

# City of Southfield, Wildlife Advisory Commission

## Formation and Prelude to Deer Herd Reduction Advisory Ballot Question



<https://www.cityofsouthfield.com/residents/wildlife-advisory-commission>



# Origin of Southfield Wildlife Advisory Commission

- The City Council voted to form the Commission in June 2020, and the first monthly meeting occurred in January 2021. Residential complaints and concerns about local wildlife, primarily deer, were a motivating factor in the commission's formation.
- The Commission was charged with developing and proposing to Council a wildlife program within the city to ensure the safety, health and welfare of the residents and visitors to the City of Southfield and of the wild animals within the City of Southfield by:
  - a) Actively seeking out and receiving input from residents and other stakeholders;
  - b) Working collaboratively with individuals of all points of view regarding wildlife;
  - c) Working collaboratively with wildlife commissions or similar organizations in nearby communities; and
  - d) Working collaboratively with the Michigan DNR and other county, state and federal entities responsible for wildlife management in or near the City of Southfield.

# Themes That Have Guided The Commission's Work

- **Sustainability**, working within the “laws” of nature
  - Understanding the **interrelationship** of **Biological Carrying Capacity** and Habitat Quality, (native and nonnative landscapes)
- **Citizen Education: short and long term possibilities**
  - Understanding **Cultural/Social Carrying Capacity**: attempt to achieve balance in coexistence of humans and other animals at municipal levels
  - Providing **resources** for residents to assist them in living harmoniously with wildlife
  - Potential for **Educational Programming**, enhanced **Recreational Opportunities**
- **Community Involvement: long term possibility**
  - **Service Learning Opportunities** for K-12 and Community College students
  - **Application of biological knowledge**: ecosystem approach, population dynamics, predator-prey relationships, watershed and wildlife management, and ecological restoration

# Summary Of The Commission's Work

- Meeting monthly (sometimes biweekly); all meetings have been open to the public. Minimum of one annual presentation to City Council.
- Reviewed the annual aerial deer population survey conducted in cooperation with Farmington Hills.
- Talking with representatives of the city local government, elected officials, and residents to better understand wildlife concerns.
- Talking with representative of other communities and subject matter experts regarding past and ongoing urban deer management activities, pros/cons of management options, costs, and logistics.
- Conducted an informal, online 2021 survey of residents regarding attitudes and goals relating to local wildlife (between 200 and 250 responses). Presented results to City Council.
- Increased roadside signage during the 2021 deer mating season.
- Proposed “do not feed the deer” ordinance to city council, which was passed and brings our local ordinances into alignment with longstanding DNR regulations.
- Proposed advisory ballot question to seek input from residents on one herd management option.
- Organized a Town Hall meeting to allow Southfield residents with detailed information on the local deer population.

# Identified Challenges

- **Habitat Degradation**; past study by Dr. Jaqueline Courteau explained browsing habits of local deer herd and ecological impacts on plant life in Southfield natural areas.
- **Citizen Concerns**; wildlife management is a polarizing issue. Primary residential concerns have been focused on deer and coyote.
- **Fiscal Concerns**; all municipal management options cost money and must be paid for by the city. Inaction places the cost of overpopulation or over-browsing on individual residents.

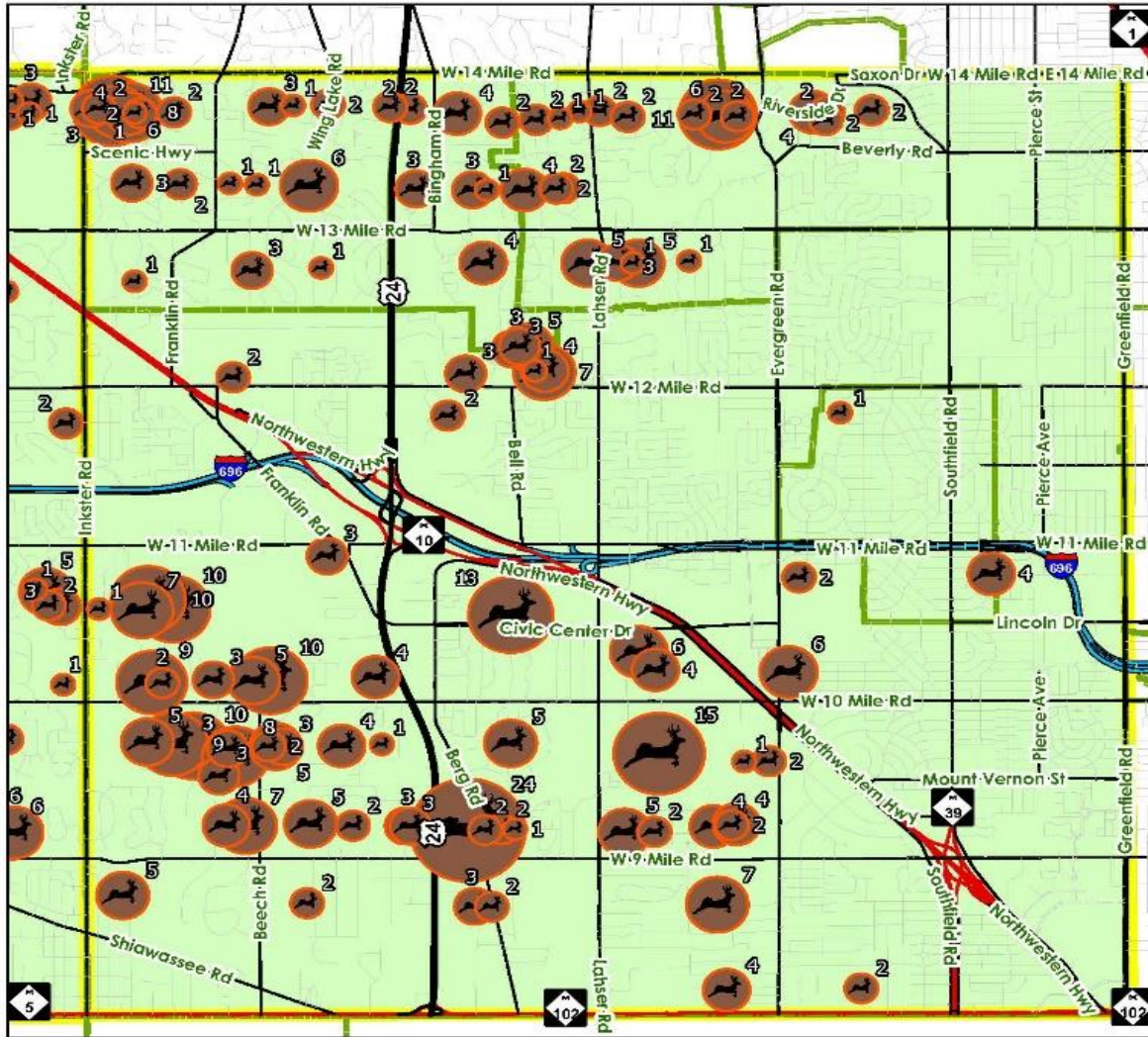
# Local Deer Population

- Deer tend to “clump” in and around **green spaces**, especially along **waterways**, and **food sources**.
- Aerial surveys have been conducted for several years. Since 2017/2018 the deer have been moving steadily east and now are seen east of Telegraph Road more often and for longer periods during the year. Southfield’s share of survey costs has gone from about \$3,000 (2018) to about \$5,000 (2022).

## Deer Count Results (Aerial Helicopter Survey)

- **2022: 273** deer observed within Southfield city limits or about 10.5 deer per sq/mile citywide
  - There is a 5 square mile area located in western Southfield with an average population density of 38.6 deer per sq/mile
  - Two square miles of the area mentioned above have 48 deer per sq/mile
  - **447** deer observed within a larger 36 sq/mile Southfield survey area (12.4 deer per sq/mile), which is bordered by Inkster Rd, 14 Mile, Greenfield Rd, and 8 Mile; **520** deer observed within the Farmington Hills survey area (14.4 deer per sq/mile), which is bordered by Haggerty Rd, 14 Mile, Inkster Rd, and 8 Mile
- **2021: 869** deer observed within Southfield (33.4 deer per sq/mile; **reason for spike is unknown**)
- **2020:** No survey conducted due to weather conditions.
- **2019: 279** deer observed within Southfield (10.7 deer per sq/mile); **447** deer observed within Farmington Hills (12.4 deer per sq/mile)
- **2018: 248** deer observed within Southfield (9.5 deer per sq/mile); **379** deer observed within Farmington Hills (10.5 deer per sq/mile)





# **Urban Deer Survey** **City of Southfield** **Aerial Survey-February 2022**



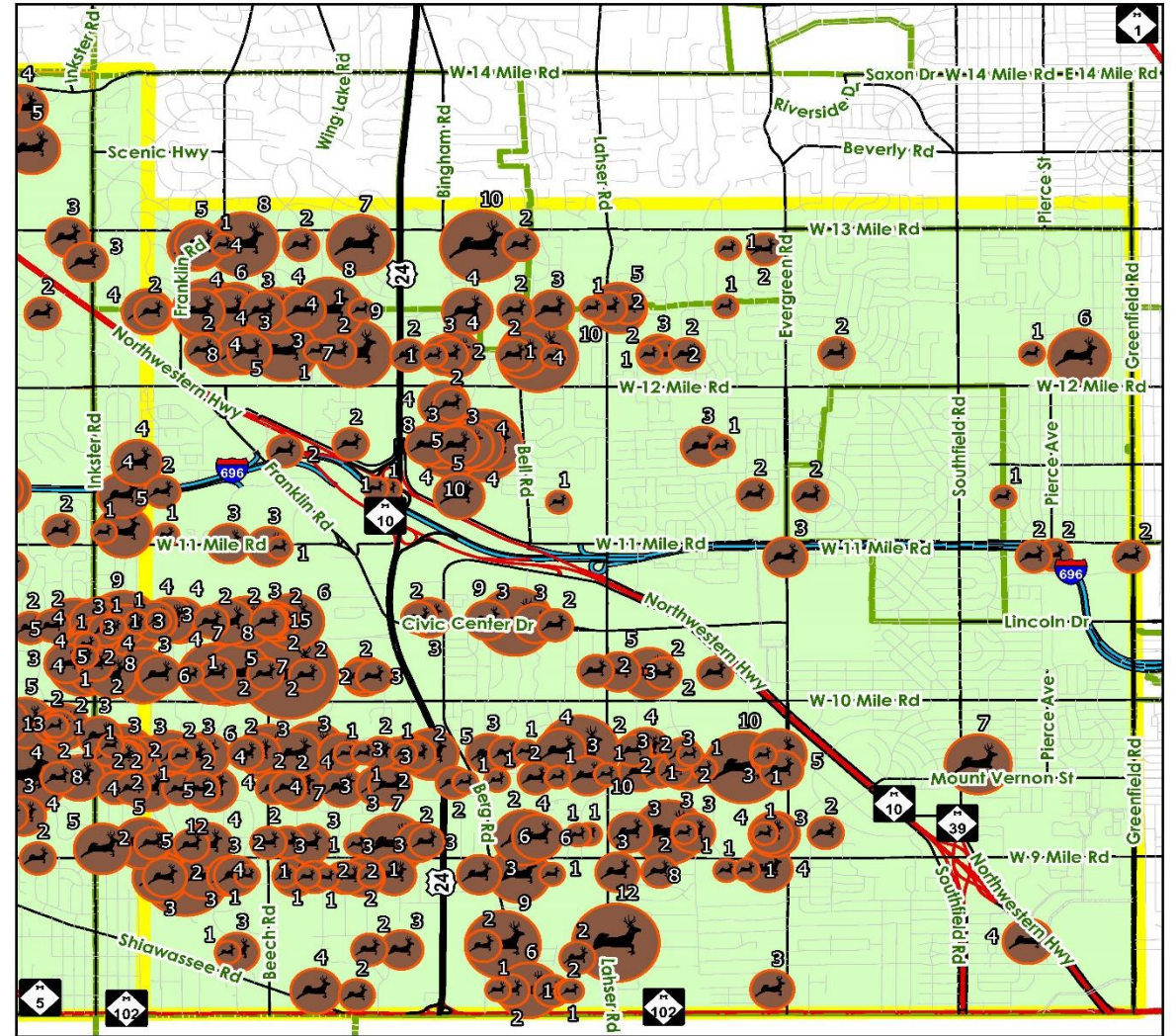
SOURCES: City of Farmington Hills, 2022  
 Department of Special Services, 2022  
 Deer Survey Conducted: 2/16/2022



\*Symbol sized proportional to number of deer sighted

Deer count\*  
 Survey area  
 Interstates  
 State  
 Major roads

Sections  
 Municipal boundaries  
 Farmington City



# **Urban Deer Survey** **City of Southfield** **Aerial Survey-February 2021**



SOURCES: City of Farmington Hills, 2021  
 Department of Special Services, 2021  
 Deer Survey Conducted: 2/12/2021



\*Symbol sized proportional to number of deer sighted

Deer count\*  
 Survey area  
 Interstates  
 State  
 Major roads

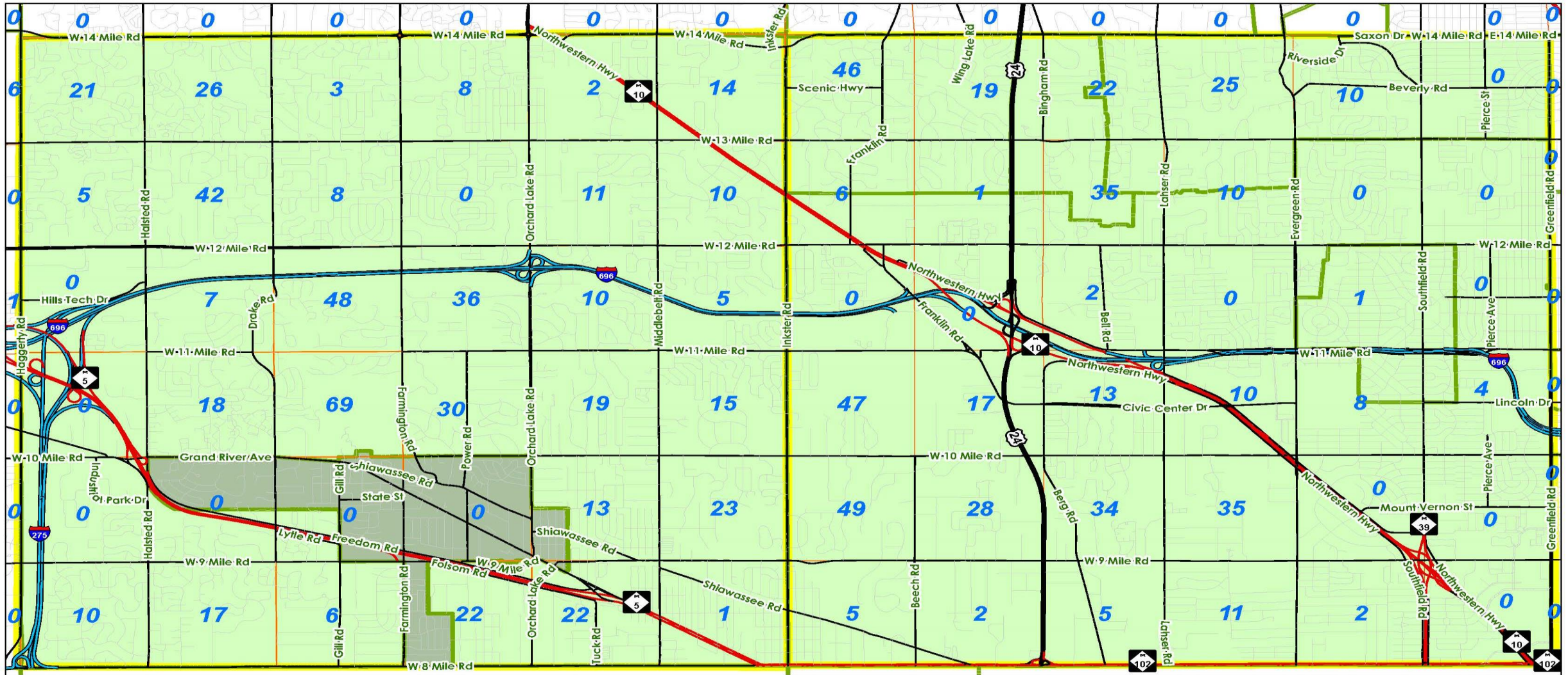
Sections  
 Municipal boundaries  
 Farmington City





## Farmington Hills

## Southfield



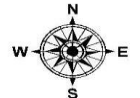
## Urban Deer Survey

Cities of Farmington Hills & Southfield  
Aerial Survey-February 2022



SOURCES: City of Farmington Hills, 2022  
Department of Special Services, 2022  
Deer Survey Conducted: 2/14/2022

Grid Boxes Represent One-Square Mile  
Numbers Represent Actual Deer Observed



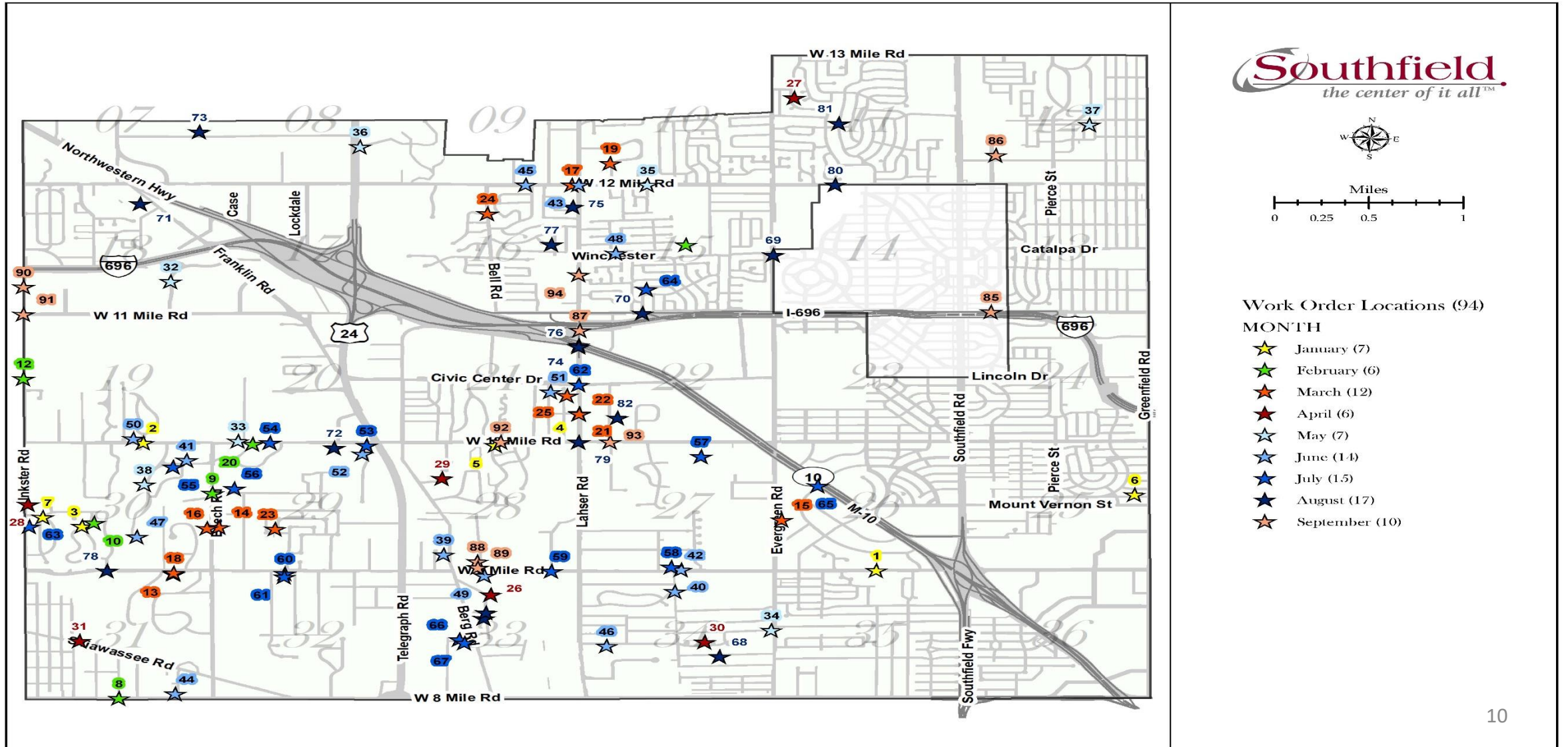


# Car Accidents and DPW Resources Used to Retrieve and Dispose of Dead Wildlife

- Southfield DPW has been averaging **over \$25,000 per year** picking up and disposing of dead wildlife. Each carcass pick up accounts for about 1 hour of labor costing about \$164.87, plus disposal costs:
  - 2022: Approximately \$15,497.78 as of 09-08-22, exclusive of disposal costs
  - 2021: No data provided.
  - 2020: \$29,003.67
  - 2019: \$26,444.25
  - 2018: \$28,841.94
- Animal/Deer involved car accidents are a **modest concern**. Oakland County has regularly had some of the highest numbers of annual deer-vehicle accidents in the state, with the road commission reporting 1,928 deer-related accidents in 2019. The Data Query Tool from Michigan Traffic Crash Facts ([michigantrafficcrashfacts.org](http://michigantrafficcrashfacts.org)) from provided the Southfield specific data below. These are likely lower than the actual figure because deer-related accidents are underreported.
  - **2021**: 67 reported accidents
  - **2020**: 50 reported accidents
  - **2019**: 50 reported accidents
  - **2018**: 67 reported accidents
  - **2017**: 52 reported accidents

# Southfield DPW Deer Carcass Pickups 2022

Deer Pickup Locations: January 1, 2022 to September 8, 2022



# Proposed Ballot Question Language

Do you support the reduction of the deer herd in the City of Southfield by humane, lethal means with the intent to engage local partners and ensure that donation of meat, deemed safe and where feasible, is made to local foodbanks and similar organizations?



# Expert Panelists

- Chad Stewart, Michigan DNR
  - Chad Stewart is the Deer, Elk, and Moose Management Specialist for the Michigan DNR, serving in that role for the past 8 years. He has been studying or managing white-tailed deer for 25 years. Chad previously served as the statewide deer program leader for Indiana. Chad has B.S. in Wildlife and Fisheries Science from Penn State University, and a M.S. from the University of Illinois in Natural Resources and Environmental Science. Chad also spent 3 years working with the Smithsonian's Conservation Biology Institute, leading several research projects on white-tailed deer and other field projects.
- Dr. Jaqueline Courteau
  - Dr. Courteau has worked on numerous studies of how deer affect native trees, wildflowers, and other species including pollinators. She earned a doctorate from University of Michigan with research on the interaction of deer and invasive species on native plants. She has worked for Michigan Natural Features Inventory and as lead developer for the Huron River Watershed Council's Rapid Ecological Assessment/Bioreserve Project. Dr. Courteau has also completed research and monitoring of deer impacts for the Huron-Clinton Metroparks, Washtenaw County, the City of Ann Arbor, among others, and enjoyed working in five of Southfield's natural areas—hidden gems with some wonderful woods and wildflowers.