

# Chapter Three

# FUTURE LAND USE STRATEGY

## Introduction

Locke Township's principal planning components are contained in the Master Plan's Future Land Use Strategy, as discussed in this chapter, and the Public Services Strategy discussed in Chapter Four. The Future Land Use Strategy identifies the desired pattern of land use, development and preservation throughout the Township. Chapter Four presents guidelines regarding future infrastructure and public services improvements to help ensure that future public services are coordinated with the planned future land use pattern, and the achievement of the Plan's goals and objectives.

The goals and objectives presented in Chapter Two are the foundation on which the Future Land Use Strategy is based. These include, in part, the desire to guide future development in a manner that ensures land use patterns compatible with public facilities and services, the cost-effective use of tax dollars, and the preservation of natural resource, and rural character.

The Future Land Use Strategy is based upon an analysis of the Township's natural and cultural features such as community attitudes, existing roadway network, existing land use patterns, soil conditions, existing and nearby public infrastructure, environmentally sensitive areas, and other natural resources. The opportunities and constraints presented by these characteristics were evaluated in the context of the goals and objectives in Chapter Two to arrive at a planned future land use pattern.

The Future Land Use Strategy proposes the continuation of the agricultural and low density residential character of the Township. Modest orderly growth is recognized. A concentration of higher density residential areas located in the southwest and southeast corners of the Township recognize the potential for the extension of existing public services from Webberville and Williamston.

## Land Use Areas

The Future land Use Strategy divides the Township into "Areas" and identifies the predominant land use pattern planned for each. These land use Areas collectively make up the planned future land use pattern in the Township. These areas are:

- Agricultural – Rural Residential Areas
- Suburban Residential Areas
- Commercial Areas

It is not the intent of this Plan to identify the specific land uses that are to be permitted in each of these Areas. This Plan makes broad-based recommendations regarding the dominant land use(s) to be accommodated in each of these Areas. Specific permitted land uses will be determined by the zoning provisions of the Township, based upon considerations of compatibility. There may be certain existing land uses that do not "fit" with the planned future land use pattern. This should not be necessarily interpreted as a lack of Township support for the continuation of such uses. Zoning regulations should clarify this matter. The approximate borders of these Areas are illustrated in the Land Use and Circulation Map at the end of this Chapter.

### Agricultural – Rural Residential Area

The Agricultural – Rural Residential Area includes the vast majority of land in the Township and nearly all lands currently farmed. The intent of the Agricultural – Rural Residential Area is to provide opportunities for farming and encourage the preservation of farmland resources and the long-term viability of local farming, while also providing opportunities for low-density residential development that preserves the community's overall rural character, natural resources, and open spaces. This Area is established in recognition of the importance of Agriculture and the need to encourage the preservation of farmland resources and viable farming operations. Agriculture and low-density residential development are intended to be the primary uses of land in this Area.

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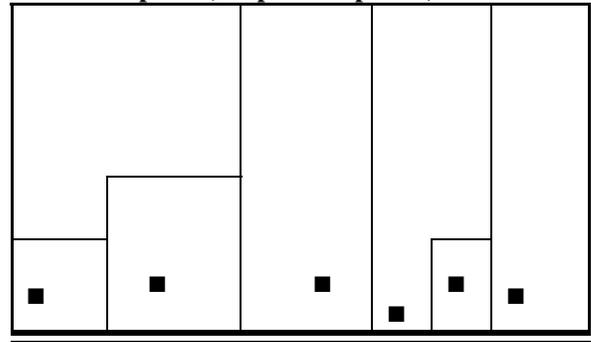
Lands in the Agricultural – Rural Residential Area are largely characterized by conditions that support their long term agricultural economic viability including: 1) classification by the U.S. Department of Agricultural as "prime farmland"; 2) minimum parcel sizes approaching 40 acres or more; 3) limited encroachment by non-agricultural land uses; 4) enrollment in the P.A. 116 Farmland and Open Space Protection Program; 5) adjacency to other farmland parcels considered to offer similar opportunities for long term economically viable farming operations; and 6) proximity to markets and transportation facilities such as grain elevators. The Area encourages the continuation of all current farming activities as well as the introduction of new farming activities. Still, in light of the Township's interest in providing opportunities for new residences in the Area and maintaining the quality of life for existing households, reasonable care should be exercised in regard to accommodating specialized agricultural operations that may have heightened impacts on surrounding land uses (such as large concentrated livestock operations).

Maximum development densities of approximately one dwelling per five acres is recommended in the Agricultural – Rural Residential Area, in support of the preservation of farmland resources and the management of growth and development. No public sewer or water that may be introduced into the Area by a private party should serve as a basis for higher development densities and the undermining of the purposes of the Area.

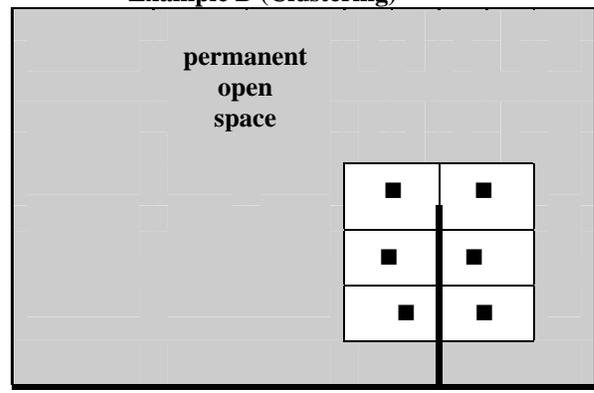
Development patterns that incorporate the preservation of natural resources, open spaces, rural character, and traffic safety are strongly encouraged. To this end, the Area supports opportunities for what is frequently referred to as "clustering" and/or "open space developments." This form of development provides for the clustering of smaller lots than what is normally required, on only a portion of the development parcel, so that the balance of the parcel can be retained for farming or otherwise reserved for open space and/or the preservation of important environmental resources. These open space areas can be reserved by the use of conservation easements, deed restrictions, or similar tools. A critical component of clustering should be the inclusion of new interior roads to serve the new lots, rather than stripping the dwellings along existing road frontages such as Rowley, Haslett, Harris, Morrice, and the many other public roads.

Traditional strip residential development along the Township's major roads is illustrated in Example A. This is the easiest form of development but it impacts public safety the greatest due to the many driveways directly accessing the roads and can significantly undermine the Township's rural character. Example B, illustrating the use of clustering, improves public safety along the road and more effectively preserves the existing character of the community. In the case where land is to be converted to one or more home sites and clustering is not exercised, lot configurations should minimize excessive frequencies of curb cuts and associated traffic hazards and congestion, as well as ensure adequate open spaces and setbacks to support the desired rural character of the area and minimize land use conflicts between farm and non-farm uses.

**Example A (Strip Development)**



**Example B (Clustering)**



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Potential new residents in the Agricultural Area should recognize that the traditional odors, noises, fertilizer applications, and generally recognized agricultural activities associated with responsible farming may well continue on a long term basis in this area. The Township does not consider such activities and operations as nuisances. Rather, the Township supports the long-term continuation of farming. Local developers and real estate agents should disclose this information to prospective buyers of land in this Area.

There are some existing small settlements in this Area, including scattered subdivisions. The Plan recognizes the viability and desirability of these settlement areas, and that some may be of a higher density than recommended for this Area. On the other hand, these settlement areas are not to serve or be interpreted as future growth and expansion zones and for this reason, are not included in the Suburban Residential Area discussed below. This Plan presents general policies. Specific zoning regulations, including zoning district boundaries and requirements, will address this issue.

### Suburban Residential Areas

The Suburban Residential Areas provides for residential development of a more suburban character than planned elsewhere in the Township. These Areas include existing residential development of a suburban character as well as vacant land where new residential development of similar character is considered appropriate.

These Suburban Residential areas will provide reasonable housing alternatives to the predominantly low-density residential development provided for in the Agricultural – Rural Residential Area. The Township is interested in providing increased opportunities for affordable housing and these opportunities are frequently associated with higher density development. Irrespective of affordable housing, the Township is interested in providing existing and future residents with choices in residential housing and lifestyles.

The proposed Suburban Residential areas include more than 700 acres of land that is generally void of wetland and flood-prone environments. This acreage has the potential to accommodate more than 500 new households based on average lot sizes of one acre and the use of a portion of this acreage for new roads. This development potential minimizes the need for additional residential development opportunities in the Agricultural – Rural Residential Area. Should sewer service be introduced to these areas, the build-out potential for the Suburban Residential areas increases to 1,500 households or more based on an average lot sizes of one-third of an acre.

As discussed under “Housing” in chapter Two, there are no locations in the Township that are particularly suitable for suburban residential development. However, the Township wants to establish a foundation for facilitating opportunities for varied housing and lifestyles. The planned Suburban Residential Areas are considered most appropriate for suburban residential development, as compared to the balance of the Township, for the following reasons:

- 1) The Township supports compact development patterns and these locations are in closest proximity to existing suburban and urban development patterns – the nearby communities of the City of Williamston and the Village of Webberville.
- 2) These locations are in closest proximity to existing retail and other commercial services, also located in Williamston and Webberville.
- 3) These locations are in closest proximity to fire protection services which are housed in fire stations in Williamston and Webberville.
- 4) Unless Locke Township intends the establishment of a Township-operated public sewer system, the potential for sewer service to greater facilitate suburban residential development opportunities will likely emanate from Williamston or Webberville.
- 5) These areas are most distant from the Township’s core agricultural areas further to the north, thereby minimizing encroachment into farm areas.
- 6) These areas are nearest to I-96 interchanges for improved access to regional employment and retail centers.

Development densities of approximately one dwelling unit per one acre are considered appropriate in the Suburban Residential Areas provided adequate potable water and on-site sewage disposal exists. Densities higher than approximately one dwelling per acre are considered reasonable only where public sewer is provided and only after special review proceedings to determine if the project is appropriate on the specific proposed property. Factors such as available infrastructure and public services, traffic safety, and the specific characteristics of the property should be considered during such a review. Until the time when public sewer may be available in one or both of these Suburban Residential Areas, development densities will be largely impacted by soil conditions including the extent of limitations they may present to septic drain fields and the rules and regulations of the Ingham County Health Department regarding on-site sewage disposal.

High-density residential developments including manufactured housing communities and multifamily developments, that would likely result in an abrupt increase in the number of dwellings and persons in the Township in a comparatively short period of time, should be located in the southeast Suburban Residential Area only. This portion of the Township is characterized by topographic conditions more suited to such developments. The Williamston School District (serving the southwest

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Suburban Residential area) is experiencing excess demand on facilities, and the Webberville School District (serving the southeast Suburban Residential area) has substantial excess capacity. In addition, locating such uses toward Webberville, with access to I-96 nearby, will minimize increased congestion in the City of Williamston and its residential areas and more effectively preserve the quality of life in these areas.

Future development in the Suburban Residential Area, when in association with platted or condominium subdivisions, or other development patterns of a similar neighborhood character, should be designed to address important growth management and quality of life measures. These include access management, pedestrian circulation, fire protection infrastructure, and recreation opportunities.

Though the limits of the Suburban Residential areas are approximate, as illustrated on the Land Use and Circulation Map (Map 5), they represent a clear policy to direct comparatively high-density residential development (densities greater than those planned for the Agricultural – Rural Residential Area) to the southeast and southwest corners of the Township. In the interest of encouraging compact development patterns, the extension of the Suburban Residential Areas beyond the illustrated approximate limits should generally be discouraged until such time that there is a demonstrated need that additional lands are necessary to accommodate medium and/or high density residential development. While the illustrated Suburban Residential areas do not extend into nearby 100-year floodplains, development within such floodplains may be reasonable where the public health, safety and welfare is not undermined nor are special environmental ecosystems associated with such floodplains.

### Commercial/Industrial Areas

The Future Land Use Strategy identifies particular locations where commercial and industrial development is considered appropriate. Commercial centers and industrial uses typically require a heightened level of road infrastructure, access, public services and visibility. These factors directly impact the identification of future commercial and industrial areas in the Township. Other concerns include minimizing conflicts between existing and proposed land uses and the encouragement of compact development. However, no development should occur unless adequate measures are provided for sewage disposal and potable water.

There is little apparent demand or need for significant commercial or industrial development in Locke Township. The Plan recognizes the proximity of Williamston, Webberville, Perry, Lansing, and other nearby communities where commercial and industrial development of varying character is plentiful and particularly appropriate. In addition, the Township is void

of public sewer or water service and is of a limited population base. It is the intent of this Plan to provide reasonable opportunities for commercial and industrial expansion within the context of the discussion in Chapter Two under “Commercial and Industrial Development”.

The Future Land Use Strategy establishes a single mixed-use M-52 Commercial / Industrial Corridor between the intersections of Haslett Road and Bell Oak Road. This corridor is to serve as the area to accommodate traditional commercial/industrial uses for several reasons.

- 1) Each intersection includes one or more existing businesses.
- 2) M-52, and the two intersection roads, affords visibility and access for future businesses. In addition, Haslett Road is classified as a county primary road.
- 3) The central location of this corridor affords convenient access from most areas of the Township.
- 4) The Township Hall’s presence on Bell Oak Road near M-52 results in more consumer traffic to these areas since the Hall is a community gathering place.
- 5) The corridor includes limited residences and substantial vacant land, presenting increased opportunities for successfully accommodating new commercial and industrial uses.

This commercial/industrial corridor is to be limited to that portion of M-52 between Haslett and Bell Oak Roads, and these immediate intersection areas. It is a basic tenet of the Plan that the M-52 Commercial/Industrial Corridor not evolve into incremental encroachment along M-52 south of the immediate intersection area of Bell Oak Road or north of the immediate intersection area of Haslett Road, or beyond approximately one-tenth of a mile to the east or west of these intersecting roads.

Future commercial development along this corridor should address the day-to-day consumer and office needs of local populations in addition to visitors and travelers along M-52. This corridor is not intended to accommodate large-scale commercial developments, or high-intensity uses that draw from a more regional market. There are enhanced locations for such development in surrounding communities where greater levels of infrastructure and services are available and where the scale and character of such uses are more appropriate. Similarly, future industrial development along this corridor should be characterized by uses that have comparatively limited public services needs. Industrial uses that have minimal external impacts are strongly encouraged. These may include service-oriented industries such as communication and information technologies and manufacturing operations that focus on the assembly of pre-made parts versus raw materials operations.

All commercial and industrial development should exhibit design measures to encourage compatibility with adjacent and nearby land uses and the desired rural character of the community. Adequate buffer yards and/or screening mechanisms should ensure new development minimizes impacts on residential properties. Reasonable limitations on signage, building height, size, and related architectural qualities should be implemented to ensure compatibility of new development with the desired character of the surrounding areas and the Township as a whole. Special attention should also be directed to ensuring future development does not undermine public health, safety or welfare due to poor road access practices including excessive curb cuts and conflicting turning patterns.

### **Red Cedar River Corridor**

Locke Township has important natural resources. Perhaps the most unique and therefore most significant, is the Red Cedar River Corridor. The Red Cedar River Corridor includes the Red Cedar River and its associated wetlands, woodlands, and flood plain environments, and requires a strong conservation theme. In addition to presenting severe limitations to development, the corridor provides important environmental benefits including habitats for wildlife, flood control, groundwater recharge and discharge, and surface water purification. In addition, they provide special opportunities for passive recreation, including linear trails, and contribute to the Township's overall rural character. It is for these reasons that the Plan establishes the Red Cedar River Corridor as a separate planning area within the Township.

Because of the critical roles this corridor plays and the severe limitations it presents to development, the Red Cedar River Corridor provides for the protection of the resources contained within by limiting the introduction and intensity of new land uses. Development in close proximity to these sensitive resources will threaten their quantity and quality and the overall character of the corridor. Future use and development of land within the corridor should be limited to open-space and natural resource based land uses such as farming and wildlife management, and low-density residential development. Residential densities and development patterns should be subject to the same policies described for the Agricultural - Rural Residential Area. Land uses requiring state and/or federal permits (especially for wetland or floodplain alterations) should not receive final Township approval until satisfactory evidence has been submitted verifying the acquisition of all necessary permits. Where only a portion of a single parcel falls within the Corridor area, future development should occur on only the portions which are not characterized by such environmental limitations.

## **Conservation of Natural Resources**

Locke Township is characterized by conditions that require a strong conservation theme. These lands include abundant wetlands and woodlands, and important streams and stream ecosystems including those of the Red Cedar River, Squaw Creek, and Wolf Creek. In addition to presenting severe limitations to development, these resources provide important environmental benefits including habitats for wildlife, flood control, groundwater recharge and discharge, and surface water purification. In addition, they provide special opportunities for passive recreation and contribute to the Township's overall rural character.

In light of the critical roles these resources play and the limitations they present to development, the Plan strongly supports the preservation of these resources. Preservation should take precedence over their unnecessary disturbance and/or destruction by land development practices. The presence of such resources in areas designated for residential, commercial or industrial development should be recognized in the deliberation of rezoning, site plan, and similar zoning requests. Land uses requiring state and/or federal permits (especially for wetland or floodplain alterations) should not receive final Township approval until satisfactory evidence has been submitted verifying the acquisition of all necessary permits. Where a portion of a parcel is characterized by environmentally sensitive areas, development should be directed elsewhere on the site.

## **Phased Zoning**

This Plan recommends the rezoning of vacant land to a more intensive zoning district in a phased or incremental manner. For example, while the Plan may identify areas that may be appropriate to accommodate suburban residential development, the Plan does not recommend "across the board" or immediate rezonings of such vacant land. The Plan recommends that rezonings to more intensive districts occur incrementally over time to ensure the Township is capable of meeting the increased public service demands, managing Township-wide growth and development, adequately reviewing rezoning requests as they apply to the specific subject property, insuring rezonings are in response to a demonstrated need, and minimizing unnecessary hardships upon the landowner of the property as a result of property assessments and/or resulting nonconforming uses and structures.

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All rezonings should be evaluated very carefully in the context of this Plan and other factors that may have relevance. The following minimum considerations should be examined in association with all rezoning requests.

- 1) What, if any, identifiable conditions related to the request have changed which justify the proposed rezoning?
- 2) What are the precedents and the possible effects of such precedent that might result from the approval or denial of the rezoning?
- 3) What is the impact of the rezoning on the ability of the Township and other governmental agencies to provide adequate public services and facilities, and/or programs that might reasonably be required in the future if the proposed rezoning is adopted?
- 4) Would approval adversely affect environmental conditions?
- 5) Would approval adversely affect the value of the surrounding property?
- 6) Is the site's physical, geological, hydrological and other environmental features compatible with the host of uses permitted in the proposed district?
- 7) Is the subject property able to be put to a reasonable economic use in the zoning district in which it is presently located?
- 8) Does the rezoning request generally comply with the planning goals of the Township?
- 9) Is the proposed rezoning consistent with the zoning classification of surrounding land?
- 10) Can all requirements in the proposed zoning classification be complied with on the subject parcel?

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(Future Land Use Map)

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