

Lincoln Township Master Plan

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

As Lincoln Township matures, a guide is needed to determine how growth decisions will be made which ensures that the Township's desires regarding development are translated into action. The Lincoln Township' Master Plan is intended to act as a guide for future zoning and development decisions in a manner that is consistent with a rational, well-conceived planning philosophy. When looking into the future, a well thought-out plan is of great value to the Township and its residents. When properly administered, it helps improve the quality of life, promote the efficient use of financial and other resources, protects the environment, encourages an economically healthy community and preserves the open space, agriculture and rural character of the Township.

However, the value of the Master Plan is directly related to the Township's willingness to follow it and its diligence in keeping the Plan current by anticipating changing conditions. As a guide, the Plan is not meant to be rigidly administered; changing conditions may affect the assumptions used when the Plan was originally conceived. But changing conditions do not necessarily mean that the Plan must change dramatically. Instead, the Planning Commission must examine those changes and decide if the policies of the Master Plan are still valid. If so, the Plan should be followed.

Overall, the Lincoln Township Master Plan is based on a number of community characteristics, each of which must be considered by the Planning Commission and Township Board as the Plan is developed and implemented. These include:

- The character of the community - The goals and policies regarding land use that determine the kind of community that is desired. For example, the strong emphasis placed on maintaining rural character is reflected in the Township's Future Land use.
- Capability of the land - A wide variety of environmental constraints was considered, such as whether or not the land itself is able to accommodate planned uses.
- Community Needs and Desires - The Township examined the need for various uses. For example, providing quality, affordable single family dwellings, retaining open space that gives the Township its rural character and striving for a clean environment free of junk and pollution were all determined to be important community issues. These issues help to determine land uses in appropriate areas as the Township develops.
- Available Services - By identifying natural resource constraints in the Township and surveying public opinion, research and data has been obtained about the

status of community services and their ability to handle planned development in the future.

- Existing Development - The effects of existing and planned land uses were also reviewed, particularly with respect to how they might affect those already established.
- Regional Planning - The Township does not exist in a vacuum. Other regional issues such as the development of the M-37 and M-20 corridors and the protection of the White River were also considered.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE MASTER PLAN AND THE ZONING ORDINANCE

The relationship between the Land Use Plan and the Zoning Ordinance is often misunderstood. The Land Use plan is a *guide* for land use in the future. The Zoning Ordinance *regulates* the actual use of land in the present. The Master Plan is *not a binding, legal document*. The Zoning Ordinance *is law and must be followed* by the Township and its residents.

Implementation of the Master Plan is realized through the Zoning Ordinance. In other words, a well enforced Zoning Ordinance will make certain that the vision of the Land Use Plan is achieved. Local control of land use (with some exceptions, such as state and federal land uses) is an accepted legal practice. Land use regulation is controlled through the separation of land into various use areas, called zoning districts. The rules governing these districts are contained in the Zoning Ordinance.

As growth in the Township continues, the Planning Commission and Township Board will have to address complex zoning issues brought on by the pace and increasing sophistication of development projects. The need to provide flexibility, coupled with the Township's desire to implement its vision statement, may create the need for innovative zoning solutions, such as clustering provisions, open space preservation, planned unit development regulations, use of conditional and conservation zoning, etc.

TIME FRAME

The Lincoln Township Master Plan focuses on a long range time horizon of 10 to 20 years. Accordingly, the elements of the Plan are not meant to be accomplished overnight, but rather serve as the guide to growth, providing direction for the development decisions that will confront the Township. While much effort has gone into the preparation of this Land Use Plan, the work is never really finished. The Plan should be regularly evaluated and updated, as needed. At a minimum, state law requires a review of the Plan every 5 years, so it continues to be a work in progress. Regardless of the state imposed 5-year timeframe, the Plan should be evaluated on a regular basis to reaffirm Township goals or change them as deemed necessary.

HOW THE LAND USE PLAN AFFECTS YOU AS A RESIDENT OR LANDOWNER

It is important that citizens understand how the Plan works and how it may affect people as residents and/or property owners. For most, the Plan will not have any immediate impact. In fact, it may never directly affect every individual. However, as someone who is concerned about the future of the Township, the Plan should be of interest to you.

- As a *property owner*, you may not only wish to know what land use is proposed for your property, but also how adjacent land and properties similar to yours are planned.
- As a *homeowner*, you should be interested in the properties in your immediate area and what uses are proposed for vacant land nearby.
- As the *owner of vacant property*, you should want to know what land uses are proposed for your property.
- As a *Township resident*, you should be interested in the overall concepts of the Plan, as expressed in the Goals and Policies found in Chapter 3 of this document. These statements will give an indication of the Planning Commission's view of the Township, now and in the future.

HOW TO USE THE LINCOLN TOWNSHIP LAND USE PLAN

How you use this Plan will depend upon your interest in the future of Lincoln Township. The following list should help you find the information that interests you the most.

To find what land use is proposed for your property or any other property in the Township, look at the Future Land Use Map. This map is located in the back of this book. The map is divided into separate land use categories. Find the category of land use in which your property or others are located.

To find out how the Planning Commission views development in your area, read through the text of the Master Plan. It will describe the general direction of development within your area; it may be either fairly specific, or it may be somewhat general.

To find out the meaning of the land use designation for your property, go to the Future Land Use chapter that discusses your land's designation. For instance, if your property is designated as Rural Residential, read the Rural Residential section in Chapter 4.

If you have a specific proposal which does not fit the Plan, you may want to research the Plan in more detail, beginning with the Goals and Policies found in Chapter 3.

To determine how the Plan and Zoning Ordinance affect your property, you will have to not only consult this Plan, but the Zoning Ordinance as well. A copy of both documents may be purchased from the Township Clerk or viewed by appointment. The Future Land Use designation will indicate to you how your property is planned for use in the future. The Land Use classification will relate to specific Zoning Ordinance districts. Once you are familiar with the Plan and how it affects your land, you will need to consult the Zoning Ordinance to determine the specific uses and regulations that apply to your land. Generally, you must meet certain minimum lots sizes, building setbacks, parking requirements, etc.

If the future land use designation is different from the current zoning designation, *this does not mean that you cannot continue to use your property as you do now*. The Zoning Ordinance allows a lawful existing use to continue as long as it meets the requirements that were in effect when the use was begun.

The Master Plan may impact the future of your property, regardless of whether you are a vacant land owner or a homeowner. For more information, attend Planning Commission meetings. Your input and questions are always welcome. Call the Township Clerk for meeting times and dates.

CONCLUSION

Communities have a responsibility to look beyond the day-to-day zoning issues and provide guidance for land use and development through the Land Use Plan. A properly developed, well thought-out Plan can be of great value to the Township. It can provide tangible benefits in improved quality of life, more efficient use of financial and other resources, an economically healthy community and a clean environment free of junk and pollution.

However, the value is directly related to the community's willingness to follow the Plan and its diligence in keeping the plan current and relevant to existing conditions. It is hard work, but the rewards usually make the effort worthwhile. The Plan is also only worthwhile if it reflects the collective values and desires of those who live and own property in Lincoln Township. Interested parties are encouraged to participate in Planning Commission meetings.

Chapter 2

THE CHARACTER OF LINCOLNTOWNSHIP

POPULATION GROWTH

The population of Lincoln Township grew at a greater *rate* than most of the populations of surrounding townships between 1990 and 2000. Additionally, the number of people added to each community was higher in Lincoln Township than most of its neighbors. Lincoln Township's population increased by 38% between 1990 and 2000, one of the highest rates in Newaygo County, which grew at a rate of 25.3%. The population rate for the next ten years (1990-2000) decreased slightly higher than the surrounding townships.

Lincoln Township Area - Population Trends 1980 – 2010

Community	1980	1990	1980- 1990	2000	1990- 2000	2010	2000 - 2010
			Change		Change		Change
Lincoln Twp.	885	969	10%	1,338	38%	1275	-0.50%
Wilcox Twp.	772	831	8%	1,145	38%	1098	-0.50%
Sherman Twp.	1810	1866	3%	2,159	16%	2109	-0.025
Merrill Twp.	508	451	-11%	590	31%	667	0.13%
Newaygo Co.	34,917	38,202	9%	47,874	25%	48460	0.01%

Projections show continued population gains in Lincoln Township as well as throughout Newaygo County.

Population projections are an important tool for planning future development, since they can assist in providing an estimate of how much growth will occur in a community during a specified time period. With every new addition to the population comes increased pressure on the Township's infrastructure, natural environment and limited resources.

AGE

The median age of Lincoln Township residents was 46.0 years in 2010, which is slightly higher than the median age for the County 40.9. The 2010 U.S. Census divided Lincoln Township's population into various age groups. The number of people in each age group is important for future land use planning, as age influences the types of activities which community members participate in. This in turn affects the amount and types of various categories of land use, especially recreational, educational and residential.

Lincoln Township Age Distribution

Newaygo County Age Distribution
2010

2010

Age	Total	Percent		Age	Total	Percent
Under 5 years	62	4.9%		Under 5 years	3018	6.2%
5 to 9	67	5.3%		5 to 9	3230	6.9%
10 to 14	92	7.2%		10 to 14	3533	7.3%
15 to 19	86	6.7%		15 to 19	3594	7.4%
20 to 24	61	4.8%		20 to 24	2616	5.4%
25 to 34	100	7.8%		25 to 34	4962	10.2%
35 to 44	151	11.9%		35 to 44	5832	12%
45 to 54	241	18.3%		45 to 54	7718	15.9%
55 to 59	118	9.3%		55 to 59	3438	7.1%
60 to 64	106	8.3%		60 to 64	2991	6.2%
65 to 74	117	9.2%		65 to 74	4369	9%
75 to 84	66	5.2%		75 to 84	2303	4.8%
85 and over	15	1.2%		85 and over	856	1.8%
Total	1275	100.0%		Total	48460	100%

Lincoln Township nearly mirrors Newaygo County when reviewing the age groups that make up the population. Assuming the proportions of each age group remain stable through 2010, it is likely that those individuals identified in the younger to middle teen group will have moved into the work force, while those over the age of 65 will have increased. As the population continues to age the need for medical and social services will likely increase. Additionally, 17.4% of the Township's population is 14 years of age and younger, while 23.9% is 60 years of age or older. Those most vulnerable to death by fire and injury are the young and the aged. With 41.3% of the Township's population

falling into those categories, the township should be aware that these age groups may need more emergency services than other population sectors.

EDUCATION

Lincoln Township is served by the White Cloud and Fremont Public School Districts. The levels of educational attainment in Lincoln are nearly the same as those for Newaygo County overall. However, only 41.7% of Lincoln Township residents age 25 or older had received a high school diploma in 2000, as compared to 61.1% in 1990. The American Community 2017 5 year Survey estimates 91.7% of the resident age 25 or older hold a high school diploma; about the same as the rate in Michigan of 90.2%.*

On the other end of the educational scale, the percentage of Lincoln Township residents who hold at least a bachelor's degree or higher increased from 6.4% in 1990 to 8.3% in 2000. The American Community 5 year Survey estimates 13.4 % of residents age 25 or older hold at least a bachelor's degree or higher.*

HOUSEHOLDS

There were 505 households in Lincoln Township at the time of the 2000 Census, an increase of 156 since the 1990 Census. Estimates for 2017 from the American Community Survey shows 567 households. As the number of households increased, the average number of persons per household has slightly decreased. There were 2.78 persons per household for the Township in 1990 compared to 2.65 in 2000. The American Community Survey estimates the average number of person per household continues to decrease to 2.4 persons per household. This mimics state and national trends toward smaller household sizes. However, since it is the household unit that consumes land and requires services the number of households is an important factor. For example, a household with a single child requires the bus to stop just the same as a household with several children. Lincoln can expect the growth rate of households in the future will be higher than the population growth rate. The decline in household size is a national trend that most communities are experiencing due to changes in family types and family sizes in the country.

The majority (60.4%) of all households in Lincoln Township were made up of married-couple families, which nearly matches the number for the county (60.2%). Married couple Families are estimated to remain at 61%. According to The American Community Survey.* Of all the housing units in Lincoln Township, 85% are owner-occupied with 15% renter-occupied. The high percentage of owner-occupied housing units generally points to those owners being invested in their community and concerned about its environment.

**Margin of error at least 10% of the total value. Take care with this statistic.*

INCOME

The median household income in Lincoln Township rose from \$19,602 in 1990 to \$35,739 in 1999, only \$1,391 less than the county-wide average. The American Community Survey 5 year Estimates median household income from 2013-2017 to be \$45,000.00*

As might be expected, the percentage of families living below poverty level has decreased from 17% in 1990 to 10.4% in 1999. The American Community Survey 5 year estimates in 2017 show 10.7% of the residents are below the poverty line.*

EMPLOYMENT

Employment statistics of Newaygo and surrounding counties form a picture of the overall economic well-being of Lincoln Township residents.

Unemployment Rates 1990 - 2010

County	1990	1995	1999	2002	2010
Newaygo	9.70%	10.00%	7.10%	8.90%	12.20%
Oceana	11.00%	11.50%	7.40%	8.90%	14.20%
Mecosta	8.60%	5.40%	4.20%	5.60%	13.20%
Muskegon	9.40%	6.15%	4.70%	9.20%	14.50%
Kent	6.20%	3.80%	3.10%	6.30%	10.40%
Lake	10.20%	13.20%	8.20%	9.50%	15.50%
State of Michigan	7.60%	5.30%	3.80%	6.20%	

As the costs of commuting increase, it may slow the inward migration of people seeking a rural lifestyle. However, many Newaygo County residents are retirees who once owned recreational property which has become their year around residence.

Of the 964 people in Lincoln Township age 16 years and over, 55.6% (536) of them are in the labor force. To get to their jobs, most people (73%) drive alone with a mean travel time to work of 33 minutes. In 2000 only 12.9% carpoled to work.

Those employed primarily work in production, transportation and material moving occupations (29.9%), manufacturing (28.1%) or service occupations (21%) much of the work force is commuting to Muskegon, Grand Rapids or Big Rapids for employment.

**Margin of error at least 10% of the total value. Take care with this statistic.*

HOUSING TRENDS

In order to develop housing policies and strategies for the future, it is important to know and understand the unique characteristics of Lincoln Township's housing stock. This requires an examination of past housing trends and current conditions, both in terms of the quantity and quality as well as housing occupancy characteristics.

In 1990 there were 774 housing units in Lincoln Township, 82.5% of which were homeowner occupied. In 2000 there were 850 housing units, 87.3% of which were homeowner occupied. The American Community 5 year estimates for 2017 shows 876 housing units with 85% owner occupied*. Ninety three housing units or 11% of the total housing units in 2000 were seasonal, recreational or occasional use homes compared to 29% in 1990.

The types of homes in Lincoln Township are primarily single unit detached homes (78%). The remaining 22% consist mostly of mobile homes as compared to 27.3% in 1990. The relatively high percentage of mobile homes in Lincoln Township has likely been an affordable housing alternative for year-round residents on a fixed income, i.e., retirees.

In 2014, 23% of owner-occupied housing units in Lincoln Township were valued at less than \$50,000. The median value of owner-occupied homes was \$395,000. In 2000, only 22.9% of the owner-occupied housing units were valued at less than \$50,000 with a median value of \$80,200. This sharp increase in housing values reflects the state-wide increase, most likely caused by recent low mortgage interest rates which spurred demand for homeownership. This may be particularly true when one considers the age of most of the homes in Lincoln Township. One hundred and seventy-one homes (20.6%) were built in 1939 or earlier. Only 17.7% of all homes were built between 1990 and March of 2009. Statistics from 2014 show 29% of all homes were built between 1990 and 2009, indicating a renewal of housing in the township.

The age of housing stock in a community is often of concern because older homes that have not received proper maintenance can deteriorate and become blighted.

The same is true for the wells and septic systems serving these homes. Lincoln Township residents rely exclusively on groundwater wells and septic fields. The average life of a well-maintained septic system is approximately 20 years. It can fail much sooner if not properly used or maintained. The bulk of the homes in the Township are over 30 years old. If septic systems begin failing and pollutants reach groundwater, this could become a significant public health concern. The Township should be mindful of the number and concentration of housing units in an area because of this.

**Margin of error at least 10% of the total value. Take care with this statistic. ADD*

TRANSPORTATION

The majority of roads in the Township are unpaved and consist of either dirt or gravel. Many roads, particularly in the northern section of the Township, are on federal lands and are ungraded, two-track paths. There are two state road corridors located in Lincoln Township. One Mile Road, also known as M-20, is the largest primary road which intersects the Township in an east - west direction and the only roadway which travels the entire length of the Township. M-20 is a paved, two lane roadway which extends from Midland to Oceana county. The northeastern corner of the Township is bisected by M-37, which provides access to Grand Rapids and interstate highways to the south and to Traverse City to the North.

Access to a great deal of the land within the Township is limited. The County Primary roads in the Township are Three Mile Road, which runs east - west; Felch Avenue and Wisner, running north - south; and Baldwin Avenue, which runs south from M-20 into Sherman Township. In 2015 a traffic count was done on the township's major roadways. The busiest stretch of road was 5 Mile Rd. west of M37 with an average of 990 cars passing on it per 24 hour period. Foss between M-37 and Mundy was the second busiest with 875 car trips in 24 hours.

As the Township grows, more and more pressure will be put upon local roads. Although an increase in road millage helps the Township maintain its roads, as costs of repairs and road usage continues to rise, the Township will be restricted in its ability to maintain and improve them. Unfortunately, the additional property tax collected from each new home does not cover the cost of the additional pressure on the township's infrastructure.

The Township will have to continue to balance the desires of residents for rural character (unpaved roads) with the need to provide a safe, high quality roadway system. Unpaved roads, while expensive to maintain, do tend to slow traffic and, in some cases, discourage growth, which many residents may see as promoting their overall quality of life. In short, when a road is improved, it becomes more desirable for development. Others may view unpaved streets as a nuisance with the problems of dust control, rutting, poor driving conditions in bad weather and other difficulties. To a certain extent, gravel roads contribute to rural character. Regardless, the Township can use road improvement policies to guide or discourage growth pressures.

The Township should continue to work with the Newaygo County Road Commission to develop and maintain a priority system for determining which streets should be paved and when. The goal may be to pave only major section line or quarter-section line streets that carry heavy traffic loads. Some of the factors that may be used to determine paving priorities include designated future land use, resident desires, roadway conditions, drainage, adjacent land uses, traffic volumes, maintenance expenditures, roadway use type and roadway function (arterial vs. local street) and growth management desires.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Public utilities and community facilities are important considerations in the development of a land use plan. Public services, especially water and sewer, are often essential to the health and welfare of residents. Currently, few services are provided within Lincoln Township due to the low level of development which has occurred. As growth takes place, it should be planned in such a fashion as to facilitate the provision of utilities and services in an efficient manner and to minimize the need for these services in areas where they would be costly to provide.

The extensive land areas devoted to surface water, coupled with poor soils and a lack of public sanitary sewer throughout the Township, provide strong reasons for being concerned about the groundwater. Private wells are the source of drinking water throughout the community. Therefore, protecting the groundwater from infiltration of chemicals and waste is a significant issue.

One of the important considerations in identifying a rural area's suitability for residential use is the ability of soils to manage on-site sewage disposal. Over development in those areas with severe soil limitations should be discouraged as it may impact ground water quality. Lincoln Township is currently not served by either public sewer or water and for the majority of Township residents; these services may never be necessary or available.

For areas of high density, such as Diamond Lake, this issue is likely to become more important over time. Residential densities around Diamond Lake, coupled with the capability of existing soil, will reach a point where effluent problems will worsen. Diamond Lake also lacks an inlet or outlet and continues to lose some of its coastal wetland areas, all of which help a lake cleanse itself. Soils, particularly along the eastern edge of the lake, are generally of unsuitable for septic systems. In addition, numerous older homes on the lake lack adequate septic systems. Given the existing conditions along the lakefront, potential water quality issues for the lake and drinking water supplies may someday require that a community sewer system be installed. At a minimum, septic maintenance programs should be considered.

Lincoln Township is currently served by the Newaygo County Sheriff's Department and the White Cloud Area Fire District. Most of the Township is, however, located outside the five-mile radius recommended to provide adequate service. This could present a problem for future development in those portions of the Township, where development may locate outside of the accepted service area, likely creating higher property insurance rates.

Chapter 3

GOALS AND POLICIES

The planning process is based upon the assumption that a community-wide consensus of planning Goals and Policies must be in place before realistic plans for future growth can be prepared. It further assumes that once growth goals have been agreed upon, a plan for future growth will be more readily used by community leaders because it reflects widely accepted goals and policies.

As communities grow, they need a direction for future development. The Land Use Plan is the instrument through which this direction can be provided. The Plan helps determine what kind of community is desired and how to achieve it. A direction for future growth is often reached in two ways. First, it may evolve from a desire to remedy some existing or projected concern. Second, it may be based upon the ideal of "what kind of community do we want to be?" Therefore, development of goals and policies requires a careful study of community needs and concerns, as well as an examination of existing policies.

Goals and Policies serve as instruments which guide the evolution of the Township by bringing the social, physical, economic and political considerations into more meaningful focus. Goals and policies are statements of the intent of the community with respect to future development and the remainder of the Plan is based on the desire to implement those intentions. The Goals and Policies were developed for the Land Use Plan by Lincoln Township's Planning Commission and are listed below.

GOAL REGARDING TOWNSHIP CHARACTER

The character of Lincoln Township will be primarily low-density residential with homes in rural settings with open space.

People live in Lincoln Township for a wide variety of reasons. Above all, residents strongly desire to keep the Township as a rural, residential community with open space. While most would readily acknowledge the need to have a balance of other uses, the preservation of rural character and agricultural lands is an essential element of their quality of life. This rural character is found in the open landscape and expanses of unaltered natural features such as forests, lakes, streams, farmland and open space.

Township Character Policies

The Township will adopt and implement ordinance provisions whose purpose will be to foster the establishment of low density residential development which maintains rural character, open spaces and preserves existing agricultural land. Before approval, the Township will seek information from applicants for land development projects that is

necessary to ensure that adequate utilities/septic or wells, roads, fire and police services and other Township services are adequate to serve the proposed uses.

Protection of groundwater resources, surface waters, natural features and other environmental features will be a primary consideration of the Township when reviewing development proposals.

GOAL REGARDING LAND USE

The Township will have an appropriate mixture of land uses, but will emphasize low density residential uses and homes in rural settings which retain open spaces. Accordingly, the Township will provide limited public services that are appropriate for a rural and agricultural community.

All commercial development will be limited and developed with the intent of retaining the rural nature of the Township by requiring sound access management principles such as access drives, curb cuts, pedestrian circulation, shared parking, landscaping, and sign regulations. The purposes of the regulations imposed are to mitigate the negative impacts of lineal (strip) or sprawling development along streets and roadways, avoid land locking parcels behind road-front commercial enterprises, and encourage clustering commercial development with one access servicing several businesses (as opposed to many driveways, one or more for each business). All of these elements are essential for quality use of land and for economic development efforts within Lincoln Township.

While Township residents place great emphasis on the preservation of rural character, they also may recognize the need to provide for a balance of other land uses necessary in any community. However, a number of factors require clear limitations on any new commercial development. As with nearly every land use issue, the key for the Township is to establish a proper balance between the needs of the community for goods and services and the desire of its residents to maintain a rural and agricultural character of open space.

It is ironic that many of the people who move to a rural area like Lincoln Township bring with them an expectation of receiving services like those in urban areas. However, the Township's low density residential development, which they sought, cannot support those levels of services.

The low density development and spread out nature of homes and businesses in Lincoln Township make it difficult to provide extensive public services in a cost effective manner. Moreover, it is unlikely that widespread public water or sanitary sewer will be available anytime soon. This emphasizes the concerns of the Township about groundwater protection and the impact of growth on water quality and other quality of life issues.

Land Use Policies

Review of land use and zoning changes will include consideration of how the proposed development preserves the rural and agricultural character of the Township. Areas of any new higher density residential development will be required to retain open space as well as assure adequate water and sanitary sewer service prior to development. Development reviews will include information on the effects of the development on area groundwater sources and surface water quality.

New commercial development should be small scale in nature and designed to reflect the rural character of Lincoln Township, with uses necessary for daily needs of the community and limited sizes of buildings and parking areas.

Industrial development is anticipated to be accommodated (and should be directed to) the Cities of White Cloud, Newaygo, or other areas that already have vacant facilities and land to accommodate industrial uses. Further, cities and villages are better equipped to provide adequate water, sewer, police and fire protection.

GOAL REGARDING TRANSPORTATION

The Township will pursue land development policies that foster a safe and efficient transportation network appropriate for a rural and agricultural community.

The influx of new residential development will likely affect residents' perception of traffic when they begin to notice more cars and other vehicles along the major roadways. In addition, newer residents may start to ask that gravel roads be paved. The Township will have to balance the desires of residents for rural character (unpaved roads) with the need to provide a safe, high quality roadway system.

TRANSPORTATION POLICIES

The Township, in cooperation with Newaygo County Road Commission, will develop and maintain a priority review system for the paving of streets, considering such factors as resident desires, traffic volumes, roadway function, land use and other appropriate elements.

The Township will encourage land development along major roadways that reduces the number of access points for individual uses.

Chapter 4

FUTURELAND USE PLAN

I. EXISTING LAND USE

A. Land Use Character

Several patterns of development and land uses have influenced the extent, character and quality of development in various portions of the Township.

B. *Strip Residential*

With the exceptions of Diamond Lake and the White River, nearly all residential development in the Township has occurred along county roadways. This is especially the case along the major roadways of One Mile, Wisner and Felch. Although development along county roads is not unusual in rural areas, it does present some practical problems as more development occurs.

First, the number of driveways along these roadways can become a traffic issue, particularly in areas where zoning allows relatively narrow lot widths. Although individually these driveways do not generate excessive amounts of traffic, over time an increase in their number on a busy roadway can present problems with additional turn movements, especially where vehicle speeds are high and driveways have limited sight distance. Further, strip residential development can severely impact the rural character of the community because it incrementally alters the character of the roadway. For example, turning areas of natural vegetation along roadways into lawns will eventually make the area look more like a subdivision than a rural stretch of country road.

As development along roadways increases, property owners are also more likely to demand better road maintenance. Residents who feel that the condition of unpaved roadways is a problem will likely become more vocal as more development occurs along these roadways.

Finally, homes spaced out along roadways, particularly when near the street, tend to detract from the rural character of the Township when the view is more of buildings than of open space. A byproduct of strip residential development, the inefficient use of land, also occurs when homes are placed near the front property line. A number of properties in Lincoln Township are divided into relatively large lots, with the frontage taken up by individual homes. This type of development tends to create relatively deep lots which leaves sizeable portions of properties cut off from road access and essentially

unusable. These landlocked parcels also fail to enhance the view shed associated with rural character, such as open space.

While this may not be a problem for the property owner, new owners may look for opportunities to use the back portions of these lots for further development and seek variances or other approvals from the Township to do so. The 1997 amendments to the state Subdivision Control Act (now the Land Division Act) provide some opportunities to limit the overall depth of properties created without the filing of a plat, but access to interior properties will continue to be an important consideration in reviewing future development proposals.

C. Spot Commercial

In less developed areas, individual commercial businesses often have long histories. The types of businesses vary considerably. Sometimes these uses were established prior to zoning, sometimes approved by past zoning actions and just as often no one really knows how or when they began.

Normally, these "spot commercial" areas sprouted at roadway intersections or locations convenient to the greatest number of people. Little consideration was given to the design or function of these areas for the most part. Driveways are not always well placed and landscaping and buffering provisions did little to shield incompatible land uses.

On the other hand, these commercial uses have tended to "grow up" with their surroundings and do not significantly detract from the area in which they are located. It is generally only when expansions are requested or new buildings or activities added that they come to the attention of their neighbors. Expansion of these areas, if requested, must be evaluated to ensure compatibility with surrounding residential and other land uses.

D. State/Federal Lands

One interesting aspect of Lincoln Township is the amount of Federal and State owned land. Through a series of contiguous lands, Lincoln Township is generally divided to the east and west by the Manistee National Forest, as well as other public lands. Although this land is not frequently sold, the Township decided to recognize the potential for private development of these lands and for that reason placed them into a land use classification.

E. Existing Land Use Description

Land use within Lincoln Township is essentially rural in nature. Residential development is concentrated in the southwest portion of the Township along Luce Avenue between One and Two Mile Roads winding along the White

River and around Diamond Lake. Many of these homes have been converted from seasonal vacation homes to year-round residences and are grouped in small subdivisions or groupings. Other residential development is scattered along One Mile Road, Wisner Avenue, Felch Avenue, Center Line Road and Ferris Avenue.

There are no concentrations of commercial or industrial uses within the Township. Commercial development which has occurred includes the following:

- Golf driving range, mini resort and storage facility located on the north side of One Mile Road to the east of Bingham Avenue;
- Party store near the corner of Mundy Avenue and Jackson; and
- A resort overlooking Diamond Lake on Mundy Avenue.

There is one industrial related use that is a sand and gravel operation located on One Mile Road between Baldwin and Luce Avenues.

Agricultural lands are scattered throughout the Township. Within Lincoln Township, there are approximately 1,300 acres of land (about 6% of the township) which are considered to be essential farmlands or have soil conditions that are optimum for production. Over 90% of Lincoln Township is not considered to be suitable for commercial farming. As more and more family farms go out of business, it becomes even more important to the rural character of the Township to protect the viable farmlands.

A great deal of acreage is publicly owned by both federal and state governments. The Manistee National Forest is principally located in the northern half and part of the central portion of Lincoln Township. The State of Michigan owns parkland in the central portion of the Township and supports the Martin L. O'Toole Roadside Park which sits on the eastern banks of the White River along One Mile Road (M-20). Other public lands of interest include the Loda Lake Wildflower Sanctuary, located at Felch and Six Mile Road; Minnie Pond rustic campground located off of Alger Road between Harrison and 4 Mile Road; the North Country Trail which winds through the Township has a trail house for overnight visitors located at Five Mile Road and Felch.

II. FUTURE LAND USE

Future land use decisions for Lincoln Township will be guided by its Goals and Policies. The principles governing land use will rest on the desire of Township residents and officials to preserve the values that make the community a desirable place to live. Those values are centered on the preservation of the

rural character and natural features of the Township, while recognizing that new development will occur and must be planned. It is also based on the likelihood that availability of public utilities throughout Lincoln Township is remote and that steps will be necessary to protect the groundwater resources from which most residents obtain water. The Lincoln Township Future Land Use Map illustrates the recommended location of Township land use classifications. Each classification is described below.

A. Rural Residential

The Rural Residential classification covers the majority of the central portion of the Township. Various areas of this land use may be characterized by inadequate roadway access, presence of significant natural features, Federal or State owned lands, active agricultural lands and isolated areas of steep topography. Development densities will be at the minimum of one unit per each 5 acres.

The principle purpose of this classification is to preserve the rural residential character of the designated areas of the Township, while continuing to allow farm and other residential uses. In part, this designation recognizes that much of the land in this classification within the Township will eventually be converted from farm and vacant fields to residential use. However, the strong desire on the part of Township residents to preserve their privacy and the rural character for which they moved to the area, dictates a need to limit development and density.

Another factor used to classify Rural Residential lands was the limited ability of the Township to provide utilities, paved road and other services to areas that are planned for more intense development. Lower development densities will permit the Township to provide an appropriate level of services to match the need.

B. Rural Residential Land Use Character

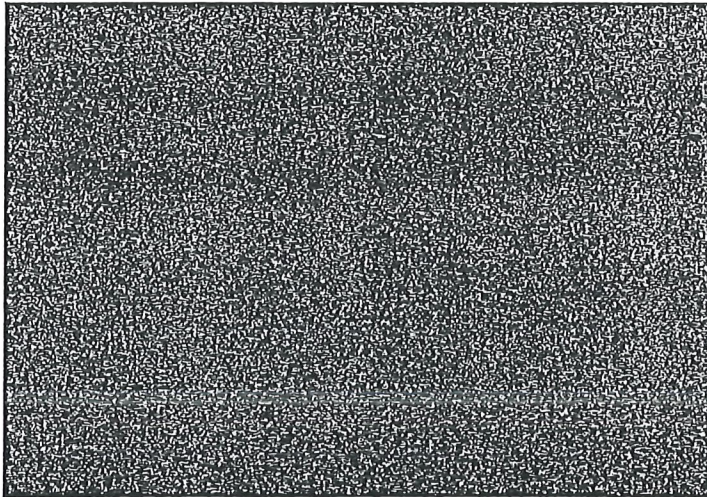
The residents of Lincoln Township value their rural surroundings, natural features and a sense of separation from larger cities. It is therefore essential that future land uses in Lincoln Township preserve these elements. At the same time, the Township recognizes that new people will wish to live in the area, drawn by the same characteristics that existing residents value. Key to directing the appropriate use of land in Lincoln Township will be the Township's ability to balance this new development against the need to preserve the low density, rural character prized by all. This balance is emphasized in the Land Use and Township Character Goals and Policies.

Although farming is not a significant land use in the Township, it is very important to the Township and land use decisions will support the continued use of land for agricultural purposes. Where development of land is

requested, the densities and design of such proposals will be of a nature that will continue the rural character of the area or permit use of a portion of the land for open space or agriculture. This may be accomplished through the use of cluster or open space development.

Clustering provides for a denser concentration of development in a limited area, with no increase in the overall or "gross density" of the site. The gross density must still comply with the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. The object of clustering is not to increase the total number of units developed, but to regulate the amount of land disturbed by new structures, lawns, and driveways.

Cluster provisions, while having limited impact on the preservation of farmland, can allow for the preservation of many site features, such as wooded areas, steep slopes, wetlands, and other natural amenities. On larger parcels, the remaining acreage may be useful for farming, provided that ownership or control of the area to be used for farming is firmly established.



Allowing cluster development through the use of a planned unit development (PUD) provides the opportunity for the Township to ensure that land will be kept free from future development. Apart from being a requirement of the PUD, preserved open space may be deeded in equal parts to the property owners of the cluster with restrictions on individual sales, requiring approval of a majority (or greater number) of the remaining owners. Regardless of ownership, the remaining acreage would not be permitted to be developed with additional housing units.

Other land use techniques may become available for use in these areas, such as the purchase or transfer of development rights, private property restrictions through land donations or conservation easements, as well as other, more restrictive zoning methods.

C. Low Density Residential

This designation recognizes that much of the land in this classification will be planned for residential use. The strong desire of Township residents to preserve their privacy and the rural character of the area dictates a need for density limitations. Most areas of new development will require a density of one dwelling unit for each one and one-half (1 1/2) acres or larger.

A major factor used to classify Low Density Residential lands was the existing development around Diamond Lake and the White River. In addition, the area designated in the northeastern part of the Township has generally better roadway access, including relatively direct access to M37. The development densities in these areas will ultimately allow the Township to provide better roadway access and other services, in contrast to areas that are planned for less intense development.

Since somewhat higher densities of land use may occur in these areas, development must remain sensitive to existing land uses, consider the need to protect groundwater resources and be designed to limit effects on traffic and natural features. Groundwater is of particular importance as the residents of the Township depend on it for their domestic water supplies.

D. Groundwater is a fragile resource. As noted in a study:

"Septic tanks are a frequently used method for disposal of sewage. Where they are properly sited, such as in sparsely populated areas and in soils with good drainage above the water table, septic tanks generally pose little or no hazard. All too frequently, however, they are installed with drain fields that are too small and intersect nearby groundwater supply wells. In such situations, sewage often contaminates wells in the area or moves to the land surface, or both. Even where septic systems are well drained, they may eventually pollute the groundwater. The EPA (1980) found that about a third of all septic tank installations are not operating properly and that the consequent pollution both above and below ground is substantial. The solution to groundwater contamination from septic systems, beyond better engineered on-site facilities or improved maintenance, may lie in better land-use control and in effective regulations for septic tank installation."

STUDIES IN GEOPHYSICS, "Groundwater Contamination," Geophysics Study Committee; Geophysics Research Forum, Commission on

Physical Sciences, Mathematics, and Resources, National Research Council: NATIONAL ACADEMY PRESS: Washington, D.C. 1984

The protection of water resources has been consistently identified as a high priority (particularly related to drinking water supplies). A combination of poor soils unsuitable for septic systems, a high water table, an increasing amount of rural development and a large number of intensive livestock operations could threaten to jeopardize the quality of the Township's water supplies.

Examples of places which may increase concerns relative to groundwater reservoirs include:

- Existing sites identified by Act 307 or the Michigan Public Acts of 1982, as amended (The Michigan Environmental Response Act) and Michigan Department of Environmental Quality identified LUST (Leaking Underground Storage Tanks) sites;
- Existing licensed landfills (active or inactive);
- Industrially used or zoned sites;
- Existing residential development that equals or exceeds a gross density (total acres divided by number of dwelling units) of one unit for every one and one-half (1.5) acres; or
- Existing agricultural development totaling more than five hundred (500) acres.

Protection of groundwater resources requires efforts on several fronts, including the need for regional planning, land planning for individual sites and technological advances that may offer alternative solutions. Regional planning must be based on watersheds of major drainage systems. It will do little good for one community to implement solutions to its problems only to find that neighboring communities do not. Groundwater has no respect for community boundaries.

The expense involved in resolving groundwater issues for a single site makes some solutions financially difficult. One area-wide solution intended for limited use is a package treatment system which serves smaller areas. Although a single development project may not be able to afford the installation and operation of a compact treatment system, several projects may join forces to implement an effective waste treatment system.

A number of management and financial issues would obviously need to be resolved before such a system was implemented. Administering the system will likely be the responsibility of individual property owners formed into an association or authority. Questions of who will pay for the initial acquisition and installation of the system as well as maintenance responsibilities will need to be addressed. Issues of liabilities and other legal problems must also be examined. Generally, engineering expertise will be needed to conduct routine repairs and inspections, and replace system components when needed.

From a land planning perspective, simply requiring larger lots does little or nothing to enhance groundwater quality. One of the few readily available solutions to polluted wells or failed septic systems is to obtain public water and sewer. Many rural communities have lot frontages that may range from 150 to over 300 feet. The costs to provide water and sewer services to homes with these frontages will be exorbitant. On the other hand, where lot frontages are lower, so too will be the cost to provide public utilities. One of the ways rural communities can look toward the future and help preserve farmlands and open spaces is through the use of open space or cluster development.

Septic system regulation is the responsibility of the Newaygo County Health Department in relation to permitting, placement and enforcement. The county health department is also responsible for the inspection of septic systems prior to the sale of a parcel of land. If the system fails the county's test, the system must be upgraded or maintenance must be completed before a permit will be issued to the new property owner.

Other regulations pertaining to soil erosion and sedimentation control practices, protection of wetland areas, increased water body setbacks, the use of greenbelts or buffers and density reductions can assist in protecting water quality. Finally, there are technological advances that are on the horizon that may offer opportunities to improve groundwater. These include:

- man-made wetlands;
- terraced, overland flow systems;
- package plants;
- sand-filter systems; and
- green house, peat, and bio-filter systems.

For the time being, it will be important to monitor groundwater and to evaluate new development with respect to its potential for affecting this important resource.

E. Neighborhood Commercial

The Neighborhood Commercial classification is used to designate general locations within the Township for small, convenience-oriented commercial areas. Approved locations will depend on the nature and intensity of any proposals received. Specific considerations will be related to requested rezoning, such as compatibility with surrounding existing and planned land uses, traffic safety and convenience, and others.

Traffic safety components will include any necessary intersection improvements. A review of needed improvements must be included in the overall plan for development, either in conjunction with the County Road Commission or as proposed by the developer of the project. Specific

considerations will include adequate turning lanes, improved shoulders, and signal improvements as needed.

The intent of the Neighborhood Commercial classification is to limit the overall size and intensity of commercial development. Businesses and services will be those that cater to residents of Lincoln Township and nearby areas. Generally, total square footage should be limited to less than 5,000 square-foot buildings. Sites should be located on lots of at least two acres. Access points (driveways) should be shared, or frontages should be large enough to prevent congestion.

Future development of commercial areas is intended to take place in a more coordinated fashion than has been the case in the past. This includes consideration of:

- shared driveways and parking areas;
- consistent site elements, such as landscaping and lighting;
- roadway improvements, including turning lanes, deceleration lanes and others; and,
- signs that are consistent with the neighborhood and rural character of the Township.

Development in commercial areas must also be sensitive to existing and planned residential development in the neighborhood. Consideration must be given to the location of buildings and parking areas, lighting, noise and other potential nuisances, and location of activity areas, such as loading and trash collection. Generous setbacks, sign limitations, reduced lighting levels, and landscaping will be necessary to ensure that these uses fit within the neighborhood in which they are located. Driveways will be located as far from a public street intersection as possible to minimize traffic conflicts, but generally not less than 150 feet from the intersection. In most situations, only a single driveway will be permitted unless a professional traffic study determines that a second drive is needed to accommodate higher volumes of traffic.

F. Other Commercial

Lincoln Township may also permit certain agricultural and low impact home based businesses in areas designated for residential use. Agricultural businesses will be restricted to those areas directly related to the farming and cultivation of plants, such as greenhouses, roadside stands, farm markets, nurseries and other similar businesses. Site elements such as parking areas, vehicle entrances and exits, loading/unloading areas, lighting, setbacks, and relationships to adjoining properties will be carefully reviewed prior to approval of these uses.

Home occupations will also be permitted on properties that have a residential use already established. However, there will be strict limitations on the extent of the business activity permitted. Activities will be limited to those businesses which operate principally to provide a service, usually by appointment, rather than selling retail goods. Signs and other external evidence of business operations will also be restricted.

G. Industrial

Industrial development is not accommodated in the Future Land Use map of the Township at the present time due to inadequate provision of municipal water and wastewater systems and the fact that nearby cities have ample vacant industrial lands that should first be developed and used first to promote a healthy regional economy.

III. IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

A. Planned Unit Development

Planned Unit Development, also known as PUD, is a zoning technique that allows some flexibility in the normal zoning requirements, such as uses allowed, setbacks, density, and others. The intent of a PUD is to allow for special conditions for which normal zoning regulations are inappropriate. Approval of PUDs is intended to be reserved for special situations, such as preserving natural areas, development on larger parcels, allowing multiple uses on the same property, or innovative project designs.

PUDs may be useful in preserving open space, and to some degree, farmland, by permitting a greater degree of flexibility in the layout of the proposed uses, while maintaining active agriculture nearby. One example of the use of PUDs in preserving land from development is the use of clustering. Cluster development provides for a concentration of density in a limited area of a site. Allowing cluster development through the use of PUDs provides the opportunity for the community to ensure that the land kept free from development will be permanently preserved. These parcels can be protected for the use and enjoyment of residents within the PUD or leased out to neighboring farmers who wish to utilize the parcel.

Non-contiguous PUDs designed for farmland and open space preservation strive to preserve portions of productive farmland in exchange for enhanced development densities in designated residential districts. With these regulations in place, both developers and agricultural producers benefit by preserving lands in the countryside for food and fiber production, while increasing residential densities where both infrastructure and public services can support development.

B. Conservation/Open Space Design

Conservation design determines suitable locations for land use activities based on the natural resource features of the property. By identifying natural features prior to laying out a street and development grid, a property owner can achieve their development goals without adverse impacts to the natural resources.

Open space design allows communities to recognize sensitive natural areas without adopting restrictive land use regulations. Each development design will be unique to the features on site, and development costs are usually lower as a result of residential lots located in closer proximity to each other and lowering street and other public service costs.

Site evaluation standards for natural feature preservation would need to be outlined in a Township ordinance specifying criteria and incentives to encourage the preservation of key resources, including the following:

- Woodland stands may be preserved as a contiguous group.
- Individual landmark trees and the natural soil in the surrounding root zone should be protected.
- Woodlands along major roadways can be preserved to maintain the rural character.
- Wetlands and surrounding upland edges can be protected.
- Other sensitive natural features such as wildlife habitat can be preserved.
- Open fields can be preserved for views, recreational use and wildlife.
- Passive or active recreational facilities can be developed, such as nature walk trails.
- Agricultural use of a portion of the land can be continued with buffer zones provided between the farming activity and residences.

Sites lacking significant natural elements, such as flat farm fields, offer a more challenging design problem. It is difficult to apply many of the open space principles to large open areas, uninterrupted by trees or topography. Emphasis on these sites should be on creating neighborhood clusters, separated by open spaces, and ensuring that the open spaces are sufficiently large and in a useable shape for farming operations.

Lands found within the Rural Residential designation would be most suitable for such development given the larger parcel size and prime natural features.

IV. SUMMARY:

The overriding issue for Lincoln Township and which should always be kept in mind when interpreting, implementing and amending the Lincoln Township Zoning Ordinance and the Zoning Map, is that Lincoln Township is a rural township without public utilities and minimum public services. Accordingly, the Township (as well as its topography, soils, utilities and public services) is not well suited for high intensity commercial or residential development, urban neighborhoods or any type of development that would negatively impact the existing farms, forests, lakes, streams and wetlands in the Township which enhance the quality of life and the Township's unique habitat.

