

GRAY'S COUNTY GOLD RESOURCE

Kent County, Michigan

Property Records, Permits, Environmental Health, Utilities and Due-Diligence Guide

Purpose A verified, homeowner-friendly starting point for identifying the correct agency, locating property records, recognizing research gaps and choosing the next factual step. This resource does not replace legal, surveying, engineering, environmental or governmental determinations.

Prepared for homeowners, buyers, sellers, inspectors and real-estate professionals

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Quick Start

1. Confirm the exact parcel and municipality using Kent County Parcel Viewer or Property Search.
2. Identify the separate authorities for zoning; building and trades; well/septic; road; soil erosion; drains; floodplain/wetlands; water; and sanitary sewer.
3. Search available online records using the address, parcel number, former address and prior parcel number.
4. Request the complete property file, including applications, permits, plans, inspections, correction notices, finals, occupancy records and expired/canceled items.
5. Compare records with seller documentation, historical sources and present physical conditions.
6. Classify unresolved issues as informational, records follow-up, professional verification or prompt safety/governmental follow-up.
7. Preserve the search log and all written responses.

Do not shortcut jurisdiction Mailing city, ZIP code, school district, utility provider and familiar neighborhood name do not reliably identify the governing municipality.

[Kent County Parcel Viewer \(iMap\)](#)

[Kent County Property Search](#)

Kent County Government Structure

Kent County contains 9 cities, 5 incorporated villages and 21 townships. Michigan LARA lists Kent as having no county construction-code program. Every local unit is a local enforcing jurisdiction for building, electrical, mechanical and plumbing, although many use contracted providers.

Cities	Villages	Townships
Cedar Springs; East Grand Rapids; Grand Rapids; Grandville; Kentwood; Lowell; Rockford; Walker; Wyoming	Caledonia; Casnovia; Kent City; Sand Lake; Sparta	Ada; Algoma; Alpine; Bowne; Byron; Caledonia; Cannon; Cascade; Courtland; Gaines; Grand Rapids; Grattan; Lowell; Nelson; Oakfield; Plainfield; Solon; Sparta; Spencer; Tyrone; Vergennes

Village warning Village of Casnovia crosses Kent and Muskegon counties. Casnovia Township is in Muskegon County and must not be routed as a Kent County township.

Construction-Code Authority Directory

Jurisdiction	Building / Electrical / Mechanical / Plumbing administrator
Ada Township	Cascade Inspection Services
Algoma Township	PCI - Rockford
Alpine Township	Local department
Bowne Township	PCI - Hastings
Byron Township	Local inspection services
Caledonia Township	Local building department
Cannon Township	Imperial Municipal Services (IMS)

Jurisdiction	Building / Electrical / Mechanical / Plumbing administrator
Cascade Township	Cascade Inspection Services
Courtland Township	IMS
Gaines Township	Local building department
Grand Rapids Township	Cascade Inspection Services
Grattan Township	Local inspectors
Lowell Township	Cascade Inspection Services
Nelson Township	Local inspectors
Oakfield Township	PCI - Rockford
Plainfield Township	Cascade Inspection Services
Solon Township	Local inspectors
Sparta Township	Local inspectors
Spencer Township	Local department
Tyrone Township	Contracted named inspectors
Vergennes Township	Cascade Inspection Services
City of Cedar Springs	PCI - Rockford
City of East Grand Rapids	Cascade Inspection Services; city zoning/drainage
City of Grand Rapids	City Development Center
City of Grandville	PCI - Jenison
City of Kentwood	City Inspections
City of Lowell	PCI - Rockford
City of Rockford	PCI - Rockford
City of Walker	PCI contract; city zoning
City of Wyoming	City Building Inspections
Village of Caledonia	IMS
Village of Casnovia	IMS
Village of Kent City	PCI - Rockford
Village of Sand Lake	Local jurisdiction; contact village to verify current complete roster
Village of Sparta	PCI - Rockford

Authority rule The municipality retains local jurisdiction even when a contractor administers permits. Zoning generally remains with the municipality unless its official instructions say otherwise. Inspector names and direct numbers must be verified because staffing changes faster than jurisdiction.

[Michigan LARA Statewide Jurisdiction List - revised July 29, 2026](#)

[PCI Rockford municipalities and contacts](#)

[Cascade Inspection Services communities](#)

Environmental Health: Wells, Septic and Real-Estate Evaluations

Kent County Environmental Health, 700 Fuller Avenue NE, Grand Rapids, MI; 616-632-6900; KCEHmail@kentcountymi.gov.

Service	Published fee / note
Well and septic real-estate evaluation	\$295; includes bacteria and partial chemical testing
Well only - property connected to sewer	\$295
Septic only - property connected to municipal water	\$250
Change-of-use office review	\$20
Change-of-use site visit	\$120; a full permit may be required

- Permits and site evaluations are generally valid for two years and are nontransferable.
- Site approval is not an installation permit.
- Many additions, bedrooms, changes of use or increased flows on well/septic properties require Environmental Health review.
- A \$50 processing charge applies to applications canceled before fieldwork; missed appointments may result in a \$75 charge. Verify all fees before relying on them.

[Kent County Septic and Well permits/evaluations](#)

Well and septic records request checklist

- Well permit and log
- Septic permit, site/soil evaluation and design
- Installation and final inspection
- Repair, replacement and abandonment records
- Water-sampling results
- Real-estate evaluation and change-of-use review
- Variances, restrictions and recorded health notices
- Municipal water/sewer connection evidence

Radon Information and Considerations

Radon maps and risk zones describe area-level potential. They cannot determine the level in an individual home and do not replace testing. Building age, foundation type, crawlspace/basement configuration and neighboring results cannot reliably clear a home without measurement.

- Test the individual dwelling using an appropriate protocol and device.
- Follow current device-placement, closed-building and quality-control requirements.
- Consider retesting after major renovations, foundation work or HVAC changes.
- Kent County commonly offers free kits in January; verify current availability and instructions.

Environmental Sites, PFAS and Recorded Restrictions

Kent County requires a property-specific environmental screen. A nearby mapped site is a reason to review current agency data; it is not proof that the subject parcel is contaminated. Likewise, absence from one map is not a universal environmental clearance.

- North Kent Study Area / House Street Disposal Area
 - Former Rockford Wolverine tannery
 - Algoma-Cedar Springs and other PFAS areas of interest
 - OE Bieri Industrial Drive and other active investigation areas
 - Former landfills and federal/state cleanup sites
 - EGLE recorded land/resource-use restrictions and restrictive covenants
1. Confirm the exact parcel and drinking-water source.
 2. Search MPART PFAS inventory and live map.
 3. Search EGLE RIDE and review recorded restrictions/deeds.
 4. Open the current site page and contact the listed site lead for current status.
 5. Review sampling locations, dates and media; do not apply an area result to an unsampled parcel.
 6. Use qualified environmental and health professionals for property-specific decisions.

Live-status rule MPART warns that some individual site pages may not be routinely updated. Use the current site lead and live inventory for the latest status.

[MPART PFAS Sites and Areas of Interest](#)

[House Street Disposal Area](#)

[Rockford Tannery](#)

Floodplain, Wetlands, Drains and Lake Levels

- Use FEMA Map Service Center for official NFIP flood products and applicable map revisions. A parcel outside a mapped special flood hazard area is not guaranteed flood-free.
- EGLE/USACE Joint Permit Application may apply to wetlands, floodplains, dams, lakes, streams and Great Lakes shoreline work.
- Kent Drain Commissioner maintains more than 536 miles of drains, hundreds of detention facilities and 19 court-established lake levels.
- A visible ditch, creek or pipe is not automatically a county drain. Confirm jurisdiction before modifying, crossing, filling or discharging.
- Legal lake levels and drain projects may create special assessments.
- Drain, floodplain or wetland review does not replace zoning, building, road or soil-erosion approvals.

[FEMA Flood Map Service Center](#)

[Kent County Drain Commissioner](#)

Roads, Driveways, Right-of-Way and Soil Erosion

Road responsibility depends on jurisdiction: KCRC county roads; municipality city/village streets; MDOT M/US/I routes; and private owners/associations for private roads. An existing driveway or road sign does not prove public status or an approved permit.

- KCRC requires permits for work in county road right-of-way, including driveways, sidewalks, landscaping and utilities.
- KCRC administers soil erosion for most of Kent County; Grand Rapids, Kentwood, Rockford and Walker are exceptions.
- A soil-erosion permit is generally required for qualifying ground disturbance within 500 feet of a lake/stream or greater than one acre.
- Active soil-erosion responsibilities may transfer to a purchaser until stabilization is complete.
- Use KCRC Find My Jurisdiction before reporting a road issue or assuming maintenance responsibility.

[KCRC permit center](#)

[KCRC Find My Jurisdiction](#)

Water, Sanitary Sewer and Utility Routing

- Cities: start with the city utility/engineering department.
- Byron and Gaines: Byron-Gaines Utility Authority.
- Plainfield, Cannon, Courtland and portions of Alpine sanitary sewer: North Kent Sewer Authority; water responsibility remains jurisdiction-specific.
- Grand Rapids provides regional water service beyond city limits in some areas.
- A nearby main does not prove availability, capacity, connection or paid frontage/availability charges.
- Utility provider, taxing municipality and permitting authority may differ.
- Storm sewer is not sanitary sewer. Review connection permits, bills, special assessments and abandonment records.

Deeds, Parcels and Historical Property Research

Kent deeds are searchable online from January 1, 1970. Basic search is free and document copies are \$1 per page. Older records require ledgers or microfilm. Current published advanced access is \$25 for 24 hours or \$2,000 annually; verify before purchase.

Source	Best use	Limitation
Parcel/assessor record	Municipality, parcel, current assessed description	Tax-roll owner may not be legal owner; GIS is not a survey
Historical assessor cards	Prior sketches, photos, descriptions	Does not prove permit/final
Aerial imagery	Timeline of larger exterior changes	Not exact construction date or interior history
Listing cards 1950s-1990s	Photos and sale descriptions	Listing statements are not governmental approval
City directories	Occupant/business/address history	Not ownership or permit evidence
Sanborn maps	Historic footprints, use and materials	Limited geography/time
Recorded deeds/plats	Title chain, legal descriptions, easements/restrictions	Needs later instruments and legal interpretation
Permit/inspection file	Authorized scope, inspections and finals	May omit work outside scope

Grand Rapids address warning: many addresses changed in 1912. Search both the current and prior address when researching older properties.

[Kent County Online Deeds Search](#)

[Grand Rapids Public Library House History Resources](#)

Property-Level Permit Research Workflow

1. Identify the exact parcel, municipality and former identifiers.
2. Separate zoning from building/trade authority.
3. Search online portals using multiple identifiers.
4. Request every discipline, including expired/canceled/voided records and code enforcement.
5. For every permit, verify scope, inspection history, correction notices, final approval and certificate of occupancy.
6. Compare records with the physical property and seller documentation.
7. Document limitations and choose the appropriate action level.

Approved missing-record language No record was located in the sources reviewed. Confirm with the enforcing agency. Do not state that work was never permitted unless the responsible agency makes that determination based on its complete records.

Physical clue to record request

Visible condition	Records to investigate
Partial crawlspace or changing foundation	Addition/remodel permits; assessor sketches; aerials; listing cards
Finished basement or basement bedroom	Building/trade permits; insulation; egress; smoke/CO; finals
Garage/attic conversion	Zoning/use; structural; building/trades; occupancy
Deck, porch or roof over deck	Zoning; footing; building; electrical if applicable; final
New panel/service or extensive wiring	Electrical permit and final
Furnace, boiler, AC, fireplace or gas changes	Mechanical permit and final
Added bath, kitchen or laundry	Plumbing/electrical/mechanical/building
Pool, hot tub or solar	Building/trades; barrier; zoning; utility where applicable
Septic field/yard disturbance	Health permit/design/final; abandonment/connection
Drive, culvert or ditch crossing	Road/ROW, drainage and soil-erosion approvals

Neutral field wording The differing foundation configuration may indicate phased construction or a later addition. This observation alone does not establish when the work occurred or whether permits were required or obtained. Review assessor records, historical imagery, building permits and available inspection records.

Special Property Branches

Condominiums

- Unit parcel and legal description
- Master deed, condominium plan and amendments
- Common-element versus unit-owner responsibility
- Permits under unit, development, common or parent parcel
- Shared roofs, foundations, utilities, roads and drainage

Manufactured/mobile homes

- Land ownership versus leased site
- Title/certificate of ownership
- Affidavit of affixture/detachment
- Installation, foundation, anchoring and utility approvals
- Additions, decks and park/local requirements

Multi-unit/rental

- Approved dwelling-unit count and zoning use

- Certificates of occupancy and rental registration
- Fire separation and alarm records
- Basement/attic units, kitchens, meters and entrances

Private roads/shared drives

- Public/private/dedicated-unaccepted status
- Recorded access and maintenance agreements
- Snow, grading, drainage, bridge/culvert and emergency access
- Entrance permit and association assessments

Waterfront/water-adjacent

- Floodplain, wetland and ordinary/legal water level
- Shoreline, seawall, dock and drain approvals
- Well/septic setbacks and riparian language
- Lake/drain special assessments

Boundary/cross-jurisdiction

- Municipality containing structure and driveway entrance
- Tax parcel, road authority and utility provider
- Fire/EMS and environmental authority
- Multiple parcels or counties

Records Conflict Decision Rules

Conflict	Next controlling evidence
Tax roll vs deed	Recorded instruments/title research
GIS vs fence/occupied area	Recorded documents and licensed survey
Assessor sketch vs house	Historical cards, permits, plans and measurements
Listing vs approved bedroom/unit count	Zoning, occupancy and building records
Permit issued vs claimed completion	Inspection log, final approval and occupancy certificate
Aerial structure vs no online permit	Former address/parcel and staff-assisted archive search
HOA summary vs restriction	Recorded declaration and amendments
Utility bill vs septic components	Connection and Health Department abandonment records

- Confirm every source describes the same parcel.
- Document the conflict exactly and preserve dates/screenshots.
- Use the evidence hierarchy appropriate to the question.
- Do not average conflicting dates or select the convenient source.
- Report unresolved facts and identify the professional or agency needed.

Action Levels

Level	Meaning	Action
1 - Informational	Difference without apparent present safety/approval concern	Retain with property records
2 - Records follow-up	Sources incomplete, inconsistent or unclear	Request complete file and written confirmation
3 - Professional verification	May affect title, boundary, structure, use, utilities, drainage or environment	Consult surveyor, title/legal, engineer or specialist
4 - Prompt safety/government	Potential immediate hazard, failed system or unsafe occupancy	Protect occupants and promptly contact qualified authority/professional

Safety exception Do not delay for paperwork when there is suspected gas/CO exposure, electrical overheating, structural instability, sewage discharge, unsafe occupied space, active flooding or another immediate threat. Protect occupants first and contact emergency or qualified help.

Transaction Timing

Before an offer

- Confirm parcel/municipality
- Screen utilities, private road, waterfront, flood and environmental flags
- Compare listing and assessor descriptions
- Identify visible/advertised alterations

Immediately after acceptance

- Record all deadlines
- Save listing/disclosures
- Request seller and agency records
- Order specialized evaluations early

After inspection

- Compare representations, records and physical observations
- Assign action level
- Prioritize issues that could change the decision

Before closing

- Confirm promised records and repair finals
- Address open permits and occupancy records
- Review utility/special assessments, title and private-road documents
- Preserve unresolved matters in writing

After closing

- Maintain permanent property file

- Obtain permits and every required final for future improvements

Evidence Grades and Search Log

Grade	Evidence	Use
A	Recorded instrument, licensed survey, final inspection, occupancy certificate, written agency determination	State documented fact within scope
B	Issued permit, approved plan, assessor card, health installation/final, official GIS layer	Report record plus limitation
C	Historic aerial, directory, Sanborn, listing card, dated photo	Corroborate timeline or clue
D	Listing, seller/contractor statement, HOA summary, third-party database	Attribute and verify
E	Physical observation needing verification	Describe neutrally; identify follow-up

Minimum search-log fields

- Address, parcel, municipality, former address and prior parcel
- Research purpose and transaction deadline
- Source/agency/provider and contact person
- Search terms and identifiers used
- Date range covered and records located
- Evidence grade and conflicts
- Missing information and referrals
- Follow-up date, outcome and limitation statement

Ready-to-Use Request Language

Complete permit-history request

Copy/paste Please provide all available building, electrical, mechanical, plumbing, demolition, zoning, occupancy and code-enforcement records associated with [address], parcel [number], former addresses and prior parcel numbers. Include applications, issued/expired/canceled/voided permits, approved plans, inspection results, correction notices, final approvals, certificates of occupancy and unresolved violations. If another office or contracted provider holds any portion, please identify it. Electronic copies are preferred; advise before processing if charges apply.

Issued permit with no displayed final

Copy/paste Please confirm whether permit [number] received every required inspection and final approval; whether corrections remain; whether it expired, was canceled or remains open; whether related building/trade permits should be reviewed; and whether a certificate of occupancy was required and issued. Please provide the inspection history and final documentation if available.

Well and septic request

Copy/paste Please provide all available well permits/logs; septic permits, soil/site evaluations, designs and as-builts; installation/final inspections; repair/replacement/abandonment records; water results; real-estate evaluations; change-of-use reviews; and variances/restrictions for [address/parcel]. If no record is located, please clarify whether records predate the system or another agency may hold them.

Formal FOIA troubleshooting

Michigan public bodies generally must issue a response to a written FOIA request within five business days and may give written notice of one extension of up to ten business days. This is a response deadline, not necessarily the delivery date for every record. Ask for itemized fee estimates, electronic delivery and nonexempt portions of partially withheld records.

[Michigan FOIA response statute](#)

[Kent County FOIA information](#)

Limitations and Safe Wording

- No online result does not establish that no record exists.
- An issued permit does not prove required inspections or final approval.
- A permit does not prove all visible work was within its approved scope.
- Assessor information supports taxation and mass appraisal; it is not a permit determination.
- GIS and parcel lines are screening tools, not boundary surveys.
- A mapped environmental site is a flag, not proof of subject-property contamination.
- Flood mapping does not guarantee a property will or will not flood.
- Legal, title, boundary, structural and environmental conclusions require the appropriate authority or professional.

Gold Standard conclusion Begin with facts, identify the responsible authority, preserve the evidence and choose the response level that matches the record. A missing record does not automatically create an emergency, and a serious visible hazard should not be delayed while searching for paperwork.

Core Official Sources

[Kent County home - https://www.kentcountymi.gov/](https://www.kentcountymi.gov/)

[Parcel Viewer - https://www.kentcountymi.gov/1608/Parcel-Viewer-iMap](https://www.kentcountymi.gov/1608/Parcel-Viewer-iMap)

[Property Description & Mapping - https://www.kentcountymi.gov/229/Property-Description-Mapping](https://www.kentcountymi.gov/229/Property-Description-Mapping)

[Register of Deeds - https://www.kentcountymi.gov/848/Register-of-Deeds](https://www.kentcountymi.gov/848/Register-of-Deeds)

[Online Deeds Search - https://www.kentcountymi.gov/1892/Online-Deeds-Search](https://www.kentcountymi.gov/1892/Online-Deeds-Search)

[Environmental Health - https://www.kentcountymi.gov/613/Environmental-Health](https://www.kentcountymi.gov/613/Environmental-Health)

[Septic & Well - https://www.kentcountymi.gov/635/Permits-Evaluations](https://www.kentcountymi.gov/635/Permits-Evaluations)

[Drain Commissioner - https://www.kentcountymi.gov/792/Drain-Commissioner](https://www.kentcountymi.gov/792/Drain-Commissioner)

[KCRC - https://kentcountyroads.net/](https://kentcountyroads.net/)

[Michigan LARA Construction Codes - https://www.michigan.gov/lara/bureau-list/bcc](https://www.michigan.gov/lara/bureau-list/bcc)

[LARA Enforcement - https://www.michigan.gov/lara/bureau-list/bcc/sections/enforcement-section](https://www.michigan.gov/lara/bureau-list/bcc/sections/enforcement-section)

[MPART PFAS - https://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse/investigations/sites-aoi](https://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse/investigations/sites-aoi)

[FEMA Map Service Center - https://msc.fema.gov/portal/search](https://msc.fema.gov/portal/search)

[GRPL House History - https://www.grpl.org/house-history/](https://www.grpl.org/house-history/)

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