



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Mission Statement.....	2
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	3
Chapter 2: Background Information.....	6
Chapter 3: Goals and Objectives.....	19
Chapter 4: Short Term Goals.....	24
Chapter 5: Maps.....	25

**Board Members:** Sherry Mead (President), Melanie McQuestion (Clerk), and Nicole Emmert (Treasurer)

**Master Planning Committee:** Sherry Mead and Rebecca Weipert

---

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This document is a guide for the future growth and development of the Village of Luther, intended to encourage development decisions based on community character, the capability and the use of the land, and the needs and desires of the community.

### **LEGAL BASIS OF PLANNING**

The State of Michigan authorizes local municipalities to develop community planning through the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008 (formally authorized under the Municipal Planning Act 285 of 1931). Under this act, villages have the responsibility to develop and adopt a plan for the future development of their community. The Village of Luther Board followed the directives of this act in the preparation of this Master Plan.

### **UNDERSTANDING THE MASTER PLAN**

A master plan acts as a guide for the future development of the Village. Although it is not a binding, legal document, the master plan serves as the basis for the development and growth. Its purpose is to promote public health, safety, and general welfare of the community.

### **HOW THE MASTER PLAN AFFECTS YOU AS A RESIDENT OR PROPERTY OWNER**

As a resident or property owner, it is important that you understand how this plan works and how it may affect you. For most community members, the plan will not have any immediate or direct impact; it may never even affect you.

As a concerned member of the Village of Luther, this plan will help you to understand:



- Vision for the future of the Village of Luther
- Proposed land uses for your property and neighboring properties
- Overall direction and development of the Village including housing density and land division, commercial and industrial development, open spaces, natural resources, environmental protection, roads, infrastructure, utilities, and services
- Protection of natural resources including lakes, rivers and creeks, wetlands, forests, groundwater, and soils

## **PLANNING FRAMEWORK**

This plan is based on a process that considered various aspects and characteristics of the community that were collected, analyzed and processed before being integrated into the plan. These included community character, community feedback, census and other data, community needs, natural resources, land capability, environmental restrictions, maps, studies, and reports, availability of services, existing land uses and development, and regional issues.

## **PLANNING PHILOSOPHY**

The Village of Luther officials believe very strongly that the Village's Master Plan should reflect the values and vision of its residents. While they recognize that it is impossible to achieve complete consensus on every issue, much effort was made to represent the will of the people in the development of this plan. As such, the Village has developed this plan around the principle of maintaining a rural, peaceful community that holds private property rights in the highest regard and looks to provide minimal government regulations to protect the basic health, safety and welfare of its residents while working with other government agencies and organizations, where appropriate, to provide additional services.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

The Village of Luther Board should use and reference this document on a regular basis in their decision-making and policy development processes to ensure that the community vision provided in this plan is implemented. Officials should refer to this plan to provide justification for land use decisions and encourage other decision-making bodies (such as the Lake County Road Commission, Lake County Board of Commissioners, school districts, neighboring townships, etc.) to review this plan for compatibility, coordination and consistency.

This plan is developed to guide the daily decisions of Village officials while guiding the development of the community over time toward its vision. This plan is designed to be implemented over time and should be followed by officials while remaining flexible. All officials should read this plan in its entirety as decisions should be guided by the plan as a whole.

# CHAPTER 2

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

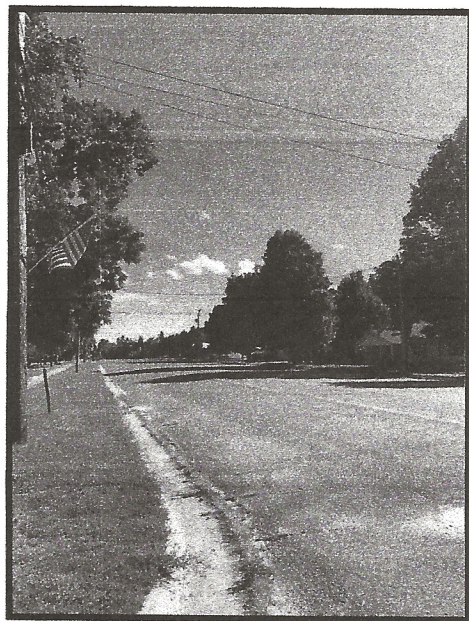
### LOCATION

The Village of Luther is rural and prominent in attracting tourists located in the northeast quarter of Lake County sharing its location with the east side of Newkirk Township and the west side of Ellsworth Township. The municipal cities surrounding the Village of Luther include LeRoy (13.2 miles east), Tustin (15.5 miles northeast), Reed City (19.3 miles southeast), Baldwin (20.2 miles southwest), Cadillac (26.4 miles northeast), and Big Rapids (34.8 miles southeast).

### DESCRIPTION

Found in 1880, the Village of Luther was an original logging town. Although the Village does not continue this industry, it still celebrates its annual "Logging Days" to this day to remember its rich history.

The Village of Luther has an area of land that makes up 0.98 square miles and 0.04 square miles of water. The land area is composed of private land ownership only with no state and federal lands. The Village is made up of residential living, thick areas of forests, agricultural land use, streams (Little Manistee River) and ponds (Luther Millpond). All of these contributing features of the Village exhibit beautiful and natural views along with recreational activities for residents and tourists to enjoy all year round.



View of State St. looking South in Luther

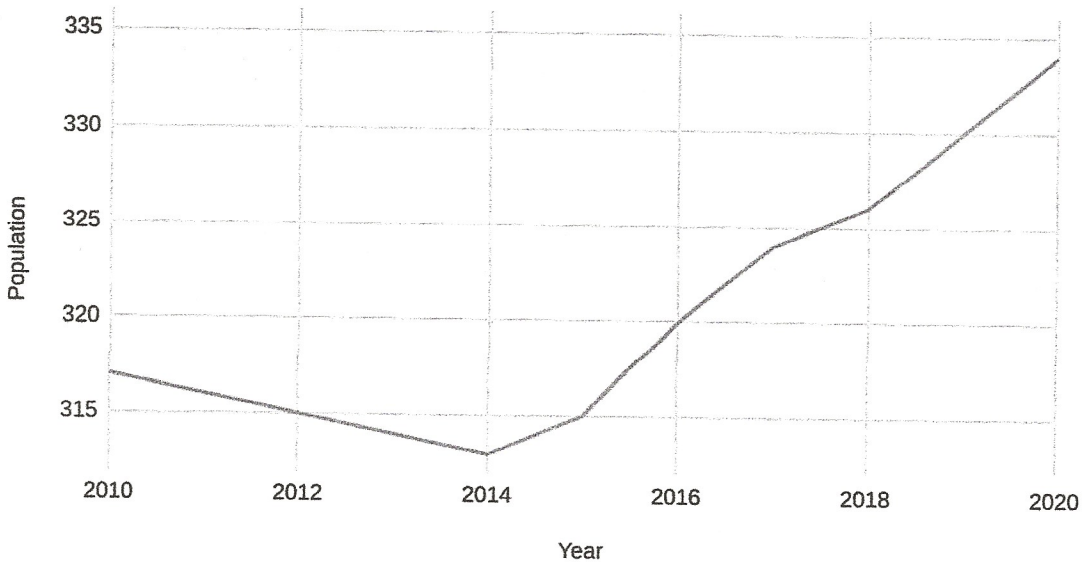


## DEMOGRAPHICS

### Population

The Village of Luther has a population consisting of people of an interconnected community including young families, retirees and vacationers. Due to the travel of seasonal residents, the Village experiences an increase in their population during the summer months. Luther's population has grown about 1.21% annually and about 5.03% since the last census in 2010.

Luther, MI Population



(World Population Review, Taken from the official US Census in 2010 and estimated US Census in 2018)

As of 2020, Luther has a population of 334 people (52% male and 48% female). There are 97 total households and 58 total families, with 17 of them having children under the age of 18. In the Village, households with one or more people of the age of 18 or younger makeup 24.7%, households with one or more people that are 60 years of age or older makeup 48.5%, those who live alone makeup for 23.7% and householders 65 years of age or older makeup 16.5%. The racial makeup of Luther is 96.98% White, 2.35% Asian, 0.67% Native American, 0% African American, 0% Native Hawaiian, 0%

other race and 0% from two or more races. The population density of the Village of Luther is 343.2 persons per square mile (World Population Review, Taken from the official US Census in 2010 and estimated US Census in 2018).

The population of the Village of Luther is also defined by age. There are 9% of people 9 years old or younger, 13.5% of people between the ages of 10 and 19, 7.4% of people between the ages of 20 and 29, 18.4% of people between the ages of 30 and 39, 14.8% of people between the ages of 40 and 49, 12% of people between the ages of 50 and 59, 10.1% of people between the ages of 60 and 69, 10.1% of people between the ages of 70 and 79, 2.7% of people between the ages of 80 and 84, and 2% of people 85 years of age or older (World Population Review, Taken from the official US Census in 2010 and estimated US Census in 2018). There is a higher number of middle-aged persons compared to youth and seniors within the Village.

The Village of Luther's population can also be represented by household types. Of the total 97 households, 48 of them are married families, 39 of them are nonfamilies, 7 of them are single-parent (female) families, and 3 of them are single-parent (male) families. The average number of people per household is 3.07 per home and the average family size is 3.98 (World Population Review, Taken from the official US Census in 2010 and estimated US Census in 2018).

## **Housing**

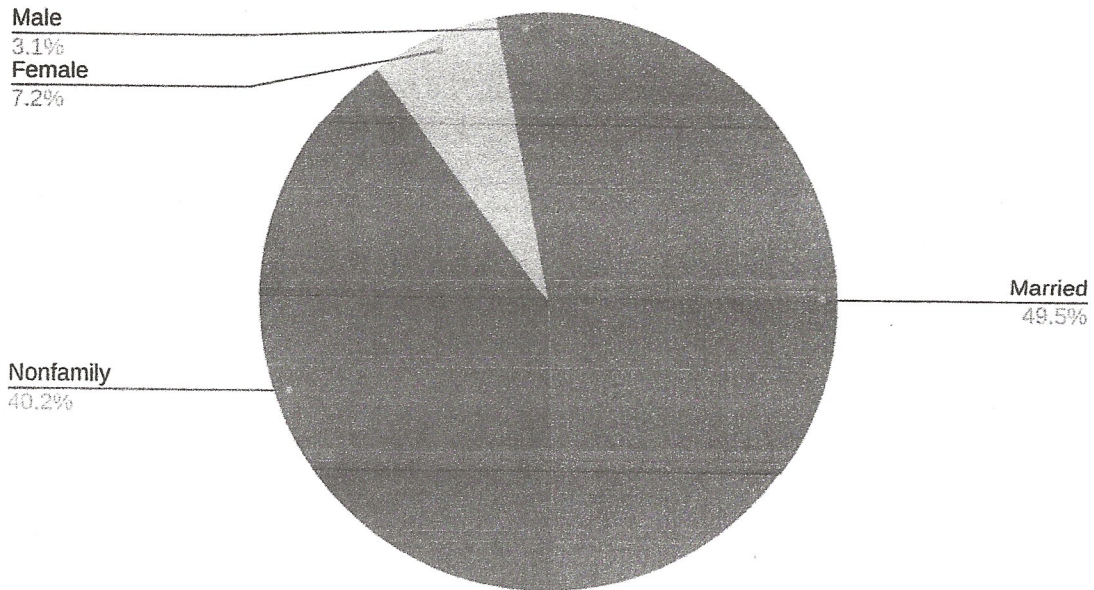
The majority of the housing within the Village of Luther consists of married homeowners. With Luther having the natural scenery and tourist attractions it does, seasonal homes in the area contribute to the homeowner number.

In the Village of Luther, 80.4% of households are 1-unit structures or single-family homes, and 19.6% of them are mobile homes or other unit types. Of these housing units, 87.6% of them are owner-occupied and 12.4% of them are rented. There are no housing units that are accounted for being vacant or unoccupied. The median housing value of owner-occupied housing units in Luther is \$55,800 while the median



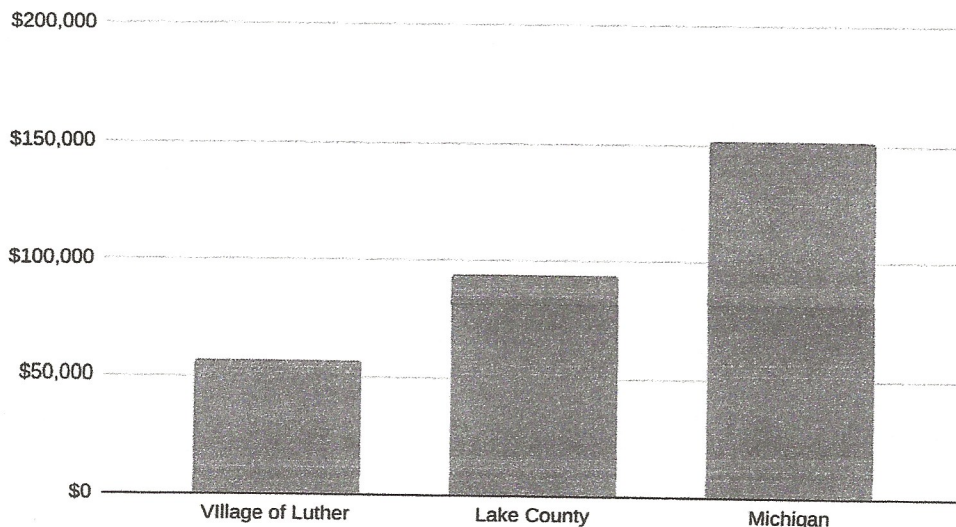
rental costs is about \$840 per month (World Population Review, Taken from the official US Census in 2010 and estimated US Census in 2018).

### Luther Households by Type



The Village of Luther recognizes that the members of its community, whether it be for individuals or families, have different needs to satisfy their financial settings. Therefore, the owners of occupied land and/or seasonal residents may use their land for different purposes such as agricultural uses or recreation. Luther wants to support such residents that use the land for these purposes to ensure the preservation and the future of the Village.

### Median Housing Values



(World Population Review, Taken from the official US Census in 2010 and estimated US Census in 2018)

## **Economic**

The median household income of the Village of Luther is higher than that of Lake County. Although, poverty is a concern within the Village with the overall poverty rate being at 22.26%. Due to the rural area the Village is located in, employment opportunities are limited making some residents commute longer distances to work. The average commute time to work for Luther residents is 27.3 minutes and 3.42% of residents commute 90 minutes or more to work (Data USA, Taken from the Datawheel).

The median income for a household was \$38,750 and the median income for a family is \$42,955. The Village of Luther has 244 employed people (16 years old or older) and a 2.4% unemployment rate.

The Village of Luther wants to encourage economic growth within its community. The joint purchase of the Luther Elementary School and plans for the future of both large and small businesses in the Village will help with the development of economic growth.

## **Education**

The Village of Luther has a low average of high school completion (or equivalency) of people 25 years of age or older, along with a low average of higher education completion. In the Village, 42.1% of people have obtained a highschool diploma or equivalent, 23.4% of people have some college education but no degree, 3.7% of people have associate's degrees, another 3.7% of people have bachelor's degrees and 27.1% of people have schooling less than a highschool diploma.

## **PLACES**

The Village of Luther shares its area about equally with Newkirk Township on the west and Ellsworth Township on the east. It is a popular destination in the northeast



corner of Lake County that provides businesses such as convenience and grocery stores, a hardware store, restaurants and bars, a bank, churches, Lion's club, a senior center, a local library and museum, campgrounds and outdoor recreational activities.

Luther is devoted to being the leading commercial development location for surrounding townships by the means of general stores. The small, rural community of Luther plans to stay at low density within its residential developments.



Luther Dam; West side of Millpond

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### **Topography**

The Village of Luther's terrain is moderately high throughout the entire Village but substantial elevation changes. Lake County's terrain ranges from low at 648 feet above sea level on its west side to high at 1,397 feet on its east side. The Village has an average elevation of 1,053 feet above sea level.

### **Geology**

The bedrock make up of Luther is mainly composed of Mississippian Pennsylvanian sedimentary deposits. These deposits consist of sedimentary rocks including shales, sandstones and evaporates. There are also deposits of the Marshall Sandstone, the Michigan Formation, and the Saginaw Sandstone. The bedrock within Luther also contains thick glacial deposits of unconsolidated material. These glacial deposits can be greater than 800 feet in the northeast corner of Lake County.

## **Soils**

The Village of Luther's soil is categorized into the general soil type of Northern Michigan and Wisconsin Sandy Drift. The soil type found throughout the entire area of Luther is Rubicon-Graycalm-Montcalm soil. This type of soil is sandy and loamy which allows excessive drainage in the landscape.

## **Land Cover**

Currently, the Village of Luther is defined as a low intensity residential area. Outside of this residential area, the Village's area makes up for smaller amounts of row crops, mixed forests, wooded wetlands, grasslands, rivers/creeks and open water sources. This type of land provides habitat for wildlife, along with scenery for residents of the Village, opportunity for outdoor recreation such as hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, snowmobiling, ORV-ing and other activities.

The Village of Luther plans to implement a plan to protect its environment from the potential negative impacts of development to ensure the beauty of the natural attractions.

## **Hydrography**

The Village of Luther has water sources available in its area such as the Luther Millpond and the Little Manistee River. The Luther Millpond is located in the southeast corner of the Village's vicinity and is a well-used, man-made body of water. The Little Manistee River starts in a number of swamps in Lake County which then runs through Wexford, Mason and Manistee Counties. Below the Luther Millpond, this river continues to flow expansively for 45 miles until it reaches the Manistee Lake.

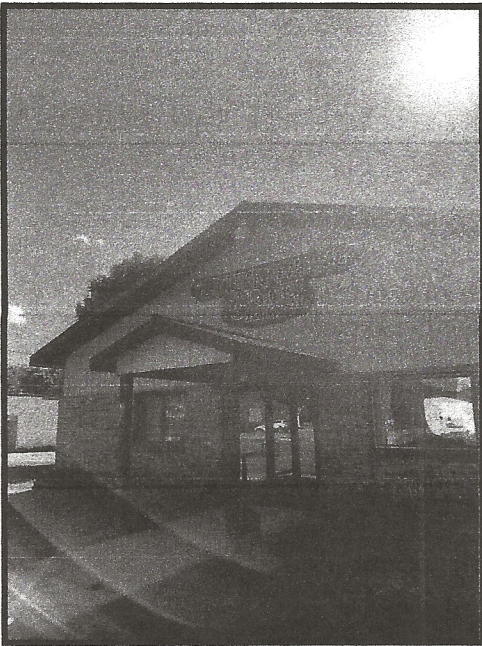


Luther Millpond



## **POLITICAL**

The Village of Luther has a three member board consisting of a President, Clerk and Treasurer. All members of the board are elected officials serving four year terms. Lake County currently does not have county zoning and has no plans to implement county zoning. Six townships within the county that have current local zoning: Lake, Peacock, Pleasant Plains, Sauble, Webber, and Yates.



Luther and Newkirk Municipal Hall

The Village of Luther notices that the community has developed further with its interactions, resulting in a greater need for services. The recent trends in the amount of resources have pushed the need for the Village to come up with other uses for funding and sharing of resources. During the correct circumstances, Luther should work with neighboring townships (Ellsworth and Newkirk) and Lake County that aid the residents and property owners of the Village of Luther.

## **SERVICES**

### **Police Protection**

The Village of Luther is protected by the Lake County Sheriff's department, located in Baldwin. The Michigan State Police provides service to the Village through the Hart Post No. 62. Additional services are also received from the Lake County Jail, Lake County Courthouse and Lake County Animal Control, all located in Baldwin. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Officers contribute to the safety and fulfillment of the Village by enforcing laws for the protection of natural resources.



The Lake County Jail is located in Baldwin. The North Lake Correctional Facility plans to reopen in the fourth quarter of 2019 and is located in Baldwin. The North Lake Correctional Facility was closed in 2017.

### **Fire Protection**

The Village of Luther is protected by the Luther Fire District #1, a part-time volunteer department. If necessary, other fire departments from neighboring communities can be called to provide additional assistance.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources field office, located in Baldwin, can provide additional services and equipment for the safety of prescribed burns and wildfires to the Village if the need were to arise.



Luther Fire Department

### **Emergency Medical Services/Ambulance Services/911 Services**

The Village of Luther is serviced by the Lake County Ambulance Services and Lake County Life EMS, both located in Baldwin. The Village's 911 emergency phone service is through Lake County Central Dispatch; located in Baldwin.

### **Hospitals**

The closest hospitals to Luther are Spectrum Health Reed City Hospital (19 miles away) and Munson Healthcare Cadillac Hospital (26.5 miles away).

### **Cemeteries**

There are three cemeteries near Luther, one located in the Village and two in Ellsworth Township. The Pleasant Hill Cemetery (located in Luther), East Ellsworth Cemetery, and Valley Cemetery (both located in Ellsworth Township) are all maintained by Ellsworth Township.

## **Library**

The Luther Area Public Library is located on the main road of Luther, State Street. The library provides members of the Village with services such as computers with printers (color and photo included), Wifi, videos, DVDs, music CDs, copy, fax, lamination, yellow and blue trash bags, tax forms, plat books and numerous kinds of books.

## **Post Office**

The Village of Luther's United States Government Post Office is located on State Street in the Village.

## **Road Commission**

The Village of Luther's roads are maintained by the Lake County Road Commission, located in Baldwin.

## **Buildings**

The Village of Luther and Newkirk Township maintain the Newkirk Township Hall, located on State Street in Luther. The hall provides office space for the Village officials, records storage, and a public meeting room for various meetings.

## **Waste Disposal/Recycling**

The Village of Luther uses Waste Management and Allied Services for waste disposal and recycling.

# **TRANSPORTATION**

## **Roads**

The maintenance of the roads within the Village of Luther is provided by the Lake County Road Commission and the Village. The Village has numerous paved roads within the high-intensity residential area of the Village. Unpaved, gravel roads are more

commonly found on the outskirts of the Village and are maintained as local roads. 'Old M-63' runs through the south end of the Village of Luther to the east side of Ellsworth Township. The main paved road that runs through the heart of Luther is State Street providing direct access to most of Luther's convenience stores, restaurants and bars, library and other businesses. Seasonal roads are not maintained by the Lake County Road Commission.

## **EDUCATION**

The Village of Luther's intermediate school district is Wexford-Missaukee ISD.

### **K-12 Schools**

Pine River Area Elementary school provides education to students in kindergarten through third grades (located in LeRoy). The school district for this elementary school is Pine River Area Schools.

Students attending Pine River Middle School obtain education in grades four through seven (located in LeRoy). The school district for this middle school is Pine River Area Schools.

Pine River High School equips students with knowledge for future preparedness in grades eight through twelve (located in LeRoy). The school district for this high school is Pine River Area Schools.

### **Colleges/Universities**

The surrounding colleges and universities of the Village of Luther are Baker College of Cadillac (29 miles), Ferris State University (34.5 miles) and West Shore Community College (39.5 miles).

## **LAND FRAGMENTATION**

### **Federal Lands**

There are no federally owned public lands in the Village of Luther.



## **State Lands**

There are no state owned public lands in the Village of Luther. However, the Little Manistee River is a Michigan Department of Natural Resources trout stream. This protection ensures lasting fish habitat restoration and overall water quality of the river.

## **Private Lands**

The Village of Luther's downtown business district is approximately 3 blocks in length and runs north/south on M-63. The residential property within the area is close to the downtown district. This property is platted into 8 parcels, each about 0.25 acres. The property outside of the residential area has acreage parcel sizes varying at about 2 to 40 acres. This land is either residential or non-residential zoning. At the west side of the Village, about 40 acres of land has been platted but rests undeveloped.

## **PARKS AND RECREATION**

Throughout Lake County, parks and recreation have been a driving factor of outdoor enjoyment for residents and/or visitors in Luther. The Village's bountiful natural resources offer exclusive opportunities for people to use the area for recreational use. Nearby the Village, the Pere Marquette State Forest provides many outdoor activities such as fishing, hiking, camping, ORV riding, and hunting on these public lands. However, there are arising opportunities to develop these resources.

## **AGRICULTURE**

The Village's soils and its groundwater availability allow for production of many agricultural and horticultural crops, with the proper nutrient regime and pH adjustment. The Village of Luther is close to existing horticulture processing plants in Oceana County, where those agricultural interests are developed.

## **BUSINESS**

Local businesses are a very important aspect of the Village of Luther and its residents. Not only do they provide jobs and income, but access to an array of basic provisions, services, and social interaction. The future of businesses in Luther will hopefully continue to be owned by local residents. The Village should focus on developing policies to increase the business growth by supporting home-based businesses rather than commercially owned businesses. Additionally, the Village of Luther should seek out an agreement with surrounding areas, such as Baldwin, Big Rapids and Cadillac, to direct industrial development in the appropriate industrial areas if needed.



# **CHAPTER 3**

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

---

### **COMMUNITY VISION**

The Village of Luther strives to continue to be a rural, sociable, and peaceful community, along with its plentiful natural resources and recreational activities. While the residential development remains low, the core of the commercial business is concentrated in the immediate part of Luther. The Village's history and natural features are reflected through their importance of protection and preservation. All of the Village's natural resources including forests, soils, open land, rivers and creeks, ponds and groundwater are protected and preserved through the correct policies.

---

### **NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Goal:**

Preserve and protect natural resources including rivers, creeks, forests, ponds, and soils from the negative effects of development.

**Objectives:**

1. Future development for a public sanitary sewer system should be set in place to achieve better water quality of susceptible areas of the Little Manistee River.
2. Encourage septic tank maintenance on all properties.
3. Work with local agencies to educate landowners on the benefits of implementing best practices when developing land.

4. Work with organizations associated with the Pine River and Little Manistee Watershed Council to protect rivers and creeks in the Village.
5. Ensure environmentally sound development through the utilization of the site plan review process that minimizes disruption to natural features including ponds, rivers and creeks, wetlands, forests, and soils.
6. Maintain low density development along rivers and creeks by developing a lake overlay district and a river overlay district that extends protections provided by Michigan's Natural River Act.
7. Encourage native plantings and other landscaping buffers on new developments.

## **GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **Goal:**

Sustain the Village's natural character through growth management and deciding the best locations for future development.

### **Objectives:**

1. Purchase of Luther Elementary School for the purpose of providing space for small businesses and the benefit of community.
2. Consideration of developing a recycle center for community use.
3. Reconstruction on Fairbanks Park including tennis courts to be renewed, addition of pavilions and barbecue grills due to its high attraction for tourists, especially cyclists.
4. Combat blight, abandoned/dangerous homes, junk, and visual clutter in the Village.
5. Provide flexibility for tourism-based businesses in the Village.
6. Encourage commercial development design that fits with the rural, natural character of the Village such as beautiful, natural landscaped areas and building facades of wood or stone.

7. Develop mandatory "point of sale" septic tank inspections for all transactions involving structure.
8. Work with the Lake County District 10 Health Department to insure all existing septic tank regulations are enforced.
9. Encourage development of small industries utilizing our forest products or the waste products from them.
10. Consideration should be given to locating walk-in clinics, PT facilities, child care and other services in the former Luther Elementary school, if acquired.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **Goal:**

Preserve and improve the existing road infrastructure, along with controlling access to road ways for preserving the community's character and traffic carrying capacities.

### **Objectives:**

1. Begin five-year street repair program for all roads within the Village. One-fifth of roads to be worked on per year for budget purposes. Project should involve working with the Lake County Road Commission.
2. Begin sidewalk repair to both west and east sides of State Street.
3. Encourage evaluation of the storm drain system in the Village.
4. Avoid sprawling of potential commercial development outside of Luther.

## **INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION**

### **Goal:**

Collaborate with Lake County, Baldwin and neighboring townships, along with federal, state, and local agencies when appropriate to expand and improve community services, protect natural resources, and more effectively utilize limited financial resources.



**Objectives:**

1. Regularly meet with surrounding communities on an informal basis to discuss issues of mutual concern and to explore opportunities for collaboration.
2. Provide public safety and other services through intergovernmental service agreements.
3. Participate in regional recreation planning to share limited community resources and increase state funding opportunities.
4. Promote intergovernmental and interagency coordination and cooperation to develop regional trails and other recreational facilities.

**RECREATION AND TOURISM****Goal:**

Maintain and improve recreational tourism that support the local economy and quality of life of the Village.

**Objectives:**

1. Encourage local businesses to work with the Lake County Economic Development Alliance (LCEDA) to encourage economic growth and development by promoting the area's recreational and tourist attractions and encourage cottage industries and small industries to locate here.
2. Encourage local businesses to provide amenities that attract tourists.
3. Utilize signage along major roads to direct people toward recreational and tourist locations in the area.
4. Encourage individuals to locate in the Village at least on a seasonal basis.
5. Cooperate in the development of camps for non-motorized bike trails and provide amenities where needed.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **Goal:**

Provide the residents with the best available infrastructure available at considerable costs.

### **Objectives:**

1. Implement renewable energy sources within the Village such as solar street lighting.
2. Provide fiber and/or wireless internet service to all residents and businesses at a minimum of 25Mbps download and 3Mbps upload speeds by 2020. By 2023, upload speeds of 100Mbps and 20Mbps download speeds at reasonable costs.
3. Encourage DTE to make natural gas available to residents of Luther. Pursue grants that help make this available to residents.
4. Develop regulations for the installation of alternate energy sources such as wind turbines and solar panel farms that provide the least negative impact to residents.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **SHORT TERM GOALS**

The Village of Luther is looking to the future for its growth and residents. With this Master Plan, we are starting the process of planning for the future with some short term goals to be accomplished within the next 5 years, at which time this plan must be reviewed per state law. We encourage citizens within the Village to become a part of any of the commissions or boards we establish to review this document and any other documents created. Participation by residents creates ownership in the Village's future.

The Village of Luther, with its rich heritage and many valued traditions, has designed a plan to preserve, promote and protect its growth and development. Planning for the future in such ways will involve maximizing the potentials of the people, the land, the environment and the institutions. The plan will reflect a fair and equitable management and utilization of the Village's resources including its Millpond, rivers, streams, wetlands, lands, industrial and commercial possibilities, housing, aesthetics, recreational areas and the overall climate for the health, safety and well-being of the people.

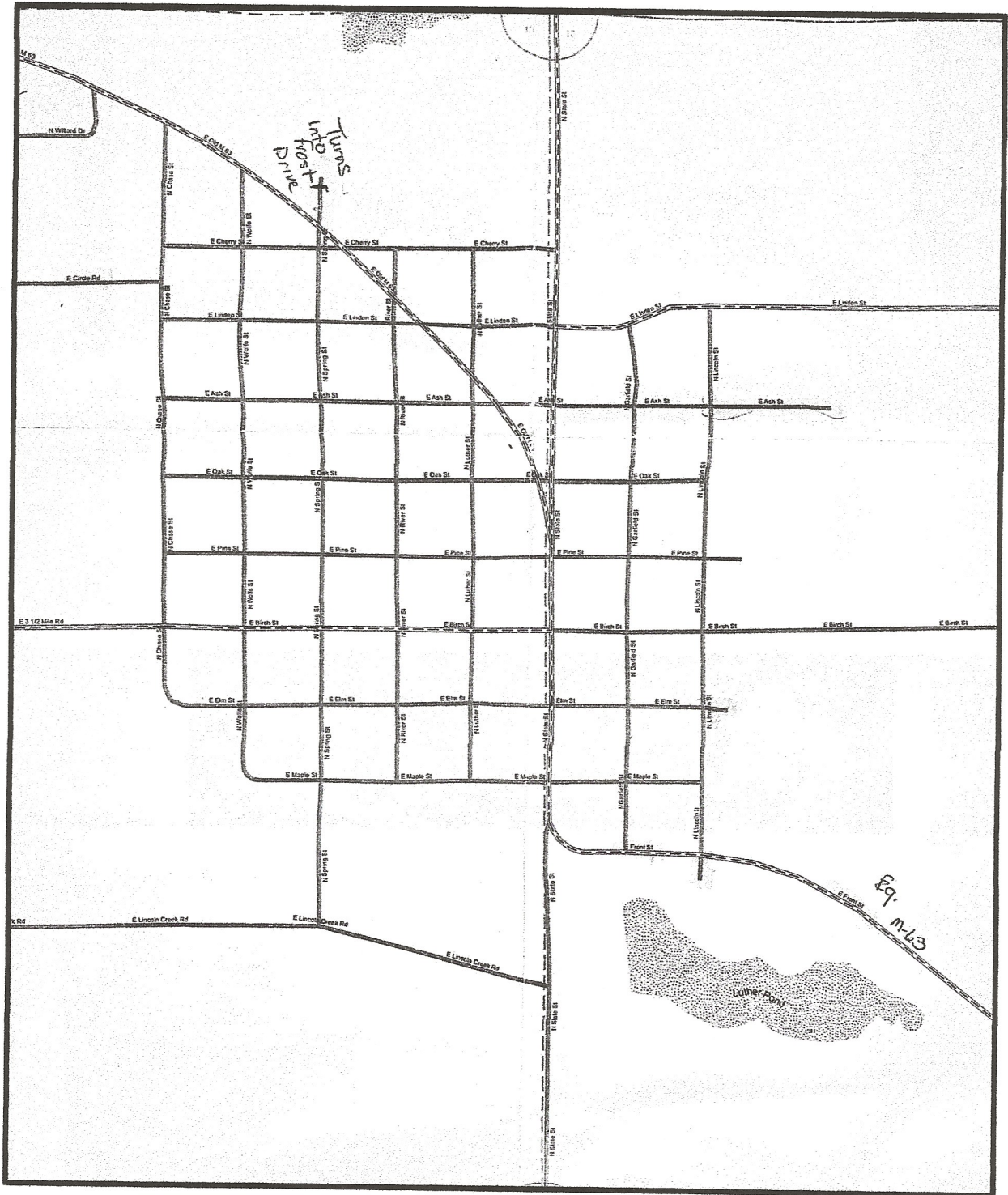
It is our intent to establish a Road Improvement Program to review and repair the Village's road needs. We also plan to work with the Lake County Road Commission for the best expenditure of our resources.

We will also work with the neighboring townships and surrounding units of government on projects of mutual interest and need for our residents including fire protection and EMS services.

# **CHAPTER 5**

## **MAPS**

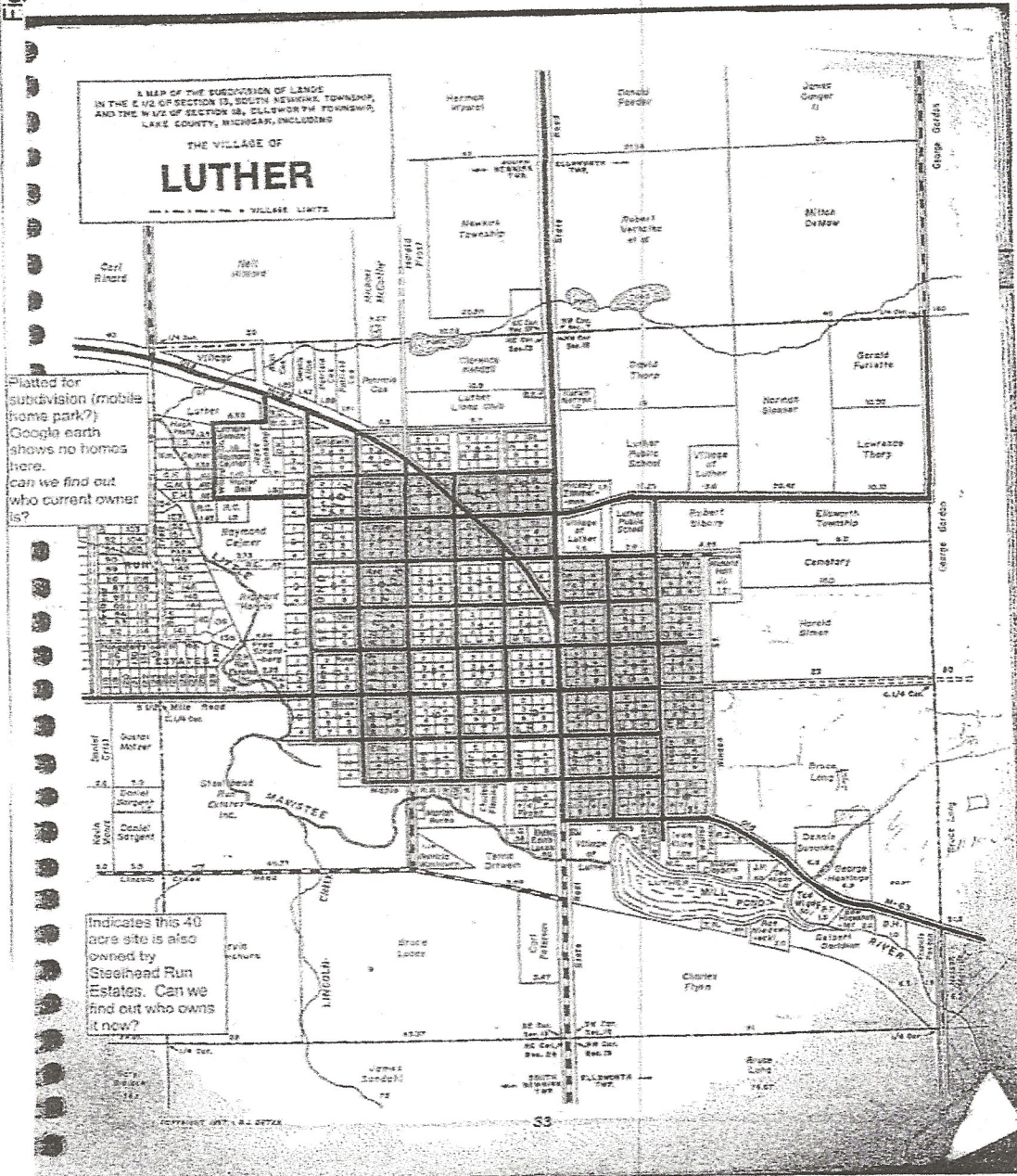
# Village of Luther Streets Map





# Village of Luther Plat Map

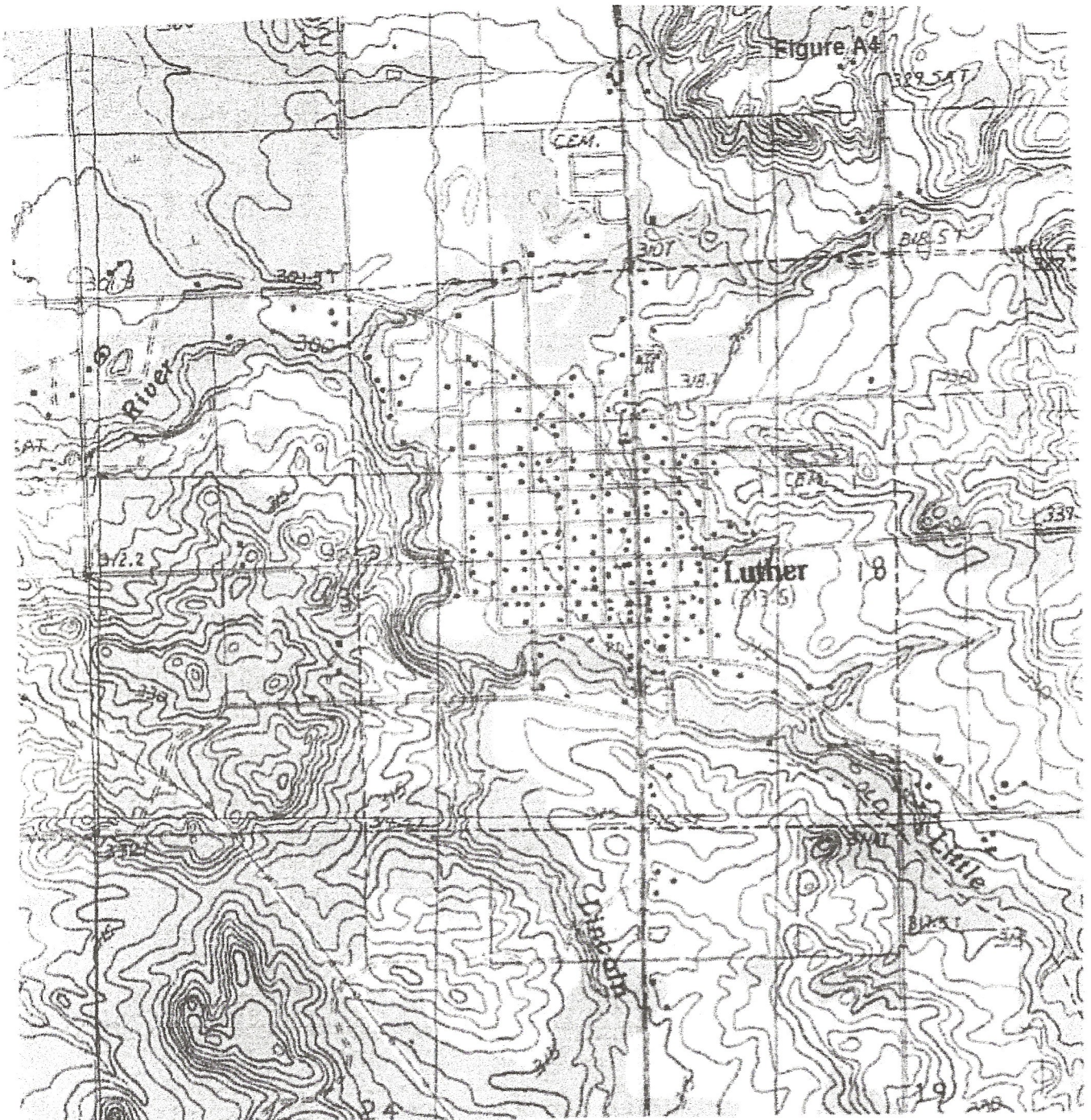
Figure A2



Lake County  
 Manistee watershed  
 north of the village of Luther, Mich.



# Village of Luther Topography Map





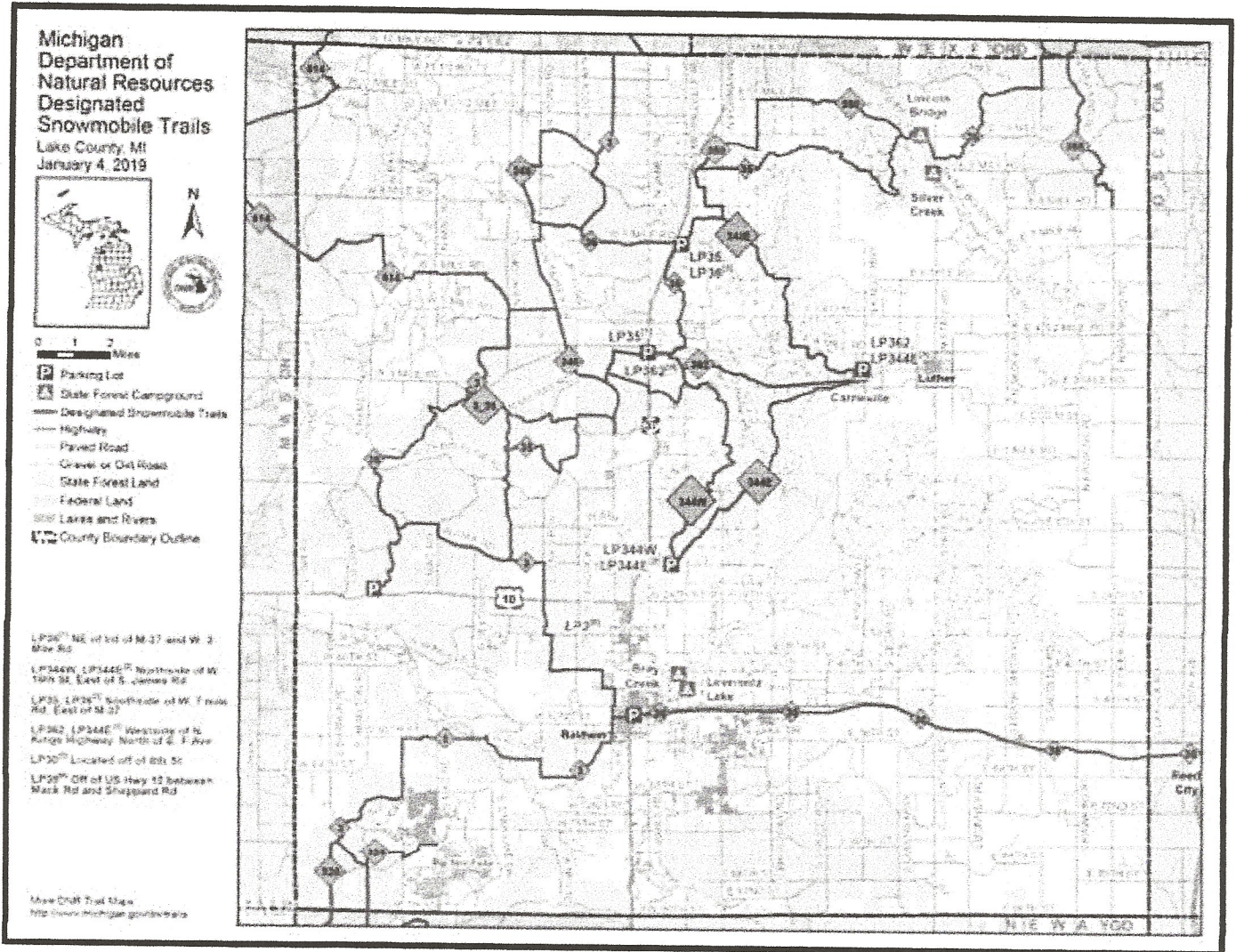
# Village of Luther Soils Map





# Lake County and Village of Luther SnowMobile Trail Maps

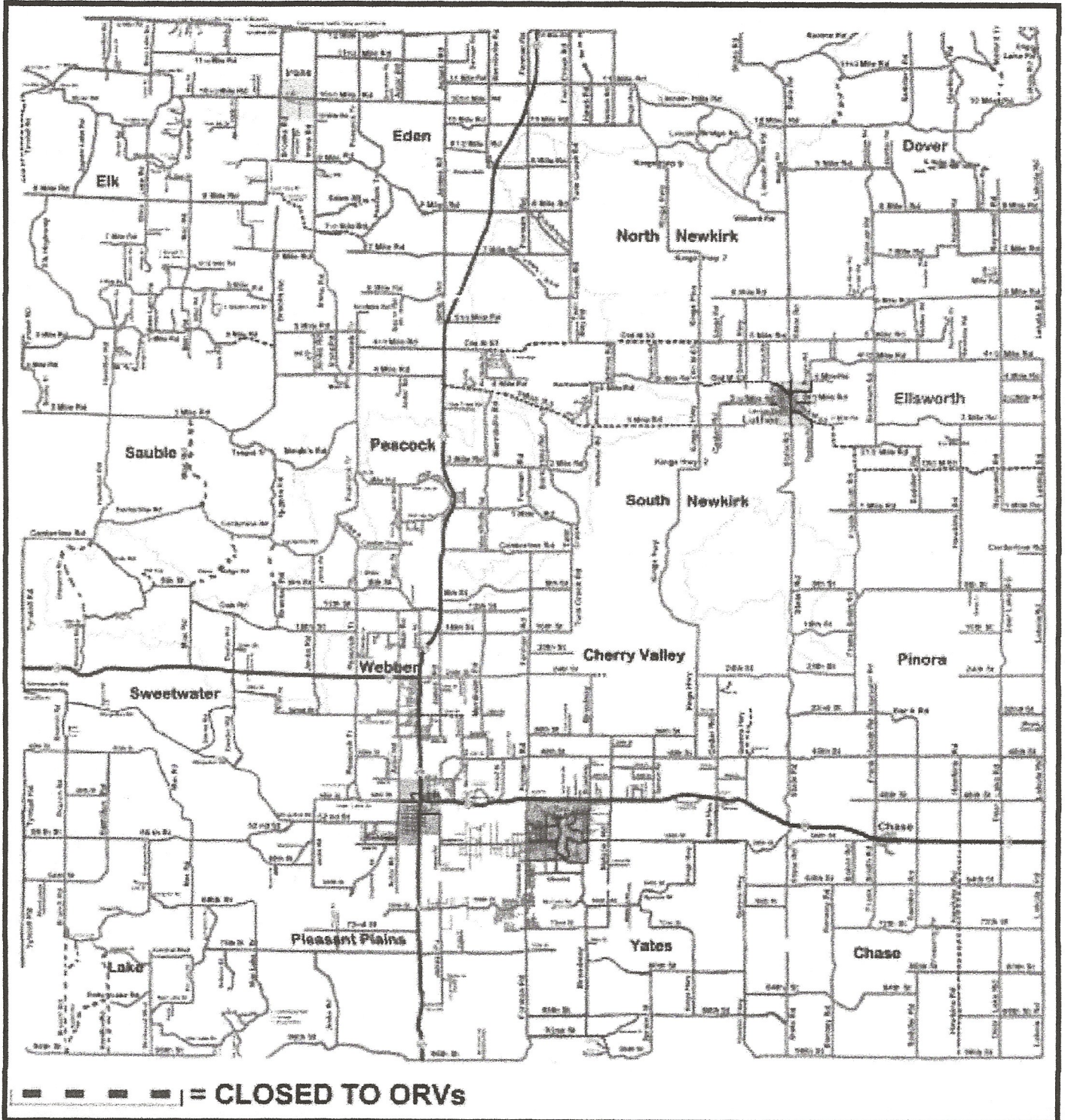
(\*Note: Maps are updated annually)



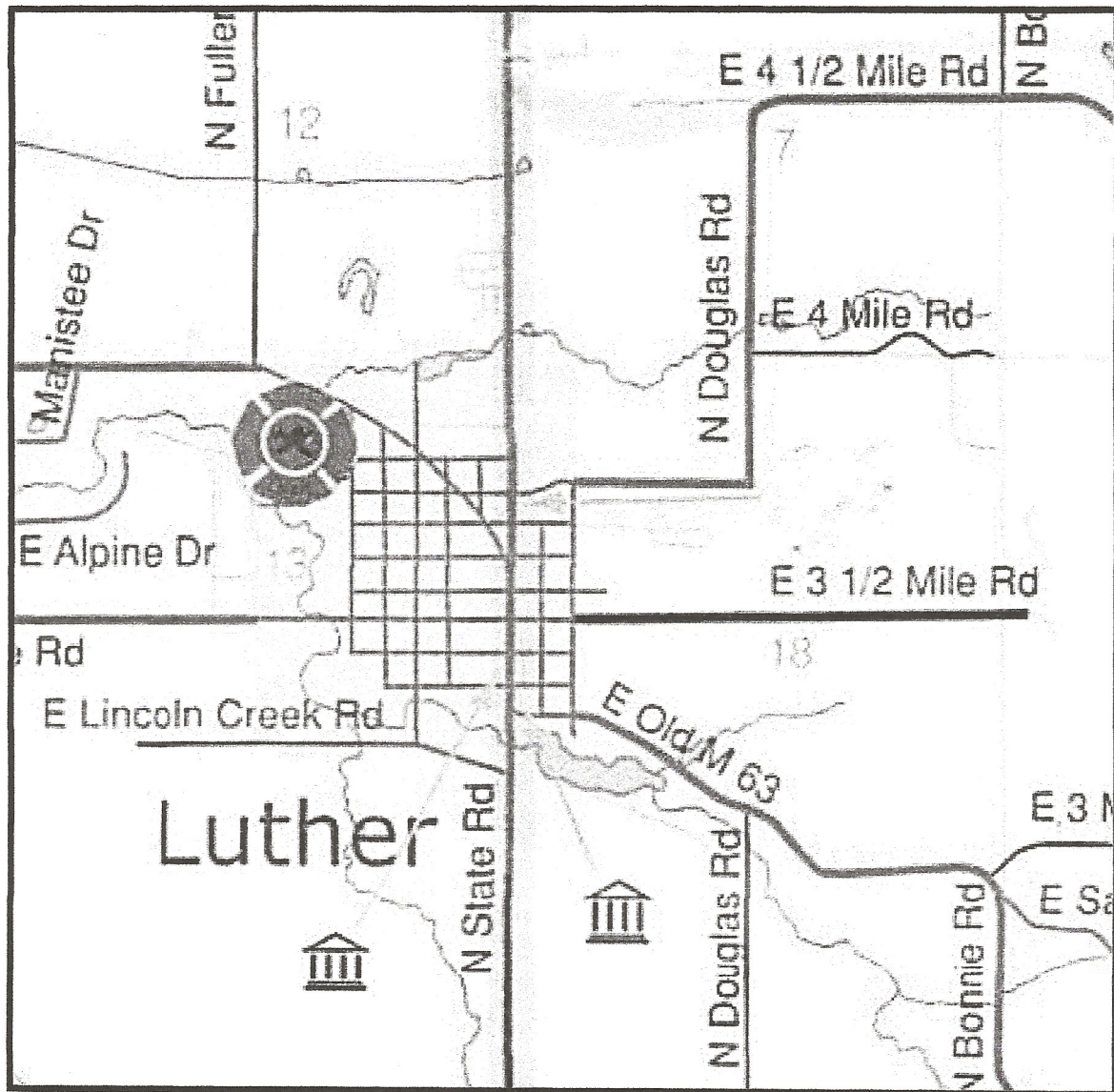


# Lake County and Village of Luther ORV Trail Map

(\*Note: Maps are updated annually)

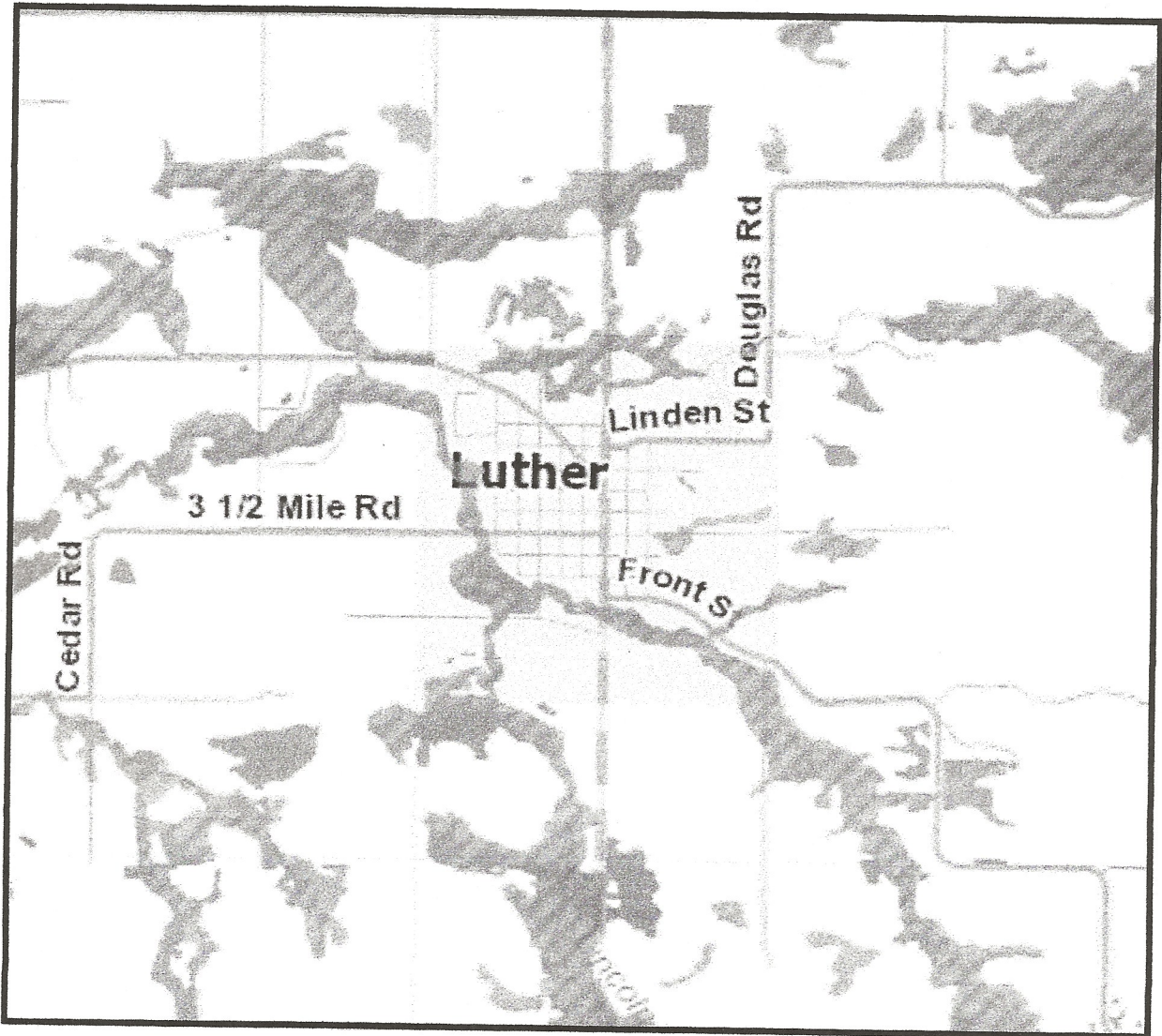


# Village of Luther 911 Emergency Services Map





## Village of Luther Wetlands Map



- Wetlands as identified on NWI and MIRIS maps
- Soil areas which include wetland soils
- Wetlands as identified on NWI and MIRIS maps and soil areas which include wetland soils