

Torch Lake Township Planning Commission (PC)

Regular Meeting Agenda

Monday, October 20, 2025

7:00 PM

Community Services Building, Torch Lake Township, Michigan

Please turn off cell phones.

Public Hearing/Public Comment Rules:

Fill out comment card at the back of the room if you wish to speak. Turn into the secretary.

Each member of the public will be given 3 minutes to address the Planning Commission.

Comments should be directed at the Chair.

Please no clapping or cheering.

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Consideration of Agenda
4. Conflict of Interest
5. Approval of Meeting Minutes from August 18, 2025
6. Public Comment on Agenda Items other than Public Hearing
7. Correspondence
8. Unfinished Business
 - a. Park and Recreation Plan
 - b. Master Plan- Survey/Open House Summary
9. New Business
10. On-Going Reports
 1. Zoning Administrator's Report
 2. PC Representative to ZBA Report
 3. TLT Board Representative on PC Report

11. Public Comment

12. Concerns of Commission

- A. Chair
- B. Members
- C. Consultant

13. Adjournment

TORCH LAKE TOWNSHIP
ANTRIM COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Torch Lake township
Planning Commission Meeting
Community Service Building
Draft Minutes
August 18, 2025

Present: Clarke, Walker, Ellison-Coats, Graves, Carleton

Absent:

Others: J. Cram

Audience: 3

Recording Secretary: M. Merchant

1. Call to Order Regular Meeting:

Meeting called to order at 7:00pm by Clarke

2. Pledge of Allegiance-*Recited*

3. Consideration of Agenda: Approved by consent

4. Conflict of Interest-*None*

5. Approval of Minutes of June 16, 2025

M/S Graves/Carleton to approve June 16, 2025 meeting minutes as presented. Passes 5-0.

6. Public Comment:

- Casey Wiggins 131 NW Torch Lk Dr-questions if public hearing was appropriately advertised 15 days in advance. Commission confirms that it was published July 29, 2025.

7. Correspondence- none

8. Unfinished Business

- a. **Public Hearing-Zoning Amendment-Short-Term Rental(STR) Definition** updated to help clarify what classifies as such, also helps to make zoning ordinance more legally defensible if legally challenged.

Public Comment:

- Casey Wiggins 131 NW Torch Lake Dr. – asks where to find the definition of STR. Cram directs him to Article 14 of current Zoning Ordinance. Further, Village Zoned District information is under Article 3, specifically 3.6

Board Discussion:Graves comments on enforcement challenges. Cram mentions a possible website monitoring agency option and discusses what is currently being done for enforcement.

Motion by Clarke to accept STR definition. Roll Call: Carleton-yes, Clarke-yes, Ellison-Coats-abstain, Graves-yes, Walker-yes. Motion passes 4-1

- b. Master Plan-Open House Questions- Clarke will be absent for Open House on 9/15/2025 4-6:30 pm. Discussion about what will take place at the open house and the purpose of updating the Master Plan. Zoning Administrator will be present to answer questions. PC members are encouraged to attend.

9. New Business-none

10. On-Going Reports

1. **Zoning Administrator's Report** is given verbally by Cram. Caught up on Zoning Permits, issued 43 to date. Ongoing violations being dealt with. A few land divisions and combinations are also ongoing. Returning around 5 emails, 6 phones calls a day with regards to zoning questions.
2. **PC Representative to ZBA**-application was approved for a property on East Torch Lake Drive. Cram mentions a violation along the shoreline. Violation letter forthcoming.
3. **TLT Board Representative On PC Report**-Graves reports the TLT Board agenda includes discussion about STR's and longer-term staffing and longer-term planning with regards to EMS and Fire Dept.

11. Public Comment-

- Casey Wiggins-not in support of neighbors monitoring neighbors with regards to STR's. Discusses remediation problems and possible alternatives.
- Bob Cook-discusses was to get the notice to the township residents and encourages a second meeting.

12. Concerns of Commission

- A. **Chair**-Would like to reschedule the 9/15/2025 PC meeting because the open house is scheduled for that day and because he will be absent that day.
- B. **Members**-Graves in support of above public comments
- C. **Consultant**-Suggests PC meeting to reschedule for 9/22/2025

13. Adjournment 8:04 pm

M/S to adjourn: Graves/Clark vote: 5-0

These minutes are subject to approval at the next PC Meeting. Please see full meeting online for more details.

project memorandum

Date: 10.15.2025
From: Sara Kopriva, AICP
To: Torch Lake Planning Commission
Project: October Planning Commission Meeting

Enclosed in your packet is the draft Park and Recreation Plan as well as a survey/open house summary that will be included in the Master Plan. The park and recreation plan includes the questions relevant to recreational activities while the master plan summary includes all questions.



initiative

Park and Recreation Plan

A complete draft of the plan is included in your packet for consideration. The Planning Commission will want to discuss action items to be added at the end of the document. I have included the action plan from the current plan for a starting reference. The Action Plan does not need to be elaborate and should be items that can be accomplished in the next 5 years.

Next steps for the plan.....

The Planning Commission will need to make a recommendation to forward the plan to the Township Board for distribution for the public comment period. The State of Michigan requires a 30 day public review period on all park and recreation plans that would make the community eligible to apply for State grants. The Township Board will be reviewing and considering distribution at the November meeting. Unlike the Township Master Plan, the park and recreation plan needs to be finalized by January 2026 if the Township wishes to apply for grants in the 2026 year.

Survey Summary

A draft survey summary is included in the packet. No action is needed at this time but does provide an opportunity to discuss any items that came to light in the plan and to have a brief conversation about action items or policies to consider for the Master Plan. Looking forward to the discussion!

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TORCH LAKE TOWNSHIP

Parks & Recreation Plan

October 2025 DRAFT

Acknowledgements

List of Maps/Tables/Figures

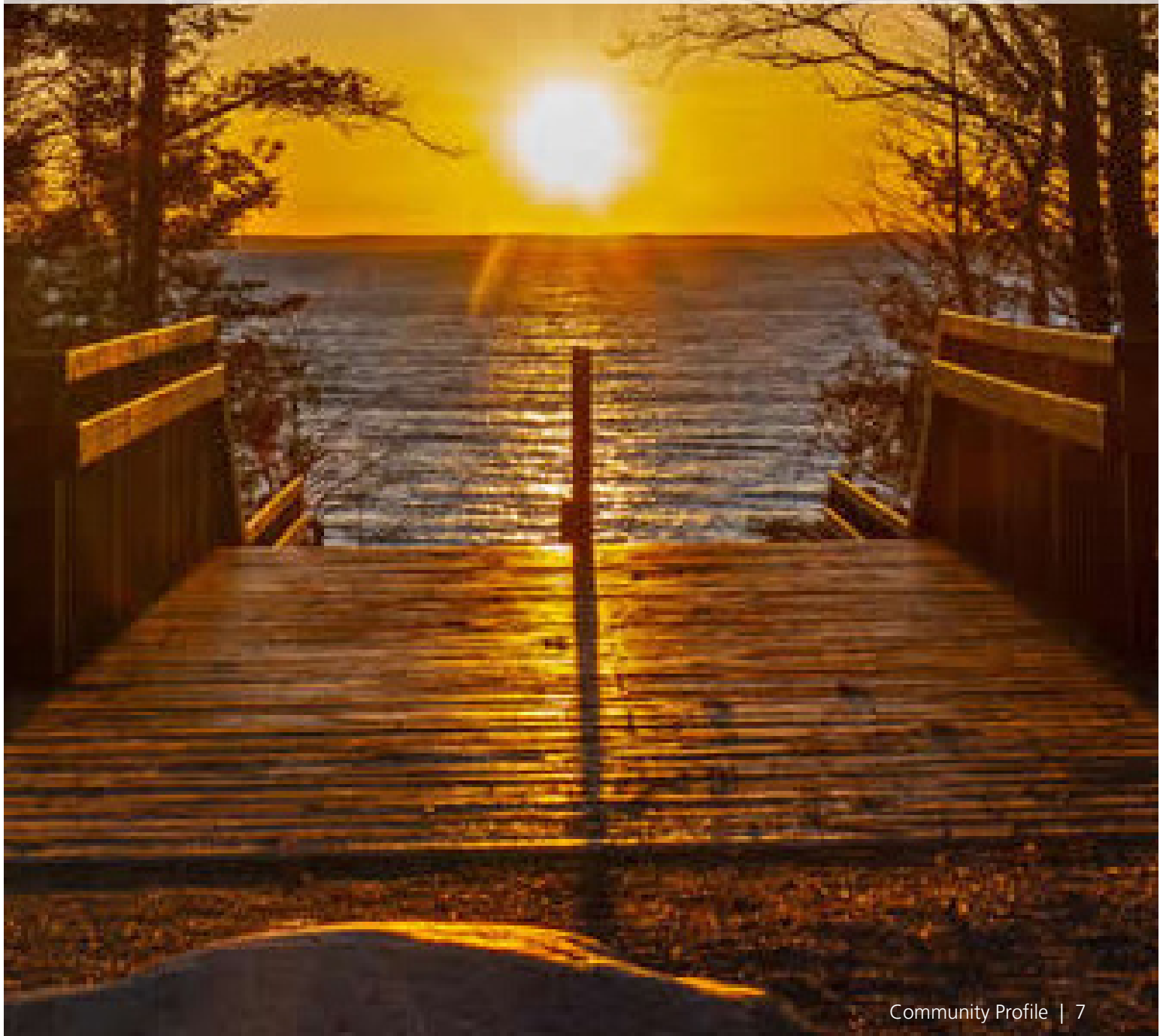
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1

Community Profile



This Parks and Recreation Plan for Torch Lake Township was created in accordance with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) guidelines. This Five-Year Parks and Recreation Plan will guide future decision making in parks and recreation development, budgeting, and grant funding.

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Torch Lake Township is located in northwest Michigan within Antrim County and is bordered by Banks Township to the north, Milton Township to the south, Lake Michigan to the west, and Torch Lake—with a small section of Central Lake Township—to the east. The Township's geography is uniquely defined by its proximity to two prominent water bodies: Lake Michigan and Torch Lake.

One of fifteen townships in Antrim County, Torch Lake Township is accessible primarily via US-31, which connects the area to Traverse City approximately 30 miles to the south and Charlevoix about 16 miles to the north. Additional access is available via M-88 from nearby communities such as Central Lake, Bellaire, and Mancelona. Antrim County lies in the northwestern portion of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. It is situated roughly 260 miles northwest of Detroit and about 320 miles north-northeast of Chicago. Several major Michigan cities are within 200 miles, including Grand Rapids (140 miles), Lansing (170 miles), and the Saginaw-Bay City region (150 miles). The cities of Kalamazoo, Battle Creek, and Jackson are each around 200 miles south.

Torch Lake Township encompasses 15.2 square miles of land and is known for its natural beauty and recreational appeal. Often referred to as part of Michigan's "Gold Coast" or "Sunset Coast," the Township features rolling wooded terrain, protected sand dunes, and extensive shorelines along both Lake Michigan and Torch Lake. These shorelines are celebrated for their scenic bluffs, sandy beaches, and clear, high-quality waters that support diverse aquatic life such as lake trout, whitefish, and cisco. Maintaining the pristine condition of these waters is essential to preserving the area's environmental health and recreational value. For those seeking a quieter alternative to more urbanized areas, Torch

Lake Township offers a rural lifestyle with access to natural amenities, quality schools, and year-round outdoor activities like fishing, boating, and hunting.

DATA SOURCES

The demographic information in this Plan came from the following sources, in this preferred order:

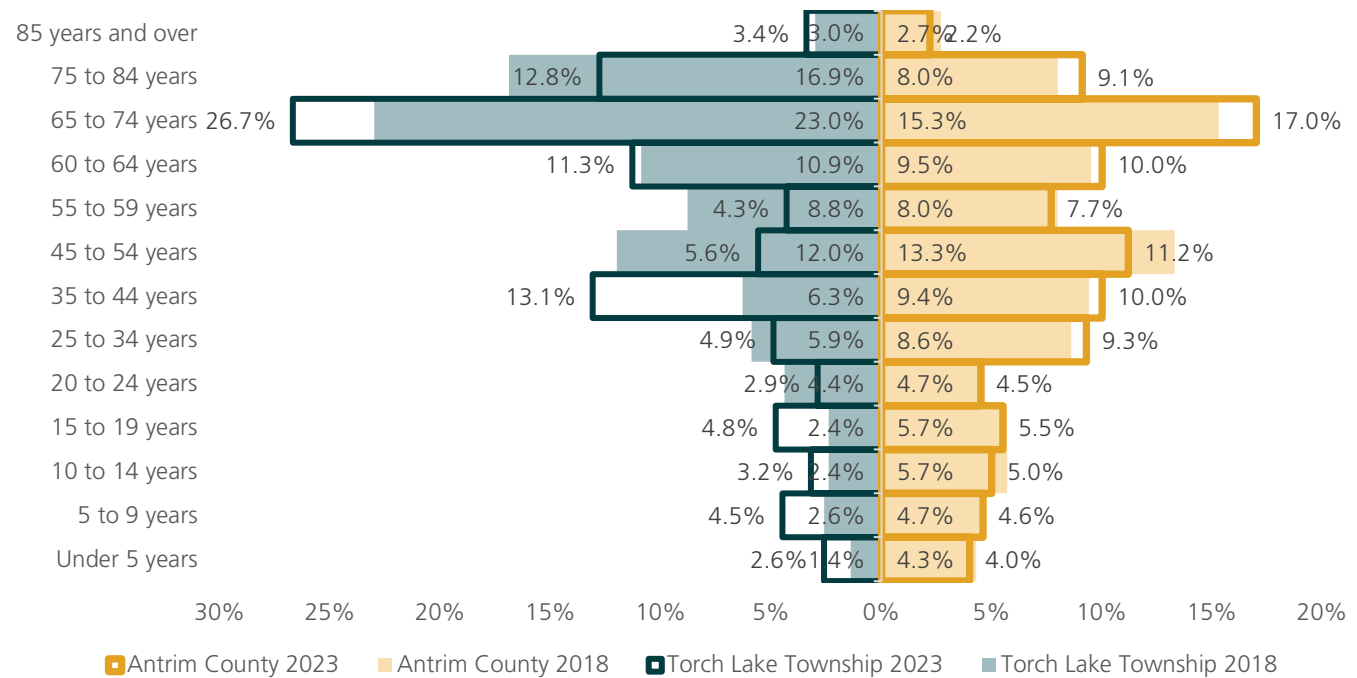
- » **US Decennial Censuses.** The decennial censuses are the most accurate source of demographic information in the United States, though the information is limited. Mandated by the United States Constitution, the aim of the decennial census is to count 100% of the US population. Because the decennial census has been operating since 1790, it offers a valuable reference point to illustrate how populations have changed over time. While the decennial census has been administered for over 200 years, the questions have shifted to reflect cultural changes. For example, one's history of rebellion against the United States is no longer a question on the form. Information collected in the most recent counts includes information about age, sex, race, the relationship between household members, and household tenure.
- » **American Community Survey.** The American Community Survey (ACS) replaced the "long-form" Census questions beginning in 2000, collecting the same types of information about social, economic, and housing conditions on a continual basis. Including these questions in the decennial census would be more resource-intensive and could reduce the response rate for the more critical decennial census. The ACS is not a complete survey of the United States but a sample. A random selection of households receives the ACS every year, and the Census Bureau uses the responses to create estimates for the rest of the population. Because the ACS is a sample, smaller communities require multiple years of sampling to create accurate estimates. Communities with fewer than 20,000 people must be sampled over 60 months to create estimates, and these estimates are referred to as 5-year estimates. This plan will use ACS 5-year estimates, as Torch Lake Township's population is under 20,000 people.

Table XX: Population 2000-2020

	2000	2010	2015	2020	% Change 2000-2020
Torch Lake Township	1,159	1,331	1,183	1,212	4.6%
Antrim County	23,110	23,975	23,267	23,431	1.4%
State of Michigan	9,295,297	9,938,444	9,990,571	10,077,331	8.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, P1

Figure XX: Population Pyramid, 2018-2023



Source: American Community Survey, DP05

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

Population

Torch Lake Township's population has experienced modest growth over the past two decades, increasing from 1,159 residents in 2000 to 1,212 residents in the 2020 Census—an overall rise of 4.6%.¹ Similar population increases were observed throughout Antrim County and the State of Michigan during this period. According to the American Community Survey, the Township's estimated population in 2023 was 1,564.² While this suggests a potential uptick—possibly influenced by the growing trend of remote work enabling people to live farther from traditional employment centers—the estimate carries a high margin of error due to the Township's relatively small population size.

Age Distribution

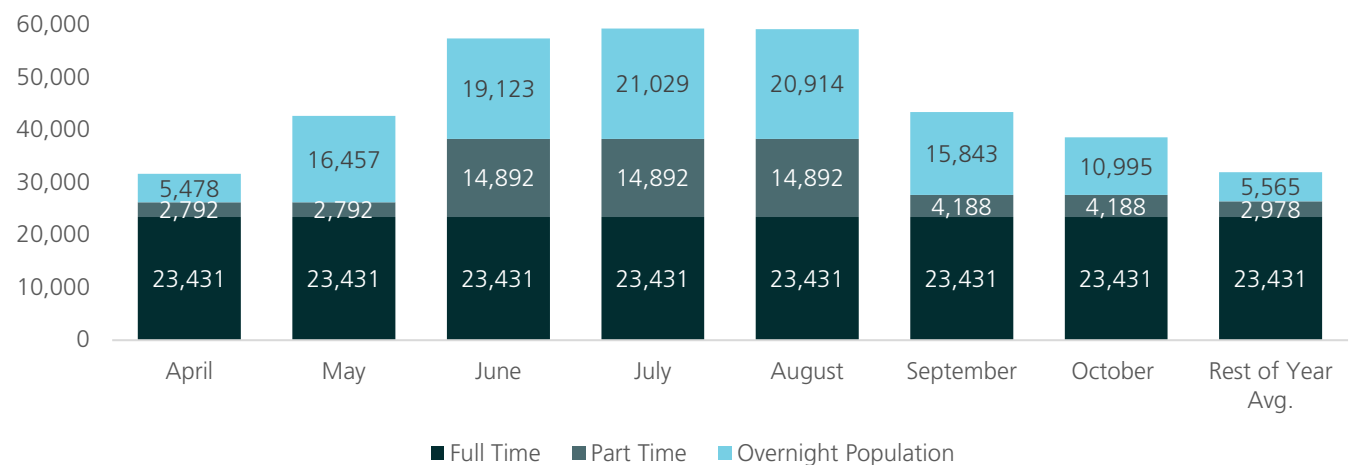
The figure "Population Pyramid, 2018-2023" shows age distribution in Torch Lake Township and Antrim County for the years 2018 and 2023. The data shows that the population in Torch Lake trends towards the elderly, with 42.9% of all residents being 65 and older in 2018; interestingly this same figure remained 42.9% in 2023.³ In 2018, 19.1% of residents were under 35 years old, a figure that increased to 22.9% in 2023.⁴ Communities with elderly populations need a variety of recreational activities that cater to different abilities and interests, including social events, physical activities, and opportunities for creative expression and engagement. Additionally, enhancing intergenerational activity offerings can help to increase community cohesiveness.⁵

Table XX: Racial Composition in Torch Lake Township, 2023

	Torch Lake Township	Antrim County	State of Michigan
Total population	1,564	23,876	10,051,595
One race	98.4%	96.0%	93.7%
White	96.7%	93.9%	74.8%
Black or African American	0.0%	0.4%	13.4%
American Indian and Alaska Native	3.0%	1.4%	0.9%
Asian	0.3%	0.4%	3.3%
Some Other Race	0.0%	0.6%	1.8%
Two or More Races	1.6%	4.0%	6.3%

Source: American Community Survey, DP05

Figure XX: Average Population of Antrim County by Month



Source: Networks Northwest

Racial Composition

The table titled “Racial Composition in Torch Lake Township, 2023” indicates that the racial makeup of both Torch Lake Township and Antrim County is predominantly white, with over 96% of residents identifying as such.⁶ The next largest racial group in the Township is American Indian or Alaska Native, comprising approximately 3% of the population. Compared to statewide figures, both the Township and the County exhibit significantly less racial diversity.⁷

Seasonal Population

It’s important to note that the U.S. Census and American Community Survey do not fully reflect the seasonal population fluctuations in Torch Lake Township—particularly during the busy summer months. Since the Census is conducted

on April 1st, many part-time residents who winter elsewhere are not included in the count. Although respondents are instructed to list their primary residence as the place, they live for more than half the year, this guideline is often misunderstood or disregarded, sometimes for tax-related reasons, resulting in an undercount.⁸

To provide a more accurate picture, Networks Northwest monitors seasonal population trends across 10 counties in Northwest Lower Michigan, including Antrim County. Their 2022 Seasonal Population Study for Lower Michigan reported that while Antrim County had a permanent population of 23,431, the summer population more than doubled—rising to nearly 60,000.⁹ A detailed monthly population estimate is illustrated in the figure titled “Average Population of Antrim County by Month.”

Employment

The U.S. Census Bureau defines the labor force as all individuals age 16 and older who are either employed, unemployed, or serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. The civilian labor force includes only those who are employed or actively seeking employment.¹⁰

As of 2023, 1,395 Torch Lake Township residents were eligible to participate in the labor force, with a participation rate of 44.3%. Of those participating, 44% were employed at the time of data collection, while approximately 0.3% of the total population was unemployed. The Township's official unemployment rate—calculated as the percentage of unemployed individuals within the civilian labor force—stood at 0.6%.¹¹ A majority of residents (55.7%) were not participating in the labor force, which aligns with the Township's age profile, as many residents are senior citizens who are likely retired.

Income and Poverty

In 2023, the median household income in Torch Lake Township was \$85,972, up 16.6% from

Table XX: Labor Force Participation, 2023

	Torch Lake Township
Population 16 years and over	1,395
Labor force	44.3%
Employed	44.0%
Unemployment rate	0.6%
Not in labor force	55.7%

Source: American Community Survey, DP03

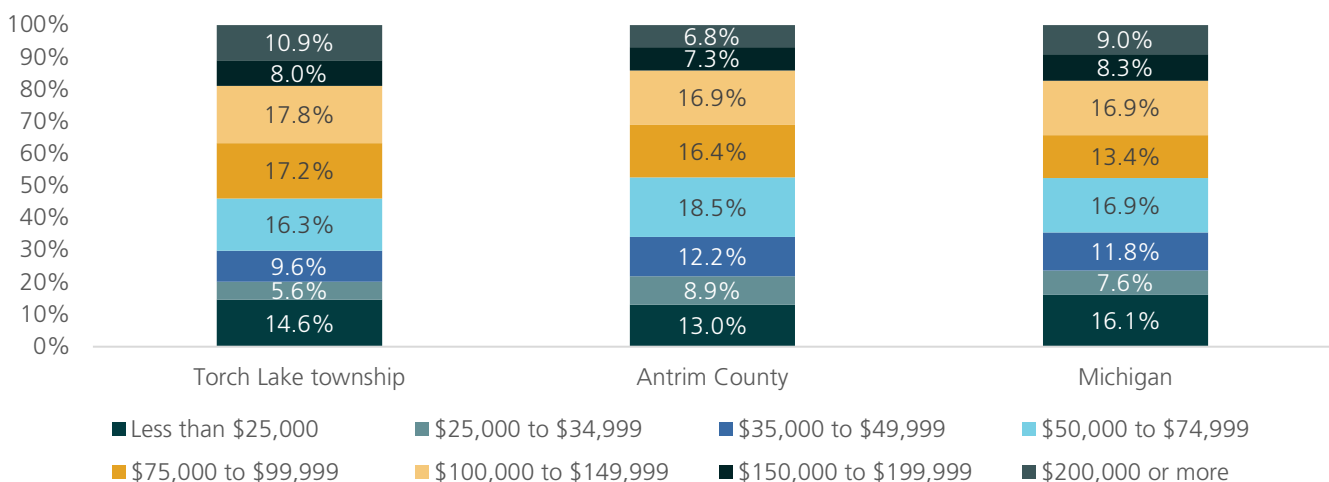
2018 (when the median household income was \$73,750).¹² The figure median represents the middle value in an ordered list of data values. The median is the very middle value and is a more reliable figure than the mean (average) of a dataset because it is not skewed by very high or very low figures in the dataset. Incomes in Torch Lake Township are significantly higher than Antrim County and the State of Michigan, which are approximate to each other.¹³

Table XX: Median Household Income, 2018 & 2023

	Torch Lake Township	Antrim County	State of Michigan
2018	\$73,750	\$52,589	\$54,938
2023	\$85,972	\$71,421	\$71,149
% Increase	16.6%	35.8%	29.5%

Source: American Community Survey, DP03

Figure XX: Household Incomes, 2023



Source: American Community Survey, DP03

Table XX: Households in Poverty, 2023

	Torch Lake Township	Antrim County	State of Michigan
All people	11.0%	9.4%	13.1%
All families	6.2%	5.3%	8.8%
With related children of the householder under 18 years	14.8%	11.1%	14.4%
Married couple families	4.3%	3.0%	4.2%
Families with female householder, no spouse present	42.3%	20.5%	25.1%
Under 18 years	12.4%	13.4%	17.5%
65 years and over	11.6%	6.0%	9.3%

Source: American Community Survey, DP03

Table XX: Population with Disability, 2023

	Torch Lake Population	With a disability	% with a disability	Antrim County % with a disability	Michigan % with a disability
Under 18 years	225	12	5.3%	8.3%	4.9%
18 to 64 years	669	60	9.0%	13.7%	12.2%
65 years and over	670	85	12.7%	24.7%	32.2%
TOTAL	1,564	157	10.0%	15.9%	14.2%

Source: American Community Survey, S1810

The Federal Poverty Level (FPL), or federal poverty guidelines, is a yearly income benchmark used to assess eligibility for a range of federal assistance programs and benefits, with thresholds varying by household size.¹⁴ In Torch Lake Township, 11.0% of residents were living below the FPL in 2023. Poverty rates were notably higher among single female-headed households and families with children.¹⁵ Household income is an important metric in recreation planning because lower-income households are more likely to face barriers to accessing recreation assets due to factors like transportation and cost of participation.¹⁶ By ensuring that recreation amenities are available throughout the Township and that programming is affordable, Torch Lake can help to ensure all residents are able to receive enrichment through recreation and interpersonal interactions.

Disability

Compared to the County and State, Torch Lake Township residents have a lower disability rate. Just 10% of the total population is disabled in some form, compared to 15.9% in the County, and 14.2% statewide.¹⁷ While the rate is lower compared to other areas, 1 in 10 residents do have a disability which should be considered in recreation planning for Torch Lake Township. When designing recreational spaces, the Township should consider barriers to access and ensure that they are modified so that all may use these spaces, employing Universal Design concepts will help to increase access for all.

Sources

- 1 U.S. Census Bureau, P1, 2000-2020
- 2 American Community Survey, 2023 5 Year Estimates, DP05.
- 3 American Community Survey, 2018 & 2023 5 Year Estimates, DP05.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 National Recreation and Park Association, Parks and Recreation Supports Older Adults, 4-8-2025, <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2024/july/parks-and-recreation-supports-older-adults/#:~:text=The%20most%20common%20intergenerational%20activities,well%2Dbeing%20of%20older%20adults.>
- 6 American Community Survey, 2023 5 Year Estimates, DP05.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 U.S. Census Bureau, About the Decennial Census, 4-7-2025, www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/about.html#:~:text=Every%2010%20years%2C%20the%20U.S.,Day%2C%20which%20is%20April%201.
- 9 Networks Northwest. 2022 Seasonal Population Study, 4-7-2025, <https://www.networksnorthwest.org/news-events/news/new-study-looks-at-seasonal-population-seasonal-workforce-and-short-term-rentals-in-northern-michigan.html>
- 10 U.S. Census Bureau, Glossary, 4-7-2025, https://www.census.gov/glossary/#term_Laborforce?term=Labor+force
- 11 American Community Survey, 2015 & 2023 5 Year Estimates, DP03.
- 12 American Community Survey, 2015&2023 5 Year Estimates, DP03.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Poverty Guidelines, 4-8-2025, <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines>
- 15 American Community Survey, 2015 & 2023 5 Year Estimates, DP03.
- 16 Kenzie, et al., National Institute of Health, Neighborhood Income Matters: Disparities in Community Recreation Facilities, Amenities, and Programs, 4-8-2025, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4082954/#:~:text=Meanwhile%2C%20support%20for%20physical%20activity,maintained%20and%20safe%20park%20and>
- 17 American Community Survey, 2023 5 Year Estimates, S1810.

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Administrative Structure

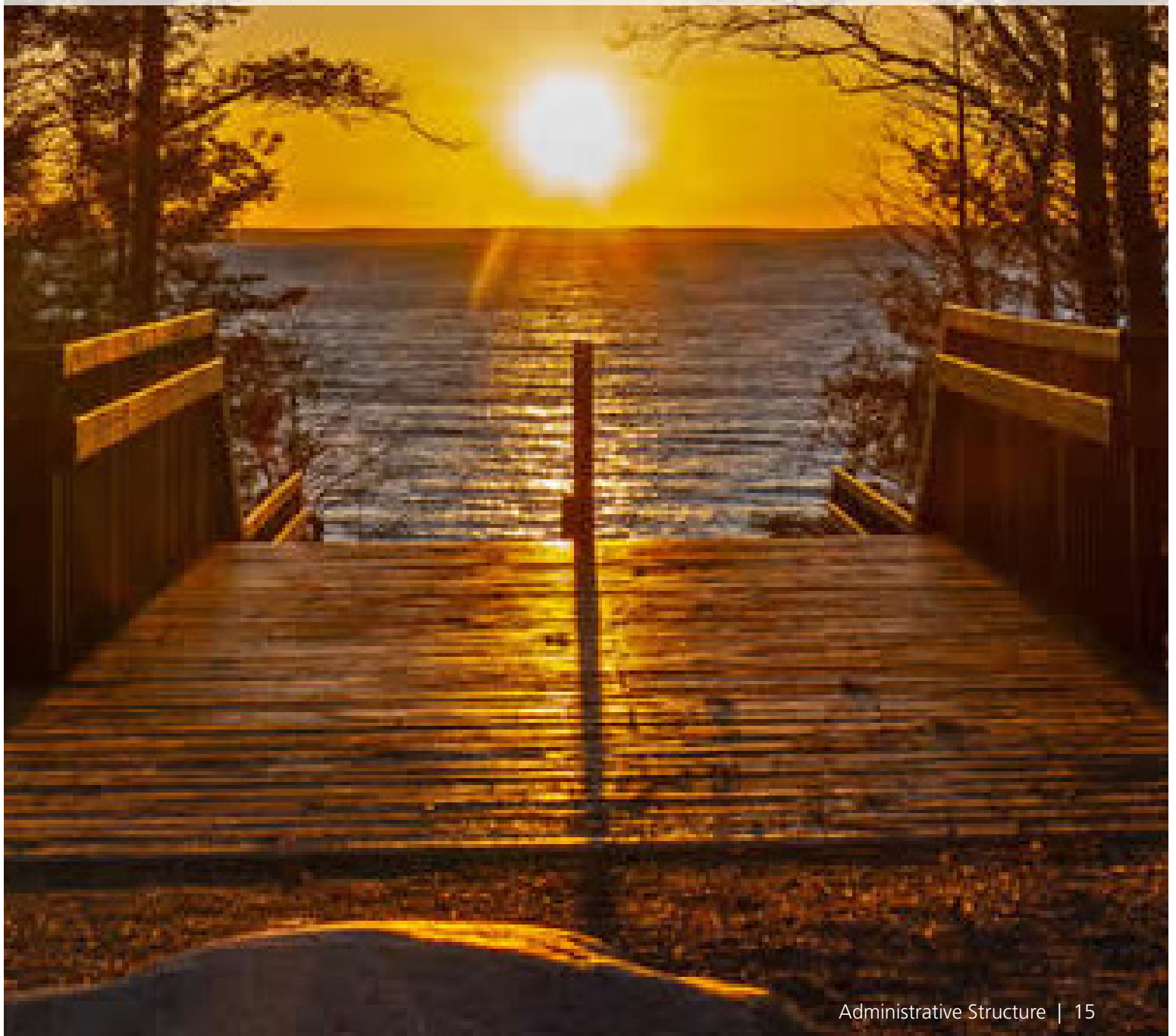
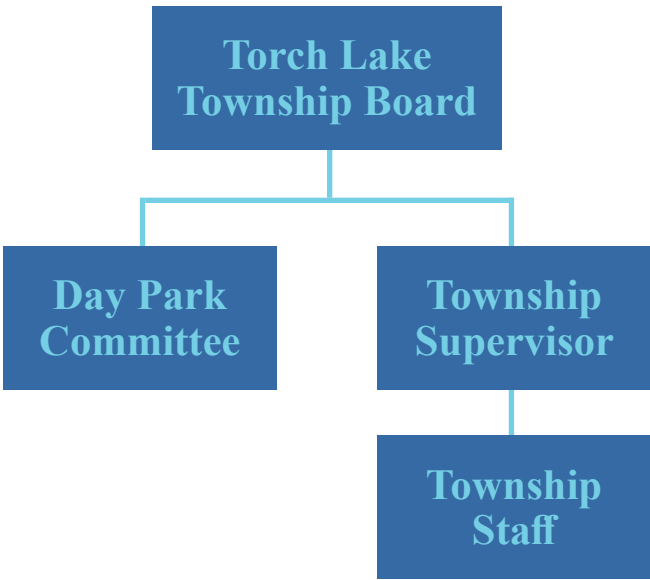


Figure XX: Organization Chart for Torch Lake Township



ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Torch Lake Township’s parks and recreation system is overseen by the Township Board, which holds ultimate decision-making authority for all recreation-related matters. A Day Park Committee, appointed by the Board, serves in an advisory capacity to support the development and implementation of the Township’s recreation goals at the Township Day Park. The Committee makes recommendations on recreation policies, park improvements, and project priorities. The Recreation Committee also functions as a conduit

for public input, helping to ensure that the community’s recreational needs and concerns are communicated to Township leadership. Day-to-day park operations and maintenance are carried out by Township staff, contractors, and volunteers under the direction of the Township Board.

BUDGET AND FUNDING

The budget proposed for parks and recreation in the 2025-2026 fiscal year (FY) in Torch Lake Township is \$17,780. The table “FY 2025-2026 Budget” shows the budget broken down by line items, as well as the budget for FY 2025-2025 as well as what was unspent at the conclusion of this last budget.¹

GRANT HISTORY

Torch Lake Township has actively sought and received grant funding in the past to support the acquisition and development of its park and recreation facilities. According to records from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), the Township has obtained grants for the improvement or establishment of the following park and recreation sites within its boundaries:

- » **Grant# TS 91-340 - Torch Lake Day Park**
Acquisition of 3.58 acres, with 196 feet of frontage on Torch Lake. (1991)
- » **Grant# TF 93-308 - Torch Bay Trail & Beach**
Acquisition of approximately 37 acres of forest and dunes with 720 feet of frontage on Lake Michigan. (1993)

Table XX: FY 2025-2026 Budget

	2023-2024 Budget	2024-2025 Budget	2025-2026 Budget
Wages	\$18,715	\$20,512	\$16,250
Contract Services	\$4,181	\$4,537	\$11,010
Janitorial	\$14,452	\$20,964	\$17,920
Electric	\$842	\$2,373	\$2,000
Repairs	\$882	\$6,020	\$3,800
Grounds Maintenance	\$8,398	\$7,000	\$6,500
Day Park Building Improvements	\$39,501	\$21,577	\$8,000
Total	\$86,971	\$82,983	\$65,480

Source: Torch Lake Township 2025-2026 Budget

COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer participation plays an important role in recreation projects throughout the Township. While there is no formal volunteer program, individuals are engaged on a project-by-project basis—often providing in-kind labor to support grant applications or help implement park improvements

Torch Lake Township lies within the boundaries of both the Elk Rapids and Central Lake school districts; however, neither district currently plays a

formal role in the Township’s recreation planning or programming.

The Township typically collaborates with Antrim County, particularly on the development of non-motorized trails and bike infrastructure. Ongoing coordination with Antrim County, local conservancies, the Upper Torch Lake Association, area Tribal Governments, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) will be important for expanding and enhancing recreational opportunities across the Township.



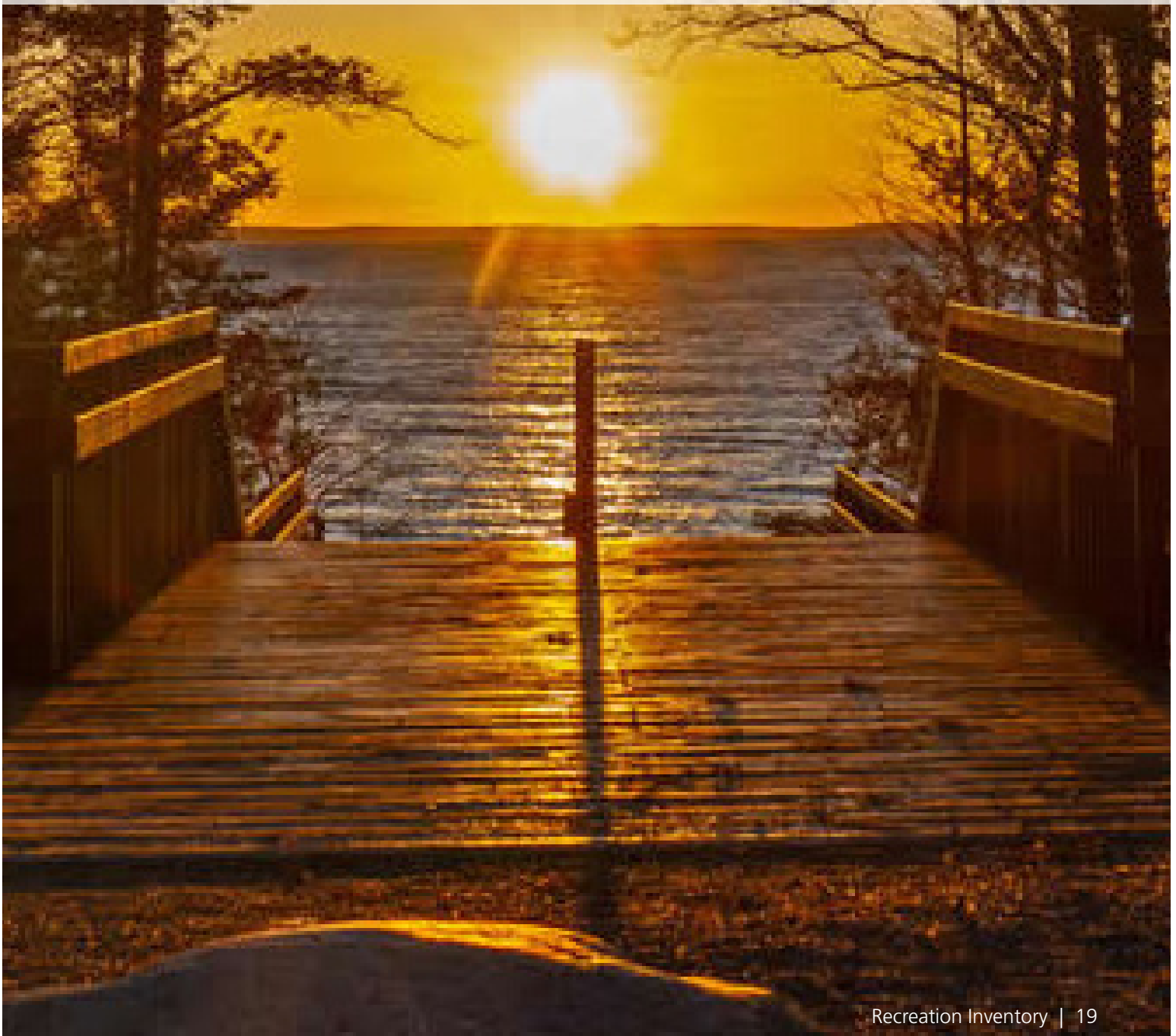
Source

- 1 Torch Lake Township, 2025-2026 Budget, 4-8-2025, <https://www.torchlaketownship.org/budgets/BUDGET%20DRAFT%20FYR%202025-2026.pdf>

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3

Recreation Inventory



Having a detailed understanding of the recreation assets used by a community is a key component of recreation planning. To understand the condition and status of recreational facilities in Torch Lake Township, an inventory of existing facilities was conducted. This inventory is intended to provide a comprehensive description of the current parks and recreational offerings that are available to recreational users across the Township. While this section accounts for facilities in the Township, including those managed by other groups in Torch Lake, and others will be mentioned in this section, only facilities operated by the Township are fully inventoried.

Beyond detailing the type, quantity, and quality of amenities at each park and recreational facility, this assessment documents the condition of amenities and park accessibility, per State of Michigan requirements. The condition of each park's amenities was assessed as "poor," "fair," "good," or "excellent," and accessibility was evaluated on a scale of 1 to 5:

- » 1: none of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines
- » 2: some of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines
- » 3: most of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines
- » 4: the entire park meets accessibility guidelines
- » 5: The entire park was developed/renovated using the Principles of Universal Design

PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Universal design is a concept of the implementation of design standards in buildings and environments that makes them accessible and inclusive for individuals of all ages, sizes, abilities, and disabilities. Its aim is to develop spaces that are convenient and functional for everyone, enabling full participation in a community. Examples of universal design in a community include large print signage, ramps instead of stairs, curb cuts for wheelchair access as well as strollers. Universal design has seven principles encompassing design for all:¹

- » **Principle 1: Equitable Use** - The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.
- » **Principle 2: Flexibility in Use** - The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
- » **Principle 3: Simple and Intuitive Use** - Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.
- » **Principle 4: Perceptible Information** - The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.
- » **Principle 5: Tolerance for Error** - The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
- » **Principle 6: Low Physical Effort** - The design can be used efficiently, comfortably, and with a minimum of fatigue.
- » **Principle 7: Size and Space for Approach and Use** - Appropriate size and space is allotted for approach, reach and manipulation regardless of physical characteristics such as size or mobility.



Torch Lake from Day Park.
Source: torchlakedaypark.org

INVENTORY OF RECREATION FACILITIES

Facilities Owned by Torch Lake Township

Torch Lake Township is a naturally rich recreation area, situated on a narrow moraine between Torch Lake to the east and Lake Michigan to the west, with most of its boundary comprised of shoreline. The area's varied climate supports a wide range of year-round recreational activities. Within an hour's drive, residents and visitors have access to ski resorts, golf courses, tennis courts, boat charters, marinas, parks, campgrounds, sailing and boating facilities, ball fields, hunting and fishing areas, nature trails, protected natural lands, and other major tourist amenities.

Many facilities in Torch Lake Township are not accessible with universal design standards which prevents many from being able to sufficiently access

recreation options in the area. While some facilities are left largely undeveloped to preserve natural features, some standards like a developed parking area, and improved pathways would still allow more access while preserving much of the site.

Road Ends

There are 18 known road ends in Torch Lake Township, some were formerly owned by transferred from the Antrim County Road Commission to the Township. Many of these road ends are not regularly maintained, some have become overgrown while others are informally maintained by neighboring property owners, making them difficult for the public to identify or access. In addition to Township- and County-owned access points, there are also numerous privately owned access sites that are collectively held by property owners within specific subdivisions.

Table XX: Recreation Facilities Owned or Managed by Torch Lake Township

Facility Name	Size	Amenities	Accessibility Score
William Good Day Park and Torch Lake Dock and Ramp	4 acres	200' Torch Lake Access, beach, restrooms, picnic area, playground, volleyball, basketball court, two pavilions, dock and single lane boat ramp and parking area, adjacent to the Day Park.	5
Golden Beach Access – Lake Michigan	100' wide lot in a subdivision	Beach on Lake Michigan	1
NW Torch Lake Drive Boat Ramp	Less than 1 acre	Concrete boat launch on Torch Lake	3
Torch Bay Nature Preserve *Property managed by Township	38 acres	Beach on Lake Michigan, nature trails, undeveloped boat launch	2
East Torch Lake Drive	Less than 1 acre	Undeveloped Site	1

Table XX: Notable Road End Sites in Torch Lake Township

Facility Name	Width of Road End	Amenities	Accessibility Score
Barnes Road – Access Site	--	Torch Lake Access	1
Kruger Road – Access Site	100 feet	Torch Lake Access	1
3rd Street – Access Site	70 feet	Torch Lake Access	1
Bay Colony Rd Ext – Access Site	--	Lake Michigan Access	1
Creswell Road – Access Site	50 feet	Lake Michigan Access and Beach	1
Erickson Rd – Access Site	66 feet (shared with Milton Twp)	Lake Michigan Access	1

Facilities Not Owned by Torch Lake Township

Beyond recreation facilities owned by Torch Lake Township, there are also facilities, both public and private that are present in the Township but owned by another entity. Most of these facilities are owned by Antrim County, and one is owned

by the State of Michigan. Recently a private group purchases property at the corner of M 88 and US 31 to provide a trailhead for the Nakwema Trailway under development. These facilities provide recreational options and enjoyment for residents of Torch Lake Township as well as those in surrounding areas.

Table XX: Public Facilities Not Owned by Torch Lake Township

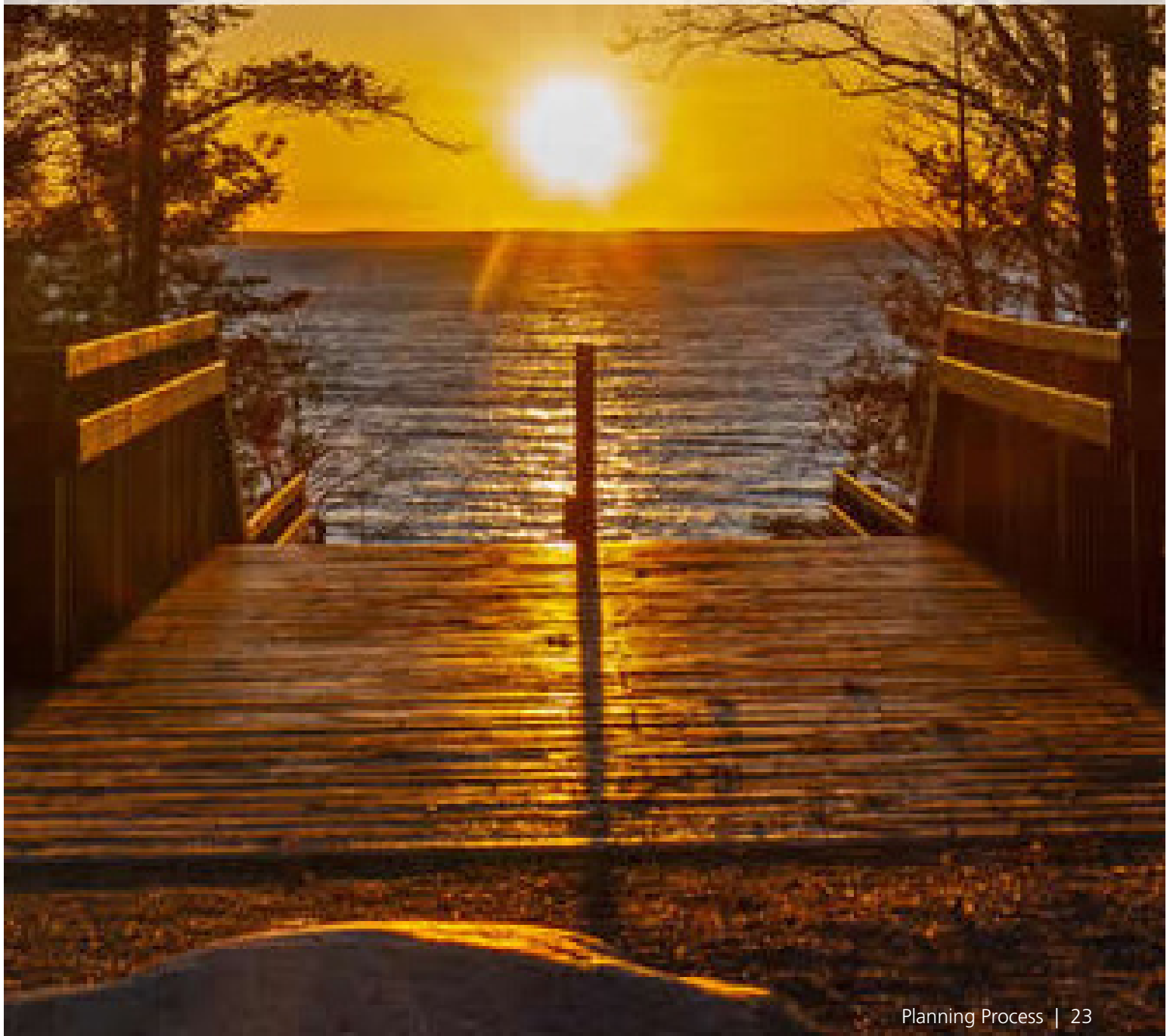
Facility Name	Size	Amenities	Ownership
Potential Nakwema Trailway Trailhead (corner of M 88 & US 31)	5 acres	None	Private
Bay Colony Road – Four Different Access Sites	Varies in width from 15 – 36 feet	Lake Michigan Access	Antrim County
Birchview Drive – Access Site	55 feet width	Lake Michigan Access	Antrim County
Manitou Trail – Access Site	--	Lake Michigan Access (with a stairway)	Antrim County
Michigan Trail North – Access Site	66 feet, comprised of 2 separate adjacent lots	Lake Michigan Access	Antrim County Road Commission
Michigan Trail South - Three Different Access Sites	--	Lake Michigan Access	Antrim County Road Commission
Barnes Park	163 acres	Campground, beach on Lake Michigan, restrooms, bath house, picnic area, playground, baseball field, two pavilions	Antrim County
Torch Lake Access Site	4.5 acres, with over 500 feet of beach frontage	Beach on Torch Lake, restrooms, boat launch	MDNR
Torch Lake Property	2.3 acres, with over 200 feet of beach frontage	Undeveloped	State of Michigan
A-Ga-Ming Golf Resort	--	72 holes for golf, dining, lodging	Private

Source

- 1 UC Berkeley, Disability Access & Compliance, Universal Design Principles, 4-16-2025, dac.berkeley.edu/services/campus-building-accessibility/universal-design-principles

4

Planning Process



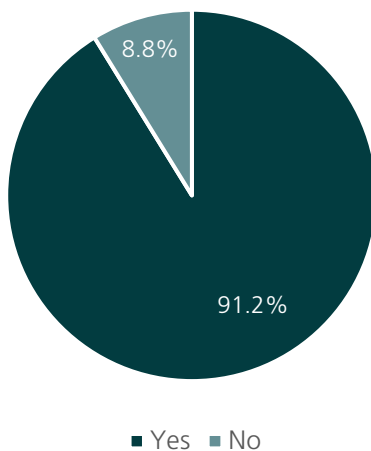
For the Torch Lake Township parks and recreation plan, public engagement was facilitated through a survey made accessible to residents online and an open house event in September. The survey and open house were done in combination with input for an update to the Township Master Plan. Both forms of public engagement informed the suggestions, strategies, and opportunities promoted by this parks and recreation plan.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

The survey was advertised by mailing, newspaper advertisements, emails, as well as in paper form that was available for completion at Township Hall. During the survey period from July 18 to September 4, 2025, the Township collected 456 responses from community members. A summary of this survey as well as a distillation of key takeaways are included in this document.

Question: Do you live in Torch Lake Township?

Total Responses: 441

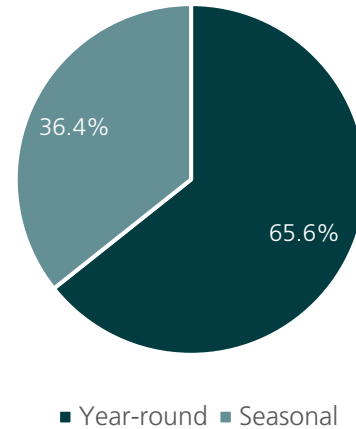


The overwhelming majority of survey respondents (over 9 out of 10) live in Torch Lake Township, indicating this survey successfully captured input

primarily from residents.

Question: Are you a seasonal or year-round resident?

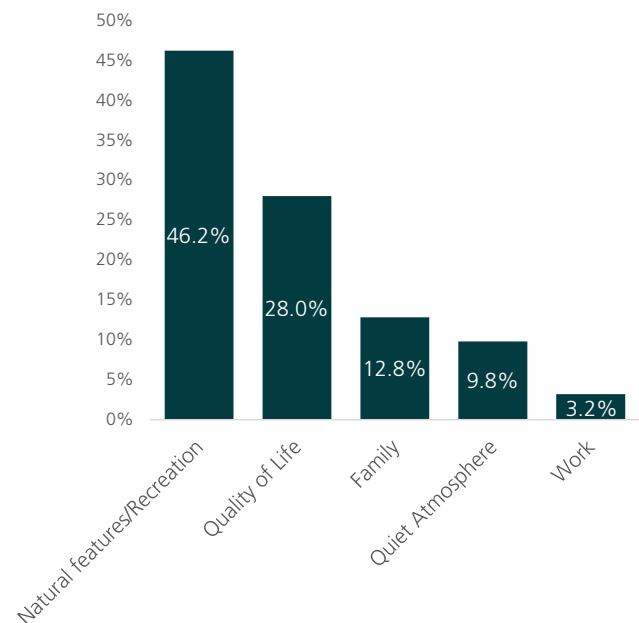
Total Responses: 456



The survey reveals a mixed community composition in Torch Lake Township with roughly a 2:1 ratio of year-round to seasonal residents among respondents.

Question: What is the main reason you decided to live/own property in Torch Lake Township?

Total Responses: 456

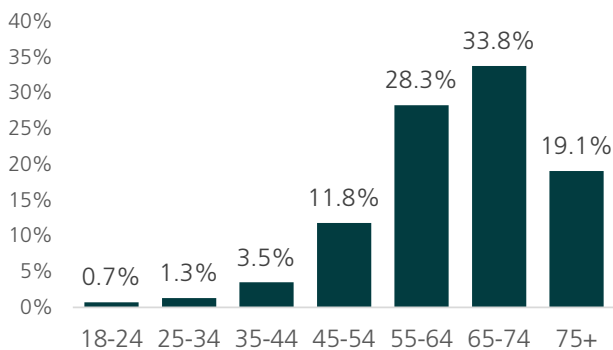


This data reveals Torch Lake Township as primarily a destination community chosen for its natural amenities and lifestyle benefits rather than economic opportunity. Residents are likely highly

invested in preserving the environmental qualities and peaceful character that originally attracted them. This could influence priorities around development, environmental protection, and maintaining the rural atmosphere that defines the community's appeal. The strong emphasis on natural features suggests residents would likely support policies that protect water quality, preserve green spaces, and maintain recreational access.

Question: What is your age range?

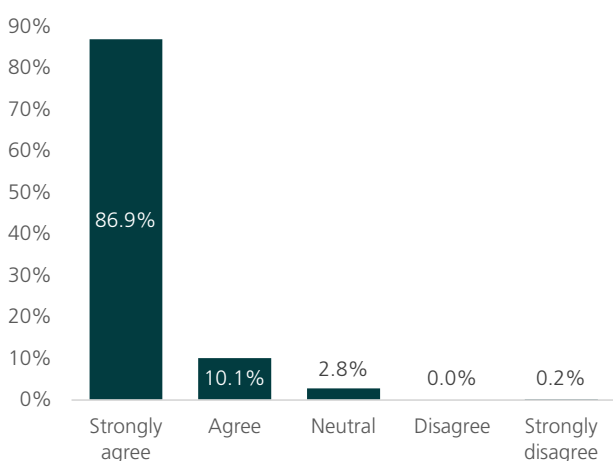
Total Responses: 456



More than 80% of all respondents were aged 55 years or older. Though not representative of the overall population age distribution, it shows that a large portion of older residents are engaged with recreation opportunities in Torch Lake Township. This age profile suggests priority needs around accessibility improvements and age-friendly recreation infrastructure.

Question: Natural features (lakes, streams, forests, wetlands, etc.) are important to my quality of life and should be protected.

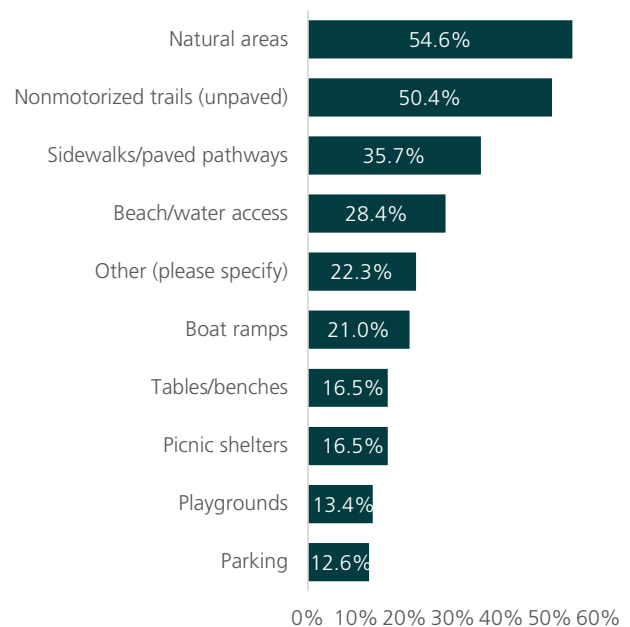
Total Responses: 456



Nearly all (96.7%) respondents either strongly agree or agree that natural features are important and should be protected, representing one of the strongest unified opinions in community surveys. This overwhelming consensus represents a rare opportunity for township leadership to pursue ambitious environmental protection measures with strong community backing.

Question: What type of recreational facilities would you like to see more of in Torch Lake Township? (Check all that apply)

Total Responses: 381



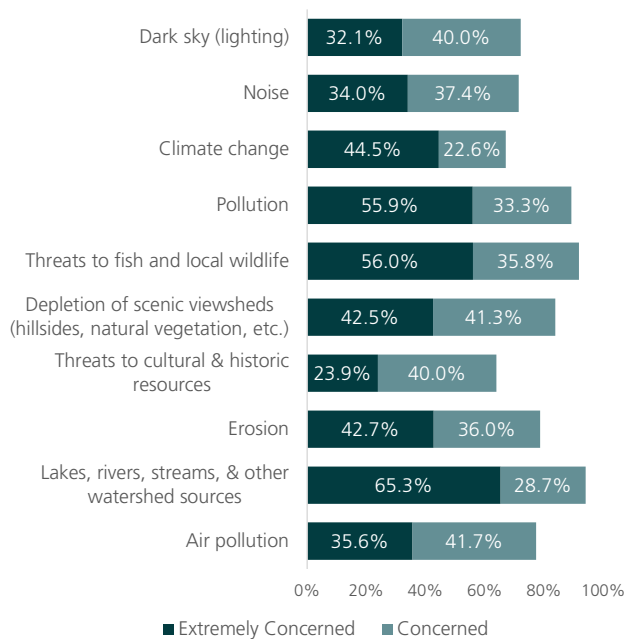
Survey responses indicate that residents of Torch Lake Township are most interested in expanding natural areas (54.6%) and nonmotorized trails (50.4%), making these the highest priorities for future recreational development. Sidewalks and paved pathways also received strong support (35.7%), showing a clear demand for improved walkability and connectivity within the community. Additionally, beach and water access (28.4%) and boat ramps (21.0%) are seen as important amenities, reflecting residents' desire for greater opportunities to enjoy the township's waterfront resources.

There was also space for additional comments with many respondents expressing a strong desire to maintain the township's natural, quiet character and limit additional recreational development, with several emphasizing that existing facilities

are sufficient and concerns about attracting more tourists and spending tax dollars on public amenities. Lastly, there was notable interest in specific improvements, including pickleball courts, bike trails, better trail connections (such as the Nakwema and TART Trails), improved boat access, and enhanced facilities like restrooms, benches, and picnic areas.

Question: Please state your level of concern with each of the topics below:

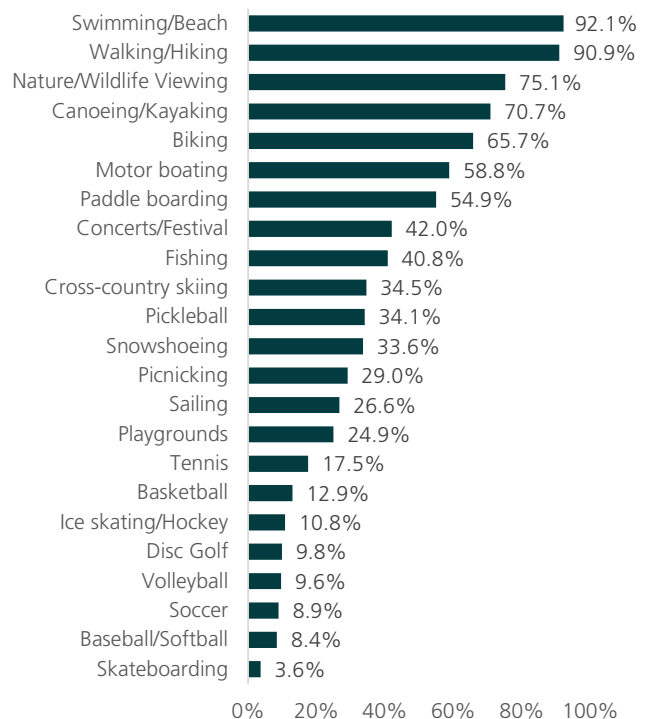
Total Responses: 425



This question gave the following options for each of the ten topics: Extremely Concerned, Concerned, Neutral, Unconcerned, Extremely Unconcerned. All topics received higher than 50% of responses stating that they were either Extremely Concerned or Concerned. Lakes, rivers, streams, and watershed sources emerged as the top concern at 78% extremely concerned/concerned, followed closely by threats to fish and local wildlife at 76%, and general pollution at 75%. These findings strongly align with the community's core values around natural features and reflect the recreational and ecological priorities that originally attracted residents to the area. Moderate-high concern issues include erosion (65%), depletion of scenic viewsheds (64%), and air pollution (62%), while lower priority issues encompass climate change (55%), threats to cultural and historic resources (52%), noise pollution (51%), and dark sky lighting concerns (48%).

Question: What recreational activities do you and members of your household enjoy? (check all that apply)

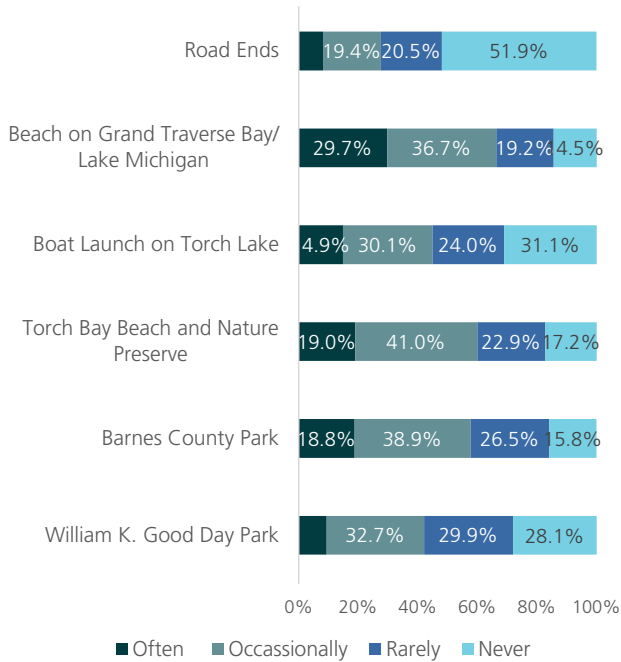
Total Responses: 417



Based on the survey responses about recreational activities enjoyed by household members, the data reveals a community deeply connected to water-based recreation and outdoor activities. Swimming and beach activities appear in nearly every response, making them the most popular pursuits, closely followed by walking, hiking, canoeing, kayaking, paddle boarding, and motor boating, which strongly suggests this is a waterfront community where aquatic recreation forms the foundation of residents' leisure time. Nature and wildlife viewing also ranks among the most frequently selected activities, indicating residents value the natural environment and outdoor experiences. The survey responses demonstrate a population that remains active throughout all seasons, with substantial winter participation in snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and ice skating, while biking, fishing, and picnicking maintain steady popularity year-round. Beyond the options that were presented, many residents added golf as another recreational activity that they frequently enjoy. The overall pattern reveals a highly active, outdoors-oriented community centered around water recreation with strong engagement in year-round outdoor pursuits.

Question: How often do you use the following Township recreational assets?

Total Responses: 415



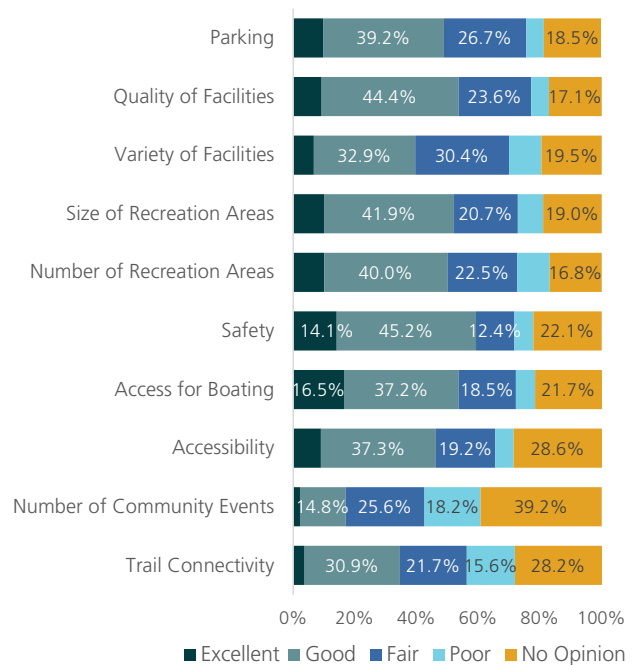
Looking at the survey responses for how often residents use Township recreational assets, the data shows varied usage patterns across the six facilities. The responses follow a frequency scale of Never, Rarely, Occasionally, and Often. William K. Good Day Park shows moderate usage with most respondents indicating "Occasionally" or "Rarely" using the facility. Very few respondents report "Often" usage, and a significant portion select "Never," suggesting this park may have limited appeal or accessibility for many residents. Barnes County Park demonstrates similar patterns with predominantly "Rarely" and "Occasionally" responses, though slightly fewer "Never" responses than Good Day Park, indicating somewhat broader community engagement.

Torch Bay Beach and Nature Preserve emerges as one of the more popular facilities, with a higher proportion of "Often" and "Occasionally" responses compared to the parks. This aligns with the community's strong preference for water-based activities, identified in the recreational preferences survey. Boat Launch on Torch Lake shows strong usage among those who participate, with many "Often" responses, though also significant "Never" responses, creating a polarized usage pattern that likely reflects the divide between boat owners and non-boat owners in the community. Beach

on Grand Traverse Bay/Lake Michigan receives substantial usage across all frequency categories, with many residents reporting "Occasionally" or "Often" visits, reinforcing the community's connection to water recreation. Road Ends show mixed usage patterns, with responses distributed evenly across all frequency categories, suggesting these access points serve different purposes for different residents. When asked more specifically which road ends respondents were referring to using, Cresswell Road, Barnes Road, Traverse Bay Road, and Erickson Road were the most frequent responses. The overall pattern indicates that water-related facilities receive the highest and most consistent usage, while traditional park facilities show more moderate engagement levels.

Question: How do you rate the following Torch Lake Township parks and recreation amenities?

Total Responses: 412

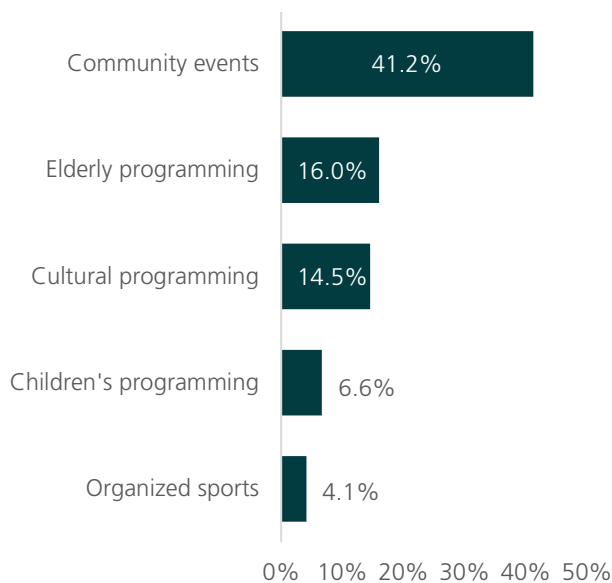


Respondents ranked various aspects of Township recreation amenities on a scale of Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, or No Opinion. Survey results show mixed opinions about Torch Lake Township's parks and recreation amenities. Safety received the highest positive ratings, with 59.3% of respondents rating it as excellent or good, followed by the quality of facilities (53.6%) and the size of recreation areas (52.1%). Access for boating also performed well, with 53.7% rating it positively. Accessibility and

parking received moderate satisfaction, with 46.3% and 48.9% positive ratings, respectively. On the other hand, several areas need improvement. Trail connectivity earned only 34.6% positive ratings, while 37.3% of respondents rated it fair or poor. The variety of facilities also scored lower, with nearly a third (30.4%) rating it as fair. The lowest-rated category was the number of community events, with just 17% positive responses and the highest percentage of respondents (39.2%) indicating no opinion, suggesting a potential lack of awareness or engagement. Overall, the results indicate that increasing programming, enhancing trail systems, diversifying facilities, and improving outreach should be top priorities moving forward.

Question: What type of recreation programs would you like to see offered in Torch Lake Township?

Total Responses: 318

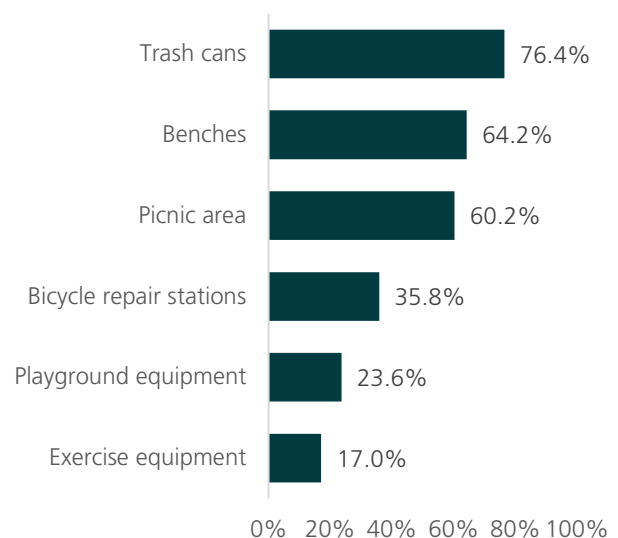


Survey responses show that community events were the most desired type of recreation program in Torch Lake Township, receiving 41.2% of selections. Other popular choices included elderly programming (16.0%), cultural programming (14.5%), children's programming (6.6%), and organized sports (4.1%), while 17.7% of responses fell under "other," reflecting a range of additional ideas. Open-ended comments revealed several key themes. A recurring request was for pickleball facilities, including both indoor and outdoor courts, highlighting its popularity as a growing sport and social activity. Some comments also suggested

additional offerings such as bike paths, outdoor concerts, therapeutic pools, senior transportation, tennis courts, and library access. At the same time, several respondents voiced skepticism about expanding township programming, citing concerns about costs, taxes, or unnecessary duplication of nearby recreation opportunities. Others preferred to leave the area as it is, with no further development. Overall, the results suggest strong community support for expanded programming especially community events, cultural activities, and pickleball.

Question: A non-profit recently acquired 4 parcels totaling 5 acres at the northwest corner of M-88 and US 31, next to Barnes Park. Current plans are to add a trailhead as part of the Nakwema Trailway that will connect Traverse City to Charlevoix. What other amenities would you like to see included at this location?

Total Responses: 377



Survey results show the most desired amenities at the new trailhead site near M-88 and US-31 are trash cans (76.4%), followed by benches (64.2%), picnic areas (60.2%), and bicycle repair stations (35.8%). Playground equipment (23.6%) and exercise equipment (17.0%) were less common but still received support, reflecting interest in creating a comfortable, functional gathering space for trail users. Open-ended feedback emphasized restrooms as the top priority, with requests for permanent, portable, or year-round facilities. Parking was also frequently noted as essential for accessibility. Beyond these basics,

many residents supported expanded recreation such as pickleball courts, basketball or volleyball courts, a skatepark, splashpad, and dog park. Others suggested community gathering amenities like shelters, fire pits, and multipurpose rooms, as well as trail-supportive features such as hydration stations, recycling bins, signage, and e-bike charging. Overall, the feedback reflects a balance between strong demand for restrooms, parking, and basic facilities, enthusiasm for new recreation opportunities, and caution from some residents about costs and growth.

Key Takeaways

- » **Survey Respondents:** Over 90% of respondents live in the township, with a 2:1 ratio of year-round to seasonal residents. More than 80% are aged 55 and over, highlighting the influence of older adults in shaping recreation needs.
- » **Environmental priorities:** Nearly all respondents (96.7%) want natural features protected, with top concerns around water quality, wildlife, and pollution.
- » **Recreation patterns:** The community is highly water- and nature-oriented, with swimming, hiking, kayaking, and wildlife viewing as top activities. Winter sports like skiing and snowshoeing also show strong participation.
- » **Facilities:** Water access sites see the most frequent use. Trail connectivity and facility variety are seen as weak spots, while community events are rated lowest.
- » **Future development:** Residents prioritize natural areas, trails, and walkability improvements, with less interest in playgrounds and parking. Many stress preserving the township's quiet, natural character.
- » **Programming:** Community events are most desired, followed by elderly and cultural programming. Pickleball is a recurring request.
- » **New trailhead site:** Trash cans, benches, picnic areas, and restrooms top the list of desired amenities. Parking and pickleball courts are also common requests, though some residents caution against overdevelopment.

COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE

A community open house was held on September 15, 2025 at the Community Services Building, slightly south of the Township of Torch Lake. Approximately 65 community members attended the event to offer input on various topics regarding parks and recreation in the Township. The results of the open house are summarized below.

Recreational Facilities and Activities

What type of recreation facilities would you like to see more of in Torch Lake Township?

The most popular recreation facilities were non-motorized trails, natural areas, and beach/water access, indicating that the Township should prioritize these types of recreational facilities.

Type of Recreational Facility	Count
Non-motorized trails	24
Natural areas	22
Beach/Water access	11
Picnic shelters	5
Boat ramps	3
Playgrounds	3
Sidewalks	2
Tables/benches	0
Parking	0

What recreational activities do you and members of your household enjoy?

Of the 24 options provided, the seven recreational activities included in the following table were the most popular, receiving at least ten votes each. Other activities that garnered fewer than ten votes are listed in order of popularity: motorboating, sailing, fishing, playgrounds, snowshoeing, concerts/festivals, paddle boarding, tennis, baseball, basketball, disc golf, volleyball, picnicking, soccer, and skateboarding.

Type of Recreational Activity	Count
Walking and Hiking	21
Biking	20
Nature/Wildlife viewing	14
Pickleball	13
Cross-country skiing	13
Swimming/Beach	10
Canoeing/Kayaking	10

Future Opportunities

What would you like Torch Lake Township to look like in 20 years?

One of the large focuses shared by participants to prioritize for the next 20 years was recreational amenities. In particular, community members identified that additional recreational spaces, such as hiking, biking, and walking trails should be developed in the Township. Another general opinion shared at the open house was that there should be additional spaces for younger children in the Township. Developing more outdoor recreational facilities geared towards the younger population in the Township may be beneficial.

Several community members additionally noted that the Township should retain many of its current features in the coming 20 years, especially regarding its natural amenities. As such, it is evident that the Township should continue to support its existing recreational facilities and amenities in the future.

What opportunities are in Torch Lake Village? What would you like to see?

Open house attendees identified five categories of opportunities to be pursued in Torch Lake Village. Two of these categories involve the Township's recreational facilities and amenities and are listed below. The other three categories of opportunities may be viewed in the Township's Master Plan.

- » **Bike Trails:** improving the safety of existing bike trails and developing new bike trail connecting Eastport and Torch Lake.
- » **Recreational Facilities:** developing pickleball and tennis courts.

What opportunities are in Eastport Village? What would you like to see?

Five additional – and generally similar – categories of opportunities for the community of Eastport were identified by community members. Again, two of these categories directly involve parks and recreation facilities in the Township.

- » **Recreation Facilities:** developing pickleball and tennis courts was largely popular among attendees.
- » **Completing the trailhead:** continuing the development of the Nakwema trailhead was also highly anticipated by community members at the open house.

Key Takeaways

- » The most prevalent interests shared by open house attendees were to expand the Township's non-motorized trails, support the natural areas, and develop additional recreational facilities, such as tennis and pickleball courts.
- » The Township should preserve existing natural features and amenities, as this is a top concern of community members.

5

Implementation



Goals offer broad guidance and outline the desired future state. They address specific needs and issues but remain general in nature.

Objectives are concrete steps that help achieve the broader goals and are designed to be attainable.

Actions detail the specific steps required to meet objectives. A single strategy may support multiple objectives, or an objective may need several strategies to be achieved. These actions also identify the implementation tools, such as zoning changes, and the key stakeholders responsible for fulfilling the goals and objectives.

The goals, objectives, and action plan are designed to shape future decisions regarding recreation, aligning closely with the Township's values and priorities. These goals were formulated through a comprehensive process that included analyzing current facilities, public input, and input from Township officials. To effectively implement these goals, objectives, and actions, it is crucial to grasp their respective roles and their interconnectedness. Understanding these dynamics ensures a coherent approach to achieving our recreational objectives.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Maintain and improve parks and recreational facilities and identify opportunities for new spaces.

- » Continue to provide, maintain, and enhance parks and recreational facilities and amenities for both residents and visitors.
- » Prioritize the enhancement of the Day Park to continue ensuring that it is the premier recreation space in Torch Lake Township.
- » Keep the 5-year recreation plan up-to-date and ensure it meets DNR approval to maintain a dependable stream of funding.
- » Explore opportunities to introduce additional recreational activities at existing parks and facilities to better attract and retain both residents and visitors.
- » Develop or upgrade amenities to expand recreational opportunities specifically for the area's youth.
- » Increase the Township's capacity to plan effectively for parks and recreation.
- » Work with the Township Board to look at zoning changes that would set aside open space for recreation in new subdivision developments.
- » Advocate for improved accessibility across all parks and recreational facilities.

Provide nonmotorized transportation options and outdoor recreational opportunities, taking advantage of the physical characteristics of the land of this Township while meeting the expressed needs of its taxpayers.

- » Improve and/or develop trail systems through open space areas in which interest has already been established such as the Nakwema Trailway.
- » Prepare trails that can be used for hiking in the spring, summer, and fall seasons and then be used for snow-shoeing and cross-country skiing in the winter season.
- » Working with neighboring communities to provide main non-motorized trails routes for the purpose of transportation and recreation that pass through Torch Lake Township such as the Nakwema Trailway.
- » Provide pedestrian routes between activity centers and focus on the more developed areas of the Township for sidewalk construction and expansion.
- » Develop policies and directives to establish construction and maintenance schedules.
- » Provide facilities and programming that encourage those living in this community to want to be outside, engaging in physical, health encouraging, and educational activities that enhance their lives
- » Work with local organizations to support events and programs that educate the community of recreation options in the area, wildlife, and the importance of exercise.
- » Establish a system that keeps Township taxpayers informed of the status of recreational/ educational programs.

ACTION PLAN

Table XX: Action Plan

Action Type	Time Frame	Specific Activity	Cost and Funding
Park Improvements			
Boat Launch Improvements			
Road End Improvements			

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Appendix

- A. Resolution of Adoption
- B. Parks Board Meeting Minutes
- C. Township Board Meeting Minutes
- D. Public Hearing Notice
- E. 30-Day Review Notice
- F. Survey Flyer
- G. Open House Flyer
- H. Post Completion Forms
- I. Letters of Transmittal
- J. MDNR Checklist

SECTION 6

ACTION PROGRAM

The action program is presented below in two tables that describe improvements to existing facilities and the development of new facilities. Anticipated funding sources will be in the form of donations to the Township for recreation projects, cash from the Township general fund, in-kind labor, Upper Torch Lake Association (UTLA) and Michigan Department of Natural Resource (MDNR) grants. Sources of the grants are: Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF), and other appropriate grant programs.

Capital Improvements Schedule for Existing Properties/Facilities

The following capital improvements are planned for the existing Township owned properties and facilities within the time period covered by this plan.

Capital Improvements Schedule for Existing Township Facilities			
Facilities	Year	Activity/ Development	Cost and Anticipated Funding Source
Park Improvements	2011	Day Park – Overall plan to better utilize the available space and improve accessibility.	Anticipated planning costs: <u>\$7,500-10,000</u> Possible funding sources: UTLA, Torch Lake Township, foundations.
	2011-2012	remove unsafe deteriorated playstructure and replace with updated structure.	Anticipated cost: <u>\$50,000</u> Possible funding sources: MNRTF, local funds.
Launch facilities	2011	Torch Lake Boat Launch at Day Park - re-design parking area to more efficiently accommodate more vehicles in an expanded pervious parking area.	Anticipated cost: Included above in planning costs.
	2012	West Torch Lake Boat Ramp (S. of Barnes Rd)—fully redesign and reconstruct access and launch (possible double ramp), add signage at the site to address safety issues, parking limitations and launch access.	Anticipated costs: <u>\$30,000-50,000</u> Possible funding sources: MNRTF, LWCF, local tribal governments, Upper Torch Lake Association and local funds

Road Ends Access Sites	2011-2013	Map existing road ends, post map on Township website to foster public awareness and prioritize improvements.	Anticipated costs: Unknown Possible funding sources: Township
	2013	3rd Street – Road End Access add improved access to lake for pedestrian use and erosion control measures.	Anticipated Costs: \$5,000-10,000 Possible funding sources: LWCF, MNRTF, UTLA and Township
	2014	Barnes Road – Road End Access add access to lake for pedestrian use and erosion control measures.	Anticipated Costs: \$5,000-10,000 Possible funding sources: LWCF, MNRTF, UTLA and Township

Improvements for other publicly owned properties

In addition to projects associated with Township owned properties, Torch Lake Township wishes to encourage the DNRE to make improvements to the Boat Launch site in Eastport on Torch Lake and is willing to work cooperatively with the State to accomplish such improvements.

Capital Improvements Schedule for Proposed Other Public Facilities			
Facilities	Year	Activity/ Development	Cost and Anticipated Funding Source
DNR Boat Launch - Eastport	?	Work with State to upgrade the restroom facilities at launch site.	Anticipated costs: To be determined DNR and local funds

Property Acquisitions and new facilities

Capital Improvements Schedule for Proposed Facilities			
New Facilities	Year	Activity/ Development	Cost and Anticipated Funding Source
Property Acquisition	2011-2012	Acquire property in the northern part of the Township for trails, tennis courts and other recreational activities	Anticipated costs: to be determined MNRTF, foundations, local funds and Township
Non-motorized route	2012-2015	Establish non-motorized connections throughout the Township to connect to local recreation areas and other places of interest. Pursue easements as needed. Prepare map and provide signage to promote use of non-motorized routes.	Anticipated costs: to be determined Top of Michigan Trails Council, DNR, Road Commission, foundations, MDOT and local funds

Rationale for Property Acquisition:

There is an interest and need for tennis courts and additional hiking trails within the Township. Additionally, if property were to be located in proximity to the DNR Launch site, it could provide some needed supplemental parking. The only developed Township park is the William K. Good Day Park located on Torch Lake, which is well utilized with limited unused space. A potential property in the northern portion of the Township is being explored.

Rationale for New Non-motorized Routes:

There is a growing interest in trails both within the community and connecting to a larger trail network. In the recently adopted Antrim County Recreation Plan, one of the identified needs is "develop a connecting trail system". The need for other biking, hiking trails, x-country ski and snowshoeing trails is currently being explored, and should be considered on future township properties.

Rationale for Park Improvements

Day Park An overall plan for the park is needed to guide any improvements and to look at the long term needs. The re-design of the boat parking area could help to reduce the parking congestion in the area. The current playstructure is outdated and potentially may soon become unsafe. This structure should be replaced with a structure which serves a range of ages.

Rationale for Launch Improvements

The West Torch Lake Boat Ramp is exceedingly tight, with very limited parking and a concrete launch ramp which is significantly deteriorated. The launch poses safety concerns, thus the need for a redesign of the site and reconstruction of the ramp.

Rationale for Road End / Access Site Improvements

In order to protect the shoreline and reduce the risk of erosion, stabilization of the shoreline and providing improved access are proposed.

Master Plan
Survey and Master Plan Summary- October 2025

Community Engagement

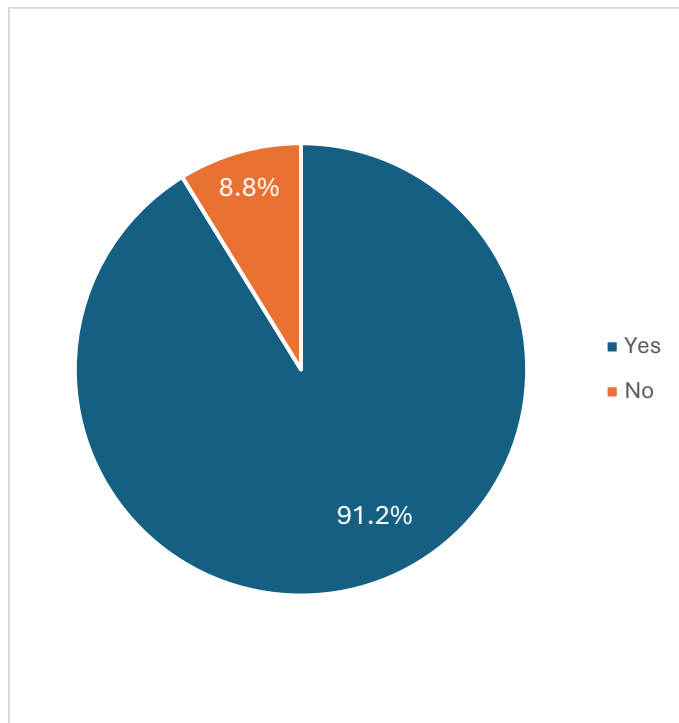
For the Torch Lake Master Plan, public engagement was facilitated through a survey made accessible to residents online and an open house event in September. Both forms of public engagement informed the suggestions, strategies, and opportunities promoted by this Master Plan.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

The community survey was advertised by a postcard mailing, newspaper advertisements, and email list as well as in paper form that was available for completion at Township Hall. During the survey period from July 18 to September 4, 2025, the Township collected 456 responses from community members. A summary of this survey as well as a distillation of key takeaways are included in this document.

Question: Do you live in Torch Lake Township?

Total Responses: 441

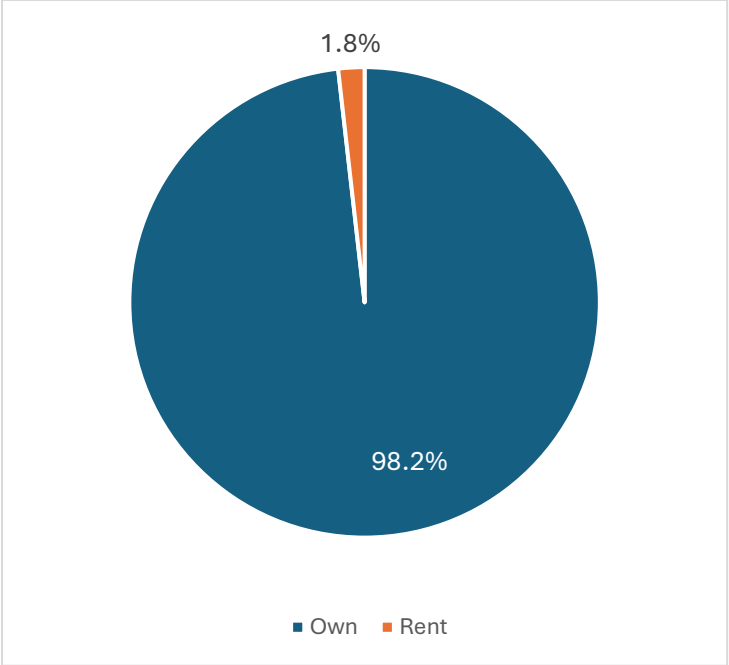


The overwhelming majority of survey respondents (over 9 out of 10) live in Torch Lake Township, indicating this survey successfully captured input primarily from residents.

Question: Do you own or rent your home?

Total Responses: 436

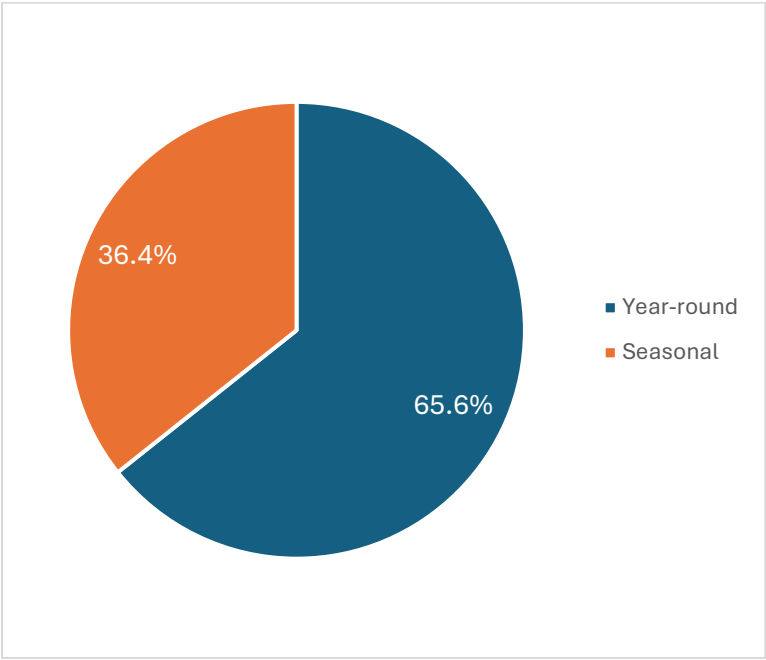
Master Plan
Survey and Master Plan Summary- October 2025



Higher than 98% of those who completed the survey were homeowners, slightly higher than the actual distribution of 92.5% homeowners across the Township.

Question: Are you a seasonal or year-round resident?

Total Responses: 456

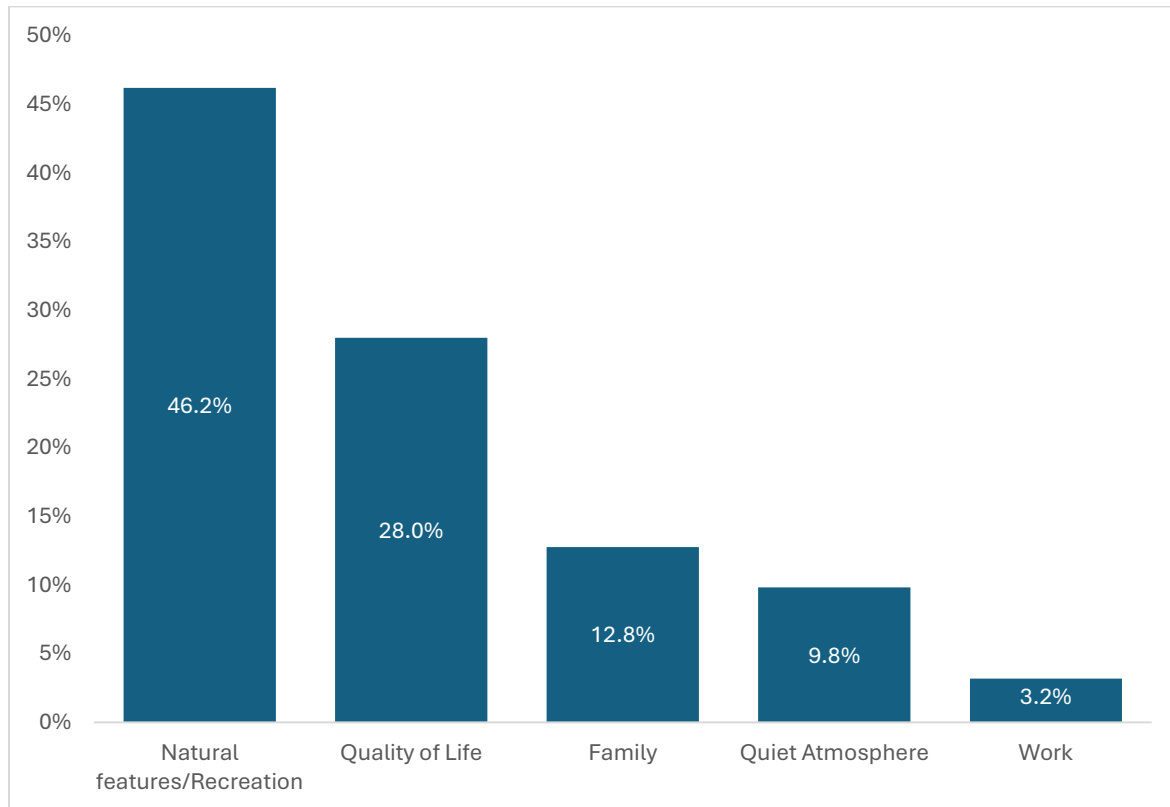


The survey reveals a mixed community composition in Torch Lake Township with roughly a 2:1 ratio of year-round to seasonal residents among respondents.

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Question: What is the main reason you decided to live/own property in Torch Lake Township?

Total Responses: 456



The data shows that Torch Lake Township is primarily a destination community chosen for its natural amenities and lifestyle benefits rather than economic opportunity. This could influence priorities around development, environmental protection, and maintaining the rural atmosphere that defines the community's appeal. The strong emphasis on natural features suggests residents would likely support policies that protect water quality, preserve green spaces, and maintain recreational access.

Question: What is the five-digit zip code of your primary residence?

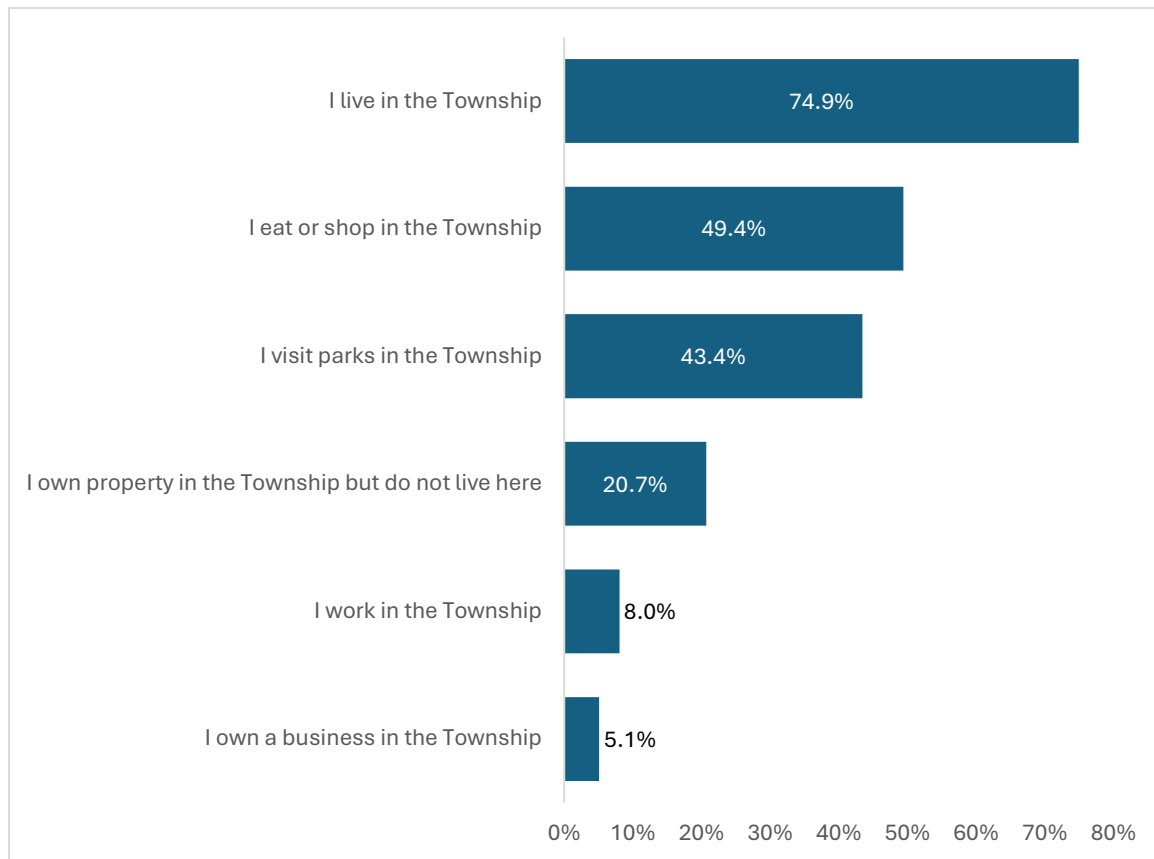
Total Responses: 428

Most respondents (nearly 70%) live in or around Torch Lake Township zip codes (49648, 49622, and 49627), confirming the survey reflects local resident perspectives. Many others were from throughout the State or Country indicating that some seasonal residents complete the survey as well.

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Question: Of the following, which describes your experience with Torch Lake Township?

Total Responses: 435

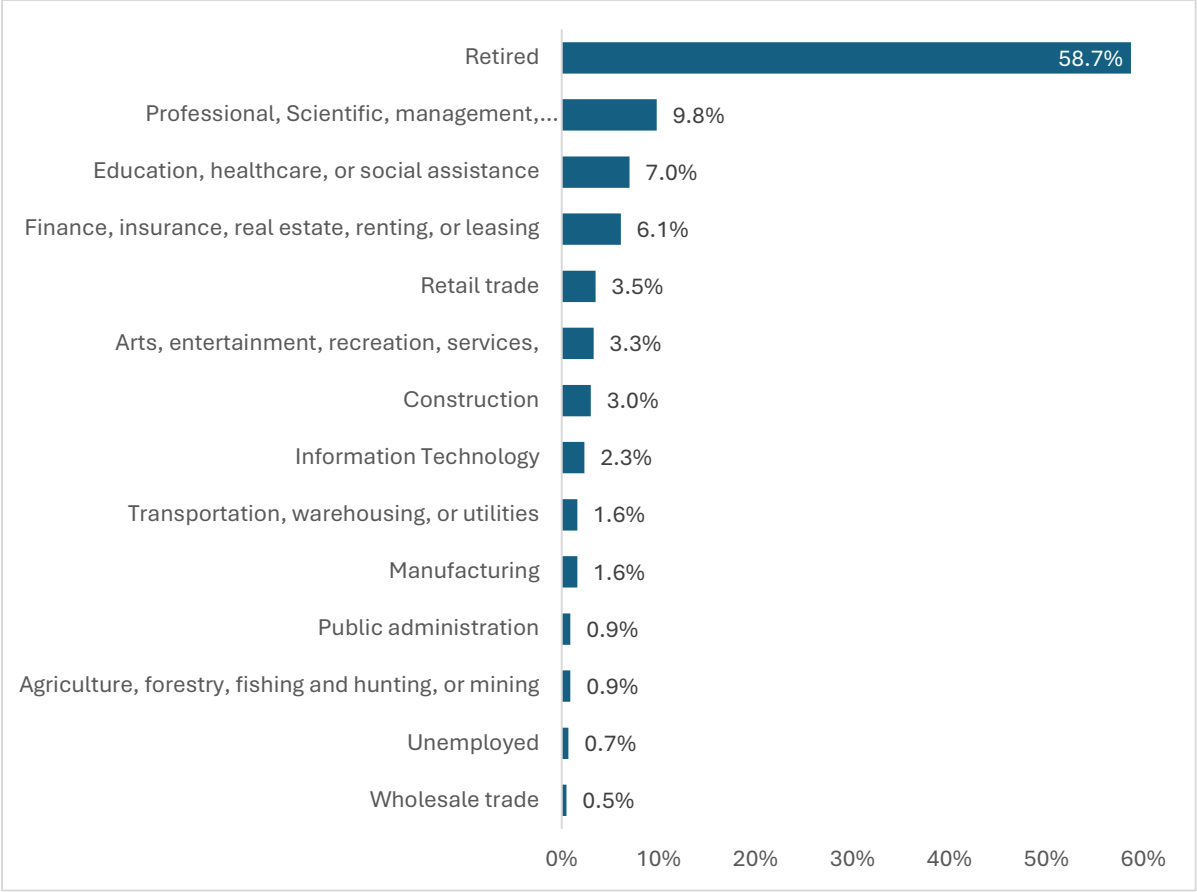


Most respondents (74.9%) reported that they live in Torch Lake Township, making residency the strongest connection to the community. Nearly half said they eat or shop locally (49.4%) and visit parks in the Township (43.4%), showing the importance of both everyday services and recreation. About one-fifth (20.7%) own property in the Township but do not live there, reflecting the presence of seasonal or absentee property owners.

Question: What best describes the type of work you do?

Total Responses: 456

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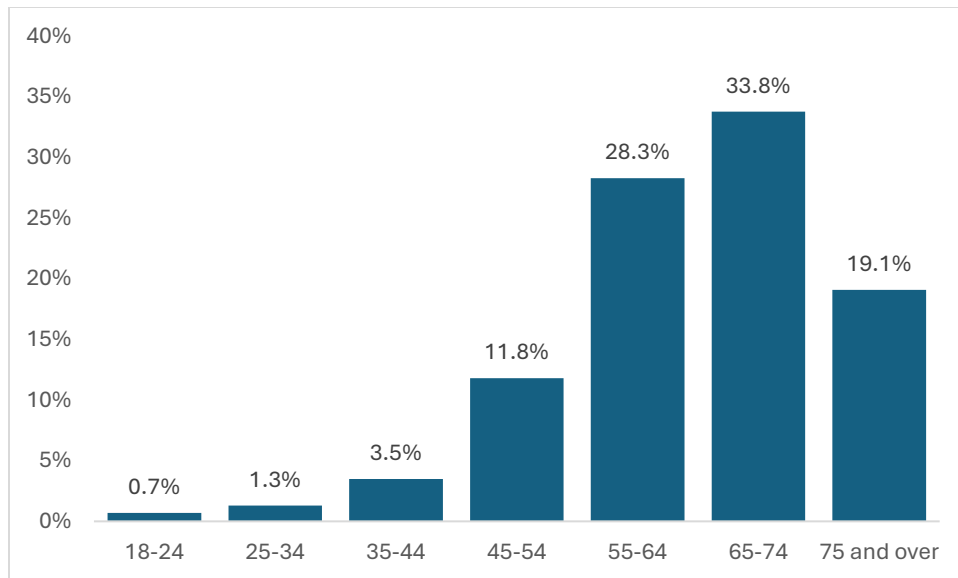


The overwhelming proportion of retirees highlights the Township’s older demographic profile, a significant difference from the overall view of Torch Lake Township residents. Those still working are most employed in professional services, education/health, or finance-related fields, with relatively little representation from traditional industries like manufacturing, agriculture, or trade.

Question: What is your age range?

Total Responses: 436

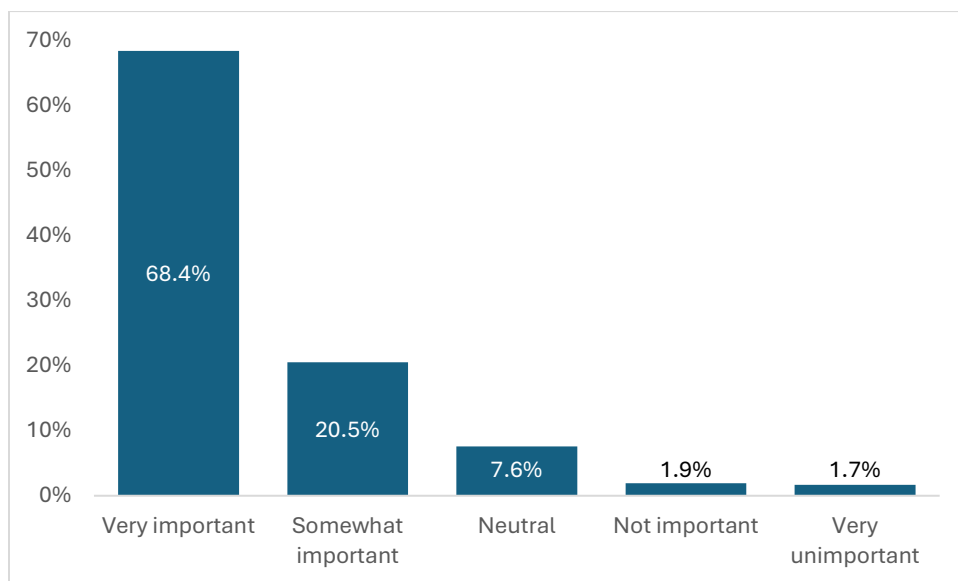
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More than 80% of all respondents were aged 55 years or older. Though not representative of the overall population age distribution, it shows that a large portion of older residents are engaged with recreation opportunities in Torch Lake Township. While respondents were largely older residents with over 80% being 55 years or older, compared to the actual distribution of about 53% of the population being over 55 years. This age profile suggests priority needs around accessibility improvements and age-friendly recreation infrastructure.

Question: How important is preserving existing agricultural land within the Township?

Total Responses: 424



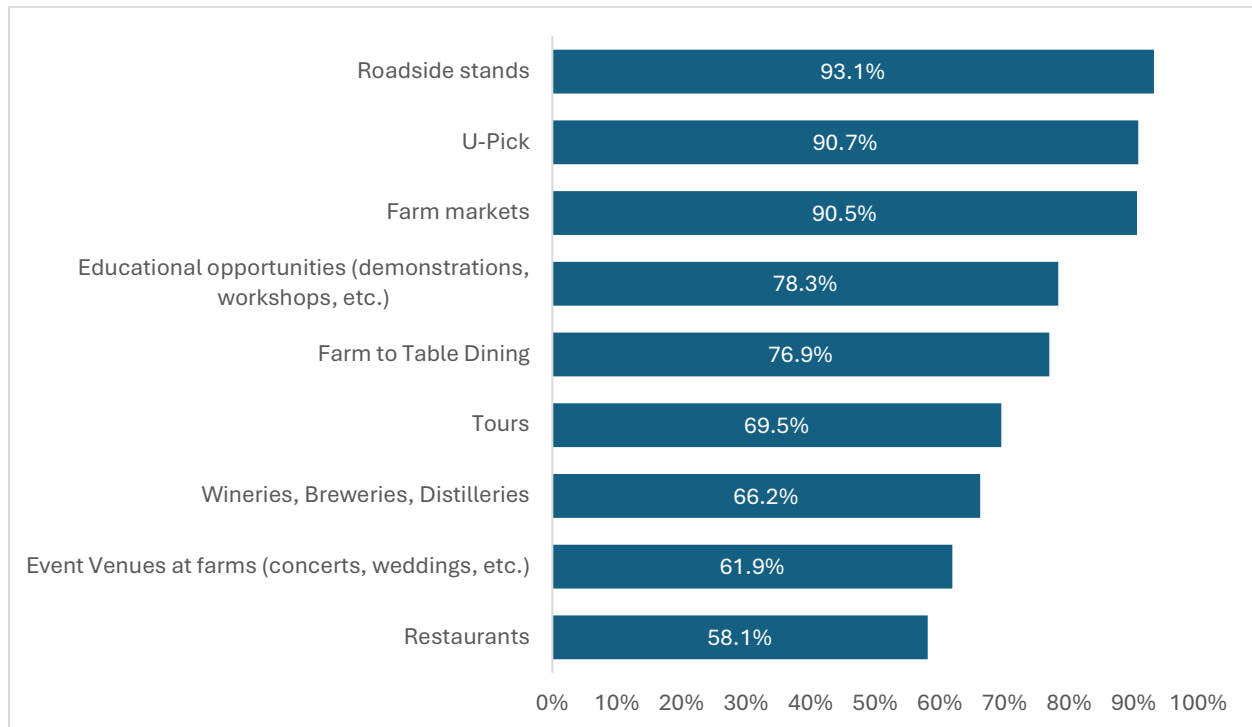
Survey responses show that preserving agricultural land is considered highly important to the community. A strong majority of respondents rated it as either very important (68.4%) or

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somewhat important (20.5%), meaning nearly nine in ten residents (88.9%) view farmland preservation as a priority. Protecting farmland is a clear community value in Torch Lake Township, with broad consensus that agricultural land should be preserved, reinforcing the township's rural identity and support for land use policies that guard against excessive development.

Question: Which of the following uses should be allowed on agricultural property where an active farm operation is occurring?

Total Responses: 420



The survey results show strong support for a variety of uses on active agricultural properties, with clear preferences for activities that both complement farming and engage the public. Traditional farm-related uses received overwhelming backing. Roadside stands (93.1%), U-pick operations (90.7%), and farm markets (90.5%) were the most widely supported, indicating strong community interest in direct farm-to-consumer activities. This reflects a desire to keep agriculture central while also allowing diversified uses that sustain farms economically and enrich community life.

Question: What retail/commercial offerings are missing, or needed in Torch Lake Township?

Total Responses: 279

This survey question was presented as a written response, giving residents an open-ended opportunity to describe what retail or commercial offerings they felt were missing or needed in Torch Lake Township. Because it was not multiple choice, answers varied widely, ranging from

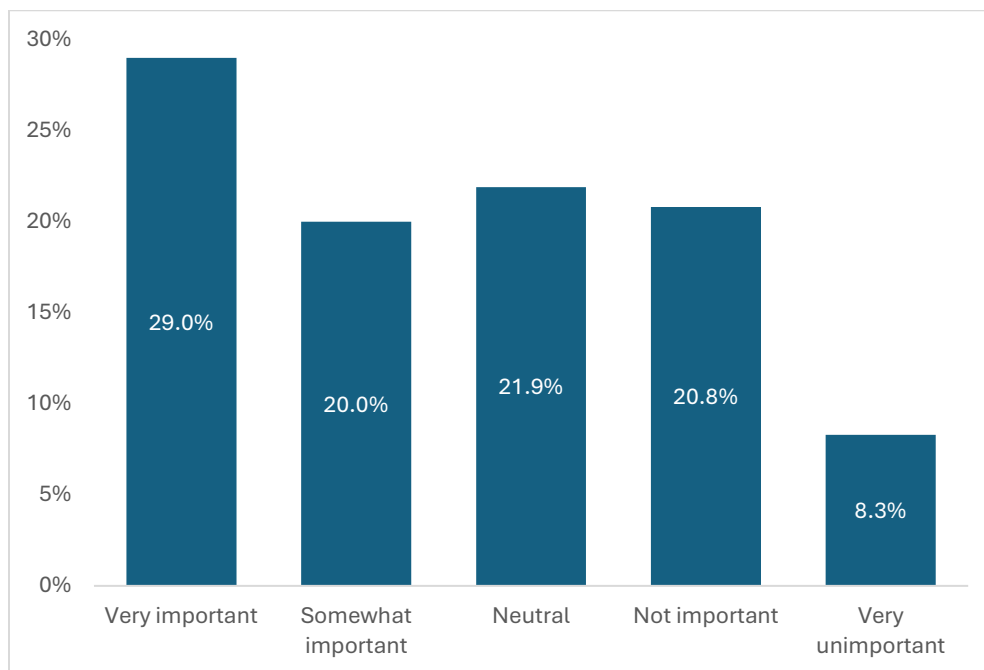
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specific types of businesses and services to broader reflections on community character. The most common requests centered on restaurants (especially affordable, year-round options) as well as grocery and pharmacy services, personal care providers like hairdressers and barbers, and fitness or wellness facilities. Other ideas included convenience stores, hardware shops, car/boat washes, coffee shops, and additional lodging options.

At the same time, many respondents indicated that no new retail or commercial development is needed, noting that Elk Rapids, Charlevoix, and Traverse City are close enough to meet their shopping and service needs. Several emphasized the importance of preserving the Township's quiet, rural character and voiced concerns about overdevelopment, tourism pressure, or environmental impacts.

Question: How important is it to you and your family to have access to healthcare providers, such as primary care doctors, dentist, pharmacy, in the township?

Total Responses: 424

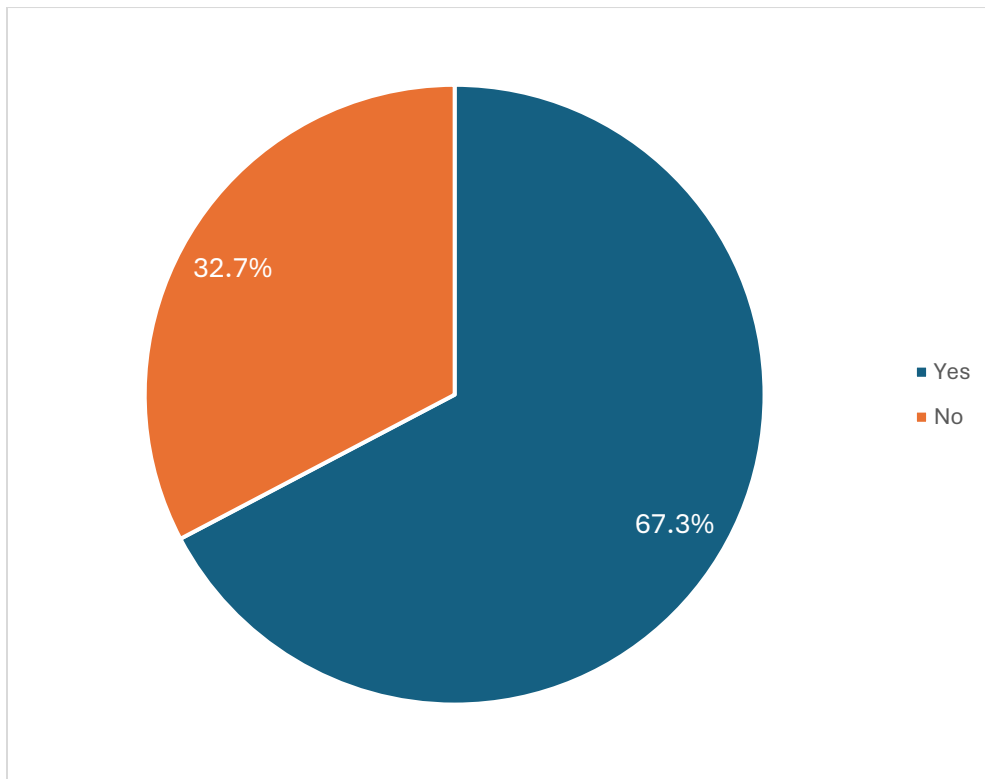


There was a reasonable distribution of responses in each option, though 49% of respondents stated that access to healthcare in Torch Lake Township is either "Very important" or "Somewhat important".

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Question: Do you own property on the water?

Total Responses: 425

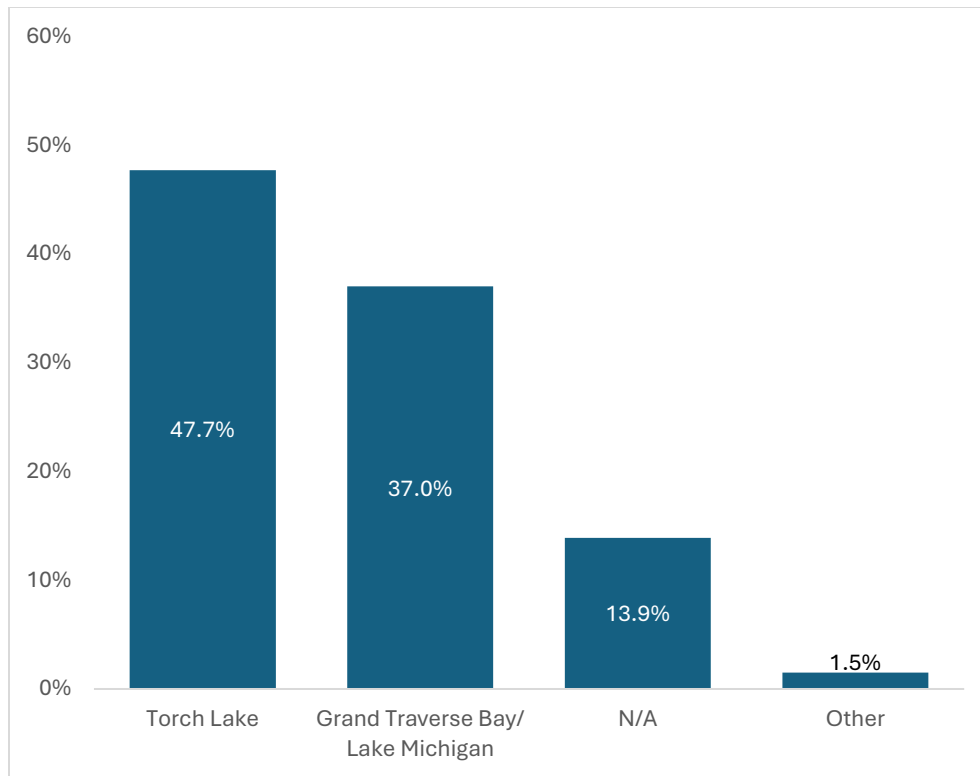


Higher than two-thirds of survey respondents stated that they own property on the water in Torch Lake Township.

Question: If yes, what body of water do you own property on?

Total Responses: 338

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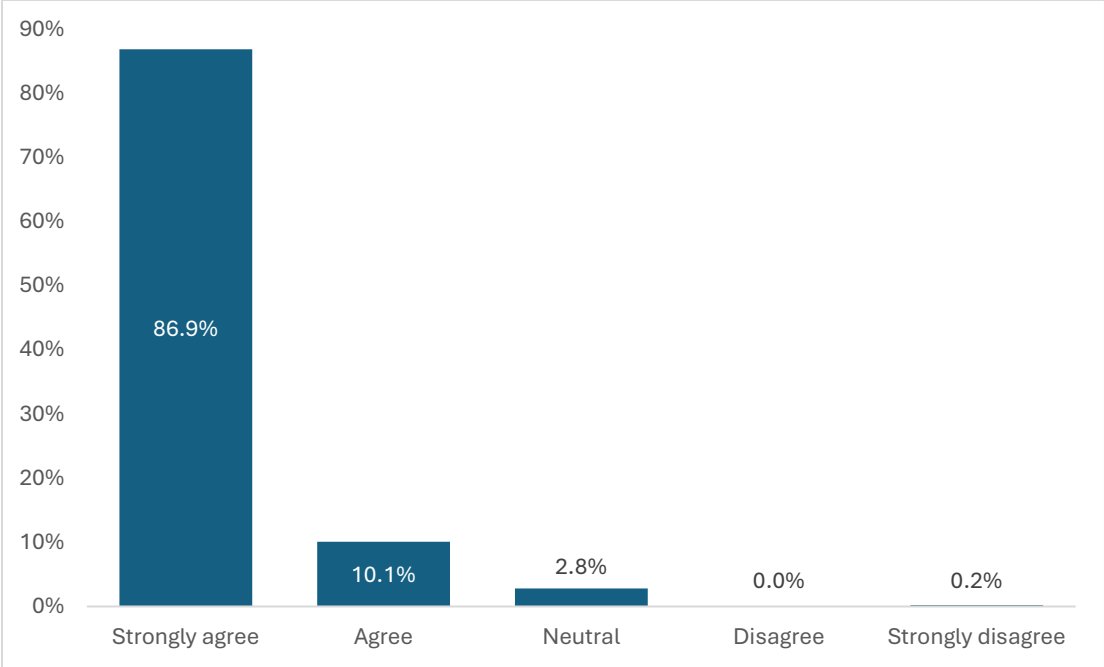


Of those who own property on the water, the majority are on “Torch Lake” and “Grand Traverse Bay/ Lake Michigan”. Those who selected the “other” option mentioned, that they had property on both water bodies, while one mentioned Birch Lake and another that they were a part of an association that collectively owned a piece of land.

Question: Natural features (lakes, streams, forests, wetlands, etc.) are important to my quality of life and should be protected.

Total Responses: 456

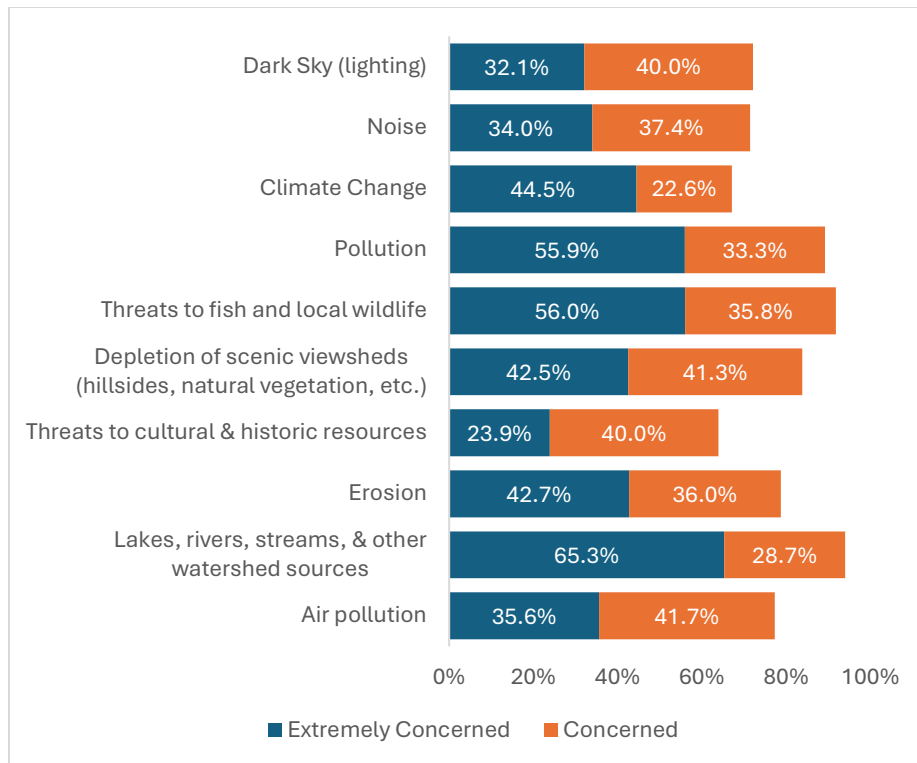
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Most (87%) respondents either strongly agree or agree that natural features are important and should be protected, representing one of the strongest unified opinions in community surveys. This overwhelming consensus represents a rare opportunity for township leadership to pursue ambitious environmental protection measures with strong community backing.

Question: Please state your level of concern with each of the below topics
Total Responses: 426

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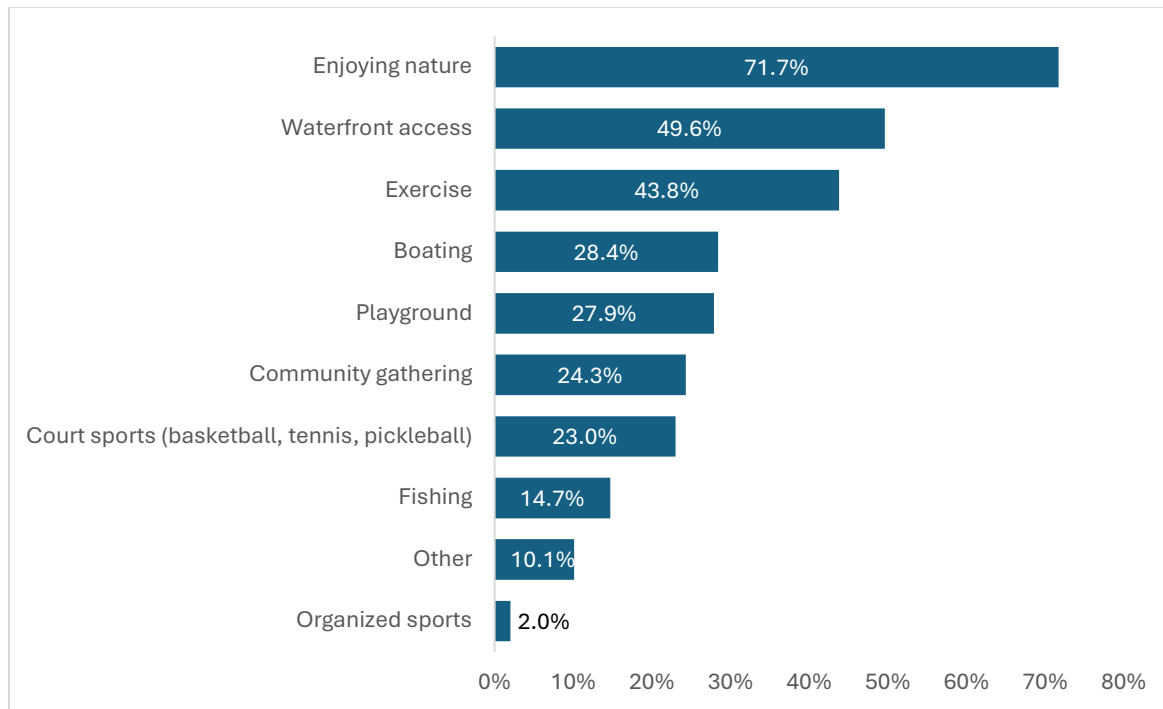


This question gave the following options for each of the ten topics: Extremely Concerned, Concerned, Neutral, Unconcerned, Extremely Unconcerned. All topics received higher than 50% of responses stating that they were either Extremely Concerned or Concerned. Lakes, rivers, streams, and watershed sources emerged as the top concern at 78% extremely concerned/concerned, followed closely by threats to fish and local wildlife at 76%, and general pollution at 75%. These findings strongly align with the community's core values around natural features and reflect the recreational and ecological priorities that originally attracted residents to the area.

Question: Why do you visit public parks or recreational facilities in the Township?

Total Responses: 395

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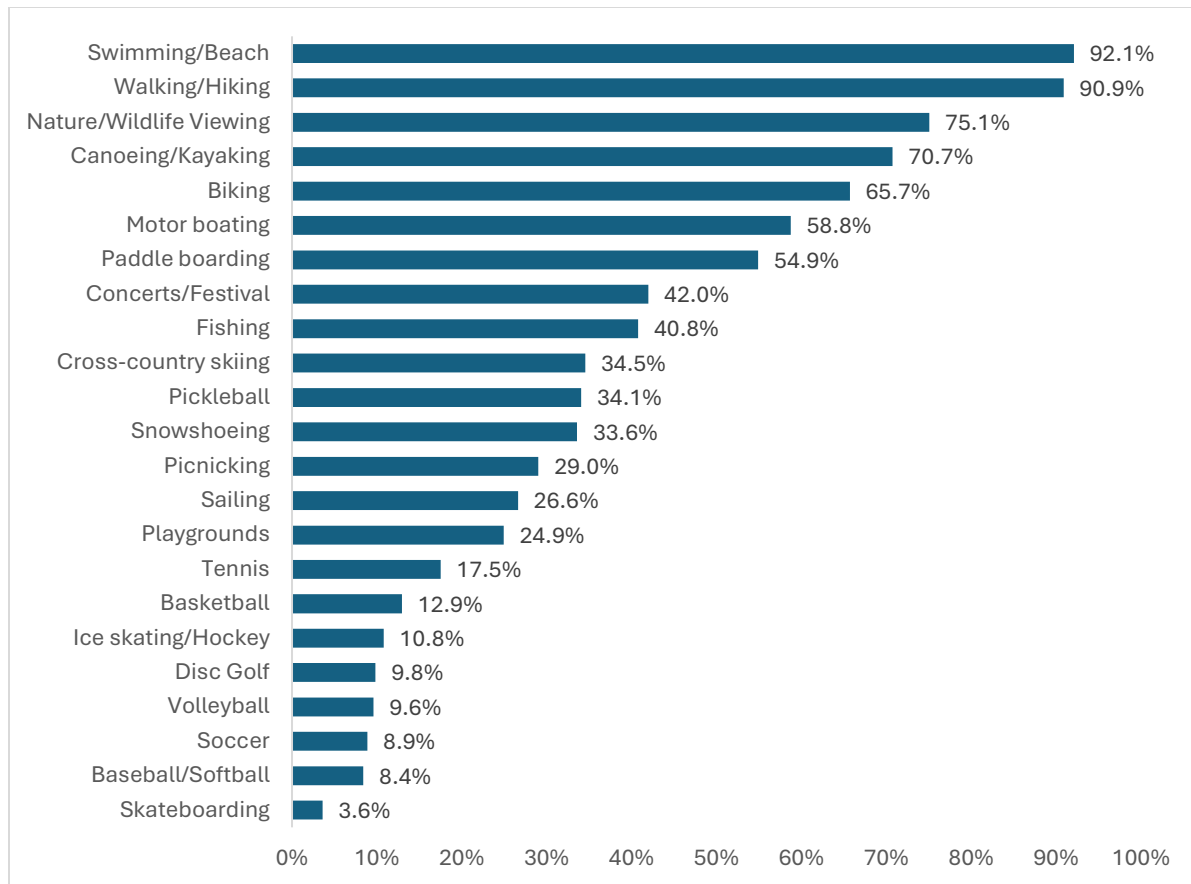


Most residents reported visiting public parks and recreation facilities in Torch Lake Township to enjoy nature (71.7%) and access the waterfront (49.6%), with many also using them for exercise (43.8%), boating (28.4%), or playgrounds (27.9%). Written comments highlighted additional uses such as picnics, family reunions, birdwatching, photography, hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing, along with amenities like boat launches, trailheads, and dog-friendly spaces. At the same time, several respondents expressed frustration with crowding during the summer months, noting that high visitor traffic, especially from out-of-state users, often discourages them from using local facilities.

Question: What recreational activities do you and members of your household enjoy? (check all that apply)

Total Responses: 417

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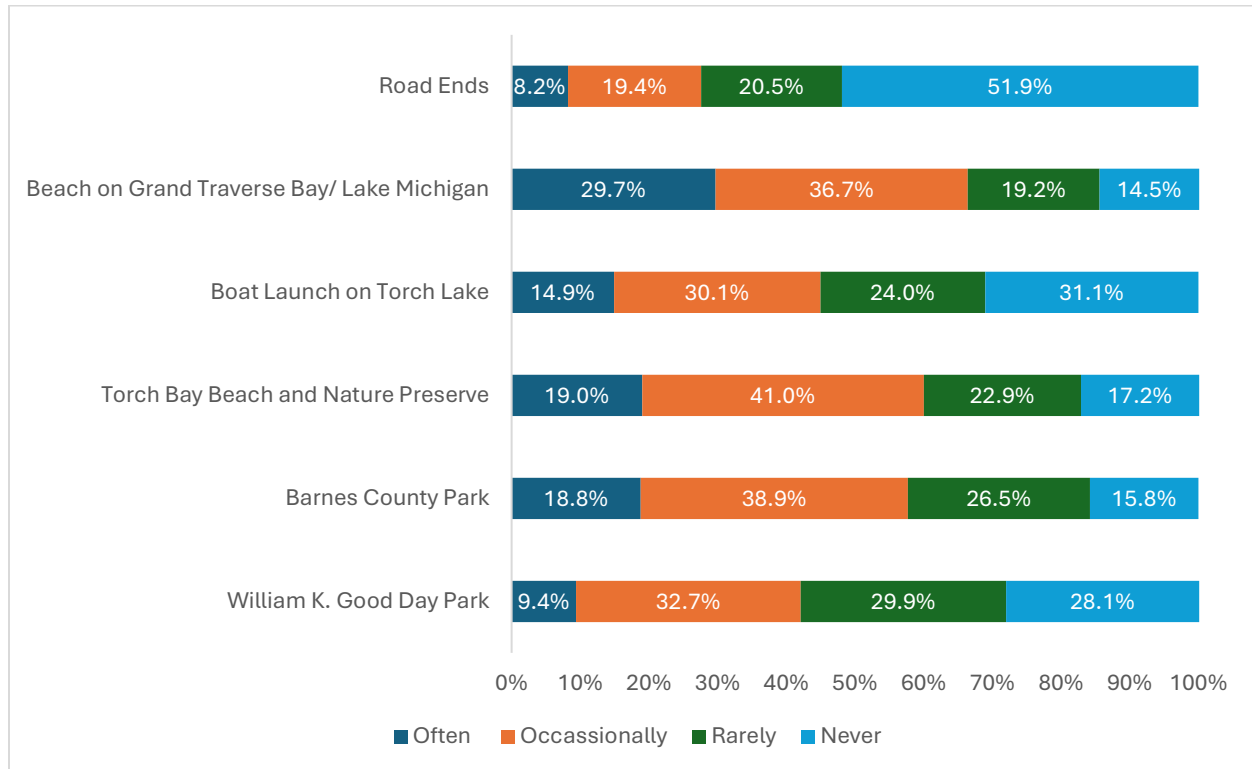


Based on the survey responses about recreational activities enjoyed by household members, the data reveals a community deeply connected to water-based recreation and outdoor activities. Swimming and beach activities appear in nearly every response, making them the most popular pursuits, closely followed by walking, hiking, canoeing, kayaking, paddle boarding, and motor boating, which strongly suggests this is a waterfront community where aquatic recreation forms the foundation of residents' leisure time. Nature and wildlife viewing also ranks among the most frequently selected activities, indicating residents value the natural environment and outdoor experiences. The survey responses demonstrate a population that remains active throughout all seasons, with substantial winter participation in snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and ice skating, while biking, fishing, and picnicking maintain steady popularity year-round. Beyond the options that were presented, many residents added golf as another recreational activity that they frequently enjoy. The overall pattern reveals a highly active, outdoors-oriented community centered around water recreation with strong engagement in year-round outdoor pursuits.

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Question: How often do you use the following Township recreational assets?

Total Responses: 415



Looking at the survey responses for how often residents use Township recreational assets, the data shows varied usage patterns across the six facilities. The responses follow a frequency scale of Never, Rarely, Occasionally, and Often. William K. Good Day Park shows moderate usage with most respondents indicating "Occasionally" or "Rarely" using the facility. Very few respondents report "Often" usage, and a significant portion select "Never," suggesting this park may have limited appeal or accessibility for many residents. Barnes County Park demonstrates similar patterns with predominantly "Rarely" and "Occasionally" responses, though slightly fewer "Never" responses than Good Day Park, indicating somewhat broader community engagement.

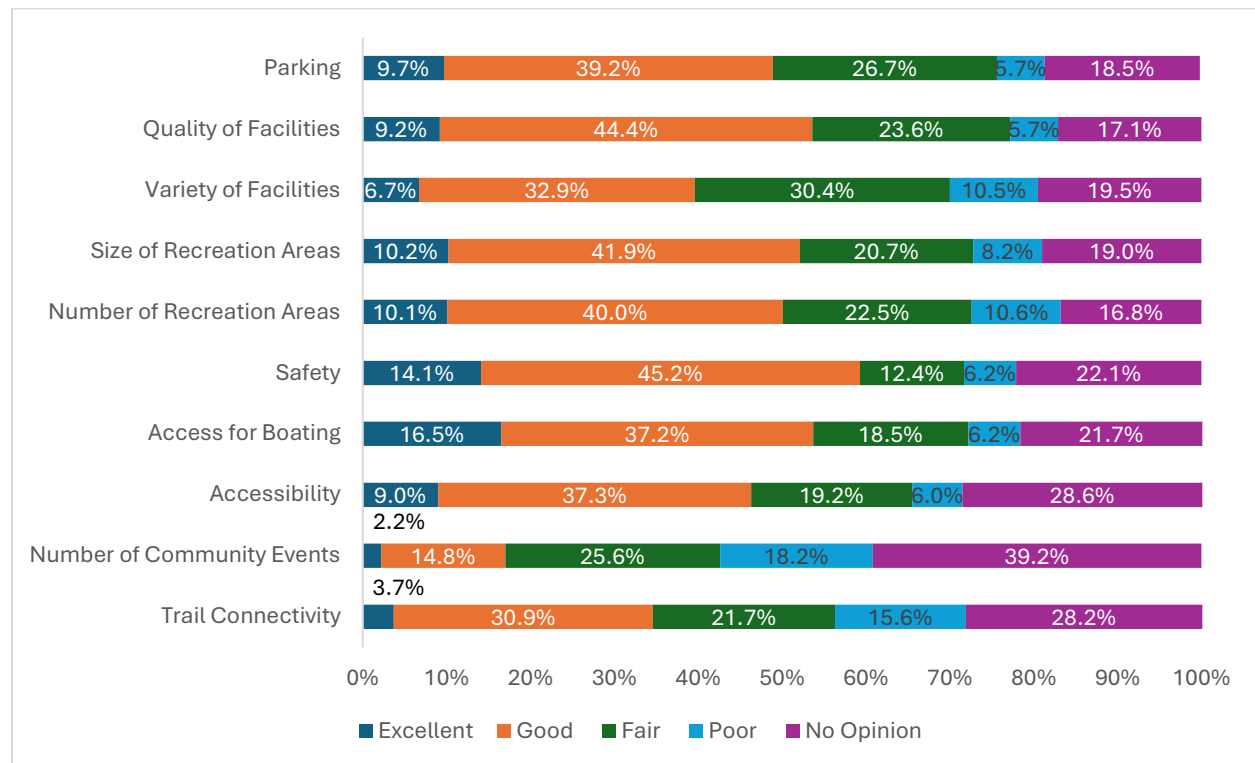
Torch Bay Beach and Nature Preserve emerges as one of the more popular facilities, with a higher proportion of "Often" and "Occasionally" responses compared to the parks. This aligns with the community's strong preference for water-based activities, identified in the recreational preferences survey. Boat Launch on Torch Lake shows strong usage among those who participate, with many "Often" responses, though also significant "Never" responses, creating a polarized usage pattern that likely reflects the divide between boat owners and non-boat owners in the community. Beach on Grand Traverse Bay/Lake Michigan receives substantial usage across all frequency categories, with many residents reporting "Occasionally" or "Often" visits, reinforcing the community's connection to water recreation. Road Ends show mixed usage patterns, with responses distributed

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evenly across all frequency categories, suggesting these access points serve different purposes for different residents. When asked more specifically which road ends respondents were referring to using, Cresswell Road, Barnes Road, Traverse Bay Road, and Erickson Road were the most frequent responses.

Question: How do you rate the following Torch Lake Township parks and recreation amenities?

Total Responses: 412

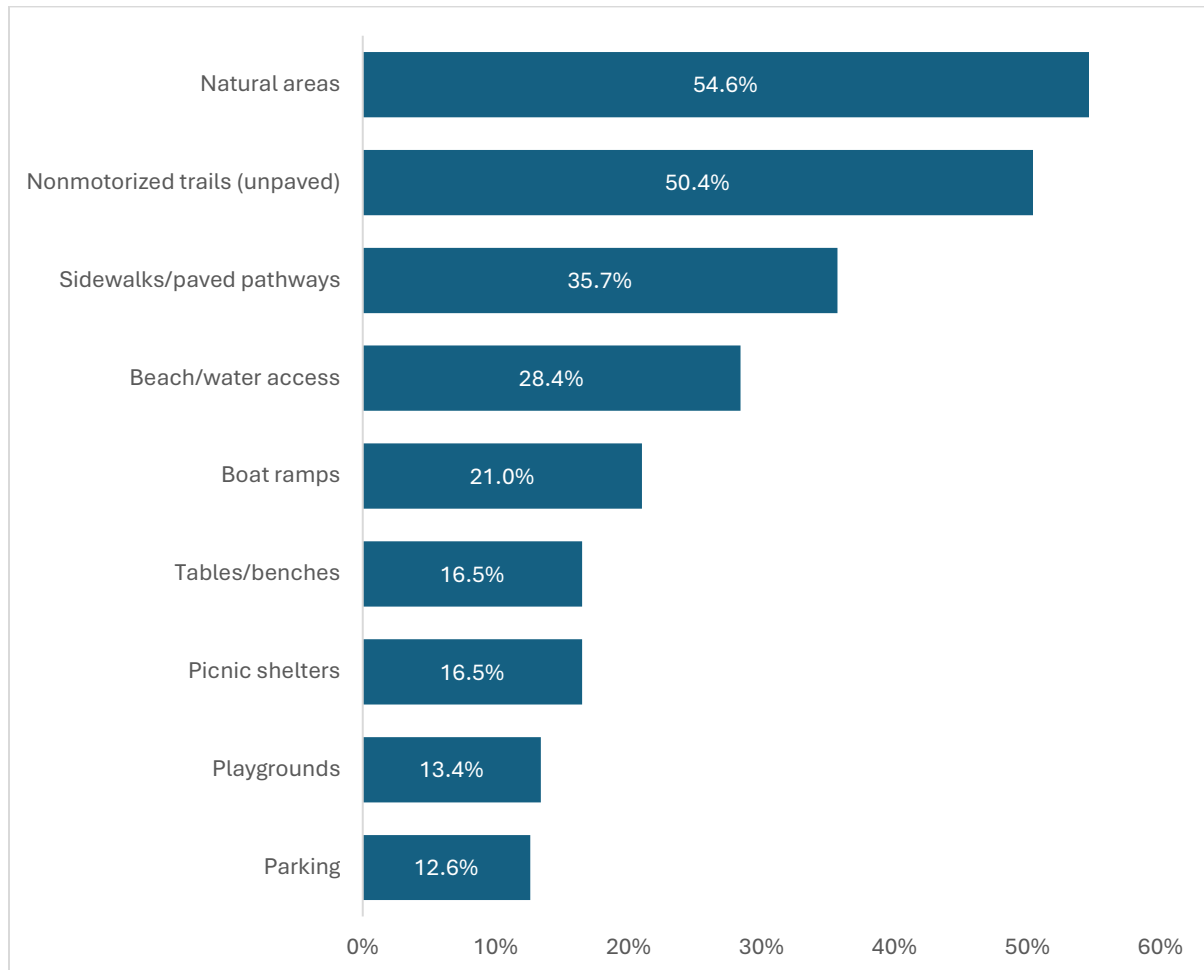


Respondents ranked various aspects of Township recreation amenities on a scale of Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, or No Opinion. Survey results show mixed opinions about Torch Lake Township's parks and recreation amenities. Safety received the highest positive ratings, with 59.3% of respondents rating it as excellent or good, followed by the quality of facilities (53.6%) and the size of recreation areas (52.1%). Access for boating also performed well, with 53.7% rating it positively. Accessibility and parking received moderate satisfaction, with 46.3% and 48.9% positive ratings, respectively. On the other hand, several areas need improvement. Trail connectivity earned only 34.6% positive ratings, while 37.3% of respondents rated it fair or poor. The variety of facilities also scored lower, with nearly a third (30.4%) rating it as fair. The lowest-rated category was the number of community events, with just 17% positive responses and the highest percentage of respondents (39.2%) indicating no opinion, suggesting a potential lack of awareness or engagement.

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Question: What type of recreational facilities would you like to see more of in Torch Lake Township? (Check all that apply)

Total Responses: 381



Survey responses indicate that residents of Torch Lake Township are most interested in expanding natural areas (54.6%) and nonmotorized trails (50.4%), making these the highest priorities for future recreational development. Sidewalks and paved pathways also received strong support (35.7%), showing a clear demand for improved walkability and connectivity within the community. Additionally, beach and water access (28.4%) and boat ramps (21.0%) are seen as important amenities, reflecting residents' desire for greater opportunities to enjoy the township's waterfront resources.

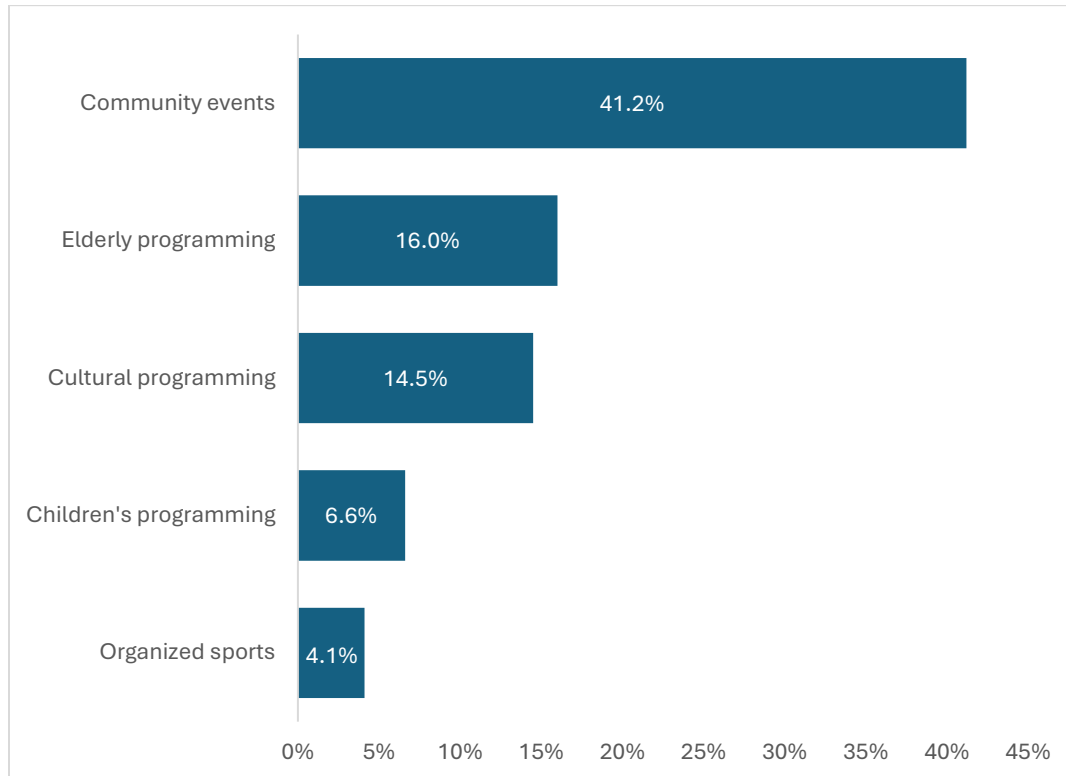
There was also space for additional comments with many respondents expressing a strong desire to maintain the township's natural, quiet character and limit additional recreational development, with several emphasizing that existing facilities are sufficient and concerns about attracting more tourists and spending tax dollars on public amenities. Lastly, there was notable interest in specific

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improvements, including pickleball courts, bike trails, better trail connections (such as the Nakwema and TART Trails), improved boat access, and enhanced facilities like restrooms, benches, and picnic areas.

Question: What type of recreation programs would you like to see offered in Torch Lake Township?

Total Responses: 318

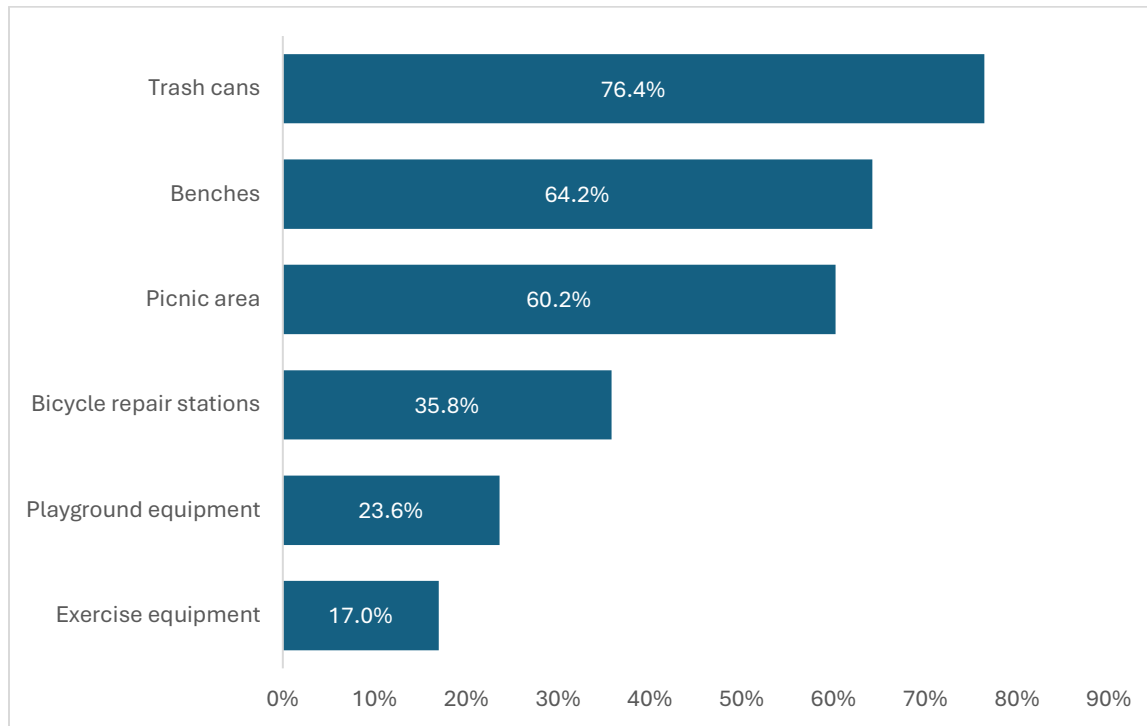


Survey responses show that community events were the most desired type of recreation program in Torch Lake Township, receiving 41.2% of selections. Other popular choices included elderly programming (16.0%), cultural programming (14.5%), children's programming (6.6%), and organized sports (4.1%), while 17.7% of responses fell under "other," reflecting a range of additional ideas. Open-ended comments revealed several key themes. A recurring request was for pickleball facilities, including both indoor and outdoor courts, highlighting its popularity as a growing sport and social activity. Some comments also suggested additional offerings such as bike paths, outdoor concerts, therapeutic pools, senior transportation, tennis courts, and library access. At the same time, several respondents voiced skepticism about expanding township programming, citing concerns about costs, taxes, or unnecessary duplication of nearby recreation opportunities. Others preferred to leave the area as it is, with no further development.

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Question: A non-profit recently acquired 4 parcels totaling 5 acres at the northwest corner of M-88 and US 31, next to Barnes Park. Current plans are to add a trailhead as part of the Nakwema Trailway that will connect Traverse City to Charlevoix. What other amenities would you like to see included at this location?

Total Responses: 377

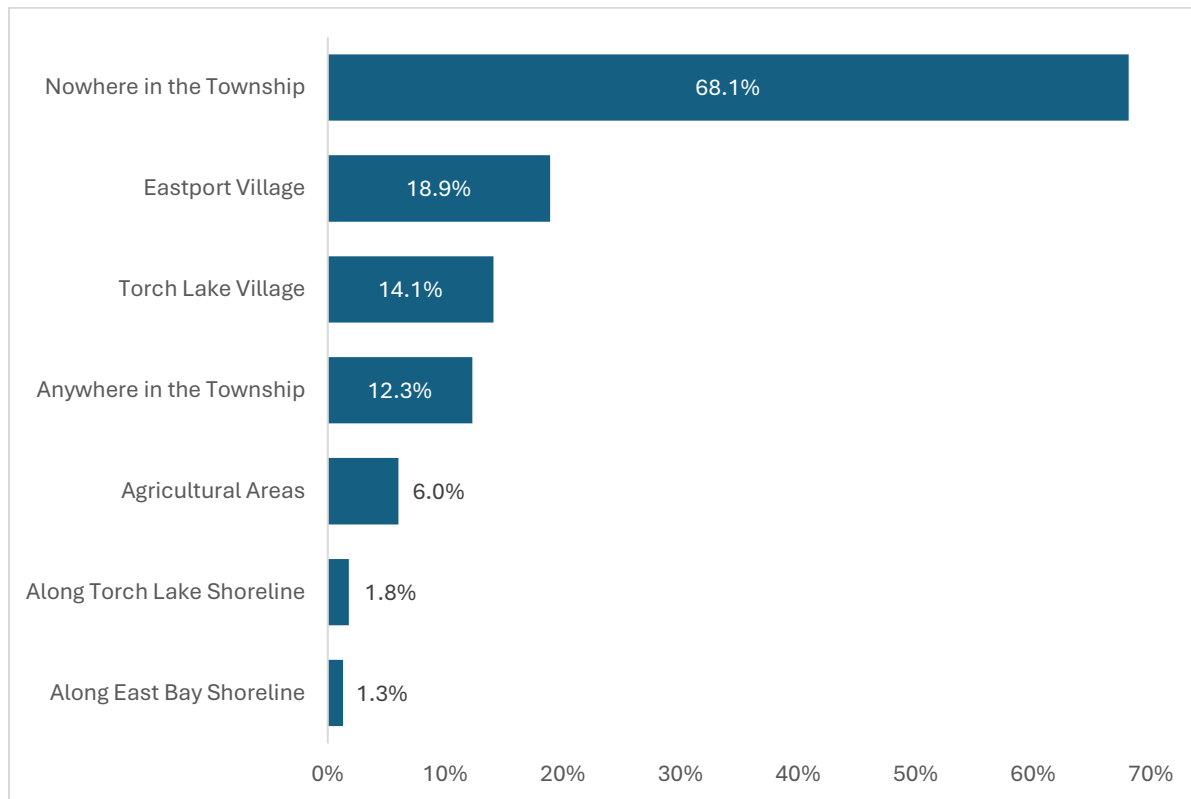


Survey results show the most desired amenities at the new trailhead site near M-88 and US-31 are trash cans (76.4%), followed by benches (64.2%), picnic areas (60.2%), and bicycle repair stations (35.8%). Playground equipment (23.6%) and exercise equipment (17.0%) were less common but still received support, reflecting interest in creating a comfortable, functional gathering space for trail users. Open-ended feedback emphasized restrooms as the top priority, with requests for permanent, portable, or year-round facilities. Parking was also frequently noted as essential for accessibility. Beyond these basics, many residents supported expanded recreation such as pickleball courts, basketball or volleyball courts, a skatepark, splashpad, and dog park. Others suggested community gathering amenities like shelters, fire pits, and multipurpose rooms, as well as trail-supportive features such as hydration stations, recycling bins, signage, and e-bike charging. The feedback reflects a balance between strong demand for restrooms, parking, and basic facilities, enthusiasm for new recreation opportunities, and caution from some residents about costs and growth.

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Question: Do you believe that increasing the density (number of dwelling units on one property) of housing within Torch Lake Township is needed, if so where would increased density be appropriate? (check all that apply)

Total Responses: 382

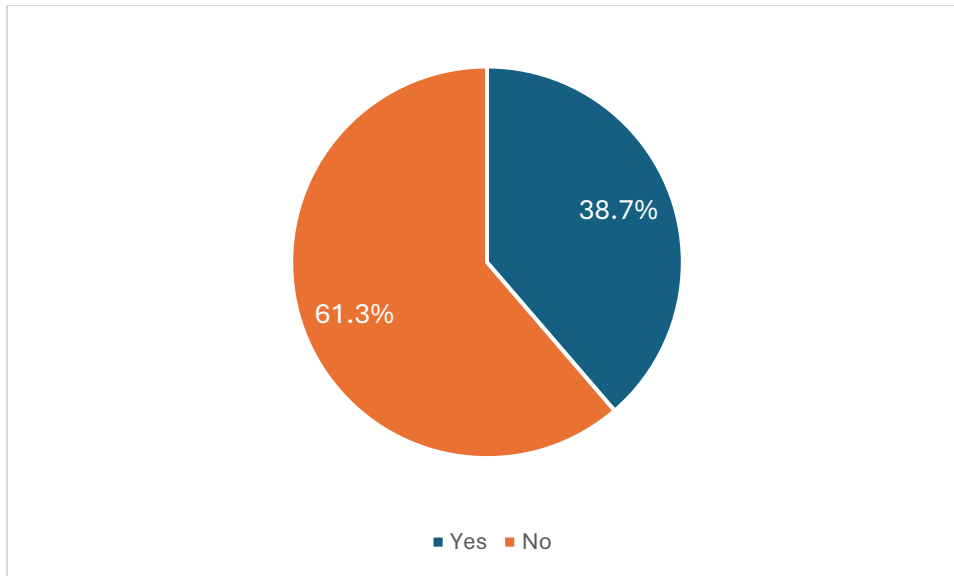


Over two-thirds of respondents stated that they would not prefer increasing density anywhere in the Township while some respondents stated that they would like to see increased density in areas like Eastport Village, Torch Lake Village, and along shorelines. About 1 in 8 respondents stated that increased density is permissible anywhere in the Township.

Question: Do you believe that increasing the density (number of dwelling units on one property) of housing within Torch Lake Township is needed, if so where would increased density be appropriate? (check all that apply)

Total Responses: 395

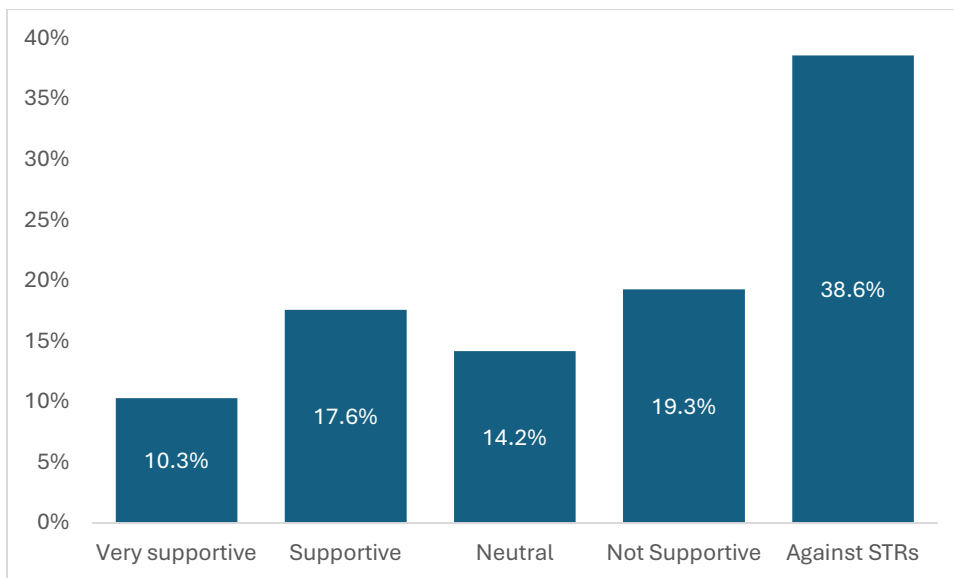
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Just over 61% stated that they would not like to see smaller square foot housing, while nearly 39% stated that they would like to see it.

Question: How do you feel about Short-Term Rentals (STRs)?

Total Responses: 409



Most survey respondents expressed opposition to short-term rentals (STRs), with 57.9% either not supportive or against them, compared to only 27.9% supportive and 14.2% neutral. Written comments reinforced this divide, with many residents arguing that STRs disrupt community life, create noise and litter, strain housing availability, and reduce respect for the Township's natural

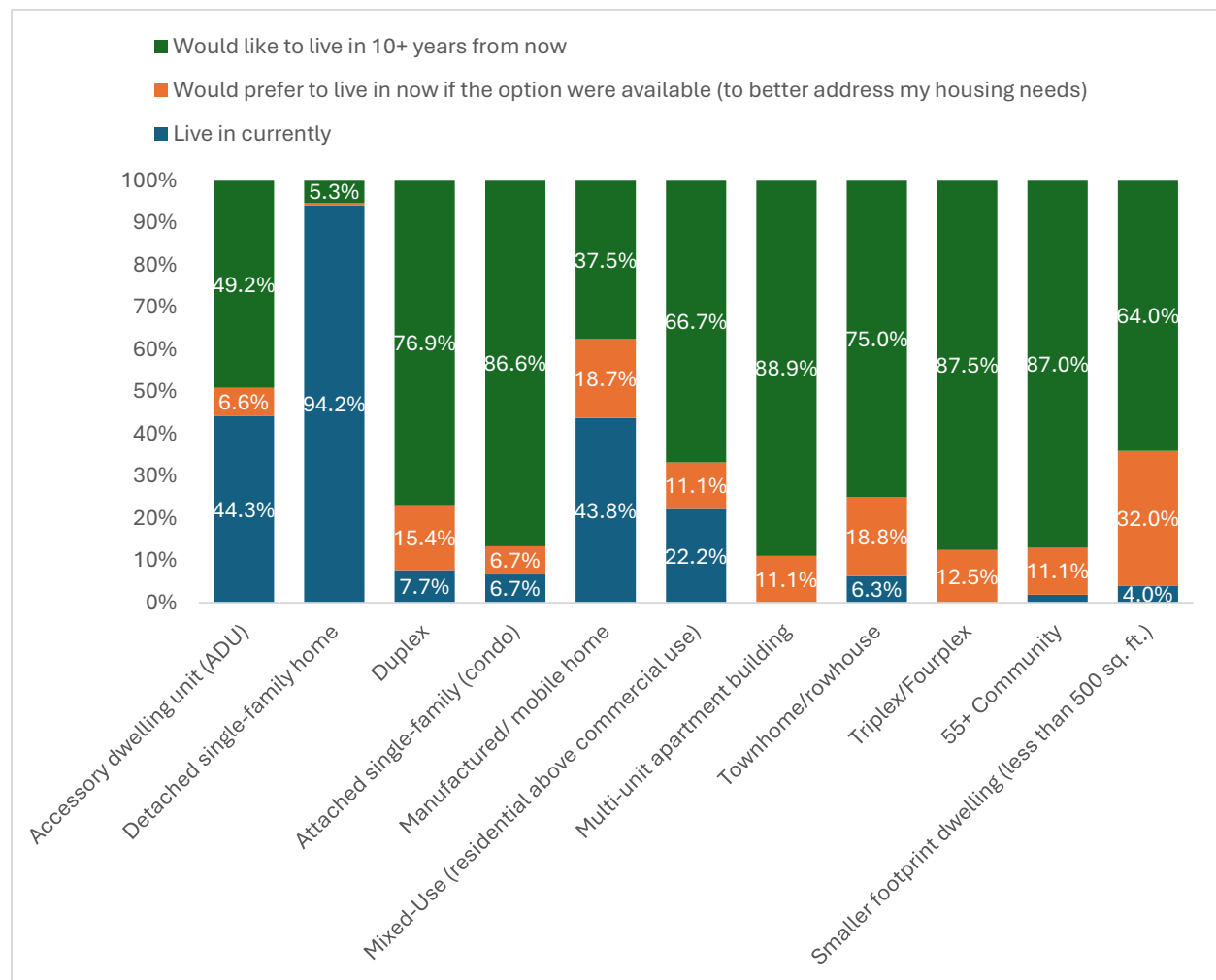
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environment. Some shared strong personal opposition, stating they bought property in Torch Lake Township specifically to avoid living near rentals.

At the same time, a smaller share of respondents recognized the potential benefits of STRs if they were tightly regulated. Suggestions included requiring minimum stays of 28–30 days, limiting the number of weeks or density allowed, and enforcing rules related to occupancy, noise, fireworks, and parking. Others noted that STRs can provide supplemental income for families and support tourism, but stressed the need for oversight and licensing.

Question: What type of unit do you currently live in, what type would you prefer to live in now if the option were available in order to better meet your housing needs, and what type of unit would you like to live in 10 or more years from now?

Total Responses: 387



Survey results reveal a clear evolution in housing preferences among Torch Lake Township residents. Currently, the vast majority live in detached single-family homes (94.2%), with smaller numbers in

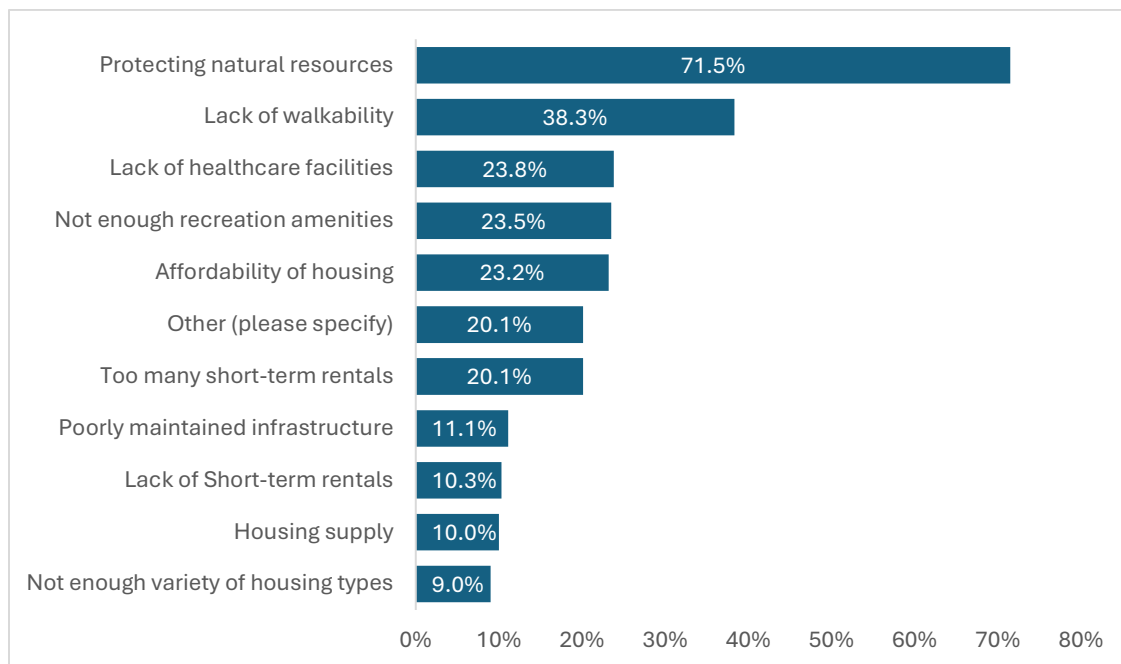
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manufactured or mobile homes (43.8%) and accessory dwelling units (44.3%). Very few live in attached housing types such as condos, townhomes, or multi-unit buildings. This reflects the Township's existing housing stock, which is dominated by traditional single-family homes. When asked what type of housing would better suit their needs today, however, residents expressed a shift away from detached homes toward smaller, more flexible housing options. Interest was strongest in smaller footprint dwellings (32.0%), townhomes (18.8%), manufactured homes (18.7%), and duplexes (15.2%).

Looking further ahead, the pattern becomes even more pronounced. In ten or more years, respondents anticipate a strong desire to downsize or transition into diverse housing types. Over 85% expressed interest in condos, apartments, triplexes, or 55+ communities, while more than three-quarters supported townhomes or smaller dwellings. Mixed-use housing also drew significant support (66.7%), signaling interest in walkable, village-style living.. Many residents anticipate moving toward smaller, age-friendly, and more communal housing types over time, underscoring the importance of diversifying the Township's housing stock to support aging in place, affordability, and evolving lifestyles.

Question: What challenges do you feel the Township needs to address?

Total Responses: 379



Survey results show that protecting natural resources (71.5%) is by far the most pressing challenge identified by residents, highlighting the community's strong commitment to preserving the Township's lakes, forests, and rural character. Other priorities included improving walkability (38.3%), expanding access to healthcare facilities (23.8%), and adding more recreation amenities (23.5%). Concerns about housing affordability (23.2%) and the impact of short-term rentals

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(20.1%) were also noted, though few residents saw a need for additional housing supply or greater housing variety.

Additionally, comments on this question provided further insight into these concerns. Many residents voiced frustration with high property taxes and township spending, while others highlighted needs such as better road maintenance, lower speed limits, paved shoulders, sewers, and recycling or composting services. Several noted that existing parks and recreation facilities feel overcrowded in the summer, with suggestions for bike trails, kayak launches, pickleball courts, and dog parks. A recurring theme was the impact of short-term rentals, which many felt undermine neighborhood character, though some supported stricter regulation over outright prohibition. Respondents also emphasized the importance of quiet neighborhoods, preserving dark skies, and preventing overdevelopment, with several warning against the Township “becoming another Traverse City.”

Question: Please provide comments on your impression of Torch Lake Township as it currently exists and/or how you would like to see the community develop in the future.

Total Responses: 219

Residents describe Torch Lake Township as a beautiful, quiet, rural place defined by its water and forests and they want it to stay that way. Many urge strict protection of natural resources (water quality, dark skies, native habitats), stronger limits or enforcement on short-term rentals, septic inspections, and careful control of lighting, noise, fertilizer use, and shoreline density. A common refrain is “don’t become another Traverse City”: keep commercial development modest, concentrate it along US-31/M-88 if anywhere, and avoid more storage buildings. At the same time, people want practical fixes like better road maintenance and cemetery care, posted speed reductions, paved shoulders or sidewalks, and a safer M-88/US-31 intersection.

Views on growth diverge. One camp prefers little or no new development and lower taxes, saying nearby towns already provide services; another supports “managed growth” to broaden the tax base and keep the community viable. Desired amenities tend to be small-scale and community-oriented: a few year-round, reasonably priced restaurants or cafés, a pharmacy or urgent care, grocery improvements, recycling/yard-waste drop-off, dog park, pickleball courts, kayak launches, and indoor/outdoor gathering spaces. Many champion walkability and the Nakwema trail connection, with calls for bike lanes, crossings, and village-style, mixed-use nodes. Multiple comments seek restored access to the Elk Rapids Library or improved library services, more transparent and responsive township governance (regular office hours, communication, enforcement consistency), and more opportunities to build community through events, classes, and concerts.

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Question: There are currently two unincorporated villages within Torch Lake Township, see map above. Do you have an interest in developing design standards to maintain or further enhance the character of these villages?

Total Responses: 223

Residents are deeply split on creating design standards for the two unincorporated villages. A large share say “no” or “not interested,” arguing standards could become over-regulation, impose costs or hardships on existing homeowners and small businesses, and should be left to property owners or the Planning Commission. Some simply want the villages to remain small, rural, and low-key, with minimal government involvement. Others were unsure or said they’d want to see specifics before supporting anything.

Those in favor typically envisioned light guidelines that protect the villages’ historic, small-scale character while allowing modest reinvestment. Common ideas included cleaning up eyesores/blight, setting time limits on long-running exterior renovations, taming sign clutter on US-31, and emphasizing low-rise forms with materials and architecture in keeping with the setting. Many asked for walkability and traffic calming (lower speeds, safer crossings), small local (not chain) businesses, and careful placement of commercial uses (often along M-88/US-31, not lakeshore neighborhoods).

Question: What is your vision for the future of Torch Lake Township?

Total Responses: 230

Many residents envision Torch Lake Township’s future as largely unchanged, with a strong emphasis on keeping its rural character, quiet atmosphere, and natural resources intact. Protecting the lakes, forests, and dark skies is seen as essential, alongside controlling development, short-term rentals, and rising taxes. At the same time, there is support for targeted improvements: safer biking and walking routes, modest commercial amenities like cafés, pharmacies, and affordable restaurants, and small community gathering spaces or recreational options. Clean-up of blighted areas, more careful design in villages, and better management of summer crowding also emerged as priorities.

Question: Is there anything else that you would like us to know?

Total Responses: 173

Many residents used the final open-ended question to emphasize their appreciation for Torch Lake Township’s rural character and natural beauty, while warning against overdevelopment and commercial intrusion. Protecting water quality, forests, and dark skies was a top priority, with several urging stronger ordinances on septic systems, lighting, and fertilizer use. At the same time, frustration with rising taxes and limited services was common many felt they pay more than

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neighboring townships while receiving fewer benefits such as recycling, waste drop-off, or library access. Residents also raised concerns about transparency and communication from township officials, asking for clearer meeting agendas, more surveys, and greater responsiveness to residents' needs. Ideas for improvements included safer bike and walking paths, yard waste and recycling facilities, more gathering spaces, small-scale local businesses, and collaboration with nearby townships.

Key Takeaways

- **Core community value.** protect nature. Nearly all agree natural features should be protected; farmland preservation (89%) is a clear priority. Top concerns: water resources (78%), wildlife (76%), and pollution (75%).
- **Facility performance** is mixed. Safety and facility quality rate best; gaps include trail connectivity, variety of facilities, and few community events pointing to needs in programming and trail links.
- **Future recreation priorities.** Top asks: natural areas (54.6%), non-motorized trails (50.4%), and sidewalks/paved paths (35.7%); interest also in better water access and boat ramps.
- **Programs people want.** Community events (41.2%) lead, followed by senior and cultural programming; open comments frequently request pickleball (indoor/outdoor).
- **New trailhead priorities.** Basics first: trash cans (76.4%), benches (64.2%), picnic areas (60.2%), bike repair (35.8%); strongest open-ended ask is restrooms and parking; secondary ideas include shelters and court sports.
- **Other community requests.** Many want affordable, year-round dining, coffee, pharmacy/grocery, basic services (recycling/yard waste, car/boat wash); a sizable group prefers no added retail, citing nearby towns and rural character.
- **Housing at present and future needs.** Current stock is overwhelmingly detached single-family (94%); respondents foresee long-term demand for smaller, age-friendly options (condos, townhomes, apartments, 55+, small-footprint dwellings) and mixed-use, walkable nodes.
- **Density & small homes.** Two-thirds oppose higher density anywhere; about 39% support smaller-footprint dwellings indicating limited but meaningful openness to diversification, especially in village areas.
- **Short-term rentals.** Majority oppose STRs (58%), while a minority support tightly regulated models.
- **Design standards.** Community is split: many resist added regulation while supporters favor light, context-sensitive standards, cleanup of eyesores, traffic calming, and walkability preferably along US-31/M-88, not the shoreline.
- **Overall vision for the Township.** Keep TLT quiet, rural, and nature-first, while making targeted, small-scale investments (trails/sidewalks, restrooms, community events/space, a few everyday services) that improve livability without sacrificing character.

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COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE

A community open house was held on September 15, 2025 at the Community Services Building, slightly south of the Township of Torch Lake. Approximately 65 community members attended the event. The results of the open house are summarized below.

Survey Results

Looking at the survey results do you have any comments and/or questions?

Respondents' comments indicated that there is a need for or interest in:

- Increased walkability
- Upgrades to the sewer system
- The completion of the Parks and Recreation plan
- Better regulation or elimination of short-term rentals

Thinking of places you have traveled to, what has been your favorite? Why?

Responses ranged from local to national and international destinations, including some located in North America, South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia. Notably, three attendees included Northern Michigan as their favorite travel destination. Features of these preferred travel destinations included natural beauty, hiking access, wildlife, rich history, walkability, and welcoming public/common spaces.

What type of recreation facilities would you like to see more of in Torch Lake Township?

The most popular recreation facilities were non-motorized trails, natural areas, and beach/water access, indicating that the Township should prioritize these types of recreational facilities.

Table XX: Preferred Recreational Facilities, by Number of Votes

Type of Recreational Facility	Count
Non-motorized trails	24
Natural areas	22
Beach/Water access	11
Picnic shelters	5
Boat ramps	3
Playgrounds	3
Sidewalks	2
Tables/benches	0
Parking	0

What recreational activities do you and members of your household enjoy?

Of the 24 options provided, the seven recreational activities included in the following table were the most popular, receiving at least ten votes each. Other activities that garnered fewer than ten

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votes are listed in order of popularity: motorboating, sailing, fishing, playgrounds, snowshoeing, concerts/festivals, paddle boarding, tennis, baseball, basketball, disc golf, volleyball, picnicking, soccer, and skateboarding.

Table XX: Preferred Recreational Activities, by Number of Votes

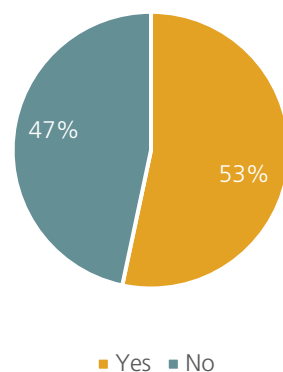
Type of Recreational Activity	Count
Walking and Hiking	21
Biking	20
Nature/Wildlife viewing	14
Pickleball	13
Cross-country skiing	13
Swimming/Beach	10
Canoeing/Kayaking	10

Housing

Please indicate if you think smaller houses (less than 500 sq ft) are appropriate in Torch Lake Township?

Attendees were relatively divided in regard to the appropriateness of smaller houses in Torch Lake Township with 53% of attendees viewing them as appropriate in the Township and 47% finding them inappropriate. On the community-wide survey, however, 64% of 387 respondents indicated they would prefer to live in a smaller house in ten or more years, while 32% would do so today if smaller homes were available. As such, it may be important to balance these different responses accordingly.

Figure XX: Are Smaller Houses Appropriate in Torch Lake Township?



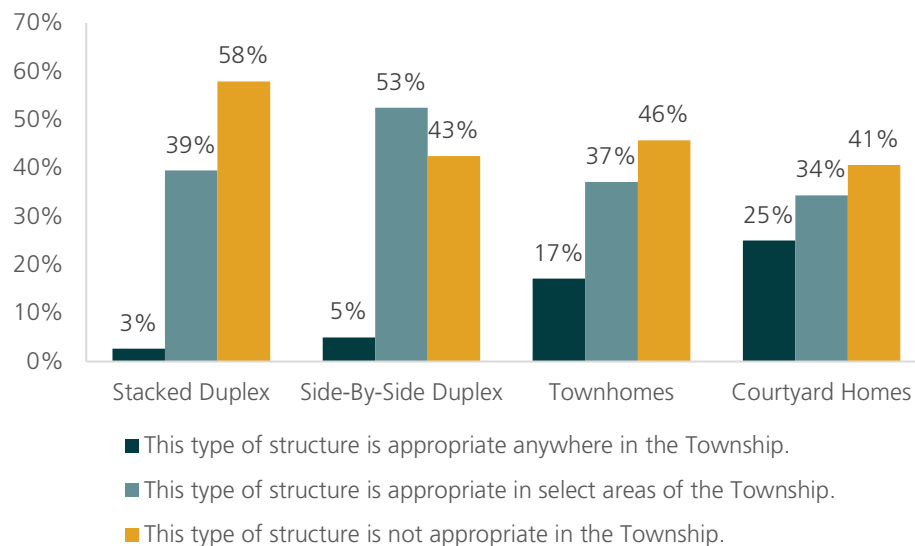
Place a sticky dot with the statement that you agree with for each type of housing in Torch Lake Township.

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In general, community members at the open house expressed some hesitation for each of the provided housing types. A very low percentage of respondents indicated that stacked duplexes and side-by-side duplexes would be appropriate anywhere in the Township. However, more than half of respondents expressed that side-by-side duplexes would be appropriate in select areas of the Township. Townhomes and courtyard homes were appropriate anywhere in the Township according to 17% and 25% of attendees, respectively.

On the community-wide survey, 77% and 75% of 387 respondents shared that they may prefer to live in a duplex or townhome, respectively, in ten or more years. Although there is some hesitation around these types of housing, there also appears to be some interest which may be further explored by the Township.

Figure XX: Housing Types in the Township



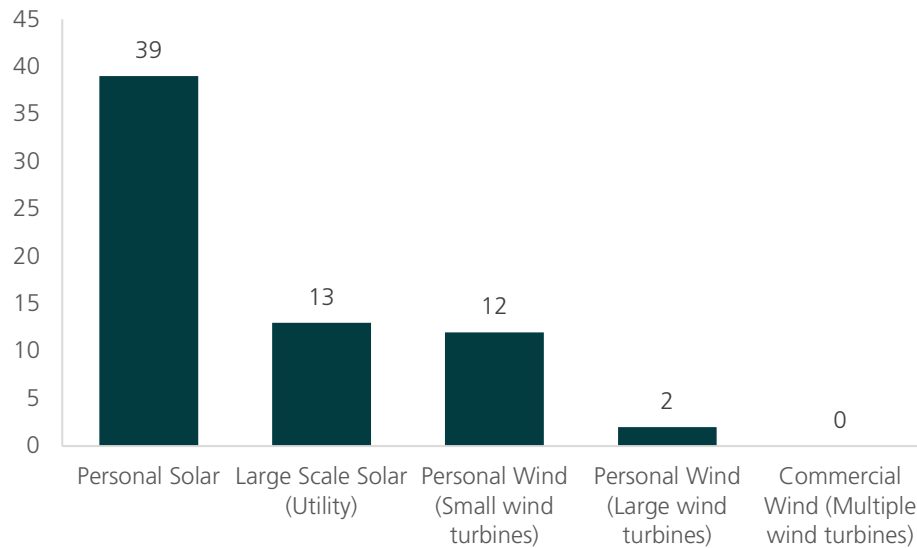
Renewable Energy

What type of renewable energy should be allowed in the Township?

Open house attendees indicated general support for allowing personal solar panels as a form of renewable energy in the Township. Large scale solar panels and personal small wind turbines were supported by a smaller proportion of attendees. There was no support for commercial wind turbines in the Township. Additional comments offered by community members expressed that renewable energy developments should not come at the cost of existing natural forest and water areas.

Figure XX: Preferred Renewable Energy in the Township, by Number of Votes

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20 Years

What would you like Torch Lake Township to look like in 20 years?

Participants largely focused future priorities for the Township on retail, intensity of development, and recreational amenities. Their visions for the Township of Torch Lake in 20 years included the following suggestions:

- Attract and support local retail businesses: promote accessibility to these businesses and minimize the arrival of larger chain businesses to the Township.
- Minimize impacts of new developments: ensure the natural amenities of the Township are preserved, especially in regard to light pollution that might disrupt the Township's dark night skies.
- Develop more recreational facilities: create more opportunities for recreational, non-motorized activities, such as hiking, biking, and walking trails.
- Age-Conscious approaches: develop additional spaces for younger generations and children.
- Elevate walkability

Several community members additionally noted that the Township should retain many of its current features. As such, community members generally illustrated interest in seeing subtle changes throughout the Township in 20 years, as opposed to large-scale developments.

Younger Population

How do we encourage the younger population to move to Torch Lake Township? What have you heard the younger generation say is a barrier for them living here?

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Housing and employment were broadly described as the most important factors that would appeal to younger individuals and families. Other ideas were proposed by community members as well, and they are all listed below in terms of barriers and opportunities.

Community members mentioned the following items as potential barriers for younger generations who might live in Torch Lake Township:

- Limited affordable housing
- Limited employment opportunities
- Limited connectivity to other nearby communities, such as Charlevoix or Bellaire
- High cost of living and taxes

Opportunities shared by community members to encourage the younger population to move to the Township included:

- Increase the availability of affordable housing
- Increase employment options
- Expand outdoor recreation amenities, including non-motorized trails and beach access
- Increase public transportation within the Township and to nearby communities
- Expand childcare options for young families
- Increase Wi-Fi connectivity (remote workers would benefit from this)
- Create developing additional public places to gather

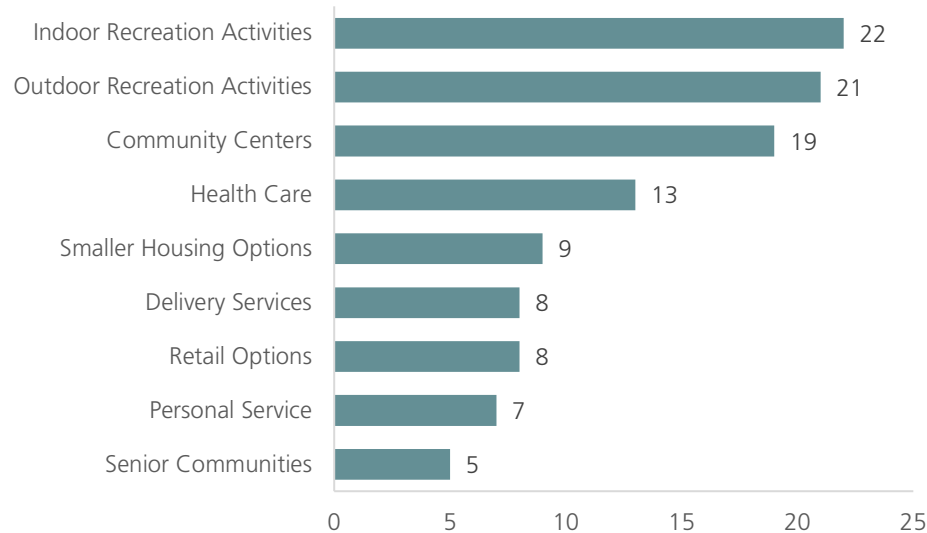
Aging

How can we support the community as we age? What do you need available to be able to continue to live in this community? What is missing?

Of the provided options, attendees expressed the most interest in indoor recreation activities, outdoor recreation activities, and community centers to support aging individuals in the Township. Additional comments suggested interest in more public transportation options, as well as expanded EMS, fire department, and law enforcement services.

Figure XX: Preferred Amenities for Aging Community Members, by Number of Votes

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Village Opportunities

What opportunities are in Torch Lake Village? What would you like to see?

Open house attendees identified five categories of opportunities to be pursued in Torch Lake Village. These opportunities are listed below, in order of popularity:

- Waste management services: incorporating recycling bins and annual junk pick-ups or drop-offs into the community's waste management system.
- Traffic calming and concerns: reducing speed limits and noise pollution. Supporting the safety of individuals engaging in non-motorized modes of transportation.
- Retail: increasing the presence of retail businesses. In particular, attendees expressed interest in the return of the community's ice cream store.
- Bike Trails: improving the safety of existing bike trails and developing new bike trail connecting Eastport and Torch Lake.
- Recreational Facilities: developing pickleball and tennis courts.

What opportunities are in Eastport Village? What would you like to see?

Five additional – and generally similar – categories of opportunities for the community of Eastport were identified by community members. One important distinction made by community members was that Eastport Village may serve as a better location to engage in retail and community development than Torch Lake Village.

- Community development: developing a community center, increasing community events and activities, enhancing local business and retail opportunities.
- Completing the trailhead: continuing the development of the Nakwema trailhead.

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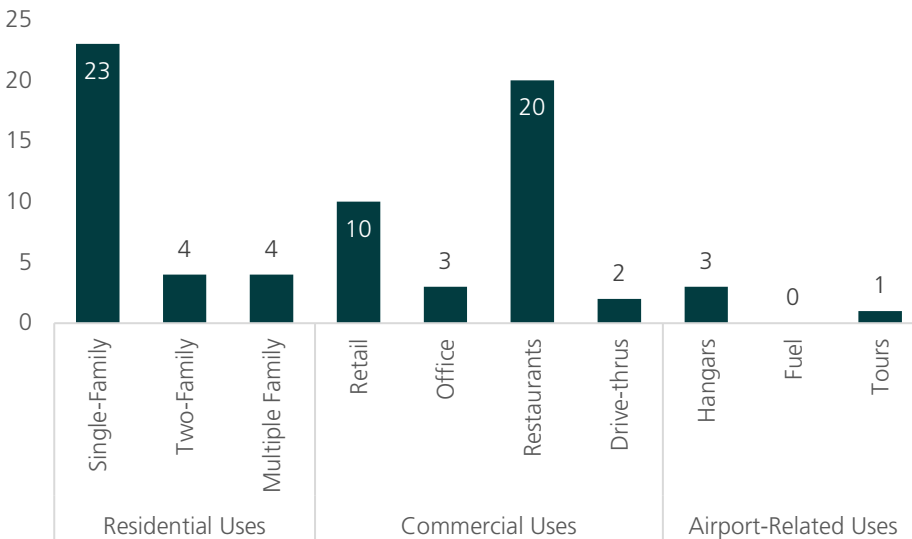
- Traffic calming and concerns: reducing speed limits and noise pollution; improving traffic signage and supporting the safety of individuals engaging in non-motorized modes of transportation – in particular, creating a light and crosswalk and US-31 and M-88.
- Waste management services: incorporating recycling bins and annual garbage pick-up events into Eastport's waste management systems.
- Recreation Facilities: developing pickleball and tennis courts.

Airport

Thinking about the area around the airport – not the airport itself – what would you like to see in this area?

Single-family residential homes and restaurants were the two land uses most preferred by open house attendees to develop around the airport. There was also slight support for retail businesses. Other proposed land uses across residential, commercial, and airport-related uses were less popular among community members.

Figure XX: Preferred Uses Around Airport, by Number of Votes



Additional Comments

Additional comments generally reflected sentiments shared by community members earlier in the Open House. Certain community members shared desire for traffic calming measures (particularly speed limit reductions on M-88 and Torch Lake Drive), disapproval of allowing short-term rentals less than 30 days, expanding commercial and mixed-use development around the Township and airport, and supporting the natural resources and landscapes of the Township.

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Community members are hesitant to allow short-term rentals, citing various concerns and previous complaints.
- There is large interest in non-motorized trails, and recreational activities, such as walking hiking, and biking.
- The Township might prioritize expanding local retail business development, natural facilities and amenities, and preserving existing natural features in the future. Additionally, in the communities of Eastport and Torch Lake, implementing new waste management, traffic calming, and retail and community development strategies are popular among community members.
- Increased job opportunities, availability of housing, and public transportation options may draw younger populations to the Township. Recreation activities and community centers are desired for the Township's aging population, however.