



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019



# OSCODA TOWNSHIP, NATURALLY.



**PLACE  
+ MAIN**  
ADVISORS

Strategic Plan facilitated by:

Joe Borgstrom, Principal  
Place + Main Advisors, LLC  
East Lansing, MI 48823  
(517) 614-2733  
[joe@placeandmain.com](mailto:joe@placeandmain.com)

# CONTENTS

Oscoda Township	04
Strategic Plan Process	05
Acknowledgments	06
Introduction	07
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats	07
SWOT at a Glance	11
Focus Group Feedback	12
Focus Group Word Cloud	15
Online Survey	16
Online Survey Word Cloud	21
Vision & Mission Statements	22
Strategic Goals	23

## OSCODA TOWNSHIP

Set peacefully along the shores of beautiful Lake Huron and the mighty AuSable River, Oscoda offers more than 120 square miles of pure Michigan.

From canoeing to sunbathing, the natural destinations of our community provide activities for water enthusiasts of all varieties. For visitors whose interests are more land-oriented, Oscoda's downtown district includes an assortment of eclectic shopping and renown restaurants. And lovers of history and the outdoors alike know Oscoda as the home of the famous Lumberman's Monument located in the Lake Huron National Forest.

Oscoda's natural resources have always played an important role in the community, even as local industry has changed over the years. The area was first settled in the late 1860s. Originally named, AuSable, the town was renamed based on the writings of Henry Schoolcraft, who named it after the American Indian words "Ossim" and "Muscoda," meaning "Pebbly Prairie." Oscoda played a major role in the distribution of lumber on the Great Lakes during the lumbering era. Today, our primary industry is tourism thanks to the abundance of year-round recreational activities available to residents and visitors, such as camping, fishing, hunting, cross country skiing, snowmobiling and more.



*Oscoda's natural resources have always played an important role in the community, even as local industry has changed over the years.*

# CREATING THE STRATEGIC PLAN

In the Fall of 2018, the Oscoda Township Board of Trustees set out to create a strategic plan to guide their efforts in the coming years. The process, described below, was designed to be inclusive and garner significant public engagement.



## Work Sessions

The Township Board of Trustees, along with the Steering Committee, met for work sessions where the final Vision and Mission Statements were crafted, as well as the final goals. These work sessions were open to the public and took into consideration the input and feedback the community gave through the online surveys, public SWOT, and focus groups. \_



## Public SWOT Analysis + Focus Groups

On October 29, 2018, the township held a public Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis of the community. Approximately 50 people assembled to participate in the facilitated discussion. This meeting was followed by several focus groups engaging key stakeholders such as major employers, downtown business and property owners, community organizations, education providers, and local government leaders.



## Online Survey

Oscoda Township conducted an online survey to engage stakeholders to share their opinions on what areas the township should focus its efforts. More than 200 people responded to this survey and provided significant feedback.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the citizens of Oscoda and members of the Steering Committee for your thoughtful input and commitment to the future of our Township. Having contributed hundreds of combined hours through three public meetings and six targeted customer focus group sessions, your involvement in this effort has proven invaluable. The Steering Committee was comprised of diverse stakeholders who embraced the process and expressed their views in a respectful and productive way; we are grateful for their knowledge and dedication. The result is a strategic plan that will drive important decision making in the near and distant future.

## TOWNSHIP BOARD

Aaron Weed, Supervisor

Jaimie McGuire, Treasurer

Martin Gayeski, Trustee

John Nordeen, Clerk

Jim Baier, Trustee

Timothy Cummings, Trustee

William Palmer, Trustee

## STEERING COMMITTEE

Al Apsitis, Oscoda Township Parks and Rec Director

Belle Flora, Oscoda Area Convention and Visitors Bureau

Lorna Ganci, Oscoda Township Zoning Administrator

Catherine Gavin-Larive, Oscoda Township Zoning Board of Appeals

Garrett Geer, AKT Peerless

Dave Iler, Oscoda Township Downtown Development Authority

Fred Lewis, Plainfield Township

Stephanie Mallak Olson, Iosco-Arenac District Library

Bob Michaelis, Oscoda Township Planning Commission

Rick Michaels, Oscoda Area Chamber of Commerce

Scott Moore, Oscoda Area Schools

Jeff Moss, AuSable Township

Mike Munson, Oscoda-Wurtsmith Airport Authority

Don Nolan, Kalitta Air LLC

Dave Schaeffer, Oscoda Township Superintendent

Pat Schiflet, Oscoda Township Downtown Development Authority

Nancy Seguin, Alpena Community College

Bob Tasiar, Oscoda Township Planning Commission

Cathy Wusterbarth, Oscoda Township Board of Review

Mark Wygant, STS Technical Services

# INTRODUCTION

The Board of Trustees for Oscoda Township contracted with Place + Main Advisors, LLC to perform strategic planning services for the community. As part of these services, Place + Main Advisors was to conduct a public Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis, six focus groups, and an online survey. This document is the result of these activities.



## Public Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

On the evening of Monday, October 29, the township hosted a public SWOT Analysis at the Warrior Pavilion in Ken Ratliff Memorial Park in the township. Approximately 50 stakeholders attended, including board members, resident, business owners and leaders, and neighboring township representatives. The SWOT was facilitated by Place + Main Advisors Principal Joe Borgstrom.



Each topic was given between five to seven minutes for the attendees to call out things they felt belonged in the respective categories. When input session was complete, attendees were asked to rank their top three in each category. The rankings were color coded and weighted based on importance. (Example- the most important strength was awarded a blue sticker and was worth three points. The second most important strength was given a yellow sticker and awarded two points, and the third was awarded a green sticker and awarded one point.) The point values were then tallied. The results follow on subsequent pages.

# STRENGTHS

Strengths are internal, positive attributes of the community and are largely either under direct control or can be influenced by the community.

Strengths	Score
Environment/Natural Resources	93
Kalitta Air, LLC Facility	27
Airport	27
Recreation Opportunities	22
Tourism	19
Beaches	15
Affordable Housing	7
Schools (Facilities/People)	7
Hiking/Biking Trails	7
Libraries	6
Broadband on Major Roads	6
ORV/Snowmobile	5
Potential of Community Center	5
Reasonable Taxes	4
Community Colleges	4
Active Senior Community	3
Good Infrastructure	1
Public Safety	1
Room for Growth	Did Not Receive Votes





# WEAKNESSES

Weaknesses are negative factors that detract from your strengths. These are things that the community might need to improve on.

Weaknesses	Score
Empty Storefronts	56
Medical Facilities/Offerings	36
Lack of Affordable Long-Term & Short-Term Housing	24
Curb Appeal/Appearance	21
Lack of Doctors	17
Environmental Issues	15
Lack of Population Under 40	15
Lack of Walkable Shopping	11
Lack of Business Diversity	10
Loss of Skilled Workers	10
Declining Enrollment	10
Lack of Quality Daycare	7
Public Perception	7
Lack of Downtown Cohesion	6
Parking	6
Roads	6
Marketing	3
Lack of Overnight Accommodations	2
Slow Rail	2
Seasonality	1
Lack of Ethnic Diversity	Did Not Receive Votes



## OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities are those things the township can do or take advantage of to improve the community.

Opportunities	Score
Beachfront Business District	41
Redevelop Air Base	39
Marketing	28
Room to Grow	19
Arts/Artisans	16
Market Schools/Higher Ed	15
Grants	12
Invest in Community Center	11
Better Connect Businesses to Waterfront	11
Walkable Housing	11
Broadband to Underserved	10
Niche Retail	8
Create Identity	7
Further Develop Old Orchard	6
MicroBreweries/Distilleries	5
Passenger Rail	4
Robotics Team	3
Career Centers	3
Wi-Fi Throughout Community	3
More Restaurants	3
Industrial Parks	2
Water Trails	2
Volunteer/Partnership w Youth	1
Data Center	Did Not Receive Votes

## THREATS

Threats are external factors that you have no control over but need to be aware of.

Threats	Score
Contamination	44
Drugs	39
Economy/Unemployment	37
Aging Community	26
Low Wages	21
Apathy	20
Public Perception	16
Online Shopping	15
Winter Unpredictability/Environmental Change	7
Department of Defense Decisions	4
Violence	4
Location	2
Brain Drain	1

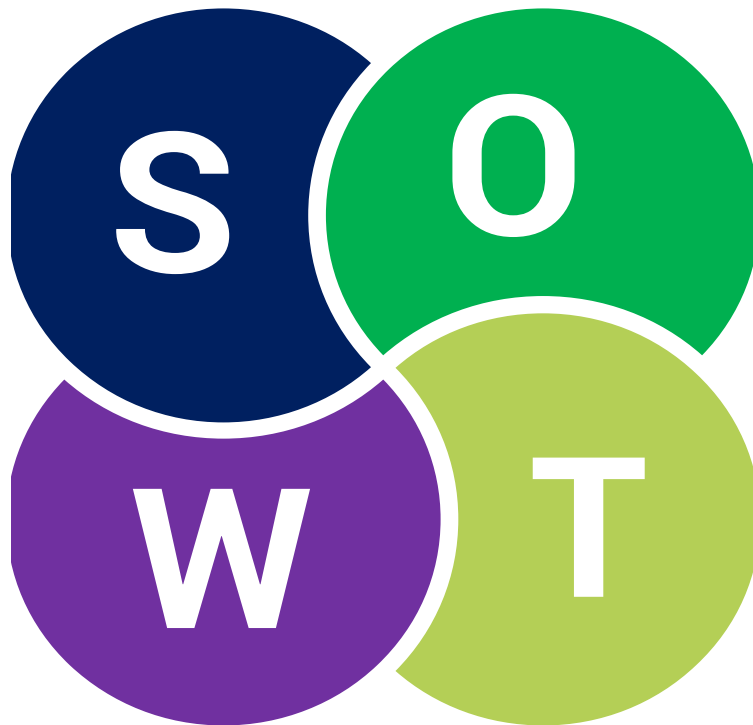
# TOP SWOT RESPONSES

## STRENGTHS

- Environment/Natural Resources
- Kalitta Air, LLC Facility
- Airport
- Recreation Opportunities
- Tourism

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Beachfront Business District
- Redevelop Air Base
- Marketing



## WEAKNESSES

- Empty Storefronts
- Medical Facilities/Offerings
- Lack of Affordable Long- & Short-Term Housing
- Curb Appeal/Appearance
- Lack of Doctors
- Environmental Issues
- Lack of Population Under 40

## THREATS

- Contamination
- Drugs
- Economy/Unemployment
- Aging Community
- Low Wages
- Apathy

# FOCUS GROUPS

On Tuesday, October 30, Place + Main Advisors met with six focus groups from the following areas:

- Government
- Education
- Major Employers
- Chamber, Downtown Development Authority Board, and Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Downtown Business and Property Owners

Groups ranged in size from three to ten people. These groups provided feedback on areas that affect them and gave their input on what they saw the major issues are. The purpose of the focus groups is to gather additional feedback from stakeholders in specific sectors. Below are comments and observations from each group:

## Government Group #1

*"Easy way to town (from out of town) no easy way to get here"*

*"Oscoda needs more (wayfinding) signage"*

*"The elimination of on-street parking has hurt businesses."*

*"We haven't figured out what we want to be."*

*Oscoda presents itself as "a retirement community."*

*"We need more businesses to serve retirees" (Meet retirees needs)*

*The contamination issue was seen as a two-sided: public relations and dealing with environmental cause. Also a recognition the community is somewhat at the mercy of the Department of Defense*

*"Our zoning is antiquated. It's not business or resident friendly."*

Lack of hospital in the area is an issue. Tawas hospital does triage only and no 24-hour retail clinic

A lack of fixed route public transportation an issue. There is Dial-a-ride (fee based) / Uber (one person)

*"First responders can't transport."*

## CVB, DDA, & Chamber

Water/Contamination (Flint comparisons)

Poor communication (from state)

DNR – PFAS warning (hunting ban)

Need Our Water – Important issue but need to communicate

Plan for communication to vacationers

Collaboration needed on major issues

Appearance/Curb Appeal is a concern for the community

Hospitality training needed for hotels, restaurants

*"There's a lack of pride."*

## FOCUS GROUPS - CONT.

### Major Employers

*"Housing is the biggest issue. There's nowhere for them to stay (in the short-term.) Especially in the summer."*

*"We would love to hire more local folks but finding people who can pass drug tests is a challenge."*

Restaurants and lack of downtown businesses hurts recruitment.

Roads plowed before 9am – untouched main roads and highways / 850-1200 people to work between 6-9am

Housing Needed (short & long term)

*"90% of apartments are low income. Our guys make too much and there's not any other options."*

Steady employers/longevity

Cost of Living vs larger cities is seen as very (positive)

Companies recruit on career opportunity

Lack of Marketing/Awareness

Talent retention is a priority (\$4K/ year in bonuses)

### Downtown Business and Property Owners

Seasonal residents (Jul-Aug) make or break business

Need quality workers (people to show up)

Housing is needed

*"Too many empty spaces. Not enough spaces to shop."*

Dirty Windows/Lack of upkeep hurting all businesses

*"Building owners should be held accountable."*

*"The business community is closed-minded (to working with others.)"*

*"Unrealistic (real estate) prices hurt the ability to redevelop."*

The River/Lake/Natural Resources are biggest assets

*"There are two camps: People who want quiet and people who want it less quiet."*

Two owners downtown interested in expanding

*"Incentives are needed."*

Sidewalks tough to keep open for the winter

Needs/Wants: More People, Parking, Dry cleaner, Meat/Butcher, Anything retail, Family businesses, Bike shop,

Outdoor Outfitters, Public Wi-Fi, more Signage/Wayfinding

*"We need food option down on the beach. Like food trucks or carts."*

Boardwalk on the river is great

*"The Base needs to be developed more around technology."*

*"We need to keep downtown businesses going during the winter."*



## FOCUS GROUPS - CONT.

### Education

Mental health services – students, school success services, counseling, 2 master social workers

Mental health issues at both High School and Community College

No Adolescent Psychologists an issue

*"High rate of poverty (68% free lunches)"*

*"Oppositional Defiance Disorder is a problem." (Environmental more than genetic)*

*"The police department is at the school every week." (Since law changed on administration not being able to restrain students)*

Graduation rate is 90% (Large growth, alt ed, teacher training)

*"Enrollment is steady"*

*"Safety is a big issue."*

*"Seen some growth in technical education."*

Hearing Company Needs: machinists, tech math and blueprint reading, Welding

Housing needed

Fiber (internet) connects to campuses

*"Things are looking better"*

*Library:*

*"Our location hurts." (need more attendance)*

Safety is an issue.

Homeless tend to congregate at the library.

Library serves as community meeting space. (Positive)

### Government Officials #2

*"We have infrastructure in place." (also weakness is age)*

Negative property values have hurt (2 home owners appealed property values)

Au Sable doesn't know the effect of contamination south of the river

*"The township facing issues head-on."*

*"We put a lot of time put into the Master Plan, but we need the document to be a living document."*

*"It (master plan) needs teeth."*

Don't have control over Department of Defense timeline

Housing downtown and other areas desperately needed

Need more density

Bring industry - Rail AND aircraft

*"We need to develop F-41 & M-65," "west side developed"*

Redevelop old base (planning commission revising zoning)

Need more bike path/recreation opportunities

Need to work with FAA on ability to transfer airport property to private entities

Public Perception – Battling negative perception

Oscoda has the ability of people to connect (sense of community)

## FOCUS GROUP WORD CLOUD

Responses from the focus group were compiled and a word cloud generated. The more a word or phrase was repeated in comments, the larger the word appears in the cloud.



## ONLINE SURVEY

As part of the effort to cast a wide of net as possible, an online survey was also conducted to supplement input given during the public SWOT and focus groups. In all, 152 people participated in the survey.

Below are the results:

### What is your age?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
UNDER 18	0.00%
18-24	3.29%
25-34	7.89%
35-44	15.79%
45-54	17.11%
55-64	27.63%
65+	28.29%

### Are you a permanent resident of Oscoda Township?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
YES	72.37%
NO	27.63%

### How long have you been a permanent resident of Oscoda Township?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
0-2 YEARS	8.26%
3-5 YEARS	11.93%
6-10 YEARS	14.68%
11-20 YEARS	20.18%
20+ YEARS	44.95%

## ONLINE SURVEY - CONT.

Since you are not a permanent resident, can you please tell us your role in the community?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
SEASONAL RESIDENT	18.18%
NON-RESIDENT PROPERTY OWNER	13.64%
OCCASIONAL VISITOR	27.27%
OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	40.91%

What do you think are Oscoda's greatest strengths? Please rank in order of importance (1 = Highest, 16 = Lowest.)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
BEACHES	12.41
ENVIRONMENT/NATURAL RESOURCES	11.78
TOURISM	10.72
PEOPLE/GENEROUS COMMUNITY	9.71
KALITTA AIR, LLC FACILITY	9.69
SCHOOLS	9.56
AFFORDABLE HOUSING	9.45
PUBLIC SAFETY	9.07
REASONABLE TAXES	8.56
LIBRARIES	7.93
AIRPORT	7.89
COMMUNITY COLLEGE	7.77
GOOD INFRASTRUCTURE	7.52
BROADBAND AVAILABILITY (MAJOR ROADS)	6.55
COMMUNITY CENTER	6.22
ACTIVE SENIOR COMMUNITY	5.97

## ONLINE SURVEY - CONT.

What do you think are Oscoda's biggest weaknesses? Please rank in order of importance (1 = Highest, 21 = Lowest.)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
EMPTY STOREFRONTS	16.85
ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	15.93
CURB APPEAL/APPEARANCE	13.72
LACK OF DOWNTOWN COHESION	13.7
LACK OF DOCTORS	13.65
LACK OF BUSINESS DIVERSITY	13.46
MEDICAL FACILITIES/OFFERINGS	13.26
LACK OF WALKABLE SHOPPING	13.24
PUBLIC PERCEPTION	12.69
LOSS OF SKILLED WORKERS	12.34
SEASONALITY	11.81
LACK OF POPULATION UNDER 40	11.41
LACK OF AFFORDABLE LONG-TERM & SHORT-TERM HOUSING	10.9
MARKETING	9.85
DECLINING ENROLLMENT	9.57
ROADS	9.03
LACK OF ETHNIC DIVERSITY	8.97
LACK OF QUALITY DAYCARE	8.82
PARKING	8.56
LACK OF OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS	8.05
SLOW RAIL	7.02



## ONLINE SURVEY - CONT.

What do you think are the biggest opportunities for Oscoda? Please rank in order of importance (1 = Highest, 23 = Lowest.)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
BEACHFRONT BUSINESS DISTRICT	16.9
REDEVELOP AIR BASE	15.82
BETTER CONNECT BUSINESSES TO WATERFRONT	15.82
MORE RESTAURANTS	14.29
CREATE IDENTITY	14.1
NICHE RETAIL	13.49
WI-FI THROUGHOUT COMMUNITY	13.43
MARKETING	13.38
ROOM TO GROW	13.35
MICROBREWERIES/DISTILLERIES	12.9
WATER TRAILS	12.84
MARKET SCHOOLS/HIGHER ED	12.83
CAREER CENTERS	12.78
VOLUNTEER/PARTNERSHIP W YOUTH	12.47
INVEST IN COMMUNITY CENTER	12.19
INDUSTRIAL PARKS	12.16
ARTS/ARTISANS	11.61
BROADBAND TO UNDERSERVED	11.4
GRANTS	11.19
WALKABLE HOUSING	11.18
FURTHER DEVELOP OLD ORCHARD	10.66
ROBOTICS TEAM	9.64
PASSENGER RAIL	8.73

## ONLINE SURVEY- CONT.

What do you think are Oscoda's greatest threats? Please rank in order of importance (1 = Highest, 16 = Lowest.)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
CONTAMINATION	10.57
LOW WAGES	9.06
PUBLIC PERCEPTION	8.88
ECONOMY/UNEMPLOYMENT	8.74
DRUGS	8.33
APATHY	8.32
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE DECISIONS	7.77
AGING COMMUNITY	7.61
BRAIN DRAIN	6.44
WINTER UNPREDICTABILITY/ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE	6.42
LOCATION	5.16
VIOLENCE	4.93
ONLINE SHOPPING	4.57

# ONLINE SURVEY WORD CLOUD

If you could change one thing about Oscoda, what would it be? (Open-Ended)

Numerous responses were given and varied. Below is a word cloud encompassing the responses. The more a word or phrase was repeated in comments, the larger the word appears in the cloud.



## VISION + MISSION STATEMENTS

Vision and Mission Statements provide direction for the Township going forward. The Vision defines the end goal for the community, while the Mission defines the Township's role in making the vision come to fruition.

### VISION

*By 2028, Oscoda Township will be a more thriving, safe, and energetic community with an active inter-generational economy. It will fully use and modernize its infrastructure and maximize its resources, both financial and natural, to create a local economy that serves its residents. Oscoda Township will be a preferred place for residents, businesses, and tourists to invest and be a part of. In partnership with neighboring communities, it will work for the betterment of the region.*

### MISSION

*The Charter Township of Oscoda is the government entity responsible for creating the environment to improve the quality of life for its residents and opportunities for its businesses to thrive. It creates and maintains the organizational and physical infrastructure of the community to engage residents and help its businesses continually adjust to the ever-changing economic climate. The Township is a steward of the public trust, administrator of responsive and efficient government, and a champion of transparency that works to serve and protect its citizens.*

## STRATEGIC GOALS

Strategic Goals are the overarching goals that guide the specific objectives the Township will pursue. These goals may change over time, but largely define what the township's purpose will be for the next five to ten years. These goals reflect the input of the public, focus groups, steering committees, and Township Board of Trustees.

**01**

***Create an environment where residents, development, and businesses can be successful***

**02**

***Create more housing options for existing and prospective residents***

**03**

***Preserve, integrate, and connect natural resources for residents and tourists***

**04**

***Market the community to prospective businesses, residents, and tourists***

**05**

***Further promote redevelopment of airport and surrounding property***


**06**

***Grow the number of residents, businesses, tourists, and developers in the township***

**07**

***Maintain and improve township-owned infrastructure***





# **OSCODA TOWNSHIP STRATEGIC PLAN 2019**

**COPYRIGHT OSCODA TOWNSHIP, 2019**

**PLACE  
+MAIN  
ADVISORS**

[WWW.PLACEANDMAIN.COM](http://WWW.PLACEANDMAIN.COM)