



A Multi-Year  
**STRATEGIC ACTION  
PLAN**  
Saugatuck Township

**A Community with a Vision**  
Prepared for the Saugatuck Township Board of Trustees

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Prepared by Larry Nielsen  
Larrynielsen6619@gmail.com

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## Preface

The Township Board and Manager engaged in a strategic planning process in December 2020 and January 2021. A report from that process has been prepared and presented. The work of the Trustees is captured in the report and provides a basis for this proposed Strategic Action Plan, hereafter referred to as 'SAP' or 'the Plan'.

The Township has other plans such as a Capital Improvement Plan, a Master Plan, and others. This Plan does not replace or supersede those plans. Rather, this Plan represents the focus of the Township Board as it desires to address its Priority Areas for the Township.

The Township has been making progress towards some of the areas in this Plan already. Indeed, the Plan has seen much progress in its Goals and Actions. The Board and Manager desire to achieve even more in the coming year.

This report restates the suggested Values, the Priority Areas and the Missions as presented in the report from the planning exercises. Again, these are suggestions and may be amended, added to, or subtracted. They appear first, followed by the plan.

The Plan for the coming year, or perhaps 2+ years, is structured by each Priority Area. Within each Priority Area there are goals, actions, and measurements of accomplishment.

## MISSION STATEMENTS

A Mission Statement for the Township may be helpful. The Board of Trustees may wish to consider adopting a Mission Statement.

As of the Special Meeting held February 2, 2012, Trustees and the Facilitator were still engaged in developing a final draft of a Mission Statement. A final draft was presented and adopted at the February 10, 2021 regular meeting of the Board of Trustees. Below is that Mission Statement.

### **Township Mission:**

Saugatuck Township is dedicated to providing visionary leadership to enhance the quality of life for all our diverse residents, providing the highest quality of service within the constraints of a fiscally responsible government, and fostering sound economic development while maintaining the highest level of stewardship of our precious natural resources.

### **A Resource: Board of Trustees Mission**

In addition to the Township Mission Statement, as a resource, a Board of Trustees Mission Statement is offered. While the Township Mission Statement covers the Township in totality, the Board of Trustees Mission Statement covers members of the Board of Trustees.

*It shall be the Mission of the Board of Trustees to provide visionary leadership in policy making that respects the Township's values and provides quality services within its financial abilities.*

# **PRIORITY AREA STATEMENTS**

Trustee responses to the exercises identified five areas of priority. Goals and Actions are grouped with a corresponding Priority Area Statement. In no particular order, they are.

## **Priority Area: Commitment to Excellence**

Saugatuck Township shall be known for its pursuit and adherence to excellence in all it does.

## **Priority Area: Collaboration and Engagement**

Collaborations and engagement undertaken by Saugatuck Township grow trust and partnership with its residents.

## **Priority Area: Parks and Nature**

Saugatuck Township shall be known for its natural beauty and its commitment to providing quality parks and trails.

## **Priority Area: Financial Stability**

Sound fiscal management practices assures long-term stability which secures a bright future for the Township and all its services.

## **Priority Area: Growth and Development**

Thoughtful growth and development will preserve the qualities people love about Saugatuck Township.

## **Priority Area: Commitment to Excellence**

Saugatuck Township shall be known for its pursuit and adherence to excellence in all it does.

The Township Board and Manager have made a commitment to pursue excellence in all it does. This requires continuous assessment and implementation.

### **Goals**

#### **1.1 INCREASE PROFESSIONAL STAFF AT TOWNSHIP HALL**

Gaging the Township's last Plan and the desire to have the Township take on or accomplish more in the coming year, Trustees believe additional professional staff is necessary to continue the pursuit of excellence.

##### **Actions**

Consider the staff position(s) needed to assure the Township provides excellence in all it does. Determine whether any position may be achieved as a contracted service or must be on an employee basis. Survey the pay ranges for similar positions in other similar Townships (size, population, tax base, etc.). Determine the funding source for the positions. Depending upon the tasks, some funding may be available via different special millages. As an example, if some of the work to be done by the employee is related to roads, a portion of the cost may be assigned to those funds.

##### **Measurements**

Information is gathered. Positions determined with pay range and job descriptions developed. Funding for the positions is secured. Position(s) is/are added.

#### **1.2 TOWNSHIP HALL**

Township Hall does not meet the needs for staff, the Board, or the residents and improvement are desired. It is desired Township Hall provide the tools, space and comfort needed for employees and officials to perform at their optimum. Consideration for replacement may be an option.

##### **Actions**

The Manager and Board explores other communities that have renovated their Halls or replaced them with new Halls. Visits, virtual or in person, are scheduled. Board determines whether reconfiguring and/or upgrading is preferred over replacement. If an upgrade is determined, Manager explores whether a college/university program or a professional service may provide reconfigured layout study and options. If a professional service is determined, Manager solicits proposals. Board determines funding for the professional service. Once options are presented, the Manager explores whether and Federal or State funding (grant or loan) may be available for public buildings. Depending upon the available of funding, bid specs are prepared and bids let out.

### **Measurements**

Information is gathered. Plans for a new or an upgraded Township Hall are completed. Funding is secured. A new Township Hall is constructed or upgrades to the existing structure is accomplished.

## **1.3 INCREASE SAFETY IN THE TOWNSHIP**

### **Actions**

Pursue information regarding a stop light at Blue Star Highway Interchange. Determine process to achieve such. Determine any Township cost implications. Determine whether grants or loans may be possible and pursue if so. Following information gathering and cost implications, budget according and schedule work.

### **Measurements**

Information gathered. Grant/loan, if available, application completed. When funding is in place work is scheduled.

## **1.4 BEAUTIFY INTERCHANGES**

### **Actions**

The Manager works to determine any desire of Board and partners (ACRC and the MDOT) may have to participate in beautification efforts. Determine amount of citizen input desired and schedule opportunities to secure input. Make presentations to partners. Seek preliminary engineering perspective drawings and plans with Partners or alone. Determine if any grants, loans, special millage funding can be utilized. If so, pursue. Determine costs estimates. Continue working with partners to arrive at final designs, costs, and work schedule,

### **Measurements**

Information gathered. Designs and cost estimates determined. Funding secured. Work scheduled.

## **1.5 ONLINE AND SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE**

Trustees indicated the Township's online presence needs updating. This included improvements which result in a more user-friendly website, interactive (forms/applications, etc.), and informative (BSA and tax education) presence. The upgrades would be beneficial to residents, businesses, and developers.

Online and social media presence is getting ever and ever more important. Yet, upkeep and staff time to keep the presence fresh is challenging for most communities. Some communities manage their needs by bringing on an employee skilled in social media and marketing whose duties are solely or partially to maintain the community's online and social media presence. Others engage a contracted service to provide the upkeep and maintenance.

### **Actions**

Manager gathers information regarding contracting out the maintenance and upkeep of the Township's online and social media presence. In doing this, the Manager would

prepare a scope of services for such a contract. This information is compared with adding an employee (full-time or part-time). Information is presented to the Board. Board determines the best option and provides the funding. The Manager then implements the Board decision.

**Measurement**

Scope of services prepared, and service contracts are sought. Information is compared with an in-house employee. The options are presented the Board. Board selects an option, provides funding and the Manager implements the decision. Either option has a cost impact (see Priority Area 4). If an added employee is determined best, see Priority Area 1.2 above.

**1.6 IMPROVE AND COORDINATE WASTE REMOVAL SERVICES (TRASH, RECYCLING, YARD WASTES, AND LARGE ITEMS)**

There is a strong desire on the part of the Township Board to provide excellent waste removal and recycling services. An area wide Advisory Committee exists which is considering all the options. The Township has representation on this Committee. The work of the Advisory Committee is currently ongoing.

**Actions**

The Township shall continue to provide input to the Advisory Committee through its representation. Advisory Committee reports and recommendations shall be given consideration by the Township. Following consideration, the Township will act as it deems appropriate.

**Measurements**

Input to the Advisory Committee is provided as requested and as the Township deems appropriate. Any reports and recommendations from the Advisory Committee are received and considered. The Township Board acts on the reports and recommendation as it deems appropriate.

## **Priority Area: Collaboration and Engagement**

Collaborations and engagement undertaken by Saugatuck Township grow trust and partnership with its residents.

### **Goals**

#### **2.1 INCREASE CITIZEN KNOWLEDGE OF TOWNSHIP TAXES AND FINANCES**

Many residents would benefit by having a better understanding of property taxes; State, County, local, schools, special district (fire, etc.), and special assessments (Roads, etc.). Residents having this knowledge also tend to better appreciate their local governmental unit as they no longer believe all taxes are from and go to the local unit. Further, using survey instruments which include budget, taxation and cost of service information allows residents to provide valuable feedback to the Board of Trustees. Such instruments can also determine the threshold that residents and businesses are willing to pay in order to get the service. This Goal also impacts Priority Area 4.

##### **Actions**

The Manager collects samples of what other communities do in presenting tax information. The County Equalization Department can provide all tax levied and collected in Saugatuck Township. This information can be presented in a great variety of methods. The Manager presents drafts of the methods and suggested distribution methods (mailing, newsletters, digitally, with tax bills, at meetings, via social media, Q & A formats, etc.). Additionally, the Manager gathers examples of surveys from other associations and municipalities. Manager explores professional survey persons/firms and online formats (Survey Monkey, etc.). Information is presented to the Board.

##### **Measurements**

Samples of how others present tax and levy information is gathered. Sample surveys are gathered. Both are developed into presentation materials and formats and distributed. Residents provide positive feedback to the Board and Manager. Tax and levy information is updated annually. Surveys are designed and implemented on an as needed basis.

#### **2.2 COLLABORATIONS ARE STRENGTHENED AND MAINTAINED**

Saugatuck Township currently is a partner in a variety of partnerships that do and can further benefit the Township.

##### **Actions**

- The Board continues to offer hosting a Tri-Community meeting.
- The Board and Manager continue to work on improving the collaborative relationship with the Kalamazoo Lake Sewer and Water Authority.
- The Board and Manager continue to participate with the Kalamazoo Lake Harbor Authority and strengthen that relationship.

- The Board and Manager continue to collaborate with the Allegan County Road Commission (ACRC) on road improvement plans, Lakeshore Drive improvement plans, and increasing resident's general knowledge of ACRC's role in the Township.
- The Board and Manager continue working with ACRC, MDOT and others on Blue Star Highway safety, round-a-bouts, and trails.
- The Manager and Board continue working with the partners for the Blue Star Trail including the two cities and the Friends of the Blue Star Trail on the Joint Study Committee's proposed route and other matters.
- The Board continues to participate with the Tri-Communities group on the Tri-Communities Master Plan, parks and trails, and other issues important to all.
- The Board establishes a Trustee visiting schedule whereby Trustees visit its committees, commissions, and collaborative partners on a regular basis.

**Measurements**

Relations are maintained or improved, matters before each are progressing or resolved, a Tri-Community meeting is hosted, the number of Tri-Community projects increases, and the Trustee visiting schedule is put into place and carried out.

**2.3 (WHEN APPROPRIATE) OPEN HOUSE, TOWNHALL MEET AND GREET OPPORTUNITIES**

Communities have found Open House, Townhall Meet and Greet opportunities effective in getting information out as well as receiving input from residents and taxpayers. They can be an effective method in engaging citizens. Quarterly or semi-annual Open House Townhall Meet-n-Greets can be an effective tool with 2.1 and 2.2. They could be effective on other matters before the Township.

**Actions**

The Board and Manager determine the topics (reason) for and Open House and communicate such to residents and businesses.

**Measurements**

An Open House, Township Hall Meet and Greet is planned and conducted. The Board evaluates the session and determines whether and how to continue same.

## **Priority Area: Parks and Nature**

Saugatuck Township shall be known for its natural beauty and its commitment to providing quality parks and trails.

**Preface** The region including Saugatuck Township, Saugatuck City, the City of the Village of Douglas, and Allegan County is rich with active and passive parks, trails, and their amenities. This inventory is readily available and could easily be shared with Township residents and businesses. Doing so may lessen the demand for more services while still offering residents every opportunity to engage in a healthy lifestyle and enjoy their natural surroundings.

## **Goals**

### **3.1 FUNDING PARKS AND TRAILS**

Maintenance and upkeep costs impact the Townships budget. Further development of parks and trails (walking, bike, snowmobile, etc.) also greatly impact the Township budget. This is also discussed in Priority Area 4.

#### **Actions**

Information regarding funding options to establish a Township Parks and Trails Millage, a Tri-Community Parks and Trails Millage, or a Tri-Community Parks and Trail Authority will be gathered by the Manager. Information, including financial impacts and options, is presented to the Board for consideration. Citizens, the Parks Commission, and members of the Tri-Communities will be engaged as appropriate. Depending on the option ultimately arrived at (Township millage, Tri-Community millage, or Authority) The Board acts to support the effort.

#### **Measurements**

Information is gathered, presented, and acted upon. Citizens and the Tri-Community partners buy into the plan.

### **3.2 PARKS AND TRAILS DEVELOPMENT**

Increasing the quality and variety of parks and trails is no easy task, requiring planning, coordination with many partners, and consideration of overloading the Township's limited staff. Planning also includes funding options i.e., grants, millage, General Fund appropriations, Crowdfunding platforms, etc. Planning also includes consideration of existing parks and trails and the amenities they may include. Development of similar assets may be self-defeating. Goals herein likely involve coordination with 3.1 and Priority Area 4.

#### **Actions**

- The Manager and the Parks Commission pursue plans for connecting bike and trail systems within the Township, within the Tri-Communities, and within the region.

- The Manager shall work with both the ACRC and the MDOT to regarding bike paths, lanes, and or trails along Blue Star Highway. This will likely involve coordination with other partners and with 3.1 and Priority Area 4.
- The Manager and Parks Commission shall pursue plans for adding amenities (bathrooms, covered picnic structures, playground equipment, signage, etc.) to River Bluff Park and others.

### **Measurements**

Information is gathered, plans made, coordination with other partners and priority areas are completed. Results are presented to the Board for consideration and direction.

## **Priority Area: Financial Stability**

Sound fiscal management practices assures long-term stability securing a bright future for the Township and all its services.

### **Goals**

The Township levies a small operating millage. The Township recently gained some flexibility regarding increasing its general operating millage. Additionally, special operating millages may need increasing to meet the Township's current level of services and operations., let alone considering expansion of services or operations.

#### **4.1 OPERATING MILLAGE PROVIDES GROWTH AND STABILITY.**

##### **Actions**

With the new flexibility the Township has with tis operating millage, the Manager and Board reviews information of its Capital Improvement Plan, its current fund balance, and items included with this Strategic Action Plan and considers any change to its general operating millage levy.

##### **Measurement**

Pertinent information is reviewed, and the Board makes a determination regarding an appropriate millage levy.

#### **4.2 SEWER AND WATER RATES AND DEVELOPMENT**

##### **Actions**

A study of sewer and water rates is well underway with updates and final recommendations coming in 2021. The study involves multiple existing agreements. As progress is made, the Manager and Board will consider any reports and recommendations with their Capital Improvement Plan, the Township's Master Plan, and desires for expansion of sewer and water services to new areas of the township. The study will determine any needed increases in sewer and water rates and connection fees. The Board will be advised of such. If rates or connection fees are needed to be increased, the Board take such into consideration and act as deemed appropriate.

##### **Measurements**

The study was completed, and information provided to the Board. The Board considered the information and acts as deemed appropriate and necessary.

#### **4.3 REDUCTION OF PENSION LIABILITY**

##### **Actions**

The Manager shall keep the Board apprised of the Township's pension liability and the required annual contribution to the pension fund. The Manager and the Board shall explore additional contributions to further reduce the pension liability.

**Measurements**

Information is gathered and provided to the Board. The Board determines the amount of an additional contribution, if any, is to be made.

**4.4 CEMETERY OPERATIONS**

**Actions**

The Manager and a Committee of the Board shall review the special millage for cemeteries taking into consideration current fee schedule, current millage, cost of operations, and long-term plans for expansion. Information shall be presented to the Township Board for consideration.

**Measurement**

The Manager and Committee complete task and present report and recommendations to the Township Board. Board acts as deemed necessary and appropriate in time for the renewal of the cemetery millage.

**4.5 ROAD OPERATIONS**

**Actions**

Current millage levies are reviewed by the Manager. Future Act 51 and Road Task Force funding from the State and County is also reviewed. Local road needs regarding stop lights, interchange safety and beautification, Northshore Drive, as well as ongoing levels of maintenance and upkeep are all considered. Information is provided to the Board in time for their consideration and action prior to the Road Millage renewal

**Measurements**

The Manager completes task and provides information to the Board. The Board considers the information and takes appropriate action regarding keeping the current levy or increasing the levy. Action is taken to meet the next scheduled renewal.

**4.6 DILIGENCE WITH SERVICE AGREEMENT**

**Action**

The Manager shall continue following the existing service agreement renewal schedule. The Manager shall provide information regarding renewal of existing agreements and of new service agreements to the Board. The Board shall consider renewal and adoption of service agreements which are in the best interest of the Township.

**Measurements**

Service Agreements, new or those to be renewed, are presented, considered and acted upon.

**4.7 LONG-TERM FUNDING FOR ITEMS RELATED TO OTHER PRIORITY AREAS**

**Actions related to other Priority Areas.**

- 1.1 is addressed.
- 1.2 is addressed.

- 2.1 is addressed.
- 3.1 is addressed.
- 3.2 is addressed.

**Measurements related to other Priority.**

- Professional staff are added as determined in 1.1`.
- Township Hall is upgraded or replaced as determined in 1.2.
- The level of understanding residents and businesses have of Township taxes is greatly increased as per 2.1.
- Park Millages are secured as determined in 3.1.
- Further development of parks and trails is arrived as determined in 3.2.

## **Priority Area: Growth and Development**

Thoughtful growth and development will preserve the qualities people love about Saugatuck Township.

### **Goals**

#### **5.1 MASTER PLAN ADHERENCE**

##### **Actions**

The Manager, Planning Commission, and Board understand the Master Plan addresses thoughtful and appropriate development within the Township. New development shall adhere to the Master Plan and all applicable ordinances. Should thoughtful and appropriate development be desired necessitating the Master Plan or ordinances be amended, the Manager and the Planning Commission will guide such amendments. Should development not be within the guidance of Master Plan or ordinance requirements and changes to same are not desired, the Manager, legal counsel, and the Board shall assure compliance by taking appropriate action.

##### **Measurements**

The Manager will advise the Board of Master Plan compliance and other issues related to new or existing developments. When developments do not comply with the Master Plan or ordinances of the Township, the Manager shall so advise the Board. The Manager, legal counsel, and Board shall continue monitoring Northshore development.

#### **5.2 ENCOURAGE AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT, SENIOR AND RETIREMENT VILLAGES/COMMUNITIES**

##### **Actions**

The Township's Planning Commission is charged with pursuit of this Priority Area. As such, it has empowered three Subcommittees to pursue goals herein. One subcommittee will focus on all types of housing as covered in this Goal. A second subcommittee will focus on the Blue Star Corridor and Economic Development. The third, will focus on Rural Character.

While the main work toward this goal is undertaken by the Planning Commission and the three Subcommittees, the Township Board remains involved providing input and review through its liaison on the Planning Commission.

The subcommittees of Planning Commission, among other things will consider five issues: 1) Reducing the lot size requirements, 2) Reducing the square footage requirements, 3) Allowing Accessory Dwelling Units, 4) Short-term rental regulations, fees, and enforcement, and 5) senior/retirement villages/communities. With the latter, the Manager may work with the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, the Economic Development Administration, and other agencies to make them aware the Township is interested in such development. The Manager may also approach developers of senior and retirement developments to make them aware of the Township's

interest in both subsidized and non-subsidized senior and retirement communities. As contacts are made, the Manager will continue to report same to the Board. Should interest result, the Manager will keep the Board informed. Finally, should developers of such, desire to develop in the Township, the Manager will facilitate their needs with Township departments, the Planning Commission, and the Board.

### **Measurements**

The four areas have been explored, considered, and developed into proposals and action items. The Board has received recommendations and/or ordinances on each of the four matters and takes appropriate action.

Contacts are made alerting Federal and State agencies and developers of the Township's interest in such development. Should developers step forward, the Manager facilitates their interactions with various departments, commissions, and the Board. Ultimately, an acceptable development breaks ground.

## **5.3 EXPAND HIGH-SPEED BROADBAND INTERNET SERVICE THROUGHOUT THE TOWNSHIP.**

### **Actions**

Because high speed internet is critical for businesses and residents alike, the Manager shall explore interest and timetables current providers have for expanding service throughout the Township and advise the Board of same. The Manager and Board members shall explore reported interest in development of high-speed broadband throughout Allegan County. Finally, the Manager shall explore development of public operated, directly or through a service agreement, high-speed internet service throughout the Township and hot spots that could serve development districts. Along, with this, the Manager shall explore State, Federal or private funding that may be available for establishing high-speed internet service throughout the Township or establishing hot spots.

### **Measurements**

The Manager and Board complete their explorations and the Board discusses information gathered. The end goal remains having high-speed internet service throughout the Township by whichever means above. Should explorations lead to an action the Board may be able to take, the Board considers such and acts accordingly.

## **5.4 ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

### **Actions – Economic Development**

The Manager explores State and Federal programs assisting communities with creating economic development plans and best practices. Grant funding may be available to assist the Township in creating a comprehensive economic development plan. The Manager will also explore the excellent private firms and individuals who assist communities with developing their plans. Exploration includes determining any costs the Township may need to provide.

### **Actions – Business Development**

Most business development occurs because the business owner is aware of the location and its assets that help assure their business will be a success. Practitioners indicate a large task is getting in front of these people or positioning the community to become known to persons looking to grow or establish a business. This does not happen overnight. It is a long-term process. The Township and the great Saugatuck/Douglas area has an advantage as is it is already known to many people outside the area. Yet, many of these visitors and all non-visitors are unaware of the Township and its assets. Therefore, the most economical way to become known and get in front of potential businesses is to be more pro-active. Most communities are reactive, waiting for a developer or business to come to them. Thus, the Manager will need to work to be more proactive with developers and businesses. Part of this entails the development of an economic development plan for the Township. Part of it is included in the upgrades to the Township's online presence 1.6). It also includes becoming (or maintaining status as) a Redevelopment Ready community. Further, the Township does not have to go it alone. There are many partners to work with in promoting the Township's interests. The Manager will need to participate with the Michigan Economic Development Association, regional and County economic development groups, the Michigan Downtown Association, and those individuals and groups pursuing particular developments and businesses. As an example of the latter, green energy such as solar panel farms and windmills. Once an economic development plan is in place, the Manager will be responsible to see it is implanted.

### **Measurements – Economic Development**

The Manager completes the exploring and reports to the Board on the best course to take to achieve a comprehensive economic development plan for the Township. The Board considers the information and takes action accordingly.

**NOTE:** Along with focusing on the community's unique assets, a good economic development plan will include strategies for encouraging single purpose visitors to make 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> stops. Single purpose visitors come for a specialty shop or seek a special service. Encouraging these visitors to make 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> stops helps all businesses be more stable.

### **Measurement – Business Development**

The first decision is whether the Board determines to pursue this goal. The Board may be comfortable with the current rate and variety of new business growth and development. If so, nothing needs to happen as the status quo is sufficient. However, if the Board decides to try to impact the rate and variety of new business and growth, then the economic development plan and strategy is developed and implemented, and the Manager becomes a member of and participates with the other entities. In time, the hard work pays off.

# APPENDIX A

## VALUE STATEMENTS

**These are presented as a Reference/Resource to the Board of Trustees**

**Values of the Township Board of Trustees of the Saugatuck Township, Michigan**

Trustee responses to the various exercises can be used to create a set of 'Values' for the Township. Values become a part of the 'box' known as the Township. Having a set of Values lets everyone know for what the Township and its officials stand. Values also guide the operation of the Township and its decision-making process.

**The Saugatuck Township Board of Trustees' Value Statements Include:**

- We value sound fiscal policies and management that is transparent and known to all.
- We value our location, its natural beauty, and our rural atmosphere.
- We value our natural environment and our parks and trails that attract visitors and residents alike and provide all opportunities to lead healthy lifestyles.
- We value collaborations with residents, other governmental units, and agencies.
- We value our potential for thoughtful growth, residential and business growth.