

Business Stakeholder Feedback Sessions Report

November 2022



Introduction

Oscoda Charter Township established a PlaceLeap plan in 2019 to guide efforts related to economic development, community marketing, and growth of the downtown. Out of that strategic plan, a series of goals and objectives were established to guide the work of the Economic Improvement Committee and staff over the next three years.

With the three-year cycle of goals and objectives closing in 2022, Oscoda Charter Township contracted ROWE Professional Services Company (ROWE) to support an initial step for updating the plan: outreach to the community's business community. **The purpose of this outreach was to gather input on the success of the plan over the first three years, and identification of priorities for the next three-year cycle.** This document summarizes the results of stakeholder input sessions held on November 2, 2022 at Warrior Pavilion in Oscoda Township.

Process

Oscoda Charter Township Economic Improvement has compiled a directory of over 100 businesses that have participated in programs or engaged with the township since 2019. To begin outreach, that list was sent a postcard inviting them to the input session, along with multiple email invitations throughout the month of October. The flyer and postcard advertising the session are included in the appendix.

Two 90-minute input sessions were held on November 2, 2022 at Warrior Pavilion, one at 1 p.m. and another at 5 p.m. The sessions were informal, with participants seated around a large table at the center of the room to share experiences and ideas.

During sessions, ROWE and Economic Improvement staff presented an overview of major accomplishments and challenges that have faced the township since 2019, and listened to business owners and stakeholders discuss the issues they have faced. All participants were provided with a slide deck and a worksheet to complete if they did not feel comfortable sharing out loud. In total, the two sessions included a total of 14 attendees from the business community, as well as township staff and other community stakeholders. The slide deck and worksheet are also included in the appendix.



Participants in 1 p.m. Business Stakeholder Input Session

Results

During the 90-minute session, participants were asked a series of questions that are included below along with a summary of the themes and feedback received during the sessions. Additional feedback received from one business owner who could not attend, but emailed a response is also included in this summary. The bullets below are generally in order of the emphasis that was placed on the topic during the discussion.

What have been major developments in your business in the past three years?

- Resilience in the face of many, many challenges
- Addition of new brands/products
- Addition of services to augment retail sales.
- New space/additions to buildings
- Opened a new business

What are the major changes in the community that have taken place in the past three years?

- Absence of available workforce and employees, particularly those that are reliable
- Inflation and increased costs for everything
- Business owners coming together, largely on their own
- Purchase and opening of the theater
- Lack of access to housing, particularly 'starter homes' and workforce housing
- Redevelopment Ready Community (RRC) Certification
- New Holiday Inn Express
- Social District and new associated opportunities
- Focus on art and placemaking has provided a great backdrop for our business
- Engagement and collaboration with schools
- Negativity on social media

Why is your business in Oscoda?

- Natural resources and beauty
- Quality of life and opportunity to live outside of larger metro areas
- Saw an opportunity to grow and invest in the community
- Connection with the community
- Lake Huron
- Family connections
- Relatively inexpensive space for brick-and-mortar businesses
- Great place to "escape" and raise a family

What challenges does your business face today?

- Difficulty hiring and keeping reliable employees
- Staying busy through the off season
- Seasonality of the local economy is challenging, both for business but also for getting and keeping employees.

- Lack of available decent buildings and brick-and-mortar space that does not require significant renovation and expense
- Lack of community support
- Advertising
- Emphasis on downtown, and other businesses in the community can be forgotten.

What challenges do you foresee in the future?

- Not enough available housing to attract new residents
- Aging community and decreased spending
- Potential changes regarding the Au Sable River related to upstream dams
- Challenges navigating small town politics

What has Oscoda Township done well over the past three years for the business community?

- RRC Certification
- Public art and placemaking, including the Art Walk
- Securing grants to create new opportunities
- Being welcoming to guests
- Blight ordinance, but need a greater focus on code compliance
- Infrastructure improvements
- Form-based code
- Growth among service groups
- Expansion of the medical center
- Increased enrollment in schools (large Kindergarten classes)

What could Oscoda Township have done better?

- Connecting business owners with available resources
- Avoid spreading misinformation that spreads among citizens and creates divisions within the community
- Establishing more clear cut objectives

What should Oscoda Township be focused on for the next three years?

- Clarify roles and responsibilities between Economic Improvement, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Convention & Visitors Bureau.
 - Provide better connections and resources for the business community.
 - Provide more opportunities for business owners to connect and work together.
 - Showcase the success of local businesses, of various types.
 - Provide support and resources to help businesses survive the off season.
 - Provide clear return on investment for businesses to engage with the chamber or other relevant business association.
- Explore ways to make the community attractive to new businesses and full-time residents.
 - Add new housing.
 - Add new employment opportunities that aren't seasonal.
 - Continued growth of the community as a whole.

- Better options for recreation and entertainment year-round.
- Transparency
- Focus on growth at the Wursmith.
- Continued redevelopment of downtown.
 - Implement tools and ordinances that are in place to hold building owners accountable for blight.
 - Expand trails and nonmotorized and ORV access between downtown and resort/camping areas.
 - Support development of new buildings and high-quality space for businesses.
 - Better connection between downtown and the water
 - Drive increased foot traffic in downtown and throughout the community with events, but also better pedestrian facilities and access.
- Have a stronger and positive presence on social media.
- Stronger utilization of Furtaw Field to be a more active space with regular events and maybe housing and other uses
- Take advantage of events and programs that are hosted in Oscoda to draw people to businesses (e.g., Canoe Marathon).
- Consider establishing a corridor improvement authority/ Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district to fund improvements in downtown and other key areas.
- More events and activities at the beach park

What are your business goals for the next three years?

- Expanding housing options
- Expanding clientele in the off season

Moving Forward

Over 100 local received invitations to the feedback sessions, but responses were gathered from just 15 businesses in total, in addition to township stakeholders and other members of the community. While this is by no means a representative sample of all business owners in the community, there was clear consensus around a few topics that could serve as a basis for the next three-year plan.

1. **Oscoda is resilient.** All participants acknowledged progress made over the past three years based on the PlaceLeap strategy, particularly given the unique challenges presented by COVID-19 and national economic trends that have affected supply chains, driven up costs, and made employee retention a significant challenge. *A common theme was that Oscoda businesses, to be successful, must be resilient.*
2. **Build on Oscoda's unique blend of assets.** The natural resources and beauty, a strong tourist economy, and the presence of a unique economic base in Wursmith create opportunities to diversify the local economy. There is likely no need to chase new industries or pursue complex economic development strategies, rather the approach should focus on building on the community's strong base of economic assets by addressing clear challenges that are well known, like a lack of housing options and the seasonal nature of many businesses in the community.

3. **Opportunities exist to capture new business from events and existing programs.** The recently created social district, the canoe marathon, and several other events and activities that occur in the township were identified as missed opportunities to drive people to purchase from local businesses. There are opportunities to make Oscoda more “sticky” through effective promotion and collaboration between businesses, nonprofits, and local government so that people stay longer, spend more money, and develop stronger connections with Oscoda.
4. **Investments in quality of life assets are working.** The Art Walk, improvements to enhance the character and appeal of the community, and recreational opportunities were identified as worthwhile investments that attracted new customers and make Oscoda a great place to live. Opportunities were identified to invest in stronger pedestrian connections between downtown and the beach, resort areas, and other establish new trail systems that would benefit local businesses and the community as a whole.
5. **The organizations and tools for business support services and economic development must become more cohesive.** The lack of resources at the Chamber of Commerce and disconnect between the Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitor’s Bureau was commonly cited as an issue that needs to be addressed. One tool that was identified that may help to drive additional resources to address this shortcoming could be a TIF district that captures tax revenue and invests the captured revenue in programs and infrastructure that support business growth.

Appendix



Time
1 P.M. - 2:30 P.M.
(lunch will be provided)
&
5 P.M. - 6:30 P.M.
(light refreshments provided)

Location
Warrior Pavillion
6288 F41
Oscoda, MI 48750

Wednesday, November 2, 2022

Oscoda Economic Improvement Business Stakeholder Feedback Session

It has been three years since Oscoda Township adopted its strategic plan and a series of PlaceLeap strategies for Economic Improvement. Over that time the township has seen great success, but also experienced setbacks, including the challenges associated with COVID-19. As the township is looking toward updating the 2019 strategic plan, we are asking for feedback from the local business community about what has worked well, and what hasn't worked so well, as we chart our course for the next three years.

Event Agenda

Looking Back

Summary of accomplishments and challenges since 2019

Taking Stock

What are the challenges and opportunities we face today?

Looking Forward

How can the Township support existing businesses and encourage continued economic growth over the next three years?



To register follow the registration link below or scan the QR code.
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/oscodabusinessstakeholder>.



For any additional questions email Todd Dickerson, Economic Improvement Director at tdickerson@oscodatownshipmi.gov



Business Stakeholder Feedback Session

November 2, 2022

Thank you for attending the feedback session today! If you would prefer to provide responses on this form rather than share them out loud, please feel free to do so. You can leave this form with your responses on the table at the end of the session.

Tell us about your last 3 years:

Major developments in your business: _____

Major changes in the community: _____

Why is your business in Oscoda?

What are the challenges you face today as a business?

What challenges do you foresee in the future?

What has Oscoda Township done well over the past 3 years for the business community? _____

What could Oscoda Township have done better over the past 3 years?

What should Oscoda Township be focused on for the next 3 years?

What are your business goals for the next 3 years?

THANK YOU!

If you wrote additional comments on this sheet you would like to be considered, please leave it at your table or hand it to one of the facilitators.



Business Stakeholder Feedback Session



November 2, 2022

Introductions

Todd Dickerson
Economic Improvement Director
Oscoda Charter Township
tdickerson@OscodaTownshipMi.gov

Jason Ball
Senior Planner
ROWE Professional Services Company
jball@rowepsc.com

Agenda

1. **Three Years in Review**—What's gone well and what hasn't?
2. **Regional Trends**—How does Oscoda measure up?
3. **Moving Forward**—Setting priorities for the next three years.



Looking Back

Events over the past 3 years:

- COVID-19
- 2020 Election
- Housing Market Crazyiness
- Supply chains
- Inflation



WORLD SERIES COMMEMORATIVE SPECIAL ISSUE

Fight Finished

Sports Illustrated

NCAA football · Nov 16, 19

Final

 10 - 44 

Michigan State Spartans (4 - 6) 18 Michigan Wolverines (8 - 2)

Team	1	2	3	4	T
Michigan State Spartans	7	0	3	0	10
Michigan Wolverines	0	17	10	17	44

HIGHLIGHTS

Game recap - 4:10

Game recap - 5:03

Game highlights - 1:11

Feedback

More about this game

Downtown Developments

- Amerilodge Group – New Holiday Inn Express
- Alcona Health Center – New Medical Center (Complete)
- 118 E. River Road – Mixed Use Rehab
- 106 Lake Street – AirBnB Vacation Cottage Rehab
- Lake Theater
- 208 S. State Street – Medical Office



Greater Oscoda Township

- Flight District - ATD Investments – Multi-Family
- Flight District - Perimeter Lot Holdings – Agribusiness
- Flight District - Kalitta Air – New Maintenance Hanger
- US23 Business Corridor – Former Auto Value
- US23 Business Corridor – Former Haneckow Property
- Flight District – AuSable Development/Skeel Ave Township Property – Multi-Family Project



Impact Metrics



12 new businesses
opened



\$1.3 Million in Real
Estate Transactions



\$73 Million in new
investment



Tell us about your 3 years.

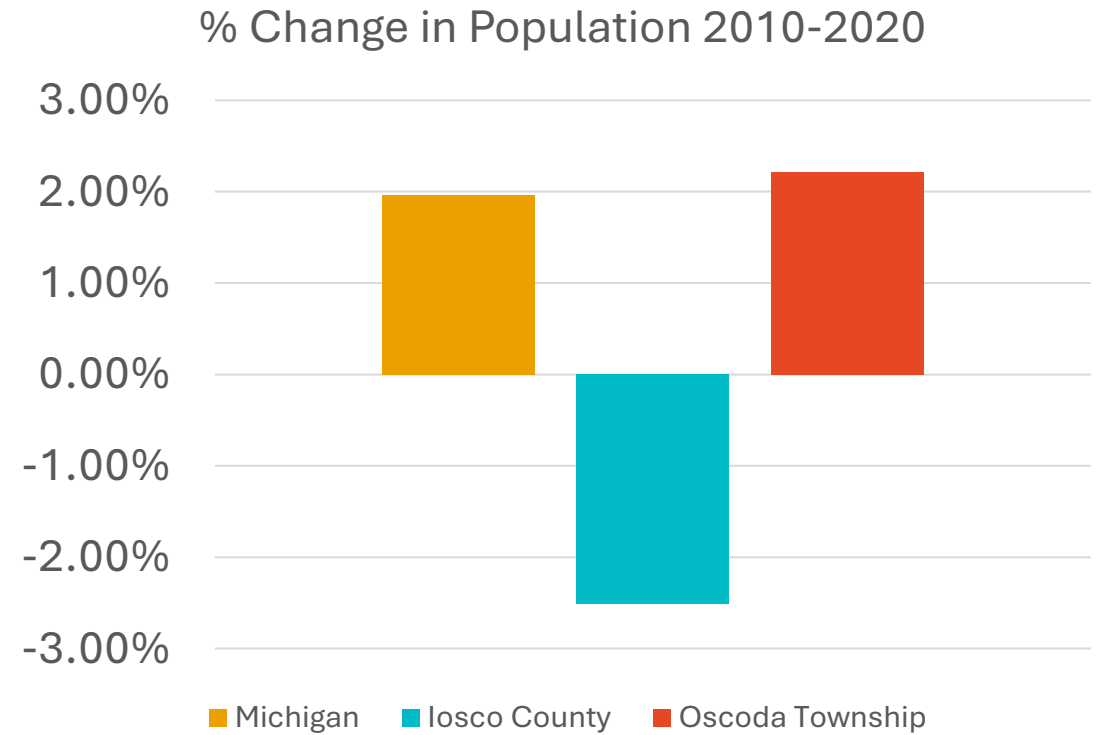
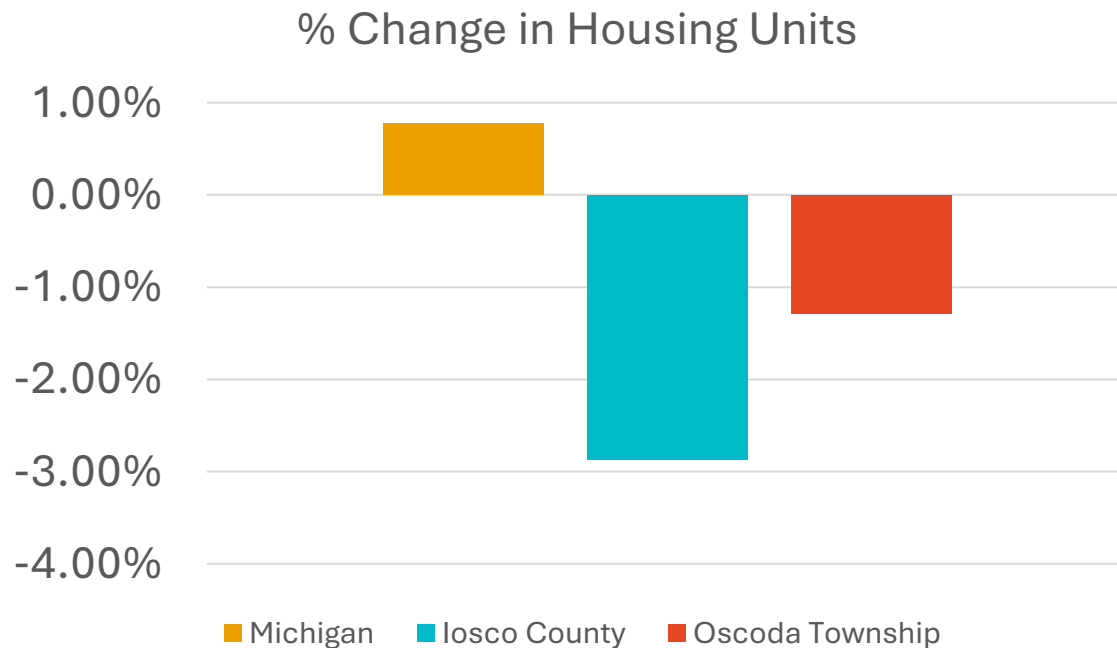
Major developments for your business.

Major changes in the community.

Background Information

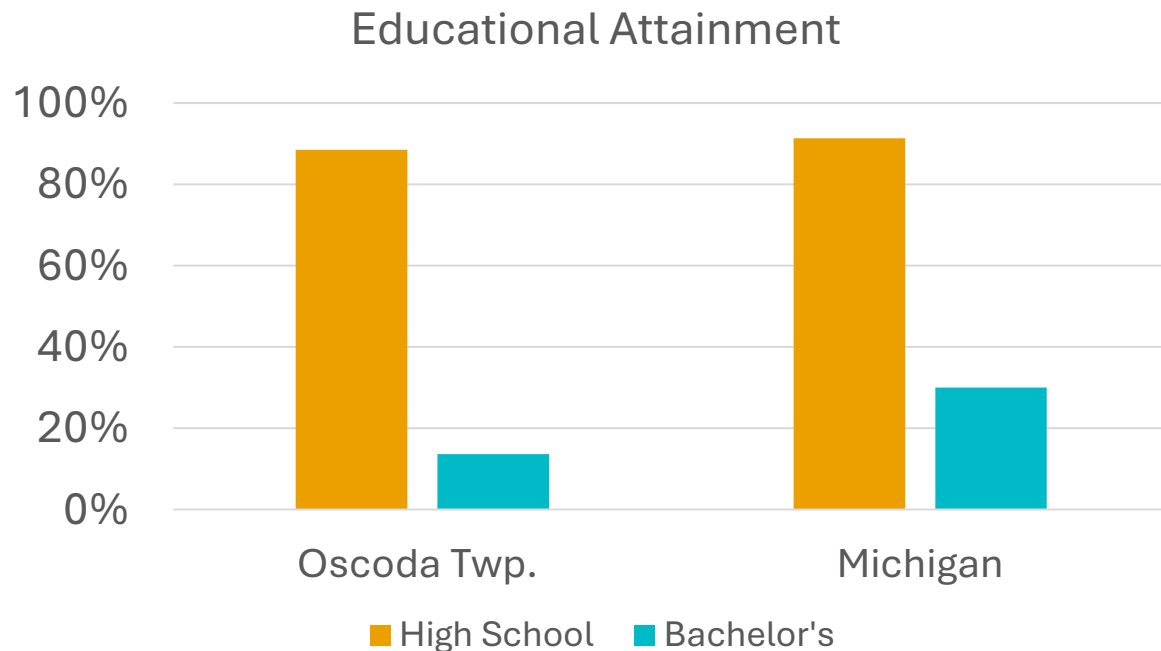


Population & Housing



Source: 2010 & 2020 Decennial Census

Education



Oscoda Township

88.5% with a high school degree or higher

13.6% with a bachelor's degree or higher

State of Michigan

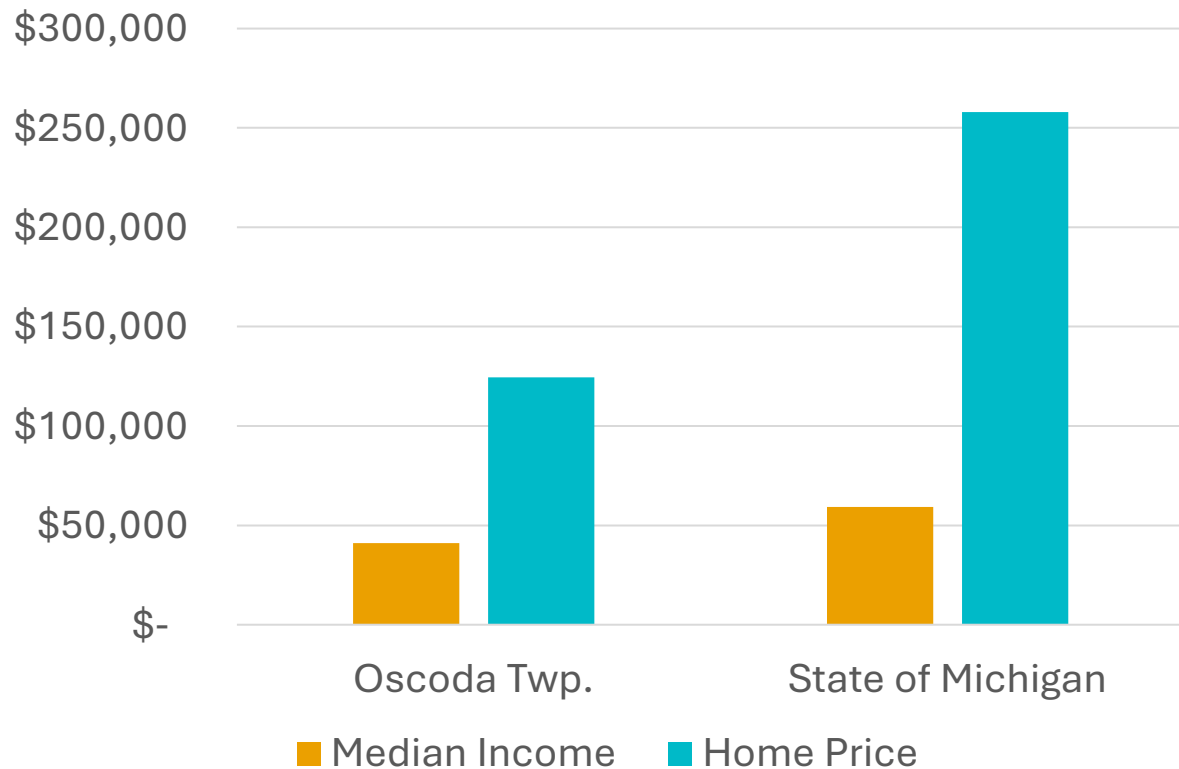
91.3% with a high school degree or higher

30.0% with a bachelor's degree or higher

Source: 2020 American Community Survey

Income & Housing

Median Income & Home Price



Median Income

Oscoda Township : \$41,135

State of Michigan : \$59,234

Home Price (Q1 2022)

Oscoda Township: \$ 124,445

State of Michigan: \$257,986

Source: 2020 American Community Survey & National Association of Realtors

Employment in Oscoda Township

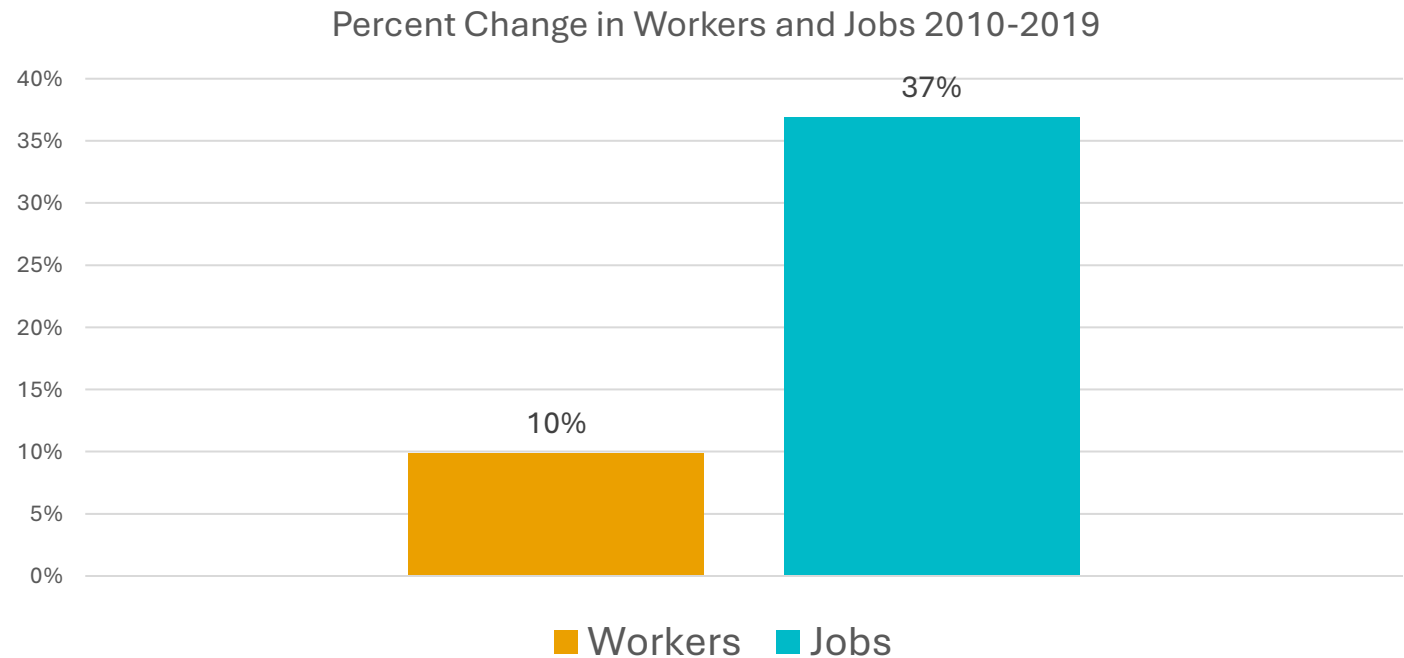
Source: US Census Bureau
Local Employer and
Household Dynamics
Survey

Workers in 2019: 2,262

Workers in 2010: 2,059

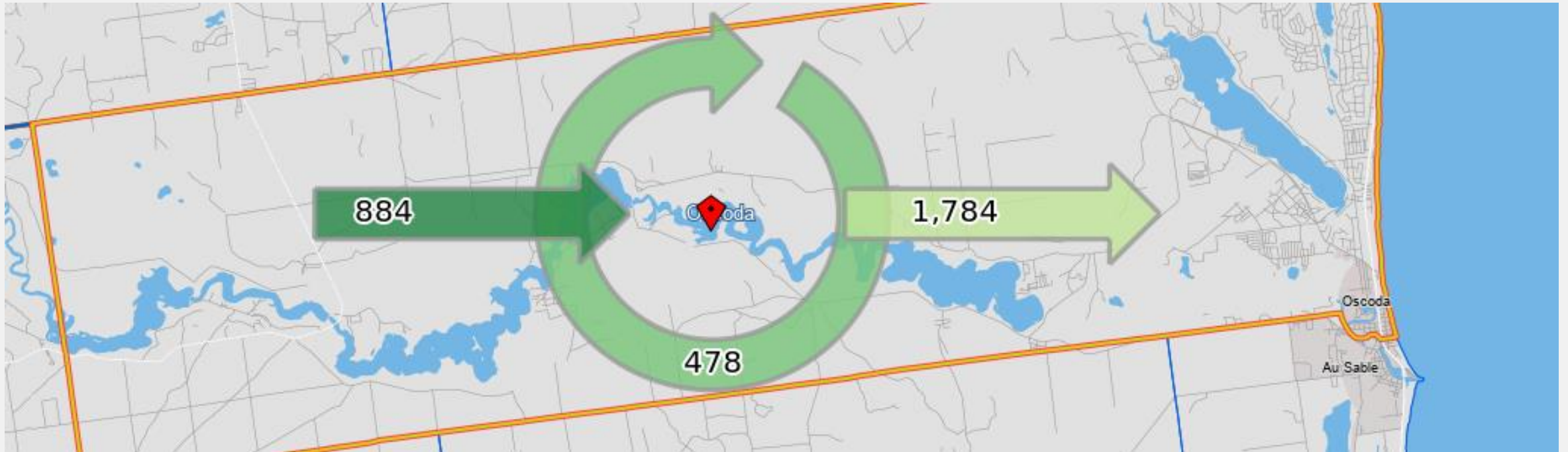
Jobs in 2019: 1,362

Jobs in 2010: 995



Commuting Patterns

Of 1,362 people employed in Oscoda Township, 478 (35%) also live in the Township.



Source: US Census Bureau Local Employer and Household Dynamics Survey

**Question: Why
is your
business here?**



**Question: What are
the challenges you
face today?**

**What about in the
future?**



Goals & Objectives



Overall Township Objectives

43 Objectives identified in 2019

31 completed

12 underway

72%

Outstanding Township Objectives

- Complete property database
- Create packages and market opportunities for rental housing to potential developers (5 objectives)
- Create packages and market opportunities for owner-occupied housing to potential developers (3 objectives)
- Create a showcase event for potential developers
- Create a quarterly tour highlighting opportunities
- Promote revolving loan fund to local businesses

Downtown Objectives

51 Objectives identified in 2019

26 completed

8 underway

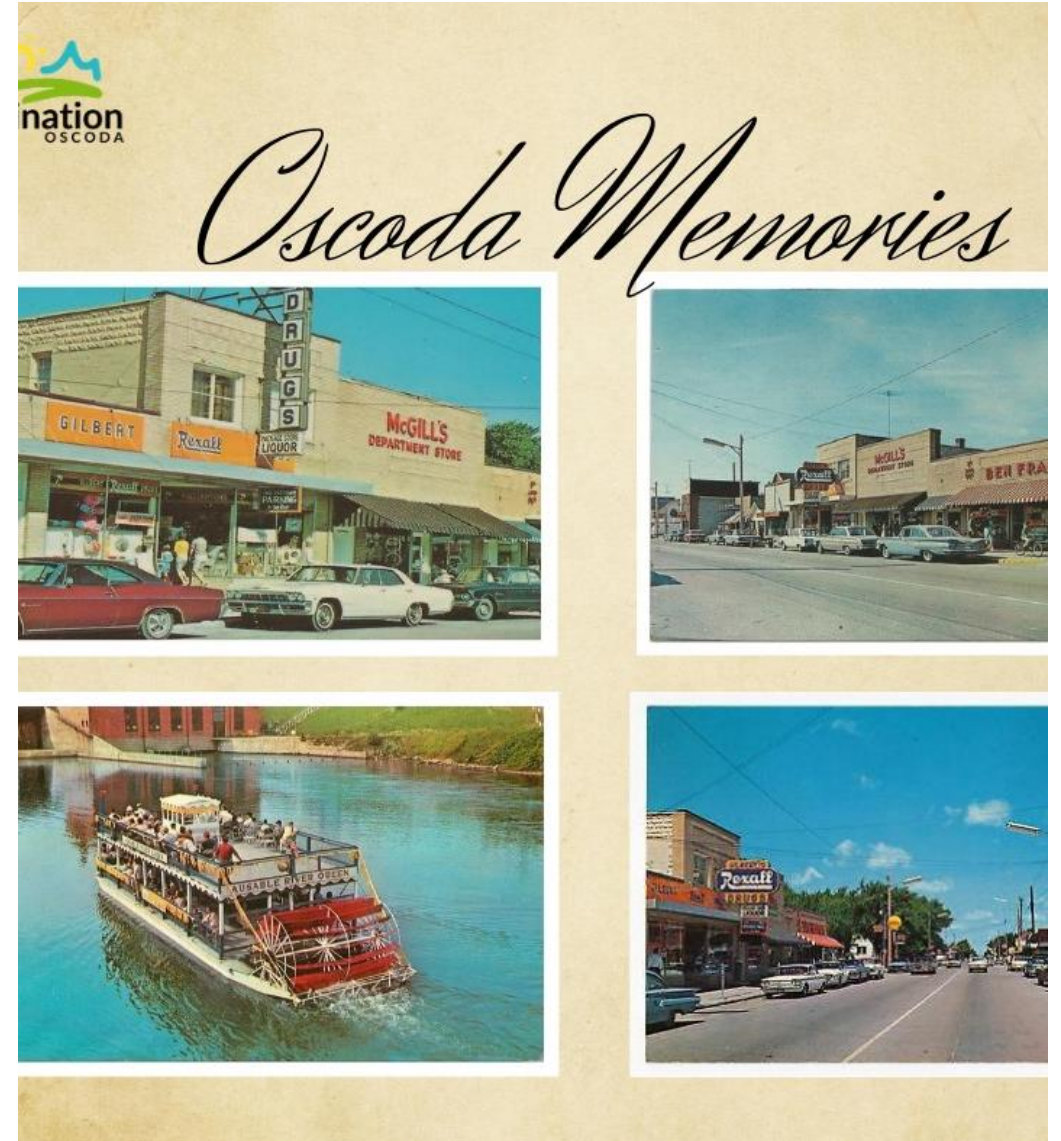
17 not started

51%

Outstanding Downtown Objectives

- Complete property database
- Create vibrancy grants (8 objectives)
- Archway to connect downtown to beach front (4 objectives)
- Micro & pop-up retail (12 objectives)

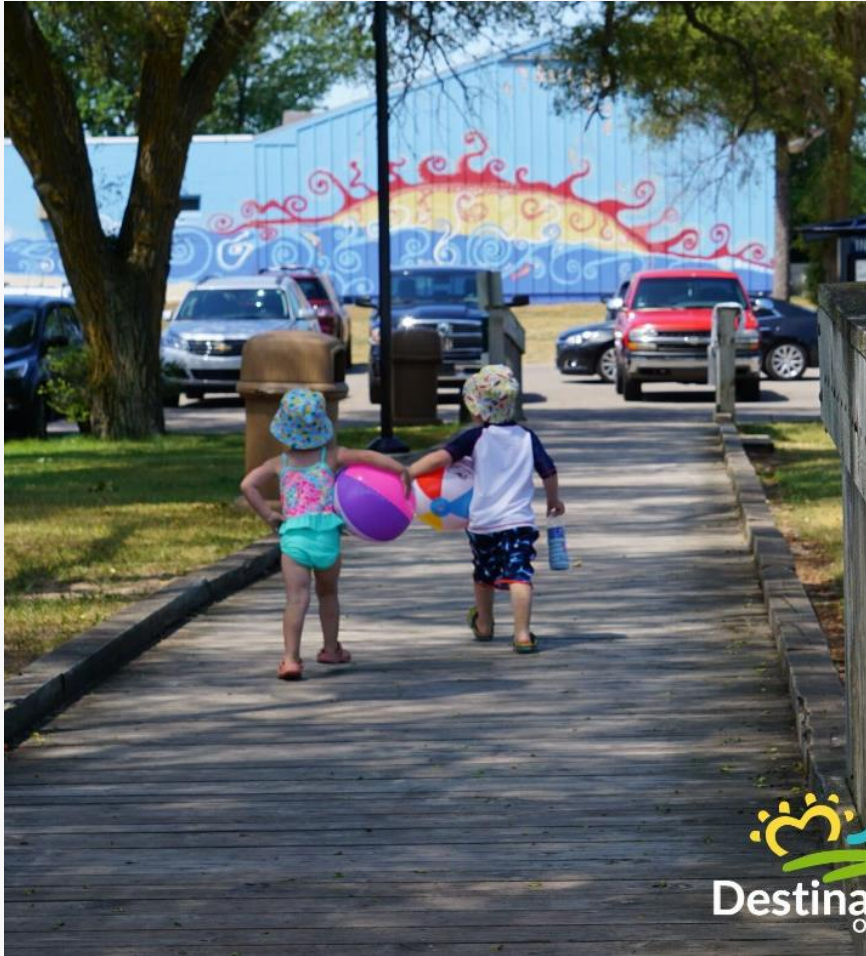
**Question: What
has gone well,
and what hasn't?**



Question: What should Oscoda Twp. be focused on for the next 3 years?



What are your business goals for the next 3 years?





THANK YOU!

Todd Dickerson
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