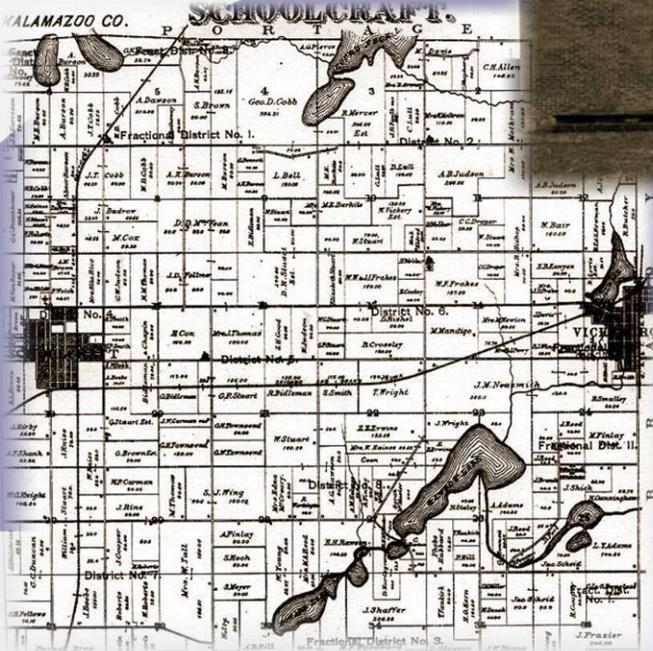
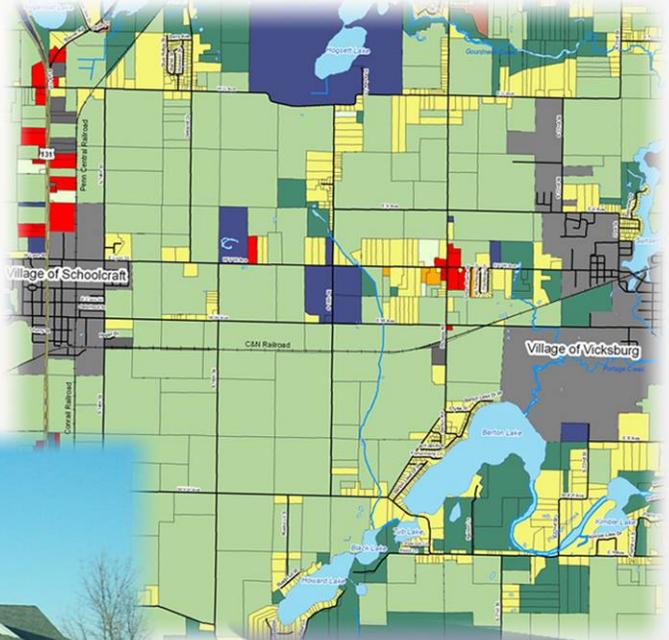


# Schoolcraft Township

Kalamazoo County, Michigan



# Master Plan

Adopted August 12, 2008



# Schoolcraft Township Master Plan 2008

Kalamazoo County, Michigan  
Adopted August 12, 2008

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# Schoolcraft Master Plan 2008

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# Executive Summary

Schoolcraft Township is a rural community on the edge of a growing metropolitan area, and the effects of growth and change are just beginning to be felt by township residents. This Master Plan is an effort on behalf of the citizens of the township to encourage responsible growth so that the agricultural and rural heritage of the township is preserved.

The Future Land Use Plan is based on the following Vision, which was crafted by a thorough process of engaging the public and assessing the issues faced by the community:

## ***OUR VISION FOR SCHOOLCRAFT TOWNSHIP: A PLACE CHARACTERIZED BY ...***

- **AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES** ... *MAINTAINING AN ACTIVE AGRICULTURAL LAND BASE THAT PROVIDES FOR OPEN SPACES AND PRESERVES OUR HIGH QUALITY WETLANDS, NATURAL AREAS, RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND TRAILS, WATERWAYS AND WOODS;*
- **RURAL CHARACTER AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS** ... *LOW-DENSITY, RURAL ATMOSPHERE AND APPROPRIATELY LOCATED CONCENTRATIONS OF HOUSING, ABUNDANT NATURAL RESOURCES AND RECREATION, ACHIEVED IN COOPERATION WITH OUR NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES;*
- **BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** ... *UTILIZING EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE TO PROMOTE WELL-PLANNED COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL USES THAT ARE COMPATIBLE WITH THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT AND THAT PROVIDE SHOPPING AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES;*

***... THAT TOGETHER MAKE OUR TOWNSHIP A RURAL TREASURE WITH ABUNDANT NATURAL RESOURCES, RECREATION, AND A PREMIER QUALITY OF LIFE.***

The land use elements and tools that will help to bring this Vision to reality are described in detail in Chapter 3, Future Land Use. The future land use designations are shown on Map 8, the Future Land Use Plan (page 50). These elements, tools, and land use designations, if properly implemented, will help to promote responsible growth while maintaining the rural character that makes Schoolcraft Township a desirable place to live, work and visit.

The Master Plan serves as a guide to future growth and development in the township, and a blueprint for actions to implement the plan. For instance, to implement certain elements of the Plan, changes to the Zoning Ordinance may be needed. As the Township faces issues that this Plan addresses, it is important for the citizens, the

development community, the Planning Commission and the Township Board to work together to implement the tools and programs recommended by this Plan.

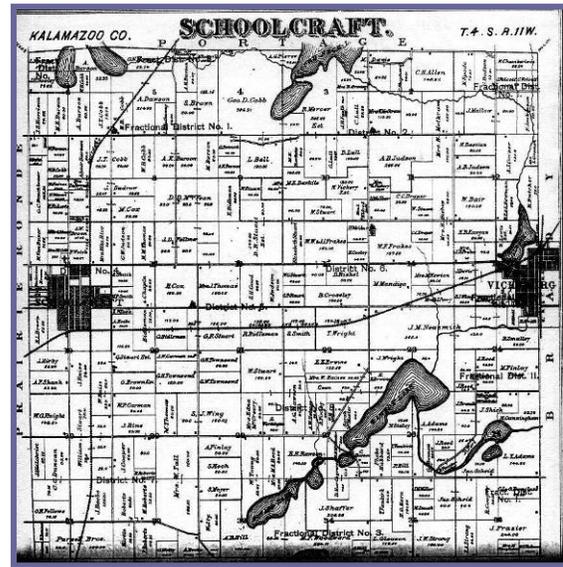
This plan represents the efforts of many citizens who attended focus group meetings or public workshops, as well as the Schoolcraft Township Planning Commission and the Township Board. It is meant to be a guide for future land use, zoning and development decisions. Therefore, this Plan should be consulted every time a new rezoning, subdivision, site condominium or Planned Unit Development is proposed. The Plan will remain effective as long as it is consulted for guidance and reviewed on a regular basis, including amending the plan when warranted.

# Chapter 1. Introduction

## The Schoolcraft Community

### *Schoolcraft Township*

The Township of Schoolcraft is located in the south central portion of Kalamazoo County in the heart of southwestern Michigan. Schoolcraft Township is positioned between three urbanized areas, the Village of Schoolcraft to its west, the Village of Vicksburg to its east and the City of Portage to its north. US 131 runs north-south through the Township and provides access to another major transportation corridor, I-94, that runs east-west. This arrangement of infrastructure and development creates a unique pattern of growth that has both rural and urban elements. Despite its proximity to the major metropolitan center of Kalamazoo/Portage and surrounding communities, the township remains a low-density residential community, with approximately 46 housing units per square mile of land.



*1890 Plat Map, Schoolcraft Township*

Schoolcraft Township was formed in 1842 when the eastern third of Brady Township was broken off to create the new township. The township was named for Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, an early surveyor of the Michigan territory, who is best known for discovering Lake Itasca, the source of the Mississippi River. The two villages within the Township, Vicksburg and Schoolcraft, have influenced the location of municipal boundary lines through the annexation of land from Township to Village. A growing suburban city, Portage, forms the northern boundary of the township and strongly influences land use north of U Avenue. Two active rail lines –the Canadian National and the Norfolk Southern - run both east-west and north-south in the Township, making this a unique location in Michigan where these rail lines intersect.

Natural resources have played a dominant role in the industrial and residential development within the township. The presence of prime agricultural soils and a plentiful groundwater aquifer have contributed to a large agricultural land base for seed corn production that is also found to the township's east, west and south. The chain of lakes in the southern portion of the township (Barton and Howard are the two largest) has attracted residential development. Many township residents feel that these unique natural features, the scenes of active agricultural production and the presence of water and wetlands are integral elements of the community's character.



### ***Development Patterns***

Patterns of development in Schoolcraft Township over the past few years highlight a trend towards suburban development, such as the single family subdivision plats near the northern border contiguous to Portage (north of U Avenue), and near the villages. Township leaders and residents have become concerned about losing the township's rural character to suburban development. This concern is valid, because with development comes change to the landscape. As people move to rural areas "to get away from" growth in other places, they often demand that the community not become the same kind of

place from which they moved. With careful planning, rural communities can accommodate reasonable growth and still maintain the rural character that makes them desirable places to live.

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, open spaces, natural features and the lakes-- are what make Schoolcraft Township special. A successful Master Plan must consider these elements, along with impending development pressure from metropolitan Kalamazoo and the two villages, and propose steps to ensure that development "fits" the character of the area. Accordingly, using the right planning tools can help to ensure that the township continues to be a special place.

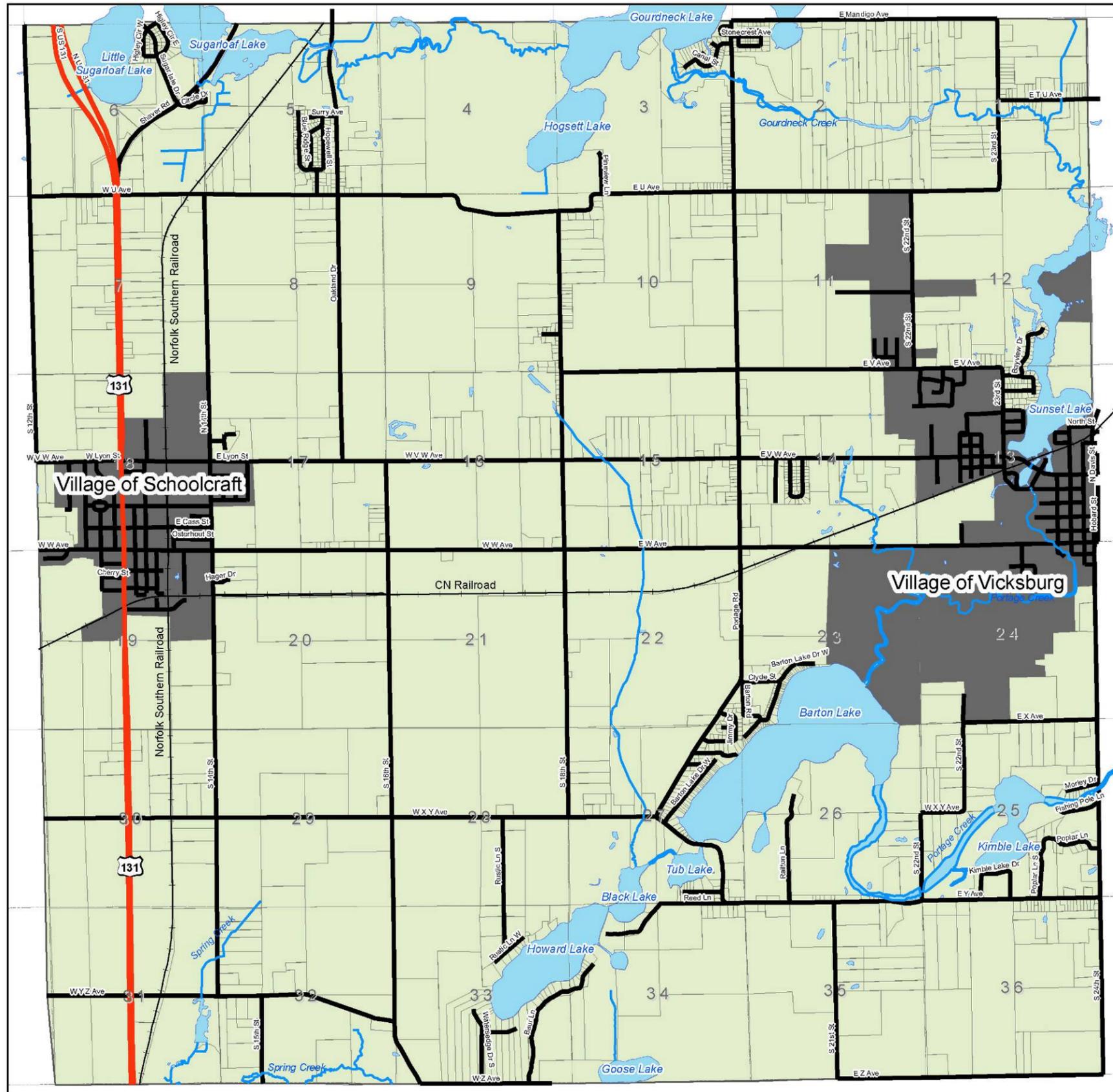
While this Plan is based on a review of the past and the present conditions of the township, as well as input from the public, it is not always possible to predict change that may have a considerable impact on the township. This Plan should be used as a "blueprint for growth and land preservation", and provide general guidelines for making sound land use decisions.

### ***Transportation***

Transportation routes in Schoolcraft Township are shown on **Map 2**. US Highway 131 travels from north to south through the western quarter of the township. Most of the road section is an expressway<sup>1</sup>, with two main travel lanes in each direction, divided by a boulevard. There is a traffic light at U Avenue. As the road approaches the Village of

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<sup>1</sup> "Expressway—a divided highway with partial control of access." *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, 2003 Revision 1, Federal Highway Administration (2004)*.



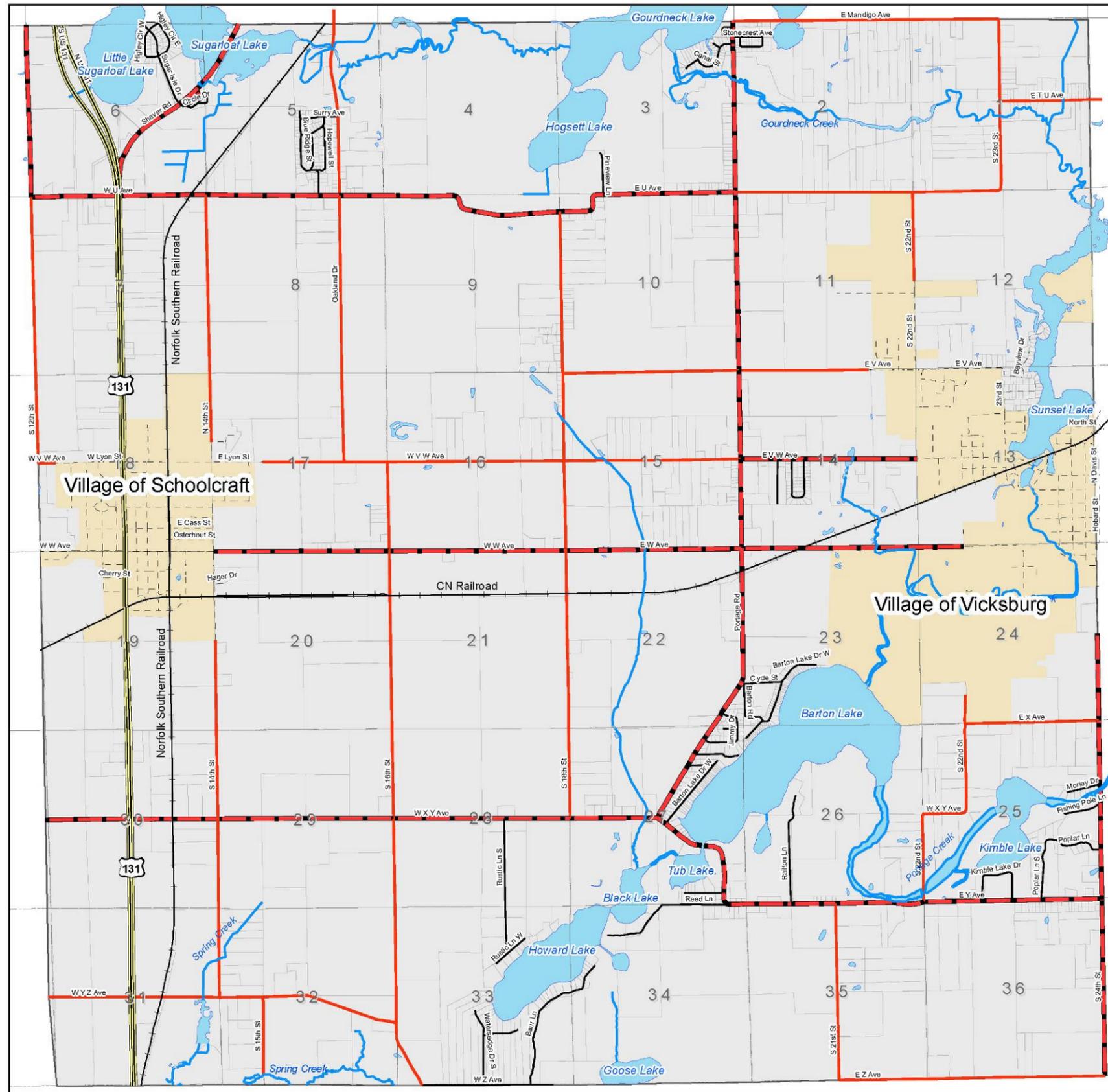
**Map I**  
**Base Map**  
 Schoolcraft Township  
 Kalamazoo County, MI

August 12, 2008




Data Source:  
 Michigan Center for Geographic Information  
 Farm & Home Publishers, Inc.





# Map 2 Road Classification

Schoolcraft Township  
Kalamazoo County, MI

-  State Highway
-  Village Street
-  Primary County Paved Road
-  Local County Paved Road
-  Local Road

August 12, 2008




Data Source:  
Michigan Center for Geographic Information  
Farm & Home Publishers, Inc.



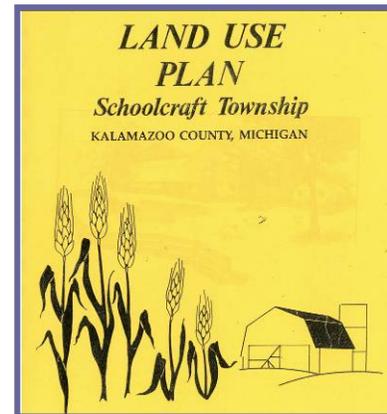
Schoolcraft, it narrows to an undivided 4-lane through the Village. South of the Village, it re-forms again into an expressway.

All public roads are paved and are under the jurisdiction of the Kalamazoo County Road Commission. The township is bisected by two significant rail lines. The Norfolk Southern line runs parallel and about ¼ mile east of US 131 through the Village of Schoolcraft. The Canadian National Line traverses through the center of the township, from Schoolcraft Village through Vicksburg. The nearest commercial airport is located six miles to the north, in Kalamazoo.

## Previous Planning Efforts

### *1990 Land Use Plan*

The 1990 Land Use Plan provided a solid resource of community information on housing, population and land use that assisted in a variety of land use decisions for the township in the 1990s. The Plan was intended to provide relevant guidance for the community for a period of 5-15 years. The length of time a Land Use Plan stays current is dependent on changing factors in the community and region, such as the economy, population and infrastructure improvements.



Recent amendments to the Planning Act in 2002 require a township to review its Master Plan every five years to determine if its policy documents are still current and still reflect the land use conditions of the area. In late 2003 and early 2004, the Planning Commission reviewed the 1990 Land Use Plan and focused on several key areas in need of an update, including demographics, population projections and analysis, and an evaluation of goals and objectives. The Planning Commission determined that a new planning effort was needed to guide future development in the township.

### *US 131 Access Management Plan*

In 2004, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) began an update to their late 1990s access management planning document to evaluate the existing traffic and access conditions, zoning regulations and planned land use along US-131 from south of the Village of Schoolcraft to the Indiana State Line. The purpose of the original plan included recommendations for improvements to the existing access systems and provided guidelines for future development. Through the project's efforts, access management guidelines were developed and ordinance language was drafted for local adoption.



While the 2004 update to the Access Management Plan update was suspended so that it could be incorporated into a larger freeway study analysis, the effort highlighted the need for continued planning coordination with MDOT for future access drives along the state highway. This planning effort can assist in meeting the needs of the public for a safe and efficient highway.

### ***Villages of Schoolcraft and Vicksburg Master Plans***

The Villages of Schoolcraft and Vicksburg, both located within the historic boundaries of Schoolcraft Township, have recently updated their Master Plan documents. In 2004, the Village of Vicksburg adopted its current plan. Vicksburg anticipates 19% growth by 2020, for a total population of 2,767. While anticipating growth, the Village of Vicksburg intends to retain its small-town character. The Vicksburg Future Land Use Plan includes township lands west of the Village to Portage Road and anticipates single family development in this area (except in those areas already developed with commercial or industrial uses).

The Village of Schoolcraft has recently completed a new Master Plan, adopted in September 2006. The Village of Schoolcraft conducted a variety of public input sessions to assist in the formation of goals and objectives. Many of the related goals support the vision to remain a quaint, small town with provisions for traditional neighborhood design and lighting standards to protect the night sky.

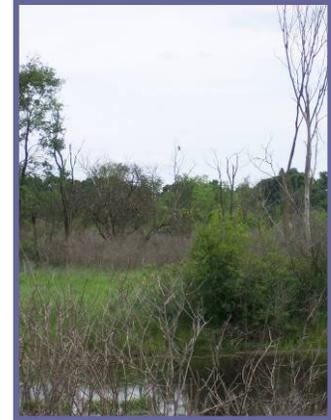
An important element of the Schoolcraft Village plan is the designation of land in the southeast portion of the village as a 'Special Planning Area'. This 27-acre property, within close proximity to the highway and rail line, has been planned for industrial use for over 15 years, but has not yet been developed. The property is located at the Village limits, and development may impact the adjacent township lands. While the Village's proposed Master Plan keeps open the hope for industrial development, it recognizes that, since the property has not developed in such a long time, a large residential development that incorporates a village feel (such as a pedestrian-oriented project with small lots and shallow setbacks) may be a viable alternative.

### ***Smarter Growth for Kalamazoo County***

In 2003, a local effort spearheaded by professors at Kalamazoo College released *Smarter Growth for Kalamazoo County*, which was a comprehensive review of existing conditions and growth countywide, along with an agenda for action. The effort includes an analysis of unique and special places within the county, the implications of current land use trends and their potential economic consequences. The plan recommends a series of "smart growth" principles, including mixing of land uses, creating housing opportunities and choices for a range of household types, families and incomes, and creating walkable neighborhoods. The plan also recognizes the importance of the county's agricultural heritage and recommends the implementation of farmland preservation techniques.

### ***Portage River Watershed Management Plan***

In December of 2005, a Watershed Management Plan was completed to fulfill the necessary requirements of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) for Phase II communities. Initiated as part of the Michigan Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) storm water permitting process, the plan has a series of maps and related text that provide important planning information for Schoolcraft Township related to improving water quality and storm water management.



## **The Planning Process**

### ***Focus Groups***



The Township Planning Commission hosted a focus group meeting on June 20, 2006 to identify issues of concern in the community that should be addressed within the new Master Plan. After identifying a series of issues at a regular Planning Commission meeting, a targeted group of individuals was invited to attend the focus group for additional comment on land use matters in the community. Three main areas were explored:

- 1. Natural Resources & Farmland Preservation**
- 2. Rural Character/ Village Encroachment**
- 3. Business Development/ 131 Access Management**

The discussion was lively and highlighted both general concerns and specific development areas. This meeting provided direction for creating the Community Survey and the process of formulating goals and policies

### ***Community Survey***

A carefully crafted community survey can provide a useful picture of community attitudes and opinions and is a useful prelude to the development of a Master Plan. Schoolcraft Township officials designed a survey and sent it out in June of 2006 in the summer tax bill to 2,962 property owners. Over 353 surveys were returned for a total response rate of 12%. Mail out surveys typically will not reach a response rate over 20%. Accordingly,



this response rate is considered modest, and may have been caused by various factors that discouraged some respondents, such as paying taxes or the inconvenience of filling out and mailing the form.

On the other hand, those who do respond tend to be individuals who feel strongly about the issues in the survey. These individuals generally provide a more educated view and may be more likely to participate in other phases of the process, making the quality of response more significant than the quantity.

Overall, respondents tended to favor the preservation of natural features and rural character, which generated the most significant majority of shared importance. A major land use change, such as more large scale commercial or expansion of village boundaries is not desired; however, there appear to be concerns related to the protection of rural character. For example, the top three items that received the highest consensus for importance were:

- 1) Good air and water quality – 99%**
- 2) Low crime rate – 97%**
- 3) Rural character – 96%**
- 3) Natural Features (woodlands, lakes, creeks, open space, farmland) – 96%**

While natural resource protection ranked high, only 39% of survey respondents felt that Schoolcraft Township is doing enough to preserve its natural resources (lakes, rivers, trees, groundwater, wetlands and open spaces). The master plan update may provide an opportunity to expand upon these resource protection measures to increase the support of area residents. While natural resource protection measures ranked the highest in importance, growth related topics received the least amount of support, with a majority of respondents ranking the promotion of new development and land use change as unimportant. For example, the top three items that received the largest response as unimportant were:

- 1) Schoolcraft Township should support large scale regional commercial development (such as Meijer, Home Depot, Walmart). – 60% unimportant**
- 2) Support the expansion of Portage, Schoolcraft, and Vicksburg further into Schoolcraft Township. – 58% unimportant**
- 3) The Township should encourage the construction of more homes. – 54% unimportant**

Respondents to the survey ranged in both age and residency, with the largest segment of survey respondents between the ages of 50 and 64 (37%). Residency of respondents was distributed evenly, with an equal number of respondents electing the “0-8 years in the Township” (23%), and the “Over 35 years” (22%).

### ***Planning Commission Work Sessions***

A series of work sessions held by the Planning Commission refined the issue areas and proposed guiding principles, goals and policies. The Planning Commission decided upon the following final issue areas for closer review and for development of a vision statement:

- **Agriculture and Natural Resources**
- **Rural Character and Community Relationships**
- **Business and Economic Development**

These issue areas are fully reviewed and developed in the next chapter. The issue areas are analyzed using existing conditions, the results of the Community Survey, and expected growth and development. A draft set of goals and policies and a Vision Statement were developed through this process.

### ***Community Workshop***

A workshop was held for community members at Vicksburg High School on November, 9, 2006. About 40 persons attended. Each attendee was presented a set of the proposed goals and policies arranged around the three main issue areas refined by the Planning Commission. Attendees could then indicate if a particular goal and policy was needed or not needed. For each issue area, a vision statement was presented. Attendees were then asked if the vision statement served the needs of the township, and why or why not. Finally, the overall Vision Statement, which compiles the vision statements of each of the issue areas, was presented for attendee comment.

The goals, policies and Vision Statement developed through the process were validated by the attendees at the Community Workshop. Although individual attendees had specific comments related to the goals, policies and Vision Statement, all of them were supported by large majorities of the persons present. The results of the workshop, along with all of the comments of the attendees, are in the Appendix.

### ***Planning Process Summary***

The goals, policies and Vision Statement in Chapter 2 are the same ones developed and supported through the public process. They form the basis for the Future Land Use Plan and Map found in Chapter 3. This plan was reviewed and adopted according to the requirements of the Township Planning Act (PA 168 of 1959).

## The Role of the Master Plan

The Plan serves many functions and can be used in a variety of ways, but its usefulness is determined by the willingness of the Township to actively support and implement its vision and goals. A plan that is not actively followed and implemented may lead to problems in the future. Failure to follow the plan will discredit any attempt to use the plan as a defense for actions that may be challenged by property owners or developers.

Likewise, consistent and vigorous use of the plan will lend credibility to implementation of controversial decisions on rezonings or other zoning actions. While the courts of the State of Michigan do not recognize the absolute authority of the Master Plan, they do lend much more credibility to actions supported by careful planning than those that appear to be taken arbitrarily without regard for the Master Plan.

- The Master Plan is a general statement of the Township's vision, goals and policies. It provides a single, comprehensive view of the community's desires for the future.
- The Plan aids in daily land use decision making. The vision and goals outlined in the Plan are intended to guide the Planning Commission and the Township Board in their deliberations on zoning, subdivision, capital improvements, and other matters relating to land use and development. Accordingly, the Plan provides a stable, long-term basis for decision making which will provide a balance of land uses and an orderly development process.
- The Plan provides the statutory basis upon which zoning decisions are based. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (Act 110 of 2006) requires that the zoning ordinance be based upon a plan designed to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare. It is important to note that the Master Plan and accompanying maps do not replace other Township Ordinances, specifically the Zoning Ordinance and map. Zoning is only one of the legal devices used to implement the Master Plan.
- The Plan attempts to coordinate public improvements and private developments. For example, public investments such as road or utility improvements should be located in areas identified in the Plan as resulting in the greatest benefit to the Township and its residents.
- The Master Plan is a component of the decision making process when proposing public services. New development and infrastructure should be supported by the Master Plan.
- The Plan serves as an educational tool and gives citizens, property owners, developers, and adjacent communities a clear indication of the Township's direction for the future.



### ***Keeping the Plan Current***

Fulfilling the community's vision will not occur overnight. Therefore, the Plan should be a living, active document that is updated as the community grows. Changing conditions that occur within or adjacent to township boundaries should be acknowledged and evaluated for their potential effect on the Plan's original intentions.



Over time, goals may be achieved and new ones needed, or individual zoning decisions may change the direction of development in a certain part of the township. When events lead to land use approvals that are contrary to the plan, the plan should be amended to reflect these changes.

In order to keep the plan current, the Township Planning Commission should conduct an annual review meeting to ensure that changes in the community are taken into consideration and that amendments are made to keep it current and consistent with Township policy. The Planning Commission should also solicit public opinion, on a periodic basis, through the use of public surveys or other means. Every five years, the Planning Commission is required by the Township Planning Act (P. A. 168 of 1959) to review the Master Plan and determine if it should be updated or replaced with a new plan. By routinely following these procedures, the township can be assured that the Master Plan will continue to be an up-to-date and reliable planning tool.

### ***Organization of the Master Plan***

As a "blueprint," the Master Plan not only looks at the current state of Schoolcraft Township, but where it has been and where it would like to go. In order to accomplish this, the Plan provides information on land use, infrastructure improvements, preservation of open space, and other relevant issues.

The vision assessment in Chapter 2 provides the philosophical and factual basis for the Plan. Demographic information is presented in this chapter to highlight current conditions and provide a basis for assessing the need for change. The philosophical and factual elements are the foundation of the Vision Statement that underlies the future land use recommendations. The future land use elements of Chapter 3 present a strategy to provide the proper land use balance and means to implement the Vision.

Development of the Master Plan required individuals and different groups concerned with the future of Schoolcraft Township to work together. Through its review of existing conditions and land uses and extensive public discussions, the community has developed this Master Plan to preserve and protect the character of Schoolcraft Township.

## 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 vision and goal statements. These statements will give you an indication as to the Township's view of the present and the future.

## How Should You 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 Plan map (**Map 7**). 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 (see **Chapter 4**) 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 Schoolcraft 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 Schoolcraft Township community, it is important that you become familiar with the Plan and what it may mean to you and your township.

## Chapter 2. Vision Assessment

### Overview

The Township Planning Act requires that the Master Plan have a 20-year horizon. Realistically, no one can confidently predict events that may occur over the next year, much less the next twenty. But the Plan can be used to establish a *direction* for the Township to follow, even though unanticipated events may alter the specific path. This direction is the basis for the Township's *vision* of the future.



Through public meetings, focus groups and workshops, the Planning Commission has determined that there are three key **Issue Areas** that define the land use challenges faced by the Township:

- **Agriculture and Natural Resources**
- **Rural Character and Community Relationships**
- **Business and Economic Development**

Creation of goals and policies is often the first step in establishing an overall vision. However, an understanding of the guiding principles that underlie the goals and policies is necessary. The Schoolcraft Township Planning Commission, through the process outlined in **Chapter 1**, has created a set of **guiding principles** that reflect the township's land use values, given existing and expected conditions. Based upon these Guiding Principles, an analysis was conducted of existing conditions and current policies as they apply to each of the three Issue Areas. These analyses form the basis of a series of goals and policies for each Issue Area.

For a long-range plan, **goals** are general statements about the quality and character of the community that are intended to reflect the Guiding Principles by focusing on a particular land use concern. The goals developed by the Planning Commission are intended to:

1. be **achievable**;
2. be **realistic**;
3. be broad enough to **inspire**, but narrow enough to meet #1 and #2;
4. be **limited** to no more than 3 or 4 major points;  
and
5. paint a **picture** of the future (10-20 years) as township residents would like to see it.



A **policy** is a more specific and present means of obtaining the goals, through specific statements that can be prioritized and translated into detailed design proposals or actions.

The following analysis of the factual elements is based directly on the three Issue Areas identified through the public review process. The current conditions affecting each issue area are explored, and the effects of current policies or directions are evaluated. Based on these analyses, a vision summary for each Issue Area is outlined. Each summary is then compiled into an overall Vision Statement that serves as the guide for creating the future land use plan and policies.

The following analysis considers three vision assessments related to this issue area: Agricultural Land, Natural Resources and Existing Land Use. The Guiding Principles stated below outline the land use values that form the basis of the following analysis of each aspect.

**Agricultural and Natural Resources.....** Page 18

**Rural Character and Community Relationships .....** Page 32

**Business and Economic Development .....** Page 41

## Issue: Agricultural and Natural Resources

### *Guiding Principles*

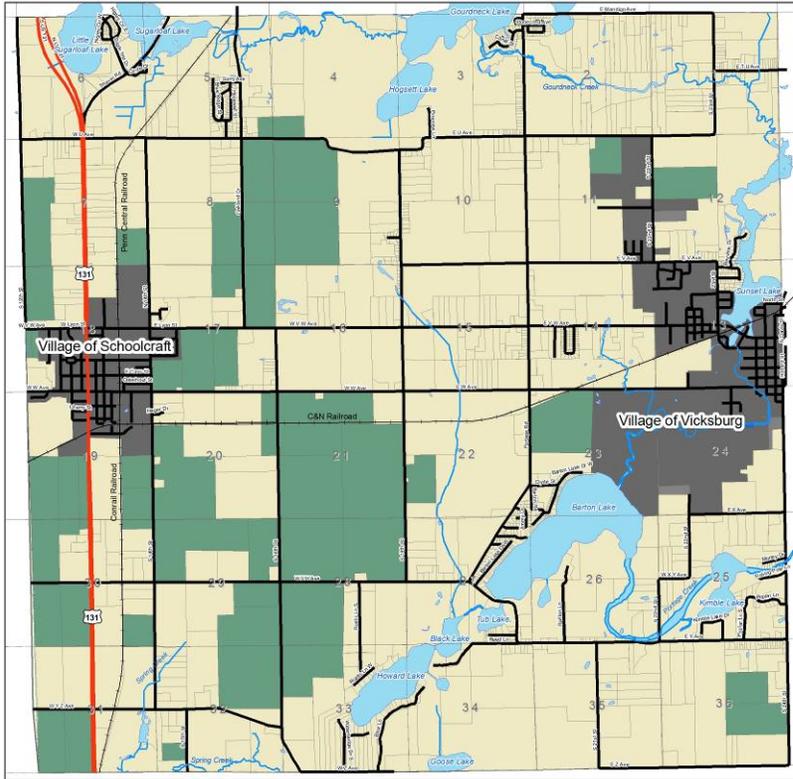
- Agriculture is important to the township historically, culturally and economically, and the preservation of viable agricultural lands (on prime soils and of a sufficient size for productive agriculture) is important.
- The natural features of Schoolcraft Township make it a desirable place to live and should be preserved.
- Schoolcraft Township values the preservation of pristine high quality natural areas, recreational opportunities and trails, waterways, wetlands and woodlands.

### *Vision Assessment: Agricultural Land*

Rural communities facing development pressure are challenged to accommodate new residents while maintaining the natural qualities that attracted those residents in the first place. Development that is insensitive to the existing land base will alter large expanses of active farm land, resulting in decreasing scenic vistas and wildlife habitats, and a loss of the community's agricultural character and heritage.

***Existing Conditions.*** Prior to residential development, the prairies of Schoolcraft Township were treeless grasslands with large expanses of open space. The land cover was a thick sod of prairie grass and scattered oak trees and was often the highest ground in the area, making them ideal territory for conversion to agricultural uses. According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture, the average farm size in Kalamazoo County was 183 acres. This has increased dramatically from the 1920 average of 98.7 acres, and even since 1974, when the recorded average farm size in the county was 158 acres. The changing profile of agriculture requires larger parcels, highlighting the importance of maintaining large acreage parcels in prime farmland soils. Proper planning for long term agriculture should examine the locations in the township that are actively farmed, have prime soils and are not located among high concentrations of residential densities.

The dominant land use form in the township continues to be agriculture. **Map 3** outlines farm properties that are enrolled in the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program (PA 116). The PA 116 program is designed to preserve farmland and open space through agreements with landowners that restrict development, and provide tax incentives for program participation. Farmland agreements are contracted for a minimum of 10 years, and a maximum of 90 years. Approximately 4,500 acres of farmland are enrolled in PA 116 and are concentrated along the western half of the township. It is interesting to note that most of these lands run parallel to US 131 along both the east and west sides of the expressway. Since this is an area where conversion to non-agricultural land appears to be lucrative, the amount of these lands in the PA 116 program shows a dedication to farmland preservation in Schoolcraft Township.



Map 3  
**PA 116 Land**  
 Schoolcraft Township  
 Kalamazoo County, MI

PA 116 Property

August 12, 2008

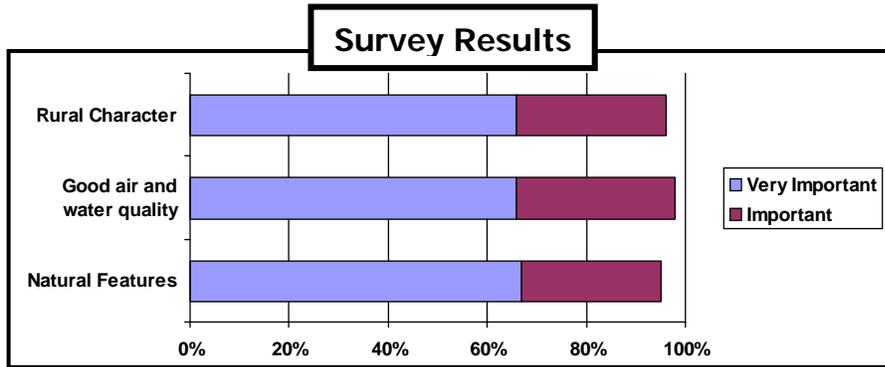
Data Source:  
 Michigan Center for Geographic Information  
 Farm & Home Publishers, Inc.

**Soils.** The township has an abundant expanse of prime farmland soils. **Map 4** shows that a majority of the soils outside of waterways are considered prime farmland soils. Areas of prime farmlands soils are present in every section of the township. Soil areas designated on the map as “Not Prime Farmland” are areas of hydric soils, and are primarily located in or near water bodies and wetlands. Large parcels that are actively farmed provide for productive agricultural sites and form the rural and agricultural character prized by local citizens.

General soil types include the Houghton-Kalamazoo-Oshtemo and Kalamazoo-Schoolcraft-Elston associations. While these soils are suitable for cultivation and certain development, many pockets of soil types within the lowland areas adjacent to the waterways contain muck, or hydric soils, which are unsuitable for residential development.

**Vision Assessment: Natural Resources**

Schoolcraft Township is blessed with abundant natural features, as shown on **Map 5**. Preservation of natural features is a major priority for the community, as measured in recent public opinion surveys and citizen resolutions (see below). Natural features both enhance and protect the quality of life in Schoolcraft Township. These features include clean water supplies, wildlife habitats, natural areas to accommodate stormwater, flood



control, and protection of environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, steep slopes, and woodlots. Together, these resources contribute to the overall natural setting that citizens value.

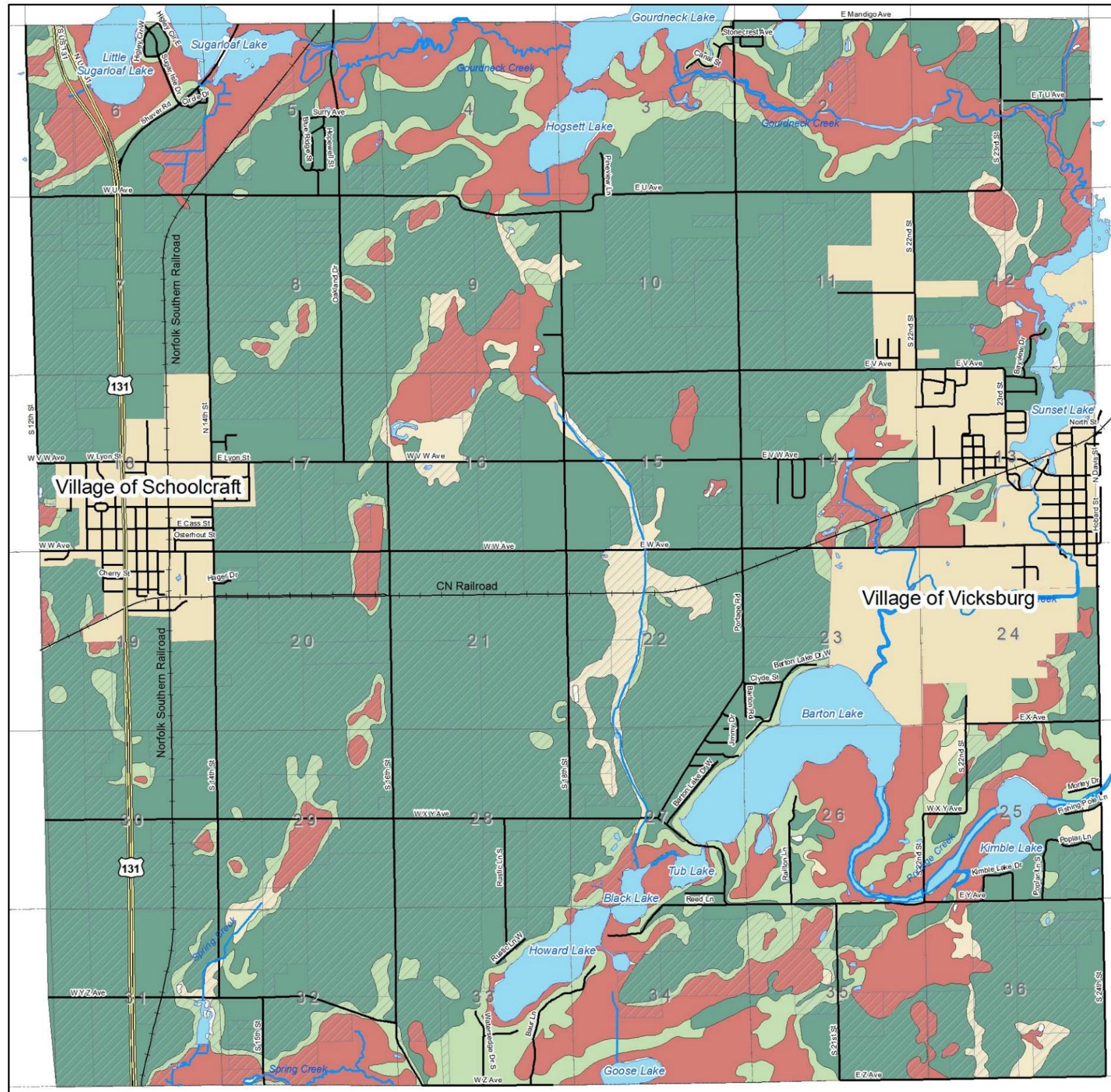
Many times, natural features serve to channel development due to soil conditions, water features and topography. In the past, many communities relied heavily on these conditions to limit or direct growth to certain areas considered more acceptable. Changes in technology and construction standards, however, have permitted development to encroach upon areas once considered unbuildable.

**Water Resources.** Water quality is an essential consideration for communities that utilize local water resources for recreation, residential living and water consumption. According to the 2006 Public Opinion Survey, nearly 96% of all respondents indicated that natural features, such as lakes, are an important element to the community. Township water quality should be maintained at a high level, since this resource is so inter-connected with the natural environment.

A dominant natural feature that covers three-quarters of the township is the Portage River Watershed (see **Figure 1**, p. 27). The Portage River is a sub-watershed of the St. Joseph River watershed, which drains 4,685 square miles of Southern Michigan and northern Indiana before entering Lake Michigan.

Within the Portage River Watershed, several inland lakes have incurred impaired water quality because of high nutrient levels in area soils and land applications. For example, Gourdneck Lake is classified as mesotrophic (containing a moderate amount of unnatural nutrients which damage lake health) and Barton Lake is under a fish consumption advisory.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Gourdneck Lake condition: Portage River Watershed Management Plan, 2005. Barton Lake: Michigan Department of Environmental Quality 303d Waterway list, 2007.



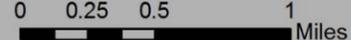
**Map 4**  
**Farmland**  
 Schoolcraft Township  
 Kalamazoo County, MI

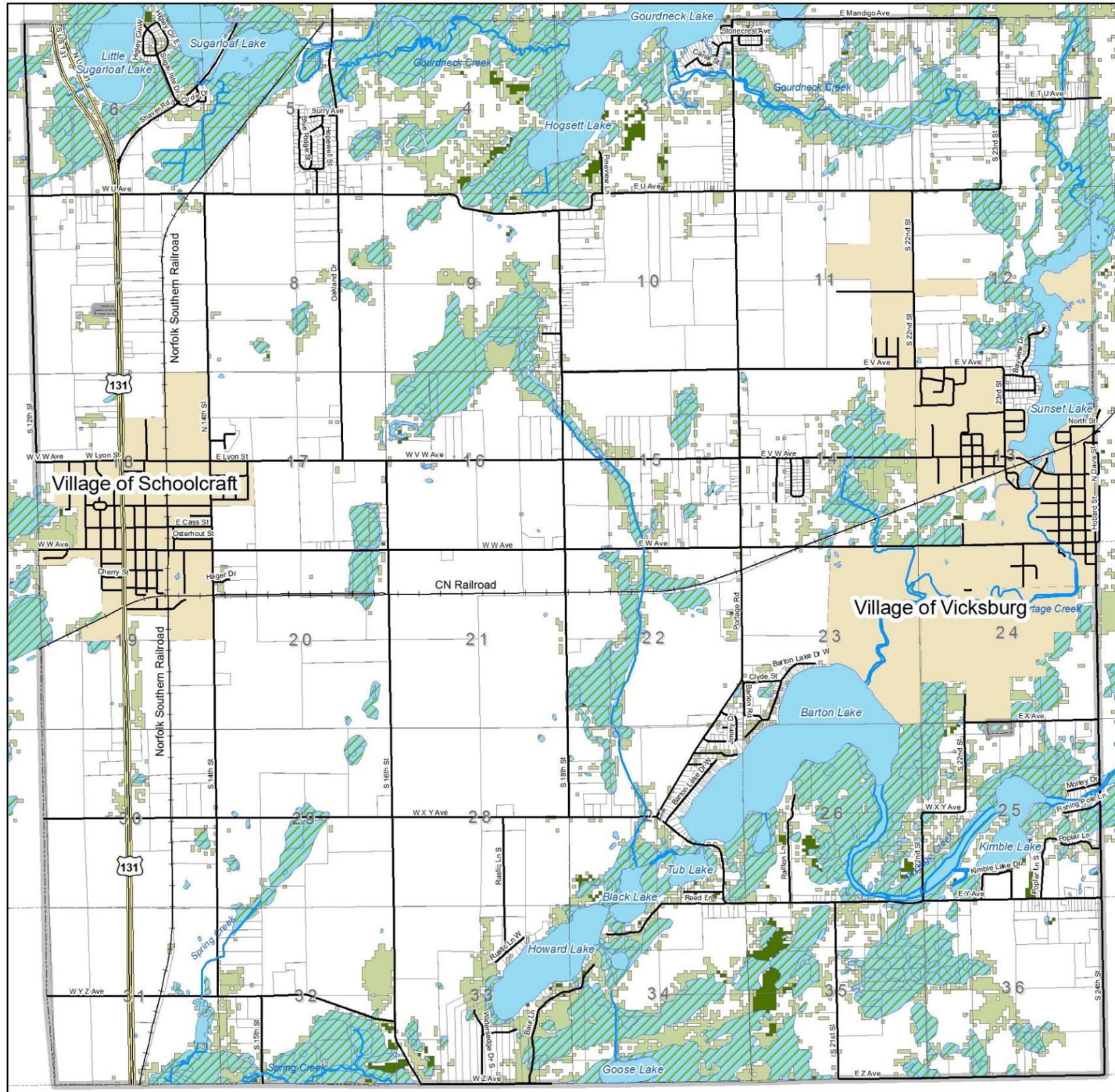
-  Existing Agriculture Use
-  Prime Farmland
-  Farmland of Local Importance
-  Prime Farmland if Drained
-  Not Prime Farmland

August 12, 2008




Data Source:  
 Michigan Center for Geographic Information  
 Farm & Home Publishers, Inc.





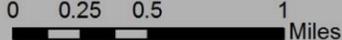
**Map 5**  
**Natural Features**  
 Schoolcraft Township  
 Kalamazoo County, MI

-  Wetlands
-  Lakes
-  Rivers
-  Deciduous Forest
-  Evergreen Forest
-  Mixed Forest

August 12, 2008




Data Source:  
 Michigan Center for Geographic Information  
 Farm & Home Publishers, Inc.



Approximately 6% of Schoolcraft Township consists of waterways, lakes and emergent wetlands. Portions of Gourdneck Lake and most of Hogsett Lake are located within the Gourdneck State Game Area. These areas are intended for hunting and outdoor recreation and very little development has occurred. Certain waterways, such as Barton and Howard Lakes, have become prime real estate lakes characterized by small lots and are intensely developed.

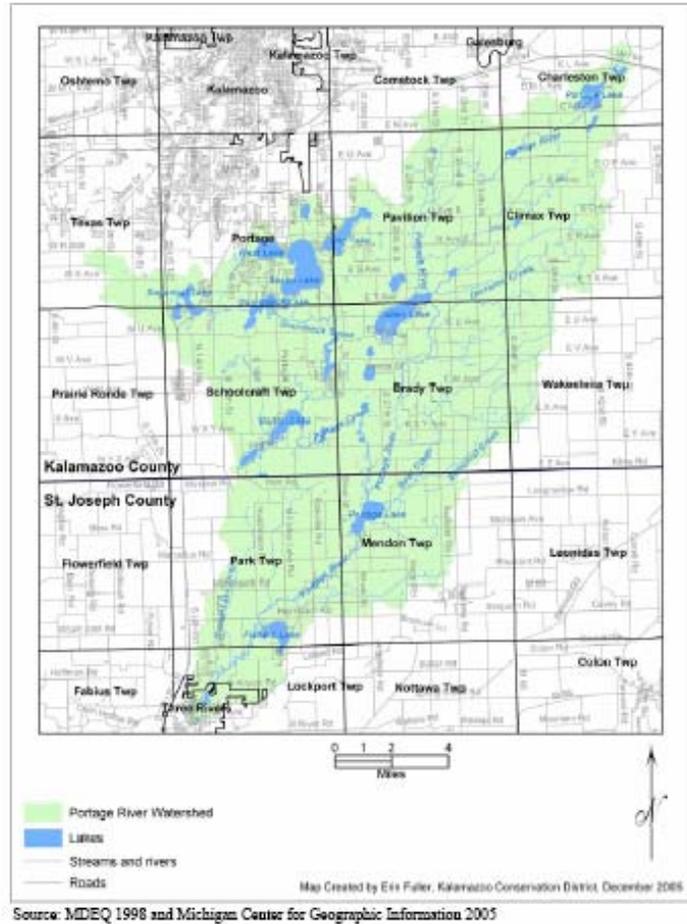
Lakefront residential development can stress water quality without the proper infrastructure to support development, such as sewer systems. Use of septic systems, lakeside landscaping and maximizing 'residential views' can increase the risk of degraded water quality. Several lakes in Schoolcraft Township are surrounded by large private land holdings with limited development and as such, water quality has not been significantly affected.

Small lot residential development, with increased amounts of impervious surfaces such as roofs, parking lots and driveways, can contribute to the transmission of pollutants. The initial flush of runoff during a rainfall washes off various contaminants, nutrients and sediment into nearby lakes and streams. This contamination speeds the natural aging process of a lake.

Along with storm water runoff, pesticides and herbicides linked to lawn care and the clearing of natural vegetation for enhanced water views can also contribute to degraded water quality. The negative impacts linked to storm water runoff and chemicals associated with lawn care can, however, be mitigated through the maintenance of lakeside natural areas, greenbelts, and vegetative strips.

Groundwater is the primary source for drinking water in the township and this reliance requires environmental stewardship. As with surface water, nitrates from fertilizers and

**Figure 1: Portage River Watershed**



septic systems can leach into groundwater supplies and affect overall quality. Providing wellhead protection and environmental stewardship is of great importance. Use of innovative techniques such as rain gardens and vegetative strips may also provide water quality benefits.

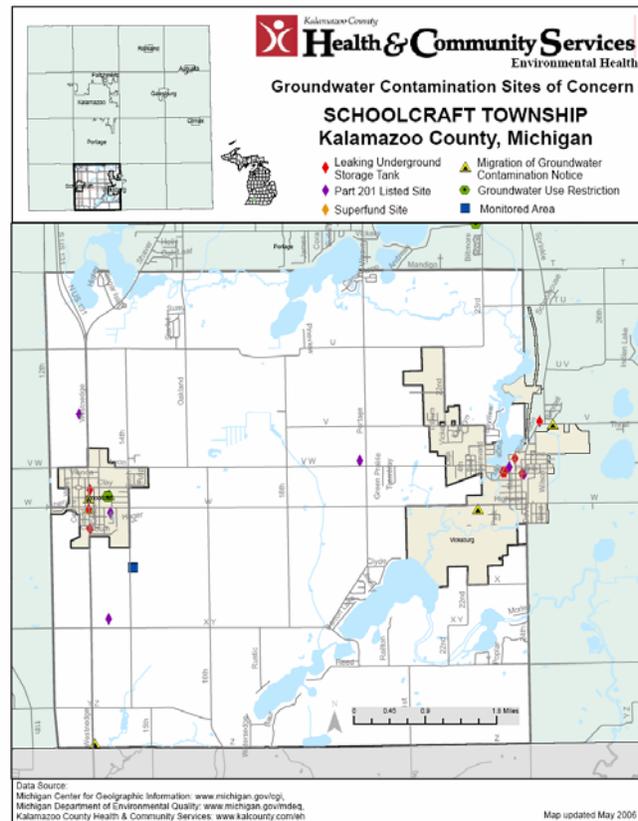
According to Kalamazoo County's Health and Community Services Environmental Health division, Schoolcraft Township has three Part 201 Listed Sites (environmental remediation), and one monitored area for groundwater contamination (see **Figure 2**). In both villages, there are several sites with leaking underground storage tanks (LUST sites), creating additional concern for migration of contaminants through groundwater.

Because groundwater is relied upon for area drinking water, proper measures to mediate these sites through ongoing work with the County and State, as well as locating new development away from possible wellhead recharge areas, can assist in the long-term protection of the resource.

**Wetlands.** Wetlands were once viewed as a detriment because of standing water, insect populations and hydric soils that make land development difficult or impossible. This public perception has changed with the knowledge that wetlands filter contaminants from water supplies, provide natural flood control and serve as habitat for bird, fish and animal populations. It is important for the Township to take steps to preserve these beneficial resources.

According to Michigan State University Extension's Natural Features Inventory, nearly 29,000 acres of Kalamazoo County's original wetlands have been destroyed through development. This represents nearly 51% of the original wetland base. Emergent wetlands along the water's edge are essential for natural flood control and controlling shoreline erosion. These wetlands also help to maintain high quality fishing lakes by providing important habitat for fish reproduction. Wetlands that run the highest risk of conversion to residential use are those wetlands located along waterways outside of public land holdings.

**Figure 2: Groundwater Contamination Sites**



Approximately 13% of Schoolcraft Township is remnant wetlands, mostly located adjacent to lakes, streams and natural drainage courses. According to the recent public opinion survey, nearly 61% felt that the Township could do more to protect natural resources, such as wetlands.

The State of Michigan safeguards wetland resources through Part 303 of the Natural Resource Environmental Protection Act; however, wetlands that are not contiguous to a water body or do not exceed five acres fall short of this protection. Schoolcraft Township could, however, implement land use incentives and permit “bonus densities” for those developments that preserve and protect wetlands. A separate wetland protection ordinance that provides protection to wetlands not otherwise regulated by the state is also an option.

**Woodlands.** Woodlands and tree-lined roadways are important features that contribute to the rural character of Schoolcraft Township. Currently, woodlots occur on publicly owned land or on private land. Woodland stands are fragmented due to previous harvesting, clearing and tilling for pastures and farmland.

Woodlands serve purposes ranging from animal habitat and soil erosion control to natural buffers from noise and odors. Woodlands that follow stream corridors are important to watershed health because of their ability to provide shade and keep water temperatures cool for healthy aquatic insect and fish populations.

In order to effectively preserve high quality woodland areas within the township, tree preservation management should be addressed. Clearing restrictions and other regulations can be used to prevent the loss of major tree stands and to protect rural character. Implementation of these regulations can ensure that development in forested areas preserves the health of the resource while protecting rural character. This can have positive effects on the environment, preserving trees and habitat, as well as creating natural stormwater retention areas.

### ***Vision Assessment: Existing Land Use***

Existing land uses are shown on **Map 6**. As a rural, natural resource-rich community within easy commuting distance to Kalamazoo, pressure for change is inevitable for Schoolcraft Township. While most of the land throughout the community is comprised of farms, open space, forests and wetlands, residential growth has emerged as a dominant use on many of the area lakes, as well as along major transportation corridors such as VW Avenue and Portage Road.

During the data gathering phase of this Master Plan, parcel data was compared to aerial photographs and on-site evaluations to determine existing land uses. The parcel map was then used to determine the distribution of land uses within the Township. Although

the parcel data is not based on accurate surveys, it was possible to determine general land use patterns. Following is a description of existing land uses within the Township.

**Agricultural.** Agricultural production, including pasture, field crops and livestock, is the dominant land use within the township, with over 52 percent of the land base in agriculture use. Actively farmed lands are located in each section of the township; however, the western portion of the Township appears to have the largest contiguous configuration of active agricultural lands that are enrolled in PA 116. This area has also begun to see the transition from active farming to commercial and industrial uses due to the location of US 131. A majority of the existing prime farmland soils, however, still remain in active agricultural use. The eastern portion of the township is actively farmed. A small envelope of residential development has emerged in Sections 23 and 24 within this prime farmland territory. It has significant potential to create agricultural conflicts between active farms and rural residences. Noise, odor, fertilizer applications and long hours of operating heavy farm equipment are all agricultural practices that are not compatible with residential neighborhoods.

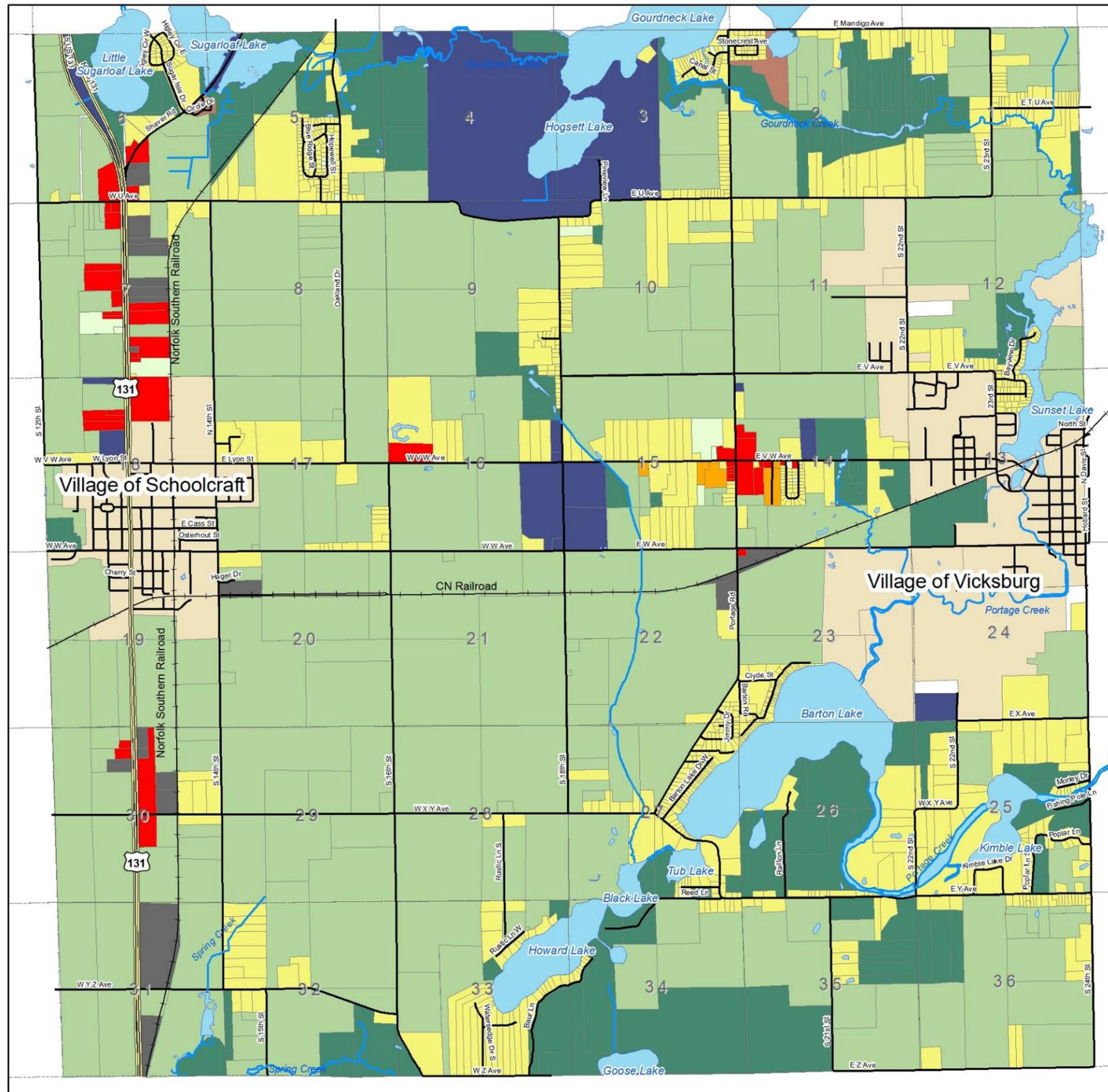
**Residential.** The township offers a wide variety of housing options, ranging from farmsteads and large-lot residential to subdivisions, a manufactured housing community and two village centers. Just under 14% of the township is in residential use (not including woodlands under residential ownership).<sup>3</sup> While there is a diverse array of options, large-lot residential tends to be the most dominant residential preference. Single-family homes on large lots can be found on every major roadway throughout the township, but a trend towards locating near the eastern township boundary and along the lakefronts has emerged over the past 20 years.

LAND USE	# OF ACRES -2006	% OF TOTAL -2006
Single-Family Residential	3,252	13.6
Commercial	336	1.4
Industrial	240	1
Agricultural	12,541	52.6
Open Water	950	4
Public	1490	6
Multi-Family	32	1.3
Forest	2,488	10.4
Vacant/Transitional	77	0.3
Manufactured Home Park	38	0.2
Villages	2,398	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,842</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: LSL Planning -2006

Development in prime farm areas has potential long-term impacts on the sustainability of farming. Land area west of 18<sup>th</sup> Street contains active farmland and

<sup>3</sup> The land use area calculations are based on the uses shown on the Existing Land Use Map, and not on residential lot sizes. Areas identified as woodlands, while often part of residentially owned lots, are not included in the residential area calculation.



**Map 6**  
**Existing Land Use**  
 Schoolcraft Township  
 Kalamazoo County, MI

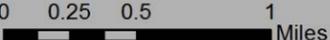
- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Manufactured Home Park
- Multi-Family Residential
- Public/Semi-Public
- Single-Family Residential
- Vacant
- Wooded

August 12, 2008





Data Source:  
 Michigan Center for Geographic Information  
 Farm & Home Publishers, Inc.





prime soils alongside scattered residential subdivisions and a growing number of small lot residential parcels. A careful balance of all land uses will be necessary to sustain the agricultural industry within this area.

**Public/Semi-Public.** Prairie View Park is a unit of the Kalamazoo County Parks system, and provides swimming, boating, hiking, fishing and picnicking on its 208 acres. The park is located on the shores of Hogsett and Gourdneck lakes and has over 200 wooded acres. Prairie View offers a significant natural amenity on the edge of the Kalamazoo-Portage metropolitan area and is an important community resource.



A unit of the Gourdneck State Game Area is located on the west side of Hogsett Lake, along Gourdneck Creek, providing permanent open space and hunting lands. In addition, the Township hosts one golf course (a second is mostly located within Village of Vicksburg boundaries) and several churches. The Township also maintains three cemeteries.

**Commercial.** Commercial development is primarily concentrated along the northern stretch of US 131 and along VW Avenue and Portage Road. Current commercial establishments, such as car dealerships, insurance agencies and small restaurants, service the needs of local residents and a larger regional market. While current commercial uses along US 131 are within close proximity to nearby Portage, there is a concern that corridor-related commercial is becoming strip development. This type of development along a major roadway typically creates excessive driveways and signs and lacks appropriate aesthetic consideration of the township's rural character. It may also distract from established business core areas within the villages.

**Industrial.** Schoolcraft Township is not known as an industrial center, however, there are a few industries located within the township that have taken advantage of Schoolcraft's transportation assets: US 131, the CN and Norfolk Southern railroads, and convenient access to I-94. The largest area of industry in the township is located along US 131. Some small industrial centers exist along the CN Railroad.

### ***Agriculture and Natural Resources: How have we done?***

Although development has been occurring within the township, particularly in the northern tier, Schoolcraft Township's agricultural land base has not been dramatically affected and its prime farmland soils have, for the most part, been preserved. Farmers have been pro-active in protecting farmland through participation in the PA 116 program. Most development has occurred near existing development areas, such as near Portage or the villages, or has been concentrated near water bodies. As a result, the agricultural character of the township is mostly intact. Development pressure is

occurring, however, and measures to promote continued preservation of the agricultural land base may be needed to maintain the rural and agricultural character of Schoolcraft Township.

Efforts by both government and private entities to preserve Schoolcraft Township's natural resources have had positive impacts, but water quality, wetlands and woodlands continue to be affected by residential, commercial and industrial development. Areas of groundwater contamination are mapped and are monitored for the public's health and safety. The water quality of Howard Lake and Black Lake was studied in fall 2005, and a detailed inventory has been conducted of the area's capability for future development. The Portage River Watershed Management Plan also provides a series of helpful recommendations to follow to provide for the long term improvement of area water bodies. These ongoing studies and adherence to study recommendations will assist in improving and protecting the water quality for future development.

The health of forest systems on a regional basis is currently under threat from various pest infestations. For new developments in Schoolcraft Township, integrated planting of mixed tree species will help protect the community from becoming susceptible to massive blights, such as what previously happened to the American Chestnut and American Elm. Provisions for tree preservation through development incentives will assist with the long term preservation of woodland resources.

### ***Agriculture and Natural Resources: Goals and Policies***

#### ***Goals***

- A. Support a viable agricultural community through planning and zoning techniques that preserve farmland.
- B. Protect the environmental resources important to the township, which include the lakes, wetlands, wildlife habitat and woodlands from the negative impacts of development.
- C. Identify lands with the greatest potential for linking natural habitat and wildlife corridors and seek opportunities to connect natural areas.
- D. Integrate environmental quality protection into local planning and policy regulation.

#### ***Policies***

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 designated agricultural areas.
2. Provide zoning options that provide incentives for land divisions that allow smaller lots in exchange for preserving



larger tracts of parent parcels for agriculture, open space preservation, wood lot and shoreline preservation.

3. 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 the natural drainage network; and 3) protecting the quality of surface and groundwater resources, open space areas, wetlands, woodlands, and wildlife.
4. Require that site plans show locations of natural features, such as significant vegetation, steep slopes, wetlands, surface water drainage, prime farmland soils, and other significant features.
5. To prevent water degradation, lakefront residential development should be restricted unless a public or private sanitary sewer system is available.
6. Provide density bonus incentives in residential and mixed-use Planned Unit Developments to preserve natural features.
7. Require the use of residential Planned Unit Development when projects result in more than a designated minimum number of dwelling units.
8. Recognize the potential for conflicts between agricultural and residential uses and focus residential development away from major agriculture areas and sensitive environmental areas.
9. Consider using or extending programs such as transfer or purchase of development rights, conservation easements, P.A. 116 and creation of land trusts.

### ***Vision Summary: Agriculture and Natural Resources***

Based on public input and the above assessment, the Master Plan should promote preservation of Schoolcraft Township's rural character and agricultural heritage. This effort will be aided by continued emphasis on preserving and protecting the township's natural areas.

## Issue: Rural Character and Community Relationships

The analysis of this issue area considers three aspects of “rural character” and the impact of the expanding villages of Schoolcraft and Vicksburg on the rural nature of Schoolcraft Township. The first vision assessment considers “rural character” and its importance to the Township. The second vision assessment reviews applicable demographics (population, income, employment and housing) as they relate to the character of the township. The third vision assessment discusses the expansion of adjacent villages, particularly the Village of Vicksburg, and the impact of expansion on the township’s rural character.

### Guiding Principles

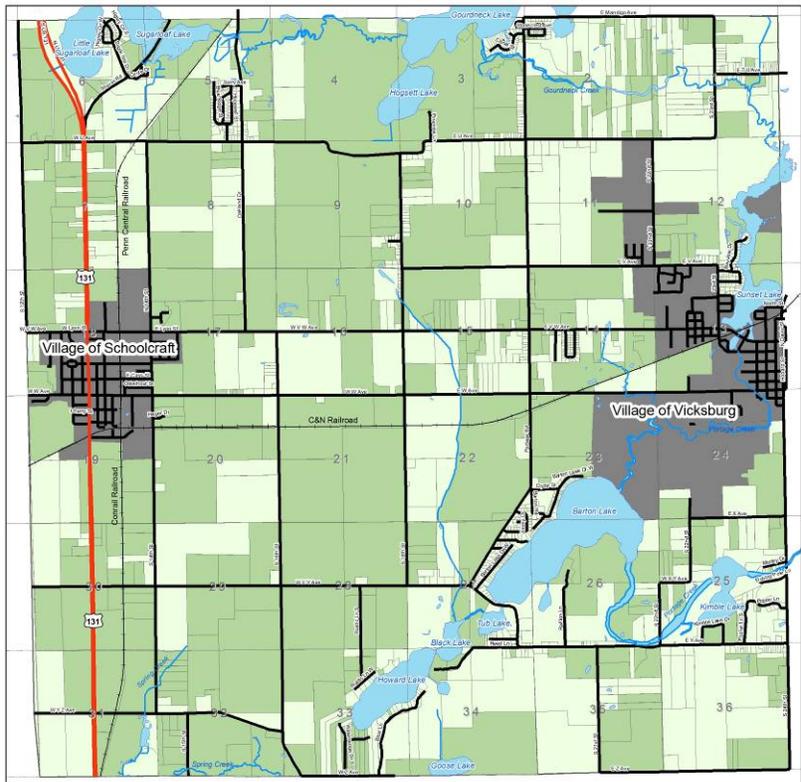
- Because of Schoolcraft Township’s rural environment, commercial and industrial uses and higher density residential developments are more suitable near the neighboring villages.
- The opportunities and challenges posed by growth require the cooperation of the township and its neighbors (villages of Schoolcraft and Vicksburg, the City of Portage, and the surrounding townships).
- Rural character is valued by the citizens and is a major element that attracts people to move to the township.
- “Rural” is characterized by (among other things): active agriculture, open vistas, low residential density, low traffic, on-site utility systems, “dark skies,” generous setbacks and country roadways (i.e., no sidewalks, curb or gutter).

### Vision Assessment: What is “Rural”?

Schoolcraft Township is a relatively rural community - 72% of the township’s land area is utilized by agricultural uses, grasslands, woodlots, recreation areas, lakes and wetlands. The amount of acreage per dwelling unit in the township is approximately 13 acres. The variety of housing ranges from suburban, with smaller lots along a road with curb and gutter, to low-density country residential and agricultural dwellings.

A recent survey conducted by Schoolcraft Township provided a strong response to the importance of rural character, with over 87% of respondents advocating to keep the ‘rural character’ of Schoolcraft Township. Because rural character can have various meanings for many people, participants invited to the master plan focus groups were asked to respond to the question: “What does ‘rural character’ mean to you?” Of the many responses recorded, these overall common themes emerged:

- An abundance of farmland
- Low traffic volumes
- Presence of natural features
- Open spaces



**Map 7**  
**Parcels > 10 Acres**  
 Schoolcraft Township  
 Kalamazoo County, MI

Parcels over 10 Acres

August 12, 2008

ISL Planning, Inc.  
 131 Planning, Inc.  
 131 Planning, Inc.

Data Source:  
 Michigan Center for Geographic Information  
 Farm & Home Publishers, Inc.

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

**Growth and Change.** Schoolcraft Township’s proximity to urban areas influences potential prime housing development on vacant or underutilized properties. Workers who wish to commute to nearby metropolitan areas can still enjoy a home in the “country.” While residential development is expected, thus far large scale conversion of large parcels to small residential parcels has not occurred. The majority of larger parcels within the township remain intact. **Map 7** highlights parcels over 10 acres in size, which still accounts for the majority of the township.

The expanding boundaries of Vicksburg as well as new development near the Village of Schoolcraft (such as the construction of a new school campus) have resulted in new residential fringe development, with village residential subdivisions adjacent to large parcels of productive agricultural lands in the township. The continuation of this pattern, however, will ultimately lead to the loss of a cohesive assembly of farm land, open spaces and natural areas. This will result in pressure to split and fragment large parcels into smaller residential lots, eventually leading to the loss of rural character.

Residential development within the township has historically occurred along existing roads, such as U and VW avenues and along Barton and Howard lakes. Residential development fronting along a public road is the least costly way to use land; main roads already exist, traffic volumes on those roads are low, and growth can be phased over a long period with little or no additional cost to either the community or the developer. This pattern does not impose significant impacts as long as densities are low, individual homes are well spaced, and agricultural uses are still evident along the roadway.

However, as the number of homes either located along or directly adjacent to main roads increase, so does the loss of rural character and the problems associated with this development pattern. These problems include:

- Loss of rural charm, since roads become lined with development and the agricultural activities are hidden by roadside homes and buildings;
- Traffic flow is compromised by an increasing number of driveways, each being a potential traffic conflict point; and
- Property behind existing strip development becomes increasingly difficult to develop.

This last problem, the “back lot” properties, is particularly difficult because they frequently take longer to develop; roads and infrastructure must be extended to serve them and they are frequently passed over in lieu of properties with existing road frontage. Unfortunately, once growth pressures and economic considerations begin to make these properties viable, surrounding neighborhoods are already in place. Consequently, existing neighbors view this “infill” development as consuming “their open space” and are often vehemently opposed to their approval.

While the majority of parcels in the township are over 10 acres in size, land development pressure in the form of new residential construction has maintained a steady pace throughout the past ten years. The amount of new building permits coupled with the average residential density of 46 housing units per square mile creates a highly valued market for living in a ‘rural neighborhood’. While the amenities of low density living provide the appearance of a rural area, the actual land assembly weakens or prevents expansion of farm operations and public recreation lands. In addition, wildlife corridors are affected as individual property owners begin fencing off land. Wildlife will begin to use alternative routes to avoid interaction with residents, affecting the use of public resources by hunters and bird watchers. Deer are often forced to find new routes, leading to more frequent auto-deer accidents.

<b>Year of Issue for Single Family Building Permit</b>	<b>Schoolcraft Township</b>
1995	17
1996	21
1997	19
1998	19
1999	12
2000	33
2001	35
2002	33
2003	31
2004	28
2005	14
<small>Source: Michigan Township Services Southwest, 2006</small>	

Development patterns have responded to natural and environmental features and the township has not yet witnessed major intrusions into wetland and active agricultural areas. The only major exception is the recent efforts to explore intensive development along Howard and Black Lakes, in primarily wooded wetland areas. Limited by sewer availability and on-site soil conditions, development within these areas would affect area water quality by accelerating sediment loading and runoff into the water system. The Township has shown a willingness to avoid a similar problem of growth around

Sunset Lake, near Vicksburg. As part of a joint 425 Agreement, the Township accepted annexation of some Township lands adjacent to the Village in return for providing sewer service to an existing subdivision adjacent to the lake. Requiring sanitary sewer, or limiting density, is a more sensitive means of protecting water quality.

While traditional development has occurred along roadways and inland lakes, area residents appear supportive of innovative land techniques that may provide an incentive to preserve more open space. Over 89% of survey respondents agree that new development should be required to preserve open space and the natural character of the land.

**Vision Assessment: Demographics**

**Population.** Schoolcraft Township has not seen a dramatic change in population in over the past twenty-five years. The greatest period of growth occurred between 1960 and 1980 (see **Figure 3**). During that time, the township experienced unprecedented growth, adding 1,837 residents (an increase of 85.8 percent).

Year	Population	Change	Percent Change
1960	1,777	-	-
1970	2,698	921	51.8%
1980	3,614	916	34.0%
1990	3,695	81	2.2%
2000	4,035	340	9.1%
2005*	3,952	-83	-2%

Source: US Census 2000; \*US Census 2005 estimates

The era of rapid development gave way to an abrupt slowing of population growth and building permit activity between 1980 and 1990. This slow down period coincides with a general economic downturn in Michigan during the early half of the decade. Between 1980 and 1990, Schoolcraft Township’s growth rate slowed to 2.2%, lower than all of Kalamazoo County (5.2%) and Prairie Ronde Township (14.8%) during the same period.

From 1990-2000, a time of strong economic growth throughout the state, Schoolcraft Township’s population began to grow, albeit at a slower rate (9.1%) than the adjacent municipalities. While Kalamazoo County grew 6.8%, Prairie Ronde Township grew by 52.8% and Brady Township grew by 14.3%.

Despite the township’s “fringe community” status, Schoolcraft Township has the opportunity to manage expected growth and protect the distinctive characteristics that make it such a desirable community. Farming is still the major land use in the township and abundant water resources are found in every sector.

**Future Growth.** Although the 2005 US Census estimates indicate a loss of 83 people in a five year period, decennial Census counts continue to show overall growth for the township. Based on these demographic trends, projections can be used to paint many possible futures. Without knowing what lies in store, the most accurate scenario that can be devised asks: if trends remain as they are, what does the future hold for

Schoolcraft Township, and how does that future compare to the township’s vision for the future?

Population projections assist in the long term planning of community needs by determining expected growth pressure and planning for long-term land use needs. While many unknown factors may influence these numbers, such as the economy, the following projections prepared by Schoolcraft Township can be used for general guidance and evaluation.

Figure 4 – Schoolcraft Township Population Projections			
2000	2010	2020	Percentage Change
4,035	4,255	4,477	11.0%
Source: Schoolcraft Township Straight Line Estimate			

While population growth is one indicator of change in a community; more importantly for Schoolcraft Township is how that population change affects the landscape. Michigan’s growth patterns are very land consumptive – land is consumed at a rate eight times higher than population growth. For a township that relies on its productive agriculture and recreational lands and open spaces for maintaining rural character, opportunities to maintain these systems in a connected land base for future use need to be explored.

Figure 5- Population by Age	
Age	Percent
0 to 4 years	6%
5 to 9 years	8%
10 to 14 years	8%
15 to 19 years	8%
20 to 24 years	5%
25 to 29 years	5%
30 to 34 years	6%
35 to 39 years	8%
40 to 44 years	9%
45 to 49 years	9%
50 to 54 years	7%
55 to 59 years	6%
60 to 64 years	4%
65 to 69 years	3%
70 to 79 years	5%
80 and more years	3%
Source: US Census; LSL Planning, Inc. Rounded percentages.	

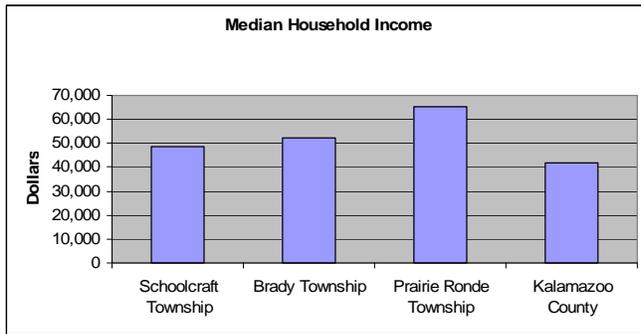
**Age.** The median age of Schoolcraft Township residents was 37.6 years in the 2000 Census, 5 years older than Kalamazoo County’s 32.7 years. While higher than the county’s median age, Schoolcraft Township is comparable to its neighbors, such as Brady Township (38.8 years).

The largest age group in Schoolcraft, at 43% of the population, is between the ages of 35 and 64 years. The second largest age category is 0 to 19 years of age at 30%. This indicates a strong base of families in the Township, and an emerging population entering their child bearing years (see **Figure 5**)

**Income.** In 2000, median household income in Schoolcraft Township was \$48,737; higher than Kalamazoo County (\$42,022), and the State of Michigan (\$42,054), but lower than the neighboring townships, Brady and Prairie Ronde.

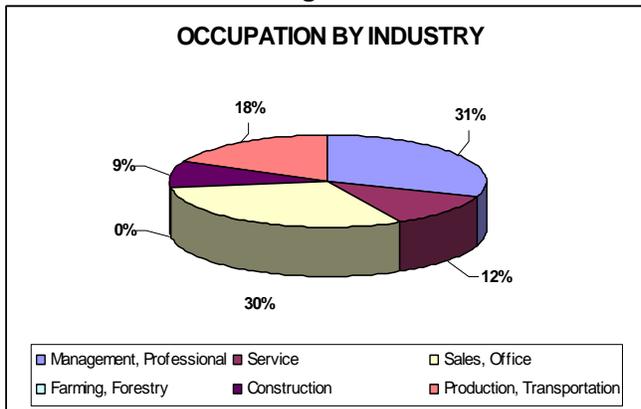
See **Figure 6.**

**Figure 6**



Source: U.S. Census, 2000

**Figure 7**



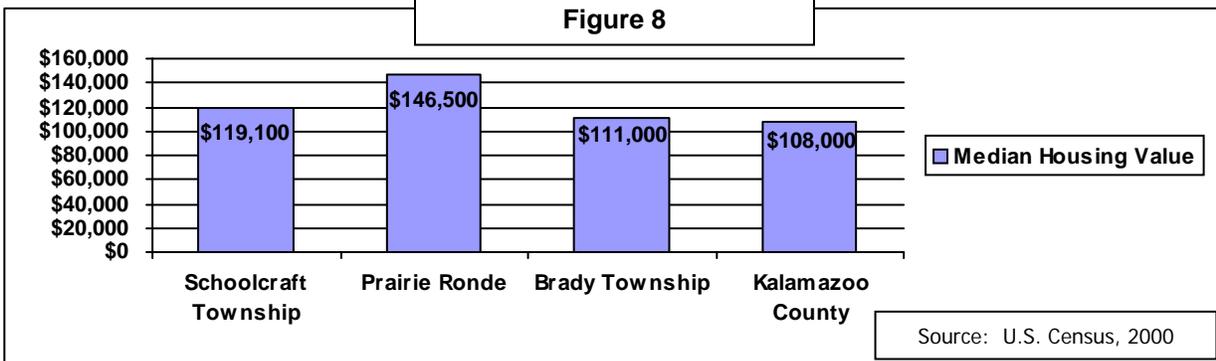
Source: U.S. Census, 2000

**Employment.** For Schoolcraft Township, 69.7% of the population is in the labor force (defined as persons 16 years or older and either employed or seeking employment). As shown in **Figure 7**, the majority (61%) of Township residents reported occupations in the Management and Sales and the Office categories. The second largest occupation group, (18%) is the Production and Transportation occupations. While farming is a major land use in the Township, only nine individuals report farming and forestry as their primary occupation.

**Housing and Households.** A community's available housing has a great influence on its population's characteristics and demographic trends. Housing is a reflection of the character of a community, particularly through residential densities, visual character, and the available land for development. The mix of housing units, their age and cost affects demand for housing and determines who can afford them.

The majority of the Schoolcraft Township housing was constructed during the population boom between 1960 and 1980. Housing values remain relatively affordable in comparison to surrounding neighbors, such as Prairie Ronde Township (see **Figure 8**).

**Figure 8**



Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Schoolcraft Township reflects a stable housing market based upon the percentage of total occupied units slightly higher than that for the County as a whole. Typically, lower occupancy percentages can be attributed to vacancy based upon market conditions or seasonal use of the unit. The majority of housing stock in the township is in single family detached units, although this percentage (82%) reflects a more balanced profile than that found in more rural townships such as Brady and Prairie Ronde (at 96%) (see Figure 9).

<b>Figure 9 – Housing Units</b>				
<b>Community</b>	<b># of Units</b>	<b># Occupied (%)</b>	<b>Detached unit (%)</b>	<b>Other (%)</b>
<b>Schoolcraft Township</b>	<b>1,580</b>	<b>1,513 (96%)</b>	<b>1,299 (82%)</b>	<b>281 (18%)</b>
Prairie Ronde Township	733	707 (97%)	705 (96%)	28 (4%)
Schoolcraft Village	645	615 (95%)	461 (71%)	184 (29%)
Vicksburg Village	956	908 (95%)	677 (71%)	279 (29%)
Brady Township	1,423	1,298 (91%)	1,363 (96%)	60 (4%)
City of Portage	18,880	18,138 (96%)	12,622 (67%)	6,258 (33%)
Kalamazoo County	99,250	93,479 (94%)	63,017 (63%)	36,233 (37%)
Source: Schoolcraft Township 2006				

Additional housing options, in the form of condominiums and apartments located in a more centralized area, with a walkable network of services, may provide an attractive option for new residents who wish to get away from the business of urban life, yet still enjoy the amenities of a rural area.

***Vision Assessment: Expansion of Adjacent Villages***

The two villages within the township have influenced the location of municipal boundary lines through annexation. The Village of Vicksburg, with a population of 2,320 people, is serviced by both water and sewer services and occupies a total of 1.9 square miles within both Schoolcraft and Brady Townships. The Village of Schoolcraft is slightly smaller with 1,587 people and has municipal water service for its .93 square mile area. Residents of the township do not support the expansion of the City of Portage or the two villages. Recent survey results show that only 21% of area residents support village expansion, while more than 58% voiced opposition to village growth.

While the City of Portage has not annexed into Schoolcraft Township, development patterns (particularly north of U Avenue) are influenced by the growing neighbor to the north. Developments on the Sugarloaf lakes and Gourdneck Lake, as well as a subdivision fronting on U Avenue and Oakland Drive, have easy access to arterial and collector roads leading into Portage. Continued land division north of U Avenue should be limited so that the rural nature of the area is maintained. Efforts to protect the Prairie View County Park by limiting development around its borders will help to preserve this vital community resource.

Development in Schoolcraft Township that is greater than one unit per acre is more appropriate near village borders where existing infrastructure can support it, especially

near Vicksburg with both sewer and water. Since the township's location on US 131 and within the metropolitan region has an influence on new residential development, two-way communication must occur between the Township and the two Villages. Adjacent utilities and existing densities within the Villages provide appropriate locations for high density residential development and mixed-use planned unit developments with commercial, office and residential living. By coordinating new growth and development with the adjoining municipalities, Schoolcraft Township may prevent unnecessary fragmentation of large parcels by directing development to appropriate areas within or near Village boundaries.

### ***Rural Character and Community Relationships: How have we done?***

Moderate growth in the township has not created significant impacts on area roads or on large parcels. East of 18<sup>th</sup> Street, roadside development along VW Avenue has created a residential ring around active farmland parcels (which may prevent long-term use of farming in those areas). Most agricultural parcels west of 18<sup>th</sup> Street, however, have not been affected.

Growth within the two villages, particularly Vicksburg, has been a major influence on the ability of Schoolcraft Township to maintain its rural character. The Township and Vicksburg have recently cooperated on a boundary and utility-extension agreement. A cooperative relationship with both villages will be an important factor for facilitating housing options that provide appropriate densities while preserving open space and scenic vistas. Development near the City of Portage poses similar concerns, and the township must carefully consider how growth will occur north of U Avenue.

### ***Rural Character and Community Relationships: Goals and Policies***

#### ***Goals***

- A. Strive to maintain Schoolcraft Township's rural character through thoughtful, proactive 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 Schoolcraft Township.
- D. Provide for a balanced and sustainable land use plan to support the people and the local economy of the township.



#### ***Policies***

1. Incorporate low-impact site design standards that respect the natural integrity of the land and minimize the loss of scenic views.

2. Implement lighting standards to minimize light pollution of the night sky.
3. Require a development setback from local roadways to preserve 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. Maintain communication with adjoining communities for land use and open space coordination, public services, and boundary planning.

### ***Vision Summary: Rural Character and Community Relationships***

The rural character of Schoolcraft Township is highly valued by its residents. Growth has been slow, but steady. The attractiveness of the township as well as projected growth in and near Portage and the villages all point towards continued growth. To maintain a low-density, rural atmosphere, it is important to appropriately locate new housing developments in cooperation with our neighboring communities.

## Issue: Business and Economic Development

Seeking out new economic development opportunities, while maintaining a low-density residential lifestyle may challenge the township's overall goal to maintain the area's rural character. Commercial and industrial development impacts related to increased traffic, hours of operation and demand for infrastructure tend to take away from the rural aesthetic of an area. Designating new industrial and commercial uses must be placed within the township in a way to utilize the infrastructure available today, and be limited to areas where their use will not influence surrounding uses of land.

This last issue area is analyzed through three vision assessments: the US 131 Corridor, the Portage Road Corridor, and the potential for large-scale industry.

### Guiding Principles

- The US 131 corridor is an economic engine for the township.
- Large-scale and regional commercial businesses are more appropriately located in an urban setting.
- US 131 and the two major railroads present unique development opportunities.
- Safety and access for nonresidential development are important site planning considerations.

### Vision Assessment: The US 131 Corridor

The most intensive development area, and the area projected for future commercial/ industrial growth due to existing infrastructure and land availability is the US 131 corridor. Most existing parcels used for commercial and industrial development extend roughly one quarter mile east and west of the highway. Active agricultural operations buffer these uses on each side of the highway, with many lands held in Michigan's Farmland Preservation Program (PA 116).



A mix of commercial and industrial uses is located north of the Village of Schoolcraft to the township boundary, and also extends a quarter-mile south of the village. Business sites have been developed on a parcel by parcel basis, resulting in frequent curb cuts along the highway that often create traffic hazards for through traffic. The overall identity of the corridor is a mix of uses, building designs and signs. Lands along the southern edge of Schoolcraft Village are still utilized for agriculture, although future expansion of this corridor is expected through the conversion of agriculture to commercial and industrial development. Residents indicate a strong consensus for encouraging commercial development along U.S. 131, with over 65 % in support.

Industries in Schoolcraft Township are dependent on groundwater resources and an adequate supply of water. Existing issues for area industries relating to groundwater

quality are high iron content and groundwater contamination. New development should be planned for low-impacts on groundwater supplies.

An opportunity exists for proper corridor planning prior to major expansion along the corridor. Sites for future uses should be designed to share driveways and provide for landscaping and signs to provide an identity specific to Schoolcraft Township. Locations for new development should be encouraged to cluster in close proximity to existing uses to avoid leapfrog sprawl and land development.

The US 131 Access Management Plan, developed by Michigan's Department of Transportation, includes several planning recommendations for the corridor that include:

- Restrict the number of driveways per lot;
- Regulate location, spacing and design of driveways;
- Encourage shared access;
- Locate driveways away from intersections.

### ***Vision Assessment: Portage Road Commercial Area***

The Portage Road commercial area provides the only commercial development in the township other than the US 131 corridor. Existing development near the VW Avenue and Portage Road intersection is rather intensive, with such uses as a salvage yard, two new car dealerships, a gas station/convenience store and various other small businesses, intermixed with residential dwellings. The 1990 Land Use Plan designated all of Portage Road between VW Avenue and W Avenue to be commercially developed. Recent rezonings have extended commercial development south to W Avenue. There is also a large industrial development south of W Avenue that takes advantage of its frontage on the railroad.



According to the 2006 Public Opinion Survey, 29% supported the concept of encouraging commercial development near the intersection of Portage Road and VW Avenue. The area serves as a neighborhood business district serving nearby residents while also drawing a regional market to the car dealerships. However, 85% of survey respondents also support the idea that the township should control the amount and location of new development. Given the existing residential and agricultural lands within close proximity to this area, future expansion and recognition of existing uses should be evaluated for long-term compatibility. For example, areas where single family residential development is located should not be the location for expanded commercial development. For this reason, further extension of the commercial area south to W Avenue should be re-evaluated.

Infrastructure within this intersection area appears to be under stress because of high traffic volumes inconsistent with the surrounding low-density residential land use patterns. Continued expansion of this area may require traffic control upgrades, such as a traffic light instead of the existing four-way stop intersection.

### ***Vision Assessment: Future Large Scale Industry***

The idea of large scale industrial uses has been explored by local officials to capitalize on existing infrastructure. With two major railroad lines traveling north-south and east-west, and US 131 running north-south from Kalamazoo and Interstate 94, Schoolcraft Township has the available land base to support future large-scale industries. The proposed expansion of the expressway portion of US 131 south to Interstate 80/90 in Indiana has the potential to make this area even more desirable. The possibilities for this type of development will generally be limited to those areas that may be served by public utilities and have access to US 131. Large scale industrial uses are more land intensive than light industrial and, as such, should be in an area where public utilities exist or can be extended.

While no specific areas are proposed for large scale industrial uses in this Plan, potential industrial properties should generally have the following characteristics:

- Direct access to US 131 and secondary access to an appropriate roadway capable of accommodating the weights and/or volumes of trucks and other vehicles.
- Direct access to one or both rail lines.
- Availability of public utilities. Areas close to the Village of Schoolcraft, from which water lines can be extended, may be the most appropriate sites.
- Sufficient property to accommodate generous setbacks for parking, loading, and other activity areas.
- Designed in a way to limit any negative effects on existing homes, or active agricultural uses, such as attractive landscaping and extensive buffering.
- Sustainable design techniques that efficiently handle storm water runoff and minimize impervious surfaces to mitigate possible impacts to area groundwater resources.
- After development, resist any further attempts to develop agricultural land, so that farm uses can provide a transition between the industry and the other existing low intensity uses.

Should an opportunity for a regional scale industry present itself, the development should provide employment benefits to the community without detracting from its rural character.

Public input received from the survey showed that residents would not support large scale commercial development, such as a Meijer or Wal-Mart store that would draw upon a regional market and increase area traffic (60% were against such development); however, regional employment opportunities within the industrial sector,

if developed in the manner outlined above, appear to be more conducive to the community's desire to preserve rural character.

### ***Business and Economic Development: How Have We Done?***

Up to this time, access management principles have not been implemented along the US 131 corridor. However opportunities exist for "retrofitting" sites with safer and more efficient access points when sites expand or change uses. Public input received during the master plan process revealed a concern that US 131 is very dangerous south of the village of Schoolcraft, drawing particular attention to existing intersections such as XY Avenue and US 131.



Business development in the other commercial area in the township, at Portage Road and VW Avenue, has been haphazard and unplanned. Pressure to expand the business area south to W Avenue has resulted in rezoning lands that are not contiguous to the existing commercial area.

Because of the presence of the limited-access highway and the rail lines, the Township recognizes the unique opportunities for a major employer within the community. While there is no active interest in a site at this time, the Township recognizes the need to plan for such an opportunity, provided that the rural character of the community is preserved.

### ***Business and Economic Development: Goals and Policies***

#### ***Goals***

- A. Provide a reasonable mix of commercial and industrial services along US 131 that complements the rural character of the township.
- B. Allow, when appropriate, industrial uses that are within the capacity of existing or proposed utilities that will contribute to the economic growth of the region, and are sensitively planned, developed and operated to have minimal impacts on natural features and the desired rural character.
- C. Maintain the Portage Road/VW Avenue area as a viable commercial neighborhood by keeping the commercial area compact and preventing expansion down the roadways.

#### ***Policies***

1. Coordinate new commercial business opportunities on a 'regional' planning level with the adjacent Villages to protect the township's agricultural land base from land speculation.
2. Designate areas for light industrial uses and evaluate them with respect to intensity, impact on surrounding areas, the natural environment, accessibility, infrastructure, and economic impacts.

3. Implement access management principles for commercial and industrial sites that improve the use and safety of the roadway, so that it services both pass-through and local traffic in an efficient manner.
4. Coordinate maintenance and improvement projects along US 131 with MDOT to ensure that access and services reflect the Master Plan.

***Sub-Issue: Regional Development***

- While Schoolcraft Township offers a quiet, rural residential and agricultural alternative to the urban/suburban areas of Kalamazoo County, it also recognizes the presence of unique assets suitable for large scale industrial type development, i.e., dual mainline railroads, interstate highway access, proximity to urban population/workforce, and availability of land.
- Hosting a large scale project doesn't mean the township intends to host related development or deviate from a land use plan geared to low density, agriculture and open space. It is anticipated the large scale project would be substantially buffered by agricultural and open space areas, and would remain a stand alone development offering significant advantage to the region.
- The Township will encourage subsequent development related to the large project to occur in surrounding communities.

***Vision Summary: Business and Economic Development***

The commercial and industrial base of Schoolcraft Township is important to the community's economic health. The Master Plan should recognize the existing infrastructure resources available and appropriately locate new non-residential development in a safe and well-organized pattern. Extension of commercial and industrial uses away from the Portage Road/VW Avenue intersection should be carefully evaluated.

## Bringing it Together: A Vision for Schoolcraft Township

### *Vision Statement*

Having a vision can motivate decision makers and residents alike by offering a clear sense of direction. However, a vision is an ideal; it may not be attained in its entirety, but it can and should guide community actions. Moreover, the vision is not dogma, set in stone. Schoolcraft Township should regularly revisit its vision to account for those changes that were not anticipated.

#### ***OUR VISION FOR SCHOOLCRAFT TOWNSHIP: A PLACE CHARACTERIZED BY ...***

- **AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES** ... *MAINTAINING AN ACTIVE AGRICULTURAL LAND BASE THAT PROVIDES FOR OPEN SPACES AND PRESERVES OUR HIGH QUALITY WETLANDS, NATURAL AREAS, RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND TRAILS, WATERWAYS AND WOODS;*
- **RURAL CHARACTER AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS** ... *LOW-DENSITY, RURAL ATMOSPHERE AND APPROPRIATELY LOCATED CONCENTRATIONS OF HOUSING, ABUNDANT NATURAL RESOURCES AND RECREATION, ACHIEVED IN COOPERATION WITH OUR NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES;*
- **BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** ... *UTILIZING EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE TO PROMOTE WELL-PLANNED COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL USES THAT ARE COMPATIBLE WITH THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT AND THAT PROVIDE SHOPPING AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES;*

***... THAT TOGETHER MAKE OUR TOWNSHIP A RURAL TREASURE WITH ABUNDANT NATURAL RESOURCES, RECREATION, AND A PREMIER QUALITY OF LIFE.***

The Vision Statement takes the vision assessments of each of the three Issue Areas and summarizes them into a concise statement that articulates the planning direction of the township. The Guiding Principles, Goals and Policies are also articulated in this Vision. The Vision will be the basis of determining land use designations for current and future development in Schoolcraft Township.

## Chapter 3. Future Land Use

### Realizing the Vision

The Future Land Use Plan is intended to reflect the goals and policies of the township. The future land use designations were developed from existing land use patterns, anticipated development areas, and input from residents. Further, they are intended to support the retention of a township character that is significantly rural, agricultural and recreational in nature.



This Plan is the product of an analysis of current conditions, the results of public input received from focus group meetings and the 2006 Survey and an understanding of the issues and opportunities likely to affect the township's future. The Plan serves as a guide for short-term land use decisions and long-range community strategies. The Plan should be consulted and carefully evaluated before land use decisions are made to ensure that they will be consistent with the goals and policies of the Plan.

While this plan acknowledges that new development will occur, the township strongly desires future growth to adhere to the Township Vision Statement. Through the public process, a strong desire to maintain the township's agricultural and rural character was expressed. Based on these views, it is clear that the rural character of Schoolcraft Township is worth protecting, but effective use of the right planning tools is needed to assure that the township continues to be a special place.

To maintain an acceptable quality of life, the township must carefully plan for the best management of *all* of its resources. While the township cannot solve every problem created by development, nor answer all concerns related to the development of land, it can ensure that its land use decisions take into account a broad range of community concerns.

As a guide, the Future Land Use Plan is not meant to be rigidly administered; changing conditions may affect the assumptions used when it was originally conceived. But changing conditions do not necessarily mean that the Plan must change. Rather, the Planning Commission must examine those changes and decide if the principles on which the Plan was based are still valid. If so, the Plan should be followed.

In addition, although the Plan advocates a long term vision in areas with established uses, this does not mean that the existing uses must change. As existing uses consider development or redevelopment, the Plan serves as the guide for ensuring that change is consistent with the township's desire to maintain its rural character.

Although the preservation of rural character is a consistent theme in this Master Plan, increasing development pressure will make it more challenging to protect. A specific purpose for preserving rural character and natural features is to recognize and protect the qualities of rural living deemed important and worth preserving by residents. Where land development approvals are requested, plan densities and design should embrace and support rural character by carefully locating homes and structures and by preserving natural features and open space areas. Open spaces help maintain expansive rural views and the sense of tranquility that are so prized by area residents. Careful open space planning can also help limit traffic impacts and environmental problems that are associated with more intensive development.

### **Protecting Rural Character**

The concept of rural character may have different implications and may take on different forms depending on the types of land uses and natural features involved; therefore, its preservation requires using a variety of techniques. Rural character is as much perception as it is reality, and that perception is gained from three principal viewpoints. The first viewpoint, and the one that affects the most people on a day-to-day basis, is from the roadway. The second, and most personal, is the view that someone may have from their own property. Finally, active farming also plays a role, as the agricultural heritage and culture of the township are major contributors to its rural character.

Properly addressing these three perspectives involves promoting farmland preservation, the design of developments and the availability of appropriate regulatory tools needed to make it happen. These factors will play pivotal roles in helping to preserve the township's rural character.

There are a number of practices that the community could encourage to promote the preservation of the rural environment from all three viewpoints. Each of these practices has its advantages and disadvantages; the key is to select those that best fit both the township's existing development patterns and meet the Master Plan's goals.



### **Density is not the only factor....**

Although existing zoning regulations may call for homes on larger lots with generous setbacks, little attention is typically paid to the careful placement of homes on lots with the express purpose of preserving rural character, views and natural features.

While maintaining lower densities for residential development is important, density alone is not the only factor to consider. Think about the above picture. While this certainly is a large lot, low-density development, it can hardly be said to have any "rural

character.” Therefore, the key to maintaining rural character is to combine density considerations along with development design.

## Future Land Use Designations

The Future Land Use Plan map (**Map 8**) is a visual depiction of how the proposed land use designations relate to the overall arrangement of the township. A general description of the proposed intensity of land use and the purpose of each designation are listed as a supplement to the Future Land Use Map. The following descriptions of land use designations also outline techniques that may be implemented to assist the Township in retaining its rural character.

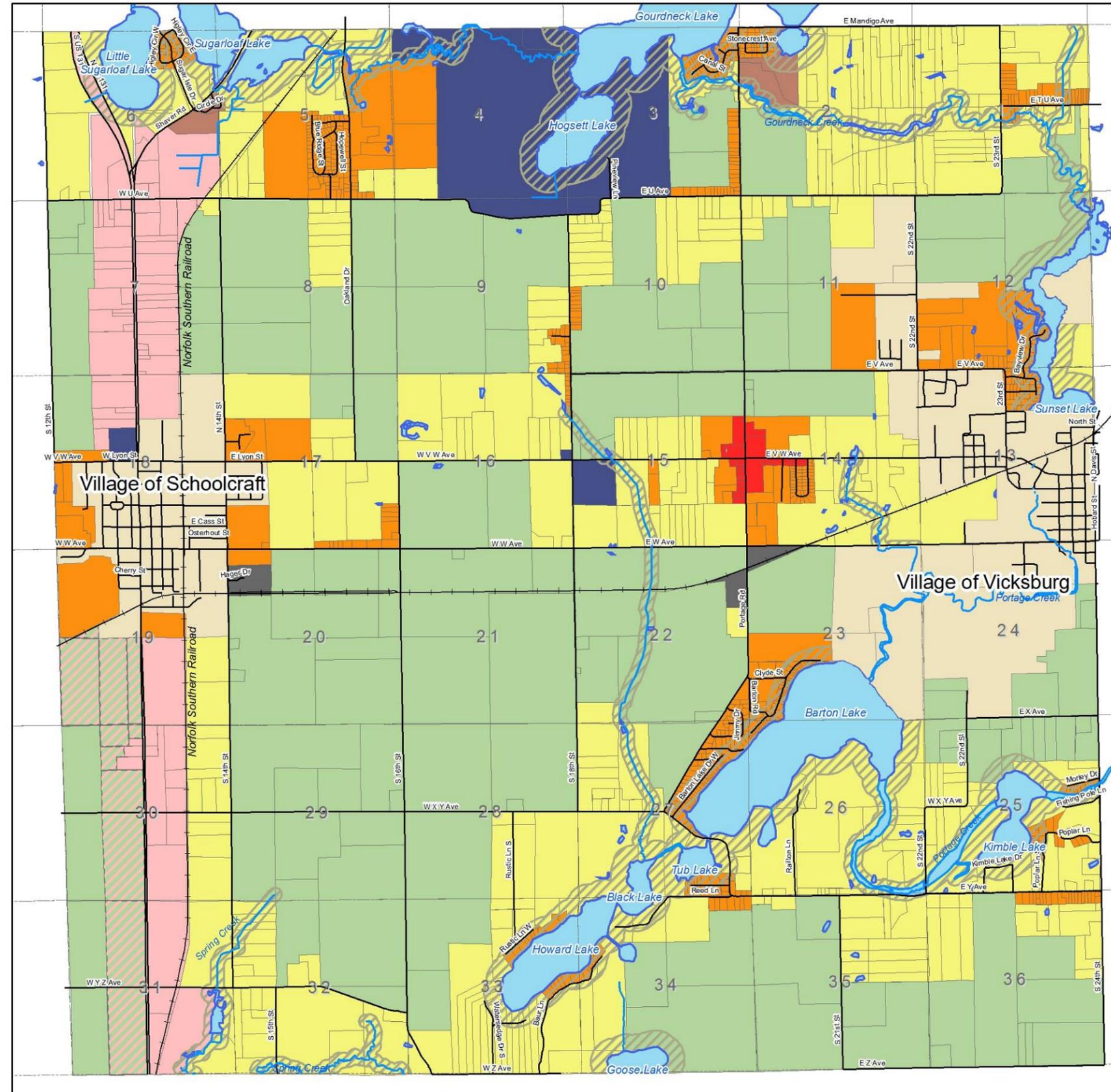
### *Agricultural Preservation*

**Description.** Consistent with the goals and policies articulated previously in this document, major emphasis is placed on supporting the continuation of farming as an essential land use in the Township. The Future Land Use map identifies those areas that have the greatest long-term potential for active agricultural production, as well as for long-term preservation. The Agricultural Preservation classification is based on several factors, including sufficiently large parcels (generally 40 acres in size or larger), prime farmland soils, lands that are actively farmed or enrolled in PA 116, or lands that are adequately buffered from residential development pressures by distance or the presence of other limiting factors, such as presence of natural features. Smaller parcels were also analyzed based on location relative to other farm uses, in order to form a relatively cohesive pattern for a long-term agricultural base, rather than isolated spots or islands of agricultural activity that lend themselves to conversion to other uses.

The presence of prime farmland soils can be found in almost every section of Schoolcraft Township and has shaped the land base into an agrarian, low-density community. Because of the importance of long-term agricultural preservation efforts to support the local economy and the rural character, land uses should continue at a low density. New residential or non-farm development should be limited and designed to minimize conflicts between agricultural and residential uses. This will help to preserve the most important farmland.

While development has occurred along the major transportation corridors between the villages of Schoolcraft and Vicksburg, lands outside of the primary transportation corridors of east-west VW Avenue and W Avenue and north-south US 131 and Portage Road have incurred less development pressures. Adjacent townships such as Prairie Ronde and Brady Township maintain a large base of planned agricultural use, which will be compatible with Schoolcraft Township land uses.

**Implementation Techniques.** Maintaining a viable agricultural land base is not just a concern for Schoolcraft Township. Agricultural lands throughout Kalamazoo County and Michigan are considered to be under extreme development pressure for non-farm



**Map 8**  
**Future Land Use Plan**  
 Schoolcraft Township  
 Kalamazoo County, MI

- Waterfront Overlay
- Agricultural Preservation
- Rural Preservation
- Medium Density Residential
- Manufactured Home Park
- Public/Recreational Lands
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Industrial
- US 131 Corridor
- US 131 Overlay

August 12, 2008

LSI Planning, Inc.  
 Community Planning Consultants

Data Source:  
 Michigan Center for Geographic Information  
 Farm & Home Publishers, Inc.

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles



development. The value of farmland and its ties to community character, as well as its accelerating loss, have been well documented in other sources, such as the *Smarter Growth for Kalamazoo County* guidebook (2003). In order to maintain the quality of life that township residents have become accustomed to, regulatory measures to promote agricultural preservation may be necessary.

The current Schoolcraft Township Zoning Ordinance allows minimum lot sizes of 5 acres in the AG, Agricultural District. While this is a relatively low density requirement, it has not prevented the loss of farmland or rural character. The following describes a range of techniques that may be implemented through the zoning ordinance which, in combination with other techniques, may be useful in preserving land for agricultural use. It is important to understand that these provisions do not, by themselves, preserve farming in any community; only the farmer can do that. Rather, these techniques are intended to permit larger blocks of land to remain set aside for farm use.

**Exclusive Use Zoning.** Exclusive use zoning for agriculture can be an effective way to protect farmland from conversion to other uses. Exclusive use zoning is most appropriate where there is limited pressure for residential development and there are already existing large areas of prime or unique agricultural resources.

The purposes of an exclusive agricultural zone include:

- protecting productive farms;
- avoiding conflicting land uses;
- maintaining a viable agricultural economic base; and
- maintaining open space/rural character.

New non-farm residences are often strictly regulated in the Exclusive Use District, including approval for non-farm single family residences only through the Special Land Use process. Site development standards within an Exclusive Use District may include a maximum lot area for non-farm residence lots and a large minimum lot area for a farm dwelling unit. Other provisions might include a maximum lot to depth ratio of 1:3 and increased minimum lot widths and setbacks.

Sliding Scale Example – Agricultural District	
Area of Lot of Record	Maximum Splits from Parent Parcel Permitted
1 to 10 acres	1
10.1 to 20 acres	2
20.1 to 30 acres	3
30.1 to 40 acres	4
40.1 to 60 acres	6
60.1 to 80 acres	8
over 80 acres	10

**Sliding Scale Zoning.** This technique limits the number of times that a parent parcel (a parcel existing on the date of ordinance adoption) can be split, based on its size. The larger the parcel, the more splits that may occur, up to a maximum number established (as shown on the example chart). A larger minimum parcel size is also established.

Unlike exclusive use zoning, sliding scale zoning allows some non-farm residential development without special land use approval or other reviews. Sliding scale zoning can be useful in agricultural areas where there are significant development pressures and land speculation. Its use is most effective in areas where a wide range of parcel sizes exist and non-farm residential development has already begun to occur.

Minimum and maximum building lot sizes can be used to encourage the location of non-farm development on less productive farmland and/or in areas where development is more concentrated to direct growth onto already fragmented land. The use of buffer areas is highly recommended to avoid land use conflicts between new residential development and agriculture fields. Non-farm parcels should be accessed from public or private roads leading from the existing public road, to avoid "strip lots" along public roads and maintain views to the farmed parcels.

This method allows for development of existing farmland, while preserving the best of that land for agricultural use. Thus, rural character is maintained while allowing the farmer some development capability.

**Quarter/Quarter Zoning.** Quarter/quarter zoning is a density-based zoning technique that is most appropriate in rural areas with large farming operations, moderate growth pressures, and where average parcel sizes generally exceed 40 acres. "Quarter/quarter zoning" refers to a quarter of a quarter section of land (1/16 of 640 acres, or 40 acres) where a limited number of non-farm homes are allowed for every 40-acres of land.

The non-farm splits are usually regulated by minimum and maximum sizes, e.g., no less than 1 acre and not greater than 2 acres. They are often required to be contiguous to one another to avoid breaking up farmland into smaller or odd-shaped sizes. A variation of this method is to establish a density of homes within each section of land. Once that density is reached, further residential or other development is prohibited.

**Large Lot Zoning.** This technique simply increases the lot size required in residential zone districts where farming operations exist, except perhaps, where public utilities are/can be provided. Lot sizes are generally greater than 10 acres, depending on the objective (farmland preservation vs. rural character). In areas where farmland preservation is particularly important to the community, individual lot sizes of 40 acres may be applicable.

While it is a frequently-used technique, large lot zoning is generally ineffective in farmland protection since low density development patterns create parcel sizes which are "too big to mow, but too little to plow." In areas of marginal farming production, this technique can have a detrimental effect by allowing large lots for individual homes while taking large parcels out of production. This technique may be effective in maintaining rural character, but not farmland. In addition, the courts have generally not supported large lot zoning, particularly in growth areas. If this technique is employed, it

should be accompanied by a clear intent to preserve agricultural uses and should be limited to areas not facing growth pressures.

**Agricultural Buffers.** Balancing the need to continue agricultural practices and the desire to develop land for non-agricultural purposes can be challenging. Open space buffers between active agricultural areas and other uses, such as residential development, can help reduce land use conflicts, particularly where residential and agricultural conflicts are occurring with greater frequency. The use of buffers can aid in easing land use conflicts and improving the relationship of agricultural uses and new residents.

Buffers are generally imposed on residential developments, rather than on farming operations, principally because the farm was probably the first use in place. Buffers should be sufficiently wide to protect the farming operation from lawn fertilizers, playing children, and other conflicts. At the same time, they cannot be so burdensome as to require excessive land commitments from residential property owners.

Buffers are most effective if a “no-disturb” zone is provided between residential properties and farmland. This requirement should be tied to subdivision, site condominium, planned unit development, or land division approval. It should also be required that the buffer be described in the property deed to alert potential buyers of the need to honor the no-disturb area.

**Planned Unit Development.** Another powerful tool is to require planned unit development (PUD) review and approval for any residential development over a certain density. PUDs can be used to preserve open space while allowing for incentives for preservation of natural features, increased development setbacks to preserve rural views, etc. Non-contiguous PUDs (where the open space is actually provided on a property separate from the development property somewhere else in the township) can preserve active farmland and direct residential development into areas with available infrastructure and services, reducing the potential for agricultural and residential conflicts.

Through the use of such techniques as open space development, Purchase of Development Rights and Transfer of Development Rights, and other pro-active agricultural planning techniques, permitted densities in selected areas may actually be increased slightly, while resulting in less impact on the agricultural base.

The foregoing methods present a range of choices that Schoolcraft Township can consider to meet its rural and agricultural preservation goals. While public input received from the various work sessions provided strong support for adopting new zoning regulations to minimize intrusion of development and loss of farmland in designated agricultural areas, the above techniques should again be reviewed with the public prior to any zoning amendment.

### **Rural Preservation**

**Description.** Land within the Rural Preservation designation may exhibit similar traits with the Agricultural Preservation category, such as large parcels, scattered farms and open spaces, but are either surrounded by urbanizing residential development or have significant natural features that enhance the rural atmosphere of the community. Most of the township's land area is designated as Rural Preservation, with both vacant and occupied large residential parcels. In most cases, these lands still exhibit those features considered most important to the rural character of the community – farms, open spaces, lakes, wetlands, woods, fields and wildlife.

Three principal considerations were used for this land use designation: preserving rural character, protecting groundwater resources and planning for natural resource protection. The purpose of this land use category is to define those areas of the township where controlled, low density residential development respects the character of the land and surrounding area. A proposed base density of 3-5 acres allows for larger lots as well as clustered developments that preserve open space.

**Implementation Techniques.** The Township acknowledges the need and desire for low density residential development in a rural living environment. Therefore, existing farms within the RP designation are encouraged to continue operations as long as they desire. Residential lands should provide the necessary buffers to enhance and protect neighboring uses that remain in agricultural use. Open space development and planned unit development should be encouraged as an appropriate means to provide these buffers. As an incentive to encourage the use of these techniques, greater densities could be offered as a bonus for providing more open space, development setbacks and/or resource protection.

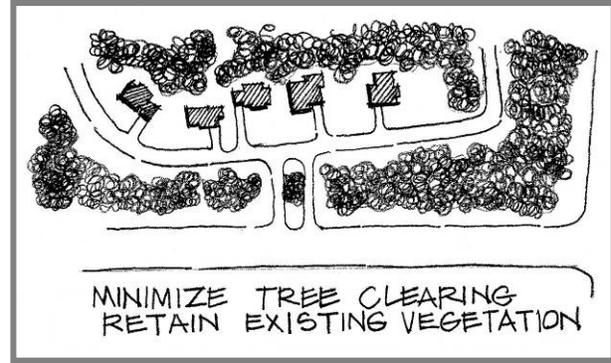
It is recommended that the Township adopt zoning regulations that reinforce the Master Plan goals and policies for integrating environmental quality protection into local planning, including, but not limited to: planned unit development and open space development provisions: increased development setback requirements; tree preservation standards; and natural feature setbacks and techniques to preserve wetlands and provide for lakefront residential guidelines along shoreline properties.

Residential densities in this area should be limited to no more than one unit per each 3 to 5 acres overall. This density helps to meet the Rural Character goal of "protecting the rural community character, natural aesthetics and environmental quality that contribute to the high quality of life in Schoolcraft Township."

The following describes two successful rural preservation techniques that may be implemented through the zoning ordinance, which, in combination with other techniques found in agricultural preservation, may be useful in maintaining the rural atmosphere highly valued by township residents.

**Conservation/Open Space Design.**

Conservation and open space design are two examples of “density-based zoning.” In both cases, an applicant is required to demonstrate the development potential of the property using the current zoning density. Allowable density is based on a “parallel plan” showing reasonable and permissible development under existing zoning. The developer creates a parallel plan based on the minimum lot size for the zoning district, the presence of any factors that limit development (such as wetlands, flood plains, etc.), and the land necessary for streets to serve the lots. The parallel plan establishes the maximum number of dwelling units that may be placed on the property.

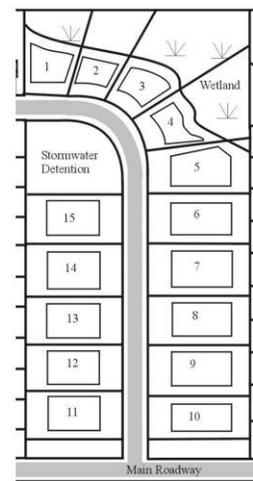


These techniques result in “clusters” of development. Inside the clusters, the density appears higher because of the grouping of dwellings. But the allowed overall density is the same as if the property were developed under traditional zoning. Clustering allows the preservation of significant natural features, provides open space for recreation, allows the continuation of farming on interior land areas, and provides a “visibility screen” to push development from the roadway to the interior of the site. It also helps to preserve roadside character, since some or all of the required open space could abut the roadway.

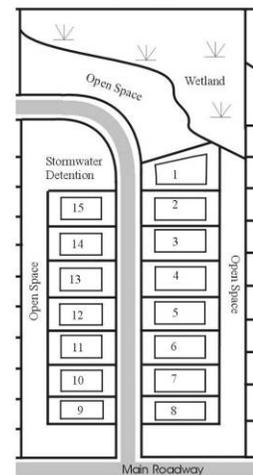
The developer gets the same density benefit as if the property were developed under the existing zoning. Since the preservation of open space is a benefit to the neighborhood, adjacent property owners can be assured that the development, while appearing to be more dense, is actually less intrusive than traditional zoning techniques.

Open space design determines suitable locations for land use activities based on the natural resource features of the property. By identifying natural features prior to laying out a street and development grid, a property owner can achieve the desired development goals while minimizing adverse impacts to rural character.

Parallel Plan Showing Conventional Subdivision



Clustered Open Space Plan



Each development designed with an open space concept will be unique based on the features of the site, in order to recognize sensitive natural areas. Development costs are usually lower as a result of residential lots located in close proximity to each other, lowering street and utility installation costs. Coordination of efforts to connect open spaces within new developments should be encouraged to provide contiguous wooded corridors and open spaces for improved wildlife habitat.

When considering open space or conservation design, the Township should encourage the preservation of key resources, including the following:

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

**Environmental Protection.** Protection of the township's many sensitive features and preservation of its rich natural character will require more than zoning regulations. Other measures that should be considered include wetland, native habitat, and woodland ordinances that go beyond local zoning and afford greater control over site-specific conditions to protect the natural resource base in Schoolcraft Township. Implementation of the Waterfront Preservation Overlay, as described later in this Plan, is also an important tool for environmental protection.

Site plan review standards should require the identification of natural features, such as significant vegetation, steep slopes, wetlands, surface water drainage and prime farmland soils to ensure that development takes place in an environmentally consistent and sound manner. Application of environmental protection requirements would occur during site plan review and subsequent building inspection phases.

### ***Medium Density Residential***

**Description.** The areas designated as Medium Density Residential are generally found near the township's lakes and roadways, where the average lot size is less than 1 acre. Housing within these areas has developed in a contiguous arrangement of small parcels, either in a traditional subdivision development or along roadways. There are also a few traditional apartment-style multiple family developments along VW Avenue. Generally, base densities under this designation will range from ½ acre to 1 acre. Where this designation is along a waterfront, it recognizes the existing land use

patterns that have formed, but also encourages long-term water quality improvements through the use of waterfront preservation techniques found in the proposed Waterfront Preservation Overlay (see below). Waterfront preservation received strong support through public surveys and focus groups.

Due to the fragile nature of the lakes and their environs, further intensive development without public or private sanitary sewer should be discouraged. The Plan puts a high priority on preventing further overcrowding and additional expansion of intensive development near the more developed lakes, as well as preserving and preventing intensive development of those lakes which are not already significantly developed. Further growth around the developed lakes, as well as significant development of those still relatively undeveloped lakes, will degrade water quality, threaten drinking water aquifers and place further strain on already inadequate infrastructure.

The small pockets of higher density residential development along South 18<sup>th</sup> and Portage Roads are not encouraged to expand along the major roadways since this type of development land-locks larger parcels and creates issues of access management. While acknowledging the potential desirability of a range of housing choices in Schoolcraft Township, appropriate locations and land use relationships must also be considered. Medium Density Residential development of one to two dwelling units per acre on or near agricultural lands has the potential to create land use conflicts in primarily rural areas in the form of increased traffic, service expectations, land fragmentation, loss of natural features and complaints of agricultural odors and related nuisances. As shown on the Future Land Use Plan map, this designation recognizes existing areas that have already developed, as well as future areas for expansion adjacent to village boundaries.

***Implementation Techniques.*** Expansion of the existing interior MDR areas that are not adjacent to existing village boundaries is discouraged, particularly where existing areas are in close proximity to agricultural lands. However, there may be circumstances under which creation of new MDR areas in coordination with the surrounding communities may become desirable, to better coordinate services and prevent the premature development of the interior, rural township. For instance, should demand ever occur, this designation is suitable for the placement of mixed-use planned unit developments that would complement the adjacent village character. The characteristics of sites that would be appropriate for expansion, or creation of new MDR sites, should meet at least three of these criteria:

- Proximity to adjacent villages and established commercial centers;
- Access to US 131 or other primary, paved roads;
- Do not contain land designated for "Agricultural Preservation" on the Future Land Use Map or contain sensitive environmental features (wetlands, high quality woodlands, hydric soils, steep slopes, lakes and streams);

- Public utilities are available, or soils and hydro-geological conditions are suitable for approved community water and sewer systems.

### ***Waterfront Preservation Overlay***

**Description.** Areas adjacent to the lakes and streams are vital to resident and visitor perceptions of the township's character. Lands within the waterfront areas are characterized by uses that are strongly tied to both residential and recreational experience and enjoyment. However, excessive waterfront development detracts from the physical beauty of the community and brings water and pollution from the shore lands down to the lakes, where pollutants accumulate.

Because waterways run through multiple land use designations with varied degrees of land use intensity, an overlay can provide uniform water resource protection measures. An overlay designation works in concert with the underlying land use designation. Therefore, a lakefront property in the Rural Preservation designation would follow the RP recommendations as to land use, but would also be subject to the Waterfront Overlay recommendations to protect water quality and the lakefront habitat. The purpose of the waterfront preservation overlay is to recognize the unique physical, economic and social attributes of waterfront and shoreline properties and to ensure that structures and uses can co-exist with these unique features. The Future Land Use Plan map proposes a Waterfront Preservation Overlay designation that extends 500 feet from lakeshores and 200 feet from streams. The Overlay designation is not a setback requirement; waterfront setbacks within the Overlay would be determined in the Zoning Ordinance.

This designation also implements the recommendations of the Portage River Watershed Plan adopted in 2005. The primary objectives of the Waterfront Preservation Overlay are:

- To recognize that waterfront ecosystems are irreplaceable natural resources that make a vital contribution to the image and character of the community.
- To protect the residential and recreational experience and enjoyment of the waterways.
- To recognize existing land use patterns and provide areas for planned, low-density and single-family residential development in a manner that provides for sustaining the area's image and rural character.
- To encourage public and private riparian land owners to work together to create a balance of interests in the use and preservation of Waterfront areas.
- To preserve open and unobstructed views to the waterways from adjacent properties, roadways and paths.
- To prevent water degradation, by restricting new intensive residential development, unless a public or private sanitary sewer system is available.

**Implementation Techniques.** Accordingly, it is the Township's intent to encourage the preservation of the waterfront lands by providing and implementing guidelines for land use and development. Properties adjacent to wetlands and water bodies should maintain a vegetative buffer strip to preserve water quality. New development in these areas should be limited to low-density, low-intensity, residential and recreational uses.

Non-riparian "keyhole" land development projects should be prohibited. Docks for boats should be limited to those accessory and customary to single family residential development on the waterfront.

### **Manufactured Housing Community**

**Description.** It is the Township's desire to maintain the existing manufactured home parks to provide for a moderate density, moderate cost residential living environment. The Future Land Use Map recognizes the two manufactured housing sites in Schoolcraft Township north of U Avenue. Sugarloaf Mobile Home Park located off of Shaver Road and Portage Terrace Mobile Home Park off of Portage Road provide a total of 138 housing sites on approximately 38.5 acres. The Future Land Use map shows land adjacent to both parks to serve future expansion.

### **Public/Recreational Lands**

**Description.** This designation includes public uses such as the Township Hall and adjacent park, cemetery and other public or semi-public land holdings, including churches. Many of the public and semi-public lands within this classification enhance the rural quality of life that residents seek. The plan recognizes the importance of these sites to the rural and natural character of the township.

A major attraction to the rural recreational enthusiasts are the natural land holdings in Schoolcraft Township. The largest such area designated on the Future Land Use map is the Prairie View County Park and Gourdneck State Game Area north of "U" Avenue. Both contain wetlands, large areas of woods, lakes and fields that provide a place for animals to live and provides territory for passive and active outdoor recreational activities. The Gourdneck State Game Area was designated as a selected "unique habitat site" in the "Smarter Growth for Kalamazoo County" guidebook (2003).

### **Neighborhood Commercial**

**Description.** A four-corner commercial area has been developed along Portage Road and VW Avenue that provides both local and regional commercial services. According to public input sessions and Planning Commission discussions, there is not a strong desire or need for an increase in commercial land use in the future. Given the rural character of the township and the lack of utilities and infrastructure, new commercial establishments should be in character with the rural atmosphere of the area, such as small-scale local services, and be adequately buffered from adjacent single-family residential uses.

Commercial sites in this designation should be planned with specific consideration of such site factors as compatibility with surrounding existing and planned land use; managing access to major roads; shared driveways and parking areas; consistent site elements (such as signs, landscaping and lighting); roadway improvements (including such elements as turning and deceleration lanes); and other factors that are consistent with maintaining rural character.

**Implementation Techniques.** Future neighborhood commercial uses are limited to the VW Avenue and Portage Road intersection. Rezoning to commercial in areas not planned for it on the Future Land Use Map is strongly discouraged. However, if the commercial use meets the criteria for “Evaluation of Land Use Requests” listed later in this Chapter, the Township may find that rezoning and amending the Future Land Use Map is appropriate.

In order to accommodate small-scale businesses that respect rural character, the Township may wish to allow “home based businesses” in the Zoning Ordinance. Home based businesses are larger in scale than a typical “home occupation” in that they may involve some limited sales, have employees other than the residents of the household, include use of light to heavy equipment and may include light fabrication of goods. Parameters for home based businesses can be made a part of the Zoning Ordinance to prevent them from becoming full-scale commercial uses. Allowing home based businesses (typically as a special land use in the agriculture and large-parcel residential zoning districts) is a means of expanding commercial opportunities in the township without compromising rural character.

## **Industrial**

**Description.** This land use designation is directed at providing continued industrial use for the existing areas, such as along Portage Road and within close proximity to the CN and Norfolk Southern railroads, next to the Village of Schoolcraft, to allow for continued light industrial development. General industrial and new industrial land uses are accommodated within the 131 Development Corridor. The “light” industrial uses found within the interior of the township tend to have lower levels of conflict with adjoining land use due to lesser amounts of air, noise and light pollution, as well as operations that are more compatible with residential uses.

**Implementation Techniques.** Future industrial development will be limited to locations that can be supported by infrastructure and have minimal impacts on nearby residential areas and the natural environment. Industrial uses are encouraged to locate along the railroads to minimize heavy truck traffic associated with such uses. New sites should utilize innovative building techniques, such as green design construction, that are harmonious with the natural environment and minimize groundwater and air quality impacts and prevent excessive storm water runoff.

### ***131 Development Corridor and Overlay***

**Description.** The US 131 corridor is the most dominant transportation corridor in the region, and serves as the primary location for commercial and industrial uses in the township. Access management is a high priority for future development along this corridor, and as such, commercial and industrial uses have been combined within the 'development corridor' in order to accommodate new commercial and industrial uses and implement access management techniques to complement the rural character of the township.

This designation includes an "overlay" on the west side of US 131, south of the Village of Schoolcraft. Except for a few existing commercial lots, all of the land on the west side of US 131 at this location is in agricultural use. Several of the properties are enrolled in the P. A. 116 program and will be farmed for the foreseeable future. Therefore, it is appropriate that the underlying land use designation for these properties is Agricultural Preservation.

However, because of the nature of the US 131 Corridor and the volume of traffic it carries, it is not inappropriate for commercial and industrial uses to be located on the west side of US 131. The overlay designation allows for potential commercial or industrial development of this area without requiring an amendment to the Future Land Use Plan.

The 131 Development Corridor allows both Commercial and Industrial uses, often not compatible with neighborhood commercial and residential areas, to locate along the highway. New development should minimize potential conflict with non-commercial uses by increasing setbacks and providing screening. Commercial and industrial development should be limited to areas along US 131 where more intensive development may logically occur, such as adjacent to similar existing land uses. 'Leap frog' development, in the form of new development occurring more than ½ mile from existing commercial and industrial uses south of Schoolcraft Village, is discouraged.

#### ***Implementation Techniques***

**Land Use.** Although the nature of the corridor appears to accept large scale development, residents are emphatic that regional commercial stores (often referred to as "big box") are not appropriate for Schoolcraft Township. The area market is well-served by large scale commercial establishments in and near Portage and Kalamazoo. Therefore, new commercial developments should be limited to small or mid-sized retail, with a limit of 15,000 square feet. Developments over 15,000 square feet could be considered via the Special Land Use process, so that adequate buffer and landscaping requirements can be imposed.

As mentioned earlier, the US 131 Corridor with the parallel railroad provides unique opportunities for development of a large, regional employer. The Plan recognizes the

benefits that such an employer could bring to the region. However, site planning for such a use would be critical, to ensure that the goals and policies of the Plan are not compromised. Generous setbacks, lush landscaping, and visual buffers are necessary so that the use does not have a negative impact on the rural character of the Township.

This development, should it occur, should be located on the east side of US 131 and have access to the Norfolk Southern rail line, or on the west side of 131 near the CN rail line. It should be located near or adjacent to the Village of Schoolcraft so that the water utility can be extended to serve the use. Except for smaller businesses that can be accommodated along the corridor in accordance with this Plan, supporting industries and spin-off businesses, along with concentrations of retail and services catering to the employees, are best located within the Village of Schoolcraft or in Portage.

**Access Management.** The most effective means of ensuring proper access management for new or redeveloped commercial and industrial property is the site plan review process, enforced through the zoning ordinance. However, in order to properly administer site plan review, the township should ensure that future land use along US 131 adequately considers the function of the roadway as a high speed corridor.

A common misconception is that local communities have no input on driveway locations if the state or county has jurisdiction over the roadway. Although local regulation cannot conflict with the road authority (i.e. be less restrictive), it can control driveway locations through the site plan review process. Schoolcraft Township has the authority to control the placement and spacing of curb cuts (as long as they are not less restrictive than the road authority).

The following measures should be considered when reviewing site plans for new or redeveloped property along US 131:

Driveway Spacing. Since speed along US 131 is a significant concern, spacing between driveways must be carefully considered. Increasing the distance between each driveway provides a measure of safety by ensuring that drivers are not confused as to the location of driveways for commercial establishments, since they may be separated by a wide distance. This also allows for a sufficient distance to slow down to enter the driveway. Proper spacing will help ease traffic conflicts between driveways and vehicles on the highway.

Spacing of drives should be as far from the intersection of public streets as possible. Sharing of drives for adjacent properties should also be required, where feasible. Limiting access points clearly helps provide an added measure of safety for uses that generate higher volumes of traffic.

Driveway spacing from intersections should be measured from the centerline of the driveway to the extended edge of the travel lane on the intersecting street, unless

otherwise noted. The minimum distance between a driveway and an intersecting street should adhere to the proposed distances in the US 131 Access Management Plan.

Changes to these guidelines should only be considered if it can be demonstrated by a traffic impact study that the driveway operation will not result in conflicts with vehicles at the adjacent intersection.

Driveway Locations. Access to US 131 should be provided at safe and convenient locations. Adequate sight distances must be provided. Access to individual parcels should consist of either a single two-way driveway or a pair of one-way driveways. Certain developments generate enough traffic to consider allowing more than one driveway. Where possible, these second access points should be located on a side street or shared with adjacent uses. For parcels with frontages of at least 300 feet, an additional driveway may be allowed, but should only be considered following a traffic impact study that demonstrates a need.

Finally, where parcels have frontage on both US 131 and a side street, access should be provided from the side street. When cross median accesses are provided for left turning traffic on US 131, a right-in/right-out only access should be provided along the US 131 frontage.

Shared Driveways, Frontage Roads, and Service Drives. Sharing or joint use of a driveway by two or more property owners should be encouraged. This will require a written easement from all affected property owners during the site plan approval process. Where a future shared access is desired, the developer should indicate an easement that will be provided to future adjacent uses. In areas within 1/4 mile of an existing or future signal location, as indicated by MDOT, access to individual properties should be provided by alternative access methods (frontage roads, service drives) rather than by direct connection to the major roadway.

Special consideration should be given to uses with large parking areas to ensure that circulation is safe and does not conflict with pedestrians, other vehicles, and adjacent uses. Shared driveways may also be required to reduce the overall number of access points. It is also advisable to require access between properties so that vehicles do not have to enter the roadway to reach adjacent uses. Other considerations, such as service drives (front and/or rear), may also be required.

Frontage road and service drive intersections at the arterial street should be designed according to the requirements of MDOT. A frontage road can be delineated through a parking lot by raised islands separating parking from the traffic lane.

Aesthetics. While aesthetics alone should not dictate the full extent of improving development along US 131 and on developing sites, attention to details, such as parking setbacks, landscaping, and signs, will help manage that development and

contribute to preserving the character and attractiveness of the community. Requiring parking setbacks along the roadway can have a beneficial effect in terms of improving driveway placement and control (such as stacking capacity at the driveway opening), control of glare and headlight spray, and provision of areas for landscaping.

Landscape Design. An important element of any new development is landscaping. Landscaping can perform a number of vital functions, including screening of incompatible land uses, micro-climate control, and improving aesthetics. Landscaped setbacks for commercial and industrial uses, if properly designed, can help define the locations of driveways. Another advantage of roadside landscaping is narrowing the perception of the driver, which has a tendency to slow traffic speed.

The most effective style of landscaping will often depend on its location and function. For example, landscaping along US 131 should be clustered to provide a clear visual impact; stringing out plantings will not make an impression on the driver. Plantings may also be used to screen objectionable views, such as trash dumpsters, parking areas, storage areas and others.

Large parking lots may also require landscaping to break up the view of acres of asphalt. Interior landscaping in parking lots should be required when the lot exceeds a certain number of spaces. Some guidelines that should be considered include:

- The interior area of any parking lot should incorporate planting islands.
- Landscaped islands shall be dispersed evenly throughout the entire area of the parking lot in order to break up large expanses of pavement and decrease storm water runoff and may be used to separate pedestrian areas, maneuvering areas, and drives.

## Evaluating Land Use Change

The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (Act 110 of the Michigan Public Acts of 2006) requires the township's Zoning Ordinance to be "based on a plan to promote the public health, safety and welfare, to encourage the use of lands in accordance with their character and adaptability, to limit the improper use of land, to conserve natural resources and energy, to meet the needs of the state's residents for food, fiber and other natural resources, places of residence...and other uses of land." Since the zoning map is a part of the Zoning Ordinance, changes to zoning boundaries should be in conformance with the Master Plan. Change is constant and usually unpredictable, and there may be circumstances that warrant changes to the zoning boundaries that are not consistent with the Master Plan. If and when this occurs, the Master Plan will need to be updated to conform to the changed circumstances. Because of the time and process required for amending the Plan, such changes should be considered carefully.

The following table contains a series of evaluation factors that may be used to determine if a proposed development warrants a change to the land use designation on the Future Land Use Plan map.

<b>Future Land Use Evaluation Factors</b>		
<b>1</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Does the proposed new classification meet the qualifications noted in the appropriate section of the Future Land Use Plan?
<b>2</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Are the zoning districts and their uses which may apply to the new classification compatible and appropriate in the vicinity of the property under consideration?
<b>3</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Have any conditions changed in the area since the plan was adopted that justify this change?
<b>4</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Will there be any community impacts that should be considered, such as increased traffic, or others that might create a need for additional services or improvements?
<b>5</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Are there any environmental considerations that may be contrary to the intent of the existing or proposed classification of that land use?
<b>6</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Was the property improperly classified when the plan was adopted or amended? Are the qualities of the property (or area) different than those that are described in the plan?
<b>7</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Will there be any adverse effects on adjacent properties as a result of the proposed land use change?
<b>8</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	What impacts will result on the public health, safety, and welfare?

As growth occurs, the township will be faced with a range of new development requests. Unless carefully evaluated, many of these can have significant impacts on surrounding neighborhoods, other land uses, traffic, local infrastructure, and facilities and services. Therefore, it is recommended that the Township Zoning Ordinance make greater use of regulatory techniques afforded by the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, such as planned unit developments. In addition, site plan review can be an effective tool for implementing the recommendations of this Plan.

### Schoolcraft Township Zoning Ordinance

The land use plan provides a basis for the range and location of zoning districts. The zoning ordinance, in turn, is the primary Plan implementation tool. Local control of land use, as provided for by zoning, is an accepted legal practice. The principles on which zoning is based include the need to:

- Balance the interests of all landowners and residents with the rights of individual landowners;
- Protect property values;
- Protect the environment;
- Ensure development is adequately served by roads and utilities;
- Achieve the quality of life desired by residents;

- Ensure land use compatibility, and;
- Protect the public health, safety and welfare.

Since the Future Land Use Plan provides a guide to land use, zoning decisions should be consistent with its provisions. This is not to say that all zoning requests that are consistent with the Future Land Use Map, such as rezonings, should automatically be approved. If all of the conditions of the Land Use Plan are met, however, approval of the request should logically be forthcoming. Similarly, if a rezoning request is different than that shown in the Plan, it should not automatically be denied, particularly if the Plan has not been reviewed in some time. Each request should be evaluated to determine if the conditions that were originally considered when the Plan was adopted have changed; if so, the Plan deserves reconsideration.

## Conclusion

While Schoolcraft Township faces challenges from growth and development, the unique qualities that make the township desirable are deeply valued by its citizens. Therefore, this Plan can be an important tool to implement the desires of the residents to protect the natural beauty and the agricultural and rural heritage of the township. This plan implements the vision, goals and policies developed through a process that involved citizens of the township, and thus serves as a guide for future development within Schoolcraft Township. By implementing the recommendations in this Plan, Schoolcraft Township will continue to be a desirable place to live, work and visit.

# Appendix

## Community Survey

### SCHOOLCRAFT COMMUNITY SURVEY FULL TABULATION

Please indicate your reaction to the following statements:

		1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
1	Schoolcraft Township is doing enough to preserve its natural resources (lakes, rivers, trees, groundwater, wetlands, open space, recreational opportunities) n = 343	6%	33%	24%	23%	13%
2	Schoolcraft Township should keep its "Rural Character". n = 357	57%	31%	9%	3%	1%
3	Preserving agricultural land in the township is important. n = 361	57%	29%	11%	2%	1%
4	Schoolcraft Township should encourage large livestock farm operations. n = 345	9%	11%	29%	25%	27%
5	Houses in new developments are too close together. n = 353	32%	25%	26%	12%	5%
6	The Township should encourage the construction of more homes. n = 356	5%	11%	29%	32%	22%
7	Require developments to preserve open space & the land's natural character. n = 358	50%	39%	8%	2%	1%
8	Schoolcraft Township is being developed too fast. n = 371	29%	23%	32%	12%	5%
9	I support the expansion of Portage, Schoolcraft, and Vicksburg further into Schoolcraft Township. n = 356	9%	12%	21%	26%	33%
10	Schoolcraft Township should control the amount and location of new development. n = 356	44%	40%	10%	4%	1%

Please indicate your reaction to the following statements:

		1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
1 1	Schoolcraft Township should continue to encourage commercial development along U.S. 131.	17%	48%	20%	7%	7%
n = 359						
1 2	Schoolcraft Township should continue to encourage commercial development near the intersection of Portage Rd & VW Ave.	7%	22%	30%	22%	19%
n = 376						
1 3	Schoolcraft Township should support large scale regional commercial development (such as Meijer, Home Depot, WalMart and similar uses).	7%	16%	18%	19%	40%
n = 359						
1 4	Future development should be located near City and Village limits.	19%	41%	26%	9%	6%
n = 357						
1 5	Schoolcraft Township needs to improve public services (road maintenance, public water, sewer, police, emergency services.).	14%	34%	36%	11%	5%
n = 363						

How important were the following when you decided to live in Schoolcraft Township?

		Very Important	Important	Not Important
16	Quality of schools	61%	28%	11%
n = 332				
17	Natural Features (woodlands, lakes, creeks, open space, farmland)	67%	28%	4%
n = 347				
18	Minimal governmental regulation	37%	46%	17%
n = 336				
19	Good air and water quality	66%	32%	1%
n = 350				
20	Rural Character	66%	30%	4%
n = 347				
21	Low crime rate	70%	27%	3%
n = 345				

How important were the following when you decided to live in Schoolcraft Township?

		Very Important	Important	Not Important
22	Availability of housing/land n = 330	34%	43%	23%
23	Job in area n = 337	27%	37%	36%
24	Easy access to larger cities n = 342	37%	46%	16%

Please answer the following:

		Years			
		0-8	9-17	18-26	Over 35
25	How long have you lived in Schoolcraft Township? n = 341	23%	20%	17%	22%

		Age			
		18-34	35-49	50-64	80+
26	What is your age? n = 341	7%	25%	37%	8%

**Written Survey Comments:**

**Common Themes:**

- Railroad crossing condition
- Sewer system needed in Township
- Keep rural character
- Too much residential development
- Softball field condition
- Bike/walking trail between Schoolcraft and Vicksburg
- Taxes are too high
- Commercial development along 131
- Township government corruption?
- Water quality
- Annexation of Township land by villages

**Community Workshop**

The tabulation and comments of the attendees at the November 9, 2006 Community Workshop are summarized on the following pages.

**SCHOOLCRAFT TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN-2006  
COMMUNITY INPUT WORKSHOP, 11/9/06  
PUBLIC INPUT FORM**

I am a resident of:

Schoolcraft Township 33 Schoolcraft Village 0 Vicksburg Village 0 Other 2

<b>SCHOOLCRAFT TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN GOALS &amp; POLICIES WORKSHEET</b>	<b>NEED</b>	<b>DON'T NEED</b>
<b>AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION</b>		
<b>Goal: Support a viable agricultural community through planning and zoning techniques that preserve farmland.</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>2</b>
<p>COMMENTS: Don't pick on the smaller farmers; &lt;50 acres is no longer considered farm land? Why? It is still being farmed. Our prime agricultural land must be protected as possible from increasing development pressure. Farmland in the midst of housing development, is it really farmland anymore? I think not, it is no longer profitable to farm; Don't change farms from agriculture to residential simply because they're less than 50 acres. If it's farmed it should be zoned agriculture; No one's land rights need to be taken away. We need to strongly consider environmental impact of development of farmland to residential; It is critical for us to balance environmental quality as an equal stakeholder-ie residential, commercial (this includes farmers) and natural spaces. Without open spaces, naturally functioning wetlands and wildlife corridors, future quality of life is greatly diminished.</p>		
<b>Goal: Protect the environmental resources important to the Township, which include the lakes, wetlands, wildlife habitat and woodlands from the negative impacts of development.</b>	<b>34</b>	
<p>COMMENTS: Major goal-should involve and be in accord with DEQ recommendations; Critically necessary-once gone or destroyed, gone for good. Very important for many reasons for quality of life; Policy should not limit access and use by non residents and landowners; Very important; Keep home site one to five acres; Wetlands at lakefront protected; The most desirable residential land are lots that incorporate water, forests and nature; Regulate wetlands less than 5 acre parcels to preserve green space throughout the township. If it takes local leadership passing local laws to make that happen, then that should occur. The data on the slideshow indicates that most people want the natural areas protected-these data were, as I understand it, drawn from citizen surveys and focus groups; The lakes, rivers, springs and wetlands are a very important feature of the township;</p>		
<b>Goal: Identify lands with the greatest potential for linking natural habitat and wildlife corridors and seek opportunities to connect natural areas.</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>COMMENTS: Opportunities to "tuck" rural residential development next to and/or within these areas; Township should buy these and create a park system; Excellent way to prioritize wild areas; But wildlife can be preserved within developments and lots of wildlife within the city of Portage; Somewhat important-do whatever is practical; Enforce wetlands protection even after developer fills in-return to nature; This goal makes great sense. If we do want growth in the township we should encourage these areas.</p>		
<b>Goal: Integrate environmental quality protection into local planning and policy regulation.</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>6</b>
<p>COMMENTS: Be careful Schoolcraft Township does not scare away business because of strict environmental laws-as does Portage; Yes! Use DEQ requirements; Very important to preserve our natural resources; Perhaps add a vehicle for reporting concerns to DEQ and follow up assurances; Keep air clean; Should add water quality to goal and tie to zoning decisions; Consult with DEQ before developing land, rather than having tax payers show why wetlands should not be developed. If this is just storm water runoff then let's just say so; Absolutely; Can use or nitrates be regulated?</p>		

<b>SCHOOLCRAFT TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN GOALS &amp; POLICIES WORKSHEET</b>	<b>NEED</b>	<b>DON'T NEED</b>
<b>POLICIES</b>		
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 designated agricultural areas.	31	2
COMMENTS: Exclusive agricultural zoning-prime soils, irrigated, sufficient size; Good idea; Requires hard choices on the part of the Township in order to accomplish goals 1 and 2; Very important; Very important;		
2) Provide zoning options that provide incentives for land divisions that allow smaller lots in exchange for preserving larger tracts of parent parcels for agriculture and open space preservation.	27	5
COMMENTS: Good idea. Must be used carefully. Should not be allowed around lake areas; This should be debated in detail/ Study Grand Rapids! Need to encourage larger lots; Same as above; In most cases its better to development a complete farm then to develop only half-it's not profitable to farm small acreage; Should add woodlot and shoreline preservation; Lot size and density of development is the critical question; Only if the large tract preservation is permanent; Include minimum lot sizes as well as maximum lot sizes; Stipulate and plan that parcels are contiguous = neighboring parcels;		
3) 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 the natural drainage network; and 3) protecting the quality of surface and groundwater resources, open space areas, wetlands, woodlands, and wildlife.	30	2
COMMENTS: Laws should include a natural lakeshore with maximum distance requirements away or back from water; Great ideas for maintaining rural character-a basic function! Very important; If we don't monitor runoff and ground water-the habit of will be impossible to monitor; So there is potential for wildlife corridors across communities, across private parcels.		
4) Require that site plans show locations of natural features, such as significant vegetation, steep slopes, surface water drainage, prime farmland soils, and other significant features.	31	3
COMMENTS: And have enforcements in place if damage occurs; Should add wetlands;		
5) To prevent water degradation, lakefront residential development should be restricted unless a public or private sanitary sewer system is available.	26	6
COMMENTS: Yes! Specify on a new subdivision; Could also address minimum lot size. They are way to small now!; Don't stop there! Require lake capacity/health study by developers before site plan to determine number of developed lots than can be built; Lake capacity studies need to be done before any development, as well as environmental impact studies, lakefront development ideally should not occur on lakefront property; Controversial but important; This is the only way to protect the lakes for future generations; Sewer runoff will effect water quality. We need clean drinking water. We need fish and game to keep our natural resources; Very important; Should have 100 feet or more at lakefront; Not just lakefront-should include near lake and waterway properties; This shuts the door on others now that we're inside. If the neighbors are degrading the water, they should solve the problem rather than oppose development of adjoining property; Why not inspect what we have- it seems logical that this less drastic process is certainly something that should be tried. Septic systems aren't bad-just dysfunctional ones!! Then, if water quality degrades, consider a sewer system. Wall Lake in Delton put in a system around its lake that was a disaster; I am very concerned about private sanitary sewer systems. What happens when these systems fail, when the owners defaults, when there is little or no government oversight?; Use of private septic and/or private sanitary sewer for a development can be an issue such as when it fails it is currently the township is responsible. Can we protect ourselves with ordinances? Can inspection and regulation be initiated on established properties?;		

<b>SCHOOLCRAFT TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN GOALS &amp; POLICIES WORKSHEET</b>	<b>NEED</b>	<b>DON'T NEED</b>
6) Provide density bonus incentives in Planned Unit Developments to preserve natural features.	7) 20	8) 3
<p>COMMENTS: For parts 6-9 : Interesting and might be good, BUT, PUD is dangerous. So many variables are involved that it becomes difficult for a PC that does not have all the expertise or time needed to interpret the PUD laws and parameters. PUD implies the need for a professional consultant on PUDs in order to protect the Commission, the developer and the public; Expand existing Twp. PUD to allow mixed use; Sounds like B. Visel; Get rid of PUD, it encourages high density development; If for mixed-use this should say so; Provides flexibility to promote "greener" development; Who pays for land that is set aside? Multi-use could be practical if strict guidelines were developed; Mixed development is necessary; I don't like the idea of multi-family units-apartments; add 'and resources'. "No mixed use"; What would the limits of the density of development? Mixed use should be allowed in the PUD ordinance; If mixed use is allowed keep the total density at the level of underlying zoning; Consider these as part of a package-focus on any development be subject to community impact seems a healthy balance.</p>		
9) Require the use of Planned Unit Development when projects result in more than a designated minimum number of dwelling units.	25	3
<p>COMMENTS: Yes, if the PUD does not allow retail business; Sounds like B. Visel; Minimum should be low; Minimum should be low density development; Mandatory important; More discussion is needed; Strongly agree with the need; Support mandatory PUD ordinance; Sounds like an excellent tool for managing development;</p>		
10) Recognize the potential for conflicts between agricultural and residential uses and focus residential development away from major agriculture areas.	28	4
<p>COMMENTS: There's going to be conflict; we don't have enough land to avoid- tell complainers to put up with it! Arbitration committee? I think the decisions need to be made on an individual basis. On a specific property or farm; Add 'and sensitive, environmental areas.' Put residential development in "population centers" near villages and major roads;</p>		
11) Consider programs such as transfer or purchase of development rights, conservation easements, P.A. 116 and creation of land trusts.	24	3
<p>COMMENTS: PDR's not needed, other controls exist; Possibility;</p>		

**VISION...** MAINTAIN AN ACTIVE AGRICULTURAL LAND BASE THAT PROVIDES FOR OPEN SPACES AND PRESERVES OUR HIGH QUALITY WETLANDS, NATURAL AREAS, RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND TRAILS, WATERWAYS AND WOODS.

**Does this vision reflect the Township's desires regarding Agriculture and Natural Resources?**

**27 Responded Yes**  No

**Why or why not?**

Yes, but it should support both agriculture and ag. business; Good statement-hope we can live up to it; Why allow the village to annex property which then does away with the PUD on the Township part; Important to my values; Ag. economy is strong here. Ag Land sales are strong here indicating a viable industry and land resource; Reflects today's atmosphere and also provides some vision for the future; Provides for multiple avenues to promote preservation; But remember the land belongs to the individual that owns the property; not his neighbor; Maintain the rural atmosphere and quality of natural resources; I believe that we all strive for great quality of life, which depends on quality wetlands and natural resources; I feel that most people have chosen to live in Schoolcraft Township because of its rural character; Should there be mention of planned development in the vision? Very good; This should preserve the wetlands and natural areas; very consistent; Depends on the new land use plan coming; The first six words are key/ Don't over do the recreational opportunities; I hope so! Our area is rich because of these features; Our area has a good variety of open water and agricultural spaces that makes use unique to the area. A high quality of living and be so for generations to come.

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

This survey should be sent to every resident! The notice for this meeting was extremely poor and does not reflect an adequate percent of Schoolcraft's population!

A mix of housing units within a PUD should be desirable such as is seen in Parkview Hills.

Add a bit more specificity to the policies as noted;

Please find a more thorough way of announcing these special meetings. Please make maps and other stuff available on the WEB! Let people KNOW these are available!

We do need to consider developing a public sewage system throughout Schoolcraft Township. The last time we considered extending the sewer system from Vicksburg to the end of Portage Road at the bridge between Barton Lake and Tub Lake. Unfortunately, it was poorly advertised/promoted. We need to slowly educate folks and show them how public sewer systems are to their advantage.

I think our policies should encourage any development be in areas/parcels already developed. We should explore funding sources to help farmers get a good price for land without having to sell it for development.

There is plenty of density in and around the two villages and Portage.

A certain amount of growth will happen, at a minimum. It takes place on 5 or 10 or 20 acres rather than 1-2 acres or less to meet the demand then we aren't preserving anything;

Lot size and density of development is the critical question. An ordinance or zoning restrictions limiting lot size to above a certain size-e.g. 3 acres- would be of interest.

SCHOOLCRAFT TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN GOALS & POLICIES WORKSHEET	NEED	DON'T NEED
<b>RURAL CHARACTER AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS</b>		
<b>Goal: Strive to maintain Schoolcraft Township's rural character through thoughtful, pro-active planning.</b>	35	
COMMENTS: All 4 goals are ridiculous-should be a given; Very important. That's why most people moved here; To keep our rural character we need to know all of the goals and be able to meet them; We need safer routes along 131-left turns are a hazard; Recognizing some development will occur; "No one's land rights need to be taken away"; Put pressure on state government to regulate existing septic systems and require regular inspections;		
<b>Goal: 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.</b>	32	2
COMMENTS: 2 Stars; South County has demonstrated, so far, an unusual ability to work together; Needs to be done better; We will need to work with our neighbors to survive and meet our needs; Coordination is very important;		
<b>Goal: Protect the rural community character, natural aesthetics and environmental quality that contribute to the high quality of life in Schoolcraft Township.</b>	32	1
COMMENTS: Excellent; Essential!; If PUD's are allowed, we need to be sure, through local law, that the resulting open space stays open for ever, not just 10 or 20 or even 50 years; Why do we need economic growth in the township if the population remains the same;		
<b>Goal: Provide for a balanced and sustainable land use plan to support the population and economic growth of the township.</b>	31	
COMMENTS: If this Twp. is to remain an Ag. township, it should support ag. related business; Substitute people for population; There should not be unlimited support of growth. There is a false limit based on goals and vision applied to land resources; We need the balance; We have to have growth in order for the twp.to stay alive; Support also businesses/manufacturing as members of the township (and their growth); It would be nice to say we can close the door and not develop but not realistic. Change out people for population; Change population and economic growth to people and economy;		
<b>POLICIES</b>		
1) Incorporate site design standards that respect the natural integrity of the land and minimize the loss of scenic views.	31	3
COMMENTS: Encourage low impact development; Yes and put the expenses of the planning on the developer to come up with plan that considers the environment;		
2) Implement lighting standards to minimize light pollution of the night sky.	26	7
COMMENTS: Account for lawful requirements for lighting; Minimal standards needed; As long as it does not restrict creation/operations of commercial facilities/industrial plants; Guidelines yes, Standards no; Clearly a need; Also cell tower locations, etc; These things are not hard to do nor expensive but can improve quality of night time experience;		
3) Require a development setback from roadways to preserve natural features and rural atmosphere.	24	8
COMMENTS: Depends on setting; Save a tree when possible; Good idea where appropriate; Setbacks take away scenic views; Where appropriate; Need in some areas, others not; Require of all development; Present setbacks are adequate; Maybe along the roadways are where the houses should go. Keep the interior space free to prevent more pollution;		

<b>SCHOOLCRAFT TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN GOALS &amp; POLICIES WORKSHEET</b>	<b>NEED</b>	<b>DON'T NEED</b>
4) Encourage and, in appropriate circumstances, mandate, the use of open space (cluster) development to preserve natural features and maintain rural character.	25	4
COMMENTS: Density must be established by law-sounds dangerous to me; Who would make this decision?; Don't encourage-review in 5 years; Don't like the word "mandate"; All developments subject to review as a PUD; Not convinced that cluster development of low income housing is the right way. What about encouraging med-high income development to reduce population but maintain the tax base? Cluster development and high density development are likely to be incompatible with the above goals; Only with tracts of land preserved residential free to compensate for the development;		
5) Concentrate higher density development in areas where infrastructure can support it.	27	3
COMMENTS: Density development in relation; Privately owned infrastructure can also support density-developing on capacity of the local environment; This is a rural community-why encourage high density development-how much tax revenue does a township need? Next to villages or existing development; With improper infrastructure we could be just like Portage, which is a bad thing; This is critical as long as current residents aren't expected to pay for the improvements required to support the growth! Avoid Portage Road Corridor-it is going to be limited to 2 lanes for at least 40 years based on the new bridge just constructed in the City of Portage; Let's avoid PUD private type sewage systems due to high potential of failure and no public recourse;		
6) Maintain communication with adjoining communities for land use coordination, public services, and boundary planning.	34	0
COMMENTS: All of the above are vital to maintain the Twp's character; Important; We should be looking at a regional and county plan=not just a separate plan; Encourage continuous open spaces and corridors between communities;		

***VISION...PROMOTE A LOW-DENSITY, RURAL ATMOSPHERE AND APPROPRIATELY LOCATED CONCENTRATIONS OF HOUSING, ABUNDANT NATURAL RESOURCES AND RECREATION, ACHIEVED IN COOPERATION WITH OUR NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES***

**Does this vision reflect the Township's desires regarding Rural Character and Community Relationships?**  
**27 Responded Yes 1 Responded No**

**Why or Why not?**  
 Good; Sounds exactly what we want to achieve; Higher density takes less farm ground out of production more housing on less acreage; That's why we live in Schoolcraft Township; Quality of Life, longevity of natural resources; Achieved with "consideration" of our neighboring communities; Very good; Change 'atmosphere' to 'township'; Depends on the new land use plan coming; Don't change a single word; This will maintain a high quality of life for present and future people;

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

If farmland is considered a natural resources then why would you encourage a developer to develop?
I'm disappointed, I thought we were much farther along in the process
Coordination with Portage and even K-zoo is important since that is the direction many residents head for work, shopping, services.
I agree with the Countywide Land Use Plan/Smart Growth Principle #7 and #2
We wish to have a rural township – not the "appearance" of a rural township
Low Density

SCHOOLCRAFT TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN GOALS & POLICIES WORKSHEET	NEED	DON'T NEED
<b>BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>		
<b>Goal: Provide a reasonable mix of commercial and industrial services along US 131 that complements the rural character of the township.</b>	35	0
COMMENTS: Not without access management; no big box-no strip commercial; Tough one to achieve but a desirable goal; Need to include traffic flow management; the need to improve traffic flow first;		
<b>Goal: Allow, when appropriate, industrial uses that are within the capacity of existing or proposed utilities that will contribute to the economic growth of the region, and are sensitively planned to have minimal impacts on natural features and the desired rural character.</b>	34	2
COMMENTS: Can you legislate against business/jobs that affect natural resources such as aquifers; too restrictive; Need to put more bite to the statement 'planned, developed and operated'. Industrial ground/well water pollution should not be allowed;		
<b>Goal: Maintain the Portage Road/VW Avenue area as a viable commercial neighborhood by keeping the commercial area compact and preventing expansion down the roadways.</b>	28	5
COMMENTS: Maintain, but is expansion needed; This area should not expand look toward villages and US 131; Road doesn't support traffic at corners now!; Some commercial areas should be located on areas as needed and not only for personal but for other needs as well; Urban sprawl. We should try to maintain buffer strips, such as natural boundaries; Very important to; This says stop growth, why not just say so?		
<b>POLICIES</b>		
1) Coordinate new commercial business opportunities on a 'regional' planning level with the adjacent Villages to protect the township's agricultural land base from land speculation.	32	3
COMMENTS: Suggest 'FOIA' clause regarding Twp. Supervisors discussions with developers to avoid "Deals" behind the scenes - i.e., no relatives or members of twp. boards should not be in a position to gain monetarily (from their twp. board positions) when dealing with potential clients; Add 'Twps/Countries' after Villages		
2) Designate areas for light industrial uses and evaluate them with respect to intensity, impact on surrounding areas, the natural environment, accessibility, infrastructure, and economic impacts.	36	0
COMMENTS: Watch zoning regulation changes; Clean industry?;		
3) Implement access management principles for commercial and industrial sites that improve the use and safety of the roadway, so that it services both pass-through and local traffic in an efficient manner.	34	1
COMMENTS: Need this now!; Difficult to do with existing sites; It is good to have sidewalks for shoppers on 131;		
4) Coordinate maintenance and improvement projects along US 131 with MDOT to ensure that access and services reflect the Master Plan.	33	2
COMMENTS: Why encourage a 4 lane highway or freeway to the Indiana Border, in which Indiana does; Need to have a serious look at traffic flow in Schoolcraft along US 131; Can Twp. take control of speed limits on US 131;		

**VISION** ...THE TOWNSHIP SHALL UTILIZE EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE TO PROMOTE WELL-PLANNED COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL USES THAT ARE COMPATIBLE WITH THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT AND THAT PROVIDE SHOPPING AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

**Does this vision reflect the Township’s desires regarding Business and Economic Development?**

**30 Responded Yes**  No

**Why or why not?**

OK, outside of 131, I’d hope there would be very little development; It’s the way we want to go; Nice guide for economic development; It seems the best way to manage industrial growth; but why only “existing” infrastructure; We don’t want traffic backups or overcrowding; consistent; Depends on the new land use plan; Well written; This plan seems most reasonable to allow for business to thrive while maintaining the character of the community;

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

Not have a freeway to meet this 131 freeway expansion;
COMMENT: I think we need to be careful not to become another “Mattawan” etc. We should strive to keep the charm and character of our villages.
Some selective infrastructure expansion (water/sewer from villages) may be appropriate, ie, water along US 131 to support C and I development;
Quality, well planned commercial means no \$ stores or Wal-mart
Limit to the 131 corridor and the villages
How can we even consider developing Portage Road with the state of the railroad track that we have been told is out of Schoolcraft Twp’s jurisdiction and that we area at the mercy of the railroad(Not to mention the need to improve Portage Road) who will pay for this infrastructure. Despite more people, the tax dollars do not bring in enough
Countywide land use plan #1, 2, 4, 7 all describe the type of planning with land use for commercial development that I support.
I think a natural way to limit/slow down growth is to require developers to come up with the money for building infrastructure or at least bear most of the cost versus the tax payers. But they should be encouraged to tap into public utilities so the quality and maintenance can be monitored.

**Are there any other goals that should be included in the Master Plan?**

No one’s land rights need to be taken away.
How about a regional/vision statement which considers immediate neighbors and school districts: (1) Villages should stay relatively small – 1500 -3000 population; (2) walkable, (3) quaint.
Schools should strive to stay approximately the size they are now. Small school/small class experience.
South County is a distinctly different living options from K-zoo and Portage.
Improve or maintain excellent water quality in the lakes, streams, and ground water.
Achieve a public sewer system for all residents of Schoolcraft Township. I realize this goal will take concerted, focused effort on the part of leaders in the village of Schoolcraft with the Township. If we can accomplish this goal, the Village can foster business development with the township will make great strides to ensure better water quality.

## Bringing it Together: The Vision Statement

***OUR VISION FOR SCHOOLCRAFT TOWNSHIP: A PLACE CHARACTERIZED BY ...***

- **AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES** ... *MAINTAINING AN ACTIVE AGRICULTURAL LAND BASE THAT PROVIDES FOR OPEN SPACES AND PRESERVES OUR HIGH QUALITY WETLANDS, NATURAL AREAS, RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND TRAILS, WATERWAYS AND WOODS;*
- **RURAL CHARACTER AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS** ... *LOW-DENSITY, RURAL ATMOSPHERE AND APPROPRIATELY LOCATED CONCENTRATIONS OF HOUSING, ABUNDANT NATURAL RESOURCES AND RECREATION, ACHIEVED IN COOPERATION WITH OUR NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES;*
- **BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** ...*UTILIZING EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE TO PROMOTE WELL-PLANNED COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL USES THAT ARE COMPATIBLE WITH THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT AND THAT PROVIDE SHOPPING AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES;*

*... THAT TOGETHER MAKE OUR TOWNSHIP A RURAL TREASURE WITH ABUNDANT NATURAL RESOURCES, RECREATION, AND A PREMIER QUALITY OF LIFE.*

### Does this vision statement reflect your desires for the future of Schoolcraft Township?

It depends on the new land use plan that will be proposed to the Twp. residents.

**What is missing from this vision statement?** Write your comments in the white space on this sheet. Thank you participating in your community’s master plan process! Please use the space below for any additional comments.

Protection of air quality seems to be omitted.

Creation of infrastructure improvements should be encouraged.

If we want to develop economic growth, we should look at ways to preserve and develop outdoor recreational activities. We will not find long-term economic success by trying to lure high paying manufacturing concerns into the area. Given the current glut of housing in Kalamazoo County, we should not leave ourselves vulnerable to vacant houses with cheap alternatives.

#### Additional Comments

Notification to residence is needed to improve, by mailer people are not aware of issues that may affect them.

Define clearly “Open Space” can not/should not be a wetland or otherwise unusable land.

I would like to see copies of the land use plan sent to all residents before the public hearing for maximum input.

P.A. 116 Program; Be sure PUD ordinances make sense

Nice job.

Thank you for taking time to educate people in the township and provide them with multiple avenues to communicate our concern.

We are Americans, the farmers were pioneers. Now it seems as we are losing our rights as to what we can do with our land. Not our neighbors. If they dislike it, they should of bought 10-20 acres rather than the three acres they own. Some times I wonder what the hell is going on, when my neighbors dictate what I can do with my land that I have owned for more than 50 years. It's a shame, a damn shame.

I think it isn't right for a land use plan to have to be reworked/reevaluated every 5 years. I think that the time should be longer. I also feel the public should be better informed on meetings that occur on crucial issues such as land use planning. The attendance at tonight's meeting doesn't represent Schoolcraft/Vicksburg population well at all. Schoolcraft Twp. needs to encourage existing farmers to keep farming. Seems like farmers are selling out to developers too much in the last 5 years. People that have lived in this Twp. for many years moved here to not live in a city atmosphere.

I appreciate the formula used here to get citizen input. I like the vision statement. I agree we should not try to stop growth or commercial development but need to be creative in looking at ways to maintain our rural nature while accommodating planned growth. I'm not convinced we need to court commercial concerns- lets work with surrounding communities to concentrate that in already developed areas. What about encourage recreational type development?

## Resolution of Adoption

### TOWNSHIP OF SCHOOLCRAFT

### COUNTY OF KALAMAZOO, STATE OF MICHIGAN

#### Resolution Approving New Schoolcraft Township Master Plan Recommended by Planning Commission June 9, 2008

WHEREAS, The Schoolcraft Township Planning Commission has developed a proposed new Master Plan intended to replace the existing Schoolcraft Township Land Use Plan adopted in 1990; and

WHEREAS, the Township Planning Commission submitted the proposed new Master Plan for review and comment to statutorily required entities, including contiguous municipalities and the county, and also for input by the general public pursuant to a public hearing held May 20, 2008; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the foregoing the Township Planning Commission made several corrections and minor revisions to the proposed new Master Plan after the public hearing, and on June 9, 2008 recommended Township Board approval of the proposed new Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Township Board has subsequently reviewed and discussed the proposed new Master Plan recommended by the Township Planning Commission and desires to approve same:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Schoolcraft Township Board does hereby approve and adopt the proposed new Schoolcraft Township Master Plan as recommended by the Schoolcraft Township Planning Commission (and with the correction of typographical and printer errors, including correcting the references to "5 acres" and "five acres" to "3-5 acres" in the segment of Chapter 3 pertaining to the Description and Implementation Techniques for the Rural Preservation land use designation), to become effective immediately and supercede and replace the 1990 Schoolcraft Township Land Use Plan (text and map) and all amendments thereof.

Upon motion by Ulsh, supported by Mongreig, to adopt this resolution,

The following voted "yes":

Jim Shaw  
Don Ulsh  
Virginia Mongreig  
Martha Moore

The following voted "no": none  
(Bob Thompson absent)

The Supervisor declared the motion carried and the resolution duly adopted.

CERTIFICATE

I Virginia Mongreig, Clerk of Schoolcraft Township, hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was adopted by the Schoolcraft Township Board by a roll call vote at a regular meeting of the Board held on August 12, 2008 in compliance with the Open Meetings Act.

/s/

Virginia Mongreig, Clerk  
Schoolcraft Township