

White Oak Township Master Plan

White Oak Township, Ingham County, Michigan

Distribution Draft – February 14, 2022

Prepared with the assistance of:



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Introduction

The White Oak Township Master Plan is the culmination of efforts of the Township Planning Commission, Township Board of Trustees and residents of White Oak Township. They joined together in order to update the previous Master Plan for the community's growth and development and make better use of the existing Zoning Ordinance.

The White Oak Township Master Plan has been developed to serve as a set of general policies to guide decision makers within the community and direct the future growth and development of the Township over the next ten to fifteen years. The Master Plan is intended to provide a suitable development pattern for the Township that will promote future economic stability and quality of life to residents of White Oak Township.

In accord with this objective, the Master Plan defines issues that are most important to the community. Resident and community input was encouraged through a visioning meeting, Planning Commission meetings, and a public hearing. An analysis of the existing features of the Township was conducted to illustrate some of its defining characteristics. The analysis includes a survey of the existing land uses in the Township; population, economic and housing statistics; and a description of the physical constraints, natural resources, and circulation patterns within the community.

Based on all gathered information and with input from citizens, goals and objectives were developed which outline the growth and development patterns for the community over the next ten to fifteen years. This plan and the goals and objectives contained within it should be the guide for all significant land use decisions made by the Township for the next ten to fifteen years. As conditions change over time, the Township may find that the Master Plan needs to change as well. Amendments are likely as it is impossible to perfectly predict exactly what will happen in the near future. Keeping the Master Plan up-to-date will ensure that it stays relevant and useful and will keep it from simply collecting dust on a shelf.

Purpose and Intent

This document is intended to fulfill the requirements and provide the functions of a Master Plan. The Township Master Plan crucial planning document for a community as It not only provides important information about the current conditions and trends in the community, but also presents a vision for the future of the Township with a plan for accomplishing that vision.

A Master Plan is used for a variety of purposes. At the most basic level, a Master Plan is the basis for a community's zoning ordinance. One of the legal tests of validity for a zoning ordinance is that the ordinance must be based on a comprehensive plan for the development of the jurisdiction. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (P.A. 110 of 2006, as amended) requires that zoning ordinances are based on a plan.

A fundamental part of the master planning process is the public involvement that identifies the community's desires for its future and its long-term vision for growth and development. The goals and objectives are the heart of the Master Plan and present the vision and the manner in which it will be achieved.

Document Contents

The White Oak Township Master Plan is organized into several chapters describing existing conditions, trends, projections, and their implications; the Township's vision, goals and objectives; master planned future land use, transportation, recreation, and community development; and proposed actions for making the Plans into reality.

- **Community Profile** is an analysis of White Oak Township with regards to its population and other demographic characteristics. Based on numerical data, this section gives an overview of the trends in the Township and projections for the future.
- **Existing Conditions** presents the existing land uses, transportation, public facilities, wetlands, floodplain, prime farmland and soils, and other physical characteristics of White Oak Township, including maps, pictures, and text. Its purpose is to present the Township as it exists today.
- **Goals, Objectives, and Development Guidelines** outline the path that the Township intends to follow, including the vision for the economic, social, and physical future of the community.
- **The Future Land Use Plan** combines the information, analysis and input from the above chapters into a coherent plan for Whit Oak Township's future. This chapter is related to the goals and objectives, Township enhancements, sustainability considerations, and future land use and transportation recommendations.
- **The Action Plan** answers the "how" of the Master Plan. With specific programs, ideas, and regulations, it provides guidance for Township officials to shape the Township's future. The chapter includes specific action-oriented implementation steps, as well as for economic development, land use and zoning regulations, and capital improvements.

White Oak Township Today

Regional Context

White Oak Township is located in Ingham County, Michigan approximately 30 miles southeast of the City of Lansing, and approximately 13 miles east of the City of Mason, Michigan. The Township is conveniently located within close proximity to Interstate-96, making it easily accessible to nearby communities and other regional destinations.

The Township is approximately 36.5 square miles in size and is largely comprised of undeveloped agricultural land and rural residential homes on large lots.

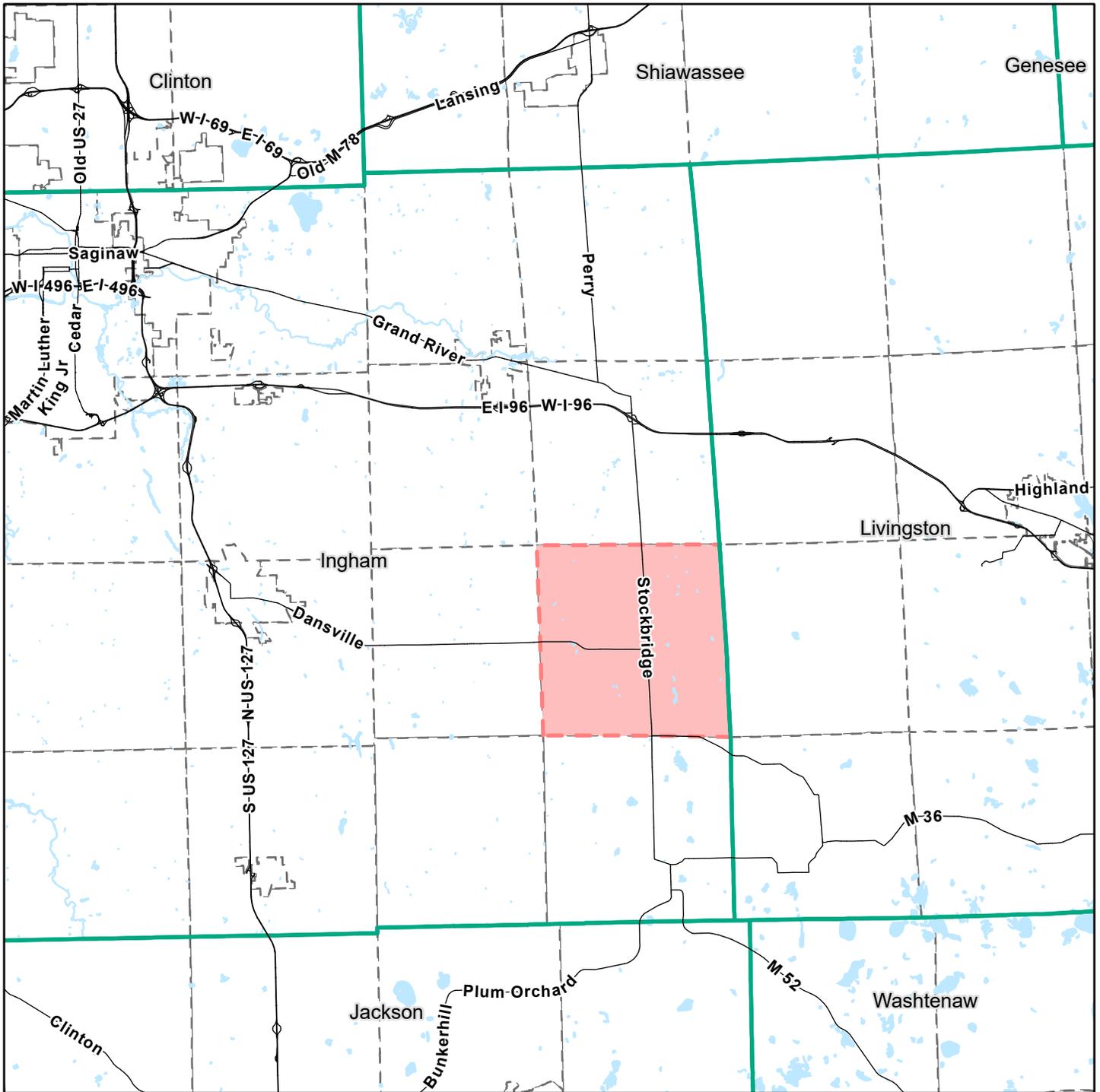
LOCATION

White Oak Township is located in southeast Ingham County in the south-central region of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. Leroy Township is located on the north side of the Township and Stockbridge Township is located on the south side of the Township. Additionally, Ingham Township and the Village of Dansville are located directly to the west of White Oak Township. It should also be noted that White Oak Township is located on the southeast edge of Ingham County, bordering Iosco Township in Livingston County.

The Township has immediate access to Interstate-96 via M-52, which runs north-south through the Township and stretches from the Saginaw area to south of the City of Adrian. Interstate-96 is a major east-west highway that provides access across the State of Michigan from the City of Novi to the City of Muskegon, which is a total of approximately 170 miles. The Township also encompasses thoroughfare M-36, a State-owned and maintained highway that provides access from the City of Lansing to White Oak Township.

ESTABLISHMENT

In 1824, Joseph Wempler surveyed the boundaries of White Oak Township. Township records state that the first recognized settlement in the Township dates back to 1835, by a man named Daniel Dutcher. Prior to Mr. Dutcher's settlement, the Township was home to a Native American tribe.



Regional Location

White Oak Township, Ingham County, MI

January 27, 2021

LEGEND

- White Oak Township
- County Boundary
- Surrounding Municipalities
- Bodies of Water
- Regional Roads



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: Ingham County 2020. McKenna 2021.



DEMOGRAPHICS

The purpose of a demographic profile is to understand the past, present, and future population, demographic characteristics, housing analysis, educational rates of White Oak Township and compare those to the surrounding communities. Population and demographic characteristics are compared with Ingham County, and in some cases the State of Michigan, to gain a regional perspective. The following paragraphs and tables will give the reader some insight as to what the future may hold for White Oak Township.

POPULATION

The population of White Oak Township was 1,999 persons, based on the 2020 United States Census count. Ingham County had a total population of 284,900 persons based on 2020 data. For reference, White Oak Township residents account for 0.007% of the entire county population.

The following table compares the population of White Oak Township to surrounding communities. Handy Township, located between Howell to the east, Webberville to the west, and surrounding Fowlerville has the highest population within the surrounding communities. Wheatfield Township, located to the southeast of Lansing, comprised the least number of residents.

	White Oak Twp	Leroy Twp	Handy Twp	Iosco Twp	Ingham Twp	Wheatfield Twp
Population	1,999	3,791	8,602	3,870	2,401	1,665

RACE & ETHNICITY

The population of White Oak Township is relatively homogenous in terms of race and ethnicity. In 2020, 89.7% of the total population reported being white/caucasian, 0.3% African American, 0.5% American Indian, 0.2% Asian, 0.1% Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander and 1.3% identified as another race. 7.9% of the population within White Oak identified as being mixed race, or had markers of two or more races in their makeup. The below table provides further analysis of the race makeup within the Township.

Race (2020 Decennial Census)

Total:	1199	
Population of one race:	1104	
White alone	1075	89.7%
Black or African American alone	4	0.3%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	6	0.5%
Asian alone	2	0.2%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	1	0.1%
Some Other Race alone	16	1.3%
Population of two or more races:	95	7.9%

AGE STRUCTURE

As of the 2020 Census, the median age within White Oak Township for residents was 46.3 years, compared to Ingham County, which has a median age of 32.4 years. This higher median age could be a factor of an aging population.

The largest age group within the Township, based on data provided by the 2019 American Community Survey, was residents between the age of 45 to 54 years. The second largest population group was the

age range of 35 to 44 years. The third largest age group was between the age of 55 to 59 years. 27.7% of residents are between the ages of 45 to 59 years.

SEX AND AGE (2019 ACS)	Population Size	Percentage
Total population	1201	
Under 5 years	67	5.6%
5 to 9 years	74	6.2%
10 to 14 years	49	4.1%
15 to 19 years	63	5.2%
20 to 24 years	62	5.2%
25 to 34 years	109	9.1%
35 to 44 years	152	12.7%
45 to 54 years	207	17.2%
55 to 59 years	126	10.5%
60 to 64 years	98	8.2%
65 to 74 years	111	9.2%
75 to 84 years	68	5.7%
85 years and over	15	1.2%
Median age (years)	46.3	

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The educational attainment for persons 25 years and older within White Oak Township is described in the following table. Within the Township, an estimated 87.1% of residents have a minimum of a High School degree or higher. 23.4% of residents have completed some college, however did not obtain a degree. 10.7% of residents received an Associates degree. 10.9% of township residents have received a Bachelors degree. Only 6% of residents within the Township have completed graduate or professional schooling to obtain an advanced degree.

For comparison, Ingham County has 40.5% of county residents with a Bachelors degree or higher. In terms of regional comparison, the State of Michigan educational attainment for persons 25 years and older is 33% for a Bachelors degree, while the national estimate for a Bachelors degree is 33.1%.

Education	
High School	36.10%
Some college, no degree	23.40%
Associates degree	10.70%
Bachelor's degree	10.90%
Graduate degree	6%
	87.10%

The following table shows the surrounding communities' educational attainment with a Bachelors degree or higher. White Oak Township accounts for the lowest educational attainment within the communities that were included in the analysis. However, White Oak Township also has one of the lowest population levels within the communities that were reviewed.

	White Oak Twp	Leroy Twp	Handy Twp	Iosco Twp	Ingham Twp	Wheatfield Twp
Bachelors degree or higher	16.9%	24.9%	20.0%	20.3%	24.5%	43.2%

EMPLOYMENT & INCOME

Data provided by the 2019 American Community Survey indicates that White Oak Township has 25% of its employment base based within the construction (13.2%) and manufacturing (11.8%) trades. The third industry for employment within the Township is retail, which accounts for 11.9%. As indicated in the previous section, the Township has a lower educational attainment level than the surrounding communities. Based on the higher rate of employment within these three sectors (construction, manufacturing and retail), advanced degrees or post-secondary education is typically not required, which may attribute to residents not seeking advanced degrees.

The median household income for the Township is estimated at a value of \$73,250. The median household income within Ingham County is \$54,395. Common thought indicates that an advanced degree offers higher wages. White Oak Township seems to be unique in this regard. The following table compares the median household income and educational attainment with other Townships.

Ingham Township and Handy Township both have higher levels of educational attainment, yet lower median household incomes.

	White Oak Twp	Leroy Twp	Handy Twp	Iosco Twp	Ingham Twp	Wheatfield Twp
Bachelors degree or higher	16.9%	24.9%	20.0%	20.3%	24.5%	43.2%
Median Household Income	\$73,250	\$75,430	\$63,971	\$88,242	\$63,750	\$93,000

2019 American Community Survey data also indicates that the average travel time to work (in minutes) in White Oak Township is 34.3. The average travel time (in minutes) for Ingham County is 21. The below table outlines the percentage of jobs in various industries residents within the Township provide services to.

Industry for the Civilian Employed Population	Percentage
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Mining	3.3%
Construction	13.2%
Manufacturing	11.8%
Wholesale Trade	4.4%
Retail Trade	11.9%
Transportation and warehousing and utilities	4.1%
Information	0.5%
Finance and insurance, real estate, rental, leasing	5.2%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative	7.2%
Educational services, health care, social assistance	25.0%

Arts, entertainment, recreation, food services	3.9%
Other services	3.6%
Public Administration	5.9%

While the census data does not provide each residents individual employer, it is reasonable to view that the 25% of industry jobs (educational services, health care, social assistance) are provided and supported within the Lansing region. Additionally, due to the large population concentration in and around the Lansing area, a demand for retail workforce would need to be provided by surrounding Townships.

Lansing is also home to Michigan State University, which is an estimated drive time of 31 minutes to the northwest of the Township. With the large university, Michigan government center, regional hospitals and other centers of commerce, it would be anticipated that the work force to support these industries would be from the surrounding communities. For additional general reference, the population of Lansing in 2019 via ACS data was 117,159 person.

Housing Review

The quality, affordability and availability of a community’s housing stock has a significant impact on the overall community vitality. The following review of Census Data relating to the number of housing units, age of housing units, amount of owner-occupied and rental units, monthly rent and mortgage values, helps evaluate the health of the Township’s housing stock.

The 2020 Census indicated that White Oak Township had an approximate total of 463 housing units. Of these 463 housing units, 445 were classified as being occupied (96.1%) and only 18 units being classified as vacant (3.9%).

The following table compares the surrounding communities as it relates to housing units. White Oak Township had the lowest number of housing units, even though the Township is not the lowest populated community within the sample set.

	White Oak Twp	Leroy Twp	Handy Twp	Iosco Twp	Ingham Twp	Wheatfield Twp
Housing Units	463	1,506	3411	1370	918	645

AGE OF HOUSING

The age of housing stock can provide important insights for a community, as the conditions of the housing stock may be related to its age. Older housing stock can also provide a sense of character to the community. Traditionally, major repairs or rehabilitation is needed when housing reaches an age of 30 years. Communities in which a substantial proportion of the housing stock is more than 30 years old typically initiate programs to encourage reinvestment in the home and property itself. Further more, beginning in the 1960s, the desire and requirement from home owners for more energy efficient houses and additional amenities has increased. Older homes tend to lack the requested features that support barrier free access and may be unsuitable for aging in place without enhanced retrofits or other significant reinvestments.

The table below presents data on the housing stock within the Township. An estimated 28% of the housing units within the Township were constructed prior to 1939. The next largest block of home construction took place between 1980 and 1999, which accounted for 26.4% of all housing units. Due to the estimated 88% of housing units having been constructed prior to the turn of the century (2000), the

Township should encourage reinvestment in the older housing stock to preserve the historical character of the community.

YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT		
2014 or later	0	0.0%
2010 to 2013	0	0.0%
2000 to 2009	53	11.8%
1980 to 1999	119	26.4%
1960 to 1979	117	25.9%
1940 to 1959	36	8.0%
1939 or earlier	126	27.9%
Total	451	

HOUSING COSTS

Monthly housing costs in White Oak Township is one measure of community quality of life and the overall health of the economy. The median gross rent for occupied housing units within the Township was \$1,104, based on 2019 American Community Survey data. Ingham County had a monthly gross rent median of \$872. Based on the data provided, White Oak Township residents pay an estimated 26% more in rent than the Ingham County as a whole.

Of the monthly housing costs, 35.9% of Township residents reported having rent between \$1,000 and \$1,499. The second highest monthly housing costs range was between \$500 and \$999, which accounts for 16.9% of Township residents.

MONTHLY HOUSING COSTS	Count	Percent
Less than \$300	9	2.0%
\$300 to \$499	64	14.2%
\$500 to \$799	76	16.9%
\$800 to \$999	33	7.3%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	162	35.9%
\$1,500 to \$1,999	63	14.0%
\$2,000 to \$2,499	22	4.9%
\$2,500 to \$2,999	0	0.0%
\$3,000 or more	3	0.7%
No cash rent	19	4.2%
<i>Median (dollars)</i>	<i>\$ 1,104</i>	

While there were no record new homes being constructed since 2010, it is possible that in the coming years expansion from the Lansing region could change this. However, due to the ongoing recovery from the Great Recession and the COVID-19 Global Pandemic, the possibility exists that new homes could be constructed within the Township.

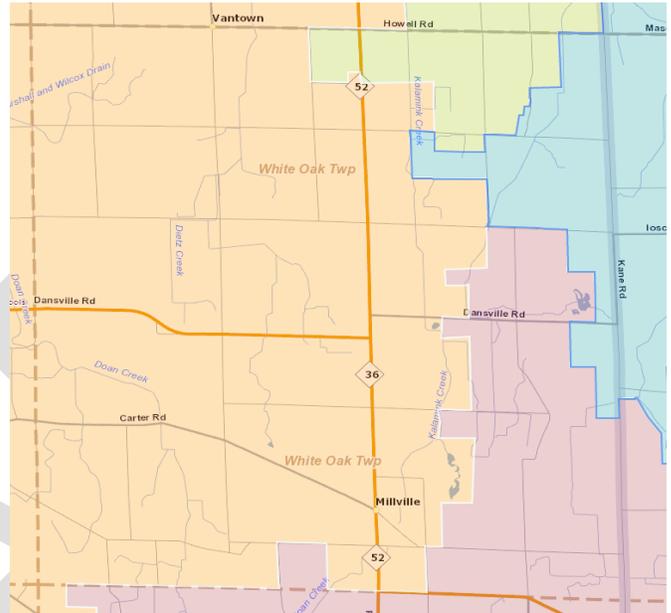
Community Facilities

A primary purpose of municipal government is delivery of services designed for the health, safety, and welfare of the local population. The responsibility for providing public services to the residents of the White Oak Township is shared by several public entities, including the Township itself, Ingham County, and other agencies.

PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITIES

White Oak Township is served by four school districts. The Township is largely served by Dansville Schools. Dansville Schools is comprised of Dansville Elementary School, Dansville Middle School, and Dansville High School. The southeast side of White Oak Township is served by Stockbridge Community Schools, which is comprised of Smith Elementary School (kindergarten - 2nd grade), Heritage School (grades 3-6), and Stockbridge Junior/Senior High School (grades 7-12).

Additionally, White Oak Township also includes the Webberville Community Schools District (to the north) and the Fowlerville Community Schools District (to the northeast). Webberville Community Schools consists of Webberville Elementary School, Webberville Middle School, and Webberville High School. The Fowlerville Community School District consists of HT Smith and Natalie Kreeger Elementary Schools, Fowlerville Junior High, and Fowlerville High School.



PUBLIC RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

White Oak Township has one park within its boundaries, which is located adjacent to City Hall. The Township allows rental of the park and Township Hall facilities to residents free of charge. The Township Park and Hall are located off M-52 just south of Dansville Road and north of M-36. The Park has several play structures, a baseball field, soccer field, bathrooms, and pathways with resting areas and other amenities.

PUBLIC UTILITIES

Like many rural Townships, White Oak Township does not provide public water and/or sewer service to all of its residents. Therefore, Township residents are served by residential well and septic facilities.

The Ingham County Road Department is responsible for the repairs and maintenance of Township roads. White Oak Township is located in the Ingham County Road Department District 3.

The Township works collaboratively with Leroy Township, the Village of Webberville, and Williamstown Township for the collection and disposal of recycled materials. White Oak Township's Recycling and Solid Waste Management Plan notes that the regional recycling site facility is located in Leroy Township. The Plan was developed by Ingham County, and the recycling site is open and available 24 hours a day to residents.

According to the Ingham County Drain Commission, White Oak Township has approximately 33 County drains within its boundaries.

EMERGENCY SERVICE FACILITIES

The Stockbridge Area Emergency Services Authority serves the Township for fire and medical emergency services. Police protection is under the jurisdiction of the Ingham County Sheriff.

TOWNSHIP HALL

White Oak Township hall is located at 1002 S. M-52 Webberville, Michigan. The Township Hall has historical significance to the area, as it was constructed in 1877 as the original Township Hall. Township Hall is utilized for day-to-day operations as well as for tax collections and voting polls.

ZONING AND BUILDING PERMITS

The Township employs a Zoning Administrator to issue and approve zoning permits. The Township Zoning Administrator is responsible for all new construction, address assignment, structural renovation or alteration, zoning issues and questions, and land division reviews. The Zoning Administrator approves and issues all permits with the exception of electrical permits, which are issued by the State of Michigan. The Zoning Administrator works alongside the Township Planning Commission on planning and zoning matters.

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Natural Features and Resources

A thorough community plan requires that the condition of the environment be considered in decisions regarding future land uses and stewardship of the land and water within the Township.

Federal environmental legislation enacted in the 1970's raised public awareness of the importance of environmental protection. Although many states, including Michigan, strengthened federal environmental laws with state laws and programs designed to correct environmental problems and prevent future contamination of air, land, and water, trends during the 1980's reduced enforcement of these laws to a low priority. During the 1990's and early 2000's, environmental protection has resurfaced as a serious concern.

The natural features of White Oak Township, such as the topography, floodplain, wetlands, groundwater, and soils are important features of the community. Although White Oak Township is predominately rural in character, concern for the environment is as critical as in urban communities that must deal with brownfields and air pollution. Most White Oak Township residents use water wells and septic systems which are reliant on clean and suitable environments for their continued use. In dense developments with many systems, this further adds to the stress on the natural environment and the concern for its protection.

Several natural features in White Oak Township are examined below.

TOPOGRAPHY

As with much of the State of Michigan, White Oak Township is characterized by relatively flat land, which is best suited for farming and agricultural activities. A majority of the flat land in the Township is at low levels in basins known geographically as "outwash plains," which were created as a result of glacial melt.

SURFACE WATERS

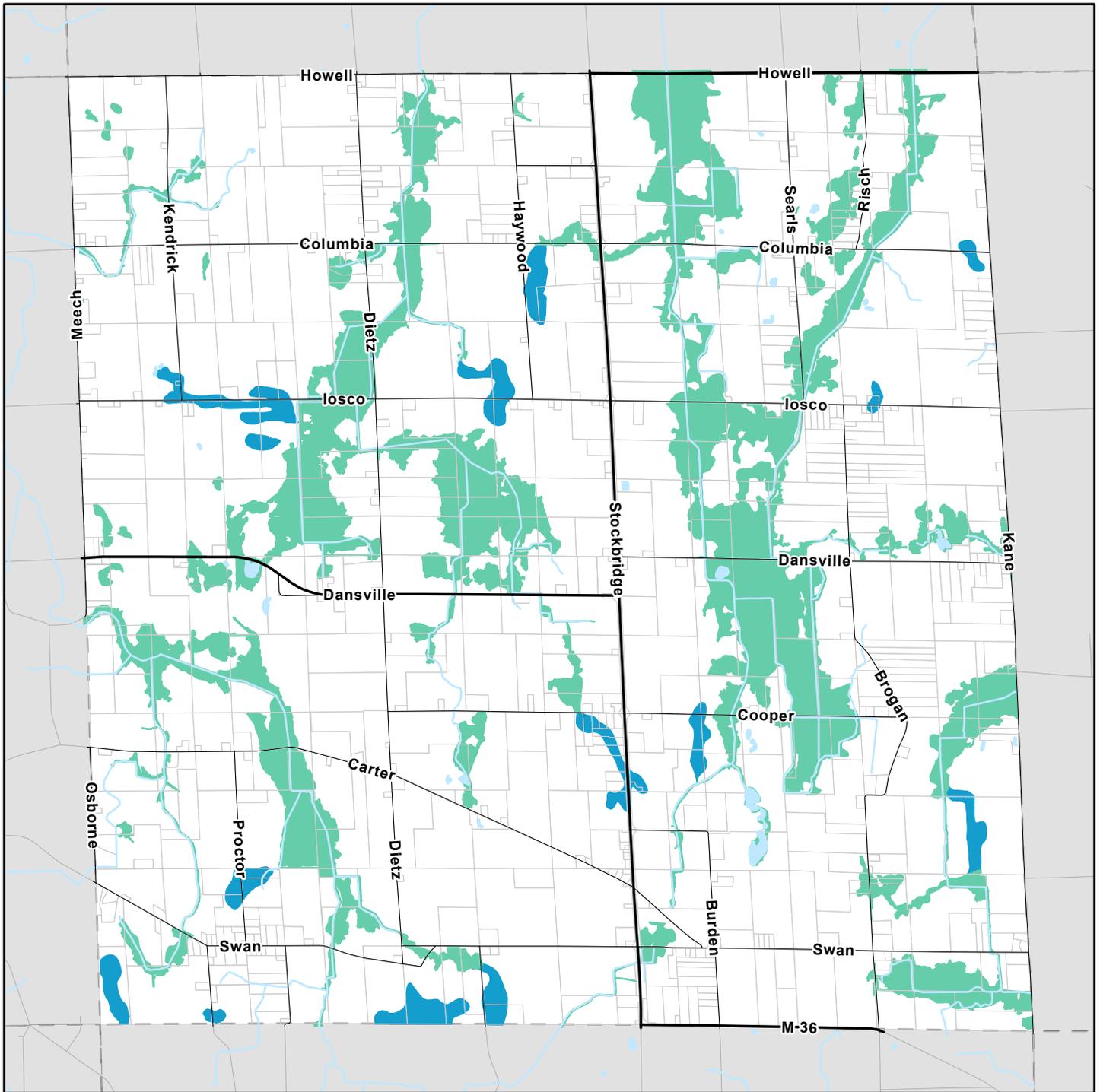
White Oak Township is comprised of little amounts of surface water. Burden Lake is the largest body of water in the Township, covering approximately 23 acres, located east of M-52 and northeast of Millville Road. Additionally, White Oak Township has a smaller lake called Mud Lake, which is located adjacent to the Kalamink Creek just south of Dansville Road east of M-52.

Some of the major drains in the Township include:

- Kalamink Creek
- Doan Creek
- Dietz Creek

FLOODPLAIN

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), portions within the central areas of the Township are located within areas of minimal flood hazard. These areas are categorized by FEMA as "Without base flood elevation (Zone A)" and "0.2% Annual chance flood hazard areas of 1% annual chance flood with average depth less than one square mile (Zone X)."



Floodplain

White Oak Township, Ingham County, MI

February 12, 2021

LEGEND

- 0.2% Chance of Annual Flood Hazard
- 1% Annual Chance of Flooding over 30-Year Mortgage
- Area of Minimal Flood Hazard



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: Ingham County 2020. McKenna 2021.



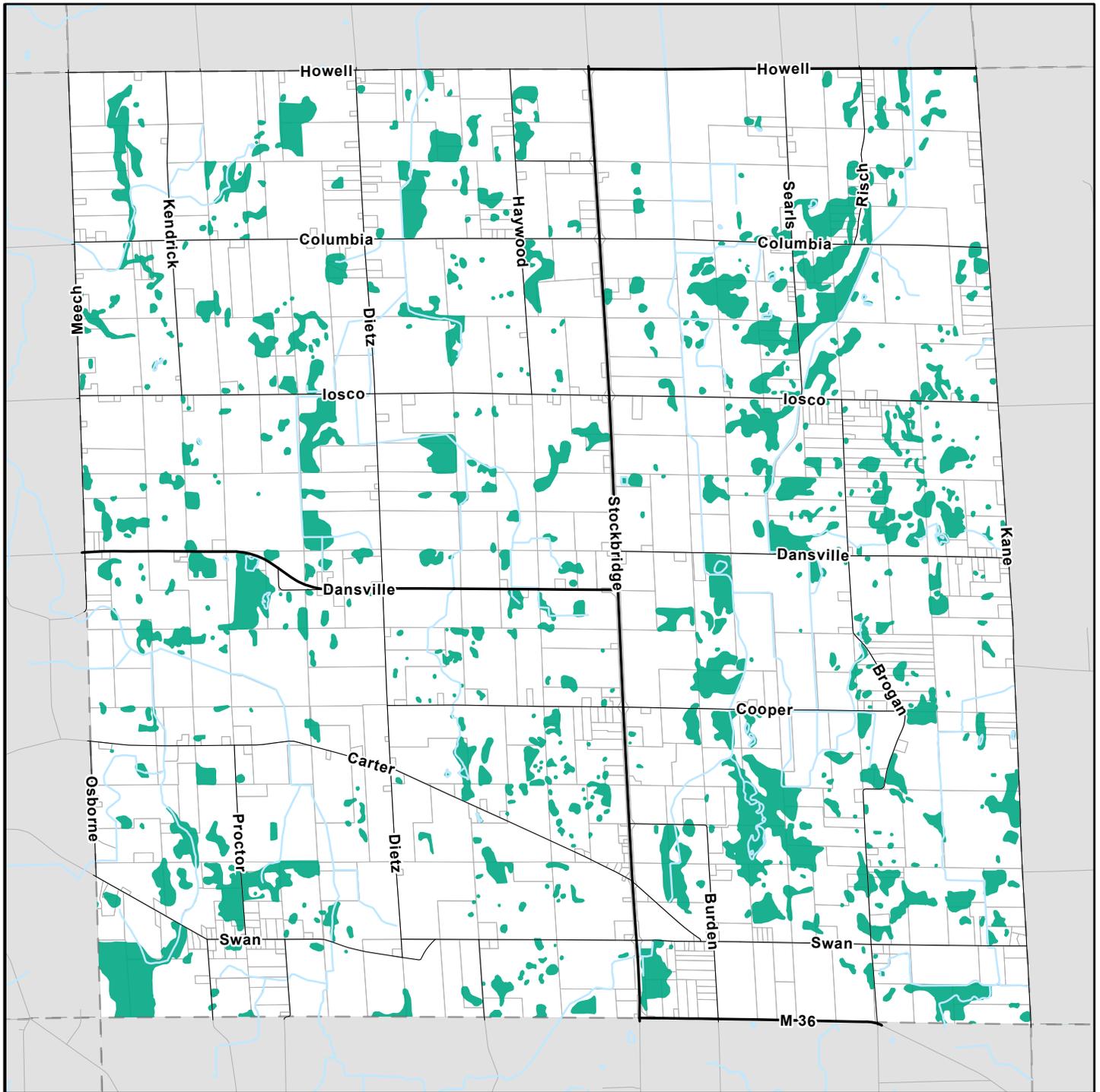
WETLANDS AND WOODLANDS

White Oak Township has a multitude of wetland areas within its boundaries. According to the National Wetlands Inventory, a majority of the existing wetlands in the Township are classified as “Palustrine Wetlands,” which include all nontidal wetlands dominated by trees, shrubs, persistent emergents, emergent mosses or lichens. Some of the most common names for the Palustrine System include marsh, swamp, pond, bog, and fen. Wetlands are important environmental resources that support groundwater recharge.

Because White Oak Township is rural in character, much of the existing land cover consists of either agricultural land, or natural woodlands. The Township’s larger forested areas are located on the east side of the Township surrounding Burden Lake and the Kalamink Creek area south of Columbia Road.

Additionally, larger wooded areas are also present in areas along the south side Iosco Road, Dansville Road, and others.

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Wetlands

White Oak Township, Ingham County, MI

February 12, 2021

LEGEND

- Wetlands
- Bodies of Water



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: Ingham County 2020. McKenna 2021.



GROUNDWATER

White Oak Township depends heavily on groundwater as its source of water for residential and agricultural use. Therefore, in White Oak Township, it is vital to plan appropriately for development in order to protect the natural resource from possible contamination. Contamination of this resource can happen:

- Through non-point sources of pollution from chemicals and efforts associated with commerce, industry and farming;
- Through chemicals filtering into groundwater from septic fields, oil tanks and waste disposal sites;
- Through everyday residential activities. In many instances, these pollutants reach lakes and streams through groundwater supplies. Pollutants may also affect well water located near septic fields.

Groundwater protection must also address the operational features of land uses. Groundwater contamination is most frequently the result of leaking septic systems, improper floor drains, improper storage of hazardous substances, leaking underground storage tanks, above ground spills, overfilling of tanks, condensation from air emissions, and improper waste disposal. Many of these avenues of contamination can be addressed in site plan review.

SOILS

Due to the importance of farming in White Oak Township, the soil composition is an important natural feature to consider when planning for future development and growth. If there are areas with better soils for farming than others, then we should work to protect those areas from the pressures of development. Similarly, some soils are not well suited for septic systems. In that light, development should be steered away from those areas as well.

Soils in White Oak Township are a blend of four different soil associations. They are summarized here:

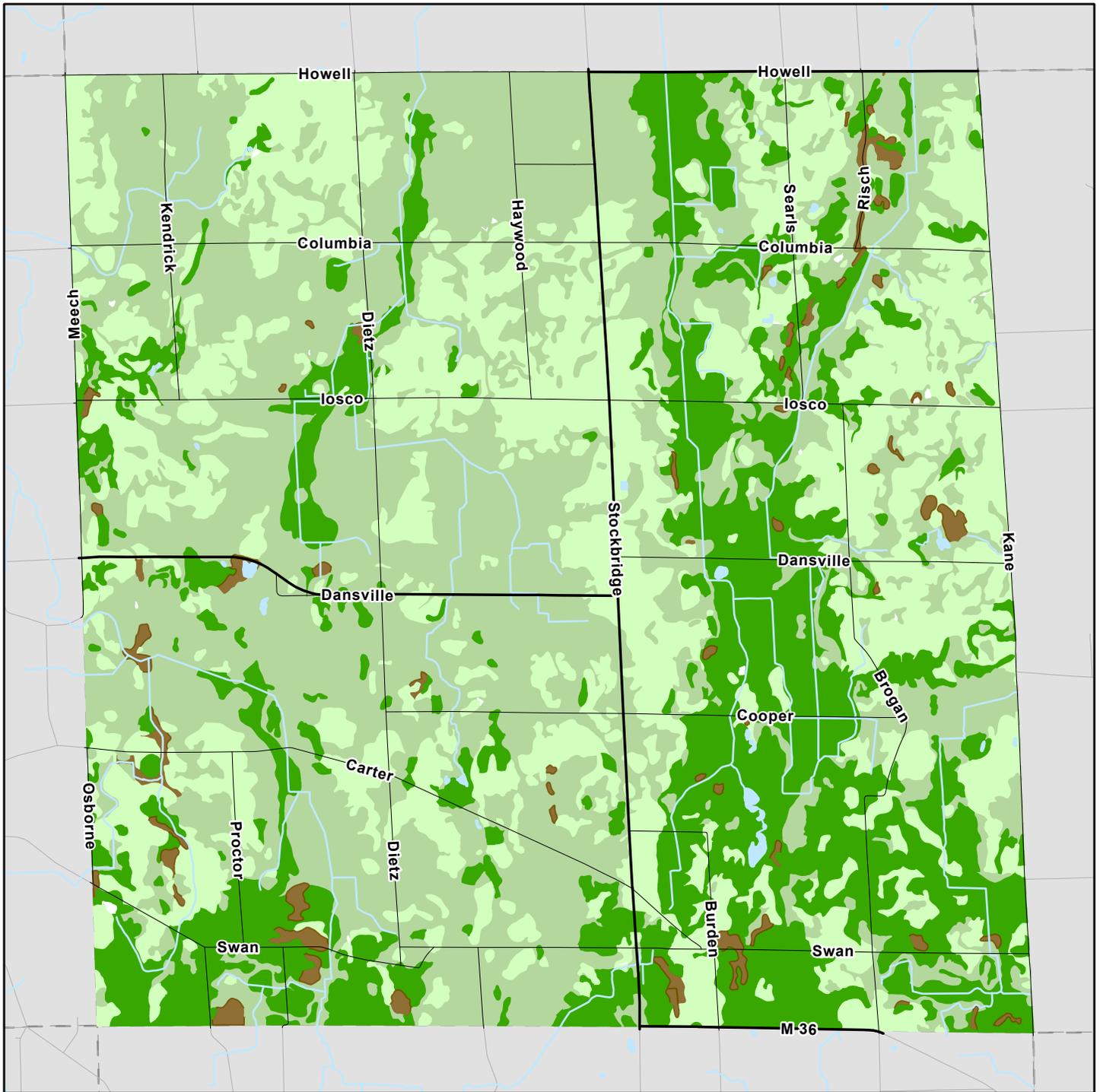
- **Capac-Marlette-Colwood Association:** This type of soil is found in the central and north-central portion of the Township. Capac-Marlette-Colwood soils are characterized by nearly level and undulating, well-drained to very poorly drained loamy soils.
- **Marlette-Capac-Owosso Association:** This soil type is found in the southern portion of the Township, to the eastern portion of the Township. Marlette-Capac-Owosso soils are characterized as nearly level to rolling, well-drained to somewhat poorly drained loamy soils.
- **Houghton-Palms-Edwards Association:** The soil type is found generally along the Kalamink Creek area and is characterized as nearly level, very poorly drained muck soils.
- **Oshtemo-Houghton-Riddle Association:** This soil type is found in the southern portion of the Township, and is characterized as nearly level to hilly, well-drained and very poorly drained, sandy, loamy, and muck soils.

PRIME FARM LAND

Agricultural production has a key role in the landscape of White Oak Township and contributes to the economy, character, and identity of the community. The preservation of agricultural land can provide environmental, aesthetic, recreational and historic benefits to the community. Open farmland also assists in the replenishment and maintenance of groundwater supplies.

Soils are the important element in determining the suitability of land for farming. In order to produce crops, soils must be well drained, without steep slope and able to support vegetation. Based upon the U.S. Soil Conservation Service ratings, the **Township is overwhelmingly suitable for farming and agriculture, with very few areas considered less than prime for farming.** This natural resource is crucial to the food systems of the state and region, as well as the economy of White Oak Township. Thus, preserving farmland is a the Township's highest land use priority.

DRAFT



Prime Farmland

White Oak Township, Ingham County, MI

February 12, 2021

LEGEND

- All Areas are Prime Farmland
- Farmland of Local Importance
- Prime Farmland if Drained
- Not Prime Farmland
- Bodies of Water



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: Ingham County 2020. McKenna 2021.



EXISTING LAND USE

Knowledge of current land use furnishes a basis by which compatibility of new land development can be considered. It is a valuable reference tool for considering the day-to-day issues associated with land management and the provision of public services.

A majority of land within the Township is classified as agricultural and used primarily for production agriculture. The residential land uses fall into one broad category: rural residential.

Land Use Classifications

The following section outlines, in more detail, the location of particular land and their characteristics within White Oak Township. Existing land uses are divided into several different categories in order to analyze the existing pattern of development. This analysis will help to define which characteristics the Township would will work to preserve and enhance throughout the duration of this Plan.

AGRICULTURE/RURAL ESTATE

For the purposes of this land use analysis, agricultural land is defined as any land that is predominately or wholly used for the raising of field or tree crops, utilized as a resource in animal husbandry, or maintained as rural open space. This category represents the overwhelming majority of land in the Township. Therefore, the Township's priority is protecting the character and viability of the rural lifestyle, natural ecosystems, and food system output associated with the Agriculture/Rural Estate land use category.

Agriculture/Rural Estate land uses are generally characterized by large lots located on arterial County roads. In these areas, traffic speeds are generally higher with infrequent stops. Intersections are typically fitted with stop signs rather than traffic signals. On land utilized for Agriculture, many lots include a residential single-family home with accompanying farm buildings. Often times, operational farms will include multiple accessory buildings incidental to agriculture businesses.

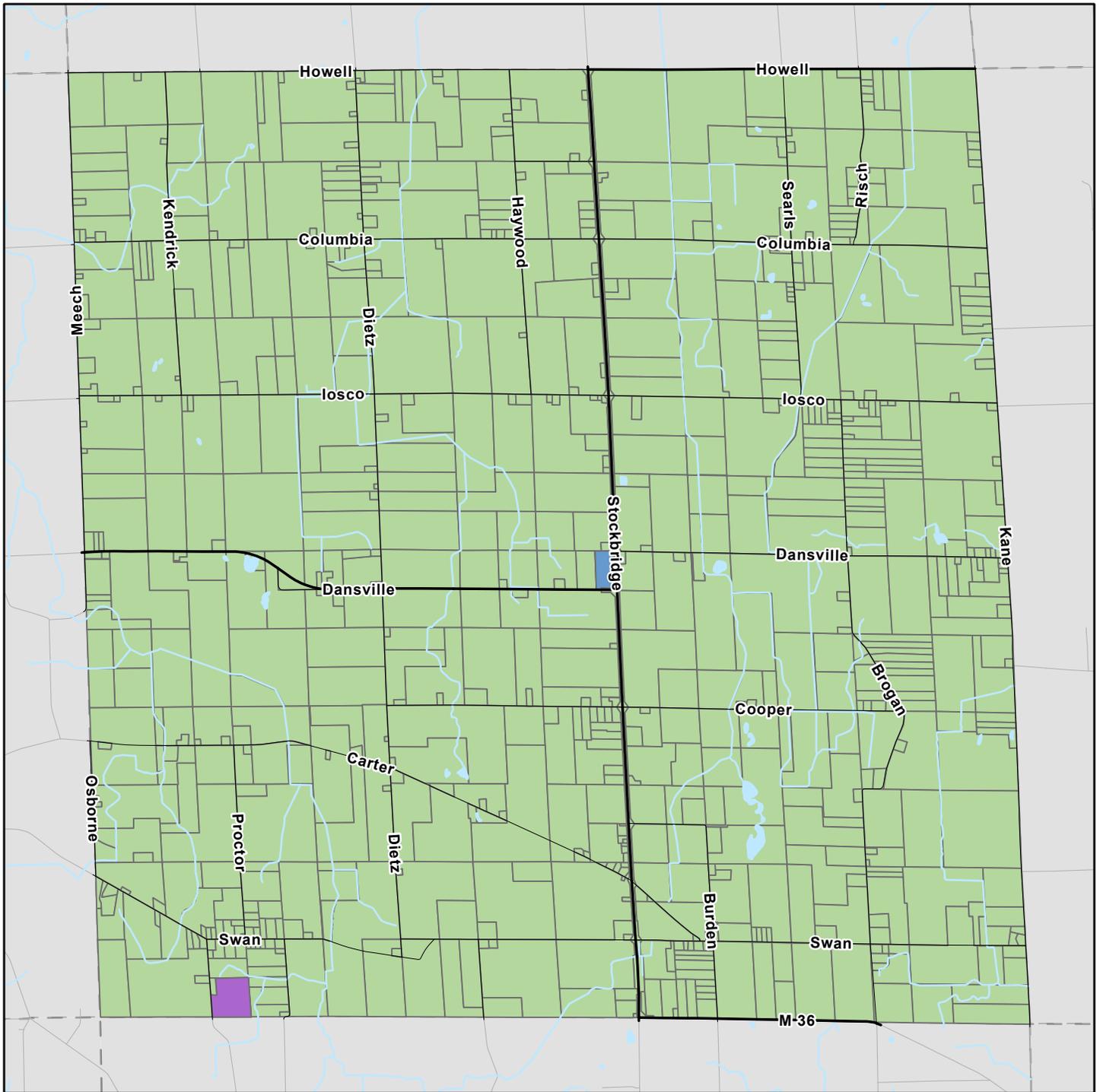
Additionally, areas within the Agriculture/Rural Estate existing land use designation can also be characterized by existing single-family homes located on large lots.

INDUSTRIAL

The industrial land use in White Oak Township is utilized for natural gas treatment, storage, and compression stations. The industrial land use is located on the very southernmost portion of the Township bordering Stockbridge Township.

PUBLIC/QUASI-PUBLIC

These land uses in White Oak Township is limited to Township-owned property. In this case, the Township Hall is designated as a Public/Quasi-Public land use.



Existing Land Use

White Oak Township, Ingham County, MI

February 12, 2021

LEGEND

- Agriculture/Rural Estate
- Industrial
- Public/Semi-Public
- Bodies of Water



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: Ingham County 2020. McKenna 2021.



Township Utilities

SANITARY SEWER AND WATER SERVICE

There is no public water or sanitary sewer service in White Oak Township, nor is there public water and sewer service within a mile of the Township boundaries in any direction. Given the absence of any reported evidence of contamination, wells are sufficient to meet the Township's water needs.

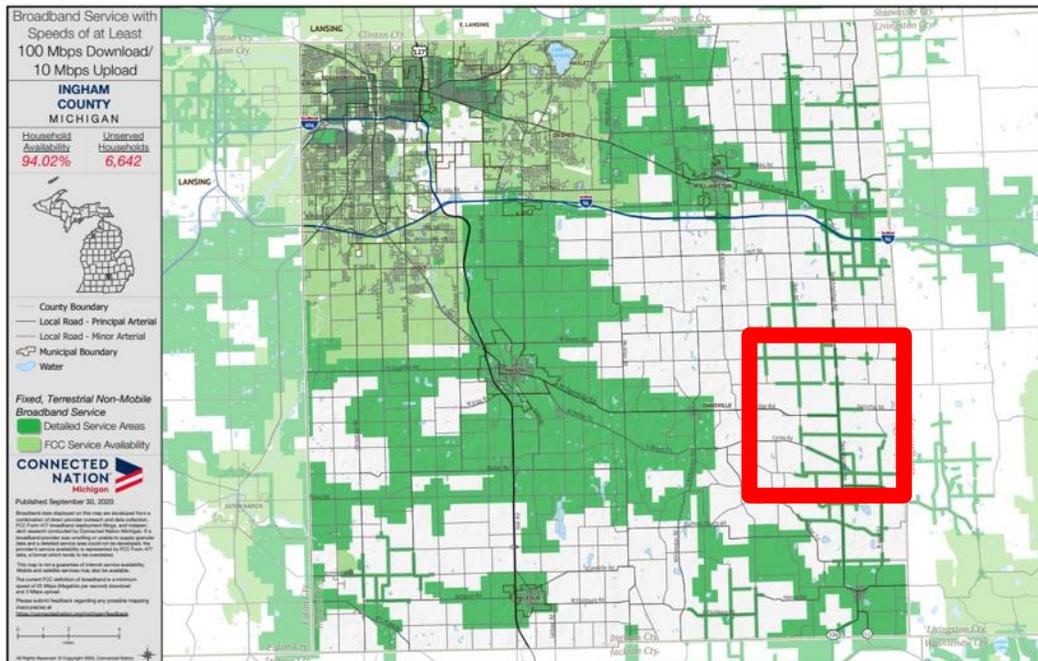
Septic systems are also sufficient to meet the Township's needs, provided that the density and intensity of land uses is kept at appropriate rural levels. The soil survey indicates that there is one soil classification that is considered relatively unstable for septic systems - the Oshtemo-Houghton-Riddle Association, due to the possibility of higher erosion and slow drainage. Therefore, in areas where this type of classification is prevalent, Agricultural Zoning and very low densities should be preserved. See the Future Land Use Section for more details.

ELECTRICAL SERVICE

DTE is the primary electrical service provider in the Township, though some parcels receive electricity from Consumers. Electrical infrastructure is sufficient to meet the needs of the Township, and no upgrades are needed.

BROADBAND/DSL CONNECTIVITY

Broadband and DSL internet, with their fast download speeds and consistent connectivity, help connect residents and businesses to the online world. As more and more economic and social activity moves online (especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic), communities without connectivity risk being left behind. As shown on the map below from Connected Nation, White Oak Township (shown in the square) is underserved by broadband and DSL internet.



According to the map, high speed, reliable internet is only available along major section line roads, most notably M-52 (but not all of M-36). The northeastern and southwestern parts of the Township are particularly underserved.

A combination of geography and economics are likely responsible for poor broadband coverage in the Township. The Township is a low-density, rural community, making private broadband providers unlikely to invest in infrastructure. But it is also not a low-income community (median income: approximately \$54,000), and it is located near suburban areas and built-up towns that have good connectivity. Ingham County as a whole has broadband available in over 94% of households. These factors combined make the Township a less likely candidate for Federal or State grant programs, such as the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Rural Opportunity Fund, which is currently funding broadband infrastructure installations in the Eaton Rapids, Owosso, and Jackson areas.

As other nearby areas receive service improvements, competition for grant funds will be reduced.

WIRELESS CONNECTIVITY

Wireless voice and data service is also an important part of the modern economy and lifestyle. But White Oak Township lacks adequate service in many parts of the Township. While wireless providers consider detailed coverage data proprietary, so the exact number and location of wireless telecommunications transmitters is not certain, the Township is aware of wireless telecommunications facilities in the following locations:

- At the intersection of Columbia and Haywood Roads
- Near the intersection of M-36 and Dietz Road

There are also towers in Ingham and Stockbridge Townships near the White Oak border. Still, there are “dead zones” for wireless service, especially in the eastern part of the Township.

Improved wireless service may come to the Township in the form of “small cell” technology. Small cells, which are generally located on poles of 40 feet or lower, are less expensive to install, and less of an aesthetic blight on the landscape, than traditional cell towers (which are usually 150-200 feet tall). The State of Michigan has already enacted legislation (including an amendment to the Zoning Enabling Act) to speed the roll out of small cells, which may hasten their installation in White Oak Township and similar communities.

Transportation System

A community's transportation system functions much like the circulation system in the human body. Roads and rights-of-way throughout the Township act like veins and arteries that pulse across the land. They carry the life of the community: its energy and its day to day activity.

Roads provide a means for people to get from one place to another. Primarily by automobile, but also by bike, foot, and other means. Roads connect people and places to one another. These stretches of public ground serve other purposes as well. Roads and road rights-of-way also provide locations for public utilities, such as gas, electric, and telephone lines. Roads provide the means by which emergency and public services are delivered to residents. Finally, roads provide access to parcels of land, thereby increasing the utilization potential of vacant and agricultural lands.

The road network also functions much like the skeletal system providing the basic form of the Township. Most rights-of-way are dedicated at the edges of properties. Therefore, boundaries between homes, sections, parcels, homesteads, and other pieces of land are often marked by roads.

Because of the many functions of the road system, transportation has a significant impact on the economy, environmental quality, energy consumption, land development and the general character of the Township. Therefore, it is important that land use planning and the transportation system be coordinated in order to manage the existing and future growth of the Township.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

White Oak Township is located just south of Interstate (I-96) and within close proximity to a regional road network, M-36 and M-52. To access I-96, residents and visitors in the Township would travel north along M-52 where there is a highway ramp in the Village of Webberville. Also, as noted previously, M-36 provides direct access from the Township to the City of Lansing, Village of Dansville, City of Mason, and more. Although White Oak Township is largely rural in nature, overall, the Township's transportation network is generally well-connected for motorists, considering its access to major regional thoroughfares.

TOWNSHIP ROAD NETWORK

Roads in White Oak Township are under the jurisdiction of two agencies: the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Ingham County Road Department. MDOT has jurisdiction over M-52 and M-36 and the Ingham County Road Department has jurisdiction over all other roads in the Township.

In White Oak Township, the roads can all be categorized into several classifications. These classifications are known as the National Functional Classification (NFC) determined by state road agencies. The NFC classifications in White Oak Township and include the following:

- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Local Road

MINOR ARTERIAL

Roads that are classified as Minor Arterials in a rural context such as White Oak Township consist of a connected network of rural contiguous roads. These roads typically serve corridor movement having a trip length and travel density characteristics indicative of substantial statewide or interstate travel. According to

MDOT, Minor Arterial roads typically are characterized by less traffic and are more local in nature than other main roads. These roads are also eligible for federal aid.

Additionally, Minor Arterial roads typically provide an integrated network without stub connections. Examples of Minor Arterial roads in White Oak Township include M-52, M-36, and the east portion of Howell Road from M-52 to Kane Road.

MAJOR COLLECTOR

In White Oak Township, Major Collector roads are those described as serving primarily intracounty travel. These roads are less traveled than Minor Arterial roads and the distances are typically shorter. On average, Major Collector roads have moderate speed limits. Additionally, these roads provide service to larger towns not directly served by higher systems. Major Collector roads link places such as parks and consolidated schools within nearby towns or cities. In White Oak Township, roads classified as Major Collector include Howell Road from Meech to M-52 and Carter Road.

According to MDOT, Major Collector routes funnel traffic from local and minor roads to arterial routes. These roads typically directly serve schools, businesses, and other important public functions. Major Collector roads are eligible for federal-aid.

MINOR COLLECTOR

Minor Collector roads within a rural context are typically spaced at intervals to collect traffic from local roads. These roads provide service to smaller communities and link locally important traffic generators within rural areas. In White Oak Township, the Minor Collector roads include Dansville Road and Kane Road from north of Cooper Road to Iosco Road.

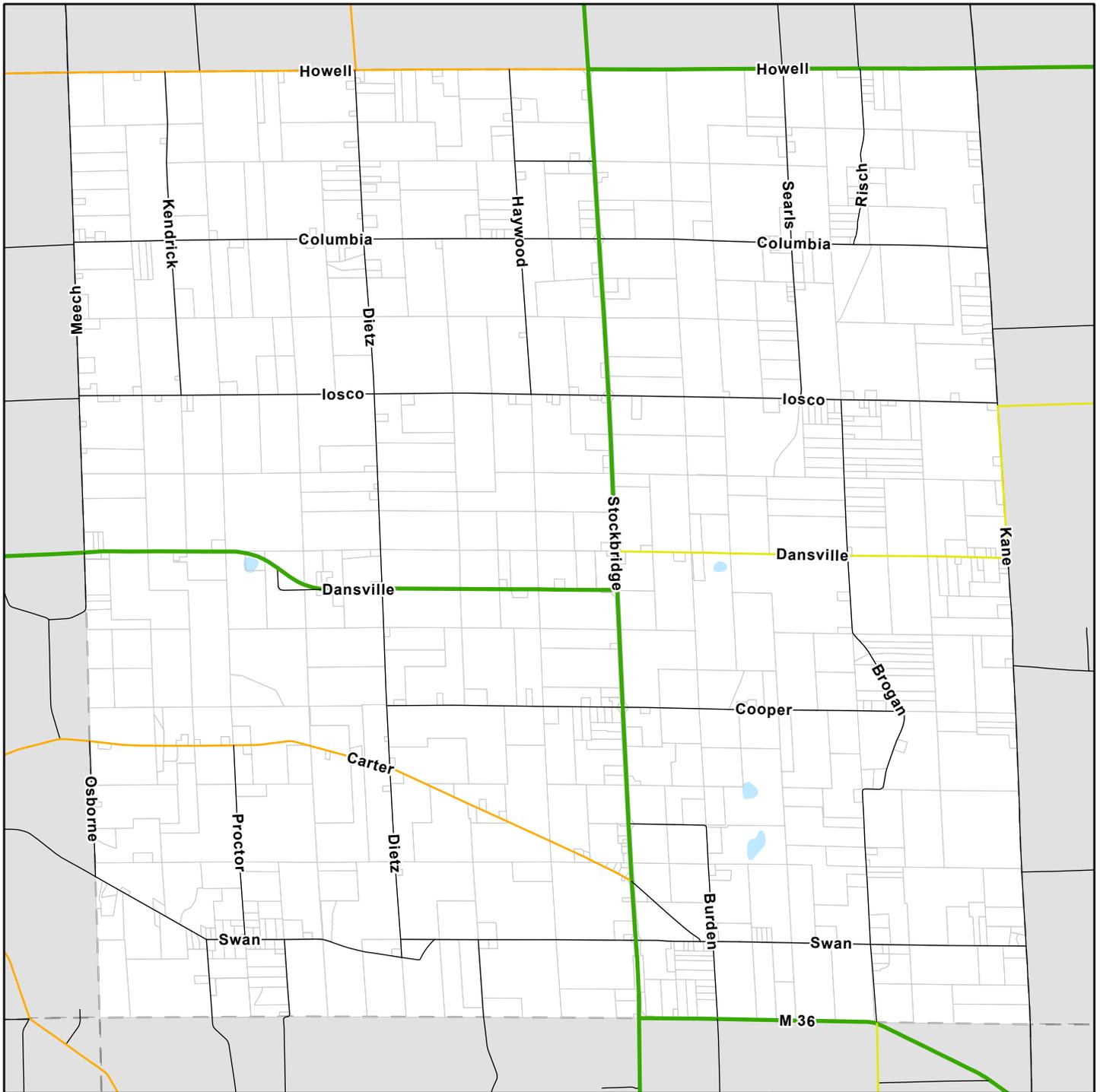
According to MDOT, Minor Collector roads are defined as having more through-traffic than local roads (described below), but not as heavy as Major Collector roads. These roads often directly serve schools, businesses, and other public functions, but are deemed as less important than Major Collectors. Rural Minor Collector roads have limited federal-aid eligibility.

LOCAL ROADS

Within rural areas, Local Roads should serve primarily to provide access to adjacent land and are typically utilized to travel relatively short distances. Within White Oak Township, the Local Roads include:

- Haywood Road
- Kendrick Road
- Iosco Road
- Columbia Road
- Dietz Road
- Cooper Road
- Swan Road
- Brogan Road
- Searls Road
- Kane Road (north end and south end)

Local Roads are predominately traveled by motorists accessing their property, such as rural farms, residential dwellings, and residential neighborhoods. Local Roads are not eligible for federal-aid.



Road Classification

White Oak Township, Ingham County, MI

February 12, 2021

LEGEND

- 4 - Minor Arterial
- 5- Major Collector
- 6- Minor Collector
- 7- Local



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: Ingham County 2020. McKenna 2021.



COUNTY AND REGIONAL ROAD AGENCIES

In White Oak Township, the Ingham County Road Department has jurisdiction of a majority of the roads, with the exception of M-52 and M-36. The Ingham County Road Department is responsible for more than 1,253 miles of roads throughout Ingham County, and also for the following duties in White Oak Township:

- Snow and ice removal
- Dust control on gravel roads
- Roadside mowing
- Traffic signs and signals
- Pavement markings
- Pothole patching
- Design of roads and bridges
- Construction inspection
- Subdivision plat review
- Traffic studies

The Township and the Road Department keep a consistent line of communication open to ensure that roads within White Oak are safe and well-maintained. The Township also provides matching funds for road maintenance projects from its general fund.

Repaving and repair along certain roadways has been funded in recent years by Enbridge, an oil and gas transportation company, which constructed a pipeline through the Township, and repaired roads that were impacted by the construction.

In addition to the Ingham County Road Department, White Oak Township is also served by the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission. The Tri-County Regional Planning Commission is a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) that is dedicated to serving Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham Counties. MPOs are public regional planning agencies designed to implement and coordinate regional transportation planning processes. MPOs are required to represent local units of government in areas with populations over 50,000 people. Additionally, the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission offers services pertaining to economic and community development, environmental sustainability, and mapping.

The Tri-County Regional Planning Commission is also responsible for producing both short-range and long-range transportation improvement schedules. These schedules outline and designate specific road improvement and enhancement projects to complete within a 3-year time period and a 25-year time period.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The Capital Area Transportation Authority (CATA) was formed under Act 55 of 1963. CATA provides regional public transportation in the greater Lansing area, to Lansing, East Lansing, Delhi Township, Lansing Township, and Meridian Township. CATA provides regularly scheduled bus routes, paratransit services, and MSU campus services. As such, White Oak Township is not served by CATA, but it should be noted that a regional public transportation service is available within the greater Lansing area and partnerships between Township staff and officials and staff and CATA could service could be brought to the Township if the Board ever decided that public transportation is needed.

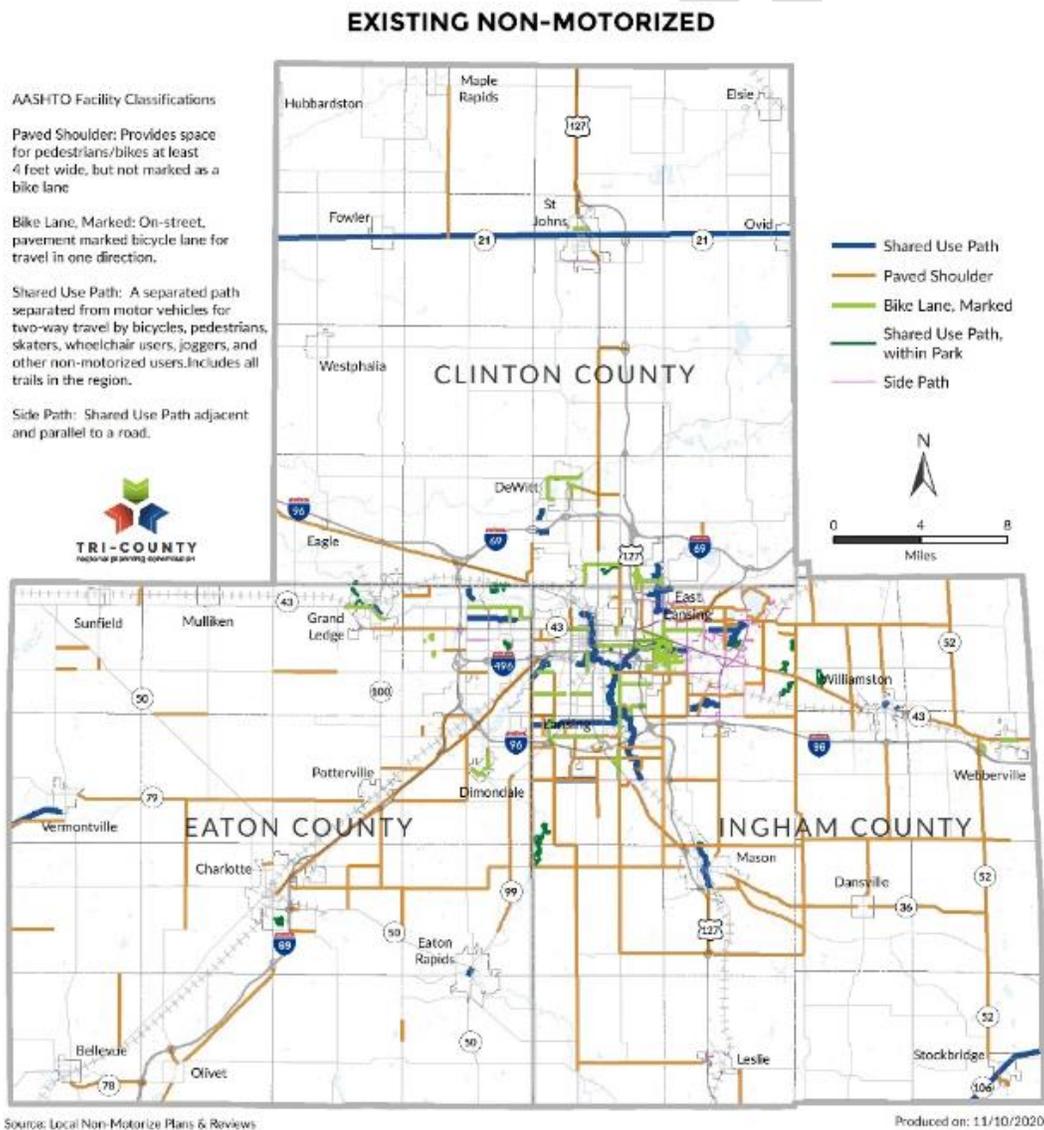
RAILROADS

There are no rail lines, passenger or freight, that traverse or serve businesses or residents of White Oak Township.

NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION

Non-motorized transportation refers to the use of bicycles, pedestrians, and other similar transportation for destination oriented trip-making. Presently, the Township does not have any existing bike paths within its boundaries. However, it should be acknowledged that the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission's Regional Non-Motorized Transportation System Analysis notes that the Township has existing paved shoulders along M-52. As per MDOT's criteria, paved shoulders are approximately 4-5 feet wide and provide space for pedestrians and bicyclists, but are not marked as a bike lane.

As for future non-motorized plans in White Oak Township, the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission's Analysis does not call for any additional bike infrastructure or connections.



Source: Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, 2020

White Oak Township Tomorrow

The White Oak Township Master Plan envisions the future of the community, as articulated by its residents and officials. In general, White Oak strives to preserve its rural character while providing high quality of life to all residents.

Goals and Objectives

Before a community can actively plan for its future growth and development, it must first set certain goals and objectives that emulate its needs and aspirations and, thus establish a basis for the formulation of a Future Land Use Plan. These goals and objectives must reflect the type of community desired and the kind of lifestyle its citizens wish to follow, given realistic economic and social constraints. Otherwise, the Master Plan will not accurately reflect the desires of the community.

The following pages contain the goals (the ultimate purpose or intent of the Plan), objectives (the means of attaining those community goals), and policy statements (specific statements which guide action) which should be used to guide the local government in making future land use decisions. They were developed out of meetings held with Township officials, including the public hearing, and supplemented by the experience of the Planning Commissioners and consultants.

GOALS

The White Oak Township Planning Commission, in recognition of its role as an area endowed with an abundance of natural assets and prime farmland, adopts the following general community goals to guide future land development activities:

1. Encourage the preservation of agricultural land uses and natural resources.
2. Improve communications infrastructure, to meet the needs of residents, while limiting the expansion of water and sewer infrastructure to hazard abatement situations only.
3. Discourage the development of urban or suburban-style land uses, which threaten the rural character and lifestyle.
4. Ensure the continued protection of groundwater, soils, bodies of water, ecosystems, and agricultural systems to preserve the sustainable rural environment.

OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

With these primary goals in mind, the following specific objectives and policy statements have been formulated to guide actions, programs, and land use decisions in the Township. These are the steps and measures that can be taken to help achieve the goals.

Land Use Objectives and Policies

1. Preserve agriculture and rural residential as the predominant land uses in the Township.
 - (a) Agriculture and Rural Residential shall be considered the default land uses, and all rezoning requests for other land uses shall be considered carefully and only approved if they meet the criteria described in the Future Land Use Plan.
 - (b) Restrict commercial development to “rural general stores” located as necessary along M-52 and M-36. Discourage the construction of high-intensity or “strip” commercial areas.
 - (c) Restrict industrial development to the existing industrial area in the southwest corner of the Township.
 - (d) Take into account the viability of the groundwater and soils for well and septic systems when determining the appropriateness of a rezoning or other development application under the Zoning Ordinance, including when determining whether to rezone a parcel from AG Agricultural to RE Rural Estate.

2. Allow specific land-intensive commercial uses as special uses in agricultural zones if specific criteria are met. This will allow uses like recreational storage that have an important role in this unique environment to exist under certain circumstances without allowing the proliferation of general commercial uses.
3. Encourage the continuation of value added agriculture related uses to enhance the incomes of farm families.
 - (a) Allow farmers to sell locally grown produce and other materials to residents and visitors of the Township at approved farm stands that meet established criteria.
 - (b) Promote enrollment in the PA 116 Farmland Preservation Program.
4. Allow residential lot sizes of under two acres only in limited circumstances (in accordance with applicable law - e.g. MCL 560.109a), to prevent suburbanization and loss of rural character.
 - (a) Residential development with lots under two acres should only occur when communications infrastructure, soils, groundwater, and road infrastructure are sufficient to support the development.
 - (b) Residential development should be limited in scale and scope, and should be separated by areas of open farm ground, to preserve rural character.
 - (c) Residential development should be limited to the Medium Density Residential Overlay on the Future Land Use Map.
 - (d) Adopt open space preservation regulations that allow for some small lot development opportunities in rural areas in exchange for preserving the open space in the form of large setbacks.
5. Establish strict design guidelines for industrial development.
 - (a) Adequate setbacks, screening, and buffering should be provided and standards for lighting, noise, odor, and other potential nuisances should be established to minimize the adverse impacts of industrial development on adjacent residential or agricultural areas.
 - (b) Quality building materials, architecture, and landscaping should be required in the industrial area.
6. Follow the Wind and Solar Policies included in this Master Plan.

Natural Resource Objectives and Policies

1. Prevent environmental degradation of prime soils, groundwater, open spaces, and water bodies
 - (a) Ensure that all development – residential, commercial, or industrial – has received any and all necessary permits from local, County, State, and/or federal regulatory agencies.
 - (b) Require new development to maintain and enhance the quality of air, soil, surface water, and groundwater.
 - (c) Potential for impact on the environment will be a consideration of approval when reviewing development applications in areas including or surrounding sensitive areas.
 - (d) Potential for impact on adjacent property owner's ability to enjoy the natural environment – i.e. blocked visibility, bright lights, - will also be a consideration of approval when reviewing development applications.
2. Protect Habitat areas for both aquatic and mainland species
 - (a) Establish programs to encourage preservation of open spaces, particularly woodlands and other spaces used as habitat.

- (b) Restrict non-rural development in order to maintain large habitat areas and connections between them.
- (c) Measure the impact of development on water and soil quality before approving construction.
- (d) Consider regulations and restrictions on activities along water bodies that negatively impact water quality and habitat.

Infrastructure Objectives and Policies

1. Provide adequate transportation infrastructure for White Oak residents, as well as travelers through the Township.
 - (a) Continue to work closely with MDOT and ICRD to ensure roadways in the Township are a priority for the maintenance entities.
 - (b) Minimize the number and frequency of automobile access driveways along road corridors.
 - (c) Continue to provide Township matching funds for road improvement projects.
 - (d) Ensure connectivity not only within the Township but also between White Oak Township and the surrounding communities.
2. Discourage the construction of private roads, which can erode rural character and frequently have long-term maintenance problems.
3. Support and reinforce the positive efforts of the Road Commission of Ingham County that have resulted in few road maintenance issues and regular annual improvements.
 - (a) Innovative and thoughtful ideas such as the rumble strips and the curbing at the intersections should be continued and are encouraged for future development and capital improvement projects.
4. Do not extend public water and sewer service into Township, or construct a Township system, unless an emergency situation involving contaminated groundwater or failing septic systems arises and needs to be mitigated.
5. Improve internet and communications service access throughout the community, including both broadband and wireless.
 - (a) Plan for communications service connectivity, and work with providers to expand service in the community. Specifically, aim to provide 5G wireless service throughout the community.
 - (b) Seek grant opportunities or other funding sources to ensure the economic viability of broadband expansions in the community.
 - (c) Advocate to public and private sector decision makers for improved service in the Township, to prevent the community being overlooked due to its low density, but relatively high income, and geographic location near well-served areas.
 - (d) Support the construction of wireless telecommunications infrastructure in parts of the Township that are underserved.
 - (e) Partner with private landowners, especially those with tall structures like silos, to locate telecommunications infrastructure in strategic locations.
 - (f) Partner with MDOT and the ICRD to locate communications infrastructure in public rights-of-way.
 - (g) Remove zoning barriers to the installation of communications technology, especially “small cell” wireless devices.

MANUFACTURED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Manufactured housing developments or mobile home parks are common in the rural areas in Michigan. Mobile home parks provide housing alternatives to residents who are unable to afford more permanent housing. From a planning perspective, they must be considered because the density in which they are built provides an economy of scale for the design and construction of on-site water and septic systems. Mobile home parks often provide their own wastewater treatment and well fields in rural areas where public utilities are not generally available, including communities like White Oak Township.

While recognized as a legitimate land use, mobile home parks can significantly increase the population of a community while providing less than a corresponding amount of property tax revenue to the host community from which to provide public services to new residents. Furthermore, though a community can plan and zone appropriate locations of manufactured housing developments, they cannot regulate the internal design nor the operation of these facilities. Therefore, it is important for the Township to discuss, consider, and plan for possible and appropriate locations for a mobile home park, should one wish to locate in White Oak Township.

Manufactured housing developments may be considered anywhere in the Township. However, when considering the construction of manufactured housing developments in the Township, they must not result in adverse impacts on the environment or in the loss of agriculturally viable land.

WIND AND SOLAR ENERGY POLICIES

In order to preserve the natural, rural beauty of the Township, the viability of the Township's farmland, the precious ecosystems contained within the Township, and the health, safety, and welfare of the Township's residents, White Oak Township adopts the following policies with regard to the development of solar and wind energy facilities within its borders.

- **Renewable energy** is important for the sustainability of ecosystems, food systems, economies, and communities. However, the large-scale positive impacts must be weighed against local negative impacts, including the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of White Oak Township.
- **On-site solar and wind energy systems** provide ecological and economic benefits, at a scale that is desirable in a rural community and with fewer impacts on the immediate surroundings than utility-scale solar and wind energy systems. However, the impacts that they do have must be managed through zoning regulations.
- **Utility-scale solar energy systems ("solar farms")** should be developed with careful consideration of the impacts on local ecosystems, farmland, rural beauty, and the health, safety, and welfare of the Township's residents.
- **Utility-scale wind energy systems** have been shown to negatively impact the health, safety, and welfare of nearby residents, can spoil rural character, and can harm local ecosystems. Therefore, they shall be treated as industrial uses, and, if large-scale wind turbines are proposed in the Township, they must be considered carefully, and meet the Township's goals in order to be approved.

Specifically, in determining whether to approve a new solar farm or utility scale wind energy system, the Township will take the following into account:

- **The Township's natural beauty must be preserved**, especially wetlands and woodlands. Existing wetlands and woodlands should not be removed for solar or wind energy development. The Township will also require the provision of pollinator habitat within solar farms, in order to promote a healthy ecosystem.

- **The Township’s agricultural systems must be protected.** The Township will prioritize agricultural land uses to retain the vibrant food production economy that already exists in the community.
- **Nearby residents** must be protected from noise, shadow flicker, glare, and aesthetic degradation, through appropriate setbacks and landscaping for solar and wind installations.
- **Solar farms and utility scale wind energy should be located in appropriate locations with regard to transmission infrastructure,** to prevent the need for large-scale transmission lines to be built across the community.
- **The Township may, at some point, hit its “solar and/or wind limit.”** White Oak Township acknowledges the importance of renewable energy, but, as described in this section, other priorities, such as local ecosystems, agricultural production, transmission infrastructure capacity, and rural aesthetics, are also important. Therefore, if utility scale solar or wind facilities are approved and operational in the Township, the Township may restrict the size of new proposals, or not approve them at all, in order keep balance between the community’s priorities.

The Township will enforce these policies through appropriate ordinances.

Future Land Use

The Future Land Use Plan is the culmination of months of effort by the Planning Commission, Township Board, Township Administration, and other area stakeholders. Based on a comprehensive planning process, the Plan serves as a guide for the community’s vision of the next 10 to 15 years.

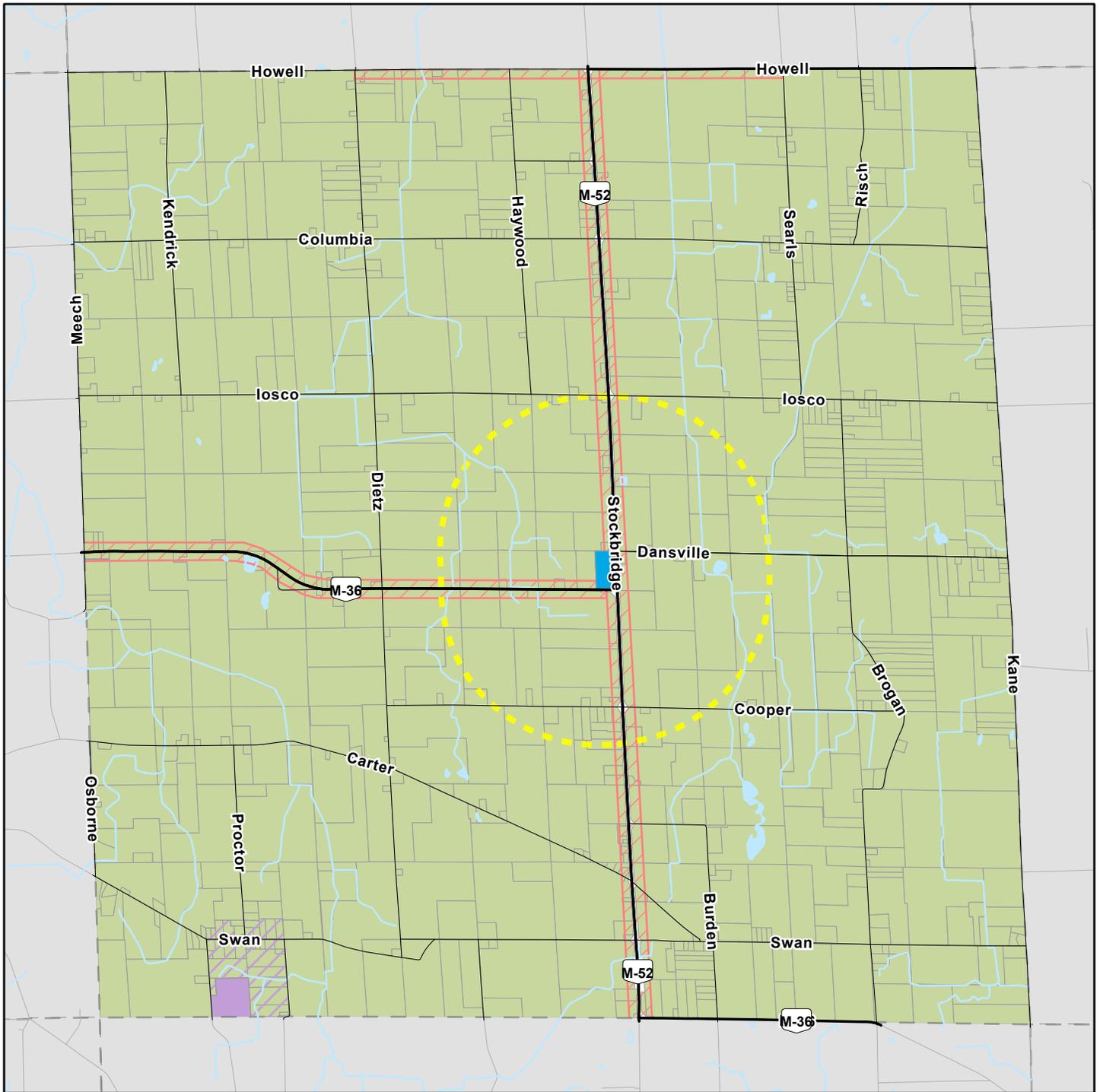
The Future Land Use Plan is based on an analysis of land use challenges facing White Oak Township, existing land uses and other conditions, demographic and housing statistics, physical constraints and resources, existing and planned transportation network, and the Master Plan’s overarching goals and objectives.

Traditionally, a Future Land Use Plan constitutes the development policy of a community. As a community grows, the Future Land Use Plan should be reviewed and updated to address how growth has impacted infrastructure and other existing conditions.

However, in White Oak Township, agricultural and rural preservation, coupled with a lack of municipal infrastructure is the main driver for the planned future land use composition in the community. As such, it should be noted that the Township is not likely to experience exponential commercial and/or residential growth throughout the duration of this Plan.

The primary goal of the following Future Land Use Map and corresponding designation descriptions is to preserve the existing rural setting of the Township and limit any growth to appropriate areas. However, it is also important to anticipate and plan for the possibility of small-scale/low-density commercial or residential development in the Township should the opportunity arise.

While the lack of public infrastructure such as water, sewer, cell, and broadband may be the largest challenge facing the Township in terms of commercial and residential development (such as low to medium density neighborhoods), the White Oak Township Future Land Use Plan accomodates the potential for these types of development in pragmatic and strategically planned ares – along the M-52 and M-36 Corridors.



Future Land Use

White Oak Township, Ingham County, MI

October 15, 2021

LEGEND

- Agriculture / Rural Residential
- Industrial
- Public / Semi-Public
- Medium-Density Residential Overlay
- Rural Commercial Overlay
- Industrial Overlay



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: Ingham County 2020. McKenna 2021.



PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Land use planning principles are used as a guide in evaluating development alternatives and public policy decisions. The following are general planning principles that should be applied to all land use categories:

1. **Consistency with the Plan.** Development should be reviewed for general consistency with the intent of the master plan as well as other regional plans. In addition other governing bodies, such as the State or County, should be encouraged to use the Master Plan in considering programming for White Oak Township.
2. **Concurrence and Compactness.** Growth should generally be compact and in most cases directed to areas that maximize the use of the existing public investment in capital improvements. Development should occur concurrently with the provisions for infrastructure. Development should be occur in a pragmatic and meaningful way to discourage incompatible adjacent land uses.
3. **Sustainability and Natural Systems.** Special consideration should be given when development is proposed in environmentally sensitive areas, particularly around the Township's natural beauty corridors, scenic agricultural areas, and river and creek systems.
4. **Human Scale.** The community should be designed on a human scale with a land use pattern balanced around activity centers such as the lakes, schools, community facilities, parks, or other similar sites.

FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

The land use categories are graphically displayed on the Future Land Use Map and are described in this section of the Master Plan on the following pages.

Agriculture / Rural Residential

General Characteristics

In relation to the Existing Land Use analysis, the vast majority of the Township's planned Future Land Uses will continue to be Agriculture / Rural Residential. This future land use designation encompasses existing land uses within the Township, consisting of active farmland and large-lot single-family residential land uses. Residential densities in this land use category should be under 1 unit per acre.

Appropriate Land Uses.

Appropriate land uses include farms with applicable accessory buildings and dwelling units matching the character and density of the surrounding area, parks, and agri-businesses.

The “**Septic System Protection Boundary**” on the Future Land Use Map identifies an area with large concentrations of Oshtemo-Houghton-Riddle Association soils. These soils are not as conducive to septic systems as other soil types in the Township. Therefore, rezonings to RE Rural Estate, or any other zoning category other than AG Agricultural, are discouraged within the Septic System Protection Boundary.

Streets and Transportation

Streets within the Agriculture / Rural Residential Future Land Use designation are typically higher in speed and under the jurisdiction of the County Road Commission. These roads should be easily accessible to nearby highways and able to accommodate heavier vehicle traffic.

Building and Site Design

New homes and accessory structures should be designed with quality materials and should be consistent with surrounding homes in terms of scale, massing, and site design. Homes and any accessory structures (used for agricultural purposes or residential purposes) should have a large front yard setback and constructed further away from the road.

Appropriate Zoning Districts

AG, Agricultural District

RE, Rural Estate Residential District (outside of the Septic System Protection Boundary)



Medium-Density Residential Overlay

General Characteristics

In general, in order to preserve rural character, residential developments with densities higher than 2 units per acre are discouraged throughout the Township. However, there may be situations where a higher density neighborhood or hamlet may be appropriate. Thus, the Medium-Density Residential Overlay designates an area of the Township, near the intersection of M-36 and M-52, where such neighborhoods or hamlets may be built.

Importantly, the underlying Future Land Use Category for the Medium-Density Residential Overlay is Agriculture/Rural Residential. This plan does NOT envision development filling the entire Overlay. Instead, the Overlay is merely a designation of where new neighborhoods *might* be appropriate, if the conditions described below are met. Further, there may come a point where the Township decides that sufficient neighborhoods have been built, and opts against rezoning any additional land to the R-M Higher Density Residential Zoning District.



The criteria for approving a rezoning to the R-M Zoning District shall be:

- The site must be all or partially within the Medium-Density Residential Overlay.
- The site must have access to M-36, M-52, and/or a public roadway that connects to M-36 or M-52.
- The site must have sufficient groundwater and soils for the well and septic needs of the proposed homes.
- The construction of a new neighborhood on the site would not cause a substantial negative impact to the quiet rural character of the surrounding parcels.

Appropriate Land Uses

The appropriate land uses for Medium-Density Residential areas are single-family homes and two-family homes up to 4 units per acre. In White Oak Township, Medium-Density Residential areas are concentrated along the intersection at M-52 and M-36.

As the Future Land Use Map notes, Medium-Density Residential development is planned in a flexible manner, not necessarily specific parcel designations such as those shown for the Agriculture/Rural Residential designation. The purpose for this flexible development “hatching” is to plan for the possibility of residential neighborhoods within the defined area, but also allow for the existing large-lot rural residential land uses to occur.

Manufactured housing parks could also be appropriate within the Medium-Density Residential Overlay, provided they meet the criteria described above and the policies described in the Goals and Objectives section.

Streets and Transportation

In Medium-Density Residential areas, the street network should be well-connected and have direct access to a main roadway such as M-36 and/or M-52. Any neighborhood streets should be fitted with sidewalks on both sides of the street, with adequate vegetation and preservation of natural landscape.

Private roads are highly discouraged, to prevent future maintenance problems. Neighborhood streets should be dedicated to the ICRD.

Building and Site Design

Homes should be constructed out of durable materials and fit the scale and massing of the surrounding area. Any Medium-Density Residential development should blend-in and accommodate the Township's rural setting.

Appropriate Districts

R-M, Higher Density Residential

DRAFT

Rural Commercial Overlay

General Characteristics

In general in order to preserve rural character, commercial developments should not be clustered in any single place, nor should “strip” commercial districts be created on any roadways. Instead, businesses should locate along major corridors, in places where there is market demand for their services, but in a manner that does not harm rural character.

The most appropriate rural business design is the “general store” – a convenience retail establishment (potentially including a gas station) that sells a variety of products, and allows nearby residents to buy goods they would otherwise need to travel to Mason, Williamston, Stockbridge, or even Okemos to purchase. Other types of businesses may also be appropriate, so long as they are consistent with rural character.

As with the Medium-Density Residential Overlay, the underlying Future Land Use Category for the Rural Commercial Overlay is Agriculture/Rural Residential. This plan does NOT envision development filling the entire Overlay. Instead, the Overlay is merely a designation of where new businesses might be appropriate, if the conditions described below are met. Further, there may come a point where the Township decides that sufficient commercial has been built, and opts against rezoning any additional land to the C-1 Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District.

The criteria for approving a rezoning to the C-1 Zoning District shall be:

- The site must be all or partially within the Rural Commercial Overlay.
- The site must have access to M-36 or M-52.
- The site must have sufficient groundwater and soils for the well and septic needs of the proposed use.
- Any driveway constructed to give access to the site must allow the safe and efficient operation of M-36 or M-52.
- The construction of a new business on the site would not cause a substantial negative impact to the quiet rural character of the surrounding parcels.

Appropriate Land Uses

Low-intensity and rural-style businesses such as personal services, small offices, corner stores, local restaurants, and other similar uses are all appropriate.

If Neighborhood Commercial development were to occur in the Township, it should be in a low-density and low-intensity manner, given the current lack of public infrastructure to support large-scale development.

Utility Scale Wind Energy is not appropriate within the Rural Commercial Overlay.



Streets and Transportation

Neighborhood Commercial development should be concentrated along the M-52 and M-36 Corridors.

Building and Site Design

Buildings should be built with durable materials and should be architecturally compatible with surrounding neighborhoods. Buildings with a connection to the street, including designs with attractive front facades, entrances, and patios are all encouraged.

Parking areas may be located in the front, side, or rear yards for buildings. Large areas of parking should be broken up with landscaped islands and trees..

Appropriate Districts

C-1, Neighborhood Commercial District

The M-1 Light Industrial District is NOT an appropriate district within the Rural Commercial Overlay. Land within the Rural Commercial Overlay should not be rezoned to M-1.

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Industrial and Industrial Overlay

General Characteristics

The Industrial Future Land Use designation is designed to encompass existing industrial development within the Township. The sole area planned for industrial purposes is the Mobil Oil Company and Marathon Pipe Line sites located on the southernmost edge of the Township.

In order to preserve rural character while still allowing for economic growth, the future land use map also includes an "Industrial Overlay." The Industrial Overlay includes land surrounding the existing industrial district that could potentially be rezoned to allow a business to be located within the Township. However, as with the Rural Commercial and Medium-Density Residential Overlay, the underlying Future Land Use Category for the Industrial Overlay is Agriculture/Rural Residential. This plan does NOT envision development filling the entire Overlay. Instead, the Overlay is merely a designation of where new businesses might be appropriate, if the conditions described below are met. Further, there may come a point where the Township decides that sufficient industrial development has been built, and opts against rezoning any additional land to the M-1 Light Industrial Zoning District.



The criteria for approving a rezoning to the I Industrial Zoning District shall be:

- The site must be all or partially within the Industrial Overlay.
- The site must have access to a paved, public road.
- The site must have sufficient groundwater and soils for the well and septic needs of the proposed use.
- The construction of a use permitted in the M-1 District on the site would not cause a substantial negative impact to the quiet rural character of the surrounding parcels. The Township Board will take all potential M-1 uses into account when making this determination.

Swan Road "All or Nothing" Policy: *Swan Road, located at the northern edge of the Industrial Overlay, contains single family homes. While at some point, an industrial business may wish to purchase those homes and request a rezoning to M-1, it is the policy of the Township that unless all of the homes on Swan Road within the Overlay are rezoned, then none of them should be. Piecemeal industrial development along Swan Road is highly discouraged. Additionally, the cemetery located at Swan and Proctor Roads is not part of the Industrial Overlay, and should remain as-is even if industrial development occurs around it.*

Appropriate Land Uses

Appropriate uses include office, light manufacturing, artisan production, food and beverage production, creative industries, and research and development uses. Parking areas and loading zones must be properly buffered and landscaped to adjacent residential and agricultural land uses. Developments should be designed and operated to be respectful of their surroundings, with truck traffic, noise, odor, dust, or outdoor storage/operations controlled and managed in compliance with the Township's Zoning regulations.

Streets and Transportation

Streets should be designed in a pattern that allows access from abutting areas, but does not encourage cut-through traffic by employees and trucks. Within the Industrial district, the streets should be designed to be sufficient for business-traffic. Non-motorized connections are encouraged, but are only necessary along major corridors.

Building and Site Design

Buildings should be constructed of high-quality materials which wrap around the entire building and feature attractive signage. Robust landscaping should be installed throughout the site, especially adjacent to residential areas.

Industrial buildings should be supported by sufficient but not overly excessive parking areas. Parking areas may be located in the front, side, or rear yards for buildings. Large areas of parking should be broken up with landscaped islands and trees.

Appropriate Districts

M-1, Light Industrial District

DRAFT

Public / Semi-Public

General Characteristics

These facilities are planned to remain in place. If renovated or expanded, they should strive to enhance the character of the surrounding area. If they are re-located or removed, redevelopment should proceed consistent with the immediately adjacent areas.

Appropriate Land Uses

Appropriate land uses in Public / Semi-Public areas include institutional uses such as public and private schools, libraries, Township Hall and other municipal buildings, utility buildings, and private clubs.

Streets and Transportation

The transportation network should include well-maintained and well-connected street patterns that are also accessible by foot or bike.

Building and Site Design

Building should be built using high-quality materials and should be consistent with the surrounding area.

Appropriate Districts

All



Zoning Plan

The following Zoning Plan includes the recommended changes to make to the Township’s Zoning Ordinance as a first step to implementation of the Master Plan’s goals and objectives.

The following table represents the White Oak Township Zoning Districts that would appropriately implement the vision of the Future Land Use categories as described above. Rezoning requests should be reviewed against this table to determine whether the requested district is supported by this Plan.

Within the “Overlays”, the Township should not feel any obligation to rezone a specific parcel to R-M, C-1, or M-1. But it may consider those zoning categories within the overlays against the criteria in this Plan, and the Zoning Ordinance, and rezone to those categories if deemed appropriate.

Future Land Use Category	Zoning Districts
Agriculture / Rural Residential	AG, Agriculture
	RE, Rural Estate Residential
Medium - Density Residential Overlay	R-M, Higher Density Residential
Neighborhood Commercial Overlay	C-1, Neighborhood Commercial
Industrial / Industrial Overlay	M-1, Light Industrial
Public / Semi-Public	<i>All Zoning Districts</i>

ZONING ORDINANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following Section notes the recommended changes to the existing Township Zoning Ordinance to achieve the goals and objectives of this Plan.

Agriculture / Rural Residential

The following list indicates the recommended changes to the Township Zoning Ordinance to accommodate the Township’s goals for agricultural and rural residential preservation.

- Consider combining the AG and RE Zoning Districts. The current schedule of regulations, permitted uses, and overall intent of both the AG and RE Districts have little difference. In accordance with the Future Land Use Plan and simplification of the current Ordinance, these Districts can be combined to achieve the following:
 - Support active farmland in the Township.
 - Promote and support existing rural aesthetic.
 - Encourage low-density residential development.
 - Provide for more flexibility between agriculture and rural residential land uses.
 - Discourage the pressure or need for public utilities.
- Allow for farm buildings and associated operations as a principally permitted use.
- Retain the current setback standards.
- Discourage residential development within the area defined as “Agricultural Preservation Overlay” on the Future Land Use Map.

Medium-Density Residential Overlay

- Rename the R-M District from “Higher Density Residential” to “Medium-Density Residential.”
- Allow single-family detached dwellings in the R-M District (e.g. neighborhood developments).
- Cap permitted density to 4 units per acre.
- Preserve natural features as much as possible with any new development.
- Limit medium-density residential development to those areas identified on the Future Land Use Plan, surrounding the M-36 and M-52 intersection.
- Discourage residential development within the “Agricultural Preservation Overlay.”

Neighborhood Commercial Overlay

- Limit development to those areas with 300 ft. frontage on M-52 and M-36 as defined in the Future Land Use Map.
- Permit outdoor seating and dining in the C-1 District.
- Define “planned neighborhood shopping centers” in the Township Zoning Ordinance.
- Require a decorative wall or vegetative buffer between neighborhood commercial properties and properties zoned or used for residential or agricultural purposes.
- Require shared parking lots or shared parking agreements among adjacent commercial uses.

Industrial Overlay

- Adopt appropriate regulations on utility scale wind turbines and solar farms, for inclusion as uses permitted by Special Use in the M-1 District.
- Ensure that industrial uses are properly buffered from residential uses.
- Adhere to the “Swan Road All or Nothing Policy” described in this plan.

Action Plan

Implementation strategies are a key component of any community's Master Plan. They determine how the Plan's guidelines and recommendations become reality. The White Oak Township Master Plan should not be viewed as a finished product. As events alter conditions within the community or the needs of Township residents' change, various adjustments or additions will need to be made to the Plan. It is not anticipated that the Plan's major goals and objectives will require change, but rather, as the Plan is interpreted and implemented, certain aspects will require periodic adjustment.

The following section presents tools and techniques that community leaders, the Planning Commission, and the Township Board can use to implement the Future Land Use Plan. The techniques can be used individually or in tandem to achieve the objectives and eventually the overall goals of this Master Plan. While the direct impact of some of the techniques cannot be immediately assessed, over time these procedures can effectively guide the land use decisions and development within White Oak Township.

PLAN FOR NATURAL AREAS

The natural features - the woodlands, wetlands, streams, and prime soils - are an essential component to life in White Oak Township. They establish the rural character, they attract people to live and work here, and they drive the local economy. It is vitally important that these resources are protected.

In order to protect them effectively, one must know if they are being harmed. Water quality studies should be conducted regularly and reported to Township residents on all major lakes. Surveys of woodlands and wetlands should be conducted, even if on a simplified level, at regular intervals, to determine if these resources are being lost to development. Similarly, analyses of soil samples should be conducted regularly to see if the quality of the soil remains at the high level it is today.

LAND DIVISION REGULATION

Like zoning, land division regulation, under the Michigan Land Division Act (P.A. 288 of 1967, as amended through P.A. 591 of 1996) is a tool for the implementation of this Plan. While zoning deals with land use on a site by site basis and activities in selected areas, land division standards are concerned with the process of dividing land and maintaining the quality of individual developments.

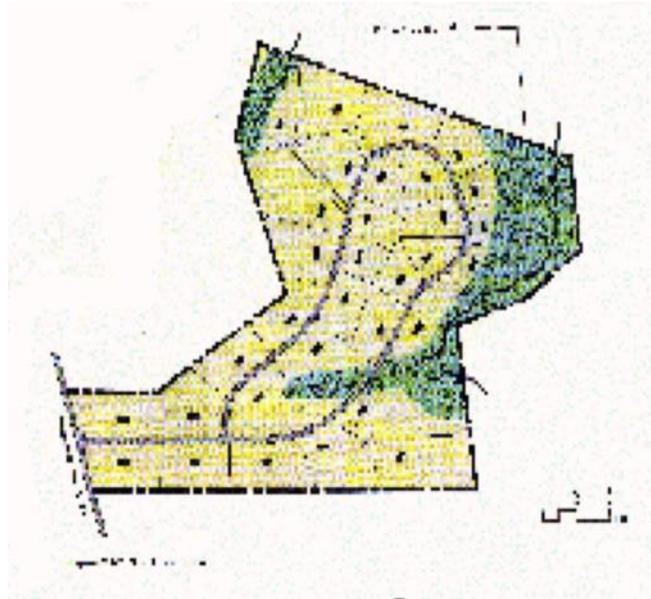
The Township should review its Land Division Ordinance (Ordinance #15), regulating lot splits, to ensure that it is consistent with the goals and objectives of this Plan. The Township should also make sure that the Ordinance conforms to all the changes that were recently made to the State law by the Michigan legislature and Governor. Some concerns remain over the changes that were made, so the Planning Commission must remain alert to future changes in this area of regulation to assure that the standards and requirements are consistent with the authorizing legislation.

OPEN SPACE DEVELOPMENT

Rural open space development is an alternative to conventional site development and is intended to promote the preservation of the Township's rural character. Conventional site development often results in residential sprawl that consumes large amounts of land and divides open spaces into fragments on individual home sites. It does not contribute to a rural appearance and is not conducive to agriculture, wildlife habitat, or other rural open space uses.

Conventional site development places lots on every available acre of the site. Open space development (also known as cluster development) on the other hand, allows for the grouping of dwellings onto part of the site, and a permanent easement covers the remainder preserving it as open space. The cluster of dwellings can be

placed either within woodlands, to preserve agricultural land, or on the agricultural land, preserving the woodlands and other existing natural features. The development also typically has a large setback from the road and limited access points in order to preserve the rural views and limit the corridor development effect.



Conventional Residential Development



Open Space Development

Township Zoning Ordinance requirements must be revised to be no more difficult for rural open space development than for conventional residential development. This development alternative is most effective when the Township offers a small incentive for open space development - one or two bonus lots - thereby encouraging developers to use this option. A density bonus is contingent upon the developer preserving a sufficient amount of natural features and open space as well as providing appropriate infrastructure for the dwellings with limited impact on the surrounding area.

RIGHT TO FARM ACT

Michigan enacted a Right-to-Farm Act (P.A. 93 of 1981) to provide farmers with protection against nuisance suits for standard farming practices. New amendments to this law prohibit local governments from passing laws that are more restrictive than Michigan's Right-to-Farm Act. The existence of such laws is important in areas where residential development and agricultural farm uses meet. Often new residents to these areas object to agricultural uses which involve the spraying of chemicals, industrial-like harvesting of crops, and odorous animal wastes. Newcomers to rural areas have been influential in having nuisance ordinances passed and pressing nuisance suits against farmers to limit their operating practices. The Right-to-Farm laws do not exempt farmers from state and federal laws relating to pollution and safety. They do, however, serve to underscore the legitimacy of farm uses, even the primacy of farm uses, above other land uses that may develop in agricultural districts.

Farmers should be aware that they are covered by the Right-to-Farm laws only in the event of a lawsuit. The Right-to-Farm Act in Michigan requires farmers abide by the GAAMP (Generally Accepted Agriculture Management Practices) in order to receive legal protection from nuisance lawsuits. Township land use regulators will recognize the provisions of the Michigan Right-to-Farm Act, however restrictions will be established on animal units and Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) consistent with the GAAMPs to control environmental and nuisance impacts that can be generated by these uses.

PLANNING COMMISSION

A stable and knowledgeable Planning Commission is critical to the success of the zoning process. The Commission's responsibilities include long-range plan formulation and the drafting of appropriate, reasonable zoning ordinance regulations designed to implement the Master Plan's goals and objectives. Adoption of the Zoning Ordinance by the Township Board then provides the legal basis for enforcement of the Zoning Ordinance's provisions. The ultimate effectiveness of the various ordinance requirements, however, is dependent upon the overall quality of ordinance administration and enforcement. If the administration procedures are lax or handled in a sporadic, inconsistent manner, the results will be unsatisfactory at best; conversely, fair and efficient administration generates a quality built and natural landscape.

Another role of the Planning Commission is to provide planning recommendations to the Township Board. This planning function is a continuous process which does not terminate with the completion of this Plan. Both the rural and lakefront areas are in constant change, and planning is an ongoing process of identification, adjustment, and resolution of problems. In order to sustain the planning process and generate positive results, maintain momentum, and respond to change, the Plan should be reviewed and updated regularly. As stated earlier, the State enabling legislation requires reviews and updates to the plan at least every five (5) years to maintain the validity of its data and relevance as a policy document. The Implementation section should be reviewed annually to monitor progress, budgetary assignments, and project goals for the coming years.

The Planning Commission recognizes the possibility of change and the fluidity of this document. It recognizes that it must be regularly reviewed and updated to assure the overall regulatory framework is supported. The Planning Commission shall review the document at least once every five (5) years, as required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, to assure the Plan continues to represent the goals and objectives of the Township's residents. The Plan will be updated or revised, as needed, in order to continue to provide a firm foundation for land use planning and regulation.



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