

Master Plan



Chester Township Ottawa County

Adopted March 2003

Updated May 2008

Acknowledgements

2003 Edition

Adopted March 2003

Prepared and adopted by the
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2008 Edition

Adopted May 13, 2008

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The fundamental purpose of the Master Land Use Plan is to enable the Township Planning Commission to establish a future direction for the Township's physical development. The Township Planning Act, Public Act 168 of 1959, as amended, specifically gives the Township Planning Commission the authority to prepare and officially adopt such plans. Once adopted, this Plan will serve as a policy guide for the conservation of natural resources and for the physical development of property to be enjoyed by present and future Township residents.

The adopted Plan also will serve as the basis for the Township zoning ordinance regulating the use and development of land in the Township. Changes in the Township's social and economic structure and activities dictate that the Plan should be subject to periodic review and revision so that it reflects contemporary trends while maintaining long range goals.

In the winter of 2002, the Chester Township Planning Commission recognized that new opportunities, challenges and patterns of growth were occurring within the Township since the first Master Plan was adopted in 1996 and therefore initiated a Master Plan update process to gain a better understanding of the recent changes in the community. These efforts were targeted primarily farmland preservation, the new sewer system in the Conklin area, and the continuing pursuit to protect and enhance the quality of life in the Township.

The Plan will be effective to the degree that it continues to:

- reflect needs and desires of Township residents;
- realistically interpret and reflect the conditions, trends and the dynamic economic and social pressures for change; and
- inspire concurrence and cooperation among the various public agencies, developers, and the citizens of the Township toward achieving the Township's goals.

This Master Land Use Plan provides:

- A comprehensive means of integrating proposals that look years ahead to meet future needs regarding general and major aspects of physical conservation and development throughout the Township;
- An official, advisory policy statement for encouraging orderly and efficient use of the land for residences, businesses, industry, and agriculture, and for coordinating these uses of land with each other, with streets and highways, and with other necessary public facilities and services;
- A logical basis for zoning, subdivision design, public improvement plans, and for facilitating and guiding the work of the Township Planning Commission and the Township Board as well as other public and private endeavors dealing with the physical conservation and development of the Township;
- A means for private organizations and individuals to determine how they may relate their building and development projects and policies to official Township planning policies; and
- A means of relating the plans of Chester Township to the plans of adjacent townships.

The final element of the plan attempts to synthesize the recommended goals and needs of the Township and the analysis of existing conditions and trends into land development strategies. The plan concludes with an implementation program.

The Chester Township Master Land Use Plan is intended to be long-range and dynamic, based on the long-term goals and objectives through the year 2020. With this in mind, there is an important caveat to this planning process: the Master Land Use Plan is general in scope. It is not intended to establish the precise boundaries of land use areas or the exact locations of individual future land uses. Its function is to serve as a decision making framework. Used correctly, the more detailed future decisions can be related to the broader community-wide perspective provided in the plan, and the decision makers will have confidence that their decisions have a clear and rational basis.

2008 ADDENDUM

In March of 2003 the Chester Township Planning Commission adopted a new Master Plan which had previously been adopted in 1996. Amendments to the Township Planning Act, being Act 168 of 1959 as amended, which became effective on January 9, 2002 requires Township Commissions to review their Master Plans every five years and determine whether to amend the plan or adopt a new plan.

This review allows the Commission to be responsive to new growth trends and current citizen attitudes. As growth occurs over the years, the Plan's goals, land use information, population projections, and other pertinent data can then be reviewed and revised as necessary so the Plan can continue to serve as a valid guide to the growth of the Township.

In accordance with this requirement the Chester Township Planning Commission with the approval of the Township Board in early 2007 determined that the 2003 Plan should be updated to reflect the current attitude and philosophy toward growth and development. The update of the 2002 Plan began in May of 2007 with the Planning Commission preparing a citizen survey which was mailed in June.

A total of 768 surveys were mailed with 106 surveys sent back for a return rate of 13.8 %. By contrast a survey sent out for the 2002 Plan had a return rate of 32 % (203 out of 630). The survey and the results are contained in Appendix 1.

As part of the Plan update process the Planning Commission and Township Board held a work session on September 24, 2007. At this session the results of the survey were presented and the Board members and Commissioners discussed, listed and voted on the importance of Township issues. The results are contained in Appendix B.

Using the results of the survey and work session the Planning Commission discussed various future land use scenarios over the next several months and on January 8, 2008 presented a draft Plan to the Township Board in a joint discussion. The Board accepted the Plan on March 4, 2008 and the Plan was sent to the adjacent communities and County Planning Commission for comment as required by the Township Planning Act.

Following the review period the Planning Commission held a public hearing and on May 13, 2008 adopted the 2008 Master Plan for Chester Township.

Much of the information contained in the 2003 Master Plan remains relevant especially the US Census information and the maps illustrating natural features such as soils, wetlands, watersheds and contours. Consequently this information has been retained and is presented in its 2003 Plan format.

The primary changes to the 2008 Plan Update pertain to the Goals and Objectives, the Future Land Use descriptions and rationale, the Implementation Strategies and the Future Land Use Map. The 2008 amendments are as noted in the following chapters.

Since 2003

Population

Population in 2000:	2315
Population estimate in 2006:	<u>2340</u>
Net Increase:	25

Housing

New house construction:	2003 - 5
	2004 - 10
	2005 - 3
	2006 - <u>4</u>
Total	22

A number of amendments to the Chester Township Zoning Ordinance were completed as recommended by the 2003 Master Plan. These consisted of adoption of the following zoning regulations: Open Space Planned Unit Development; Lake Residential; Low Density Residential District; High Density Residential District; Neighborhood Commercial; Regional Commercial and Special Setbacks for Waterfront Property.

CHAPTER 2 POPULATION, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

This chapter describes the Township's social and economic characteristics. By comparing the available data, it is possible to identify trends in population and housing, as well as the economic and labor force composition of the Township. Viewed in an historic perspective and in relation to surrounding communities and the region, these trends give valuable insights for potential future conditions and serve as a basis for projections of future population, housing and economic conditions.

Population Characteristics

Table 1 illustrates population changes occurring from 1970 through 2000 for Chester Township, adjacent communities and Ottawa County. From 1970 to 2000 the U.S. Census indicated that Chester Township experienced a moderate increase in population as compared to Ottawa County as a whole. Chester Township represented less than one percent of the County's growth between 1990-00. In comparison, population growth in most adjacent communities listed in Table 1 witnessed moderate increases similar to Chester Township.

The decade between 1980 and 1990 produced even less of an increase in population in Chester Township (5%), whereas, Ottawa County as a whole experienced an almost twenty percent increase. Similar to the previous decade, Chester Township's growth represented a fraction of the County's growth as Chester's growth totaled only one-third of a percent of the County's growth. One of the reasons for the County's substantial growth may be its location along the Lake Michigan lakeshore and its close proximity to the Grand Rapids metropolitan area. Interestingly, over half of the County's population is located in five communities: Park, Georgetown and Holland Townships and the cities of Holland and Grand Haven.

The population of Wright Township, located immediately south of the Township, and Ravenna Township (Muskegon County), located to the west, both decreased in population between 1980-90. According to the U.S. Census, Wright Township decreased by 3 percent, or 102 persons, while Ravenna Township decreased by almost 5 percent, or 117 persons. Between 1990 and 2000, the trend in Ravenna changed significantly with a population increase of 21.3% while Wright Township remained practically unchanged in the same time period. Part of the increase in Ravenna Township may be attributed to the close proximity of Muskegon, as many of the Townships to the west of the Ravenna also had significant increases in population.

Sparta Township, located along the east side of Chester Township in Kent County, witnessed a significant increase in population between 1980 and 1990 growing by almost 22 percent or 1,513 persons. This is the largest population increase of any of the communities listed in Table 1 during that time period. Between 1990 and 2000, the population continued to grow, but at much slower rate of only 5.8%.

To the north, the population of Casnovia Township (Muskegon County) increased at a moderate pace over the past decades. The U.S. Census data indicates that Casnovia's population grew by almost 10 percent during 1980 to 1990 and by more than 12% between 1990 and 2000.

In summary, all of the surrounding Townships, except Wright Township, gained population from 1990 to 2000. Chester Township experienced an 8.5% population growth during this time period while the County continued to grow at the fast pace of 26.9 percent which illustrates that Chester Township is growing steadily but not as fast as other communities in the County. Table 1 illustrates most areas have experienced fairly consistent growth over the last 30 years.

TABLE 1

Historical Population Change

Chester Township and Surrounding Communities

1970-2000

					Percent Change Between	Percent Change Between	Percent Change Between
Community	1970	1980	1990	2000	70-80	80-90	90-00
Chester Township	1,786	2,034	2,133	2,315	13.9%	4.9%	8.5%
Wright Township	2,983	3,387	3,285	3,286	13.5%	-3.0%	0%
Sparta Township*	6,466	6,934	8,447	8,938	7.2%	21.8%	5.8%
Casnovia Township**	1,879	2,158	2,361	2,652	14.8%	9.4%	12.3%
Ravenna Township**	2,403	2,471	2,354	2,856	2.8%	-4.7%	21.3%
Ottawa County	128,181	157,174	187,768	238,314	22.6%	19.5%	26.9%

Source: U.S. Census Data

*Located in Kent County

**Located in Muskegon County

Table 2 provides a comparison of the age distribution of persons living in Chester Township in 1990 and 2000. In 2000, the median age of persons living in Chester Township was 34.6 years, with 787 persons under the age of 19 and 268 persons 65 years of age and older. This data illustrates that the overall population in the Township is getting older and that residents are likely to remain in the Township after retirement. The age of local residents is an important consideration in determining the types and levels of public facilities and recreational programs, schools, and transportation services.

TABLE 2

Age Distribution and Median Age
Chester Township

1990			2000		
	Number	% of		Number	% of
Age	of Persons	Total	Age	of Persons	Total
Under 5 years	209	9.8%	Under 5 years	145	6.3%
5 to 17 years	497	23.3%	5 to 19 years	642	27.7%
18 to 24 years	213	10.0%	20 to 24 years	110	4.8%
25 to 54 years	907	42.5%	25 to 44 years	721	31.1%
55 to 64 years	143	6.7%	45 to 64 years	429	18.5%
65 and over	164	7.7%	65 and over	268	11.6%
Totals	2,133	100.0%	Totals	2,315	100.0%
Median Age: 28.6 Years			Median Age: 34.6 Years		

(Source: U.S. Census Data)

Housing Characteristics

The 1990 Census reveals that there were 729 housing units in Chester Township and 793 units in 2000. The increase of 64 housing units since 1990 illustrates a positive growth trend that is similar to the population trends. In the previous decade between 1980 and 1990, the Census indicated that the housing units declined in Chester Township. This loss is most likely due to the different criteria utilized for housing unit determination in 1980 and 1990.

Chester Township experienced a slight increase in the number of persons per occupied dwelling unit, or average household size from 1980 to 1990. Generally, in 1980 there was an average of 2.99 persons per household. Based on U.S. Census data, in 1990 there were 3.16 persons per household. Conversely, there was a noticeable national trend towards smaller family units and lower birth rates. The average household size in Ottawa County was 2.90 persons whereas in the State of Michigan it was 2.3 persons in 1990.

The 2000 U.S. Census data reveals that the average household size has decreased since 1990 to 2.99 in Chester Township. In comparison, the Ottawa County average household size decreased from 2.90 to 2.81 and the State of Michigan increased from 2.3 in 1990 to 2.56 in 2000.

Table 3 gives a breakdown of housing types located within the Township in 1990 and 2000. Approximately 85 percent of the dwelling units in the Township were single-family homes in 2000, with the second largest category being mobile homes which represented 13 percent of the Township's housing stock. The remaining housing units consisted of multi family units. 2000 Census information illustrates that there was an additional 65 housing units constructed over the last ten years. Of the 714 occupied housing units, 79 units or 11 percent were renter-occupied in 2000. The number of vacant houses in 2000 totaled 79 units for an overall vacancy rate of 10 percent. Homeowner units had a vacancy rate of 1.4% while rental properties had a vacancy rate of 27.5%.

TABLE 3

Housing Units by Type

Chester Township

	1990		2000	
	Number Of Units	Percentage Of Total	Number Of Units	Percentage Of Total
1-Unit	582	79.80%	673	85.60%
2 to 4 Units	23	3.20%	13	1.50%
5 to 9 Units	0	0	0	0
10 or more Units	14	1.90%	0	0
Mobile Home, Trailer	110	15.10%	103	13.00%
Total	729	100.00%	794	100.00%

Source: U.S. Census Data

TABLE 4

Housing Units by Year Structure Built
Chester Township

Years	Number Of Units	Percentage Of Total
1999 to March 2000	24	3.00%
1995 to 1998	77	9.70%
1990 to 1994	57	7.20%
1980 to 1989	56	7.10%
1970 to 1979	122	15.40%
1960 to 1969	70	8.80%
1940 to 1959	101	12.70%
1939 or earlier	287	36.10%
Total	794	100.00%

Source: U.S. Census Data

Table 4 provides the age of the Township's housing stock and the housing units built during past decades. Like many rural communities, the Township has experienced a significant increase in single-family housing construction over the last ten years. Thirty-six percent of the existing housing stock was built before 1940. Overall, Chester Township has an older stock of housing as over 73% of the total housing stock was built before 1980. These older homes tend to be costly to maintain and repair, but can be valuable assets to a community if they reflect the heritage of the area, such as the centennial farmhouses, or help define the character or identity of the locality.

Economic Characteristics

As shown in Table 5, the per capita income for Chester Township in 2000 was \$18,197, which represented a 63 percent increase from 1990. The per capita income for the Township was slightly less than the neighboring Townships and Ottawa County as a whole. Wright Township was the only community in the region with a per capita income lower than Chester Township. Furthermore, Chester Township's per capita income was generally lower than that of the State, which was \$22,168 in 2000.

TABLE 5

Per Capita Income - 1980 - 2000

Chester Township and Surrounding Communities

<u>Community</u>	1980	1990	2000	Percent Change 80-90	Percent Change 90-00
Chester Township	\$5,939	\$11,133	\$18,197	87%	63%
Wright Township	\$5,732	\$11,109	\$18,183	94%	64%
Sparta Township*	\$6,976	\$12,345	\$18,345	77%	49%
Casnovia Township**	\$5,773	\$11,231	\$16,880	95%	50%
Ravenna Township**	\$6,280	\$11,551	\$18,440	84%	60%
Ottawa County	\$7,199	\$14,347	\$21,676	99%	51%

Source: U.S. Census Data

*Located in Kent County

**Located in Muskegon County

Table 6 lists the occupations of Township residents 16 years of age or older who were employed in 1990 and 2000. While technicians, salespersons and administrative support made up the largest occupation groups in 1990 and 2000, the most significant increase came from the managers/professionals sector with an increase from 13.2% to 25.7%. The farming, forestry, fishing sector illustrated a significant percentage loss, 9.6% to 2.9% from 1990 to 2000, illustrating that farming as a primary occupation is employing fewer people as a percentage of the workforce than in the past.

TABLE 6

Occupation of Residents

Chester Township

Occupation	1990		2000	
	Number of Workers	Percent of Total	Number of Workers	Percent of Total
Manager and Professionals	131	13.20%	270	25.70%
Technicians, Salespersons & Administration Support	264	26.50%	272	25.90%
Service (Household, Protective & Other)	114	11.40%	134	12.80%
Farming, Forestry, Fishing, & Mining	96	9.60%	30	2.90%
Precision Production, Craft and Repair	145	14.50%	142	13.50%
Operators, Fabricators, Laborers and Transport	247	24.80%	201	19.20%
Total	997	100.00%	1,049	100.00%

Table 7 presents the number and percent of Township residents employed in various industries during 1990. While the employment of Township residents is well balanced and diverse, almost one-third of the residents were employed in the manufacturing industries, particularly the manufacture of durable goods. Retail trade was the second largest group, providing employment for almost 14 percent of the Township residents. Generally, most of the remaining industry groups contain between 4 and 7 percent of the residents.

TABLE 7
Residents Employed by Industry
1990
Chester Township

<u>Industry</u>	<u>Number of</u> <u>Workers</u>	<u>Percent of</u> <u>Total</u>
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishery, Mining	117	11.7%
Construction	73	7.3%
Manufacturing		
Non-durable Goods	75	7.5%
Durable Goods	208	20.9%
Transportation, Communication & Utilities	52	5.2%
Wholesale Trade	57	5.7%
Retail Trade	138	13.8%
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	35	3.5%
Business, Personnel & Entertainment Services	64	6.4%
Professional & Related Services		
Health Services	78	7.8%
Education Services	42	4.3%
Other Professional Services	43	4.4%
Public Administration	<u>15</u>	<u>1.5%</u>
	997	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Data

CHAPTER 3 NATURAL FEATURES

The natural environment has had a significant influence on the land use patterns in Chester Township, helping to shape what the community is today. Natural features, in general, can present both constraints to and inducements for various types of land uses. While failure to acknowledge environmental constraints can lead to costly problems, integration of natural features into an overall Master Plan can enhance the quality of life for residents and help preserve the character of the Township. At the same time, it is important to recognize that there are land areas which serve a vital function in terms of cultivation, drainage, and wildlife habitat which may never be suitable for urban development.

Following is a discussion of the natural features in Chester Township as they pertain to broad planning considerations.

Regional Setting

Chester Township covers 36 square miles in Ottawa County. It is bounded to the north by Casnovia Township (Muskegon County), on the west by Ravenna Township (Muskegon County), on the south by Wright Township, (Ottawa County) and to the east by Sparta Township (Kent County).

Located in the northeast most corner of Ottawa County, the Township lies between the Muskegon and Grand Rapids urban areas, each within 30 minutes travel from the Township. The nearest major access route linking the Township to the Grand Rapids/Muskegon areas is Interstate 96 (I-96) in an east/west direction, located approximately five miles south of the Township.

Climate

The influence of Lake Michigan on the climate in the Chester Township area is a factor throughout the year. Because of the prevailing westerly winds, spring and early summer temperatures are somewhat cooler than further inland locations such as Grand Rapids, while fall and winter temperatures are slightly milder. According to the data from the National Weather Service's station in the City of Grand Haven, the average minimum daily temperature in January is 19.3°, and the average maximum daily temperature in July is 79.3°. Data from the weather station in Grand Haven also indicates that the average rainfall during the crop season (May-October) is 17.63 inches and the average annual snowfall is 65.4 inches while the snowfall averages increase to 80 inches in communities a short distance to the east.

Topography

The topography in Chester Township varies from nearly level in the western portion of the Township to very hilly and rolling hillsides in the eastern portion. Map 1 is the elevation contour map that illustrates the general change in elevation throughout the Township. The significant variation in topography in the eastern portion of the Township is generally conducive for orchard type growth whereas the flat or level land in the western area is more advantageous to field crops, such as corn and soybeans.

Soils

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, the soils in Chester Township consist of well-drained to poorly drained, loamy soils in the eastern half and southwest portion of the

Township. In the northwest and center area of the Township, the soils are made up of somewhat poorly drained to very poorly drained, sandy and loamy soils. (See Map 2)

Most of the soils in Chester Township are well suited to agriculture.

The location and drainage capabilities of various soil types as well as are important considerations for future land use and infrastructure plans for the Township because most residents in Chester Township still rely on septic fields for the disposal of wastewater. The Township needs to consider those areas in which intensive development without improved infrastructure can lead to environmental degradation and health hazards.

Prime Farmland

The resource value of soils lies mainly in agriculture. Map 3 illustrates general locations of locally important prime farmland and prime farmland if drained or flooded, as indicated Michigan Department of Natural Resource, Michigan Resource Information System (MIRIS) 1978 data. Map 3 reflects a 1992 update of the data by the Water Resources Institute of Grand Valley State University. Prime farmland, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is the land that is best suited to food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. The soil qualities, growing season, and moisture supply are those needed for a well-managed soil to produce a sustained high yield of crops in an economic manner. Prime farmland produces the highest yields with minimal expenditure of energy and economic resources.

Wetlands and Woodlands

Wetlands play a critical role in regulating the movement of water within watersheds. Wetlands are characterized by water saturation in the root zone, or above the soil surface, for a certain amount of time during the year. The fluctuation of the water table above and below the soil surface is unique to each wetland type.

Wetlands store precipitation and surface water and then slowly release the water in associated water resources, ground water, and the atmosphere. They help maintain the level of the water table and may serve as filters for sediments and organic matter. They may also serve as a sink to catch water, or transform nutrients, organic compounds, metals, and components of organic matter. Wetlands have the ability to impact levels of nitrogen, phosphorous, carbon, sulfur, and various metals. Without them, water quality decreases, areas are prone to flash flooding and habitat for specialized plants and animals is reduced.

Map 4 illustrates the location of the wetlands within the Township identified and mapped by the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI). While the NWI illustrates the general location of wetlands in the Township, an on-site analysis should be conducted by a professional delineation to verify the specific boundaries of wetlands. Wetlands that adjacent to or associated with surface water and larger than five acres in size are subject to regulation by the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (Part 303 - Wetlands Protection, Act 451 of 1994), which requires permission from the State of Michigan to fill or alter the wetland site. Wetlands within the Township are somewhat limited but are comprised of deciduous shrub swamps as well as lowland hardwood and lowland coniferous forest stands. The few pockets of wetlands in the Township are typically associated with the drainage courses of the local creeks and around Crockery Lake.

These wooded areas provide a variety of habitat settings for wildlife and are an important attribute of the local landscape.

Local forested lands, illustrated on Map 6, are scattered throughout the Township. Most are associated with low, poorly drained areas and drainage ways along local creeks and streams. Local forested lands include northern, central, and lowland hardwoods such as beeches, maple and oak; aspen and birch associations, and pine stands. These wooded areas provide a variety of habitat settings for wildlife and are an important attribute of the local landscape. As development occurs within the Township, careful site designs which recognize wetlands and tree stands as important amenities can lead to enhanced projects and contribute to maintaining the overall rural character of the Township.

Groundwater and Surface Water

As the population in Chester Township slowly increases, natural resources will inevitably be impacted. The groundwater supplies in the Township, even though abundant, can be affected as more area becomes impervious and with greater demand placed on groundwater supplies.

There are many different ways ground water can be polluted. Two primary contributors are application of fertilizer on crops and residential lawns and septic tank drain field effluent. Proper fertilizer application management and septic tank maintenance may help to significantly reduce nitrate levels. Abandoned wells may also be a threat to ground water quality if they have not been properly closed. Open wells may expose groundwater supplies to surface contaminates.

Watersheds

All of the land which eventually drains to a common lake or river is said to be in the same watershed. Watersheds are defined by topographic divides which separate surface flow between two water systems. Use of the watershed as a water management unit continues to gain support because all of the water-related issues which arise for a particular lake, river, or watershed can then be managed as a whole.

Chester Township is in the Grand River Watershed System which includes many other smaller watersheds that eventually feed into the Grand River. The Crockery Lake Watershed primarily includes tributaries located to the east of the lake, which encompasses approximately 2,500 acres of land that delivers runoff (water that is not absorbed by the soil) to these tributaries. A majority of this land is currently being used as agricultural land while the perimeter of Crockery Lake is utilized for dense residential development.

As indicated on Map 5, the Crockery Lake Watershed is part of the bigger North Branch Crockery Creek Watershed, which encompasses most of the northern portion of Chester Township. The North Branch of Crockery Creek eventually feeds its water to Crockery Creek, which runs west and south of Chester Township in Ravenna Township and Crockery Township, eventually to the Grand River, a tributary to Lake Michigan. Other smaller watersheds of the Grand River in Chester Township include Nash Creek, Mill Creek, Sand Creek, and Deer Creek, all located primarily in the southeast and south portion of the Township.

Watersheds are a reminder that natural processes do not follow political boundaries and planning for healthy environments can transcend the abilities of individual jurisdictions. Water quality within a watershed is directly related to the land management practices within that watershed. For example, if a new development created a large amount of impervious surface (i.e. asphalt) and storm water was not properly managed, it is possible that the flow of the run off into the creek, stream, or river could be increased to a point that stream bank erosion occurs. Stream bank erosion has the potential of increasing silt material on the streambed, changing the chemistry of the water with phosphates, nitrogen, and other chemicals, and altering the turbidity of the water. All of these changes may have an

effect on the wildlife that is dependent on the stream or river for survival. A watershed, being an area where all of these water attributes are interconnected, should be looked at closely when assessing the impacts of new development within the Township.

Wildlife

The existing brush, woodlands, wetlands, native grasslands, and drainage ways of Chester Township provide good habitat for wildlife. In Chester Township, wildlife species include white-tailed deer, cottontail rabbits, raccoons, squirrels, red and gray fox, muskrat, mink, opossum, skunk, various song birds and waterfowl, ruffed grouse, and woodcocks. The survival and/or enhancement of wildlife in the Township is dependent upon the habitat that is available in Chester Township. New development that divides or destroys critical habitat areas may result in the reduction of wildlife present.

CHAPTER 4 COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The Township's community facilities provide tangible services to its residents and enhance the local quality of life. As the Township's population grows, the demand for these services will also grow. This will translate into the need to expand existing community facilities. As a basis for planning for these future needs, below is a description of existing community facilities within the Township.

Township Hall (*revised for 2008*)

In April of 2007, construction began on a new Township Office & Hall located at 3509 Sehler Street, just east of the Musketawa Trail. The approximately 5800 square foot building houses offices for the Supervisor, Treasurer, Clerk, Assessor, Zoning Administrator and additional staff. A community room is used for meetings, elections and is also available for rent to be used for small gatherings.

Police Protection

Chester Township residents are provided police protection through the Ottawa County Sheriff's Department. According to Township officials, the Sheriff's Department has two units that patrol the general Township area. The Township is presently contracting with Ottawa County for an additional eight hour patrol per week.

Ottawa County participates in a "911" emergency notification system for County residents. In Chester Township, the Sheriff's units are dispatched directly from 911 dispatchers for calls that originate from Township residents. According to Township officials, the level of service and response time to emergencies is currently adequate.

Fire Protection

The Township maintains one fire station located in the Conklin area. Chester Township has a voluntary Fire Department, comprised of one fire chief and approximately twenty-three volunteers. Dispatching responses are initiated from the Ottawa County "911" emergency notification system. Funding for the Fire Department's operation is provided through a special millage.

The Department has a mutual aid agreement to provide services to or receive assistance from the surrounding communities, which include Kent City, Sparta, Coopersville and others when needed. According to Township officials, the level of service and response time to emergencies is currently adequate.

Schools

Chester Township is served by four public school districts: Sparta, Coopersville, Ravenna, and Kent City. No public school buildings are located within the Township boundaries. The Coopersville Public School district covers the most area (386 parcels) in Chester Township, followed by Ravenna Public School district (297 parcels). Each of the school systems operate and maintain its own bus system. A small private elementary school operated by Trinity Lutheran Church (established in 1869) is also available for educational opportunities.

Conklin Sewer System

Due to dense residential development in the area of Conklin and failing septic systems, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality required a new public wastewater system in 1997 in order to

protect ground and surface water quality. The lagoon sewer system was designed to collect the liquid wastewater from each household and the remaining solids are collected and remain in the on-site septic tank until emptied on an individual basis and appropriately treated.

The current sewer system has 83 customers in the Conklin area which includes residential, commercial and light industrial developments. The current system has the capacity to serve an additional eight to ten users. The current 31.5 acre lagoon site, located in north of the Township, is owned and maintained by Ottawa County. The site is large enough to accommodate expansion that would allow for the potential of doubling of the amount of users served. Further, any new system could potentially be designed to appropriately treat solid material, relinquishing the need for any on-site holding tank.

Road System

All public roads within the Township are under the jurisdiction of the Ottawa County Road Commission. Roads designated as primary roads by the County include:

- Sherman Street
- Truman Street
- Gooding Street
- Sehler Street
- Wilson Street
- 36th Avenue
- 32nd Avenue

The remaining public roads are designated as county local roads. There are currently five private roads in the Township which include Centennial Road, Kayce Lane, Crockery Woods, Arrowhead Drive and Crockery Shores Private. Centennial and Crockery Woods are paved while the remaining private roads are gravel and unimproved.

For planning purposes, it is useful to recognize that the various roads within Chester Township can have different functions. An understanding of these functions can lead to decisions as to the desirable use of each road segment, road right-of-way widths, building setbacks, and adjoining land use. Below is a brief description of four road types which are important to consider in Chester Township.

Major Arterial Roads (County Primaries) - The major function of these roads is to move a fair volume of traffic within and through a community. A secondary function is to providing access to adjacent properties. In Chester Township, the major arterials are the county primary roads listed above. Many residents use these roads when traveling to and from the Township.

Minor Arterial Roads (County Locals) - These roads provide for internal traffic movement within a community and connect local land areas with the major arterial road system. Providing direct access to adjacent properties is an important function of these roads. The majority of the roads in Chester Township fall under this classification. Examples of such roads include Coolidge Street, Hoover Street, and 16th Avenue. Over time, as development in the Township increases, traffic along minor arterials will also increase. Some minor arterial streets eventually become major arterial roads.

Local Collector Roads - The sole function of local roads is to provide access to adjoining properties. In many cases, through-traffic is discouraged. An example of such a road in Chester Township includes Van Dyke Street adjacent to Crockery Lake.

Local Feeder Roads - These roads provide for internal traffic movement within a specific area, such as a residential subdivision, serving to funnel traffic from local collector roads to arterial roads. Feeder roads are typically wider than other local roads and may have amenities such as sidewalks and lighting, and could be public or private. An example of this type of road in the Township includes Cherry Street in the Conklin area.

Libraries

The Northeast Ottawa District Library, located in Coopersville, serves the Township, which is a member of the Lakeland Library Cooperative.

Cemeteries

The Township operates and maintains three cemeteries including:

- Big Springs Cemetery, located on Wilson Avenue, east of 24th Avenue
- McNitt Cemetery, located on the southeast corner of the 40th Avenue/Gooding Street intersection
- Bennett Cemetery, located on 24th Avenue, between Truman and Sherman Streets

Each cemetery has a sexton to oversee maintenance and upkeep. Funding for the operation of each cemetery is derived from the Township's general fund.

Musketawa Trail

The Musketawa Trail is a twenty-six mile paved trail located along the old Muskegon, Grand Rapids, and Indiana Railroad corridor that stretches from Marne to Muskegon. The trail has a twelve (12) foot wide paved surface and a gravel shoulder of four (4) to eight (8) feet wide. The rail corridor was purchased by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in cooperation with Muskegon and Ottawa Counties in 1990 after all rail transportation ceased. In 1994, a \$250,000 grant was obtained by the DNR through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to begin development of the trail and the first section of trail was paved in 1997. The entire trail was paved by late summer of 2000.

The trail runs through the southwest portion of Chester Township, including the area of Conklin, which includes a public parking lot in Conklin for trail users. The Musketawa Trail is a valuable amenity to Chester Township as it provides for bikers, hikers, horses, snowmobiles, cross-country skiers, and in-line skating.

CHAPTER 5 EXISTING LAND USE

Map 6 illustrates the generalized existing land use in Chester Township. This map, originally obtained from a 1983 Michigan Resource Information System (MIRIS) Land Use Map, was updated through 1999 aerial photographs. The notable land use changes between 1983 and 1999 were increased residential land uses around the area of Crockery Lake and in smaller pockets throughout the Township.

Chester Township is rural in character, with the majority of its acreage considered agricultural or open/unused. Residential properties are the second most prevalent land use. Homes are scattered throughout the Township. The highest concentration of residential use exists in the Crockery Lake area and the Conklin area. Additionally, a mobile home park is located in the northwest corner of the Township along 36th Avenue.

1999 Chester Township Land Use Breakdown		
Land Use	Acres	%
Forested, Rangeland, and Open lands	4,335	19.19%
Cropland Rotation, and Permanent Pasture	15,777	69.85%
Single Family, Duplex	279	1.23%
Commercial, Services, Institutional	50	0.22%
Extractive	110	0.49%
Wetland	29	0.13%
Industrial	8	0.04%
Lakes	124	0.55%
Orchards, Vineyards and Ornamental	1,896	8.39%
Transportation, Communications, and Utilities	8	0.04%
Total	22,615	100%

Chester Township is rural in character, with the majority of its acreage considered agricultural or open/unused.

Most commercial and industrial land uses are located in the Conklin area. Other commercial uses are located on Gooding Street near the intersection of Kenowa Avenue in section 13 and scattered throughout the Township. Most of the commercial uses located outside of the Conklin area consist of the business operations associated with orchards/agricultural areas.

Institutional and public/semi-public uses such as churches, cemeteries, the Township Hall, and the fire station are dispersed at various locations in the Township.

The following is a description of the major land uses in the Township:

Orchards, Vineyards, & Ornamentals

This category of land use includes orchards, vineyards and ornamental agricultural areas. Although this MIRIS classification includes vineyards and ornamentals (different species of trees or plants grown for their aesthetic qualities) as part of this category, most of this area illustrates primarily apple orchards. As shown on Map 6, this land use is located primarily in the eastern portion of the Township, with the larger farms located in the south. By referring to Map 1, the relationship of orchards to the topography of the land becomes evident. Specifically, the east half of the Township contains rolling hills and pastures with significant variations in topography. This area is part of what is often referred to as the Fruit Ridge of western Michigan which is home to a large concentration of orchards.

Cropland, Rotation, and Permanent Pasture

An abundance of field crops exist throughout the Township, which include corn, wheat, and hay. Livestock operations are also a predominant activity within this land use category. As Map 3 illustrates, a large amount of prime farmland is located in this area.

The most common of these residential land uses found in Chester Township is the detached single family home.

Residential

This category includes detached single-family homes, multi-family homes, mobile home parks, and seasonal homes. The most common of these residential land uses found in Chester Township is the detached single family home.

One of the two densely populated areas is located adjacent to Crockery Lake. The style and types of homes in these areas vary primarily with age and location. The Conklin area is the other portion of the Township with a higher residential concentration. This area contains a typical subdivision layout with an older housing stock. Other residential corridors in the Township include homes adjacent to main county primary roads. Most of these homes are situated on large lots, some of which are associated with agricultural uses or are non-farm dwelling units in the agricultural district.

There is one mobile home park within the Township. This park is located on 36th Avenue in the northwest quadrant of the Township. There are a small number of mobile homes on single lots located elsewhere in the Township, some of which are utilized for migrant housing. These migrant housing units are typically associated with orchard facilities.

Commercial, Services, and Institutional Land Use

The commercial land use identified within the Township includes retail, service, and agricultural operation types of facilities. Commercial land use within the Township is most predominantly located within the Conklin area. This area contains retail and business facilities primarily intended to serve the local residents and farmers. Some other commercial uses in Chester Township are associated with agricultural and orchard operations. Overall, the Township has a moderate number of commercial uses within its boundaries.

Extractive Land Use

As shown on Map 6, resource extraction within the Township is relatively limited. This includes an excavation/gravel operation located on the southwest and southeast corner of the 32nd Avenue/Sherman Street intersection along the northern boundary of the Township. There is also a small operation located on 24th Avenue and Coolidge in section 21.

Forested, Rangeland, and Open Lands

This land use category consists of lands that are primarily not used for agricultural purposes or residential developments. These lands are generally lower lying areas that are often associated with creeks and streams. Large wooded areas exist northwest of Crockery Lake, along the North Branch of Crockery Creek, and in the south central portion of Township along the Rio Grande Creek.

A county-owned park, Grosse Park, is located on the southeast corner of the Hoover Street/24th Avenue intersection, just north of Crockery Lake. Chester Park, owned by the Township, is associated with the elementary school on Sehler Road near Conklin.

Industrial

Current industrial land uses are located in the Conklin area and near the intersection of Kenowa Avenue and Gooding Street. Industrial activities in the Township are generally light in nature and are often focused to support agricultural activities.

Transportation, Communication, and Utilities

Consumers Energy, a power supply company, operates an electrical transfer station in section 11 of the Township. This facility, located in an agricultural area with very low residential development, serves existing power lines that cross the Township from north to south and east of the station.

A 31.5 acre lagoon site, located in section 29 of the Township, serves the as the sewer treatment facility that serves the area of Conklin. The site is owned and maintained by Ottawa County and is large enough to accommodate expansion that would allow for the potential of doubling of the amount of users served.

PA-116 Enrolled Lands

Although not illustrated on Map 6, land enrolled under PA-116 can serve as a good illustration for amounts of productive agricultural land. As of 1996, there were approximately 12,020 acres of land in the Township that were enrolled in the P.A.-116 Farmland Open Space Preservation Program. Under this program, property owners agree to relinquish development rights to their land for a minimum enrollment period of ten years in exchange for tax credits. There is also one farm enrolled in a Purchase of Development Program, where the development rights have purchased from an outside source.

Many of the farming areas contain lands which are naturally endowed with the soil quality, growing season, and moisture content necessary to sustain high crop yields under average farming practices. Farming such land is feasible with minimal input of energy and economic resources, and results in the least damage to the environment.

CHAPTER 6 PLANNING DIMENSIONS

This section of the plan examines the various components which have previously been described and undertakes an analysis of planning indicators and growth trends. This analysis will provide an understanding of how the Township has developed and, with this knowledge, the Goals and Objectives for future development can be established.

By looking at population projections, the existing land use mix and basic planning assumptions, the guidelines for determining the various land use needs can be established. Through this process, the Township Board and the Planning Commission will know if it is reasonable to plan for large scale or modest development in various categories of land uses.

Population Projections

Projections of future population growth connect the present and the future in the comprehensive planning process. These projections help give dimension to future land use requirements and the demand for particular public services and capital improvements.

Projections of population growth need to consider the growth of the larger region of which the community is a part. For Chester Township, this involves considering future population growth within the Township as it relates to the growth characteristics of Ottawa County and nearby communities in Muskegon and Kent Counties.

Several techniques are traditionally used to project future population growth. Any of these methods may be used depending on the availability of the background information required. No single method is necessarily superior to others, since all such projections are merely refined estimates based on assumptions of what the future may bring. The following discussion presents three alternative approaches to population forecasting and the results they yield for Chester Township.

Constant Proportion Method

The constant proportion method assumes that Chester Township will comprise the same percentage of Ottawa County’s projected population that it currently represents. The State Demographer’s Office in the Michigan Department of Management and Budget (DMB) has prepared population projections for all Michigan counties through the year 2020. These are preliminary projections and certainly subject to change, but they do provide a basis for forecasting the growth in Chester Township. Table 8 illustrates the resulting population in the Township using the constant proportion method.

Table 8
Constant Proportion Method
Chester Township

		Population Projection			
		1990	2000	2010	2020
Ottawa County		187,768	238,314	269,300	315,600
Chester Township		2,133	2,315	2,612	3,061
Proportion of County		1.14%	0.97%	0.97%	0.97%

This relatively simplistic model gives a general impression of the likely future population of the Township, but it fails to take into account the differing rates of growth in particular areas of the County or Muskegon and Kent Counties that adjoin Chester Township. This methodology forecasts that the Township will grow at the same rate as the County even though Chester Township has historically grown more slowly than the balance of the County.

In 1995, the Township was projected to have a population of 2,549, while the actual population according to the 2000 Census was 2,315. The 2000 projected population for the County was 223,573 while the 2000 Census counted 238,314 people, illustrating that real growth outpaced the projections. Even though these projections were not accurate numerically, it did illustrate the overall positive growth.

Township Growth Rate Method

This approach projects future population based only on the past rate of growth in the Township. Table 9 utilizes the growth rate method assuming that growth in the future will occur at the same rate experienced in the past between 1970 and 2000. From 1970 to 1980, the Township grew at an annual rate of 1.31%, between 1980 and 1990 the Township grew at an annual rate of .48%, and between 1990 and 2000 the Township grew at annual rate of .85%. For the sake of simplicity, an overall annual rate of growth of .88% is used in Table 9, based on the annual rate of growth over the thirty-year period ending in 2000.

Table 9
Township Growth Rate Method
Chester Township

	2010	2020
2000	Population	Population
<u>Population</u>	<u>Projection</u>	<u>Projection</u>
Chester Township		
(annual compounded rate of growth: .88%)	2,315	2,741

When using the growth rate method between 1970 and 1990, the resulting projection was quite accurate as the 2000 population was projected to be 2,331. This was only 16 people more than the actual 2000 Census population count.

Regional Growth Rate Method

A third approach uses a growth rate based on the projected rate of growth in the Holland MSA (Allegan, Ottawa, Muskegon and Kent Counties) and applies that rate of growth to the Township. The DMB forecast shows that the combined population in the four counties will grow from 1,052,300 in 2000 to 1,157,200 in 2010 for an annual rate of growth of .99% and to 1,275,500 by 2020 for an annual rate of

growth of 1.02%. Table 10 applies the resulting regional growth rates to the Chester Township population.

Table 10
Regional Growth Rate Method
Chester Township

	2000	Annual	2010	Annual	2020
	<u>Population</u>	<u>Rate of</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Rate of</u>	<u>Population</u>
		<u>Growth</u>		<u>Growth</u>	
Chester Township	2315	.99%	2,544	1.02%	2,803

Table 11
Summary of Population Projections
Chester Township

	2000	2010	2020
<u>Growth Rate Method</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Population</u>
		<u>Projection</u>	<u>Projection</u>
Constant Proportion	2,315	2,612	3,061
Township Growth Rate	2,315	2,519	2,741
Regional Growth Rate	2,315	2,544	2,803
Average of all Methods	2,315	2,558	2,868

Projection Summary

The anticipated population levels for the Township using each of the population projection methods are summarized in Table 11. By averaging the results of these methods it is reasonable to forecast that the Township’s population will reach 2,500 people by 2010 and about 3,000 by 2020.

In essence, each of the projection methods assumes that the Township will continue the patterns exhibited in the past. However, development policies in the Township and in surrounding communities can result in changes in conditions that may impact these projections. Thus, growth in housing and population in the Township will be impacted by:

- The types and quantity of housing permitted or encouraged,
- The image of the Township as a desirable place to live,

- Other types of development that might occur locally, and
- The overall economic health of the west Michigan region.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there were 793 dwelling units in Chester Township housing its 2,315 Township residents. This results in an average household size of 2.91 persons per dwelling unit. Based on the above population projections, an additional 707 persons will reside in Chester Township by 2010. At 2.91 persons per household, an additional 243 dwelling units will be needed by then to accommodate this population. The following analysis provides a summary of the approximate land area that would be needed to meet this need, based on varying densities, or minimum lot sizes:

<u>Density</u>	<u>Acreage Consumed</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assume 3 dwelling units/acre (typical subdivision) 243 dwelling units ÷ 3 units per acre 	81 acres
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assume .5 dwelling units per acre (2 acre lots) 243 dwelling units x 2 acres per dwelling unit 	486 acres
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assume 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres (5 acre lots) 243 dwelling units x 5 acres per dwelling unit 	1,215 acres

There are 640 acres in a square mile (one section), so about 1.66 square miles would be consumed if all 243 new dwelling units were to be sited on five acre lots. Chester Township currently has significantly more vacant land than is needed to accommodate this growth even if all housing units were developed in the least dense format. In reality, a combination of residential densities is likely, thereby restricting the amount of land that will be needed.

In summary, it can be assumed that the Township has adequate land available to accommodate residential growth over the next fifteen years.

CHAPTER 7 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Planning goals are statements that express the community's long-range desires and serve to provide direction for related planning activities. The following goals and objectives have been developed by the Planning Commission as a foundation in establishing future direction. These goals are based, in large measure, on the results of a comprehensive community opinion survey and Futuring Session conducted by the Township as a part of preparing this Master Plan and summarized in Chapter 6.

➤ **Goal: Agriculture and Rural Preservation**

Encourage the continued use of the prime and productive agricultural lands in the Township for farming purposes by minimizing the encroachment of residential, commercial and industrial uses into prime and productive farming areas.

Objectives (as revised for 2008)

1. Through proper planning and transitional zoning techniques, discourage spot zoning and the encroachment of non-farm development into prime agricultural areas.
2. Discourage the fragmentation of prime agricultural lands through land splits and the subdivision of parcels which render farming operations on those properties impractical.
3. Encourage the continued use of P.A .116 preservation agreements by area farmers that are consistent with overall land development needs of the area.
4. Review effectiveness of existing residential zones to accommodate likely growth in areas that minimize conflicts with agricultural operations.
5. Support the use of a Transfer or Purchase of Development Rights in the Township that would retain active farms, farmland, and planned growth in the area of Conklin.

➤ **Goal: Rural Character**

Recognize the importance of the rural character of the Township and develop land use approaches that preserve and protect the rural lifestyle and the natural features of the Township.

Objectives (as revised for 2008)

1. Develop approaches to discourage the fragmentation of natural areas into large acreage lots for single homes.
2. Encourage open space development by permitting clustering of homes to preserve natural areas.
3. Implement zoning and related development review tools that encourage developers to take natural features such as soils, topography, hydrology and natural vegetation into account in the site design process.
4. Explore the possibility of permitting private roads in the Township under specific circumstances that preserve the rural character and significant environmental features.

➤ **Goal: The Environment**

Protect the quality of the natural environment in Chester Township by developing land use approaches that preserve groundwater, surface water (lakes and streams), agricultural soils and air quality.

Objectives (as revised for 2008)

1. Promote soil conservation and wise use of fertilizers and pesticides that are consistent with the State of Michigan Right to Farm Act and other applicable Federal requirements.
2. Institute land use plans, policies and regulations intended to minimize or avoid impacts on air and water quality.
3. Encourage runoff and sedimentation controls in all significant excavation activities.
4. Establish landscape guidelines for new development intended to offset the loss of natural vegetation caused by development.
5. Encourage new development techniques that avoid impacts to and protect the significant natural features within Township.

➤ **Goal: Residential Land Use and Housing**

Strengthen the existing housing stock and provide for managed development of additional housing to serve population growth.

Objectives

1. Encourage the maintenance and preservation of the existing housing stock through proper zoning and code enforcement.
2. Implement subdivision control procedures to govern the essential elements of new housing development to assure high quality and appropriate integration of natural features.
3. Establish procedures to create buffer areas between residential and agricultural uses to minimize conflicts.
4. Allow for various housing types in the community to meet the needs for an aging population.

➤ **Goal: Commercial Development**

Provide land uses to meet the essential shopping needs of Township residents while minimizing traffic congestion and land use conflicts.

Objectives (as revised for 2008)

1. Direct commercial land uses to major Township roadways in locations which are convenient but not detrimental to residential areas.
2. Implement policies and regulations to promote the limited development of neighborhood commercial services that support local residences.
3. Develop appropriate landscaping, signage and building appearance standards to promote aesthetics and the vitality of commercial areas.
4. Regulate commercial growth to be centralized in the area of Conklin where appropriate public facilities exist and accessible to the local neighborhood.
5. Maintain a detailed land use plan for the commercial areas in the community of Conklin.
6. Encourage the development of a business association for commercial and industrial development in the Conklin area.

➤ **Goal: Industrial Development**

Improve the economic vitality of the Township through the controlled development of limited light industrial uses in designated areas.

Objectives (as revised for 2008)

1. Require safe light industrial areas that are designed to blend well with surrounding residential development.
2. Direct industrial development to County Primary roads which can safely accommodate industrial traffic.
3. Require industrial land uses to provide landscaping along public roads, low level lighting and attractive building facades in order to present a positive image for Chester Township and promote an inviting business environment.

➤ **Goal: Transportation**

Provide for adequate vehicular and non-motorized transportation routes and for the appropriate maintenance of all existing facilities.

Objectives (as revised for 2008)

1. Work with the Ottawa County Road Commission to promote the effective improvement, maintenance and repair of existing roadways.
2. Work toward developing a safe pedestrian walkway on Sehler Street between Chester Park and the Musketawa Trail.
3. Maintain effective communication with the Ottawa County Road Commission to promote road improvement policies that are consistent with the goals of the Township.

➤ **Goal: Parks and Recreation**

Implement the Township Parks and Recreation Plan to expand outdoor recreation facilities to meet the needs of current and future Township residents.

Objectives

1. Develop requirements within new developments to provide non-motorized recreational trails that interconnect and focus on possible connections to the Musketawa Trail.
2. Review the Recreation Plan annually to update the progress made on projects and facility improvements and revise and adopt a new Plan every five years.

➤ **Goal: Water and Sewer Facilities**

Water and sewer facilities will be developed and expanded to complement the Township's land use plan and designed to serve adequate public safety needs.

Objectives

1. Ensure that surface and ground water quality is protected for all residents.
2. Allow the availability of public sewer facilities to effectively guide and facilitate growth in the Township.

3. Explore the possibility of developing a wellhead protection plan in the Township.
4. Explore the possibility of providing sewer facilities to existing areas of dense development in the Township, including the Crockery Lake area.

CHAPTER 8 FUTURE LAND USE

The Future Land Use Plan is a compilation of descriptions, recommendations and justification for future land use in Chester Township. It serves as an overall framework for the management and regulation of future development and also serves as the basis for evaluating rezoning requests.

The Township Planning Act 168 of 1959, as amended, specifically gives a Township Planning Commission the authority to prepare and officially adopt a Plan. When prepared, officially adopted and maintained, this Plan should provide an advisory guide for the physical conservation of certain areas and for the development of other areas into the best possible living environment for present and future Township residents.

Because of the constant change in our social and economic structure and activities, the Plan must be maintained through periodic review and revision so that it reflects contemporary trends while maintaining long-range goals.

The Master Land Use Plan is general in scope. It is not in most cases intended to establish precise boundaries of land use or exact locations of future uses. It is also important to note that there is no schedule to implement the recommendations contained here. The timing of a particular land use is dependent upon a number of factors such as availability of public utilities, provisions for adequate roadways, effect on public services and the demand for a particular land use versus the available and zoned for this use. Those, plus other factors, must be considered when reviewing a request for rezoning a particular parcel of land.

2008 ADDENDUM

This chapter contains revisions to the Future Land Use Categories described in the 2003 Master Plan. The Plan Assumptions listed in the 2003 Plan continue to be valid and have been retained in the 2008 Plan update. The citizen survey and Board / Planning Commission workshop results still show a strong desire to preserve farmland and rural character and to continue with the zoning regulations limiting non farm dwellings in the Agricultural Zone.

However, the Plan recognizes that the Agricultural Zone regulations do limit new housing opportunities not only for people moving to Chester Township but also those wishing to re-locate within the Township. This latter group includes younger residents seeking their first house after having grown up in the Township, and long time residents seeking to downsize or who simply desiring a new housing arrangement due to age, retirement or a change in employment.

Land zoned for Low Density Residential use, which would allow new houses on a minimum two acre parcel is limited. Land for new houses zoned High Density Residential located in and around Conklin must be served by the existing sanitary sewer system which has capacity for only 15 to 20 new houses. In order to address this situation the 2008 Plan has proposed several new areas for residential land use. These areas are illustrated on the Future Land Use Map and described in the following Future Land Use Category narrative.

This recommendation is supported by the survey response showing a desire for residential lots with one to two acres as well as expressing a need for some type of senior housing.

The Relationship of Planning to Zoning

The relationship between land use planning and zoning is an important one. Planning is basically the act of planning the uses of land within a community for the future from a policy standpoint, while zoning is the act of regulating the use of these lands by law or ordinance. The laws of the State of Michigan require that a community engage in land use planning activities, including the preparation of a comprehensive plan or Master Plan, prior to the initiation of a zoning ordinance in a community.

The following narrative provides a better understanding of the terms “planning” and “zoning.”

Land Use Planning

Land use planning is the process of guiding the future growth and development of a community. Generally, a document is prepared known as the Master Plan which addresses the various factors relating to the growth of a community. Through the processes of land use planning, it is intended that a community can preserve, promote, protect and improve public health, safety and general welfare. Additional considerations include comfort, good order, appearance, convenience, law enforcement and fire protection, preventing the overcrowding of land to avoid undue concentration of population, facilitating the adequate and efficient provision of transportation, water, sewage requirements and services, and conservation, development, utilization and protection of natural resources within the community.

Zoning

Zoning is one of the instruments, along with capital improvements programming and the administration of local subdivision regulations, which implements the goals and policies of a Master Plan. The enactment and administration of the Zoning Ordinance are legislative and administrative processes conducted by local units of government relating to the implementation of the goals and policies of the Master Plan.

Plan Assumptions

The goals and policies previously outlined and analysis of the Township’s physical, social and economic makeup have allowed the formulation of seven broad assumptions that were used in the development of a long-range development plan. These include:

1. The majority of Township residents prefer living in a farm or rural undeveloped setting.
2. The population is expected to increase over the next two decades, but not at a significant rate.
3. The area of Conklin will continue to be the local neighborhood commercial center in the Township.
4. Commercial growth needs to be confined to central locations which provide a “service center” for Township residents.
5. The bulk of the land acreage in the Township is prime and productive farmland. Non-farm development should be discouraged from infringing on this productive commodity.
6. Non-farm housing should be located on land which is not considered prime farmland.
7. Due to nutrient loadings, it may be necessary to develop wastewater collection and treatment facilities around Crockery Lake in the next twenty years.

Land Use Categories

The Future Land Use Map (Map 7) of the entire Township and Map 8, the enlargement of the Conklin area, recommend a number of different future land use classifications. The following descriptions of these classifications explain the type, intensity and location of the proposed uses.

The future land use recommended for an area may be the same as the zoning already existing in the area, while in some cases the future land use recommended is different from the existing zoning. Future Land Use Categories may or may not correspond to zoning districts existing in the Township; in some cases, a new zoning district is recommended as an implementation strategy.

The Future Land Use Map does not change the existing zoning in an area. A property owner or the Township will need to apply for a rezoning at some point in the future if the future land use category is different from the existing zoning. Meanwhile, a property owner must use the property as it is currently zoned.

2008 ADDENDUM

All categories have been updated to reflect changes made for the 2008 Master Plan.

Agricultural Preservation Area

The primary purpose of this future land use category is to preserve agricultural lands. The 2007 citizen survey and previous surveys in 1976, 1996 and 2001 showed strong support to preserve the farmland in Chester Township. The principal land use is agriculture and agriculture support services which help to enhance and stabilize the farming industry.

Minimum lot size for a single family farm dwelling is 40 acres with 660 feet of road frontage. A non-farm dwelling requires a minimum of two acres with 165 feet of frontage. In order to construct a non-farm dwelling in the Agricultural Zone a Special Use Permit must first be granted by the Planning Commission which considers a number of criteria designed to assure that prime farmland is not used for the non-farm house and that approving such dwelling will meet the goals and objectives of the Master Plan. This has proved to be an effective technique in preserving agricultural lands. The continuation of these zoning rules was supported by the majority of the respondents in the 2007 citizen survey.

The majority of the land in the Township is recommended for long term agricultural use based on the following factors: Much of the soils in the Township are considered prime by the U.S Department of Agriculture as shown on Map 1; the number of parcels enrolled in the State of Michigan Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act (PA 116); the number and size of active farms and the scattered number of non-farm dwellings.

The Chester Township Master Plan supports the efforts of the Ottawa County Commission to establish a Purchase of Development Rights Program (PDR) in Ottawa County.

Low Density Residential

This classification is intended to provide for residential development in a rural setting in locations which may be adjacent to prime agricultural areas. The lot size and agricultural activities recommended for this land use classification are intended to satisfy a demand for a rural lifestyle without intruding into prime agricultural areas.

The LDR future land use classification proposes single-family homes as the predominant land use. Farming would continue to be a permitted use in this area. The LDR category is analogous to the Low Density Residential Zoning District.

Minimum lot sizes for dwellings in this area would continue to be two acres with a minimum lot width of 150 feet. The Plan recognizes those LDR zoned lands located in Sections 5, 8, 15 & 16. These areas are characterized more by single family dwellings on smaller lots and within platted subdivisions than by large active farms. LDR lands are not intended to be served by public sanitary sewer.

The 2008 Master Plan recommends one new area for Low Density Residential use in order to provide more land for non-farm dwellings. This area is in Section 32 along the west side of 32nd Street south of Harding Street to just south of Sehler Street to a depth of about ¼ mile. These lands were recommended for HDR use in the 2003 Plan.

However, HDR requires public sewer and allows lots with 100 ft. of width and 15,000 sq. ft. of area. The area east of Conklin to 32nd Avenue would require costly lift station for the extension of the sewer system. This is unlikely to occur for many years but in the meantime this land cannot be developed for residential use even though it is in the most logical place for such development which is adjacent to Conklin.

Ottawa County soil maps indicate slight limitations for septic systems for this area and with a two acre minimum lot size locations for on site septic system and well could likely be found.

The Plan therefore recommends that this area be planned for LDR use as the two acre minimum lot size is sufficient to provide a private well and septic system given the soil types in this area and that encouraging residential use near Conklin will help achieve one of the major Master Plan goals which is to minimize the encroachment of residential uses into productive farming areas.

If public sanitary sewer can be provided to this area however, High Density Residential (HDR) development would also be acceptable as this type of land use also meets the goals of the Plan.

LDR areas may be developed as Open Space Planned Unit Developments where appropriate in order to preserve open space and rural character.

Lake Residential

The purpose of the Lake Residential future land use designation is to protect the integrity and uniqueness of Crockery Lake and the watershed surrounding it along with future man made lakes and their water sheds. New development in the Lake Residential designation will consist of traditional single-family homes with a recommended low-density pattern of one unit per two acres. In late 2005 the Township Board adopted the Lake residential Zoning District and in 2006 rezoned lands around Crockery Lake to this district.

The LR Zone calls for a minimum lot size of two acres and 240 feet of lot width without sanitary sewer. If sewer is provided the lots may be reduced to 15,000 sq. ft. with 120 feet of width.

Much of the land within the existing Lake Residential area has been divided into lots less than one acre and consists of seasonal and year around homes. This dense development combined with aging septic systems threatens the water quality in the lakes.

The Township should support maintenance education programs, which include the regular pumping of septic systems every two to three years or as recommended by a qualified engineer or sanitarian. Older septic systems should be replaced if they are not suited or capable of properly disposing of the septic

waste created from an existing or remodeled single-family dwelling. The educational programs will also include landscaping techniques that protect surface water quality. With the possibility of future public water and sewer services in the area, adequate easements will be provided for such services in any new land subdivisions.

The existing platted subdivisions around the lake precludes conformance with the recommended one dwelling per acre density. Future regulations should recognize these existing conditions and allow for the reasonable continued use and character. As renovation of seasonal homes into year around homes continues, redevelopment should be compatible with the architectural styles along with encouraging protective measures for maintaining water quality.

The Master Plan calls for a new LR area in Section 21 north of Coolidge and west of 24th Avenue. This area which is about 80 acres contains a lake as a result of mining activities which are not yet complete. The land around the lake will be more suitable for LR type development once mining is complete than agricultural uses. The Plan recognizes that an Open Space PUD would be a suitable development technique for this property as it would allow for clustering of houses and open space preservation methods to protect lake waters from erosion and septic tank contamination.

Another LR area is proposed in the northeast quadrant of Section 5 along the west side of 32nd and south of Sherman. This area was recommended for Low Density Residential use in the 2003 Plan and is zoned LDR.

This area is part of an existing mining operation and contains soils more suitable for septic systems than most of the nearby Agricultural zoned lands. Because a lake will be created as a result of the mining, an LR designation is more appropriate than LDR due to the lake protection provisions in the Zoning Ordinance. This area would be compatible with the LDR land to the south and west and will provide additional opportunity for non-farm residential uses.

Land to the east of 32nd Avenue in Section 4 along the south side of Sherman Street has also been mined off and on in past years. This area contains soils which are conducive for residential dwellings served by on - site well and septic systems. Because of nearby active farms and the amount of land already proposed in the 2008 Plan for LDR and LR residential land use it would be premature to plan this area LDR or LR use. The Plan therefore recommends that this area be reviewed in the 2013 Plan update for possible residential use.

LR areas may be developed as Open Space Planned Unit Developments where appropriate in order to preserve open space and rural character.

High Density Residential

This land use category recognizes existing smaller single-family lots and platted subdivisions located specifically in the Conklin area. This land use category is intended to preserve and promote single-family dwellings as a predominant land use with limited multi-family development. The High Density designation is unique from other areas in the Township due to the availability of public sewer service which allows greater development density without threatening water quality and other natural resources.

Since the Conklin area is served by a sewer system that can be expanded, it is logical to encourage new subdivisions to be located in this area. If a transfer or purchase of development rights program is created by the Township in the future, this area would be suitable as a receiving zone for new development. Any new development within this designation will be designed to provide non-motorized pathways, which will ultimately allow access to the Musketawa Trail and a larger trail network.

The Plan proposes several new HDR areas within Conklin both of which can be served by the existing sewer system without a lift station.

- The first proposed new HDR area was planned for Neighborhood Commercial in the 2003 Plan and consists of the residential lots along both sides of the Musketawa Trail between Sehler and Miller Streets. These lots contain single family houses which should be protected from being torn down or converted for commercial purposes as they are viable residences which contribute to the village character of Conklin. In addition, these are small lots which would likely need to be combined to support a commercial use.
- Also, the Plan is recommending a new commercial designation along Sehler Street east of Conklin Street. This is vacant land served by public sewer and this area is therefore a more logical place for new commercial uses than the existing lots along the Musketawa Trail occupied by houses.
- The Dykstra feed mill is located within this area but it should be retained as Neighborhood Commercial.
- Another HDR area is recommended in Section 29 north of Harding Street on land to the east of and abutting the Musketawa Trail. The 2003 Plan proposed this area for Agricultural use. This land is relatively flat and while outside the existing sanitary sewer service area is very close to the treatment ponds and can physically be connected when the development opportunity arises. This area serves to replace HDR planned land in Section 32 which is now recommended for LDR use.
- An area northwest of Daggett Avenue and Miller Street in Conklin is zoned Neighborhood Commercial although the land is devoted to residential use and was recommended for HDR use in the 2003 Plan. In order to implement this recommendation **the 2008 Plan recommends that this NC zoned land be rezoned to High Density Residential to reflect the residential use.**
- The Plan also recommends that Miller Street be extended to provide a logical access route into Conklin from future residential uses to the east and west. This road extension would be part of any future development abutting Miller Street.

Manufactured Housing Community

This category recognizes the existing manufactured housing community in Section 5 on the east side of 36th Street. This existing development has approximately 55 lots which are served by an on site sewer system. The 2003 Plan had proposed a MHC designation for lands to the east and south of the existing manufactured housing community and this designation is being retained in the 2008 Plan to allow for expansion and to ensure sufficient space is available for an on site septic treatment system.

Neighborhood Commercial

The purpose of the Neighborhood Commercial designation is to provide a primary commercial area. It is intended for neighborhood commercial businesses and business offices. It is designed to provide goods and services primarily to meet the needs of residents in Conklin, Chester Township, and surrounding communities.

Specifically, local retail designation areas are intended to retain and build upon the unique character within Conklin. Residential uses will be allowed above commercial and office uses. Designed to be

pedestrian friendly downtown commercial uses can serve hikers and bikers utilizing the Musketawa Trail. Historical preservation and restoration will be encouraged.

Facilities will be developed in harmony with the area's natural features and in a scale and form to encourage pedestrian access and to minimize auto-pedestrian conflict. Innovative techniques will be encouraged to include a mix of office and residential uses with local retail land uses. In those locations where mixed commercial and residential can be accommodated effectively consistent with the goals and objectives of this Plan, planned developments will be encouraged.

The Neighborhood Commercial area is designated in the area of Conklin in the Main Street area. Development and redevelopment of these areas must be sensitive to the existing residential neighborhoods in terms of noise, landscaping, lighting, and signage. Uses in these areas need to serve the adjoining neighborhood, not conflict with the residents.

The 2008 Plan proposes to reduce the amount of planned Neighborhood Commercial along both sides of the Musketawa Trail between Sehler and Miller Streets in order to protect viable residential lands as noted in the HDR land use category description.

A new Neighborhood Commercial area is proposed along the north side of Sehler Street between Conklin Street and the Township offices. This NC area would a depth of about 300 feet although a greater depth may be allowed for uses which fit the village character and the overall goals of the Plan.

This new NC area is within the sewer service area, has good access from Sehler Street and has good visibility. Commercial uses here will serve the retail and service needs of the nearby planned Low and High Density Residential uses as well as users of the Musketawa Trail. As uses develop sidewalks should be required to be installed along Sehler Street.

One of the most important features of this type of land use is the need to ensure compatibility with adjacent residential uses. Zoning regulations should provide standards for appropriate parking, driveways, and pedestrian safety and reduce conflicts by requiring screening and berming for commercial use that abut residential properties and review of commercial site plans to ensure measures are taken to protect these adjacent residential areas

Specifically, local retail designation areas are intended to retain and build upon the unique character within Conklin. Local retail land uses can be thought of as a source of identity and often considered landmarks in a community. Unique design features such as outdoor seating, awnings, and landscaping should be encouraged.

The Plan also proposes a Neighborhood Commercial designation for land at the north end of Conklin Street along the east side of the Musketawa Trail. This land is zoned Industrial but such a designation is not suitable for this location due to poor accessibility for industrial truck traffic and proximity to residential uses. Because of its past use for non-residential purposes a Neighborhood Commercial designation is more appropriate. The Plan recommends that the Township initiate a rezoning of this land to the NC zoning district.

An area northwest of Daggett Avenue and Miller Street in Conklin is zoned Neighborhood Commercial although the land is devoted to residential use. **The Plan recommends that this land be rezoned to High Density residential to reflect the residential use.**

The Plan proposes a change for the Telamon building on Sehler Street which provides Headstart and other services for migrant workers. The 2008 Plan recommends a Neighborhood Commercial designation for this site as it would abut the proposed NC land to the west and it is within the sanitary

sewer service area. Also, the building which once served as Conklin Elementary School lends itself to office, retail or a service use rather than residential which was the designation in the 2003 Plan.

Regional Commercial

The Regional Commercial areas are intended to serve local and regional commercial needs that provide goods and services without detracting from the Neighborhood Commercial area around Conklin. The Regional Commercial category is intended to allow for a full variety of commercial as well as farm – oriented businesses. Uses may also include some light manufacturing or light industrial developments that are compatible with the surrounding residential or farm activities.

Regional Commercial areas are located on Gooding Road, or B -72, which is the main thoroughfare from Sparta to Muskegon. These parcels are already zoned Regional Commercial. The citizen survey voiced support for these existing locations but no new RC areas are designated on the Future Land Use Map. Special review and site plan review will be required for any intense land use. Development standards should be aimed at minimizing the effect of the highway as well as offering an attractive entrance to the Township.

The Plan recommends reducing the amount of RC planned land by designating the area north of Gooding Road and west Kenowa Avenue for Industrial land use instead of RC use.

Industrial

The Industrial land use classification is new to the 2008 Master Plan. It is being proposed as the Chester Township Zoning Ordinance and Map contains an Industrial Zoning District. It is important that the Master Plan recognize this land use and provide support for the existing zoning classification. While the Regional Commercial zoning district allows some manufacturing and other types of industrial land uses the RC district does not allow the full spectrum of industrial land uses some of which may not be compatible with regional commercial uses.

The Plan proposes an Industrial land use classification for land on the north side of Gooding Road west of Kenowa in Section 24. This location is appropriate as Gooding Road is an Ottawa County designated Inter County Road between Sparta and Muskegon which satisfies one of the Industrial Objectives of the Plan. This land is zoned Regional Commercial and contains some non-residential uses which have industrial characteristics and so this area is appropriate for future industrial use. The land to the west is zoned and planned for Regional Commercial which is compatible with most industrial land uses.

The classification is intended to accommodate uses such as manufacturing and processing, warehousing, contractor equipment yards and truck terminals. Other industrial uses which might have objectionable operating characteristics such as salvage yards would be permitted by special land use.

Stream Buffer Areas

This category illustrates a Zoning Ordinance requirement adopted in 2005 that buildings be set back a minimum of 100 feet from the ordinary high water mark of a lake, pond, stream, creek, river, major county drain or similar body of water in order to provide a greater measure of protection for water bodies and watercourses within the various watersheds in Chester Township. The setback may be reduced to no less than 50 feet for those parcels which were created before July 1, 2005 if certain standards are met.

Open Space/Public/Institutional

This designation identifies the areas in the Township that are public lands and intended for public use. This designation includes schools, parks, or any public open space. Grose Park, a forty acre Ottawa County Park is located on the north side of Crockery Lake and offers picnic and boat launch facilities. The other site within this designation is the elementary school located just east of the area of Conklin on Sehler Road. This area also includes the Chester Township offices and Chester Park.

The Musketawa Trail is also a public park which traverses the southwest corner of the Township running through Conklin where a parking lot is available for trail users on Sehler Street.

CHAPTER 9 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES-2008

In order for the Master Plan to serve as an effective guide to the continued development of Chester Township, it must be implemented. Primary responsibility for implementing the Plan rests with the Board, the Planning Commission and the Township staff. This is done through a number of methods. These include ordinances, programs, and administrative procedures.

It is important to note that the Master Plan itself has no legal authority to regulate development in order to implement the recommendations of the Plan. This implementation must come from the decisions of the Board and Planning Commission to provide needed public improvements and to administer and establish regulatory measures relative to the use of the land.

The private sector, which includes individual land owners as well as developers, is also involved in fulfilling the recommendations of the Master Plan by the actual physical development of land and through the rezoning of land. The authority for this, however, comes from the Township. Cooperation and coordination among individuals, private developers, and public agencies is, therefore, important in successful implementation of the Master Plan.

Chapter 7 of the Plan sets forth goals and objectives which serve to guide the future development of Chester Township. Many of the specific implementation recommendations of this chapter are taken from these objectives, while others are taken from the land use recommendations made in Chapter 8.

The following sections identify the major activities which the Chester Township Planning Commission should pursue in order to be pro-active in the implementation of the Master Plan.

Zoning

Zoning represents a legal means for the Township to regulate private property to achieve orderly land use relationships. It is the process most commonly used to implement community Master Plans. The zoning ordinance consists of an official zoning map and zoning ordinance text.

The official zoning map divides the community into different zones or districts within which certain uses are permitted and others are not. The zoning ordinance text notes the uses which are permitted and establishes regulations to control densities, height, bulk, setback, lot sizes, and accessory uses.

The zoning ordinance also sets forth procedures for site plan review, conditional uses, and sign controls. These measures permit the Township to control the quality as well as the type of development.

In order that the recommendations and goals of the Master Plan be implemented, the following amendments to the Zoning Ordinance must be prepared and adopted:

1. Amend the requirements for duplexes which call for a two acre minimum lot size in the HDR Zone to allow a duplex on a lot with 20,000 sq. ft. of lot area 80, 90 or 100 feet of lot width. This may allow some lots to be combined or some of the larger lots to be developed with a two family dwelling and meet rental housing needs in Conklin.
2. Rezone to Neighborhood Commercial from Industrial the land at the north end of Conklin Street along the east side of the Musketawa Trail.
3. Rezone land northwest of Daggett Avenue and Miller Street in Conklin from Neighborhood Commercial to High Density Residential as recommended in Chapter 3.

Additional Strategies & Recommendations

- Continue to permit non-farm dwellings in the Agricultural Zone as a Special Land Use. The 2007 citizen survey demonstrated continued support for this requirement as a means to exercise oversight of residential encroachment into agriculture preservation areas.
- Support the efforts of the Ottawa County Commission to establish a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program in Ottawa County.
- Broaden sewer policy to facilitate development. Policies that direct the location of public sanitary sewer services often have the effect of steering growth. Township policy should require new development to connect to existing or proposed sewer lines if within a certain distance.

In addition, the Township should be receptive to alternative opportunities for water and sewer management. The Township should understand that new technology offers some alternatives to public sewer and water services and these methods should be given due consideration during the planning process.

Finally, to assure that on-site wastewater systems continue to function properly, the Township should require periodic inspections. Some communities require that drain fields and septic tanks be inspected for proper operation at time of sale.

- Develop a Township Subdivision and Site Condominium Ordinance that specifically regulates platted subdivisions and site condominium developments
- Trails / Non-motorized Pathways

Identify and document existing and potential trail routes throughout the Township and surrounding communities, which could be part of a larger over all Recreation Plan. Coordination with Ottawa County, adjacent jurisdictions, and local developers within the Township could result in a “regional trail network.” It is the intent of the Township that the trail follows the best and most logical route in the corridors – not the route that is left over after development is established. The Township will accomplish the actual construction of the trail network by working with developers as development projects occur. The Township understands that there may be a need for the Township to fund, design, and construct some areas of the trail network, as there will be gaps in the system.

To reach the desired trail network, the Township will perform the following activities:

- Prioritize the construction of the segments of the trail network.
- Develop a trail system that feeds the existing Musketawa Trail for the benefit of Township residents.
- Create a mechanism to encourage or require developers to participate in development of the trail network.
- Set standards for the trail design, characteristics and management.

Responsibilities. This activity should be the responsibility of a new Parks and Recreation Committee or by the Planning Commission. This group will need to work with Township planning and engineering staff, the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Department and may require the assistance of the Michigan Department of Transportation in some instances.

- A key aspect of the Township's Master Plan is the preservation of the natural beauty and important features of the community. The purpose of this strategy is to prepare an inventory of important natural features and to identify the likely trends or conditions that may threaten them.

Growth and increasing demands upon natural resources have had the effect of encroaching upon, despoiling or eliminating many of the trees, other forms of vegetation, and natural resources and processes associated with natural woodlands. An inventory of these resources would aid in their protection.

Wetlands are another natural resource that provides benefits to the entire community beyond the understanding of many individuals. The State of Michigan regulates and protects this resource but there are limits to the level of protection they provide. Once an inventory has identified the wetland resources, the Township could explore a local ordinance geared to supplement the State of Michigan law.

Using automated or manual mapping, the Township may develop a set of mapped exhibits that would serve as a guide to future land use decisions. In some areas, it may be appropriate to develop overlay zoning or other preservation mechanisms. These inventories must eventually be field-verified, and with modern global positioning systems (GPS) this process can be accomplished fairly efficiently. In addition, as private property owners submit site plans for consideration, independent and professionally prepared natural features determinations may be collected for incorporation into this inventory.

Standards for the preservation of such features will need to be developed which are effective, yet which permit reasonable use of private lands. These would be structured to permit proposed buildings to be shifted on a site to preserve features.

Responsibilities. The Planning staff should take the lead in preparing the inventory. Outside support may be needed in structuring a consistent approach to completing the inventory and to complete wetlands designation work.

- Developing mechanisms to encourage and require scenic easements and natural buffers within developments will enhance open space, protect water quality and maintain a rural character.

The Township could use its PUD mechanism to provide for natural area buffers while preserving the right of property owners to realize an appropriate yield from their lands. The PUD ordinance will be evaluated for the flexibility to promote the preservation of open lands and natural area buffers. With regard to larger tracts of natural features, the Township could consider the formation of a nonprofit conservancy or the use of existing conservancies in the area to accept title or easements. The use of a non-profit conservancy may be important to provide tax incentives, in some instances.

In addition to buffers and open lands, this strategy will also include the formation and implementation of a long-range plan to create non-motorized connections between neighborhoods, activity centers, parks and schools. These pathways will help to relieve some of the traffic and vehicle/pedestrian conflicts at critical intersections. More importantly, they will add a further amenity to the Chester Township community.

In the interest of protecting water quality throughout the Township, the following strategies are incorporated as part of the program:

- Development should be encouraged in areas that least affect the integrity of the watershed's water quality;
- Development should be structured to reduce degradation of the watershed;
- Development and integration of different land use groups should be encouraged to minimize unnecessary vehicular movements within the watershed and region;
- Development should be concentrated within defined areas to create an identity for these areas; and
- Intensive development should be confined to a prescribed area that maximizes existing investment in the infrastructure and defines appropriate growth areas.

In addition to stream protection, another objective of this program is the protection of wildlife corridors. Due to the extent and quality of wetlands and streams in the Crockery Lake watershed, this area hosts a diverse population of wildlife, ranging from deer, rabbits, raccoons, squirrels, red and gray fox, muskrat, mink, opossum, skunk, various song birds and waterfowl, ruffed grouse and woodcocks. This wildlife is an important element of the character of the Township and the protection of wildlife corridors will support the natural feature protection goals of this Plan. The purpose of wildlife corridor protection is habitat connectivity to prevent the development of isolated habitat populations, ultimately weakening or threatening a species in the area.

Land uses may include a combination of low intensity development intended to work in harmony with the sensitive natural features of the watershed. These uses may include single family residential, office park or clean industrial land uses. Development proposals within this area will be required to address specific performance standards intended to maintain and enhance the natural characteristics of the region and to maintain its buffering properties. Those performance standards will include:

- Corridors of at least 200 feet in width for the protection of streams and wildlife corridors.
- Accurate and field verified wetlands delineation and protection.
- Dedicated scenic easement of 100 feet from all county roads consisting of natural vegetation and non-motorized trail connections.
- Minimization of formal landscaping and restrictions on excessive fertilization.
- Prohibition of high traffic generating land uses.
- Strongest possible implementation assurances (e.g., performance bonds, deed restrictions, etc.)

Responsibilities. The Planning staff should take the lead in preparing the standards for natural buffers. Outside support may be needed on a case by case basis when landowners or developers select to use conservation easements. The Township staff should coordinate with regional agencies to plan for a regional network of natural areas particularly relating to non-motorized and recreational facilities.

Planning Commission Work Program

The Plan recommends that the Planning Commission prepare an annual work program in the beginning of each year. This work program would set forth the tasks of goals which the Planning Commission

determines to accomplish for the upcoming year. This will allow the Commission to stay focused on important tasks, in order to develop and implement goals and strategies identified within this Plan.

Planning Education

The Planning Commissioners should be kept informed of planning seminars to learn how to better carry out their duties and responsibilities as Planning Commissioners. These seminars are regularly sponsored by the Michigan Association of Planning (MAP) and the Michigan Townships Association (MTA) and are a valuable resource for Planning Commissions.

The Michigan Citizen Planner Program which is administered by the Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service is also an important education program for Planning Commissioners. There are also several planning publications which are useful information tools for Planning Commissions. The main publications are Planning and Zoning News and Michigan Planner Magazine.

Revisions to Master Plan

Amendments to the Township Planning Act effective on January 9, 2002 require Township Planning Commissions to review their Master Plans every five years and determine whether to amend the plan or adopt a new plan. This review allows the Commission to be responsive to new growth trends and current citizen attitudes. As growth occurs over the years, the Plan's goals, land use information, population projections, and other pertinent data can then be reviewed and revised as necessary so the Plan can continue to serve as a valid guide to the growth of the Township.

APPENDIX A -- COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

The following pages include the original questions and tabulated responses for the community surveys done in 2003 and 2007. A detailed analysis of the data for the 2003 survey is included in the original 2003 Master Plan. Such an in depth study was deemed to be unnecessary in 2007 as the opinions expressed reflected very little change from the 2003 survey.

CHESTER TOWNSHIP 2007 COMMUNITY SURVEY

(Responses are show in parenthesis)

1. **Using the map included at the end of this survey, please circle the number below corresponding to the area of the Township where you live.**

1 (18) 2 (15) 3 (26) 4 (16) 5 (9) 6 (15)

2. **How long have you lived in Chester Township?**

(3) less than two years - (7) 2-5 years - (18) 6-10 years - (17) over 10 years - (62) over 20 years

- Do you or anyone in your household derive a substantial portion of your income from farming?**

(24) Yes (82) No

4. **Are you satisfied with the existing zoning regulations?** (53) yes (45) no

If you answered no, what best describes your dissatisfaction? (Check all that apply)

(24) The current regulations do not adequately preserve farmland.

(37) The current rules are too restrictive in allowing homes to be built in the Agricultural District.

(16) Residential and commercial development should be allowed in all districts.

5. **What types of recreational facilities would you most like to see developed in the Township?**

(28) Bike & walking trails (18) Neighborhood parks (9) Ball fields (5) Tennis courts

(10) Basketball courts (34) Nature areas (49) None (4) Other

6. **Would you support a special millage to finance any of these facilities?**

(27) yes (76) no

7. **What type of housing do you think is needed in the Township? (please check as many as you wish):**

(8) apartments (13) attached condominiums (33) senior housing (condominiums/assisted living)

(58) homes on lots between one and two acres (28) homes on lots of less than one acre

8. **Current zoning requires new homes be built to a minimum of 1200 square feet. Would you like to see that minimum:** (69) Stay at 1200 sq. ft. (21) Be reduced (14) Be increased.

9. **How would you rate enforcement of Township Ordinances?**

(32) Good (28) Fair (15) Poor (25) No Opinion

10. **What types of businesses or services would you like to see developed in Chester Township?**

(29) restaurant (16) gas station (5) industrial/repair

11. **The 2003 Township Master Plan recommends that commercial land uses be located in Conklin and along of Gooding Road just west of Kenowa Avenue and on Gooding Road just east of 40th.**

Neighborhood Commercial uses may include: retail, services, small garages, restaurants, offices, churches, schools, clubs, etc.

Regional Commercial uses may include: all Neighborhood Commercial uses plus warehouses, commercial garages, lumberyards, larger retail or wholesale units with outdoor storage, drive thru establishments, etc.

(79) These locations are sufficient

(17) Additional land should be planned for commercial uses at: (4) Conklin (4) Gooding

12. Industrial land uses, which may include: manufacturing, assembly, packaging, freight terminals, warehouses, fuel distribution, equipment yards, service stations, implement sales, etc., should be located:

(62) In Conklin

(43) On Gooding Street west of Kenowa Avenue

(11) Other locations such as:

13. Please categorize the following:

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Preserving farmland	(68)	(28)	(9)
Improving/maintaining road conditions	(64)	(27)	(9)
Increasing housing opportunities for seniors	(20)	(47)	(36)
Improving the appearance and function of Conklin	(39)	(46)	(23)
Protecting the water quality of Crockery Lake	(60)	(33)	(7)
Enforcing zoning and home maintenance rules	(41)	(40)	(17)
Adding additional street lighting	(11)	(35)	(55)
Preserving rural character and views	(62)	(26)	(14)

14. Please rate your level of satisfaction with the following services:

	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	No Opinion
Fire Protection	(79)	(7)	(12)
Police Protection	(57)	(20)	(16)

CHESTER TOWNSHIP 2003 COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

1. Using the map included in this packet, please circle the number below corresponding to the area of the Township where you live.
 1. 15%
 2. 16%
 3. 14%
 4. 13%
 5. 14%
 6. 28%

2. What are the ages of those in your family?

Average adult male 50.9	Average adult female 50.5
Average male 37.3	Average female 37.7

3. How long have you lived in Chester Township?
 - a. Less than 2 years **5.5%**
 - b. 2-5 years **9.5%**
 - c. 6-10 years **12.4%**
 - d. 10+ years **72.6%**

4. How long do you plan to stay in your current home?
 - a. Less than 2 years **3%**
 - b. 2-5 years **6.15%**
 - c. 6-10 years **8.1%**
 - d. Indefinitely **82.7%**

5. Do you live in:
 - a. A farm residence? **30.8%**
 - b. A single family home? **65.1%**
 - c. A duplex? **.5%**
 - d. An apartment? **0%**
 - e. A manufactured home? **3.6%**

6. Do you feel that agriculture will continue to play an important part in Chester Township in the next ten years?
 - a. Yes **89.5%**
 - b. No **10.5%**

7. Do you feel that agriculture will play an important part in Chester Township for **more** than ten years?
 - a. Yes **79.3%**
 - b. No **20.7%**

8. Do you feel that agriculture and residential lands are presently in conflict?
 - a. Yes **64.1%**
 - b. No **35.9%**

9. Do you feel that agricultural lands should be preserved?
 - a. Yes **83.5%**
 - b. No **16.5%**

10. Should the Township encourage new residential development?
 - a. Yes **33.3%**
 - b. No **66.7%**

11. If you answered "yes" to item 10 above, which of the following do you think the Township should encourage?
 - a. Single family homes **92.4%**
 - b. Manufactured house **4.5%**
 - c. Multi-family housing **3.0%**

12. Do you feel that locations of single-family, non-farm homes should be restricted in some way?

- a. Yes **71.4%**
- b. No **28.6%**

13. Would you consider your home to be:

- a. Rural Farm **35.7%**
- b. Non-Farm **47.4%**
- c. Country Estate **16.8%**

14. Is your residence located:

- a. In a platted subdivision **45.8%**
- b. On a parcel of less than 5 acres **36.7%**
- c. On a parcel of 6-10 acres **10.6%**
- d. On a parcel of more than 10 acres **36.2%**

15. Where would you prefer to live?

- a. On a farm **39.3%**
- b. In a rural, undeveloped area **44.8%**
- c. In a village or small town **9.3%**
- d. In a small city **1.6%**
- e. Rural housing development **4.9%**

16. What is your approximate annual family income?

- a. \$0-20K **10.3%**
- b. \$20K-\$30K **13.7%**
- c. \$30K-\$40K **12.6%**
- d. \$40K-\$60K **31.4%**
- e. More than \$60 **32%**

17. What are the types of occupations of the primary and secondary wage earners in the family?

	Primary	Secondary
a. Farming	10.6%	6.6%
b. Trucking/Transportation	4.5%	5.0%
c. Construction/Building	6.7%	3.3%
d. Operator/Assembler in a factory or industry	10.6%	5.0%
e. Sales	5.0%	4.1%
f. Foreman or manager in a factory or industry	7.8%	1.7%
g. Business or Clerical	9.5%	25.6%
h. Professional	12.8%	14.9%
i. Education	2.2%	4.1%

- j. Retired **30.2%** **29.8%**
- k. Other (specify)

18. Which of the following is the location of the employment of the primary and secondary wage earners in your family?

	Primary	Secondary
a. Muskegon area	4%	6%
b. Grand Rapids area	54%	52%
c. Sparta area	9%	7%
d. Ravenna area	3%	4%
e. Chester Township	22%	21%
f. Coopersville area	9%	9%
g. Other		

19. How many miles to you travel to work

Average: **20.2** miles

20. Should we encourage the development of some commercial and industrial enterprise in Chester Township?

- a. Yes **49.2%**
- b. No **50.8%**

21. What types of commercial development should be encouraged? (check no more than 2)

- a. Regional shopping center **3.5%**
- b. Sit down restaurants **24.4%**
- c. Fast food restaurants **1.6%**
- d. Specialty shops **6.6%**
- e. Neighborhood shopping center **5.4%**
- f. Gas/Convenience **27.9%**
- g. Other **4.7%**
- h. None **26%**

22. Please rank the following areas as to the priority of attention you feel they should be given by the elected officials of the Township. (mark numerically, with "1" being the most important)

- a. Economic development **2**
- b. Land use controls **1**
- c. Recreation **4**
- d. Housing **3**
- e. Transportation **5**
- f. Public facilities **6**

g. Other **7**

- 23.** Do you feel the zoning in Chester Township is too restrictive, restrictive enough or lacking in strength?
- a. Too restrictive **23.1%**
 - b. Restrictive enough **51.6%**
 - c. Lacking in strength **25.3%**

Land Use Questions (Numbers 24 – 28)

In order to form policies, we need to know the use you would prefer for lands within the Township. Please check the appropriate responses to each of the following statements using the following key:

- 1. “agree”
- 2. “neutral/cannot judge”
- 3. “disagree”

	1	2	3
24. Land use controls (i.e. zoning ordinances, zoning maps, building codes, etc.) have been effective and useful in the Township.	37%	36%	27%
25. It should be the policy of your Township government to establish strong zoning ordinances which prevent unsound development.	74%	12%	14%
26. It should be the policy of your Township government to prohibit land uses which detract from the scenic quality.	66%	18%	16%
27. Are you generally satisfied with the current land use in Chester Township?	49%	24%	27%
28. Should it be the policy of your Township to restrict residential development in the agricultural areas by means of zoning.	65%	13%	22%

29. What types of recreational facilities would you most like to see developed in the Township? (Check no more than two)

Bike & walking paths 22.4%	Neighborhood Parks 20.4%
Baseball/Softball Fields 7.6%	Soccer Fields 2.6%
Basketball Courts 3%	Tennis Courts 4.3%
Nature Areas 26.6%	None 13.2%

30. In terms of Township priorities, how important are the following, in your opinion?

	Very Important		Somewhat Important	Not Important	
	1	2	3	4	5
Improving traffic flow	13%	3%	23%	12%	37%
Developing water lines	9	7	28	10	47

Extending sewer line	17	3	22	11	37
Preserving farmlands	60	13	13	6	9
Expanding industrial & commercial development	13	10	22	17	38
Establishing pedestrian & bike trails	9	16	35	12	28
Increasing housing opportunity for seniors	14	18	35	18	14
Improving police protection	28	27	29	9	8
Improving fire protection	34	28	26	6	6
Improving parks & recreation facilities	14	15	42	15	14
Enforcing zoning & home maintenance rules	30	23	29	9	10
Improving the appearance of neighborhoods	33	22	29	9	8
Adding street lights	13	9	25	18	36

APPENDIX B – MAPS

List of Maps

Map 1. Contour Map

Map 2. Soils Map

Map 3. Prime Agricultural Land

Map 4. Wetland Map

Map 5. Watershed Boundary

Map 6. 1999 Land Use

Map 7. Future Land Use Map

Map 8. Future Land Use Map for Conklin Area

Map 9. Future Land Use Map for Crockery Lake Area