

APPENDIX F: CONSERVATION ACTION PLAN

Goals

The goals and action strategies below are intended to provide both a long-range vision for the Township, as well as specific short-term action strategies that foster the burgeoning conservation efforts of the community.

GOAL: Conserve the Natural Environment

Conserve the natural features and character of Township lands by protecting undeveloped open spaces.

Action Strategies:

- A. Work with ecological partners to complete inventory mapping and field verification of plant biodiversity, and wild-life habitats and corridors in the Township. Adopt updated Conservation Areas of Interest Map as new information becomes available.
- B. Develop a prioritization system of land conservation-based mapping completed through an assessment of preservation value and threat of loss.
- C. Prioritize the protection of wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, and the headwaters of the river systems.
- D. Map existing open space properties that are deed restricted through the Open Space Community zoning ordinance or are privately deed/conservation restricted and identify possible greenway linkages between these lands.
- E. Develop incentive programs to conserve land within the Township. These programs should consider both the conservation of open space within proposed subdivision/site condominiums as well as incentivizing individual parcel owners to conserve land.
- F. Work with property owners to restore native ecosystems to the Oshtemo region through the development of programs with local conservation organizations.
- G. Establish operation and maintenance Best Management Practices (BMP's) for open space lands within the more developed areas of the Township.
- H. Develop a regional approach to conservation through partnerships with adjacent jurisdictions, conservation organizations, Kalamazoo County, Southcentral Michigan Planning Council, etc.
- I. Consider acquisition techniques, such as fee-title acquisitions, purchase of development rights, donations, or tax incentives.

GOAL: Connect Nature and People

Advance a greenway network that connects natural features and people to community and regional destinations.

Action Strategies:

- A. Develop a set of criteria for determining when greenway/open space lands should be permanently protected in their undeveloped state and when passive recreation should be permitted for the use and enjoyment of Oshtemo residents, promoting the balance between recreational opportunities and natural resource protection.

- B. Structure the passive recreational component of the greenway system so that connections to the larger Township nonmotorized plan provide linkages to local and regional destinations, particularly Oshtemo parks and other publicly accessible open spaces.
- C. Investigate opportunities for acquisition of undeveloped lands within the more urbanized area of the Township to allow for community open spaces and greenways where available natural areas may be scarce.
- D. Develop a generalized map for where acquisition of land/easements should be prioritized within the Township.
- E. Develop policies and practices for the maintenance and upkeep of the passive recreation greenways within the Township.
- F. Review current ordinances for improvements and investigate new techniques to minimize loss of natural features when new development occurs in the urbanized area to maintain a more naturalized environment.

GOAL: Enhance Rural Character

Enhance the rural character of the Township through the preservation of natural features that strengthen the desirability of our community as a place to live, work, and recreate.

Action Strategies:

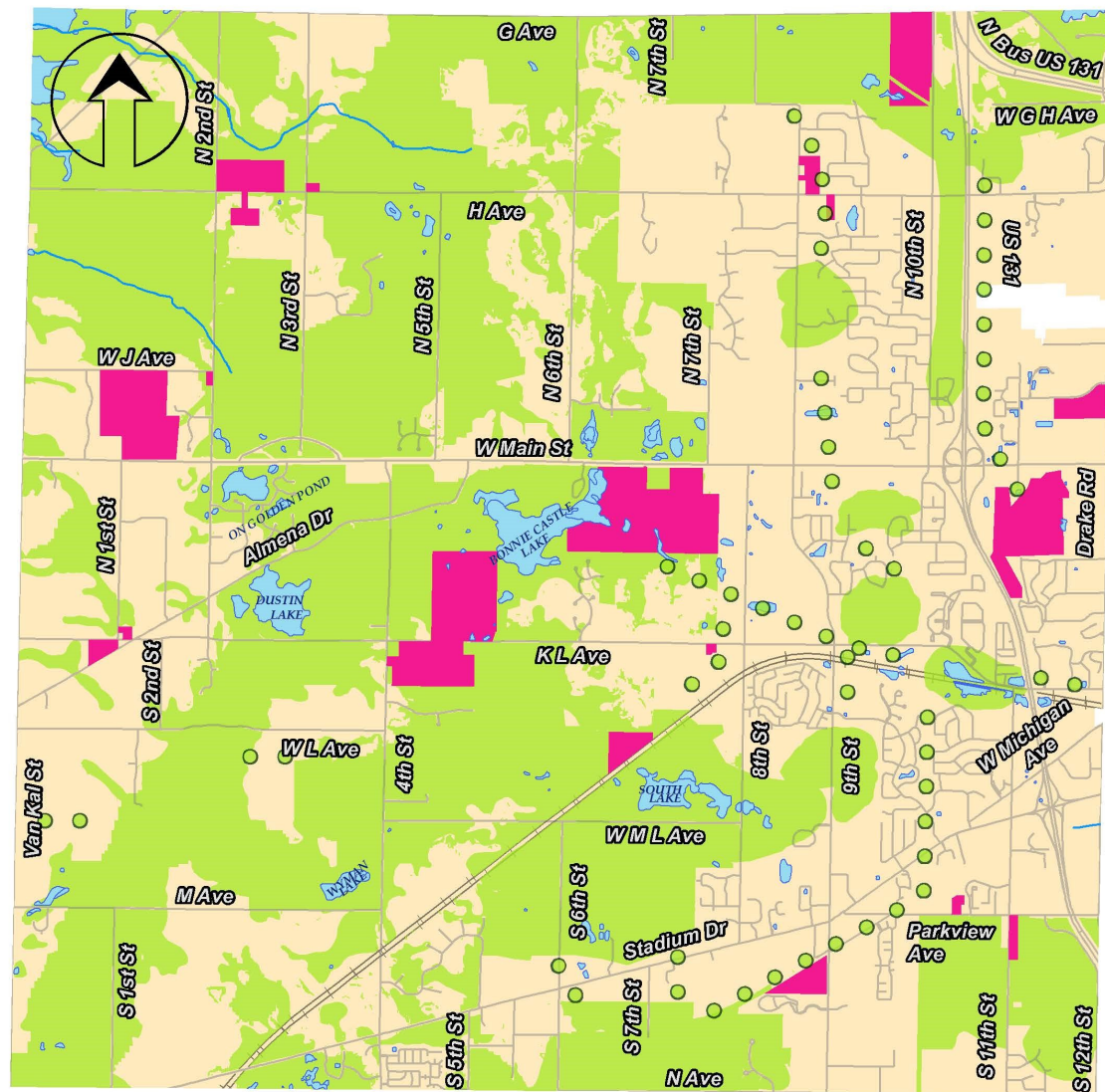
- A. Seek to create a network of Natural Beauty Roads through the State of Michigan program to support rural character and a healthy natural environment, via the establishment of natural buffer strips along the edges of primary and secondary roadways.
- B. Review existing “low impact development” ordinances for improvements and investigate new planning and design practices to simultaneously reduce infrastructure costs, conserve and protect natural resource systems, and reduce potential environmental impacts.
- C. Require management plans for the open space/conservation areas within new subdivision and site condominium projects.
- D. Continue to support the Future Land Use Plan of the Township’s Master Plan to direct appropriate growth in the more urbanized locations of the Township, allowing for the opportunity to preserve undeveloped parcels in the rural area of the community.
- E. Review current ordinances for improvements and investigate new techniques to minimize loss of natural features when new residential development occurs.

Conservation Anticipated Projects

Conservation of properties is a new endeavor for the Township and therefore much of the work during this 5-year Plan period will be establishing priorities, developing criteria, and field work. With that said, the Township will capitalize on any opportunity to work with residents, developers, and conservation partners to preserve lands. The Conservation Areas of Interest Map found on the following page outlines the areas of priority for conservation in the Township. These areas have been delineated based on the data provided in the Existing Condition Inventory and Trends and Needs sections of this Plan.

In addition to assisting residents, developers, and conservation partners with land conservation, the Township also hopes to establish one to two catalyst projects as part of this Plan. In the Township’s 2019-2024 Capital Improvement Plan, funding has been set aside for the acquisition of possibly two open space conservation areas. Property for these areas will be located within the part of the Township delineated in the Conservation Areas of Interest Map. The acquisition of these properties will be contingent on the Township securing state and/or local grants.

Conservation Areas of Interest



0 1 2 Miles

- Road Network
- +— Railroad
- ● Potential Wildlife Habitat Connections
- Waterway
- Lakes, Ponds, and Wetlands
- Other Areas of Interest (Recreation, Nature Preserves, Cemeteries, Historic Farmsteads, Etc.)
- Areas of Natural Interest

