

Project updates

2022: Edition 2

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Featured Projects



Performance Improvement Projects

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA): Department staff have been busy with a number of projects related to the County's ARPA funds. These include creating and analyzing data from a resident and business owner survey; launching a "general ideas" portal on the ARPA website to collect funding ideas and reporting those ideas out weekly; and creating a survey to obtain ARPA application data for projects within the "county initiatives" bucket.



Lakeshore Nonprofit Alliance: Since April, staff have been busy analyzing the data and compiling three reports to illustrate the results of the Lakeshore Nonprofit Alliance's (LNA) second Nonprofit Community Assessment. The goal of the assessment is to measure the all-around health of the local nonprofit sector, with the results used to strengthen the nonprofit sector in the years ahead. This assessment consists of two surveys—one completed by executive directors of local nonprofits and one by board chairs—with each executive director investing up to 2 hours to complete their survey.

Step It Up: Department staff are working to complete the annual evaluation of the Step It Up! program. Step It Up!, a program offered by Parks and Public Health, is a free 8-week challenge offered each Spring to get residents active and visiting new parks. The evaluation involves an analysis of participant data collected before, during, and after participating in the challenge.

Ready for School: Department staff continue to work with Ready for School to evaluate their Summer Kindergarten Readiness Camp, a program that aims to bridge the divide from home to kindergarten for area families and their children—helping kids be confident and curious as they enter kindergarten. Department staff assisted Ready for School with researching and selecting data collection tools for the evaluation, creating a report card to share with families, and updating the parent survey questions. The evaluation will commence later in August.

Migrant Health Evaluation: Department staff continue to work with Public Health and the Migrant Health Task Force to evaluate several of the initiatives that were implemented as a result of [this strategic plan](#). Over the last few months, the department created surveys to assess the results of the initiatives. The mission of the Migrant Health Task Force is to improve the health of Ottawa County's migrant farmworkers by bridging health gaps, improving social determinants of health, and addressing health disparities and inequities.

Food Club & Opportunity Hub Evaluation: Department staff received data from Community Action House (CAH) in June to complete the first evaluation of its new Food Club. The evaluation will involve a comparison of Food Club member data collected at entry into the Food Club and then 6-months into their membership. CAH's Food Club & Opportunity Hub serves to bridge the gap between a food pantry and a grocery store. Members pay a small monthly fee to receive points for shopping in a grocery store setting, with healthy food options requiring fewer points.



Inside Food Club



Land Use Planning Projects

Groundwater Monitoring: Since the approval of an in-house management approach to the county's groundwater monitoring project, department staff have begun to establish protocols and acquire the appropriate equipment and personnel training in order to ensure safe, reliable data collection throughout the life of the project. With the aid of state funding from MEDC, a service vehicle has been equipped with supplies to properly deploy and maintain monitoring equipment and take water quality samples at sites all around the county, as well as attend to any landscape remediation services that may be needed after the well drilling process.

Over the course of the Summer, staff is continuing to work with the Michigan Geologic Survey (MGS) to locate sites to drill monitoring wells and collect core samples throughout various parts of the county. Beginning in July and continuing through August, two additional



Featured Projects continued



Well Drilling at Eastmanville Farms

monitoring wells have been drilled: one in Polkton township and another in Chester Township. The MGS is collecting geologic core samples from both of these wells to contribute to a more up-to-date and comprehensive understanding of Michigan's geologic composition. The data collected at these sites as well as future sites moving forward will aid in the development of new geologic maps for Ottawa County and potentially the state moving forward into the future. Water monitoring equipment will also be deployed into these wells to continue to monitor aquifer levels and contribute to a long term initiative to track and predict changes in aquifer availability throughout the county. Department staff would like to extend a special thanks to the Ottawa County Parks Department, Chester Township, and the Ottawa County Road Commission Public Utilities Department for granting access to their properties to support this important endeavor.

Department staff has been working with the County's Fiscal Services Department to develop and release a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to local well drilling and environmental consulting agencies. The RFQ explains the Groundwater Monitoring Project and the services required from these qualified consultants. By explicitly listing services required by the County, the RFQ allows for an efficient and cost-saving approach to identifying qualified service providers. This also creates the opportunity for the County to obtain the best pricing for needed services and identifies the businesses as a preferred vendor which can be called upon on an as-needed basis.

West Michigan Pike: The West Michigan Pike Historical Route was once a way to travel the Lake Michigan Lakeshore from Michigan City, Indiana, to Mackinaw City, Michigan. Now, thanks to local historian Blaine Knoll, Department staff, and Grand Haven Area Community Foundation, the West Michigan Pike will live again. A series of signs are being installed at the Ottawa-Allegan County line, along parts of U.S.-31, and into Grand Haven. Just off the shoulder on 152nd Avenue near Luce Street in Grand Haven Township stands an original Pike marker still in its original location. Knoll and County staff are developing a commemorative plaque to be placed there to highlight this piece of local history. A handful of other original West Michigan Pike markers exist, including one locally at 7th and Fulton streets in Grand Haven. The Grand Haven marker, however, was moved from a different location to serve as a representation of what once stood there. This route joins other notable Pure Michigan byways like M-22 and the U.S.-12 Heritage trail. Read the full release [here](#).



Housing for Seniors and Residents with Disabilities: On August 23rd, the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners approved an allocation of ARPA funds to support two affordable housing projects. The first project, spearheaded by the non-profit entity Samaritas is located in the Village of Spring Lake and is designed to meet the needs of seniors and those with disabilities. The units will provide rent prices for income earners between 30% and 70% of the Area Median Income (AMI) for Ottawa County. The second project is situated in the City of Holland and supports residents with disabilities who make at or below 80% of the AMI. The nonprofit organization Dwelling Place is spearheading the development of this project. ARPA funding for both projects is contingent on each being awarded necessary tax credits from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA). Under the regulations of MSHDA, both projects will, if awarded tax credits, remain as fixed affordable living units for a minimum of 45 years.

Eviction Prevention Programming: The continuation of the 58th District Court and Good Samaritan Ministries' Eviction Prevention Program was approved for ARPA funding by the Board of Commissioners on August 23rd in order to bridge a gap in Covid Emergency Rental Assistance (CERA) funding. CERA, which funded the program prior, is abruptly ending in September of 2022. ARPA dollars will allow Good Samaritan and the District Court to keep their current program alive without losing their current resources and valuable staff. The Eviction Prevention Program will continue to create housing stability by keeping good tenants housed when they fall behind on a payment, serving as the intermediary between tenant and landlord. This funding will also allow for the program to develop an improved long-term sustainable program that is privately funded and self sustaining based off tenant repayment plans. This will ensure it will be around to help individuals and families well into the future.

Coordinated Future Land Use Vision: The Department anticipates meeting with local Township supervisors near the end of September to share an overview of the *Vision* concept. The intent of this meeting is to garner support for moving the effort into its next phase. The *Vision* is being designed as data-driven guide for implementing practical, effective and coordinated land use strategies at the local level. As the fastest growing county in the State that is also experiencing declining groundwater availability in many areas, along with diminishing acreage of productive agricultural lands, addressing these types of challenges that cross political/jurisdictional boundaries necessitate a broader and more regional approach. Currently, this type of forward-thinking, data-driven reference guide for local governments does not exist. The *Vision* concept will provide the data and long-range perspectives to help inform local decision-making related to land use, infrastructure, and economic sustainability countywide. This effort can realistically only move forward with the support of local communities to participate in this first-of-its-kind undertaking for Ottawa County. It remains the hope of Department staff to release a Request For Proposals to commence with the visioning planning before the end of 2022.

Beginning Farmer & Rancher Development Program Mapping: Department staff have been diligently mapping and analyzing county level data to support economic development, MiFarmlink, and the USDA's Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP). Through geospatial and remote sensing analysis DSI staff have been compiling data into an interactive map which users may explore



Featured Projects continued

and search for desirable areas that fit their land-use needs. The map will include layered data such as: parcel information, current zoning, future/masterplan zoning, land use and cover, and farmland preservation areas, etc.

MiFarmLink Project, a collaborative effort spearheaded by a USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Grant administered through Ottawa County, continues to work to ensure prime Michigan agricultural continues to be farmed for years to come.

As this grant comes to a close, administration of this vital, state-wide program is being transferred to the Washtenaw County Conservation District for continued development and growth. Having already facilitated matches between property owners and property seekers, staff has been working diligently toward gaining more property listings on the site by promotion through Michigan Farm Bureau publications and Michigan's Conservation Districts.

Farmland protection efforts continue to build through the County's role in the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), which seeks to address water quality and quantity through conservation practices and permanent land preservation. Funding from RCPP will be used to preserve a total of four properties – three in Ottawa County and one in Kent County.

Farm Bill 2023 development is underway, and Ottawa County is making every effort to make its voice heard by attending hearings and listening sessions around West Michigan.

Farmland Preservation Program: The Farmland Preservation Program is not slowing down. In June, two more properties were selected for preservation. The Veldheer 35 acres located in Olive township. And The Jongekrijg 90 acres located in Zeeland township. Both properties are adjacent to properties that are currently being preserved. The total acres in preservation will be 727.38!

Department staff are stepping up their efforts to promote and raise funds for the Farmland Preservation Program by engaging community stakeholders through video interviews. Staff is creating an informational video, called "What Ottawa County farmland means to you", by asking a handful of area officials, business owners, and nonprofits about why local farmland is important and why they support the farmland preservation program. The full-length video will be played during the annual Farm are the Tapas fundraiser dinner and posted on our [website](#). Keep an eye out for teasers and clips from the video on County social media channels.

Now in its sixth year, Farms are the Tapas has become an advocacy event that farmland preservation supporters look forward to every year. This year we have selected a new event venue - the Red Shed in Hudsonville! Same great event in a fun new space. To freshen up the look of the event, staff has designed and released a new, more colorful, and eye-catching logo.



Economic Development Projects

Broadband (Digital Inclusion Strategy): After obtaining a more accurate picture of current internet accessibility across the County via the recently completed Broadband Data Collection survey, department staff and partner Urban Wireless Solutions are moving on to Phase II of the Digital Inclusion Strategy. Phase II involves developing a pre-engineering design for a middle-mile broadband architecture, along with preparing financial feasibility analyses of that design. The end result of the project will be a documented and executable network model that Ottawa County can use as its blueprint to achieve their vision for broadband accessibility.

Department staff have identified GrayBar/Fujitsu to conduct this design work. The middle mile engineering is a critical step for the County to determine what it will cost to build the necessary infrastructure that is accessible for private-sector ISPs to "piggy-back" on to deliver their services to underserved areas, especially in the County's more rural areas. With these engineering and cost-modeling data, staff can then seek/secure grant funds, and local contributions as necessary, to deploy the network design. If the business/network model makes fiscal sense, partnerships with private-sector ISPs are secured, and necessary funding is acquired, staff is targeting fiscal year 2023/24 for construction. Department staff remains highly confident that its public/private model to address broadband needs in Ottawa County is highly viable, and cost-effective, based on years of experience and a strong knowledge-base in this complex broadband arena.

Department staff also recently issued a Request For Information (RFI) to internet service providers (ISPs) to formally identify which companies are willing to partner with the County in this vital public/private partnership. Once ISP partners are selected, and estimated costs to construct the needed infrastructure are established (based on the impending engineering design work), staff will seek grant funding to start construction.

For more information on the Digital Inclusion Strategy, check our [website](#) often, or contact department staff at plan@miottawa.org, or Douglas Weber of Urban Wireless Consultants at douglas.weber@urbanwireless.us

Brownfield Redevelopment: The Ottawa County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (OCBRA) has had an active summer using USEPA grant funds to support assessment work on sites across the County, from the City of Grand Haven to the City of Coopersville to Jamestown Township. The OCBRA has worked with the environmental professionals from Fishbeck to expend 85% of its EPA grant funding and anticipates depleting all remaining funds well ahead of the grant end date. Department staff also plans to collaborate with Fishbeck to prepare an application for additional brownfield assessment funding from the USEPA for fiscal year 2024. In addition to



Featured Projects continued

USEPA Assessment grant funding, the OCBRA also has its own local dedicated pool of funds to help developers with the costs of assessments through its Brownfield Incentive Program.

Staff has also been providing guidance and support for the City of Zeeland's Brownfield Redevelopment Authority as they have reorganized and are considering an application to add an amendment to their citywide brownfield plan.

Economic Development Corporation: On July 21, the Ottawa County Economic Development Corporation closed on the tax-exempt bonds (PA 338) that will support the construction of a 128 room life plan facility in the City of Holland that will provide independent units, assisted living, and memory care for senior residents of Ottawa County. The facility will employ roughly 50 full time equivalent employees, many of whom will be skilled labor. This is Phase I of the project and will encompass 22 of the 39 acres on the site, leaving room for future expansion.

Electric Vehicle Charging Stations: The era of the electric vehicle is arriving – quickly. All the major domestic and foreign automakers are turning to electric, or adding electric vehicles to their lineup. In Michigan, EV registrations climbed nearly 60% in 2021. In light of this transportation transformation, department staff have been researching the basics of electric vehicle charging, reviewing both public and private articles and surveys on consumer habits and trends, technical requirements for different types of chargers, and watching state and federal plans closely as they unfold.

Staff has identified potential cost-effective options for installing a small number of EV charging stations at select County sites. Funding avenues are being explored.

Hope College Center for Leadership Collaboration: Dovetailing with existing EV charger research being conducted by staff, the department is in the early stages of collaborating with Hope College students to investigate Ottawa County's Electric Vehicle charging landscape in depth. This opportunity arose through Hope College's Center for Leadership's CFL Consulting Program, which offers college students real-world experience to conduct research and solve problems for businesses, nonprofits, and government organizations. Managed by an experienced practitioner coach well-versed in the subject matter, several students will conduct a Countywide Assessment of an EV Charging Station Network. Split into a fall and spring sessions, this project will include spatial and technical analyses of suitable locations, along with, but not limited to, equipment and maintenance options, ownership structures, best practices, and a thorough cost-model of anticipated, multi-year expenses and revenues. This collaboration is a win-win for Ottawa County and Hope - department staff are excited to tap the energy and collective ambition of Hope College students and their mentor to future-proof our County, as well as help the next generation gain the experience and hone skills they need to be successful and contribute to society. A special thank you is also extended to Consumers Energy for their underwriting support of this project.



Events, News, and Notable Statistics

Events

Registration now open! Farms are the Tapas: Register on our [Farms are the Tapas web page](#).

News & Stats

Performance Outlines: Performance Outlines for all County departments have been updated, distributed, and collected by department staff. These outlines identify each department's mission & description, primary goals, objectives, and outcome measures. Once completed, these outlines are sent to Fiscal Services who include them in Ottawa County's annual budget book. The outlines are required for the County to achieve the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association.

County Statistics: Department staff are continually updating various County statistics. Since April, staff have updated Ottawa County's population estimates and monthly unemployment numbers. Q1 building permit data have also been collected from local units of government and updated, with requests for Q2 data sent out. Some of these statistics can be found on the Department of Strategic Impact's [website](#), while others are available upon request.

County Dashboard Updates: Department staff continue to work on updating the County Dashboard. The Dashboard includes statistics on County economy, health, education, government, public safety, and environment. It will include a one-page progress report document that the County submits to the State of Michigan as part of the County Incentive Program (CIP) that will also be available on the department [website](#). Staff are also looking at ways to share that information with the public in a more accessible way.