

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF TEXAS

5-YEAR UPDATE

TO THE

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

**ADOPTED BY THE TEXAS TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION ON AUGUST 22, 2006 AND APPROVED BY THE
TEXAS TOWNSHIP BOARD ON AUGUST 28, 2006**

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The following report is intended to serve as a 5-Year Update to the 1999 Comprehensive Plan pursuant to P.A. 263 of 2001 and is presented as a supplemental report to be used in conjunction with the original plan. This update (of the 1999 Plan) revealed substantial consistency with the findings and recommendations made at that time. The 2000 Census of population revealed a population for Texas Township of 10,919 persons, up 41.6% from the 1990 Census total of 7,711. The 1999 Comprehensive Plan used four different population projection methods to arrive at an average estimated population of 10,914 for the year 2000, increasing to 14,484 by 2010 and 18,947 by 2020. More recent projections by the Kalamazoo County Planning Department indicate projected population of 15,462 by 2010 and 21,894 by 2020. While these estimates reflect the substantial growth anticipated in the Township over the next 15 years, the current plan provides substantial capacity for that growth to occur. A rough build-out analysis was conducted in 2001 of both the residential zoning districts and the residential comprehensive plan designations, resulting in a projected capacity in excess of 50,000 residents. While full build-out is not realistic, it does provide a foundation for supporting projections of population growth that does serve as the basis for providing capacity for new development.

The “Goals & Objectives” within the 1999 Plan were derived from a 1998 community opinion survey and input from the Land Use Plan Committee, and these remain on target and have, in some instances, proceeded through to implementation. This report and update shall focus primarily on two elements of the Comprehensive Plan: the “Future Land Use Plan” (Chapter 8) and the “Implementation Strategies” (Chapter 9). In addition, this report will also provide an update to the Texas Corners Sub-Area Plan that was completed in March of 2000, with these changes reflected on an overall Future Land Use Plan Map attached to this narrative. Since the Comprehensive Plan was completed in 1999, two adjoining units of government, Prairie Ronde Township to the south and Antwerp Township (Van Buren County) to the west have completed new Land Use Plans. (It should be noted that references to the planning efforts of those communities are, thus, out-of-date on pages 39 and 40 of the Comprehensive Plan.)

As part of this review and update, reference will be made to actions that have been taken that are consistent with the thirteen (13) strategies outlined within the “Implementation” element of the Plan. The first strategy, to “evaluate and revise the zoning ordinance”, has been undertaken but continues to be a work in progress, based upon changes in state law and development applications. *Open Space Preservation* zoning ordinance amendments now provide an additional development option as a permitted use, reflecting the potential for more residential development within agricultural areas of the Township, although at densities of less than one unit for every two acres of land. This amendment resulted in some minor increases in minimum lot area in the “A” and “R-1” zoning districts and a minor decrease in the “R-2” zoning district. In general, based upon projected population growth, this supported the goal of increasing density within a growth area that can be served by public utilities during the life of the plan.

In addition to changes in site development regulations, the Township has moved forward with implementing access management guidelines as part of site plan review and approval. This should provide for improved coordination between vehicle and pedestrian movement and preserve additional right-of-way in areas where more intensive development is anticipated. As with any planning and zoning amendments, educating the public and development community is critical in successful implementation of these strategies.

CHAPTER 8. FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The Future Land Use Plan element seeks to merge the elements presented within the “Community Profile” into a plan which can support growth while preserving open space, farmland and the rural character of Texas Township. It is based upon the need to provide sufficient capacity for future development in support of growth outlined within the population projections for the community. This element also serves as the foundation for the zoning ordinance and is directed toward implementation through capital improvement programming.

This element of the plan is presented in both a narrative form as well as on the Future Land Use Map. Each land use designation is described in terms of density (residential) or intensity of use and includes a description of the compatibility of the designation to specific zoning classifications within the zoning ordinance. While the Plan is intended to be general, and sometimes flexible, in its implementation, it is guided by the concept of more intensive development within a growth boundary where public services can most efficiently be extended. The nature of the plan is based upon a twenty year time horizon with updates every five years or upon a change in condition that may warrant such review and possible amendment.

The following twelve (12) designations represent specific categories of land use that may be implemented through amendments to the zoning districts map (rezoning) or through actual layout and design considerations during site plan review and approval. References to preservation of open space, planned unit development, conservation easements or similar terminology are intended to describe characteristics of development options that may serve to implement the goals and objectives of the Plan.

RESOURCE CONSERVATION

This land use designation supports the preservation of open space within public or private facilities where protection of the natural environment is balanced by opportunities for passive or active recreation. The overall purpose of the areas designated for Resource Conservation is to foster the protection of these natural features with as little disturbance as possible.

The areas designated are located in the central portion of the Township and provide relief from areas where more intensive development is occurring. While much of this area is in private ownership for organizational camps or facilities, benefit is derived by all residents when such areas are preserved and natural resources are protected. While no specific zoning district exists for resource conservation, development in these areas should be monitored and implementation should include development techniques such as planned unit development where open space connections can be maintained.

AGRICULTURE

This land use designation is intended to support the preservation of farmland while allowing for limited residential development through open space preservation or traditional land division options. While compatibility may not naturally exist between agricultural operations and encroaching residential development, the intent is that development will be through scattered sites or where layout and design considerations can minimize such conflict. It should be emphasized that these areas are intended to support agriculture as part of the local economy and preservation of these areas is the primary goal.

Implementation of this designation is through the “A” Agricultural district and it is anticipated that maximum density for residential use will be at one unit per every two acres. While overall density (within the planned area) will be substantially less than this, consideration is given to supporting splits or development where the maximum land area is preserved for agriculture.

The area designated is primarily in the southern and western portions of the Township, directed at compatibility with more rural development in Prairie Ronde and Antwerp Townships. It is not anticipated that public utilities will be extended into this area during the life of this Plan and protection of groundwater supplies will be based upon this scattered site approach.

LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

This land use designation is intended to provide for residential development at a density range of between one unit per every 1.5 acres to three units per acre. This range allows for development within areas that may or may not be served by public utilities yet are within the anticipated growth area during the life of the Plan.

The primary use of land will be single family residences on individual lots or sites, often through development of subdivision or site condominium projects. Implementation of this designation is primarily through the “R-1” Residential district, although the “R-2” Residential district may be compatible where public utilities and surrounding land use support more intensive development. A new “R-1A” District has been adopted to provide transition between these districts and compatibility within the middle of this density range. It is intended that the “R-1” District would serve as the perimeter of this Low Density designation, where this is abutting and within approximately 1/8 to 1/4 mile of the Agricultural designation. The “R-1A” District would provide for transition between the “R-1” and “R-2” Districts, depending upon the availability and distance to public utilities. The “R-2” would only be compatible where abutting existing “R-2” zoning along two boundaries and where public utilities are in place to serve the development.

In most instances, this designation defines the growth area for the Township and should be considered the area for public utility expansion over the next twenty years. While many areas planned for Low Density Residential are presently zoned “R-2” Residential,

this more intensive zoning reflects existing utility service areas as well as proximity to commercial and industrial development areas of the Township, with this more compatible with the Medium Density Residential designation.

MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

This land use designation is directed at supporting single family development on smaller lots and introducing two-family dwellings in areas of transition to more intensive land use. The density range is from three (3) to five (5) units per acre and is dependent upon connection to public utilities.

The “R-2” Residential district is considered most compatible with this designation, with the “R-3” Residential (Single and Two-Family) district generally consistent where conditions support such density of residential use. Use of Planned Unit Development (PUD) may be beneficial in preserving open space where higher densities of development may impact upon adjoining development of a less intensive nature.

Areas planned for such use are adjoining commercial and office areas centrally located or along major thoroughfares within the Township. Such development may also be useful for infill projects in order to support more intensive development inside the growth area.

HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

This land use designation supports the development of two-family, multiple family and mobile home park uses based upon residential density of between five (5) and ten (10) units per acre. Such development allows for a diversity of housing options and may provide support with housing needs for local employers or students attending local colleges or universities.

The “R-4” Residential (Multiple Family) district is considered the most compatible, with the “R-5” and “R-6” (Mobile Home Park) districts generally consistent based upon surrounding land use and zoning. The Township provides a number of areas for such development based upon proximity to business areas and access to major thoroughfares.

OFFICE

This land use designation is often associated with providing a transition area between residential and commercial development areas. While such use is integrated into both commercial and industrial (business technology) designations, it may also serve to define where more intensive development is not compatible based upon impact to adjoining residential development areas.

This land use designation is implemented through the “O-1” Office district, which is considered the only specific district compatible with this designation. Consideration may

be given to using this designation when Neighborhood Commercial or High Density Residential designations are deemed too intensive based upon adjoining residential land use. Such an approach is utilized east and west of 9th Street and in the Texas Corners area, although use of buffers, screening or open space perimeters may allow for such residential and commercial development to share a common boundary.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL

This land use designation is utilized to support commercial services in areas where the type of adjoining residential land use may define the scope of such services. In most instances, uses include retail business that may be supported by pedestrian movement as well as vehicular access.

The “C-1” (Local) Commercial district is considered most compatible, with the “C-2” (General) Commercial district generally consistent where adjoining more intensive land use or where residential development can effectively be screened or buffered from a site development perspective.

CENTRAL COMMERCIAL

This new designation is directed at the establishment of a central business district for the Township, located at Texas Corners, generally the area around the intersection of Q Avenue and 8th Street. A new “CBD” (Corners Business District) has been adopted and is proposed for the Texas Corners area. This new district would be the only zoning district compatible with this designation due to the unique nature of proposed uses, including the potential for mixed-use. Residential access to recreational facilities, the Township Hall and commercial services is proposed to be linked by sidewalks and bike trails, providing pedestrian movement more oriented to a “downtown” environment. Restaurants and shops, with shared parking potential based upon hours of operation, may add to this mix and become an attraction for expanded development within this area of the Township.

REGIONAL COMMERCIAL

This land use designation provides for a wide range of commercial uses, with a focus on vehicular access from patrons within the Township as well as through traveling through the community. Accessibility from I-94 and its interchange at 9th Street provides the primary location for such development within the Township.

The “C-3” (Shopping Center) and “C-4” (Highway) Commercial districts are both considered compatible with this designation. The mix of uses is quite broad and typically focuses on providing sufficient parking and access to move patrons quickly from the roadway to avoid traffic conflicts and congestion. Access management guidelines are especially encouraged in these areas due to potential conflict with turning movements as well as pedestrian and non-motorized transportation needs.

BUSINESS & TRAINING

This specialized land use designation seeks to broaden the Township's role in economic development and training by supporting business, industry and job training for area students and residents. Proximity to I-94 provides for ease of access to employees as well as students, with this enhanced by the connection along 9th Street to Kalamazoo Valley Community College (KVCC).

This designation is compatible with and implemented through the "EBT" Education, Business and Technology Park district. While such development can support large scale business and industry, site development in a campus-like setting allows for increased compatibility to residential areas not often associated with typical industrial development.

INDUSTRIAL

This land use designation provides for a broad range of business and industry to locate in the Township. The area designated, north of I-94 along 9th Street, is also consistent with a similar pattern of development to the north in Oshtemo Township.

This designation is implemented through the "I-1", "I-2" and "I-3" Industrial districts. Compatibility is defined by the nature of surrounding land use to the subject site and the mix of businesses in the area.

COMPATIBILITY WITH ZONING

Throughout this Future Land Use Plan element, reference has been made to the zoning districts that are considered most compatible with a given land use plan designation. In most instances, the zoning district most compatible is that which is considered least intensive or at the lower density range for residential use. Other zoning districts may be identified as generally consistent based upon surrounding land use or adjoining plan designations or zoning districts.

The need to define this compatibility is based upon the need and time frame associated with amending the plan in response to requests for zoning ordinance map amendments. In most cases, a "rezoning" request is initiated by a private party (typically the owner) to change the zoning classification to allow for a more intensive land use. Such request may be incompatible with the land use designation in the Plan and should lead to an amendment in order to preserve the integrity of the Plan as an unbiased guide for future development of the Township.

When a request is made for a rezoning to a classification that is less intensive than the Plan designation, the concern is based upon whether sufficient capacity remains within the Plan to support that intensity of use in other locations. If so, the Planning Commission may determine that a plan amendment is not necessary based upon a less intensive use than anticipated, which is generally consistent based upon surrounding land use for areas not presently developed.

To determine the need to undertake a plan amendment, the Planning Commission, in coordination with the Township Board's decision to authorize distribution of a Notice of Intent, should rely on these references in the Future Land Use element as to compatibility and general consistency. This requirement is based upon the desire for implementation of the Plan through the zoning ordinance and for educating the public (and applicants for rezoning) about the importance of the Plan within the overall development process.

CHAPTER 9. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

This element of the Plan identifies and recommends a course of action to be followed based upon the recommendations made within the Comprehensive Plan. This section of the supplemental report (Five-Year Update) is intended to simply identify progress that has been made based upon the goals and objectives presented within the original Plan.

The following thirteen (13) strategies were presented within the 1999 Plan:

- 1) Evaluate and Revise the Zoning Ordinance
- 2) Revise and Expand Planned Unit Development (PUD)
- 3) Inventory Key Natural Features
- 4) Survey of Farmland Owners
- 5) Develop Farmland Preservation Programs
- 6) Promote the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)
- 7) Coordinate Capital Decisions with the Plan
- 8) Develop Sewer Policy to Guide Development
- 9) Establish a Natural Area Conservancy
- 10) Prepare a Sub-Area Plan for Texas Corners
- 11) Develop a Plan for Non-Motorized Connections
- 12) Develop a Geographic Information System (GIS)
- 13) Improve Public Understanding of Growth Management Benefits

To report on progress directed toward implementation of these strategies, it will be useful to consider how laws or programs at the state and county level influence decisions at the local level. The new *Planning Act* and *Open Space Preservation* zoning amendments (to the Township Zoning Act) in 2001 required considerable time commitment in 2002 in preparation of these changes. In addition, the development process often defines priorities in terms of exposing areas within the zoning ordinance that should be considered for possible amendment. These impacts (based upon the need for more immediate attention) often delay implementation of recommendations within a long-range plan, although much progress has been made since Plan adoption in 1999.

The Township has continued to evaluate and revise their zoning ordinance (#1), with recent efforts directed at amendments related to an Open Space Preservation "OSP" Overlay District, lot area and setback requirements, access management guidelines, provisions for regulating mining operations and consideration of enhancements to site plan review provisions. A new "CBD" Corners Business District has been adopted

following conceptual planning by an outside consultant experienced in downtown redevelopment. A large residential PUD project (#2) was approved in the Texas Corners area and focused on compatibility with traditional residential development and open space connections to Texas Drive Park. It is this type of project that will enhance the attractiveness of the Texas Corners as a central shopping and restaurant location.

In undertaking changes to this Plan and amendments to the lot area requirements, interested farmland owners (#4), developers and the general public provided input related to the impact of growth and the desire to manage such growth (#13). The State of Michigan and Kalamazoo County have continued efforts directed at Farmland Preservation (#5) and Purchase of Development Rights (#6). A program proposal for PDR has been completed by the County and provides a useful guide for such understanding development rights and farmland preservation.

The Township continues to evaluate policy regarding public sewer (#8) and water and the influence on overall capital improvement programming (#7). It should also be noted that the growth boundary presented on the 1999 Plan has been expanded, primarily in the northwest area of the Township, based upon development activity toward the Village of Mattawan and public utility extensions in this area.

The 1999 Comprehensive Plan was immediately followed by completion of the Texas Corners Sub-Area Plan (#10) in March of 2000. This supplemental report includes reference to ongoing work of creating a specialized commercial zoning district for that area and incorporated map amendments into the overall plan map at the end of this supplemental report. In addition, the Q Avenue/8th Street Road project in Texas Corners has focused on access management guidelines and non-motorized connections (#11) to Texas Drive Park. The Township has completed the development of a bikepath feasibility study with Oshtemo Township in order to provide coordinated bikeway and trail connections within the Township, connecting the two communities along 9th Street. Other connections include the abandoned rail R.O.W. owned by AT&T that crosses the common boundary and connection to the City of Portage linear park to the east.

The Township also contracts with their engineering consultant (Prein&Newhof) on updating their mapping and GIS program (#12) to track much of the development trends impacting the Township. This valuable tool will only enhance efforts to coordinate planning, zoning, assessing and other land use classifications as well as provide graphic explanation and presentation of the data influencing development of the Township. It will also be beneficial in undertaking an inventory of natural features (#3) and assisting with defining areas of the Township that should be preserved in a natural state (#9).

The Township shall continue to move forward with implementation of these strategies and may consider additions to this list in future updates to this Plan.