



Introduction

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This report presents the Master Plan for Lapeer Township, Michigan. It establishes long-range recommendations for the maintenance and enhancement of the Township's existing rural atmosphere as well as future planning concepts which will help maintain the Township's character as development continues to encroach upon the Township. This report summarizes the results of a thorough planning process and incorporates feedback received from elected and appointed officials, information and projections obtained from Lapeer County as well as the communities surrounding the Township.

Purpose of the Master Plan

The Master Plan is a comprehensive document that provides direction for the community over a protracted period of time; it is intended to guide the future decision-making process as related to land use and development within the community. The State of Michigan passed enabling legislation which gave local municipalities, through the designated planning commissions, the authority and responsibility to create a long-range plan for development. This ensures that incremental improvements are in line with the long-range vision for the community. This has great value to the community in that it provides a plumb line for considering development proposals and prevents elected and appointed officials from making decisions based on political pressure that may not be the best for the community in the long run. The Master Plan is Lapeer Township's official policy guide for physical improvement and development. It is comprised of both short term strategies as well as projections for development 10 to 15 years in the future. Since many factors influence land use development patterns, the plan is comprehensive in scope and coverage. It covers the use of land and buildings, the protection of environmental assets, the movement of vehicles and pedestrians through public rights-of-way, and the provision of public facilities such as parks, schools and utilities.

The Master Plan establishes the "ground rules" for private and public investment. It provides guidelines by which the Planning Commission and Township Board can review and evaluate private development proposals. It ensures that individual developments are moving toward the common vision and ensures that public dollars are spent wisely. The Master Plan also provides a basis for refining the zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations and other development codes, all of which are used to implement planning policies adopted as part of this plan. Finally, the Master Plan can serve as a marketing tool to promote Lapeer Township as a unique place to live and establish a business. By promoting the community vision, officials can use the plan to attract new families and desirable investment to the community for years to come.

The Planning Process

The Township's current Plan was adopted in 1994 and has continued to serve as a blueprint for development in Lapeer Township until this plan was adopted. A Master Plan is generally a 20-year plan however in a County such as Lapeer which has been emerging as a developing county, plans are often updated more often in order to consider changing conditions within the community and its relationship, economically, socially and environmentally, within the larger regional setting.

It is essential that the Master Planning process be conducted within a public forum. Opportunities must be provided for public participation and input if the Plan is to be truly representative of the community as a whole. The support of the community can also help facilitate implementation. An approach that has been used successfully when planning for the future of a community involves preceding the planning process with an exercise designed to develop "a vision of the future" for the Township.



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Public Input

In developing the Master Land Use Plan the Township Board along with the Planning Commission conducted a visioning session with local residents, business owners, other stakeholders, and the like. The Township collected names of individuals who indicated they would be interested in partaking in such a session and when the meeting was held, those individuals were invited to provide their input on the current assessment of the Township as well as its future.

Specific questions or topics were discussed at the visioning session to keep discussion focused. The following questions were asked of the participants of the meeting:

Visioning Questions

If you had out of town relatives coming into town, where in the Township would you take them or what aspects of the Township would you boast about to them? Also, where would you avoid taking them or what would you avoid telling them?

As farming continues to evolve, a new farming trend is for farmers to sell products which may not be grown on their farm or even be farm related. Do you believe that the Township should allow or encourage farmers to sell non-farm products at their farm stands, operating more like a commercial business? Why?

The Township has traditionally required large lot sizes in an effort to preserve the Township's rural and open space character. Do you believe the Township should still require large lot sizes or should smaller lot sizes be permitted throughout the Township? Why?

Do you agree with the use of people's homes for home based businesses, allowing people to work out of their home? Do you feel that a business of this type would impact your neighborhood?

The Township has long planned the M-24 Corridor for primarily residential purposes. Do you believe that with the current and future improvements on M-24 that this is still realistic or desirable?

Keeping in mind that the Township has very little control over the roadways within the Township, do you feel that the existing conditions of the roadways within the Township are safe? Should additional roadways within the Township be paved?

Would you be willing to live in a house along M-24? Would you be willing to live in a subdivision that backed onto M-24? If so, what types of amenities or separation would you want between your house/subdivision and M-24. If you would not be willing to live along M-24 why not?

Stakeholders & Visions

Identify the "stakeholders", that is, those groups that have a stake in improving the quality of life in the Township.

Involve the stakeholders in a process designed to identify what the future should be like in the Township.

Build consensus among the stakeholders in setting forth the important characteristics of any new planning program.

Prepare a vision statement from the stakeholders' consensus that will serve as the underlying direction for the Planning Commission's work of preparing a new Master Plan.

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Have you as a resident or a business owner utilized the Township's recycling program which is available. If so, do you feel that the program is beneficial, and in what ways can the program be improved? What other types of "green" practices do you feel the Township can implement.

If office and retail stores were to be developed in the Township, what types of development would you desire? Would smaller, more local size developments or larger shopping centers which provide a more abundant number of choices be preferable?

The Township has recently adopted a recreation plan which describes recreation improvements that should be completed in the Township in the future. This includes developing a park at Township Hall, a park at the Township property located on Maple Grove Road, as well as a plan for where pathways should be located throughout the Township. What types of recreation improvements would you like to see (if any) and where at?

Have you as a resident or a business owner utilized the Township's recycling program which is available. If so, do you feel that the program is beneficial, and in what ways can the program be improved? What other types of "green" practices do you feel the Township can implement.

If office and retail stores were to be developed in the Township, what types of development would you desire? Would smaller, more local size developments or larger shopping centers which provide a more abundant number of choices be preferable?

Would you be willing to live in a house along M-24? Would you be willing to live in a subdivision that backed onto M-24? If so, what types of amenities or separation would you want between your house/subdivision and M-24. If you would not be willing to live along M-24 why not?

If the Township needed to rezone property for office and retail purposes where do you believe that that property should be located? M-24, Imlay City Road (M-21), Wilder Road and I-69 interchange, other? At intersections, along the entire roadway, etc.

Are there any additional issues relative to the Township that you feel are not being adequately addressed or that could be addressed in a better manner?

The planning process entailed a multi-phase program consisting of:

- 1) Analyzing Existing Conditions and Community Growth Projections
- 2) Identifying Issues and Concerns
- 3) Establishing an Overall "Vision" for the Community
- 4) Formulating Goals and Objectives
- 5) Preparing a Comprehensive Plan which includes a Land Use Plan, Community Facilities Plan, and Thoroughfare Plan
- 6) Preparing Implementation Strategies

The basic components include the following:

Organization of the Document

Introduction

The Introduction section will provide a review of the surrounding growth patterns, the Lapeer County General Development Plan, as well as the surrounding Communities Master Plans. This section will also highlight pertinent demographic data within the Township (*a full demographic profile will be provided as a part of the Plan's appendix*)

Demographics

The demographic section of the Master Plan provides a snapshot of and reviews the pertinent population and housing data for the Township and the County.

Physical Features

The physical features section of the Master Plan provides an overview of the physical features of the Township, including the soil conditions, potential wetlands, woodlands, watersheds, amongst others.

Existing Land Use

The existing land use section provides a general review of the Township's current make up of the types of uses found within the Township. Uses such as agriculture, residential, manufactured housing, commercial and industrial land uses are identified.

Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives section of the Master Plan provides those guiding principals from which the Master Plan is derived. Each section of the Master Plan then builds from these principals and provides recommendations to implement the future land use plan.

Land Use and Sub Areas Plan

The land use and sub areas plan sections provide an overall view of the proposed future land use recommendations for the Township. The sub areas plan further refines the land use recommendations for specific, prominent areas of the Township.

Thoroughfare Plan

The Thoroughfare Plan will provide an overview of the existing transportation network within the Township, including; the condition, classification and level of service of thoroughfares; and an overview of planned improvements and thoroughfare designations.

Community Facilities Plan

The Community Facilities Plan will provide an overview of the schools, utilities and Township services (provided either locally or at a regional or County level) such as police, fire, library and administrative buildings.

Zoning Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan will outline the recommendations of the Master Plan, provide a brief outline of the recommendation, the responsible party for undertaking the recommendation, its priority, etc.

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Relationship Between Lapeer Township Planning Efforts and Lapeer County

In 2007, Lapeer County adopted a comprehensive Master Plan for the entire county. Being a County Plan, the Plan is more generalized and provides overarching goals for land use patterns and development throughout the County on a larger scale; while the Township's Plan focuses on a much smaller scale, being that of just the Township itself, and can address the issues specific to the Township. Further, since the Township has adopted its own planning and zoning documents and authority, the County plan is advisory for the Township. The Township Master Plan provides its legal basis for zoning, not the County Plan.

In conducting its planning efforts, the Township does however need to review what the county plan envisions for the Township as well as the surrounding region taking into account what the county plans and policies are. Where feasible and/or desirable, the Township should try to coordinate its planning efforts with the County Plan (*as the County Plan should try to coordinate with the Township's when the County Plan is reviewed*). Again, though, when making local planning and zoning decisions, the Township will rely on its own Master Land Use Plan, policies and regulations.

Future Land Use – Lapeer County Comprehensive Development Plan

OS-2 Reserved Open Sector

This land use category is the largest within the County. This land use category is designed to protect the County's existing agricultural land uses and character. Agricultural land uses include farming (the production of crops, livestock, and related goods), orchards, nurseries, farmsteads, and other activities directly associated with agriculture.

The desired densities within the agricultural land uses is planned for one dwelling unit per every 40 acres, or 0.025 dwelling units per acre. The plan suggests that densities of these nature are necessary to ensure that parcels are large enough to contain agricultural uses which are economically viable.

This designation also notes the lack of public infrastructure in a large portion of the County and does not promote the extension of such infrastructure. The extension of such infrastructure would allow for smaller, more suburban natured lots which are not conducive to the agricultural character of the area. Further, most of the roadways within the OS-2 area are currently gravel and the Plan suggests that these remain gravel to reduce speeds and overall traffic volumes, thereby maintaining character.

Finally, these areas are intended to be the primary sending zones should the County, or a consortium of local municipalities implement a transfer of development rights program.

The vast majority of the Township is planned for the OS-2 Reserved Open Sector.

G-1 Restricted Growth Sector

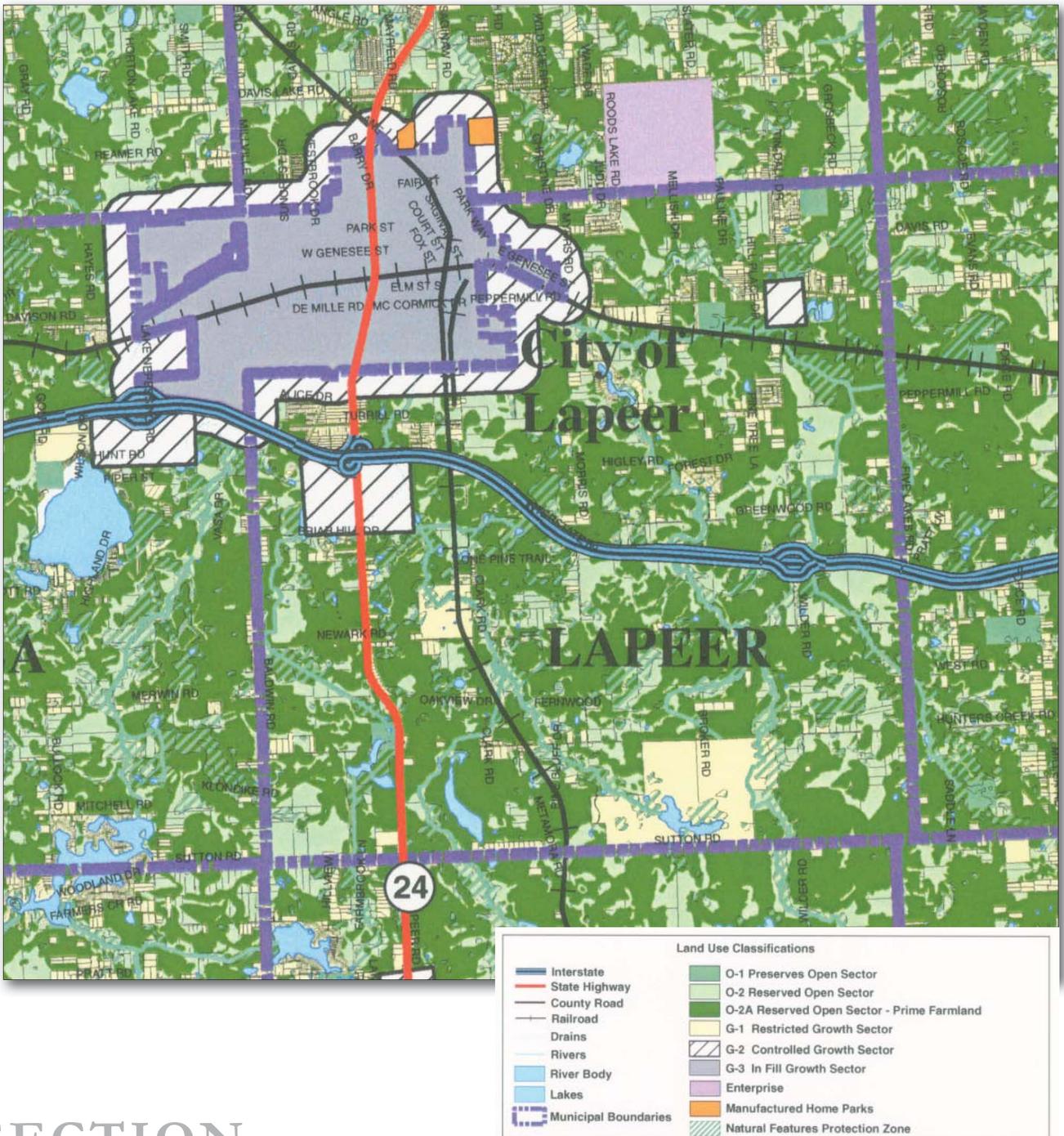
This designation is designed to accommodate the already existing development of commercial and industrial nodes along major roadways or intersections. The extension or expansion of these areas is strongly discouraged.

The land area near the southern boundary of the Township which basically consists of the existing hunt club is planned for G-1. Several other small properties throughout the Township are also planned for G-1 Restricted Growth.

G-2 Controlled Growth Sector

This designation is intended to be the main development zones within the County. These areas are located around existing cities and villages as well as major intersections where existing infrastructure and facilities are already present. Further, the designation promotes the mixture of uses such as residential and commercial. The residential density is envisioned to be approximately 0.5 to 2.0 dwelling units per acre.

ILLUSTRATION #1
 FUTURE LAND USE
 LAPEER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2006



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The designation also states that planned unit developments or clustered housing which preserves open space would be an appropriate form of development. These development types could include commercial development as a part of a neo-traditional development.

Intended commercial uses would include automobile related uses, general retail, grocery stores, professional offices, banks and restaurants. These additional commercial uses are intended to complement those which already exist in the commercial centers and downtowns.

Those areas immediately surrounding the City of Lapeer are planned for G-2 Controlled Growth Sector. This boundary is approximately one quarter mile wide adjacent to the City. The Plan also calls for the south side of the M-24 and I-69 interchange to be regulated under the G-2 designation. This property is currently a part of the 108 agreement between the Township and the City. These plan designation area extends approximately one half mile south of I-69, one half mile to the east and west of M-24.

Natural Features Protection Zone

This designation is intended to preserve the natural features found throughout the County in an attempt to help preserve its overall rural character. The preservation of these areas not only preserve the character of the area but also help maintain the water quality within the County.

This designation anticipates a one hundred (100) foot setback (buffer) along all creeks, rivers and drains within the County. The removal of trees, shrubs, brush, etc. should be limited and all other types of development should only be permitted in a manner in which the natural feature will not be adversely impacted.

These designations are found throughout the Township wherever existing wetlands or other similar natural features are located.

Cooperative and Coordinated Land Use Planning

While the Township is autonomous in terms of its planning and zoning schemes, the Township should carefully consider the planning and zoning schemes of those communities which surround it (Mayfield, Attica, Metamora, and Elba Township) as well as those utilized in the City of Lapeer. This ideal is reiterated within the State's planning policies for Master Planning which requires Master Plans and planning policies be reviewed by the surrounding communities. Land use decisions for those properties which abut adjoining communities should take into account adjoining communities planning policies while protecting the Township's right to plan and zone as it sees appropriate.

Generally speaking, the communities which surround Lapeer Township have similar planning policies as the Township; preserving agricultural land uses wherever possible, maintaining larger, more rural single family lots and allowing nonresidential land uses in those areas where such are most desirable and most viable such as along M-24. The City of Lapeer obviously has a much more intense land use planning philosophy to support the traditional downtown intensities. The City has a number of nonresidential land uses which extend from downtown Lapeer along M-24 in that area which was recently annexed from the Township into the City. These planning policies are generally similar to that of the Township's previous policies when the land was still within the Township.

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