



Project updates

2023: Edition I

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Featured Projects



Evaluation, Statistics, and Research Projects

Food Club Evaluation: Last year, staff completed a six-month, fee-for-service evaluation for Community Action House's (CAH) Food Club. This six-month evaluation involved comparing Food Club member data at entry into the program to survey data from members six months into the program. Now, staff are working to prepare a 12-month evaluation for CAH. This evaluation will build on the data used in the 6-month survey and give insight into the Food Club's current work and success. At CAH's Food Club, members pay a small monthly fee to receive points that are used to shop in a grocery store setting. This serves to bridge the access and income gap between a traditional food pantry and traditional grocery stores.

Early, In-Person Voting Strategic Planning: With the passing of 2022 Michigan Proposal 2, the Right to Voting Policies Amendment, the County Clerk's Office has been collaborating with local clerks across Ottawa County to develop a plan for early, in-person voting across the County. DSI Staff have been supporting the County Clerk Office and Fiscal Services staff to help prepare a strategic plan for implementing four, new, early, in-person voting sites that meet the new legislative requirements. This has included brainstorming sessions and creating an estimated, potential budget.

County Performance Dashboard: Staff are close to completing a new update to the County Performance Dashboard that utilizes Qualtrics software management system. This improved dashboard will dynamically represent key statistical indicators on the County's economy, health, education, government, public safety, and environment. The dashboard metrics fulfill the requirement for the *County Incentive Program* from the Michigan Department of Treasury. The new update will see the dashboard move to an online, interactive format that will be more accessible and engaging than past dashboards.

2020 Census Dashboard: With new 2020 data and information being released by the US Census Bureau, staff are working on an interactive dashboard to share the updated Census information on Ottawa County and other local government units. This dashboard will include population, demographic, and housing information.

Department Performance Outlines: Annual Performance Outlines that exist for each County Department and the Courts, which are part of Ottawa County's budget documentation, are in the process of being updated, collected, and refined by DSI staff. These outlines are required for inclusion into the County's Comprehensive Annual Finance Report, and help the County continuously achieve the Distinguished Budget Presentation award from the Government Finance Officers Association. Individual Department missions, primary goals, objectives, and outcome measures are part of each year's Performance Outlines, and once completed, they are sent to Fiscal Services. This year, DSI staff are also working in collaboration with County Administration to enhance the utilization and referencing of these Outlines through more intentional connectedness with the County's overall Strategic Plan.

County Statistics: Staff are continually updating various Ottawa County statistics. These statistics include population estimates, building permits, and local unemployment numbers. Many of these stats can be found on the Department of Strategic Impact's [website](#), while others are available upon request.



Featured Projects continued

Land Use Planning Projects

Drone Footage for County Parks & Recreation: In support of other County Departmental goals, staff has recently provided assistance by utilizing our small unmanned aircraft system (drone) to capture aerial images and video. In conjunction with the Parks & Recreation staff, we conducted the first of several rounds of documentation for the Ottawa Sands construction project. This initial footage has proven to be particularly valuable for the landscape design firm involved in the project. It has allowed them to visually showcase the future Ottawa Sands Park design to stakeholders and the community, aiding in plan updates, and providing a clear understanding of the park's envisioned landscape. We are proud to contribute our expertise to this effort and supporting Parks & Recreation with achieving their goals.



Ottawa Sands design sketch

Groundwater Sustainability Initiative: Staff recently issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) with the aim of commissioning an agency to develop digital media assets, such as animated videos and educational infographics that support our Groundwater Sustainability Initiative educational outreach. Staff received an overwhelming response to the RFP, with 25 companies from across the nation submitting their proposals. After careful review and evaluation, staff narrowed down the selection to four companies that best align with the desired outcomes of this project. Considering various factors, staff conducted a thorough analysis and after a series of interviews identified two local organizations whose work complements each other and would effectively communicate our message. We are excited about the progress made in this project and the potential impact it will have on our educational outreach efforts for the Groundwater Sustainability Initiative.

Staff will be working with the Michigan Geologic Survey (MGS) again this summer to drill a series of wells across the County. MGS is drilling core samples to provide data for other ongoing projects, including mapping regional subsurface geology and to study glaciation across the area. After core samples are drilled, staff then converts the holes into monitoring wells to build on the overall groundwater monitoring network. MGS aims to drill around six wells in Ottawa County over the summer months.

At the beginning of 2023, staff began a new project to remove the majority of the turfgrass at the Fillmore Complex and replace it with native landscaping. The native landscaping replacement will require little to no supplemental irrigation and maintenance compared to the turfgrass lawn.



sneak peek of landscaping plan, by Native Edge LLC

The project will showcase different styles and arrangements for native plantings that can be emulated by homeowners and business owners alike in the community. This project will be an important educational tool as the County works with the community to reduce water consumption and slow the decline of the Marshall Aquifer water table. In the months of May and June, an official landscaping plan was created and approved by the Native Landscaping Committee and plants for the project were ordered. Turfgrass removal is expected to begin in July. New plantings will be installed late August through December. For more information on Native landscaping, visit the department's [Water-Conscious Landscapes page](#).

Farmland Protection News: In December 2022, 123.12 acres in Olive Township were permanently preserved with financial support from the Michigan Ag Preservation Fund, the Farm Bill, and local donors. The Bronkema family owns the property, proudly producing and locally marketing a wide variety of dry beans, wool products, lamb, and beef.

Later this year, 130.65 acres in Zeeland Township will be permanently preserved again with support from the Michigan Ag Preservation Fund, the Farm Bill, and local donors that will allow Ottawa County to purchase the development rights to two adjacent properties that have riparian corridors along the Black River Drain and the Macatawa River.

For the first time in program history, an orchard will be permanently preserved by the Ottawa County Farmland Preservation Program. In May, Windy Ridge Orchards, a MAEAP (Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program) verified farm in Chester Township, was selected for preservation. This lovely 76 acre property sits on the highest point in Ottawa County!

Park Township signs on to the Farmland Preservation Program, joining 10 other local communities who choose to prioritize farmland. Farmers in Park can now apply to permanently preserve their land, leaving a farming legacy for future generations.



Featured Projects continued

Housing Revolving Loan Fund: DSI staff are continuing to steward communications with IFF and HousingNext to officially launch the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) within the next few months. In preparation for the official public release and solicitation of projects later this year, an official in-take protocol is being developed for prioritizing projects in which the RLF will fund. One of these housing priorities particularly being recognized by IFF, HousingNext, and the Housing Commission is supporting projects that offer homeownership opportunities. Efforts are also underway to begin conceptualizing a 'dashboard' that provides the Housing Commission real-time updates on projects in the cue, projects supported, projects denied, etc. as well as developing the necessary outreach and marketing materials associated with the RLF.

Related, necessary updates to the County Housing Commission's dedicated [webpage](#) will also be made to help ensure continuity of publicly shared information regarding the RLF.

Kent County Housing Program Voucher Expansions into Ottawa County: Since April 2023, staff with the Lakeshore Housing Alliance, Good Samaritan Ministries, and the Department of Strategic Impact have continued to meet with Lindsay Reames, Executive Director of the Grand Rapids Housing Commission, to garner a better understanding of the potential impacts of their service area expansions into Ottawa County. These discussions have primarily centered around waiting list protocols, tenant selection processes, and referral network procedures. Arguably, continuing conversations with the Kent agencies should result in better access opportunities for Ottawa County residents so long as communications and collaboration moving forward are genuine between the entities. At this time, a formal Memorandum of Understanding between the Ottawa and Kent/Grand Rapids Housing Commissions is being negotiated and refined by staff in collaboration with local housing partners.

J.H. Campbell Generating Plant Closure: Keep up to date on the progress of the [J.H. Campbell Generating Plant Closure](#). The latest update from Consumer's Energy can be found [here](#).



Economic Development Projects

Digital Inclusion Strategy (Broadband): Ottawa County was notified by the State of Michigan's High Speed Internet Office ([MIHI](#)) that it, in partnership with [123Net](#), was not selected for [ROBIN](#) broadband grant funding. You can read the details of the funding application [here](#). While unfortunate; this is only consider a temporary setback/delay given other impending funding opportunities that will become available to effectively resolve our County's broadband needs. A next, and anxiously anticipated grant program is BEAD with \$1.5B available for Michigan communities. The BEAD application submittal process will most likely open in early 2024. Accordingly, between now and then, our diligent work will involve assessing where our ROBIN grant fell short, continuing to build support for this important work, and tactfully advancing necessary pieces of this complex puzzle (in close partnership with 123Net) in order to prepare a strong grant application(s). The closer we can get to a *shovel-ready project* the stronger our next applications for funding will be. This remains are committed focus over the next 6 months.

Moreover, to assist in this complex broadband infrastructure planning effort, DSI staff recently gained access to the most up-to-date FCC broadband internet mapping data. This valuable data will allow us to conduct a geospatial analysis that can provide a better understanding of locations and current internet speeds countywide, as well as identifying areas with deficiencies, and pinpointing those areas in need of improved infrastructure.

Ottawa County Land Bank Authority: The State Land Bank Authority has released information about their third round of Blight Elimination Program for local land banks, and in some cases local units of government, to use for eligible stabilization, rehabilitation, or demolition purposes. Ottawa County Land Bank Authority has received \$1.2M dollars in funding through rounds one and two that will support projects in Chester Township and the cities of Grand Haven, Zeeland, Holland, and Hudsonville.

Brownfield Redevelopment: While grant funding from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for environmental assessments has been depleted, the County is still fortunate to have its own dedicated local fund to support environmental assessment of suspected brownfield properties. The EPA funding was also used to send a staff person to the National Brownfields Conference to improve their skills to help stakeholders redevelopment contaminated, blighted or functionally obsolete properties. This year the conference is being held in our home state of Michigan right in downtown Detroit!

PACE Program: [#DYK that Ottawa County has a PACE Program?](#) PACE stand for Property Assessed Clean Energy, and it is an economic development tool that can help developers finance energy efficient and renewable energy improvements on eligible commercial property located in Ottawa County. The County has completed one PACE project since its establishment in 2021 – Quincy Place Senior Living in Holland Township.



Events, News, and Notable Awards

Events

Planning Education Series: At the start of 2023, staff decided to revamp the trainings for local elected planning officials by creating a set of multiple yearly trainings rather than a single annual event. In partnership with Michigan State University Extension, these trainings are intended to discuss hot topics in the planning world, as well as teach the basics of planning best practices to elected planning officials. In May, staff hosted a training to kick off the new program, “Planning and Zoning for Solar Energy Systems”.



LOCATION: OTTAWA COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM 12220 FILLMORE ST. WEST OLIVE, MI 49460	
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY Extension CITIZEN PLANNER Ottawa County 2023	MONDAYS SEPT 11-OCT 16, 2023
	To Register or For More Information, Visit here: HTTPS://EVENTS.ANR.MSU.EDU/CPOTTAWACOUNTY23/

In the Fall, staff will host a 6-week MSUE Citizen Planner training, which will include an opportunity to become certified as a Master Citizen Planner. The training is tailored for new board members, as well as individuals with an interest in planning and zoning practices. Trainings will take place on **Monday evenings: September 11 – October 16**. [Registration](#) is now open. For additional information, explore the [flyer](#).

For more information about past and future events from the Planning Education Series, visit the department’s [News & Events page](#).

Planning for Farms are the Tapas 2023 is well under way. The event will be held at the Red Shed in Hudsonville. Don't miss this chance to enjoy fantastic Tapas prepared by local restaurants and have an adult beverage while supporting our local farms! Register on our [Farms are the Tapas web page](#).

	<p>An event to support</p> <h2>FARMLAND PRESERVATION</h2> <p>WWW.EVENT.GIVES/TAPAS2023</p> <p>Thursday, September 28, 2023</p> <p>6 p.m.- 8 p.m. THE RED SHED, 5301 Barry St., Hudsonville, 49426 & online</p>
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News & Notable Awards

DSI voted **Outstanding Partner of the year**: On June 13, 2023 department staff had the privilege of accepting the Ottawa Conservation District’s *Outstanding Partner of the year* award.

