



OUR NATURAL ADVANTAGE

Oakland County is rich in natural resources. The county has been blessed with over 1,400 lakes (more than any other county in the state), is home to the headwaters of five major river systems, and has over 89,000 acres of park and recreation lands. The rolling landform left by receding glaciers some 14,000 years ago has given birth to special natural areas, some unique to the entire state and beyond.

This special natural setting is a primary reason for the substantial growth and development which has occurred over the past 50 years. Now we are confronting the question of balance and sustainability in maintaining our "Natural Advantage".

The public's health has direct ties to our natural environment. Our natural environment also serves as a cornerstone of our excellent quality of life. We have available to us a great diversity of natural and man-made environments in Oakland County. From the cosmopolitan city, to historic town centers, to abundant lakes and rivers, to rural and natural country settings, we have it all. This diversity has offered us a great range of choice and the freedom to live in a setting which matches our desired lifestyle. These elements of diversity and choice must be retained in order to sustain our quality of life advantage in attracting a skilled workforce that supports our economy.

Oakland County Planning

The Planning Group is one of four functional groups within the Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services Division (PEDS). The Planning Group provides consultative services and products that address county and local economic, community, and environmental topics. The primary clients of the Planning Group are the County Administration, local governments, not-for-profit organizations, businesses and developers.



Planning Group Mission

Serve the public interest by providing planning, economic development, and design services that establish processes and best practices so that Oakland County continues to grow as a diverse, healthy, complete, and desirable living and working environment.

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The Economic Impact of Oakland County's Green Infrastructure



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Planning & Economic Development Services

Impact of Oakland County's Green Infrastructure on the Local Economy:

Green Infrastructure is defined as an interconnected network of open spaces, natural areas, and waterways.

Oakland County Planning & Economic Development Services (PEDS) worked with Michigan State University's Land Policy Institute to estimate the impact that proximity to green infrastructure amenities (e.g., lakes, recreational lands, etc.) has on residential property values.

PEDS also worked with Public Sector Consultants to document, and quantify where possible, how green infrastructure (water resources in particular) benefits Oakland County's residents and businesses.

Residential Property Values:

- Lakes add **over \$1 billion** in value to Oakland County's residential properties.
- Parks and Recreational lands add **over \$425 million** in value to Oakland County's residential properties.



Household Recreation:

- Water resources generate about **\$200 million annually** to county residents.
- About 40 % of County residents use recreational resources at least once per week.
- More users (80 %) visit parks than any other recreational resource.



Tourism:

- The County attracted an estimated **394,514 pleasure trips** from Michigan, neighboring states, and the province of Ontario during 2007, generating an estimated \$177 million in spending .
- About **1.3 million people** visited Oakland County on these trips, spending an average of 3.5 days.
- **Over 40%** of these trips involved outdoor recreation at some point and **20%** involved water-based recreation in particular.

Business Location and Employee Attraction/Retention:

The term New Economy is defined as a global, entrepreneurial, and knowledge-based economy in which the keys to success lie in the extent to which knowledge, technology, and innovation are embedded in products and services.

In terms of business decisions, research indicates New Economy firms tend to place more importance on quality-of-life factors than do other types of firms.



Ecosystem Services:

Ecosystem Services are defined as the processes by which the environment produces resources that people often take for granted such as clean water, timber, habitat for fisheries, and pollination of native and agricultural plants. Ultimately, ecosystem services help to sustain, enrich, and fulfill human life.

Oakland County's freshwater ecosystems (i.e., wetlands, rivers, streams, and lakes) are estimated to produce **\$806 million annually** in services to county residents.