

Master Plan Of Claybanks Township, Oceana County, Michigan



Prepared by
Claybanks Township Planning Commission
Assisted by LSL Planning, Inc.

Approved by
Claybanks Township Board
August 13, 2007

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Authorization

This, the Claybanks Township Master Plan has been created under the provisions of Michigan Public Act 168 of 1959, as amended and approved by the Claybanks Township Board August 13, 2007.

Introduction

The Role of the Master Plan

Every community has a responsibility to look beyond day-to-day zoning issues and look at the long-range consequences of their decisions. Similarly, the community must have a document that provides guidance for land use and development by considering a wide range of possible futures. Claybanks Township's long-range view is presented through this Master Plan.

Claybanks Township has seen patterns of development over the past few years that highlight a growing concern over land use. Township leaders and residents have become concerned about losing the township's rural character and this concern is valid, because with development comes change. However, residents, both new and old, face a seeming paradox: people move to rural areas "to get away from" growth in other places, then demand that the community "not become" the same kind of place from which they escaped.

Many rural communities in Michigan are facing this challenge, and there is no simple solution for all of the contrasting concerns about land development. But advocates for both development and preservation have common goals; each want "better planning." Decision makers, then, must balance the interests of landowners wishing to develop their properties, while maintaining the features that attracted people to the area in the first place.

Those "quality of life" features -- farms, rural views, natural features and Lake Michigan-- are what make Claybanks Township special. A successful Master Plan must consider these elements, along with impending development pressure and take steps that will ensure that development "fits" in the area. Accordingly, use of the right planning tools is needed to ensure that the township continues to be a special place.

How Does the Master Plan Affect You?

How the Master Plan affects you depends on your particular situation:

If you are a property owner you may have several interests, including not only your property but properties that are in a similar land use category.

As a homeowner, you will be interested in the properties in your immediate neighborhood. You may wish to know what uses are proposed for vacant land in your area.

As an owner of vacant property, you will want to know what land uses are proposed for your property.

As a township resident, you will be interested in the overall concepts of the Plan, as expressed in its goal statements. These statements will give you an indication as to the township's view of the present and the future.

How to Use This Plan

While the plan is comprehensive in scope and can be used for a number of purposes, most property owners will get the greatest benefit from the plan by the following simple process:

Step #1 What land use is proposed for your property, or the area surrounding your property? This information is on the Future Land Use map. This map is divided into separate land use classifications. Find the classification of land use in which your property is located.

Step #2 Determine how the Planning Commission and the Township Board view development in your area.

The description of the Future Land Use classifications will indicate the planned development within your area; it may be fairly specific or somewhat general. This part of the Plan is intended to provide some reasonable direction to the Planning Commission, as well as provide property owners information about development within the township.

Step #3 Determine the meaning of the land use designation for your property.

Find the Future Land Use classification your property is located within and read the long-term land use vision for that area. Depending on the nature of your interest, this may be as far as you need to go. If you have a specific proposal that does not match the expectations of the Plan, you may want to look at it in more detail.

Step #4 Determine how your property is affected.

The Future Land Use classification will indicate the planned use for your property. This does not mean that you cannot continue the use that you currently have. Land use within Claybanks Township is regulated by the zoning of your property. See the zoning ordinance or call the Township offices for more information.

Whether you are a landowner, developer or a homeowner, the Master Plan may have a profound impact on the future of your property. As part of the Claybanks Township community, it is important that you become familiar with the Plan and what it may mean to you and your Township.

How the Plan was Developed

This plan was created by the Claybanks Township Planning Commission and approved by the Claybanks Township Board. The planning commission consisted of seven residents representing the diversity of the township, appointed and charged with the development of a “Master Plan” for the township. Material for the township history was collected from several sources including Oceana County Road Commission, Oceana County Health Department, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Oceana County Historical and Genealogy Society and Michigan Department of Natural Resources. In order that all property owners in the township have an opportunity to have input into the plan an opinion survey was developed and sent to all the property owners. The response to the survey was 51 percent which the commission considered to be adequate to get a sense of the property owners concerns and suggestions for the township’s future growth. The plan was reviewed by LSL Planning Inc. and many of their suggestions were incorporated prior to final acceptance.

Claybanks Township Profile

Pre-settlement

An Act was passed on February 13, 1855 that defined Oceana County as it currently exists. Prior to 1855 the Name "Oceana" was used to define a large part of western Michigan, but did not include what is now Oceana County. At that time the area now called Oceana County was part of Mackinac County.

It is believed that French missionaries explored the east coast of Lake Michigan as early as 1615. Pere Marquette was active along the coastline from the late 1660's until his death near the mouth of what is now the Pere Marquette River in May 1675. The area to be Oceana County was surveyed in 1837 and 1838. However, no real interest in making permanent settlements in the county were made until the late 1840's when lumbermen started to harvest the virgin pine forests of the area.

Settlement

In 1849 six families and several single men were the first settlers in what is now Oceana County. They all settled along the shore of Lake Michigan, between Flower Creek and Whisky Creek, in what is now Claybanks Township. At that time the transportation was either on Lake Michigan, along the Lake Michigan beach or on a trail established by the Native Americans from the head of White Lake to what is now Section 21 in Claybanks Township. These early settlers and the many who followed in the 1850's were truly pioneers, contending with Native Americans, no roads, many wolves and other than a few small areas cleared by the Natives, a land of trees and tree stumps.

The 1855 Act establishing Oceana County created three townships, Claybanks, Stony Creek and Pentwater. Pentwater Township contained the top row of townships, Stony Creek Township (renamed Benona in 1857) contained the middle two rows of townships plus the top row of sections of the current Claybanks Township. Claybanks originally consisted of all of the current townships of Claybanks, Grant, Otto and Greenwood except for sections one through six of what is now Claybanks Township. These townships were divided as the county was populated over the next fifteen years or so.

Claybanks Township evolved as follows:

- In December 1857 the County Board of Supervisors took Greenwood Township from Claybanks.
- In December 1858 the County Board of Supervisors added sections 1 through 5 to Claybanks with Benona retaining only section 6. (*Benona may have also retained section 5 at this time*)
- In February 1860 the County Board of Supervisors took Otto Township from Claybanks.
- In March 1866 the County Board of Supervisors took Grant Township from Claybanks, and at this point the current boundaries of Claybanks Township were established..

(The above information is extracted from "Oceana County Pioneers and Business Men of To-day, 1890")

Early Years

The population grew rapidly and by 1880 the population of Claybanks Township was 643, including 246 children under the age of 16. The main source of income was general farming, generally on 80 acres or more. The county seat was located at Whisky Creek (Village of Roseville) until it was removed to Hart in 1864. Three post offices were established; Claybanks at Whisky Creek, Flower Creek in section 27 and Holstein in the NE corner of section 22. In 1859 the first road was laid out, but it would be many years before roads were anything but wagon trails. Religious services were held in homes by traveling ministers from the mid 1850's with edifices being constructed in the 1880's. The Peace Lutheran church was built in 1880 (removed

about 1960). Trinity Lutheran Church in 1884, St. John’s Catholic Church and Claybanks Methodist Church both in 1885, a Methodist Episcopal Church in the SE corner of section 1 (removed in the 1950’s). The first school was located at Whisky Creek, but over the years five schools were located in the township; Pine Grove – section 16, Bradyville – section 2, Girdle Road – section 13, Green – section 25 and Flower Creek – section 27. Some township residents attended school at the Cranston school in Grant Township and the Gee and Sumner schools in White River Township. All of these “country” schools were consolidated into either the Montague or Shelby School Districts by the 1960’s.

The social lives of the residents were centered on the schools, churches and neighbors that joined forces for threshing grain, filling silo, etc. This rural farming way of live continued until the automobile, farm mechanization and out of area employment, especially during World War II, started the decline of self-sufficient family farming.

Population Growth

Figure I shows the township population growth since the township was established.

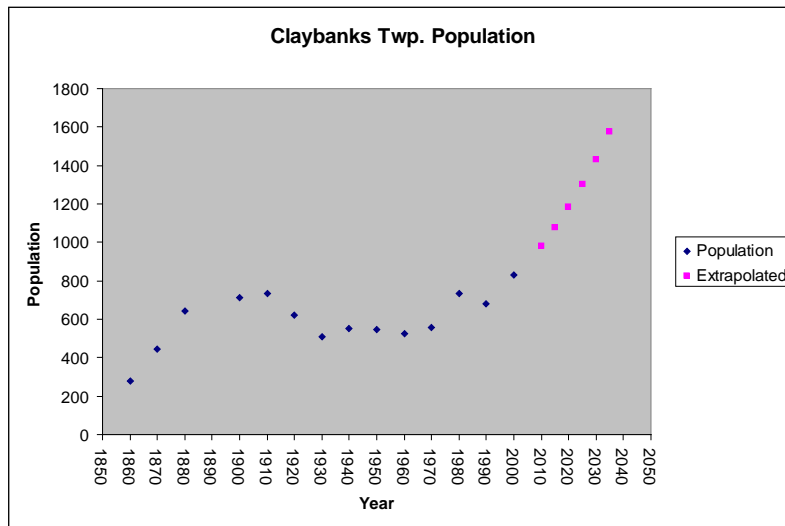


Figure I – Claybanks Township Population History

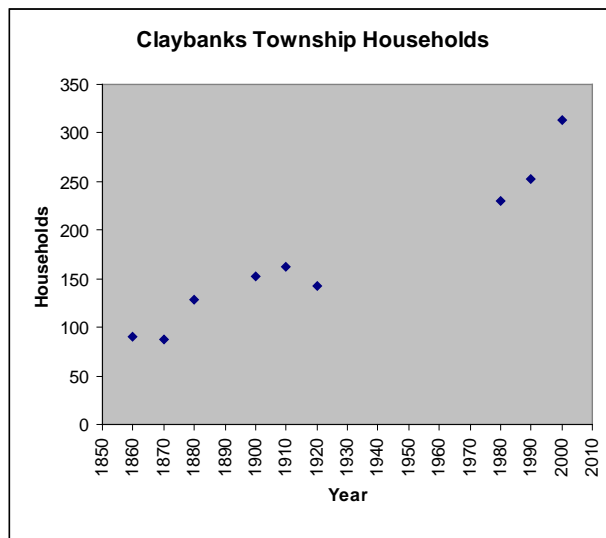


Figure II – Claybanks Township Household History

Figure II shows the upward trend for the number of households in Claybanks Township. This trend is steeper than the population growth trend because the number of people in each household is decreasing from 3.19 in 1980, 2.69 in 1990 and 2.65 in the year 2000. 1930 to 1970 census data were not available.

The number of occupied households was 162 in 1910 and 313 in the year 2000 with about the same population. This shows that the households are now about half as large as they were in 1910.

POPULATION											
	ACTUAL				EST	PROJECTED					
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2004	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035
Oceana County	17,984	22,022	22,454	26,873	28,415	31,850	35,028	38,523	42,367	46,594	51,243
Benona Township	816	1,203	1,133	1,520	1,591	1,783	1,961	2,157	2,372	2,609	2,869
Claybanks Township	557	733	679	831	873	979	1,076	1,184	1,302	1,432	1,574
Colfax Township	222	328	374	574	612	686	754	830	912	1,004	1,104
Crystal Township	453	602	658	832	892	1,000	1,100	1,209	1,330	1,463	1,609
Elbridge Township	799	899	820	1,233	1,304	1,462	1,607	1,768	1,944	2,138	2,352
Ferry Township	719	898	1,033	1,296	1,388	1,556	1,711	1,882	2,070	2,276	2,503
Golden Township	871	1,358	1,302	1,810	1,900	2,130	2,342	2,576	2,833	3,116	3,426
Grant Township	1,587	2,366	2,578	2,932	3,183	3,568	3,924	4,315	4,746	5,219	5,740
Greenwood Township	575	815	915	1,154	1,239	1,389	1,527	1,680	1,847	2,032	2,234
Hart Township	1,525	1,801	1,513	2,026	2,132	2,390	2,628	2,890	3,179	3,496	3,845
Leavitt Township	773	848	804	845	911	1,021	1,123	1,235	1,358	1,494	1,643
Newfield Township	1,551	1,968	2,144	2,483	2,629	2,947	3,241	3,564	3,920	4,311	4,741
Otto Township	196	426	404	662	726	814	895	984	1,082	1,190	1,309
Pentwater Township	1,154	1,424	1,422	1,513	1,564	1,753	1,928	2,120	2,332	2,565	2,820
Shelby Township	3,352	3,506	3,692	3,951	4,124	4,623	5,084	5,591	6,149	6,762	7,437
Weare Township	695	939	1,041	1,261	1,342	1,504	1,654	1,819	2,001	2,201	2,420
City of Hart	2,139	1,888	1,942	1,950	2,005	2,247	2,472	2,718	2,989	3,288	3,616
Hesperia Village (part)	525	529	586	590	625	701	770	847	932	1,025	1,127
New Era Village	466	534	520	461	477	535	588	647	711	782	860
Pentwater Village	993	1,165	1,050	958	988	1,107	1,218	1,339	1,473	1,620	1,782
Rothbury Village	394	522	407	416	445	499	549	603	663	730	803
Shelby Village	1,703	1,624	1,871	1,914	1,981	2,220	2,442	2,686	2,954	3,248	3,573
Walkerville Village	319	296	262	254	266	298	328	361	397	436	480

SOURCE: Actual and Estimated Figures from the U.S. Bureau of the Census - Projected figures from the WMSRDC

NOTE: Population projections are developed at the county level. As a result of this, in-county migration from urban to non-urban areas may be understated.

NOTE: Village population included in township figures.

Table I – Population Growth Projections

Table I shows the growth in population, projected by the WMSRDC, to be 57 % from 2000 to 2025 and 89% from 2000 to the year 2035.

This increase for the township is based on a ratio from an Oceana County estimate that may or may not provide a good estimate for Claybanks Township. However, if the extrapolated trend is anywhere near accurate, township government must be prepared to meet the challenges of that growth.

The New Settlers

By the year 2000 only a handful of self-sufficient agricultural enterprises operated in the township. Beyond that, the balance of the tillable land is now used for hobby farming, rented to the few large agricultural enterprises, divided into residential parcels or has been left dormant and has or is becoming overgrown. Socially, the township has been changed as it has become more of a bedroom community with the influx of people of diverse backgrounds and visions for the future of the township.

The development of the Lake Michigan shoreline began in the early 1900's with the establishment of several plats; Stony Heights on Stony Lake in 1924, and Roseville Beach in Section 8 in 1926. Then another wave of plat development occurred between 1954 and 1973 with 13 plats/subdivisions totaling approximately 360 lots, In 1960 the Asa J. Bays Subdivision with eight lots, located along Webster Road, became the only inland subdivision.

As of 2006 a new wave of development is in the works, The Claybanks Sunset Site Condominiums was established in 2004 and the remaining undeveloped parcels along Lake Michigan are expected to be subdivided in the next few years. The challenge for the township is to control this development so as not to exceed the capacity of the area relative to roads, septic system absorption capabilities and public services.

The Current Population

The 2000 U.S. census provides a comprehensive study of Claybanks Township. As of 2000, there were 831 people residing in the township, with a median age of 41.6 years. 208 people, or 25 percent of the population were less than 18 years old and 129, (16 percent) were 65 years of age or over. Twenty-six percent (219) of the population were attending school, preschool through college. Of the 577 people 25 years or over, 85 percent had a high school education or higher, and of those, 16 percent had achieved a bachelor's degree or higher.

The race of 94 percent of the population was recorded as White and four percent Latino, accounting for 98 percent of the total. Of the 763 people five years and over, 92 percent spoke the English language at home only. Those speaking Spanish at home make up six percent of the total.

There were 511 housing units in 2000, of which 313 or 61 percent of the units were occupied. Vacant housing units made up 39 percent of which 36 percent or 182 units were seasonal units. Of the 313 occupied housing units 26 units, or eight percent, were renter occupied. Ninety-two percent of the homes are single units while seven percent, 36 units, are mobile homes.

There were 407 employed workers over the age of 16 years. Eleven percent worked in the Agricultural and related industry. This followed Manufacturing at 24 percent and Education, health and social services at 16 percent. The average household income was \$46,396 in the year 2000. Five percent of the households had incomes of less than \$15,000 and the same percentage had incomes of \$100,000 or more.

Current Land Use

Claybanks Township has a total area of about 24 square miles or about 15,360 acres. The township is considered a rural community with low density residential development except for areas along Lake Michigan and the small portion of Stony Lake that is within the township. Other than some home occupations there are no large industrial or commercial businesses except for a private campground. There is a seasonal influx of migrant workers that harvest much of the fruit and asparagus raised in the township.

An analysis of the 2006 tax roll shows the township true cash value to be in excess of 165 million dollars. The residential zoned area has a true value of 102 million dollars, which represents 62.7 percent of the total, although the residential area represents only 5.7 percent of the total township area. The township has considerable residential property, including a couple of subdivisions, which are not in the residential zoned area. The 2006 tax roll has 73.7 percent of the township value and 20.2 percent of the township area classed as residential.

It is estimated, based on a review of the latest aerial mapping of the township property that about 6400 acres or 42 percent of the township is actually used for agricultural purposes. This includes homesteads of land owners even if they rent their property, but generally does not include unused property and not-for-profit property uses. It is difficult to determine the change in the amount of property used for agricultural purposes since the early part of the 20th century when the population was predominantly families making their living from their small farms of 80 acres or so. Prior to World War II a large part of the township was fenced and much of the marginal land, including much of the Flower Creek drainage, was used as livestock pasture land. Now, in the 21st century most of the marginal land and the Flower Creek drainage has been reclaimed by nature and is overgrown by native trees and bushes as well as invaders, principally Autumn Olive. Autumn Olive is a bush that grows to a maximum height of about 20 feet and in a very few years can completely cover an area and crowd out all other growth. This invasive species has already claimed some unused farmland in the township as well as areas in other parts of the county.

Streams and Floodplains

Flower Creek passes through the southern part of the township and empties into Lake Michigan just south of section 33 in White River Township. The main “trout stream” part of the creek is confined to sections 26, 27, 33, 34 and 35, but what some call “Little Flower Creek” starts in section 13 and flows southward through section 14, 23 and feeds into “Big Flower Creek” in section 26. A large part of the township is drained by this stream system. The main stream is a trout stream while the northern branch has much more silt and mostly a clay bottom and does not support a year round trout population.

During the spring runoff and after rainstorms there can be significant flooding in sections 26, 27, 33 and 34 making part of this area unsuited for residential development. Stream crossings and construction within floodplains are regulated by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ).

Whisky Creek is a very small spring fed stream that starts in section 17 and enters Lake Michigan in section 8.

These streams require protection from contamination from septic system leaching as well as surface runoff from agricultural activity.

Inland Lakes

Three small lakes are in the township, all of which have been reduced in size over the last century.

Park Lake is located in sections 10 and 11 and has not seen any development yet. Except for a small area on the East end, the lake is now basically a marsh.

Jake’s Lake, located in section 10, has seen some development but is nearly dry in the summer.

Long Lake, in early years known as “Ole’s Lake”, is located in section 8 and is mostly marsh at this time.

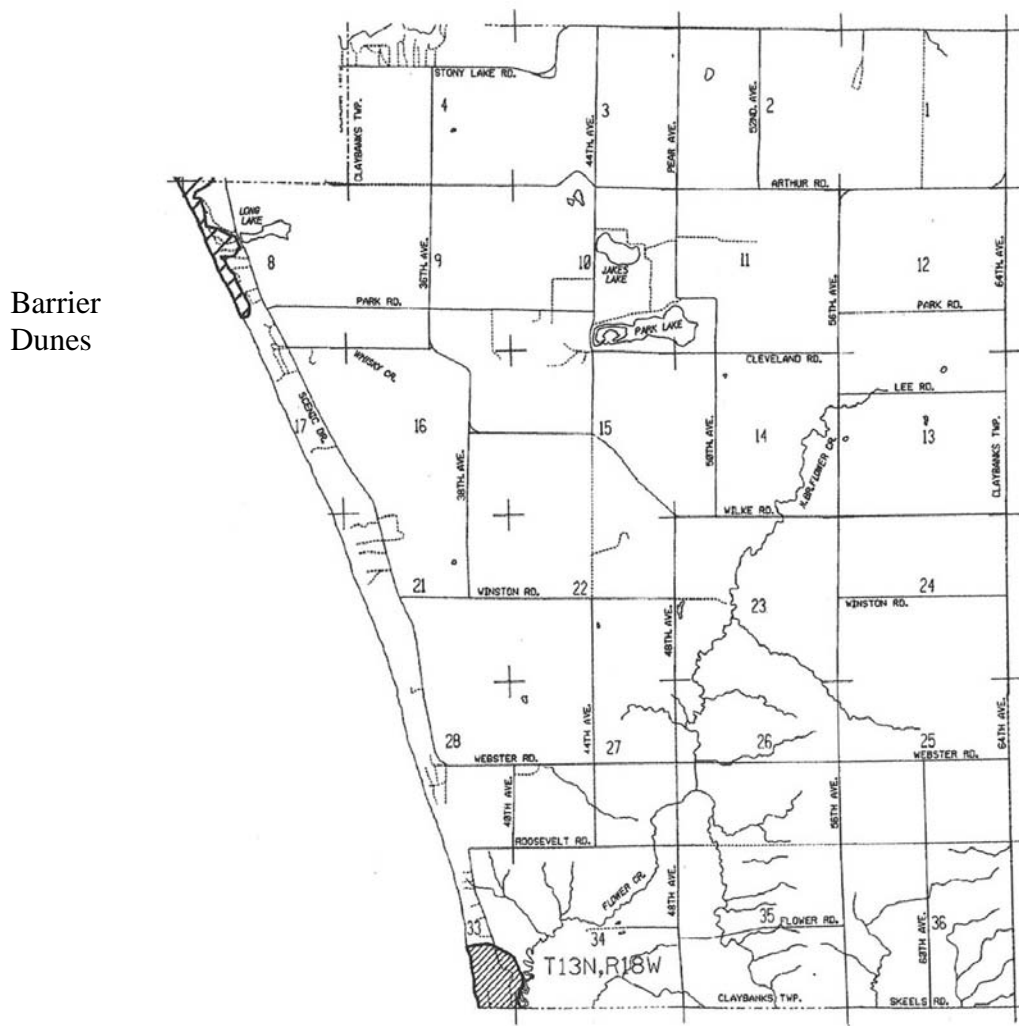
These small lakes provide wildlife habitat and should be protected from excessive development.

Critical Dune Areas

Two areas along the Lake Michigan shoreline have been defined on a MDEQ map as shown below.

The area shown in section 8 is defined as a barrier dune and the area in section 33 is defined as an area that exhibits dune like characteristics. The map does not show Michago Beach and neighboring areas that were severely damaged during the 1986 storm when Lake Michigan was at its near record high water level. In this area homes were built on dunes that had been built up subsequent to the previous high water cycle that had occurred in 1886.

The entire Lake Michigan shoreline in the township is covered by the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA), PA 451 of 1994. The two parts that provide regulations are, part 323, Shoreline Protection and Management, which regulates high risk erosion areas and part 353, Sand Dune Protection and Management, which regulates critical dunes.



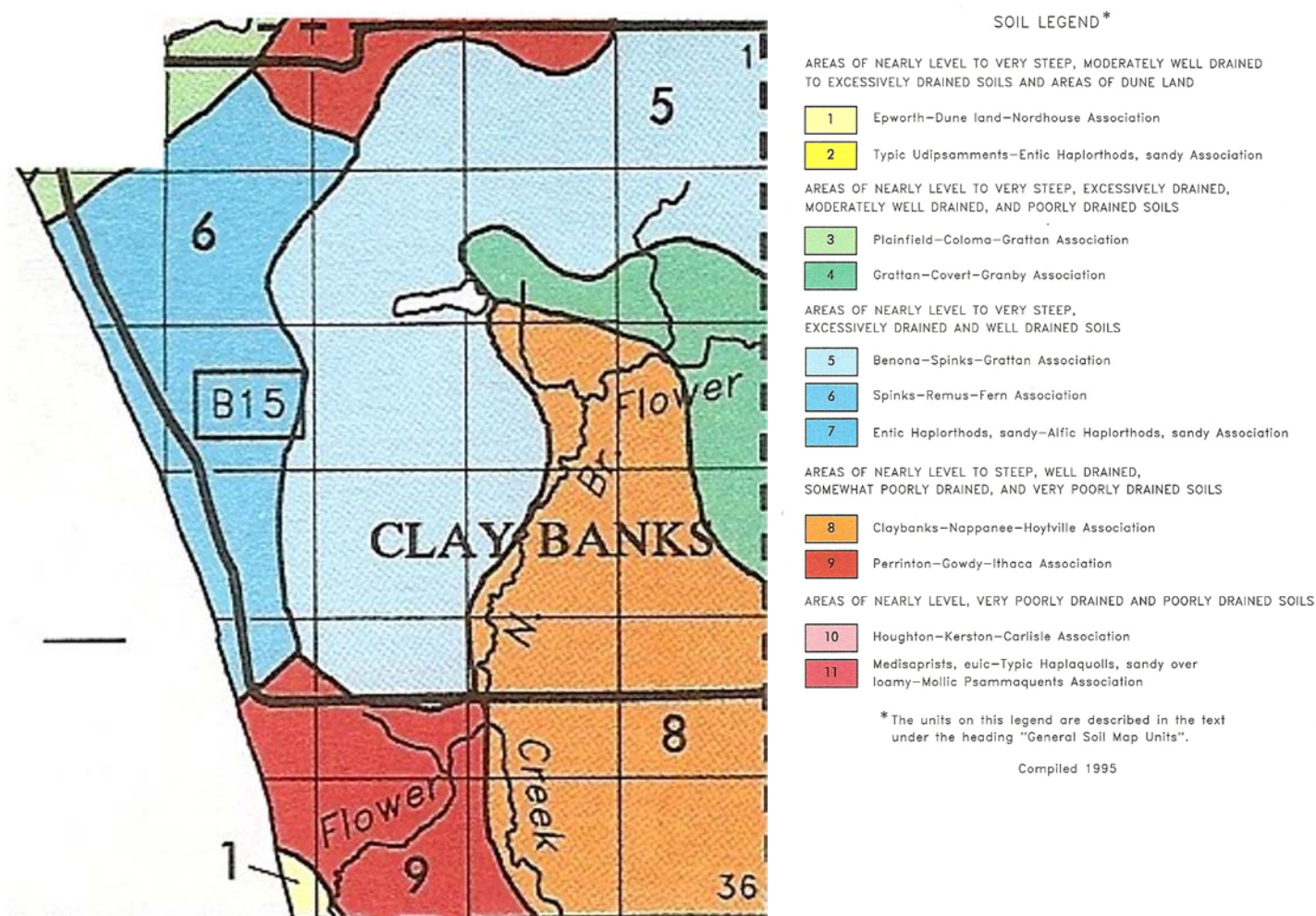
Area that Exhibits Dune
Like Characteristics

Source: MDNR, Land and Water
Management Div.

Figure III – Critical Dune Areas

Claybanks Township Soils

The latest soil mapping for Oceana County was completed and issued in 1996 by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The soils in the township range from very light unproductive sandy soil, fertile sandy loam, to heavy clay loams. Since the very early settlement times orchards have been planted in the northern and western parts (north of Webster Road) of the township where the lighter well drained soils are found. The lower, flatter, generally heavier and often less well drained soils are found in the southeastern part of the township and have been used as general cropland. The topography of the township is varied due to its formation by glacial activity with rolling hills and some areas that were swamps. Most of the swampy areas were drained and cleared during the early settlement times and used as cropland. It is common to find several quite different soil types in a 40 acre field as well as significant drainage problems notably in the areas where the clay soils that the township was named after is near the surface.



Source: Soil Survey of Oceana County, Michigan, U. S. Department of Agriculture and others, 1996

Figure IV – Claybanks Township Soils

The soils in the township vary from well drained soils with good percolation ability to heavy clay soils with very poor percolation ability. In addition, there are areas that are wetlands and other areas that are periodically flooded. Development in areas that could cause environmental issues should not be allowed.

The Prime farmlands based on soil type are shown as types 8 and 9 in the above map, but there are areas of unique soils and conditions that are conducive to agriculture in the other soil types as well.

Claybanks Township Roads

The township roads are shown on the township map below. There are four roads in the township that are partially unimproved and shown in green on the map. There are three lake access roads, two to Lake Michigan and one through the Oceana County Park to the launch ramp on Stony Lake. 50th Ave between Wilke Rd and Cleveland Rd has been registered as a “Scenic Road” by the State of Michigan.



Paved Roads	(Blue)	31 Mi.
Gravel Roads	(Orange)	28 Mi.
Unimproved Roads	(Green)	3 Mi.

Source: Oceana County Road Commission

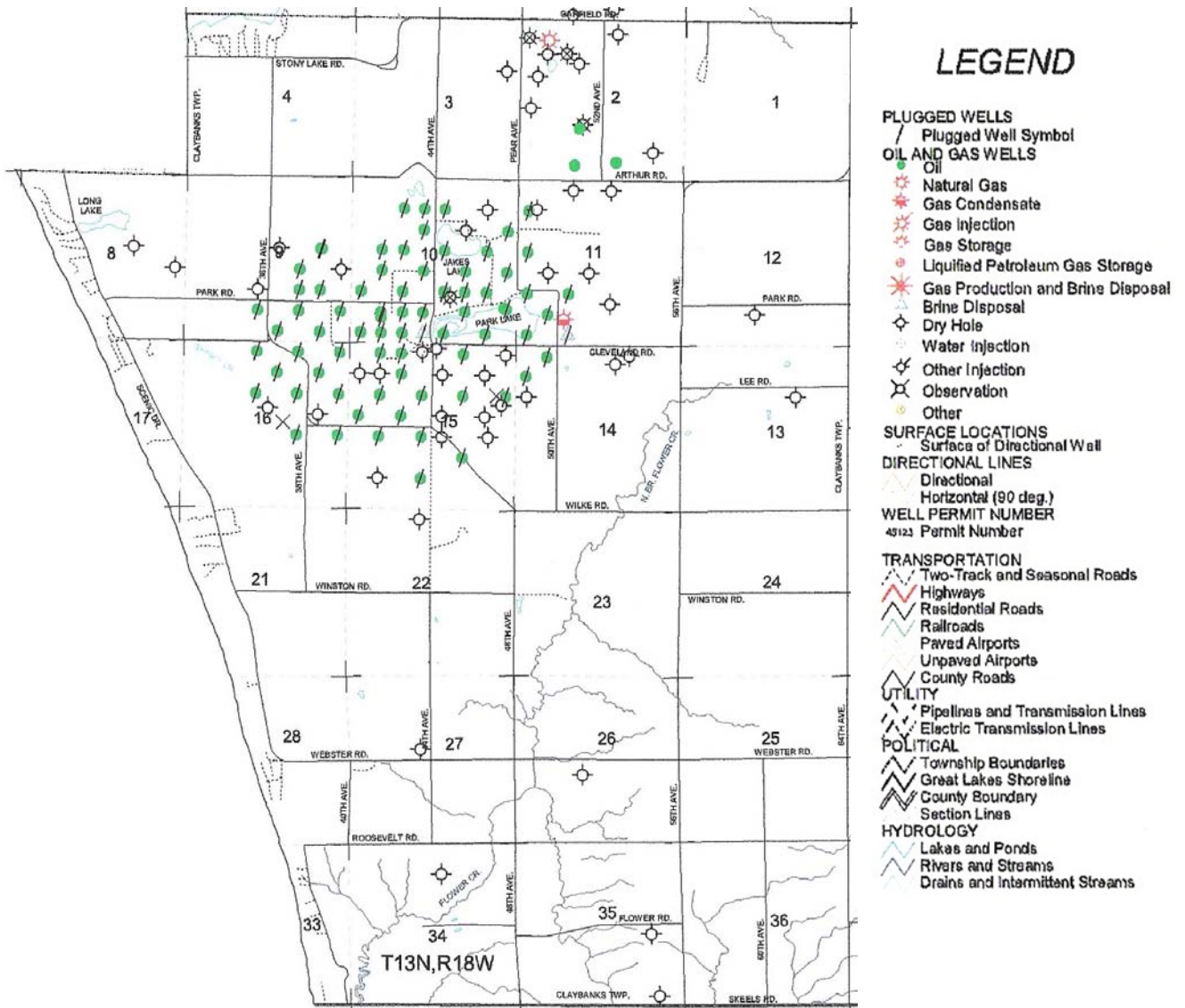
Figure V – Claybanks Township Roads

Most of the paved roads in the township are in poor or very poor condition with much patching and edge deterioration with little chance of improvement in the foreseeable future. Some of the early paved roads were not constructed to modern standards. The carrying capacities of the townships gravel roads and the condition of the paved roads must be a consideration when determining allowable development densities.

Oil & Gas Wells

Oil exploration began in the township in the late 1940's with the establishment of the Claybanks field that produced to a limited degree into the 1990's. This was a shallow well field, generally less than 2000 feet. In the 1970's exploration as deep as the Niagran level began with several wells producing oil and sour gas. Three of these wells were combined and a re-injection facility was built on Arthur Road to extract the oil and re-inject the sour gas. The other wells sat dormant for over 20 years before they were connected to a pipeline for out of the township processing. Exploration continues in the township with more seismic studies and wells being drilled.

The map below shows the past activity, although there are some early dry holes missing from this record.



Source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Figure VI – Claybanks Township Oil & Gas Exploration

Water Wells

The availability of useable water varies throughout the township and varies from very shallow (20 feet or so) to a small area where it is difficult to find sufficient quantity as deep as 300 feet. Two areas where water is more difficult to find in sufficient quantity are near section 26 and at the west end of Roosevelt Road. Many of the early wells in the township were artesian wells. Some of these wells flowed as little as one or two gallons per minute to wells that flowed many times that amount.

The water quality also varies with well depth and location. Although the water is generally good, iron, calcium carbonate and even tannin may be encountered and excessive hardness can occur. In a small area in the center of the township the water can be brackish. It is possible that this brackish water might have been caused by contamination from improperly sealed oil test wells. Due to farming activity it is not uncommon to find excessive nitrates at the shallower levels. High nitrate levels, more than 10 milligrams per liter, are normally caused by contamination of the ground water by human or animal waste or fertilizers. This can normally be avoided by going deeper.

Camp Claybanks

In 1953, just south of the Claybanks Township Park the U.S. Army established Camp Claybanks. This was an anti-aircraft firing range that covered 434 acres and created a danger zone over Lake Michigan that extended from the White Lake channel to Little Point Sable and 10 miles out into the lake. It had a permanent detachment of approximately 100 military and civilian personnel, but during the summer months as many as 1500 Army Reserve and National Guard troops from Michigan, Illinois, Indiana and Iowa would be stationed at the camp. The firing range overlooking Lake Michigan had positions for 16 guns up to 90 millimeter size. In 1958, the Army announced the closing of the camp. The noise from the guns could be heard throughout the township and had become a sore spot for the residents living close to the camp. Today all that remains of the camp are cement foundations and the land has been subdivided and some homes have been built.

Zoning in Claybanks Township

The first Claybanks Township zoning ordinance was adopted October 19, 1970. On November 17, 1975 the township board established a township planning commission which resulted in the approval of a much more comprehensive ordinance adopted July 24, 1978. In 1985, as development became a greater concern and the 1978 ordinance had many problems that made enforcement difficult, an update was necessary. This ordinance was adopted July 11, 1988. Also, in 1988 Conoco Corporation's attempt to build a gas scrubber plant in the township brought zoning to the forefront in the minds of the public. After several contentious public and township board meetings the township board approved the permit, although Conoco dropped their plan and never started the plant. At this same time a group petitioned for a public referendum to invalidate the 1988 ordinance and in the fall 1988 election the ordinance was repealed. The zoning in the township then reverted to the 1978 ordinance which remained in force until the current ordinance was adopted May 13, 1996.

During the preparation of the 1988 ordinance the Claybanks Township Board adopted a one page "Master Plan" (see below) which was meant to reflect the board's view of the future growth of the township.

"Claybanks Township Master Plan

In order that the land in Claybanks Township be used in a manner that would best meet the needs of the public, this Master Plan has been adopted by the Claybanks Township Board.

The township has been agriculturally oriented since its organization in 1855. This land use is considered essential to the future of the state and the county and should be continued. Non-agricultural development of cropland should be discouraged.

The township has been used as a "bedroom" area for local industry and commerce. This single family residential use is non-intrusive and beneficial to the tax base. This type of development should be encouraged on non-cropland.

The township lakeshore frontage on both Lake Michigan and Stony Lake is well developed and serves a public need and is beneficial to the tax base. The platted development occurred from 1925 into the 1970's. These plats have been developed as relatively high density single family resort property with either direct or indirect access to one of the lakes. Non-platted resort residential lots were also developed during this time. This land use is considered appropriate and may be continued indefinitely. However, future development should be less dense to provide a balance of property types and to meet the needs of current property owners in the less densely populated and yet undeveloped resort areas along Lake Michigan.

This board believes that commercial, industrial and multi-family development in the township would adversely affect the rural atmosphere of the township and would not generally be in the best interest of the public. These land use needs are being met by the several nearby urban areas."

Public Opinion Survey

In August 2006 a public opinion survey was created by the Claybanks Township Planning Commission and mailed to the property owner in Claybanks Township. Six hundred thirty six surveys were mailed with 325 returned, for a return rate of 51 percent.

The goal of the survey was to determine, directly from the property owners, the needs and concerns that they consider important for the future of the township. The survey contained sections on demographics, land use and other issues; with opportunities to comment on any issue that was of interest to them.

For the majority of questions the property owners had the options of leaving questions blank, answering yes, no or no opinion. It is understood that some property owners do not have the local experience to have an opinion on every question, so the summary that follows is an analysis of the respondents that did have an opinion.

The entire results of the public opinion survey are contained in Appendix I.

Demographics

Sixty percent of the respondents were over 55 years old and 63 percent had owned their property more than 15 years.

Of the respondents that owned homes, 243 owned single family homes, 18 owned mobile homes and no respondent lived in an apartment or duplex.

The respondents were evenly divided between owning homes in the current residential and agricultural areas of the township.

Half of the respondents reported at least one retiree in the household, while half of the respondents also reported at least one person employed outside of the township.

Land Use

This section of the survey asked questions that were designed to get opinions on future development of the township, specifically land subdivision, preservation of agricultural land, open space and other uses.

The response to the question "Is preserving areas of open space and woodlands important?" was 295 yes and 10 no; indicating that 97 percent thought that it was important.

Seventy-six percent thought it important to protect agricultural land from non-farm use.

When asked if development has replaced areas of natural beauty 61 percent said no.

Ninety five percent thought that zoning should protect the natural and environmental features of the township.

There were several comments about farmers damaging roads and 71 percent of the respondents said no to high density livestock operations.

The question “What should the minimum lot size in acres be in the agricultural zone? 5 10 20 or other” had quite varied results as is shown in the Figure VII.

Figure VII – Response to Minimum Agricultural Lot Size Question

Eighty-three percent of the respondents would like to see lands abutting our inland lakes and streams protected from small lot development.

Questions were asked if there was a need for more mobile homes, rental apartments, duplexes, single family homes, elderly housing, condominiums and vacation homes. Figure VIII shows that a single family home is the only use with a positive response.

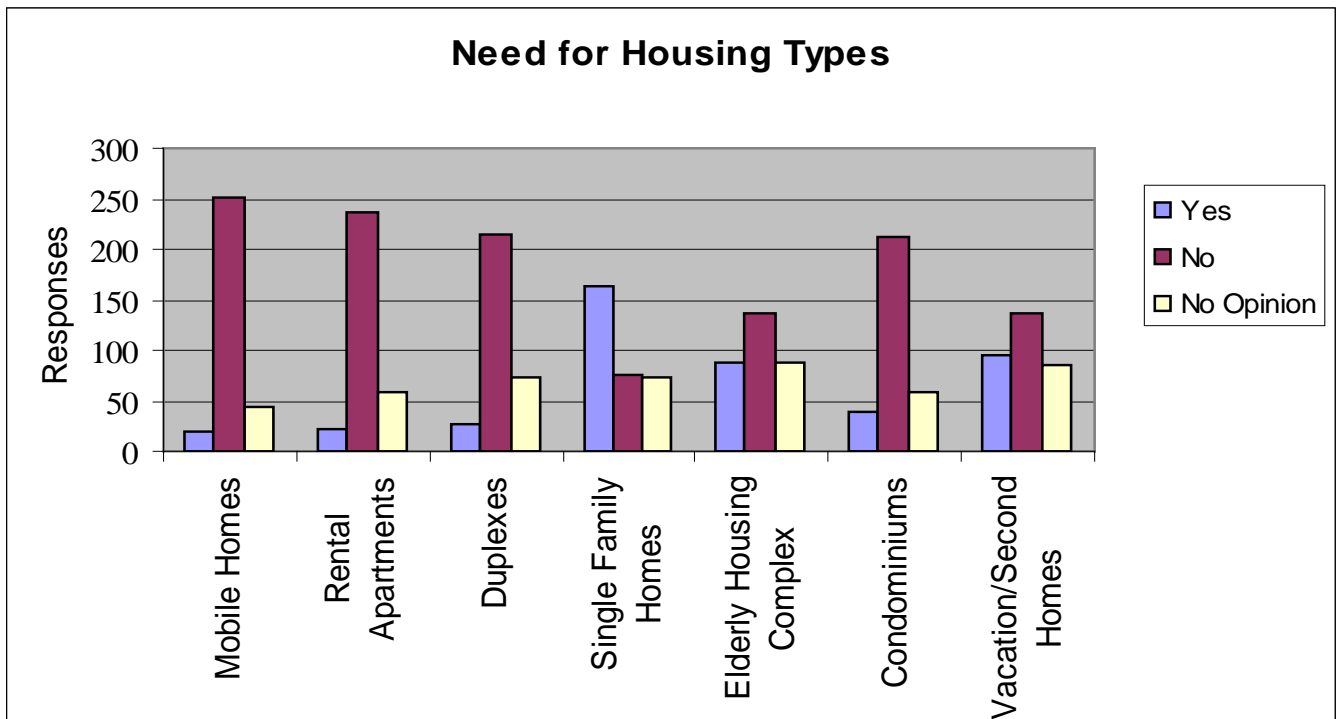


Figure VIII – Response to Need for Housing Types Question

On a related question, 77 percent of the respondents were not in favor of allowing the conversion of single family homes into multiple-living units.

On the question as to whether mobile homes should be allowed to be scattered throughout the township or be required to be in a mobile home park the response was 71 percent saying that they should be in a park.

There were 135 written responses to the question “What kind of commercial or professional businesses do you feel are absent or lacking within the township?” The results are shown in Figure IX and it is probably significant that 190 of the 325 that returned the survey chose to not respond to this question. Also 55 stated that there were no businesses lacking in the township. There was no significant difference in opinion between residents, non-residents, those that owned property in the agriculture zone or those that owned property in the residential zone.

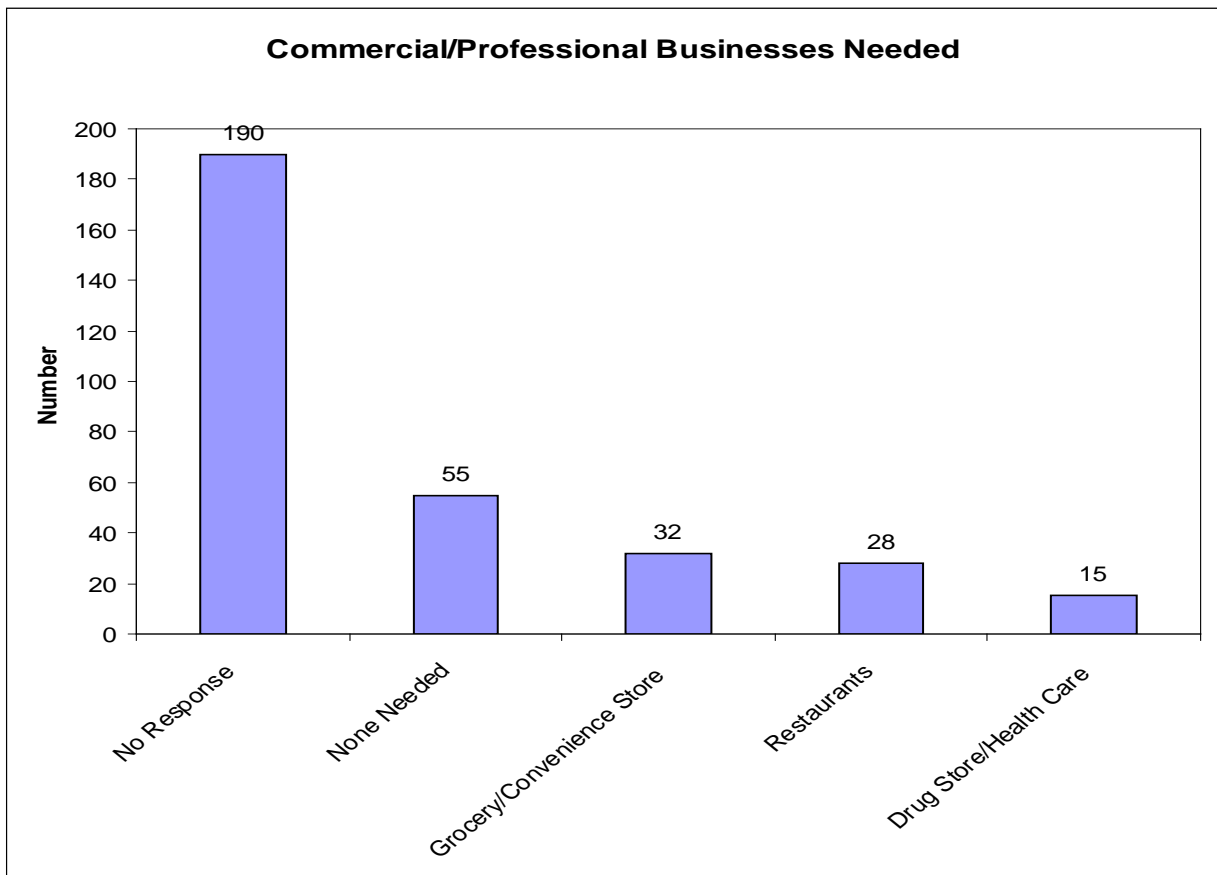


Figure IX – Response to Commercial/ Professional Businesses Needed Question

Sixty-six percent of those responding thought that a resident/ property owner should be allowed to operate a business from their garage or accessory building.

The responses on the questions about industrial development shows that 66 percent agree that small machine or fabrication shops should be permitted, but 67 percent responded that there should be no additional industrial development in the township.

Sixty-eight percent of the responders believe that recreational campers/trailers should be limited to 90 days on property that is not a primary residence. Also, 68 percent think that a permit for this use should be required.

General Township Opinions

Two essay questions asked for concerns about the future of the township. The three most prevalent topics commented on were; concern over future growth and development, road maintenance and paving, junk and unlicensed vehicles. The approximately 160 respondents to these essay questions were nearly evenly divided between residents and non-residents. They were also evenly divided between owning property in either the residential or agriculture zone.

Over 95 percent of the responders say that the township is tranquil, the quality of life is good, and the area schools provide a good education.

When asked if the current shopping facilities in the surrounding area are adequate and convenient the response was 65 percent yes. Similarly, 63 percent thought employment opportunities are available within reasonable driving distance.

Eighty percent of the responders desire no additional public services or recreational opportunities provided by the township or county.

Seventy-nine percent of responders believe that the township government is responsive to the property owners.

There were several comments about roads and road maintenance, mostly negative. However when asked if the township roads are in good condition 64 percent said yes.

Outdoor furnace boilers should be allowed in the agricultural zone by 80 percent of responders, but only 55 percent would allow them in the residential zone.

Eighty-nine percent of responders thought a township zoning ordinance was an effective management tool, although there were several statements that the ordinance must be enforced.

Safety services (fire, medical & police) are considered adequate by 176 responders, 74 percent. However responses from the 63 who said no were generally that one or more of these services are located so far away that the response times are too great and fire insurance rates are higher because of response times.

Eighty-three percent of responders favor the township forcing the removal of damaged/unsafe structures with several comments that the cost should be the owners' responsibility.

Goals & Objectives

The planning commission's vision of the township's future is summarized below to arrive at the goals and objectives they believe will best serve the township for the foreseeable future. The planning commission members have analyzed the results of the township opinion survey and combined that with their understanding of the likely growth and development trends.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Goals

- A. Support a viable agricultural community through planning and zoning techniques that preserve farmland.
- B. Promote the preservation of prime and locally important agricultural lands in the Township for continued farming.
- C. Protect the environmental resources important to the Township, which include the Lake Michigan shoreline, wetlands, wildlife habitat and woodlands from the negative impacts of development.
- D. Integrate the protection of environmental quality into local planning and policy regulations.

Objectives

1. Formulate and adopt new zoning regulations designed to promote responsible land use practices that will minimize intrusion of development and loss of farmland in areas designated for agriculture.
2. Provide incentives for land divisions that allow smaller lots in exchange for preserving larger parent parcels for agriculture, open space, wood lot and shoreline protection.
3. Create two agricultural districts that distinguish between current agricultural production and surrounding development patterns.
4. Encourage and support farmers to participate in the Oceana County Purchase of Development Rights Program.
5. Consider programs such as transfer or purchase of development rights, conservation easements, P.A. 116 and creation of land trusts to preserve open space and agriculture.
6. The Township, through review of development plans, will ensure that development takes place in an environmentally consistent and sound manner by: 1) minimizing potential soil erosion; 2) minimizing disturbances to natural drainage; and 3) protecting the quality of surface and groundwater resources, open space, wetlands, woodlands, and wildlife.
7. Require that site plans show natural features, such as significant vegetation, steep slopes, wetlands, surface water drainage and prime farmland soils.
8. Require residential Planned Unit Development for projects that exceed a designated maximum number of dwelling units.

RURAL CHARACTER AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Goals

- A. Strive to maintain Claybanks Township's rural character through thoughtful, pro-active planning.
- B. Coordinate land use planning with the surrounding communities to complement existing uses within each community, coordinate services to avoid duplication, and preserve the rural character of the township.
- C. Protect the rural community character, natural aesthetics and environmental quality that contribute to the high quality of life in Claybanks Township.
- D. Provide a balanced and sustainable land use plan that supports desired lifestyles and the local economy.
- E. Recognize the physical constraints that limit the ability to support land intensive, non-residential development, such as industrial and commercial uses.

Objectives

1. Incorporate low-impact site design standards that respect the integrity of the land and minimize the loss of scenic views.
2. Implement standards to minimize light pollution of the night sky.
3. Require development setbacks from local roadways that result in preserving natural features and rural atmosphere.
4. Encourage the use of open space (cluster) development to preserve natural features and maintain rural character.
5. Concentrate higher density development in areas with compatible land use patterns and where infrastructure can support it.
6. Discuss with adjoining communities issues dealing with coordinating land use and open space protection, public services, and planning.
7. Establish a program that promotes gravel road maintenance, rather than paving.
8. Limit commercial development to areas where such uses already exist or are planned, where adequate access is available, and where sufficient area is available for such development.
9. Direct new commercial development to the US-31 and Stony Lake Road interchange.
10. Permit home-based businesses until such time that the commercial use is greater than the residential character of the surrounding property.
11. Industrial development should not be encouraged in Claybanks Township until appropriate public infrastructure is available.

TRANSPORTATION

Goals

- A. Retain Claybanks Township's rural character by providing an adequate transportation network that meets township needs.
- B. Maintain a rural atmosphere by directing traffic to major roads that are designed and capable of handling higher volumes.

Objectives

1. Discourage the paving of gravel roads in low density areas.
2. Enhance transportation corridors by maintaining or recreating a rural environment landscape and by using signs that do not conflict with this rural character.
3. Limit separate driveways to serve individual homes along major roads.

RESIDENTIAL

Goals

- A. Retain Claybanks Township's rural character by fostering secluded yet safe living environments.
- B. Encourage diverse housing options that complement various age groups, seniors, young families and retirees. Housing options should be appropriately located, such that higher density development takes place in locations where necessary services and infrastructure can be provided.

Objectives

1. Locate higher density development where infrastructure and related services can support the increased density and where it's compatible with neighboring uses.
2. Encourage conservation design development (clustering) in areas where there are large parcels.

Future Land Use Plan

The Plan is more than a final document. The text, tables, and maps that fill these pages are representations of the concerns, philosophies, and visions of the community through its Planning Commission. A great deal of effort went into the formulation of this Master Plan. Many meetings were held by the Planning Commission and 325 citizens gave their time to the process by participating in the community opinion survey.

It may now be tempting to pronounce the Plan completed and move on to other things. If this happens, the long, involved process of planning will have been no more than a time-consuming exercise. Now the work really begins. The Township Planning Commission and Township Board, along with the many public officials responsible in one way or another for the day-to-day development activities in Claybanks Township, must consciously adhere to the adopted goals and recommendations outlined in this Plan document.

The purpose of the Plan is to serve as a guide for short-term land use decisions, as well as long-range community strategies. Before such decisions are made, the Plan should be consulted and carefully evaluated to ensure that those decisions will be consistent with the intent and spirit of the Plan.

The land use categories used in the Plan and the accompanying Future Land Use Map are described below. It is important to note that these do not always correspond to zoning districts. Zoning regulations and district boundaries should, indeed, reflect the Plan recommendations. But while the Plan is long-range in its scope, the zoning ordinance is short-term and may not immediately reflect the same patterns as the Master Plan.

Agricultural Preservation Area

Consistent with the goals and policies articulated previously in this document, a major emphasis is placed on supporting the continuation of farming as an essential land use in the Township. During the process used to formulate the Plan, the goal of preserving prime and important agricultural lands was given almost universal support. Farming has played a major role in the history of Claybanks Township and is a key to its economy and culture. Intensive development clearly threatens farming and related agricultural uses.

This area contains the prime farmlands as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) soil map as well as unique soils and conditions that are favorable to farming activities. Coincidentally this area also contains much of the Flower Creek drainage and all of the floodplain part of the stream. This is difficult to separate from the prime farmland that the stream travels through.

Within this area the policy is to preserve farmland and prevent premature conversion of farmland to other uses. It is also the policy to protect Flower Creek from excessive development and the resulting contamination from septic system leaching and construction erosion. In order to further the Townships efforts to preserve farmland, zoning regulations should be adopted to emphasize the important public purpose of protecting food and fiber production and to minimize the extent to which potentially incompatible non-farm development will be permitted to encroach into these designated areas. No commercial or industrial businesses should be allowed except for agricultural outlets for the selling of materials mostly produced on the property. Permitted residential densities in this area should be very low, with overall densities no greater than two units per forty acres. Any new residential development should be limited and designed to minimize conflicts between agricultural and residential uses and to help preserve the most important farmland in the Township.

The Plan map identifies for preservation those areas that have the greatest long-term potential for preservation. This classification was based on several factors in combination. First, only parcels of 40 acres or more were generally considered viable for agricultural preservation. Second, lands currently farmed or contiguous with farmland were included in the classification. Finally, those lands which met the previous two criteria and could form a relatively cohesive pattern, rather than isolated spots or islands of agricultural activity, were included. It is not intended to suggest that other agricultural or nonagricultural lands are unimportant or unworthy of township preservation. However, these other areas are more susceptible to the pressures and influences of non-farm development due to the encroachment of single family homes and the creation of relatively small parcels nearby, and require different preservation techniques.

It is the policy to support the right to farm within the guidelines established by the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MIDEQ). Farming operations take precedent over all other land uses in this area, so residential use may be subjected to the normal dust, noise, odors and sprays of farming operations.

Rural Preservation Area

This area currently accommodates low density residential use on lands not as well suited for agricultural use. Much of the area is either heavily wooded or has poor soil characteristics for farming. However there are significant pockets of farming operations in this area with good and or unique soils.

Within this area the policy is to preserve farmland and prevent premature conversion of farmland to other uses. The future residential density would be at an average of less than four dwelling units per 40 acres. Where possible, dwellings could be clustered on smaller lots (to preserve open space), with individual septic systems, or a common septic system.

It is the policy to support the right to farm within the guidelines established by the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MIDEQ). Farming operations take precedent over all other land uses in this area, so residential use may be subjected to the normal dust, noise, odors and sprays of farming operations.

Higher densities would, over time, cause severe negative impacts on the county road system, Public sewer and water will not be developed or extended into the township.

Residential Area

The areas designated for Residential development are found adjacent to Lake Michigan and Stony Lake. Parts of these areas have been platted, resulting in some very small lots. Due to the fragile nature of the lakes and their environs, further intense development should be discouraged. While infill development can occur on existing lots, new subdivisions comprised of small lots should not be permitted. The Plan puts a high priority on preventing further overcrowding and additional expansion of intensive development that will degrade water quality, threaten drinking water aquifers, place further strain on already inadequate utilities and infrastructure, and threaten the environment.

The policy is to allow single family dwellings with an average of no more than one dwelling per acre. Sewage disposal would be by private, on-site septic systems. Where possible, dwellings could be clustered on smaller lots (to preserve open space), with individual septic systems, or a common septic system. Public sewer and water will not be developed or extended into the township.

Parklands

There are two areas of parkland in the township. There is a small Oceana County Park in the Northwest corner of Section 4. This park contains a public launch ramp for Stony Lake. The Claybanks Township Park is 98 acres and over ½ mile of Lake Michigan shoreline. The park has a campground and access to Lake Michigan for the public. The majority of the land is wooded. This property was deeded to the township with the stipulation that it be used for a park. Any other township uses in the future would need to be investigated.

It is the policy to continue to provide these accesses to Stony Lake and Lake Michigan for the public use.

Commercial/ Industrial Areas

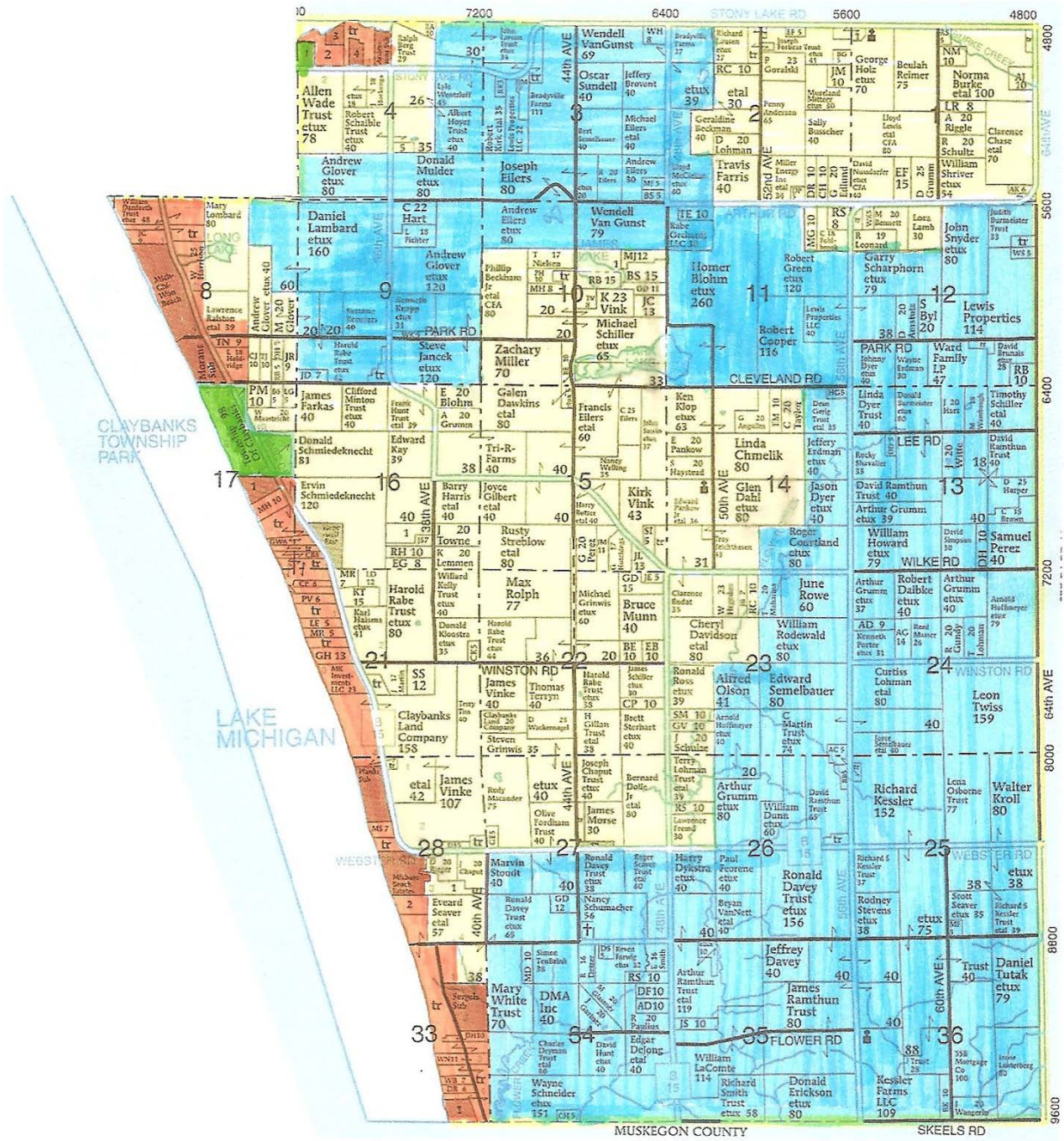
According to the opinion survey and Planning Commission discussions, there is not a strong desire for widespread commercial or industrial businesses in the future. There are no areas for either commercial or industrial defined on the future land use map, but the current zoning ordinance does allow both as a special use. It is imperative that these businesses, if allowed, are compatible with the surrounding uses and not place further strain on already inadequate utilities and infrastructure, or threaten the environment.

Commercial/industrial businesses should only be located in the rural preservation area.

Zoning Ordinance Update

Much of the Master Plans future implementation will depend on zoning regulation. Upon adoption of this Plan, therefore, the Claybanks Township Zoning Ordinance should be reviewed and updated, as needed, to ensure that the necessary tools are in place to support the recommendations and policies contained in this document. Specifically, the number of zoning districts should be evaluated to correspond more closely with the land use categories used in the Master Plan. Separate agricultural preservation and rural preservation regulations should be adopted.

Future Land Use Map (Claybanks Township, Oceana County, Michigan)



Map Legend

- Agricultural Preservation
- Rural Preservation
- Residential
- Parklands



8. Employment status? (Circle all that applies for the adults in the household)

Retired, Working in the Twp., Working out of Twp., Unemployed
158 22 160 13

Land Use

1. Should agricultural lands in the township be protected from non-farm use? **Yes No No Opinion**
15 blank 196 61 53

2. Is preserving areas of open space and woodlands important? **Yes No No Opinion**
7 blank 295 10 13

3. What should the minimum lot size in acres be in the Agricultural zone? **0 1 2 3 5 10 20 30 40**
59 blank, 2 10 9, 4 122 52 57 1 8

4. Should zoning provide for small residential lots (One acre or less)? **Yes No No Opinion**
15 blank 113 158 39

5. Should lands abutting streams and the inland lakes in the township be protected from small lot development.
8 blank Yes No No Opinion
236 48 33

6. Is there is a need to increase the number of the following types of housing?

a. Mobile homes **Yes No No Opinion**
10 blank 19 251 45

b. Rental apartments **Yes No No Opinion**
9 blank 21 237 58

c. Duplexes (2-family units) **Yes No No Opinion**
9 blank 28 214 74

d. Single family homes **Yes No No Opinion**
12 blank 164 76 73

e. An elderly housing complex **Yes No No Opinion**
10 blank 89 137 89

f. Condominiums **Yes No No Opinion**
7 blank 39 212 58

g. Vacation/second homes **Yes No No Opinion**
8 blank 95 137 85

7 Should future mobile homes be required to locate in mobile home parks rather than on a scattered basis throughout the township? **Yes No No Opinion**
9 blank 209 84 23

8. Do you support additional commercial development in the township? **Yes No No Opinion**
13 blank 137 133 42

9. Are you in favor of the development of a small commercial center with businesses such as restaurants, service stations, convenience stores and other retail uses? **Yes No No Opinion**
10 blank 161 117 37

10. Should a township resident/property owner be permitted to operate a business from their garage or accessory building? **Yes No No Opinion**
9 blank 186 96 34

11. What kinds of commercial or professional businesses do you feel are absent or lacking within the township?

135 Total Responses

Of those responding some listed several businesses that were lacking. It is probably significant that 190 of the 325 that returned the survey chose to not respond to this question. Also 55 stated that there were no businesses lacking in the township. There were 32 who would like to see Grocery/Convenience stores, while 28 would like to see various types of restaurants. There were 15 responders that listed drug stores or some type of health care.

12. Do you support additional Industrial development in the township? **Yes No No Opinion**
10 blank 88 180 47

13. Should the township permit light industrial development such as small machine shops, fabrication shops, etc.? **Yes No No Opinion**
10 blank 181 93 41

14. Should a township resident/property owner be permitted to convert a large single family home into multiple-living units (such as condominiums or apartments)? **Yes No No Opinion**
8 blank 64 214 39

15. In return for setting aside permanent open space, should the township allow homes to be clustered on smaller lots? **Yes No No Opinion**
12 blank 87 185 40

16. Should recreational campers/trailers be allowed for more than 90 days per calendar year on property that is not a primary residence? **Yes No No Opinion**
7 blank 90 193 35

17. Should recreational campers/trailers be licensed and have a permit from the zoning administrator unless not in use and located at a primary residence? **Yes No No Opinion**
13 blank 176 81 55

Other

1. In Claybanks Township:

a. Overall quality of life is good. **Yes No No Opinion**
6 blank 296 3 20

b. Development has replaced areas of natural beauty. **Yes No No Opinion**
16 blank 99 154 56

c. Do you consider the township to be tranquil? **Yes No No Opinion**
7 blank 283 12 22

d. The current shopping facilities in the surrounding area are adequate and convenient.
Yes No No Opinion
7 blank 189 101 28

f. Employment opportunities are available within reasonable driving distance. **Yes No No Opinion**
8 blank 128 76 113

g. Public schools are providing a good education. **Yes No No Opinion**
8 blank 159 9 149

2. Are there public services or recreational opportunities that the Twp. or Oceana Co. have not provided that you would like to have? **Yes No No Opinion**

17 blank 41 162 105

If your answer above is **Yes**, please list a few

37 Responses

Of the few that answered yes above and responded to the essay question the largest common responses were 4 comments about roads and 4 that would like to see cable or high speed internet service.

3. In your opinion can you attend a township meeting or contact a township official and get action?

Yes No No Opinion

16 blank 147 38 124

4. Public roads in the township are in good condition? **Yes No No Opinion**

12 blank 182 104 27

If you answered **No** to the above question, are you willing to support a road millage for paving? **Yes No**

185 blank 67 73

5. Should all roads constructed in the township, including those serving future residential developments, be public roads? **Yes No No Opinion**

15 blank 156 85 69

6. Is outdoor storage of junk and debris a problem in the Twp.? **Yes No No Opinion**

10 blank 150 67 66

7. Should outdoor furnace boilers be allowed in the residential zone? **Yes No No Opinion**

5 blank 136 111 73

8. Should outdoor furnace boilers be allowed with restrictions in the agricultural zone? **Yes No No Opinion**

8 blank 195 50 72

9. Should high density livestock operations (factory farms) be allowed in the township? **Yes No No Opinion**

7 blank 77 186 55

10. Is a Township Zoning Ordinance an effective management tool? **Yes No No Opinion**

12 blank 205 26 82

11. Are safety services (fire, medical, police) adequate? **Yes No No Opinion**

11 blank 176 63 75

If not, what are your concerns?

63 Responses

Most of the concern was that the police and mainly the fire department and medical assistance were to far away making the response times unacceptable. Three responders noted high fire insurance rates due to distance from the fire department.

12. Would you like to see a public transportation system serving the Twp.? **Yes No No Opinion**

6 blank 32 207 80

If yes, would you support a millage for this Purpose? **Yes No**

216 blank 33 68

13. Should the Twp. zoning ordinance protect the natural and environmental features of the township?

Yes No No Opinion

12 blank 277 14 22

14. Should historical features and records of the township be preserved? **Yes No No Opinion**

6 blank 296 3 20

15. Would you be in favor of the township forcing the removal of damaged/unsafe structures?

Yes No No Opinion

8 blank 234 47 36

16. What are the most important problems facing the township? (List up to 3 in order of decreasing importance)

137 Responses

Of those responding to the survey 188 did not respond to this question. The most common comment had to do with uncontrolled growth, lack of zoning controls, pressure from developers and preservation of farmland – 43 comments. The second most common group of comments was about road conditions and Maintenance – 31 comments. The third most common group of comments was about junk, junk car, debris and blight – 25 comments.

Would you support a millage increase in property tax to help solve the problems stated in question 16?

Yes No

130 blank 70 125

17. Please use the space below for any comments you may have. Attach additional sheets if needed.

81 Responses

Although only 88 responded to this question there were four areas where responders voiced common remarks. Eight to 10 responders identified roads and road maintenance, junk and blight, and the potential problems associated with excessive growth as areas of concern. Ten responders thought the township was great!