

MAY 2022



ALLEGAN COUNTY MICHIGAN

COMMUNITY UPDATE

Dear Allegan County Resident,

In November 2019, the County released its first community survey designed to gather input from residents throughout the county in an effort to make more informed decisions on services. Thank you for participating in that process. The County, as well as many of its local units of government, have utilized your input in a number of planning processes and decisions. Based on the success of the last survey, Allegan County is issuing a follow-up survey beginning in May 2022.

In this update, we are providing information on the plans, projects and services that were initiated based on input, including the 2019 survey. We request you participate in the upcoming survey at www.allegancounty.org/communitysurvey so that we can continue to include your input into the updated planning process.

How does the County develop its plan?



The County has developed its planning process over time and will continue to improve for each cycle. There are a number of different plans that come together to form a master plan. At the highest level, the Board of Commissioners determines key strategic projects to keep the county moving forward.

In doing so, it uses an adaptation of the International City/County Management

Association (ICMA) model for planning. As shown in the image, the community survey plays an instrumental role at the analysis phase.

What did the County learn from the 2019 Survey?

Find out on Page 2.

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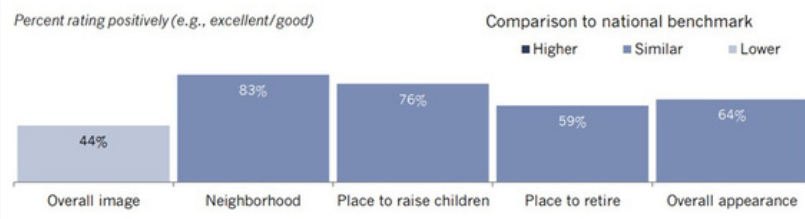
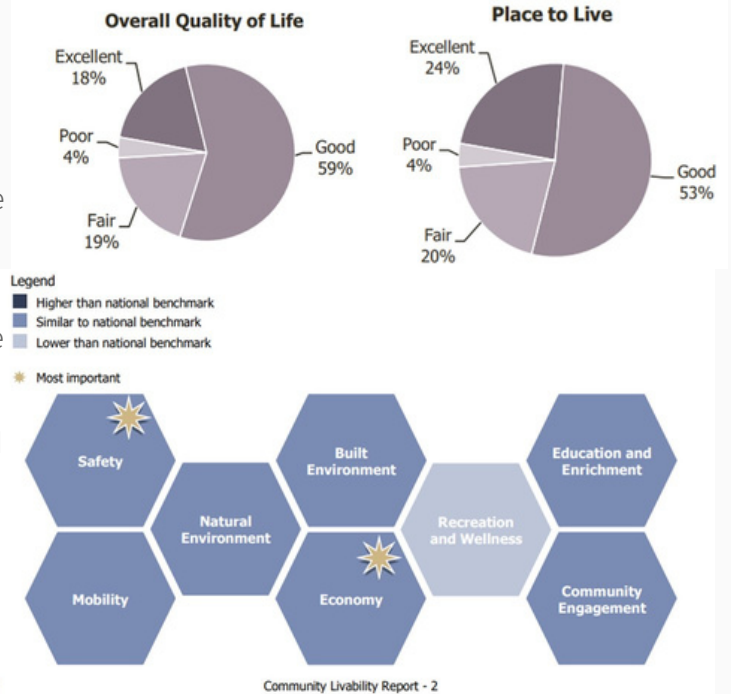
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The survey revealed the following regarding Allegan County:

- Residents enjoy a positive quality of life.
- About **3 in 4 residents** rated the overall quality of life and the livability of the County as excellent or good.
- About **8 in 10** residents gave positive ratings to their neighborhood as a place to live, while three-quarters gave favorable marks to Allegan County as a place to raise children.
- Roughly **6 in 10** respondents awarded positive reviews to the County as a place to retire and the overall appearance of the County.
- About **6 in 10** residents gave excellent or good ratings to the sense of community in the County, while **8 in 10** would recommend Allegan County to someone who asked and nearly **9 in 10** planned to remain in the County for the next five years.

National Community Survey results below:



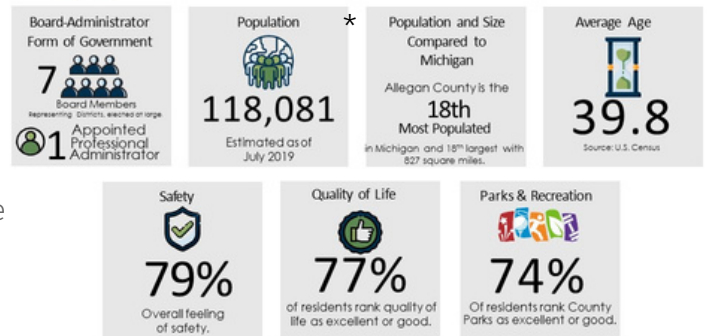
Allegan County Rankings (at the time of the 2019 survey)

Niche ranks thousands of places to live based on key statistics from the U.S. Census and expert insights.

- Best Counties for Outdoor Activities in Michigan: #9 of 82
- Best Counties for Families in Michigan: #19 of 82
- Best Counties for Young Professionals in Michigan: #24 of 82

These ratings were similar to those given in other communities across the nation (2019 *Allegan County Community Livability Report* by The National Community Survey).

The survey, as well as other inputs, revealed the following areas as needing to maintain importance and priority in the County's planning: Health & Safety, Economy/Financial, and Recreation.



*2020 Census Count was 120,502 for Allegan County population

HEALTH & SAFETY

Allegan County Medical Care Community (ACMCC)

ACMCC traces its roots to 1866, when Allegan County established a "poor farm" to provide for the disabled and infirmed of Allegan County. In 1970, the current facility was constructed as the Allegan County Medical Care Facility.

ACMCC has been providing quality skilled long-term health care services for over 50 years, as well, short term rehabilitation, and adult day services in more recent years, to the residents of Allegan County.

ACMCC has been the safety net for individuals needing the facility's care, but whom are unable to pay for the cost of care or to qualify for benefits, since its origination. Over time, providing such as service placed significant demand on the facility's finances, building, infrastructure and programming.



Continued on page 3.

Allegan County Medical Care Community, continued

As such, the community was asked if there was support for the ACMCC to maintain its services for older adults and to help fund the related expenditures through a millage. On March 5, 2020, a presentation was made to the Allegan County Board of Commissioners requesting support for an August 2020 ballot proposal for the ACMCC, and unanimous support was received. Voters approved the proposal.

Since that time, the ACMCC has contracted with Plante & Moran's Living Forward division to complete strategic and master planning to explore the potential for diversifying the care offerings of ACMCC. Including the possible care levels of Assisted Living, Independent Living with Support Services, Rehabilitation Services, Skilled Nursing, and Adult Day Services while reviewing the financial feasibility of addressing each of the identified service needs and of the existing facility's infrastructure, engineering, roofing, technology, HVAC, etc. to determine the potential for renovation or the need for new construction to address the identified potential service offerings.

In line with ACMCC's mission, "To care for the aged and disabled of Allegan County with care, love, and dignity," providing services that fill potential gaps in the continuum of care for Allegan County residents is at the forefront of the planning process. Currently, the 0.25 mills per \$1,000 of taxable value millage produces approximately \$1,232,000 in additional, annual revenue.

While the strategic and master planning process has been taking place, other urgent facility needs have been addressed, as well as COVID-19 response measures.

ACMCC is extremely grateful for the support of the Allegan County Community and the Allegan County Commissioners for the Medical Care Community Millage. Without it, COVID-19 would have further devastated the financial status of the facility.

Public Safety and Criminal Justice

While citizen input revealed people generally feel safe in Allegan County, the overall need to prioritize safety and the related justice system was conveyed. Citizens also expressed a desire to support funds; this was accomplished through a tax limitation restoration approved by the voters. Based on plans submitted by the Sheriff, and leaders within the justice system, changes were implemented.

Positions (+6)

- Road Patrol Deputy (2)
- Warrant Officer Deputy
- Detective
- Compliance Coordinator
- Prosecuting Attorney

Vehicles (+6)

- Patrol vehicles (4)
- Detectives (2)



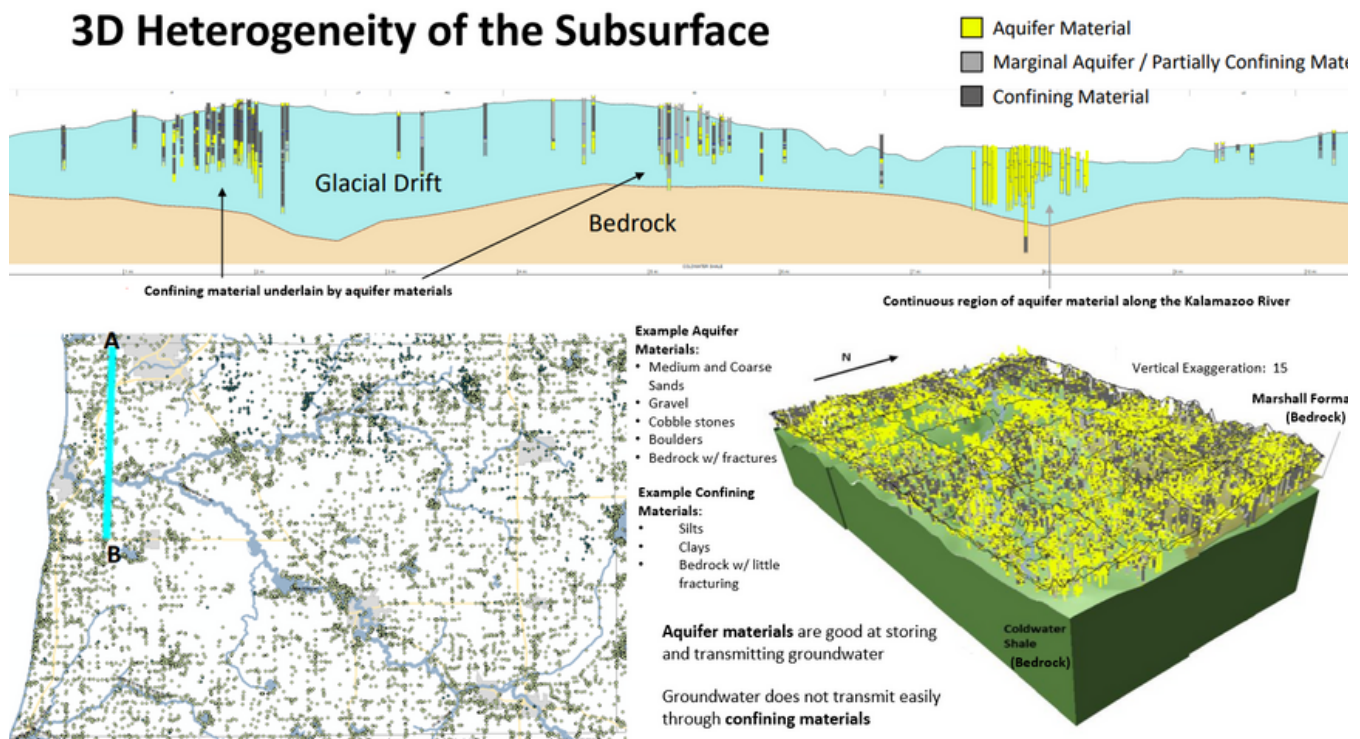
In addition to the County's core investigative and patrol services, the County continues to partner with local units for more focused services within local communities. Currently, we have deputies contracted across the County: Casco, Dorr, Fillmore, Gun Plain, Lee, Leighton, Overisel, and Wayland Townships, along with Saugatuck City.

Water Study

The availability of quality water is a critical component of maintaining health within any community. After reviewing the findings of the Ottawa County Groundwater Study, Allegan County commissioned a similar study to evaluate the availability and quality of groundwater. The final Allegan County Groundwater Study, conducted by Hydrosimulatics, Inc. and submitted to the Board of Commissioners on March 25, 2021, can be viewed at: www.allegancounty.org/waterstudy.

A workgroup has been formed and tasked with providing a written summary of observations and recommendations relative to the study content (and any other aspects of Allegan County's current and future state relative to water quality, including recommendations for how the County (as a geographic area) should proceed.

The recommendations are expected back to the Board of Commissioners by the end of March 2023. The public may view the meetings of the workgroup posted on the website listed above as well.



Shown in the graphic above, groundwater in Allegan County is almost entirely pumped from a thick, countywide layer of sand, gravel, clay, and other sediments and rocks left over from millennia of glacial activity. Certain materials dominate different parts of the County based, but in general, the materials are highly mixed horizontally and vertically. This means the groundwater quantity (ability to pump water) and groundwater quality can change dramatically over a short distance.

In the northeast "corner" of the County, the older bedrock underlying the glacial sediments is fractured enough that it can produce reliable amounts of groundwater, but most of the County cannot rely on groundwater from the deep bedrock.

Secure Courthouse Entrance & Transport



Safety is a priority at all County properties. The Courthouse presents particular challenges for maintaining a safe and accessible environment. As part of the County's safety enhancement a central secured entrance to the building was recently completed.

Two existing holding cells within the Courthouse have been updated and three additional holding cells have been constructed, resulting in increased separation of individuals in custody, among other benefits.

To ensure increased safety to and from the building, and to avoid transporting individuals in custody in open areas, a secured garage was constructed with two holding cells.

Even during times of high construction costs, the County was able to complete the project for approx. \$1.8 million. The costs were covered **without debt or an increase to taxes** by putting funds aside proactively.



Facility Master Plan

Community Mental Health (CMH) Clinic Building:

As demand increases for housing, mental health and addiction services and the opportunity for alignment with other medical resources arose, CMH developed a plan to consolidate its services and relocate to the building, formerly known as Shopko, within the City of Allegan (across the street from Ascension Allegan Hospital & Medical Clinics), pictures are below. The project will enable the County, over time, to reallocate existing space in its County Services Building to better meet justice related needs and general government services more cost effectively.



County Services Building:

After Community Mental Health relocates, non-court related services in the Courthouse will be relocated to the County Services Building. This will support the Board of Commissioners' direction relating to the use of the Courthouse for court functions, will make efficient use of available space, create easier access to services for customers and, among other benefits, will save significant money as opposed to new construction.

ECONOMY AND FINANCE

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

ARPA provides support to the public health response and lays the foundation for a strong and equitable economic recovery. Specifically, the State and Local Fiscal Fund provides resources to help governments address revenue losses experienced and cost incurred, as well as invest in infrastructure, including water, sewer, and broadband services, among other possible uses (Adapted from the U.S. Department of The Treasury Fact Sheet).

Mid 2021, the Board of Commissioners solicited public input regarding the use of these funds and great response was received. Based on those responses and much discussion, on February 10, 2022, the Board of Commissioners took action to reserve all remaining ARPA funds for the Broadband and Water Infrastructure projects. A workgroup for each project exists to provide recommendations to the County on those topics.

Broadband Internet Accessibility

As stated above, on February 10, 2022, the Board of Commissioners reserved ARPA funds for Broadband. In mid-2021, a Broadband Action Workgroup was formed for the purpose to increase the accessible availability of reliable internet connectivity, with a preference of broadband speeds. One of the four identified steps have already been accomplished.

In February 2022, a Broadband Project Manager was contracted to lead the remaining three steps:

- Step 2: Consider partners, technical professionals, and other stakeholders to serve as an advisory resource to the project team.
- Step 3: Gather necessary and relevant data to form Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound (S.M.A.R.T.) goals.
- Step 4: Consider plans, proposals, legislative initiatives and other resources to establish and implement plans for increased accessibility.

For more information, visit www.allegancounty.org/broadband.

Former Rock Tenn Paper Mill, Demolition and Sale

The County is redeveloping the property through a Brownfield Redevelopment Plan. On May 18, 2021, Mannik & Smith Group, Inc. (MSG) completed technical specifications for the demolition request for proposal (RFP) to meet all local, state, and federal requirements. Demolition and removal of all structures was completed. The foundation removal, crushing, and backfill continues. There are demolition crews working onsite daily.

The Board of Commissioners authorized up to \$1,560,000 in County reserves to conduct related environmental work and demolition. The costs are eligible for reimbursement from the Board of Commissioners approved Brownfield Redevelopment Plan.

Redeveloping Brownfields sites may lead to a variety of economic benefits. As this property is cleaned and redeveloped, it can be used in a multitude of ways, for individual businesses, manufacturing facilities, residences, and more. This redevelopment is reducing negative environmental impact by reducing public health risks and improving safety. A purchase agreement with a developer is currently being negotiated.



Transportation Services

Efficient and affordable transportation is an important driver in economic growth in rural areas and helps ensure that people can obtain services and participate in public life.

Through the 2019 survey, the community expressed support towards the prioritized expansion of public transportation through a tax limitation restoration, which was later approved by the voters. As a result, Transportation service hours have now been expanded to **Monday through Friday 5:30am - 7:00pm and Saturday 8:00am - 3:00pm.**

The local and national shortage of drivers of all types is impacting the ability to expand additional service and increase marketing. Several initiatives have been developed to help retain current drivers and add to the driver pool.

A video advertisement seeking drivers was created at the Secretary of State, banners were made for the side and back of the bus to advertise “Now Hiring” and the County transportation contractor adjusted wages to be more competitive in the market. Currently, there are 13 full-time and 3 part-time drivers working towards the goal of 17 full-time and 2 or more part-time drivers.



Debt Elimination Allows Redirection of Funds to Operations and Services

Allegan County has historically maintained a low level of debt. By State law, municipal debt is restricted to a maximum level of 10% of the total Taxable Value. The County’s debt calculation shows that the debt level as of July 1, 2020, is 1.01%, even when including the Drain, Department of Public Works (DPW), and Road Commission bonds. This demonstrates the County’s discipline to borrow only when necessary to meet essential needs, such as financing construction projects that have long-term benefits for residents.

The community was asked if there was support to prioritize the reduction of legacy public employee pension debt through a tax limitation restoration approved by the voters. On October 14, 2021, the Board of Commissioners adopted the 2022 budget, which includes the first opportunity to pay debt early, and invest in the projects that are detailed in this update.

An early payment of \$7.2 million in long-term pension obligations **will save approximately \$2 million in interest payments over the next ten years.** Similarly, when the County is in a position to retire more debt early, in 2024 and 2028, **an additional \$1.5 million in interest will be saved, compared to the original payment schedules.**

A reduction of debt allows the County to pay less interest. The dollars that are no longer needed to pay interest will support the enhancements to law enforcement, judicial, and transportation services.

COUNTY DEBT STATEMENT

ALLEGAN COUNTY DEBT STATEMENT - as of July 1, 2020

DIRECT DEBT OF COUNTY:	Dollars Outstanding
Drain & DPW Bonds	12,026,440
Pension Bonds and Long-Term Pension Obligations	18,045,000
Capital Improvement	13,729,746
Michigan Transportation Fund (Road Commission) Bonds	5,350,000
Installment Purchase Contracts	3,604,746
TOTAL DIRECT DEBT	52,755,932
Per Capita County Net Direct Debt	\$457.75
Percent County Net Direct Debt to 2020 Taxable Value	1.01%

Audit

The County's Fiscal Year 2020 audit was submitted prior to the June 30, 2021, deadline. The County received a clean audit opinion and continues to be a low risk auditee per federal Single Audit standards. The annual audit assists the County in creating financial structures and training that support financial stability.

Annual Budget

The Fiscal Year 2022 Budget will implement the Board of Commissioners millage rate strategy, and include service level enhancements (Sheriff, Court, Friend of the Court personnel and Transportation) and start-up costs. The long-term impact of these changes will be included in the 2023-2026 budget projections.

On October 14, 2021, the Board of Commissioners adopted the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget which included capital and grants. Focus has already moved to the 2023-27 Budget.

In addition to adopting an annual budget, the County maintains a 5-year operational planning budget and 20 year capital infrastructure plan. On-going planning enables to the County to make better decisions and look ahead to future needs.

Recreation

Parks and Recreation

The Parks Department and Parks Advisory Board were asked to review the 2020-2024 Parks Recreation Plan to include input gained through the 2019 Community Survey. In December 2021, the review was completed. The Parks Advisory Board also reviewed all the improvement projects listed in the Parks Recreation Plan and developed a list of priority projects.

On January 27, 2022, the Board of Commissioners accepted the updated Parks Recreation Plan which includes:

- **Bysterveld Park**
 - Modernize restroom (running water & electric)
 - Add electricity to the pavilion
 - Pave the entrance drive and parking lot to enable year round use
- **Dumont Lake Park – bank/bridge stabilization project**
 - Make necessary improvements to ensure the bank does not erode causing the loss of the drive into the park and entrance bridge
- **Ely Lake Campground**
 - Add playground equipment
- **Littlejohn – modernize campground (water and electric)**
 - Identify best locations for campground to include current baseball fields
 - Turn former concession building into shower house



Pictured above: Bysterveld Park Pavilion



Pictured above: New Richmond Turn Bridge

Continued on page 9.

Parks and Recreation, continued

- **New Richmond Park Improvements**
 - Develop and install kayak launch
 - Add a pay machine and gate at current parking lot
 - Additional parking and no pay parking lot
 - Add improved location closer to river for sturgeon trailer
 - Create an area for presentation and fish release near river for education and sturgeon release opportunities
- **Silver Creek Campground Improvements**
 - Modernize some campsites
 - Add modern bathrooms with a shower house
 - Add walking trails (separate from Equestrian trails)
- **Trowbridge Township Dam Property**
 - Incorporate into the Allegan County Parks
- **West Side Park Beach Access**
 - Develop a plan to restore beach access and/or viewing points to Lake Michigan
- **Miscellaneous Priority Projects – identified as funding is available**
 - Disc Golf Course @ Littlejohn Lake Park
 - Build and install a 18 hole disc golf course
 - Update and replace park signage
 - Have same design/entrance signage at each park

West Side Park



Scenes above from Allegan County's West Side Park.

West Side Park has suffered significant loss of beach access resulting from unavoidable challenges with changes in the lake level and beach/bluff erosion over the last few years. The south stairs and ramp that provided primary access to the beach was removed at the end of 2019.

The bottom of the stairs located in the north section of the park suffered significant damage. Repairs were completed to the stairs in the spring of 2021 and continue to provide access to the beach.

Currently, there remains no beach access from the south section of the park. The Park Advisory Board is currently working with the engineering firm, Abonmarche, to develop long-term beach access solutions that could include Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access, or at a minimum, provide ADA lakeview opportunities.

Draft plans should be available for public feedback by late summer 2022.

Meet the Board of Commissioners

The Board of Commissioners (Board) provides leadership, policy direction and funding for all County activities. The Board is currently comprised of 7 members; pictured below.

The Board meets the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month in the Board Room at 3283 122nd Avenue in Allegan. Citizens can view meeting schedule and details online at: www.allegancounty.org/connect/calendar/board-calendar. Instructions are also posted for citizens who wish to watch meetings live or participate virtually. Questions regarding the meetings can be answered at 269-673-0239.

In lieu of speaking at a meeting, the public may contact a County Commissioner at any time via phone, email or letter. Letters may be addressed to Allegan County Administration, 3283 122nd Avenue, Allegan, MI 49010.



District #1 (Vice-Chair)
Dean Kapenga
dkapenga@allegancounty.org
616-218-2599



District #2 (Chairperson)
Jim Storey
jstorey@allegancounty.org
616-848-9767



District #3
Max Thiele
mthiele@allegancounty.org
269-673-4515



District #5
Tom Jessup
tjessup@allegancounty.org
269-637-3374



District #6
Gale Dugan
gdugan@allegancounty.org
269-694-5276



District #4
Mark DeYoung
mdeyoung@allegancounty.org
616-318-9612



District #7
Rick Cain
rcain@allegancounty.org
269-744-7918

The Board appoints a County Administrator to oversee County operations and serve as its liaison:

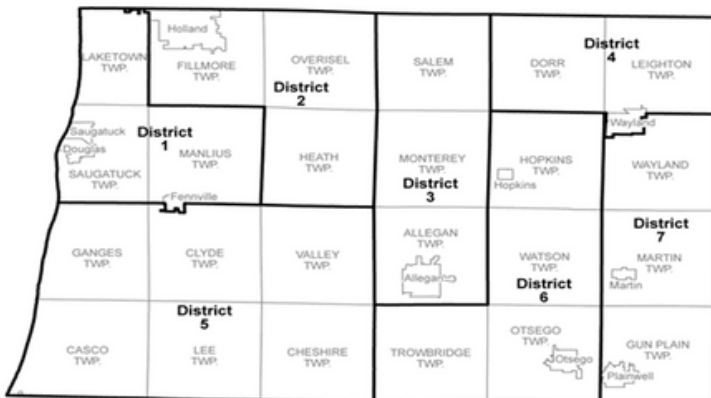
Robert J. Sarro
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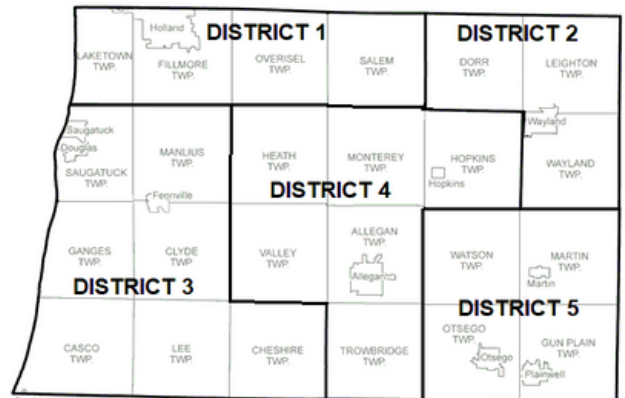
County District Map is Changing

On September 28, 2021, the Allegan County Apportionment Commission adopted a five (5) member plan for the next 10 years. This will change the districts of the Allegan County Board of Commissioners from 7 down to 5. The new 5 District Plan will take effect January 1, 2023. Voters will elect 5 commissioners based on the new districts through the November 8, 2022, general election.

Current Districts



Districts Effective January 1, 2023



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MAY 2022



Photo of beach in Saugatuck, Michigan



Allegan County

3283 122nd Ave.
Allegan, MI 49010

Please register at www.allegancounty.org/communitysurvey to participate in the upcoming Community Survey.