



OSCEOLA COUNTY, MICHIGAN MASTER PLAN

August 2025

This plan serves as a guide for the Osceola County Planning Commission and other decision makers when making land and infrastructure development decisions affecting the County.

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Osceola County, Michigan Master Plan

INTRODUCTION

Why Develop a Master Plan	5
Planning Process & Community Input	5
How to Use the Plan	6
Legal Basis	7
Relationship to Municipal Plans	7

VISION STATEMENT & GOALS

Vision Statement	8
Goals	8
Conclusion	10

COMMUNITIES

Location	11
History	12
Cities	14
Villages	15
Townships	16

DEMOGRAPHICS & ECONOMIC PROFILE

Population (trends, projections, shifts, seasonal)	22
Age (median, distribution, dependency)	27
Race, Ethnic, Tribal, and Ancestry Composition	29
Disability Status	30
Education (attainment, enrollment)	31
Language Spoken at Home	32
Income & Poverty (per capita and median household income, distribution, Gini Coefficient, earnings by source, poverty)	32
Employment (by industry, by occupation, labor force data, commuting characteristics)	35
Housing (type, occupancy, year built, costs)	41
Taxable Valuation	43

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

County Buildings & Services	47
City Halls	48
Village Halls	48
Township Halls	49
Schools	49
Libraries	50
Medical	50
Public Safety	51
Parks & Trails	52
Utilities (including broadband)	54
Historic Sites	55
Museums	56
Osceola-Lake Conservation District	56
Road Commission	56
Media	56
Transportation (roads, bus service, airports, rail service)	57
Solid Waste	60

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development Organizations	62
Major Employers	62
Industrial Parks	63
Recreation and Tourism	64

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

Climate	67
Soils	69
Topography	71
Water Features	71
Sites of Environmental Contamination	73
Large-Scale Solar	74

STATUS OF PLANNING & ZONING

Community Planning & Zoning	75
Master Plans	75
Zoning	75

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Notice to Local Governments and Public Entities	79
Appendix B – Survey Data	83
Appendix C – Michigan Counties by Type; Urban or Rural	91
Appendix D – Large Scale Solar Planning Project Summary	93

INTRODUCTION

WHY DEVELOP A MASTER PLAN

The development of a Master Plan (PLAN) can be a long, time-consuming process. As a county that has not implemented zoning there is no requirement to develop a PLAN. Therefore, it is important to ask the question, “Why develop a master plan.” The PLAN:

- Provides a VISION: The PLAN is a statement by Osceola County’s Planning Commission and residents regarding the present and desired future character of the County.
- Establishes GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & ACTIONS: The PLAN sets forth the goals, objectives, and potential actions for Osceola County (County) to obtain its desired future.
- Establishes a CONTINUOUS PLANNING PROCESS: The PLAN establishes a formal process that can be replicated, and updated when needed. It is anticipated the PLAN will be reviewed and, if needed, updated every five years.
- Serves as a GUIDE: *It is non-directive in nature, but instead is intended to guide actions and decisions.*

PLANNING PROCESS & COMMUNITY INPUT

At their June 6, 2023 meeting the Planning Commission passed a motion (23-09) to “update the County’s Master Plan”. The following is a quick summary of the process used to develop the PLAN:

- The West Michigan Regional Planning Commission, local units of government, utilities, and Great Lakes Railroad were notified (*see Appendix A, Notice to Local Governments and Public Entities*) that the Planning Commission would be updating the PLAN.
- Information was gathered from numerous sources in order for individuals to make fact-based decisions.
- The community was provided an opportunity to provide input through surveys and a public meeting (*see Appendix B, Survey Data*).

- A draft PLAN was written. The goals and objectives were developed based on the fact-based information that had been gathered and the input obtained from the community surveys.
- The Planning Commission submitted the PLAN to the Osceola County Board of Commissioners for review and approval. After receiving approval, the PLAN was sent to the local units of government and agencies listed in *Appendix A, Notice to Local Governments and Public Entities*. Local units of government and agencies were allowed more than 63 days to provide comments.
- The Planning Commission held a public hearing after local units of government and agencies were given an opportunity to provide comments. Prior to the public hearing the draft PLAN was available for review on the County's website (www.osceola-county.org), Marion Public Library, and County Administration Building. The Planning Commission voted to adopt the PLAN and forwarded it to the Board of Commissioners.
- The Board of Commissioners approved the PLAN and notified the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission then sent a copy of the PLAN to the local units of government and agencies listed in *Appendix A, Notice to Local Governments and Public Entities*.

HOW TO USE THE PLAN

Every effort was made to provide factual, correct, up-to-date, and complete information; however, the decision whether to rely on data in the PLAN rests solely with the user. This is particularly important when making site specific decisions which should be investigated with original research before proceeding.

LEGAL BASIS

The State of Michigan authorizes counties to undertake community planning through the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008. Under this Act counties may adopt an ordinance creating a planning commission¹. Furthermore, the act states that planning commissions “shall make and approve a master plan as a guide for development within the planning jurisdiction²...” The Osceola County Planning Commission followed the procedures outlined in the Michigan Planning Enabling Act in the preparation of this Master Plan. Refer to *Appendix A, Notice to Local Governments and Public Entities*, for a copy of the letter that went to the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission, contiguous County Planning Commissions or Board of Commissioners, all municipalities within Osceola County, as well as all utilities and railroads operating in the County.

RELATIONSHIP TO MUNICIPAL PLANS

Each city, village, and township in Osceola County is given the opportunity by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Act 33 of 2008) to conduct their own planning. The guidance in this PLAN is subservient to any guidance found in city, village or township plans.

¹ Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, 125.3811

² Ibid

VISION STATEMENT & GOALS

VISION STATEMENT

“A Harmonious Future Rooted in Agricultural Heritage.”

Our county envisions a future where economic prosperity, sustainable development, and community well-being flourish hand in hand with the preservation of our rural agricultural heritage. We encourage business development that complements the current landscape of our county. By fostering innovation and environmental stewardship, we aim to cultivate a vibrant and resilient community for generations to come, while honoring the rich legacy of our farmlands and natural landscapes.

GOALS

Economic Development

- *Foster Local Entrepreneurship:* Encourage the growth of small businesses and locally-owned enterprises that align with the county's rural character.
- *Support Agricultural Innovation:* Promote best practices of farming techniques and agritourism to enhance the economic viability of the agricultural sector.
- *Diversify Job Opportunities:* Attract industries that complement the county's resources, such as craft manufacturing and eco-tourism.
- *Enhance Workforce Development:* Partner with educational institutions to provide training and upskilling opportunities tailored to community needs.
- *Encourage Commercial Development:* Encourage commercial development in the County's cities and villages.
- *Encourage Industrial Development:* Encourage industrial development in the County's industrial parks.
- *Provide Targeted Incentives:* Provide incentives for sustainable and innovative business practices that respect the county's natural environment and resources.
- *Coordinate Efforts:* Work with state, regional and local organizations regarding economic development programs.

Future Land Use

- *Protect Important Areas:* Preserve agricultural, forest and recreational properties.
- *Encourage Mixed-Use Development:* Designate areas for a mix of residential, commercial, and recreational uses to promote walkability and reduce commuting distances.
- *Focus on Smart Growth:* Concentrate future development in established communities to preserve open spaces and maintain the rural landscape.
- *Coordinate Efforts:* Work with state, regional and local organizations regarding land use programs and education.

Housing

- *Promote Affordable Housing:* Develop housing options that are accessible to a diverse range of income levels while complementing the rural character.
- *Encourage Energy-Efficient Homes:* Support the construction of energy-efficient and environmentally sustainable housing developments.
- *Preserve Historic Homes:* Protect and restore historic buildings to maintain the cultural identity of the county.
- *Expand Housing Choices:* Provide options such as farmsteads, tiny homes, and cohousing communities to meet varying lifestyle needs.
- *Coordinate Efforts:* Work with State, regional and local organizations to identify programs that support housing needs.

Environment and Natural Resources

- *Preserve Watersheds:* Protect rivers, streams, wetlands and aquifers to ensure clean and sustainable water supplies.
- *Conserve Wildlife Habitat:* Maintain and expand natural habitats to support biodiversity.
- *Support Blight Prevention Programs:* Identify and support programs that ensure issues related to blight, trash, junk and other unsightly items are addressed. Implement proactive measures to identify and rehabilitate deteriorating properties, ensure proper land stewardship, and maintain the visual and structural integrity of communities. Encourage community involvement in beautification projects and provide incentives for property upkeep to prevent neglect and abandonment.
- *Encourage Recycling:* Encourage and support recycling.
- *Support Educational Programs:* Encourage public education about conservation.

- *Coordinate Invasive Species Efforts:* Work with state, regional and local agencies to control/eliminate invasive species.

Transportation

- *Enhance Rural Connectivity:* Improve roads, bridges, and broadband access to connect rural areas with regional hubs.
- *Expand Bike and Pedestrian Pathways:* Develop multi-use trails that connect communities and encourage active lifestyles.
- *Support Mass Transit:* Support the Mecosta Osceola Transit Authority (MOTA).
- *Maintain/Improve Secondary Roads:* Work towards blacktopping secondary roads.
- *Coordinate Efforts:* Work with state, regional and local transportation organizations

Recreation

- *Develop Multi-Use Parks:* Create recreational spaces that accommodate varied activities such as hiking, fishing, and sports.
- *Promote Agritourism:* Encourage farm tours, local festivals, and farmers' markets to celebrate agricultural heritage.
- *Expand Outdoor Opportunities:* Add campsites, picnic areas, and waterfront access to promote family-friendly recreation such as in Rose Lake and Crittenden Parks
- *Support Arts and Culture:* Develop spaces for community events, performances, and exhibitions that reflect local traditions.
- *Work with state, regional and local organizations to identify programs that support recreational needs.*

CONCLUSION

This master plan seeks to balance growth and development with a steadfast commitment to preserving the county's rural and agricultural roots. By working together as a community, we can build a future that respects our heritage while embracing progress and innovation

COMMUNITIES

LOCATION

Osceola County is located in the west central portion of Michigan’s Lower Peninsula (43° 55’ N / 85° 21’ W). Wexford and Missaukee Counties lie to the north; Clare County to the east; Mecosta County to the south; and Lake County to the west. The economies, resources, land use, infrastructure, and other characteristics of these counties vary greatly. In addition to the five border counties, Osceola County touches two additional counties; Newaygo in the southwest corner and Isabella in the southeast corner.



Why is Location Important?

Location impacts a community in many ways. Examples include, but are not necessarily limited to, the weather, the local economy, and recreational opportunities.

Osceola County lies north of Michigan’s more developed areas. Grand Rapids, Michigan’s second largest city, lies approximately seventy

(70) miles south. Other larger cities frequented by Osceola County residents include Cadillac, Traverse City, Mount Pleasant, and Midland.

Distance to Points of Significance ³	
Destination	Miles (from Reed City / Evart)
Cadillac	29 / 36
Lake Michigan (Ludington)	51 / 63
Mount Pleasant	60 / 47
Grand Rapids	68 / 82
Midland	75 / 61
Traverse City	75 / 87
Lansing	135 / 110

³ Computed using Apple Maps

Straits of Mackinac (Mackinac City)	171 / 161
Detroit	202 / 189
Chicago	247 / 259

HISTORY⁴

The land that now makes up Osceola County was acquired through an 1836 treaty with Native Americans; however, it was not until 1869 that Osceola County was formally organized.

The lumber industry and railroads were instrumental to the development of Osceola County. In the early 1800s, Osceola County was known as the “Land of Green Gold” because of timber. The timber would eventually bring logging activity, which in turn brought the railroads. The railroads brought people.

It was the lumber industry that brought Osceola County one of its first and most prominent pioneers. D.A. Blodgett moved to the area because of his involvement in the lumber industry. Once in the area he settled in what is now Hersey and began raising horses and farming.

After the Civil War returning soldiers were given an opportunity to homestead up to 160 acres. Many soldiers that returned to Osceola County exercised their option. As a result, agriculture became a part of the local economy.

Eventually the lumber industry began to slow down at which time the oil and gas industry played a major role for several decades. Although still operating today, oil and gas operations no longer play a significant role. Today, Osceola County has an economy primarily based on manufacturing.

Timeline:

- 1836 – Land that encompasses Osceola County is acquired through a treaty with Native Americans.
- 1838 – Land is surveyed.

⁴ History Sources: 2002 Osceola County Land Use Plan, Osceola County Genealogical Society website, (www.ocgs.info); the Portrait and Biographical Album of Osceola County... a complete history of the county, from its earliest settlement to present time; and the University of Michigan Library, (<http://name.umdl.umich.edu/bad1032.0001.001>).

- 1840 – Unwattin (now Osceola County) is created from Michilmackinac and attached to Ottawa County for judicial purposes. The name Unwattin was chosen after the Chief of the Ottawa tribe.
- 1843 – The name Unwattin is changed to Osceola after a Seminole Indian Chief.
- 1850 – Land is acquired for lumber which was an important influence in the County’s development.
- 1855 – Richmond Township created (comprised all of what is now Osceola County).
- 1855 – Osceola County is detached from Ottawa County and attached to Mason County for judicial purposes.
- 1857 – Osceola County detached from Mason County and attached to Newaygo County for judicial and administrative purposes.
- 1859 – Osceola County is detached from Newaygo County and attached to Mecosta County for judicial and administrative purposes.
- 1860 – Census shows 27 residents.
- 1860 – Delos A. Blodgett, instrumental in business and lumber, settled in Hersey and began farming and raising horses.
- 1869 – Osceola County is formally organized and detached from Mecosta County. The newly formed Village of Hersey is established as the county seat.
- 1870 – City of Reed City formed.
- 1870 – Census shows 2,200 residents.
- 1871 – Flint and Pere Marquette Railroad arrives in Evart (now Pere-Marquette State Rail-Trail).
- 1871 – Village of Evart formed.
- 1871 – Village of Tustin formed.

- 1872 – Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad completed in Osceola County (now White Pines Trail State Park).
- 1874 – Population increased to 6,216 residents (283% increase from 1870 Census).
- 1875 – First agricultural association formed.
- 1878 – Population estimated reached to 10,000 residents.
- 1883 – Village of LeRoy formed.
- 1889 – Village of Marion formed.
- 1900 – Lumbering declining, farming becoming most common occupation.
- 1927 – County seat moved to Reed City after a long dispute (originally considered in 1891) with Hersey.

CITIES⁵

Ewart: The City of Ewart is the smaller of Osceola County’s two cities. It is bisected by US-10 in southcentral Osceola County, located in the townships of Ewart and Osceola. In 2020 its population was 1,752; a 9.1% decrease from the 2010 Census. The city is governed by a mayor-council-manager form of government and is zoned.

Major employers in Ewart include Ventra, the County’s largest employer, the Ewart Public Schools, and Vitro. Key issues in the community include the controversial increase in water withdrawal by a major water bottler and the loss of downtown businesses. Key assets in the community include its manufacturing base, the Ewart Air-Industrial Park, Osceola County Fairgrounds, and the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail

In 2016 the City of Ewart was one of the first ten communities in Michigan to participate in the Rising Tide program. The city graduated in 2018. Also, in 2018 the city was selected as a Michigan Main Street community. Approximately 99% of the city sits in an Opportunity Zone⁶.

Reed City: The City of Reed City is located near the intersection of US-10 and US-131 in the southwest corner of Osceola County within Richmond Township. It is the larger of the

⁵ All population references are from the US Census Bureau. The reader is cautioned that the margin of error (MOE) in small communities can be significant.

⁶ Rising Tide, Michigan Main Street, and Opportunity Zone all refer to economic development programs.

County's two cities and serves as the county seat. In 2020 its population was 2,482; a 3.6% increase from the 2010 Census. The city is governed by a mayor-council-manager form of government and is zoned.

The City of Reed City is both a Pure Michigan Trail Town and a Gigabit community.

Major employers in Reed City include Lactalis (formerly Yoplait), Corewell (formerly Spectrum) Health, Reed City Public Schools, Osceola County (county government), Kraftube, and the Reed City Group and Hydecker Wheatlake. Issues in the community include the lack of space for residential and industrial expansion, a limited tax base, and an aging housing stock. Key assets in the community include its manufacturing base, Corewell Health Reed City Campus, its location at the intersection of US-10 and US-131, the Pere Marquette and White Pine Rail-Trail, the Reed City Depot, and the White Pines State Park.

Additional information specific to each city can be found on their respective website (www.evart.org; www.reedcity.org), from their chamber of commerce, city hall, or Downtown Development Authority (Ewart only).

VILLAGES⁷

Hersey: The Village of Hersey is located in the southwest corner of Osceola County, bisected by the townships of Richmond and Hersey. It is a general law village with minimal employees. The village is zoned. Key assets in the village include Blodgett Landing, the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail, its proximity to US-10, and several small employers. The Village's population in 2020 was 357; a 3.2% increase from the 2010 Census.

LeRoy: The Village of LeRoy is located in the northwest quadrant of Osceola County within LeRoy Township. It is a general law village with minimal employees. The village is zoned. Key assets in the village include a local park, the White Pines State Park (rail-trail), its proximity to US-131, and several manufacturing-based employers as well as several other small employers. The Village's population in 2020 was 254; a 0.8% decrease from the 2010 Census.

Marion: The Village of Marion is located in the northeast corner of Osceola County within Marion Township. It is a general law village with a few employees. The village is zoned. Key assets in the village include Veterans' Park, Mill Pond Park, a municipal water and sewer system, an industrial park with available lots, a railroad line passing through the village, and several small employers. The Village's population in 2020 population was 784; a 9.5%

⁷ All population references are from the US Census Bureau. The reader is cautioned that the margin of error (MOE) in small communities can be significant.

decrease from the 2010 Census. Additional information specific to the Village of Marion can be found on their website (www.marionmichigan.org).

Tustin: The Village of Tustin is located in the northwest corner of Osceola County within Burdell Township. It is a general law village with several employees. The village is not zoned. Key assets in the village include its community center/library, proximity to US-131, and several small employers. Tustin is Osceola County's smallest community. The Village's population in 2020 was 252; a 14.0% increase from the 2010 Census. This is the largest increase by percentage of any city, village or township in Osceola County.

Additional information concerning any of the villages can be obtained from their village office.

TOWNSHIPS⁸

All 16 townships in Osceola County are general law townships with an elected supervisor, clerk, treasurer, and two trustees. Each township is six miles by six miles.

In January 2023 the townships reactivated the Osceola County Township Association (OCTA). Township participation is voluntary. The mission of (OCTA) is

“... to bring together the townships in Osceola County in order to provide township government with a stronger voice, to foster a better understanding of the problems facing our townships, and to provide a forum for unity in working on projects that are of a common interest and benefit.”

Each individual township is represented on the county website. The content of each township's web page(s) is determined by each individual township. Some townships use the website extensively (contact information, agendas/minutes, announcement, newsletters, forms, etc.) while several others use it very little.

Burdell Township:

(www.osceola-county.org/residents/townships/burdell_township/index)

Burdell Township is located in the northwest corner of the county. It surrounds the Village of Tustin. Its 2020 population was 1,410, a 6.0% increase from the 2010 Census. Burdell is a zoned township. US-131 runs the entire north-south length of the township.

⁸ All population references are from the US Census Bureau. The reader is cautioned that the margin of error (MOE) in small communities can be significant.

Cedar Township:

(www.osceola-county.org/residents/townships/cedar_township/index)

Cedar Township is located in the central section of the county. Its 2020 population was 479, a 5.5% increase from the 2010 Census. It is the smallest township in Osceola County. Cedar is a zoned township. The Pere Marquette State Forest comprises approximately 25% of the township. A portion of Cedar Township is located in an Opportunity Zone⁹.

Evert Township:

(www.osceola-county.org/residents/townships/evert/index)

Evert Township is located in the southcentral portion of the county. It includes the southern portion of the City of Evert. Its 2020 population was 1,978, which is a 6.5% increase from the 2010 Census. A portion of Evert Township is located in an Opportunity Zone¹⁰.

Evert is not a zoned township. US-10 either forms the northern border or passes through a majority of the township. Chippewa Plastics is a major employer. The Muskegon River cuts through the township.



Hartwick Township:

(www.osceola-county.org/residents/townships/hartwick_township/index)

Hartwick Township is located in the north central section of the county. Its 2020 population was 591, which is a 4.4% increase from the 2010 Census. Hartwick is a zoned township. A portion of Hartwick Township is located in an Opportunity Zone.

Hersey Township:

(www.osceola-county.org/residents/townships/hersey_township/index)

Hersey Township is located in the south central portion of the county. Its 2020 population was 1,941, which is a 0.8% decrease from the 2010 Census.

The township surrounds a majority of the Village of Hersey. Hersey is not a zoned township. US-10 runs the entire east-west length of the township. The Muskegon River also runs through the township. The township operates a cemetery, a transfer station, and has a volunteer fire

⁹ An Opportunity Zone is an economic development related program.

¹⁰ Ibid

department. A portion of Hersey Township is located in an Opportunity Zone¹¹. Cargill is a major employer.

Highland Township:

(osceola-county.org/residents/townships/highland/index)

Highland Township is located in the north central portion of the county. Its 2020 population was 1,148 which is a 9.0% decrease from the 2010 Census.

Highland is a zoned township. M-115 bisects the township from its southeast to northwest corners. The township operates two cemeteries. A portion of Highland Township is located in an Opportunity Zone¹².

LeRoy Township:

(www.osceola-county.org/residents/townships/leroy_township/index)

LeRoy Township is located in the west central portion of the county. The Village of LeRoy's northern, western, and southern borders are in the township. Its 2020 population was 1,246, a 2.9% increase from the 2010 Census, which is the largest percentage increase of any township in the county.

LeRoy is a zoned township. US-131 runs the entire north-south length of the township. The township is part of the LeRoy-Rose Lake (volunteer) Fire Department. Pine River Public Schools are a major employer. The township operates a park, cemetery, and provides its township hall for rent.

Lincoln Township:

(www.osceola-county.org/residents/townships/lincoln_township/index)

Lincoln Township is located in the west central portion of the county. Its 2020 population was 1,553, a 2.4% decrease from the 2010 Census. Lincoln is not a zoned township. US-131 runs the entire north-south length of the township. The township has a volunteer fire department and operates four cemeteries. Nartron is a major employer.

Marion Township:

(www.osceola-county.org/residents/townships/marion_township/index)

Marion Township is located in the northeast corner of the county. Its 2020 population was 1,565, a 7.3% decrease from the 2010 Census. Marion is not a zoned township. M-66 runs the

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

entire north-south length of the township. There is an active railroad line that enters the southern border of the township and exits in the northeast corner. The township has a volunteer fire department. Pollington Machine & Tool is a major employer.

Middle Branch Township:

(www.osceola-county.org/residents/townships/middle_branch_township/index)

Middle Branch Township is located in the east central portion of the county. Its 2020 population was 775, an 8.0% decrease from the 2010 Census. Middle Branch is not a zoned township, but it has several ordinances and codes. M-115 bisects the township from its southeast to northwest corners and M-66 runs the entire north-south length of the township. The township operates two cemeteries.

Orient Township:

(www.osceola-county.org/residents/townships/orient/index)

Orient Township is located in the southeast corner of the county. Its 2020 population was 733, a 5.1% decrease from the 2010 Census. Orient is not a zoned township. US-10 runs the entire east-west length of the township and M-66 runs the entire north-south length of the township. Crittenden County Park is located in the township.

Osceola Township:

(www.osceola-county.org/residents/townships/osceola_township/index)

Osceola Township is located in the central section of the county. The township surrounds the majority of the City of Evart. Its 2020 population was 943, an 11.7% decrease from the 2010 Census. It was one of only two townships that experienced a decrease above 10%.

In the southern portion of the township US-10 either forms the southern border or passes east-west through a majority of the township. The Muskegon River goes through the southeast corner of the township. Osceola is a zoned township. The Pere Marquette State Forest comprises over 10% of the township. A portion of Osceola Township is located in an Opportunity Zone¹³.

Richmond Township:

(www.osceola-county.org/residents/townships/richmond_township/index)

¹³ Ibid

Richmond Township is located in the southwest corner of the county. It surrounds Reed City and a portion of the Village of Hersey. Its 2020 population was 1,657, a 6.3% increase from the 2010 Census.

The township is a zoned community. US-10 runs east-west the entire width of the township while US-131 runs north-south the entire length. The intersection of the two roads is known as the “Crossroads”. Major manufacturers include H&R Screw, Tubelite, H&H Fur Design and Dressing, and Eckhart. The township operates a transfer station and offers its township hall for rent.

Rose Lake Township:

(www.osceola-county.org/residents/townships/rose_lake_township/index)

Rose Lake Township is located in the central portion of the county. Its western border forms the Village of LeRoy’s eastern border. The township’s 2020 population was 1,406, a 2.5% increase from the 2010 Census.

The township is not a zoned community. Rose Lake County Park and Rose Lake are located in the township. The township is part of the LeRoy-Rose Lake (volunteer) Fire Department. The Pere Marquette State Forest comprises over 10% of the township.

Sherman Township:

(www.osceola-county.org/residents/townships/sherman_township/index)

Sherman Township is located in the north central portion of the county. Its 2020 population was 991, a 4.8% decrease from the 2010 Census. It is a zoned community. M-115 clips the northeast corner of the township. It operates a park, cemetery, and provides its township hall for rent.

Sylvan Township:

(www.osceola-county.org/residents/townships/sylvan_township/index)

Township is located in the east central portion of the county. Its 2020 population was 967, a 12.1% decrease from the 2010 Census. This is the largest percentage decrease of any of the townships in the county. It was one of only two townships that experienced a decrease above 10%.

The township is a zoned community. M-66 runs the entire north-south length of the township. US-10 runs along the southern border of most of the Township. The Muskegon River runs the entire east-west length of the township. The township operates a cemetery and provides its township hall for rent. A portion of Sylvan Township is located in an Opportunity Zone¹⁴.

¹⁴ Ibid

DEMOGRAPHICS & ECONOMIC PROFILE

Demographics provide insight into the social characteristics of an area. Osceola County is one of 61 rural counties in Michigan classified by the U.S. Census Bureau as “Rural”. See *Appendix C, Michigan Counties by Type, Urban or Rural*, for a listing of all 83 Michigan counties by type.

POPULATION¹⁵

In 2020 Osceola County’s population was 22,891. This makes Osceola County the 62nd most populated of Michigan’s 83 counties.

Why is Population Important?

Population is the most basic demographic measurement. It can be used to show the size of a community, growth or decline over a time period, make comparisons between communities, and project into the future.

Trends

Osceola County has experienced significant growth over the last 50 years. Its largest population growth, from both a numeric and percentage basis, occurred between 1970 and 1980. The only 10-year period of decline occurred during the most recent Census; however, a comparison to other Michigan counties helps put this decline in perspective. Although Michigan experienced a 2.0% population increase the population declined in 47 of Michigan’s 83 counties.

Total Population Change, 1970-2020							
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	% Change 1970-2020
Osceola County	14,838	18,928 (27.6%)	20,146 (6.4%)	23,248 (15.4%)	23,505 (1.3%)	22,891 (-2.6%)	+8,503 (57%)
Michigan	8,875,083	9,262,078 (4.4%)	9,310,462 (0.5%)	9,952,450 (6.9%)	9,877,597 (-0.8%)	10,077,331 (2.0%)	+1,202,248 (14%)
U.S.	203,392,031	226,542,550 (11.1%)	250,131,894 (9.8%)	282,162,411 (12.8%)	309,327,143 (10.0%)	331,449,281 (7.2%)	+128,057,250 (63%)

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau

Comparisons can be made to each of Osceola County’s neighboring counties. Although Osceola County experienced a 57.0% population growth between 1970 and 2020 this was slower than all but one of the seven neighboring counties. Osceola County and two of the seven neighboring counties declined in population between 2010 and 2020.

Total Population, Osceola and Neighboring Counties , 1970-2020							
County	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	% Change 1970- 2020
OSCEOLA	14,838	18,928	20,146	23,248	23,505	22,891	54.2%
Clare	16,695	23,822	24,952	31,398	31,005	30,926	85.2%
Mecosta	27,992	36,961	37,308	40,657	42,851	42,798	52.9%
Isabella	44,594	54,110	54,624	63,414	70,297	70,311	57.7%
Newaygo	27,992	34,917	38,202	47,972	48,373	48,460	73.1%
Lake	5,661	7,711	8,583	11,338	11,514	11,539	103.8%
Missaukee	7,126	10,009	12,147	14,478	14,818	14,849	108.4%
Wexford	19,717	25,102	26,360	30,537	32,735	32,745	66.1%

Osceola County Population ¹⁶			
	2010 (est.)	2020 (est.)	Change
Total Population	23,681	22,891	-1.5%
19 and under (youth)	6,549	5,728	-12.5%
20-34 (formal education/training & early career)	3,568	3,652	2.4%
35-44 (mid-career)	2,859	2,530	-11.5%
45-64 (mid & late career)	6,806	6,244	-8.3%
65 and over (late career & retirement)	3,899	5,038	29.2%

¹⁶ Based on US Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Surveys

Osceola County’s population decline that occurred between 2010 and 2020 was in the youth, mid-career, and mid & late career categories. Both the formal education/training & early career, and late career & retirement population categories increased.

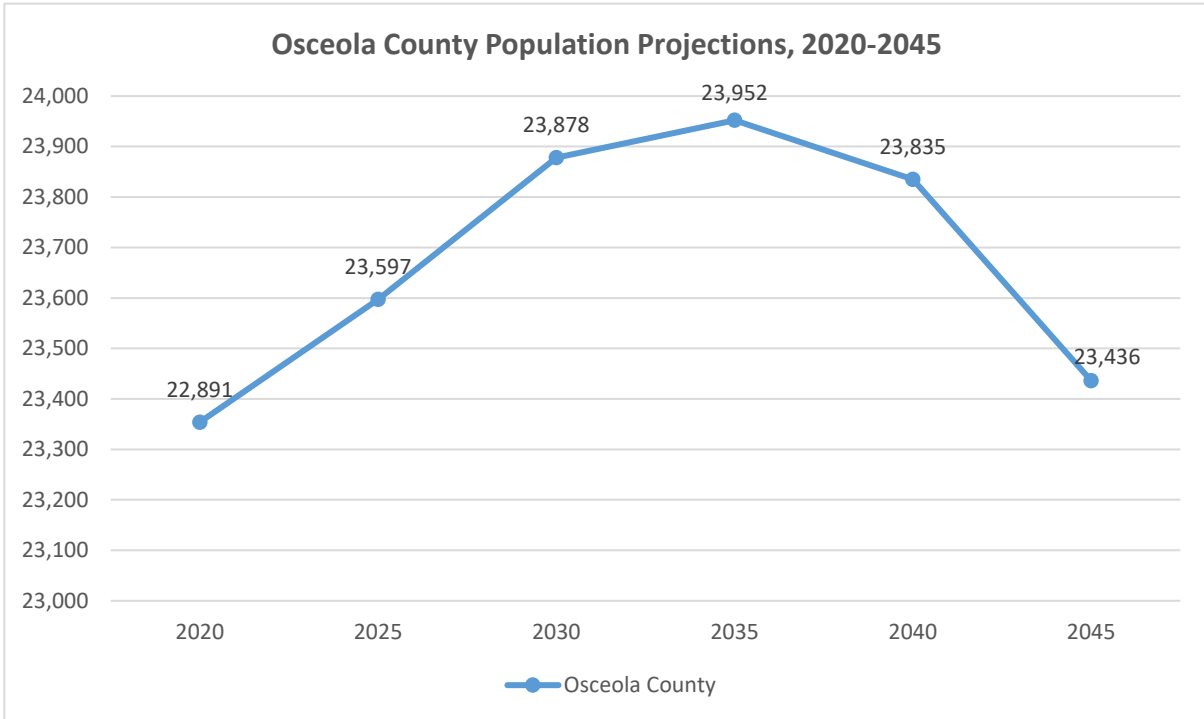
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Projections

While the County has grown over the last 50 years it is important to know what it might do in the future. Population projections can help do this. While population projections can help provide a glimpse into the future it must be pointed out they are not always accurate. For example, Osceola County’s 2002 Land Use Plan projected Osceola County’s 2015 population would reach 29,081. This estimate was significantly off target; however, the estimate was most likely affected by the significant impact of the turn of the century recession.

Population projections for the period 2020 through 2045 for each of Michigan’s 83 counties were provided by the State Demographer. Based on this data Osceola County will experience slow growth beginning in 2020 and continue through 2035 at which time the population is expected to decline through 2045 when it returns to close to what it is today.

¹⁷ Based on US Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Surveys



Shifts

Another important factor is to try to determine where growth may occur. While the County experienced significant growth over the last 40 years, even after accounting for the recent period of relatively little growth, it does not mean the growth occurred uniformly across the County. Generally, there has become a desire to locate more in the townships than the cities and villages.

From 1980 to 2010:

- One of the two cities in the County increased in population. Reed City gained 269 residents while the City of Ewart lost 203 residents. This was the largest numeric decrease of any of the cities or villages in the county.
- Three of the four villages in the county **decreased** in population. The community in Osceola County experiencing the largest percentage decrease (11%) was the Village of LeRoy.
- All sixteen townships in the County **increased** in population. Marion, LeRoy, Cedar and Hersey townships each more than doubled their population.

Population Shifts, 1980-2020						
Community	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	Change 1980 - 2020 # / %
Cities						
Evart	1,945	1,744	1,738	1,728	1,742	-203 / -10%
Reed City	2,221	2,379	2,430	2,705	2,490	+269 / +12%
Villages						
Hersey	364	409	374	411	347	-17 / -5%
LeRoy	293	257	267	206	260	-33 / -11%
Marion	816	801	836	872	789	-27 / -3%
Tustin	264	230	237	94	270	+6 / +2%
Townships						
Burdell	803	917	1,004	1,342	1,140	+337 / +42%
Cedar	235	238	406	452	479	+244 / +104%
Evart	1,029	1,229	1,513	1,469	1,345	+316 / + 31%
Hartwick	420	504	629	562	591	+171 / +41%
Hersey	865	1,046	1,472	2,012	1,594	+729 / +84%
Highland	1,063	1,018	1,207	1,392	1,148	+85 / +8%
LeRoy	565	706	892	1,039	986	+421 / +75%
Lincoln	1,173	1,228	1,629	1,443	1,462	+289 / +25%
Marion	675	644	744	673	776	+101 / +15%
Middle Branch	642	695	858	791	775	+133 / +21%
Orient	635	686	803	829	733	+98 / +15%
Osceola	920	889	1,118	1,027	943	+23 / +2%
Richmond	1,649	1,722	1,695	1,873	1,657	+8 / +1<%
Rose Lake	847	937	1,231	1,252	1,406	+559 / +66%
Sherman	847	949	1,081	851	991	+144 / +17%
Sylvan	657	858	1,033	1,060	967	+310 / +47%
<p>Green indicates an increase in population from previous Census.</p> <p>Red indicates a decrease in population from previous Census.</p>						

Seasonal

When planning for certain services it can be helpful to have an estimate of the number of seasonal residents and tourists that may be in the area; however, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to obtain an accurate number. It is estimated that Osceola County has a large percentage of seasonal, recreational, occasional use housing units; more than four times greater than Michigan as a whole and seven times greater than the United States.

AGE

Median

An aging population is a typical phenomenon for rural counties. In 2020 Osceola County's estimated Median Age¹⁸ was 43.8 years, which makes it Michigan's 42nd oldest county. Historically the County has had a higher Median Age than both Michigan and the U.S.; however, since 2000 the Median Age is rising at a much greater rate than the State and over twice as fast as the U.S.

Why is Age Important?

Examining the age characteristics of an area provides a better understanding of its population and needs. For example, a community with a large number of young individuals may indicate needs related to the education system, a large number of 65+ residents can indicate a retirement community and a need for senior services while a large Baby Boomer generation (1946-1964) will have a changing need for housing, health care, and recreation as it ages. Median age is an indicator of whether a community is growing older or younger.

¹⁸ Age which divides the population into two numerically equal groups; half the people are younger than this age and half are older.

Distribution

Age Distribution, 2020				
	Osceola County #	Osceola County %	Michigan %	U.S. %
Total Population	22,891	100%	100%	100%
Under 5 years	1,226	5.3%	5.8%	6.2%
5 to 9 years	1,460	6.3%	6.1%	6.4%
10 to 14 years	1,460	6.3%	6.4%	6.5%
15 to 19 years	1,512	6.5%	6.8%	6.6%
20 to 24 years	1,125	4.9%	7.3%	7.0%
25 to 34 years	2,527	10.9%	12.3%	13.7%
35 to 44 years	2,530	10.9%	11.9%	12.7%
45 to 54 years	2,695	11.7%	13.8%	13.4%
55 to 59 years	1,583	6.8%	7.3%	7.0%
60 to 64 years	1,966	8.5%	6.6%	6.7%
65 to 74 years	3,053	13.2%	9.2%	8.6%
75 to 84 years	1,541	6.7%	4.6%	4.4%
85 years and over	444	1.9%	2.1%	1.9%

Dependency

Osceola County has a higher dependency ratio than both Michigan and the United States.

Dependency Ratios			
	Osceola County	Michigan	U.S.
Age Dependency Ratio*	50.1%	45.5%	44.9%
Child Dependency Ratio**	27.2%	26.3%	27.2%
Old-Age Dependency Ratio**	22.9%	19.2%	17.7%
<p>* (Under 18 population + 65 and over population) divided by 18 to 64 population multiplied by 100. ** Under 18 population divided by 18 to 64 population then multiplied by 100. ** Population 65 and over divided by 18 to 64 population then multiplied by 100.</p>			

RACIAL, ETHNIC, TRIBAL, and ANCESTRY IDENTITY

Osceola County, like many of Michigan’s rural counties, is *not* very racially diverse. As such, Osceola County has a racial distribution much different than both Michigan and the United States; however, this is not unusual for a rural Michigan county.

Racial Distribution, 2020 ¹⁹				
	Osceola County	Osceola County %	Michigan %	U. S. %
White	21,537	93.1%	78.7%	73.0%
Black or African American	251	1.1%	13.8%	12.7%
American Indian and Alaska Native	78	0.3%	0.5%	0.8%
Hispanic or Latino	463	2.0%	6.0%	19.5%
Asian	82	0.4%	2.9%	5.4%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	1	0.0%	< 0.1%	0.2%
Some other race	292	1.3%	1.2%	4.8%
Two or more races	881	3.8%	2.8%	3.1%

Osceola County has a significantly higher portion of its population that is “White alone” than both Michigan and the United States and a significantly lower portion of its population that is “Black or African American alone”.

Within Osceola County 463 individuals self-identified as Hispanic or Latino. This is only 2.0% of the population, approximately three times less than Michigan and ten times less than the United States. This is significant since Hispanics accounted for over half the growth in the United States between 2000 and 2010 and the Census Bureau is predicting approximately 25% of the population in the United States will be Hispanic by 2050.

In general terms, the percentage of the population in Osceola County (0.8%) who self-identify as American Indian and Alaska Native is similar to both Michigan (0.5%) and the United States (0.8%).

Why is Racial, Ethnic, Tribal, and Ancestry Identity Important?

Federal agencies use racial, ethnic, and tribal information to implement and enforce a number of programs, as well as promote and enforce equal opportunities. At the local level this information is used to run programs and meet legislative requirements.

¹⁹ Source: 2020 Decennial Census ACS Survey US Census Bureau

The most common ancestry claimed by individuals in Osceola County is German followed by English and Irish. This is also true in both Michigan and the United States. Other ancestries listed from most to least common include American, Dutch, Polish, French (except Basque), Swedish, and Scottish.

Ancestry, 2023			
Ancestry	Osceola # / %	Michigan %	U.S.%
German	4,802 / 20.8%	18.0%	14.1%
English	3,271 / 14.1%	10.1%	10.1%
Irish	2,542 / 11.0%	9.9%	7.5%

HEALTH/DISABILITY

Both the percentage of individuals in Osceola County that reported having a disability was higher than both Michigan and the United States. Additionally, Osceola County has a higher percentage of residents that do not have health insurance.

According to the FY24 Annual Report for Community Mental Health for Central Michigan, 979 individuals age 26+, were served by Community Mental Health for Central Michigan.

	Osceola County %	Michigan %	U. S. %
Percentage of Individuals Under Age 65, With Disability	9.1%	10.3%	13.8%
Percentage of Individuals, Under Age 65, Without Health Insurance	6.7%	5.5%	9.5%

Why is Disability Status Important?

A community with a high percentage of disabilities may indicate an increased demand for disabled services.

EDUCATION

Attainment

The percentage of high school graduates and individuals in Osceola County with an Associate degree is similar to that of both Michigan and the United States; however, the percentage of individuals with a Bachelor's or Graduate degree is less than one-half of both Michigan and the United States.

Why is Education Important?

Education is one of the most important indicators of the potential for economic success as a lack of education is closely linked to poverty. Areas with a higher than average educated workforce typically grow faster, have higher incomes, and suffer less than other areas during economic downturns. (A Profile of Demographics, Economic Profile System, May 25, 2018, page 15)

VISION

Osceola County's schools provide a quality education to students that include job-training programs designed by the schools, students, and local businesses.

Educational Attainment, Population 25 Years and Over, 2015-2020*

	Osceola County # / %	Michigan %	U.S. %
No high school diploma	1,823 / 11.1%	8.7%	11.5%
High school graduate (includes equivalency) or higher	6,907 / 88.9%	91.3%	88.5%
with some college, no degree	3,737 / 22.7%	23.2%	20.3%
with Associate degree	1,385 / 8.6%	9.6%	8.6%
with Bachelor's degree	1,303 / 8.1%	18.3%	20.2%
with Graduate or professional degree	696 / 4.3%	11.7%	12.7%

* The Educational Attainment chart provides valuable information; however, it does not include important skills that can be obtained through apprenticeships and on-the-job training.

LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME

Based on 2015-2020 Census estimates the ability to speak the English language is not an issue. In Osceola County. Only 1.2% of individuals, 5 years and over, speak English “less than very well”. This compares to 3.4% for Michigan and 9.0% for the U.S.²⁰

Why is Language Spoken at Home Important?

If a significant portion of a population speaks English “less than very well” this must be taken into consideration when developing and implementing plans, conducting meetings, performing public outreach, and other activities involving the public.

INCOME & POVERTY

There are various measurements of income within a community. Some of these include Per Capita and Median Household Income, Income Distribution, Gini Coefficient, Household Earnings by Source, and Poverty.

Per Capita and Median Household Income

The Per Capita Income in Osceola County is significantly less than both the State (73.7%) and Nation (67.3%). With such a low Per Capita Income it makes sense that the County also has a low Median Household Income compared to the State (80.2%) and Nation (72.6%).

Why is Per Capita and Median Household Income Important?

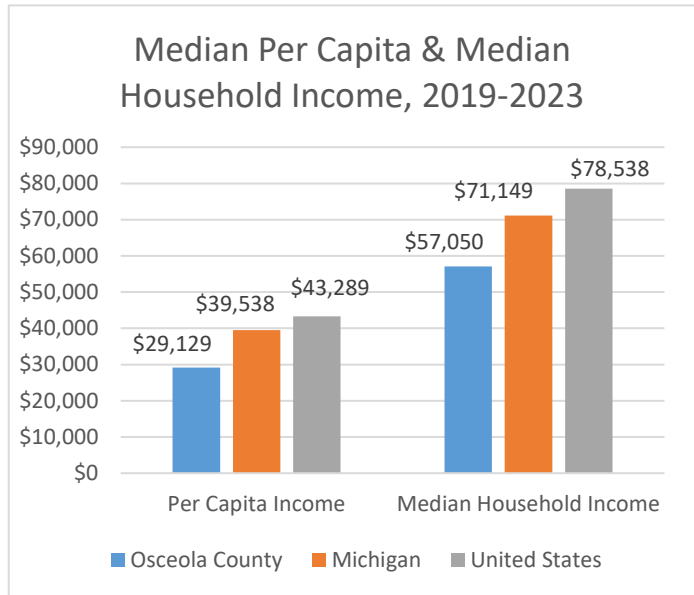
Both per capita income and median household income provide an indicator of potential spending.

²⁰ 5-Year ACS Estimates, 2013-2017

While both income measures are lower this is not uncommon for a rural county.

Income Distribution

An income distribution chart is a tool that can reveal income distribution and potential impact. An income chart that reveals a high percentage of households at the lower end of the income spectrum can indicate economic hardship. An income chart revealing a high percentage in the middle of the income spectrum can indicate a strong middle class. Lastly, an income chart with a large percentage of households at both ends of the spectrum chart can indicate economic inequality or “haves” and “have-nots”. The income chart skews toward the lower income range brackets in Osceola County.



Why is Income Distribution Important?

Income distribution can identify a community facing economic distress, a strong middle class, or a “have/have-not” situation.

The table below shows the data used to construct the income distribution chart.

Median Household Income, Osceola County, 2017-2021

Total	Households (%)
\$0 to \$24,999	21.7%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	27.5%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	20.0%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	13.0%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	12.9%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	3.3%
\$200,000 or more	1.6%

Household Earnings by Source

Labor income is not the only source of household income.

Why are Household Earnings by Source Important?

The source of income can provide insight into a community. For example, Social Security and retirement income can indicate an aging population or an influx of retirees. A high percentage of Supplemental Security Income (SSI), cash public assistance, and food stamp/SNAP assistance can reflect economic hardship.

Household Earnings by Source, 2017			
	Osceola County # / %	Michigan %	U. S. %
Total Households	9,010 (100%)	100%	100%
With earnings	5,887 (65.3%)	74.1%	77.7%
Mean earning (dollars)	\$54,999	\$74,358	\$83,186
Social Security	3,862 (42.9%)	34.3%	30.6%
Mean Social Security Income (dollars)	\$18,725	\$19,702	\$18,778
Retirement income	2,262 (25.1%)	22.5%	18.4%
Mean retirement income (dollars)	\$17,025	\$22,642	\$25,798
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	671 (7.4%)	6.3%	5.4%
Mean Supplemental Security Income (SSI) (dollars)	\$11,055	\$10,072	\$9,743
Cash public assistance income	214 (2.4%)	2.8%	2.6%
Mean cash public assistance income (dollars)	\$2,331	\$2,670	\$3,230
Food Stamp / SNAP	1,589 (17.6%)	14.9%	13.0%

Poverty

Osceola County has a very high poverty level. The County's Poverty Rate is higher than all but eleven counties in the State, five of which happen to be counties with a large college which naturally increases the poverty rate. Although high throughout the county, the poverty level is highest in the NE quadrant and significantly higher in several communities; for example, City of Evart – 31.5%, Village of Marion – 32.9%, and Reed City – 20.9%.

Poverty Rate, All People, 2019-2023	
United States	11.1%
Michigan	13.5%
Osceola County	16.8%

Why is Poverty Important?

Poverty is an important indicator of economic well-being.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment by Industry

Osceola County’s Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over has shrank 3.9% when compared to the previous 5-year time period. While this could be concerning, a decrease in the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over. This compares to a 3.3% gain for Michigan and a 4.3% gain for the Nation.

Why is Employment by Industry Important?

Employment by Industry shows the industrial sector where people work. It is important as it shows the diversity of an economy, or putting it another way, the dependency on a specific sector or sectors.

Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining plays a much greater role in Osceola County than it does in both the State and Nation. So does manufacturing.

Civilian Employment by Industry, 2023			
	Osceola County # / %	Michigan %	U. S. %
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	9,713(52.3%)	61.3%	-
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	425 (4.7%)	1.1%	1.9%
Construction	675 (7.4%)	5.8%	6.4%
Manufacturing	1,994 (22.0%)	18.4%	10.3%
Wholesale Trade	200 (2.2%)	2.1%	2.7%
Retail Trade	997 (11.0%)	10.8%	11.4%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	534 (5.9%)	4.8%	5.1%
Information	69 (0.8%)	1.2%	2.1%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	348 (3.8%)	5.8%	6.6%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	398 (4.4%)	10.1%	11.3%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1,937 (21.3%)	23.3%	23.1%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	613 (6.8%)	8.6%	9.7%
Other services, except public administration	473 (5.2%)	4.5%	4.9%
Public administration	414 (4.6%)	3.5%	4.7%

Employment by Occupation

Osceola County has a significantly lower percentage of individuals employed in Management, Business, Science, and Arts Occupations than both Michigan and the United States. This can be significant since these occupations typically pay higher wages.

- Someone in Osceola County is more likely to have a Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance job as someone in Michigan or elsewhere in the United States.

Why is Employment by Occupation Important?

Employment by Occupation shows what people do. It is important as it shows the type of work individuals do regardless of the industry. In addition to requiring different levels and types of education and/or formal training certain occupations typically have higher wages.

- Someone in Osceola County is approximately twice as likely to have a Production, Transportation, and Material Moving job as someone in Michigan or elsewhere in the United States.

VISION

Osceola County’s cities and villages provide convenient, good paying jobs that decrease the commuting time for residents that formerly commuted to surrounding areas for employment.

Employment by Occupation for the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over, 2023

	Osceola County %	Michigan %	U. S. %
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	9,077 (100%)	100%	100%
Management, professional, & related	2,451 (27.0%)	39.9%	37.0%
Service	1,523 (16.8%)	16.2%	18.1%
Sales and office	1,631 (18.0%)	19.6%	23.8%
Farming, fishing, and forestry	425 (2.1%)	1.1%	0.7%
Construction, extraction, maintenance, & repair	675 (7.4%)	5.8%	5.0%
Production, transportation, & material moving	2,323 (25.6%)	16.3%	12.2%

Labor Force Data

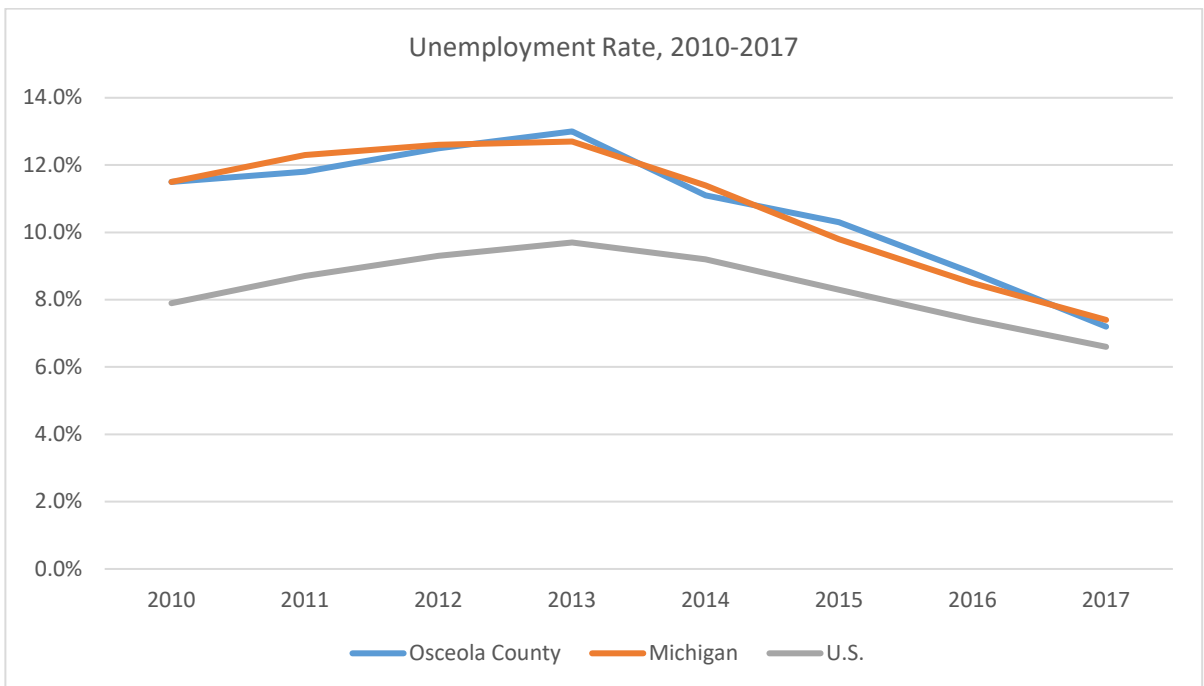
Osceola County has had a reduction in its unemployment rate since 2010; however, this is not necessarily positive. Much of this reduction can be attributed to a reduction in the workforce.

Why is Labor Force Data Important?

Labor Force Data identifies the size of a labor force and whether the labor force is working or not working, but potentially available for work.

Osceola County Labor Force, 2010-2017				
Year	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
2017	9,659	8,960	699	7.2%
2016	9,616	8,772	844	8.8%
2015	9,817	8,807	1,010	10.3%
2014	9,952	8,849	1,103	11.1%
2013	10,025	8,723	1,302	13.0%
2012	10,186	8,908	1,278	12.5%
2011	10,350	9,126	1,224	11.8%
2010	10,442	9,232	1,198	11.5%

Another way to view the labor force data is to make comparisons. Osceola County has always had a higher unemployment rate than the United States while the County's unemployment rate tracks fairly close to the State of Michigan's.



Osceola County Unemployment Ranking Among Michigan's 83 Counties									
Year	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Ranking ²¹	43rd	34th	24th	21st	21st	32nd	52nd	40th	48th

Commuting Characteristics

A substantially higher percentage of Osceola County residents work outside the county as compared to individuals in other Michigan counties or the United States. This may be explained by Osceola County's rural setting and the fact that the larger cities of Cadillac, Big Rapids, and Mt. Pleasant lie to the north, south, and east respectively and are accessible by a good road network.

Commuting Characteristics, 2023			
	Osceola County # / %	Michigan %	U. S. %
WORKERS 16 YEARS and OVER	8,540 (100%)	100%	100%
PLACE OF WORK			
Worked in County	55.3%	71.8%	74.7%
Worked outside County of residence	44.1%	26.5%	22.0%
Worked outside State of residence	0.6%	1.7%	3.3%
TRAVEL TIME TO WORK			
Less than 10 minutes	17.5%	14.2%	12.5%
10 to 14 minutes	11.9%	14.6%	13.2%
15 to 19 minutes	11.3%	15.7%	15.2%
20 to 24 minutes	16.1%	14.7%	14.2%
25 to 29 minutes	9.4%	7.8%	7.0%
30 to 34 minutes	15.6%	12.4%	13.6%
35 to 44 minutes	6.0%	7.3%	7.3%
45 to 59 minutes	3.3%	6.9%	8.1%
60 or more minutes	9.0%	6.3%	8.9%
Mean Travel Time to Work	25.6 min.	24.5 min.	26.8

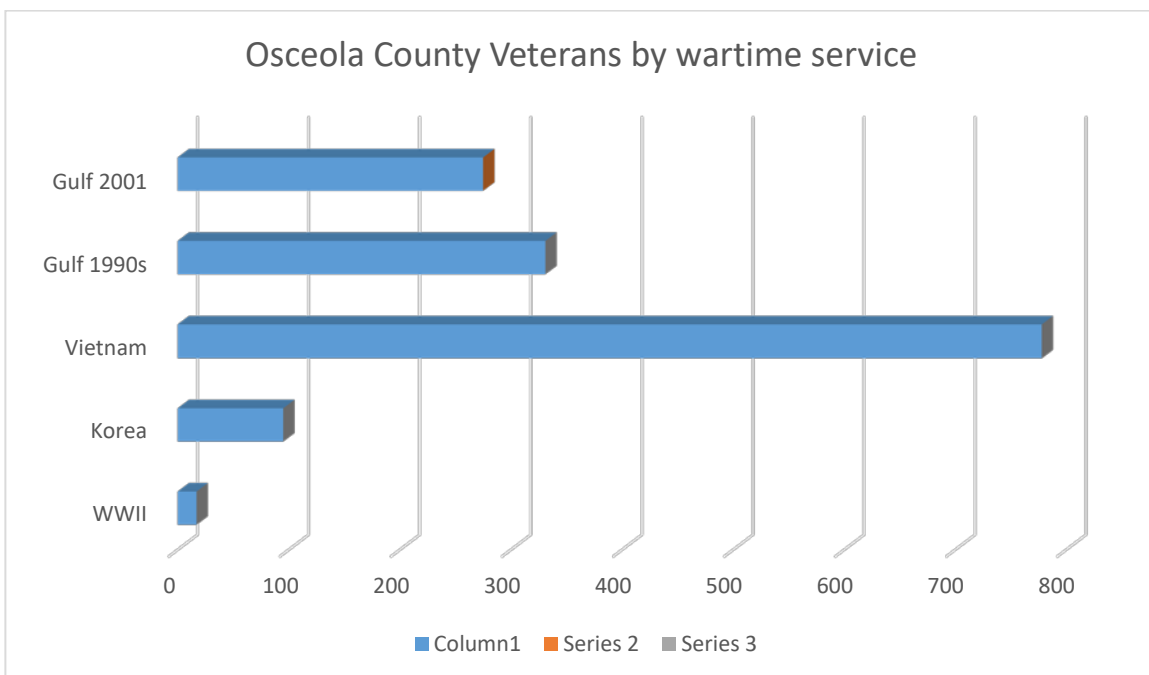
²¹ 1 equals lowest unemployment; 83 equals highest unemployment

Why are Commuting Characteristics Important?

High out-commuting is more common in rural areas; however, it may also be pointing out several possible issues. High-out commuting can potentially separate tax revenues from demands for services. Local governments may struggle to provide social services, housing, water and sewer, fire and police protection, and other services without an adequate tax base. Longer commutes may also indicate a housing/job imbalance – either availability or affordability.

Veteran Data

Osceola County is the home to an estimated 1,830 veterans comprised of 1,655 Males and 175 Females. Veterans in Osceola County account for an estimated 10.2% of the population. A study put out by the State of Michigan showed that nearly 500,000 or 6.3% of the population in the state age 18 and older are veterans. It also showed that rural counties within the state have higher veteran populations.



HOUSING

Household Type

Osceola County has a total of 9,072 households and an average household size of 2.50 individuals. This is approximately the same as the U.S. average household size of 2.49 and slightly higher than the Michigan average of 2.39.

The family household size in Osceola County is 2.98 individuals. This is slightly lower than the family household size in Michigan (3.01) and the United States (3.09).

Why Is Housing Data Important?

Housing data can provide insight into the quality of life experienced by individuals in an area as well as serve as an economic gauge. The data can also serve to aid in the development of housing programs to meet the needs of individuals at different economic levels.

VISION

Osceola County has a variety of well-maintained housing to meet the varied needs of its residents. Year-round homes include single family homes built on a variety of lot sizes, apartments in the cities and villages, and modular housing.

The biggest difference between Osceola County and both Michigan and the U.S. is that Osceola County has a higher percentage of Married-Couple Family Households.

	Osceola County # / %	Michigan	U.S.
Total Households	9,072	4,107,809	131,332,360

Married-Couple Family Household	4,844 / 53.4%	46.2%	46.8%
Cohabiting Couple	714 / 7.9%	7.2%	7.2%
Male Householder, No Wife Present, Family Household	1,555 / 17.1%	19.3%	18.4%
Female Householder, No Husband Present, Family Household	1,959 / 21.6%	27.3%	27.6%

Occupancy

In 2020 Osceola County had a total of 12,534 housing units. Of these units, 9,152 were occupied while 3,382 were vacant. This high vacancy rate (27.0%) is often an indicator of an unstable population base with associated issues; however, this is likely not the case in Osceola County. Upon review it was determined the high vacancy rate in the County was attributed to “seasonal/recreational/occasional use” homes. After subtracting these types of homes, Osceola County actually has a vacancy rate lower than both Michigan and the U.S.

Why is Occupancy Important?

Occupancy can provide information related to the stability and quality of housing in an area. The information can be used to identify demand and turnover. Seasonal or recreational homes may also indicate desirable places for recreation and tourism.

Housing Occupancy, Percentage of Totals, 2020			
	Osceola County # / %	Michigan %	U.S. %
Total Housing Units	12,534	NA	NA

Occupied	9,152 / 73.0%	88.4%	90.3%
Vacant (for rent, rented not occupied, for sale only, sold not occupied, for migrant workers, seasonal/recreational/occasional use)	3,382 / 27.0%	11.6%	9.7%

Year Built

In 2020 the median age of a home in Osceola County was 44 years old. Although in recent years fewer new homes have been built in Osceola County the median age of the County's housing stock is comparable to the U.S. and newer than Michigan's.

Year Structure Built, Occupied Housing Units			
	Osceola County # / %	Michigan	United States
Total Housing Units	9,072	4,107,809	145,333,462
Built 2020 or later	26 / 0.3%	1.4%	2.9%
2010 to 2019	407 / 4.5%	5.1%	9.9%
2000 to 2009	1,106 / 12.2%	10.7%	14.0%
1980 to 1999	2,515 / 27.7%	21.6%	24.8%
1960 to 1979	2,437 / 26.9%	26.4%	23.5%
1940 to 1959	1,061 / 11.7%	21.0%	13.7%
1939 or earlier	1,520 / 16.8%	15.1%	11.2%
Median year structure built	1976	1972	1981

Housing Units and Costs

Why is Year Built Important?

The year homes were built provides information on the age of a community's housing stock. This information can be used to forecast future demand for home construction, energy consumption, weatherization programs, home repair programs, and other such services.

Osceola County has a total of 12,729 housing units of which 83.7% are owner occupied housing units. The Median Value of a owner-occupied home in Osceola County is \$139,600. The Median Monthly Cost for a homeowner with a mortgage is \$1,157 and is \$475 for homeowners without a mortgage. Only 25.2% of housing units with a mortgage consume *less than* 30% of a household’s income.

The Gross Rent for a housing unit in Osceola County is \$764. Approximately one out of every two Osceola County (43.6%) renters find their household costs “unaffordable”; however, this is not an Osceola County specific problem. Both Michigan (49.6%) and the United States (50.3%) have the same issue.

Why are Housing Costs Important?

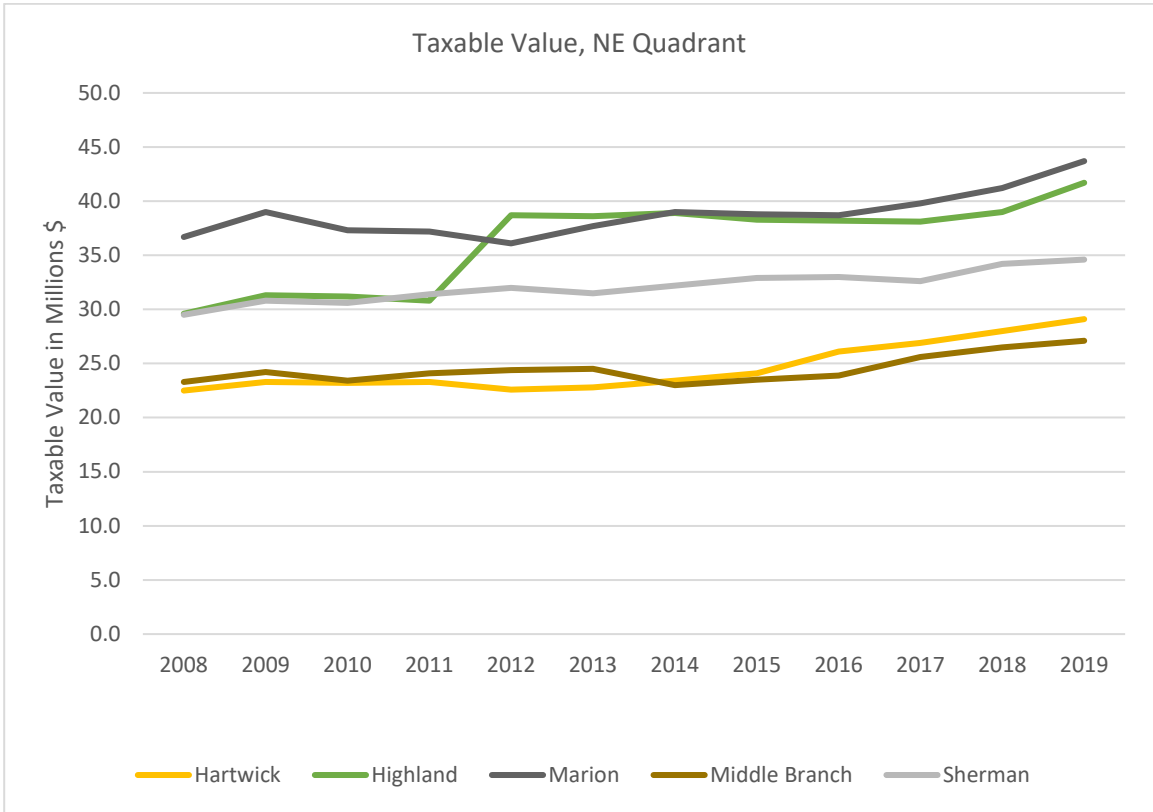
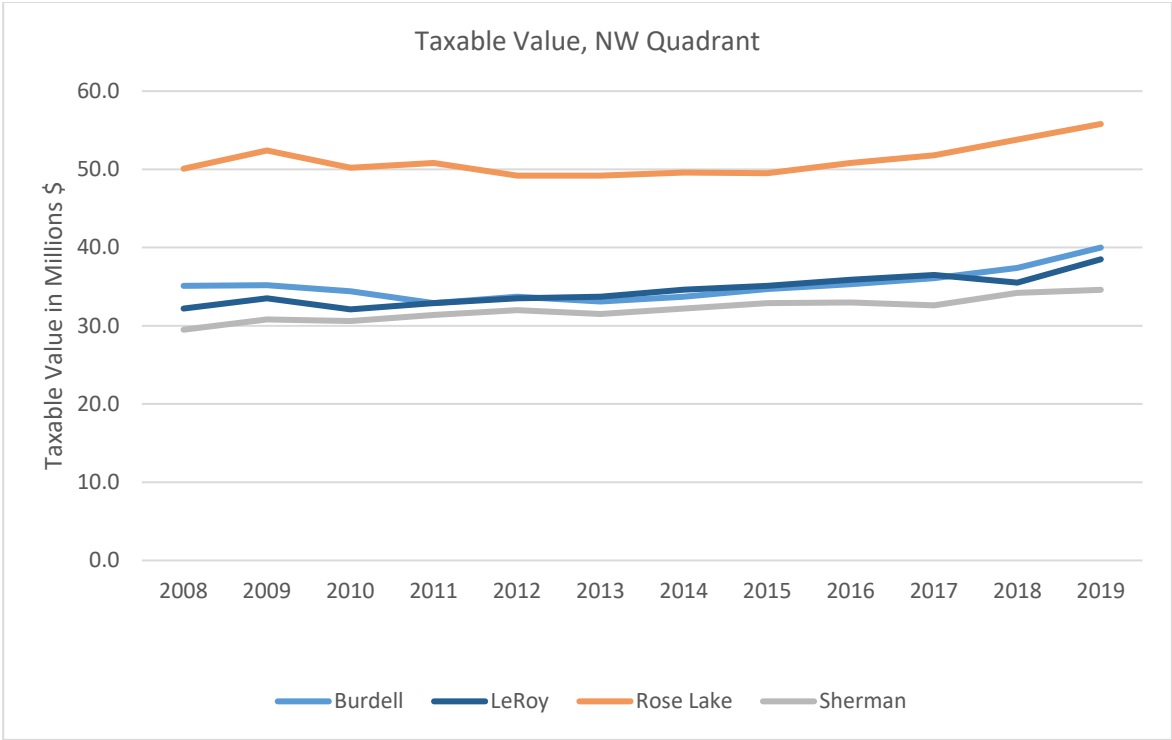
Housing is typically recognized as the largest category of any household expense. As a result, the availability of affordable housing is recognized as an important economic indicator. When a household devotes less than 15% of their household income to housing costs (mortgage or rent plus related costs) it is considered “highly affordable”. When a household devotes more than 30% of their household income to housing costs (mortgage or rent plus related costs) it is considered “unaffordable”.

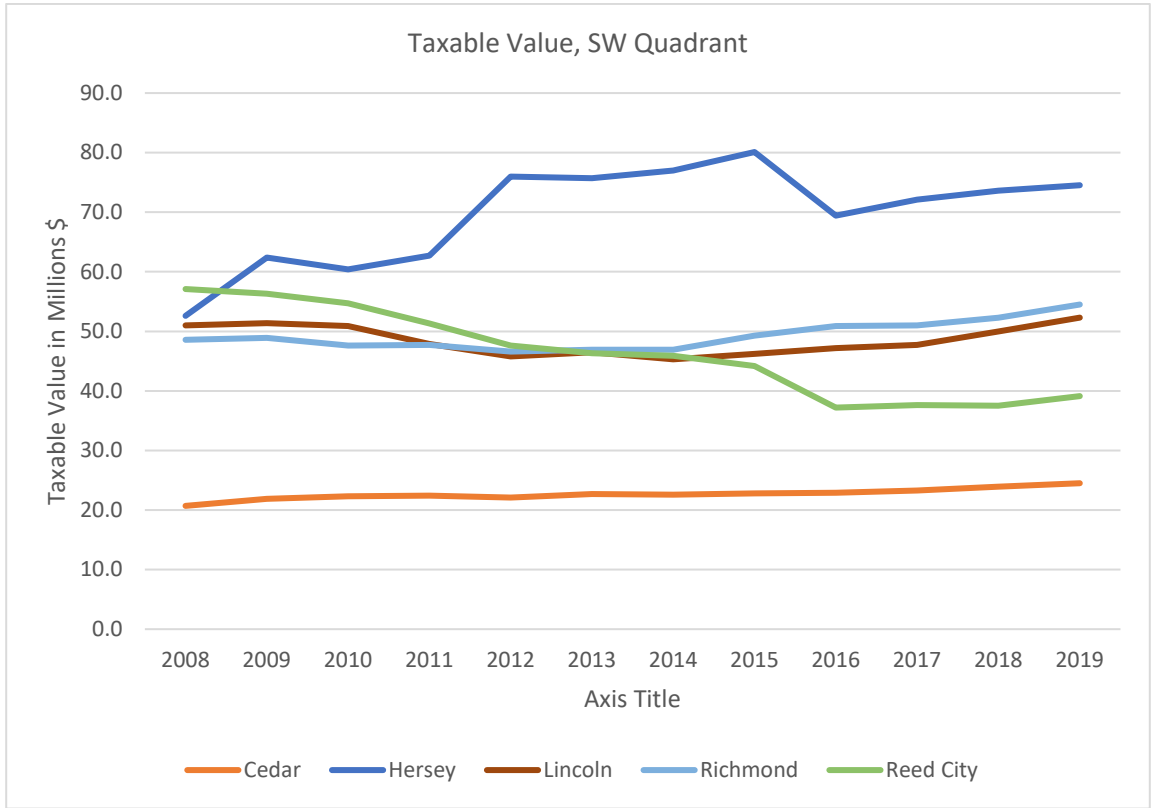
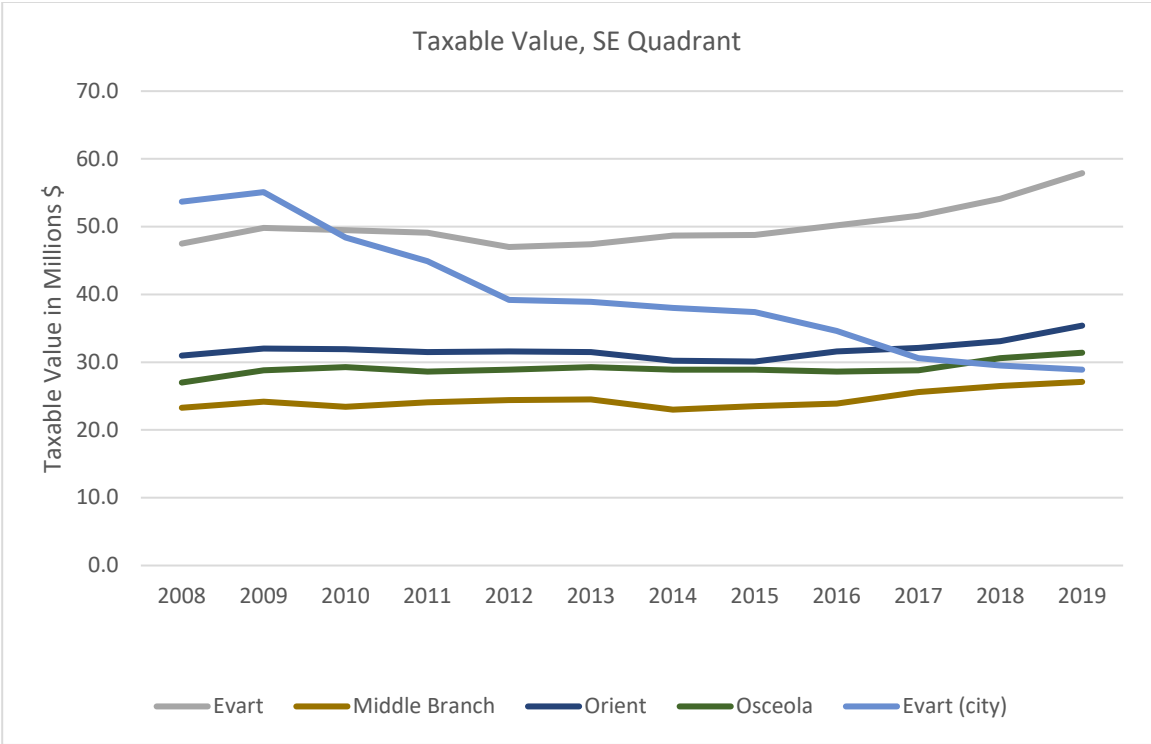
Housing Affordability Index, 2023			
	Osceola County	Michigan	U.S.
Homeowners			
Not Burdened (less than 30%)	25.2%		
Cost Burdened (30% to 49%)	43.2%		
Severely Cost Burdened (50% or more)	31.6%		
Renters			
Not Burdened (less than 30%)	56.6%	50.4%	49.7%
Cost Burdened (30% to 49%)	24.9%	23.9%	25.0%
Severely Cost Burdened (50% or more)	18.5%	25.7%	25.3%

TAXABLE VALUATION

Observations and conclusions can be drawn by analyzing the Taxable Valuations (TV) within the County over a period of time. The following observations are based on the time period of 2008-2019:

- The County's TV increased \$64.2 million which was 9.5%. This included 8 years of growth and 3 years (2010, 2011, 2016) of decline.
- Agricultural: With the exception of Residential, the largest portion of the County's TV comes from Agriculture. From 2008 to 2019 Agricultural TV rose \$14.7 million which was a 20.9% increase. In only one year (2010) did Agricultural TV decrease.
- Commercial: The smallest portion of the County's TV comes from Commercial. From 2008 to 2019 Commercial TV was basically stagnant as it only increased \$400,000 which was a 0.9% increase.
- Industrial: Once the sector with the second largest TV, Industrial was passed by Agricultural in 2011. From 2008 to 2019, Industrial is the only sector that lost TV. Industrial assessments declined \$9.3 million which was a 12.9% decrease.
- Residential: Without question the largest portion of the County's TV comes from Residential. From 2008 to 2019 Residential TV rose \$50.2 million which was an 11.1% increase. Fairly good growth considering the County was not immune to the housing crisis at the beginning of the decade (2010-2013).
- From 2008 to 2019 the TV in all townships increased. The TV in Ewart, Hartwick, Hersey, and Highland Townships each exceeded 20%.
- From 2008 to 2019 the TV in both cities decreased dramatically. Specifically, Ewart lost 46.2% of its TV while Reed City lost 39.1%. In both situations the majority of the losses can be attributed to changes in how industrial personal property is taxed.
- The Southwest (\$244.9M) quadrant has the most TV followed by the Southeast (\$187.0M), the Northwest (\$168.9M), and lastly the Northeast (\$144.6M).





COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

The Community Infrastructure section identifies government buildings, anchor institutions, and important physical infrastructure within the county.

OSCEOLA COUNTY BUILDINGS & SERVICES

The county has recently made changes concerning building locations and occupants. As a result, the county feels it has increased the efficiency of services and lowered costs.



- County Courthouse: Located at 301 W. Upton in Reed City the Courthouse is the main County building. The original building was built in 1938-39. Some additions were made in 1982 and a large addition was made in 1999-2000.

The 77th District Court and 49th Circuit Court are located in the Courthouse.

County offices located in the Courthouse include Equalization, Friend of the Court, Register of Deeds, Treasurer, Clerk, Technology, Prosecuting Attorney, Community Corrections, Probate & Family Court, and Circuit Court Probation.

VISION

Osceola County's efficient government provides an appropriate level of services that meet the needs of its residents and businesses.

- Maintenance Building: The Maintenance Department works from a small building that sits adjacent to the County Courthouse.
- County Administration Building: Located at 602 W. Upton the building houses the Drain Commissioner, County Coordinator's office, and the Middle Michigan Development Corporation's satellite office. County Commissioners and various boards, committees, and commissions hold their meetings at this building.
- Commission on Aging (COA) Buildings: The main COA building is located at 215 S. Division St., Hersey. Veterans' Services and Michigan State University Extension are also located in this building.

In addition to their main facility there are COA satellite facilities in Evart, Marion, and Tustin which serve as both meal sites and as social gathering places. The COA building in Tustin will soon be sold and moved to a new, undetermined location.

- Emergency Management Services (EMS) Buildings: The main EMS building is located at 306 N. Patterson, Reed City. In addition to their main facility there are EMS satellite facilities Ewart, Marion and Tustin.
- Animal Control Building: The Animal Control Department is located at 502 Savidge St., Reed City.
- Professional Drive Building: The Building Department, Soil and Sedimentation, Emergency Management Department, and Parks administrative offices are located at 22054 Professional Dr. (formerly 4323 220th Ave.), Reed City.
- Sheriff's Building and Jail: The Sheriff's Department and jail are located at 325 W. Main St., Reed City. The building is located adjacent to the County Courthouse. The jail is a 76-bed facility.

CITY HALLS

- Reed City, City Hall: Located at 227 E. Lincoln Street, the Reed City Hall houses the administrative offices of the city which include the City Manager, Treasurer, Clerk, and Assessor. The Police and Fire Departments are located adjacent to City Hall. Go to the City of Reed City website (<https://reedcity.org/>) to learn more about the City of Reed City.
- Ewart City Hall: Located at 200 S. Main Steet, the Ewart City Hall houses the administrative offices of the city which include the City Manager, Treasurer, Clerk, Assessor, and Department of Public Works. The Police Department is located at 137 N. River Street while the Fire Department is based at 109 E. Sixth Street. Go to the City of Ewart website (<http://www.ewart.org/index.php>) to learn more about the City of Ewart.

VILLAGE HALLS

Each of the four villages in the County maintain a village hall at which they hold their board meetings and conduct other business.

TOWNSHIP HALLS

Each of the sixteen townships in the County maintain a township hall at which they hold their board meetings and conduct other business. Some of the townships rent their hall for individual or community events.

SCHOOLS

Osceola County is served by four different public school districts and several private schools. The four k-12 school districts are supported by two Intermediate School Districts (ISDs).

➤ Evert Public Schools²³: Evert Public Schools are comprised of three schools. During the 2023-2024 school year a total of 869 students attended these schools; elementary school (K-4) – 340, middle school (5-8) – 252, and high school (9-12) – 277.

➤ Marion Public Schools²⁴: Marion Public Schools are the smallest public school district in the County. It is comprised of two schools. During the 2023-2024 school year a total of 425 students attended these schools; elementary school (K-5) – 209 and middle/high school (6-12) – 216.

➤ Pine River Area Schools²⁵: Pine River Area Schools are comprised of three schools. During the 2023-24 school year a total of 912 students attended these schools; elementary school (K-5) – 271, middle school (6-8) – 274, and high school (9-12) – 367.

School Districts in Osceola County		
School District	2023-2024 Enrollment ²²	5-Year Trend
Evert Public Schools	869	Fluctuating, but steady
Marion Public Schools	425	Fluctuating, but steady
Pine River Area Public Schools	912	Declining
Reed City Area Public Schools	1,421	Fluctuating year-to-year, but overall decline

²² (www.mischooldata.org)

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid

- Reed City Area Public Schools²⁶: The Reed City Area Public School District is the largest school district in the county. It is comprised of three schools. During the 2023-24 school year a total of 1,421 students attended these schools; the elementary school (K-5) – 495, middle school (6-8) – 470, and high school (9-12) – 456.
- Mecosta-Osceola Intermediate School District²⁷: The Mecosta-Osceola Intermediate School District is comprised of the Evert Public Schools, Reed City Area Schools, students from three other districts located outside of the county, and one charter school. During the 2023-24 school year there were 7,885 students in the ISD.
- Wexford-Missaukee Intermediate School District²⁸: The Wexford-Missaukee Intermediate School District (ISD) is comprised of the Pine River Area Schools, Marion Public Schools, and students from five other districts located outside of the county. During the 2023-24 school year there were 11,015 students in the ISD.

LIBRARIES

There are five libraries in Osceola County, one in each corner of the county (Reed City, Evert, Marion, and Tustin) plus one in the Village of LeRoy.

- Evert Public Library; 104 N. Main St., Evert, MI 49631, (231) 734-5542
- LeRoy Community Library; 104 W. Gilbert St., LeRoy, MI 49655, (231) 768-4493
- Marion Public Library; 120 E. Main St., Marion, MI 49665, (231) 743-2421
- Reed City Area District Library; 829 S. Chestnut St., Reed City, MI 49677, (231) 832-2131
- Tustin Community Library; 310 S. Neilson St., Tustin, MI 49688, (231) 829-3012

MEDICAL (does not include doctor offices, dental offices, rehab facilities, or chiropractic offices)

The Corwell Health Reed City Campus offers family medicine as well as other clinics and medical specialties. They also operate a nursing facility and a regional cancer center.

- Corwell Health Reed City Campus; 300 N. Patterson, Reed City, MI 49677

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid

- Susan P. Wheatlake Regional Cancer Center; 4499 220th Ave., Reed City, MI 49677

Osceola County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) provides 24-hour emergency medical assistance to injured persons and those with a critical medical emergency from four locations in the county (Reed City, Ewart, Tustin, and Marion).

PUBLIC SAFETY

Law Enforcement

There are four law enforcement agencies that serve the residents of Osceola County. The Ewart and Reed City Police Departments provide police services in each of their respective communities.

The Michigan State Police (MSP) provide law enforcement and public safety services throughout Michigan. While the MSP provide a wide array of law enforcement and safety services the most visible is crime and traffic. Coverage is provided by the MSP post in Mount Pleasant.

The Osceola County Sheriff's Department provides a full spectrum of law enforcement, corrections, and court services so that Osceola County can be a safe and secure place to live, work, and visit, both today and in the future. The Sheriff's Department employs certified deputies (including the Sheriff, Undersheriff, and bailiffs) and corrections officers.

Fire Departments

Osceola County's fire protection is provided by seven volunteer, on-call fire departments, each with their own station. The western side of the county is covered by five departments (Reed City, Hersey, Lincoln, LeRoy-Rose Lake, and Tustin while the entire eastern side is covered by two (Ewart and Marion). All fire departments in the county also provide Emergency Medical Response that augments ambulance services within their respective coverage areas. There is a countywide mutual aid agreement for inter-departmental service. Also, several departments cover areas outside of Osceola County via formal contract.

Like most rural communities, staffing is down. Each department will have approximately 15-30 positions. These maximum number of positions, including open positions, typically ranges between 15-30 personnel.

PARKS & TRAILS

Information on each of the larger parks in Osceola County is included in each community's Community Parks & Recreation Plan. Refer to the appropriate plan for detailed information. Depending on the community, the plan may be listed online or you may have to contact the community.

- Osceola County (www.osceola-county.org)
 - Crittenden Park – A 10-acre park bordering the eastern shore of Big Lake. The park features camping and other activities and amenities; 3641 S. 50th Avenue, Sears, MI 49679
 - Rose Lake Park – A 48-acre park set adjacent to Rose Lake among beautiful pines and hardwoods. The park features camping and other activities and amenities; 17726 Youth Drive, LeRoy, MI 49655

- City of Ewart (www.ewart.org)
 - Riverside Park West – A 17-acre community park and campground.
 - Riverside Park East – A 33-acre park and primitive campground for outdoor enthusiasts.
 - Refer to the Ewart Parks and Recreation Master Plan posted on the city's website for additional parks and detailed park amenities.

- City of Reed City (<https://reedcity.org/parks-and-trails.php>)
 - Rambadt Park – A thirty-three (33) acre community park located near the southwest corner of US-10 and US-131.
 - Westerburg Park – A forty-six (46) acre community park and campground.
 - Linear Park – A memorial walkway running along the Hersey River.
 - Depot-Crossroads Park – An urban park located at the intersection (crossroads) of the Pere Marquette State Trail and White Pine Trail State Park.
 - Purple Heart Trail
 - Refer to the Reed City website for additional parks and detailed amenities.

- Village of LeRoy/LeRoy Township (copies of the Parks and Recreation Plan are available upon request, leroyvillagecouncil@gmail.com)
 - Village Memorial Park, Picnic Area, and Open Space

- Village of Hersey
 - Mosaic Park
 - East Park

- Village of Marion (copies of the Parks and Recreation Plan are available upon request, marionclerk@sbcglobal.net)
 - Mill Pond Park – A three (3) acre community park adjacent to the Marion mill pond.
 - Veterans’ Park – A thirty (30) acre community park with camping.

Many trails can be found in Osceola County. These may be as small as undesignated trails which in some cases may even be considered paths all the way up to large, named trails that are part of the State of Michigan park system. Listed below are three of the more significant trails.

- Pere Marquette State Rail Trail²⁹

The Pere Marquette State Rail Trail (PMSRT) is a 56 mile long multi-use trail. The trail goes from the City of Clare in Clare County to the Village of Baldwin in Lake County. The trail runs the entire east-west width of the southern portion of the County, going through the cities of Evart and Reed City and the villages of Sears and Hersey. The trail is paved from Clare to Reed City and a hard-packed, crushed limestone surface from Reed City to Baldwin.

Permitted activities along the trail include biking, hiking, jogging, inline skating, and weather permitting cross-county skiing and snowmobiling. Water and restrooms along the trail are available at both the Evart Depot and Reed City Depot.

- White Pines Trail State Park

At a length of 92 miles long the White Pine Trail State Park is the longest Rail-Trail in Michigan. It is a multi-use trail running from Comstock Park, which is just north of Grand Rapids, to Cadillac in Wexford County. The trail runs the entire north-south length of the western portion of the County. In Osceola County it goes through the City of Reed City and the villages of LeRoy and Tustin. The entire length of the trail is paved.

Permitted activities along the trail include biking, hiking, jogging, inline skating, and weather permitting cross-county skiing and snowmobiling. Water and restrooms along the trail are available at the Reed City Depot.

Both rails-to-trails intersect in Reed City. This is the only location in Michigan where two Rails-to-Trails intersect, thus offering users the opportunity to travel in an east, west, north, or south direction.

- The Michigan Department of Natural Resources maintains an ORV trail just outside of the city of Evart. It is a 22 Mile Motorcycle-Only trail.

²⁹ The Pere Marquette State Rail Trail should not be confused with the Pere Marquette Rail Trail which runs from Midland to Clare.

UTILITIES (including Broadband)

Osceola County Utilities		
Type Utility	Provider	Service Area / Comments
Electricity	<p>Consumers Energy (www.consumersenergy.com)</p> <p>Great Lakes Energy (www.gtlakes.com)</p> <p>Homeworks Tri-County Electric Cooperative</p>	<p>Within Osceola County electrical service is provided by three utilities. Refer to each company's website for information.</p> <p>Consumers Energy provides electrical service throughout Osceola County.</p> <p>Great Lakes Energy provides electrical service throughout most of Osceola County</p> <p>Homeworks Tri-County provides service in the communities of Ewart and Hersey.</p>
Natural Gas	<p>DTE Energy (www.dteenergyservices.com)</p> <p>Consumers Energy (www.consumersenergy.com)</p>	<p>Ewart (city), Ewart (township), Hartwick, Hersey (village), Hersey (township), Highland, Lincoln, Orient, Osceola, Reed City, Richmond and Sylvan</p> <p>Consumers Energy provides natural gas service to a small portion of the northeast quadrant of the county. Areas served include the Village of Marion and both Marion and Middle Branch Townships.</p>
Telecommunications (phone, television, broadband)	<p>Numerous providers: Due to the ever changing telecommunications landscape individual providers are not limited.</p> <p>Television: Charter (www.charter.com) Summit Digital (www.summitdigital.us), satellite providers</p> <p>Broadband Internet (minimum 25 mbps download / 3 mbps upload)</p>	<p>With the availability of satellite communications all of Osceola County has access to the internet; however, the available speed and cost can vary based on the location within the county.</p>

Water & Sewer	City of Evert, City of Reed City, Village of Marion	Each municipality provides sewer and water to its residents. The remainder of the County utilizes well & septic.
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HISTORIC SITES³⁰

Across the United States there are over 87,000 sites on the National Register; however, Osceola County is one of only five counties in Michigan without any sites. on the *National Register*. There are over 2,700 sites on the *State of Michigan Historic Register*. Seven of these sites are in Osceola County:

- Congregational Church, 216 South Main, Hersey; listed on June 15, 1979
- Joseph W. Guyton, Informational Designation (historical marker), 308 N. Main Street, Evert; listed on June 15, 2005
- John E. Larson Farm, 20432 Mackinaw Trail, Tustin; listed on June 5, 1997



- Marion Mill Pond / Founding of Marion Information Designation, M-66, one block north of Main, adjacent to water and Lake Shore Drive, Marion; listed on April 15, 1999

- North Evert United Methodist Church, 8985 90th Avenue, Evert (vicinity); listed on July 20, 1984
- Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church, 308 Michigan Avenue, Tustin; listed on July 15, 2004
- Swedish Immigration Informational Designation, Old US-131 near Tustin, about 10 miles south of Cadillac, Tustin; listed on June 15, 1979

³⁰ Although still listed on the *State of Michigan Historic Register* the Reed City Community Building has been demolished.

MUSEUMS

Within Osceola County there are four local museums:

- [Evert Public Library & Museum](#); 104 N. Main Street, Evert
- [Marion Area Historical Museum](#); 505 S. Mill Street, Marion
- [LeRoy Area Museum](#), LeRoy; 105 Bevins Street, LeRoy
- [Old Rugged Cross Historical Museum](#); 138 W. Slosson Avenue, Reed City



- [Pine River Area Historical Museum](#); Howard Street, Tustin

OSCEOLA-LAKE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Located at 138 W. Upton in Reed City the Conservation District provides site-specific, technical assistance and information to landowners/users in all aspects of resource management. Go to the Osceola-Lake Conservation District website (<https://www.mecostacd.org/agriculture-maeap>) to learn more about the Osceola-Lake Conservation District.

OSCEOLA COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION – OFFICES & GARAGES

The Road Commission is responsible for maintaining roads and bridges in Osceola County. Their administrative office and main facility is located at 4737 Makwa Drive, Hersey (just off US-10). Their North Facility is located at 13353 20 Mile Road, Tustin. Go to the [County Road Association of Michigan](#) website to learn more about the Osceola County Road Commission.

MEDIA

The following television stations and newspapers serve Osceola County.

Television Stations:

- 7&4 WPBN – NBC affiliate broadcasting from Traverse City.

- 9&10 News (WWTW) – CBS affiliate broadcasting from Traverse City.
- FOX 32 – FOX affiliate broadcasting from Cadillac.
- Public Broadcasting Station (PBS) – PBS broadcasts from Mount Pleasant.
- WZZM – ABC affiliate broadcasting from Grand Rapids.

Newspapers:

- Cadillac News – Daily newspaper covering Cadillac and surrounding communities which includes Osceola County.
- Pioneer – Daily newspaper covering Big Rapids and surrounding communities which includes Osceola County. An Osceola County specific edition is published once a week.

TRANSPORTATION

Roads

The National Functional Classification (NFC) System Road Network Map for Osceola County is used by the Michigan Department of Transportation to classify roads. Roads are classified into one of seven categories. Osceola County does not have an Interstate.

<i>VISION</i>
<i>The County's network of well-maintained roads serve the varied needs of residents, businesses, and visitors.</i>

- Freeways: Freeways are highways intended to provide for the movement of large volumes of traffic on a regional basis as well as between communities. These types of roads typically have limited access, no at grade crossings, and no traffic stops. The legal speeds are typically 55 miles per hour for trucks and 75 miles per hour for other vehicles. Osceola County has one freeway.

US-131 is the only road in Osceola County that falls into this category. It enters Michigan at the Indiana border near White Pigeon and runs to Petosky. The Osceola County portion runs north-south the entire length of the county. It passes through the townships of Richmond, Lincoln, LeRoy, and Burdell. Entrance/exit ramps provide easy access to the communities of Reed City, LeRoy, and Tustin.

- **Principal and Minor Arterial:** Arterials are highways maintained by the Michigan Department of Transportation and are intended to provide for the movement of large volumes of traffic on a regional basis as well as between communities. These roads may have channelized grade crossings and signals at major intersections. Osceola County has four arterial highways.

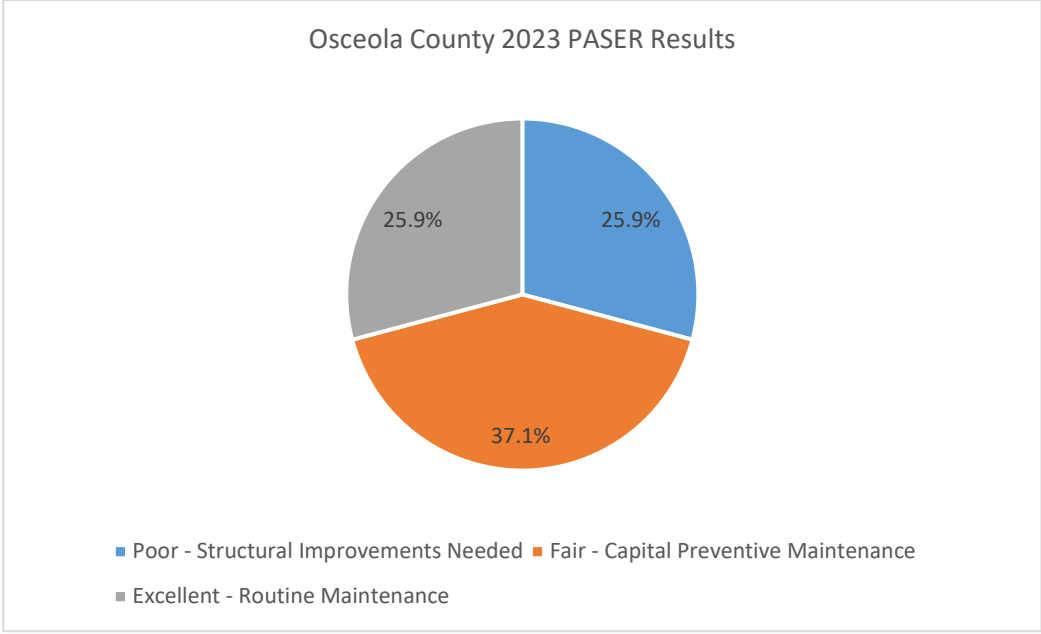
US-10 runs east-west the entire width of the county. It runs from Ludington on the West side of the State to Bay City on the East. M-66 runs north-south the entire length of the county. It enters Michigan at the Indiana border near Sturgis and runs to Charlevoix. M-115 runs diagonally through the Northeast portion of the County. From the East it enters in Sylvan Township near 12 Mile Road and exits in the North near 135th Avenue in Sherman Township. The portion going through Osceola County is entirely paved, two or more lanes. Lastly, M-61 connects M-115 in Osceola County to communities in the East.

- **Major and Minor Collectors:** Collectors provide for through traffic between areas and across communities, as well as direct access to abutting property. These are primarily paved roads designed to move traffic at speeds between 35 and 55 miles per hour. The roads are subject to necessary control of entrances, exits, and curb cuts.

An example is 80th Avenue from just north of 7 Mile Road, near the Muskegon River, all the way up to just south of 20 Mile Road. Another example is Mackinaw Trail from 13 Mile Road heading north where it exits the County. Osceola County has approximately 915 miles of county primary and county local (see below) roads.

- **Local:** Local roads provide for traffic movement within the county and connect local land areas with the major arterial road system. Providing direct access to adjacent properties is an important function of these roads. These roads may or may not be paved. The majority of roads within the county fall into this classification. Several examples include 5 Mile Road, 22 Mile Road, and 90th Avenue.

Each year, an assessment of all federal-aid roads within Osceola County is done jointly by the Osceola County Road Commission and the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission (WMRPC) using the Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) road rating system. In 2023 Osceola County roads were rated somewhat better than the State of Michigan as a whole; however, this was not the case when looking at both the villages and cities. Approximately three quarters of Osceola County's roads were considered fair or better.



Area Rated	Poor	Fair	Good
State of Michigan	32.7%	40.8%	26.4%
Osceola County	25.9%	37.1%	37.0%
Reed City	4.5%	51.8%	43.7%
Ewart	86.4%	0.0%	13.6%
Hersey	63.8%	27.9%	8.3%
LeRoy	37.6%	41.7%	20.7%
Marion	44.6%	48.2%	7.2%
Tustin	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Bus Service

Indian Trails is a regional bus carrier that provides daily scheduled routes throughout Michigan and into Chicago as well as Milwaukee. They carry well over a million passengers annually. In Osceola County they have a pick-up/drop-off point in Reed City.

Local bus transportation is provided by the Mecosta Osceola Transportation Authority (MOTA). MOTA provides public transportation to individuals in both Mecosta and Osceola Counties.



Within Osceola County service is provided on a Demand Response basis. At this time, Route Service does not justify the cost of this type of service.

Airport

The City of Evert Municipal Airport is co-located with the Evert Air-Industrial Park. The airport is classified as General Aviation meaning that it was established primarily for the accommodation of other than regularly scheduled passenger service. The closest commercial air carriers operate out of Gerald R. Ford International Airport in Grand Rapids, MBS International Airport in Freeland, and Cherry Capital Airport in Traverse City.



Rail Service

Great Lakes Central (GLC), a Class II Regional railroad, operates the former Tuscola & Saginaw Bay Railway routes. Appendix B, Great Lake Central’s Rail System, shows a small portion of the route going through Osceola County. The route enters Osceola County in the northeast corner between 16 Mile Road and 17 Mile Road. The train goes through the Village of Marion and exits to the North just east of 60th Avenue (approximately 4 miles North, 2.75 East of Marion). A spur can be run into the Village of Marion industrial park.

SOLID WASTE

Solid waste disposal is accomplished through a combination of means:

- Curbside – Residents in the City of Evert and Reed City have access to curbside pick-up as part of normal city services. Residents in other parts of the County can access curbside pick-up through contract with one of several vendors that provide service in the county.
- Transfer Stations – Both Hersey and Richmond Townships operate a transfer station. Additionally, a private transfer station is also operated in Richmond Township.
- Electronic Waste – Annually a countywide electronic waste disposal day is held. Typically, several drop-off locations are setup. The program is funded through donations.

<i>VISION</i>
<i>The County has an active program to promote the area’s beauty by insuring issues related to trash, junk, and other unsightly detractors are quickly addressed.</i>

- Recycling – The majority of residents in the County do not have access to recycling. For those that do the method depends on their location. City of Ewart residents have curbside recycling. The City of Reed City has a recycling center where residents can bring their recyclables. In the Village of LeRoy trailers are occasionally set-up for recycling. At the end of the day the collected materials are then transported to a recycling center.
- Hazardous Household Waste – The Mecosta-Osceola Conservation District has typically sponsored an annual Hazardous Household Waste Disposal Day. The program is funded through both community and individual donations.
- Scrap Tires – For over 10 years Middle Branch Township has been conducting an annual scrap tire clean-up. The program is available to residents from other townships as long as the township contributes manpower. For several days each Spring residents throughout the county are allowed to turn in scrap tires which are then hauled away by a scrap tire contractor. The program is funded through a grant from the Michigan Department of Energy, Great Lakes, and Environment and manpower is provided by volunteers. In 2024 Middle Branch Township stopped participating in the clean up and in 2025 Lincoln Township picked up the program and was reported to have great success in their first year.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Overall economies do not function on their own, but instead are *regional in nature*; however, with that said, this section on economic development focuses strictly on Osceola County.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

There are several organizations in Osceola County with economic development related responsibilities. Each organization has a specific geographic focus.

- Osceola County – Osceola County provides countywide economic development services through a contract with the Middle Michigan Development Corporation (MMDC). The county has a Land Bank and Brownfield Redevelopment Authority.
- City of Ewart – The City of Ewart has a Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Development Authority (DDA). The city was selected into the Michigan Main Street program in 2018.
- City of Reed City – The City of Reed City has a Chamber of Commerce, Land Bank, and Brownfield Redevelopment Authority. The city is currently in the process of reestablishing Downtown Development Authority. The city and neighboring Richmond Township occasionally meet to discuss community and economic development issues of joint significance.
- Village of Marion – The Village of Marion has a Chamber of Commerce.
- Richmond Township – Richmond Township has a Downtown Development Authority (DDA). The township works closely with the City of Reed City.

In addition to the organizations listed above Michigan Works! West Central maintains a service center in Reed City. Michigan Works! West Central serves both employers and job seekers in Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Newaygo, Oceana, and Osceola Counties.

MAJOR EMPLOYERS

There are a total of 17 for-profit companies and governmental organizations in Osceola County with 51 or more employees. This group is heavily weighted toward manufacturing (10). Each of the four school districts in the County, the one hospital, a mining facility, and county government make up the remainder. There are some retail establishments in the county; however, the low level of retail activity should be noted. Osceola County residents must often shop out of the county if they wish to shop at larger retail stores.

A detailed list of all manufacturers can be found in the Economic Development section of the County website (www.osceola-county.org).

Osceola County Employers with 50 or More Employees		
Employer	Employment Range #	Industry
Ventra LLC	1,000+	Manufacturing (Tier II automotive)
Corwell Health, Reed City Campus	251-500	Health care
Lactalis (Yoplait)	251-500	Manufacturing (food processing)
Osceola County	251-500 (approximately 100 full-time)	Government (county)
Vitro	101-250	Manufacturing (automotive glass)
Reed City Public Schools	101-250	Education (k-12)
Ewart Public Schools	101-250	Education (k-12)
Pine River Public Schools	101-250	Education (k-12)
Lume	101-170	Agriculture (marijuana)
Kraftube	51-100	Manufacturing (metal tubular parts)
LeRoy Tool & Die	51-100	Manufacturing (design and manufacture of rubber & plastic production and prototype molds)
Ebels	51-100	Retail (groceries)
Cargill	51-100	Mining (salt)
Hydaker-Wheatlake	51-100	Construction (utility infrastructure)
Reed City Group	51-100	Manufacturing (plastic injection molding, tooling, automation)
Pollington Machine Tool Inc.	51-100	Manufacturing (CNC, CAD/CAM, welding, precision machining)
Marion Public School District	51-100	Education (k-12)
Tubelite	51-100	Manufacturing (aluminum doors, store fronts)
Nartron	51-100	Manufacturing (electronic sensors, generators)
Chippewa Plastics	51-100	Manufacturing (Plastic molds and parts for the automotive, furniture and other industries)

INDUSTRIAL PARKS

Osceola County has two industrial parks.

- Evert Air Industrial Park – The Evert Air-Industrial Park is located within the Evert Municipal Airport.
 - Lots may be combined
 - Michigan Certified Business Park
 - Zoned General Industrial
 - Adjacent to US-10, Class A road
 - Fully developed, including broadband access
 - 75' x 3,800' lighted runway
 - Designed to allow direct loading and unloading of aircraft from most lots

- Marion Industrial Park – Located in the Village of Marion.
 - Fully developed, including broadband access
 - One-quarter mile east M-66, Class A road
 - Rail spur can be brought into the park

RECREATION & TOURISM

Located north of most of Michigan’s more developed areas, approximately 50% of Osceola County is open space which includes forests and open areas not being actively used for agriculture. As a result, the county offers an abundance of outdoor recreational opportunities that are available to both residents and visitors. With so much open space there is plenty of opportunity for activities such as hunting, birding, geocaching, and wildlife viewing. This includes hunting in the 995 acres of the Osceola-Missaukee Grasslands State Game Area located in Osceola County.

<i>VISION</i>
<i>Osceola County has an abundance of State recreation areas, County and local recreation areas, and linear parks.</i>

Several rivers and lakes are available for water related activities. Larger rivers running through the county include the Muskegon, Hersey, and Middle Branch Rivers. The Muskegon is Michigan’s second longest river. Its slow moving water makes it ideal for canoeing, kayaking, or viewing wildlife. Located in the southwest portion of the county, the Hersey River is a 21-mile long principal tributary of the Muskegon River. The river primarily flows through Osceola County and is a designated trout stream. The 35-mile long Middle Branch River, located in the northeast portion of the county, is also a tributary of the Muskegon River.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has identified 21 Osceola County lakes as locations to fish. Two of these lakes are adjacent to parks operated by Osceola County. The parks offer recreational opportunities to both day users and campers, many of whom come from outside the local area. Rose Lake Park, the larger of the two, is 48-acres in size and located on Rose Lake. Crittenden Park, 10-acres in size, is located on Big Lake. Both parks provide opportunities for swimming, canoeing, camping, picnicking, and other activities. In addition to the two county parks there are approximately a dozen (state, municipal, and private) other campgrounds ranging from primitive to full-service.



Osceola County has one of the more developed rails-to-trails systems in all of Michigan. These trails offer an opportunity for walking, biking, inline skating, bicycling, and snowmobiling. Reed City is the only location in the State where two rails-to-trails intersect. The location offers a trailhead, parking lot, restrooms, pavilion, picnic tables, and fire pit. The 55-mile long Pere Marquette State Trail runs east-west through the entire width of

the county. The entire 24 miles through Osceola County are hard surface (paved or crushed limestone). The 93-mile long White Pine Trail is the second longest trail in the State. It runs north-south the entire length of the county. The entire portion of the trail running through Osceola County is hard surface.



The Osceola County Fairgrounds is a community gem. In addition to its ability to host the annual county fair, the fairground has 190 campsites along with facilities allowing it to host national, regional, state, and local events. Some of the current activities include:

- National – Original Dulcimer Players Club’s annual Non-Electric Music Funfest, the nation’s largest hammered dulcimer festival.
- Regional – Gold Wings Touring Association’s Region F annual event (five states).
- State – Michigan Trappers / Predator Callers Association Rally, Michigan Travel Trailers Convention, and Michigan Woodcarvers Roundup.
- Local – Organizations and individuals use the fairgrounds for activities such as community meetings, recycling, weddings, reunions, school activities, and more.

Other outdoor opportunities include:

- A 22-mile, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, off-road trail set in the Pere Marquette State Forest near the city of Evert.
- Two 18-hole and one 9-hole golf course.
- Two sportsman clubs offering trap & skeet fields and rifle & pistol ranges.
- Osceola Quilt Trail, one of the longest quilt trail in the State of Michigan.
- Pere Marquette State Forest, offers an opportunity for hunting, birding, mushroom picking, ORV riding, snowmobiling, and the State designated Evert Motorcycle Trail.



In addition to the activities previously mentioned, many communities in Osceola County have a long history of hosting their own events. Some of these events include the Osceola County Fair, Evergreen/Crossroads Festival and musicale series in Reed City, 4th of July Fireworks and Musicale Series in Evert, the Marion Fair and Old Fashion Days in Marion, Tustin Daze in Tustin, and Razzasque Days in LeRoy .

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

Understanding Osceola County’s environment and natural resources are key to establishing a solid master plan as the environment and natural resources provide both opportunities and limitations. Many of these features do not change, or change very little from year-to-year, while others may disappear or become destroyed if not managed properly.

VISION

The County has an abundance of open space including working agricultural lands, forested areas, and recreation sites. Osceola County’s water resources include its many clean lakes, rivers, and streams as well as its well-protected supply of quality groundwater. Balanced growth has protected natural resources, wildlife, and fishing opportunities.

CLIMATE

An area’s climate can affect recreational opportunities, agricultural diversity, utility costs, and other things. Generally, January and February are Osceola County’s coldest months of the year. July and August are generally the warmest. February has more snowfall than any other month while June is the wettest month.

Average Temperatures, Rainfall, and Snowfall³¹

	Avg. Temp.	Avg. High Temp.	Avg. Low Temp.		Avg. Rainfall	Avg. Snowfall
January	19.23	26.48	11.9		2.48”	6.1”
February	21.02	29.5	12.5		1.49”	18.65”
March	31.72	42.43	20.95		1.24”	12.0”
April	44.17	55.53	32.75		3.3”	1.75”
May	55.12	67.17	43.0		2.21”	0
June	63.97	75.97	51.91		4.09”	0
July	68.79	80.66	56.87		1.42”	0
August	66.35	78.45	54.22		2.57”	0
September	57.9	70.4	45.35		2.28”	0

³¹ All data from Osceola County, MI Weather Homefacts (<https://www.homefacts.com/weather/Michigan/Osceola-County.html>)

October	47.35	57.45	37.2		2.46"	0
November	36.57	44.55	28.57		1.22"	5.75"
December	27.77	33.1	22.37		1.9"	0

Osceola County experiences its highest percentage of sunny days in June through August. Conversely, its lowest percentage of sunny days occur from November through January.

Chance of Sunshine ³²				
	% Sunny	Clear Days	Partly Cloudy Days	Cloudy Days
January	29.03%	3	6	22
February	39.29%	4	7	17
March	41.94%	6	7	18
April	43.33%	6	7	17
May	53.33%	7	9	14
June	60.0%	7	11	12
July	66.67%	7	13	10
August	61.29%	8	11	12
September	51.72%	6	9	14
October	41.94%	5	8	18
November	23.33%	2	5	23
December	25.81%	2	6	23

Heating Degree Days (HDD)³³ and Cooling Degree Days (CDD)³⁴ are measurements that can be used to estimate the demand for energy needed to heat or cool a building. They are also useful when comparing energy costs between different times of the year or between two or more geographic locations.

³² Ibid

³³ HDD is a measurement designed to reflect the demand for energy needed to heat a building. In general the higher the number the higher the demand for energy.

³⁴ CDD is a measurement designed to reflect the demand for energy needed to cool a building. In general the higher the number the higher the demand for energy.

Typically, Osceola County experiences 251.23 HDD and 12.24 CDD per year. To put things in perspective Marquette County experienced 285.66 HDD and 6.97 CDD and Miami Dade County, Florida experienced 4.94 HDD and 139.23 CDD.

Energy Demand ³⁵			
	Heating Degree Days (HDD)	Cooling Degree Days (CDD)	Total
January	45.48	0	45.48
February	43.7	0	43.7
March	33.33	0.07	33.4
April	21.66	0.02	21.68
May	10.39	1.07	11.46
June	3.27	2.44	5.71
July	1.38	4.38	5.76
August	1.85	3.43	5.28
September	7.57	0.73	8.3
October	17.55	0.1	17.65
November	28.1	0	28.1
December	36.95	0	36.95

SOILS

The information in this section is taken from the *Soil Survey of Osceola County, Michigan* published by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The *Soil Survey of Osceola County, Michigan* contains information that can be applied in managing farms and woodlands; in selecting sites for roads, ponds, buildings, or other structures; and in judging the suitability of tracts of land for agriculture, industry, or recreation; however, it should be considered a starting point. Additional investigation should be made before making specific decisions.

³⁵ All data from Osceola County, MI Weather Homefacts (<https://www.homefacts.com/weather/Michigan/Osceola-County.html>)

The following soil associations are found in Osceola County:

- Kalkaska-Rubicon Association – *Well-drained sandy soils on level plains and steep moraines.* This association is mainly in the northwestern part of the county. In most areas of this association, the soils are too steep, too sandy and draughty, or too subject to erosion to be used for crops. Their major uses are for woods, pasture, wildlife habitat, or recreation.
- Chelsea-Rubicon-Montcalm Association – *Well-drained and moderately well-drained sandy soils on rolling to steep moraines.* This soils of this association are in the hilly most parts of the county, where there are many lakes and deep depressions, but only a few streams. Farming is extremely limited. Most of this association is used for wood crops or habitats for wildlife.
- McBride-Montcalm-Kalkaska Association – *Well drained and moderately well-drained sandy and loamy soils on undulating and rolling moraines.* The soils of this association are found throughout many parts of the county. Most areas of this association are limited for crop use. Most areas of this association are suited to woods, recreational uses, or wildlife habitat.
- Isabella-McBride-Montcalm Association – *Well-drained and moderately well-drained loamy and sandy soils on undulating to hilly uplands.* Soils of this association are on undulating to hilly uplands where there are small lakes, intermittent streams, deep depressions, and short narrow valleys. Some areas of this association are suitable for crops. Steeper areas are suitable for pasture, woods, and recreational use. Dairy and general farms are predominant in this association.
- Nester-Kalkaska-Menominee Association – *Well drained to very poorly drained loamy soils on level to undulating uplands.* Some of these soils are the most productive in the county while some have severe limitations. Soils in this association have moderate to severe limitations for recreational uses and, in general, are not suited to the production of desirable trees.
- Rubicon-Croswell-Au Gres Association – *Well-drained to somewhat poorly drained sandy soils on level to undulating plains.* Most areas in this association are in second-growth woods. The areas that were farmed in the past are now idle and in grass or planted to trees.
- Grayling Association – *Well-drained, droughty, sandy soils on level to sloping plains.* Most areas in this association are in woods or idle. Only a small area is used for crops. In the past large areas have been cut over. Many wildlife habitats are present.

- Mancelona-Montcalm Association – *Well-drained and moderately well-drained sandy soils on plains along streams*. This association is generally on level to undulating plains adjacent to or near the Muskegon River. Some areas have been cleared of trees and planted with crops such as corn, small grains, hay, and potatoes. Some areas are in trees or pasture.
- Lupton-Markey-Wheatley Association – *Poorly drained and very poorly drained muck and sandy soils in stream valleys*. The soils of this association are in level stream valleys, or bottom lands, adjacent to the Muskegon River and east of Evart. Most of the areas in this association are in forest or permanent pasture.

TOPOGRAPHY

It is extremely difficult to produce a readable 8.5“x11” county-level topography map; therefore, individuals needing detailed information should refer to United States Geological Survey (USGS) maps.

In general, the highest elevations are found in the North central portion of the county. The county’s highest elevation, located in Sherman Township, is 1,690 feet above mean sea level and is one of the highest elevations in Michigan’s lower peninsula³⁶. The lowest elevation in the county is in Hersey Township along the Muskegon River.

WATER FEATURES

Osceola County has a variety of water features that includes rivers, streams, lakes, and wetlands. The largest of these rivers is the Muskegon River. It enters in the east side of the County in Sylvan Township and flows west through Evart before exiting on the southern border in Hersey Township. The Hersey River starts just north of Reed City, flows through the city, and continues to the Village of Hersey where it empties into the Muskegon River. Other rivers include the Middle Branch River in the northeast quadrant of the county and the Pine River which forms near the Osceola/Lake border and flows north into the Manistee River.

Like most counties in Michigan, Osceola County has many lakes. Twenty-one of these lakes are listed on the Michigan Department of Natural Resources website. Most are small in size; however, even small lakes provide recreation opportunities and are popular for residential development. Below are the larger lakes in Osceola County and their size in acres. This list is not all-inclusive.

³⁶ The highest elevation is Briar Hill (1,706’) in Wexford County.

- Burdell Township – Diamond Lake (61.5), Hewitt Lake (20.4), and Noggle Lake (5.0)
- Cedar Township – Indian Lake (85)
- Ewart Township – Alexander Lake (5.7), Big Stone Lake (50), Saddlebag Lake (90.0), and Tiff Lake (46.9)
- Hartwick Township – Hicks Lake (155.0), Little Long Lake (34.5) and Sunrise Lake (80.5)
- Lincoln Township – Austin Lake (29.2), Lincoln Lake (27.5), and Todd Lake (75.5)
- Orient Township – Big Lake (204.0) and Tubbs Lake (34.0)
- Rose Lake Township – Hogback Lake (48.0), McCoy Lake (18.0), Penasa (32.5), Rose Lake (370), Silver Lake (34.0), and Wells Lake (48.0)
- Sherman Township – Center Lake (40)

The table titled *Water and Wetland Acreage* shows the number of acres and the percentage of area covered by water and wetlands in each township, quadrant of the County, and County as a whole.

Water and Wetland Acreage				
	Acreage			% of Area Covered by Water and Wetlands
	Water	Wetlands	Total	
NE Quadrant	384	5,009	5,393	5.8
Highland	26	833	859	3.6
Marion	25	1,487	1,512	6.4
Hartwick	317	1,564	1,881	8.3
Middle Branch	16	1,125	1,141	5.0
NW Quadrant	1,149	5,128	6,277	6.8
Burdell	133	1,430	1,563	6.6
LeRoy	104	1,147	1,251	5.6
Rose Lake	782	1,498	2,280	10.2
Sherman	130	1,053	1,183	5.2
SW Quadrant	665	2,845	3,510	3.9
Lincoln	244	1,363	1,607	7.1
Richmond	60	779	839	3.7
Cedar	351	374	725	3.2
Hersey	10	329	339	1.5
SE Quadrant	1,373	5,372	6,745	7.5
Osceola	51	596	647	2.9
Evart	811	1,364	2,175	9.6
Orient	391	1,459	1,850	8.2
Sylvan	120	1,953	2,073	9.2
Countywide Total	3,571	18,354	21,925	6.0

SITES OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINATION

There are two Brownfield Redevelopment Authorities within Osceola County; the Reed City Brownfield Redevelopment Authority and the Osceola County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority. The Osceola County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority has a history of being able to leverage Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant dollars at a 65:1 ratio.

- There are 88 Baseline Environmental Assessments (BEAs) from 60 sites on file with the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy³⁷
- There are a total of 147 underground storage tanks sites in Osceola County. There has been a total of 84 releases at 60 of the sites³⁸. Forty-six of the releases have been closed³⁹.



LARGE-SCALE SOLAR

Intentional planning efforts related to large-scale solar⁴⁰ are often overlooked. In January 2024, the Planning Commission began an effort to think ahead and plan for the possibility of large-scale solar in Osceola County. In order to do so the Planning Commission worked in collaboration with Michigan State University Extension. Both education and public input were key components of the project.

The project resulted in publication of the Large-Scale Solar Community Planning Report. The report addresses local solar suitability, public engagement, recommendations for solar siting, and policy considerations. A copy of the Large-Scale Solar Community Planning Report can be obtained from the Planning Commission.

In summary, Osceola County does contain suitable land, transmission lines, and substations that can support large scale solar.

Osceola County is not a zoned county therefore zoning for such projects is left to the townships that are zoned. It is the recommendation of the board that when residents consider leasing they do their due diligence and if they are able consult legal counsel.

³⁷ Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE), Remediation Information Data Exchange (RIDE)

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ A “Closed” site is a location where a release has occurred from an underground storage tank system, and where corrective actions have been completed to meet the appropriate land use criteria (Part 213 of 1994 PA 451).

⁴⁰ As part of the project large-scale solar was defined as a project of 40-acres or more in size.

STATUS OF PLANNING & ZONING

Planning and Zoning are traditional tools that communities use to manage growth, preserve community character, protect property values and enhance economic opportunities. Planning, in the form of a written Master Plan⁴¹, can help a community establish a vision of its desired future and then establish goals that support this vision. Zoning, when effectively implemented, is an effective means for achieving the goals that support the vision.

Community Planning & Zoning

Osceola County does not have countywide zoning. The decision on whether to implement zoning rests with the local unit of government. Currently both cities, three of the four villages, and eight of the sixteen townships in the county are zoned.

Master Plans

A Master Plan typically includes a future land use map that provides a picture of the community's vision for its development over time, usually 20 years into the future.

Refer to the table, Status of Master Plans & Zoning, for a list of communities in Osceola County that have adopted a master plan. Further information concerning each master plan can be obtained from the local unit of government.

Zoning

Communities often implement the vision stated in their Master Plan through zoning. Zoning provides communities a means to regulate the location, type, and intensity of development.

Refer to the table, Status of Master Plans & Zoning, for a list of zoned communities in Osceola County and whether their zoning ordinance is online. Further information on the zoning for a community can be obtained from the local unit of government.

⁴¹ Sometimes referred to by a different name such as Comprehensive Plan, Future Land Use Plan, Land Use Plan or similar name.

Status of Master Plans & Zoning			
Community	Master Plan Year Adopted	Zoning Ordinance Online	Comments & Other Plans
TOWNSHIPS			
Burdell Township	2020	Online through portal on County website	
Cedar Township	1998	Contact township clerk	
Evert Township	NA	NA	not zoned
Hartwick Township	2007	Contact township clerk	
Hersey Township	NA	NA	not zoned
Highland Township		Online through portal on County website	
LeRoy Township	Revised 2022	Online (leroytwposceola.org)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Recreation Plan 2018-2022 • All plans are joint effort with Village.
Lincoln Township	NA	NA	not zoned
Marion Township	NA	NA	not zoned
Middle Branch Township		Online through portal on County website	not zoned
Orient Township	NA	NA	not zoned
Richmond Township		Online through portal on County website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DDA Development and Tax Increment Finance Plan Update 2012
Rose Lake Township	NA	NA	not zoned
Sherman Township	March 2007	Online through portal on County website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center Lake Aquatic Vegetation Management Plan - 2015
Sylvan Township	NA	NA	not zoned

VILLAGES			
Village of Hersey			
Village of LeRoy	Revised 2022	Online (leroytwposceola.org)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Recreation Plan 2018-2020 • All plans are joint effort with Township.
Village of Marion	2007	Online (marionmichigan.org)	
Village of Tustin	NA	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to Burdell Township Master Plan and Zoning.
CITIES			
City of Ewart	2017	Online (ewart.org)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2017 Parks & Recreation Master Plan • Economic Development Strategy, 2018 • Capital Improvements Program , 2017-2022 • DDA Master Plan
City of Reed City	2005	Online (reedcity.org)	
COUNTY			
Osceola County	Revised 2000	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Osceola County Recreation Master Plan • Large-Scale Solar Community Planning Report

APPENDIX A

Notice to Local Governments and Public Entities

APPENDIX A
NOTICES TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND PUBLIC ENTITIES



Osceola County Planning Commission

301 West Upton Avenue
Reed City, MI 49677
231-832-7397
Fax 231-832-3381

November 1, 2019

TO: See Distribution List
FROM: Osceola County Planning Commission
SUBJ: Notice of Intent to Prepare a Master Plan

In accordance with Section 39 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, the purpose of this letter is to inform you that the Osceola County Planning Commission is beginning the process of preparing a new Master Plan. The Planning Commission welcomes your cooperation and comments.

The proposed Master Plan will be posted online for review and comments once it is completed. You will not receive a hard copy unless one is requested.

If you have questions, comments, or suggestions you may contact Dan Massy at (231) 832-7397 or dmassy@osceolacountymi.com.

Sincerely,

Rich Jacobs
Chair

Distribution List (30)

West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

Counties (7)

Clare
Isabella
Lake
Mecosta

Newaygo
Missaukee
Wexford

Cities (2)

Ewart
Reed City

Villages (4)

Hersey
LeRoy
Marion
Tustin

Townships (16)

Burdell
Cedar
Ewart
Hartwick
Hersey
Highland
LeRoy
Lincoln
Marion
Middle Branch
Orient
Osceola
Richmond
Rose Lake
Sherman
Sylvan



Osceola County Planning Commission

602 W. Upton Avenue
Reed City, MI 49677
231-832-6196
231-832-6197 Fax

December 13, 2023
(Township Clerk)
(address)

The Osceola County Planning Commission is in the process of updating the County Master Plan. As part of the update we are attempting to obtain public input. We are hoping you can help us obtain input from your township.

We have set up a very short survey. It can be accessed from the home page of the Osceola County (www.osceola-county.org). If you would promote the survey it would be appreciated.

Hopefully we will obtain input from all areas of the county. If you have any questions I can be contacted via email at dmassy17@hotmail.com.

Sincerely,

Dan Massy

Dan Massy
Secretary

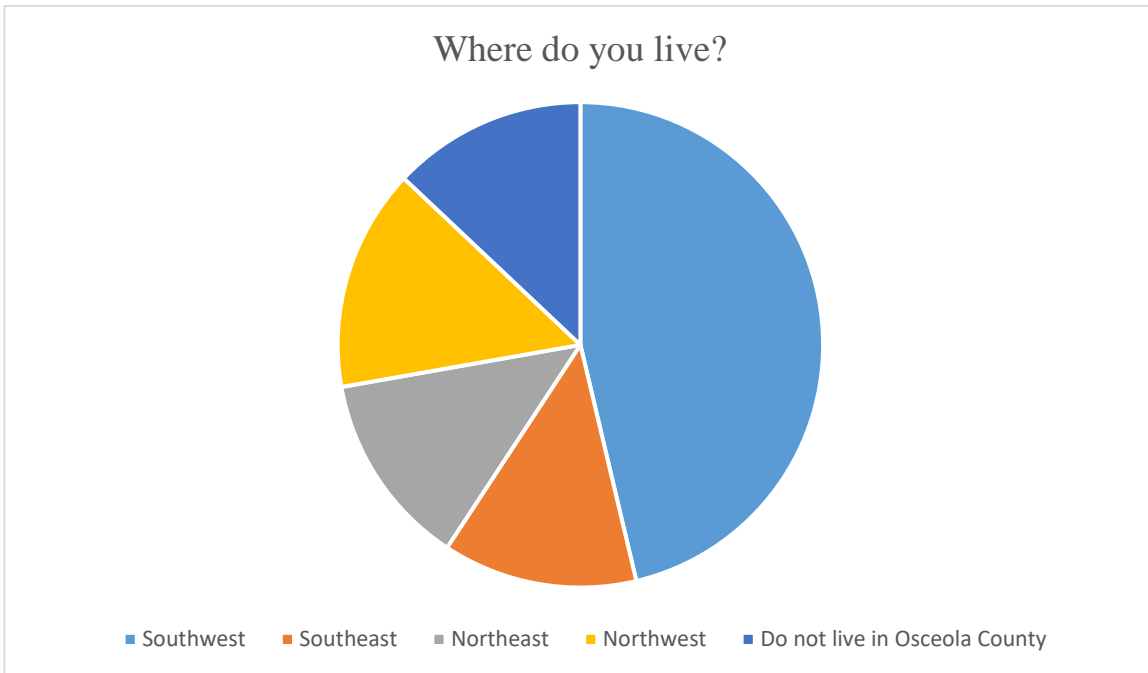
APPENDIX B

Survey Data

Master Plan Online Survey Results

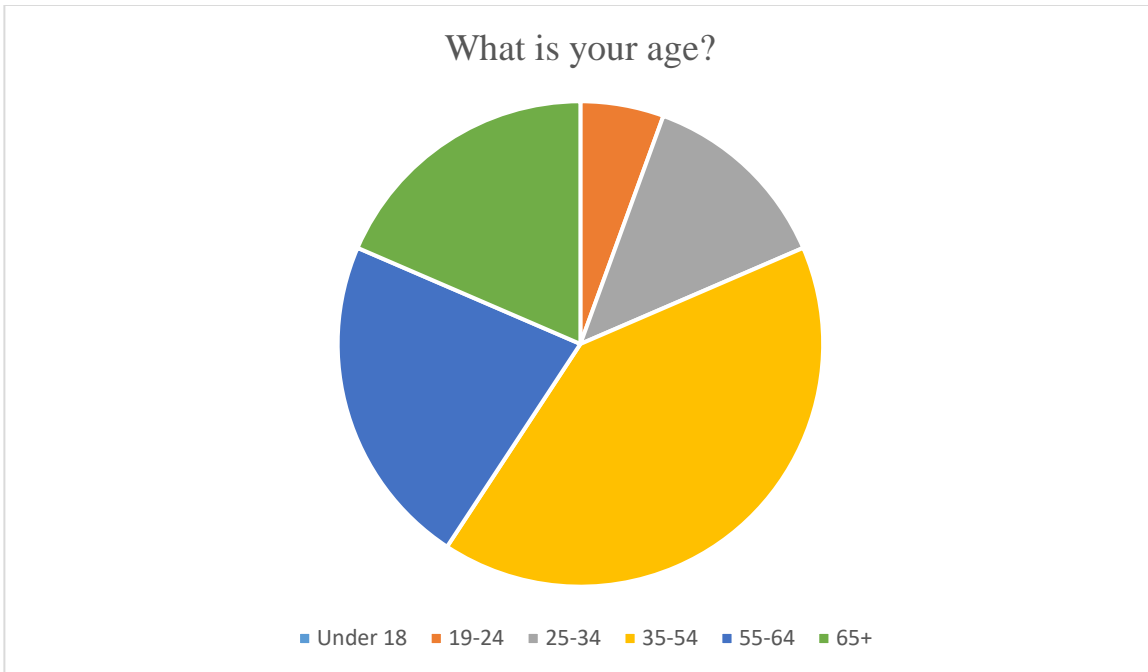
1. What area of the County do you live in?

- a. Southwest Quadrant (Cedar, Hersey, Lincoln, or Richmond Township) - 25
- b. Southeast Quadrant (Ewart, Orient, Osceola, or Sylvan Township) - 7
- c. Northeast Quadrant (Hartwick, Highland, Marion, or Middle Branch Township) - 7
- d. Northwest Quadrant (Burdell, LeRoy, Rose Lake, or Sherman Township) - 8
- e. I do not live in Osceola County - 7



2. What is your age?

- a. Under 18 – 0
- b. 19-24 – 3
- c. 25-34 – 7
- d. 35-54 – 22
- e. 55-64 – 12
- f. 65+ - 10



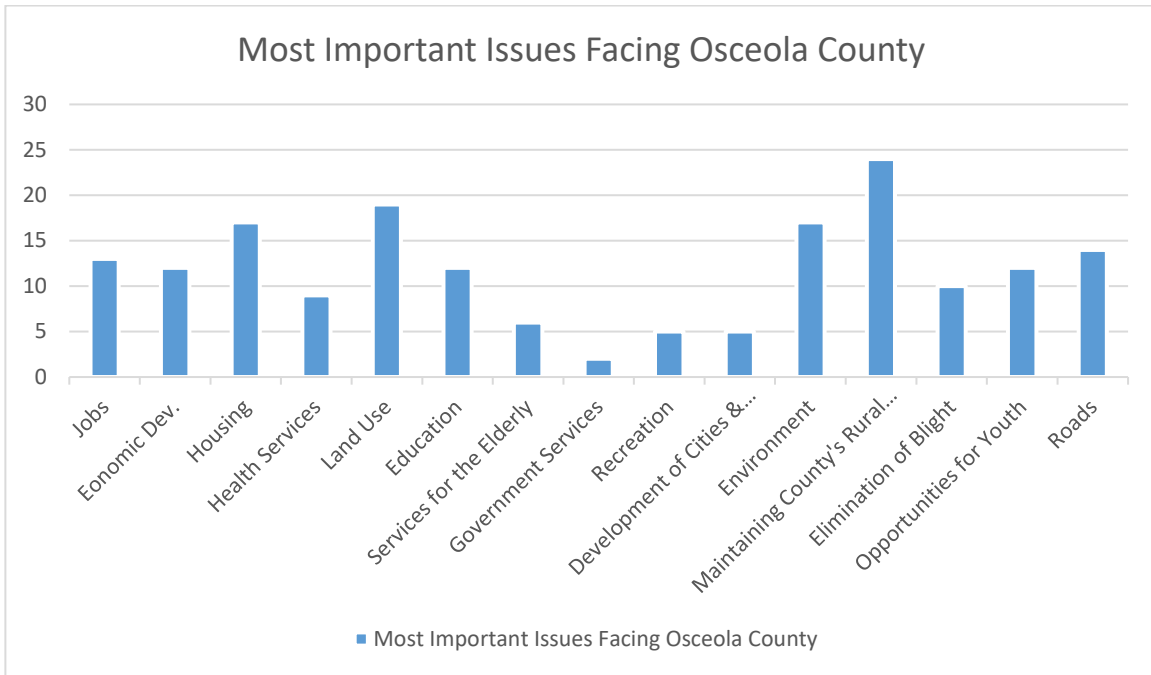
3. *Would you attend an informational meeting concerning the development of alternative energy in Osceola County?*

- a. Yes – 30
- b. No – 24

4. *What do you feel are the most important issues facing Osceola County in the next 5-10 years? (select at least one, but no more than five issues)*

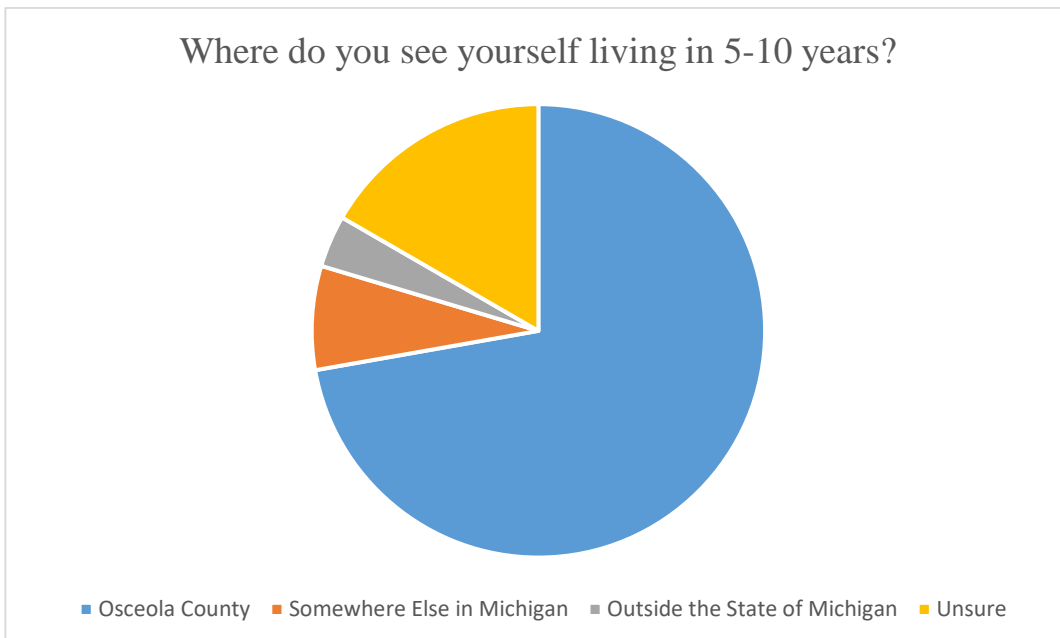
- a. Jobs – 13
- b. Economic Development – 12
- c. Roads – 14
- d. Land Use – 19
- e. Environment – 17
- f. Education – 12
- g. Development of Cities and Villages – 5
- h. Services for the elderly – 6
- i. Housing – 17
- j. Government Services – 2
- k. Recreation (includes development of county parks) – 5
- l. Maintaining the County’s Rural Nature – 24
- m. Elimination of Blight – 10
- n. Opportunities for Youth – 12
- o. Health Services – 9

p. Other (please specify) – 7 (government transparency, public safety, foreign access to natural resources, solar)



5. *Where do you see yourself living five years from now?*

- a. Osceola County – 35
- b. Somewhere else in Michigan – 3
- c. Outside State of Michigan – 1
- d. Not sure – 8



6. *What are the best things about living in Osceola County?*

Thirty (30) individuals provided a response to this question. Responses have been compiled on separate sheet.

7. *What can be done to improve Osceola County?*

Thirty-four (34) individuals provided a response to this question. Responses have been compiled on separate sheet.

8. *Additional Comments*

Fourteen (14) individuals provided a response to this question. Responses have been compiled on separate sheet.

Written Responses to Osceola County Master Plan Survey

Question #6, What are the best things about living in Osceola County?

- Green spaces, less population, parks, and natural areas
- The simple lifestyle and country living. Supporting farmers
- Proximity to other cities
- Rural life
- Nature/recreation, safety, small town feel, the people
- Rural environment and beautiful environment, lakes, rivers, forests, wildlife
- Rural environment, beautiful natural surroundings. No wind farms, only a few solar arrays, abundant wildlife, no massive commercial development, small towns, friendly people.
- Small town kindness
- Reed City
- Rural communities, small schools
- Small community and caring
- Its rural charm
- Nature, not all concrete and driving congestion
- Its my home. Its quiet and beautiful.
- Natural beauty, my family enjoys fishing on the numerous lakes, rivers, streams year round.
- The scenery, the “less is more” feeling, the school my children utilize and the County government

- Sense of community. Rural setting, but within proximity to larger city amenities and low crime rate.
- Rural country living
- Active community involvement, maintaining the small town feel while still having access to necessities.
- Rural nature
- Rural nature with regional amenities
- The scenery
- Muskegon River
- It's a nice rural community.
- Natural resources and small communities
- I love living in a small community, I enjoy the connections that are able to be made.
- Rural area, great people
- Rural living and friendliness
- Natural beauty, friendliness, rural
- Rural beauty - water

Question #7, What can be done to improve Osceola County?

- Keep it rural, do not add ugliness.
- Keep foreigners from accessing our natural resources and don't buy into the Green movement.
- Stronger restrictions of foreign land ownership, stronger enforcement of existing environmental rules protecting our wildlife and habitat.
- More small business
- Follow the rules with regard to environmental protection, protection of wetlands, watersheds, and property values.
- Keep Chinese government out.
- The parks system needs improvement, recreation for youth needed.
- Roads are the first thing that comes to mind although I have been seeing some good improvements the past few years, so it is beginning to be addressed.
- Better maintenance of dirt roads, better internet in outliers.
- I would love to see our recreation program develop into something similar to Mecosta County's. Bring in pickleball courts, recreation classes available to community members, etc.
- Roads, law enforcement, job opportunities
- Keep Osceola County rural, encourage farming.
- Clean up the roadside, roadkill
- Increase affordable housing, increased mental care, increase jobs and wages

- More development and bringing in more stores/restaurants.
- Encourage new housing growth and development in Reed City/Richmond area.
- More low-income housing, more appealing things for kids to do
- Bring more business and stores
- Develop housing that meets the needs and desires of all income levels.
- Housing and economic development. To be successful we need both because they are connected for sustainability of a community.
- Better enforcement of the current zoning laws related to the number of buildings per lot, number of cars that do not work, living in structures that should be condemned and not containing garbage in make shift junk yards.
- Keep property taxes under control so we don't lose all we worked for!
- Rural no restrictions
- High speed internet connectivity for all
- Housing development
- Keep government small
- So many things! Improvement and training for all school districts, county leaders actually listening to residents, smarter spending of funds... better cooperation between agencies, better financial planning, capitalize on the beautiful natural resources that attract tourism.
- Better roads, education for youth
- I believe our community needs to improve with the elimination of blight.
- Reduce taxes and more county services in Osceola County.
- Improve downtowns, hold people accountable for property cleanliness.
- Improve downtowns, keeping a tidy natural vibe.

Question #8, Additional Comments

- It is a beautiful area. It can be improved upon with changing what it is fundamentally.
- No Gotion (times two)
- We need places to employ our people here, but not China owned that is after our water and other resources.
- Keep Gotion out of our community... do not ruin our farmlands and natural beauty with "green" energy projects.
- I enjoy the rural lifestyle we have and I am opposed to China buying up our American soil.
- Any amount of environmentally friendly resources including electric vehicles, wind and solar are only positive for maintaining the Earth for future generations.
- Keep Osceola County rural and protect our quality of life here! If someone wants to live near a polluting toxic factory, they can move elsewhere. We also need some sort

of rule prohibiting NDAs with outside entities. They are used to hide things from the public and in most cases that is wrong.

- It took a long time to adjust to moving here from Kalamazoo, but now that I have been here a few years, I am thankful to be in a place that I consider safe and serene and full of opportunities, if you know where to look! Always options to get involved in the community!
- Would like to see growth and more restaurants
- As Michigan grows we have the availability of US-10 and the 131 corridor to provide many possibilities. In order to bring jobs we need housing. We also have the recreation trail and many parks in our county.
- Address the huge drug problem in the area so we don't lose the safety of our rural area!
- More youth opportunities
- People come here to "get away from it all".

APPENDIX C

Michigan Counties by Type, Urban or Rural

APPENDIX C
MICHIGAN COUNTIES BY TYPE, URBAN OR RURAL

The U.S. Census Bureau classifies counties as either **urban or rural**. The U.S. Census Bureau defines an Urban County as “any county containing a city of greater than 50,000 people or an area that has at least 100,000 people and has a substantial commuting interchange with a city of greater than 50,000 people.”

Osceola County is one of 61 rural counties in Michigan. The table below shows all 83 of Michigan’s counties by type.

<p>Rural (61)</p>	<p>Alcona, Alger, Alpena, Antrim, Arenac, Baraga, Barry, Benzie, Branch, Keweenaw, Cass, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Chippewa, Clare, Crawford, Delta, Dickinson, Emmet, Gladwin, Gogebic, Grand Traverse, Gratiot, Hillsdale, Houghton, Huron, Ionia, Iosco, Iron, Isabella, Kalkaska, Keweenaw, Lake, Leelanau, Lenawee, Livingston, Luce, Mackinac, Manistee, Marquette, Mason, Mecosta, Menominee, Missaukee, Montcalm, Montmorency, Newaygo, Oceana, Ogemaw, Ontonagon, Osceola, Oscoda, Otsego, Presque Isle, Roscommon, Sanilac, Schoolcraft, Shiawassee, St. Joseph, Tuscola, Van Buren, and Wexford</p>
<p>Urban (22)</p>	<p>Allegan, Bay, Berrien, Calhoun, Clinton, Eaton, Genesee, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Kent, Ingham, Lapeer, Macomb, Midland, Monroe, Muskegon, Oakland, Ottawa, Saginaw, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne</p>

APPENDIX D

Large Scale Solar Project Report Summary

LARGE-SCALE SOLAR DEVELOPMENT

Large-scale solar projects are capable of generating over 50 megawatt hours of electricity per day and commonly cover over 350 acres of land. In theory a solar field of over 350 acres could provide the electrical needs of over 13,000 homes. They now can be seen as part of Michigan's landscape, and it is believed that a project of this size could possibly come to Osceola County. In January 2024, the Osceola Planning Commission established a goal to learn more about large scale solar and what impact it may have on Osceola County. In order to do so the Planning Commission worked with Michigan State University (MSU) Extension to educate the Commission members and the general public on large scale solar projects as well as to gather public opinion of these projects.

This educational effort resulted in over four hours of training taught by specialists from MSU and the University of Michigan, as well as an attorney with vast experience with alternative energy land leasing. Another two hours were spent collecting the thoughts of Osceola County citizens in attendance on large scale solar. A total of over 90 citizens were surveyed.

Citizens first learned that solar collection for electrical generation is now economically feasible in Michigan because of the improved efficiency of solar photo cells and the supporting battery storage. They also learned Public Act 233 of 2023 now gives siting control of all large scale solar projects of 50 megawatts or more to the Michigan Public Service Commission. However, they also learned there is still local siting control of solar projects less than 50 megawatts in counties and townships that have planning and zoning that addresses solar projects. It is the opinion of the University experts that the Public Service Commission will take into consideration the Zoning recommendations of local communities for large scale solar projects in those communities.

At the conclusion of this effort a fifteen page document was authored by Mary Reilly of MSU Extension, the project leader. Highlights of the document include:

- Large scale solar developers prefer relatively flat ground that is not wooded and is located within three miles of a major transmission line
- Survey results of the 91 citizens attending show that 55% felt that large scale solar projects were an acceptable use on less productive or marginal farm land, and 54% felt that the extra income to the landowner was one of the greatest benefits of having large scale solar in their community
- The greatest survey concerns were the impact on wildlife, on the environment, on public health, and on public safety (77%); concern over the lack of removal of solar panels at the conclusion of the project (76%); and taking land out of agricultural production (76%).
- Landowners and community officials considering large scale solar development are encouraged to learn as much as possible from un-biased sources like Ohio State University, Michigan State University and the University of Michigan which all have good information on the topics of large scale solar planning and zoning.

- All entities/landowners contemplating entering into a contractual agreement for solar land leasing or the sale of land for solar development are highly encouraged to consult with an attorney familiar with alternative energy agreements to protect their rights and the resources of their community.

For more information on this project, or large scale solar development, leasing, and zoning regulations go to <http://sites.google.com/msu.edu/osceola-solar/home> or contact Mary Reilly, MSU Extension Planning, Zoning and Public Policy Educator at reilly8@msu.edu, or the Osceola County Planning Commission.