

CHAPTER SEVEN

Community Facilities & Open Space

VISION

Community facilities in the Village of Franklin have evolved consistent with the needs and expectations of this small-town, prudent, close-knit community. Accordingly, community services are professional and friendly, not bureaucratic; community facilities meet essential needs and are not extravagant; and services and facilities are community oriented while respecting individual privacy and independence. Quality is the most important characteristic that defines all community facilities in the Village of Franklin.

VILLAGE SERVICES

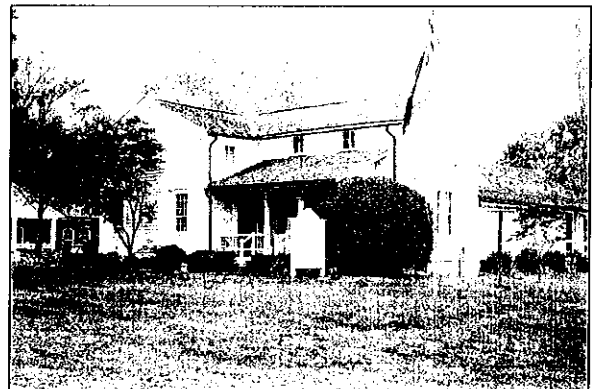
A primary purpose of municipal government is the delivery of services designed for the health, safety, and welfare of the local population. The Village of Franklin coordinates with local organizations and neighboring municipalities to provide residents with high quality community facilities and services. Administrative services, police and fire protection, open space, social and cultural opportunities, and other services and public infrastructure are provided and/or managed by the Village, Oakland County, the Birmingham Public School District, Franklin Community Church, Franklin Community Association, and other public and private groups.

Broughton House (Village Hall)

Village offices are housed in the historic Daniel Broughton House, built in the mid-1800s. The Village Hall includes the offices of the Village Administrator and Village Clerk, the Building Department, and a meeting space for the Village Council, Planning Commission, and other community groups. Work space in the Village Hall is at a premium, as the structure was not originally designed for municipal offices. Even though the existing space is efficiently used, eventually it may be necessary to seek additional office space for the Village government.

A continuing problem in the Village is the lack of public meeting space. Only two small publicly-owned spaces are available: a meeting room in the Broughton House and a smaller room in the

library. The room at the Broughton House can seat between 20 and 30 comfortably; stored items would need to be relocated to permit the maximum capacity of 40 persons. The room in the library can hold a meeting of about one dozen persons, but it cannot be closed off from other library functions, limiting its usefulness. Although having to work around scheduling conflicts is common, the Franklin Community Church

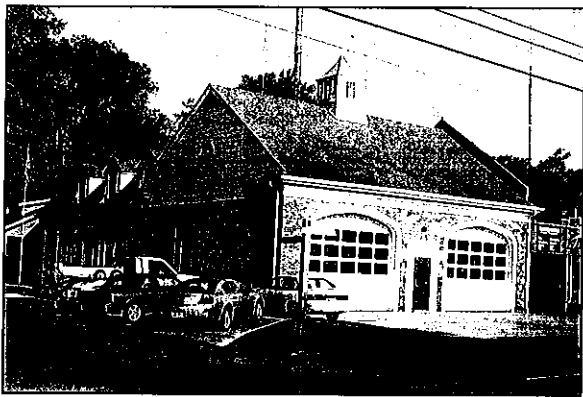


accommodates large public meetings. Community meeting facilities are lacking at times. Nevertheless, the Village has always managed to accommodate needs by adjusting schedules and moving groups to the properly-sized facility. Due to budget constraints, Historical Society restrictions, political considerations and other reasons, it is likely that the Broughton House, Library, and Franklin Community Church will continue to be the Village's main meeting

facilities. The Derwich Property, which is owned by the Historical Society, is also a potential meeting place.

Franklin-Bingham Volunteer Fire Department

The Franklin-Bingham Volunteer Fire Department is a private, non-profit corporation, founded in the 1930s. It has achieved distinction among surrounding communities because of its unique organization (a form of privatization) and quality of service. The department has achieved a very respectable average response time of 5.41 minutes.



The department serves Franklin and Bingham Farms plus seven houses in Southfield Township. Within this area last year the department made 385 runs, 10 of which were fires and 204 of which were for emergency medical services. The department also has a primary mutual aid agreement to serve seventeen communities in the area, and a secondary aid agreement to help serve all of Oakland County.

The mutual aid agreement benefited surrounding communities several years ago during a regional U.S. black out. The Franklin - Bingham Fire Department was on stand-by to deliver water using its tankers to communities on public water, since water pressure dropped to zero in those communities. Franklin does not have a public water system, so the Fire Department maintains a

fleet of 2 tankers. Other vehicles in the fleet include a ladder truck, an engine, a rescue vehicle and a command vehicle.

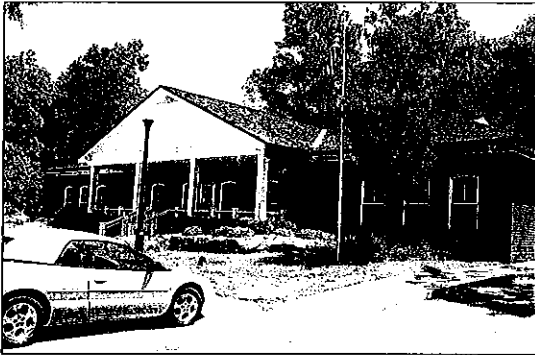
The fire hall, built in 1959, has limited space and parking. An addition built in 2005 added a second, larger truck bay at ground level and two rooms on the second floor. The department has a full-time Chief, a full-time firefighter, a part time clerk, and 33 volunteers. Nearly all of the volunteers live outside of Franklin Village.

The Department has been able to adequately handle any fire-related problems that the Village has experienced to date. Because future development is not expected on a larger scale than currently exists, it is expected that current Fire Department capabilities will be adequate to provide high-quality service now and in the future.

Franklin Police Department

The Police Department is employed by the Village Council to provide protection and assistance to the Village residents. Staffing of the Department includes the Chief, ten full-time officers, and twelve reserve officers. As is the case for the Fire Department, the police provide service to both the Villages of Franklin and Bingham Farms.

The Police Department typically responds to more emergency calls than the Fire Department. The predominant complaints handled by the Village police include home alarms and other minor incidents. According to the detective sergeant, Franklin experienced very few Class I felonies in 2005, with only one armed robbery, one home invasion, two stolen vehicles, and six residential larcenies. Incidents in all categories decreased from 2004 to 2005, with no violent crimes (e.g. murder, sexual assault) reported in the Village. For many years, the Police Department occupied the basement of Broughton House (the Village Hall), leading to severe space constraints for all occupants of the building. A new, 4,500 square foot police station was constructed in 2000. This new facility provides much needed dedicated space for the police department to fulfill its functions and duties.



Water

The Village currently has adequate potable water provided by individual private wells. A recent (2003) referendum of Village residents showed that a 2-1 majority favored staying on private wells.¹

Future changes in the water supply method should consider such issues as cost, growth potential, reliability of a public system, water quality, and environmental considerations.

Wastewater

Residential neighborhoods in Franklin Village are served by sanitary pressure sewers or individual septic tank systems. About fifty percent of the residences are hooked up to the sanitary sewer system. Septic field failures prompted the installation of sanitary sewers in the Village in 1995.

The primary motivation for providing sanitary sewer service in the Village is the protection of public and environmental health. Failing septic systems create the potential for untreated wastewater to enter the local streams and rivers, exposing Village residents to unhealthful conditions and creating negative effects on natural areas.

¹ There was 65% voter turnout, and 935 voted against and 509 voted in favor of a public water system. 934 voted against an increased millage to fund a public water system, and 497 voted in favor.

Storm Water

In addition to wastewater disposal, storm water management is also an essential part of pollution control within the Village. Few of the streams located in the Village are designated as County drains, and there are no guidelines available for permissible activities within non-designated drain areas. Map 6 shows the locations of streams and floodplains in the Village. Storm water management operations will be enhanced by following these recommendations:

- The floodway area, which bounds the Franklin Branch of the Rouge River, should be preserved and protected. No development or filling should be allowed in this area, nor should any vegetative alterations be permitted.
- To protect the natural ability of the drains and drainage swales to absorb and convey storm water flows, no development, filling, or change in the character of the vegetative cover should be permitted in such drainage courses.

By granting special consideration for these drainage areas, environmental integrity of these zones will be preserved, and the storm water management objectives of the Village may be achieved.

Runoff from streets and parking lots is a major source of pollutants to the Franklin Branch of the Rouge River. Wherever possible, on-site detention should be sought to encourage stormwater infiltration into the ground.

Utility Wires

Overhead utility wires and poles are among the most visually disruptive elements in the rural landscape in Franklin. The aesthetic quality of the streetscape is diminished by the presence of wires lining and crossing the streets. A phased program to eliminate overhead wires and poles is required. Such a program should begin in the Village Center and Historic District.

COORDINATED SERVICES

Library

The Franklin Library began its life in the Franklin School, moving in 1938 to an office building

located on what would become the Village Green. The Franklin Community Library Association was formed in 1940, accepting responsibility for the library's collection from the Franklin School Parent-Teacher Association.

From 1961 to 1976, the library shared building space with the Village offices and police department, until those entities moved to the Broughton House. In 1973, the library changed from a paid subscription organization to a public library to become eligible for State funding.

The late 1980s brought significant change when the Franklin Public Library joined what would later become The Library Network (TLN), a consortium of over 65 local libraries throughout Southeast Michigan. Membership in TLN allows Franklin Public Library patrons reciprocal access to materials in the collections of any TLN member library.



Schools

The Village of Franklin is part of the Birmingham Public Schools (BPS), which serves 7,900 students in thirteen schools from kindergarten through 12th grade. There are no district facilities within the Village; elementary students attend the West Maple Elementary School, located two miles away in Bloomfield Township. Middle school students attend Berkshire Middle School at Fourteen Mile and Lasher, and high school students attend Groves High Schools at Thirteen Mile and Evergreen Road. Students in grades 3 – 8 also have the option of attending Covington School, a magnet school.

The historic Franklin School, founded in 1828 (current building built in 1922), is located in the Village, but it is no longer owned by the school district. It is now called Huda School, a private school.

Recent bond issues are providing for ongoing improvements at all BPS schools, including those that Franklin students attend. The schools have been updated with new technology, and all elementary schools in the district are being completely renovated. Given the plans of the BPS for renovation and improvements, the lack of space for new development, and the projections of school-age children in the Village, no new school facilities should be necessary within the Village of Franklin.

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

Due to the existing recreational opportunities in the Village (provided by the Franklin Community Association) and neighboring communities, Franklin has little need to construct additional active recreation facilities within the Village limits. However, consideration should be given toward the acquisition of new, publicly-owned open space areas within the Village.

Village Green and Franklin Community Association Grounds

The Village Green, the block on which the library sits north of Broughton House, is owned by the Village. There are no active recreational facilities on this land, but it is accessible to the public. It is a particularly useful gathering place for Village events, such as Concerts on the Green.

The Village would benefit from preparing and adopting a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Such a plan would include an analysis of existing facilities and programs, identification of deficiencies and needs, and projections of future improvements, short-term (within 5 years) and long-term. A Parks and Recreation Master Plan could incorporate an open space element, as described below.

On land owned by the Franklin Community Association (a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving the people of Franklin Village) and located west of the Broughton House, there are three ball diamonds, two tennis courts, and a gazebo. A sledding hill, located on Village property between the cemetery and the Green, also provides a recreational opportunity.

Open Space

Village residents take pride in Franklin's undeveloped places and natural areas. Wetlands, wooded thickets, ball fields, Charlotte's Garden (adjacent to Broughton House), and the Village Green are essential to the image of Franklin.

Most of the undeveloped areas are privately owned, however, and are not protected from future development. With the exception of scattered small parcels, the only publicly-owned open space is the Village Green and the adjacent land owned by the Franklin Community Association.



The loss of open spaces will significantly change the character of the Village if residential development occurs on the few remaining open parcels. Development may be sudden or gradual – the incremental expansion of cleared area for lawn can, over time, have as detrimental an effect as wholesale land clearing for construction of new houses. The deed restrictions in place for some neighborhoods provide only a minimal level of protection for open spaces; the restrictions may

not cover all potential losses of open space or they may not remain in force over the long term.

An open space plan for the Village would inventory the remaining undeveloped parcels and publicly-owned natural areas and establish guidelines for their use and preservation. A plan would provide land developers, whether of multiple parcels or a single lot, with the opportunity to shape development around open space areas and incorporate the natural features of the Village into their construction plans. An open space plan could identify potential connections between open space areas that would serve to better enhance the rural character of the Village.

The following recommendations regarding open space within the Village should be considered for implementation by the Village Council.

- Preserve undeveloped areas throughout the Village to protect rural character and the functioning of natural ecosystems. An inventory of undeveloped parcels, natural areas, and publicly-owned land should be the basis for a preservation program. Acquisition of development rights, obtaining conservation easements, or outright land purchases are tools that can be used to implement the program. Priority areas include:
 - Connections to publicly owned parcels or other protected natural areas.
 - Highly visible locations that define the character of the Village, such as intersections.
 - Opportunities for a public pathway system linking neighborhoods to the Village Center.
 - Parcels offered by private landowners for conservation easements or permanent deed restrictions.
- Develop landscape guidelines for the protection of the character of Franklin Village through appropriate plantings and the retention of existing vegetation. These guidelines should be applicable to both individual residential landowners and parcels in the Village Center.



Franklin Cemetery

Franklin Cemetery, established in 1827 by Elijah Bullock, is currently owned and managed by the Franklin Cemetery Association, a non-profit corporation of cemetery plot owners. The cemetery comprises approximately six acres of land in the southwest corner of the historic district. A variety of mature trees are planted within the cemetery, particularly on the north side of the property.

The cemetery holds over 3,500 graves, with 532 dated from the 19th century. A war memorial to Franklin's veterans holds a place of honor in the cemetery. Additional spaces in the cemetery are available for sale to residents; purchases are conducted through the Cemetery Association.