

## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

Owing to its name, Waterford Township's frontage on 34 inland lakes, including scenic Cass Lake, Elizabeth Lake, and Watkins Lake, underpins the quality of life for residents and provides a residential setting unique among communities in southeast Michigan. The Township was first organized in 1834 shortly after the establishment of Oakland County in 1819.

The Township grew rapidly during the middle of the 20th Century as the Detroit metropolitan region expanded outward, yet the growth leveled off towards the end of the century as much of Township's land became developed. In 2023, the Township has just over 72,800 residents, a figure which has remained relatively stable since 2000. Though the Township continues to provide a high-quality setting that locals value, much of the housing stock and commercial corridors developed in the middle of the 20th century show signs of aging. Recognizing its exceptional natural assets, Waterford Township is uniquely positioned to further enhance the community by building on its unique qualities and providing high-quality housing and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike.

The Waterford Township Master Plan is a long-term guide for the growth, improvement, development, and redevelopment within the Township. Prior to this plan, the Township's most recent Master Plan was adopted in 2003 and established policies to build the local economy, expand recreation, and protect the environment. The Township decided to update the plan to ensure that officials and staff have a strong policy foundation to guide the community as it changes and develops over the next 20 years. To do this, the plan contains policies, goals, and objectives that direct future growth and development and establish the groundwork for the Township's zoning and development regulations.

## ABOUT THE PLAN

This section describes the statutory context for the Master Plan, as defined in the State of Michigan's statutes. This section also describes the requirements for Master Plans set by state statute and describes the plan's organization by Chapter.

### State Master Plan Requirements

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act, enacted by the state of Michigan, requires local governments to develop a Master Plan to guide development within its jurisdiction over a timeframe of 20 years or more. This act sets the statutory requirements that all Master Plans in Michigan, including this plan, must meet. The Act requires that a master plan include maps, plats, charts, and other descriptive materials that show recommendations for physical development within the planning jurisdiction. The statute requires that Master Plan also contain a classification and allocation of land for agriculture, residences, commerce, industry, recreation, and other uses.

### Plan Organization

The Waterford Township Master Plan addresses how the community will grow and redevelop, how residents will travel, and the locations for future recreational sites. The Plan includes the following chapters.

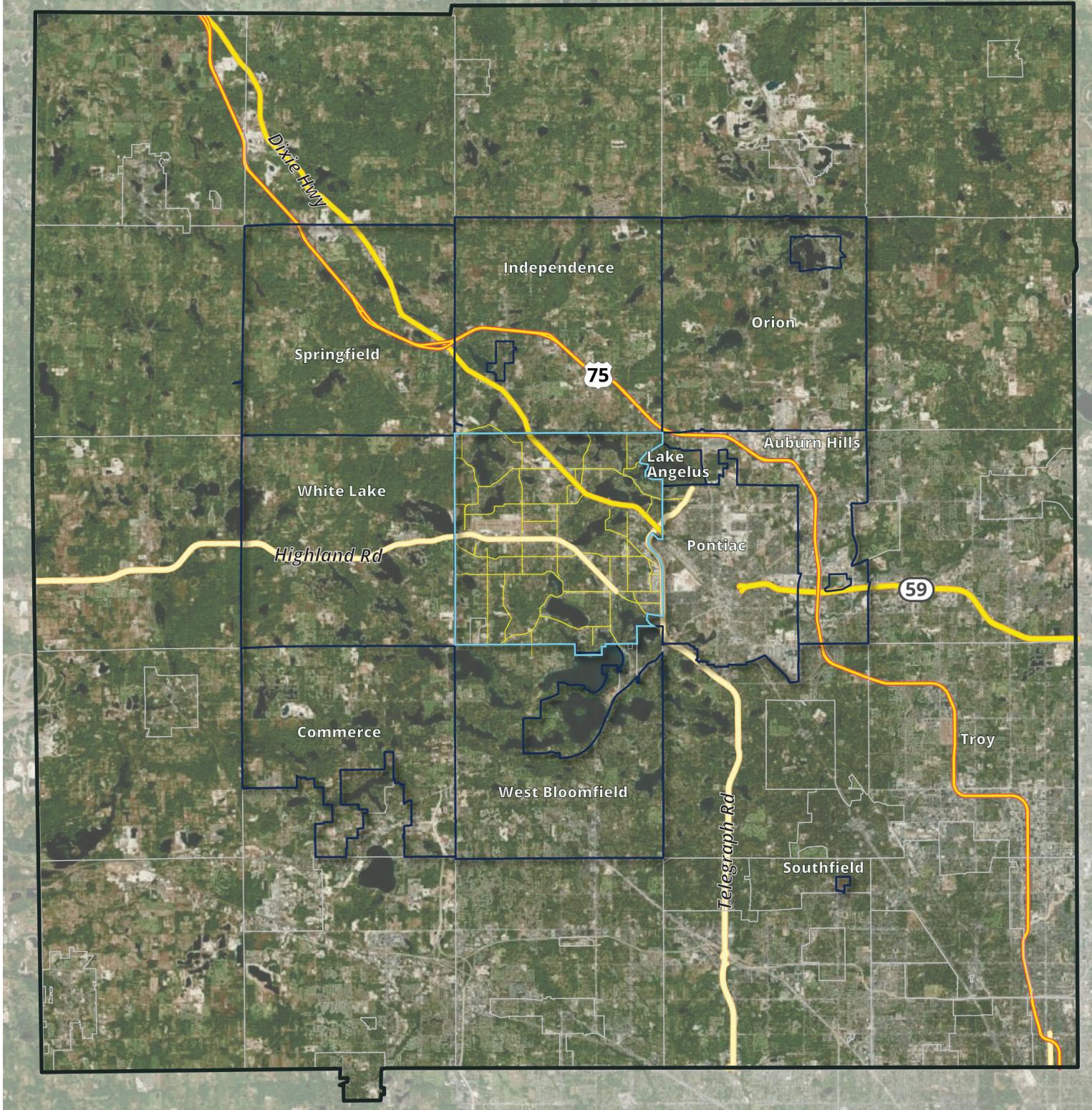
- **Introduction.** Establishes the role and organization of the Master Plan, highlights key demographic and housing trends that influence the Township's issues and opportunities, and describes the community's previous planning efforts that can inform the policies and recommendations in the Master Plan.
- **Community Outreach.** Describes the community engagement efforts as part of the Master Plan and highlights the issues, and opportunities defined by stakeholders during these activities.
- **A Vision for Waterford.** Defines a vision statement that provides an overarching vision for how the Township should grow and change and establishes goals that guide the principles of the rest of the Master Plan.
- **Land Use Plan.** Describes the types of uses and development that should be located throughout the community and how the Township should grow and change.
- **Residential Areas Plan.** Establishes specific policy statements and objectives for different residential areas within the Township.
- **Commercial and Industrial Areas Plan.** Establishes specific policy objectives for different commercial and industrial areas within the Township.

- **Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources.** Describes the Township's parks, recreational facilities, and natural resources and establishes how these amenities can be diversified and improved to enhance the community's access to natural resources.
- **Drayton Plains Subarea Plan.** Describes specific development patterns, built characteristics, and physical improvements for the Downtown Center in the Drayton Plains subarea on Dixie Highway.
- **Transportation.** Describes the road network, nonmotorized infrastructure, and other transportation assets and describes how the transportation network can be diversified to improve community.
- **Community Facilities and Infrastructure.** Inventories the community's infrastructure and services provided by public, semi-public, and private entities and establishes recommendations to coordinate these facilities and services with the Township's growth.
- **Implementation.** Provides strategic guidance on how the Master Plan should be put into action and how impacts can be assessed over the next 20 years.

## REGIONAL CONTEXT

Waterford Township comprises 35 square miles of land in the geographic center of Oakland County. The Township is in the northwest portion of the Detroit metropolitan area. The cities of Lake Angelus, Pontiac, and Auburn Hills are to the Township's east, while Commerce and West Bloomfield Townships are to the south, all of which are more urbanized. Springfield, Independence, and Orion Townships are to the north and White Lake Township is to the west. Dixie Highway, M-59, and Telegraph Road traverse the Township and connect it with other communities in the region. Employment centers are located within driving distance to the east and south in Troy, Southfield, and Auburn Hills. Interstate 75 is immediately north of the community and provides vehicular access to commercial centers in Downtown Detroit and Flint. The Township also holds a presence in the region through the Oakland County International Airport, which provides air freight and passenger service and contributes over \$1 billion to the County's economy annually.

# Regional Context



County Boundary

Waterford Boundary

Adjacent Municipalities

Surrounding Municipalities

## Roads

Interstate

Highway

Regional Arterial

Primary Roads - Waterford

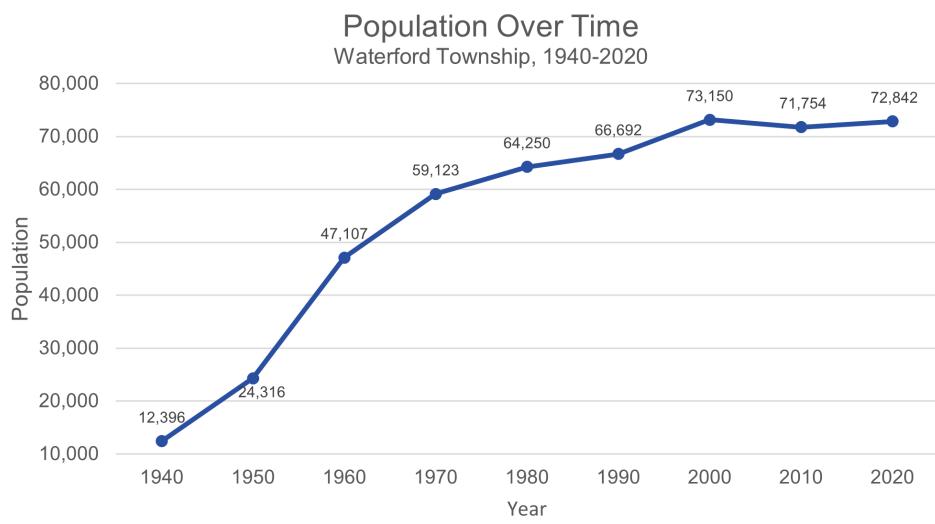
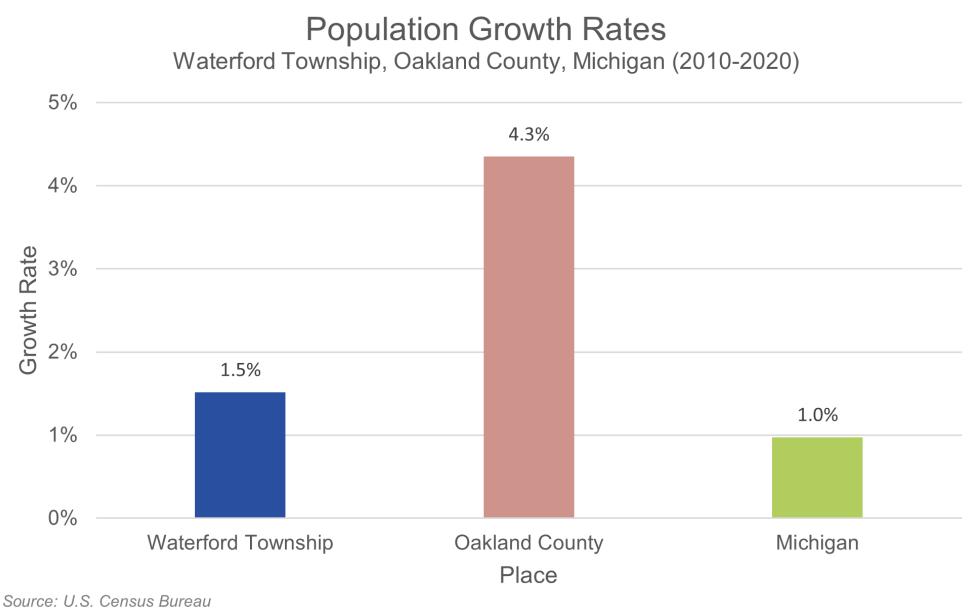
## COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

The demographic snapshot summarizes the existing characteristics and recent trends of Waterford Township's population. This community snapshot informed the development of the Master Plan, ensuring that its goals, objectives, policies, and land use plan are founded on an understanding of recent growth trends, issues, and opportunities. Where appropriate, Waterford Township has been compared to Oakland County and the State of Michigan to provide context. The data used in the snapshot is from the American Community Survey and US Decennial Census and is cited under each graph or chart.

### Population

**Waterford Township's population grew rapidly beginning in 1940, though its population growth has leveled off over the past 20 years.**

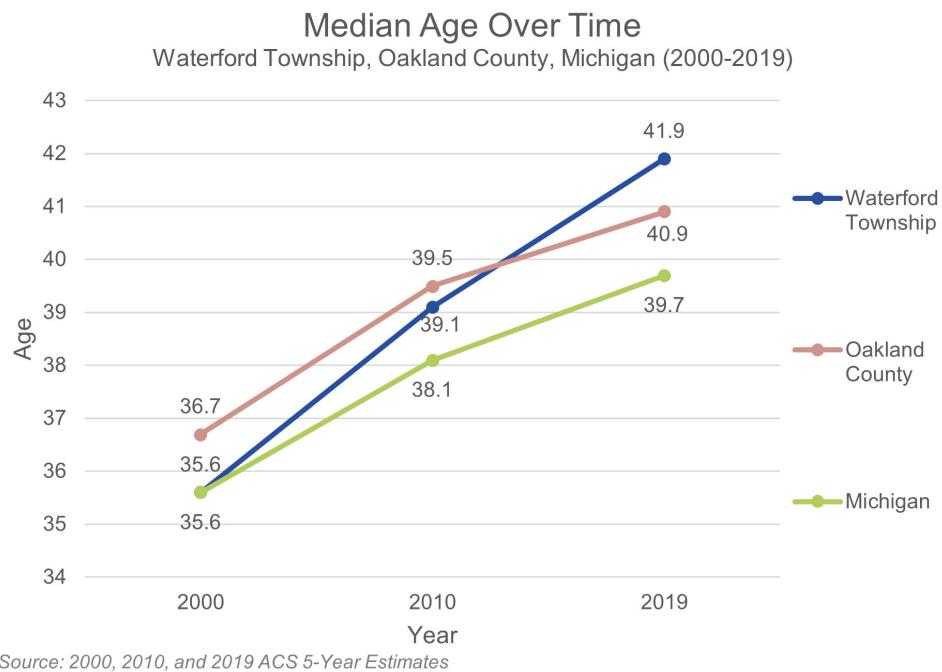
According to the US Decennial Census, the population of Waterford Township is 72,842. Waterford Township's population grew by 1.5% between 2010 and 2020, and has remained stable since 2000. By comparison, Oakland County's population increased by 4.3% in the same timeframe, while Michigan's population grew by 1%.



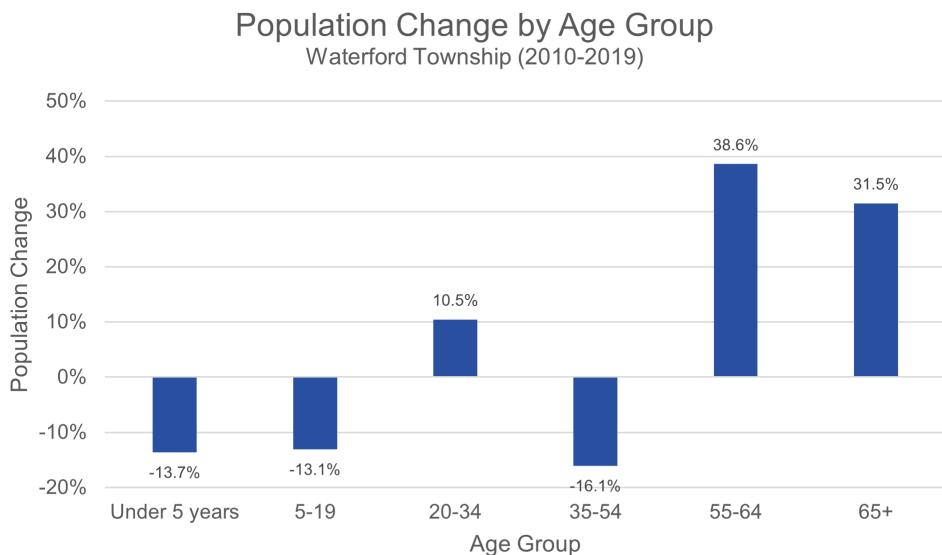
## Age

Waterford Township's population is aging, as its median age increased by almost three years over the past 10 years.

The 2019 median age of residents in Waterford Township was 41.9. The median age increased by 2.8 years since 2010 and 6.3 years since 2000. The 2019 median age of Waterford Township is one year older than the median age of Oakland County (40.9) and over two years older than the median age of Michigan (39.7).

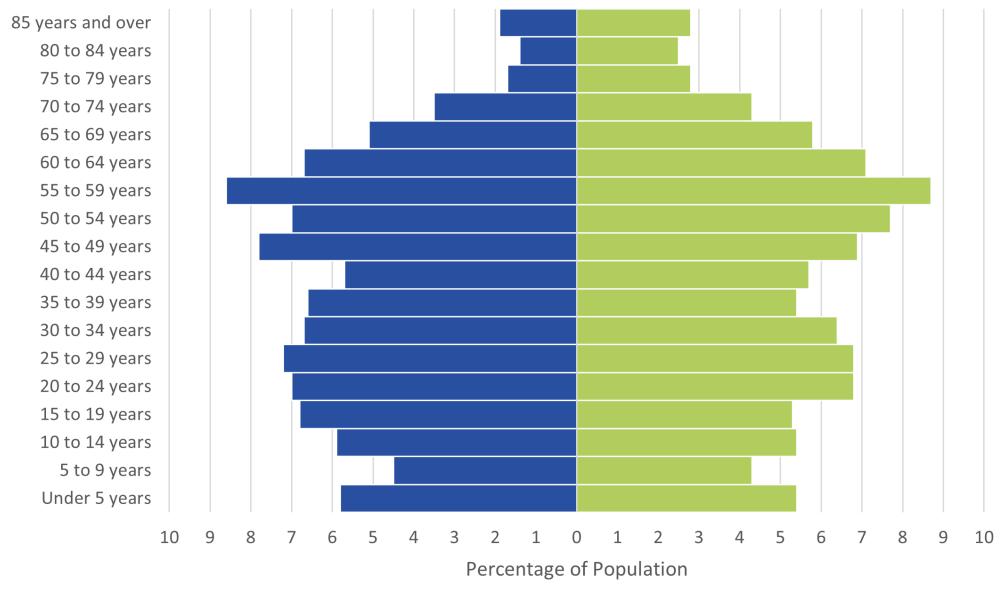


From 2010 to 2019, the age group that experienced the highest growth was the 55 to 64 year old age group, as it increased by 38.6%. From 2010 to 2019, the age group that experienced the greatest decline was the 35 to 54 age group, as it declined by 16.1%. The 55 and older age group experienced the greatest increase in its population from 2010 to 2019.



Source: 2010 and 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

As of 2019, a large share of the Township's population was at or nearing the retirement age range. In that year, 17.4% of the population was between 55 and 59 years old. This comprised the largest of any five-year-increment age ranges shown in the population pyramid.



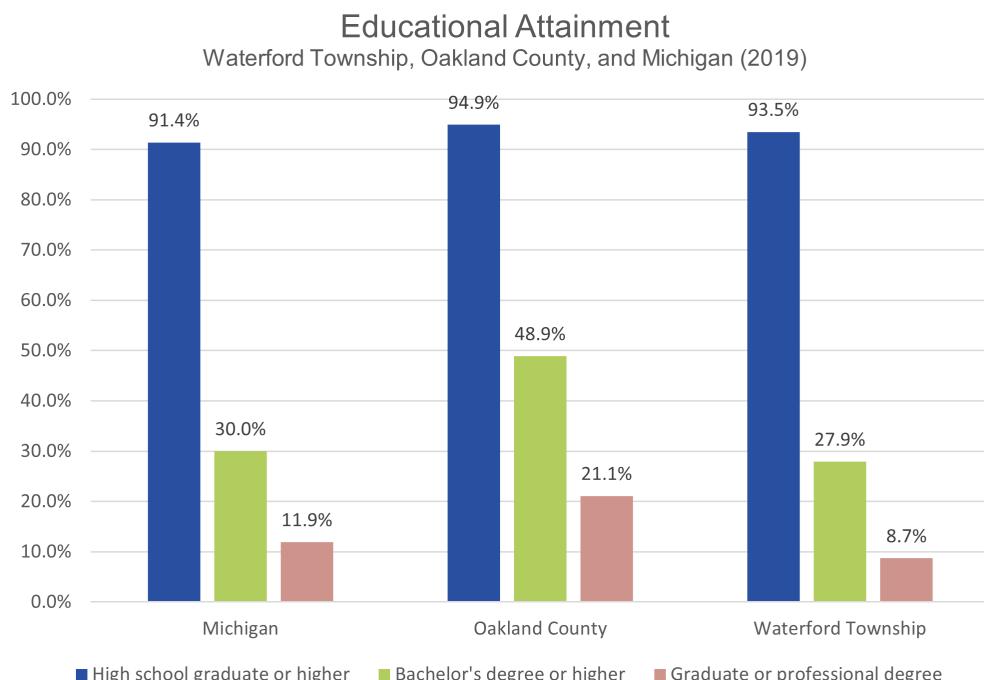
Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

■ FEMALES ■ MALES

## Income and Education

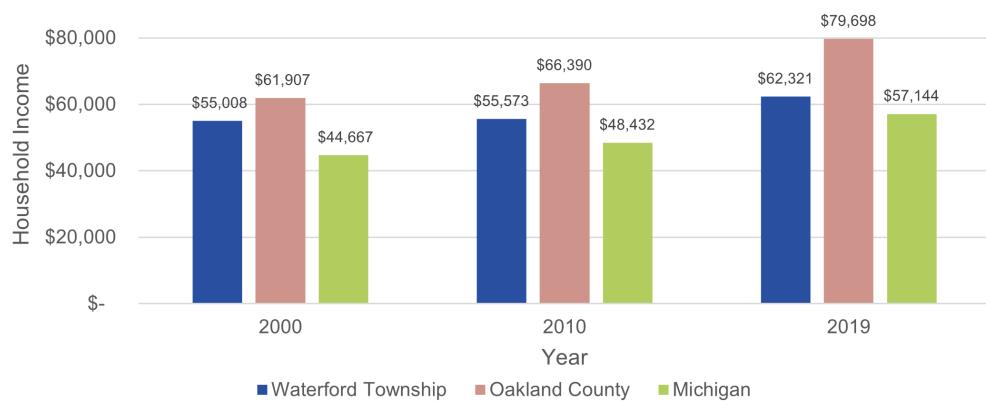
**The median household income in Waterford Township has grown modestly from 2000 to 2019 but remains below the 2019 median household income for Oakland County and slightly above the 2019 median household income for Michigan.**

The educational attainment graph shows that though attainment of high school education was similar in Waterford Township to Oakland County and Michigan overall, higher educational attainment was lower in the Township than in the two larger geographies. The share of individuals with at least a Bachelor's degree was lower in Waterford Township (27.9%) than in Oakland County overall (48.9%) and the State of Michigan (30.0%), as was the share of individuals with a Graduate or Professional degree in the Township (8.7%) compared with the County (21.1%) and State (11.9%).



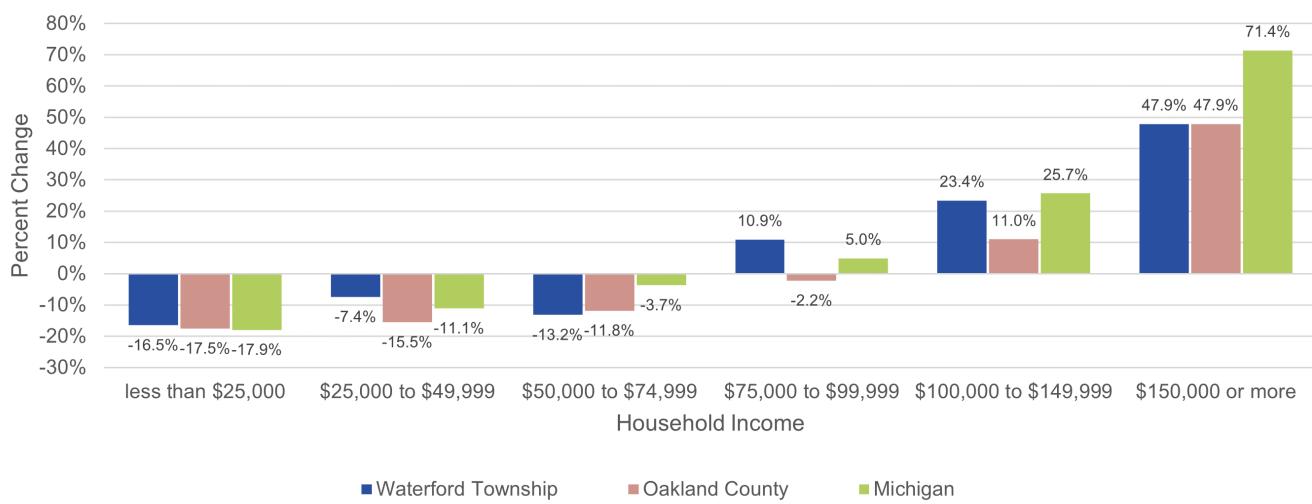
The median household income was \$62,321 in Waterford Township. This is \$17,377 lower than Oakland County's median household income and \$5,177 more than the State of Michigan's median household income. Although the median household income in the Township was relatively stagnant between 2000 and 2010, the figure increased by 12.1% between 2010 and 2019, perhaps coinciding with the area's economic recovery from the Great Recession. The Change in Household Income graph shows that the number of moderate-income households earning between \$75,000 and \$149,999 annually grew, as did the number of upper-income households making \$150,000 or more annually.

**Median Household Income**  
Waterford Township, Oakland County, Michigan (2000-2019)



Source: 2000, 2010, and 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

**Change in Household Income**  
Waterford Township, Oakland County, Michigan (2010-2019)



Source: 2010 and 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

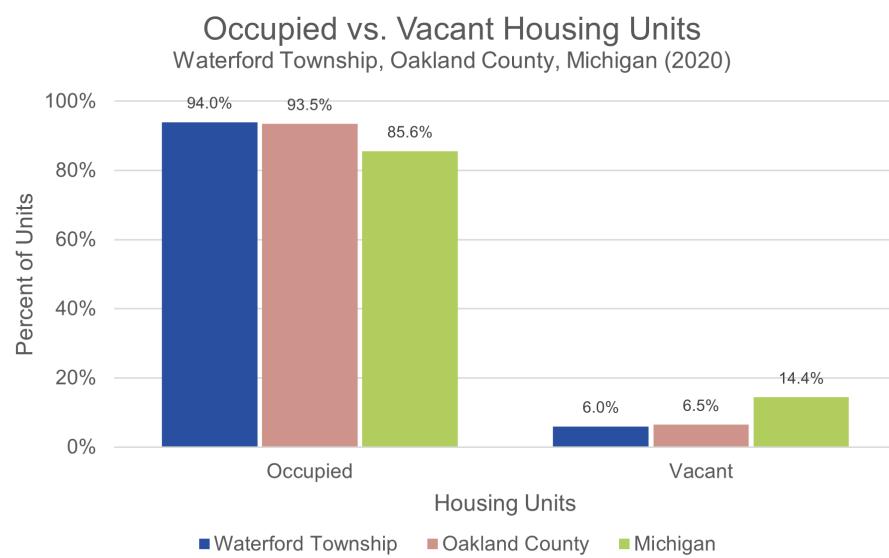
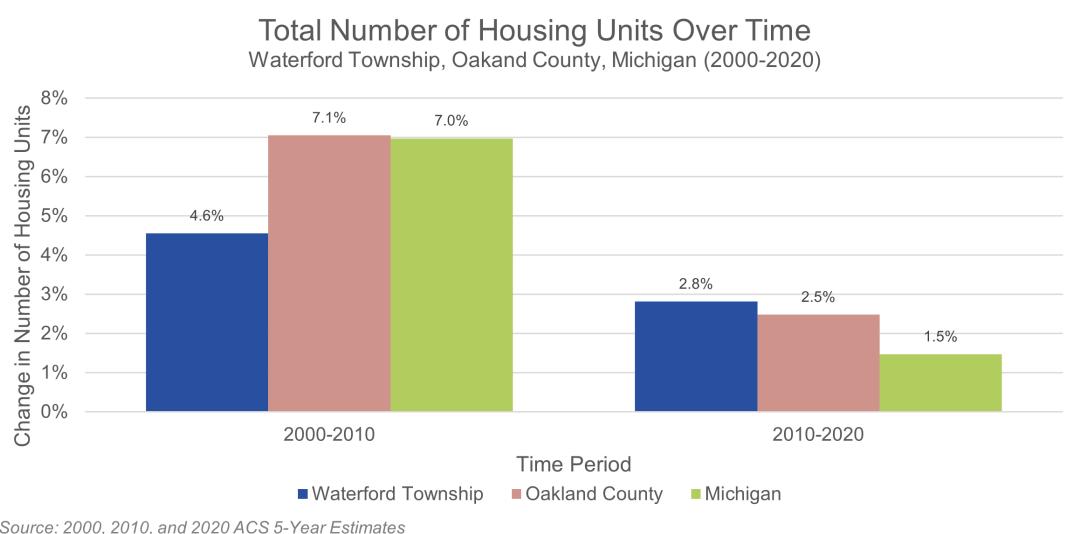
## Housing

Waterford Township's housing stock predominantly consists of owner-occupied, single-family homes, similar to Oakland County and Michigan.

### Housing Units

Waterford Township has a total of 32,659 housing units, which is a 2.8% increase in the total number since 2010. Waterford Township experienced a higher growth in housing units from 2010 to 2020 compared to its peer communities but fell behind new housing units being built from 2000 to 2010.

Of its 32,659 housing units, 94% of the housing units in Waterford Township are occupied, which is 0.5 percentage points more than the occupied housing units in Oakland County and 8.4 percent higher than the occupied housing units in Michigan.

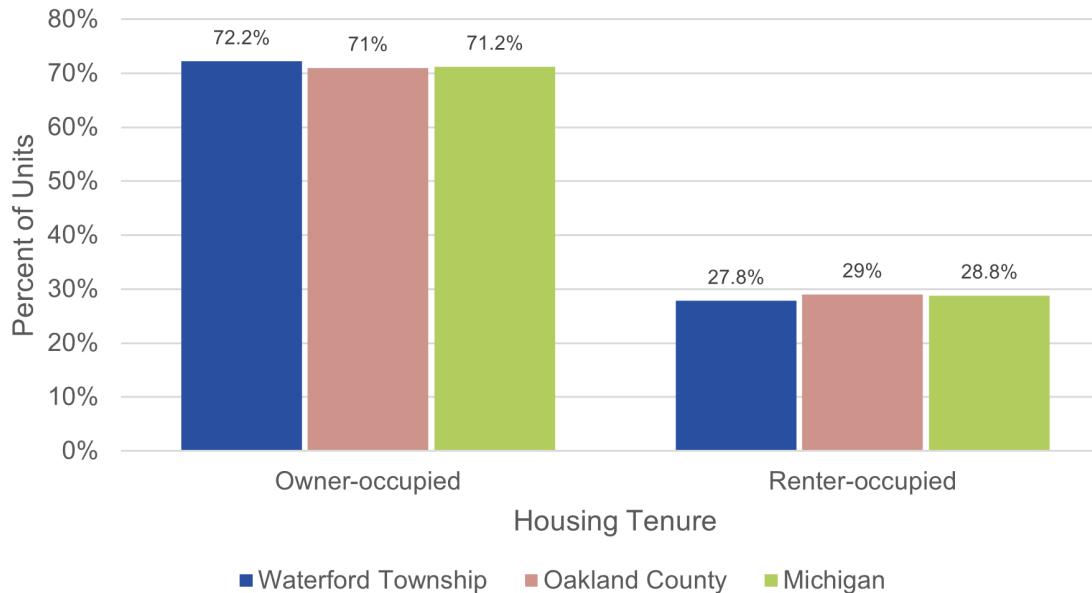


Source: 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates

## Housing Tenure

Housing tenure refers to households owning or renting the housing units they reside in. In Waterford Township, 72.2% of the housing units are owner-occupied and 27.8% of the housing units are renter-occupied. This is in line with the housing tenure of Oakland County and Michigan.

### Owner vs. Renter-Occupied Housing Units Waterford Township, Oakland County, Michigan (2019)

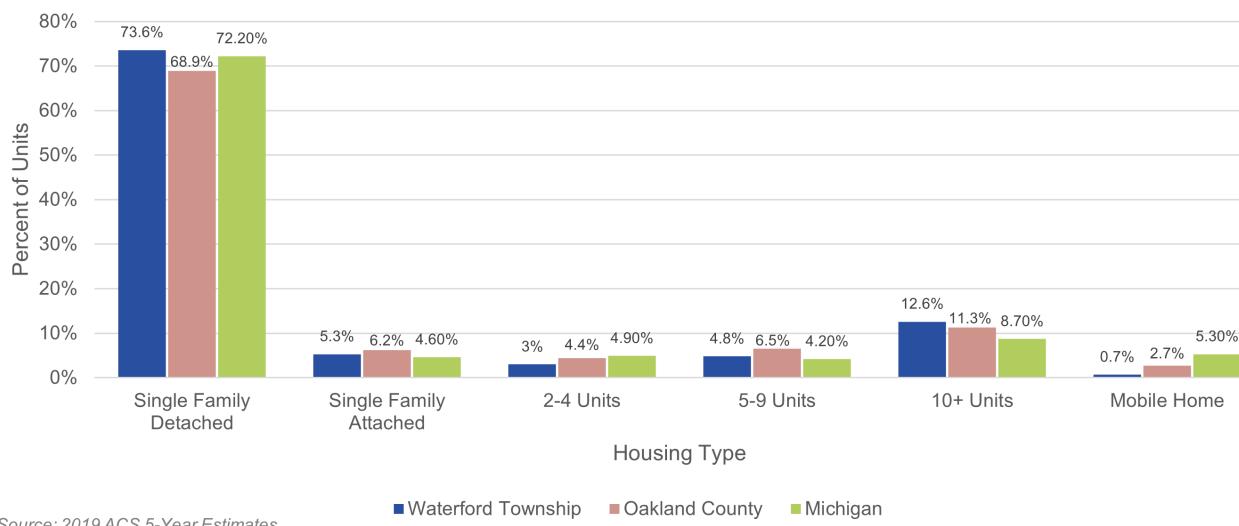


Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

## Housing Type

Waterford Township's housing stock consists of 73.6% single-family detached homes, which is 4.7 percent larger share than Oakland County's share of single family detached housing units and 1.4 percentage points higher than Michigan's. Waterford Township has a lower share of residents residing in mobile homes (0.7%) than Oakland County (2.7%) and Michigan (5.3%). The proportion of residents in multifamily buildings (two or more units) is 20.4% in Waterford Township, 22.2% in Oakland County, and 17.8% in

### Housing Type Waterford Township, Oakland County, Michigan (2019)



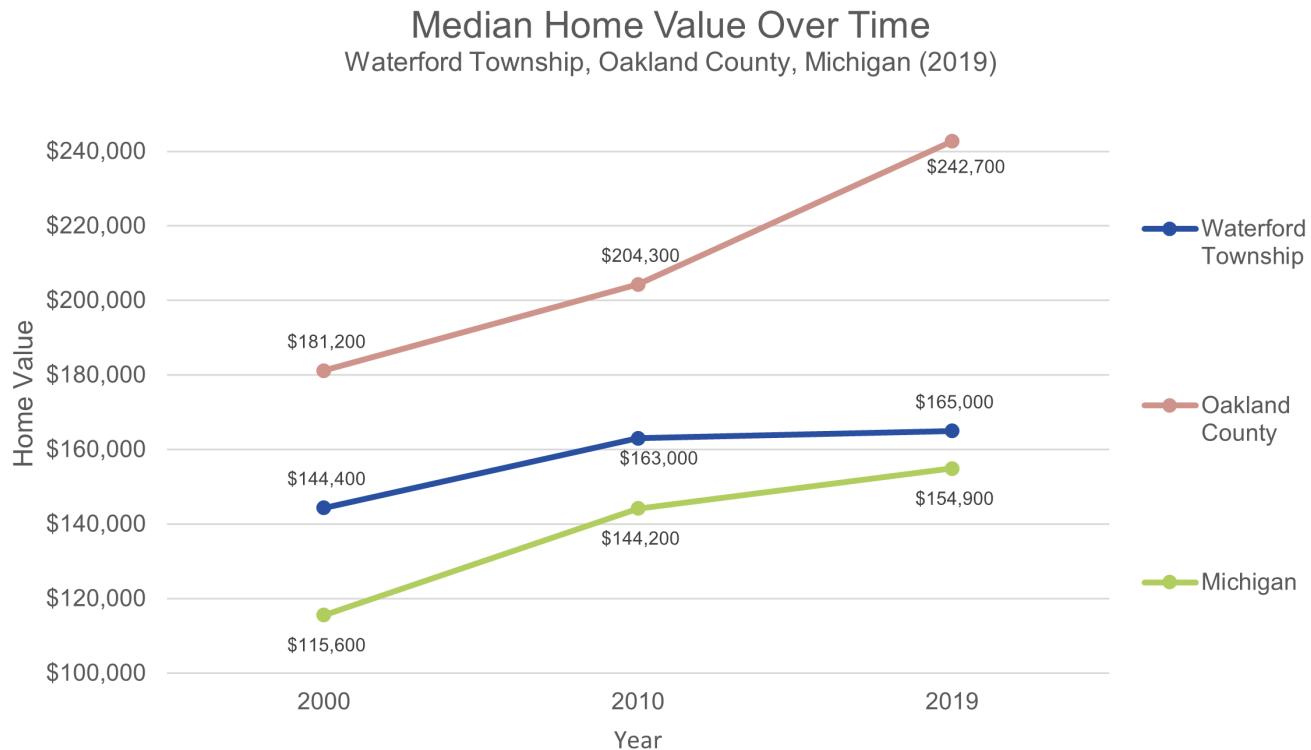
Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

■ Waterford Township ■ Oakland County ■ Michigan

Michigan.

### **Home Value**

The median home value in Waterford Township is \$165,000, which is \$77,700 less than the median home value in Oakland County (\$242,700) and \$10,100 more than the median home value in Michigan (\$154,900). The median home value in Waterford Township



Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

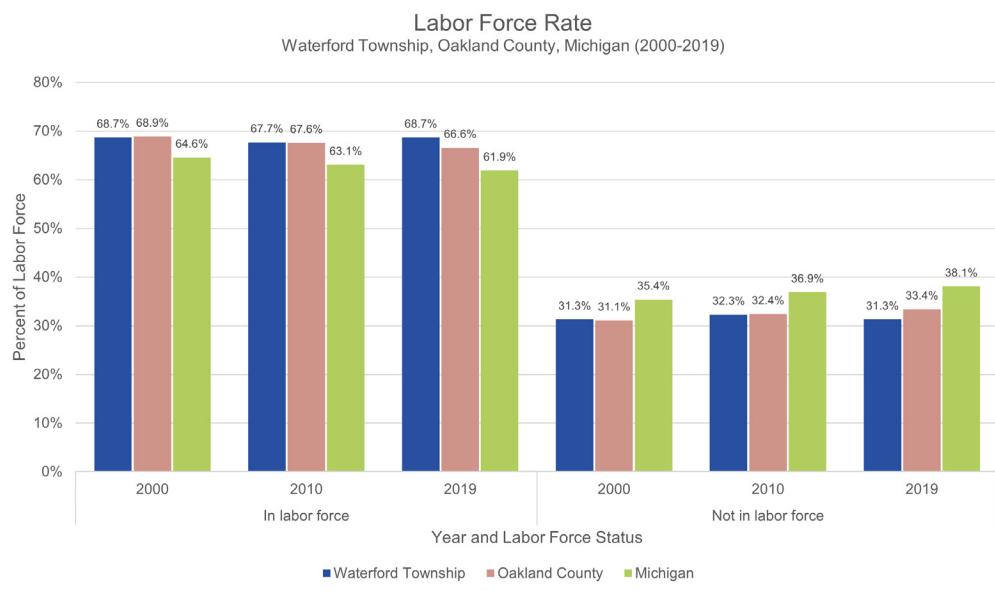
grew by 1.2% from 2010 to 2019 and by 14.3% from 2000 to 2019.

## Employment

The labor force rate in Waterford Township has been steady from 2000 to 2019, with a similar labor force rate as Oakland County. Public Administration is the largest sector within Waterford Township.

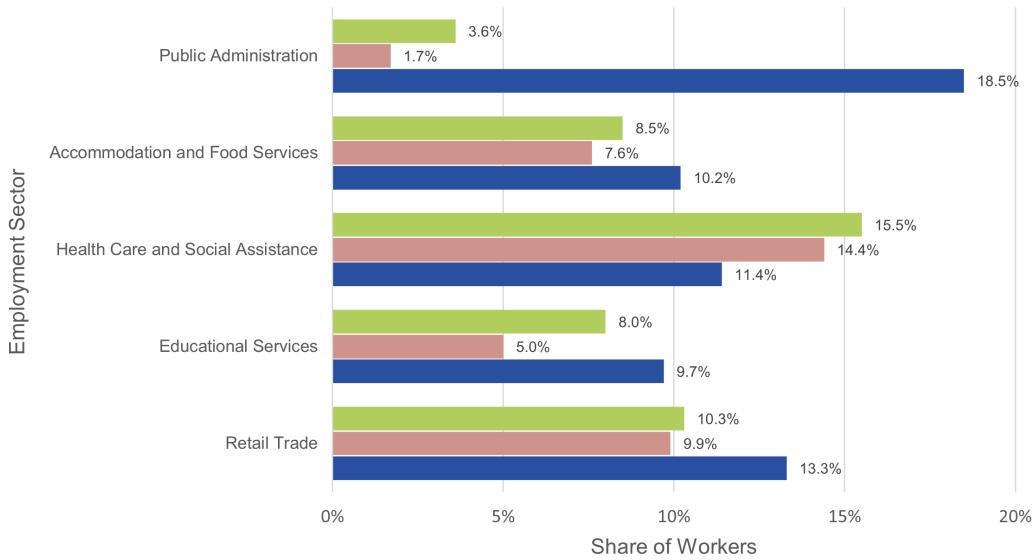
The labor force rate of Waterford Township has been consistent since 2000. According to the 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates, the labor force rate of Waterford Township is 68.7%, which is 2.1 percentage points higher than the population in the labor force in Oakland County (66.6%) and 6.8 percentage points higher than the population in the labor force in Michigan (61.9%). The Waterford Township labor force has remained consistent from 2000 to 2019 as the population in the labor force increased slightly by 1 percentage point from 2010 to 2019.

The five largest sectors in Waterford Township are Public Administration, Retail Trade, Health Care and Social Assistance, Accommodation and Food Services, and Educational Services in terms of the number of residents employed by sector. The largest sector in Waterford Township is Public Administration - 18.5% of the Township's population is employed in the sector. The second highest industry sector in Waterford Township is the Retail Trade sector with 13.3% of the population employed in the industry.



Source: 2000, 2010, and 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

### Largest Industry Sector in Waterford Township In Comparison with Oakland County and Michigan, 2019



## PAST PLANS AND STUDIES

Waterford Township conducted numerous planning efforts in the past that are an important to consider during the Master Planning process. The Master Plan seeks to build on these previously adopted plans and studies and ensure existing community policies and goals are integrated within the Master Plan where they are relevant to consider.

### Waterford Township Comprehensive Development Plan Update Brochure (1968)

The Comprehensive Plan Brochure was a condensed version of the update of the 1966 Comprehensive Development Plan. The main goals of the update address an expansion of utility systems and services including water supply, storm sewers, sanitary sewers, and refuse disposal; a need for community facilities including schools, recreational, governmental, and library facilities, fire protection, hospitals, and land use planning.

### Focal Area Plans (1988)

The 1988 Focal Area Plan was written prior to the upcoming comprehensive plan update with the previous plan being the 1975 Comprehensive Development Plan. The plan encouraged and promoted new and innovative office/commercial development, redevelopment, and quality design at seven designated focal areas. The plan also examined the implications for transportation, environmental, zoning, and density.

1. **Oakland Airport.** Highland Road at Oakland Airport
2. **Triangle.** Walton Boulevard, Sashabaw Road, and Dixie Highway intersections
3. **Town Corners.** Highland Road at Crescent Lake Road
4. **Meijer.** Highland Road at Pontiac Lake Road
5. **Intersection.** Cass Lake Road, Highland Road, and Elizabeth Road intersections
6. **Regional Center.** Elizabeth Lake Road and Pontiac Lake Road at Telegraph Road (Summit Place Mall)
7. **Gateway.** Telegraph Road at Dixie Highway

### Master Plan for Future Land Use (1991)

The 1991 Master Plan was adopted with the goal of making Waterford a more desirable community for residents. The plan outlined ten goals highlighting land use, community preservation and engagement, preservation of natural land, infrastructure development, and improved physical aesthetics. The plan considered environmental impacts and preservation focused on waterbodies, wetlands, groundwater, woodlots, trees, and waste processing. Other main focuses included improving the commercial and industrial economic base, enhancing transportation, and improving administrative and public community facilities.

### Charter Township of Waterford Master Plan (2003)

The Waterford Master Plan was adopted in January 2003 and outlines seven major goals to accomplish between 2003 and 2023, which focused on local economic development, sustainable land use, the wellbeing of and recreational opportunities for Township citizens, the improvement of transportation and walkability, and the retention of the Township's unique character and qualities. Key stakeholders noted that Waterford's main issues were a lack of development planning, aesthetic guidelines, and traffic congestion along the Township's commercial corridors. Stakeholders also established a desire for stronger communication among governmental agencies, an improved and expanded nonmotorized path system, greater walkability, and the need for a central community center with activities for Township youth.

The future land use plan helps define the types of desired land uses and developments in the Township. It identified locations for multiple-family development dispersed throughout the community, often to serve as transitions between single-family neighborhoods and commercial corridors. Further, the future land use plan proposed a Central Community Business District along M-59 to include office, commercial, and residential uses to serve as a central focal point within the community with an emphasis on streetscaping and walkability. The Plan also allocated land for high-tech services uses along Dixie Highway and Telegraph Road and for an Urban Business land use designation along M-59 near the Township's eastern border to include small-lot development and a mix of local and community businesses as well as multifamily residential uses.

## Waterford Township Planned Destination Area Vision Plan (2007)

The Planned Destination Area (PDA) Vision Plan provides recommendations for land uses that expand on the objectives and policies of the Waterford Township Planned Destination Area. The goal of the Vision Plan is to shape the regulatory and private development process of the PDA and to create a successful, economically viable, socially useful, unique, and environmentally sound place. The PDA is located on the east side of Waterford Township adjacent to the City of Pontiac and the Oakland County seat. In 2003 the community created a Vision for their future and defined a PDA along Telegraph and Elizabeth Lake Roads. The plan builds on that Vision with site information, community workshops, and PDA recommendations and implementation.

## Waterford Township Parks and Recreation Plan (2019)

The 2019 Parks and Recreation Plan is a five-year plan written with the purpose of improving recreation facilities and developing new recreational opportunities for the community. The plan includes community input to determine which parks and recreation facilities to improve and how to do so. It also identifies potential funding sources. The main goals of the plan are to develop new amenities and improvements, provide recreation opportunities that improve health and fitness, develop non-motorized pathways, maintain all existing facilities and access to rivers, promote awareness of recreational opportunities, and improve accessibility to all recreational facilities.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

Based on the data examined above, the following are key takeaways influencing the policies of this Master Plan:

- **Population Has Plateaued.** Waterford Township's population growth has leveled off since 2000, and recently little population change has occurred since 2010.
- **An Aging Population.** The Township's population has aged over recent years at a similar rate to the state and County; the median age has increased steadily since 2000, while the number of residents between 55-64 years of age grew the fastest of any group.
- **Lower Rates of Higher Educational Attainment.** Though high-school educational rates are on-par with the County and State overall, rates of higher-educational attainment were lower in Waterford Township than in the two larger geographies.
- **Slowing Housing Construction.** Though some new housing was constructed in the Township between 2010-2019, housing construction has been relatively slow since 2000.
- **Predominance of Single-Family Detached Housing.** As is the case in Oakland County and in Michigan overall, most Waterford Township's housing is single-family detached units. Some large multifamily developments with 10+ units exist as well, and very few small-scale multifamily developments with 2-9 units exist.
- **Moderate Increase in Home Values.** Median home values have increased slightly since 2000 in the Township, however, the increase in average home values has slowed since 2010.
- **Service-Based Economy.** Services, including professional services such as public administration, healthcare, and education as well as retail and accommodation/food services comprise the most common forms of employment among residents.
- **Regional Position.** Waterford's combination of lakes and natural areas located on the edge of the Detroit metro area provide a unique opportunity for residents to enjoy nature while benefiting from the everyday convenience of city life and close proximity to job opportunities.