



Village of Mecosta  
Master Plan  
2022  
**DRAFT**



**Village of Mecosta**  
Mecosta County, Michigan

**Village Council**

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Plan Adopted: [INSERT DATE HERE]

Plan prepared with the assistance of:  
**Sidereal Planning, LLC**

## **Table of Contents**

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Introduction	-1
Demographics	-5
Natural and Cultural Resources	-11
Housing	-21
Transportation	-29
Utilities and Community Facilities	-37
Economic Development	-45
Land Use	-53
Intergovernmental Cooperation	-59
Implementation	-63
Appendices	-67



# Chapter 1: Introduction

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## General Description

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The Village of Mecosta Master Plan is intended to be “the will of the people” in writing for land use planning. When the people of Mecosta’s desires for the community change, so too should this document. Local officials should use this document when making land use decisions. The Plan will also assist in development and management issues or public administration by addressing short-term and long-term concerns regarding development and preservation.

The Village of Mecosta is a small community in eastern Mecosta County, in west central Michigan. State Highway M-20 runs though the Village as it connects Big Rapids to the west and Mount Pleasant to the east. M-20 crosses the East Branch Little Muskegon River just west of downtown Mecosta at Bromley Park.

The Village is situated in the northeast corner of Morton Township and near to Martiny Township to the north, Sheridan Township to the northeast, and Wheatland Township to the east. It is one of four villages in Mecosta County. See [Map 1](#) (page 3) for a visual of the location. [Map 2](#) (page 4) shows a 2022 satellite image of the Village.

## Planning Process

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In Spring 2021, the Village Board initiated a process to update its 2004 Master Plan. The State Planning Enabling Act (Michigan Public Act 33 of 2008) outlines the process by which a municipality may prepare and adopt a Master Plan. This plan was created in accordance with the procedures outlined by the state law.

The Village Board met four times in 2021 and 2022 to discuss the Plan. A Community Workshop was held in December 2021 to refine the Goals of the Plan and draft the Future Land Use map. The final draft of the Plan was discussed at the August, 2022 meeting. A Public Hearing was held and the Plan was adopted on [DATE, MONTH] 2022.

Every effort has been made to present information that is both current and accurate. The Village of Mecosta and Sidereal Planning shall not be held liable for any errors and/or omissions that are related to this plan. This plan is a general document; therefore, a thorough investigation with original research materials should be undertaken before proceeding with any specific implementation decisions. These materials might include site plans, legal review, etc. and would vary by situation.

## Public Participation

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An important part of any planning process is public involvement. Public involvement provided the citizens of the Village an opportunity to express their views, ideas, and opinions on issues that they would like to address regarding the future development of their community. Local officials use this input to guide policies and decisions with greater awareness of the public’s desires and consensus.

All Village Board meetings were posted to invite the public to attend. A Community Workshop provided an opportunity for the public to be actively involved in drafting the Goals and Actions of the Plan as well as the Future Land Use Map. A Public Hearing was held to collect input on the final Plan.

## **Community Vision**

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The vision for the Village in ten years is a series of aspirational statements of what makes a strong, vibrant Village of Mecosta.

In 2032, the Village of Mecosta is a unique rural community with a growing population and an active downtown. It is safe and convenient to walk and bike around the Village on sidewalks and paths, with popular destinations being the local parks and new Farmer's Market. An annual Summer Festival is a regional draw, providing fun activities and bringing new people to the Village.

## **How to Use this Plan**

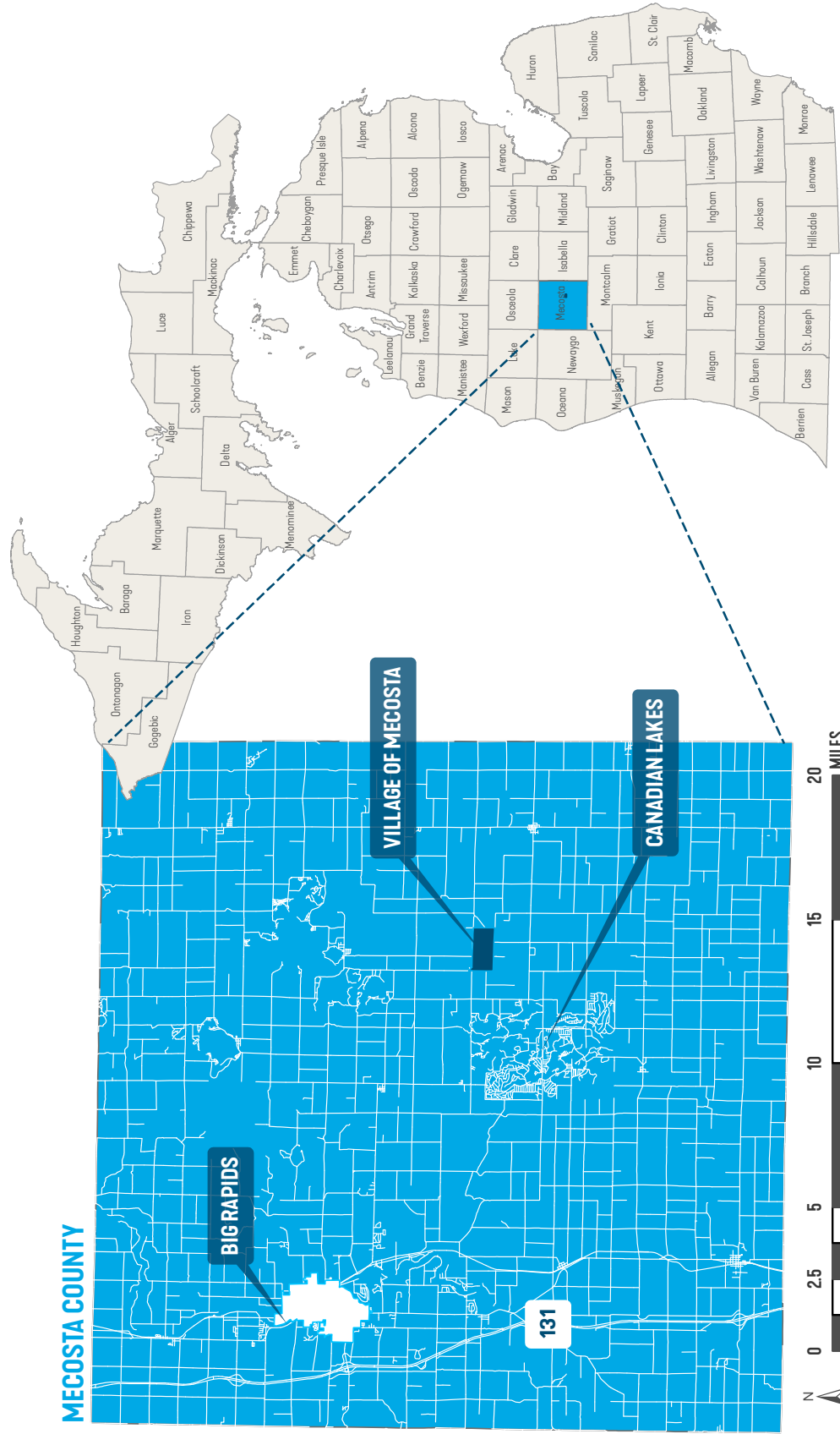
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The Village of Mecosta Master Plan is intended to function as a guide for directing and managing development within the Village boundaries. The Plan is not a zoning ordinance, which is a legally enforceable document. This Plan is a policy-planning document that provides a legal rationale for zoning. It presents a written analysis of the Village's physical, social, and historical characteristics, as well as visions and goals for the future of the community. Further, implementation strategies are identified and are intended to guide policymakers toward accomplishing the goals of the Plan. Future zoning and/or development decisions in the Village should be based on the data and information presented in this plan and should also be consistent with the goals and objectives established during the planning process.

The Master Plan describes a variety of goals, objectives, and actions the Village has identified to help it respond to issues and opportunities identified in this plan. Definitions are provided below to clarify the purpose and intent of each category.

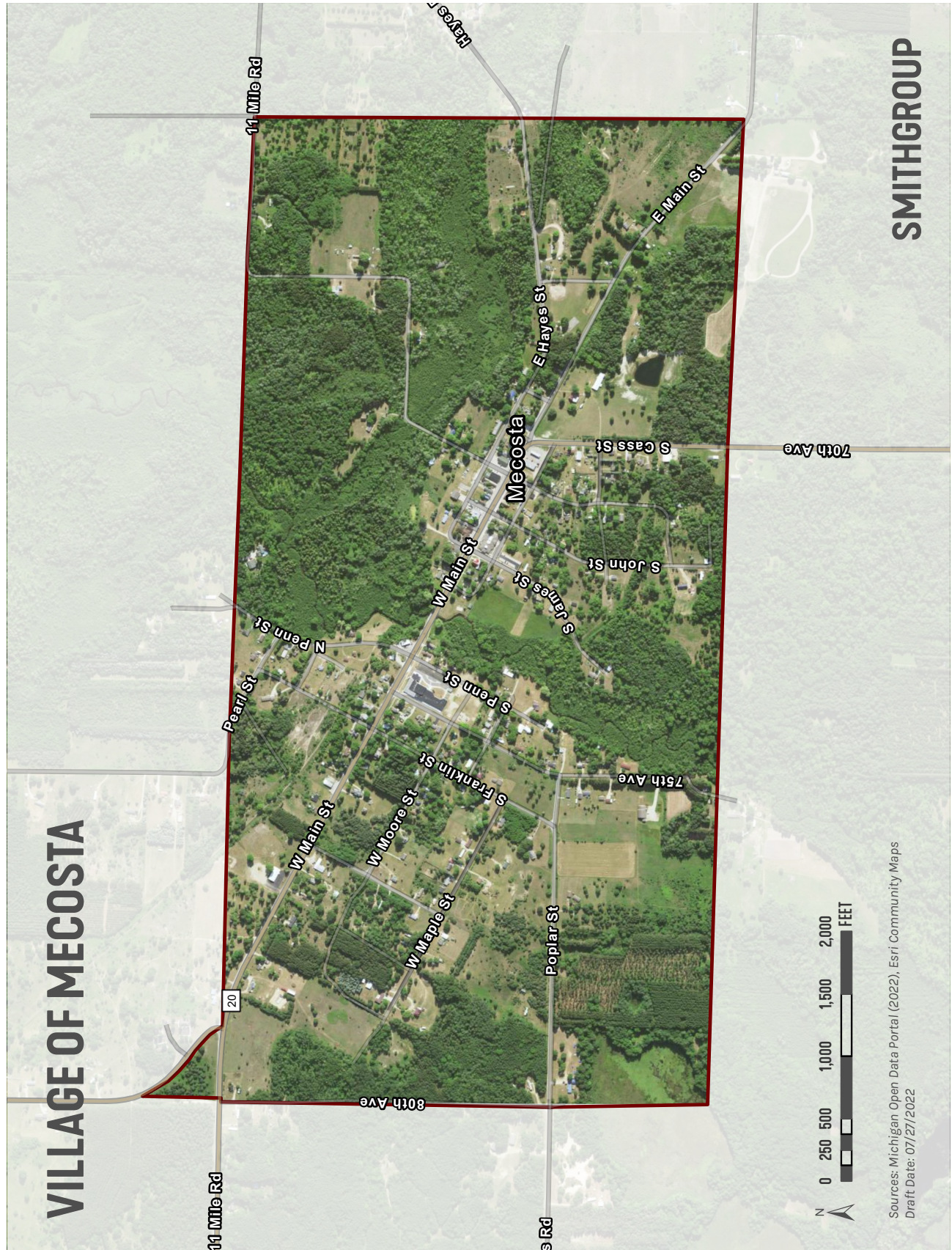
- Goals are statements made about the Village of Mecosta's aspirations in the topic area.
- Objectives are vision statements which provide direction to the sub-topics within the areas of each goal.
- Actions are key steps which should be taken on the road to meeting the objective and reaching the goal.

## CONTEXT VILLAGE OF MECOSTA



Sources: Michigan Open Data Portal (2022), Urban Footprint (2022), Esri Community Maps  
Draft Date: 07/27/2022

# SMITHGROUP





## Chapter 2: Demographics

This chapter is intended to describe and analyze the existing demographics of the Village of Mecosta and identify the major demographic trends impacting Mecosta over the next decade. Both Mecosta County and the State of Michigan are also listed for comparison.

### Population and Households

#### Historical Trends

The Village has had a relatively stable population since 1980, with some variability within a range of about 50 persons. Between 2000 and 2019, the Village had a population decrease of 8.2 percent. During this same time Mecosta County grew by 6.7 percent and the State of Michigan grew by 0.3 percent. See [Table 1](#) for a comparison of population, households, and average household size between the Village of Mecosta, Mecosta County, and the State of Michigan.

**Table 1: Demographic Changes**

		1980	1990	2000	2010	2019	% Change 2000-2019
<b>Total Population</b>	Village of Mecosta	428	393	440	451	404	-8.2%
	Mecosta County	36,961	37,308	40,553	42,730	43,251	6.7%
	Michigan	9,262,078	9,295,297	9,938,444	9,952,687	9,965,265	0.3%
<b>Total Households</b>	Village of Mecosta			167	176	147	-12.0%
	Mecosta County	9,693	12,260	14,915	16,081	15,808	6.0%
	Michigan	3,195,216	3,419,331	3,788,780	3,873,997	3,935,041	3.9%
<b>Average Household Size</b>	Village of Mecosta			2.63	2.56	2.75	4.6%
	Mecosta County	2.83	2.66	2.49	2.34	2.55	2.4%
	Michigan	2.84	2.66	2.56	2.53	2.47	-3.5%

Source: US Census Bureau

The number of households in the Village has decreased by a higher percentage than the population. This is possibly related to the slight increase in average household size during the same time.

[Table 2](#) (page 6) shows the percent of the population by age group. The largest age group in the Village is persons 25 to 34 years old, while it is those 20 to 24 years for Mecosta County and those 45 to 54 for the State of Michigan. The median age in the Village (39.5 years) is very close to that of the State (39.7 years), while Mecosta County has a lower median age (36.9) by almost 3 years. The median age in Mecosta County is likely lower due to the number of students in the 15 to 19 Years and 20 to 24 Years age groups that attend Ferris State University, located in Big Rapids in western Mecosta County.

**Table 2: Population by Age Group, 2019**

Age Group	Percent of Population		
	Village of Mecosta	Mecosta County	Michigan
Under 5 years	7.7%	4.8%	5.7%
5 to 9 years	2.7%	4.7%	5.9%
10 to 14 years	4.0%	5.6%	6.3%
15 to 19 years	7.4%	10.0%	6.6%
20 to 24 years	5.7%	12.6%	7.1%
25 to 34 years	14.1%	10.5%	12.7%
35 to 44 years	13.9%	9.2%	11.7%
45 to 54 years	11.4%	11.0%	13.2%
55 to 59 years	6.9%	6.8%	7.2%
60 to 64 years	8.2%	6.6%	6.8%
65 to 74 years	10.9%	10.8%	9.8%
75 to 84 years	4.7%	5.5%	4.9%
85+ years	2.5%	1.8%	2.1%
Median Age	39.5	36.9	39.7

Source: US Census Bureau

**Race and Ethnicity**

The Village of Mecosta is more racially diverse than Mecosta County, as shown in [Table 3](#). The Village has double the percentage of population of Black or African American persons and of American Indian or Alaska Native persons. However, the Village has a much less racially diverse population than the State of Michigan. The Village is also less ethnically diverse than both the County and the State as regards Hispanic or Latino persons.

**Table 3: Race and Ethnicity, 2019**

Race and Ethnicity	Village of Mecosta	Mecosta County	Michigan
White	92.8%	95.1%	81.0%
Black or African American	7.7%	3.8%	15.2%
American Indian and Alaska Native	3.2%	1.6%	1.5%
Asian	1.7%	1.4%	3.8%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Some Other Race	1.0%	0.5%	1.5%
Hispanic or Latino	1.5%	2.3%	5.1%
Not Hispanic or Latino	98.5%	97.7%	94.9%

Source: US Census Bureau

## **Population Forecasts**

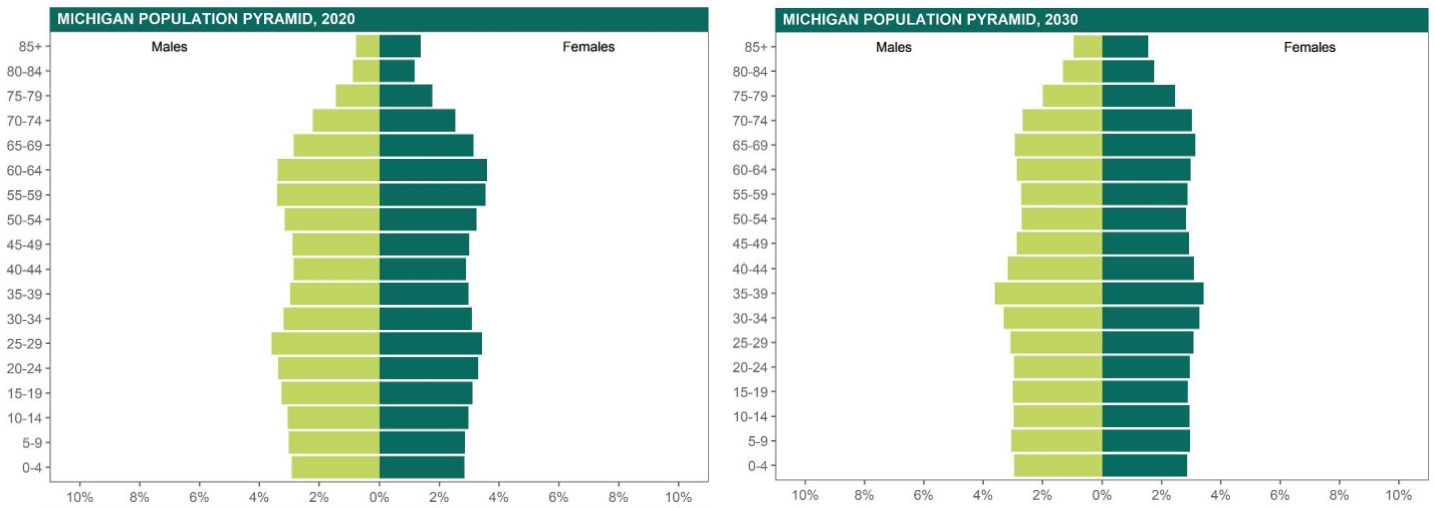
The State of Michigan's Department of Technology, Management, and Budget has a Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives, which published population projections through 2045 for Michigan as a whole and broken down by county in a 2019 report. According to the report:

“Michigan's population has yet to recover to its 2004 peak of 10,055,315 residents. The state's population declined due to emigration following the economic downturns of the first decade of this century. However, migration into Michigan is expected to increase for the next decade as workers move to the state to fill job openings created by retiring baby boomers. As a result, Michigan's population should surpass its previous peak by around 2022. In the longer-term, Michigan's population is expected to rise to around 10.6 million by about 2040 and then decrease through 2045 as the baby boomer generation shrinks.”

By looking at the county population projections, information about Mecosta County becomes clear. While many of Michigan's counties are projected to have population loss between 2020 and 2030, Mecosta County is projected to have a 2.3 percent population gain. This increase is projected to be due to net migration more than natural increase.

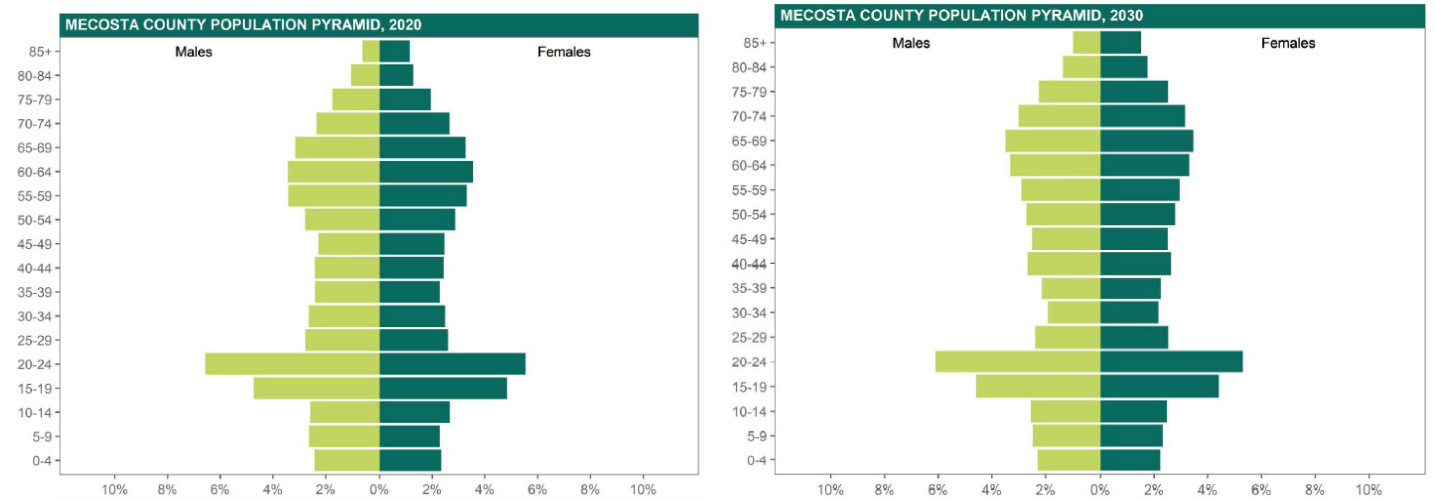
Population pyramids for Michigan in 2020 and 2030 are displayed in **Graphic A** (page 8), while those for Mecosta County are shown in **Graphic B** (page 8). Mecosta County is notable for having a much higher percentage of the population in the 15-19 and 20-24 age ranges, predominantly due to students at Ferris State University located in Big Rapids. The County also has lower percentages of the population in the young child age ranges and in the age ranges between 25-29 and 45-49. All four pyramids show fairly balanced percentages between the males and females sides, except in the oldest age ranges, where females have higher percentages than males.

## Graphic A: Population Pyramids for Michigan in 2020 and 2030



Source: US Census Bureau

## Graphic B: Population Pyramids for Mecosta County in 2020 and 2030



## Education and Income Levels

According to the 2019 American Community Survey, 72.4 percent of Village residents have a high school education or higher, see [Table 4](#). This compares to 90.2 percent for the County and 90.8 percent for the State. In the Village, 8.2 percent of residents have a Bachelor’s Degree or higher. This is lower than the number of persons with a Bachelor’s Degree or higher in the County and State, with 22.7 percent and 29.1 percent respectively. Median household income for the Village of Mecosta residents was \$33,750 in 2019. This compares lower than Mecosta County with a median income of \$45,018 and the State overall at \$57,144. The Village, County, and State all have roughly the same proportion of households with income in the \$50,000 to \$74,999 range, with 17.7 percent, 18.4 percent, and 18.3 percent respectively. See [Table 5](#) for more details.

**Table 4: Educational Attainment, population age 25 and over, 2019**

Age Group	Village of Mecosta		Mecosta County	Michigan
	Number	Percent	Percent	Percent
Less than 9th Grade	19	6.5%	3.0%	2.9%
9th to 12 Grade, No Diploma	62	21.2%	6.8%	6.3%
High School Graduate	138	47.1%	36.0%	28.9%
Some College, No Degree	34	11.6%	22.0%	23.4%
Associate's Degree	16	5.5%	9.5%	9.4%
Bachelor's Degree	18	6.1%	13.3%	17.7%
Graduate or Professional Degree	6	2.0%	9.4%	11.4%
High School Graduate or Higher	212	72.4%	90.2%	90.8%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	24	8.2%	22.7%	29.1%

Source: US Census Bureau

**Table 5: Household Income Levels, 2019**

Income Levels	Village of Mecosta		Mecosta County	Michigan
Households	147		15,808	3,935,041
Less than \$10,000	15	10.2%	8.4%	6.6%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	16	10.9%	7.2%	4.4%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	23	15.6%	12.9%	9.6%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	23	15.6%	10.7%	9.8%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	26	17.7%	15.3%	13.5%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	26	17.7%	18.4%	18.3%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	9	6.1%	11.0%	12.7%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	8	5.4%	10.5%	14.2%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	1	0.7%	3.5%	5.6%
\$200,000 or More	0	0.0%	2.1%	5.2%
Median Household Income	\$33,750		\$45,018	\$57,144

Source: US Census Bureau

## Employment Characteristics

**Table 6** illustrates the breakdown of the employed population of the Village in 2019 by occupation. The “employed population” is defined as people living in the Village who are 16 years and older and who had a job at the time of the Survey. In 2019, the Village had an employed population of 144 persons. Most residents were employed in Service Occupations and in Production, Transportation, and Material Moving Occupations as they were tied with each having 32.6 percent of the employed population. Sales and Service Occupations was third with 19.4 percent of the employed population.

**Table 6: Occupation by Sector, 2019**

Sector	Number	Percent
Management, Business, Science, and Arts Occupations	8	5.6%
Service Occupations	47	32.6%
Sales and Office Occupations	28	19.4%
Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance Occupations	14	9.7%
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving Occupations	47	32.6%
Total Employed*	144	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau

## **Chapter 3: Natural and Cultural Resources**

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Natural Resources, including water resources, soils, and other natural features, influence a community's development. These physical features directly or indirectly constrain or encourage growth. Cultural resources include historic buildings, archeological sites, and other elements which give a community a sense of identity. There are few if any agricultural resources within the Village of Mecosta. Natural, agricultural, and cultural resources play an important role in the livability of a community.

### **Previous Plans and Studies**

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Over the last decade, several plans were adopted or prepared for Mecosta County to address protection and management of natural resources. These plans may be used as resources to guide local policy and decision making regarding natural and cultural resource management and protection.

### **Mecosta County Master Plan**

The Mecosta County Master Plan has a chapter on "Physical Character – Natural Features" which goes into detail on the geology, climate, soils, wetlands and floodplains, forest and woodland resources, surface and groundwater resources of the County.

### **Natural Resources**

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The environmental features and assets that are examined in this plan include water, wetlands, soils, and more. Protection of certain natural features is necessary for the environment and for future generations. Certain environmental features and assets have more than merely aesthetic and leisure-time activity values; they are essential to long-term preservation of life, health, and general welfare.

The Village of Mecosta has a continental climate which experiences four distinct seasons with long, cold winters and short, warm summers. Winter temperatures in January average between 11 and 28 degrees Fahrenheit and summer temperatures in July average between 57 and 81 degrees Fahrenheit. In the Village of Mecosta, average annual rainfall is 36 inches and average annual snowfall is 58 inches. The United States average annual rainfall is 38 inches and average annual snowfall is 28 inches per year. On average there are 165 sunny days per year in Mecosta, while the US averages 205 sunny days.

See the Natural Resources Map, [Map 3](#) (page 19), for more information.

### **Surface Water**

Surface water is any water that has not penetrated under the surface of the ground beneath. Rivers, lakes, oceans, and wetlands are commonly known bodies of surface water. Surface water is lost through evaporation and regained through precipitation or recruited from ground-water sources. Two of the primary human uses of surface water are for irrigation and for the enjoyment of anglers, boaters, hunters, and casual observers. Surface waters provide for drainage after heavy rains and habitat for plants, fish, and wildlife.

The two surface water features in the Village of Mecosta are the East Branch of the Little Muskegon River and Dye Creek.



*East Branch Little Muskegon River as seen from Bromley Park.*

### **Watersheds**

A watershed is the land area that drains into a stream or other waterbody. The Village of Mecosta is located in the local watershed of the East Branch Little Muskegon River. See [Graphic C](#) (page 13) for a visual of this watershed from the Environmental Protection Agency’s How’s My Waterway tool. This local watershed is part of the wider watershed for the Muskegon River

According to the 2020 Waterbody Report available on How’s My Waterway for this watershed, conditions were evaluated to be Impaired. While conditions for agriculture, cold water fishery, industrial water supply, navigation, and other were “good”, conditions for fish consumption were “impaired” due to the presence of PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls. PCBs are a group of man-made organic chemicals with a range of toxicity. Despite being banned in the U.S. since 1979, PCBs are long lasting in rivers and lakes. Presence of PCBs in waterways is a cause of fishing bans or warnings. The report includes a plan for restoration of the waterway.

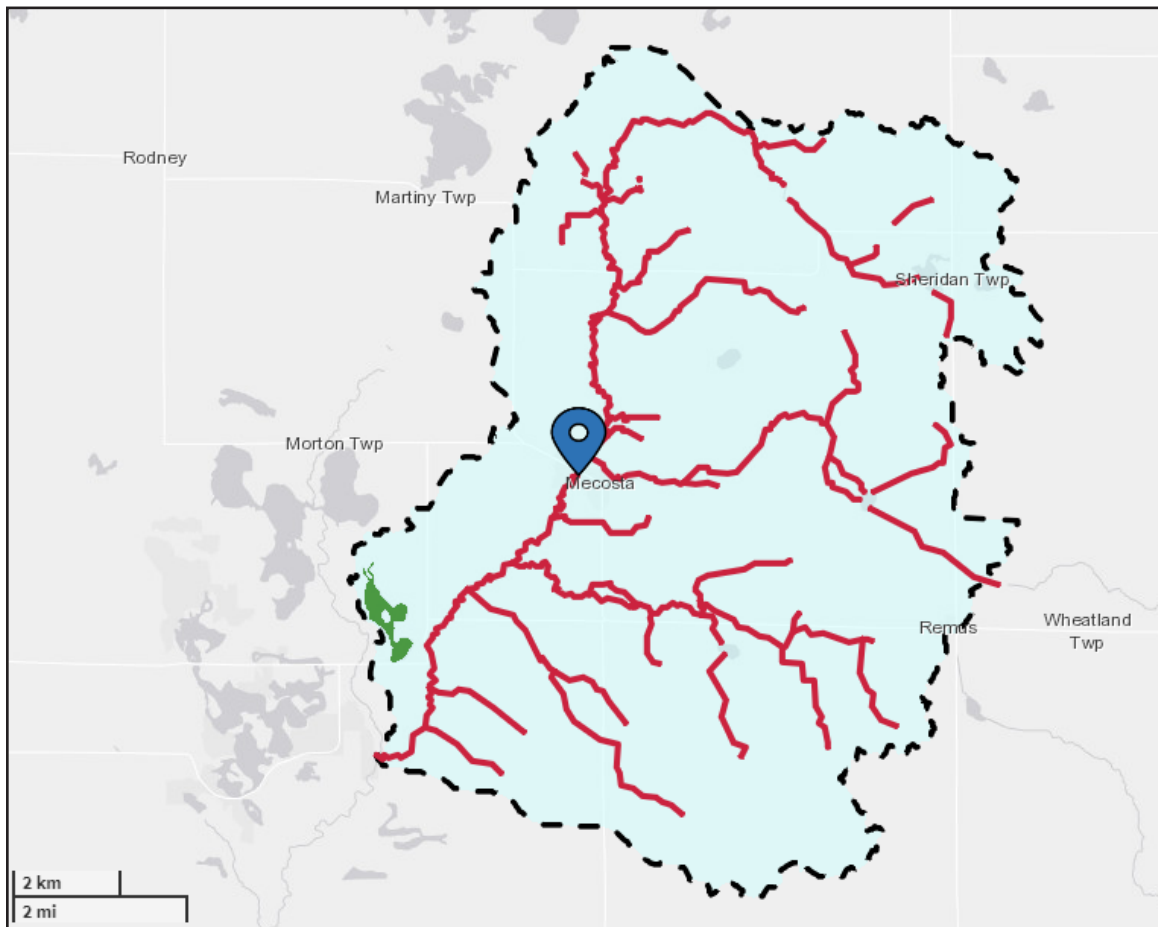
### **Wetlands**

Wetlands are defined as areas between terrestrial and aquatic systems where the water table is at, near, or above the land surface for a significant part of most years. Wetlands include marshes, wooded swamps, and wet meadows. Soils in these areas are usually saturated during the growing season within a few inches of the surface. The presence of wetlands in an area can limit the type of development that can occur in that location.

Wetlands perform many indispensable roles in the proper function of the hydrologic cycle and local ecological systems. In a natural condition, wetlands control floodwater by moderating peak flows and acting as groundwater recharge sites. All wetlands have valuable water purification capabilities and make significant contributions to surface and groundwater quality. They act as settling areas for inflowing streams and help reduce water nutrients through uptake of these compounds into plant tissues. Wetlands also have a buffering effect on water acidity or alkalinity and are helpful in the elimination of harmful bacteria which may be found in surface or groundwater. They are breeding and nesting



## Graphic C: East Branch Little Muskegon River Watershed



*Wetlands along the East Branch Little Muskegon River as seen from N Webber St.*

grounds for waterfowl and other animals that depend on aquatic habitats. Wetlands also serve as important recreation, education, and aesthetic resources for communities.

In the Village of Mecosta, wetland areas are concentrated around the East Branch of the Little Muskegon River and Dye Creek.

### **Floodplains**

Floodplains are formally designated areas that experience flooding during a 100-year storm event. The floodplain consists of the “floodway” and the “flood fringe”. The floodway is the channel of a river or stream and those portions of the floodplain adjoining the channel required to carry the regional flood discharge. The flood fringe is the portion of the floodplain outside the floodway which is covered by floodwaters during the regional flood and is generally associated with standing water rather than rapidly flowing water.

Development can occur within the flood fringe with appropriate flood proofing or elevation measure. Such measures may provide some relief from flood insurance premiums. Within the floodway, only open uses that do not obstruct flood flow are allowed.

Floodplain areas are based on information compiled by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM). Areas within the 100-year floodplain are located near the East Branch of the Little Muskegon River.

### **Groundwater**

Groundwater is the major source of all water consumption in the Village of Mecosta. The Village does not have a water utility, but rather all residents have their own well and septic system. Depth to groundwater in the Village is mostly shallow and of ample quantity for the current level of development and use. Groundwater quality is affected by surface runoff contamination, so monitoring potential runoff operations is necessary.

### **Soils**

The United States Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service has an online soil survey which provides soil data and maps. Reviewing this data shows that three soil groups make up over 50 percent of all soils in the Village, with the remaining soil made up of 17 different soil types represented in small amounts. The three larger soil groups are Mecosta Sand (18.0 percent), Pipestone loamy sand (17.8 percent), and Adrian muck (14.3 percent). See [Graphic D](#) (page 15) for a visual representation of the distribution of different soil types in the Village.

### **Non-Metallic Mining**

Non-metallic mines are important sources of locally used construction aggregate and also produce value added stone products (such as shingle aggregate, decorative stone, architectural stone, and railroad ballast) that are marketed regionally and nationally. Local non-metallic mines can help to keep construction costs low by minimizing high transportation costs of these necessary minerals. There are no non-metallic mines in or immediately around the Village of Mecosta at this time.

## Graphic D: Soil Survey Map Excerpt



### **Woodlands**

Temperate forests, such as those found across Michigan, provide habitats for plant and animal life, provide outdoor recreation opportunities, protect and enhance air and water quality, and support thousands of jobs. Forested ecosystems include living and non-living components combined into a broad landscape diversity mix.

While at one time before the Village was settled the area that is currently the Village of Mecosta was a forest, the area was fully logged over a century ago. Today, woodland areas in the Village of Mecosta are limited and are concentrated along the East Branch of the Little Muskegon River.

### **Wildlife Resources and Habitat**

Wildlife resources in the Village of Mecosta include a variety of game and non-game species of birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, and amphibians that typically live in Mecosta County. Common types of wildlife include deer, wild turkeys, racoon, squirrels, songbirds, waterfowl, and raptors. Wildlife resources are abundant in the many undisturbed sanctuaries, refuges, reserves, and scattered habitats located throughout the County. Numerous other species of migrating birds use habitat in Mecosta county for food, shelter, and resting stops during seasonal migration.

There is a significant amount of wildlife habitat in Mecosta County. In addition to County parks and forests, major wildlife habitat areas include the Haymarsh Lake State Game Area and the Martiny Lake State Game Area. Both of these areas have been dedicated for wildlife conservation and management by the DNR Wildlife Division.

## **Endangered Species**

In 1973, the U.S. Congress passed the Endangered Species Act. The purpose of this law is to identify animals and plants that are in trouble and to protect these animals and plants and their habitats. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) keeps a list of animals and plants protected by this Act. An endangered species is in danger of extinction throughout the area in which they are usually found. A threatened species is one that could become endangered in the near future. Additionally, certain birds are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

The list of federally endangered and threatened species in Michigan includes four mammals, four birds, two reptiles, four freshwater mussels, six insects, and eight plants. The USFWS's Information for Planning and Consultation tool can be used to identify endangered and threatened species present in Mecosta County. These include four mammals (Northern Long-eared Bat, Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake, Karner Blue Butterfly, and Monarch Butterfly) and 13 migratory birds (including the Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Canadian Warbler, and Red-headed Woodpecker among others).

## **Cultural Resources**

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Cultural resources are features that signify a community’s heritage and help to evoke the sense of place that makes an area distinctive. Cultural resources may include archaeological sites and cemeteries, historic buildings and landscapes, historic transportation routes, or traditional cultural properties important to Native Americans or other cultural groups.

### **Cemeteries, Burial Mounds, Other Burials**

Mount Hope Cemetery is located in the Village of Mecosta on W Main Street. The Village Street Administrator is responsible for managing the maintenance of the cemetery. The Village Clerk and Treasurer are responsible for selling of lots therein.

### **History of the Village of Mecosta**

For a brief overview of the History of the Village of Mecosta, see the special section after this chapter.

### **Notable Local Cultural Resources**

One notable local cultural resource is the Russell Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal. This Center is located at Russell Kirk’s ancestral home in the Village of Mecosta and houses seminars, reserach, and fellowship opportunities in the residential library and conference center. Mr. Kirk lived and worked in Mecosta during much of his career authoring 32 books on political theory, the history of ideas, education, cultural criticism, and supernatural tales. The facility is named as a Michigan Historic Site and features a historical marker.



*The Russell Kirk Center in Mecosta.*

## Issues

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**East Branch Little Muskegon River** – The river can be unpredictable and cause difficulties due to flooding. The river could be viewed as a great local asset for recreation and fishing with more promotion.

**Rural Character and Historic Resources** – Residents in Mecosta have expressed a desire to preserve the small town character of the community. An important part of rural character is the small town landscape and the buildings that convey this particular sense of place. While it is important to address the location and type of new development, it must be balanced with the need to preserve visible reminders of small town character.

## Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps

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**Natural and Cultural Resources Goal:** The Village of Mecosta manages natural and cultural resources in a balanced way for current and future generations' health, enjoyment, and benefit.

1. Maintain good groundwater quality.
  - a. Evaluate water quality levels on a periodic basis.
  - b. Report instances of possible groundwater contamination to the State.
  - c. Enhance monitoring efforts in areas thought to contain possible contamination hazards.
  - d. Maintain a good working relationship with the DNR and EGLE.
2. Maintain good water quality in existing river and creek.
  - a. Set policies to limit uncontrolled runoff, overuse of fertilizers, and other waterway contaminants to surface water.
  - b. Monitor water quality reports from the State.
3. Protect wetlands and floodplains from the encroachment of development.
  - a. Establish local guidelines for development located near wetland areas including type and use.
  - b. Communicate and work with the DNR regarding wetland protection and regulations.
  - c. Encourage the elimination of residential uses from within the floodplain.
4. Preserve historically significant buildings and sites.
  - a. Work with the County Historical Society to identify historic resources.
  - b. Ensure that any known cemeteries, human burials, or archeological sites are protected from encroachment by development activities.



## Brief History of the Village of Mecosta

The history of the Village of Mecosta dates back to the late 19th century. The first settlers to the region were Native Americans, free African Americans, and white settlers who were given homesteads by the Federal Government. In its early days, the Village of Mecosta was known as “Little River” because the East Branch of the Little Muskegon River winds through the area. In those days, much of the land was covered by valuable white pine trees, which drew sawmills and lumberjacks to the area.

In 1897, the Detroit, Lansing, & Northern Railroad came through the area to provide transportation to markets for foresters and farmers. On July 17, 1879, the Webber Brother of Ionia, E.B. Moore of Edmore, and Giles Gilbert of Stanton platted the community and named it Mecosta. However it was not until four years later in 1883 that the community was officially incorporated into the Village of Mecosta. The original plat contained 120 acres along the East Branch of the Little Muskegon River at the junction of the Alma and Clinton State Road with the railroad. The name Mecosta, which means “bear cub”, came from a local Potawatomi Chief who signed the Treaty of Washington in 1836.



*Mecosta Train Station, early 1900s*

The combination of the railroads and sawmills quickly made the Village of Mecosta a thriving community. In 1880, the Village had six business establishments and 189 residents. By 1883, these numbers jumped to 36 businesses and 800 residents. The local businesses included a wagon shop, a general store, a livery stable, a furniture store, a photography gallery, a drug store, two hotels, a jewelry stores, a clothing store, a bank, a shoe store, a hardware store, a meat market, a blacksmith, a planing mill, a barber shop, and a saloon. The Village also had a lawyer and two physicians in residence.

The Village has many residents who made a name for themselves and stand out in the community’s historical development.

- Amos Johnson arrived in 1878 and was appointed the agent for the sale of lots. In addition, he established a mercantile house and was elected the first Village President in the spring of 1883.
- Charles Calkins, Isaac W. Ferris, and Isaac W. Pierce were, respectively, elected the Village’s first Clerk, first Justice of the Peace, and first Treasurer of the Village Council.
- Malon Carman was a local entrepreneur who, in addition to opening a grocery store in 1883, owned a shingle manufacturing operation that produced between 75,000 and 100,000 shingles daily.
- Christian Wernette owned the Village saloon, the blacksmith shop, the Wilson House, and the building where The Mecosta Advance (the local newspaper) was published, as well as a 260-acre farm to the southeast of the Village.



There were a number of other pioneers who influenced the history of the Village: Amos R. Streeter was the first superintendent of schools; Dominick O'Brien owned the Mecosta House, a three story hotel which did unbelievable business; and John Bracy, who was the only Negro stock buyer in Michigan at the time.

Within 10 years of work, the lumberjacks depleted the area's timber resources and the sawmills moved out of town. As a consequence of the sawmills moving, the number of Village residents declined severely, as much of the population was lumberjacks. As the population dwindled, so did commerce, and many businesses were forced to either shut down or relocate.



*Main Street, looking east, in 1912*



*Main Street, looking east downhill, in 1939*

After the lumber era was over, Villagers continued to farm and export potatoes, beans, and pickles. At the turn of the century Mecosta was still a good size farming town. The Village had a Heinz Pickle factory where pickles were sorted and a large grain elevator. The Pere Marquette Train went through the village twice each day. There remained three grocery stores, a butcher shop, two garages, a shoe cobbler, a barbershop, an undertaker, and a bank.

The Village of Mecosta was a thriving community during the lumber era and managed to maintain some of that vitality by transitioning to a farming community after the sawmills relocated. Today, the Village lacks real industry and is in need of economic revitalization. This will not come as a quick fix but rather as a result of careful planning and community involvement. Looking back at the history of this once flourishing Village, residents can take pride in their past and gain confidence that this community can prosper once again.

The Village of Mecosta was a thriving community during the lumber era and managed to maintain some of that vitality by transitioning to a farming community after the sawmills relocated. Today, the Village lacks real industry and is in need of economic revitalization. This will not come as a quick fix but rather as a result of careful planning and community involvement. Looking back at the history of this once flourishing Village, residents can take pride in their past and gain confidence that this community can prosper once again.



*Main Street, looking south, undated*



*Men in front of Mecosta Drug Store, in 1908*

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## **Chapter 4: Housing**

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Housing characteristics and trends are an important component of a master plan. The physical location of housing determines the need of many public services and facilities.

Housing is a crucial component of livability. The connection between home and work is a fundamental function of any transportation system and understanding the factors affecting people’s decisions on meeting their housing needs provides a basis for how home-work connections can be efficient, reinforce and strengthen community ties, and foster economic growth and environmental sustainability.

### **Previous Plans and Studies**

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#### **Michigan Statewide Housing Needs Assessment**

The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) published the Michigan Statewide Housing Needs Assessment in 2019. The report focuses on the state of the housing market in Michigan since the 2008 Great Recession and shows overall improvement. Several trends and goals arise from the Assessment including the need to focus on housing affordability, senior housing, rural housing, and the need to review the effectiveness of MSHDA’s programs. Further, MSHDA is now working to develop Michigan’s first collaborative Statewide Housing Plan.

#### **2004 Village of Mecosta Master Plan**

The 2004 Village of Mecosta Master Plan included a section on Housing Characteristics within the Population and Economic Characteristics chapter. This section analyzed statistics for housing units and housing characteristics in the Village as compared to the Village of Barryton and Morton Township. It noted that while the Village of Mecosta has grown at a slow, steady pace since the 1940s, the Village remains “notably underdeveloped”.

Goal #2 of the Plan addresses residential needs: “Within the context of a small community atmosphere, preserve and enhance the supply of affordable, decent, safe, and sanitary dwelling units and adjoining properties”.

## **Housing Inventory**

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### **Housing Type and Tenure**

In 2019, the Village of Mecosta had 147 occupied housing units. Of the total units, 125 (or 85 percent) were owner-occupied, see [Table 7](#) (page 24). The Village had an average household size of 2.72 persons, which is higher than Mecosta County and the State of Michigan. Over 29 percent of all households are classified as “1-Person Households”. Approximately 37 percent of Village households had one or more people age 65 years or older.

### **Changes in Housing Stock**

[Table 8](#) (page 24) notes changes in the housing stock between 2000 and 2019. Total housing units have decreased by 27 units, or 13 percent. The number of occupied housing units decreased by 24, or 14 percent. Vacancy rates stayed very consistent, changing by only one percentage point. The number of owner-occupied housing units decreased from 143 units in 2000 to 125 units in 2019.

**Table 7: Housing and Householders, 2019**

Area	Village of Mecosta	Mecosta County	Michigan
Total Occupied Housing Units	147	15,808	3,935,041
Owner Occupied Housing Units	125	11,594	2,802,699
Renter Occupied Housing Units	22	4,214	1,132,342
Average Household Size	2.72	2.55	2.56
% Owner Occupied	85.0%	73.3%	71.2%
% 1-Person Households	29.6%	29.9%	36.0%
% with One or More People 65 Years or Older	37.4%	33.3%	30.0%

Source: US Census Bureau

**Table 8: Changes in Housing Stock**

	2000	2010	2019	Change 2000 to 2019	
				#	%
Total Housing Units	207	215	180	-27	-13.0%
Occupied Housing Units	171	176	147	-24	-14.0%
Vacancy Percent	17.3%	18.1%	18.3%	NA	NA
Owner Occupied Housing Units	143	144	125	-18	-12.6%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	28	32	22	-6	-21.4%
Owner Occupied Housing Units as Percent of Total Occupied Units	83.6%	81.8%	85.0%	NA	NA
Number of Single Family Homes	135	172	119	-16	-11.9%
Number of Duplexes	8	9	4	-4	-50.0%
Mobile Home	60	32	57	-3	-5.0%

Source: US Census Bureau

### **Housing Age**

The age of a community's housing stock typically reflects several important factors including size, offered amenities, and overall maintenance costs. Age of the home often also reflects different regional and national trends in housing development. Housing predating the 1940s, for example, was typically smaller and built on smaller lots. In subsequent decades, both average lot and home sizes have increased. Additional bedrooms, bathrooms, and attached garage space are among the amenities found in newer housing units. However, older construction methods and materials are often desirable for their long-lasting quality and high character.

Table 12 shows housing age for the community. In the Village of Mecosta, over 20 percent of the local housing stock were built prior to 1940. Housing growth from the 1970s makes up the largest percentage of housing development with 39 housing units built between 1970 and 1979 which accounts for 21.7 percent of all housing.

The data in [Table 9](#) (page 25) shows that only three (3) new housing units were built in the Village between 2010 and 2019. This is consistent with state trends showing that after the Housing Market Crash and subsequent Great Recession from 2008 to 2010, new housing starts across Michigan were down significantly.

**Table 9: Age of Housing Stock, 2019**

	Year Built								
	2010 or Later	2000 to 2009	1990 to 1999	1980 to 1989	1970 to 1979	1960 to 1969	1950 to 1959	1940 to 1949	1939 or Earlier
Total Units									
(# total Units)	3	14	30	11	39	16	17	12	38
% of Units	1.7%	7.8%	16.7%	6.1%	21.7%	8.9%	9.4%	6.7%	21.1%

Source: US Census Bureau

**Physical Housing Stock**

Several select measures of physical condition of housing stock is displayed in **Table 10**, which compares these features between the Village of Mecosta, Mecosta County, and the State of Michigan. The median home size in the Village, as determined by median number of rooms, is slightly larger than that of Mecosta County and smaller than the State. Over 66 percent of the community’s housing stock is classified as “single family” homes, which is lower than both Mecosta County (70.7 percent) and Michigan (76.8 percent). The Village has no large multi-unit buildings but has a higher percentage of mobile homes than the County and State.

**Table 10: Physical Housing Stock, 2019**

Community	Characteristic			
	Median Rooms	1-Unit, Detached or Attached	In buildings with 10 or more Units	Mobile Home
Village of Mecosta	5.7	66.1%	0.0%	31.7%
Mecosta County	5.4	70.7%	5.0%	17.4%
Michigan	5.8	76.8%	8.7%	5.3%

Source: US Census Bureau



*One example of a house in Mecosta.*



*A second example of a house in Mecosta.*

## **Housing Values**

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### **Median Value**

**Table 11** (page 27) shows home value statistics for the Village, County and State in 2019. Specifically, it shows the median (or middle value) of select owner-occupied homes for each area. This value includes only single-family houses that are located on less than 10 acres. Additionally, this statistic only considers homes without a business or medical office on the property. This data, from the American Community Survey, indicates that the Village has a significantly lower median home value than Mecosta County, with about half the median value.

### **Range of Values**

The range of home values that exist in the community are displayed in **Table 12** (page 27). Compared to overall percentages for Mecosta County, the Village of Mecosta has a higher proportion of lower value homes. Over 83 percent of owner-occupied homes in the Village in 2019 had a value of less than \$100,000, while only 40.1 percent of owner-occupied homes in County were valued less than \$100,000.

### **Housing Affordability**

Several factors impact the varied levels of housing affordability in Mecosta County. These factors include rent and mortgage payments, maintenance expenses, lot size, and required or desired amenities in the home. Household size and income are also key factors contributing to what housing options are available and accessible to residents.

Statistically speaking, those spending more than 35 percent of their total household income on housing costs may be facing affordability difficulties. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recommends that rental-housing costs not exceed 30 percent of the monthly income. HUD also indicates that mortgage lenders are more willing to make loans if the scheduled mortgage payment is less than 29 percent of the monthly household income. The percentage of households in the Village of Mecosta that pay more than 35 percent of their income on housing costs (44.9 percent) is much higher than among the County (29.1 percent) or the State (29.2 percent). The Village also has a higher percentage of renters paying more than 35 percent of their income on housing costs (50 percent), than renters in the County (45.6 percent) or the State (40 percent).

Additionally, **Table 13** (page 27) shows that select Village median owner-occupied costs, both with and without a mortgage, are lower than median figures for Mecosta County and Michigan. Interestingly, median gross rent in the Village is higher than in the County but lower than in the State. Gross rent is calculated as the contract rent plus the estimated average monthly cost of utilities (electricity, gas, water, and sewer) and fuels (oil, coal, kerosene, wood, etc.) if these costs are paid by the renter.

**Table 11: Median Housing Value, Owner-Occupied Housing, 2019**

Community	Median Housing Value
Village of Mecosta	\$63,100
Mecosta County	\$121,400
Michigan	\$154,900

Source: US Census Bureau

**Table 12: Range of Housing Values, Owner-Occupied Housing, 2019**

Houses per Housing Value Category	Village of Mecosta	Mecosta County
\$49,999 and Less	44	1,426
%	35.2%	12.6%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	60	3,190
%	48.0%	27.5%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	12	2,319
%	9.6%	20.0%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	5	2,031
%	4.0%	17.5%
\$200,000 and More	4	2,628
%	3.2%	22.4%

Source: US Census Bureau

**Table 13: Housing Affordability, 2019**

	Median Selected Monthly Costs				
	Owner Occupied			Renter Occupied	
	With Mortgage	No Mortgage	% Housing Burdened*	Median Gross Rent	% Housing Burdened*
Village of Mecosta	\$778	\$315	44.9%	\$767	50.0%
Mecosta County	\$1,101	\$394	29.1%	\$712	45.6%
Michigan	\$1,298	\$490	28.2%	\$871	40.0%

Source: US Census Bureau

## Special Housing

### Senior Housing

Housing for seniors is an important piece of the housing discussion. An array of options cater to the needs of seniors, from independent living communities to assisted living facilities and more. Facilities commonly provide services such as trained staff, personal services, and social activities for residents. Other services that may be provided include dementia care, hospice, and rehabilitation services.

There are no dedicated senior housing facilities in the Village of Mecosta. Royal View Retirement Community is located less than five miles from the Village near School Section Lake and provides supportive care services to residents.

The Mecosta County Commission on Aging (COA) is also located near to the Village, less than 3 miles away at the corner of 80th Ave and 13 Mile Rd. The COA provides services to seniors to help them remain in their homes and maintain independence.

# **Housing Assistance Programs**

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## **State Programs**

### **Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA)**

The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) was established in 1966 to provide financial and technical assistance through public and private partnership to create and preserve safe and decent affordable housing, engage in community economic development activities, develop vibrant cities, towns and villages, and address homeless issues. To this end, they offer a variety of programs to homebuyers (including the MI Home Loan programs and housing education classes), homeowners (including the Property Improvement Program), renters (including the Housing Choice Voucher Program), and more.

## **Federal Programs**

### **USDA-RD**

A variety of loan programs are available to provide assistance in financing homes for low-income households including the Homeownership Direct Loan Program of the Rural Health Services, the Mutual Self-Help Housing Loan program, the Very-Low-Income Housing Repair Program, the Rural Rental Assistance Program, and the Rural Housing Preservation Grants. These funds are provided through approved lender organizations (local banks).

### **Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)**

The Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program finances land acquisition and site development associated with self-help housing for low-income families. Loans are made to the non-profit sponsors (including the Housing Assistance Council and Habitat for Humanity International) of development projects and are interest free. Portions of the loans are forgiven if promised units of housing are completed within a given period. These forgiven “grant conversion” funds may be used to subsidize future development projects.

The HOME Investment Partnership Program aims to encourage the production and rehabilitation of affordable housing. HOME Funds may be used for rental assistance, assistance to homebuyers, new construction, rehabilitation, or acquisition of rental housing.



## Issues

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**Housing Condition** – The current housing stock is fairly old, with approximately 50 percent of the housing stock built before 1970. As such, there are some distressed properties in need of rehabilitation.

**Available Housing** – The Village is in need of more quality family housing. There are currently not many housing options for people to choose from if they desire to move to the Village.

**Lack of Housing Diversity** – The housing stock in the Village is primarily single family houses and mobile homes. Housing of a variety of sizes would be beneficial to providing options for people looking to move to the Village.

## Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps

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**Housing Goal:** The Village of Mecosta has decent, safe, affordable housing options to meet the needs of all community members.

1. Encourage a greater diversity of housing types.
  - a. Develop a housing plan to inventory supply of affordable housing and identify programming to ensure proper upkeep.
  - b. Encourage development of new single family housing units and senior living facilities.
2. Improve the condition of existing housing stock.
  - a. Encourage enforcement of building code requirements.
  - b. Explore additional program development for home improvements, such as a revolving loan fund for exterior repairs and code enforcement.

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## **Chapter 5: Transportation**

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Transportation is necessary for the effective movement of people and goods within and with community outside of the Village. Transportation is also critical to development and land use. This chapter provides an inventory of the existing transportation facilities and services within the Village.

Transportation is a crucial component of livability and provides a basis for the formulation of policy to coordinate transportation facilities with a sustainable pattern of development. The existing network needs to be coordinated to maximize efficiency for the overall system. The connection between home and work is an important part of any transportation system. A range of transportation alternatives should be supported, including walkability, wherever possible.

The Village of Mecosta is directly served by state trunkline highway M-20 which serves as one of the main thoroughfares of the transportation system in Mecosta County. M-20 serves as the primary entry gateway to the Village. See the Transportation Map, [Map 4](#) (page 38), for more information.

A network of local and county roads provides good access to and through the Village. Village roads are in decent condition. The original platted section of the Village has a distinct grid pattern, as opposed to newer areas of development which are more likely to have curved roads and cul-de-sacs.

### **Previous Plans and Studies**

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#### **State Transportation Plans**

Michigan Mobility 2045 is the Michigan Department of Transportation’s newest State Long-Range Transportation Plan. This plan is an essential element of Michigan’s transportation planning and program development process. The plan provides a foundation for developing Michigan’s transportation programs, including MDOT’s Five-Year Transportation Program and the statewide, rural, and metropolitan transportation improvement programs, and presents the social and economic cases for transportation investment in Michigan. Michigan Mobility 2045 is a multi-modal plan, integrating the state freight and rail plans into one plan with the active transportation plan, the statewide transit strategy, and the long-range transportation plan to establish a cohesive transportation vision for all of Michigan.

#### **MDOT Five-Year Transportation Program 2021-2025**

The Five-Year Transportation Program presents anticipated investments across all modes as early in the planning process as possible, supporting successful program delivery, encouraging local coordination, and guaranteeing opportunities for meaningful public input. It provides information on planned investments for all components of the transportation network. The 2021-2025 edition identifies a Road Preventative Maintenance project for M-20 from Remus east to the Mecosta/Isabella County border to take place in 2023.

#### **MDOT Grand Region – Regional Nonmotorized Plan 2017**

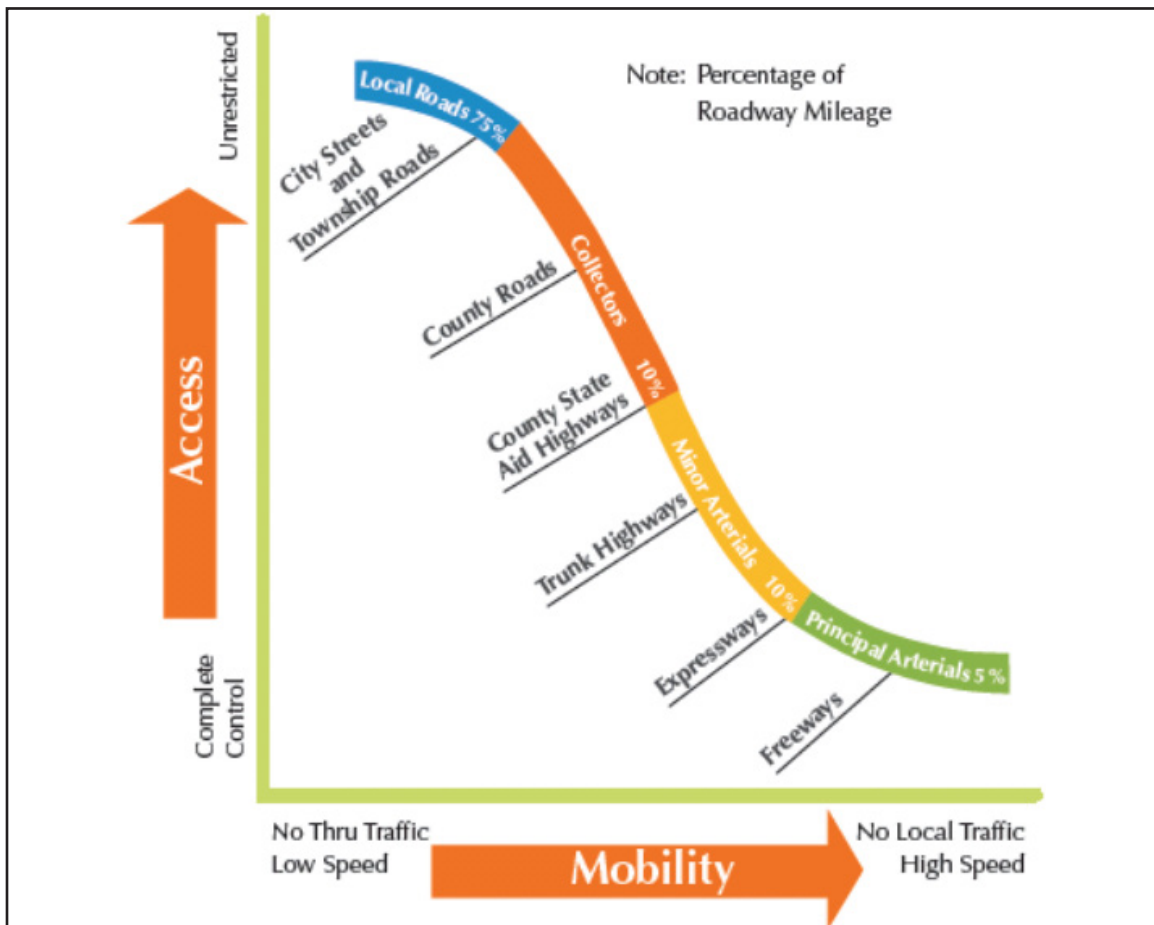
The MDOT Grand Region encompassed the western central portion of lower Michigan and includes 13 counties, one of which is Mecosta County. This transportation plan is focused on non-motorized transportation, such as bicycle and pedestrian travel. The plan has regional policy goals as well as priorities and desired connections for the different counties included.

# Road Network

## Functional Classification of Roads

According to the Traffic Safety Fundamentals Handbook, there are two primary roadway functions (access and mobility) and that all roadways serve one function or another, or in some cases both functions. A functionally classified road system is one in which streets and highways are grouped into classes according to the character of service they provide. The four components of most functionally classified systems are Local Streets, Collectors, Minor Arterials, and Principal Arterials, see **Graphic E**. The primary function of local streets is land access and the primary function of principal arterials is moving traffic. Collectors and minor arterials are usually required to serve some combination of both access and mobility functions.

### Graphic E: Functional Classification of Roads



## Jurisdiction

Roads are commonly classified in one of two ways: by ownership or by purpose. Jurisdictional responsibility refers to ownership of a particular road, while functional classification, as described above, identifies a road by the level of service it provides.

Jurisdiction refers to governmental ownership, not necessarily responsibility. For example, some State-owned roads are maintained by local jurisdictions. Additionally, the designation of a public road as a “Federal-aid highway” does not alter its ownership or jurisdiction as a State or local road, only that its service value and importance have made that road eligible for Federal-aid construction and rehabilitation funds.

Ownership is divided among the Federal, State, and local governments. States own over 20 percent of the national road network. The Federal Government has responsibility for about 5 percent, primarily in national parks, forests, and Native American reservations. Over 75 percent of the road system is locally controlled.

In some cases, local municipalities are responsible for conducting routine maintenance and minor repairs on State and Federal highways within their jurisdictional boundaries. In return, the State generally provides financing to those jurisdictions. However, major repairs and reconstruction are generally still the responsibility of the State Department of Transportation.

## **Major Road Facilities**

### **M-20**

M-20 is a state trunkline highway which crosses the Lower Peninsula of Michigan from west to east, from the Village of New Era in Oceana County to the City of Midland in Midland County. This highway, originally opened in 1926, currently traverses a total of 132.4 miles and is the primary connection between the Cities of Big Rapids in Mecosta County and Mount Pleasant in Isabella County.

M-20 crosses a bridge over the East Branch Little Muskegon River in the Village. According to the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) M20 in downtown Village of Mecosta had an Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) count of 2,278 vehicles in 2020. The M-20 AADT at the west end of the Village of Mecosta was 2,688 in 2020 and was 2,308 to the south of the Village.

### **M-66**

Located 3.5 miles from the Village boundary to the east is M-66, a north-south state trunkline highway. M-66 runs from the Indiana state line in the south to the City of Charlevoix in the north, spanning 272.9 miles across the full distance of the Lower Peninsula.

### **County Roads**

Several County roads touch the Village boundary. 80th Avenue runs north-south along the west boundary of the Village. 11 Mile Road runs east-west even with the north boundary of the Village. Other county roads near the village include Hayes Road, Grant Road, and 75th Avenue. See the Transportation Map for more detail.



*M-20 entering the Village from the south.*

**Local Roads**

Local roads are those in the Village of Mecosta that are owned and maintained by the Village and includes all roads in the Village that are not State or County roads. The Village employs a Street Administrator who manages the maintenance of the Village-owned streets and parks. The Street Administrator is responsible for snow removal on Main Street and all local roads as well as cleaning local sidewalks. Further the Street Administrator also manages the maintenance of all Village equipment and parks.

**Road Maintenance**

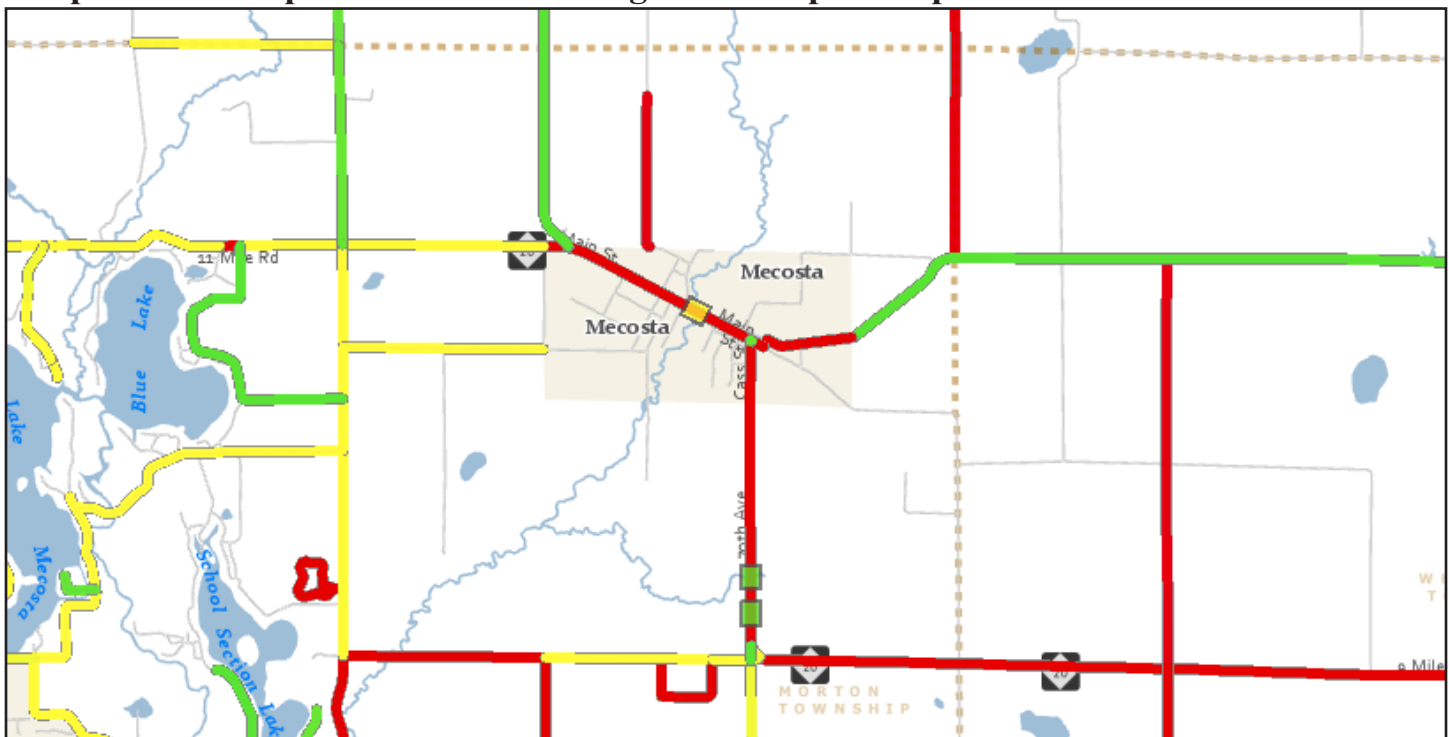
Roads are rated based on their pavement conditions and these ratings are used to prioritize road repair and reconstruction projects. The Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) system rates road surfaces on a scale of 1-10. Numerical PASER ratings are translatable to condition categories and prescribed treatment options as noted in **Table 14**. An excerpt of the State of Michigan’s Transportation Asset Management Map is included in **Graphic F** showing local road ratings from 2018-2020, with roads in good condition marked green, roads in fair condition are yellow, and roads in poor condition are red.

**Table 14: The PASER Scale**

Quality	Rating	Treatment (Asphalt)	Treatment (Cement)
Excellent	9-10	No maintenance required	No maintenance required
Good	7-8	Crack sealing and minor patching	Routine maintenance
Fair	5-6	Preservation treatments (non-structural)	Surface repairs, partial-depth patching
Poor	3-4	Structural renewal (overlay)	Extensive slab or joint rehabilitation
Failed	1-2	Reconstruction	Reconstruction

Source: Transportation Information Center, University of Wisconsin--Madison

**Graphic F: Transportation Asset Management Map Excerpt**



## **Other Transportation Modes**

Due to the rural nature and location of the Village of Mecosta, transportation options are limited. The primary mode of transportation is the automobile. Other modes of transportation as they are related to the Village of Mecosta are discussed below.

### **Pedestrians**

Sidewalks are present in the downtown areas of the Village of Mecosta.

### **Bicycles**

Bicycle lanes are present in the downtown area of the Village of Mecosta. A few bike racks are also present in the downtown area.

Plans have been drafted by county officials to connect the Village of Mecosta to the White Pine State Trail in Stanwood and in Big Rapids via future bicycle routes made up of widened shoulders in county roads.



*Sidewalk and pedestrian street crossing.*



*Bicycle lanes on M-20 in the Village.*

### **Transit**

The only public transportation offered in the Village of Mecosta is the Mecosta Osceola Area Transit Authority (MOTA) which offers an on-demand “dial-a-ride” public transportation system within both Mecosta and Osecola Counties. Riders call MOTA at 231-796-MOTA (6682) to schedule their ride. Standard fare is \$2.00 per ride for adults and \$1.00 per ride for seniors over 60, children between 6 and 16, ADA qualified riders, and veterans. Seniors over 80 years old ride for free. Service in Mecosta County is available from 5:30AM to 6PM, except on Holidays.

Intercity bus operator Indian Trails has routes that go through Big Rapids on a north-south route along US-131 and through Mount Pleasant on a north-south route along US-127.

## Rail

There is no passenger or freight rail service to or through the Village.

## Air

The Village has a publicly owned airstrip located at the northeast corner of M-20 and 90th Avenue. This airstrip has grass runways and is accessible for small planes only.



*Airport signage on M-20.*



*Marked grass runway at the Airport.*



## Issues

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**M-20 and Traffic Volume** – As the busiest road in the Village, ensure that all intersections and pedestrian crossings on M-20 are safe given the traffic volume and traffic speed.

**Pavement Quality** – Roads in some areas of the Village suffer from low quality pavement.

**Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails** – Increased demand for safe paths for bicyclists and pedestrians requires the development of new off-road trails to promote movement of people through the Village and physical fitness.

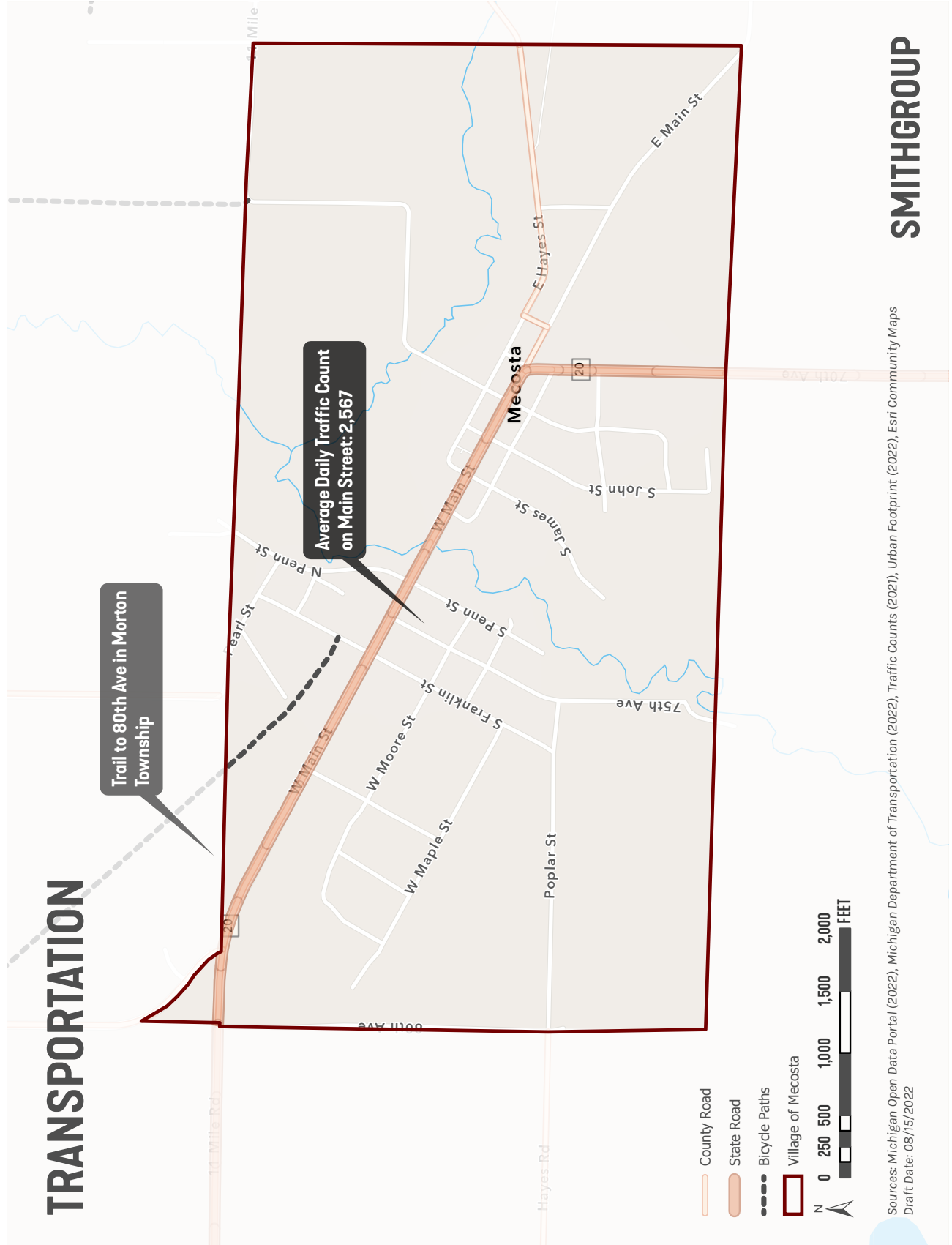
**Traffic Speeds** – On M20 and on Franklin St, vehicles regularly drive above the speed limits and create safety hazards to other vehicles and to pedestrians.

## Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps

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**Transportation Goal:** The Village of Mecosta maintains local transportation infrastructure to the highest standards to allow safe and efficient movement of people, goods, and services.

1. Provide a multi-modal transportation system to meet the needs of all citizens, including transit-dependent and disabled citizens.
  - a. Maintain existing sidewalks.
  - b. Develop a formal sidewalk policy.
  - c. Promote the development of multi-use trails and trail linkages.
  - d. Support expansion of bus services within the Village, including MOTA.
2. Maintain a safe and efficient Village road network.
  - a. Utilize the Capital Improvement Program to plan and budget for maintenance and new construction.
  - b. Utilize the PASER system to inventory and rate local road condition.
  - c. Increase local enforcement of speed limits, especially along Main Street, Franklin St, etc.
  - d. Explore developing a local Public Safety Officer program to enforce traffic and safety issues in the Village.



## **Chapter 6: Utilities and Community Facilities**

Utilities and community facilities, whether provided by public or private entities, are critical for community development. Utilities include electrical service, natural gas, and telephone and cable communications, among others. Community facilities include local government buildings, libraries, educational facilities, and maintenance and storage facilities as well as services like police, fire protection, and emergency medical services. Utilities and community facilities play an important role in the livability of a community.

### **Utilities**

#### **Water and Sewer**

The Village of Mecosta does not have a water or sewer utility. All residences and businesses have private wells and septic systems.

#### **Surface Water Management**

Surface water runoff is managed via several storm sewers which drain directly into the East Branch Little Muskegon River.

#### **Solid Waste Management and Recycling**

Trash and recycling are both provided by private contractors and picked up on a weekly basis.

#### **Electrical and Gas Utilities**

Electrical service to the Village of Mecosta is provided by Consumers Energy. Natural gas service is also provided by Consumers Energy.

#### **Telecommunication Facilities and Services**

CenturyLink, Spectrum, and CMS are the primary local telephone service provider in the Village of Mecosta. Nearby cell towers provide mobile phone services from several of the major national carriers.

Broadband and fiber optic cable for both television and internet services are provided by private companies such as Spectrum, Casair, and CMS.



*Polycart at the road for trash pickup..*



*Casair Fiber Internet sign at a residence.*

# Community Facilities

## Municipal Facilities

The Village of Mecosta’s municipal office was purchased in 1994 and is located at 115 W Main Street in the downtown business district. The Village Hall serves as an office for the Village Council, the Village Clerk, and the Village Treasurer, and as a meeting hall for Village business such as Council meetings. All Village financial and public records are stored in the Village Hall. The building is of an adequate size to meet the present administrative needs of the Village.

The Morton Township Hall is also located in the Village of Mecosta at 290 W Main Street in the downtown business district. The Morton Township Hall was constructed in 1982 and enlarged in 1999 and it provides office spaces for the elected officials and Township staff including the Supervisor, Clerk, Treasurer, Trustees, Assessor, Building Official, and Ordinance and Zoning Administration. The Township Hall is used for regular meetings of Township boards, elections, and is also available for rental as an event space.



*Village Hall.*



*Morton Township Hall.*



*Mecosta Elementary School.*



*Morton Township Library.*

## **Schools**

The Village of Mecosta is located within the Chippewa Hills School District. A consolidation of smaller districts, Chippewa Hills encompasses 387 square miles in portions of Isabella, Mecosta, and Osceola Counties. The District includes three elementary schools, one intermediate school, one high school, and an alternative school for students in grades 7th to 12th. Mecosta Elementary School, part of the Chippewa Hills School District, is located at 555 W Main Street in the Village of Mecosta. This facility houses preschool through fourth grade classes and serves approximately 260 students.

As part of Chippewa Hills School District's Mecosta County area, the Village is also part of the Mecosta-Osceola Intermediate School District (MOISD) located in the City of Big Rapids. Intermediate school districts provide specialized instruction on a regional level that could not otherwise be provided by an individual school district. MOISD provides instructional opportunities for gifted and disabled children in the Education Center, Head Start and Preschool programs at Eastwood Early Childhood Community Center, and vocational and career related programming at the Mecosta Osceola Career Center and at Meceola Tech.

## **Post-Secondary Educational Facilities**

While there are no schools of higher education located in the Village of Mecosta, Ferris State University is located in Big Rapids and Central Michigan University is located in Mt Pleasant. Both of these universities offer many educational programs, including associates, bachelors, and master's degrees, as well as some doctorates in specialized fields.

The regional community college is Mid-Michigan College which has campuses in Mt Pleasant and Harrison which offer 50 different degrees and credentials. Additionally, Mid-Michigan College offers some programs and courses at the Mecosta-Osceola Intermediate School District campus in Big Rapids.

## **Libraries**

The Morton Township Library is located at 110 S James Street in the Village of Mecosta and is a class II Public Library. The library building was constructed in 2011 and offers large and small meeting rooms for public use, a large children's programming area, a designated area for teens, a comfortable reading area, and several computers for public use. The Morton Township Library serves the residents of Morton Township as well as the residents of the Village of Mecosta and the residents of Austin, Colfax, Martiny, and Sheridan Townships. The library holds over 27,630 materials including books, DVDs, audiobooks, magazines, CDs, and newspapers.

## **Police**

Police protection in the Village of Mecosta is provided by the Mecosta County Sheriff's Department which is located at 225 S Stewart Avenue in the City of Big Rapids. Although the Department is located 17 miles away in Big Rapids, Sheriff's Deputies live throughout the County, lowering the response time in an emergency. Patrol cars are on call from the Department and backup support is available from the State Police Department in Lakeview.

## **Fire and Emergency Response**

Fire and emergency response for the Village are provided by the Morton Township Fire Department. The Department has two stations: Station 1 is a modern facility located at 8260 100th Avenue in Canadian Lakes which contains administrative offices, a large meeting/training room, kitchen facilities, and an office for the Michigan State Police and Station 2 is an older facility with basic facilities and is located at 210 Hayes Street in the Village of Mecosta.

The Morton Township Fire Department provides fire protection services, such as firefighting and public safety education, and medical first responder services. The Department has approximately 30 trained personnel and provides services to Morton Township, the Village of Mecosta, and Austin Township, as well as parts of Colfax, Hinton, and Martiny Townships.

## **911 Dispatch**

The emergency communications center that serves the Village of Mecosta is the 911 Meceola Central Dispatch which provides service for all of Mecosta and Osceola Counties. Operators are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to answer calls and dispatch appropriate response based on the location and incident details. The dispatch center is located at 20701 Northland Drive in Paris Michigan.

## **Hospitals and Medical Clinics**

The primary hospital serving residents of the Village of Mecosta is Spectrum Health Big Rapids Hospital located at 605 Oak Street in the City of Big Rapids, located approximately 17 miles to the northwest of the Village. Other regional hospitals include McLaren Central Michigan Hospital which is located in Mt Pleasant approximately 25 miles to the east of the Village and Spectrum Health Kelsey Hospital which is located in Lakeview approximately 15 miles to the south of the Village.

There are no medical clinics located in the Village of Mecosta. Morton Township has two medical centers: Spectrum Health Family Medicine Canadian Lakes located at 8354 100th Avenue and Michigan Primary Care Partners-Eastside located at 8541 105th Avenue.

## **Health Department**

The Village of Mecosta is part of District Health Department #10 (DHD#10) which serves all of the communities in 10 counties in northern and western Michigan including: Crawford, Kalkaska, Lake, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Missaukee, Oceana, Newaygo, and Wexford. DHD#10 has almost 200 employees and serves a population of over one-quarter of a million people with a mission “to promote and enhance the health of our communities and environment through protection, prevention, and intervention”.

DHD#10’s presence in Mecosta County is located in the County Services Building at 14485 Northland Drive in Big Rapids. Some of the many services provided by DHD#10 include: issuing well and septic permits for construction projects, evaluating the condition of current well and septic systems, dispensing emergency preparedness information, compiling county health data and statistics, monitoring food service establishments, offering family planning and reproductive health services, administering immunizations, offering public health programs such as hearing and vision screenings, and monitoring sanitary codes and local water supplies.

# Parks

## Local Parks, Trails, and Open Space

The Village of Mecosta has three municipal parks, Bromley Park, Pine Tree Park, and Pocket Park.

### Bromley Park

Bromley Park is located south of Main Street (M-20) between the Little Muskegon River and Cedar Street. Amenities at Bromley Park include:

- Pavilion
- Playground which includes several Universally Accessible elements
- Skate Park
- Picnic tables and grills
- Access to the Little Muskegon River for fishing, limited to children 12 and under
- Port-a-John facilities in the non-winter months
- Hand-pump water well is available for use during the non-winter months.

Additionally, Bromley Park is the location of Village events such as the “Music on the River” program which runs in the summer and is host to the Village Christmas Tree in the winter.



*Entrance to Bromley Park off M-20.*



*Pavilion in Bromley Park.*



*Playground at Bromley Park.*



*Skate park at Bromley Park.*

## **Pine Tree Park**

Pine Tree Park is located east of M-20 south of Hayes Street. Amenities at Pine Tree Park include:

- Pavilion
- Baseball field, with new safety fence
- Picnic tables and grills
- Horseshoe pits
- Cornhole courts
- Swing set and merry-go-round
- Tetherball
- Hopscotch
- Port-a-John facilities in the non-winter months.

## **Pocket Park**

Pocket Park is located south of Main Street (M-20) between the Village Hall and Woody's. This small park features a picnic table and two benches, a message board for communicating Village business, and a Little Free Library.



*Pavilion at Pine Tree Park.*



*Softball field at Pine Tree Park.*



*Horseshoe pits at Pine Tree Park.*



*Pocket Park.*



## **County or State Parks, Forests, or Trails**

The Mecosta County Parks Commission, based in Paris MI, operates seven parks and one nature area spread across Mecosta County. School Section Lake Veteran's Park is located about five miles from the Village of Mecosta on 90th Avenue in Morton Township. This 86-acre park includes a large sand swimming area, beach, and historic fieldstone concessions building. The park's historic one-room schoolhouse is still used for educational summer programs. In addition to day use, the park offers 162 camp sites and five cabins.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources operates many facilities including 74 state parks and 12 state forests among others. The nearest state park to the Village of Mecosta is Newaygo State Park, a park catering primarily to campers with 99 rustic campsites on the Hardy Dam Pond, located 27 miles from the Village of Mecosta.

The next two nearest state parks are Wilson State Park, a public recreation area occupying 36 acres on the northwest shore of Budd Lake in Harrison MI, and William Mitchell State Park, a public recreation area within the city limits of Cadillac located between Lake Mitchell and Lake Cadillac. Both of these parks are located approximately 50 miles from the Village of Mecosta.

## **Issues**

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**Trail Systems** – There is currently one recreational trail link connecting the Village to other municipalities or recreation areas. Developing a bicycle or pedestrian trail could allow easy access to local parks and a safe way for residents to travel to other facilities. One trail was recently developed on 80th.

**New Recreation Facilities** – There is a desire for more recreational facilities within the Village. This could be an avenue to explore for local parks development.

## Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps

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**Utilities and Community Facilities Goal:** The Village of Mecosta provides adequate utility infrastructure and community facilities to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial, and industrial use.

1. Maintain provision of services at a high level.
  - a. Perform annual budget evaluations on public service funding.
  - b. Continue to find methods of cost sharing, such as equipment sharing, with surrounding communities to increase the efficiency with which services are provided.
  - c. Ensure adequate fire and emergency service provision throughout the Village.
  - d. Maintain clear and open communication with the Mecosta County Sheriff's Office.
  - e. Continue to work with telecommunications service providers to upgrade and expand access to high-speed data and communications services.
2. Plan utility and service extensions for future development
  - a. Determine the most suitable locations for future development and analyze extension capabilities.
  - b. Explore developing an official map to site locations for infrastructure additions.
  - c. Continue to use the Capital Improvement Program to establish goals, identify specific improvements, and attain funding.
3. Support and maintain existing community facilities.
  - a. Maintain the Village Hall as a seat of local government and a community meeting hall.
  - b. Ensure the local park system is well maintained and meets the recreation needs of residents.
    - i. Continue to develop Bromley Park with a new pavilion, a band shell, and exercise equipment, as well as other recreational facilities.
    - ii. Continue to develop Pine Tree Park with bleachers and a water well, as well as other recreational facilities.
  - c. Support the Mecosta County Parks system.
  - d. Maintain and continue to operate the Village of Mecosta Airport as a key facility to bring new people into the Village.

## Chapter 7: Economic Development

The economic development chapter provides an overview of the local and county economy and workforce. The economy includes all activity related to production, consumption, and trade of goods and services in an area. The workforce is all the people engaged in, or available for, work in an area.

The conditions of the local economy directly influence growth and development, and therefore must be considered when planning for a community's future. Employment patterns and economic trends generally occur on a regional scale. Oftentimes residents of one community work in another. Similarly, changes in a major industry can impact jobs and growth far beyond the community where the business is physically located.

It is therefore important to understand a local community's economy in light of its regional context. The following section provides a brief overview of the local economy by looking at elements and data specific to the Village of Mecosta or Mecosta County, depending on the data available.



*A local business in downtown Mecosta.*



*A local business on M-20.*

### Previous Plans and Studies

#### **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)**

Mecosta County is one of 8 counties included in the West Michigan Economic Development District as designated by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration. The West Michigan Regional Planning Commission is the agency that is responsible for maintaining that federal designation. As part of maintaining that designation, the WMRPC annually prepares a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy report. The report serves to summarize and assess economic development activities of the past year and to present new and modified program strategies for the upcoming year. Key components of this regional plan include an inventory of the physical geography of the region and its resident population. Labor, income, and employment data are reviewed as well as an in-depth analysis of the economic status of the region.

## Local Economic Environment

### Economic Sectors

In 2019, there were 144 employed persons living within the Village, an increase of seven new employed persons since 2010. These people’s jobs are categorized into thirteen standard economic sectors, as seen in [Table 15](#). It is important to note that this information is based on survey data and is not a direct count of employees. Between 2010 and 2019, six sectors gained employment within the Village, four sectors lost employment, and three experienced no change.

**Table 15: Employment by Sector, 2019**

Sector	2010	2019	Change
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Mining	3	3	0
Construction	0	16	16
Manufacturing	28	35	7
Wholesale Trade	0	3	3
Retail Trade	9	19	10
Transportation and Warehousing, and Utilities	3	3	0
Information	12	2	-10
Finance and Insurance, and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	0	5	5
Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative and Waste Management Services	15	15	0
Educational Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance	32	18	-14
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services	25	12	-13
Other Services, except Public Administration	10	8	-2
Public Administration	0	5	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>7</b>

Source: US Census Bureau

### Occupations

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 144 employed persons living in the Village of Mecosta in 2019. The workers who held these jobs were dispersed among the five major occupation areas, see Table 8 in the Demographic Chapter for more detail. Occupations address the set of tasks that employees are paid to perform, as distinct from the industry, which is a group of establishments that produce similar products or provide similar services. Some occupations are concentrated in a few particular industries, while other occupations are found in many industries.

## **Labor Force Analysis**

### **Labor Force**

The labor force is defined as the number of persons, sixteen and over, employed or looking for employment. Overall, the Village labor force has increased slightly from 327 persons in 2000 to 346 persons in 2019, see [Table 16](#). This represents an increase of 5.8 percent. In 2000, 204 of those persons were employed. That figure decreased to only 151 persons in 2019, a decrease of 26 percent.

**Table 16: Labor Force, 2019**

	2000	2010	2019	% Change 2000 to 2019
Population 16 Years and Over	327	308	346	5.8%
Labor Force	204	202	151	-26.0%
Participation Rate	62.4%	35.6%	43.6%	NA
Employed	192	137	144	-25.0%
Unemployed	12	65	7	-41.7%
Unemployment Rate	3.7%	21.1%	2.0%	NA

Source: US Census Bureau

### **Unemployment**

Unemployment is defined as the difference between the total civilian labor force and total persons employed. Stay-at-home parents, retirees, or persons not searching for employment are not considered unemployed because they are not considered to be part of the “labor force”. The Village had an unemployment rate of 2 percent in 2019, which is lower than the County (3.8%), State (3.7%), and Nation (3.4%).

### **Workforce Participation**

Workforce participation is a measure expressed in terms of a percentage of persons actively seeking employment divided by the total working age population. People not participating in the labor force may not seek employment due to a variety of reasons including retirement, disability, choice to be a homemaker, or simply are not looking for work. In 2000, 62.4 percent of the population over 16 in the Village of Mecosta was in the labor force. By 2019, that rate decreased to 43.6 percent. The participation rate in 2019 for Mecosta County was 55.1%, for Michigan was 61.5%, and for the Nation was 63.4%.



*Two storefronts in downtown Mecosta.*



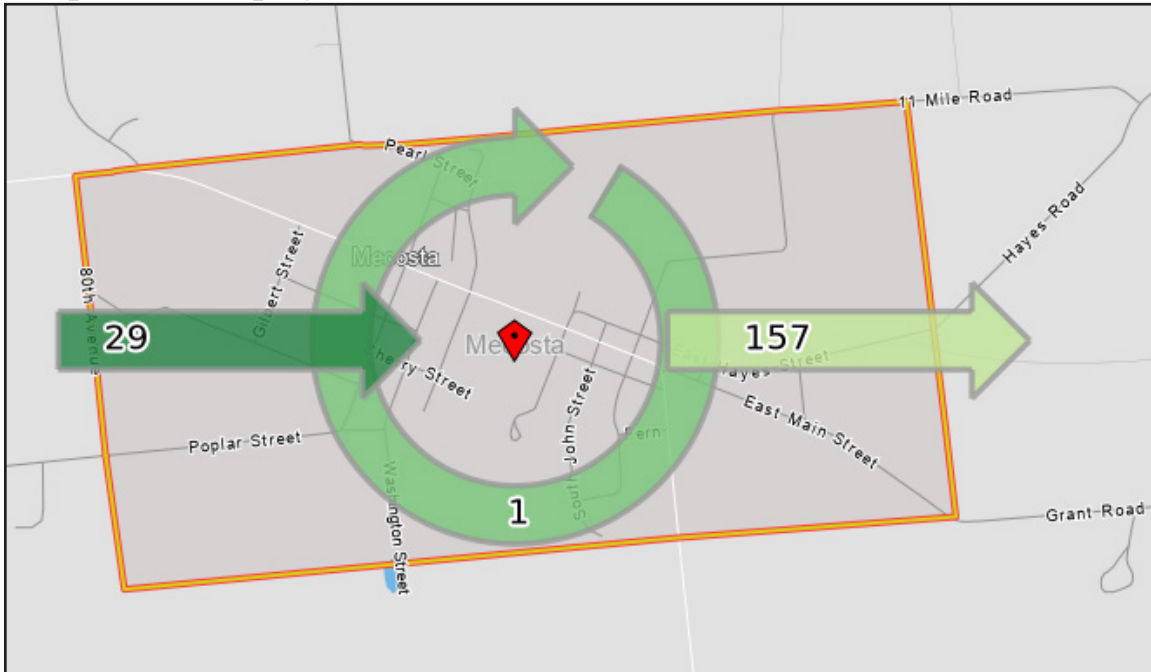
*A gas station on M-20.*

## Work Commute

The mean commute time to work for residents of the Village of Mecosta in 2019 was 29.7 minutes. For comparison, the mean commute for work for people in Mecosta County in 2019 was 23.1 minutes, and in Michigan was 24.6 minutes.

In 2019, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's OnTheMap tool, 30 people were employed in the Village of Mecosta, while 158 residents of the Village were employed. **Graphic G** demonstrates the inflow/outflow of employees in the Village. In 2019, 29 people commuted to the Village for their employment, 157 people commuted out of the Village for their employment, and one person both lived and worked in the Village.

## **Graphic G: Employee Inflow/Outflow, 2019**



## Incomes

Both median income and per capita incomes were discussed in the Demographics chapter. Median household income for the Village of Mecosta in 2019 was \$33,750. This is lower than the median income of \$45,018 for Mecosta County, and of \$57,144 for Michigan. Income distribution in the Village is slightly different than from the County and State, as the Village has a larger percentage of the population in the each of the brackets lower than \$50,000 and a smaller percentage in the brackets earning over \$75,000.

## County Economic Environment

Due to the small size of the Village’s local economy, some economic data is more useful if viewed at a larger scale. This section looks at data for Mecosta County.

### Key Economic Sectors

Key sectors of the regional economy can be identified by size; by growth or decline in employment; by a concentration of the industry in the local area exceeding the national concentration; or other factors. An industry that shows a higher concentration of employment than the national average is considered a “basic industry” and is identified by a technique called “Location Quotient” analysis. Basic industries are those sectors that export a product or service from the local community into the national or international economy. They are a critical party of the “economic engine” for a region, affecting the growth and health of many dependent sectors such as retail, transportation, construction, and local services.

While a location quotient analysis provides a snapshot of the economy at a given time, a shift-share analysis introduces trend analysis (change over a period of time). This is an analysis technique that examines economic change and incorporates a “what-if” component. The theory behind shift-share is that local economic trends can be determined to be “up” or “down” relatives to national trends, called the National Growth Component. It also identifies if the growth is in fast or slow growing industries or sectors, called Industrial Mix; and finally, it identifies how competitive an area is for attracting different economic sectors, called the Competitive Share. Both models use the same employment data.

The industrial mix effect represents the share of regional growth explained by the growth of the specific industry at the national level. The national growth effect explains how much the regional industry’s growth is explained by the overall growth in the national economy. The regional competitiveness effect explains how much of the change in a given industry is due to some unique competitive advantage that the region possesses, because the growth cannot be explained by national trends in the industry or the economy as a whole. A region’s unique competitiveness will help it to grow over time.



*A gas station in downtown Mecosta.*



*A local business on M-20.*

## **Jobs by Industry**

In 2019, there were 9,619 jobs in Mecosta County. **Table 17** (page 53) shows a select number of industries by employment in Mecosta County in 2012 and 2019. In 2019, the Manufacturing Industry (NAICS 31-33) was the largest employment sector with 2,409 workers. Retail Trade (NAICS 44-45), Health Care and Social Assistance (NAICS 62), and Accommodation and Food Services (NAICS 72) were second, third, and fourth largest industries respectively, all with over 1,000 workers in Mecosta County.

In terms of job growth, Accommodation (NAICS 72), Health Care and Social Assistance (NAICS 62), Retail Trade (NAICS 44-45), Manufacturing (NAICS 31-33), and Construction (NAICS 23) gained the most employees between 2012 and 2019. The fastest growing industry was Construction (NAICS 23), which added 68 employees, accounting for an increase of 45.3 percent in that industry's workforce. Management of Companies and Enterprises (NAICS 55) and Educational Services (NAICS 61) were the second and third fastest growing industries, each increasing their workforce in the County by over 30 percent.

It should be noted that the number of employees in certain sectors, particularly those workers engaged in Crop and Animal Production may be understated, because this dataset does not reflect those who are self-employed or who work in a family business.

Nine industries lost jobs between 2012 and 2019. The Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services industry (NAICS 56) lost 395 jobs, decreasing by 62.7 percent. The Information industry (NAICS 51) lost 90 jobs, or 36 percent of the local industry workforce.

Between 2012 and 2019, Mecosta County lost 325 jobs, a decrease of 3.3 percent. The State of Michigan experienced a job growth of 11.4 percent and the nation which increased 11.8 percent during that same time period.

## **Issues**

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**Growth of the Local Economy** – There is a need to grow and diversify the local economy to help protect the Village from shifts in the regional, state, and national economy. Employment centers as well as service and retail businesses will help draw new residents to the Village.

**Few Employment Opportunities in the Village** – There is no major employers in the Village. This means that there is a low business tax base and few opportunities for residents to be employed nearby their homes.



**Table 17: Jobs by Industry - Mecosta County, 2019**

NAICS	Description	2012 Jobs	2019 Jobs	2012 - 2019 Change	2012 - 2019 % Change
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	4	3	-1	-25.0%
22	Utilities	98	113	15	15.3%
23	Construction	150	218	68	45.3%
31-33	Manufacturing	2,339	2,409	70	3.0%
42	Wholesale Trade	100	95	-5	-5.0%
44-45	Retail Trade	1,954	2,044	90	4.6%
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	204	154	-50	-24.5%
51	Information	250	160	-90	-36.0%
52	Finance and Insurance	214	206	-8	-3.7%
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	94	86	-8	-8.5%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	280	214	-66	-23.6%
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	19	26	7	36.8%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	630	235	-395	-62.7%
61	Educational Services	48	64	16	33.3%
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	1,445	1,551	106	7.3%
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	173	150	-23	-13.3%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	1,157	1,351	194	16.8%
81	Other Services (Except Public Administration)	526	537	11	2.1%
Total		9,944	9,619	-325	-3.3%

Source: US Census Bureau

## Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps

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**Economic Development Goal:** The Village of Mecosta has a diverse economy that is a place of opportunity where people and businesses can grow and be successful.

1. Promote a diverse and healthy economy.
  - a. Increase development in the downtown.
  - b. Consider using tools like a Tax Increment Financing district to attract new businesses.
  - c. Consider establishing a downtown overlay district that includes special regulations, beyond zoning, for the appearance of structures and facades.
  - d. Identify funding sources, such as a revolving loan fund, to assist businesses in making exterior renovations.
  - e. Work to attract a catalyst of magnet development that will draw other businesses to the Village of Mecosta.
  - f. Pursue grant funding to clean up and redevelop brownfield areas.
  
2. Support local industry.
  - a. Encourage the expansion of local industries by making land available for increased development.
  - b. Work with regional and state entities to identify business support programming and services.

## Chapter 8: Land Use

Land use is a crucial component of livability and provides a basis for the formulation of policy to coordinate a sustainable pattern of development. The existing natural landscape and land use patterns influence future land use and development. Balancing the needs of the community with land use issues requires that each situation be considered individually and that the community seeks the solution which fits the unique challenges it faces.

### Current Pattern of Land Use

The Village of Mecosta is located wholly within the boundaries of Morton Township, near the northeast corner of the Township. Other neighboring townships, close but not bordering the Village, include Martiny Township to the north, Sheridan Township to the northeast, and Wheatland Township to the east. State highway M-20 runs through the Village from the northwest corner to the southeast corner. M-20 is also W Main Street within the Village.

The East Branch of the Little Muskegon River is a dominant land feature in the Village, bisecting the Village, roughly north to south. The traditional downtown areas of the Village are located on the east side of the River, while slightly newer developments are found on the west side. Most Village public services are also located on the east side of the River, including the Village Hall, the United States Post Office branch, Morton Township Hall, and the Morton Township Library.

Beyond the traditional street grid areas to the east and west of the River just off M-20, the Village is very rural in character, with large lots spread apart from one another. The Village has a total land area of approximately 1.12 square miles.

### Existing Land Use

The Existing Land Use Map, [Map 5](#) (page 58), shows how land in the Village of Mecosta is currently utilized. [Table 18](#) shows the percent of total land area in the Village occupied by each category in the Existing Land Use Map. This is distinct from the current zoning.

**Table 18: Existing Land Use, 2022**

Land Use	Acres	Percent of Total Land Area
Single Family	314.79	48.98%
Two Family	65.63	10.21%
Commercial	40.66	6.33%
Government	32.32	5.03%
Non-Profit	6.19	0.96%
Property Not on Tax Roll	10.16	1.58%
Vacant Lot	172.89	26.90%
<b>Total</b>	<b>642.64</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Village of Mecosta, SmithGroup

### Land Use Regulations - Zoning

Zoning is the major implementation tool to achieve proposed land uses. The Village of Mecosta partners with Morton Township to enforce the local Zoning Ordinance. Under the Ordinance, zoning regulations are applied to zoning districts to regulate land use and development.

## Future Land Use

The Future Land Use Map represents the long-term land use recommendations for all lands in the Village. Although the Map is advisory and does not have the authority of zoning, it is intended to reflect community desires and to serve as a guide for local officials to coordinate and manage future development of the Village.

The Plan co-locates land uses that are compatible and separates conflicting uses. To create the Plan, seven basic future land use categories were created. The classifications are not zoning districts and do not have the authority of zoning. The Future Land Use Map and classifications used within it are intended for use as a guide when making land use decisions.

These land use classifications are designed to be similar to those embodied in the Village's Zoning Ordinance. The Map was intentionally drawn with broad categories that can easily be translated into future zoning decisions. Permitted use of land is determined by the Zoning Ordinance and other land use regulations and is not determined by the classification of land on [Map 6](#) (page 59), the Future Land Use Map. [Table 19](#) shows the percent of total land area in the Village occupied by each category in the Future Land Use Map.

A general description of each land use classification follows:

**Low Density Residential** – identifies areas recommended for single-family residential development, includes wooded and cleared lots.

**Medium Density Residential** – identifies areas recommended for multi-family residential development, such as duplexes and small apartment buildings.

**Commercial** – identifies areas recommended for commercial development, as well as existing commercial establishments located throughout the Village.

**Industrial** – identifies areas recommended for industrial development

**Parks and Cemeteries** – identifies areas recommended for parks, sport fields, and other outdoor recreation spaces, as well as land set aside for cemeteries.

**Institutional** – identifies existing or planned institutional facilities within the Village, including schools and government facilities.

**Wetland Conservation** – identifies areas that are unlikely to be developed because they contain sensitive environmental areas, such as 100-year floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, or open water.

**Table 19: Future Land Use**

Land Use	Acres	Percent of Total Land Area
Low Density Residential	396.67	61.73%
Medium Density Residential	14.82	2.31%
Commercial	22.16	3.45%
Industrial	26.13	4.07%
Parks and Cemertaries	23.79	3.70%
Institutional	5.7	0.89%
Wetland Conservation	153.37	23.87%
<b>Total</b>	<b>642.64</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Village of Mecosta, SmithGroup

## **Land Use Conflicts**

Any plan should seek to avoid or minimize potential future land use conflicts through controlled development, planned use-buffers, and public information and education components. In order to attain that outcome, it is important to identify the existing or potential conflicts between land uses in the Village. There may be some degree of undesirability between many land use combinations, such as a residential development in close proximity to a particular industrial or commercial development that might conflict with sight, sound, odor, or other undesirable characteristics. Another example could be a new residential neighborhood in close proximity to a working farm, where farm equipment, odors, and sounds may not be compatible with dense residential development.

## **Issues**

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**High Percentage of Vacant Land** – A high percentage of the existing land use in the Village is vacant land. Most of this vacant land is privately owned by property owners who are not residents of the Village.

**Blighted Properties** – The Village has several blighted properties which create a hazard to public health and safety.

## **Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps**

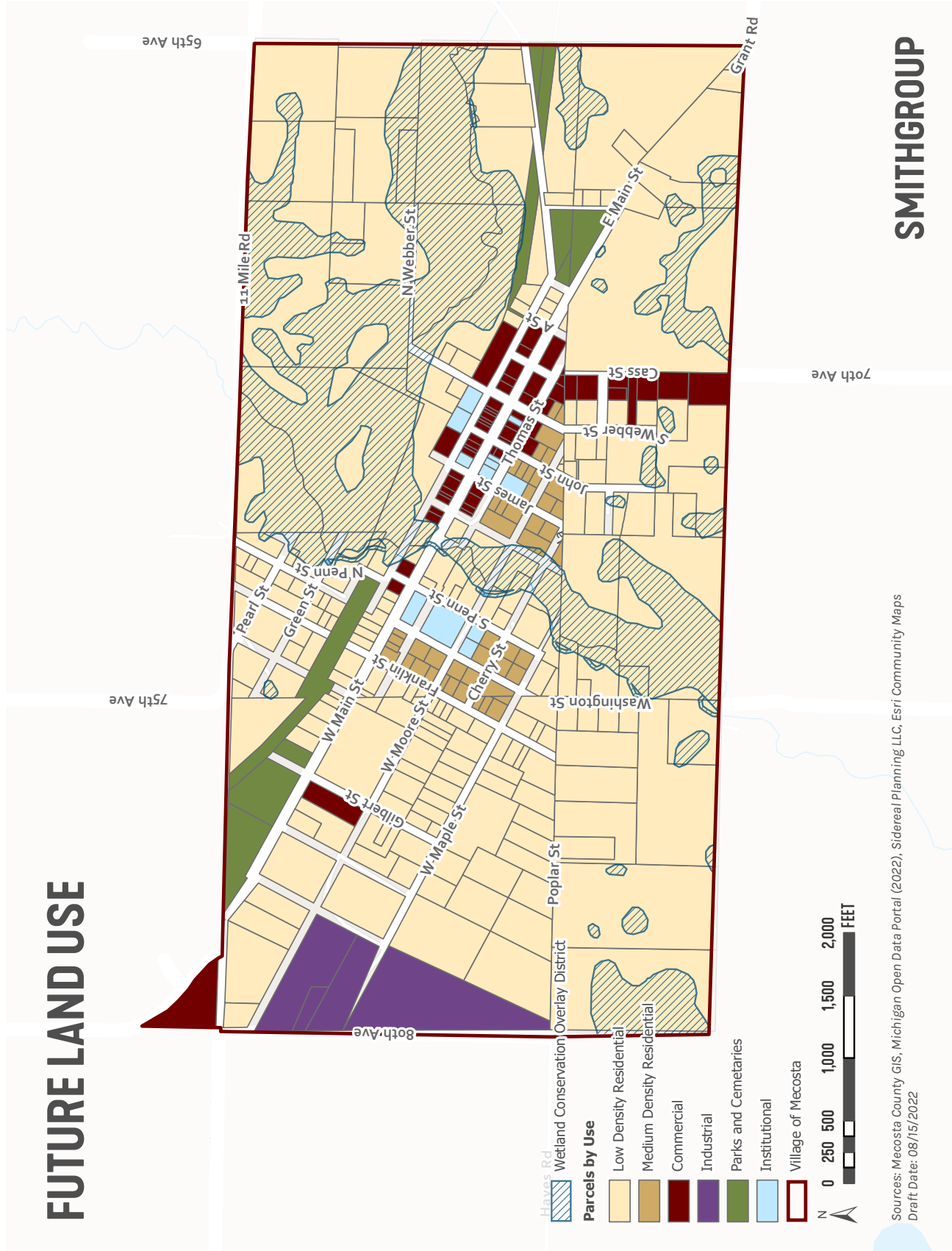
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**Land Use Goal:** The Village of Mecosta makes sound land use decisions to balance the diverse needs of the community and to wisely maximize the land's potential.

1. Provide tools for managing and coordinating growth and development.
  - a. Explore the creation and adoption of an official map to site the locations of future infrastructure and development.
  - b. Maintain clear and open communication with neighboring townships.
2. Preserve the Village of Mecosta's downtown as the center of the community.
  - a. Develop a long-term downtown development plan.
  - b. Enhance the streetscape of the downtown to identify it as a unique shopping location.
  - c. Concentrate businesses in the downtown and encourage businesses aimed at the serving the local community to operate in the downtown.
  - d. Consider options to address the blighted and vacant properties in the downtown.



# FUTURE LAND USE



SMITHGROUP

Sources: Mecosta County GIS, Michigan Open Data Portal (2022), Sidereal Planning LLC, Esri Community Maps  
 Draft Date: 08/15/2022

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## Chapter 9: Intergovernmental Cooperation

The issue of intergovernmental cooperation is increasingly important, since many issues (such as watersheds, labor force, commuter patterns, and housing) cross over political municipal boundaries. Communities are not independent of each other, but rather depend on each other. The effects from growth and change on one spill over to all surrounding communities and impact the region as a whole.

The State of Michigan has provisions which allow for municipal intergovernmental cooperation, including Public Act 35 of 1951 and several sections of the 1963 Michigan Constitution. These provisions enable local governments, in providing required services to their residents, to jointly do together what one can do alone. Unfortunately, there is little public policy that encourages horizontal governmental relationships. The result is that townships, villages, cities, and counties often act more as adversaries than as partners.

Statewide, Michigan has 533 different municipalities, including 276 cities, 257 villages, and 1,240 townships. Having so many governmental units allows for local representation, but also adds more players to the decision making process. In general terms, intergovernmental cooperation is any arrangement by which officials of two or more jurisdictions coordinate plans, policies, or programs to address and resolve issues of mutual interest. It can be as simple as communication and information sharing, or it can involve entering into formal intergovernmental agreements and sharing resources such as equipment, buildings, staff, and revenue.

As jurisdictions communicate and collaborate on issues of mutual interest, they become more aware of one another's needs and priorities. They can better anticipate problems and work to avoid them. Intergovernmental cooperation makes sense for many reasons including trust, cost savings, consistency, and ability to address regional issues. Cooperation can lead to positive experiences and results that build trust between jurisdictions. It can save money by increasing efficiency and avoiding unnecessary duplication. It can lead to consistency of goals, objectives, plans, policies, and actions of neighboring communities.

The major beneficiary of intergovernmental cooperation is the local resident. They may not understand or care about the details of a particular intergovernmental issue, but residents can appreciate the benefits, such as cost savings, provision of needed services, a healthy environment, and a strong economy.

A variety of factors, some long-standing and other more recent, have brought the issue of intergovernmental cooperation to the forefront. Some of these factors include:

- local government financial conditions;
- opportunity to reduce costs by working together;
- elimination of duplicate services;
- population settlement patterns and population mobility; and
- economic and environmental interdependence.

The Village of Mecosta cooperates with neighboring municipalities, the County, the State, and other groups on a variety of matters ranging from delivery of services to coordination of planning along common boundaries. The Village recognizes that cooperation with its neighbors can improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of services, foster coordinated development, and enhance the overall quality of life for residents of all municipalities involved.

## **Intergovernmental Relationships**

Currently, the Village of Mecosta has numerous relationships and several general agreements in place. The following is a summary of existing and potential cooperative efforts.

### **Morton Township**

The Village of Mecosta and Morton Township have a unique relationship because the Village is wholly surrounded by the Township. Several township facilities, including the Morton Township Hall, are located in the Village. The Township also helps the Village through a shared Planning Commission, which rules on new developments in the Village and administers the Village's Zoning Ordinance. The Township Tax Assessor does the calculations for the Village Tax, though the Village collects their own annual tax.



*Morton Township Office.*



*Morton Township Fire Station.*

### **County**

Mecosta County provides several services to the Village. The County Road Commission maintains the State highway and County roads in and around the Village. The County Sheriff's Office provides police services to the Village. The Mecosta Osceola Central Dispatch provides emergency dispatch services throughout the County, including to the Village. These are just some of the many examples of the Village and the County or other County-wide organizations working together.

### **School Districts**

School districts are independent units of government. The Village of Mecosta is located in the Chippewa Hills School District, and Mecosta Elementary School is located in the Village. The Village is also within the service area of the Mecosta Osceola Intermediate School District (MOISD) and Mid-Michigan College.

### **Regional**

The West Michigan Regional Planning Commission (WMRPC) is a regional, voluntary association of governments. Mecosta County is a member of the WMRPC, which includes all of its local units of government. WMRPC provides both regional and local assistance with planning, transportation, economic development, and more.

## **State and Federal**

State agencies regulate certain activities such as access onto State roads, shoreland, floodplain and wetland zoning oversight, navigable waters protection, compliance with water quality standards, farmland preservation, and more.

In Michigan, most federal programs are administered to local units of government through the State, so the Village would be dealing with the responsible state agency with regard to federal programs and regulations.

## **Issues**

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**Village Liaison to the Township** – To continue to facilitate a healthy working relationship with Morton Township, the Village should once again designate a Liaison to the Township and share information between the two groups.

## **Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps**

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**Intergovernmental Cooperation Goal:** The Village of Mecosta is a cooperative and collaborative partner with other units of government and organizations to most effectively and efficiently provide services to residents.

1. Establish and maintain good working relationships with other units of government including nearby townships, Mecosta County, the State of Michigan, and the federal government.
  - a. Promote communication between the Village and other governmental entities.
  - b. Periodically review existing shared services agreements and explore additional agreements which would benefit the Village.
  - c. Increase interaction with pertinent agencies to address specific local strategies like economic development expansion.

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# **Chapter 10: Implementation**

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Implementation of this plan depends on the willingness of local officials to use it as a guide when making decisions that affect growth and development within the Village. It is also important that local citizens and developers become aware of the plan.

## **Village Decision Making**

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The adopted plan should be used as a guide by the Village of Mecosta when making land use and development decisions. The plan contains a variety of goals, objectives, and actions which together comprise the framework for decision making by Village officials. Decisions concerning private development proposals, public investments, regulations, incentives, and other actions should be consistent with the goals, objectives, and actions outlined in this plan.

Although this plan is intended to guide the future of the Village, it is impossible to predict exact future conditions. As such, the goals, objectives, and actions of this plan should be monitored on a regular basis to maintain concurrence with changing conditions and respond to unanticipated events.

## **Implementation Tools**

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Having the appropriate tools to implement the recommendations in this master plan is critical. The most common implementation tools are the Village regulatory codes. In particular, the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations comprise the principal regulatory devices used to protect existing development and guide future growth and development. There are also non-regulatory approaches to implementing the plan. These generally involve decisions about how the community will spend its limited funding resources on capital improvements and staffing.

### **Zoning Ordinance**

The Village of Mecosta has its own Zoning Ordinance. Zoning is the major implementation tool to achieve proposed land uses by regulating the use of all structures, lands, and waters in the Village. A Zoning Ordinance should be derived from, and be consistent with, the policy recommendations adopted in the master plan. The desired land uses should drive the development of specific Zoning Ordinance provisions including district descriptions, permitted uses, special land uses, and the Zoning Map. See the Village Zoning Ordinance for more information.

### **Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)**

A Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is an ongoing financial planning program that allows local communities to plan ahead for capital expenditures and minimize unplanned expenses. A CIP consists of a list of proposed projects according to a schedule of priorities over a six-year period. It identifies needed public improvements, estimates their costs, and identifies financing methods and sources. Public improvements or expenditures typically considered include public buildings, park and trail improvements, roads and highways, and utility infrastructure.

### **Other Tools**

Additional tools and approaches can be utilized by the Village to achieve the goals of this Plan. These include, but are not limited to, the following: acquiring land through fee simple transactions, easements (purchased or volunteered), deed restrictions, land dedication,

and ordinances and programs regulating activities such as impact fees, building permits, erosion control, and others.

## **Plan Adjustments**

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### **Plan Amendments**

Periodic amendments can be made to this Plan. Amendments are generally defined as minor changes, such as slight changes to text or maps. Frequent changes to accommodate specific development proposals should be avoided. The Planning Enabling Act requires that the same process used to adopt the Plan be used to amend the Plan.

Criteria to consider when reviewing Plan changes are as follows:

- The change is consistent with the overall goals and objectives of the Village of Mecosta 2022 Comprehensive Plan.
- The change does not create an adverse impact on public facilities and services that cannot be mitigated.
- Development resulting from the change does not create an undue impact on surrounding properties. Such development should be consistent with the physical character of the surrounding neighborhood or would upgrade and improve its viability.
- The change allows a more viable transition to the planned uses on adjacent properties than the current land use.
- The change does not have a significant adverse impact on the natural environment including trees, slopes, and groundwater, or the impact could be mitigated by improvements on the site or in the same vicinity.
- There is a change in Village actions or neighborhood characteristics that would justify a change.
- The change corrects an error made in the original plan.
- The change does not adversely impact any landmarks or other historically significant structures or properties unless mitigated through relocation, commemoration, or dedication.

### **Plan Review and Updates**

Periodic updating of the plan is necessary for continued refinement to ensure that the plan reflects the desires of the Village's citizens. An essential characteristic of any planning process is that it be ongoing and flexible. The Village should re-examine the plan at least every five years and determine if a more complete review is required to bring it into line with changed conditions or altered priorities within the Village.

State law requires that a Comprehensive Plan be updated at least every ten years.

## **Master Plan Goals**

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Below is a review of the goals identified in each chapter of the Village of Mecosta 2022 Comprehensive Plan. These serve as an overall policy guide for the Village of Mecosta.

**Natural and Cultural Resources Goal:** The Village of Mecosta manages natural and cultural resources in a balanced way for current and future generations' health, enjoyment, and benefit.

**Housing Goal:** The Village of Mecosta has decent, safe, affordable housing options to meet the needs of all community members.

**Transportation Goal:** The Village of Mecosta maintains local transportation infrastructure to the highest standards to allow safe and efficient movement of people, goods, and services.

**Utilities and Community Facilities Goal:** The Village of Mecosta provides adequate utility infrastructure and community facilities to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial, and industrial use.

**Economic Development Goal:** The Village of Mecosta has a diverse economy that is a place of opportunity where people and businesses can grow and be successful.

**Land Use Goal:** The Village of Mecosta makes sound land use decisions to balance the diverse needs of the community and to wisely maximize the land's potential.

**Intergovernmental Cooperation Goal:** The Village of Mecosta is a cooperative and collaborative partner with other units of government and organizations to most effectively and efficiently provide services to residents.

## **Implementation Recommendations and Projects**

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Implementation of this plan depends on the willingness of local officials to use it as a guide when making decisions that affect growth and development in the Village. This section outlines some overall recommendations to implement the goals, objectives, and actions that are contained in the previous chapters of this plan, as well as some of the major initiatives identified throughout the planning process.

These overall recommendations are:

1. The Village Board should adopt the plan and use it as a guide for decision making.
2. The Planning Commission should become knowledgeable of the Plan and use it to justify recommendations to the Village Board on development issues.
3. The Village should encourage citizen awareness of the Plan. It is also important that the plan is easily available for review by potential developers.
4. Village staff should incorporate the goals, objectives, and actions of the Plan into annual work plans and budgets.
5. The Village should review its Zoning Ordinance to ensure consistency between the two documents and incorporate any needed changes.
6. The Village should periodically review the Comprehensive Plan and update the document at least every ten years.

In addition to these overall recommendations, the Village could utilize a variety of specific efforts or initiatives to begin making strides toward reaching the goals and objectives of the

Plan. These would be intended to provide further direction to local leaders and staff as well as citizens of the Village of Mecosta for the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. Examples of these specific efforts are a Housing Study, a Downtown Redevelopment Plan, or a Community Recreation Plan.

## **Measuring Plan Progress**

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To measure progress toward meeting these goals, objectives, and actions, a variety of tasks need to be accomplished. In some cases, the task to measure plan progress is as simple as determining if any action was taken or not. Objectives could be categorized by the time it may take to accomplish them, generally short-term (one to five years), mid-term (six to ten years), or long-term (ten years or more). In other cases, some of the actions and projects identified in the plan are continuous or on-going; these should also be monitored to measure the plan's overall success.

The development of a strategic plan could provide guidance to the Village on when specific actions are to be initiated. Based on such as plan, measure of progress in achieving implementation of the plan can be examined. It is also recommended that a periodic "Plan Status" report be prepared to summarize the progress toward implementation.

Ultimately, the success of the planning process will be measured by the future quality of life and prosperity experienced by both residents and visitors to the Village of Mecosta.



# Appendix A: Adoption Ordinance

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[Copy of the Ordinance  
adopting the Master Plan  
Update]

**Village of Mecosta  
Master Plan  
2022**