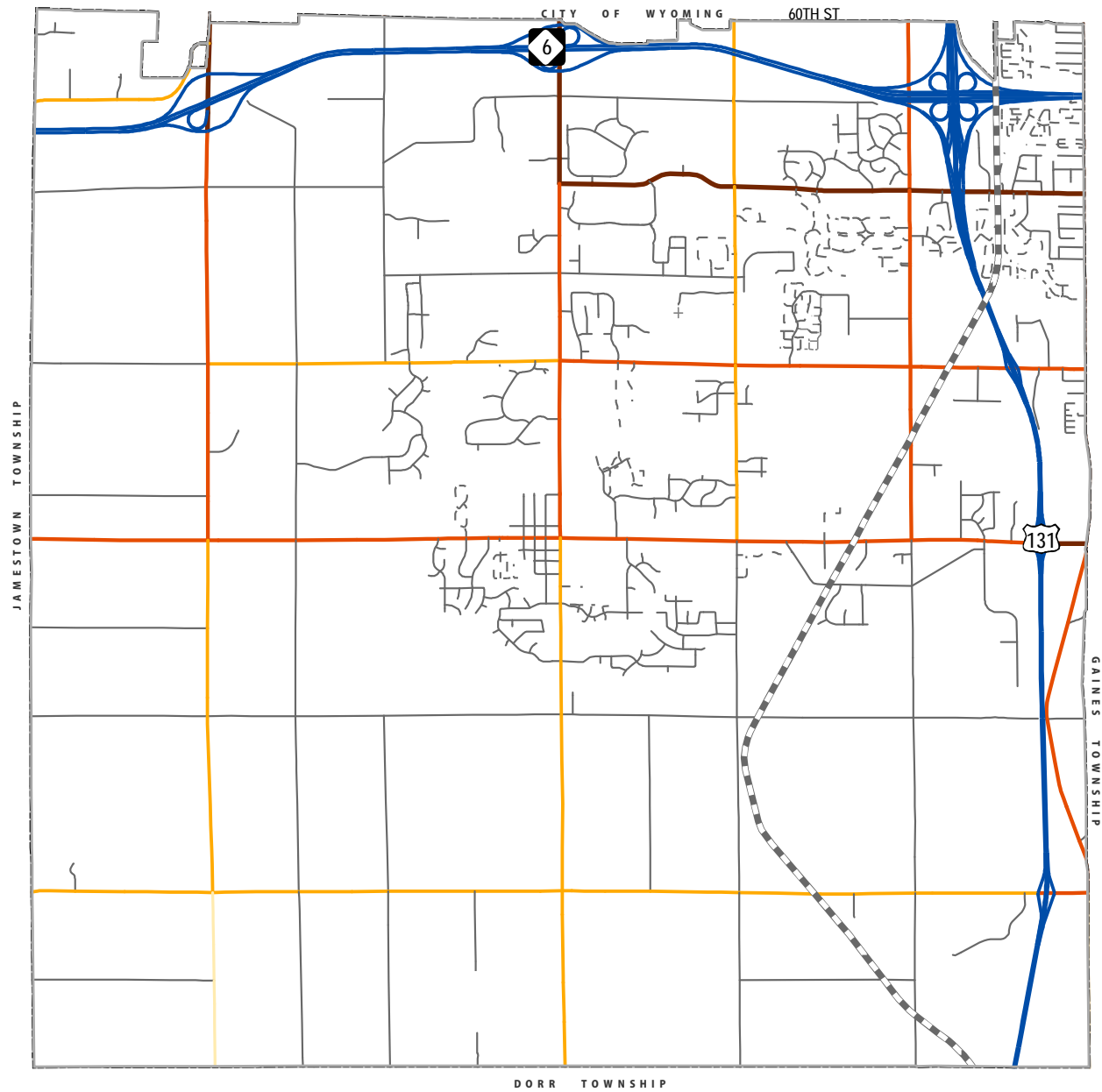
#### Public Schools

In addition to the private schools serving the Byron community, four public school districts serve the Township. Cumulative total enrollment of the four districts is approximately 21,306 students. Map 6 illustrates all school facilities within the Township. The following summarizes characteristics of those districts serving the Township. Besides Byron Center Public Schools, the remaining three are without schools within the boundaries of the Township.

Though four districts serve the community, Byron Center Public Schools (BCPS) is the only district with facilities in the Township.

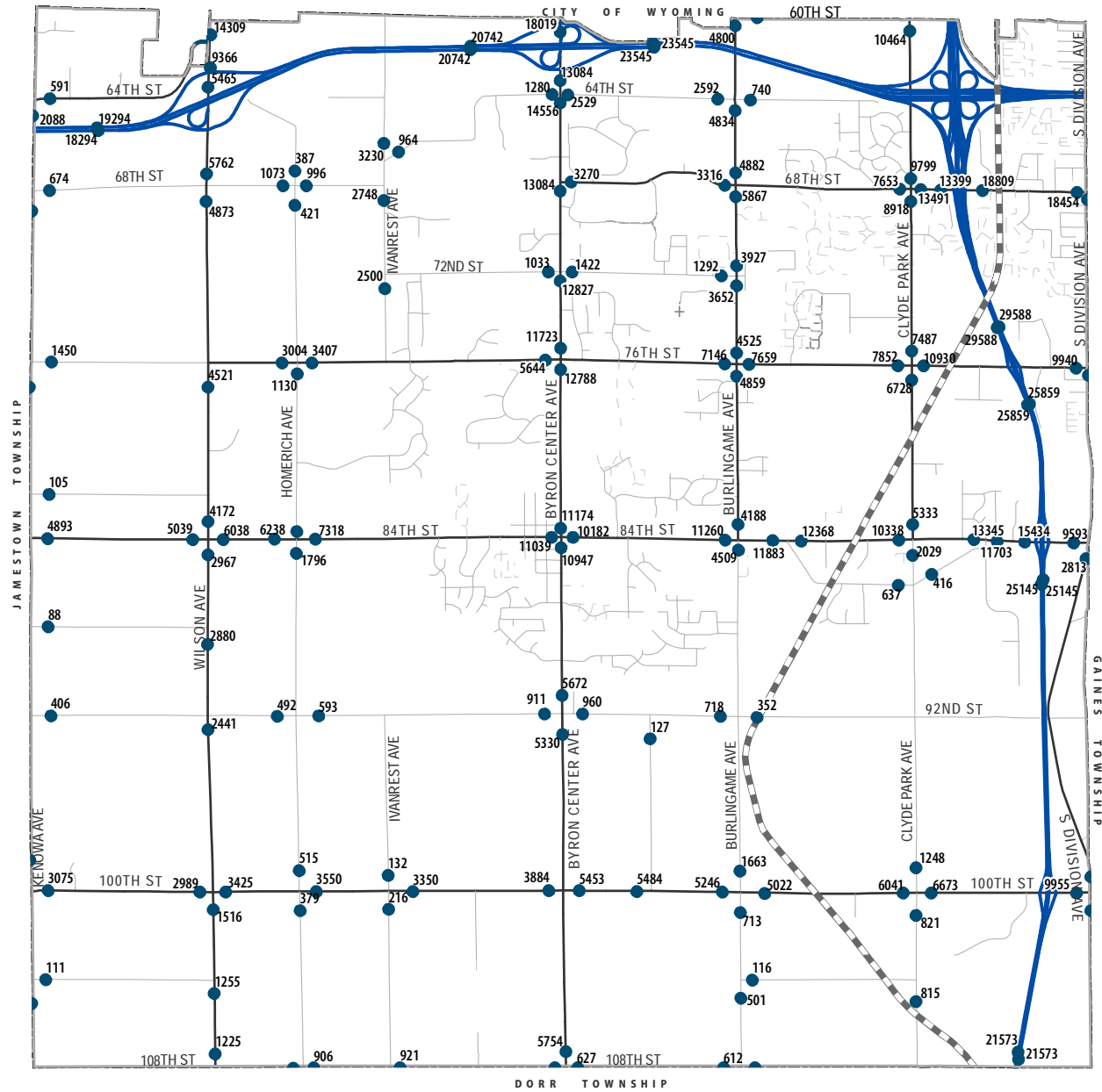
Map 6.  
Road Classifications

-  Highways
-  Major Arterials
-  Minor Arterials
-  Major Collectors
-  Minor Collectors
-  Local
-  Private



Map 7.  
Traffic Counts

● Traffic count location



The district operates from seven facilities. BCPS school district comprises approximately forty square miles, of which about thirty-five square miles are in Byron.

District enrollment trends may provide insight as to the type of growth the Township is experiencing. Generally, the size of the American household has decreased over the last fifty years. This trend has meant that in some growing communities, school enrollment has remained relatively stable, since families are having fewer children. In the Byron Center district, however, enrollment numbers over the past seven years reveal that growth in enrollment has been steady. Between 2010-11 and 2015-16, BCPS saw a 12% increase in students. To accommodate this growth and the growth of preceding years, several new schools have been recently constructed, and several improvements are anticipated for the future.

#### Van Singel Fine Arts Center

The Kent Career Technical Center's Regional Theater Arts Technology program provides education and experience for students seeking careers in theater technology. The Van Singel Fine Arts Center is a non-profit, 798-seat theater housing the program and is attached to the Byron Center High School. The center also hosts a myriad of events, including national touring companies, concerts, private events, school productions, corporate events, civic meetings and conferences.

#### Library

Byron Township is home to the Byron Library. The Byron Library, part of the Kent District Library, facilitates various programs for children, youth and adults. In addition to offering a circulation of over 150,000 items, the Library provides three "quiet study rooms" for public meeting space, and access to the Internet. The Byron Library is located at 8191 Byron Center Avenue, just north of the Byron Center business district.

## Parks

Byron Township maintains three recreation facilities comprising approximately 106 acres. It also accommodates other facilities maintained by Kent County and private enterprises. These facilities provide the opportunity for cross-country skiing, picnicking, golfing, walking, bicycling, camping, snowshoeing, competitive sports and provide an aesthetic amenity for residents. Recreational facilities are illustrated on Maps 9 and 10.

#### Byron Township Facilities

**Bicentennial Park.** Bicentennial Park is a 39-acre facility that surrounds the Byron Township Hall, located at 8085 Byron Center Avenue. The Township Hall was built in 1986 and offers public meeting areas. In addition, the park offers tennis courts, a shuffleboard court, playground equipment, modern restrooms, basketball, an open shelter, baseball, softball, open space and a wooded hiking trail.

**Whistlestop Park.** Whistlestop Park is located south of 76th Street, between Byron Center Avenue and Burlingame Avenue. The Township's newest park facility, Whistlestop is 59 acres and includes concession buildings, a community center, modern restrooms, a pavilion and picnic area, playground equipment, a pond, dog park, fields for football and soccer, walking trails and softball diamonds. Recently, a new western access was constructed to Byron Center Avenue.

**Cutler Park.** This eight-acre park is located north of 68th Street in Cutlerville. Amenities include softball diamonds, tennis courts, shuffleboard courts, playground equipment, open shelters, a soccer field, modern restrooms and a basketball court. The Township also sponsors several recreational programs that serve local residents such as basketball, softball and volleyball leagues, fitness classes and luncheons.

## Kent County Facilities

Douglas Walker Park. Douglas Walker Park is located along the north side of 84th Street, between Clyde Park and Burlingame Avenues. The park is 62 acres and includes the following amenities: baseball diamonds, bike trails, hiking trails, picnic facilities, a children's playground, areas for soccer and winter sports, a year-round heated shelter, open space areas, a polo field and modern restrooms. There is also a pedestrian trail connection that connects the park to 76th Street to the north, ultimately leading to the Kent Trails.

Kent Trails. Kent Trails is a paved, 15-mile, non-motorized regional trailway connecting Byron Township with the cities of Grand Rapids, Grandville, Wyoming, and Walker. A converted railroad track, the trail is a symbol of cooperative planning effort among West Michigan communities. The trail represents Kent County's largest recreational construction project and funding was provided by a Michigan Department of Natural Resources grant, and matching dollars from Grand Rapids, Grandville, Wyoming, Walker and Byron Township.

The trail provides tremendous opportunity for leisure and promotes fitness and alternative, cleaner transportation in the community. Views along the trail are varied and interesting, and range from suburban subdivisions and other improved property, to wooded lands and rolling agricultural fields. Kent Trails is intended for nature interpretation, walking, running, bicycling, skating, cross country skiing, and snow shoeing.

Four main access points serve the trail, two of which are in the Township: Douglas Walker Park, John Ball Park, Johnson Park, and at 84th Street in the Downtown Village Center. These staging areas provide public parking for trail patrons. The trail may also be accessed at all cross street locations, though designated parking is not provided.

## Fred Meijer M-6 Trail

Constructed in 2008, the trail starts at a junction with the Kent Trails west of Byron Center Avenue in Wyoming. The trail runs along the north side of the M-6 freeway to Clyde Park Avenue. The trail follows Clyde Park south to 68th Street where it terminates. Cyclists can continue along 68th Street over US-131 freeway to Division Avenue and north along Division to the trail on the south side of M-6. The trail continues east to Eastern Avenue where it crosses back over to the north side of the freeway.

## Other Public Facilities



Also important to mention is Ideal Park. Although this 22-acre facility is maintained by the City of Wyoming, five acres lie in Byron Township. The park, only accessible from within the City of Wyoming, includes nature interpretation of Buck Creek, ball fields, playground equipment, picnic space, tennis and a bike path. In addition, the school facilities in the Township each offer open fields. The high school provides space for competitive sports, a running track, swimming pool and other play areas, while other school grounds include playground equipment and basketball facilities.

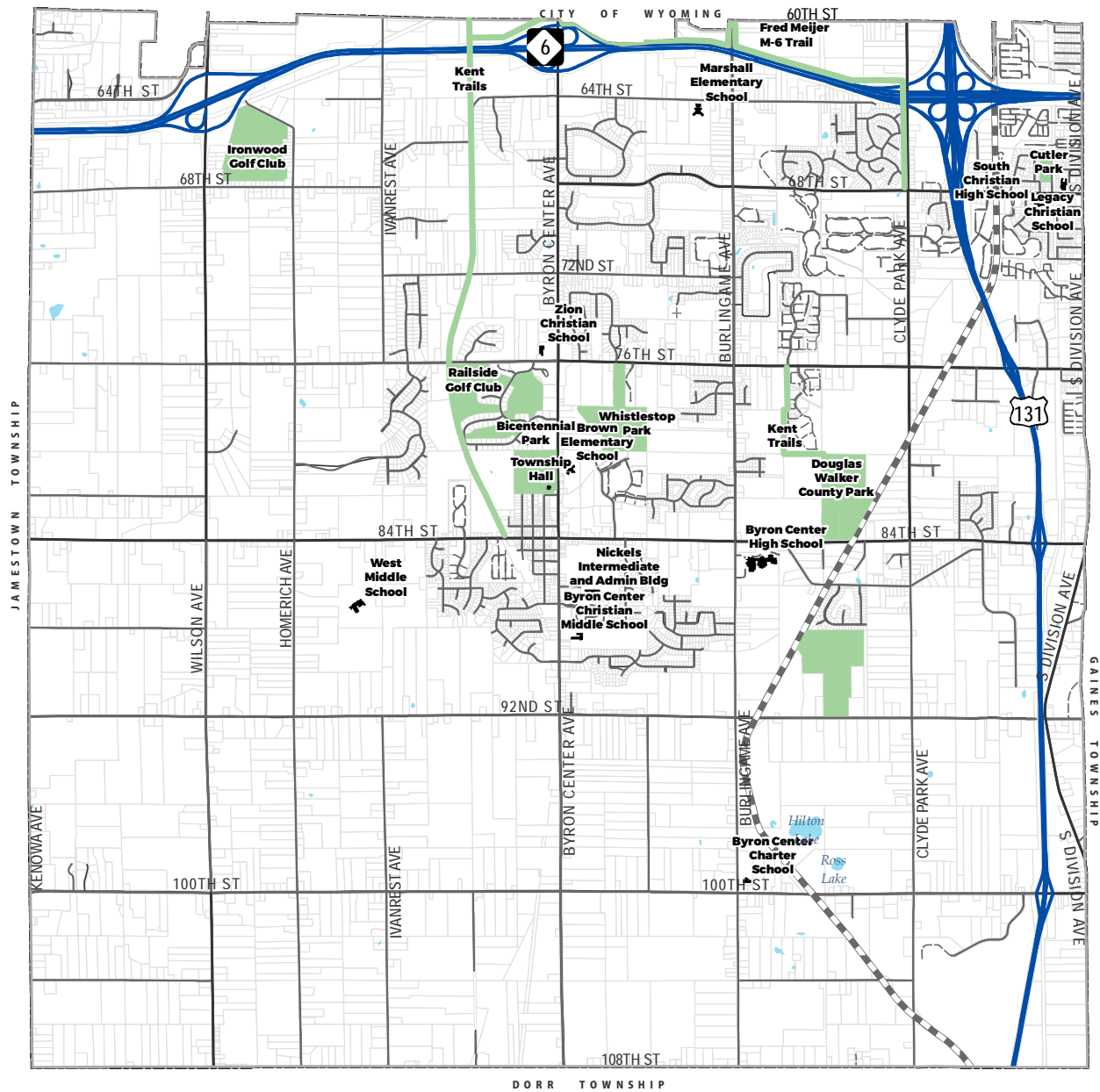
## Private Facilities

In addition to these publicly owned and maintained facilities, private recreation lands may also foster scenic views, leisure and community pride. The following are privately maintained and operated recreational facilities in Byron Township: Railside Golf Club, Wood Chip Recreational Campground, Byron Fun Spot, CourtHouse Athletic Center and Ironwood Golf Club. There are also many other facilities in the Township which help meet the recreational needs of local residents.

Map 8.

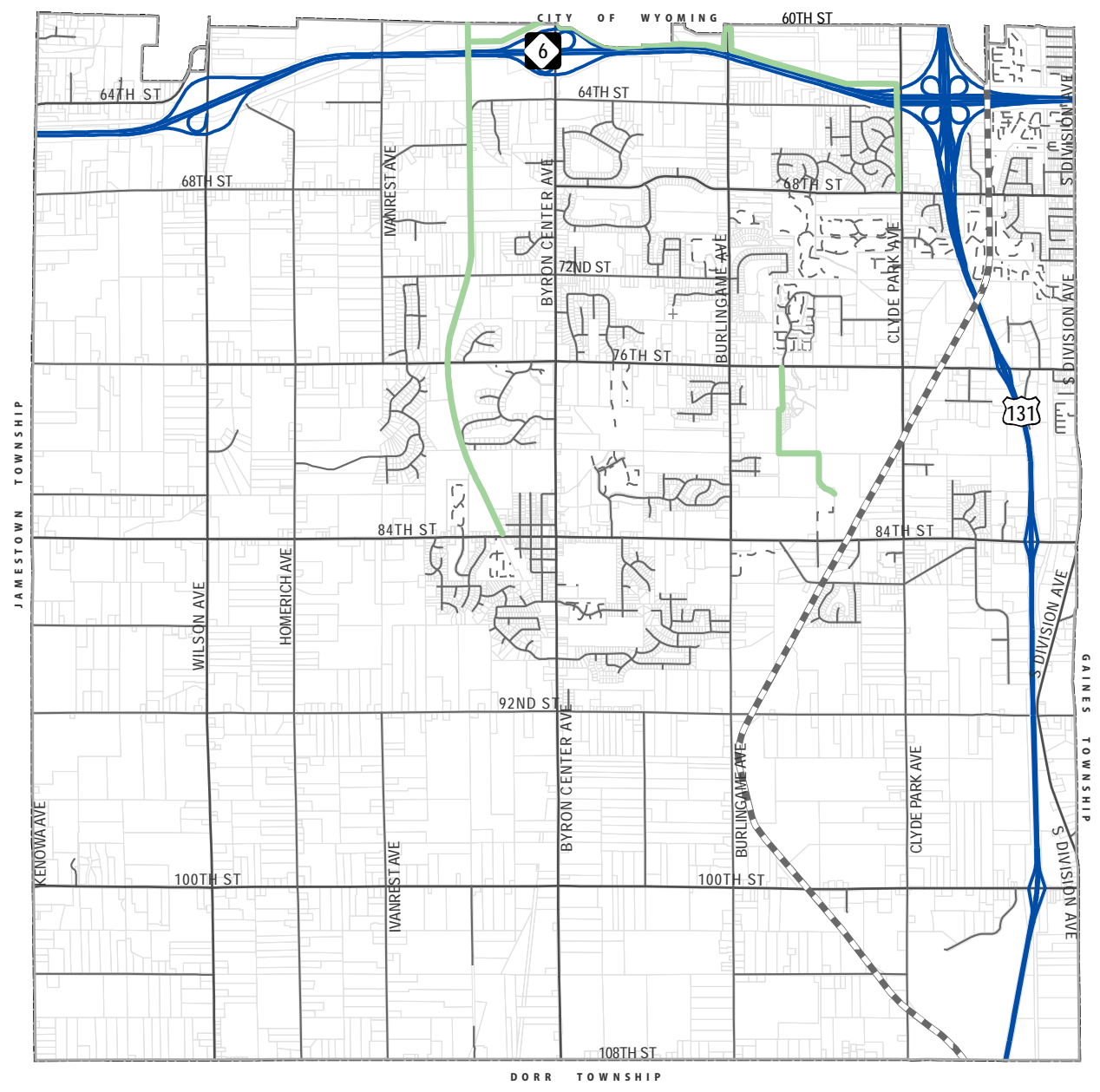
# Schools & Recreational Facilities

-  Schools
-  Recreational Facilities



Map 9.  
Non-Motorized  
Facilities

 Trails



## Public Safety Services

Police, fire, and hospital services are necessary for any community, as they protect the general welfare, help alleviate crime and provide treatment when needed. Byron Township is currently served with public safety services necessary to meet the needs of its burgeoning population.

### Metro Health Village

Just north of Byron in the City of Wyoming, Metropolitan Hospital consumes about 170 acres and includes pharmacies, physician offices, and fitness and wellness services within one site. In addition, commercial and retail that helps support and augment the facility. The hospital is a total of eight stories and 448,000 square feet providing 208 beds.

### Public Safety

The Kent County Sheriff's Department meets public safety needs in Byron Township. The Township contracts with the County for police protection and law enforcement. Although there are no police stations located in the Township, a station located at 84th Street and Kalamazoo Avenue in Gaines Township serves Byron (this facility also serves the Townships of Caledonia, Byron and Gaines).



### Fire

Two fire departments serve the Township. The majority of the Township is serviced by the Byron Township Fire Department. The Byron Township Fire Station is located at 2560 84th Street and includes four full-time firefighters and 15 on-call staff. A joint department, in partnership with Gaines Township, primarily serves the Cutlerville community and all areas east of US-131.

## UTILITIES

Public utilities are an important element in a master plan. Utility systems have the potential to aid in growth management by enabling greater densities in selected locations. Through the reliable delivery of clean water and the safe and efficient disposal of wastewater, communities can improve the quality of life for local residents. Finally, public utility systems give the community the ability to provide effective stewardship over such important natural features as groundwater and surface water.

### Water Supply System

A safe, secure, plentiful and reliable source of water is vital to a community's growth and development. Potable water for drinking, sanitation, fire suppression and industrial uses are a hallmark of modern society. Byron Township and Gaines Township fill this need in their communities with the Byron-Gaines Utility Authority, which serves the residents of both Townships.

Byron Township's water and sewer system is combined with the water and sewer system from Gaines Township, and together are referred to as the Byron-Gaines Water/Sewer System. This system is operated and maintained by the Byron-Gaines Utility Authority.



The Byron-Gaines Utility Authority receives its water supply from the City of Wyoming's Donald K. Shine Water Treatment Plant, located at 16700 New Holland Street in Holland. Lake Michigan is the source of water for the Donald K. Shine Water Treatment Plant. The total pumping and treatment capacity of the Plant is currently about 160 million gallons per day (MGD).

The Byron-Gaines system is one of many wholesale customers for the City of Wyoming. In addition to Byron-Gaines, the City of Wyoming provides water to the Cities of Kentwood, Grandville and Hudsonville; and the Townships of Georgetown, Jamestown, Holland, Zeeland, Olive, Blendon and Park, all of which are in Ottawa County.

Policies related to watermain extensions generally require that the system will not be extended at public expense except as may be needed to improve the water system. The policy dictates that developers pay for extension of the system to serve new developments, and the Township pays for extending the service to existing residences.

### Sanitary Sewer System

Currently, wastewater from Byron Township is conveyed to the City of Wyoming's Clean Water Plant located at 2350 Ivanrest Avenue in Wyoming for treatment. The plant is operated by the City of Wyoming, which, together with the Cities of Grand Rapids and Grandville, provides most treatment services for the Grand Rapids metropolitan area.

The wastewater collection system (sewer system) in Byron Township is owned by the Township and maintained by the Byron-Gaines Utility Authority. The Township system serves most of the developed portions of the community, which is a significant segment of the area east of Ivanrest Avenue and north of 84th Street, as well as the area surrounding the Downtown Village Center. The northwest corner of Byron Township near the Wilson Avenue interchange at M-6 is also served with water and sewer.

New extensions of the collection system are typically undertaken in response to resident requests stemming from failing septic systems. These are implemented by the Township with the costs supported by special assessment. In addition, a developer may seek to extend the wastewater collection system to enable a new development to occur. This type of development is financed by the developer with pay-back arrangements as adjoining property owners are connected. Properties adjoining such an extension are given ten years to make that connection.

Map 11 shows the existing utility systems within Byron Township.

## CONCLUSION

Based upon all the existing conditions presented in this chapter, the following key findings have been established. These findings provide the basis for the vision statement, goals and plan recommendations found throughout this plan.

### Land Use and Development

- » Decades ago, Byron Township was a remote fringe community outside metropolitan Grand Rapids. As the metro area population expanded, the lure of a rural living environment a short drive away from employment centers in Grand Rapids attracted a growing number of new residents. Today, the Township's population eclipses 21,000 and continues to be among the fastest growing communities not just in Kent County but in the greater Grand Rapids area. The population, like many suburban communities in the state, is rapidly becoming older which will likely place a greater strain on senior facilities and services in the coming years.
- » The prevailing development pattern in the Township is low to moderate density, characteristic of typical suburban development. A continuation of this development pattern

will necessitate use of an automobile to travel about the community, thereby increasing vehicular traffic. For the Byron Center district, which was originally designed to function principally on pedestrian activity, an increasing number of motorists could be unfavorable and may be injurious to the goals of the community.

- » Big box stores, fast food restaurants and strip centers are conventional and have a monotonous appearance and function. While conventional commercial development is imperative to the service and convenience needs of the community, such facilities add nothing “special” toward the image of the Township and may even detract from it. In the future, it may be critical to analyze locations where conventional commercial development is and is not desired.

### Transportation and Infrastructure

- » The private automobile is the most used form of transportation in the Township, in part because of disposable incomes. Low and moderate density development and the segregation of land uses may also preclude the feasibility of walking due to the “spreading out” of different developments. In other words, dwellings are separated from places of employment and services by distances which make walking to these places undesirable. About 1% of Township residents walked to work in the year 2010.
- » An incomplete sidewalk network makes it difficult to walk or bike between schools, parks and other destinations. Not only do sidewalks and pathways enable children to safely access recreational facilities and schools, but pathways themselves also serve as recreational facilities for pedestrians and those on bicycles (or other non-motorized

transportation).

- » Major roads in the Township are under control of the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Kent County Road Commission. Improvements to traffic flow, capacity issues and roadway design are handled at a county and regional level rather than a local level.

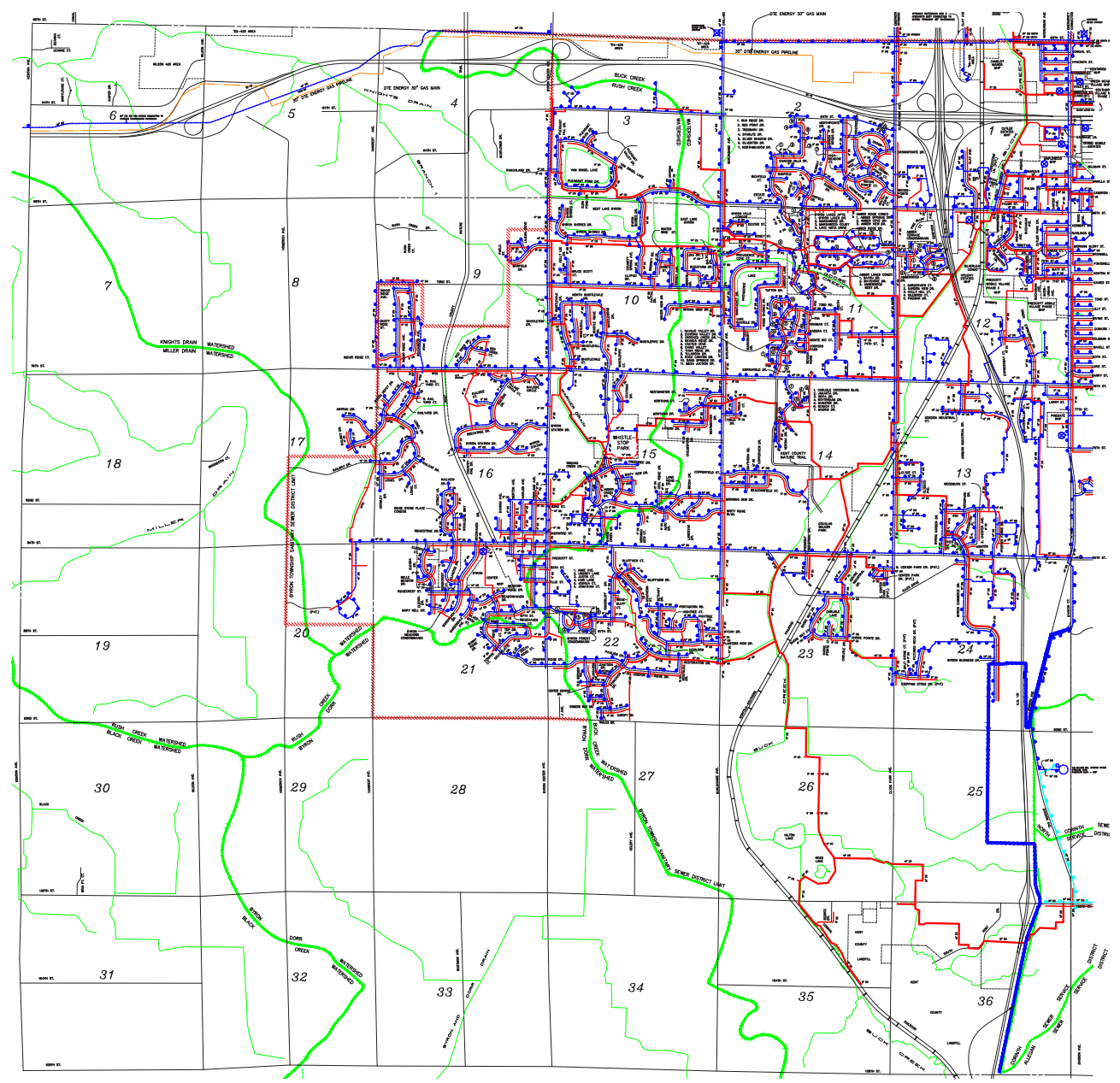
### Community and Quality of Life

- » The rural atmosphere and small-town lifestyle that has defined Byron Township served as a magnet for residential development, resulting in increasing growth pressures. While the pace and scale of growth is manageable, there is a risk that without effective planning, this growth will begin to degrade the very natural, cultural and aesthetic resources that draw it.
- » Byron Township is a great place to live and raise a family. Excellent schools, expansive open spaces, employment opportunities, and shopping amenities combine to make the Township an enviable place to live. However, limited housing options and lack of diversity of options pose as a weakness to all that the Township has to offer. Many long-term residents whose children are grown and gone no longer need or want a large home and yard. Condominiums, two-family homes, rowhomes, courtyard apartments and other non-detached single-family residential housing types (i.e., townhouses, row houses, and apartments) are in short supply.
- » Good public policy emerges when the Township and public and private schools share plans. Such cooperation

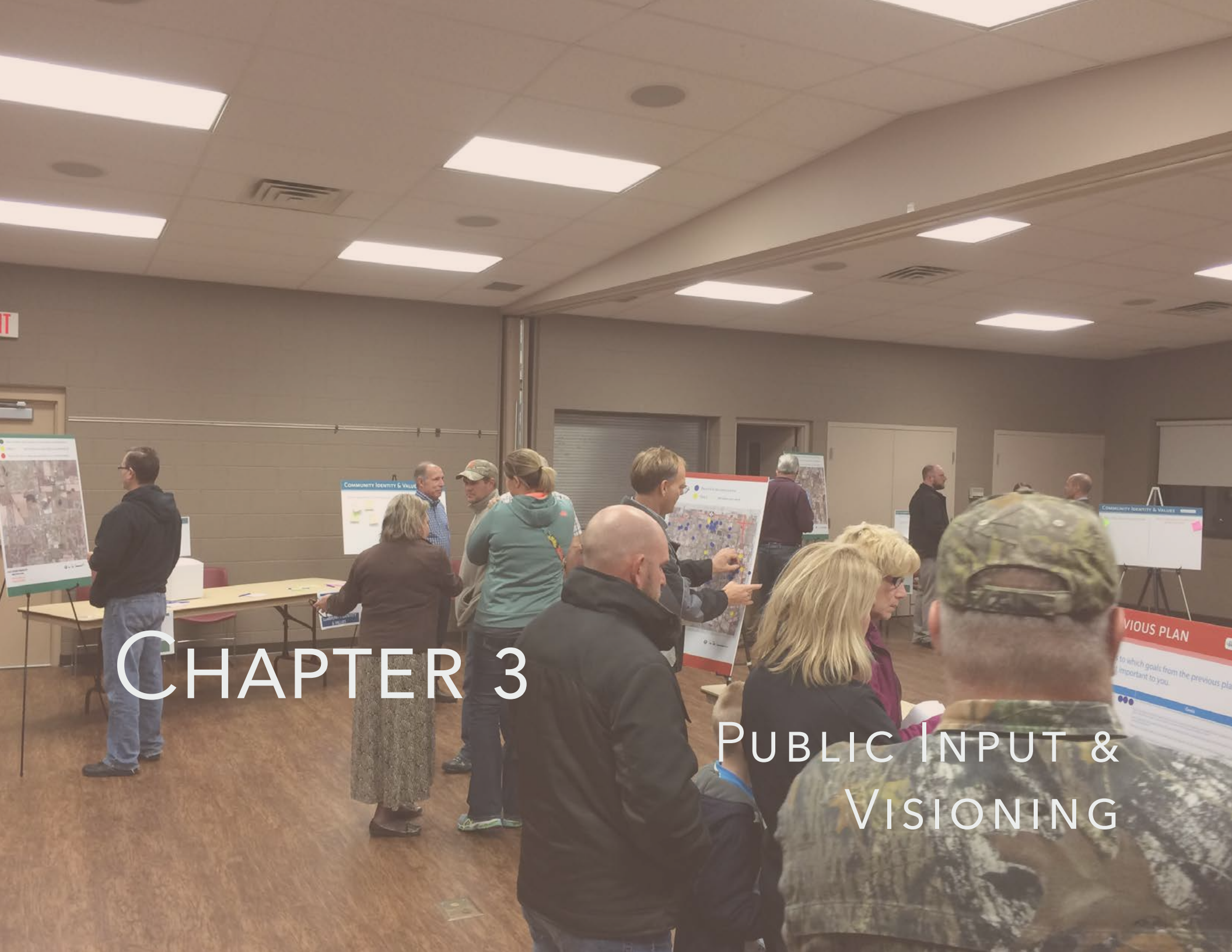
between the Township and school administration gives the Township the opportunity to offer insight regarding compatibility with surrounding land uses and student capacity. This type of interaction fosters a healthy relationship with Township residents, many of whom utilize their institutions.

Map 10.  
Utility Systems

- Watermains
- Sanitary Sewer



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# CHAPTER 3

# PUBLIC INPUT & VISIONING

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A critical component of the master planning process was to invite participation from the public, elected and appointed officials, Township staff and experts in various fields. As a result, the plan is a cohesive collection of input from as many community stakeholders as possible. A series of techniques were applied for the purpose of this planning effort: a community survey, public workshop events and a project-specific website. These involvement strategies allowed community issues and opportunities to be identified and translated into planning values and goals. These values and goals are found in Chapter Four, Byron Tomorrow.

## COMMUNITY SURVEY

In 2023, the public involvement process moved forward with a community survey issued to Byron residents, visitors and business owners. The purpose of the survey was to gauge attitudes and interests regarding several key issues facing the Township. Key issues included: demographics and basic information (age group, location of residency within Township, length of residency, etc.), attitudes toward future residential development in the Township, desired commercial development, attitudes toward growth, roadway improvements, non-motorized transportation and farm and open space preservation. The survey was made available online and via submitted hardcopies and was advertised on the Township's webpage, the project website and mailings to encourage a wide audience to participate.

1. Central Byron Township was best represented (46%).
2. Most participants have lived in the Township between 3 and 25 years:
  - 3-9 years- 34.84%
  - 10-24 years- 35.59%
3. Most participants lived in single-family detached homes:
  - Single-family homes- 90%
  - Townhome or multi-plex- 5.5%
  - “Other” category primary mentioned condos- 4% (as such it should be applied to b above)
4. How do you best describe the Township?
  - A growing community- 46%
  - An ideal place to live- 21.05%
  - Grand Rapids suburb- 16.54%
5. Why did you choose to live in the Township?
  - Schools- 53.27%
  - Near family and friends- 44.47%
  - Safety- 41.90%
6. Needed or desired housing:
  - Single-family homes on lots 18,000 SF to one acre- 54.92%
  - Single-family homes on lots larger than one acre- 50.90%
  - Single-family homes on lots 10,500 to 17,000 SF- 35.31%
  - Senior housing- 32.22%

- Mixed use buildings- 20.46%
  - Single-family homes on lots less than 10,500 SF- 17.22%
  - Townhomes- 16.75%
  - Two-family homes -12.66%
  - Multi-family- 7.24%
  - Manufactured homes- 1.03%
7. Top businesses desired
- Restaurants (sit down fine and casual dining)- 84.63%
  - Smaller retail stores, such as hardware stores, boutique stores, art galleries, antique stores, gift shops, convenience stores, clothing stores, etc.- 65.33%
  - Micro-breweries 52.14%
  - Personal services, such as barber shops, salons, spas, fitness centers, gyms, yoga studios, etc.- 51.13%

8. Agreement statements:

- Scenic vistas should be protected- 85.43%
- Farms and agriculture should be preserved- 82.16%
- Non-motorized trails, pathways, and sidewalks should be expanded- 81.45%
- The Township’s character should be protected- 79.45%
- Growth should only be allowed in places planned for it- 66.67%
- The number of new homes built in the Township should be restricted- 64.57%

9. Ranked concerns:

- Loss of open space and natural resources
- High growth rate in the Township
- Traffic congestion
- Blighted properties (junk, debris, dilapidated structures, etc.)
- Lack of nearby shopping and services
- Loss of farmland
- High cost of housing
- Overcrowding
- Poor image along US-131
- Limited housing options

Complete results of the survey may be found in the series of background reports to this plan.

**PUBLIC WORKSHOPS**

A series of three public workshops were conducted in November of 2015 to seek public comment and input early in the master planning process. The workshops were publicly advertised and well-attended. While more quantitative data was received from the online community survey, the planning team was able to solicit qualitative data during this process. The team met face-to-face with approximately 100 community members over these three sessions. The workshops were organized around for major topic areas: policies, community values, transportation and land use and development and were organized by six geographic areas to encourage more detailed input on the various distinctive character areas within the Township.

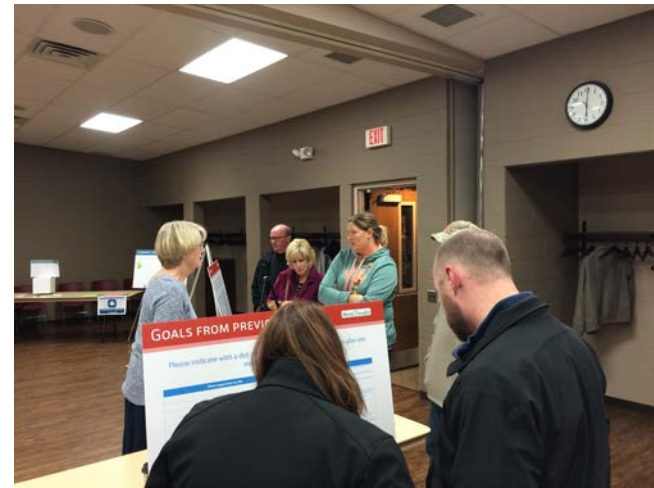
Each of these topic areas included an interactive station which included maps with various land use exercises, comment card



prompts and informal conversations between public officials and community members. This process allowed residents the opportunity to weigh in and voice their opinions and recommendations. Below is a short summary of the feedback received from the workshops:

- » Small town, great schools, and small town/“community feeling” make Byron great while growth and increase traffic associated with growth is detracting.
- » Residents would like to see more developed pedestrian facilities; an expanded trail and pathway network with more off-street trails, marked bike lanes, greater separation between sidewalks and streets and crosswalk enhancements.
- » Preserving rural characteristics and open space in key locations throughout the Township to enhance and preserve its remaining rural image. Discourage new development in sections of the Township where public water and sewer are not available.
- » Enhance Downtown Village Center civic space and beautify streetscape.
- » Address rapid development near new Tanger Outlet Mall near 84th Street corridor.

A complete summary of workshop feedback is contained in a background report.





# CHAPTER 4

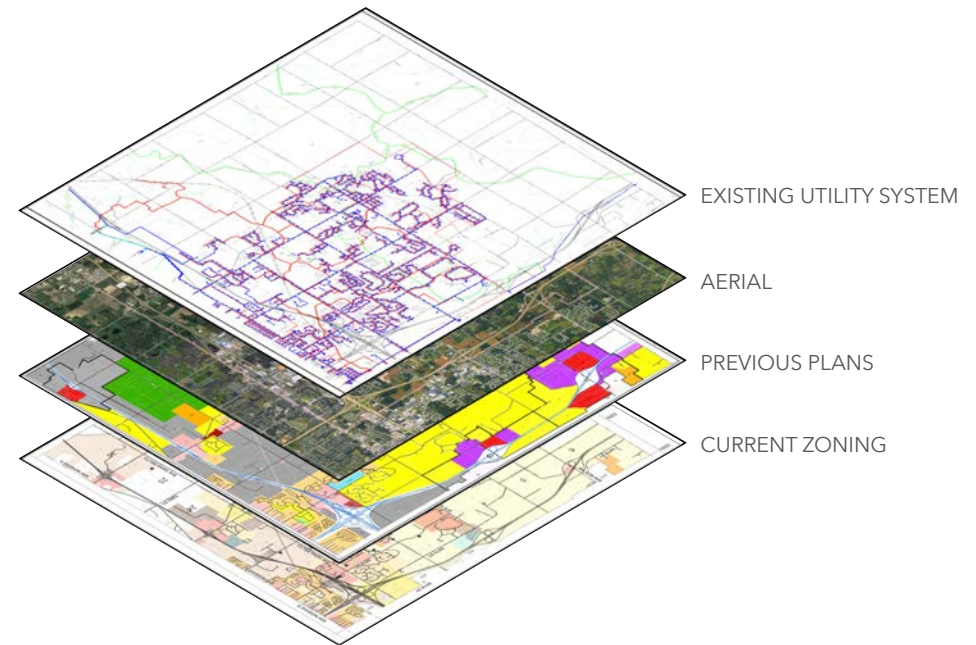
BYRON TOMORROW

Byron Tomorrow is a framework for future land use distinctions and community character. It outlines and describes future land use and includes maps that illustrate prescribed land uses at specific locations.

## GROWTH FRAMEWORK AND CHARACTER AREAS

The future growth framework of this plan builds on the community profile presented in Byron Today and furthers the Township's vision contained in the Introduction. The character area overview presented in this section and shown on the Growth Framework and Character Areas Map (Map 12) provide the framework and the guidance for the creation of the Future Land Use Map (Map 13). The purpose of assessing the entire Township in a generalized, bigger-picture manner, is the following:

- » To establish a clear and simplified framework for growth and growth boundaries.
- » To provide justification for future land use planning within each character area and to create general distinctions between areas.
- » To classify each area by a review and assessment of common characteristics: land use, existing zoning, density, intensity, utility availability and general infrastructure.



## Core Area

The Core Area is the primary residential and developed core of the community. Most residential development is detached single-family units on smaller lots within the original grid of the Downtown Village Center, single-family homes on single lots or within formal subdivisions and site condominium developments. To a lesser extent, there are attached housing products, such as multi-plexes, single-family attached condos, second floor residential and duplexes located in the downtown and site condominium projects.

Commercial land uses include smaller village-scale developments, including restaurants, grocery stores, smaller-scale retail, services, offices and financial institutions. The majority of businesses are on single parcels while some multi-tenant buildings with associated outlots also exist. Institutional and public facilities and amenities, including public offices, parks, schools and churches are common in the core, with more of a focus within the Downtown Village Center. Some larger agricultural facilities, such as wholesale nurseries and farms, are scattered throughout the Core Area.

Developable land within the Core Area is served by public water and sewer or is in close proximity to these utilities.

- » Unique sub-areas within the Core Area include:
  - North Gateway
  - Northeast
  - Downtown Village Center
  - Burlingame-84th
- » Appropriate future land use categories include:
  - Public
  - Urban Residential
  - Mixed and Attached Single-Family Residential
  - Mixed Use
  - Offices and Services
  - Commercial
  - Village Commercial

## Suburban Area

The Suburban Area defines the periphery of the Core and Regional Corridor Areas. Single-family residential building types are predominate in this area, and lot sizes are generally larger than those in the Core Area. Dwellings exist within formal subdivisions, are on larger lot estate properties or are on parcels divided out in accordance with the land division ordinance. Institutional uses primarily consist of day care facilities and churches.

Some larger agricultural facilities, such as wholesale nurseries, farms and agricultural uses are more common in the Suburban Area than the Core. Much of the land within the Suburban Area is not served by public water and sewer, although most of this area is within the future service area or in close proximity. Should water and sewer be unfeasible within the next 10-20 years, the boundaries of the Suburban Area could be further refined.

- » Unique Sub-Area within the Suburban Area:
  - Wilson Gateway
- » Appropriate future land use categories include:
  - Public
  - Single-Family Residential
  - Mixed and Attached Single-Family Residential
  - Mixed Use
  - Commercial

## Rural Area

In terms of land area, the Rural Area is the largest of the overall growth framework, covering over one-third of the Township. Most land within the Rural Area is agricultural, large lot residential estates or parcels divided out in accordance with the land division ordinance. Agricultural land and residential parcels are served by on-site septic systems and wells.

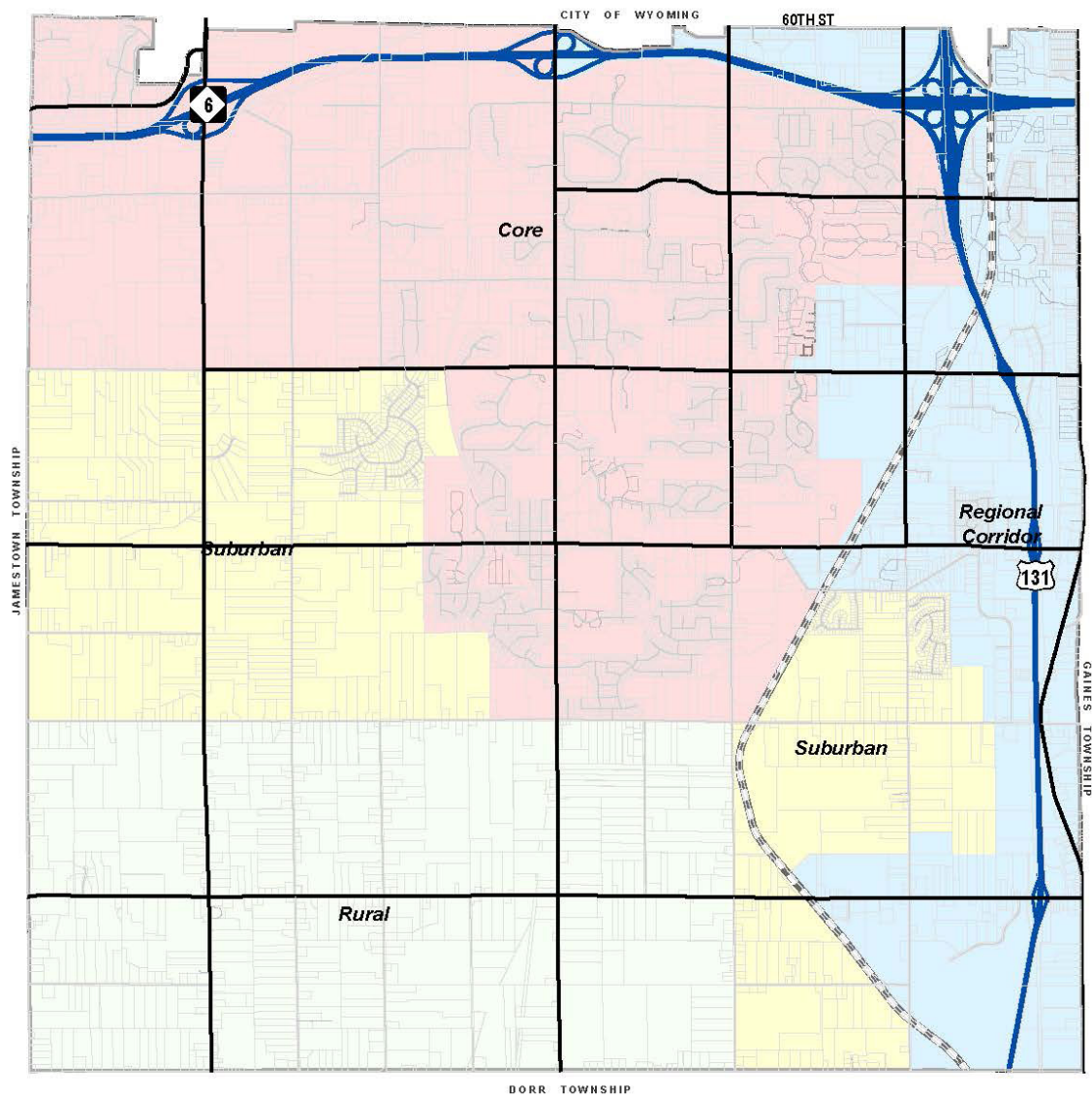
- » Unique Sub-Areas within the Rural Area include:
  - N/A
- » Appropriate future land use categories include:
  - Public
  - Agricultural and Rural Residential

## Regional Corridor Area

The Regional Corridor Area is the most diverse in terms of land use and includes the most dense and intense developments within the Township. Residential land use includes multi-family development and manufactured home communities to the north, primarily in between US-131 and Division Avenue. Single-family dwellings are common to the south, mostly east of US-131.

Commercial and industrial land use drives the Township economy, primarily located between 68th Street and 92nd Street. Most of the Regional Corridor Area is served by public water and sewer or is in close proximity to these utilities. The utility network is sparse to the south, although the entire area is within the future service area.

- » Unique Sub-Areas within the Regional Corridor include:
  - 84th Street East
  - Southeast Industrial
- » Appropriate future land use categories include:
  - Public
  - Single-Family Residential
  - Urban Residential
  - Mixed and Attached Single-Family Residential
  - Multi-Family Residential
  - Offices and Services
  - Commercial
  - Industrial and Research



**MAP 11**  
**Growth Framework & Character Areas**  
2023 Master Plan  
Byron Township  
Kent County, Michigan

- Character Areas**
- Core
  - Regional Corridor
  - Rural
  - Suburban

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 Miles  
Data Sources: Byron Township, MCGI, REGIS

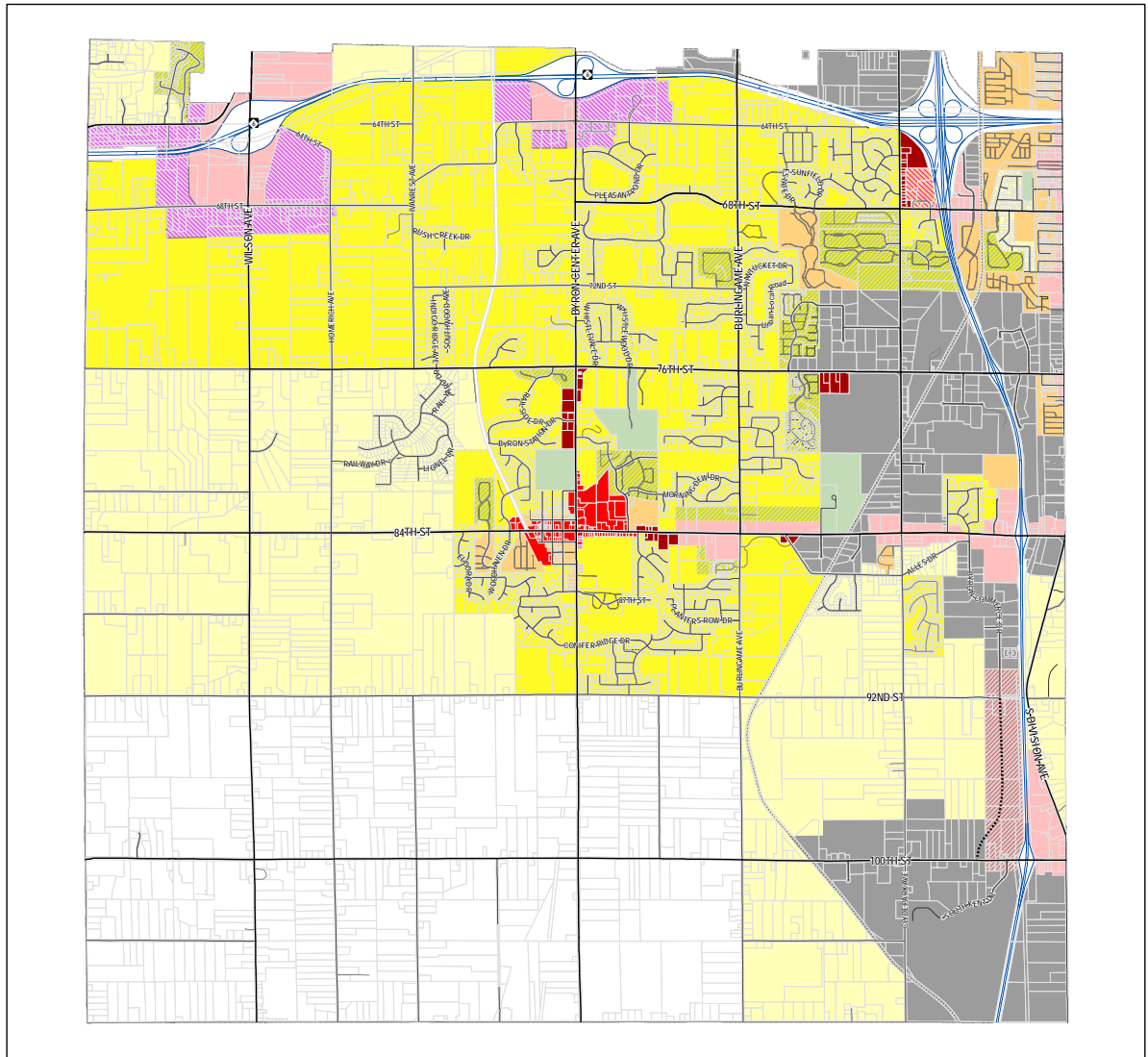
## FUTURE LAND USE AND SUB-AREAS

The future land use plan for the Township serves as a guide to assist local officials with decisions regarding day-to-day planning, zoning, land subdivision and public improvement issues. This section includes descriptions of land use categories planned for the Township, a Future Land Use Map, and the vision for specific sub-areas. Sub-areas are identified for more detail visions and recommendations for key locations in the Township.

The future land use plan is general in scope. It is not, in most cases, intended to establish precise boundaries of land use or exact locations of future uses in the same way as the Official Township Zoning Map. A future land use designation shown on a map does not mean that a rezoning of land to a compatible district is appropriate at the time of an application. The Master Plan is a long-term vision and certain land use decisions will depend on site-specific conditions at the time.

The timing and appropriateness of zoning map changes is dependent upon a number of factors, such as availability of public utilities, provisions for adequate roadways, environmental sensitivity, natural and physical site constraints, traffic conditions and congestion, impacts on public services and the demand for a particular land use as determined by market forces. Many additional case and site-specific factors must be considered when reviewing a request for rezoning a parcel of land, aside from Future Land Use Map consistency.

The key to this section is that there is an important relationship between land use planning and zoning. Planning is guiding land uses from a policy standpoint, while zoning is the act of regulating the use of these lands by law or ordinance. The laws of the State of Michigan require that a community engage in land use planning activities, including the preparation of a Master Plan, prior to the administration of a zoning ordinance in a community.



MAP 12  
**Future Land Use**  
 2023 Master Plan  
 Byron Township  
 Kent County, Michigan

- Future Land Use**
- PR, Public Recreation
  - AG/R, Agricultural and Rural Residential
  - SR, Single-Family Residential
  - UR, Urban Residential
  - M/A SFR, Mixed/Attached Single-Family Residential
  - MFR, Multi-Family Residential
  - C/MFR, Commercial or Multi-Family Residential
  - MU, Mixed Use - Office/Residential
  - OS, Office Service
  - VC, Village Commercial (Community)
  - C, Commercial (Regional)
  - C/I, Commercial or Industrial and Research
  - IND, Industrial/Research
  - Future Roads





## FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

### Public

The Township seeks to provide continued recreational opportunities to its residents and visitors. The Public future land use designation includes natural resources, public parks, and cultural and historic amenities. Lands falling within the designation include Bicentennial Park, Whistlestop Park, Cutler Park, Douglas Walker Park and Ideal Park. These facilities play a fundamental role in the Township's civic pride and the health and leisure advantages extend beyond Township boundaries.



## Agricultural and Rural Residential

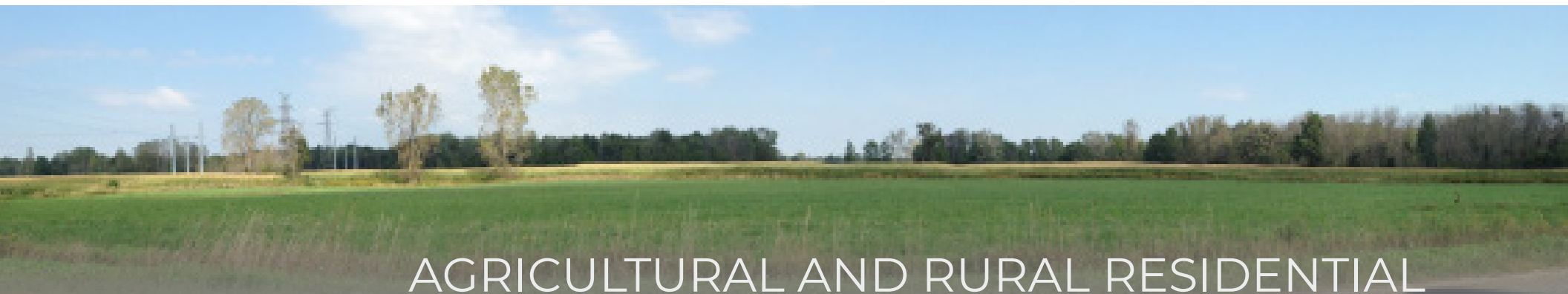
Agriculture is a central component to Byron Township's heritage and this master plan seeks to encourage the continuation of economically viable agricultural land uses in the Agricultural and Rural Residential designation. Agricultural uses, agribusiness, and low-density single-family development (not including subdivisions and condominium developments) on larger lots and with greater setbacks define areas within this designation. Furthermore, these areas are typically not serviced by public water and/or sewer.

### Preferred Land Uses:

- » Farmland, field crops, orchards, vineyards, limited livestock operations
- » Agri-retail, agri-tourism (farm markets, riding stables, greenhouse nurseries, landscape and garden supply markets)
- » Farmsteads with multiple accessory buildings
- » Single-family residential dwellings at low densities
- » Parks and recreational amenities
- » Schools and churches
- » Natural areas
- » Trails

### Best Practice Tools and Strategies:

- » Open space preservation
- » Rural viewsheds along major roadways
- » Substantial setback distances and landscaping adjacent to roadways
- » Limit development to legal land divisions; subdivisions and condominiums are not permitted with public water and sewer
- » Boundaries serve as the limits to urban services (public water and sewer)



# AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL RESIDENTIAL

## Single-Family Residential

The Single-Family Residential designation has been established in recognition of the emerging suburban character of much of the Township. This plan anticipates the orderly and sequential transition of development into attractive and inviting single-family neighborhoods within areas serviced by public water and sewer. Further, even as any future development occurs, there are certain rural attributes of the Township that should be protected and preserved during development review processes.

### Preferred Land Uses:

- » Single-family residential development with densities of one (1) to two and a half (2.5) units per acre
- » Schools and churches
- » Trails and sidewalks
- » Parks and recreational amenities

### Best Practice Tools and Strategies:

- » Open space and natural resource protection is encouraged
- » Perimeter buffering and landscaping
- » Interior street connections, trails and sidewalks where possible with adjacent developments, recreational amenities, and public facilities to improve connectivity



## SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

## Urban Residential

The Urban Residential future land use designation describes lands predominantly residential in nature lying within the “Core” character area with higher densities than the Single-Family Residential designation.

### Preferred Land Uses:

- » Single-family residential development with densities of One (1) to four (4) units per acre in subdivisions and condominium developments
- » Schools and churches
- » Trails and sidewalks
- » Parks and recreational amenities

### Best Practice Tools and Strategies:

- » Open space and natural resource protection is encouraged
- » Perimeter buffering and landscaping
- » Interior street connections, trails and sidewalks where possible with adjacent developments, recreational amenities, and public facilities to improve connectivity



## Mixed and Attached Single-Family Residential

To meet housing demands beyond traditional single-family detached housing, the Mixed and Attached Single-Family Residential category encourages additional forms of single-family housing. These units will blend in with the existing single-family character at modestly increased densities and provide high-quality housing for young families, seniors and young professionals. This designation will facilitate a transitional use between multi-family residential and single-family residential or commercial uses and single-family residential. For attached units to be classified as single-family structures, each unit must:

- » Be separated by a ground-to roof wall,
- » Have a separate heating system,
- » Have individual meters for public utilities,
- » Have no units located above or below, and

- » Designed in way that does not preclude fee simple ownership.

### Preferred Land Uses:

- » Townhomes, row houses and quad, tri and duplex buildings, four (4) to eight (8) units per acre
- » Trails and sidewalks
- » Parks and recreational amenities

### Best Practice Tools and Strategies:

- » Diversity of housing types
- » Planned Unit Development (PUD) could be one method to implement until a new zoning district was available
- » Neighborhood walkability



- » Housing for aging-in-place, so long-time residents may continue to live in Byron Township
- » Sensitive transition to existing single-family areas

### Multi-Family Residential

Byron Township recognizes the need to provide for areas of affordable, low maintenance and high-quality housing for young families, seniors and young professionals. Accordingly, development in the Multi-Family Residential designation will consist of condominiums, senior living facilities, apartments and multi-plexes. These designated areas are strategically placed in targeted locations near transit lines, existing infrastructure, nearby businesses and places of employment. Moreover, this designation includes existing manufactured housing communities. Additional manufactured housing communities are not anticipated or desired, but have been accommodated.

#### Residential Density:

- » Up to eight (8) units per acre

#### Preferred Land Uses:

- » Townhomes, row houses, quadplex, triplex, duplex, senior living facilities appropriately-scaled multi-plex apartment buildings
- » Parks and recreational amenities
- » Trails and sidewalks

#### Best Practice Tools and Strategies:

- » Walkability
- » Context-sensitive appearance and site design
- » Sensitive transition to existing single-family areas
- » Plan near existing infrastructure, transit, commercial uses and employment opportunities



## Mixed Use

This plan anticipates the greater need for a mixture of uses. This designation encourages more efficient use of land through a mixture of office, service and various forms of residential uses together in close proximity. Uses can be integrated cohesively into a single site or mixed throughout designated Mixed Use areas. This category is essentially a combination of Mixed and Attached Single-Family Residential and Offices and Services.

The combination of residential and non-residential uses in single developments is a concept to create high-quality, vibrant activity centers. Front building facades and primary building entrances should orient toward major streets and have well-defined, street-level windows and entries comprising a significant portion of the facade. Buildings should be well-designed and limited-scale (50,000 SF maximum size).

### Preferred Land Uses:

- » Professional and medical offices
- » Personal and business-oriented services
- » Residential uses (single-family detached, townhomes, row houses, etc.)

### Best Practice Tools and Strategies:

- » Connectivity
- » Walkability
- » Live-work units
- » Landscaping
- » Quality building materials and articulated facades
- » Sensitive transition to single-family areas



## Offices and Services

Byron Township is experiencing a steadily growing population, which results in an increased need for professional services. The Office and Services future land use designation recognizes this increased need and provides for professional offices and modest-scale service-oriented developments intended primarily to serve residents. Uses will be of a non-commercial and non-industrial character, with the exception that restaurants and other small-scale service uses may be integrated into office developments or office buildings to serve employees and to minimize automobile trips.

### Preferred Land Uses:

- » Restaurants
- » Clinics
- » Personal services
- » Professional office buildings

### Best Practice Tools and Strategies:

- » Access management (limit number of curb cuts and driveways)
- » Pedestrian accommodations
- » Compatible with nearby residential areas
- » Sensitive transition to single-family areas



OFFICES AND SERVICES



## Commercial

It is this plan's intent to balance the realities of the marketplace with the Township's desire to preserve its unique identity and small-town character. The Commercial category allows for larger-scale retail and commercial uses, primarily in the Regional Core Area and targeted sub-areas in the Core Area. This plan encourages architectural elements that deviate from conventional brand archetypes and developments that utilize site design approaches which hide parking lots behind buildings and landscaping.

### Preferred Land Uses:

- » Service-oriented uses
- » General retail

### Best Practice Tools and Strategies:

- » Access management
- » Low-impact design (stormwater management)
- » Landscaping and buffering, particularly in large parking areas
- » Avoid strip commercial character
- » Ground-mounted signage
- » Exterior building materials should be limited to cast stone, brick, stucco/texture, wood, and glass



## Village Commercial

This designation is found in the Downtown Village Center as well as at the intersection of Burlingame and 84th Street. These areas seek to capture and encourage a quintessential small town downtown feel of single and multi-story buildings located closer to roads, creating a pedestrian-scaled environment. Moreover, the floor area of the building(s) of one individual store, facility or use should not comprise more than 50,000 square feet, to help maintain competition, reduce traffic and protect local character.

### Preferred Land Uses:

- » General retail
- » Service-oriented uses
- » Restaurants and taverns
- » Residential units located on second or third stories of mixed use buildings
- » Detached and attached single-family dwellings

### Best Practice Tools and Strategies:

- » Infill development
- » High transparency (at least 75%) on ground floor
- » Avoid strip commercial character
- » Minimize or prohibit drive-throughs
- » Relegate parking to on-street (for minor roads) or to the side or rear of buildings
- » Exterior building materials should be limited to cast stone, brick, stucco/texture, wood and glass



## Industrial and Research

The Industrial and Research designation is intended to provide for environmentally sustainable and context-sensitive development located in proximity to critical infrastructure, such as public utilities, a railroad and US-131. Specific uses may include manufacturing, processing, assembly operation, transportation, warehousing, mini-storage units, high-tech research and small-scale service uses internal to a building or development to serve employees of industrial facilities. Public utilities will serve these areas.

### Preferred Land Uses:

- » Manufacturing
- » Light industrial
- » Processing and assembly
- » Transportation
- » Warehousing
- » Mini-storage
- » Research

### Best Practice Tools and Strategies:

- » Access management
- » Regulate building materials to only allow for high-quality construction materials such as stone, brick, and other natural materials, when visible from public right-of-way
- » Sensitive site design



## SUB-AREA RECOMMENDATIONS

Sub-area planning of key intersections, nodes and corridors helps to identify important issues and opportunities within the Township. Although the boundaries of the future land use designations are reflected on the Future Land Use Map, the relationships between different designations is more intricate in these areas. A more detailed assessment of existing and proposed conditions will directly affect planning of these areas. The 2016 Master Plan Update includes seven separate sub-areas for a more detailed analysis and vision for each area.

### WILSON GATEWAY

Single-Family Residential should be located at the fringe of the Wilson Gateway sub-area, with a further transition to Agricultural and Rural Residential at its outlying edges to the southwest. These designations will help to preserve rural character and allow for a transition to Mixed Use areas, and then to more intense highway-oriented development near the interchange.

While the Ironwood Golf Course is currently a viable business, the golf industry has experienced a decline in recent years. Consequently, a mixed of land uses is recommended should the course ever be redeveloped. Adjacent to the interchange to the southeast, a Commercial designation is recommended. Mixed-Use is also recommended along the southern frontage of 68th Street and flanking 64th Street, north of M-6 and west of Wilson Avenue. In these instances, mixed use includes office and residential but not retail or commercial land uses. A mix of housing should be encouraged, consistent with the Mixed and Attached Single-Family Residential category. Mixed-Use and Commercial along 64th Street should complement the Office Service and Community

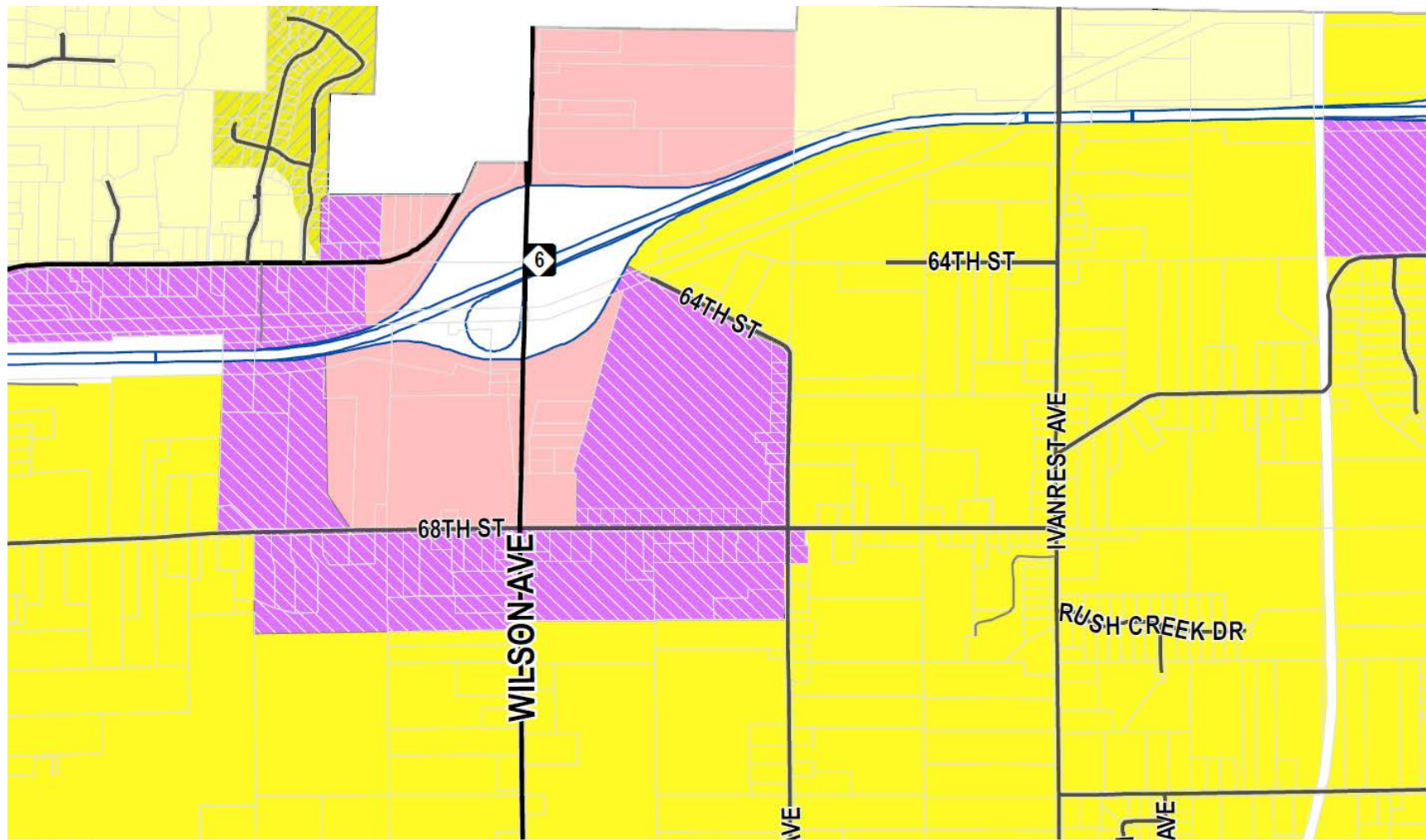
Commercial planned for the 425 Agreement area in Wyoming.

Highway-oriented commercial is proposed on each side of Wilson Avenue between 68th Street and the highway interchange, as well as east of Wilson north of M-6. This segment of Wilson should develop as a regionally serving commercial area. Land uses could include big box retail, lodging, service stations and outlot development, such as sit-down restaurants. Given its proximity to M-6, property access on Wilson Avenue, between the highway ramps and 68th Street, should be limited to a single full turn intersection. Any additional access should be from 68th Street.

The area north of M-6, east of Wilson Avenue, is also planned for highway-oriented commercial development. Site access should be limited to two full turn access points; one opposite the current 64th Street and Wilson Avenue intersection and the second opposite the access drive to the Spectrum health center. Any additional curb cuts should be avoided as they could result in unsafe conditions and increase the potential for crashes. Internal service drives or frontage roads should facilitate site circulation and provide access to interior land uses. This access must be coordinated as individual development plans are prepared, strongly suggesting land assembly or joint development agreements between individual property owners. Since a large wetland further divides the land into two distinct development bays, cross access agreements to serve this area may also be necessary. Layout and stormwater management design will need to be carefully considered when developing adjacent to the wetlands.

Map 13.

# Wilson Gateway Sub-Area



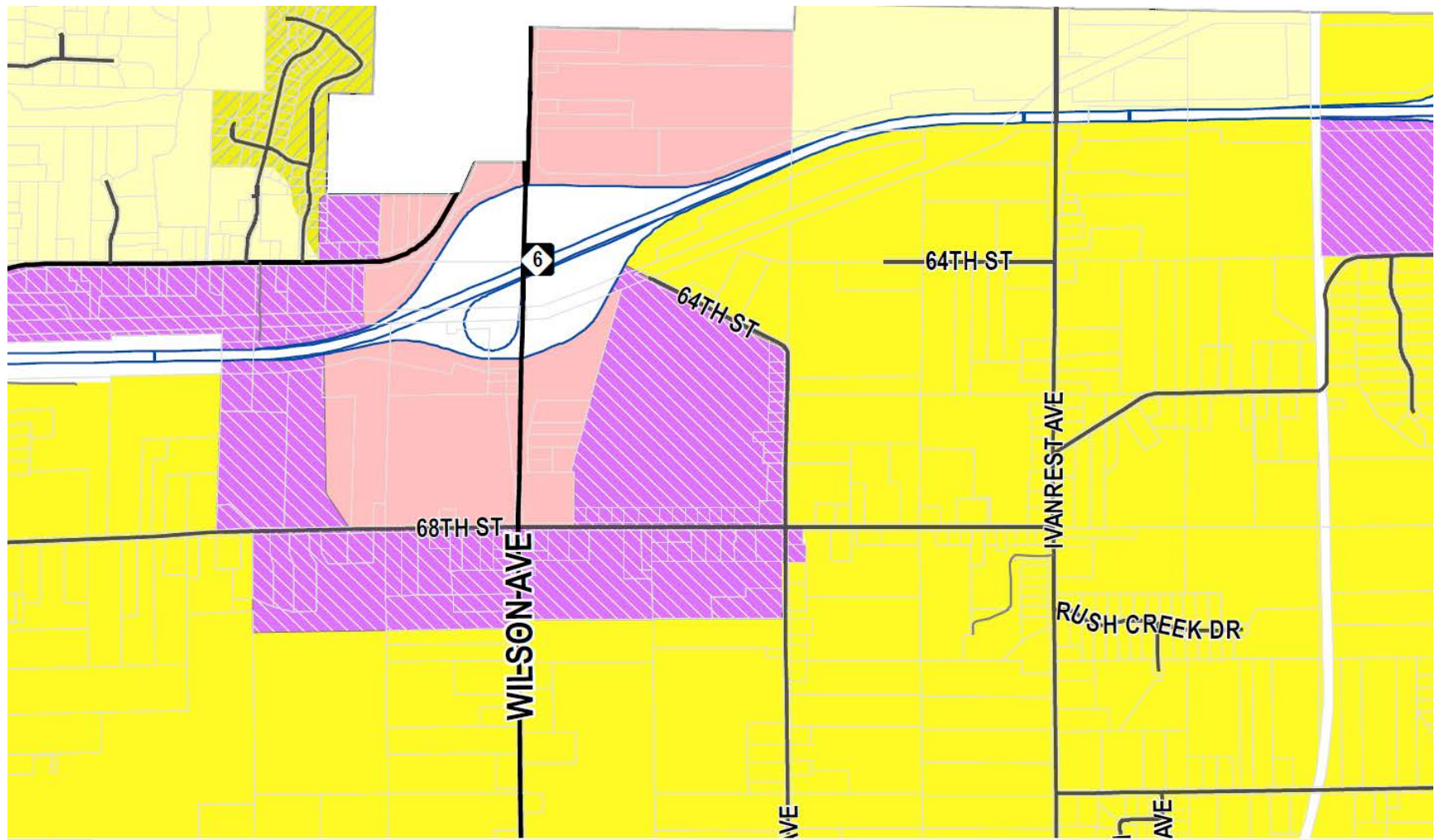
## NORTH GATEWAY

Urban Residential and Single-Family Residential frames the periphery of the sub-area. Land uses should then transition to more intense Mixed-Use and Commercial development near the M-6 interchange and around the intersection of Byron Center Avenue and 64th Street. The Commercial designation strategically placed for high visibility and separation from existing residential areas. Residential development should be characterized by varying housing densities, such as attached single-family housing in the context of the surrounding medical and office environment. Given driveway spacing requirements along Byron Center Avenue in the vicinity of the M-6 ramps, primary site access should be from 64th Street.

Industrial and Research is planned north of M-6, west of Burlingame Avenue, as a complementary use to the Metro Health Village just to the north.

Map 14.

# North Gateway Sub-Area



## DOWNTOWN VILLAGE CENTER

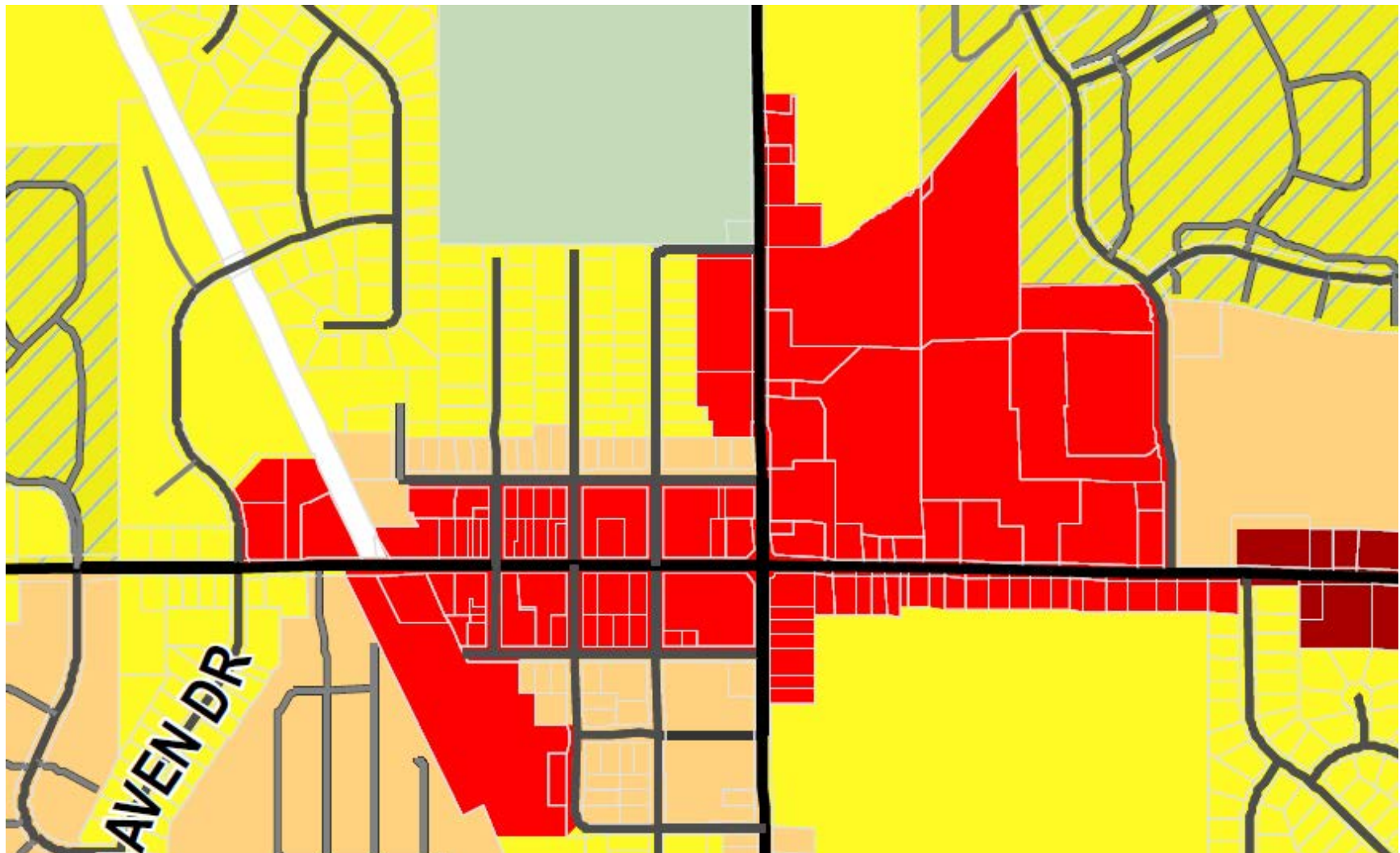
The Downtown Village Center is the heart of the Township and should be celebrated and preserved. However, there are opportunities for improvements and infill development that can enhance the downtown area to draw residents and visitors. The vision for the Downtown Village Center includes the following:

- » Parking should be placed towards the rear or side of commercial buildings if a pedestrian friendly streetscape is to be accomplished. Large front yard setbacks for commercial buildings, coupled with expansive front yard parking, establishes an atmosphere unwelcoming to pedestrians.
- » Automobile-scale signage towers over pedestrians and does not promote a “quaint” aesthetic. Signage standards could be amended to require smaller, more ornamental messages that communicate clearly the merchant’s statement while also conveying a unique sense of place. Sign design standards can encourage a common theme and a “sense of place” within the Downtown Village Center.
- » Two- to three-story buildings should be encouraged during infill and redevelopment projects. The predominance of one-story structures in the Downtown Village Center limits future population potential. As development and redevelopment occurs, the Township may consider permitting - even requiring - taller buildings. These buildings would be mixed-use, including commercial, service or office uses in the first floor, with residences above. Taller buildings, in addition to their placement closer to the public right-of-way, will help the Township achieve a more traditional aesthetic while creating more vibrancy and energy with the presence of new residents, customers and visitors.
- » To increase the village’s exposure, the district may contemplate marketing itself as a specialty destination. Byron Center is not near an expressway interchange, and it does not experience the extent of traffic that regional shopping areas experience. The market base is currently captured primarily from the surrounding residential neighborhoods, and comprehensive advertising may be required to raise awareness of the area.
- » New downtown development should focus on building form, design, architecture and character. Big box stores, fast food restaurants and strip centers are conventionally suburban and have a repetitive appearance across the region - even the nation. These facilities, while vital to the service needs and convenience of Byron Township residents, are more appropriate for areas such as the Regional Corridor. These types of monotonous establishments should be prevented in the Downtown Village Center. Further, blank, featureless and windowless walls should not be permitted within the Downtown Village Center. Aesthetically uninviting, these walls make the area appear desolate and dark.
- » East of Byron Center Avenue, north of and adjacent to the Byron Center Public School property, several homes sit very close to the 84th Street right-of-way. Traffic on 84th Street can be loud and can reach high speeds. To extend the village-scale streetscape to the east (and to keep strip commercial from creeping west), redevelopment of these multiple, small properties should be encouraged. For instance, mixed-used buildings fronting on 84th Street could be developed after the assembly of smaller parcels.



Map 15.

### Downtown Village Center Sub-Area



- » Street trees, landscape plantings, brick pavers, pedestrian-scale light fixtures and other features may be used to enhance the pedestrian realm of the Downtown Village Center. These measures along certain segments of 84th Street and Byron Center Avenue would help to address a lack of separation between motorized and non-motorized traffic and would help to define the road edge. The Township should work with the KCRC on the improvements, and other issues - such as crosswalk installation and speeding traffic - in the future.



## BURLINGAME-84TH

As an extension of the Downtown Village Center, the Burlingame-84th sub-area plans for Village Commercial uses on the southwest, northwest and northeast corners. Proposed commercial uses in these sectors should have specific site design standards to ensure high quality, desirable development which meets the intent of this subarea plan. Access along 84th Street and Burlingame Avenue should be restricted to ensure efficient, safe traffic flows. Pedestrian-friendly crosswalks should be installed to provide safe access to and from the Byron Center Public Schools property on the southeast corner of the intersection.

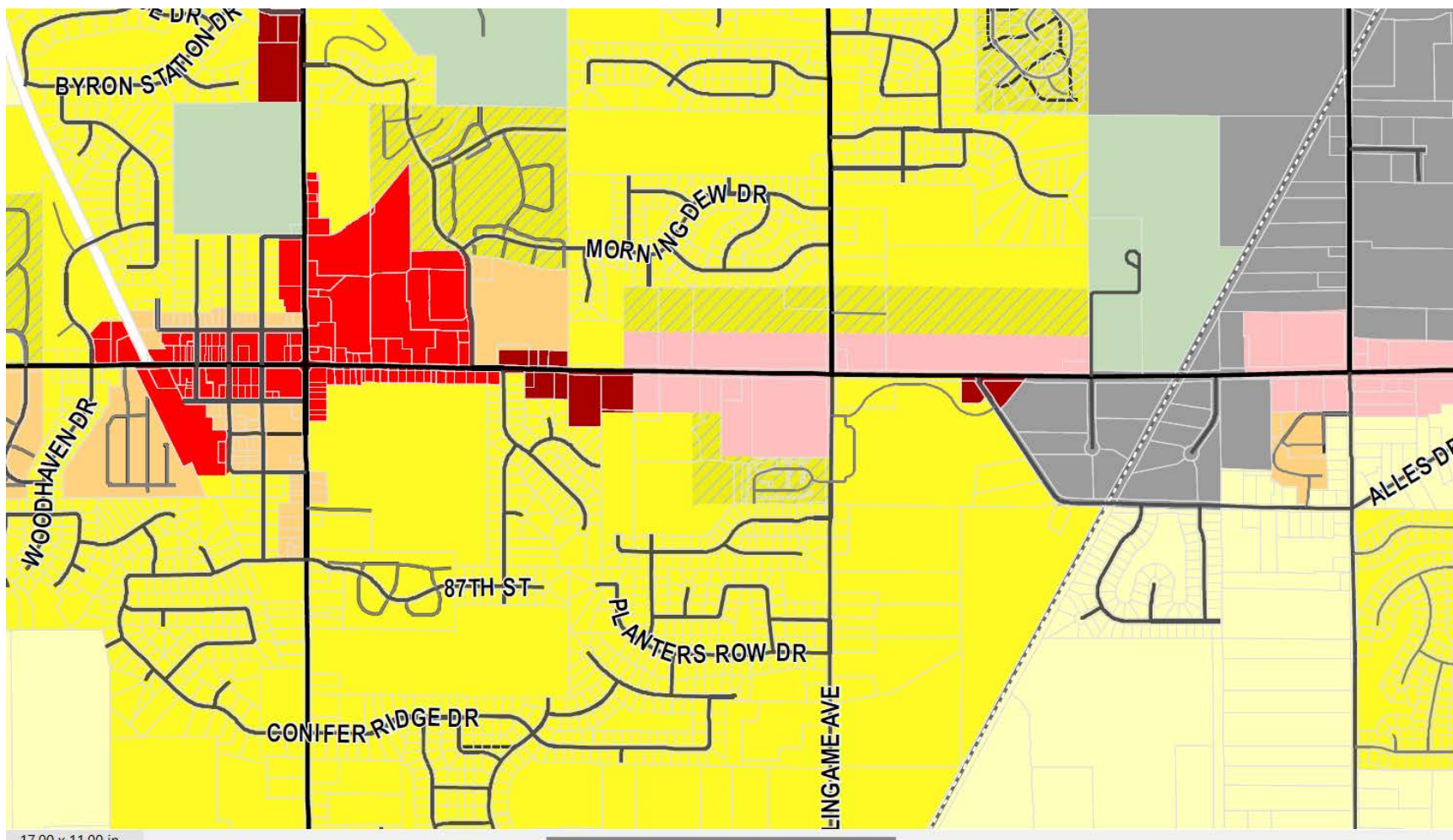
Surrounding the commercial uses planned at the corners of the intersection should be Mixed and Attached Single-Family Residential uses which includes detached single-family, townhomes, row houses, and quad, tri and duplex buildings. The area to the west and just south of Arlo Drive is designated as Mixed Use, to allow for flexibility between offices, services and attached single-family residential land uses. While Village Commercial is designated along 84th Street, for this particular area, some uses permitted in the B-2 Zoning District, or the Commercial future land use designation, may be appropriate to consider on a case-by-case basis. However, the intent of Village Commercial should be demonstrated in future development proposals.

The intent of this subarea plan is to limit driveways on 84th Street and Burlingame Avenue, provide safe driveway separations, and to encourage comprehensive access planning between developments. Development proposals should incorporate the following:

- » Cross-access connectivity to Burlingame Avenue with no more than one main driveway. However, a second driveway could potentially be aligned with Misty Ridge Boulevard.
- » Limited driveway access to 84th Street between Burlingame Avenue and Douglas Walker Park and coordination with the Kent County Road Commission, school officials, and other landowners, as applicable:
  - Mid-way between Burlingame and Alles as a shared access.
  - Aligned with Alles and possibly signalized.

Map 16.

# Burlingame-84th Sub-Area



## SOUTHEAST INDUSTRIAL

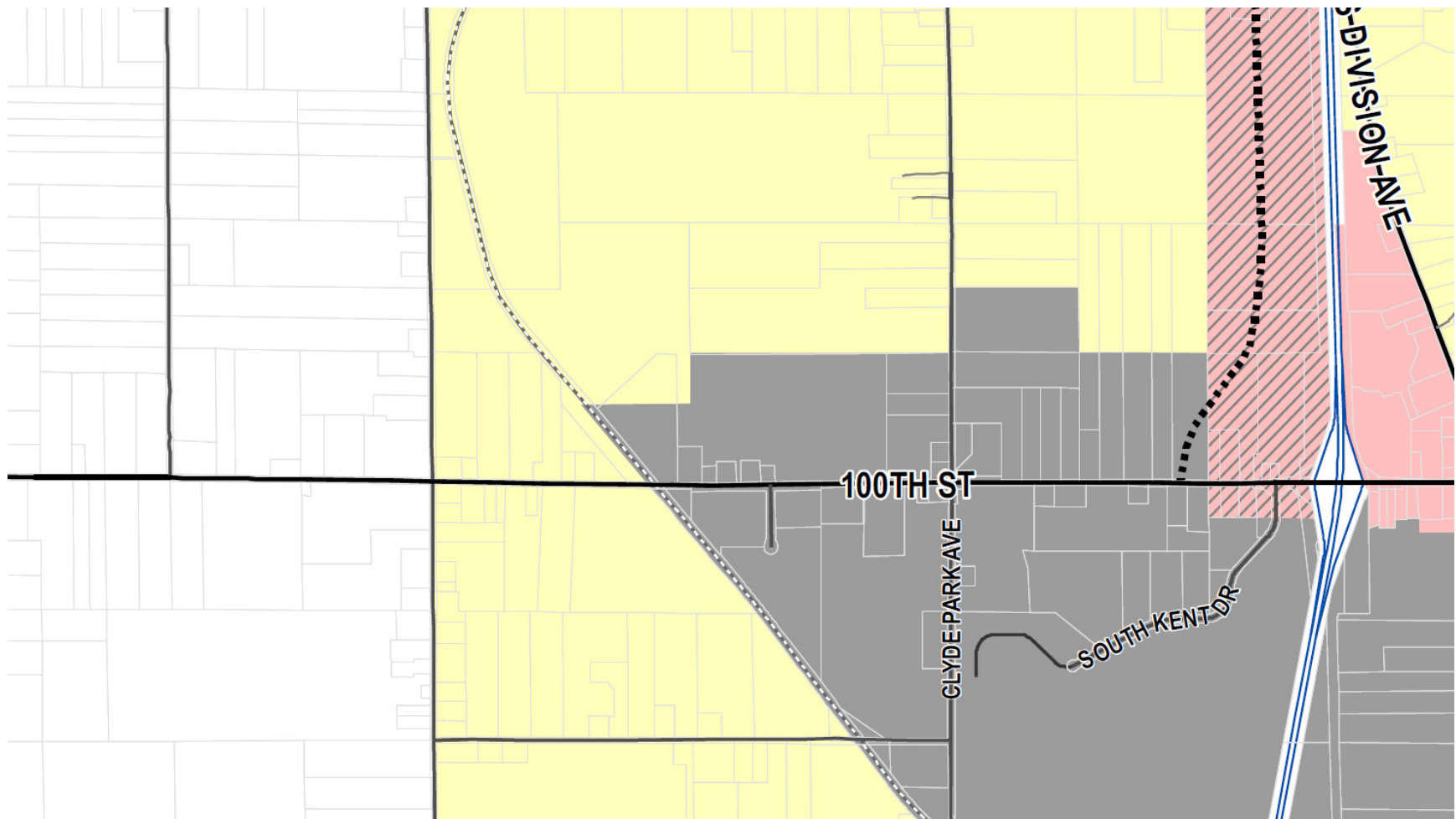
Industrial and Research uses are planned west of US-131 and east of US-131 except those parcels with immediate frontage along 100th Street straddling each side of the US-131 interchange. Given the proximity of the sub-area to the South Kent landfill, industrial or heavy commercial uses are appropriate. Industrial uses could include manufacturing, assembly, processing and others. Convenient access to US-131 makes these sites suitable locations for businesses reliant on ground transportation. Key though will be improvements to the highway interchange, which is currently not planned by MDOT.

The currently-landlocked area west of US-131 and north of 100th Street should be accessed via a new road extending south from Byron Commerce. This new roadway will enhance access to US-131 and help preserve the Township's rural residential character along Clyde Park Avenue.

While a Commercial designation is planned along 100th Street on each side of the US-131 interchange, access management will be very important given the current interchange design and intersection spacing. A single new intersection, serving properties to the north and south of 100th Street should be located between the highway ramps and Division Avenue. Commercial uses should be highway oriented and neighborhood-serving retail avoided. Examples include storage and warehousing, auto and truck repair facilities, lumberyards, kennels, and vehicle sales, among others. Such commercial activities could complement industrial/research uses planned for the west side of US-131.

Map 17.

# Southeast Industrial Sub-Area



## RE-EVALUATION OF BOUNDARIES

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires that the Master Plan be reviewed at least every five years to determine if the plan remains relevant or is in need of revision. Over time, conditions inevitably change and a reevaluation of goals and accomplishments is needed. While the Planning Act does not provide specific guidance for the five-year plan review, the following criteria shall be used when considering amendments to the growth boundaries, future land uses, and applicable land use policies within each growth area, or the combinations of these factors. Considerations during re-evaluation include, but are not limited to the following factors:

- » Amount and capacity of undeveloped land remaining within the growth framework areas, which should be used to satisfy the demand for development prior to expanding boundaries.
- » Projected population growth within the Township and demand for additional land areas for commercial or industrial development.
- » Present and planned sewer capacity.
- » The capacity and condition of the road system.
- » The ability of the Township, County and other public agencies to provide necessary services to the new growth areas and the additional resulting population.
- » Community surveys and input.
- » Impact on public health, safety and welfare.
- » Changes to conditions considered at the time of the 2016 plan update.
- » Environmental constraints and sensitivity.

- » Adverse impact to adjacent or nearby property.
- » Any other relevant criteria.

The Master Plan considers land use and infrastructure issues and projects 20 years into the future. The intent of establishing growth framework areas is to ensure that there is sufficient land capacity to accommodate growth within the 20-year timeframe, although growth within these target areas must occur incrementally and develop under sound planning practices. While the growth framework areas are noted in Map 12, simple expansion of the boundaries is not the default solution when build-out is approached. If a five-year review of the Master Plan and the existing conditions within and around the growth areas indicates that the boundaries do not have sufficient capacity to accommodate forecasted growth, the Township should first assess strategies to enhance the efficiency of land use within the boundaries.

When considering a comprehensive approach to accommodation of forecasted growth, the Township may also consider:

- » Amending zoning regulations to allow denser development, such as lessening building setbacks or increasing height.
- » Assessing innovative stormwater management strategies to lessen the acreage necessary for retention while maintaining water quality and increasing development capacity.
- » Providing incentives to encourage the redevelopment of abandoned or underutilized development sites.
- » Implementing other strategies to maximize use of land to accommodate job growth and to provide goods and services to an increasing permanent and visiting



population.

If these strategies prove to be effective and sustainable approaches to accommodate growth, no expansion of boundary lines will be appropriate. If there remains a need for additional capacity within the boundary to meet the forecast growth, boundaries may be expanded. However, this shall only occur after a full assessment and possibly only after implementation of the above-mentioned strategies.

Although this plan is a comprehensive guide for land use planning over the next 20 years, there is no way to predict what changes may occur that are not contemplated. Change is constant and usually unpredictable, however, and there may be circumstances that warrant changes to the zoning boundaries that are not consistent with the Master Plan. If and when this occurs, the master plan should be updated from time to time to conform to the changed circumstances. Because of the time and process required for amending the plan, such changes should be considered carefully. Therefore, decisions related to development should be considered carefully in light of the recommendations of the master plan.



# CHAPTER 5

IMPLEMENTATION

## GOALS AND DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

Specific policies and actions were developed from public input and the data analysis (contained in Chapter Two, Byron Today) which reflect these goals and values and help provide structure for the Master Plan. These policies and actions can also guide the community when making decisions about the Township's future. Community policies and actions are dynamic and subject to change; therefore, regular review by the Planning Commission ensures that they remain relevant and valid, reflecting changing trends and circumstances.

In addition to the Future Land Use Map and Sub-Area concepts, the foundation of the Master Plan is its vision, goals and guiding principles. These are the declarations of the Township citizens upon which the Township officials base their decisions concerning land use, infrastructure, investment and the use of resources. If achieved, these goals will ensure the vision of the plan becomes a reality.

**GOAL 1:** Large tracts of interconnected woodlands, open space and habitat will be preserved throughout the Township and public parks and recreational lands will be conveniently located, safe and well-maintained.

- » Unique natural features and resources are considered during review of development.
- » Review of planned developments prioritizes public amenities, active park recreation areas and passive parks.
- » Open space residential development is encouraged as a technique to preserve sensitive natural features and maintain rural character.

**GOAL 2:** The residents and visitors of Byron Township will enjoy a safe and efficient network of trails, pathways and sidewalks between neighborhoods, services, schools, shopping areas and parks.

- » Extensive external connections and internal circulation routes are incorporated into commercial and residential developments.
- » Township residents and visitors are greeted with attractive, safe and well-maintained trailhead staging areas.

**GOAL 3:** A safe, efficient, aesthetically attractive and well-maintained system of roadways will serve the businesses and residents of Byron Township, providing effective linkages between and among neighborhoods, shopping and employment areas and within the larger West Michigan region.

- » Present and projected roadway level of service, safety and traffic conditions are considered during rezoning and planned development requests.
- » Cooperative transportation planning efforts are coordinated with the Kent County Road Commission and Michigan Department of Transportation.
- » Connectivity between developments and incorporation of service roads alleviate congestion on primary roadways

**GOAL 4:** The Downtown Village Center will remain a quaint and vibrant shopping and living area with an attractive streetscape that will host a diverse range of opportunities for arts and recreation.

- » Local and small business efforts are supported by policies, zoning and programs.
- » Strategic public investments and capital expenditures ensure that the Downtown Village Center remains a focal point of the Township.
- » Cultural and recreational activities and land uses attract community members and visitors to the Downtown Village Center.

**GOAL 5:** Byron Township will have a quality community image and an attractive identity in the area. The Township will be home to a diverse mix of businesses and industries, attractively developed and maintained and providing meaningful employment opportunities.

- » Innovative businesses and clean technology are supported and recruited.

**GOAL 6:** Byron Township will assume a leadership role in nurturing cooperative and productive communication with neighboring jurisdictions and local and regional agencies for the benefit of the Township and region.

- » Communication with surrounding communities is strong and the Township cooperates and coordinates on key local and regional issues.
- » Future land use decisions are coordinated with local school districts to ensure compatibility and availability of facilities and resources.
- » Working and productive relationships are maintained with the school officials to achieve common goals for the public good.

**GOAL 7:** The future land use ambitions of the Township will guide and direct the rational and sequential expansions of the public water and wastewater systems in the Township. Storm water will be effectively managed through advanced techniques that are sensitive to environmental impacts and offer aesthetic amenities to the community.

- » Utility service expansion considers the future land use designations and overall development framework of the master plan.

- » Denser development occurs where utilities are present.
- » Development practices protect surface and ground water resources.

## ZONING PLAN

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires that a master plan include a “zoning plan” with an “explanation of how the land use categories on the future land use map relate to the districts on the zoning map (MCL 125.3833).” This is important as zoning is an essential master plan implementation tool. The following table summarizes the future land use designations and indicates how they relate to each of the existing zoning districts.

|                            |  | Agricultural and Residential |     |     |     |     | Commercial |     |     | Office and Service | Industrial |     | PUD or new zoning district |     |
|----------------------------|--|------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------------|-----|-----|--------------------|------------|-----|----------------------------|-----|
|                            |  | R-A                          | R-R | R-S | R-U | MHC | MFR        | B-1 | B-2 | B-3                | O-S        | D-1 |                            | D-2 |
| Future Land Use Categories | Public                                       |                              |     |     |     |     |            |     |     |                    |            |     |                            |     |
|                            | Agricultural and Rural Residential           |                              |     |     |     |     |            |     |     |                    |            |     |                            |     |
|                            | Single-Family Residential                    |                              |     |     |     |     |            |     |     |                    |            |     |                            |     |
|                            | Urban Residential                            |                              |     |     |     |     |            |     |     |                    |            |     |                            |     |
|                            | Mixed and Attached Single-Family Residential |                              |     |     |     |     |            |     |     |                    |            |     |                            |     |
|                            | Multi-Family Residential                     |                              |     |     |     |     |            |     |     |                    |            |     |                            |     |
|                            | Mixed Use                                    |                              |     |     |     |     |            |     |     |                    |            |     |                            |     |
|                            | Village Commercial                           |                              |     |     |     |     |            |     |     |                    |            |     |                            |     |
|                            | Commercial                                   |                              |     |     |     |     |            |     |     |                    |            |     |                            |     |
|                            | Offices and Services                         |                              |     |     |     |     |            |     |     |                    |            |     |                            |     |
| Industrial and Research    |  |                              |     |     |     |     |            |     |     |                    |            |     |                            |     |

## IMPLEMENTATION TABLE

While the Township will rely on policies to guide future decision-making, the actions must be implemented to achieve the goals of the Master Plan. Therefore, it is essential to develop a prioritized “work plan” for the next five-year timeframe, identifying responsible parties, timeframes and priorities to ensure that the plan remains a dynamic and “living” document. Prioritization as it relates to timing is presented below:

- » **Priority 1:** Projects are those that should be given an immediate and concentrated effort within one year of adoption.
- » **Priority 2:** Projects necessary to implement the plan, but dependent upon commencement or completion of Priority 1 projects or do not have the same urgency of those projects (one to three years from adoption).
- » **Priority 3:** Projects necessary to implement the plan, but do not have the same urgency as higher priorities or are subject to budgetary constraints (up to five years from adoption).

The primary sources of funding are anticipated to be the Township General Fund and tax increment financing (TIF) through the Downtown Development Authority and the Corridor Improvement District. The following table includes the action plan and implementation strategy for the Byron Township Master Plan.

| Action   | Goal | Responsibility | Priority |
|--|------|----------------|----------|
| Development Regulations  |      |                |          |
| 1. Update the zoning ordinance to include more detail townhome dimensional and density requirements.   | 4    | PC             | 1        |
| 2. The B-1, Central Business District should be revised to include more specific requirements for building form, architecture, landscape features, village-scale signage, bicycle and pedestrian amenities, civic space, architectural standards, and a vertical mix of commercial and residential uses. | 5    | PC             | 1        |
| 3. Update the Byron Township Parks and Recreation Plan.  | 1    | PC             | 2        |
| 4. Prepare a sidewalk and pathway inventory and overall Township non-motorized transportation plan. This plan should identify partners and stakeholders and encourage regional cooperation.  | 2    | PC             | 2        |
| 5. Work cooperative with the Recreation Commission and the Kent County Parks Department to extend the M-6 Trail west of Bryon Center Avenue.   | 2    | PC             | 2        |
| 6. Periodically evaluate the Township’s Growth Framework Map and prevent the extension of utilities beyond the boundary until objective and pre-determined threshold requirements are met.   | 8    | PC             | 3        |