

# THREE OAKS / 2050 PLAN

VILLAGE OF THREE OAKS, MICHIGAN / MASTER PLAN / DDA PLAN



# THREE OAKS 2050 PLAN

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**DRAFT FOR ADOPTION CONSIDERATION V.11 - JANUARY 8, 2020**

Adopted: \_\_\_\_\_, 2020 by the Village Council, Three Oaks, MI

*Prepared for the*  
Village of Three Oaks, Michigan

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the following individuals who played an important role in the development of this master plan and downtown development plan.

Gratitude is also extended to the residents, business owners and community stakeholders who participated in the workshops and public meetings.



*Three Oaks Village Hall Offices at 21 N. Elm Street (credit: The Harbor Country News, 2014)*

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Acknowledgments .....	4
<b>00</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
	Welcome.....	2
	Purpose & Intent.....	3
	Plan Organization & Contents .....	4
<b>01</b>	<b>COMMUNITY PROFILE</b>	<b>5</b>
	Community Snapshot .....	7
	A Charming, Rural Community .....	8
	Socio-Economic Report .....	12
	Population .....	12
	Housing .....	16
	Economics .....	18
<b>02</b>	<b>THREE OAKS TODAY</b>	<b>21</b>
	Existing Land Use .....	22
	Public Services & Infrastructure .....	28
	Public Services & Infrastructure Priorities.....	29
	Transportation .....	30
	Natural Features.....	35
<b>03</b>	<b>PUBLIC INPUT</b>	<b>37</b>
	Community-Wide Survey.....	38
	Respondent Data .....	39
	Evaluating Today .....	40
	Living in Three Oaks.....	42
	Future Service Priorities.....	43
<b>04</b>	<b>DOWNTOWN ANALYSIS &amp; DEVELOPMENT PLAN</b>	<b>45</b>
	Downtown Three Oaks.....	46
	DDA Goals .....	47
	Purpose of this Effort.....	47
	Development Area, the DDA District.....	48
	District Composition .....	49
	Downtown Circulation.....	52
	Downtown Transportation.....	54
	Future DDA Priorities.....	57
	Summary of Proposed Improvements .....	58
<b>05</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN 2050</b>	<b>65</b>
	Vision Framework .....	66
	Guiding Principles & Goals .....	67
	Future Land Use.....	69
	Zoning Plan .....	76
	Strategic Action Plan .....	77
	<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>82</b>
	Appendix A: Legal Description of the Development Area	
	Appendix B: Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Plan	

**List of Tables**

Table 1.1: Population Trends, 1990-2017 .....13

Table 1.2: Out of Town Property Owner Comparison, by State, 2011-2018 .....13

Table 1.3: Households Trends, 2010-2017 .....14

Table 1.4: Household Size Trends, 1990-2017 .....14

Table 1.5: Age Structure, 2017 .....15

Table 1.6: Housing Types, 2017 .....17

Table 1.7: Age of Housing Stock, Village of Three Oaks, 2017 .....17

Table 1.8: Median Household Income, 1990-2017 .....18

Table 1.9: Employment Industries, 2016 .....19

Table 1.10: Commute Destinations, 2016 .....19

Table 2.1: Existing Land Use Summary, 2018 .....27

Table 2.2: Top Priorities for Improving Public Services / Infrastructure .....29

Table 4.1: Top Priorities for Improving Business Performance .....57

Table 4.2: Top Improvements for the Downtown .....57

Table 4.3: Village of Three Oaks DDA: Projects and Timing .....59

Table 5.1: Zoning Plan .....76

Table 5.2: 2050 Action Plan .....78

Table B.1: Three Oaks DDA Taxing Jurisdictions .....84

Table B.2: Future Capture Estimates and Impact on Taxing Jurisdictions, 2019-2050: Village of Three Oaks, MI DDA .....85

**List of Figures**

Figure 1.1: Median Age Trends, 2017 .....15

Figure 1.2: Median Household Income Trends, 2017 .....18

Figure 2.1: Existing Residential Use Breakdown, 2018 .....23

Figure 2.2: Existing, Non-Residential Use Breakdown, 2018 .....24

Figure 2.3: Existing Community Land Use Breakdown, 2018 .....26

Figure 2.4: Existing Undeveloped Land, 2018 .....27

Figure 3.1: Years as a Resident or Property Owner in the Village of Three Oaks, MI .....39

Figure 3.2: Age Classifications of Survey Respondents .....39

Figure 3.3: Levels of Satisfaction with Village Efforts, 2011 and 2018 .....40

Figure 3.4: Village Service Prioritization, 2011 and 2018 .....41

Figure 3.5: Levels of Satisfaction: Continuum of Growth Preferences, 2018 .....41

Figure 3.6: Appropriateness Ratings of Various Housing Options in Three Oaks, 2018 .....42

Figure 3.7: Percentage of Respondents that Felt the Village is a Community Where One Can Age in Place, 2018 .....43

Figure 3.8: Top Priorities for Village Services, 2018 .....43

Figure 4.2: Modes of Transportation for Those Visiting the DDA District, 2018 .....54

Figure 4.3: Public Parking in the DDA District, 2018 .....55

Figure 4.4: Percentage of Respondents that Visit the DDA District, 2018 .....56

**List of Maps**

Map 1: Existing Land Use .....25

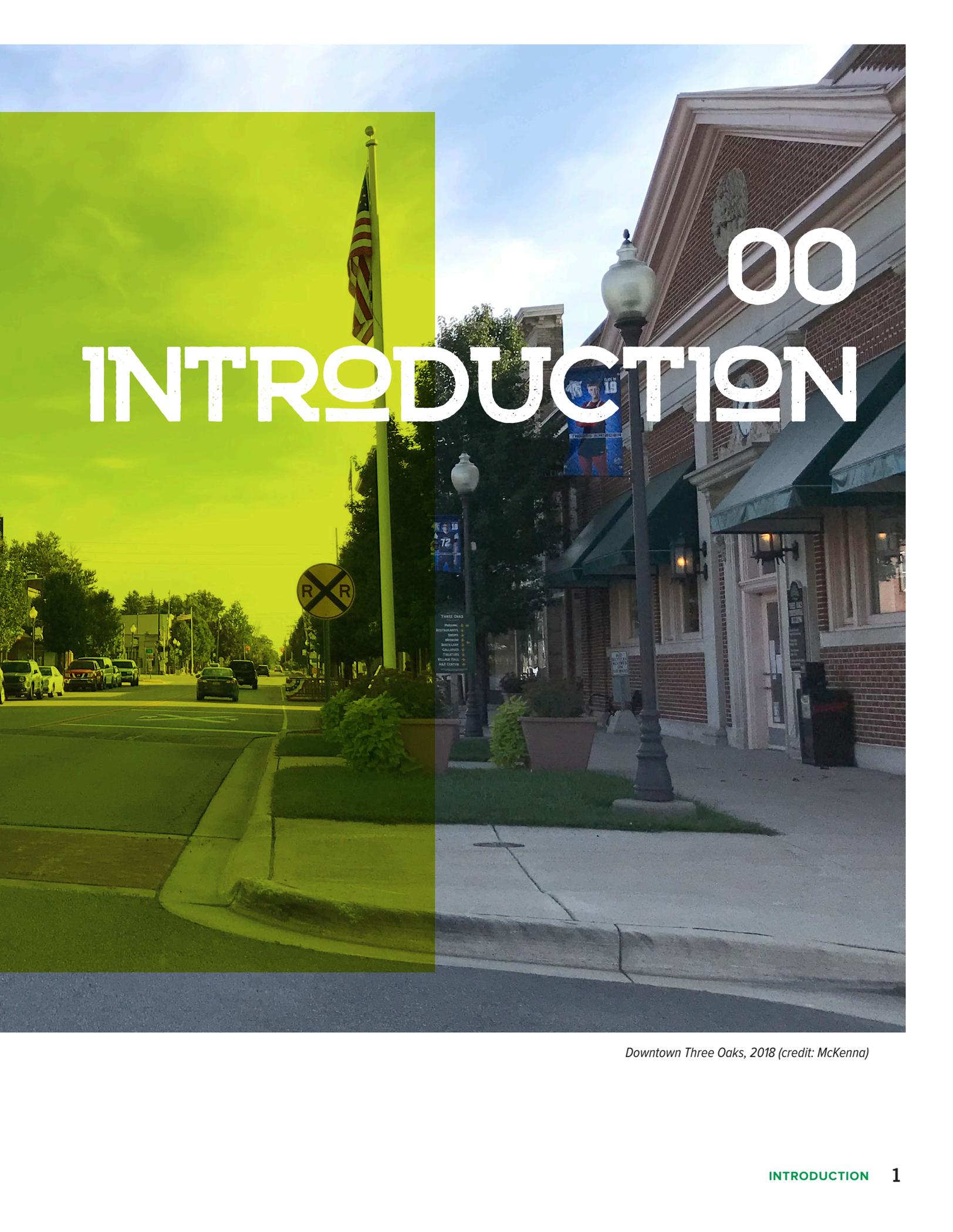
Map 2: Transportation .....33

Map 3: Natural Features .....36

Map 4: Downtown Development Area .....48

Map 5: Development Areas .....53

Map 6: Future Land Use .....71



# 00 INTRODUCTION

*Downtown Three Oaks, 2018 (credit: McKenna)*



*The 2050 Plan has been prepared under the direction of and with direct participation by the Planning Commission and Downtown Development Authority (credit: Village of Three Oaks)*

## WELCOME

Welcome to the 2050 Master Plan and Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Plan – a vision for the future of land use, transportation, the economy, environment, downtown, parks, and cultural stewardship of Three Oaks. To maintain the Village as a community with a high quality of life, vibrant traditional downtown, abundant natural beauty and great recreation opportunities, we must work together with a common vision. *Plan 2050* builds upon the 2011 Master Plan (*Plan 203Oaks*), and satisfies the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended, requirements for a Master Plan.

*Plan 2050* was developed through an open, public process led by community stakeholders who are committed to making a difference in the Village and creating a community where one can live, work, and relax their entire life. It is based in the belief that citizens of Three Oaks can make decisions today to create the Village of tomorrow. We understand that change happens, but we want to decide how that change will happen. *Plan 2050* helps us decide how to manage that change for the next 30 years.

# PURPOSE & INTENT

A policy document, *Plan 2050* is to be used by Village leaders, residents, businesses and stakeholders to make decisions about future growth, development, design, policy and capital improvements. In addition, this document is intended to fulfill the requirements and provide the functions of both a Master Plan and a Downtown Development Authority Plan. These two documents are crucial planning tools for the community.

A Master Plan is used for a variety of purposes and is a guide for the future:

## 1. Basis for the Zoning Ordinance

One of the requirements that make zoning constitutionally valid is that the ordinance be based on a comprehensive plan for the development of the jurisdiction. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (P.A. 110 of 2006, as amended) requires that zoning ordinances be based on a master plan.

## 2. Basis for Proactive Projects and Programs that Improve the Community

A fundamental part of the master planning process is the public involvement that forms the basis for the future land use plan and indicates the community's desires for its future and its long-term vision for growth and development. The goals and objectives are the heart of the Master Plan and present that vision and the manner in which it will be achieved.

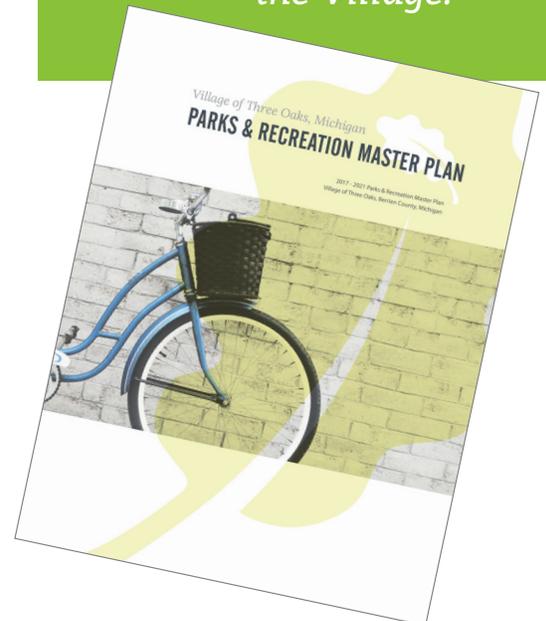
This document presents the vision of the community over the next 30 years, but also includes a number of specific, short term implementation activities intended to realize the overall vision of *Plan 2050*.

*Plan 2050* also acts as the Village's Development and TIF (Tax Increment Financing) Plan. Such a Plan establishes the legal basis for the capture and expenditure of tax increment revenues in accordance with PA 57 of 2018, the Recodified Tax Increment Financing Act, which governs Downtown Development Authorities. The Three Oaks Downtown Development Authority is tasked with stimulating and encouraging private investment in the designated DDA district through the provision of public improvements. The Development Plan component identified specific project ideas to be completed by the DDA over the next 30 years, while the TIF Plan presents technical aspects of the tax increment capture and its impact on taxing jurisdictions and properties.

## RECREATION MASTER PLAN

A Parks and Recreation Master Plan was previously included within the *2030Oaks Master Plan* (2011). This section of the Master Plan was separated in 2017 into its own Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2017-2021). For more information on parks and recreation in Three Oaks, please review the 2017-2021 Plan for details (pictured right).

*The Master Plan is the official document used to guide the future development and growth of the community and the management of its resources. Organized through a series of goals, objectives and strategies, the master plan provides the framework and basis for sound decision-making and establishes a clear direction for the Village.*



# PLAN ORGANIZATION & CONTENTS

*The Three Oaks 2050 Master Plan and DDA Plan is designed to:*



*Anticipate change*



*Ensure a wide use of resources*



*Implement a vision for the future*



*Protect our environment*



*Preserve our quality of life*

*Plan 2050* is organized into several key sections:

## **Part 1: Community Profile**

This chapter is an analysis of the current situation in Three Oaks with regards to its population and other demographics. Based in numerical data, this section gives an idea of the socio-economic trends in the Village and provides some projections about the future.

## **Part 2: Three Oaks Today**

This section focuses on the physical existing conditions, and its analysis, including maps, pictures, and text. Its purpose is to present the Village as it exists today related to land use, transportation, public services and more.

## **Part 3: Public Input**

The Public Input chapter describes the process used to collect input from the public and summarizes the key results.

## **Part 4: Downtown Analysis and Development Plan**

This section more specifically lays out the existing conditions in Three Oaks' downtown core, including details regarding priorities and opportunities for future development, and constraints against improvements, citing specific survey and public-input response data. The Village's Downtown Development Plan is also provided for in this section, with the TIF Plan referenced in Appendix B. Both documents are prepared in accordance with the Recodified Tax Increment Financing Act (P.A. 57 of 2018).

## **Part 5: Strategic Action Plan 2050**

The final chapter of *Plan 2050* combines the information and input from the above chapters into a coherent vision for Three Oaks' future. The chapter deals with goals and objectives, specific improvements, and future land use planning, including a zoning plan. With specific programs, ideas, and regulations, it will guide the Village along the path to shaping the Three Oaks of the future.

The image shows a park area with a large sculpture made of pipes and a path leading through trees and buildings. The sculpture is a complex structure of white and black pipes, with a red chain hanging from it. The path is a light-colored gravel path that winds through the park. In the background, there are several buildings, including a yellow one and a white one. The sky is blue and clear. The text '01 COMMUNITY PROFILE' is overlaid on the image in a large, white, sans-serif font. The number '01' is positioned at the top right, and 'COMMUNITY PROFILE' is centered below it.

# 01 COMMUNITY PROFILE

*Chamberlain Path, home to various sculptures with a path connecting Elm Street and Generations Drive, Village of Three Oaks, MI (credit: McKenna, 2018)*





Postcard, circa 1913 of North Elm Street, Village of Three Oaks, MI (credit: Berrien County Genealogy)

## COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

The existing socio-economic conditions of the Village form the foundation on which the community's future is built. Without a deep understanding of the unique characteristics of the Village of Three Oaks, the market it exists within, its' history, its' people, and its' geography, the Plan's recommendations will be generic and difficult to implement. Therefore, on the following pages are a detailed analysis of the Village based on US Census and Village data. While not quantifiable, quotes from community-wide survey are also peppered throughout this section to highlight the caring, charming community built on strong partnerships with one another.

*"I really think the town is coming along and getting more well known. I'm so glad to see Three Oaks grow and more people coming to town and seeing stores open, that's great that our town of Three Oaks is growing!"*

*- public engagement quotes, 2018*

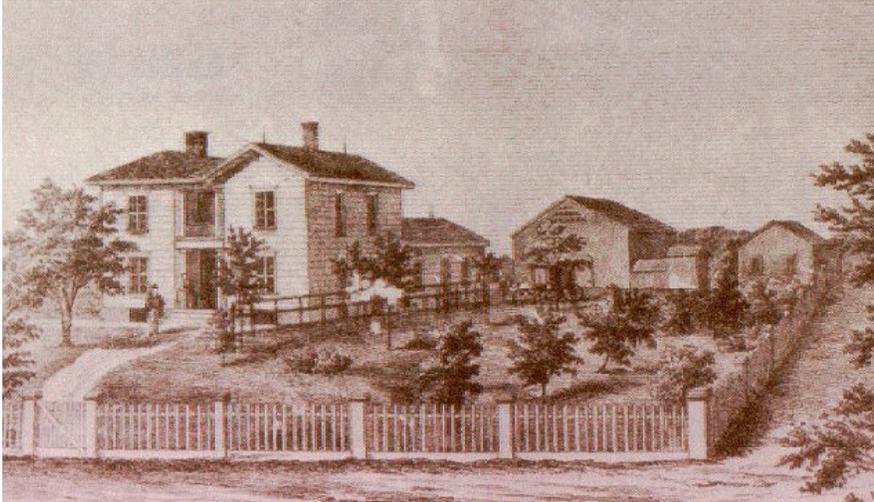


*Participants on the Apple Cider Century (credit: Apple Cider Century)*

## A CHARMING, RURAL COMMUNITY

The Village of Three Oaks is a traditional small town with an historic core, grid street system, abundant amenities, in southern Berrien County, southwestern Michigan. It is located within a few miles of Lake Michigan and many other regional destinations which attract visitors to the general area. US-12, nearby I-94 and the railroad in New Buffalo provide access to nearby metropolitan areas of Chicago, St. Joseph-Benton Harbor, and South Bend.

Three Oaks is well known for its historic downtown, culture, arts, and friendly, rural community charm. The Village also has well-established, attractive and architecturally significant neighborhoods which help define the character and unique sense-of-place of the community. Various parks near downtown are the home of special events throughout the year and include Dewey Cannon Park, Carver Park, Chamberlain Path and community garden facilities.



Residence of Henry Chamberlain, circa 1860 (credit: Davis F "Doc" Ball)



EK Warren Featherbone Factory  
(credit: Journeyman Distillery)

## HISTORIC ROOTS

The area that became Three Oaks was initially settled in 1850, with its' first businesses serving the rail line between Chicago and Detroit. Originally called Chamberlain's Siding, after founder Henry Chamberlain, the settlement became a Village in 1867 and was renamed "Three Oaks" after three distinctive trees near the railway that engineers used as a marker.

In its' early decades, the Three Oaks economy revolved around the Warren Featherbone Company, which employed local residents making corsets from turkey feathers lighter and more comfortable than the traditional whale jaws. The factory building still stands today, although now it is the site of retail uses, a theater and a distillery.

Throughout its history, Three Oaks has been known for its patriotism. In 1899, the community raised \$1,400 for the Dewey Cannon Memorial to the battleship USS Maine, the largest amount per capita of any community in the country. The memorial was dedicated by President William McKinley and other heroes of the Spanish-American War. To this day, Three Oaks continues to host an annual Flag Day Weekend Celebration that has been called the largest in the nation. In June of 2018, the Village celebrated their 66<sup>th</sup> annual Flag Day Weekend and hosted the world's largest Flag Day Parade. The Flag Day festival includes a parade and the reading of an original piece by the Village Poet Laureate.

*"I love the charm of Three Oaks, and the people in the Village."*

*"I love that Three Oaks is becoming a destination for both vacationers and year-round residents, and a place that people actively seek out for restaurants, the distillery, and shopping, even when they live in or are staying in other areas of Southwest Michigan."*

*- public engagement quotes, 2018*



Annual Flag Day Celebration Parade (credit: Village of Three Oaks); and Spring Stroll Flyer (credit: Design by Goods & Heros and Illustration by Ciara Ni Dhuinn)

## TODAYS' ASSETS AND REGIONAL DRAWS

Downtown Three Oaks remains the center of most community activities in the Village. With a strong retail base, park space, institutions, and public facilities, it continues to act as a draw for residents and visitors alike.

Parks near the downtown are home to year-round special events, for instance, Dewey Cannon Park is used during the summer for volleyball tournaments and concerts, and is also the staging area for the Apple Cider Century bicycle ride. The Apple Cider Century is the largest bike tour in the Midwest and draws over 6,000 participants. Other community events within park areas include Art in the Park, the winter Tree Lighting Ceremony and Music in the Park events throughout the year and are advertised on the Village's own local radio station, WRHC.

In addition to the many assets, festivals, and amenities offered in Three Oaks, the community is ideally situated to take advantage of the abundant historical, cultural, and institutional facilities located in the surrounding communities as well as natural features and resources.

Indeed, Three Oaks is situated at the center of the booming tourism industry in Harbor Country that draws visitors from near and far. In a region well supplied with parks and natural assets of various types, Three Oaks provides a trailhead that is part of the larger Harbor Country Trails systems, which includes both biking and pedestrian hiking trails. There are also snowmobile trails, national parks, birdwatching and unique habitats for other wildlife in the area. In addition, directly southwest of the Village limits are new trails on W. Forest Lawn Road at the Kesling Conservation area. Across the state line is Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, which offers lake front beaches and sand dune recreation. Other Lake Michigan beaches include Grand Mere, Warren Dunes, and Indiana Dunes State Parks, while both Michigan and Indiana have inland State or National Parks in the region.



Top: Harbor Country Bike Trails Map (credit: Harbor Country); and below: Silver Beach, a regional asset (credit: WNIT Local Production)

*"I have noticed a big increase in visitors, attendance at events, new businesses and people going to these businesses. All a plus for the Village."*

*"I've lived in the area now eight years and over the last six or so it only seems to be bustling more. There is more press about Three Oaks in neighboring cities like Chicago. Everyone is wanting to come and have a wedding here or explore the downtown charm since we have all these great little shops opening up."*

*- public engagement quotes, 2018*

# SOCIO-ECONOMIC REPORT

The following section describes the population and socioeconomic statistics, housing status, and health characteristics and trends of the Village of Three Oaks. For purposes of analysis, where appropriate, comparisons have been made with neighboring communities, Berrien County as a whole, and, in some cases, the State of Michigan. The four comparison communities are Three Oaks Township; the City of Bridgman; Niles, the largest City in Berrien County; and the City of New Buffalo, Three Oaks' coastal neighbor to the west.

The intent of a demographic analysis is to paint a general picture of the community as it currently exists and any trends that may exist. The analysis identifies those demographic characteristics in which the Village is different from nearby communities, or from the rest of Berrien County. A differential in demographic characteristics may indicate issues or areas in which land use planning and public policies beyond the typical scope of a master plan are warranted.

*Demographic analysis is a fundamental element of master planning. Planning for future growth and development requires some consideration of “how much” – how many people will need Village services, how much housing is affordable, and how many new houses may be built.*

## POPULATION

### DATA SOURCES

All data for 1990, 2000 and 2010 comes from the US Census Bureau's Decennial Census. Taken every ten years, the Census is considered the most reliable source of demographic and housing data. Many categories of information presented here come from 100% head counts, while others are derived from sampling. The most recent figures are provided by the US Census American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates for 2013-2017.

Population trends are an extremely important element of any demographic analysis because growing communities have different needs from established communities with stable or declining populations. Table 1.1 shows the relative populations of Three Oaks and the comparison communities.

While Table 1.1 indicates that Three Oaks has lost population since 1990, the percentage of loss, approximately 15% of the total population (just under 300 individuals) is likely a result of the amount of seasonal, second home property owners in the community. The variation and extent of seasonal residents is discussed further on the following page.

In comparison, Three Oaks Township, Niles and New Buffalo have also experienced a population loss (for instance, New Buffalo with an approximate -5% loss and Niles with an approximate -2% loss) some of which may also be attributed to seasonal residents as the entire region experiences an influx from the Chicago area and beyond. The City of Bridgman population has fluctuated over the past thirty years, with the 2017 population now exceeding the 2000 population. Berrien County as a whole gained population during the 1990s, but lost population over the past decade and the year-round population is now smaller than it was 20 years ago, even with the rate of population loss slowing over the past several years.

Table 1.1: Population Trends, 1990-2017

Year	Comparison Communities (Population)						
	Three Oaks (Village)	Three Oaks Twp.	Bridgman	New Buffalo	Niles	Berrien County	Michigan
1990	1,833	2,952	2,140	2,327	12,355	161,378	9,295,297
2000	1,829	2,949	2,428	2,200	12,204	162,453	9,938,444
2010	1,883	2,574	2,291	1,883	11,600	156,813	9,883,640
2017	1,544	2,430	2,397	1,750	11,332	154,948	9,925,568

Source: US Census Bureau

### SEASONAL RESIDENTS / OUT OF TOWN PROPERTY OWNERS

The 2018 Berrien County tax database revealed that 178 single family, residential properties were owned by individuals outside of the Village limits, likely seasonal residents and some rental property owners.

Table 1.2 illustrates that the expansion and breadth of states with Three Oaks residential titleholders is expanding, with greater variety, since 2011 ---- green highlighting indicate a new state or state with an increase in Three Oaks property owners. The significance of Table 1.2 is that the national interest and attention in Three Oaks is increasing, which can be a positive sign and lead to greater diversity of the community.

The figures for all Three Oaks property (not just single family parcels) are also provided in Table 1.2, with the intent that future comparisons can be tracked on a yearly basis for the Village to continually evaluate. In total, 253 properties (28.9%) of all property is held by non-Village residents.

Table 1.2: Out of Town Property Owner Comparison, by State, 2011-2018

State	Single Family Residential Property Only				All Property	
	2011		2018		2018	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
CA	-	0.5%	4	2.2%	6	2.4%
CO	-	1.0%	1	0.6%	1	0.4%
FL	-	1.5%	4	2.2%	5	2.0%
IL	-	50.0%	81	45.5%	95	37.5%
IN	-	8.9%	16	9.0%	26	10.3%
KY	-	0.5%	1	0.6%	1	0.4%
LA	-	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	1.2%
MD	-	0.0%	1	0.6%	1	0.4%
ME	-	0.0%	1	0.6%	1	0.4%
MI	-	35.1%	62	34.8%	102	40.3%
NC	-	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.4%
OH	-	0.0%	1	0.6%	4	1.6%
OR	-	0.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
TN	-	0.5%	2	1.1%	2	0.8%
TX	-	1.5%	2	1.1%	2	0.8%
VA	-	0.0%	1	0.6%	2	0.8%
WA	-	0.0%	1	0.6%	1	0.4%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Berrien County GIS, 2011 and 2018

## HOUSEHOLDS

### Household Trends

This section analyzes the composition and characteristics of households in Three Oaks. Households are an important unit of analysis because changes in the number of households are an indication of changing demand for housing units, retail, and services. Tracking household changes ensures sufficient land is set aside for the future to accommodate future growth and demand for housing.

Throughout the early 2000's, in par with the overall economic climate, the Village of Three Oaks experienced a slight loss of 4% of overall housing. However, since 2010, the Village has only seen a slight reduction in households (2%). Similar to population loss, the decrease is likely associated with seasonal ownership and the transference of property outside of the community. In comparison, the City of Bridgman saw an increase in the number in the number of households while Three Oaks Township saw a slight decrease. Both the increase and decrease are minimal. Minimal loss was also experienced in Niles, with the County and State as a whole gaining households as national trends see more Michigan residents remain in the state after college graduation and new households locating here for jobs.

Table 1.3: Households Trends, 2010-2017

Community	2010 Households	2017 Households
Three Oaks	824	807
Three Oaks Twp.	1,080	1,069
Bridgman	954	944
New Buffalo	1,558	1,682
Niles	5,321	5,310
Berrien County	76,824	77,221
Michigan	4,529,680	4,568,200

Source: US Census Bureau

### Average Household Size

Average household size is also an important indicator of community composition. Larger average household size generally means more children and fewer single-parent families. Nationally, household sizes are shrinking as young singles wait longer to get married and life expectancy increases for the senior population.

Table 1.4 below compares the change in average, owner-occupied household size since 1990 in Three Oaks, which is slightly smaller than comparison communities, largely accounting for the increase in single (one) family households, which increased by approximately 35% between 2010 and 2017. In contrast, the average household size is increasing in Niles and the County as a whole as new families move in and/or grow. The City of Bridgman household size saw very little change during the twenty-year period. It's also important to note that the average renter-occupied household size in Three Oaks, per 2017 ACS data is slightly lower, at 2.26, which largely represents seasonal residents.

Table 1.4: Household Size Trends, 1990-2017

Year	Comparison Communities (Owner-Occupied Household Size)					
	Three Oaks (Village)	Bridgman	New Buffalo	Niles	Berrien County	Michigan
1990	2.63	n/a	2.48	2.38	2.60	2.66
2000	2.47	2.31	2.32	2.35	2.49	2.56
2010	2.41	2.30	2.26	2.32	2.44	2.53
2017	2.33	2.31	2.05	2.56	2.43	2.57

Source: US Census Bureau

## AGE

### Median Age

The age of a community’s population has very real implications for planning and development, whether it is an increased or decreased need for schools to serve the population under 18, or a need for housing alternatives for empty nesters and older residents.

Figure 1.1 compares the median ages (the mid-point where half the population is younger and half is older) of Three Oaks and the comparison communities. Three Oaks’ low median age indicates there are proportionately more younger individuals and families than in the other communities, except for Niles where the median age is approximately one year younger than the Village. The City of Bridgman’s median age is similar to that of the County overall, and most closely aligns with the State’s median age. In contrast, New Buffalo’s median age is much higher, almost by 14 years, and the County as a whole has a higher median age of approximately five years, indicating a lower presence of children or millennials in the community.

### Age Breakdown

Age structure (analyzing which proportions of a municipality’s population are in which stages of life) gives a nuanced view of the makeup of a community. To compare age structure, the population of Three Oaks is divided into the following groupings:

- Under 5 (Pre-School)
- 5 to 19 (School Aged)
- 20 to 44 (Family Forming)
- 45 to 64 (Mature families)
- 65 and Better (Retirement)

Table 1.5 compares the age structure of Three Oaks with that of Berrien County overall. The Village and the County have very similar distributions, however, as shown with green highlighting, Berrien County as a whole features a greater number of individuals who are 45 years and older entering / in retirement or have older children that will be leaving the nest soon. In contrast, Three Oaks maintains a higher percentage of the family forming age category, with slightly more children as well.



Active recreational amenities in the community area highly appealing for millennials and young family demographics, Village of Three Oaks, MI (credit: McKenna)

Figure 1.1: Median Age Trends, 2017

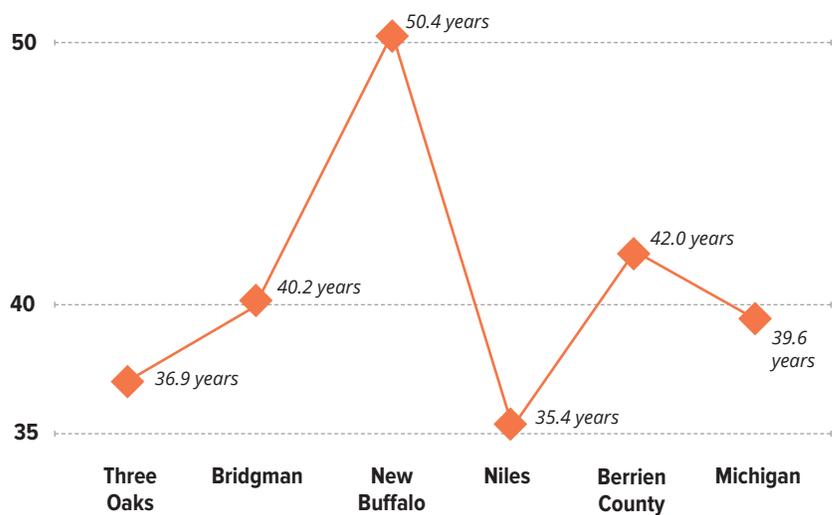
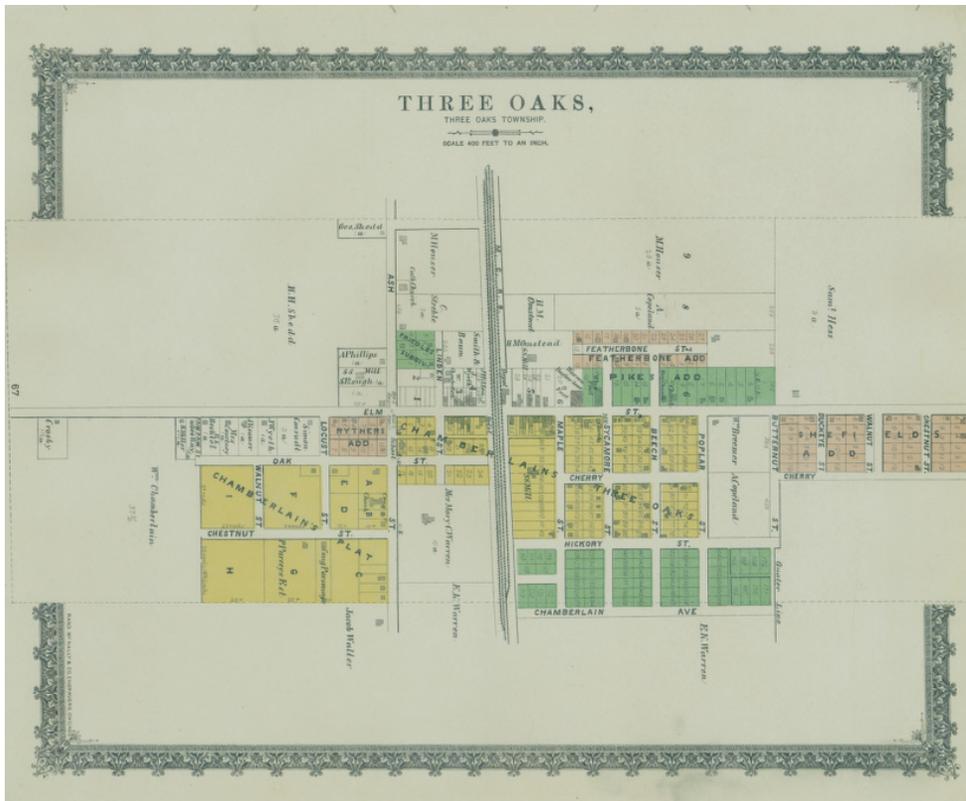


Table 1.5: Age Structure, 2017

Age Category	Village of Three Oaks	Berrien County
Under 5	7%	6%
5 to 19	20%	19%
20 to 44	33%	29%
45 to 64	24%	28%
65 and Better	16%	18%

Source: US Census Bureau



*Village of Three Oaks Land Map, circa 1887 with traditional residential neighborhoods platted in a grid system surrounding the walkable downtown (credit: Graves, Washburn W.)*

## HOUSING

### HOUSING TYPE

This section analyzes the types of housing present in Three Oaks and their proportions, as compared to the proportions in Berrien County at large. As Table 1.6 details, the Village has very similar proportions to the County overall and the large percentage of single family, detached units are representative of the traditional, historic neighborhoods in the Village.

In addition, the majority (74% per 2017 ACS data) of existing residential units contain two or three bedrooms, which is ideal for family forming households but may present challenges for empty nesters that need to downsize into a more modernized, accessible household.

It is important to note that just over 42% of the entire housing stock of the Village was constructed prior in 1939 or earlier (see Table 1.7). In contrast, the County as a whole only has a quarter of its total housing stock that was constructed prior to 1950. This further highlights the importance and character of traditional housing and its historic architectural features that are worth preserving, making the neighborhoods of Three Oaks very unique in the region.



Village of Three Oaks residential property with character and style (credit: Google, Sept. 2013)

## TENURE

Housing tenure describes how housing is occupied – by owner or renter. While Three Oaks has a majority of owner occupied properties, the Village also has a number of seasonal residents and renters. To ensure rental properties are maintained in accordance with the community character and to ensure proper regulation, the Village recently adopted a Short-Term Rentals Ordinance, by which property owners can register on an annual basis. In fact, the Village’s Ordinance, for its comprehensive nature and best practices, was recognized by the Michigan Planning Association (MAP) in the fall of 2018.

Per the Ordinance, short-term rentals are for one month or less duration, while long-term rentals are for a term of greater than one month. In general, registered rental properties are located throughout the community and do not dominate any given area, indicating that the character of neighborhoods blocks with permanent, year-round residents is maintained.

Table 1.6: Housing Types, 2017

Housing Type	Three Oaks		Berrien County	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Single Family Detached	624	77%	58,966	76%
Single Family Attached (Two-Family)	38	5%	4,570	6%
Multiple Family	105	13%	9,861	13%
Mobile Home	40	5%	3,824	5%
<b>TOTAL UNITS</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>77,221</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: US Census Bureau

Table 1.7: Age of Housing Stock, Village of Three Oaks, 2017

Year Constructed	Percentage
2000 to Today	2.7%
1990 to 1999	8.6%
1980 to 1989	7.4%
1970 to 1979	10.2%
1960 to 1969	6.2%
1950 to 1959	13.6%
1940 to 1949	9.2%
1939 or earlier	42.1%

Source: US Census Bureau

*“Three Oaks is like no other community I’ve lived in. I appreciate the mixed economic classes in neighborhoods, something seldom seen in other over-developed communities. I feel extremely safe here, and appreciate the art, theaters, and other amenities that are seldom seen in a small town like Three Oaks. I would like to see better job opportunities and job training / education for local citizens that won’t risk the safety and security of this charming town.”*

- public engagement quotes, 2018

# ECONOMICS

## MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Median household income is the amount that divides the income distribution into two equal groups, half having income above that amount, and half having income below that amount.

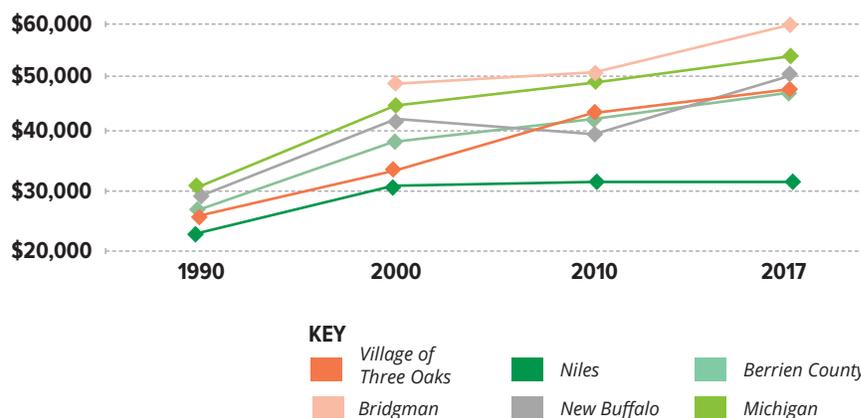
As shown in Table 1.8, the Village of Three Oaks has continued to experience an overall increase in median household income since 1990. Figure 1.2 below also shows the trends in income levels among the comparison communities over the past 30 years. Both the City of Bridgman and Three Oaks Township experienced an increase in their median household income. The City of Bridgman experienced the largest growth between 2010 and 2017. Three Oaks’ Township growth was steady throughout the sample years. The Village’s planning efforts and continued investment in the community are likely to encourage further steady increases in the median household income.

Table 1.8: Median Household Income, 1990-2017

Year	Comparison Communities						
	Three Oaks	Three Oaks Twp.	Bridgman	New Buffalo	Niles	Berrien County	Michigan
1990	\$26,625	\$26,445	n/a	\$29,628	\$23,900	\$27,245	\$31,020
2000	\$33,777	\$36,989	\$48,292	\$42,340	\$31,242	\$38,513	\$44,667
2010	\$42,939	\$43,490	\$50,909	\$39,976	\$31,757	\$42,625	\$48,432
2017	\$47,500	\$50,273	\$60,000	\$49,602	\$31,844	\$47,132	\$52,668

Source: US Census Bureau

Figure 1.2: Median Household Income Trends, 2017



## OCCUPATION

This section shows the employment industries of Three Oaks residents. This is not an analysis of what kind of employment is offered or what businesses are located within the community, but rather what occupation members of the community are employed in, regardless of where they work. Thus, commuters from Three Oaks to other areas are counted in this analysis, but not commuters into the Village from other areas.

Table 1.9 indicates that Three Oaks has similar proportions to Berrien County overall, except with a greater proportion in the Village employed in tourism and entertainment occupations and a smaller percentage in manufacturing occupations, which is representative of the Village's character with a traditional, mixed downtown and smaller industrial base.

**Table 1.9: Employment Industries, 2016**

Industry	Three Oaks		Berrien County	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<b>Agriculture / Mining</b>	30	3.9%	1,156	1.7%
<b>Construction</b>	56	7.3%	3,800	5.5%
<b>Manufacturing</b>	110	14.4%	13,767	19.8%
<b>Transportation / Utilities</b>	37	4.8%	4,218	6.1%
<b>Information</b>	8	1.0%	926	1.3%
<b>Wholesale Trade</b>	14	1.8%	1,354	1.9%
<b>Retail</b>	70	9.2%	6,982	10.1%
<b>Finance / Insurance / Real Estate</b>	19	2.5%	2,896	4.2%
<b>Tourism / Entertainment</b>	177	23.1%	7,008	10.1%
<b>Education / Health Care</b>	163	21.3%	16,759	24.1%
<b>Other Services</b>	23	3.0%	3,526	5.1%
<b>Government</b>	7	0.9%	1,861	2.7%

Source: US Census Bureau

## COMMUTING

Because of Three Oaks' close proximity to regional centers like Benton Harbor / St. Joseph, South Bend, Michigan City, and Kalamazoo, as well as the accessibility of the Chicago metropolitan area, many Village residents commute to these areas. Table 1.10 shows the commute time of Three Oaks residents with an average of 21.5 minutes, a commute that could reach Niles or Michigan City. It is a goal of this 2050 Master Plan to create additional jobs and employment areas immediately within the Three Oaks community, which would decrease the commute time for some residents.

**Table 1.10: Commute Destinations, 2016**

Time of Commute	Places of Work	Percentage of Residents
<b>Under 10 Minutes</b>	In and around Three Oaks	18.1%
<b>10-19 Minutes</b>	New Buffalo, Galien	34.9%
<b>20-29 Minutes</b>	Niles, Michigan City	24.8%
<b>30-39 Minutes</b>	Benton Harbor/St. Joseph	10.8%
<b>40-49 Minutes</b>	South Bend, LaPorte	3.9%
<b>50-59 Minutes</b>	Gary, Elkhart	3.1%
<b>Over 60 Minutes</b>	Chicago, Kalamazoo	4.4%

Source: US Census Bureau



# 02 THREE OAKS TODAY



*Tree-lined neighborhoods on Sycamore Street, Village of Three Oaks, MI (credit: McKenna, 2018)*

# EXISTING LAND USE

In order to make informed decisions regarding future land uses and zoning priorities, it is critical to have a clear understanding of existing land uses. The following sections identify and describe the various existing land uses in the Village, based on 2018 GIS data from Berrien County and a review of aerial imagery.

Land use categories are broken out by both general classifications (i.e.: residential uses, community uses, etc.) and then further analyzed by specific use types within each category. Table 2.1 details all existing land use classifications, acreage, and the percentage of land cover in the Village.



*Residential on Elm Street, Village of Three Oaks, MI (credit: Greenridge Realty, 2018)*

## RESIDENTIAL LAND USES

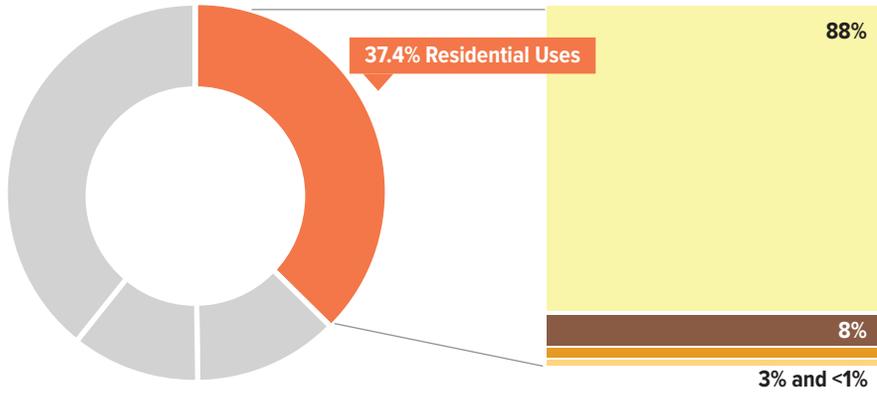


### Single Family Residential

Approximately a third of Three Oaks' developed area falls under this category, which is characterized by detached, single family homes that are located on a traditional street grid. Out of all the residential uses, single family residential is the majority, encompassing just over 88%.

Single Family Residential is located throughout the community but is especially concentrated north of Maple Street and south of Ash Street. Many of these structures continue to reflect the historical and traditional residential character of the area. The size, architecture, and condition of the homes can vary, even sometimes within blocks.

Figure 2.1: Existing Residential Use Breakdown, 2018



*“I love the small town feel. People are really friendly.”*  
 - public engagement quotes, 2018



**Two Family Residential**

Two Family Residential is the smallest of the housing categories within the Village, with approximately 0.72 acres (less than 0.1% of land area). Two Family Residential are characterized by duplexes.

Only three parcels in the Village are considered to be Two Family Residential. Two of the parcels are found between W Ash and Locust Street and the other is located in the southern portion of the Village at the corner of Indiana Street and Magnolia Street.



**Multiple Family Residential**

Multiple Family Residential, with 5.76 total acres, represents only 3% of the residential housing stock. Multiple Family housing includes Three Oaks’ denser housing options and are comprised of few small apartment buildings as well as a larger apartment complex, Hidden Harbor Villas.

Only a few parcels contain Multiple Family Residential uses, including parcels located in the southern portion of the Village at the corner of Michigan Street and Sherwood Avenue, on Hickory Street, between Butternut Street and Beech Street East, and Hidden Harbor Villas located along Locust Street near Watkins Park.



**Manufactured Housing**

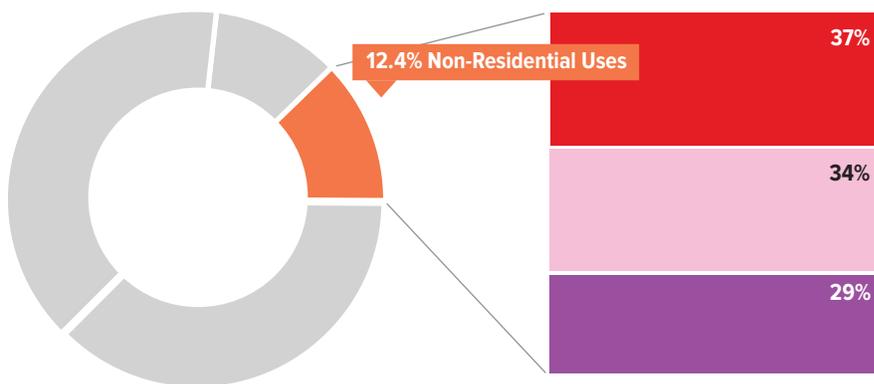
Manufactured Housing is the second largest housing district in Three Oaks (approximately 8%) and encompasses 17.88 acres of land total. Overall, Manufactured Housing only accounts for 3.2% of the land within the Village.

The Manufactured Housing district is comprised of only one, expansive park, Oakview Estates, which is located in the southwestern portion of the Village, south of West Ash Street. The Park layout follows a long and thin build out, with the homes laid out in a diagonal orientation along one roadway. As an older facility (40+ years) the condition of homes in Oakview Estates and the amenities for its residents remains a priority for the Village to ensure quality of life standards are upheld.



Vickers Theatre, Village of Three Oaks, MI  
(credit: Cinema Treasures)

Figure 2.2: Existing, Non-Residential Use Breakdown, 2018



## NON-RESIDENTIAL LAND USES

### Downtown Commercial

Downtown commercial is the largest non-residential district in Three Oaks with approximately 25 acres and just over 37% of commercial / industrial developed land within the Village. A total of 69 parcels are designated as downtown commercial and they are found mainly in stretches along Elm Street between Beech Street and Ash Street. Generations Drive, Sycamore Street, Maple Street, Linden Street, Oak Street, and Ash Street feature additional downtown uses.

This commercial category is typified by the traditional layout of a downtown commercial district. Buildings are built right up to the sidewalk with zero setbacks with several storefronts per building in some cases, and parking in the rear. There is a healthy mix of commercial, residential and entertainment uses present in the downtown.

### General Commercial

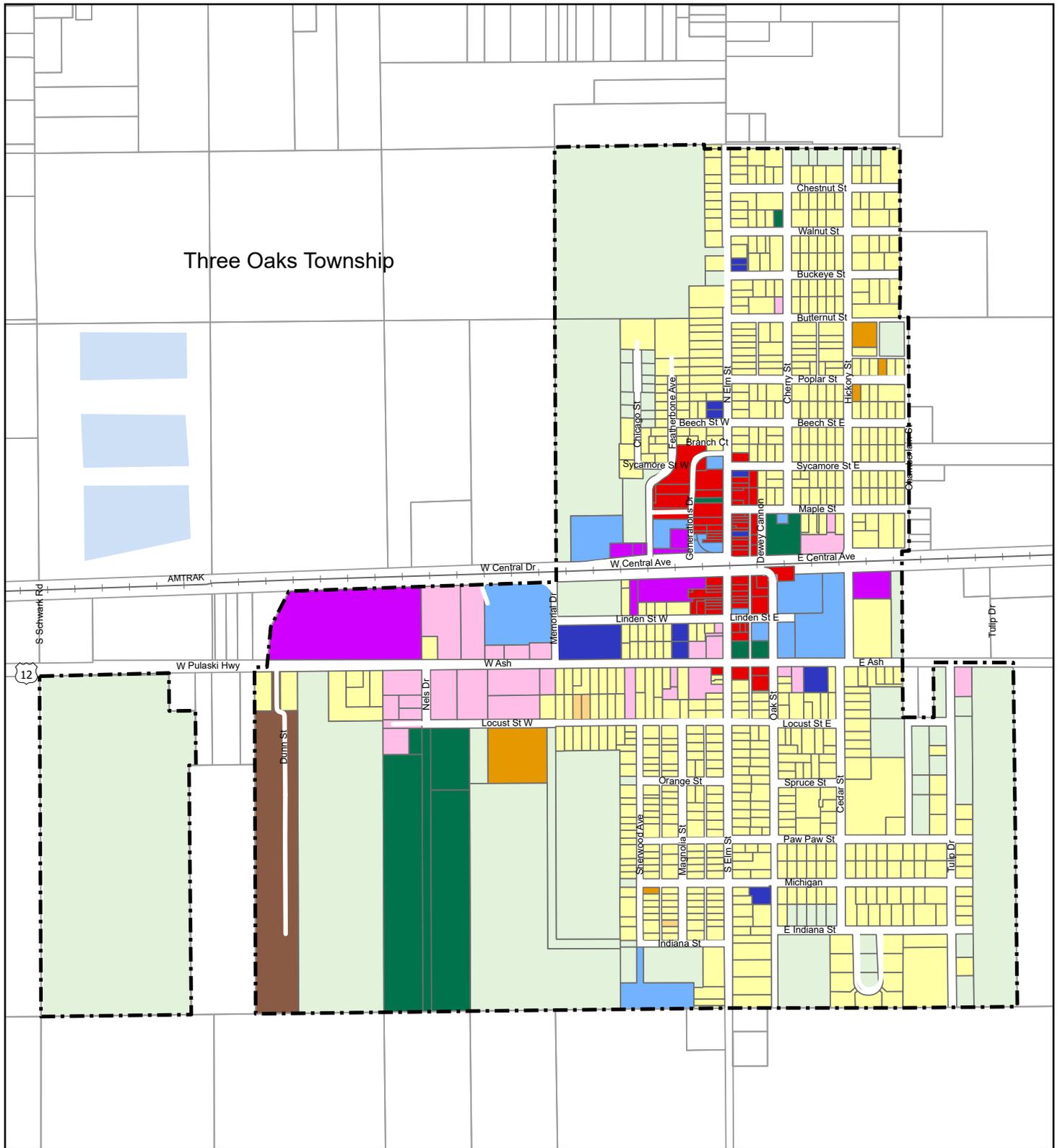
General commercial is the second largest non-residential district in the Village with just over 23 acres of land. This commercial land use takes a different form than downtown commercial uses. Generally set back from the street and surrounded by parking, these businesses cater to and rely upon customers arriving by car.

Most of the highway commercial uses are located along Ash Street, including a larger concentration of such uses west of Memorial Drive featuring convenience based destinations such as Harding's, Family Dollar, two banks, and Seifert's Farm Supply, east of East Central Street.

### Industrial

The industrial district contains 20.43 acres and approximately 29% of the commercial / industrial developed land. There are a total of 11 parcels within the Village that are designated as Industrial uses.

Three Oaks' industrial uses are scattered along the railroad tracks that run through the center of the Village. The largest industrial uses are Shepherd Hardware Products, located along Ash Street west of Nel's Drive and the Big C Lumber Yard in the downtown district. While the Big C Lumber Yard has a storefront on S. Elm Street that is downtown commercial in character, the remaining portion of the parcel is used for more industrial type activity.



# Existing Land Use Map

Village of Three Oaks, Berrien County, Michigan

- |                             |                      |                            |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Village Boundary            | Manufactured Housing | Religious Institution      |
| Single Family Residential   | General Commercial   | Public / Quasi-Public      |
| Two Family Residential      | Downtown Commercial  | Public Park and Recreation |
| Multiple Family Residential | Industrial           | Undeveloped                |



March 1, 2019

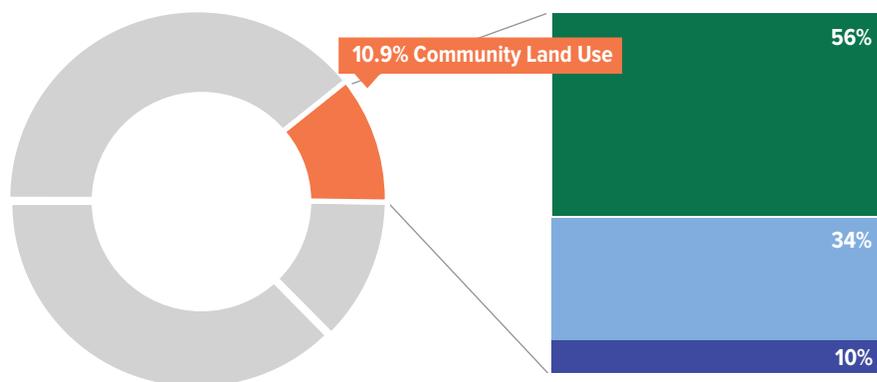
Data Source: Michigan Geographic Framework 2017, Berrien County 2018 Village Parcel Data and 2008 Surrounding Parcel Data, McKenna





Dillard Park, Village of Three Oaks, MI  
(credit: McKenna, 2017)

Figure 2.3: Existing Community Land Use Breakdown, 2018



## COMMUNITY LAND USES

### Religious Institutions

Religious institutions account for 6.01 acres and a total of 1.1% of the land within the Village. In Three Oaks, all forms of religious institutions are found in the form of churches, a total of eight:

- Calvary Tabernacle Church: On Elm Street at Buckeye Street.
- Three Oaks Church of Christ: On Elm Street near Beech Street.
- Three Oaks United Methodist Church: On Sycamore Street at Elm Street.
- Real Life Community Church: moving to Michigan Street at Oak Street.
- First Congregational Church: On Ash Street between Oak Street and Cedar Street.
- St. John's Congregation of Three Oaks: On Ash Street west of Elm Street.
- St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church: On Ash Street at Memorial Drive.

### Public Parks and Recreation

Public parks and recreation account for 34.83 acres and 6.2% of the total land in Three Oaks. The Village operates a total of five recreation areas: Watkins Park, Dillard Park, Carver Memorial Park, Dewey Cannon Park, and the Chamberlain Downtown Pocket Park.

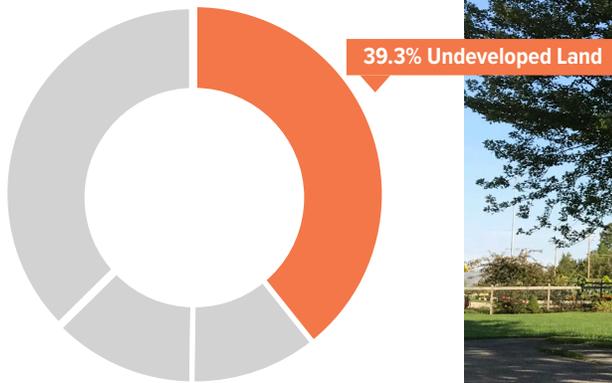
Additionally, the non-motorized pathways and trail systems are considered to be a desirable amenity for Three Oaks residents. Three Oaks is the center of a network of 12 regional bikeways: the 5-mile Spring Creek Trail stays close to the Village, while longer trails like the Grand Mere Trail, the Posey Hill Trail, and the Warren Woods Trail stretch to distant destinations – the Lakeshore, Indiana, and Warren Woods State Park, respectively. The bike trails provide the routing for the annual Apple Cider Century, and they are popular with locals and visitors alike.

### Public / Quasi Public

Public / quasi public uses account for 20.83 acres and 3.7% of land within the Village. Three Oaks contains many public facilities and amenities, including:

- Village Police Department: On Maple Street at Cherry Street, adjacent to Dewey Cannon Park.
- Three Oaks Township Hall: Southeast of West Ash Street and Nels Drive.
- Three Oaks Ambulance: On Linden Street, north of Carver Park.
- Three Oaks Elementary School: On Ash Street between Oak and Hickory Streets.
- Public Library: On Elm at Central Avenue.
- Three Oaks Museum: Between Featherbone Avenue and Generations Drive west of Downtown.
- Post Office: On Elm Street near Sycamore Street and Generations Drive.
- Public Works Facility: At the west end of Central Avenue near the railroad tracks.
- Water Treatment Plant and Well Site: At the end of Sherwood, near Indiana.
- Fire Department: on Linden Drive, southwest of Oak.

Figure 2.4: Existing Undeveloped Land, 2018



Three Oaks Community Garden, Village of Three Oaks, MI (credit: McKenna, 2018)

## UNDEVELOPED LAND



### Undeveloped

With 221.26 acres and 39.3% of the land within the Village designated as undeveloped land, this district is the largest existing land use category in Three Oaks and an integral part of the Villages identity as a unique, rural community.

A significant amount of open and undeveloped land remains in the Village, especially located within the southwest and northwest parts of the community. Enterprise Park is a recent addition to the Village (acquired in 2015 under a 425 Agreement with Three Oaks Township), consisting of 70-acres that remains farmland. There is also a small vacant area east of Tulip Drive.

These parcels are illustrated for purposes of future planning either for preservation or for future growth and development that is aligned with the build out and character vision of the Village.

Table 2.1: Existing Land Use Summary, 2018

Existing Land Use Category	Land Usage	
	Acres	Percentage of Total Land Area
<b>Residential Land Uses</b>	-	<b>37.4%</b>
Single Family	186.38	33.1%
Two Family	0.72	0.1%
Multiple Family	5.76	1.0%
Manufactured Housing	17.88	3.2%
<b>Non-Residential Land Uses</b>	-	<b>12.4%</b>
Downtown Commercial	25.64	4.5%
Highway Commercial	23.72	4.2%
Industrial	20.43	3.6%
<b>Community Land Uses</b>	-	<b>10.9%</b>
Public Park and Recreation	34.83	6.2%
Public / Quasi Public	20.83	3.7%
Religious Institution	6.01	1.1%
<b>Undeveloped Land</b>	-	<b>39.3%</b>
Undeveloped	221.26	39.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>563.46 Acres</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: 2018 Berrien County GIS Data

# PUBLIC SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE



Three Oaks Police, Village of Three Oaks, MI  
(credit: Village of Three Oaks)

*“Let’s get creative and think about how we can grow smart.*

*Let’s invest now while things are good instead of wishing we’d done the right thing when the bad times inevitably come back.*

*Let’s be prepared for the future.”*

*- public engagement quotes, 2018*

## POLICE AND FIRE

Both the police and fire services for the Three Oaks community are shared services between the Village and Township. The Three Oaks Police Department is a service of the Village and the force’s headquarters is located in the former Village Hall offices on Maple Street. Under the leadership of Police Chief Dennis Buller, the department’s eight sworn officers protect the public safety in both Three Oaks Village and the surrounding Township (by contract). The department also provides gun registration and code enforcement, in addition to traditional police protections.

The Three Oaks Fire Department is operated by Three Oaks Township and provides service to the Village by contract between the municipalities. Service is dispatched by Berrien County 911. Chief Dave Flick has 21 part time firemen and 22 more volunteers to protect the community. The Fire Department headquarters is located on Linden Street, just north of Carver Park.

## GARBAGE COLLECTION

Residential curbside garbage collection is done by Lakeshore Recycling via contract with the Village. Property owners pay for the service through a special assessment on their Village tax bill.

## MEDICAL SERVICES

Three Oaks Ambulance, a non-profit organization partially supported by the Township and utilized by the Village, provides Emergency Medical Services to the Three Oaks community. There are no hospitals within the Township or Village. The nearest hospitals are Franciscan Health Hospital in Michigan City, LaPorte Hospital in LaPorte, and Lakeland Memorial Hospital in Niles and St. Joseph. Doctors and clinics are also available in New Buffalo providing minor outpatient care and general services.

## ELECTRICITY AND NATURAL GAS

Electricity in Three Oaks is provided by Indiana-Michigan Power, a division of AEP. Indiana-Michigan provides service to communities in northern and eastern Indiana, like South Bend and Fort Wayne, and southern Michigan, such as St. Joseph and Niles.

Natural gas service to Three Oaks is provided by SEMCO. SEMCO provides gas energy service in communities scattered throughout Michigan, including Holland, Battle Creek, Port Huron, and Upper Peninsula, in addition to Berrien County.

## WATER, SEWER, AND STORMWATER

Three Oaks runs its own water and sewer system. The water treatment plant and well field are located at the far southern edge of the Village, at the end of Sherwood Street. The wastewater treatment plant is located in the Township, just west of the Village limits.

The Schwark Drain was built on the southwest side of town in order to make the vacant land south of Locust Street more attractive and feasible for development and to more properly discharge stormwater into the nearby creek to alleviate drainage problems.

A significant number of comments in the 2018 community-wide survey mentioned improvements to the quality of the Village’s water supply should be considered by the Council. To that effect, the Village is currently working on a “Water Reliability Study” to be completed in 2019 and reviewing plans for improvements to the sewer treatment processes.

## GOVERNANCE

Greater transparency and collaboration in governance was also recommended as part of the 2018 community-wide survey. Enhancements to this level of service are underway: in 2017, the Planning Commission initiated review of the Master Plan and held a joint session with the DDA in 2018 to aid in collaboration of the Plan update, in effort to work more efficiently and utilize the strengths of each Board.

Additionally, the Village is pursuing its Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) certification and has made application, which is currently being reviewed by the State. The RRC program is administrated through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and the program aims to streamline the development approval process by integrating transparency, predictability and efficiency into the Village’s development practices. It is anticipated that the Village will receive such certification in 2019, which is a step towards best practices in good governance and will offer the Village further recommendations and guidance on public services.

# PUBLIC SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITIES

When asked about the top priorities for public services and infrastructure, the majority of responses stressed an emphasis on prioritizing existing infrastructure and resources before adding new development to the system and for greater collaboration between the public, business community, public and private agencies and the Village. Table 2.2 (to the right) ranks the top three service and infrastructure areas that were identified as most important for Village investment today.

The Village of Three Oaks already works with the Township on a number of shared services and the intent of this Plan is to continue to look for areas of greater collaboration, especially where it results in a financial benefit and improved level of service for the communities.

**Table 2.2: Top Priorities for Improving Public Services / Infrastructure**

Action	Percentage Vote
1 Improve existing infrastructure for upgrading and redevelopment of the Village	86%
2 Invest in new infrastructure for growth and new development in the Village	80%
3 Coordinate with adjacent communities to achieve shared objectives.	73%



*N. Elm Street, Village of Three Oaks, MI with wide sidewalks for pedestrians to comfortable stroll and streetscape furnishing such as pedestrian scale lighting, street trees, planters and seating (credit: McKenna, 2018)*

## TRANSPORTATION

### OVERVIEW & LOCAL STREETS

Three Oaks is laid out for the most part in a well-connected street grid, with addresses measured east-west from Elm Street and north-south from Central Avenue and the railroad tracks. For the most part, the Village's streets are welcoming, tree-lined and narrow, which is a positive, natural traffic calming design and contributes to the traditional character of the community.

As the Village develops in the future, there are plenty of available opportunities to extend the street grid. Unused rights of way already exist in the northeast and southwest parts of the Village, and streets such as E. Michigan, E. Indiana, Paw Paw and E. Locust can all be extended. When future developments are proposed, it is important that they connect to the existing street grid in as many places as possible, in order to maintain the existing fabric and neighborhood structure of Three Oaks.

Only two streets in Three Oaks cross the railroad tracks. Elm Street features a grade crossing and Hickory Street features an overpass over the railroad tracks, which improves pedestrian safety and automobile efficiency dramatically, and is especially helpful on school mornings. Although the bridge is only two blocks east of downtown, most traffic (especially visitor traffic) utilizes the grade crossing. The Transportation Map on the following page presents the circulation system in the Village and illustrates the functional classification of road typologies.

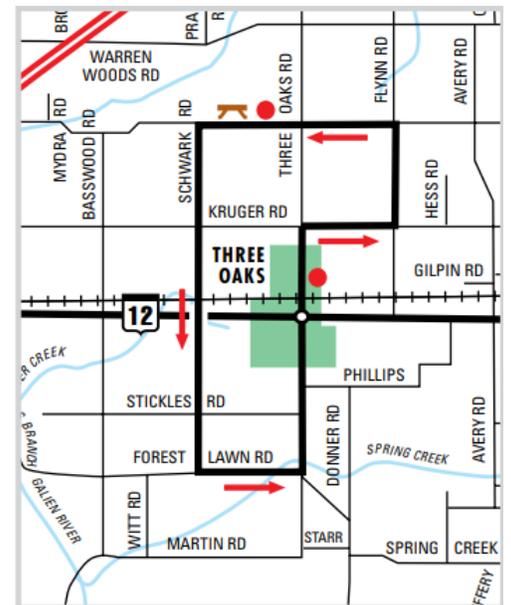
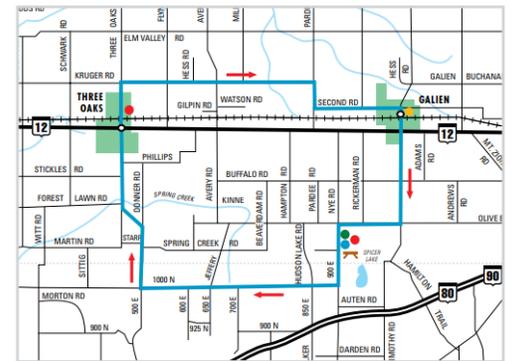


Participants on the Apple Cider Century (credit: Apple Cider Century)

## BICYCLE PATHS AND SHARED USE PATHS

Three Oaks is the center of the Harbor Country regional network which consists of over 12 bikeways, and a total 36 mile bike route through New Buffalo, Union Pier, Lakeside, Harbert, Sawyer, and Three Oaks. The mission of the Harbor Country Trails is to bring the communities together by creating a safe place for people to walk, ride bikes, and be active

Pictured right are several bike routes, with others including the 5-mile Spring Creek Trail, which stays close to the Village, and longer trails like the Grand Mere Trail, the Posey Hill Trail, and the Warren Woods Trail stretch to distant destinations – the Lakeshore, Indiana, and Warren Woods State Park, respectively. The bike trails provide the routing for the annual Apple Cider Century, and they are popular with locals and visitors alike. Currently there are designated bike lanes on US-12 (Ash Street) and Elm Street.



Pictured above, top to bottom, popular bike routes: Lake Michigan Trail (32 miles), Spicer Lake Trial (21 miles) and Schwark Trail (11 miles) (credit: Apple Cider Century)



*Pictured left, top to bottom:*

*Existing conditions of the S. Elm Street bike lane (credit: Google, 2018); a neighborhood sidewalk in the Village which requires improvements to ensure accessibility for all (credit: Village of Three Oaks, Planning Commission); and existing condition of downtown sidewalks (credit: McKenna)*

## **SIDEWALKS AND NON-MOTORIZED PEDESTRIAN ACCESS**

For the most part, Three Oaks’ streets feature wide and well-connected sidewalks. These allow residents to access most of Three Oaks’ amenities on foot and increase the overall quality of life for residents.

However, some streets immediately west of downtown lack sidewalks. These, and other gaps in the sidewalk network, and the poor condition of sidewalks in some areas are a deterrent to access, especially for those with barrier-free needs. To address this, the Planning Commission appointed a sidewalk subcommittee in 2019 to respond to two major challenges associated with sidewalks in the Village: (1) code enforcement (and the ordinances surrounding installation and maintenance); and (2) property owner maintenance and repair to existing sidewalks.

It is recommended that the Village subcommittee also consider a Complete Streets approach. The Complete Streets model treats streets as places and elevate them as not only linkages to destinations but as destinations themselves, as enjoyable, safe places to exercise and promote social interaction.

Such non-motorized infrastructure is an indicator of sustainability as it demonstrates the community investment in bicycling and walking facilities. Communities with non-motorized facilities create the opportunity to reduce motor vehicle trips, which contributes in many ways to the overall environmental sustainability, including relieving traffic congestion, and reducing space necessary for downtown parking. By addressing Complete Streets in the Village, the community will be taking a step towards ensuring its streets are safe and accessible for all users: pedestrians, cyclists, and motor vehicle drivers.



## **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

Berrien County Transit provides both dial-a-ride and Berrien Bus semi-fixed route service through the County. Three Oaks residents have access to these services, including residents 60 years of age and older transportation service with the River Valley Senior Center, but there is no public transportation specifically for the entire Village.

## **RAILROAD**

The rail line between Detroit and Chicago played a major role in Three Oaks' history and development. Today, that line still cuts through the center of the Village, but its importance has been greatly reduced. Amtrak's Wolverine line uses the track but no longer stops in Three Oaks – Chicago-bound passengers board in New Buffalo and Detroit/Pontiac-bound passengers use the Niles station. However, the closest station is only seven miles away and offers a unique opportunity to draw visitors to Three Oaks. There is also significant freight usage, and some rail-served industry still exists within the community.

While the rail and Amtrak bring a unique identity to the Village, the railroad tracks themselves pose a challenge. They create a physical and mental barrier and the only way to get across them downtown is the grade crossing on Elm Street, which can be dangerous and awkward for pedestrians. Further, both Central Avenue and Oak Street run parallel alongside the tracks in the downtown, and the configuration could be more conducive to pedestrian traffic and easier to navigate for new motorists.

## **HIGHWAYS**

Three Oaks sits on US-12, a historic cross-country route that runs from Detroit to Olympia, Washington. The highway is the main East-West route through southern Michigan, connecting Ypsilanti, Dearborn, and Detroit on the east with New Buffalo and the Indiana state line on the west. Within the Village limits, the highway is known as Ash Street. The highway contains most of Three Oaks' commercial and non-residential development that is not located in the downtown, including the largest industrial use and the majority of the auto-oriented retail and large retail uses. Quality design, access management, and character / form are critical to protecting the integrity of these corridor areas and the character of the Village.

Elm Street runs through the core of Three Oaks from north to south and in many ways is the gateway to the community. Many downtown businesses and institutions are located along Elm Street, and north and south of downtown, Elm Street is primarily residential, particularly south of Ash Street (US-12). Protection of the residential / small town character along the corridor in these areas is important considering the role as a gateway to the community.

The nearest Interstate to Three Oaks is I-94, which runs along the Lake Michigan shoreline. The nearest exit to Three Oaks is Exit 4A about six miles west of the Village, signposted "US-12 East, Three Oaks, Niles" to eastbound travelers. Visitors to Three Oaks by this route arrive along West Ash Street. However, signposts for westbound travelers suggest turning off the highway at Exit 12, near Sawyer. These visitors enter along North Elm Street, straight into downtown.

## **AIRPORTS**

The nearest commercial airport is South Bend Regional, across the border in Indiana, which offers flights to Chicago, Cleveland, Atlanta, Detroit, and other destinations. Southwest Michigan Regional Airport, in the Benton Harbor/St. Joseph Area, is another option for Three Oaks Residents, although no commercial carriers fly there.

# NATURAL FEATURES

## TOPOGRAPHY AND VEGETATION

The Village and surrounding areas are very flat, the result of glaciers grinding down any roll to the land during the most recent Ice Age. Those same glaciers left southern Michigan and northern Indiana with the extremely fertile farmland that surrounds Three Oaks today.

Since so much of the land around Three Oaks is used for farming, large woods or forests are not common. However, the Village has a healthy number of street trees and other vegetation in its residential districts. Additionally, there are two wooded areas within the community – one at the southern end of Watkins Park, which features nature trails, and one south of Indiana Street, where the Three Oaks Woods subdivision has been built with minimal impact on the tree canopy.

## WATERWAYS

There are no significant natural waterways in Three Oaks, except for a few minor creeks on the northwest side of the community. The flat topography surrounding Three Oaks presents challenges associated with drainage; the entire Village is located within the Galien River Watershed. The Schwark Drain, a man-made watercourse built to ease drainage problems, cuts across the southwest side of town, through Watkins Park. Water in Three Oaks eventually drains into the Galien River and then into Lake Michigan.

## NATURAL FEATURES MAP

The map on the following page shows the important natural features surrounding Three Oaks that should be protected as development occurs to ensure the rural character of the community is intact. It is also important to note that Three Oaks, surrounded by the Township, is adjacent to many existing areas that are used for agricultural production. This requires all future development to be extra sensitive to the surrounding natural features and potential off-site impacts.



*Natural assets in the Village of Three Oaks, MI  
(credit: McKenna)*





*Downtown Three Oaks, MI during Music in the Park, August 11, 2018 (credit: McKenna)*



*Downtown Three Oaks, MI during Music in the Park, August 11, 2018 (credit: McKenna)*

## COMMUNITY-WIDE SURVEY

A community-wide survey was conducted as part of the Three Oaks' *2050 Master Plan and DDA Plan* public engagement strategy, which originally ran during the months of August and September 2018. The survey period was further extended into November of 2018 after the Planning Commission and DDA opted to offer more time to gather additional responses, including reaching out to younger generations. Paper copies of the survey were also available at public locations for pick-up, including Village offices, the library, etc. and the survey was advertised at community events, including Wurstfest and Music in the Park.

# RESPONDENT DATA

The survey was designed to provide feedback on the community with topics ranging from neighborhoods to the downtown, infrastructure and pedestrian safety, to future improvements and new initiatives. A total of 199 responses were collected with 82% of survey participants having owned, lived or rented property within Village limits. This represents an increase from the 2011 community-wide survey, which received a total of 121 participants.

While the majority (52%) of respondents own a primary residence in the Village, the survey represents a range of interest perspectives from both seasonal homeowners and renters and those who own a business and non-rental property, either in the Village or in Three Oaks Township. It is encouraging to see that residents, property owners and business members of the Three Oaks community took part in the survey.

## Harbor Country Assessment, 2018 Results

The 2018 Harbor Country Assessment, which included municipal leaders from the larger Three Oaks community (including the Village of Three Oaks), the business community, non-profit leaders, and religious institution representatives.

Top issues raised during the various meetings for Harbor Country included:

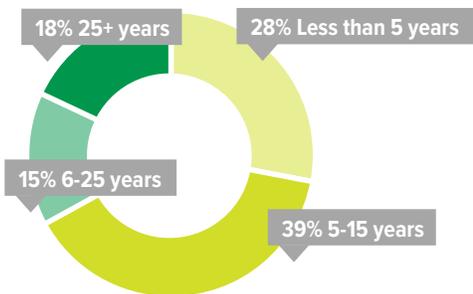
- Affordable Housing (\$150,000 - \$300,000, especially for the workforce population and aging in place individuals);
- Seasonal Residents (and how to provide balance between residents and visitors);
- Agricultural Land (and the unique sense of character it brings to the community);
- Quality of Cellular Service;
- Year-round Recreation and Gathering Spaces; and
- Regional Awareness and Collaboration (blurring the boundaries between Villages and Townships for a more prosperous, regional community).

The results of the 2018 Assessment are included within Three Oaks' *2050 Master Plan* and incorporated throughout the DDA and Village Action Plans' as a first step in advancing these common community goals and objectives.

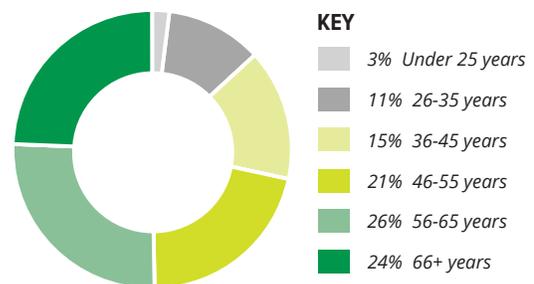
## LONGEVITY OF RESIDENTS AND BUSINESS OWNERS AND AGE OF RESPONDENTS

Survey respondents show that the Village has a strong foundation of residents and business owners who have selected Three Oaks as a desired home and business community and have remained here for years, even decades (Figure 3.1). Further, as shown below in Figure 3.2, 50% of respondents were 56 years of age or older, which anecdotally, is a common result in surveys. Only 13% of respondents were 35 years of younger, which is the same percentage of under 35 age votes in the 2011 survey.

**Figure 3.1: Years as a Resident or Property Owner in the Village of Three Oaks, MI**



**Figure 3.2: Age Classifications of Survey Respondents**



# EVALUATING TODAY

## CURRENT VILLAGE POLICIES

Survey respondents were asked to evaluate the Village’s efforts on a number of policies in the community, including the direction of growth, quality of life for residents and support for the arts and youth. The same question was asked in 2011 and the change in the percentage of those who felt such efforts were previously “good” or “excellent” is shown in the left column of Figure 3.3.

In Figure 3.3, the scaled dots under each level of service rating (i.e. Poor, Fair, Satisfactory, Good, and Excellent) represent the percentage of votes (out of 100%) for each category and is designed to illustrate, at a glance, the positives and challenges associated with current Village efforts. It is important to note that there are less individuals today (than in the 2011 survey) that feel the Village is providing sufficient efforts in supporting, guiding, and directing growth and that the quality of life for residents and cultural offerings are sufficient.

On the other hand, the data shows that the majority of Village efforts are rated higher today than previously perceived, for instance, the majority of participants felt the Village’s efforts to support historical identity was good and had increased since 2011. However, a number of Village efforts were rated as “Fair”, indicating there are opportunities to enhance or expand current policies and efforts. One objective of this *2050 Master Plan* is to offer recommendations to aid the Village in this process and provide a guidebook for appropriate growth in Three Oaks over the next 30 years.

Figure 3.3: Levels of Satisfaction with Village Efforts, 2011 and 2018



### CURRENT VILLAGE SERVICES

In addition to Village efforts, survey participants were asked to prioritize the Village’s services, ranging from redevelopment of neighborhoods to the expansion of public utilities. The same question was asked in 2011 and those priority rankings are listed in the table on the left in Figure 3.4 below. The priority rankings for 2018 (along with the average score) are shown in the table on the right. Directional arrows show the realignment of policies, with the modernization and expansion of public utilities making a drastic climb to the number one priority, which was not even listed as a top three priority in 2011.

Figure 3.4: Village Service Prioritization, 2011 and 2018

Village Service	2030Oaks Master Plan (2011)	Village Service	Three Oaks 2050 Plan (2018)
	Average Score		Average Score
1 Increase Road Maintenance	3.21	1 Extend / Modernize Public Utilities	2.60
2 Maintenance and Expansion of Sidewalk System	3.86	2 Increase Road Maintenance	2.79
3 Redevelopment of Vacant and Blighted Properties in Existing Neighborhoods	4.38	3 Redevelopment of Vacant and Blighted Properties in Existing Neighborhoods	2.86
4 Plant New / Replace Damaged Trees	5.21	4 Maintenance and Expansion of Sidewalk System	3.07
5 Improve and Expand the Park System	5.31	5 Plant New / Replace Damaged Trees	4.44
6 Extend / Modernize Public Utilities	5.44	6 Improve Police Protection	4.69
7 Improve Police Protection	5.79	7 Improve and Expand the Park System	4.82
8 Improve Fire Protection	5.88	8 Improve Fire Protection	4.97
9 Improve Code Enforcement	6.00	9 Improve Code Enforcement	5.14

A score of 1 = highest priority, while a score of 9 = lowest priority.

### APPROPRIATENESS OF GROWTH

In 2011, only 36% of survey respondents felt the Village was “growing just right”. Figure 3.5 shows that now 49% feel the growth is appropriate, indicating that the growth that the Village has undergone in the past eight years is generally agreeable, if not a bit too slow still for some community members.

Figure 3.5: Levels of Satisfaction: Continuum of Growth Preferences, 2018



*“Growth allows the community to improve roads, improve parks, improve utilities. We need leadership to move Three Oaks to being a sustainable, thriving community”.*

- public engagement quotes, 2018

**WHAT IS MISSING  
MIDDLE HOUSING?**

*Many Michigan communities have an abundance of low-density single-family housing units and high-density mid-rise apartments.*

*What communities don't have a lot of are the housing types somewhere in the middle (e.g. duplex, townhouse, live/work apartment located in walkable mixed-use areas) - commonly referred to as the "missing middle." It turns out these are the types of housing units desired by many young professionals and empty nesters.*

# LIVING IN THREE OAKS

## HOUSING

Participants were asked to evaluate the appropriateness of a range of housing types in the Village, with the top five residential types illustrated in Figure 3.6 (below).

Housing types which were identified as "not appropriate" in the survey included stacked duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes and multi-unit apartment buildings greater than three stories. Senior housing (both independent and assisted) was found as very appropriate for the Village.

Housing typologies that were considered appropriate for the downtown include small apartments (three-stories or less) and live / work units. Respondents were generally undecided on row-houses and it is recommended that any future row houses would be built to the highest design standards and in limited amounts to ensure compatibility with the desired character of the Village.

**Figure 3.6: Appropriateness Ratings of Various Housing Options in Three Oaks, 2018**

Single Family, Detached (\$100,000-\$200,000)



71% very appropriate  
26% neutral  
3% not appropriate

Single Family, Detached (less than \$100,000)



51% very appropriate  
37% neutral  
12% not appropriate

Live / Work Units



45% very appropriate  
40% neutral  
15% not appropriate

Small Apartment (three-stories or less)

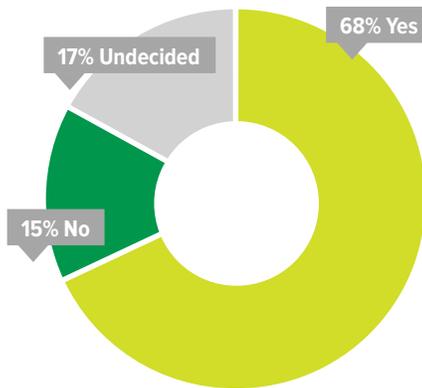


36% very appropriate  
43% neutral  
21% not appropriate

## AGING IN PLACE

The majority of survey respondents (68%) shared that they felt Three Oaks was a community where one could age in place and spend an entire life in (see Figure 3.7 below). However, the remaining 32% of respondents were divided between those who felt aging in place is difficult or were undecided. Many comments in this section expressed a desire to remain in the community but that the lack or distance (+25 miles) of senior medical and transportation services were inhibiting factors. A lack of housing designed specifically for empty nesters or independent senior living was also often cited in the survey as a major deterrent to being able to age in place in the Village.

**Figure 3.7: Percentage of Respondents that Felt the Village is a Community Where One Can Age in Place, 2018**



*“The Village itself is a nice place to live and enjoy retirement but unless you are a healthy homeowner, there are limited opportunities to age in place, and due to the aging population, these are issues that need to be addressed. The creation of affordable rental housing, especially for seniors, is vital to this.”*

*“As an aging resident, the top priority for me is long term residency requirements, getting around town easily, having local stores for basic needs so that I can support the community and provide what I need to stay here.”*

- public engagement quotes, 2018

## FUTURE SERVICE PRIORITIES

When asked about the satisfaction of Village services provided, top services include fire protection, parks and recreation and the downtown. Satisfaction levels were increased from the survey. To the right in Figure 3.8 are the top five services areas that have room for improvement and are a priority of this Action Plan in the following chapter.

**Figure 3.8: Top Priorities for Village Services, 2018**

Village Services <i>(ranked in order from the least level of satisfaction)</i>	Change since the 2030aks Master Plan (2011)
1 Public water system	▼
2 Public sewer system	▼
3 Code enforcement	▲
4 Building and construction permits	▲
5 Parking	not asked in 2011

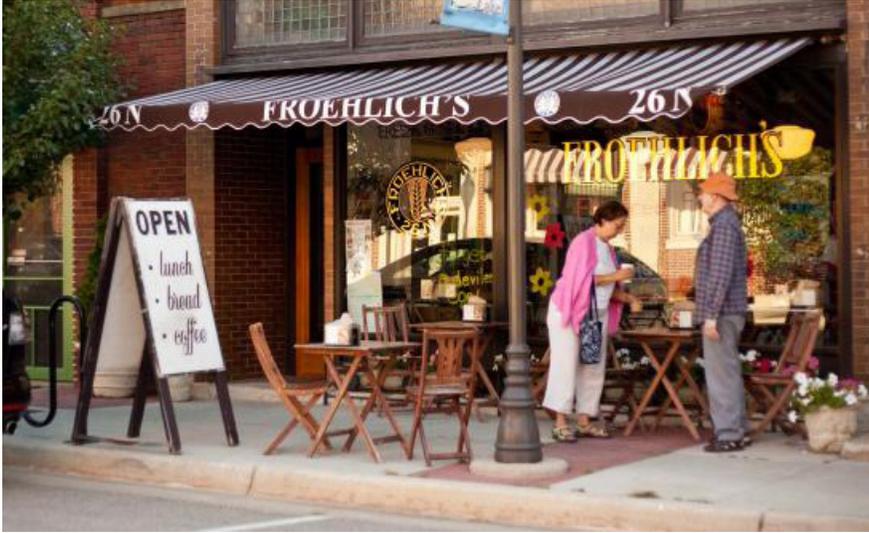
**KEY** ▲ increase in satisfaction ▼ decrease in satisfaction





# 04 DOWNTOWN ANALYSIS & DEVELOPMENT PLAN

*Downtown Three Oaks, MI (credit: McKenna, 2018)*



Left: Froehlich's with outdoor seating, Downtown Three Oaks, MI (credit: Trip Advisor); and right: Acorn Theatre (credit: Acorn Theatre)

## DOWNTOWN THREE OAKS

Downtown Three Oaks remains the center of most community activities in the Village. With a strong retail, destination event and artisan base, park spaces, churches, and civic institutions, it continues to be a draw for residents and regional visitors.

The Three Oaks Downtown Development Authority (DDA), which is a non-profit development corporation, exists for the purpose of promoting a desirable environment for businesses and residents, and implementing economic development projects. A variety of financing techniques are available to DDAs, including bond issues, Tax Increment Financing (TIF), and public and private contributions, which are discussed in this chapter.

Although it is only a small segment of the community, the downtown has a significant impact on the economy and character of the Village as a whole. Therefore, it is in everyone's best interests that it continue to flourish.

## DDA GOALS

The overarching goal of the *2050 Plan* for the DDA is to undertake public improvements that will provide the framework and impetus for additional private investments, improvements, and redevelopment projects in the DDA District as well as maintain and improve the quality of life of residents and businesses in the community.

Specific goals of the DDA include the following:

- 1 Improve the overall business climate of the district and deter economic decline;
- 2 Encourage the retention and expansion of employment opportunities;
- 3 Maintain and improve public facilities;
- 4 Improve wayfinding, signage, and streetscape amenities to improve the ease of use and access downtown and attract visitors to the district;
- 5 Market and promote the downtown businesses and downtown area to recruit new businesses and uses;
- 6 Promote façade improvements, retail incubators, and other similar programs designed to help small business owners;
- 7 Connect key activity centers in the Village to the downtown with safe and pleasant non-motorized pathways;
- 8 Provide guidance for compatible land use development within the district; and
- 9 Improve the general appearance and visual amenities in the district while preserving sites with unique features or character.

*“I visit downtown because there is a sense of community among business owners that makes it an enjoyable experience for residents and visitors alike. They foster a healthy business-friendly environment for the Village, that helps this community thrive.”*

- public engagement quotes, 2018

## PURPOSE OF THIS EFFORT

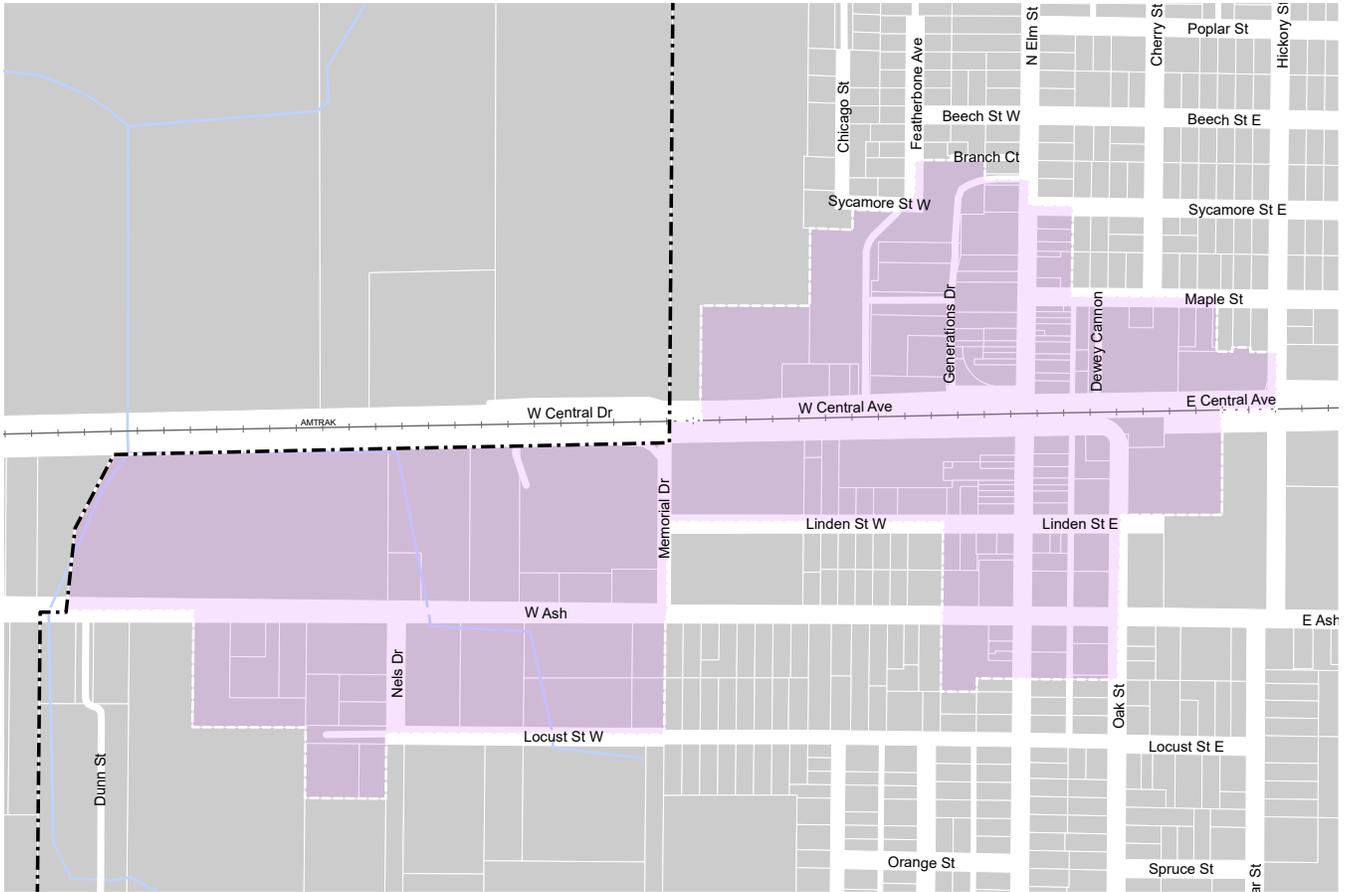
In order to have the opportunity to capture funds and use those funds within the district, the DDA must adopt a current Development and TIF Plan. As this is an updated Development Plan, this is also an opportunity to generate new ideas and objectives for projects within the DDA district. Not all of them will be accomplished, particularly not within the first few years of the planning period. It is also probable that the DDA will share the costs of some of these projects with other public or private agencies.

There are two separate documents contained within the 2050 Master Plan. First is the Development Plan (this chapter) which defines the Development Area within which the DDA can make improvements and describes what these improvements might be. It describes what projects the DDA may implement over the course of the Plan.

Second, the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Plan (as detailed in Appendix B) explains one method the DDA uses to collect funds

and estimates how much money it will generate over the life of the Plan. This helps the DDA understand how much money they will have to use, and it helps the tax jurisdictions understand what the impact will be on them.

The Village has prepared this Development and Tax Increment Finance Plan as part of the *2050 Master Plan* so that the DDA may continue their efforts and investments in the downtown that address needs of Three Oaks in a timely and appropriate manner.



### Downtown Development Area Map

Village of Three Oaks, Berrien County, Michigan

--- Village Boundary    DDA District Boundary

Data Source: Michigan Geographic Framework 2017, Berrien County 2018 Village Parcel Data and 2008 Surrounding Parcel Data, McKenna

March 1, 2019

**MCKENNA**

0 250 500 FEET

# DEVELOPMENT AREA, THE DDA DISTRICT

The Development Area is located within the limits of the Village of Three Oaks. The boundaries of the Development Area are the same as the boundaries of the DDA District, shown on the above Downtown Development Area Map. Generally, the development area is bounded by the Village limits to the west, Ash and Locust Streets to the south, Oak and Hickory Streets to the east, and a staggered northern boundary including Maple and Sycamore Streets. The district extends to the east to capture the public and non-residential properties adjacent to the downtown and then west to the Village limits incorporating the other primary commercial and industrial uses along the US-12 corridor. This allows for greater capture by the DDA and potential improvements along this key corridor through the community.

### Legal Description

The legal description of the Development Area is provided in Appendix A.

# DISTRICT COMPOSITION

## PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LAND USES

Existing land uses in the Development Area are shown on the Existing Land Use Map (page 31). The map also shows existing land uses on surrounding properties in the Village in order to illustrate the relationship of the properties in the district to those outside of it.

### Public / Quasi-Public Uses

Public facilities within the Development Area include the Village Hall, the Police Department, Three Oaks Township Hall, the Fire Department, Three Oaks Ambulance, the Post Office, Dewey Cannon Park, Carver Park, Chamberlain Path, the Library, and the Museum.

There are no educational uses within the Development Area. The River Valley Elementary School (Three Oaks' only public school) is at the corner of Ash Street and Hickory Street, and although not within the District boundaries, it is adjacent.

### Private Uses - Residential

There are approximately 23 residential units located in the DDA district, none vacant at the time this information was obtained by the Village in the fall of 2018.

The residential units within the Development Area are located on West Linden Street west of Elm and on the south side of US-12 west of Nel's Drive. In addition, a few residential units are also located in some of the second stories of the taller commercial buildings located on Elm Street.

### Private Uses - Industrial

Very little of the land in the district is industrial, however, a portion of Big C Lumberyard is considered Industrial.

### Private Uses - Commercial

As the Development Area covers the downtown core of the Village and commercial uses along the US-12 corridor, commercial is the dominant land uses in the district. The heart of the central business district is on Elm Street just to the north of US-12. Retail uses include restaurants, clothing stores, antique stores, art galleries, banks, and offices. The development pattern is consistent with traditional downtowns featuring a pedestrian layout, large storefronts, and on street parking.

Approximately three (3) commercial units are vacant (based on Village data from the spring of 2019) and several operate on a seasonal basis with limited hours during the winter months. One of the DDA's objectives is to improve business coordination and develop a steady, year-round business mix. The lack of a big box establishment likely contributes to the strength of the Downtown retail core and attracting a large scale retailer should not be a priority.

Besides the central business district, the Development Area also includes the commercial establishments along Ash Street (US-12) which are more auto-oriented and serve a larger population than the Village. Such uses include a grocery store, banks, car sales, restaurants, offices and retail outlets.

*“The addition of Journeyman Distillery as an anchor tenant has dramatically impacted the town for the better. Tourism is up, investment is up, and revenues are up. These aspects are vital to the continued development, growth, and success of the Village.”*

*“We opened our retail store because we love the small town Americana feel you instantly get when you visit Three Oaks.”*

*- public engagement quotes, 2018*



Pictured above: Carver Memorial Park, 2016  
(credit: McKenna)

The Village, with support from the Masonic Lodge, the Pokagon Fund, and other, has made significant recent investments, including the construction of a covered, outdoor pavilion with a series of picnic tables underneath and a fireplace to afford residents and visitors with year-round community gathering activities.

## RECREATIONAL AND OPEN SPACES

There are four recreational and open space areas within the Development Area:

### 1 Carver Memorial Park

Situated at the high profile corner of Elm and Ash Streets, Carver Park is a gateway into the downtown and a key Village gathering space during festivals. Named Carver Park in the 1970's, it is dedicated to Three Oaks' only Vietnam fallen soldier, Randall Carver, and now contains various memorial and historical markers, including a 'fallen soldier monument'. The existing historical markers have been repaired, cleaned and re-situated for better display.

The redesign and updates to Carver Memorial Park over the past five years have truly created a beautiful area that facilitates community gathering, including the annual tree lighting event in December and Art in the Park during Flag Day celebration, and various public and private outdoor events. A new sculpture was added by the Harbor Country Public Arts Initiative in recognition of the Apple Cider Century and in support of bicycling in the area. Pathways and landscaping have been added, with more landscaping planned, and the new benches along the paths encourage gatherings. Recent improvements include a visitor information kiosk, as well as a park entry sign. To complete the park and enhance its function as a gathering place, a public restroom facility is still a much needed amenity. At completion, Carver Memorial Park will truly be a year round asset to the community as envisioned five years ago.

### 2 Dewey Cannon Park

Dewey Cannon Park is Three Oaks' most historic recreational facility and the site of the historic Dewey Cannon monument to the Spanish-American War, which was famously dedicated by President William McKinley himself. In the summer, the park plays hosts to a weekly volleyball league and a concert series and is the staging area for the Apple Cider Century bike race. Its central gazebo is used for weddings and other gatherings, as well as community events.

The park is in need of some improvements, however. The drinking fountains and barbecue grills are in disrepair, landscaping and/or a fence screening the park from the railroad would improve the setting, and grading or drainage improvements would assist with usability and access.

### 3 Chamberlain Path

Named after Three Oaks founder Henry Chamberlain, Chamberlain Path is a small park in the heart of downtown Three Oaks and features an ever changing collection of sculptures provided by the Harbor Country Public Arts Initiative. The pedestrian path connects Elm Street and Generations Drive with an attractive walking route and improved landscaping, updated in 2015. Planters were placed in the park and local volunteers plant these annually. Additionally, an artistic large Kaleidoscope has been placed along the path for viewing.

There is an open-to-traffic driveway on the south side allowing traffic to drive through, park and visit the Region of Three Oaks Museum, The Acorn Theater and Journeyman Distillery. There is also frequent pedestrian activity along Chamberlain Path and Generations Drive. Future improvements include the potential incorporation of public restrooms within this area.



#### 4 Community Garden Facilities

The Community Garden was established in 2011 with Three Oaks Township's grant from The Pokagon Fund and located on township property, behind the River Valley Three Oaks Elementary campus, south of the railroad tracks and just east of the historical Three Oaks train station.

It is a true "community" garden. Village resident volunteers manage participation of gardeners, educational and celebratory events held over the seasons, and maintenance of the grounds and the local garden club volunteers as well. The River Valley schools are engaged with students planting, maintaining and harvesting. Volunteers help the students plant seeds each season using grow lights for germination. Teachers include the plantings in their curriculum and each student takes home a plant in spring, with the remaining plants being planted in the beds or sold to support their gardening efforts.

The entry is also graced with Little Free Library #24908 in the entry kiosk. Seating in the entry shelter allows visitors to sit and enjoy the garden or read in a natural setting.



*Pictured above left: Chamberlain Path (credit: Village of Three Oaks)*

*Pictured above, top to bottom: Community Garden Facilities (2) and Chamberlain Path (credit: McKenna)*

## DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENTS SINCE 1993

*A key previous success of the DDA was the streetscape improvements in the reconstruction of Elm Street (Ash to Sycamore) including new sidewalks, storm sewers, decorative street lighting, and other pedestrian amenities.*



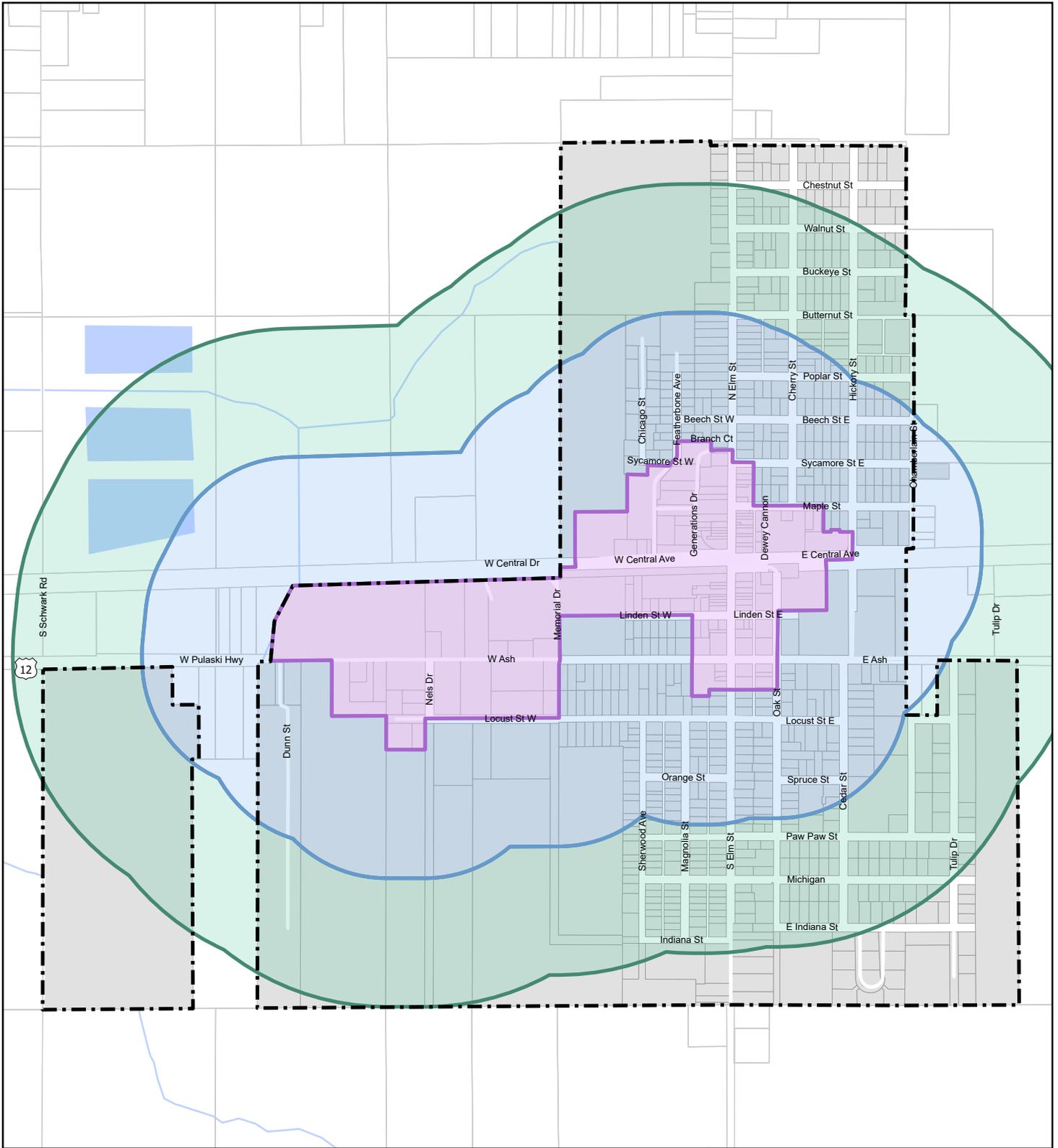
*Historic Train Station, Downtown Three Oaks, MI (credit: McKenna, 2018)*

## DOWNTOWN CIRCULATION

One of Three Oaks' greatest strengths is the walkability of its core. Downtown, neighborhoods, several churches, employers, and several large community parks are all connected by walkable residential streets. As shown on the Development Areas Map to the right, a total of 395 households are within a 10 minute walking distance of the DDA, accounting for approximately 49% of all Village residential units. The street grid, block size and central location of the commercial corridors allows for easy flow of residents, shoppers and visitors to their destinations. Additionally, the majority of the Village is located within a 1/2 mile radius of the downtown, which is approximately a six-minute, leisurely bicycle trip. As detailed on page 60, transportation priorities identified in the public engagement survey highlight the importance of non-motorized transportation options in the Village.

The interconnectivity of the DDA district and surrounding neighborhoods promotes social interaction between and among neighbors and visitors and accounts for much of the community's vitality. Downtown should continue to be positioned to attract a greater variety of businesses - the historic churches, theaters, and factories should be enhanced, and the walkable core of Three Oaks should be expanded. Infill housing is strongly encouraged within this pedestrian zone and sidewalk and non-motorized improvements made to create additional connections or enhance existing facilities. Further, the areas west and north of downtown should become more cohesive through pedestrian and circulations improvements and connections to the rest of the community.

Existing streets in the Development Area include at least portions of the following: Ash, Nel's, Locust, Memorial, Elm, Oak, Linden, Hickory, Dewey Cannon, Central, Generations, Sycamore, Chicago, Featherbone, Branch, and Maple, as shown on the Downtown Development Area Map.



# Development Areas Map

Village of Three Oaks, Berrien County, Michigan



-  Village Boundary
-  Pedestrian Zone (1/4 Mile Radius)
-  DDA Area
-  Cycling Zone (1/2 Mile Radius)
-  Village Parcels

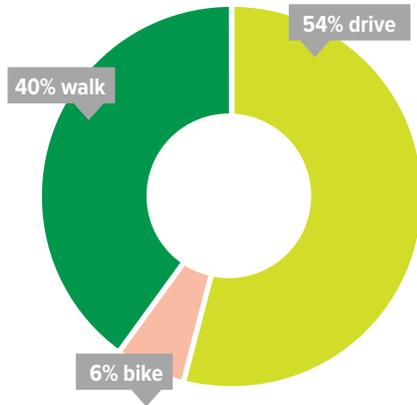
Data Source: Michigan Geographic Framework 2017, Berrien County 2018 Village Parcel Data and 2008 Surrounding Parcel Data, Village of Three Oaks Rental Data 2018, McKenna



March 1, 2019

# DOWNTOWN TRANSPORTATION

Figure 4.2: Modes of Transportation for Those Visiting the DDA District, 2018



*“Lovely town, tons of opportunity available to bring both tourists and long term residences in by building up available winter activities.”*

- public engagement quotes, 2018

The majority of 2018 survey respondents indicate that they drive to the downtown; which is likely especially true for out-of-town visitors. However, a significant portion of participants noted they walk to downtown (40%) with biking as the least utilized option (6%). It is also likely that a significant number of patrons drive to downtown Three Oaks and then park and walk to multiple destinations, making the welcomeness, accessibility and connectivity between downtown destinations increasingly essential.

It is important to note that no survey respondents selected a ride share services (such as Uber), but this will likely change in the future as transportation technologies continue to advance and evolve.

## DOWNTOWN PARKING

Parking in downtown Three Oaks is plentiful for most of the year, although it can be overwhelmed during the popular summer festivals. Surface lot parking is available in a number of locations throughout the DDA district. Street parking is also available along Elm Street, Generations Drive, Dewey Cannon Avenue, and most side streets, as detailed on Figure 4.3: Public Parking in the DDA Map. Parking on public streets and Village surface lots is free all day, except between the hours of 2:00 am and 6:00 am (no overnight parking).

The survey also showed that the majority (72%) of survey respondents find (considering all months of year) a parking space immediately or the first place they look, unless an event is going on. Only 6% stated it was necessary to circle several times before find a spot downtown, indicating that there are sufficient parking spaces available.

Although parking is readily available, visitors often report struggling to find available parking. Easy to read, coordinated wayfinding signage showing where to find parking at key locations may help alleviate this challenge. Valet options may also be useful for larger events and overflow parking at underutilized areas (such as school parking lot in summer months), may also help alleviate congestion.

## Public Engagement Results

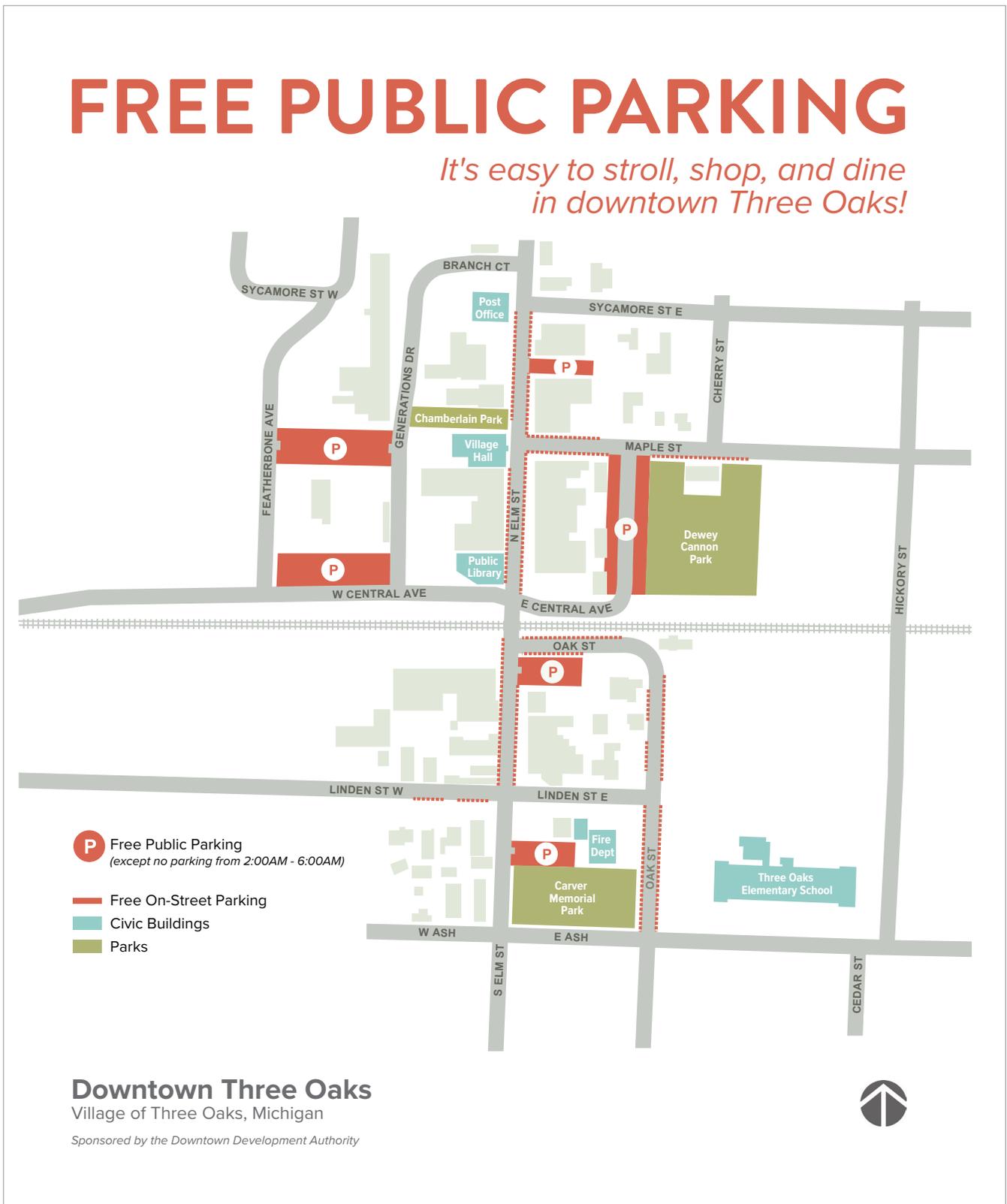
In regards to living downtown, approximately 46% of survey respondents stated interest in living downtown as a primary residence. There was less interest in living downtown as a secondary / vacation destination rental.

Downtown residential units should be targeted towards permanent residents who want the advantages of downtown living, such as entrepreneurs and millennials. Advantages cited include entertainment, convenience, a vibrant community with a variety of social activities, walkability, work/life balance, energy, shops, arts, parks, and culture.

2018 survey respondents indicated (with a 70% response or greater) that the top draws when visiting downtown include:

- restaurants;
- grocery stores;
- gas stations; and
- entertainment venues.

Figure 4.3: Public Parking in the DDA District, 2018



*“I would love to see more attractions for children and families....Having a movie at Vickers for children would be really neat.”*

*[We need] “longer term events attract people to visit a community over a span of time rather than just one day or weekend.”*

- public engagement quotes, 2018

## EVENTS AND VISITING FREQUENCY

Ongoing public events help drive positive awareness of a Village and its downtown. Bringing people from across the Three Oaks’ community and from other areas within the region to downtown on a regular basis serves to make citizens aware of the unique amenities that exist. Awareness of the amenities and foot traffic in the downtown helps to strengthen businesses and supports the Village’s quality of life. There were approximately 45 event days during the 2018 calendar year in the Village, including:

- Acorn Theater – Hausefest (1)
- Apple Cider Century Day (1)
- Civil War Days (2)
- Flag Day (2)
- Flag Day Fundraiser Day (1)
- Four A’s Car Show (1)
- Journeyman – Events (6)
- Music in the Park (12)
- Rotary Club – Rib Fest (1)
- School – Halloween Parade (1)
- Three Oaks Merchant Strolls (2)
- US 12 Garage Sale (1)
- Village – Christmas Parade & Tree Lighting (1)
- Village – Trick or Treat (1)
- Village – Wurstfest (1)
- Village Farmers Markets (12)

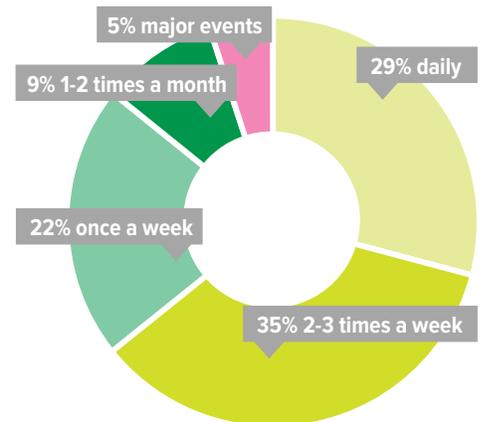
### WHY SPONSOR EVENTS ?

- Bring visitors into the community, year round attractions.
- Attract customers for businesses.
- Sense of excitement and vibrancy.
- Visitors come back after the event is over.

### Public Engagement Results

Downtown Three Oaks is well visited on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. Based on survey respondents, the afternoon is the busiest time but participants noted visiting consistently throughout normal business hours. Late night (after 7:00 pm) is the least popular time to visit, with only 25% visiting during this time.

**Figure 4.4: Percentage of Respondents that Visit the DDA District, 2018**



# FUTURE DDA PRIORITIES

When asked about various actions that could be undertaken by the DDA that would most help local business performance, an overall emphasis on marketing, appearance and larger events were central to ideas of success. Table 4.1 below ranks the top five actions that were identified as most helpful to the performance of existing business owners (percentage indicates the number of respondents that voted this as a priority action). The action that was found to be the least helpful was workshops or technical assistance in business management, receiving only a vote of 6%.

Additionally, survey participants were asked to select their top desired improvements for downtown Three Oaks. The top five improvements are listed in Table 4.2 below. Improvements with the least amount of responses included safety at night and the convenience of parking, indicating that the downtown area is enjoyable to walk around, even during evening hours and that parking is available, but maybe not as easy to find for new visitors as it could be. Priority improvements #2 and #4 are especially important for the DDA to spearhead as only 63% of survey respondents indicated they have plans to start or complete a building or site improvement within the next two years. By providing financial assistance programs, such as facade grant program, the DDA can encourage and incentive additional property improvements.

**Table 4.1: Top Priorities for Improving Business Performance**

Action	Percentage Vote
1 Better marketing of the downtown	52%
2 Improve the appearance of the downtown	42%
3 More special events and activities	35%
4 Increase the "critical mass" of downtown	34%
5 Improved signage and wayfinding	32%

**Table 4.2: Top Improvements for the Downtown**

Action	Percentage Vote
1 More retail / restaurant / nightlife offerings	71%
2 Attractiveness / Sense of Place	52%
3 Walkability	49%
4 Storefront / facade improvements	47%
5 Additional employment opportunities	43%

*“Three Oaks has incredible potential to be the example of how a small town can thrive when residents and business owners voices are heard and implemented in a meaningful manner. We look forward to keeping our business here for many years and contributing in our own unique way to keeping Three Oaks so special and charming!”*

*“Anchor tenants such as Froelichs, Driers, Nelsons, Journeyman Distillery, Patellies, Acorn, and the Vickers Theater are a small towns dream come true.”*

*- public engagement quotes, 2018*

# SUMMARY OF PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

In order for the DDA to fund a project in the District, it must be included in the Development Plan. Therefore, there are many projects included in this Plan, some of which may not happen for 20-25 years until the end of the Plan. Also, it is possible that the DDA may only pay for a portion of the costs of the proposed improvements. The remaining costs may be paid for by a private party, donations, grants, or another public agency. In addition, new projects may emerge in the future that were not anticipated at the time of drafting of this Plan. Those projects may be completed by simply amending the Plan to include the desired project.

## PROJECTS CLASSIFICATION

The following categories identify the types of projects that DDA intends to pursue, as noted on Table 4.3:

### Business Development (BD)

Business development improvements do not necessarily result in the Village making physical changes to a structure or infrastructure, but operational improvements that can have significant impacts. Business development efforts market the district to consumers and recruit businesses in order to attract them to the district. Priority for business development efforts was high so as to fill vacancies, organize business owners, build greater vibrancy in the downtown, and better provide for the needs of Village residents.

### Infrastructure (I)

Infrastructure improvements are projects that impact the public facilities and services in the district. These improvements may not always be visible or the most exciting, but they often have a significant impact on the quality of life of residents in the community and the quality of the experience of working, shopping, and visiting in the district. Projects in this category might include improvements to roads, utilities, sidewalks, or pathways.

### Marketing (M)

While Business Development activities are targeted specifically towards the business owners, the marketing activities are targeted more broadly to all potential users of the district, particularly the visitors and potential customers. Coordinated marketing activities by the DDA can help reduce the marketing burdens of the individual businesses and increase the overall profile of the Village. This may include advertising, on-going communication and updating, Internet marketing, events, and other important functions.

### Private Improvements (Priv)

The DDA may become involved in development projects that are ultimately completed by the private sector. The DDA can acquire buildings or land and then enter into an agreement with a party to sell the property to them provided it is used / developed / redeveloped in the desired manner. The DDA can also issue grants to support private improvements and development within the district. In this role, the DDA is providing incentives for improvements that are consistent with their vision.

### Public Improvements (Pub)

Public Improvements are development projects that are completed by the DDA or Village on public property or to public facilities. While this is similar to the Infrastructure category, these projects are largely unique, individual projects and not a part of a larger system or grid such as park improvements or gathering places. As there are a number of community facilities within the district as well as significant right of way corridors, Public Improvements are a critical category for DDA consideration.

Table 4.3: Village of Three Oaks DDA: Projects and Timing

Project	Category	Estimated Cost
<b>On-Going: 2019-2050 (as needed, annual basis)</b>		
Business Owner Organization and Facilitation	BD 	\$2,000 / year
Façade Improvement Grant Program	Priv 	\$15,000 / year
Downtown Events / Activities	M 	\$5,000 / year
Marketing Activities	M 	\$10,000 / year
Historic Resources and Commission	Pub 	\$10,000 / year
Design Guidelines	BD 	\$2,000 / year
Infrastructure Improvements Program	I 	\$10,000 / year
<b>Phase I: 2019-2029 (Top Priority Project)</b>		
Parking Study and Improvements	Pub 	\$10,000
Streetscape Improvements	I 	\$500,000
Dewey Cannon Park Improvements	Pub 	\$30,000
Circulation Analysis and Non-Motorized Improvements	I 	\$250,000
Public Restroom Downtown	Pub 	\$100,000
Traffic and Safety Improvements	Pub 	\$20,000
Signage / Wayfinding / Gateway Plan and Improvements	I 	\$50,000
Public Wi-Fi	I 	\$120,000
<b>Phase II: 2030-2040</b>		
Establish and Operate Incubator Center for Entrepreneurs	BD 	\$40,000 (plus \$30,00 year once operational)
<b>Phase III: 2041-2050</b>		
Covered Activity / Event Space	Pub 	\$100,000
Chamberlain Path Sculpture Park	Pub 	\$50,000
Redevelopment and Acquisition of Property	Pub 	\$250,000

**CATEGORIES KEY**

 *BD, Business Development*     
  *I, Infrastructure*     
  *M, Marketing*     
  *Priv, Private Development*     
  *Pub, Public Development*

## DDA HISTORY:

*On July 14, 2010, the Village Council of the Village of Three Oaks created the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) by ordinance, pursuant to Act 197 of the Public Acts of 1975, as amended, of the State of Michigan.*

*This was the second iteration of a DDA in the Village of Three Oaks (a DDA had previously existed in the Village from 1986 to 2007, when it was dissolved in 2007 as part of the overall fiscal restoration of the community).*

## DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROJECTS

The following projects are included in Table 4.3 of the Development Plan as proposed projects. By including the project in the Development Plan, it gives the DDA the opportunity to complete that project in the future. However, there is no obligation for the DDA to complete any of these projects. For those projects that are completed, the DDA may cover all or a portion of the costs. If opportunities arise that were unforeseen at the time of passage of this Plan, the projects may be implemented out of schedule without amendment to the Plan. Additional projects may be added to the Plan through the amendment process, in accordance with the requirements of PA 57 of 2018. Below is a summary description of each of the projects, programs, or improvements:

### Business Owner Organization and Facilitation

Due to the seasonal nature of some businesses in the downtown and that some business owners are not from Three Oaks, coordination and organization is needed to bring greater consistency to the district, particularly in terms of the expectations of the customers. By addressing these and other issues in a shared manner, efficiencies and cost savings are possible. This includes when stores are open, both seasonal and hourly and the mix of job opportunities (i.e. year round positions, with benefit options).

The DDA should also encourage business owners to operate on a more consistent basis as well for the benefit of Village and nearby residents and coordinate efforts of the local business owners, and other related organizations to market community businesses, inform residents of local businesses, recruit businesses to fill vacancies, and address upkeep and maintenance of the historic downtown.

### Façade Improvement Grant Program

This program would provide grants to qualifying business owners who are completing façade improvements in the downtown district that meet certain design standards. The DDA may work with the private sector to establish a similarly effective low interest loan or grant program. This would result in the alteration of the existing building stock in the Development Area by creating incentives for business and property owners to improve their facades consistent with design guidelines.

### Downtown Events / Activities

Many community wide events (for instance, the Spring / Winter Stroll, Artisan Market, Blue Moon Market, etc.) have a significant impact on the Village economy and the downtown. The downtown businesses should follow this trend with consistently scheduled events designed to bring residents and visitors downtown to ensure year, round (including winter!) organized activities.

### Marketing Activities

This would allow the DDA to spend money annually on marketing for the downtown and the downtown district. This includes signs, newspaper ads, fliers, radio ads, etc. This marketing promotes activities occurring in the downtown, businesses existing in the downtown, vacant space available in the downtown, and other activities of the DDA.

The DDA should continue to market the downtown for arts and culture but it is encouraged to also market to a wider, diverse population based on its many assets.

### Infrastructure Improvements

The Infrastructure Improvements Program would allow the DDA to assist in the maintenance and upkeep of the infrastructure in the district. This includes the streets, utilities, public safety equipment, and other infrastructure.

### Historic Resources and Commission

Encourage historic preservation in both commercial buildings and residential homes to honor the special and unique history of the community. Consider the creation of a historic district and commission to maximize (pending) state resources and raise awareness of existing assets. This could also include a DDA based grant program to preserve the historic character and enhance the destination-based economy of the community.

### Design Guidelines

Update existing design guidelines of the DDA and establish incentives to encourage compliance and improvements to existing structures. New development and redevelopment in the downtown area should fit with the historic nature of the district, including design standards, setbacks, and building materials.

### Parking Study and Improvements

There are multiple parking lot improvement projects proposed for implementation. Depending on the parking lot and the extent of work required for the particular lot, this work may involve repaving, restriping, patchwork, bollards, landscaping, lighting, grading, storm water management, and/or other site improvements. The study should also ensure that adequate parking is provided in efficient locations to support continued development in the downtown. It is also recommended that on-street parking is maintained and restriped as needed. It is anticipated that a majority of the cost for these projects would be absorbed by the DDA with some funding being provided by the Village through Act 51 funding, after an initial parking study and parking plan with project phasing was conducted.

### Streetscape Improvements

There are also streetscape improvements proposed in the Development Area. As these projects are installed, existing improvements such as sidewalks, curbs, ramps, benches, banners, pedestrian amenities and streetlights may all be altered, repaired, or replaced depending on the final design. As was recommended during the 2018 survey, participants would like to see more seating and gathering spaces throughout the business district. It is recommended that the DDA conduct an inventory of aging streetscape furniture and create a palette of design that is consistent in design / unique to Three Oaks.

### Dewey Cannon Park Improvements

A number of minor improvements are proposed at Dewey Cannon Park. These projects address selected physical improvements including installation of streetlights, landscaping and other streetscape improvements and underground installation of utilities, and to improve the buffering of the park space from the railroad and other uses. Infrastructure improvements are also needed to address drainage and ponding issues at the park.

### Circulation Analysis and Non-Motorized Improvements

An analysis of the circulation system should be completed to understand the best course of action for improving access to businesses throughout the downtown and circulation of traffic and residents in and out of the area. Based on this analysis, efficient implementation of these improvements can begin, including additional sidewalks, pathways, bike facilities and other aspects of a Complete Streets approach which would expand the walkability of the downtown core.

### Public Restroom Downtown

There is no restroom in the downtown, not even a consistently available public restroom in any of the parks. This project would find an appropriate location for such a facility and install it in the downtown to encourage use of the area and parks.

### Traffic and Safety Improvements

The DDA should complete an analysis of traffic and safety conditions in the downtown and make surgical improvements where possible. This may include extending the walklights in downtown to give pedestrians greater time to safely cross streets, traffic calming techniques on local streets to reduce vehicle speeds and additional patrol vehicles to enforce speed restrictions. This also extends to improving the railroad pedestrian crossings (ex: reduce pavement where possible) and partner with Amtrak to better understand railroad safety best practices.

### **Signage / Wayfinding / Gateway Plan and Improvements**

While there are many signs in the Village, a more coordinated signage system could better communicate the location of community facilities and destinations as well as locations off the main corridors that are not as easy to find, including parking and main attractions.

### **Establish and Operate Incubator Center for Entrepreneurs**

The incubator center is planned as a location for small, modular office or retail space and conference rooms that would be available for low rent to selected entrepreneurs and start-up businesses. These businesses would apply and need to satisfy certain qualification standards that would be created by the DDA. To establish the Center, the DDA would acquire property or establish a lease with a property owner. Then, it would have to rehabilitate the building as necessary so it was ready for entrepreneurs and start-up business to use.

### **Public Wi-Fi**

Establishing public wireless internet service in the downtown district would be an economic development incentive to businesses considering locating in the Village. It would remove a common barrier that often exists for conducting business in a small town. In addition, it would also provide an incentive for residents to consider living in the downtown and accessing this service from downtown apartments. Further, providing public Wi-Fi would make it easier to for residents who work at home to stay longer in Three Oaks rather than having to return to their permanent residence.

### **Covered Activity / Event Space**

There are several events that are based in the downtown, however, there is no covered area or shelter for these events in the downtown to facilitate their operation, particularly in bad weather. This project would provide such a facility.

### **Chamberlain Path Sculpture Park**

Chamberlain Path currently contains several sculptures and open space and acts a functional recreational area. Additional landscape maintenance and improvements may be necessary in the future including maintenance and improvements to paths, plantings, lighting, signage, drinking fountains, and/or hardscape improvements.

### **Redevelopment and Acquisition of Property**

The DDA has authority to acquire and redevelop properties in an effort to improve the downtown district. By acquiring properties, the DDA takes control over potential redevelopment of the property and/or the uses that would be located at the site. This is one method the DDA can use to direct the type of development that occurs in the downtown and to implement certain desired changes in the district.

## **CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE**

An estimated schedule for the completion of the proposed projects is outlined in Table 4.3. Over time, as the District changes, budgets fluctuate, and opportunities present themselves, specific projects may be moved into a different phase for implementation. Moving projects from one phase to another shall not require an amendment of the Plan. In approving the project, the DDA, at that time, shall provide an explanation as to why the shift was justified.

On-going projects are those projects that are likely to continue on an annual basis throughout the life of the Plan. Many are likely to start within the next one to five years but may not start until later in the Plan. In some instances, these projects are already on-going in the Village or by some other entity. Phase I projects were identified as high priority projects addressing immediate needs. These are projects that will likely be implemented within the first ten years of the Development Plan. Phase II projects were also identified as priority projects but not as a high priority. They will likely be implemented during the next 10 year period (2030-2040). Finally, the Phase III projects are likely to be addressed during the final 10 years (2041-2050) of the Plan when additional revenue may be available to the DDA.

## PORTIONS TO SELL, DONATE, LEASE OR EXCHANGE

Currently, the DDA does not own any property. The Village leases the Village Hall offices and associated park space from the County. Currently, there are no immediate plans for the Village DDA to sell, donate, exchange, or lease any of the property that they currently own but the Village may be interested in property ownership of the Village Hall offices should the opportunity be available in the future.

## ZONING, STREET, AND UTILITY CHANGES

Although there are several zoning districts represented within the Development Area, there are no immediate plans or need to change the zoning within the Development Area. Additionally, no changes to streets, street levels, or intersections are anticipated at this time. However, it is possible that future development, infill redevelopment, streetscape or parking improvements may include some redesign to the streets, parking and access lanes in and around the downtown to create a more efficient and pedestrian friendly circulation system.

Utility improvements are also likely by year 2050; infrastructure improvements continue to be a priority of the Village and several key utility arteries pass through the Development Area. As other projects occur such as street improvements, pathway installation, or parking lot enhancements, it is likely that the Village and DDA may also take advantage of the opportunity to improve or replace utilities.

## ALTERATION OF EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

The extent of demolition, repair, or alteration of existing public improvements are not yet known for certain since funding for specific projects has not been committed nor design plans been completed. No structure or improvement is specifically designated for demolition in this *2050 Plan*. There are many existing improvements (ex: streetscape, parking lots, etc.) that may be altered or repaired as a result of the other proposed improvements, as detailed in this *2050 Plan*, with some additional improvements that are unknown at this time due to a need for a formal analysis first.

Also, two proposed programs would allow for the alteration of existing improvements - the Infrastructure Improvements Program and the Downtown Façade Improvement Program. Money has been set aside for the DDA to operate and finance these programs, although they may ultimately partner with a private institution to provide low interest loans and financing.

## COST ESTIMATES FOR IMPROVEMENTS AND FINANCING

Public improvements contemplated to be completed over the next 30-years, along with estimated costs and time of completion, are included in Table 4.3. The projects have been grouped into phases for scheduling purposes and cost estimates are very preliminary because construction or design drawings have not yet been prepared. A percentage has been factored into the cost estimates to cover the cost of some contingencies and associated administration, engineering, planning, and design work.

Funding for the public projects is proposed from a variety of sources including: tax increment revenues, federal and state grants (including CDBG, MDNR, and MDOT), private donations, partnerships with public and private state agencies, and additional sources to be determined. Each project will offer a unique funding opportunity, and the DDA will take advantage of the opportunity that allows for successful implementation of the project and as many additional projects as possible. The proposed improvements include property developments, pathways and pedestrian access, parking lot improvements or additions, and business development.

## VACANT LAND

There is very little vacant land available within the Development Area as almost all of the downtown district is built out. However, some land exists to the west of Featherbone Street and there is a large lot located at the northeast corner of Memorial and Linden. In addition, a few commercial buildings are vacant and available for new tenants. These few vacancies are interspersed throughout the district and are not a dominant characteristic of the Village.

## **PROPOSED PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LAND USES AND OPEN SPACE**

Proposed land uses shall be consistent with the *2050 Plan* and Future Land Use Map. It is the intent of this Development Plan to encourage infill development, redevelopment, and expansion of existing uses consistent with the *2050 Plan*. It is not anticipated that there will be a significant shift in land uses within the DDA in the near future, which is consistent with the Village's Zoning Ordinance and *2050 Plan* - the district will remain primarily mixed-use in nature.

The portions of the Development Area that are intended to be left as open space are areas that are currently designated and used as open spaces. This includes existing parks and recreation spaces – Dewey Canon Park, Carver Park, Chamberlain Path, and the Community Gardens – and surrounding facilities. It is intended that these areas will be maintained as green space in the future and retain their existing use. Projects to be completed by the DDA would result in upgrades, maintenance, and modern amenities being provided at these facilities but would not alter the substance or intent of the use.

## **DESIGNATION OF PERSONS**

The majority of projects to be completed are public improvements. All public improvement projects undertaken as part of this Plan will remain in public ownership for the public benefit. Over the course of the Plan, the DDA may purchase properties with the intent to redevelop them and sell them or to use them for an alternative purpose, such as parking. Besides these uses, it is unknown the person or persons to whom such property may be leased or conveyed at this time.

## **BIDDING, LEASING, PURCHASING, OR CONVEYING PROCEDURES**

Any land acquisitions will be in accordance with DDA and Village policies regarding acquisition of property as well as with the following: Act 344 of the Michigan Public Acts of 1945, as amended; Act 87 of the Michigan Public Acts of 1980, as amended; the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policy Act of 1970 (Uniform Act), as amended; and the regulations promulgated there under by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. It is a policy of the DDA to inform a prospective seller of real estate of these policies and to provide them a copy of such policies and/or regulations for which the DDA must comply.

## **DEVELOPMENT AREA POPULATION**

Based on the number of residential units located in the DDA (23 units in 2018) and an average of 1.5 individuals per unit, there are approximately 34 persons residing in the District. This *2050 Plan* does not propose to displace any individuals.



# 05 STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN 2050

*Downtown Three Oaks, MI (credit: McKenna, 2018)*



*Downtown Three Oaks, MI (credit: McKenna)*

## VISION FRAMEWORK

It is the intent for the *2050 Plan* to serve as a guide for Village officials, residents, and landowners in making future decisions regarding land use, infrastructure, budgeting, and all other choices that will impact the future of the community. These decisions shall be consistent with an identified overall vision for the community.

Three Oaks is already a prosperous place for the residents and businesses that live here and offers a place to recreate, spend time, and enjoy culture, community, and nature. The Village is well positioned to capitalize on those quality of life measures and to celebrate its vitality. The *2050 Plan* seeks to ensure future prosperity by building a welcoming and desirable community for full-time residents that preserves and enhances the well-established small home town atmosphere, but one that also balances and plans for seasonal residents and visitors.

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES & GOALS

The Village of Three Oaks Planning Commission and Downtown Development Authority has developed a list of guiding principles and goals based on the results of analysis, public input and input from the 2018 Harbor Country Assessment. The following statements are intended to provide an operational framework for future decision making and should be reviewed annually and modified as necessary by the Planning Commission, Downtown Development Authority and Village Council.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPERITY GUIDING PRINCIPLE:

Future development in the Village of Three Oaks shall provide increased economic and employment opportunities for the current and future generations while increasing the tax base of the Village and increasing Three Oaks' presence in the greater Harbor Country market area.

### Goal 1

#### DEVELOPMENT

Three Oaks is comprised of a dynamic and vibrant mix of housing, businesses, and activities designed to be attractive to a variety of demographic groups. This simultaneous and contradictory process of maintenance and evolution is critical for the community to continue to keep current and attract new residents and businesses to the community while at the same time preserving Three Oaks' small town character.

### Goal 2

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Provide opportunities for appropriately sited and attractively designed retail, service, and industrial development at appropriate locations within the community. Recognizing that tourism is an important driver in the local economy, incorporate context sensitive short-term rental property within the Village's downtown and neighborhoods that adds social diversity and economic value.

### Goal 3

#### DOWNTOWN

Future development in Three Oaks shall respect the traditional character and fabric of the community, especially its downtown core, while expanding the vitality and range of services, including infrastructure available in the downtown area. Additional goals related to the DDA are located in Chapter 4.

### Goal 4

#### UNIQUE, YEAR ROUND COMMUNITY

Through physical improvements and new uses, Three Oaks is set apart from the other communities in Harbor Country as a great place to live, to visit, and as a thriving rural community. This requires working with businesses and services to make sure Three Oaks not only a seasonal community, but one that provides services and amenities to residents and visitors year-round.

### Goal 5

#### TRANSPORTATION

Provide a quality, well-maintained transportation system in the Village that integrates various modes of transportation, ensures a high quality of life for residents, and provides for the efficient movement of goods and persons throughout the community.

### Goal 6

#### INFRASTRUCTURE

Establish and carry-out a multi-year capital improvement program to incrementally improve Village infrastructure, with special emphasis on accommodating the existing community and providing opportunities for future manageable growth.

## ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP GUIDING PRINCIPLE:

A variety of natural features exist within the Village of Three Oaks and shall be protected for the enjoyment and use of future generations. As future development occurs within Three Oaks, this development shall be done in a manner that enhances these sensitive natural features and promotes their enjoyment by residents and visitors alike long into the future.

### Goal 7

#### NATURAL RESOURCES

Protect sensitive natural features of the community and maintain a rural character and sense of community.

### Goal 8

#### CONNECTIVITY

Encourage sidewalks, bike lanes and bike trails in order to promote recreation and non-motorized transportation, while creating enhanced access to the natural beauty of the community. A walkable downtown and connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods and other regional trail systems is also a driver of economic development and a positive contributor to a destination community that should be enhanced.

### Goal 9

#### LOCAL FOODS / CULTURE

Promote local farms and gardens and provide connections to local food sources by promoting and enhancing the Farmers' Market and community gardens in the community.

## SOCIAL AND EQUITY GUIDING PRINCIPLE:

To ensure the continued vitality of the community, Three Oaks must maintain and enhance the quality of life in the community and enrich the social welfare of all residents.

### Goal 10

#### NEIGHBORHOODS

Three Oaks will preserve the charm and built patterns of its traditional residential neighborhoods and ensure that new developments are context sensitive to the character and form of the Village and to maintain new open spaces, parks and other community facilities with any new developments.

### Goal 11

#### HOUSING

Set a standard for quality housing for all residents in the community and provide opportunities for new development in designated areas that matches the traditional character of the community. New single-family housing, rentals, multi-family housing, senior housing development, assisted living, and nursing home facilities should be at the proper scale and character to be compatible with existing residential single-family structures.

### Goal 12

#### PARKS, ARTS, CULTURE AND SOCIAL INTERACTION

Maintain and enhance existing community parks and facilities and promote the community as a center of arts and culture.

Create an environment and provide opportunities that encourage positive interaction and collaboration among residents and visitors to Three Oaks.

# FUTURE LAND USE

Consistent with the goals and objectives in this Plan, Three Oaks intends to remain an attractive, desirable rural community with a thriving, year-round traditional downtown and ample natural spaces and parks, with an emphasis on providing a high quality of life for its residents and visitors. Focused on development patterns, coupled with the preservation of natural resources and enhancements to its walkable downtown core, the Village is well positioned to continue to offer residents and visitors the best possible blend of amenities and character.

## FUTURE LAND USE MAP AND DESIGNATIONS

The Future Land Use Map, which is presented in this chapter, provides the framework to direct zoning and land use decisions and builds upon past growth and prevailing development patterns. Future changes to the Zoning Ordinance text and map are expected over time as the economic, social and physical climate changes. This document should serve as a guide in evaluating any future proposed changes. The following land use categories are represented on the Future Land Map and were developed from the existing conditions in Three Oaks today, the framework laid out in the existing zoning code, and a vision for the future growth and development.

### Low Density Residential

Neighborhoods are the building blocks out of which a community is built. In Three Oaks, neighborhoods are created based on history and the social interactions of the residents who live there. In low density residential areas, typical blocks feature a traditional grid layout, charming housing stock with various architecture styles and a tight configuration designed to foster social interaction. The sense of community and connections of the neighborhood is created through the shared interests of the residents who live there.

Future residential development should incorporate these same characteristics in order to extend the fabric of the community and ensure continuity across the neighborhoods, old and new.

**Appropriate Land Uses.** Uses in this category include detached residential dwelling units, schools, parks, and other compatible municipal and civic uses.

**Streets and Transportation.** Roads follow a traditional grid pattern with common elements such as sidewalks, pedestrian scale lighting, and a tree canopy.

**Building and Site Design.** New dwelling units or substantial modifications to structures should be designed with quality materials, and conform to the dominant architectural typology of the block. New developments with “cookie-cutter housing” are strongly discouraged. Alternative architectural styles may be appropriate in some neighborhoods, provided the character of the residential block is enhanced. Garages should be located in rear yards.

Cluster development and open space preservation techniques are highly encouraged for new developments to protect valuable natural resources and provide additional public green space to residents. New residential areas should contain mini neighborhood parks, similar to Dillard Park, located on the north side of town at the corner of Cherry and Walnut Streets, which is a staple of the neighborhood and well-used.



*Planned Character*



*Planned Character*

### Medium Density Residential

The small pockets of medium density residential are proposed to remain where apartment buildings or duplexes are already located or where the existing zoning calls for multiple family. This is mainly in the southwestern portion of the Village along Locust Street and along Linden Street.

**Appropriate Land Uses.** Recommended uses in this category include apartments, condominiums, townhouses, and duplexes. The units may be in stand-alone buildings, or may be clustered in complexes.

**Streets and Transportation.** Residential streets should be designed for slow traffic and easy pedestrian and bicycle usage. However, they should form a connected, logical pattern with as many connections to the existing street system as possible, including connections to existing neighborhoods. Cul-de-sacs are highly discouraged.

**Building and Site Design.** Multi-family buildings should be constructed with high-quality materials, should be architecturally compatible with their surroundings and in harmony with adjacent uses in terms of scale, massing, and site design. Stand-alone sites should be designed with attractive entrances and porches that allow residences to experience the street. Complexes should be designed to preserve trees and other natural features. They should also include common area amenities and green space, be internally walkable, and connect logically to their surroundings for both automobiles and pedestrians.

Garages should be located so that they do not dominate the front façade of the home. Parking lots should be sufficient for residents and visitors, but not excessive. They should be well-maintained, landscaped, and designed to be safe for pedestrians, especially children.

### High Density Residential

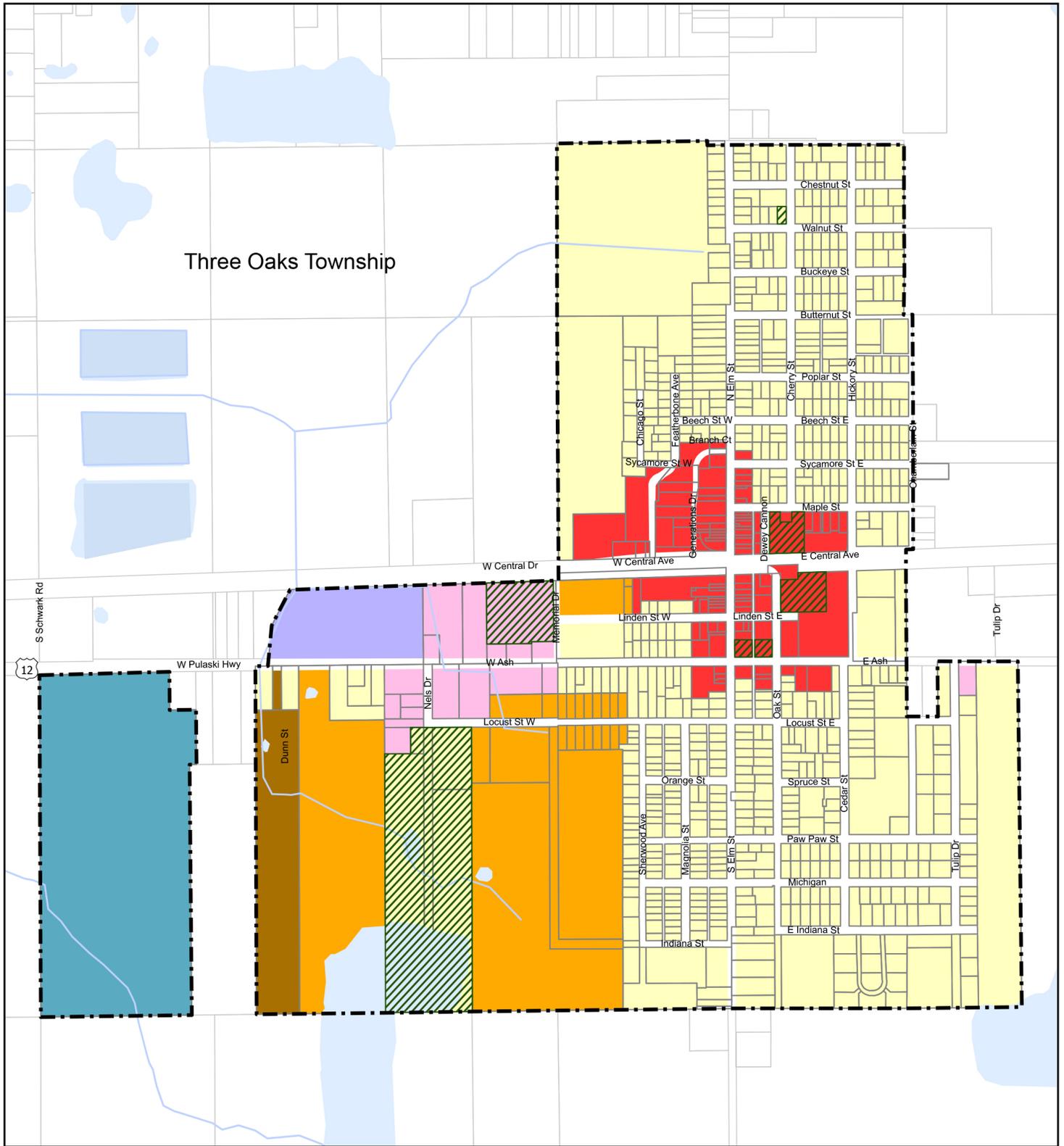
There is little need or demand for high density residential development in the Village of Three Oaks. The only current development in the designation is the manufactured housing park located in the southwest corner of the Village, accessible from Ash Street (US-12). This designated area is projected to remain in the high density residential designation.

**Appropriate Land Uses.** Recommended uses in this category manufactured housing parks and high density residential, such a large apartment complexes that are greater than three stories.

**Streets and Transportation.** Residential streets should be designed for slow traffic and easy pedestrian and bicycle usage. However, they should form a connected, logical pattern with as many connections to the existing street system as possible, including connections to existing neighborhoods. Cul-de-sacs are highly discouraged.

**Building and Site Design.** Multi-family buildings should be built with high-quality materials, should be architecturally compatible with their surroundings. Complexes should be designed to preserve trees and other natural features. They should also include common area amenities and green space, be internally walkable, and connect logically to their surroundings for both automobiles and pedestrians.

Parking lots should be sufficient for residents and visitors, but not excessive. They should be well-maintained, landscaped, and designed to be safe for pedestrians, especially children.



# Future Land Use Map

Village of Three Oaks, Berrien County, Michigan



January 8, 2020

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
|  Low Density Residential    |  Village Mixed Use  |  Enterprise Park                                     |
|  Medium Density Residential |  General Commercial |  Park/Recreation                                     |
|  High Density Residential   |  Industrial         |  Water Bodies, Rivers, Streams, Drains, and Wetlands |

Data Source: Michigan Geographic Framework 2017, Berrien County 2018 Village Parcel Data and 2008 Surrounding Parcel Data, McKenna





### Village Mixed Use

Downtown Three Oaks is a focal point for the community socially and economically. The district encompasses not only the retail uses along Elm Street but also residential uses, entertainment destinations, public and institutional uses, churches and schools that make the Village's historical center a gathering place for the entire community, including visitors and second homeowners.

The Village mixed use land use district stretches from approximately Sycamore Street to Ash Street (US-12) and from Featherbone Avenue to Hickory Street. This area forms the core of the community and its vision is a coherent, walkable district that offers a variety of year round businesses and attractions. As the core of the community, the downtown establishes the character and image of the community. There are wide, well-lit sidewalks, historic building facades, and an abundance of streets trees. Therefore, it is important that the desired, traditional character be maintained and enhanced.

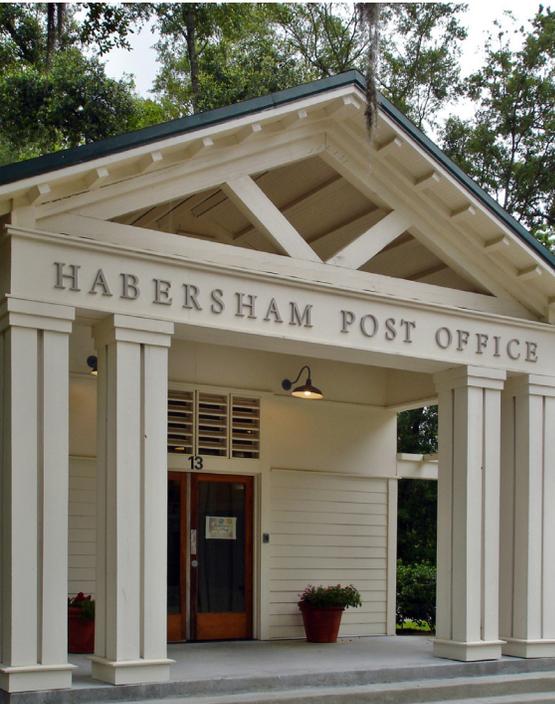
**Appropriate Land Uses.** Recommended uses in this category include a mixture of commercial, entertainment, residential, and public uses and destinations catering to the broad spectrum of the community, from schoolchildren to retirees and from year-round residents to weekend tourists. Businesses intended for this category include service, professional, and retail businesses that encourage foot traffic and do not require large parking lots. Institutional and recreational uses, especially those revolving around the arts, are strongly encouraged. Automotive oriented uses such as gas stations, auto repair, or drive-through facilities are not appropriate.

It is the intent of this Plan to also encourage residential uses downtown. Examples of permitted residential uses would be upper-floor apartments located above retail businesses, townhouse-style buildings, and small apartment buildings that are compatible with the existing character of the district.

**Streets and Transportation.** Downtown streets should all have on-street parking, curbs, streetscape, pedestrian scale lighting, landscape planter beds, pedestrian crossings, and other elements that enhance and encourage walkability and business vitality. The streets should be a walkable and attractive with visible intersections and traffic calming measures. Most streets already have these elements.

**Building and Site Design.** Infill buildings should be built right to the sidewalk, with transparent, welcoming first-floor storefronts. In downtown Three Oaks, the typical building façade is 1-2 story masonry construction. All facades should incorporate the following, at a minimum: (1) decorative cornice that caps the building; (2) upper masonry facade with regularly spaced windows; and (3) transparent storefront with pedestrian scale entrance and large window displays. Signage should be attractive, with projecting signs encouraged. Upper floors should have ornamental designs to add interest.

Parking should be provided behind establishments or along side streets in private or public lots, as well as on the street. The design of parking lots should be attractive and environmentally conscious, with high quality landscaping.



*Planned Character*

### General Commercial

Areas for general commercial are located along the Village’s primary vehicular corridor, US-12 (Ash Street) and call for retail uses designed to be accessed by automobile, including restaurants and banks as well as larger centers such as Harding’s and Family Dollar. While these areas cater to the local population, they are also designed to capture business from pass-through traffic.

These uses are important for providing needed goods and services to the residents and visitors of Three Oaks. However, the Plan does not call for significant expansion of this area so as not to create competition for the existing uses here or in the downtown. This will also allow for existing vacancies to be filled and limit potential for increased vacancies.

**Appropriate Land Uses.** Recommended uses include office, general retail commercial, food service, and entertainment uses. Automotive oriented uses such as gas stations, auto repair, or drive-through facilities should be located in this district, provided that parking areas and loading zones are properly buffered and landscaped.

**Streets and Transportation.** Sites should be so designed as to incorporate shared access drives and connections between parcels (“cross access”) in order to reduce the number of curb cuts onto the street. The streetscape should be well designed and landscaped. Streets connections and/or pedestrian connections should be provided between commercial areas and adjacent neighborhoods.

**Building and Site Design.** Buildings facing US-12 streets may be located close to the street or set back to permit front-yard parking. Buildings should be constructed of high-quality materials which wrap around the entire building and feature attractive signage. Facades facing public right-of-way should be highly transparent. Parking areas may be located in front, side, or rear yards for buildings, provided that they are broken up with landscaped islands and trees. Shared parking is encouraged.



*Planned Character*

### Industrial

The Future Land Use Map identifies Industrial areas primarily based on where industrial land use already exists, along US-12 (Ash Street) as it extends through the western portion of the Village

Given the location of industrial development on a major corridor into the Village, efforts to minimize land use and traffic conflicts, enhance the streetscape, and establish the corridor as a community gateway must be taken.

**Appropriate Land Uses.** Recommended uses in this category include a mixture of low intensity industrial development such as research and testing, innovative commercial and cottage industry uses, especially those that support the cultural and artisan nature of the community.

**Streets and Transportation.** Connectivity is important, and cross access connections should be created as part of any development. On site and connecting walking and biking paths are also recommended for employees, and the streets should be designed to be sufficient for truck traffic, without making them unsafe for pedestrians.

**Building and Site Design.** Buildings should be designed to be long-lasting and to support efficient industrial and/or business practices. High-quality appearance is encouraged. However, sites should be designed to minimize off-site impacts and to reduce pollution and site contamination to the extent possible.

Parking lots should be sufficient to support employee parking and truck maneuvering, but should not be excessively large and broken up with landscaped islands and trees.

### Enterprise Park

Enterprise Park, 70 acres of undeveloped farmland situated on the western edge of the Village along US-12, is identified for future industrial land use. Consistent with the Village's goals for Economic Development, Transportation and Infrastructure, the 70-acre site is envisioned for planned light industrial development that is both consistent in external effect and complementary to nearby industrial uses.

Significant expansion of commercial land use on the Enterprise Park property or along this area of US-12 is not recommended due to issues of compatibility with surrounding land use; the aesthetic character of the area and corridor as a whole; the goal of maintaining the viability of the downtown district; and, the potential influence on the value of downtown properties. However, a planned development approach to mixed use (compact commercial, residential, institutional and recreational) could be considered appropriate where such a development would support Village housing goals, protect the character and stability of adjacent and surrounding properties, as well as the downtown, and facilitate compatibility of design.

**Appropriate Land Uses.** Recommended industrial uses include a mixture of low intensity industrial development such as research, testing, and innovative commercial and cottage industry uses, especially those that support the cultural and artisan nature of the community.

Recommended uses in a planned mixed-use development include a combination of small-scale, compact commercial uses; mixed density residential with varied housing types; and public uses and destinations, especially those revolving around the arts.

**Streets and Transportation.** Connectivity is important, and cross access connections should be created as part of any industrial development. On site and connecting walking and biking paths are also recommended for employees, and the streets should be designed to be sufficient for truck traffic, without making them unsafe for pedestrians.

A planned mixed-use development should be provided streets designed for slow traffic with elements that enhance and encourage walkability and business vitality, such as streetscape, pedestrian scale lighting, and traffic calming measures. They should form a connected, logical pattern that connects neighborhoods and businesses within the development. Cul-de-sacs are discouraged.

**Building and Site Design.** Buildings for industrial use should be designed to be long-lasting and to support efficient industrial and/or business practices. High quality appearance is encouraged. However, sites should be designed to minimize off-site impacts and to reduce pollution and site contamination to the extent possible. Parking lots should be sufficient to support employee parking and truck maneuvering, but should not be excessively large and should be broken up with landscaped island and trees.

A planned mixed-use development should be designed to preserve natural features and include common area amenities and green space, be internally walkable, and provide logical connections for both automobiles and pedestrians. Housing should be constructed with high-quality materials and be architecturally compatible and in harmony with the surrounding area in terms of scale, massing, and site design. Commercial buildings should be small-scale, appropriately oriented within the development, architecturally compatible and constructed with high-quality materials that wrap around the entire building. Parking areas should be shared, well-situated, and incorporate attractive and environmentally-conscious design with high quality landscaping.

### Park / Recreation and Sensitive Area Overlay

As an overlay district, it is intended for areas designated as parks and open space to remain as public green space for the enjoyment of residents and visitors. Areas within this designation can be used for both passive and active recreation. Natural areas and developed parklands should be compatible with the surrounding landscape and neighborhood.

Also included in this classification is the Village's sensitive natural environments, including water bodies and wetlands, which are to be protected with any future development and enhanced as character areas of the larger Three Oaks' community.

**Appropriate Land Uses.** All areas should maintain uses which promote the inclusion of the public and provide recreational and gathering opportunities. Parks should be maintained and upgraded as needed.

**Streets and Transportation.** Existing pedestrian and cyclist trails and bike lanes should be maintained. Additional pathways and associated amenities (i.e. bicycle racks, water fountains, wayfinding signage, lighting, etc.) should be constructed as needed. The connection of such pathways to link the parks is strongly encouraged.

**Building and Site Design.** There are no specific recommendations for the Parks district, although high quality architecture is encouraged. Buildings should be well lit, highly visible, and provide public amenities. Sufficient parking should be provided for public facilities and designed to minimize stormwater runoff and implement low-impact development techniques (pervious pavement, bioswales, etc.).



*Planned Character*

# ZONING PLAN

A “zoning plan” is required by the Michigan planning and zoning enabling acts. Section 33(d) of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, PA 33 of 2008, as amended, requires that the plan prepared under this act serve as the basis for the zoning plan. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, PA 110 of 2006, as amended, requires a zoning plan be prepared as the basis for the zoning ordinance. It must be based on an inventory of conditions pertinent to zoning in the municipality and the purposes for which zoning may be adopted (as described in Section 201 of the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act). The zoning plan identifies the zoning districts and their purposes, as well as the basic standards proposed to control the height, area, bulk, location, and use of buildings and premises in the Village. These matters are regulated by the specific terms in the zoning ordinance.

The zoning plan is a key implementation tool to achieve the vision of the Master Plan. In order to realize that vision, the Village must ensure that ordinances and regulations permit the type and style of development recommended by the Master Plan.

## DISTRICTS AND DIMENSIONAL STANDARDS

There are 12 zoning districts in the Village (including three overlay districts), each of which is described in the Zoning Ordinance. There, uses permitted in each district are provided. In addition, the schedule of lot, yard, and area requirements provides specific area, height, and bulk requirements for each district. The Zoning Map is also a part of the Zoning Ordinance and illustrates the distribution of these districts throughout the Village.

## RELATIONSHIP TO THE MASTER PLAN

This *2050 Plan* establishes the vision, goals, objectives, and policies for growth and development in Three Oaks for approximately the next twenty years. It includes a specific strategy for managing growth and change in land uses and infrastructure over this period, and, as required by statute, will be periodically reviewed and updated at least once each five years. This section presents the Zoning Plan, along with the rest of the Master Plan, is intended to guide the implementation of and future changes to the Three Oaks Zoning Ordinance. It is recommended to continue to review and update the Zoning Ordinance for compliance with the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, Public Act 110 of 2006, as amended, on an annual basis.

Table 5.1 provides a list of proposed future land use designations and their corresponding zoning district. For each designation, recommendations for use, placement street treatment and building design and style are provided earlier in this Plan:

**Table 5.1: Zoning Plan**

Future Land Use Designations	Zoning District(s)
<b>Low Density Residential</b>	R-1 Single Family Residential
	CD Conservation Development
	CO Corridor Overlay
<b>Medium Density Residential</b>	R-2 Multiple Family Residential
	CD Conservation Development
	CO Corridor Overlay
<b>High Density Residential</b>	R-3 Mobile Home Residential
	CD Conservation Development
	CO Corridor Overlay
<b>Village Mixed Use</b>	MU-1 Downtown Core
	MU-2 General Mixed-Use
	MU-3 Neighborhood Mixed-Use
	CO Corridor Overlay
<b>General Commercial</b>	C-1 General Commercial
	CO Corridor Overlay
<b>Industrial</b>	I-1 Industrial
	CO Corridor Overlay
<b>Enterprise Park</b>	MU-3 Neighborhood Mixed-Use
	I-1 Industrial
	CO Corridor Overlay
<b>Park / Recreation</b>	n/a

# STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

*Plan 2050* recommends a future vision for Three Oaks—to build upon the Village’s existing assets and make the most of opportunities that can attract new development and residents to the community, to create an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable community where people want to live, work, visit and play.

Successful implementation of this Plan will be the result of daily actions taken by elected and appointed officials, Village staff, the Downtown Development Authority, the Parks and Recreation Board, the Planning Commission, public agencies, and private citizens and organizations. The following chart presents a detailed summary of all of the recommended implementation activities, who is responsible for completing the activity, and available funding resources for each activity.

## COMPLETED PROJECTS SINCE THE PREVIOUS 2030AKS MASTER PLAN:

Approximately a quarter of all projects which were originally identified in the *2030aks 2011 Master Plan* for implementation have been successfully accomplished over the past eight-plus years.

One such high-priority project was a major update to the 2003 Zoning Ordinance so that it would be consistent with the 2011 Master Plan. Adopted in 2017, the updated Village of Three Oaks Zoning Ordinance and Map contain a series of mixed-use districts, corridor overlays, and several architectural guidelines for new construction and redevelopment projects. Additionally, the Parks and Recreation Board adopted a new, five-year Parks and Recreation Master Plan in 2017 and has made considerable improvements to the Village’s parks system, including enhancements to Carver Memorial Park and Dillard Park.

The DDA and the Village have also been successful in making infrastructure improvements to the Chamberlain Path. The DDA also implemented a wayfinding system for the Downtown district and has spent considerable efforts creating, developing, and promoting community events and activities.

## ACTION PLAN PRIORITIZATION

Projects in the Action Plan were given the following priorities based on the following scale:

- 1. High Priority:** These projects should be given immediate and concentrated effort. They are the first projects that should be started after the Plan has been adopted.
- 2. Medium Priority:** These projects are those necessary to implement the Plan, but either depend on the completion of High Priority projects or require more complex or coordinated efforts / funding sources.
- 3. Low Priority:** These projects implement elements of the Plan but are not urgent and can be delayed for a longer period of time. Further, these projects may be limited by budgetary constraints.

**Table 5.2: 2050 Action Plan**

	Goal Categories	Priority	Timeframe	Responsibility			Funding		
				Village	Other Govt.	Private	Public	Private	TIF / DDA
<b>Development Projects</b>									
1.1	Maintain, enhance, and redevelop existing residential, commercial, and mixed-use developments to maximize use of existing resources and infrastructure and curb sprawl.	Medium	On-going	VC PC	3OT		+		
1.2	Encourage and facilitate use of compact development approaches, such as the Conservation Development of the Zoning Ordinance to reduce sprawl, preserve open space and maintain the character of a rural community.	High	1-2 years	PC VC	3OT		+	+	
1.3	Review and update the Master Plan at least every five years to address changing conditions, redevelopment opportunities, and the needs of the community (at a joint meeting of all govt. entities).	Low	Annually	PC VC	DDA	CM	+		+
<b>Economic Development Projects</b>									
2.1	Create opportunities that will increase permanent, full time employment jobs in the community and increase the tax base without negatively impacting the surrounding area.	High	On-going	VC PC	DDA BC 3OT	BO CM	+	+	+
2.2	Work with regional economic development agencies to attract new companies and businesses that are complimentary to the existing Village uses.	High	On-going	VC	DDA BC 3OT	BO	+		+
2.3	Concentrate industrial development near similar existing uses to protect established residential neighborhoods and utilize existing infrastructure and services.	High	1-2 years	PC			+		
2.4	Direct local commercial development within the DDA district, near existing services and infrastructure.	High	1-2 years	PC	DDA		+		+
2.5	Incentivize local and unique destinations that further define and enhance the rural character of the Three Oaks area.	High	On-going	VC	DDA BC 3OT	BO CM	+		+
<b>Downtown (DDA) Projects</b>									
-	See Chapter 4 for a complete list of projects for the DDA.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Unique, Year-Round Community Projects</b>									
4.1	Create a brand (i.e. logo, font, theme, slogan – a central message that people will immediately identify with Three Oaks) for the community to market itself to current and prospective residents and for use and implementation with all future development and improvements. The existing work the Village has done with a rural community designation could be built upon to achieve the desired brand and subsequently utilized by the DDA.	Medium	2-3 years	VC	DDA	BO HO CM	+		+
4.2	Increase code enforcement and property maintenance to ensure quality of life remains high and properties are kept to the highest standard.	High	1 year	VC	DDA	HO CM	+		+
4.3	Promote and market the assets and events in Three Oaks to attract visitors and new residents / businesses to the community.	High	On-going	VC	DDA BC 3OT	BO CM	+		+

**CATEGORIES KEY**

VC, Village Council  
PC, Planning Commission

DDA, Downtown Development Authority  
PR, Parks and Recreation Commission

BC, Berrien County  
3OT, Three Oaks Township

HO, Home Owners  
BO, Business Owners

MDOT, MI Dept. of Transportation  
CM, Community Members

Table 5.2: 2050 Action Plan

	Goal Categories	Priority	Timeframe	Responsibility			Funding		
				Village	Other Govt.	Private	Public	Private	TIF / DDA
<b>Transportation Projects</b>									
5.1	Improve and maintain the road network and provide for on-going maintenance of the circulation system.	High	Annually	VC	MDOT BC DDA		+		+
5.2	Implement traffic calming access management best practices along primary corridors of the Village, particularly Ash Street (US-12), such as shared driveways, medians, and landscaping. Collaborate with the Township and County to determine appropriately signed Truck Routes.	Medium	2-3 years	VC	MDOT DDA BC		+		+
5.3	Include non-motorized transportation (i.e. sidewalks, bike lanes, etc.) as infrastructure components in all future street projects.	High	1 year	VC	MDOT DDA		+		+
5.4	Address the road network and circulation system in and around downtown to provide efficient access to businesses, esp. those not located along Elm Street.	Low	3-5 years	PC VC	DDA MDOT	BO	+	+	+
<b>Infrastructure Projects</b>									
6.1	Continue to update the existing Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) on an annual basis which includes incremental improvements to Village services and how to fund them. Emphasize maintenance to ensure infrastructure systems continue to operate effectively.	High	Annually	VC			+		
6.2	Minimize the expansion of existing infrastructure until current systems are improved (unless expansion is done at private expense).	Medium	2-3 years	PC VC	DDA BC	BO	+	+	
6.3	Work with utility companies to bury utility lines and require future utility lines to be underground.	High	1-2 years	VC	DDA	BO	+		
6.4	Provide public Wi-Fi throughout the community and improve cellular service, consistent with the 2013 Quality of Cell Service report by the Southwest MI Planning Commission and other reports.	Medium	2-3 years	VC	BC DDA		+		
<b>Natural Resource Projects</b>									
7.1	Retain and enhance open space in and around new development to provide green space in the neighborhoods and protect sensitive areas (i.e. wetlands, woodlands, etc.).	High	1-2 years	PR VC PC		CM HO	+		
7.2	Enrich and expand natural habitats in dedicated areas throughout the community. Provide areas dedicated to both preservation and active recreation.	High	On-going	PR VC		CM	+		
7.3	Incorporate best practices in stormwater management into site plan review and development reviews to protect groundwater resources and reduce impacts caused by high water table.	High	1-2 years	PC			+		
7.4	Provide standards to guide sustainable practices such as renewable energy resources, composting, rain barrels, low-impact development storm water management, and green design. Implement green and blue infrastructure in Village owned property and parks to set a community example.	Medium	2-3 yeras	VC PR PC	DDA	CM HO	+		+

**CATEGORIES KEY**

VC, Village Council      DDA, Downtown Development Authority      BC, Berrien County      HO, Home Owners      MDOT, MI Dept. of Transportation  
 PC, Planning Commission      PR, Parks and Recreation Commission      3OT, Three Oaks Township      BO, Business Owners      CM, Community Members

**Table 5.2: 2050 Action Plan**

	Goal Categories	Priority	Timeframe	Responsibility			Funding		
				Village	Other Govt.	Private	Public	Private	TIF / DDA
<b>Connectivity Projects</b>									
8.1	Attend and support regional greenway meetings and establish and maintain good relationships with adjacent communities and regional agencies and continue to connect Three Oaks to the regional pathway system. Identify additional opportunities for pedestrian traffic entering and existing the Village.	High	On-going	VC PC PR	DDA BC 3OT		+		
8.2	Maintain and enhance the non-motorized network (which includes bicycle lanes, bicycle parking, and other amenities) along the major routes in the Village, including but not limited to Ash Street (US-12) and Elm Street. This includes the expansion of bike lanes along Three Oaks Road between Kruger and Stickles Road, on both sides of the road, and on Elm Street.	Medium	2-3 years	VC	3OT BC		+		
8.3	Create a sidewalk plan for the Village to establish new and repair existing sidewalks throughout the community, in conjunction with the 2019 Sidewalk Committee. This project includes identifying and gaining easements for sidewalk gaps and creating a funding source for improvements.	High	1 year	VC PC	DDA		+		+
<b>Local Foods / Cultural Projects</b>									
9.1	Create additional opportunities and linkages between farmers and food growers in surrounding area and Three Oaks residents.	Medium	2-3 years	VC	3OT BC DDA	BO	+		+
<b>Neighborhood Projects</b>									
10.1	Address home maintenance and blight issues within existing neighborhoods through code enforcement, education, and access to state and federal programs providing funding to address these issues. Provide existing standards in a digestible form ex: ordinance standards regarding property / housing maintenance (cheat sheet) and distribute to all property owners.	High	On-going	VC		HO	+	+	
10.2	Provide opportunities and incentives to encourage private property and neighborhood improvements that will have positive impacts on the surrounding area.	High	1-2 years	VC	DDA	HO	+		+
10.3	Coordinate volunteers and/or encourage creation of centralized entity to spearhead efforts to assist in neighborhood improvements and home services (ex: snow removal, sidewalk lawn edging, etc.).	Medium	2-3 years	VC	DDA	BO HO	+		+

**CATEGORIES KEY**

VC, Village Council  
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BC, Berrien County  
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HO, Home Owners  
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MDOT, MI Dept. of Transportation  
CM, Community Members

Table 5.2: 2050 Action Plan

	Goal Categories	Priority	Timeframe	Responsibility			Funding		
				Village	Other Govt.	Private	Public	Private	TIF / DDA
<b>Neighborhood Projects</b>									
11.1	Encourage and market prime mixed-use housing development locations, especially in the downtown, on the website and share with local real estate companies.	High	1-2 years	VC PC	DDA	BO	+		+
11.2	Ensure regulations and standards support a mix of housing types and densities available to households of a variety of income levels throughout Three Oaks, including missing middle housing and affordable housing.	High	1-2 years	VC PC			+		
11.3	Ensure appropriate housing is available for the aging demographics and empty nesters looking to retire and/or remain in the community.	High	1-3 years	VC			+		

**CATEGORIES KEY**

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HO, Home Owners  
BO, Business Owners

MDOT, MI Dept. of Transportation  
CM, Community Members

# APPENDIX A:

## LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF THE DEVELOPMENT AREA

The Development Area of the DDA district is described as follows:

A part of Sections 2, 3, 10, and 11, Township 8 South, Range 20 West, Three Oaks Township, also being a part of the Village of Three Oaks, Berrien County, Michigan described as: Beginning at a point on the centerline of U.S. Highway 12 and the North line of Section 10, 900.1 feet West of the North quarter post of Section 10; thence North 7° 40' East, 307 feet; thence North 29° 22' East 266.82 feet to the Southerly right of way line of the Amtrak Railroad; thence Easterly, along said right of way line 2031 feet; thence North 149.7 feet, more or less, to the Northerly line of said right of way; thence Easterly, along said Northerly right of way line, 113.41 feet; thence North 00° 02' East 358.28 feet; thence South 89° 58' 19" East 397.71 feet; thence North 278.88 feet, thence South 89° 18' East 156.78 feet; thence North, 124 feet, more or less, to the North line of Chicago Street; thence East, along the North line of said Chicago Street, 194.3 feet, more or less, to the West line of Featherbone Avenue; thence North, along said West line, 140 feet; thence East 284 feet; thence South 50 feet; thence East 166 feet to the centerline of Elm Street; thence continuing East 33 feet to the East line of said Elm Street; thence South, along said East line, 82 feet to the North line of Sycamore Street; thence East, along said North line 132 feet; thence South 330 feet to the North line of Maple Street; thence East, along said North line, 528 feet; thence South 227 feet; thence East 264 feet to the East line of Hickory Street; thence South, along said East line, 208 feet to the centerline of the Amtrak Railroad; thence Westerly, along said centerline 445.5 feet; thence south 446 feet to the South line of Linden Street; thence West, along said South line, 132 feet to the East line of Oak Street; thence South, along said East line, 330 feet to the South line of Ash Street; thence continuing South, along the East line of Oak Street, 198 feet; thence West 379.5 feet to the centerline of Elm Street; thence continuing West 165 feet; thence South 49.5 feet; thence West 132 feet; thence North 247.5 feet to the South line of Ash Street; thence Northeast 66 feet, more or less, to the Southeast corner of Lot 1, Friedle's Addition; thence North, along said East line of said Friedle's Addition, 330 feet to the South line of Linden Street; thence West, along said South line, 1003.5 feet to the East line of Memorial Drive; thence South, along said East line, 330 feet to the South line of Ash Street; thence West along said South line 18 feet; thence South 447.25 feet to the South line of Locust Street; thence West, along said South line 1013 feet; thence South 200 feet; thence West 297 feet to the North and South Quarter line of said Section 10; thence North, on the North and South Quarter line of said Section, to a point 419.24 feet South of the North quarter post of said Section; thence West 415.6 feet; thence North 419.24 feet, more or less, to the centerline of U.S. Highway 12 and the North line of Section 10; thence West, on the centerline of U.S. Highway 12 and the North line of Section 10, to the place of beginning.

## APPENDIX B:

# TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF) PLAN

Three Oak's Downtown Development Authority was established to mitigate the negative social and economic impacts of downtown property value deterioration and to uphold the vibrancy of the downtown district. To accomplish a number of goals, such as to increase property tax valuation and facilitate the overall economic growth of its business district, Three Oak's Village Council deemed it beneficial and necessary to create and provide for the operation of a DDA under the provisions of Public Act 197 of 1975, as amended. At that time, the DDA also determined that a Tax Increment Financing Plan ("TIF Plan") was necessary to achieve the purposes of the Act, and prepared and submitted said plan to the Village Council, which is updated as part of this amendment.

### EXPLANATION OF THE TAX INCREMENT PROCEDURE

As provided in P.A. 57 of 2018, tax increment financing is a financing tool for the redevelopment of designated development areas within a DDA Development Area. Tax increment financing is the process of expending new property tax dollars for improvements that generally benefit the parcels that pay the taxes. Tax dollars generated from new private property developments and from improvements to existing private property within a designated development area are "captured" and utilized by the DDA to finance public improvements within the development area. This process supports and encourages continued private investment.

To utilize tax increment financing, the DDA must prepare a development plan and a tax increment-financing plan. Both plans are submitted for approval to the Village Council. The Council must adopt the plans by Ordinance. The plans specify the initial assessed value; estimate the captured assessed value, and provide for the expenditure of the funds. These plans may be amended in the future to reflect changes desired by the DDA. All amendments must follow the procedures of the Act.

"Captured assessed value" is defined in the Act, as the amount, in any one year, by which the current assessed value of the development area exceeds the initial assessed value. "Initial assessed value" is defined as the assessed value, as equalized, of all the taxable property within the boundaries of the Development Area at the time the ordinance establishing the tax increment financing plan is approved, as shown by the most recent assessment roll of the municipality. Such funds transmitted to a DDA are termed "tax increment revenues." Tax increment revenues are the amount of ad valorem and specific local taxes attributable to the application of the levy of all taxing jurisdictions other than the state education tax and local or intermediate school districts upon the captured assessed value of real property in the development area.

### BOND INDEBTEDNESS TO BE INCURRED

Based upon the estimated costs of the public improvements and the projected revenues from the estimated capture assessed values within the development area, the maximum amount of bonded indebtedness to be incurred will not exceed \$1.6 million dollars, plus a sum sufficient to pay the interest on the tax increment revenue bonds.

If all the projected developments do not materialize as projected in this Plan, the maximum amount of bonded indebtedness to be occurred shall be adjusted so as to be supported by the adjusted estimates of annual captured assessed value. Alternatively, the Authority recommend and the Village may decide not to bond, but to invest all or a portion of the tax increment revenues received and phase the improvements as a "pay-as-you-go" program or finance the improvements by some other borrowing in accordance with the DDA Act and Village Ordinances.

#### Plan Duration

The duration of this amended tax increment financing plan is thirty years, commencing upon adoption of the amendments by the Village Council and ending 2050, unless this plan is amended to extend or shorten its duration.

## ESTIMATED IMPACT OF TAX INCREMENT FINANCING ON TAXING JURISDICTIONS

The assessed valuation of property within the Development Area was \$7,460,557.00 in 2018. Table B.1 summarizes the tax jurisdictions and the millages subject to capture (rates per \$1,000 of taxable value).

Captured assessed value is defined in the Act, as the amount, in any one year, by which the current assessed value of the development area exceeds the initial assessed value. Initial assessed value is defined as the assessed value, as equalized, of all the taxable property within the boundaries of the development area at the time the ordinance establishing the tax increment financing plan is approved, as shown by the most recent assessment roll of the municipality. Such funds transmitted to a DDA are termed “tax increment revenues”.

Tax increment revenues are the amount of ad valorem and specific local taxes attributable to the application of the levy of all taxing jurisdictions other than the state education tax and local or intermediate school districts upon the captured assessed value of real and personal property in the development area.

Table B.1: Three Oaks DDA Taxing Jurisdictions

Taxing Unit	Millage Subject to Capture
Village Operating	9.0015
Village Streets	3.6004
County 911	0.4500
County Law Enforcement	0.3500
County Senior Center	0.3000
County Parks	0.1000
Township	0.7481
Roads	0.3656
Library	1.4724
Berrien County General	4.7723
Lake Michigan Community College	2.2654
<b>Total Applicable Millages</b>	<b>23.4257</b>

Source: Village of Three Oaks, 2019

## PLAN FOR THE EXPENDITURE OF CAPTURED ASSESSED VALUE

### Estimate of Tax Increment Revenues

Table B.1 summarizes the impact of tax increment financing on all taxing jurisdictions whose increment is subject to capture. The projected annual growth in taxable value is estimated in Table B.2 at a 1.5% annual rate.

Outside grant funding should also be pursued using TIF and other Village revenues to provided the required matching contributions.

Cost estimates for the projects are very preliminary; specific plans and refined cost estimates for the Downtown Development Area improvements will be completed upon initiation of each project. Projects that arise and are consistent with the objectives and priorities of the DDA may be funded consistent with the financing methods described in this Plan.

### Expenditure of Tax Increment Revenues

Chapter 4 details the DDA Capital Improvement Plan activities which will be funded with tax increment revenues. Costs estimated included are current to the date of adoption and are based on concepts. Additional tax increment revenues beyond those projects may be used in any of the following ways:

- Accelerate the repayment of debt as permitted by bond provisions;
- Expand the list of projects or expedite the completion of projects; and
- Be returned to the taxing units as provided by law.

Should the tax increment revenues be less than those projected, the DDA may elect to collect and hold captured revenues until a sufficient amount is available to implement specific public improvements or consider implementing public improvements based on the ability to match existing funds with expenditures while seeking out additional funding sources.

The Downtown Development Authority shall annually review proposed increment expenditures and revenues to prioritize the use of additional funds. Other public improvements which would further the completion of the Development Plan may be funded by the DDA.

## ESTIMATE OF TAX INCREMENT REVENUES

Table B.2 details projected value increases over the next three decades and the estimated future capture:

Table B.2: Future Capture Estimates and Impact on Taxing Jurisdictions, 2019-2050: Village of Three Oaks, MI DDA

Year	Projected Taxable Value <sup>1</sup>	Estimated Captured Taxes (Total)	Village of Three Oaks	Village Streets	Township Operating	Township Roads	Township Library	Berrien County (General)	Law Enforcement / Public Safety	911 (County)	Senior Citizens and Twp. Park	Lake Michigan Comm College
	1.50%		9.0015	3.6004	0.7481	0.3656	1.4724	4.7723	0.3500	0.4500	0.4000	2.2654
2019	\$7,572,465.36	\$2,621.53	\$1,007.34	\$402.91	\$83.72	\$40.91	\$164.77	\$534.06	\$39.17	\$50.36	\$44.76	\$253.52
2020	\$7,686,052.34	\$5,282.39	\$2,029.80	\$811.87	\$168.69	\$82.44	\$332.02	\$1,076.13	\$78.92	\$101.47	\$90.20	\$510.84
2021	\$7,801,343.12	\$7,983.15	\$3,067.59	\$1,226.97	\$254.94	\$124.59	\$501.77	\$1,626.33	\$119.28	\$153.35	\$136.31	\$772.02
2022	\$7,918,363.27	\$10,724.43	\$4,120.94	\$1,648.29	\$342.48	\$167.37	\$674.07	\$2,184.79	\$160.23	\$206.01	\$183.12	\$1,037.11
2023	\$8,037,138.72	\$13,506.83	\$5,190.10	\$2,075.92	\$431.34	\$210.80	\$848.96	\$2,751.62	\$201.80	\$259.46	\$230.63	\$1,306.19
2024	\$8,157,695.80	\$16,330.96	\$6,275.29	\$2,509.98	\$521.53	\$254.87	\$1,026.47	\$3,326.96	\$244.00	\$313.71	\$278.86	\$1,579.30
2025	\$8,280,061.23	\$19,197.46	\$7,376.77	\$2,950.54	\$613.07	\$299.61	\$1,206.64	\$3,910.92	\$286.83	\$368.78	\$327.80	\$1,856.50
2026	\$8,404,262.15	\$22,106.95	\$8,494.76	\$3,397.72	\$705.99	\$345.02	\$1,389.51	\$4,503.64	\$330.30	\$424.67	\$377.48	\$2,137.87
2027	\$8,530,326.08	\$25,060.09	\$9,629.53	\$3,851.60	\$800.29	\$391.11	\$1,575.13	\$5,105.26	\$374.42	\$481.40	\$427.91	\$2,423.45
2028	\$8,658,280.98	\$28,057.52	\$10,781.31	\$4,312.29	\$896.02	\$437.89	\$1,763.53	\$5,715.90	\$419.20	\$538.98	\$479.09	\$2,713.32
2029	\$8,788,155.19	\$31,099.92	\$11,950.38	\$4,779.88	\$993.18	\$485.37	\$1,954.76	\$6,335.70	\$464.66	\$597.42	\$531.04	\$3,007.54
2030	\$8,919,977.52	\$34,187.95	\$13,136.97	\$5,254.50	\$1,091.79	\$533.56	\$2,148.85	\$6,964.79	\$510.80	\$656.74	\$583.77	\$3,306.17
2031	\$9,053,777.18	\$37,322.30	\$14,341.37	\$5,736.23	\$1,191.89	\$582.48	\$2,345.86	\$7,603.32	\$557.63	\$716.95	\$637.29	\$3,609.28
2032	\$9,189,583.84	\$40,503.66	\$15,563.84	\$6,225.19	\$1,293.48	\$632.13	\$2,545.82	\$8,251.43	\$605.16	\$778.06	\$691.61	\$3,916.94
2033	\$9,327,427.60	\$43,732.75	\$16,804.64	\$6,721.48	\$1,396.61	\$682.53	\$2,748.78	\$8,909.27	\$653.40	\$840.09	\$746.75	\$4,229.21
2034	\$9,467,339.01	\$47,010.27	\$18,064.05	\$7,225.22	\$1,501.27	\$733.68	\$2,954.79	\$9,576.97	\$702.37	\$903.05	\$802.71	\$4,546.16
2035	\$9,609,349.10	\$50,336.96	\$19,342.35	\$7,736.51	\$1,607.51	\$785.60	\$3,163.88	\$10,254.68	\$752.08	\$966.96	\$859.52	\$4,867.87
2036	\$9,753,489.33	\$53,713.54	\$20,639.83	\$8,255.47	\$1,715.34	\$838.30	\$3,376.11	\$10,942.56	\$802.53	\$1,031.82	\$917.17	\$5,194.41
2037	\$9,899,791.67	\$57,140.78	\$21,956.77	\$8,782.22	\$1,824.79	\$891.78	\$3,591.53	\$11,640.76	\$853.73	\$1,097.66	\$975.69	\$5,525.84
2038	\$10,048,288.55	\$60,619.42	\$23,293.47	\$9,316.87	\$1,935.88	\$946.07	\$3,810.18	\$12,349.43	\$905.71	\$1,164.48	\$1,035.09	\$5,862.25
2039	\$10,199,012.88	\$64,150.25	\$24,650.21	\$9,859.54	\$2,048.64	\$1,001.18	\$4,032.10	\$13,068.73	\$958.46	\$1,232.31	\$1,095.38	\$6,203.70
2040	\$10,351,998.07	\$67,734.03	\$26,027.31	\$10,410.34	\$2,163.09	\$1,057.11	\$4,257.36	\$13,798.82	\$1,012.00	\$1,301.15	\$1,156.58	\$6,550.27
2041	\$10,507,278.04	\$71,371.57	\$27,425.06	\$10,969.41	\$2,279.25	\$1,113.88	\$4,485.99	\$14,539.87	\$1,066.35	\$1,371.02	\$1,218.69	\$6,902.04
2042	\$10,664,887.21	\$75,063.68	\$28,843.78	\$11,536.87	\$2,397.16	\$1,171.50	\$4,718.06	\$15,292.03	\$1,121.52	\$1,441.95	\$1,281.73	\$7,259.09
2043	\$10,824,860.52	\$78,811.16	\$30,283.78	\$12,112.84	\$2,516.84	\$1,229.99	\$4,953.60	\$16,055.47	\$1,177.51	\$1,513.94	\$1,345.72	\$7,621.49
2044	\$10,987,233.43	\$82,614.86	\$31,745.38	\$12,697.45	\$2,638.31	\$1,289.35	\$5,192.68	\$16,830.36	\$1,234.34	\$1,587.00	\$1,410.67	\$7,989.33
2045	\$11,152,041.93	\$86,475.62	\$33,228.90	\$13,290.82	\$2,761.60	\$1,349.61	\$5,435.34	\$17,616.87	\$1,292.02	\$1,661.17	\$1,476.59	\$8,362.69
2046	\$11,319,322.56	\$90,394.28	\$34,734.68	\$13,893.10	\$2,886.74	\$1,410.76	\$5,681.65	\$18,415.19	\$1,350.57	\$1,736.44	\$1,543.51	\$8,741.65
2047	\$11,489,112.39	\$94,371.73	\$36,263.04	\$14,504.41	\$3,013.76	\$1,472.84	\$5,931.64	\$19,225.47	\$1,409.99	\$1,812.85	\$1,611.42	\$9,126.29
2048	\$11,661,449.08	\$98,408.84	\$37,814.33	\$15,124.89	\$3,142.69	\$1,535.85	\$6,185.39	\$20,047.92	\$1,470.31	\$1,890.40	\$1,680.36	\$9,516.70
2049	\$11,836,370.82	\$102,506.50	\$39,388.89	\$15,754.68	\$3,273.55	\$1,599.80	\$6,442.95	\$20,882.70	\$1,531.53	\$1,969.12	\$1,750.33	\$9,912.97
2050	\$12,013,916.38	\$106,665.63	\$40,987.06	\$16,393.92	\$3,406.37	\$1,664.71	\$6,704.37	\$21,730.00	\$1,593.68	\$2,049.01	\$1,821.34	\$10,315.18
Totals:		\$1,625,107.04	\$624,459.51	\$249,769.93	\$51,897.81	\$25,362.71	\$102,144.55	\$331,067.94	\$24,280.49	\$31,217.77	\$27,749.13	\$157,157.20

<sup>1</sup>(Existing Prop. Value + 1.5% Increase) with a 2018 baseline of \$7,460,557 and a total captured millage of 23.4257.