

CHAPTER 6. COMMUNITY FACILITIES, UTILITIES & SERVICES

Community facilities play a fundamental role in enhancing civic engagement, sponsoring cultural events, and promoting community pride; and recreational opportunities are quality of life indicators. Recreational facilities and public schools provide public spaces for interactions, learning, and community building, and safety personnel provide a compulsory service to the community. Finally, utility systems are important to understand, because utilities can influence land use decisions, development intensity, and residential densities. The reliable delivery of water and the safe and efficient disposal of wastewater can improve quality of life.

For residents of Wells Township, the city of Caro offers many services essential for health, safety, enjoyment, and daily living as a TIER 1 Urban Service Area (as designated in the Tuscola County General Development Plan). Caro is the county seat of Tuscola County, and therefore houses most main offices of county government and services, including agriculture, police, court, health, education, records, veteran services, and other resources expected to be available in the central county location. The State of Michigan provides a Secretary of State location and Michigan State Police Post in or near Caro. Caro contains a downtown shopping area, along with shopping destinations that extend out from Caro mostly in a southwest to northeast direction along M-81, and offers a large percentage of consumer products needed to maintain properties, homes and the people in them. Wells residents closer to Kingston may find limited services and products they seek in this Tier II Urban Service Area.

Community Facilities

Wells Township Hall (pictured below) was erected in 2006 and houses offices for Township officials. Additionally, it offers a meeting place for Township residents and their governing boards, a location for voting in local, state, and national elections, as well as a facility for rental events. The Township requires a fee and signed agreement for the rental. This facility is expected to be suitable for the life of this plan.



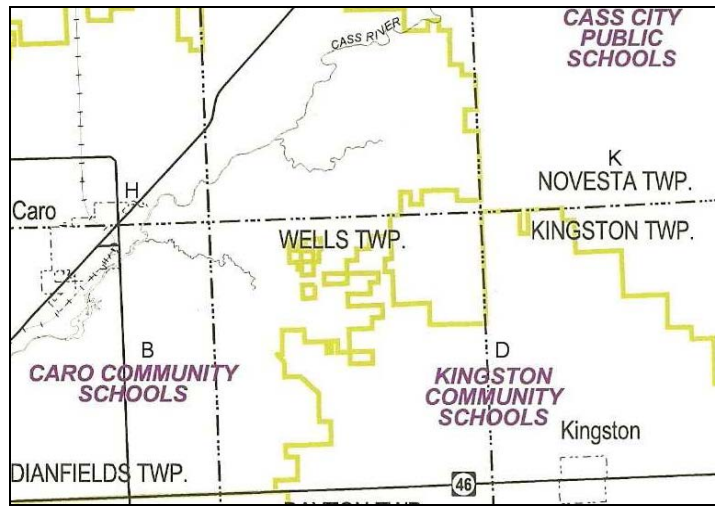
Wells Township maintains the East Dayton Cemetery, with burial spaces available. The Township also owns the North Wells Cemetery, which was abandoned around 1910. Property around the current Wells Township Hall is also owned by the Township.

Educational Facilities

Public School Districts

Three public school districts serve Wells Township, including the Caro Community School district, Kingston Community School district, and Cass City Public School district, as **Map 6.1** shows.

MAP 6.1. SCHOOL DISTRICTS



Caro Community Schools includes Ben H. McComb Elementary School (PreK-2), Frank E. Schall Elementary School (3-5), Caro Middle School (6-8), Caro High School (9-12), and the Caro Alternative Education Learning Center. Caro Community Schools offer access to an indoor pool. Caro Community Schools has a current enrollment just below 1500.

The Cass City Public School district enrolls 938 students and includes an early childhood building, elementary school, and Jr/Sr High School.

The Kingston Community School district has a population of approximately 627 students and contains Kingston Elementary (K-6) and Kingston High School (7-12), and an alternative education center.

Non-Public Schools

Several non-public schools, all parochial, also offer educational facilities within Tuscola County. None of these are located within Wells Township, nor are they located in nearby Caro or Kingston.

Other Learning Institutions

Bayshire Beauty Academy is located in Caro and provides educational services for cosmetology, nail technician, and massage therapy. Wells Township residents also commute to attend college and university programs offered in larger cities such as Flint, Saginaw, and Bay City, Michigan. Those with adequate internet may take advantage of on-line education.

Area Libraries

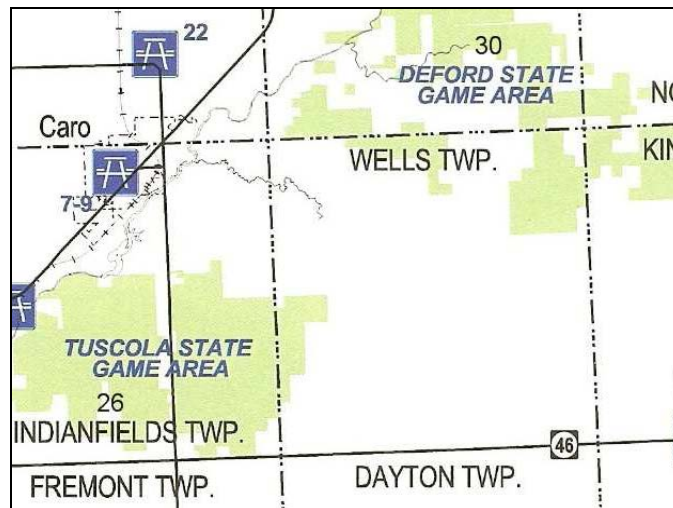
The Caro Area District Library in Caro and the Jacqueline E. Opperman Memorial Library, located in Kingston High School, serve Wells Township residents. The Caro Library offers year-round daily hours and a wide variety of events as well as media check-out services. Activity topics include fitness, art, hobbies, traveling, and movie and story times. Both libraries offer summer reading programs.

Recreational Opportunities

In Wells Township

Wells Township contains sections of State Game Areas as shown in **Map 6.2**, operated by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, offering hiking and hunting opportunities. The Township does not operate any recreational facilities of its own.

MAP 6.2. STATE GAME AREAS



Nearby Recreation

Caro Parks and Recreation offers facilities and activities at Bieth Park, Chippewa Landing, and Atwood Park. Outside of Caro, the Darbee Farm Park, Indianfields Township Park, and Tuscola County Fairgrounds are all within a 20-minute drive for Township residents. Kingston also has a park that may be convenient for residents living closer to the southeast corner of the Township.

City of Caro Parks and Recreation has a five-year master plan and work with a number of partners to provide a large variety of recreational activities. The organizations play an active role in providing places, programs, and services to the meet the recreational needs

of area residents of all ages. Local festivities in Caro include the Farmer's Market, Tuscola County Fair, Pumpkin Festival, Caro Cars & Crafts, and Gingerbread Village.

Facilities in and around Caro offer a variety of recreational opportunities, including bowling, fitness and gym facilities, golf, firearms practice and archery. More than 35 golf courses offer this recreation in the greater thumb area.

In Caro, the Strand Theater provides an old-fashioned theater experience, and opportunities to participate in the arts are available in Caro as another means of recreation.

Less than an hour's drive away is the shoreline of the thumb of Michigan, offering the amenities that the Great Lakes have to offer. Popular beach destinations characterize the Saginaw Bay and Lake Huron shorelines.

Potable Water and Sanitary Sewer

Wells Township residents utilize private wells to receive potable water. There is no municipal sewer in the Township.

Private Utilities

Wells Township is served with relatively basic private utilities. As with many rural communities, portions of Wells Township may not be completely served with a variety of innovative energy and communication systems.

Communications and Digital Connectivity

Landline and cell telephone services are available from a number of local and national vendors. Gaps in coverage occur when not all mobile network operators cover an area, or in cases of "not spots" where a mobile phone loses connection on any network. Such gaps exist in Wells Township.

Internet usage has increased significantly in recent years, with more people using the internet for a wide range of activities, including communication, entertainment, education, and work.

Wells Township has a number of areas unserved (no service or speeds below 25/2 Mbps) and underserved (less than 100/20 Mbps) by high speed cable internet service. Michigan houses many internet providers who collectively offer an average download speed of 67.18 Mbps. Some Wells residents are currently able to access download speeds much lower than this. The Township has been split into sections served by either Thumb Electric/Air Advantage or Mercury Broadband. The coverage is not yet complete. Those still relying on satellite internet service may find less consistent connection, however, many wireless seekers in Wells Township must settle for a satellite provider at this time. Satellite systems for high-speed internet and digital television are available from national network services.

Heating Fuels

The following 2022 data regarding house heating fuel is reported as the percent of occupied housing units with the particular usage. Bottled, tank, or LP gas are used by 66.3% of Township residents as house heating fuels. Fuel oil and kerosene make up 2.7% of fuel use, with electricity used by 8.4% as their main source of fuel. Other fuel makes up the remaining 19.5%. No fuel used for heating was reported by 1.3%. Heating fuel needs are met by a number of area companies.

Electricity

Thumb Electric Co-Operative Inc. and Detroit Edison supply electricity to Township residents. An easement agreement allowed for the development of a photovoltaic solar farm facility operated by Detroit Edison next to the Thumb Electric Co-Operative station. Disruptions in some areas of the Township are experienced several times a year, usually due to storm or equipment damage.

Public Safety Services

Police, fire, and hospital services are necessary for any community, as they protect the general welfare, help alleviate crime, and provide treatment when needed. Police service is provided by the Tuscola County Sheriff's Department and the Michigan State Police. The Township contracts fire services from the Caro Fire Department and Kingston Fire Department.

Emergency 9-1-1 telephone services are available to area residents, including emergency services to Caro Community Hospital, Hills and Dales General Hospital in Cass City, and hospitals in Saginaw, Marlette, Lapeer, Bay City, and various other metropolitan-area medical centers.

Various medical offices covering many medical specialty areas are located in nearby Caro. Drive-in emergency services are provided locally at Caro Community Hospital, nearby in Cass City, and clinics located in Caro provide some evening and weekend services for non-emergencies.

Wells Township contracts for trash and recycling services for all residents. One large item may be picked up on a regular route day with advanced notice. Recycling bins are distributed to each residence and are emptied on the regular route day each week. In addition, the Township website advertises free used-tire drop-off opportunities in surrounding areas. All of these services have reduced the stoves, carpeting, and bags of trash dumped in ditches, woods, and vacant fields. The free tire drop-off service has been popular, since there is usually a charge applied for tires dropped off for recycling elsewhere. Free tire collection is offered in Wells Township and at least ten other locations in Tuscola County through spring and summer months.

Senior Citizen Programming

Senior living accommodations are located in Caro and Cass City, along with opportunities for recreation and social interaction.

IMPLICATIONS – COMMUNITY FACILITIES, UTILITIES AND SERVICES

1. Township facilities currently include the Township Hall and Cemetery. No change is anticipated with these and both should be adequate for the extent of this plan. Vacant Township property should be retained for future use.
2. Educational facilities will likely continue to be based outside of the Township.
3. Most commercial, industrial, and recreational services will continue to be sought in nearby urban service centers of Caro and Kingston, making development of business, commercial, industrial, and recreation services within the Township less important than other land uses.
4. An aging population may benefit from services offered within the Township, such as social/recreational/informational programming, perhaps offered on a regular basis.
5. Utilities must be evaluated in respect to public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare. The character of the Township and the quality of the natural environment are important considerations for utilities within the Township.
6. Wells Township has areas unserved and underserved by broadband service. This presents an important inequality, as lack of internet access can have a number of negative consequences, including limited access to education and employment opportunities, reduced access to health information and services, and limited access to a wide range of resources and services that are now available mostly online. Close monitoring of promised broadband connection is necessary, as the internet continues to play a central role in our daily lives, and the need for high-bandwidth, low-latency connectivity is likely to continue to grow.
7. Renewable energy including solar and wind energy is currently addressed in legislation that may restrict a township's ability to set zoning regulations. Solar energy exists in the Township as a working installation and solar energy systems are addressed in the zoning ordinance.
8. Adjustments to the zoning ordinance may be necessary as the legislation becomes definite.
9. Local communities explore the feasibility of wind and solar facilities in their communities and enact zoning regulations that manage the impacts associated with them. While commercial wind farms can have many impacts and may or may not be appropriate for sites in Wells Township, small scale turbines have much less of an impact on surrounding areas and may be contemplated as a potential alternative energy source for Township residents. Zoning regulations

may address both types of systems, be comprehensive, and regularly reviewed to keep up with this rapidly advancing technology.

10. Townships may pass local snowmobile ordinances that can both restrict and enhance recreational opportunities of this type within the Township. Wells Township may follow county regulations for snowmobiles.
11. Continuance of trash and recycling contracts allow all Township residents a means to dispose of items that might otherwise add to blight. This provides residents with a means of disposing of household trash, which may no longer be burned after a Department of Natural Resources and Environment rule change on April 1, 2011.