

Chapter One OVERVIEW

Introduction

This Chapter provides an overview of the Lake Township Master Plan and the Master Plan's role, importance, preparation process, and principal policies. Understanding the fundamentals of the Master Plan (also called the "Plan") will enable Township residents and officials to appreciate the role it plays in ensuring the future welfare of the community, its residents, its visitors and its resources. Embracing this Plan as a vital tool in preserving and enhancing the public health, safety and welfare of the township is essential if this Plan is to be effective.

What is the Master Plan?

Purpose / Enabling Authority

Just as individuals and families plan for their future well-being, so must municipalities. This Master Plan is a "plan" – it is a specific tangible document consisting of text, maps, and figures that establishes a plan for how growth and associated land development should be guided to enhance the long-term welfare of Lake Township.

The following key words and phrases can generally describe the Master Plan:

FUTURE ORIENTED: The plan concerns itself with long-range planning to guide and manage future growth and development, and the manner in which the Township should evolve over the next ten to twenty years in response to growth, development and preservation interests.

GENERAL: The plan establishes broad principles and policies to address future land use and public services.

COMPREHENSIVE: The Plan is comprehensive in that it addresses all principal types of land use and the practical geographic boundaries of each.

DYNAMIC: The Plan is intended to be continually evolving in light of the aspirations of local residents and property owners, changing conditions in the township, and new strategies to manage growth.

This Master Plan was prepared by the Lake Township Planning Commission under the authority of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (P.A 33 of 2008, as amended).

Purpose of the Master Plan

Section 7(2) of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MCL 125.3807) provides:

The general purpose of a master plan is to guide and accomplish, in the planning jurisdiction and its environs, development that satisfies all of the following criteria:

(a) Is coordinated, adjusted, harmonious, efficient, and economical.

(b) Considers the character of the planning jurisdiction and its suitability for particular uses, judged in terms of such factors as trends in land and population development.

(c) Will, in accordance with present and future needs, best promote public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare.

(d) Includes, among other things, promotion of or adequate provision for 1 or more of the following:

(i) A system of transportation to lessen congestion on streets.

(ii) Safety from fire and other dangers.

(iii) Light and air.

(iv) Healthful and convenient distribution of population.

(v) Good civic design and arrangement and wise and efficient expenditure of public funds.

(vi) Public utilities such as sewage disposal and water supply and other public improvements.

(vii) Recreation.

(viii) The use of resources in accordance with their character and adaptability.

This Master Plan is not a law, ordinance or regulatory document, but a "policy plan" to be implemented through, in part, zoning and other regulatory and non-regulatory tools. For example, although the Master Plan is not a zoning ordinance, the Master Plan's recommendations and policies serve as a basis for updating the current Lake Township Zoning Ordinance, as may be applicable.

topography, and water resources (Appendix B); demographic features such as population growth, employment, and education (Appendix C); and maps illustrating Township features (Appendix D).

Importance and Application of the Master Plan

The importance and application of the Lake Township Master Plan are demonstrated in:

- the long-term interests of the Township
- the day-to-day administration of the Township's planning and zoning program

Long Term Interests

There are a number of interests shared by Lake Township residents, property owners and officials today that can be expected to continue for years to come and be similarly shared by future residents and new officials. Some of these important interests include:

- protecting the Township's rural character
- protecting the character of the M-25 corridor
- protecting the Township's natural resources including its Lake Huron shoreline and coastal environments, water resources, productive farmland, forests, wetlands, and wildlife
- minimizing tax burdens
- ensuring appropriate land use and adequate services to protect the public health, safety, and welfare of residents and visitors
- ensuring compatibility with the use and development of neighboring properties
- protecting the quality of life of residents

This Plan supports these long-term interests through a future-oriented strategy that seeks to further these interests. Chapter Two establishes goals and objectives, and Chapters Three and Four establish future land use and public services strategies, to secure these and other long-term interests.

**Zoning Ordinance
Must be Based on a Master Plan**

The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, which provides Michigan municipalities with the statutory authority to adopt zoning regulations, requires that a municipality's land development regulations *"...shall be based upon a plan designed to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare, to encourage the use of lands in accordance with their character and adaptability, to limit the improper use of land, to conserve natural resources and energy..."*

The Lake Township Master Plan addresses this statutory requirement and ensures a strong legal foundation for the Township's zoning regulations.

Elements of the Master Plan

This Master Plan consists of the following key components:

Chapter One (Introduction) presents an overview of the purpose and role of the Plan, the process followed in its preparation, key planning policies, and a summary of Township conditions.

Chapter Two (Planning Issues, Goals and Objectives) presents important planning issues facing Lake Township today, and associated goals and objectives that address these issues.

Chapter Three (Future Land Use Strategy) presents land use policies including the planned geographic boundaries for principal land uses.

Chapter Four (Coordinated Public Services) presents policies addressing the coordination of public services with the planned future land use pattern and the Township's overall welfare.

Chapter Five (Implementation) presents key measures to effectuate the policies of the Plan.

The Appendices present an overview of Lake Township conditions and trends, addressing cultural features such as roads, land use, and public services (Appendix A); natural features such as soils,

Balancing Development with Services and Natural Resources

Development without adequate public services to meet the demands of the development, as well as development which places excessive demands on the Township's natural resources, can lead the Township into a future of social and environmental risks that may threaten the public's health, safety, and welfare.

Day-To-Day Administration

In addition to furthering the long-term interests of the Township, the Master Plan also plays an important role in the day-to-day planning and zoning efforts of the Township:

- Advisory Policies: The Plan is an official advisory policy statement that should be readily shared with existing and prospective residents, landowners and developers. The Plan informs all of the long-term intentions of the township regarding land use and encourages development proposals more closely integrated with the official policies of the Plan.
- Regulatory Programs: The Plan establishes a practical basis for the Township to revise, update, or otherwise prepare regulatory programs intended to ensure that the policies of the Plan are implemented including zoning and land division regulations.
- Review of Land Development Proposals: Chapter Two includes a list of Township goals and objectives that should be reviewed when considering proposed rezoning requests, site plans, and related land use proposals, serving as criteria upon which the proposal can be evaluated. Chapter Three provides policies regarding the planned future land use pattern in the Township – valuable reference points upon which land use proposals should be evaluated.
- Public Services Improvements: The identification of a planned future land use pattern enables the Township to prioritize areas in need of current or future public services improvements and plan accordingly. Chapters Four and Five provide important guidance in this area.
- Intergovernmental Coordination: This Plan provides the basis for township officials to communicate effectively with neighboring communities regarding both the impact of their planning and zoning actions and opportunities for mutual gain through coordinated land use and public services efforts.
- Factual Reference: This Plan includes a factual overview of trends and conditions in the Township. This factual profile can educate local officials and residents and aid in the review of development proposals, encourage constructive discussion of planning issues and policies, and serve as a base line for future studies.

How The Plan Was Prepared

Lake Township adopted a master plan in 1999. In an effort to maintain a current planning program and in association with efforts to develop a new Zoning Ordinance, the Township undertook the development of a new Master Plan in the spring of 2019.

With the assistance of a professional planning consultant, an initial draft of a new Master Plan was prepared. The initial draft was based on several key elements including the general theme of the 1999 Plan and the extended deliberations on planning issues that surfaced during the preparation of the new Zoning Ordinance – an endeavor that overlapped in timing with the preparation of the new Master Plan.

During the preparation of the initial draft Plan, several alternative future land use patterns and strategies were explored. The Planning Commission studied these alternatives and developed a concept upon which to further refine the policies of the new Plan.

The Planning Commission assembled a complete initial draft of the new Plan and refined the draft to arrive at a document suitable for presentation to the community. The Planning Commission held a public hearing on the draft Plan and subsequently finalized the Plan for adoption.

Throughout the development of the Plan, the Township followed the procedural requirements of the Planning Enabling Act including notification of neighboring communities of its intent to prepare a plan and the township's subsequent solicitation for comment on the draft plan.

Important Themes of the Master Plan

Preservation of natural features.

Preservation of farmland and the local farming industry.

Protect and enhance the M-25 corridor character.

Manage growth and development.

Limit commercial and industrial expansion.

Encourage the preservation of rural character.

Overview of Planning Policies

This Plan presents a coordinated strategy that addresses growth, development and preservation. The Plan supports the continuation of Lake Township as a lakefront residential and agricultural community.

The M-25 corridor is to continue to be predominantly residential in character, with suburban and semi-urban densities similar to those that dominate the corridor today. Proposed development densities and neighborhood layouts are to take into consideration measures for potable water and sewage disposal, on-site environmental conditions, surrounding land use conditions, and similar factors. Development densities of approximately six dwellings or more per acre, including manufactured housing communities, are to be guided to the Oak Beach Road corridor in the north half of the Township.

The southern portion of the Township is to continue to be rural in character, dominated by farming, woodlands, wetlands and other open spaces; and low density residential development with densities generally not exceeding one dwelling per two acres.

Commercial and industrial uses are to be limited and located in the general areas where they exist today – primarily along the east side of State Park Road just south of M-25, along the west side of Oak Beach Road in the general area of Sand Road, and several small commercial sites on M-25 near State Park Road and Oak Beach Road.

Public services improvements are to be focused in those areas of the community where heightened growth and development are anticipated, as described above.

Lake Township Overview

The following is a brief overview of Lake Township. A more detailed review of Township trends and conditions can be found in Appendix A, B, C, and D.

Lake Township is a Great Lakes community of about 657 persons (2020 U.S. Census) on the northwest edge 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). There are no cities or villages immediately adjacent to Lake Township, with the City of Caseville being just one mile west of the Township. Caseville, with a population of about 650, is the largest urban center in the regional area though there are multiple small urban centers within 20 miles including Port Austin, Kinde, Elkton, Bad Axe, Pigeon, and Bay Port. The regional landscape within

fifty miles of Lake Township is dominated by agriculture, woodlands, wetlands and other open spaces, and scattered residential development, along with periodic small villages and larger cities.

Principal regional access to Lake Township is via M-25, which travels around the entire “Thumb” of Michigan. The nearest interstate is I-75, traveling north-south through Michigan and within approximately 55 road miles of the Township at the I-75/M-25 interchange near Bay City.

The traditional one-mile local road grid so dominant throughout Michigan is noticeably less present 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, the presence of extensive wetlands, the Rush Lake State Game Area, and the Albert E. Sleeper State Park. All roads in the Township are under the jurisdiction of the Huron County Road Commission except for M-25 and various private roads owned and maintained by the property owners they serve. Approximately one-half of the road miles in the Township are of a gravel surface.

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 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 which straddles M-25. Commercial and industrial sites are generally limited to two convenience stores, a mini-storage facility, an auto repair service, and a sheet metal fabricator, with each less than an acre in area.

The 2020 Census recorded 1,502 dwelling units in the Township, a 6.3% increase over the 1,413 dwellings in 2010. Based on an average dedication of 0.4 acres per 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. Approximately 98.2% of the Township’s dwellings are single-family dwellings. The vast majority of all dwellings in the Township are along the Lake Huron shoreline or otherwise within one-quarter mile of M-25.

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There are two major facilities in Lake Township devoted to outdoor recreation and/ conservation – the Albert E. Sleeper State Park and the Rush Lake State Game Area. There are also several beachfront parks in the Township including Philp County Park, Oak Beach County Park, and a Michigan Department of Transportation roadside park (Thompson Park).

The topography of Lake Township can be described as generally level to nearly level. Drainage is facilitated by several systems – the very permeable sandy soils that dominate its northern half, the Township's substantial wetlands, and the presence of the Pigeon River (southwest corner) and the Pinnebog River (east periphery).

Approximately one-quarter of the Township is comprised of wetlands and they are principally contained within the Sleeper State Park and the Rush Lake State Game Area. Nearly all soils in the Township are classified as loam, sand or muck, and nearly 80% are hydric in nature.

A five-member Township Board governs Lake Township. Township offices are located in the Township Hall at the northeast corner of the W. Kinde and N. Elkton Roads intersection. There is no public sewer or water service in the Township. Lake Township receives fire protection services from CAFPA – the Caseville Area Fire Protection Association. The fire station is on Main St. in Caseville. 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. Ambulance service is provided to Township residents by the Village of Elkton, located approximately 13 road miles south. The Lake Township Board currently funds nearly all services and the maintenance of all Township facilities through local tax revenues.

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