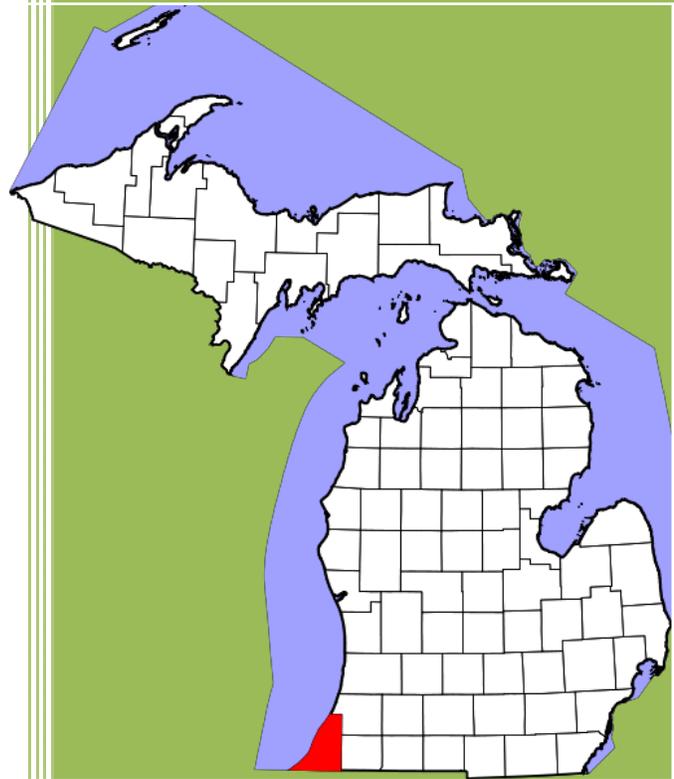


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# 2009

## Berrien County Master Plan



DRAFT for Board of Commissioners and  
Public Review  
9/9/2009

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# Introduction

## *How to use this document*

### Purpose

A common question is: what is a Master Plan? And even more specifically, what is the role of the *County* Master Plan?

In general, a Master Plan is intended to guide land use decisions and provide direction to current and future Planning Commissions and Boards which will implement it. The County Master Plan is different from a local master plan in that it focuses on policy, not on individual properties or development objectives.

A County Plan is unique in that it must also function as an “umbrella” document, bringing together plans and studies from other agencies, presenting a coordinated approach to growth, preservation, and development in the County. The Master Plan is a working document that dovetails with the planning documents of other functions in the county and links the planning efforts of each of the other planning agencies in the county.

With this Plan, the Planning Commission also seeks the cooperation of the professional and citizen planners in each of Berrien County’s cities, villages and townships. While the Plan provides overall guidance in managing the growth and development of the County, much of the responsibility for implementation will fall to our local governments.

### Planning Process

This Plan was developed by the Berrien County Community Development Department with the support and input of many local, county and state agencies, non-profits, and residents. The planning process included the following general steps:

1. **Data gathering**, including census, economic, housing, and geographic data and review of existing plans and policies.
2. **Analysis** of existing conditions, trends, and issues from other plans and policies.
3. **Input** from stakeholder groups and via a web-based survey of all Berrien County residents.
4. **Draft goals, objectives and strategies** which were reviewed with stakeholder groups and the Planning Commission.
5. **Draft Plan** sent to local governments, surrounding counties and other agencies for review.
6. **Public hearing** held by the Planning Commission on the draft plan.
7. **Plan revised and adopted** by the Planning Commission.

### Common Themes

Throughout this document several common themes emerge:

1. **Technical assistance for local units of government:** One of the most important roles of the County Planning Commission is to provide information and technical assistance to local governments on land use, planning and zoning issues. Many of the implementation strategies in this plan involve compiling data, model ordinances and other resources and making them available to local governments. The goal is to facilitate more informed land use decision making.
2. **Cooperation with other agencies:** The County recognizes the many excellent resources already developed by other agencies. These include plans,

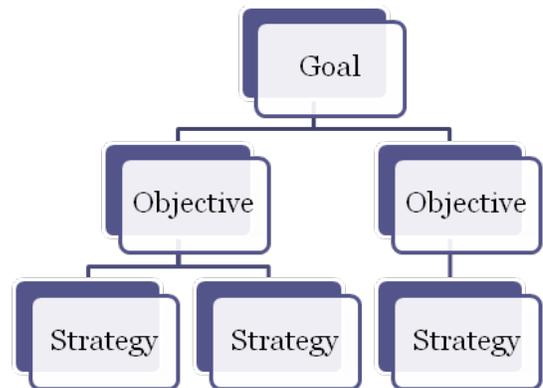
studies, data and model ordinances by agencies such as Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) and others. Rather than duplicating efforts, the County will gather relevant resources and fill in gaps to assist local land use decision-makers. The County will also participate in other efforts (such as the SWMPC's Growing Greener project) that further the goals and objectives of this Plan.

- 3. Focused growth:** Several elements of the Plan contain strategies dealing with focusing growth in and around existing developed areas. Focused growth is a key part of maintaining the quality of life in Berrien County. For the County, helping to focus growth means investing in infrastructure in and near areas where it already exists, providing resources to local governments to further agriculture and open space preservation goals in rural areas, and targeting economic development opportunities in existing urban areas.

## Plan Format

The Plan is arranged by subject area. Each of these chapters, or “elements”, contains relevant data (gathered from the census, other agencies, plans and documents), public input results, and discussion of trends.

Each element each concludes with a series of Goals, Objectives and Strategies. The hierarchy of these is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Relationship between goals, objectives and strategies in the Plan.**

Each element will have one over-arching goal, supported by several objectives. The strategies, which are very specific implementation actions to be carried out by the County (or other agencies where specified) are the means by which the County will achieve the goal. The goals and objectives in each element are consistent with and supportive of the goals and objectives of the other elements.

The Landscapes element is the overarching concept for the entire document, and provides a framework for the future of the County. Each of the other elements relates to the Landscape areas of the County.

The elements covered in the Plan include:

**Landscapes**

**Green Infrastructure**

**Economic Development**

**Agriculture**

**Housing**

**Transportation**

**Infrastructure**

# Landscapes

## *The Character of Berrien County*

Generally, Master Plans deal with the future land use of a place. However, land use is just one element in creating a sense of place. Land use decisions impact transportation patterns, proximity of homes to work, amount and location of nature preserves and spaces for social interaction: all things that create the quality of life of Berrien County.

Density, building type, building placement, street design and open spaces also create a sense of place for a community. All of these factors vary throughout the County, creating the vibrant communities and quiet rural areas of Berrien County.

Currently, the County's rural and urban areas each have a sense of place with distinct characteristics and defined boundaries. Development patterns that promote auto dependency and consume land and resources are not sustainable. As subdivisions and roadside residential developments appear between communities and within the rural countryside, our sense of place diminishes.

## What is a Landscape?

Landscapes describe a culmination of characteristics including transportation systems, land uses, densities, intensities, open spaces and architectural design. The combination of these characteristics produces vibrancy, personality and sense of place. The current locations of the landscapes in Berrien County are presented in Map 2.

Berrien County can be described in terms of five landscapes, listed below.

**Urban:** Vibrant centers consisting of a variety of land uses, from historic downtowns and

neighborhoods to higher density development and employment centers. A range of housing options (such as detached and attached single family homes, apartments, and senior housing) are available, along with public transit, bike paths, and pocket parks. Streets generally follow a traditional grid pattern.

Berrien County's urban landscapes are known for their dense neighborhoods, grid street patterns, and vibrant downtowns. The urban landscape includes the cities of Benton Harbor, St. Joseph, Niles and higher density uses surrounding them.

**Small City/Village:** Quaint and functional downtown main streets, lined with historic and architecturally appealing buildings. Generally mixed-use developments have first floor retail, office/service uses and second story residences. Other features include relics from the past, such as mills, churches, civic buildings or a community park. Established higher density residential typically surrounds the center (six dwelling units per acre), and streets are on a grid pattern. Villages are walkable and public transit may or may not be available.

The Village landscape includes the areas in and around the cities of Bridgeman, Buchanan, Coloma, New Buffalo and Watervliet and the Villages of Baroda, Berrien, Eau Claire, Galien, Stevensville and Three Oaks.

**Suburban:** Single-family subdivisions and commercial and office uses frequently located in strip centers along major roadways. They offer a housing choice not available in other landscapes: single family residential units, with private yards and garages, and neighbors in close proximity but not so close as to be sharing walls. The road pattern is more hierarchical (has fewer interconnections) than in the urban landscapes, and includes more cul de sacs. The lack of local employment centers results in heavy peak hour traffic conditions as residents commute to work.

Suburban areas of Berrien County include the areas around Benton Harbor and St. Joseph,

south of Niles to the County border and some of the area to the west of Niles towards Buchanan.

**Lakefront Residential:** areas distinctly different from other residential areas of the County because they border what is perhaps the County’s greatest natural asset: Lake Michigan. They are also home to the most upscale housing in the County. Residential areas along the lakefront are usually secluded, have private lake access, have private roads and are often gated. These areas contribute greatly to the County’s property tax base. While low in density, this type of development does impact natural areas and restricts public access to the lakefront.

Lakefront landscapes are found all along the coast of lake Michigan from St. Joseph/Benton Harbor north to the County line, in Lake Township north of Bridgeman, and along the lake in Chickaming and New Buffalo Townships.

**Rural:** area recognized for agriculture operations, parklands and vast open spaces. The transportation network generally consists of the County and State roads, paved and gravel. Scenic vistas of open space, agricultural fields, barns and farmsteads and historic resources are enjoyed by visitors and residents alike. Rural is the predominant landscape in the County.

**Open Space/Natural Preserve Areas:** undeveloped areas or connections between existing parks and recreation areas. These areas were designated based on existing land use, their classification on the Potential Conservation Areas Map (see Green Infrastructure chapter for more information), the presence of natural features, and the potential for connections between them. Areas designated as “preserve” are not necessarily meant to be bought and preserved as parks. Private development can occur, but care should be taken to maintain the integrity of natural areas and connections should be provided where possible. Natural features ordinances should be used in Preserve areas to establish appropriate buffers and setbacks from wetlands and woodlands. Non-motorized trails

should be provided in these areas, to connect open spaces and recreation areas.

## Where are we now?

### Land Use

Despite urbanizing forces from the greater Chicago area, agricultural land still makes up the vast majority of the area of Berrien County (see Existing Land Use, Map 1 ). The table in Figure 2 shows the distribution of land uses in the County. The vast majority (nearly 85%) of land in the County is agricultural or vacant/undeveloped. The approximately 35,000 acres of residential land is divided across the rural, urban and suburban areas in the County.

Land Use	Acres	Percent
Residential	35,197	9.4%
Commercial	4,911	1.3%
Industrial	5,634	1.5%
Public/Semi-Public	13,063	3.5%
Agriculture/Vacant	314,545	84.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>373,350</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Figure 1: Distribution of existing land use.**  
Data source: Berrien County GIS

### Population

Berrien County’s population declined sharply by almost 10,000 people between 1980 and 1990. While the population rose slightly in the 1990’s, the number of people in Berrien dipped again in 2007 and is expected to decline further by 2020 (Figure 2).

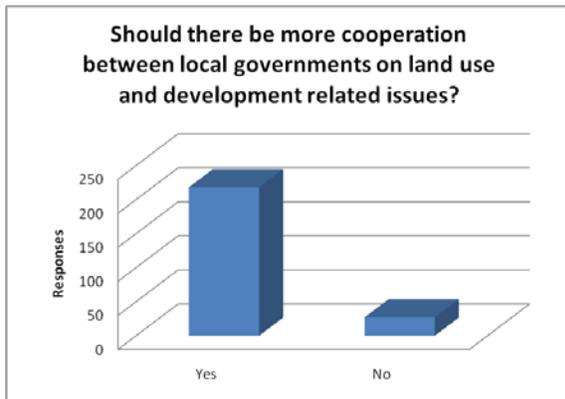
When population trends of the last two decades are analyzed on a municipal level, the data shows populations swings throughout the county (Figure 4) with hot spots of population explosions, swathes of slight increases and pool of decline. For instance, the population of the small lakefront residential community of Grand Beach Village increased by 51.4% while the urban city of Benton Harbor decreased in



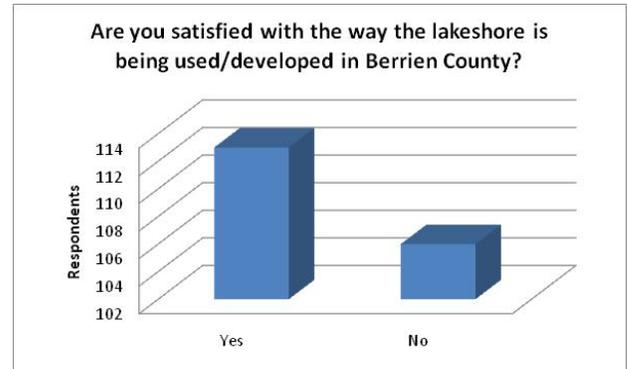
## The people say...

While residents were not specifically surveyed about the “landscape” concept, several of the questions related to the subject:

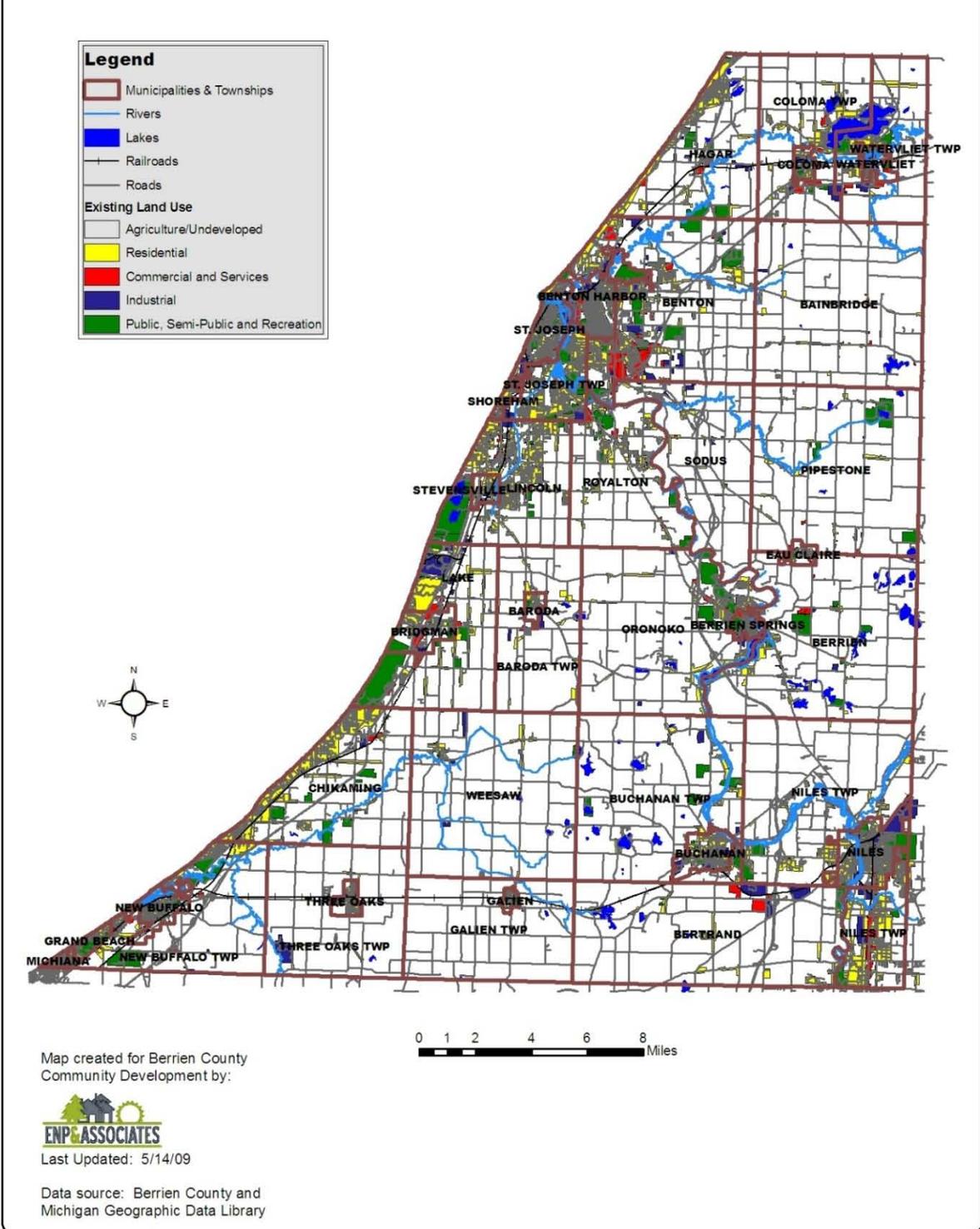
- 76.8% said there should be more cooperation between local units of government on land use and development related issues



- 70.2% said they were very concerned or somewhat concerned about the loss of farmland in Berrien.
- 58.3% felt the County should place its energy for natural feature conservation on lakeshore preservation.
- Survey respondents were divided as to whether they were satisfied with the way the lakeshore is being used/developed. When asked how the lakeshore should be used differently, respondents suggested public access to beaches, less density, greater setbacks from the shoreline and dune, and using the lakefront as a tourist destination.



## Berrien County - Existing Land Use



**Map 1: Berrien County Existing Land Use. Data source: Michigan Geographic Data Library**

## Goal

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**Promote an efficient pattern of development that maintains our sense of place, preserves our natural resources and reduces the effects of sprawl.**

## Objectives

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(NOTE: specific implementation strategies are not provided here. Rather, these objectives serve as guiding principles for the remainder of the Plan. The elements of the Plan that follow provide specifics on meeting these objectives.)

**Objective #1** - Promote **higher density infill development and redevelopment** within existing cities, suburban areas, and smaller cities and villages and areas surrounding them. See implementation strategies in Infrastructure, Economic Development, Housing and Transportation elements.

**Objective #2** – Preserve the **unique identity** of each of our communities by establishing clear boundaries between them. See implementation strategies in Green Infrastructure, Agriculture, Economic Development and Housing elements.

**Objective #3** - Maintain our **rural sense of place** through land use techniques, economic viability agriculture and alternatives that provide rural tax base for local governments. See implementation strategies in the Agriculture and Infrastructure elements.

**Objective #4** - Develop a **system of open spaces** throughout the county to help delineate communities, maintain our sense of place and preserve our natural lands. See Green Infrastructure element for implementation strategies.

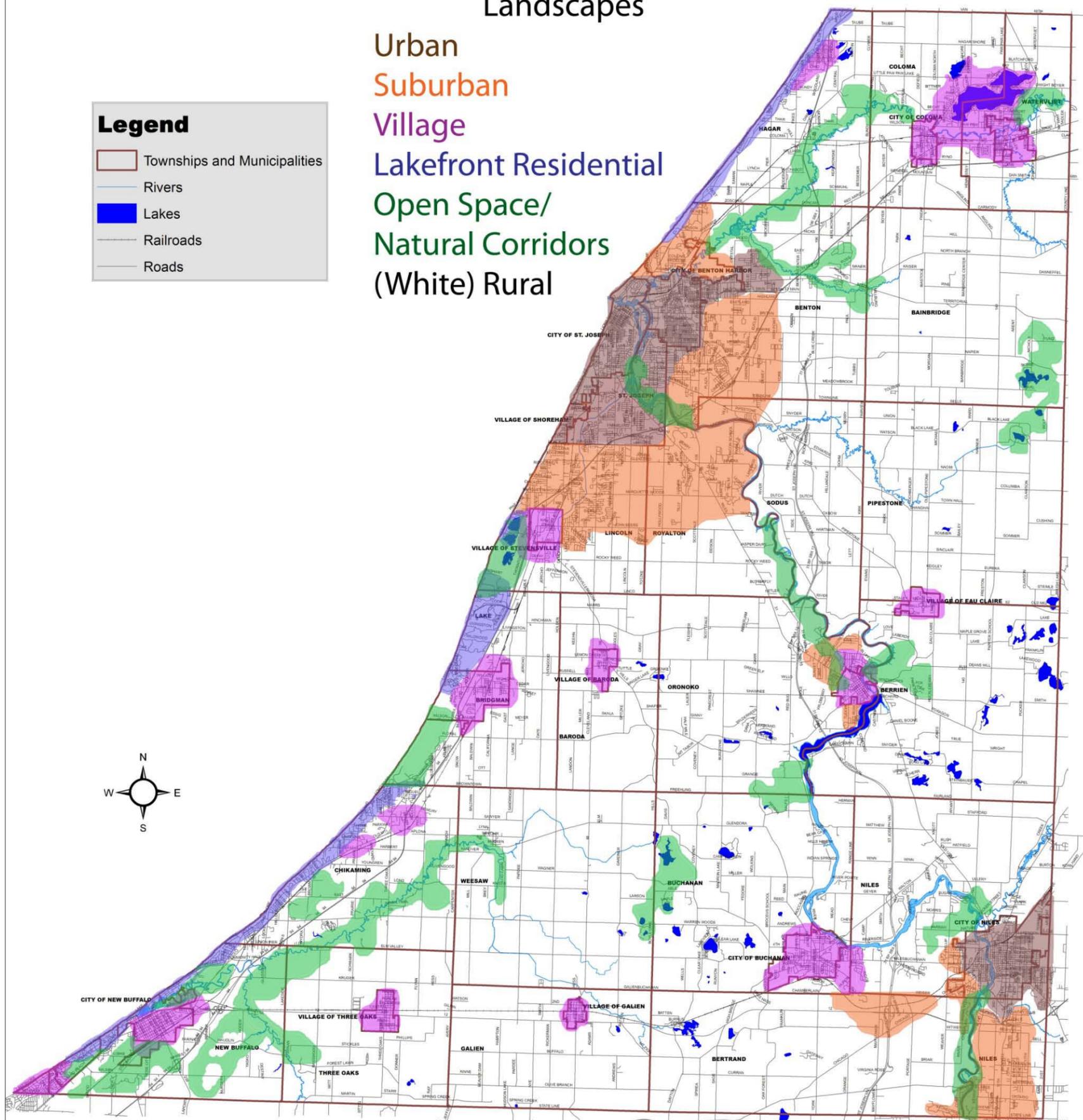
# Berrien County - Base Map

## Landscapes

- Urban
- Suburban
- Village
- Lakefront Residential
- Open Space/  
Natural Corridors
- (White) Rural

**Legend**

- Townships and Municipalities
- Rivers
- Lakes
- Railroads
- Roads

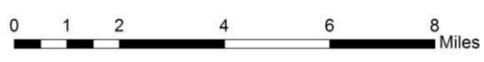


Map created for Berrien County  
Community Development by:



Last Updated: 5/14/09

Data source: Berrien County and Michigan Geographic Data Library



**Map 2: Berrien County Landscapes**

**Urban:** Vibrant centers consisting of a variety of land uses, from historic downtowns and neighborhoods to higher density development and employment centers. A range of housing options are available, along with transit, bike paths, and pocket parks.

**Small City/Village:** Quaint and functional downtown main streets, lined with historic and architecturally appealing buildings. Generally mixed-use developments have first floor retail, office/service uses and second story residences. Established higher density residential typically surrounds the center (six dwelling units per acre)

**Suburban:** Single-family subdivisions and commercial and office uses frequently located in strip centers along major roadways. They offer a housing choice not available in other landscapes: single family residential units, with private yards and garages, and neighbors in close proximity but not so close as to be sharing walls.

**Lakefront Residential:** Lakefront residential areas border Lake Michigan. They are also home to the most upscale housing in the County. Residential areas along the lakefront are usually secluded, have private lake access, have private roads and are often gated.

**Rural:** Recognized for agriculture operations, parklands and vast open spaces, scenic vistas of open space, agricultural fields, barns and farmsteads and historic resources.

**Open Space/Natural Preserve Areas:** These areas were designated based on existing land use, their classification on the Potential Conservation Areas Map, the presence of natural features, and the potential for connections between them. Areas designated as “preserve” are not necessarily meant to be bought and preserved as parks. Private development can occur, but care should be taken to maintain the integrity of natural areas and connections should be provided where possible.

# Green Infrastructure

## *Open Space, Natural Features, and Connections*

The term “green infrastructure”, as used in this plan, refers to a network of natural resources and open spaces spanning the region. Green infrastructure may include: parks, open spaces, recreation areas, lakes, rivers, dunes, wetland and important forests. The green infrastructure network crosses urban, suburban, coastal and rural areas.

Green Infrastructure is important to the quality of life and well being of Berrien County for several reasons, including:

- **Economic** benefits, including jobs in the forestry, agriculture and tourism industries; increased housing values (and tax revenues) near open space areas; and more desirable communities to attract and retain workers.
- **Health** benefits, including improved air quality, water quality, and promotion of physical activity
- **Environmental** benefits, including reduced storm water runoff, connected habitats for wildlife, increased biodiversity, and better flood control.

## Where are we now?

### Existing Parks and Natural Features

The County currently has large areas of undeveloped land, which includes agricultural lands, parks, recreation areas and vacant parcels. Over 87% of the County’s land area is either agriculture, vacant, or in public ownership (see figure 1 below).

Land Use	Acres	Percent
Residential	35,197	9.4%
Commercial	4,911	1.3%
Industrial	5,634	1.5%
Public/Semi-Public	13,063	3.5%
Agriculture/Vacant	314,545	84.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>373,350</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Figure 1: Distribution of existing land use.**  
Data source: Berrien County GIS

Map 1 shows a composite of the natural features in the County, including wetlands, water features and critical dune areas.

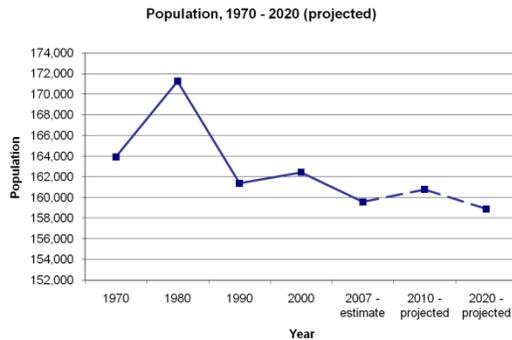
Map 2 depicts Potential Conservation Areas, as modeled by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI). These areas were determined based on multiple factors including native vegetation, stream corridors, size of natural areas, and landscape connectivity. The lands with the highest ranking were used in developing the Open Space/Preserve landscape.

Map 3 is an inventory of existing “green infrastructure” or preserved lands as developed by the Berrien County Parks and Recreation Department.

These maps show us patterns on the land, and where there are potential connections between important natural features, recreation areas, and habitats. Using all three of these data sets, a map of potential “preserve” areas was developed as part of the Landscape section of this plan. Map 4 shows just the Preserve landscape category.

## Demographics

While the population is projected to decrease over the next decade, we predict that interest in Berrien County from the Chicagoland area will continue. Population countywide is projected to decline by 689 people or 0.4% between 2007 and 2020, according to the Office of the State Demographer.



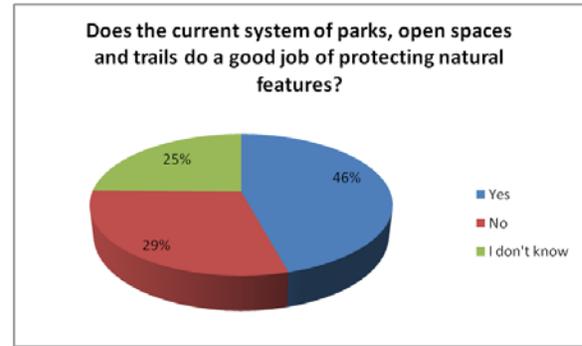
**Figure 2: Population trends. Data source: 2007 American Community Survey Estimate and Michigan Department of Management and Budget Office of the State Demographer 1996 Projections**

There will likely be little demand for new housing, except for seasonal/second homes from the Chicago suburbs. However, the areas that are most attractive for these upscale residents often coincide with the most fragile natural areas.

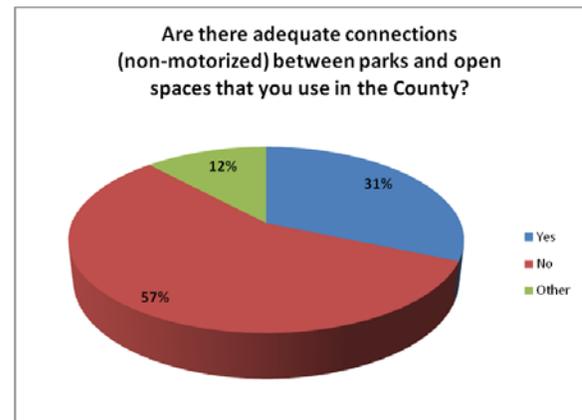
## The people say...

County residents completing the web survey provided a great deal of valuable information regarding open space, natural areas, recreation and connections within the County.

When asked about currently preserved parks and open spaces, 46% said they did a good job of protecting natural features while 29% said they did not.



More opportunities became evident when we asked about connections and walkability in the County. A majority (57%) of respondents said that there were NOT adequate non-motorized connections between parks and open spaces.



Only 32.5% of respondents classified their community as “walkable” (41% said their community was “somewhat” walkable).

Approximately half of the survey respondents said that they cannot walk or bike to the parks and open spaces they want to visit in the County.



People have mixed feelings about the development along the lakeshore. Approximately 42% of survey respondents said they were satisfied with how the shore was being developed. Concerns raised included lack of adequate public access, overdevelopment of private homes and condos, golf courses on the beach, and the need to preserve the views.

The SWMPC also conducted an extensive written survey of residents in the region during their Growing Greener project. Particularly relevant results from that survey for Berrien County include:

The numbers of people who said that the following were either extremely or very important benefits of green and open spaces:

- Scenic and aesthetic values – 80.7%
- Local cultural vitality to communities – 63.4%
- Economic vitality and jobs for communities – 65.8%
- Habitat for plant and animal species – 84.5%
- Healthy living and quality of life – 88.7%
- Areas for agriculture, activity, including locally produced food – 77.7%
- Places for outdoor recreation – 80.6%
- Protect and conserve water quality – 92.2%
- Protect and conserve air quality – 91.8%

The numbers of people expressing strong or moderate support for conservation efforts or programs targeted at the following:

- Sand dunes: 84.4%
- Inland lakes: 83.1%
- Rivers: 81.4%
- Lake Michigan: 85.5%
- Recycling: 86.7%
- Neighborhood, city and county parks: 83.3%
- Trails: 83.8%

Approximately 63% of Berrien County residents stated that their county should be “primarily involved in conservation”

Factors that were extremely or moderately important to selecting a home in Berrien County:

- Natural landscapes/views – 65%
- Outdoor recreation – 57%

## Where are we going?

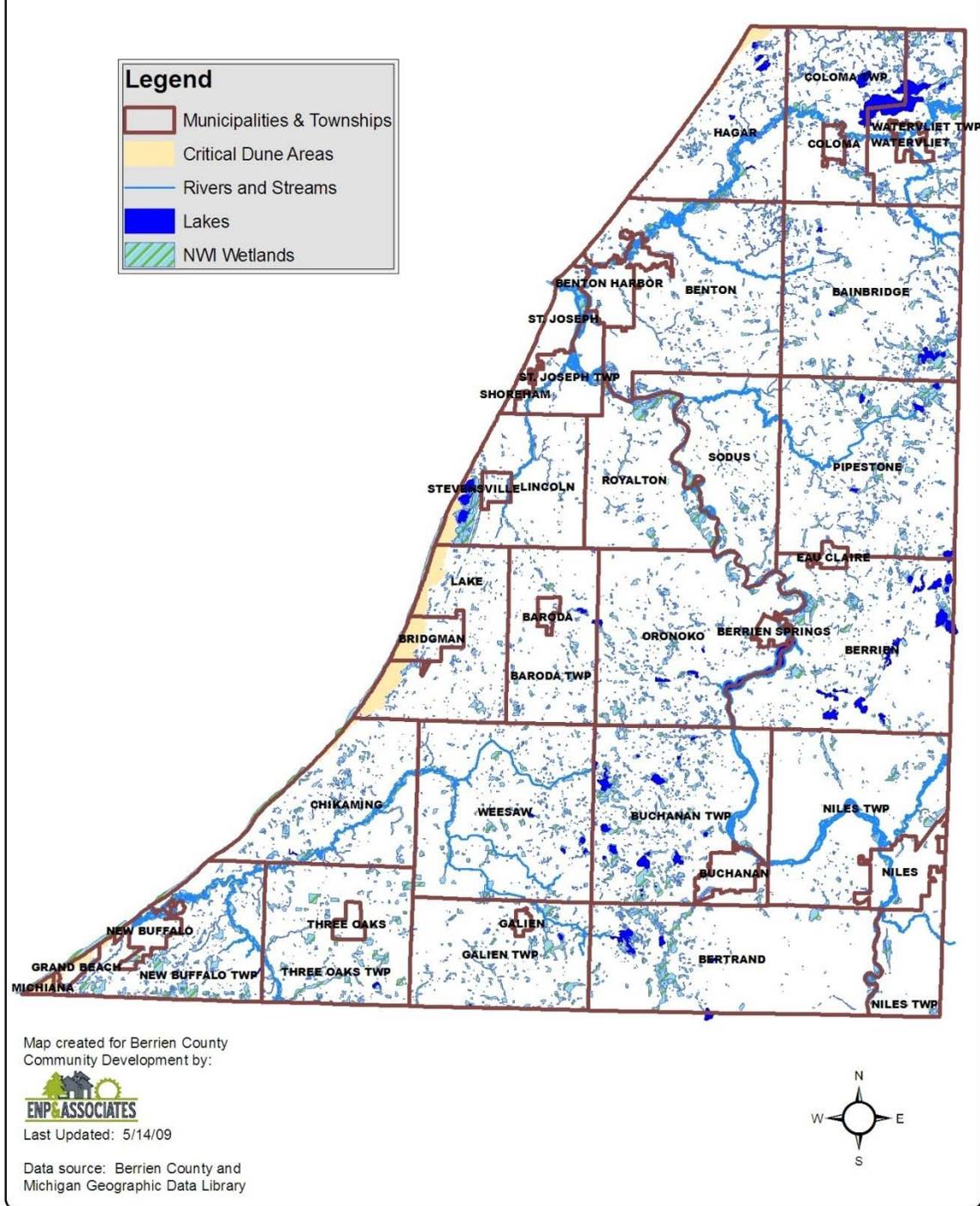
### Principles of Green Infrastructure

The following Principles of Green Infrastructure are taken from the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC). The emphasis in Green Infrastructure planning is on connecting people to green space networks. These principles shall be considered by the County during the land use decision making process:

1. Connectivity is key.
2. Context matters.
3. Green infrastructure should be grounded in sound science and land-use planning theory and practice.
4. Green infrastructure can and should function as the framework for conservation and development.
5. Green infrastructure should be planned and protected before development.
6. Green infrastructure is a critical public investment that should be funded up front.
7. Green infrastructure affords benefits to nature and people.
8. Green infrastructure respects the needs and desires of landowners and other stakeholders.

9. Green infrastructure requires making connections to activities within and beyond the community.
10. Green infrastructure requires long-term commitment.

# Berrien County - Natural Features



Map 1: Existing natural features

## Potential Conservation Areas Berrien County

### Legend

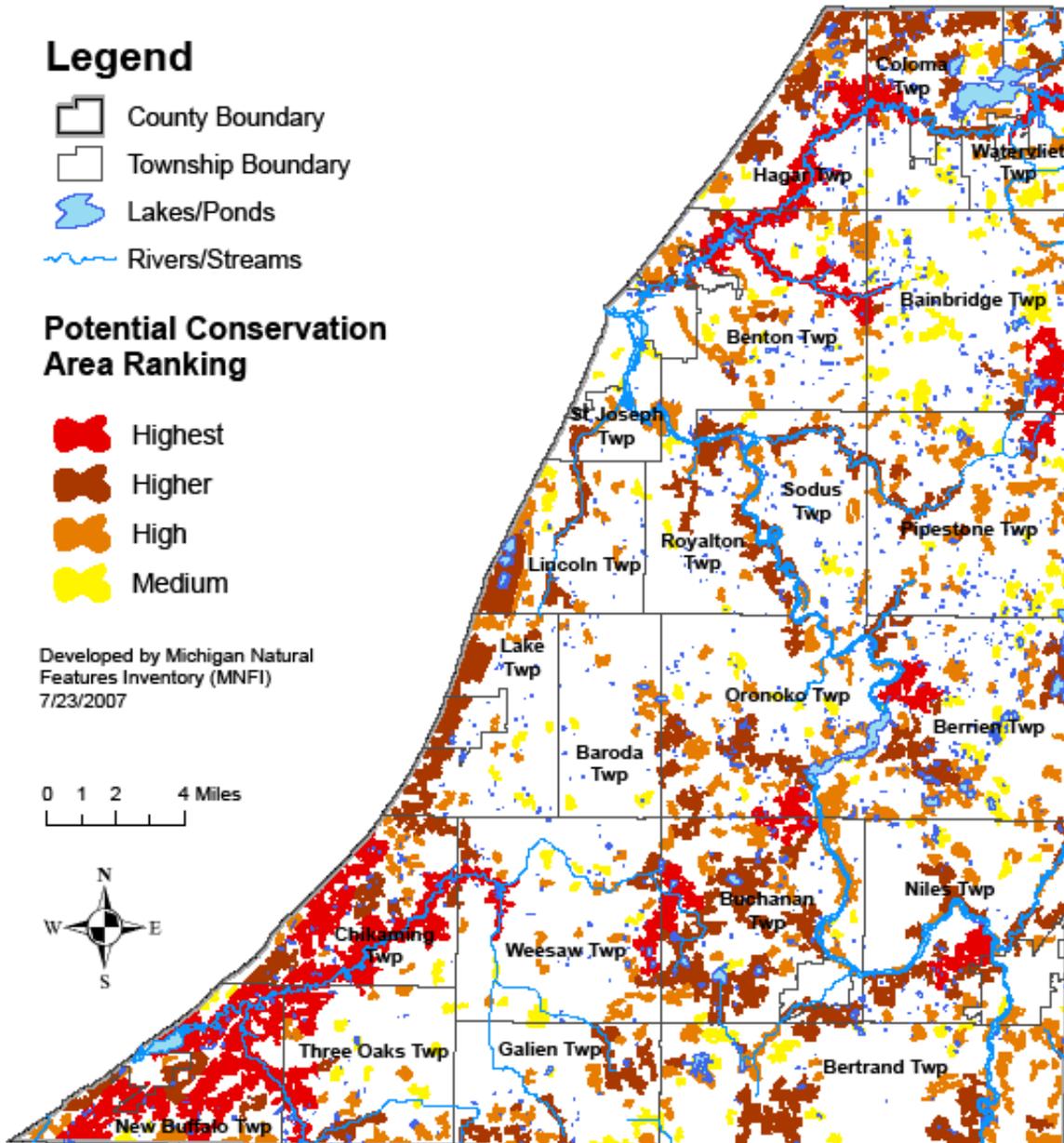
-  County Boundary
-  Township Boundary
-  Lakes/Ponds
-  Rivers/Streams

### Potential Conservation Area Ranking

-  Highest
-  Higher
-  High
-  Medium

Developed by Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI)  
7/23/2007

0 1 2 4 Miles

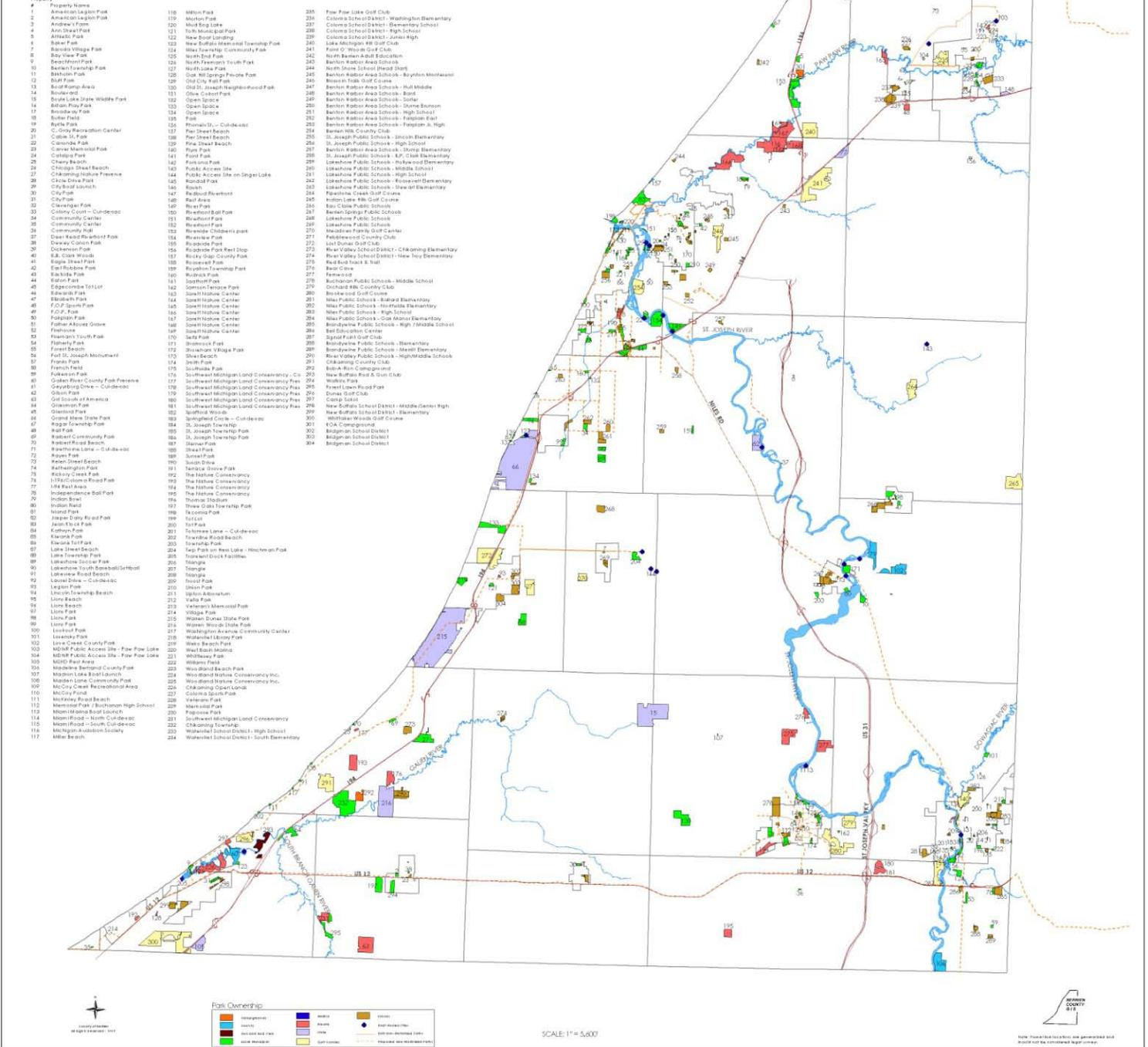


Potential Conservation Areas (PCAs) are defined as places on the landscape dominated by native vegetation that have various levels of potential for harboring high quality natural areas and unique natural features. Scoring criteria used to prioritize sites included: total size, size of core area, length of stream corridor, landscape connectivity, restorability of surrounding land, vegetation quality, and biological rarity score.

Data Sources: Michigan DNR IFMAP land cover circa 2000, Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) Biotics Database (2007), Michigan's Vegetation circa 1800, and the National Hydrologic Database stream lines.

Map 2: Potential Conservation Areas, MNFI

# Berrien County's Green Infrastructure



## Goal

**Protect, preserve and restore the natural resources of Berrien County by creating a connected network of open spaces, recreational areas, and natural habitats.**

## Objectives and Strategies

**Objective:** Protect and improve the quality of our water resources with a comprehensive program of planning, maintenance, and best management practices.

**Low Impact Development:** Work with the SWMPC to educate and encourage local units of government on Low Impact Development (LID) principles and options.

**Watershed Plans:** Utilize the watershed plans developed by the SWMPC and others when evaluating local zoning ordinances and master plans.

**Urban Stormwater Systems:** Pursue grants and local funding sources to retrofit urban stormwater systems for improved functioning, elimination of combined sewer overflows, and introduction of new technologies.

**Impervious Surfaces:** Encourage the Berrien County Road Commission to promote a reduction in impervious surfaces through its road design standards.

**Stormwater:** Subject all new developments to County Drain Commissioner requirements and the standards of the MDEQ storm water permit for Berrien County

**Model Ordinances:** Gather and publish model ordinances to reduce impervious surfaces on commercial sites, promote cluster development, and other resource protection techniques such as the Low Impact Development Manual from MDEQ.

**Objective:** Preserve wetlands, woodlands, floodplains, critical dunes and other natural features through resource assessments, model regulations and leveraging open space and trail programs.

**Natural Features Model Ordinances:** Publish model wetlands, woodlands, floodplain and open space preservation ordinances and encourage all local units of government to amend or adopt consistent regulations.

**Natural Features Inventory:** Build on existing inventories such as the Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) Potential Conservation Area Map, Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy and Chickaming Open Lands information to create a comprehensive natural features inventory. Use this inventory as a basis for review of new developments, master plans and rezoning requests.

**Natural Resource Area Connections:** Identify potential connections between valuable natural resource areas, systems and trails and promote protection through county and local trail and open space programs.

**Objective:** Empower local governments and other agencies to preserve and protect the natural resources and open spaces.

**Information:** provide data on existing natural resources, build-out analyses and other models to assist local government decision making

**Ordinance audits:** Partner with other agencies, including the SWMPC, Southwest Michigan Water Quality Partnership, and local watershed councils to conduct natural resource ordinance audits for local units of government.

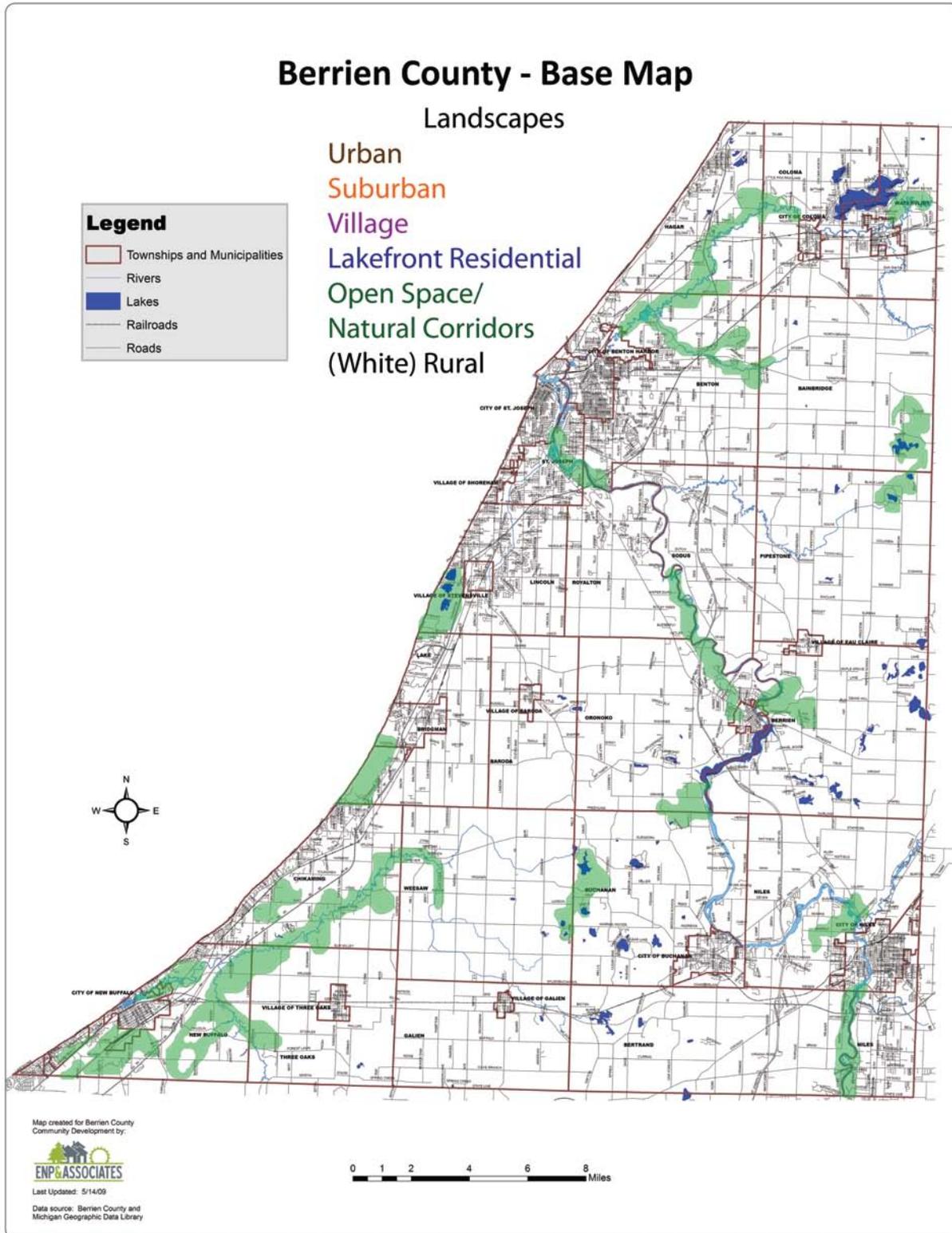
**Best Management Practices Toolkit:** Prepare and publish a best management practices toolkit for use by local government,

developers and community groups using resources such as the LID Manual, MDEQ Best Management Practices Manual, and EPA Toolkit

Objective: Promote a multi-jurisdictional approach to green infrastructure planning

**Growing Greener:** Actively participate in the SWMPC's Growing Greener Initiative and other existing regional organizations, and encourage local governments to do so

**Connections:** Facilitate efforts to create non-motorized connections between parks and open spaces that span jurisdictional boundaries and participate in existing regional trail projects.



Map 4: "Preserve" landscape, described in complete detail in the Landscapes chapter of this plan.

# Economic Development

## Drivers and Regions

Employment options and the available quality of life drive the robustness of a community. Berrien County has a wide spectrum of economic drivers, ranging from agro tourism to deep harbor shipping. This variety offers the County substantial opportunity to prepare for and respond to changes in the evolving economy both locally and nation wide.

## Where are we now?

### Existing Economic Climate

Unlike the rest of the nation, Berrien County has experienced only a minor loss in population in the last five years, at 1.4%. At the same time, both per capita income (PCI) and personal income have risen in the years 2006-2007, to the extent that Berrien County has the fifth highest increase in PCI of all counties in the state. While these changes have been primarily positive for the population, they have also focused economic and community development efforts toward a more regional view of the future.

Redevelopment also plays an important role in the economy of the county. Over 350 acres of land has been redeveloped through Brownfield Plans in the urbanized area, comprised of St. Joseph, Benton Harbor, Benton Township and the St. Joseph Charter Township. Other Brownfield incentives have also been used in Watervliet, Niles Township and the Village of Stevensville. Redevelopment incentives also protect the highly valued and valuable agricultural land in the county by discouraging sprawl and Greenfield development where possible.

## Employment and Economic Conditions

Noteworthy employment and economic data includes the following:

**Table 1: Number of establishments by type of service.**  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census 1990, 2000; 2007 American Community Survey Estimate

Type of Service	No. of Est. 2004	No. of Est. 2008	% Change
Forestry, fishing, hunting, and agriculture support	72	80	+11%
Mining	6	6	0%
Construction	444	416	-6%
Manufacturing	388	353	-9%
Wholesale trade	179	166	-7%
Retail trade	584	558	-4%
Real estate & rental & leasing	155	153	-1%
Admin, support, waste mgt, remediation services	195	193	-1%
Arts, entertainment & recreation	69	66	-4%
Other services (except public administration)	337	374	+11%

Unemployment in 2009 in the county is hovering at about 12%, slightly lower than the state average of 14% for the same six month time period.

Berrien County was ranked 27<sup>th</sup> highest unemployment in the state out of 83 counties.

Since 2004, for those industries with consistent data, the number of establishments has changed markedly, increasing 11% in forestry, fishing and agricultural support, other services and decreasing 9% and 7% in manufacturing and wholesale respectively.

The number of people employed by industry component (for those industries with consistent data) is shown in Table 2. Proprietor’s employment has decreased by 16%, along with decreases in current-production income (including income in kind) of sole proprietorships and partnerships. However, construction and real estate leasing employment has increased in greater amounts.

**Table 2: Economic Components.** Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census 2000; 2007 American Community Survey Estimate.

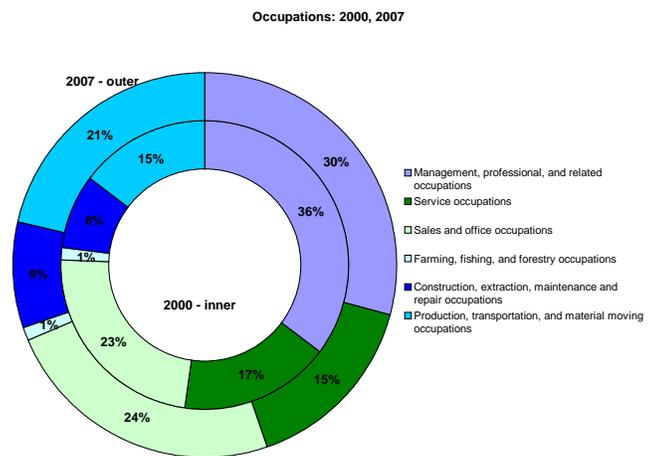
Components by Type	2003	2007	% Change
Total employment	84,938	87,229	3%
Wage and salary employment	67,892	67,511	-1%
Proprietors employment	17,046	19,718	-16%
Farm employment	2,200	2,183	-1%
Nonfarm employment	82,738	85,046	3%
<b>Components by Industry</b>			
Private employment	73,996	75,992	3%
Mining	153	162	1%
Construction	4,158	4,710	13%
Manufacturing	16,115	15,181	-6%
Wholesale trade	2,619	2,386	-9%
Retail Trade	9,944	10,215	3%
Finance and insurance	2,193	2,284	4%
Real estate, rental and leasing	2,496	3,043	22%
Professional, technical services	3,027	3,145	4%
Government, govt enterprises	8,742	9,124	4%
Federal, civilian	419	375	-11%
Military	342	309	-10%

Occupations in the county have also changed with an increase of 6% in material moving and transportation and a decrease of the same

amount in management, professional and related occupations between 2000 and 2007.

Personal income has moved upward 19% since 2001. Taking an average of 3% inflation per year into account, this is a real increase of about 1%.

Inflows and outflows of income to and from the county are measured based on the place of employment. After these figures are calibrated for residency, they show that Berrien County has a net inflow of 32% more income than flows out



**Figure 1: Occupations by sector.** Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census 2000; 2007 American Community Survey Estimate.

of the County.

Agricultural tourism is not measured as a component of industry, yet this is a key feature of the economy in Berrien County as is evidenced by the survey results that identify it as the major economic driver in the County as a whole. Berrien County ranks third in the state in value of production of fruits, nuts and berries, which comprise 26.5% of the total agricultural value produced in the County.

### Hazard Mitigation

Berrien County has taken a proactive role in melding hazard mitigation planning with economic development activities. Items included in the Hazard Mitigation Action Plan that

partner with economic and community development groups are assisting businesses to plan for disasters, develop mechanisms for assessing damage, encouraging businesses to locate in appropriate locations to mitigate potential disasters and provide adequate emergency response. Brownfield redevelopment is also included as a hazard mitigation technique.

is the where the County should focus its efforts on education.

## The people say....

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The most notable result of the survey related to the economy is that there is strong consensus that the county's economy is shifting from a primarily industrial focus to more tourism. Some of this may be related to the increase in waterfront and resort expansion and recent marketing efforts to draw people to the growing agro tourism areas of the county.

The survey provides mixed commentary on this subject:

- 81% of the respondents to the survey perceived that there was a change from industry to tourism as an economic base in the county.
- 46% cite tourism and agro tourism as the most important driver of the economy in the County.
- Half expressed moderate concern that this shift was taking place, as opposed to feeling positive or negative about it.
- At the same time as being moderating concerned, 64% think that the manufacturing and industrial employment in the County is too little.
- When asked what the most important economic development resource is in Berrien County, respondents cited the waterfront, tourism and agriculture most frequently.
- Related to changes in the economy, the survey showed that 66% of all respondent said promoting workforce education for fields that have a demand

## Where we are going....

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Collaboration, cooperation and elimination of duplicative efforts are the primary themes from the survey results and input from both private and public economic and community development agencies. Promoting agro tourism and protecting the land that supports it is equally important to the economy and the greatest strength the County has in place right now.

The goals and objectives that follow support this push into the future. Viewing the county in terms of larger functional landscapes as opposed to land use, also helps to focus efforts toward promoting farm related tourism.

At the same time there is a desire to think regionally instead of just within the county borders and embrace the value more of proximity to Chicago, Indiana and other major urban influences. This will help to consolidate agencies and services, take advantage of economies of scale and provide for greater infrastructure necessary to attract and keep industry.

## Goal

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Create a common vision with strategies to foster coordination among economic and community development agencies and between these groups and governments.

## Objectives and Strategies

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### Objective: Eliminate duplicative Community Development Process

Identify all economic and Community Development groups and their visions, strategies and sources and uses of funds. There are at least five public and several privately run

economic development agencies or groups in the county.

Identify duplicative efforts in actions, funding and resources. For example, the Cornerstone Chamber of Commerce has published a report summarizing their participants, objectives and needs from previous retreats.

Facilitate a process to combine and/or focus community development efforts toward specific objectives. These objectives need to be aligned with the economic drivers in the county either geographically or functionally.

Research the economic and functional feasibility of a "county campus" of all county facilities. Currently, there are county offices scattered throughout the county which are expensive to maintain. An identified spot for a campus of 50+ acres is located on Napier near Lake Michigan College area. This is accessible to North, Central, and South County via I-94 and US 31.

### Objective: Focus efforts of Community Development Groups on the economic Drivers in the community

Identify agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, alternative energy and harbor front as economic development drivers and show their influence by regions in the County.

Determine existing training opportunities and gaps in educational opportunities that are necessary to fill the present and future employment needs. Promote workforce development and responsiveness to employer's needs.

Identify crossover opportunities for resources from existing dying manufacturing sectors to new economic drivers. For example, some equipment and skills needed currently in the automotive industry are transferable to wind energy production.

**Objective: Create an economic and community development focus by region.**

Form economic development landscapes. These could be New Buffalo, South County, Coloma/Watervliet, St. Joseph/Benton Harbor.

Assign marketing responsibility to community development groups by regions and economic drivers within those regions.

Paint an accurate vision for development using regional strengths. New Buffalo, for instance, is part of the Chicagoland area and has unique development opportunities as a result.

At the same time promote quality of life aspects of the County by region so that people can see there is more to living in Berrien County than a job. Proximity to cultural, athletic and educational opportunities also exist.

**Objective: Integrate transportation systems with community development**

Create a common Transportation Authority. Similarly to the number of economic and community development agencies and groups, there are several transportation operators in the County, limiting the opportunity to offer transportation to places of employment, education and tourism destinations.

Offer public transportation at development and housing clusters by region. Let need and opportunity drive service.

**Objective: Improve infrastructure information**

Prepare accurate maps of existing infrastructure for recruiting new development and employers. Show all utilities, housing transportation and other pertinent aspects of infrastructure necessary to have in place to locate a major facility.

Promote Smart Growth and Smart Grid Opportunities. At the same time note the deficiencies in a Smart Grid so they may be incorporated into the objectives of the reformatted development agencies.

Identify necessary infrastructure to promote various types of development. For example, major manufacturing requires transportation, telecommunications, housing and retail support.

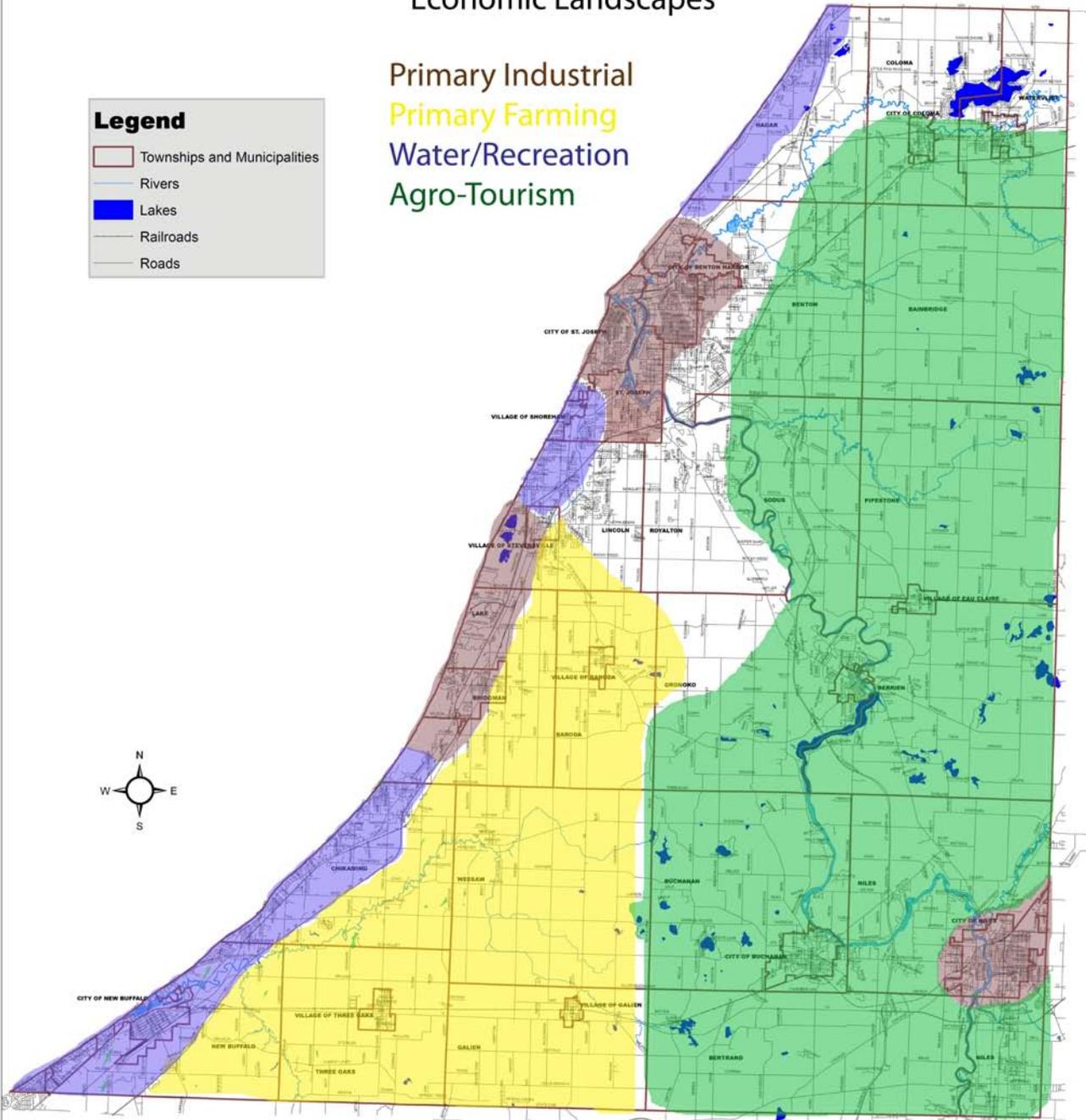
# Berrien County - Base Map

## Economic Landscapes

### Legend

- Townships and Municipalities
- Rivers
- Lakes
- Railroads
- Roads

Primary Industrial  
Primary Farming  
Water/Recreation  
Agro-Tourism



Map created for Berrien County  
Community Development by:



Last Updated: 5/14/09

Data source: Berrien County and  
Michigan Geographic Data Library



# Agriculture

## Heritage and Economy

Agriculture is important to Berrien County because of its contributions to the economy, food supply, and culture. While Berrien County is home to a very diverse and robust agricultural sector, development pressures and changes in the desires of the next generation of farmers necessitate careful planning for the future.

## Where are we now?

### Land Use

Despite urbanizing forces from the greater Chicago area, agricultural land still makes up the vast majority of the area of Berrien County (see Map 1). Over 84% of the land area of the county remains either vacant or agricultural.

Land Use	Acres	Percent
Residential	35,197	9.4%
Commercial	4,911	1.3%
Industrial	5,634	1.5%
Public/Semi-Public	13,063	3.5%
Agriculture/Vacant	314,545	84.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>373,350</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Figure 1: Distribution of existing land use.**  
Data source: Berrien County GIS

### Demographics

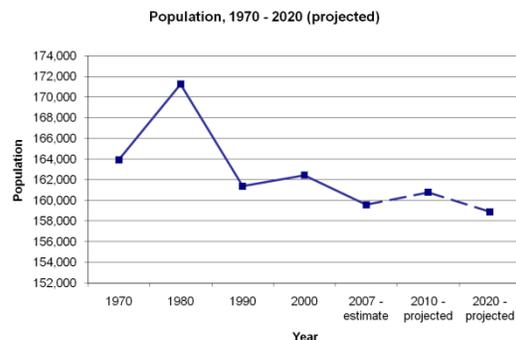
While the population is projected to decrease over the next decade, we predict that interest in Berrien County from the Chicagoland area will continue. People will continue to seek second/vacation homes in the County

Other noteworthy demographic observations:

- Population countywide is projected to decline by 689 people or 0.4% between

2007 and 2020, according to the Office of the State Demographer

- The population in general is aging, which means that the average age of farmers in the County is also likely aging
- Looking at change in population figures, many of the townships with the largest and most vibrant farms are the ones gaining in population
- Agricultural employment has remained fairly steady between 2000 and 2007, employing slightly more than 2,000 Berrien County residents during that time period



**Figure 2: Population trends. Data source: 2007 American Community Survey Estimate and Michigan Department of Management and Budget Office of the State Demographer 1996 Projections**

### Trends

Berrien County continues an agricultural heritage that positions it well for food processing industries and enhanced agri-tourism. There are opportunities for increased value added agriculture including organic farmsteads (sales of organics have quadrupled since 1997), direct market productions, and farmers' markets. Cash crops like melons, vegetables, and fruits are the staple of Berrien County's position in Michigan agriculture where it ranks in the top three counties for production. Berrien County ranks fifth in Michigan for colonies of bees and seventh in the production of meat chickens.

The characteristics of farms are important in understanding the economics of agricultural

operations. The number of farms increased between 2002 and 2007, from 1,093 to 1,300 while the average farm size decreased from 159 acres to 130 acres. Over that same time period, the market value of production increased 41%, to \$136.2M. Although there are farms that encompass over 1,000 acres, the vast majority of farms in the County are 180 acres or under.

The trend towards smaller farms is significant because it does not follow the prevailing paradigm that economies of scale necessitate large corporate farms. Smaller farms are better candidates for purchase of agriculture preservation rights, more likely to participate in agri-tourism and farmers' markets, and indicative of small business success and entrepreneurship. The frequency of small farms is an opportunity for Berrien County to meet food needs in its own "foodshed" and the variety of cash crops are a benefit to buy local initiatives.

More acres of grapes (7,744) are farmed in Berrien County than in any other county in Michigan. Berrien County is 22<sup>nd</sup> in the nation by county for acres in grape production.

Berrien County ranks towards the bottom third of the state in the production of cattle, ranked 53<sup>rd</sup> by county.

Source: *2007 Census of Agriculture Berrien County Profile*

### Farmland and Open Space Preservation

Fortunately, Berrien County has taken a strong position towards preserving agriculture via the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program. The County adopted the PRD ordinance creating the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program in 2004. Part of the intent of the program is to establish a County Comprehensive Plan element to be prepared in collaboration with local units that describes geographic areas within the county where eligible property should be protected and preserved.

### Prime Agricultural Lands

Prime and unique agricultural soils (as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service) are prevalent in Berrien County.

Prime farmland, as defined by the NCRS, is "land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses. It could be cultivated land, pastureland, forestland, or other land, but it is not urban or built-up land or water areas."

"Unique farmland" is land other than prime farmland that is used for the production of specific high-value food and fiber crops, such as citrus, tree nuts, olives, cranberries, and other fruits and vegetables. It has the special combination of soil quality, growing season, moisture supply, temperature, humidity, air drainage, elevation, and aspect needed for the soil to economically produce sustainable high yields of these crops when properly managed (NRCS).

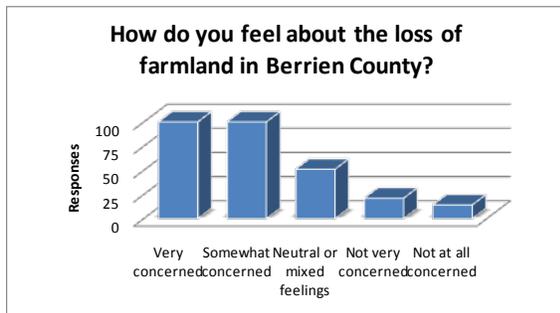
There are two other classifications of important agricultural soils to note: farmland of statewide importance and farmland of local importance. In some areas, land that does not meet the criteria for prime or unique farmland is considered to be "farmland of statewide importance" for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. The criteria for defining and delineating farmland of statewide importance are determined by the appropriate State agencies. Generally, this land includes areas of soils that nearly meet the requirements for prime farmland and that economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Some areas may produce as high a yield as prime farmland if conditions are favorable. Farmland of statewide importance may include tracts of land that have been designated for agriculture by State law. In some areas that are not identified as having national or statewide importance, land is considered to be "farmland of local importance" for the

production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. This farmland is identified by the appropriate local agencies. Farmland of local importance may include tracts of land that have been designated for agriculture by local ordinance.

Map 2 shows the locations of each of these soil types in Berrien County. Prime and locally important farmlands are located throughout the County, with the highest concentrations of “All Areas are Prime” in the central and southeast portions of the County.

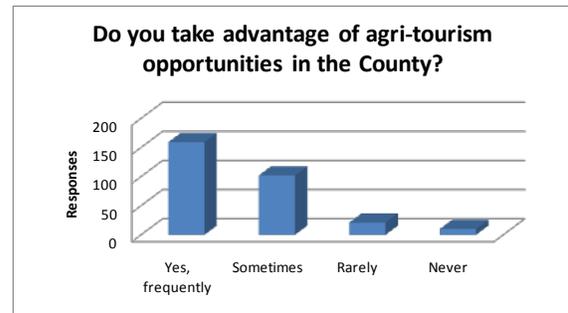
### The people say...

Results from the written survey conducted for this Plan indicate a great deal of support for agriculture in the County. For example, over 70% of respondents are either very concerned or somewhat concerned about the loss of farmland in the County



However, while the vast majority of respondents are concerned about the loss of farmland, only 19% stated they would be willing to pay to save it (35% said no they would not be willing, the rest said maybe or not sure)

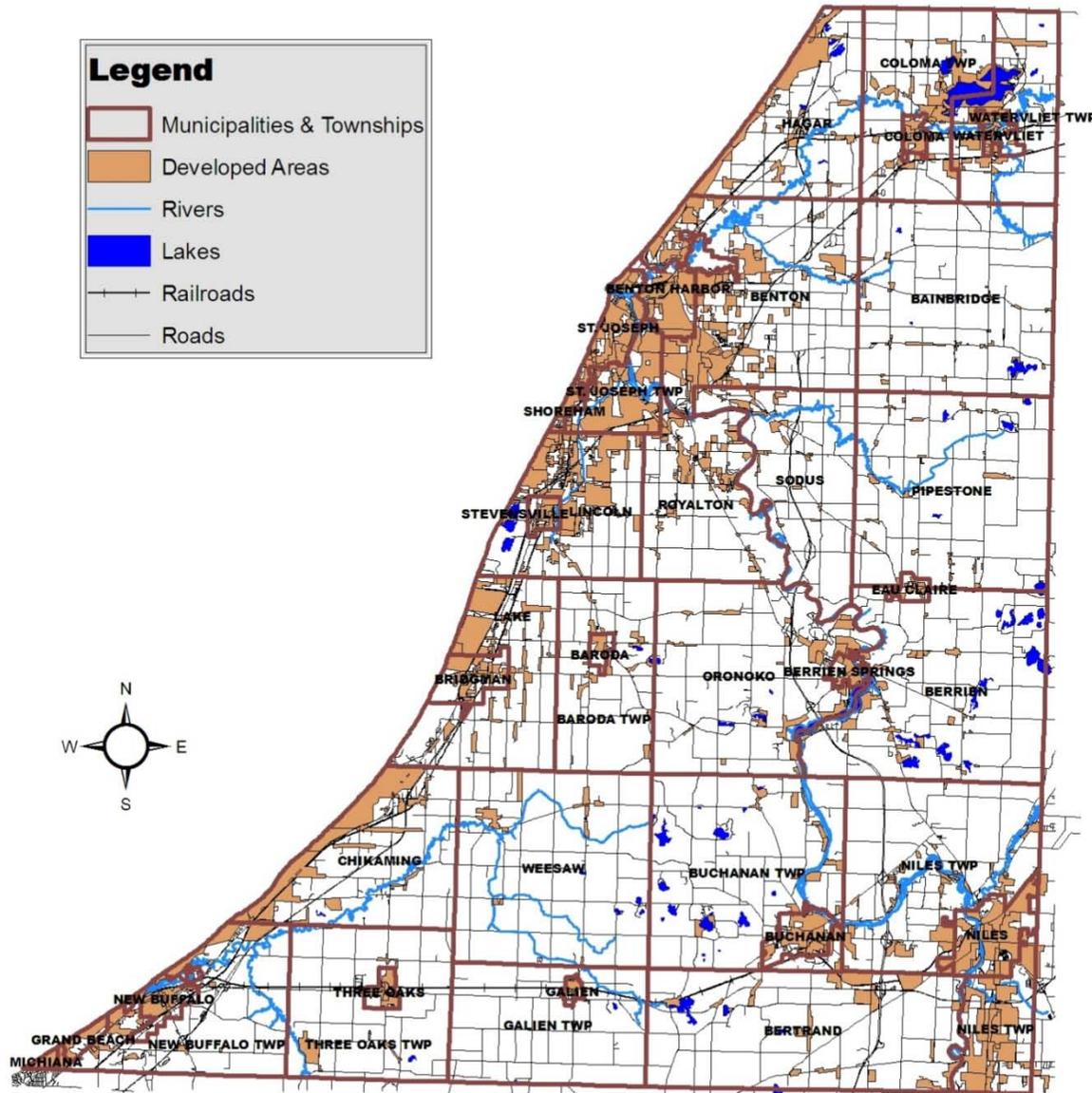
Respondents indicated a great deal of participation in agri-tourism activities in the County. Over 89% of respondents said that they take advantage of agri-tourism opportunities in the County frequently or sometimes. Farmer’s markets and wineries were the top attractions for County residents.



Further illustrating their concern for loss of farmland in the County, a vast majority, 76.8%, said there should be more cooperation between local units of government on land use and development related issues



## Berrien County - Developed Areas



Map created for Berrien County  
Community Development by:



Last Updated: 5/20/09

Data source: Berrien County and  
Michigan Geographic Data Library

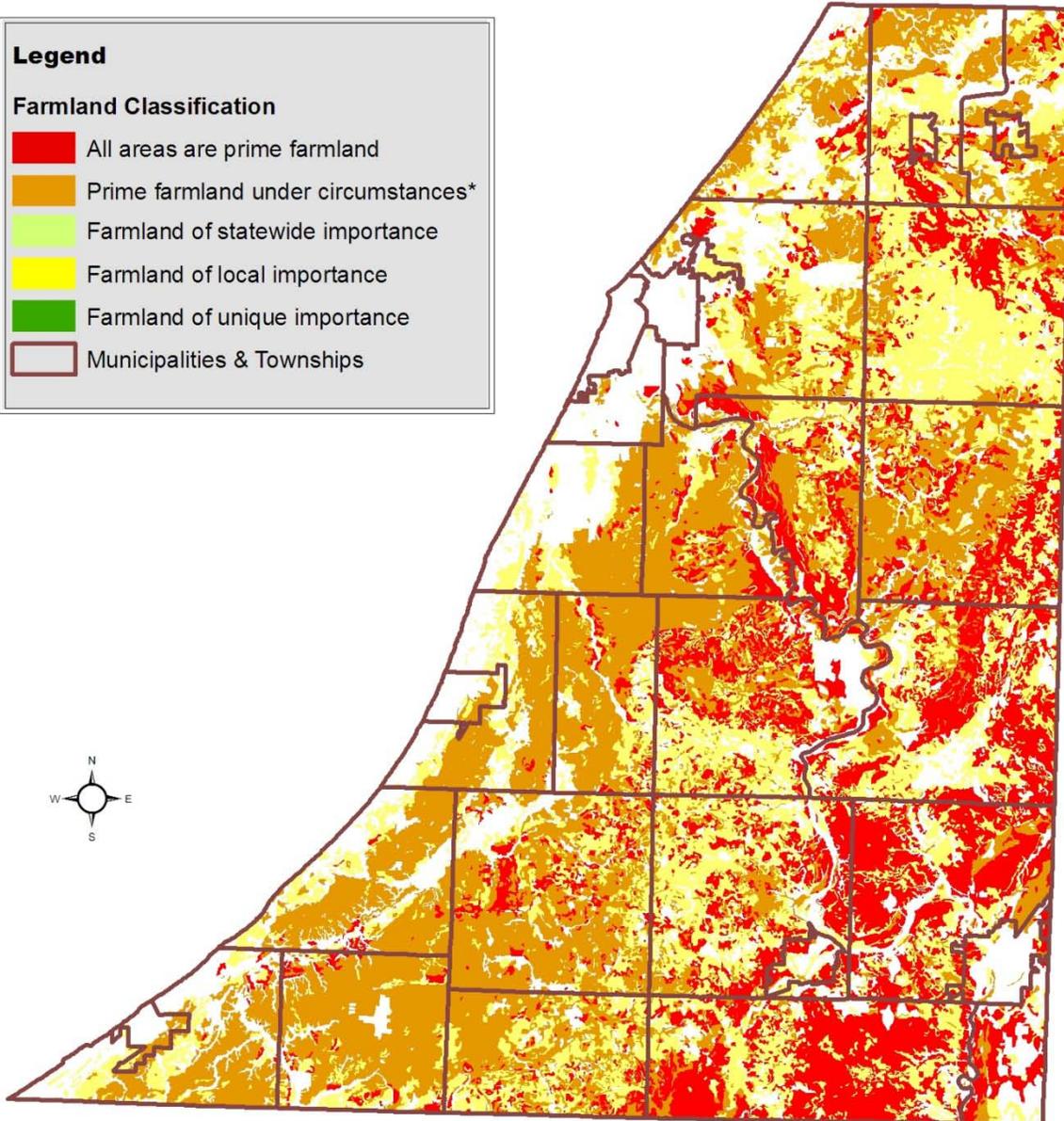
**Map 1: Developed areas**

## Berrien County - USDA Farmland Classification

**Legend**

**Farmland Classification**

-  All areas are prime farmland
-  Prime farmland under circumstances\*
-  Farmland of statewide importance
-  Farmland of local importance
-  Farmland of unique importance
-  Municipalities & Townships



Map created for Berrien County  
Community Development by:



Last Updated: 8/3/09  
Data source: Berrien County and  
USDA NRCS Soil Data Mart

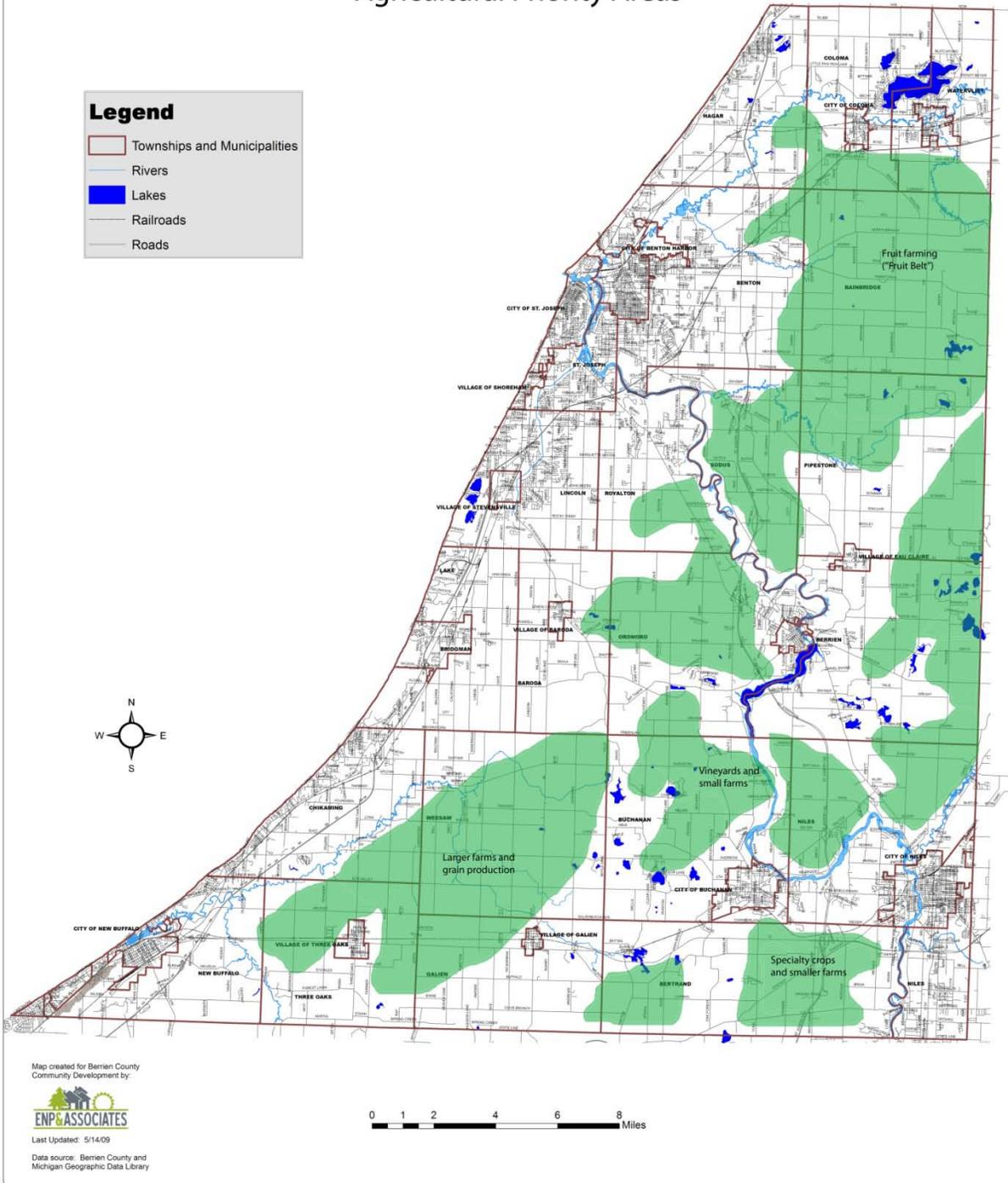
**Map 2: Farmland Classification based on soil type. Data Source: USDA NRCS. Circumstances for some prime farmland include: if drained, if irrigated, sub-soiled, or protected from flooding.**

## Agricultural Preservation - Priority Areas

While agriculture is an important part of the entire culture and economy of Berrien County, there are certain areas that have particular importance. Those areas include (but are not limited to): prime agricultural soils, contiguous blocks of undeveloped large parcels, locations of agri-tourism sites such as wineries or farm markets, and location of agricultural processing facilities.

The County's Purchase of Development rights program is intended to supplement and honor the local unit of government's desire to participate and preserve agricultural lands. As such, Map 3 depicts particular areas of agricultural significance. This map may be used to determine high priority areas to target for preservation, but is not meant to exclude any potentially eligible land from the PDR program.

## Berrien County - Base Map Agricultural Priority Areas



**Map 3: Agriculture Priority areas and descriptions**

## Goal

**To create an environment where a wide variety of agricultural operations can continue to thrive in the County, and where agricultural lands can be preserved for generations.**

## Objectives and Strategies

Objective: Enable and empower local governments to preserve agricultural lands.

Encourage local governments to participate in the County PDR program.

Conduct build-out analyses for local governments to show the impact of current zoning and/or master plans on agricultural lands.

Provide agriculture-supportive model ordinances to local governments (such as agri-business districts, cluster zoning, and sliding scale zoning).

Educate local governments and property on the ramifications (such as ineligibility for agriculture preservation funding) of extending public services into agriculture preserve areas.

Objective: Use County leverage over public services to promote preservation of rural areas and agricultural lands.

Only support funding for sewer or water service expansions into areas designated for urban or suburban growth (urban, village or suburban landscapes within the County Master Plan) or for maintenance of existing systems.

Coordinate projects in the Capital Improvements Plan with areas designated in the master plan as

urban, village, or suburban landscapes so as to discourage growth into rural areas.

Objective: Create a supportive environment for agricultural support and related businesses.

Work with local governments to allow limited agricultural product processing in agricultural zoning districts.

Assist local governments in creating definitions of and criteria for farm-oriented business activities that may be appropriate in agricultural areas.

Develop model criteria for the siting of farm-oriented businesses for local governments.

Objective: Support agri-tourism

Create a forum for farmers engaging in agri-tourism to discuss any conflicts with local plans and zoning.

Work with local governments to ensure that zoning ordinances allow for appropriate agri-tourism.

Create a model farm-oriented business zoning district for rural townships.

Develop educational materials for farmers on appropriate placement for agri-tourism oriented uses on their property.

Objective: Encourage and support programs that will maintain the viability of agriculture through new and expanding markets for locally grown products.

**New Market Opportunities:** Actively participate in collaborative efforts between Berrien County, MSU Extension, the Farm Bureau local governments, surrounding counties, and state government to find new market opportunities for Berrien County's agricultural sector. Opportunities may include wind farms, direct producer-to-consumer marketing of farm products, local food distribution network, grain elevators and livestock markets.

**New Market Education:** Support existing programs that encourage and educate producers on new entrepreneurial opportunities in the agricultural sector, including:

- Direct marketing to consumers (includes "community supported agriculture")
- Adding value to the food (packaging, agri-entertainment, agri-tourism)
- Niche marketing of farm products (ethnic foods, organic foods, specialty farm products).

**Ordinance Audits:** Conduct ordinance audits to evaluate how local zoning facilitates (or discourages) newer market opportunities for agriculture.

# Housing

## *Neighborhoods & Homes*

The neighborhoods and homes are the core of Berrien County communities. As the residents grow older and the County's economy changes, the needs of residents and the desirability of the existing housing will change as well. Careful planning, coordination and cooperation between the County, local governments, non-profits and the private sector will be needed to assure that safe, decent, affordable homes are in reach for everyone, no matter their age, income or abilities.

## Where are we now?

### Existing Housing

Berrien County's existing housing consists mainly of older, single-family homes. In 2007, seventy-five percent of the dwelling units in Berrien County were single-family detached houses. The U.S. Census estimated that in 2007 almost half of the dwelling structures in the County were built before 1960. Older homes can be more expensive to maintain and are less energy-efficient. Housing built before 1960 also have fewer bedrooms and bathrooms and are harder to retrofit for barrier-free access than newly constructed houses. Therefore, existing housing will need to be maintained and updated to remain competitive with new construction, to preserve neighborhoods and provide housing for all incomes and abilities.

Year Structure Built	Number	Percent
Built 2005 or later	1,973	2.6%
Built 2000 to 2004	3,783	4.9%
Built 1990 to 1999	7,732	10.0%
Built 1980 to 1989	4,743	6.2%
Built 1970 to 1979	10,583	13.7%
Built 1960 to 1969	9,813	12.7%
Built 1950 to 1959	15,112	19.6%
Built 1940 to 1949	6,302	8.2%
Built 1939 or earlier	16,985	22.1%
<b>Total housing units</b>	<b>77,026</b>	

### Demographics and Economic Conditions

In 2009, the Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency conducted a housing needs analysis for the County. The following noteworthy demographic and economic trends from the report have significance for housing in Berrien County:

- The number of residents entering older life stages will increase. If they choose to stay in their homes, which they most likely own, the single family housing market would remain stable.
- Over half of the housing units were built before 1960, which usually have sleeping, eating and laundry area scattered among two floors and a basement, posing difficulties for older residents.
- Seniors may seek out other housing, such as active adult living or senior housing complexes.
- If appropriate housing is not available, older residents may leave the county altogether, leaving their homes behind.
- Family sizes and school enrollments are declining. Single-family housing needs of new families with children can be met

by existing houses expected to be vacated by older residents.

- The number of families with school age children is not as large as the population of Berrien entering older age and cannot fill the void if seniors as a group move into other housing.
- High-paying manufacturing jobs will continue to decline.
- Most job growth will be in lower paying jobs in services and retail trade, many located outside of the County.
- The downward shift in income will result in less money for housing.
- Vacation homes account for over 10% of the housing units in seven Berrien County communities.
- The concentration of vacation homes can raise property values, it also can create a lack of affordable housing, decline school enrollment and funding, and a shift in the local economy from long-term, year-round jobs to seasonal employment generally of a service nature.
- The housing needs of the population in 2030 in Berrien could be satisfied by the number of housing units existing in the County in 2008. However, the units, their location, affordability and characteristics will not match the needs of an aging population in a changing economy.

Source: *Berrien County Housing Needs Study, June 2009*

Other demographic data point to populations within the county with special housing needs:

- 29% of the population was between the ages of 35 and 54, with 27% of the population over the age of 54. As residents age, their housing needs will change. Unless seniors are able to stay in their homes and communities, called “aging in place”, the housing market in

Berrien will become oversaturated and the population decline.

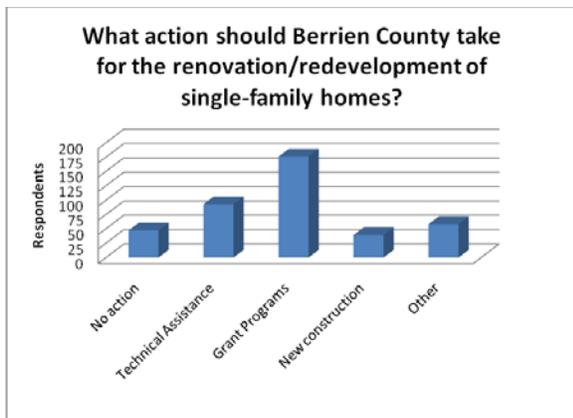
- 24,957 people in Berrien County or 17% of the population over the age of 5 had a disability.

Source: *U.S. Census, 2007 Estimates*

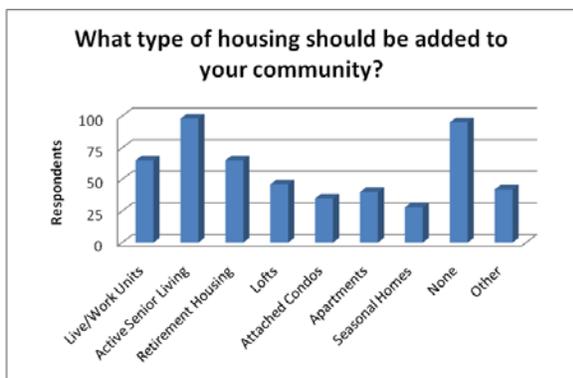
## The people say....

The survey respondents were mostly homeowners (92.6%), whereas the U.S. Census listed only 62.1% of housing units in Berrien County as owner-occupied. While not representative proportionately of those renting their home, the survey results provide insight into the concerns and hopes of homeowners in Berrien County.

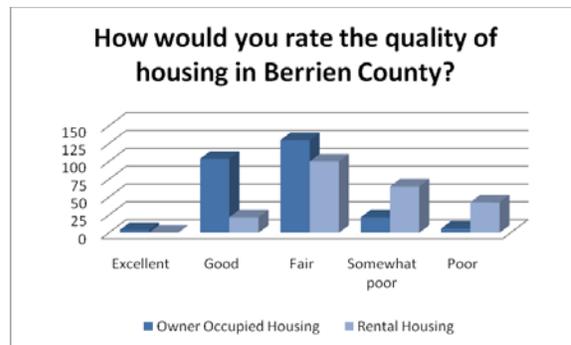
- Over sixty-five percent of the respondents felt the older houses in their communities would remain attractive to new buyers. In their comments, respondents expressed concern that older houses would only be attractive to new buyers if they were well maintained and updated. Many pointed out that upkeep of an older house is time-consuming and expensive. Others felt young families want more rooms and amenities in their homes than older floor plans could provide.
- Grant programs for rehabilitation (62.9%) received the most support for what actions Berrien County should take to redevelop or rehabilitate single-family homes. About one-third supported technical assistance to local municipalities.



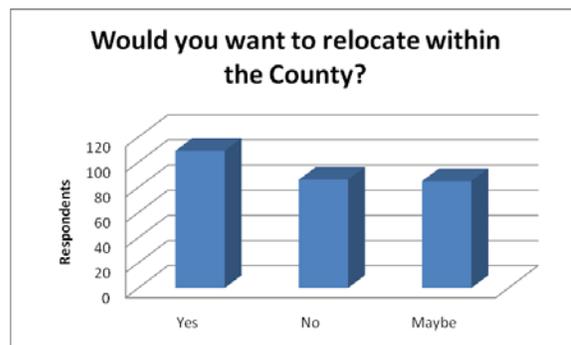
- Active senior living (34.3%) and retirement housing (23.5%) were the most selected options for needed housing but 34.3% of the respondents felt that no additional type of housing was needed. In the comments, many respondents expressed a need for affordable housing, throughout the County. Also, many said that no more downtown condominiums were needed and no more rental properties or manufactured housing communities.



- Most felt that owner-occupied houses in their communities were in excellent or good condition, 18.1% and 52.0%, and in the county overall those homes were in good or fair condition, 37.1% and 46.4%.
- Rental housing was not seen as well in terms of condition. Within communities, rental housing was rated fair or somewhat poor, 34.4% and 22.2%, and in the county, 35.6% and 23.1%.



- The survey asked a series of questions about whether residents would be able to move to less expensive residence within their own community or within the county. Slightly less than half of the respondents felt they could move within their community and almost sixty percent felt they could find a residence in the County. However, when asked if they would want to relocate within the County, only a 38% said yes.



## Where we are going?

The county is limited in its powers to influence housing. Many non-profit and municipal agencies adeptly handle the housing needs of low-income, elderly and physically challenged residents. However, the County plans to do the following in order to achieve its goals for housing:

- Assist municipal and non-profit agencies in accessing grants
- Strengthen and supplement existing County programs

- Provide municipalities with data and suggestions during master plan and zoning ordinances reviews
- Distribute model ordinances or agreements to be used by municipalities or individuals if they so choose
- Utilize redevelopment opportunities through the Land Bank where and when appropriate.

## Goal

**To provide safe, decent and affordable housing for Berrien County residents of all ages, abilities and incomes in Berrien County and within individual communities.**

## Objectives and Strategies

### Objective: Maintain existing housing stock and neighborhoods

Look for other funding resources to expand the number of homeowners that can receive funds, either through more funds or less stringent income limits through its homeowner rehabilitation 0% deferred loan program. The amount and required upgrades have limited the County's ability to only help 12-15 houses in a two-year cycle.

Pursue funding resources to establish an emergency fund, to fix a roof or one item rather than everything in the house as required by the federal loan program.

Lay the groundwork for accessing federal funds for energy efficiency by establishing an energy audit program to ultimately be supported by a revolving loan fund. The audits must be financially efficient, i.e. the suggested improvements should pay for themselves in a timely manner. Also, the program should have enough oversight.

Distribute a model code enforcement program to preserve and protect existing housing. The model should include a rental registration

component and penalties for those who do not maintain rental housing, both single and multiple family units.

Assist communities in accessing federal neighborhood stabilization funds to combat the impact of foreclosures and disinvestment, clearly laying out the criteria and rationale for federal programs available for neighborhood stabilization.

The Berrien County Land Bank should develop vacant land stabilization strategies for neighborhoods in which it holds properties.

Act as a liaison to bundle potential funding for upper story redevelopment in downtowns of villages from sources such as the Michigan State Housing Development Authority and Rural Development Funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

### Objective: Ensure housing for seniors

Develop strategies with agencies serving older adult homeowners to enable aging in place. With the agencies, develop benchmarks for communities to help seniors stay in their homes and communities. Macomb County in southeastern Michigan has undertaken a similar initiative and national models are available (see appendix).

Use the state-law mandated County reviews of master plans and zoning ordinances to suggest actions to preserve and create housing options for those over 65 years in age. Depending on the community, these may include active adult communities, barrier-free housing, accessory dwelling units and nursing homes (see appendix for further examples).

### Objective: Ensure housing for residents of all abilities

Use reviews of master plans and zoning ordinances to suggest planning for and allowing housing for disabled residents, such as zoning allowances for the retrofitting of houses and wheelchair ramps.

Develop model disabled renter agreements between private sector landlords and social

service providers to improve disabled renters' ability to stay in housing.

### Objective: Ensure housing for residents of all incomes

Encourage smaller cities and villages to designate areas for multiple/mixed densities in areas intended for higher density.

Offer county-wide education about innovative ways to build residential communities to reduce land consumption and infrastructure costs.

Provide housing consultations during communities' master plan development for providing housing for residents of all incomes within their communities, using County data and the 2009 Housing Study.

Assist housing authorities and non-profits in accessing Low Income Housing Tax Credits and other grant programs for the rehabilitation or construction of mixed income renter occupied developments.

### Objective: End homelessness in Berrien County

Assist housing authorities and non-profits in accessing federal grants, especially those available from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, to improve the quality and desirability of the county's public housing stock.

Coordinate with and supplement the homeownership training efforts of the existing housing authorities in the County by offering technical assistance to areas that are not currently served by a housing program.

Assist communities and housing authorities in accessing and administering housing voucher programs such as Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) and the Homeless Assistance Recovery Program (HARP).

Require the redevelopment of tax reverted properties through the Land Bank to provide a percentage of affordable to low income households.

Create a public-private renter education strategy, which would include a resident

advocate who could act as a third party in tenant/landlord disputes. A possible model is a program in Hennepin County, Minnesota funded by a federal grant.

Offer leadership and organizational development training for emerging non-profits and existing nonprofit housing development corporations to increase their production capacity to develop or redevelop lower cost rental housing on a large scale.

Distribute a sample rental/lease agreement for the entire County and promote its use through a series of educational workshops and posting on County website.

Develop a set of guidelines for affordable housing development based on best practices to guide affordable housing grants, proposals and Land Bank redevelopments.

### Objective: Improve communication and coordination between governmental agencies and practitioners in the housing field

Establish a permanent committee to study and advise on the need for affordable and workforce housing in Berrien County. The committee should include representatives from all municipalities in Berrien County, homeless advocates, housing authorities, non-profits working in housing, for profit builders, contractors, mortgage banker and realtors.

Provide free, accessible information on the internet on land, housing and neighborhoods in Berrien County.

# Transportation

## *Roads, waterways, and transit*

The movement of people and goods is one of the predominant factors shaping development patterns within Berrien County. Historically, developments along the lakeshore, particularly Fort St. Joseph, and inland waterways were followed by stops along the rail line between Chicago and Detroit. The most modern nodes of development occur at the intersections of I-94 and Us 31 with other main state trunklines and County routes.

## Where are we now?

### System Structure

Transportation funding is primarily through the redistribution of gas taxes through the Federal Government and the State of Michigan. Federal funding distributes locally through two urbanized areas: the Niles Area Transportation Study and the TwinCATS study are for Benton Harbor-St. Joseph. State gas taxes are distributed through the County Road Commission and cities and villages according to Act 51 in order to provide funding for all roads, not just the ones eligible for Federal Funds. Federal Funds are distributed through a comprehensive planning process that features public involvement, air quality and travel demand analysis, and environmental protocol. Funding to non-urbanized areas exists through a rural planning task force. Map 1 shows the roads in the County that are eligible for funding.

### Trends

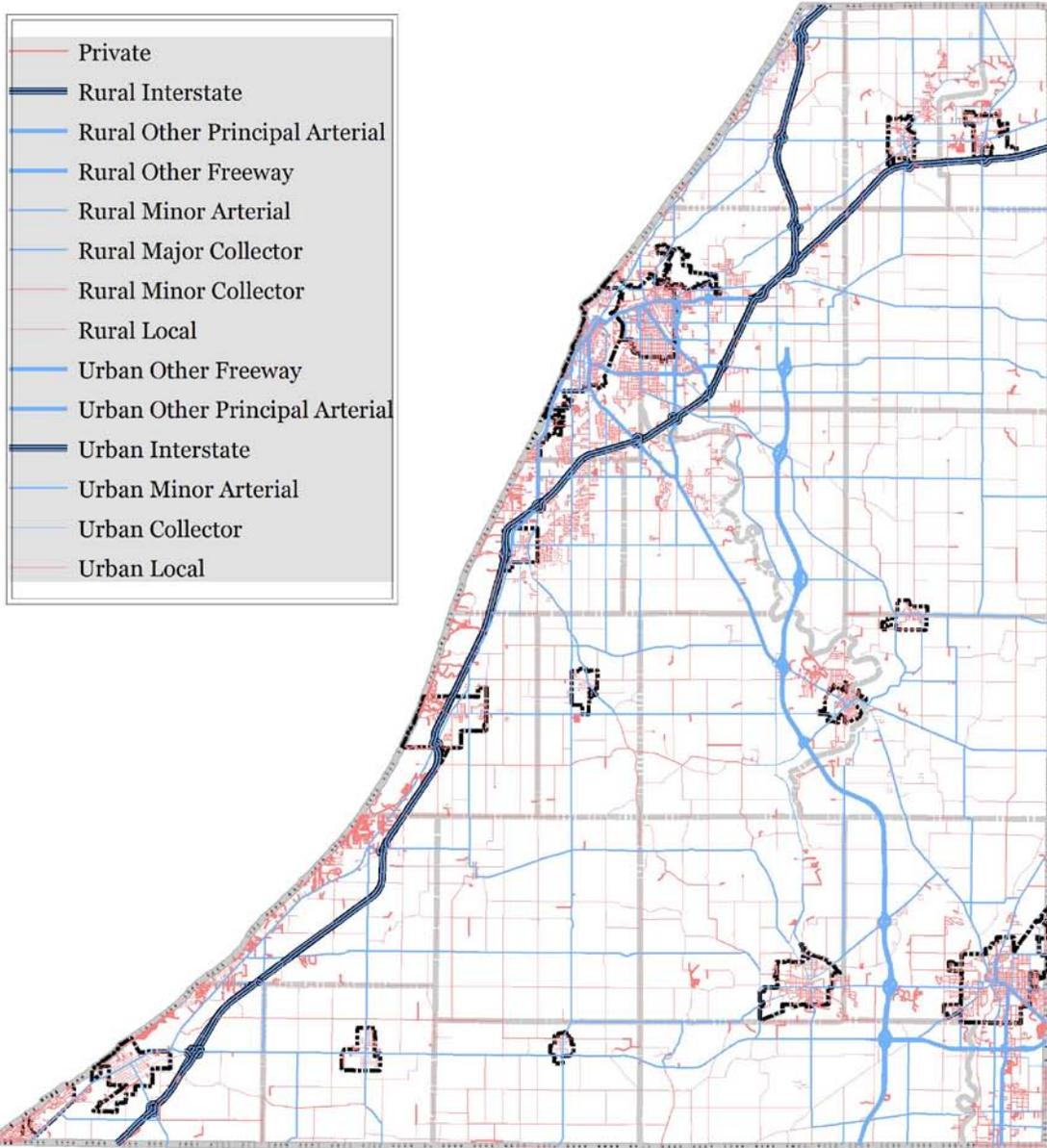
While population and employment figures are projected to remain somewhat stagnant, we predict that interest in Berrien County from the Chicagoland area will continue. People will continue to seek second/vacation homes in the County, thus an increase in choice traveling and tourism. Models for the NATS and TwinCATS

long range transportation plans indicate that the existing road networks should handle vehicle capacity through a 20-year horizon.

Other noteworthy trends:

- The Southwest Michigan Regional Airport projects an increase in private service with safety improvements and facility upgrades.
- Continuously plan for traffic produced by special generators such as tourist destinations, hospitals, regionally significant projects and new industrial, residential, and commercial centers.
- There is dramatic interest in pedestrian and bicycle route development.
- The proposed connection of US 31, east of business loop I-94 is proceeding through an Environmental Impact Statement, and will likely be the only significant capacity expansion in the County over the next couple of decades.
- Industrial/commercial use of the waterways and harbors has dwindled; the majority of future use is recreation in nature.
- The lack of needed capacity expansions suggests funding is primarily for capital preventative maintenance, safety improvements, and non-motorized investment.
- A 2005 windshield condition survey rated 25% of federal aid eligible roads good, 65% fair, and 10% in poor condition. Non-Federal aid roads rated 12% of federal aid eligible roads good, 53% fair, and 35% in poor condition. Poor roads likely need major reconstruction while capital preventative maintenance prolongs the lifecycle of fair roads at a lower cost.

## National Functional Classification



Map created for Berrien County  
Community Development by:



Data Source: Michigan Geographic Data Library

**Map 1: Federal Aid Eligible Roads (blue are eligible, red are not).**

### Transit Operations

There are four operating transit systems in Berrien County. A local millage provides funding for the Twin Cities dial-a-ride to support Federal and Michigan contributions for capital and operations.

The Berrien County system is operated by a private transit provider under the trade name of Berrien Bus. The service consists of both semi-fixed route service and demand-response service within the County. The service facility located in Berrien Springs provides storage, maintenance, and administration.

The Buchanan Dial-a-Ride service consists of demand-response service within the Buchanan area and regular shuttle service to Niles.

The Niles Dial-A-Ride system is operated by a private transit provider under contract to the City. The service consists of both demand response service and one deviated fixed route within the City and Township of Niles. The same facility houses administration, maintenance, and storage.

Cost recovery for transit through Federal and Michigan grants is dwindling. Opportunities for consolidated functions should be explored prior to merging the multiple operators under a county-wide authority in order to reduce costs and leverage additional partnerships.

Additionally, a larger organization could have economies of scale in business operations like accounting and finance, labor relations and employee costs, and purchasing. There are benefits to operations such as maintenance, dispatch, and marketing under a single brand.

<b>Transit Provider</b>	Berrien County	Buchanan	TCATA	Niles
Days of Service	5- Mon-Fri	6, Limited Sat.	6, Limited Sat.	6, Limited Sat.
Total Vehicles	24	3	25	7
Lift Equipped Vehicles	24	3	19	7
Population Served	73,356	4,992	57,744	25,000
Employees	23	3	31	17
<b>System Data</b>				
Passenger Miles	581,191	39,109	493,015	206,843
Vehicle Hours	27,640	3,417	37,195	16,597
Passengers	110,980	11,643	193,187	62,297
Eligible Expenses	\$1,288,877	\$147,892	\$1,549,342	\$8,188,129
<b>Economics</b>				
Eligible Expense per Passenger Mile	\$2.22	\$3.78	\$3.14	\$39.59
Eligible Expense per Vehicle Hour	\$46.63	\$43.28	\$41.65	\$493.35
Eligible Expense per Employee	\$11.61	\$12.70	\$8.02	\$131.44
Eligible Expenses per Population	\$17.57	\$29.63	\$26.83	\$327.53
Passengers per Passenger Mile	0.19	0.30	0.39	0.30
Passengers per Vehicle Hour	4.02	3.41	5.19	3.75
Notes: FY 2008 data obtained at <a href="http://www.michigan.gov/mdot">www.michigan.gov/mdot</a> . Unknown skew for Niles Dial-A Ride in 2008. High indicators in blue, low in red.				

## The people say...

Results from the written survey conducted for this Plan indicate a great deal of support for the development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the County. For example, over 58% of respondents believe walking, biking or water connections between recreation facilities are inadequate, and 50% cannot travel to open spaces and parks.

The perceived lack of inter-agency coordination is significant according to the survey, with 73% responding that there is occasional or ineffective communication.

Survey participants were extremely supportive of transit options for riders with few mobility options (87%) and consolidating dial-a-ride services if it resulted in a better performance (76.5%).

Respondents believe that available funding for roads and bridges should focus on maintaining already developed areas (55%) or evenly balanced between existing infrastructure and new development (40%).

## Goal

**Use transportation investments to advance economic opportunities and equity in Berrien County.**

## Objectives and Strategies

Objective: Improve the industrial base of the County's economy by targeting investments that improve efficiency and modal links in core urban areas

Complete US 31. Assist local communities in managing the impacts, both positive and negative, to land uses as the freeway is completed to Benton Harbor.

Prioritize transportation investments that bring sustainable, emergent sector manufacturing jobs to Berrien County.

Preserve and enhance commercial, industrial, and recreational use of the Harbor.

Promote agri-tourism in the Open Space/ Natural Preserve and Rural districts indicated in the Landscapes Chapter by focusing rural road funding in communities that participate in the County's PDR program.

Deliver feeder routes and park-n-ride lots to capture market for high-speed rail commuters in conjunction with ARRA funding.

Focus opportunities for neighborhood redevelopment in urban and suburban areas around County resources like the Southwest Michigan Regional Airport.

Target development around multimodal transit centers establishing synergy and housing opportunities on an urban scale.

Objective: Provide equal access to the transportation system.

Balance investment, carefully considering underserved and minority populations.

Connect centers of employment, education, commerce, and housing with multiple modes of transportation, particularly non-motorized corridors.

Coordinate, or consolidate if possible, public transportation services to eliminate duplication and provide complete coverage for the County.

Provide ADA compliant non-motorized facilities for persons with mobility impairments. Encourage local jurisdictions to exceed Michigan Barrier Free Code when reviewing development.

Establish a minimal County-wide fixed transit route that provides access to core human services from the other developed areas of the County.

Objective: Maintain and provide efficiencies in the current system.

Advocate “complete streets” design standards that correlate with state initiatives like Safe Routes to Schools and Building Healthy Communities.

Encourage access management principles through local zoning and right-of-way ordinances.

Provide asset management services for primary and secondary road systems so each local jurisdiction can best understand its needs and fund a desired level of service.

Continue to select road projects that include safety improvement components.

Evaluate bridges and culverts to avoid closure or weight restrictions on economically important routes.

Form a fuel consortium with major public users that can contract for futures purchases that are less susceptible to volatile market swings.

Continuously evaluate the performance of the multiple transit providers for opportunities that facilitate cost reductions without changing governance models. Streamlined purchasing, branding, and dispatch are primary objectives. Physical consolidations, like maintenance, storage, and dispatch, should occur next, prior to merging governance.

Investigate opportunities with public and institutional transportation providers that meet the needs of underserved populations or correlate with other goals of this plan, such as providing access to work or recreation opportunities.

Promote transit for both choice riders and dependent riders. Provide amenities and clean safe vehicles and stops to improve the perception of safety, cleanliness, and convenience.

# Infrastructure

## *Water, Sewer, Solid Waste*

The maintenance and development of infrastructure systems, exclusive of the transportation network, is vital to economic stability and industrial development within Berrien County. Municipal water and sewer systems control the pace and intensity of development, second only to roads. The County has significant opportunities for expanding the industries in resource reclamation from the massive amounts of out of state rubbish deposited in privately-held landfills. The project survey indicated that 93.4% of respondents would recycle more if it would create new manufacturing jobs through resource recovery industry.

## Where are we now?

### System Structure

There are several public providers that operate water and wastewater facilities. These authorities typically use the County's bonding capacity along with Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund and Wastewater Revolving Loan Fund programs to finance capital improvements

The majority of regulated waste facilities in the County are operated by private industry. System components of the County's current solid waste plan (2001) include:

- Resource Conservation Efforts
- Volume Reduction Techniques
- Resource Recovery Programs
- Collection Processes and Transportation
- Disposal Areas
- Institutional Arrangements
- Education and Information Programs
- Capital, Operational, and Maintenance Costs

### Trends

The City of Benton Harbor and other, established water and wastewater systems generally focus their efforts on system upgrades, infiltration reductions, and the elimination of illicit discharges into the sewer systems. Recent changes to the Clean Water Act require many upgrades to meet more stringent standards for chemicals allowed in drinking water. Providing generators at pump/lift stations can be a necessary, but visually impacting upgrade to preserve system performance. Expanding water systems are able to ensure redundancy and adequate water pressure during new construction.

Waste Category	2001	2006 Projected	2010 Projected
Residential	208,600	170,000	160,000
Commercial & Industrial	174,300	145,000	135,000
Industrial Process	198,200	170,000	160,000
Construction & Demolition	182,793	155,000	145,000
Municipal Sludge	2,800	1,800	0

**Table 1: Projected Waste Generation (cubic yards per year) Source: 2001 Berrien County Solid Waste Plan**

Other noteworthy trends:

- In 2001, the waste deposited in Berrien County from out of state alone exceeded the amount of waste generated by County users almost six-fold.

## The people say...

Results from the written survey conducted for this Plan indicates that of the approximately two-thirds of the respondents that have municipal water service, 85% are satisfied with drinking water quality and 81% are satisfied with the overall service. Half of the respondents not on sewer service would be interested in County programs to maintain their septic systems and dispose of septage.

Respondents strongly favored (76%) the consolidation of water and sewer providers into larger authorities if is provided a value to the consumer.

One third (66%) of respondents wanted to know more about the importance of stormwater quality is and how to improve it through education programs. Slightly more than half (56.5%) were interested in information on how to reduce their water consumption.

Activity	Favorable Response
Recycle household items curbside.	48.0%
Recycle household items at a drop-off center.	42.6%
Compost organic household waste.	46.1%
Take household hazardous waste to facilities or events.	42.6%
Make household purchases considering environment.	43.0%
Recycle electronic items like TV's and computers.	59.0%
Reduce packaging waste by purchasing in bulk, reduced packaging, or re-using items.	44%
Send leaves and brush to a facility for composting.	28.9%
Use compost or mulch for landscaping or gardening.	50.8%
Reuse items like plastic cups and grocery sacks.	78.9%
Use durable cups, plates and utensils instead of disposables.	69.1%

Almost two thirds (62%) of respondents individually contract with a garbage hauler.

Strong responses of 78.5% and 75.5% indicate support for single hauler if it provides value for consumers or if it provides additional funding for household hazardous waste collection and expanded recycling initiatives, respectively.

## Goal

**Coordinate development to infill around existing infrastructure capacity and rehabilitate systems prior to establishing new service.**

## Objectives and Strategies

Objective: Maximize capacity of existing infrastructure

**Urban Service Boundaries (USB):**

Develop feasible 20 year growth areas based on population and land use demands. USB's help evaluate local comprehensive plans, zoning map changes, and applications to state and federal loan programs for consistency (see Map 1). Undeveloped sites are not 'leap-frogged' over, producing sprawl.

- The Service Boundary concept provides space for expansion of existing water and wastewater systems in a manner that promotes efficient development options.
- Contains capacity for future growth.
- A Service Boundary line, as indicated in Map 1 of this chapter, is a policy tool and not a geo-political boundary. The intent of the boundary line is to evaluate proposed system expansions so that they are contiguous to existing development and consistent with local comprehensive plans.
- This strategy supports preserving the 85% of the County land use for agriculture and open space.

Objective: Maximize returns on future infrastructure investments.

Consolidate resources into larger authorities, when practical, while preserving local representation for management of water and wastewater systems.

Prioritize funded infrastructure projects that accomplish multiple functions (e.g. replacement of water main in coordination with road reconstruction).

Provide education programs for homeowners that demonstrate opportunities to reduce drinking water consumption.

Prioritize public infrastructure expenditures that rehabilitate 'Brownfield' sites.

Conduct a cost of services study that presents the benefits of different investment scenarios correlated with alternative land use patterns

Direct residential, commercial, and industrial growth within the Service Boundaries.

Begin a long term planning effort to consolidate core, mandated County services into a centralized county campus, beginning with an incarceration facility. This future endeavor should be located within or adjacent to the Urban Service Boundary and should carefully consider impacts to transportation and local economic movements.

Objective: Provide enhanced solid waste services.

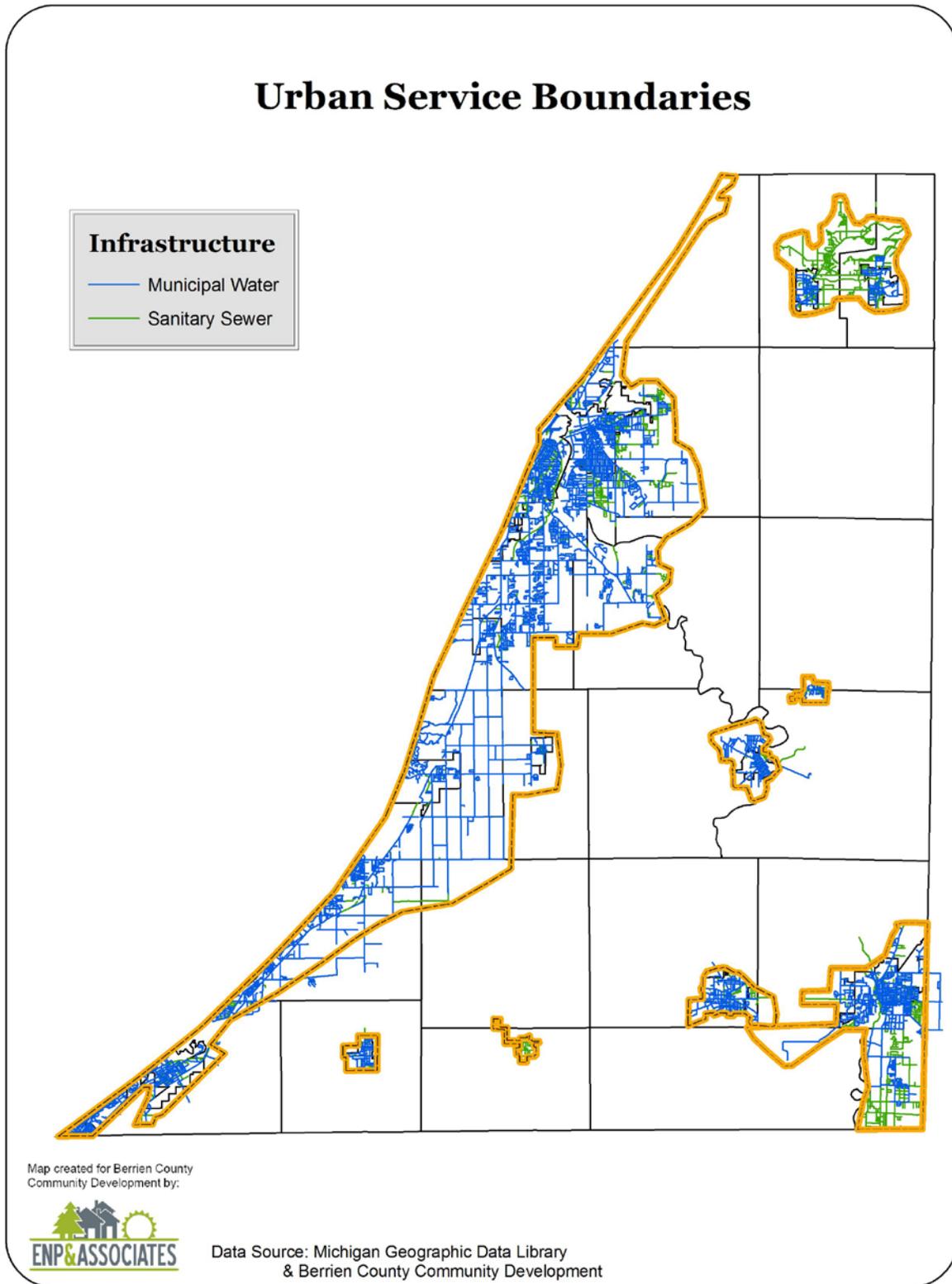
Form solid waste authorities that provide opportunities to contract with single haulers. Single garbage haulers have less impact visual impact on communities, are simpler to regulate, and may provide lower fees through economies of scale.

License garbage haulers and earmark revenues towards broader community functions like electronics recycling, document shredding, and household hazardous waste events.

Evaluate opportunities to acquire facilities or form public-private partnerships that allow the County to develop industries that retrieve value from the area's out-of-state waste stream through reclamation and other emergent technologies.

Utilize new landfill technologies such as bio-reactors in concert with resource recovery methods to preserve long term capacity in the County's existing landfills. This eliminates the need for locating future facilities and provides an opportunity to assist homeowners in the treatment of septage.

The County should integrate appropriate 2007 solid waste management and recycling program strategies into the next update of the County solid waste plan.



**Map 1: Urban Service Boundaries.**