

# 2017 Master Plan Data Update

Almena Township, Van Buren County, Michigan

February 16, 2017



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## Introduction

In 2016, the Alma Township Planning Commission reviewed the Township’s Master Plan, which was adopted in 2011. As part of that review, the Commissioner’s requested an update of the demographic, economic, and housing data included in the plan.

The following pages include updated data from the 2011-2015 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates. That data is the most recently available information from the US Census. However, it should be treated with some caution. Unlike the decennial Census, the American Community Survey is based on sampling, not a true headcount. Further, the five-year estimates include data going back to 2011, which is not reflective of the current economic and demographic reality. However, the data is the best available to the Township as of February, 2017. Another data update would be appropriate when data from the next decennial census is made available, likely in 2021.

## Demographic Analysis

In order to adequately plan for its future, a community needs to understand trends occurring in its population. Questions regarding the sources of development pressures, the types of households in the Township, and the kinds of housing in demand are relevant to officials making community service decisions. For example, a young family in a single-family home has different needs than a single senior citizen in an apartment. This chapter provides an overview of basic descriptive statistics (including housing, employment and income levels) to provide Township decision-makers with a frame of reference regarding area demographics.

### Population

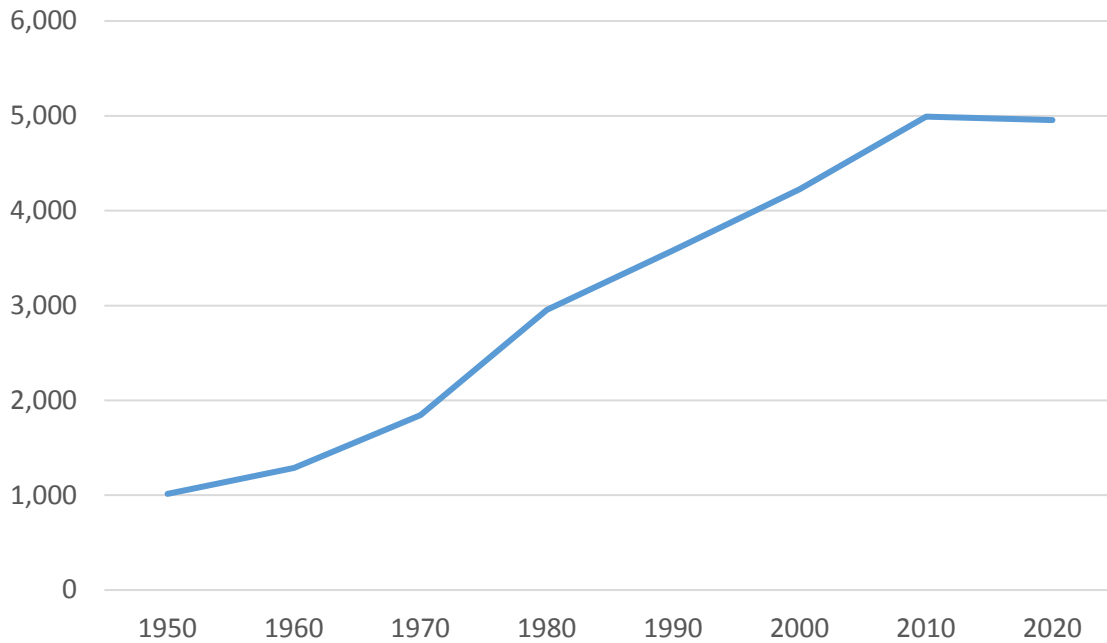
Alma’s population has grown steadily since the 1950’s (see Table I). Between 1970 and the year 2010 (see Figure I) the population has almost tripled, increasing by over 270%. By comparison, Van Buren County’s population increased by about 35% (see Table II) and Michigan’s increased by just over 11% in the same time period. The population estimate for 2016 indicates that the population has leveled off, and even dropped slightly, in the Township over the past few years.

**Table I**  
**Alma Township Total Population by Decade**

1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015
1,014	1,288	1,845	2,956	3,581	4,226	4,992	4,957

Source: U.S. Census, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

**Figure I Total Township Population by Decade**



**Table II  
Total County Population by Decade**

1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015
39,184	48,395	56,173	66,814	70,060	76,263	76,258	75,351

Source: U.S. Census, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Compared to its surrounding communities and the County, the Township had a sizable increase in its population between 1990 and 2010, increasing by 18% between both 1990 and 2000 and between 2000 and 2010 (see Table III). Oshtemo and Texas Townships, located between the City of Kalamazoo and Alma, increased by about 28% and 35%, respectively between 2000 and 2010. These figures are significant considering the State of Michigan population decreased by 0.6% (the only state to have a decreasing population). Between 2010 and 2015, However, Van Buren County, Alma Township, and the surrounding Townships in the County decreased in population slightly, while the Townships in Kalamazoo County has continued to grow, albeit more slowly than in the past.

**Table III Area Population Changes**

<b>Unit of Government</b>	<b>2000 Population</b>	<b>2010 Population</b>	<b>Percent Change (2000-10)</b>	<b>2015 Population</b>	<b>Percent Change (2010-15)</b>
Van Buren County	76,263	76,258	-0.0%	75,351	-1.2%
Almena Twp.	4,226	4,992	18.1%	4,957	-0.7%
Antwerp Twp.	10,813	12,182	12.7%	12,101	-0.7%
Paw Paw Twp.	7,091	7,041	-0.7%	6,942	-1.4%
Waverly Twp.	2,467	2,554	3.5%	2,522	-1.3%
Bloomingtondale Twp.	3,364	3,103	-7.8%	3,054	-1.6%
Pine Grove Twp.	2,773	2,949	6.3%	2,930	-0.6%
Alamo Twp. (Kalamazoo Co.)	3,320	3,762	-1.5%	3,838	+2.0%
Oshtemo Twp. (Kalamazoo Co.)	17,003	21,705	27.7%	22,294	+2.7%
Texas Twp. (Kalamazoo Co.)	10,919	14,697	34.6%	15,796	+7.4%

Source: U.S. Census, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

### Housing Trends and Density

Almena still has relatively low population density overall, and the process of converting from a rural to a suburban community has largely stalled. As of the year 2000, Almena had approximately 123 persons and 47.4 housing units per square mile. Today, those numbers have increased to only 138 persons and 54.9, respectively. For comparative purposes, the population density of Oshtemo Township went from 472 persons per square mile to 619 persons per square mile over the same time period. The largest concentration of population in Almena is in the subdivisions located in the easternmost sections of the Township (again, nearer Kalamazoo). It is only very recently that interest in developing new neighborhoods has resurfaced, after coming to a near complete halt during and after the Great Recession.

### Households

In 1990, Almena Township had 1,204 households. By the year 2000, the number of households had increased by 29%, to 1,553 households. The increase in number of households was much larger than the increase in population. This is likely a reflection of national trends of smaller households and more single-person households. In many ways the increase in the number of households is more significant than the increase in population because it is the household unit that consumes land and requires services. By the year 2010, the Township had a total of 1,839 households for an increase of 18%, and 2015 estimates gave the Township 1,742 households, for a decrease of 5%.

The majority of Almena households are married-couples (74%) reflecting a higher percentage than County and State averages (see Table IV). A higher-than-average number of married couple households

are common for suburbanizing areas because the more affluent two-income households drive the large-lot single-family market. Not surprisingly, the presence of children in the Township’s households is higher than County and State averages. About 37% of all households have school-aged children (individuals 18 or under). The number of households with a senior citizen is higher than County and State averages in that about 44% of all households in the Township have a senior in them while the County and State averages are about 39% and 37% respectively.

The number of single-parent households (12.2%) in the Township is not far from the County and State averages. Non-family households consist of single persons or unrelated persons living together. Almena’s portion of non-family households is smaller than that of the County and State. About 14% of the Township’s households are non-family while nearly one-third of the State’s households are non-family. About 8% of the Township’s households are senior citizens living alone. When considering Township services, non-family and single parent households need to be kept in mind in that they are less able to bear the cost of increased services. The average household size in the Township is 2.84 persons per household, slightly higher than the State and County averages of 2.52 and 2.62 persons, respectively.

**Table IV Household Types**

	Almena Twp.	Van Buren Co.	Michigan
Married-couple families	73.6%	53.1%	48.0%
Single-parent families	12.2%	16.3%	17.3%
Non-family households	14.2%	30.6%	34.7%
Households with individuals under 18 years of age	36.8%	32.1%	30.6%
Households with individuals 60 years and over	43.9%	39.3%	36.8%

Source: 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Age

The percentage of school-aged children (eighteen years and under) in the Township is a little higher than the percentages in the State and the County (see Table V). Almena has a higher median age than both the County and the State but it also has fewer people sixty-five years and over than the County and State. Further, almost half (46%) of Almena’s population is between thirty-five and fifty-four years of age. These facts suggest a predominance of older families (with children in upper grade levels) and “empty-nesters” (couples whose children are raised and out of the house).

**Table V Age Ranges**

	Almena Twp.	Van Buren Co.	Michigan
Percent of the population under 18 years of age	25.4%	24.7%	23.0%
Percent of the population 65 years or older	14.0%	14.9%	14.6%
Median Age	42.9	40.9	39.3

Source: 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Housing

In the year 2000, the Township had a total of 1,631 housing units. Over half of those units were built within a span of nineteen years. Between 1980 and March of 2000, 830 housing units were built in Almena. The housing stock of the Township is almost exclusively single-family (98.2%). Only twenty-nine multi-family units were recorded in the 2000 Census, and they were all two-family units. Mobile homes are considered single-family units and accounted for about 11% of all housing units in the Township. Mobile homes are scattered throughout the Township on individual parcels, in a mixed mobile home subdivision, and in a mobile home park. Single-family homes are found in both large-lot subdivisions as well as on scattered, large-lot parcels. Single-family homes on smaller lots are primarily along the Township’s lakeshores. The value of Almena homes is much higher than the state average of \$94,200. The median home value of owner-occupied homes in Almena as of the year 2000 was \$118,500. In 1980 the median value of the Township’s housing was \$46,400. In twenty years median housing value has gone up 250%.

In 2010, there were 1,945 housing units in the Township; in 2015 there were 1,975 housing units in the Township. However, this increase masks a disturbing trend – the Township actually lost housing units in both 2014 and 2015, likely due to manufactured homes being moved out of the community. A proposal for a new housing development in early 2017 makes a return to increased housing supply likely, however.

The below table shows the new single family, duplex, mobile homes that were built in each year, as compared to the previous.

**Table VI Changes in Housing Stock**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Single Family Residence</b>	<b>Duplex</b>	<b>Manufactured Home</b>
2015	-43	0	-3
2014	-66	0	11
2013	46	0	-60
2012	160	1	-35
2011	52	4	27
2010	10	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>-60</b>

Source: 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Income and Educational Attainment

The Census measures income in three ways: 1) median household, which is representative of all households (non-family and family); 2) median family, which is representative of all family households, including those with single parents; and 3) per capita income, which averages all incomes among the entire population, including non-workers such as children. In all scenarios the Township’s income levels are higher than those of the County and the State (see Table VI). Given the higher income levels of the Township, it’s not surprising that there is a high level of educational attainment. As of the year 2015, over 96% of the population had a high school education and about 36% had a Bachelor’s degree or higher. Only 2.4% of the Township’s population was on public assistance at the time of the 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, yet 9.5% of the population had income below poverty level. Of greater concern are the income levels of female-headed households in the Township. About 27.4% of all female-headed household incomes were below the poverty level.

**Table VII Income Levels**

	<b>Almena Twp.</b>	<b>Van Buren Co.</b>	<b>Michigan</b>
Median household	\$73,851	\$46,536	\$49,087
Median family	\$76,969	\$54,809	\$61,684
Per capita	\$29,825	\$22,034	\$26,143

Source: 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## Employment

As is suggested by the mean reported travel time to work of about 24.5 minutes as of 2015, most workers in the Township commute out of the area for employment. Workers are primarily employed in “educational services, and health care and social assistance” (24.8% of all workers), “manufacturing,” (14.7% of all workers), and “professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services” (13.5% of all workers). About 10% of those employed worked in “retail trade.” The top three occupations that Almena workers reported were “management, business, science, and arts occupations,” (38.1%), “service occupations” (18.3%), and “sales and office occupations,” (18.0%). Another 14.6% of all workers were in “production, transportation and material moving” occupations.

## Agriculture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agriculture Statistics Service (USDA-NASS) prepares a census of agricultural statistics every five years for every county in the nation. The Census of Agriculture is a complete count of all farms and ranches in the United States. The Census looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures. The most recent agricultural census in Van Buren County was completed in 2012. The next census will take place in 2017.

In 2012, there were 1,113 farms in Van Buren County, a 10% decrease from 2007. Those farms covered 175,121 acres, with an average of 157 acres per farm. The market value of all products sold in 2012 was \$194,664,000, an average of \$174,900 per farm. This was the 15th highest total of all counties in the State. The County had the 12th highest total value of crops alone (not including livestock). In Van Buren County, 83% of the sales is from crops and 17% is from livestock sales.

## Conclusion

From 1960 to 2010, Almena Township grew quickly in population and evolved from a predominantly rural area to a community of people who want to live in the “country” yet work in other areas. However, due to the Great Recession and its aftermath, that growth has largely stalled since 2010. That lack of new development, however, presents Almena with an opportunity to define its character. Does it want to grow? Or does it want to preserve its rural character?

The 2011 Master Plan states clearly: “Almena Township should remain an uncongested, slow-paced, rural community where residents are surrounded by peaceful elements of the natural environment.” With that in mind, the lack of growth is a positive – Almena’s character is not under threat from heavy development pressure, and the Community’s Vision, as expressed in the Master Plan, is being fulfilled.