

WALES TOWNSHIP PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN 2024-2028



Adopted on: January 2, 2024

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Cynthia Bobcean, Township Clerk

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Jason Downey, Trustee

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Nicole Downey

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CHAPTER 1

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION



WALES TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN

EXTENT OF PLAN FOCUS

Over the next five years, this Recreation Plan is intended to serve as a guide for recreation planning and development decisions within the boundaries of Wales Township. The plan examines the socio-economic status of the township and the surrounding area as well as evaluates the nearby recreational opportunities to determine and plan for the recreational needs of residents and visitors as well as maintain the aesthetic values found in the township's water resources, wetlands, and woodlands.

REGIONAL LOCATION

Wales Township covers approximately 37.4 square miles in the central section of St. Clair County within Southeast Michigan (Map 1-1). It is bordered by Kenockee Township to the north, Kimball Township to the east, Columbus Township to the south, and Riley Township to the west. Wales Center Road is the main road in the community, while Interstate 69, Lapeer Road, and Smiths Creek Road connect Wales Township to Port Huron, City of Memphis, Village of Emmett, Capac, and Flint. Smiths Creek Road indirectly provides access to Interstate 94, which travels approximately 50 miles towards Detroit.

POPULATION

In 2020, the population in Wales Township was 3,180 individuals and is projected to decline in 2050 (Table 1-1). All of the surrounding townships, except Kimball Township, are also forecasted to experience a population decline despite St. Clair County as a whole being projected to experience a growth in population. Wales Township residents are employed in a range of occupations with the majority employed in the natural resources, mining, & construction, and healthcare services categories.

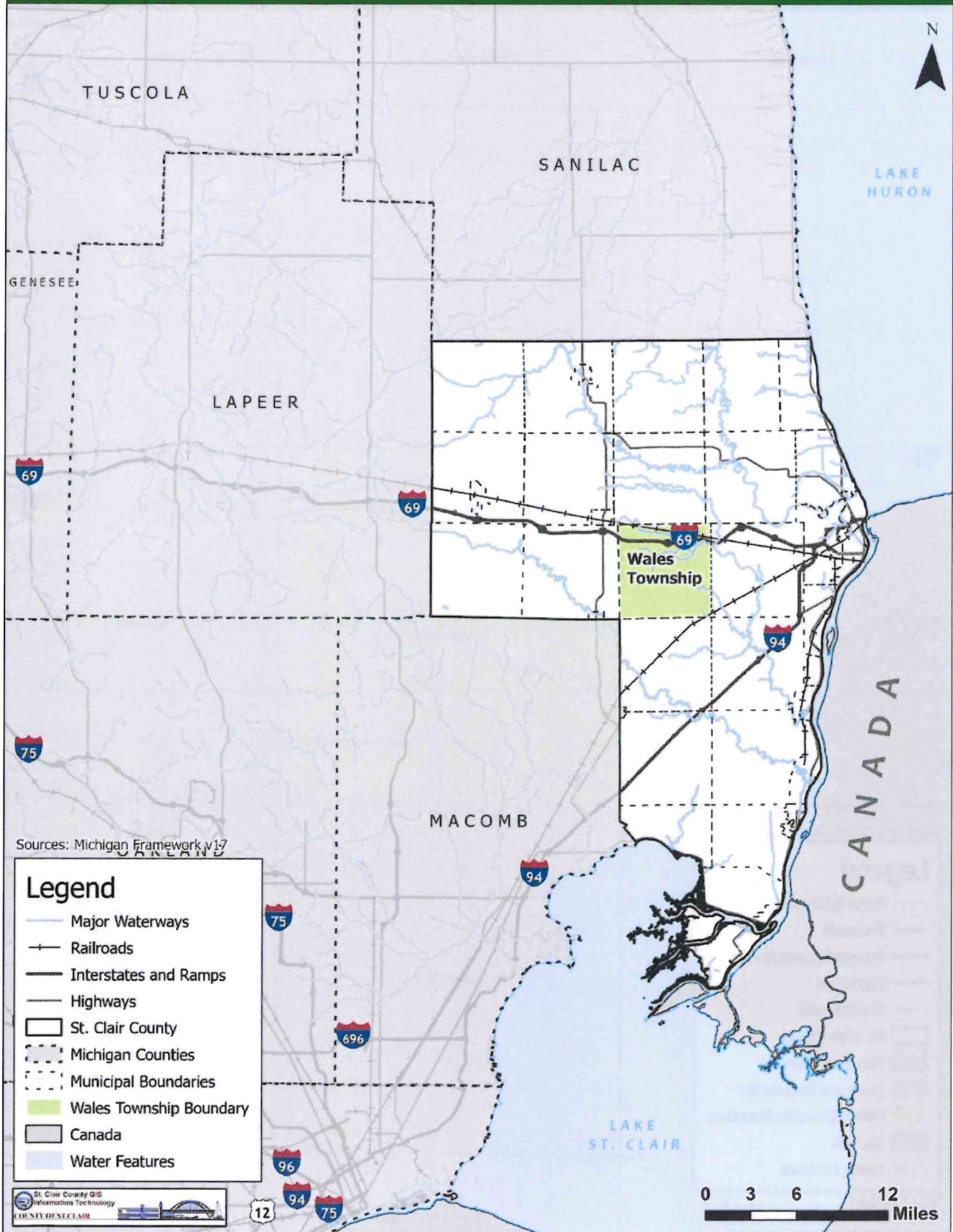
Wales Township has a large mid-life population with individuals 40-64 years of age making up 41.1% of the population (Table 1-2). The median age is 46.3 years old, which is older than the median age in the State of Michigan and St. Clair County (39.8 and 44.1 years old, respectively). Individuals aged 65 years and older make up 16.0% of the township's population, which is the fastest growing age group in the township. Since 57.1% of the population in Wales Township is 40 years and older, this population should be given consideration when planning for recreational activities.

Table 1-1: Population & Population Projections

Municipality	2010 Population	2020 Population	2050 Population Projection	Percent Change (2010-2020)	Percent Change (2020-2050)
Wales Township	3,248	3,180	3,166	-2.1%	-0.4%
Kenockee Township	2,470	2,405	2,333	-2.6%	-3.0%
Kimball Township	9,358	9,609	10,194	2.7%	6.1%
Columbus Township	4,070	4,112	4,032	1.0%	-2.0%
Riley Township	3,353	3,199	3,136	-4.6%	-2.0%
St. Clair County	163,040	160,383	163,144	-1.6%	1.7%

Source: Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) Community Profiles, 2023

MAP 1-1: Regional Overview



WALES TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN

MAP 1-2: Wales Township and Surrounding Area



Table 1-2: Wales Township Population Change by Age, 2010-2021

Age	2010	2021	Percent Change (2010-2021)
Less than 5 years	176	163	-7.4%
5 to 19 years	706	482	-31.7%
20 to 24 years	167	197	18.0%
25 to 39 years	530	513	-3.2%
40 to 64 years	1,286	1,301	1.2%
65 years and older	383	507	32.4%
Total	3,248	3,163	

Source: Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) Community Profiles, 2023

Young people aged 0-19 years old make up 20.4% of the township's population; however, this age group has significantly declined over the years. Individuals between the ages of 20-39 are the second fastest growing age group in the township and make up 22.4% of the population. Recreational facilities and programs should appeal to the diverse age groups within the township.

The Township has 1,255 total housing units with five units classified as seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Since 2019, the township has had 32 building permits issued for single family dwellings and no permits issued for two family dwellings, attached condos, or multi-family housing. The median household income is \$76,705 and the per capita income is \$36,505, which is higher than both median household and per capita incomes in St. Clair County (\$62,847 and \$33,302, respectively). Approximately 3.7% of Wales Township's population is in poverty, which is a 52.8% decline since 2010. Affordability of recreational activities as well as drive time and associated travelling expenses to and from recreational facilities should be considered.

Environment and Geography Overview

CLIMATE

The area's four seasons provide year-round recreational opportunities, including hiking, fishing, birdwatching, and hunting. The lowest temperatures occur in January (average low of 19 degrees Fahrenheit), while the highest temperatures occur in July (average high of 81 degrees Fahrenheit). The average annual precipitation is approximately 33.83 inches. The average annual snowfall is about 37 inches with the majority of the snowfall occurring between December and February.

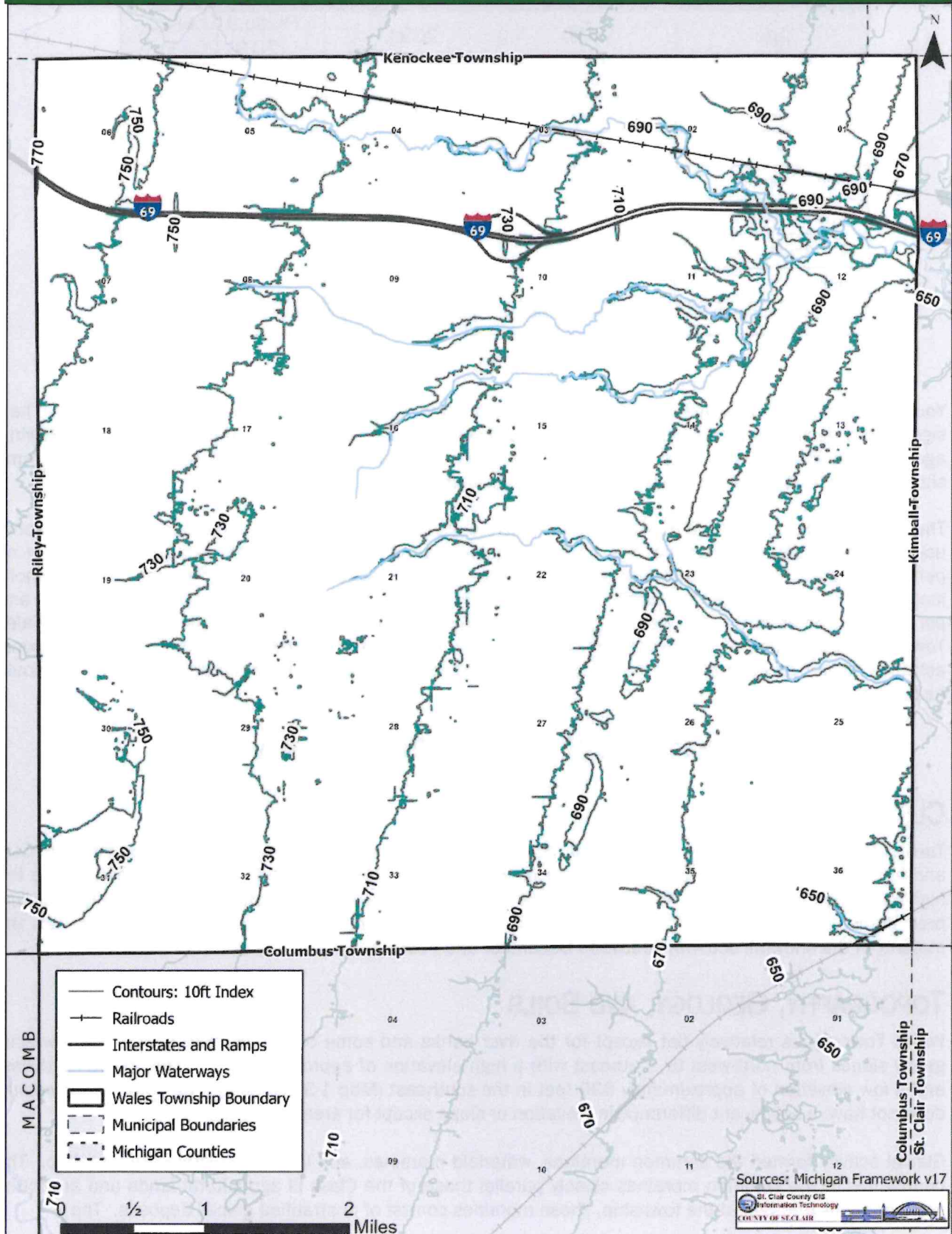
TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY, AND SOILS

Wales Township is relatively flat except for the river banks and some of the old river beds. The township gently slopes from northwest to southeast with a high elevation of approximately 770 feet in the northwest and a low elevation of approximately 630 feet in the southeast (Map 1-3). It should be noted the township does not have a significant difference in elevation or slope except for areas along the rivers.

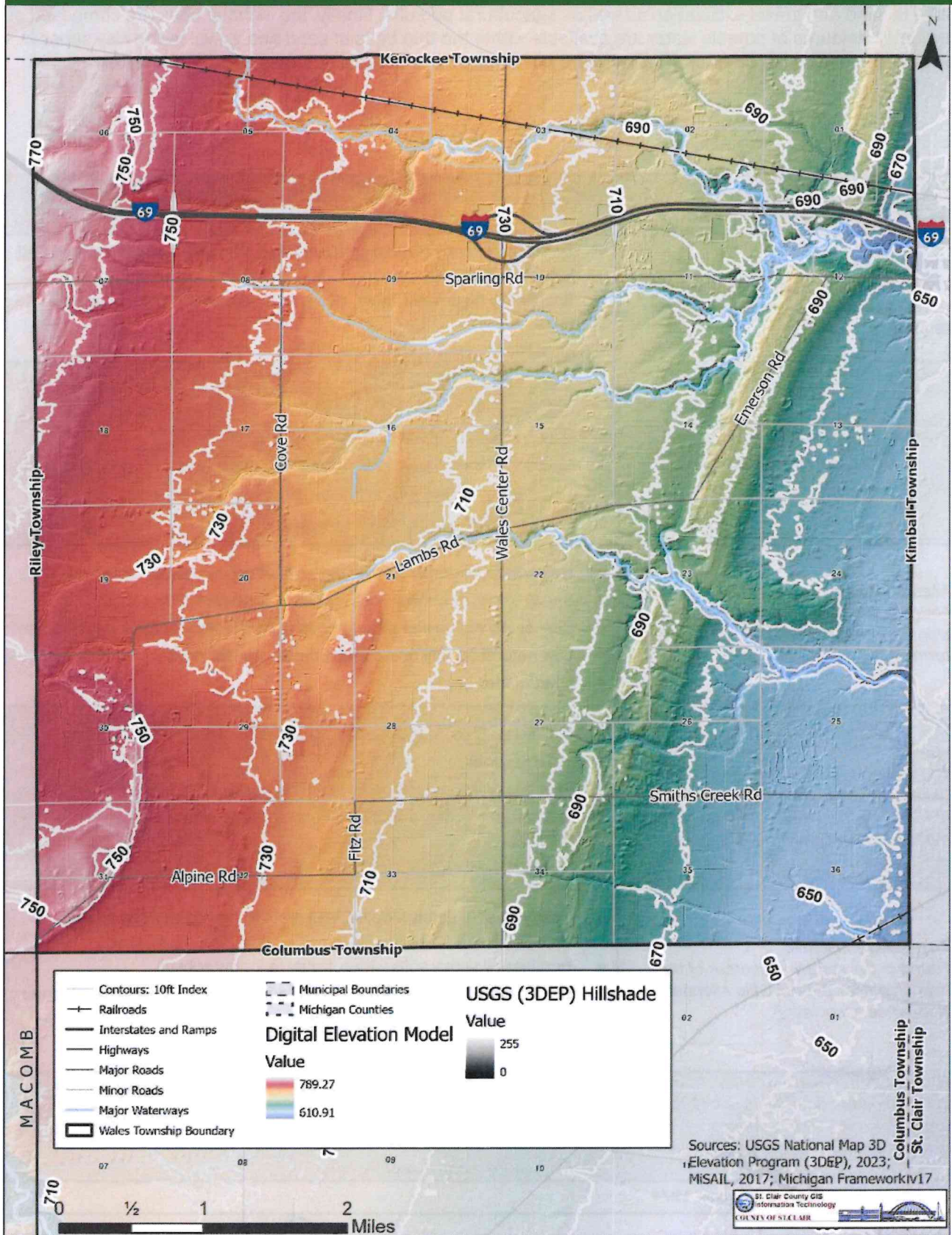
Glacial activity formed the common moraines, waterlaid moraines, and lake beds within the township. The boundaries of the common moraines closely parallel those of the Class III agricultural lands and are found predominantly throughout the township. These moraines consist of unstratified glacial deposits. The

WALES TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN

MAP 1-3: Topography in Wales Township



MAP 1-4: Elevation in Wales Township

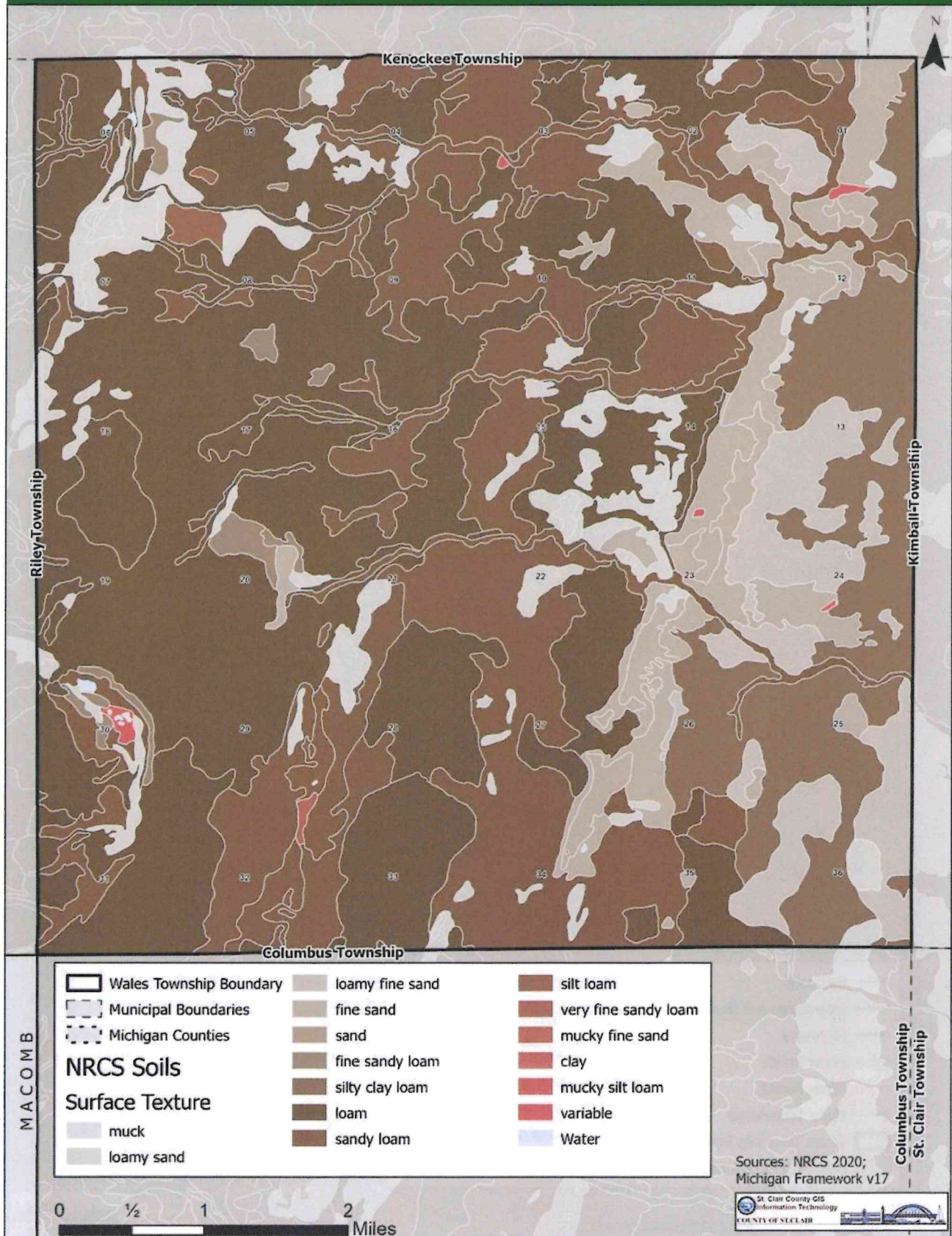


WALES TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN

waterlaid moraines, on the other hand, are composed of sand and gravel materials. These moraines have resulted in sand and gravel excavation as well as agricultural pursuits. Finally, the old lake beds are composed of clay. Small amounts of potable water are available within the thin beds of sand and gravel in the clay subsoil; however, the underlying bedrock structures are not conducive to potable or large quantities of water.

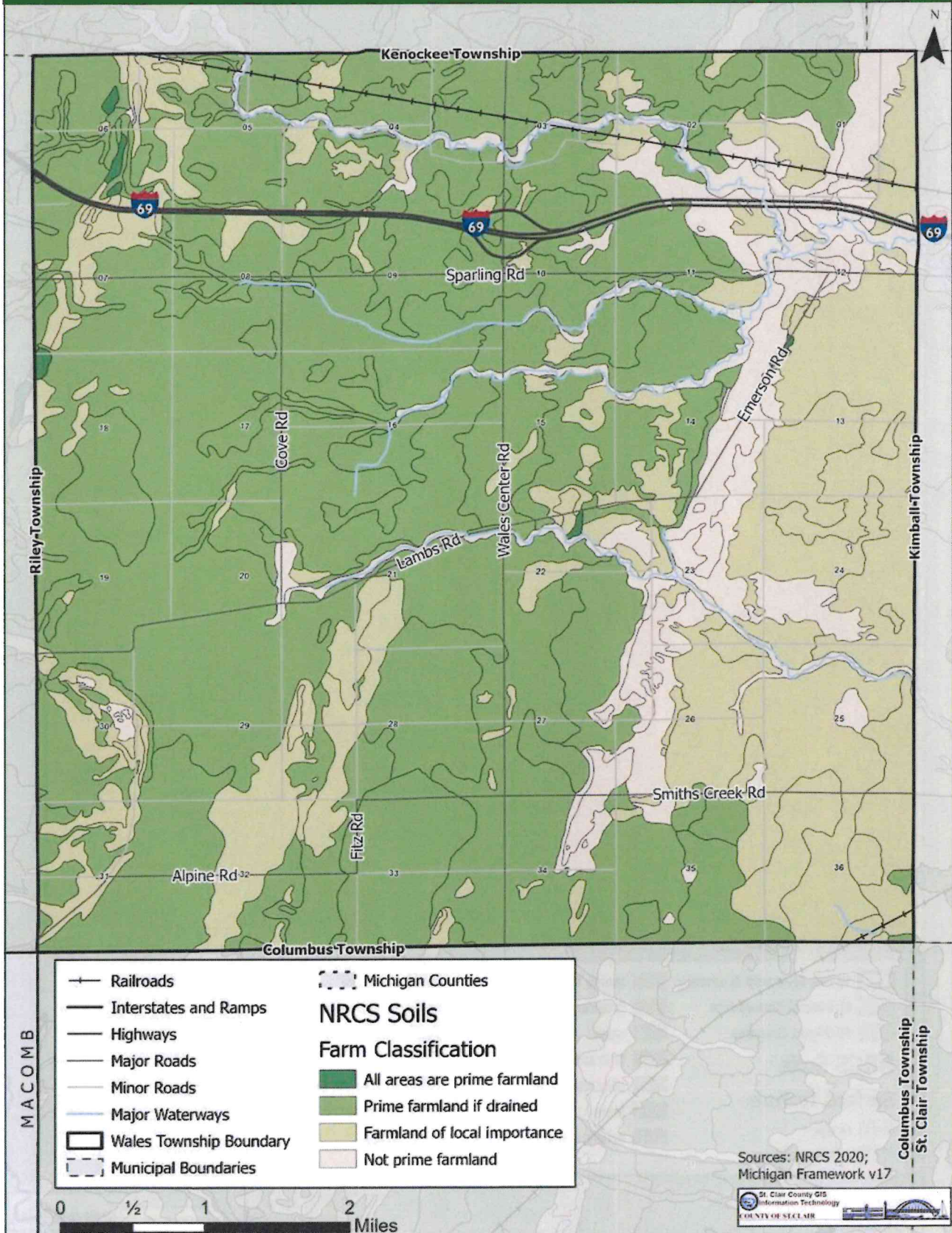
Table 1-3: Soil Associations	
Soil Associations	Description
<p>Blount-Parkhill <i>Located in the western two-thirds of the township in an area primarily used for farming.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consists of nearly level to gently sloping, somewhat poorly drained and poorly drained soils. • Seasonally high-water table, needs to be drained for most development. • Limitations: septic, shrink-swell, clay
<p>Hoytville-Allendale-Nappanee <i>Occurs in the moraines found in the southwestern corner of the township; difficult to use for farming.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly level to gently sloping, very poorly drained and somewhat poorly drained soils • Clayey to sandy subsoil with slow permeability • Seasonally high-water table, needs to be drained for most development • Low natural fertility and a midsummer droughtiness • Limitations: septic, shrink-swell, clay
<p>Allendale-Latty <i>Found in the six sections along the township's eastern border; difficult to use for farming.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly level to gently sloping, somewhat poorly drained soils • Sandy to clayey subsoil with very slow permeability • Seasonally high-water table, needs to be drained for most development • Low natural fertility and a midsummer droughtiness • Limitations: septic
<p>Wainola-Deford <i>Found in a narrow north-south band between the Blount-Parkhill and Allendale-Latty associations; primarily accommodates open space and cropland.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly level, somewhat poorly drained and very poorly drained soils • Sandy subsoil • Seasonally high-water table, needs to be drained for most development • Low natural fertility and a midsummer droughtiness (low available water capacity) • Limitations: septic (Deford only)
<p>Boyer-Wasepi-Spinks <i>Found in the southwest corner of the township near the Hoytville-Allendale-Nappanee association.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly level to gently sloping, well drained and somewhat poorly drained • Dominantly sandy soils with a sandy to loamy subsoil • Seasonally high water table, needs to be drained for most development • Low natural fertility and low available water capacity • Limitations: septic (Wasepi only)
<p>Alluvial Land <i>Located on the floodplains along part of the Pine River in the northwestern part of the township.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly level to gently sloping, well drained to poorly drained soils on floodplains and adjacent bluffs • Not suitable for development • Limitations: septic, shrink-swell
Source: St. Clair County Soil Survey, 1974	

MAP 1-5: Soil Surface Texture



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MAP 1-6: Prime Farmland in Wales Township



COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

The Township's bedrock contains natural gas and shale. The geologic formation containing natural gas extends in a narrow, east-west band across the State of Michigan, resulting in well drilling. Within Wales Township, the Alpine field is the main producing natural gas field. In addition, materials transported by glaciation have obscured the underlying shale in most areas of the township.

SOILS

Wales Township has six major soil associations: Blount-Parkhill, Hoytville-Allendale-Nappanee, Allendale-Latty, Wainola-Deford, Boyer-Wasepi-Spinks, and Alluvial Land (Table 1-3). Since the majority of St. Clair County has drainage problems, 95-99% of the land is severely limited for development. Several areas, which are particularly unsuited for development, are near the shoreline and on farmland. The soils least suitable for non-agricultural development tend to exhibit the following characteristics:

- Steep slopes tend to be easily eroded to very high soil permeability;
- High groundwater table and/or slow soil permeability can cause wastewater pollution of drains and watercourses;
- Inability to sustain septic fields due to soil type or proximity to the water table;
- Soils between 100 and 300 feet deep tend to yield very little water (less than ten gallons per minute); and
- Glacial deposits tend to yield water too highly mineralized for household use.

In Wales Township, the Latty soil along the eastern border have severe septic limitations, are bad for roads due to the high shrink-swell factor, are corrosive to uncoated steel, has high runoff and erosion, and is the worst soil for landscaping.

Hydric Soils

The Federal Register (July 13, 1994) defines hydric soils as “soils that are formed under conditions of saturation, flooding, or ponding long enough during the growing season to develop anaerobic conditions (life devoid of oxygen).” The leading indicator of the existence of such soils are the presence of cattails, sedges, bulrushes, smartweed, wild millet, water plantain, wild rice, arrowhead, pondweed, pickerelweed, wild celery, duckweed, and burreed.

Prime Farmland

The clay soils of the region were among the first areas in the state farmed by European settlers. Most clay lands have been ditched and tiled and, largely due to these improvements, are among the most valued agricultural lands in the state. Portions of the sand plain were also ditched for agriculture, but the wettest areas remain, as either swamp forest, wet prairie, or marsh.

The best soils for grain and seed crops include the following: Blount, Boyer, Conover, Londo, Metamora, Metea, Minoa, Morley, Nappanee, Pert, Sanilac, Spinks, Wainola, Wasepi. Map 1-6 shows the prevalence of prime farmland in Wales Township. As shown on the map, the majority of the township has prime farmland soils, particularly in the central and western areas of the township. The production levels of prime farmland have the highest yields with the smallest inputs of energy and economic resources, and farming it results in the least damage to the environment.

WATER RESOURCES

According to the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments' (SEMCOG) 2020 Land Cover data, Wales Township has about 239 acres of rivers, lakes, ponds, and drains. The majority of the township is located in

WALES TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN

the Pine Watershed, which drains into the Pine River. A small portion in the southwestern section of the township is part of the Belle Watershed, which drains into the Belle River.

The main watercourses that traverse the township include the south branch of the Pine River, Moore Creek, Smiths Creek, and numerous county drains. Generally, the Pine River and Moore Creek run east-west through the northern third of the township, while, Smiths Creek runs east-west through the southern half of the township. The Pine River provides fishing opportunities for brown trout, rainbow trout, walleye, rock bass, carp, and largemouth bass.

WETLANDS

Wetlands are areas where water periodically covers the soil, or is present at or near the surface of the soil throughout the year. These areas are commonly referred to as swamps, fens, marshes, and bogs. Wetlands have hydric soils and support hydrophytic vegetation, which assist in protecting and improving water quality by trapping and storing pollutants, nutrients, silt, and heavy metals found in stormwater runoff. In addition, wetlands moderate flooding and droughts events, stabilize water supplies, provide wildlife habitat, and function as ecological corridors. Poor development practices can damage or destroy wetlands, which in turn negatively impacts the area's ecological and public health since the wetlands are unable to filter and store contaminants and excess stormwater. Some development projects may be required to obtain permits if they have the potential to impact wetlands.

The majority of wetlands in the township are located along watercourses, such as the Pine River, Smiths Creek, Moore Creek, and the county drains. There are other wetlands scattered throughout the township that are not associated with any watercourse (Map 1-6).

FLOODPLAINS

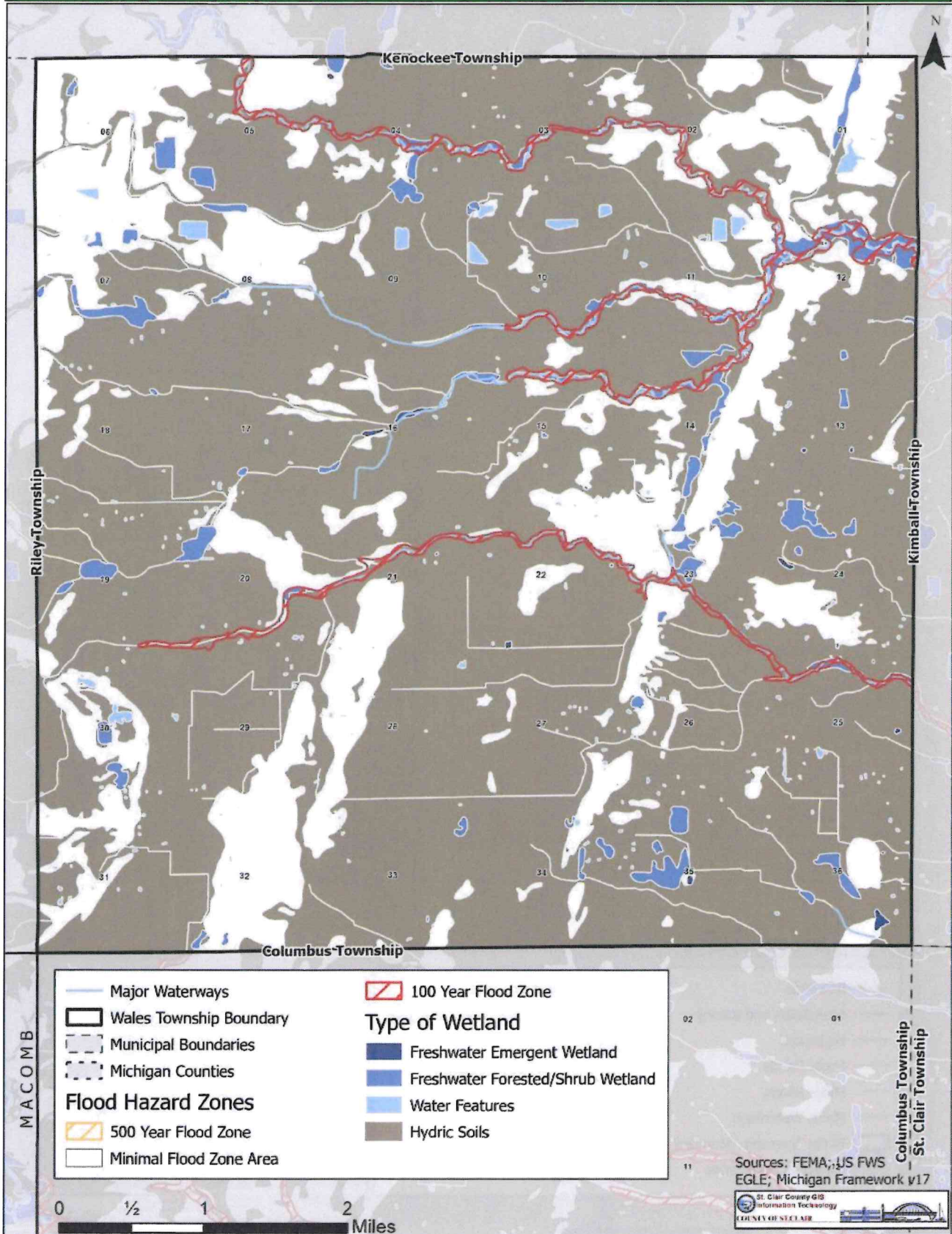
Floodplains are areas adjacent to wetlands or water bodies that periodically become covered by floodwaters from storms or snow melt. These areas provide wildlife habitat as well as function as groundwater recharge areas as they dissipate floodwaters. Floodplain alterations from vegetation removal, grading, filling/dumping, or the construction of buildings or structures can interfere with the movement and speed of floodwaters, availability for floodwater storage, flood elevations (rising floodwaters), the amount of erosion, sedimentation, and debris flowing into surrounding areas, and the amount of damages impacting wildlife habitats and developed areas.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) digital flood insurance rate map for Wales Township depicts special flood hazard areas along the Pine River, Moore Creek, Smiths Creek, and Apply Drain. These flood areas are referred to as 100-year flood zones, which have a one percent (1%) chance of flooding in any given year (Map 1-7).

WOODLANDS

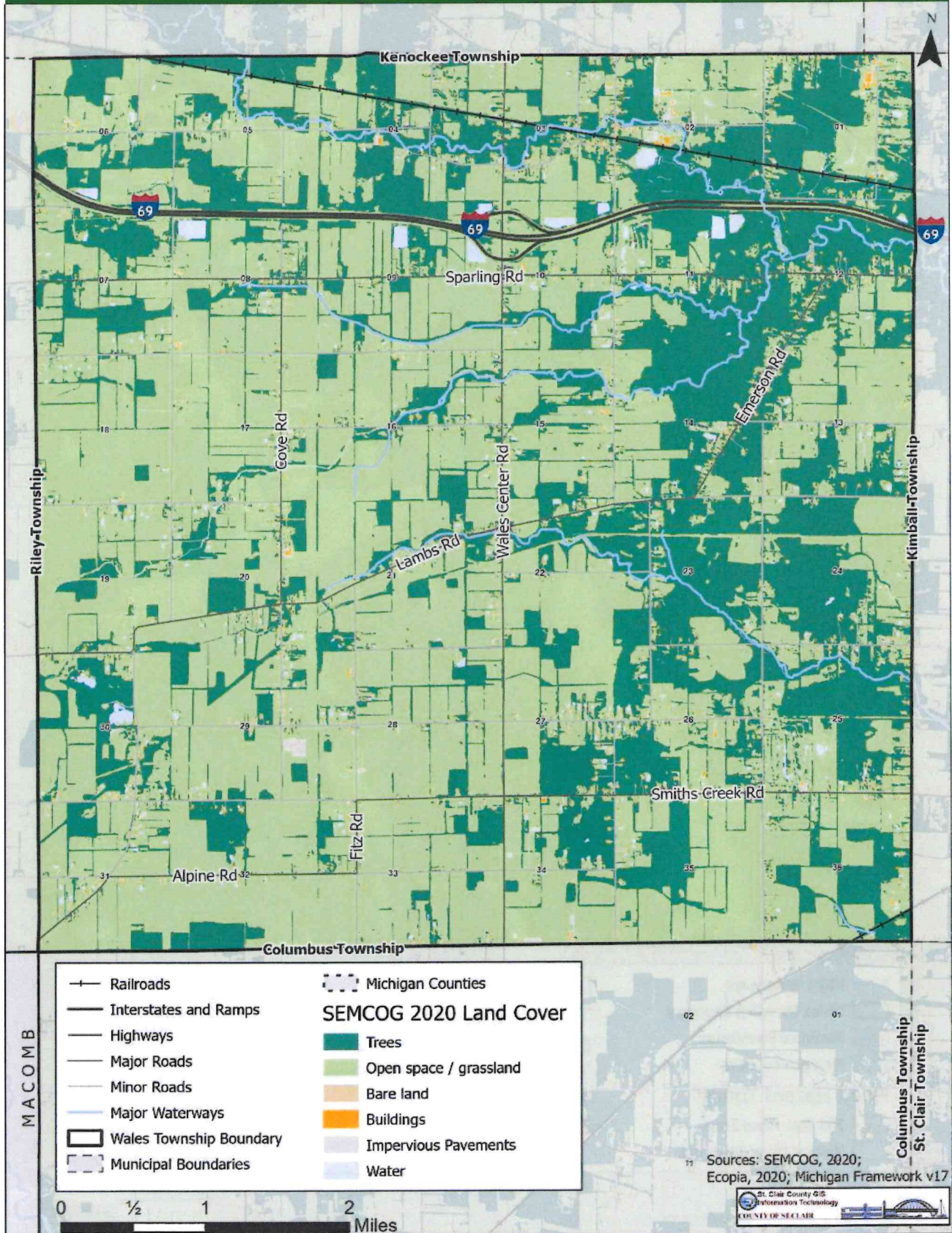
Woodlands create a sense of community, provide wildlife habitat, and offer numerous recreational activities, such as hiking, camping, birdwatching, and hunting. These forested areas improve personal health, protect air quality, reduce noise pollution, prevent soil erosion and sedimentation, reduce stormwater runoff, and increase groundwater recharge. Woodlands also increase property values since people prefer landscaped properties instead of barren lands. Wildlife species within St. Clair County include whitetail deer, cottontail rabbit, fox squirrel, gray squirrel, raccoon, skunk, fox, coyote, beaver, muskrat, badger, opossum, sandpipers, woodpeckers, vireos, owls, and warblers. Bird watching is extremely popular in this area since the Great Lakes Basin is a major flyway for thousands of North American waterfowl and bird species.

MAP 1-7: Wetlands, Hydric Soils and Flood Zones



WALES TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN

MAP 1-8 Land Cover, 2020



According to SEMCOG’s 2020 Land Cover data, Wales Township has nearly 8,008 acres of woody vegetation and trees. The majority of it is concentrated along the eastern edge of the township with the largest areas found in Sections 1, 2, 11, 12, 14, 23, 24, 26, and 35.

Land Use Overview

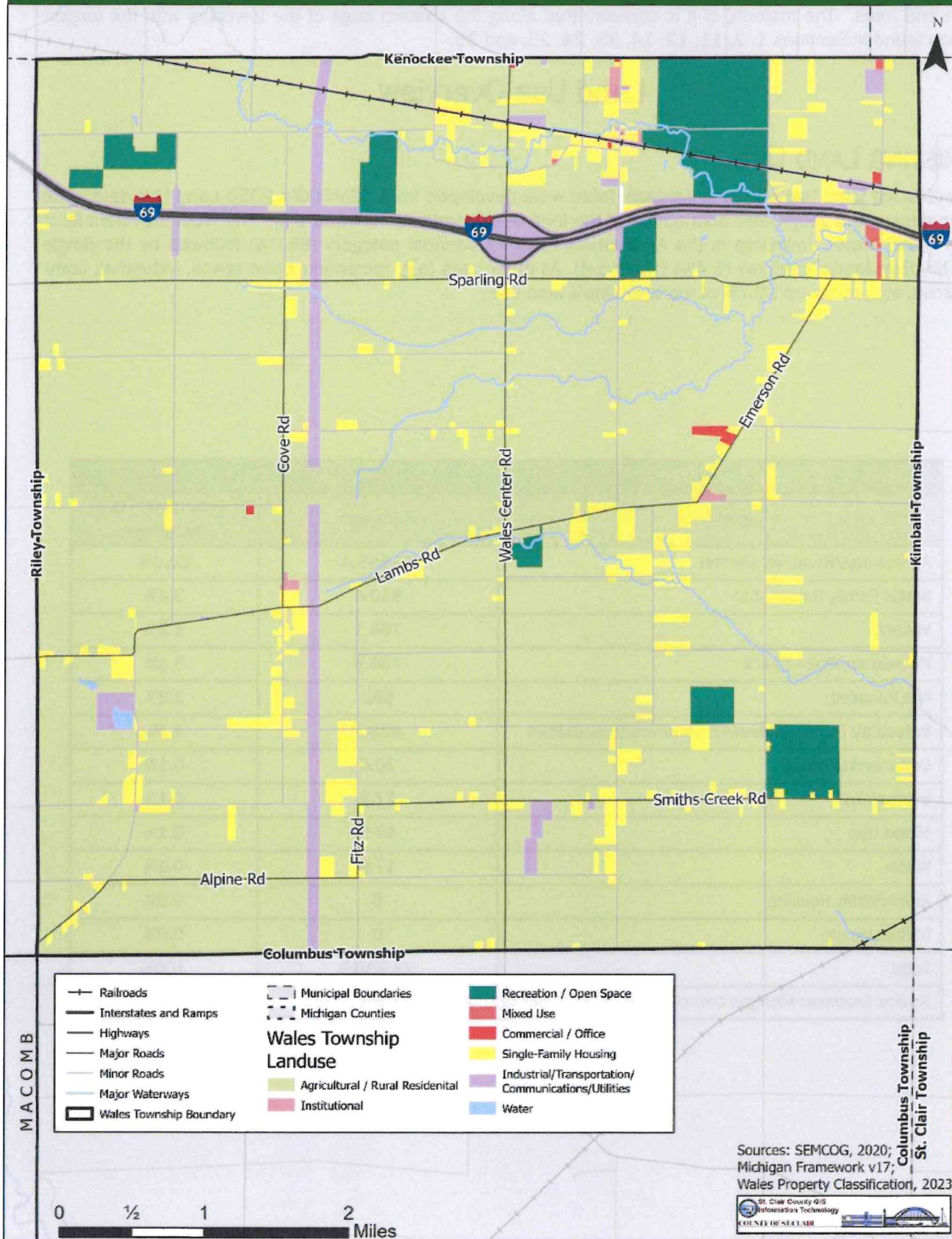
EXISTING LAND USE

The Existing Land Use Map and Acreage Table were developed from SEMCOG’s 2020 Land Use data. The map depicts the geographic distribution of the land use classifications (Map 1-9). The most prevalent land use within Wales Township is the Agricultural/Rural Residential category (86.0%) followed by the Single Family Residential category (3.4%) (Table 1-4). All other uses (e.g. recreation/open space, industrial, commercial, etc.) make up 10.7% of the township’s land use.

Table 1-4: Existing Land Use		
Land Use	Acreage	Percent of Total Acreage
Agricultural/Rural Residential	20,588.4	86.0%
Single Family Residential	810.6	3.4%
Vacant	764.1	3.2%
Recreation/Open Space	736.9	3.1%
Not Parceled	552	2.3%
Industrial/Transportation/Communications/Utilities	403.7	1.7%
Commercial/Office	20.6	0.1%
Institutional	27.2	0.1%
Mixed Use	17.5	0.1%
Water	17.6	0.1%
Multi-Family Housing	0	0.0%
Mobile Home	0	0.0%
Total	23,938.6	100%
<i>Source: Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) 2020 Land Use, 2023</i>		

WALES TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN

MAP 1-9 Land Use, 2020



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CHAPTER 2

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE



WALES TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

In Wales Township, the Board of Park Commissioners is responsible for the acquisition, operation and maintenance of parks and recreation facilities and the provision of recreation programs. The Township Board of Trustees serves as the Board of Park Commissioners under the authority of Public Act 157 of 1905 and Township Ordinance #35. The Board of Park Commissioners was established on November 7, 1995.

The current membership of the Board of Park Commissioners for Wales Township is as follows:

President: Elizabeth Masters
Clerk: Cynthia Bobcean
Treasurer: Elisha Messina
Commissioner: Carly Kimmen-Demil
Commissioner: Jason Downey

The Board of Park Commissioners does not presently have any employees of its own. Parks and recreation business and activities are carried out by regular Township employees, contractual service providers, and volunteers.

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE

In addition to the Board of Park Commissioners, the Township has an advisory Parks and Recreation Committee that consists of paid appointees that meet on a regular basis and provide input and recommendations to the Board of Park Commissioners. At present, the Parks and Recreation Committee consists of four members.

PARKS AND RECREATION BUDGET

Table 2-1 highlights the Wales Township parks and recreation budget for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. For 2023-2024, the Township is projecting the budget to be the same as in 2022-2023.

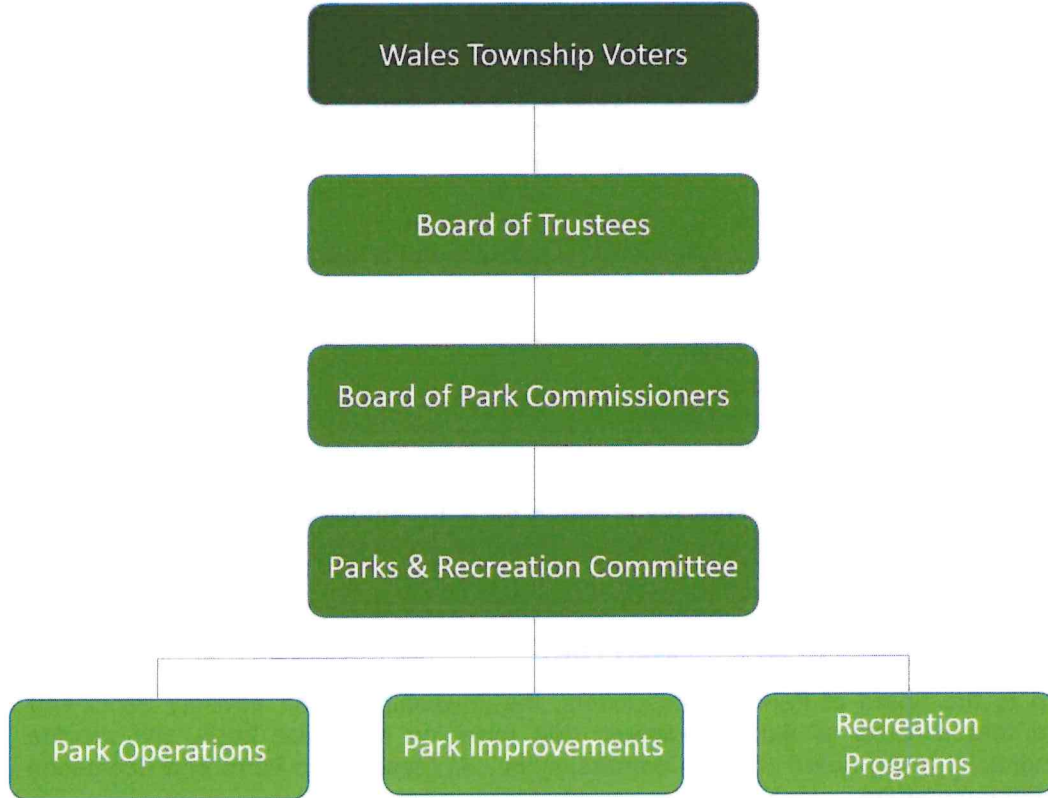
St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Millage

The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) has a countywide millage for parks and recreation in St. Clair County. PARC dedicates 75% of the millage revenues to parks and recreation facilities that serve a countywide audience. PARC distributes the remaining 25% of the County Parks and Recreation Millage revenues to local units of government to enhance or expand local parks and recreation programs and facilities. Since 1995, the amount of money distributed to local communities has totaled more than \$18.8 million. This distribution has had a positive impact on the delivery of local parks and recreation services in every community in St. Clair County. The amount of local distribution is based on the number of residents living in each municipality or township. From 1995 to 2023, a total of \$342,280.28 has been distributed to Wales Township for parks and recreation activities.

In order to receive these funds, communities must submit an annual report and show evidence of “maintenance of effort” to assure the funding is used to expand opportunities rather than to supplant

Table 2-1: Wales Township Parks and Recreation Budget			
	2022-2023 Budget	2023-2024 Projection	Parks & Recreation Fund Balance
Parks & Recreation Budget	\$15,668	\$15,668	\$86,813.59

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE



existing local funding. In effect, local units of government must document that they have maintained their local financial support for parks and recreation services at a level equal to or greater than the amount they spent prior to the 1994 millage election.

The Township does not always allocate the entire millage distribution to the parks and recreation budget. Any millage funds that do not go into the budget are put into a parks and recreation fund balance. In 2023, the parks and recreation fund balance was \$86,813.59.

GRANT HISTORY

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant

The Township received \$74,300 in acquisition grant funding [Grant #03-143 under PA 309 of 2004] through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) in 2004 to acquire the property that would become the Wales Township Park.

Community Foundation of St. Clair County

In 2019, Wales Township received a \$15,000 grant from the Community Foundation of St. Clair County to assist in the development of the multi-purpose court at the Township Park. This was one of 13 new multi-purpose courts and play spaces in local parks supported by the Community Foundation, with support from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, along with \$5,000 in matching funds from the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission.

WALES TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN

DONATIONS, VOLUNTEERS AND PARTNERSHIPS

From time to time, the Township has had help from residents who have volunteered to help with events at the Township Park. Additionally, DTE Energy donated old telephone poles to the Township to be used as bollards in the parking lot.

In the past, the Township has had a variety of partnerships with youth sports leagues to utilize the park for sporting events and activities, including the Emmett Township Little League and the AYSO soccer league in Memphis. At this time, those partnerships have ended, but the Township remains open to forming new partnerships with community organizations to provide additional recreational opportunities for the community.

CHAPTER 3
RECREATION INVENTORY



WALES TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Wales Township's residents are able to utilize a variety of recreational resources at the regional, county, and local levels, as well as through privately-owned facilities. This section describes those resources.

LOCAL PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Wales Township Park

The Township owns and operates the 30.97-acre Wales Township Park, which is located next to the Township Hall on Wales Center Road. The park was acquired in 2004 with the assistance of a \$74,300 grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF).

Park Amenities

Currently, the Wales Township Park includes a playground, a picnic pavilion, cornhole boards, and a multi-sport court, which was developed with funding assistance from the Community Foundation of St. Clair County.

Accessibility Evaluation

In accordance with the Michigan Department of Natural Resource's Guidelines for Recreation Plans, an accessibility was completed for the Township Park. The evaluation was conducted by planners from the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission. Amenities at the Township Park were compared to the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design and given a ranking from 1-5, where:

- 1 = none of the site elements meet ADA Standards,
- 2 = some site elements meet ADA Standards,
- 3 = most site elements meet ADA Standards for Accessible Design,
- 4 = all site elements meet ADA Standards, and
- 5 = the facility meets the Principals of Universal Design.

The Wales Township Park currently has an accessibility rating of 2.

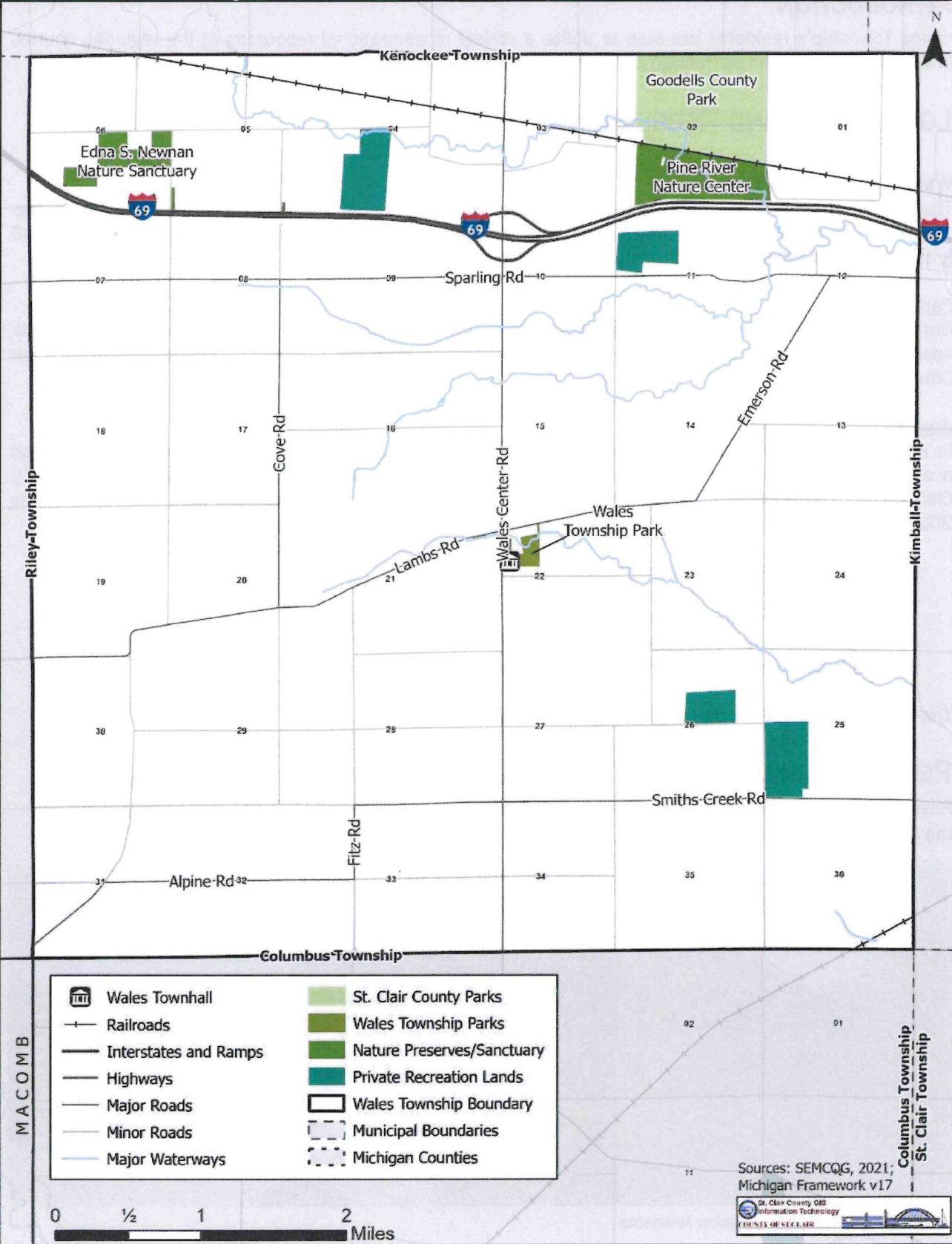
PRIVATE RECREATION FACILITIES IN WALES TOWNSHIP

Private recreation facilities in Wales Township includes Leaning Tree Golf Club on Smiths Creek Road and the Edna S. Newman Nature Sanctuary operated by the Michigan Nature Association (MNA).



Leaning Tree Golf Club in Wales Township

MAP 3-1: Community Facilities in Wales Township



WALES TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN

PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES IN NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES

There are numerous parks and recreation facilities in neighboring communities, including Clyde Township, Columbus Township, Kenockee Township, Kimball Township, and Riley Township. The tables below contain an inventory of facilities located within these communities.

TABLE 3-2: CLYDE TOWNSHIP		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Bills Bearss Park	20	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, tennis courts, picnic areas, pavilion, basketball court, concessions, restrooms
Firefighters Park	1	Playground, ball diamond, basketball court, picnic facilities, ice skating
Clyde Township Hall Park	1	Playground, tennis courts, picnic areas, pavilion, restrooms
Jake Simpson Wilderness Park	17	Basketball courts, inline skating, playground, pickleball court
Riverfront Park	1.8	Undeveloped

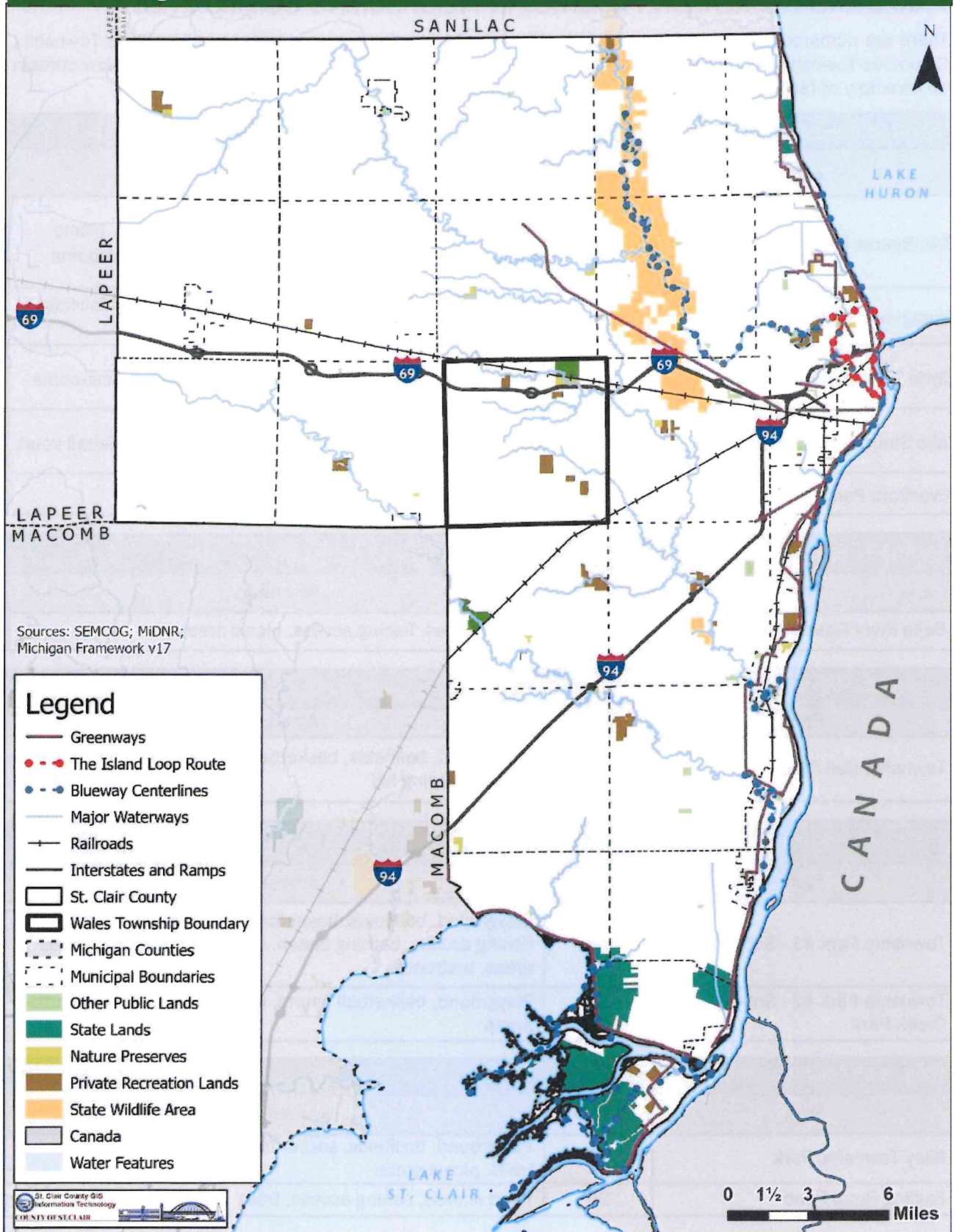
Table 3-3: Columbus Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Belle River Roadside Park	23	River access, fishing access, picnic areas

Table 3-4: Kenockee Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Township Hall Park	16.4	Playground, ballfields, basketball courts, trails, picnic areas, sledding hill

Table 3-5: Kimball Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Township Park #1 - Sutherland	46	Playground, ballfields, basketball courts, pond access, fishing access, bathing beach, trails, tennis courts, picnic areas, restrooms
Township Park #2 - Smiths Creek Park	3	Playground, basketball courts, ice skating, trails, picnic areas

Table 3-6: Riley Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Riley Township Park	19	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, basketball courts, trails, picnic areas
Eagling Road Pond	20	Pond access, fishing access, trails

MAP 3-2: Regional Parks and Recreation Overview



MAP 3-3: St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Facilities



ST. CLAIR COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

St. Clair County currently owns eight properties committed to parks and recreation activities that total 1,010 acres:

- Goodells County Park 366 acres
- Columbus County Park 411 acres
- Fort Gratiot County Park 30 acres
- Woodsong County Park 33 acres
- Fort Gratiot Light Station 5 acres
- Blue Water River Walk County Park 5 acres
- North Channel County Park 10 acres
- Marine City Dredge Cut Access 0.34 acre
- Wadhams to Avoca Trail 160 acres (12 miles long)

Goodells County Park (Wales Township)

The park's facilities include a Visitor Center, two playgrounds, river and fishing access, a seasonal ice skating rink, trails, four picnic shelters, a community center, historic buildings, a BMX track, a radio-controlled model airplane airfield and truck track, a butterfly garden, five special events buildings, a Splashpad, equestrian facilities, and areas for outdoor events.

The Splashpad has 11 spray features that include two water cannons, five dumping buckets, ground geysers, and a rainbow water tunnel. The Splashpad is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and admission is free. In February 2006, the County received a Facility Design Award from the Michigan Recreation and Parks Association (MRPA) for the Goodells County Park Splashpad. This award recognized the Splashpad as the first water play facility in the state that uses and recycles water that is supplied by a well rather than a municipal water system.

The Historic Village at Goodells County Park contains the Lynn Township Schoolhouse (1885), and the C.C. Peck and Company Bank (1908). Visitors will also see the Columbus Bible Church (1860), the Murphy/Ryan Farmhouse (1872) and the Mudge Log Cabin (1863). The latest addition to the Historic Village is the Columbus Bible Church. The Church was moved to the park and restored, complete with its twelve-foot tall windows and bell tower.

Columbus County Park (Columbus Township)

Through five separate transactions, the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) owns 411 acres of property in Columbus Township. In 2007, PARC used a \$1.4 million Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) grant to secure 291 acres for the park and used a \$65,800 MNRTF grant to secure the final 26 acres in 2016.

Phase 1 construction at the park was completed in early 2010, which included construction of the main entrance on Bauman Road, a park roadway, a 100 space parking lot, erosion control and drainage improvements, underground utilities, a water well, and development of a lighted sledding hill.

Other facilities at the park include mountain biking trails, walking trails, horse trails, fishing access, and permit only hunting. The Belle River provides 1.6 miles of water frontage in the park. A historic gambrel roof barn was restored by Columbus Township and is located at Columbus County Park near Bauman Road. The barn is used for maintenance and storage.

WALES TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN



Left: Columbus County Park. Right: Fort Gratiot County Park

In 2012, an energy efficient park lodge was constructed with modern restrooms, a picnic pavilion, offices, and storage rooms. Activities at the lodge include picnics, weddings, educational programs, and meetings.

Fort Gratiot County Park (Fort Gratiot Township)

Fort Gratiot County Park is located off M-25 on Metcalf Road in the northeast part of St. Clair County. This 30-acre park offers breathtaking views of Lake Huron and 852 feet of shoreline and beach. It also includes picnic areas, restrooms, a children's playground, and paved walking trails. Other park improvements include the addition of ADA-accessible restrooms and a playscape in 2007, an overflow parking area in 2008 and two picnic pavilions and additional sections of boardwalk on the beach in 2009.

Fort Gratiot County Park is also home to the 1971 Tunnel Explosion Memorial that was erected in 2007 to commemorate the construction accident that took the lives of 22 men working on the water intake tunnel located beneath the park. The 1971 Water Tunnel Explosion committee raised funds for the memorial. The Michigan Historic Commission dedicated a State Historical Marker at the site to mark the 40th anniversary of the tragedy.

Woodsong County Park (Clyde Township)

In 2008, St. Clair County purchased the 33-acre Camp Woodsong site from the Michigan Waterways Council of the Girl Scouts of America. The property is located in Clyde Township off of Abbottsford Road at the east end of Rynn Road. Woodsong County Park is a passive park that provides opportunities for nature watching and studying, hiking, biking, and water activities on the Black River, such as canoeing, kayaking, and fishing.

The rustic trails follow the natural terrain by traversing along the scenic, steep slopes that travel down to 2,800 feet of Black River shoreline. Additionally, the Clinton River Area Mountain Bike Association (CRAMBA) continues to rapidly develop two-track and single-track mountain bike trails that follow the steep ridges next to the Black River. Currently, three of the proposed four miles of designated mountain bike trails have been completed.

In 2017, a canoe and kayak launch was added using a \$50,000 grant from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). While the launch itself is fully accessible, the steep trail leading from the parking lot to the launch is not ADA accessible.



Fort Gratiot Light Station

Fort Gratiot Light Station (City of Port Huron)

The Fort Gratiot Light Station is the oldest lighthouse in Michigan. As the shipping needs on the Great Lakes increased in the 1820's, there was a need for a navigational aid at the mouth of the St. Clair River. In August 1825, the first lighthouse was built in Port Huron, Michigan. The original tower was located near the base of the present day second span of the Blue Water Bridge. It was 32 feet high above ground level, 18 feet in diameter at the base, and tapered to nine feet across at the top.

The Coast Guard maintained the Fort Gratiot Light Station from the 1930's until they moved next door into the new station that was built in 2004. The property was officially transferred to St. Clair County in 2010.

Restoration of the lighthouse was completed in 2013, and other property repairs and additions have been made using Michigan Coastal Zone Management Grant funding. The restoration of the tower was made possible by the "Save America's Treasures" grant program and a match from the City of Port Huron. The tower reopened for tours in Summer 2012. The Port Huron Museum serves as a partner in leading site tours, programming, and private reservations. Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light Station raise funds for building restoration projects and provides volunteers.

Blue Water River Walk County Park (City of Port Huron)

Blue Water River Walk County Park is a former railroad switch yard that has been partially restored to a coastal wetland. The wetland features three ponds, marshland, and native plants. The habitat is home to amphibians, such as frogs and toads, and is a popular nesting and feeding spot for migratory birds. A boardwalk with interpretive signs educate visitors about wetlands and allows them to get close to the wetland without disturbing its natural features. North of the wetland is a picnic pavilion, a shade trellis, walkways, landscaping, an artificial lawn activity area, picnic tables, grills, and benches. Future developments include a children's playground, restrooms, and another pavilion.

The Blue Water River Walk is a paved pathway that travels through the park and is part of the Bridge to Bay Trail System. It begins at Desmond Landing to the north and travels southwest to 10th Street. The Blue Water River Walk is owned by the Community Foundation of St. Clair County. St. Clair County Parks leases and maintains the grounds.

WALES TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN



Pine River Nature Center



Pine River Nature Center (Wales Township)

The St. Clair County Regional Educational Service Agency's Pine River Nature Center is an educational facility whose mission is to promote the awareness, understanding, and stewardship of the Blue Water Area's natural and cultural heritage. The center provides programs for local schools to enhance their science and mathematics curricula with outdoor-based field studies correlated with the Michigan Curriculum Framework as well as offers outdoor recreation and environmental education opportunities for area residents.

The Pine River Nature Center opened in May 2003 and sits on 111-acres of property with over 4,800 feet of the Pine River meandering through it. Since opening, over 21,900 students from around St. Clair County have visited the center for programs. Activities and events at the center include:

- Opportunities to hike over two miles of trails (open daily from dawn to dark).
- Browse the indoor displays and live animals.
- Read about nature or do research in the library.
- Attend public programs, including star gazing parties and nature walks.
- Volunteer to help with special events and school programs.
- Adopt-a-Trail.
- Visit the universally-accessible (ADA) tree house.

STATE OF MICHIGAN PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

The State of Michigan owns and manages 22,178 acres of resource-based facilities in St. Clair County, including Algonac State Park, Lakeport State Park, the Port Huron State Game Area, the St. Clair Flats State Wildlife Refuge, the St. John's Marsh Recreation Area, and a mini-game area in St. Clair Township.

THE BLUEWAYS OF ST. CLAIR

The Blueways of St. Clair is a system of 17 water trails, totaling 151 miles, in nine unique bodies of water. More information can be found at www.BluewaysOfStClair.org.

MAP 3-4: The Blueways of St. Clair



WALES TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN

MAP 3-5: Bridge to Bay Trail



Island Loop National Water Trail

The 10.2-mile Island Loop National Water Trail was the first national water trail to be designated in Michigan and the 14th in the United States. It navigates between the United States and Canada for 2.5 miles and meanders through Fort Gratiot Township, Port Huron Township, and the City of Port Huron. The trail makes a loop from the Black River to the Black River Canal to Lake Huron into the St. Clair River and back to the Black River. It also passes the oldest lighthouse in Michigan, the Thomas Edison Museum, the Huron Lightship Museum, and the Acheson Maritime Center.

TRAILS AND GREENWAYS

A greenway refers to trails or pathways designed for non-motorized traffic that connect residential areas to other residential areas or commercial districts. Greenway resources refer to the total collection of trails and parks within a community or geographic area, including both land and water areas.

St. Clair County's countywide trails plan illustrates a system of trails and conservation corridors with significant natural features, such as soils, hills and valleys, drains, streams, rivers, wetlands, lakes, shoreline, woodlands, and wildlife habitat. The plan's objective is to maintain the natural features in a balanced ecological state, while allowing communities to grow in a controlled manner.

Wadhams to Avoca Trail

The Wadhams to Avoca Trail is a 12-mile trail located on property owned and maintained by PARC, and is managed as if it is a county park. The trail starts at Avoca, travels east through Wadhams, and ends at Lapeer Road west of the I-94 overpass on the outskirts of the City of Port Huron. There are plans to extend this trail northwest to Yale, as well as to connect it to the Bridge to Bay Trail through Port Huron Township and heading east toward the St. Clair River.

Bridge to Bay Trail

The ad hoc Regional Trails Governing Board is working with St. Clair County and 13 local communities to develop a 54-mile long network of non-motorized recreational trails linking the shoreline communities of New Baltimore (Macomb County), Algonac, Marine City, St. Clair, Marysville, Port Huron, and Lakeport. Over 25 miles of paved trail have already been constructed in various sections utilizing funding from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and private grants. Future plans call for the Bridge to Bay Trail to connect with the Macomb Orchard Trail in Richmond and the Wadhams to Avoca Trail as part of the Great Lake to Lake Trail Route #1, which extends from South Haven to Port Huron.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND FACILITY COMPARISON

An essential task during the recreation planning process is to determine the needs of the township as a basis for an action plan. This task can be accomplished by asking township officials to provide insights into needed improvements, asking people what they desire, and by comparing the township to established recreation standards based on the size of the community and its service area.

Park Acreage and Facility Comparison

The Township's existing recreation facilities were compared against the guidelines set by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) to determine if the existing facilities are adequate to meet residents' needs in comparison to national standards. The analysis takes into account a variety of factors, including existing conditions, public input, programming desires, and site conditions.

Table 3-7 identifies the NRPA guideline for each facility type, the recommended and existing number of facilities, and the surplus or deficiency. The list of recreation uses in Table 3-7 is not exhaustive. The table

WALES TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN

shows the township has a deficiency in soccer fields, tennis and volleyball courts, and baseball/softball diamonds based on recommended standards. It is important to note recreation planning standards must be used in concert with other information, such as regional interests, parks and recreation trends, demographics, citizen mobility, unique natural areas, neighboring communities' parks and recreation opportunities, and tourism impacts, to fully understand actual public needs. Generally, these issues are mitigated when they are addressed through recommended standards and proactive updates to the Recreation Plan every five years to garner new citizen input and assess current trends.

TABLE 3-7: PARK LAND ACREAGE AND FACILITY ANALYSIS, WALES TOWNSHIP						
Park/Activity	Standard	Population (2020)	Population (2050)	Recommended Size/Population 2020	Recommended Size/Population 2050	Existing Acreage/Facilities
Community Park	5-8 acres per 1,000 residents	3,180	3,166	16-26 acres	16-26 acres	30.97 acres
Children's Play Lot	1 lot per 3,000 residents	3,180	3,166	1	1	1
Basketball Court	1 court per 10,000 residents	3,180	3,166	1	1	1
Softball/Baseball Diamond	1 diamond per 5,000 residents	3,180	3,166	1	1	0
Nature Trails	1 trail per 20,000 residents	3,180	3,166	0	0	0
Golf Course	1 course per 25,000 residents	3,180	3,166	1	1	1
Tennis Court	1 court per 2,000 residents	3,180	3,166	2	2	0
Soccer Field	1 field per 10,000 residents	3,180	3,166	1	1	0
Ice Rink (Outdoor)	1 per 20,000 residents	3,180	3,166	0	0	0
Volleyball Court	1 court per 5,000 residents	3,180	3,166	1	1	0

Source: Lancaster, R.A., Ed. *Recreation Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines*. Alexandria, VA: NRPA, 1983; Mertes, J.D. and J.R. Hall. *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines*. Alexandria, VA: NRPA, 1995.

CHAPTER 4

PLANNING PROCESS & PUBLIC INPUT



WALES TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN



INTRODUCTION

The success of any planning process is reliant upon public involvement. Wales Township committed to proactively gathering public input for the development of this plan. Efforts focused on soliciting input via two community surveys to garner residents' ideas and suggestions for parks and recreation in the township.

The general public was important to the development of this plan. Public input, along with the input of Township officials and Recreation Committee members, was collected to create the goals and objectives (and action plan) of this plan.

PLAN CONTRIBUTORS

The process of preparing this Parks and Recreation Master Plan involved Township residents, the Wales Township Board of Trustees, the Wales Township Parks and Recreation Committee, and the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC).

Other significant involvement was contributed by both individual and organizational stakeholders. Additionally, a number of other documents were researched and analyzed to help create the framework for this plan. The 2009-2013 Wales Township Recreation Plan served as the backbone for this updated document. Additionally, the 2022-2026 St. Clair County Master Recreation Plan was consulted in order to have a better understanding of the countywide recreation inventory and current efforts involving trails and water trails. Lastly, the Wales Township Master Plan and the master plans from neighboring communities and the County were studied to see what content could be integrated with the development of this plan.

KICKOFF PLANNING MEETING

Staff from the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning commission attended a Wales Township Parks Committee meeting that was open to the public on Friday, July 7, 2023 to discuss issues, problems, and

PLANNING PROCESS & PUBLIC INPUT

ideas for the Wales Township Park. This open discussion provided a list of items to consider for the update of the five-year recreation plan.

2022 COMMUNITY SURVEY

In 2022, Wales Township issued a community survey to residents to get their thoughts, concerns, and ideas on a number of community issues, including marijuana facilities, broadband internet, commercial development, wind and solar energy, and parks and recreation. When asked what improvements people would like to see at the Township Park, identified amenities included:

- Walking path
- Playground equipment
- Splash pad
- Restrooms
- Soccer field
- Baseball diamond
- Pickleball courts

2023 ONLINE COMMUNITY SURVEY

An online community survey was made available to residents from August to October 2023. A total of 24 responses were collected. Below is a summary of input received through the survey:

- 91.3% indicated that parks and recreation are important to the overall quality of life in Wales Township.
- 45.8% said they visit the Wales Township Park at least once per month.
- 25% indicated they visit the park a few times a month.
- 12.5% said they visit the park once a week.
- 16.7% indicated they never visit the township park.
- 96% feel the township park is in good condition and well-maintained.
- 41% agreed that the Township should develop an additional park in an appropriate location; 59% disagreed.
- 73% said they would like to see more bike trails and walking paths in Wales Township.
- 70% indicated they would like to have a small community center within the township.
- 61% said they would like to see lighting installed at the township park.
- 75% said they would like to see the playground updated/expanded at the township park.
- 64% said they prefer to receive information about parks and recreation in the township through a mailed newsletter.
- 50% indicated they preferred to get information from the Township website.

Summary of the things people like most about the Wales Township Park:

- Good equipment for young children.
- Picnic area.
- Basketball court.
- The pavilion.

WALES TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN



- The park is quiet.
- Cleanliness.
- Grounds to walk on.
- Good location.
- Cornhole boards.
- Not busy.
- Water availability.
- Ample parking.

Summary of the things people like least about the Wales Township Park:

- No restrooms.
- No power for parties.
- Poor lighting.
- Narrow driveway entrance.
- Wish the play area was larger.
- No splash pad.
- It needs more options.
- Kids get bored quick.
- Lack of shade.
- No handicapped accessible walking area.
- Park is a bit small.
- Price to maintain.
- Not fenced.
- No trails or area to ride bicycles or rollerblade.
- Needs soccer field.

PLANNING PROCESS & PUBLIC INPUT

Summary of improvements residents would like to see at the Wales Township Park:

- A small event barn.
- More play equipment for kids - particularly 5-12 year olds.
- Fence around the basketball area.
- Splash pad.
- Baseball diamond.
- Walking/bike trails.
- Disc golf.
- Grills for public use.

Summary of other recreational opportunities or issues residents would like to see addressed in the Parks and Recreation Plan:

- Stroller-accessible walking paths.
- A municipal campground.
- Pickleball courts.
- Community events like gardening/plant exchange, outdoor town hall meetings, and mom-to-mom sales.
- A community center.
- Small restroom facility.
- More activities like crafts, plant swap, and community garage sales.
- Cement pad for roller hockey.
- Leave hunting available within the Township property.
- Cameras, lighting, and fencing for basketball.



WALES TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN

CONNECTIONS TO THE WALES TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

The Wales Township Master Plan was adopted in September 2011. The Master Plan identifies numerous goals and objectives that are directly related to recreation, trails, parks and open space in the Township. These goals and objectives include:

- Cooperate with adjoining communities, the St. Clair County Regional Education Services Agency (RESA), and the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission on the delivery of public recreation and open space opportunities.
- Avoid unwarranted duplication of public and commercial recreation opportunities that are available in nearby communities.
- Recognize, conserve and incorporate the Township's existing natural features into the development of future recreation sites.
- Protect the Township's air, water, soil, forest, mineral and wildlife resources so that future generations may enjoy them in the same or better state than they now exist.
- Enhance existing public recreation sites by expanding the range of passive and active recreational opportunities that are available at each site.
- Relate recreation programs and facilities to changing demographic characteristics of the Township.
- Utilize appropriate planning and zoning tools that encourage developers to incorporate more open space in new residential developments to be owned and maintained by private homeowner associations.
- Set aside sufficient land area to meet the leisure time recreation needs of existing and potential users.
- Protect natural resources from intrusion by industry, business and residences so as not to jeopardize their delicate balance.
- Protect the water quality and scenic aspects of the Pine River by regulating the type, location and density of development along its banks, floodway and floodplain that would detract from its natural beauty or its use as a community resource.
- Encourage the use of the Pine River and its banks, floodway and floodplain for passive recreational facilities such as: picnic areas, nature trails, scenic open space, wildlife sanctuaries, etc.
- Promote the development of active recreational areas that address the needs of local residents for facilities that are not available in the local area.
- Encourage cooperation with the school districts that serve the Township in providing recreation facilities and programs.
- Preserve land with natural open space features such as mature trees, recognizing that these are the unique features of Wales Township that make it such an attractive community.
- Protect areas designated as scenic, wildlife preserve or recreation by maintaining them in their natural state.

PUBLIC HEARING

Following a 30-day review and comment period that began on **November __, 2023** and ended on **December __, 2023**, the Wales Township Board of Trustees held a public hearing on the proposed 2024-2028 Parks and Recreation Plan and adopted the plan on **January __, 2024**.

CHAPTER 5

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTION PLAN



WALES TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN



INTRODUCTION

The Wales Township Parks and Recreation Committee has formulated the following goals and objectives for the next five-year planning period. The goals and objectives are broad enough to encompass the needs expressed by the public and Township officials, as well as respond to the observed deficiencies in recreation resources. They also consider current demographic and economic trends and projections, the area's physical resources, and recreation trends.

FUTURE RECREATIONAL DEMANDS

The community must recognize the recreational activities that will generate the greatest number of participants and will show the greatest growth in participation in future years. According to the Outdoor Industry Association's 2023 Outdoor Participation Trends Report, 80% of outdoor activity categories experienced participation growth in 2022 including large categories like camping and fishing, and smaller categories like sport climbing and skateboarding. Additionally, although 2022 outdoor recreation included record numbers of participants and record high participation rates nationally (especially amongst families and youth), the number of outings per participant declined in 2022 for the first time since the pandemic began in 2020.

Wales Township is interested in providing recreation opportunities for all ages and abilities, from young children to the senior population. In Wales Township, as well as regionally and statewide, the population is aging. As Township residents continue to get older, there will be an increased need for more passive recreational opportunities for the senior population.

Residents with disabilities must also be considered in the development of a recreation plan. The U.S. Census categorizes 'disability' as an individual with a long-lasting physical, mental or emotional condition. The condition can make it difficult for a person to do activities such as walking, climbing stairs, learning or remembering. The condition can also impede an individual's ability to go outside or participate in activities alone.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The availability of diversified recreation facilities and programs is an important component in evaluating the quality of life in a community. Those communities that have recreation facilities and programs available for all residents are often perceived to be the most desirable in which to live and work. This perception will continue to be reinforced in the future as the leisure time for individuals and families increases. In recognition of this trend and the traditional role played by local governments in meeting the recreation needs of their residents, the Parks and Recreation Plan is offered to help Wales Township provide for the recreation needs of its residents, both now and in the future.

Policy Basis

In the broadest sense, the Recreation Plan is a policy instrument, developed from a set of goals and objectives, which is intended to serve as a guide to consistent and rational public decisions relative to the delivery of recreation programs and facilities to the residents of Wales Township. The goals and objectives formulated by the community are viewed as the cornerstone of the planning process as they form the framework for public decision making.

POLICY STATEMENTS

The goals and objectives that will be incorporated into this Parks and Recreation Plan are set forth in the following policy statements. These policy statements are grouped into three categories concerning general recreation policies, policies on recreation facility development, township park improvements, and provisions and policies concerning the administration of recreation facilities and programs.

General Recreation

- Enhance and increase the quality of life of Township residents by providing a full range of recreation programs and facilities to meet the needs of the residents.
- Relate recreation programs and facilities to the demographic character of the township population.
- Encourage continued and expanded cooperation with the all of the school districts serving the Township in providing recreation facilities and programs.
- Establish a working relationship with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission for the purpose of obtaining the assistance of the DNR and the County in the acquisition and development of recreational facilities within the Township.
- Avoid duplicating recreation facilities and programs that are already being provided by other levels of government or by the private sector.
- Provide open space and recreation opportunities through a combination of communitywide and neighborhood facilities that are easily accessible to the population that they are intended to serve.

Recreation Facilities

- Set aside sufficient land area to meet the leisure-time recreation needs of existing and potential users.
- Incorporate neighborhood recreation facilities into future plans for residential development areas.
- Utilize appropriate planning and zoning techniques encouraging developers to incorporate more open space into new residential developments.
- Encourage the preservation of open space along existing drainage and utility corridors where feasible.

WALES TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN

- Seek and provide meaningful access, where possible, to the South Branch of the Pine River, Moore Creek and Smiths Creek and the woodlands, wetlands and floodplains that adjoin them.
- Use the public right-of-way along streets, roads, abandoned railroads, or along drain easements for non-motorized, pedestrian and bicycle paths where possible and where needed.
- Expand the range of outdoor, winter recreation opportunities including cross-country skiing, ice-skating and ice hockey.
- Design future recreation facilities to minimize maintenance expenses.
- Incorporate unique natural features (woodlands, wetlands, floodplains and rivers) into future recreation planning whenever practicable and feasible.
- Provide both “passive” and “active” types of recreational facilities. Provide a mix of developed recreational areas and natural open space areas.
- Acquire recreation sites, especially areas containing unique natural resources, well in advance of actual need before rising land prices and development make acquisition more difficult.
- Prepare and adopt master development plans or park layout plans for all park sites acquired or owned by the Township.
- Coordinate the acquisition and development of Township facilities with the plans and actions of the County relative to the County property at Goodells, so as to complement, enhance and not duplicate County facilities.

Wales Township Park Improvements

- Install fencing around the multi-use court.
- Explore the feasibility of constructing a small community center at the township park.
- Develop a nature trail that circumnavigates the entire park property.
- Explore the feasibility and impact of installing light to cover the multi-use court and playground areas. Conduct a thorough impact study on use of the park after dark.



GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTION PLAN

TABLE 5-1: CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEDULE, 2024-2028

Program Year	Improvement	Funding Source(s)
2024	Install fencing around the multi-use court; add nets for tennis courts; hire landscape architect to develop master park layout plan; install information kiosk.	General Fund, PARC Millage, LWCF, MNRTF, MDNR Recreation Passport, donations
2025	Develop nature trail around park property; install additional picnic tables as needed.	General Fund, PARC Millage, LWCF, MNRTF, MDNR Recreation Passport, donations
2026	Install lighting at the township park; develop landscaping plan for park.	General Fund, PARC Millage, LWCF, MNRTF, MDNR Recreation Passport, donations
2027	Add smaller picnic pavilions; improve the narrow apron at entrance to parking lot; add additional play features.	General Fund, PARC Millage, LWCF, MNRTF, MDNR Recreation Passport, donations
2028	Install pickleball courts; add interpretive elements	General Fund, PARC Millage, LWCF, MNRTF, MDNR Recreation Passport, donations

PARC = St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission

LWCF = Land and Water Conservation Fund

MNRTF = Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund

MDNR = Michigan Department of Natural Resources

- Install additional picnic tables in appropriate locations throughout the park as needed.
- Enhance the play structure at the park by adding climbing items for older kids.
- Work with community partners to identify a potential bike trail connection to Goodells County Park.
- Regularly communicate with biking community to identify potential locations for bike paths and other regional trail connections.
- Add 1-2 smaller picnic pavilions with tables and seating.
- Install nets for the tennis courts on the multi-use court.
- Coordinate with DTE on the potential to eliminate the overhead powerlines at the park.
- Develop a landscaping plan for the park and allow donations based on plant requirements in the plan.
- Install a community information kiosk at the park that highlights community history and upcoming

WALES TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN

events.

- Identify opportunities to install interpretive elements at the park highlighting township history.
- Install pickleball courts.

Recreation Administration

- Review and modernize the adopted park rules for the township park. Establish open/operating hours for the park.
- Plan recreation programs to meet the needs of all age groups and abilities in the Township.
- Coordinate existing and anticipated recreation programs with those offered by other public and private recreation providers.
- Relate recreational program offerings to the availability of facilities.
- As more recreation facilities and programs are developed, provide necessary staffing and an administrative infrastructure to support the expansion of recreation opportunities.
- Make sure that recreation acquisition and development projects are included in the Township's capital improvement program.

FIVE-YEAR ACTION PROGRAM

The following describes Wales Township's proposed Action Program to maintain and improve recreation opportunities in the township. The primary focus of the program is on facility development with an emphasis on implementation based on realistic objectives.

In terms of property acquisition for park development, it is difficult to predict when an appropriate or significant property will become available. The Township should be prepared to react with relative quickness in terms of identifying an acquisition opportunity, exploring the potential feasibility, and assessing available funding resources and financing mechanisms should the *right* opportunity present itself.

Priority Staging

It will be important in the years ahead to apply two important principles of plan implementation. The first is flexibility. Social and economic conditions are changing rapidly. An improvement, which was clearly necessary at one point in time, may lose its priority due to unforeseen changes in conditions. Likewise, a project may have to be elevated in priority staging because of other unexpected circumstances. The implementation program will require continual updating to assure that needs are being met and that public and private resources are being wisely invested.

The second important principle is the ability to accomplish projects, primarily those urgently needed. This will establish confidence in the ability of the community to produce results, thereby generating enthusiasm for additional work and facilities. The purpose of clarification and the priorities presented in this section are divided into short-term and long-term recommendations. Short-term recommendations are intended to prioritize actions to be addressed over the next five years. Long-range recommendations cover the years beyond the next five years.

FUNDING PARKS AND RECREATION

There are many ways parks and recreation facilities can be financed. The availability of funds affects the priority of projects and as funding sources are likely to be reduced in future years, eligible projects should be prioritized first before funds are diminished.

Pay-As-You-Go

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTION PLAN



The least encumbered method of financing is to “pay-as-you-go.” Funds are drawn against current revenue receipts. These revenues are generated from local property taxes, fees, and service charges. The constraint on this funding tool is that most of these dollars are utilized solely for the general operation of local government, and few monies are immediately available for capital improvement projects, especially recreation facilities and programs.

Reserve Funds

Reserve funds are a second financing source. Funds are accumulated in advance of a purchase and come from surplus or “earmarked” operational revenues or from the sale of community assets. Such funds could be scheduled for recreation purposes. It is recommended that the Township establish an investment account for funding park acquisition and major capital improvement projects as part of its financial management planning. However, this source would leave immediate needs unmet.

Bonds

Bonds represent a third financing mechanism. The two major types are general obligation bonds and revenue bonds. General obligation bonds are “guaranteed” by the full faith and credit of the municipality. The taxing power of the Township is pledged to pay the interest and retire the debt. General obligation bonds are best suited for major recreational improvements, either as single projects or groups of projects. However, communities operate under a State-imposed debt ceiling and are further constrained by the bond ratings and the associated interest rate at the time of issuance.

Revenue bonds are “non-guaranteed.” They are issued against project that produce revenues. These bonds have a higher interest rate than general obligation bonds, since they are not backed by the taxing power of the Township and due to the uncertainty of a project producing a consistent stream of revenues. Revenue bonds are best suited for major recreational improvements that have use fees.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is a federal program administered by the National Park Service (NPS) that provides matching grants to States and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. In Michigan, a portion of the funds are passed through to local governments by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for development projects that will meet community recreation needs.

A variety of development projects for public outdoor recreation facilities are eligible for funding through the LWCF program. Renovation or redevelopment of existing facilities are eligible as well. The minimum grant request is \$30,000 (\$60,000 minimum total project cost) and the maximum development grant request is \$75,000 (\$150,000 maximum total project cost). The local community must provide a portion of the total project cost as a local match. The LWCF opportunities in the township. The primary focus of the program is on facility development with an emphasis on implementation program requires a 50% match.

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF)

WALES TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund provides financial assistance to local governments to purchase land, or interests in land, for recreation or protection of land because of its environmental importance or scenic beauty, and the appropriate development of land for public outdoor recreation use.

Goals of the program are set in the belief that the natural resources of the state should be accessible to the public for the outdoor recreation opportunities they provide and protected for their environmental importance. To provide access to and protection of significant natural resources, inland water bodies, and hunting/fishing/wildlife viewing opportunities; establish trail projects; promote hunting, such as shooting ranges and facilities for hunter education and safety programs; and projects that propose or support natural resource-based recreation opportunities.

Any individual, group, organization, or unit of government may submit a land acquisition proposal. However, only state and local units of government can submit development proposals. All proposals for grants must include a local match of at least 30% of the total project cost. There is no minimum or maximum for acquisition projects. For development projects, the minimum funding request is \$15,000 and the maximum is \$500,000.

Recreation Passport Program

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) Recreation Passport program gives Michigan residents the option of paying an additional \$11 per car or \$5 per motorcycle when renewing a vehicle registration each year. The Passport, symbolized by the letter "P" printed on the renewal sticker, entitles that vehicle to access MDNR facilities for the year the sticker is valid. The revenue from this Passport program provides funding for grants made to local municipalities. The grants provide for a broad range of public recreation projects including playground equipment, picnic tables and shelters, renovation of bathroom facilities, tennis and basketball courts, skate parks, and improved access for those with disabilities. Eligible projects include the development of new facilities and the renovation of old facilities. The Recreation Passport grant requires a 25% match from the local unit. The minimum grant amount is \$7,500 and the maximum amount is \$150,000.

User Fees

A means of generating governmental revenue in which individuals pay charges for those goods and services that benefit them directly are called user fees. Types of services for which user fees are often levied are roads and bridges, sewage disposal, water supply, transit, and recreational facilities. The use of user fees has grown significantly over the past 60 years and has come to represent a significant portion of state and local government revenue.

Special Purpose Millage

A special purpose millage is a voter-approved tax that provides revenues earmarked for a particular purpose. It is based on the total State Equalized Value (SEV) of all properties within the political jurisdiction. The tax is applied in terms of a mill, which represents one-tenth of one cent, or one dollar of every thousand dollars. To determine the amount of revenues that could be collected from the tax, the tax levy is multiplied against the SEV. The Township presently has no such recreation millage; however, the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) does have a parks and recreation millage and shares those revenues with the local governments on a per capita basis. More information about the countywide parks and recreation millage can be found in the Administrative Structure chapter.

Local Annual Budget

The Township Board can also provide a source of funding to the Township's Parks and Recreation Committee through its annual budget process. This source of funding can represent an important element in the overall financial status of the Parks and Recreation Committee since this allocation can be supplemented by leveraging Township funds (annual budget) with county, state, and federal funding programs (millage sharing and grant programs) along with financial contributions and donations.

