

Appendix A

CULTURAL FEATURES

Geography and Regional Context

Lake Township is located along the northwest periphery of Huron County in the “Tip of the Thumb” area of Michigan, along the Lake Huron shoreline. The township occupies a total area of approximately 13,250 acres (20.7 square miles), of which approximately 960 acres (1.5 square miles) are comprised of inland waters. The township is six miles in width with an irregular west and north boundary that follows the Lake Huron shoreline. As a result of the presence of Lake Huron, Lake Township does not reflect the six miles by six miles square congressional township boundary characteristic of the majority of townships in Michigan’s Lower Peninsula (based on the U.S. Public Land Survey System). Lake Township is one mile east of the City of Caseville (population of 651 in 2020), and about 20 miles northwest of Bad Axe (population of 3,042 in 2020), the county seat. There are no cities or villages immediately adjacent to Lake Township.

The four principal surrounding municipalities are Caseville Township to the west, Hume Township to the east, and Chandler Township to the south. M-25 travels along the Saginaw Bay and Lake Huron shoreline including along the northern edge of Lake Township for its entire length. The nearest urban centers of 30,000 persons or more are Bay City (32,661 persons in 2020) and Saginaw (44,202 persons in 2020), both approximately 55 to 65 road miles to the southwest. The City of Flint, approximately 85 road miles to the south, is the nearest urban center with a population of 75,000 or more (81,252 persons in 2020).

The regional landscape within fifty miles of Lake Township is dominated by agriculture, woodlands, wetlands and other open spaces; and scattered residential development with more concentrated settlement areas along the Saginaw Bay and Lake Huron shorelines and within the numerous small villages and cities that dot the landscape such as Caseville, Bad Axe, Port Austin, and Bay Port.

Access and Circulation

Regional Access

Principal regional access to Lake Township is via M-25, which travels around the entire “Thumb” of Michigan. The nearest interstate is I-75, which travels north-south through Michigan and within approximately 55 road miles of the township at the I-75/M-25 interchange. The nearest public regional airport is the Huron County Memorial Airport, approximately 20 miles southeast in Bad Axe.

Local Road Network

Lake Township’s local road network exhibits in instances the general one-mile square grid system that is so dominant in most Michigan townships. This grid system is not nearly as dominant in Lake Township due to the presence of the Lake Huron shoreline where residential development is denser and served by a far more developed road system, and the presence of extensive wetlands, the Rush Lake State Game Area, and the Sleeper State Park. All roads in the township are under the jurisdiction of the Huron County Road Commission (HCRC) except for M-25 and some private roads owned and maintained by the property owners they serve. Approximately half of the public road miles in the Township are of a

LAKE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

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gravel surface. Approximately two-thirds of the road miles outside of the M-25 developed corridor are of a gravel surface.

Public Act 51 Road Classifications: In compliance with the requirements of Public Act 51 of 1951, the HCRC classifies all roads under its jurisdiction as either “*primary*” or “*local*.” Primary roads are considered the most critical in providing regional circulation throughout the county. The classification of roads by the HCRC has important financial implications with regard to maintenance and improvements. Under Michigan law, townships have no responsibility for funding road improvements and maintenance. The HCRC is responsible for local road maintenance.

On the other hand, while the HCRC must maintain and improve primary roads at its own expense, state law limits the participation of road commissions and departments to no more than 50% of the cost for improvements to local roads. Requests by local townships for local road maintenance levels beyond those considered adequate or feasible by the HCRC frequently require local funding. In reality, there are few counties in Michigan where local townships are not actively involved in funding road improvements.

Roads in Lake Township that the HCRC classifies as “*primary*” under Act 51 are limited to:

- Kinde Rd.
- State Park Rd.
- Oak Beach Rd.

All other roads in the township under the jurisdiction of the HCRC are classified as “*local*.”

National Functional Classifications (NFC): Also of importance is the national functional classification of roads as established by the Federal Highway Administration (FHA). The FHA classifies road segments according to their function – the extent to which the road is intended to facilitate traffic movement over long distances versus over shorter distances and for access to abutting property. The relative hierarchy of the classification and its applicability to Lake Township follows:

Interstates, Freeways and Principal Arterials are thoroughfares intended to move large volumes of traffic over long distances, including facilitating circulation on a regional level and between cities and states. *No road segments in Lake Township fall under these classifications.*

Minor Arterials/Major Collectors serve to accommodate through traffic while also providing access to abutting properties and minor intersecting streets.

Minor arterials in the township are limited to: *M-25*

Major collectors in the township are limited to: *State Park Rd., Oak Beach Rd., and W. Kinde Rd.*

Minor Collectors serve to collect traffic from local streets and to provide a means of access to local destinations and minor arterial/major collector roads. *No road segments in Lake Township fall under this classification.*

Local Streets serve primarily to provide access to adjacent properties and minor collectors. *The public roads in Lake Township not otherwise identified above are classified as local streets – being the vast majority of road miles in the township.*

Federal aid for road projects is limited to roads classified as major collectors or higher. Roads classified as minor collectors have only limited eligibility. Roads classified as local are not eligible for federal funding.

Land Cover, Land Use and Development

The dominant land cover in Lake Township is of an “open space” character including farmland, woodlands, wetlands, meadows and similar environments. The most dominant active land use is farming. Together, agricultural operations and other open spaces account for approximately 62% of the land area of Lake Township. The more urbanized areas of the township, including those developed for commercial, industrial, and suburban residential uses, are along the M-25 corridor including a nearly continuous pattern of residences and residential neighborhoods. The principal exception to the residential character of the M-25 corridor is the presence of the Sleeper State Park in the township’s northwest quarter and straddles M-25.

Table A-1 provides a breakdown of general land use/land cover in Lake Township. Table A-1 is followed by a review of some of the more significant characteristics of land use and development in the township.

**Table A-1
Approximate General Land Use/Land Cover Allocation, 2019**

Land Use-Land Cover	Approximate Acreage (ac.)	Approximate Portion (%) of Township
Agriculture	7,630 ac.	57.6%
Open Space, comprised of water courses/bodies, woodlands, wetlands, and meadows, including outdoor conservation-based recreation areas such as Sleeper State Park and Rush Lake Wildlife Area.	4,558 ac.	34.4%
Residential	600 ac.	4.5%
Transportation, comprised of road/highway rights-of-way.	420 ac.	3.2%
Industrial, comprised of manufacturing and similar processes.	1 ac.	---
Commercial, comprised of retail, office and service-oriented uses.	1 ac.	---
Other, comprised of golf courses, cemeteries, substations, and municipal buildings.	45 ac.	0.3%

Table is based on aerial imagery, township records and “windshield” survey.
“—” denotes less than 0.1%

Agriculture

Farming operations occupy approximately 58% (approximately 7,630 acres) of the township. Farming occupies nearly all areas of the township not otherwise part of the M-25 residential corridor, Rush Lake State Game Area, Sleeper State Park, and wetland/woodland areas. As such, the southern half of the township is devoted nearly entirely to farming operations. Nearly all farmland is dedicated to crop production, most particularly the growing of wheat, corn, soybeans and sugar beets.

In an effort to better protect Michigan's farming interests, the state passed Public Act 116 of 1974 – the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act. The Act has since been amended and ultimately repealed, and made part of Public Act 451 of 1994, the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act. The program continues to be commonly referred to as the “PA 116 Program.” The program permits farmers to enroll their properties to gain property tax relief provided the farmland is maintained in an agricultural and/or other open space status. Minimum and maximum program enrollment periods are 10 and 90 years respectively, with renewal enrollment periods of a minimum of seven years. Except in certain instances, termination from the program requires the landowner to repay the tax credits received for the enrolled property during the previous seven years.

There were approximately 5,890 acres in Lake Township enrolled in the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program in 2022, comprising approximately 45% of the township's area. Except for about 11 enrolled parcels totaling about 600 acres, all enrolled parcels are located in the southern half of the township (Section 25 – 36) and account for approximately 69% of the acreage in the township's southern half. There were approximately 89 enrolled parcels township-wide in 2022, ranging in size from 5 acres to 208 acres and with an average parcel size of approximately 65 acres. Approximately 30 landowners are involved in the program. About 30% of the enrollments extend to year 2040, and about 60% of the enrollments extend to year 2060 or beyond.

Residential Development and Land Division

The 2020 Census recorded 1,502 dwelling units in Lake Township, a 6.3% increase over the 1,413 dwelling units recorded in 2010. Based on an average dedication of 0.4 acres for each residential lot for each home and maintained lawn area, the dwelling itself, and related site modifications such as driveways, decks and similar accessory features, residential development comprises approximately 4.5% (600 acres) of the township's total acreage.

According to the 2020 Census Bureau's American Community Survey, approximately 98.2% of the township's dwellings were single-family detached dwellings. Mobile homes accounted for 3.9% of all single-family dwellings.

According to the 2020 American Community Survey, 4.4% of the dwelling units were constructed prior to 1940, 63.5% were constructed between 1940 and 1979, and 32.1% were constructed since 1980. The township's housing stock is comparatively young. The 4.4% of the township's housing stock constructed prior to 1940 is far less than that of the county (18.8%) and state (14.6%). The township's 2020 median value of the owner-occupied housing stock was \$135,200, significantly higher than the county (\$109,000) and significantly lower than the state (\$162,200). See Table A-2.

TABLE A-2
Selected Housing Characteristics Comparison

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey

DWELLINGS	LAKE TOWNSHIP	HURON COUNTY	STATE OF MICHIGAN
Year Built (%)			
Since 1980	32.1%	31.9%	36.0%
1940 to 1979	63.5%	49.3%	49.4%
Before 1940	4.4%	18.8%	14.6%
Median Value, Owner Occupied	\$135,200	\$109,000	\$162,200
Median Monthly Owner Cost, With Mortgage*	\$987	\$973	\$1,312
Median Monthly Owner Cost, Without Mortgage*	\$338	\$420	\$495

*Owner costs include mortgages, loans, and similar property debt, utilities, and fuel.

Residential development in Lake Township exhibits two principal development patterns. The first and original form is the farm homestead and other large land tracts. With the organization of Lake Township in 1867 and into the 1940s, nearly all of the township’s acreage was contained within parcels of 30 to 120 acres or more. The parcels were commonly occupied by farming families and those in the timber industry.

By the 1950s, new dimensions in the township’s land division pattern had begun to emerge. Most particularly, residences on small lots began to appear along M-25 and the Lake Huron shoreline including unified neighborhood subdivisions with their own internal street systems. Neighborhood subdivisions represent multiple land divisions established as a unified development project pursuant to the requirements of the Land Division Act (formerly Subdivision Control Act) or the alternative provisions of the Condominium Act.

Lake Township has not seen the level of “strip residential development” in its agricultural areas as has occurred throughout so much of the state. This strip form of development is commonly characterized by parcels of two to ten acres stripped along section-line roads. The limited evidence of this development pattern in Lake Township is a reflection of the local farming industry’s commitment to maintaining farm operations rather than the conversion of acreage to residences. Strip residential development has been the source of increasing concern in the transportation and land use planning arena due to its negative impacts upon traffic safety, congestion, farmland preservation, and rural character preservation.

Commercial Development

The principal “*brick and mortar*” commercial sites in Lake Township are:

- convenience store at the M-25/State Park Road intersection
- convenience store on M-25 east of Oak Beach Road
- auto repair service on Oak Beach Road south of Sand Road
- mini-storage facility on State Park Road approximately 300’ south of M-25

There are also a number of other commercial enterprises scattered throughout the township in association with agricultural operations and occupations conducted from residences, and a golf course along Griggs Road.

Industry

Industry in Lake Township is limited to a sheet metal fabricator located on the east side of State Park Road, just north of the above referenced mini-storage facility.

Outdoor Recreation and Conservation

Aside from the Caseville Golf Course (Griggs Road) referenced above, there are two principal outdoor recreation and/or conservation facilities in the township.

- The Albert E. Sleeper State Park covers approximately 723 acres in the northwest quarter of the township. The facility straddles M-25, with its approximately 275 campsites located on the south side with access to the Lake Huron and beach facilities on the north side.
- The Rush Lake State Game Area covers approximately 2,166 acres in the north-central region of the township, directly east of Sleeper State Park. Approximately half of the facility is comprised of wetlands, with the open water portion of Rush Lake being approximately 100 acres in area.

With the presence of the Albert E. Sleeper State Park and the Rush Lake State Game Area, the public, through the State of Michigan, owns approximately 22% of Lake Township's area.

Community Facilities & Services

Government Administration

A five-member Township Board governs Lake Township. Township offices are located on the north side of W. Kinde Road just east of N. Elkton Road. The township hall includes office space, a restroom, and a meeting room. The hall covers approximately 1,500 sq. ft. on an approximately 1/2-acre parcel. The Lake Township Board currently funds nearly all services and the maintenance of all township facilities through local tax revenues.

Cemeteries

Lake Township operates no cemeteries at this time.

Education

Lake Township is served by three public school districts:

- Elkton-Pigeon-Bay Port Laker Schools serves more than three-quarters of the entire township area including all of the central two-thirds of the community.
- North Huron Schools serves about one-fourth of the east quarter of the township.
- Caseville Public Schools serves about one-fifth of the west quarter of the township.

There are no public school facilities located in Lake Township. The nearest public school facilities are in Caseville.

Public Sewer and Water

There is no public sewer or water service in Lake Township. The City of Caseville is the nearest municipality that provides such services.

Emergency Services

Lake Township receives fire protection services from CAFPA – the Caseville Area Fire Protection Association. The fire station is on Main St. in Caseville. Fire emergency services are paid by way of a township-levied tax.

Police protection services are provided by the Huron County Sheriff's Department, and the State Police during times of need and most particularly along the M-25 corridor. Basic service levels are funded through county and state tax revenues. The township contracts for enhanced levels of service from the Sheriff's Department on an as-needed basis, which is funded through the township's general fund.

Ambulance service is provided to township residents by the Village of Elkton, located approximately 13 road miles south. Lake Township pays an annual fee for ambulance service.

Recreation

Lake Township does not operate any recreation facilities but residents do have access to two significant outdoor recreation-based facilities – the Albert E. Sleeper State Park and the Rush Lake State Game Area. Township residents also have available to them the recreational facilities and services of other public entities including the school facilities and programs of the various school districts that serve the township, the parks and recreation programs of nearby municipalities including Caseville and the six parks/campground facilities operated by Huron County Parks.

In addition to the above publicly owned recreation facilities, area residents have access to the Caseville Golf Course on Griggs Road, in the township.