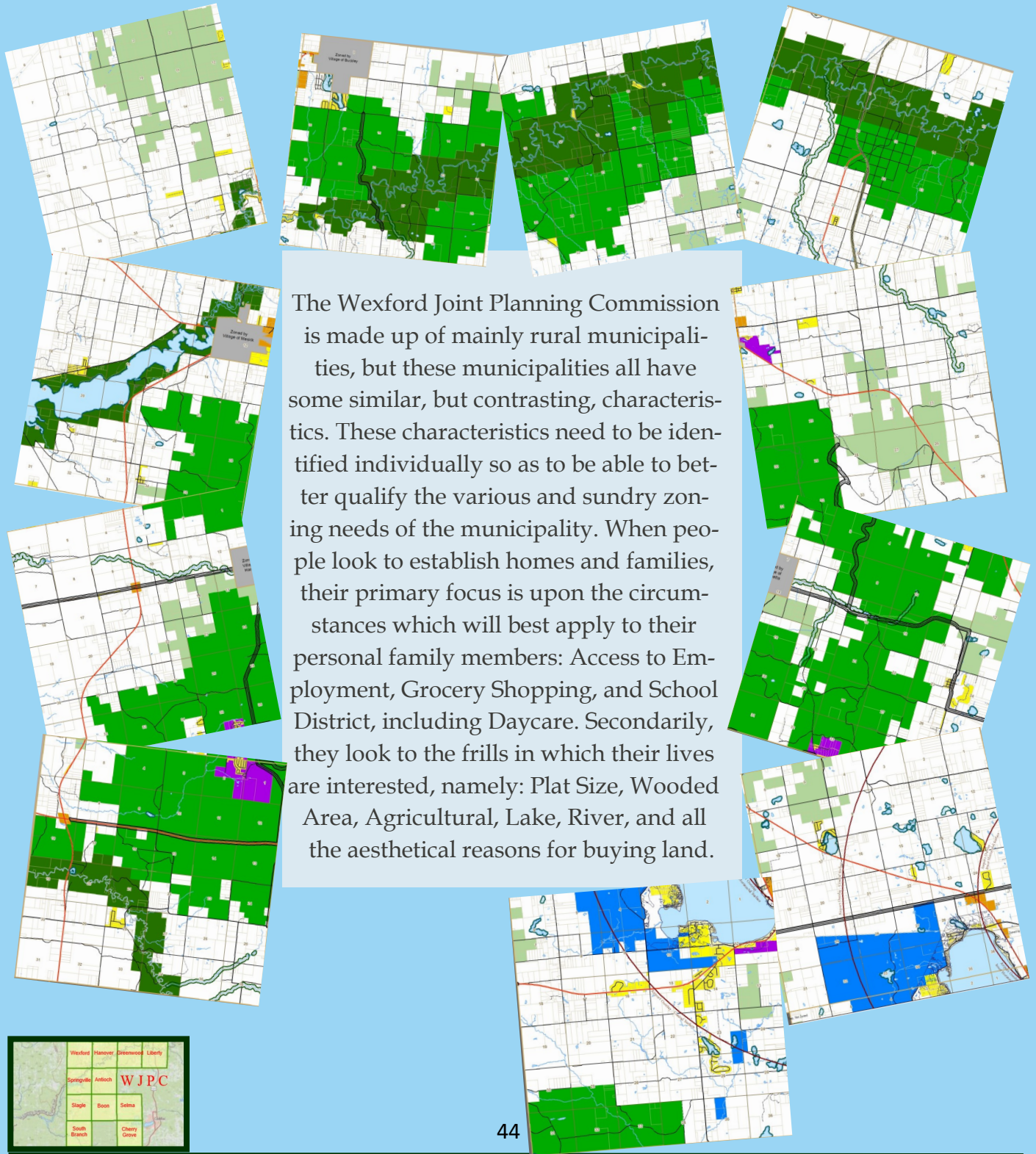
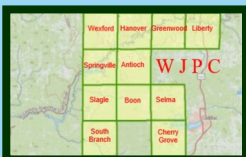


Unique Jurisdictions

Members of the WJPC



The Wexford Joint Planning Commission is made up of mainly rural municipalities, but these municipalities all have some similar, but contrasting, characteristics. These characteristics need to be identified individually so as to be able to better qualify the various and sundry zoning needs of the municipality. When people look to establish homes and families, their primary focus is upon the circumstances which will best apply to their personal family members: Access to Employment, Grocery Shopping, and School District, including Daycare. Secondly, they look to the frills in which their lives are interested, namely: Plat Size, Wooded Area, Agricultural, Lake, River, and all the aesthetical reasons for buying land.



WJPC Master Plan - 2020

Introduction

The various municipalities of the Wexford Joint Planning Commission should be recognized not only as to the similarities, but also to their diverseness from one another. These diversities are not so extreme as to be devoid of Planning and Zoning, but as to the extent of the Zoning principles.

During the divesting from Wexford County of their Zoning Ordinance, the remaining townships in the county fell into three basic categories. Some of the most rural areas desired the simplest and most basic form of zoning possible. The rural townships with small villages wanted an ordinance that was weightier in the residential areas mainly, whereas the other townships desired the most restrictive ordinance for their multiple residential areas.

Four Wexford County Commissioners met personally with township officers in four meetings in the Spring of 2015 to understand what type of zoning the townships desired for themselves. At that time there were three separate zoning ordinances offered to the townships. County Zoning Ordinance No. 6 was the biggest of the three and featured the most rules, restrictions and guidelines. WJPC townships which favored this option were Cherry Grove, Liberty and Slagle.

Another option was the current County Zoning Ordinance No. 5, which was considered to be a mid-level ordinance in terms of its rules and regulations. WJPC townships which favored

this option were Hanover, Springville, Wexford, Greenwood and Selma.

The third option given the townships was County Zoning Ordinance No. 5 Revised. This ordinance was the simplest of the three options. WJPC member townships which favored this ordinance were Antioch, Boon and South Branch.

The result of these meetings concluded that the county would need help in providing all the townships with zoning, but the townships would have to provide the bulk of the funds to the county in order to have the zoning they wanted. Therefore, in January of 2016 the Board of Commissioners voted to charge townships \$2 per parcel to be their participation fee in continuing county zoning. The estimated fee for the participating townships would have been \$29,864 that would be brought into the county.

Still, the solution of combining county and township funds did not work out, and the county finally resolved to do away with zoning. The brunt was on the townships to either have their own zoning, or else combine into a Joint Planning group. In the end, eleven townships decided to join together in Joint Planning, and would cover the cost of doing joint zoning. Each township could have purposed to handle its own zoning, but the price tag of such a move would be astronomical for most of the townships.

This section naturally divides the eleven townships into four categories for the Master Plan: the Manistee River townships, the Mesick surrounding townships, the Lake Mitchell townships, and the most rural southwest townships.



1. The Manistee River Townships: Hanover, Greenwood, Liberty

Hanover Township

Originally, Hanover Township covered the entire area of Hanover, Greenwood and Liberty Townships of today, or, the northern townships through which the mighty Manistee River flows.

This township was one of the four first townships in Wexford County. The division of townships mainly showed the population growth of Wexford County at the time, with a portion of County Seat Sherman and all of Buckley existing within Hanover's borders.

This township consists of primarily undeveloped forested areas, of which approximately one-half are in the Pere Marquette State Forest, with 18 of the 36 township sections covered either by the Manistee River Corridor or the Forest Conservation Districts.

The west side of the township is bordered by highway M-37, which includes the famously steep Sherman Hill just north of the Manistee River bridge. The only other way to traverse from the south side of the Manistee River to the north side is North 19 Road and the Harvey Bridge, a naturally scenic drive, preserved in this Master Plan as a Scenic Road Overlay District. Harvey Bridge is the only remaining truss bridge in Wexford County, and should be

preserved. This bridge is on a seasonal road and is not plowed during the winter.

Forestry Makeup of Hanover

During the 1800's the township was filled with a complete forested area. White Pine with a mixed hardwood forest covered the middle, with a Hemlock-White Pine forest stretching out seven miles wide, and reaching nineteen miles east from those. The entire southeast portion of the township was covered with a Jack Pine-Red Pine forest. The rest of the township, including the Buckley area consisted of a Beech-Sugar Maple-Hemlock forest. Since the ravaging of the forests in the late 1800's to the 1920's the area has come back to where there is a mixed Conifer-Deciduous forest. These forests again split the township in half, with residents living on the north side or the south side of the township.

Most of the land in Hanover Township is owned by the State of Michigan, Department of Natural Resources. The DNR owns over 68% (15,000 acres) of the township, mostly the state forests. This leaves less than 1/3 of



Harvey Bridge, Hanover Township



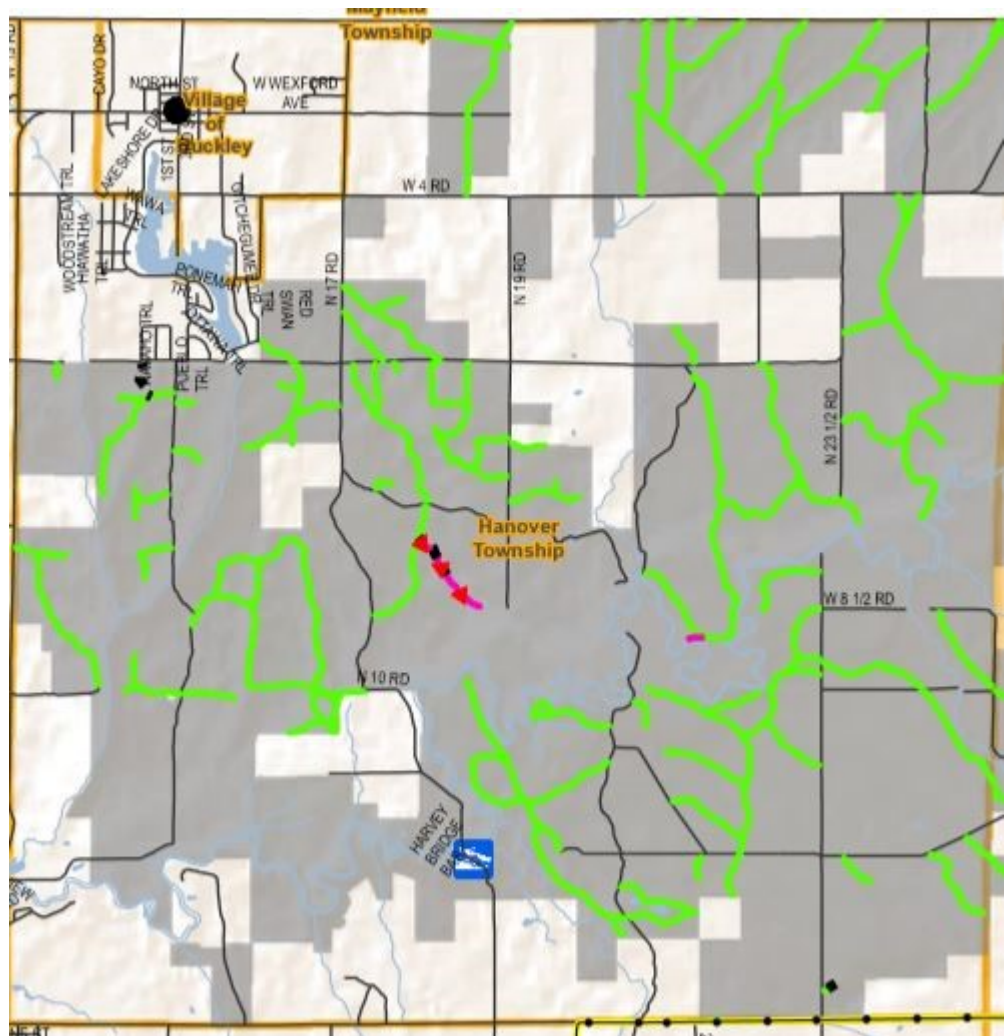
WJPC Master Plan - 2020

the township (6,887 acres) for private ownership. So the township made the most of its private property by having three subdivisions on the south side on or below the Manistee River, and five subdivisions on the north side, not counting the entire village of Buckley.

of the Buckley School children also coming from this same township.

The state forest also allows multiple ORV trails throughout the township. This mostly rural plus intensive subdivision layout, especially around Lake Gitchegumee, allows many outdoor hunting, fishing and recreational sports over the entire breadth of its borders. Hanover over the years has found a balance between large acreage plats and subdivision lots where people can build homes and commute to larger cities for work. The large percentage of homes are equidistant from the cities of Cadillac, in Wexford County, and Traverse City in Grand Traverse County.

Thus, the river, roads, and modern forests have determined to split Hanover in two halves. This is evident even in the fact that 18% of the Mesick School children come from Hanover compared to 28%



State Forest in grey, ORV trails in green.



WJPC Master Plan - 2020

Greenwood Township

Just east of Hanover Township lies the six mile by six mile township of Greenwood. Once part of Hanover, Greenwood broke off and became its own township in 1873. For another year and a half, Greenwood would also contain the land mass that would become Liberty Township in 1874. Population determined when those boundaries would finally become permanent, and Greenwood would be placed between two townships along the Manistee River which would be closer to a larger population of people; Hanover with its own Village of Buckley, and Liberty being a bedroom community to the City of Manton.

Still, Greenwood Township would be divided by the mighty Manistee River and boast of the most rural developmental township in Wexford County. To this day, proportionately, Greenwood Township shows an ever increasing desire from families and retirees for



Historic Town Hall, Greenwood Township

new homes to be placed on plats of larger acreage or in special subdivisions along the Manistee River than any other township in the county. This increase in new dwellings can be seen in the natural increase in Taxable Property Value (TPV). When joining the WJPC in 2016, when its TPV was \$19,394,784, Greenwood's TPV has reached \$22,374,232

in just three years in 2019. This shows a growth of over three million dollars worth of taxable value. On a yearly rate, Greenwood's property value has been increasing approximately 1.5 million dollars per year.

Private vs. Public Land

As is true with the three northern townships in the WJPC, the Pierre Marquette



High Rollways, Greenwood Township



WJPC Master Plan - 2020



Baxter Bridge Campground, Greenwood Twp.

State Forest separates Greenwood in half, taking up over half the land mass in the township

(52.7%). The state forest

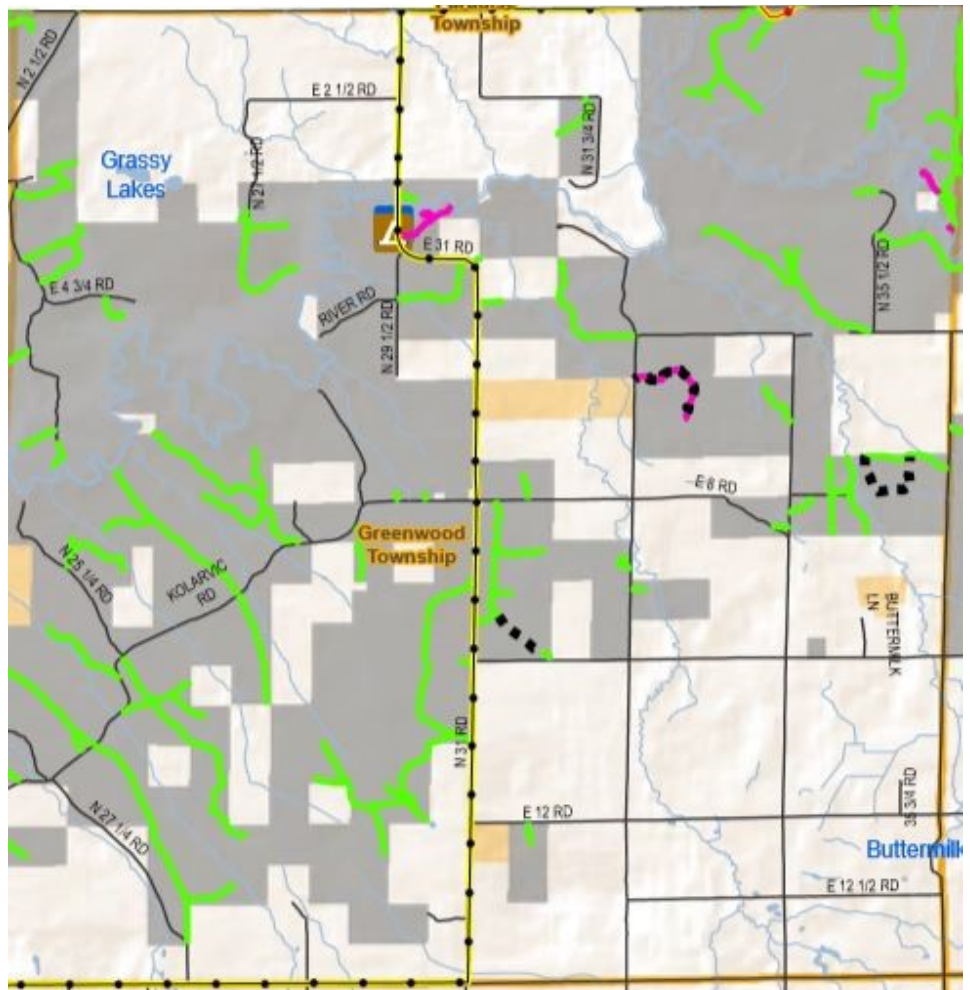
causes the most residences to be in the northwest and southeast portions of the township. The township stays connected via N-31 Road which dissects the township across Baxter Bridge and allows residents easy access to both Traverse City to the north and Cadillac to the south.

Three subdivisions were platted in the township, two along the river (sections 8 and 10) and one in the southwest (section 31). These subdivisions offer the attractiveness of the forest being almost out their backdoor.

The goal of the Master Plan is to keep Greenwood's overall rural look pristine for those who choose to live in this "in-between" township. An example would be the three school districts which overlap

Greenwood Township: Kingsley, Mesick, and Manton schools. Whereas many townships desire to have industry and commercial developments, Greenwood actually is a model for financial stability and livability.

The greatest sense of value can be readily seen in the Median Household Income between the three Manistee River townships: Greenwood - \$37,083 to \$58,068 from 2000 to 2017, or a 57% increase, whereas Hanover's was \$36,850 to \$47,500 (29%) and Liberty's was \$36,979 to \$43,558, or 18% increase.



State Forest in grey, ORV trails in green.



Liberty Township

The third township along the Manistee River was carved from Hanover Township in 1783 and from Greenwood Township in 1784 - Liberty Township. Several manmade developments have caused Liberty to have its unique blend of rural and rural-residential districts. The Manistee still splits this township into two substantial areas, with the northern portion having its own subdivision development, and the southern having its own subdivision.

The manmade railroad and highways that have made Liberty a township which would lure many residents its way. First, the railroad developed the closest city of Manton which is a mere 3000 feet from the township's southern border. But it is Business-131 and Interstate 131 that intersect directly in the middle of the township, giving quick and easy ingress and egress both north and south to the entire state.



Town Hall, Liberty Township

This highway also gives quick access to the cities of Manton and Cadillac for those that reside in Liberty and work in those places. Thus, Liberty folks have all of the access, but none of the headaches of having a city in their midst.

Private vs. Public Lands

Again, the blessing of having a river surrounded by a forest is having public lands for hunting, fishing, and boating. Well over fifty percent (55.4%) of the township is made up of the Pierre Marquette State Forest, or almost 13,000 acres of its total 23,000 acres. This 10,000 plus acres of private land are primarily in sections 1-6 of the north part of the township, the twelve sections which contain sections 25-36 in the south part of the township, and sections 17-18 and 20 in the westerly part of the township. (Note: Section 19 is 700 acres entirely owned by the State of



Manistee River, near Chippewa Landing, Liberty Township



WJPC Master Plan - 2020

Michigan DNR.) By far the smallest parcels are in sections 27, 28, 33, and 34, but even these are mostly ten acres or greater.

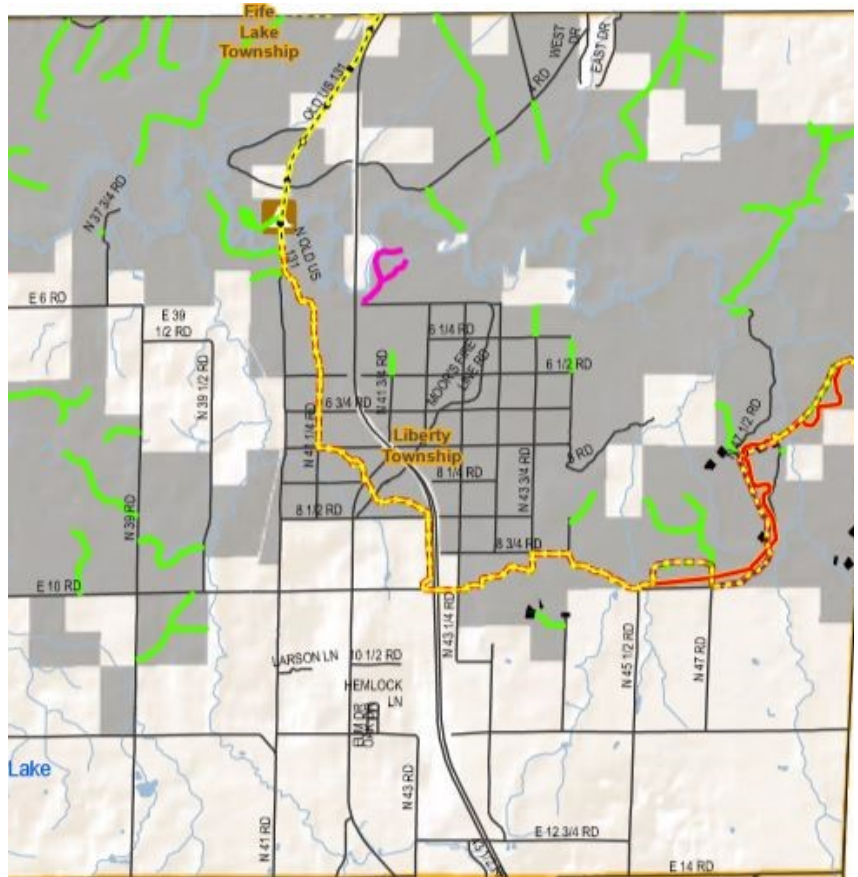
There is also an increase in Taxable Property Value (TPV) in Liberty Township. When joining the WJPC in 2016, the TPV was \$20,119,337. In the year 2029 the TVP topped \$22,161,342, an increase of over 2 million dollars in property value. This shows that people are buying and building in Liberty Township, and, when given a choice of large parcels in a rural area, plus quick access to close cities and even the rest of the state, these types of families are choosing property in Liberty Township.

Thus, the Master Plan seeks to preserve the rural qualities of the township, also adhering to allowing housing in the two subdivisions which are already there. Mainly the future Plan is to continue to preserve the natural boundaries of the Manistee River and its adjacent forests. This preservation should be paramount to the future success of Liberty Township Planning and Zoning.

Conclusion

Although having their major differences, the three townships which comprise the northern portion of the WJPC boundaries do have some similarities also. Each of them is primarily rural in nature. Each has the Manistee River flowing from east to west through its township. The river becomes the natural boundary dividing the southern part of the townships from

their northern part. The ease of access from north to south in Liberty Township is slightly better than the same access in Greenwood Township, although a much better highway system exists in the former than the two-lane road in the latter. Whereas Hanover Township has a summer access road from north to south in the township, or else access is found from M-37 on its western boarder, which most people already use. And, although both Hanover and Greenwood townships have subdivisions along the Manistee River, Liberty has shied away from this subdivision process and the river, which helps keep the Master Plan for preserving the natural environment of the river in place.



State Forest in grey, ORV trails in green. Michigan Cross Country Cycling Trail in Yellow.

