



# JOINT MASTER PLAN

DENTON AND ROSCOMMON TOWNSHIPS  
ROSCOMMON COUNTY, MICHIGAN

DRAFT – June 22, 2023





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# Acknowledgments.

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# Introduction.



# Welcome.

*Denton & Roscommon Townships' Joint Master Plan is the culmination of efforts of a joint planning commission and both townships' boards of trustees, residents, and business owners. These groups joined together to update the previous Master Plan for the community's continuing growth and development.*

Roscommon & Denton Townships are the two most populous townships in Roscommon County, Michigan. They form the southern boundary of Houghton Lake, which is Michigan's largest inland lake. The Townships comprise a 130-square-mile, four-season recreational destination, complete with vast forests and inland lakes and streams, with most developed land bordering more than 10 miles of Houghton Lake waterfront. Houghton Lake and the greater area make for a truly amazing "Up North Experience."

At its most basic level, the Master Plan serves as the basis for the community's zoning ordinance; for zoned communities like Denton and Roscommon Townships, a master plan is required by the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (P.A. 110 of 2006, as amended).



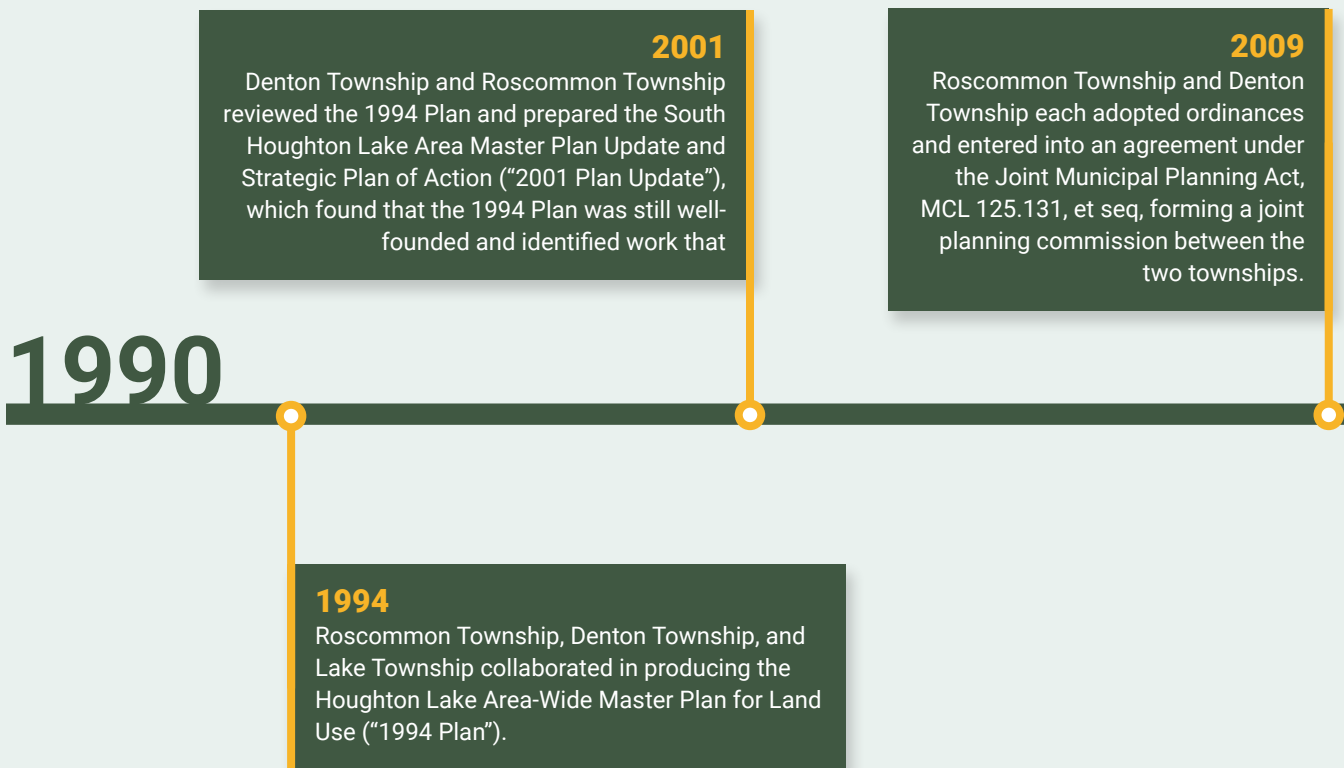
The Master Plan is a collection of policies designed to guide community decision-makers and the future growth and development of the townships over the next two decades. The Master Plan is intended to provide for a suitable development pattern that will promote future economic stability and quality of life for residents of Denton and Roscommon Townships.

To accomplish these objectives, the Master Plan identifies issues that are most important to the community. Public participation was encouraged through a community-wide visioning survey, Joint Planning Commission meetings, and public hearings. Analyses of the existing features of the townships were conducted to illustrate some of its defining characteristics including land uses; population, economic, and housing statistics; and a description of the community's physical constraints, natural resources, and circulation patterns.

Based on this information, several goals, objectives, and action items were developed to outline the community vision and guide its implementation. The Master Plan should inform significant land use decisions made by the Townships for the next 10 to 20 years and, as conditions change over time, the Townships may find that the Plan needs to change as well. The Townships are obligated to conduct a review of the Master Plan every five years and pursue amendments as necessary. Keeping the Master Plan up to date will ensure its relevance and usefulness.

# Past Planning Efforts.

*This is only the most recent effort by the Townships to update the Master Plan, which is used for a variety of purposes. In 2017, the Townships created the South Houghton Lake Joint Master Plan, to guide development of the downtown area.*



**2010**

The Roscommon County Planning Commission produced the Roscommon County Master Plan for Land Use, which provided a wealth of background data regarding the entire County and identified a number of actions designed to improve the County's economic development.

**2015**

The Denton Township and Roscommon Township Joint Planning Commission began review of the current conditions in the two Townships to determine whether additional modifications should be made to the prior plans.

**2017**

The Denton Township and Roscommon Township Joint Planning Commission adopted the South Houghton Lake Master Plan to guide development in the downtown area.

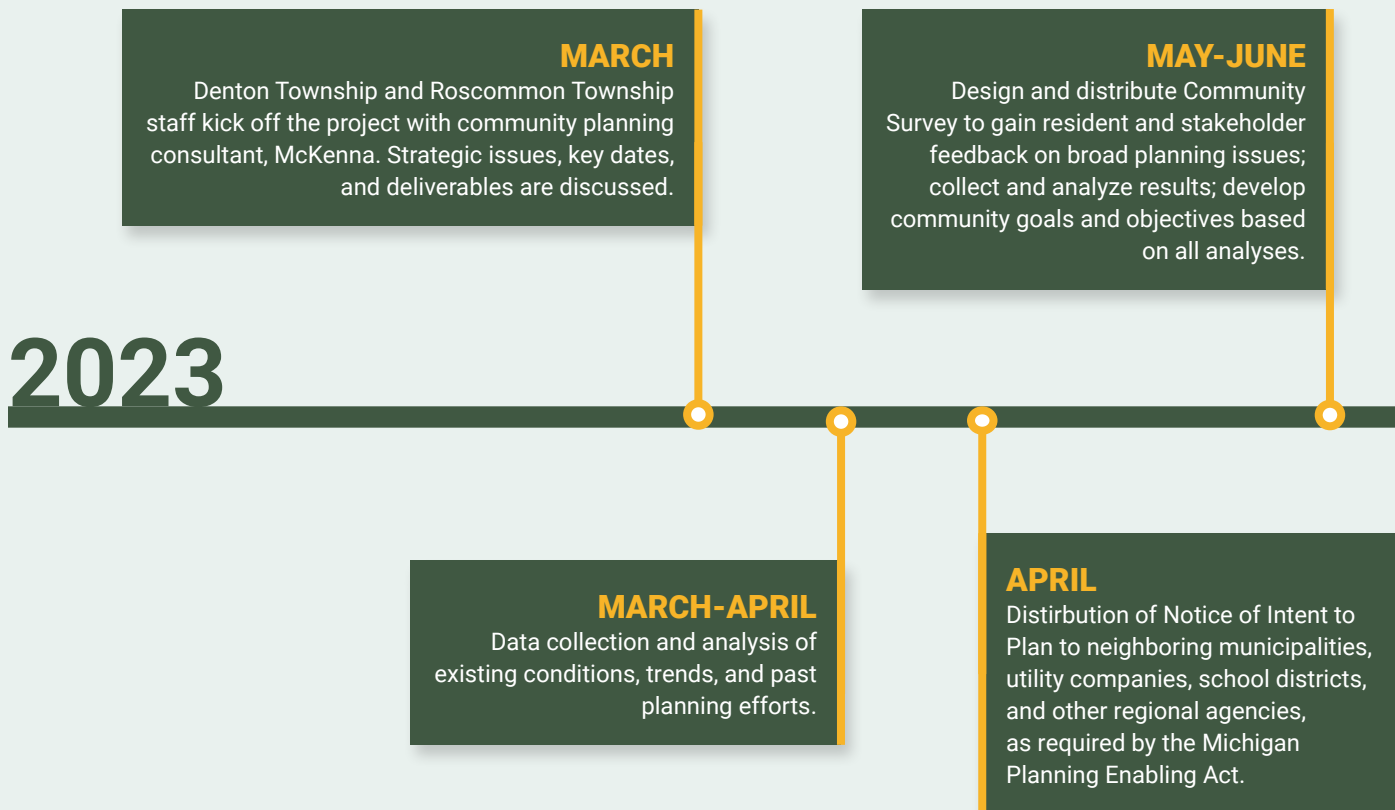
**Today**

Roscommon & Denton Townships set forth a joint master plan update in 2022, not only for South Houghton Lake but for the entire townships. This document not only presents the vision for Roscommon & Denton Townships over the next 20 years but also includes several specific, short-term implementation strategies intended to realize the overall vision of the Joint Master Plan. This Plan also builds on the South Houghton Lake Joint Master Plan, incorporating many of the goals and visions established by the communities in 2017.

**2030**

# Current Planning Efforts.

*This most recent planning effort involved the coordination of various notices, data collection and analysis, public engagement, plan writing, and public meetings. The final Plan will serve as a guide to development of the Townships for years to come.*



## JUNE

The Joint Planning Commission reviews the draft Master Plan and recommends its distribution to the Townships' Boards of Trustees.

## JULY

The Denton Township and Roscommon Township Boards of Trustees each review the draft Master Plan and authorize its distribution to the public; the Plan is shared with required agencies and posted on the communities' websites.

## JULY-SEPTEMBER

The legally-mandated 63-day public review period lasts from July to September; comments are collected, analyzed, and used to refine the Plan.

## OCTOBER

The Townships' Boards of Trustees each review the final Master Plan, which is adopted by resolution of both governing bodies.

## SEPTEMBER

The Joint Planning Commission hosts the legally-mandated public hearing to review and discuss the final plan and make a recommendation of adoption to the Township's Boards of Trustees

## FUTURE USE

Public snapshot of the community

Policy guide for new developments and preservation.

Basis for zoning ordinance amendments, including rezonings.

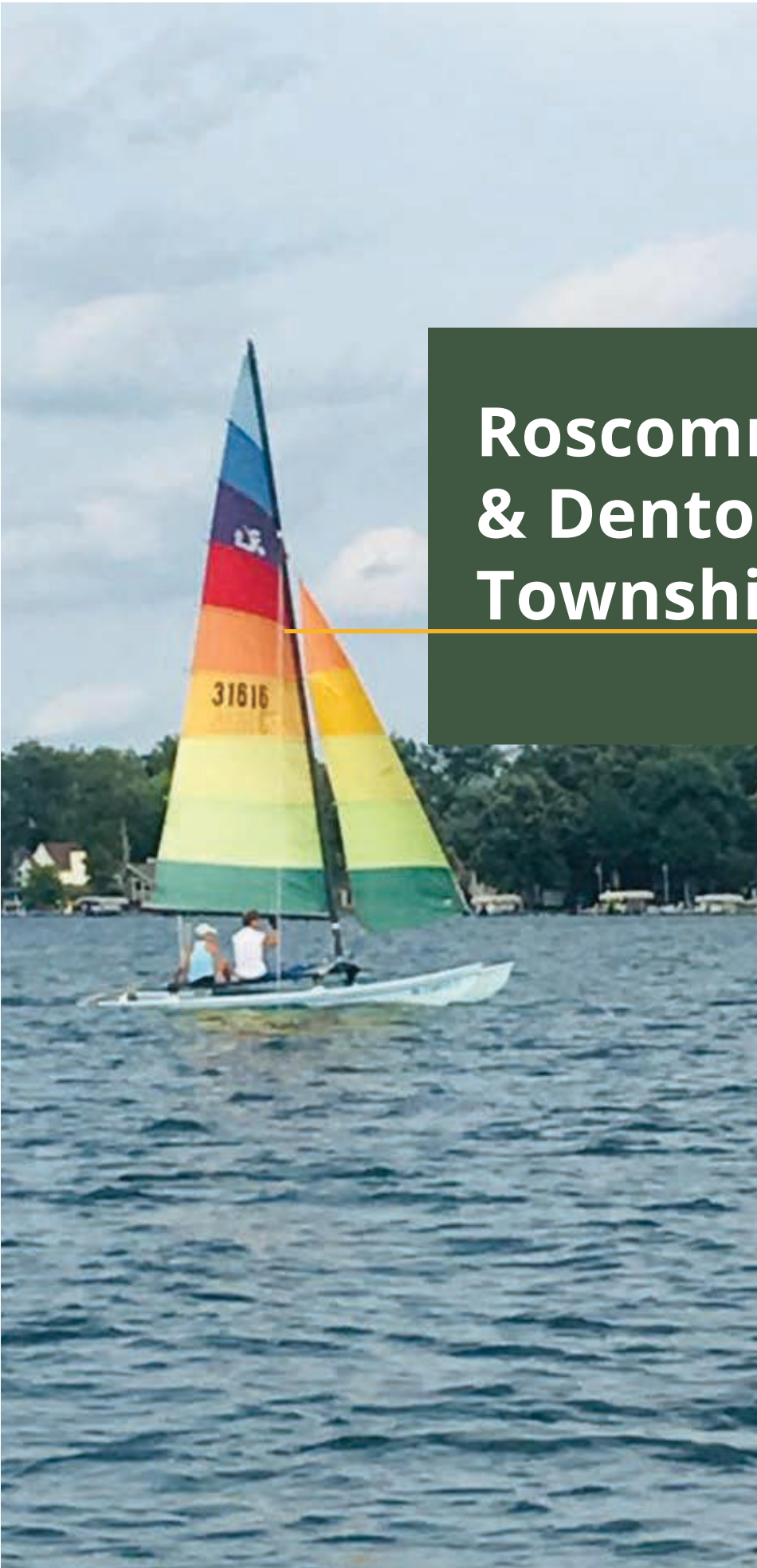
Basis for granting special land use, use variance, and PUD deviation requests.

# Key Themes.

The key themes represented throughout this Plan, as identified through analysis of existing conditions and public participation data, can be summarized as the following:

1. **Advancing** public health, accessibility, and an overall high quality of life for Township residents
2. **Preserving** the Townships' prime soils, waterways, tree stands, and rural character.
3. **Providing** a well-maintained and balanced housing stock, developing land within specific planned areas.
4. **Continuously improving** public services, recreation opportunities, and infrastructure to meet current and future demand.
5. **Supporting** existing businesses, entrepreneurship, and a diversified economy.

# Roscommon & Denton Township Today.



# Regional Context.

*In order to develop and implement goals and strategies specific to Roscommon & Denton Townships, it is equally as important to understand the existing conditions of the area. Understanding the Townships' regional position, existing land uses, and key demographics help paint a clearer picture of the future fabric of Roscommon & Denton Townships in terms of future land use designations, future transportation networks, infrastructure needs, and more.*

## LOCATION

Roscommon & Denton Townships are in south-central Roscommon County in the central part of Michigan's lower peninsula, in the southwest corner of Roscommon County. Roscommon Township is roughly three (3) times the size of a traditional Michigan township; together, Roscommon and Denton occupy one-quarter of the entire county.

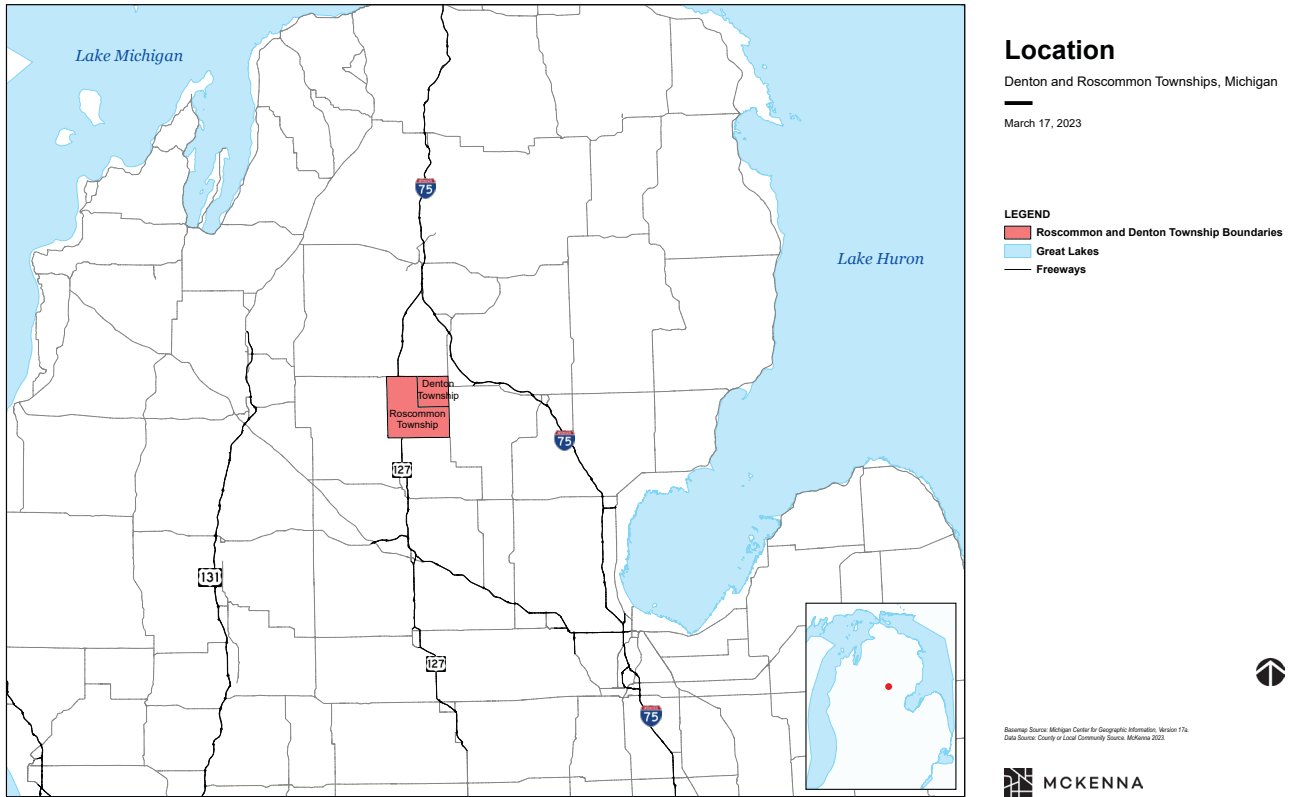
### Figure 1. Location of Neighboring Townships

[chart here]

The Townships' immediate access to US-127 provides opportunities for access to many other cities and regional destinations. The prime central location of Roscommon & Denton places them exactly 1.5 hours from Traverse City, Mackinac Island, and Saginaw/Bay City, which are some of the largest recreation and employment centers in the state. Additionally, Lake Huron, Lake Superior, and Lake Michigan are all less than 2 hours away via car. The Townships are also home to Houghton Lake, which is a major recreation destination itself, home to a state park and multiple expansive state forests.



## Map 1. Location



## HISTORY AND MUNICIPAL ESTABLISHMENT

Roscommon County was established in 1841 and formally organized as a government in 1875. The Roscommon County seat of government is located in the Village of Roscommon, which is on the far northern edge of the county. It was originally called Mikenauk County and was renamed Roscommon County after Roscommon, Ireland, in 1843. Prior to settlement by Europeans, the area was occupied by the Ottawa (Odawa), a Native American tribe that named the area Mikenauk in honor of a notable tribal leader. Although there are no federally recognized tribes in Denton & Roscommon Townships today, members of the Ottawa continue to live in the area.

There are several unincorporated named places located inside Denton & Roscommon Townships: Houghton Lake (which is the downtown area of the Townships), Houghton Lake Heights, Loxley, Nellsville, and Vencroft. These communities are not incorporated as municipalities, and as such are considered functional parts of the Townships.

## HOUGHTON LAKE

Although it is not an incorporated municipality, Houghton Lake stands apart from the remainder of the Townships due to its high concentration of residents, wealth of recreation opportunities, and unique combination of public (state) and private property access. Houghton Lake is represented by its tourism bureau, which includes not only Denton & Roscommon Townships, but also all the other townships that border the lake to the north and numerous other businesses, non-profits, and stakeholders.

Houghton Lake is not just a weekend destination. Over the years, many people have chosen to live full-time at the lake. Of course, there remain many families that drive from near and far that spend a few weekends per year at their “cottage on the lake.” Throughout this Plan, the implications of lakefront homeowners retiring and settling permanently at Houghton Lake should be considered.

# Demographics.

The purpose of a demographic profile is to understand the past, present, and future population and demographic characteristics of Roscommon & Denton Townships. Population and demographic characteristics are compared with Roscommon County, and in some cases the State of Michigan, to gain a regional perspective. Data is provided by the United States Census Bureau, located within the Department of Commerce. For this section, data has been provided by the 2020 Census and in other places the 2019 American Community Survey. Due in part to the COVID-19 global pandemic, some data has not been released by the U.S. Census Bureau.

## POPULATION

In 2010, the population of Roscommon & Denton Townships was 9,968 persons. As of the 2020 Census, that population had decreased slightly to 9,690 persons, for a net loss of 278 persons (2%). However, this loss may be attributed to the low occupancy rate of vacation properties during the 2020 pandemic lockdown. In general, the Denton Township population continues to trend upward, while the Roscommon Township population continues to trend downward since 2000. This change is in part to movement within Roscommon County, with more people moving to the Houghton Lake area and out of the more rural portions of the Township.

The graphic provides a summary of the 2020 population totals for the surrounding communities, which will be used as reference comparisons in subsequent sections.

Table 1. Population

Population	2010	2020	% change
Denton Township	4,411	5,293	▲ 17%
Roscommon Township	5,557	4,397	▼ 26%
Roscommon County	24,449	23,459	▼ 4%
State of Michigan	9,883,640	10,077,331	▲ 2%

Figure 2. Population Change

[chart here]

## RACE AND ETHNICITY

The population of Roscommon & Denton Townships is homogenous in terms of race and ethnicity. In 2020, 94% of the total population reported being white/Caucasian, 0.2% African American, 0.5% Native American, 0.4% Asian, and 0.3% of another race. Lastly, 4% of the population reported having the ethnic makeup of two or more races. As shown the Table 2 below, the racial makeup of Roscommon County is almost identical.

**Table 2. Racial Breakdown, 2020 Census**

Race (2020 Census Categories)	Roscommon County		Roscommon & Denton Township	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White alone	22,067	94.07%	9,132	94.24%
Black or African American alone	65	0.28%	24	0.25%
Native American and Alaska Native alone	105	0.45%	51	0.53%
Asian alone	78	0.33%	44	0.45%
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	10	0.04%	1	0.01%
SomeOtherRacealone	110	0.47%	29	0.30%
Population of two or more races:	1,024	4.37%	409	4.22%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>23,459</b>		<b>9,690</b>	

## AGE AND HEALTH

As of the 2020 Census, the median age of Roscommon & Denton Townships' residents was 54 years old, slightly below the Roscommon County median age of 56 years old. The high median age is reflective of the state-wide trend toward an older population as people live longer on average, as well as Roscommon & Denton Townships' status as a retirement destination.

**Table 3. Age Breakdown, 2019 ACS**

Age Category	Number	Percent
Under 5 years	384	3.63%
5 to 9 years	570	5.39%
10 to 14 years	664	6.28%
15 to 19 years	380	3.59%
20 to 24 years	340	3.22%
25 to 29 years	286	2.71%
30 to 34 years	276	2.61%
35 to 39 years	436	4.12%
40 to 44 years	900	8.51%
45 to 49 years	554	5.24%
50 to 54 years	364	3.44%
55 to 59 years	776	7.34%
60 to 64 years	1010	9.55%
65 to 69 years	972	9.19%
70 to 74 years	1154	10.92%
75 to 79 years	750	7.09%
80 to 84 years	374	3.54%
85 years and over	382	3.61%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>10,572</b>	

With data provided by the American Community Survey, circa 2019, the highest concentration of the population was between the ages of 55 years to 79 years. This group accounted for 37% of the Townships' population. Additional notable groups include 40 to 44 years, which accounts for 8.5% of the population, and 5 to 14 years, which accounts for 11.67 % of the population. Regarding the remainder of the Townships, most age groups averaged between 3% and 5% of the total population, which is represented in the Table 3 above.

### Figure 3. Age Distribution, 2019 ACS

[graph here]

Roscommon County ranks as the 10th most healthy county in Michigan out of 83 counties, according to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services' 2020 Primary Care Needs Assessment. The state determines the ranking through two categories: Health Status Indicators and Social Determinants of Health.

The Health Status Indicators are markers such as cancer rates, respiratory disease rates, and diabetes rates. In general, the county excels in terms of these indicators but lags behind the state with cancer rates, infant mortality, neonatal abstinence syndrome (infant drug withdrawal), and respiratory disease. This is in part due to the higher age of the population since cancer rates are high amongst the elderly.

The Social Determinants of Health are things like poverty rates, food insecurity rates, disability rates, and eviction rates. The county excels compared to the state in many categories but falls behind in terms of families in poverty, food insecurity, disability rates, and the proportion of the population over 65. The county unemployment rate was estimated at 7.8% in 2020, roughly double the state rate; this may be in part due to the high proportion of retirees but may also be due to the loss in tourism during the pandemic. As with the Health Status Indicators, these differences are largely due to the higher age of the population. The most notable categories are maternal tobacco use and the percentage of people with a disability, which are both twice the state-wide rate. Meanwhile, eviction and obesity are roughly half the state-wide rate. Additionally, annual medical exam rates are only 16% of the population per year, compared to 30% of the population state-wide.

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The educational attainment for people 25 years and older in Roscommon & Denton Townships is shown in the table below, along with a comparison of surrounding communities. Within the Townships, roughly 90% have attained a high school diploma or higher. Roscommon & Denton Townships have had about 12% of all residents earn a bachelor's degree, professional degree, or a graduate degree, with Denton Township having slightly higher education rates. With the surrounding communities being predominately agriculturally based in terms of employment, advanced degrees (post-secondary education) are not sought after as aggressively as compared to other professions.

### Figure 4. Education Breakdown, 2019 ACS

[graph here]

In comparison with the State of Michigan, the Townships perform better in terms of high school graduation rates, but worse in terms of associate and bachelor’s degrees. The educational attainment rates for all categories are comparable between the Townships and Roscommon County.

**Table 4. Education Rates, 2019 ACS**

Educational Attainment	State of Michigan		Roscommon County		Denton Township		RoscommonTownship	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than high school graduate	749,003	10%	2,154	11%	426	9%	417	12%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	2,263,705	29%	7,739	38%	1,847	40%	1,423	41%
Some college or associate’s degree	2,685,189	34%	7,328	36%	1,746	37%	1,254	36%
Bachelor’s degree or higher	2,089,490	27%	2,973	15%	652	14%	354	10%
Total Population Over 18	7,787,387		20,194		4,671		3,448	

**EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMY**

The local economy in Roscommon & Denton Townships is dominated by tourism, which includes boutique and specialty retail, arts, entertainment, food, and hotels/motels. The second largest industry is education and medical care, which is common in vacation communities across Michigan. Roscommon Township’s proportion of the arts industry is lower than Denton Township because most of the Houghton Lake downtown areas lie within Denton Township’s boundaries.

Although agriculture accounts for a very small portion of the area’s economy, fishing and hunting are major industries in the area that have not been captured by the Census. According to the MDNR’s 2012 Fishery Resource Report, the Houghton Lake Fishery is estimated at \$5.4 million; this figure is likely even high today due to inflation. The State’s 2023 Outdoor Recreation Plan also found that hunting activities were the most prevalent form of recreation in the northeastern region. The hunting industry is currently at risk due to a variety of zoonotic diseases in the whitetail deer population, some of which affect humans. Roscommon County is one of the areas being tested for bovine tuberculosis by the state. Per the 2022 MDNR deer management report, 8,206 licensed hunters were out in the Roscommon County area during the season and brought home 3,036 deer.

**Data Note:** The breakdown of employment by industry, as shown in Table 5, was constructed using 2019 5-year estimates derived from the American Community Survey (which is conducted by the Census). ACS data is an estimate based on a sample of the population, not an exact count. As such, some categories may be estimated as “0%” (such as agriculture) but are known to be higher through local observation. As such, it is most useful to look at the data as comparisons between categories, not exact numbers, to understand which industries are bigger or smaller.

**Table 5. Employment by Industry, 2019 ACS**

Employment Industry	Roscommon County		Denton Township		Roscommon Township	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	2%	120	2%	44	~0%	~0
Construction	8%	674	9%	179	11%	149
Manufacturing	10%	820	7%	130	11%	148
Wholesale trade	1%	111	2%	34	~0%	0
Retail trade	17%	1314	15%	287	29%	388
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	5%	368	7%	137	5%	70
Information	1%	48	0%	6	1%	8
Finance and insurance, real estate, rental, and leasing	5%	416	3%	60	12%	154
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	7%	531	10%	201	3%	37
Educational services, healthcare, and social assistance	20%	1588	18%	352	14%	192
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services	14%	1096	23%	449	4%	59
Other services, except public administration	5%	424	2%	48	6%	80
Public administration	5%	434	2%	43	4%	53
<b>Total Employed Population (16 years or older)</b>		<b>7,944</b>		<b>1,970</b>		<b>1,338</b>

Despite the economic strengths of the area, a high percentage of families in Roscommon & Denton Townships are living in poverty. A portion of this may be attributed to senior living on fixed incomes, but the data suggests a broader issue with rural poverty. Much of the area’s industry is based on low-wage service jobs such as retail and food, and few higher-paying professional positions are available outside of education or medical jobs. The low economic diversity compounds with the geographic isolation from necessary services (medical, grocery, etc.) that comes with rural living, leading to great difficulties in reducing poverty rates.

**Figure 5. Rates of Families Poverty, 2019 ACS**

[graph here]

## HOUSING

The quality, affordability, and availability of a community’s housing stock have a significant impact on overall community vitality. Trends relating to the number of housing units, households, year of construction, amount of owner-occupied, and rental-occupied homes all assist in evaluating the health of the Townships’ housing stock.

As of 2020, the Townships had an estimated 3,934 housing units (these include homes, apartments, condos, and all other forms of housing). Of these housing units, 71% were classified as being owner-occupied, while 29% were classified as renter occupied. These figures do not take into consideration the number of “short-term” rentals, such as weekend rentals, which might be available within the Township.

Table 6 below provides a comparison of housing units across municipal jurisdictions.

**Table 6. Housing Occupancy, 2020 Census**

Occupied Housing Units	2010	2020	% Change
Denton Township	1,932	2,002	▲ 3.6%
Roscommon Township	2,702	2,635	▼ 2.5%
Roscommon County	11,433	11,415	▼ 0.2%
State of Michigan	3,872,508	4,041,760	▲ 4.4%

## AGE OF HOUSING

The age of the housing stock can also provide important insights for a community, as the condition of the housing stock may be related to its construction age. Additionally, older housing stock can also provide a sense of character to the community. Based on the number of occupied housing units, over 53% of the housing units within the Township were constructed between 1960 and 1989. Meanwhile, less than 1% of all housing was constructed between 2014 and 2019. This reflects the reality that much of the housing stock is aging and will soon require updates for building safety and accessibility. As shown in Table 7, the housing stock in the Townships is slightly newer, on average, than the stock county-wide.

**Figure 6. Housing Stock Age in Roscommon & Denton Townships, 2019 ACS**

[graph here]



**Table 7. Comparison of Housing Age Between County and Townships, 2019 ACS**

Year Structure Built	Roscommon & Denton Twp		Roscommon County	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Built 2014 or later	216	0.9%	51	0.6%
Built 2010 to 2013	171	0.7%	86	1.0%
Built 2000 to 2009	1905	7.8%	895	10.8%
Built 1990 to 1999	4025	16.4%	1499	18.1%
Built 1980 to 1989	3570	14.5%	1209	14.6%
Built 1970 to 1979	5247	21.4%	1606	19.4%
Built 1960 to 1969	4288	17.5%	1380	16.6%
Built 1950 to 1959	3108	12.7%	822	9.9%
Built 1940 to 1949	1186	4.8%	420	5.1%
Built 1939 or earlier	822	3.3%	321	3.9%

Since 2014, it is estimated that only 216 new homes have been constructed within the two Townships. It should be noted that within this nine-year range, significant economic impacts such as the Great Recession and the onset of the COVID-19 Global Pandemic impacted the demand for new housing. Should the Townships wish to encourage new housing construction, further analysis of the type of needed housing style should be undertaken.

## HOUSING VALUES

The value of homes in Roscommon & Denton Townships is another measure of community quality of life and the overall health of the economy. The median home value within Denton Township was \$122,800 in 2019, while the median home value in Roscommon Township was \$106,800 the same year.

As of 2019, most owner-occupied homes were valued in the \$100,000 to \$175,000 range. However, a notable portion of homes also exceeded \$200,000, mainly in the Houghton Lake area. A very small proportion of homes exceed the \$1,000,000 price point, and in general home prices remain modest in the area. These values are reflected in Table 8 below.

**Table 8. Home Value, 2019 ACS**

Home Value	Estimate	Percentage
Less than \$10,000	17	0.5%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	24	0.7%
\$15,000 to \$19,999	30	0.9%
\$20,000 to \$24,999	90	2.6%
\$25,000 to \$29,999	34	1.0%
\$30,000 to \$34,999	97	2.8%
\$35,000 to \$39,999	71	2.0%
\$40,000 to \$49,999	128	3.6%
\$50,000 to \$59,999	105	3.0%
\$60,000 to \$69,999	297	8.4%
\$70,000 to \$79,999	177	5.0%
\$80,000 to \$89,999	303	8.6%
\$90,000 to \$99,999	147	4.2%
\$100,000 to \$124,999	441	12.5%
\$125,000 to \$149,999	376	10.7%
\$150,000 to \$174,999	354	10.1%
\$175,000 to \$199,999	172	4.9%
\$200,000 to \$249,999	254	7.2%
\$250,000 to \$299,999	169	4.8%
\$300,000 to \$399,999	144	4.1%
\$400,000 to \$499,999	51	1.4%
\$500,000 to \$749,999	9	0.3%
\$750,000 to \$999,999	6	0.2%
\$1,000,000 to \$1,499,999	15	0.4%
\$1,500,000 to \$1,999,999	0	0.0%
\$2,000,000 or more	9	0.3%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>3,520</b>	

# Key Takeaways.

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## **AGING POPULATION**

Due to the percentage of residents within the townships who are 55 and older, the Townships should consider planning for services that cater to an older demographic. Such services could include housing improvement programs that promote aging in place; a Township-wide public/private transportation system that would enable mobility-challenged residents to reach essential services such as health appointments and food services and other recreational amenities that are more focused on leisure.

## **COMMUNITY-WIDE HEALTH**

Despite the easy access to regional and local medical facilities, many residents in Roscommon & Denton Townships are not getting annual medical exams. Due to the high rates of disability (physical and mental), cancer, and maternal substance abuse, these medical exams are extremely important to help ensure the townships' residents stay healthy. The ample recreation opportunities in the area contribute to a lower obesity rate than in other areas, but other health problems persist, especially in older adults. Although Roscommon & Denton Townships do not control healthcare facilities, insurance coverage, and many other aspects of the medical process, they can support other agencies which provide healthcare services. For example, the Townships can continue to supply information about free health-related events (such as medicine drop-off days, blood drives, substance abuse counseling, etc.) and advertise these events via social media. Additionally, the Townships can investigate zoning changes that would allow for greater coverage by medical clinics and independent physicians in the Houghton Lake Heights areas and the rural southern portions of the townships.

## **ECONOMIC DIVERSITY**

The diversity of employment industries impacts everything from poverty levels to age distribution, to housing stock. Denton and Roscommon Townships are largely tourist-driven economies, with a higher number of lower-wage retail service jobs available compared to higher-wage trades, management, or salaried positions. Despite two-thirds of community survey participants desiring more restaurants and retail businesses on the consumer side, the employment mix this offers can dissuade younger individuals and families from establishing themselves in the community. Reflecting this, 0% of survey participants said employment opportunities were something they valued about the community. A feature of the previous Master Plan aimed to recruit more entrepreneurs into the area and support small business growth, which can address both concerns. The Townships should continue to pursue this goal, which may involve modifying the zoning ordinance to provide for incubators and flexible workspaces, which can alleviate the costs of starting a business. In collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, the Townships can develop incentives to bring new industries into the area, including renewable energy and construction projects, to bolster trades and manufacturing.

## **HOUSING DIVERSITY**

Similar to economic diversity, the diversity (and affordability) of the housing stock can impact the opportunities available to the wider population – only 3% of survey participants indicated housing options as something they appreciate about the community. While most survey participants wanted more single-family homes, a third said they would like to see more multifamily housing types, including apartments, duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes. This means that while single-family homes will likely remain the predominant housing type, the Townships can explore providing more attainable housing stock. This could look like modifying the zoning ordinance to allow for apartments above retail uses, smaller lots with higher density (more dwelling units), and single-family home conversions into duplexes and triplexes.



## **Natural Features and Resources.**

*A thorough community plan requires that the condition of the environment be considered in decisions regarding future land uses and stewardship of the land and water within the two Townships.*

Federal environmental legislation enacted in the 1970s raised public awareness of the importance of environmental protection. Although many states, including Michigan, strengthened federal environmental laws with state laws and programs designed to correct environmental problems and prevent future contamination of air, land, and water, trends during the 1980s reduced enforcement of these laws to a low priority. During the 1990s and early 2000s environmental protection has resurfaced as a serious concern.

The natural features of Roscommon & Denton, such as the lakes, wetlands, groundwater, and soils are important resources to the community. Although Roscommon & Denton Townships are predominately rural in character, concern for the environment is as critical as in urban communities, which must deal with brownfields and air pollution. Several natural features in Roscommon & Denton Townships are examined below within the following categories: surface water, groundwater, wetlands, and soils.

## **SURFACE WATERS**

In addition to Houghton Lake, other popular lakes in Roscommon & Denton Township include Wraco Lodge Lake, Barney Lake, Lake Co-Be-Ac, Duck Lake, and Lake James. Most of these lakes are located within the Roscommon State Forest Area but are still accessible to the public; only Lake James is directly bordered by homes and intensive development.

The surface waters within Roscommon & Denton represent an abundant natural, recreational, and economic resource. The lakes provide the community with a variety of amenities including scenic views, fish and wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities. In addition to the aesthetics of the Lake and the lake-side setting, the lakes are also important to the local economy. Many of the residences located around the lakes are used for weekend, seasonal, vacation, rental, and/or recreational purposes that draw visitors from across the state. These visitors spend money at the stores and restaurants and the properties around the lakes, providing tax revenue.

One of the most pressing recent problems for the area is the Eurasian Watermilfoil epidemic in Houghton Lake. The issue is being managed by the Houghton Lake Improvement Board, which has been vigorously addressing this issue with special assessment district financing. Importantly, the health and beauty of the community's principal surface water asset, Houghton Lake, must be ensured for the community to remain robust and for the desired vision of this area to be achieved. Roscommon County has put considerable effort into documenting and mapping all the Eurasian Watermilfoil occurrences in the Township, and their work is used to help inform control and eradication efforts.

The overall condition of Houghton Lake has been improving over the past few years due to rigorous aquatic vegetation surveys and selective spot treatments to control invasive aquatic plant species such as hybrid Eurasian Watermilfoil and Starry Stonewort. Both of these species are declining in Houghton Lake and providing space for the now 29 native aquatic plant species that are so important to the ecological balance of Houghton Lake.

## **WETLANDS**

Located throughout the Townships are wetlands, which are commonly called swamps, wetlands, bogs, or marshes. The year-round presence of water in the soil is what makes a wetland distinct from other natural areas; wetlands support special wetland vegetation and animals that are not found in other areas. Wetlands are most commonly located between waterways and higher, drier lands.

Wetlands perform a wide range of important functions for Roscommon & Denton Townships. In addition to being a natural habitat for fish and wildlife, wetlands control flood and stormwater, remove pollutants from water, control erosion, and act as water recharge areas. Wetlands are also a major tourism draw because of the rare species they support, which draw people from across the state and country, and their natural beauty which brings together onlookers and photographers.

Most of the Township's wetlands are located in the southern and western portions of the Township, where there is very little development and most of the land is designated as state forest. However, pockets of wetlands still surround Houghton Lake, the two largest areas of which are in Denton Township. These wetlands are especially important because they help "buffer" the lake from the negative impacts of residential development. When rainwater hits the ground, it picks up all the fertilizers, dust, and pollution it comes into contact with. It then carries these pollutants with it as it runs across the surface and drains into Houghton Lake. These pollutants negatively impact drinking water, damage water quality for swimmers and aquatic animals, and can even lead to major environmental problems like algal blooms (as seen in Lake Erie). Wetlands help prevent these negative consequences by acting like a sponge and absorbing the rainwater before it can reach the lake. As such, wetlands



# Water Features

Denton and Roscommon Townships, Michigan

June 13, 2023

## LEGEND

- Roscommon and Denton Township Boundaries
- Other Municipal Boundaries
- Roads
- Streams and Drains
- Lakes, Rivers, Streams, and Drains
- Properties with Milfoil (Invasive Aquatic Plant)
- Wetlands



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, Version 17a.  
Data Source: Roscommon County, 2023.  
McKenna 2023.



are very important for maintaining the health of Houghton Lake, so the townships can continue to enjoy all of the lake's environmental, economic, and aesthetic benefits.

The quality of Houghton Lake is not only improved by wetlands but also by other actions which prevent pollutants from reaching the lake directly. These actions include disconnecting parking lots and other impervious surfaces from the drain system, constructing rain gardens and other forms of green infrastructure, encouraging surfacing materials that help absorb water, and decreasing fertilizer and pesticide use. The 2008 Roscommon County Phosphorous Fertilizers Ordinance was a step in the right direction toward improving the quality of the lake; Roscommon & Denton Townships have yet to adopt their own ordinances to build on the county's progress.

According to the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI), most wetlands in Roscommon & Denton Townships are categorized as "Freshwater Forest and Shrub" wetlands. These wetlands are commonly called swamps or bogs and have standing water year-round. These wetlands mainly have trees and other native shrubs such as buttonbushes, dogwoods, and blueberries; grasses are not common in these ecosystems.

The second most common type of wetland in the townships is "Freshwater Emergent" wetlands. These are commonly called marshes, fens, or wet meadows, and also have year-round water. However, these wetlands do not have many trees and are instead dominated by grasses, ferns, flowers, and other sedge plants like snake grass and cotton grass. These wetlands are almost exclusively located around Town Line Creek and Knappen Creek, which are both inside the Roscommon State Forest.

## **WOODLANDS**

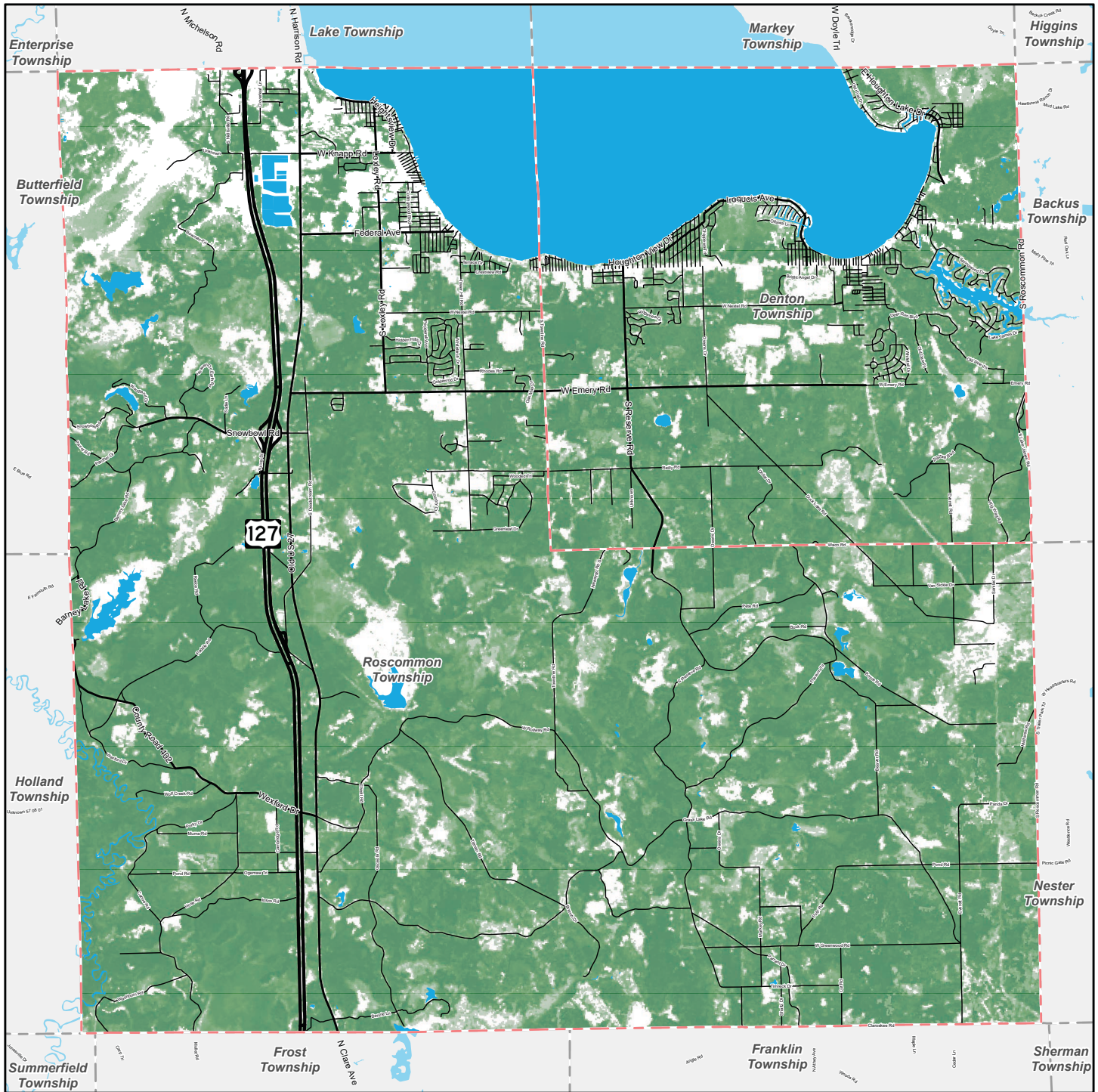
Roscommon & Denton townships have an extensive woodland and forest network which stretches across the southern and western portions of the townships. Because the Roscommon State Forest takes up over 50% of the townships' land area, they are fortunate to have far more forestland than other northern communities. These forestlands provide numerous benefits for both the natural environment and residents, as well as visitors.

- Habitat for native plants and animals
- Recreation for hiking, biking, camping, snowmobiling, ORV-ing, and more
- Land for hunting and fishing during state game seasons
- Natural views and vistas
- Cleaner and cooler air

The Crawford-Roscommon Conservation District is a locally elected division of the state government, and it's charged with maintaining the area's forestlands for the benefit of all generations. The Conservation District promotes conservation, stewardship, and sustainable use of the natural resources in Crawford and Roscommon Counties through landowner assistance and education. The District's Forestry Assistance Program is a technical assistance program for landowners in Michigan which provides free information on forest management, reforestation, tree farming, soils, and more. The District also operates a tax exemption program for landowners who pledge to conserve large tracts of forestland to help incentivize conservation.

The District also maintains a unique program called the Tree Farm Program, which helps farmers get Environmental Verified through the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP). Started in 1998, MAEAP is a voluntary program that recognizes farmers who are top stewards of their land. MAEAP helps farmers adopt cost-effective practices that reduce erosion and runoff into ponds, streams, and rivers. Under the District's Tree Farm Program, the MAEAP applies to not only farmland but also active farms with a forested component.





# Vegetation

Denton and Roscommon Townships, Michigan

June 13, 2023

## LEGEND

- Roscommon and Denton Township Boundaries
- Other Municipal Boundaries
- Lakes, Rivers, Streams, and Drains
- Freeways
- Roads
- High Vegetation
- Low Vegetation



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, Version 17a.  
 Data Source: Roscommon County, 2023.  
 McKenna 2023.



## WILDFIRES

Roscommon County as a whole is at high risk for wildfires due to the high concentration of woodlands. In the 2016 County-wide Community Wildfire Protection Plan, the Wildfire Committee laid out a set of actions that should be taken by all agencies within the area to reduce fire risk. Roscommon & Denton Townships are at the center of this plan:

*“Perhaps the greatest wildfire concern in Roscommon County is the area around Houghton and Higgins Lakes, the population centers of Roscommon County. Development there is often characterized by dwellings tucked away on wooded lots. Adding to this concern is the prevalence of poor or inadequate access for first responders, such as narrow drives, extreme topography, and abundant fuels. This environment hinders fire suppression efforts and puts emergency responders at risk.”*

– 2016 Wildfire Protection Plan

The 2016 Plan laid out steps that local units of government should take to help mitigate wildfire risk. These items cover both Master Plans and other local regulations.

1. Revise local zoning to include standards for private/public road construction; driveway standards; requirements for developments (such as subdivisions, condominiums, commercial, recreational, and industrial) to have two egress ingress roads; and house addresses to be displayed on 911 signs at the driveway end.
2. Revise local zoning and building codes to include requirements for Firewise landscaping and construction to reduce the ignition of homes. A clearing around homes for at least 30 feet on all sides will discourage wildfires from spreading directly to them.
3. Revise local zoning to establish special standards for Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) in fire-risk areas which include the use of defensible zones, fuel breaks, road and driveway design, signage for street identification, ingress and egress roads, underground utilities and vegetative maintenance for managing dangerous fuel loads in high fire risk areas.
4. Revise local Capital Improvement Plans (CIPs) to include expenditures for creating access roads and fire breaks, hazardous fuels reduction projects including community vegetation management, vegetation removal, vegetation clearing and/or thinning, and retrofitting existing public structures against wildfire, etc.
5. Adopt local Wildfire Codes which set standards for vegetative fuel clearance, building requirements, roadway and driveway standards, and planning and assessment.
6. Adopt the International Code Council’s (ICC) most recent International Urban-Wildland Interface Code. The ICC is a nonprofit organization dedicated to developing single sets of national model construction codes.
7. Adopt regulations that limit, prevent, or remove development within hazardous areas such as flood plains. The 2016 Plan recommends that open space be maintained within agricultural uses or serve as parks, greenway corridors, and golf courses.
8. Retrofit fire stations, water treatment plants, and other critical municipal facilities to protect them from fires and keep them functioning during a local emergency scenario.
9. Make public awareness brochures and materials available in government offices.

The State of Michigan DNR is an active participant in wildfire reduction in Roscommon & Denton Townships. The state's Roscommon Equipment Center and Forest Fire Experiment Station provide fire agencies across the nation with specialized wildland firefighting equipment from its cutting-edge design and fabrication shop. Services include:

- Technical assistance for efficient and safe conversions of surplus federal equipment for rural fire defense.
- Developing and adapting equipment or technology for improved wildfire control.
- Testing equipment to determine suitability for wildfire control.
- Equipment information services including reports and newsletters, workshops, forums, and participation in national fire equipment boards.

## **FLOODING**

Houghton Lake is the main area of concern in terms of seasonal flooding as it poses the largest risk to private property in Roscommon & Denton Townships. Recognizing the need to effectively manage Houghton Lake, the Houghton Lake Improvement Board (HLIB) was established in 2000 under the provisions of Michigan's Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act. In accordance with state law, the lake board is composed of a representative of each of the four townships that border the lake, a county commissioner, the county drain commissioner, and a lakefront property owner.

The 2023 HLIB Annual Report noted that the overall condition of Houghton Lake was good, and floodwaters are largely managed through the Houghton Lake dam and Houghton Lake Flats State Park, which acts as a flood reservoir. However, given the operational limitations of the Houghton Lake Dam, it is not always possible to maintain the desired lake levels. At times, the level of the lake is significantly higher than the court-ordered levels, even with the gates in the dam fully open. Thus, the dam must always be operated in a manner that prevents excess storage of water above the court-ordered winter and summer lake levels.

Pursuant to court order, maintenance of the legal lake levels on Houghton Lake is the responsibility of the Roscommon County Board of Commissioners. On December 8, 2022, the County established a special assessment for property owners who benefit from Houghton Lake to help pay for the cost of dam improvements that the County cannot pay for alone. The assessment is an annual cost that appears on a property owner's property taxes. Privately owned parcels of land, subdivisions, and state-owned land are in the special assessment district.

## **GROUNDWATER**

Roscommon & Denton Townships depend heavily on groundwater as the source of water for residential and commercial use. Therefore, it is vital to plan appropriately for development to protect the natural resource from possible contamination. Contamination of this resource can happen: 1) through non-point sources of pollution from chemicals and efforts associated with commerce, industry, and farming; 2) through chemicals filtering into groundwater from septic fields, oil tanks, and waste disposal sites; and 3) through everyday residential activities. In many instances, these pollutants reach lakes and streams through groundwater supplies. Pollutants may also affect well water located near septic fields.

Groundwater protection must also address the operational features of land uses. Groundwater contamination is most frequently the result of leaking septic systems, improper floor drains, improper storage of hazardous substances, leaking underground storage tanks, above-ground spills, overfilling of tanks, condensation from air emissions, and improper waste disposal. Many of these avenues of contamination can be addressed in a groundwater protection plan.



## **LOCAL PARKS**

Both Townships have recently made great strides in the development of parks and beaches along the shore of Houghton Lake.

### **Denton Township**

The newest addition is Denton Township's Trestle Park, a universally accessible park located in the heart of Prudenville on the Houghton Lake waterfront near the corner of M-55 and M-18.

Denton Township's Sullivan Beach is located 4 blocks west of the corner of M-55 and M-18 in Prudenville. The site is over an acre in size with a sandy beach for swimming. Public restrooms are on site, along with a small playground. A boat launch site on the east side of the park is suitable for launching small boats.

Johnson's Beach is a narrow strip of land 210' long on Dogwood Drive, with no facilities and limited parking. Rotary Park in Denton Township has a pavilion, public restrooms, and soccer and baseball fields, in addition to a playground and picnic area.

### **Roscommon Township**

Lakeview Park is located on the Houghton Lake waterfront along M-55, 2.5 miles east of US-127. The completed phase one of this barrier-free park includes a wheelchair-accessible fishing pier, tiered seating with a natural fish mural, a covered picnic area, benches, and some playground equipment. A kayak launch is also located along the natural shoreline. Phase two of this popular urban waterfront park utilizes an adjacent old cottage parcel purchased by the township and added 140' of frontage on Houghton Lake. The project developed additional accessible amenities and includes; family-style UA rest/changing rooms; native landscaping/screening; pergola/shape structure, a rooftop interpretive plaza space, and swimming beach. This phase is an MDRTF-granted project that was completed in the fall of 2016.

Skinner Park in Roscommon Township includes a par 3 disc golf course, a walking trail with fitness equipment, two pavilions, grills, play areas, and softball fields. In August, a free movie on the park event has drawn hundreds to this location.



# Recreation

Denton and Roscommon Townships, Michigan

June 13, 2023

## LEGEND

- Boat Launch
- Camping
- Other Recreation
- Golf
- Park
- Roscommon and Denton Township Boundaries
- Other Municipal Boundaries
- ORV Trails
- Snowmobile Trails
- Railroads
- Roads
- Lakes, Rivers, Streams, and Drains
- Roscommon State Forest



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, Version 17a.  
Data Source: Roscommon County, 2023.  
McKenna 2023.



Heights Park is located on 248' frontage of Houghton Lake in Roscommon Township and provides a picnic shelter, grills, play area, and a swimming beach.

## **STATE RECREATION LAND**

The Roscommon State Forest is the largest recreation resource in Roscommon & Denton Townships, covering 41,116.3 acres (64+ square miles) within the two townships. The State Forest covers more than 50% of the land in the townships and is almost entirely contiguous, although some residential homes, private lodges, and small agricultural lots persist within the forest. This makes the Forest a tremendous resource in terms of recreation, but also an economic draw on the Townships' finances, since state lands produce no tax revenue. However, many township residents appreciate and understand the tradeoff and make good use of the woodlands available in their backyards for hiking, trail riding, camping, hunting, and more.

The State of Michigan also maintains designated trails for hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing within the Roscommon State Forest. Numerous ORV and snowmobile trails are shown in the Recreation Map, and the townships boast excellent trail connectivity during both the summer and winter months. Not shown on the map are the state's many hiking, biking, and equestrian trails, which weave between Roscommon and Denton Townships and are constantly being expanded. To keep up to date on new trails, view the state's interactive online non-motorized trail map.

The most notable trail in the Roscommon State Forest, within Roscommon & Denton Townships, is the Lost Twin Lakes Trail which runs 3.3 miles through forests, wetlands, and creeks. This trail is a tourist destination due to its natural beauty and isolated location in the center of the state forest.

## TOURISM

Houghton Lake, with 20,044 acres and 30 miles of shoreline, is the largest inland lake in Michigan and its tourism impacts are very important for the economic health and stability of Roscommon & Denton Townships. The Houghton Lake Chamber of Commerce is the primary agency responsible for marketing the area to tourists and it maintains a year-round event calendar. The Chamber also coordinates a local business directory, advertising, and entertainment for the region, as well as provides services to local businesses looking for employees, communications and IT services, and professional assistance.

The Chamber also helps market the townships' many natural assets, including streams and lakes, forests, beautiful scenery, hiking trails, camping facilities, fishing, hunting, boating, swimming, water skiing, snow skiing, ice skating, sledding, and more.

*Houghton Lake is home of the nationally-famous Tip-Up-Town USA winter festival. Other local attractions and activities in the Townships and nearby include:*

- Bluewater Trail and Lost Twin Lakes Trail
- Boating resources, numerous public access sites
- Fishing & Hunting
- Roscommon County Quilt Trail
- Hiking
- 6 public golf courses
- Birding; Kirtland Warbler Habitat and Festival
- Nordic skiing and cross-country ski trails
- Groomed snowmobile trails
- ORV trail network
- Michigan Shore-to-Shore Trail from Empire to Oscoda and points north and south, a 500 mile interconnected system of trails.
- Sailing
- Tip-Up-Town USA winter festival, Houghton Lake (last two weekends in January).
- Oldsmobile Club
- Pumpkin Run Car Show
- ATV Jamboree
- Guided color tour, Houghton Lake
- Arts & Crafts Fair, Houghton Lake
- Bluegill Festival, Lake St. Helen
- Michigan Fireman's Association Memorial, Roscommon
- Houghton Lake Senior Center
- Au Sable Forest
- Backus Creek State Game Area
- Houghton Lake Wildlife Research Area
- Genealogy Club
- Roscommon County Fair
- Rusty Nuts Car Show
- Area 4 Special Olympics-Summer Games

# Key Takeaways.

## NATURAL HAZARDS

Roscommon & Denton Townships are at uniquely high risk for natural hazards, due to their combined exposure to both wildfires and flooding. As such, the townships need to take more immediate, regulatory action to direct development away from high-risk areas and work with existing property owners to disaster-proof structures that are at risk. Further, the townships should work to help disseminate information to residents and vacationers about how they can personally reduce their risk.

## LAKE QUALITY

It is of utmost importance to Roscommon & Denton Townships to maintain and improve the water quality of Houghton Lake due to its numerous environmental and economic benefits. To do this, the townships should continue to support the efforts of the HLIB and county which are actively working on invasive species management and water level regulation improvements. In addition, the townships need to consider local legal and policy changes to encourage residents and developers to be more lake-conscious. This includes implementing development standards that encourage pervious surfaces and other green infrastructure, enacting regulations to restrict fertilizer and pesticide use on lakefront properties, and reducing or eliminating local zoning requirements which lead to unnecessary pavement.

## TOURISM IN THE FUTURE

Tourism continues to be the most important industry in the area, and marketing existing assets is one of the easiest ways for Roscommon & Denton Townships to continue bolstering the local economy. Coordination between townships through the chamber is a very effective method of inter-governmental cooperation, and the townships should continue to use the Chamber to their advantage as a marketing tool. However, the townships should also improve marketing of their local parks and amenities by providing detailed information on their respective websites, updating the information about these sites on Google Maps, and working with one another to cross-advertise.

Creative interactive options should also be considered for the townships' many trails and recreation areas to help reach more people of all ages. Other townships have launched native plant bingo cards, podcast audio trail guides, and other forms of multimedia to help engage visitors. The townships should also consider accessible amenities and activities at local parks and trails. Trestle Park has been a notable step forward in designing for universal accessibility, and all future parks should be built and improved with accessibility at the forefront. Especially as the population ages, proving materials and activities for the vision, mobility, and cognitively impaired will be extremely important.





## **Existing Land Cover.**

*Knowledge of current land cover and usage provides a basis to consider compatibility of new land development and is a valuable reference tool for the day-to-day problems associated with land management and the provision of public services.*

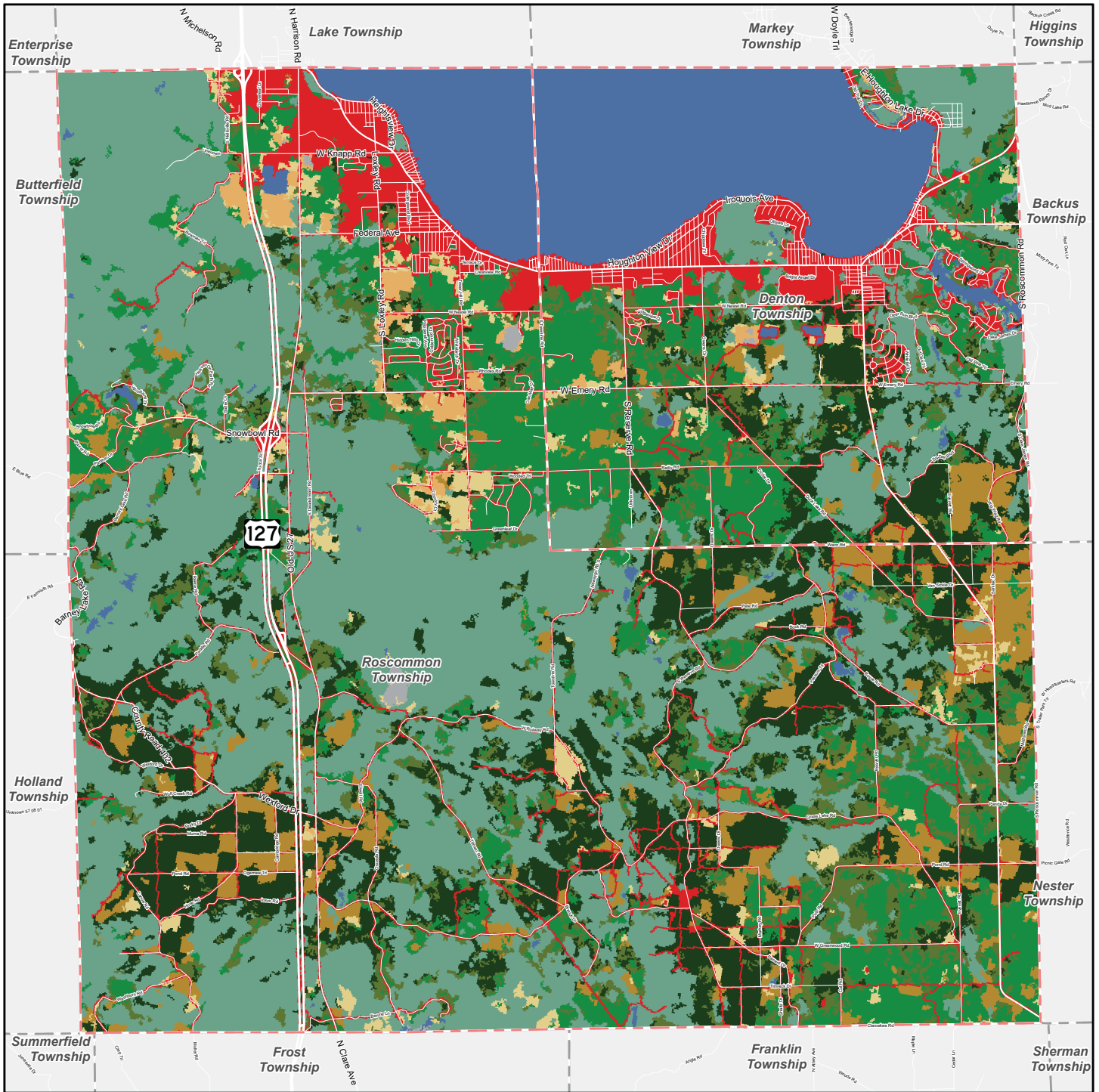
The existing land use survey provides an inventory of land use within the community and is a key source of background information used in developing the future land use plan.

Most of the land within the two Townships is classified as agricultural and used primarily for production/ agriculture. Most residential land uses fall into two broad categories: either exceptionally large-lot rural/ agricultural farmstead homesites or very dense lots packed tightly around the many lakes of the Townships. Overall, the openness of the large, agricultural uses prevails, and Roscommon & Denton has a distinct rural setting. However, the areas of intense residential development along the lakes create a secondary lakeside residential setting.

The following section outlines, in more detail, the location of land cover types and their characteristics within Roscommon & Denton Townships. Existing land cover types were divided into several distinct categories to analyze the existing pattern of development. This analysis will help to define the specific areas within the Townships that are planned to be preserved or enhanced throughout this Plan.

### **OPEN WATER**

Open water is defined as surface water that is present year-round, such as lakes, rivers, ponds, and streams.



# Existing Land Cover

Denton and Roscommon Townships, Michigan

June 13, 2023

## LEGEND

- 11 Open Water
- 12 Perennial Ice/ Snow
- 21 Developed, Open Space
- 22 Developed, Low Intensity
- 23 Developed, Medium Intensity
- 24 Developed, High Intensity
- 31 Barren Land (Rock/Sand/Clay)
- 41 Deciduous Forest
- 42 Evergreen Forest
- 43 Mixed Forest
- 51 Dwarf Scrub\*
- 52 Shrub/Scrub
- 71 Grassland/Herbaceous
- 72 Sedge/Herbaceous\*
- 73 Lichens\*
- 74 Moss\*
- 81 Pasture/Hay
- 82 Cultivated Crops
- 90 Woody Wetlands
- 95 Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands

\* Alaska only



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, Version 17a.  
Data Source: Roscommon County, 2023.  
McKenna 2023.



## **DEVELOPED**

Developed land is defined as land that has been cleared for either residential, commercial, or industrial development. The “Open Space” sub-category is land with a mixture of some constructed materials, but mostly vegetation in the form of lawn grasses. Impervious surfaces (surfaces that cannot absorb water) account for less than 20% of total cover. These areas most commonly include large-lot single-family housing units, parks, golf courses, and vegetation planted in developed settings for recreation, erosion control, or aesthetic purposes.

The “Medium Intensity” sub-category is land with a mixture of constructed materials and vegetation. Impervious surfaces account for 20% to 49% percent of total cover. These areas most commonly include single-family homes.

The “High Intensity” sub-category is land where people reside or work in high numbers. Examples include apartment complexes, commercial areas, and industrial plants. Impervious surfaces account for 80% to 100% of the total cover.

## **BARREN**

Barren land is defined as bedrock, glacial debris, dunes, strip mines, gravel pits, and other accumulations of earthen material. Generally, vegetation accounts for less than 15% of total cover. The numerous gravel businesses located through the townships are most of the land in this category.

## **FOREST**

Forest land is defined as area dominated by trees where areas dominated by trees, generally greater than 5 meters tall, and greater than 20% of total vegetation cover. The “Evergreen” sub-category is land where more than 75% of the tree species maintain their leaves all year. The “Deciduous” sub-category is land where more than 75% of the tree species shed foliage simultaneously in response to seasonal change. The “Mixed” sub-category is land where neither evergreen nor deciduous trees are dominant.

## **SHRUBLAND**

Shrubland is defined as area dominated by shrubs, which are woody plants that are smaller than a tree and have several main stems arising at or near the ground. Examples of Michigan shrubs include witch-hazel, viburnum, ninebark, and buttonbush. Shrubland is typically composed of plants that are less than 5 meters tall and has shrub canopy typically greater than 20% of total vegetation. This class includes true shrubs and young trees in an early successional stage or trees stunted from environmental conditions.

## **GRASSLAND/HERBACEOUS**

Grassland/herbaceous land is defined as area dominated by graminoid (grass) or herbaceous vegetation, generally greater than 80% of total vegetation. These areas are not subject to intensive management such as tilling but can be utilized for grazing livestock.

## **PLANTED/CULTIVATED**

Planted/cultivated land is defined as area comminated for the rearing of livestock or cultivation of crops. The "Pasture/Hay" sub-category is land used for grasses, legumes, or grass-legume mixtures planted for livestock grazing or the production of seed or hay crops, typically on a perennial cycle. Pasture/hay vegetation accounts for greater than 20% of total vegetation. The "Cultivated Crops" sub-category is land used for the production of annual crops, such as corn, soybeans, vegetables, tobacco, and cotton, and also perennial woody crops such as orchards and vineyards. Crop vegetation accounts for greater than 20% of total vegetation. This class also includes all land being actively tilled.

## **WETLANDS**

Wetlands are defined as areas of land that are routinely or constantly saturated with water. The "Woody Wetlands" sub-category is areas where forest or shrubland vegetation accounts for greater than 20% of vegetative cover and the soil or substrate is periodically saturated with or covered with water. The "Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands" sub-category is areas where perennial herbaceous vegetation accounts for greater than 80% of vegetative cover and the soil or substrate is periodically saturated with or covered with water.

# Key Takeaways.

## **CONCENTRATED DEVELOPMENT**

Roscommon & Denton Townships have managed to keep residential and commercial development relatively concentrated in the Houghton Lake area, with only some encroachment into the outer forestlands. This is in large part due to the state's ownership of the forests and wetlands. As the townships look to encourage a wider variety of commercial businesses, especially tourism-based industries and entrepreneurs, special care must be taken to ensure development remains concentrated. Keeping development centralized not only helps preserve natural resources, but also helps create an economic center that sustains itself; encouraging entrepreneurship, accumulating capital, and drawing together businesses, employees, and patrons. Additional zoning changes and performance measures may be needed to help make the desired pattern of development a reality, and to ensure that additional development does not result in negative environmental impacts to Houghton Lake.

## **DIVERSE NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS**

Roscommon & Denton Townships stand apart for their wide variety and diversity of natural ecosystems. The many forest, shrub, and wetland ecosystems which house rare plants and animals are an asset to the area, and the Townships should continue to support their preservation. Additionally, the Townships should collaborate with external agencies to help market these ecosystems and their uniqueness; the wild rice restoration project with Ferris State University is just one example of such a project currently underway.

# Community Facilities.

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*Like many rural Townships, Roscommon & Denton Townships collaborate with other governments, agencies, and private firms to provide communities facilities and services. The County, School District, and Library are all important players in making sure residents have access to the amenities they need.*

## **EMERGENCY SERVICE FACILITIES**

The County Sheriff is aided in law enforcement by the Michigan State Police and the Denton Township Police. Denton Township has its own Fire Department that services Denton Township. Roscommon Township Fire Department services Roscommon Township. The Denton Township Ambulance Service provides coverage with two full-time Advanced Life Support Ambulances to Denton Township. Houghton Lake Ambulance Authority provides Roscommon Township (and Lake Township) with ambulance services.

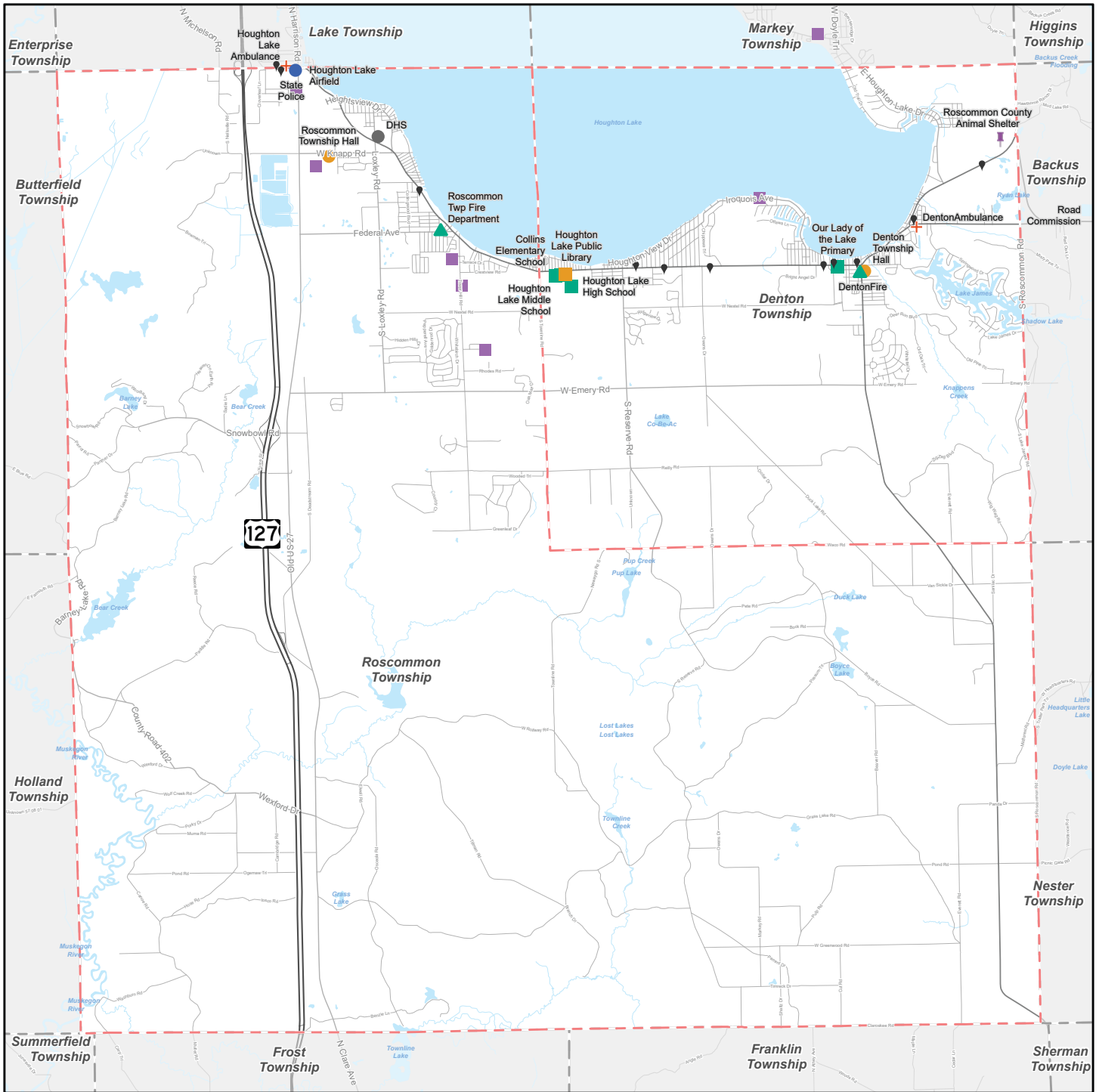
## **HOSPITALS AND MEDICAL CARE**

The main area hospital is the West Branch Regional Medical Center (WBRMC) in West Branch, which offers full medical and surgical services including cardiopulmonary services, nutrition services, laboratory services, diagnostic services, rehabilitation services, pain clinic, general surgical services, plastic/reconstructive services, orthopedic services, and urology services. WBRMC has a 24-hour emergency room, as well as the Seton Cancer Institute which offers oncology services, radiation, chemotherapy, and hematological services. WBRMC also maintains Lakeside Medical Arts Center in Prudenville which offers both primary and specialty care.

The secondary area hospital is the Munson Family Care in Grayling. Services include Inpatient care, extended care, 24-hour emergency room, general and specialty surgery services, and outpatient services.

The Mid-Michigan Medical Center of Gladwin also provides the area with medical services. Mid-Michigan is a 25-bed primary care hospital providing general medical and surgical care for inpatients and 24-hour emergency room coverage. They also provide a wide range of services including cardiopulmonary, imaging services, laboratory, pharmacy, rehabilitation services, and sleep lab. Mid-Michigan Health Park is a medical outpatient facility with a full range of outpatient services including primary and specialty care by physicians from the Medical Centers in Clare and Midland, as well as an Urgent Care facility in Houghton Lake.

Additionally, the Houghton Lake area has a high concentration of nursing care and assisted living facilities, in part due to its popularity as a retirement destination. In Roscommon & Denton Townships alone, there are six (6) assisted living facilities. However, there are very few independent living facilities for seniors within the townships.



# Community Facilities

Denton and Roscommon Townships, Michigan

June 13, 2023

## LEGEND

- ▲ Marina
- ▼ Animal Shelter
- + Ambulance
- Courthouse
- Police
- School
- ▲ Fire Dept
- Libraries
- Township Hall
- General Doctor's Offices
- Nursing and Assisted Care Homes
- Roscommon and Denton Township Boundaries
- Other Municipal Boundaries
- Roads
- Lakes, Rivers, Streams, and Drains



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, Version 17a.  
Data Source: Roscommon County, 2023.  
McKenna 2023.



## **GOVERNMENT OFFICES**

Roscommon Township maintains its own township hall and offices, which are new facilities with an adjacent area for sports activities. Houghton Lake Building Agency and the Houghton Lake Sewer Authority offices are in Roscommon Township. Denton Township has established its township hall in Prudenville, which also houses the local office of the Secretary of State. Roscommon County offices in Prudenville include the Animal Control Building, Roscommon County Road Commission, County Health Department, and Roscommon County Transit Authority.

## **CEMETERIES**

There are two (2) official cemeteries: Roscommon Township Cemetery and Denton Township Cemetery. However, many smaller forgotten cemeteries and burial grounds are located throughout the Townships, as is common in much of Michigan.

## **LIBRARIES**

The Houghton Lake Public Library is located in Denton Township and is open Monday through Saturday. The Library offers services, programs, a collection of almost 42,000 items in various formats (books, audiobooks, music CDs, DVDs, videos, magazines, newspapers, large print materials, and more), and free Internet access (including wireless). The Library is the anchor of the county for fiber optic Internet, and has in turn tripled internet speeds. Most Library services are free except for minimal charges for printing or photocopying and overdue fines on videos or DVDs. Other free services include interlibrary loan,s reserves on materials, and online access (both in-house and remote) to reference databases. Awarded the first State Librarian's Excellence Award in Michigan in 2001, the library was cited for exemplary public service. Though small and rural, the Houghton Lake Public Library strives to provide the same kinds of services and programming that larger libraries provide. The library remains patron-centered with the Board of Trustees, staff, and volunteers working together to provide a quality library with excellent services.



The Library at Kirtland Community College is also open to the general public and offers a number of services. A large number of reference materials are available and reference librarians are available to assist in research. Librarians are available to help find demographic, marketing, and other information necessary for preparing a successful business plan. The Library also has lists of wholesalers and suppliers, and online resources to help the businessperson.

## SCHOOL FACILITIES

Primary and secondary public education is supplied by the Houghton Lake Community Schools. Houghton Lake Community School District serves about 1,700 pupils in a nearly 500 square-mile area that comprises the southern portion of Roscommon County and the eastern portion of Missaukee County. The Houghton Lake Community School District includes Collins Elementary School and Houghton Lake Middle School, which have been updated, and Houghton Lake High School. In addition, there is also the Houghton Lake Adult & Community Education School, and the Houghton Lake Cosmetology School located in Roscommon Township. Houghton Lake Community Schools closed Merritt Elementary School and Prudenville Elementary in 2005 due to declining enrollment and funding.

Houghton Lake Community Schools consistently score well on state exams and its schools are considered “very good” to “excellent.” Additionally, the district’s 2022-2023 Goal Progress Report found that 100% of 12th-grade students were passing in English and that on average, the district is improving 33% on reaching its education goals each year.

The Townships are also within the COOR Intermediate School District, which includes the counties of Crawford, Oscoda, Ogemaw, and Roscommon, an area covering 2400 square miles and six local public school districts. The ISD acts as a link between the Michigan Department of Education and local school districts. The ISD provides special education, career and technical education, information technology, and general education programs and services on request that single local districts find difficult or impossible to provide.

## Private Schools

Established over 55 years ago, Our Lady of the Lake Regional Catholic School in Prudenville provides elementary education including a Young 5’s/Montessori kindergarten program and continuing through eighth grade. In addition to Our Lady of the Lake is the United Methodist Church Preschool. Skeels Christian School, a private school, just 15.5 miles from Prudenville in Gladwin is also an option for students in the area.



New to the area in 2012 is the Charleton Heston Academy, located in Richfield Township, Roscommon County. The school has grown considerably in attendance from approximately 140 to 503 students and boasts an excellent teaching staff.

### **Higher Education**

Higher education is available to the Townships' students through Kirtland Community College in Roscommon County. Created in 1966 by a vote of the electorate from six local K-12 school districts in all or part of nine counties. Kirtland is the largest Michigan community college district, totaling 2,500 square miles. Approximately 65,000 people reside within the Kirtland district. Kirtland Community College has enlarged its capacity by constructing new buildings to house new healthcare training and police academy training on an expandable scale. In addition, more recent expansion of academic programs in automotive technology, computer sciences, and industrial technologies have allowed the college to continue to provide advanced education and career opportunities for the surrounding community.

Advanced educational opportunities are also available to the Townships' students at Michigan's fine public colleges and universities, including Delta College in Bay City, Saginaw Valley State University in Saginaw, and Mid-Michigan Community College in Harrison.

# Key Takeaways.

## **ROBUST EDUCATION AND MEDICAL SERVICES**

Houghton Lake Community Schools maintain good scores on state exams with continuing improvement. Though having consolidated over the decades, the updated primary schools; secondary schools; library; and adult, technical, and trades education form a solid network of education in collaboration with the state.

Further, and particularly for professional medical services, Roscommon & Denton Townships provide a good healthcare network. This is important as the community remains an attractive settlement for retirees. As the Townships look to continue supporting aging in place and personal freedom through all stages of life, additional independent living facilities may need to come online. Zoning changes may be needed to allow for this use to expand in the community.



## **Township Infrastructure and Utilities.**

*Roscommon & Denton Townships collaborate to provide public water and sewer to Houghton Lake area residents; many other residents rely on private water and septic.*

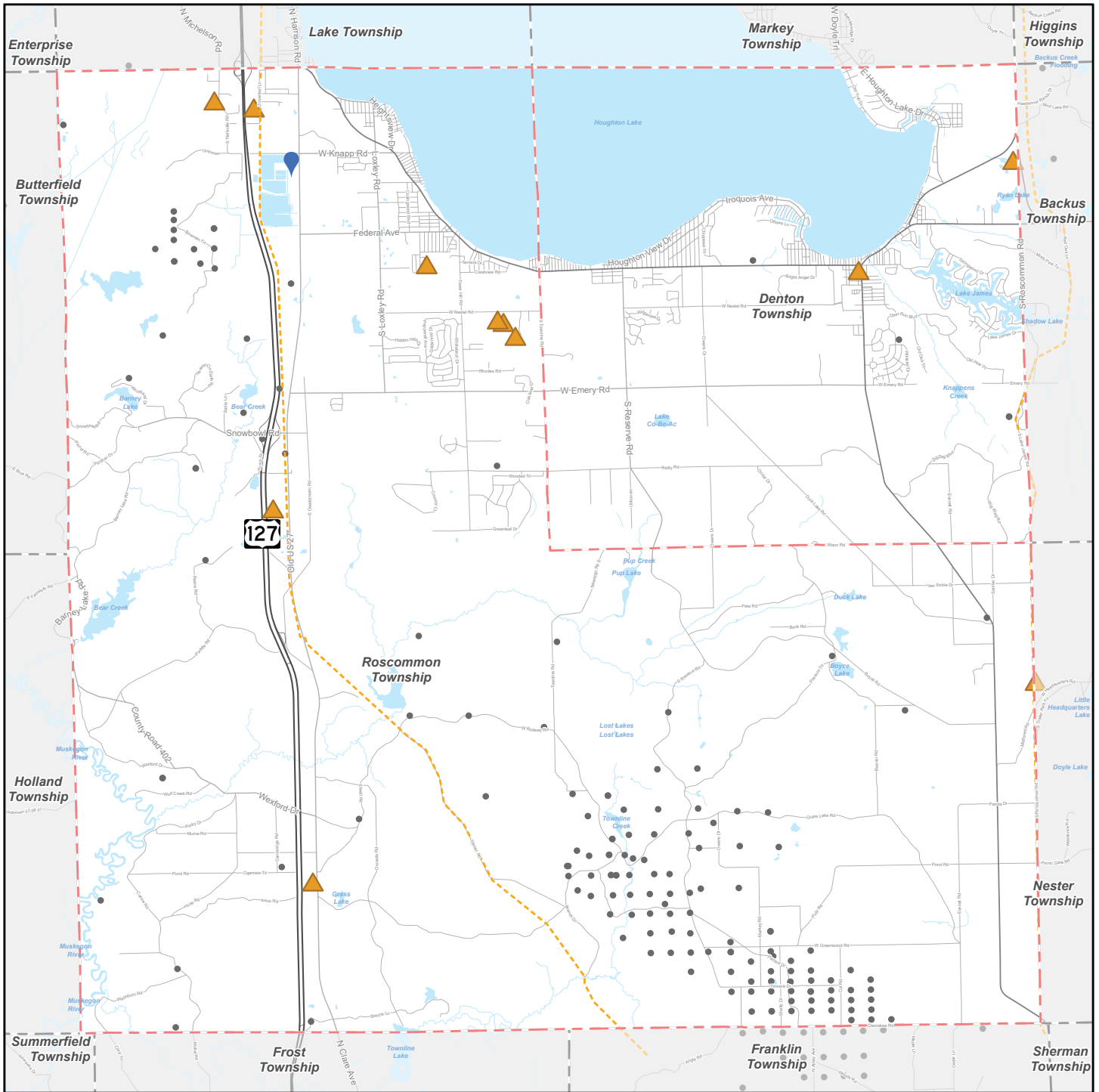
### **SANITARY SEWER AND WATER SERVICE**

The safe provision of water and disposal of sanitary wastes are important considerations for Township officials, particularly in the higher-density areas around the lakes. Unsatisfactory septic systems could cause public health concerns by contaminating groundwater, lake water, and private wells.

Public sanitary sewer service is available in the Houghton Lake area through the Houghton Lake Sewer Authority. The Authority was created in 1973 by the townships of Denton, Lake, and Roscommon for the purpose of operating, maintaining, administering, and managing a sanitary sewage facility for the benefit of the townships and for any other township or municipality which hereafter joins in and becomes a part of such sewer system and the related agreement, all for the betterment of the health, safety, economy, and general welfare of the participating municipalities. Beginning January 1, 2007, the Authority took control and ownership of the sewer facilities as allowed under Act 233 of 1955. The Authority includes sewer systems of Denton, Lake, Roscommon, and Markey Townships.

The Houghton Lake Sewer Authority oversees three separate treatment facilities located in Roscommon Township, Denton Township, and Markey Township. The Roscommon Township wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) has a capacity of 1.1 million gallons per day and currently is treating between 700,000 to 800,000 gallons per day. The Denton Township WWTP has a capacity of 700,000 gallons per day and is currently treating around 550,000 gallons per day. From these figures, it appears that the sanitary sewer capacity in these areas is sufficient and has room for expansion of future development.

Potable water availability has not been a problem and does not appear that it will become one unless intensive growth occurs in the Townships.



# Utilities and Natural Resource Extraction

Denton and Roscommon Townships, Michigan

June 13, 2023

## LEGEND

- Roscommon and Denton Township Boundaries
- Other Municipal Boundaries
- Natural Gas Pipelines
- Oil Wells
- Electrical
- Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Electrical Transmission and Cell Towers
- Roads
- Lakes, Rivers, Streams, and Drains



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, Version 17a.  
 Data Source: Roscommon County, 2023.  
 McKenna 2023.



## **SOIL SUITABILITY FOR SEPTIC SYSTEMS**

Like many rural Townships, Roscommon & Denton do not provide sewer service to all residents. Currently, Coldwater Lake and Long Lake residents are the only residents to be served by public systems. The Township's sanitary waste disposal is therefore handled primarily by septic systems on private land. The safe provision of water and disposal of sanitary wastes are important considerations for Township officials, particularly in higher-density areas along the lakes not served by public systems. Faulty or ill-placed septic systems could cause pollution to private water wells, groundwater, and Township lakes and streams. Poorly performing septic systems can also be faced with unanticipated costs.

The soil survey indicates that several areas of the Townships are relatively less suitable for septic systems. The Roscommon County Public Health Department tests the suitability of soils for septic systems on properties that propose installing septic systems. A determination is made by the Public Health Department on a case-by-case basis whether a septic system is suitable for a proposed site.

## **OTHER SERVICES**

Utility services in the townships are provided by Consumers Energy (electric service), DTE Energy (natural gas service), AT&T, Verizon & Frontier (phone service). Cable television and high-speed internet services are provided by Charter/Spectrum Communications.

## **NATURAL RESOURCE EXTRACTION**

Numerous gas pipelines run through Roscommon Township, and oil wells are scattered throughout the area. Most of these wells are concentrated in the State Forest. This is a result of the State of Michigan's easement program, which provides ownership rights for some forms of natural resource extraction; either the MDNR purchases an easement from a private landowner who is already drilling on-site, or the MDNR grants an easement for continued drilling to a property owner as a condition of fee-simple property purchase. Most of these wells are not located in areas where the MDNR has recorded the presence of rare species, per their 2013 Northeast Region Resource Assessment Report. However, many of these wells are located near one or more waterways (surface or ground) and may pose a risk to water quality.

There are also a select few pockets of open timber sales in the southern portions of Roscommon & Denton Townships. However, the state has largely concluded its timber operation in the Roscommon State Forest for the foreseeable future. There are 69,470 acres of state forest land in the Houghton Lake Wetlands management area located in Roscommon and Missaukee counties near the towns of Houghton Lake, Grayling, Lake City, Roscommon, and West Branch. The state's 2013 Northern Lower Peninsula Regional State Forest Management Plan notes that future timber management will focus on harvesting older jack pine and balancing age-class distributions of oak, aspen, and red pine. Wildlife habitat management objectives will focus on supporting hunting and other wildlife-related recreation. The state expects an increased need to manage exotic species (especially Phragmites and glossy buckthorn), as well as the need to continue to manage land cover types to respond to increased recreation pressure.





# Transportation Network.

*Land use patterns and transportation systems are inherently interconnected. Proximity to efficient and connected transportation networks is a primary factor in determining where new development occurs.*

## **TOWNSHIP ROAD NETWORK**

Roads in Roscommon & Denton Townships are under the jurisdiction of two agencies, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Roscommon County Road Commission. MDOT has jurisdiction over US-127, which is part of the state trunkline system. All other roads in the Townships are under the jurisdiction of the County Road Commission. There are also a select few private roads in the Township, for which the maintenance is funded by the property owners they serve.

In general, the Townships have a reasonably well-connected road network in that a majority of the rural roads are accessible to one another, as well as to outside neighboring jurisdictions. However, being rural in nature, many of the roads within the area are unpaved. Additionally, no new road improvements are planned by the County in Roscommon & Denton Townships in the near future due to the county's severe funding deficit. In the 2023 budget, the County reported a \$700,000 shortfall, which has resulted in a scaling-back of county services and staff levels. The Special Road Millage Fund, established in 2020, has helped lessen the budget blow and ensure that maintenance continues for roads throughout the county. This is because the Fund's revenue is dedicated solely to roads and cannot be appropriated for other uses. The 2023 Fund budget was \$9,635,000.



## VEHICULAR TRANSPORTATION

The Townships' roads are generally patterned on a basic "grid" system with roads spaced every half mile to a mile in distance. In many cases, the roads follow and serve as definition for the Township's individual section lines. The "grid" system established along section lines provides an efficient and familiar circulation network. The grid is interrupted in various locations, however, by one of three things: the highways, the state forest, or the water.

Major transportation routes to and through the Townships include US-127 on the West and Interstate I-75 to the East. These two major highways meet just north of the northern Roscommon County line. The Townships are connected to several major state highways that traverse the state and the county and provide access to and from many surrounding communities. The Townships lie within a one-hour drive of several small communities including Grayling, Gaylord, Cadillac, West Branch, and Gladwin. Interstate I-75 and US-127, as well as M-18 and M-55, connect the Townships to Cadillac, Gaylord, Grayling, Saginaw, Midland, Bay City, and Flint, putting them within the range of the modern commuter. Access to Interstate I-75 and US-127 also provides residents across Michigan, the United States, and Canada with access to the Townships' recreational and vacation opportunities.

## FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF ROADWAYS

The National Functional Classification (NFC) is a term utilized by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) for the Highway Functional Classification values. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) adopted the highway functional classification for all public roads. The higher functions emphasize mobility, while the lower functions emphasize more property access.

The road network in Roscommon & Denton Townships can be classified into the following categories, as per the NFC system:

- Freeway/Expressway
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Local Paved / Local Gravel
- Non-Certified

**Freeway:** As noted above, the interstate within Roscommon & Denton Townships is I-75. I-75 runs north-south across the Townships and provides access across the region. Interstates nationwide usually have posted speeds between 55 and 75 mph.

**Principal Arterial:** Principal arterials are highways in rural and urban areas that provide access between an arterial and a major port, airport, public transportation facility, or other intermodal transportation facilities. They connect urbanized areas, cities, and industrial centers. Land access is limited. Posted speed limits on arterials usually range between 50 and 70 mph.

**Minor Arterial:** Minor arterials are roads that supplement the principal arterials, but are generally slightly slower or lower in volume.

**Major Collector:** Major Collector roads generally serve intercounty travel. These routes typically accommodate shorter-distance trips and include moderate speeds. Major Collector routes provide access to community facilities such as schools, municipal buildings, parks, and other destinations. Additionally, Major Collector routes are eligible for federal aid. The posted speed limit on collectors is usually between 35 and 55 mph.

**Minor Collector:** Minor collector roads provide service to major collector routes. These routes experience more through-traffic than a local road, but not as heavy traffic as a major collector.

**Local:** Local roads are those typically traveled by those who are accessing property, rural farm roads, and residential neighborhood roads. This classification includes all the paved local roads in the Township. Local roads have posted speed limits usually between 25 and 40 mph.

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

The Roscommon County Transportation Authority provides intra-county bus services for the county residents. The County received grants from the State and Federal Governments to build its own facility. The County purchased the land for the transportation building, which was dedicated in November 1988. Continuing the process of growth and improvement, in 2004, it became an Authority with its own governing board.

## **NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION**

Non-motorized transportation refers to the use of bicycles, pedestrians, and other similar transportation for destination-oriented trip-making. Currently, Roscommon & Denton Townships' non-motorized infrastructure is concentrated around Houghton Lake in the downtown area of the Townships. The typical sidewalk is 5 feet wide, separated from the roadway by a 1-foot grass strip, and located along a major thoroughfare, such as Houghton Lake Drive or Loxley Street. These sidewalks are often interrupted by driveways, abruptly end at some properties and restart at others, or are used as informal snow storage locations by plows during the winter. As such, the non-motorized network is not particularly safe or accessible for people of all ages and levels of ability.

The Townships do not have any designated bike lanes or bike paths alongside major roads. Although mountain biking is popular on the trails throughout Denton & Roscommon, biking to get from place to place is less popular due to the lack of safe options. Most cyclists must ride on the unpaved shoulder, which puts both them and drivers at risk for collisions and does not provide a method of crossing intersections that do not have a traffic light. Further, the roadways are generally minimally lighted, which makes seeing cyclists in the evening, morning, or darker winter months very difficult.

## **AIRPORTS**

There are four (4) small community airports in Roscommon County: Houghton Lake State Airport located in Roscommon Township; Blodgett Memorial Airport located northeast of Houghton Lake, Roscommon Conservation Airport located southeast of the Village of Roscommon; and St. Helen Airport in St. Helen. The Midland-Bay City-Saginaw International Airport (MBS) is about an hour away and is the closest commercial airport capable of handling large jets; the largest airlines serving MBS are Delta and United. Alpena Regional Airport also offers daily flights to Detroit and through a Delta Airlines air link.



# Transportation

Denton and Roscommon Townships, Michigan

June 13, 2023

## LEGEND

- Roscommon and Denton Township Boundaries
- Other Municipal Boundaries
- Freeway
- Expressway
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Local
- Lakes, Rivers, Streams, and Drains



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, Version 17a.  
 Data Source: Roscommon County, 2023.  
 McKenna 2023.



## ORV TRAILS

Roscommon County has several Department of Natural Resources designated ORV trails and currently has 4 trailhead locations with parking provided to permit access to this trail system. These ORV trails include:

- **Owens Road Trail Head**
- **Leota Trail:** 52.1 miles of trails west of US-127
- **Denton Creek Trail:** 37.3 miles of trails between US 127 and Highway M-18
- **Denton Creek Route:** 28.6 miles of trails, Highway M-18 to Maple Valley Road
- **St. Helen Trail:** 43.7 miles of trails between Waco Road and St. Helen
- **St. Helen Route:** 8.7 miles of trails between Waco Road and St. Helen
- **M-30 to St. Helen #3 Michigan Cross Country Cycle Trail:** 14.5 miles of trails between Gladwin County and St Helen Trail
- **St. Helen to Geels Trail:** 13.7 miles of trails between St. Helen and Geels
- **Geels Trails:** 46.2 miles of trails east of I-75
- **Geels to Roscommon Route:** 9.0 miles of trails from Geels to the Village of Roscommon
- **Beaver Creek Trail Michigan Cross Country Cycle Trail:** 30.9 miles of trails between Geels and West Higgins Lake Trail
- **West Higgins Lake Trail:** 35.3 miles of trails west of Higgins Lake

A full map of the current ORV trails that service Denton & Roscommon Township can be found in Map 4 on page 31

## RAILROADS

There are no rail lines, passenger, or freight, which traverse or serve businesses or residents of Roscommon & Denton Townships.



# Roscommon & Denton Township Tomorrow.

*This section of the Roscommon & Denton Townships Joint-Master Plan outlines the conceptual plans and ideas for the future of the Township in a variety of different areas such as goals and objectives, future land uses, motorized transportation, non-motorized transportation, zoning, and more.*



## **Goals and Objectives.**

*The goals and objectives outline the Township's vision for the next 20 years. Goals are broad and aspirational statements and objectives are the steps taken along the way to achieve a goal. In later chapters, the Action Plan and Zoning Plan prioritize specific tasks that implement the objectives of the overall Plan.*

Importantly, though the goals and objectives of the Master Plan are neatly separated on the following pages, they are not mutually exclusive; several objectives can support multiple goals. As the Plan is implemented, it may become necessary to focus time and resources on action items that address several objectives at once.

**GOAL**

**Public Health and Accessibility**

Advance health, accessibility, independence, and an overall high quality of life for people of all ages, abilities, and financial situations.

**Objectives**

- Encourage a more even distribution of the number and type of medical services throughout the community.
- Support the marketing of private and non-profit service providers through Township advertising channels.
- Incorporate safeguards for new development or redevelopment to require accessibility features.
- Work with the County to implement a home assistance program for aging in place.

**GOAL**

**Natural Resources and Environment**

Preserve natural resources, the environment, and rural character.

**Objectives**

- Regulate the use of pesticides and other chemicals proximate to the lake and other sensitive areas.
- Encourage 'green' development practices.
- Continue to actively protect the community's natural beauty and resources.
- Embrace reasonable renewable energy expansion in specific areas of the townships.
- Expand recreation opportunities, including public lakefront access

**GOAL**

**Housing and Neighborhoods**

Provide a well-maintained and varied housing stock, permitting growth in specific, planned areas.

**Objectives**

- Protect neighborhood character.
- Permit a variety of housing types and sizes throughout the Townships.
- Ensure quality, attainable housing is available.
- Improve walkability and accessibility of neighborhoods.
- Ensure that new residential development supports and integrates the existing rural character of the Townships.
- Promote open space and natural space designations within new neighborhoods.
-

**GOAL**

**Transportation, Utilities, Services, and Infrastructure**

Continuously improve public services, recreation, and infrastructure to support current and future demand.

**Objectives**

- Work with County and State agencies to support a multimodal transportation network within the Townships.
- Maintain relationships with local road agencies to continue planning and enhancing the Township’s road network as applicable.
- Implement best practices for complete streets in multiple contexts.
- Ensure the Township’s existing infrastructure can support proposed developments.
- Improve internet and communications service access throughout the community, including both broadband and wireless.
- Update and strengthen the Township’s Zoning Ordinance standards on solar energy facilities.

**GOAL**

**Economic Development**

Support existing businesses, tourism, and a diversified economy.

**Objectives**

- Continue to encourage entrepreneurship within the community.
- Continue to support and maintain partnerships with regional economic development agencies.
- Support local and regional tourism and events.
- Encourage ‘Main Street’ style developments in prime locations.



# **Future Land Use.**

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*The Future Land Use Plan is the culmination of months of effort by the Planning Commission, Township Board, Township Administration, and the citizens of Roscommon & Denton Townships. Based on a comprehensive planning process, the Plan serves as a guide for the community's vision for the next 10 to 15 years.*

It is based on an analysis of land use issues facing Roscommon & Denton Townships, existing uses and conditions, demographic and housing statistics, physical constraints and resources, circulation patterns, the community visioning session, and the goals and objectives set forth by the community.

For the Plan to function effectively, it has been crafted to be both flexible and general, with possibilities for future development being left open. This Future Land Use Plan constitutes the development policy of the Township, and as the Township grows, the Plan should be updated to address how the growth has impacted the Township's infrastructure and existing conditions.

## **PLANNING PRINCIPLES**

The Future Land Use Plan as described below provides the tools needed to guide policies for future growth and development in the Township. A Future Land Use Plan is developed for several primary reasons; to describe and preserve the existing characteristics of specific areas, to plan for future development types, and set the stage for future zoning regulations.

## **FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES**

The Future Land Use Plan constitutes the development guide to Roscommon & Denton Townships, and as the Townships move into the future, the Plan should be regularly updated to address how development and physical change have impacted the Townships' infrastructure and existing conditions. Roscommon & Denton Townships are divided into the following Future Land Use categories:



### **Low Density Residential**

Low-Density Residential areas are envisioned to be characterized by spacious neighborhoods with predominantly single-family homes and appropriate accessory structures. Low-Density Residential areas in Roscommon & Denton Townships are planned to include sparsely developed parcels along local and collector roads. These areas will prioritize residential development amidst green spaces and open spaces. Each residential property will typically have larger lot sizes, typically one acre or more, allowing for gardens, lawns, and outdoor spaces.

The emphasis on low density means that lot sizes will be larger, buildings more spread out, and population density lower than in medium-density residential areas. Development is encouraged to harmonize with the surrounding environment, preserving natural features like the lake, trees, and wildlife habitats. Neighborhoods may include amenities such as community parks, playgrounds, and gathering spaces.

Additionally, Low-Density Residential lots are within areas immediately surrounding more dense residential development, such as medium-density residential that is present alongside Houghton Lake. As such, the Low-Density Residential designation is planned to provide a seamless transition from the higher-density lakefront neighborhoods to the surrounding preservation and recreation areas that are present to the south.



### **Medium Density Residential**

Medium Density Residential areas usually consist of single-family homes and more compact residential buildings situated on smaller lots of land, generally less than one acre. The Medium Density Residential Future Land Use designation is suitable for detached single-family homes and accessory structures, low-rise apartments, townhomes, duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes.

Medium Density Residential areas are concentrated and intended to support residential homes and neighborhoods directly adjacent, or within the immediate vicinity, of the lake and M-55. New residential development in areas planned for Medium Density Residential should be of appropriate size, scale, and massing so as to complement the surrounding character of existing homes and the Township's rural setting.

As residential development continues to occur within the immediate vicinity of the lake, special consideration should be given to any environmental impacts that may affect the lake such as erosion and water pollutants.



### **Corridor Commercial**

The aim of the Corridor Commercial Future Land Use designation is to encourage and prepare for a diverse range of commercial activities in Roscommon & Denton Township. The Corridor Commercial section encompasses the main commercial hub along M-55 from US-127, the downtown Prudenville area, and up M-18.

Suitable land uses in the designated Commercial zones include establishments like bars, restaurants, cafes, personal service or office developments, retail stores, corner shops, and similar enterprises. Moreover, adaptive reuse that allows for mixed-use, such as buildings with second-story office or residential use, is appropriate. When designing new commercial spaces in the Township, it should blend with the Township's surrounding rural environment. As a result, strip-style development is discouraged in these areas, and instead, commercial developments should be pedestrian-friendly, have minimum front yard setbacks, and be connected by a sidewalk network.



### **Neighborhood Commercial**

Neighborhood Commercial Future Land Uses are designated areas intended for local commercial activities and services within a community. They are usually located in nodes adjacent to Low and Medium Density Residential areas to provide convenient access to essential goods, services, and amenities for nearby residents. In this way, these areas promote the creation of vibrant, walkable, and economically sustainable neighborhoods.

Developments within Neighborhood Commercial Future Land Use areas typically feature a mix of small-scale businesses, retail, and services that cater to the immediate needs of the community. Examples include grocery stores, pharmacies, salons, healthcare clinics, small-scale offices, and local dining establishments. Similar to the Corridor Commercial Future Land Use designation, development in these areas is encouraged to be mixed-use, with second-story office or residential spaces. Live-work establishments, such as offices with attached residential uses, are also encouraged in these areas.



## Recreation And Preservation

The majority of the Future Land Use Map continues to be dedicated to recreation and preservation areas due to the vast amount of state-owned land that is located within the two communities. As shown in the existing land use survey, land designated for preservation and recreation dominates the landscape of Roscommon and Denton Townships.

Because of state park designation, this land use trend is expected to continue for the next 20 years. The recreation and preservation designation includes land uses related to parks and recreation, open space, vacant land, forests, some rural residential, and agriculture (production, agricultural industries, nurseries, farmsteads, etc.). Due to the valuable nature of these land uses, the areas planned for recreation and preservation are expected to be preserved and minimally enhanced.

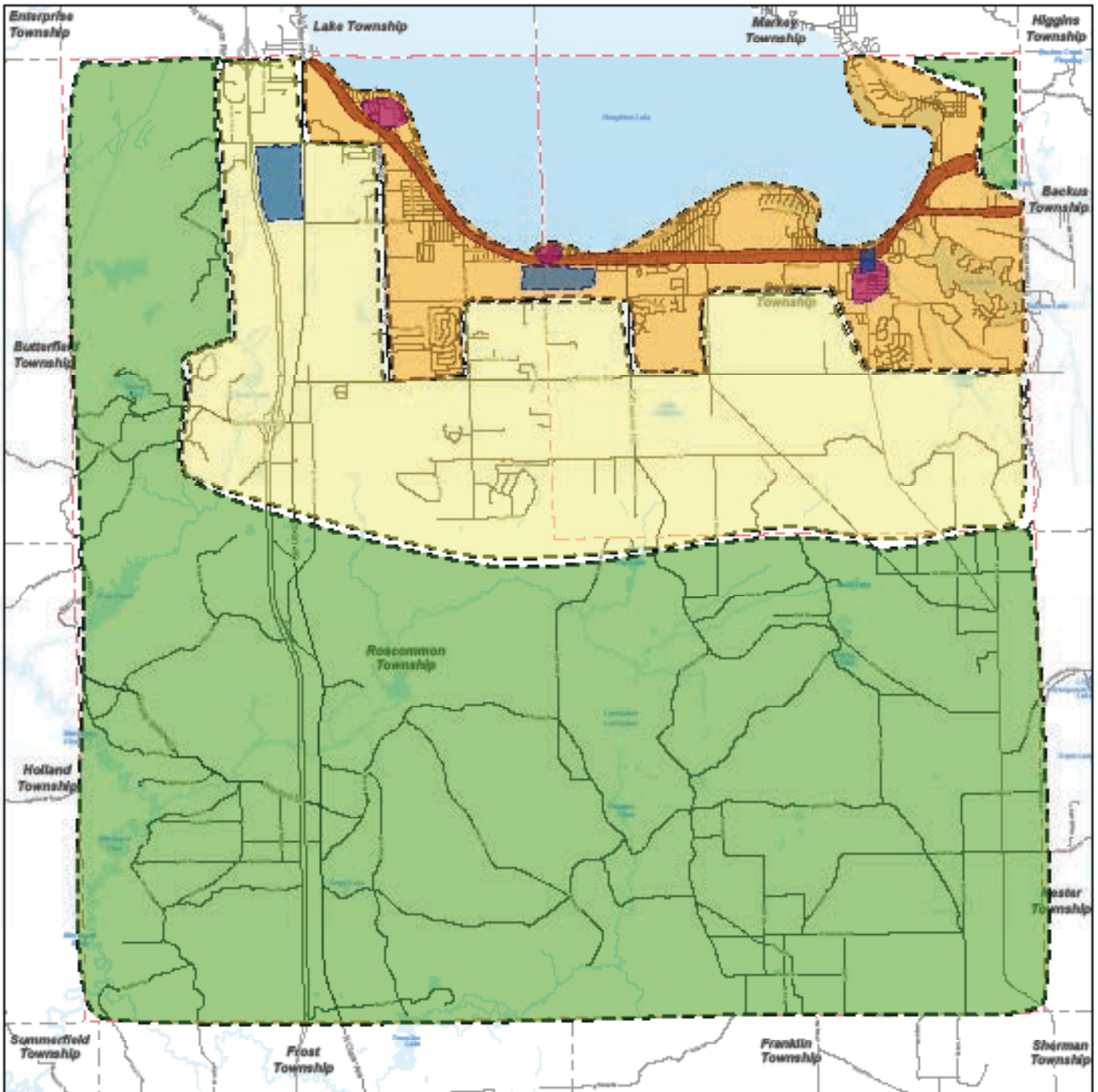


## Public and Quasi-public

The Public and Quasi-Public Future Land Use Designation encompasses a range of facilities and spaces that are intended for public use or to serve a public purpose. These land uses are designed to benefit the community as a whole and provide essential services or amenities.

Examples of Public and Quasi-Public land uses include parks and recreation areas, government buildings, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, public transportation infrastructure, utility infrastructure, cultural and arts institutions, libraries, etc.

Public and Quasi-Public land uses play crucial roles in shaping vibrant communities, fostering civic engagement, and enhancing the quality of life for residents. These spaces and facilities contribute to a social, cultural economic, and environmentally conscious future, ensuring a sustainable and inclusive future.



# Future Land Use

Denton and Roscommon Townships, Michigan

June 13, 2023

### LEGEND

- Roscommon and Denton Township Boundaries
- Other Municipal Boundaries
- Roads
- Lakes, Rivers, Streams, and Drains
- Recreation and Preservation
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Corridor Commercial
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Public and Quasi-Public



BaseMap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, Version 17a.  
 Data Source: Roscommon County, 2023.  
 McKenna 2023.



## **Sub-Area Plans.**

*Within Roscommon & Denton Townships several areas that warrant their own special attention. The Townships' vision for these areas is described in this chapter, to help guide future development and policy.*

### **HOUGHTON LAKE HEIGHTS**

Roscommon and Denton Townships were bustling lumbering communities after the passage of the Homestead Act in 1862, which granted free land to travelers moving west. "The Heights", named after its elevation, dates back to an 1880s lumbering settlement that was largely employed by the S.C. Hall Lumber Company. People remained in the area through the twentieth century. In fact, Houghton Lake Heights was credited as being one of the most popular business centers in the area throughout the 1920s up until the 1950s.

The area featured a variety of buildings and services, including a post office called "The Heights", later renamed "Houghton Lake Heights", which opened in 1923. There were also bustling businesses such as Bill Park's Grocery, Dr. Snyder's Drug Store, the Little Gift Shop, RaWalla Dance Hall, Akin's Hotel, Parker's Barbershop, Ray Walling's Garage and gas station, Girley's Gift Shop, Tam-a-rack Lodge, and Anderson's Patent Medicine Store. Additionally, the area saw a lot of activity, as it hosted sportsmen in the Former Heights Inn and cruises in the "Houghton Queen", which docked in The Heights and carried up to 68 passengers for cruises around Houghton Lake. Additionally, there was also a large waterslide built on stilts, often referred to as Sanford's Dock, which was reinstalled every summer to prevent ice damage to the structure.

Today, Houghton Lake Heights hosts a post office, a public access lakeshore park, and two pubs. Located off W Houghton Lake Drive (M-55), the area now serves as a good place for those who enjoy the lake life. Most of the buildings constructed in the 1920s and 1930s have been demolished, but the Heights Inn still stands, although it is no longer an operating hotel. Today the area is primarily made up of residential properties.

The Joint Planning Commission aims to restore this area to its former glory as a mixed-use development by repurposing vacant buildings into shops, boutiques, and restaurants. However, achieving this vision will necessitate a community effort to invest in streetscaping, pathways, trails, and off-street parking for visitors. Additionally, financial assistance may be necessary to improve building façades and attract new businesses to the area. This funding may require an investment of Township general funds or a district millage, as authorized by the Downtown Development Act.

## **PRUDENVILLE (TRESTLE PARK DISTRICT)**

Like Houghton Lake Heights, Prudenville was the result of the area's rich lumbering history that began in the nineteenth century. At one point, the area has a "stand-alone" trestle railroad, built by the Roscommon Lumber Company to assist in logging efforts. This trestle railroad would allow logging crews to push timber into the east bay of Houghton Lake, where they would float toward the Muskegon River and to the mills of Muskegon on the shores of Lake Michigan.

During its operation from 1882 to 1887, Roscommon Lumber Company employed 700 workers and logged 175 million board feet of white and Norway Pine. As mentioned previously, the lumbering industry had a significant influence on the area. Back then, Prudenville very much resembled Houghton Lake Heights, as it had a post office, two hotels, a variety of businesses, and a school.

In the present day, Prudenville is centered on M-55 and M-18, serving as a 5-corner key node gateway into the Houghton Lake area from I-75. New Trestle Park, newer brick strip malls, and a newer Walgreens are nearby. Although a once busy place, the area is currently comprised of vacant/obsolete buildings with inadequate sidewalks. However, Prudenville boasts a prime location adjacent to a universally accessible park with State of Michigan historical designation and Houghton Lake access. Also, the area can be accessed by car, bike, boat, and pedestrian traffic, especially if infrastructure were to be improved. There is no "fixed route transit," but the Roscommon County Transit Authority services this corridor and has transit stops/pickups.

This area also displays Creative Place-making with Denton Township's Trestle Park, which includes a Michigan historical marker relating to the lumber era. The park was built through a DNR Trust Fund grant and has its own non-profit "Friends of Trestle Park" that arranges concerts, art series, and other events, some of which are fundraisers.

Other non-profits involved in this corridor are Houghton Lake Association, Houghton Lake Rotary, Roscommon County Community Foundation, Houghton Lake Lions Club, Kiwanis Club, Houghton Lake Area Historical Society, and Houghton Lake Public Library. Many volunteer hours have been devoted to "shaping the physical and social character of this

neighborhood.” Trestle Park is the catalyst to bring more awareness to the current businesses in the area and to entice other businesses to open.

Encouraging the establishment of new businesses is just one piece of existing plans for the area. Other plans include expanding greenbelts, adding adequate sidewalks, updating the streetscape, demolishing obsolete, non-historic buildings, repurposing buildings, and providing Wi-Fi hotspots to the area. This area would eventually have mixed uses, retail, restaurants, and an event center.

Prudenville, paired with these plans, displays a lot of potentials, as it is near quality public spaces, including Denton Township Hall, Secretary of State, Denton Stone Hall (used for meetings and art events), Trestle Park, and Houghton Lake access points. Furthermore, it is serviced by car, foot, bike, boat, and in winter, snowmobile traffic. There are also multiple housing options available in the surrounding area. Art and culture are being incorporated by the offering of free outdoor concerts, art in the park, and being part of the Roscommon County Quilt Trail.

## **VILLAGE OF HOUGHTON LAKE**

The Village of Houghton Lake is located in Roscommon Township, between the Heights and Prudenville. Its general location is the blocks surrounding the intersections of Federal and Tower Hill with M-55. The area was established by Oliver King in the early 1900s, who ran a general store. It served as the location of the Roscommon Township Hall before a new hall was built on Knapp Road. It has also been home to hotels, cabins, farms, automobile dealerships, and a post office. Today it has a party store, saloon, church, bank, cosmetology school, post office, and a new public lake access park, Lakeview Park. Some of the original historic structures remain and are still being used as functioning public buildings to this day.



# Zoning Plan.

Roscommon & Denton Townships are committed to enhancing and updating the Townships' Zoning Ordinances. One of the key purposes for this is to ensure the Townships' regulations and requirements align with best practices in planning, determine that the Zoning Ordinances are compliant with State laws, and enhance the quality of life for residents and business owners.

The following table shows the relationship between Roscommon & Denton Townships Zoning Districts and the Future Land Use categories as described in this Plan. Rezoning, special land use, and use variance requests should be reviewed against this table to determine whether the request is supported by this Plan.

Future Land Use Category	Appropriate Zoning District - Denton Districts / Roscommon Districts
Recreation and Preservation	Forest Residential / Agriculture, Create an 'Open Space' district
Low Density Residential	All Residential / Residential, Agriculture
Medium Density Residential	All Residential, PUD Condo, Village Mixed Use, / Mixed Use, Residential
Neighborhood Commercial	Lake Front, Residential, Village Mixed Use / Residential, Commercial 1
Corridor Commercial	Commercial, Industrial, PUD Condo, Village Mixed Use / All Commercial, Industrial
Public/Quasi-Public	All Districts

*\*The current Zoning Map for Roscommon Township does not show the majority of the township below the match line with Denton Township. This is primarily state forest land with minimal local development. Providing standards for a new 'Open Space' zoning district for all land under Township jurisdiction can allow for case-by-case review and approval of developments, including future renewable energy uses..*

## MANUFACTURED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Manufactured housing developments or mobile home parks are common in the rural areas of Michigan. Mobile home parks provide housing alternatives to residents who are unable to afford more permanent housing. From a planning perspective, they must be considered because the density in which they are built provides an economy of scale for the design and construction of on-site water and septic systems. Mobile home parks often provide their own wastewater treatment and well fields in rural areas where public utilities are not available, including communities like Roscommon & Denton Township.

While recognized as a legitimate land use, mobile home parks can significantly increase the population of a community while producing less than a corresponding amount of property tax revenue to the host community from which to provide public services to new residents. Furthermore, though a community can plan and zone appropriate locations of manufactured housing developments, they cannot regulate the internal design nor the operation of these facilities. Therefore, it is important for the Townships to discuss, consider, and plan for possible and appropriate locations for a mobile home park, should one wish to locate in the area.

Manufactured housing developments may be considered anywhere in the two Townships. However, when considering the construction of manufactured housing developments in the Townships, they must not result in adverse impacts on the environment or in the loss of agriculturally viable land.

## OPEN SPACE DEVELOPMENT

Rural open space development is an alternative to conventional site development and is intended to promote the preservation of the Townships' rural character. Conventional site development often results in residential sprawl that consumes large amounts of land and divides open spaces into fragments on individual home sites. It does not contribute to a rural appearance and is not conducive to agriculture, wildlife habitat, or other rural open space uses.

Conventional site development places lots on every available acre of the site. Open space development (also known as cluster development) on the other hand, allows for the grouping of dwellings onto part of the site, and a permanent easement covers the remainder preserving it as open space. The cluster of dwellings can be placed either within woodlands, to preserve agricultural land, or on the agricultural land, preserving the woodlands and other existing natural features. The development also typically has a large setback from the road and limited access points in order to preserve the rural views and limit the corridor development effect.

Township Zoning Ordinance requirements must be revised to be no more difficult for rural open space development than for conventional residential development. This development alternative is most effective when the Townships offer a small incentive for open space development - one or two bonus lots - thereby encouraging developers to use this option. A density bonus is contingent upon the developer preserving a sufficient number of natural features and open space as well as appropriate infrastructure for the dwellings with limited impact on the surrounding area.

Figure 7. Conventional Residential Development

Figure 8. Open Space Development



## **AGRICULTURE ZONING ORDINANCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- TBD

## **RESIDENTIAL ZONING ORDINANCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (Denton) Consolidate, redefine residential zoning districts

## **COMMERCIAL ZONING ORDINANCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (Roscommon) Consolidate, redefine commercial zoning districts

## **GENERAL ZONING ORDINANCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Pursue joint or concurrent zoning re-writes, create unified districts across Townships
- Show the full extent of Roscommon Twp. on the zoning map; consider a new zoning category for Open Space to account for the largely public use of state lands south of the match line with Denton Twp.
- Remove legal descriptions of zoning districts.

# Action Plan.

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*Roscommon & Denton Townships' Joint Master Plan and its goals, objectives, and strategies recommend a future vision for the community. This vision is to build upon the Townships' existing assets and make the most of opportunities that can attract appropriate development and residents to the community while protecting the Township's natural beauty and resources. To put it simply, the plan for Roscommon & Denton Township is to create an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable community where people want to live, visit, and play.*

The goals and objectives of this plan should be reviewed often and be considered in decision-making by the Township. Successful implementation of this plan will be the result of actions taken by elected and appointed officials, Township staff, the Planning Commission, public agencies, and private citizens and organizations.

This section identifies and describes actions and tools available to implement the vision created in this Plan. Broadly stated, the Plan will be implemented through the following overarching categories:

**Public Health and Accessibility:** Advance health, accessibility, independence, and an overall high quality of life for people of all ages, abilities, and financial situations.

**Natural Resources and Environment:** Preserve natural resources, the environment, and rural character.

**Housing and Neighborhoods:** Provide a well-maintained and varied housing stock, permitting growth in specific, planned areas.

**Transportation and Infrastructure:** Continue to support and maintain the Township's existing infrastructure and utility networks and provide high quality public services.

**Economic Development:** Provide for a diversified economy, support existing businesses, and maintain a strong tourism industry.

The tables on the following pages present a detailed summary of all the recommended implementation activities, who is responsible for completing the activity, and available funding resources for each activity.

KEY			
Priority		Timeframe	
A	Most Important	1	Within one year
B	Very Important	2	1-3 years
C	Important	3	3+ years

Responsibility (Abbreviation)	
RC	Roscommon County
BO	Business Owners
CC	Chamber of Commerce
MDOT	Michigan Department of Transportation
MDARD	Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
SM	State of Michigan
HO	Homeowners
CM	Community Members
DEV	Developers
TB	Township Board
PC	Planning Commission

Funding	
Public	Includes public funds from the Township operating budget, County, and State funding. May also include local government bonds and grants.
Private	Includes funds from private sources such as grant monies, corporate funding, or property owners



Project	Priority	Timeframe	Responsibility			Funding	
			Township	Other Gov't	Private	Public	Private
<b>Public Health and Accessibility</b>							
Develop partnerships with local providers through an annual 'Public Health Summit' with key staff and public officials.							
Create and maintain a community resource bulletin, both online and in-person, that can showcase available resources							
Subsidize advertising for critical care services and non-profits.							
Revise zoning ordinance to 'bake in' accessibility features for developments							
Revise zoning ordinance to include exemptions for accessibility retrofits in private residences.							
Designate staff to research and coordinate with Roscommon County.							
Develop informational brochures, direct residents to the community representative.							
Continually monitor the program through annual reporting							
<b>Natural Resource and Environment</b>							
Develop and mail homeowner brochures to inform residents of negative impacts of pesticides.							
Establish bans of certain chemicals within 500 feet of the lake or protected wetland.							
Create zoning standards to limit impervious surface area while increasing green infrastructure.							
Revise the zoning ordinance to reduce or eliminate minimum parking requirements.							
Identify and inventory sensitive habitats and high-quality wetlands.							
Concentrate residential growth/development; steer development away from environmentally sensitive areas.							
Encourage owners of agricultural land or open space to enroll in the State's P.A. 116 program.							
Maintain the quality of the Township's groundwater system and continue to monitor well and septic system locations to prevent any adverse effects on the Township's groundwater supply.							
Maintain partnerships with local solar energy providers and other agencies to ensure							
Identify prime sites for large wind and solar energy projects, minimizing impact on residential neighborhoods.							
Explore grants that fund land acquisition and public park, trail, and campground development							
Explore access easements with private property owners.							
Provide additional recreation opportunities for kids and teenagers.							
Construct a joint community recreation and senior center.							

Project	Priority	Timeframe	Responsibility			Funding	
			Township	Other Gov't	Private	Public	Private
<b>Housing and Neighborhoods</b>							
Initiate or expand blight remediation and enforcement.							
Hire an additional full-time staff person to administer property maintenance, condemnation, and demolition programs.							
Review and update a unified Blight Ordinance; initiate or expand remediation and enforcement.							
Revise and adopt a shared short-term rental ordinance.							
Expand enforcement for noise, light, and odor pollution; ensure unified nuisance ordinances.							
Install community gardens on Township land; encourage their development on private lots.							
Revise zoning ordinance to allow for dwelling units in all commercial zones; remove owner/employee residency requirement.							
Revise zoning ordinance to regulate lot coverage in residential zones.							
Revise zoning ordinance to allow duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes as permitted uses.							
Adopt a rental unit ordinance; require registration and inspections for all units.							
Adopt an accessory dwelling unit ordinance for single-family homes.							
Establish a joint Housing Commission to coordinate affordable housing initiatives.							
Connect unhoused individuals or those living in substandard housing to appropriate resources; coordinate with County and State agencies.							
Support the conversion of motels and hotels into affordable, multifamily units.							
Survey neighborhood sidewalk network; install sidewalks for pedestrian connections between neighborhoods and commercial areas.							
Install barrier-free ramps and crosswalks at intersections.							
Ensure sidewalks are usable year-round; increase winter maintenance.							
<b>Transportation and Infrastructure</b>							
Install multi-use paths for pedestrians and cyclists in strategic locations.							
Install on-street or off-street recreational vehicle lanes for seasonal use, connecting recreation destinations and trails.							
Install signage and pavement markings to encourage shared use of local roads.							

Project	Priority	Timeframe	Responsibility			Funding	
			Township	Other Gov't	Private	Public	Private
Work with County to improve shoulder conditions on rural roads.							
Form a corridor improvement authority to explore needed repairs and streetscaping to improve network quality along and around M-55.							
Leverage the zoning ordinance to require traffic, environmental, or service impact studies from large developments.							
Include zoning provisions for the exaction of development fees, if necessary for off-site improvements of community utilities/ infrastructure to support increased service demand.							
Plan for communications service connectivity, and work with providers to expand service in the community. Specifically, aim to provide 5G wireless service throughout the community.							
Seek grant opportunities or other funding sources to ensure the economic viability of broadband expansions in the community.							
Advocate public and private sector decision-makers for improved service in the Township, to prevent the community from being overlooked due to its low density, but high income, and geographic location near well-served areas.							
Focus development to areas with the best broadband/internet access.							
Support the construction of wireless telecommunications infrastructure in parts of the Township that are underserved.							
Partner with private landowners, especially those with tall structures like silos, to locate telecommunications infrastructure in strategic locations.							
<b>Economic Development</b>							
Work with Chamber of Commerce to coordinate a biannual conference of business leaders, entrepreneurs, and commercial realtors.							
Work with commercial realtors to aggressively market vacant storefronts.							
Permit flexibility for incubator spaces, coworking spaces, and communication hubs.							
Increase advertisement of existing community events; explore new programming for cultural events.							
Reduce or eliminate commercial setback requirements on roads other than M-55.							
Develop design standards to encourage pedestrian-scale buildings and storefronts.							
Discourage strip-style commercial development.							





# Appendix.

*This includes a full report of community engagement efforts, data collected, and analysis of results. The feedback received throughout the project was reviewed and incorporated into the recommendations of this Plan.*

# Public Participation Overview

## Denton-Roscommon Master Plan Update

June 20, 2023

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### OVERVIEW

A key aspect of the planning process involves the stakeholders within Roscommon and Denton Townships. Input from community members is essential, as they are the past, present, and future of the two Townships. The Joint Roscommon Township and Denton Township Master Plan has taken community engagement into account by utilizing various public engagement strategies with the assistance of McKenna.

Public engagement efforts include the following initiatives:

### SURVEYS

#### Community Survey

A public survey was distributed to solicit general feedback on stakeholders' vision for the future of Roscommon and Denton Townships and engage in goal-setting activities. The target audience included stakeholders such as seasonal and year-round residents, property owners, visitors, and business owners. The survey was advertised through public notice postings, email, and flyers, and was available from May 12, 2023, to June 2, 2023.

### MEETINGS

#### Staff Kickoff

May 9, 2023

Key staff met with the community planning consultant, McKenna, to discuss strategic planning issues, current and past planning efforts, project goals, and deliverables.

#### Joint Planning Commission

1. *Meeting for Draft Plan Review, Call for Public Hearing, Recommend Distribution – June 28, 2023*
2. *Meeting for Public Hearing, Recommendation of Adoption – September 27, 2023*

Representatives from McKenna Associates will attend both Planning Commission meetings to assist the Master Plan team. During the Draft Plan Review meeting, Planning Commissioners will discuss the proposed plan and may recommend it for distribution. Feedback from Commissioners and the public will be incorporated into the plan during the public review period and the Public Hearing of Adoption.

Both meetings will be advertised according to the procedures of each Township, and the public hearing will follow the notice standards required by state law for Master Plan drafts and public hearings. The updated plan and its results will be posted on each Township's website. A combined notice will be sent out to all neighboring municipalities, local utilities, area transit operation agencies, and other required government bodies, as well as select stakeholder agencies and citizen groups. This notice will also be posted to ensure visibility for all residents.

## **Township Boards of Trustees**

1. *Meeting for Authorization of Distribution – July 5, 2023 (Denton), July 11, 2023 (Roscommon)*
2. *Meeting for Resolution of Adoption – October 3, 2023 (Roscommon), October 4, 2023 (Denton)*

The Master Plan team, as represented by McKenna Associates, will attend the Board of Trustees meetings for each Township. At these meetings, McKenna will present the plan to the Board to be considered for draft distribution (Meeting 1) and adoption (Meeting 2). Meetings will be advertised according to the procedures of each Township. All residents and stakeholders of Roscommon and Denton Townships can attend. The adopted Master Plan Update will be posted online on each Township's website.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

### **Notice of Intent to Plan**

Sent to all required agencies and neighboring jurisdictions to formally establish the planning project.

### **Newspaper Notices**

Newspaper notices were sent out to advertise meetings, public hearings, and posted surveys.

### **Stakeholder Email**

Emails to Boards, Commissions, DDA Members, residents, business owners, property owners, and other stakeholders were sent to publicize the community survey.

### **Flyers**

Flyers with information were sent to the Township for distribution to business owners so that they may be placed in storefronts. Additionally, Township staff posted the flyers in public spaces to gather survey participants.

# Community Survey - Analysis

## Denton-Roscommon Master Plan Update

June 12, 2023



### OVERVIEW

As part of the thorough planning process, stakeholders of Roscommon and Denton Townships were surveyed to better understand the community's vision for the future and aid in community goal setting, which plays a major role in shaping the master plan's approach.

The survey was public from May 12 to June 2, 2023, and there was a total of 120 responses. The survey included 14 questions, ranging from demographic to open-answer, limited-selection, and ranking questions, all aimed at gathering stakeholder input.

Key insights from the survey include:

- The majority of respondents indicated that community character – including proximity to Houghton Lake, location in relation to northern and southern portions of Michigan's Lower Peninsula, and rural character – is the element of the two Townships that they value most.
- The greatest concern for survey respondents is the vacant and blighted properties throughout the two Townships.
- Other major concerns include the lack of shopping and dining opportunities – especially restaurants, cafes, and retail shops – and investment in infrastructure.

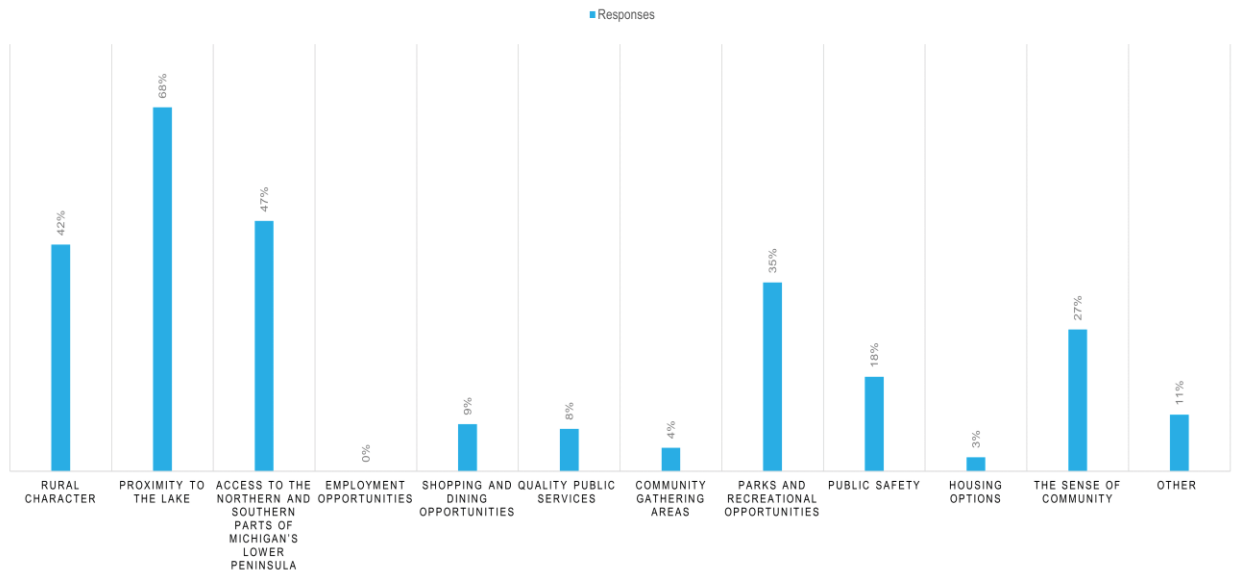
Based on the survey responses, the majority of survey takers belong to the following demographic groups:

- Individuals who own a home in Roscommon or Denton Township throughout the year.
- Residents who have lived in the area for 5 years or more plan to stay for another 5 years or longer.
- Respondents aged between 35 and 59 years old, comprising 46% of survey participants.

## SELECTED RESULTS

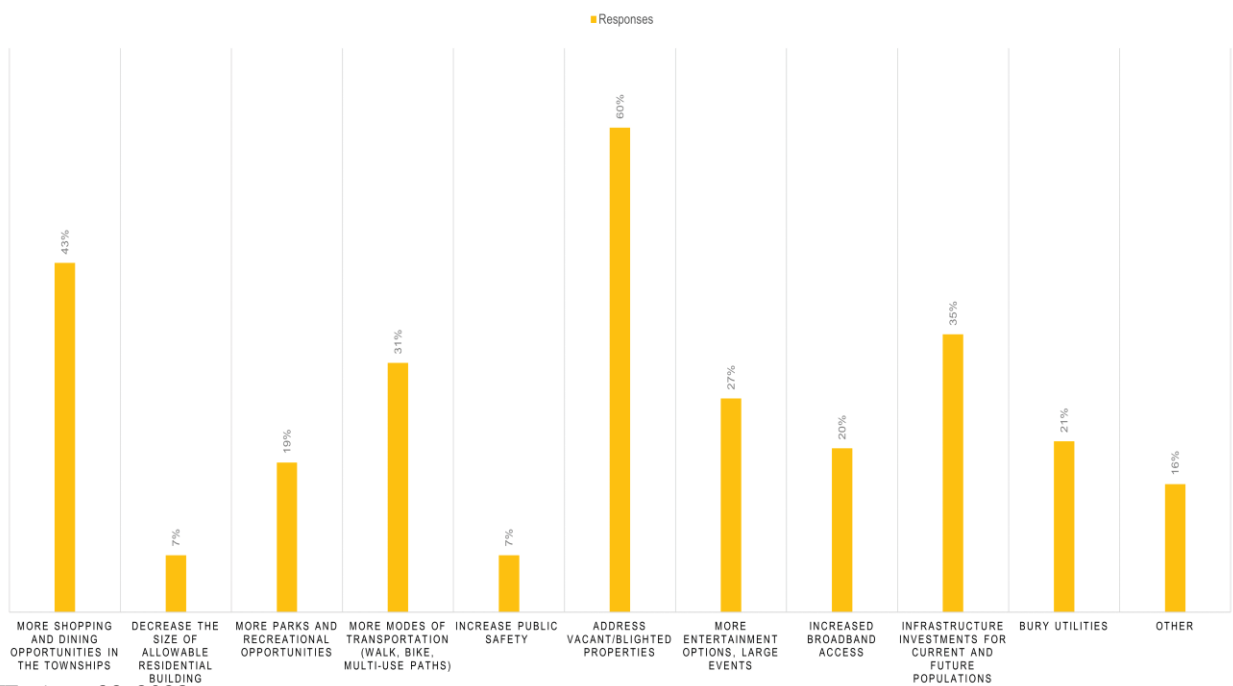
### 7. Choose the three things you like most about the Denton-Roscommon areas of Houghton Lake.

Choose up to three – label them with numbers 1, 2, and 3 (1 = top choice)



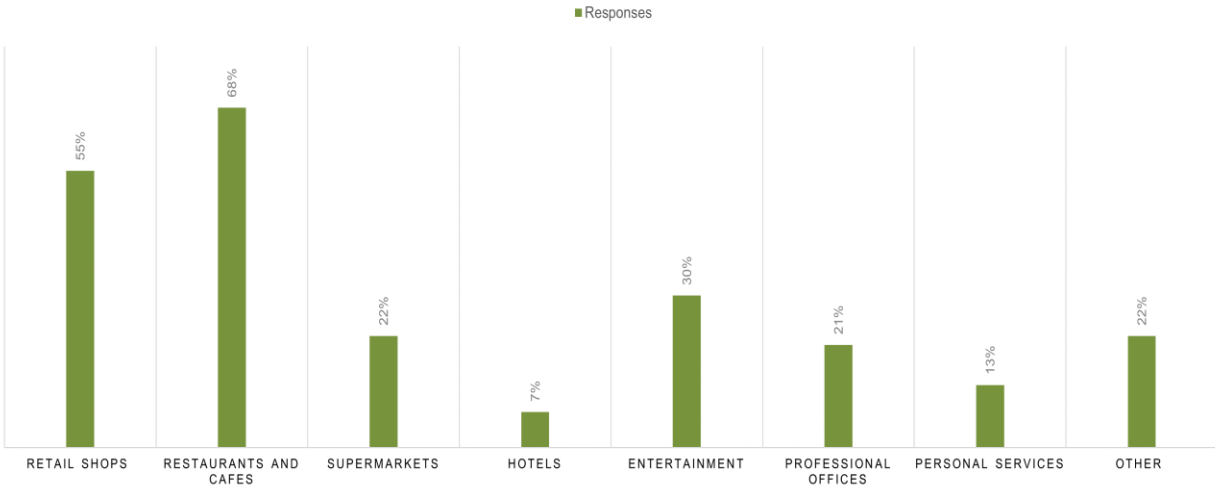
### 8. Choose your top three areas of improvement – which should the Townships focus on most?

Choose up to three – label them with numbers 1, 2, and 3 (1 = highest priority)



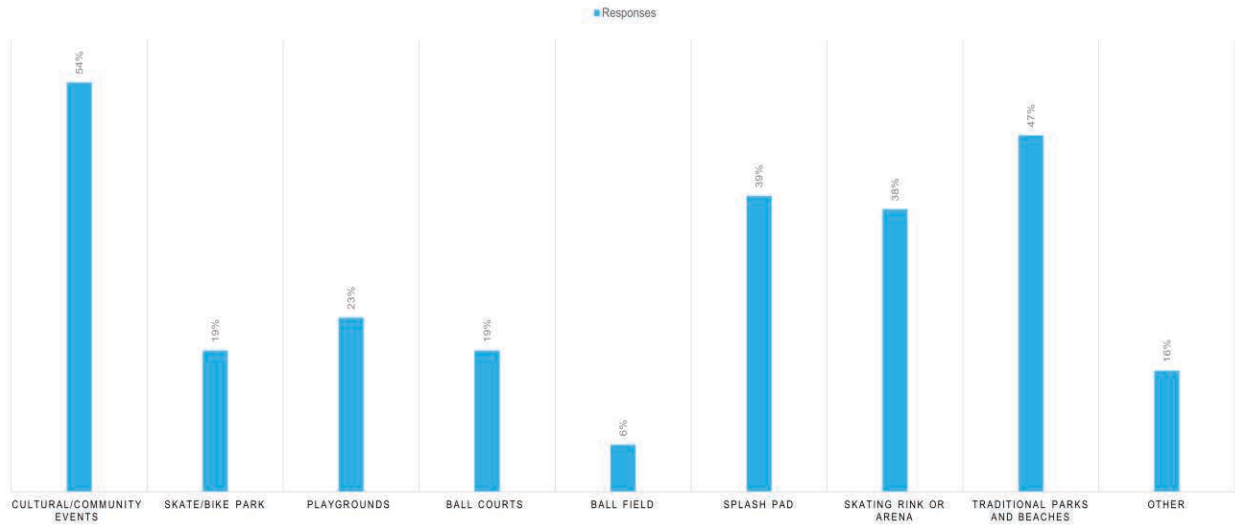
**9. What types of businesses would you like to see more of in the Townships' commercial districts?**

*Choose up to three – label them with numbers 1, 2, and 3 (1 = top choice)*



**10. What sorts of entertainment/recreation options should the Townships provide more of? Choose three.**

*Choose up to three – label them with numbers 1, 2, and 3 (1 = top choice)*





# Community Survey - Results

## Denton-Roscommon Master Plan Update

June 2, 2023

### OVERVIEW

This survey was conducted by the Townships to help determine the community's vision for the future of the south Houghton Lake area. Preliminary response data below.

### RESULTS

14. Are you a resident of either Denton or Roscommon Township? *Choose one.*

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes, I am a resident of one of the Townships.	92.5%	111
No, I am not a resident of one of the Townships.	7.5%	9

15. Do you own or rent your residence in either Township? *Choose one.*

Answer Choices	Responses	
Own	95%	111
Rent	2%	2
Other	3%	4

16. If you ARE a resident of either Township, are you a seasonal or year-around resident?  
*Choose one.*

Answer Choices	Responses	
Seasonal	14%	16
Year-round	86%	101

17. If you ARE a resident of either Township, have you resided here for 5 or more years?  
*Choose one.*

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	88%	104
No	12%	14

18. If you ARE a resident of either Township, do you plan on residing here for at least the next 5 years? *Choose one.*



<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses</b>	
Yes	89%	107
No	1%	1
Unsure	10%	11

**19. Do you own a business or work in either Township? Choose one.**

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses</b>	
Yes, I own a business in one of the Townships.	18 %	20
Yes, I work in one of the Townships (but do not own a business here).	35 %	40
No, I do not own a business nor work within one of the Townships.	47 %	53

**20. Choose the three things you like most about the Denton-Roscommon areas of Houghton Lake?**

*Choose up to three – label them with numbers 1, 2, and 3 (1 = top choice)*

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses</b>	
Rural character.	42%	4 8
Proximity to the lake.	68%	7 7
Access to the northern and southern parts of Michigan's Lower Peninsula.	47%	5 3
Employment opportunities.	0%	0
Shopping and dining opportunities.	9%	1 0
Quality public services such as schools and healthcare.	8%	8
Community gathering areas, such as churches and social clubs.	4%	5
Parks and recreational opportunities.	35%	4 0
Public safety.	18%	2 0
Housing options.	3%	3
The sense of community.	27%	3 0
Other (please specify)	11%	1 2

Ranked	1 (Top Choice)	
	Rural character.	16%
Proximity to the lake.	36%	33
Access to the northern and southern parts of Michigan's Lower Peninsula.	14%	13
Employment opportunities.	0%	0
Shopping and dining opportunities.	3%	3
Quality public services such as schools and healthcare.	1%	1
Community gathering areas, such as churches and social clubs.	0%	0
Parks and recreational opportunities.	7%	6
Public safety.	9%	8
Housing options.	0%	0
The sense of community.	5%	5
[Insert text from Other]	5%	4

**21. Choose your top three areas of improvement – which should the Townships focus on most?**

*Choose up to three – label them with numbers 1, 2, and 3 (1 = highest priority)*

Answer Choices	Responses	
	More shopping and dining opportunities in the Townships.	43%
Decrease the size of allowable residential building footprints and heights.	7%	8
More parks and recreational opportunities.	19%	2 1
More modes of transportation (walk, bike, multi-use paths).	31%	3 5
Increase public safety such as police and ambulance services.	7%	8
Address vacant/blighted properties.	60%	6 8
More entertainment options, large events.	27%	3 0
Increased broadband access.	20%	2 3
Infrastructure investments for current and future populations.	35%	3 9
Bury utilities.	21%	2 4
Other (please specify)	16%	1 8

<b>Ranked</b>	<b>1 (Top Choice)</b>	
More shopping and dining opportunities in the Townships.	13%	1 2
Decrease the size of allowable residential building footprints and heights.	2%	2
More parks and recreational opportunities.	2%	2
More modes of transportation (walk, bike, multi-use paths).	5%	5
Increase public safety such as police and ambulance services.	0%	0
Address vacant/blighted properties.	40%	3 6
More entertainment options, large events.	9%	8
Increased broadband access.	7%	6
Infrastructure investments for current and future populations.	11%	1 0
Bury utilities.	3%	3
[Insert text from Other]	10%	9

**22. What types of businesses would you like to see more of in the Townships' commercial districts?**

*Choose up to three – label them with numbers 1, 2, and 3 (1 = top choice)*

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses</b>	
Retail shops (boutique, small business, etc.)	55%	63
Restaurants and cafes	68%	76
Supermarkets	22%	25
Hotels	7%	8
Entertainment (music venues, bars, clubs)	30%	34
Professional offices (health, legal, financial, and other services)	21%	23
Personal services (beauty shop, barber, small repair shops)	13%	14
Other (please specify)	22%	25

<b>Ranked</b>	<b>1 (Top Choice)</b>	
Retail shops (boutique, small business, etc.)	18%	16
Restaurants and cafes	36%	33
Supermarkets	8%	7
Hotels	4%	4
Entertainment (music venues, bars, clubs)	8%	7
Professional offices (health, legal, financial, and other services)	7%	6
Personal services (beauty shop, barber, small repair shops)	3%	3
[Insert text from Other]	18%	16

**23. What sort of entertainment/recreation options for families should the Townships look to provide?**

*Choose up to three – label them with numbers 1, 2, and 3 (1 = top choice)*

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses</b>	
Cultural/community events (Polish food festival, Indigenous arts festival, concerts, etc.)	54%	6 2
Skate/bike park	19%	2 1
Playgrounds (modular equipment, tot lots, etc.)	23%	2 7
Ball courts (hard surface)	19%	2 1
Ball fields (grassy, rectangular fields)	6%	7
Splash pad	39%	4 4
Skating rink or arena	38%	4 2
Traditional parks, beaches	47%	5 3
Other (please specify)	16%	1 8

<b>Ranked Choices</b>	<b>1 (Top Choice)</b>	
Cultural/community events (Polish food festival, Indigenous arts festival, concerts, etc.)	35%	3 1
Skate/bike park	4%	4
Playgrounds (modular equipment, tot lots, etc.)	7%	6
Ball courts (hard surface)	6%	5
Ball fields (grassy, rectangular fields)	0%	0
Splash pad	13%	1 2
Skating rink or arena	8%	7
Traditional parks, beaches	19%	1 7
[Insert text from Other]	8%	7

**24. What sort of residential development would you like to see more of in the Townships?**

*Choose all that apply.*

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses</b>	
Apartment buildings (5+ units)	32%	35
Two-, three-, or four-family homes (duplex, triplex, fourplex)	31%	34
Cottage courtyard (several small, detached homes with shared common space)	19%	21
Townhomes	22%	24

Single family, detached homes	65%	72
Other (please specify)	13%	14

**25. Would you be in favor of more Township land being used for passive energy and green initiatives, such as windmills or solar farms?**

*Choose one.*

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	38%	42
Indifferent	30%	31
No (please specify why)	33%	39

Responses
Would need more information before making that decision. I'm not convinced passive energy/green initiatives are as efficient and clean as advertised.
not in my backyard.
There are better use for the land we pay for
Do not think it is needed in this area
Research shows more problems then benefits
They are expensive to build, not pleasing to the eye, some are dangerous to wildlife
Eye soar
Unsightly
Not at government level. Help for individual households or businesses for solar. Wind energy has issues just finding out. Noise and problems with when disfunctional. What do you do with wind turbines.
No windmills
Green energy will NEVER work for long term. Those who think that don't have very much common sense.
No windmills. I am indifferent to solar
I don't know the health risks if any for living nearby
Green energy is consistent
Need more housing
Develop clean fossil fuel that we have, i.e. natural gas.
The townships need to take care of its people that they have not been for 30 years, especially Roscommon Township, before dreaming.
Not viable financially
Looks terrible. It takes away from the natural beauty of the area.
Too noisy
unattractive
We do not have enough space in our township for that and growth
Green energy only enriches China. It will only cost Americans more money in the long run.
No room for this technology

I don't feel our area is a proper choice for wind or solar farms. They are unsightly and there are much better areas (more rural than Roscommon or Denton Township) that would be better suited for that type of development
Not huge fan because this is Michigan solar would only get three good months & look gawdy. Windmills are cool to look at and the purpose is smart but the wind produced would feel like we live on the ocean with the constant wind.
No Windmills
Township property near the lake should not be cluttered with large equipment. Preserve the natural beauty.
It creates an eyesore
Visually awful
It creates an eyesore
Will specify at a later date if it came to it actually happening.
No windmill farms. Noisy and bad for the area to look at
No windmills.
It depends on how, why, and when it is done. It would be better to reduce energy consumption in half.
Windmills: unsightly, kills birds, noise, costly to maintain, non-recyclable, SOLAR FARMS: unsightly, uses land needed for agriculture, lack of sunlight in MI, costly to be repaired, costly to install.
They have a short-term life expectancy and are not biodegradable material.
It depends on how it is done and where. Simpler to cut energy use in half and stop wasting. E.g. building houses 2-4x as big as needed

**26. What is one change that you believe would improve the quality of life in Denton and Roscommon Townships?**

*Open response – tell us your BIG idea!*

Get rid of rundown/vacant properties which will then attract a more positive population willing to personally invest in the area.
I would like to see more family oriented fun things to do!
We need sustainable businesses that provide employment so people can support themselves/families. While I love the small time feel, it's very difficult to make a living here. This town needs a boost. Period.
Friendlier staff at township building, they are not helpful and never help. They just push you to someone else's voicemail. It is almost impossible to get things done correctly because of all the run around. And TRASH ! My trash has not been picked up in eight months! I also came into the township in July 2022, and paid for a plastic trashcan. I was told it would be dropped off. I still have yet to get that trashcan that I paid cash for and my trash is still also outside in the bin.
More jobs
Higher water level.
Clean up some of the old houses and hotel turned into apartments
To clean up the blighted buildings and run down areas and make both areas coming into town on M55 more welcoming
Enforce actions for serving notices to clean up or tear down empty and blighted properties within a time limit and follow through no postponement's p
Better beautiful beaches and access for familys. Improved beach access in Houghton Beach sub

Natural gas
Consolidation of townships to better reflect the reality of Houghton Lake and attract business and jobs. We have some 14,000 people living around the lake, we are actually the 2nd largest community in Northern Lower Michigan.
Be much more aggressive in enforcement of ordinances. Spend the money to hire more staffing to do the job as there are far too many property owners doing as "they wish" with no fear of enforcement
More coordination between groups when scheduling community events and celebrations (instead of competing with each other).
Have more retail stores like Meijer, Target or Khols. These can attract more people to area. More shoppers in Houghton Lake, more profit for local business's.
Access to water, I want to see it, increase visibility along 55 to open views to the largest inland body of water in the state. There is an entire coastline covered up masked, or otherwise unavailable by ugly buildings, or ugly greed. The north side of the lake is a pleasant drive with views. I wouldn't even be mad if we rerouted 55 to follow the shoreline all the way to prudenville.
Something like craf center Roscommon has. People could bring ideas there for working on where for children or other ages. Needs to be affordable and easy to get to because we live in low income area.
Public beach on the west side of the lake
Underground utilities to enhance the beauty of M-55, Provide (nice) low income housing facilities so residents are not living in motels and outdoor youth park to provide things for our children to do.
Natural park on the south west side. For those of us in Forest Estates with kids it takes 20 minutes to get to a decent park (that is available during school hours) and there are a ton of kids in this area.
Stores
More residential living more people might be an opportunity for more employment
I think Roscommon County needs a hospital. It would bring in higher paying jobs, thereby reducing poverty rates. It would directly benefit/support our large senior citizen population. A town can only grow so much without either a local hospital, or higher education opportunities. -Side note, I'd love to see a summer festival comparable to TUT. Perhaps a lumberjack festival, which would celebrate our town/regions logging history.
Broadband internet to rural areas, and expand public beach areas.
Improve intersection of 18 and 55. Including use vacant lot and fix road only going one way to Lake James. Possibly installing a round about?
More, good paying jobs.
How about slap the crap out of these lazy punk kids who don't work, who don't show respect, who think they're entitled and think that boys can become girls and girls can become boys.
Health Care
Make a "town" area. All surrounding like Clare and West Branch actually have nice little downtown areas. I love houghton lake but driving down M55 feels like just a lot of hodgepodge building. Slow the traffic down. Vehicles including police drive way too fast.
County fair
The villages type of retirement community
Event center to keep residents and tourists from seeking fun at the bars. Concerts, ball games, kids events, talent shows, ethics festivals
I would love to see money spent towards bringing in and keeping younger generations and families instead of the focus being on the retirement community. Making the area more walking/biking friendly like other up north communities. We go to downtown West Branch, Grayling, and Lake City to shop and eat since you can enjoy the day walking from shop to shop.

Affordable housing and an economy not dependant on retail/service industry jobs.
Get the dumpy businesses and houses cleaned up! Get 55 cleaned up! Our once very beautiful town is getting so dumpy. I grew up here and remember the beauty I grew up with. It's getting more and more dumpy and trashy. Denton seems to be more on top of the looks of their end of town. It's achievable.
Get rid of the abandoned/ run down buildings
More recreational activities (walking/bike trails), better beaches that have food stands/bathrooms
There isn't much for older kids to do. I'm not sure the solution unfortunately. More of a walkable down town
More clean up of buildings now being used
Improve and enforce lake access via roads ending at lake. Some roads/lake access are being made impassable by neighboring property owners
The blight is horrible here
Beaches. Bike paths. Places like basketball courts for the kids. Clean up the blight.
We need more for kids to do
Na
more manufacturing
<b>STOP ATV UTV USAGE OF ROADS AND TRAILS CLOSE TO TOWN! THEY ARE DRIVING ON THE STREETS AND TEARING UP THE WOODS!</b>
Carter more towards younger population. Help keep middle age families from relocating
Road diet/stop lights/lower speed limit on 55
Better trail markings
Getting new supervisors
New curb and sidewalks along 55 allows for walking follow the state suggestions regarding the change in traffic patterns along 55. Will allow more walking and bike opportunities (somehow safely allow people to walk across the street)
A walkable shopping district.
Rental ordinance
Cleaning up the blight!!!
N/A
More of a downtown feel
Cleaning up of old abandoned buildings and businesses, more activities for kids and families
No police force in Roscommon Township so problems aren't addressed until they become "BIG" problems. Trash pickup is spotty in the winter months with plenty of excuses of why it doesn't get done. Tax is burdensome and inequitable. Noise pollution is bad especially in the summer months IE: Dogs barking, Loud exhausts and Music way too loud, Fire works. Neighbors yelling at each other. Light pollution, no low impact lighting so stars get washed out at night. Wouldn't it be great to have a "Dark Sky Park" somewhere in Roscommon Township!
Less air bnb and vrbo
Fish stocking
Less government regulations. More family entertainment areas to draw in younger people
Less traffic
Affordable Housing & Full-Time Employment
More pedestrian friendly
Get rid of the bike path.. make a shared lane for UTV, golf carts, four wheelers, snowmobiles, they would need safety equipment installed (arizona has good laws regarding this) we would see a huge amount of people coming up to spend their money here. People avoid HL because



<p>it's not a user friendly town. St. Helen increased money in their town by allowing this type of activity to happen. They would have to follow all traffic rules or be ticketed otherwise. You would see a massive amount of people/money. And you could have ride parties or even get-togethers cookouts for this group. I was raised here and ppl don't like change but we have to in order to survive</p>
<p>More community coming together in a friendly way instead of all ongoing bitterness</p>
<p>I would love to see a splash pad and toddler play structure and baby swings! Very few parks have baby swings available.</p>
<p>Not sure at this time</p>
<p>na</p>
<p>More shopping opportunities other than Walmart</p>
<p>Addressing blight/vacant buildings while providing more housing opportunities.</p>
<p>Clean up vacant building and make the town a clean and fresh look for visitors coming here.</p>
<p>Maintain a slower speed on m-55. Public safety</p>
<p>We need people to get back to work, but I don't know how to make that happen. Our restaurants and stores already have issues hiring people.</p>
<p>More for kids to do.</p>
<p>Tear down old hoarded motels and clean up our sidewalks. We need m-55 to be more appealing driving and walking up and down. It looks terrible</p>
<p>More food places</p>
<p>More places to rent</p>
<p>Having the community hold higher standards to appearances. Run down buildings do not help our community and need to be taken care of. Junk yards in a front yard of a house need to be taken care of better. We also need to focus on the children in this community more and our stop allowing retirees dictate this community.</p>
<p>More things for pre teens to do. A public beach for easier access to the lake for. On lake front homeowners and store like Higgins Lake.</p>
<p>Believe in the many scientific studies that have been done about our lakes. Remove the seawalls, stop lawn chemicals, road salting near lakes, fine and jail offenders. Check sewer systems of residents and force repairs, etc. PRUDENVILLE CORNER, use local trees and vegetation (DNR permits), build a four sided shelter so people can sit in and be protected from the rain, wind, sun, and have privacy.</p>
<p>Safer roads and walkable.</p>
<p>Entertainment options.</p>
<p>Wish I had some big idea, sorry!</p>
<p>One day - community wide spring clean up. Get rid of junk and/or paint, plant, pickup garbage on trails or parks. Dumpsters?</p>
<p>Remove seawalls and outlaw and prosecute violators for using lawn fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides. Quit salting roads near lakes. Listen to the numerous (wasteful spending) studies we've thrown at us. Eg. Army corps of engineer study about Houghton Lake water quality and ignoring their report. Wasteful and not good for our lake and communities. Believe in science. Quit ignoring our environment. Furthermore, in Denton Township we do not like their plan for vacant lot where surplus, Inc. used to be. Local garden people (lawncare, groups, professionals, etc.) should be in on it. Again, GRANTS were available and public officials forced to pay outsiders to do a local job. Do we need another veterans memorial? There are many veterans' community centers etc.</p>

**27. What is your age?**

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses</b>	
19 years or under	0%	0
20-34 years	12%	11
35-59 years	46%	42
60-74 years	35%	32
75 years or better	8%	7



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