

CITY OF LOWELL
PLAN FOR CONTINUED COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION

PREVIOUS SERVICE CONSOLIDATIONS

1. In 2009, the City of Lowell, Vergennes Township and Lowell Township entered into a joint Fire and Emergency Services agreement. This agreement allows for the City and Townships to provide fire protection and emergency medical support to the entire area of the City of Lowell, Vergennes and Lowell Charter Township. This agreement has provided the City of Lowell greater cooperation and sharing of resources for public safety. It has saved the City approximately \$36,000 per year, as the City of Lowell no longer pays for the maintenance of the fire station, these costs are all shared and based on a formula among the three municipalities. The formula for the authority consists of the following:

State Equalized Value 40%, Population 20% and number of runs 40%.
2. The City of Lowell has an agreement with the State of Michigan to maintain M-21 within the City limits for snow/ice removal, street sweeping, and general maintenance in exchange for an amount equal to 100% of the Act 51 funding dedicated to these routes. The State of Michigan remains responsible for any road or bridge improvements.
3. The City of Lowell entered into an agreement with REGIS (Regional Geographic System) in May of 2008 with 18 other municipalities in Kent County. Regis provides centralized hosting of a comprehensive GIS system which is accessed via the internet. The City of Lowell pays dues to the consortium to support the services provided. Member dues are less than what would be needed to support an in house system.
4. The City of Lowell receives election equipment from the state, ballots and supplies from Kent County, and hosts the elections for entities with ballot issues located in the Lowell School District. These centralized elections reduce redundancies and provide economies of scale for jurisdictions having items on the ballot.
5. The City of Lowell participates in mutual aid agreements with the surrounding townships, state and the County for police and fire response. The agreements improve our police and fire response by sharing personnel and equipment with surrounding agencies when mutual aid is needed.
6. The City of Lowell bills and collects taxes for all jurisdictions in our taxing area twice per year (summer and winter billing). Kent County and Lowell Schools save by not having to create, mail and collect property taxes.
7. In 2003 the Lowell Community Fund provided a grant for the purchase of various items including a brush hog, sprayer, parking lot striper and other pieces of miscellaneous

outdoor equipment for the shared ownership and use by the City, Lowell Area Schools and the Kent County Youth Fair. This agreement provides all three entities the use of this equipment without having to individually purchase these items. Each jurisdiction houses a portion of this equipment, maintains and stores it. This agreement and worked out very well for the shared use of this equipment.

8. In November, 2004, the City of Lowell entered into an agreement with Lowell and Vergennes Townships to create the Lowell Area Recreation Authority (LARA). The authority has already been successful in obtaining grant funding for the construction of a trail that connects schools through each of the municipalities. There are no savings as a result of this cooperative effort.
9. The Lowell Police Department provides public safety services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The LPD has six full time officers. The minimum number of full time officers needed to provide 24/7 coverage is 11. Lowell uses part-time officers that are approximately one third the cost of a full time officer per hour to cover shift shortages.

In addition, LPD officers work collaboratively with the Kent and Ionia County Sheriff Departments to provide first responder services to the townships of Lowell and Vergennes (Kent County) and Boston and Keene (Ionia County). LPD officers are frequently the closest police car to an emergency in parts of those townships. LPD will manage the call until the appropriate county unit arrives and on occasion take the call at the request of the sheriff department. This occurred more than 300 times in 2011.

10. The Lowell Police Department has a collaborative agreement with the Lowell Area Schools wherein the LPD fingerprints school employees free of local charges and the school district allows the police department to use school facilities for training and meetings at no charge. This is compatible with another training collaborative effort in which the Lowell Police Department has joined more than 50 other public safety services providers and several universities to provide regional criminal justice training through the West Michigan Criminal Justice Training Consortium. By pooling training dollars and utilizing training facilities in the region public safety providers, including Lowell, are able to attract high quality instructors and use local facilities that saves member agencies thousands of dollars in travel and housing costs for officer training each year. In addition, localized training decreases the amount of time officers are out of the patrol schedule in their home jurisdictions.
11. The City of Lowell contracted privately with Imperial Municipal Services for building code enforcement and inspection services for more than 20 years. This privatization effort has saved the city for many years. In 2012, the City of Lowell negotiated a more advantageous contract with Cascade Township for these services. This new contract doubled the revenue that the City of Lowell (for a total of approximately \$5,000) receives as reimbursement for administrative expenses relating to building permits and code enforcement.

2012 PROPOSED SERVICE CONSOLIDATION UPDATE

12. The City of Lowell will work with Lowell and Vergennes Townships, the Lowell Area School District and the Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce to develop a process to create a community vision and identity. This process will enable local government, schools, and non-profit entities to collaborate in areas that will help move the community toward a common vision. The visioning process itself may not result in any immediate savings, however, it could identify certain areas where future collaboration may occur.

2013 UPDATE: The Community Vision process has been completed without any barriers and consultants are currently in the process of working on the final reports. Included in reports will be a communication plan and an implementation plan. While the vision process itself has been implemented, review and discussion of any ideas that come from the plan itself will take time. The next step will be review and discussion and proceeding with the implementation plan. First steps in proceeding with the implementation plan will begin in the spring of 2013. It is expected that it will take one to two years to complete the implementation plan.

2014 UPDATE: A result of the Community Vision process is the creation of the Greater Lowell Strategic Alliance. The alliance has been endorsed by Lowell and Vergennes Townships, the City of Lowell, Lowell Area Schools and the Lowell Community Chamber of Commerce. The head of the governing bodies plus one other individual in each of the organizations is a member of the alliance. The alliance meets monthly and is currently undergoing discussion about how to coordinate local economic development efforts. There are no barriers and no timeline has been established by the group yet for achieving specific outcomes. The greatest benefit is that the leadership of the involved organizations are talking on a regular basis and we believe that this relationship-building process will lead to further dialog on potential ideas for collaboration. This is a key first step in the local collaborative process, unachievable in many areas of the state.

2013 PROPOSED SERVICE CONSOLIDATION UPDATE

13. The City of Lowell has contracted with the Kent County Sheriff's Department for part-time dispatch services (weekends and weekday evenings) for several years. We will explore the potential savings of contracting for this service on a full-time basis. If we contract on a full-time basis we would begin July 1, 2013. The potential savings is not measurable as staff currently assigned to dispatching will be assigned to enhancing other services currently being provided.

2014 UPDATE: The City of Lowell contracted with the Kent County Sheriff's Department for full-time dispatch services beginning in the summer of 2013. The contract increased expenses by approximately \$12,000. The increase in expense was offset by eliminating a part-time cleaning position and re-assigning a portion of the time of a dispatcher/clerk

to cleaning duties. There was no savings in this consolidation effort. There were no barriers. This project is complete.

2014 PROPOSED SERVICE CONSOLIDATION

14. The City of Lowell is considering an agreement with the Michigan State Police to participate in the Statewide Records Management System. This agreement would be an alternative to a countywide effort to collect and maintain police records. Estimated savings would be approximately \$5,000 in up-front costs and approximately \$3,000 annually. Anticipated implementation would be late first quarter or second quarter of 2014.