

Chapter 6: PUBLIC FACILITIES

Introduction

Inventorying existing public facilities and lands is an important step in the planning process. Public facilities within Edwards Township include state, county, and township-owned facilities.

Public Properties/Recreation Facilities

Edwards Township presently owns three parcels. These public parcels include: the Edwards Township Hall (6 acres); the Edwards Township Cemetery (5 acres); and an approximately 2.5 acre cemetery/chapel addition to the Edwards Township Cemetery. Please refer to Table 31 for locations of public lands and recreational facilities within Edwards Township.

TABLE 31 EDWARDS TOWNSHIP LANDS	
Edwards Township Public Land/ Facility	Public Land Acres
Township Hall	6.0
Township Cemetery	5.0
Township Cemetery Chapel Addition	2.5
Total	13.5

The Edwards Township Hall is located on Wickes Road, just west of its intersection with M-30 Highway. The Edwards Township Hall is a large modern structure with kitchen, office, restroom and large meeting and elections facilities. The Edwards Township Hall was constructed in 1996, after a fire destroyed the original Edwards Township Hall in October of 1995. The Township Hall's parking lot is paved and designed to accommodate up to 96 cars.

The Edwards Township Cemetery is five acres in size, and is located on Greenwood Road, approximately one and three-quarter miles west of M-30 Highway. Based on sales, the cemetery at this time is 80-90% sold nearing full capacity. Residents within adjoining Clement and Bourett Townships are able to purchase cemetery lots within the Edwards Township Cemetery. Edwards Township purchased an additional approximately 2.5 acres, located immediately west of the Township Cemetery in 1975.

Recreational Facilities in Edwards Township

Table 32 below summarizes existing recreational facilities within Edwards Township.

TABLE 32 EXISTING RECREATIONAL FACILITIES EDWARDS TOWNSHIP		
Facility	Description	Location
MDNR Boat Launch	Public boat launch with pit toilet	Tee Lake, Section 18, Tee Lake Road
MDNR Boat Launch	Public boat launch with dock, toilet, picnic area and beach	Lake George, Section 13, Channel Lake Road
Spring Hill Subdivision	Pavilion and picnic area (private)	Lake George, Section 13, south end of Lake George Road
Morris Lake Association	Picnic area, access (private)	Morris Lake, Section 5, on Irene and Jack Morris Drive
Frost Lake Association	Private access	Frost Lake, Section 30
Woodland Lake Association	Private access	South side of Frost Lake, Section 30
Westbrook Heights	Private access	East side of Frost Lake, Section 30
New Life Christian Church	Church playground (private)	On M-30 Highway, northeast of intersection with Greenwood Road.
Edwards Community Church	Church gazebo	On Greenwood and McCauley Roads
Long Timber Ranch	Private hunt club	Section 6, NE corner of Edwards Township, west end of Rau Road
Paradise Hunt Club	Private hunt club (approximately 160 acres in Edwards Township and 1,200 acres within Nester Township)	Section 30, adjoining Nester Township, Roscommon County, Little Frost Lake on Greenwood Road
Outdoor Adventure	Recreational vehicle park	Lake George, Sections 13 & 24, Elm Drive
Nelander Riding Stables	Horse back riding, trails and field - private	On Green Road, north of Rau Road, Section 3
Greenhill Buffalo Farm	Private farm	West end of Rau Road, Section 9

Irons Park within the City of West Branch possesses an outdoor ice skating/hockey rink, basketball and tennis courts, a skateboard park, and is the location of fish derby's "between the bridges." Fort Austin, a large wooden, playground complex, also exists within the City of West Branch. The Ogemaw Recreation Center exists at M-55 Highway and Dam Road and has three ball fields and two soccer fields. Little League baseball diamonds exists within the City of West Branch.

Educational Facilities

There are no public or private school facilities within the political boundaries of Edwards Township. School age children within Edwards Township are included within the West Branch/Rose City Area School District, and take West Branch Schools buses to public schools located within the City of West Branch approximately two and one-half miles to the north of Edwards Township's northern boundary. The West Branch/Rose City Area School District is geographically the largest public school district in lower Michigan.

Chester F. Surline Elementary serves K-4 grades and Surline Middle School serves grades 5-8, all within one school building within the incorporated limits of the City of West Branch. Surline School is reportedly the largest Michigan elementary school under one roof. Surline School also possesses a playground, ball fields, three gymnasiums, bus garage/transportation office, greenhouse/garden, and nature area. The Ogemaw Heights High School serves grades 9 through 12, and is located on M-33 Highway, approximately 6.1 miles northeast of the City of West Branch. The Ogemaw Heights High School also includes football stadium and ball fields, swimming pool, gymnasium, auditorium, greenhouse, metal and wood shops, etc. New additions to the High School and Surline School were completed in approximately 2000. A district school administration building also exists on M-33 Highway near State Road.

There are two parochial schools in the area: St. Joseph Catholic and Ogemaw Hills Free Methodist schools in West Branch. Adult education classes are offered throughout the county through the public school systems. Baker College offers for credit college courses at the Ogemaw Heights High School. Kirtland Community College exists in nearby Roscommon, Mid-Michigan Community College is located in Harrison, and Delta Community College exists near Bay City-Saginaw to the south. Four year colleges within commuting distance of Ogemaw County include Northwood Institute in Midland, Saginaw Valley State University in Saginaw, and Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant. Extension classes are also offered by Michigan State University Extension and the University of Michigan at Saginaw Valley State University.

The West Branch Rose City Intermediate School District offers specialized services such as alternative education and vocational-technical training. In addition, the public high school also operates vocational training programs. The West Branch Area Public Library exists downtown on 4th Street in the City of West Branch.

Emergency Services Protection

The West Branch Area Fire Department provides emergency services for residents of the City of West Branch and Edwards, Churchill, Horton, Ogemaw and West Branch Townships. The West Branch Area Fire Department is a public body that provides emergency and fire protection services 24 hours a day to the residents of Edwards Township. The West Branch Area Fire Department is funded by member jurisdictions according to State-equalized property values (SEVs) of properties within each. Currently, Edwards Township's share of the West Branch Area Fire Department is 15 to 16% of total budget. Edwards Township is billed by the West Branch Area Fire Department for individual fire runs. Edwards Township, in turn, seeks reimbursement from landowners and/or auto owners requiring emergency services.

The West Branch Area Fire Department owns a fire hall located within the City of West Branch, and possessing fire trucks, and other fire fighting equipment. All firefighters and fire department officers are paid volunteers. A pumper truck pump station exists within Edwards Township at the MDNR boat launch at Lake George.

Police services are provided through the Ogemaw County Sheriff's Department and the State Police Post out of West Branch. A satellite Ogemaw County Sheriff office exists within Mills Township. Provisions for ambulance services are obtained through a private contractual arrangement with Ogemaw County EMS. All emergency services are handled through the support of Ogemaw County 911 through the Sheriff's Department. The Ogemaw County Sheriff's Department provides animal control service to the Township. Edwards Township residents are assessed 911 charges through their use of cell phones and regular phone lines. Edwards Township has three constables, regulating liquor licenses and monitoring public functions at the Edwards Township Hall.

Ogemaw County also works with eight separate volunteer fire departments, interconnected by a Mutual Aid Agreement that includes membership from neighboring townships and counties. The 911 facility is located at Central Dispatch at the Ogemaw County Sheriff Department, immediately south of the Ogemaw County building. Dispatching services utilize state-of-the-art computer systems to receive emergency calls and to direct fire, police and ambulance units to the emergency scene.

Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling

Solid waste disposal and recycling operations for Edwards Township are planned and regulated by Ogemaw County solid waste and recycling management plan. All operational landfills in Ogemaw County were closed in 1980. During fiscal year 2003, Ogemaw County residents disposed of 27,978 cubic yards of solid waste. This waste was disposed of in three landfills in nearby counties as follows: Whitefeather Landfill in Bay County (24,256 cubic yards or 87% of Ogemaw County solid waste); Northern Oaks Recycling and Disposal Facility in Clare County (1,856 cubic yards or ~ 6.5% of Ogemaw County solid waste); and City Environmental Services of Waters, Inc. in Crawford County (1,861 cubic yards or ~6.5% of Ogemaw County solid waste).¹ Edwards Township residents contract with and pay waste haulers directly to collect, haul and dispose of solid waste by the rental of curb-side waste containers. Solid waste haulers currently serving Edwards Township include Waste Management Incorporated, American Disposal, and Republic Waste.

Ogemaw County offers occasional grant-funded household hazardous waste collection events. The last event was in approximately 2000-2001, and additional future events are being planned. Ogemaw County residents have strongly supported recycling programs, according property owner surveys administered since 2000. Recycling drop-off facilities are located within various Townships throughout the County. A recycling drop-off location is open to Edwards Township residents and located on North Forth Street north of the Family Video Store in downtown West Branch. Scrap metal is accepted by Rifkin Steel on M-76 Highway in Ogemaw County for recycling.

During 2004 Ogemaw County surveyed over 3,000 property owners, demonstrating strong and continued support for recycling as an alternative to landfilling. Recycling benefits everyone by saving raw resources, reducing consumption of landfill space, and reducing environmental contamination of groundwater sources. However, it is imperative to encourage reusing, reducing, and recycling (in that order) of as much of the waste stream as possible.

Roads and Transportation

Greenwood and Rau Roads exist as the two primary east-west county roads within Edwards Township. Other generally less traveled collector and seasonal roads, both paved and unpaved, include Stillwagon Road, Tee Lake Road, McCauley Road, Pointer Road, Kartes Road, Ehinger Road, Fournier Road, Green Road, Edwards School Road,

¹ Report of Solid Waste Landfilled In Michigan; October 1, 2002 – September 30, 2003, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Waste and Hazardous Materials Division.

Channel Lake Road, Lake George Road, Brewer Road, Lehman Road, Diebold Ranch Road (upgraded in 2003), Priddy Road, Beardslee Road, Wickes Road, and Sergeant Road. Some seasonal roads are generally unpaved with no winter maintenance. The only State road within Edwards Township is M-30 Highway, classified as a minor collector road south of the City of West Branch. I-75 Interstate Highway runs slightly north and east of the Township's northeast corner, and no on/off ramp exists within Edwards Township. Although explored in the past, plans do not currently exist to construct an I-75 on/off ramp at M-30 Highway within Edwards Township.

Diebold Ranch Road, Stillwagon Road, the west end of Greenwood and Lehman Roads, and Fournier Road are known for their natural beauty and adjoining farmland and forest lands. These routes are pleasant rides at any time of year, but are especially beautiful during the fall color season. M-30 is heavily traveled by cars. These and other roads within Edwards Township can be viewed on the following Base Map on page 6-5a.

Transportation Trends

Many Township roads are unpaved and seasonal. Development trends are currently increasing the demands for road improvements, potentially ultimately changing the character of rural areas of Edwards Township and using up limited state and local highway dollars. At the same time an increase in private roads, driveways and other access points along Edwards Township roads has the potential for increasing the number of hazardous stops and turning patterns. Unregulated private road development and road access can lead to dangerous conditions and increased stop and go traffic, which in turn leads to congestion and the reduces the carrying capacity of roads and public safety.

Summary of Findings

It is anticipated that future residential and commercial development within Edwards Township will necessarily translate into more vehicle trips on primary Township roads, with calls to straighten curves, build deceleration and passing lanes, erect more signage or even traffic lights, etc.