

Chapter Eight. Planning Implications

The initial chapters of this Plan form broad profile of Milton Township. They present a brief “snapshot” of current conditions in the community and the forces that are apparent. With an analysis of those forces, the challenges that are facing the community today and those that will materialize in the future become apparent.

Some of the implications of the materials presented here include the following observations:

Without proper planning, growth and development would begin to undermine the very features that attract it.

- ◆ While it may not seem that Milton Township is poised for significant growth and development at the current time, it is still essential to acknowledge the potential of growth and change in the future. Development pressure may increase, in part, because of the Township’s scenic farmland and small-town character; and in part due to proximity to the South Bend, Niles and Edwardsburg communities. Small town characteristics have historically been desirable and tend to draw population. Without proper planning, however, growth and development would begin to undermine the very features that attract it.
- ◆ The tendency in the current marketplace to encourage land-consumptive large lot development will continue to keep population density low and spread out. In the longer term, however, these patterns require longer commutes to jobs and services and as a consequence greater traffic congestions. In addition, low density development is much more costly to retrofit for public utilities when and if the demand materializes.
- ◆ Significant areas of the Township hold sand and gravel resources and it is probable that the Township will face mining impacts for many years to come. With recent amendments to the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, there are limits to the Township’s ability to regulate these uses, but that does not mean that reasonable operating and reclamation standards cannot be applied to mitigate the impacts of extraction operations. A comprehensive ban on mining is not possible, but where mining activity produces very serious negative consequences in the community, the Township is able to regulate the activity, up to and including preventing it where local regulations will not effectively address those consequences. In most cases, however, with proper management and oversight, mineral extraction can occur with most impacts moderated and regulated.

If growth is desired, it will be appropriate to steer it away from high quality farmland.

- ◆ Agricultural activity in the community thrives, partly because of high quality soils, especially in the southeastern portion of the community. Because of the economic importance of agriculture in the region and its contribution to the community's rural character, it will behoove the Township to steer new development and the parceling of farmland toward portions of the community that are not characterized by these unique soils and where utility and commercial services are more likely to be available.
- ◆ Milton Township's population is older, on average, than the County, the State or the nation. While the difference is not significant, this does signal a probable short-term demand for services to aid an aging population, and the Township generally supports the concept of assisted living in a context-sensitive, rural setting. It also implies that the community's demographics are likely to see significant shifts if new and younger residents replace the maturing members of the population. This could mean a greater demand in the future for services required by young families. It is also possible that without proper planning, the community will not see significant turn-over and it could struggle to maintain its population. This may signal a trend toward long-term housing vacancies and a softening of housing values.
- ◆ Agriculture and residences make up the vast majority of local land uses. With Michigan's current local revenue structure, this fact has implications on the fiscal viability of local government. Agriculture lands typically have lower values and may be subject to caps that reduce their tax obligations. Residential lands - especially single-family neighborhoods - pay significantly higher taxes, but they also demand the highest level of services from local government (including the public schools). The predominance of these land uses results in a very attractive, low density environment for the community, but it also implies an impending fiscal challenge as emerging neighborhoods demand greater levels of service.

Chapter Nine. Goals and Objectives

As a result of the Township's efforts to form a community consensus about growth and development, a series of six broad goal statements has been developed. These goals and objectives are founded on the input received during the Visioning Workshop that was held in support of the plan and the knowledge of the Planning Commission and local officials.

Each goal is supported by more specific objectives, and the policies of this plan are based on these statements. The goals are intended to describe a desirable end state or the condition of the Township twenty to thirty years into the future. They are intentionally general but attainable through concerted effort. The objective statements tend to be more specific and may be regarded as milestones in the journey to achieve the larger goal.

Goals and Objectives are founded on the input received during the Visioning Workshop.

An effective goal serves as a useful guide for policy decisions by the Planning Commission, Township staff and the Township Board. For a goal to be useful, it should meet the following criteria:

- **Define a desired end.** A goal statement should describe a desired end state, outcome or result. The statement may be worded in either the present or future tense, but if the future tense is used, it should be stated as a prediction, rather than a hope.
- **State in positive terms.** For a goal to be effective, it should state a positive outcome, as opposed to avoidance of an undesirable result. It is tempting to state goals as the reversal of an undesirable trend, such as "Milton Township will limit significant additional development in agricultural areas." This statement, however, does not address the underlying issue: Protection of the Township's productive farmlands for the benefit of future generations.
- **Bold, but realistic.** For a statement to be meaningful, it needs to require effort to achieve. If goals were achieved without effort, they would simply be re-statements of current trends. On the other hand, a goal also needs to be realistic. Goals that are impossible to achieve will languish, resulting in community frustration and acrimony.
- **Reflect a consensus.** Most importantly for goal setting, the goal must reflect a community consensus on a particular issue. Since implementation of these goals will require broad community support, the goals need to reflect community ideas and values. A statement that does not reflect the ideas and values of a broad section of the community is doomed to failure.

Each goal statement is supported by a series of objectives, which may be thought of as milestones to achieving that particular goal. While a goal describes a desired end, objectives answer the question, “If this is our goal, what must happen or what must we achieve to realize the goal?” The actual action strategies will be presented in the final chapter of the Master Plan and will be drawn from these objectives.

Agriculture and Farmland Preservation

GOAL 1

Productive commercial agriculture will comprise a significant element of Milton Township. It will be characterized by economically viable farm operations and their supporting facilities and services. It will be sited on lands best suited to the purpose and sustained by land use policies intended to ensure long-term viability of agriculture in the region.

OBJECTIVES:

- a. Complete a survey of farmland owners to determine their long- and immediate-term interests with regard to commercial agriculture as a basis for forming helpful regulations.
- b. Focus agricultural land use and zoning on prime farm ground with the least degree of fragmentation.
- c. Work with regional and state agencies and organizations to support and implement viable farmland preservation programs, such as purchase and transfer of development rights.
- d. Support use of PA 116 Agreements and other opportunities to preserve farmland.
- e. Within prime farmland areas, develop zoning and development standards to encourage land uses that may conflict with agriculture to locate in areas with the least impact on commercial agriculture.

Rural Character and Natural Features

GOAL 2

The fundamentally rural nature of Milton Township will be maintained and strengthened with key defining features permanently protected and supportive rural land uses and activities encouraged. Even in areas of development, the rural character of the community will be expressed with design techniques that embrace a rural lifestyle and protect important features and rural land uses and activities.

OBJECTIVES:

- a. Complete a natural features inventory to identify those features and land forms that are important to the rural character of the Township including a ranking that may be used to guide preservation and development standards.
- b. Adopt incentives, including reduced lot size or increased density, to enable the preservation of natural features identified as important in the inventory (see 2, a).
- c. Establish design standards requiring the establishment of green buffers along the county road network and between developments to protect the rural aspect of the community, even while accommodating development.
- d. Establish development incentives, such as reduced interior setbacks or density offsets, to compensate for design elements such as conservation strips along county roads, inter-connections, preservation of scenic vistas, winding access drives and sustainable development techniques (duplicates 4, c).

Land Use Planning and Zoning**GOAL 3**

The Township's land use plans and zoning standards will strike an effective balance between the goals and objectives of this Plan to protect important features and promote high quality development with the varied interests of land owners. This will be achieved and maintained by fostering an on-going dialog among the varied interests while continually working to tailor appropriate responses to emerging land use challenges.

OBJECTIVES:

- a. Complete an "audit" of the existing zoning and development standards in the Township to assure consistency with the policies of the Master Plan. Incorporate standards to encourage and support low impact home occupations.
- b. Promote increased communication between Township boards and commissions with joint training exercises.
- c. Establish expectations for board and commission members to attend training programs directed at staying ahead of emerging trends.
- d. Seek out opportunities for cooperation and partnerships with neighboring communities and seek to establish consistent and complementary regional regulations.

Growth and Development

GOAL 4

New development in the Township will be carefully planned and controlled with an emphasis on high quality, a varied mix of uses and a reasonable and sustainable scale of growth. Development will be planned and designed to enhance the rural aspects of the community both through architectural design and by protecting open space and important features.

OBJECTIVES:

- a. Establish regulations to encourage and govern community wastewater systems within areas planned for higher densities.
- b. Establish and maintain a program of communication with residents, developers and businesses to increase understanding of Township land use policies and to build support for balanced land use and zoning standards and for efficient local government services. (duplicates 5, a).
- c. Establish development incentives, such as reduced interior setbacks or density offsets, to compensate for design elements such as conservation strips along county roads, inter-connections, preservation of scenic vistas, winding access drives and sustainable development techniques (duplicates 2, d).
- d. Establish standards and incentives to achieve an appropriate and sustainable balance of housing types to serve the needs of all segments of the community (duplicates 6, a).
- e. Establish standards regulating land divisions which encourage flexibility in terms of parcel size and shape resulting in the efficient use of land and the reduction of long, narrow land divisions.

Community Facilities and Services

GOAL 5

Milton Township residents will enjoy public services and facilities scaled appropriately for the community. These will include effective, and well-supported public safety services, well-used and desirable recreation facilities and public facilities and offices to support efficient local government services.

OBJECTIVES:

- a. Establish and maintain a program of communication with residents, developers and businesses to increase understanding of Township land use policies and to build support for balanced land use and

zoning standards and for efficient local government services. (duplicates 4, b).

- b. Seek out ways to improve coordination and interaction between the Township and the neighboring educational institutions to promote a sense of community within the region.
- c. Develop mechanisms to cooperate with developers, neighboring communities, and regional authorities in the establishment and maintenance of a regional system of recreation and non-motorized trails.
- d. Maintain and strengthen cooperative public safety and emergency services with officials from the county and neighboring communities.
- e. As the population of the Township expands, seek out appropriate opportunities to expand park and recreation spaces and to improve existing facilities.

Housing and Neighborhoods

GOAL 6

The Township's neighborhoods will be well-designed, inviting and scaled for comfortable community formation. Some will support a mix of high quality housing types to serve the broad spectrum of the marketplace including young families, empty-nesters and aging residents, but all will be arranged in keeping with the Township's rural identity and commitment to quality design and amenities.

OBJECTIVES:

- a. Establish standards and incentives to achieve an appropriate and sustainable balance of housing types to serve the needs of all segments of the community. (duplicates 4, d).
- b. Establish standards to guide the scale of residential neighborhoods to foster the formation of inviting and diverse neighborhoods.
- c. Establish authority to require detailed analyses of larger scale developments to gain a complete understanding of possible environmental and traffic impacts.
- d. Establish specific requirements to protect the health and safety of residents within limited access developments.
- e. Create standards requiring private infrastructure to be constructed to county standards.

Chapter Ten. Future Land Use and Zoning Plan

The Milton Township Master Plan establishes general patterns of land use to guide growth and development for the next twenty to thirty years. This Plan constitutes a practical and integrated approach to accommodate the impacts of growth suggested by growth trends and existing patterns of development. The intent is to foster efficient and sustainable forms of development that preserve the community’s rural personality and natural features while accommodating modest levels of sustainable growth.

The intent is to foster efficient and sustainable forms of development that preserve the community’s rural personality and natural features while accommodating modest levels of sustainable growth.

Township residents have indicated that they wish to preserve their agricultural operations in Township and protect the Township’s woodlands, wetlands and other natural areas. They also recognize emerging residential development patterns along the Michigan/Indiana boundary and some limited commercial development expansion near the US-12 interchange and, potentially, in small, village-scale nodes. This Plan will provide guidance for new development while protecting farmland and critical natural resources.

The overall purpose of the future land use designations is to guide new development in logical and viable patterns while offering fair, and in some cases, value-enhancing opportunities for development, where appropriate. Public utilities are generally not anticipated in the Township, although in areas where private community water and wastewater systems are proposed, the Township will seek to capitalize on such systems by encouraging the preservation of important natural features in exchange for greater densities for the areas served by those systems.

Support for Complete Streets

Objectives under Community Facilities and Services and Housing and Neighborhoods in Chapter 9 support the promotion of high quality transportation infrastructure and non-motorized trails. This Plan further supports enacting complete streets policy, in the form of a Township Resolution or Zoning Ordinance amendments. Complete streets are roadways planned, designed and constructed to allow access to all legal users safely and efficiently, without any one user taking priority over another. Complete streets can result in increased safety for non-motorized users, improved public health, a cleaner environment, mobility equity and enhanced quality of life through increased modal choices and more inviting streets.

While Milton Township relies on the Cass County Road Commission for local public road infrastructure and private developers for neighborhood street development, it can support policies that enhance safe and efficient

travel for all roadway users. Michigan law encourages MDOT to give additional consideration to enhancement grant applicants with complete streets policies. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act has also been amended to stipulate that transportation improvements be respectful of the surrounding context, further ensuring that more equitable and attractive streets become reality.

The Township's objective will be to work jointly with surrounding communities and developers to promote healthy lifestyles for people of all abilities through the development of a non-motorized network. Suggested design elements may include sidewalks on both sides of a roadway or street; adequate lighting; pedestrian signals and signage; bike lanes; multi-use trails; and other features. Even though Milton Township is a rural community, these elements are feasible in certain areas of the Township.

Some features may be accomplished through simple road restriping and the addition of signage. Other projects may be more involved and may only be practicable when coordinated with major roadway reconstruction. The Township should work with neighboring communities, developers, the road commission, and other pertinent agencies in implementation of complete streets policy.

FUTURE LAND USES

The following pages describe the future land use designations as illustrated on the Future Land Use Map (Map Ten). The Future Land Use Map reflects a desired future for the Township which may emerge over the next twenty to thirty years. Where it departs from current land uses the intent is not that immediate change is expected but that the Township will work with market forces and land owner objectives to guide growth in accord with this plan over a period of several years. In addition, every five years the Planning Commission will evaluate existing land uses and trends and may make appropriate adjustments in the Future Land Use Plan and Map. For reference purposes, the zoning map as of April 2000, is presented along with the Future Land Use Map.

Each Future Land Use designation is intended to foster a character distinctive of that district and unique to this community. Furthermore, it is intended that as the community develops over the next twenty to thirty years, a significant share of the natural features existing today will have been preserved.

Finally, it must be understood that the future land use designations on the map are meant to be seen as general with indistinct edges. Along the margins, where two or more designations adjoin, either land use may be appropriate in keeping with the predominate conditions of the area.

Agricultural Production

Milton Township contains several agricultural operations that not only produce high-quality agricultural products, but aid in the establishment of the rural character that the Township residents seek to maintain. Maintaining these productive agricultural lands is a high priority among Township residents, and preserving large and contiguous tracts of productive farmland is essential to that goal.

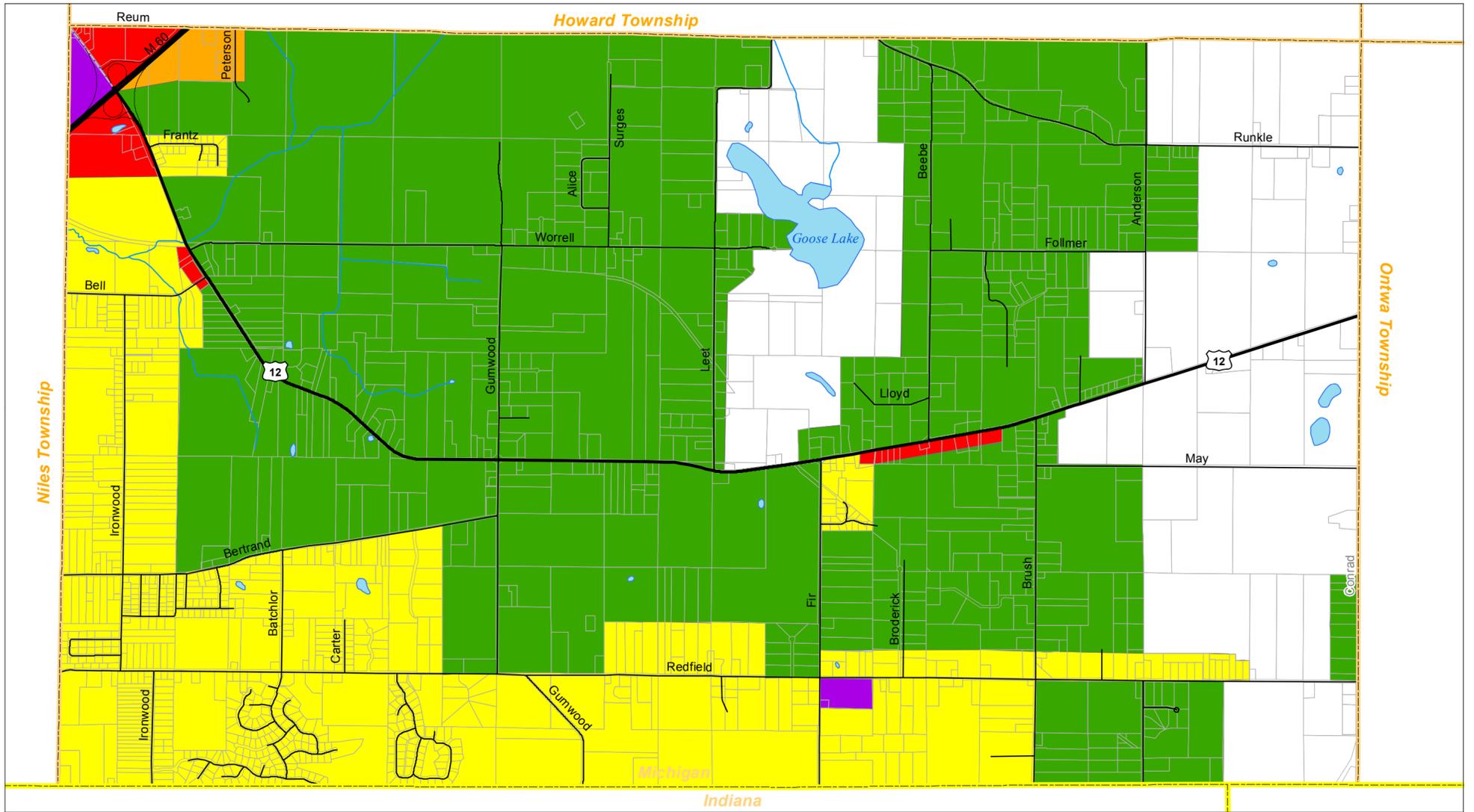
To this end, this plan strongly encourages the continuation of these farming activities. The Agricultural Production future land use designation will help preserve agricultural productivity and viability within the Township by allowing for enough land to support agriculture and related services. It is intended to accommodate farming as well as to provide for very low-density residential development with an average density of approximately one unit per five acres.

The land designated as agriculture amounts to about 2,954 acres, or approximately 22% of total land area within the Township. The most important factors informing the decision to designate particular parcels of land as Agriculture are (1) an examination of local and county data identifying productive agricultural land uses; (2) the relative size and contiguity of those agricultural properties; (3) soil conditions identified as prime farmland.



Preserving large, contiguous tracts of productive farmland is essential to supporting viable agriculture

Voluntary farmland protection techniques such as P.A. 116, Purchase of Development Rights, Farmland Conservation Easements, and Transfer of Development Rights will be actively supported in this area. Furthermore, with the mineral resources within this area, mining in parts of the Township are likely. Regulatory standards will be established to mitigate long-term impacts of mining within the Township.



Milton Township Master Plan

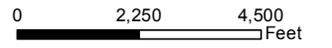
Cass County, Michigan

Future Land Use

Future Land Use

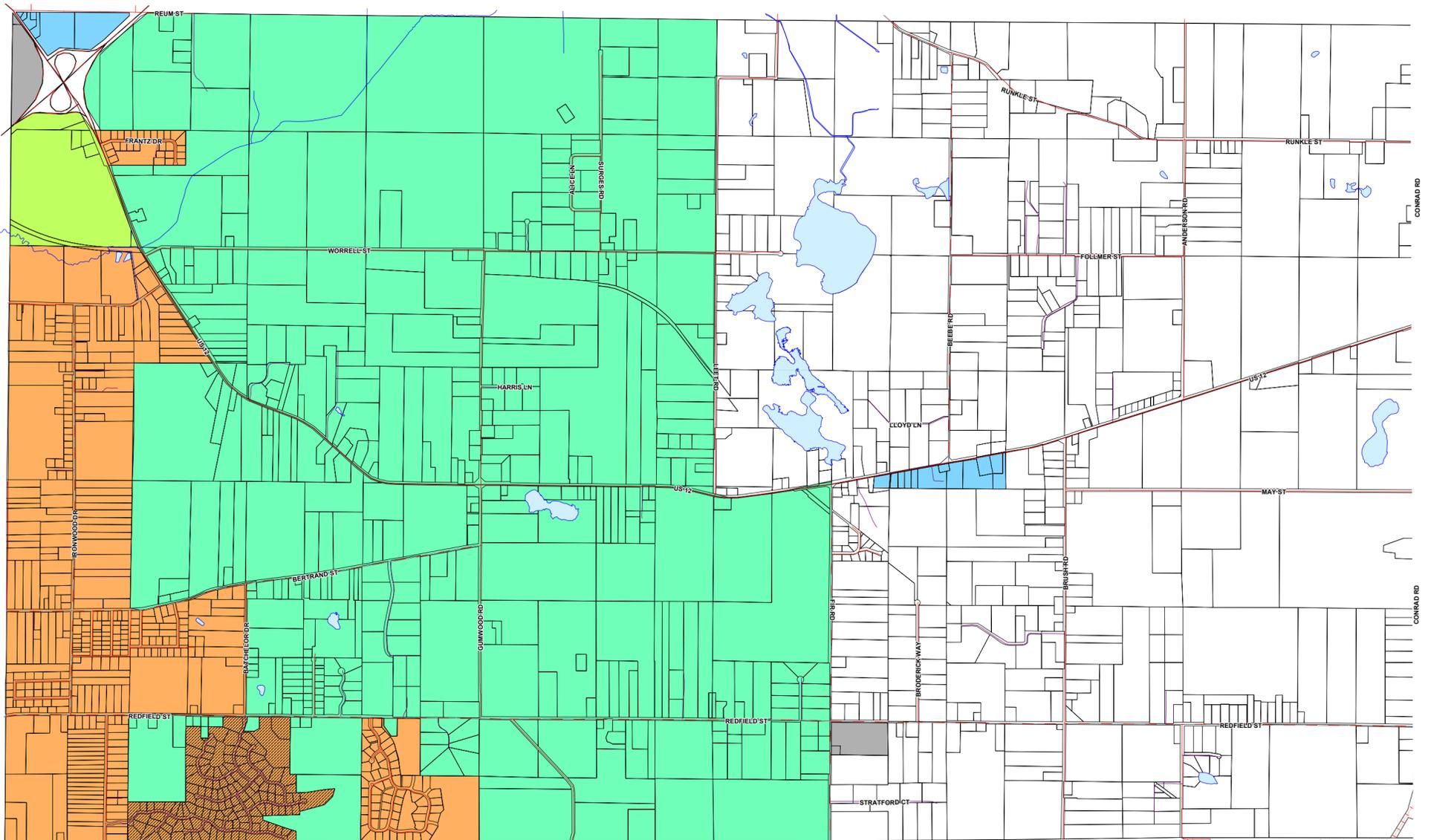
- Agricultural Production
- Rural Residential
- Single Family Residential
- Medium-Density / Multi-Family Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial

1 inch = 2,250 feet



Williams & Works

Source Data:
State of Michigan Center for Geographic Information, Cass County



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Zoning Legend

- Agricultural Production
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Medium Density Residential
- Planned Unit Development
- Rural Residential
- Single Family Residential
- Service Commercial

MILTON TOWNSHIP

ZONING MAP

Printed: March 2, 2011



Information contained herein is provided for reference purposes only and should be confirmed with the appropriate local agency. Cass County assumes no responsibility for errors and/or omissions.

Scale: 1 inch equals 997 feet

Rural Residential



A preferred alternative clusters residences in small groups with significant open space buffers

The Township wishes to encourage the continuation of agricultural operations, while allowing low-density residential development on lands with little quality prime farmland soils (e.g., prime farmland soils defined as "drainage required" by the U.S.D.A.). Residential development is anticipated at densities of an average of one unit per two acres. These areas are not intended to be serviced with public sewer or water. This designation is intended to serve as a transitional zone from the agricultural eastern portion of the Township and increasing residential development to the south and west. Much of these areas contain significant development constraints such as wetlands, floodplains, and high water table characteristics. The provision of Rural Residential areas will lead toward the preservation of the Township's rural atmosphere. Approximately 7,214 acres fall into this designation, representing about 53% of the land area in the Township.

The traditional development pattern in rural residential areas consists of large-lot single-family residences and hobby farms strung out along county roads. A preferred alternative encouraged in this plan anticipates residences clustered to preserve areas of natural resources, open spaces, or farmland. It is the Township's intent to allow clustered residential lots to be of a size significantly smaller than two acres but an overall density no greater on average than one unit per two acres. Both the clustered residential provisions and the dedication methods for open space will be defined in the Zoning Ordinance and may include planned unit developments, site condominiums, or full land divisions where an equal or greater area of open space is maintained as part of an association or trust. Each cluster will be separated by open spaces where the rural character of the land and natural habitat are retained. Typically less road infrastructure is needed for the development, residential areas are hidden from major roadways and cul-de-sacs and other road configurations limit through traffic and dedicated open space provides recreational opportunities.

Single Family Residential

This land use category recognizes existing single-family platted subdivisions generally within the southern portion of the Township and makes provision for new residential developments with an average overall density of one acre per dwelling unit. About 3,174 acres are included in the Single Family Residential designation, or about 23% of the Township. This land use category is intended to preserve and promote single-family dwellings as the predominant land use. These areas are not intended to be serviced with public sewer or water. New developments are encouraged to

utilize extensive landscaping and vegetation to create a visually appealing sense of entry and to further the character of the community. However, the bulk, scale and positioning of buildings must be carefully managed to preserve the aesthetics of a neighborhood and any important views within the area.



Extensive landscaping and preservation of existing woodlands help to create inviting, high quality neighborhoods

The traditional residential development pattern in rural communities consists of large-lot single-family residences strung out along county roads, or in large subdivisions. A preferred alternative encouraged in this plan anticipates residences clustered to preserve areas of natural resources, significant areas of open spaces, parkland, or farmland. It is the Township's intent to allow clustered residential lots with an average density of one acre per dwelling unit and possibly with greater local densities where public utilities are available. With appropriate regulatory controls, these provisions may be used to encourage high quality open

space design with modest increases in density. Both the clustered residential provisions and the dedication methods for open space will be defined in the Zoning Ordinance and may include planned unit developments, site condominiums, or full land divisions where a quarter of the total development is maintained as part of an association or trust as perpetual open space. The clusters of dwellings may vary significantly in size depending on the characteristics of the site with the clusters separated by open spaces where the rural character of the land and natural habitat are retained. Typically less road infrastructure is needed for the development, residential areas are hidden from major roadways and cul-de-sacs and other road configurations limit through traffic and dedicated open space provides recreational opportunities.

Medium-Density/ Multiple Family Residential

The purpose of the medium density residential land use category is to accommodate a range of residential uses including attached and detached single-family dwellings, multiple-family dwellings, and mobile home subdivisions. Special attention will be given to buffering between medium-density and adjacent low-density land uses. New developments are encouraged to utilize extensive landscaping and vegetation to create a visually appealing sense of entry and to further the character of the community. The area chosen for this category is in close proximity to water and sewer connections and major roadways.

Commercial

The commercial land use category is intended to accommodate limited retail and daily necessity goods and services to primarily serve Township residents. Limited areas along major thoroughfares or at major

intersections including the US-12 interchange would be the most desirable for commercial uses. This category would also include similar educational or institutional uses. In some appropriate areas, medium- to high-density housing may be carefully incorporated within mixed-use commercial neighborhoods. Landscaping and setback standards should be established to create a balance between the needs of a commercial operation and the preservation of the rural character of Milton Township.

Industrial

Milton Township's rural character is compatible only with very limited industrial uses. As such, uses within this land use category should be of such nature that they will not negatively impact the surrounding uses or discourage agricultural production. One site is located south of Redfield and east of Fir. Another site is located north of M-60 and west of US-12 and is occupied by the Michigan Department of Transportation as a storage site. Expansion of industrial uses should be permitted only if the use is connected to municipal water and sewer and new developments are encouraged to utilize extensive landscaping and vegetation to create a visually appealing sense of entry and to further the character of the community.

Local Commercial Sub-Area Plan

It is recognized that the Township will likely experience growth trends and opportunities that originate outside the community or which are the result of regional trends. Often the effect is to create a market opportunity for higher intensity development at critical transportation nodes and, without careful planning, such nodes can evolve into inefficient strip patterns that represent low-value development and foster suburban sprawl.

Consequently, this plan recognizes a potential need for a small, attractively designed node of local commercial and service uses during the planning horizon of this Plan. Such a node could include convenience commercial and, potentially some locally-oriented office or commercial uses to serve the nearby residential neighborhoods and the traffic that traverses the community. An inviting mixed use commercial node may also include medium- to high-density residential uses, if appropriately-scaled for the neighborhood. This is desirable in that would offer a convenience to residents that otherwise will need to travel outside the community for such services. However, if not carefully managed, such land uses can expand and alter the character of the community, so it will

be important that when the demand for a commercial node materializes, that it be carefully located in areas characterized by higher traffic volume with good connections to residential areas.

An exact location for such a node is not established by this Plan, but locations that are not characterized by higher traffic volumes with reasonable connections to residential areas should be avoided. In

addition, any such development must be carefully designed and executed to maintain the Township’s rural character and, as such, would be relatively small in scale – likely less than ten acres in total and regulated by effective design standards.

This Plan anticipates some pressure for commercial or service uses to address the needs of local population and when interest emerges, the Township will determine the most appropriate location and undertake a more detailed sub-area planning process to define future land uses for that node. It is intended that once such a node becomes established no further expansion of commercial land uses will be needed during the planning horizon of this Master Plan, or any subsequent extension of it.



Eventual development of a small-scale commercial node is anticipated in the Township

Zoning Plan

Section 33, (2), (d), of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Act 33 of 2008) requires that Master Plans adopted after September 1, 2008 include a Zoning Plan to explain how the future land use categories in this Plan relate to the zoning districts incorporated in the Township’s Zoning Ordinance. The following table relates the more general future land use categories with the zoning districts and discusses features and factors to be considered in reviewing requests to rezone lands in the Township consistent with this plan.

It is the intention of the Planning Commission in adopting this Master Plan that any zoning amendments that might occur as a result of the Future Land Use Map and Plan would have to be initiated by land owners for their own property. Furthermore it is the intention of the Planning Commission that the present or future Planning Commissions would not initiate the entire zoning changes which might be suggested by the Future Land Use Map.

Future Land Use Categories	Supporting and Compatible Zoning Districts	Potentially Compatible Zoning Districts*	Evaluation Factors and Features*
Agricultural Production	Agriculture Production	Rural Residential	In those portions of the Township where commercial agriculture has waned and an emerging pattern of smaller land divisions is apparent, Rural Residential zoning may be appropriate.
Rural Residential	Rural Residential and Agriculture Production	Single Family Residential	In those portions of the Township adjacent or close to Single Family Residential zoning and development, and where natural features are better protected through an open space or cluster pattern that might include smaller lots while protecting such features.
Single Family Residential	Rural Residential and Single Family Residential	Agriculture Production	Areas of the Township that may ultimately evolve into suburban residential patterns could retain significant rural character for many years. Primarily in the eastern portion of the Township and as long as commercial agriculture remains viable, Agriculture Production zoning may be appropriate if it does not foreclose the eventual shift to single family residential uses.

Future Land Use Categories	Supporting and Compatible Zoning Districts	Potentially Compatible Zoning Districts*	Evaluation Factors and Features*
Medium Density/Multi-Family Residential	Medium Density Residential	Rural Residential or Single Family Residential	Immediately east of the US-12/M-60 interchange, the Future Land Use Plan anticipates an emerging area of higher density residential development. However, given the overall residential character of the area, the Township may consider a lower density alternative
Commercial	Commercial or Service Commercial	Medium Density Residential	In the vicinity of the US-12/M-60 interchange areas planned for commercial uses may find alternative uses in medium density residential limited to developments designed to moderate traffic and other impacts that could emanate from an intense residential development.
Industrial	Industrial	None	
Local Commercial Sub Area	Commercial (or a new District)	Single Family Residential Medium Density Residential	When and if a local commercial Sub Area Plan is established, it must incorporate appropriate zoning guidance. Likely zoning districts to implement such a Plan will include the Commercial or Service Commercial districts, but Single Family or Medium Density Residential may be appropriate if called for in the Plan and carefully designed to create a unified development plan.

In considering a request to rezone property in Milton Township, the Planning Commission shall consider the future land use map (Map Ten) and the future land use descriptive narrative of this plan. The foregoing table shall be used to evaluate the degree to which the proposed rezoning is, or may be, consistent with this plan together with an evaluation of the specific request. The proposed rezoning shall also consider whether the proposed site may be reasonably used as it is currently zoned, whether the proposed site is an appropriate location any and all of the land uses that might be permitted within the requested zoning district, whether there may be other locations

in the community that are better suited to accommodate such uses and any potential detrimental impact on the surrounding property that could result from the proposed rezoning.

In all cases, this Zoning Plan shall be applied as a guideline for the Planning Commission subject to the appropriate application of the discretionary authority permitted to the Planning Commission and Township Board by statutory authority, case law and good planning practice. Nothing in this Zoning Plan will preclude the Planning Commission and Township Board from considering amendments to this Master Plan to better serve the public interests of the community.

Chapter Eleven. Implementation Strategies

An effective Master Plan must provide not only a vision for future development, it must also outline strategic activities to be undertaken to achieve that vision. Many visions are never realized when communities allow the plan to languish and do not take the proactive steps necessary to give the plan life.

Often planning visions are never realized when communities fail to take proactive steps to achieve them. This plan avoids this by outlining specific implementation strategies.

To avoid this in Milton Township, this plan includes the following strategies to implement the goals and objective and land use recommendations contained in these pages. It is recognized that many strategies will be long-term in nature and that many entities in addition to Milton Township must cooperate to fully implement the Plan. In many instances, the Township's role is that of facilitator for some of the strategies outlined. Finally, it is important to recognize that, while implementation of this plan and the following strategies will be important, they must be addressed in the context of the broader priorities of the Township and may, at times, take subordinate importance to more immediate demands.

1. **Zoning Ordinance Audit and Evaluation.** The Zoning Ordinance offers a vitally important set of tools, regulations and policies to implement the Master Plan. Therefore, it is important that the intent statements and district standards of the ordinance be evaluated to assure they are fully compatible with the Plan. Detailed design standards for subdivisions and site condos, lot area adjustments to enable green area set-asides, inter-connectivity standards are some of the tools that could be considered. In addition, there are a few areas of the Township where the Plan calls for less intense land uses than would be permitted currently by the Zoning Ordinance. These should be carefully evaluated for rezoning to a less intense district. Areas of the Township planned for more intense land uses typically need not be rezoned immediately, but can wait for owner interest. The result of this task would be an extended narrative report that considers the existing Zoning Ordinance in the context of the plan and recommends a series of amendments to further the Plan's objectives.
2. **Strategic Zoning Ordinance Amendments.** Once this audit report is completed, the Planning Commission can establish priorities for strategic amendments to the document. This activity would consist of the necessary amendments to assure the Township has the tools and standards that are appropriate to move the plan forward. These could be implemented one at a time, or in a comprehensive amendment, as appropriate.

The Township will be equipped with sufficient information to accurately evaluate and guide development to protect features where possible

3. **Natural Features Inventory.** This strategy is called for in the goals and objectives (see objective 2a), and it is important to protecting the most significant natural features. The purpose of the inventory would be to identify and map areas of significant wildlife habitat, healthy and scenic woodlands and wetlands, historic features or areas, important viewsheds, etc. These features should be described in detail and mapped as part of the inventory. Then when proposals come forward proposing development in their vicinity, the Planning Commission may use the inventory to minimize negative impact on features. This need not mean that no development will occur in or around important natural areas, but it does mean that the Township will be equipped with sufficient information to accurately evaluate and guide development to protect features where possible. It also can be useful to developers as they study a site informed by the detailed analysis in such an inventory.
4. **Incentives for Open Space and Cluster Design.** A central theme of this plan is the desire to protect the important natural features and rural character of the community. Open space design residential developments have been proven to protect meaningful woodlands, wetlands and other features while allowing sensitive and appropriate residential development. In addition, the residential development industry recognizes the value of such design techniques as homes in open space communities can fetch significantly higher prices. However, this technique is seldom employed because of the lack of certainty in a development process that involves significant review and re-work through public meetings and hearings. Developers evidently value a predictable process more than the potential higher return. Therefore, the Township will evaluate a zoning ordinance amendment to incentivize the open space design format by making it the permitted use by right in the Single Family Residential zoning district and, potentially, in the Rural Residential District, while a conventional subdivision would become a special land use. As a special land use, the applicant will be called upon to justify the proposal as more in keeping with the objectives of this Plan than the open space design would be. In essence, this technique will streamline the approval process for open space design while it may retard development that is inefficient and land consumptive.
5. **Survey of Farmers.** The policies of the Master Plan strongly support a continuation of productive agriculture in the community. Zoning can be very useful in this area, but in many rural communities stringent zoning standards intended to protect farmland are not embraced by farmers. This is often due to the fact that they regard the zoning provisions as an imposition that restricts their property rights. However, in some communities, farmers welcome standards that

facilitate productive agriculture, if they can participate in developing them. Therefore, the purpose of this task is to meet with or survey the people actively involved in commercial agriculture to isolate policies that might be inhibiting farming and to seek ways the Township could work with them to strengthen farming. Examples of some of the provisions we have helped other communities we serve prepare include standards for Agri-Tourism businesses, more liberal standards for small-scale retailing from agricultural properties (e.g., country markets, U-Pick operations, small craft operations), and standards to guide any residential development in Agricultural areas to lands least suited for commercial farms.

6. **Standards for Community Wastewater Systems.** In several places the Master Plan emphasizes conservation cluster form subdivisions as a means to protect open space. In these forms, lot size may be reduced in exchange for dedicated open space. This pattern can be a very attractive alternative to “slice and dice” subdivisions, but it sometimes means that individual lots become too small to accommodate on-site wastewater systems. This does not mean, however, that public sewers must be installed, merely that a community wastewater collection and on-site treatment system should be installed. Both the County Health Department and the MDNRE have regulatory standards to govern the technical aspects of these systems and it is not necessary for the Township to duplicate those. But it is important that the Township have a clear understanding of the funding mechanism for the capital cost of development and for on-going operations and maintenance and provisions that address these matters should be a part of the Township’s development standards.
7. **Neighborhood Commercial Sub-Area Plan.** The future land use plan recognizes the probability that over the next twenty years a demand for some local commercial services and facilities may emerge. The plan does not identify a specific location, but provides guidance in terms of traffic and connections to nearby residential. It also discusses the desirability of attractive and inviting design standards for the node that develops. The most appropriate approach to achieve these would be to complete a detailed sub-area plan for the location selected, including desired land uses, design standards, circulation plans and implementation mechanisms. These could be incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance as specific overlay provisions, or they could be adopted as more general policy guidance as a supplement to the Master Plan. The most effective planning process would involve the property owners in the vicinity to gain broad acceptance.
8. **Mineral Extraction Site Reclamation.** The Township is home to significant areas of sand and gravel deposits and, therefore, surface

mines. These can provide some economic activity in the community and income to the land owners, but the potential off-site impacts from mining can be very disruptive to a residential environment. The current Township zoning ordinance rightly treats such operations as special land uses with appropriate measures to control off-site nuisance impacts. However, the reclamation standards are limited to the ultimate stabilization of the site after the mining activity is completed. These standards do not address the future land uses that may evolve and this misses an opportunity to assure that eventually mined areas will be put to a use more consistent with the long term vision for the community. An implementation strategy for this Plan, therefore, is an amendment and strengthening of the ordinance with regard to mine reclamation.

APPENDIX

In accordance with Section 41 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Act 33 of 2008, as amended), the Township Board authorized distribution of this Master Plan to the entities and jurisdictions called for in the Act. The following agencies and organizations were invited to participate in the Master Plan update effort and to comment on its results. The table on the following page summarizes the responses received from several of the surrounding jurisdictions as well as numerous comments on file from interested citizens and the actions taken in finalizing the Plan, where appropriate.

Jefferson Township Planning Commission
 Jefferson Township Hall
 24725 Jefferson Center Street
 P.O. Box 188
 Cassopolis, Michigan 49031

Niles Charter Township
 Planning Commission
 320 Bell Road
 Niles, MI 49120

St. Joseph County
 Plan Commission
 227 W. Jefferson Boulevard
 Suite 1140 County-City Building
 South Bend, IN 46601

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
 185 East Main Street, Suite 701
 Benton Harbor, Michigan 49022

Howard Township
 1345 Barron Lake Road
 Niles, MI 49120

Ontwa Township Planning Commission
 Township Hall
 26225 US 12
 Edwardsburg, MI 49112

Cass County Planning Commission
 120 North Broadway, Suite 116
 Cassopolis, MI 49031

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
 185 East Main Street, Suite 701
 Benton Harbor, Michigan 49022

Cass County Road Commission
 340 N. O'Keefe Street
 Cassopolis, MI 49031

Michigan Department of Transportation
 State Transportation Building
 425 W. Ottawa St.
 P.O. Box 30050
 Lansing, MI 48909

DTE
 One Energy Plaza
 Detroit, MI 48226-1221

Consumers Energy
 One Energy Plaza
 Jackson, MI 49201-2357

AEP - Michigan
 500 Circle Drive,
 Buchanan, MI 49107

Berrien County Planning Commission
 Berrien County Community Development
 Department
 Berrien County Administration Building,
 701 Main Street
 St. Joseph, MI 49085

Municipality or Entity	Nature of Response	Action Taken
St. Joseph County	Favorable	None needed
Ontwa Township	Favorable	None needed
Howard Township	Update	Include Township Planning Commission and Master Plan
Niles Charter Township	Update	Noted same correction as Howard Township
City of Niles	Favorable	None needed
Berrien County	Favorable	None needed
Cass County	Update	Noted typographical errors and posed question regarding Bibliography
Southwestern Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC)	Smart growth commentary	The SWMPC provided an extensive review based on the ten tenets of Smart Growth. Many of their ideas will be addressed in further Master Plan Updates. Several comments are inconsistent with the desire of Milton Township residents to protect the rural character of the Township. In addition, the Township recognizes that working more closely with neighboring Townships in the future as suggested could provide additional benefits.
Numerous interested citizen comments on file	Various comments	Appropriate consideration

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following texts, resources and websites were consulted in the preparation of this Master Plan.

Brandywine School District Annual Report

Cass County Michigan Master Plan

Edwardsburg School District Master Plan

Indiana Map (Indiana Geographic Information System Data Directory)

Milton Township Master Plan (1999)

Milton Township Zoning Ordinance

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Niles Township Zoning Ordinance

Niles/Buchanan/Cass Area Transportation Study

South West Michigan College Website

South West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

St. Joseph County/ South Bend Indiana Master Plan

St. Joseph County/ South Bend Indiana Zoning Ordinance

State of Michigan Center for Geographic Information

State of Michigan Center for Geographic Information

State of Michigan Historic Preservation Office

US Census Bureau

Woods & Poole Population Projections