

Chapter 1

Community Description

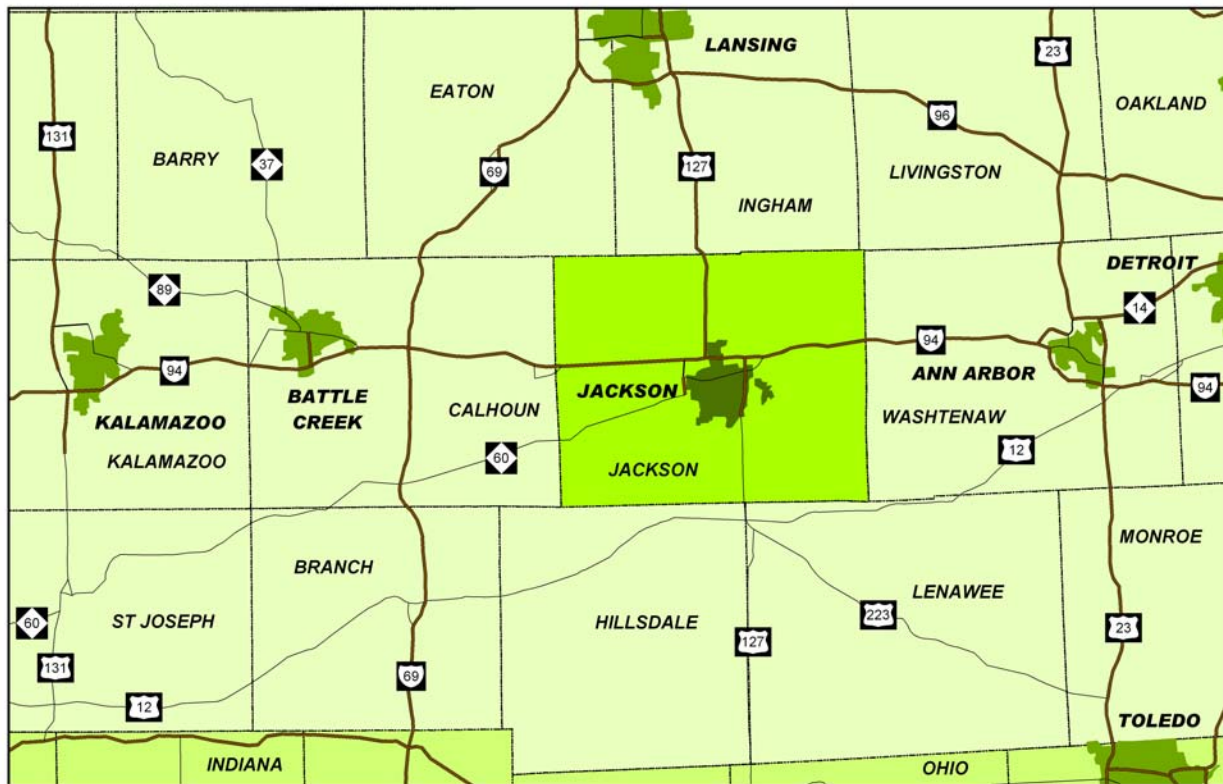
City of Jackson & Jackson County Joint Recreation Plan

A priority of Jackson County and the City of Jackson is to develop and implement a joint recreation plan which responds to the recreational desires of their citizens and plans for enhancements to their parks and recreation programs. A sincere effort was spent in developing this joint plan which represents the projected needs for recreation facilities and services in the County and City. For example, the plan provides a clear picture of the recreational opportunities available to residents regardless of who provides them. Nontraditional recreation opportunities such as historic districts/structures and shopping opportunities are catalogued as well as traditional parks and recreation facilities.

Location

Jackson County is located in south-central Lower Michigan, close to border with Northwest Ohio and Northeast Indiana. The Jackson area is located in the center of the County. Interstate Highway 94 (I-94) and United States Highway 127 (US-127) converge in Metropolitan Jackson, earning the area the nickname of “Crossroads of Michigan.” Those roads connect Jackson directly to Ann Arbor and Detroit to the east, Battle Creek and Kalamazoo to the west, and Lansing to the north.

LOCATION MAP



The City of Jackson has a total land area of 10.8 square miles. Jackson County has a total land area of 720 square miles. In addition to Jackson, the County includes 19 townships and 6 incorporated villages.

JOINT RECREATION PLAN
JOINT OPERATIONS STUDY

CITY OF JACKSON &
JACKSON COUNTY

**JACKSON
COUNTY
BASE MAP**

BOUNDARIES

PROPERTIES
& PARCELS

CITY OF JACKSON

URBAN TOWNSHIPS

RURAL TOWNSHIPS
AND VILLAGES

JACKSON
URBANIZED AREA

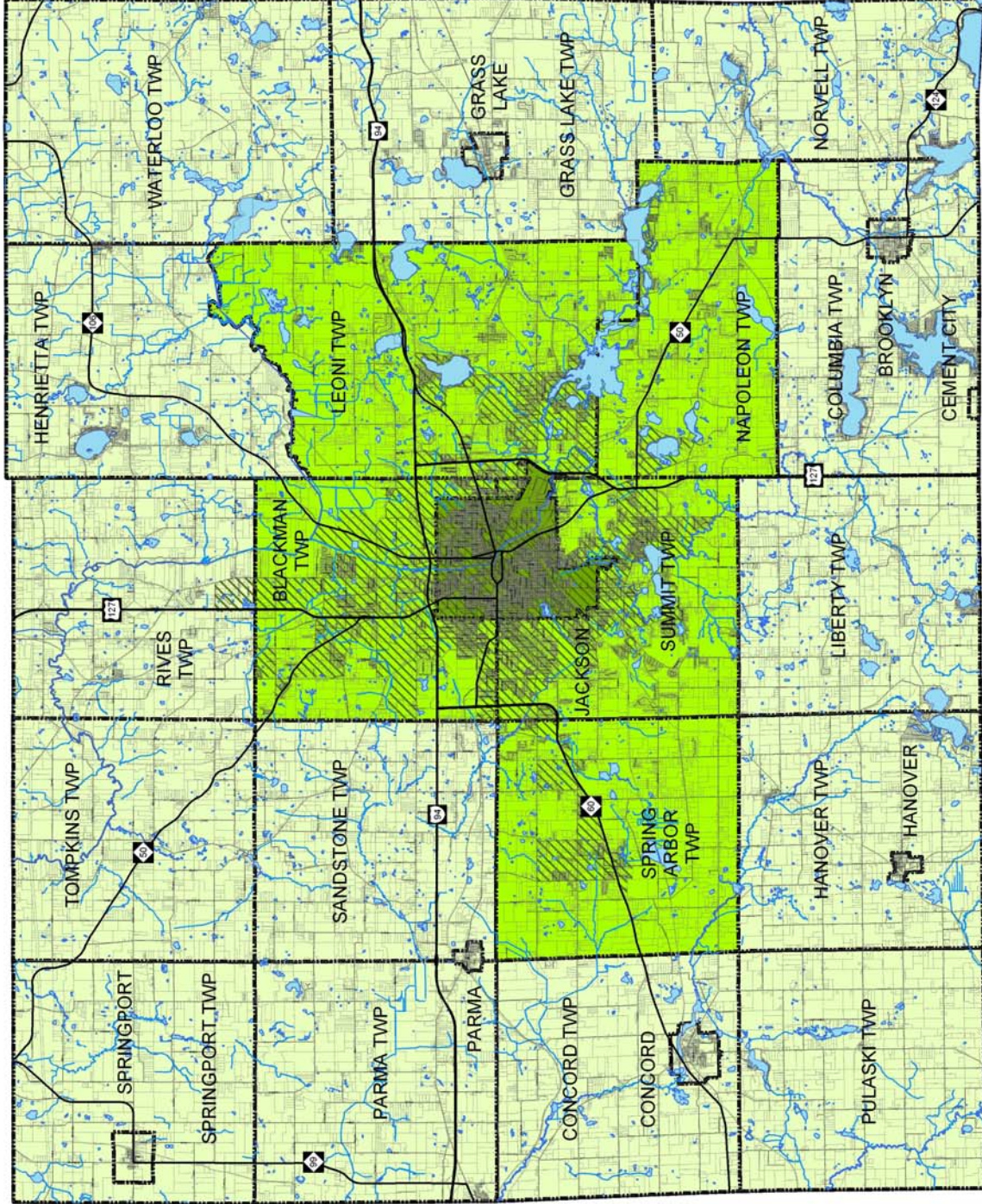
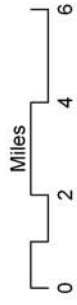
HYDROLOGY

LAKES & PONDS

RIVERS, STREAMS,
& DRAINS

TRANSPORTATION

STATE HIGHWAYS



The townships of Blackman, Leoni, Napoleon, Spring Arbor, and Summit are recognized as urban because the Jackson Urbanized Area extended into them in the Year 2000. The remainder of the townships and the villages are considered to be rural.

A Brief History

Jackson County was first occupied by the Pottawatomie Indians. Jackson was the crossing place of two great trails, the St. Joseph and the Washtenaw. Western tribes stopped in the area to fish in the Grand River.

In 1829 a Federal Act was passed to survey Jackson County. Horace Blackman, the first white settler, arrived in what is now Jackson that year. He came from New York to investigate the region and found dense woods, a beautiful river in a little valley, and an Indian campground.

Jackson may be best known for hosting the first Republican Convention on July 6, 1854. It was selected as the site of the first Republican Convention due to its involvement in the Underground Railroad. Hundreds of influential Michigan citizens made the pilgrimage to Jackson.

The prison in Blackman Township may have been responsible for Jackson's industrial boom in the mid-1800's. The prison provided a source of cheap labor for factories, making Jackson a very attractive place to do business. However, in 1909 the practice of using prisoners for labor in private industry was prohibited by the Michigan legislature.

By the 1930's, Jackson had been transformed from an agricultural community to a bustling city of 55,000 with several tall buildings built of limestone and marble. Jackson was known for its beautiful homes, tree-lined streets and its many fine parks.

A Brief Socioeconomic Summary

The demographic composition of the population of Jackson County — including its urban and rural townships and the City of Jackson — has an effect upon its recreational needs. Pertinent demographic components are listed below along with a brief paragraph describing the local situation. Each of the components is described in greater detail in Appendix A of this document.

Population History and Projections

Jackson County's population was comprised of 158,422 people in 2000 according to the US Census. The share of county residents living within the city declined to less than a quarter (22.9%) in 2000. Accordingly, the residents of the urban (45.7%) and rural (31.4%) townships grew to comprise correspondingly larger portions of the county population that year. Based upon this pattern, the county population in 2015 is projected to be around 165,996 with the city comprising considerably less than one-quarter (19.1%) of that population, the urban townships comprising almost one-half (46.1%) of that population, and rural townships comprising over one-third (35.8%) of that population.

The Sexes and Age of the Population

Males comprised over one-half of county (51.0%) and urban township (54.3%) residents in 2000. In contrast, over one-half (52.3%) of city residents were female. The sexes were split evenly (50.0%) in the rural townships. The average city resident also tended to be younger than the average county resident while the average residents of urban and rural townships tended to

be older. For example, 'Baby boomers' –people between 35 and 54 years of age in 2000– accounted for almost one-third of all county (31.0%) and urban township (32.0%) residents, over one-quarter of city residents (26.0%), and over one-third of rural township residents (33.2%).

Households and Families

Families comprised over two-thirds of county (70.2%) and urban township (70.2%) households, less than two-thirds of city (61.0%) households, and over three-quarters of rural township (77.5%) households in 2000. One-person households comprised less than one-quarter of county (24.6%) and rural township (18.3%) households, approximately one-quarter of urban township (25.1%) households, and almost one-third of city (32.0%) households.

Racial and Ethnic Minorities

African Americans comprised the largest minority group countywide (7.9%) as well as in the city (19.7%) and the urban (7.0%) and rural (0.6%) townships. Persons of Hispanic origin were a small but important segment of the countywide (0.8%) population and the populations of the city (1.7%) and the urban (0.7%), and rural (0.4%) townships in 2000.

The Disabilities of Residents

Disabled individuals comprised well less than one-quarter (17.3%) of county residents in 2000. More city residents (20.5%) were disabled that year than residents of the urban (16.7%) or rural (16.0%) townships. It is also important to note that older residents are more apt to have a disability than their younger neighbors.

Income

The recent economic downturn is reflected in local household, family, and per capita estimates for 2005-2007 despite gains in most categories since 2000. For example, the median family income in the county (\$55,325) was lower than the median for the United States (\$60,374) during that time period and the median in the city (\$37,619) was far lower.

The Health of Jackson County Residents

Almost one-quarter of Michigan residents were considered obese in 2001, the third highest rate in the nation according to the Jackson Community Comprehensive Plan (please see Appendix B). That Plan also showed that a poor diet and physical activity were second only to tobacco as the greatest cause for actual death in the United States in 1990 and 2000. These statistics point to a need for more active recreational opportunities in all communities. Those opportunities may include providing more walkable neighborhoods as well as the provision of actual recreational opportunities such as athletic fields (e.g., soccer, baseball, etc.) and courts (e.g., basketball, tennis, etc.).

The 2008 Jackson Community Report Card indicates that well over one-third (36.7%) of survey respondents reported being overweight and approaching one-quarter (18.3%) reported being obese in 2007, which means that under half (45.0%) of respondents reported a healthy weight. Although the rates of obesity and overweight were less than what was reported in Jackson County in 2005 and 2002 and statewide in 2002 and 2004, they are still very high. "Overweight and obesity substantially increase the risk for cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, hyper-

tension, lipid disorders, stroke, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea, respiratory problems, psychological disorders, stress incontinence, and cancers of the endometrium, breast, prostate and colon,” according to Promoting Healthy Weight in Michigan through Physical Activity and Nutrition. A couple factors of particular relevance to community growth, development, and planning contribute to unhealthy weight, according to that report:¹²

- “Inadequate community infrastructure limits the ability of people to be active. These include lack of accessible indoor and outdoor exercise facilities, neighborhood sidewalks, walking paths, and bicycle trails. Additionally, inclement weather, lack of adequate recreational opportunities, fear of unsafe neighborhoods, and unattractive/unpleasant local environments may prevent people from exercising.”
- “Programs and policies are necessary to promote smart community growth and the establishment of urban and rural environments supportive of physical activity. Active community environments provide access to safe favorable conditions for physical activity and promote the development of social support networks that encourage activity.”

Promoting Healthy Weight in Michigan through Physical Activity and Nutrition recommends cooperation among state and local units of government and residents in the promotion of active environments, including the following actions.

- “Develop walkable communities by widening and maintaining or building sidewalks, safe roadway crossings, and aesthetically pleasing areas.”
- “Encourage bicycling by developing, maintaining, and promoting the use of bike paths.”
- “Require [that] all urban planning and re-design incorporate the concepts of active community environments and there by promote physical activity.”

The 2008 Jackson Community Report Card indicates that only around two thirds (69.0%) of survey respondents reported exercising over the past month. Less than 1.0% of respondents were not sure, which means that approaching one third of respondents participated in no form of exercise over the past month.

¹ The 2006 Jackson Community Report Card was produced by the United Way of Jackson County, www.uwjackson.org

² Promoting Healthy Weight in Michigan through Physical Activity and Nutrition is part of a series entitled “Informing the Debate: Health Policy: Options for Michigan Policymakers,” published by Michigan State University’s Institute for Public Policy and Social Research (IPPSR) and Institute for Health Care Studies (IHS).