



**LAKETOWN TOWNSHIP,
MICHIGAN**

**TOWNSHIP
MANAGER**



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Laketown Township, MI (pop. 6,192) is a thriving rural community in beautiful West Michigan located between Holland and Saugatuck. Founded in 1858, Laketown Township borders Lake Michigan and encompasses 21.6 square miles in western Allegan County. Residents enjoy Laketown's non-commercialized environment and its dozens of family-friendly outdoor recreational opportunities.

Laketown's bountiful natural resources include six (6) miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, Laketown Beach, the 1,000-acre Saugatuck Dunes State Park, seven (7) Township parks, three (3) lakes, a nationally recognized disc golf course, several mountain bike trails, a BMX pump track, and thirteen (13) miles of non-motorized trails. Additionally, the Township Board and staff are continually making improvements including recently adding pickleball courts. Laketown Township is home to the unique and historic 100-cottage Castle Park built in the 19th century. Macatawa Park, another turn-of-the-century development, is where L. Frank Baum wrote *The Wizard of Oz*. Laketown Township also owns and oversees the operation of the renowned historic Felt Mansion.



QUALITY OF LIFE

Residents can enjoy a variety of active and passive recreational options, including activities on Lake Michigan and inland lakes, non-motorized trails, fishing, hiking, and organized recreational opportunities such as pickleball and community programs. Laketown Township is known for being family-oriented and has excellent roads, bike paths, schools nearby, and contains more parks than most similar communities. Its rural roads are lined with well-maintained, high-quality, single-family homes where hardworking, family-oriented residents live. Residents can choose from a variety of lifestyle choices ranging from upscale single-family homes to historic farmhouses or townhouses near the City of Holland. Life is lived at a slower pace with non-existing crime rates. You will know your neighbors and will find out first-hand that you are not just a number in Laketown Township.



Opportunities to get outside and hike, road and mountain bike, fish, hunt, shoot recreationally, archery bow hunt, cross country ski, disc golf, and boat are nearly endless. You can explore hiking at Saugatuck State Park, enjoy Laketown Beach on Lake Michigan, go for a dune ride, cross country ski, or a [bike ride to Holland or Saugatuck](#) on any given day. Holland's popular Aquatic Center is known throughout Michigan as a recreational and competitive swimming resource.



The nearby downtowns of Holland, Saugatuck, Kalamazoo, and Grand Rapids provide opportunities for multiple shopping and restaurant options and to engage in community activities and a host of cultural and community events including live music and theater. The Grand Rapids Art Prize celebration is held in September each year and the Gilmore Car Museum, and the Kalamazoo Air Zoo are must-see venues.



Multiple school choices exist in Saugatuck, Hamilton, and Holland and include facilities that are recognized as top class. In addition to these three public school systems, ten charter and parochial school systems exist and offer low pupil-to-teacher ratios. Teachers get to know and actively engage with their students. You can count on teaching and support staff mentoring – whether for college preparation or overall life preparation. School millages are generally approved.

If interested in postsecondary learning venues, numerous

QUALITY OF LIFE

community colleges, four-year colleges, and graduate degree institutions, exist nearby in Holland, Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo, including Hope College, Grand Valley State University, Western Michigan University, and Kalamazoo College.

The award winning Holland Hospital provides first-rate general health care, along with specialized services such as cardiology. [Our Services and Specialties: Healthier Ahead | Holland Hospital](#)

Residents report an acceptance of multiple rural lifestyles in Laketown. Active working farms still exist and it is wide-open enough for hobby farms such as those raising chickens and/or horses. Laketown Township is composed of people committed to its heritage, where local values such natural resource preservation, rural landscapes, and passive recreation predominate.

New professionals and their families love living in Laketown Township. Work/life balance is important. The retiring Township Manager was able to perform well in his position, be active in the community, and participate fully in family life for over three decades.

Given the multitude of outdoor activities, along with convenient transportation, quality schools, safe communities, and friendly people, Laketown Township is referred to by some as a vacation community and creates the backdrop for a great life. This is an excellent opportunity for an experienced professional looking to make a meaningful impact, prioritizing Laketown's public service and community consensus over advancing a specific political agenda. The new Township Board stands ready to support the Township's new Manager in achieving a long and successful tenure.



LAKETOWN TOWNSHIP ECONOMY & MASTER PLAN

With a current unemployment rate of 1% in the area, there is an employment opportunity for each person. Laketown has the lowest tax rate in the area.

Laketown Township’s **Master Plan** is comprehensive. On one hand, the Township is home to lakes, woodlands, and high quality farmland. These irreplaceable natural assets give Laketown Township a strong tradition of preservation in its planning and zoning policies. On the other hand, the Township is part of the fast-growing West Michigan region with rising suburbanization. Laketown Township features a prominent farming industry. The **Master Plan** reads in part:

The amount of land which is vacant or used for agriculture has played a significant role in the development of the character of the Township. The large, open areas create a feeling of spaciousness and provide a tranquil surrounding. Agriculture is one of the major reasons that many of the current residents moved to the Township and continues to be a factor in attracting new residents. Although agriculture is not the dominant use of land within the Township, there are significant areas where soils and drainage characteristics make agricultural preservation appropriate.

Laketown Township is actively working to maintain its rural character while limiting growth to its northern boundary with Holland and its southern boundary with Saugatuck. These low growth options are preferred by the upcoming board members and is explained in the **Master Plan’s** core values:

- Preserve and maintain rural character, open space, and sand dunes from development
- Protect farmland from development
- Provide pedestrian connectivity throughout the Township
- Provide for a high quality of commercial and industrial building and site design to improve aesthetics and compatibility with adjacent land uses.



Specific Agricultural Preferences include:

1. A mixture of large lots and a clustering of residential development to preserve rural character, farmland, and open spaces.
2. Higher quality building materials to improve aesthetics.
3. Installation and connectivity of pedestrian pathways

Specific Residential Preferences include:

1. Clustering of residential development to preserve rural character, farmland, and open spaces

Blue Star Highway Commercial and Industrial preferences include:

1. Smaller scale development of buildings and related signage
2. Preservation of trees along the right-of-way corridor
3. A mixture of higher quality (not only metal) building material
4. Use of building accents and other physical elements
5. Consider an ordinance requiring pedestrian pathways as a part of development proposals

Master Plan Link

The Township is easily accessible to the Grand Rapids Gerald R. Ford International Airport and the runways of the Kalamazoo/Battle Creek International Airport. These two major population and business centers are just a half hour away with a combined total of 1.3 million people.

ORGANIZATION & BUDGET

Laketown is a general law township. Its five-member board consists of a supervisor, clerk, treasurer, and two trustees and all elected officials serve four-year terms. The Township Board is responsible for establishing policies, adopting the budget, appointing committee memberships, and hiring the Township Manager. The Township Board is elected on a partisan basis. A new board majority will be seated in November and is participating in the interview, selection, and employment agreement process.

Laketown Township has a quality staff and is fiscally strong with strong increases in property values. The unrestricted unallocated general fund reserve is \$1.4 million, or approximately nine months of annual operating costs. The Township provides a wide range of public services with a combined budget of \$3 million, performed by eleven (11) full-time staff supplemented by part-time staff and contractual services. Laketown's services include legislative, elections, community development, parks, recreation, fire, cultural, Downtown Development Authority (DDA), public improvements, cemetery, assessing, and general administration. Municipal water and sewer systems are available to northern and southern portions of the Township through contractual agreements with neighboring communities. The Fire

Department is operated by Laketown according to an intergovernmental agreement and shared revenue with Fillmore Township. Policing services are provided by the Allegan County Sheriff's Office. The Township board approves the annual budget on an April 1 through March 31 basis.

[FY2024-25 Budget](#)

The Township Manager reports directly to the Board, serves as the Chief Administrative Officer of the Township, and implements directives and policies of the Board. The Township Manager position is intended to provide the best possible service to the residents of Laketown Township. The Township Manager provides oversight and administrative support to the departments. The position is contractual.

There are no current intergovernmental issues or barriers, yet there is some consideration being given to developing a strategic plan from which short and long-term Township Manager and community goals could be developed. Laketown's staff is composed of hard-working, experienced, and constructive professionals. The office staff work 4 nine-hour days. 36 hours/week.



UPCOMING MAJOR DUTIES, MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

Laketown Township is searching for a seasoned Manager with excellent communication and project implementation experience, as well as frugal financial skills. Laketown Township has high expectations for innovation and thoughtful problem solving.

The next Township Manager will need to be a positive, personable, and hardworking public official who is able to support the new Township Board majority in making hard and controversial decisions on several fronts (key examples include succession planning, strategic planning, financial planning, and communication/technology enhancements).

Laketown's Manager will need to be a patient and effective coordinator using an incremental, shared learning processes to maximize best outcomes. A significant challenge is to orient, mentor, and support new personnel following new board member elections and expected retirements (new elected clerk and new deputy clerk, for example).

The next Township Manager will need to assist the Board and Administration with coordinating and completing the following priorities and opportunities:

- Orient, train, and mentor the new Township Clerk and supplement with a new Deputy Clerk when retirements occur.
- Keep the Township finances in the black while employing conservative financial principles; budgets are traditionally tight.
- Facilitate and direct five-year, strategic planning to calibrate services and projects provided to the community.
- First do no harm; maintain quality of life as a priority. Understand and communicate the indirect or unintentional consequences of an action.
- Consider a zero-based budgeting process to re-orient overall priorities based on completion of a strategic plan early in 2026.
- Address purchasing policy/practices to include new bidding cycles and new prospective competition.
- Consider the Fire Department service realities and make a recommendation on a dedicated Fire Department staffing millage.
- Address short-term rentals via new zoning and enforcement policies.
- Consider extending a sewer line up the Blue Star Highway and associated contractual changes; understand its indirect or unintentional consequences.
- Address Laketown Beach access issues.
- Develop an effective communication plan and implement diligent administration to enable transparent and consistent responsiveness to the community's communication needs.
- Address miscellaneous contractual and intergovernmental negotiations.
- Protect the Township from annexation actions that may arise.





IDEAL CANDIDATE

The ideal candidate understands the complexity of Township finance and intergovernmental relationships and will be able to effectively coordinate and leverage staff efficiency outcomes. Although the former Board majority functioned collegially, multiple pressures need to be astutely managed and communicated from a variety of political, ad hoc, and special interest groups. Impartiality is essential. A thoughtful and comprehensive governance system that is appropriately responsive to multiple points of view and practical realities is needed to channel relationships proactively and positively. It is critical that the Township Manager sets their own personal political beliefs aside.

Laketown Township is specifically looking for a manager who will be:

- A personable, professional, strong, service-oriented, yet practical leader who will listen, learn, and be mindful of residents. This individual will bring a fresh perspective as a consummate professional, communicating directly and honestly with transparency and integrity, while maintaining a realistic approach to assessing needs and managing expectations.
- A well-rounded local government professional who can help orient and enable newly elected officials conduct their roles and responsibilities.
- A leader who can mentor and support staff when taking heat for performing their jobs.
- Someone who can recommend and administer a conservative budget with creativity, innovation, proactive and intergovernmental financial skills while acting as the township's finance director and respecting the checks and balance requirements.
- Capable of being hands-on and personally addressing matters that cannot be delegated given the Township's small staff (inclusive of Laketown's finances, FOIA requests, and parliamentary procedures) yet is not a micromanager.
- An unflappable, flexible, patient and level-headed, well spoken, diplomatic, non-authoritative, good listener, trustworthy, and transparent individual who will share info equally and in a timely manner.
- Someone with knowledge about Fire Departments and the challenges facing them regarding staffing and can develop, recommend, communicate, and support a new potential new fire millage for a full-time professional Fire Department.
- Understands and values Laketown's uniqueness and quality of life accomplishments.
- Demonstrates pacing and endurance and will be slow and incremental in making large changes while recognizing and avoiding potential political whiplashes.
- A servant leader who deeply understands and embodies that the Township Manager's office exists to serve the residents and the Board.
- Knowledgeable about Michigan Township government, and related county and state elected boards and officials, and can demonstrate a quick learning aptitude as changes arise.
- Collaborative with the multiple stakeholders.
- Understanding of the multiple consequences of growth and how it plays a part in funding departments, Township projects, and the Township, while avoiding quality-of-life detriments.
- Has an open door policy, is a people person, respects diverse points of view, stands behind their employees.
- Acts as the Township's human resource director.





REQUIREMENTS

The successful candidate is required to have:

Education:

- Bachelor's degree

Experience:

- Five (5) years of administrative/supervisory experience in local government with responsibility for budgeting, personnel, purchasing, and human resources.
- Knowledge of
 - Principles and practices of public finance, including principles of fund accounting
 - Principles and practices of budget development and control
 - Principles and practices of public administration
 - Management and supervisory principles and practices
 - Principles and practices of media relations and presentation skills
 - Grant application and administration experience
- Professional experience working with a policymaking board.
- Demonstrated commitment to quality improvement and consensus building.
- Ability to strategically plan and implement complex and creative operational programs.
- Ability to manage and/or oversee Township infrastructure projects.
- Demonstrated integrity of, and accountability for, services provided by the Township.
- Supervisory experience using collaborative management principles.

Preferences:

- Preference to candidates with experience as a Township Manager, Deputy Township Manager, City Manager, or an Assistant City Manager in a comparably sized or larger organization.
- Graduate degree in Business, Public Administration, Finance, Law, or a related field preferred
- Residency is not required yet preferred.



COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

The compensation range for the position is \$115,000 - \$140,000, negotiable, DOQ/E. The Township offers a generous and competitive benefit package via an employment agreement.

APPLY TODAY!

[Click here](#) and upload your résumé, cover letter, and contact information for five professional references (references will not be contacted until interview stage). For questions, contact Ryan Cotton at 847-380-3240, Ext. 114. Apply now since applicants will be screened continuously and applications will be accepted until the position is filled. Virtual meetings between likely candidates and the recruiter will begin on September 27, 2024. The final deadline is October 9.

SAVE THESE DATES!

Interviews with the existing and new Township Board members will be conducted on October 30 (first interviews) and November 6 (second interviews). The expected start date is the middle of December or early January. Candidates' applications remain confidential until the semi-finalist stage.

Equal Opportunity/ADA Employer.



BY THE NUMBERS

Population: **6,192** (2024)

Square Miles: **21.6**

Median Age: **47**

Bachelor's Degree: **42%**

Number of Housing Units: **2,755**

Single Family Home ownership rate: **91%**

Income, Median Household: **\$83,986**
(Census 2020)

Median Home Value: **\$445,000** (2024)

Poverty: **2.8%**

Number of Full Time Laketown Township
Employees: **11**

RACE AND ETHNICITY:

93% White

4% Hispanic or Latino

1% Black or African American

1% Asian

1% Other

