



**4-13-17 DRAFT**

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**Watertown Township  
2017 Master Plan  
& Recreation Plan**

**WATERTOWN TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN and RECREATION PLAN**  
**2017 – 2027**

**Watertown Township Planning Commission**

Al Stoutenburg, Chair  
Gary Fetting, Vice Chair  
Sheila Coats, Secretary  
Amanda Aldrich  
William Dixon  
Dale Schoen  
Mark Batkie

**Watertown Township Board**

Rich Honaman, Supervisor  
Tammy Ross, Clerk  
Sheila Coats, Treasurer  
Scott Franzel, Trustee  
Becky Cambridge, Trustee

A public hearing for this Master Plan and Recreation Plan was held on \_\_\_\_\_, 2017.

The Watertown Township Master Plan and Recreation Plan was adopted by resolution on \_\_\_\_\_  
2017 by the Watertown Township Planning Commission by authority of the Michigan Planning Enabling  
Act, Public Act 33 of 2008. The Township Board adopted the Master Plan and Recreation Plan on  
\_\_\_\_\_.

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Chair  
Watertown Township Planning Commission

Watertown Township  
2630 S. Sandusky Road  
Sandusky, MI 48471  
[www.watertowntownship.net](http://www.watertowntownship.net)

With assistance from Spicer Group, Inc., Planning and Zoning Consultant  
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*Cover image courtesy of Google Earth*



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*300 West Marlette Road*



*Elk Creek, looking north from Marlette Road*

# About the Planning Process

## Introduction

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This document is the outcome of a year-long effort by the Watertown Township Planning Commission to draft a new Master Plan and to steer the course for the future. This document reflects the community's concern for the future development of Watertown Township and conveys a strong commitment to retain and strengthen the local quality of life. The preferred future, or vision, for Watertown Township is outlined within this Master Plan. Specifically, the vision is expressed in the way this Master Plan:

- Documents citizen input on community needs and services,
- Articulates goals and related actions to be accomplished by local leaders,
- Provides an overall view of future physical development of Watertown Township, and
- Presents a map that shows locations of how land is proposed to be used in the future.

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA), Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended, is the legal basis for Townships in the State of Michigan to develop a Master Plan. The main purpose of a Master Plan is to guide and enable a community to establish a future direction for its development. The Planning Act specifically gives communities the authority to prepare and officially adopt a Master Plan, which serves as the primary policy guide for local officials when considering matters related to land development. As a policy guide, the Master Plan is specific to Watertown Township and considers market trends,

community character, environmental conditions, the availability or capacity of public infrastructure and services, and the relationship to existing and planned land uses. As such, the Master Plan aims to:

- Guide the use of limited resources in an efficient manner,
- Promote public health, safety, and general welfare,
- Preserve the quality of the environment in the Township, and
- Guide future zoning decisions.

Because of constant change in our social and economic structure and activities, this Master Plan must be maintained through periodic review so that it reflects contemporary trends while maintaining long-range goals. The MPEA requires the Master Plan be reviewed by the Township at least once every five years.

## Recreation Plan Incorporated into the Master Plan

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This document also serves as a Recreation Plan for Watertown Township. Broadly speaking, Watertown Township officials intend to use the recreation portions of this plan to guide their work on future recreational and parks projects within the area. It is also a strategic document that articulates specific goals to various agencies and organizations that fund local recreational and parks improvement projects. In accordance with the State of Michigan recommended five-year cycle for recreation planning, this updated plan covers the five-year period 2017-2021. The recreation portions of this plan have been developed in accordance with the guidelines for Community Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plans published by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

## Process and Statutory Requirements

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Watertown Township began the process to update its Master Plan in April of 2016. It contracted with Spicer Group of Saginaw to assist the Planning Commission in the preparation of this Master Plan. The Planning Commission met with the Spicer Group planning consultants three times between April 2016 and November of 2016 to work on the plan. As required by the MPEA, Watertown Township followed the required procedures for notifying neighboring communities and registered entities so that each interested party was made aware of the planning effort and was provided an opportunity to comment on the Master Plan.

The planning process began with a review and analysis of existing conditions and land uses in Watertown Township. Then, community input was sought through an online community input survey. Feedback from the community along with the pertinent background data was used as the basis for the goals, action program, and future land use outlined within this Master Plan.

A draft of this document was prepared in \_\_\_\_ of 201\_\_ and delivered to the Planning Commission and Township Board for review. On \_\_\_\_\_, 201\_\_, the Township Board approved the distribution of the proposed plan. The plan was then distributed to neighboring communities, registered entities, and to Sanilac County for review. Next, the Township held a public hearing on \_\_\_\_\_, 201\_\_ per requirements of the Michigan Planning Act and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. This provided an additional opportunity for public information and input. After the public hearing, the Planning Commission adopted the Master Plan and Recreation Plan on \_\_\_\_\_. The Township Board approved the Master Plan and Recreation Plan on \_\_\_\_\_. The adoption documents are contained in the appendix.

## Relationship of a Master Plan to a Zoning Ordinance

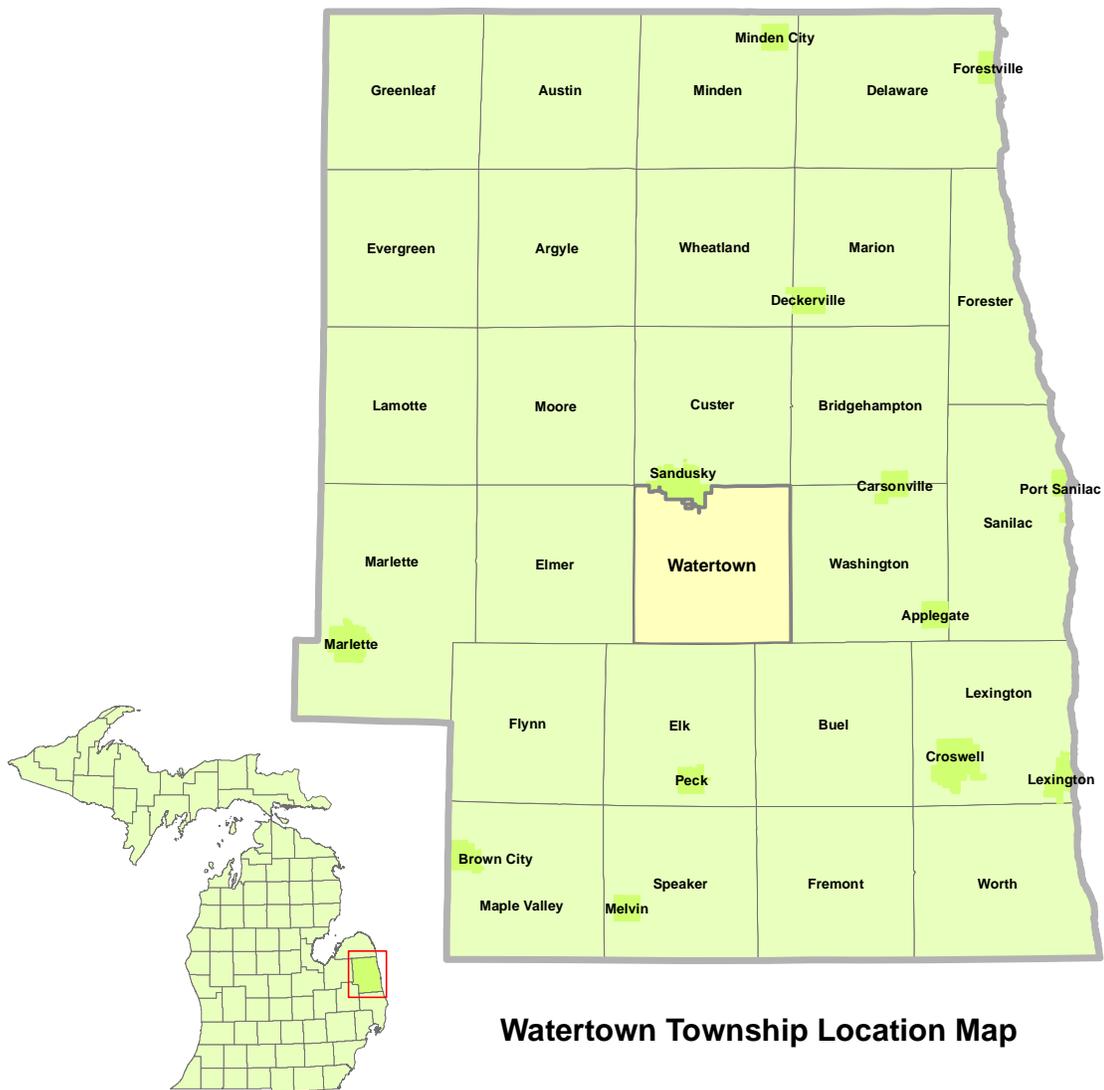
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A Master Plan is a set of policies, not a law. The Master Plan represents a community's future vision, while the zoning ordinance contains the rules that govern the path to that vision. The long-range goals of the Master Plan are the basis for a zoning ordinance and zoning decisions. Zoning is regulation of the use of land. A zoning ordinance controls how land is used today. It is the law. State law requires that a zoning ordinance be based on an adopted Master Plan. Zoning decisions that are consistent with the Master Plan are more likely presumed to be valid if ever challenged in the courts.

# About Watertown Township

## Location

Watertown Township is located in the center of Sanilac County in the thumb of Michigan. The City of Sandusky and Custer Township are to the north, Elmer Township to the west, Washington Township to the east and Elk and Buel Townships to the south.



**Watertown Township Location Map**

*Map 1 – Watertown Township is 35 square miles in area and is located in eastern Sanilac County in Michigan’s Thumb.*

## Early History

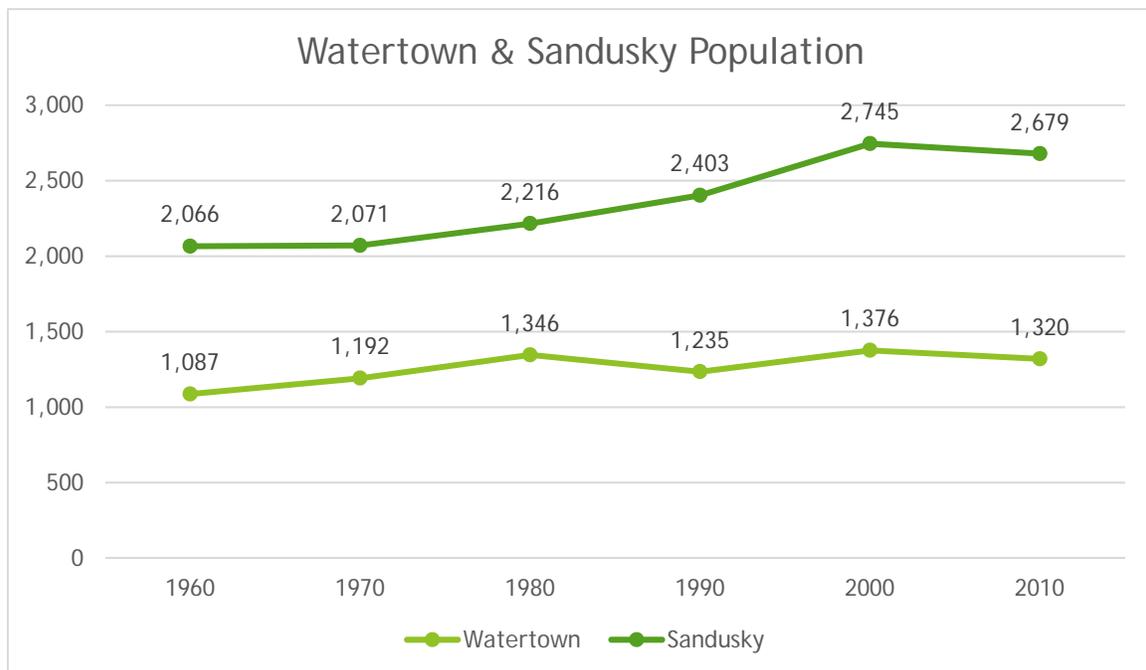
The first white settler in the Watertown Township area was Edward Cash, who settled in the area in 1851. The first meeting to organize Watertown Township was held in his home in 1868 where James McClure was elected the first Supervisor. Watertown is an unincorporated community in the southern part of the Township on M-19. The first school was built here in 1867. John Gimmel built a sawmill in 1882 and William Tomelson opened the first store in 1883. A post office operated from January 1895 until February 1905.

## Demographic Analysis

This section includes an analysis of demographic data taken from the most recent U.S. Census as well as other sources. Census data provides a current profile of the Township and its existing trends, both of which can affect future land use.

### Population

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the population of Watertown Township is 1,320. This is a decrease of slightly more than 4% since 2000, when the population was 1,376. The Township population has remained relatively stable since 1980. The City of Sandusky's population also declined between 2000 and 2010. However, Sandusky's population showed stronger growth between 1980 and 2000. See Figure 1 for a comparison of the two communities.



**Figure 1** – Watertown Township's population has remained relatively stable since 1980. Data: U.S. Census

## An Aging Population

The median age of the population in Watertown Township in 2010 was 42.4 years. In 2000 it was 37. The 2010 median is slightly younger than Sanilac County's median age of 42.8 but it is considerably older than the median age of Michigan which is 38.9 years. The median age of the United States is 37.4 years.

The aging demographic is mostly a result of the large baby boom generation born between 1946 and 1964. For planning and land use purposes, an aging population has unique needs in terms of housing, access to medical care, recreational facilities, etc.

## Housing and Households

According to the 2010 Census, there are 561 housing units in Watertown Township. This is approximately 40 more units than in 2000, when there were 523 housing units.

The average household size in Watertown Township in 2010 is 2.53 persons. In 2000, it was 2.77. In 2000, there were 185 households with children under 18 years. In 2010, that had dropped to 161 households. These statistics directly relate to the higher median age.

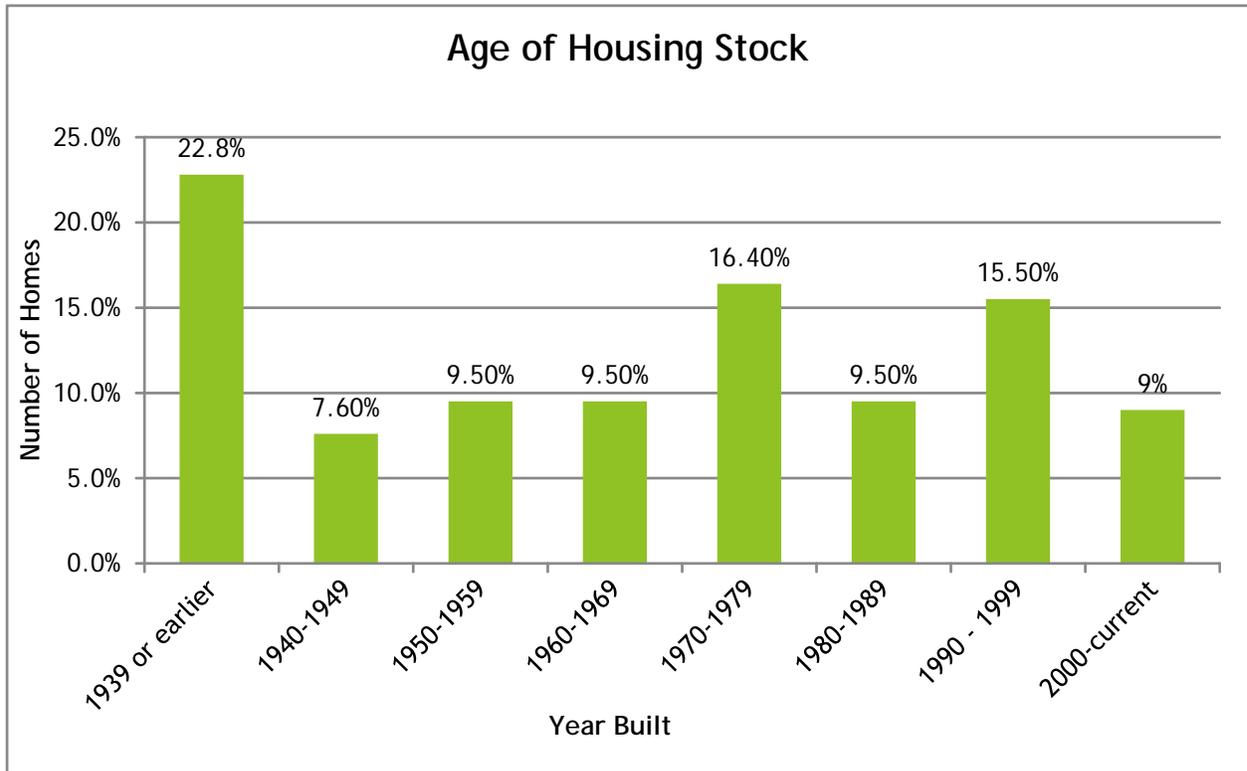
The median housing value in Watertown Township is \$114,000. This is 20% more than the median in Sanilac County which is \$94,900. It is approximately 6% less than the median housing value in Michigan which is \$121,700. The median is that number which separates the higher half of the data from the lower half. Thus, half the housing units in Watertown Township are worth more than \$114,000 and half are worth less than \$114,000.

	Watertown Township	Sanilac County	Michigan
Average Household Size	2.53	2.48	2.49
Median Housing Value	\$114,000	\$94,900	\$121,700
% of Housing Units without a Mortgage	42.4%	47.9%	35.2%
% Owner Occupied Homes	85%	80.2%	71.2%

**Figure 2** – *Watertown Township housing statistics as compare to Sanilac County and Michigan.* Data: 2010 U.S. Census, 2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## Housing Statistics

The condition of housing in a community is, in part, related to its age. Traditionally, the need for major repairs or rehabilitation becomes evident when housing stocks reach an age of 40 or more years. Approximately 50% of the housing in Watertown Township was built prior to 1970. The Township may need to strengthen its plan for monitoring housing for disrepair and blight. See Figure 3.



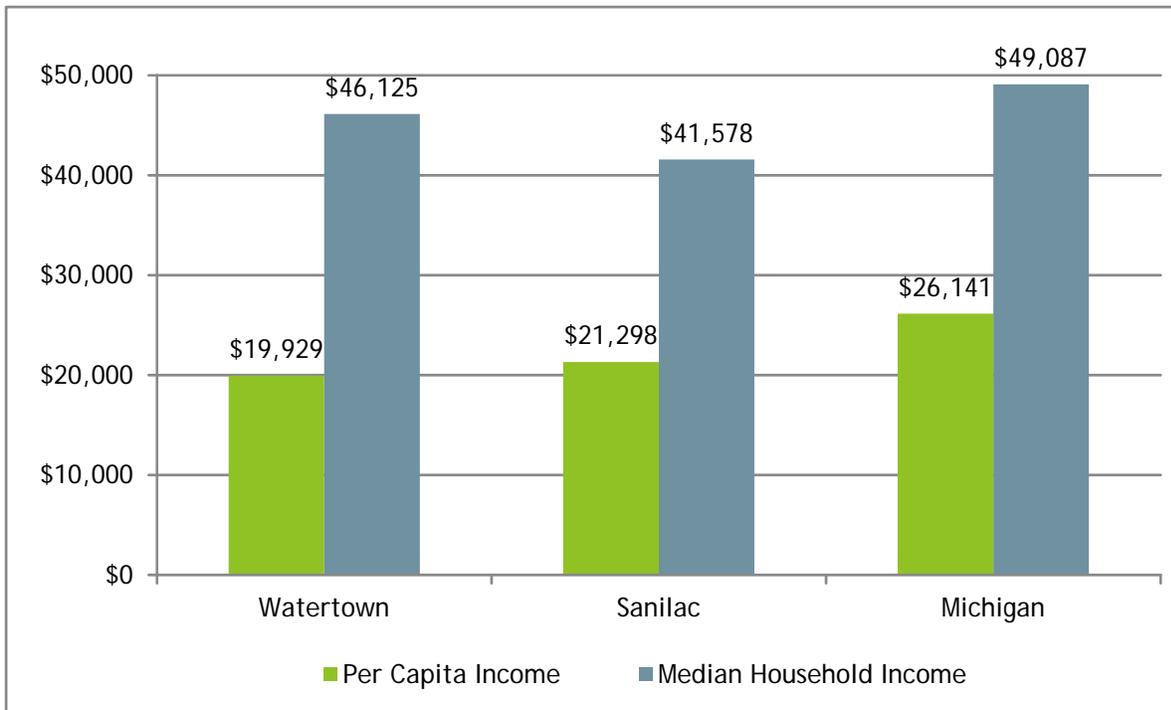
*Figure 3 – Approximately 50% of the homes in Watertown Township were built prior to 1970. Data: U.S. Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*

## Income and Employment

Median household income in Watertown Township is \$46,125 according to the 2014 American Community Survey. Median income is the amount which divides the income distribution into two equal groups, half having income above that amount, and half having income below that amount. This figure compares to \$41,578 for Iosco County and \$49,087 for Michigan.

Per capita income in Watertown Township is \$19,929. This compares to \$21,298 in Sanilac County and \$26,141 in Michigan. Per capita income is income per person in a population. Per capita income is often used to measure the standard of living in a particular geography. See Figure 5 for these income comparisons.

The relatively older population of Watertown Township and Sanilac County is also reflected in the statistics for percentage of the population with Social Security income. Approximately 39% of the residents of Watertown Township have Social Security income. Forty percent of the residents of Sanilac County have Social Security income and only 33% of Michigan residents have Social Security income.



**Figure 4** – Income data for Watertown Township, Sanilac County, and Michigan. Source: U.S. Census 2014 American Community Survey

## Education

The percentage of the population of Watertown Township that is a high school graduate or higher is 92%. This is higher than both Sanilac County at 88% and that of Michigan at 89.3%. The percentage of the population in Watertown with a bachelor’s degree or higher is 12.8%. This is slightly greater than Sanilac County at 11.6% but significantly less than the State of Michigan at 26.4%. See Figure 5.

	Watertown Township	Sanilac County	Michigan
High School Graduate	92%	88%	89.3%
Bachelor’s Degree or Higher	12.8%	11.6%	26.4%

**Figure 5** – Education Statistics for Watertown Township, Sanilac County, and Michigan. Source: U.S. Census 2014 American Community Survey

## Natural Features and Environment

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### Topography & Soils

Watertown Township is very flat, varying in elevation less than 50 feet across the Township. The average elevation is approximately 760 feet above sea level. There are no steep slopes in the Township that would be a hindrance to development. The vast majority of the Township reflects grades of 1% or less. Those select areas with grades in excess of 1% are generally restricted to the banks of drainage courses. The Township generally falls in elevation as one travels in an easterly and southerly direction. The lowest elevation in the Township is approximately 740 feet and is found along the Elk Creek and Rickett Drain in Section 36. The highest elevation, approximately 794 feet, is located at the Townline and Miller Roads intersection area in the northwest corner of the Township.

Most of the soils in Watertown Township are mixtures of clays and loams with some sand. The clay and loam mixes are naturally poorly drained. However, with field tile and Watertown Township's extensive network of open drains, the soil has become productive farmland. With proper drainage, these soils could support most types of development.

A unique feature of the soils in Watertown Township is the Spalding peat bog located in Sections 2, 3, 10, 11, 14 and 15, commonly known as the Sandusky Bog. Spalding peat is a strongly acid organic soil which is brown and disintegrated in its topmost layer but become yellow in color, coarse, spongy, fibrous or wood, and shows little decomposition at a depth of less than 12 inches. The peat has been harvested for commercial gardening purposes in Watertown Township. The land is currently owned by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

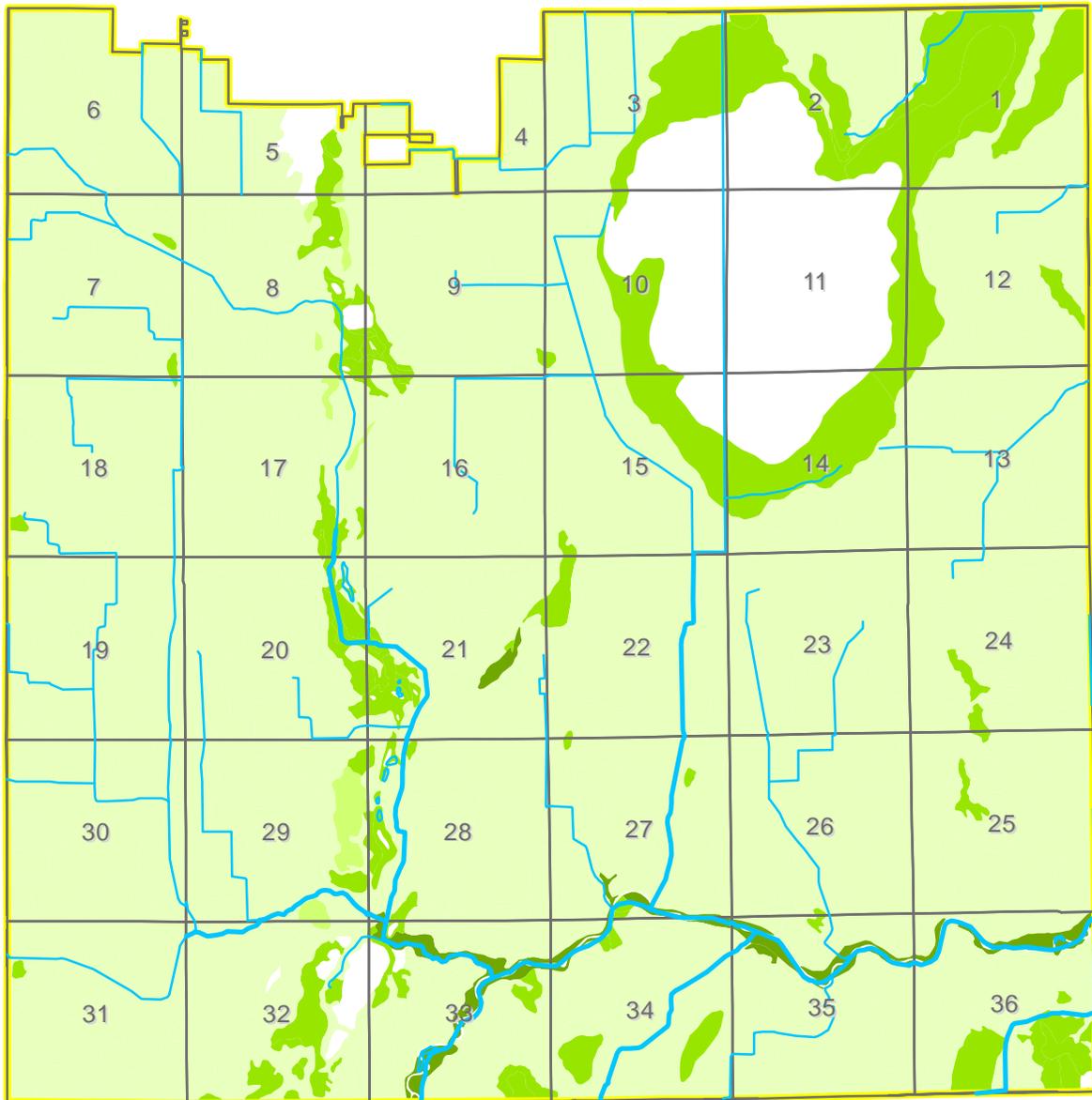
### Prime Farmland

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, there are very few acres of naturally occurring prime farmlands in Watertown Township. However, the vast majority of the Township's soils are considered to be prime farmland if drained. Prime farmland is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics and is available for producing food, feed, forage, fiber and oilseed crops. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to economically produce sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods.

Prime farmlands are not excessively erodible or saturated with water for a long period of time, and they either do not flood frequently or are protected from flooding. Other small portions of the Township are considered to be "farmland of local importance" which is a determination made by the local soil conservation district. See Map 2.

### Climate

Sanilac County's climate is considered a Cold Middle Latitude climate where the coldest monthly mean temperature goes below 27°F and a long season of cold weather and a significant winter snow cover develops. In this climate the westerlies dominate all year. As such, weather changes are frequent. Average rainfall is approximately 28-32 inches per year and average snowfall is approximately 40-45 inches per year. Summer months have average high temperatures around 80 degrees with cool evenings in the 50's. Winter months see average highs in the 20's and 30's. with lows in the teens and 20s.



Map 2

**Watertown Township Prime Farmland**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
|  Prime farmland if drained    |  Prime farmland if drained and either protected from flooding or not frequently flooded during the growing season |
|  All areas are prime farmland |  Not prime farmland   |
|  Farmland of local importance |  |

Source: USDA Soil Survey Geographic Database

### *Wetlands, Waterways & Drainage*

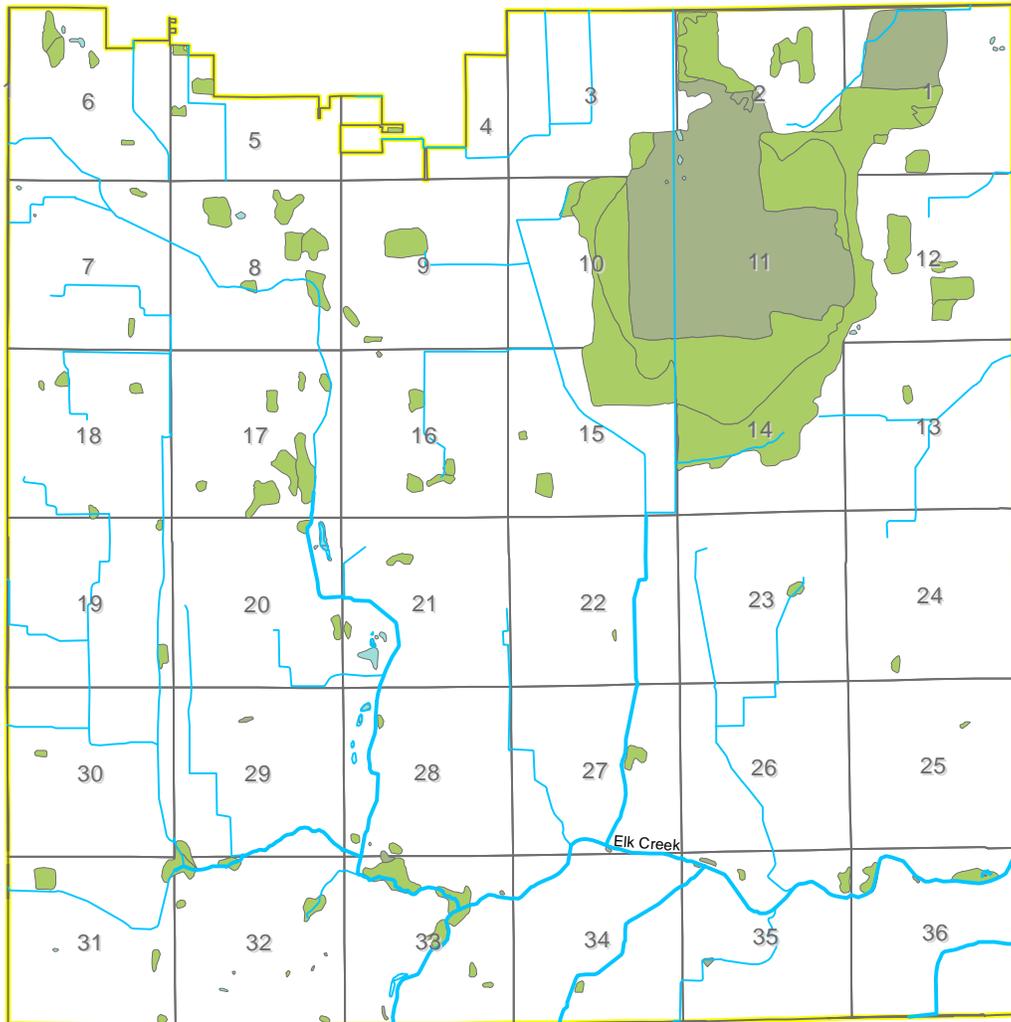
According to the National Wetland Inventory, Watertown Township contains several small tracts of wetlands in addition to the large peat bog. Wetlands serve an important purpose in an ecosystem by providing wildlife habitat, erosion control, floodwater storage, ground water recharger, and water purification. They are also used for recreation purposes such as hiking, bird watching, photography, and hunting. Wetlands that are five acres in size or larger and wetlands that are contiguous to a water body are protected in Michigan by the Goemaere-Anderson Wetland Protection Act.

Drainage in the Township is facilitated through an extensive network of streams and creeks. Fed by many smaller drains, each of the Eggert, Beals and Frizzle, and Smalldon Drains run in a general north south direction in the western and central region of the Township and carry runoff southward where it is subsequently picked up by the Elk Creek near the Township's southern border. These four principal drains, and the secondary drains that support them collect the vast majority of runoff in the Township. Elk Creek flows northeasterly through Washington Township where it empties into the Black River.

Runoff from the balance of the Township, comprised largely of the northern and northeastern periphery of the Township, is collected by drains flowing northeasterly into Washington and Custer Townships where they subsequently empty into the Black River as well. The Black River flows in a southerly direction to Port Huron where it drains into Lake Huron.

Lands abutting or in close proximity to drainage courses, including streams, ponds, and lakes, may be subject to flood conditions where the drainage courses do not have the capacity to accommodate the rate of runoff from a single rainfall or numerous rainfalls over a relatively short period of time. Historically, no flooding of any large scale significance has occurred in Watertown Township. This is due in large part to the comparatively limited development within the Township and the existence of a township-wide network of drainage courses and wetlands to carry and store runoff.

Wetlands and waterways can be viewed in Map 3.



Map 3

**Watertown Township  
Wetlands & Waterways**

- Freshwater Emergent Wetland
- Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland

Source: National Wetlands Inventory - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2010.

## Public Infrastructure and Services

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### *General Township Services*

Watertown Township is governed by a five-member Township Board. Township offices are located in the Township Hall on the west side of M-19 just north of Watertown. The Hall was originally located at Banner and Walker Roads before the Township purchased the existing church building in the mid-1980s. The Hall consists primarily of a meeting room, restrooms, and a storage basement, and underwent renovations several years ago. The majority of the day-to-day government administrative activities take place in the homes of the elected officials although Township files are primarily stored in the Hall.

The only other Township property is the Zion Cemetery located on M-19 across from the Township Hall near Watertown.

### *Emergency Services*

Police protection is provided by the Sanilac County Sheriff's Department and the Michigan State Police. There is no special funding by the Township for these services and they are provided on demand. Both the local Sheriff's Department and the State Police offices are located in Sandusky. Fire protection is provided by the Sandusky Community Fire Department. The Authority is located in Sandusky and is composed of volunteer fire fighters. The Township annually contracts with the Authority for fire protection service. Ambulance service is provided by the McKenzie Health System. Costs are borne by the individual receiving the service. All emergency services utilize a 911 emergency communication system. NEW UPDATED

### *Healthcare*

A full range of healthcare services is provided nearby in Sandusky. This includes McKenzie Health System Hospital, which includes physical therapy and associated rehabilitation services. A full range of physicians, assisted living, and nursing home care are also available in the community.

### *Water and Sewer*

The vast majority of Township residents rely upon on-site potable water and sewage disposal. The sewer service area in the Township extends from Sandusky south along M-19 to Wedge Road, east from M-19 along Miller Road to Davis Road, and along Gleason Street in the Thomas Subdivision. Of the 552 dwelling units in the Township, approximately 90 households are connected to the public sewer system. There are no plans at this time for the expansion of the sewer service area in the Township. There is no public water service currently in the Township nor are there any plans at this time to introduce such service. However, availability of water service from Sandusky has been discussed.

## *Transportation*

### **Regional Access**

Regional access to Watertown Township is provided by M-46 and M-19. M-46 travels through Sandusky along the northern border of the Township, connecting the Saginaw area and Interstate 75 to the west (approximately 60 miles) with Port Sanilac on Lake Huron to the east (approximately 15 miles). M-19 travels north and south through Sandusky and the central region of Watertown Township, connecting Bad Axe to the north with Interstate 69, approximately 30 miles to the south. These highways provide comparatively good accessibility to and from the Township. A private air field is located at the southeast corner of Walker Road and M-19.

### **Local Roadway Network Pattern**

Watertown Township's local roadway network generally reflects the traditional section line grid pattern which characterizes the vast majority of townships in the Thumb Area and most parts of Michigan. The principal exception to this pattern is the lack of road segments in the northeastern portions of the Township where the peat bogs are located. Except for M-46 and M-19, which are under the jurisdiction of the State, and a number of roads under private ownership (recorded as private easements), the balance of the Township's roadway network is comprised of roads under the jurisdiction of the Sanilac County Road Commission.

M-19 is the backbone of the Township's local road network and provides continuous movement in a north-south direction across the community. French Line Road is the principal east-west thoroughfare and intersects M-19 two miles north of the Township's southern border. Those roads providing continuous movement across the entire Township are limited to M-46, M-19, Marlette Road, Townline Road, Banner Road, Walker Road and French Line Road. Three of these roads are along the Township borders.

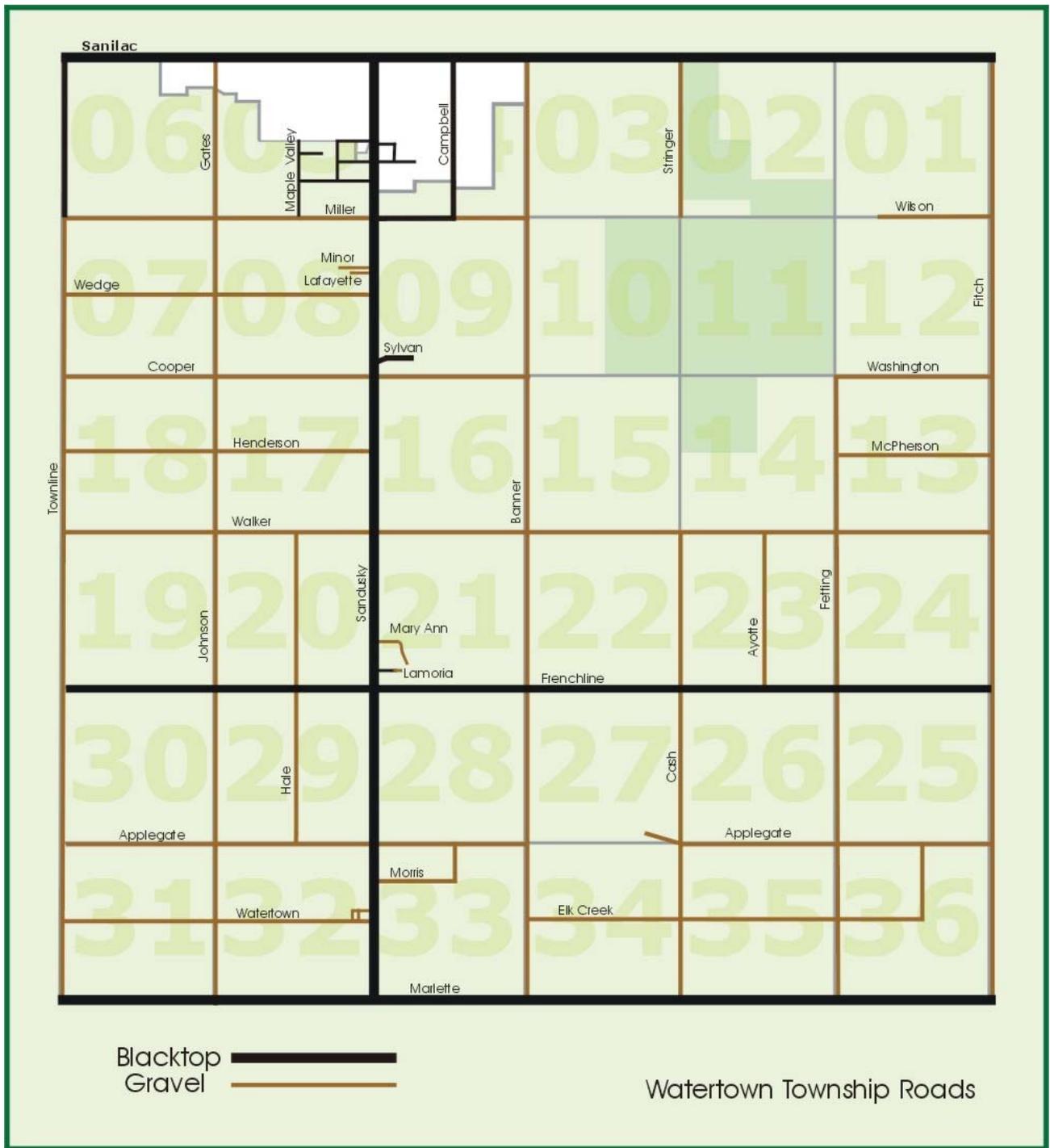
In compliance with the requirements of Michigan Act 51 of 1951, the Sanilac County Road Commission (SCRC) classifies all roads under its jurisdiction as either primary roads or local roads. Primary roads are considered the most critical in providing regional circulation throughout the County. All roads in the Township under the jurisdiction of the SCRC are classified by the SCRC as local roads except French Line Road and Marlette Road (located along the Township's southern border).

M-19, M-46, French Line and Marlette Roads, and several neighborhood roads are paved. Nearly all other roads segments in the Township have a gravel surface.

Map 4 on the following page depicts the Watertown Township roads.

### **Public Transportation**

Sanilac Transportation Services provides curb-to-curb shared ride services in Sanilac County. Their buses are 100% handicapped-accessible with wheelchair lifts for the mobility impaired.



## Parks and Recreation

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### Park Inventory

Watertown Township does not have any parks of its own. It has some woodland space west of the Township Hall. Currently, residents use City parks in Sandusky and Sanilac County Parks for recreation facilities. There is also interest in developing some of the large tract of DNR property for recreational use. The Township Hall property and the DNR lands are identified on the Road Map on page 15.

### Administrative Structure and Budgets

If Watertown Township decides to develop a park or trail, the Township Board will oversee that process. It may add a Parks and Recreation Commission sometime in the future.

Since Watertown Township does not currently have any park facilities, there is no dedicated park budget. However, the Township plans to dedicate general fund monies in the future for park and path development. The Township also wishes to seek grants for the proposed improvements.

### Recreation Programs

Watertown Township residents can participate in a variety of programs offered by the City of Sandusky.

# Existing Land Use

## Introduction

The existing land use in a community is one of the most important pieces of data to analyze during the Master Plan process. In many cases, the existing land uses have set a pattern that is unlikely to change. In other areas, there may be vacant or underutilized land that can be evaluated for its development or conservation value.

An existing land use map is designed to provide a snapshot in time of how land in the Township is actually being used. Such a map is useful in developing a Master Plan since it provides a benchmark as to how property is being used, regardless of, or sometimes in contradiction to, zoning. It lets residents, township officials, and other stakeholders see patterns in growth and development.

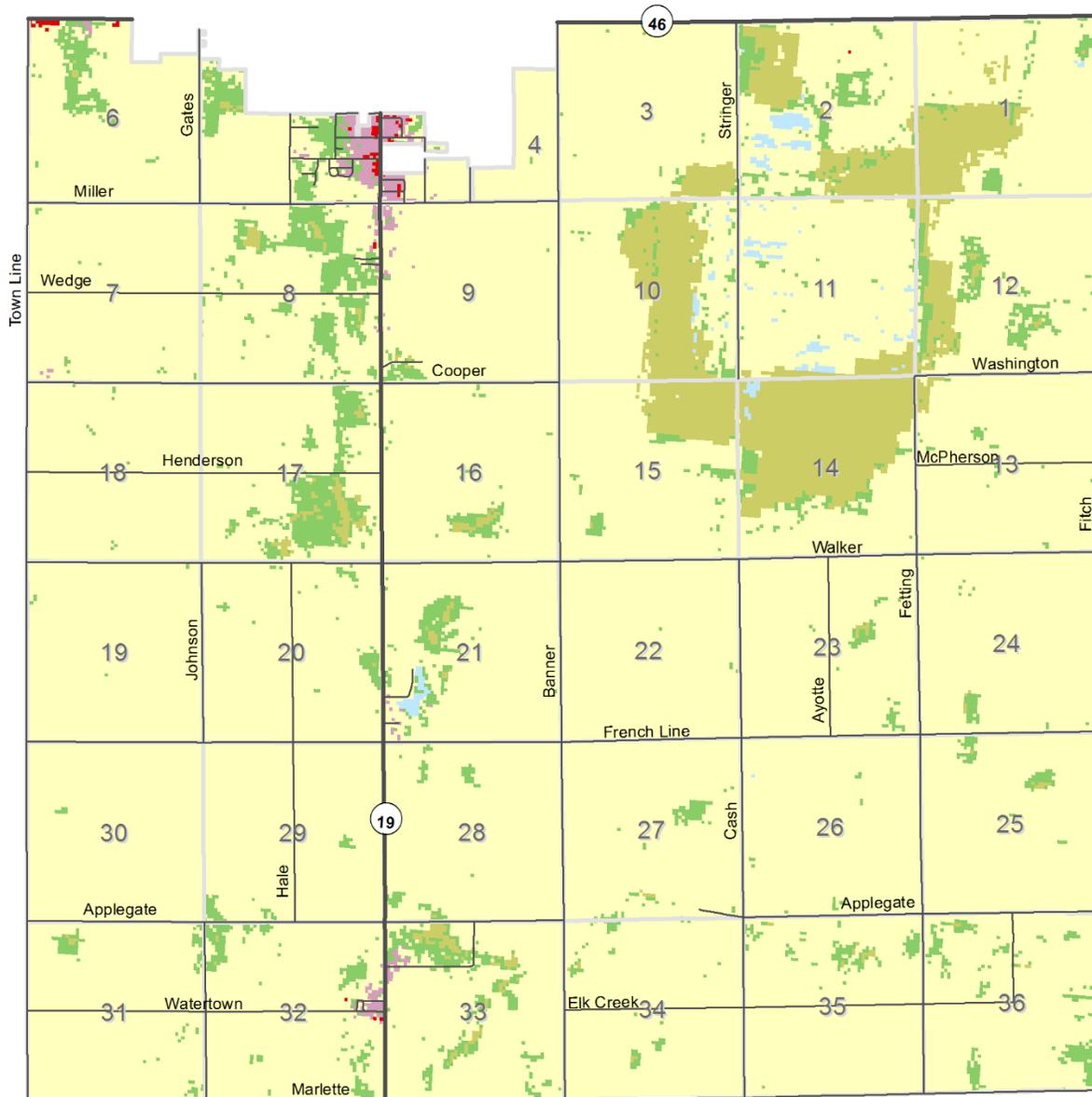
The existing land use map was developed digitally with data from the 1992 National Land Cover Database.

Figure 6 below contains a land use analysis chart for Watertown Township. As the chart shows, nearly 90% of the land in Watertown Township is classified as Agricultural. Wetlands are the next highest category of land use at approximately 6%. Most of the wetlands occur around the peat bog area. Woodlands are the third highest category of land use in Watertown Township at approximately 4-1/2 or 973 acres. The remaining land is used for residential or commercial use or it is open water.

An existing land use map is depicted in Figure 5 on the following page.

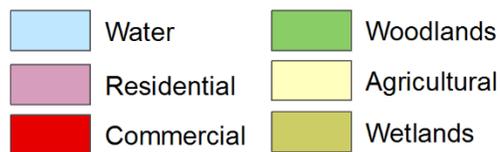
Figure 6 WATERTOWN TOWNSHIP EXISTING LAND USE		
Land Classification	Acres	Percentage
Commercial	12	.05%
Water	64	.29%
Residential	90	.40%
Woodlands	973	4.34%
Wetlands	1,242	5.54%
Agricultural	20,048	89.38%
TOTAL	22,429	100%

Source: 1992 National Land Cover Database



Map 5

**Watertown Township Existing Land Use**



Source: 1992 National Land Cover Database

# Community Input

## Introduction

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To be effective, a Master Plan should incorporate the input and ideas of the local population. By basing the Master Plan on the goals and objectives of its residents, land use management decisions become politically feasible and represent the intents and vision of the community.

In Watertown Township, citizens were offered a community input survey early in the master planning process. When the draft was complete, the plan was made available for public review for at least 42 days. This opportunity for review was published in the Tribune Recorder and the plan was made available on the Township website. The public could also respond and offer input at the public hearing held on \_\_\_\_\_.

## Survey

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The survey was mailed with tax bills to all land owners in the summer of 2015. The intent of the survey was to establish an easy means of communication where residents and stakeholders of Watertown Township could provide input about the existing community conditions and the need for future improvements. Approximately 80 responses were received. Complete survey results are given in the Appendix. A summary of significant highlights is given in the paragraphs below.

## About the Respondents

Sixty percent of the respondents had lived in Watertown Township 21 years or more. They were from a variety of occupations as shown in Figure 7. Most of “other” respondents indicated retired.

Farmer	19.5%
Sales or office work	18.2%
Homemaker	14.3%
Manager or owner	13.0%
Skilled worker	9.1%
Semi-skilled	7.8%
Other	14.3%

## Future Character of the Township

The majority of the respondents (67%) envisioned the character of the Township to be unchanged in the future. Seventeen percent envisioned it as more rural and 16% envisioned it as more urban.

## Quality of Services

Respondents were asked to rate the quality of six different township services on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 was excellent and 5 was poor. The majority of respondents ranked each services as 1 or 2. Of the six services, fire protection received the highest percentage of “one” rankings. Zoning Regulation and Enforcement had the highest percentage of “five rankings”. See Figure 8.

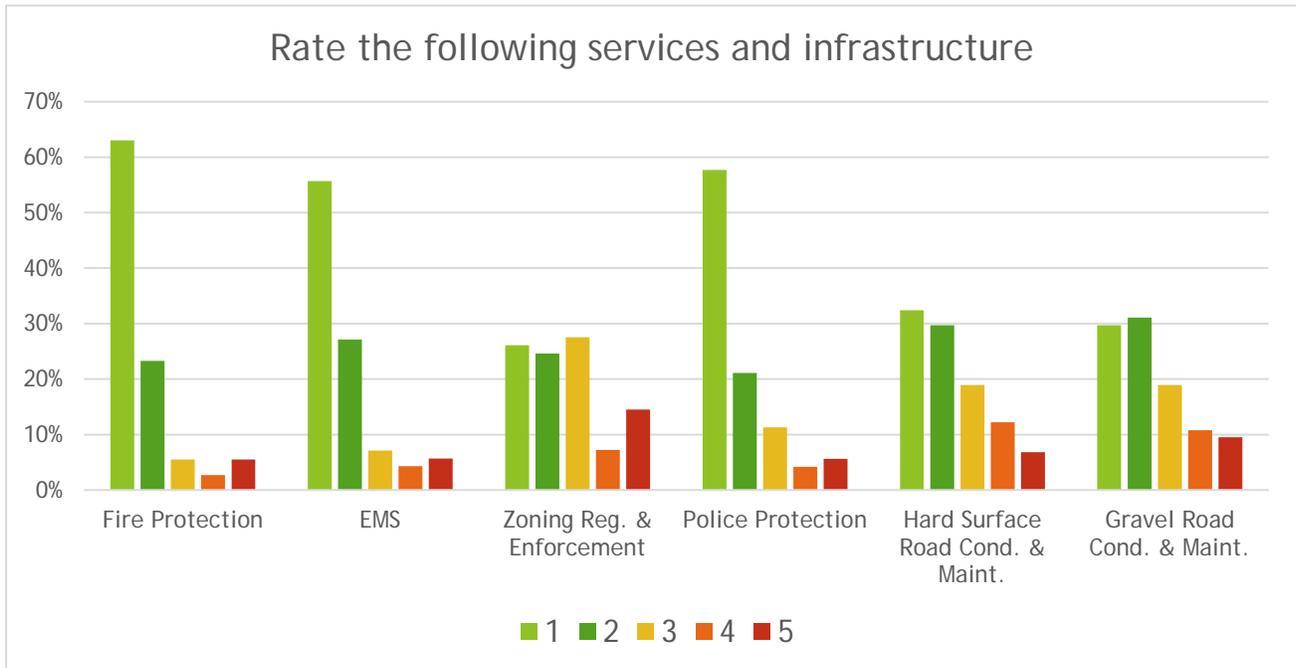


Figure 8 – Respondents ranked 6 different services and infrastructure on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 was excellent and 5 was poor. All items had a majority of the respondents ranking the respective item with a 1 or 2.

## Reasons for Living in Watertown

Respondents were presented with 5 possible reasons for living in Watertown Township. The most popular response was small community atmosphere. The second most popular response was family. Common responses specified as other were farming and this is where my home is. See Figure 9.

Figure 9 WHY DO YOU LIVE IN WATERTOWN TOWNSHIP?	
Jobs	15.6%
Family	27.3%
Schools	3.9%
Small community atmosphere	46.8%
Low cost of living	9.1%
Other, please specify...	19.5%

## What does the Township need?

Respondents were asked to rank 11 different items and an “Other” category from 1-12 as to what they would like to see developed in Watertown Township. Figure 10 shows those responses. Several of the items relate to recreation needs. Items characterized as high were ranked from 1-3, medium high was 4-6, medium low was 7-9, and low was 10-12.

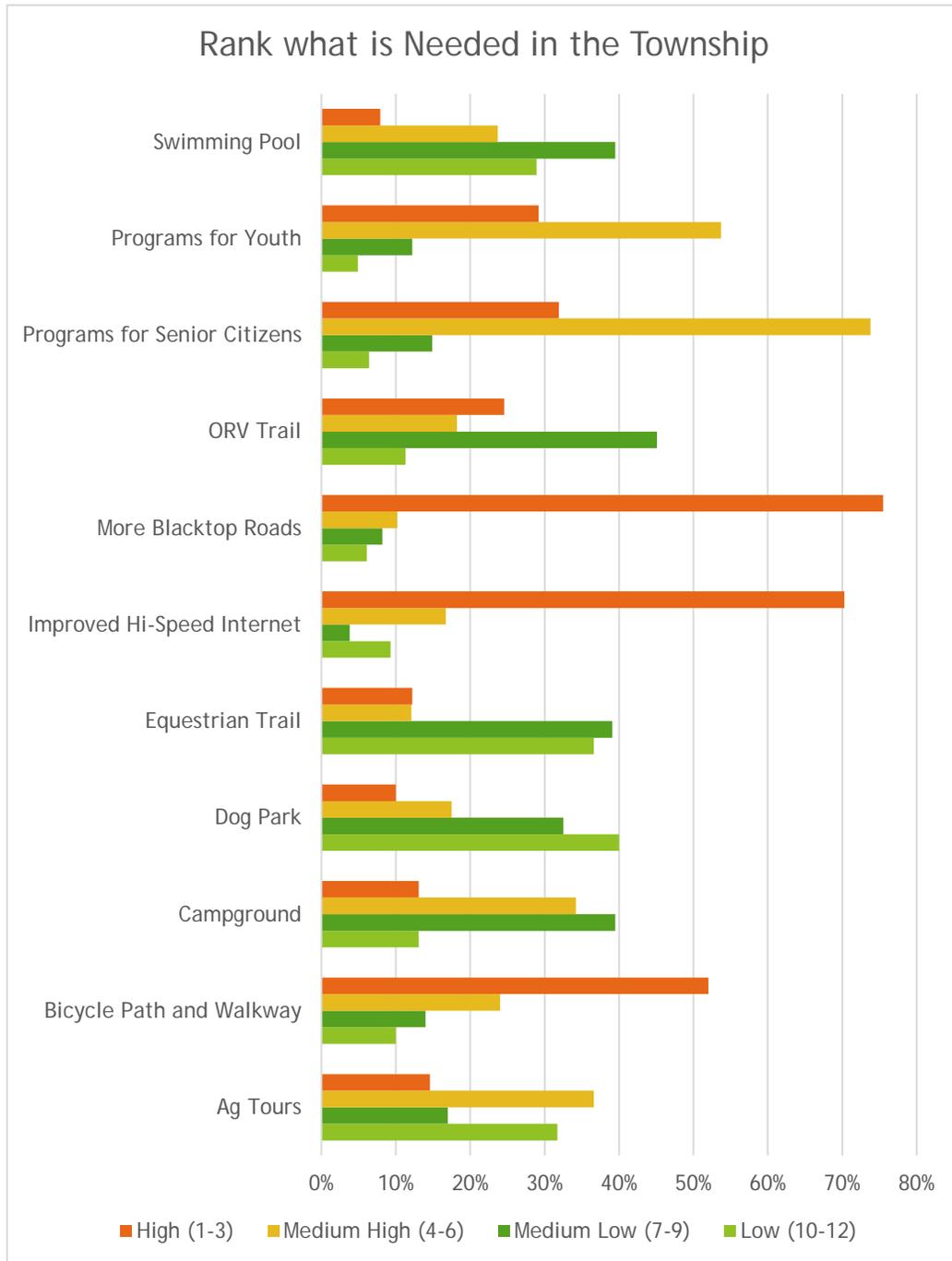
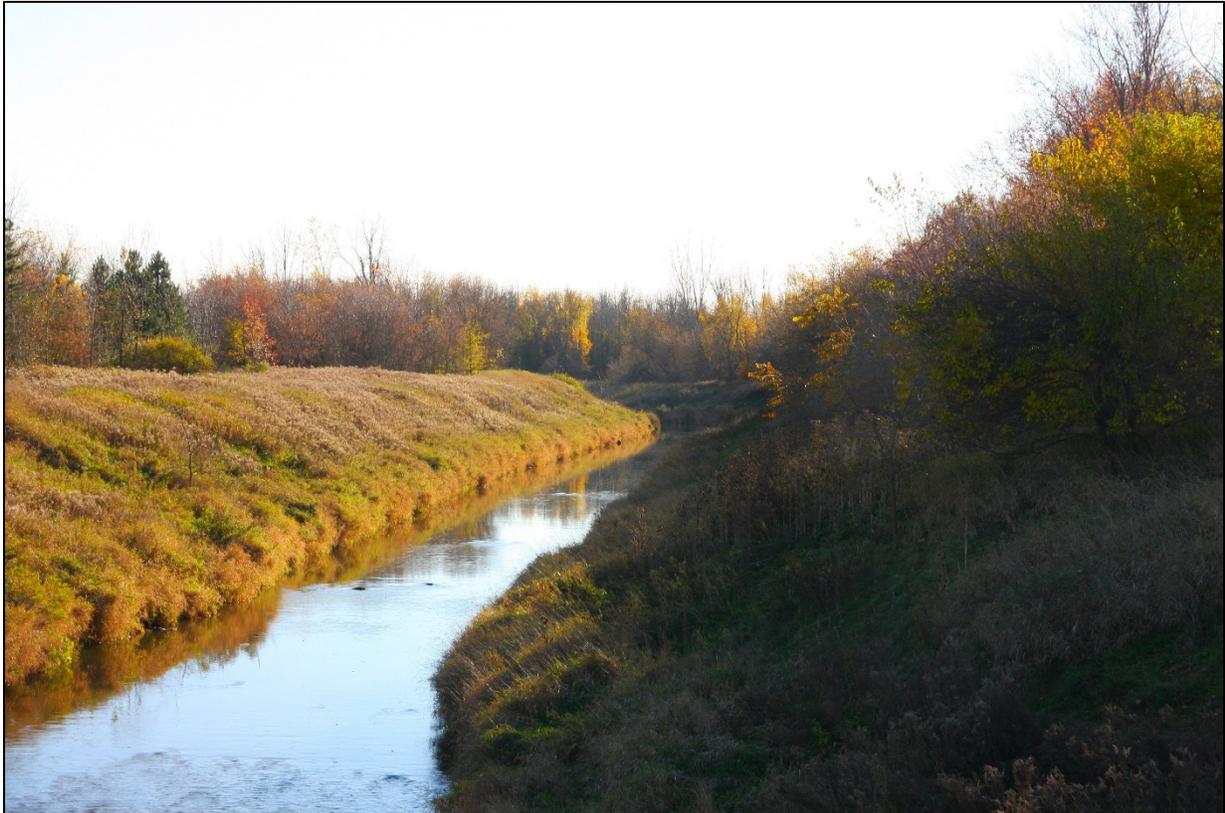


Figure 10 – Respondents felt that more blacktop roads, improved hi-speed internet and bicycle path and walkway were items needed in Watertown Township.

Items that received the largest percentage of high rankings were More Blacktop Roads, Improved Hi-Speed Internet and Bicycle Path and Walkway. Items with relatively low priority were Dog Park, Equestrian Trail, Swimming Pool, and Ag Tours.

### Comments and Suggestions

Twenty respondents offered comments and suggestions at the end of the survey. Concerns were expressed about the condition of roads, junk cars, weeds, and home occupations.



*Elk Creek - looking north from Marlette Road*



*Aerial view Aldrich Family Farm*

*courtesy of John Bezotte*

# Goals and Objectives

## Introduction

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The planning issues, and associated goals and objectives, are divided into the following major categories:

- Growth Management
- Community Character and Environment
- Farmland
- Residential Development
- Commercial & Industrial Development
- Roads
- Parks and Recreation
- Regional Coordination

The planning issues presented in the following pages are not intended to be all inclusive. They are presented as the primary issues that the community must address as it establishes a future for itself. These issues can be expected to evolve over time and, accordingly, should be reexamined periodically and modified as needed.

## Growth Management

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Watertown Township experienced significant growth from 1930 to 1980. Since that time, the population has been relatively stable. The character and quality of life will be impacted by the way the Township

chooses to manage future growth and development. Managed growth can minimize unnecessary loss of natural resources including farmland; preserve the Township's existing character and environmental integrity; encourage orderly land development; assure the efficient expansion of public services and expenditure of Township funds; and limit traffic hazards and nuisances.

With minimum lot size requirements, zoning regulations largely determine the maximum population growth potential (buildout population) of a community. In the case of Watertown Township where one-acre zoning exists throughout the vast majority of the Township, the Township's buildout population approaches 35,000 persons or more. While this buildout population will probably never occur, the potential for excessive growth over a short or extended time period is possible and hinges only on market conditions and housing demands. Such growth can have a dramatic impact upon public services, community character, natural and environmental resources, economic stability, and taxes.

Tax revenues dictate, in part, the extent and quality of public services. Even though new development can be expected to increase the Township's tax base, the new development will place additional demands upon public services. Contrary to traditional planning wisdom and thought, recent research has shown that new development does not necessarily "pay its way," particularly as it applies to traditional single family residential development. Development patterns which minimize new public costs should be sought where practical.

It is advantageous to maintain a compact form of growth and development and, to the extent it is practical, locate higher density and intensity development near or adjacent to areas currently being served with higher levels of public services or anticipated to be served by such services in the future. Current police and fire protection services, and the roadway network, appear to be meeting the current needs of area residents. This is due, in large part, to the limited population of the Township and the joint services available from Sandusky. High growth rates will mean increased costs to the township, which may or may not be able to be absorbed by additional tax revenue.

This Plan aims to provide a strategy for effectively shaping and guiding future growth and development in a feasible manner, consistent with the aspirations of the Township's citizens and the opportunities and constraints presented by its natural and cultural characteristics.

**GOAL: Encourage future growth and development and assure that it is consistent with the natural limitations of the land, the availability of necessary public facilities and services, the protection of the Township's natural resources and rural character, the provision of public facilities and services, and the protection of the public health, safety and welfare - all in a cost-effective fashion.**

### *Objectives*

1. Preserve the Township's natural resources through a coordinated future land use strategy and related regulations which permit reasonable use of land while discouraging unnecessary destruction or loss of natural resources.
2. Encourage the introduction or expansion of public sewer or water in areas designated for such growth especially where the intensity of existing development requires such services, or where the public health, safety, or welfare is at risk.
3. Encourage growth and development at a rate whereby the Township can assure adequate public health, safety, and welfare.

4. Guide development into areas where public facilities and services have adequate capacity to accommodate growth and increased development, and where the provision or expansion of public facilities is cost-effective.
5. Wherever legally permissible, local regulations should require new developments to pay for the direct and indirect public service costs associated with that development. These costs should not be imposed on existing residents. Exceptions should be made where public interests and benefits may be at stake.



*Township Hall*

*courtesy of John Bezotte*

6. Recognizing that the Township is a critical link in a regional network of communities, the Township should develop a meaningful communication program with area municipalities and county agencies to discuss contemporary planning issues, local and area wide public facilities and services needs, alternative strategies for mutually improving local public services, and land use conditions, trends, and planning strategies.
7. Provide regular opportunities for substantive public input on growth and development issues facing the Township.
8. Review and revise zoning regulations, as applicable, to assure that permitted growth and development is coordinated with the future vision for the community.
9. Establish effective land development review procedures to assure new land uses are designed to minimize negative impacts upon existing uses, protect important natural resources, and assure public health, safety, and welfare.

## Community Character and the Environment

Protection of Watertown Township's rural character is important to its residents. "Rural character" is a subjective quality, but is typically associated with an overall perception of limited urban development, and open spaces comprised of farmland and/or other open landscapes including woodlands, wetlands, and fields. Not only are these elements important in shaping the character of the Township, they provide vital environmental roles including wildlife habitats, flood control, water purification, groundwater recharge, and air quality. The Township has abundant natural resources and sensitive environmental features.

Effective protection of rural character and natural resources does not require the prohibition of growth and development. Managed growth and development encourages the continuation of the Township's overall rural character. The preservation of rural character and natural resources in the face of growth and development, such as platted subdivisions, condominium subdivisions and nonresidential development, is largely dependent upon managing development densities and encouraging site development practices which purposely incorporate the protection of open spaces, natural resources and environmental ecosystems into the development plan.

Individual properties and land uses exist within a network of adjoining and nearby properties and land uses. This weave of uses helps to establish the Township's character. A township-wide land use pattern should strive to assure compatibility between land uses. This can be accomplished by appropriately locating new land uses, managing development densities and the rate of growth, utilizing buffer areas between uses, and reviewing site development proposals to minimize land use and vehicular conflicts. Increased knowledge of the environment, when incorporated into a comprehensive planning strategy, can minimize the potential for environmental degradation. Establishment and protection of interconnected systems of natural environmental areas, including wetlands, woodlands, stream corridors, and open fields will provide a diverse and viable habitat for wildlife and native plants.

Zoning regulations should encourage protection of the Township's natural resources and rural character where large scale residential development is permitted. Multiple lot residential developments (such as platted subdivisions) void of any semblance of the previous open spaces and natural resources which characterized the development parcel detract from the community's environmental integrity and character.

**GOAL: Preserve the dominant rural character of Watertown Township and its environmental resources and integrity.**

### *Objectives*

1. Assure that future land development be designed in scale with existing developed areas, and respect the existing surroundings, through reasonable standards addressing density, building size, height, and other development features.
2. Encourage land development which actively strives to preserve open spaces as part of a development project by incorporating on-site woodlands, wetlands, lakes, and fields and by the use of such tools as conservation easements, land trusts, and density bonuses.
3. Encourage the maintenance of historically significant structures and a structurally sound housing stock, and the rehabilitation or removal of blighted structures and yard areas.
4. Separate incompatible land uses by distance, natural features, and/or manmade landscape buffers which screen or mitigate adverse impacts.
5. Assure that new development does not unreasonably create increases in air, noise, land, and water pollution, or the degradation of land and water resource environments including groundwater.
6. Development densities and intensities in environmentally sensitive areas should be limited and all development should be in compliance with applicable local, county, state, and federal regulations.
7. Review proposed development in light of its potential impact upon wetlands, woodlands, and other natural resource areas.
8. Encourage greater public awareness about waste management and the Township's fundamental reliance upon groundwater resources for potable water, and the detrimental effects of irresponsible land use and development practices.

**GOAL: Strive to make 21<sup>st</sup> century communication tools available to everyone in Watertown Township.**

*Objective*

1. Work to make high speed internet and mobile communication available to all residents and businesses in the Township. The Township Board or a representative committee should meet with all local internet and telecommunications providers to determine what needs to be done to provide access/coverage in areas where it is not yet available, less than reliable.

## Farmland

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Watertown Township has, historically, been a strong farming community. Today, nearly 90% of the acreage in the Township is devoted to agricultural use. The Township has to be careful of permitting comparatively high level of residential development in a community's agricultural areas because it can encourage encroachment of farmlands, increased conflicts between farm and non-farm residents, and higher property assessment values. All of these factors impinge on the long-term economic viability of the farm operations.

Much of Watertown Township farmland is considered to be "prime" by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The Township's farmland resources provide important food and fiber to both local and regional populations, are an important source of income, and contribute to the stability of the local economy. The state's economic stability is directly linked to agriculture as it is the second largest industry in the state. Further, the cost to provide community services for agricultural land is generally considered to be less than its corresponding revenue. Traditional single family residential development, on the other hand, has been consistently identified as generating less revenue than the cost to provide Township services. So, it could be said that agricultural land makes money for the Township.

Effective farmland preservation is dependent upon the management of both the number and size of new non-farm lots. The concentration of agricultural operations on large parcels and the relative absence of competing uses within these areas makes preservation of agriculture possible in Watertown Township.

It is important that the Plan's recommendations recognize the challenges facing the local farming community. At the same time, the Plan should actively encourage the continuation of farming operations and the long-term protection of farmland resources.

**GOAL: Actively encourage the continuation of local farming operations and the long-term protection of farmland resources.**

*Objectives*

1. Designate areas which support long term farming and encourage the continuation of agricultural operations through complimentary zoning provisions.
2. Minimize nuisance problems (destruction of crops, complaints about legitimate day-to-day farming operations, etc.) in designated agricultural areas by limiting the encroachment of incompatible land uses.

3. Limit the amount of non-farm residential development permitted in designated agricultural areas and, to the extent such development does occur, discourage large acreage lots that unnecessarily consume and accelerate the loss of farmland acreage.
4. To the extent that residential development occurs in agricultural areas, encourage such development to be placed on less productive farmland.
5. Assure that new development minimizes disturbances to, and the premature destruction of farmland areas through responsible and innovative development and site planning.
6. Support and maintain P.A. 116 farmland preservation agreements.

## Residential Development

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Residential development has the potential to be a significant land use change in the coming years. Watertown Township is an attractive place to live for many prospective residents. The Township has abundant open spaces, an overall rural character, and close proximity to desirable urban services and retail areas. Principal limitations are largely related to the environmentally sensitive areas, the ability of area soils to accommodate septic drain fields, the limited public services and the ability of the Township to meet the demands of the increased residential development, and the balancing of residential growth with conservation of farmland resources.

The primary concern in regard to future housing is that it be located wisely, as the actual land area needed is comparatively small. Even if Watertown Township's population grew 15% every ten years between 1990 and 2020, a rate considerably higher than the previous 25 years, only approximately 260 acres of undeveloped or farmland would require conversion to residential use for the required 230 additional dwellings (based on an average lot size of one acre and a household size of 2.8 persons). However, 230 dwelling units, inappropriately located, can undermine the long-term economic viability of local farming operations. Large residential lots, such as five to ten acres or more in size, can dramatically accelerate the rate at which farmland and other undeveloped lands are converted to residential use. When these lot splits occur throughout the Township, one by one, the cumulative impact can be devastating. On the other hand, small acreage zoning across the entire Township, such as one-acre zoning, provides for an excessive buildout population with dramatic impacts on farming, community character, taxes, and public services demands.

Watertown Township has the unique potential to offer varied housing opportunities. Rural residential lifestyles are readily available, and the proximity of the urban services to the City of Sandusky also provides opportunities for more suburban and urban lifestyles in the Township. Establishing suburban and urban residential development areas can be very important as part of the Township's efforts to provide varied housing opportunities for current and future residents and limit the extent of residential encroachment into agricultural areas. Further, it is generally accepted that multiple-family development, unlike low density residential development, generally generates more municipal revenue than the cost to provide it with services.

**GOAL: Accommodate new residential development in a manner which recognizes the opportunities and constraints of the Township's public services, infrastructure, and natural features; preserves the overall rural character of the Township and its farmland resources, and accommodates a range of densities and lifestyles.**

### *Objectives:*

1. Encourage the continued dominance of low density housing as the principal housing option in the Township and identify land areas, through planning and zoning, most appropriate for such housing.
2. While maintaining low density housing as the primary housing option, provide opportunities for other alternative housing options to meet the varying housing preferences of current and future residents, including small lot single family dwellings and multiple family housing.
3. Identify limited areas in the Township where higher density residential development, including multiple family development, can be adequately accommodated. Priority should be given to locations which have greater access to improved thoroughfares and necessary public services.
4. Land capacity should be an important consideration when determining the appropriate development densities, and development densities should not undermine important environmental features. Limit strip residential development along the frontage of existing state and county roads, to minimize traffic safety hazards and the land locking of interior acreage.
5. Encourage innovative residential development which incorporates the preservation of natural resource systems and open spaces, and the preservation of the Township's rural character within the site planning process. One such initiative, where multiple lots or dwelling units are created, should include the development of only a portion of the original parcel and placing the balance of the parcel in a permanent open space status.

## Roads

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As new residential and non-residential land uses are introduced into the Township, demands upon the roadway network will increase. Even low density residential development can significantly increase local traffic levels. This increased traffic may diminish the level of service along some of the Township's roads. This is particularly true of the many miles of unpaved roads including Walker and Banner Roads. The Township is interested in assuring that roads are adequately maintained and improvements are coordinated with the planned future land use pattern and the designated growth and development areas.

Opportunities for successfully accommodating growth and development are presented by the Township's improved thoroughfares and their potential can be maximized by appropriate land use management. The extent to which higher density and intensity land uses, including commercial and industrial are in comparatively close proximity to key thoroughfares will minimize future maintenance costs and traffic levels along the Township's other roads. To this extent, M-19, M-46 and/or other important thoroughfares should be considered in an effort to identify a practical and beneficial future land use pattern for the community. On the other hand, the principal function of these important corridors – the movement of vehicles over comparatively long distances – should not be undermined by development patterns along their frontage that unnecessarily heighten congestion and traffic hazards.

The future pattern of residential lot splits and subdivisions within Watertown Township will have an important impact upon the future quality of life within the Township. Much of the residential development in the Township today is of a strip pattern – residences are stripped along the existing county road frontages. This pattern of lot splits can be troubling to Watertown Township because 1) the increased number of driveways directly accessing the county roads increases the level of congestion and safety hazards along these corridors; 2) travel times are increased; and 3) the Township's previously rich rural panoramic views of woodlands, fields, and other open spaces, as seen from the roadway, are

reduced to images of never ending driveways, cars, garages, and front yards. Zoning regulations that encourage this development pattern negatively impact the effectiveness and character of the Township's roadway network.

**GOAL:** Maintain a transportation network throughout the Township which moves vehicular traffic in an efficient and safe fashion, utilizes road segments specifically designed to accommodate higher traffic flows where higher traffic levels are being generated, and is coordinated with the planned future land use pattern.

### *Objectives*

1. Identify priority road segments for maintenance and improvement, based upon the planned future land use pattern and existing and projected traffic patterns, and systematically undertake these projects.
2. High traffic generating land uses and development along the Township's secondary roads should be targeted along roads that have been improved to accommodate such development.
3. Adopt land use and/or other regulations which minimize the potential for traffic congestion and safety hazards along adjacent roadways.
4. Maintain gravel roads in designated agricultural and low density residential areas.
5. Road improvements should be targeted in areas of the Township specified for growth and development.

## Commercial and Industrial Development

Watertown Township has approximately two dozen commercial facilities located primarily along M-19 and M-46 and, except for several sand and gravel extraction operations, has no industrial development. Constraints on future commercial and industrial development include limited access to public water and sewer, a comparatively small population base, and competition from Sandusky. Sandusky's commercial development is more extensive and concentrated. It caters to the day-to-day needs of area residents as well as providing opportunities for comparison shopping and professional services.

Perhaps the principal opportunities for new commercial and industrial development are those presented by the improved road infrastructure and population base near Sandusky. Accommodating future commercial and industrial development in close proximity to Sandusky can take advantage of the existing retail and local shopping activity patterns and necessary services. Ultimately, the viability of future commercial and industrial development within a community is directly linked, in part,



*Sandusky Auto Sales*

*courtesy of John Bezotte*

to access and, particularly in the case of commercial uses, visibility. In this regard, M-19 and M-46 must

be recognized as providing these requirements and should be carefully considered in the location of future commercial and industrial growth.

To the extent that Watertown Township accommodates future commercial or industrial development, such development should: 1) be compatible with available public services and facilities, including police protection and road infrastructure; and 2) minimize negative impacts upon the enjoyment and use of nearby lands.

**GOAL: Provide opportunities for limited expansion of commercial and industrial uses that minimize negative impacts upon adjacent land uses, respond to the predominant rural character of the community, and is compatible with available public services and infrastructure.**

### *Objectives*

1. Identify locations in the Township, through planning and zoning, considered appropriate for commercial and industrial land uses, taking into account the constraints and opportunities presented by the Townships natural features, such as topography and soils, and the availability of public facilities and services, including road infrastructure.
2. Recognize the significance of M-19 and M-46 as potential opportunities for the location of new commercial and industrial uses.
3. Assure future commercial and industrial uses are in scale with surrounding land uses, including such features as building size and height, setbacks, and open space areas.
4. Manage future commercial and industrial land uses from indiscriminately encroaching into residential and agricultural areas but rather be clustered in appropriately identified locations.
5. Encourage consolidated commercial centers rather than strip commercial development patterns which undermine highway safety and the Township's rural character.
6. Provide opportunities for a mix of commercial uses that target both local day-to-day consumer needs and the consumer needs of more regional populations.
7. Require landscaping and screening measures to assure commercial and industrial uses do not adversely impact the normal use and enjoyment of adjoining land uses.
8. Limit industrial uses to those which are predominately characterized by assembly activities and similar light operations that do not require heightened levels of public services or otherwise negatively impact surrounding land uses or the community as a whole.
9. Provide opportunities for homebased occupations within residential areas under conditions which will support the residential character, appearance, and quality of life experienced by surrounding residential properties and neighborhoods.

## Parks and Recreation

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Historically, Watertown Township has not had any of its own parks and recreation facilities. Township residents rely on the City of Sandusky and Sanilac County for parks. With this document Watertown Township is beginning to plan for recreation within the Township. Parks can provide many benefits for a community including:

- Community Engagement
- Green Infrastructure
- Promoting Public Health

- Outdoor Education and Learning Opportunities
- Community Revitalization

The Township sees a need to add simple, close to home recreation features to the community to enhance the quality of life for residents. Opportunities may exist for trail development and for some type of cooperative recreational use on the DNR Land that was formerly used for peat mining.

**GOAL 1: Develop park land and paths to provide recreation and fitness opportunities for all age groups and abilities.**

*Objectives*

1. Explore options for developing the land around the Township Hall into a Township Park.
2. Explore options for developing multi-use paths and trails in Watertown Township.
3. Work with MDOT to designate M-19 as a bicycle route.

**GOAL 2: Provide safe and attractive recreation facilities that improve the overall quality of life for residents.**

*Objectives*

1. Develop parks that provide opportunity for social interaction, community gatherings, and public events.

**GOAL 3: Retain public lands for future generations. Manage them on a sustainable basis.**

*Objectives*

1. Work with MDNR to cooperatively develop recreation opportunities around the former peat bog.

## Regional Coordination

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Watertown Township exists within a regional network of communities, none of which are islands unto themselves. The Township abuts seven other townships and one city, and all can greatly benefit by cooperatively pursuing common goals in the areas of land use and public services.

Planned land use and public services should take into consideration land use and services in Sandusky.

The City is an urban center and the majority of land in the City that abuts Watertown Township is planned and zoned for residential development of approximately four to five dwellings per acre. Industrial zoning is in place along M-46 along the eastern periphery of the City where it abuts the Township. Commercial zoning is in place on the City’s west side. The five principal abutting Townships of Washington, Buel, Elk, Elmer, and Custer are similar in character to Watertown. Most areas of these communities are devoted to agriculture and other open spaces and the majority of residential acreage is of a low density character. This is particularly true of the land in these neighboring communities immediately abutting Watertown Township.

Land use planning efforts of the Township should seek to establish a land use pattern compatible with surrounding conditions provided the goals of the Township are not undermined. To this end, the Township must recognize the potential for annexation efforts by Sandusky and give careful consideration to the location of new commercial and industrial development and the protection of its tax base.



**GOAL:** Guide future development and public services in a manner which recognizes the position of Watertown Township within the larger region and the effects of Watertown Township’s planning efforts and those of neighboring communities.

### *Objectives*

1. Where practical, identify a planned future land use pattern which seeks to assure compatibility among land uses along municipal borders.
2. Where practical, identify a planned future land use pattern that does not risk the loss of important commercial and industrial property tax dollars through annexation.
3. Maintain communication with all neighboring municipalities to discuss land use and public service needs in a mutually beneficial manner.

## **Parks and Recreation Action Plan**

With goals and objectives in place, Watertown Township has developed a five-year action plan that will enable it to move toward accomplishing the goals and objectives. The action program details the direction the Township wishes to take over the next five years to develop its first park and recreation facilities.

Each of the action items on the project list relates to one or more of the numbered goals from the Parks and Recreation Goal section that begins on page 31. Each is prioritized from one to three where one indicates the highest priority and three the lowest priority. The potential capital improvements that are described have been established to provide a framework for decision makers, and to enable the community to apply for grant funding for the proposed projects.

The projects listed below are not fixed elements nor are they exhaustive. The project lists reflect the results of the input received from the public and township officials. The projects are part of the overall

capital improvements plan for the Township. Future circumstances, especially availability of funding, may influence the order in which the projects are completed.

**1. Collaborate with the City of Sandusky to work on tennis courts and other recreational developments.**

Despite the tremendous benefits of municipalities providing recreational opportunities, the reality is that such amenities can be costly, difficult to maintain or perhaps impractical for a given community. Multi-municipal cooperation can make providing such recreational amenities more realistic and affordable. In order to be cost effective for the community, the Township wishes to work cooperatively with the City of Sandusky on future recreation projects.

RELATES TO GOAL: 1, 2

PRIORITY: 1

**FUNDING SOURCES:** Township General Fund, local foundations, MNRTF Grant, Michigan Recreation Passport Grant, LWCF Grant

**2. Develop a Township Bike Route that is part of a regional trail.**

The Township is interested in developing a bike route along M-19 in the Township. Ultimately, it would like to see the development of a regional trail that would connect Sandusky to Peck.

RELATES TO GOAL: 1,2

PRIORITY: 1

**FUNDING SOURCES:** Township General Fund, local foundations, MNRTF Grant, Michigan Recreation Passport Grant, LWCF Grant, MDOT TE grant

**3. Develop passive recreation opportunities around the former peat bog area in the northeast portion of the Township.**

The DNR currently owns several hundred acres of land in Watertown Township. The Township and the DNR would like to work cooperatively to add recreational features to this property to develop it into a passive recreational park. These may include nature trails and nature viewing. Doing this would meet all the goals and objectives described above. The Township would look to fund the project with State grant funds and any other funding opportunities.

RELATES TO GOAL: 1, 2, 3

PRIORITY: 2

**FUNDING SOURCES:** Township General Fund, Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) Grant, Michigan Recreation Passport Grant, Michigan Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Grant, Donations

**4. Develop a concept plan for a local park at the Township Hall.**

The Township owns several acres of wooded property behind the Township Hall. It would like to develop a simple park for Township residents and visitors.

RELATES TO GOAL: 1, 2, 3

PRIORITY: 3

FUNDING SOURCES: Township General Fund, local foundations

**5. Develop walking paths and non-motorized trails.**

The Township wishes to take advantage of other opportunities to develop paths and trails in the Township. This may include roadside trails or stand-alone trails.

RELATES TO GOAL: 1,2

PRIORITY:3

FUNDING SOURCES: Township General Fund, local foundations, MNRTF Grant, Michigan Recreation Passport Grant, LWCF Grant, MDOT TE grant

**6. Study the feasibility of using and developing Elk Creek as a canoe/kayak trail.**

There are few water related recreation opportunities in the Watertown Township area. With the renewed popularity of canoeing and kayaking, the Township wishes to explore how it could use Elk Creek for this type of recreation.

RELATES TO GOAL: 1,2

PRIORITY: 3

FUNDING SOURCES: Township General Fund, local foundations, MNRTF Grant, Michigan Recreation Passport Grant, LWCF Grant, MDOT TE grant



# Future Land Use

## Future Land Use Overview and Zoning Plan

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This section is considered by many as the heart of the Master Plan. It encompasses, in graphic and text form, the recommendations of each of the proceeding chapters in the Plan. From a practical point of view, the Future Land Use Plan is fundamentally a guide to the future physical development of the community. It translates values into a scheme that describes how and where to build, rebuild or preserve the Township.

As the community moves forward this map may and probably will be modified as circumstances dictate. The map is not to be construed as a rigid image of Watertown Township in the future.

The Future Land Use Map does not share the same legal status as the Zoning Map. It should be considered a guide, expressing the Township's vision for the future, and should be used to influence future land use decisions, not regulate the activities in specific zones. While the future land use map attempts to translate future land use categories to specific zoning districts, it is mostly intended to provide a framework for future site-specific land use or zoning decisions that are brought before the Planning Commission. For example, the future land use map may indicate a residential area, and yet it may not be zoned for residential until a property owner requests that zoning change and the Township adopts the rezoning request.

It should be noted future land use categories on the Future Land Use Map are slightly different from the existing land use categories. This difference is attributed to the fact that future land use is developed with an eye toward the zoning classification that will be needed to actually move toward the

implementation of this plan. For example, while the existing land use map described woodland areas, these uses are not described on the future land use map. These existing land uses are combined into various other future land use categories because the future land use categories reflect how these wooded and agricultural land uses should be used in the future, and hence should be zoned.

Ultimately, the recommendations shown on the future land use map are intended to help Watertown Township officials, property owners, and residents make zoning and development decisions that are in the best interest of the Watertown Township community. The future land use map seeks to guide development of residential and commercial districts, as well as the allocation of lands for future parks and conservation areas, into appropriate locations while maintaining the overall character and appearance of Watertown Township.

Because Watertown Township is a relatively stable community, Township officials do not see a great deal of change happening in terms of land use in the next 10 to 20 years. The Township made minor adjustments to the commercial districts from the future land use map that was developed in 1999. These include extending the commercial future land use area to the south on M-19 south of Sandusky. It also added a potential commercial area on the south side of Miller and on Campbell north of Miller. It reduced the commercial area along Gates and expanded it slightly along the entrance drive behind Walmart.

Descriptions of the future land use categories and the corresponding zoning districts begin below. The Future Land Use Map is shown at the end of this section.

## Agricultural Land Use

Agricultural is the largest land use category in Watertown Township and the Township sees that continuing for many years to come. This land use is categorized by large open spaces and viewsheds of agricultural crops. Homes are scattered across this area in large lots. Farming operations take priority in this area and roads are developed and maintained to handle large farm equipment.

This category corresponds to the Agricultural Residential zoning category.

## Residential Area

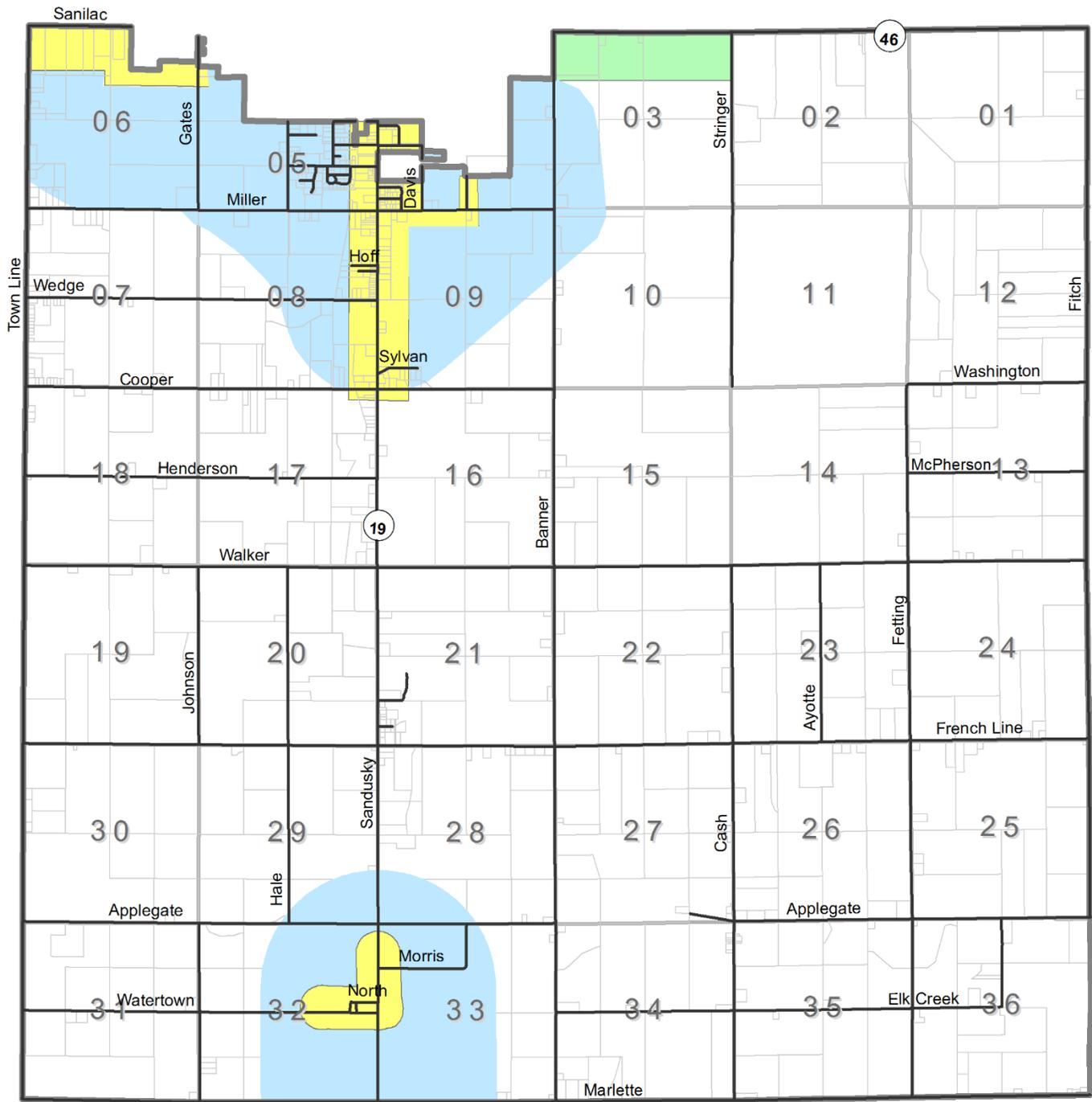
Suburban residential land use is more densely developed and it is intended primarily for residential use, characterized by single family homes on smaller lots. Most of the area indicated for single family residential in Watertown Township is near Sandusky. A second smaller area for suburban residential is around Watertown.

This category corresponds to the Single Family Residential District. It could also correspond to Multiple Family Residential or Manufactured Housing Park but, if development occurs, the vast majority of the land is expected to be developed and zoned as Single Family Residential.

## Commercial/Industrial

A small area east of Sandusky is shown on the future land use map to be commercial/industrial. Because of its location on M-46 and proximity to Sandusky, the Township feels this area could develop for commercial or industrial uses in the future. The corresponding zoning category would be either commercial or industrial.

<b>Figure 11 WATERTOWN TOWNSHIP POTENTIAL FUTURE LAND USE</b>		
<b>Land Classification</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Agricultural</b>	20,069	89.5%
<b>Residential</b>	1,542	6.9%
<b>Commercial</b>	639	2.8%
<b>Commercial/Industrial</b>	179	0.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22,429</b>	<b>100%</b>



Map 6

**Watertown Township Future Land Use**





*Tri County Equipment*

*John Bezotte*

# Implementation and Summary

## Implementing and Using the Plan

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The key to a well-planned community is the actual day-to-day use of planning documents, like this Master Plan. Because this plan is to be the basis for future zoning and planning decisions, it is imperative that the plan be available to Watertown Township staff, elected and appointed officials, as well as business owners, developers, stakeholders from Sanilac County and the region, and the general public.

The implementation of this Master Plan depends on its continual use by the Planning Commission and the Board of Trustees. In its best form, implementation of this plan will result in the achievement of the goals. Implementation is often the most difficult portion of the planning process because while the intentions of the Township and its residents and stakeholders are clear, the legal ways and available planning tools are often not. The following provides a review of additional tools available to Watertown Township and the ways in which they can be used to ensure that the goals of this plan are met.

## Zoning Changes and Ordinance Updates

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With a new Master Plan in place, the Township has an opportunity to review and update its current zoning ordinance to reflect the goals adopted in this plan. Changes may be minor but provide a substantial benefit. Another step may be to review the cases that have come before the Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals to determine if there are trends that may need to be addressed in the zoning ordinance itself.

## Grant Opportunities to Support Proposed Capital Improvements

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This Master Plan can also be used to identify potential funding sources to support proposed capital improvement projects, such as grant and loan programs to help fund priorities. At the Federal level, there is the Housing and Community Facilities Programs, the Public Works and Economic Development Program, and the Water and Wastewater Disposal and Grant Program, to name a few. At the State level, a potential funding source may be the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, which offers grants from the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. The Michigan Department of Transportation also administers Federal funds appropriated under the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (Public Law 112-141, MAP-21). Additionally, local funding programs, as initiated by Watertown Township, such as a special assessment, can also be used for infrastructure projects.

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires that the Township review its plan every five years and update it if necessary.

## Regional Cooperation

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Development, growth, and changes across Sanilac County will affect its quality of life and growth within the Township itself. Communities near Watertown have experienced a variety of changes – some experiencing growth and others experiencing a loss of population and declining housing value. Watertown Township is rightly concerned with the effect that these changes can have on the Township. The Township has the opportunity to pursue cooperative and mutually beneficial relationships with all the surrounding communities and Sanilac County. Cooperative relationships between and among Watertown Township and neighboring communities can provide an opportunity for the full impact of new or expanding developments to be considered, as well as provide an opportunity for communities to pool resources and skills to tackle similar challenges. At the least, Watertown Township should actively participate with the review and opportunity for comment on neighboring communities' Master Plans. Further, the Township should invite comments and suggestions from neighboring communities on major developments within Watertown Township.

## Local Planning Capacity

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Good planning practice and State law require the Township to review its plan every five years and update it if necessary. A cursory review of the plan should take place annually by both the Planning Commission and the Board of Trustees. This provides an opportunity to consider the goals and intent of the plan against pending capital improvements, budget requests, and other developments that may impact the community. Watertown Township provides important planning and development services with limited staff. When change confronts the community, it will be necessary to review the time and effort expended by the staff to address development proposals. Adjustments in fees and changes in the application processes may be necessary in order to cover the costs associated with new or expanding development.

## Additional Implementation Tasks

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Many of the steps necessary to ensure the successful implementation of this Master Plan might not be obvious or are not part of an established Township fund. The implementation efforts that have been described in this section focus on the residents, landowners, and other stakeholders in Watertown Township. To date, Watertown Township has taken steps to keep residents and others involved and informed regarding Township issues.

The successful implementation of this plan depends greatly on Township officials using the plan and residents being aware of the plan, knowing its purpose, and understanding how they might be able to use it. This can be accomplished by consistently referring to the document when making zoning decisions and even referencing the plan, when appropriate, during site plan reviews and variance decisions. Further, the Township should keep a copy of the Future Land Use Map on display and provide a copy of the plan for review at the Township Hall at all times.

## Conclusion

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Watertown Township has spent nearly a year discussing and examining issues regarding its future. It received valuable input from Township residents from the community input survey. As a result, the Planning Commission has compiled a complete, carefully prepared Master Plan document that represents the data, efforts, and collective thoughts of Watertown Township residents and officials.

This Master Plan is only the beginning of an action program for the next 10 to 20 years. Because the future welfare of the Township depends upon rational, coordinated action, the Planning Commission stands ready to meet any person or group interested in the future development of the area. The Planning Commission will be available to help and guide those who need advice or wish to be part of the Master Plan implementation process.

The implementation of this Master Plan is a task to be led by Township officials and the Planning Commission, but is also dependent upon every responsible citizen of Watertown Township. By working together, Watertown Township will continue to be a desirable, attractive, and convenient community in which to live, work, and play.

Appendix A  
Community Input Survey Results

# Watertown Township Survey

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## 1. How long have you lived in Watertown Township?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Less than 1 year		2.5%	2
1 to 20 years		35.0%	28
21 to 50 years		37.5%	30
51 to 64 years		15.0%	12
65 years or more		7.5%	6
		<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>78</b>

### Comments

#	Response
1.	Do not live - only have property - Ag use
2.	Have building there

## 2. Which one of the following categories describes your occupation?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Semi-skilled		7.8%	6
Sales or office work		18.2%	14
Skilled worker (e.g. craftsman, foreman, technician)		9.1%	7
Farmer		19.5%	15

Homemaker		14.3%	11
Manager or owner		13.0%	10
Educational or professional worker		3.9%	3
Other, please specify...		14.3%	11
		<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>77</b>

**3. Which one of the following categories describes your occupation? (Other, please specify...)**

#	Response
1.	Retired
2.	Retired
3.	Disabled, Retired
4.	Retired- used to work at hospitals
5.	Retired
6.	Industrial Processing
7.	unemployed (office work)
8.	Retired
9.	Retired
10.	retired
11.	Retired

**4. What do you envision the character of the township in the future?**

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Unchanged		67.1%	51
More rural		17.1%	13
More urban		15.8%	12
		<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>76</b>

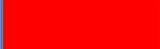
### 5. Why do you live in Watertown Twp.?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Jobs		15.6%	12
Family		27.3%	21
Schools		3.9%	3
Small community atmosphere		46.8%	36
Low cost of living		9.1%	7
Other, please specify...		19.5%	15
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>77</b>

### Why do you live in Watertown Twp.? (Other, please specify...)

#	Response
1.	Can't sell property.
2.	Own business & property
3.	Farmland
4.	owned farm here
5.	Great place to raise a family
6.	This is where my home I purchased is located
7.	Farm Land
8.	farm
9.	Access to Lake Huron
10.	This is where home is
11.	Life Time Farmer
12.	Only affordable house near Peck Schools when I had to move
13.	own property do not live there
14.	Farming
15.	Farming

**6. How do you rate the quality of life in our township?**

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Excellent		33.3%	27
OK		45.7%	37
Fair		3.7%	3
Needs Improvement		11.1%	9
Poor		1.2%	1
No opinion		4.9%	4
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>81</b>

**7. Rate the following services, infrastructure and quality of service provided by the Township. Use the scale of 1 for excellent to 5 for poor.**

	1	2	3	4	5	Total Responses
Fire Protection	46 (63.0%)	17 (23.3%)	4 (5.5%)	2 (2.7%)	4 (5.5%)	73
EMS (Ambulance & Emergency Medical	39 (55.7%)	19 (27.1%)	5 (7.1%)	3 (4.3%)	4 (5.7%)	70
Zoning Regulations & Enforcement	18 (26.1%)	17 (24.6%)	19 (27.5%)	5 (7.2%)	10 (14.5%)	69
Police Protection	41 (57.7%)	15 (21.1%)	8 (11.3%)	3 (4.2%)	4 (5.6%)	71
Hard Surface Road Condition & Maintenance	24 (32.4%)	22 (29.7%)	14 (18.9%)	9 (12.2%)	5 (6.8%)	74
Gravel Road Condition & Maintenance	22 (29.7%)	23 (31.1%)	14 (18.9%)	8 (10.8%)	7 (9.5%)	74

**8. Please rank in order of importance (1-12) which of the following you would like to see developed in our township.**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Ag Tours	2 (4.9%)	3 (7.3%)	1 (2.4%)	1 (2.4%)	7 (17.1%)	7 (17.1%)	3 (7.3%)	1 (2.4%)	3 (7.3%)	8 (19.5%)	5 (12.2%)	0 (0.0%)	41
Bicycle Path and Walkway	10 (20.0%)	6 (12.0%)	10 (20.0%)	3 (6.0%)	6 (12.0%)	3 (6.0%)	4 (8.0%)	2 (4.0%)	1 (2.0%)	2 (4.0%)	2 (4.0%)	1 (2.0%)	50
Campground	1 (2.6%)	3 (7.9%)	1 (2.6%)	4 (10.5%)	4 (10.5%)	5 (13.2%)	6 (15.8%)	4 (10.5%)	5 (13.2%)	1 (2.6%)	3 (7.9%)	1 (2.6%)	38
Dog Park	1 (2.5%)	2 (5.0%)	1 (2.5%)	2 (5.0%)	1 (2.5%)	4 (10.0%)	4 (10.0%)	5 (12.5%)	4 (10.0%)	6 (15.0%)	7 (17.5%)	3 (7.5%)	40
Equestrian Trail	2 (4.9%)	1 (2.4%)	2 (4.9%)	3 (7.3%)	1 (2.4%)	1 (2.4%)	4 (9.8%)	5 (12.2%)	7 (17.1%)	7 (17.1%)	8 (19.5%)	0 (0.0%)	41
Improved Hi-Speed Internet Access	<b>20</b> <b>(37.0%)</b>	16 (29.6%)	2 (3.7%)	5 (9.3%)	2 (3.7%)	2 (3.7%)	1 (1.9%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.9%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (5.6%)	2 (3.7%)	54
More Blacktop Roads	12 (24.5%)	<b>17</b> <b>(34.7%)</b>	8 (16.3%)	3 (6.1%)	2 (4.1%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (4.1%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (4.1%)	2 (4.1%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.0%)	49
ORV Trail	3 (6.8%)	3 (6.8%)	5 (11.4%)	2 (4.5%)	5 (11.4%)	1 (2.3%)	4 (9.1%)	11 (25.0%)	5 (11.4%)	2 (4.5%)	2 (4.5%)	1 (2.3%)	44
Programs for Senior Citizens	3 (6.4%)	4 (8.5%)	8 (17.0%)	6 (12.8%)	7 (14.9%)	9 (19.1%)	1 (2.1%)	3 (6.4%)	3 (6.4%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (4.3%)	1 (2.1%)	47
Programs for Youth	1 (2.4%)	3 (7.3%)	8 (19.5%)	8 (19.5%)	7 (17.1%)	7 (17.1%)	2 (4.9%)	2 (4.9%)	1 (2.4%)	2 (4.9%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	41
Swimming Pool	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (7.9%)	7 (18.4%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (5.3%)	7 (18.4%)	5 (13.2%)	3 (7.9%)	4 (10.5%)	4 (10.5%)	3 (7.9%)	38
Other	6 (42.9%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (7.1%)	1 (7.1%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (7.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (35.7%)	14

**Other-specify**

#	Response
1.	Gravel roads kept up.
2.	Clear side road of high weeds
3.	Ignore all of your ideas. Concentrate on what you have to improve already
4.	Drug Free area
5.	More jobs for our young
6.	A safe water access
7.	Annual Township Hall picnic with free sidewalk chalk
8.	None of the above
9.	Less taxes
10.	Clean up the township. The old Kramer gas station right at the edge of township and city is terrible. A good clean up is long overdue.
11.	Better roads

**9. Do you own a computer or smartphone/tablet with internet access?**

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Yes		81.5%	66
No		18.5%	15
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>81</b>

**10. If yes, have you visited [www.watertowntownship.net](http://www.watertowntownship.net) for information about the township meetings, ordinances, or our Master Plan?**

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Yes		21.1%	15
No		78.9%	56
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>71</b>

**11. Do you use social media like Facebook, Twitter or others? Please List.**

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Yes		53.2%	41
No		46.8%	36
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>77</b>

**Do you use social media like Facebook, Twitter or others? Please List.**

#	Response
1.	Facebook only
2.	Facebook
3.	Facebook
4.	Facebook
5.	Facebook
6.	Facebook
7.	Facebook
8.	Facebook
9.	Facebook
10.	Facebook, Weather.com
11.	Facebook
12.	Facebook and Twitter

**12. Comments and Suggestions |**

#	Response
1.	Keep the wind turbines out of the township. They are ugly.
2.	More clean up of junk cars and trucks. Cutting down dead trees near the roads.
3.	You need to add a land use permit form to online for availability.
4.	Road Commission could do a better job of keeping our back roads graded and the ditches cleaned. Also the trees cut by roadsides.
5.	I feel Watertown township is a great place to live and would not like to see it become commercial. We are close enough to town and do not need o replicate programs that are offered in nearby towns. I also feel property taxes are too high and am concerned about being able to pay such taxes now and in our retirement years. Please, please stay focused on being frugal.

6.	More jobs for people at a good wage.
7.	Why do you brine the shoulder on main roads? This makes such a mess if you have a paved driveway and is a waste of money.
8.	Heard there might be a push for residential zoning in small cluster of houses in a ag dominate setting. I think that might open a can of worms for zoning issues for residents and township officials.
9.	Pave Cooper Road :)
10.	Try revoking that dog kennel on Townline Rd. that is disturbing. Not fair to all the neighboring tax payers to put up with that noise all day and night. What were you thinking giving permission for that many dogs?
11.	USE MORE BRINE- More often AND more of it! Poor road conditions- too much dust and not enough brine.
12.	Facebook
13.	Encourage small businesses to open in the township which would be good for the community overall.
14.	I am concerned about safe water to drink
15.	I did not realize there was a website for info
16.	M-46 and M-19 are a mess!
17.	More freedom of zoning most of us take pride in our homes and try to improve value and nice looks with out being made to pay for permits. Eliminate former board member's from observing and reporting activities to board members.
18.	Put the "return to" address on this form and include a postage-paid envelope.
19.	Bicycle/electric scooter path from Watertown into downtown Sandusky would be a real benefit for low-income seniors. Maintaining automobile and compulsory insurance is becoming too expensive.
20.	Make sure all homes are kept up outside-lawn mowed and no trash

Appendix B  
Adoption Documentation