

A decorative graphic on the right side of the page features several overlapping blue circles of varying sizes and shades, connected by thin blue lines. The circles are arranged in a way that suggests a network or a series of interconnected points. The lines are thin and light blue, creating a subtle background pattern.

Somerset Township Comprehensive Community Land Use Plan

Master Plan

The purpose of the Master Plan (“Plan”) for the Township of Somerset (“Township”) is to set forth a policy guide respecting land usage within the Township for at least the next ten to twenty years unless amended due to changing conditions. This Plan serves as the basis for the Township’s zoning ordinance as well as the foundation of the decision making by the Township Planning Commission and Township Board of Trustees (“Board”).

**By the Planning Commission
09/09/2012**

Contents

Introduction 4

Chapter 1 - A Brief History of the Establishment of Hillsdale County..... 5

 The Erie Canal 5

 The Great Sauk Trail 5

 Historical Map 6

 Township Of Somerset..... 6

 Somerset Village 6

 Somerset Center 6

 Jerome..... 6

 Transportation 6

 Water Bodies..... 7

Chapter 2 - Regional Setting 8

Chapter 3 - Population 9

Chapter 4 - Demographics 12

Chapter 5 - Housing 13

Chapter 7 - Community Facilities 19

 Transportation 19

 Road Classifications..... 19

 Major Arterial Roads: State Trunk Line..... 19

 Minor Arterial Roads: County Primary..... 20

 Collector Streets..... 20

 City or Village Streets..... 20

 Areas of Concern..... 20

 Educational Facilities..... 20

 Health Care Facilities..... 20

 Police and Fire Protection..... 21

Chapter 8 - Natural Features 22

Topography and Soils.....	22
Agricultural Areas.....	22
Groundwater.....	23
Wetland Areas.....	23
Lake Area Development.....	24
Natural Features Protection Methods.....	24
Chapter 9 - Land Use Concerns.....	27
Rural Environment.....	27
Abandonment of Cities.....	27
Township’s Rural Environment.....	27
Agriculture.....	28
Strip Development.....	28
Mixed Land Uses.....	28
Chapter 10 - Future Land Use.....	30
Future Land Use Categories.....	31
Agricultural Areas.....	31
Residential Areas.....	32
Commercial Areas.....	33
Industrial Areas.....	34
Zoning Designations.....	34
Planned Unit Development District (PUD).....	35
Cluster Development Ordinance.....	36
Chapter 11 - Goals and Objectives.....	37
Goal #1 - Retain The Rural/Recreational Character Of The Township Of Somerset.....	37
Goal #2 - Facilitate Office, Commercial and Industrial Land Use Compatible with Goal #1.....	38
Goal #3 - Facilitate Necessary Community Infra-Structure Compatible with Goals #1 And #2.....	40
Chapter 12 - Plan Implementation.....	41

Introduction

The purpose of the Master Plan (“Plan”) for the Township of Somerset (“Township”) is to set forth a policy guide respecting land usage within the Township for at least the next ten to twenty years unless amended due to changing conditions. This Plan serves as the basis for the Township’s zoning ordinance as well as the foundation of the decision making by the Township Planning Commission and Township Board of Trustees (“Board”).

This Plan reflects the philosophy behind the Township’s sustainability and growth. The key identifying feature of the Township is its rural environment, as described below.

- Natural environment is preserved in the road right of ways, the open spaces, within natural features, within agricultural and outdoor recreational land, within the interior lakes and waterways, the quality of water, minimal commercial and industrial presence, the night skies, and the quiet.
- The Township seeks to preserve the use of the natural environment; such as outdoor recreation including boating, swimming, fishing, walking, bicycling, hunting, picnicking and seasonal sports. Productive utilization of the land through all forms of agricultural practices, crops, animal and poultry production, agri-tourism, cideries, wineries, local food stands, conservation planting, vegetative plantings for wildlife, re-forestation; wildlife preservation; wetland preservation; and scenic views.

The Township must be responsive to residential development but also preserve the rural environment, particularly in the agriculturally zoned areas. The Township recognizes the pre-zoning rapid development surrounding the interior lakes as well as the previous smaller land divisions in agriculturally zoned areas (at one time two to five acres). However, a continuation of these practices will rapidly deplete the ability of the Township to sustain or enhance its rural environment. In addition, the Township lacks the infrastructure or the tax base to adequately service certain development, particularly in the agriculturally zoned areas. It is best that the agricultural tax base, which has minimal demand and yet helps sustain the overall tax base, be kept at a proportion sufficient to allow the resources to meet the needs of the Township. Nevertheless, the Township believes there is currently adequate available housing as well as sufficient platted buildable properties within Somerset Township to respond to anticipated residential demand for the foreseeable future.

Chapter 1 – A Brief History of the Establishment of Hillsdale County

The Territory of Michigan was organized in an act passed by the United States Congress on January 11, 1805, and the legislative power of the Territory was vested in a Governor and Judges (1). Although the Territory was surrendered to the British on August 17, 1812, it was reclaimed by the United States on September 29, 1813. Colonel Lewis Cass was appointed Governor. On August 29, 1821, Governor Cass and Congressman Solomon Sibley of Detroit met in Chicago with the Ottawa, Chippewa and Pottawattamie Native American Indians and negotiated the 1821 Treaty of Chicago (2). This Treaty ceded to the United States the lands in the Michigan Territory south of the Grand River, which included areas of the future Hillsdale County. Hillsdale County was originally organized as Vance Township of Lenawee County and according to the 1830 census, had a population of 75. On October 29, 1829, Vance Township was separated from Lenawee County and organized as Hillsdale County (3).

The Erie Canal

Michigan was difficult to access: the Great Black Swamp, which was a large marshy wetland covering much of northwestern Ohio in the vicinity of the southwestern shore of Lake Erie effectively impeded travel from the eastern United States. Even though one could access Michigan through the Great Lakes, there was no natural water access to the Great Lakes from eastern New England.

In 1825 the newly constructed three hundred sixty mile Erie Canal from Albany to Buffalo gave ready access to New Yorkers to travel by boat via the Hudson River, and Lake Erie (4). By some accounts the opening of the Erie Canal was the single greatest factor contributing to the settlement of Michigan. However, this did not assist the development of southern Michigan which required passable roads.

The Great Sauk Trail

In 1824, the United States General Survey Act “authorized the President to have surveys made of routes for roads and canals of national importance, in a commercial or military point of view, or necessary for the transportation of public mail”(5). Although most of the southern portion of the lower peninsula of Michigan had already been surveyed by 1825, the General Survey Act enabled the specific survey and construction of a road across southern Michigan. The route selected for the new road was that of a prior Native American Indian trail in use since at least 1687 (6), known as the “Great Sauk Trail.”

The “Great Sauk Trail” extended westward from the Detroit River through the southern tier of counties in Michigan, traversed through the present Township and then continued through Northern Illinois to the Mississippi River. The road was completed in 1835 (7) but still difficult to travel upon due to the mud. Nevertheless, the new road opened up the way to the west from

Detroit to Chicago and became known as the “Chicago Road,” the “Chicago Pike,” “Michigan Avenue,” and as “United States Highway 12.”

Historical Map

An old survey map, suggested to have been developed around the 1830s, indicated the entire area of what is now known as the Township of Somerset to be “Vacant State Swamp Land” which is indicative of the low water table throughout the Township as well as its environmental sensitivity.

Township Of Somerset

The Township was established along US-12 as a stagecoach stop. Sometime after 1831, James D Van Hoevenburgh, from New York, established a tavern as well as a log home for travelers. Other settlers purchased land in the vicinity from the United States government and by 1861, the Township had 22,474 assessed acres.

Eventually in the late 1900s, two manmade lakes, Lake Somerset and Lake LeAnn, were constructed which significantly added to the population of the Township.

Somerset Village

By an act of the State of Michigan, the Township was separated from Wheatland Township and the new post office became known as “Gambleville” (the successor to the tavern established by Thomas Gamble who also became the first postmaster). In 1840, the post office was relocated to Somerset Center and its name changed to “Somerset”. Even though the post office was later relocated back to Gambleville, the name remained as Somerset (7).

Somerset Center

In 1833, Elias Alley, a shoemaker, and Elias Branch, a tavern and stage coach businessman, settled in what is now Somerset Center. On February 17, 1872, Somerset Center was platted (8).

The area of Somerset Center offered a plentiful supply of water, fertile land and game-filled forests. By 1838 the Township had two sawmills and a population of 441. Herman Pratt was elected the first supervisor and John McKnight became the first clerk of the Township. By 1879 there were a variety of commercial establishments. Newton C. Wolcott began the manufacture of rakes in the Township and for a time was Michigan’s leading producer of this product.

Jerome

The Village of Jerome was platted in 1871 and was intended as a railroad stop. However, Jerome has never been a self-governing entity or a village.

Transportation

Until about 1865, many products from farms in this area were hauled by wagons or, in the winter, by bobsleds to Adrian or Jackson, the locations of the nearest markets. In the late 1800s commerce was significantly impacted by the railroads, including the New York Central and the Hudson River Railroad. Two trains a day served the needs of the farmers and provided convenient passenger transportation. Eventually, the railroads were abandoned and in 1967 the railroad bed and depot site of the New York Central railroad in the Township became part of the lake bed of Lake Somerset.

Water Bodies

Besides the manmade lakes, Lake LeAnn and Lake Somerset, there are also natural lakes, including Goose Lake, Crystal Lake, Perch Lake, Lombardi Lake and Mercer Lake. The head water of the River Raisin is Goose Lake. The head water of the Kalamazoo River and the Grand River are also located in the Township, within the Bundy Hill area.

The attractiveness of the water bodies enticed both temporary and permanent residents. Although lake areas were platted, the Township was not a zoned community during the time of significant growth around the lakes.

Chapter 2 – Regional Setting

The Township is located within Michigan's Region II planning area, which comprises the south-central portion of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. Region II encompasses three counties: Hillsdale, Jackson and Lenawee. Jackson County is considered the heart of Region II's industrial and commercial activities.

The Township is in the northeastern most corner of Hillsdale County. To the south is the Hillsdale County Township of Wheatland and to the west is the Hillsdale County Township of Moscow. The Township of Liberty in Jackson County is to the north, and the Township of Woodstock in Lenawee County is to the east.

Within the Township, there are very limited employment opportunities, recreational or educational infrastructure. Residents commute to outlying areas within the three counties and beyond for employment, schooling, medical care and shopping.

The chief feature of the Township is its rural environment as described in Chapter One.

Chapter 3 – Population

Region II experienced significant population growth during the 1940s, 1950s and 2000s. Growth during the 40s and 50s was attributed to high birth rates and the migration of workers because of increased manufacturing. Growth in the 2000s can be attributed to the decay of cities. Historically, population development in Region II has been adversely influenced by the State's ailing economy. The economic recession between 1981 and 1983 caused significant population declines, mostly concentrated in Jackson County. The population of the tri-county area increased by 1.0% from 2000 to 2010, despite a loss of 0.6% state wide. The distribution of the regional population remains stable.

2010 U.S. Census Data – Population Distribution – Region II Area

	2,000		2010	
County	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Hillsdale	46,527	15.3	46,688	15.2
Jackson	158,422	51.2	160,248	52.2
Lenawee	98,890	32.6	99,892	36.2
Totals	303,839		306,828	
Table 3.1				

2010 U.S. Census Data – Somerset Township

2000	2010	% Change	# Change
4277	4623	8.1	346
Table 3.2			

Population developments in a local area have important implications for current and future land uses. The size and age distribution of an area's population is a major influence on its labor supply thus affecting its need housing, education, and other vital services. In the years between 2000 and 2010 Somerset Township has experienced a growth in population of 346 persons or 8.1 percent.

2010 U.S. Census Data – Somerset Township

Sex	2000	2010	% Change	# Change
Female	2120	2324	9.6	204
Male	2157	2299	6.6	142
Total	4277	4623	8.1	346
Table 3.3				

The ratio of male to female residents has changed little between 2000 and 2010. Somerset experienced an increase of 204 or 9.6% growth in female population and an increase of 142 or 6.6% growth in male population.

An important aspect of population distribution is the Township’s age distribution including the extent to which it has changed over time. Table 3.4 compares the 2010 age distribution of the Township’s population to that of 2000. This data illustrates the general aging of the population and the growth in the proportion of population in older age groups.

2010 U.S. Census Data – Somerset Township

Age	2000	2010	% Change	# Change
Under 5 yrs.	216	250	15.7	34
5 to 9 yrs.	248	208	-16.1	-40
10 to 14 yrs.	347	277	-20.2	-70
15 to 19 yrs.	262	268	2.3	6
20 to 24 yrs.	154	182	18.2	28
25 to 34 yrs.	463	466	0.6	3
35 to 44 yrs.	657	511	-22.2	-146
45 to 54 yrs.	746	786	5.4	40
55 to 59 yrs.	304	400	31.6	96
60 to 64 yrs.	244	405	66	161
65 to 74 yrs.	409	554	35.5	145
75 to 84 yrs.	179	238	33	59
85 yrs. & over	48	78	62.5	30
Median Age	42.2	47.3	12.1	5.1
Table 3.4				

In 2010 the percentage of the 5 year and under group increased by 15.7%, with a median drop of 18% noted for the 5 to 14 year old group. A decline of 22.2% in the 35 to 44 year old group

was one of the largest losses. Coupled with the slight gain of the 0.6 of the 25 to 34 year old group, shows a weakening of the 25 to 44 year old group.

Weakness in the 25-44 age group is important since it is the principal child rearing group. A low concentration in this age group means

- Decrease in family formations
- Decrease in demand for single-family housing, especially 3-plus bedroom houses
- Decreases in the 5-17 age group
- Decrease in retail trade.

Population Projections

	2000	2010	2015	2020
Hillsdale County	46527	46688	46786	46849
Somerset Township	4277	4623	4669	4715
Table 3.5				

U.S. Census Data – Somerset Township Percent Change in Decennial Population 1950 to 2010

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Percent	15.6	25.3	66.5	8.7	25.2	8.1
Table 3.6						

Somerset Township’s growth is linked to several factors including its location, rural environment, the establishment of lake subdivisions, outdoor recreation areas and an attractive retirement area.

Chapter 4 – Demographics

Information on the racial and ethnic composition of the area's population and family structure is important to understanding racial and ethnic differences in income and poverty status. The Region II area's racial makeup includes higher portion of White and a lower portion of Black persons than state wide. Region II's 2010 racial distribution was 87% White, 5% Black and 8% other races. Compared to the statewide distribution of 78.9% White, 14.2% Black and 6.9% other races. The area's Hispanic population, at 5.2% is slightly higher than the state at 4.4%.

2010 U.S. Census Data – Demographics Region II, State, Township

Race	State	Region II	Somerset Twp.
White	78.90%	87%	97.2%
Black	14.20%	5%	0.5%
Other	6.90%	8%	2.2%
Table 4.1			

In 2010, 97.21% of Somerset Township residents were White, .54 were Black and 2.25% of other national origin, according to the 2010 Census. Somerset Township racial make-up includes higher proportions of White residents and a lower proportion of Black residents than either the Region II area or the State of Michigan. Although the percentages indicate lower percentage average of Black residents and other ethnic origins, actual census counts show a population increase between 2000 and 2010 in all three ethnic categories.

2010 U.S. Census Data – Somerset Township

Race	2000	2010	%Change	#Change
White	4187	4494	7.3	307
Black	16	25	56.3	9
Other	19	26	36.8	7
Table 4.2				

Chapter 5 – Housing

The housing stock in Somerset Township is composed of almost entirely of single family detached units. Table 5.1 compares the change in housing from 2000 to 2010. Somerset has an addition of 441 new housing units in the past ten years.

2010 U.S. Census Data – Housing Stock

Housing Type	2000	2010	#Change	%Change
One unit detached	2161	2602	441	20.4
One unit attached		N/A		
Two to Four Units		6	-3	-33.3
Five to Nine Units		1		
10 or More Units		N/A		
Mobile Home, Trailer		N/A		
Table 5.1				

It is vital for the community's growth to encourage well designed residential development. Availability of quality housing is important for the Township because it attracts people to Somerset and provides them an aesthetically pleasing residential environment. The lake environment encourages both seasonal/recreational and rental housing.

2010 U.S. Census Data – Housing Units

Housing Type	2000	2010	#Change	%Change
Total	2161	2602	441	20.4
Owner Occupied	1578	1735	157	9.9
Renter Occupied	109	189	80	73.3
Seasonal, Recreational	396	473	77	19.4
Vacant	N/A	102		
Table 5.2				

Somerset Township has experienced over a 20% growth in housing from the 2000 census to the 2010 census. In this 10 year period 441 new residential units were built. A significant increase in four bedroom homes could indicate higher income levels moving into Somerset Township. Improvements to existing houses indicate higher property value of housing and personal income in the area. It also indicates that improvements are being made to existing housing in the area in addition to the building of new homes.

2010 U.S. Census Data – Bedrooms per house

Bedrooms per housing unit	1990	2010	#Change	%Change
One Bedroom	64	78	14	17.9
Two Bedroom	439	484	45	10.2
Three Bedroom	865	1639	774	89.4
Four Bedroom	169	263	94	55.6
Five or More Bedrooms	117	231	114	97.4
Table 5.3				

Residents of Somerset Township still rely heavily on drilled wells, septic systems and on heating systems other than natural gas. Currently there is no municipal water system or sanitary sewer system within Somerset Township. The existing Somerset Center Estates Condominium development is on a private water and sanitary sewer system. It will be very important in the future to plan for the construction of appropriate municipal systems to preserve and protect the natural environment of Somerset Township including the water quality of the lakes.

2010 U.S. Census Data – Source of Water

Source of Water	1990	2010	#Change	%Change
Pubic System or Private Co	43	48	5	11.6
Drilled Well	1573	2450	877	55.7
Dug Well	77	210	103	133.7
Table 5.4				

2010 U.S. Census Data – Waste Disposal

Waste Disposal	1990	2010	#Change	%Change
Public Sewer	75	50	-25	33.3
Septic Tank or Cesspool	1549	2600	1051	67.8
Table 5.5				

In the last decade, there has been an increased use of the variety of heating sources. The largest increase occurred in utility gas and additional increases of LP gas and solar energy.

2010 U.S. Census Data – House Heating Fuel

House Heating Fuel Occupied Housing	1990	2010	#Change	%Change
Utility Gas	634	1609	975	153.7
LP Gas Fuel Oil	226	726	500	221.2
Electricity	213	176	-37	17.3
Wood	0	14	14	1400
Solar	6	16	10	166.6
Table 5.6				

Somerset Township has an established base of residential housing. The Township should encourage future housing that emphasizes well planned and innovative design techniques that would allow new development to consider natural features while creating an attractive place to live. In addition, Somerset Township should provide and maintain a high quality of construction and building materials to enhance the neighborhood character of the community's residential development and promote livability and long term reinvestment in their housing stock. The maintenance of existing housing will be just as important as new development to maintain real estate investments for current residents.

Chapter 6 – Income

The size of the civilian labor force and its component parts of employment and unemployment follow trends in population and economic development. Labor force information can be used by communities to gauge the number of individuals experiencing unemployment problems and to increase the responsiveness to changing conditions and contribute to the attainment of social and economic goals of the local area and state.

2010 U.S. Census Data Employment Status

Population 16 years and over in 2010	
In labor force	3712
Civilian labor force	2375
Employed	2375
Unemployed	138
Armed forces	0
Table 6.1	

2010 U.S. Census Data Class of Worker

Civilian employed population 16 & over	2237
Private wage and salary workers	1810
Government workers	293
Self-employed in own business	134
Table 6.2	

Market area employment trends are a leading indicator of Somerset's future economic development outlook.

2010 U.S. Census Data – Occupation of worker

Civilian employed population 16 & over	2237
Management, business, science and arts occupations	853
Service occupations	210
Sales and office occupations	544
Natural resources, construction & maintenance occupations	369
Production, transportation & Material moving occupations	261
Table 6.3	

2010 U.S. Census Data – Industry of worker

Civilian employed population 16 & over	2237
Agricultural, forestry, fishing & hunting, mining	9
Construction	285
Manufacturing	445
Wholesale trade	37
Retail trade	226
Transportation & warehousing, and utilities	88
Information	8
Finance & insurance, real estate and rental and leasing	94
Professional, scientific, management, administrative	152
Education services, health care, social assistance	563
Arts, recreation, entertainment, food services	146
Other services except public administration	104
Public administration	80
Table 6.4	

As a society, we are relying more on professional and service occupations than on agriculture or industry as a principal means of employment. We have shifted from an agrarian society or an industrial society dependent upon mass producing tangible items to an information society which provides services and processes data.

2010 U.S. Census Data – Income type

Medium household income (dollars)	\$65,804
Mean household income (dollars)	\$69,800
With earnings	1440
Mean earnings (dollars)	\$64,790
With Social Security	605
Mean Social Security Income (dollars)	\$19,756
With retirement income	556
Mean retirement income (dollars)	\$23,017
With Supplemental Security income	9
Mean Supplemental Security income (dollars)	\$20,022
With cash public assistance income	47
Mean cash public assistance income (dollars)	\$1,079
With Food Stamps/SNAP benefits in the past 12 months	71
Table 6.5	

The median income for a household in the township was \$65,804, an increase of 35.59%. The median income for a family was \$68,821, an increase of 34.21%. The per capita income for the township was \$27,236, an increase of 21.25%.

Chapter 7 – Community Facilities

Transportation

The settlement pattern in Michigan's early history is a clear indicator of the role transportation plays in land development. The locations of ports, rail lines, and roads have influenced development throughout the state. Since federal highway construction first began, Michigan has experienced rapid changes in its transportation system and land development patterns. Increasing miles of road, changing commuting patterns, rising vehicle miles, more single drivers and fewer car pools, declining road conditions, increasing cost of fuel, rapidly rising maintenance and construction costs, and limited road maintenance funds are among the key trends influencing transportation.

The thoroughfare system serving the Township is important to the Township's development in several respects. By having direct access to such major arterial roads as US-12 and US-127, the Township is enabled connections with several urban areas, thus increasing the potential for retail trade and employment activities for its residents.

Road Classifications

Roadways can be classified in a hierarchy according to their predominant type of function. Functional classification is based on the two-fold purpose of the road system: first, to move traffic from one location to another; and second, to provide access to property which adjoins the road. Most roads serve both of these purposes, to varying degrees, with one or the other the dominant function. Functional classification categorizes roads according to which of these two purposes is dominant for a given road.

The County Road Commission classifies county roads as either "primary" or "local" roads. This classification is used uniformly by all counties in the state, consistent with requirements of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). Hillsdale County receives a higher level of funding per mile from the state for primary roads than for local roads (refer to the MDOT classification map included in this Plan). Primary roads are roads which are of greatest importance to traffic circulation in the county; to effectively serve major traffic origins and destination. The Township has five primary roads which are financed in total by Hillsdale County, with available state assistance. The primary roads are Jerome Road, Round Lake Road, Sterling Road, Waldron Road south of US-12 and South Jackson Road.

Major Arterial Roads: State Trunk Line

The primary role of major arterial roads is movement of traffic through the Township. Providing access to adjoining property is of minor importance. Allowable traffic speeds in this classification are high (45+ mph). Additional characteristics include high traffic volumes, multi-lane cross-sections, no on-street parking and limited use of traffic control devices, or preference in signalization of major thoroughfare traffic movement. Proper management of the number, location and design of access driveways along major arterials is important to maintain the

safety, efficiency and capacity of these major roads. US-12 is the only major arterial road in the Township.

Minor Arterial Roads: County Primary

Movement of traffic within the Township remains the more important of the two functions for this category of roadway. However, access to adjoining property is of higher importance than in the case of major arterials. Many, but not all of the roads in the Township are in this category. Sterling Road is the only minor arterial road that runs in an east-west direction. The remaining roads, Waldron, Jerome, South Jackson and Round Lake, run in a north-south direction.

Collector Streets

Collector streets serve the dual function of mobility and access. They collect traffic from a network of local streets, and link the local street network to streets of higher classification, while also providing access to adjoining properties. The more familiar collector streets in the Township are Addison, Baker, Calhoun, Chandler, Lane, Mercer, Sandhill, Somerset and Vicary.

City or Village Streets

The major function of local streets is providing access to adjoining property. Therefore, route continuity and limiting access are of negligible importance. Local streets carry little or no through-traffic, and their design should not encourage through-traffic. Most streets in platted subdivisions and the gravel roads in the Township fall within this category.

Areas of Concern

All roads in the Township are dependent upon maintenance, repair and reconstruction either by the state, Hillsdale County or the Township. As indicated, there is minimal financial assistance by the state or Hillsdale County for most of the roads in the Township. Currently many roads in the Township require inspection, and other than for US-12, are in need of heightened maintenance, significant repair, or reconstruction. This situation is expected to continue for the foreseeable future given the aged dirt/gravel mix of most of the roads in the southern portion of the Township as well as the financial needs and the multi-year economic downturn in the state.

Educational Facilities

The educational needs of the Township are served by four school districts: Addison, North Adams-Jerome, Hanover-Horton, and the Columbia school districts. Nearby colleges and universities include: Hillsdale College in the City of Hillsdale, Jackson Community College, Baker College and Spring Arbor University in Jackson County, Adrian and Sienna Heights College in the City of Adrian, Eastern Michigan University in the City of Ypsilanti, Michigan State University in the City of East Lansing, and the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

Health Care Facilities

Hospital facilities are located some distance from the Township; the closest being in Jackson and the City of Hillsdale. These hospitals, in turn, become connector hospitals to others which are located even further, such as in Lansing, Ann Arbor and Toledo. Patients may have to be transported by ambulance or helicopter. The Township does have its own ambulance capability. There are a few local medical clinics and dental facilities within or near the Township.

Police and Fire Protection

The Township has one full time and two part time police officers and has additional support, during off hours, by the Hillsdale County Sheriff's Department and the Michigan State Police. Fire protection service for the Township is provided by a volunteer fire department although there is limited full time staff (Fire Chief and one fire fighter). Other area fire departments lend assistance as needed.

Chapter 8 – Natural Features

The populations shift toward more rural settings, coupled with an expanding tourist industry, have put greater pressure on Michigan's environment and natural resource base. Nature is an important quality of life indicator. Research shows that people value having nature close by. A clean natural environment is also essential to human health.

Though natural resources such as land, water, air, wildlife, and plants are often studied separately, they exist in complex interrelated systems. The interactions of these systems are affected by human alteration of the landscape. An awareness of the Township's natural resources gives the community a better understanding of the environmentally sensitive areas that should not be intruded upon and deserve protection. This would include our recreational use of these natural resources such as hunting, lake recreation and fishing, birding, and bicycling.

Topography and Soils

The topography of the Township is best classified as gently rolling, with elevations ranging from 1,012 feet to 1,300 feet above sea level. The primary soil types identified in the Township are Hillsdale Sandy Loam and Miami Loam and are generally well suited for agricultural use and production. The Township also has several extensive wetland and marshland areas consisting of organic soil types which are extremely limited in the type of development they can support. However, these areas may still retain value for agricultural, open space, and recreational land uses.

Agricultural Areas

Agriculture, both crop production and animal husbandry, plays an important role in Region II's economy. Currently, agriculture and its related agri-tourism and agri-business (farm equipment, materials and supplies) comprise the second largest industry in our State.

Agriculture is an important element in the local economy of the Township, and care should be taken to preserve agricultural lands from encroachment. Combined with open spaces, conservation acreage, recreational land such as for hunting, and low density housing, the land zoned agricultural helps preserve the rural environment of the Township. Currently, there is sufficient residential property available for anticipated future growth. In the long term residential development in previously zoned agricultural property should be balanced so as to retain the rural character of the Township while preserving what remains of agriculture, open spaces and low-density housing.

Air

Air is a natural resource that is both affected by human activities in Michigan and by activities in distant areas of the world. Many different land uses contribute pollutants to the air. There has

been a trend toward increasing federal and state regulation of air pollution. This oversight would impact local land use planning.

Groundwater

Almost one-half of the state's population, and almost all of the Township's population, rely upon groundwater as the source of drinking water. Despite this dependence, there is little public understanding of the nature and importance of groundwater. One widely held misconception is that groundwater flows in huge underground lakes and rivers. Another is that groundwater travels very rapidly or that its direction follows the earth's contours. Of the common misconceptions, perhaps the most dangerous ones are that groundwater is adequately protected by the earth's surface and that activities on the land surface have little impact on this resource. In reality, groundwater quality can be easily affected by human activities on the surface.

The quality and availability of water for human consumption and recreation is very much dependent on land use. Human activities can change the composition of surface runoff and groundwater, with the result that water is vulnerable to contamination at all points in the hydrologic cycle.

Like most other natural resources, groundwater is more vulnerable in some areas than others. This vulnerability is determined by three main factors: soil type, depth to the aquifer and general aquifer condition and type. For example, sandy soils offer considerably less protection from surface impacts than heavier clay soils: Confined aquifers are safer than unconfined aquifers.

There is a balance between (a) the clear intentions of the majority of the lake residents in the Township to continue with septic systems rather than participation in a sewer system, and (b) updating, maintaining and otherwise properly caring for such septic systems so that their use does not contribute to groundwater and surface water contamination. There is also a balance between (a) the nutrient value of animal waste as fertilizer for crop production, and (b) proper application so that such wastes do not contribute to groundwater and surface water contamination.

Wetland Areas

Much of environmental planning has to do with transition landscapes; the lines and edges where one environment gives way to another. No edge is more important than that between land and water. Some of the most productive ecosystems on earth are found there. Among these ecosystems are wetlands which occupy the shallow-water environments.

The term "wetland" includes marshes, swamps, bogs, and similar areas that are often found between open water and uplands. Many, but not all of these areas are now subject to protection under various laws.

All wetlands have three characteristics, and these serve as a general definition:

- The presence of water on the surface, usually relatively shallow water, all or part of the year.
- The presence of distinctive soils, often with high organic contents, which are clearly different from upland soils.
- The presence of vegetation composed of species adapted to wet soils, surface water, and/or flooding.

Besides the environmental quality rationale, there are a number of practical reasons for respecting wetlands in land use planning.

- The places in the landscape where wetlands form are characterized by drainage conditions that are extremely limiting to most land uses.
- Most wetlands are usually underlain by organic soils that are unstable for most forms of development.
- Wetlands are landscape amenities and, like lakes and streams, can improve land values and design opportunities for developers.

Lake Area Development

Water features in the Township provide both unique natural and recreational opportunities. The careful preservation and development of lake areas and wetlands can provide the Township with valuable recreation and open space benefits. Within the Township there exist several larger lakes and a chain of smaller lakes that serve as a natural habitat and provide recreational uses for the area. The larger of the lakes are Lake LeAnn and Lake Somerset that serve as residential recreation. Lombard Lake is protected within the State Game Area and Wildlife Refuge. Other lakes include Crystal, Perch, Braxee, Butler, Ames, Goose, Mercer, Powers, Bruno, Blood and Moon Lake. These lakes are connected by streams and creeks creating an interrelated ecological system.

Planning for residential and related land uses near water features presents a fundamental dilemma: people are attracted to water, yet the closer to it they build and live, the greater the impact they are apt to have on it. The impacts of water pollution cause the decline of the water environment.

The processes of nutrient loading accelerate biological activity, and the buildup of organic deposits is known as eutrophication, often described as the process of aging a water body. Land development accelerates the discharge of nutrients and sediments to a lake through runoff and sanitary seepage.

In planning and management programs aimed at water quality, basically two approaches may be employed: preventive and corrective. The preventive approach is generally preferred for most bodies of water. This approach includes the maintenance of wetland, floodplains, and natural stream channels and balancing development with the preservation of the rural environment.

Natural Features Protection Methods

Local governments, developers and other property owners have a variety of means available for protecting natural features and open spaces.

For example, Planned Urban Development (PUD) and Cluster Zoning provides flexibility in the size and layout of lots in the design of new development, allowing reduction in individual lot sizes in return for setting aside other land within the development as permanent open space, while retaining the same overall dwelling unit density (units per acre) as under normal zoning. The flexibility provided in PUD and Cluster zoning can be used to protect environmentally sensitive lands by reducing the size of home sites and placing them on less sensitive areas of the development site. In designating the sensitive areas as common open space, all homeowners in the development benefit from shared ownership and access to common area.

The Zoning Ordinance needs to be consistent with the Master Plan in preserving the rural environment of the Township. Future growth can be accommodated north of US-12 in a manner protective of the lakes. Future growth south of US-12 can be accommodated in a manner which does not destroy the value and use of agricultural land, the recreational use of the land within agriculturally zoned areas such as for hunting, and the conservation and preservation of natural habitat within zoned agricultural and open spaces.

There are specific methods which are helpful in furthering the protection of natural features:

Land Donation – Donating land for conservation purposes is one of the finest legacies a person can leave. Land donation may be the best strategy for those who:

- Do not wish to pass the land on to heirs;
- Own property but no longer use it;
- Own highly appreciated property;
- Have substantial real estate holdings and wish to reduce estate tax burdens; and would like to be relieved of the responsibility of managing and caring for the land.

Land donations may provide substantial income tax deductions and estate tax benefits (Refer to Section 501c (3) of the Internal Revenue Code). Although the Plan focuses on the value of preserving open space, even commercial or residential property may be donated; with the understanding the property would be sold to support future conservation efforts.

Conservation Easements – A conservation easement (or conservation restriction) is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation value. It allows landowners to continue to own and use their land and to sell it or pass it on to heirs. (Refer to Article I, Part 21, Subpart 11 of the Natural Resource and Open Space Preservation Act, Public Act 451 of 1954)

When a conservation easement is donated, the landowner gives up some of the rights associated with the land. For example, a landowner might give up the right to build additional structures, but retain the right to grow crops. Future owners would be bound by the terms specified by the easement. The party to whom the easement is donated would be responsible for making sure that the terms of the easement were followed.

Conservation easements offer great flexibility. An easement may apply to a portion of the property and need not require public access. For example, an easement on property which supports rare wildlife habitat might prohibit development. An easement on agricultural property might permit continued farming and construction of additional agricultural structures.

Landowners usually donate easements, but sometimes conservation easements are sold. Easements may qualify as tax-deductible charitable donations if the easements meet other federal tax code requirements. The amount of the donation is the difference between the land's value with the easement and the land's value without the easement.

Placing an easement on property may also result in property tax savings. A conservation easement may be essential for passing land onto heirs when it helps lower estate taxes. By removing the potential for development, the easement lowers the land's market value, resulting in lower estate tax. Whether the easement is donated during life or by will, it may make a difference to the heirs' ability to keep the land intact.

Part 361 of Public Act 451 of 1994, the Michigan Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act, consists of six methods for preserving farmland and open space:

- Farmland Development Rights Agreement: A temporary restriction on the land between the state and a landowner voluntarily entered into by a landowner, preserving their land for agriculture in exchange for certain tax benefits and exemptions for various special assessments (the ability to enter into such an agreement is commonly referred to as PA 116)
- Conservation Easement Donation: A permanent restriction on the land between the state and a landowner voluntarily entered into by a landowner, preserving their land for either open space or agriculture.
- Agricultural Preservation Fund: A fund established to assist local units of government in implementing a local purchase of a development rights program.
- Local Open Space Easement: A temporary restriction on the land between the local government and a landowner voluntarily entered into by a landowner, preserving their land as open space in exchange for certain tax benefits and exemptions for various special assessments.
- Designated Open Space Easement: A temporary restriction on specially designated lands between the state and a landowner voluntarily entered into by a landowner, preserving their land as open space in exchange for certain tax benefits and exemptions for various special assessments.
- Purchase of Development Rights: As funds may be available, a permanent restriction on the land between the state and a landowner voluntarily entered into by a landowner, preserving their land for agriculture in exchange for a cash payment for those rights (these rights may be purchased as authorized by the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, Public Act 110 of 2006).

Chapter 9 – Land Use Concerns

Along with the potential opportunities within the Township, existing and anticipated concerns also must be analyzed in the Master Plan. If concerns are not recognized and corrected, they may in the future impose a greater impact to the Township.

Rural Environment

People who move to rural landscapes such as found in the Township do so because they value the recreational options, water, open spaces, rural vistas and non-urban lifestyle. In contrast to their original intentions, increased residential population growth can lead to adverse environmental impact.

The same land use pattern that has caused concerns in urban areas can also cause concerns in nature, particularly in loss of biological diversity, the variety and richness of living organisms and the ecologically intricate system in which they live. Past bio-diversity losses are attributable to large-scale clearing and burning of land, over-harvesting of timber, indiscriminate use of pesticides, draining and filling of wetlands, and various forms of pollution (air, noise, light, water).

Abandonment of Cities

The focus on land use is most often dealing with urban sprawl, the conversion of resource lands, and the loss of wildlife habitat and open spaces. Equally important, however, is the inevitable outcome of sprawl: the abandonment of cities. This, in turn, leads to (a) less amenities attractive to young families, educated workers and population densities necessary for economic growth, (b) a larger carbon footprint due to inefficiencies in service provisioning, (c) destruction of the rural environment as well as lost opportunities for agricultural productivity and entry barriers for young farmers. Agriculture is one of the highest economic growth sectors in Michigan's economy and is very much tied to the availability of land which is not hemmed in by residential development.

Township's Rural Environment

The Township is somewhat unique even within Hillsdale County in that its agriculturally zoned areas are not entirely associated with the traditional concept of farming: there are properties used in conservation and recreational activities. The Township lacks significant amenities including infra-structure, educational and medical facilities, concentrated employment opportunities, full range of utilities and services. Any increase in the tax base will not provide the funding necessary to immediately expand amenities. Further, the very provisioning of these amenities would destroy the rural environment which attracted the residents to the area.

If the advantages of the rural environment, including the clean recreational lakes, were to be adversely impacted, the residential occupants would suffer decreased lifestyle enjoyment as well as the likely reduction in property values.

Agriculture

Although agriculture is one of the highest economic growth sectors in Michigan, urban sprawl facilitated by failures in land use plans and their implementation in agricultural communities have resulted in significant decreases in unrestricted land mass for productive agricultural enterprises. There are a number of trends in agriculture which can be impacted by land use planning.

- Areas such as Hillsdale County have experienced an incursion of large confined animal and poultry feeding operations (such facilities could encompass thousands of animals or poultry in one confined area with surrounding acreage utilized for waste spreading, including the use of heavy equipment for such large scale operations). There has been marked resistance to this type of endeavor as well as concerns for the impacts on road and drain maintenance, and environmental, health and safety issues. At this point it is unknown whether the incursion of such large operations as well as the leasing of land in outlying areas for waste dispersal will increase, stabilize or diminish.
- Although small family farms are expected to continue to decline, there are other trends at diversification such as agri-tourism and organic/ethnic food specialization, “farm to fork” local food distribution programs, preservation efforts, and the state’s effort to preserve the viability of agriculture, all of which would lead to the Township’s responsibility to enhance these developments through sustaining the rural environment of the Township.

Protection of the rural environment can best be accomplished through the Master Plan. Once the zoned agricultural land is converted to other uses, such land is, for all practical purposes, permanently lost to agricultural and outdoor recreational activities. Further, farmland conversion has a snowballing effect. As the residential growth increases in an agricultural area, its adverse impact on agricultural operations increases exponentially. Studies show when such zoned agricultural land is sold in an area experiencing growth, the higher prices paid by non-agricultural uses accelerate land conversion. Once these lands become fragmented and subdivided, it results in an increase in residential-agricultural conflicts.

Strip Development

Strip development presently exists in several areas of the Township. This form of development utilizes only road frontages for construction and limits the access to interior lands, making them less useful for potential planned development. Strip development also increases traffic problems due to excessive turning movements required of traffic entering and exiting establishments. Greater efficiency and a solution to this problem can be achieved through the future clustering of new development.

Mixed Land Uses

Mixed land uses generally involve an incompatible mixture of residential, commercial, and industrial land uses. These mixed uses can have a negative impact on property values, as well

as hinder land use policies. Although specific areas of mixed land uses are isolated, they do appear along US-12 within the Township.

Chapter 10 – Future Land Use

The Master Plan is a policy guide for future growth and development within the Township as envisioned by the Township Planning Commission. It sets forth guidelines for future development in an attempt to minimize land use problems, capitalize on opportunities and potential, and encourage development in a way that promotes the health, safety, and welfare of Township residents. Based on analysis of current population, economic data, land use characteristics and socio-economic trends, the Plan is designed to enable the Township to anticipate various forms of development and the locations necessary to create a pleasant, viable community. The Plan is considered a “living document” with frequent review and updates as the Planning Commission sees fit.

The Master Plan defines the areas into which future expansion of various types of land uses are anticipated to occur. These areas have been carefully defined and located to represent a conceptual basis for land development. The Future Land Use Map illustrates the concepts and objectives and is intended to guide the growth of the Township. The following is a detailed discussion of each land use category in the Plan and its suggested location.

These major land use concepts include the following:

- The continuation of the Township as a rural-recreational community with a rural environment and single-family housing as the predominant land use
- Commercial land use will be promoted and encouraged in the existing commercial areas and key locations along the US-12 corridor. These commercial areas include:
 - Somerset Center
 - The intersection of Somerset Road and US-12
 - The intersection of Waldron Road and US-12
 - The intersection of Mosherville Road and US-12
 - The intersection of Walworth Road and Jerome Road in the Village of Jerome
 - An area east of South Jackson Road
- Light industrial land use will be promoted only in designated areas of the Township. The lack of public facilities and infrastructure will make expansion of industrial land use difficult. The Township will encourage the improvement of existing industrial development through the use of reasonable measures and requirements for incremental improvements.
- Recognition and protection of the environmentally sensitive areas of the Township. Single-family housing north of US-12 is dependent upon waterways that must remain viable for recreation. The rural environment south of US-12 is dependent upon farming, open spaces, and waterways relatively unhampered by housing development. Wetlands, groundwater and surface water are considered a vital resource of the Township and should be protected as such.

- Promotion of innovative design techniques when developing large tracts of open space within the Township. Land splits resulting in unplanned residential development in the rural environment are discouraged.

Future Land Use Categories

The Future Land Use Map recommends a number of different land use classifications. The following descriptions of these future land use classifications explain the intended uses and general location of each classification.

The Master Plan has the following Future Land Use designations:

- Agricultural
 - Agricultural Type Land Use includes agricultural endeavors, outdoor recreation that utilizes open land areas, conservation acreage and open areas. Open Space and Natural Areas such as found in State owned land currently preserved for wildlife refuge are also included.
- Residential
 - Low-Density Residential Land Use
 - Medium Density Multiple-Family Residential Land Use
- Commercial – C1, C2 and C3
 - Core Commercial Areas of Land Use
 - General Commercial Areas of Land Use
- Industrial
 - Light Industrial Areas of Land Use

Agricultural Areas

The Township is characterized by small agricultural properties and minimal prime agricultural land. Not all of the agricultural zoned land is utilized for traditional farming. The Township would like to work with the property holders in the agricultural zoned areas to encourage preservation of the rural environment. The goal is to retain the rural environment while allowing property holders to utilize the economic benefits of their investment using “Planned Unit Development” and “Cluster Development” design techniques and conservation easements.

Most of the southern two-thirds (2/3) of the Township is zoned agriculture. Commercial, industrial and traditional subdivision platting of zoned agricultural land should be discouraged in those areas. Development is more beneficial to the community when confined to central areas where services and facilities are, or can be made, accessible.

Open space and natural areas indicated by the Future Land Use Map include:

- A large area south of US-12 in the central portion of the Township
- An area surrounding Braxee Lake
- An area paralleling Mercer Lakes
- An area in the southeast corner of the Township

- A small area near Somerset Road and US-12
- The Somerset State Game Area and Wildlife Refuge
- The 42 acre McCourtie Park

In some cases, these areas contain poor soils for development, wetlands or creek shoreline and therefore should be preserved in their natural state. Preserving these natural areas can provide the Township with such benefits as improved wildlife habitats, storm water retention basins that aid surface drainage, and valuable scenic opportunities. These natural areas could, however, be utilized in the future for passive recreational purposes should opportunities become available. Such uses preserve and protect these areas from development.

Residential Areas

The Future Land Use Map proposes two types of residential land uses: moderate-density and low-density regulations. Moderate-density residential areas are intended for two-family or single-family housing and areas are proposed at three sites:

- US-12 near the intersection of South Jackson Road
- North of US-12 and east of Somerset Road
- East of Baker Road near Sutfin Road

Of major importance in selecting these locations were current existing land uses. With one exception, these areas are located in such a manner as to provide easy access to future sewer and water facilities should they develop in the Township.

Prior to the adoption of the previous Land Use Plan, a mobile home park was developed near the intersection of South Jackson Road and US-12 in the area currently designated for moderate-density use. Expansion of this site is possible in the future. The sites listed above that front on US-12 have the most potential to accommodate the traffic volumes generated by moderate-density residential development. The third site is located in close proximity to two primary roads.

Low-density residential areas correspond closely to the existing developed areas of the Township. The Plan provides an increase in residential acreage over that which is presently developed in four general areas. It is intended to accommodate conventional single-family development. The largest areas of low-density residential development proposed by the Plan surround Lake LeAnn (extending south of US-12), Lake Somerset, Crystal Lake and Perch Lake.

Future residential development could continue to develop northward as long as natural resources can be protected. These areas are extensions of existing residential land uses near lakes and offer an attractive environment for residential living. A third area proposed for low-density residential development is the existing Village of Jerome, and the fourth area lies east and west of Goose Lake.

In order to preserve the quality of these residential areas, guidelines should be followed. For example, industrial activities should not be permitted in the residential areas. However, it may be desirable to encourage small commercial land uses of a convenience nature in residential areas to enhance the quality of the neighborhood. Examples of this type of commercial development can be seen in the Township at the entrance of Lake LeAnn at the intersection of Waldron Road and US-12. These small convenience businesses are in close proximity to service the single-family residential neighborhoods without causing incompatibility of land uses.

Commercial Areas

The Master Plan designates areas in the Township that can serve as locations for commercial development generally along the US-12 corridor. The largest of these areas is located south of US-12 near the intersection of South Jackson Road and incorporates the Somerset Center area, which already serves as the governmental center of the Township (Township offices, Fire Station, Post Office, commercial establishments, and parks). This site is envisioned by the Plan as being a major commercial center serving the Township. The uses in this area should be those which identify and promote the "Center of the Township" area to serve as a gathering place and identifiable geographic area, in the sense that "village squares" or "general stores" served as gathering places (and in some areas still do) for small towns or communities.

Other commercial areas located within the Township are:

- The intersection of Somerset Road and US-12
- The intersection of Waldron Road and US-12
- The intersection of Mosherville Road and US-12
- The intersection of Walworth Road and Jerome Road in the Village of Jerome
- An area east of South Jackson Road

The first of these commercial areas stretches from the intersection of Somerset Road and US-12 and continues east to US-127. The core area of commercial activity is located at the entrance to Lake Somerset. Located in this area are several residential houses that may need special regulations to preserve these structures as residential units or for limited business uses.

The intersection of Walworth and Jerome has potential to be a commercial core because it is located within an existing community, commonly referred to as the Village of Jerome. This area, if revitalized and promoted as a commercial area, could serve the residents of Jerome.

Additional commercial areas designed to serve local convenience needs have developed at these locations: the intersection of Waldron Road and US-12 and the intersection of Mosherville Road and US-12. These commercial areas are located at the entrance of Lake LeAnn and serve the residents in the subdivisions surrounding the lake. These areas are located along major roads within the Township and generally follow existing patterns of land use. Commercial development in these areas should be encouraged to cluster and thereby reduce traffic congestion and limit undesirable strip development. An area of land east of South Jackson Road is currently zoned commercial. This commercial development consists of Meckley's Flavor

Fruit Farm and is compatible with the surrounding low-density residential use. The Township needs to better balance the area zoned as commercial with the need to preserve the rural environment with agricultural zoned property adjacent to the commercial zoned property.

Industrial Areas

Three industrial areas have been designated by the Township and are illustrated on the Future Land Use Map. The largest is located north of US-12 east of Jerome Road. Since heavy industrial development is not a characteristic of the Township, it is anticipated that light industrial uses will comprise this area. The industrial area is also located in such a manner as to be compatible with surrounding land uses and accessible to possible future sewer and water facilities should they develop.

Currently, some of this area is utilized for a commercial off road vehicle park. Expansion of any Industrial development, as well as use of such land in other capacities, should remain in this area north of US-12 and require a buffer from residential land use at Lake LeAnn.

Two smaller sites designated as industrial areas include:

- Inside the eastern Township limits on the south side of US-12
- The south side of US-12 just east of Somerset Center.

These sites contain facilities that in the past or currently supported industrial activity. The Township should encourage the use of these facilities as light industrial or commercial uses to promote the economic viability of the Township and the renovation of existing buildings.

Zoning Designations

The Township has the following zoning district designations:

- Agriculture
 - Agricultural District (preserving open space, natural areas and the rural environment)
- Residential
 - Low-Density - Rural Non-Farm Residential District
 - Moderate-Density - Lake Residential District
- Commercial
 - Local Commercial District
 - General Commercial District
 - Highway Service Commercial District
- Industrial
 - Light Industrial District

The Township should encourage the development of ordinances that would:

- Protect and preserve the natural and rural environment
- Maintain the desirability of the residential, commercial and industrial districts

- Be responsive to innovative development such as solar, wind and alternative energy
- Give developers flexibility to conventional zoning regulations.

The following is a major concept of this Master Plan and should be used to advocate design techniques that provide for creative solutions and maintenance of open spaces.

Planned Unit Development District (PUD)

The Zoning Ordinance of the Township currently allows for Planned Unit Development, but no such development currently exists within the Township. The PUD concept of land use control (as compared to traditional zoning land use control) is designed to provide for development that incorporates a variety of related land use activities planned and developed as a unit rather than as an unplanned aggregation of individual units on separate lots.

The purpose of this type of development is to permit flexibility for residential, commercial, and industrial development where large tracts of land are planned with integrated and harmonious design. Ideally, the overall design is so outstanding as to warrant modification by the Planning Commission of the current regulations.

Before development could occur under PUD, the Planning Commission and Township Board would require site plan approval for the entire site after a public hearing. In order to assure good design, the approval or denial is based on a careful evaluation of factors listed below as applied to the plan site, the directly adjacent properties, and the general surrounding community area. PUD Plan design Review Factors include, but are not limited to:

Factor	Concern
• Traffic	amount, type, time
• Access	safety and convenience
• Signs	size, location, lighting, character of design
• Noise	amount, frequency
• Landscaping	parking lots, foundation areas, buffers
• Natural Environment	soils, trees, vegetation, waterways, wetlands
• Circulation	on-site, auto, pedestrian
• Architectural Character	height, size, style, position of structure
• Utilities	availability, capacity
• Schools	location, needs, impact
• Public Safety Facilities	access, availability
• Land Use Transition	on-site, off-site
• Air Pollution	type, amount odor
• Energy Consumption	type, amount, availability
• Drainage	location, capacity, type

The PUD Concept is a major recommendation for the Township's Master Plan. This Plan recommends that the Township encourage this development technique as an option to conventional zoning.

Cluster Development Ordinance

Cluster Development Ordinance is a regulation tool that allows for innovative design techniques in areas of low-density. Such regulation allows cluster development on small tracts with common open space areas. Using this option allows developers to build on small size lots without increasing the density established by the zoning ordinance. Conservation easements are used to assure that future land use in the open space areas of the development remain in their natural state.

Chapter 11 – Goals and Objectives

The Master Plan expresses the objectives of the Township with respect to its future physical growth and development. The Plan is intended to (a) guide local government's policies and decisions as well as private sector decisions regarding land use and development; (b) state the specific purposes which the Township seeks to achieve in its future development and growth as well as what it seeks to retain; and (c) the policy directions, including ordinances, which will be pursued to help attain the stated goals.

Goal #1 – Retain The Rural/Recreational Character Of The Township Of Somerset

Objective 1.1 – Agricultural Land Use

The preservation of the rural environment which includes open spaces, natural features, prime farm land and agricultural land is the first major goal of the Plan. The Township is determined to retain the rural character in appearance and fact, including the preservation of agriculture and the activities associated with the rural environment as a way of life and economic activity.

Supporting policies:

- Encourage rural residents to retain land for agriculture and activities associated with the rural environment. Agricultural activities are encouraged to be consistent with the capabilities of the Township to service and maintain as well as the preservation of the rural environment compatible with good environmental stewardship.
- Maintain low development densities in the areas south of US-12 which is currently zoned as agriculture. This policy is consistent with the lack of services, road conditions and topography of this area.

Objective 1.2 – Residential Land Use

The Township will direct new residential development to areas which are compatible with the established land use patterns and with environmental and service capability that can support development. The Township will promote rational division of land and innovative design techniques for future residential development.

The preservation of the recreational land use associated with residential development adjacent to the Township's waterways is the second major goal of the Plan. The Township is determined to retain the quality of these waterways sufficient for such recreational usage and maintenance of home values.

Supporting policies:

- Density guidelines, as implemented through the zoning ordinance and depicted on the zoning maps, will be based on environmental constraints, land use compatibility, availability of public facilities and services (including water, sewer, roadway and storm

drainage), character of the surrounding area, and more specific policies adopted for specific areas in this Plan.

- The Township will encourage well planned and innovative design techniques that allow land owners options to traditional zoning. Design of new development should place a high priority on preserving the Township's rural environment and environmental goals.
- The Township will be cognizant that the tax base balances the service demand as found in the agricultural areas with the increased service demand as found in the residential areas.
- The Township will be cognizant that preservation of the rural environment within residential areas includes the scenic views, natural road right of ways, minimization of annoyances from light and noise associated with residential development.
- The Township will encourage the use of the Planned Urban Development District option and is open to a density bonus for developments which propose to utilize either the Cluster or Planned Urban Development District options.
- The Township will continually evaluate its zoning, subdivision and other development regulations to ensure that proper standards are adopted to promote quality construction and continued maintenance of the community's housing stock and all aspects of the environmental impact of such.

Goal #2 – Facilitate Office, Commercial and Industrial Land Use Compatible with Goal #1

Objective 1.3 – Office and Commercial Land Uses

The Township will direct new commercial uses to areas which are compatible with established land use patterns which can be supported by available public facilities and have environmental features that can handle specific commercial uses. The Township will support existing commercial development in revitalization efforts that would strengthen the Township's economic viability. The Township supports the importance of commercial uses by maintaining a balanced mix of land uses and sustaining its commercial centers.

Supporting policies:

- The Township will encourage commercial development that utilizes appropriate uses within the Commercial District along the US-12 corridor. This area serves as a commercial area not only for the residents of the Township, but also consumers passing through or visiting the Township. These regional commercial uses generally serve retail and service needs for the Township and adjacent areas.
- The Township will encourage working with property owners and developers in the design phases of the development with the goal of retaining the rural and recreational character of the Township.

Commercial Development Strategies:

- The Township will continue to include commercial development projects within the Township in the site plan review process.

- The Township will support the development of successive five year Capital Improvement Plans for improvements to the Township offices, parking lots, parks, and local roadways.
- The Township will encourage local businesses to participate in land use and economic development consistent with the Plan.

Objective 1.4 – Light Industrial Land Uses

The Township will maintain the Township’s current Light Industrial land use base. Such land use will maintain high standards of aesthetic appearance and minimization of adverse impact.

The Township will direct new industrial development to the north-west portion of the Township which is compatible with established land use patterns and that have environmental factors suitable for light industrial use.

Supporting policies:

- Existing and planned industrial areas of the Township should be protected from encroachment by non-industrial uses which are likely to conflict with and be adversely affected by industrial uses, through use of responsive zoning in perimeter areas and provision for adequate buffers adjacent to industrial areas.
- Through use of reasonable measures and requirements for incremental improvement, seek to upgrade the aesthetic appearance and any adverse environmental impact of existing development industrial areas.
- The Township should assure adequate systems are in place to handle sanitary and waste disposal, water use, and storm water retention and direction. Due to the lack of public facilities within the Township, these criteria need special attention for any scale of industrial development.
- The Township may consider the establishment of a Research Park located in areas with visible access or directly adjacent to US-12 or primary roads and in areas where the light industrial district abuts a residential or conservation area.
- The provision of additional land for heavy industrial use in the Township is discouraged because of environmental issues such as water preservation, and lack of additional land, roads and services in the Township suitable for such use. New light industrial development should be limited to locations where such use will not result in negative environmental or social impact to surrounding areas.

Goal #3 – Facilitate Necessary Community Infra-Structure Compatible with Goals #1 And #2

Objective 1.5 – Community Land Uses

The Township recognizes the importance of adequate land for community uses and recognizes land owned by other entities as well as the Township for educational, community and conservation purposes. These uses include the Township Offices, the Jerome Community Building, McCourtie Park and other parks, the Somerset State Game Area and Wildlife Refuge, and cemeteries within the Township.

- The Township recognizes the Township's Recreation Plan as a guide for the maintenance and improvement of existing recreational and community facilities.

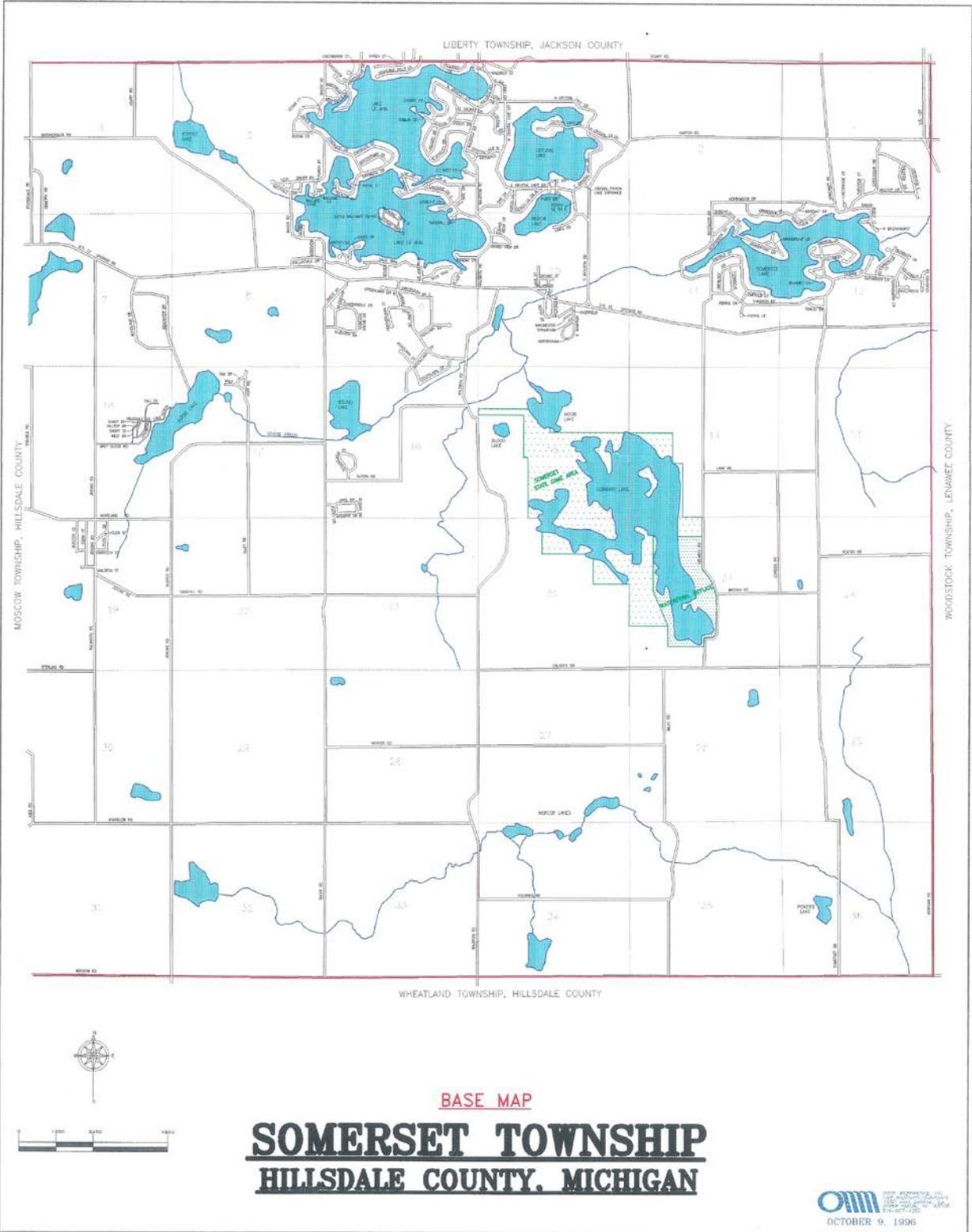
Chapter 12 – Plan Implementation

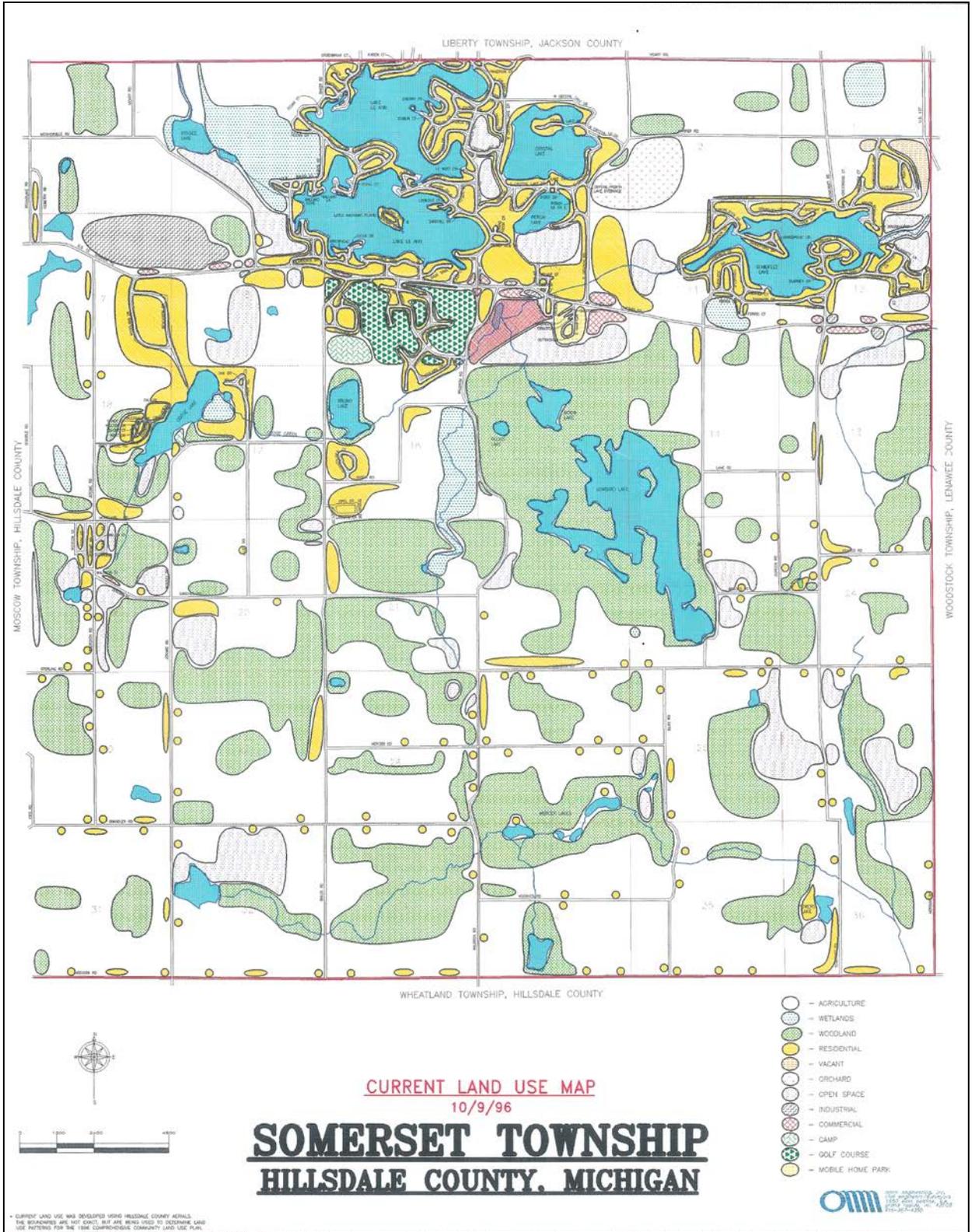
As noted previously, the Township's Master Plan is a guide to promote a safe, efficient, and desirable pattern of land use. The concepts and principles which it describes should be applied as the Township grows and develops.

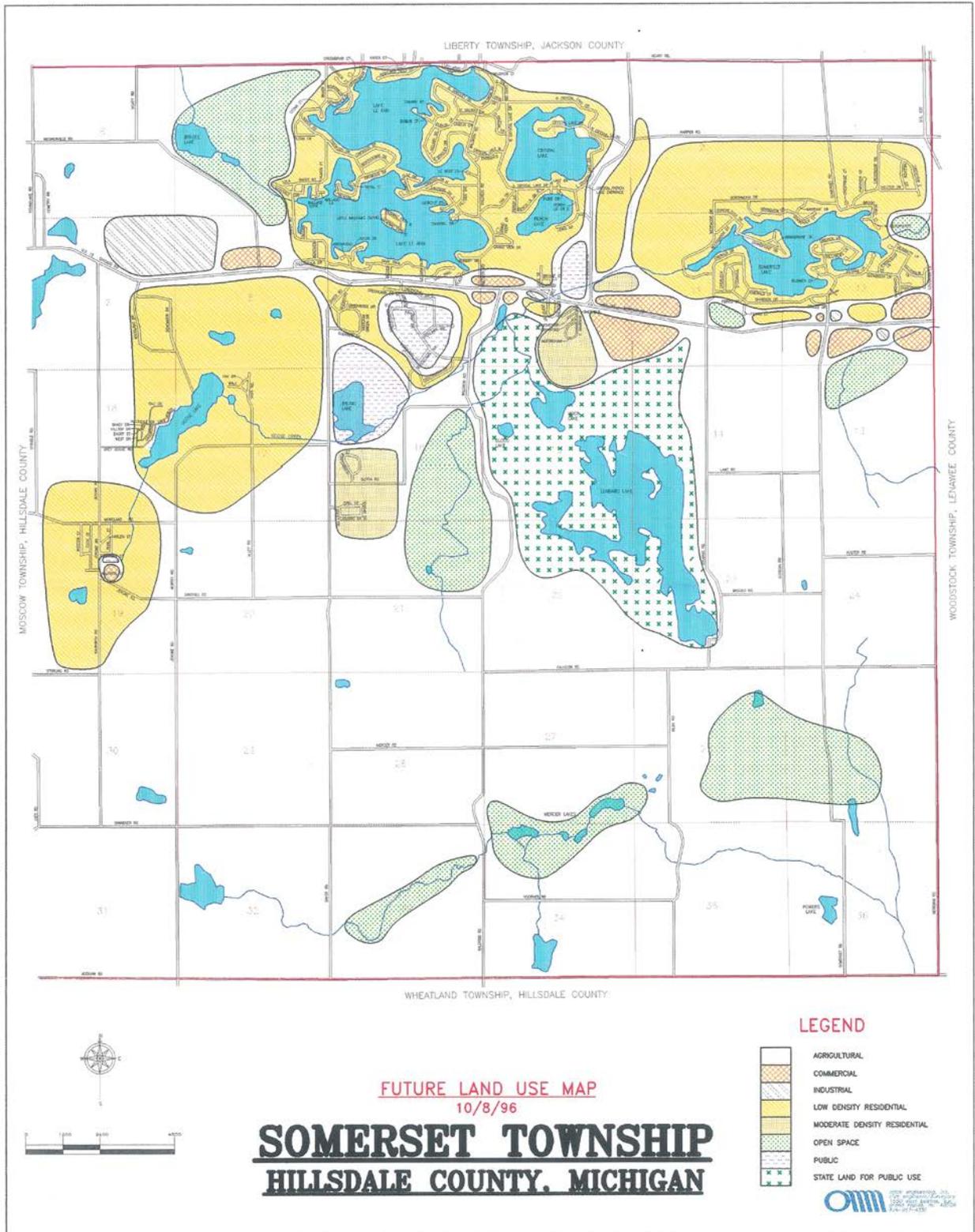
The Township Zoning Ordinance is the primary instrument which the Township would use to implement its Plan. Properly applied, the Zoning Ordinance accepts the realities of existing land uses and patterns and generally, as new development occurs, it directs growth toward achieving the concept of the Plan. The Plan, therefore, is a guide to be used in determinations of zoning policies. Understandably, the Plan cannot anticipate all potential future problems or conditions which may arise in the Township, nor predict the exact location of future land uses. In the practical matter of day-to-day zoning development, it may be necessary at times to amend the Plan due to these uncertainties. However, the general concepts set forth by the Township in the Plan are the actual statements of policy, and should be followed closely.

In addition, subdivision regulations provide another tool for implementation of the Plan. Subdivision regulations provide standards for the subdivision of land and promote proper subdivision design creating a healthy and pleasant living environment. This includes the provision of parks, efficient street patterns, and a complete, easily maintained system of utilities. The following is a recommended priority list of steps that should be taken by the Planning Commission to ensure proper development and maintenance of land within the Township:

- Continue to update the (5) year capital improvement plan for the Township's planning expenditures.
- Continue to update computerized tracking of property land use information of properties within the Township boundaries.
- Continue to update the site plan review process for prompt response to conformity with the Plan and the Zoning Ordinance.
- Continue to update the Zoning Ordinance responsive to the Plan and future development, including Cluster Development and Planned Urban Development.
- Continue to update design criteria to ensure quality construction, building materials, and other design responsive to the Plan and the Zoning Ordinance.
- Evaluate methodologies for preserving the key elements of the Plan; agricultural/rural environment; and recreational preservation/residential development.







Current Somerset Township Zoning Map

