

Parks Department

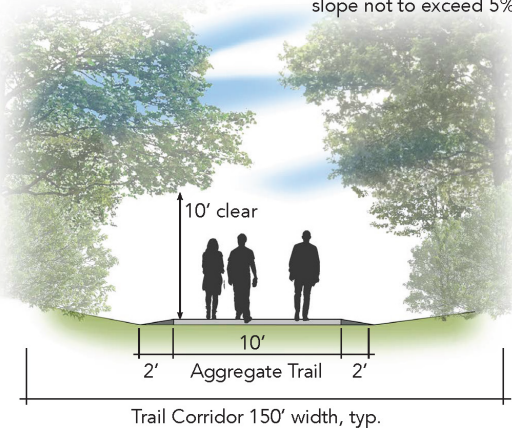
Fruit Belt Rail Trail



Consumers Energy has completed its gas pipeline upgrade in the Fruit Belt corridor, and the Fruit Belt Rail Trail (FBRT) is now open for public use while final project planning continues. Residents and visitors are welcome to enjoy the newly accessible segment as a temporary recreational resource but should plan for seasonal closures and intermittent closures once construction on the formal trail begins. The FBRT project has officially gone out to bid and construction is expected to begin in early 2026 with completion targeted for November 2026. A community grand opening celebration is planned to follow the finish of construction and mark the trail’s official debut.

TRAIL SECTION

Cross slope not to exceed 2%, running slope not to exceed 5%



A bit of history: between 1852 and 1924 the Fruit Belt Rail Line ran from Kalamazoo to South Haven, swinging south through fruit-producing communities including Oshtemo, Mattawan, Paw Paw, Lawrence, and Hartford. Today, fourteen miles of the original corridor

are preserved and enjoyed as Michigan DNR’s Van Buren Trail. Communities along the remainder of the historic line have been coordinating efforts to create a continuous trail that honors the corridor’s agricultural heritage. The FBRT segment now under development is the first section to be built in Kalamazoo County and represents a crucial link in the larger vision.



When the Fruit Belt Rail Trail is finished and linked to the Kal Haven Trail, the two will create a unique, 70-mile loop of regional and statewide importance. Please enjoy the FBRT while it remains open, it will close again once work ramps up next year. Stay tuned for construction updates and grand opening details!

Scan the QR code for details and updates.



Oshtemo Historical Society Awarded America250MI Grant to Restore Drake House Flooring

Oshtemo Charter Township and the Oshtemo Historical Society are proud to partner with America250MI to restore the original second-level flooring of the historic Benjamin Drake House at Drake Farmstead Park. This important preservation work celebrates our state’s rich history and will help ensure future generations can experience an authentic piece of local history.



The 14-room farmhouse was built by early settlers Benjamin and Maria Drake, who arrived in 1830. In 2004 the township purchased the house to save it from demolition, and the Oshtemo Historical Society was formed that same year to guide its restoration and preserve the community heritage. Today the Drake House is the centerpiece of the 26-acre Drake Farmstead Park, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and is used for public events and guided tours by appointment.

America250MI’s investment was crucial for the restoration of this treasured Michigan landmark.

Seasonal Reminders

Timely Reminders for Fall

As the seasons change, here are a few reminders to help keep our streets safe and neighborhood infrastructure running smoothly.

Leaves and Drainage

With fall leaves arriving, please help keep culverts, catch basins, and curb lines free of leaf buildup. Clearing leaves from storm drains improves drainage, reduces vegetation overgrowth, and protects road edges.

Streetlight Outages

As daylight hours shorten, streetlights will begin turning on earlier and staying on longer. If you notice a light that is out or malfunctioning, please report it to Consumers Energy.

Scan the QR code to contact Consumers Energy.



Excess Chip Seal Stones

After a chip seal project, you may notice loose chips in the roadway. If excess chips remain 6 to 8 weeks after the project, submit a service request to the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County so they can arrange cleanup.

Streetside Restoration Issues

Recently there has been an increase in private utilities installing conduit and new services in residential areas. If streetside property restoration, including lawn repairs, forgotten supplies, or other damage is delayed or causing problems, please submit a service request so the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County can contact the contractor to resolve the issue.

Scan the QR code to contact RCKC to submit a service request.



At Your Service From Supervisor Cheri Bell



When Township Government Matters

When people think of local government, they often picture city halls or county offices. But township government plays a unique and vital role, especially in communities like Oshtemo.

Townships are one of the oldest forms of government in Michigan, and we're still going strong because we're so close to the people we serve. Our powers and responsibilities differ from those of cities and counties. While counties often focus on regional services like courts, jails, and public health, and cities manage dense urban infrastructure, townships are designed to meet the needs of more suburban and rural areas.

We maintain local roads, parks, cemeteries, and public spaces. We manage zoning and

land use to preserve the character of our community. We provide fire protection, ordinance enforcement, and support for building and development. We also serve as a direct link between residents and other levels of government, advocating for your needs and ensuring your voice is heard.

Oshtemo is a Charter Township, which means we've adopted a special status under Michigan law that gives us additional protections and powers compared to general law townships. Charter townships were created to help growing communities avoid annexation by nearby cities and to provide more flexibility in governance. This status allows us to offer services similar to those of cities, like expanded public safety and infrastructure, while still maintaining the accessibility and community focus of township government.



Unlike cities, townships do not have home rule. That means we operate under powers granted by the State of Michigan, and we must be careful stewards of those powers. But what we lack in autonomy, we make up for in responsiveness. Township government is lean, accessible, and deeply rooted in the community.

Every decision we make, from budgeting to road repairs, is guided by a simple question: What's best for our residents? That is the heart of township government. And it is a privilege to serve you.

Feel free to stop by Township Hall during open office hours with questions or concerns. Supervisor Cheri Bell will be available to assist you. Can't make it? She's a call or email away.

- First and Third Tuesdays of Each Month
- Noon to 1 p.m.
- Public Meeting Room, Oshtemo Township Hall
7275 West Main Street, Kalamazoo MI 49009
- 269.910.8607 cbell@oshtemo.org

At Your Service From Fire Chief Greg McComb

Meet Engine 511

The Oshtemo Township Fire Department is proud to welcome Engine 511 to service. This state-of-the-art apparatus replaces a 2008 Pierce that served our community for more than 15 years and logged over 150,000 miles.

Designed by the department's Apparatus Committee: Capt. Nathan Carley, Lt. Joe Keck, Driver-Operators Cody Roberts and Shane Chambers, with leadership oversight, Engine 511 is built for reliability and rapid response and will be the first engine out of Station 5-1, protecting Oshtemo residents and businesses.



At its recent push-in ceremony, a longtime firefighter tradition that honors the era of horse-pulled apparatus, Engine 511 was formally welcomed into service. Visit our social channels or stop by Station 5-1 to see it in person.

Quick specs: 2,000 GPM pump
1,000-gal tank | 1,000 ft large-diameter hose | Seats 6 | Station 5-1

Donate a Structure for Fire Training

Do you have a building headed for demolition? Consider donating it to Oshtemo Township Fire Department for live-fire training. These controlled exercises give our firefighters real-world experience while providing significant savings to property owners who would otherwise pay demolition costs. Not all properties qualify, as each potential training site is evaluated for safety and feasibility.

Scan the QR code for details and application.



Bulk Trash and Yard Waste Programs



The Bulk Trash and Yard Waste Voucher Programs for this year will end on November 30. Vouchers may be requested online or in-person at our office.

Vouchers can be redeemed at the WasteNot Recycling facility at the southeast corner of Ravine Road and Nichols Road. For more information about WasteNot Recycling, visit their website here: wastenotofmi.com

Learn more about these programs here:

oshtemo.org/Bulk-Trash
oshtemo.org/Yard-Waste

Featured Events in Oshtemo

Fire Prevention Day

Join the Oshtemo Fire Department for our third annual Fire Prevention Day! This family-friendly event is free and packed with hands-on safety learning and fun. Enjoy a complimentary pancake breakfast, meet your firefighters, and take part in activities designed to help you and your family stay safe at home.



Date and Location

- Saturday, Oct. 11 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- 7275 W. Main Street
- Family-friendly, accessible

Fall Comes to the Forest

Join us for our last scheduled Guided Nature Walk of the season as the forest prepares for colder, darker days. Join us **Saturday, October 18 at 10 a.m.** and Volunteer Educator Lorri will lead a 3/4-mile stroll on gentle trails, pointing out seasonal changes in plants and wildlife and offering hands-on activities along the way. Participants will receive a small take-home item.

This all ages, drop-in event is free, with no registration required.

Want to share a skill or passion as a volunteer naturalist or program leader? We'd love to hear from you! Just email us at: parks@oshtemo.org

The Rise and Fall of Michigan's Poor Farms

Hosted by Adam Oster of the Library of Michigan

Discover the early history of Michigan's county poorhouses and poor farms, hear the stories of the people who lived there, and learn how these institutions evolved to serve those with chronic illnesses before many closed in the late 20th century. Join us **Sunday, Oct. 26 from 2 to 4 p.m.** at Oshtemo Township Hall for an illustrated talk and community discussion.



Helpful Tax Facts

From Treasurer
Clare Buszka



As part of our ongoing effort to keep residents informed, here are a couple of helpful property tax tips.

Principal Residence Exemption (PRE)

If you live in your home year-round, you may **qualify for the PRE**, which can exempt

you from up to 18 mills of school operating tax. To apply, file a **PRE Affidavit** with the Assessing Department. This exemption can reduce your annual taxes substantially.

How taxable value changes

Taxable value increases each year by the **rate of inflation or 5%**, whichever is lower. When a property is sold, its taxable value is “uncapped” and reset to **market value at the time of sale**, which can cause higher taxes for new owners.

Infrastructure News



Progress has been made on several infrastructure projects in 2025, and multiple initiatives are planned for 2026. Below is a summary of what has been completed by the Michigan Department of Transportation and your Oshtemo Public Works team and what residents can expect next.

Pedestrian Paths

- » New sidewalk on the west side of 9th Street from Stadium Drive to Quail Run Drive. Bidding will occur this fall with construction planned for 2026.
- » 10-foot shared-use path on KL Avenue is currently under design. Pending permit approval, 2026 construction includes a bridge to The Paddock apartments.
- » 10-foot shared-use path on H Avenue between Drake Road and Westport Village. Planned for construction in 2026, project costs will be split between the developer and the township.

Sanitary Sewer:

Phase 1 included major sanitary sewer upgrades across several neighborhoods. Skyridge and Driftwood are complete,

including new roads. A lift station will be constructed this fall and winter, enabling residents in those areas to begin connecting in early 2026.

Work is underway in the Fairlane Plat and anticipated to be completed in late October. Once finished, residents will be able to connect immediately.

Chime Street construction is about to begin, including new sanitary sewer, storm sewer, curb and gutter, on-street parking, and a sidewalk on the west side.

US-131 Business Loop:

Business Loop construction is progressing and expected to open this fall. This will provide additional routes for industrial traffic and commuters, helping to distribute vehicles across the network. By offering alternative routes, the project increases resiliency during emergencies or periods of heavy travel and reduces congestion in primary corridors.

West Main Street:

This project provided safety improvements, including upgraded traffic signals with coordinated timing and enhanced vehicle detection. These changes will reduce conflict points and improve traffic operations for drivers and pedestrians alike.

The Future of Oshtemo



Comprehensive Master Plan

As part of Oshtemo’s 2045 Comprehensive Plan, we prepared several Special Studies on specific local areas. These show real examples of smart design and development that can be used across the township.

Lodge Lane Special Study

We studied the Lodge Lane to West Main area because it is seeing development interest and faces topographic constraints, limited road connections, and drainage challenges tied to local soils. The roughly 80-acre study area (bound by West Main, 9th Street, KL Avenue and Lodge Lane) looks at ways to improve access, handle stormwater more effectively, and support thoughtful growth.



H Ave. to Croyden Ave. Special Study

The area was selected because it typifies Neighborhood Residential Place Type and presents an opportunity for focused planning. The study area, about 300 acres bounded by H Avenue to the north, Westgate Drive/US-131 to the west, Maple Hill Pavilion Mall to the south, and Drake Road to the east, contains large tracts of undeveloped land, limited street connectivity, nearby shopping and transit, and is already served by municipal utilities. The study provided options to improve connectivity and responsible infill while making the most of existing infrastructure and transit access.

Maple Hill Pavilion Mall Special Study

We are focusing on the Maple Hill Pavilion Mall area because it has several underused parcels in a well-served location near parks and transit but with few direct street connections. The study area (about 70 acres) examines how smart infill and better street and transit connections can make the area more walkable and connected.

Growth Happens. Let’s Decide How!

Safety News

Oshtemo Adopts 2024
International Fire Code



The Charter Township of Oshtemo has adopted Ordinance No. 682, which establishes the 2024 International Fire Code (IFC) as the township’s official fire code and replaces NFPA 1 as the primary basis for local fire code enforcement. The ordinance also includes local fire safety provisions not covered by the IFC.

Why does this matter? The IFC is widely used across Michigan and the U.S. and aligns with other International Codes (I-Codes), including the International Building Code adopted at the state level, which will help promote consistency in permitting, inspections, and fire-safety regulations for new and existing buildings.

No Grace for False Alarms

The Township has adopted a text amendment to False Alarm Ordinance No. 683 that removes any grace for false alarms caused by prohibited actions. This specifically includes smoking or vaping in areas where those activities are banned, as well as the malicious activation of fire alarms.

What does this mean? False alarms resulting from prohibited conduct will not receive leniency and may result in enforcement action. Please be mindful of no-smoking/ no-vaping rules and never intentionally activate a fire alarm unless there is a real emergency.

Follow Us On Social Media!

@OshtemoCharterTownship
 OshtemoTownship

Growth and Future Development

As Oshtemo continues to grow, preserving its unique character while guiding future development remains a top priority. A Comprehensive Master Plan and Master Streets Plan were developed through careful analysis of data, community input, and discussions with residents, thought leaders, staff, and officials. This plan refines how growth, safety, and mobility are thoughtfully aligned over the next 20 years.

Together, these efforts will help shape a vibrant, cohesive future for Oshtemo.

Scan the QR code for DRAFT
2045 Comprehensive &
Master Streets Plans



Get Connected to Alerts & Updates from RCKC

[kalamazoocountyroads.com](https://www.kalamazoocountyroads.com)
269-381-3171
info@kalamazoocountyroads.com



New Hire Bios

June 23, 2025: David Kobb Operations Coordinator

David is a proud Hoosier who relocated to Kalamazoo County in 2019. He holds a Master of Science in Management Information Systems from Indiana University. With extensive experience in higher education, David has served as an academic advisor, instructor, and support specialist. He is passionate about process improvement and is dedicated to helping others grow and succeed.

July 7, 2025: Rich Blair Media & Communications Manager

Originally from Jackson, Rich moved to Kalamazoo in 1995 to attend Western Michigan University. He and his wife, Kari, enjoy traveling with their two children, Kathryn and Henry. In his free time, Rich likes to play golf and attend sporting events and concerts with friends. A proud Oshtemo resident, he brings over 20 years of experience in media, marketing, and communications to his role.

July 22, 2025: Chad Bouwman General Maintenance

Chad Bouwman joined Oshtemo Township as General Maintenance after relocating with his family from Hamilton to the Alamo area. He brings years of municipal maintenance experience and enjoys camping, hiking, traveling, woodworking, and playing guitar in two local bands. Chad is committed to keeping township facilities and grounds safe and well-maintained.



Scan the QR code to view our current job postings.



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Township Board

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269-216-5258 | cbell@oshtemo.org

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Trustee Neil Sikora
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Trustee Michael Chapman
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OSHTEMO NEWSLETTER

FALL 2025 EDITION



Important Dates

Holiday Office Closures

Offices will be closed November 11, 27, and 28, as well as December 24 and 25. Offices will also be closed until 9 a.m. on the first Thursday of each month for staff meetings.

Bulk Trash & Yard Waste Programs

The 2025 programs end November 30. Visit oshtemo.org/Officials/Office-of-the-Supervisor for details.

Board Meetings

Visit the Boards & Committees page on our website for current schedule information:
oshtemo.org/Boards-Committees

Proposed Millage Election

Election for renewal and increase of the Central County Transportation Authority (CCTA) millage will be held on November 4. Oshtemo residents in precincts 3 through 9 are within the service area and eligible to vote.